



European Territorial Cooperation

Work Package 11

*Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes
2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional
Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund
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European Territorial Cooperation (Work Package 11)

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Executive Summary

The theme of this case study is “**capacity building**”.

No specific (sub-) priority or project code was used to quantify which projects specifically focused on “capacity building”. Instead, **the focus was to explore the ways which “capacity building” was enhanced in different thematic domains**, such as innovation, environment, administrative capacity etc.

This approach was **informed by stakeholders interviewed for the Spain-Portugal programme**, including the JTS, who clearly stated that the respective priorities contribute *transversally*, in different ways and extents, to developing “capacity building” across the border.

From the outset, it is important to emphasise that the **historical, cultural, socio-economic and territorial context of the “border” between Spain and Portugal poses a number of “barriers” to cooperation** for the CBC programme. A key finding to emerge from the evaluation is that the CBC funding has really had a significant impact in changing the mentality of stakeholders on both sides of the border. **The result has ensured that the “border” is no longer viewed as much as a “barrier”** as it once was but rather as a way in which common issues and challenges can be tackled.

The Spain-Portugal programme has made significant achievements which have had a range of impacts. In particular, stakeholders stressed the ways in which the Spain-Portugal programme had enhanced “capacity building” through **the development of “softer” elements of cooperation such as trust, networking and joint working**. Such qualitative elements of the programme are harder to “measure” and so there is a need for more tailored indicators developed specifically to capture the value of the cross border programmes.

The **value added of the CBC funding** is precisely in its focus to bring a large variety of stakeholders to tackle joint challenges and issues from both sides of the border. A significant number of **organisations have collaborated and worked together, which would not have been possible if it were not for the Spain-Portugal programme**. The programme has also encouraged considerable **learning and knowledge transfer** between stakeholders to enhance “capacity building”.

Without the existence of the Spain-Portugal programme the range of “capacity-building” activities would not have been funded. No other domestic funds, even if they were available, focus on stimulated cross border cooperation.

The **economic crisis**, however, which started in 2008, was cited by a number of stakeholders as creating a **real set of barriers for the implementation of the Spain-Portugal programme**. Furthermore, the crisis created significant challenges for a range of stakeholders to continue to build on the process of “capacity building” in terms of joint working, knowledge sharing etc. In particular, **the lack of domestic match funding means that various organisations may not have sufficient funding** to continue to participate in the new 2014-2020 programme.

Whilst the objective setting process for the Spain-Portugal programme took into account relevant EU policies and guidance, **the main complementarity between**

Interreg and mainstream ERDF stems precisely from their respective remits. Mainstream ERDF focuses on promoting economic development *within* particular regions rather than encouraging cross border working. Conversely, **cross border cooperation allows stakeholders to work with cross border partners.** In this regard, a clear message from the JTS emerged about the positive value of INTERACT in terms of providing intelligence, organising workshops and sharing information.

1. Introduction

This case study is part of the ex-post evaluation of all programmes in the period 2007-2013 aiming at promoting European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), widely known as Interreg, in view of creating synergies and European value-added by eradicating internal borders and capitalizing on the existing assets of the whole territory of the Union. It is one amongst 9 case studies of programmes aiming at cross-border cooperation (Strand A of Interreg).

The purpose of the case study work in the overall evaluation is to deepen the analysis of the contribution of cross-border programmes to co-operation and to economic and social integration between European regions. This Task 2 of the overall evaluation is performed through a field analysis with a variety of programme stakeholders, that complements a first documentary analysis and an interview with Managing Authority previously carried out in Task 1 of the evaluation.

The present case study provides an assessment of the Spain-Portugal programme including its main achievements, the cooperation mechanisms put in place, their effects in terms of reducing barriers to co-operation and taking advantage of common opportunities. It also aims to identify the added value of such programme in comparison with mainstream programmes at play in the same area.

The theme of this case study is "capacity building". From the outset, it is important to note that no specific (sub-) priority or project code was used to quantify which projects specifically focused on "capacity building". Instead, the focus was to explore ways in which "capacity building" was enhanced in different thematic domains, such as innovation, environment, administrative capacity etc.

This approach was informed by stakeholders interviewed for the Spain-Portugal programme, including the JTS, who clearly stated that the respective priorities contribute *transversally*, in different ways and extents, to developing "capacity building" across the border.

The aim of the case study, therefore, is to illustrate the ways in which the Spain-Portugal programme has transversally contributed to improving "capacity building". The challenge is to distinguish between "capacity building" as a policy (with clear objectives and instruments) compared to the development of "capacity building" as a by-product of other policies (learning processes, exchanges, etc.). Moreover, "capacity building" and "institutional building" are not the same thing (the former denotes an improvement in the capabilities of public officials and private individuals, the latter an improvement in the institutional structure or arrangements). There are also differences between administrative and institutional "capacity building".

This report starts in Section 2 with the methodology adopted for the case study. Section 3 is the core of the report. It is structured according to the evaluation questions as mentioned in the terms of reference (the order of the first two questions has been switched compared to the terms of reference). Each sub-section responds to each evaluation question in turn.

- Section 3.1 assesses what has been delivered by the programme and its impacts. It also provides an analysis of resources spent and types of activities supported (evaluation question b).
- Section 3.2 deals with impacts of the programme on cooperation practices in the area (evaluation question a).
- Section 3.3 appraises achievements in terms of learning and capacity and knowledge transferred (evaluation question c).
- Section 3.4 discusses sustainability of cooperation and learning and the extent to which these achievements are dependent on EU funding sources (evaluation question d).
- Section 3.5 discusses the issue whether the projects would have happened without existence of EU funding, if there were no prior CBC programmes (evaluation question e).
- Section 3.6 assesses the quality of the programme monitoring system (evaluation question f).
- Section 3.7 investigates the value-added of the INTERACT programme to support implementation of this programme (evaluation question g).
- Section 3.8 appraises the extent to which the objectives of this programme have been coordinated with those other regional and national programmes active on the same territory (evaluation question h).
- Section 3.9 compares this programme with another programme in the mainstream of Cohesion policy (evaluation question i).

1.1 Main features of the programme

The Spain-Portugal programme is the fourth in a consecutive series of cross-border cooperation programmes between both countries within the framework of the Interreg Community Initiative for the periods 1990-1993, 1994-1999 and 2000-2006. The current period 2007-2013 introduced several changes in the programming, notably (i) the reinforcement of the interventions immaterial component; (ii) the widening of the scope of stakeholders involved; (iii) the intensification of the cooperation in all phases of the development of interventions (design, development and operation, joint management); (iv) the strengthening of joint cooperation structures.

This operational programme covers the longest land border of all cross border programmes funded in the 2007-2013 period (see Figure 1). The programme area covers 1,234 km of border between Spain and Portugal and includes 17 NUTS III eligible areas on both sides of the border (plus 16 NUTS III adjacent areas). The 17 NUTSIII eligible area for the programme makes up just over 10 per cent of the total population of the Iberian Peninsula; just under 10 per cent of total employment and accounts for 7.5 per cent of GNP.

Figure 1. Map of the eligible area



Source: Spain-Portugal Operational Programme, 2007-2013

In terms of governance, Spain and Portugal differ considerably. On the one hand, Spain has a decentralised system in which the regions (autonomous communities) have a considerable range of powers and competencies. Interestingly, however, for the responsibility for the management of EU funds, such as ERDF and Interreg, the respective Spanish central government Ministries in Madrid play a key role, working in partnership with regions and municipalities.

On the other hand, Portugal has a centralised system of governance with the majority of competencies being the responsibility of the respective Ministries in Lisbon. For the purposes, of economic development and the management of EU funds, however, there are five NUTS 2 regions which are key management and implementation bodies. These regions do not have directly elected regional governments like their Spanish counterparts.

The Spain-Portugal programme is the largest CBC programme funded in the 2007-13 period, with just over EUR 267 million of ERDF combined with almost EUR 78 million of domestic match funding making a total of almost EUR 345 million.

The overall objective of the programme is to **develop further and broaden the common border areas of both countries within the priorities set by the new European territorial cooperation objective, notably** (i) improving connectivity and basic infrastructures in the border areas, (ii) improving competitiveness, (iii) promoting employment and enhancing socio-economic and institutional integration in the border regions. A comparison of the objectives of

The programme aims to develop a more intensive approach to territorial integration by focusing interventions on cooperation as well as on the joint management of infrastructures, equipment and services.

The Programme is structured along the following 4 main priorities (Technical assistance excluded; see Table 1):

Priority 1: Cooperation and joint management for the improvement of competitiveness and the promotion of employment

- Improvement of regional resources through the promotion of joint innovation and technological development structures between research centres on both sides of the border.
- Promotion of joint growth and public services improvement through the use of information and communication technologies.
- Promotion of the development of local economies, competitiveness and job creation.
- Promotion and stepping up of links between companies and organisations in order to better explore business opportunities within a cross-border context.

Priority 2: Cooperation and joint management in environment, cultural heritage and risk prevention

- Implementation of coordinated planning and management of environmental infrastructures and services.
- Promotion of joint actions to preserve and enhance the environment as well as natural and cultural resources.

- Support to the joint planning and management of human and material resources on both sides of the border regarding risk prevention and interventions in the event of disasters.

Priority 3: Cooperation and joint management in spatial planning and accessibility

- Planning and coordination of public transport systems on both sides of the border.
- Establishment of joint cross-border logistics and intermodal transport infrastructures.
- Development of joint projects for the shared use of energy resources, in particular renewable energies.

Priority 4: Cooperation and joint management for socio-economic and institutional integration

- Establishment of cooperation mechanisms regarding health and social assistance services improving services to border populations.
- Enhancement of institutional integration through the establishment of permanent cross-border cooperation networks between local authorities, companies, social organisations and public institutions.

**Table 1. Priority Axes in Interreg IVA programme
Spain - Portugal**

Priority Axis	EU Investment	National Public Contribution	Total Public Contribution
Cooperation and joint management for the improvement of competitiveness and the promotion of employment	EUR 104 million	EUR 29 million	EUR 133 million
Cooperation and joint management in environment, cultural heritage and risk prevention	EUR 83 million	EUR 26 million	EUR 109 million
Cooperation and joint management in spatial planning and accessibility	EUR 40 million	EUR 12 million	EUR 52 million
Cooperation and joint management for socio-economic and institutional integration	EUR 27 million	EUR 8 million	EUR 36 million
Technical assistance for the process of cross-border cooperation	EUR 13 million	EUR 2 million	EUR 15 million
Total	EUR 267 million	EUR 78 million	EUR 354 million

Source: DG Regio website.

1.2 The context of the Spain-Portugal programme

When considering what the programme has delivered via co-operation it is vital to bear in mind the various elements of the Spain-Portugal context, as discussed below.

The **historical, cultural and linguistic context** is a key issue. The fact that the "border" has been viewed by stakeholders from both countries as a "barrier" rather than a source of cooperation is important.

Cross border cooperation between Spain and Portugal is a relatively more recent phenomenon compared to other parts of Europe, i.e. the Benelux which dates back to the 1950s and 1960s (Perkmann, 2007). Both Spain and Portugal joined the EC (as it was then) in 1986 and hence the need for greater cross border cooperation was fundamental to encourage economic development.

When discussing the introduction of the early Interreg programmes between Spain and Portugal, Valls (2004:133) argues, that both countries had in common "the presence of authoritarian regimes that abandoned the [respective] border regions" and "the main problems were the lack of cooperation culture among the administrations, different political-administrative provisions in the two countries, and different juridical frames."

Moreover, Valls (2004: 133) argues that "at an institutional level the initial lack of cooperation culture and legal differences were difficulties for the cooperation and integration. The process of cooperation and integration consisted in establishment of protocols, later the establishment of working communities and sectoral commissions."

The key point to stress, therefore, is that developing cross border capacities takes time. There are no "quick fixes" to providing the enabling conditions within which cooperation can take place. This may seem counter intuitive when the Spain-Portugal border, compared to other parts of the EU, has had several funding programmes to encourage cross border cooperation. Importantly, however, stakeholders mentioned this point as being crucial in terms of the need for continued support via EU funds to encourage cross border capacity building between Spain and Portugal.

As a senior Portuguese regional official argued:

"The key question now is whether the Interreg "flame" will continue. The programme was born, it has grown into an adolescent but the funding is still important to make sure growth in cooperation continues. Maybe less money is needed than before but it is still necessary. We need to keep the Interreg "flame" burning and keep institutional links alive, continue the learning, maintain the contacts, trust and cooperation."

The broader point to emerge is that *a priori* it is very difficult to compare the extent to which "borders" across the EU are mature and cross border cooperation is less relevant or needed than previously. The Spain-Portugal programme clearly illustrates the importance of not only the historical but also the temporal dimension and the fact that cross border cooperation is a dynamic process which takes time to develop. Stakeholders involved in furthering the process of collaboration via the Spain-Portugal programme are not aware of the nature of cooperation in other parts of the EU. Their interests are focused locally or regionally on developing joint projects that tackle common problems.

The socio-economic context has an important influence on the need for improved capacity building in the Spain-Portugal programme area. Notably, all of the regions in the programme area were Objective 1 and more recently Convergence regions.

As Valls (2004:135) argues in relation to the Interreg IIIA Spain-Portugal programme, the regions “have the problem of high dependence on agriculture in recession, no diversified and little industry, low productivity and lack of investments from other regions, dependence on government, subsidies, high unemployment, ageing and depopulation, and so on.”

Such issues remained important constraining factors upon the socio-economic development of the regions in the Spain-Portugal programme for the 2007-2013 programming period. Indeed, the economic crisis which started in 2008 arguably posed even more serious socio-economic challenges than ever before. Spain was severely hit by the downturn, as was Portugal.

The **territorial context** is another key dimension of the programme. Significantly, given the extent of the border, which spans the full length of the Iberian Peninsula there are distinct territorial differences between respective zones of territory. This is an important point to bear in mind in relation to the implementation of the Spain-Portugal programme. To manage the respective territorial differences along the border, five main areas are demarcated in the Operational Programme (OP), as well as a pluri-regional category (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Geographical areas demarcated in the Spain-Portugal programme

Cooperation area
Galicia – Norte de Portugal
Norte – Castilla y León
Castilla y León – Centro de Portugal
Centro – Extremadura – Alentejo
Alentejo – Algarve – Andalucía
Pluri-regional

Each of the five main areas listed have contrasting historical, cultural, socio-economic and territorial contexts, which play an important role in shaping the ways in which the “border” is perceived at the local level. For example, the Galicia-Norte de Portugal area is historically closer with similarities in language and culture. This is in contrast with the Centro – Extremadura – Alentejo area in which territorially the Spain and Portugal are “divided” by physical boundaries such as mountains and rivers.

Whilst it is easy to dismiss such points as rather peripheral to the implementation of the programme, almost all of the stakeholders interviewed emphasised the importance of ERDF funding in overcoming such territorial, socio-economic, historic as well as cultural differences along the Spain-Portugal border.

2. Methodology

The team has developed a methodology to address the evaluation questions that takes into account the general finding from Task 1 that the quality of indicators and information in the Operational Programmes and Annual Implementation Reports is not sufficient to robustly assess achievements of the programme. The main way to tackle this challenge lies in collecting additional qualitative information from Managing Authorities, stakeholders in the cross-border region, and from people and organisations involved in projects funded by the programme. Deepening the analysis of the allocation of resources spent and of the types of activities supported with a focus on capacity building helps to create a qualitative “picture” on results achieved by programme, in the form of a narrative rather than of verified indicators.

A field visit of 5 days, from June 8th to 12th 2015, took place in order to collect additional documents and data and to interview Managing Authorities from the programme and from one ERDF programme, as well as some of the main stakeholders involved in programme implementation or as project beneficiaries. Follow up telephone interviews were carried out in October 2015. The selection of projects was carried out prior to the visit through an analysis of the projects database and documentation from the programme.

It is important to note that this case study provides some insights, mainly qualitative, that were gleaned from the semi-structured fieldwork interviews. Given the sheer length of the border, size of the programme as well as budget and time constraints, it was not possible to speak to *all* stakeholders. Consequently, the sample interviewed is not scientifically representative. Having said that, the aim of the fieldwork was to try to “tell the story” about what has been achieved, the impact of the programme etc. The findings discussed here are intended to be illustrative of some of the key dynamics, themes and messages that emerged about the programme from the interviews carried out. The full list of stakeholders interviewed is listed in [Annex 1](#).

3. Answers to the evaluation questions

This section responds to the evaluation questions listed in the introduction. Each sub-section starts with the question copied from the terms of reference and then includes the analysis of the issue treated in the evaluation question.

3.1. Achievements and impacts of the programme

EVALUATION QUESTION

b) What has been delivered via co-operation, and what is its impact (e.g. in terms of R&D and innovation, enhanced administrative capacity, or better environmental status)?

3.1.1. What has been delivered via co-operation?

In total, the programme funded 220 cross-border projects with a total of just over EUR 252 million of ERDF funding. As discussed in the previous section, “capacity building” is viewed as a transversal issue in the Spain-Portugal programme to which all the respective priorities and range of projects have contributed to. This section drills down in more detail to explore the impact of the programme in terms of specific results and outputs.

In Priority 1 – **promoting competitiveness and employment** – 90 projects were funded, which was the largest number out of the four priorities in the Spain-Portugal OP. It made up just over EUR 110 million of the ERDF funding committed to the programme.

Priority 1 actions have benefited 109,251 companies in the eligible programme area, creating 263 jobs. The R&D and Innovation projects supported 6,936 researchers involving 388 organisations. In addition, 137,023 hours of transboundary training were provided to 16,728 individuals.

Critically, it is important to note that of the jobs created, whilst significant in themselves, the majority depend directly on ERDF funding for their existence i.e. they are not new jobs. This is a crucial point that is explored further in Section 3.4 on Sustainability.

The need to focus on strategic projects was a key recommendation from the 2000-06 programming period. In that regard, a flagship Priority 1 project is the Iberian International Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL), in Braga, Portugal (see Box 1 below).

This project has received a high degree of visibility internationally and is a concrete example of “capacity building” in terms of improving the joint research capabilities between Spain and Portugal. As a senior researcher at the INL pointed out:

“The INL was the first large joint cross border investment. Importantly, it was thought of as bi-national entity since its conception. Before its existence researchers from the two sides of the border sometimes bid together for joint research, but this was done in an ad-hoc manner. The INL is unique in Iberian Peninsula level and is also one of the best research centres of its kind in Europe. POCTEP has financed the building of the laboratory. The INL was designed to house over 200 researchers. Currently it counts 130 researchers so there is space to grow. The 130 researchers usually came from other institutions and brought their personal knowledge and skills to enhance the

capacities of the INL. This has created an environment to develop joint new research and innovation.

Box 1: International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL)



The International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL), based in Braga northern Portugal, is the first, and so far the only, fully international research organisation in Europe in the field of nanoscience and nanotechnology. INL is the result of a joint decision of the Governments of Portugal and Spain, taken in November 19, 2005, whereby the two Governments made clear their commitment to a strong cooperation in ambitious science and technology joint ventures for the future.

The INL provides a state-of-the art research environment, promoting an interdisciplinary effort in addressing the major challenges in the emerging areas of Nanobiotechnology, Nanoelectronics, Nanomedicine and Materials Science at Nanoscale. The key research activities are based on existing areas of excellence in Portugal and Spain, as well as on new strategic development areas where PIs (Principal Investigators) will be hired.

INL seeks strong collaborations with industrial partners and academic research institutions, through a vigorous participation in international research programs. INL will further foster the creation of spin-off companies in competitive nanotechnology areas, and will manage a strong program in public outreach.

The INL sets a clear example of a new type of research collaboration between European Union Member States, and fosters international cooperation with other regions, namely North America, Latin America and certain Asian states.

The combination of an appropriate level of available research funds, internationally competitive recruiting, a state-of-the-art research facility, and an innovative and entrepreneurial attitude are the major factors in attracting leading scientists and young and promising researchers to join the founding research team of INL.

The INL was selected as one of the best practice cases to be presented in the first workshop of best practices on the Lisbon Agenda held on October 6, 2006, in Lisbon.

Some pictures of the facilities are provided below:



Source: <http://inl.int/> and www.poctep.eu

In Priority 2 - **environmental protection, risk prevention, heritage protection and valorisation** – 66 projects were funded, which was the second largest number of the four priorities. It constituted almost EUR 83 million of the ERDF funding committed to the programme.

Overall, Priority 2 invested in nearly 490 environmental education campaigns benefiting 287,644 people. It focused more on specialised infrastructure, improving 86 infrastructure projects in waste management, sanitation and water efficiency, involving 363,052 people and 49 natural sites.

In addition, Priority 2 contributed to “capacity building” via the improvement of specialised civil protection services across the border by implementing 62 projects on prevention of catastrophes of natural, technological and social origin, including forest fires, which a total of 1,660,292 people using the services.

Similarly, Priority 2 enhance the historical and cultural heritage of the regions, intervening in 71 tourism and heritage infrastructures, improving 22 tourism routes, and signalling of 30 tourism projects.

In Priority 3 - **spatial planning and improvement of connectivity** – 27 projects were funded, which was the smallest number of the four priorities. It constituted almost EUR 39 million of the ERDF funding committed to the programme.

Whilst Priority 3 focused specifically on transportation, improving 424 km of roads and seven navigation routes there was a range of other outputs were delivered, which enhance “capacity building”. For example, five territorial development observatories; four urban master plans; 20 GIS systems; and eight R+D projects were funded.

In Priority 4 – **socio-economic and institutional integration** – 37 projects were funded which was the third largest number out of the four priorities. It constituted almost EUR 27 million of the ERDF funding committed to the programme.

Notably, Priority 4 was specifically focused on improving institutional capacity and complementarities across the programme area. In this regard, a total of 25 cooperation networks were established, which involved a total of 532,668 users from municipal, private and third sector stakeholders.

Furthermore, a range of other outcomes were achieved including 59 social projects, 38 social and labour inclusion actions, 121 actions for the promotion of equal opportunities and 72 professional exchange initiatives involving a total of 4,122 persons.

An important example of collaboration carried out in from Priority 4 is shown in Box 2 below. As discussed earlier, this is illustrative of one of the dimensions of the contributions of the programme to the transversal theme “capacity building”. The aim of is to improve collaboration between municipalities and other stakeholders for the effective management of the area surrounding Lake Alqueva. This is an area of outstanding natural beauty which spans the Spain-Portugal border.

This is a good example of increased administrative capacity and collaboration amongst stakeholders from either side of the border, particularly in dealing with common issues related to managing the environment on either side of the border. Moreover, this work has facilitated improvements in institutional arrangements between stakeholders from municipalities and other stakeholders across the border.

The interesting point to bear in mind is that over 30 local stakeholders attended the focus group interview that was carried out as part of the evaluation. This really highlighted the extent of the commitment of stakeholders to the Spain-Portugal programme. As emphasised by a number of stakeholders during the focus group with the ATMTGLA:

"The fact that Interreg has longer-term objectives enables the process of establishing cooperation, which takes time. This happened in the case of the members of ATMTGLA. The communities on either sides of the border had very limited contact, and then the cooperation between Portugal and Spain started in 1993, at the time of the development of the Lake. Through the years, since then, and partly thanks to the Interreg meetings, contacts and coordination have developed to what there is now."

Box 2: Border Association of Municipalities of the Great Lake of ALQUEVA (ATMTGLA)

The Cross-Border Association of Municipalities of the Lands of the Great Lake Alqueva (ATMTGLA) was established in 2005 by the municipalities of Alandroal, Moura Mourão Portel, Reguengos de Monsaraz, Serpa, Vidigueira (since 26/04/2012 renounced membership) and the Spanish Municipalities of Alconchel, Cheles, Olivenza and Villanueva del Fresno. It is endowed with legal personality and takes the form of an association of municipalities for specific purposes, in accordance with and pursuant to Law 11/2003 of May 13 and other Portuguese legislation.

The ATMTGLA focuses on the common management of public facilities and services and the development of actions to enable it to benefit from the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Spain-Portugal 2007 - 2013 (POCTEP), or other instruments that replace and may, alternatively, provide services to one or more affiliated municipalities, in the above fields.

The ATMTGLA objectives are:

The execution of works of public interest, especially related to the use of the potentials of the artificial lakes of the Alqueva and Pedrógão, in order to: combat pollution, protect water levels, the recovery and conservation of historical and natural heritage and urban rehabilitation;

The Joint Management of public facilities and services; the development of projects and actions to enable it to benefit from the ERDF and CBC programmes; provide services, conduct studies and draw up plans, in the areas mentioned; promote information and dissemination activities.

The ATMTGLA is involved in two CBC strategic projects entitled PEGLA and ADLA which encourage the development of the Lake Alqueva area. The details of the PEGLA project is provided below:

POCTEP 2007-2013: Strategic Projects
Cooperation Area Centro – Extremadura - Alentejo

PEGLA - Development of the territory "Terras do Grande Lago do Alqueva" (lands of the great Alqueva lake)

Strategic, harmonious and equitable development of the adjacent territory of both sides of the border, **promoting** the area of "Alqueva Lake".

Mainly, promoting **tourism** and exploring the potentialities of **rural areas**.

Total Cost: 5.993.591€
ERDF: 4.495.193€

16 Beneficiaries:
Regional and Local Administration
National Authorities

The poster includes a map of the Alqueva lake area, showing the border between Portugal and Spain. It also features several small photographs of the lake and surrounding landscape. The bottom of the poster has logos for the European Union, the Portuguese Government, and the Extremadura Regional Government, along with the year 2013.

Source: <http://lagoalqueva.eu/ATMTGLA/> and www.poctep.eu

3.1.2. What is the impact of the programme?

The funding provided by the Spain-Portugal programme was crucial in order to help to facilitate “capacity building” to try to remove and ameliorate the challenges facing different areas along the “border”. The qualitative impact of the programme in this regard is a key element, which should not be underestimated.

A key point that emerged from the stakeholders regarding the impact of the CBC programme related to the ways in which the funding had really helped to change mentalities on both sides of the “border”. This links firmly to the fact that both Spain and Portugal did not really cooperate greatly prior to their accession to the (then) EC.

A senior Portuguese public sector official stated that:

“The key impact of the programme has been to help change mentalities. There has really been a cultural shift which has helped to promote more cross border cooperation. A good example is that in the 1970s, people in Badajoz [the main Spanish border town in Extremadura] did not speak Portuguese; now most people do! Institutions across the border now know each other much better and we all work together. Institutional cooperation is really very important”

In short, the Spain-Portugal programme has made a range of significant achievements which have had a range of impacts. The key theme to emerge from the fieldwork was that the CBC funding had really had a significant impact in changing the mentality of stakeholders on both sides of the border. Stakeholders stressed the important role that this plays in shaping the way in which the Spain-Portugal programme is perceived as well as implemented.

3.2. Impacts of the programme on cooperation

EVALUATION QUESTION

a) To what extent has co-operation been enhanced? What barriers to co-operation have been removed? What is the evidence for the contribution of Interreg programmes?

3.2.1 To what extent has co-operation been enhanced?

Consecutive cross border ERDF funded programmes have created a dynamic of “capacity building”, which has facilitated greater cooperation between stakeholders in a range of thematic areas, including innovation, environmental issues and administration.

The result is that the “border” is no longer viewed as a “barrier” as it was once was but rather a way in which common issues and challenges can be tackled. The 2007-2013 programme, in particular, has enhanced “capacity building” further, in a number of ways.

First, cooperation has been enhanced in each of the five areas demarcated in the OP, as well as a pluri-regional category. As mentioned, the programme covers the longest land border in the EU and as such there is considerable territorial diversity.

A sensible approach was adopted by the JTS in order to manage this diversity. The sheer length of the border means that it would be very difficult to have a “one-size-fits-all” approach to implementing the programme. Instead, it is managed according to

five demarcated areas along the border. This makes sense and is organised in such a way to enhance cooperation in each of the respective areas with projects being delivered to meet the territorial diversity. This is a good example of administrative “capacity building” being enhanced by the programme as a result of the need for stakeholders work together along the different areas of the border.

Second, stakeholders stressed the ways in which the Spain-Portugal programme had enhanced cooperation through the development of “softer” elements of cooperation such as trust, networking and joint working has been a key development. This is a good example of the ways in which the programme has enhanced “capacity building” via the fostering of processes of incremental learning, the exchange of good practice and the development of shared approaches to developing joint projects.

A Spanish regional government official involved in a renewable energy project argued that:

“The Interreg funding has played a real catalytic role. It has allowed us to create networks of trust, develop institutional capacity and ultimately work together with partners from across the border. Renewable energy is a common issue for partners on both sides and we have developed an excellent partnership to try to tackle the challenges”.

Third, the 2007-2013 period, has, according to stakeholders, contributed to a much greater understanding and knowledge of the governance structures on either side of the border. This is an example of the improvement in administrative “capacity building” that the programme has helped to foster, which has been crucial in helping to break down the perception of the border as a “barrier” between the two countries. As a focus group participant explained:

“The regions along the border vary greatly. There is a more developed relationship between the Norte (PT) and Galicia (ES), than between say Algarve (PT) and Andalusia (ES). The institutional cooperation is currently very rooted, and there is a broad range of mutual knowledge of the governance systems of each side of the border.

Fourth, there is recognition amongst stakeholders involved in the programme that “capacity building” has been enhanced and built on cooperation between both institutions and people. This is a key point that stakeholders emphasised as being an important impact of the programme.

This has helped to develop trust and enhanced networking, particularly between public officials in a range of institutions across the border. The role of personal relationships in helping to drive cooperation is an important dimension that emerged from the interviews with stakeholders. Furthermore, this is a good example of the qualitative and transversal dimension of capacity building that has been generated. As a coordinator of a cooperation project in the field of agriculture stated:

“People are key assets in cooperation. Without people, cooperation would not take place. It is all about personal relationships, creating capacity and the ability to develop networks. This has helped to change the mentality of stakeholders from both sides of the border. This was even more important in the primary sector”.

3.2.2 What barriers to co-operation have been removed?

The historical, cultural, socio-economic and territorial context of the “border” between Spain and Portugal pose a number of barriers to cooperation for the programme. These are not straightforward to overcome.

First, stakeholders discussed the administrative, legal and governance differences between the two countries which place constraints, within which the programme has to operate. The key point, however, as stakeholders stressed, is that cooperation has helped to ameliorate some of the impacts of these differences.

As a Portuguese regional government official stated:

“There are numerous barriers to overcome; different administrative and judicial structures for one. Spain has 17 regions and a good degree of decentralisation. In Portugal we have very different governance arrangements with quite a centralised structure. For us to work together, therefore, we need to get the permission and support from three central government Ministries in Portugal. Clearly, this takes more time, for example, when compared to the Regional Government of Extremadura. For this reason, the funding to enhance institutional capacity building has been vital.”

Another stakeholder from a Portuguese Agrarian Institute made a similar point, providing a very clear example of the barriers to enhanced cooperation:

“The legal barriers are difficult to overcome. A good example is the postal service. If we need to send a letter to Spain across the border, which is only 15km, it has to go first to Lisbon and then back across the border. Thanks to the cooperation that has been created, this situation is now better.”

Here it is important to acknowledge the “indirect” impacts and role of the Spain-Portugal programme. In other words, whilst the programme did not directly fund postal service provision, the fact that there is enhanced collaboration and cross border exchange ensures that such issues have started to be addressed. A key point, therefore, is to acknowledge such “spin offs” from the programme in terms of raising the awareness of such cross border issues in order to be able to try to tackle them.

Second, the economic crisis, which started in 2008, was cited by a number of stakeholders as creating a real set of barriers for the implementation of the Spain-Portugal programme. Importantly, the CBC funding was mentioned as being crucial to ensuring the continuation of funding, in the face of domestic spending cuts, which for several organisations and institutes meant survival rather than closure.

A Portuguese regional government official argued that:

“The crisis created a series of barriers, particularly on the Portuguese side. The crisis has increased social problems on both sides of the border. However, municipalities have faced considerable cuts in their budgets which means that they are less able to spend money to tackle the problems. In Portugal this meant that it was more difficult to get the match funding to be involved in the Spain-Portugal programme.”

Critically, this raises a key issue about the role of CBC funds, which seemingly helped to fill the “funding gap” which resulted from austerity cuts following the recession. This is not to say that the CBC funds were mis-managed but rather that the funding took on another role in helping to insulate several organisations involved in the programme to continue to function in difficult external circumstances.

The longevity of the ERDF funding cycle apparently provided stability and allowed project objectives to be delivered in spite of changes in domestic budgets. On the other hand, the lack of available public funding meant that it was harder for organisations to find the budgets in order to participate in programme activities. This was in spite of the fact that socio-economic challenges increased due to the recession.

3.2.3 What is the evidence for the contribution of Interreg programmes?

As discussed, the Spain-Portugal programme contributes *transversally* to enhancing “capacity building” in a number of different but interrelated dimensions.

The evidence for this stems from the range of “soft” achievements in terms of cross-border engagement, collaboration and the development of networks.

For example, a focus group participant argued that the evidence of the contribution of the programme is in the development of joint initiatives, networks and collaboration in key thematic areas.

“Starting in POCTEP III [2007-2013 programme], there have been common objectives. There are several eurocities along the border, with significant joint efforts and common development, provision of services, and tourism. Examples are: Valença (PT)-Tuy (ES), Chaves (PT)-Verín (ES) and Elvas (PT)-Badajoz (ES).

Furthermore, a good example of the contribution of the programme to other dimensions of “capacity building” is the Chaves-Verín Eurocity project (see Box 3 below), which was recognised by DG Regional Policy in its RegioStars Awards 2015 winning the Citystar award.

The Chaves-Verín Eurocity is a cross-border conurbation located on the border between North Portugal and the Autonomous Spanish Community of Galicia, formed by the cities of Chaves (42 000 inhabitants) and Verín (15 000 inhabitants). The key objectives of this project were to provide the Eurocity with a structure that ensures efficient cooperation, involve citizens to encourage coexistence, create euro citizenship, and boost the economy and sustainable development of the territory.

Both cities worked together on a wide range of projects, such as offering of joint services and joint municipality facilities, a cross-border office for youth, joint cultural events, commerce, sports, leisure, tourism and promotion of entrepreneurship. In total, 3,500 people participated in youth exchanges and 40,000 people in sports, extracurricular and cultural events. About 50 cross-border micro-initiatives were supported. In short, the project demonstrated that institutional, economic, social, cultural and environmental integration of two cities is possible across borders.

Box 3: Chaves-Verín Eurocity: an instrument of economic and social development*

Chaves-Verín Eurocity is a pioneering project in the Iberian Peninsula and Europe, initiating a new cooperation model which goes beyond institutional collaboration, and the simple sum of cooperation programmes and initiatives, enhancing the assumption that it is possible to adopt a new model of European citizenship.

The constitution of the Chaves-Verín Eurocity is based on the promotion of scale economies, the use of existing synergies, enabling the region to generate added value and to create conditions for its local absorption and, all this is possible by setting common policies and strategies to be adopted in common in the most diverse areas: culture, tourism, trade, education, R&D, social policies...

However, the success of the implementation of such policies and strategies require the involvement and full acceptance of the community, active stakeholders in the implementation of the Chaves-Verín Eurocity, a project created with the citizens for citizens which aims to be a fundamental mechanism for improving the quality of life in all territory. Consequently, this development, which is both sustainable and integrated, covers all social, economic and environmental scenarios.

* This project was amongst the winners of the RegioStars Awards 2015

Source : <http://en.eurociudadechavesverin.eu/>

3.3. Impacts on learning, knowledge transfer and capacity building

EVALUATION QUESTION

c) What learning has been generated during the implementation of the CBC programme? Who has benefited? From which stakeholders to which other stakeholders has knowledge and capacity been transferred?

3.3.1 What learning has been generated during the implementation of the CBC programme?

Learning and knowledge transfer was a key element cited by stakeholders as an important element of the programme in terms of the different dimensions of "capacity building". There are different elements to learning at the project and programme levels as well as in terms of the content and process of cooperation.

First, stakeholders involved in project management have been able to "learn" through carrying out projects in different programming periods. This is an example of the enhanced administrative "capacity building", which involves being able to execute projects more efficiently as well as developing ways of tackling the various barriers to cooperation that exist, whether they are legal, administrative or financial.

As a project manager explained:

"We have definitely learnt as an organisation about how to manage CBC projects. In the beginning it took a lot more time to coordinate a project with all the idiosyncrasies of dealing with ERDF such as the audit, the complex processes. Over time, we have been able as an organization, to identify ways of effectively reducing the bureaucracy".

Second, another level of the learning is on the content and ambition of the programme in terms of the quality of cooperation at the programme level. This is an example of enhanced “capacity building” at the institutional level.

In this regard, the focus is on improvement and innovation in order to make sure that the CBC funding continues to improve the quality and density of collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders. As mentioned, the Spain-Portugal programme has gone through several periods; as a senior official in POCTEP, the JTS, pointed out:

“We are keen that with each programme we do not want to do more of the same and simply add to it. The key thing is learning from previous periods to innovate and build up more and deeper value added. We aim to capitalise on what has been done by the programme before. We have developed a large network of cooperation and it is important to continue to build on that. We have lots of interest from other programmes about our work and also from further afield, including Brazil and Argentina.”

Third, another level of learning focuses upon the role of the Spain-Portugal programme with a view to the future period in order to continue the work already carried out. A number of stakeholders emphasised the point that cross border cooperation is still relatively young and that the dynamic process of collaboration needs to continue to develop moving forward.

Again this raises the point that cross border cooperation takes considerable time to develop. In other words, cross border collaboration is a dynamic process rather than an “event”. This means that it is ongoing, contingent and it is rather difficult to reach a point in which the collaboration is complete i.e. it is constantly evolving.

In spite of the fact that the Spain-Portugal has had several iterations, stakeholders consider that the process of cross border collaboration is still in need of nurturing and further development. Learning is a key element of that and particularly to develop ways of collaborating with less funding available.

As a senior Portuguese regional official argued:

“The early Interreg programmes were pioneering as they helped to make cooperation possible and build the foundations for future cooperation. Interreg III, 2000-2006, was when the density of cooperation really kick-started. Almost a billion Euros was spent by the programme, which really provided resources, including for infrastructure, to further enhance cooperation. The 2007-13 programme had less money, just over EUR 300 million and the focus was more on innovation, R&D and environmental priorities. Still the level of cooperation intensified.”

3.3.2 Who has benefited?

Given that “capacity building” is transversal across the main programme priorities, it is apparent that a significant number of stakeholders, from a range of domains, have gained from being involved in the Spain-Portugal programme.

The main beneficiaries include universities and research institutes, particularly in Priority 1 with its focus on research and innovation. Environmental groups and associations, third sector as well as local, provincial and regional governments are also

key beneficiaries of the programme. The involvement of private sector partners, however, was problematic both because of eligibility rules and the onset of the economic crisis.

In this regard, a particular theme to emerge was the importance of the programme during the crisis in order to ensure that a number of organisations actually survived and were able to continue to operate. As a project coordinator based in Spain argued:

"Without Interreg none of this would have happened. Our project was crucial to insulate the cooperation during the crisis. It has allowed partners to develop a common platform and network in order to work together for the good of the territory. This has allowed us to concentrate our efforts rather than duplicating work and experiments on either side of the border. After all the environmental, ecological and rural issues are the same on either side of the border. Ultimately the project has opened lots of doors, allowed us to share capacities and help to reduce duplication."

Another important dimension about beneficiaries relates to the territorial breakdown of projects across the length of the border. This is important because it illustrates the numbers of projects that were carried out in the different areas along the border.

As shown in Table 3 below, the "Galicia-Norte de Portugal" area had the most projects, which reflects the fact that this area of the border has traditionally been the closest in terms of cooperation. Linguistically, culturally as well as socio-economically, the areas have had close links for generations. Clearly, the programme has been able to build on and enhance that level of collaboration.

Table 3: Number of projects per demarcated geographical area in the Spain-Portugal programme

Cooperation area	Number of projects	ERDF committed (EUR million)
Galicia – Norte de Portugal	73	72
Norte – Castilla y León	26	24
Castilla y León – Centro de Portugal	23	16
Centro – Extremadura – Alentejo	37	69
Alentejo – Algarve – Andalucía	33	30
Pluri-regional	28	51
Total	220	262

Source: poctep.eu

3.3.3. From which stakeholders to which other stakeholders has knowledge and capacity been transferred?

As mentioned in Section 3.3.1, the learning and knowledge transfer has taken place at multiple levels. Undoubtedly, the transfer of knowledge has been significant amongst a range of public sector organisations on both sides of the border.

A senior Portuguese public sector official stated that:

"The programme has helped to improve institutional capacity and bring people together. This has been a very important achievement. For example, a number of sectoral commissions have been created looking at the economy, social issues, culture and health. These have created concrete action plans to deal with concrete issues. Thanks to a joint health protocol between Alentejo and Extremadura, pregnant Portuguese women from Alentejo could give birth in Badajoz. This is just one example where cooperation has really helped to benefit lives".

Another aspect involves the transfer and exchange of specific knowledge and in order to tackle common cross border issues and problems. As mentioned, parts of the border are rather peripheral and as such the challenges of depopulation, fragile socio-economic contexts, promoting tourism, improving the competitiveness of agriculture are examples of these. The key point is that such challenges are common on both sides of the border and so developing joint solutions is particularly relevant.

As a researcher in a Portuguese Agrarian Institute argued:

"We gained good experience from our involvement in previous Interreg projects. This was crucial for our own learning and development. Importantly, the projects have helped us to tackle common issues and share our learning and knowledge on key issues, such as depopulation. We are a marginal, peripheral region and face a number of challenges including depopulation but also we are suffering a "brain drain" with young educated people moving away, plus with the crisis there is less public money around. The funding has helped to stimulate the cooperation and do research on important cross border issues".

In this regard, a key added value of the programme stems from the ability to cooperate and share scientific knowledge and expertise between organisations and research institutes from both sides of the border. Notably, peripherality is not specific to a particular territory and the issues are common across administrative and border demarcations.

Crucially, the CBC funding has brought expertise together from different scientific domains from the two countries in order to develop joint solutions to such common problems. Whilst this will not solve issues of peripherality or depopulation completely, the pooling of ideas, knowledge and scientific expertise across the border can contribute to the development of new and innovative perspectives.

3.4. Sustainability of learning and cooperation

EVALUATION QUESTION

**d) What is the likely future for such learning mechanisms and co-operation?
Will its sustainability depend on future EU financing?**

3.4.1. What is the likely future for such learning mechanisms and co-operation?

As discussed, the Spain-Portugal has improved “capacity building” in a range of different areas; one of the most notable being the impact on cross border learning mechanisms. The learning generated from joint working to tackle common issues; the sharing of expertise between administrations; and the development of trust and knowledge sharing. These are all important elements that the programme has helped to nurture and hence improve cross border cooperation.

On the one hand, this dynamic of cross border learning is a process which has developed over several programming periods and the future of such learning mechanisms and cooperation will mainly depend of the capacities of the beneficiaries, mainly public institutions, to use, maintain, update and enlarge all tools and capacities gained.

Importantly, a good proportion of the tools developed in the 2007-13 Spain-Portugal programme such as networks, platforms, joint working groups, contacts within and between public authorities and other stakeholders will be used for formulating projects under the 2014-2020 programme.

On the other hand, the sustainability of such learning mechanisms cannot be guaranteed indefinitely. This is because whilst networking has a formal aspect, carried out for example between institutions, there is also the informal dimension that will endure only for as long as particular staff remain involved. Changes in personnel and staff turnover could impact the nature of learning and knowledge sharing already generated.

In addition, institutional reforms and changes in the field of local economic development, for example, as a result of continued austerity measures, may lead to a loss of capacity and knowledge since particular stakeholders and their staff may be less involved in cross border working compared to before.

A number of stakeholders emphasised the fragility and incomplete nature of the cross border cooperation process in Spain and Portugal. For this reason, the lack of domestic match funding to be able to continue to be involved in the future Spain-Portugal programme is a concern and one which would mean the loss of some previously active partners. A Spanish regional government official stressed that:

“A real problem for us is the fact that there is a gap in funding from the current project finishing and the new 2014-2020 one starting. How do we continue to fund project outputs, which have had a real impact, such as the website, when the funding runs out? The danger is that all the good work that we have done on the project will be lost. The gap in funding really creates problems.”

3.4.2. Will its sustainability depend on future EU financing?

Several stakeholders emphasised that sustainability is an important issue. Whilst the new CBC programme for 2014-2020 is being planned, the challenge stems mainly from the domestic context of austerity and the availability of adequate funds to continue to be involved. The lack of domestic funding means that various organisations do not have the funding to continue to operate or have lost a significant number of staff.

The fact is that the cross border cooperation between Spain and Portugal has been heavily reliant on public funding via CBC programmes. Whilst this has ensured certain barriers to cooperation have been removed and capacity building has been enhanced, a significant number of stakeholders have become dependent on the funding. This, however, is not completely sustainable, especially in the current climate of public sector austerity in the two countries. Whilst it is important to “wean” some organisations off this reliance on public funding, the specific focus, remit and nature of the cross border collaboration projects requires public funding in order to fill the “market failure” that inevitably exists.

3.5. Significance of Interreg programme

EVALUATION QUESTION

e) If there were no prior CBC programmes, would the projects co-financed through the programme have happened without the existence of EU funding?

A clear message emerged from the stakeholders interviewed on this point about the fact that without the CBC programmes, the projects would not have existed. Put simply, the reality is that there are actually no alternatives to funding cross border collaboration. The CBC programmes are really “the only game in town”.

The historical, institutional, political and economic reality of the Spain-Portugal “border” means that cooperation has not been well-established and the flow of goods, people, knowledge etc has been rather restricted. In the absence of such economic linkages and cooperation, the advent of the CBC funding in the 1990s and successive programmes have been important in nurturing cross border cooperation between Spain and Portugal.

As a Spanish project coordinator argued:

“The Interreg funding was crucial to create our project which would have not happened otherwise. The border still exists and cooperation still needs to continue. Previously Portugal was far away; there were lots of barriers - institutional, cultural, linguistic, and territorial but lots of those have been overcome. Interreg is very important in this region and has been crucial to encouraging development. The key thing is that we are able to continue using the funding to promote cooperation.”

Importantly, there are several characteristics of the Spain-Portugal programme compared to domestic policy.

First, the CBC programme provides additional funding in a context of very tight budget constraints in both the Spanish and Portuguese contexts. This funding allows the development of joint cross border projects, which would not have otherwise been funded. For example, a senior researcher in the INL laboratory stated that:

"The cross border programme was paramount for the existence of the laboratory. Its intervention logic promotes joint action which regional and/or national Operational Programmes do not promote."

Second, the involvement of several partners from both sides of the border is crucial in encouraging the exchange of ideas, expertise, learning as well as helps to breakdown barriers, such as language and culture. The opportunity to work cross border was perceived by all stakeholders as a clear added value and a means of reinforcing "capacity building."

Third, the CBC programme has ensured that dissemination, knowledge-sharing, the development of common tools (e.g. websites, training manuals) are mainstreamed in the project deliverables. This has been a key added value of the Spain-Portugal programme, which domestic funding (even if it was available) would not have created in the same way.

3.6. Quality of monitoring system

EVALUATION QUESTION

f) Which programmes have the best monitoring systems and which have the worst?

At the programme level, the management is really quite effective thanks mainly to a dedicated and experienced team in the JTS. In spite of challenging external circumstances, especially in terms of the lack of match funding for beneficiaries, the programme reached its respective targets and delivered on its objectives. This is not a trivial task given that Spain-Portugal is the largest programme in terms of budget as well as length of border.

At the project level, however, the fact is that the indicators are viewed by the beneficiaries interviewed as not being as completely appropriate as they could be. This means that it is often not easy for individual projects to apply indicators to capture the full scope of the activities carried out.

As a focus group member mentioned:

"The indicators that have to be used in the reports are not adapted to the projects being implemented. Instead, we propose that specific indicators be developed to be applied to the cross border programmes and their respective projects."

The key point to emerge, therefore, was the need for more tailored indicators developed specifically to capture the nature and value of the cross border programme.

Another layer of complexity related to the monitoring system, as a senior official from a Portuguese regional government pointed out:

"The monitoring of the CBC programme is not a trivial task. One reason is that data are not obtained in the same way in Portugal and in Spain. Thus, it is harder to get the same information, especially at NUTS3 level because there are no common sources available. Another point is that the data is managed and centralised in Lisbon. This adds another layer of complexity".

Another aspect of the monitoring system to emerge was the bureaucracy involved in managing the projects. In particular, an issue about delays in receiving claims was highlighted. As a focus group member argued:

"The major constraint in Interreg procedures is the payments process. The fact that payments from the EU are only possible against proof of disbursement instead of invoices, and the fact that those payments take time to arrive, limit the swift implementation of the projects as the implementing entities have limited available funds."

3.7. Value-added of INTERACT

EVALUATION QUESTION

g) What has been the added value of the INTERACT programme to the effective functioning of the CBC programme?

Given that project beneficiaries interviewed did not engage with INTERACT, the main source of feedback is from the JTS.

The JTS was on the whole positive about the role of INTERACT. The key point to bear in mind is that the Spain-Portugal programme has gone through several rounds of funding so it is well established in terms of the relevant EU wide networks and associations. Moreover, given the size of the programme, there are a number of established links between INTERACT and the Spain-Portugal programme management team in the JTS. For example the JTS Director has very good links and is often asked to contribute to seminars hosted by INTERACT. The challenge for INTERACT is to continue to be able to provide a relevant service (via seminars, workshops, documentation etc.) to well established programmes such as the Spain-Portugal programme, which have different information requirements and needs compared to nascent programmes in other parts of the EU.

The clear message about the value of INTERACT, as the quote from a senior official illustrates:

"Interact has been useful for us. We have lots of collaboration with Interact. The key point is that not all the programmes are the same – some are more advanced than others, some have longer histories than others. There is always a need for practical, up-to-date information."

3.8. Coordination with national and regional programmes

EVALUATION QUESTION

h) To what extent were the programme objectives coordinated with those of national and regional programmes? Can synergies be objectively evaluated?

3.8.1. To what extent were the programme objectives coordinated with those of national and regional programmes?

The objective setting process for the Spain-Portugal programme took into account relevant EU policies and guidance, as well as the priorities defined at national level (ES and PT) regarding EU Cohesion Policy and the priorities set by the respective regional authorities. As a result, the programme had internal and external coherence. A senior Portuguese official from a regional government argued that:

"In terms of mainstreaming, the President of the CCDR for Alentejo is responsible for managing both the CBC OP and ERDF programme delivery. There is a coordination committee which links both CBC and mainstream ERDF in the region to ensure that synergies do exist."

Having said that, several stakeholders mentioned the point that the value of the cross border funding was the fact that it allowed projects to be carried out which could not be funded via the mainstream ERDF programme. The key challenge, however, is that the sustainability of such cross border interventions is almost totally dependent on the CBC funding. A reduction in the amount of funding available will impact on the ability of organisations to do cross border collaboration. In the short term, especially with the current economic situation and lack of available public funds, there is really no alternative to funding cross border collaboration via any other source. The challenge, therefore, moving forward is to do "more with less".

3.8.2. Can synergies be objectively evaluated?

In terms of synergies, however, it is difficult to fully evaluate this point, particularly for the capacity building theme. The level of integration seems to be rather limited and focused more on the sharing of information on activities rather than carrying out integrated projects. As a senior researcher at the INL pointed out:

"The Interreg programmes management authorities invite the managers of National and Regional Operational programmes to the presentations of the programmes. However, there is no joint working besides the knowledge of the activities."

3.9. Comparison with regional programme

EVALUATION QUESTION

The contractor will compare for the theme of the case study the selected programmes with a programme financed from the national/regional ERDF budgets to understand the difference between the different programmes as regards their impact on the theme and on cooperation.

The regional programme "Convergence" for Extremadura is selected for the comparison to the Spain-Portugal programme (see Box 4). Several differences emerge between the two in terms of size, scale of objectives and nature of activities; these are discussed further below.

First, the programmes differ considerably in terms of the size of the respective budgets. The Extremadura programme has a total budget of around EUR 2.3 billion with the ERDF contribution amounting to around EUR 1.6 billion. Interestingly, this represents approximately 4.5% of the total EU investment earmarked for Spain under EU Cohesion Policy for 2007-13.

Conversely, the Spain-Portugal programme has a total budget of just over EUR 354 million with an ERDF contribution of almost EUR 268 million. In other words, there is simply no comparison in terms of the size of the respective budgets.

Second, for obvious reasons, the main objectives of the Extremadura programme are on a completely different scale to those of the Spain-Portugal. As a result of the investments in Extremadura, GNP is expected to increase to 84.5% of the average of the 27 EU Member States and productivity by one-third by 2013. In addition, the

Operational Programme should contribute to the creation of about 15 700 jobs, a 0.3% reduction in the unemployment rate and the mobilisation of more than €1.7 billion of private investments. The combined impacts of the Programme could result in a regional Gross Regional Product (GRP) increase of 0.4%.

With its limited budget, the Spain-Portugal programme's objectives are much more focused on delivering enhanced cross border cooperation via the four main programme priorities.

Third, in terms of the nature of the activities, there are considerable differences. The Extremadura programme has six Priorities, compared to four in the Spain-Portugal programme.

Having said that, there is overlap in the focus of the respective priorities. This is in part due to the fact that both programmes were drafted to be aligned with the Lisbon Strategy and so there are obvious synergies. For example, both programmes focus on developing the knowledge economy and promoting innovation as well as developing tackling environmental issues.

In addition, two of the priorities in the Extremadura programme focus on improving Local and Regional Sustainable Development and enhancing Social Infrastructures.

There are some elements of encouraging networks in the health field as well as encouraging research on ways to improve and maintain the cultural heritage of the region.

The key differentiator between the two programmes, however, is precisely the focus on developing capacity building to enhance cross border cooperation and the ability to work with partners from across the border in the Spain-Portugal programme. Whilst the Extremadura ERDF programme has a rather large budget, it does not provide funding for such cross border collaboration.

In fact, this is precisely the key point of complementarity between the two respective programmes. Given that Extremadura belongs to the club of poorest regions in Europe, it needs to stimulate its socio-economic development in order to compete.

As several stakeholders argued, the fact is that Lisbon, the capital city of Portugal, is much closer to the capital of Extremadura, Merida, than Madrid, clearly illustrates the need for the region to work across the border. It takes less time to travel to Lisbon Airport than it does to Madrid Airport from Badajoz, which is the main border town in Extremadura, which has excellent road links connecting it directly to Lisbon.

In short, the mutual benefits of collaboration are clear for Portuguese as well as Spanish partners in the Extremadura region of Spain.

Box 4: Regional Operational Programme for Extremadura in Spain for the 2007-13 period

The Operational Programme falls within the framework laid out for the Convergence Objective and has a total budget of around EUR 2.3 billion. Community assistance through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) amounts to about EUR 1.6 billion, which represents approximately 4.5% of the total EU investment earmarked for Spain under the Cohesion Policy for 2007-13.

The Operational Programme is structured along the following priorities:

Priority 1: Development of the Knowledge Economy (R&D&I: Information Society and ICTs) [approximately 5.4% of total funding]

Priority 2: Entrepreneurial Development and Innovation [approximately 18.1% of total funding]

Priority 3: Environment, Natural Surroundings, Water Resources and Risk Prevention [approximately 26.7% of total funding]

Priority 4: Transport and Energy [approximately 30.5% of total funding]

Priority 5: Local and Urban Sustainable Development [approximately 11.7% of total funding]

Priority 6: Social Infrastructures [approximately 7.5% of total funding]

Priority 7: Technical Assistance [approximately 0.1% of total funding]

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/2007-2013/spain/operational-programme-extremadura

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Annex

- ANNEX 1. Programme of Interviews and Visits¹June 8th: Interview with senior official in the Portuguese Agency for Development and Cooperation in Lisbon, Certifying Authority for the Spain-Portugal programme;
- June 9th: Focus group with over 25 stakeholders from both Spain and Portugal that are members of the Transboundary Municipality Association of the Lands of the Grand Alqueva Lake (Associação Transfronteiriça dos Municípios das Terras do Grande Lago Alqueva, (ATMTGLA), <http://lagoalqueva.eu/>);
- June 9th: Interview with senior official in the Regional Coordination Authority for the Portuguese region of Alentejo;
- June 10th: Meeting with the project coordinators of the TAEJO International project, from the General Directorate of Local Development of the Extremadura Regional Government;
- June 11th: Meeting with the project coordinators and partners of the RITECA I and II projects from CICYTEX-INTAEX Badajoz (Spain); the Agrarian School of Elvas (which is part of the Polytechnic Institute of PortoAlegre, Portugal); and National Institute of Agrarian and Veterinarian Research, (Elvas, Portugal);
- June 11th: Meeting with senior officials from the Spain-Portugal programme JTS, POCTEP, in Badajoz (Spain);
- June 12th: Meeting with project coordinators and partners of the ALTERCEXA project, from the Environment Directorate of the Regional Government of Extremadura.
- October 15th: Telephone interview with a senior researcher at the International Nanotechnology Laboratory, Braga, Portugal;
- October 15th: Telephone interview with senior public official from the Portuguese Agency for Development and Cooperation, Lisbon, Portugal;

¹ The names of the stakeholders are not provided in order to respect confidentiality

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