

COMPART - *Comparing Partnerships*

From territorial cooperation to Euroregions: what progress has been made?

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EDITOR'S COLUMN

This third issue of the COMPART project newsletter will explore some issues linked to European territorial cooperation and to Euro-region structure. In particular, the first section sets out the main characteristics of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – EGTC, the new instrument created principally for managing interventions to be implemented under the 3rd Objective of European Structural Policy (2007-2013). In addition, this first piece also touches on issues related to Euroregions, which are explored in more detail in the report on the Venice Conference (held on 6 February, 2006) for the launch of the Adriatic Euroregion.

This issue also features an interview with and an article by representatives of two other partners of the COMPART project: Mr. Graziano Lorenzon - Head of the Service for International Relations and European Integration of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia (FVG) Region - and Mr. Tullio Fernetich, delegate of the Local Democracy Agency (LDA) of Verteneglio.

The former interview describes the main features of the FVG Region's decentralised cooperation and, in particular, the experience of FVG in cooperating with Croatia and Bosnia–Herzegovina, while the latter article presents a specific mode of cooperation carried out by the LDAs which has put the creation of territorial partnerships at the very heart of their interventions.

The final part of this newsletter provides information on the main activities carried out and outputs generated within the framework of the COMPART project during the last few months. A specific section is dedicated to providing an update on other COMPART-related Interact projects.

Finally, some interesting further reading suggestions are given for readers who are interested in learning more on the topic of Euroregions.

EUROPEAN GROUPING OF TERRITORIAL COOPERATION - EGTC

Cross-border cooperation (CBC) has existed in Europe since the beginning of the '50s, when the first Euroregions were created, most of them in central-western Europe (Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland and France). In 1980, on the initiative of the Council of Europe (CoE), the Madrid Convention established a framework for regulating cross-border cooperation and for establishing administrative structures for managing relations between different territories. However, CBC became more widespread once the Interreg Community Initiative was created by the European Commission in 1990 within the framework of European Structural Policy.

For these reasons, CBC has witnessed an enormous expansion from the '90s up to today, generally revolving around Interreg-funded projects.

As it is a prerequisite that Interreg programmes be managed by entities with a separate legal identity, in many cases, Euroregions have direct responsibilities over the Interreg cycle, from the design to the management of the projects.. By contrast, other



structures such as the Work Communities, which do not have such legal status, are not entitled to manage Interreg-funded programmes directly.

Given this framework, the European Commission recognised the urgency of creating a new instrument, specifically-tailored to the management of cross-border cooperation and of Interreg in particular. A 2004 Explanatory Memorandum of the EC to the Parliament outlined how “the existing instruments, such as the European economic interest grouping on Community level or bi- or multilateral agreements between Member States have proven ill-adapted to organising a structured co-operation of structural fund programmes within the Interreg initiative during the 2000-2006 programming period”. This Memorandum represents the basis on which the Parliament and the CoE devised, in 2004, a proposal for a Regulation aimed at establishing a European Grouping for Cross-border Cooperation – EGCC. The latter was subsequently modified and, in March 2006, the amended proposal for a Regulation establishing a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – EGTC was issued by the European Parliament. The first significant change brought about by the amended version of 2006 is in the proposed instrument’s name, being renamed to refer to “territorial cooperation” and thus widening the former reference to “cross-border cooperation”. In so doing, the legislator underlined that “the grouping may cover all kind of territorial co-operation: cross-border, trans-national or inter-regional”. The EGTC is invested with legal personality and by virtue of this is “able to act, either for implementing co-operation programmes co-financed by the Community, notably by the Structural Funds, or for carrying out any other co-operation action at the sole initiative of the Member States and/or their regional and local authorities, with or without financial contribution by the Community”. In particular, this new instrument is specifically-tailored for managing cooperation programmes within the framework of the new Objective 3 of European Structural Policy (2007-2013).

The EGTC is created on the initiative of its members, which could be central governments, local and regional authorities and public law bodies. The Memorandum highlights the critical political significance of the EGTC mechanism in that that it represents, for border regions, an instrument for managing cooperation relations with other territories in a flexible and autonomous way with respect to central governments and administrations. The Memorandum also underlines the complementary role of the EGTCs with respect to other similar initiatives such as the Euroregions. Nevertheless, it is likely that these two instruments will, to some extent, overlap: the CoE, which specifically supports the Euroregions, has

demonstrated a more cautious attitude when “examining it, with a special concern about the possible consequences if the objective of the grouping is not clearly limited and about the measures for the control over its legality and over the regularity of its acts”. In a sense, the European Commission has created its own instrument for regulating and managing territorial cooperation, effectively by-passing the CoE’s own instrument, the Euroregions. However, there are two main differences between the EGTCs and the Euroregions:

- The EGTC is specifically aimed at EU Member States. In this sense, the Euroregion has a wider scope of application, which makes it preferable in the case of cooperation with non-EU areas such as the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean.
- The EGTC is always invested with legal personality whereas this is not always the case with the Euroregions. Nevertheless, the Additional Protocol to the Madrid Convention, issued in Strasbourg in 1995, evidences an intention on the part of the legislator of fostering the establishment of Euroregions invested with legal personality, thus placing them in a position to manage EU-funded programmes and projects.

The Regulation also provides guidance on the administrative organs with which the EGTCs should be endowed: an Assembly, composed of the representatives of each member and a director. Thus, while these structures are leaner than those of the Euroregions (which are generally composed of many different internal bodies), this will probably facilitate their functioning, making them, in a sense, more efficient. Although it is still too early to assess the strengths and weaknesses of an instrument intended to be launched next year, it is likely that this tool will be widely used. In fact, it will represent an opportunity, for those cross-border structures which are not invested with legal personality, to acquire a status that will allow them to effectively implement their own strategies and policies. Working communities (e.g.. Alpe-Adria), as well as Euroregions - for example, the future Adriatic Euroregion (see the report on the Venice conference below) - would be able to take full advantage of the EGTC structure, thereby acquiring legal personality and providing them with a wider scope of action.

▪ INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE ADRIATIC EUROREGION (VENICE, 6 FEBRUARY, 2006)

The conference held in Venice on the 6th of February was the latest step in the creation of the Adriatic Euroregion (AE), a project launched and driven by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the



CoE, the Istrian Region (Croatia) and the Molise Region (Italy). The establishment of the AE had already been formalized during a previous International conference, held in Termoli (8-9 November, 2004), during which the CoE and the Molise Region signed an official Protocol that “outlined the objectives and structure of the co-operation body and established an initial road map for the months following its signature”. The newly-instituted AE includes representatives from the Adriatic Regions of Italy, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Slovenia.

The Venice conference represented, or at least was intended to constitute, a further step forward towards the actual establishment of the AE. The signature of a Joint Declaration (JD) which took place at the conference should underpin a precise commitment by the main actors involved in the process. Through the JD, the signatories have committed themselves to laying down the “procedures for joining the association designated as the Adriatic Euroregion”, to participating in its future activities and to signing the annexed Statute of the AE.

Although the actual extent of the commitment is not well-defined, the Statute itself is already an important, formal accomplishment as it identifies the AE’s legal status (a non-profit association), its principles and objectives of cooperation, the rights and duties of its members, its administrative organs and its intended sources of funding. According to its Statute, the AE is endowed with 5 administrative organs: the Assembly (that “shall be known as the Adriatic Council”) and the President, which carry out a representative and decision-making role; the Executive Committees and Standing Committees, invested with technical functions; and the Board of Auditors, which carries out internal monitoring duties.

The Joint Declaration was signed by a number of institutions of different levels and natures. Indeed, on the Italian side of the Adriatic, the signatories were the Regions (FVG, Veneto, Marche, Abruzzi, Molise and Apulia) while, on the Balkan side, the signatories ranged from the national level (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Albania and of Montenegro), to the Regional (the Istrian Region, the Regional Council of Scutari) and municipal levels (the City of Dubrovnik). The JD was also signed by the CoE and by the European Parliament, the former being one the main supporters of the AE initiative.

During the second part of the conference, other Italian and Balkan institutional actors declared, at various levels, their support for the initiative as a whole, expressing their desire to participate in the near future. Of particular note was the observation of the mayor of

Aquileia (a municipality of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region) that now the AE had been established, an important step in itself, it should aspire to acquire a public law status, which would enhance its executive powers. The last panel session, dedicated to the area of transport, noted that one of the main common objectives enshrined in the AE is the development of infrastructure (such as ports and roads) and of European transport corridors. An interesting speech by the Mayor of Bar (Montenegro) stressed the importance of the Belgrade-Bar railway and, more generally, of a specific commitment and support geared to upgrading and re-opening links to the sea.

Although the Venice conference led to a formal commitment to developing cooperation within the Adriatic area under the umbrella of the Adriatic Euroregion, this process will still need to overcome many critical issues, which may be briefly summarised as follows:

- Each of the Italian Regions involved seems intent on demanding a leadership role, at least in relation to those fields in which they have particular interests. To some extent, the conference provided an opportunity for each Region to outline its added value: Molise and Veneto were the first to support the creation of the Adriatic Euroregion; FVG is the only Region which shares a land border with the Balkans; Abruzzi is, at present, the managing authority for the Interreg Italy-Adriatic programme; and Marche has boasted a strong cooperation policy with many of the Balkan countries since 1990, whereas over the last decade Apulia has been a hub for immigration flows from the Balkans and from Albania in particular. The combination of these diverse characteristics may either constitute a solid foundation on which to build or a clash of interests that could eventually see the AE ship running aground on the shores of a stormy Adriatic sea.
- The Balkan institutions showed a genuine interest in a process that could eventually foster the development of better linkages with the Italian territorial system. However, there could be some problems of accountability and of representation due to the different institutional levels that will sit together on the Adriatic Council.
- Historically, Euroregions have encountered problems due to the different powers with which their members were invested: Regions with special powers, federal regions, and municipalities, which all possess varying degrees of autonomy from the Central State and perform different types of executive functions. This has often led to different



interpretations of the role that the Euroregions should perform, which has hindered their functioning and eventually led to their role diminishing.

Given that it is still too early to gain a clear picture as to how these issues will be worked through, it seems advisable to wait until the conclusion of the next conference - due to be held in Pola (Croatia) in July 2006 - before making any definitive observations.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA REGION, CROATIA AND BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

FVG decentralised cooperation is based on the co-development principle, whereby the activities undertaken foster both the development of partner countries and of the Region itself. This aim can be achieved by creating coordination and synergies between, on the one hand, the economic internationalisation of FVG and, on the other, international cooperation and human development activities (according to a comprehensive approach to cooperation). Hence, within the Regional administration, two different services share responsibility for decentralised cooperation: the service dealing with peace and solidarity policies and the service for international relations and European integration.

These two services are responsible for preparing the "Regional programme on development cooperation and international partnership" which establishes - in compliance with regional law no. 19/2000 - the objectives, priority areas of cooperation and the characteristics of the interventions to be carried out.

Since 2000, FVG has adopted an approach to decentralised cooperation anchored in the creation of territorial partnerships with third country counterparts. This approach to cooperation privileges the establishment of a 'framework agreement' involving all the various local actors (local authorities, associations, universities, social and economic partners, the private sector, etc.) from all the territories concerned. In addition, FVG decentralised cooperation encourages the creation of networks ("thematic partnerships") between FVG actors and those from the other beneficiary countries.

FVG decentralised cooperation is implemented both by indirectly co-financing those projects proposed by the territorial actors and directly financing projects of regional interest. The total amount of resources available in 2001-2003 was equal to €2,890,426.03.

South-eastern European countries are considered a priority area for cooperation because of their geographical proximity and the longstanding relations between FVG and other regional actors with these countries. Decentralised cooperation with these countries is mainly aimed at sharing the experience that the Region has gained in the management of territorial policies (such as in the areas of welfare, training, economic development, institution building and good governance).

▪ INTERVIEW WITH MR. GRAZIANO LORENZON, HEAD OF THE FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA SERVICE FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

What are the main issues that underlie the cooperation relationship between FVG and Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Cooperation with these countries is a traditional component of the FVG Region's international relations, that has always been closely-linked with areas such as the economic sector in particular. Our enterprises have regarded these countries as a market outlet for their products since before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Trieste and Gorizia, in particular, have continued to consider the Slovenia and Croatia territories as a hinterland, as indeed they were until the end of the Second World War.

But it is particularly since the fall of the Berlin Wall that the economic system has expressed a growing interest in this area.

Which particular territories is your Region interested in?

We particularly focus on Croatia, both at an economic and institutional level, especially on those regions which have historical links with FVG, and in particular the Istria Region, where strong Italian communities still exist. Furthermore, FVG has always paid attention to the entire Croatian coastal area and to the Croatian Region of Eastern Slavonia, where we are implementing projects financed under Italian law no. 84/2001 regarding the reconstruction and development of the Balkans area.

There is a strong complementarity between our productive activities and those of these territories. For this reason, the Regional Council will soon sign agreements with these areas which aim, above all, to develop the wood industry. By contrast, relations with Bosnia-Herzegovina in this sector are less-developed.



In addition, it is worth noting that there has been an evolution in the role played in these territories by our enterprises. In the past, they acted only as buyers of raw materials. Now, we have started to import semi-finished products.

How have relations between the two areas changed in the wake of the period of humanitarian emergencies?

In reality, the relationship did not change substantially. Perhaps, the real evolution concerns the attitude of these countries towards the Italian small-enterprise model. The model has been deemed more readily reproducible than the model offered by big enterprise due to the fact that the territory is not able to produce all the external economies conducive to the formation of new enterprises. This consideration is of particular importance for the FVG Region, which can contribute to the development of small-sized enterprises in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina by transferring the know-how acquired in this sector.

What kind of evolution have relations between these two territories witnessed in the last year?

First of all, initially economic relations were mainly commercial, based on import/export activities. However, currently, our enterprises are investing in these areas in order to strengthen their competitiveness, since there is a growing diversification of trade due to internationalization of all the sectors of the regional economy. Within this changing context, the Region has been asked to play a key role, by providing the necessary institutional support to the economic actors involved.

Can you explain the exclusion of the Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto Regions from territorial cooperation under ENPI?

On completion of the relevant negotiations, FVG and Veneto were not considered eligible for cooperation under the "South Mediterranean Sea Basin programme" to be implemented within the framework of the ENPI -European Neighbourhood and partnership Instrument- cross-border component commencing from 2007. FVG is only able to participate in the ENPI CBC sea basin programme as an adjoining region. In fact, Trieste is the real dividing line between northern and southern Europe as it represents the gateway to northern and central Europe for the Mediterranean countries. Considering that it is the northernmost harbour of the Mediterranean Sea, its exclusion from the programme is paradoxical.

TERRITORIAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LOCAL DEMOCRACY AGENCY OF VERTENEGLIO

Article by Tullio Fernetich, delegate of the Local Democracy Agency for Istria – Verteneglio

The Local Democracy Agencies (LDAs) were created in 1993 by the Permanent Conference of the Local and Regional Powers of Europe (CoE) to initiate cooperation between local and regional authorities and NGOs in war-ravaged regions of the Former Yugoslavia, with the aim of: promoting the development of civil society and local democracy, establishing a permanent presence in the host countries and regions, and facilitating the application in the territory of the ethics and constitutive principles of the CoE.

The LDA of Verteneglio (Istria) was founded ten years ago (on 5 May 1996) in order to pursue two different objectives. First, on the basis of the 1991 census, it was determined that, notwithstanding the post-Second World War events and population movements in these territories, Verteneglio was the only municipality in Croatia where the native-born Italian citizens constituted the majority. While today this fact might be considered to be of mere statistical importance, at the time it was felt that this presence had deeper implications. Secondly, this municipality wished and felt compelled to contribute to preventing a repetition of the events of the post-war years affecting this territory and this group of people, as well as those which had occurred in Croatia during the most recent conflict.

The LDA of Verteneglio has proved a good visibility mechanism and a driving force for addressing the problems, specificities and needs that are ethnically and historically peculiar to the municipality and region. In particular, the LDA of Verteneglio has worked hard to promote the inclusion of citizens and young people in public life.

The inclusion of citizens in public life should go beyond the right to vote. NGOs should not be seen as an obstacle or as an imposed burden to bear, but rather as partners in the management of the territory and in the growth of society. As far as the inclusion of young people in public life is concerned, it is important that this is not interpreted as an exercise in setting parameters which have to be met but as a response to the real need for reconstruction, to be pursued through education of citizens and supporting, encouraging and



defending freedom of expression and the independence of the media. Moreover, there is a need for efficiency and transparency in order for problems encountered by ethnic minorities at local and regional levels to be faced, and a need to facilitate growth in civic sense and to reduce corruption and abuse of power.

LDAs have demonstrated a great capacity for adaptation to the differences existing among the various territories in which they operate and to changing needs. At the beginning of our work, Croatia was a country at war, awaiting membership of the CoE. Today Croatia is a peaceful country and an official candidate for European Union membership. The pre-accession process is a complex task that should engage the whole of society at all levels, even if I often get a sense that, at local level, this process is too often perceived as a “business” transaction between central governments and Europe.

Municipalities and regions can no longer limit their centre of interest and action to the confines of their territory. They need to stimulate and encourage contacts with foreign territories and institutions in order to create territorial partnerships and to contribute, bottom-up, to the evolution of political systems, to the establishment of true democracy, to the growth of civil society and to the fostering of human rights and fundamental liberties.

It is worth stressing that every LDA project is based on an agreement defining the concrete commitments of participating local and regional institutions. Each partner contributes to the implementation of the project developed by the LDA with their technical know-how and financial means.

The keywords of our mission are local autonomy, civil society and citizens. Indeed, the Partners of the LDA of Verteneglio are the Municipality of Verteneglio, the Istrian Region, the City of Bellinzona, the Municipality of Greve in Chianti, the Municipality of Russi, the City of Portogruaro, the City of Ravenna, Causes Communes Switzerland, the Association Marevivo (FVG) and the Circolo di cultura istro-veneta “Istria” (Trieste), and the last partner to join, the Autonomous Region of FVG.

The first Policy Dialogue Workshop organised under the COMPART project on the 10th anniversary (5 May, 2006) of the creation of our LDA, was an occasion to celebrate that event together with the addition of the FVG Region to the partners of the Verteneglio LDA. The FVG Region, with its potential, experience and capacities, represents a great boost and assurance for the LDA and its entire partnership.

However, for the Istrian Region, FVG symbolises something more, as both regions share a common history, made up of traditions and collaborations. The desire to build another bridge of cooperation through the LDA is very important since, unfortunately, Istrian institutions have in the past often found it easier to build official partnerships with other much further removed realities.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE COMPART PROJECT

Since January 2006, when the first newsletter was issued, the COMPART project has produced various and interesting outcomes.

As far as research activities are concerned, the Concept Paper has been completed and the stakeholders’ analysis has almost been concluded. The preparation of the Concept Paper was the very first activity to be undertaken within the ambit of the COMPART project and it represents the starting point for the stakeholders’ and benchmarking analysis. The main aim of the Concept Paper is to clarify and establish a common language on the basic concepts and issues underlying the application of the partnership principle in the cross-border cooperation component of the ENPI, IPA – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance - and under the territorial cooperation component of EU Cohesion Policy.

As mentioned, the stakeholders’ analysis has almost been completed. Each expert prepared an “Overview on the decentralisation process” in relation to the regions they work for. These documents represented important tools in carrying out the said analysis and the regional stakeholders’ analysis, as well as in preparing the final stakeholders’ analysis report. The latter document is still in draft form but the final version will be available soon.

The preliminary results of the stakeholders’ analysis were presented for the first time during the second experts meeting of the COMPART project, organised by FAMSI and held in Cordoba (on 17-18 March 2006). On this occasion, CeSPI, which is responsible for the scientific coordination of the project, presented the results of the stakeholders’ analysis based on the stakeholders’ analysis reports prepared by each expert. The latter had the opportunity to share with each other the problems encountered and the results obtained during the conduct of the interviews and analysis of the responses given by stakeholders in their respective regions.



Furthermore, during the Cordoba expert meeting, the COMPART experts agreed on the methodology to be followed for the benchmarking analysis, the next activity to be carried out, which in contrast to the stakeholders' analysis will focus on the implementation of the partnership principle at project level.

On the basis of the analysis conducted, the COMPART project has also contributed to the consultation process regarding the implementing rules for IPA and ENPI CBC, with recommendations being forwarded to the European Commission in the document entitled "Observations from the COMPART project regarding the cross-border components of ENPI and IPA".

The main conclusions of the stakeholders' analysis were also presented during the first Policy Dialogue Workshop of the COMPART project, organised by the Local Democracy Agency of Brtonigla (or Verteneglio) (Croatia), in collaboration with the Autonomous Region of FVG (on 5 May, 2006). The event brought together technical experts and political representatives from the two areas concerned, as well as representatives from central governments and from the COMPART project.

One of the most recent outcomes of the COMPART project has been the launch of the COMPART website (<http://www.compartproject.org/>). The website represents a useful tool for people who would like to be updated on the reform process of European external cooperation policies, and especially on the implementation of the partnership principle. It will be updated with the main documents prepared and events organised within the framework of the project, but also with other documents and news concerning the reform process of external territorial cooperation under ENPI and IPA.

Finally, the website also contains a FORUM by means of which issues linked to external territorial cooperation or to the results produced by the COMPART project may be explored further. The forum is aimed at all persons involved in the programming of the future cross-border components of ENPI and IPA and of the new Objective 3, in order that suggestions and proposals may be solicited.

NEWS ON COMPART-RELATED PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

▪ NEWS ON OTHER INTERACT PROJECTS

RE-ACT – Regional Actors in INTERREG Cooperation

The project's activities started in March 2005. The two working groups, respectively for research and for the analysis of Interreg programmes and projects, have recently issued their final reports. On the basis of these results, a third working group is preparing a handbook for the management of Interreg projects. Additionally, the project has organised a cycle of three training seminars on: "Communicating Interreg projects" (held in Bologna on 25-26 January, 2006) and the "Evaluation Process – Programmes and Projects" (in Waterford, on 10 April, 2006). The third seminar - held in Milan on 22 May – concerned "Interreg: From Community Initiative to Objective Programme", with a special focus on how to prepare Interreg projects. The next seminar will take place in June in Palma de Majorca (Spain). On this occasion, the final report on project analysis will be presented.

Finally, a staff-exchange programme has been launched with the purpose of sharing good practices among the partners.

ALSO - Achievement of The Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategy Objectives by Interreg

The ALSO project (€1.3 million) was put forward by the Marche Region and developed together with Sviluppo Marche S.p.A. – SVIM. The participating countries are Italy, Hungary, Bulgaria, Finland, Lithuania, Estonia, France, Spain, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands.

ALSO aims at achieving territorial cooperation through effective tools for regional planners and decision-makers. Its goal is to establish an operational link between the concrete territorial projects funded within the Interreg programme and the re-launched Lisbon Strategy. The ALSO project will provide effective operational tools to help regional development planners, Interreg programme managers and Interreg project developers evaluate project impacts and results in light of the Lisbon Objectives and enhance territorial planning.

Thanks to the work of the ALSO Scientific Committee (composed of experts from the ALSO partners) and to the collaboration of 15 partners, the deep analysis phase has now been completed and the final indicators for the evaluation model have been identified. On the basis of the information collected, the Scientific Committee has started to identify best practices. The final evaluation model will be approved at the Barcelona Workshop to be held in October 2006. The model will be subsequently applied to selected projects in order to assess what impact the projects and their areas have had vis-à-vis the Lisbon Strategy Objectives.



INTER-A PROJECT - Best practice analysis in terms of Managing Tools for Cooperation Programmes and Support Tools for SMEs in Innovation & Internationalisation process

This INTER-A project focuses on two main themes (axes) and its objectives are:

- to identify and analyze the practices and procedures used to facilitate the management of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation projects (the cooperation axis);
- to select tools that support innovation and internationalisation of SMEs (the innovation axis).

The aim is to facilitate the exchange of and access to the diverse tools and methods implemented by partner organizations, by the proponents of other initiatives and by Interreg authorities, so as to extend cooperation towards other territories (with the possibility of replicating the approaches) and improve the efficiency and adaptability of Interreg programmes. Above all, the project aims to contribute to the improvement of the next programming period of Structural Funds and allow an exchange of points of view to reduce the gap between European strategic policies, operational programming and efficient project implementation.

In order to reach these objectives, the partners of the project, which represent 15 European business and innovation support organizations for small and medium-sized enterprises (BICs) from Spain, Italy, Germany, Greece, the United Kingdom, France, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal and the Czech Republic, have conducted a survey at the European level focussing on tools, methods and processes used in cooperation programmes. Having regard to the strategic perspective for the 2007-2013 territorial cooperation Objective, the open debate on the main results of present programming period initiatives which took place between representatives of the European Commission, Managing Authorities and Technical Secretariats during the Rome European Workshop, organised by BIC Lazio on 5 December last year, helped to provide valuable inputs to the project.

The results obtained from the abovementioned questionnaire and debate have been used to achieve the two outputs foreseen by the project which are:

- a Recommendations paper on territorial cooperation programmes which will be submitted to the national, regional and European authorities involved in the definition, coordination and management of Interreg-type initiatives and in particular to the European Commission; and
- a Handbook/practical guide on management tools for cooperation programmes and on incentive methods to facilitate innovation within SMEs.

The partnership of INTER-A is currently collating and selecting existing best practices as far as the cooperation axis is concerned and is identifying tools and other measures aimed at supporting and stimulating the innovation process as far as the second axis is concerned. All these tools and practices, which will be selected on the basis of their innovativeness, the quality of their methods and the impact they generate, will be included in the abovementioned Handbook.

The project was approved in November 2004 and will end in October 2006, with a results presentation event planned in Brussels. The forecast total expenditure for the project is 560,000 euro.

▪ **NEWS ON THE ESPON PROGRAMME**

The MONTESPON seminar will be held in Lucerne (Switzerland) on 5-6 September, 2006.

MONTESPON is an ongoing transnational initiative aimed at organising a transnational thematic seminar to foster greater understanding of the specific development challenges of mountainous regions, taking into consideration the ESPON findings and transnational Interreg III B project results.

In May 2006, the first issue of the electronic ESPON Newsletter was issued.

This newsletter, published 4 to 5 times a year, will offer information on the latest developments within ESPON. Furthermore, each newsletter will also provide readers with a brief special feature on the latest ESPON findings.

For further information, please visit the ESPON website (<http://www.espon.lu>)

▪ **NEWS FROM INTERACT**

Euregia 2006 - International Trade Fair and Congress on Local and Regional Development in Europe

This conference and exhibition provides an important forum for meeting with representatives from government ministries, trade associations, chambers of commerce, local authorities and regional development networks.

The topics covered will relate to the strengthening of European territorial cooperation, future strategies for cities and states and new forms of financing in urban and regional development.

This event will be held in Leipzig (Germany) from 23 to 25 October, 2006.

INTERREG IIIA Network Seminar on the new cooperation objective: cross-border programmes

The IIIA Network Seminar on the New Objective 3 Cross-Border Programmes (Postdam - Germany - 12-13 July, 2006) focusses on the preparations that all programmes need to make to establish structures, ensure well-functioning management bodies and smooth-running programme procedures for the new 2007-2013 period.

For more information on these events, you can visit the following website : <http://www.interact-eu.net>.

FURTHER READING

❖ *The institutionalisation of co-operation, vademecum for a “good” Euroregion*, in Council of Europe &, Quarterly of International Sociology - ISIG, Cross Border Cooperation in the Balkan-Danube area. An analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunity and threats, 2004, pp. 223-238 (http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal_affairs/local_and_regional_democracy/Documentation/Library/Transfrontier_Cooperation/tfc_English_SWOT.pdf)

This article aims to define the characteristics that a “good” Euroregion should have, by means of providing a quite schematic Handbook, or “Vademecum”, that answers questions such as: How many Euroregions should be established in the cross-border area? How extensive should the area be? Where? When? Which functions should the Euroregion fulfil? Which institutions should necessarily be established? Finally, the author also provides an “algorithm” for a “good” Euroregion, based on the ten operative dimensions which are the basic core of “what should and can be done to create a Euroregion”.

❖ Markus Perkmann, *The rise of the Euroregion. a bird's eye perspective on European cross-border co-operation*, 2002 (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fss/sociology/papers/perkmann-rise-of-euroregion.pdf>)

This article analyses the emergence of several cross-border institutions in public governance, like Euroregions and other cross-border regions in the 1990s, which period saw a strong surge in their number all over Western and Eastern Europe. Following a brief history of cross-border regions in Europe and related EU policies to support them, the article provides a conceptual definition of cross-border regions and gives an overview of the quantitative incidence of their various types, including their frequency, geographic distribution and

development over time. It concludes by linking cross-border regions, and Euroregions in particular, to institutional conditions in specific countries as well as the effects of European regional policy.

❖ William Collier & Roger Vickerman, *Cross-Border Activity in the Kent - Nord-Pas de Calais – Belgium Euroregion: Some Comparative Evidence*, 2001

(<http://www.kent.ac.uk/economics/research/interreg/ComparativeStudy.pdf>)

This paper considers the Euroregion composed of Kent (England), Nord-Pas de Calais (France) and Belgium and analyses the cross-border co-operation of enterprises in this area. In particular, the paper aims to determine whether, in this field of co-operation, there is a general set of criteria or individual circumstances that drive the responses of enterprises.

❖ Council of Europe, *Developing an open and responsive central government attitude towards issues in relation to transfrontier cooperation. Final report*, 2003

(http://www.coe.int/t/e/legal_affairs/local_and_regional_democracy/documentation/library/transfrontier_cooperation/tfc_open_attitude.pdf)

This paper presents a project developed in Bulgaria and the FYROM during 2001-2002, financed by the Czech Republic and aimed at analyzing how these two countries develop cross-border cooperation activities, including a look at their respective sub-statal entities and the possibilities for reinforcing the role of local levels in this kind of cooperation. The paper also describes the main characteristics of decentralisation in Bulgaria and the FYROM. Finally, it provides a brief overview of the cross-border co-operation projects that involve these two countries.

❖ Luca Simone Rizzo, *Monitoring Analysis: City-networks in the Euroregion (involving local authorities)*, 2002

(http://www2.polito.it/ricerca/eupolis/euraconference2002/Paper_pdf/52RizzoArticle1.PDF)

This paper analyzes the Euroregion that includes the Belgium region of Brussels-Capital, Flanders and Wallonia, the English County of Kent and the French region of Nord-Pas de Calais. In particular, the paper aims to identify the city-networks involving municipalities of the Euroregion's territory.

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