

WHEN TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION BUILDS EUROPE

- More than **3 000** cooperation projects approved
- More than **29 700** beneficiaries across Europe
- More than **4,5bn€** invested in transnational cooperation since 2000
- Around **250** events organised to bring Europeans closer
- Around **1 300** trainings and capacity buildings events
- Around **50 000** entrepreneurs and SMEs involved

*These data may be estimations. Calculated on transnational programmes' declarations.



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Brussels, Belgium

INTERREG TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES

TOGETHER AT THE EUROPEAN WEEK OF REGIONS AND CITIES



ON 10/10/2018, INTERREG TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES ORGANISED A WORKSHOP ON THE FUTURE OF INTERREG TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION, BASED ON A COLLECTIVE REFLEXION ON 3 THEMES: *MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES, FUNCTIONAL AREAS AND POLICY OBJECTIVES.*

The workshop was introduced by Thomas Wobben, CoR's Director for legislative works, who insisted on the importance of a long term investment strategy for EU, based on unity and diversity. For this purpose, Cohesion Policy - and therefore Interreg, remains key as it responds to specific citizens needs. When talking about transnational cooperation programmes, territories are essential. On the other hand, approaches based on macro-regional strategies, sea basins and functional areas are hardly needed. For the time being, European Union has to face reduced budget which leads to severe cuts. It is crucial in fact to maintain transnational cooperation budgets at least at the same level as it currently stands and to foster even more cooperation.



Otherwise, programmes compete unhealthily with one another. It also remains essential to defend different ways of cooperation, by working together and not limiting our focus on the ones better endowed. Specific mentions were made to sea/maritime basins, which should not be limited to transnational cooperation and functional areas as integral components of territorial cooperation due to historic backgrounds and local knowledge generated. In short, transnational cooperation should focus on territory needs, results and on its contribution to Cohesion Policy and the wider EU project.

Several key points were raised in the thematic roundtables.

Several criteria should be taken into account when defining Functional Areas (FA) for transnational cooperation programmes: flows of people and goods (natural, economic, knowledge, environmental, trades, energy etc.), historic background as well as transport/mobility. Moreover, expected and existing challenges, the culture of cooperation and difficulties to measure the above-mentioned flows should be considered. In this sense, OECD works were mentioned as reference. Transnational Programmes face several challenges when responding to FA objectives such as differences regarding legislative framework, territorial capacity, politics and administration and multilevel governance. Overlapping can't be avoided as a territory can be included in several FA.

Macro-regional strategies (MRS) and transnational cooperation programmes are complementary as MRS guarantee higher political visibility and transnational programmes contribute to MRS implementation. In the future, the approach for TNP could be different: not addressing priorities in a sectoral way, but having a more horizontal approach and thinking more of the challenges. Another option is to consider TNP as an instrument providing framework projects that would kick off investments or infrastructure to be completed by other regional/national or EU funds. In the future, the financial support of mainstream programmes to MRS will be essential otherwise too many expectations are wrongly posed on TNP. Few questions remain key as awareness raising, and the commitment of mainstream programmes' contribution to MRS implementation.

Regarding transnational cooperation and policy objectives: programmes should focus on each territory's relevance, keeping specific attention to methods replication. An open and horizontal approach should be guaranteed, avoiding limitations. Concerning thematics, focus should be put on smarter Europe (PO1) - when working on exchange of knowledge, Greener and Low Carbon Europe (PO2) and more connected Europe (PO3). More social Europe (PO4) should be financed through other funding.