

The Future of European Cooperation in Spatial Development

Work package 3: Recommendations regarding the future of Interreg B
Report 3.2: Evaluation of the revised orientation of transnational cooperation
in the current programming period 2014-2020

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Deutscher Verband für Wohnungswesen, Städtebau und Raumordnung e.V.
Radboud University Nijmegen / Prof. Dr. Stefanie Dühr
INFRASTRUKTUR & UMWELT Professor Böhm und Partner

prepared by

INFRASTRUKTUR & UMWELT
Professor Böhm und Partner, Darmstadt/Potsdam

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Abstract

Within the context of the MORO project on the 'Future of European cooperation on spatial development', this report evaluates the revised orientation of transnational cooperation in the programming period 2014-2020.

Key aspect of the revised orientation of transnational cooperation in the programming period 2014-2020 is the result orientation of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), which is based on the definition of specific objectives with a strong intervention logic following the principles of thematic concentration, the definition of output and result indicators with measurable targets and the establishment of clear and transparent milestones to ensure progress is made as planned (performance framework).

In the programming period 2014-2020 all transnational cooperation programmes involving German federal states selected from the set of 11 thematic objectives defined for the EU cohesion policy four thematic objectives and defined three to four related priority axes.

The definition of specific objectives for each cooperation area follows the selection of thematic objectives and related investment priorities. The approach to the definition of specific objectives differs in each cooperation area in terms of numbers and degree of detail, and spatial or territorial aspects apparently were of subordinate relevance in the formulation of specific objectives.

The importance of the result orientation in the 2014-2020 funding period is underlined by the common output indicators, which establish a clear link to tangible outputs and allow the results of European structural policy to be aggregated and communicated in an easily understandable and transparent way. However, since only in the NWE programme common output indicators are applied to a significant extent, the results of Interreg are not sufficiently reflected in the monitoring system of EU cohesion policy.

Additionally, for each cooperation area programme-specific result and output indicators have been defined, which measure the effects of transnational cooperation on programme and project level. The result orientation is clearly visible, but indicators were defined following different approaches in each cooperation programme.

Links between macro-regional strategies and transnational cooperation programmes were considerably strengthened in the funding period 2014-2020, in order to activate synergies between both cooperation structures. Nevertheless, the relations between macro-regional strategies and transnational cooperation programmes vary widely, depending on the history of development and the institutional setting of each macro-regional strategy.

Taking into account that the importance of macro-regional strategies for the EU cohesion policy will continue to increase, transnational cooperation programmes without corresponding macro-regional strategies also assume the function of transnational or macro-regional strategies, even if they are not yet recognised as such.

The different approaches to implementing rules and regulations in different cooperation areas prove that the Member States made use of the available room for manoeuvre when designing the transnational cooperation programmes. At the same time, the expectations towards transnational Interreg projects, their results and impacts have changed. There has been a shift in emphasis from the project level to the programme level, and the programme areas of transnational cooperation programmes have been strengthened as action areas for EU cohesion policy.

However, the different approaches followed in each cooperation area weaken the profile of Interreg and make it more difficult to establish cooperation and exchange across cooperation areas. Therefore, for future funding periods it should be examined whether greater harmonisation of rules and regulations in all cooperation programmes could strengthen the general position of transnational cooperation.

1 Introduction and structure of the report

This report contributes to Work package 3 'Recommendations on the future of Interreg' of the project 'Future of European cooperation on spatial development', which is realised within the research programme 'Demonstration Projects of Spatial Planning (MORO)'. The structure of this research project is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Work packages of the MORO project on the 'Future of European cooperation on spatial development'



Work package 3 consists of four components:

- LB 3.1: Development of transnational cooperation (Interreg B) since 1996
- LB 3.2: Evaluation of the revised orientation of transnational cooperation in the current programming period 2014-2020
- LB 3.3: Identification of the unique selling point (USP) of Interreg B compared to other EU-assisted programmes
- LB 3.4: Monitoring and analysis of current framework conditions on EU level, which might affect the design of future European cooperation

This report evaluates the revised orientation of transnational cooperation in the current programming period 2014-2020 (LB 3.2). Within the work package, focus is on content-related and strategic issues, and therefore operational issues of Interreg B implementation are not given dedicated attention. Based on existing analyses and studies, complementary research and existing evaluations of the programmes, an assessment of the changing framework conditions for Interreg B was undertaken and recommendations were prepared to support and to facilitate the discussion on the future of transnational cooperation within Interreg.

Results and conclusions of work were discussed with representatives of German federal states during work group meetings, preparing a dedicated workshop on the unique selling point (USP) of Interreg B. With regard to the work package, the following research questions have been formulated:

- Do the existing delimitations of Interreg B cooperation areas comply with functional areas? Are they appropriate to address spatial challenges? What are the possibilities to adapt territorial cooperation to large cross-border functional areas?
- What are the possibilities to highlight the specific nature and added-value of transnational cooperation within Interreg (planning, implementation, monitoring) more adequately?
- What are the possibilities to strengthen the delimitation and synergies between Interreg B and other funding programmes and to promote the application of innovative financing instruments, in order to better contribute to the objectives of spatial development?

Key aspect of the revised orientation of transnational cooperation in the programming period 2014-2020 is the result orientation of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI Funds), which is based on the definition of specific objectives with a strong intervention logic following the principles of thematic concentration, the definition of output and result indicators with measurable targets and the establishment of clear and transparent milestones to ensure progress is made as planned (performance framework).

Accordingly, the following aspects are in the focus of investigation:

- Thematic concentration: Choice of investment priorities and definition of specific objectives, territorial aspects (chapter 2)
- Indicators: Definition of programme-specific output and result indicators, choice of common output indicators (chapter 3)
- Influence and links to macro-regional strategic approaches (chapter 4)

The aim is to describe how the thematic concentration and the increased focus on results in the current funding period have affected the design of transnational cooperation programmes.

2 Thematic concentration

According to Article 9 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (General regulation, European Parliament and European Council 2013), the following 11 thematic objectives (TO) shall be supported by each ESI Fund:

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, ICT
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, of the agricultural sector and of the fishery and aquaculture sector
4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility
9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning
11. Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration

In order to facilitate the communication of the thematic objectives under Interreg, Interact has developed easily understandable short titles and icons which are applied by nearly all transnational cooperation programmes (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Short titles and icons representing thematic objectives under Interreg



Source: Interact 2014: 24

2.1 Thematic objectives and investment priorities

Article 6 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (ETC regulation, European Parliament and European Council 2013) states that at least 80 % of the ERDF allocation to each cross-border cooperation and transnational programme has to be concentrated on a maximum of four of the thematic objectives set out in Article 9 of the General regulation.

Accordingly, in the programming period 2014-2020 all transnational cooperation programmes involving German federal states selected four thematic objectives and defined four related priority axes. The only exception is the North West Europe (NWE) programme – here four thematic objectives have been assigned to three priority axes.

In the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) programme, the Danube programme and the Alpine Space programme the related macro-regional strategies are addressed by the thematic objective 'Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration' (TO 11) and a related priority axis.

In Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 (ERDF regulation, European Parliament and European Council 2013) a set of 39 investment priorities (IP) has been defined, specifying the detailed objectives to which the ESI Funds are to contribute. From this list 17 investment priorities were selected by the transnational cooperation programmes involving German federal states.

In summary, the following observations can be made (Table 1):

- **TO 1 Research and innovation** has been addressed by all cooperation programmes, with the focus on IP 1b (Developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector).
- Additionally in the BSR programme IP 1a (Enhancing R&I infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence) has been chosen.
- **TO 4 Low-carbon economy** has been addressed by the NWE programme, the CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) programme and the Alpine Space programme, with the focus on IP 4e (Promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas).
- Additionally in the CE programme IP 4c (Supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure and in the housing sector) and in the NWE programme IP 4f (Promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies) have been chosen.
- **TO 5 Combating climate change** has been addressed by the North Sea Region (NSR) programme only, with the focus on IP 5a (Supporting investment for adaptation to climate change, including ecosystem-based approaches).

- **TO 6 Environment and resource efficiency** has been addressed by all cooperation programmes, with the particular focus on IP 6b (Investing in the water sector), IP 6c (Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage), IP 6d (Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services) and IP 6g (Supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management).
- Additionally in the CE programme IP 6e (Taking action to improve the urban environment) and in the NWE programme IP 6f (Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency) have been chosen.
- **TO 7 Sustainable transport** has been addressed by all cooperation programmes except the Alpine Space programme, with the focus on IP 7c (Developing and improving environmentally-friendly and low-carbon transport systems).
- Additionally in the BSR programme and in the CE programme IP 7b (Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure) and in the Danube programme IP 7e (Improving energy efficiency and security of supply) have been chosen.
- **TO 11 Better public administration** has been addressed by all cooperation programmes with macro-regional strategies, with the focus on IP 11c (Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders by developing and coordinating macro-regional and sea-basin strategies).
- Additionally in the Danube programme IP 11a (Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders related to the implementation of the ERDF) has been chosen.

In one single case, no investment priority has been assigned to a thematic objective (Alpine Space programme, TO 11).

Table 1: Thematic objectives and investment priorities addressed by transnational cooperation programmes involving German federal states in the programming period 2014-2020

Thematic objective		IP	NWE	NSR	BSR	CE	Danube	Alpine	Definition of investment priorities	
1	Research and innovation	1a			X				Enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence, and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest	
		1b	X	X	X	X	X	X	Promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies	
4	Low-carbon economy	4c				X			Supporting energy efficiency, smart energy management and renewable energy use in public infrastructure, including in public buildings, and in the housing sector	
		4e	X			X		X	Promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multimodal urban mobility and mitigation-relevant adaptation measures	
		4f	X						Promoting research and innovation in, and adoption of, low-carbon technologies	
5	Combating climate change	5a		X					Supporting investment for adaptation to climate change, including ecosystem-based approaches	
6	Environment and resource efficiency	6b			X		X		Investing in the water sector to meet the requirements of the Union's environmental acquis and to address needs, identified by the Member States, for investment that goes beyond those requirements	
		6c				X	X	X	Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage	
		6d			X			X	X	Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure
		6e				X				Taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites (including conversion areas), reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures
		6f	X							Promoting innovative technologies to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency in the waste sector, water sector and with regard to soil, or to reduce air pollution
		6g			X	X				Supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors
7	Sustainable transport	7b			X	X			Enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes	
		7c	X	X	X	X	X		Developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility	
		7e						X	Improving energy efficiency and security of supply through the development of smart energy distribution, storage and transmission systems and through the integration of distributed generation from renewable sources	
11	Better public administration	11a					X		Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration through actions to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to the implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions under the ESF to strengthen the institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administration	
		11c			X		X		Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by developing and coordinating macro-regional and sea-basin strategies	

Source: Authors' analysis of programme documents

2.2 Specific objectives

The choice of thematic objectives and investment priorities is reflected in the specific objectives (SO) defined within each priority axis by the cooperation programmes. The approach to the definition of specific objectives is very different, e.g. regarding the number and the degree of detail of specific objectives:

- 10-14 specific objectives: BSR programme, CE programme, Danube programme
- 7-9 specific objectives: NSR programme, Alpine Space programme
- 5 specific objectives: NWE programme

The specific objectives were used in all programme areas in order to substantiate the investment priorities and to adapt them to the needs of the respective programme area. At the same time the principles of thematic concentration lead to a clear focus of the cooperation programmes.

Spatial or territorial aspects apparently had a subordinate role in the formulation of specific objectives. In case territorial aspects are included, they usually refer to the entire cooperation area:

- Danube programme, SO 3.1: "...contributing to a balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas" (IP 7c)
- NWE programme, SO 2.3 [SO 4]: "To facilitate the implementation of transnational low-carbon solutions in transport systems to reduce GHG emissions in NWE" (IP 7c)

Only in few cases objectives are defined more precisely in spatial terms:

- Danube programme, SO 2.3: "...bio-corridors and wetlands of transnational relevance" (IP 6d)
- CE programme, SO 2.3 / SO 3.3: "...functional urban areas" (IP 4e, IP 6e); SO3.3: "...revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites" (IP 6e)
- BSR programme, SO 3.1: "...interoperability in transporting goods and persons in north-south and east-west connections" (IP 7b)

The annex provides a detailed overview of the specific objectives defined in each cooperation programme.

3 Indicators

The importance of the result orientation in the 2014-2020 funding period is illustrated by the list of common output indicators published as part of the ERDF regulation (Table 2).

Table 2: Common output indicators for ERDF support under the investment for growth and jobs goal

Thematic field		Unit	Indicator
Productive investment		enterprises	Number of enterprises receiving support
		enterprises	Number of enterprises receiving grants
		enterprises	Number of enterprises receiving financial support other than grants
		enterprises	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support
		enterprises	Number of new enterprises supported
		EUR	Private investment matching public support to enterprises (grants)
		EUR	Private investment matching public support to enterprises (non-grants)
		full time eq	Employment increase in supported enterprises
		Sustainable tourism	visits/year
	ICT Infrastructure	households	Additional households with broadband access of at least 30 Mbps
Transport	Railway	kilometres	Total length of new railway lines of which: TEN-T
		kilometres	Total length of reconstructed or upgraded railway lines of which: TEN-T
	Roads	kilometres	Total length of newly built roads of which: TEN-T
		kilometres	Total length of reconstructed or upgraded roads of which: TEN-T
	Urban transport	kilometres	Total length of new or improved tram and metro lines
	Inland waterways	kilometres	Total length of new or improved inland waterways
Environment	Solid waste	tonnes/year	Additional waste recycling capacity
	Water supply	persons	Additional population served by improved water supply
	Wastewater treatment	population eq	Additional population served by improved wastewater treatment
	Risk prevention and management	persons	Population benefiting from flood protection measures
		persons	Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures
	Land rehabilitation	hectares	Total surface area of rehabilitated land
Nature and biodiversity	hectares	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status	
Research, innovation		full-time eq	Number of new researchers in supported entities
		full-time eq	Number of researchers working in improved research infrastructure facilities
		enterprises	Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions
		EUR	Private investment matching public support in innovation or R&D projects
		enterprises	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products
		enterprises	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products
Energy and climate change	Renewables	MW	Additional capacity of renewable energy production
	Energy efficiency	households	Number of households with improved energy consumption classification
		kWh/year	Decrease of annual primary energy consumption of public buildings
	users	Number of additional energy users connected to smart grids	
GHG reduction	tonnes of CO _{2eq}	Estimated annual decrease of GHG	
Social infrastructure	Childcare & education	persons	Capacity of supported childcare or education infrastructure
	Health	persons	Population covered by improved health services
Urban Development specific indicators		persons	Population living in areas with integrated urban development strategies
		square metres	Open space created or rehabilitated in urban areas
		square metres	Public or commercial buildings built or renovated in urban areas
		housing units	Rehabilitated housing in urban areas

Source: Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013, Annex I

The common output indicators establish a clear link to tangible outputs and allow the results of European structural policy to be aggregated and communicated in an easily understandable and transparent way.

Through the ETC regulation the list of common output indicators has been amended by further indicators, reflecting selected Interreg activities (Table 3).

Table 3: Additional common output indicators defined in the ETC regulation

Thematic field	Unit	Indicator
Productive investment	enterprises	Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects
	organisations	Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects
Labour market and training	persons	Number of participants in cross-border mobility initiatives
	persons	Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training
	persons	Number of participants in projects promoting gender equality, equal opportunities and social inclusion across borders
	persons	Number of participants in joint education and training schemes to support youth employment, educational opportunities and higher and vocational education across borders

Source: Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, Annex

Within the framework of programming, the common output indicators are complemented by programme-specific result and output indicators.

3.1 Programme-specific result indicators

Programme-specific result indicators are overarching indicators measuring the effects of transnational cooperation at programme level.

The approach towards the definition of result indicators differs in all cooperation areas considered – from the analysis of framework conditions and impacts achieved in thematic fields and impacts on the capacities of actors and institutions to achieve the defined aims to the intensity of cooperation of key actors:

- Analysis of framework conditions and impacts achieved in thematic fields: NWE programme, Alpine Space programme
- Analysis of the capacities of actors and institutions to achieve the aims of the programme: NSR programme, BSR programme
- Analysis of the impact of transnational cooperation on the capacities of actors and institutions to achieve the aims of the programme: CE programme
- Analysis of the intensity of cooperation of key actors: Danube programme

In the BSR programme and in the Danube programme different and more specific result indicators apply to the objectives linked to macro-regional strategies.

Notably only in the Danube programme explicit reference is made to cooperation and collaboration – the essential subject of Interreg projects.

The result indicators are mainly measured by methods of qualitative research (surveys, expert interviews and focus groups). In the NWE programme, surveys are based on ‘objective’ data and reports.

3.2 Programme-specific output indicators

Programme-specific output indicators measure the effects of transnational cooperation on project level. The result orientation is clearly visible, but indicators were defined following different approaches in each cooperation programme, as it was the case with result indicators (Table 4).

Table 4: Programme-specific output indicators in transnational cooperation programmes involving German federal states in the programming period 2014-2020

Programme-specific output indicator	NWE	NSR	BSR	CE *	Danube	Alpine
Number of strategies, action plans, strategic elements				X	X	X
Number of tools, solutions, technologies, services, products	X	X	X	X	X	
Number of pilot actions, implementation elements	X	X		X	X	X
Number of documented learning experiences, learning interactions			X		X	
Number of institutions adopting/applying/informed about new/improved strategies, action plans, tools, solutions, services		X		X		
Number of trainings/trained persons				X		
Number of supported transnational cooperation structures						X
EUSBSR/EUSDR indicators			X		X	
Number of innovation networks, transnational clusters	X			X		
Number of innovation support measures, enterprises cooperating with new/improved knowledge partnerships		X				
Number of jobs created/maintained	X			X		
Amount of funding leveraged, documented planned investments	X		X	X		
Amount of decreased raw material, increased material recovery	X					
Number of end-users benefitting	X					
Number of public authorities/institutions involved			X			

* Programme specific output indicators and Thematic result indicators, as defined in the Cooperation Programme and in the Application Manual – Annex III

Source: Authors' analysis of programme documents

In summary, the following observations can be made:

- The NWE programme and the NSR programme apply differentiated programme-specific output indicators, which are tailored to specific objectives.
- On the contrary, the Alpine Space programme uses only a few indicators, which apply equally to all specific objectives.
- The BSR programme and the Danube programme apply more process-oriented indicators ('documented learning experiences and learning interactions').
- In addition to programme-specific output indicators, the CE programme introduces an additional category of 'thematic result indicators' in order to better distinguish between outputs and results.

Overall, only a few indicators explicitly refer to transnational aspects. Beyond that, spatial references are not recognisable.

3.3 Common output indicators

Regarding transnational cooperation programmes involving German federal states, only in the NWE programme common output indicators are applied to a significant extent (and in relation to all thematic priorities).

All other cooperation programmes have chosen only a limited selection of common output indicators. The Danube programme and the Alpine Space programme use common output indicators only in the thematic field of research and innovation (Table 5).

Nearly all common output indicators do not take into account the aspect of cooperation, including vertical and horizontal cooperation. The only exception is the indicator 'Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions'. Accordingly, this indicator was selected by almost all cooperation programmes investigated.

The common output indicators 'Number of enterprises and number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects', which explicitly refer to Interreg projects, were selected by only part of the transnational cooperation programmes.

Table 5: Common output indicators in transnational cooperation programmes involving German federal states in the programming period 2014-2020

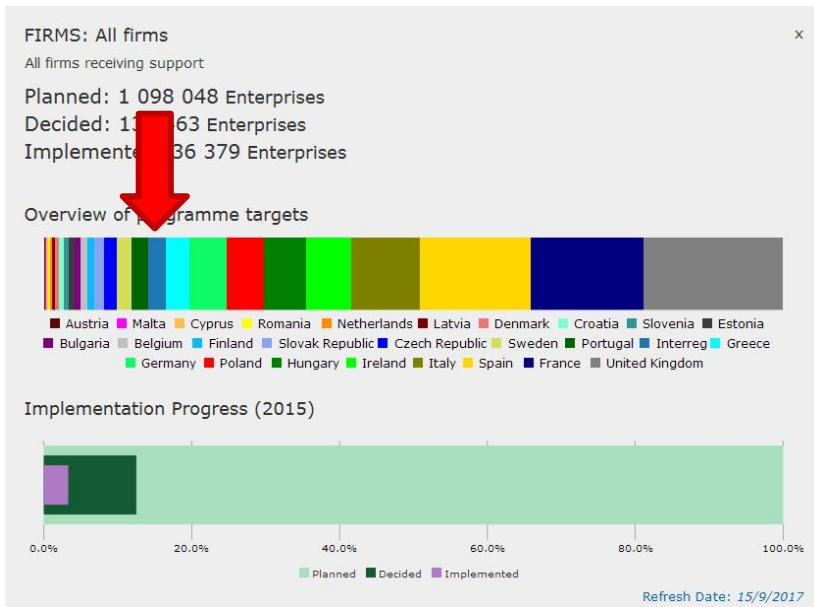
Common output indicator		NWE	NSR	BSR	CE	Danube	Alpine
Productive investment	Number of enterprises receiving support	X		X	X		
	Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support			X		X	
	Number of enterprises participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects		X		X		
	Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects		X		X		X
Research, innovation	Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions	X		X	X	X	X
	Private investment matching public support in innovation or R&D projects			X			
	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the market products	X					
	Number of enterprises supported to introduce new to the firm products	X					
Energy and climate change	Additional capacity of renewable energy production	X					
	Number of households with improved energy classification	X					
	Decrease of annual primary energy consumption of public buildings	X					
	Estimated annual decrease of GHG	X					

Source: Authors' analysis of programme documents

The following figures illustrate the mapping of Interreg in the EU cohesion policy monitoring system, which is based on common output indicators. All indicators selected by more than one cooperation programme are documented.

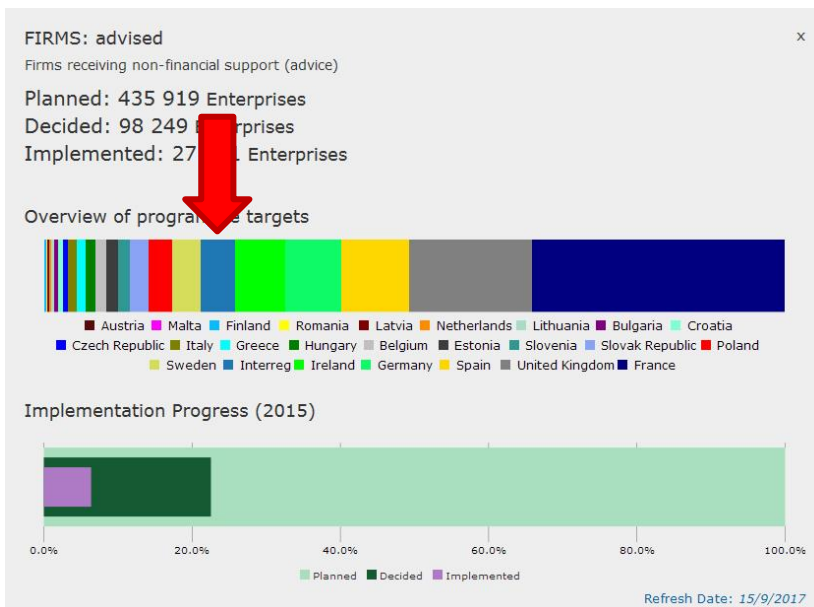
The results show that Interreg makes a visible contribution to achieving the objectives of EU cohesion policy. However, the indicators documented below cover all strands of Interreg, and they reflect only a small part of transnational cooperation activities. A large part of transnational cooperation realised within Interreg is not feeding into this system, thus effects of these activities are measured in terms of programme-specific result and output indicators exclusively.

Figure 3: Monitoring of common output indicators in the EU cohesion policy monitoring system – Number of enterprises receiving support



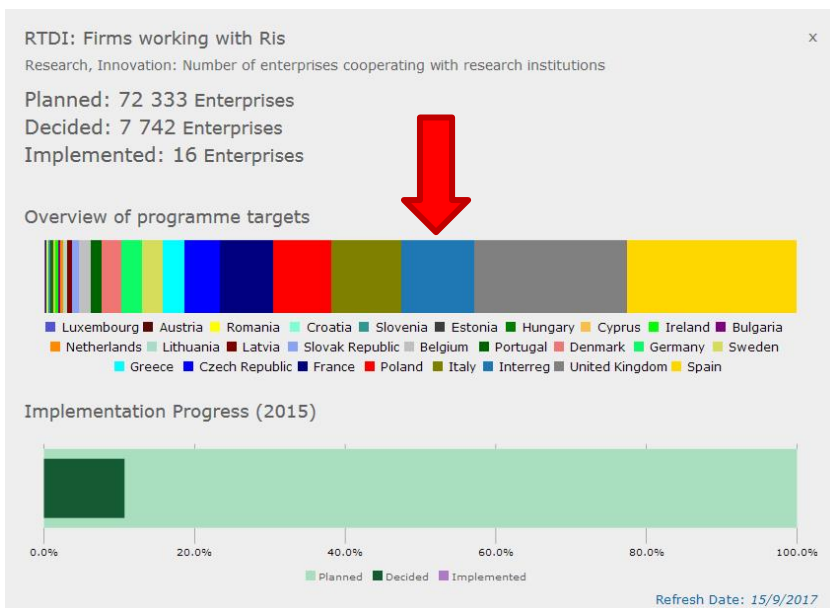
Source: European Commission: ESI Funds Open Data Platform. Access: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/erdf> [retrieved on 28 November 2017]

Figure 4: Monitoring of common output indicators in the EU cohesion policy monitoring system – Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support



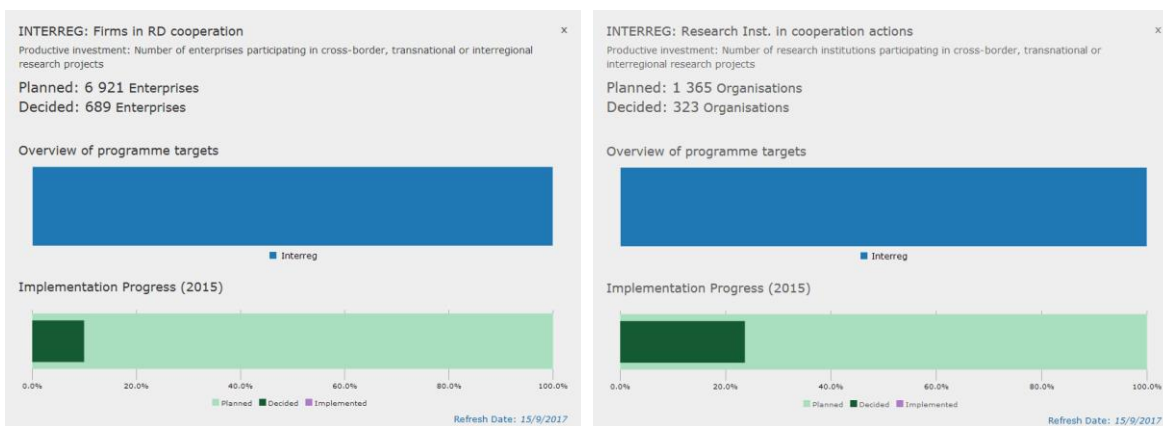
Source: European Commission: ESI Funds Open Data Platform. Access: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/erdf> [retrieved on 28 November 2017]

Figure 5: Monitoring of common output indicators in the EU cohesion policy monitoring system – Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions



Source: European Commission: ESI Funds Open Data Platform. Access: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/erdf> [retrieved on 28 November 2017]

Figure 6: Monitoring of common output indicators in the EU cohesion policy monitoring system – Number of enterprises and number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects



Source: European Commission: ESI Funds Open Data Platform. Access: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/funds/erdf> [retrieved on 28 November 2017]

4 Macro-regional strategies

With the funding period 2014-2020, macro-regional strategy areas and programme areas of transnational cooperation programmes have been aligned. In addition, links between macro-regional strategies and transnational cooperation programmes were considerably strengthened, in order to activate synergies between both cooperation structures.

However, the relations between macro-regional strategies and transnational cooperation programmes vary widely. In the **BSR programme**, the related priority axis 'Institutional capacity for macro-regional cooperation' has been fully geared to the needs of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR).

A total of around EUR 15.5 million, or approx. 5 % of the programme volume, has been dedicated to support corresponding activities in the funding period 2014-2020.

Table 6: Specific objectives and indicators of the BSR programme related to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)

Specific objectives	4.1 Seed Money		4.2 Coordination of macro-regional cooperation	
	To increase capacity for transnational cooperation implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and working on common policies with the partner countries			To increase capacity of public administrations and pan-Baltic organisations for transnational coordination in implementing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and facilitating the implementation of common policies with the partner countries
Result indicators	Amount of funding for projects implementing the EUSBSR resulting from seed money projects	Number of organisations from the partner countries working on joint projects resulting from seed money projects	Percentage of EUSBSR priority areas and horizontal actions reaching the identified targets	Percentage of EUSBSR priority areas and horizontal actions facilitating the implementation of joint priorities with the partner countries
Measurement unit	Million EUR	Number of organisations	Number of EUSBSR PA and HA in relation to their total number	
Programme specific output indicators	Number of project plans for a main project including information on possible financial sources Number of project plans contributing to joint priorities with the partner countries Number of transnational meetings held to facilitate implementation of the EUSBSR targets Number of transnational meetings held to facilitate joint work on common priorities with the partner countries Number of strategic policy documents supporting the implementation of the EUSBSR targets and/or common priorities with the partner countries Number of support measures provided to the EUSBSR			

Source: Authors' analysis of programme documents

In the **Danube programme** the range of possible activities within the associated priority axis 'Well-governed Danube region' has been extended to the improvement of institutional capacities to meet major societal challenges.

Accordingly, in the funding period 2014-2020 there will be significantly more funds available to support such activities – around EUR 30.9 million or approx. 13 % of the programme volume.

Table 7: Specific objectives and indicators of the Danube programme related to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)

Specific objectives	4.1 Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges Strengthen multilevel- and transnational governance and institutional capacities and provide viable institutional and legal frameworks for more effective, wider and deeper transnational cooperation across the Danube region in areas with major societal challenges	4.2 Support to the governance and implementation of the EUSDR Improve the governance system and the capabilities and capacities of public institutions and key actors involved in complex transnational project development to implement the EUSDR in a more effective way
	Result indicators	Intensity of cooperation of institutional actors and other stakeholders
Measurement unit	Semi-quantitative scale	
Programme specific output indicators	Number of strategies Number of tools Number of pilot actions Number of documented learning interactions in finalised operations	Number of EUSDR Priority Areas financed Number of projects plans prepared through the seed money facility EUSDR Strategy Point implemented

Source: Authors' analysis of programme documents

In the **Alpine Space programme**, the priority axis 'Well-governed Alpine Space' has been geared towards supporting multilevel and transnational governance in general. In contrast to the other programmes, this priority has been fully integrated into the system of programme-specific result and output indicators.

In the funding period 2014-2020, almost 8 % of the programme volume (approx. EUR 11.0 million) will be available to support corresponding activities.

Table 8: Specific objectives and indicators of the Alpine Space programme related to the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

Specific objectives	4.1 Increase the application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space
Result indicators	Level of application of multilevel and transnational governance in the Alpine Space
Measurement unit	% of maximum possible
Programme specific output indicators	Number of supported transnational cooperation structures Number of developed strategic elements Number of developed implementation elements

Source: Authors' analysis of programme documents

When analysing and evaluating the links between macro-regional strategies and transnational cooperation programmes, the history of development and the institutional setting of each macro-regional strategy should also be taken into account.

Thus, the macro-regional strategy for the Baltic Sea Region emerged in an environment of intensive cooperation of many different networks. Integrating these networks, each with its own logic and history, into a common strategy still proves to be a major challenge. With this regard, the stakeholders and actors making use of the Interreg programme can also be understood as a network.

In the Danube region, which is strongly influenced by the process of EU enlargement, there were hardly any overarching cooperation networks before the emergence of the macro-regional strategy. The macro-regional strategy and the Danube programme emerged in parallel and are often linked by stakeholders active in both spheres.

Finally, the macro-regional strategy for the Alpine region emerged from the transnational cooperation programme, so that here too the strategy and the programme are often supported by the same stakeholders. At the same time, there are long-established cooperation networks (e.g. the Alpine Convention) that are closely linked to the Alps.

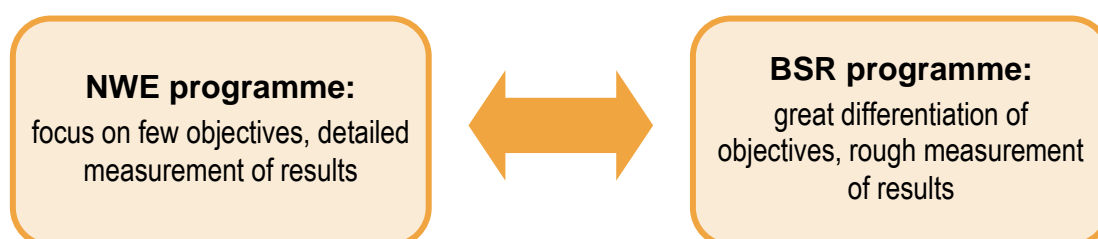
It can be expected that the importance of macro-regional strategies for the EU cohesion policy will continue to increase. At the same time it should be noted that with sea-basin strategies such as the Atlantic Action Plan (2013) and the Atlantic Strategy (2011) or the North Sea Commission's strategy paper 'North Sea Region 2020' (2016) further strategies are available for large functional regions that can be compared with macro-regional strategies. Partly these strategies are linked with the respective transnational cooperation programmes, and existing synergies are exploited.

Last but not least, transnational cooperation programmes without corresponding macro-regional strategies also assume the function of transnational or macro-regional strategies, even if they are not yet recognised as such.

5 Results and findings

The revised orientation of transnational cooperation in the programming period 2014-2020 lead to different effects. The selection of thematic objectives, the definition of specific objectives and the selection and definition of indicators show that the Member States made use of the available room for manoeuvre when designing the transnational cooperation programmes. The NWE programme and the BSR programme are examples of how the framework conditions defined by the General regulation, the ERDF regulation and the ETC regulation have been implemented differently in different areas of cooperation.

Figure 7: Different approaches towards the implementation of rules and regulations in different cooperation areas



At the same time, the expectations towards transnational Interreg projects, their results and impacts have changed. More targeted projects are needed which do not necessarily have a direct spatial impact but an indirect impact by contributing to the achievement of the (larger) objectives set out in the cooperation programmes. As a result, there has been a shift in emphasis from the project level to the programme level, and the programme areas of transnational cooperation programmes have been strengthened as action areas for EU cohesion policy. This is also underlined by macro-regional strategies.

However, the different approaches to implementing rules and regulations in different cooperation areas weaken the profile of Interreg and make it more difficult to establish cooperation and exchange across cooperation areas. For future funding periods, it should be examined whether greater harmonisation of rules and regulations in all cooperation programmes could strengthen the general position of transnational cooperation.

Finally, the results of Interreg are not sufficiently reflected in the cohesion policy indicators, as only the NWE programme uses the common result indicators to a greater extent – all other programmes use these indicators to a very limited extent. For future funding periods, result indicators should be developed which better reflect the activities realised within Interreg and better reflect the results achieved.

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Annex

Analysis of objectives and indicators according to cooperation areas involving German federal states (synopsis)