



INTERact

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Background Paper

National/regional contact/info points in Interreg programmes

Experiences in 2007-2013 and plans for 2014-2020
Lessons learnt leading to continuity or discontinuity?



Background of this paper

The aim of this background paper is to draw a picture on how national/regional contact/info points have been used by Interreg programmes in the 2007-2013 programming period and what are the plans for the 2014-2020 period - with possible lessons learnt from 2007-2013 having influenced the set-up in 2014-2020.

Programmes contributing to the analysis

For this purpose, all CBC, transnational and the interregional INTERREG IV C/INTERREG Europe programmes were invited in April 2015 to contribute to a short online survey and to submit related programme documents as e.g. the respective chapters of the Cooperation Programme, the description of the management and control system etc.

23 respectively 85% of the respondents were CBC programmes. Also when measuring against the overall number of CBC programmes in the 2014-2020 period, the CBC programmes were the most active responding compared to the transnational and interregional programmes. 23 contributing CBC programmes constitute 38% of all 2014-2020 CBC programmes while 3 contributing transnational programmes constitute only 20% of all transnational programmes in 2014-2020.² That conversely 62% of all CBC programmes did not respond to the survey might have to do with the fact that not all had/have national/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013 and/or 2014-2020 - hence did not consider it relevant to contribute to the survey.

PROGRAMME ¹
Cross-border cooperation (23)
BE/NL Flanders-Netherlands
DE/AT/CH/LI Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein
DE/CZ Bavaria-Czech Republic
DE/NL Germany-Netherlands
DK/DE Fehmarnbelt Region Sjælland - Ostholstein-Lübeck-Plön
EE/LV Estonia-Latvia
FI/SE/EE/LV Central Baltic
FR/UK/BE/NL 2 Seas
IE/UK Ireland-Wales
IT/AT Italia-Austria
LT/PL Lithuania-Poland
LV/LT Latvia-Lithuania
PL/SE/DK/LT/DE South Baltic
PL/SK Poland-Slovakia
RO/BG Romania-Bulgaria
RO/HU Romania-Hungary
SE/DK/NO Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak
SE/FI/NO Botnia Atlantica
SE/FI/NO Nord
SI/AT Slovenia-Austria
SI/HU Slovenia-Hungary
SK/HU Slovakia-Hungary
SK/AT Slovakia-Austria
Transnational (3)
Atlantic Area Programme
Baltic Sea Region Programme
MED Programme
Interregional (1)
INTERREG IV C

¹ In case several persons answered the questionnaire for the same programme, the answers were merged and possible 'contradictions' sorted out by e.g. checking with the programmes. It has to be noted that not all respondents have necessarily answered to all questions. Therefore, there are differences in the number of received answers to each questions. The percentage values in this document are, if not otherwise stated, percentages of the total number of answers received to the concrete question.

² As only one of the four interregional programmes was invited to contribute to this background paper, interregional programmes are not included here.

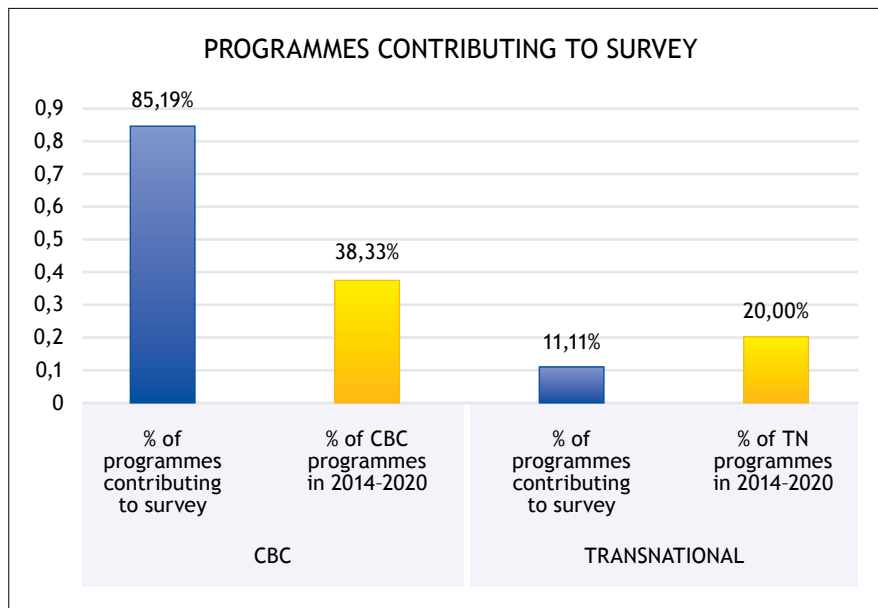


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beyond. INTERACT is the hub for exchanging information and best practises among cooperation programmes. INTERACT also works to make project results more visible. Its services, seminars and advice help streamline the work of cooperation programmes, allowing them to devote more time and energy to their projects.

CHART 1



In this context, it has to be mentioned that not all programmes contributing, not all documents sent in had yet been approved by the European Commission and/or the programme's Member States, programming committees and task forces etc. Therefore, the situation described in this background paper, especially for 2014-2020, cannot be considered final. However, it provides a good picture about the main aspects, arguments and 2007-2013 lessons learnt regarding the integration, cooperation and use of national/regional contact/info points in addition and relation to the programme's J(T)S.

Programme continuity from 2007-2013 to 2014-2020

At the same time, it should be noted that in 78% (21 programmes) the programme continues from 2007-2013 to 2014-2020 with the same authorities/institutions acting as MA, JS, AA etc. Only in 22% (6 programmes), the programme is not continued the same way in 2014-2020 but e.g. has been merged with another programme or the MA function has been moved across the border to the other Member State participating in the programme, or any other relevant structural and set-up change. Meaning changes took place in about every fifth programme.

Continuity of national/regional contact/info points from 2007-2013 to 2014-2020

As this background paper is about the lessons learnt from 2007-2013 and the plans for 2014-2020, the analysis should start with a simple overview on which of the responding programmes did have national/regional info/contact points in 2007-2013 and which will have them in 2014-2020 - either continuing the practice from 2007-2013 or as a new feature in 2014-2020.

TABLE 1: National/regional info/contact points in 2007-2013 and/or 2014-2020³

National/regional info/contact points in... ⁴	...2014-2020: Yes	...2014-2020: No
...2007-2013: Yes	CBC BE/NL Flanders-Netherlands CBC DE/CZ Bavaria-Czech Republic CBC DE/NL Germany-Netherlands CBC EE/LV Estonia-Latvia CBC FI/SE/EE/LV Central Baltic CBC FR/UK/BE/NL 2 Seas CBC IE/UK Ireland-Wales CBC LT/PL Lithuania-Poland CBC PL/SE/DK/LT/DE South Baltic CBC PL/SK Poland-Slovakia CBC RO/BG Romania-Bulgaria CBC RO/HU Romania-Hungary CBC SE/FI/NO Botnia Atlantica CBC SE/FI/NO Nord CBC SI/HU Slovenia-Hungary CBC SK/HU Slovakia-Hungary Atlantic Area Programme	CBC DK/DE Fehmarnbelt Region Sjælland - Ostholstein-Lübeck-Plön ⁵
...2007-2013: No	CBC LV/LT Latvia-Lithuania CBC SK/AT Slovakia-Austria	CBC IT/AT Italia-Austria CBC SE/DK/NO Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak CBC SI/AT Slovenia-Austria Baltic Sea Region Programme INTERREG IV C

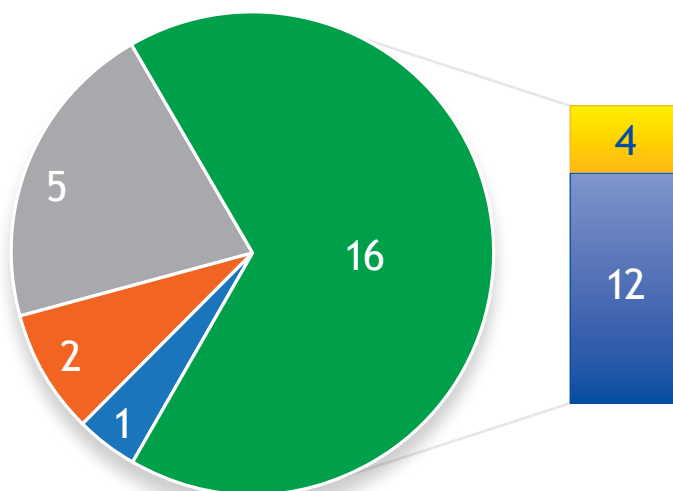
Advantages and disadvantages/challenges of having national/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013

The same can be displayed in a slightly different way, looking at the programmes which had national/regional info/contact points in 2007-2013 and kept them in 2014-2020, separated into those where the set-up has remained the same and those where it has changed from 2007-2013 to 2014-2020.

CHART 2⁶

CONTINUITY (OF SET-UP)

- National/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013, but not in 2014-2020
- Not in 2007-2013, but now in 2014-2020
- Neither in 2007-2013 nor in 2014-2020
- In both 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 and set-up, roles and responsibilities kept
- In both 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 and set-up, roles and responsibilities changed



³ Two programmes (not included here) only partly filled in the survey (with national/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013).

⁴ NB! It can be assumed that many programmes neither having national/regional info/contact points in 2007-2013 nor in 2014-2020 did not consider answering to the survey relevant.

⁵ The programme was merged in 2014-2020 into the CBC Germany-Denmark Programme.

⁶ One of the 17 programmes responding that they had and will have national/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 did not answer if the set-up, roles and responsibilities will remain the same or change. Therefore, in Chart 2 only 16 programmes are displayed. The one (blue) programme having had them only in 2007-2013 was merged into another programme in 2014-2020.

This can then be complemented with the advantages and challenges mentioned by those programmes having had national/regional info/contact points in 2007-2013. In addition, so called follow-up questions have been formulated in the below Table 2. These questions could serve as a starting point for a further exchange and discussion with Interreg programmes e.g. at relevant upcoming INTERACT events.

TABLE 2: Developments from 2007-2013 to 2014-2020 and follow-up questions

ADVANTAGES IN 2007-2013	DISADVANTAGES/CHALLENGES IN 2007-2013
Answers from programmes having national/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013, but not in 2014-2020	
Decentralisation, to be next to the project partners	Ensuring to work with the same methods
Follow-up question: Were the identified disadvantages/challenges in 2007-2013 the reason not to keep the national/regional contact/info points in 2014-2020? ⁷	
Answers from programmes having national/regional contact/info points both in 2007-2013 and in 2014-2020...	
... with the same set-up, roles and responsibilities in 2014-2020 as in 2007-2013	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer to, hence short distances to the beneficiaries (less travel time and more personal contacts) • Better knowledge of the respective region where the contact/info point is located • To get the programme known in all regions in the programme area • To serve as source of knowledge when it comes to synergies with other programmes (e.g. national programmes) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No disadvantages, but (practical) challenges • Different interpretations of certain issues • Lack of communication between contact points • “Since the contact points finance their own work it varied from region to region for example how many arrangements each contact point performed and how active they were in spreading information.”
Follow-up question: Were the identified advantages in 2007-2013 the reason to keep the national/regional contact/info points in 2014-2020 with the same set-up, roles and responsibilities?	
... with some changes in set-up, roles and responsibilities in 2014-2020	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantage for the JTS regarding Programme events (e.g. organisation of certain events was easier) • Wider geographical presence of the programme, bringing the programme closer to potential applicants and project partners (by having someone in each programme country) • Advantage for the JTS [in Country A] with regard to applicants and beneficiaries (info point being contact point for beneficiaries [in Country B]) • Qualitative, first-line dissemination of information towards the target groups for project acquisition throughout the entire programme region • Effective and close cooperation between JTS and the Contact Points in the field of project development (advice to applicants, joint organisation of consultations etc.) • Contact Point is closer to beneficiaries: hands on role to develop genuine CBC projects; efficient flow of (technical) questions from the field to the JTS (for example, questions from (potential) project partners concerning subsidiary costs, modification requests, legislative framework, etc.) • Easier for beneficiaries to get support: quick and easy accessible, regional accompaniment for (potential) project partners; tailor-made feedback to (potential) project partners in the field • Ability to connect local actors • “Their aftercare function meant that they “stayed” with the project in an informal capacity outside the control environment to offer advice and assistance throughout the whole project timeframe.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of tasks (uneven in different countries) • Keeping the information point person busy enough • The internal communication and coordination of staff situated in different locations • Very loose cooperation and communication ties between the JS and the contact points (feedback from the contact points on their performed activities sometimes dependant on the their “goodwill”) - Keeping info points as part of the JTS team • To ensure that all staff have the same level of information and offer a consistent and co-ordinated level of advice and guidance • Insufficient involvement during later stages of programme implementation (promotion of programme results) • Increased and time-demanding measures have to be put in place in order to ensure constant and univocal coordination of the programme. Both internally, within and between the executing programme levels, as well as externally, between the JTS/project managers and the target groups, communication on aspects such as procedures, rules, monitoring, etc. needs to be uniform and clear. • Double administration: coordination and hosting body of JTS and employer of info points being different organisations in different countries (coordination from two directions) • Progress reports of the contact points directly sent to the MA, thus not giving the JTS the possibility to systematically analyse the tasks performed by the contact points

⁷ The only programme with such discontinuity answering to the survey was actually merged into another programme in 2014-2020. Hence, this question is, in this concrete case, obsolete.

- Provision of first information, communication and advising project and project partners in local/national languages, hereby language barrier omitted
- Helping in understanding national legislation of another country
- Strong commitment of individual contact point colleagues
- Dedicated role, firmly centred on the ... programme
- Broad knowledge of and working experience with wide array of target groups active in the field, of their expertise and of their potential surplus value for cross-border cooperation projects.
- Able to signpost possibilities in other EU/ETC programmes.

- At arm's length and difficult to really manage and track work. Reliant on host organisations who can have different priorities than the programme
- JTS/MA has limited possibility to influence/change performance of the contact points without any legal relation between JTS/MA and the contact points.
- Ideally, info points should have at least one representative in each of the [participating] countries.
- Inexperience of the JTS staff, especially the Head of JTS, with managing such setting⁸
- Ability of staff members to work effectively as a team
- Finding the right person for whom such distance setting away from the main office would not cause major problems
- Risk of duality in the role of the info/contact points staff due to "institutional link" between the staff and their regional/local host organisation (supporting project preparation and assessing projects with a potential accentuation of regional policy priorities, however, still within the thematic framework of the programme). "At times, the added value of cross-border cooperation ... did not always seem to be pursued to its maximum potential."
- "The Regional Contact Points on the [Country A] side were not financed from the TA, the level of cooperation depended basically on the individual involvement of the Regional Contact Points employees."

Follow-up question: Are the changes in 2014-2020 the response to the identified disadvantages/challenges in 2007-2013?

...or more generally, why did you keep the contact/info points in 2014-2020?

- Benefits as identified for 2007-2013, with advantages clearly outweighing the remaining challenges
- Contact/info points were seen as very relevant on the ground and particularly in project development and getting partners together
- Operational structure of the programme functioned well and received mostly positive feedback from both programme partners and project partners in the field.
- "The partners of the program greatly value the established basis of cooperative involvement, and therefore chose to continue the successful deployment of regional project managers in order to guarantee accessible and qualitative propelling and accompaniment of cross-border projects."
- The presence ... has been identified as best practice therefore it was logical to retain this function in 2014-2020
- Programme authorities wished to keep and increase
- Will and intention to keep the organisation as alike as possible
- Good practise, established methods, importance for regions
- Regional Network, good contacts/closer to the projects/beneficiaries
- Direct and close information sources for applicants
- Applicants need for personal contacts mainly for those who have never submitted an application before
- Project development support
- In order to facilitate circulation of information about the programme
- Better promotion of the programme in all regions of the programme area
- Involvement in communication and dissemination tasks
- Constitute the local source of information, preferred by some beneficiaries
- Helpful in contacts with the local media
- The role in the smooth implementation of the projects/programme
- Language reasons, tackling the language barrier
- Understanding national legislation
- Different mentality of people
- Political decision, but also the need to be present in both [Country A] and [Country B].

⁸ It should be mentioned that this is a self-assessment by the respective Head of Secretariat.

Why to have national/regional contact/info points now in 2014-2020?

As shown above, there are also few programmes which did not have national/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013, but will have such now in 2014-2020. It is actually interesting to look at the reasons provided for this change. From the answers provided by the programmes, no direct link can be made to the advantages presented (above) by those programmes. Rather,

- It was requested by ... National Authority in 2014-2020 to have Info Point in ...
- The function of MA has moved from [Country A] to [Country B]. The JS has the main seat in [Country B] now and its staff is governed by rules of the ... Ministry. The programme partners want bi-cultural staff in the JS thus a JS branch office in [Country A] has been agreed (due to the low probability that [Country A] staff would take a job in [Country B] under 'the given conditions'.



Relation between JTS and the national/regional contact/info points (especially regarding monitoring of the contact/info points work) in 2007-2013

Interesting besides this overview on the developments and changes is of course the relation between the JTS and the national/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013, especially regarding the coordination and monitoring of their work. Meaning, below Table 3 is not about the division of roles and responsibilities between JTS and contact/info points in general, but on the contact/info points' administrative set-up and their management/monitoring.

TABLE 3: Relation JTS and national/regional contact/info point (esp. regarding monitoring) in 2007-2013⁹

OVERALL COORDINATION AND SET-UP (INCL. FINANCING)	PLANNING	REPORTING	COMMUNICATION
<p>OVERALL COORDINATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JTS responsible for overall coordination and administration Day-to-day coordination of the Contact Points work by the JTS (annual work plans, regular online meetings, physical meetings) Coordination of facilitator network from operational point of view by JTS (project unit, 1 person for overall and 1 person for day-to-day coordination) via internal newsletter, internal deadlines, e-mail correspondence cc: to facilitators 	<p>ANNUAL WORK PLAN(NING):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JTS sets up generic work programme in the area of promoting the programme, networking, internal communication, project development, project monitoring and training. Cross-border facilitators to provide the JTS by 15 November with a specific annual work programme which will be incorporated into the JTS annual work plan/TA. Annual plans of activities sent by contact points to JTS (activities taken into account preparing the annual plan of communication activities for the whole programme) The main tool used by the JTS for the coordination and work done by the IP was the Annual Activity Plan including a table of activities for each year, approved by the JMC. Based on the JTS Activity Plan, IP drew every year its own Annual Activity Plan and Table of activities. The plan included also the communication activities with IP input, described in the JTS Annual Communication Plan. 	<p>FORMAL REPORT(ING):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal reporting to JTS every 6 months Contact Points quarterly reporting their activities to JTS and twice per year submitting audited financial reports. At the end of each year, info point prepared an Annual Activity Report, also approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee. Implementation reports sent by contact points to JTS 	<p>GENERAL:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact/info point on a regular basis communicating with MA and JTS to get at smooth programme implementation JTS and Info Point having a continuous close contact JTS's task is to keep the IP informed in due time regarding the latest developments that might have an impact on the performance of the IP, to provide a clear guidance to the IP's performance.

⁹ This table is based on the answers provided by the programmes to the online survey. For a more detailed analysis, drafts or final version of relevant programme documents (Cooperation Programme, Description of Management and Control System etc.) have been provided by some programmes.

<p>HR and STAFF COORDINATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators recruited by Host Organisations, JTS involved in recruitment only if asked by Host Organisation • General Director of JTS managing all employees, incl. contact/info point staff • The Programme employed three Development Officers, two in [Country A] employed by the [Host Organisation A] and one in [Country B] employed by the MA. Coordination by JTS [in Country A] and Host Organisation [in Country B] as management partners in the programme 	<p>REGULAR PLANNING & UPDATES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators submitting every 2nd week an activity plan, every 2nd month physical meeting JTS-facilitators (1st meeting on project issues at facilitators office, 2nd on programme issues at JTS) • Participation in the weekly team meeting at the JTS, to discuss the state of affairs regarding project management, preparation of the steering committees, etc. 	<p>REGULAR REPORTING MEETINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual meetings held between Host Organisations and JTS • Participation in the weekly team meeting at the JTS, to discuss the state of affairs regarding project management, preparation of the steering committees, etc. • JTS and Info Point having a continuous close contact, and Info Point performing its activities under the supervision of the JTS 	<p>TOOLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact/info point staff physically present at the JTS for a minimum of two days a week • Via standardized documents, email and phone • Via internal newsletter, internal deadlines, e-mail correspondence cc: from JTS to facilitators
<p>LEGAL AGREEMENTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement between MA, Host Organisation and EEIG on who are the facilitators, their tasks and services to be provided, and financial issues • Agreement regarding the performance of the Regional Contact Points' task between National Authority and Host Organisation • Contact Points established under separate agreements between the MA and the Contact Points' hosting institution. • TA contract 			
<p>FINANCING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Contact Points do not receive any TA-money and are therefore free from any conflict of interest when it comes to for example participating in arranging projects. • Contact Points co-financed from the TA budget • Info Point financially dependent on the National Authority, but under the technical coordination of JTS. • Financing of the info/contact point staff integral part of the budget for TA within the programme 			

Continuity of contact/info points and their role and responsibilities from 2007-2013 to 2014-2020

As shown above, 12 out of 17 programmes (71%) having had points in 2007-2013 and having them also in 2014-2020 indicated that the set-up, roles and responsibilities will not be the same in 2014-2020. The main differences were described as follows:

• Set-up and staffing

- Contact points being national, not (anymore) part of the JS
- More tasks, more staff (e.g. monitoring)
- Now Antenna being a branch of the JS (so coordination should be easier)
- Contact Points in [Country A] integrated in the TA project (so far not)
- More specific details contained in Co-operation Programme document
- Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed)
- Trying to ensure wider dissemination, as well as to provide bigger variety of channels and tools by increasing the role and responsibilities of the Regional Contact Points a TA information and promotion project is envisaged, with the Regional Contact Points acting as project partners and the JTS acting as the Lead Partner
- JS shall conclude a Host Agreement with the regional contact points
- More functions are foreseen for the regional contact points starting from the independent organisation of events, visiting projects, managing [Country A] version of the website, consulting not only on visibility issues, but also on national public procurement rules etc.

• Responsibilities, tasks and work focus

- Not taking part in assessment and monitoring but purely for communication purposes
- More tasks, more staff (e.g. monitoring)
- More focus on contextual help and content help not so much in technical help
- Info/Contact point person more like a consultant, but also with tasks related to communication (mix of two versions tried during 2007-2013, only communication and information person and only consultant)
- Clearer roles and responsibilities
- Maximise separation of roles with regard to the preparation, the assessment and the approval of projects by prioritising a more formally independent, objective assessment of project applications - focus now more on project acquisition and accompaniment
- Assigning to screen submitted project outlines and project applications in which one's own region is not, or minimally, involved. Hereby the assessment procedures are now organized in a more independent and objective manner.

• Overall coordination

- Closer coordination by the JTS
- JTS will be responsible for verifying the TA progress reports submitted by the Contact Points
- 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer)
- Trying to ensure wider dissemination, as well as to provide bigger variety of channels and tools by increasing the role and responsibilities of the Regional Contact Points...
- Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up

In the following Table 4, the above presented changes for 2014-2020 will be, where suitable, paired with the disadvantages and challenges identified for 2007-2013 (cf. Table 2). The idea behind is to see if the changes planned or already implemented by the programmes for 2014-2020 actually respond to the challenges and disadvantages identified in 2007-2013. It has to be reminded that both disadvantages/challenges identified and changes planned/implemented are the ones brought up by the programmes themselves, and are put here uncommented. Further, the solutions (right column) do not necessarily come from the same programme which brought up the disadvantage/challenge (left column).

TABLE 4: Disadvantages/challenges in 2007-2013 vs. changes in 2014-2020

DISADVANTAGES/CHALLENGES IN 2007-2013	CHANGES PLANNED/IMPLEMENTED IN 2014-2020
...with changes planned/implemented in 2014-2020 to possibly tackle these disadvantages/challenges from 2007-2013	
Ensuring to work with the same methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now Antenna being a branch of the JS (coordination should be easier) • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer)
No disadvantages, but (practical) challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer)
Lack of communication between contact points.	
<p>“Since the contact points finance their own work it varied from region to region for example how many arrangement each contact point performed and how active they were in spreading information.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Points in [Country A] integrated in the TA project (so far not) • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • Trying to ensure wider dissemination, as well as to provide bigger variety of channels and tools by increasing the role and responsibilities of the Regional Contact Points a TA information and promotion project is envisaged, with the Regional Contact Points as project partners and the JTS as Lead Partner • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer) • JTS will be responsible for verifying the TA progress reports submitted by the Contact Points • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
Division of tasks (uneven in different countries)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More specific details contained in Co-operation Programme document • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • Trying to ensure wider dissemination, as well as to provide bigger variety of channels and tools by increasing the role and responsibilities of the Regional Contact Points a TA information and promotion project is envisaged, with the Regional Contact Points as project partners and the JTS as Lead Partner • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
Keeping the information point person busy enough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More tasks, more staff (e.g. monitoring) • Trying to ensure wider dissemination, as well as to provide bigger variety of channels and tools by increasing the role and responsibilities of the Regional Contact Points a TA information and promotion project is envisaged, with the Regional Contact Points as project partners and the JTS as Lead Partner • More functions are foreseen for the regional contact points starting from the independent organisation of events, visiting projects, managing [Country A] version of the website, consulting not only on visibility issues, but also on national public procurement rules etc. • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer)

<p>The internal communication and coordination of staff situated in different location.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer) • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
<p>Keeping info points as part of the JTS team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now Antenna being a branch of the JS (so coordination should be easier) • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer) • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
<p>To ensure that all staff has the same level of information and offers consistent and co-ordinated level of advice and guidance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now Antenna being a branch of the JS (so coordination should be easier) • Assigning to screen submitted project outlines and project applications in which one's own region is not, or minimally, involved, hereby the assessment procedures are now organized in a more independent and objective manner. • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer)
<p>Different interpretations of certain issues</p>	
<p>Insufficient involvement during later stages of programme implementation (promotion of programme results)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More functions are foreseen for the regional contact points starting from the independent organisation of events, visiting projects, managing [Country A] version of the website, consulting not only on visibility issues, but also on national public procurement rules etc. • Info/Contact point person more like a consultant, but also with tasks related to communication (mix of our two versions tried during 2007-2013, only communication and information person and only consultant) • Trying to ensure wider dissemination, as well as to provide bigger variety of channels and tools by increasing the role and responsibilities of the regional contact points a TA information and promotion project is envisaged, with the regional contact points as project partners and the JTS as Lead Partner
<p>Increased and time-demanding measures have to be put in place in order to ensure constant and univocal coordination of the programme. Both internally, within and between the executing programme levels, as well as externally, between the JTS/project managers and the target groups, communication on aspects such as procedures, rules, monitoring, etc. needs to be uniform and clear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now Antenna being a branch of the JS (coordination should be easier) • More specific details contained in Co-operation Programme document • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer) • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
<p>Double administration: coordination and hosting body of JTS and employer of info points being different organisations in different countries (coordination from two directions)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
<p>Progress reports of the contact points directly sent to the MA, thus not giving the JTS the possibility to systematically analyse the tasks performed by the contact points</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JTS will be responsible for verifying the TA progress reports submitted by the Contact Points • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up • Now Antenna being a branch of the JS (coordination should be easier)

<p>At arm's length and difficult to really manage and track work. Reliant on host organisations who can have different priorities than programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • JS shall conclude a Host Agreement with the regional contact points. • Clearer roles and responsibilities • Assigning to screen submitted project outlines and project applications in which one's own region is not, or minimally, involved, hereby the assessment procedures are now organized in a more independent and objective manner. • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer) • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
<p>JTS/MA has limited possibility to influence/change performance of the contact points without any legal relation between JTS/MA and the contact points.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now Antenna being a branch of the JS (coordination should be easier) • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • JS shall conclude a Host Agreement with the regional contact points. • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
<p>Risk of duality in the role of the info/contact points staff due to "institutional link" between the staff and its regional/ local host organisation (supporting project preparation and assessing projects with it a potential accentuation of regional policy priorities, however, still within the thematic framework of the programme). "At times, the added value of cross-border cooperation ... did not always seem to be pursued to its maximum potential."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • JS shall conclude a Host Agreement with the regional contact points. • Clearer roles and responsibilities • Assigning to screen submitted project outlines and project applications in which one's own region is not, or minimally, involved, hereby the assessment procedures are now organized in a more independent and objective manner. • Closer coordination by the JTS • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer) • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
<p>Very loose cooperation and communication ties between the JS and the contact points (feedback from the contact points on their performed activities sometimes dependant on the their "goodwill")</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now Antenna being a branch of the JS (so coordination should be easier) • More specific details contained in Co-operation Programme document • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • JS shall conclude a Host Agreement with the regional contact points. • 2 employees appointed at the Secretariat to coordinate the work of the Contact Points (one Project Officer and the Communication Officer) • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
<p>"The Regional Contact Points on the [Country A] side were not financed from the TA, the level of cooperation depended basically on the individual involvement of the Regional Contact Points employees."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Points in [Country A] integrated in the TA project (so far not) • Different institutional structure (details of staffing, roles and responsibilities of JS and Info Points still to be decided/agreed) • Trying to ensure wider dissemination, as well as to provide bigger variety of channels and tools by increasing the role and responsibilities of the Regional Contact Points a TA information and promotion project is envisaged, with the Regional Contact Points as project partners and the JTS as Lead Partner

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JS shall conclude a Host Agreement with the regional contact points. • Clearer roles and responsibilities • JTS will be responsible for verifying the TA progress reports submitted by the Contact Points • Clearer roles and responsibilities, links with host organisation and reporting set-up
...with still missing answers to tackle these disadvantages/challenges from 2007-2013	
Ideally, info points should have at least one representative in each of the [participating] countries	
Finding the right person for whom such distance setting away from the main office would not cause major problems.	
Ability of staff members to work effectively as a team	
Inexperience of the JTS staff, especially the Head of JTS, with managing such setting ¹⁰	

It seems that for the majority of disadvantages and challenges identified in 2007-2013 by the programmes of having national/regional contact/info points, solutions have been found - even if not necessarily designed to answer exactly the above mentioned disadvantage/challenge. However, there are also few disadvantages/challenges which have not been tackled by any of the changes in the set-up, roles and responsibilities foreseen for 2014-2020. The first one (having one representative in each country) is more of a technical/financial resource issue. The other ones might be the more tricky ones as they do not only relate to finances, but rather to the human factor.

Learning from each other - Other Interreg programmes as role models

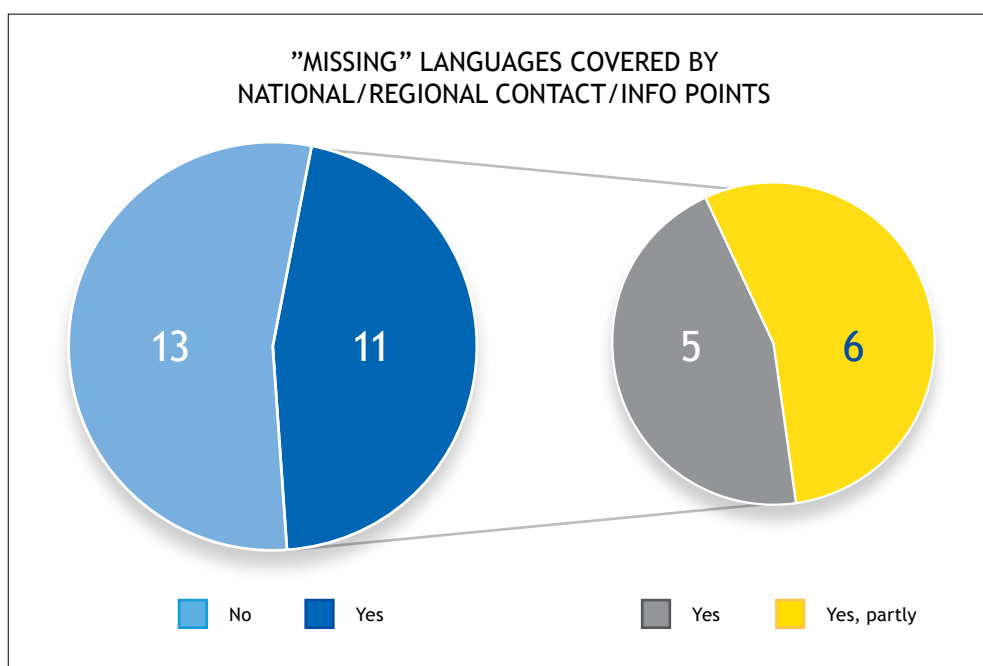
Although 17 programmes will have national/regional contact points in 2014-2020, only 4 programmes (all of them had national/regional contact/info points in 2007-2013) mentioned that they took into account a 'role model' used by another programme when designing the 2014-2020 set-up, division of responsibilities, coordination and supervision between JS and national/regional info/contact points. One programme mentioned that it at least took some ideas from other programmes. This is a good signal as these programmes did not only draw their lessons from their own experience, but were looking for inspiration from other programmes. The programmes which served as good practice were CBC PL/SE/DK/LT/DE South Baltic, CBC FI/SE/EE/LV Central Baltic, 2 Seas, CBC Romania-Bulgaria, Euregio Meuse-Rhin/Maar-Rhein/Maas-Rijn and INTERREG IV C.

Language knowledge as an asset of national/regional contact/info points

As national/regional info/contact points normally act in a rather national environment, not least when it comes to language, it was also investigated how many different languages are spoken in the respective programme areas (in average three) and how many of them are covered on a sufficient level (B1 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages/CEFR) by the present Secretariat staff. It turned out that actually only two languages are mastered by the Secretariat staff enabling to consult a project developer in its own national language. It was somewhat obvious to find out if then the national/regional info/contact points fill this language gap. In fact in 13 programmes the contact/info points do not fill and in 11 cases they do fill this gap (5 fully, 6 partly). Hence, there seem not to be any 'division of languages' between the Secretariats and the national/regional info/contact points comparable to the division of tasks between the two.

¹⁰ It should be mentioned that this is a self-assessment by the respective Head of Secretariat.

CHART 3



CONCLUSIONS:

1. Having national/regional contact/info points is considered beneficial for the programme and its anchorage in the programme area.
2. No major disadvantages of having such points were identified.
3. However, there are practical challenges of having national/regional contact/info points when it comes to
 - a. having structures in different countries with their own national and host organisation rules and regulations to be observed
 - b. how to ensure coherence of information and services by JS and national/regional contact/info points despite their physical separation
4. The experiences collected during 2007-2013 have been taken into account when designing the set-up, roles and responsibilities etc. of national/regional contact/info points for 2014-2020.
5. It is worth further discussing and exchanging on the practical implications and challenges with the Interreg programmes at relevant INTERACT events.

Abbreviations:

AA	Audit Authority
CBC	Cross-border cooperation
EEIG	European Economic Interest Grouping
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
IP	Info(rmation) Point
JMC	Joint Monitoring Committee
JTS	Joint Technical Secretariat
JS	Joint Secretariat
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
TA	Technical Assistance



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