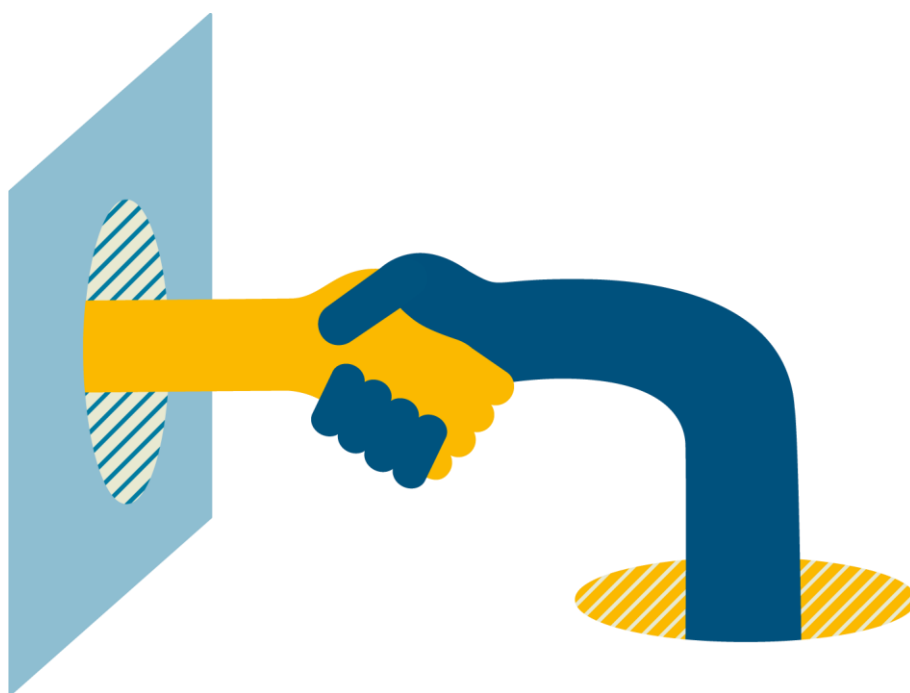


# Cross-border or Transnational – Does it matter?

---

A collection of thoughts from Interreg authorities and practitioners.

December 2021



**Disclaimer:** You are permitted to print or download this material for your personal use. This material can be used for public use, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given a prior notice. None of this material may be used for commercial purposes. The information and views set out in Interact documents do not always reflect Interact's opinions, especially if written by external contributors.

**Publisher** Interact Programme **Date** December 2021 **Publication leader** Mercedes Acitores **Publication Co-writer:** Philipp Schwartz. **Contributions:** Blanka Bartol, Monica Bellisario, Christina Bezes-Feldmeyer, Pascal Boijmans, Dominika Butkiewicz, Lucille Ehrhart, Giuseppe Ciralo, Nicola Gouvernel, Jean Pierre Halkin, Baiba Liepa, Tomaž Miklavčič, Merike Niitepõld, Eeva Rantama, Jean Louis Valls and Tesim Team  
**[www.interact-eu.net](http://www.interact-eu.net)**

# Table of Content

<b>Table of Content</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Is the difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation relevant at all?</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1. European Commission, DG REGIO	6
1.2. From the EU Member State perspective (Italy)	8
1.3. From the perspective of an Interreg Managing Authority (POCTEFA/Spain-France-Andorra)	10
1.4. From the perspective of another Interreg Managing Authority (Central Baltic)	11
1.5. From the perspective of an Interreg Joint Secretariat (South Baltic)	12
<b>2. Does the difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation matter from a territorial perspective?</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1. The Presidency of the Council of the EU perspective (Slovenia, 1 July-31 Dec 2021)	133
2.2. From the perspective of a regional organisation (CPMR Baltic Sea Commission)	15
2.3. The macro-regional and sea-basin perspective	17
2.4. From the Alpine macro-regional perspective	20
<b>3. Reality counts - Suggestions and examples how transnational and cross-border cooperation programmes could work better together?</b>	<b>222</b>
3.1. Monitoring of and Response against oil spills (CALYPSO and Slcomar projects)	222
3.2. Project chains in the Baltic sea region	
<b>4. Next period 2021-20027 Interreg calls for stronger linkages between cross-border and transnational. Why?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>5. TESIM inputs on NEXT programmes</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>6. Thoughts and suggestions for 2021-2027 Interreg's implementation</b>	<b>30</b>

## List of Abbreviations

BSR	Baltic Sea region
CB	Cross-border
CBC	Cross-border cooperation
CLLD	Community led local development
CPMR	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
DG REGIO	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg)
EU	European Union
EUSAIR	EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region
EUSALP	EU Strategy for the Alpine Region
EUSBSR	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission
ICT	Information and communication technology
Interreg B	Interreg transnational
Interreg D	Interreg outmost regions and third countries
IPA	Instrument for pre-accession assistance
ITI	Integrated territorial investment
JTS	Joint Technical Secretariat
MC	Monitoring Committee
MRS	Macro-regional strategy/strategies
NEXT	(Interreg) Neighbourhood External (programme)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NOP	National Operational Programme(s)
NUTS	Nomenclature des Unités territoriales statistiques
POCTEFA	Programme Opérationnelle de Coopération Territoriale Espagne-France-Andorre
ROP	Regional Operational Programme(s)
SBS	Sea basin strategy/strategies
SPF	Small project fund(s)
TESIM	Technical support to the implementation and management (of ENI CBC programmes)
TF	Task Force

# Introduction

This paper gathers the views and opinions of a variety of cooperation stakeholders in Europe on the question “*Cross-border or Transnational – Does it really matter?*” The views presented from the perspective of EU Member States, Interreg managing authorities and joint secretariats, or (regional) cooperation practitioners, as well as neighbourhood and INTERREG experts and beneficiaries show that there is not a unique response to this question, neither a clear perception on what such difference means e.g. regarding the type of outputs both type of strands can deliver in practice. The diversity of views in this publication also shows how the relation between cross-border and transnational cooperation is perceived depending on the geographic area in Europe, the organisational background or cooperation experiences.

At the same time, one can see a guiding principle through all the received inputs which we invite you to discover through this publication. Let’s get back to it in the conclusions part at the end of this publication.

“*Cross-border or Transnational – Does it really matter?*” Is this question relevant at all? Or shouldn’t we rather ask ourselves, what is the purpose of regional cooperation and cohesion policy, instead? Focusing on the aim instead of the tool? And most probably (hopefully) everyone could agree that what counts is the territory. And Interreg programmes with their cooperation projects are the tool that will (hopefully) reduce territorial disparities and achieve cohesion in Europe.

Cohesion throughout Europe can only be achieved if any kind of cooperation, within projects and between different programmes has a territorial impact which goes beyond their individual intervention. Hence, also the discussion about the difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation is more of an operational question which helps to identify the strengths, for what each strand of actions and interventions (cross-border or transnational) is good for, which parts of the bigger picture can be solved by either the one or the other. Hence, the answer to the question puts the different levels of cooperation into the bigger picture, giving each a specific task and by combining forces and complementing each other (in this case between cross-border and transnational elements and operations), bring the opportunity to strengthen the impact in the respective territory (European, national, regional, local, functional area, territorial strategies, etc...).

When reading this paper, it is important to keep in mind that it has been compiled at the turn from the 2014-2020 to the 2021-2027 period and it is mainly based on the how the question cross-border-transnational is perceived at this moment. The new programming period 2021-2027 might now bring some changes. In this context, it is important to underline that, for the period 2021-2027, the Interreg community will be extended to Interreg “NEXT” programmes. In the past, such programmes were financed by the European Neighbourhood Instrument with a different concept of cross-border than the one of Interreg programmes across internal EU borders. For 2021-2027, Interreg NEXT programmes will adopt the same kind of coverage as all Interreg programmes, being considered transnational (larger transnational territories or around sea basins) or cross-border (land or maritime adjacent borders). A specific chapter in this publication will be dedicated to illustrating their position and understanding.

This publication is not meant only for the Interreg programme community. But for anyone interested in and working with and for regional policy. This is a large group, from the European Commission through territorial strategic frameworks, via all levels of programme authorities and bodies to project beneficiaries as well as other cooperation actors and stakeholders – and all of them play a different role and can contribute to the discussion from their different relevant perspectives. Some of them share their views in this publication.

Finally, we are very grateful to all those that shared their thoughts, provided us with inputs and kindly dedicated their time to this paper. Thank you very much!



## 1. Is the difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation relevant at all?

As already indicated in the introduction, the key question is if the difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation and hence cooperation programmes is relevant. And if the answer would be yes, why is it important and for whom? And if not, why not? In this first chapter, an answer to these questions will be given from the perspective of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG Regio), from an EU Member State perspective (Italy) and from the perspective of Interreg managing authorities/joint secretariats.

### 1.1. European Commission, DG REGIO

*Both cross-border and transnational are part of the Interreg family and have clearly a different scope with objectives that are complementary. Both strands were already part of the 2014-2020 architecture and will to a large extent remain unchanged building blocks of the 2021-2027 programme architecture.*

*European Cross-Border cooperation (known as Interreg A, supports cooperation between NUTS III regions from at least two different Member States or neighbouring countries lying directly on the borders or adjacent to them. It aims to tackle common challenges identified jointly in the border regions and to exploit the untapped growth potential in border areas, while enhancing the cooperation process for the purposes of the overall harmonious development of the Union.*

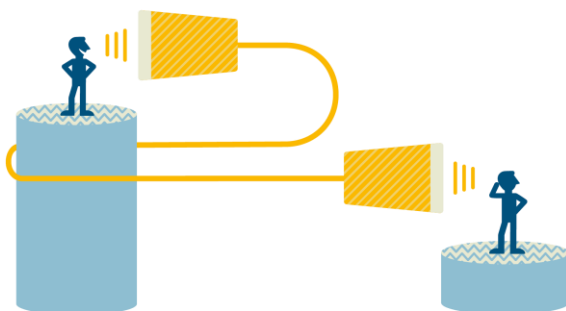
*Transnational cooperation (transnational), known as Interreg B, involves regions from several countries of the EU and outside the EU forming bigger areas. All EU regions are taking part in an Interreg B (or D) programme which aims to promote better cooperation and regional development within the Union and with neighbouring countries by a joint approach to tackle common issues. Interreg B supports a wide range of project investment related to innovation, environment, accessibility, telecommunications, urban development etc. The transnational programmes add an important extra European dimension to regional development, developed from analysis at a European level, leading to agreed priorities and a coordinated strategic response.*

*A clear example of how both strands can complement each other is in environment and pollution. The sea pollution in the Baltic Sea requires a clear transnational approach where all regions and countries around the Baltic Sea join forces and cooperate. Developing a strategic framework for such cooperation is clearly a task for transnational cooperation. But this might also require concrete infrastructural investments in border areas which can be supported under cross border cooperation. The same applies to management of flood risks along rivers, which require a wide scope at river basin level for which the transnational approach is most suitable; this can again be complemented by concrete investments in border regions. The best and most efficient use of different modes of transport in the EU can be best assessed at transnational level, but when it comes down to concrete investments in cross border public transport the cross-border programmes can offer best support.*

*In general, the difference between cross border and transnational is the geographical scope and level of orientation. This has an impact on the type of projects supported under both strands, which are clearly complementary.*

*It is from our point of view less relevant if citizens perceive the difference between cross border and transnational projects if they recognize that projects are supported by Interreg, the brand name for territorial cooperation between local, regional, and national levels. Interreg as a name is well recognized in general by citizens because it supports projects, larger and small scale, which are concrete and brings the EU closer to its citizens. This is one of the main strengths of Interreg, achieved during its 30 years of existence.*

**Jean Pierre Halkin and Pascal Boijmans**  
Heads of Units D1 and D2 respectively in DG Regio. European Commission





## 1.2. From an EU Member State perspective (Italy)

**Interact:** Is it important for you in your work to make a difference between ‘cross-border’ and ‘transnational’? - If yes, why? If no, why not?

*Monica Bellisario:* Yes, it is, as regards the types of projects/activities, outputs and stakeholders, the programming approach (both in programming and in the implementation phase), the contribution to MRS/SBS and the Italian (and often overall) governance.

**Interact:** Is the demarcation between cross-border and transnational cooperation clear enough?

*Monica Bellisario:* It is. Anyhow, demarcation is not always possible and/or significant. Though, the different level of focus between cross border (Nuts 3) and transnational (Nuts 2) for sure shows its relevance also as far as governance is concerned.

Transnational and cross border programmes are often complementary in terms of types of actions. Transnational enable the creation and strengthening of partnerships across a vast area among territories and provide the necessary framework for a homogeneous development process at programmes’ area level. Cross border often represents a testing ground for pilot projects of common interest, for providing services to local communities, businesses, and citizens, and for the implementation of soft infrastructure projects and small-scale investments, also thanks to the greater proximity to the needs of the territories, allowed by their geographical demarcation.

Additionally, the more direct involvement of local actors makes cross border preferred fora for the connection with mainstream programmes. cross border projects can, in fact, allow the amplification of the project experiences carried out with the ROPs/NOPs and the other way around, adjusting their scale of intervention, act on priorities not allowed or not adopted by the mainstream programmes, or even create synergies through the complementary use of resources in specific territories.

Cross border and transnational programmes have also a different role as regards their contribution to MRS/SBS. This applies for the transnational being the reference programme for each strategy, having legislative for the embedding<sup>1</sup>. In the Adriatic-Ionian area, the existence of a macro-regional strategic framework has fostered a relative thematic convergence of Interreg programmes on EUSAIR's priority challenges. Even in case of common thematic issues, a beneficial mutual synergy between initiatives on transnational and cross-border scale occurs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Referring to Interreg Regulation 1059/2021, article 15 Thematic concentration, point (3) 3. Where an Interreg B programme supports a macro-regional strategy or a sea-basin strategy, at least 80 % of the ERDF contribution and, where applicable, part of the external financing instruments of the Union allocations under priorities other than for technical assistance shall contribute to the objectives of that strategy.

**Interact: Can you provide an example where the difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation influenced your way of working?**

*Monica Bellisario: The Italian governance of cross border and transnational is completely different. Under transnational we have a compulsory national coordination of regional positions and a single voice speaking in task forces and monitoring committees. Under cross border coordination remains desirable (it occurs for Italy-Croatia), but each (local) body entitled as member of TF/MC usually directly voices the specific territorial needs.*

**Interact: Does transnational and cross-border cooperation affect the project impact in the territory the same way?**

*Monica Bellisario: I will here quote from the Italian Non-Paper on the future architecture of Territorial Cooperation programmes in the Mediterranean Sea basin for 2021-2027 (October 2019): “the distinctive capacity of cross-border programmes to read the specific needs of sub-regional territories and to respond to local development needs of a cross-border nature through integrated cooperation actions, including mainstream programming, is an added value to be preserved and enhanced”.*

*Cross-border show a fostered ownership of the planning and implementation processes of cooperation policies by local stakeholders. Cross-border are in fact the ones mostly developing territorial strategies and using local development instruments like ITI, CLLD, SPF and small projects.*

**Interact: How do you think citizens (taxpayers) perceive the difference?**

*Monica Bellisario: Based on their direct and indirect involvement in the (making of the) projects: in any case, if the citizens see a significant change in their life, so they can perceive the added value of cooperation, whether it comes through a cross border or a transnational.*

**Interact: What is the value of a transnational and a cross-border cooperation projects, compared to other sources of EU financing?**

*Monica Bellisario: The Interreg governance process is in any case quite complex, having to respect the partnership rule set by the legislative framework: this might result as a partially negative element. On the other hand, as a positive value, involvement of several layers of stakeholders guarantees an increased bottom-up participation, often more evident in cross border.*

**An interview with Monica Bellisario**  
Department for Cohesion Policy. Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Italian Republic

### **1.3. From the perspective of an Interreg Managing Authority (POCTEFA/Spain-France-Andorra)**

**Interact: Is it important for you in your work to make a difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation? Is it sufficiently clear?**

*Jean Louis Valls: The difference between transnational and cross border is not important.*

*Theoretically speaking, if we must do a distinction between the kind of activities or operations a transnational or a cross border programme may support. The answer is quite clear, transnationals would focus on mainly financing analysis, research, whether cross border would finance infrastructure for the cross-border benefit, cross border pilots, etc. However, in practice and comparing both strands, I have observed that the kind of results are many times the same, protocols, exchanges of good practices, pilot actions.*

*Their difference resides in the geography, while a transnational programme will cover a wider range of a country, the cross border will focus only the border regions and their territorial specificities.*

**Interact: Can you provide an example where the contrast between cross-border and transnational cooperation influenced your way of working?**

*Jean Louis Valls: As an example, I must mention Sardinia's hospital construction in 2006. A clear infrastructure project for a cross border area, which benefits equally people of both side of the borders. However, hospital new protocols and services can be financed with either way, via cross border projects or transnational.*

**Interact: Does transnational and cross-border cooperation affect the impact in the territory the same way?**

*Jean Louis Valls: Both transnational and cross border kind of projects should have an impact in the territory. However, it is unquestionable that the impact in the territory for cross border projects such as "[Cerdanya Hospital](#)", the kind of result is more tangible and easier to recognize in less time, while for transnational projects, their results are less visible and their impact in the territory only possible to perceive in the longer run.*

**Interact: How do you think citizens (taxpayers) perceive the difference?**

*Jean Louis Valls: Citizens do not distinguish such difference and neither the project beneficiaries. Who would care! The difference is more of an administrative kind; it is only for Interreg programmes. What is important is Interreg to be recognized among more people and go beyond the 30% of the population who seems already to know about it.*

**An interview with Jean Louis Valls**  
Managing Authority  
Interreg POCTEFA (Spain-France-Andorra) Programme

#### **1.4. From the perspective of another Interreg Managing Authority (Central Baltic)**

**Interact: Is it relevant to make a difference between cross-border and transnational?**

*Merike Niitepõld: It is not important to me to make a difference between cross border and transnational in the cooperation between programmes. All Interreg programmes follow the same regulation and share similar challenges. I also don't think one type of programme is better or more needed than the other. So, I certainly think we should not compete or quarrel among each other. It is, however, important to see the difference for stakeholders. Cross border and transnational programmes do have a different scope, different goals, different activities, and different stakeholders. During the discussion about the Commission wanting to delete maritime cross-border programmes as independent programmes, the regional response was very clear: cross-border programmes are closer, more accessible. They allow an easier entry to cooperation. Cross-border programmes are the tool for really cooperating with your neighbours and this cooperation is needed.*

**Interact: Is such distinction sufficiently clear? If yes, can you provide an example where this fact influenced your way of working?**

*Merike Niitepõld: The difference is in the scope of activities as well as in the partnerships. As all programmes, regardless of scope or territory, work on the same thematic menu. Still, as the reply above shows, there is a clear difference in the stakeholder minds and in programme implementation. So yes, the difference is clear. In the concrete work of programmes (after programming) I don't see many differences anymore. The differences are rather due to programme characteristics (what is your budget, how many partner countries, what are the cultures of your countries, what is your programme culture) than directly related to cross border or transnational.*

**Interact: Does transnational and cross-border results have equal territorial impact?**

*Merike Niitepõld: It may be so that cross border programmes work on more hands-on projects whereas transnational programmes work more with strategies, plans etc. In that sense the project impact is also likely to be different. It would also be welcomed to have different impacts, which then can complement each other. In some cases, the cross-border projects also "grow" to transnational projects or allow for cross-border tested solutions to be spread wider in transnational projects. Thus, the projects and programmes remain interlinked and benefit both each other and the whole EU. I don't think citizens (taxpayers) perceive the difference. I also don't think they need to; the crucial aspects are rather international cooperation with our EU neighbours and the benefit of doing things across any border.*

**An interview with Merike Niitepõld**  
Head of Managing Authority. Interreg Central Baltic Programme  
Managing Authority / The Regional Council of Southwest Finland

### **1.5. From the perspective of an Interreg Joint Secretariat (South Baltic)**

*The South Baltic Programme is a multilateral cross-border cooperation programme created on the coastal regions of five EU Member States: Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Lithuania, and Poland. Maritime cooperation in this region is based on joint challenges and opportunities strongly connected with a common natural resource - the Baltic Sea. The basis for cross-border cooperation is the existence of a border, separating communities who have a common interest in undertaking joint actions in each area. Sea border is one of the boundaries that separate neighbouring communities from each other, but at the same time it focuses significantly more cross border problems and perspective cooperation channels than other natural or political borders. The essence of maritime cross-border cooperation is the existence of conditions that are common only for coastal regions, not for countries which cooperate in transnational programmes. For this reason, South Baltic area is home to functional areas, where there are numerous cooperation links condition opportunities of development. Natural functional links in South Baltic area have been developing for a thousand years and now are based on business relationship, culture, and natural assets.*

*The difference between cross border and transnational is important in the light of the scale, cross-border cooperation with its small scale gives opportunities to work with local actor, municipalities, institutions, NGOs which have no capacity, knowledge, and courage to apply to the transnational programmes. The cross border could serve as 'seed money' for further applying, so kind of beginning for bigger projects. And at the same time, the cross border may be used as the last step to promote, further develop, or test solutions created in the frame of transnational programmes. Having in mind above, the impact is of course different, however the observed differences are needed and necessary. The programmes can complement each other, having positive and complete influence on the area of operations.*

*Keeping an eye on the cross-border principle is one of the main tasks in the programme secretariat. Due to requirements of preserving the difference between cross border and transnational, employees must understand the divergence between mentioned cooperation ways. This affects the work with projects at many levels, from consultation, through assessment, and finally to monitoring. The effort is done by the project owners and programme bodies, it not important and not recognised by the citizens (taxpayers).*

**Dominika Butkiewicz**  
Head of the Joint Secretariat  
Interreg South Baltic

## **2. Does the difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation matter from a territorial perspective?**

As stated in the introduction, it is the territory which counts. But there is not the one and only territory as territories can be defined on different levels (e.g. NUTS), geographically (e.g. macro-regions or sea basins) or thematically. Hence this chapter is about looking at the question if the difference between cross-border and transnational cooperation really matters from a regional perspective. This chapter presents the territorial relevance of cross-border and transnational cooperation from the overall EU perspective (Slovenia as Presidency of the Council of the EU), the (general) macro-regional and sea basin perspective and specifically from two macro-regions (Baltic Sea and Alpine region)

### **2.1. The Presidency of the Council of the EU perspective (Slovenia, 1 July to 31 December 2021)**

*The cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes offer opportunities for improving living conditions, economic options, employment opportunities and quality of the environment in different parts of Europe. Having broad visibility, they also improve the European identity and affiliation. Through instruments they address similar topics and similar objectives but due to their different scope and ability to adapt them to territorial diversity they provide unique territorial impacts.*

*The transnational programmes often bring more strategic framework and have a potential of defining strategical elements, e.g., nodes, important at transnational level, missing links, bottlenecks and connectivity needs; they support the implementation of different agreements and policy agendas (e.g. territorial agenda or regional land or sea conventions). Their results can steer the tailored-made interventions within the cross-border programmes, providing more tangible solutions for territorial problems and challenges on the ground but at the same time fitting better in the broader context.*

*The cumulative result of both strands (transnational and cross border) should be a coordinated to achieve a complementary impact, meaning that interventions are performed where they are really needed while contributing to solutions at a bigger scale. For this, involvement of stakeholders who have mandate to define and decide strategic frameworks is necessary. It happens too often, that stakeholders in transnational programmes are not in a position for taking strategic decisions. This leads to wrong expectations and poor uptake of the produced results.*

*If interventions within transnational and cross border programmes would be performed individually, separately or without any linkages, one could expect some undesirable territorial impacts of projects implementation. In case of physical interventions, we could expect pressure for greenfield development, impacts on environment, push for the undesired territorial processes; in case of soft interventions (e.g., strategic frameworks, guidelines, education) we would not expect physical impacts but without proper coordination follow up activities would be less efficient or not implemented at all.*

*The cross border and transnational projects have the impact in defined functional areas. cross border can improve the cohesion of border areas and, to a certain level, prevent asymmetric processes on both sides of the border. Asymmetric development often increases tensions, decreases level of development and quality of live on one side of the border, causing distractions on labour markets (e.g., in healthcare) etc.*

*The territorial impact of transnational and cross border projects differ what can be explained by the different type of projects and its activities developed within the two types of cooperation programmes. The impact of transnational is less tangible, indirect, and extremely hard to measure. Often the impacts are secondary, a result of a capacity building in governance structures involved in transnational projects and their activities. The CB cooperation and projects often bring more direct, tangible, and visible impact. For this reason, the better strategic alignment of both is needed and beneficial. When concrete actions are developed and implemented, but not aligned, the impacts of projects can be contradictory; for example, measures for the protection of nature or biodiversity implemented in one type of programme can be offset by a project that develops infrastructure, promotes greater tourist visits or vice versa.*

*The differences among activities implemented within transnational and cross-border projects are also perceived by the residents and by the decision (policy) makers. The transnational projects which are about soft measures, discussions, and knowledge exchange, are understood as unnecessary papers, studies. Although cooperation and exchange of knowledge and practices bring innovation, improve capacity of governance structure and provide better grounds for projects, the results that do not directly materialise in territories are not popular. For local administrations and the public, cross border programmes where money is available for concrete measures, constructions, investments and products are more important.*

*The question is what needs to be done to achieve complementary between both types of programmes and stimulate greater coherence? Would territorial concepts for the transnational programmes bring efficient territorial framework for cross-border programmes?*

**Blanka Bartol, Tomaž Miklavčič**  
Ministry of the Environment and Spatial planning, Republic of Slovenia



## **2.2. From the perspective of a regional organization (CPMR Baltic Sea Commission)**

This note integrates initial reflections on the territorial impact of a complementary use of cross-border and transnational programmes, based on previous CPMR positions on Interreg, which is a key area of work and interest for Member Regions of CPMR and its Baltic Sea Commission.

### **The preservation of the division between transnational (transnational) and cross-border cooperation (cross-border) does really matter since they have their own raison d'être and added-value**

*Transnational and cross-border programmes have both their “raison d'être”, having a distinct added-value and fulfilling different purposes, as indicated in a [CPMR technical note on Interreg](#). The types of actors involved in the cooperation, the actions, the identity, the structure of the projects and the budget of the programmes are different and justify the distinction and standalone existence of the two strands. Furthermore:*

- *Regional authorities have a stronger role in the governance of INTERREG cross-border programmes in comparison to INTERREG transnational programmes.*
- *cross-border programmes enable a stronger participation of regional and local authorities, and smaller stakeholders in the programmes than transnational programmes.*
- *cross-border programmes are more focused on the local context and designed accordingly. cross-border programmes help to address more local/targeted issues.*
- *cross-border programmes are better suited than transnational programmes for the participation of newcomers or smaller actors.*
- *In the cross-border programmes, actors can test, on a smaller scale, innovative ideas, which have a more practical impact. The bureaucratic burden is less important for cross-border programmes for the smaller actors.*
- *cross-border programmes reflect the local character of cooperation (direct neighbors-history of working together, smaller number of project partners which helps to create a trustful and effective cooperation).*

*Transnational and cross-border (projects) do have their specific role to support the EUSBSR*

- *cross-border programmes, including maritime, have integrated the objectives and policy themes of the update EUSBSR Action Plan while developing the new programs. In most of the cases, the projects' applicants will need to justify the contribution of the expected project results to the EUSBSR objectives. The cross-border programmes are enabling to strengthen local cooperation, which also serve the overall purpose and benefit to the BSR as a macro-region.*
- *cross-border programmes help finance projects under priorities of the EUSBSR that are not covered by the transnational corresponding programme (due to thematic concentration)*
- *In many ways, the Interreg BSR programme support the EUSBSR, from the governance, flagship projects, technical assistance, seed moneys, the themes and overall objectives.*



**However, further complementary/linkages between transnational and cross-border programmes would benefit territorial cohesion**

*Increasing synergies between the Interreg transnational and cross-border programs is important to increase coherence and impactful results for the whole Baltic Sea Region.*

- *Further complementarities between Interreg transnational and cross-border are important for the benefits of the overall Baltic Sea Region. There should be strategic coordination on different levels. The EUSBSR Action Plan is the common vision for the Baltic Sea Region, which should be supported by the various Interreg programmes. The results of the cross-border projects should be more widely communicated at transnational level.*
- *There are already existing synergies, which could be reinforced further for this new programming period. The establishment of project platforms, gathering existing projects from different Interreg programmes but similar objectives and themes should be continued and strengthened.*
- *Options to reinforce linkages: Setting up an ex-ante mechanism to ensure coherence between cross-border and transnational programmes; Redefining the perimeter or the geography of some programme.*
- *The regular exchange between key JTS should be encouraged further (for instance, JTS project officers that have global knowledge over the different projects they are following should discuss with each other to explore synergies projects related to similar themes and objectives).*

*Yes, the transnational and cross-border should be complementary for stronger development of the Baltic Sea Region as a macro-region (EUSBSR) area (greater coherence, the transnational and cross-border should both support the EUSBSR objectives, but the mean and contribution are different and both valuable). The cross-border can contribute through closer to the citizens, people to people and practical cooperation projects, and the dissemination of the results can be a transnational scale, while the transnational helps to gather larger stakeholders from different parts of the BSR Region together.*

*To trigger the social, economic and territorial recovery of the EU following-up from the outbreak of the pandemic, it is even more important to promote further synergies between the cross-border and transnational programmes*

*CPMR has identified as example linked to coastal and maritime tourism, the [CO-EVOLVE](#) project (Interreg MED), were there were some exchanges/cooperation with the [MAREGOT](#) project (Interreg Maritime)*

**Lucille Ehrhart**  
Executive Secretary, CPMR Baltic Sea Commission

### 2.3. The macro-regional and sea-basin perspective

*EU macro-regional strategy (MRS) as a strategic framework is established to address shared territorial challenges through co-creating solutions that best fit that specific territory. In other words, MRS is addressing complex territorial problems (e.g., water management, safety and civil security, nature protection, mobility, climate change, etc.) that no single country, region, or stakeholder can deal with efficiently on their own. Macro-regions are established to provide space for multi-level stakeholders to come together and create solutions that best fit that macro-region<sup>2</sup>. Through the engagement of these multi-level stakeholders, long-lasting territorial impact/change is made.*

*Setting above said as a starting point for further elaboration, it is obvious that problems in the focus of our own macro-regions require utilising all relevant available resources (legislative, institutional, and financial) and building complementary actions that bring good for the people.*

*There are five unique characteristics of the macro-regional framework that informs the MRS implementation process:*

- long-term policy impact and/or progress in chosen thematic areas.*
- cross-sectoral collaboration for systemic impact.*
- multi-level governance collaboration, incl. civil society stakeholder engagement and participation.*
- flexibility of scope of actions/activities.*
- aligning relevant funding resources to enable longer-term work.*

*We can observe that often territorial challenges are worked within the following formats: single projects<sup>3</sup>; interlinked and follow-up projects (so-called “project chains”); flagships, sometimes referred to as flagship projects and/or strategic initiatives; capitalisation platforms established by funding programmes, Interreg in particular; working groups, networks, and task forces; stakeholder dialogues, etc. Valuing all of these formats that are built to seek place-based solutions, it is evident that planning each of these separately does not necessarily provide sustainable and long-term change.*

*As macro-regions mature<sup>4</sup>, the need for more strategic and impactful implementation formats become more and more obvious. Therefore, the macro-regional ‘policy-action process’ has emerged as a natural response to territorial needs. “Policy-action process” should not be perceived as another complication of the macro-region framework, but instead a term enclosing its deeper meaning:*

- a. placing attention to striving individual actions/formats for long-term policy impact/change.*
- b. underlining a need for building complementarity.*

---

<sup>2</sup> Territory built upon interdependent administrative units - regions and countries.

<sup>3</sup> Single project here is meant a project funded by a programme (Interreg, national, regional or Europe wide (directly managed) programmes, both - co-financed by the EU or another resource).

<sup>4</sup> Please see for more information [study “Macro-regional strategies and their links with Cohesion policy”](#). COWI, 2017

c. and a process – it is when stakeholders from across the macro-region cooperate and align the most relevant resources to address these complex macro-regional challenges.

Finally, the policy-action process is a practice in many thematic areas of all four MRS.

### **Complementarities between Interreg and macro-regional strategies.**

MRS policy-action process primarily focuses on the desired change in the long-term, then most relevant multi-level stakeholders and then relevant funding tool. Therefore, any programme is encouraged to establish pre-requisites for macro-regional collaboration and contribution to it (in building openings in reference to the regulatory framework for 2021-2027) and thus becoming an available funding resource.

Interreg programmes, because of their purpose for cooperation, are essential resource kicking-off collaboration at local, regional, and transnational levels, piloting approaches, transferring knowledge and experiences across borders. However, Interreg is not the only funding instrument aligned and available to implement MRS. MRS governance stakeholders engage in dialogue with funding sources operating on local, regional, national, supranational and EU levels; public, private, and civil society sector funding, thus translating MRS thematic into the work of all.

There is a need for continuous operational dialogue between the MRS governance and funding programmes in their own countries and at cross-border and transnational level to acknowledge obstacles and build mutual trust. The importance of daily exchange and benefit for both should not be neglected.

There is a call to challenge existing perceptions and addressing misunderstanding between the MRS and funding programmes. The MRS is a strategic framework that grew out of the bottom-up initiative of countries and regions of Europe. Any funding programme can utilise and benefit from macro-regional collaboration networks and governance settings, achieving programme defined objectives.

MRS implementation through policy-action processes requires some re-thinking when it comes to funding. The current EU funding system is geared for funding projects through programmes, whereas these formats go beyond projects in scope and time and engage policy environments to a much higher degree. This re-thinking is needed on both sides – macro-regional and programmes, and it will be continued.

Interreg programmes (but not only) are asked to open for coordination and complementarities. Where the MRS exist, it is a great asset for the programmes to exploit this strategic framework and streamline their funding to address already predefined and cross macro-regionally agreed political priorities (shared territorial challenges). There are quite some added values for the programme in this process, but as the main benefits could be mentioned: efficiency and streamlining of funding to most relevant territorial challenges; contribution to sustainable change at policy level; reaching out to new stakeholders, also stakeholders beyond programme's territory; having a potential to

*multiply and sustain project results; gaining visibility and political recognition; using already existing governance and framework; becoming a valued partner in the macro-regional networks despite programme territory.*

*It needs to be repeated that territorial challenges addressed by the EU macro-regional strategies are complex. These challenges are relevant for the entire Europe, not only European Union! Therefore, any resource made available to contribute to the macro-regional processes is much valued.*

***What about the complementarity between transnational and cross-border programmes in the framework of the strategy? Is their difference relevant, when making the "project chain"?***

*Interreg programmes (transnational or cross-border cooperation) and the MRS key implementing stakeholders<sup>5</sup> are invited for active dialogue and joint exploration of funding opportunities to the problems. Each Interreg programme has its specific purpose and can support the needed actions for the most relevant multi-level stakeholders; that brought together would make the change. No single programme would be ever able to finance all necessary measures to deal with macro-regional problems fully. Therefore, no programme shall be seen as the important funding source to contribute to the macro-regional developments.*

*All have the role to play!*

*Therefore, Interreg programmes are encouraged to engage proactively with relevant MRS thematic coordinators to identify where and for what specific activities their funding is most relevant. Interreg programmes, through introducing simple collaboration activities, can become an active partner in the macro-regional planning and implementation processes, contributing to joint efforts and make the change.*

**Baiba Liepa.**  
Interact

---

<sup>5</sup> Especially thematic coordinators (differently named in different EU macro-regional strategies) and thematic area steering group members, but also national coordinators.

## 2.4. From the EU Alpine macro-regional perspective

**Interact: From your macro-regional strategy perspective please describe the territorial impact which can be achieved by combining cross-border and transnational cooperation interventions.**

*Nicolas Gouvernel/Christina Bezes-Feldmeyer:* Cross border programmes intend to finance more integrated local scale projects. They can cover more often projects which finance infrastructures (cycle track, tramway track etc.) since the area of cooperation is more limited geographically, territorially is more focused and the budget of the programme is higher than the transnational ones.

The difference between transnational and cross-border projects is important for local, regional, national, European actor's/ project partners to know which programmes and funding opportunities they can apply to, according to the scope and the content of their project.

**Interact: What would your territory miss if interventions would be performed individually, separately, without any linkages?**

*Nicolas Gouvernel/Christina Bezes-Feldmeyer:* So far, the stakeholders of the Alpine MRS have been focusing on the funding opportunities of the transnational Alpine Space Programme. However, under the French Presidency and for the future to come, the MRS will work closer with the cross-border (Alcotra) and vice versa, as well as with the mainstream funds. This will be done throughout launching of networks that intend to bring together and closer EUSALP action group stakeholders and managing authorities of mainstream and ETC programmes. The aim is to better exchange information and help to match projects ideas with funding opportunities in the Alpine regions in coherence with EUSALP priorities and needs. Meetings between Alpine MRS -Interreg and the mainstream programmes will be established periodically.

A first mapping of the different opportunities (priorities and themes selected by the cohesion programmes 21-27) in France has been elaborated. The idea is that the different regions try to coordinate their interventions and project financing.

It is to recall that the macro-regional strategies are "soft governance" models and that mainstream and ETC programmes are implemented in a specific and given framework with rules and procedures enshrined in the EU regulation, so the flexibility is little.

**Interact: For the development of the territory of a macro-region, where do you see the contribution of cross-border cooperation and where of transnational cooperation?**

*Nicolas Gouvernel/Christina Bezes-Feldmeyer:* It could be possible to have a pilot project developed more locally in a cross-border context between some alpine regions and on the basis of its conclusive results to scale up its recommendations/results to other alpine regions in a transnational project.

Or other way around, a transnational project could build a network and could undergo a first analysis of the legal framework in each country towards a new technology or sources of energy for ex. which can have a more operational application/development on a local level in a cross-border cooperation afterwards. It could also include pilot experiments, like in [Smart Altitude](#) project (four mountain resorts as living labs implementing concrete measures of energy transition) which could later be replicated at a larger scale by the cross-border programs or mainstream programs.

Examples: [Smart Altitude project](#). transnational Alpine Region

**Interact: Do transnational and cross-border cooperation affect the project impact in the territory the same way?**

[Nicolas Gouvernel/Christina Bezes-Feldmeyer](#): Transnational programmes show their impact in the territory mainly by supporting the networking opportunities on the ground (sharing practices) and pilot actions (test on the ground). Main elements of a transnational programmes: Innovation through experimentation and replicability.

Cross-border programmes besides financing joint infrastructure also works in complementarity with the mainstream programmes.

**Interact: How do you think citizens (taxpayers) perceive the difference?**

[Nicolas Gouvernel/Christina Bezes-Feldmeyer](#): They might perceive the difference of the geographical scope of the cooperation when it comes to the difference between cross-border cooperation projects and transnational cooperation projects.

Citizens could see differences since they are aware of ETC projects in their daily life. For example, one cross-border program Alcotra project co-funded touristic bus shuttles in cross-border remote valleys in Southern Alps, to avoid traffic jam in very small mountainous roads and pollution of natural environments.

## [An interview with](#)

### [Nicolas Gouvernel](#)

Commissaire adjoint à l'aménagement, au développement et à la protection du massif des Alpes. Coordonnateur national des acteurs français impliqués dans la Stratégie de l'Union européenne pour la région alpine.  
National Agency for Territorial Cohesion.  
France

### [Christina Bezes-Feldmeyer](#)

Executive Officer for European Territorial Cooperation and cross-border issues  
European cohesion policy division  
Directorate for operational and strategic support  
National Agency for Territorial Cohesion.  
France



### 3. Reality counts - Suggestions and examples how transnational and cross-border cooperation programmes could work better together?

At the end, it is the reality, the cooperation activities on the ground which count. Any concept is only worth the efforts if it is also implemented. Hence this chapter will look at some hands-on practices, cooperation project examples which will shed light on the relation and synergies between cross-border and transnational cooperation.

#### 3.1. Monitoring and Response against oil spills in the Mediterranean (CALYPSO and Sicomar projects)

*Starting from a common cross border problem between Sicily and Malta, concerning the need to monitor and prevent the deliberate actions caused by the oil spills operated by ships in transit in the Mediterranean, [Calypso project](#)<sup>6</sup> financed during the 2007-2013 programming period installed a HF radar observation system (4 antennas) along the Sicilian and Maltese coasts line. Two more projects (2014-2020) extended the detection area assuring a wider coverage of the marine areas allowing the competent authorities to acquire information and data to intervene systematically with the same ICT system equipped. Now, Calypso network is ready to relate to Lampedusa-Tunisia marine region.*

*There are several leverage and synergetic actions produced by “Calypso” series of projects. Since its origin “Calypso” projects series produced high level of cooperation and network established among the competent benefiting authorities of Italia-Malta and Italia-France programmes. In fact, the same common problem concerning the maritime surveillance is also sensitive for the marine area interested by Italy-France cross border programme. As a consequence, the beneficiaries of Calypso project shared their experience to the Italia-France beneficiaries of [SICOMAR project](#)<sup>7</sup>, especially on methodologies and installation challenges. Thus, the two Mediterranean areas are now monitored by same technological systems able to share data at disposal of authorities to intervene in case of deliberate actions of oil spills. As Calypso series of projects, also SICOMAR project generates a few spin-off projects to expand the network coverage and the area monitored ([SICOMAR PLUS](#)) up to Sardinia and Corsica.*

*The philosophy of Calypso series of projects produced a strong experience and best practices in the Italia-Malta maritime cross border programme through the inter - project complementarities which represents a real prospective to build on inter cross-border programme coordination. In fact, only the coordination among cross border projects that focused on the possibility to solve common problems that affect the same borders area, can produce effective results.*

---

<sup>6</sup> [Calypso](#) project had a second phase with [Calypso South](#) in Interreg V-A Italy Malta in 2014 -2020.

<sup>7</sup> [Sicomar](#) had a second phase with [Sicomar Plus](#), financed under Interreg V-A Italy France Maritime in 2014 - 2020.

*Recent Interactions with Tunisian partners and stakeholders, interested in applying the same monitoring technologies, suggest promoting a coordinate action with the Italia – Tunisia programme to better capitalize the experience produced by projects themselves. This goal is achieved by sharing knowledge, observations, and technologies as well as building common frameworks, tools, and services to assess and possibly forecast impacts of environmental threats to the marine ecosystems. Different locations will follow a common procedure but can focus on different aspects and environmental threats, depending on each location and size specificity.*

*I think the division between transnational (transnational) and cross-border cooperation (cross-border) really matter and thus distinction should be maintained. I do not have a direct experience with transnational projects, but my feeling is that programmes such as Interreg Italy-Malta are to be considered as "operational" and effective actions meaning that within this programme specific local or regional problems (cross border) can be solved also setting up systems (e.g., Calypso monitoring systems or similar projects within these kind of programmes). I think the same is for the Interreg Italy - France as far as I know. On the other hand, transnational programmes/projects, in my opinion, should be considered as more general projects where new policies, good practices can be developed also starting from the cross-border projects outputs. I think this complementarity should be maintained.*

*Some actions to facilitate the communications and exchange of experiences among different kinds of projects (cross-border and transnational) could be carried out to make transnational and cross-border work together. I think that transnational projects should take advantage from cross-border experiences to find more general policies of intervention at national levels.*

**Giuseppe Ciraolo**  
SICOMAR and CALYPSO Projects – Palermo University, Italy



### 3.2. Project chains examples in the Baltic sea region

South Baltic [MORPHEUS](#) project mapped the quality of the wastewater treatment in different plants and the left-over pharmaceutical substances flushed into the Baltic Sea. They came up with recommendations for investments and awareness raising. **Baltic Sea Region** [CWPharma](#) complements the work with a wider focus, both in geographical coverage and pharmaceutical emission reduction measures. CWPharma produced recommendations for measures on different levels of governance and guidelines for operators and authorities. The projects jointly organised events and meetings for authorities and operators of wastewater treatment plants. They gave feedback and ideas to each other on e.g., how to better present and share project results. Both projects were part of EUSBSR Policy Area Hazards flagship on “Pharmaceuticals in the environment” which helped in coordinating activities. The two projects did not have any partners in common.

South Baltic [CATCH](#) created a knowledge platform on coastal angling tourism that provides information for angling tourists; among others on “catch and release method.” **Baltic Sea Region** [RETROUT](#) developed among others the Baltic Sea Fishing Ethical Code. This included the “catch and release method” from CATCH. RETROUT used CATCH partner network as an additional platform to increase outreach. The projects had one partner in common.

South Baltic [abc.multimodal](#) developed strategies, visions and guideline to integrate cycling in the transport system in three cities. **Baltic Sea Region** [cities. Multimodal](#) combined different environmentally friendly alternatives for individual cars in 10 cities. They developed sustainable urban mobility plans and mobility management tools. All the partner cities of abc.multimodal participated in cities. Multimodal bringing in their experience from integrating cycling to the mobility systems.

#### **Lessons learned from these and other examples:**

- Cross-border projects can deliver tangible results and pilot cases that can be made use of in broader and more policy oriented transnational projects.
- Entering Interreg cooperation may be easier when first starting with partners across border and then broadening the topic and partnership to a transnational context.
- A thematic framework structure like a policy area of a macro-regional strategy, a transnational organisation like HELCOM or Interreg BSR project platforms support building synergies across cross-border and transnational projects working on a similar topic.

#### **What could help to get transnational and cross-border cooperation projects work better together:**

- To request from all project applicants to be aware that they are not acting in isolation. Applicants should get acquainted with other programmes in the area and results of completed projects in the region. Programmes should ask already in the application about links to other projects and existing results as well as about links to strategies and thematic frameworks in the region.

- *Promotion of Interreg towards thematic organisations/structures in the region by managing authorities/joint secretariats, projects themselves or project platforms. Building cooperation across projects or building project chains based on clear needs coming from a joint target group. In the regions with macro-regional strategies policy area coordinators could have a role as a facilitator in this process.*

**Eeva Rantama**  
Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme



#### **4. Next period 2021-20027 Interreg calls for stronger linkages between cross-border and transnational. Why?**

With the new programming period 2021-2027 a more integrated approach to sectoral and territorial policy implementation is in focus. And that not only regarding the Policy Objective 5, but in general. Within this context, the European Commission through their different (Border/Maritime) Orientation Papers has encouraged a stronger cooperation between programmes operating within the same area (transnational, cross-border including IPA cross-border and Interreg Next).

Why is such inter-programme coordination needed? Planning and implementing operations with a complementary focus and reinforcing synergies between programmes and hence their projects lead to a stronger impact in the territory, a better allocation of public resources and to improve the capacities of the programme authorities and beneficiaries.

Additionally, the recent European Court of Auditors report<sup>8</sup> mentions few findings of general relevance in the context of inter-programme coordination, addressed to Interreg cross-border programmes, such as:

1. Avoiding supporting the same kind of operations financed by the mainstream programmes. Also avoid mirror projects in both sides of the borders.
2. Preserving the uniqueness of Interreg cross-border projects and programmes. Interreg Projects should be characterized by joint planning, joint implementation and joint financing with a clear cross-border or transnational character.
3. Stressing the reality that programmes do not work on isolation. Transnational and cross-border are complementarity and an optimal coordination between them within or not a macroregional or sea basin context it is a must. Not forgetting also, the regional and national programmes who also should be consider when talking about complementarities with INTERREG.

Interact already for several years actively promotes and works on inter-programme coordination and cooperation between transnational and cross-border<sup>9</sup>. Most recently, this work is focusing on reinforcing cooperation between cross-border, transnational, IPA cross-border and Interreg Next programmes around a sea basin or within macro-

---

<sup>8</sup> [Interreg cooperation: The potential of the European Union's cross-border regions has not yet been fully unlocked. European Court of Auditors Special Report 2021](#)

<sup>9</sup> See more here:

[Compilation | Coordination - plans vs. reality:](#)

[Report | Suggestions for better coordination and cooperation:](#)

[Publication | Coordination and cooperation: how can we achieve these in Interreg?](#)

region. Different exchanges have been launched in different geographical areas across Europe (Mediterranean Sea area, Baltic Sea region, North-West Europe, South-East and Central Europe), each of them having different processes and methodologies, wishes, visions and realities depending on their geographical context.

While in some areas, coordination and building synergies seem not to be a top priority for the programmes as they might not see the benefit of this process, there is at the same time already a lot of cooperation and coordination between programmes ongoing. May be not on a formalised level, but rather based on pragmatic direct human contacts. And maybe not, among all the programmes in e.g., a certain sea basin, but between smaller groups of programmes with closer geographic or thematic commonalities. In such areas, trying to establish (over)formalised coordination mechanisms might not be the way forward. While in another geographic context, a formalised mechanism would be the way forward.



## 5. TESIM<sup>10</sup> inputs on NEXT programmes.

TESIM provides support and guidance to the 15 ENI CBC programmes. This technical assistance project is financed by the European Commission, and managed by DG REGIO – Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy.

### **Is the difference between CBC and TN kind of results clear to them?**

*There are clear differences between a cross-border (CBC) or transnational (TN) programme, even though they might be not so evident for all stakeholders and especially for projects beneficiaries. Beyond what written in regulations, in the ENPI and ENI experience there is a wide margin of discretion in understanding programmes and projects as transnational (TN) or cross-border (CBC). The boundary between TN and CBC has evolved over the programming cycles, with an emphasis that has been accentuated in the 2021-2027 Interreg regulation.*

*From a practical perspective, the difference is more evident between programmes that include land borders, with actual frontiers and contiguous territories, instead of other programmes involving more countries or addressing diluted maritime borders. Therefore, the cooperation dimension can be especially appreciated in those bilateral programmes in which it is possible to concentrate the intervention on specific contiguous territories and in which it is possible to think of concrete investments. The cooperation angle is even reinforced in the case of infrastructural action, financially relevant and with mutual, tangible benefit on both sides of the border, although the infrastructure component may be unbalanced between Member States (MS) and Partner Countries (PC). While the beneficiaries from MS have other possibilities to obtain funds for infrastructure (e.g., from ERDF), the ones from PC may have an only opportunity with the CBC programmes.*

*On the other hand, the TN programmes have the challenge of a wide eligible area and limited resources. In a shared perception within the ENI CBC family, the TN dimension is seen as closer to policies, to intangible, soft actions and strategy and planning oriented, unlike the CBC dimension which favours the more concrete, pilot, and experimental dimension, with the possibilities for specific and concentrated investments. In this general distinction each programme has often opted for different types of calls and therefore projects, some of which more genuinely CBC and other with a more strategic breath, and therefore tending to emphasize the more systemic, institutional, and political TN perspective.*

*Is it easy for them to understand the difference? Do they see the complementarity?*

---

<sup>10</sup> More about TESIM: <https://tesim-enicbc.eu/>

*It is not always easy for programmes to fully understand the difference. In several programmes the double dimension TN and CBC coexist, sometimes not only in the same programme but even in the same project. The two meanings of TN and CBC certainly recall what is sketched in the regulations, that is on the one hand the need to identify common challenges (CBC), on the other the broader ambition to strengthen cooperation in a larger geographical perspective (TN). It will be arduous to determine or even measure in each programme how many projects can be labelled as clearly CBC and how many are purely TN and even from the ones that are hybrids or mixed, with many projects inscribed in both dimensions.*

### **Do TN and CBC affect the project impact in the territory the same way?**

*At least in intent, the impact of TN and CBC actions should be different, more strategic, and political in the case of TN cooperation and more direct and concrete in the case of CBC. As said, this assumption holds true especially in land borders, and especially with Large Investment Projects (LIPs) which are implemented only in the CBC programmes and are of bilateral nature. In other cases, the theory is not followed by practice, for example, when we look at projects under maritime programmes, such as ENI CBC Italy Tunisia or ENI CBC Med Sea Basin, where difference between CBC and TN fades to the point of almost disappearing.*

### **Final remarks**

*There is still a lot of room for enhancing complementarities between the TN and CBC approaches, and in some ways the two approaches evolve and grow precisely to the extent that they continue to nourish each other. CBC and TN may have clear synergies and complementarities in theory. However, the CBC programmes usually cover only a small part of the TN eligible territory. Therefore, the focus on complementarity is difficult to sell in TN programmes to the countries non-concerned with CBC. Nonetheless, CBC should be able to promote the complementarity in the programmes, either by capitalisation/transferability of pilot experiences in TN programmes, or by providing complementary infrastructure. The theoretical distinction imprinted by the regulations is certainly useful for emphasizing both dimensions of cooperation, although a certain flexibility between the two dimensions should be maintained.*

**This is a contribution from TESIM Team**

## 6. Thoughts and suggestions for 2021-2027 Interreg's implementation.

Currently, this paper gathers opinions of 18 actors' experts in territorial cooperation (EU, pre-accession, and neighbourhood) with different roles, positions, and experience during Interreg programmes planning and monitoring especially in 2014-2020. However, the possibility of adding on more statements and additional viewpoints could be considered in future versions to enrich and complement the views shared in this publication

The contributors **convey** the following main points:

- A clear difference between cross-border and transnational is based on the territorial scope of their intervention. Cross-border is based in NUTS III, whereas transnational in NUTS II.
- The difference between transnational and cross-border matters only to those implementing the programmes rather than those who are final beneficiaries. For those planning and implementing the programmes, the need to improve the interconnection and complementarity between transnational and cross-border cooperation programmes was stressed.
- There is a strong demand from the contributors to move from theoretical discussions to practical solutions wanting to focus on topics and tools, with a good dose on planning, commitment, and willingness.

However, when discussing in practical terms the complementarities of transnational and cross-border and how they could be better interconnected, experts' **opinions differ on the following aspects:**

- on how transnational and cross-border programmes would support capitalisation, macro regional strategies and mainstream programmes;
- on the type of operations cross-border and transnational would invest their funds;
- on the kind of results and territorial impact
- on type of stakeholders and citizens' proximity.

When considering these views, aspects, and questions, one could add respectively respond with the following thoughts and **suggestions:**

- Transnational and cross-border programmes are both Interreg funding tools aiming to support operations in a respective territory that will have an expected impact to improve territorial cohesion in Europe and within its neighbours and pre-accession countries. At the same time, there should be a stronger difference between transnational and cross-border cooperation programmes and projects.
- There should be a stronger and clearer understanding among cooperation practitioners on the difference between the nature and the added value of a transnational versus a cross-border cooperation programme (and project) in the framework of European Territorial Cooperation. This is not to separate the two, but in the best case to make both joining forces by each contributing with its specific strengths to a common solution, considering that what it is at stake is the territorial needs.
- However, from a practical perspective, this effort of joining forces between cross-border and transnational programmes is not easy and possible solutions depend on the (geographical/thematically) context and those probably will be different.

Previously it would require defining the territorial challenges, the programmes and strands specific strengths and niche, the existing funding sources and the roles of the programmes stakeholders and beneficiaries, so each funding source plays a different role in the bigger picture.

- There still room to discuss, clarify and better develop linkages between the concepts of *capitalisation*<sup>11</sup> and *complementarity* between transnational and cross-border. While capitalisation focuses on exploiting the results, complementarity highlights the mutual dependence or action or influence between both strands.
- As a final point and considering that there are six years ahead for Interreg programmes and projects to be implemented, this publication offers an opportunity to revive the discussion between transnational and cross-border cooperation programmes to look for, in practical terms, ways of working together and in complementarity.

---

<sup>11</sup> [See more about ETC Capitalisation in Capitalisation Management Guide](#)



