



Federal Ministry
of the Interior, Building
and Community

Good Practice Guidelines for an Effective Implementation of Interreg B Projects

The Impacts of Transnational Cooperation in Interreg B



Interreg_B
Zusammenarbeit. Transnational.



BBSR

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1. Transnational cooperation in Interreg B

These good practice guidelines illustrate, with clear examples, the impacts Interreg B projects can have within transnational cooperation, and which factors are particularly significant for the achievement of these impacts. In the context of “European territorial cooperation” Interreg B is the instrument that strengthens cooperation in transnational cooperation areas. For more than 20 years it has already made a visible contribution to reinforcing territorial and social integration within Europe. Interreg B promotes cooperation between national, regional and local partners in transnational cooperation areas. The aim is to develop new strategies, services and concepts in order to be able to effectively address transregional challenges such as climate change, demographic change, or globalisation. The transnational aspect of this cooperation is not only the prerequisite but also the guarantor for the development of effective solutions for large joint challenges and their long term sustainability.

The funded projects are oriented towards complex goals which can sometimes only be captured with difficulty. Often the introduction of new procedures or the improvement of existing ones, the improvement of players’ ability to work transnationally, or the increasing of institutional capacities are the focus of the project. These guidelines are intended to make the impacts of these aims more tangible.

In this way the readers of these guidelines are, on the one hand, made aware of the complex impacts that can be achieved through Interreg B projects. On the other hand, the guidelines outline which aspects need particular attention during the preparation and implementation of the project, in order to make projects particularly successful and effective. However, the advice in these guidelines should in no way be seen as a replacement for the documents that are provided by the Interregprogrammes (such as programme handbooks or “fact sheets”).

The guidelines do not guarantee immediate success when applying for funding. Rather they should be seen as additional advice which supports (future) project developers in the planning and implementation of successful Interreg B projects by offering practical suggestions, and which provides an impetus to increase the impacts of Interreg B even more in the future.

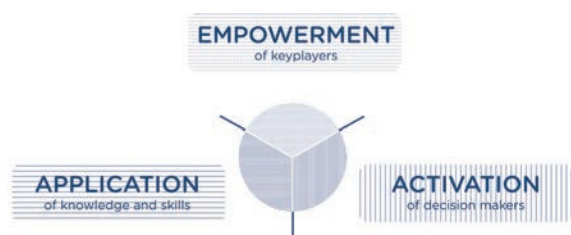
The design of these guidelines is based on the findings of the “investigation of the impacts of transnational cooperation using the example of Interreg IV B projects”, which Ramboll Management Consulting has carried out on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure¹. The focus of this investigation is on selected projects from the funding period 2007-2013, which were implemented in the cross-national cooperation areas that Germany was involved in at that time: Alpine Space, Central Europe, North Sea Region, North West Europe and Baltic Sea Region. Because of the enormous thematic variety and regional specificity within and between the transnational cooperation areas, the results of the investigation cannot be seen as representative of all projects and cooperation areas in Interreg B.

To start with, these good practice guidelines describe the general impacts of Interreg B projects identified in the course of the investigation. Then the most important factors for a successful and effective project implementation are discussed and clearly illustrated with reference to a project example.

¹ Further information on this investigation can be found on the website for the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) <http://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/DE/FP/ReFo/Raumordnung/2015/transnationale-zusammenarbeit/01-start.html?nn=1380582>

2. What can Interreg B projects achieve?

Interreg B projects are complex, transnational cooperation projects that can trigger a range of positive changes in the programme area. These varied impacts can be summarised in the following categories, which are often interlinked with each other.



- **Empowerment of key players**, that is, the knowledge and skills of the stakeholders are increased and enable them to exploit new opportunities for action.
- **Activation of decision makers**, that is, the political players, who by dint of their area of responsibility are able to create the necessary political frameworks for the subsequent implementation of targeted measures, are made more aware of the theme of the project, and are activated to support it.
- **Application of knowledge and skills**, that is, concrete measures are implemented by the relevant players and tangible changes are achieved.

Depending on the regional setting and on the content-related complexity of the transnational project, these impact categories can be addressed to varying degrees within the framework of Interreg B funding. While some projects use Interreg B funding to empower key players, other projects are able to build on already existing knowledge and skills and in so doing, use the funding to put the emphasis on the activation of decision makers or on the application of knowledge and skills.

In the following section, the impacts which concretise the contribution of Interreg B funding to the three categories outlined above will be discussed. We will discuss those effects of the funded projects, which only come into effect after the end of the funding, and which although they may be initiated by them are not directly caused by them. These effects are realised by players outside the project partner-

ship and thereby describe the contribution of Interreg B funding to the development of the relevant cooperation area. In chapter 3 some of the impacts are further illustrated with reference to selected projects.

EMPOWERMENT of keyplayers

Increased capacity of key players to act through increased knowledge and skills

As a result of the development of their knowledge and skills, participants who act within the scope of the project at hand are empowered to implement new opportunities for action.

Through the development of new methods, approaches and technologies, Interreg B projects can extend the sphere of action of the key players in a targeted way. Through awareness-raising measures projects draw the attention of their target group to the new opportunities. The target groups of this impact are strongly dependent on the topic the project covers. Participants from politics or administration can, for example, be shown opportunities, as to how desirable developments in the region can be supported in a more focussed way, or how social challenges can be addressed more effectively. The extended sphere of action frequently offers businesses the opportunity to better exploit the existing economic potential, or tapping into new economic opportunities. It should be stressed here that in this case the target groups are only being empowered to employ new opportunities for action. The application of knowledge gained, and of new skills is a possible subsequent step, which this impact does not describe.

ACTIVATION of decision makers

Better representation of interests at regional, national and European level

This impact describes the increased influence on political decision makers and the heightened awareness among these players for the relevant topic. The topic at hand is more prominently placed on the political agenda of the relevant decision makers, and new insights are taken into account in the political decision-making process.

Interreg B projects can achieve this, for example by establishing new or more effective channels of communication such as transnational network forums or groups, where stakeholders join forces with each other and pool together their joint interests. The communication of these joint interests can be further supported through different types of public relations work (e.g. the creation of guides, position papers, brochures, etc.)

Strengthened joint action in political decision-making processes

This impact describes the enhanced cooperation by players from politics and administration in the relevant topic areas as a basis for joint decision making. Joint action does not only refer to strengthened cooperation on a vertical level (e.g. through the increased participation of national and regional stakeholders in processes at EU level), but also on a horizontal level (e.g. through the greater involvement of different players and interest groups operating at national and regional level in the decision-making processes). In Interreg B projects, this can be achieved for example by the development of technical and organisational prerequisites (e.g. new strategic processes or approaches), as well as by awareness-raising measures with regard to the added value of increased transnational cooperation.

APPLICATION

of knowledge and skills

More frequent application of social and technical innovations

This impact describes the increase in innovative performance by different stakeholders in the programme area. On the one hand, this is something that businesses and scientific establishments that develop and apply technical innovations can profit from; but, on the other hand, it is also of benefit to players that initiate social innovations in relation to social challenges.

Interreg B projects can bring about this impact by means of an increased exchange of knowledge from players in science and industry, the creation of framework conditions that promote innovation, as well as the introduction of respective awareness-raising measures.

More efficient and effective design of work processes

This impact describes the further development of procedures and operating methods in both public and commercial organisations. This includes, in particular, the fact that more forward-looking decisions are made, existing processes and procedures are further developed or standardised, or new methods and approaches are integrated into the work processes. Very different groups of players profit from this more efficient and effective design of work processes: It could be ministries and authorities, but also businesses and scientific establishments.

Within the framework of Interreg IV B projects, these improvements could for example be initiated by means of the direct development of new or the improvement of existing processes and procedures, as well as training measures about them.

Improved ecological, social and economic (living) environment

This impact describes the direct improvement of everyday living situations of regional players. These changes can be both economic and structural, but also social and ecological. This means that potentially all players in the region concerned can benefit from these changes.

Within the framework of Interreg B projects these improvements can be achieved for example by the (further) development of planning processes and management structures, as well as by means of concrete pilot projects. In this way, newly created social and cultural offers can promote social spatial development and strengthen social cohesion, while the ecological conditions in the region can be significantly improved by new management approaches for example.

3. How can effectiveness be increased?

The effectiveness of Interreg B projects, that is, their contribution to the achievement of the outlined impacts, is primarily influenced by five aspects of project preparation and implementation; these are represented in the following diagram. These five success factors can be directly influenced by the project participants². They play a decisive role in the success of the project, not only during its implementation phase, but also in the preparation process, and should therefore be taken into account early on by project participants.



Source: Own diagram: Ramboll Management Consulting

The five success factors should be seen as integral components of an overall construct: Project participants should ideally take account of all the listed success factors, in order to achieve the highest possible effectiveness with their project. The more components that are missing the more fragile the overall construct will be, and the less likely that the relevant project will be highly effective. In fact, the following project examples, which will be used to illustrate the individual success factors, each cover at least four of these five success factors.

² In addition, aspects outside of the project partnership also influence the effectiveness of a project. These will not be considered further in these good practice guidelines.



Identification:
Reach agreement on common goals and interests



What does Identification mean?

A clear common vision, with which all the project partners involved can identify, is necessary for a high level of motivation and the willingness of all project partners to actively participate. In addition, there is a need for clearly communicated goals, which are of benefit to all project participants and are actively supported by them.

Why is IDENTIFICATION important?

Common goals: All participants should be able to identify with the agreed goals, so that despite regionally different starting points, they can all contribute to their goals in an engaged and successful way. In transnational projects in particular, misunderstandings can occur as a result of language barriers, cultural differences and different ways of working; these can be minimised or even completely avoided through clearly communicated goals. This will result in cooperation that is both more effective and more efficient.

A high level of commitment: A common understanding of and an individual interest in the project goals is crucial for the motivation of the project partners and their commitment or willingness to take on an active role in the implementation of the project. In this respect, the stronger the conviction of the participants that they can benefit from the project, the greater will be their willingness to assume responsibility for the implementation of the project.

Intensive exchange: A strong common interest has a discernibly positive effect on the frequency and intensity of exchange between the project partners. The stronger the participants' interest in the project and its outcomes is, the more intensive is the technical exchange within the project team. A committed exchange of this type makes it possible to discuss and to take account of the different technical and regional perspectives, and in this way to fully exploit the enormous potential of a transnational partnership.

How can IDENTIFICATION be achieved?

Even before the project starts, it is important to state the vision as well as the planned goals of the project as concretely as possible. Only by doing this they become tangible for the potential project partners and act as motivation to actively participate in the project. In addition, this early concretisation of the planned goals is helpful so that in the process of putting together the project partnership, the most suitable players can be identified and recruited for the common project.

At the start of the project it is necessary to have an explicit understanding of the goals, and a clear plan for the pending tasks within the project partnership, in order to create a common basis for the project implementation. In this phase, sufficient opportunities should be created for all participants to be involved and have their say, so that all partners can actively participate in this important decision-making process. In addition, at this stage participants should be made clearly aware of the particular challenges of transnational partnerships, both with regard to the different regional circumstances, as well as in respect of different working cultures and language barriers. There should therefore be a strong emphasis on clearly communicating the strategy, goals and responsibilities within the project partnership. In this context, the various different language abilities of the project partners should be taken into account. As far as possible simple, clear language should be used.

During the implementation of the project it is important to constantly communicate the jointly developed vision in the project partnership, and to align emerging (interim) goals with this vision and where necessary adapt them. In this context, it is for example helpful to establish working groups that have the goal of ensuring that the focus of all activities is aligned with the overall vision, and of regularly informing all project partners of the progress that has been made.

SCIENCE LINK

Programme area:

Baltic Sea

Topic:

Research and innovation

Goal:

Improvement of knowledge transfer between industry and science

Impacts:

Increased capacity of key players to act through increased knowledge and skills

The SCIENCE LINK network of leading research establishments and universities, as well as regional business development organisations, has improved the knowledge transfer between business and science players in the Baltic region and thereby increased their capacity for action. Through stronger network activity (contact points at business development organisations), concrete research partnerships and the provision of research instruments, businesses have been able to initiate innovations. The research institutes benefit from greater visibility and significance and as a result from increased competitiveness in the international scientific context.

More frequent application of social and technical innovations

Innovations have been initiated through the research partnerships that have been set up. In particular, the use of research tools and measuring instruments helped participating industries to develop or enhance products. As a result of the creation and constant use of the networks, fundamental physical research in the Baltic region is being effectively used for innovative business projects.

Success factor: Identification

“You need a common vision in which the goals of the project are embedded. All participants must have a clear idea of where we will be in 10 years’ time and which social challenges we want to tackle.”

Dr Uwe Sassenberg, DESY Hamburg

An important prerequisite for the proactive and committed cooperation of participants from science and industry was the clear and frequently communicated vision of the project. This vision was actively supported by the project partners, because it also aligned with their own interests: the goal of improving the knowledge transfer between industry and science would also result in the increased competitive and innovative capacity of these players in the region. As a result, the project partners took on a common challenge and developed solutions within the framework of the project. All activities were subordinated to this vision and contributed to its achievement. The explicit goal was to make use of the opportunities offered by the largescale research infrastructures of basic research in physics in the Baltic region for the researchintensive businesses in the area as well.

The strict alignment of the project with the identified vision and the declared interests of the project partners was a crucial factor in the active and committed pursuit of the project goals by the extremely complex project partnership (41 members). In particular, the strong awareness of the benefits of the concrete opportunities offered by the intended outcomes both in the short term (improved cooperation structures) and long term (increased capacity for innovation and competitiveness) had a very positive effect. All partners had both a shared and individual interest in the successful implementation of the project.



Leadership:

Ensure professional project management and strengthen team spirit



What does Leadership mean?

In order to enhance the cooperation of the project partners and to make it both efficient and effective, there needs to be professional management by the lead partner that ensures the active involvement of all project partners and successful coordination and guidance. Given the complex transnational partnerships of Interreg B projects, effective project management is particularly important.

Why is LEADERSHIP important?

Project management: Interreg B projects need the lead partner to exercise professional, administrative, financial and team management. In respect of administrative and financial matters, the specific and often extensive requirements of Interreg B funding have to be taken into account, together with the European specifications. Wide ranging project management experience, particularly in relation to EU-funded projects, is very useful here, and signifies a recognisable efficiency gain for project implementation. As regards team management, the lead partner has to put together a functioning project partnership and lead it appropriately. Alongside the careful selection of motivated, representative and technically competent team members, there is also the need for the professional guidance and coordination of a usually large number of project partners. Responsibilities and tasks must be clearly distributed and work packages must be organised accordingly. It is helpful here for example to provide a detailed list of project milestones with binding deadlines for particular stages of work for different partners.

Team spirit: A further factor for successful cooperation is a trusting relationship between the project partners, and this is something that can be decisively influenced by the lead partner. In Interreg B, a strong team spirit is necessary, given the fact that the projects are technically complex and implemented by a diverse range of team members. Team spirit supports intensive and easy communication

between the partners, and helps to break down mistrust, silo thinking and other barriers to communication. The lead partner can exert a decisive, positive influence here, by bringing the participants together and creating a good group dynamic.

How can LEADERSHIP be achieved?

Crucial to professional project management and a strong team spirit is the commitment of the lead partner. Particularly during the initial phase of the project, the lead partner can positively influence the group dynamic and develop a team spirit amongst participants with different technical backgrounds and nationalities. Study visits to the individual partners or staff exchanges with team members lasting several months, for example, can be helpful in this respect.

In relation to team management, skills in intercultural communication and organisation are required, as well as perseverance, and the ability to motivate. For example, regular compulsory meetings, frequent one-to-one discussions, and feedback sessions can be used to sort out any specific problems and misunderstandings with individual project partners early on, and to review the progress of the implementation of the project. In this respect, the lead partner should (as discussed under IDENTIFICATION) constantly motivate the other project partners and regularly reiterate the value of this commitment. It is also helpful to offer project partners explicit opportunities where they can openly discuss specific problems and challenges and be actively involved in their resolution.

In order to ensure effective and efficient cooperation, establishing obligations and discipline is another important aspect that the lead partner can actively influence, by setting deadlines early on, and providing a clear understanding of responsibilities. At the same time, given the different working cultures within a transnational partnership, it is necessary to react flexibly to different cultures and ways of working and respect these as far as possible. In addition, cooperative work with people who already know each other from other projects, can be helpful for managing the team. In this way, it is possible to build on shared experiences and an existing relationship of trust, and to draw on knowledge

previously gained concerning the implementation of complex transnational projects.

With regard to administrative and financial project management, if the lead partner is lacking EU project management specific skills, it is possible to call on external experts, financial advisers or specialists, who can take over the relevant subtasks of project management. In this way, the time required for these tasks within the project can be reduced, and the team and content management tasks can be performed all the more intensively.

Ballast Water Opportunity

Programme area:
North Sea

Topic:
Environment and natural resources

Goal:
The effective treatment of ballast water in the North Sea region.

Impacts:
More frequent application of social and technical innovations

By bringing together participants from science, industry and administration and by creating a new knowledge transfer centre and a new testing facility, new innovative products could be developed. This has enabled some businesses to develop and authorise new ballast water treatment technologies.

Increased capacity of key players to act through increased knowledge and skills

The project consortium composed of representatives from science, industry and administration developed - alongside new treatment technologies - new methods and strategies to better test ballast water from seagoing ships and thereby prevent the introduction of foreign organisms into domestic ecosystems. As a result, newly developed testing methods have enabled the authorities

to carry out more effective controls. The general norms for ballast water were negotiated according to the UN framework, that is, at international level. The project work resulted in the fact that on the basis of the test results, political decision makers in the North Sea region were able to appear together at the UN committees and present a joint position at the negotiations concerning international ballast water standards.

Strengthened joint action in political decision-making processes

The solutions developed for ballast water treatment and the attendant public relations work led to intensified coordination between the North Sea coastal states with regard to the decision-making processes in the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Hence the results of the project were used as a basis for negotiations for a new convention for ballast water treatment, which is currently in the process of being ratified.

Success factor: Leadership

“The lead partner has to ensure that there is an intensive, internal exchange and give partners sufficient freedom to present their challenges and problems.”

Dr Hans Flipsen, EmConsult

The successful development of new solutions as well as their significance at international political level was attributable to a great extent to the committed and professional management of the lead partner. In order to strengthen the cooperation of the numerous participants - in total 16 project partners, and 29 subpartners from the private and public sectors - and to exploit their potential to the full (in particular in relation to networking with political decision makers), a regular and intensive exchange was organised. On the one hand, the high degree of accessibility of the lead partner was of help here, but on the other hand also - alongside regular meetings, conferences and the high degree of accessibility - the creation of platforms, which ensured the opportunity for exchange. So, for example, internal workshops, regular meetings and conferences were organised, where the project partners were motivated to discuss current challenges in implementing the project, and to present possible suggestions for their solution. In addition, this

gave them the opportunity to be actively involved at the strategic level of the project implementation.



What does Balance mean?

Of benefit to the success of a transnational cooperative project is the involvement of different, relevant key players as project partners: a number of stakeholders, who are of technical, political and regional significance in relation to the project theme should be represented in the project partnership so that the project implementation can be as effective as possible.

Why is BALANCE important?

Quality: A balanced project partnership is one of the specific advantages that Interreg B allows. It enables different viewpoints to be included in the project implementation. As far as content is concerned, multidisciplinary can be very helpful in complementing knowledge and skills and opening up new ideas and ways of thinking. Moreover, horizontal (administration, industry, interest groups, etc.) and vertical (representatives at regional, national and EU level) balance in the partnership makes it possible for the outcomes to be aligned to the relevant regional situations and the needs of the different stakeholders. Transnationality has become necessary since an increasingly larger proportion of present day challenges cannot be managed regionally or nationally. There is a need for a consistent transnational orientation of the project partnership, in order to analyse transnational challenges and formulate possible relevant solutions.

Legitimation: In addition, a balanced partnership has a positive effect on the legitimation and significance of the claims and outcomes of the project. The special value of a transnational partnership is particularly apparent here; experiences, outcomes and progress from different regional contexts are brought together and in this way new practices and ways of thinking are conveyed to less networked participants. A project partnership that brings together different stakeholders also strengthens the negotiating position of the participants; the more stakeholders contribute

to and support the claims of the project, the greater is their significance and influence at political level.

Reaching target groups: The project partners function as important disseminators that take the project into their respective regions and topic areas. A multidisciplinary, transnational partnership that spans different levels is therefore important in order to be able to engage in effective networking. It helps to be able to reach and address target groups on different levels and to disseminate project outcomes and information as widely as possible.

Crucial for a partnership with added value is the selection process for project partners before the start of the project. At this stage, relevant participants should be identified in a focussed way. On the one hand, relevance refers here to the thematic orientation. Intended here are participants who have a personal interest in the project and can also make a significant contribution to the success of the project in relation to the subject area. On the other hand, relevance also refers to the position of the participants. Potential project partners should be well networked both thematically and regionally, in order to make reaching the target groups easier, and also where necessary to be able to involve relevant players outside the project partnership in the project implementation.

Potential project partners should be approached as early as possible. This gives the lead partner sufficient time to find suitable participants for the project, and find alternative people for anyone declining to take part. In addition, it enables the project partners to find sufficient personnel and financial resources and plan ahead appropriately. A suitable way of involving players who for financial and/or time reasons cannot be project partners is to make them "associate partners". In this case stakeholders assume an advisory function and/or participate in a limited way in the implementation of the project by resource allocation (networking, knowledge transfer, etc.). This possibility will be discussed further under the success factor LINKAGE.

In order to guarantee an effective and efficient cooperation between the very diverse participants during the project implementation, the lead partner needs to show committed team management - as described under LEADERSHIP. In addition, particularly for projects with a large number of

partners, it is advantageous to institutionalise certain procedures. For example, working groups can be established to review progress in relation to goals and to coordinate the operational collaborative work.

It should be emphasised that it is not the number of project partners that is crucial to the success of the project, but rather the balance of project partners in relation to their technical, regional and political expertise and significance. It should also be noted that in certain circumstances a large number of partners can also be detrimental to efficient project implementation.

Code24

Programme area:
North West Europe

Topic:
Traffic and transport

Goal:
Further development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor by means of an overall strategy

Impacts:
Strengthened joint action in political decision-making processes

17 regional decision makers and key players from The Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy joined forces in the transnational project consortium Code24 to work on a joint integrated overall strategy for the trans-European transport corridor between Genoa and Rotterdam. The outcome was that the regional players came to an agreement that in the future they would coordinate activities more closely with regard not only to transport, but also in relation to economic, environmental and spatial development. In order to continue with the respective regional activities for the development of the corridor after the end of the project, and thereby to strengthen the long term joint working of the regional players, the partnership was consolidated following the completion of the project and now operates as a “European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation” (EGTC).

Better representation of interests at re-gional, national and European level

The combining of the regional players and decision makers and the accompanying pool-ing of interests improved the mediation of interests at European level. Alongside working on the overall strategy and the extensive public relations work accompanying it, the consolidation of the partnership through the legal form of the EGTC was particularly rewarding. The legal personality gave the concerns of the participating players a greater significance and stronger visibility at European level. In fact, the organisation is now operating as a voice for regional matters, for example, in the course of the consultation processes for the federal transport route plan 2030, or in the development of the core network corridors at EU level.

Success factor: Balance

“The project partnership should be as representative as possible and combine skills which are relevant both technically as well as politically.”

Jörg Saalbach, Rhine-Neckar Metropolitan Region

The complex, diverse and thereby highly representative partnership of Code 24 was decisive in achieving the project goal of developing a joint overall strategy for the corridor. A total of 17 project partners from five countries took part and represented the whole corridor from Rotterdam to Genoa.

When the partnership was being established, particular value was placed on ensuring that all relevant topic areas were covered. In this way, relevant perspectives were brought together with the participation of representatives from administration, commercial players, scientific establishments, regional planners and seaport authorities, and combined together into an integrated, representative overall strategy. This balance strengthened the legitimisation and significance of the overall strategy as well as the partnership itself. This in turn facilitated access to the decision-making processes at EU level.

The identification and engagement of suitable project partners required extensive preparation.

More than a year before the application was submitted, potentially suitable players were approached and recruited as participants.



Linkage: Identify and use potentials for synergy



What does Linkage mean?

In order to get the best possible benefit from existing structures, it is necessary to actively use existing partnerships. These could refer both to political, commercial and scientific associations and networks, as well as to Interreg funded projects in other programme areas.

Why is LINKAGE important?

Synergy: Cooperation with existing partnerships is of great relevance, particularly for the content-related design of the project. Associations, networks and forums offer important starting points for a value-added exchange of experience and knowledge on the basis of their structure (the coming together of numerous players with different experiences). They pool a range of knowledge, different experiences and ways of seeing things, and on the basis of their similar cross-regional and stakeholder focus, offer great potential for synergy for Interreg B projects. Cooperation with associations and networks enables, in the first instance, a better holistic understanding of the challenges, and secondly the development of suitable, practical approaches to solutions.

Visibility: Cooperation with existing structures increases the visibility of Interreg B projects, whether it is via agreed partnerships, contributions at conferences, or participation at workshops and seminars. These approaches provide project partners with direct access to stakeholders. This makes it easier to approach stakeholders and also offers the possibility of their subsequent engagement with the project. Visibility can be further increased by the active promotion and help of, for example, associations. They are important disseminators for Interreg B projects, because they can distribute information from and about the relevant project effectively within their network, and in this way significantly increase the awareness level of the project.

Influence: Cooperation with other, similarly placed partnership projects, and above all Interreg projects, is also advantageous to the extent that in this way a greater exter-

nal effect can be achieved. In particular, the technical and practical exchange as well as the mutual assistance when communicating with and reaching target groups can be very helpful during the project implementation.

How can LINKAGE be achieved?

Helpful for effective linkage is early awareness raising amongst project partners of the need for active communication with, and inclusion of, external associations, networks and forums. All project partners should be encouraged to publicise the project in their respective areas of influence (e.g. by at least one event in every participating country) and to identify points of connection for cooperation with other partnerships. Partnerships with a particularly high level of relevance (in terms of technical issues, or with regard to target groups) should be actively approached and included in discussions around content, e.g. via associate partnerships or concrete projects.

When approaching a potential network partner, a professional and comprehensive communication strategy is also helpful, in order to recruit relevant associations, networks, and forums for cooperation for the project implementation, and as potential disseminators, to be able to provide them with engaging information. With regard to this, provision should be made to recruit sufficient personnel with specialized expertise on communication, so that they can develop relevant publicity materials and organise events. Suitable products include publications, press releases and information materials. When presenting the outcomes to a public audience, an eye-catching layout and design should be chosen; a corporate identity could also be used in order to increase the recognition value. Other creative formats (e.g. cartoons, short films, postcard campaigns, summer schools for students) can be helpful in order to make the project goals and outcomes as tangible as possible.

PROINCOR

Programme area:

Central Europe

Topic:

Industry and innovation

Goal:

Improvement in capacity for innovation and competitiveness in SMEs

Impacts:

Increased capacity of key players to act through increased knowledge and skills

The PROINCOR project has increased the capacity for innovation of numerous SMEs. Within the framework of the project, 400 innovation audits were undertaken by specially trained innovation advisers, which provided the SMEs with a clear idea of their innovation procedures and processes, and developed measures with them in order to improve their capacity for innovation. So, for example, clear recommendations were formulated for the management of the process; the opportunities within the innovation funding landscape were discussed; and partnership structures for research and knowledge transfer were improved.

More frequent application of social and technical innovations

The PROINCOR project was indeed able to increase the innovation performance of the participating SMEs through the advice given, and the resulting changes in the businesses initiated by this advice. Consequently, a total of 80 technical product and process development projects were initiated and 30 million euros acquired in grant funds. The grant funds were used mainly to improve existing products or develop new ones. The successful implementation of these many technical innovations also had a spill over effect onto other SMEs in the region. The interest in research and development projects in the region (and with it the number of applications) has markedly increased.

Success factor: Linkage

“The active use of regional network connections was very helpful, particularly for securing partners from industry”.

Prof. Dr. Jürgen Besold, TGZ Bautzen

Between 2010 and 2013, the PROINCOR project supported ca. 400 businesses in the programme area. For this, the project partners used a jointly developed scheme for an innovation audit. The experiences of innovation centres, universities, research institutes and Chambers of Industry and Commerce all contributed to the methodology. To reach target groups, the project partners used their personal regional network connections, e.g. with the European Enterprise Network, the business associations and the innovation advisers. In this way, the SMEs were familiarised with the range of services provided by PROINCOR. They were also used to implement the recommendations of the innovation audits that had been carried out. In addition, PROINCOR was accompanied by an internationally staffed Advisory Board. Political recommendations to improve the regional innovation systems were formulated jointly with the high-ranking board members. The recommendations addressed the conditions of the regional innovation systems, e.g. the funding available for enhancing innovation.



Topicality:
Address urgent and significant transregional challenges



What does Topicality mean?

In order to secure and maintain the attention of key players, the project should engage with existing challenges and actions that need urgent attention, and present relevant solutions.

Why is Topicality important?

Interest: The success of the project and its sustainability depend to a large extent on the support of high ranking key players - particularly decision makers - outside the project partnership. They are not only able to provide valuable technical and practical assistance during the project implementation, but after the end of the project they can also utilise the project outcomes or continue to develop them further. In order to gain this support, the project topic should be of considerable significance and relevant interest for players outside the project partnership. In this respect, topicality plays a crucial role. The more strongly the project is focused on existing challenges and actions that need urgent attention, and presents relevant solutions, the greater is the likelihood of maintaining active support and attention from political decision makers and other key players. To some degree it can also be a matter of focussing on topics that despite the need for action have in the meantime disappeared from the political agenda, and which regain topicality through the efforts of the project partners.

How can TOPICALITY be achieved?

An important prerequisite to ensure the topicality of the project is the early agreement to focus the project goals on existing challenges or actions that need urgent attention, for example, by linking into current political action plans and recently adopted agendas. This should already have been established by the initiators of the project in the design phases, before the project has begun. At the start of the project, it is also useful to have an intensive exchange between the project partners about the situation in the indivi-

dual regions. Project partners should have a good understanding of the political, social and/or economic context of the relevant programme area and its specific characteristics, and be able to make assessments, in order to systematically identify the existing challenges and develop suitable solutions.

A proactive approach to key players, and particularly high ranking political players, is also useful, as has already been discussed under LINKAGE. Finally, attention should be drawn to the added value that the relevant project offers in addressing the urgent challenges that have been identified. In this respect it is useful, on the one hand, to have a presence at, and active participation in, political decision-making processes such as for example, consultation processes. Short introductory meetings with, and presentations to high ranking politicians, where the potential of the project outcomes for existing challenges are comprehensively presented, are also beneficial. On the other hand, key players can also be actively involved in the project implementation, whether by invitations to specially organised panel discussions or seminars, or also by including them in associated advisory project committees.

MORECO

Programme area:

Alpine Space

Topic:

Spatial and mobility development

Goal:

Development of strategies and tools for an improved spatial and mobility development

Impacts:

Increased capacity of key players to act through increased knowledge and skills

Within the framework of the interdisciplinary transnational project consortium MORECO, two new software products were developed, which increased the capacity for action in relation to mobility and spatial develop-

ment in the Alpine region, particularly for public sector players. With the settlement calculator, municipalities and provincial governments can very easily compare and evaluate locations with regard to specific indices. The household calculator helps private individuals to be better informed about the individual living and mobility costs of different locations and as a result to influence their decisions about where to live. In addition, mobility tests and simulations were carried out in pilot regions, in order to increase the knowledge of communities in the Alpine region of the relationship between mobility and settlement activity.

More efficient and effective design of work processes

The two software products were widely used in location decisions in the Alpine region, making possible a more sustainable form of settlement development. For example, the region wide implementation of the settlement calculator was financed by the provincial government of Salzburg; new location criteria were accepted for the Salzburg housing subsidies; and the household calculator was used in housing counselling to stem urban sprawl and promote environmentally friendly mobility. Numerous workshops provided public sector decision makers with the necessary knowledge about the use and handling of the software products, and private individuals were made aware of them via information giving events.

Success factor: TOPICALITY

“MORECO came at the right time. The political need for action regarding improved spatial and mobility development is huge.”

Walter Riedler, Salzburg Institute for Regional Planning and Housing

In the last few years the Alpine region has been faced with increasing urban sprawl as a result of economic and demographic changes. Whereas the rural area has increasingly thinned out, municipalities in the urban conurbations are struggling with a high settlement pressure which brings with it negative consequences, such as increasing commuter traffic or high costs for infrastruc-

ture. The need for the municipalities to act in respect of coordinated and early planning has therefore increased enormously. It is precisely here that the MORECO project positioned itself. With these two newly developed software products, the household calculator and the settlement calculator, the project created the necessary means of being better able to address the growing problem of urban sprawl.

The interest in, and the response of the municipalities, towns and regional governments to these two software products are as a consequence very high. For example, over 2,500 public sector employees and private individuals attended the numerous project events in the Alpine region; several newspaper articles and a TV programme featured the project, while the project leaders were constantly being invited to (international) presentations.

4. Contact details and important links

The relevant national contact points are the first port of call for further information and practical guidance on this theme. Also the programme secretariats as well as the contact partners in the Federal states are available for further questions.

The contact details of the German contact points, the transnational programme secretariats, and the contact partners in the Federal states and at federal level are available online at www.interreg.de. Comprehensive information about funding as well as practical guidance on project implementation can be found here. In addition, it includes a project database of all Interreg B projects funded between 2007 and 2013, as well as a summary of projects in the current funding period 2014 – 2020.

Further Information:



- [Contact partners at the state and federal level, of the contact points and programme secretariats](#)
- [Links to the programme websites](#)
- www.interreg.de

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