

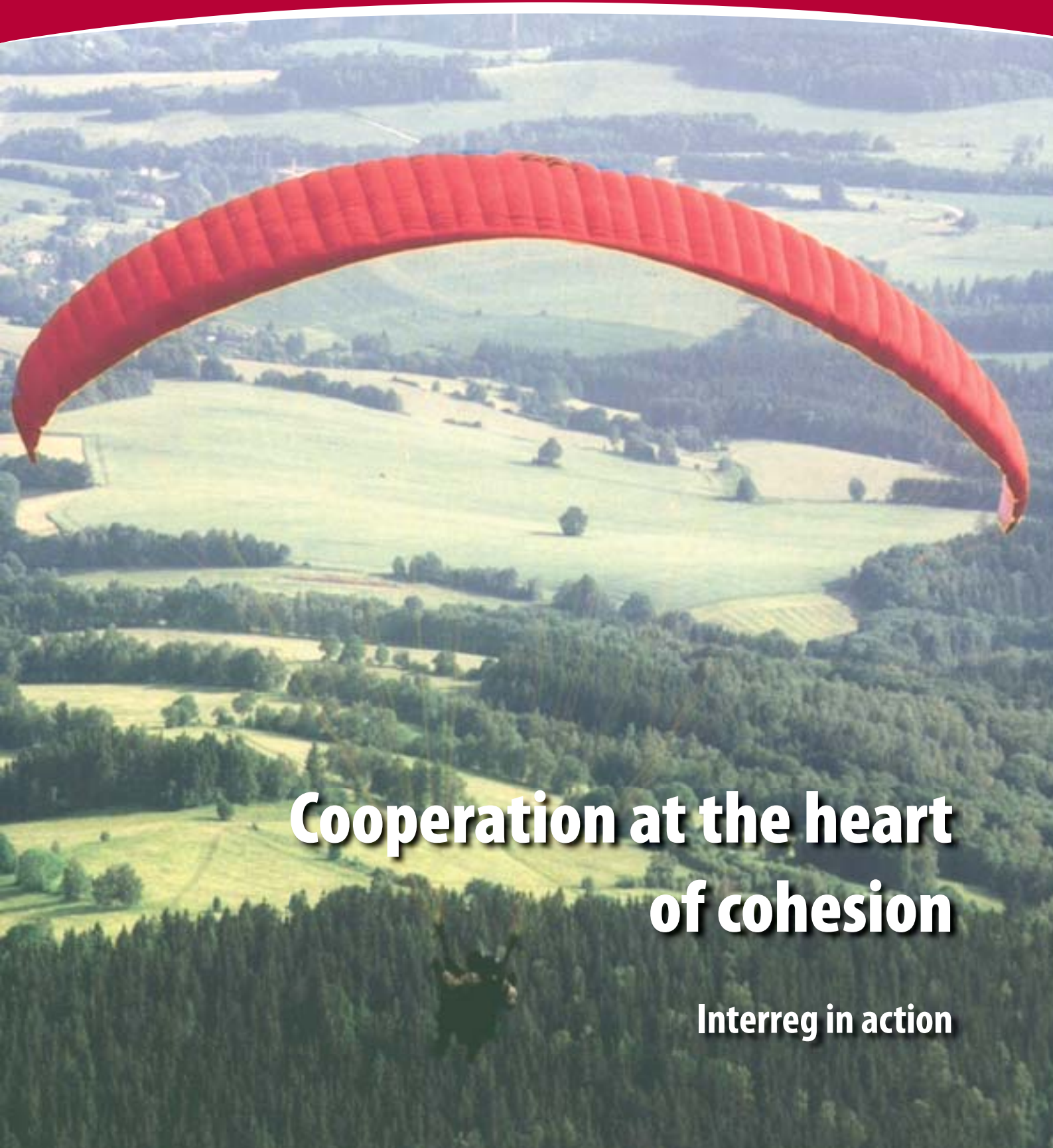
en



European Union
Regional policy

inforegio

| N° 17 | September 2005 | **panorama**



**Cooperation at the heart
of cohesion**

Interreg in action

Contents

The new Community strategic guidelines for cohesion, growth and jobs

These guidelines will establish the priorities for the next generation of cohesion policy programmes by helping Member States to place the emphasis on key fields for growth and jobs.

4



Cooperation *at the heart of cohesion*

The challenges of cooperation and the lessons from Interreg for the new Member States ... and the others

Central and eastern Europe is a geographical area within which there will be even closer cooperation after 2007. The experience acquired and solutions found in resolving the difficulties encountered in this rapidly changing region can be of benefit not just to the new Member States and other countries concerned, but to all the EU regions.

7



Mid-term evaluation of Interreg III

The INTERACT programme has carried out, for its managing authority, the Austrian Federal Chancellery, a study of the mid-term evaluations of the Interreg Community initiative.

12

Interreg IIIA in action: Italy–Switzerland, ‘Pamina’, Austria–Czech Republic, Ireland–Wales

14

From the ground: Finland–Russia

15



Report: Interreg IIIA France–Spain — No mountain can divide us

16

The convergence of the French and Spanish economies, combined with the cooperation programmes, has considerably strengthened cross-border exchanges between the two countries. It is a trend that Interreg is stimulating.



Interreg IIIB in action: Alpine Space, Northern Periphery, Cadres, North-West Europe

21

From the ground: Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe

22



From the ground: Italy

23

Interreg IIIC in action: North, South, West, INTERACT

25



The state of the regions demands greater solidarity

26

The third progress report on cohesion reveals the great disparities between regions.

REGIO and networks

27

Online

28

Photographs (pages): Czech Tourist Authority (1), European Commission (4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11), Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (6, 7), Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano (14), Interreg IIIA Pamina (14), Nationalpark Thayatal GmbH (14), PACTS (14), Euregio Karelia (16), Institut Cartogràfic de Catalunya (16), F. Márquez (17), AEIDL (18), Ballet Biarritz-Donostia (19), PortilHon (19), ITEBE (21), DESERVE (21), Bezirksamt Marzahn-Hellersdorf von Berlin (21), Foundation for Applied Water Research (21), Institut de la Méditerranée (22), Regione Emilia-Romagna (23), Västerbottens län (25), Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Arbeit und Frauen Berlin (25), VINTUR (25), IQ-Train Secretariat (25).

Cover: Parachuting in the Czech Republic.

Other contributors: Aiga Berke, Inge De Prins, Pierre Ergo, Véronique Faure, Jean-Luc Janot.

Editor: Thierry Daman, European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy.

This magazine is printed in English and French on recycled paper.

The thematic dossier is available in 19 languages of the European Union at http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm

The text of this publication is not legally binding.

Territorial cooperation and cohesion: at the true 'heart' of Europe

Cooperation between European regions is without doubt one of the most dynamic and most visible dimensions of 'Community added value', regardless of the form or scale of the actions implemented.

Fifteen years after the launch of the Interreg Community initiative cooperation programme, we can look back on thousands of projects and partnerships as well as an unquantifiable exchange of experiences, know-how and 'best practice' across the internal and external borders of the EU of 12, 15 and now 25 Member States.

The European Commission is well aware of this. This is why, in its proposals for 2007–13, it included 'territorial cooperation' among the three major objectives for Europe's future cohesion policy. The aim is for more cooperation at three levels: cross-border cooperation through joint programmes; cooperation between transnational zones; cooperation networks and the exchange of experiences throughout the EU. In this way, the cooperation objective aims to encourage a balanced, harmonious and sustainable development of the European territory.

Another indication that cooperation is now recognised as an essential element of European cohesion is that the programmes of the two other major objectives proposed by the Commission — 'convergence' and 'regional competitiveness and employment' — also include specifically interregional cooperation actions involving the programme's participating authorities and those in at least one other Member State.

It is for all these reasons that *Inforegio Panorama* is once again putting the spotlight on cooperation by making it the subject of this 17th issue's thematic dossier. It is clear from these articles, testimonies, reports and project presentations that today — in these difficult times for European integration — cooperation between regions lies at the very 'heart' of the European model as never before. This is because, more than anything else, cooperation is about people coming together, getting along together and working together.

The Editorial Team

The new Community strategic guidelines for cohesion, growth and jobs

On 5 July, Commissioners Danuta Hübner (regional policy) and Vladimír Špidla (employment, social affairs and equal opportunities) presented a communication on the Community strategic guidelines for economic, social and territorial cohesion ⁽¹⁾. These new guidelines will determine the priorities for the next generation of regional policy programmes by helping Member States to place the emphasis on fields of vital importance to growth and jobs.



Navigation courses for young fishermen in Thyborøn (Denmark).

The Community strategic guidelines are a key element in the new post-2007 cohesion policy plan of action. They are the link between the Member States' operational programmes and the regulations governing the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund. It is on the basis of these strategic guidelines that the Member States will establish the strategic priorities for their own cohesion policy in the context of their national action programmes for growth and jobs in line with the Lisbon strategy.

The strategic guidelines provide the Member States and regions with common indicative priorities for cohesion programmes, placing the emphasis on the need for increased synergy between cohesion policy, national and regional priorities and the Lisbon strategy. They also give more ownership of regional policy to the regional and local authorities, the social partners and other stakeholders. The limited resources available to cohesion policy must be concentrated in those fields where they can produce the best results in terms of growth and jobs. To this end, the communication defines three general guidelines, the main thrust of which we will summarise below.

Guideline I: Making Europe and its regions more attractive places to invest and work

> **Expanding and improving transport infrastructures.** Member States must give priority to 30 projects of European interest, located in

Member States and regions eligible under the convergence objective. It is also essential to ensure complementary investment in secondary connections, in the context of an integrated regional transport and communication strategy covering urban and rural areas. It is also important that the transport networks be environment friendly. To guarantee the optimum efficiency of transport infrastructures, and thereby promote regional development, the emphasis should be put on improving the connectivity of landlocked territories to the trans-European transport network (TEN-T). Harbours and airports, in particular, should be connected to their hinterlands. Finally, attention should be paid to the development of 'motorways of the sea' ⁽²⁾ and to short-sea shipping as viable alternatives to long-distance road and rail transport.

> **A better environmental contribution to growth and jobs.** This involves:

- meeting the need for major infrastructure investments, especially in the new Member States, in order to ensure that environmental legislation is respected in the fields of water, waste, air, and nature and species protection;
- promoting attractive conditions for businesses and their qualified staff;
- encouraging investments that help the EU to honour the Kyoto commitments;
- implementing risk prevention measures.

⁽¹⁾ 'Cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs — Community strategic guidelines, 2007–13', COM(2005) 299 of 5 July 2005.

⁽²⁾ Sea transport links aimed at taking heavy goods vehicles off the roads and on to the sea.

> **Addressing the issue of Europe's intensive use of traditional energy resources and supporting the development of renewable and alternative technologies.** Recommended action in this field concerns:

- supporting projects to improve energy efficiency and the dissemination of low-energy-intensity development models;
- supporting the development of renewable and alternative technologies (wind, solar, biomass); such investments also contribute to the Lisbon objective of ensuring that 21 % of electricity is generated from renewable sources by 2010;
- concentrating investment in traditional energy sources on projects designed to develop networks where there is evidence of market failure.



Sustainable development requires environmental education.

Public consultation

The Commission will propose the guidelines for formal adoption by the Council and European Parliament as soon as the legislation on which the new cohesion policy is based has been adopted. In the meantime, public consultation will help determine the document's final form. Interested parties are therefore invited to submit their comments online before 30 September 2005 at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/index_en.htm

Guideline II: Improving knowledge and innovation for growth

> **Increasing and improving investment in research and technological development (RTD).** The following actions can be implemented:

- increasing cooperation among businesses and between businesses and public research/higher education institutions by supporting the creation of regional and trans-regional clusters of excellence;
- supporting RTD activities in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and enabling SMEs to access the RTD services of publicly funded research institutions;

- supporting regional cross-border and transnational initiatives aimed at strengthening research cooperation;
- RTD capacity building, in particular in information and communication technologies (ICTs), research infrastructure and human capital, in areas with significant growth potential.

> **Facilitating innovation and promoting entrepreneurship.** The guidelines under this heading are:

- making regional RTD, innovation and education supply more efficient and accessible to firms, in particular SMEs;
- providing business support services to enable companies, especially SMEs, to become more competitive and active internationally;
- ensuring that Europe's strengths in the field of eco-innovations are exploited to the full ⁽³⁾;
- promoting entrepreneurship.

> **Promoting the information society for all.**

The need here is to:

- ensure uptake of ICTs by firms and households and to promote their development;
- ensure availability of ICT infrastructure where the market fails to provide it at an affordable cost and at a sufficient level to support the required services, especially in remote and rural areas and in new Member States.

> **Improving access to finance.** This should involve:

- supporting non-grant instruments such as loans, secured debt financing for subordinate debt, convertible instruments (mezzanine debt) and risk capital (seed capital and venture capital); guarantee and mutual guarantee mechanisms should also be encouraged, in particular to facilitate access to micro-credits by SMEs;
- reaching out to specific groups such as young or female entrepreneurs, as well as entrepreneurs from disadvantaged groups, including ethnic minorities.



The start-up Absis IT Systems of Angleur (Belgium) received financial assistance from the ERDF.

⁽³⁾ Innovation that contributes to management that respects the environment.

Guideline III: More and better jobs

> **Attracting more people to and retaining them in employment and modernising social protection systems.**

Attention should focus on the following measures:

- implementing employment policies to achieve full employment, improved quality and productivity at work, and strengthened social and territorial cohesion;
- promoting a life-cycle approach to work;
- creating inclusive labour markets, enhancing work attractiveness, and making work financially more attractive to job seekers, including disadvantaged people and the inactive;
- improving response to labour market needs.

> **Improving the adaptability of workers and companies and the flexibility of the labour market.**

Member States are asked to:

- encourage flexibility combined with employment security, and reduce labour market segmentation, whilst taking into account the role of social partners;
- ensure the development of employment-friendly labour costs and wage-setting mechanisms.

> **Increasing investment in human capital through better education and skills.** There is a need to invest more in human capital and to adapt education and training systems in response to new requirements for skills.

> **Strengthening administrative capacities.**

The communication proposes to:

- support good policy and programme design as well as monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment;
- enhance administrative capacity in the delivery of policies and programmes.

> **Helping to maintain a healthy labour force.** There is a need to improve prevention of health risks, fill the gaps in health infrastructure and promote the efficient provision of services.

The Community strategic guidelines also pay particular attention to territorial cohesion and cooperation. They confirm the **contribution of cities to growth and jobs**, support the **economic diversification of rural areas** and strengthen **cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation**.

The guidelines do not seek to impose a uniform approach. On the basis of the priorities set, each Member State or region must implement actions in line with its own development plan, taking into account its particular economic, social, institutional and cultural circumstances. The guidelines require the unanimous approval of the Council after adoption of the regulations (following an agreement on the 2007–13 financial perspectives) and on the basis of a Commission proposal. They will serve as a basis for the national strategic reference frameworks and for the corresponding operational programmes that will be adopted by the Commission.

In the absence of an agreement on the financial perspectives at the last European Council in June, the adoption of this communication will enable the national and regional authorities to move forward in preparing their future programmes.

To find out more:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm
http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index_en.html

High-tech textile company in Poland.



The challenges of cooperation and the lessons from Interreg for the new Member States ... and the others

By Imre János Csalagovits ⁽¹⁾

Central and eastern Europe is a geographical area within which there will be even closer cooperation after 2007. The experience acquired and solutions found in resolving the difficulties encountered in this rapidly changing region can be of benefit not just to the new Member States and other countries concerned, but to all the EU regions.



The objectives of European territorial cooperation — and of the present Interreg programmes in particular — extend far beyond the strategic choices of the individual regions and Member States. They represent a development concept of a different dimension to the typical regional development strategy. Territorial cooperation is a unique component of regional policy, which has greater political and economic significance for many regions of Europe than the financial resources allocated to it would suggest.

Territorial cooperation as a unique opportunity

A large area of central and eastern Europe became part of the European Union after 15 years of political and economic change dictated by restructuring and the switch to a market economy. More generally, the new Member States

of central and eastern Europe (the Baltic States, the Visegrad ⁽²⁾ countries and Slovenia), as well as the accession countries and neighbouring countries in this region, have survived centuries of war and repeated political upheavals. They have experienced successive integration and disintegration and many long years of enforced isolation. Having only recently started to recover, the countries and regions of this part of Europe are well aware of the significance of national and regional identities. They are also very aware of the potential benefits of cooperation. It is becoming increasingly apparent that their painful history has served to create a bond between their peoples, uniting them in a kind of common destiny. For the new Member States, the 'new neighbourhood' proposed in the European Union framework is therefore an exceptional tool for cooperation and development.

⁽¹⁾ Director of the Interreg unit at Hungary's National Agency for Regional Development (VÁTI Kht.); VÁTI Kht., H-1016 Budapest, Gellérthegy utca 30/32.
E-mail: csalagovits@pharereg.hu

⁽²⁾ Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.



Cooperating with Latvia on maritime security.

Although the inhabitants have retained their specific identity, central and eastern Europe has become a relatively homogenous area in political, economic and cultural terms. The geographical area formed by the four countries of the Visegrad group and Slovenia is of particular significance as it constitutes the EU's 'eastern zone' and in this part of Europe a great deal of attention is paid to cooperation, whether local, regional or national.

Territorial cooperation in central and eastern Europe is popular partly because the programme objectives formulated are exactly what are needed to meet the present social and economic needs of these countries. On these eastern limits of the Union, territorial development is gradually becoming one of the key development criteria for countries whose political and economic environment has changed radically.

Various critical evaluations confirm that the experience of cooperation to date has been positive and this is likely to facilitate the planning and implementation of future European programmes, especially if these programmes award priority to genuinely joint and integrated actions.

While the form and effect of territorial development can clearly vary depending on the region and the size of country or the politico-institutional system in place, the common programme characteristics ensure that the general experience does not differ significantly between different cooperation programmes.

Experience and best practice

The new Member States have more than a decade of experience with Interreg-type programmes on which they can now draw. This augurs very well for further partnerships in the framework of territorial cooperation.

Much of this experience is linked to implementing Phare CBC (cross-border cooperation) programmes and projects. In each of the new central and eastern European Member States, relatively large sums were allocated to cross-border programmes and a specific management structure was provided. Phare CBC accounted for around 10 % of the annual Phare budget between 2002 and 2003. Despite the obvious obstacles due to the different financial procedures between Interreg and Phare CBC, it proved possible to launch many integrated cross-border projects.

The pre-accession participation of the new Member States in the Interreg IIA and IIIB cross-border programmes implemented on the EU-15 borders, and also in the Interreg IIC and IIIB transnational programmes, gave these countries the opportunity to acquire a good command of Interreg programme management.

No doubt the greatest experience was acquired in the **cross-border cooperation** programmes, primarily due to the scale of the financial resources allocated. This form of cooperation is by far the most appreciated at local and regional levels, in particular because cross-border partnerships are more concrete and based on a simpler and more direct relationship. Their results are also more visible.

With the exception of Poland, the size of the new Member States is rather small. This means that many central and eastern European regions possess an external or an internal EU border and their development almost always includes an 'international' dimension. The eagerness of small countries to develop — plus the fact that the vast majority of local and regional development strategies take this factor into account — contributes greatly to the popularity of cross-border cooperation in this part of Europe.



A Polish student at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt an der Oder (Germany).

Although the reputation of **transnational cooperation** programmes will never equal that of cross-border programmes among the local and regional actors, participation to date shows that the new Member States have understood the still largely unexploited strategic opportunities these transnational programmes offer. Central Europe and the Baltic States form one of the most rapidly developing macro-regions in the European Union. There is therefore no reason why these dynamic territories should not be effectively involved in transnational cooperation in the pertinent fields. A need for the same kind of cooperation, but in different fields, is evident along the EU's external borders, especially in the east and in the Balkans.

Participation in **interregional cooperation** projects has made it possible for several central and eastern European regions to be involved directly in the exchange of experiences at European level. This is already contributing to the success and effectiveness of the Objective 1 programmes currently being implemented in the new Member States. The expansion and thematic concentration of territorial cooperation at European level would signify additional progress for territorial cooperation.

In addition, the new Member States are implementing a number of new **neighbourhood** programmes initiated by the European Commission along the EU's external borders. Several of these new programmes are already operational ⁽³⁾

and are supporting the initiation of joint projects. These incorporate in a common device both the internal (Interreg) and external (Takis, CARDS neighbourhood components) European cross-border development instruments. To date, these programmes — which are even more complicated than usual due to the differences in legislation and methods of financing — have proved quite popular. Several hundred applications have already been submitted for programmes already approved, many of them for joint projects. Because of their complexity, neighbourhood programmes require a lot of flexibility from the parties involved, but after initial experience and with the necessary additional resources, they can provide a solid foundation for the integrated programmes of the subsequent programming period.

It is in the initiation and implementation of joint projects that territorial cooperation can fully manifest itself. Previously, for certain regions, the divergent national administrative and financial regulations often tended to limit opportunities to launch and implement projects of this kind. Several key projects were nevertheless developed and implemented under the various programmes and can serve as examples of 'best practice' in territorial development. Among the Interreg-type actions, best practice exists for the creation of common infrastructure (roads, sewage systems, medical centres, cross-border employment policies, etc.) and for local 'people-to-people' actions to improve interregional, inter-cultural and inter-ethnic relations.



Building a cross-border road between Greece and Bulgaria, co-financed by Interreg.

⁽³⁾ Lithuania–Poland–Kaliningrad, Latvia–Lithuania–Belarus, Estonia–Latvia–Russia, Poland–Belarus–Ukraine, Hungary–Slovakia–Ukraine, Hungary–Romania and Hungary–Serbia and Montenegro ^(*), Slovenia–Hungary–Croatia.

^(*) Including Kosovo, under the auspices of the United Nations, pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999.

Connecting European regions: Community cooperation instruments

Cooperation between regions is an essential dimension of 'Community added value'. The European Union allocates considerable resources to this policy and makes a range of instruments available to regional actors for the purposes of financing and the exchange of know-how.

Launched in 1990 and supported by the ERDF, **Interreg**, the Community initiative for cooperation, is the most prominent of these instruments. The objective of Interreg III (2000–06) is to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by encouraging cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation as well as the balanced development of the continent. Special emphasis is placed on integrating remote regions and those that share external borders with the candidate countries. Interreg III has an annual budget of EUR 5.18 billion (2002 prices) and is made up of three strands.

- **Strand A (cross-border cooperation):** Cross-border cooperation between adjacent regions aims to develop cross-border social and economic centres through common development strategies.
- **Strand B (transnational cooperation):** Transnational cooperation involving national, regional and local authorities aims to promote better integration within the Union through the formation of large groups of European regions.
- **Strand C (interregional cooperation):** Interregional cooperation aims to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies and instruments through large-scale information exchange and the sharing of experience.

Two programmes complete these three strands: **ESPON** (European Spatial Planning Observatory Network) and **INTERACT** (cooperation network for the transfer of Interreg best practice).

Until they joined the EU in 2004, the new Member States of central and eastern Europe benefited from the **Phare CBC** (cross-border cooperation) programme. This is the financial arm of Interreg for the transnational cooperation activities of projects in the candidate countries.

For EU regions bordering third countries, the financial cooperation instruments are the technical assistance for the Community of Independent States (**Tacis**) programme, the Mediterranean development agreement (**MEDA**) to support economic and social reforms in the third countries of the Mediterranean Basin, and Community aid for reconstruction, development and stability (**CARDS**) in the countries of the former Yugoslavia.

From 2007 the European Commission plans to implement a new **European neighbourhood and partnership instrument (IEVP)** to support cross-border cooperation. Work on drawing up this instrument began with the introduction, between 2004 and 2006, of the **neighbourhood programmes** at the EU's new external borders. These programmes complete and use existing cross-border cooperation instruments (Interreg, Phare CBC, Tacis CBC, MEDA and CARDS).



Interreg cooperation between Sweden and Denmark in the field of organ donation.

Priorities

Experience shows that the most successful Interreg programmes have been developed on a local or regional basis, have 'cross-regional' dimensions and operate within the simplest possible administrative framework.

The efficiency, effectiveness and regulatory conformity of programmes are three priorities that must be tackled simultaneously, while two objectives and fields of development are of particular importance for effective preparation of territorial cooperation.

Greater impact and effectiveness of programmes

The transfer of experience from the most innovative and successful programmes is essential for drawing increased benefit from cross-border, transnational and interregional programmes.

Despite the efforts made during the present programming period, differences between regional development programmes (under Objective 1 for example) and cross-border programmes, or even in some cases between the various In-

terreg programmes, are not always evident. The boundaries between certain development projects are not always clear and it is often necessary to redefine their objectives in relation to the programmes under which they are implemented.

It would also be beneficial to make a better distinction between the various types of programme (especially cross-border and regional programmes) by placing the emphasis in cross-border programmes on complementary elements, synergy and common bases of cooperation. These aspects must be systematically verified and validated during the programming process (by ranking objectives, activities supported and selection criteria in order of priority), and at the time of project selection.

In the case of cross-border cooperation, improving strategic planning capacities is of key importance at local and regional level. Each programming stage must be evaluated jointly by the partners, with reference to a kind of 'common regional consciousness', in order to identify genuinely shared activities, i.e. those that need support and that complement other programmes.

Cooperation must also concentrate on fields that are a priority for each of the parties and this is an element that should be taken into account when defining these fields. This is particularly pertinent for future transnational programmes.



In the Vorarlberg (Austria), the Interreg 'SPEAK' project is providing teaching aids for foreign language teachers.

Simplified programme management

The Interreg and neighbourhood programmes must meet many criteria. These can add considerable complications to application procedures and project selection and implementation because of national or regional variations and fundamentally different fund management systems, depending on whether they operate inside or outside the EU. The inevitable compromises at the planning stage then complicate matters further and make it difficult for the project applicants to meet all the conditions.

It is essential to simplify application criteria in order to be able to include the widest possible range of partners in the pro-



Ylamyly (Finland): nursery school at a converted military base.

grammes and to ensure pertinent selection of project proposals. To achieve this, conditions relating to joint cooperation projects must be taken into account when drawing up national and European regulations. Subsequently, the European Commission, the managing authorities and the technical secretariats of each programme must work together to achieve a significant simplification of programmes and projects in the field.

Conclusions

The success of the intense territorial cooperation we are currently seeing at the EU's 'eastern extremity' is of great importance to Europe as a whole. The lessons and opportunities that can be drawn from this cooperation are exceptional, not only for the countries concerned but also for the development and security of the entire EU. All Member States must therefore be involved in improving the effectiveness of the approach.

As explained above, there are two key elements that must be taken into account: on one hand, a significant improvement in programme targeting and, on the other, a simplifying of the management and implementation system, the improvement of its efficiency and the redefining of the joint rules of management.

In eastern Europe, the complexity of cooperative relationships makes it impossible to create artificial or informal structures as there is always the possibility of political or institutional interference to thwart the realisation of even the most realistic objectives. In this context, all the key participants from inside and outside the EU must be able to validate their choices at each stage of the cooperation process. European cross-border regions and transnational macro-regions must therefore find the solutions that are best suited to their situation in order to ensure the most efficient cooperation possible.

The EU's internal and external borders are in a way the perfect territories for experimenting with change management and showing that it is possible to find common solutions through negotiation, under very different and often complicated circumstances. Benefit must be drawn from these experiences — not only between countries but also within them — by learning the lessons from the specific 'cross-regional' management instruments developed for the purposes of this cooperation.

Mid-term evaluation of Interreg III

The INTERACT programme secretariat has carried out, for its managing authority, the Austrian Federal Chancellery, a study of the mid-term evaluations of the Interreg Community initiative ⁽¹⁾.

The European Policies Research Centre (EPRC) at Glasgow's Strathclyde University was commissioned to carry out a 'meta-evaluation' to synthesise the findings of the 2003 Interreg mid-term evaluations. The purpose was to provide the Interact programme with recommendations on the future development of Interreg and to ensure that its services are relevant to the needs of participants in cooperation programmes.

The research had three specific objectives: to take stock of progress to date while highlighting the strategic, structural and operational strengths and weaknesses of Interreg III; to help define the priorities of the Interact programme; and to identify any lessons for territorial cooperation in the post-2006 Structural Fund's programming period.

Published at the beginning of 2005, the study identifies three priority fields for action: to help the Interreg programmes to learn the lessons from the 2003 evaluations; to pool Interreg evaluation practices; and to provide the Interreg programmes with a resource centre and common services.

These priorities stem largely from the following observations.

- At the time the study was carried out, in 2003, many programmes had made little progress in financial terms. Just 10 % of programmes showed acceptable commitment and disbursement levels; others showed a high level of commitments but little disbursement; and still others had scarcely even started up. Hence, there was real danger of a decommitment of funds under the 'n + 2' rule ⁽²⁾.
- While considerable progress has been made in upgrading monitoring indicators and data collection practices, many

monitoring systems are failing to provide sufficient pertinent management information and it is difficult to obtain an overall European view of Interreg's successes — an important issue for the post-2006 reform.

- Despite the many difficulties to be overcome, the programme management mechanisms seem effective. There is a range of 'best practice' under Interreg IIIA, IIIB and IIIC, even if many managers clearly have a very heavy workload that leaves them little time to devote to strategic planning.
- Many Interreg programmes communicate, mobilise and select projects effectively. However, they need to pay more attention to the strategic challenges to come. An urgent question for many of them is how to increase demand for programme resources from certain areas, sectors or types of organisation. Some innovative techniques warrant wider application.
- A poll carried out among project promoters shows a need for more exchange of experience of practical aspects of Interreg project design and management.

The most urgent priority is to support the development of programmes in the new Member States and to remove the threat of automatic decommitment. In the medium term, there is a need to facilitate the acquisition of skills and to ensure that lessons are learned from the current period for the benefit of the design of the new EU territorial cooperation objective and the next generation of programmes. Finally, it is important to take better account of external changes, whether socioeconomic, strategic or institutional.

Contact: Inge De Prins, interact@interact-eu.net

INTERACT: promoting and building on cooperation



The INTERACT programme (Interreg Animation, Cooperation and Transfer) harnesses and coordinates information on activities under the Interreg Community initiative of which it is a part.

The aim is to build on the experience and lessons of Interreg I (1990–94) and II (1994–99) in order to maximise the effectiveness of Interreg III (2000–06) in the EU Member States and neighbouring countries. Interact sets up communication networks, disseminates information and stimulates the exchange of experiences, through training for example.

Interact has a secretariat based in Vienna (Austria) and a network of five 'Interact points' that provide the following services:

- **information and animation** (making Interreg information and experiences visible and accessible);
- **qualification and transfer** (training, networking and new ideas for all members of the Interreg Community);
- **IIIC coordination** (support for cooperation between the four Interreg IIIC programme zones and sharing experience with Interact stakeholders);
- **managing transition and external cooperation** (promoting the transfer of Interreg know-how in the areas affected by the EU enlargement process);
- **tool box** (identifying good practice and developing practical tools for Interreg programme management).

The implementation of 22 specific projects completes the work of the INTERACT points and secretariat.

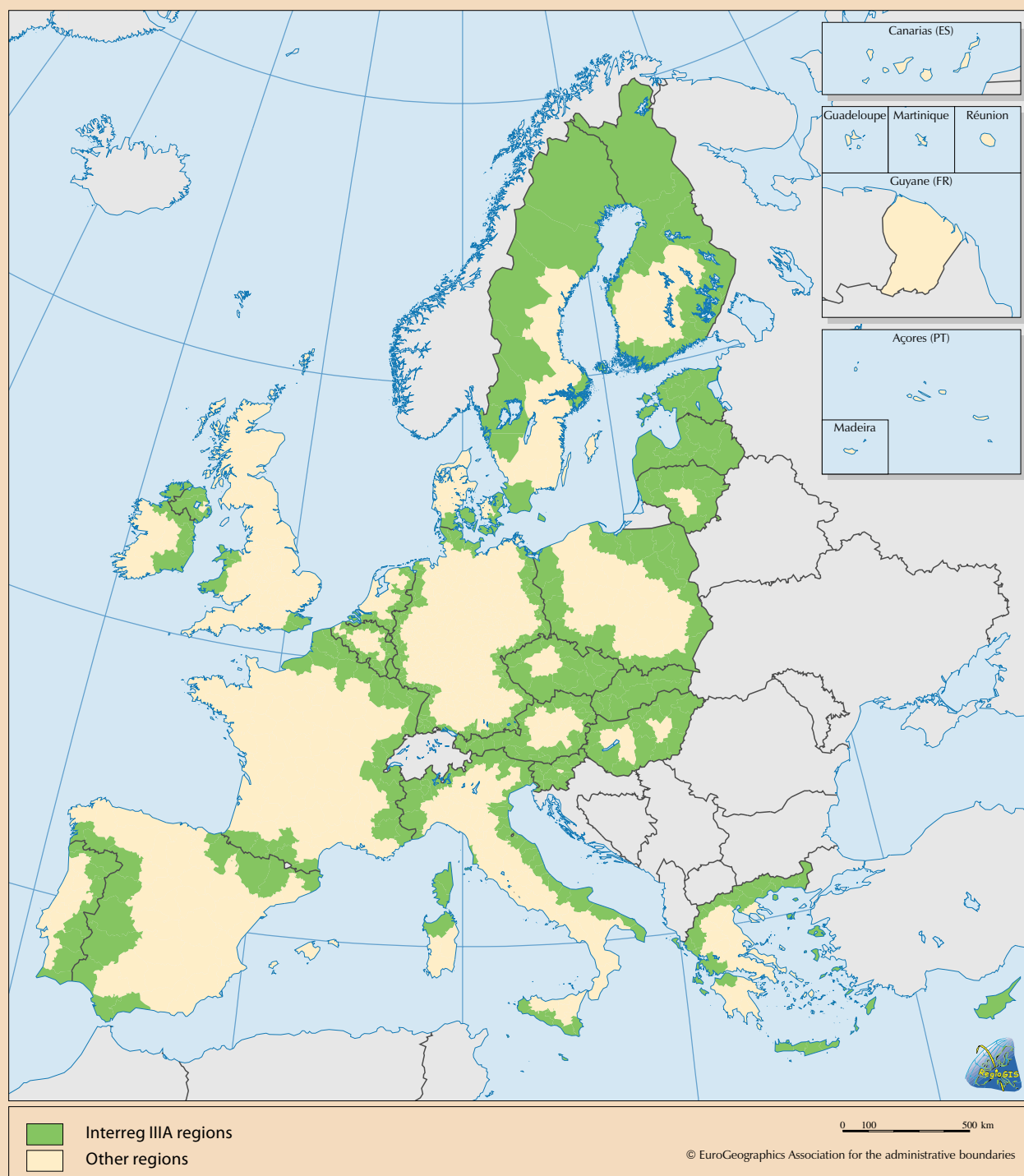
To find out more: www.interact-eu.net

⁽¹⁾ 'A study of the mid-term evaluations of Interreg programmes for the programming period 2000–06', an electronic version and form for ordering the printed version are available at the Interact website (www.interact-eu.net).

⁽²⁾ Under this rule, the annual financial instalment of a programme co-financed by the funds must be disbursed before the end of the second year that follows the year of commitment ('n' being the year of commitment); credits not used are automatically decommitted, except in special cases.



Interreg IIIA: cross-border cooperation



ITALY–SWITZERLAND

Promoting Alpine cereals



Total cost: EUR 422 933
EU contribution: EUR 93 745

'The aim of this cooperation between the Autonomous Province of Bolzano and the Canton of Les Grisons is to make an inventory of the growing areas for local cereal varieties and to take stock of the related knowledge and know-how. The project also includes a comparison of cereal crops in the two regions, a qualitative analysis and the production of endogenous varieties with agricultural crop potential with a view to reintroducing them to local agriculture and conserving this biological heritage of our Alpine valleys. Information campaigns, conferences and a travelling exhibition will inform the population of the benefits of these local varieties.'

Josef Dalla Via, *Director of the Agricultural and Forestry Experimentation Centre of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano*
josef.dallavia@provinz.bz.it

AUSTRIA–CZECH REPUBLIC

National park information centre



Total cost: EUR 2 797 904
EU contribution: EUR 1 398 951

'Founded in 2000, the Thaya Valley National Park is the Austrian extension of the Podyji National Park in the Czech Republic, which opened in 1991. This is both a nature conservation project and an instrument to foster local development through the tourism it generates. A central feature is the construction of an information centre. The interpretation and educational facilities enable visitors to discover the evolution of the park and natural processes, the park ecology and our cross-border action to protect the environment. The project is aimed in particular at children and young people as well as nature lovers and scientists.'

Martha Schöber, *Nationalpark Thayatal GmbH*
office@np-thayatal.at
www.np-thayatal.at
(www.nppodyji.cz/_E_PODYJ.HTM)

'PAMINA'

The 'Pamina youth network'



Total cost: EUR 240 000
EU contribution: EUR 120 000

'A network has been set up to encourage closer contacts and cross-border partnerships between young people and youth organisations within the Pamina (South Palatinate, Middle and Upper Rhine and North Alsace) Franco-German cooperation area. The Pamina youth network has a central headquarters plus three local centres that implement cooperation projects between young people, organise joint activities, and facilitate exchanges and access to financing, etc. In addition to these contacts between young people, the more general aim is to strengthen and deepen relationships between citizens on both sides of the border.'

Jörg Saalbach, *Technical Secretariat of the Interreg IIIA Pamina programme*
Joerg.saalbach@regio-pamina.org
www.paminaj.net

IRELAND–WALES

Help for people with learning disabilities



Total cost: EUR 911 000
EU contribution: EUR 683 250

'The main aim of the PACTS (Partners collaborating in training for individuals with specific learning disabilities) project is to increase public awareness and to find ways of identifying and helping people with learning disabilities in Wales and eastern Ireland. Specifically, it seeks to develop teaching methods to aid these people in gaining access to higher education and thereby improve their prospects of finding quality employment. The project has now been running for more than a year and has organised residential courses at which representatives from schools, associations and employment agencies have been able to exchange good practice. The PACTS team has also launched a distance teaching programme using CD-ROMs and web-based information. There have also been joint training courses.'

Amanda Kirby (Wales) and **Mary Meaney** (Ireland), *project managers*
Mary.Meaney@itb.ie; amanda.kirby@btinternet.com
www.pactsproject.com

Finland–Russia

'Euregio Karelia: EU–Russia cooperation on the ground'

Marko Ruokangas, Head of the Secretariat, 'Euregio Karelia' neighbourhood programme



The 'Euregio Karelia' cooperation area covers 700 km on both sides of the Finno-Russian border. It includes three Finnish regions (Kainuu, Northern Karelia and Oulu) plus the Russian Republic of Karelia.

It was only after Finland joined the EU in 1995 that its regions were able to cooperate with their Russian neighbours. The border had been closed until around 1991 and even after the fall of the Soviet regime contacts between the inhabitants remained infrequent. Against this background, the Interreg IIIA Karelia programme (1995–99) provided new opportunities. The establishment of contacts at all levels was the most tangible result of this first phase of Interreg.

The regions concerned decided to strengthen links in the late 1990s by setting up a new forum for cooperation, named 'Euregio Karelia'. This made it possible to define the main lines of cross-border cooperation.

Preparations for Interreg IIIA Karelia (2000–06), which covers activities on the Finnish side, began at the same time as the Russian Republic of Karelia's cross-border cooperation programme. It was a synthesis of the two — the 'Our common border' programme — that created an initial basis for Euregio Karelia's activities.

Euregio Karelia proposed that the European Commission should launch a pilot project to include internal and external funding within a single programme. But the time was not yet ripe and this only became possible in 2004, when the EU transformed the Interreg programmes at its external borders into 'neighbour programmes' that fund both internal and external activities. At the same time, the European programme and the political forum of Euregio Karelia established closer ties. Although the neighbourhood programme is managed separately in accordance with the legal procedures, it nevertheless chose

to be known as 'Euregio Karelia' in order to benefit from the renown accorded to the name.

Cooperation has had a major impact on development and jobs at regional and local levels. Successive programmes have made it possible to implement no fewer than 350 projects thus far, ranging from the simple modernisation of a border post to more ambitious actions to protect cultural heritage. A good example is the twinning of the Oulanka (Finland) and Paanajärvi (Russia) national parks. In addition to creating jobs, all of these projects have had significant indirect effects and have encouraged other cooperation.

This initiative has made it possible to establish good relations with our Russian neighbours as well as between the three participating Finnish regions. Each has its own special features and concept of cooperation with Russia, but with a common vision behind their individual approaches.

A concrete basis has thus been created for cooperation between the EU and Russia in these northern areas. The major challenge for the future is to bring these activities closer together at the political level. In this respect, the EU–Russia strategic partnership, with its four common areas, as well as the 'northern dimension' initiative, is creating a political context for cooperation. This should in turn create a strategic framework for future cross-border programmes at the EU's external borders.

A 'cooperation culture' has gradually become a day-to-day reality for many people. Cross-border cooperation is today an inherent part of regional development, even if the untapped potential remains considerable. The major challenge now is to involve young people in cooperation, and many promising initiatives have been started in this respect.

Managing cross-border cooperation is also a fascinating exercise: the programme secretariat is forever facing new challenges, ranging from practical questions of implementation to the EU's foreign policy. Networking has also opened up new possibilities. In particular, this shows how cross-border problems are more or less the same everywhere, with always the same desire to reduce the 'border effect'. But is that not part of what the European Union is all about?

To find out more: www.euregiokarelia.fi



A group of young people in Koli on the occasion of the 'Euregio Karelia 2000+' meetings

Interreg IIIA France–Spain right across the Pyrenees

No mountain can divide us

Difficult to cross, the Pyrenees form a barrier that long divided France and Spain. However, local populations have progressively overcome this obstacle and today many economic, political, social and cultural links unite the two sides of the mountains. Spain's entry to the European Union and subsequent rapid development, the convergence of the French and Spanish economies and the many cooperation programmes have all helped strengthen cross-border exchanges. It is a trend that Interreg is stimulating and structuring.



Participants in the ISARD project that is harmonising the seismic data of Spain and France.

‘We have moved from an affective and ideological co-operation to effective and organised cooperation.’ That is how Jean Lavie, French director of the cross-border observatory for employment, describes the essence of this Interreg project, implemented in the frontier regions of Aquitaine, the Basque Country, Navarre and Aragon by the Pirineos-Eje Atlántico-Huesca Inter-Regional Trade Union Council and eight French and Spanish partner trade union organisations. ‘Since the time of the *hirondelles* (swallows), the women who, in the 19th century, crossed the mountains to work in the espadrille factories, people have always crossed the Pyrenees to find employment and it is a trend that has increased. In this area alone, between Bayonne and San Sebastian, there are today 3 500 frontier workers: 2 000 Spaniards who work in France and 1 500 French nationals who work in Spain. But we know very little about this very heterogeneous labour market that, in many fields — the labour laws, training, recognition of qualifications, etc. — is sub-

ject to different rules depending on whether you are talking about the north or south of the Pyrenees.’ This is the basis for setting up the cross-border observatory for employment, with three aims: to gather comparable statistics and details of studies carried out on both sides of the border; to develop indicators able to meet the needs of workers; and to make all the data available to the public authorities. The project receives funding of EUR 247 750 (including EUR 93 000 from the ERDF) and, in terms of mission and content, is a particularly apposite example of the approach adopted by the Interreg IIIA France–Spain programme for many years already.

This cross-border programme covers both sides of the Pyrenees and extends along its full length, an area covering about 70 000 km² with a population of 4.7 million. With a budget of around EUR 172 million (including 86 million from the ERDF), the programme aims to see the implementation of some 250 projects by the end of 2006. These are all joint projects in fields ranging from major infra-

structure works (roads, tunnels) to 'small-scale' projects managed by municipalities, associations or companies, 'even if cross-border action in support of companies quickly comes up against problems of competition,' stresses Jean-Marie Blanc, Director of the European Funds and Cross-Border Cooperation Service with the Aquitaine region, the programme's managing authority.

'Our point of departure was our differences. We asked ourselves: "among our differences, what are the ones that could offer something to others?"' says Victor Lacambra, who is coordinator of the first social project financed by Interreg II-IA France-Spain. The project is known as PortilHon, after the mountain pass that, between Benasque and Luchon, links the regions of Aragon and Midi-Pyrénées. The project promoters explain, "PortilHon" has a capital H in the middle of the name to evoke both the H on a rugby field for the conversion of tries and "H" for handicap.' Sponsored by two federations of aid organisations for handicapped people — CADIS-Huesca in Spain and APAJH31 in France⁽¹⁾ — PortilHon seeks to improve living conditions for disabled people and their families in five areas of life: free time, integration into working life, education and training, ageing, alternatives to residential centres, and legal protection. 'We are all learning a great deal,' continues Victor. 'For example, by seeking to network four holiday centres with facilities for disabled people we came up against two apparently opposing approaches. In Spain, professionals employed in providing services for disabled people are given training in leisure activities, whereas in France it is the opposite, with leisure sector professionals being trained to work with disabled people. The two approaches are in fact quite complementary and combining the two proved very rewarding.'

Centralism on one side of the Pyrenees, autonomy on the other

Judging from what the project administrators and managers say, at the basis of cross-border cooperation is the confrontation of practices, cultures and even systems that are often very different as they originate in a different past, society, approaches and needs. More than language even, partners in cooperation often cite differences in institutional context and administrative culture as the principal difficulty. In the case of France and Spain, these differences are particularly important as their political structures have a fundamentally different model, with a still pronounced centralisation on the French side and a very advanced regionalisation on the Spanish side.

Managing Director of the Ballet Biarritz dance company and one of the promoters of the cross-border choreographic centre supported by Interreg, Filgi Claverie sums up how he sees it: 'The French administration is often seen as a "Jacobin", "pyramidal" and bureaucratic system. In Spain, the proximity of the decision-making centres and the greater autonomy of the regions, especially in the case of

Catalonia and the Basque Country, permit greater flexibility and creativity. On the other hand, one must accept that French traditions of cultural development and multiannual planning are reassuring in terms of project financing. In Spain, budgets are always annual, with the risk of funding decisions subsequently being called into question.'

'Administrative cooperation is one of our programme's strengths. We are learning a great deal. This dimension was much less present under Interreg II,' believes Amaia Urtaşun, Interreg officer on the Aquitaine Regional Council. The programme involves a large number of institutional partners. On the French side there is the State, three regional councils (Aquitaine, Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon), five general councils (Pyrénées-Atlantiques, Hautes-Pyrénées, Ariège, Haute-Garonne and Pyrénées-Orientales) and the DATAR⁽²⁾. On the Spanish side there is the central State (payment authority) and five autonomous communities (Basque Country, Navarre, Aragon, Catalonia, La Rioja).

Lead partners

'The large number of partners and the size of the area covered caused us to set up three "technical units",' explains Michaël Lapoirière, also an Interreg officer. 'The east zone unit is headed by the Government of Catalonia, the Central Pyrenees unit by the Government of Aragon and the west zone by the General Council of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques. Each project also has a lead partner who is our principal interlocutor, responsible for project implementation.'

'The concept of "lead partner", which we sought to formalise, obliges us to create genuine partnerships,' explains Jean-Marie Blanc. 'Interreg III is a genuine cooperation project and, unlike Interreg II, it has genuine joint projects with participants on both sides of the Pyrenees.'



The bearded vulture feeds on bones that it breaks by dropping them from a height of between 50 and 100 metres.

⁽¹⁾ CADIS-Huesca: Coordinadora de Asociaciones de Discapacitados de Huesca (Coordination of Associations for the Handicapped of Huesca). APAJH31: Association Pour Adultes et Jeunes Handicapés de Haute-Garonne (Association for Disabled Young People and Adults of Haute-Garonne).

⁽²⁾ Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale, the French national agency for spatial planning and regional development.



Fuensanta (Aragon): restoring a chapel as part of the 'Continua Pirineum' project.

The 'Living Pyrenees' (Pirineo Vivo/Pyrénées vivantes) project — which receives funding of EUR 3.11 million, 49 % of it from the ERDF — is particularly illustrative of this joint approach. This is concerned with putting into place concerted management of the mountain area and offering a joint and local approach to environmental problems that complements the European plan of action. Protection of the bearded vulture (*gyaetus barbatus*), a large bird of prey that is a powerful symbol of the Pyrenees, was chosen as the model around which this cooperation is organised in three thematic networks — environmental monitoring, environmental education and protection of the biodiversity. 'By adopting a cross-border approach with all the parties (hunters, farmers, foresters, elected representatives, hikers, nature organisations, teachers, etc.) with an interest in the area inhabited by the bearded vulture, we hope, by providing a better understanding of the needs of all, to instil local awareness of and responsibility for the environmental issues and the implementation of effective measures for the protection of the Pyrenean natural heritage,' explains Juan Faure of the Government of Aragon, coordinator of the project that includes some 60 partners from both sides of the border and in particular the French and Spanish societies for the protection of birds: the Ligue pour la protection des oiseaux (LPO, France) and the Fundación para la conservación del quebrantahuesos (FCQ, Spain).

It is from a base in Ainsa (Aragon) — in the same castle as the magnificent ecomuseum that the FCQ has dedicated to the bearded vulture — that the tourism services of the Comarca of Sobrarbe (15 Spanish municipalities) and the mixed trade union of the Aure and Luron valleys are running the 'Continua Pirineum' project (48 French municipalities and three French cantons). Their aim is to network rural tourism on both sides of the Pyrenees (creation of a tourist office on each side, plus a joint website, etc.) by highlighting the ancient cross-border mountain paths as part of a 'Roman art road' and an 'historic trade route'. Sheepfolds, St Jacques pilgrim hospices, smugglers' refuges and other rural heritage sites are all being restored.

Risk prevention and the power of proposal

Speaking of 'refuges', man's safety is another subject of shared concern on both sides of the Pyrenees and one that is mobilising Interreg as well as national and regional public institutions at the highest level.

In Barcelona, the Cartographic Institute of Catalonia (CIC) is working with the French Office for Geological and Mining Research (BRGM) and four other partners on the ISARD project (Automatic seismic information on regional damage) whose main aim is, as manager Agnès Lladós explains, 'to collect both preventive and operational information on Pyrenean seismic risks, without any distortion linked to the border, and to transmit this information effectively and in real time to the local emergency and crisis management services.' With an Interreg budget of EUR 1 645 million, the ISARD partners are working on four measures: unified coverage of the Pyrenees seismic zone, the generation of seismic scenarios, the development of an automatic risk assessment system and the dissemination of information.

Piloted by the MEDES, the French Institute for Space Medicine and Physiology, the Pyrenees Emergency Security project (Sécurité Urgences Pyrénées/Seguridad y Urgencias en los Pirineos) (SUP) combines mountain rescue, telemedicine and risk prevention. Using the latest technological and telematics advances, it has produced the prototype of a kit consisting of a small laptop, satellite telephone and portable medical devices. This kit can be used by doctors and first-aid workers to deliver initial emergency medical care to accident victims in mountain zones as well as emergency aid to remote mountain populations on both sides of the border with difficult access to health centres. 'We are trying to reduce the size of the kit material even more,' explains Francisco Rojas of the Aragon Technological Institute, one of the 10 SUP partners. 'In the meantime, the project has already had an effect on legislation: in Aragon, paramedical staff and first-aid workers can now administer care that previously only doctors could.'

The example of the SUP is testimony to the impact Interreg can have by virtue of its status as a European programme engaged in pilot actions. There are many examples of cross-border projects that result in changes to legislation and policy. Taking their inspiration from French legislation, the Aragon partners working on the PortiHon project, for example, are campaigning to reduce the retirement age for disabled people in Spain, while in Albera, an area that straddles the Franco-Spanish border in the eastern Pyrenees, the association that is promoting the Interreg 'L'Albera, memòria i terra' (Albera, land and memories) project to 'record the Catalan oral memory' is able to cite these activities to strengthen its case for obtaining recognition for the region as a 'living cultural landscape' under the 'Unesco World Heritage' label. 'Interreg recognition lends legitimacy,' believes Brigitte Castell, project coordinator. This is a view shared by Filgi Claverie of the Biarritz ballet: 'The European flag on our posters is a label. Even if the financial resources were to disappear, it is vital that Europe's support continues to be a daily reality and that is what Interreg permits.'

Many of the project applications submitted are indeed inspired by everyday life: 'We have received a lot of applications and the



Performance by the Biarritz Ballet.

measures most in demand are closely linked to the specific problems faced in our area,' points out Laurence Hourcourigaray, Interreg officer on the Pyrénées-Atlantiques Regional Council. 'This is self-evident for cultural projects but I am also thinking of other actions such as the "Bizia" (LIFE) project sponsored by five associations, including Médecins du Monde. Every weekend, thousands of young people cross the border to go to discotheques or attend rave parties. All kinds of drugs are circulating and there are many accidents, sometimes fatal. The first aspect of the project is to reduce the risks linked to this "partying" with teams on the ground talking with drug users to inform them and ensure they do the least possible harm to themselves. The second aspect is the setting aside, in Bilbao, of a "hygienic consumption" site, the largest in Spain.' Seen as very innovative from a European point of view, the Bizia project receives Interreg funding of EUR 1.75 million, half of it from the ERDF.

Time and method

'Globalisation, or at least the internationalised economy, begins with cross-border cooperation. That is why Interreg is so important to us,' believes Xavier Farriols Sender, Assistant Director-General for Vocational and Continuing Training at the Catalan Ministry of Education. His department is implementing the Interreg 'Cross-border vocational training' project that aims to encourage cooperation between the Catalan and the French vocational training and orientation systems. In addition to a study of similarities, differences and needs (several studies are being published in book form), the project also organises exchanges in the form of territorial seminars between training professionals as well as very concrete experience in occupational mobility that has already involved 60 young people with low qualifications: French trainee chefs are attending a training course in Catalonia while their Catalan counterparts are doing the same in the Toulouse region. 'In this instance too, it was not easy to arrange,' explains Angels Font Burés, who piloted the scheme. 'The French trainees have an employment contract with an employer, which is not the case for the Catalans, who

have student status. Fortunately the restaurant owners entered into the spirit of it and agreed to release their apprentices for the length of the training course.'

Xavier Farriols Sender stresses the importance of developing cooperation over time: 'Interreg gave us time and time is crucial. Time, first of all, to get to know the partners. That took the whole of the first year. Then you have to be able to count on a degree of continuity — we missed a similar opportunity in the hairdressing sector because the new French partner had not been informed properly.'

Joan Luria i Pagès, who heads the East Zone Technical Unit for the Interreg IIIA France–Spain programme, sums up the general feeling: 'For the project promoters, Interreg is proof that long-term cooperation is possible.'

'There are still a few imperfections,' notes Jean-Marie Blanc, 'but overall, I believe that we can be pleased with the progress made. It took a year to get over the teething problems. We were surprised by the number of applications. The operators were on the starting blocks and we had to apply the brakes a little. But we were prepared for all the problems. Those we encountered — refocusing of objectives, the competences of the promoters — are of the kind you find with all projects and programmes. Cross-border cooperation simply complicates things a little more. What matters is the desire to act between regions and in the service of the project promoters. We must be modest and ambitious at the same time. Make a realistic assessment and take realistic action, while remaining focused on the "ideal" objectives set by the Commission, whose role is to place the bar as high as possible — which is only normal. You then need a method for working together and systematic agreements on all the key points. Finally, you have to be imaginative and to think outside the administrative culture.'

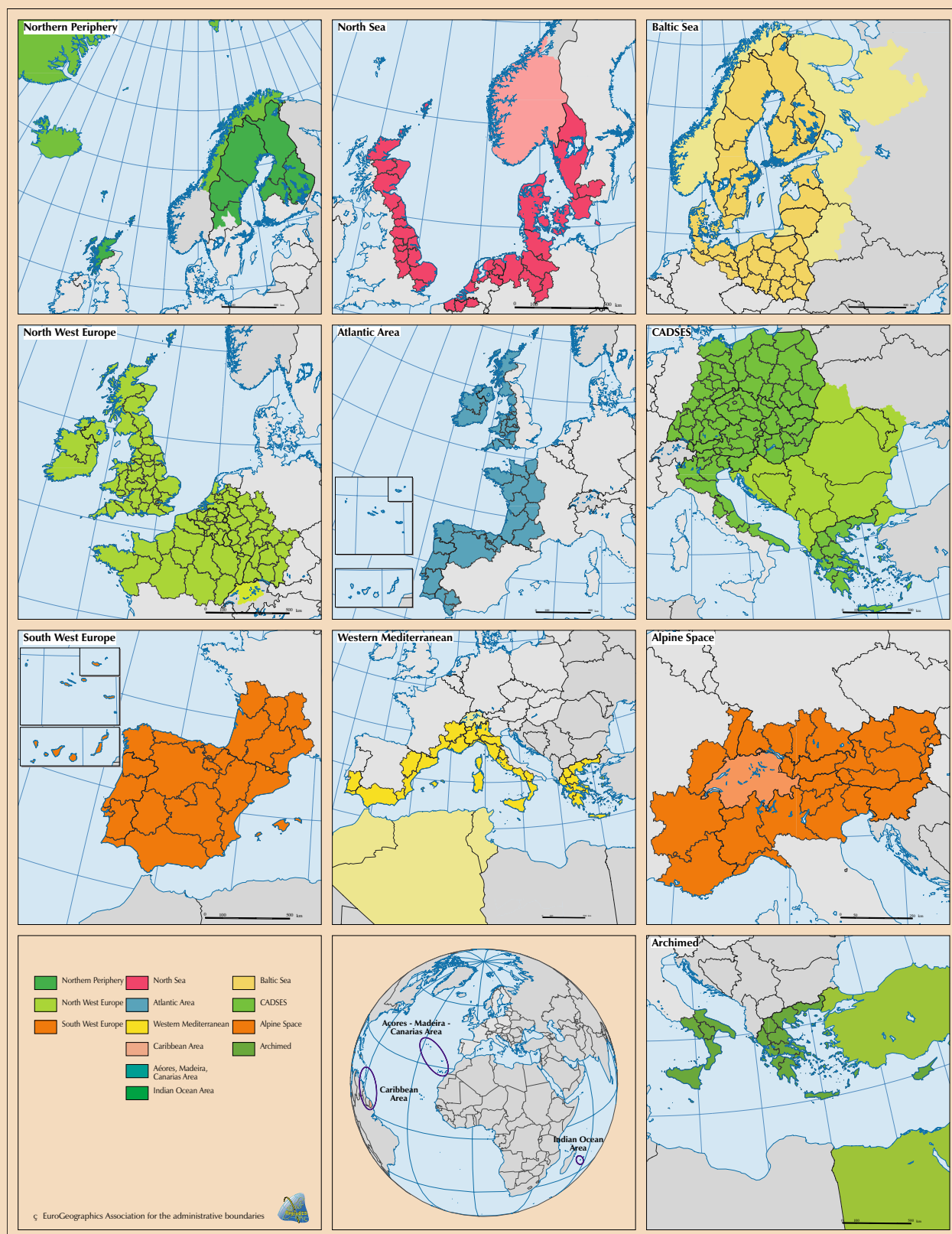
To find out more: <http://aquitaine.fr>



PortilHon project: summer meetings to improve living conditions for disabled people.



Interreg III B: transnational cooperation



ALPINE SPACE

AlpEnergyWood: wood as an energy source



Total cost: EUR 1 831 700

EU contribution: EUR 851 000

'The main aim of the AlpEnergyWood project is to make the knowledge and best practice of the professionals, local authorities and citizens of nine regions in the Alpine space more generally available for the purposes of promoting a local energy source: wood fuel. More specifically, there is a need to bring the actors together and facilitate their access to knowledge on the subject via a website, to make this renewable energy source known to the general public, to study the feasibility of industrial structures for wood fuel production and to lay the foundations for vocational training in this field by means of new communication technologies.'

Frédéric Douard, *Director of the ITEBE (Institut technique européen du bois-énergie)*
frederic.douard@itebe.org
www.alpenergywood.org

CADSES

LHASA: revitalising high-rise housing estates



Total cost: EUR 1 801 220

EU contribution: EUR 1 122 512

'High-rise housing estates can play an important role in the development of competitive regional areas and cities. The LHASA project aims, on the basis of integrated development plans, to support initiatives that improve the socioeconomic situation of high-rise housing estates while also making it possible to renovate and convert empty buildings for other uses. This will render the towns and urban areas of the new Member States more attractive. The Italian and German partners will be running pilot projects to develop strategies to combat social exclusion and the deterioration of the living environment. The results will be disseminated through the CADSES cooperation area.'

Ansgar Tesch, *District of Marzahn-Hellersdorf (Berlin)*
ansgar.tesch@ba-mh.verwalt-berlin.de

NORTHERN PERIPHERY

DESERVE: improving services in remote and rural areas



Total cost: EUR 2 251 542

EU contribution: EUR 1 642 811

'The DESERVE project aims to establish the transferability of models of service delivery to remote and rural areas among the participating partner regions within the northern periphery. Each participating region implements a project in its native region utilising a model or elements of various models tested previously by a partner region in its own region. The emphasis is on models of service delivery rather than on the specific service provided in itself. The rationale is also to transcend sectors of activity so as to transfer the lessons learned in one sector to another. The partners can also test to what extent a particular model can be adapted to their local context.'

Helen Betts-Brown, *project coordinator*
Helen.Betts-Brown@scvo.org.uk

NORTH-WEST EUROPE

NOAH: flood prevention, water management and crisis management



Total cost: EUR 6 500 000

EU contribution: EUR 3 250 000

'Clear and rapid information is essential for flood prevention. The NOAH Germano-Dutch partnership is developing a new approach to flood management in the Rhine-Meuse basin, based on two major principles. First, it is necessary to respond as quickly and effectively as possible to periods of high water in the partner zones, by means of the Fliwas (flood information and warning system) computer system as tried and tested in Cologne, Karlsruhe and three areas of the Netherlands. The other NOAH principle is that of "flood partnerships" between government bodies, the other stakeholders and the general public. Through active participation in flood management, we are seeking to increase awareness of water-related issues.'

Ludolph Wentholt, *project leader*, and **Bob Pengel**, *Foundation for Applied Water Research*
noah@stowa.nl
www.noah-interreg.net

Conference of the Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)

'Bottom-up cooperation between the regions'

Philippe Cichowlaz, Director of Regional Policy and Territorial Planning at the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR)



For more than 15 years, the CPMR, which today represents some 150 regions in the EU or neighbouring territories, has been investing in cooperation between regions. Whether in terms of financial resources, methodology or project quality, major progress has been made since the very first ERDF provisions in this field. This growing strength has led to our association lending its support to projects that are less immediately operational and more forward looking, thereby seeking to encourage new development dynamics. It is for this reason that the CPMR is currently participating in three strategic projects under Interreg IIIB.

> The **Ateliers méditerranéens d'aménagement du territoire** (Mediterranean spatial planning workshops) — AMAT: piloted by the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region in partnership with the Institut de la Méditerranée, nine regions on the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean are participating in AMAT as part of the drive for innovative regional policy. First of all, it was necessary to study the exact conditions for pursuing these policies in the EU's Mediterranean countries in order to open the door to projects with a major territorial impact ('structuring' projects) for the next programming period. Next, it was necessary to exchange territorial best practice between the various regions in preparation for actions that will be eligible under the future post-2006 European territorial cooperation objective, such as the prevention of major risk, coastal protection, innovation networks, etc.

> The **Atlantic spatial development perspective** (ASDP), which involves exploring the possibilities for a more polycentric development of the Atlantic area, according to the principles of the European spatial development perspective (ESDP): about 20 Atlantic regions participate in the ASDP project, which is implemented by our Porto 'Forward Studies' unit. On the basis of an analysis of socioeconomic, demographic and environmental trends in the areas comprising the Atlantic area, this project seeks to define the following: on one hand, **strategic proposals** to be submitted to the European and interregional as well as the regional and national actors in the interests

of better structuring of the Atlantic coastline; on the other hand, **cooperation themes** for post-2006 projects, with a view to reducing structural weaknesses in this area and making it more attractive compared with more central and competitive regions. A series of workshops organised for this purpose will be attended by, both, institutional players (regional and local authorities, through the 'Conference of towns in the Atlantic arc') and socioeconomic players (universities and research centres, regional and economic and social committees via the transatlantic network (TN), port authorities, companies, etc.).

> A transverse project devoted to issues of **maritime security**, already mentioned in *Inforegio Panorama* No 15.

On a more ad hoc basis, we have been involved as experts in various projects such as 'Baltic palette', which produced a passionate exchange of experiences, and an Interact project. We are also participating in a new Mediterranean project known as 'Stratmed-Medisdec', launched in the framework of the current programming period. Promoted by the Latium region, this will be partly based on the conclusions of the AMAT project.

Finally, the project in which we are currently most active is of a quite exceptional nature: 'Europe of the sea' is harnessing the efforts of almost 30 regions together with the CPMR secretariat in preparing a Green Paper on Europe's maritime dimension and the role of the regions in this respect.

In line with our experiences, our expectations for 2007–13 are essentially based on a strengthening of the strategic nature of projects to come, without neglecting the inherent added value of smaller scale projects. This does not necessarily mean bigger budgets, but rather increased coordination and involvement on the part of the various parties. One of the biggest difficulties is establishing genuine partnerships between States and between the networks of socio-professional actors as, in exercising their competences, the regions have several years' advantage in this field. Will they succeed in stimulating cooperation from below, bringing the other players in their wake? That is the all-important question.

Contact: philippe.cichowlaz@crpm.org
Internet: www.crpm.org



Emilia-Romagna (Italy)

'How the Emilia-Romagna region has accepted the Interreg challenge'

Lodovico Gherardi, member of the Interreg IIIB Cadses Steering Committee, and
Michele Migliori, coordinator of the Interreg IIIB and IIIC (Emilia-Romagna region) pro-



Following the positive experience of its participation in Interreg IIC between 1994 and 1999, the Emilia-Romagna region decided to be actively involved in the three strands of Interreg III: under strand A for its coastal provinces in the Adriatic cross-border programme; under strand B through participation in the Cadses programme (Central, Adriatic, Danube, south-eastern Europe space) — for which it is coordinator for the Italian regions — and in the MEDOCC programme (western Mediterranean); and under Interreg IIIC for the eastern area.

Today, Emilia-Romagna is involved in 120 cooperation projects representing investments of some EUR 20 543 000 from the ERDF, broken down as follows: 15 cross-border projects (including eight as lead partner), 30 Cadses projects (including 10 as lead partner), 26 MEDOCC projects (including three as lead partner) and 49 Interreg IIIC projects (including eight as lead partner). Of these projects, 58 were submitted by the territorial authorities and the others by the regional authorities directly. About 1 200 partnerships have been established in 50 countries. About 85 % of these partnerships involve public or private entities from the EU countries (75 % in the old Member States and 25 % in the new Member States) and 15 % from third countries, most of them in the Balkans. Emilia-Romagna is also participating in the Interact programme as lead partner of the 'RE-ACT' (regional actors in Interreg cooperation) project.

Most projects concern sectors of intervention that relate directly to territorial development policies. Environment tops the list of fields covered, with 32 projects. In this respect, the fight against all forms of pollution and the sustainable management of resources — both inland and coastal — has received most attention. Mobility and logistics is another important field (13 projects). The aim here is to develop and share innovative methods for optimal management of goods transport flows. From a strategic and political point of view, the fields of local development (12 projects) and spatial planning (10 projects) are also important. In its activities, the Emilia-Romagna region is trying to take into account the results of studies carried out in the framework of the ESPON programme in order to complete its 'tool kit' for regional spatial planning.

Interreg is clearly arousing growing interest at local and regional level. The possibility of establishing partnerships with distant and thus different structures and institutions and of sharing experiences on an in-

ternational scale has resulted in the regional administration improving the quality of its services. We are also seeing a shift away from a local view — one that attaches little importance to the added value derived from cooperation — and towards an awareness of the growth opportunities offered by international relations. In this respect, we stress that nearly all the partners and all the project coordinators selected at the time of previous calls have submitted proposals for the current calls, even though it is a fact that the Interreg programmes are extremely difficult from a management point of view. This means that these partners believe that the added value of international cooperation makes the difficulties worthwhile and also that they have acquired valuable experience that will enable them to confront these difficulties again.



Offices of the Emilia-Romagna region in Bologna.

In this final stage of programming, the services concerned by the European programmes ⁽¹⁾ are making maximum use of resources to help the regional actors involved in Interreg projects and to meet the ever growing expectations of the territory. Every effort is also being made to improve coordination both inside and outside the regional administration, so that it can become a 'one-stop shop' for European cooperation in the service of all the regional actors. The experience acquired in participating in the Interreg III initiative constitutes a valuable knowledge base for the next stage of European territorial cooperation that will begin in 2007 with the new Structural Funds programme and new neighbourhood programmes.

To find out more:

http://www.regione.emilia-romagna.it/wcm/infoagenda2000/sezioni/sez_iniziative_comunitarie/interregIII

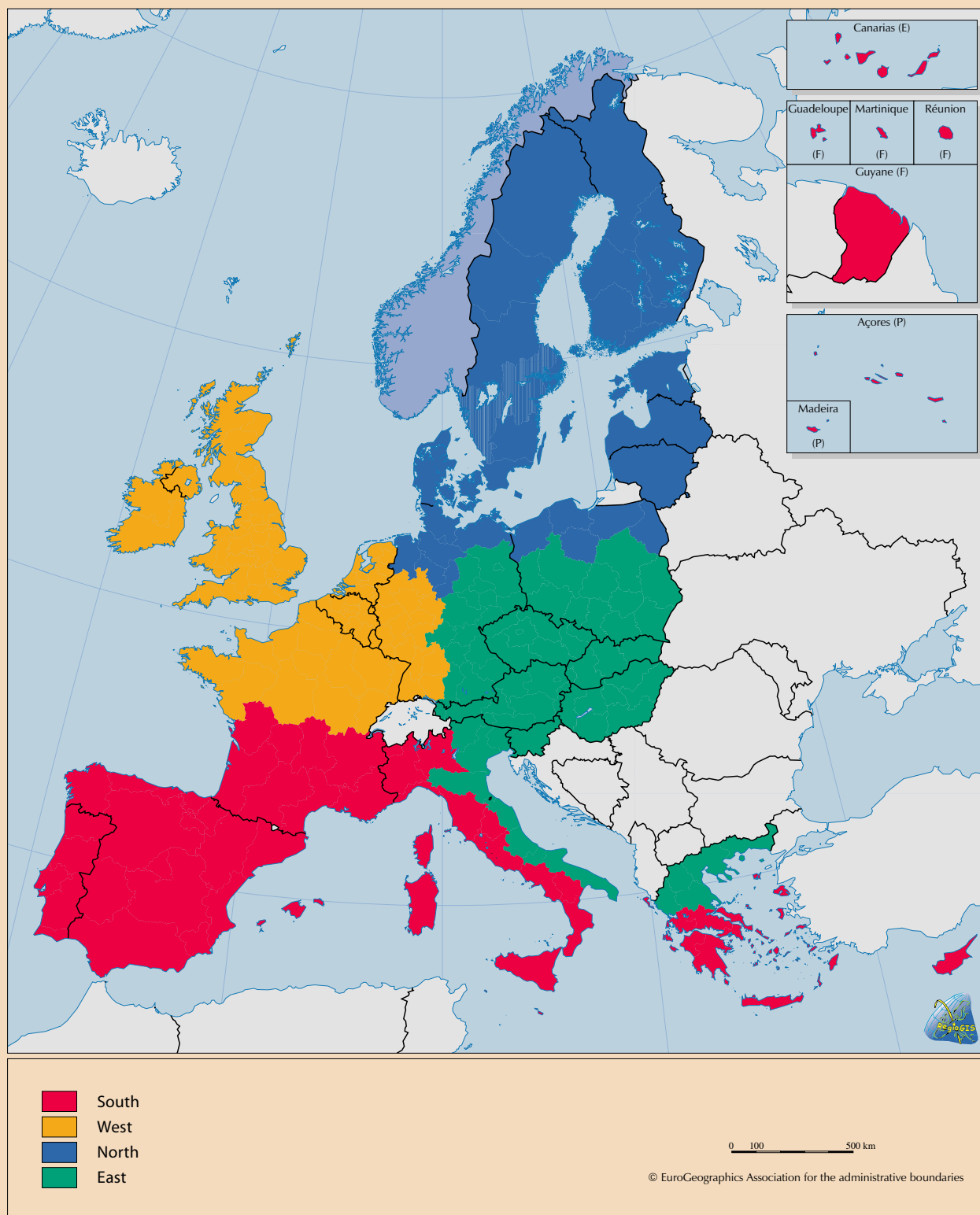
Contacts:

lgherardi@regione.emilia-romagna.it
mmigliori@regione.emilia-romagna.it

⁽¹⁾ Direzione generale Programmi e intese, relazioni europee e cooperazione internazionale (Directorate-General for Programmes and Agreements, European Relations and International Cooperation).



Interreg III C: interregional cooperation



NORTH

STIMENT: innovative approaches for enterprise creation



Total cost: EUR 3 400 000
EU contribution: EUR 2 050 000

'The STIMENT (STIMulating new ways of ENTrepreneurship) project seeks to improve entrepreneurship in four regions where this is particularly necessary (Swedish far north, Greater Poland, southern Finland–Häme and Lorraine) and to pilot innovative approaches to enterprise creation in the Province of Brescia (Lombardy). The aim is to encourage the development of partnerships between socioeconomic actors in the five participating regions in order to increase entrepreneurial knowledge and skills by exchanging experiences and transferring tools, methods and policies. Stiment places particular emphasis on three fields: economic intelligence, e-learning and logistics.'

Mats-Rune Bergström, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten
mats-rune.bergstrom@ac.lst.se
www.stiment.net

WEST

DICE: cooperation focused on digital technologies



Total cost: EUR 1 052 000
EU contribution: EUR 624 000

'The DICE ('Digital innovation through cooperation in Europe') project focuses on exchanging experiences among eight regions that are preparing to install digital terrestrial television and all the related services this enables. DICE is placing the emphasis on regional development and the promotion of SMEs in the media and telecommunications industry. The project covers the many facets of this new technology — such as consumer relations, common standards, new applications, new markets, business models, and the legal and regulatory framework — and will also measure the impact this technical progress could have on regional development. While identifying and transferring best practice (by means of a manual), the ultimate aim is to encourage, in the participating regions, the development of a competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy that creates jobs.'

Ingrid Walther, Government of Berlin, Information and Communication Technologies Division
ingrid.walther@senwaf.verwalt-berlin.de
www.dice-online.net

SOUTH

VINTUR: European oenotourism network



Total cost: EUR 1 319 900
EU contribution: EUR 759 950

'VINTUR'S overall mission is to create, develop and consolidate a European area of wine-growing regions and towns as a platform for closer cooperation between the economic actors and the authorities and for the spread of best practice. The expected results include: the creation of a permanent forum for the pooling of quality information, an improvement in mutual knowledge, the development of a wine-based tourism strategy, the drafting and circulation of a "European oenotourism charter" and the development of new methods to promote tourism and wine-growing.'

Toni Alujas, Vilafranca del Penedès Town Hall
talujas@ajvilafranca.org
www.vintur.org

INTERACT

IQ-Train: network of Interreg managers



Total cost: EUR 540 000
EU contribution: EUR 270 000

'IQ-Train is the network of the administrative authorities that operate the Interreg Community initiative. This pilot project is based on previous Interreg experiences and involves implementing a device for the transfer of know-how for and by the Interreg actors — especially members of the steering and monitoring committees — in order to contribute to successful enlargement by facilitating the integration of the managing authorities of the new EU Member States.'

Sabine Rosenberger, IQ-Train Secretary
Sabine.Rosenberger@noel.gv.at
www.iq-train.net

Third progress report on cohesion

The state of the regions demands greater solidarity

In May 2005, Commissioner Danuta Hübner presented the 'Third progress report on cohesion' ⁽¹⁾, which takes stock of the regions of the enlarged European Union in terms of revenue, jobs and productivity. Sixty-four regions, or one quarter of the EU population, have a per capita GDP that is less than 75 % of the EU average.

The enlarged EU shows considerable disparities in wealth: in 2003, the per capita GDP ranged from 41 % of the EU average in Latvia to 215 % of the EU average in Luxembourg. Ireland is the EU's second most prosperous country with a GDP of 132 % of the EU average. All the new Member States show a per capita GDP of less than 90 % of the EU-25 average; in Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania and Bulgaria it is less than half this level.

In 2002, the per capita GDP ranged from 189 % of the EU-25 average in the 10 most prosperous regions to 36 % in the 10 least prosperous regions. More than a quarter of the EU population, living in 64 regions, had a per capita GDP of less than 75 % of the average. In the new Member States, this was the case for 90 % of the population, except in the regions of Prague, Bratislava and Budapest and for Cyprus and Slovenia. In the EU-15, where this applies to just 13 % of the population, the low income regions are concentrated in the south of Greece, Spain and Italy as well as in Portugal and the eastern German *Länder*.

Employment rates and competitiveness. National employment rates, which stood at an average of 62.9 % for the EU-25 in 2003, remain well short of the 70 % target set for 2010 by the Lisbon strategy, with the exception of four Member States: Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. In Poland, the employment rate is just 51.2 %. For the EU as a whole, some 22 million additional jobs are needed to achieve this 70 % target. In the new Member States, employment would have to increase by one quarter to reach this 70 % target, representing an additional 7 million jobs. At the regional level, the picture is more diverse than at national level. Just one quarter of the EU-25 population resides in regions where the 70 % employment target rate has been met, meaning that employment in 200 of the EU's 254 regions is running below the target rate.

Differences in productivity between Member States are even more marked: productivity is less than

30 % of the EU-25 average in Poland and the three Baltic States, but over 150 % in Luxembourg and Ireland. Productivity in all the EU-15 countries, with the exception of Portugal, exceeds that of any of the new Member States.

Internal disparities. Regional disparities inside countries are more pronounced than at national level but are declining: the ratio between the GDP shares of, respectively, the most and least prosperous regions fell from 12 to 8.5 during the period 1995–02. The greatest internal disparities are in Hungary, where the 20 % of the population living in the most prosperous regions represent 2.6 times the share of the GDP of the least prosperous regions. It is also in Hungary where this figure has increased most since 1995. The Czech Republic, Slovakia, the United Kingdom and Belgium also have high internal disparities. Greece, Germany, the Netherlands and Finland have the lowest. Italy is the only country where regional disparities have clearly fallen, although they have also been reduced somewhat in Spain and Austria.

In addition to these data, the progress report also provides information on ways in which the Member States and regions have benefited from the mid-term review of the Structural Funds to adjust their development programmes.

Finally, the report looks ahead to the post-2006 period. In this respect, the level of disparities recorded in the EU demonstrates the need to continue to pursue an active cohesion policy. The proposed reforms for cohesion and rural development policy, with the accent on jobs and growth, should help provide a better implementation of the Lisbon strategy. The report stresses that these measures will not only benefit from increased financial resources but also increased political support for action at the local level.

To find out more:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/reports/interim3_en.htm

Regional per capita GDP in the EU-25 ⁽¹⁾: disparities ranging from 32 % to 315 % of the EU average

The 10 highest			The 10 lowest		
1	Central London (UK)	315	1	Lublin (PL)	32
2	Brussels Capital (B)	235	2	Lower Carpathia (PL)	33
3	Luxembourg (L)	213	3	Mazovia (PL)	34
4	Hamburg (D)	188	4	Podlachia (PL)	35
5	Île-de-France (F)	176	5	Holy Cross (PL)	36
6	Vienna (A)	173	6	North Hungary (H)	37
7	Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire (UK)	162	7	Opolia (PL)	37
8	Province of Bolzano (I)	160	8	Northern Great Plain (H)	38
9	Stockholm (S)	158	9	Eastern Slovakia (SK)	39
10	Upper Bavaria (D)	158	10	Latvia (LV)	39

⁽¹⁾ In PPS (EU-25=100), year: 2002. Source: Eurostat (April 2005).

⁽²⁾ 'Third progress report on cohesion: Towards a new partnership for growth, jobs and cohesion', COM(2005) 192 final.

REGIO and networks

European funds and the environment

The WWF (World Wildlife Fund) has published *EU funding for the environment*, a European environmental funding handbook for the 2007–13 programming period. The publication analyses the regulations proposed for the Structural Funds and other structural instruments as well as the LIFE+ programme. The WWF looks at future financial options in various fields such as the protection of nature and water resources, energy efficiency and renewables, and sustainable transport. The handbook also presents 18 projects demonstrating best sustainable development practice that received aid from the Structural Funds and their structural instruments during the 2000–06 programming period.

Internet: www.panda.org/downloads/europe/eufundingforenvironmentweb.pdf

Cohesion and the Lisbon strategy

A new study assesses the contribution of the present generation of Structural Fund programmes to the Lisbon strategy in the EU-15. Carried out by the Danish Technological Institute on behalf of the Regional Policy DG, the study identifies the synergies and complementarities between the Structural Funds and the Lisbon strategy, showing how these can be encouraged at regional level.

Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/lisbon2005.pdf

Arc Latin

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona process, the Arc Latin association made a study of the most important aspects of the territorial approach for Mediterranean cooperation, such as social cohesion, migration, equal opportunities, local governance and sustainable economic development. For this purpose, the Diputació de Barcelona assembled in Barcelona, between 14 and 16 September 2005, experts and representatives from the towns of the Mediterranean and principal Euro-Mediterranean cooperation networks. The meeting made it possible to assess the current state of cooperation between the territorial authorities and prospects for the future in the context of the new neighbourhood policy. The results of these exchanges will be presented to representatives of the Member States at a Euro-Mediterranean summit scheduled for next November. The Arc Latin is an association of *diputaciones*, provinces and *départements* of the north-western Mediterranean area, covering an area from the Algarve (Portugal) to Sicily (Italy), that aims to build an area of political cooperation in the interests of social cohesion, to help rebalance Europe in the direction of the Mediterranean area and to forge links with the southern shores of the Mediterranean.

Contact: Diputació de Barcelona, Secrétariat Arc Latin. Tel. (34-93) 402 20 77

E-mail: oce.arclati@diba.es

Youth policy

Launched at the European summit on 16 and 17 June of this year, the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKC) is an observatory for youth policy, a single entry point for easy access to up-to-date information on the latest research into the situation of young people in Europe. The project is being developed in the framework of the research partnership on youth between the Council of Europe and the European Commission and is supported by a European network of correspondents. In addition to youth policy, subjects covered include participation, information, training, voluntary activities, etc. The EKC website features an application that allows searches by country, year, etc. All interested persons are welcome to sign up and participate in the EKC's development by contributing information.

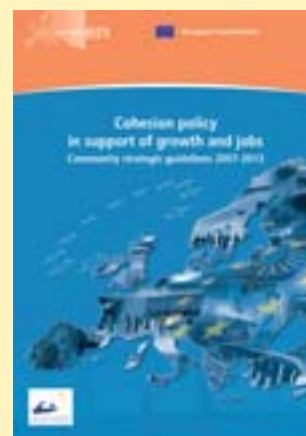
Internet: <http://www.youth-partnership.net/INTEGRATION/EKC/Intro/index.html>

REGIO agenda

Dates	Event	Place
5–7 October	'Shaping best practice' http://www.best-practice-magdeburg.de/conference.htm	Magdeburg (D)
10–13 October 2005	'Open Days — European Week of Regions and Cities' http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/opendays/about.cfm	Brussels (B)
14 and 15 November 2005	'Towards a knowledge society — The Nordic experience' http://europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/gothenburg_conference/index_en.htm	Gothenburg (S)
24 November 2005	'Financing growth and cohesion in the enlarged EU' http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional-policy/events/ifi/index.cfm	Brussels (B)
24 November 2005	'Sustainable regions: making regions work' http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/events/241105cfp.pdf	London (UK)

Latest publications

Community strategic guidelines 2007-2013



Available in the 20 official languages of the EU.

Regions matter



Structural Funds action in the 25 Member States and Bulgaria and Romania.

Multilingual product.

Third progress report on cohesion



Available in 21 languages.

<http://eic.cec.eu.int/PES>

Launched by the Enterprise and Industry DG, pan-European business cooperation schemes (PES) are designed to assist small and medium-sized enterprises in their search for business partners. No fewer than 4 000 SMEs in 30 countries and representing more than 20 economic sectors can participate in any one of the 32 matchmaking events to connect companies at leading international trade fairs over the next two years. A budget of EUR 6 million has been allocated to the scheme, which will run until September 2006.



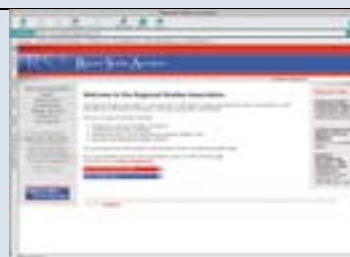
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/agriculture/rur/leaderplus>

This is the address of the new website, in 20 languages, of Leader+, the Community initiative for rural development. In addition to the latest news, it gives details of publications, activities and other matters of European interest implemented under Leader+. An 'interactive section' allows access to a range of information and networking tools, including a partner search, a database of Leader+ local action groups, details of cooperation projects and subscription to the mailing list.



<http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/>

Regional policy, development and research are the mission of the Regional Studies Association (RSA), based in the United Kingdom but with offices in a number of countries. Members include organisations and individuals (actors 'on the ground', researchers, students, etc.) from all over the world. A genuine international network dedicated to regional development, the RSA produces a number of publications (journal, newsletter, books), organises conferences and other exchanges and also keeps an online register of regional policy research.



<http://www.southwestukbrusselsoffice.com>

The website of the south-west UK office in Brussels is a good example of an information and communication tool for regional promotion. Its 'Policies and projects' page provides a very concrete presentation of local projects supported by Objective 1 or 2 programmes in various sectors.



2007–13: preparing the new generation of programmes with the Inforegio site

The Member States and the regions are preparing the upcoming 2007–13 programming period. The Inforegio website presents extensive information and important documents of interest to all the actors involved in this approach. The aim is to facilitate exchanges between these stakeholders and to inform the general public about progress made. Do not hesitate to address your questions and contributions to the Regional Policy DG.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/debate/forum_en.htm

European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional Policy
Unit 01 — Information and Communication
Thierry Daman
Avenue de Tervuren 41, B-1040 Brussels
Fax (32-2) 29-66003
E-mail: regio-info@cec.eu.int
Internet: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dgs/regional_policy/index_en.htm

Information on the European Union's regional aid
http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm

ISSN 1608-398X

© European Communities, 2005
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Printed in Belgium



Publications Office
Publications.eu.int