



***LOOKING BACK ON
25 YEARS OF INTERREG
AND
PREPARING THE FUTURE
OF
TERRITORIAL COOPERATION***

**Background Document
prepared by the Luxembourgish Presidency of the EU Council**

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Disclaimer

This background document was drawn up for the purpose of informing and supporting specific contributions of the Luxembourg Council Presidency to the conference celebrating the 25th anniversary of Interreg, which took place in Esch-Belval on 15/16 September 2015, and to the General Affairs Council - agenda point "Territorial Cooperation/Interreg" which took place on 18th November 2015.

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List of abbreviations

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
CPMR	Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions
DG Regio	European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
DG RTD	European Commission, Directorate-General Research and Innovation
ECU	European Currency Unit
EEA	European Environment Agency
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observation Network
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
EU15	Member States before the EU enlargements of 2004, 2007 and 2013
EU12	Member States having joined the EU with the enlargements of 2004 and 2007
EUR	Euro
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
IP	Investment Priority
MECU	million ECU
MOT	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
SMEs	Small and medium sized enterprises
R&D	Research and development
SO	Specific Objective
SOER	State and Outlook on the European Environment (report of the EEA)
TA2020	Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020
TO	Thematic Objective
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP-ART	United Nations Development Programme initiative on the Articulation of Territorial Networks for Sustainable Human Development

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1. General introduction

Interreg celebrates in 2015 its 25 years of existence. During this quarter of a century, territorial cooperation has become central to the construction of a common European space and also a cornerstone of the European integration process.¹

Still, it should be remembered that the start of Community-level support for territorial cooperation at the end of the 1980s was preceded by an already long-standing cooperation process between European local and regional authorities, which was launched at their own initiative. Important “historical milestones” of this process were

- the conclusion of the first bilateral twinning agreements between European municipalities and towns already shortly after World War II, which subsequently continued to grow in number and aim to promote peace and mutual understanding at grassroots level;
- the establishment of a first embryonic “transnational cooperation” initiative in North-West Europe in 1955 (i.e. the “Conference of the Regions of North-West Europe” - CRONWE), which operated until the mid-1990s and aimed to jointly address issues related to spatial planning;
- the establishment of the first permanent structure for decentralised cross-border cooperation at the German-Dutch border in 1958 (i.e. the EUREGIO), which was followed during the next three decades by the setting-up of other cooperation structures mostly at borders between countries in Western European and Scandinavia;
- the establishment of the first European-wide associations in the early 1970s (i.e. the “Association of European Border Regions”, AEBR, in 1971 and the “Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions”, CPMR, in 1973), which aimed to represent the common interests of their respective member regions at the Community level.

The **overall purpose of the present document is to provide background information** for preparing a general discussion about potential design principles for Interreg VI in the time after 2020 and for starting a joint reflection on the long-term orientation of territorial cooperation up to 2040. However, a fruitful exchange on these matters can only take place if a good and also shared understanding exists for (1) the past experiences made with Interreg and (2) the major challenges which territorial cooperation is likely to face in a medium and long-term perspective. Accordingly, the content of this background document is presented in three main chapters.

- **Chapter 2** examines the changing development objectives and funding priorities of Interreg as well as the main achievements and the added value which emerged from territorial cooperation over the past 25 years. Finally, a short outlook on territorial cooperation in the period 2014-2020 is given.
- **Chapter 3** sketches out important aspects which should be considered by a long-term vision for territorial cooperation in the EU. This also includes a view on considering aspects of the Interreg-approach for other parts of the world, where it could potentially serve as a model for delivering international development objectives.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/

- **Chapter 4** makes some concluding remarks on the possible setting up of a strategic and continuous multi-stakeholder process for preparing the future of Interreg in the time beyond 2020.

This background document was realised on ground of a comprehensive review of existing research and evaluation literature on territorial cooperation and also by taking into account different interventions and contributions at the recently organised conference for celebrating the 25th anniversary of Interreg (15-16 September 2015).

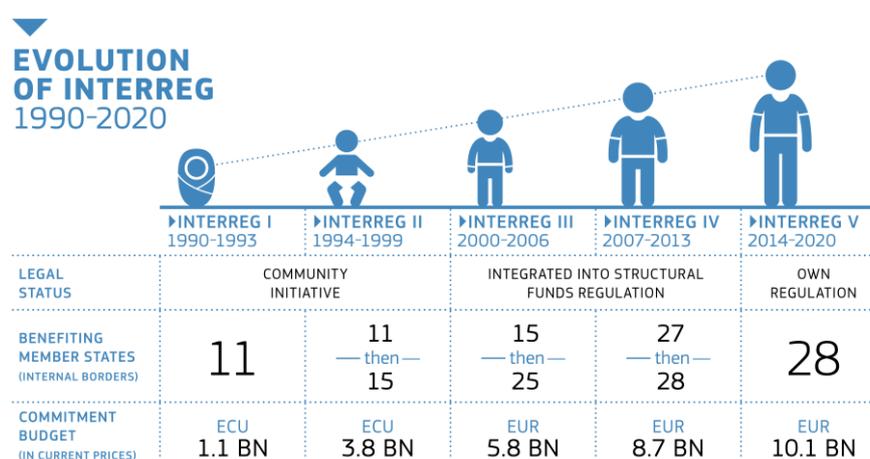
Key messages emerging from the background document were also summarised by the **concluding speech of the Luxembourg Secretary of State, Camille Gira, which was held on the occasion of the conference “25 years of Interreg” in Esch Belval/Luxembourg (see: annex 1)**

2. A retrospective view on 25 years of Interreg and a short outlook on territorial cooperation up to 2020

2.1. Changing EU-wide developments and evolving territorial cooperation objectives

Interreg evolved and matured significantly over the past 25 years, both in terms of the number of Member States benefitting from the steadily increasing Community funding for territorial cooperation and also as regards its legal status within the EU's Cohesion Policy (**see: figure 1**). Driving forces behind this evolution were major developments linked to the ongoing European integration process and also emerging macro-societal challenges, which both generated new territorial needs and problems that had to be addressed by EU-level, national, regional and local policies.

Figure 1: Evolution of Interreg 1990-2020:



Source: European Commission, DG Regio (2014c), p.16

The period 1990-1999

This first decade was marked by a further integration of national economies in Europe and by a growing interdependence of the EU economy with the rest of the world (economic globalisation). This resulted partly from important developments of the European integration process such as the completion and further deepening of the Single Market, the conversion of the European Communities into a European Union (EU), the introduction of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the fundamental changes which took place in countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the EU-accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden. These developments and processes challenged the EU's economic and social cohesion and, at the same time, also made territorial development increasingly complex. Therefore, consensus grew on that the still country-focussed regional development and spatial planning policies in EU Member States and neighbouring countries should be complemented and enriched by an additional dimension of cooperative territorial development which transgresses national boundaries.

This motivated the Community level at the end of the 1980s to initiate **first support schemes for stimulating more intense exchange and cooperation among regional and local authorities in Europe.**

With the launching of Interreg in 1990, Community support for **cross-border cooperation** focussed first on the internal EU-borders (1990-1993) and was then further expanded towards all external EU-borders (1994-1999). The main objectives under both phases were to assist internal and external EU-border areas in overcoming the special development problems arising from their relative isolation within national economies and within the Union as a whole, to promote the creation and development of networks of cooperation across internal borders, to assist the adjustment of external border areas to their new role as border areas of a Single Market and to respond to new opportunities for cooperation with Third Countries at the external EU borders.

Transnational cooperation on regional and spatial planning was launched as a new strand of Interreg in 1997. It was introduced with a view to help EU Member States and regions with better facing common challenges and needs that result from their increasing economic integration and interdependence and to promote a more harmonious and balanced development of the EU territory.

Since the early 1990s, but still outside the framework of Interreg, also a variety of Community-level pilot schemes supporting **interregional cooperation** were launched and implemented. They started a process of European-wide exchanges of experiences and supported cities and regions in finding common solutions to shared problems (i.e. Exchange of Experience and PACTE programmes; RECITE I & II, ECOS-Ouverture I & II).

The period 2000-2014

These fifteen years were marked by two important developments of the European integration process. The first one was the **preparation and accomplishment of the EU's most significant widening process from previously 15 to now 28 Member States** (i.e. enlargements of 2004, 2007 and 2013). This has substantially increased socio-economic differences and the number of internal and external borders in the enlarged EU territory, but also the diversity of the institutional context for territorial cooperation. The second one was the **launching and implementation of an ambitious renewal process of the EU** which encompassed the dimensions of socio-economic development (i.e. **Lisbon Strategy**) and of sustainable development (i.e. **Gothenburg Strategy**). While the former aimed at boosting the EU's competitiveness and at making Europe the world's leading knowledge-economy by 2010, the latter aimed at achieving a more sustainable development of the EU through making progress in key priority fields such as combating climate change, ensuring sustainable transport, addressing threats to public health and managing natural resources more responsibly. In addition to this, awareness grew within the EU that also other macro-societal challenges of the 21st century such as demographic change and an emerging new energy paradigm have to be addressed by more adequate policy responses.

Both developments took place under still rather favourable economic framework conditions during the first half of this period.² However, this context changed dramatically with the global financial crisis starting in September 2008 and the subsequent world-wide economic downturn.

² In the years between 2000 and 2007, the EU's economic growth per head was above that of the United States and Japan or Canada, mainly because of the higher growth rates of the less developed and moderately developed EU Member States.

As a consequence of this, the EU faced its most serious economic crisis since 1945 which had substantial negative impacts on business activities and employment. In many European countries also public authorities at different governance levels were affected by the credit crunch and drastically falling fiscal resources, and this at a time when they had to react with policies on rapidly worsening national, regional or local conditions. For helping the EU to recover from this crisis and for getting the Union “*back on track*”, the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth was adopted in 2010. This new ten-year EU-level policy agenda replaced the Lisbon Strategy and aims to achieve high levels of employment and productivity for which knowledge and innovation are the key factors, while actively promoting the EU’s economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 can together be considered a transition phase for Interreg which at the same time includes elements of further consolidation (i.e. an upgrading of territorial cooperation practices launched during the previous decade), continuity and change.³

Cross-border cooperation under Interreg IIIA (2000-2006) was expected to develop “*cross-border economic and social centres through joint strategies for sustainable territorial development*”, with a view to assist areas along the internal and external EU borders in overcoming their complex and multi-dimensional problem of isolation. In the period 2007-2013, Interreg IVA focused mostly on the internal EU-borders because the external EU-borders were now supported by the new Instrument for Pre-Accession and the European Neighborhood Instrument (with co-support from the ERDF). Interreg IVA was expected “*to develop cross-border economic, social and environmental activities through joint strategies for a sustainable territorial development*”. The strategic goals for both periods show, however, that the territorial development mission of Strand A had become rather vague and that DG Regio considered the role of cross-border cooperation essentially as one of “*filling the gaps*”⁴ in-between the Cohesion Policy’s regional support programmes (i.e. for convergence & regional competitiveness and employment).

Transnational cooperation was consolidated at the outset of the period 2000-2006 by establishing a new Interreg B-Strand which covered the previous Interreg IIC programme areas and also included new cooperation zones. Interreg IIIB was expected to “*contribute to a harmonious territorial development and integration of the Community territory by supporting and developing genuine transnational cooperation on a limited number of key issues of major concern*”. Transnational cooperation was continued under Interreg IVB (2007-2013) and aimed to “*promote networks and actions that are conducive to integrated territorial development*”, while focusing on cooperation topics that were relatively similar to those of Interreg IIIB. However, a requirement for elaborating transnational spatial development strategies was not any longer foreseen under INTERREG IVB and also R&D and innovation was introduced as a new cooperation topic. Both aspects represented a clear shift away from the original spatial development policy approach pursued by previous transnational cooperation.

Also **interregional cooperation** was consolidated at the outset of the funding period 2000-2006 by establishing a new Interreg C-Strand which brought together actions that were previously realised under separate ERDF-pilot schemes. Interreg IIIC was delivered through four programmes covering larger zones of the EU. They pursued as their common goal to “*improve*

³ European Commission, DG Regio (2010), pp. 33-34, 113, 164-166

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/cooperation/crossborder/index_en.htm

the effectiveness of policies and instruments for regional development and cohesion through networking, particularly for regions whose development is lagging behind and those undergoing conversion." Cooperation was promoted between territorial authorities from old and new EU Member States (also before their EU-accession) and could address a wide range of themes and policy fields. Interreg IVC (2007-2013) was delivered through a single programme for which the EU remained eligible. However, cooperation now adopted a clearer thematic focus (if compared to Interreg IIIC) because operations had to address issues which were more directly related to the objectives of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies.

European territorial cooperation as a whole was further extended and also strengthened in the period 2000-2013. A novelty at the start of the period 2000-2006 was the introduction of the new networking programmes INTERACT (technical umbrella and knowledge repository for Interreg) and ESPON (data and tools on European territorial development), which were continued in the period 2007-2013. Another important novelty that further strengthened territorial cooperation was the adoption of the new EC-regulation on "European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation" (EGTC) in 2006. As a reaction to the very heterogeneous and often also weak legal framework conditions for territorial cooperation which previously existed throughout the EU, this regulation now provides EU-internal territorial cooperation with a more solid legal basis.⁵

For the period 2014-2020, the EU's Cohesion Policy and also territorial cooperation under Interreg was again considerably reshaped (**see: section 2.3**) in order to contribute to a successful delivery of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

2.2. Interreg in the period 1990-2013: funding priorities, main achievements and the added value of territorial cooperation

The available quantitative evidence from previous ex-post evaluations of Interreg⁶ and from INTERACT⁷ indicates that nearly 33,000 territorial cooperation projects were realised in the past 25 years with a total Community support of slightly more than EUR 20.6 billion.⁸ Most projects were supported under cross-border cooperation (i.e. 28,300), while the others were supported under transnational cooperation (i.e. 3,280) and interregional cooperation (i.e. 1,340).

The following sub-sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.3 provide a summary overview on funding priorities and main achievements of the three Interreg cooperation strands. This overview can, for obvious reasons, only focus on some larger thematic fields⁹ and therefore does not consider a number of other important themes which were addressed by the supported cooperation programmes and

⁵ The EC-Regulation 1082/2006 facilitates the establishing of structures with a legal personality based on Community law which promote cross-border, transnational and/or interregional cooperation, with the exclusive aim of strengthening economic and social cohesion.

⁶ At date, ex-post evaluations exist only for the period 1999-1994 (European Commission, DG Regio, 2003) and the period 2000-2006 (European Commission, DG Regio, 2010). For the period 2007-2013, however, more substantial information on cooperation achievements is not yet available (i.e. only the inception report was recently published).

⁷ Figures from the INTERACT database "KEEP" for the periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013. See: <http://www.keep.eu/keep/data-programme/>

⁸ This sum covers the total Community support dedicated to Interreg in the period 1990-2013 (i.e. EUR 20.4 billion, see figure 1 of this document) and also Community support dedicated to the early interregional cooperation schemes which were implemented between 1990 and 1999 outside the context of Interreg. The Community contribution to these schemes were: EEP/PACTE: 39 MECU; RECITE I: 48 MECU; RECITE II: 110 MECU; ECOS-Ouverture I: 40 MECU; ECOS-Ouverture II: 24 MECU.

⁹ i.e. "accessibility and sustainable mobility"; "economic development, R&D/innovation and labour market integration"; "environment, resources management and climate change".

projects. Finally, sub-section 2.2.4 takes a look at the three main dimensions of the added value generated by territorial cooperation over the 25 years.

2.2.1. Cross-border cooperation

After a specific pilot programme for border regions which funded 14 cross-border pilot projects at various internal and external borders of the Community (1988/1989), multi-annual support for cross-border cooperation was introduced in 1990 through the Interreg Community Initiative.

While the **31 Interreg programmes** supported a little more than 2,500 cross-border projects in the first funding period 1990-1993, the total number of supported projects increased to more than 10,000 under the **58 Interreg IIA programmes** of the second funding period (1994-1999). During this decade, much of the ERDF support for cross-border cooperation went into projects which established the basic conditions for mutual cooperation and improved the living conditions of people in border areas. Cross-border cooperation was implemented in the following two funding periods through **64 Interreg IIIA programmes (2000-2006) and 55 Interreg IVA programmes (2007-2013)**. These programmes have respectively supported a total of 8,664 and 7,190¹⁰ projects. Although the thematic scope of the selected programme interventions remained rather broad in both periods, clear shifts in the funding allocation to some strategic cross-border development themes can be observed.

Accessibility and sustainable mobility

Transport and communication measures accounted for around 45% of the total ERDF-support under **Interreg I** and some programmes covering Objective 1 regions had even spent more than 60% of their total ERDF-support on such interventions. This strong focus on improving border-regional and cross-border transport systems continued under **Interreg IIA**, but mostly under the 39 programmes where a day-to-day contact was often not feasible due to geographical obstacles or where a remote location coupled to insufficient transport communication links led to a high degree of isolation. These 39 programmes have alone spent around 95% of the total Interreg IIA support which was dedicated to transport and communication measures. Transport and communication measures helped in both funding periods to eliminate missing links and especially the road infrastructure investments allowed to increase the country-internal and cross-border accessibility of border regions or improved the convenience for cross-border travel.

In the following **Interreg IIIA and Interreg IVA** funding periods, the share of transport and communication measures in the total ERDF-support decreased from around 17% (2000-2006) to around 13% (2007-2013). While funding for such measures was very low in both periods under most Interreg programmes at borders between “old” Member States (except the Greece-Italy border programme of 2000-2006), high shares of support especially for transport infrastructure investments still existed under programmes covering borders between “old” and “new” Member States (i.e. around 21% in each period). This focus is understandable if one considers the still significant infrastructure needs along these borders and the fact that other lagging EU15 border regions took nearby 10 years to eliminate their gaps before funding for such measures started to reduce.

¹⁰ This figure does not include the 924 projects supported under the 12 ENPI cross-border programmes and the 764 projects supported under the 8 IPA cross-border programmes.

Economic development, R&D/innovation and labour market integration

Promoting the socio-economic development of border-regions and cross-border areas is an important issue under all Stand-A programmes. This is delivered through a variety of measures in different fields such as an enhancement of cross-border business interactions and R&D cooperation, a stimulation of cross-border tourism (e.g. joint promotion activities; small-scale infrastructures etc.) and a development and further integration of cross-border labour markets (e.g. joint qualification/training measures, elimination of mobility obstacles for workers etc.).

The 31 **Interreg I programmes** have spent 28% of their total ERDF-support on enterprise- and tourism-related measures, while training and labour market actions or other social measures accounted for another 11% of their total ERDF-support. Also under **Interreg IIA**, a substantial share of the total ERDF-support went to interventions which developed the economic fabric and a cross-border labour market in the cooperation areas. However, the most significant funding shares dedicated to such measures were observed under the 44 Interreg IIA programmes which covered cross-border areas characterised either by a low degree of isolation (i.e. 52% of the total support)¹¹ or a medium degree of isolation (i.e. 43% of the total support).¹²

The 64 **Interreg IIIA programmes** allocated 28% of their total ERDF-support to measures for developing the business spirit and SMEs, tourism and local development or employment initiatives. A further 9% of their ERDF-support was used for promoting cross-border labour market integration and social inclusion. Instead, cross-border cooperation in the field of R&D/innovation was in overall terms still rather limited under the Strand-A programmes (i.e. with around 1.3% of their total ERDF support). More substantial direct effects occurred only in programme areas which already disposed of a certain “cross-border critical mass” in terms of R&D/innovation (e.g. Øresund region, the Upper Rhine Area, Euregios along borders between Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, the Lake Constance Area) or which attempted to create such a critical mass by combining substantial infrastructure investments with soft cooperation activities (e.g. Ireland-Northern Ireland).¹³

Also the 55 **Interreg IVA programmes** have allocated a substantial share of their funding to measures which aimed to developing the border-regional and cross-border economy. Evidence from the ex-post evaluation of ETC shows, however, that cross-border cooperation on R&D and innovation received greater attention in the period 2007-2013: the investments of all programmes represented around 20% of their total ERDF-support and some of the programmes even allocated close to 50% or more of their funding to this theme (i.e. Nord Interreg and Ireland-Wales with respectively 53%; Germany-Netherlands with 47%; Öresund-Kattegatt-Skagerrak with close to 45%; Maas-Rijn with 43%). But also a number of other cross-border programmes dedicated to this theme between 40% and 25% of their total budget (i.e. Fehmarnbelt-region, Denmark-Germany, Botnia Atlantica, Upper Rhine, Spain-Portugal, Amazonia, France-UK, Ireland-Scotland, Hungary-Romania, Slovenia-Austria, France-Wallonia-Flanders and Spain-France).¹⁴ In addition, close to 7% of the total ERDF-funding were allocated to cross-border interventions which increased the adaptability of workers and firms and which improved human capital and the access to employment or the social inclusion of less-favoured

¹¹ Mostly covering internal land EU-borders and some external EU-borders: NL-BE, DE-NL, DE-NL-BE, DK-DE, DE-AT, DE-LU, DE-FR, FR-BE, FR-DE-CH, DE-AT-CH-LI.

¹² Mostly covering internal land and maritime EU-borders and external EU-borders: IE-UK; ES-Morocco; UK-Morocco; ES-PT; ES-FR; FR-IT; FR-UK; FR-IT; FR-CH; IT-CH; IT-AT; DK-SE; FI-SE-NO; FI-SE; DK-Baltic; SE-NO; FI-EE; SE-NO.

¹³ European Commission, DG Regio (2010), pp.39, 46-49

¹⁴ ADE (2015), p.3

persons. Around 69% of the ERDF-support for these interventions was mobilised by only 17 Interreg IVA programmes which, interestingly, often covered maritime and mountainous or rural areas where the significance of cross-border labour market commuting was usually rather low.¹⁵

Environment, resources management and climate change

An improvement of the environmental situation in cross-border areas received already under the first two generations of Interreg increasing attention, as the total ERDF-support dedicated to such measures rose from 10% under **Interreg I** to around 15% under **Interreg IIA**. These measures improved the degree of freshwater supply or increased the treatment capacity for wastewater and solid waste, helped to establish cross-border nature parks and marine reserves or improved the scope and quality of a joint surveillance and monitoring of different environmental and natural risks (e.g. air pollution, water quality, forest fires, flooding etc.).

In the following Interreg funding periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013, funding shares for environmental and climate change related interventions show a rising trend. The 64 **Interreg IIIA programmes** allocated around 25% of the total ERDF-support to measures improving the environment and the quality of life and more than half of the programmes have made this theme their first, second or third most important priority. The share of environment-related support was also clearly higher under Interreg IIIA programmes involving “old” and “new” Member States (app. 31%) than under programmes involving only “old” Member States (app. 24%). The 55 **Interreg IVA programmes** dedicated close to 29%¹⁶ of their ERDF-support to measures in the field of environment, climate change and energy efficiency. The latter two areas of intervention accounted for around 11% of the total ERDF-support, but strong differences existed in terms of focus between EU12 Member States (i.e. energy efficiency, co-generation, energy management) and EU15 Member States (i.e. mitigation and adaptation to climate change).¹⁷

2.2.2. Transnational cooperation

Community support for transnational cooperation started in 1997 with the introduction of a new C-Strand under the Interreg II Community Initiative.¹⁸

Interreg IIC was implemented in the period 1997-1999 through three different types of programmes: seven programmes on transnational cooperation in the field of spatial planning¹⁹, two cross-country flood prevention programmes (i.e. “IRMA” for the Meuse-Rhine area involving FR, BE, LU, DE, NL and CH; France-Italy) and four drought mitigation programmes covering individual Mediterranean countries (i.e. Portugal, Spain, Italy and Greece).

¹⁵ INTERACT (2015c), pp.38-39

¹⁶ Environmental interventions in a narrow sense indeed represent “only” 19% of the total ERDF-funding, but the higher share of 29% is obtained if also environmental measures under the interventions fields tourism, culture and spatial planning are considered (e.g. promotion of natural assets; protection & development of natural heritage; protection & preservation of the cultural heritage; integrated projects for urban and rural regeneration).

¹⁷ INTERACT (2015b), pp.141-142

¹⁸ Beside the A-Strand on cross-border cooperation, Interreg II also comprised a B-Strand which promoted the development and integration of natural gas and electricity networks. This was expected to address wider challenges which resulted from the Single Market’s integration impulses in these sectors. Three Interreg IIB programmes were implemented in the period 1994-1999 (i.e. Spain/Portugal, Greece, Greece/Italy).

¹⁹ i.e. the programmes “Western Mediterranean and Latin Alps”, “South-West Europe”, “Atlantic Area”, “North West Metropolitan Area” (NWMA), “North Sea Region” (NSR), “Baltic Sea Region” (BSR) and “Central European, Adriatic, Danubian, South-Eastern European Space” (CADSES).

- A particular feature of the first generation of Interreg IIC programmes was that the bulk of the total ERDF-support went to climate change mitigation relevant water management investments (app. 71%), which were realised under the two cross-country flood prevention programmes and the four drought mitigation programmes.
- The seven Interreg IIC programmes promoting transnational cooperation on spatial planning supported mostly projects in the field of “accessibility and sustainable mobility” (23% of their ERDF-funding) and “environment and climate change” (around 20% of their ERDF-funding). These early projects produced most often soft cooperation outcomes (e.g. knowledge bases, studies and long-term transnational forecasts, policy recommendations and improvement of planning practices etc.), but in some cases also experimental projects or physical investments especially in the field of environment and water management were realised.²⁰

Furthermore, **also four smaller Pilot Action Programmes were supported under ERDF Article 10** which promoted - similar to the Interreg IIC programmes - transnational cooperation on spatial planning in other larger areas.²¹ The early transnational cooperation programmes under Interreg IIC and Article 10 have altogether supported close to 800 projects.

Transnational cooperation was continued during the two **funding periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013** as “Strand B” of Interreg. While Interreg IIIB led to a consolidation and further widening of the early cooperation experience²², changes under Interreg IVB mainly involved a re-shaping of certain transnational programme areas.²³ The 13 transnational programmes under each period have supported respectively 1,212 projects (2000-2006) and 1,264 projects (2007-2013).

Environment, resources management and climate change

Interreg IIIB programmes dedicated 42% of their total ERDF support to a promotion of the environment and a good management of cultural and natural resources, including in particular also a management of water resources. The range of issues addressed was very wide, especially under transnational programmes involving a terrestrial and maritime dimension. The development and application of environmental management tools or monitoring systems and the elaboration of planning schemes, studies and databases or the realisation of awareness raising campaigns generated changes in policy making or in the behaviour of individuals, which contributed to a sustainable development of the concerned cooperation areas. Interreg IIIB projects also contributed to making the implementation of EU-wide environmental legislation more effective at regional and local levels and sometimes even achieved wide-ranging direct effects in the field of water-resource management and flooding prevention by combining soft cooperation with physical investments (esp. North West Europe).²⁴

Also the **Interreg IVB programmes** dedicated a high proportion of their total ERDF-support to interventions in the fields of “environment” and “climate change” (around 35%). This share is even higher if also environmental interventions from other priority themes such as tourism,

²⁰ INTERACT (2015b), pp.127-128

²¹ i.e. Northern Periphery, Eastern Alps, the Central and Eastern Mediterranean space “Archimed” and Mediterranean Gateway.

²² A total of 13 Interreg IIIB programme areas were established, partly by continuing or re-shaping the eleven former Interreg IIC/Article 10 programme areas and by adding three new cooperation areas (i.e. Caribbean; Indian Ocean; Madeira-Açores-Canarias), and the issues of flooding prevention and drought mitigation were integrated as potential fields of intervention under the new transnational programmes.

²³ The former Interreg IIIB programme areas “CADSES” and “ARCHIMED” were dissolved and the two new transnational cooperation areas “Central Europe” and “South East Europe” were created.

²⁴ European Commission, DG Regio (2010), pp.82, 84-87

culture and urban/rural development are considered (43%).²⁵ The most interesting feature is, however, that interventions in the fields of climate change adaptation and mitigation received alone more than one fourth of the total financial resources for transnational cooperation in the period 2007-2013 (around 26%).²⁶

Accessibility and sustainable mobility

Interreg IIIB programmes allocated around 21% of their ERDF-support to the priority topic “development of efficient and sustainable transport systems and an access to the information society”. Evidence from several programmes shows that transport-projects helped to improve the internal and external accessibility of transnational areas (e.g. by creating new or enhancing existing transport links, esp. in the field of maritime transport), stimulated modal shift towards more sustainable transport modes (i.e. freight and passenger transport), developed transnational solutions for seamless logistics operations and more fluid traffic flows on major EU transport corridors or improved maritime safety in European Seas.²⁷

The thirteen **Interreg IVB programmes** dedicated around 13% of their total ERDF-support to the themes “accessibility and sustainable mobility”. This corresponds to the thematic funding share of cross-border programmes in the period 2007-2013, but a clear difference is that interventions promoting sustainable mobility received a comparatively higher attention under transnational cooperation (i.e. with a funding share close to 9%). Within this context, intelligent transport systems (2.8%) and multimodal transport (2.7%) were clearly the most important transnational interventions. Cooperation areas with dense traffic flows particularly emphasised interventions promoting sustainable mobility (i.e. with funding shares > 10% in North Sea Region, Central Europe, North West Europe and Alpine Space), while programme areas involving a larger number of EU12 Member States or peripheral EU15 Member States have put a stronger focus on improving their internal and external accessibility (i.e. Central Europe, South East Europe, Mediterranean).²⁸

Economic development, R&D/innovation and labour market integration

Interreg IIIB programmes addressed these issues mostly under their priorities promoting cooperation between cities or urban and rural areas which pursued as their main objective to achieve a polycentric, balanced and also sustainable development of transnational areas. The wide range of different activities which were realised under such priorities received in general 29% of the total ERDF-support. However, more precise figures for the funding shares allocated to economic development, R&D/innovation and labour market integration do not exist. Still, the available evaluation evidence suggests that cooperation on these themes was mostly realised under Interreg IIIB programmes which covered the continental core areas of the EU (e.g. North West Europe, North Sea, Baltic Sea, Alpine Space, CADSES). Here, a larger number of projects supporting transnational business cooperation and SME-development or inwards investment promotion and cooperation on R&D/innovation were carried out.²⁹ A few programmes also

²⁵ e.g. promotion of natural assets; protection & development of natural heritage; protection & preservation of the cultural heritage; integrated projects for urban and rural regeneration.

²⁶ INTERACT (2015b), pp.144-146

²⁷ European Commission, DG Regio (2010), pp.82, 87-88

²⁸ INTERACT (2015b), pp.146-147

²⁹ European Commission, DG Regio (2010), pp.82, 88-90

supported transnational labour market measures, mostly for improving workforce flexibility and educational or vocational training.³⁰

First evidence from the ex-post evaluation of ETC in the period 2007-2013³¹ shows that transnational cooperation on R&D and innovation now received greater attention, especially in cooperation areas which previously were not very active in this field. The 13 **Interreg IVB programmes** dedicated together 26% of their total ERDF-support to cooperation on R&D and innovation. Five programmes concentrated more than one quarter of their total support on this theme,³² while the eight other programmes show levels of support that are clearly lower.³³ Also transnational cooperation on labour market issues received greater attention in the period 2007-2013. The 13 programmes allocated 4% of their total ERDF-support to labour market interventions and six of these programmes show above-average shares of ERDF-support.³⁴ In absolute terms, however, only three programmes account together for 68% of the total ERDF-support dedicated to such interventions (i.e. South East Europe, Central Europe, Baltic Sea Region).³⁵

2.2.3. Interregional cooperation

Interregional cooperation was already supported in the **period 1989-1999** through various ERDF-pilot schemes which did not yet form part of the Interreg I and II Community Initiatives. These early schemes have introduced a practice of exchanges of experience between territorial authorities in Europe (e.g. “Exchange of Experience Programme” and its continuation “PACTE” between 1989 and 1995) and also allowed cities and regions to find common solutions to shared socio-economic problems and challenges resulting from the Single Market or a further globalisation of the economy (i.e. RECITE I & II between 1990 and 1999) and the changes in Central and Eastern Europe (i.e. ECOS-Ouverture I & II between 1990 and 1999). Altogether, these different schemes have supported a total of 867 interregional cooperation projects between 1989 and 1999.³⁶ A noteworthy legacy of this early cooperation phase is that several project partnerships have created permanent links among them and still operate today as well-known European issue networks or European-wide associations (e.g. POLIS, ERNACT, Quartiers-en-Crise, EURADA, EUROCITIES).

With the third funding **period 2000-2006**, interregional cooperation became a proper stand of Interreg. The new Interreg IIIC programmes covered four larger zones of the EU (i.e. West, East, North and South) and supported 270 cooperation projects which involved a total of 2,650 partners. This has catalysed the development of an interregional cooperation culture to an unprecedented proportion, because a mapping of project partnerships shows that virtually every region in the EU was involved in Strand C cooperation to some extent. The most popular themes addressed by Interreg IIIC projects were “Environment, risk prevention, energy and natural resources” and “Regional planning, territorial regeneration and urban Development”,

³⁰ INTERACT (2015c), p.81

³¹ ADE (2015), p.5

³² i.e. South West Europe (48%), Caribbean (42%), Atlantic Area (38%), Madeira-Acores-Canaries (32%), Alpine Space (27%).

³³ i.e. North West Europe (16%), North Sea (16%), Northern Periphery (17%), South East Europe (17%), Indian Ocean (18%), Baltic Sea (18%), Central Europe (20%).

³⁴ i.e. Indian Ocean with 11.4%; South East Europe with 7.4%; Atlantic Area with 6.4%; Central Europe with 6%; Baltic Sea Region with 5.9%; Northern Periphery with 5.8%

³⁵ INTERACT (2015c), pp.82-84

³⁶ i.e. EEP/PACTE (436 projects between 1989 and 1995); RECITE I (36 projects between 1990 and 1995); RECITE II (55 projects between 1996 and 1999); ECOS-Ouverture I & II (340 projects between 1990-1999).

with each accounting for 21% of the approved operations. These were followed by “Culture, heritage and tourism” (15%) and three themes closely connected to the Lisbon Agenda (i.e. in total 33% for “SME development and entrepreneurship”, “Research, technology and innovation” and “Information society and e-government”). Interreg IIC projects have generated real impacts in the involved project partner areas, mainly through improving the effectiveness of regional development policies and instruments by way of information exchange and a sharing of good practices. By this, Interreg IIC had also a certain although unquantifiable positive impact on enhancing economic and social cohesion of the EU.³⁷

A single and EU-wide Interreg IVC programme was established for the **period 2007-2013**, which has supported 204 cooperation projects that involved a total of 2,276 partners: 60% of these projects addressed sub-themes relating to the Priority 1 theme “innovation & the knowledge economy”, while the other 40% focussed on sub-themes relating to the Priority 2 theme “environment & risk prevention”. A study which analysed the interregional exchange of experience processes under 184 “Regional Initiative Projects” shows that significant learning processes have taken place at different levels (i.e. individual & group learning within projects; organisational learning & policy-learning) and that a greater awareness and knowledge as well as improved skills or capacities of the directly involved staff and organisations has led to substantial policy changes in the concerned cities and regions.³⁸ Towards the end of the programme, a “Thematic Interreg IVC Capitalisation Initiative” was realised. It systematically collected and analysed the results of all projects in relation to 12 policy fields and widely disseminated this knowledge and the identified good practices for the benefit of local and regional authorities and other stakeholders throughout Europe.³⁹

2.2.4. The European added value of territorial cooperation

Interreg was and still is the only EU-level instrument which provides substantial and multi-annual funding to European territorial cooperation. This funding allowed realising many thousands of projects and also many strategic initiatives which would in most cases not have been implemented otherwise, at least with respect to the same timing, scope and depth.

According to the view of DG Regio, **the various forms of territorial cooperation have a clear European added value:** they help to ensure that borders are not barriers, that Europeans are brought closer together, that common problems are solved, that a sharing of ideas and assets is facilitated and that strategic work towards common goals is encouraged.⁴⁰ This rather general statement on the European added value can be made more concrete if a closer look is taken at four different dimensions.⁴¹

Socio-economic added value

Cross-border and transnational programmes have initiated additional cooperative socio-economic development processes in smaller and larger contiguous areas stretching across the political borders of European countries, while interregional cooperation between regional and

³⁷ European Commission, DG Regio (2010), pp.118-126

³⁸ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013)

³⁹ For further details, see: <http://www.interreg4c.eu/capitalisation/>

⁴⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/

⁴¹ The following is elaborated on ground of evidence from the ex-post evaluation of Interreg III, which is still of actuality at date. See: European Commission, DG Regio (2010), pp. 50-51, 72-75, 107-110, 162-163

local authorities of Europe has enhanced economic and social development in individual cities and regions through an improvement of their public policies.

Cross-border programmes improved the accessibility of border regions and promoted cross-border sustainable mobility, improved market transparency across borders, initiated cooperation between SMEs and in the fields of R&D/innovation or tourism development, facilitated the cross-border mobility of workers and helped to develop and integrate border-regional labour markets. Especially the more experienced and mature cross-border programmes have frequently also started experimental and innovative actions which tackle issues of high relevance for furthering social integration and improving the daily life of citizens (e.g. cross-border healthcare, cross-border emergency services and police cooperation).

Transnational and interregional programmes stimulated socio-economic development most often less directly, but their soft outcomes did achieve important improvements and changes. These resulted from an establishment of cooperation networks between SMEs or actors and institutions in the field of R&D and innovation as well as from an introduction of new ideas and approaches which improved local and regional development or planning policies, mainly through exchanges of experience and a transfer of good practices.

A good “indicator” which may demonstrate the existence of such a socio-economic added value is that public funding for territorial cooperation was also able to mobilise private sector funding. The experience from Interreg III shows this mobilisation effect was highest in the case of cross-border cooperation (3.8% of the public expenditure), but clearly lower the cases of transnational cooperation (1%) and interregional cooperation (0.75%).

Added value for sustainable development

Interreg has progressively introduced a new cooperative dimension for promoting sustainable development in Europe because cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation projects have initiated additional joint approaches and solutions which helped to address or tackle environmental and climate change related problems that are transgressing national borders.

The cross-border programmes of Interreg have dedicated a steadily increasing share of their funding to joint actions promoting the quality and protection of the environment or to measures addressing climate change related challenges and energy efficiency. The three generations of transnational programmes have addressed a wide range of environmental and climate change related issues with both a terrestrial and maritime dimension, by developing and applying joint management tools and monitoring systems or by elaborating issue-focussed planning schemes and other support tools for joint policy making. Also under interregional cooperation, EU-wide projects involving regions or local authorities have strongly promoted policy-learning and a transfer of good practices in fields such as environmental and natural resources management or climate change mitigation and an adaptation to climate change risks.

Socio-cultural added value

Interreg helped to establish an increasingly dense inter-organisational and inter-personal cooperation culture in Europe and the mutual working relations at programme- and project level have favoured a better cross-sector and inter-cultural understanding.

The many thousands of cross-border, transnational and interregional projects which were supported since 1990 have significantly increased the level of Europeanisation and internationalisation within various types of organisations. In order to get an impression about the level of magnitude, one can quote some figures from the Interreg III: only the projects supported in period 2000-2006 have directly mobilised 1 million individuals which came from around 68,000 different organisations throughout Europe (i.e. public institutions at different levels of government; semi-public or private and civil society organisations from various sectors of activity).

Through territorial cooperation, also a considerable stock of social capital was built up in Europe which would not exist without Interreg. Programme and project-level cooperation have initiated learning processes at different levels (i.e. individual, organisational, systems-wide etc.) which improved personal skills and organisational capacities on a wide range of issues or policies. During and also after the lifetime of projects or programmes, the new knowledge acquired through cooperation was used for changing organisational contexts or procedures and for improving policy process and instruments. This happened not only within the geographically focused context of cross-border and transnational cooperation areas, but also across the entire EU through interregional cooperation.

This wide-ranging cooperation culture established through Interreg also enhanced a better understanding between different cultures and communities in Europe, which in the medium- and long-term will foster the European integration process from a bottom-up perspective. An aspect worth to be highlighted in this context is that especially cross-border cooperation has often led to a strong mobilisation of the wider civil society and to a direct involvement of individual citizens. Since the very beginning of Interreg, cross-border cooperation achieved this through supporting social integration projects or micro-projects which focus on issues of day-to-day relevance in the concerned programme areas (i.e. cross-border sports, culture and school exchanges). These projects intensified cross-border people-to-people relations at grassroots-level and helped to remove existing prejudices and furthered inter-cultural understanding and learning at the level of individuals.

Political-institutional added value

Interreg has significantly widened and intensified political and administrative exchange relations in many policy fields across Europe, stimulated the Europeanisation of public administrations at all levels and enhanced a practice of cooperative self-organisation between decentralised government levels from different countries.

Community support for interregional cooperation has strongly contributed to further intensify and deepen cross-country administrative relations already in the 1990s and in particular since the year 2000, when the Interreg C-Strand started to promote more structured exchange of experience processes and good practice transfers between regional and local authorities in Europe. Interreg support to cross-border and transnational cooperation has helped to progressively built up a joint and also durable “problem-solving capacity” in the concerned cooperation areas, which has become a key feature of the wider practice of cooperative self-organisation of decentralised government levels in Europe.

- An important element of the **cross-border problem-solving capacity** is a permanent cross-border cooperation structure, which exist today in many variants along nearby all EU-borders (e.g. Euregios or Euroregions, Eurodistricts, Working Communities etc.).

Interreg helped to further develop and strengthen such structures (esp. under more experienced & mature programmes, by directly involving them into the management and implementation process) and also motivated the establishment of new structures in areas where a permanent and multi-thematic approach to cooperation did not yet exist. Other elements which add further density to this joint problem-solving capacity are the many durable cross-border networks and initiatives, focussing either on specific themes or sub-areas (e.g. cross-border nature parks, observatories, platforms, service offices providing information & advice on cross-border issues etc.). These networks and initiatives involve a wide range of public, semi-public, private and civil society actors from both sides of a border and emerged most often from projects supported by Interreg. Their activities allow alleviating a variety of still persisting border obstacles and help to exploit common opportunities for territorial development. Through their continuing joint efforts, lasting improvements are generated which cannot be achieved by only time-limited cooperation activities.

- A **transnational problem-solving capacity** is primarily established through networks and strategic initiatives which have become durable or self-sustaining over time. They focus on policy fields that require transnational action to meet problems efficiently (i.e. solutions will not emerge from purely national actions) or promote continuous cooperation across larger sub-areas and along major transport corridors which are relevant for the integration of the entire transnational area. Interreg support was in most cases the main driver which helped to establish such networks and initiatives that go beyond domestic policies for territorial development and planning. But also the establishment of other types of permanent vertical and horizontal partnerships adds further density to this joint problem-solving capacity (e.g. cross-programme cooperation on maritime safety in the context of Interreg IIIB; ongoing transnational spatial visioning processes⁴²). However, the overall scope and quality of this transnational problem-solving capacity is still considerably different across the various cooperation areas.

Such a progressive integration of administrative processes in Europe is important within the multi-level governance design of the EU's Cohesion Policy, but also of high relevance for the new and complex concept of "territorial governance". This concept brings together the approaches of place-based policies and multi-level governance and is considered important for a targeted and result-oriented implementation of the EU's Cohesion Policy in the light of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 (TA 2020) and the Urban Agenda.⁴³

2.3. Interreg in the period 2014-2020: thematic intervention focus and the challenges of result-oriented territorial cooperation

For the fifth programming period of the EU's Cohesion Policy (2014-2020), Interreg was significantly reshaped in order to support the harmonious development of the Union's territory at different levels and to contribute more effectively to deliver the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Interreg now has a total ERDF budget of EUR 10.1 billion, which is ten times higher than was the Community support allocated to the first

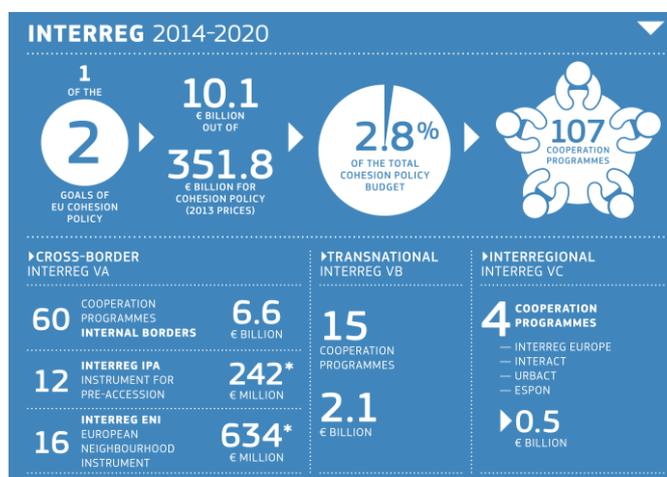
⁴² A good example is the on-going and semi-institutionalised inter-governmental spatial visioning process in the Baltic Sea Region (VASAB - Vision and strategies around the Baltic Sea), which started already in the early 1990s.

⁴³ See on this in general: European Parliament (2015)

generation of Interreg programmes (1990-1993). This funding from the ERDF will be implemented through 107 cooperation programmes (see: figure 2):⁴⁴

- 60 cross-border Interreg VA programmes, which receive an ERDF-contribution of EUR 6.6 billion to promote an integrated regional development between neighbouring land and maritime border regions at the 38 internal EU-borders;
- 28 programmes at the external EU-borders, which are supported by the Instrument for Pre-Accession (i.e. the 12 IPA cross-border programmes)

Figure 2: Interreg V (2014-2020) at a glance



(*) ERDF-contribution

Source: European Commission, DG Regio (2014c), p.16

and the European Neighborhood Instrument (i.e. the 16 ENI cross-border programmes) and receive an ERDF-contribution of EUR 876 million for the participating EU Member States;

- 15 transnational Interreg VB programmes covering larger cooperation areas in Europe, which receive an ERDF-contribution of EUR 2.1 billion to achieve a higher degree of territorial integration of those larger transnational territories;
- the interregional cooperation programme “INTERREG EUROPE” and the 3 networking programmes Urbact III, Interact III and ESPON2020 which cover all 28 EU Member States and receive a total ERDF-contribution of EUR 500 million.

Interreg programmes in the period 2014-2020 have to address the 11 Thematic Objectives (TOs) which are common for the ESI-Funds (see: box 1) and focus on a limited number of related Investment Priorities (IPs). The latter are set out in the ERDF- and ETC-regulations⁴⁵ and define more closely the intervention focus under each TO. However, at least 80% of a cooperation programme’s budget has to be concentrated on a maximum of 4 TOs. This shall direct ERDF-support more effectively towards the most relevant territorial development needs and cooperation potentials and help with achieving a clear contribution to deliver the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Box 1: Thematic Objectives (TOs) as defined by Article 9 of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)

- TO 1:** strengthening research, technological development and innovation;
- TO 2:** enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT;
- TO 3:** enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, of the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and of the fishery and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF);
- TO 4:** supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors;

⁴⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/

⁴⁵ see: Article 5 of the ERDF-Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 and Article 7 of the ETC-Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

TO 5: promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management;
TO 6: preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency;
TO 7: promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures;
TO 8: promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility;
TO 9: promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination;
TO 10: investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning;
TO 11: enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration.

A recent study of INTERACT reviewed the eleven TOs in order to identify topics under the related IPs which are most relevant for cross-border and transnational cooperation.⁴⁶ A prioritisation of cooperation potentials across the IPs was achieved by applying a multi-criteria approach⁴⁷ and the final result of this exercise suggests the following (**see: annex 2**):

- **Cross-border cooperation potentials** tend to be most significant under TO 8, TO 4 and TO 6 (i.e. more than 70% of the related IPs have a very high priority level) as well as under TO 10 (with no related IPs). Significant potentials also exist under TO 5 and TO 1 (i.e. 50% of the related IPs have a very high priority level).
- **Transnational cooperation potentials** tend to be most significant under TO 4 and TO 8 (i.e. with respectively more than 70% and 57% of the related IPs having a very high priority level). Significant potentials also exist under TO 6, TO 5 and TO 1 (i.e. 50% of the related IPs have a very high priority level).
- **Transnational cooperation potentials are more variable across the TOs and IPs** (i.e. ranging from “low”, “medium”, “high” to “very high”) **than cross-border cooperation potentials**. This difference originates from the fact that proximity-based cross-border cooperation is able to address a wider range of thematic needs/problems or joint development potentials and that transnational cooperation can sometimes only make a comparatively smaller contribution to enhance core dimensions of territorial cohesion (i.e. stronger territorial integration, improved territorial policy coordination, better territorial governance).

Thematic intervention focus of Interreg V programmes

Although information on the thematic intervention focus of the new Interreg V programmes is still provisional, some general features can be derived from internal assessments which were realised by DG Regio and INTERACT.

Provisional budget figures from the draft Interreg V programmes⁴⁸ show that **the total ERDF-support** for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation **addresses ten out of the eleven TOs** (i.e. support for cooperation on TO 2 - enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT - is marginal). **Close to 70%** of the total ERDF-support **is dedicated to cooperation on only four TOs** (TO 6, TO 1, TO 7, TO 11), **while the other 30% is dedicated to cooperation on the remaining six TOs** (i.e. TO 3, TO 4, TO 5, TO 8, TO 9, TO 10).

⁴⁶ INTERACT (2015a)

⁴⁷ The considered criteria were (1) the cross-border or transnational dimension of the general territorial challenges, needs and potentials addressed by a given IP-topic, (2) the basic modes of intervention that should be adopted for achieving visible change and lasting improvements, (3) the types of stakeholders which should be involved in cooperation, (4) the likely contribution of future cooperation results to deliver on the six headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy and (5) the likely contribution of future cooperation results to enhance territorial cohesion in the EU.

⁴⁸ In July 2014, DG Regio assessed the TO-allocation of the planned ERDF-support on ground of the provisional budget figures which were indicated in the received draft cross-border, transnational and interregional Interreg V programmes (i.e. 2 programmes were still missing; the IPA and ENI cross-border programmes were not considered).

- Around 28% of the total ERDF-contribution supports cooperation on preserving and protecting the environment and on promoting resource efficiency (TO 6) and nearby 21% is dedicated to cooperation on strengthening research, technological development and innovation (TO 1).
- Around 20% of the total ERDF-contribution supports cooperation on promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures (TO 7) and on enhancing institutional capacity (TO 11), with shares of around 10% dedicated to each of these TOs.
- Five other TOs receive together 29% of the total ERDF-contribution, with individual shares ranging between 4.8% and 6.8%. This includes cooperation for enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs (TO 3: 6.1%), for supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy (TO 4: 6.8%), for promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management (TO 5: 4.8%), for promoting sustainable and quality employment and labour mobility (TO 8: 5.2%) and for promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination (TO 9: 6.2%).
- Cooperation on education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning (TO 10) receives with 2% of the ERDF-contribution the lowest share.

A more precise picture of the **intervention focus adopted by the 37 already approved cross-border and transnational Interreg V programmes** can be obtained, if a closer look is taken at the number of specific objectives (SOs) which are formulated in relation to the various IPs selected.⁴⁹

- It appears from the total number of IPs addressed by SOs of the 37 already approved programmes that cross-border cooperation focuses on a much wider range of IPs than transnational cooperation. This also tends to confirm the theoretical findings of the INTERACT-assessment of cooperation potentials under the various IPs (**see above**).
- The strategies of the 30 approved **cross-border programmes** focus on measures enhancing environmental and natural resources management (i.e. 29 SOs relating to IP 6c & 19 SOs relating to IP 6d) and promoting smart growth (i.e. 27 SOs relating to IP 1b & 16 SOs relating to IP 1a), while giving also considerable attention to measures enhancing labour market integration (i.e. 11 SOs relating to ETC-IP 8e; 12 SOs relating to TO 10 or to the ETC-IPs 10a & 10b). Other strong elements in many programme strategies are measures for enhancing sustainable transport (i.e. 17 SOs relating to IP 7c), for improving legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions (i.e. 17 SOs relating to IP 11a) and for promoting risks prevention, disaster resilience and disaster management (i.e. 11 SOs relating to IP 5b).
- The strategies of the 7 approved **transnational programmes**⁵⁰ focus on promoting sustainable growth, with a particular emphasis put on measures protecting and preserving the natural and cultural heritage (i.e. 6 SOs relating to IP 6c;) and on measures for climate change mitigation (i.e. 8 SOs relating to IP 4e; 5 SOs relating to IP 4c), and also on promoting smart growth (i.e. 12 SOs relating to IP 1b). Other strong elements in many programme strategies are measures which enhance sustainable transport (i.e. 5 SOs relating to IP 7c) and measures for developing and coordinating EU-

⁴⁹ INTERACT established a database with information on 40 already adopted Interreg V programmes (status as of July 2015: 30 cross-border programmes, 7 transnational programmes and 3 interregional programmes), but it does not include a detailed thematic breakdown of the programme funding at TO and IP level.

⁵⁰ i.e. Alpine Space, Baltic Sea Region, Central Europe, Northern Periphery & Arctic, North West Europe, Mediterranean, South West Europe.

level macro-regional and sea-basin strategies (i.e. 6 SOs relating to IP 11b). With respect to labour market relevant interventions (IPs of TO 8-10), however, no SOs are formulated in the already adopted programmes.

Results-orientation: a challenge for territorial cooperation

The new design of the EU's Cohesion Policy in the period 2014-2020 introduced the concept of "results-orientation" to reverse the previously input-driven logic of Structural Funds programmes. This also led to a fundamental revision of some basic concepts which are relevant for monitoring and evaluation (esp. understanding of results and impacts).⁵¹ These novelties strongly affect Interreg V, because programmes have to become more focussed on results in order to achieve greater change in their respective cooperation areas. This stronger focus on results under territorial cooperation is indeed appropriate, especially if one remembers the criticism voiced in the Barca-Report of 2009⁵² and also some findings of the Interreg III ex-post evaluation.⁵³ However, the new approach also creates a real challenge for Interreg V programmes.

This could already be noticed during the preparation of cross-border, transnational and interregional programmes, because putting into place a stronger results-orientation was not easy for many programming teams. The most important challenges, also explicitly recognised by DG Regio⁵⁴, emerged in relation to

- a definition of specific objectives and associated result indicators, as this required that choices had to be made;
- an establishment of a baseline and targets (qualitative or quantitative) for the chosen result indicators;
- a good understanding and design of the programme's intervention logic;
- a translation of result indicators into selection criteria to ensure that projects will contribute to results;
- making sure that performance frameworks represent the priorities and that milestones and targets are fixed at an appropriate level.

Recent policy research observed for regional ESI-Funds programmes that uncertainties surrounding the concept of results-orientation will challenge the generation, selection and implementation of projects.⁵⁵ This suggests that the clearly more complex project-level cooperation under Interreg V programmes will even be more challenged by the concept of results-orientation. **Interreg programmes need therefore to ensure high-quality project-**

⁵¹ Within this wider concept, the "intended result" is the specific dimension of well-being and progress for people expected to change, which motivates policy action through specifically designed public interventions. The "actual result" is the observable difference between the situation before and after the public intervention, but this change is the sum of the actions co-financed by a public intervention (i.e. impact or effect of an intervention) and the contribution of "other factors". See on this: European Commission, DG Regio (2013b), pp.4-7

⁵² *The assessment of results is still more difficult in the case of the three strands of territorial cooperation – cross-border, transnational, interregional – due to their complexity, to the particular fuzziness of their objectives, and to shortcomings in monitoring systems and data collection. (...) Whatever view is taken of the networking and new regional identities promoted by territorial cooperation, their translation into verifiable results has been limited in the past by several factors. First, a lack of fit between EU and national policies and rules together with insufficient (or absent) Member State commitment to exploiting the programmes – which is also evident in their poor integration with mainstream cohesion policy programmes – has prevented the use of their experimental results. Second, the policy objectives have often lacked clarity: most programmes are broad, leaving room for the pursuit of more vested interests. Finally, the territorial programmes themselves have lacked adequate organisational commitment to translate learning into practical results. (...)* Barca (2009), pp.97-98.

⁵³ i.e. outputs of Interreg programmes could be quantified but not the impact, because policy objectives and programme strategies were not specific or focused enough; indicators and target setting was not aligned with the objectives. See on this: European Commission, DG Regio, (2010) and European Commission, DG Regio (2013a)

⁵⁴ European Commission, DG Regio (2013a)

⁵⁵ EPRC (2014)

level cooperation which also has to become more durable, so that that the outputs of operations can effectively contribute to achieve the desired territorial development results. Findings from previous Interreg evaluations and other research on territorial cooperation⁵⁶ point to three general factors which strongly condition the success of projects in tackling shared problems and in exploiting joint development potentials (**see: box 2**).

Box 2:

General factors conditioning the success of territorial cooperation projects

(1) Suitability of a project's basic intervention mode: Projects must select a cooperation approach which fits the very nature of the addressed needs/problems or development potentials. Some needs/problems or potentials only require a time-limited joint effort in order to be removed or exploited for the common benefit (i.e. one-off cooperation), while others require a continuous joint effort for achieving noticeable improvements or visible change (i.e. durable or self-sustained cooperation).

(2) High cooperation intensity between partners and purpose-oriented composition of the project partnership: Four basic principles need to be observed for establishing genuine and high intensity cooperation (i.e. joint development, implementation, staffing and financing) and the directly involved partners must also dispose of appropriate capacities which allow them to actually influence the issues at stake (e.g. explicit powers, solid knowledge etc.).

(3) Well-designed project delivery mechanisms: Projects have to select actions which are adequate for addressing and tackling the problem or issue at stake so that real improvements can materialise at the end of the funding period. Project actions have to be combined in an intelligent way and also to be planned and delivered within a realistic implementation time schedule which allows achieving the expected outputs and thus also the wider programme results.

However, the observed weaknesses of past project-level cooperation also suggest that the need for further improvements is quite different between the Interreg-Stands. Cross-border cooperation should ensure that projects choose an adequate intervention mode and make more efforts to establish intense cooperation between neighbouring partners, especially at borders where a spirit of genuine cooperation has not yet emerged clearly. Transnational and interregional cooperation, where project partners are usually more distant from each other, should in particular ensure that project partnerships show a purpose-oriented composition and also that project delivery mechanisms are well-designed. An important issue for cross-border and transnational cooperation is to ensure that project-level cooperation becomes more durable or self-sustained after the end of funding, especially in case of topics where noticeable improvements and visible change can only be achieved in a medium or longer term perspective.

Finally, a challenge will also appear when it comes **to evaluating the actual change achieved in the respective programme areas**. Future evaluations cannot just appraise as before what a programme has actually supported, because the new concept of results-orientation requires evaluations to disentangle the contribution of the policy to change (i.e. identification of the impact) from the influence of other factors.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See on this in particular sections 2.2.3, 3.2.3 and 5.2.3 of the Commission's ex-post evaluation of INTERREG III (European Commission, DG Regio, 2010) and other more recent studies (INTERACT, 2015a, pp.5-7; INTERREG IVC Programme, 2013)

⁵⁷ European Commission, DG Regio (2013b), p.6

2.4. Key messages emerging from sections 2.1-2.3

(1) The strategic development objectives of Interreg were continuously adapted during the period 1990-2013 in order to reflect the EU's dynamic evolution and also major changes of Community- or Union-level policies. "Integration" has increasingly become the key word under the strategic objectives for both transnational cooperation (i.e. already since 2000) and cross-border cooperation (i.e. period 2014-2020).

(2) In the past 25 years, around 33,000 territorial cooperation projects were realised with a total Community support of slightly more than EUR 20.6 billion. Most of these projects were supported under cross-border cooperation (i.e. 28,300), while the others were either supported under transnational cooperation (i.e. 3,280) or interregional cooperation (i.e. 1,340).

(3) Between 1990 and 2013, cross-border cooperation under Interreg was active in a broad spectrum of themes which covers nearly all aspects of daily life in EU border areas. However, the overall focus of cross-border interventions has considerably changed over the past 25 years. Programme interventions focussed during the first decade mostly on closing gaps in the availability of basic infrastructures and services (e.g. transport, telecommunication, energy and other public utility networks). Investments in transport infrastructure clearly accounted for the bulk of the total ERDF-support (e.g. 46% in 1990-1993; 29% in 1994-1999), but especially under programmes covering the least developed border regions. This strong focus on transport infrastructures clearly decreased in the following periods and represented only around 13% of the ERDF-support in the period 2007-2013. Conversely, interventions addressing the wider theme environment and climate change have continuously gained in importance between 1990 and 2013, as their funding share rose from around 10% in the period 1990-1993 to around 29% in the period 2007-2013. A significant and stable intervention focus was cooperation in the fields of economic development, R&D / innovation and labour market development, which together represented between 35% and 40% of the total ERDF-support in the different funding periods between 1990 and 2013. Overall, it appears that cross-border support is more and more oriented towards a pattern of sustainable socio-economic development in the meaning of the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy.⁵⁸

(4) EU-funded transnational cooperation was launched in 1997 and has since then clearly supported a sustainable development of the larger zones covered. Especially from 2000 onwards, programme investments for environment and climate change represented more than 40% of the total ERDF-support (i.e. in the periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013), to which also the investments promoting sustainable transport and mobility of several financially larger programmes have to be added (esp. in the areas North West Europe, North Sea Region and Central Europe, partly also in Alpine Space). Investments for transnational economic development and cooperation in the field of R&D and innovation also played an important role, but they were in comparison to the above less significant (i.e. between 25% and 29% of the total ERDF-funding under Interreg IIIB and IVB).

(5) Interregional cooperation between regional and local authorities of Europe was supported by the EU since 1989/1990 and generated since then mostly non-material (or non-physical) but nonetheless important "soft" outcomes. These outcomes helped to improve the effectiveness of regional and local policies and instruments, mainly through structured

⁵⁸ i.e. achieving a prosperous, innovative, knowledge-rich, competitive and eco-efficient economy which provides high living standards and full and high-quality employment.

exchanges of experience processes and associated learning processes as well as through a transfer and application of good practices.

(6) The **European added value of Interreg** becomes evident if it is looked at from three different perspectives. The **socio-economic added value** is that cross-border and transnational programmes have initiated additional cooperative socio-economic development processes in smaller and larger contiguous areas stretching across the political borders of European countries, while interregional cooperation between regional and local authorities of Europe has enhanced economic and social development in individual cities and regions through an improvement of their public policies. The **added value for sustainable development** is that Interreg has initiated additional joint approaches and cooperative solutions which helped to address or tackle environmental and climate change related problems that are transgressing national borders. The **socio-cultural added value** is that Interreg established an increasingly dense inter-organisational and inter-personal cooperation culture in Europe, which has built up a considerable stock of social capital through the mutual working relations at programme- and project level and which has also enhanced a better understanding between different cultures and communities in Europe. The **political-institutional added value** is that Interreg has significantly widened and intensified political and administrative exchange relations across Europe. This led not only to a further Europeanisation of public administrations and of many public policies at all levels, but also to a practice of cooperative self-organisation between decentralised government levels from different countries which finds its key expression in the establishment of joint and also durable cross-border and transnational “problem-solving capacities”.

(7) The thematic intervention focus adopted by the **Interreg V programmes (2014-2020)** shows that they will continue promoting a sustainable socio-economic development, although with slightly different preferences under cross-border cooperation (i.e. environment & natural/cultural heritage management; smart growth, labour market development & integration) and transnational cooperation (i.e. natural/cultural heritage management; low carbon, smart growth). The newly introduced concept of “results-orientation” represents a real challenge for territorial cooperation. This was already noticed in the programme preparation phase and it will become even more evident during the forthcoming programme implementation process. The new concept requires from Interreg programmes to ensure high-quality project-level cooperation (which also has to become more durable) and also to adopt a new type of evaluation for capturing the actual change achieved in a programme area.

3. Towards a long-term vision for territorial cooperation in the EU and in other parts of the world

3.1. Future EU-wide development trends, new territorial needs and territorial cooperation potentials

A long-term vision requires knowledge about the territorial implications of important macro-societal challenges and EU-wide themes which are relevant for territorial cooperation (What can we see already?), so that strategic thematic orientation can be given to future cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation (What has to be done and where?). This section focuses, from a top-down perspective, on the macro-societal challenges “climate change” and “demographic change” as well as on the important EU-wide themes “environment and resource use”, “sustainable mobility” and “border obstacles”.

Information on the territorial implications of some of these future-relevant themes was drawn from two recent INTERACT-studies which reviewed the results of many EU-wide research and forecasting activities with the aim to establish a retrospective and partly also forward looking analysis of long-term territorial trends in the EU (1990-2020).⁵⁹ Another important source of information, especially for future trends in sustainable development, was the EEA’s most recent state and outlook report on the European environment (SOER 2015).⁶⁰

Halting environmental degradation and improving resource efficiency

If long-term trends in the field of environment and resource efficiency are analysed for topics having a significant territorial dimension,⁶¹ then a mixed overall situation appears for the period 1990-2014. Many developments indicate that there are aspects under all sub-themes for which the situation has clearly improved over time, also as result of the comprehensive environmental legislation that was progressively established in Europe. At the same time, however, there are developments for a number of aspects which illustrate that a more positive status of the environment and a more sustainable use of resources has not been achieved until now (**see: box 3**).⁶² This dual situation for the present time is also confirmed by the findings of the EEA’s most recent SOER 2015-report.

Box 3: Negative aspects characterising the EU’s current environmental status

Progress was made in most of the EU towards more sustainable water abstraction practices, but repeating periods of water stress exist in the Mediterranean which are mainly aggravated by a high tourism presence during the summer season.

Multiple pressures still affect the quality of many freshwater bodies or coastal and transitional waters, also in case of tourist-used inland or coastal bathing water sites.

Still high population shares in urban areas are affected by pollutant concentrations which are higher than selected limit/target values;

⁵⁹ One study addressed the See primarily INTERACT (2015b), while the other study addressed implications of demographic change from a viewpoint of cross-border and transnational labour market integration (INTERACT, 2015c).

⁶⁰ EEA (2015a)

⁶¹ The study analysed territorial development trends for the sub-themes (1) water resources and water quality, (2) air pollution and air quality, (3) land cover and land use, (4) ecosystems and biodiversity and (5) material resource use and waste.

⁶² INTERACT (2015b), pp.17-54, 148-149

There is continuous increase of land take for urbanisation and infrastructures which reduces farmland and forests or semi-natural land and leads to adverse environmental effects.

Diverse threats and pressures affect protected and non-protected terrestrial ecosystems which most often are found in border and mountain regions, but also marine ecosystems are affected by growing threats and pressures.

Ecosystems have an increasingly reduced ability to provide services that support directly or indirectly human survival and the quality of life.

Although there is progress made towards greening the EU economy, it appears that regional levels in green economic performance are very different across Europe. Clearly below average performance levels are mainly found in eastern and south-eastern European regions and in some regions on the Iberian Peninsula.

For the medium- and long-term future, the SOER 2015-report indicates that substantial challenges exist in the three key areas for action which are related to the EU's 2050 vision of *“living well within the limits of the planet”*.⁶³ A strong presence of deteriorating or mixed future trends can be observed under the areas for action “Protecting the natural capital that supports economic prosperity and human well-being” and “Safeguarding from environmental risks to health”. But also under the area for action “Stimulating resource-efficient, low-carbon economic and social development”, a clear worsening is expected to take place for some issues mostly in a long-term perspective (see: **figure 3**). However, and based upon an evolving understanding of environmental challenges, it also becomes clear that (...) *the systemic and transboundary nature of many long-term environmental challenges are significant obstacles to achieving the EU's 2050 vision (...)*.⁶⁴

Modern environmental policy therefore needs an approach which allows addressing simultaneously two types of problem. In the case of environmental problems with relatively specific cause-effect relationships, specific environmental policies with a more straightforward design and short-term targets can reduce environmental pressures and the immediate harm they cause. In the case of more complex environmental problems involving multiple causes which result from interactions between several factors, comprehensive thematic environmental policies with medium-term targets (up to 2020 or 2030) are required to prevent long-term environmental degradation. In addition, also comprehensive sectoral policy responses are needed for making our society's key provisioning systems more sustainable (e.g. transformation of the transport, energy, housing and food systems), by decarbonising them and by making them more resource efficient and compatible with ecosystem resilience. This may also require a redesign of other systems which have created unsustainable lock-ins (e.g. the finance, fiscal, health, legal and education systems).⁶⁵

Past territorial cooperation has devoted considerable attention to improving the environment and also to enhance resource efficiency. The share of ERDF-support allocated to environmental interventions under cross-border and transnational cooperation grew continuously, from 10% in the period 1990-1993 to 29% in the period 2007-2013 (cross-border programmes) and from around 20% in the period 1997-1999 to 43% in the period 2007-2013 (transnational programmes). Also interregional cooperation has increasingly focussed on topics relating to

⁶³ In the 7th Environment Action Programme of 2013, the EU formulates an engaging vision of the long-term future: *In 2050, we live well, within the planet's ecological limits. Our prosperity and healthy environment stem from an innovative, circular economy where nothing is wasted and where natural resources are managed sustainably, and biodiversity is protected, valued and restored in ways that enhance our society's resilience. Our low-carbon growth has long been decoupled from resource use, setting the pace for a safe and sustainable global society.*

⁶⁴ EEA (2015a), p.144

⁶⁵ EEA (2015a), pp.7, 9-17, 141-144

environment and sustainable development, especially since 2000. While 22% of all interregional projects in the period 2000-2006 addressed the themes environment, risk prevention, energy and natural resources, already 48% of all projects approved in the period 2007-2013 addressed the sub-themes of the programme priority “Environment & Risk Prevention”. Overall, it seems that a still strong focus on such issues prevails in the period 2014-2020 because all Interreg V programmes devote 28% of their ERDF-support to cooperation on TO 6.

Figure 3: An indicative summary of future environmental trends

	5-10 year trends	20+ years outlook	Progress to policy targets
Protecting, conserving and enhancing natural capital			
Terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity			<input type="checkbox"/>
Land use and soil functions			No target
Ecological status of freshwater bodies			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Water quality and nutrient loading			<input type="checkbox"/>
Air pollution and its ecosystem impacts			<input type="checkbox"/>
Marine and coastal biodiversity			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Climate change impacts on ecosystems			No target
Resource efficiency and the low-carbon economy			
Material resource efficiency and material use			No target
Waste management			<input type="checkbox"/>
Greenhouse gas emissions and climate change mitigation			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Energy consumption and fossil fuel use			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Transport demand and related environmental impacts			<input type="checkbox"/>
Industrial pollution to air, soil and water			<input type="checkbox"/>
Water use and water quantity stress			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Safeguarding from environmental risks to health			
Water pollution and related environmental health risks			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> / <input type="checkbox"/>
Air pollution and related environmental health risks			<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise pollution (especially in urban areas)		N.A.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Urban systems and grey infrastructure			No target
Climate change and related environmental health risks			No target
Chemicals and related environmental health risks			<input type="checkbox"/> / <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Indicative assessment of trends and outlook		Indicative assessment of progress to policy targets	
	Deteriorating trends dominate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Largely not on track to achieving key policy targets
	Trends show mixed picture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partially on track to achieving key policy targets
	Improving trends dominate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Largely on track to achieving key policy targets

Source: EEA (2015a), p.11

Future territorial cooperation after 2020 should in general focus on those topics of the EU's 2050 vision for which a positive status of the environment has not yet been achieved and for which the situation is expected to worsen. On the one hand, territorial cooperation should continue to address specific environmental policies and their short-term targets which aim to reduce different sorts of environmental pressures. This can be done, for example, through expanding a cross-border provision of public services which directly improve environmental conditions and the quality of life in cooperation areas (e.g. sewage water treatment, treatment of solid waste, fresh-water provision). This can be intensified at many internal EU-borders and especially at the new internal EU-borders, while bearing in mind also further positive effects which are usually linked to such activities (i.e. avoidance of double-investments, efficiency gains,

reduced cost for citizens etc.). Experience from already existing joint sewage water treatment at several EU15 borders (e.g. Benelux countries, Germany, France) shows that substantial cost savings were achieved for both sides, be this at the time of the initial investment and also during the ongoing operation and in case of a legally required upgrading of a treatment facility. Cross-border and transnational programmes should, on the other hand, also develop joint strategies with implementation provisions for their respective territorial context. They would allow addressing systemic environmental challenges in an integrative way and within a long term perspective. A good example for this is the EU's transport sector, where a more sustainable pattern of mobility has to be achieved in the long term.

Promoting sustainable mobility

Transport plays an essential role for the socio-economic development of countries and regions in the EU, as it allows people to commute and travel and companies to trade and deliver goods. While the retrospective long-term analysis of INTERACT suggests that regional accessibility has generally improved within the EU between 1990 and 2013,⁶⁶ its findings also clearly highlight that the whole EU transport sector was and still is rather “resistant” to becoming more sustainable. Transport was the only sector with growing GHG emissions and it is still responsible for 25% of EU's GHG emissions. Transport causes, despite of noteworthy improvements in the past, air pollution and noise, but also major human casualties which still represent a loss of lives per year equalling the population of one medium-sized city. Transport infrastructures have considerably fragmented landscapes and ecosystems and continue to do so, resulting in a reduced connectivity among habitats which represents a growing threat to many wildlife populations. Growing road traffic led and still leads to significant congestion within or around cities and on main European transport axes, which causes huge economic cost and also many other adverse effects.⁶⁷

For the future, the EEA's SOER 2015-report concludes that significant additional efforts have to be made in the field of transport and that Europe will need a coordinated approach for transport policy which integrates a variety of different measures: *alternative-fuel vehicles, transport avoidance, shifting to less environmentally damaging modes of transport, new infrastructure, and financial measures. In order to gain public support, this coordinated approach must aim to address not just the environmental impacts of the transport system. It must also create better health and improved quality of life for Europe's citizens.*⁶⁸

This makes clear that a more integrated transport system and also a more sustainable mobility remains an important issue throughout the EU which also needs to be addressed and promoted by future cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. Progress in this sector is also needed for reaching the European Commission's long-term target of a 60% reduction in GHG emissions by 2050 and thus for limiting the magnitude of climate change.

Combating climate change

The already ongoing and future climate change is a macro-societal challenge linked to the global increase of temperature since the mid-20th century, which is most likely due to the observed higher atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gas (GHG) resulting mainly from human

⁶⁶ However, this improvement happened not everywhere in the EU-periphery and it was also not induced equally by all modes of transport.

⁶⁷ INTERACT (2015b), pp. 85-117; 151-152

⁶⁸ EEA (2015), European briefing on “transport”

activity.⁶⁹ GHG emissions of the EU represent at date about 10% of the total global GHG emissions and these EU emissions will be reduced by 20% until 2020 as part of the EU's climate and energy package of 2009.⁷⁰ For some issues relating to the wider theme of climate change, long-term developments in the period 1990-2013 show that there has been an improvement of the EU-wide situation (i.e. substantial drop of GHG emissions in the EU; increased share of energy generated from renewables). In a number of other issues, on the contrary, long-term developments do not indicate a shift towards a more positive overall EU-wide situation (i.e. no clear trend towards a lower energy demand; increased use of solid fuels, particularly of climate harmful coal; rising GHG emissions from transport etc.). Moreover, when looking further ahead, the projected reductions of GHG emissions are already considered insufficient to bring the EU on a pathway towards its 2050 decarbonisation target (i.e. the EU objective to reduce its GHG emissions by 80% to 95% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels).⁷¹

Climate change encompasses a broad variety of risks which adversely affect natural and human systems across the EU. They range from gradual risks (e.g. increase in temperature, loss of biodiversity, rise of sea level) to sudden risks which are linked to extreme events (e.g. storms, coastal and river floods, droughts, heat waves and forest fires). These risks already cause considerable social cost and economic losses, which are expected to further increase in the long term. The adverse effects of global warming have a strong territorial dimension, but the very nature of these impacts and their presence on the EU territory strongly differ (**see: figure 4**).⁷² Adapting to climate change, understood as actions for reducing the vulnerability of social and biological systems to climate risks and for increasing resilience of these systems to climate change, brings several challenges to the fore: one challenge is that multiple governance levels in Europe must be engaged to respond to these impacts (i.e. local, regional, national and EU levels), while another one is that different affected sectoral policy areas have to be integrated which requires that multiple synergies and trade-offs between competing objectives need to be considered.⁷³

Combating climate change must therefore be given continuing and growing attention under territorial cooperation, also through joint measures in the field of R&D and innovation (e.g. energy efficiency, use of renewable energy development and uptake of low-carbon technologies, innovative solutions or technologies improving resilience to climate change).

Transnational programmes have always dedicated a quite substantial and also growing share of their support to climate change relevant interventions. They focussed primarily on adaptation measures in the period 1997-2013, but more recently a growing attention is given to mitigation measures (period 2014-2020). In the medium- and long-term, however, climate change adaptation should receive continuing attention especially in transnational cooperation areas which cover a majority of countries from around the Mediterranean and from Eastern Europe. This is important because territorial research evidence shows that regions from these countries have, on the whole, a considerably lower adaptive capacity in regard to climate change than regions from Western or Northern European countries.

⁶⁹ The main sources of man-made GHGs are: burning of fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) in electricity generation, transport, industry and households (CO₂); agriculture (CH₄) and land-use changes like deforestation (CO₂); land filling of waste (CH₄); the use of industrial fluorinated gases. See on this: <http://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/climate/intro>

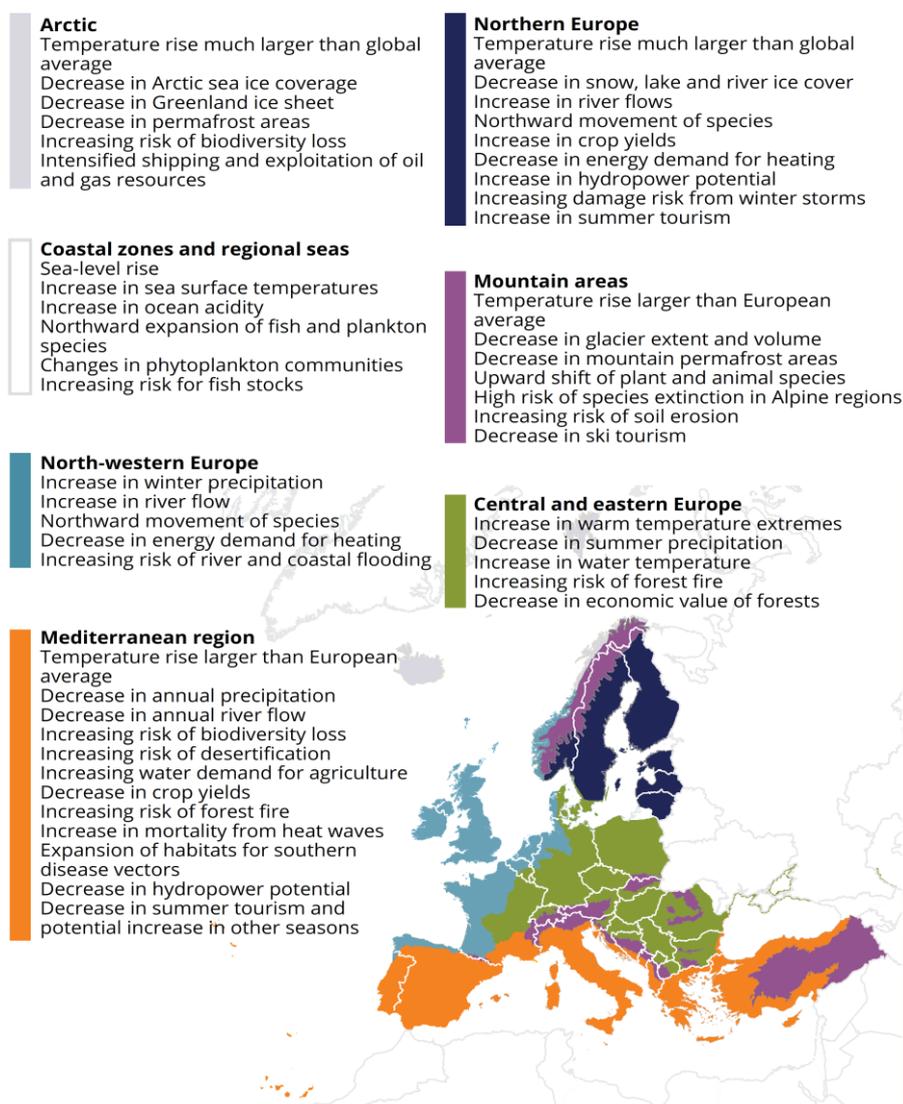
⁷⁰ The EU climate and energy package implements the 20-20-20 targets which were endorsed by EU leaders in 2007: by 2020 there should be a 20 % reduction of GHG emissions if compared to 1990 levels 1990, a 20 % share of renewables in EU energy consumption and energy improvement by 20 %.

⁷¹ EEA (2015a), p.142

⁷² INTERACT (2015b), pp.55-84, 149-151

⁷³ EEA (2015a), p.78

Figure 4: Key observed and projected impacts from climate change for the main regions in Europe



Source: EEA (2015a), p.77

Cross-border programmes were, in comparison, much more hesitant when it came to supporting measures for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Whereas only a few cross-border projects had been realised on risk prevention and management during the first decade (1990-1999), climate change-relevant interventions have started to increase in the funding periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013. However, Interreg IIIA programme measures on “risk prevention” and “energy” were always among the lowest funding priorities and climate change relevant interventions under Interreg IVA programmes accounted for just around 11% of the total ERDF-support. The above suggests that the indeed existing and wide cooperation potentials are still far from being fully exploited. In the future, cross-border action is needed at borders where differences between domestic climate change policies lead to undesired competition or contradictions, especially in the field of climate change adaptation. This requires joint actions for enhancing horizontal cooperation in the fields of risk prevention and management or civil protection. Stronger cooperation on adaptation is also needed along several

borders where marked differences in the regional adaptive capacity can be observed (e.g. DE-PL, DE-CZ, HU-AT, AT-CZ, AT-SK, AT-IT, IT-CH, FR-IT, FR-BE), but also in a few other cross-border areas where the potential vulnerability to climate change shows a high or medium negative impact (e.g. ES-PT, ES-FR).⁷⁴ Finally, cross-border mitigative action should receive more attention, especially in the field of a decentralised energy production on ground of renewables. Aside of the positive contribution to combat climate change, this can be a new source of added value for many rural and peripheral or remote cooperation areas and also offer opportunities for cost-savings and lower consumer prices (i.e. if the produced energy is consumed directly without being fed into the general electricity grid, then transport and distribution costs or taxes can be avoided).

Coping with demographic change and its territorial implications

Another important macro-societal challenge within the EU is demographic change, which consists of the two main dimensions “population aging” and “population shrinking”. The extent of demographic change is determined by a complex interplay of different factors (e.g. fertility, life-expectancy, migration, current age structure), which together strongly influence the amount of births and deaths and thus population growth as well as the future age structure.

Demographic change encompasses **evident future risks and new needs** which can emerge at different territorial levels within the EU (**see: box 4**). A specific field where European countries and regions already notice implications of demographic change are their labour markets. As related demographic risks or needs will further increase in the medium- and long-term future, albeit with different levels of intensity and divergent patterns across the EU 28 territory, actions are needed which help compensating potentially adverse effects of demographic change.⁷⁵ But overall population aging will also offer **new development opportunities**. These are linked to the emergence of new consumer markets and alternative business activities which can supply the growing demand for age-specific products and services or address the need for age-specific advertising and distribution methods (i.e. the “silver economy”).⁷⁶

Box 4: Future territorial implications of demographic change

Country-wide risks for existing social protection and welfare systems: Population ageing increases demands on pension, health care and long-term care systems and leads to a raise of age-related public expenditure or other social expenditure items (e.g. disability benefits; various transfer payments), which will have to be financed by a shrinking active population (i.e. through taxes & social contributions).

Country-wide risks for economic growth: Especially in highly developed Member States with a declining working-age population and no expected further increase of employment rates, a stronger development and uptake of new technologies and changes of production processes is required because future economic growth will depend on rising productivity alone.

Regional and local risks for a provision of and access to services of general interest: Areas facing a strong population decline will need to maintain a sufficient access to close-by and affordable services of general interest for their inhabitants and for enterprises. In order to combat social exclusion and foster the social and territorial cohesion of cross-border territories

Regional and local need for a provision of new and age-specific infrastructures and services: Areas which face a further ageing of their population will have to find adequate responses to an increasing demand of the elderly

⁷⁴ See on this: ESPON (2011), p.161; ESPON (2012), pp.1041-1043; INTERACT (2015b), pp.82-84,132, 146

⁷⁵ e.g. on a stronger mobilisation of the still unused potential of female labour force and an increased openness of the labour market towards foreign workers (i.e. for attenuating labour scarcity), a promotion of life-long learning (i.e. for keeping older professionals in work & lessen scarcity of the highly skilled) and more company-level investments in R&D or technology-intensive production processes (i.e. for reducing the presumed age-dependency of individual productivity).

⁷⁶ See on this in general: Tivig/Frosch/Kühntopf (2008); ESPON (2010)

citizens for specific public goods and services (e.g. health care, long-term care, housing, transport, leisure etc.).

Regional and local needs for ensuring social integration and managing urbanisation pressure: Areas which face an increase of their population, mainly through a strong influx of foreign born migrants, will have to put into place adequate social and economic integration opportunities to avoid social exclusion and polarisation. Especially larger cities and metropolitan areas with an increasing population will have to adapt basic infrastructures and services, to develop more sustainable urban mobility and also to carefully manage unwanted urbanisation effects linked to higher population (e.g. urban sprawl, real estate speculation, raising rental prices, sub-urbanisation or ghettoization etc.).

Regional and local risks of a reduced abundance of labour force: Areas with a further ageing and also shrinking working-age population will be exposed to general labour scarcity and in particular to scarcity of skilled labour and of young and highly qualified professionals.

Regional and local needs for putting into place age-adequate production processes: The naturally decreasing productivity of the older workforce will require at the enterprise level that new forms of work organisation in ageing production teams are established and that the knowledge transfer in age-mixed production teams is better organised.

It is difficult to appraise in how far these multiple territorial implications of demographic change are already addressed by **cross-border cooperation**. Some indications exist for the labour market effects of demographic change, which programmes addressed either directly or indirectly through joint interventions which help to develop and further integrate cross-border labour markets. Such interventions were always important in cooperation areas where strong commuter flows existed or have rapidly developed (i.e. in the more densely populated and urbanised cross-border areas of north and western Europe), but recently they have also become more intense in cooperation areas where cross-border commuting is usually low.⁷⁷

Important potentials for future cross-border action exist also in the field of a provision of services of general interest,⁷⁸ because many programmes cover rural, sparsely populated and peripheral (or even remote) border areas which will be particularly challenged by demographic change. A stronger outward migration of the younger generations and a further aging of the resident population will not only question the existence of certain types of services (e.g. closure of childcare or primary/secondary education facilities, reduced availability of close-by medical care, closure of hospitals etc.), but also require that new age-adequate assistance and care services are created in these areas. If affordable services have to be maintained or newly created under such conditions, then it will become increasingly important to conceive “critical population size thresholds” for cost-efficient services in a cross-border perspective. On ground of this, unconventional joint service provision solutions should then be tested and further developed which help maintaining an adequate level of service access for citizens and businesses and also prevent a further desertification of these areas.

Transnational and interregional cooperation started to address issues relating to demographic change already during Interreg III period (2000-2006)⁷⁹ and continued to do so

⁷⁷ Among the 17 Interreg IVA programmes which were most active in this respect during the period 2007-2013, 12 covered a maritime border or mountainous and rural areas. INTERACT (2015c), pp. 38-39

⁷⁸ Cross-border services of general interest can cover a wide range issues such as health, medical and social care (e.g. access to hospitals and medical care, specific assistance for elderly and disabled persons, child care), education and training or employment as well as environment and transport. See on this in general: MOT (2015b)

⁷⁹ **Interreg IIIB projects:** “A.S.A.P. - Efficient Administrative Structures as a Prerequisite for Successful Economic and Social Development of Rural Areas in Demographic Transition” (Baltic Sea Region), “ENI - Experiment in Newcomer Integration” (Cadses), “MSC Regeneration - Demographic and Urban Change in Medium-Sized Cities” (North West Europe), “Our Life as Elderly” (Northern Periphery). **Interreg IIIC East Zone project:** “WelHops - Welfare housing policies for senior citizens”.

more intensively in the following programming period 2007-2013.⁸⁰ In case of transnational cooperation, however, only some programmes perceived demographic change as a common challenge that should be addressed and also became active in this respect (i.e. Central Europe, North West Europe, Baltic Sea Region). This focused cooperation is somewhat astonishing if the results of long-term projections up to 2030 for population ageing and shrinking, for labour supply and for the availability of human capital are considered. The currently active transnational programmes either cover a majority of regions which will be under all constellations in a rather favourable position (North West Europe, to some extent also Baltic Sea Region) or in a clearly unfavourable position (i.e. Central Europe), while some of the non-active programmes cover a large number of regions which will be under all constellations either in a clearly unfavourable position (South East Europe) or in a less favourable position (i.e. Mediterranean, Alpine Space).⁸¹ In other words, this suggests that the latter programmes should in the future intensify cooperation on issues relating demographic change.

Reducing legal and administrative obstacles at EU borders

A final EU-wide theme with long-term relevance especially for cross-border cooperation is the continuing existence of legal and administrative border obstacles. These obstacles are rooted in the established and politically defined EU land borders and also in the different statuses these borders can have throughout the EU.⁸² Although governance structures and legal systems of individual states are rational and coherent in their respective domestic context, it is the difference between legal provisions and administrative proceedings of neighbouring countries which emerges at EU-borders that produces problems and impediments for all sorts of border-crossing economic, social, cultural or personal exchange relations.

Legal and administrative obstacles hinder a stronger functional integration and sustainable development of cross-border areas because they affect a wide range of policy fields. Rather well known and also well analysed are obstacles which hinder cross-border commuting and a further integration of cross-border labour markets. They result from different national tax and social security systems, from a lack of recognition of qualifications or skills as well as from poorly connected or coordinated (public) transport systems and inadequate administrative proceedings.⁸³ Other sources show that legal and administrative obstacles also exist in many other policy fields that are relevant for cross-border cooperation such as economic development, spatial planning and sector policy planning, a provision of services of general interest (e.g. health care and social services, emergency and rescue services, security and crime prevention etc.) or environmental policy and climate change action (e.g. protection and sustainable use of natural resources, waste treatment, energy production from renewable sources, prevention and management of natural risks etc.).⁸⁴

⁸⁰ **Interreg IVB projects:** "ACT4PPP" (Central Europe), EPOurban (Central Europe), "SMART" (Central Europe), "WOMEN" (Central Europe), "BestAgersLighthouses" (Baltic Sea Region), "Baltic Sea Labour Network" (Baltic Sea Region), "I-stay@home" (North West Europe), "Senior Enterprise" (North West Europe). **Interreg IVC projects:** "CREATOR" (Creative regional policies addressing economic development opportunities related to aging societies) "DAA" (Design led Innovations for Active Ageing), "DART" (Declining, Ageing and Regional Transformation Employment), "ESF6 CIA" (Capitalising Innovative Approaches towards Demographic Change), "PEOPLE" (Innovation for societal change).

⁸¹ INTERACT (2015c), pp.79-80

⁸² e.g. internal and external EU-borders; borders between Schengen or non-Schengen countries, between Eurozone or non-Eurozone countries, between EEA and non-EEA countries, between Council of Europe members countries and non-members (Belarus) as well as between Council of Europe members having ratified or not specific conventions or protocols.

⁸³ INTERACT (2015c); AEBR (2012a); European Commission (2010); European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs (2009).

⁸⁴ MOT (2015a); Council of Europe (2012a); Council of Europe (2012b)

Legal and administrative obstacles will continue to exist, because various aspects suggest that systems differences emerging at borders are not disappearing in the future. First, because the EU lacks a relevant legal competence in several policy fields which are affected by obstacles (e.g. spatial planning and sector policy planning) or which are at the origin of many obstacles (e.g. taxation). Second, because in policy fields where such a competence does exist an effective harmonisation of national legislations through the influence new Community law is about to reach its limits in an EU at 28 Member States. Third, because national legislations will continue to change in the future which then creates new differences that may lead to additional uncertainties or border obstacles.

Bearing in mind the variety of “causes” for such obstacles and also their long-term relevance, it becomes clear that a continuing effort is needed for their removal or alleviation. This effort will have to involve actors from different levels of government (i.e. EU, national, regional, local) and also different constellations of action (e.g. EU-wide action, bilateral or trilateral inter-state action; bilateral or trilateral regional or local action etc.). As a consequence, the Luxembourg Council Presidency has launched a political debate on voluntarily applicable specific legal provisions for border regions to boost cross-border cooperation. On this issue also an international workshop took place on 19th May 2015 in Luxembourg which was informed by an external study providing a first overview on border obstacles to overcome.⁸⁵ In addition, DG Regio also launched specific activities in the wider context of the 2015 “cross-border cooperation review” to nourish a debate around border obstacles (i.e. a study on “Easing legal and administrative obstacles in EU border regions”; a public consultation for collecting examples of border obstacles as experienced by European citizens).

3.2. Expectations of regions and local authorities about the EU’s territorial development status in 2040 and on the future role of Interreg

A long-term vision also requires that stakeholders have concrete expectations about the desired future situation and also about the ways and means by which this situation can be reached. If this is applied to our specific case, then expectations have to be formulated about the future development status of the EU territory and of individual EU regions (What do we expect to achieve by 2040?) as well as on the contributions that Interreg can make to realise the desired development statuses (How can cooperation support this?).

Both aspects are mainly addressed here from a bottom-up perspective, by making use of the results of an on-line survey which DG Regio conducted for the preparation of the 2015 celebration of the 25th anniversary of Interreg on 15-16 September 2015⁸⁶ and by taking into account different interventions and contributions at this Interreg conference.

How should the EU territory and individual EU regions look like in 2040?

The survey respondents’ visioning contributions for the EU-level and regional perspectives are in overall terms focused on five important dimensions of our societies: (1) economy, knowledge and innovation, (2) social and cultural relations and the wider civil society, (3) environment and

⁸⁵ Government of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg (2015); MOT (2015a)

⁸⁶ This survey was run until the end of August 2015 and focused on the following core questions: How would you like to see your region by 2040? How would you like to see Europe by 2040? Do you see a role for Interreg in this? and if so, which one exactly? Interreg-what would you keep? Interreg-what would you change?

See: https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/25years_interreg_look_back_forward

sustainable development, (4) governance and (5) outward relations. Whereas the EU territory's future development status is addressed by expectations relating to all five dimensions and in particular to the governance dimension, one can observe that the future development status of individual regions is most often addressed by expectations relating to only the first three dimensions.

Most survey responses describing **the desired development status of the EU territory in 25 years from now** want the Union territory to be more cohesive with less economic and social disparities. They expect the EU territory to be better connected across Europe and with the world and also to be endowed with a modern and competitive and stable economy, allowing people to find jobs where they use to live. Frequently mentioned expectations also want to see a more sustainable and socially inclusive EU territory, where national, regional and local identities or cultures are respected as sources of diversity. A large number of statements expect an EU-wide governance system with clearly more democracy, less bureaucracy and a better implementation of EU laws. Many of the governance-related statements clearly advocate a stronger political integration of the EU, also by allocating more competences to the Union level. Finally, a few statements also expect the EU to become a real global political player and cooperate better with its Eastern neighbours, while being also more socially responsible in its external relations. **In a nutshell: the future EU territory is more prosperous and spatially cohesive as well as more sustainable and inclusive, open to our European neighbours and to the rest of the world, while being governed more efficiently and democratic and also closer to its citizens.**

For illustrating how this rather general EU-wide vision translates at the level of individual regions, survey responses are now summarised which describe the **desired development status of individual EU regions in 2040**. Most statements expect regions to be more developed and prosperous and also to be well-integrated into Europe, mainly because they have a modern and competitive and knowledge-based economy which offers more and also valuable jobs that retain and attract young and creative people. At the same time, most statements expect that this better positioning goes hand-in-hand with reaching a more sustainable development status of the region⁸⁷ and also a regional society that is based upon diversity and solidarity. This society should be proud of its own culture and at the same time open-minded to other cultures (also in neighbouring regions), respect the needs of different age-classes in the population and also be free of any discrimination.⁸⁸ **In a nutshell: EU regions are in the future characterised by a modern and well-performing economy which offers enough and also valuable jobs, by a healthy environment and a good quality of life as well as by an open-minded and inclusive society that cares of people of all ages and origins.**

What about the future development status of cross-border and transnational areas?

These expectations about the long-term development status of the EU territory and of individual regions are a good starting point for a strategic visioning process on the future of Interreg. Still, a vision also has to include expectations about the long-term development statuses of cross-border and transnational cooperation areas. This is important, because both intermediate layers are essential for making the EU territory's future status more concrete and also for determining how territorial cohesion in the EU can be promoted through these types of cooperation.

⁸⁷ i.e. intact natural resources and high level of biodiversity; environmentally-friendly transport; use of renewable energy; green and energy efficient economy and agriculture or housing; healthy food.

⁸⁸ i.e. a peaceful society with a high living standard for all citizens and jobs for all generations, a family-friendly society, a society where people are taken care of, a society where racism is a thing of the past.

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, territorial cohesion has become a new objective for the EU's wider integration process. Although territorial cohesion still is a rather abstract concept, there is some agreement on how cross-border and transnational cooperation can enhance the cohesiveness of the EU-territory:⁸⁹ by contributing (1) to a stronger territorial integration of cooperation areas, (2) to an improved territorial coordination of policies in cooperation areas and (3) to a better territorial governance of cooperation areas.

For such contributions to be actually achieved, it is obvious that cross-border and transnational programmes must have a good understanding of the current and future needs or problems in their respective cooperation areas and also dispose of a shared vision on the desired long-term development status to be reached. Jointly elaborated cross-border development concepts and transnational spatial visions are essential and very helpful instruments in this respect, especially if one remembers the three basic functions which circumscribe their general purpose.⁹⁰ However, **experiences from previous cross-border and transnational cooperation (see: box 5) as well as more recent developments suggest that still significant further efforts and improvements have to be made across the EU.**

In the period 1990-2006, the number of **cross-border development concepts** elaborated between local and regional authorities from both sides of a common border increased considerably. Cross-border development planning activities were also continued in the period 2007-2013, be this through an up-dating of already existing medium-term concepts or in form of an elaboration of new concepts. The ESPON applied research project "ULYSSES" shows, however, that still many more of such concepts need to be elaborated especially at EU-borders in Southern and Eastern Europe. Furthermore it appears that also the quality of a number of existing cross-border strategies could be further improved, as comprehensive territorial analyses using long-term projections or forecasts and scenario development are still rare (i.e. a good example is the project VISÖ – Visualization of Infrastructure and Sustainable development in Öresund).⁹¹ Finally, and despite of an increasing usefulness of territorial data provided by ESPON, problems relating to data availability (esp. cross-border flow data) still remain of actuality.⁹²

After some **transnational spatial visions** had been elaborated and updated in the periods 1997-1999 and 2000-2006, it can be observed that these early visioning processes were in nearby all cases not systematically continued or further deepened in the period 2007-2013. A noteworthy exception is the Baltic Sea Region with its "VASAB Long Term Perspective" (VASAB-LTP), which was adopted at the 7th conference of BSR ministers responsible for spatial planning and development in Vilnius (October 2009) and will be pursued in parallel to the implementation

⁸⁹ Despite of the intense EU-wide scientific and policy-level debate on the concept of territorial cohesion, variations in the basic understanding persist and also no definitive answers could be found on the big questions of "what exactly is territorial cohesion" and especially of "how to define territorial cohesion". However, common points in the Commission's "Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion", in the Commission's ex-post evaluation of INTERREG III and in several parts of the "Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020" (TA2020) allow identifying at least three core dimensions of the territorial cohesion concept to which cross-border and transnational cooperation can strongly contribute.

⁹⁰ Three main functions can illustrate the general purpose of transnational and cross-border spatial planning strategies. (1) The establishment of an "interpretative framework", by drawing up a comprehensive territorial situation analysis which brings together relevant data and knowledge on spatial structures and functional interactions and which improves the joint understanding of the concerned cooperation area. (2) The presentation of a "spatial policy programme", by defining common and meaningful normative provisions (e.g. long term spatial vision, medium- and short-term territorial development objectives or policy-specific objectives, horizontal principles etc.) which can guide future policy making. (3) The provision of an "application framework", by setting out operational provisions which are able to translate the normative provisions into reality and which are well-oriented towards the targeted key stakeholders (i.e. policy recommendations, suggestions for concrete activities and projects etc.). See: ESPON-INTERACT (2006), pp.35-36

⁹¹ ESPON / AEBr (2012)

⁹² ESPON (2012a)

of the EU macro-regional strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Furthermore, also no new vision processes were launched in transnational cooperation areas which were previously not active in this respect. This lack of continuation and expansion of transnational spatial visioning is somewhat astonishing, because the overall development goals set for transnational cooperation in the periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 expect that Interreg IVB had to promote “*integrated territorial development*” and that Interreg VB should even achieve “*a higher degree of territorial integration of larger transnational territories*”.

Box 5:

Past cross-border territorial planning and transnational spatial visioning processes

Cross-border cooperation in the field of spatial planning was started already at an early stage (1970s–end of 1980s) and took place within specific intergovernmental structures that covered cross-border areas mostly in Western Europe. Such structures were often established on ground of inter-state agreements on spatial planning. Early agreements concluded before the start of Interreg are those between Belgium-Germany (1971), Switzerland-Germany (1973), Austria-Germany (1974), France-Germany (1975), the Netherlands-Germany (1976) or Austria-Hungary (1985). Since the start of Interreg in 1990, also an increasing number of cross-border territorial planning activities were launched at the initiative of local and regional authorities from neighbouring countries, most often along internal EU-borders and also at several of the former external EU-borders which now have become internal EU borders.

The first initiative for elaborating a common transnational spatial vision was launched in the Baltic Sea Region, where an intergovernmental process started in 1992 which led to the publication of the document “Vision and strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010” (VASAB) in 1994. Further transnational vision documents were elaborated towards the end of the Interreg IIC funding period (1997-1999), but only under a few cooperation programmes (i.e. North-Western Metropolitan Area, North Sea Area, CADSES). During the Interreg IIIB funding period 2000-2006, some new vision documents were elaborated (i.e. Atlantic Area) or prepared (i.e. Alpine Space, Western Mediterranean, Central Europe) and already existing ones were further up-dated or up-graded (i.e. North West Europe, North Sea Area, VASAB).

These early cross-border development planning activities and transnational visioning processes have all faced to various extents problems of data availability and comparability. Furthermore, approaches to forecast territorial development in the respective cooperation area cannot be observed in the transnational spatial visions and also not in most of the early cross-border territorial development concepts. This lack of prospective territorial analysis and the only exceptional development of alternative scenarios resulted in the fact that these cooperative planning documents hardly took into consideration factors of significant change which were already perceivable in the present period and tended to become increasingly important for territorial development in the future.

Source: ESPON-INTERACT (2006). The study on “Spatial Visions and Scenarios” provides a comprehensive historical review of cross-border and transnational development planning activities until 2005 and analyses in much detail the contents of existing planning documents as well as the methods and approaches used for their elaboration and application.

What should be the future role of Interreg?

It is obvious that many efforts at different levels are needed for realising or at least approaching the desired future development statuses of the EU territory and of individual regions and it is also evident that Interreg can only contribute to this within the limits of its own possibilities. Especially in terms of funding, however, these possibilities will remain restricted in a foreseeable future when compared to those of other Cohesion Policy instruments or of other territorially relevant Community policies (e.g. transport policy and “Connecting Europe Facility”).

Despite of this, **survey respondents expect Interreg to play a marked future role within this wider context which they circumscribe by some strategic attributes and also by a larger number of core tasks** that should be kept in the long term.

From a **strategic viewpoint**, Interreg should remain an important and positive instrument for the European integration process which continues to facilitate and foster cooperation between Europe's territories. Interreg should also continue to have a clear function within the wider system of EU support programmes which keeps the basic cooperation philosophy and also the three types of cooperation (cross-border, transnational, interregional) that all have their particular strengths and necessities.

The most frequently mentioned **core tasks** of a future Interreg can be summarised as follows:

- Supporting a more harmonious development of the EU territory, through including rural and peripheral or remote areas and by acting as a “knowledge transfer hub” between regions from North and West Europe and regions from South and East Europe;
- Promoting a more competitive and energy-efficient and greener economy throughout Europe;
- Promoting environmental and climate change action by strategies and also actions on the ground to make the improvement real;
- Promoting and piloting new approaches and solutions in the social sphere for finding ways to equal out levels of well-being between countries, for dealing with problems relating to demographic change or for fighting racism;
- Promoting a joint elaboration of approaches or strategies across countries and regions to foster integrated and sustainable territorial development, including an application and dissemination of such integrated approaches or strategies;
- Promoting an exchange of experiences and knowledge on a variety of themes and policies to learn from each other's mistakes and success stories, also involving a transfer of good practices;
- Promoting the “laboratory character” of Interreg, because it should act as a creative forerunner programme which initiates innovative and experimental projects in certain themes;
- Promoting inter-action and joint work between stakeholders with different national, professional and cultural backgrounds, for generating fresh ideas and blue-print solutions to address territorial challenges which are also applied or tested in pilot actions;
- Promoting a better access to services of general interest and to infrastructures;
- Promoting a coordination of policies and of public investment across borders as well as a harmonisation of planning instruments, administrative procedures and legal provisions across borders, so that national borders become a distant memory by 2040;
- Enhancing the development of governance approaches across state borders;
- Facilitating and inspiring organisations and citizens to engage in their communities and regions and also beyond (i.e. “Think local-act as a European-create global development”);
- Encouraging cross-cultural cooperation at grassroots level for making people understand better their counterparts in other parts of Europe (sometimes only behind the next border) and for enhancing a sense of unity between European citizens.

What should be improved or changed under a future Interreg?

Still, the scope and also the complexity of future challenges might require that some elements of the current Interreg-approach might have to be improved (i.e. objectives and scope of themes addressed, project-level cooperation and types of action, procedures and processes etc.) or even have to be complemented by introducing completely new aspects.

Survey respondents indeed pointed to a number of issues that should be improved or changed, but they did not suggest new aspects that have to be added:

- Interreg should be less oriented towards “abstract” EU-wide objectives (also not towards some of those applied by other ESI Funds) which are difficult to be understood and to be put into practice at the regional or local levels;
- Interreg should again strengthen its conceptual dimension (e.g. strategic territorial development planning or sector-specific planning) in order improve an understanding of complex interlinkages between different themes or sectors and to achieve a better coordinated and more integrated development of cooperation areas;
- Interreg should focus more on environmental issues and topics relating to climate change in order to achieve more sustainable territorial development;
- Interreg should further strengthen its innovative dimension (i.e. more openness for experiments and for the development of new approaches, useful methods and tools; more emphasis on learning);
- Interreg should promote a wider application of successfully tested tools or innovative solutions with exemplary character by other regions that are not involved, especially under transnational cooperation (i.e. stronger capitalisation & dissemination);
- Interreg should ensure that cooperation is real, i.e. that all involved partners are equally engaged;
- Difficulties for newcomers and small institutions in accessing programmes should be reduced and it should also be avoided that always the same institutions are applying;
- Interreg should strengthen a participation of the civil society (e.g. by co-creation strategies that involve civic initiatives) and stimulate the involvement of individual citizens (e.g. by innovative participation techniques or by joint cultural and social activities);
- Interreg should involve more private actors;
- Interreg should be better advertised and communicated so that cooperation results are taken more seriously by national institutions and authorities.

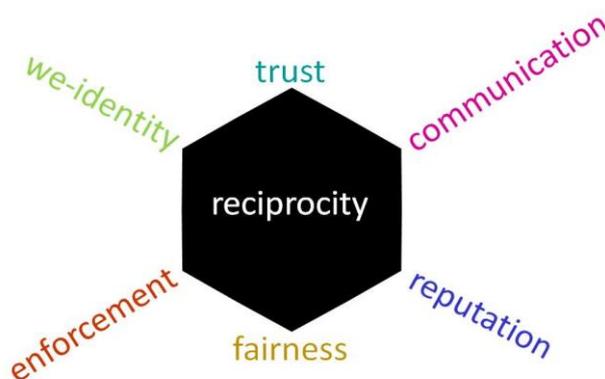
Another important aspect highlighted by many survey responses and also by direct contributions at the 25th anniversary conference of Interreg **is that the future management and implementation of Interreg programmes and projects has to become less bureaucratic**. Survey respondents asked for a further reduction of bureaucracy for programme authorities and project applicants, because recent progress made in some fields is counteracted by increased bureaucracy in other fields (e.g. state aid, control activities, separate SEA, application of indicator systems and definition of intervention categories etc.). Conference contributions also rightly pointed to the much higher degree of complexity which results from the multinational set-up of both Interreg programme management systems and cooperation projects. This complexity is not adequately reflected by the general ERDF-rules for programme management and an assessment of financial programme performance, as they are primarily designed for programmes which are implemented in a single-region context. Therefore, an

application of these rules to Interreg projects and programmes then often leads to problems. Consequently the Commission should take this complexity better into account in order to avoid excessive error rates and to enable the Interreg programmes to fulfil their specific tasks, namely to establish networks of co-operation between different actors in different regions.

Finally, several interventions at the 25 years of Interreg conference provided new insights into findings from other scientific disciplines and approaches which all represent **valuable entry points for further improving the quality of future territorial cooperation**.

- A first example is **behavioural / evolutionary biology**, which identified **basic elements of successful general human cooperation** that can be related to each other by way of a “cooperation hexagon” (see: **figure 5**).⁹³ There is trust building, as the foundational layer for human cooperation to work, as well as communication and reputation which are other important elements. Fairness is a crucial aspect for human cooperation to last in time, but also enforcement, in the sense of reward and punishment, and a we-identity are essential elements. Finally there is reciprocity, which is the “glue” that binds the other six elements together.

Figure 5: The “hexagon” of human cooperation



Source: Guarín (2015)

- A second example is **the diffusion of innovation theory**, which provides a more **integrated understanding of innovation and of the different steps and aspects for its diffusion**.⁹⁴ It sees innovation diffusion as a communication process among inventors or producers (i.e. those people knowing a novelty well) and potential users as well as an exchange of information and a preparation of decision making, while taking account of uncertainties and risks and understanding diffusion as a process of changing the society. Such a holistic understanding of innovation and of the steps for its diffusion is important for Interreg. This is because territorial cooperation programmes are actively promoting R&D/innovation and because Interreg acts as an “EU-wide laboratory” which develops and experiments new ideas or innovative approaches in a wide range of public policies and also disseminates these innovations across Europe.

⁹³ Guarín (2015)

⁹⁴ Zenko (2015)

3.3. Interreg as a model for delivering international development objectives in other macro-zones of the world

As Europe shares many macro-societal challenges with other macro-zones of the world, the EU decided in 2006 to establish partnerships with a number of countries outside the EU for the purpose of pooling responses and experience. Also the EU's Cohesion Policy forms part of this wider international dialogue, which is based upon "Memoranda of Understanding on Regional Policy Cooperation" that were concluded with several countries outside the EU. This policy-specific dialogue pursues the aim of exploring in how far the basic Cohesion Policy principles which were developed over the past decades could be of interest to regions and emerging economies outside Europe and, if so, also be shared with them. One of the explicitly recognised principles of the EU's Cohesion Policy model is the promotion of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation between regions and countries, which aims to reduce the economic significance of national borders.⁹⁵

Although the geographical, historical, political, socio-economic and cultural context in other parts of the world is markedly different from that of Europe, **the basic cooperation philosophy of Interreg and the EU experience with territorial cooperation can indeed be relevant for promoting peace, stability and regional integration in other parts of the world.** This was also shown by several interventions at the 25th anniversary conference of Interreg. They provided a summary overview on already existing territorial cooperation initiatives in Latin America and West Africa and also presented the orientation a United Nations cooperation programme which promotes a territorial approach to development based on multi-level and multi-actor partnerships to attain Sustainable Human Development.

Cross-border cooperation in Latin America and West Africa

In Latin America and West Africa, territorial cooperation initiatives at different scales and intensity already exist. This is shown by several studies and on-the-spot activities supported by DG Regio between 2010 and 2014, which explored the current state and future perspectives of cross-border cooperation in both macro-zones.⁹⁶

In **Latin America**, where the 18 concerned countries are separated by 36 land borders with a total length of around 41.000 km, a variety of continental-wide or macro-regional political cooperation structures do already exist (e.g. Organization of American States – OAS; Andean Community of Nations – CAN; Central America Integration System – SICA etc.). Also free trade and a fluid movement of goods, people and currency is promoted through the two sub-regional blocs MERCOSUR and the Andean Community, which both are working towards becoming fully integrated into a new community that is conceived after the example of the European Union (i.e. the "Union of South American Nations" - USAN). The development of cross-border cooperation in Latin America is currently linked to supranational, as well as to national and sub-national processes, where multi-level governance and subsidiarity are key issues. The role of regional and local authorities and other actors on the ground is growing, with city twinning playing a major role in this process. It is concluded that the European experience in cross-border and interregional cooperation is becoming particularly relevant and that especially cross-border cooperation (...) *will create sustainable added value and contribute to Latin American integration becoming therefore the cement of a "Latin American House". In order to succeed, the existing back-*

⁹⁵ European Commission, DG Regio (2009)

⁹⁶ AEBR (2013); AEBR (2012b); AEBR (2010); European Commission, DG Regio (2014a); European Commission, DG Regio (2014b)

*to-back situation in this process of integration must be transformed into a “face to face” relationship, while respecting the national sovereignties. Barriers have to be overcome and prejudices too. (...) Cross-border cooperation (...) at regional/local level in partnership with national governments and supra-national organisations is the most suitable instrument to pave the way for a new quality of borders as meeting places offering a wide range of opportunities. At the same time there is a chance to transform the national peripheral situation of border areas in Latin America into a more favourable internal position within the continent.*⁹⁷

Cross-border cooperation is becoming a reality at many borders in Africa, but especially at the borders in **West Africa** where the most developed cooperation processes exist up to now which were also the base for other initiatives in this continent. Cross-border development and integration is promoted at a continent-wide scale by the African Union⁹⁸ and in West Africa, more specifically, by several organisations belonging to the complex network of African regional economic communities⁹⁹ as well as by some other financial institutions.¹⁰⁰ The border reality in West Africa is very complex and challenging, because it involves at the same time great potential for developing practical cooperation as well as constellations of instability and substantial risks. Potentials emerge from cultural or linguistic similarities existing on both sides of a border and from already developed trade or social networks across borders (i.e. in some cases these exist since centuries). Instability and risks originate from the very artificial political border lines and still relatively frequent inter-state border disputes,¹⁰¹ ethnic conflicts, refugee flows, crime and illegal trafficking or the existence of irregular armed groups and terrorism. Despite of this, it is observed that in (...) *West Africa the European experience (...) is becoming particularly relevant. African stakeholders wish to use all of this unique set of experiences in order to take profit of the best practise available to develop real (...) cross-border cooperation (...) amongst most of the countries involved. This concerns above all the border areas between Mali and Burkina Faso; Niger-Nigeria, Senegal with The Gambia, Mali and Guinea-Bissau, and the coastal border with the EU Canary, Azores and Madeira islands, with a strong cooperation with Cape Verde. One specific European experience is that territorial cooperation actions are fundamental for the development of regional integration processes and progress. Some national and supra-national authorities have already begun a process of regionalisation and exchange of information with the EU, developing the concept of border areas with shared competences between national and sub-national governments.*¹⁰²

In the light of the above, **it should also be considered in how far the Interreg-approaches for transnational and interregional cooperation can be of use in Latin America and West Africa.** They could be applied for establishing complementary cooperation frameworks which allow addressing major challenges at a larger territorial scale and help securing and fostering localised cross-border cooperation.

⁹⁷ AEBR (2010), pp.46,55, 59-60

⁹⁸ The African Union has adopted several political and legal instruments to manage border issues, including the establishment of a Conference of Border Ministers and the implementation of the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) since 2007 with support of German development cooperation.

⁹⁹ Regional economic communities are groupings of individual African countries by sub-regions with aim to achieve greater economic integration in these sub-regions. Of relevance for cross-border cooperation in West Africa is the “Economic Community of West African States” (ECOWAS), which launched a cross-border initiatives programme (CIP) and a Convention on cross-border cooperation in 2006. Relevant is also the “West African Economic and Monetary Union” (UEMOA), which is a customs and currency union between eight members of ECOWAS.

¹⁰⁰ i.e. African Development Bank (AfDB), the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), the West African Development Bank (BOAD).

¹⁰¹ i.e. borders were mainly drawn up in the 19th century in the interest of the European colonial powers (i.e. Berlin West African Conference of 1884/1885) and inter-state disputes over boundaries are still very common and sometimes also escalate (i.e. in a few cases they even reached full-scale war).

¹⁰² AEBR (2012b), pp.82-86

Transnational cooperation should be launched in both macro-zones across larger contiguous areas and focus on common problems or challenges which are beyond the capacity of individual states to be solved. This cooperation should mainly involve actors with substantial competences and resources for tackling the issues at stake (e.g. national-level ministries esp. for territorially relevant policies; specialised government agencies, other relevant structures). Cooperation can promote mutual coordination and planning as well as concrete joint actions in policy fields which create favourable and stable frame conditions for developing successful and also lasting cross-border cooperation at the local level (e.g. development of cross-country transport axes; major cross-border transport infrastructures; efficient customs control procedures at border-crossing points; border security and coordinated police action against illegal migration, smuggling or trafficking, basic medical and health care etc.). Cooperation could also be established on other important themes with a cross-country dimension such as environmental degradation and its diverse sources (e.g. growing agricultural land take, de-forestation, pollution, etc.), major natural risks being often linked to climate change (e.g. droughts, floods etc.) and other threads for humans (e.g. famine, diseases). Some examples for such cooperation can be found in West Africa,¹⁰³ where large-scale cooperation structures for a joint management of the rivers Niger, Senegal and Mano or of the Lake Chad and a “Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel” already exist.

Also **interregional cooperation** should be launched in both zones, mainly for establishing a complementary framework that facilitates localised cross-border cooperation. Though this, persons from regional or local authorities and civil society organisations of different countries who are directly involved in cross-border cooperation should be given an opportunity to exchange their experiences and to engage into mutual learning processes. Such activities help avoiding that error and failures made in one place are repeated in other places (e.g. by improving practical knowledge and skills) and they also ensure that successful or innovative problem solutions developed in one area are known and replicated elsewhere (e.g. by collecting, analysing, show-casing and transferring good practices). Last but not least, such activities are important for increasing the self-consciousness and motivation of local actors and also contribute, in the medium- and long-term, to build up an endogenously developed “stock of knowledge” on how to promote development most successfully (e.g. by capitalising on past experiences).

Promoting international development objectives through an Interreg-like approach

2015 is the first ever “European Year for Development” which deals with the EU's external action and Europe's role in the world and it also marks the formal adoption of the United Nation's post-2015 development agenda entitled “*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*”.¹⁰⁴

Bearing this wider context and also the considerable benefits yielded in the past by EU territorial cooperation in mind, an Interreg-like approach can also be of use for delivering international objectives which focus on local and regional socio-cultural, economic and environmental development.

¹⁰³ AEBR (2012b), p.7

¹⁰⁴ The process of intergovernmental negotiations on this agenda was successfully concluded in August 2015 (i.e. agreement by consensus at the informal meeting of the plenary on 2 August 2015) and on 27 September 2015, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) formally adopted the 2030 Agenda including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at a summit of heads of State and Government.

For supporting the implementation of the UN's new post-2015 Agenda, it is proposed to use in partnership the EU's accumulated Interreg experience within the "United Nations Development Programme" (UNDP). More specifically, this programme supports an initiative on the "Articulation of Territorial Networks for Sustainable Human Development" (ART) which promotes a territorial approach to development based on multi-level and multi-actor partnerships to attain Sustainable Human Development. In this context, an Interreg-like approach could systematically inform national and local development processes in partner countries especially through an involvement of local, regional and national partners and through a well-structured exchange and transfer of good practices.

3.4. Key messages emerging from sections 3.1-3.3

(1) A long-term vision for EU territorial cooperation in 2040 should provide strategic thematic orientations which can be derived from the future territorial implications of important EU-wide themes and macro-societal challenges and describe - from a stakeholder perspective - the desired future development status for different territorial levels (i.e. EU territory, individual regions, cross-border & transnational areas) and also the contributions which Interreg should make to reach the desired development statuses.

(2) A review of several macro-societal challenges and important EU-wide themes suggests that **future territorial cooperation should contribute** to halting further environmental degradation and improving resource efficiency, to promoting sustainable mobility and combating climate change, to addressing territorial risks/needs and potentials relating to demographic change and finally to reducing legal and administrative obstacles at EU borders.

(3) The desired development status of the EU territory in 25 years from now is, in a nutshell, the following: *the EU territory is more prosperous and spatially cohesive as well as more sustainable and inclusive, open to our European neighbours and to the rest of the world, while being governed more efficiently and democratic and also closer to its citizens.*

(4) This general vision for the EU-territory translates into **a desired development status of individual EU regions in 2040 which can be summarised as follows:** *EU regions are in the future characterised by a modern and well-performing economy which offers enough and also valuable jobs, by a healthy environment and a good quality of life as well as by an open-minded and inclusive society that cares of people of all ages and origins.*

(5) A vision for the future of Interreg must also consider the expected long-term development status of cross-border and transnational areas. This is needed because both intermediate layers are essential for making the EU territory's future development status more concrete and also for determining how territorial cohesion in the EU can be promoted through cross-border and transnational cooperation. However, no comprehensive information on this is currently available. Existing cross-border development concepts and transnational spatial visions could be used in this respect, but past and more recent cooperation experiences in this field suggest that still significant further efforts and improvements have to be made across the EU.

(6) Future Interreg should continue to be an important and positive instrument for the European integration process which facilitates and fosters cooperation between Europe's

territories and which also has a clear function within the wider system of EU support programmes **that maintains the basic cooperation philosophy and also the three types of cooperation.** Interreg should keep and also further improve a larger number of core tasks which are needed for achieving an integrated and also sustainable socio-economic territorial development, but also maintain and further strengthen its innovative nature and laboratory character as well as its orientation towards promoting cross-cultural cooperation at grassroots level.

(7) At the same time, however, it has become clear that **the future management and implementation of Interreg programmes and projects has to become less bureaucratic.** This is mainly due to the much higher degree of complexity which results from the multinational set-up of both Interreg programme management systems and cooperation projects.

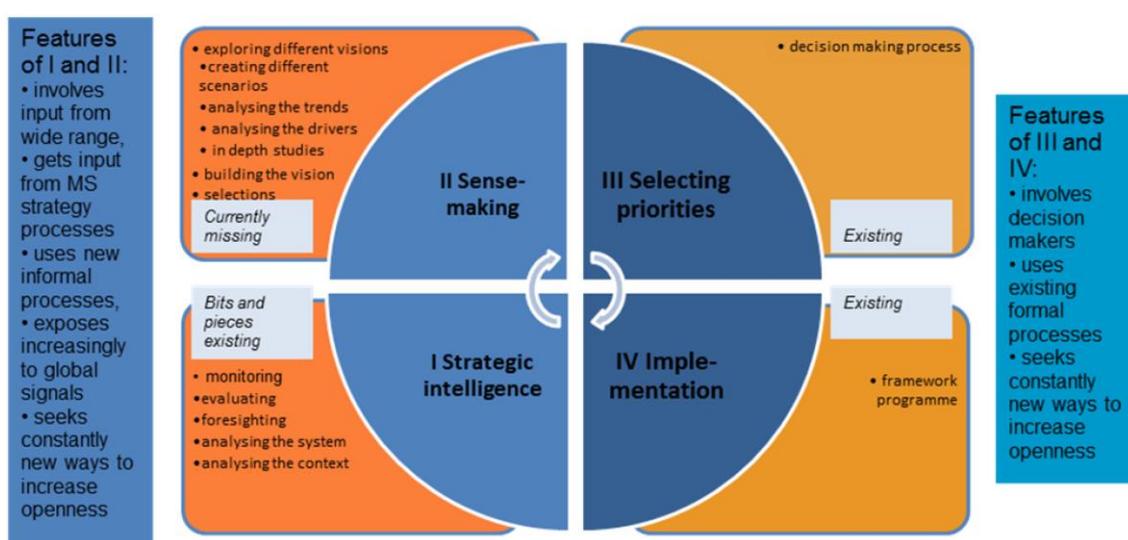
(8) A long-term vision should also promote Interreg-like territorial cooperation as an **approach for delivering international development objectives relating to socio-cultural, economic and environmental matters, with a view to stimulate peace, stability and regional integration in other parts of the world.** Latin America and West Africa are concrete examples where this could be considered, because cross-border cooperation already exists within both zones at different levels of intensity and scope. Also transnational and interregional cooperation approaches could potentially be used in both zones as complementary frameworks for addressing major societal challenges at a larger territorial scale and also help fostering or expanding localised cross-border cooperation. The EU's accumulated experiences with Interreg should also be actively shared with the United Nation's Development Programme (UNDP), which supports an initiative on the "Articulation of Territorial Networks for Sustainable Human Development" (ART).

4. Concluding remarks on a strategic multi-stakeholder process for preparing the future of Interreg beyond 2020

A general discussion about potential design principles for Interreg VI in the time after 2020 and a joint reflection on the long-term orientation of territorial cooperation up to 2040 requires a structured approach for handling, “digesting” and further processing the expectedly large number of contributions and views that will be received on these matters. **It is therefore deemed useful to consider a strategic process for preparing the medium- and long-term future of territorial cooperation which also includes “sense-making” (see: box 6) as one key element.** The set-up and organisation of such a process can be inspired by another strategic EU-level foresight process which was established by the Commission’s Directorate-General Research and Innovation (DG RTD).

DG RTD established this process in 2011 with a view to enhance collective forward looking intelligence, to help the EU in tackling upcoming societal challenges and to devise comprehensive and pro-active European Research & Innovation Policies. An overall framework was designed for this process (see: figure 6) with a view to providing a clear link between forward looking activities and the processes where formal decisions regarding strategies, selection of priorities and design of their implementation are made. An important element of this framework is a systematic process of collecting, analysing and making sense of all strategic intelligence, in order to be able to provide the necessary evidence and future perspectives or options needed to make enlightened decisions about selection of priorities and design of implementation. Sense-making was also expected to reveal any gaps there might be in strategic intelligence, thus providing insight on how strategic intelligence activities can be further developed to better support evidence-based policy making. Finally, this framework was also sought to be a platform for mutual learning, shared understanding of future European and national challenges and identification of promising areas where pooling resources and launching joint activities can make a real difference.¹⁰⁵

Figure 6: Basic features of the DG RTD’s strategic foresight process



Source: European Commission, DG Research and Innovation (2015b), p.2

¹⁰⁵ See: European Commission, DG Research and Innovation (2015a); European Commission, DG Research and Innovation (2015b)

Box 6: The “why” and “what” of sense-making

Why sense-making?

In a world that is growing “smaller” but ever more complex, where unpredictable events and shifting political, economic, environmental, and social conditions challenge us at every turn, we all need to make better sense of what is going on. We should all explore the wider system, create maps that are plausible representations of what is happening, and act in the system to improve our understanding of reality. We will never capture it all, and never know how close we are. The best we can do is to make sensemaking a core individual, team, and organizational capability so that we can break through our fears of the unknown and lead in the face of complexity and uncertainty. (Ancona, 2012, p.15)

What is sense-making?

Sense-making, **in its most basic and personalised focus**, is the process by which people give meaning to experience (Wikipedia, 2015). Sense-making is also a process through which (...) *people work to understand issues or events that are novel, ambiguous, confusing, or in some other way violate expectations* (Maitlis/Christianson, 2014, p.57).

In organisational contexts (Maitlis/Christianson, 2014, p.62; European Commission, DG Research and Innovation (2015a, p.2; Wikipedia, 2015), sense-making is used to focus attention on the largely cognitive activity of framing experienced situations as meaningful. It is a collaborative process of creating shared awareness and understanding of relations between people, places, and events out of different individuals' perspectives and varied interests, in order to create mental models which then enable anticipation of behaviours and effective action. Sense-making is not the same as interpretation, and even less similar to decision-making.

Organisational sense-making is frequently attributed **seven constituent “properties” or ideas** and each of these aspects interact and intertwine as individuals interpret events. Sense-making is ...

- (1) identity construction and context identification, for getting an own understanding in relation to the world around us;
- (2) retrospection in time, for shaping experience into meaningful patterns according to our memory of experience;
- (3) about enacting the environments that people face through dialogues and narratives, with the peoples' socialisation background being determinant for what becomes sensible;
- (4) a social activity in that plausible stories are preserved and retained or shared, with the narratives being an evolving product of conversations with ourselves and with others;
- (5) ongoing or continuous, because the world and our interactions with the world and our understandings of the world are constantly changing.
- (6) building on extracting cues from the context, in order to help deciding on what information is relevant and what explanations are acceptable;
- (7) a matter of plausibility and sufficiency (and less a matter of accuracy and completeness), as we neither have the perceptual nor cognitive resources to know everything exhaustively.

Future-oriented sense-making can be understood as a process which (...) *seeks to construct intersubjective meanings, images, and schemes in conversation where these meanings and interpretations create or project images of future objects and phenomena* (Maitlis/Christianson, 2014, p.68).

Sources: Maitlis/Christianson (2014); Ancona, (2012); European Commission, DG Research and Innovation (2015a) ; Wikipedia (2015) at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sensemaking>

Features of the strategic Interreg process and questions to be addressed

Bearing the above in mind, it becomes clear that a strategic process for preparing the future of Interreg could – mutatis mutandis – apply the basic design of the DG RTD framework. This means that it should comprise insight and foresight phases (i.e. strategic intelligence & sense making) as well as strategy and action phases (i.e. selecting priorities & implementation). This

process should be continuous and long-term oriented and therefore not be limited to the time-sequence of individual programming phases.

The strategic process should include a variety of territorial cooperation stakeholders (i.e. from the public, private and associative sectors at the EU, national, regional or local levels) as well as the scientific community and other concerned practitioners (e.g. evaluators). The process-level involvement of these actors will be different during the four phases, with an expectedly broad participation during the foresight and insight phases and a more focussed participation during the strategy and action phases. Accordingly, appropriate working mechanisms and tools for ensuring participation would have to be arranged for each of the different phases.

By such a continuous process, it will be possible to address a broad variety of questions linked to the medium- and long-term development of Interreg. Among these should also be a number of questions which can be directly derived from the contents of the present background document.

(1) How can Interreg be successful in delivering on territorial cohesion so that the desired development status of the EU territory in 2040 can be reached? The strategic process should, on basis of the already existing common ground established by past debates on territorial cohesion, TA2020 and the EU2020 strategy/its follower, help making the three main contributing dimensions of territorial cooperation more concrete. In view of “achieving a stronger territorial integration of cooperation areas”, the process should in particular look at the nature and scope of functional exchange relations that are vital for this and also examine factors which are likely to create new territorial fragmentation in the future. In view of “improving the territorial coordination of policies in cooperation areas”, the process should in particular look at the interplay and complementarity between Interreg, other Community or domestic policies and existing or future EU-level macro-regional strategies. In view of “achieving a better territorial governance of cooperation areas”, the process should finally examine the basic conditions and also pro-active approaches for establishing a joint and also durable “problem-solving capacity” in cross-border and transnational cooperation areas.

(2) What is the appropriate geographical perimeter of Interreg programmes ? Should some of the larger cross-border programme areas again become smaller in the future? A merger of smaller and neighbouring cross-border programmes into a larger programme covering an entire border and also an extension of cross-border areas has taken place at several occasions in the past. This can indeed be understood from a strategic management point-of-view (esp. lowering the administrative burden at the EU-level), but there are also bottom-up views arguing that smaller and more “proximity-based” programme areas would help to achieve more concrete territorial results. How to ensure flexibility in order to be able to provide the appropriate geographical scope for the issue tackled?

(3) What is needed for continuing the concept of results-orientation under future territorial cooperation after 2020? Previous EU-wide and programme-level evaluations show that territorial cooperation generates a wide range of immaterial (or intangible) outcomes leading to actual improvements, which both are hardly or even not at all captured by the traditional (and current) output and result indicators. Such problems exist in case of measuring learning effects and the associated improvements, but also in relation to many other soft activities which lead to a change of collective mind-set or behaviour. Problems also exist for capturing the “big picture of change”, for example, when it comes to identifying factors which

enhance “integration” of transnational or cross-border areas (i.e. which ones are linked to cooperation results) and also when the extent of “increased integration” should be measured (i.e. this requires a baseline value, which in nearly all cases does not exist). This calls, should the results-based approach be continued in the future, for a thorough review of the currently applied indicators and also for the elaboration of a measurement approach which is better adapted to the particularities and needs of territorial cooperation. Furthermore, when doing so, it should also be considered how a renewed results-based approach can be brought closer to the principles of “results-based accountability”.

(4) How can stakeholders generate clearly results-oriented cooperation projects in the future? Earlier reflections on the newly introduced results-orientation show that considerable challenges are likely to emerge from this concept for future project-level cooperation. The strategic process should therefore help establishing a comprehensive stock of knowledge across all three strands of Interreg which informs about (1) programme-level approaches or procedures used for generating and selecting cooperation projects with high potential, (2) concrete projects which achieved outputs strongly contributing to programme-level results and finally (3) the processes by which such project contributions were actually achieved (or not achieved), preferably through detailed theme-specific analyses.

(5) What could (and should) key players of territorial cooperation undertake “outside” the future Interreg support framework? The strategic process should identify solutions or pathways for becoming more independent from Interreg funding and also highlight situations requiring alternative forms of action, because local or regional authorities alone cannot achieve improvements or change. The first case merits to be considered carefully, because it cannot be assumed that every theme being potentially relevant for territorial cooperation will continue to receive Interreg support in the future. An important driver behind this is the close linkage between thematic concentration and results-orientation, which is expected to persist after 2020. This implies that selective policy choices will have to be made in the future, which can involve that some prior fields of activity might not any longer be supported. If, however, these activities are deemed still important for cooperation, then new solutions for maintaining them need to be searched for. The second case relates more specifically to cross-border cooperation, because many sources for existing legal and administrative border obstacles cannot (and will not) be removed alone by local or regional authorities. Therefore, complementary actions involving other more competent levels of government are needed to achieve progress in this respect (e.g. bilateral or multilateral cooperation & coordination between national governments; new EU-level legislation etc.).

5. Annexes

Annex 1: Conclusions of Secretary of State Camille Gira on the occasion of the conference “25 years of Interreg”, 16th September 2015, Luxembourg

“25 years of Interreg”

15-16 September 2015

**Maison du Savoir
Esch-Belval, Luxembourg**

16th September

Conclusions of Secretary of State Camille Gira

(Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure, Luxembourg)

These two days had indeed a very charged agenda. But they are only a first step towards the future and therefore I would like to invite you warmly to revisit the presentations and to use them in your further work. All conference materials will be uploaded to the dedicated website.

(1) Interreg exists now since a quarter of a century and **our two-days conference** celebrating this anniversary **has clearly revealed two essential aspects:**

- When **looking back on 25 years of Interreg**, it becomes clear that territorial cooperation is central to the construction of a common European space and that it is a cornerstone of the European integration process.
- When **looking ahead -to the next 25 years** it becomes evident that we need a clear vision for the desired territorial situation in 2040 and also concrete expectations about the ways and means by which this vision can be reached.

(2) The important **European added value of Interreg** becomes especially evident if it is looked at from four different perspectives.

- **Interreg has a socio-economic added value.** It initiated additional cooperative socio-economic development processes in smaller and larger contiguous areas stretching across the political borders of European countries (cross-border and transnational

cooperation), but also in individual cities and regions across the EU (interregional cooperation).

- **Interreg has an added value for sustainable development.** It initiated additional joint approaches and cooperative solutions which helped to address or tackle environmental and climate change related problems that are transgressing national borders.
- **Interreg has a socio-cultural added value.** It established an increasingly dense European cooperation culture between organisations and individuals. This also allowed building up a considerable stock of new knowledge through joint working relations at programme- and project level as well as through mutual learning processes. By all this, Interreg has enhanced a better understanding between different cultures and communities in Europe.
- **Finally, Interreg has also an important political-institutional added value.** It significantly widened and intensified political and administrative exchange relations across Europe. This introduced a European perspective into the day-to-day activities of public administrations and the delivery of many public policies at all levels. Furthermore, also a new practice of cooperative self-organisation was initiated between regions and local authorities from different countries which would not exist at this scale without Interreg.

For all this we should be aware, what changes the Digital Revolution has brought, especially for rural and remote areas. Today it is possible to have access to the same information at the same time and also to be well connected to others, whether you are living in a big city or in a small rural village. And also cross-border cooperation between small villages is made easier. But these new opportunities for the European territories cannot be fully exploited, especially for job creation, by just providing the new technology. It needs amongst others know-how and training and we have seen a good example of how to organise this effectively from the Interreg IVC project ENGAGE.

(3) The contributions from **outside “the Interreg box”** showed that there are a number of aspects, which are worth being considered attentively in order to improve future territorial cooperation.

On the one hand, these are six key elements of human cooperation, which **emerge from behavioural and evolutionary biology**. They were presented in form of a “cooperation hexagon”:

- **trust building** as the foundational layer for cooperation to work,
- **communication,**
- **reputation,**

- **fairness** as a crucial aspect for cooperation to last in time,
- **enforcement**, in the form of awards and punishments,
- **and we-identity**.

These all are possible entry points in order to improve cooperation

On the other hand, the **theory of diffusion of innovation offers** a more integrated understanding of innovation and of the different steps and aspects for its diffusion.

It may help to better understand how to establish Interreg more firmly as an “EU-wide laboratory” that develops and experiments new ideas and innovative approaches in a wide range of themes and public policies.

We could see Interreg as a powerful instrument for the diffusion of innovation across Europe.

(4) Later on we directed our view away from the EU context **towards other macro-geographical regions of the world**. We could see that the basic cooperation philosophy of Interreg is also in Latin America and West Africa considered relevant for promoting peace, stability and regional integration.

Cross-border cooperation already exists in both zones, but also transnational and interregional cooperation approaches could potentially be of use. They could establish complementary frameworks which allow

- to address major challenges at a larger territorial scale;
- fostering or further expanding the existing localised cross-border cooperation.

2015 is also the European year of development as promoted under the EU development cooperation. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) supports an initiative on the Articulation of Territorial Networks for Sustainable Human Development (ART). In the light of the new post 2015 global development agenda the UNDP-ART initiative proposes to use in partnership the European Interreg experience for the support of the implementation of the new global agenda. Especially with the involvement of local, regional and national partners and the well structured exchange and transfer of good practices Interreg could systematically inform national and local development processes in partner countries.

At the same time, however, also Interreg can learn from cooperation experiences in other parts of the world.

(5) Two general visions appear from a summary of stakeholder replies to a survey conducted by DG Regio, which asked **for the desired future status of the EU territory and of individual EU regions:**

- In 25 years from now, the **EU territory** will be more prosperous and spatially cohesive as well as more sustainable and inclusive, open to our European neighbours and to the rest of the world, while being governed more efficiently and democratic and also closer to its citizens.
- In 25 years from now, **individual EU regions** will be well connected with good accessibility and will have a healthy environment, which offers a good quality of life as well as by an open-minded and inclusive society that cares for people of all ages and origins.

(6) It is obvious that these general visions need to be made more concrete at various levels. The efforts of the municipality of Norrköping (Sweden) show impressively how this can be achieved at the local level. The **ESPON** map showing national territorial visions, made clear, that there is need for stronger coordination. Therefore further concretisation is also needed at the cross-border and transnational levels. But current practices suggest that there is still considerable scope for further improvements. Therefore, many more long-term cross-border and transnational development concepts should be elaborated and also be applied in practice.

(7) Territorial research evidence, for example from the ESPON programme, suggests that several challenges for our societies and other EU-wide developments have important spatial implications which need to be considered by future territorial cooperation. Interreg should therefore contribute to

- halting further environmental degradation,
- improving resource efficiency,
- promoting sustainable mobility,
- combating climate change,
- mitigating the effects of demographic change,
- reducing legal or administrative obstacles which will continue to exist at many EU borders.

(8) The stakeholders responding to the survey realised for this conference expect that, in overall terms, Interreg remains an important and positive instrument for the European integration process which facilitates and fosters cooperation between Europe's territories.

For this to be achieved, **Interreg should**

- have a clear function within the system of EU support programmes,
- maintain its basic cooperation philosophy (and the three types of cooperation),
- focus on promoting an integrated and sustainable socio-economic territorial development,
- maintain and further strengthen its character as a “laboratory” for experimentation and innovation,
- continue to promote cross-cultural cooperation at grassroots level
- and should be less bureaucratic.

(9) Our conference has clearly illustrated that there is no alternative to cooperation.

Considering this, the Luxembourg EU-Council Presidency has already become active in a number of points:

- it launched a discussion on a voluntary instrument in order to overcome legal and administrative obstacles and,
- it organized a workshop on the potential of small and medium cities in cross-border polycentric regions.

Furthermore there will be an agenda point “Territorial Cooperation” at the General Affairs Council on 18th November, for which Luxembourg is currently preparing an input paper taking into consideration the conclusions of this conference.

But let me end with some personal reflections:

Nowadays we can see that more and more people are moving to a sharing economy. At the same time there is a move from competition to cooperation and we should build bridges, not fences!

I think you should communicate even more about your work and I hope that you have regained energy and hope during the last two days for the challenges ahead.

And last but not least, I would like to thank all those who have made this fabulous event possible!

Annex 2: Prioritisation of cross-border cooperation (CBC) potentials and transnational cooperation (TNC) potentials under the various IPs

TOs	IPs	Overall priority levels for ...	
		CBC	TNC
1	IP 1(a) enhancing R&I infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest;		
	IP 1(b) promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, (...);		
2	IP 2(a) extending broadband deployment and the roll-out of high-speed networks and supporting the adoption of emerging technologies and networks for the digital economy;		
	IP 2(b) developing ICT products and services, e-commerce, and enhancing demand for ICT;		
	IP 2(c) strengthening ICT applications for e-government, e-learning, e-inclusion, e-culture and e-health;		
3	IP 3(a) promoting entrepreneurship, in particular by facilitating the economic exploitation of new ideas and fostering the creation of new firms, including through business incubators;		
	IP 3(b) developing and implementing new business models for SMEs, in particular with regard to internationalisation;		
	IP 3(c) supporting the creation and the extension of advanced capacities for product and service development;		
	IP 3(d) supporting the capacity of SMEs to grow in regional, national and international markets, and to engage in innovation processes;		
4	IP 4(a) promoting the production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources;		
	IP 4(b) promoting energy efficiency and renewable energy use in enterprises;		
	IP 4(c) supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector;		
	IP 4(d) developing and implementing smart distribution systems that operate at low and medium voltage levels;		
	IP 4(e) promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures;		
	IP 4(f) promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies;		
	IP 4(g) promoting the use of high-efficiency co-generation of heat and power based on useful heat demand;		
5	IP 5(a) supporting investment for adaptation to climate change, including ecosystem-based approaches		
	IP 5(b) promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems;		
6	IP 6(a) investing in the waste sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements;		
	IP 6(b) investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements;		
	IP 6(c) conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage;		
	IP 6(d) protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure;		
	IP 6(e) taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures;		
	IP 6(f) promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution;		
	IP 6(g) supporting industrial transition towards a resource- efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors;		
7	IP 7(a) supporting a multimodal Single European Transport Area by investing in the TEN-T;		
	IP 7(b) enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes;		
	IP 7(c) developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility;		
	IP 7(d) developing and rehabilitating comprehensive, high quality and interoperable railway systems, and promoting noise-reduction measures;		
	IP 7(e) improving energy efficiency and security of supply through the development of smart energy distribution, storage and transmission systems and through the integration of distributed generation from renewable sources;		
8	IP 8(a) supporting the development of business incubators and investment support for self-employment, micro-enterprises and business creation (...)		
	IP 8(b) supporting employment-friendly growth through the development of endogenous potential as part of a territorial strategy for specific areas, including the conversion of declining industrial regions and enhancement of accessibility to, and development of, specific natural and cultural resources;		
	IP 8(c) supporting local development initiatives and aid for structures providing neighbourhood services to create jobs, (...)		
	IP 8(d) investing in infrastructure for employment services;		
9	IP 9(a) investing in health and social infrastructure which contributes to national, regional and local development, reducing inequalities in terms of health status, promoting social inclusion through ...		
	IP 9(b) providing support for physical, economic and social regeneration of deprived communities in urban and rural areas		
	IP 9(c) providing support for social enterprises		
	IP 9(d) undertaking investment in the context of community-led local development strategies		
TO 10: investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning			
TO 11: enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration			
= Very High Priority Level		= High Priority Level	= Medium Priority Level
			= Low Priority Level

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