

**COMPART PROJECT
INTERACT PROGRAMME**



**TOWARDS EXTERNAL TERRITORIAL COOPERATION UNDER
ENPI AND IPA**

**COMPARING STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS
IN THE PLANNING OF INTERREG AND
NEIGHBOURHOOD PROGRAMMES
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN**

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS REPORT

April 2006

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1. INTRODUCTION: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITIES IN MEDITERRANEAN LOCAL CONTEXTS

1.1. Interest in and perception of the Mediterranean.

The Italian regions converge in defining their significant interest in implementing cooperation in the Mediterranean. The geographic location of the Italian regions in the Mediterranean determines the presence of harbours, of migration flows, of traditional economic interests and trade relations¹, of common political interests (peace and security) and linkages (civil society sharing of the Palestine and Saharawi issues). Within the framework of the new glocalization processes, public opinion and political elites are increasingly aware of the inevitable interdependence between countries and territories, as well as the importance of increasing relations at regional and local level among the various relevant actors in the Mediterranean sea, exploiting the incentives offered by specific EU programmes, such as INTERREG and the new cross-border cooperation component under IPA and ENPI.

On the other hand, it is interesting to point out the case of Calabria whose Mediterranean orientation is considered, due to geopolitical conditions, as “destiny” rather than a matter a choice. International cooperation has evolved exploiting mainly the INTERREG programme. Within this context, it is worth noting that cooperation initially started as cultural collaboration in the fields of tourism, cultural heritage, and conservation of landscape and monuments, developing later into commercial and industrial agreements. The intention is to create and support a Mediterranean cultural area of collaboration, where the common historical and cultural roots are re-discovered, protected and promoted and considered as a foundation for new collaboration in other sectors.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is in the process of integration in the EU as a potential candidate country. It is in a geo-strategic position in the Balkans area. All bordering countries have a strong interest in the peaceful, democratic and economic development of BiH. In that country, awareness of the strong transnational interdependencies is widespread but nationalisms and ethnic tensions continue to persist as does intolerance of the presence (European Union peacekeeping troops – EUFOR) and dependence on the international community. The division among ethnic groups determines the institutional, administrative and territorial structure. Tensions between the three constituent peoples remain high in Bosnia and often provoke political disagreements. Each of the three groups are influential to roughly the same degree in Bosnia with Bosnians being the most numerous, Serbs having their own entity and Croats being the wealthiest and the strongest economically. In this problematic framework, external territorial cooperation could represent an instrument that builds bridges to overcome nationalistic confrontations.

Considering the particular geographical shape of **Croatia** and the length of its borders, territorial cooperation is of particular importance in the development of its regions, particularly the border ones. Territorial cooperation is considered as a tool of development and a very positive support that generally opens up new perspectives to regional development; it provides a different vision and mechanisms, innovative ones, to the social and economic development of the territory. It is

¹ But also, as the Tuscan region indicated, “the beginning of a phase of potential competition between Tuscany and other Mediterranean regions in specific areas such as tourism and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which has, on the one hand, already caused the relocation of various economic activities from Tuscany to the southern part of the Mediterranean, and on the other, created potential interest in new forms of industrial and technological cooperation”.

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perceived as an excellent opportunity to reduce development disparities among regions and to establish long-lasting relations and networks with EU and non-EU countries.

In the Mediterranean basin Italy, represents for Croatia, and more particularly for Istria, a key partner in the economic sector. The Adriatic Sea is a connection between the two countries that offers a variety of development possibilities, in the transport, tourism and cultural fields.

Even if greater attention is given to the further development of relations with EU and neighbouring countries, cooperation with the Mediterranean area is considered to be a future inevitable and highly necessary condition in a common environmental, economic and social space.

Morocco is also mainly interested in cooperating with neighbouring EU countries. Due to historical links, Morocco cooperates above all with France and Spain and to a lesser extent with Italy. This cooperation involves numerous actors: regional and local authorities as well as territorial and civil society organisations.

The geographic position of the region of Tanger/Tétouan represents a great advantage. Situated in the North-East of Morocco, the region of Tanger/Tétouan boasts two sea coastlines, the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, extending over 3500 km. Moreover, its proximity to the European Union (14km) makes Tanger/Tétouan a bridge between two continents and opens up a great deal of opportunities. The history of the two main towns of the region, Tanger and Tétouan, have been strongly influenced by foreigners. While Tétouan was the capital under Spanish colonization, Tanger was an international town, where people of different nationalities co-habited.

It is worth noting that in Morocco political will exists to open up the country to the Mediterranean area. The region of Tanger/Tétouan will contribute to this through the implementation of the project “Tanger Méditerranée” and in particular with the creation of the infrastructure envisaged by it (motorways; ferries; tourist zones; etc.).

1.2 Stakeholder communities

The stakeholder communities of the Italian regions are numerous and varied. **For example, in Tuscany**, according to a detailed inquiry recently conducted, there are more than 80 actors (representing the public sector, NGOs, the private sector, civil society, education and research centres, etc.) actively involved in various forms of relations with other Mediterranean partners. Out of them, according to the survey, at present there are about 97 projects of cooperation involving an active presence of a Tuscan partner. The nature of these projects varies greatly. In general terms, the projects can typically be divided into development projects, humanitarian projects, international solidarity activities, etc. From a geographic perspective, the following are the countries and territories mainly benefiting from the activities of Tuscan actors (various projects cover several countries): Palestine (57 projects), Western Sahara (57 projects), Morocco (19 projects), Algeria (12 projects), Israel (11 projects), Tunisia (3 projects). The Tuscany Region is fully involved in the following INTERREG Programmes: III A ILES, III B MEDOCC and III C SUD.

The stakeholder community **in FVG** is quite numerous and varied. But unfortunately, it is currently difficult to quantify the exact number of regional actors involved in cooperation projects.

From the geographic point of view, most of the stakeholders were involved in cross-border cooperation projects mainly with Slovenian partners while projects with the Balkans region represent a clear minority. Nevertheless, all the stakeholders wish to strengthen their cooperation with the Balkans area.

As regards the level of participation in the planning phase, the main characteristic of the stakeholder community is that there is a clear-cut differentiation between the entities that are directly linked/part of the regional government administration and those outside the “system”. In fact, the FVG region mainly plays a nearly sole-actor role in planning and managing of the INTERREG projects.

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Another differentiating factor within the stakeholder community is that some actors have solid specialised internal structures for external cooperation management and have therefore developed substantial international activities. While the majority of other actors have only implemented actions in an unsystematic manner. The latter group complained of a lack of information and consequently that their activity was mainly based upon self-entrepreneurship. In particular, local authorities (mainly municipalities) which are practically the main group of stakeholders, would like increased involvement in the planning phase, particularly as regards the setting of priorities and strategic objectives for the international cooperation process. Yet they lack the necessary institutional capacity to actively participate.

The role of the Region in creating a territorial system for the evolution of external territorial cooperation is highly significant. In Calabria, the regional authority has established good cooperation links with various stakeholders (especially universities and agencies), some of which have been appointed as *implementing bodies* within the INTERREG programmes. Nevertheless, the stakeholders ask the regional authority to play a more important political and strategic role in the spread of information on the different opportunities offered by EU programmes. Moreover, most of them have stressed the importance of having a platform at the regional level capable of support stakeholders in preparing and managing international cooperation projects.

In order to strengthen the capacity-building of the regional system, universities could play an invaluable role, since they naturally play role in the international exchange of studies, research results and project ideas, as well as possessing knowledge and skills relating to making applications for EU-funded programmes. Starting from pre-existing horizontal and vertical relationships, universities could put their technical knowledge at the disposal of the regional and international communities and could improve their level of cooperation by means of innovative methodologies.

In Tuscany the institutional context is more developed. The Tuscany Region decided to map out decentralised cooperation actors and activities. This proved to be of great advantage and helped to provide, in an easily accessible way, relevant information about who is doing what and where, enormously increasing the possibilities of new forms of coordination and synergies. It supported the creation of the so-called "Tavoli di coordinamento" (informal meetings which bring together all those, from both public institutions and private entities, who are active in a given area or country) with the aim of sharing precious information and improving the possible forms of cooperation. The region decided to give preference, in choosing which project should be financed through public funding, to those projects which involve more than one partner from Tuscany. Finally the Region is offering, free-of-charge for the beneficiaries, a significant number of services for those involved in decentralised cooperation. Such services include, for example, **training opportunities, workshops, sharing of information** (a monthly bulletin [inform@zione per lo sviluppo](mailto:inform@zione.per.lo.sviluppo) devoted to presenting new opportunities and policies in the area of decentralised cooperation is sent to all the Tuscan actors involved in decentralised cooperation). All these elements contributed strongly to promoting new and reinforced forms of cooperation among the different Tuscan partners active in the Mediterranean region. In general terms, the capacity of the "Tuscan system of cooperation" is increasing the quality of its contribution by developing and increasing relationships with other Mediterranean partners with beneficial impact on the quality of projects in which it is involved.

In BiH, the stakeholder community is fragmented and dependent on aid but a core of actors having a high level of experience in transnational cooperation is active. For example, the Foundation of local democracy in Sarajevo achieved significant results: around 50 million euro was spent in reconstruction and social development projects; around 3000 visits between representatives of different cultural and educational institutions and non-governmental organizations took place; long-term relations were established with various European cities (especially with Barcelona) which still continue. The Citizens' Association for Local Development Initiatives (TALDI) supports the

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capacity-building of NGOs in BiH, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Kosovo as well as the development of cooperation among relevant stakeholders in several municipalities by creating a platform for the identification of prior needs and the implementation of common projects on dialogue and reconstruction, European integration and regional cooperation, democracy and human rights. The Chamber of Economy of the Sarajevo Canton participates in various projects². It has experience and knowledge, very motivated management and good connections with EU and more distant partners.

The stakeholder community **in the Istrian Region** attracts participation from various bodies. Territorial cooperation is mostly carried out by the region and the local self-government units, regional and local public institutions and NGOs. EU regional policy instruments and initiatives are the focus of attention of all the interested stakeholders who have expressed a strong will to be included in the programming phase of the upcoming IPA.

The majority of stakeholders of the region active in international cooperation activities are included in the INTERREG initiative, IIIA Neighbourhood Programme Slovenia–Hungary–Croatia 2004–2006, Adriatic New Neighbourhood Programme or IIIB CADSES. However, knowledge of programming methodologies under INTERREG is poor, due to the lack of inclusion of regional and local institutions in the programming phase for the programmes for which Croatia is eligible.

In Morocco there is a lack of coordination between the different local actors. Thus, there are no consultation mechanisms involving deconcentrated and decentralised local authorities and NGOs. Most of the people working for NGOs disengage themselves from politics. Usually, they are people who have been disappointed by politics or do not trust in it or just wish to be detached from it.

Therefore, the bulk of the work would consist of establishing mechanisms to create synergies between this potential and enthusiasm, to have a greater impact on local development. In order to achieve this aim, it is necessary to ensure coordination between the political and technocratic levels.

1.3 The selection of the stakeholders

Implementing the stakeholder analysis methodology³ **in EU partner regions** of the COMPART project, experts selected a majority of stakeholders who participated in INTERREG programmes and a minority of stakeholders (especially local authorities and civil society stakeholders) who have been involved in other cooperation programmes supported by multilateral organizations (such as the “City-to-City” Programme and GOLD Maghreb of UNOPS/UNDP), by Italian Cooperation and Regional programmes (SEENET of the Tuscany region), and by other EU programmes (CARDS and TWINNING PHARE, MEDA, LIFE, SMAP, VI Framework Programme, Leonardo, PHARE, DAPHNE and EQUAL).

² The PARTNERS project (Project of Assistance to Regional Trade and Networking for Economic Recovery and Stability) of EUROCHAMBRES, financed by the European Commission through CARDS Programme, which supported the capacity-building of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and other business organisations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, in the area of intra-regional trade and international trade services; the EUROPEAN ACADEMY FOR CHAMBER STAFF IN WESTERN BALKANS project trained key players on various EU-related topics to ensure further dissemination of knowledge to the business community and related organisations, as well as to establish appropriate mechanisms and create an environment, which would ensure continuous knowledge transfer. One of the goals was to improve the coordination of CCI staff in former Yugoslav countries and various business organisations in the region resulting in increased economic prosperity and stability.

³ The COMPART project experts were required to conduct about 30 interviews with actors who have and have not participated in the planning of INTERREG programmes or in other decentralised cooperation programmes as follows:

- 2/3 of interviews with stakeholders that have been involved in the planning of INTERREG programmes;
- 1/3 of interviews with stakeholders that have participated in other decentralised cooperation programmes.

This variegation ensures the collection of data which enables a comparison of different experiences in planning and potential interest in participation.

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In external countries, the majority of **stakeholders did not participate** in INTERREG and Neighbourhood programmes but in other cooperation programmes. In the case of BiH, most stakeholders did not participate either in INTERREG or in other cooperation programmes. However, experts selected a representative sample of stakeholders who were potentially interested in external territorial cooperation.

In accordance with the criteria established in the stakeholder analysis methodology⁴, the COMPART partners made the following **selection**:

In Calabria, **30** stakeholders were interviewed (14 Public Authorities (PA) provinces, municipalities, agencies, a harbour authority and a public consortium; 3 chambers of commerce and 1 financial institution – Private Actors (PrA); 4 educational and research institutes and 8 civil society actors (CS)). **In FVG**, **30** stakeholders were also interviewed (10 PA – regional services, provinces and municipalities and 20 CS and PrA).

In Tuscany, 31 institutions/persons were contacted several times. In the end, **21** duly completed forms were collected (11 PA; 8 CS; 2 PrA).

The Calabria region organised **focus groups**. A seminar on "Tuscany and Mediterranean: partnerships and cooperation networks" was organised in Viareggio on February 10, 2006 by the Tuscany region. The seminar offered an opportunity to present the specific experience of the Tuscan system in the Mediterranean area over the last decade.

In Greece, the collection of information and the conducting interviews took place through focus groups, personal interviews and by e-mail. The regional stakeholder analysis concerned **11 stakeholders** (1 NGO; 2 universities and research centres; 7 public authorities), involved in more than one of the 50 INTERREG programmes implemented in the Region of Western Macedonia.

In BiH, **27** stakeholders in all categories were interviewed: local authorities; local entrepreneurship (which, in turn, included entrepreneur associations, cooperatives and chambers of commerce); finance (banks and non-banking financial institutions); civil society (solidarity organisations, cooperatives favouring social inclusion, single-issue groups, pro-environment movements and cultural organisations); education and research (universities, research and study institutes, centres for technical and professional training). Some of them were from the USA and participated through EU countries.

⁴ Three macro-categories of stakeholders were identified. In square brackets, the approximate number of interviews per each category is indicated.

- a. The European Commission, EU delegations
- b. Public institutions at national, sub-national/local level [10]; particular criteria for selecting sub-national/ local level were: municipalities of different dimensions (for example, one large city and two small towns; their significance for INTERREG and decentralised cooperation; their geographic location (nearby and far from the border); aggregation of municipalities and/or of rural communities that are participating in transnational and cross-border cooperation.
- c. Actors belonging to the territory (private sector – profit-making, tertiary sector – non-profit, universities etc.) [20]
In turn, the great variety of actors that fall within this third category can be broken down into four fundamental sub-categories:
 - c1. Local entrepreneurship (which, in turn, includes entrepreneur associations, cooperatives, chambers of commerce) [5]
 - c2. Finance (banks, non-banking financial institutions) [3]
 - c3. Civil society (solidarity organizations, cooperatives favouring social inclusion, single-issue groups, pro-environment movements and cultural organizations) [7]
 - c4. Education and research (universities, research and study institutes, centres for technical and professional training) [5].

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In Croatia (Istria), 28 stakeholders participated in the analysis, 15 PA from different administrative levels and 13 CS and PrA (4 universities and research centres, 7 social and environmental associations and 2 entrepreneurial associations).

In Morocco, the stakeholder analysis covered **20 stakeholders** from the T/T region (4 central public institutions; 1 regional authority; 2 municipalities; 2 chambers of commerce; 1 professional association; 3 education and research centres; and 7 NGOs).

In general terms, it may be argued that the identified stakeholders are **quite representative** of the different territorial realities operating within INTERREG programmes or potentially interested in becoming active partners in external territorial cooperation.

The stakeholder analysis was conducted with a **questionnaire** divided in two sections: section A which is a semi-closed questionnaire that can be filled in by the interviewee with the assistance of the interviewer and section B which is a semi-structured open questionnaire that should be filled in by the interviewer.

In section A, a **scale of value** for stakeholder perceptions was used. The scale of value ranged from level 1 - very low degree, to level 2 – low degree, level 3 – insufficient, level 4 – sufficient, level 5 high degree and level 6 - very high degree.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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The questionnaire had the objective of analysing the different involvement modes of partners in the planning of external territorial cooperation (partnership programming), taking their different political and institutional contexts into account. But most stakeholders (particularly external actors) have not been involved in the planning phase of programmes. Consequently **some of them responded to the questionnaire referring not to planning of programmes but of projects.**

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2. STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF PARTNERSHIP IN INTERREG PLANNING

2.1 EU-region stakeholders

PARTNERSHIP IN DECISION-MAKING

In Tuscany, PA and CS declared they had **sufficient access** (4 out of 6) to official information on the decision-making process coupled with a sufficient level of knowledge of the process (4 out of 6). Only the PrA claimed insufficient access and knowledge (3 out of 6).

In Calabria, the average of access to official information and knowledge of the decision-making process was considered sufficient (4 out of 6), with interesting differences among the categories of stakeholders (low level for chamber of commerce). In particular, it is worth noting that on average, civil society and research centres perceived that they had good access to the official information and a good personal knowledge of the process of decision-making.

In FVG, on average access and knowledge were considered insufficient especially for PA and CS, while PrA and research and training institutes reported a sufficient level, because they worked with the Region in the design and implementation of projects and because of their interpersonal relationships.

In Western Macedonia, all categories of stakeholders judged the level of access to official information and their own knowledge of the decision-making process as insufficient (2 out of 6; 2,6 out of 6), except universities and research centres (4,5 out of 6; 3,5 out of 6).

In Tuscany, the majority of stakeholders **participated in the planning phase** and they evaluated it as sufficient, but few of them indicated the bodies they were involved in.

In Calabria, although PA have been the most involved in planning, civil society and education and research actors considered they had a high degree of participation (5 out of 6) in the planning of projects.

By contrast, in FVG the majority of stakeholders did not participate. Only a few of them were involved due to specific institutional and interpersonal relationships and to the fact that the identification of the projects depended on the Region. PA in particular complained of a very low degree of participation.

Generally the bodies indicated were consultative ones.

In the case of **Western Macedonia**, only one public authority took part to the planning phase. In addition, universities and research centres were also involved in planning through seminars, working tables and organizing committees. The NGO interviewed had not participated.

In Tuscany, CS perceived that their capacities and effective influence on the decision-making process was sufficient, while the other actors declared they had **insufficient capacities** and effective influence. Similarly, **in FVG**, the majority of stakeholders considered that they had a low degree (2 out of 6) of capacity and influence, except for research and training institutions (4 out of 6) that were involved in the planning of the projects.

On average, **in Calabria** the degree of capacity and influence was quite high for public institutions, research and training institutes and civil society (5 out of 6), whereas it was insufficient for chambers of commerce (2 out of 6).

In Western Macedonia, stakeholders perceived their degree of participation in the planning phase as insufficient (0 out of 6). The only exception concerned universities and research centres which considered they had a high degree of participation (5 out of 6).

In general, stakeholders maintained they have an insufficient capacity to participate in the planning phase of the programmes. In Tuscany, “it is interesting to highlight that 2 out of 7 Public Authorities reported the lack of human resources devoted to the project within their organisation as the main reason for their scarce involvement in planning”. By contrast, **in FVG** access problems of stakeholders were mainly due to Regional institutional choices.

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RESOURCES

In Tuscany, as far as financial resources are concerned, PAs surprisingly **did not report particular problems** in coordinating within and among public institutions (2 out of 6) and mild problems with different and complicated procedures (3 out of 6). Although spending on programmes was perceived as having been sufficiently results-oriented (4 out of 6), it seems that **programmes did not end up mobilising additional resources** (2 out of 6).

By contrast, **in FVG the PA reported a high degree of problems resulting from complicated procedures** and coordination within and among public institutions. Complicated procedures also limited the spending, while stakeholders did not have sufficient knowledge to answer the results-oriented and resources mobilisation questions.

As far as the Calabria regional authority is concerned, it stressed the difficulty in managing financial resources because of the **lack of coordination** inside the region and among the other participating public institutions (6 out of 6), but also the difficulty of dealing with different and complicated procedures (6 out of 6). Moreover, as in the case of FVG, in Calabria the complexity of procedures also appears to be one of the main problems in spending resources. Notwithstanding this, all Calabrian stakeholders perceived that spending was considerably results-oriented (5 out of 6).

Western Macedonian stakeholders did not encounter particular constraints in spending financial resources. Only universities and research centres had a more critical attitude towards the lack of coordination among public institution and the complexity of procedures (3,5 out of 6). Moreover, the latter problem was considered by public institutions as a limitation to the mobilisation of new and additional resources (4 out of 6). Spending was considered as insufficiently results-oriented (3 out of 6) by all stakeholders except universities and research centres (5 out of 6).

PARTNERSHIP AMONG PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS (vertical subsidiarity)

In Tuscany, stakeholders perceived that **partnership among public institutions was insufficiently applied to the planning process**. **In FVG** and in Calabria, on the other hand, the average indicated a sufficient partnership, but not on the part of local authorities.

Regions were reported to be **the most crucial public institution** in planning and decision-making, especially in the INTERREG programmes. **Central government** was also considered a pivotal institution with reference to other decentralised programmes, while local authorities were seen as marginal actors.

The partnership among PA was considered sufficiently significant (though in the case of FVG, this is to be considered an observation regarding the future) for planning (4 out of 6), but not in the opinion of PrA (2 out of 6).

In **Western Macedonia**, public authorities and universities and research centres interviewed believed that partnership among public institutions was applied quite sufficiently (3,5 out of 6) during the planning process, whereas partnership among public institutions was considered highly significant (4,6 out of 6) in the preparation of cooperation programmes. In the planning phase, local self-administrations, sectoral ministries (Ministry for Public Works, Ministry for Development, Ministry of Finance), the region and the INTERREG managing authority were judged the most influential actors.

PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR (horizontal subsidiarity)

In the case of Tuscany, Calabria⁵ and Western Macedonia stakeholders considered that **civil society and the private sector have been insufficiently (3 out of 6; 2 out of 6 in the case of FVG and Western Macedonia) involved in the planning phase**. But there is a difference in perception: the PA reported a lower degree of horizontal subsidiarity (2 out of 6) than CS (4 out of 6) or PrA (in the case of FVG). On the other hand, in Greece civil society stakeholders were more critical (1 out of 6) than public authorities (3,5 out of 6), whereas they agreed in considering the planning process insufficiently open (2 out of 6).

⁵ Except for universities, considered by the regional authority to be a crucial actor in the planning process

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The PA demonstrated a scattered perception about who were the most influential CS and PA stakeholders in planning. But in the case of Tuscany, CS perceived themselves as influential particularly in decentralised programmes.

The PA considered planning was **narrowly (2 out of 6) open** to the participation of all stakeholders, while CS (and financial institutions in the case of FVG) reported it was sufficiently open.

However, in the end, **all stakeholders judged partnership with civil society and private sector organizations was insufficiently significant in planning.**

PARTNERSHIP IN PLANNING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

The main Mediterranean partners for Tuscan stakeholders were PA, local NGOs and universities in Morocco and Serbia Montenegro, followed by Tunisia and Croatia. All stakeholders indicated an intention to expand their cooperation with other Med countries (from Maghreb countries to Turkey and the Balkans area).

In the case of FVG, stakeholders first of all indicated different actors in Slovenia as partners, and then Croatia, BiH and Serbia/Montenegro, while no one reported links or interest in creating new relationships with countries in the Southern Mediterranean.

Western Macedonia also cooperated predominantly with its neighbouring Balkan countries (Albania, FYROM) while Calabrian stakeholders cooperated mainly with Southern Mediterranean countries (Tunisia and Morocco).

An opinion common to all the categories of respondents was that **external/foreign partners should be significantly involved in planning** (5 out of 6; 4 out of 6 in Western Macedonia) (but PrA in FVG gave a minor score considering the low capacity of external partners in planning).

According to the majority of stakeholders in Tuscany and Calabria, **the participation** of external partners was sufficient (at project level). In FVG, stakeholders had a different view: CS and research and training institutions rated their level of participation as insufficient, while PrA rated it as high (probably because they experienced good relationships with external partners in the planning of a greater number of projects with significant budgets). The majority of Italian stakeholders maintained that the participation of external partners **improved the needs assessment** phase, as well as sufficiently **generating new areas of cooperation** beyond the programme (but not according to PA in Tuscany, Calabria and FVG). PA demonstrated a lower capacity to develop cooperation than PrA.

On the other hand, in Western Macedonia the involvement of external partners in planning was considered insufficient (2 out of 6), resulting in no significant impact to the needs assessment (2 out of 6) stage.

Stakeholders that the obstacles to external partners participating in cooperation programmes were **mainly financial**.

In Tuscany, coordination problems (4 out of 6) linked also to a limited degree of decentralisation in Southern Mediterranean countries was reported, while minor importance was placed on political and capacity problems (2 out of 6 in Tuscany; 3 out of 6 in FVG, due to the low knowledge of the programmes by the PA of external countries). By contrast, Calabrian stakeholders did not identify any particular problems in involving external partners in project planning.

As far as Western Macedonia is concerned, poor coordination and a lack of capacity on the part of external partners were indicated as significant (4 out of 6) obstacles to cooperation.

Generally, the choice of external/foreign partners were reported as being made in accordance with the objectives and core missions of stakeholders. But an important difference of attitudes was recorded between the Italian Regions oriented towards the Southern Mediterranean and FVG oriented towards the Balkans area.

In Tuscany, CS reported their main motivations as political and solidarity-related (4 out of 6; whereas PA rated them as only 2 out of 6 and surprisingly PrA rated peace and security as 6 out of 6), while PrA naturally also indicated economic interests as important; less significant was the cross-border relationship (2 out of 6) while for PA, occasional contacts were considered to be particular importance (4 out of 6).

By contrast, **geographical proximity had a high degree of significance for stakeholders in FVG**, while political and solidarity motivations scored low in importance. All the stakeholders reported a sufficient and high degree of importance for lasting relationships and cooperation agreements with specific foreign territories (4 out of 6).

In Calabria, on the other hand, political and solidarity motivations were considered sufficiently important for PrA (4 out of 6), whereas in the case of CS and research centres, the choice of external partner was mainly driven by lasting relationship concerns (4 out of 6).

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As regards external partners in **Western Macedonia**, the choice of public authorities was mainly driven by the geographical proximity criteria (5,6 out of 6), whereas economic interests and lasting relationships with specific foreign partners were motivations common to all Greek stakeholders (4 out of 6).

PARTNERSHIP FOR PLANNING

In Tuscany and Calabria, the main (4 out of 6) problems regarding partnership in planning were reported by PA and related to the high level of complexity and the slowness in the participatory planning, and the limited access to financial resources. In FVG, stakeholders (above all PA) pointed to bureaucratic difficulties, problems in the broad scale involvement of partners and poor financial access.

Stakeholders from Western Macedonia also indicated these five criteria as the main obstacles (4 out of 6) to establishing a partnership for planning.

In particular, stakeholders indicated the following categories of bodies, mechanisms and devices to facilitate participation in planning:

- the **sharing of tools** such as the logical framework approach and GOOP approach and the creation of an intranet system for the participants in a project;
- the **creation of networking facilities**, such as permanent coordinating and working groups, meetings and events; the establishment of a focal point in the partner territory, a system of committees at three level (steering, executive and awareness-raising committees), and the acknowledgment of the capacity of NGOs to support the process of facilitating participation in planning, joint scientific committees
- **training** on the functioning of the programmes and project
- **studies** and the sharing of best practices
- more integration among policies.

PARTNERSHIP IN ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES IN PLANNING

The Tuscan and Calabrian stakeholders perceived that **partnership in planning had sufficiently improved the impact on local and trans-local development**, the coherence in planning and the introduction of innovations, **while the concentration of resources on strategic priorities was considered insufficient**.

By contrast, in FVG and Western Macedonia stakeholders reported insufficient impacts due to poor participation in planning.

Generally, the choice of priorities for external territorial cooperation corresponded to the different core missions of the stakeholders. In this sense, PA as well as CS attributed more importance to institution-building, cultural dialogue, environmental issues and migration flows, while PrA accorded a higher priority to trade and investment (joint ventures and industrial cooperation, enhancement of textile capital). However, it is interesting to note that a low degree of priority was assigned to transport, while all stakeholders considered **knowledge flows as first priority**. In FVG, cultural dialogue also received a high score, while in Calabria some stakeholders stressed the importance of transport.

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Box 1. Multi-level partnership in territorial cooperation: the Italian case

According to the Ministry of Economy (MoE), which had a pivotal role in the negotiation of the Cohesion policy (and consequently on objective 3 of territorial cooperation), the Italian case is one of the most advanced in the implementation of the partnership principle. The Italian government set up a committee where all the different stakeholders were involved through various representative institutions: Regions and national representatives of Provinces and Municipalities, entrepreneur organizations, trade unions, civil society organizations, environmental groups, cultural associations and so on. Networking opportunities were provided to facilitate the participation of all stakeholders. Specific working groups and general meetings were organised to debate the various contributions that the stakeholders put forward for defining the Italian position in the negotiation of the Cohesion policy. A specific working group on territorial cooperation was created based on an agreement between the central State and Regions.

In 2006, the MoE led the preparation of the National Strategic Framework with the same partnership structure. Italy is one of the few Member States that is assigning an important role to territorial cooperation in the NSF. Each Region is defining its Regional Strategic Framework and various working groups have been set up: one specifically on territorial cooperation and another on internationalisation. The mechanism is working well due to the experience developed by the MoE and all the stakeholders.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) had a pivotal role in the negotiation of ENPI and IPA (and consequently on their cross-border cooperation components). The MFA established a consultative group to inform various stakeholders on the EC proposals and to invite suggestions. The MFA opened up privileged relationships with the regions to involve them more closely in the working process.

The MoE and MFA are in close contact and they have involved representatives of the regions in informative meetings organised by the EC in Brussels.

The following are some specific observations on the Italian experience:

- The well-established partnership among Central Ministries and the stakeholders was not replicated identically at the regional level: not all the Italian regions implemented methods to facilitate the involvement of local stakeholders.
- The Ministry for Transport and Infrastructure, which is the national coordinator and Managing Authority of the INTERREG Medoc Programme, has a close relationship with the regions but did not involve other stakeholders as it considered that there were problems of representation and it would hold up the work of the programme.
- The MFA is trying to develop a new approach to planning external territorial cooperation with the regions. Some innovative and experimental actions are in progress, but no experience is yet available and the regions have difficulty in agreeing a shared position.
- There are difficulties in structuring the co-development principle both at a national and regional level: the MoE supports the national interest in implementing territorial cooperation aimed at promoting the competitive development of Italian territories, while the MFA is trying to put in place an external territorial cooperation initiative aimed at promoting mutual benefits to Italian and external territories and overcoming competitive conflicts between partners.

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Box 2. Multi-level partnership in territorial cooperation: the PACA case

The cooperation activities of the region of Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur (PACA) in the Mediterranean area are carried out mainly under INTERREG III B MEDOCC. PACA has also acquired good experience in decentralised cooperation with Maghreb countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria). Moreover, there is a wish to extend this experience to the Balkans.

In the case of PACA region, the contribution to the stakeholder analysis was provided by the CRPM, on the basis of a meeting with: the "SGAR" (General Secretariat responsible for regional affairs), as representative of the State; the "Prefet", as representative of the State at regional level; and a representative of the regional council. In addition, the CRPM also conducted an interview with the director of the "Institut de la Méditerranée" (IM).

These are the only institutions involved in the planning phase of the programme, as well as in other of programming steps. The partnership is functioning quite well and the co-responsibility between the State and the Region is considered effective.

However, as far as horizontal subsidiarity is concerned, it is worth noting a discrepancy between the very positive perception of the State and its representative at regional level, and that of the IM. The latter considers the horizontal subsidiarity in MEDOCC programme to be very low.

The IM plays a key role both in the case of vertical and horizontal partnership. This institute is co-financed by the "PACA" region, the province of "Bouches du Rhône", the city of Marseille and the Chamber of Commerce of Marseille. It is the implementing tool of these 4 stakeholders for cooperation projects under the INTERREG initiative at transnational level. Over the last few years, the "Institut de la Méditerranée" was responsible for the technical management of the following projects: AMI, AMAT, C2M, PIC RM, STRATMED-MEDISDEC and I2C.

External partners have not been involved in the planning phase of cooperation programmes. While the central and regional authorities explained this as a result of a lack of financial resources, IM identified other possible causes such as the lack of capacity on the part of the external countries and poor coordination between the partners. However, there is a clear political will to involve southern partners. Around 50% of the INTERREG projects have a external partners in the south but without financing they are not active. Consequently as far as the participation of Southern Mediterranean regional and local authorities is concerned, it is fairly token.

The external partners referred to above were chosen on the basis of the lasting relationships criteria, and to a lesser extent according to solidarity motivations and economic interests. The different sub-categories and categories of the stakeholders in the south are universities, regional and local authorities, research centres and sometimes socio-economic partners.

One of the main obstacles to the PACA region's Mediterranean cooperation relates to the limited means for engaging in in-depth cooperation, mainly because of the limited competencies and financial resources of the regional level in France (especially compared to those in Italy or Spain). The amount of French regional resources for Mediterranean cooperation is quite low compared to the numerous transnational areas where France is involved (South-Western Europe, the Atlantic Arc, North-West Europe and Alpine areas).

Rather, the importance of the regional level consists in the capacity to mobilise other levels of partnership and to exercise political influence over the national government. In fact, the real problem is the lack of cooperation between central French policies for the Mediterranean Area and the INTERREG programme managed at the regional level. There are no clear links between them. Furthermore, the capacity for the regional level to influence the State level in the planning phase of bilateral cooperation is often very low. As result of this, central State priorities are not the same of those of the regional level.

For all the reasons described above, the CRPM concluded that PACA region will mainly be able to facilitate the exchange of experience but not more in the next programming period for territorial cooperation. This analysis also emerged from the AMAT project. On the basis of these remarks, the European Commission will need to adopt a more realistic approach.

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2.2 Mediterranean external region stakeholders

2.2.1 The case of the Sarajevo region (Bosnia – Herzegovina)

PARTNERSHIP IN DECISION-MAKING

In most cases, Bosnian stakeholders **did not participate or did not have information** about INTERREG, Neighbourhood Programme 2004-2006, decentralised cooperation programmes (for example, the City-to-City programme of UNOPS/UNDP) or other initiatives. Only 7 (3 PA, 3 CS and 1 PrA) out of 27 stakeholders had participated in cross-border or transnational cooperation programmes.

From an analysis of the answers to questions in Section A, one of the most interesting points to highlight is the **difference in views between PA and CS regarding the openness** of the decision-making process. Public institutions declared they had sufficient access (4 out of 6) to official information on the decision-making process with a good level of knowledge of the process. They were involved in the planning phase and had a significant impact on it.

The private sector presented a totally different picture as regards participation in the planning process. Indeed, the private sector declared that planning was not open to the participation of all stakeholders (2 out of 6), that the private sector had not been involved in the planning phase (2 out of 6) with a consequent low degree of significant impact (2 out of 6). Together with CS actors, they requested “more access and sharing of relevant information ... the introduction of transparent mechanisms ... better communication ... for tenders to be published in newspapers ... considering that the participation of stakeholders in the decision-making process is very relevant and has positive impact”

RESOURCES

As far as financial resources are concerned, the civil sector surprisingly **did not report particular problems** in coordinating within and among public institutions and mild problems with different and complicated procedures (N.A.). The private sector reported a low incidence of problems in managing and spending of financial resources (1 and 2 out of 6). These remarks did not relate to INTERREG programmes but other cooperation projects. On the other hand, PA indicated slightly more problems in the coordination and procedural management and spending (3 out of 6).

Furthermore PrA thought that spending on projects **had been results-oriented** (5 out of 6) and that the projects did end up mobilising additional resources (5 out of 6).

PARTNERSHIP AMONG PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS (vertical subsidiarity)

Perceptions among CS/PrA and PA regarding vertical subsidiarity differed. CS and PrA maintained that there was a high level of vertical partnership and significance (5 out 6). By contrast, PA reported a low degree of partnership (2 out 6).

PARTNERSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR (horizontal subsidiarity)

CS and PrA were more critical as far as horizontal subsidiarity is concerned. They reported a **low degree and insufficient level of access and involvement**. On the other hand, PA felt they had a high degree of openness (5 out of 6) but a low level of involvement. All the stakeholders maintained

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that they had a sufficient level of significance on horizontal partnership (as an observation regarding the future).

In relation to these issues, stakeholders put forward **suggestions for improving information flows** (e-communication, regular meetings, informative workshops, public debates), increasing institution and capacity-building and enhancing the involvement of CS and PrA in needs assessment. In this regard, the Directorate for European Integration is “planning to **develop a system of horizontal co-ordination** during 2006”.

PARTNERSHIP IN PLANNING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

In BiH, stakeholders agreed on the geographical scope of external territorial cooperation which covers the **EU and Neighbourhood countries**, and ex-Yugoslav countries particularly. But some of them underlined the **need to go beyond** the border concept: “Today the world is being based on the globalisation of all nations and help should be encouraged and enlisted from many diverse nations and cultures in order for this country to try and catch up with, be a part of, and participate with it all”.

An opinion common to all the categories of respondents was that **external/foreign partners should be significantly involved in planning** and that their participation in this stage had improved the needs assessment phase (4 out of 6).

Stakeholders accorded practically all the criteria for choosing external partners with a similar degree of preference (4 out of 6). **Solidarity motivations** obtain a slightly higher preference, while surprisingly PA assigned a lower degree of preference to political motivations (2 out of 6).

All stakeholders agreed that the main obstacle to sharing priorities with external partners was a **lack of financial resources** (4 out of 6). Other problems were related to the low levels of political involvement (indicated especially by CS and PrA) and coordination (3 out of 6)

Stakeholders also stressed the **necessity of building a system of connections**, an information network with the external partners, of organise “interest groups and committees with clear obligations and rights for each partner”.

PARTNERSHIP FOR PLANNING

Limited access to financial resources (4 out of 6), the slowness of participatory planning, poor information flows/communication and the lack of wide-scale involvement of partners (3 out of 6) were seen as the mains problems regarding partnership in planning. These responses underline the access and capacity problems mentioned above. Stakeholders in BiH also suggested the same kind of proposals put forward by EU stakeholders.

PARTNERSHIP IN ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES IN PLANNING

All stakeholders thought that partnership could be **improved by the introduction of innovations and the concentration of resources** into strategic priorities (4 out of 6) with a positive impact on local development. **Knowledge flows**, cultural dialogue, institution-building and investment needed to be priorities in the external territorial cooperation. Furthermore, investment was considered the most important priority by the private sector (5 out of 6), which also gave a high score to cultural dialogue. PA assigned more importance to environmental issues, investment and transport and CS to institution-building and cultural dialogue.

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However, some stakeholders pointed out the very important political problems facing BiH. Government institutions as well as the international community are in a stalemate. “The country lacks defined and positive leadership in any direction, whether in terms of democracy, a market-driven free competitive economy or even issues of discrimination. The International Community has hinted at all of these issues, but it really has not been strong or instrumental in accomplishing anything concrete.”

2.2.2 The case of the Istrian Region (Croatia)

PARTNERSHIP IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Among Croatian stakeholders, 15 have been involved in INTERREG programmes (INTERREG Neighbourhood programme Italy/Adriatic; Neighbourhood programme Slovenia/Hungary/Croatia; INTERREG II B Neighbourhood CADSES).

Almost all the stakeholders judged as **very low the degree of access** to official information concerning the process and mechanisms of decision-making (1 out of 6). The only exception was the Ministry of EU Integration (MFAEI), which declared it was sufficiently informed.

The partnership principle, though, was not applied in the planning phase, since the MAEIE was the only institution involved in the preparation of the INTERREG programmes. However, the **degree of participation of the MFAEI was also low**. All the programming documents were completed before Croatia was considered a full member, following the entry into force of the Neighbourhood approach. Only the European Union partners participated actively in the planning phase, whereas the participation of MFAEI was limited to seminars, meetings and workshops.

It is also true that at that time, the Croatian MFAEI **was not ready to play a stronger role from an institutional capacity point of view**. It must be borne in mind that in the last few years, MFAEI has been challenged by numerous methodological changes due to the pre-accession process.

RESOURCES

In relation to resources, the main problem faced by Croatia was the **difficulty of finding additional resources** and, to a lesser extent, **the complexity** of INTERREG methodologies and procedures. The co-financing principle was perceived as an obstacle, above all by local authorities. On the contrary, it was considered an incentive by associations and NGOs.

VERTICAL PARTNERSHIP

Despite **very low level of participation in planning**, the majority of Croatian stakeholders perceived partnership with national public institutions as **quite important for cooperation**. In particular, it was felt that this partnership should concern not only the ministerial level but also regional and local authorities.

HORIZONTAL PARTNERSHIP

The actual involvement of stakeholders from civil society and the private sector was **quite low**, as was the actual openness of the planning phase to the participation of these kinds of stakeholders. Notwithstanding this, **their participation in the planning phase was perceived as very important** (5 out of 6), even if it was limited by specific criteria which did not envisage their involvement.

PARTNERSHIP IN PLANNING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

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In Croatia, the majority of stakeholders cooperated **with European partners**, but only to a limited extent with actors from other third countries, except for associations and NGOs which did cooperate with third country partners.

The choice of external partners was made predominantly according to **criteria of geographical proximity and lasting relationships with external partners** (4 out of 6).

In the case of cooperation with third country partners, Croatian stakeholders agreed on the **importance of actively involving those partners in planning**, at the same level as other partners (4 out of 6). Moreover, their involvement was considered very useful (5 out of 6) for the assessment of the needs for cooperation. Notwithstanding this, the Croatian MFAEI considered **low levels of political inclusion and insufficient financial resources** as obstacles to effective participation of external partners in the planning phase (4 out of 6).

Ongoing cooperation programmes have generated new cooperation areas only to a limited extent. However, the majority of the stakeholders interviewed were quite satisfied with their partners, even if they expressed a wish to improve and deepen their existing relationships.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that Croatian stakeholders did not show any interest in building relationships with other developing third countries, but rather indicated that they were mainly interested in European or other developed countries.

PARTNERSHIP FOR PLANNING

As far as partnership in planning is concerned, the Croatian MFAEI did not indicate any particular problems.

Although the Croatian MFAEI considered the degree of vertical partnership in planning insufficient, **several bodies for facilitating participation** in planning exist, namely: the INTERREG coordinator established at a ministerial and regional level; the national body for the coordination and implementation of INTERREG; technical working groups; and EU info points. But the other stakeholders observed that those bodies were insufficient.

PARTNERSHIP IN ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES IN PLANNING

Institutional building and environmental protection were considered the main priorities of cooperation in Croatia (6 out of 6), followed by trade, information flows, cultural dialogue and investment (5 out of 6).

2.2.3 The case of the Tanger/Tétouan region (Morocco)

PARTNERSHIP IN DECISION-MAKING

The majority of stakeholders in Morocco have **not participated in the planning of cooperation programmes**. This was the case not only for INTERREG programmes (Medoc and INTERREG ES/Morocco), but also for other European Programmes (such as Tempus and MEDA). Consequently, **none of them had the opportunity to influence** the decision-making process.

Notwithstanding this, Moroccan stakeholders indicated they were quite interested in territorial cooperation. Almost all of the actors interviewed had participated in an INTERREG project. Thus, despite a mediocre knowledge of the decision-making process in INTERREG and a low level of access to information, the country stakeholder analysis in Morocco provided interesting results in terms of perceptions and suggestions from Moroccan actors, especially as regards their **participation in project planning**.

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RESOURCES

In the T/T region, public institutions did not encounter specific problems in spending resources, whereas the mobilisation of new resources was considered quite problematic.

As regards INTERREG programmes, the spending of resources was **not considered to be results-oriented**. This is the result of two fundamental limitations of INTERREG. On the one hand, because of a lack of participation in the planning phase of programming, the identified priorities of cooperation **have not always reflected local needs**. On the other hand, since the ERDF does not allow money to be spent outside the EU territory, the lack of financial resources on the part of Moroccan stakeholders has limited the impact of INTERREG projects.

Most of the time, they involved **small-sized projects** and their activities were mainly **limited to the exchange of experience**, transfer of know-how and the organisation of workshops and seminars. Moreover, Moroccan stakeholders observed that some of their European counterparts had an opportunistic attitude.

PARTNERSHIP AMONG PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

As mentioned previously, none of the Moroccan institutions participated in the planning of INTERREG programmes, including in the transitional phase 2004-2006. The Neighbourhood approach will apply only partially to INTERREG programmes at the external borders with southern Mediterranean countries. Although the vertical partnership principle will be improved by involving the Moroccan Ministry of Finance and the European Commission Delegation, their participation will concern mainly the management and implementation of the programme and not the planning.

Notwithstanding this, it is worth noting that all the stakeholders interviewed **perceived vertical partnership as being very important in planning**.

In general, the interviews revealed a **lack of information sharing** among central institutions on the one hand and between them and the regional and local authorities, on the other.

Moroccan regional and local authorities have developed significant experience in decentralised cooperation programmes, even though the law does not envisage these kinds of activities as being within the sphere of their responsibilities. In practice, Moroccan regional and local authorities can sign cooperation agreements or conventions with their foreign counterpart institutions. In this case, the approval of the Ministry of the Interior (*autorité de tutelle*) is required. However, they are able to autonomously decide on participating in cooperation projects. In the latter case, however, deconcentrated authorities (especially the *wali*) and development agencies were recognised as the most significant actors, followed by decentralised institutions (regions and municipalities) and chambers of commerce and industry.

HORIZONTAL PARTNERSHIP

Despite the numerous cooperation activities carried out, **lack of coordination** characterised the cooperation activities of territorial and civil society actors both with deconcentrated and decentralised authorities.

Moroccan stakeholders perceived horizontal partnership as essential for making the planning phase of cooperation activities more effective and to avoid overlapping. To this end, they stressed the **need to establish consultation and coordination mechanisms** between regional and local authorities and territorial and civil society actors.

Civil society actors were considered sufficiently involved in project planning. In particular, the most relevant actors were seen as: NGOs, industry associations and cooperatives.

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PARTNERSHIP IN PLANNING WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

The cooperation of Moroccan stakeholders has Mediterranean overtones, being mainly oriented towards Spain (in particular with Andalusia), France and Italy. To a lesser extent, there are also examples of cooperation with the following: Belgium, Germany and international organisations (e.g. Bureau International de travail, INTA and OXFAM).

Most of the time, external partners were the initiators of programmes and the main actors in their preparation. Furthermore, it is worth noting that all the stakeholders considered that cooperation with external partners **considerably increased the sectors and opportunities** of cooperation.

Moroccan stakeholders considered **geographical proximity** as one of the main criteria for identification of external partners. All the stakeholders expressed a wish to extend their cooperation activities to actors (mostly of the same category) from other regions of Mediterranean countries, **but also from other countries** (especially Germany, but in some cases also Eastern Europe and the Balkans).

Apart from geographical proximity, the stakeholder analysis revealed that Moroccan stakeholders choose their external partners according to different criteria. Thus NGOs' cooperation relationships were mainly driven by the solidarity motivations, whereas regional and local authorities as well as industry associations were guided by economic interests. Moreover, all stakeholders also considered **lasting relationships as a key criterion** for cooperation. Finally, it is worth noting that, most of the time, the establishment of new partnerships was made possible through contacts with previous partners.

PARTNERSHIP FOR PLANNING

As far as the preparation of programme/projects is concerned, the main problems encountered were: the **low degree of involvement; poor information and communication sharing**; and difficulty in agreeing on priority axes and creating a synergy between the needs and priorities of each partner.

PARTNERSHIP IN ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES IN PLANNING

It was felt that external territorial cooperation should concentrate resources on **measures capable of producing tangible and sustainable results in terms of local development**. In terms of the most important priorities of cooperation, Moroccan stakeholders identified **migration flows, information society**, investment, trade and cultural heritage.

As regards areas of priority for cooperation, there was also a perceived need for institution-building of the stakeholders concerned, especially through training and seminars. The 'Twinning programme' could represent an effective tool for these purposes.

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3. CONSTRAINTS ON AND OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE PARTNERSHIP IN EXTERNAL TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

Stakeholders **complained of low participation in planning** of INTERREG and Neighbourhood programmes, depending on the different regional contexts, but especially in Mediterranean external countries. They stressed that without sufficient experience, they had difficulty in suggesting improvements for partnership in planning other than requesting greater involvement. Consequently, many of the identified constraints did not concern the INTERREG planning phase but all programming in general, and particularly project implementation. This is due to the fact that the stakeholders participated actively in the execution of programmes. However, many criticisms were received, as well as suggestions for the improvement, in relation to the INTERREG programme with a view to future external territorial cooperation.

The various stakeholders reported that “**external territorial cooperation has great potential** for boosting economic, cultural and social development and offers great opportunities for integration and dialogue”⁶.

Stakeholders noted that the **many constraints** of different kinds can be divided into exogenous and endogenous, into those relating to access and capacity. Some remarks were specifically tied to different regional and country contexts.

Exogenous constraints independent of the INTERREG programme

Stakeholders pointed to problems related to the “**political, cultural, economic and social context** in the Mediterranean area such as the North - South divide, knowledge gaps, differences in commercial systems, in administrative and business structures, in legal and institutional frameworks and specifically in the varying degrees of decentralisation, language barriers, potential and current competition between economic systems, the presence of economic disparities which create mistrust and cultural biases, a sense of frustration of Mediterranean countries together with a lack of well-established democracies”.

In **Western Macedonia**, in particular, the unclear and often unstable political context of neighbouring countries functioned as a disincentive to cooperation. The heavy presence of bureaucracy in these countries, such as in Greece, but also in the bureaucracy inherent in EU programmes, is a discouraging factor in deciding whether to undertake joint actions. Political disputes between countries such as in relation to the adoption of the name FYROM, were also cited as obstacles to cooperation. Reference was also made to visa issues, which complicate movement and contact with neighbouring countries. The organisational structures of neighbouring countries were viewed as being in an early stage. These countries were also considered as having deficiencies in their legal frameworks.

⁶ Other comments made by Tuscan stakeholders highlighted “the need for enhancing external cooperation in the Mediterranean as the gap between the two shores is huge”; External territorial cooperation is “a strategic area for local and regional development within institutions, the economy and society”. It may provide “a very important tool for fostering multi-track diplomacy, especially in situations of transition to democracy, useful to diminish local conflict potential”. It is “a useful instrument for involving territorial actors not dedicated to international cooperation”. In FVG, stakeholder indicated a high priority was accorded to cross-border cooperation. In BiH, stakeholders reported that “external territorial cooperation is very important, very useful for knowledge, experience, capital transfer, for free movement of people and information”. In Croatia, stakeholders considered external territorial cooperation as an innovative tool for supporting regional socio-economic development and reducing economic disparities between regions. As a candidate country for accession to the EU, external territorial cooperation acquired even more importance in Croatia. It was considered that these kinds of programmes would help Croatia to familiarise itself with the mechanisms and procedures of Structural Funds.

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The same kind of constraints were also reported by stakeholders participating in decentralised cooperation programmes aside from INTERREG. They focussed more on problems related to the external context: difficulties in finding reliable and experienced partners; cultural differences; differences in economies; a lack of methods for coordination; and difficulties in adapting complex legislative frameworks to different economic systems. One perceived problem was also low level of political attention accorded to the Mediterranean area by the EU and the low credibility of Italian external policy.

In the case of BiH, stakeholders underlined **the very critical situation of their country**. They agreed on the marginality of BiH in EU cooperation. “The country has developed a bad reputation and it is considered a high risk. This can be seen from the “donor fatigue” that exists, where more and more donors are simply disappearing.” There seems to be no end in sight for the transition process. Relationships of trust have not positively evolved. The very complicated political and ethnic situation represents a great constraint and it is mirrored in the specific multi-level subdivision of territorial institutions. According to one stakeholder, “The best way to overcome such problems is to take a long hard look at the internal capabilities and resources to come up with a strategic plan for “self help” programmes. This will help prove to the international community that this country is trying and making an effort to move in a specific and positive direction. How this can be achieved is the real question!” Another stakeholder underlined the need for “a reform of the public administration system and institutional development, as well as strengthening of the role of NGOs as implementers of development support actions. Since BiH, as a transition country, faces serious structural problems and has a high unemployment rate, development priorities for its integration in the European economic context are related to a wide range of needs”. In this context, external territorial cooperation could have a special role to play. But the question remains: What role?

Endogenous constraints dependent on the characteristics of the INTERREG programme

Stakeholders reported **problems of access** in relation to the programme. It was perceived as being too heavily centralised and overly complex and bureaucratic. “The process for writing, submission and evaluation of proposals takes too long, while the time provided for the implementation phase is too short ... too much attention is paid to formalities while too little is given to substance ... the inability of public authorities to self-certify expenses places a burden on the administrative process within institutions and discourages participation”. Other complaints related to the lack of instruments enabling participation in the planning phase, poor coordination, difficulties in communication and weak integration among political and technical/administrative bodies, and the tendency to replicate EU hierarchies and bureaucracy.

In BiH, stakeholders complained of a “lack of information about who is doing what and where as well as an insufficient number of formal and/or informal meetings bringing together all public institutions, private entities, civil society and financial institutions that are active in a given area or country, with the aim of sharing precious information and improving possible forms of cooperation. It was felt that actions to overcome access problems would enormously increase the possibilities of new forms of coordination and synergies”. The same kind of problems were also reported in Croatia and Morocco.

Problems of capacity were also stressed as regards technical matters, including a lack of know-how (especially on the part of external partners and of minor stakeholders), expertise in project management and planning methods. These problems “are also related to the territorial disparities and differences between capital and countryside cities, industrial and rural regions, geographical accessibility and the communications infrastructure of different regions” in BiH. In Croatia,

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stakeholders also faced disparities in capacity and resources between the big urban centres and outlying areas. Especially at a local level, it was felt that human resources and capabilities to deal with these kinds of programmes need to be strengthened.

Other constraints relating to the structure of the programme: the programme was considered too much scattered and fragmented, with a weak identification of priorities. The initiatives appear to be too scattered and not integrated, often replicating each other. The impact on territorial development was not evaluated. A major limitation for the active participation of external partners was the lack of financial resources to fund activities outside EU territories. Other remarks were directed at “an almost exclusive focus on economic issues; territorial cooperation that is not on the top of the political agenda; the poor connection between the local level and national strategy for decentralisation”.

Needs and suggestions

In connection with the problems and criticisms raised, stakeholders indicated many needs and put forward suggestions to improve partnerships in future external territorial cooperation. A general area consensus emerged regarding the partnership concept: it was seen as implying the necessity of ensuring equal dignity and access to the management of financial resources for external partners, as well as of identifying real mutual interests, accompanied by the need for enhancing political and technical involvement and increasing reciprocal trust between partners. It was also considered as necessitating the creation of social capital among partners. It involves a time-consuming process that requires concrete results for linkages to be strengthened.

The stakeholders considered the **establishment of partnership mechanisms** both at vertical and horizontal level as a necessary precondition to improving external territorial cooperation. This implies action to open up access and build capacities.

It was considered that **opening up access to decision-making**, especially to local authorities, civil society and private actors and **improving vertical and horizontal participation in planning** could be pursued by:

- simplifying procedures and technical terminology that is often unclear;
- making planning methodologies easier and transparent;
- circulating more information regularly (“enhance communication processes”, “improve early stage communication to local stakeholders”) to encourage participation (including within institutions) especially “the participation of marginal stakeholders that are penalised because of the greater attention to big centres” and “to allow small municipalities to cooperate in defining their priorities of cooperation”;
- setting up information units on cooperation both at ministerial level and within local institutions (request by Moroccan stakeholders);
- identifying specific activities at stimulating the involvement of weaker stakeholders (integrated with capacity-building actions);
- implementing smaller programmes and supporting small pilot projects in order to reduce bureaucracy and administrative burdens, enabling the participation of minor stakeholders, and possibly sub-programmes, where necessary, with separate steering committees;
- increasing the involvement of representatives from civil society groups and private actors in the identification of priorities and needs of the territory, in the preparation of guidelines within the programme, through working tables and other participatory instruments, and through ex ante analysis of the social and economic structure of the territories;
- organizing regular meetings between the different administrative levels, aimed at defining common priorities on cooperation and agreeing on the division of labour and responsibilities;

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- providing territorial stakeholders with clear terms of reference. These should assign the appropriate role in territorial cooperation, thus avoiding a situation where participation is simply due to the request of local authorities;
- setting up multi-level working groups on specific themes, such as that established by the DG-Research of the European Commission on scientific research;
- setting up a permanent conference on project development with the participation of local external actors, but also with a view to identifying new programming priorities; and
- increasing access to project-level planning (“the participatory approach in planning processes implemented in the formulation of projects”, “to enhance the linkage between Programme objectives and the formulation of projects”).

It was considered that it would be possible to **raise the capacity** to participate in planning and management of projects by:

- providing training for decision-makers on lobbying as well as specific training and workshops for technicians and administrative personnel on planning and project cycle management and language courses;
- strengthening the capacity of local institutions and civil servants, to receive and integrate input coming from civil society and private actors, through governance and participatory mechanisms;
- improving coordination and communication capacities through periodic meetings and permanent working groups among partners;
- funding bodies should provide expertise in devising appropriate participation processes and building capacity. Local authorities should also invest more in specific training for their personnel;
- setting up specific agencies to improve coordination among institutions, support capacities and facilitate networking;
- establishing an international panel on participatory planning to identify methodologies that enable intensive participation by local and regional authorities and civil society organisations with a certain degree of flexibility; and
- transferring know-how and exchanging experience and best practices

Increasing capacity strengthens the reciprocal trust and autonomy of actors. In the external partner countries, these actions converge with the assistance supporting decentralisation strategies and democratic participatory processes. Consequently, **a coordination mechanism should be established to link external territorial cooperation with multilateral, bilateral and decentralised cooperation programmes aimed at supporting decentralisation.**

In order to reduce the fragmentation of actions and to identify strategic priorities, a process and evolutionary approach should be adopted in external territorial cooperation. Considering the low partnership level with external partners during the previous INTERREG programme, there is a need on one hand **to create linkages and reciprocal trust** and, on the other, **to share the identification of relevant priorities and actions “for achieving concrete results”** and high visibility.

The creation of linkages and of reciprocal trust is a necessary precondition of external territorial cooperation and it should provide for important **networking opportunities** and planned and shared working methodologies. According to various stakeholders a “strategic priority should focus more **on institution and trust-building**, in order to enable local and regional authorities to participate in operations and to develop cross-border networks and management with special emphasis on those projects creating links among border communities”. Many stakeholders have put forward suggestions to network reciprocal knowledge, information and communication, practices and

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evaluation outcomes⁷. “Separate funding for needs assessment and participatory planning mechanisms as well as for exploratory meetings and conferences” should be put in place. In this sense, **specific priority should be accorded to social capital building**. These actions would promote “the progressive and systematic involvement of both sides’ actors” creating the knowledge and trust necessary to identify strategic priorities and results-oriented projects.

Furthermore, some stakeholders proposed certain **strategic priorities**. In Tuscany, CS stakeholders indicated the “development of intercultural projects around a possible shared Mediterranean identity and the need to support more culture as it plays a key role in Euro-Mediterranean relations; to spread a culture of peace, democratic participation and respect for human rights as guiding principles for cooperation; and to provide for the mainstreaming of territorial participation at the EU level”. Private actors participating in INTERREG suggested it was necessary “to give priority to local strategies that respond to local needs with a long-term outlook as well as to give support to partners in identifying their own solutions”. Some stakeholders pointed out opportunities to cooperate in the fields environment, tourism, culture and business, according to their missions and experience⁸.

The answers in section A of the questionnaire (Chapter 2) underlined the **general significance** of the issue of knowledge flows **and specific country priorities**, such as migration flows in the case of Morocco and the environment in the case of Croatia. Stakeholders in BiH underlined the specific needs of their country and the lack of a strategically-oriented plan, particularly regarding external territorial cooperation. Stakeholders in Istria pointed out that until now decentralisation strategy has not been implemented and that a partnership mechanism should be established to identify common priorities. In Morocco, central bodies determine strategic priorities and the lack of synergy with the various stakeholders reduces their opportunity to participate. In this sense, the identification of priorities should be **accompanied by an increased effort to involve stakeholders and promote partnership**.

Perhaps a **process approach** in identifying priorities based on successful experiences arising from a few themed areas and on a widened core of actors could satisfy, on the one hand, the need for concentration and effectiveness of the scarce resources and, on the other, the need to open up partnership to various stakeholders.

In relation to **providing continuity and sustainability to partnerships** with external partners, the real challenge is to build up and maintain long-term relationships. Continuity would:

- reduce the risk of fragmented cooperation
- be conducive to more structured actions and to their greater impact
- increase the credibility of the partners and the programme
- raise the capacity of external partners to directly manage financial resources in order to carry out activities within their territory.

⁷ Tuscan stakeholders made the following suggestions: “to increase the opportunities for partners to get to know each other and share experiences, increase knowledge of different customs and cultures, facilitate best practice transfer among local actors of different countries, create efficient mechanisms of coordination with day-to-day contacts, create opportunities for mutual acquaintance in the process of formulating of the projects, increase venues for mutual acquaintance in order to gain a better understanding of potential partners before starting cooperation activities, make funding procedures easier for meetings and staff exchanges before the implementation of programmes, increase information, vocational training and communication, hold more frequent meetings and conduct more monitoring in the field with greater attention paid to substance rather than form, as well as conduct surveys among decision-makers and administrators ...”.

⁸ “External territorial cooperation is very important for economic and social development in the Balkans. Cooperation within the neighbouring area (Serbia, Croatia, Adriatic basin) is most important. For example: cooperation in relation to the Sava river, the Drina river (in the fields of tourism, environment, hydro-potential, water), cooperation in Trebinje, Dubrovnik and Herceg Novi (South Adriatic) in the fields of tourism and environment, cooperation in Mostar-Dalmatia and on the Adriatic coast (on tourism, food and water), and cooperation in Sarajevo, Banjaluka with other centres of business, culture, education, etc.”

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To achieve continuity and sustainability, the external territorial cooperation programme should:

- “be based on the establishment of long-term cooperation relationships”;
- involve “more broadly the NGOs which have good methodologies in establishing partnerships and cooperation planning with civil society actors”;
- conduct “in-the-field ex post evaluation of the results achieved by projects that would allow for a proper understanding of the objectives achieved and provide a starting point for subsequent complementary cooperation”;
- link projects and planning: “the participatory approach in planning processes should be implemented in the formulation of the projects”.

In order **to create systems that raise the efficiency of partnerships in external cooperation programmes**, stakeholders also suggested various proposals to enhance the involvement of partners in territorial cooperation, focussed on clarifying the role of different partners, the division of labour, complementarity and integration among partners, the establishment of performance reward mechanisms and the adoption of flexible management practices⁹.

In relation to financing, stakeholders supported the proposal of the new EU regulations on IPA and ENPI establishing funding for external partners in cross-border and trans-national cooperation: “complementary funds should be directly managed by non-EU partners for activities within their country and directly linked to projects”; “an equal distribution of financial resources might make partners more reliable”. Some suggested “providing for financial resources to be available also to civil society organisations and not only to territorial bodies” and complained that “public institutions should improve their internal procedures on the management of resources as they are too complicated and slow. In addition, public institutions should mobilise new resources for cooperation programmes to be made available especially to NGOs”.

Finally, some observations related to **the need to support the external territorial cooperation in conjunction with central governments**. Policy dialogue should reinforce the sharing and coherence of planning on external territorial cooperation between regions and central governments. The Italian case of broad partnership in the negotiation and planning of the Cohesion Policy might constitute an important point of reference.

But it is especially in external partner countries that the strong commitment and political support of the central governments on territorial cooperation should be encouraged. In this regard, the identification of relevant and concrete pilot projects on a few but strategic shared priorities is essential.

⁹ The following remarks were made by Tuscan stakeholders: “cooperation should be implemented by similar institutions within a broader framework and the partnership based on a clear division of labour according to each actor’s specific expertise”, “to guarantee integration between institutional partners and representatives of social categories, attributing to each of these proper room for action and financial resources”; “reward mechanisms should be established ensuring effective exchange between partners in the planning phase and acknowledgment should be given to the added value of a certain type of partnership contribution (i.e. the emphasis should be on practical aspects not numbers)”; “flexible management practices should be implemented”, “accountability of people and not only of institutions” should be required; a “clear indication of the coordinator’s role” should be provided and the “attribution of responsibility” should be structured “according to the role within the project and not to the financial or institutional weight”.