Analysis of tools and methods identified in the management of the INTERREG IIIB and IIIC programmes 2000-2006

A TOOL for better use of the European Regional Development Fund

Acknowledgements

Table of contents

2.4. Structures

3. Target: Optimising visibility of programme features and outputs

4. Target: Involving third parties in interreg programmes

Annex: INTERREG IIIB and IIIC programme features _____ 119

Introduction

INTERACT is part of the INTERREG Community Initiative. The Programme seeks to build on the experience and lessons of INTERREG I and INTERREG II in order to increase the effectiveness of INTERREG III during the current programming period.

The INTERACT Programme was approved by the European Commission on 16 December 2002 and is financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). INTERACT has a wide geographic scope covering the 25 EU Member States and neighbouring countries.

The core of the INTERACT Programme is to set up information and communication networks, to define information frameworks and flows, to proactively disseminate information and to stimulate the exchange of experiences. In this framework, INTERACT Point TB identifies good practice and develops practical tools for INTERREG programme management, and is managed by the Generalitat Valenciana (ES) in cooperation with the Euregio Meuse-Rhine Foundation (NL).

The research developed in this study thus contributes to the diffusion of good practice in the INTERREG III programme managers' network. It is important to underline that **the treatment of the tools and methods listed in the course of this document does not imply any kind of evaluation**. Its purpose is restricted solely to describing their content and performance.

Aims of the study

With the ongoing preparation phase of the new INTERREG programmes 2007-2013 in mind, this document offers a catalogue of tools and methods identified as specific features that have been implemented in the management of some INTERREG III B and C programmes during the programming period 2000-2006.

The paper aims to provide INTERREG managers and officers with a guide for practical consultation where they may find a number of ideas and solutions to difficulties encountered. They are accompanied by the opinion of the actors concerned regarding the advantages and disadvantages they have identified in the course of the day-to-day management experience.

The INTERACT Programme hopes that the consultation of this study may not only help INTERREG actors optimise the performance of their programme during the current 2000-2006 and the upcoming 2007-2013 programming periods, but also promote networking among the different INTERREG programmes.

The potential added value and contribution of such tools and methods to further improving the performance of future INTERREG programmes is an input to be considered.

How to read this document

The different tools and methods discussed in the course of this document are grouped according to their contribution to the achievement of at least one of the following programme targets:

1. **Higher quality project generation and application**
2. **Meeting management requirements at project and programme levels**
3. **Optimising visibility of programme features and outputs**
4. **Involving third parties in the INTERREG programmes**

For each target, different tools and methods are provided. The treatment of each of the tools and methods comprises the following sections:

Description: Definition and content of the instrument.

Experience: Conclusions drawn from the day-to-day programme management experience are displayed including both advantages and disadvantages that have been identified by the INTERREG actors concerned.

In this respect, it must be kept in mind that the content of this section is mainly based in opinions.

Programme examples: For each tool and method, several programme experiences are given in order to show the particularities of the tool or method concerned that have been found in each case.

Please note that **the list of programmes selected as examples is not exhaustive**, but merely indicative.

For further information: When a specific study has been used for analysing the tool or method concerned, an overview of its content and the online link to the document itself are made available for those interested in further consultation.

Additionally, links to the Websites of all the INTERREG IIIB and IIIC programmes are provided in the Annex, where a particular sheet of "Programme features" is devoted to each of the programmes mentioned in the course of the document, offering an overview of the corresponding geographical area, the programme finances and the statistics of the various call for proposals that have been launched by each of the programmes during 2000-2006.

List of acronyms

ARCHIMED:	Central and Eastern Mediterranean Space
BSR:	Baltic Sea Region
CADSES:	Central Adriatic-Danubian and South-eastern European Space
CBC:	Cross Border Component
CIP:	Community Initiative Programme
CP:	Contact Point
EC:	European Community
e.g:	exempli gratia
ENPI:	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
ERDF:	European Regional Development Fund
ESPON:	European Spatial Planning Observation Network
EU:	European Union
EUR:	euro
FAQ:	Frequently Asked Questions
FLC:	First Level Control
JPS:	Joint Programme Secretariat
JS:	Joint Secretariat
JTS:	Joint Technical Secretariat
i.e:	in extenso
IPA:	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
LP:	Lead Partner
MA:	Managing Authority
MAC:	Madeira, Açores, Canarias
MC:	Monitoring Committee
MEANS:	Mesures pour l'Evaluation des Actions de Nature Structurelle
MEDA:	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership
MEDOCC:	Espace de la Méditerranée Occidentale
MMS:	Managing and Monitoring System
MSC:	Monitoring Steering Committee
MTE:	Mid-term Evaluation
PC:	Programme Complement
PDN:	Project Development Network
NC:	National Correspondent
NCP:	National Contact Point
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWE:	North West Europe
OP:	Operational Programme
PA:	Paying Authority
PMD:	Project Monitoring Database
PRESAGE:	Programme Régional et Européen de Suivi, d'Analyse, de Gestion et d'Evaluation
RCP:	Regional Contact Point
RFO:	Regional Framework Operation
SC:	Steering Committee
SF:	Structural Funds
SUDOE:	South West Europe
TB:	Tool Box
TS:	Transnational Secretariat
TWG:	Transnational Working Group

1. Target: Higher quality project generation and application

In this chapter, the reader will find the following tools and methods designed to improve the quality of project generation and application in INTERREG III programmes:

1. **Tools for partner search**
2. **Support services for applicants and partners**
3. **Assistance in project building and implementation taken up by consultants**
4. **Financial support for project preparation costs**
5. **Additional project typologies**
6. **The "Three helix" approach**
7. **Application Packs**
8. **Flexibility in the application process**

1. Tools for partner search

Description

In the initial stages, the communication strategy of the INTERREG III programmes focuses primarily on generating new project applications, and finding the **right partners** is the main challenge for INTERREG projects.

To meet this challenge, programmes have introduced innovative ways and tools for encouraging partner search thus facilitating the development of project ideas prior to the application stage:

Some programmes offer potential applicants a Web-based **database of project ideas** in the different fields of programme Priority, covering all relevant key players (public bodies, public agencies, professional organisations, public-private partnerships, universities and research centres, etc.) in which participants can share and search for project ideas. The following components are offered on programme Websites to facilitate the search for partners:

- Specific contact databases of operations approved.
- Forms to be filled in for submitting an operational idea.
- Virtual forums for the various programme Priorities.

When programmes feature a network of Contact Points (CPs), they are usually involved in the compilation of the joint targeted database of contacts, which has to be constantly updated.

Experience

Tools for partner search have proven to be a very successful tool for improving the **quality of partnerships**, raising **awareness** of the benefits of the respective programme and opportunities for funding, and for closing up partnerships. But a major challenge ahead is how to evaluate the success of these tools. Therefore there is a need for **indicators**, since their results and impacts

cannot be easily measured. Asking about this issue in the project application form has been suggested as a possible **solution**.

Databases of project ideas on the Website make contact among potential partners easier because they are available online. It makes sense for partners and potential partners to have access to their own information so they can modify and update it. The respective CPs can also use the ideas to find partners in their area.

But databases of project ideas need a lot of work, and major **challenges** ahead are: filtering the ideas on the database to make sure that all are relevant or "strategic", keeping databases up to date in order to know whether ideas are still waiting to be developed or have already been approved, and if people are still available. As proposed **solution** would be for project ideas to be assessed or monitored for these purposes. There are also a lot of technological procedures involved, which complicates the management and updating of the database.

The **high costs** involved in the organisation and implementation of partner-search activities, together with the advisability of increasing the number of **strategic/project-targeted meetings** and the need for **smaller forums** were also highlighted as major areas where improvement was needed.

Partnership idea search **events** are more time-consuming, but have proven to be more efficient in all respects due to the successful partnership possibilities. Although programmes provide the ground floor for partner search, their success is in the hands of project owners. The organisation of partner search **forums** does not ensure the attendance of all relevant stakeholders. Another area for improvement is the insufficient help for partner search **outside the EU**.

For some programmes, partner search forums should in the future become **lead applicant seminars**, to provide applicants with the necessary information for developing their application.

More specifically, "**partenariats**" are targeted ways of promoting the programme and an effective way of making it visible to final users in the programme area. They have proved successful in providing support for developing **strategic project ideas** using a top-down approach. The programme Regional Contact Points (RCPs) invite the relevant actors they already consider potential partners to the event, so they can start working immediately.

They are a powerful instrument for project implementation and help fulfil the strategic programme goals, representing an essential cornerstone to secure successful programme implementation.

However, they don't represent a bottom-up approach to regional development if they lack local and regional input. Another risk is that some strategic actors may not get the opportunity to participate in the event, so in the future it would be important to plan the partenariats in advance to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- INTERREG IIIB Baltic Sea Region (BSR) has organised three **partner search forums** on specific themes, such as transport issues, which provide all the relevant information about the

programme, where project owners can present their idea and get some feedback. There is also an **On-line database** in which participants can share and search for project ideas. The project idea is accessible to a wide audience in a **standard format** that gives only main information about the project, which guarantees that the idea will be screened.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE (South West Europe) has also carried out a wide range of activities for facilitating partner search (including thematic workshops), with **events** attracting more than 500 participants. In 2004 a section was created on the programme Website during the last call for proposals consisting in a **database** where interested project promoters could exchange ideas and proposals. Interested players could there either post an outline of their project searching for partners or join a project of their interest. This tool was quite successful and a number of project partnerships came out of it.

- In INTERREG IIIB CADSES, INTERREG IIIB North West Europe (NWE) and INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space **partner search forums** have been organised, and CPs provide assistance not only to potential applicants among their nationals but also to those of other countries to help them in their partner search. At INTERREG IIIB CADSES, **national and transnational meetings** are organised for the purpose of partner search. INTERREG IIIB NWE has had occasional partnership ideas search **events** (Rotterdam and Paris) with a high impact, having generated enough project ideas for the following six years.

- INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area also has developed events and an On-line "**project fair**" **database** of project ideas for all partner search projects including an on-line "**forum**". In addition, **seminars** were held at both **transnational** (organised by the programme JTS) and **national** (organised by National Correspondents (NCs) levels, as well as **thematic forums** dealing with *maritime security and water*.

- In INTERREG IIIB North Sea, an **annual fair** is organised to facilitate the search for partners. These annual fairs -called "**Directoria**"- are an opportunity to hold specific meetings. Additionally, a "**Project Ideas Book**" is published prior to each annual fair in order to further facilitate the development of quality projects.

- Within the INTERREG IIIC Programme, five pan-European "**Info days and partner search forums**" were organised, proving to be a very successful tool, with a large number of participants and project stands. Partners can attend and post their interest. At these forums for the first time, partners from all over Europe could get together and know each other.

- For the purpose of attracting a significant number of projects and thus achieve the programme objectives and impact, in INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery a number of conferences (called "**Partenariats**") have been organised as an arena for network building among project developers. Their primary aim is to present and develop project ideas, and to prepare the ground for future partnerships. They include a wide range of participants; delegates to these events represent both local and regional government authorities in the programme area, research and educational institutions as well as NGOs. Regional Contact Points have contributed to the organisation of these events. Participants were invited to present their ideas about how to best organise or run the programme (brainstorming). After three conferences, it became clear that 'thematic partenariats' were more appropriate because they focus on the

programme's different Priorities. Partenariats therefore evolved into **thematic workshops** aimed at **finding project partners**. The process was organised in the following way: organisation of a thematic partenariat to work on an idea for different projects culminating in a 'draft' application, followed by the identification of resources needed to run the project. The final step was to make a formal application to the programme.

2. Support services for applicants and partners

Description

The provision of quality information and **support services** aimed at applicants/Lead Partners (LPs) /project partners' needs is a relevant feature common to all INTERREG programmes. Some of them offer good examples of organising their structures in such a way that project applicants can easily access the support they need during the project preparation phase. A combination of **info days** for those project promoters actively preparing an application for the forthcoming call for proposals, **seminars** and **training sessions** related to the different fields of programme Priorities to provide running operations with intensive support (LP seminars, Financial seminars, Communication seminars…), thematic **workshops** (i.e. financial management, auditing…) and **individual consultations**, mainly offered at the JTS premises and via email for LPs on project management issues (especially financial management) and for partners on general programme issues and for promoting networking set a good basis for implementation.

Once a project idea has been outlined and the partnership established, detailed consideration needs to be given on how the project will be further developed. There are programmes where pre-assessment is offered at an early stage by the programme Secretariat. The purpose of **pre-assessment** is to provide guidance for the development of the project and - when needed - to get the project developers back on track. Good applications need to address a wide range of issues and pre-assessment provides the opportunity to receive comments on the project idea's strengths and weaknesses at an early stage.

The sooner this can be done, the longer partners have to work on developing the idea before the actual deadline. Pre-assessment can never provide a guarantee that the project will be approved, but it can greatly improve chances.

Experience

The quality of support offered to potential applicants by the programme management structures is a key factor for successful **quality project generation**, and the impact of the advisory activities has become more visible and tangible at the respective programme level. In the context of quite complicated systems and processes that must be dealt with in order to develop a project, **guidance** is essential at all stages, ensuring that no "bad" projects waste time and resources, and that "good" projects get optimum information and chances of success. Support services to applicants lead to better quality of applications and reports.

The main problems associated with support services are that they require a lot of time and resources from the programme's JTS, which is usually already overworked. Additionally special care must be taken to avoid any conflict of interest arising from the JTS giving too much advice and support to some applicants or partners.

In particular, training addressed at LPs is more relevant for programmes where partners are new to the LP principle (e.g. New EU Member States) or where partners are participating in the programme for the first time. **LP seminars** allow project reporting issues (e.g. problems encountered from JTS and projects) to be discussed. They also support networking among projects in concrete themes.

When **individual consultation/advice** is organised shortly before the upcoming call, the project proposals that will be submitted can be focused on. On the other hand, since the administration of registration is one of the main bottlenecks, taking up a great deal of **time and resources**, and individual consultation runs the risk of unfair treatment of applicants, transparency must be ensured.

Thematic seminars help people focus on the issues that the programme wishes to see developed. They also attract future partners for future projects. As programmes develop and funds become increasingly committed, events tend to be focused on gaps where there is a lack of project applications.

For the **future**, the organisation of more **thematic workshops** and **seminars** that take place more regularly is suggested by programme structures e.g. linked to the different reporting periods to discuss the experiences and aspects encountered during project implementation and reporting. Also national networks and support structures are important for new partners or LPs, so **national partner seminars** should be encouraged. A **mentoring system** useful for new LPs is currently being considered in some programmes. Considering the limits of the Technical Assistance budget, consideration should be given to how to simplify systems to avoid draining JTS resources.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area support is given to project applicants by NCs, which allows the JTS to focus on project assessment.

- The IIIB North Sea Programme Secretariat offers potential applicants, amongst other services, a **pre-assessment facility** which is previous to the submission of the application. This service is in great demand and a queuing system has therefore been introduced to cope with the workload. Projects have the possibility of submitting a three to four page draft outlining the main aim, activities and outputs of the project to the Secretariat before they continue project development in more detail.

  Each project can only ask for one pre-assessment and it takes about three weeks to carry it out. In addition to the pre-assessment facility, the programme offers further financial advice through its Finance Unit, including support in drawing up the detailed cost work plan, which is regarded as key to every successful project. The Secretariat does not carry out pre-assessments on applications that are virtually complete or once the call for proposals has opened.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE (South West Europe) combines transnational **info days** about project management, **seminars** for LPs and **individual consultations**.

- INTERREG IIIB Madeira-Azores-Canary Islands (MAC) offers a three-month period of **training activities** after project approval devoted to providing LPs with all the information they need to develop a high quality project (LP seminars, conferences, technical conferences for all partners, etc.). Conferences addressed to all project partners and not just the LPs are an unusual feature not found in many programmes.

- INTERREG IIIB BSR Programme Joint Secretariat (JS) offers project developers a **two-three days session for individual consultation** for which any project developers interested have to register, and the consultation is based on project ideas collected using **project idea forms**, on which a short description of the project is given, outlining problems encountered by the applicant (two pages maximum).

  Thematic workshops on Programme Priorities are organised and are also useful for partner search. Additionally, this programme organises **LP information seminars** for approved projects offering practical information on reporting and monitoring procedures, auditing, payment procedures and legal aspects. Before the submission of the first progress reports a workshop for financial managers and First Level controllers is held where the JS provides detailed information on the programme rules governing financial management, reporting and First Level audit. Experienced financial managers / auditors are invited to report their practical experiences. For projects under implementation **quality workshops** are organised (one workshop per Measure).

- INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space Programme bodies give support to project holders by organising **thematic workshops**, **seminars** etc in which project holders have the opportunity to learn about other projects and develop ideas for new projects with new partners.

- In INTERREG IIIB NWE support for projects is a key issue. Project developers, financial and communication officers are available for partners in a very informal way at all stages of the preparation process. The types of support provided include: LP seminars, Audit seminars, info days in different programme countries to explain procedures… A **thematic seminar** on "water" was jointly organised with representatives of one NWE project approved, with lots of new projects coming out of it. In this forum, achievements and future objectives in this field were discussed, and the project took the opportunity to promote itself.

- In INTERREG IIIB CADSES, the programme organises **info days**. **Individual consultations** are attended both face to face during transnational meetings and continuously via email and phone. **Thematic workshops** are organised, also running during the CADSES **Annual Conference**.

- INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery offers a comprehensive **support network** for project applicants and managers, which is complemented by the **RCPs** in each partner country. A **pre-assessment service** is offered on all applications, as well as LP seminars following approval. In addition, **national partner seminars** are organised by the RCPs in each country to ensure that individual partners are also aware of their management and communication responsibilities.

- INTERREG IIIC applicants receive adequate support from the respective JTS in preparing their application and during project implementation. Programme-level stakeholders provide a **wide range of support** for projects during the application and implementation phases. The type of support includes: partner-search events, on-line database of "project ideas", consultations through the programme's JTS in the four programme zones (individual, face-to-face, email, phone), seminars for applicants (also in the regions), provision of good practice examples (applications, progress reports, examples for indicators), LP seminars, financial seminars (to explain in detail reporting and audit requirements) and advice on financial management, communication seminars (communication kit), support for progress reporting; and in general the JTS staff is permanently available and responds to queries promptly and well.

  This programme also organises **info days for LPs** after project approval. More particularly, the IIIC West zone has organized special **applicants' seminars** with the aim of teaching them in what the subsidy contract looks like.

  In the IIIC South zone, due to the strong commitment of the EU Member States, technical meetings are organised between the JTS, the representatives of the EU Member States and the LP and partners of the operations facing specific implementation difficulties.

3. Assistance in project building and implementation taken up by consultants

Description

Consultants may be hired through calls for tenders to collaborate with the Managing Authority (MA) or the JTS to provide advice and assistance to Lead and project partners from the beginning through the execution of the project.

Experience

Assistance with setting up and implementing projects ensures project peer evaluation on specific subjects. The MA and JTS are **released from work overload** thanks to the help of outside consultants. This tool may be useful for certain **specialised project fields**.

However, **budgetary constraints** are the main obstacle for contracting such assistance. Additionally, organising calls for tenders can be too time consuming, and the method of recruiting the correct experts can be difficult. Ensuring **impartiality** is another relevant challenge, and some much specialised project fields may require assessment by specific experts to ensure the project is innovative.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space

4. Financial support for project preparation costs

Description

Unlike most of the programmes, where the co-financing of preparation costs is accepted only for the approved operations, some programmes assign a percentage of their total programme funds to supporting costs incurred in preparatory steps of project design.

- The purpose of **Micro projects** is to establish first contact and help find potential partners in the new part of the programme area (Faeroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Northwest Russia) and in the previous Article 10 programme area (Finland, Sweden, Norway and Scotland) by funding expenses such as searching for partners in other countries, travel, meetings between partners, etc. The micro project is limited to EUR 10 000 and the maximum grant from the programme was EUR 5 000.

  Only one partner is required to make an application, and there is a simplified application form and reporting procedure.

  Preparatory projects allow partners to meet and discuss the drafting of main project applications. In this second category of a preparatory kind a broader, well-balanced partnership is mobilised. This system was developed as a result of the experience pointing to the achievement of a larger share of projects bringing together different actors from each country in complex partnerships. At least two partners from two countries are required to apply for preparatory project funding. The maximum total budget for preparatory project applications is 30 000 EUR with a maximum ERDF grant of 15 000 EUR, on the condition that national co-financing and a joint project plan are provided.

  The Preparatory project should result in a main project funding application. It is also used for committing partners to specific contributions and should reduce the risks associated with large projects involving a complex partnership. Alternative actions are clarified through an initial analysis. These projects also have a simplified application form and reporting procedure.

- An additional **proactive approach** in project generation is the INTERREG IIIB BSR **Seed Money facility**. The aim of Seed Money is to assist projects in the preparatory phase as well as to support the establishment of new transnational partnerships.

  The instrument co-finances approved Seed Money projects with 50%, with a maximum amount of EUR 10 000 ERDF. It is the INTERREG IIIB BSR JS which assesses project eligibility, on the basis of guidelines approved by its Steering Committee (SC), and selects projects for allocation of Seed Money. Innovative approaches, complex project themes and new compositions of transnational partnerships are promoted by providing Seed Money funding. Seed Money projects should result in the submission of a well-prepared main application to the INTERREG IIIB BSR. Experience shows that almost all projects receiving Seed Money finally submit an application. Of those submitted, **75-80%** are **approved**.

Receiving Seed Money does not, in itself, give these projects any preference, since they go through the same competition and assessment procedures as all the others.

- A different form of financial support consists in allowing applicants to apply in the project Application Form for the co-financing of **preparation costs**, which are included in the project budget and only eligible for **successful operations** approved by the respective SC of the respective zone.

Experience

The introduction of such tools depends on the respective programme needs. Overall, we can say that Seed Money and Micro/Preparatory projects have the advantage of preventing unsuccessful applications and the time wasted on ineligible projects. They also help avoid a long start-up phase.

On the other hand, the inclusion of preparation costs for funding in the main application form is fair enough, since much of the project has actually been implemented before it is approved, and the time and resources spent on the application form are also considerable.

In further detail:

- In the cases where submission, approval and co-financing of preparation costs are carried out within the **normal** evaluation and monitoring procedure, the **additional management efforts** have been **very limited**, even if their main pitfall is that the investment is lost if the project is not approved. But this seems fairly understandable.

- The experience after funding **Micro** and **Preparatory** projects in the Northern Periphery shows that they lead to better quality applications where the partners have met and properly developed a joint work plan for the future, and the main project can be implemented more quickly because the partners have already worked together and are familiar with the application and reporting procedures. One aim was to prioritise the approval of projects which proved able to manage to work with little preparation time (thus avoiding decommitment on projects). Another advantage is that such tools help overcome the high costs associated with project development meetings to develop the project in the large programme area and thus encourage a larger number of applications.

These tools for additional financial support encourage and ease project generation, help partners get to know each at project level and help applicants develop good project ideas ahead of a high quality main application for support to the programme.

Micro projects represent an increase in cross-border activity and have proved a good source of information for the programme bodies on conditions for setting up transnational projects. They have also proved to work as a good instrument for addressing the special features of the periphery.

However, the main disadvantage is that processing all the applications and reports associated with Micro and Preparatory projects is very time consuming for the JPS, and applicants always

want to include as many staff costs as possible, reaching the maximum grant amount by using staff costs.

The Mid-term evaluator observed that, even if they were assessed as having added value, there was not a high demand because of the small budget and they did not evolve into main projects.

An important feature of using **Preparatory project** funding is that many problems that would otherwise occur while starting up a main project have already been foreseen, dealt with and solved in the Preparatory project phase. Applicants are able to develop higher quality main project applications and receive additional support in developing their main project applications.

A specific study on these two categories was produced by INTERACT Point TB: the "*Handbook on financial support to draft INTERREG project applications*" concluded that, depending on their needs, programmes may focus on thematic calls and **encourage project applications** for measures under which no projects or only a small number of projects have so far been approved. INTERREG programmes should apply measures which enable **flexibility, improvement and effective project design** leading to high participation rates. By making it easier and more attractive for project applicants to enter INTERREG programmes, management bodies will take an important step towards better usage of ERDF.

For the **future**, proposals for improvement are among others: excluding staff costs from the budget; a more simplified report and claim system should be developed. The Micro project tool makes the system more complicated, and the Northern Periphery Programme does not envisage using this tool for the next 2007-2013 programming period.

• With regards to the **Seed Money facility**, it provides the project owner with the recognition for the project idea and guidance by the programme JTS, which can also ease the process of partner search and help them to get funding from politicians.

The aforementioned "*Handbook on financial support to draft INTERREG project applications*" concluded that the results achieved by INTERREG programmes while allocating funds to improve project generation show the advantages of such a tool in most of cases. It is a proactive and positive measure that encourages project applicants to work together and draw up working lines before implementing main projects in order to minimise the risk of complex partnerships being unsuccessful.

The management of the Seed Money facility has nevertheless entailed **excessive administrative costs** and proven to be too **time-consuming** for programme management since report assessment and payment absorb nearly same resources as the main application.

Some programmes did not use this tool because of the small number of applications submitted. In others, every Seed Money application was treated as a whole application each time.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- The system of applying for **preparation costs in the main application form** has been implemented in programmes such as INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area, IIIB CADSES, IIIB Alpine Space, IIIB NWE, IIIB SUDOE and the IIIC four zones.

  For example, in the case of INTERREG IIIC the activities financed should show a direct, demonstrable connection with the development of the operation. The preparation activities should be described in the Application Form and the related costs must be listed there as well. These costs must have been incurred before submitting the preparation cost report. Total eligible preparation costs are subject to a ceiling of EUR 50 000 EUR for Regional Framework Operations (RFOs) and 25 000 for individual interregional cooperation projects and networks. They must be broken down into the same budget categories as the basic budget for the operation and must be listed in a separate annex to the Application Form. The preparation costs were reported in a separate preparation costs report and submitted to the JTS in principle together with the first progress report.

- The INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery Programme devised the **Micro** and **Preparatory projects** tool considering that sparse population in the European northern periphery limits institutional density as well as the number of potential cooperation partners, and this had implications for both programme operation and project implementation.

  The Joint Programme Secretariat (JPS) was delegated sole authority for making decisions concerning these two kinds of projects, with advice being offered by the RCPs.

  In September 2006, this programme launched a **special call** for Preparatory projects that had a view to **developing a main project** in the new programme **2007-2013**, proving that **targeted** preparatory project calls can thus be useful for developing **strategic project themes**.

- The INTERREG IIIB BSR Programme is the one featuring the **Seed Money** facility, whose introduction was agreed back in 2001 by the programme Monitoring Committee (MC).

  For the programming period **2007-2013**, the aforementioned excessive administrative costs and time-consuming performance that this tool has proven have made the BSR Programme consider to replace the Seed Money facility with a constantly updated project idea database where the project owner would submit its idea, complemented with the JTS accessing the database and providing guidance in a form of letter.

For further information

The "*Handbook on financial support to draft INTERREG project applications*" is available for download on: http://www.interact-eu.net/download/application/pdf/1069193

5. Additional project typologies

Description

In addition to the INTERREG standard individual cooperation projects, INTERREG IIIC also funds two particular types of operations:

- **Regional Framework Operations (RFOs)**

  Within the frame given with the INTERREG IIIC Programme, the RFO's strategy is to form a stand-alone strategic framework that is a kind of "**mini-programme**". In line with this strategy, a RFO should cover a limited number of smaller projects. The selection of RFO-internal projects is the responsibility of the regional partners cooperating in the RFO, who will form a SC at RFO-level for the purpose of project selection. Each partner should be supported by a regional partnership.

- **Networks**

  Networks aim to link the various regions inside and outside the EU on project implementation methods and development. They represent a first cooperation stage, where the scope for cooperation is limited to the exchange of experiences and pass on expertise between partners, with no further pilot actions. This is the reason why only costs related to actions such as seminars, conferences, Websites, databases, study trips and exchanging staff can be considered in Networks.

Experience

RFOs are innovative types of cooperation which allow for more sophisticated project development following a **micro-programming approach**. They represent the most intensive and integrated type of cooperation and are generally highly valued by programme level stakeholders.

RFOs in almost all cases require that partners know each other before the partnership structure is set up, as they are complex and administratively demanding. Given the complexity and innovative character of RFOs, management structures are aware of the need to provide the RFO LP with close support, which also increases the possibilities of improved management. A learning curve can therefore be seen, with JTS support gradually improving while RFOs also learn from each other, so there has been a significant progress in the quality of applications.

However, the complexity and the big administrative burden resulted in many RFOs incurring high management costs and delays in implementing activities, which increased the **decommitment** of funds at the IIIC zones programme level.

Programme examples

INTERREG IIIC

6. The "Three helix" approach

Description

According to this principle, a specific criterion for eligibility of **all projects submitted** is that they should touch **three spheres** of society: the business, the academic and the public spheres.

Experience

The triple helix approach leads to a better exchange of experience and more exchanges between different actors from different backgrounds. This method encourages private sector involvement in projects in line with the Lisbon agenda. Project results tend to be more tangible and concrete with more funds going to activities and less to networking. Thus, some of the selected projects have already been designed with a **long term vocation** in order to make the programme **sustainable**.

This said, funding systems for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) vary across the programme area and can be complicated to explain and manage. SMEs often don't have the time or resources to be involved as full project partners fulfilling the administration requirements, so an "associated partnership" is often more relevant.

In the **future** the **private sector** is **not eligible** for funding in the Northern Periphery Programme, but it will still be encouraged to participate.

Programme examples

The triple helix approach has been developed by the Northern Periphery Programme. Examples include projects such as '*Christina*', which has designed sustainable activities in the context of this programme, or a project related to integration to innovation and is aimed at creating networks between SMEs, governmental bodies and the research sector.

7. Application packs

Description

The INTERREG programme Websites offer **applicant's packs** that bring together documentation for project applications that have proved to be helpful and user-friendly for applicants.

Experience

Application packs provide LPs with all the useful information and forms relevant for the successful submission of the project application and also for project development and implementation in a single set of documents. They make it easy to direct applicants to the documents online so that they

are aware of the relevant rules, deadlines, obligations and even in some cases of the assessment procedures to be followed, which also gives transparency.

Explaining admissibility and selection criteria in detail and breaking them down for each Priority and Measure, helps to improve the quality of projects.

Nevertheless, the fact that the application pack includes so many documents could discourage applicants and not all pages would be read. Bringing all this information together in a single handbook has been suggested as a possible solution.

Another major challenge is keeping the application pack constantly updated, for which the automation implemented by some programmes has been really useful.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- Taking the INTERREG IIIB CADSES application pack as an example, the programme has published the application package for each call for proposals on the CADSES Website. It comprises:

  1. Application form.
  2. Co-financing statement.
  3. A practical guide for filling in the form.
  4. A Manual that describes the programme *Management and Monitoring System (MMS)*.
  5. A preliminary guide to financing opportunities for non-Member applicants.
  6. A draft Subsidy contract between the MA and the LP.
  7. A draft Joint Convention between the Lead and project partners.
  8. A list of contacts, referring to all the persons and institutions that are relevant at the national and transnational level for the project construction, financing and implementation.
  9. The list of the project selection criteria.
  10. A checklist which helps applicants to check if their application is accurate and complete.

  For the last call for proposals (fourth call) and for **transparency** reasons, the **Assessment Manual** has been also included, describing the criteria governing the assessment procedure.

- INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area experienced considerable improvement in the content and quality of the application form following the recommendations of the Mid-term Evaluation (MTE). The MTE Update reveals progressive improvement in the application form, including a better explanation of partner characteristics, clear distinction between project preparation and start-up time and costs, clarifications on expenditure related to human resources. In addition, the information in the application form has been made consistent with that of the programme monitoring tool "PRESAGE" (*Programme Régional et Européen de Suivi, d'Analyse, de Gestion et d'Evaluation*), which facilitates the collection of monitoring data on the programme.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE's Website makes available the "Project submission kit" which consists of the application form and the "Transnational project promoter's Guide".

During the second call for proposals a **CD Rom** was also distributed containing the eligibility criteria and answers to questions addressed to project promoters such as: "How to submit your project application". It also included all relevant forms and manuals, programme official documents and EC regulations, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section, a useful links and contacts section and a glossary of the programme's common terminology in French, Portuguese and Spanish.

• The INTERREG IIIB BSR provides a comprehensive applicant's package which is available on the programme's Website and is distributed by email or post on request. It includes: a practical guide for filling in the application form, the project selection criteria, the programme manual, the INTERREG IIIB BSR glossary, co-financing statements for INTERREG IIIB BSR partners and the Subsidy contract, all available for download.

• In INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space, the applicant's package includes the application documents and an applicants' manual featuring not only a list of clear admissibility and selection criteria distinguishing between compulsory and priority criteria for programmes and measures but also explanatory examples.

• INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED's Website also offers a comprehensive applicant's package, including all relevant documents and information for the successful submission of the project, together with models for letter of financing, letter of co-financing and letter of intent.

• In INTERREG IIIC, the application pack jointly developed by all four IIIC zones includes an interactive Microsoft Excel-based application form. This application pack has been further updated and improved from one application round to the next on the basis of the experience gained.

More specifically, the IIIC application form helps applicants to reduce mistakes when filling in the application form. If certain eligibility criteria (e.g. number of partners) are not met, warning messages appear, budgets are automatically calculated and any mismatch is clearly highlighted.

For further information

INTERACT Point TB has produced the tool "***Good Practice INTERREG III Application Pack***", a study whose purpose is to present a complete and easy-to-implement overview of what an Application Pack for INTERREG programmes should contain. Furthermore an **optimised application form template** is presented, together with a list of all **documents** that should **ideally be included** in an Application Pack, such as Application Guidelines and programme manuals. This tool is available for download at: http://www.interact-eu.net/4107/0/0/1092913

8. Flexibility in the application process

Description

Some **flexibility** in certain aspects of the application process (i.e. adaptation of documents or presentation of complementary documentation prior to the respective selection committee meeting) has been implemented by most of the programmes to meet the time projects need to consolidate partnerships and make any changes/ improvements required.

Experience

Despite some delay this may cause in the instruction phase of projects approved, flexible approaches in the application process are positive since they release project LPs from the work-load associated with the preparation and submission of certain documents that are only required if the project is approved, and therefore more applications are supported because they are not rejected unnecessarily. This flexibility also helps applicants and presents a more friendly side of the JTS.

However, this flexibility can sometimes mean that treatment is not fair and equal for all applicants, with the risk of permitting lobbying or favouritism, which some applicants might exploit. It can also be time consuming for the JTS, and from the programme point of view, the most flexible approach would be to avoid reception of all the information that will be necessary to assess the application form at the time the project proposal is submitted.

In the **future**, greater flexibility seems advisable in view of the generally high complexity of INTERREG procedures.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area offers project LPs the possibility of submitting some additional instruments once the deadline has passed but before the Subsidy contract has been signed, provided that the initial application form included certain information and Letters of Intent from all project partners.

- INTERREG IIIB CADSES also implements flexibility, since some documents can be presented after the signature of the Subsidy contract.

- INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space implements flexibility, by allowing minor formal amendments of the original Application Form before the signature of the Partnership Agreement and Subsidy contract.

- INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED follows a procedure consisting of several steps after the launch of the call for proposals.

- INTERREG IIIB NWE permits "revisions" of the project after approval. These must be also approved and cannot change the nature of the project.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE and INTERREG IIIC give project applicants a period of time to provide a corrected application form when this has been submitted with an error or omission that makes it ineligible. The request for rectification must be met within **10 days** of receiving a letter from the programme JTS to this effect. Only if the rectifications are made can the application be re-assessed.

2. Target: Meeting management requirements at project and programme levels

In this chapter, with the aim of **meeting management requirements at project and programme levels**, the following group of tools and methods identified in the INTERREG IIIB and IIIC programmes are offered, structured in **four sub-sections**:

2.1. Documents

1. Joint convention/ Partnership Agreement models
2. Letter of Intent/ Letter of Commitment models
3. Subsidy contracts/ Grant Offer Letters
4. Handbooks of procedures/ Project management guides
5. Binding documents between programme structures
6. Action plans

2.2. Tools

1. Internal communication channels
2. Monitoring databases
3. Indicator systems

2.3. Methods

1. Strategic approaches
2. Strand C joint structures, tools and activities
3. Permanently open call for proposals
4. Two-step application procedure
5. Additional categories for project selection
6. Project reserve lists
7. Means of ensuring objectivity in the assessment of project applications
8. Means of ensuring transparency after SC decisions on proposals
9. Flexibility for the submission of project payment claims
10. Intermediate Financial Reports
11. Previous experience in cooperating in operations
12. Working languages
13. Coordination of First Level Control systems

2.4. Structures

1. MSC as a single structure
2. SC and MC presidency at the regional level
3. Programme committees' advisory members
4. The Contact Point networks and the National Correspondents/ Coordinators
5. Intermediate bodies in project assessment and selection
6. The Technical Committee, a non-decision making body
7. Supervisory groups
8. Financial groups for coordinating financial controls
9. Paying Authority common to several INTERREG III programmes
10. One authority acting as MA and PA
11. Territorially decentralised JTS

2.1. Documents

1. Joint Convention / Partnership Agreement models

Description

Partnership Agreements or Joint Conventions are private contracts to be signed by all project partners, and constitute the norm for consolidating quality project partnerships including any issues concerning the partnership such as, among others: the definition of partners' joint aims, responsibilities and mutual duties, the project's duration, the amount of funding applied for, the distribution of resources, the reporting duties and the procedures to resolve potential disputes and apply penalties, etc.

All existing Partnership Agreement models offered by the INTERREG III programmes cover as at least: the main Lead and project partner's responsibilities, financial provisions and governance issues.

For the next programming period 2007-2013, the responsibility for laying down the arrangements for the relations between the beneficiaries participating in the operation in an **agreement** is that of the operation's lead beneficiary. The Partnership Agreement thus becomes a **new compulsory requirement** according to Article 20 of the new ERDF Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 and must comprise, inter alia, provisions guaranteeing the sound financial management of the funds allocated to the operation, including the arrangements for recovering amounts unduly paid.

However, for the 2000-2006 period the use of Joint Convention was only obligatory in a few of the 15 INTERREG programmes that offered project holders a model Joint Convention to be signed by project partners. The contents of such a model Convention must be negotiated and customised to the specific circumstances and requirements of the individual project partnership:

- Some programmes request applicants to submit at least a pre-negotiated **draft version** of the Joint Convention with their application form, even if it has not yet been signed. The definitive negotiated, customised and signed convention must be provided to the JTS **before** the **first full payment claim** is submitted.

- Other programmes simply **recommend** that such agreements are drafted in cooperation with professional legal advisers.

Experience

Partnership Agreements are the framework for efficient project implementation and governance. They are mainly useful for defining project responsibilities and procedures, minimising risks in project implementation and settling conflicts/disputes among partners.

In this framework, offering project partners reference **models** is an important basis for successful cooperation, and provides a solid foundation for management. Experience has shown that getting the Partnership Agreement signed by all partners is a very complicated task.

Nevertheless, in some programmes, such as INTERREG IIIB MAC, the existence of a signed Partnership Agreement rarely means that conflicts among partners can be settled.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB CADSES, a Joint Convention must be concluded between the LP and all project partners and is part of the Subsidy contract. The LP establishes legal relations with the project partners in order to define their cooperation and to safeguard himself against his partners by contract. The programme makes available a Joint Convention model but this model is not compulsory.

- INTERREG IIIC produced a model for a Partnership Agreement between all partners and their LP in all operations. It must be negotiated between partners and tailored to the partnership's individual needs. The model and signature of this document is only obligatory in the IIIC East and IIIC South zones.

- INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC, IIIB Caribbean Space, IIIB SUDOE and IIIB Alpine Space also issued a template of a convention for use by project partners. Some clauses of the Alpine Space model are compulsory (e.g. the "settlement of disputes" clause) but they can be tailored to partners' particular needs. Nevertheless, the LP is solely responsible to the MA and the JTS.

- Although to begin with INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area did not have a Partnership Agreement model, an unofficial template was produced and supplied on request. This template varies considerably depending on the status of the partners involved.

- The INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery's "Practical Guide to Project Management" provides the basic content for agreements or texts to be signed at the transnational level.

For further information

INTERACT Point TB has produced a tool called "*Good practice INTERREG III Partnership Agreement*" that has been designed to provide INTERREG programmes with practical and analytical information for the effective implementation of INTERREG Partnership Agreements.

It includes a **comparative analysis** of existing Partnership Agreement templates and practices in order to identify good practice examples, bottlenecks and unresolved legal issues that may have delayed the implementation of INTERREG projects in the current programming period. Furthermore, a practical **template** of good practice Partnership Agreement is also offered. The tool is available for download at: http://www.interact-eu.net/913123/647778/0/0

2. Letter of Intent / Letter of Commitment models

Description

The **Letter of Intent** —in some programmes called *Co-financing statement or Letter of Commitment*— is a statement from **each project partner** declaring that it is fully capable of contributing its share of the project budget and able to deliver the outputs required. Each project application submitted to the JTS must thus include a Letter from each of the partners involved in the project that must be completed separately.

A **standard text** for this formal commitment by the project partner is offered and its use suggested by most INTERREG IIIB and IIIC Programmes in the respective application form. All Letters of Intent/ Commitment should be dully signed, dated and stamped by those empowerd to make financial commitments on behalf of the organisation.

Experience

The Letter of Intent/ Commitment standard forms provided by the respective programme ease and simplify the process of submitting the project application for LPs, and aims to ensure that adequate match funding is available for the completion of the project.

Nevertheless managers of various programmes emphasise that these letters are not legally binding, and are much more about the psychological effect they generate in the person who signs the document.

On the other hand, having all co-financing statements duly stamped and signed by all partners by the deadline is quite a cumbersome process. A proposal for improvement considers the convenience of asking the LP to sign a declaration on behalf of all the partners stating that they all agree to their participation in and financial contribution to the project, thus releasing the JTS from having to check signature by all partners.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

• In INTERREG IIIB SUDOE, partners have to undertake to make a financial contribution in accordance with the financial plan presented in the application. The amounts stated in the letters of engagement cannot be lower to those stated in the partner's national counterpart column in the financial table.

  There should be as many letters as there are partners financially involved, and they should be presented to the JTS with the application form.

• In INTERREG IIIB MAC every application submitted to the JTS must also include a Letter of Intent from each project partner. In the case of LPs subject to private law, further evidence of solvency is required in the form of a bank guarantee to cover the full amount of ERDF funding applied for by the project. LPs are strongly advised to do likewise with their private partners.

- INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED Programme facilitates two different Letters of Intent models depending on whether it is filled in by the LP or the other project partners. Partners located in EU Member States also submit a Co-Financing Statement while partners from non-EU Member States submit a Financing Statement. For the latter, although their participation is entirely secured through national funds, reimbursement from MEDA funds is also possible.

- In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery, a "Co-financing commitment" model is included with the application form.

- INTERREG IIIB CADSES requires a "Co-financing statement" only from partners participating in the project budget. For the rest, a "Letter of intent" is enough.

- INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area requires co-financing statement only for the signature of the Subsidy contract, provided that all partners had previously submitted a letter of intent with the project application form.

- In the INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space all models of Letter of Commitment are available on the Website and can be downloaded. They are drafted in all Alpine Space Programme languages.

3. Subsidy contracts / Grant Offer Letters

Description

The **Subsidy contract** (in some programmes called **Grant Offer Letter**) is an essential element within the framework of the managing and monitoring of INTERREG III programmes. This agreement stipulates the rights and obligations of the LPs, and sometimes their partners, as well as the authorities involved in the implementation of the programme (generally concluded between the MA of the programme and the LP of the project concerned), and serves as a basis for the checks carried out and for possible amicable and contentious disputes.

The fields covered by this agreement are quite numerous and range from methods of reporting the progress of projects to payment methods for Community aid and cover the different legal and financial obligations to be respected by the co-signatories.

A Subsidy contract is systematically proposed by the MA of the programme to the LP, either in the form of a **bilateral contract**, or as a **unilateral notification** (or subsidy order), with an acceptance period for the LP. It thus seems to respond to specific demands.

Experience

Subsidy contracts guarantee uniform application and completion of the project in conformity with the programming decision of the SC, imposing a series of direct obligations on the LP as well as protecting its rights in obtaining the Community subsidy. On the other hand, they protect the MA

against all forms of risk, and in addition preserve respect for national and Community rules concerned.

For the future, the inclusion of a clause stating the commitment to implement information and communication measures for programme marketing has been highlighted as a main field for improvement.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space: The model Subsidy contract was drawn up by a legal expert on the basis of requirements of applicable Austrian private law, on the basis of information/experiences gained from other SF programmes and was adopted by the programme´s SC. After some years of programme implementation some aspects of the model Subsidy contract were modified in order to make certain provisions clearer and to motivate the LP and its project partners to observe more strictly the time schedule for project implementation and the budget plans as set out in the application form. In general, it does not take too long for the Subsidy contract to be signed as the model contract is always available for download for all interested project holders. In general LPs do not request for supplementary information.

- The Grant Offer Letter in INTERREG IIIB NWE allows for good monitoring of the projects and risks of litigation to be foreseen. The Grant Offer Letter model has already been modified several times (updating Community rules, obligation to repay unjustified expenditure within three months, law applicable in cases of litigation, etc.). Although the signing delays are relatively long, the JTS of the programme found appreciable improvements and a progressive reduction in delays from 31 weeks for the first call for proposals to 10 weeks for the 5th. LPs have their obligations explained to them during the course of a specific seminar that is held following the approval of operations.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE Grant Offer Letter allows good monitoring of projects and foresees risks of litigation. The Grant Offer Letter was modified to emphasise the consequences of modifications, most notably financial, during the course of the project, and the need to respect the necessary rules for the payment of advances. The Grant Offer Letter takes a long time to be signed, even though this period has been reduced compared with the first call for projects in 2002 and relies on the administrative organisation of the bodies concerned. Its contents are clarified by the organisation of seminars and sending explanatory guides to the LPs, who regularly request additional information.

- The INTERREG IIIC Programme zones feel that the Subsidy contract allows for good monitoring of the projects. The model was modified, notably by including flexibility clauses on budgetary reallocations. Legal experts in international and Community law helped the programme to draw up its Subsidy contract. The contract is generated by the database and includes clear spending targets for each reporting period. The Subsidy contracts are explained in detail at the LP seminars following the approval of operations.

  INTERREG IIIC South zone's Subsidy contract has been chosen as the model form implemented by the INTERACT Secretariat to be signed with the INTERACT project holders.

For further information

INTERACT Point TB has produced a tool called "*Recommendations for the implementation of INTERREG III Subsidy contracts*" that has been designed to provide INTERREG programmes with practical and analytical information to make it easier for LPs to implement their contractual tasks when executing Subsidy contracts.

It includes a commented analysis of a standard Subsidy contract, examples of good practice and a comparative analysis of existing Subsidy contract models that looks at whether these obey the same rules or whether legal, political and administrative profiles in the different areas of cooperation play a defining role and lead to different approaches.

This tool is available for download at: http://www.interact-eu.net/913123/647778/0/0

4. Handbooks of procedures / Project management guides

Description

In compliance with Article 5 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001, **handbooks of procedures** compiling the different forms, agreements, standard letters and procedures on filing, signing and payments have been produced by INTERREG programmes. In most cases they also include **project management guides** intended to act as a basic instrument to inform project holders and managers about the programme, provide assistance with the project preparation process, filling in the application form and the preparation of the dossier applying for subsidy. More specific documentation is particularly relevant for setting up monitoring procedures.

In this framework, considering the specific complexity of the project reimbursement and **financial control circuits**, some programmes have produced a range of documents intended to compile and provide a detailed description and explanation of:

- The concepts and aspects related to the model forms for the certification of expenditure and progress reports, together with instructions for the reimbursement procedure.

- The different First Level Control (FLC) systems in use in their EU partner States, mainly aimed at partners of approved projects to give them a better understanding of the respective FLC circuit.

Experience

Handbooks of standard procedures and project management guides facilitate the support task of the JTS and help to develop an efficient administrative system by explaining all the existing procedures in the project cycle life to the applicants and project stakeholders.

Especially, manuals and guides for ERDF reimbursement and FLC procedures represent quick and easy-to-use tools for preparing progress reports, combining the Activity Report and Financial Report in a coherent block.

They may also allow easy interaction between the application form and real progress of the project, thus ensuring consistency with the application form and making progress report assessment easier. Such tools therefore save the LP repeating information already known.

Availability of customised manuals helps ensure that quality progress reports are produced and is a good example of enabling projects to carry out effective monitoring.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In the INTERREG IIIB North Sea Programme, the Programme Secretariat created a **handbook of standard procedures** and developed an adequate and efficient administrative system for filing letters, documents, etc.

  The "*Guidelines for system audit in Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery*" and some guidelines for completing the financial claims are also available on the programme's Website.

- In INTERREG IIIB BSR, the **programme Manual** offers information on project management, including a detailed description of the financial circuits.

- The Atlantic Area Programme Website makes available a "**Methodological guide for preparing cooperation projects**" and the "**Applicants guidelines**". Additionally, with the encouragement and guidance of the MA, the Atlantic Area partner States agreed a project for organising the different types of controls to be carried out by the designated national authorities and the MA.

  The MA then issued a document containing **instructions** on the ERDF reimbursement procedure system common to France, Ireland, Portugal and Spain to systematise and publicise the procedures (available for download on the Atlantic Area Programme's Website).

- The INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space "**FLC Manual**" is available for download on the programme's Website. It is constantly updated and revised. Furthermore, some of the Alpine Space partner States have issued specific national guidelines for FLC procedures.

- In INTERREG IIIB NWE, the MA, Paying Authority (PA) and JTS jointly drew up the "**Handbook of Procedures IIIB NWE**" which is updated regularly whenever the need arises. A **FLC Manual** in four languages and annually updated is also available online.

- In INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED, the "**Project management handbook**" is offered in the application pack.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE has produced two types of "Transnational project Guides":

- The "**Transnational project holders Guide**" is a practical and methodological tool and also an alternative source of information, offering potential project holders a collection of methodological advice and recommended practices in relation to the programme content.
- The "**Transnational project management Guide**" is an instrument that provides guidance on essential management aspects and the execution of a project.

Its first part presents the structures related to programme management. The other part is devoted to the main milestones in the project life cycle: approval, signature of the ERDF grant, the physical and financial process of implementation, and finally the administrative and financial closing of the project".

This programme also issued an "**Instructions Manual, certification of expenditure application and ERDF reimbursement application**" which introduces and explains the formal models created by the programme's JTS for the certification of expenditure by the project LP and partners.

- Another example is INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery, where LPs are given a practical guide to project management. It includes information and guidance on the most important aspects of managing an INTERREG project, such as financial rules, Partnership Agreements, communication requirements and retention of documents.

- INTERREG IIIB MAC has elaborated a specific, well structured guide and a template for LPs who want to modify projects that have already been approved. No more than three changes can be requested during the life of the project and no changes can be made to the content of the project that would alter the final objectives.

- The INTERREG IIIB CADSES **Project Management Handbook** is a compilation of various MA and JTS guidelines covering the most important issues that emerge in the process of project implementation and final reporting. It is intended to help LPs and other actors involved with any questions they might have concerning progress reports, payment claims, project changes and final reporting. Moreover, the handbook includes a section on national management aspects and on CADSES contacts as well as a chapter explaining the essential unified CADSES terminology. It also includes most of the Manuals that have been drawn up by the programme to ease the work of the LPs:

1. Reporting manual (concerning progress reports)
2. Payment Claims Manual (concerning Payment claims)
3. Project Change Manual (concerning applications to change the project)
4. Final Project Report Manual (concerning final progress reports).

All project LPs and CADSES CPs have received a copy of this handbook, which is also available on the CADSES Website. Any updated versions in the future will also be available on the Website.

In 2004 INTERREG IIIB CADSES also produced a document called "**Reporting Tool - User's Guide**", which gives detailed guidelines on the reporting procedure and advises projects on how to make the compulsory six-monthly reports.

This guide instructs the LPs on how to use the "Reporting Tool", a Microsoft Access-based standardized tool designed to generate progress reports. The manual provides LPs with detailed advice for producing a progress report, and examples of the Access-based report. The empty Reporting Tool contains all the necessary information arising from the application form and the relevant information available in the programme databases. This tool is customised for every project.

This is the only valid document for submitting progress reports. On request, it is sent directly via email by the JTS to the LP, who in turn fills in one Tool per reporting period and sends it as a Microsoft-Access file back to the JTS via email on the deadlines given.

The system also requires a printed version of the progress report to be submitted together with the electronic one. The original of the paper version must be stamped, signed and dated, and delivered to the JTS by the deadline. The general principle is:

> One reporting period = One progress report = One Reporting Tool file.

Additionally, the INTERREG IIIB CADSES Website offers the Public general information, templates for certification of expenditure and guides.

- In INTERREG IIIC the **Programme Manual** that is part of the application pack (which was subsequently updated and replaced by the **Implementation Manual**) and the **Audit Guidelines** are the main management guides for operations. In LP Seminars, Financial Seminars and Communication Seminars further advice has been given. A special **Communication Tool Kit** for INTERREG IIIC operations has been developed and is available on the Website.

5. Binding documents between programme structures

Description

In addition to the standard documents laid down in Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999, some programmes have produced **conventions, letters of agreement** and **contracts** signed between some of the **programme structures** detailing the respective party's rights and duties and their means of cooperation for **programme management**.

Experience

Key binding documents are useful for setting down legally binding obligations between the respective bodies to reinforce performance.

The values such documents add to the programme are, on the one hand, reinforcing the institutions' commitment to cooperate on a contractual and legally binding basis, and ensuring projects' compliance with decision-making procedures and with EU and national legislation, on the other.

Such contracts, conventions, letters of agreement, memorandums of understanding and agreements lay the groundwork for the optimal understanding of all signatories and are interesting tools for future INTERREG programmes.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- INTERREG IIIB BSR:
  - After the approval of the programme, the BSR EU Member States decided to sign a *Memorandum of Understanding* on the joint implementation of the INTERREG IIIB programme, thus defining the joint implementation structure and financial responsibilities.
  - The *Agreement between the EU Member States and the Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein* on the implementation of the INTERREG BSR Programme governs the work of the *Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein* as MA, PA and host of the JS.

- The INTERREG IIIB NWE Member States signed a Letter of Agreement, presented as an annex to NWE 2002 Annual Report, with both the MA - as foreseen in NWE Community Initiative Programme (CIP) - and the PA.

  A Convention has also been signed between the MA and the PA and then approved by the MC as a key binding document, stating each party's rights and duties, and also their means of cooperating in the management of the programme.

- For the INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space, a multilateral agreement laying down the rights and duties of the Land of Salzburg as programme MA and PA and those of the Alpine Space EU Member states was signed by all of them. With the accession of Slovenia to the EU on 1 May 2004, this multilateral agreement was amended accordingly.

  Each of the Alpine Space **non-EU Member States** also signed a **declaration of consent** declaring their willingness to participate in the CIP in the spirit of the Community Initiative.

- In INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area, following the initial agreement between the Atlantic Area EU Member States and the MA, a **Convention** was signed between the MA and PA and then sent to the European Commission.

6. Action plans

Description

Action Plans are planning instruments issued by INTERREG programmes that are designed to meet their particular challenges.

Experience

Action Plans are useful for fulfilling programme objectives and targets. In the case of the IIIB NWE, the implementation of a specific Action Plan to avoid decommitment meant that the programme did not lose any ERDF funding at the end of 2004.

A disadvantage to be considered is that they may restrict flexibility.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- The INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area made some **adjustments** introduced in an Action Plan to respond to MTE demands to increase the stability of MC performance by fostering its leading role in the programme's strategy.

- With the aim of tackling the **decommitment risk**, in 2004 INTERREG IIIB NWE produced and successfully implemented a comprehensive Action Plan approved by the programme MC. The decommitment risk was still estimated at EUR 32 million in April 2004, and its reduction to an acceptable level represented an immense challenge requiring a particularly creative approach. This included various steps:

  - "N+2 meetings" with partners of approved projects to speed up the implementation of their Action Plan.
  - Launching an extra call for proposals targeted at projects whose implementation had already been initiated.
  - Redefinition of the payment claim.

2.2. Tools

1. Internal communication channels

Description

Most INTERREG III programmes have established **internal communication channels** for exchanging information between programme structures to ensure proper management of the programme.

Experience

Internal channels for communications are relevant instruments for improving the efficiency, celerity and coordination of the programme management structures that share them.

The online restricted access area systems are very effective: the documents are all in one place and can only be modified by one person at a time, which makes coordination much simpler. On the whole, these systems have been working well and programme actors gave a positive assessment of intranets of this kind, which have proved especially effective in the preparation of project decision-making meetings.

However, in some programmes such systems do not allow adequate qualitative monitoring. The lack of transparency associated with restricted access is another aspect to be considered.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB CADSES and IIIB Alpine Space, a **restricted area section** that can only be accessed by people involved in programme implementation (such as members of MA, PA, JTS, SC, NCP, MC…) was created. This section is used, for example, to transmit bulky documents such as application forms received during the call for proposals, and the results of the JTS evaluation (i.e. evaluation grid, project abstract, financial database, final evaluation report, spider graphs…) to the members of the SC as securely and quickly as possible.

- INTERREG IIIB NWE Contact Points (CPs) have set up **regular communication channels** both within the CP network and between CPs-JTS, consisting of maintaining a close working relationship aimed at stimulating project development and promoting the programme's opportunities at the transnational level, the mechanisms being:

  - Regular meetings held between JTS and CPs network.
  - Daily phone and email contacts between CPs and CPs-JTS.
  - Additionally, NWE also features four different "**online restricted access areas**": Following the setting up of the NWE programme Website and associated online database of Project Ideas, the initial system of regular internal CP '**Info Bulletins**' reporting on their advisory activities to JTS and other CPs to ensure a systematic flow/exchange of information between the CPs and the JTS was replaced in the autumn of 2003 by a more efficient shared "online restricted access area" on the NWE Website (there is one for programme SC members, one for MC members, one for the Internal Working Party and one for CPs, containing different documents and catering for different needs) created to allow national

authorities to download project applications online, and to improve the flow of information and the coherency of documents between the CPs and the JTS, who share information and documents related to project idea development. It enables CPs to access and modify joint documents (calendar of events, programme SC submission list etc.) in real time and without them creating conflicting sources of information.

- In INTERREG IIIB SUDOE an **Extranet** has been built to provide a computer platform for the LPs and partners of approved projects on the one hand, and for the NCPs, the MA and the JTS on the other. This constitutes support for the follow-up and management of projects approved.

  The Extranet also has a supplementary chapter shared with the MA/JTS Extranet for following up the programme and the various projects. This chapter contains the consolidated application forms but in particular the balance sheet of the certification of expenditure with view to having a regular follow-up of the reimbursements from ERDF in order to foresee the application of the n+2 rule.

- The INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area also has an **intranet** accessible from the programme's Website whose use is restricted to the managing structures. This online restricted access area provides a virtual library of programme documents and information on the projects.

  Regular meetings between the **JTS** and the **NCs** are held to foster better coordination and collaboration between them. Sometimes such meetings are thematic, also including the MA. This is found to be one of the most useful in the field of communication.

- INTERREG IIIC West has set-up an **Intranet** site with restricted access for the INTERREG IIIC West Member States (Members of MC, SC and the national second level auditors). The Intranet includes all relevant programme documents, annual reports, mid-term evaluations, minutes and supporting documents for all MC, SC and Supervisory Group meetings, relevant information concerning the operations and read-only access to the JTS operations database.

- INTERREG IIIB BSR also makes use of a **restricted access area**, while IIIB Northern Periphery uses a shared **Extranet** available on the programme Website also accessible for the programme SC and RCPs which allows documents to be downloaded. Both programmes also hold **regular meetings** between different programme bodies.

<div style="background:orange"> **2. Monitoring databases** </div>

Description

Most INTERREG III programmes use **databases** for the respective programme and project management and monitoring.

In strands B and C of INTERREG, these are the main widespread pattern systems:

1. The French application "**PRESAGE**" was designed in 2000 for the main stream programmes and a specific INTERREG version was launched in June 2003. The entire network currently includes more than 3 000 users and some workstations in Spain and Portugal. The main output produced by this database consists of financial reports, EU payment requests, project progress reports and reports for MCs and SCs.

2. The INTERREG IIIB BSR **Project Monitoring Database (PMD)** is a centralised system that runs on *Microsoft Windows SQL Server 2000* located in Rostock and it is accessed by Internet Explorer for the management of workflow (project applications submitted, checking the eligibility of applications and assessment, contracting, project selection and budget monitoring, project payments). Users are selected and have different access rights to the PMD. The electronic PMD has been in use since autumn 2003.

Experience

Monitoring databases ease project management and make for better programme management. With such tools, the JTS staff can find when and what has been sent or received, to or from whom, where it is filed, etc. Furthermore, the programme's database allows the JTS staff to track the projects' financial progress, the partners involved, their contact details, the invoices sent, amounts paid, etc.

• The **PRESAGE** database has added great **versatility** and **convenience** to management, monitoring and control of projects and Technical Assistance by providing physical and financial information and producing (according to the update of the MTE) "good performance, useful results and easy data update".

It is accessible to all programme management structures, and its use makes both **control** and **consultancy** of the situation of the **programme's financial execution** in real time **easier** for the programme's partner States.

After several months of use in INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area and despite the complexity of the data feeding process, PRESAGE had made management, monitoring and control of projects and Technical Assistance much more versatile and simpler, providing physical and financial information and producing "*great performance, useful results, and easy data update and breakdown*".

• As for the INTERREG IIIB BSR **PMD** strengths, all data are automatically transferred from the forms and reports to the database without the need for any manual input. Progress reports are pre-completed by the database, and LPs report against the data initially provided. Standard email communication with Lead applicant/partner is also supported by the database. Added value due of the constantly harmonised data is also appreciated.

The overall performance of PMD was assessed by the "*Study on Selected Monitoring Systems in use by INTERREG III programmes across EU-25*" issued in 2005 by INTERACT Point Managing Transition (MT), which concluded that users find PMD user-friendliness good (50%) or satisfying (50%).

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

1. **PRESAGE** is currently used to implement **seven** cooperation programmes, the following among them:

- In INTERREG IIIB NWE, PRESAGE complemented the initial Excel database system for programme monitoring and financial management.

  The PRESAGE database is an adequate instrument for financial management, monitoring and control of ERDF within the NWE programme, but as it could not be fully adapted to the programme's requirements (with particular regard to intermediate values taken by physical indicators), the initial Excel database has been kept in parallel.

- The PRESAGE database has been fully operational since 2004 for monitoring projects involving the Atlantic Area MA and the French, Spanish and Portuguese national authorities (UK and Irish also to be integrated), although EU Member States' use is restricted to mere consultancy, and they are not allowed to introduce or edit data.

  The MTE had insisted on raising awareness of the importance of computer monitoring of the applications by passing on the information provided by the PRESAGE software, adding that "the programme has anticipated the work required for effective use of the software in 2004, including installations, training and data input. In addition, the monitoring system could be improved by using monitoring indicators for socio-economic variations and the quality of cooperation (at both project and programme level). The issue for monitoring will be to input accurate information (from the measurement indicators) into PRESAGE and to use simple tools for the other types of indicators".

2. The **PMD system** has been the basis for developing several other INTERREG programmes' databases, and so far has been implemented by the following:

- The INTERREG IIIB BSR JS in Rostock originally developed the PMD version that had been programmed by Gecko GmbH in 2002.

- In INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space, the system developed for the INTERREG IIIB BSR has been in use since 2004 for managing the programme workflow. The system has been adapted to the needs and requirements of the programme and will be further developed for the programming period 2007 - 2013.

- INTERREG IIIC Programme developed an adapted version of the INTERREG IIIB BSR PMD in 2002 to support the decentralised programme administration of the operations in the four INTERREG IIIC Programme zones (North, East, South, West). Four different servers in the respective zones allow them to access the system.

  This database provides management for monitoring activities and finances, producing statistics, producing most programme and standard documents (e.g. Subsidy contract, notification letters, progress reports). It also helps to standardise the workflows of the programme between the four IIIC zones.

  The users are mainly staff members of the JTS, MAs, PAs and NCs of the four INTERREG IIIC Programme zones geographically distributed throughout Europe. While JTS and MA are allowed to introduce and edit data, Paragraphs' and NCs' accessibility is limited to mere consultancy. In

addition, by publishing some of the operation information on the Web, usage of the database is partially extended to a wider public.

INTERREG IIIC West has also given the West zone Member States read-only access to the JTS operations database.

This database is a product of the INTERREG IIIC coordination activities, led by the INTERREG IIIC North zone - which issued a user-friendly Database Handbook in November 2004 - within the framework of INTERACT Point IIIC Coordination.

- In the future INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery Programme will also have a system that has been adapted from the BSR database system.

For further information

The "*Study on Selected Monitoring Systems in use by INTERREG III programmes across EU-25*" and also a "*Study on Monitoring Systems: Process Monitoring of Impacts: Working Paper*" issued by INTERACT are available for download at: http://www.interact-eu.net/913123/0/0/0

3. Indicator systems

Description

The development of a comprehensive indicator system tailor-made to the specific characteristics of each programme is a key tool for effective management and monitoring the programme and quality project implementation. The information obtained from the indicators can be used not only to manage current projects but also to drive future calls, particularly encouraging the generation of projects/ types of cooperation in areas that prove to be of strategic importance.

Experience

The different indicator systems developed by the INTERREG programmes aim to be simple. But finding the right indicators for transnational and interregional cooperation is always very difficult because many of the activities are difficult to quantify, especially with regard to qualitative information. Qualitative indicators are often better but are difficult to collect and disseminate.

In particular, the **innovative aspects** of the INTERREG IIIC indicator system are the following:

- It respects the guidelines of the European Commission working paper n° 3 on MEANS collection (*Mesures pour l'Evaluation des Actions de Nature Structurelle* *).

(*) The MEANS collection makes available the fruits of the work carried out under the MEANS programme, launched by the European Commission with the aim of improving and promoting evaluation methods. In this sense, the MEANS collection is an original methodological guide, providing solutions to technical and organisational evaluation problems that are barely covered in the existing technical literature.

- It respects the triangle structure —impact/result/output— suggested by the INTERACT "*Study on indicators for monitoring transnational and interregional cooperation programmes*".

- It streamlines the operational indicators on the basis of the four IIIC zones' main objectives.

- It has succeed in quantifying "soft" (intangible) concepts: *accessing others' experience, expanding the effects of SF, improving regional policies and instruments, contributing to horizontal EU policies*.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB NWE a long list of indicators has been produced, which are reviewed periodically. This programme has set up a "**Task Force on Cooperation Indicators**" in consultation with INTERACT. Its aim is to prepare a set of physical indicators tailored to the specific needs of future territorial cooperation programmes; this is the second, long-term stage of implementing the "Evaluation Initiative" proposed by *Rupprecht Consult* in their MTE recommendations, the fist step being a short-term pragmatic and soft streamlining of the existing set of INTERREG IIIB NWE physical indicators.

- In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery at the end of 2006 a **task-force** with a wide range of participants is working on the development of a **new indicator system** and considering how to monitor qualitative information.

  This programme has also developed **checklists** in the fields of sustainable development and equal opportunities. These will be used in the future 2007-2013 programme and will help assess and monitor the implementation of project and programme horizontal objectives in practice.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE has re-programmed the whole list of indicators.

- In INTERREG IIIC defining indicators was a complex process, bearing in mind the nature of the activities expected to support the programme's objectives.

  All programme zones recognised the importance of indicators for evaluation and monitoring purposes and it was soon discovered that the SF mainstream programme indicators could not be applied meaningfully in the context of INTERREG IIIC due to the experimental character of the programme. A joint effort was then undertaken to simplify and better target the definition and quantification of indicators. This culminated in the development of a **fully harmonised** indicator system, both at project and programme levels, between the programme zones, which has involved the establishment of a common structure, which distinguishes between **two categories** of indicators:

  - **33 programme level** indicators, with a further distinction between **physical** and **financial**.
  - **32 operation level** indicators that all projects have to fill in (four additional for RFOs), streamlined into the four main IIIC objectives: *accessing others' experience, expanding the effects of SF, improving regional policies and instruments, contributing to horizontal EU policies*.

For each category a further distinction has been made for **output**, **result** and **impact** indicators.

For the 2007-2013 period indicators will be included in the INTERREG IVC OP (not waiting until the MTE as in the case of the 2000-2006 programming period).

For further information

The "*Study on indicators for monitoring transnational and interregional cooperation programmes*" launched by the INTERACT Secretariat in June 2006 develops a new grid of indicators (output, result and impact) related to the four key programming levels of SF (project, Measure, Priority, programme) appropriate to the themes proposed for transnational and interregional cooperation programmes under the European territorial cooperation Objective in the new 2007-2013 programming period.

This document is available on: http://www.interact-eu.net/913123/0/0/0

2.3. Methods

1. Strategic approaches

Description

The emphasis placed by INTERREG IIIB on the need for a **long-term strategic approach** to frame cooperation projects has been a constant feature of transnational cooperation in some programmes, which have deployed different instruments with this purpose.

For the 2007-2013 programming period European Commission guidelines clearly prioritise the approval of **strategic projects**, which are top-down focused. In the new EU Regulations for 2007-2013 the strategy needs to be included in the respective OP leading to more "tangible" projects.

With this strategic focus, during the current 2000-2006 period in some INTERREG IIIB programmes **specific call for proposals** targeting a number of Priorities/ topics/ types of operations or the agreement of a list of **special requirements** which applicants have to comply with have been launched in most IIIB and IIIC programmes where the SC/ MC is entitled to do so.

In this same strategic framework, some programme **SC** are empowered to establish **thematic Transnational Working Groups** (TWGs), clearly describing their duties and objectives.

On the other hand, the philosophy of INTERREG in the 2000-2006 programming period is driven by the pursuit of economic and social cohesion and spatial development through transnational cooperation. In this context, the strengthening of **local and regional** bodies in the decision-making process and implementation of programmes is one of the main activities foreseen for INTERREG III*.

Some programmes have combined these two different approaches during 2000-2006.

Experience

A bottleneck that has been identified by some programmes during 2000-2006 is that there are not enough **resources** for supporting strategic project development, and that no Technical Assistance has been foreseen to this purpose.

Extraordinary calls, extension calls, categories of special requirements and thematic-targeted topics and Priorities help to achieve specific programme goals and the allocation of remaining funds. They have considerable potential in terms of encouraging project generation within underdeveloped specific Priorities and Measures, and help to overcome the decommitment rule.

The fact that good projects developed under the non-targeted Measures could not be funded with this system is also an aspect to be considered.

On the other hand, **TWGs** coordinate relevant projects in order to produce synergies and support project implementation.

(*) Source : European Development Scheme, Potsdam, 10/11 May 1999

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space two interesting tools have been applied with regard to strategic issues, and were an outcome of a **workshop of national coordinators** that was organised:

  - A **prospective study** delivered in November 2005 by a team of experts commissioned by the partner States: In this study important questions relating to the alpine regions and future scenarios for the Alpine Space have been answered and ideas for possible strategic projects have been developed.
  - **Three transnational workshops** covering the three Priorities of the CIP were organised. In the course of these workshops in which the experts of the prospective study participate, first project results were presented to the public, scientific findings in the different fields of interest were communicated and first ideas for future projects were discussed.

The first workshop held in Germany was dedicated to the topic "*Impact of climate change on risk management and sustainable spatial development*", the second was organised in Austria dealing with the topic "*Maintaining the quality of life and competitiveness in the Alpine rural areas and their centres*", and the third was held in Italy and dealt with transport issues.

Networking seminars held by the JTS also brought projects together in transnational workgroups.

The "prospective study" can be regarded as useful input for the remaining programming period as well as the preparation of the next Alpine Space Programme. On the other hand, all three thematic workshops organised proved to be very fruitful and can be regarded as another important step taken to foster transnational cooperation to tackle common problems jointly in the cooperation area.

Specific and extraordinary calls for proposals have also been used by in Alpine Space within the strategic focus. In this programme, the various open calls for proposals usually cover all Priorities and Measures. However, depending on the results of previous open calls, the programme SC launched specific and extraordinary calls for proposals or decided on special requirements (e.g. strategic projects) aimed at helping to achieve the respective programme goals. This was implemented for the Alpine Space 4th and 5th call.

In May 2005 a specific call was launched aimed at granting an ERDF contribution for those **Slovene Partners** participating financially in the activities of projects already approved. Since the previous calls had been launched before Slovenia was a full member, and therefore not eligible for ERDF funding, this specific call helped to fill the funding gap between the various partners, and strengthen the implementation of projects performing well.

This programme is also working on how to provide **continuity** to approved projects. To this end, in September 2006 the programme launched an **extension call** restricted to projects already approved in order to fund additional activities in three fields: *Sustainability of project results, Promotion and dissemination of project results* and *Networks with other Alpine Space projects*.

The extension call was made available by ERDF funds that had not been applied for by closing projects.

- A special feature of the INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area has been the **bottom-up** approach in local/regional level involvement, which has led to the development of high impact, low-budget (i.e. EUR 300 000) bottom-up projects. Most projects approved display high cost-efficiency rates, such as Red Telecem which is aimed at disabled people at a local level.

  Additionally, the need for the programme to address **strategic issues** such as **marine pollution and risk prevention** has led to a top-down approach with the active involvement of regional authorities and generated interest at European level.

  This top-down approach has brought about the development of **high-budget strategic projects** such as *Prestige*, which is aimed at addressing the negative impacts of the PRESTIGE disaster.

- The INTERREG IIIB SUDOE MC approved the establishment of a **Transnational Prospective Working Group**, with the main objective of putting in place an exchange and discussion framework in which the territorial actors of the programme EU Member States can draw a general spatial vision of SUDOE, within the perspective of an enlarged EU.

  Both INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area and IIIB SUDOE **SCs** also launched respective **extraordinary calls** for financing cleaning up and repair activities at sea after the pollution caused by the *Prestige* catastrophe.

- In INTERREG IIIB NWE, the SC set up a list of Priority research **topics** for the "Study projects" category that applicants must meet. Tackling the decommitment risk, the NWE 2004 Action Plan included the launch of an **extra call** for proposals targeted at projects whose implementation had already been initiated.

  According to the INTERREG IIIB NWE CIP "the INTERREG IIIB programme is a significant opportunity for encouraging, by means of more substantial transnational and interregional cooperation, a breakthrough towards a new culture of **strategic planning and action** in the NWE area".

  The outcome of the Spatial Vision process carried out under INTERREG IIC was the production of a discussion document, "*A Spatial Vision for North-West Europe: Building cooperation*", published in September 2000, which outlines a comprehensive territorial strategy for the NWE area. The INTERREG IIIB NWE CIP accommodated the Spatial Vision principles to a large extent.

  In 2003 the NWE MC gave the impetus to take the Spatial Vision process further during the lifetime of the INTERREG IIIB programme and a **Spatial Vision Working Group** was set up, made up of representatives from the NWE Member States and regions. There was general agreement that the continuation of the Spatial Vision process should have a more pragmatic and operational orientation from a 'Vision' to a 'Framework for action'. A broad set of objectives for the next step of Spatial Vision was agreed upon.

The resulting "**Framework for action**" is expected to identify key transnational issues to be tackled in the coming 2007-2013 programming period, key players to mobilise and key projects to carry out for this purpose. Three **preparatory studies**, each of which revolves around one of the three European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) policy aims, were conducted. On the basis of their findings (delivered in July 2005), a fourth synthesis study should produce the "framework for action".

In NWE, the output of the aforementioned process is expected to provide a framework to guide strategic spatial planning in the regions and define common goals for territorial development across NWE, make key ESDP concepts operational and highlight the transnational dimension of planning issues.

- In INTERREG IIIB BSR, as the programme was near the end, an evaluation was carried out to determine how approved projects had contributed to achieving programme indicators at Measure level. On the basis of this evaluation, a guidance note was developed for potential applicants, whereby a thematic scope for a targeted call was described, restricting the call to certain themes. Thus, in line with the pro-active approach to programme implementation, the programme SC decided on a **special focus** or **requirements** for individual calls.

  For example the 7th and 8th calls were focused on Measures where funds had not been committed; the 9th call scheduled for the autumn 2006 focuses on committing external Tacis funds only.

- In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery Programme a **strategic meeting** between the Regional CPs, the Regional Advisory Groups and the JPS was held to consider strategic project themes for development to help develop strategic projects.

  This programme also used calls only open in specific Measures as funds became more limited. Additionally, in September 2006 this programme launched a **special call for Preparatory projects** that has been intended as a **bridge** between the current and the next programming period: With the aim of developing a main project in the new 2007-2013 programme, this call has proved that targeted Preparatory project calls can be useful for developing **strategic project themes**.

  In the next 2007-2013 period the top-down and bottom-up approaches will be combined in this programme.

- In line with the latter the INTERREG IIIC South zone MC agreed in 2004 an **extension call** of the programme third call for proposals. It was specifically targeted at RFOs with the aim of complying with the CIP guidelines stating a specific indicative share of allocations for every typology of the operations approved.

  INTERREG IIIC West zone has launched two "**calls for additional funding for running operations**" in November 2005 and May 2006 respectively. During the first call six operations were successful in securing just over EUR 1 million ERDF to finance additional activities, while in the second 14 operations have been invited to apply according to specific eligibility criteria related to their overall progress.

Additionally, in July 2006 the INTERREG IIIC West MC approved a **new procedure** for awarding remaining ERDF funds for **capitalisation activities** to **running** IIIC West **operations**.

With the future Interregional cooperation programme under preparation, the need for capitalisation on the currently running operations in all four INTERREG IIIC zones is essential to ensure that the results of these operations are maximised and that future operations under the new programme can take advantage of what has already been achieved. By sharing and grouping the findings of operations approved in all four zones that are working in similar fields, capitalisation activities will allow current INTERREG IIIC operations and regional policy makers to derive maximum benefit and impact from their results and lessons learned.

All INTERREG IIIC West operations are therefore being given the opportunity to propose additional activities that will contribute to the above objective (e.g. joint conferences, seminars, study visits, publications etc). It should be noted that only the costs of INTERREG IIIC West operation partners are eligible for the supplementary funds. This will be an on-going procedure with applications welcome at any time.

2. Strand C joint structures, tools and activities

Description

INTERREG IIIC Programme features the **close cooperation** achieved both at institutional and technical level for the whole IIIC Programme life cycle phases (promotion and implementation —including evaluation procedure, monitoring and capitalisation—) as a major strength of the programme management.

This joint technical programme structure is a strength for the IIIC overall activities and financial management that has been reinforced by setting up INTERACT Point IIIC Coordination, which is common to all four programme zones —North, East, South and West— in order to allocate horizontal tasks among the four JTS for the implementation of the programme. The objective of INTERACT Point IIIC Coordination is to ensure that implementation of the IIIC Programme is harmonised across the four INTERREG IIIC zones. INTERREG IIIC North, located in Rostock, is the LP of a consortium consisting of four JTS and MAs based in Rostock, Vienna, Lille and Valencia.

IIIC Coordination harmonises the development of the programme documents, tools and procedures, and is responsible for the development and implementation of joint information and communication strategies as well as training for managers of the programme. The IIIC Programme is marketed as a joint, EU-wide programme. Common standards and fair and equal treatment of applicants from all zones are guaranteed by joint eligibility and selection criteria and a system of quantified indicators, and also by a harmonised legal framework and financial control and audit system.

In the framework of this INTERACT Point IIIC Coordination, the following main **outputs** have been produced:

- Harmonised tools and activities developed:

  - Joint Website.
  - Joint promotion and dissemination activities.
  - Joint financial management Financial Control Group (FCG) set up.
  - Joint printed material.
  - Joint training activities for IIIC staff.
  - Advice to Third Countries participating in IIIC projects.
  - Joint newsletter

- Harmonised joint documents:

  - CIP.
  - Programme Complement (PC).
  - Manuals

- Good tools for data-management developed jointly: Application process, monitoring, change requests, statistics, etc. are supported by the project management database.

- Yearly All-zones meetings to inform the 25 EU Member States about the IIIC Programme implementation.

- Joint Task-Force meetings (four zones JTS and MA meetings) for the better coordination of programme performance.

Experience

The exchange and harmonisation of tools and procedures amongst the four programme zones results in INTERREG know-how from different parts of Europe being brought together, discussed, harmonised and directly applied in the programme. Positive benchmarking amongst the four zones has a positive impact on their performance.

On the whole, the division of the IIIC Programme into four administrative zones allows easier access to project applications from the point of view of geographical proximity.

Programme examples:

INTERREG IIIC

3. Permanently open call for proposals

Description

The system of **permanently open** call for proposals entails no deadlines or time constraints. As the potential projects are being submitted, the instruction procedure represents the first stage in the life cycle of a project.

Experience

The system of permanent call for proposals has proved to have many advantages for internal functioning. It provides great **flexibility**, since potential partners can submit their application at any time without being limited by established deadlines. On the other hand, deadlines limit flexibility but are normally needed to organise programme workload and meetings.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space uses the permanently open call for proposals period as a general rule.

- In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery, this system is implemented for Preparatory Project applications.

4. Two-step application procedure

Description

The two-step application procedure is a **top-down approach** in which the call for proposal procedure is split into **two parts**: The first stage is open to all the beneficiaries and it is based on "Terms of Reference" (ToR) setting **further requirements** than those indicated at Priority/Measure level. Applicants have to submit a **short document** with some **key information**. After the pre-assessment phase only a limited number of project ideas are asked to submit the complete application pack.

Experience

The first two-step application procedure experience has resulted in an increase in the **quality of projects approved**, and a smoother and more comprehensive **evaluation process** was achieved. It can be useful in terms of enlarging the number of project applications since it means first stage applicants do not have to fill in a large number of pages. It also considerably reduces communication tasks and has produced more effective **results** in terms of meeting programme objectives.

This procedure enables projects that are not relevant to the programme to be weeded out, thus saving the applicants a lot of wasted time. It also cuts down on the JTS workload in assessing project application at a later stage.

However, this method of organising and coordinating the first step of the call still requires quite a lot of time, and instead of saving time it has resulted in an approval procedure that is one month **longer** than the usual one, with double evaluation, double consultation and double SC decision.

Some programmes have already showed their interest in this method, with some debate generated during the preparation phase of their new programme documents. The concern over the risk of rejecting ideas before they could be more fully developed in a main project application was the reason for ruling it out, and it was also thought that this system might not allow project ideas to be improved with the support and advice from the JTS and CPs.

Programme examples

In IIIB Alpine Space this procedure was applied in the course of the **targeted fourth call**. The "Terms of Reference" (ToR) specified exactly what the partner States expected from projects to be submitted in each Priority of the Operational Programme (OP). 40 project ideas were presented in a **short pre-application form** with key information on the project (four pages). Five projects that were considered to fit into the programme and meet expectations were **pre-selected** and invited to submit a full application form. Pre-selection was made through SC written procedure.

It has to be highlighted that this call was launched on the basis of results obtained through three **thematic workshops** that dealt with one programme Priority each (presentation of project results, stimulation of exchange of experiences/networking between projects) which also proved to be a useful instrument.

In the **future**, conclusions coming out from the first experience of implementation will be used by the Alpine Space 2007-2013 Programme to further improve and refine such a procedure.

5. Additional categories for project selection

Description

Beyond the common standard categories of projects submitted to the respective programme SC decision (*approved/ not approved*), some programmes agreed **additional categories** should be introduced in order to help the achievement of the programme goals and to improve the quality or future projects submitted.

Experience

Additional categories should always be followed by clear guidance and advice to applicants by the programme structures.

Projects "approved subject to conditions" may cause delays in implementation of the project. The conditions should therefore not be too difficult to fulfil.

The "postponed projects" category is an interesting tool to support SC in making decisions. Its main advantages are: Its potential regarding project generation and the improvement in terms of project quality and the added flexibility it gives to the SC's decisions.

On the other hand, its main disadvantage is the reduction in terms of efficiency if the 'postponed' project does not eventually comply with the conditions set by the SC. This was why INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area Programme disregarded the "postponed" category for all subsequent calls launched. It can also be argued that rejected operations can try again in the next application round.

An interesting proposal considered by the IIIB BSR Programme was that projects submitted should be graded as follows:

- a. Excellent
- b. Quite good, but with some conditions set for approval
- c. Good idea not ready for implementation: invited to submit in the next call.
- d. Suggestion that the project should not be re-submitted in the future

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area first call for proposals and in INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC, projects submitted to SC decision were assigned to one of the following categories:

  1. Approved
  2. Not approved
  3. Approved subject to conditions
  4. Postponed

  The latter consisted in projects the SC did not approve for small technical reasons or which required slight modifications or further financial adjustments before final approval, but which obtained a sort of "**pre-commitment**" from the SC, who guarantees their automatic approval in the next call for proposals once such requirements had effectively been met. For this purpose, the SC set aside a corresponding amount in the funding for these projects.

- INTERREG IIIB BSR, IIIB NWE and INTERREG IIIC add the "**Not eligible**" category for projects submitted. In IIIB BSR and IIIC this means that after registration, each application is subject to a two-step selection procedure. First, operations will be checked against the eligibility criteria -i.e. whether they have fulfilled the technical requirements of the programme-. The eligibility check will be performed by the JTS. The operations which do not satisfy the eligibility criteria will not be subject to quality assessment.

  However, in INTERREG IIIB NWE the "not eligible" projects are still assessed internally. This programme also includes a category of projects that are "approved subject to conditions".

- In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery, projects submitted to the SC are assigned to one of the following four categories: approved, approved subject to conditions, invited to re-submit and rejected.

6. Project reserve lists

Description

Project reserve lists have been set up from SC's decisions on proposals in several programmes. Projects on the reserve list can immediately receive a Grant Offer Letter when additional funds become available, e.g. when projects approved in an earlier call and coming to an end spend less than 100% of the allocated funds.

Experience

Reserve lists allow for greater **flexibility** in the management of programme funding allocated to operations, and projects on the reserve list could be approved even if there were no funds available at the time of the next SC meeting.

A disadvantage identified with project reserve lists is that project managers do not know exactly whether or when their project will start. Some programmes have rejected this method because of the complications it would cause with co-financing, since co-financing commitments are often time limited due to budget restraints, and they would not be valid at a later stage.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB North Sea Programme, a reserve list was created for **all Priorities**.

- In the 8th call for proposals, INTERREG IIIB BSR applied this method only for projects that required **Tacis** funding.

- INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC also used the project reserve list system for the SC decisions on the **fourth** (and last) **call for proposals** (May 2006).

- The INTERREG IIIB MAC SC set up two project reserve lists for the allocation of remaining funds: one for approved projects which could receive additional funding, and the other for projects which could be automatically approved in case of failure of approved projects.

- In INTERREG IIIB CADSES the JTS sets up a reserve list of projects but their approval still depends on the programme SC.

- INTERREG IIIC East zone used this system to allocate ERDF funding available as a result of under spending or poorly performing projects.

7. Means of ensuring objectivity in the assessment of project applications

Description

Objectivity is one of the main aims pursued in the assessment process for project applications. To achieve this, different instruments have been implemented by the INTERREG programmes.

Experience

A more **rigorous, objective and professional assessment** for project applications is ensured by the implementation of these instruments.

However, experience shows that obtaining assessment from experts and people who have not been involved in project generation is **quite costly**, and selecting the right person to be an external expert using the tendering process is not always easy.

Proposals for future programmes are to set up **pools of experts** or teams which may operate for all the different calls. **Reserve lists of experts** would also be useful in case there is a need for additional experts or any of the existing ones drops out during the assessment process.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB NWE:

   a. The **assessment team** is made up of staff members who were not responsible for assisting applicants in developing the project to be assessed. This requires a high degree of complex organisation of the assessment procedure, ensuring that appropriate **tandems** of project development and finance officers are allocated to the assessment of each project application.
   b. A **timetable** for the assessment panels is drafted for the assessment period. Once all projects have been assessed, they are then compared with each other in a final panel to ensure that consistent criteria have been applied to all project applications and that such consistency applies across all previous SC decisions.
   c. Detailed assessment **forms and scoring systems** are employed in the forms sent to the SC delegates.

- For the first stage of assessment, INTERREG IIIB BSR uses assessment teams of **external experts** who are hired after a public tender. In the second stage, the JTS still looks at proposals by setting up **assessment teams** that match the different Priorities.

- In INTERREG IIIB North Sea, a clear separation of responsibilities between giving advice to projects and then carrying out technical assessments is implemented.

- In the framework of the INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area Programme, all applications submitted are sent to all **NCs** so that they give their opinion on the project, even if the LP is based in a different

Atlantic Area partner State. The NCs issue a report on the project background and the quality of the partnership.

On the other hand, in Spain and France the assessment on the project application relies on **civil servants**, which also saves money for the national authority concerned.

• For the future Alpine Space 2007-2013, the use of external experts in particular calls for proposals has been considered.

• In INTERREG IIIC, the involvement of **external experts** in the **assessment phase** in some programme zones (double or triple assessment of the same applications depending on the type of operation) allowed project evaluation based on more diversified thematic and geographic knowledge and added different viewpoints to the appraisal.

8. Means of ensuring transparency after SC decisions on proposals

Description

Transparency after SC decisions on applications submitted is a key factor in ensuring applicants' future commitment and trust in the programme's performance.

Experience

Such means ensure higher levels of transparency in the project evaluation and selection procedure. The information given also enables rejected applicants to resubmit an improved application in the following application round.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

• In INTERREG IIIB SUDOE the MA and the JTS are ready to offer explanations to the promoters and members of the **projects** that have **not** been **selected** by the SC, in addition to the written notification sent by the MA to the project LPs. There has also been an effort to give counselling to the promoters for future calls for proposals.

• In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery the minutes of the respective SC meeting are sent to applicants accompanied by some feed-back. Additionally, detailed advice is also offered on how to proceed in the future.

• In the field of project management all INTERREG IIIC rejected Lead applicants receive **detailed feedback** about the reasons for rejection.

9. Flexibility in the submission of project payment claims

Description

When fixing the schedule for LPs for submitting **project payment claims**, different systems are put in place to offer different solutions to suit the respective programme workflow requirements: some of them set fixed (generally two) compulsory dates, others allow claims to be made throughout the year. The mixed system consists in setting a number of minimum compulsory deadlines and allowing additional voluntary claims.

Experience

Flexibility in the submission systems enables projects to proceed at their own rhythm and schedule for implementation, avoiding inflexibilities that may hamper their performance. Meeting the minimum requirements allows:

- A correction in the work overload caused by the accumulation of certifications experienced at the end of the year, which slows down the performance of FLC procedures, especially in the Member States with centralised systems.

- The commitment of those LPs that would otherwise tend to submit very few or even no payment claims in the course of the year.

- Financial tables reflecting the real programme situation update.

- A reduction in the n+2 decommitment risk.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB SUDOE, requests for reimbursement can be presented **at any moment** to the MA once a significant level of execution of the project has been achieved. This is to enable the MA to group the different projects, examine and address them vis-à-vis the PA for their payments.

- In INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area Programme, up to 2004 **no minimum** compulsory payment claims were required for project LPs. However, the programme Action Plan updated in 2005 limited this total flexibility by requiring project LPs to submit a **minimum** of three payment claims per year, according to the specific schedule displayed in the Action Plan (in 2005: June, October and December). This rule has also been applied to 2006. Beyond this compulsory schedule, further payment claims are still accepted throughout the year.

  This flexible approach is complemented by the possibility of LPs submitting "**partial claims**", that is to say, payment claims which do not include expenditure incurred by all partners, but by a "representative" number of them.

However, the latter should be complemented by setting an additional requirement: each payment claim should reach a minimum threshold of expenditure, to be fixed by the MC. Otherwise an excessive number of certification requests claiming for very small amounts could slow down and even jam FLC circuits.

- Another example of particular flexibility in this respect is the INTERREG IIIB CADSES: Although the programme **Payment Claim Manual** recommends LPs to submit payment claims to the MA according to a regular timetable (comprising four deadlines per year: 1 April, 1 July, 1 October and 1 December), no compulsory fixed dates have been set.

  Nevertheless, this great flexibility is limited by the obligation for project LPs to submit at least one payment claim per year, on the basis of the specific schedule dividing the project year given in the respective Subsidy contract.

  Beyond this minimum, further payment claims are still accepted throughout the year.

- A different approach has nevertheless been implemented in other programmes such as INTERREG IIIB NWE, where LPs are asked to submit project payment claims **twice a year** —by 30 June and 31 December—.

  It was decided not to allow projects to submit payment claims throughout the year according to their own schedule because the JTS had to organise its workload according to specific priorities per year. A flexible approach would mean that the payment claim assessment phase could not be controlled and assessments could not be carried out as efficiently.

- In INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED, four payment claims must be submitted in the course of the year, one every three months.

- INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space sets two particular deadlines for each project depending on the date of the signature of the respective Subsidy contract.

- In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery, obligatory deadlines are June and December but further claims can be submitted every three months with a report every six months if the project wishes.

10. Intermediate Financial Reports

Description

In order to include as much expenditure as possible in the payment claim submitted to the Commission, in some programmes the operations were asked to submit an Intermediate Financial Report (IFR). This report has to include expenditure which was actually paid out by October/November of the respective year but not necessarily confirmed by an independent auditor.

Experience

The request for an IFR **reduces decommitment** of ERDF funds helping to meet n+2 targets. In some cases project partners appreciate it because they get paid by the end of the year, even if this causes extra work for the PA. In others, as the report does not have to be certified by an independent auditor and does not lead to payment requests, the workload for the operations and for the programme Secretariat is reduced.

Nevertheless, some programmes noted that the IFR could not be in full compliance with Article 10 of the Commission Regulation 438/2001, and more specifically with regards to the audit trail requirements.

If interim claims are to be used in the future, some programme managers suggest that the claim structure should shift to **three times a year** as a general rule rather than two claims and an extra one.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- All INTERREG IIIC zones implemented this method in December of the years 2003 to 2005, and in some IIIC zones the IFR will also be used in 2006. It was stressed that the expenditure reported in the IFR had to comply with all legal and financial obligations as stipulated in the Subsidy contract and Audit Guidelines. Payments were only made after the reception of the regular progress report covering the whole reporting period from July until December of the respective year. As usual, this normal progress report had to be accompanied by confirmation from an independent auditor and submitted at the regular deadlines.

- INTERREG IIIB CADSES, IIIB NWE, IIIB BSR, IIIB Alpine Space and IIIB Northern Periphery also implemented this method during the past few years to help accomplish n+2 targets. In IIIB Northern Periphery, the claim has to be submitted by mid-November for expenditure incurred up until the end of October.

11. Previous experience in cooperating in operations

Description

Some of the INTERREG IIIB projects have been developed on the basis of previous experience in cooperation, especially as a continuation of the INTERREG II programme or traditional cooperation in an area not necessarily linked to INTERREG.

Experience

Such previous experience in cooperation certainly helps to **improve the performance** of the operation when the participating institutions have the right size and knowledge. Nevertheless there is a risk of not allowing new actors to get involved in projects.

"Mentoring" and support systems are suggested for cases where new partners lack previous experience.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED, most partnerships have started working in the past under other programmes (INTERREG IIIB CADSES, INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC, INTERREG IIIC East and South zones, INTERACT, the VI Research and Technological Development Framework Programme, etc.). The integration of experienced partners with new partners that are taking their first steps in the INTERREG III programmes is also very interesting.

- In INTERREG IIIB North Sea Programme, partnerships with previous experience in INTERREG projects sometimes have an advantage compared with complete newcomers, but not always. The key point is that existing partnerships must realise that mere continuation of a previous project can never be a good project despite its previous successes. The ability to "think outside the box" is sometimes difficult to develop in existing partnerships, but when it happens their previous technical and administrative experience is an important asset.

- The INTERREG IIIC Programme has gone even further to make of **previous experience** in some topics covered by the programme a requirement for approval of the application. Experience of LPs and in many cases project partners is therefore guaranteed in the design of the programme, since the improvement of the existing regional policies is inherent to the IIIC Programme conception.

12. Working languages

Description

A relevant issue common to all INTERREG programmes is the way the working language is tackled to cope with the respective socio-cultural and linguistic differences.

Experience

In programmes featuring a **single working language** the main advantages are reduction in complexity and in the amount of financial resources otherwise devoted to translation services and publications.

Nevertheless, some of the actors involved in programme implementation state that a single programme language sometimes leads to additional **misunderstandings** and misinterpretations and that the possibility of speaking in the mother-tongue and relying on **translation** would be very welcome.

On the other hand, programmes featuring **several** working languages understand that transnational cooperation must allow participants to speak in their own language to avoid the pre-eminence of certain actors.

This approach recognises that a single working language would make life much easier and reduces translation and publication costs dramatically, but respecting the respective cultural attachment is as important as creating new ways of working together.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

Different approaches have been raised:

- The INTERREG IIIB NWE recognises **four** different **official languages** (Dutch, German, French and English). However, simultaneous interpretation provided in the MC and SC meetings is only given from the other three languages into English. The Secretariat's working language is English and all correspondence to projects and Member States is in English.

  The submission of the application form in English is a minimum requirement, but additional copies of the application can be submitted in one or more of the other partnership languages (French, German or Dutch). All submitted versions of the application are circulated to the members of the SC but if there are any differences between the English and other language versions, the English version is taken as the reference document.

  Therefore, all reference documents (and some others) are translated into the three other languages. The Website is not translated but the Newsletter is.

  In the INTERREG IIIB NWE, even though one out of three stakeholders perceives language as a barrier in project development, the MTE deemed that "it is encouraging that 2/3 of all stakeholders do not seem to have a particular problem with English being the "first" language in a transnational programme".

  In this programme it has been noted that the French attachment to their language for example makes the exclusive use of English nearly impossible.

- In INTERREG IIIB SUDOE **three working languages** were adopted (Spanish, French and Portuguese) and the project forms have to be duly filled in all the languages of all partners involved.

  This programme's approach is reflected in the SUDOE 2003 Annual Report "…Even if that (the project forms having to be duly filled in all the languages of all partners involved) represents a difficulty in terms of communication and the employment of resources in order to provide different official documents and methodologies, it facilitates a **bigger participation** in the programme. Experience has showed that the advantages are bigger than the disadvantages since the objectives and actions of the programme are more accessible and comprehensible to a bigger number of potential promoters".

- On the other hand in the INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area, although programme partner States agreed **French** as working language, applicants and project partners are allowed to submit all

documents in any of the four Atlantic Area EU Member States main languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese and French).

At the programme level, **simultaneous translations** of all MC and SC sessions, as well as translations of the relevant programme documents and the documents issued by these committees are provided in all four programme languages. A transnational JTS staff covering communication in all four official languages, together with the provision of **translation services** paid for by Technical Assistance, ensure the use of any of these four languages by all actors.

- In INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED, in order to avoid the communication language problem that occurred in the previous cooperation experience (it was one of the four factors indicated as being responsible for the slow start of cooperation), the MC agreed to use Greek, Italian and English as official languages for the programme. Nevertheless it should be noted that in practice, **English** is considered the programme's official language. Italian and Greek are only used to facilitate communications with final beneficiaries within each respective country.

- In the INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space, even though **French** is the programme's official language, **other languages** are also accepted: **English**, **Spanish** and **Portuguese**:
    - Bilingual Letters of Commitment are provided online by the programme JTS: French-English, French-Spanish and French-Portuguese.
    - In addition to the compulsory French version of the project application, the programme also recommends including a copy in the respective partner's own language.
    - The programme's Internet site is also available in English.

- Differences do not seem to be particularly relevant in INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space, where **English** was adopted as the programme's single official language.

13. Coordination of First Level Control systems

Description

Behind the variety of national FLC systems, some programmes have implemented systems for organising the different types of controls to be carried out by the designated national authorities and the MA.

Experience

This system allows for a better **coordination** and **homogeneity** in data returned to the MA, which is ultimately responsible for the FLC.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- The INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area MA has implemented a specific system based on a "**pyramid of certifications**". This mechanism complies with the relevant regulations (in particular 438/2001):

  - The FLC is the core of the system.
  - If the States want to outsource, the MA can have an interlocutor within the chosen structure. LPs must also be aware of the importance of their role in the FLC of the documents sent by the other partners.
  - Random checks: the regulations allow the national authority to outsource control work (up to 5% of the programmed amount).
  - The concomitant involvement of controllers from each EU Member State where there is a partner should be ensured.

- INTERREG IIIB CADSES organised a **round table** with the FLC controllers concerned in all programme Member States.

2.4. Structures

1. MSC as a single structure

Description

For the 2007-2013 programming period, the new ERDF Regulation states a single Monitoring and Steering Committee (MSC) as the general rule in the Territorial Cooperation Objective OPs. This said, during the current 2000-2006 period some INTERREG III programmes have already combined the MC and the SC into a single **MSC**, which has a broader and more operational remit than a MC.

Experience

Common membership of both committees potentially gives greater coherence within the programme and a continuity and depth of engagement which strengthens programming. This approach can help to create a committee which, while it has a heavy workload, is very actively engaged and gains an **excellent understanding** of the programme it is steering. In addition, such a solution avoids problems among others concerning the relationship between the MC and the SC.

However, in a single MSC there is a risk of the tasks of the strategic level and the technical levels (FLC coordination, decision on projects) **overlapping**.

During 2000-2006, some of the programmes that have a separate MC and SC have already considered the advisability of merging the two committees for 2007-2013 on the grounds that the persons appointed to the MC and SC are mostly the same. Therefore, in the **future** Northern Periphery Programme will have a single MSC. However, others such as IIIB Atlantic Area, IIIB NWE or IIIB SUDOE will keep the MC and SC separate, since they consider their tasks to be quite different even if the persons attending are the same.

The "*Study of the MTE of INTERREG programmes for the Programming Period 2000-2006*" issued by INTERACT highlighted that, in some programmes, there appeared to be confusion between the roles of the two committees, with ambiguity about functions such as monitoring. The partial duplication of committee structures was also noted in cases where MC members were also SC members, making the MC a form of enlarged SC.

Another finding was that some MCs have been caught up in management tasks and were not engaging sufficiently in strategic discussion. In some cases, this was due to the early stages of the programming period being dominated by a very practical agenda focused on establishing working procedures and administrative routines.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In the IIIC North zone Programme, as permitted by point 24 of the INTERREG IIIC Communication, a joint MSC comprising representatives of the EU and New EU Member States and also representatives of Belarus, supervises the overall implementation of the programme (acting as MC) and decides on project applications submitted to the North zone (thus undertaking the tasks of the SC).

- In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery, the MC also performs the tasks of the SC. Programme SC members are the same as those of the MC except that SC meetings also include representatives of the European Commission and, where appropriate, the European Investment Bank representatives attend as **observers** (whereas in the MC they have an advisory capacity).

  Nonetheless, when members of the MC, acting as the SC, have an interest in a project application they must declare this interest and restrict their participation in the assessment and decision making concerning the project.

For further information

The "*Study of the MTE of INTERREG programmes for the Programming Period 2000-2006*" can be downloaded at: http://www.interact-eu.net/913123/0/0/0

2. SC and MC presidency at the regional level

Description

Unlike most of the INTERREG IIIB programmes whose committees have a presidency at the State level, the MC and the SC in the INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space single EU State programme are chaired at the regional level by the three regions participating:

- For the SC, presidents come from Guadeloupe, Guyana and Martinique.
- For the MC, presidents come from the General Council of each region.

Experience

The rotating nature of the SC and the MC presidencies at the regional level makes all three regions feel permanently committed and involved in the INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space. It forces participant parties to coordinate with each other.

The risk of exclusion from the respective national objectives should be considered.

Programme examples

INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space

3. Programme committees' advisory members

Description

All INTERREG IIIB and IIIC programmes include in some of their structures —mainly the programme MC meetings— a broad range of **actors** with an **advisory role**, namely the European Commission, the social and economic representatives, NGOs and other experts invited.

Experience

The voice of such representatives in the INTERREG III programme structures with an advisory role enables their interests to be considered, and in addition enriches input to the Committee's decisions with an "on the ground" approach.

The *Study of the MTE of INTERREG programmes for the Programming Period 2000-2006* carried out by the University of Strathclyde and published by INTERACT concluded that not all (actors) had the same balance of regional, local, social and economic partners. Some evaluators noted a **lack of representation** of social and economic partners, NGOs and/or regional actors but many found **wide participation**, including social partners, the private sector, NGOs and environmental experts. Sometimes, this broader partnership has been developed using Technical Assistance.

Programme examples

All INTERREG IIIB and IIIC programmes

For further information

The "*Study of the MTE of INTERREG programmes for the Programming Period 2000-2006*" can be downloaded at: http://www.interact-eu.net/913123/0/0/0

4. The Contact Point networks and the National Correspondents/ Coordinators (NCs)

Description

Beyond the standard management structures of every INTERREG III programme —MA, PA, JTS, SC and MC— many of the IIIB programmes feature the existence of a network of **CPs**, which are structures activated to provide mediation and technical support for project partners.

With a similar role, other programmes are structured at the national level on a network of "**National Coordinators**" or "**Correspondents**" (*Correspondents Nationaux*) representing and appointed by each of the EU Member States involved in the respective programme.

As a general rule, **NCs** are intermediaries intended to facilitate communication between project sponsors and management structures within the programme, to which end they usually work in close collaboration with the respective JTS and MA and support them in their roles. Usually they are not only the first contact for assisting project partners and closely collaborate with the respective JTS in project evaluation and development, but may also provide the JTS with key consultancy in the assessment and control of the certification of expenditures. In some programmes they even participate in the monitoring of programme implementation in their national territory. The costs relating to the NCs' activities are in many cases detailed and integrated into the programme 's Technical Assistance budget.

However, in other programmes such as INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space these functions are the responsibility of the **CPs**, while the programme **NCs** focus on preparing and easing the work of the SC/MC.

Experience

The different JTS officials of programmes that have **NCs** consider their role **crucial**. NCs providing information and assistance to all project partners allow JTS to perform its role by focusing on contact for LPs and they contribute to **project building** by easing partner search thanks to their contacts with NCs in other EU Member States. NC patterns focusing on project set-up, instruction and selection provide the project assessment with:

• **Higher quality**: The assessment issued on the basis of the NC's expertise is usually strictly technical, mainly consisting of verifying project soundness and the reality of each partner's national contribution, the national eligibility of expenditure and check the project's coherence against the relevant national policies.

• **Higher efficiency**: Saving time and expenditure otherwise devoted to external expertise.

Through knowledge of its country's socio-economic context, the NC has a wide knowledge of the national public and private bodies in its EU Member State. The opinion phase allows NCs to check that the partnership is real and the partners who appear on the application form will take part in the project. They know if a potential partner, in view of its legal status, may participate in the programme, also being able to state whether such and such a partner has a place in a transnational cooperation project, and to evaluate whether national contributions have been mobilised correctly, etc. It is not for the NCs to formulate their own opinion on a project which they have helped to start up, but to provide useful elements for decision-making by SC members by gathering technical opinion and offering a summary of it.

This **accurate knowledge** of the institutions and mechanisms is particularly useful in States where competences are largely shared between national and local levels.

However, in some cases even when they are paid by the programme, CPs tend to be heavily influenced by **national interests**, repeating the view of the respective programme MC to the detriment of a genuinely transnational approach.

- **CP networks** available in several IIIB programmes are in general deemed a positive structure for their performance. Overall, the support from CPs is considered **useful** by project partners and their performance **good** by the programme managers.

    CP networks ensure the respective programme's presence at the local level. As a result, in most of programmes that have CPs the start up of new projects and their performance have notably improved.

    In addition, their role helping partner search, project building and project development allows the JTS to focus on strategic issues and programme implementation. CPs also make a significant contribution to the preparation and smooth running of all publicity and project development events organised by JTS at national and regional levels. The organisation of events is in most cases a genuine joint product of the coordinated work of the JTS and CPs.

    When CPs are paid by the respective programme Technical Assistance, it can be a drain on the budget, but since it represents a significant investment in terms of reinforcement for project development, it is good value for money.

    Such a structure is considered useful provided that CPs have sufficient staff and distribution and CPs-JTS coordination tasks are clearly laid down to avoid dysfunctions and prevent them overlapping.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In programmes such as INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED, **NCs** promote the programme's **publicity and organisation** in their countries in order to guarantee transnationality and the integrated character of the operations. Particularly in ARCHIMED, NCs with a permanent form of cooperation also facilitate the work of the MA by providing support at the national level for the successful organisation of technical meetings with final beneficiaries as well as the national bodies involved in the management and control system of the programme.

- In INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area, the **NCs** are more involved in **project set-up, instruction and selection.**

    Meetings (whose characteristics differ depending on the partner State) between the NCs themselves are organised to examine any initial problems with the projects submitted, which will allow them to ask the LP for details after instruction if necessary. These meetings also make it possible to consolidate the partnership (or enlarge it) on certain projects. They also check on the project's external coherence with other public intervention mechanisms and supervise any other public funding obtained by the LPs.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE also has a **NC** network consisting of one person in and appointed by each partner State. Amongst other functions they **verify** the compatibility and contribution of the projects to the national regional and local laws and regulations, and they carry out the co-instruction of the projects close to the JTS.

Moreover each NC ensures **project follow up** in cases where the coordinators are located in their country. The control system uses the indicators proposed by the European Commission. Each Member State ensures financial control in accordance with its own procedures, in consultation with the project coordinator and respecting the regulatory dispositions.

NCs in this programme also carry out some communication and publicity work.

• INTERREG IIIB North Sea combines both **NCs** and **NCPs**.

NCPs representing each of the Member States i**nform and assist project applicants** and complement the guidance made available by the JTS. They streamline efforts to identify and encourage high quality in projects by focusing on key issues.

NCPs in each country participating in the programme are responsible for **programme promotion, project development and project monitoring**. They also assist the Secretariat if a project is in difficulties and local support is needed, and in organising events by acting as information forums to promote programme activities.

• In INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC, one **CP** established at the national level in each partner State (excepting two in Italy) assist the National Committees, project applicants and the project implementation process.

They complement and work in close collaboration with the JTS, providing assistance to potential project partners, assisting the JTS in project evaluation and helping information and publicity activities at the national level.

CPs get a copy of all communications produced by the JTS, and three/four joint JTS-CPs meetings per year are held to coordinate their action more effectively.

• INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery has also created the **Regional CPs** as a specific structure for the proper functioning of the programme. They are an innovative structure responsible for information and promotion of the programme.

The RCPs are located in the different areas of the programme. This network works in close cooperation with the JPS and is funded by the Technical Assistance budget. The RCPs have a substantial role in informing and promoting the programme in their respective areas. They work closely with the JPS in the development of project ideas, organisation of partenariats and offer a support system in their region. They are able to provide a regional perspective in the assessment of preparatory project applications and maintain a network of project partners in their countries. They are also responsible for organising National Partner seminars in their countries to help support and advise project partners that are not always able to attend LP seminars and transnational events for LPs.

• INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space has also established **RCPs** as specific intermediate bodies whose role is crucial for the proper management of the programme. They carry out the following tasks:

- Receiving of dossiers.
- Providing information to the project applicants (LPs).
- Pre-instruction.
- Project transmission for instruction to the JTS.

- INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space has established a specific network of **National Contact Points (NCPs)** in order to facilitate the involvement of regional and local authorities. They are responsible for regional and local development and spatial planning on the regional and local level, both in the planning phase (mainly as providers of project ideas) and in the implementation phase (as project developers and for co-financing) of the CIP, as well as the involvement of the economic and social partners and NGOs. The NCPs work in close cooperation with JTS.

- Complexity of the programme and the size of the INTERREG IIIB CADSES space have given rise to particular organisational arrangements to ensure successful programme implementation. Therefore the activities of the JTS will be complemented by CADSES **CPs** set up in each country participating in the programme.

  The main tasks of the CADSES CPs are:

  - To assist to the project application and implementation process for all projects
  - To contribute to information and publicity within the respective country
  - To support the National Committees in fulfilling their transnational tasks
  - To serve as a first contact for project applicants

  Thus, the activities of the CADSES CPs are important for project development and information about the programme within the partner States. Furthermore, they are of great importance for smooth operation of the multi-level interaction of the committees and of the related organisations of the European, national, regional and local level in the framework of the programme.

  In addition to that, cooperation between EU and non-EU Member States —as well as between non-EU Member States— at the programme and the project level in the geographic and political context of the CADSES area requires particular support. To provide this support the CADSES CPs in Thessaloniki and Vienna fulfil additional tasks.

- With a wider scope, INTERREG IIIB NWE features a **Project Development Network** (PDN), made up of the JTS and every CP established in each NWE EU Member State and Switzerland all working in close cooperation.

  The NWE CIP puts great emphasis on the project development process and on promotion activities, mobilising a wide range of administrations and stakeholders able to contribute to the achievement of the CIP Priorities. Activities carried out in the PDN proactive promotion strategy and the interactive project development process are paid from the programme Technical Assistance budget.

  In the PDN framework, it was decided that the NWE CPs' remit would remain **transnational** in character, thus avoiding the risk of creating a network of "national contacts" whose purpose

could have been to promote national interest to the detriment of a genuinely transnational approach.

As a result **CPs**, even those hosted by national authorities, do not perform tasks usually carried out by national administrations and are not involved in the project assessment and selection process. Formal project applications are always directly submitted to and assessed by the JTS, without any pre-application step at national level.

CP staff, travelling expenses, and part of their overheads are paid for by the NWE programme. Premises and logistics are provided by the corresponding EU Member State.

According to the service level formally approved by the MC of the NWE programme, CPs' main **responsibilities** are:

a. Facilitating the **overall implementation of the programme**, collaborating in the preparation and implementation of specific activities in each EU Member State. CPs are the first contact for project promoters, allowing JTS to focus better on the technical advice at a second stage. Advice is generally conveyed in the promoter's mother tongue, which has in many cases eased the understanding of the programme requirements and helped to overcome the language barrier faced by a number of potential project partners.
b. Cooperating with the JTS in an advisory capacity with a view to pro-actively **stimulating the project development process**.
c. In partnership with the JTS, facilitating the **international partner search**, by capitalising on their specific knowledge of regional and local conditions.
d. Involving authorities responsible for regional and local development in the **generation of relevant projects**.
e. All CPs are proactively involved in implementing the programme's **publicity strategy** in their own country, also in partnership with the JTS.
f. In partnership with the JTS, CPs help to **promote the programme**, mainly by organising conferences and events, info-sessions and the production of country-specific information materials.

5. Intermediate bodies in project assessment and selection

Description

Apart from the standard management structure laid down for the INTERREG programmes, some of them have established a category of **intermediate bodies** in the form of **National Committees, National Sub-Committees, National Correspondents, Transnational Secretariats** or **Regional Advisory Groups** whose role is crucial in the **project application assessment and/or selection process**. They are specific structures set up to involve regional and local authorities in

the generation of relevant projects, and provide the respective SC with an assessment of the suitability of project applications from both the transnational and local perspective.

In particular, **National Committees** are usually chaired at the national level by the corresponding SC members and are composed of civil servants from the regional and national authorities involved as well as representatives of the social and economic sectors, NGOs, etc.

The **Transnational Secretariat** (TS) is a specific structure only featured in a number of INTERREG programmes established for the **programme's operational management**. It is usually composed of:

- The **JTS**.
- The **NCs** appointed by each of the partner EU Member States, who deal with the programme's promotion and organisation in the respective country in order to ensure the interregional and uniform character of the programming activities.

This structure was set up in some programmes mainly to guarantee **transnationality** in the respective programme by ensuring direct, close and better cooperation between the transnational authorities, the Member States and the national management authorities and also better coordination of actions at a transnational level. The TS provides input to the technical evaluation carried out by the JTS to ensure that Regional Policy implications are taken into account.

Experience

Such intermediate bodies play the important role of relevant link between the respective programme's national stakeholders and the SC, carrying out an important coordination function in discussing and determining the national position and in choosing a strategy for project selection in SC meetings.

They help formulate the **national/regional strategic focus** for the programme, involving the local and regional authorities in the adoption of the national approach and the promotion of project generation. As members come from a wide range of organisations and have a good knowledge of the programme, they are also an excellent resource in project development and promotion. They may thus help to unify regional and local issues at the respective national levels in accompanying the programme implementation, also involving economic and social partners and NGOs.

The main disadvantage of involving such structures is that it may entail some **delay** in the project approval decision process.

In particular, the **TS** has an important role in fostering the **transnational** character of the programme and acts as a pre-SC. By ensuring transnationality in the day-to-day operational management of the programme, the TS helps to integrate of the various national mentalities more broadly.

Financial resources needed for the JTS "outposts" are no longer available for the main JTS, which could reduce the capacity of the JTS to fulfil its programme tasks fully. As the "outposts" are difficult

to coordinate, information given to applicants and partners could go astray between the main JTS and the different outposts. This could further hinder programme implementation.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB BSR the **National Sub-Committees** receive the application forms with the respective evaluation sheets and meet before each SC to establish their own position.

- In INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space and INTERREG IIIB CADSES members of the SC receive the advice of the **National Committees**, the **JTS**, the National and the Regional **construction projects**, among others.

- **Regional Advisory Groups** have been set up in every INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery Programme Member State, Norway and the overall north Atlantic area to assist the MC in preparing decisions on individual projects. The Regional Advisory Group members come from different fields of expertise representing main partner organisations, including environmental authorities, politicians and, if appropriate, NGOs.

  Regional Advisory Groups assess the suitability and priority of project applications and issue recommendations accordingly. They also promote the generation of new transnational projects. Non-EU Member States contribute to co-financing Regional Advisory Group activities.

- In INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area this role is performed by the **NCs**, and in INTERREG IIIB SUDOE, by the **NCs** and the **JTS**.

  In INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area meetings between the **NCs** are organised between the NCs and the representatives of the regions in the programme partner States and focus on project content, allowing a common position to be established and defended by the EU Member State representative on the SC, on the basis of the opinion issued by the JTS.

  Meetings are also organised between the Atlantic Area JTS and the NCs to discuss all the opinions given before the projects are presented to the **SC** and to prepare and assist project instruction, with the final decision coming from the SC. They also organise **joint events**.

- The INTERREG IIIC South zone has the **Transnational Secretariat (TS)** as a specific structure not available in the other IIIC zones: the TS has been established to preserve transnationality in the operational management of the programme with the involvement of all regions, especially the weakest ones.

  The IIIC South TS is in charge of the following tasks:

  - Promotion and organisation of the programme.
  - Preparation, recommendations on the approval of applications and implementation of MC and SC decisions in close collaboration with the MA. In this respect, the TS has incorporated more than 90% of JTS projects' evaluation results, while MC and SC decisions have followed the TS recommendations in more than 97% of cases.
  - Preparation of the Annual reports.

- • Providing assistance to the MC and SC in close collaboration with the MA.
- • Acting as an interface between interregional and national management and organisational levels.

- • In INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC, the main responsibilities of the **TS** are: the overall promotion and organisation of the programme, the implementation of project submission and instruction procedures and helping partner search and providing project promoters with advice. In close collaboration with the MA, the TS also prepares the programme's annual reports and assists the MC and SC, the Transnational technical groups and the MEDOCC Partnership Transnational Conference.

6. The Technical Committee, a non-decision-making body

Description

In INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space Programme, the **Technical Committee** as a non-decision-making body provides technical advice and proposes a financing plan for the co-financers on the cooperation projects being assessed. It is made up of representatives of the administrative co-financing members from the Regional Councils of Guadeloupe, Martinique and Guyana.

Experience

Technical advice from a non-decision making body offers an additional point of view and facilitates the work of the management structures.

Programme examples

INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space

7. Supervisory Groups

Description

The **Supervisory Group** (SG) is a specific body in a few programmes that consists of a limited number of programme **MC members** and acts in an **advisory capacity**.

Experience

This type of structure provides **continuity** for MC and SC tasks between meetings, taking forward any issues arising and increasing **efficiency**. The existence of the **SG** provides **additional pro-**

active support for programme implementation, with a more operational supervision for various issues to be discussed.

SGs provide **flexibility** when the MC and SC structure is too rigid.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB NWE, the SG is responsible for periodically supervising the implementation, by the MA and the JTS, of decisions made by the MC. Should an urgent decision prove necessary, it can invite the chair of the MC to arrange for it to be taken by written procedure or by convening an extraordinary meeting of the MC.

  There is no regular schedule for SG meetings but they are held on average three times a year. They constantly monitor the state of progress of the JTS' Work plan, including project-related payments and Technical Assistance expenditure.

- A SG was also set up by the INTERREG IIIC Programme West zone MC very much as a **working level** to allow various issues to be discussed and to prepare decisions in a small group. This SG is not an official body, and the power to take decisions remains with the MC and the SC only.

- In INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery this role is played by the **Programme Management Group** (PMG), consisting of the national authorities responsible for implementation of the programme. The PMG supports and assists the MA, PA and JTS in the performance of their tasks -especially those related to the administration of ERDF funds - and in facilitating networks and the flow of information between the programme partners.

- INTERREG IIIB BSR also has a similar type of group for this purpose, called a "**task-force**", while in INTERREG IIIB CADSES it is called a "**troika**", and is composed of representatives of the programme MA, JTS and of the current, previous and next chair of the programme MC.

8. Financial groups for coordinating financial controls

Description

According to article 14.2 of the new ERDF Regulation (EC) 1080/2006, the existence of a **Group of Auditors** comprising a representative of each Member State participating in the OP and chaired by the Audit Authority is a new requirement for the next programming period 2007-2013 for programmes approved under the territorial cooperation Objective.

Nevertheless, some programmes have already implemented a similar structure during the 2000-2006 period.

Experience

The establishment of a FCG allows the Second and Third Level Control procedures to be coordinated from the start of the programme by the controllers from the different programme EU Member States.

According to the NWE Programme, the lessons learnt from the Auditors Group experience for the next programming period are:

1. Members of the group were not involved in establishing the management and control system for the programme.

2. National auditors should be involved as much as possible and as soon as possible in order to create and promote confidence in the programme's management system.

3. The role of Auditors Group should not be restricted to sample checks but consist of the wider role of the programme's "financial controller".

4. Sample checks should start as soon as possible even if not all procedures have been fully established.

5. Compiling reports about controls carried out in different Member States by different members of the group is very time-consuming.

6. Regular and continuous participation of all Member States in the group is important.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

• In order to ensure the transnational implementation of financial control requirements, the INTERREG IIIB NWE Programme established the **Auditors group**, composed of auditors from each Member State participating in the programme, with the NWE JTS, MA, PA and the winding-up body also participating in the work of the group.

The Auditors group is responsible for organising the **2nd Level sample checks**, for which the Group has set up a specific procedure. It meets at least twice a year, meeting for the first time in January 2003, and first sample checks on projects and Technical Assistance were carried out in 2004.

In practice, the work of the Auditors group has gone **beyond** the organisation of the 2nd Level Control sample checks, assuming competences related to Articles 4 (FLC), 13 (annual implementation report) and 15 (winding-up declaration) of Commission Regulation 438/2001. The Group has also developed a procedure for financial corrections.

• INTERREG IIIC set up a **Financial Control Group** (FCG) composed of the national second level controllers of all EU Member States and Norway. The FCG meets at least once a year. As the INTERREG IIIC operations include partners from all EU Member States and Norway, it was decided to contract an **international auditing company** to carry out the sample checks on operations as required by Article 10 of Commission Regulation (EC) 438/2001.

The reports on sample checks drafted by the auditing company have to be sent to the FCG. The FCG will forward these reports to the MAs and PAs and to the persons or departments appointed to issue declarations on winding-up of the assistance.

- Other programmes such as INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space and IIIB SUDOE have also set up respective programme FCG responsible for steering the 2nd Level Control in compliance with article 10 of Regulation 438/2001. The IIIB SUDOE FCG is composed of one representative of the 2nd Level Control and one representative of the winding-up body in each programme partner country respectively.

9. Paying Authority common to several INTERREG III programmes

Description

In the vast majority of INTERREG III programmes PAs are **public bodies** that are responsible for this task (73 out of 82 programmes). Only seven INTERREG III PAs are banks (with a strong presence of the German *Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein*). In this context, certain institutions (mainly the French *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations* (CDC) and once again the German *Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein*) combine PA functions for several INTERREG III programmes across the A, B and C strands.

Experience

When the PA manages several INTERREG programmes, they benefit from **synergies** generated by an experienced institution (i.e. by using the same database for each of the programmes). Trained for this activity, their staff operate within the specific context of managing ERDF, which requires a perfect knowledge of different financial procedures and specific legal rules.

For most of these programmes it is much more efficient to deal with the same body acting as PA and MA provided that the different departments are strictly separated and thus overlapping is avoided.

Programme examples

CDC is a public-sector financial institution. The following ten different INTERREG IIIA, IIIB and IIIC programmes share the CDC acting as PA:

INTERREG IIIA Wallonia - Lorraine - Luxembourg

INTERREG IIIA Upper Rhine Centre-South

INTERREG IIIA France - Switzerland

INTERREG IIIA Franco-British

INTERREG IIIA France-Wallonia-Flanders

INTERREG IIIB NWE

INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area

INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space

INTERREG IIIB Indian Ocean / Réunion Island Programme

INTERREG IIIC West zone

For further information

The specific *Benchmark study on the activities of a PA within the framework of European Regional Cooperation Programmes - INTERREG* was issued in 2005 by CDC: www.caissedesdepots.fr

10. One authority acting as MA and PA

Description

In some INTERREG III programmes the same institution acts as MA and PA, even if the respective responsibilities pertain to separate divisions.

Experience

The coincidence of both responsibilities within the same institution has generally worked well in the programmes where this applies, with a performance that has been found satisfactory by programme managers concerned.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

INTERREGIIIB BSR

INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space

INTERREG IIIC North

11. Territorially decentralised JTS

Description

INTERREG IIIB MAC Programme has adopted a specific administrative organisation comprising a **decentralised structure** for the programme **JTS**, in view of the fragmented geographical character of the territories in the programme area.

Thus, the JTS **headquarters** from which the whole JTS team is coordinated are located in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain), with **branch offices** in Tenerife (Spain), Azores and Madeira (Portugal).

The programme considers the option of having a decentralised JTS and dividing functions between the latter and Regional Interfaces to be positive.

Experience

This decentralised administrative structure with four offices encourages the **active involvement** of all the regional authorities concerned, with a clear division of tasks which facilitates the coordination and good functioning of the programme.

The division of tasks and competences is clear and allows an adequate instrumentation and a correct control of the intervention which is confirmed by the majority of the LPs.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

INTERREG IIIB MAC

3. Target: Optimising visibility of programme features and outputs

Dissemination and visibility of each INTERREG programme's features, performance and outputs has become a major challenge with increasing relevance as the programmes face the final stage of implementation. Big efforts have thus been invested by programmes in **optimising the visibility of their features and outputs**. A selection of the instruments used in this field are the following:

1. **Communication plans**
2. **Programme Websites**
3. **Specific communication units**
4. **The Partnership Transnational Conference**
5. **Means for disseminating programme/project features and good practice**
6. **Newsletters**
7. **Questionnaires for the assessment of needs**

1. Communication plans

Description

Beyond the Communication Plans that have been set out in the respective PC by each INTERREG IIIB - IIIC programme in compliance with point 3.1.1. of the Annex of Commission Regulation (EC) nº 1159/2000, some programmes have developed **detailed Communication Plans** to give SF outputs the greatest possible visibility.

Furthermore, for the next programming period the EC has called for the inclusion of communication plans in the programme CIP.

Experience

Having detailed and well-designed information and/or communication action plans is a good basis for ensuring that there is **adequate and high-quality awareness** of the programmes.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

• The INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery Programme Secretariat has designed an **Information Action Plan** which initially focused on start-up projects that needed guidance and on targeting information to specific groups, such as the General Public. It now has an additional focus on promoting project and programme results. This represents an interesting example of a formal tool to develop awareness-raising campaigns that is also used to monitor the information they provide.

Furthermore, the system is organised in such a way that the Secretariat is in charge of publicity at transnational level and the RCPs at national level. The Information Action Plan is also used as an instrument for the Secretariat to **monitor, coordinate and evaluate** the provision of

information in the programme as a whole on an **annual basis**. It contains all information-providing activities by different actors (such as MAs, PAs, JPS, RCPs, etc.) which makes it possible for the Secretariat to coordinate all activities that provide information for the benefit of the programme. The Information Action Plan is evaluated at the end of each year by the programme MC.

- With many similarities to the latter model, INTERREG IIIB CADSES also allows for a general Communication Plan that is included in the PC. It describes the general communication strategy and mentions aims, target groups, means, responsibilities and approximate budget.

  This general strategy set out in the PC is implemented on a yearly basis through the **Communication Action Plan** prepared by the JTS with the supervision of the MA and approved by the MC by the end of the year. The Communication Action Plan gives a clear picture of the objectives to be achieved in the year, through which actions, in which timeframe, and by whom. It also determines the budget to implement them.

- INTERREG IIIB NWE and IIIB Alpine Space developed specific Communication Plans in 2002 and 2004 respectively.

- IIIB SUDOE produces **annual Communication Plans** adapted to specific programme requirements and objectives for the year. It contains the communication activities scheduled and the strategy to be developed during the year. Each annual Communication Plan is submitted to the programme MC for approval.

2. Programme Websites

Description

The creation of tools that provide information about the programme, including information on previous projects, best practices etc. is fairly frequent in INTERREG programme **Websites** and can be useful as an input for potential partners to help them generate quality applications.

Among other services, some programme Websites offer a section for **documentation library**, a complete and systematised source of information on programme documents which has proved useful for the project stakeholders and the General Public.

Experience

Programme Websites are crucial communication item for all INTERREG III programmes to provide information to potential project applicants, public and private institutional partners and the General Public.

However, it has to be taken into account that the Website should not replace other tools, so the tendency to use the Website as the only communication tool has to be avoided.

As programmes develop and funds become increasingly committed, the role of the Website is central to the communication strategy, helping to foster networking between existing and potential project partners and constantly providing them with accurate and reliable information and data to support the project application process.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- INTERREG IIIB North Sea offers a user-friendly Website, well structured with updated information, including sections with project ideas useful for future proposals. The FAQ section is simple but clear and all key issues are dealt with. The Website also has direct links to all key documents as well as to papers and reports on previous INTERREG II projects. Fact Sheets also comprise a set of guidance notes with concise information for project partners. The main purpose of the Fact Sheets is to provide common guidance for projects, when national rules are either unclear or conflicting.

- The INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC JTS has created an attractive programme logo that forms part of the programme's recently-established Website. The site features some very complete information in an attractive format.

- The INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery Website displays a **documentation library online** as an interesting example of a complete and systematised source of information.

- INTERREG IIIB NWE uses the Website as a showcase for project outputs, but also as the main source of information for non-specialists. In the first stages of the programme, the Website was used for stimulating applications: all of the documents, including a project idea form, a database of contacts and guidelines were available online. The Website focus changed with the programme objectives: when the calls were coming to an end, more emphasis was put on highlighting the projects, thanks to an interactive map and more news outputs.

- The INTERREG IIIB CADSES homepage, re-designed in 2005, offers an interactive map, fast access to frequently needed information and highlights of the projects and the programme.

  Now each CADSES country has its own section. Since the last call was a neighbourhood one and that all the countries were on the same level as regards the assessment process and the availability of funds, it was necessary to present the relevant information not only on the basis of the funds or the procedure for filling in the application form, but also on the basis of the participating country.

  The publicity package is also very useful: In this section the project managers can find practical information on publicity measures to be carried out by projects.

  The automatic synchronisation between the programme's database and online database with approved projects is an innovation. This means that through a simple click the information related to the approved projects is updated on the basis of the information included in the MMS. This is particularly important for information such as duration, partners contact data, which changes quite frequently.

- The INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space Website has been re-launched, offering specific information about the Alpine Space Programme such as a project database updated with project results, an events calendar, a programme news section, relevant thematic and technical documents for download, as well as information on the new programming period.

- INTERREG IIIC Programme makes available a well managed and regularly updated joint Website for all four zones within the IIIC joint Web structure. It includes information on the programme, on the application pack, EU Regulation, Partner search, running operations and specific country information.

- Since late 2004 the INTERACT Programme Website has offered access to its **Web Library**, where documents officially requested from all INTERREG III programmes (CIPs, PCs, MTE and Update, Subsidy contracts, Partnership Agreements, application forms, project reporting templates, etc.) are categorised to make it easier for INTERREG stakeholders and other interested parties to consult specific papers.

For further information

http://www.interact-eu.net/913123/1068916/0/0

3. Specific communication units

Description

In terms of workload, the need to provide increasingly relevant information means that the provision of a specifically devoted communication officer or unit is deemed a major necessity for the future. However, many INTERREG programme JTS still lack of a **person or persons responsible for communications** and such tasks have to be performed by staff responsible for other areas.

Experience

Programme communication actions are fostered by the existence of a unit specifically responsible for carrying out these tasks.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB North Sea, the specific **Programme Support Unit** is responsible for implementing the Publicity Plan, and receives additional advice and assistance from the programme managers and members of the project development and finance teams.

  This Unit consists of three people and produces printed material that it disseminates widely, including brochures, application packs, annual project idea books and conference packs. It is also responsible for organising informative events, thematic seminars and the annual Directoria,

for arranging and following up on press activity related to main events and for updating the programme's homepage.

- In INTERREG IIIB NWE, the JTS communication unit includes **two** full time professional communication officers responsible for implementing communication tasks (organisation of events, publications, programme Website management…). Only occasionally they are also involved in strategic programme issues.

  The following programmes have **one** communication officer:

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE

- INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC

- INTERREG IIIB MAC

- INTERREG IIIB CADSES

- Each of the four INTERREG IIIC zones

4. The Partnership Transnational Conference

Description

As a specific event organised by INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC, the **Partnership Transnational Conference** brings together representatives from **LPs** in the EU and also in the Third Countries, and features as its main tasks:
- Promoting the programme at a transnational level.
- Providing a forum for the expression of new ideas and exchange of experiences.
- Assessing the programme's performance and formulating its own approach to reaching the programme's main milestones.

Experience

This forum allows programme structures to keep in touch with the project LPs. Its meetings facilitate the necessary exchange of information and finding solutions to any doubts or problems that arise.

Programme examples

INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC

5. Means for the dissemination of programme/project features and good practice

Description

Specific means have been deployed by the various INTERREG III programmes to provide applicants, project partners and programme stakeholders with an understanding of the respective programme and project features and the good practice developed.

As principal among them, **compendiums, booklets, fact sheets and guides** edited and distributed by many INTERREG programmes gather relevant information from the **projects approved** in the course of the respective call for proposals.

Experience

Compendiums of approved projects give **visibility** to programme and project outputs, helping applicants, project partners, programme stakeholders and the General Public understand the final destination of ERDF funds.

Fact sheets make sure everyone has the same basic information.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB North Sea, the **Publicity Centre** is a very innovative, comprehensive tool. It provides the most important channels through which to broadcast accounts of projects to a wide range of media, representatives from all levels of government and other related stakeholders.

    The aim of the publicity centre is to provide projects with further support and guidance on how they can set up their communication strategies, which are the backbone for effective and efficient publicity and dissemination of information about the projects. It also enables the circulation of important results and outcomes, and provides information on what the other projects funded through the programme are doing.

    This programme has also developed **Fact Sheets**, which are available on the programme Website. They are made up of a set of guidance notes with concise but vital information for project partners, and explain key concepts such as: project development, (transnationality, spatial development, infrastructure projects), financial issues (exchange rates, eligible costs, auto-decommitment), partnership (LP principle, Letters of commitment, private-public partnerships), application and approval (detailed cost work plan, technical assessment process), and reporting (preparation costs, sub-partners, indicators, change of budget, audit and control, final report, publicity requirements).

- According to the schedule of the INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area, during 2004 the programme JTS produced, for the MA, a number of publications aimed at showing programme features and good practice, consisting in:

- A **Compendium** describing the Atlantic Area cooperation strategies, a Partner's yearbook, a summary of the 75 projects approved to date, together with 34 sheets containing an overview of each of the Atlantic regions.
- A **specialist's report** on "Maritime safety".

- Also a **booklet** bringing together relevant information from each of the **58 projects** approved during the previous three calls for proposals was launched during 2003. Projects are classed on the basis of the four **programme Priorities**.

The Atlantic Area's Mission for Maritime Safety identified not only ways of allowing projects of this nature to be presented for the current programming period of the INTERREG IIIB programme, but also the conditions under which such projects could be promoted under the policy of territorial cooperation in the next programming period for the 2007-2013 cohesion policy.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE has produced a publication on "**SUDOE's approved projects**" (volume one and two) offering detailed information on the features and objectives of the projects approved under the programme. It has been published in French, Portuguese and Spanish.

- INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC has also published a **guide** giving information on the 136 approved projects in the programme.

- INTERREG IIIB CADSES has produced three editions of the **Project Book** with descriptions of the approved projects. For the first time, the third edition of the CADSES Project Book compiles all 134 projects approved within CADSES.

The aim of this book is to illustrate how the approved projects contribute to the achievements of the objectives of CADSES. In many cases the projects have already achieved their final results. By illustrating them the CADSES Project Book should also serve as reference material for those who wish to develop new partnerships and project ideas in the field of territorial cooperation for the upcoming 2007-2013 programming period.

The projects covered in the book are grouped according to the Priorities and Measures as they were agreed on by the partner States. Each project is presented in its working structure with a complete list of the participating partners, the financial structure and other details, such as project duration. A map indicates the location of the project partners. In addition to this information the book provides descriptions of project activities and the expected results, including those already achieved. The project Website and contact person listed for each project enable readers to deepen their knowledge of the individual projects.

- INTERREG IIIB NWE is publishing a **contacts booklet** and a more detailed **compendium** to emphasise the outputs of the 99 projects approved, complete with maps and photographs, which will be used, amongst other things, to stimulate project applications for the next Programme.

This programme has also produced a "**Fact sheet**" showing basic information on the programme and giving a clear explanation of activities and objectives as well as key messages.

It is designed to be distributed to all project partners; all programme SC, MC, MA and JTS members, politicians and interested journalists.

This document needs to be agreed on by all programme bodies. It is essential for both internal and external communication. It can be updated and amended periodically.

- In INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space Programme, a **booklet** that has been issued recently containing brief and precise information of **all approved projects**. It gives a very lively description emphasising the importance of the projects' transnational approach, what has been improved by the project and also what new challenges / needs emerged. The content is jointly coordinated with the project managers. The format permits the integration of information on additional approved projects and is available in five languages (English, Italian, German, French and Slovenian). The structure of the booklet is based on the Priorities and Measures and follows the programmes' corporate identity.

- The INTERREG IIIC Programme (under coordination of INTERACT Point IIIC Coordination) has issued **two compendiums** of projects approved for funding during the programming period 2000-2006 in the four IIIC zones:

  - The first volume —*Interregional cooperation at work, Operations co-financed by the INTERREG IIIC Programme*— was published in November 2004 and gave a description of all 98 projects that had been approved up to that time.
  - The second volume —*INTERREG IIIC Operations, Interregional Cooperation at work: 2000-2006. The Complete Collection*— was issued in late 2005. It provides an overview of the 264 operations approved for funding under INTERREG IIIC during the programming period 2000-2006*. The publication compiles and delivers insight into the activities carried out by the projects and gives information on outputs and results.

It shows what kind of activities are being covered in order to inform the programme's different target groups (wide audience and INTERREG structures) and to promote interregional cooperation. 10.000 copies of this publication will be distributed throughout the EU, also reaching institutions from Third Countries participating in IIIC operations.

6. Newsletters

Description

A large number of INTERREG programmes periodically produce and issue Newsletters in various formats.

(*) Total projects approved in all four IIIC zones up to August 2005

Experience

Newsletters are a relevant and straightforward instrument used to inform the stakeholders involved about the news, events, and outputs relating to the performance of programmes.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- The INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC JTS has been publishing a half-yearly Newsletter since 2004.

- INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space is also publishing a regular newsletter covering news about the programme and projects as well as upcoming events.

- INTERREG IIIB NWE produces a newsletter every three months, 4000 copies of which are printed in English and mailed to stakeholders. The translations into French, German and Dutch are available alongside the English version on the Website. It comprises three main sections: Programme News, Project News, and Upcoming events.

- INTERREG IIIB SUDOE distributes a quarterly Newsletter in four languages (English, French, Portuguese and Spanish) offering all relevant news. It has a number of fixed sections (editorial, programme news, project news).

- In INTERREG IIIC, since November 2003 a joint Newsletter common to the four zones has been published every four months as a tool for dissemination of programme development.

7. Questionnaires for the assessment of needs

Description

Specific questionnaires to be sent to programme stakeholders have been prepared by some programmes. Once completed, questionnaires provide valuable feedback which allows the external perception of the programme to be identified and various other kinds of information to be obtained.

Experience

Questionnaires are a relevant instrument for detecting programme dysfunctions and bottlenecks. The information they provide allows self-knowledge and performance of the programme to be improved and thus fulfil the expectations of agents involved in programme projects.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- INTERREG IIIB MAC has submitted, among others, a questionnaire to partners of approved projects who attended technical training meetings for starting up and implementing their projects.

- In INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space, a specific section was opened on the Website where programme stakeholders could fill in a specific questionnaire aimed at getting new ideas and inputs for the new Alpine Space Programme 2007 - 2013.

- INTERREG IIIB BSR, IIIB NWE and IIIB CADSES have also used questionnaires for canvassing relevant information.

4. Target: Involving third parties in INTERREG programmes

The following four fields for practice have been identified in the way that third parties are involved in the INTERREG programmes:

1. **Coordination with other EU Third Countries programmes and funding sources**
2. **The participation of some Third Countries as partner States**
3. **Cooperation with the Outermost Regions**
4. **Exchanges with other INTERREG programmes**

1. Coordination with other EU Third Countries programmes and funding sources

Description

The different regulatory framework of INTERREG vis à vis the EU Third Countries programmes (i.e. financing sources for non-EU Member States), as well as divergences in national legislation with regard to preparing and signing the Subsidy contracts, have traditionally been a main obstacle to achieving EU cooperation goals.

The EU has taken its responsibilities to such Third Countries regions seriously and has set up well-funded and far-reaching programmes such as Phare, Tacis, CARDS and INTERREG. However the range and specific character of these programmes have given rise to problems. Geographically they often operate in the same areas, but on both sides of the EU borders, and each has its own particular aims and conditions. Previously they could not cooperate directly with each other. Up until mid-2004 mirroring funds were lacking because the timing and availability of funds were asymmetric.

This was a less than ideal situation. Some project partners have expressed dissatisfaction with the ambiguities and irregularities involved. **Phare** Cross Border Component (CBC) regulation issued in 1998 was a first step forward by introducing joint management structures and joint programming documents, involving regional and local authorities. With the accession of 10 new EU Member States on 1 May 2004, it became a priority all along EU external borders.

The European Commission Communication "Paving the way for a New Neighbourhood Instrument" released in July 2003 finally addressed the question of cooperation along external borders of the EU, for now and for the next programming period 2007-2013. The Commission foresees **two phases**, which should ease and encourage regional cooperation across the external borders.

During the first stage **2004-2006**, it is harmonising the existing aforementioned EU instruments through the creation of Neighbourhood Programmes (NPs). During the second phase **2007-2013**, cooperation will be even further enhanced with increased funding and harmonised instruments by the new ENPI (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument) and IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) to replace INTERREG, Phare, Tacis, MEDA and CARDS across the EU's external borders.

In this framework, some INTERREG III programmes have already displayed different **approaches** for the achievement of a higher level of cooperation with the Third Countries.

Experience

The fact of having Third Country partners participating in an INTERREG project means the necessity of various handicaps (mainly administrative and financial) to be avoided for a successful cooperation by Third Country applicants and partners:

First amongst them, there is a structural weakness in the way local bodies administering national coordination of EU programmes in the Third Countries provide such partners with the accurate **information** about how to participate in a EU cooperation programme.

Cumbersome **administrative procedures** have also been identified as a main obstacle:

- The respective national, regional or local public organisation often means a big hurdle when it comes to obtaining signatures on co-financing declaration or on an undertaking to submit a request for co-financing to other EU funds.

- Different contracts have to be concluded: on the one hand, between the EU partners with the programme MA, and between the Third Country partners with the corresponding European Commission delegation on the other, which results in some delay in starting implementation of the project.

- The financial circuits for the certification of expenditures of Third Country partners are overall considered as being very complex. When other EU funds grant co-financing, these partners must submit their expenses to double verification (EU and national), a system that greatly delays incurring expenditure and carrying out activities.

Additionally, there are problems arising from the **lack of coordination** between the EU-ERDF and the EU-Third Countries cooperation programmes: Setting up a system of coordination between the programme MA and the national bodies in charge of the management of the EU funds in Third Countries for monitoring purposes has also been identified as a big necessity, as well as the reduction of the differences between the procedures and deadlines for allocating ERDF funds and external funds.

In this regard we can take the case of CADSES, a programme that shows as a major achievement in its performance the great improvement in the relevant field of coordination with EU Third Countries programmes such as Phare, Tacis and CARDS.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- In INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC, the participation of partners from the **MEDA** NP (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria) in MEDOCC-approved projects had been merely symbolic in the four call for proposals launched up till 30 September 2005 (excepting Priority 1, where projects are required to include MEDA partners).

MEDA programme is the principal financial instrument of the EU for the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, which includes the new Member States Cyprus and Malta and the following non-EU countries: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey (candidate country) and the Palestine Authority.

In principle, the MEDOCC Programme had envisaged coordination with the MEDA NP in accordance with the financial and technical guidelines laid down by the MEDOCC MC, but this coordination was not implemented until the European Commission and the MEDOCC MA organised a MEDA Conference in Rome on 19 and 20 July 2005 addressed to the MEDOCC EU Member States and the MEDA National Authorities, with representatives coming from both shores of the Mediterranean.

The official document approved by the European Commission after the event (*Participation des pays MEDA au programme MEDOCC: Modalités de mise en oeuvre*) is the first initiative of institutional cooperation with the MEDA programme in the framework of MEDOCC. In this document, the European Commission sets MEDA NP allocations, encouraging the financial participation of MEDA countries in projects submitted during the various calls for proposals. The total MEDA budget for MEDOCC amounts to **EUR 4.5 million**. Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia have EUR 1.5 million each, individually, at their disposal, to be allocated to projects and MEDA administrations management costs. Most of this budget is managed directly by the MEDA authority in the framework of a financial **Convention** to be signed between the latter and the European Commission.

Therefore, MEDA countries' administrations can, if they wish, use part of the budget available in the MEDA-MEDOCC NP for funding:

1. A number of projects already approved during the **second and third call for proposals** that already have MEDA partners. The participation of new MEDA partners and complementary activities can also be supported in projects that have been approved but that do not yet have MEDA partners.
2. Projects submitted and approved by MEDOCC Programme during the **fourth call for proposals** closed by February 2006, in which representatives of the MEDA countries participate in the SC meeting to give their advice on the projects to be selected.

In both cases, the responsibility for choosing projects to be financed from those approved by the MEDOCC SC lies with the respective MEDOCC NC in the MEDA country, taking into consideration which projects best meet the priorities of the MEDA country.

- In the same framework set by the European Commission, INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED envisages that by September 2006 the negotiation process will have been concluded with the European Commission leading to the implementation of MEDA funding received by partners from Third Countries participating in ARCHIMED approved projects.

- INTERREG IIIB BSR puts particular emphasis on the proactive involvement of the non-EU Member States in the implementation of the programme. This is reflected, among other things, by the composition of the MCs and SCs, the tasks and staffing of the JS and the National Sub-Committees.

The overall idea of the NP is to allow joint projects (involving partners from the EU Member States and partners from Russia/Belarus) to submit **one application** that is **jointly assessed and approved** in relation to the project activities to be carried out on the internal (EU) and external (Russia and Belarus) sides of the border. The contracting for the ERDF and for the Tacis parts of the projects is done separately; the projects also report for each part according the ERDF respective Tacis rules.

It should be noted that the external funding (budget allocated from Tacis for Russia and Belarus for IIIA and IIIB programme Priorities) for the years 2004-2006 is only **indicative**. Depending on the performance and the capacity of the Russian and Belarusian partners to absorb the funds, the European Parliament decides on the yearly allocations for each of the NPs each year.

Project partners coming from **Russia and Belarus** are entitled to participate in the INTERREG IIIB BSR projects, but are not eligible to receive ERDF funding. However it is planned that in the next programming period an external fund (ENPI) to be integrated into the INTERREG IIIB BSR system will be used to provide financing for the Russian/Belarusian partners involved in the joint projects.

- In INTERREG IIIB CADSES, coordination with other EU Third Countries cooperation programmes has been a major achievement to be underlined, since this programme managed to combine ERDF, Tacis, Phare and CARDS funds in a joint framework. This allowed project partners from all 18 partner states to be co-financed.

Compared with previous calls, the CADSES fourth call for projects (29 September-7 November 2005) was the first to award grants from four different funds on the basis of a single call, a single application form and a single selection process.

The programme had previously set up an "Enlargement/MTE" Task Force in 2003, and the programme MC had previously agreed a modification in the CADSES CIP with the European Commission so that for the first time project applicants would be allowed to apply for funding from ERDF, CARDS, Phare and Tacis CBC using a single application form. This fourth call thus combined four different financing sources allowing a unified project selection process to be carried out by a joint selection committee approving grants from all four financing instruments.

The financial sources envisaged are:

- **ERDF** for the nine **EU Member States** (Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia).
- **Phare** for the accessing countries **Romania** and **Bulgaria**.
- **CARDS** for the countries of the **west Balkans**: Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania.
- **Tacis CBC** for the eligible regions of **Ukraine** and for **Moldova**.

But there is more behind it. To bridge the gap between EU-internal and EU-external funding both flexibility and good will was needed. The list of stakeholders contributing to this process gives an idea how big the coordination effort was: MA, JTS, 10 external Contracting Authorities, 18

CADSES CPs, 18 National Committees, several services of the EU Commission, and last but not least 18 delegations to the SC.

- In INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space, combining the **ERDF** and **non-EU funds** —namely the Regional Cooperation Funds and the European Development Funds— has become a **major issue**: The management of the existing financial disparity among the three regions of the programme proves to be complicated. Nevertheless, efforts are being taken to coordinate all this different financing.

- INTERREG IIIC Programme is also open to the participation of the Third countries in IIIC operations. No ERDF allocations are however envisaged for such partners, who have to finance their participation through their own funding or other EU funding available for their geographical area (Phare, Tacis…).

    This possibility results in operations with different financing sources, meaning an additional effort in terms of coordination in the framework of certain main stages of the implementation of IIIC operations such as the submission of financial reports, etc.

2. The participation of some Third Countries as partner States

Description

Some countries such as Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Iceland and Norway are invited to participate in some INTERREG programmes as partner States. The forms of participation by partners coming from those countries have been different.

Experience

These third countries are involved in very similar conditions to the EU Member States and their participation in the different INTERREG programmes is very active. Their national specific funding committed to the respective programme helps foster the integration of non-EU Member States participating in EU ERDF-funded programmes.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- **Norwegian partners** can participate in the INTERREG IIIB BSR on equal terms with partners from the EU Member States. In order to enable its partners to actively participate in the INTERREG IIIB BSR financed projects, Norway provided Norwegian National funding to the programme budget. The total support going to Norwegian partners from an EU Member State may not at any stage exceed the Norwegian contribution. From the 5th round onwards, the co-financing from the INTERREG programme for Norwegian partners was reduced from 50% to 30% of the total costs, and has been even further reduced as from later calls.

Norwegian partners do not have to send a separate application form to any Norwegian authorities for approval. Applications that include Norwegian partners are assessed and approved on the same principles as those for EU Member States. The participation of Norwegian partners in INTERREG IIIB BSR projects is handled in the same way as it is for partners from EU Member States when it comes to project reporting and monitoring. The INTERREG IIIB BSR JS is responsible for the administration and payment of Norwegian national funds.

- **Norway** is also contributing financially to the INTERREG IIIC Programme, and authorities from Norway can, therefore, become a partner in operations in all four IIIC Programme zones. However, since Norwegian authorities are not allowed to administer ERDF funds they can only be a **functional LP** in cooperation with another financial LP from an EU Member State in the **North zone**. Norwegian partners are financed from a EUR 2.7 million Norwegian national budget, which is allocated against a 30% co-financing rate. Norwegian applicants do not need to send a separate application to any Norwegian authorities for approval, as their applications are assessed and approved according to the same procedures as those applied to the participating EU Member States. The participation of the Norwegian partners in the INTERREG IIIC Programme operations is handled in the same way as the involvement of the EU Member States when it comes to reporting and monitoring, but the Norwegian funds have to be listed separately. The INTERREG IIIC North JTS is responsible for the administration of Norwegian national funds and transferring them to the PA of the programme zone where the Norwegian partner is a partner in an operation.

  Partners from **Switzerland** can also take part in all four IIIC zones operations, since Swiss national government funds have also been reserved for co-financing their activities. Swiss partners can apply for up to 50% national co-financing to the Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. This application has to be submitted, in parallel with the main application, to one of the four INTERREG IIIC Programme zones. If more than one Swiss partner is involved in an operation, a **Swiss LP** has to be appointed who is responsible for the coordination between the Swiss partners and the federal government.

  After all calls for proposals for the 2000-2006 period had been closed, of the 1 700 000 Swiss francs of national government funds initially reserved, around **1 000 000** have been effectively assigned to Swiss partners in IIIC approved projects.

- Particularly intense Swiss participation in the INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space is possible thanks to the financial contribution of the Swiss Federal Government to the programme, since it has established **unique funds** for INTERREG IIIB programmes such as the Alpine Space.

  These funds co-finance Swiss project partners in a similar way to ERDF funding for EU-Member States, so Swiss projects are in general double-funded, similar to those of the Member States, on one hand through the Federal Government (INTERREG IIIB funds) and, on the other, through regional or local authorities or private bodies. Since the Swiss funds are limited the share was in most cases under 50%.

  This has resulted in a much higher average of funding of projects in Switzerland and in a very high exhaustion rate. At midterm, the allocation rate envisaged for Swiss partners had risen 120%, so funds were more than fully exhausted unless an increase in funding was decided.

3. Cooperation with the Outermost Regions

Description

Some INTERREG IIIB programmes include potential partners from areas of the **Outermost Regions** (ORs):

• INTERREG IIIB MAC Programme, which includes the Macaronesia Area (Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands).

• The Indian Ocean / Réunion Island Programme.

• The INTERREG IIIB Caribbean Space Programme, which integrates the three Départements Français d'Amérique.

The INTERREG IIIB programmes including ORs appear to be **more complex** than those of the EU spaces for several reasons:

• ORs benefit from the ERDF for the first time in 2000-06 through INTERREG.

• The territories are isolated: transport makes trading exchange difficult.

• Governments and economies of Third Countries are more fragile and unstable than those of EU Member States.

• The scale of cooperation differs from that of the EU spaces; ORs cooperate with other States and not other regions.

Considering the specific character of the ORs and the different experiences that they have acquired in carrying out regional development programmes in the ERDF framework, ORs have strengthened mutual cooperation, which had already begun to develop around common issues and themes within the framework of the REGIS programme for the programming period of 1994-1999.

Even if each of the areas has a configuration that is different from the others, all three INTERREG IIIB programmes constitute a privileged framework that makes it possible to improve, on an operational level, the cooperation relationships among the ORs. These regions have a specific budget which makes it possible to finance cooperation activities with each other.

ORs are committed to:

• Jointly establishing the specific criteria for project selection among the ORs.

• Holding annual meetings in order to review this type of cooperation.

• Get informed on projects that are likely to bring together partners from the different areas and transmit the project forms to them.

Experience

The special consideration for the ORs in some INTERREG III Programmes encourages the permanent improvement and smooth functioning of these areas through the exchange of experiences.

The INTERREG IIIB Indian Ocean / Réunion Island Programme benefited from the existence of its Objective 1 OP while reproducing its structure for operations. It has not been necessary to create any specific JTS or committees for this programme, which makes programme implementation easier and more flexible.

On the other hand, it is a challenge to simultaneously manage and coordinate the different types of funds that Réunion Island receives, including those of the INTERREG IIIB programme.

The good programme performance reflects a great effort made by all the stakeholders and their ability to overcome all barriers at the time of implementation.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

• Under INTERREG IIIC, ERDF especially finances partners coming from ORs up to **85%** of the total eligible cost, beyond the 50% and 75% average funding provided to the other regions.

• INTERREG IIIB Indian Ocean / Réunion Island is the first regional cooperation programme specifically assigned by the EU to an OR. This programme adopted a mechanism reproducing that of Objective 1 for its management. The Regional Council of Réunion Island is the programme MA, relying on a JTS represented by a tripartite partnership unit: AGILE (State, Region, Department) which directs the regional Objective 1 OP. Thus the programme did not have to create a specific JTS.

   Although this programme comprises only one EU Member State (France), it calls for the development of relations between ORs and the neighbouring Asia, Caribbean, Pacific countries. Certain factors make this programme more **complex**:

   • The programme is the smallest French INTERREG IIIB programme in terms of budget, even at a time when the region benefits from more important SPD Objective 1 concerning other French regions (EUR 1,5 billion of EU subsidies). This is also the smallest of all European INTERREG III programmes.
   • It is the only INTERREG programme involving a single EU region.

The programme design is guaranteed by the same programme committees as Objective 1:

   • The National Monitoring Committee which meets twice a year.
   • The Local Monitoring Committee which meets on a monthly basis.

4. Exchanges with other INTERREG programmes

Description

A range of contacts within the same strand and also cross-strand have been maintained by some INTERREG programmes with a view of exchanging know-how and making the most of potential synergies to improve their programme performance.

Experience

The exchange of experience and information flow between different INTERREG programmes contributes to improving their performance and to the overall INTERREG added value, avoiding overlapping and double funding of similar activities and projects.

As an example, in the strand C of INTERREG, better coordination and systematic communication implemented between the other INTERREG III programmes (strands A and B) has been identified as a relevant IIIC field for improvement. The risk of double funding has been detected during the IIIC evaluation procedure, since applications that had already been completed or even failed under INTERREG IIIB programmes have applied for IIIC funding.

The New EU Member States also benefit from synergies generated by the experience and background of the previous INTERREG programmes, which helps their future project applicants adapt more quickly and participate in a better way. In the next programming period starting in 2007, the New EU Member states are fully responsible for implementing their own III A programmes. Consequently, it is important to use the transitional phase to build up their capacity to handle INTERREG.

Programme examples (non-exhaustive list)

- The INTERREG IIIB NWE JTS has been maintaining regular informal contacts with colleagues from other INTERREG IIIB and C bodies in order to exchange advice and expertise, mostly with the North Sea, Baltic Sea and Atlantic Area programmes.

  In particular, the NWE JTS has taken advantage of its **proximity** to the INTERREG IIIC West Zone JTS —both located in the same premises— and, apart from sharing frequent informal contacts, if a project idea is found to be more relevant for INTERREG IIIC, the project promoters are referred to the IIIC JTS.

  In 2004 NWE responded to the need for an exchange of experiences in **communication** by setting up the "**Network of Communication Officers**" with INTERACT Point Qualification and Transfer. The network aims to meet and exchange information regularly, as it did in Rome in May 2005.

  More recently, two IIIB-IIIC multi-programme task forces were set up in consultation with INTERACT:

- The "**Lisbon-Gothenburg Task Force**", initiated by the Luxembourg Presidency of the EU with a view to exploring the possible contribution of territorial cooperation to the Lisbon/Gothenburg agenda.
- The "**Task Force on Cooperation Indicators**" already mentioned in another chapter.

Moreover, the NWE JTS actively participates in the multi-programme "**Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation**" coordinated by the INTERREG IIIB North Sea Programme.

- The INTERREG IIIB Atlantic Area MA and JTS have been maintaining several **exchanges and meetings** with other INTERREG IIIB programmes, namely SUDOE, MEDOCC, the Outermost programmes (namely Caribbean Space), NWE, North Sea Region and Northern Periphery, as well as with ESPON and INTERACT. In addition, the programme thus responded to the MTE suggestions in this respect.

- In the INTERREG IIIB Northern Periphery Programme, an essential programme input is the **synergy** with other INTERREG programmes and regional plans. Fields of cooperation have been identified with the following:

  - The Scottish-Nordic Action Plan.
  - INTERREG IIIB North Sea Programme: project complementarities.
  - INTERREG IIIB BSR: project complementarities.
  - INTERREG IIIC.

- INTERREG IIIB BSR and INTERREG IIIC North zone share the **same** MA, PA and the premises of their respective JTS.

Constant exchange of experience between the two parts of the JTS and considerable synergy due to the joint JTS with INTERREG IIIB BSR including two IIIA priorities for the Baltic States were highlighted by the IIIC North programme officials, who consider the experience and tools provided by the INTERREG IIIB programme a valuable input for helping IIIC North develop its own programme structures.

In addition, the INTERREG IIIB BSR management system was used as a **model** for the implementation of two INTERREG IIIA cross-border programmes (Latvia, Estonia, Russia and Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus).

Annex: INTERREG IIIB and IIIC programme features

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB ALPINE SPACE

INTERREG IIIB - Alpine Space

www.alpinespace.org

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 22 631 650
Total programme budget:	EUR 38 107 525

INTERREG IIIB ALPINE SPACE Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	Type of call	Number of project applications submitted	Number of projects approved	Rate of approval
1st call (phase 1) Closed: 15.05.2002	Open	40	8	68%
1st call (phase 2) Closed: 19.12.2002	Open	20	19	40%
2nd call Closed: 25.07.2003	Open	35	8	54%
3rd call Closed: 02.07.2004	Open	30	18	60%
4th call Closed: 23.12.2005	Strategic - Thematically targeted (Two step procedure)	5 (second step only)	4	80%
5th call Closed: 02.05.2006	Thematically targeted Priority 2	3	1	33%
TOTAL	5 calls	133	58	44%

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED

INTERREG IIIB - Archimed

E.U. regions
zones outside the E.U.

Non-E.U. areas are indicative only.
© EuroGeographics Association for the administrative boundaries

www.interreg.gr/en/

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 79 536 208
Total programme budget:	EUR 119 578 164

INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	Type of call	Number of project applications submitted	Number of projects approved	Rate of approval
1st call Closed	Open to all Measures of the three ARCHIMED CIP Priorities	237	72	30%
2nd call Closed	Open to all Measures of the three ARCHIMED CIP Priorities (except Measures 1.4, 3.1 and 3.4)	117	Evaluation ongoing	%
TOTAL	2 calls	354		%

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB ATLANTIC AREA

INTERREG IIIB - Atlantic Area

www.interreg-atlantique.org/

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 119 991 130
Total programme budget:	EUR 205 717 187

INTERREG IIIB ATLANTIC AREA Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	**Type of call**	**Number of project applications submitted**	**Number of projects approved**	**Rate of approval**
1st call (phase 1) Closed: 10.01.2003	Open	27	8	30%
1st call (phase 2) Closed: 07.03.2003	Open + Postponed projects from phase 1	122	35	29%
1st call Closed: 01.11.2003	Postponed projects	31	15	34%
Total 1st call	**Open**	**180**	**58**	**31%**
2nd call Closed: 30.06.2004	**Open Priority B+D**	**56**	**16**	**29%**
3rd call Closed: 30.11.2004	**Risk Prevention**	**1**	**1**	**100%**
4th call Closed: 30.06.2006	**Open Priority A+C**	**16**	**To be decided by SC 23/11/06**	**%**
TOTAL		**237***	**75***	**32%***

* Not including 4th call for proposals

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB BALTIC SEA REGION

INTERREG IIIB – Baltic Sea

www.bsrinterreg.net

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 148 951 278
Total programme budget:	EUR 217 206 684

INTERREG IIIB ARCHIMED Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	**Type of call**	**Number of project applications submitted**	**Number of projects approved**	**Rate of approval**
1st call Closed: 26.10.2001	Open	39	6	15%
2nd call Closed: 28.03.2002	Open	60	21	35%
3rd call Closed: 01.10.2002	Open	37	16	43%
4th call Closed: 14.03.2003	Open	19	6	32%
5th call Closed: 27.02.2004	Open	39	19	49%
6th call Closed: 24.09.2004	Open	32	15	47%
7th call Deadline: 07.03.2005	Targeted to missing themes (Measures: ALL)	46	17	37%
8th call Deadline: 23.09.2005	Targeted (Measures: 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2)	64	20 regular applications 6 upgrades [1]	31%
9th call Deadline: 16.10.2006	Cooperation with Russia and Belarus (TACIS) (Measures: 3.1. - 3.2.)	33	9	27%
TOTAL		**366**	**129**	**35%**

1   Projects that applied only for Tacis funding only, as the ERDF part was approved in 6th and 7th application round (so called '*upgrades*')

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB CADSES

INTERREG IIIB areas - CADSES

www.cadses.net

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 161 239 712
Total programme budget:	EUR 279 032 036

INTERREG IIIB CADSES Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	**Type of call**	**Number of project applications submitted**	**Number of projects approved**	**Rate of approval**
1st call Closed: 31.07.2002	**Open**	**88**	**34**[1]	**38.6%**
2nd call Closed: 14.04.2003	**Open**	**99**	**39**	**39.4%**
1st call, 2nd call projects Closed: 05.11.2004 [2]	Extension call	32	27	84.4%
3rd call Closed: 14.01.2005	**Open**	**134**	**21**	**15.6 %**
4th call Closed: 07.11.2005	**Open**	**238**	**41**	**17.2%**
TOTAL		**559**	**134**	**24%**

1   After the approval, one project "Hydroadria-2A016" has informed the MA on its withdrawal.
2   By the "Extension call" the Programme offered to those partners from the New Member States (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovak Republic, Slovenia), who were already involved in the projects approved in the first and second call, the chance to apply for ERDF funds via their Lead Partners.

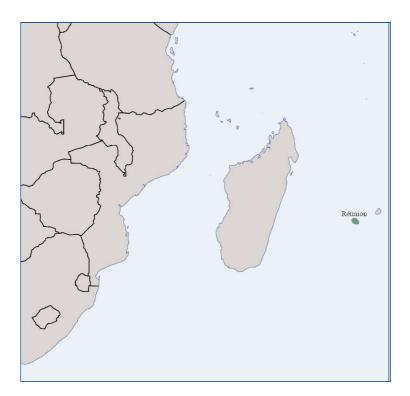## Programme features: INTERREG IIIB CARIBBEAN SPACE

www.interreg-caraibes.org

Programme finances and call for proposals 2000-2006 statistics

Not available

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB INDIAN OCEAN/ RÉUNION ISLAND

www.reunioneurope.org/

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 5 088 792
Total programme budget:	EUR 5 986 815

INTERREG IIIB INTERREG IIIB INDIAN OCEAN/ RÉUNION ISLAND Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	Type of call	Number of project applications submitted	Number of projects approved	Rate of approval
Continuous (Up to: beginning 2007*)	Open	108	101	94%

*   By November 2006, 99% of programme funds has been allocated

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB INTERREG IIIB MADEIRA, AÇORES, CANARIAS
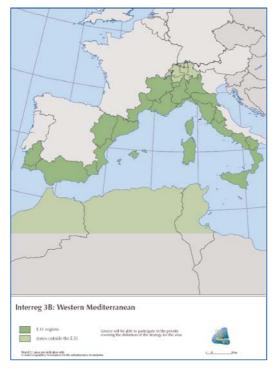

www.interreg-mac.org/

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 145 363 358
Total programme budget:	EUR 171 015 724

INTERREG IIIB MADEIRA, AÇORES, CANARIAS Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	Type of call	Number of project applications submitted	Number of projects approved	Rate of approval
1st call Closed: 13.09.2002	Open	226	86	39.4%
2nd call Closed: 15.12.2003	Open	189	65	34.7%
3rd call Closed: 15.09.2004	Cooperation with third countries	41	20	48.7%
4th call Closed: 30.06.2005	Open	166	41	24.6%
List of reserve established by Management Committee			9 new projects approved from the reserve list 3 projects already approved in the 4th call for proposals were assigned an increased budget	
TOTAL	4 calls	622	221	35.5%

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC

Interreg 3B: Western Mediterranean

www.interreg-medocc.org

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 119 346 457
Total programme budget:	EUR 214 939 595

INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC 2000-2006 Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	Type of call	Number of project applications submitted	Number of projects approved	Rate of approval
1st call (phase 1)	Open	69	14	20.3%
1st call (phase 2)		95	30	31.6%
Total 1st call	Open	164	44	26.8%
2nd call	Open	109	33	30.3%
3rd call	Open	106	26	24.5%
4th call	Open	202	33	16.3%
TOTAL		581	136	23.4%

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB NORTH SEA

INTERREG IIIB - North Sea

E.U. regions

zones outside the E.U.

www.interregnorthsea.org

Programme finances
(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)
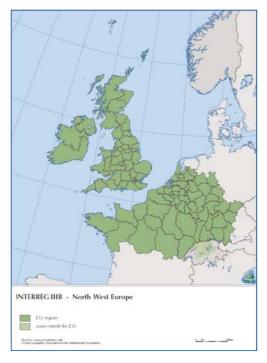
ERDF contribution:	EUR 134 654 463
Total programme budget:	EUR 269 308 926

Call for proposals 2000-2006 statistics:

Not available

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB NORTH WEST EUROPE

INTERREG IIIB - North West Europe

E.U. regions

zones outside the E.U.

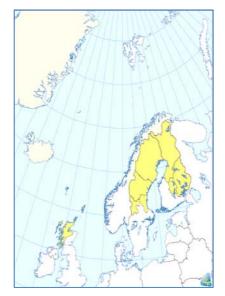www.bsrinterreg.net

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 330 578 096
Total programme budget:	EUR 655 688 562

INTERREG IIIB NORTH WEST EUROPE Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	Type of call	Number of project applications submitted	Number of projects approved	Rate of approval
1st call Closed: July 2002	Open	22	4	18%
2nd call Closed: November 2002	Open	25	10	40%
3rd call and 3rd call bis Closed: June and Sept 2003	Open	37	26	70%
4th call Closed: November 2003	Open	33	18	55%
5th call Closed: June 2004	Open	44	23	52%
6th call Closed: November 2004	Restricted/thematic	27	13 (5 new; 8 extensions)	48%
7th call Closed: November 2005	Restricted/thematic	29	14 (13 new; 1 extension)	48%
8th call Closed: October 2006	Extensions	42	21	50%
TOTAL		259	99*	

*   Not including "extensions", since these mean additional funding for projects already approved

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB NORTHERN PERIPHERY

www.northernperiphery.net

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 22 631 650
Total programme budget:	EUR 38 107 525

INTERREG IIIB NORTHERN PERIPHERY Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	Type of call	Number of project applications submitted	Number of projects approved	Rate of approval
1st call Closed: 31.10.2001	Open	11	2	18%
2nd call Closed: 21.03.2002	Open	7	5	71%
3rd call Closed: 30.09.2002	Open	10	7	70%
4th call Closed: 14.03.2003	Open	8	5	63%
5th call Closed: 15.09.2003	Open	8	4	50%
6th call Closed: 06.03.2004	Open	8	4	50%
7th call Closed: 15.06.2004	Open	10	5	50%
8th call Closed: 28.10.2004	Open	16	9	56%
9th call Closed: 15.03.2005	Thematic	6	4	67%
10th call Closed: 12.09.2005	Thematic	7	3	38%
11th call Closed: 03.03.2006	Thematic	1	0	0%
TOTAL	11 rounds	92	48	52%

Programme features: INTERREG IIIB SOUTH WEST EUROPE

www.interreg-sudoe.org/

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 67 248 575
Total programme budget:	EUR 111 705 142

INTERREG IIIB SUDOE Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	**Type of call**	**Number of project applications submitted**	**Number of projects approved**	**Rate of approval**
1st call 1st phase Closed: 30.06.02 2nd phase Closed: 15.09.02	Open	155	49	32%
Extraordinary call Closed: 29.11.03	Thematically targeted	2	1	50%
2nd call Closed: 31.07.04	Open	165	27	16%
TOTAL		**322**	**77**	**24%**

Programme features: INTERREG IIIC

INTERREG IIIC (2000-2006)

- South
- West
- North
- East

North East South West
INTERREG IIIC

www.interreg3c.net

North zone

NORTH East South West
INTERREG IIIC

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 38 534 287
Total programme budget:	EUR 55 569 071

INTERREG IIIC NORTH ZONE Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	**Type of call**	**Number of project applications submitted**	**Number of projects approved**	**Rate of approval**
1st call Closed: 10.01.03	Open	21	6	29%
2nd call Closed: 26.10.03	Open	29	8	28%
3rd call Closed: 30.04.04	Open	33	10	30%
4th call Closed: 19.11.04	Open	27	11	41%
TOTAL	**4 calls**	**110**	**35**	**32%**

Programme features (2): INTERREG IIIC

INTERREG IIIC (2000-2006)

- South
- West
- North
- East

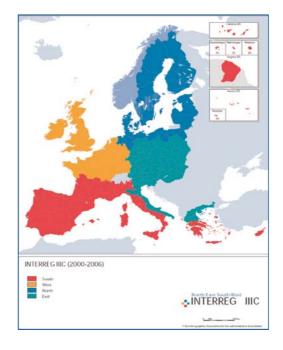www.interreg3c.net

South zone

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 127 631 396
Total programme budget:	EUR 187 041 783

INTERREG IIIC SOUTH ZONE Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	**Type of call**	**Number of project applications submitted**	**Number of projects approved**	**Rate of approval**
1st call Closed: 10.01.2003	Open	93	14	15%
2nd call Closed: 26.09.2003	Open	118	24*	20%
3rd call Closed: 30.04.2004	Open	130	44	35%
Extension call Closed: 08.10.2004	Extension call targeted on RFO	27		
TOTAL	**3 calls**	**368**	**82**	**22%**

*   Initially 25 but one project was de-programmed due to delay on the signature of the Subsidy contract

Programme features (3): INTERREG IIIC

INTERREG IIIC (2000-2006)

- South
- West
- North
- East

North East South West
INTERREG IIIC

www.interreg3c.net

East zone

North **EAST** South West
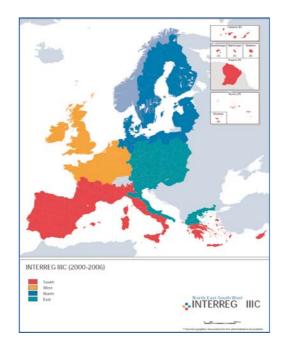INTERREG IIIC

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 78 736 092
Total programme budget:	EUR 117 454 593

INTERREG IIIC EAST ZONE Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	**Type of call**	**Number of project applications submitted**	**Number of projects approved**	**Rate of approval**
1st call Closed: 10.01.03	Open	27	6	22%
2nd call Closed: 26.10.03	Open	64	26	41%
3rd call Closed: 30.04.04	Open	66	25	38%
4th call Closed: 19.11.04	Open	115	18	16%
TOTAL	**4 calls**	**272**	**75**	**28%**

Programme features (4): INTERREG IIIC

INTERREG IIIC (2000-2006)

South
West
North
East

North East South West
INTERREG IIIC

North East South West
INTERREG IIIC

www.interreg3c.net

West zone

North East South WEST
INTERREG IIIC

Programme finances

(Source: European Commission Website as of November 2006)

ERDF contribution:	EUR 96 153 370
Total programme budget:	EUR 146 505 998

INTERREG IIIC WEST ZONE Call for proposals 2000-2006: Statistics				
Call for proposals	Type of call	Number of project applications submitted	Number of projects approved	Rate of approval
1st call Closed: 10.01.2003	Open	18	8	44%
2nd call Closed: 26.09.2003	Open	40	18	45%
3rd call Closed: 30.04.2004	Open	40	18	45%
4th call Closed: 08.10.2004	Open	58	33	57%
5th call Closed: 09.12.2005	Additional funding to running operations	8	6	75%
6th call Closed: 02.06.2006	Additional funding to running operations	6	5	83%
7th call Closed: 01.12.2006	Additional funding to running operations	Ongoing	Ongoing	%
TOTAL	7 calls	170*	77*	52%*

* Excluding 5th, 6th and 7th calls, since these mean additional funding for projects already approved

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