

inter act

summer 2015



Interreg



25
years



contents



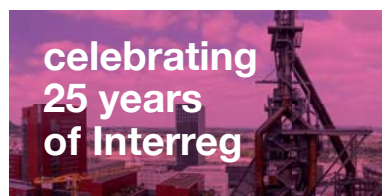
overview of 25 years of Interreg

- 04 the meaning of turning 25
- 06 a journey to improve european cohesion
- 08 what spatial view of territorial cooperation?
- 10 cross-border visions for understanding



success stories

- 12 bound to cooperation
- 16 where cities meet
- 18 “the established partnerships in 2007-2013 will further expand their potential in 2014-2020”



celebrating 25 years of Interreg

- 22 Luxembourg hosts the Interreg festivities
- 26 Interreg engages local communities for the fourth year in a row



cooperation outside Interreg

- 28 “Interreg should inspire the regions”
- 30 strategic partnerships to support local authorities
- 32 it's time to learn from cooperation culture
- 34 growing through challenges: achievements of EU external border cooperation

get informed!

By subscribing to the INTERACT Contact Database, you will receive our regular newsflash (on average 8 times per year), and the INTERACT Newsletter (3 issues per year), as well as other information relevant to the Interreg community.

Register at:
<http://forms.interact-eu.net/contact-database>

follow us!   

www.interact-eu.net

Copyright/Disclaimer:
Unless otherwise stated, the copyright of material published in this newsletter is owned by the INTERACT Programme. You are permitted to print or download extracts from this material for your personal use. This material is allowed to be used for public use, provided the source is acknowledged. None of this material may be used for any commercial purposes.

The information and views set out in the INTERACT Newsletter are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect institutional opinions. Responsibility for the information and views set out in this lies entirely with the authors.

Contact: INTERACT Programme
Secretariat, Bratislava Self
Governing Region, Sabinovská 16,
P. O. Box 106, 820 05 Bratislava 25,
Slovakia
interact@interact-eu.net

Publisher: INTERACT Programme
Secretariat
Editorial Team:
INTERACT Communication Group
Graphic design:
Martina Vrablová

editorial



Philipp Schwartz
INTERACT

happy birthday Interreg!

It seems it was just yesterday when we celebrated 20 years of Interreg in September 2010 in Tournai, Belgium. And suddenly, just another 5 years have passed and we are already in the 5th ‘Interreg season’. I assume we all have the feeling that Interreg has always been there (with the short ‘intermezzo’ of it being called ETC in 2007-2013)?

But who really remembers how it all began 25 years ago? Not many, looking at the average age of Interreg Secretariat staff. A Europe-wide survey done by INTERACT in 2014 including a question on the age of staff actually showed that in 2007-2013 around two thirds of Secretariat staff members were between 30 and 40 years (the majority between 30-35 years). This means that when Interreg was born the majority of those working today with Interreg programmes was between five and 15 years.

When you reach 25 and have finished your education, one has the feeling that the rest of one’s life is still ahead. However, Interreg at 25 already has a long life behind it. Where is Interreg now, 25 years later? One could say much further, in the 5th programming period, having its own regulation instead of ‘just’ a Community Initiative, with 28 Member States benefitting instead of 11, and a much bigger budget than back in 1990. And this development is embedded into broad historical changes in the past 25 years starting with the German Reunification in 1990, to Croatia becoming the Union’s 28th Member State and the Euro being introduced in the 19th EU Member State, in Lithuania in 2015.

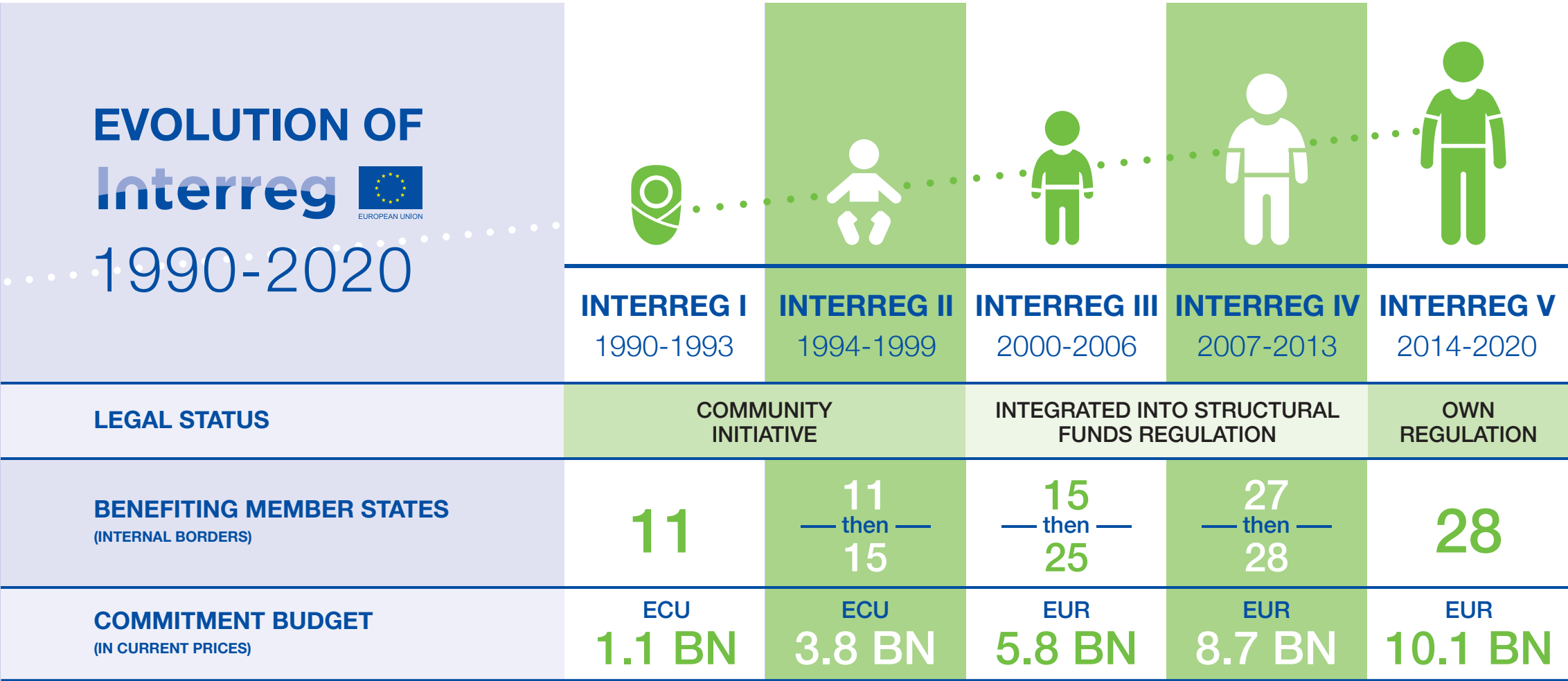
Birthday parties tend to be occasions to look back. But let’s look forward. What will be in 2020? Or rather, what do we want Europe to be in 2020? Let’s not come up with wishful thinking. But let’s rather have a look at what is realistic for Interreg, for cooperation across borders in Europe to achieve in the coming years. And we do not really need a crystal ball for the answer. In the 2014-2020 programming period, we are much better prepared and equipped with tools to ‘predict’ what will be in 2020 – if everything goes smoothly.

The new element of result orientation, with concrete expected results and result indicators provides a good picture of 2020. It would be interesting to aggregate and visualize in one big picture all the different result indicator baselines and target values of the different Interreg programmes. This would then show how we expect Europe to look in 2020 from the perspective of European territorial cooperation. Some might say it is unrealistic to achieve this, or at least ‘ambitious’ and ‘challenging’. I personally would think it is ‘possible’ if we all work together, across borders for this common goal. And here I do not mean only crossing national borders, but also borders of funding programmes within and even beyond Interreg.

But for now, let’s stop working for a moment and celebrate 25 years of Interreg, with this special edition of the INTERACT Newsletter and at the “25 years of Interreg” conference in Luxembourg on 15-16 September. Enjoy reading and Happy Birthday Interreg!

the meaning of turning 25

Time to show maturity and resilience in jointly approaching common challenges.



By Nathalie Verschelde, European Commission

Source: European Commission

Interreg turns 25 this year. It sounds quite grown up and responsible: 25 years spent on building trust, bridging gaps and growing together. Rather impressive. Maybe this is not a bad time to reflect somewhat on what it means to be 25.

Being 25 nowadays often coincides with the beginning of professional life. Studying time is over – the real life experience and competence building begins. After years of family support it is time to become independent and stand on one’s own two feet.

Is Interreg now in this position? Has Interreg grown up and can it stand more steadily on its own two feet in the future? To some extent – yes. The past generations of Interreg programmes have dedicated significant resources (time, people and funding) to “neighbourly studies”. Partners have learned about each other and got used to each other’s ways of doing things, they have found ways to cope with differences in cultures and systems. They have also studied what brings them together, what values they share and what they can do together to be stronger.

Some have of course taken steps into ‘real life’ with many concrete outputs: better and a greater number of border crossing points, shared tourism and cultural infrastructure, common business incubators, shared postal services and cross-border bus lines, joint management of nature parks, joint training programmes for young people or people in search of employment, rescue and security services which can help people on either side of the border, joint festivals promoting a common identity or celebrating diversity, and many more.

For those who turn 25 this year, it is time to use all this experience and turn it into genuine joint productive investments for a better common future. It is time to demonstrate visible, substantial and durable changes. New cross-border infrastructure where necessary, new ways for institutions to share and work together when planning or delivering services, new opportunities for people to work, live or spend free time on the other side without too many complications. It is time to show maturity and resilience and turn a sometimes piecemeal approach into structural and sustainable activities that will lead to a genuine joint management of territorial common interests.

Of course, because the European Union is an evolving project, not everyone in the family turns 25 this year. Some are a bit younger (just over 10 years), others much younger (not even 10 years). We must be confident that the family feeling will prevail and that the eldest will support and nurture the younger ones. We know that when growing up there are things that everyone must discover for themselves but there are other aspects where learning from others can help gain time and confidence.

I grew up literally on a border, sharing my school years with as many French as Belgian pupils, using two shopping lists at home for best buys in France and best buys in Belgium, naturally developing a strong taste for both beer and wine. I have personally witnessed the evolution of the past 25 years – my home village has not changed much physically apart from losing its border posts and its familiar border guards.

There have been massive changes in the way we do things together now: my parents’ doctor sends them to either a Belgian hospital or a French hospital depending on the nature of their ailments.

Why? Because the local hospitals on both sides have put their resources together and thus made significant economies of scales by each specialising in different sectors of health, thereby making resources available to purchase the best equipment and recruiting the best specialists.

Would it not be a great achievement if, by the time Interreg turns 35, this type of genuine joint resource management was possible over a greater number of borders? I certainly think it is possible and I do hope I will not have to wait too long before I see this in action on other borders.

In the meantime, it is time for me to say Happy Birthday to all those who make Interreg real: the programme authorities on all sides, the members of monitoring and steering committees, colleagues in the European institutions but above all the thousands of beneficiaries who want to develop projects with their neighbours (despite the complexities of managing an Interreg project).

Let’s celebrate and enjoy this moment, and let’s also think of a bright future ahead.

a journey to improve european cohesion

Telling the Interreg story is like boarding on a high-speed train direct into the past 25 years with some stops and many territories to be explored.

By **Ivano Magazzù**, INTERACT

The train started in 1988 with the first Community Initiatives aimed to support actions of specific interest for the Community between the Member States; many of us were just children, some living at borders, with no idea of the positive sense of this train, neither what it was supposed to link and, especially, nor where the journey will have been arriving. Like in every journey, expectations, directions and stops must be considered, with a part of dream that will make the trip amazing.

Let's start exploring the objective of this journey called Interreg: in fact, its main objective was to support innovative actions in the field of Regional Policy, especially activating partnership networks with the participation of public and private stakeholders of each territory. Their 'value added' laid in boosting cooperation mechanisms among territorial entities involving also the civil society, in implementing innovative administration models and in raising awareness on specific social issues such as exclusion and discrimination, within a partnership approach.

Furthermore, the Interreg Initiative for territorial cooperation also focused in helping the Member States of the Community to overcome territorial and socio-economic imbalances in border areas, more sensitive to situations of hardship and marginalisation. This was just the beginning of the journey but, over time, Interreg would see further improvements, more structure and funding.

But it's now time to have a first stop - Interreg I (1989¹-1993)

In its first stretch, activities under Interreg were limited to the only objective to promote cooperation between border regions of the Member States and to develop operational programmes aimed at reducing problems in these areas, by financing projects for the improvement of infrastructure systems and cooperation between public and private organisations, including environmental protection also. At this time, 31 operational programmes were

approved with an allocation of resources equal to 1 billion ECU². The main features of the financed activities were: improving accessibility of the regions and their services through better communications; increase the activity of the regions in the field of tourism and cultural projects; and create jobs through the works financed by the projects.

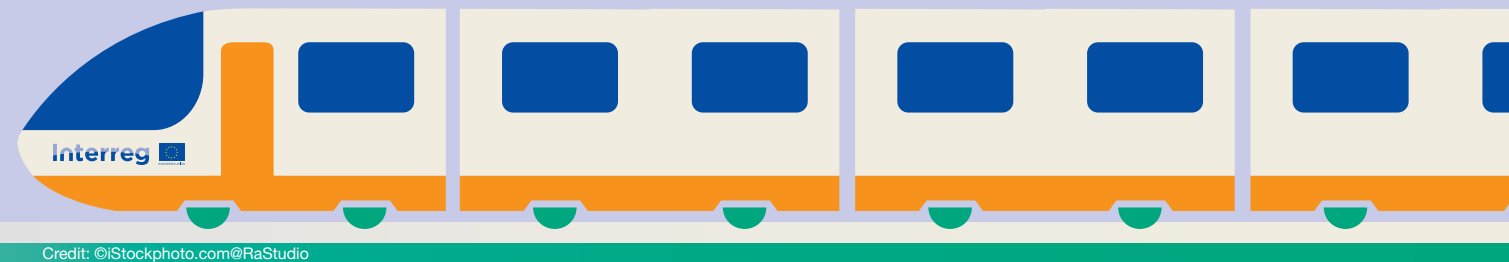
The journey continued and quickly approached its second stop - Interreg II (1994-1999)

The second programming phase saw a significant expansion of Interreg, both in terms of financial allocation and from the point of view of the foreseen actions. Moreover, in addition to the measures for the development of border areas and cross-border cooperation, two more were added: a targeted completion of networks of energy and another aimed to foster regional planning for large space groupings of the Community, in particular in Central Europe and the Mediterranean. Under Interreg II, new topics such as education, training and cultural exchanges, health, media, language training, spatial planning, additional measures for the trans-European networks, the fight against illicit trade, and the development of small and medium enterprises were included.

And here we arrive to another stop: Interreg III (2000-2006)

The initiative kept the track of the previous experiences encouraging the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of the whole Community and ensuring the integration of the European territory. The new phase was aimed to strengthen economic and social cohesion through the promotion of cross-border, transnational and Interregional cooperation through interventions on internal and external border areas of the Community.

Five principles for cooperation actions under Interreg III were defined: the development of joint development programmes; the principle of partnership between local, regional, national, social



partners and other relevant organisations (NGOs, academics etc.) and a 'bottom-up' approach; complementarity of operations respect to Operational Programmes of all objectives and other Community Initiatives; greater integration and coordinated use of the Structural Funds; effective coordination between Interreg III and the Community instruments of foreign policy, also in view of enlargement. During this programming period, Interreg ensured the mobilisation of stakeholders involved in cooperation and contributed to the creation of an intercultural awareness and the development of social capital.

But the journey is not about to stop here. It's time to increase the speed and to approach the next step, the "EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION" Objective (2007-2013)³

The overall success of Interreg between 1989 and 2006, led to its "promotion" to a priority objective period, under the name of "European Territorial Cooperation", strengthening its legal basis and its visibility, gaining a new role in framing within the Cohesion Policy. Cooperation programmes must contribute to achieving the objectives of the European Union (as in the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies) and be consistent with its strategic guidelines and national plans. Even the priorities identified in the previous programming periods have been confirmed, allowing the continuity of cooperation activities.

Observing the evolution of European Regional Policy, it is possible to grasp how its characteristics have changed in depth with time. From a financial perspective, it has gone from 4-5% of the EU budget to a weight of 36% of the total. While the policy was previously defined within the national borders, more and more the profile of cooperation became relevant, giving space to exchange practices and integrated projects between different realities belonging to different legal systems. In 2011 a deep reform of the legislative framework, mechanisms and dynamics was presented by the Member States and the Commission aiming to ensure more effectiveness and a closer contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy.

All these improvements of the tracks led our high-speed train direct to these years, direct to the programming period 2014-2020

The Cohesion Policy for this period and 'Interreg V' have been significantly reformed to achieve a greater impact. In fact, the main objective is now helping to deliver the Europe 2020 targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. For this reason, investments under the funds will be made in a more strategic and integrated way, and concentrated on four key priorities: innovation and research, the digital agenda, support for small and medium-sized businesses and the low-carbon economy.

Interreg programmes will directly contribute to this concentration effort, while retaining their specific focus on improving institutional cooperation across borders, being more strategic and defining better and clearer results. Strengthening cooperation across the various funding and cooperation mechanisms, such as the macro-regional strategies, is now a major challenge as well as re-enforcing the link with national and regional programmes and to show greater consistency.

At the end of this 25 years-long journey, Interreg has achieved to establish cooperation between various administrative cultures on relevant issues to their respective regions. It has initiated learning processes through which local public actors have acquired and improved their skills of planning for territorial development and their culture of negotiation, building a wide network made of bridges and railways and common wills. This is what the train linked, an increasing community, a closer continent, a common dream of Europe.

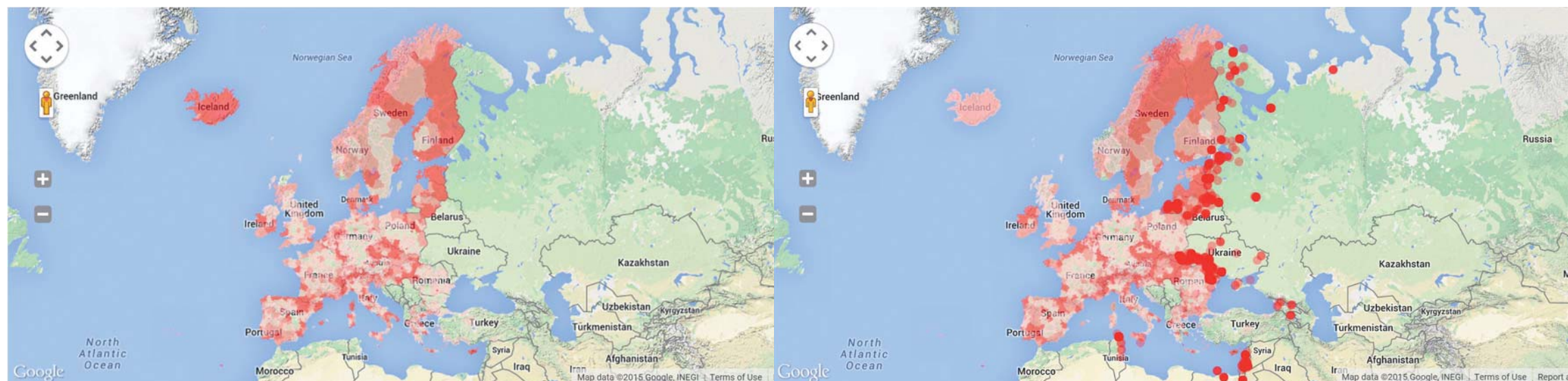
At the end of the journey (just for the moment) we will celebrate Interreg and its Programmes as a valuable tool in the hands of the regional and local entities throughout the EU, increasing their ability to network, to solve common border issues and problems, helping territories and citizens to be more competitive and escape from their marginality.

The train will now continue its journey: next stop is Luxembourg, where it will be the time to celebrate 25 years of Interreg!

¹ According to regulation 2052/1988, the first programming period was meant from 1989-1993, since the regulation entered into force on 1st of January 1989. However, the first programmes started only in 1990, hence the 25th anniversary takes place in 2015.

² European Currency Unit, almost the same amount in current Euro currency.

³ Well known as Interreg IV.



Intensity of territorial cooperation
in Europe, neighbouring countries
and pre-accession countries
(the shades depict the deviations
from the average number of project partners
per standard area)
in the periods 2000-2006
(left, based on a sample
of 64% of all projects) **and 2007-2013**
(right, based on a sample
of 88% of all projects).

*For more information on these
and other territorial cooperation maps,
go to keep.eu.*

what spatial view of territorial cooperation?

Even though Herman Melville said that 'It is not down in any map; true places never are' (but then again he also wrote about a white whale), whenever we think of graphically depicting space, either actual or imaginary, we think of maps. So, if this article is about a spatial view of territorial cooperation, is it forcibly about maps? Well, not necessarily. It is, first and foremost, about meanings, needs and wants, and the ability that each of us now has to come up with the view of territorial cooperation that best serves her or his own needs.

By **Rafael Agostinho**, INTERACT

Initially the purpose of this article was to give readers a spatial view of territorial cooperation, i.e., to show on a map of Europe the areas with more or less concentration of partners or projects of territorial cooperation programmes. This would not be difficult, we have tools in place that could easily give us very good proxies (as shown on the images).

However, would that be the spatial view of territorial cooperation? It wasn't very long before we came to the conclusion that the main issue regarding a spatial view of territorial cooperation is the definition itself. We thus decided to focus this article on the several possibilities opened by the concept of spatial view, and in understanding why this is a challenge – a technological one, but also one of an organisational nature.

In order to focus the article on the concept of spatial view, we should first clarify that territorial cooperation means all the Interreg, IPA cross-border and ENPI cross-border programmes: All transnational,

pan-European and cross-border programmes from the Interreg objective and from the IPA and ENPI instruments.

Do we even need to be on the same page?

Let us now define 'a spatial view of territorial cooperation'.

For some of us, this spatial view might be about depicting how many territorial cooperation partners there are per country in Europe, others might focus on regions, or about the investment made per regions. For others still it might be about the type of programmes investing in a certain area.

Some might be interested in a region or a country, some in the whole of Europe and some yet in the European territories outside the European continent. Others still might want to have both a helicopter view of cooperation throughout European territories and also a view of cooperation in each and every region.

A very relevant matter is the content of cooperation: On what do partners cooperate? Some themes might be more interesting than others. Comparisons can also be drawn: Do transnational programmes as a whole invest more in a given field of activity than cross-border programmes? In which field? On which geographical scope?

And yet another set of possibilities: Take the 'when' variable into account. Would your 'spatial view of territorial cooperation' include programmes, projects and partners from the 2007-2013 period, or would you like to take into account other periods as well? Or would you rather compare investments in different times and on the same geography?

Still another issue: The format. Depending on why we are looking for a spatial view of territorial cooperation, some might be looking for maps with colours (each colour representing the intensity of cooperation, for instance), some might think of maps with charts. Some yet might think of no maps at all and prefer to have tables with names of countries or regions and figures showing number of partners, or number of projects, or average number of partners per project, or yet other types of data.

What are we talking about when we talk about 'a spatial view of territorial cooperation'? It actually depends. It depends on each of us, on our wants and needs.

Each person, one view

With all these possible meanings in mind (and many, many more), providing the professionals of the sector with their view of territorial cooperation is where the challenge lies. And this is where technology comes in. The idea of reference documents for guidance is probably as old as mankind. The first known maps are of the night skies, they date back to 16,500 BC,

but maps of territory exist from ancient times. A map, according to the etymology of the word, is a two-dimensional representation of the surface of the world (from medieval Latin *Mappa mundi*, *mappa* being napkin or cloth and *mundi* the world).

Maybe maps are the single most referred-to type of publications. For millennia they have been guiding and helping mankind communicate ideas, facts and trends. And in a couple of decades, *mappae mundi* are being quickly overtaken by online technologies. We have now reached a time where it is possible and very easy for anyone with widely accessible technologies (a computer of any form connected to the Internet – even a smart phone) to produce views of territorial cooperation in accordance with their own needs. The images in this article are just examples of what we can come up with.

Create your own views of territorial cooperation

These images are search results of queries made at keep.eu. This website gives professionals the chance to use many different search criteria in combination to produce meaningful outputs – not only maps but also tables and charts. Moreover, users can create and store their own documents merging all the search results, in whichever format, into Word documents, which they can then print or publish as PDFs.

The greatest challenge facing the development of this website is now the anticipation of users needs and wants, in order to deliver to the Territorial Cooperation community the spatial views of territorial cooperation it needs, when it will need them. For that the team working to develop this website and its associated resources also counts on ideas and suggestions from its users, some of who may be readers of this article. Their feedback on the use of keep.eu is very welcome.

cross-border visions for understanding

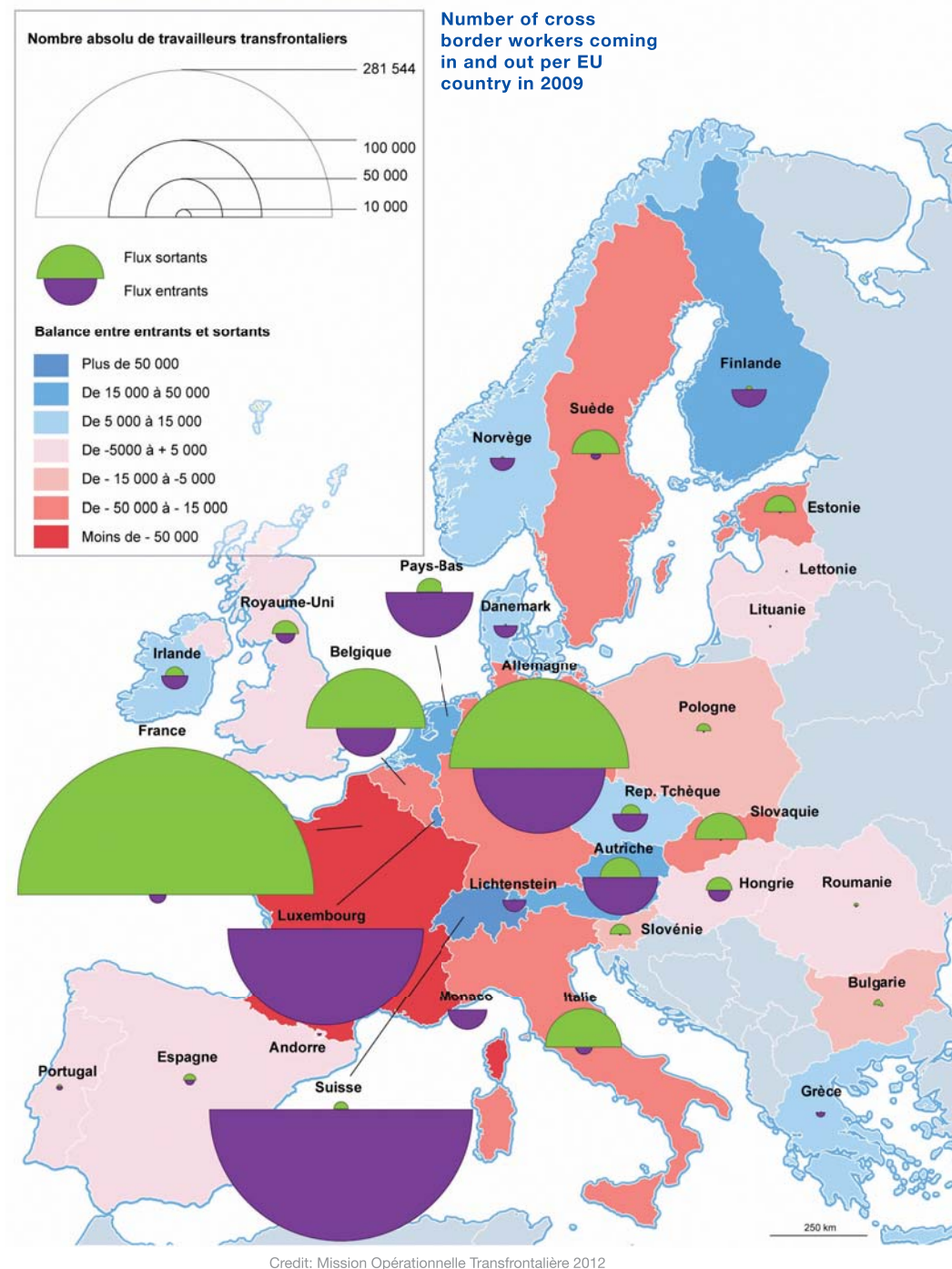
The observation of cross-border territories is a prerequisite to implement effective sector and spatial policies in favour of their integrated development. These areas, laboratories of European integration, are at the heart of European policies: EU 2020 Strategy, single market, territorial cohesion. The European Union must consequently pay greater attention to them.

By **Jean Peyrony**, Director General of the Transfrontier Operational Mission

After 25 years of Interreg programmes, much progress has been made in favour of cross-border territories and their inhabitants, but the Single market and territorial cohesion are far from being achieved. Moreover, the lack of understanding between the European Union and its citizens seem to increase. Consequently, it's urgent to change approach by encouraging the development of shared projects. **The first step is to develop cross-border observation: a better knowledge of today's territorial realities shall allow defining a common vision of what should change, and turn it into action.** In this perspective, the Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) was commissioned by the DATAR¹ to explore statistical observation in cross-border territories.

After two studies (2007 and with the FNAU² in 2010), the MOT concluded that cross-border spaces show diversified functional integration and require a cross-border governance. Then the General Commission for Territorial Equality (CGET, former DATAR), the MOT and the FNAU organised the first European seminar on cross-border territory observation, on 10 December 2012 in Nancy, France.

The represented States agreed about the need to coordinate statistical observation across the borders. **To go further and raise awareness on cross-border statistical observation at European level, these States have established a cross-border strategic committee.** It is composed of representatives of the ministries responsible for spatial planning in France and neighbouring countries (Belgium, Germany, the



Netherlands, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Italy and Spain). Its role is to coordinate a multi-year work programme and, with support from a technical working group, to define priorities, identify and secure data sources and collection. The technical working group brings together representatives of statistical offices, government departments or expert operators interested. Its role is to define the conditions for the realisation of the command coming from the strategic committee.

¹ French national agency in charge of spatial planning and cohesion

² Fédération nationale des agences d'urbanisme (National Federation of the Public Urban Planning Agencies)

The Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT)

Was established in April 1997 by the French government to "provide operational assistance to project stakeholders and, more generally, to cross-border territories". The network brings together more than 60 members representative of all levels of governance and actors implicated in cross-border projects, including states, local and regional authorities and their cross border groupings, associations, federations, and public companies.

A "multi-level" relay

The MOT is coordinated by its French institutional members, including the CGET, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the Caisse des Dépôts. Its "multi-level" positioning enables it to foster continuous dialogue between national and European authorities, and local actors.

On 19 May 2015, the future Luxembourg presidency of the EU organised a workshop about obstacles to cross-border cooperation³. The cross-border strategic committee organised a panel devoted to observation. This work will go on during the following presidencies of the EU. Other countries in Europe (for example, Germany, which will launch in 2015 a research project on this topic, or Hungary which has organised a seminar on cross-border observation in Central Europe in September 2014) emphasise the importance of strengthening cross-border statistical observation to better adapt public policies to the needs of cross-border spaces.

The support of the European Commission and INTERACT,

³ <http://www.dat.public.lu/eu-presidency/Events/Workshop-2/index.html>

Three main missions



- Promoting the interests of cross-border territories**
The MOT promotes the acknowledgement of cross-border territories in national and European policies and helps to define overall policies and strategies. It communicates the needs of actors to the authorities concerned and puts forward proposals for legislative and regulatory changes.
- Assisting project leaders**
The MOT provides practical assistance to stakeholders at various levels intending to undertake cross-border projects. For each intervention, the MOT adapts its expertise to the realities on the ground, forming pluri-national interdisciplinary working teams.
- Networking stakeholders and experience**
Networking of stakeholders and sharing of experience on cross-border cooperation are core activities of the MOT. Through its events, working groups and dissemination tools (website, publications), it creates links between all actors and disseminates cross-border cooperation good practices.

who follow the cross-border strategic committee's work, and of other Interreg programmes is essential. Interreg A programmes should contribute for topics related to their priorities: they aim at cross border integration, they contribute to EU 2020 objectives through the promotion of cross border labour markets, inter-clustering, or management of common environmental assets, and at territorial cohesion through the development of shared services; but in many cases, the drafting of these programmes has shown the lack of data necessary to define a baseline situation and expected outcomes; in that case, Interreg programmes should contribute to build sustainable data systems, so as to monitor changes. At the EU level, ESPON and INTERACT should support joint efforts of local and national authorities through capitalisation and benchmarking.

<http://www.cross-border-territories.eu>

bound to cooperation

Successful projects showcase the involvement of Bratislava Region in international cooperation.

By **Petra Masacova**, head of INTERACT Managing Authority, Bratislava Region and **Michal Beniac**, head of Project Management Unit, Bratislava Region

The cooperation aspect was always present in Bratislava Region life. The region has a strong potential to cooperate with its neighbours, laying at the border triangle between Slovakia, Hungary and Austria and sharing a common past with them as a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and later as one half of Czechoslovakia. The historical events of Slovakia shaped these long-term relationships. A very important factor enabling a smooth cooperation with for example, the Czech Republic is the non-existence of a language barrier and that the traditional activities of both Czechs and Slovaks are naturally close.

Another factor directing the focus on international cooperation is that Bratislava Region is the most developed region in Slovakia. On the one hand, this is something to be proud of, but on the other hand, it excludes the region from some of the opportunities, e.g. only a limited set of activities could be supported by the European Structural Funds 2007-2013.

In order to use the potential of the region in the best possible way, the regional authorities focused on the international aspect of cooperation in the past seven years. Participation in European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) projects was one of the ways to cooperate. The region is participating in the following Interreg programmes: Slovakia-Czech Republic, Slovakia-Austria, Slovakia-Hungary, Central Europe, South-East Europe and Interreg IVC.

Apart from these, the Bratislava Region is also the Managing Authority of the INTERACT Programme. The region was entrusted to take over the responsibilities of managing INTERACT in 2008 (all other MAs are embedded in ministries), Bratislava was a pioneer in this respect. Managing a programme covering not only all EU Member States, but Norway and Switzerland as well, was a challenge in a good way. This new experience not only enabled strengthening the cooperation of Bratislava Region on the international level, but also increased the interest for international affairs in the regional politicians and the general public, e.g. by organising local European Cooperation Day events in Slovakia.

The Bratislava Region recognises the importance of the INTERACT Programme and will perform the tasks of the Managing Authority in the programming period 2014-2020 in the best possible way in order to enable INTERACT to deliver high quality services to its target groups while being flexible and responsive to the needs of the stakeholders.

INTERACT will keep its decentralised structure, with Bratislava Region hosting the Managing Authority and INTERACT Secretariat, and four INTERACT Offices providing services (Turku, Valencia, Viborg, Vienna). The INTERACT target group will consist of mainly the management bodies of Interreg programmes (managing authorities, joint secretariats, certifying authorities, audit authorities etc.), but also other stakeholder influencing the shaping and implementation of Interreg activities (national

Bratislava Region gathered together local population to celebrate territorial cooperation results as part of the initiative European Cooperation Day.



Interreg networks, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions etc.) INTERACT will facilitate the identification and transfer of good cooperation practices through events and tools, tailor-made to the needs of the target groups. There are three main objectives INTERACT will focus on:

- to contribute to an efficient and effective implementation of Interreg programmes, addressing also the shift towards more simplified and standardised programme management;
- to contribute to Interreg capacity in capturing and communicating programme results and
- to contribute to the improvement of the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches.

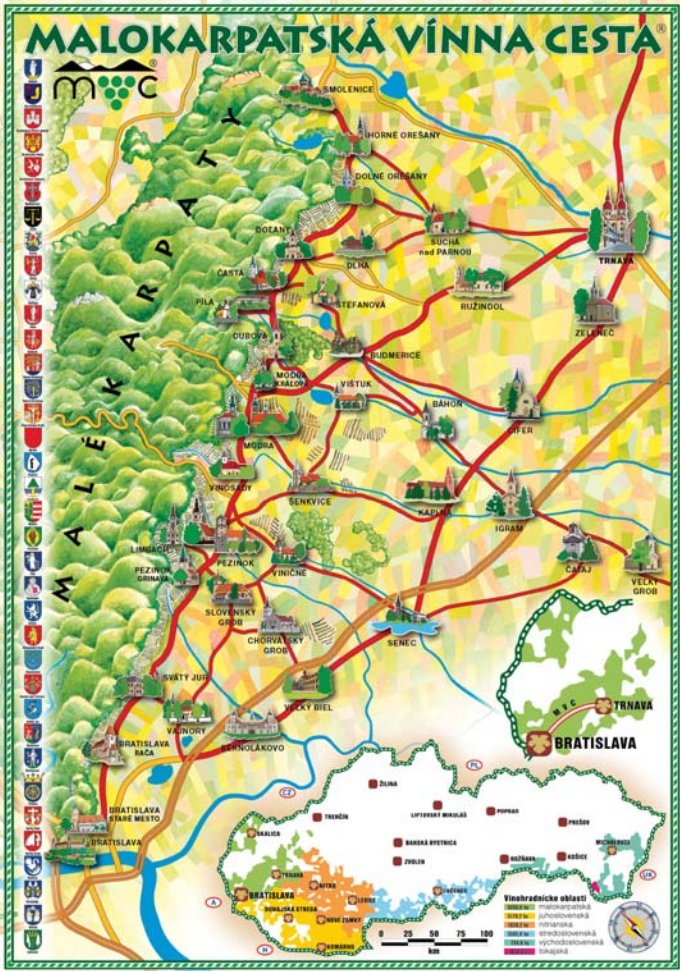
INTERACT can rely on experienced and dedicated staff members in fulfilling these objectives. Its strength is also having a 'birds-eye view' on the Interreg community, which allows for example, to set things in a broader policy context or being able to coordinate actions across programmes and strands. INTERACT provides a link between locally and regionally anchored programmes and the decision makers with its input to the EU debates and the feedback back to Interreg community.

Interreg is one of the ways to cooperate on an international level. Another example is the Visegrad Group, consisting of Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. The Visegrad Group has not only become an important political player over the years, but the International

Visegrad Fund with its seat in Bratislava contributes to strengthening the cooperation and relationships between these four countries by awarding grants in different fields of life (cultural cooperation, scientific exchange and research, education, youth exchange, promotion of tourism, regional cooperation, capacity building etc.) In each project, at least three out of the four countries must be participating.

Visegrad Group (V4) regions and their capitals

An exhibition was prepared and a book called 'Visegrad Group (V4) regions and their capitals' published with the help of International Visegrad Fund. 56 pull ups with pictures, maps and information about all Visegrad Group countries regions (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia) were designed and presented. The information about regions contained their geographical coverage, history, culture and major tourist attractions. The exhibition toured in almost all EU countries and by organising this tour, Bratislava Region enabled also other Visegrad Group regions to present themselves on the soil of EU Member States. The exhibition and the book served mainly as a tool to overcome mental barriers and prejudices between Visegrad Group regions and other EU regions. These barriers often stem from lack of information and knowledge. The tour was a big success and the book was very much appreciated by the public.



Credit: Malokarpatská vínná cesta



Credit: Milan Beláček

success stories

Reviving the wine trade in the Small Carpathians (2000-2001)

Malokarpatská vínná cesta (Small Carpathian Wine Route) - one of the most successful marketing projects carried out within the cross-border cooperation supported by Phare CBC between the Small Carpathian Wine Route Association (Malokarpatská vínná cesta®) and the Weinviertel Tourismus GmbH.

The end product, the Small Carpathians Wine Route, is an essential part of the cultural and social life of inhabitants of Bratislava Region and attracts tourists not only from other Slovak regions, but also from abroad. The Small Carpathian Wine Route has paved the way for the revival of old traditions unique to the region, following the collapse of large-scale wine production in the area in the 1990s. Broad co-operation between smaller private producers has increased wine quality and individual participants have come up with a product capable

of competing with wine routes in neighbouring Austria. The project improved the visual side of the promotion of products of the Small Carpathian Wine Route; prepared human resources for professional marketing, intensified the cooperation and experience exchange with the Austrian partners; creating integrated Slovak-Austrian tourist products.

Pedestrian and cyclobridge between Slovakia and Austria

The most important project implemented by the Bratislava region in the segment of Interreg cross-border cooperation was the building of a pedestrian and cyclobridge between Slovakia (Bratislava-Devínska Nová Ves) and Austria (Schlosshof). This project was co-funded by Slovakia-Austria CBC Programme 2007-2013 and implemented in 2010-2012. The actual construction took only 10 months and the cyclobridge was named 'Cyclobridge of Freedom' connecting countries on two sides of the river Danube, one of them being behind the iron curtain for more than 40 years. The cyclobridge

was awarded with several major awards in Slovakia including the Award from the Minister for Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic for the contribution to the whole society and the Award for Architecture. The partners in this project were Bratislava Region, Lower Austria Region, City of Bratislava, and Bratislava District Devínska Nová Ves. The building of this bridge was followed by projects 'Za mostom' (Behind the Bridge) and 'Perimost', during which the missing infrastructure for cyclists was built on both sides of the border.

TransDanube project

The main goal of the TransDanube project, funded by the South East Europe programme, was to maintain the sustainable mobility along the river Danube. This goal should be achieved by connecting traditional and ecological ways of transport in order to increase the accessibility and to create a new concept of sustainable tourism in the whole Danube region. The project was implemented in 2012-2014 and its most important result is the ongoing cooperation between public institutions, transportation companies, tourism bodies and experts.



Credit: Danube Tourist Commission



Credit: Bratislava Self-Governing Region

where cities meet

the example of the Interreg Upper Rhine programme on cross border urban areas

The Interreg V Upper Rhine programme has a long and perennial experience in the development of cross-border urban areas. The main focus remains the same but the trust and therefore the cooperation only deepen with each new project. This started before 2007 with already a priority given to the improvement of the inter connection between Germany, France and Switzerland; with for example, the first extension of a tram line across the border from Basel toward France and Germany but also some more social services were developed such as the improvement of patient hospital care with the cooperation between the hospital of Sélestat and Offenburg. During the 2014-2020 programming period, the programme will focus on reducing the environmental impact of the economic development and urban planning in the Upper Rhine.

By **Anne-Sophie Mayer**, Project and communication officer, Interreg Upper Rhine

Whether it's related to demography, employment or the motorway network, the Upper Rhine region is a highly densely populated region with intense functional and spatial interconnections that bind territories beyond national borders. Thus, the proximity between the different urban centres, mainly Karlsruhe (D), Strasbourg-Kehl (F, D), Colmar (F), Freiburg (D), Mulhouse (F) and Basel (CH), all along the Rhine is a major feature of the region.

However, as in all border areas, despite this proximity and the deep and sustainable integration of cross-border cooperation in the regional development, there are the border separating effects and significant national differences regarding the socio-economic situation of the territories in the region. The Rhine forms an additional natural barrier with potentially crippling effects arising in different areas.

Several issues and challenges result from this specific characteristic of the Upper Rhine region

which can only be tackled by cooperating across the borders: density factors and economic development creates conflicts of use in view of the scarcity of available surfaces and increase the difficulties of the preservation of the environment. The high level of cross-border mobility creates an intensive and overloading use of transport modes impacting significantly on the environment while this must be kept under control.

To overcome the challenges resulting from the dividing character of the Rhine, all urban development issues in the Upper Rhine region should ideally be tackled by cross border cooperation.

Addressing these issues has always been one of the core concerns of the Interreg Upper Rhine Programme, who is a major actor of the development of a cross-border urban area. During the last programming period, the programme particularly fostered two aspects:

- Indeed, the territory of these cross-border urban areas is not harmoniously developed on all sides of the borders. Every day, more than 20 000 workers commute from Germany and France to work in Basel (CH). Purchase opportunities are also different in each country which also increases cross-border traffic. Facilitating cross-border mobility and reduce environmental pollution, appeared as a natural priority for the programme which co-financed several projects contributing to the development of urban public transport.

For example, the city of Weil am Rhein (D), in cooperation with Swiss partners, carried out a project for the extension of the tram line 8 from Basel to Weil am Rhein which opened in December 2014. Since then the number of users has increased between 5 and 6,000 daily, largely exceeding expectations. Improving cross border mobility is also a priority for the Urban Community of Strasbourg and the city of Kehl where an extension of a tram line is also under construction (opening in 2017).

- Moreover, the programme also made possible the implementation of several projects that enabled

partners from all sides of the border to coordinate the development of the cross border urban areas, including services to the population. Still today the canton of Basel-Stadt and the municipalities of Huningue and Weil am Rhein wish to develop a new urban district located along the Rhine in the triangular area, where the borders of the three countries meet, at the heart of agglomeration of Basel. Exploring together for example the town planning, the coordination of public transport or also the potential for the building of a new bridge, the objective of the project partners is to define coordinated and concerted urban development of this new district.

The planning or development of heavy infrastructures is not the only element required for the harmonious development of a cross border city. The « Maison de la petite enfance transfrontalière », built in the heart of the Strasbourg-Kehl, conurbation is also a flag ship project of the current programming period. This structure welcomes at equal part up to 60 children between 3 month and 4 years from both side of the border bringing together the French and the German approach to child care.

In line with these projects, the development of a cross-border urban area in the future remains a major challenge of the programme. After conducting several studies on the needs of the programming area, 2014-2020 will see a particular emphasis on the goal of reducing environmental impact in the development of economy and town planning in the Upper Rhine. As part of this objective, project leaders will have to consider raising awareness and informing economic actors, policy-makers and the public to continue reducing the environmental impact and, in this perspective, implement concepts and border facilities dedicated to this goal. There are also plans to invest in pilot projects to ensure efficient use of energy and a rational use of surfaces and improving the use of renewable energies.



Information about the programme and project mentioned above:

<http://www.interreg-rhin-sup.eu/>



Credit: Programme INTERREG Rhin Supérieur

« Prolongement de la ligne de tram 8 de Kleinhüningen (Bâle-Ville, CH) vers Weil am Rhein (D) »

Total budget: 3 321 408,00 €
Co-financing EU: 923 456,00 €
Dates: from 01.01.2009 to 31.12.2014
Lead partner: Stadt Weil am Rhein
Other partners: Kanton Basel-Stadt, Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Contact details:
Tel: +49 (0) 7621/704-0 | **Email:** stadt@weil-am-rhein.de
Web: <http://www.weil-am-rhein.de/>

« Construction de l'extension Est de la ligne tram D du réseau strasbourgeois jusqu'à Kehl »

Total budget: 4 000 000,00 €
Co-financing EU: 2 000 000,00 €
Date: from 01.03.2013 to 30.06.2015
Lead partner: Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg (CUS)
Other partner: Stadt Kehl
Contact details:
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 60 90 90 | **Web:** www.strasbourg.eu

« Maison de la petite enfance transfrontalière »

Total budget: 3 360 000,00 €
Co-financing EU: 1 680 000,00 €
Dates: from 07.04.2011 to 30.06.2015
Lead partner: Ville de Strasbourg
Other partner: Stadt Kehl; Département du Bas-Rhin; Caisse d'allocations familiales
Contact details:
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 60 90 90 | **Email:** courrier@strasbourg.eu
Web: www.strasbourg.eu

« 3Land: Aménagement concerté d'un quartier transfrontalier au cœur de l'ETB »

Total Budget: 700 000,00 €
Co-financing EU: 225 000,00 €
Date: From 01.01.2013 to 31.03.2015
Lead partner: ETB (Eurodistrict Trinational de Bâle)
Other partners: Département du Haut-Rhin, Communauté de Communes des Trois Frontières, Ville de Huningue, Stadt Weil am Rhein, Kanton Basel-Stadt
Contact details:
Tel: +33 (0) 3 89 67 06 75 | **Mail:** info@eurodistrictbasel.eu
Web: www.eurodistrictbasel.eu

“the established partnerships in 2007-2013 will further expand their potential in 2014-2020”

Maria Duzova, Head of the Managing Authority for three Interreg-IPA CBC programmes, advocates for continuing to strengthen cooperation at all levels in the new programming period.

By *Ivana Lazic*, INTERACT

You are Head of the Managing Authority for three Interreg-IPA CBC programmes. What are you most proud of regarding the implementation of these Programmes in the 2007-2013 period?

Despite the initial difficulties I think that within the last three years we have managed to catch up and to achieve a good level of implementation. The most important achievement for us is the establishment of a mutual trust between us and our beneficiaries so that they recognize in us a reliable and responsible partner, who will assist and support them rather than reprimand them.

I am also very proud of the high level of cooperation thriving between all the structures involved (Managing Authority, National Authorities and the Joint Technical Secretariats) and excellent collaboration with our partners from the three participating countries (Serbia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia). A good relationship between the management structures is of great importance for successful management of cross-border programmes.

Now that the programmes are at their final implementation stage, what is your overall assessment of their achievements?

During the current programming period 2007-2013 the implementation of the programmes has significantly enhanced the cross-border cooperation at both a regional and municipal level, between local governments, entrepreneurs, cultural, educational and health institutions and nongovernmental organisations in the programmes' eligible areas. I am particularly pleased by the high interest shown by the regional stakeholders in the programme. The total number of the implemented projects under the three programmes is 377 involving more than 800 partners from the three participating countries. The projects are jointly prepared and implemented in an effort to provide adequate solution to common problems and to strengthen the cooperation and the interaction on both sides of the border.

I am convinced that the established partnerships in the period 2007-2013 will further expand their potential in the programming period 2014-2020.

What are the lessons learnt and your consideration on how to facilitate the implementation process concerning 2014-2020 Interreg - IPA CBC programmes?

One of the most challenging aspects in the previous programming period was the establishment of a management structure and to set the implementation provisions. We have learned that a prior agreement on management & control structures and procedures between both participating countries at the earliest programming phase is fundamental for the future implementation of the programme. This allows the structures to concentrate their efforts on programme content implementation instead of being permanently involved in administrative procedures.

It is also crucial to contract available financial allocation at the earliest possible stage following the programme approval. Delays in the contracting phase lead to significant problems in achieving the de-commitment targets at a later stage.

What main challenges for the three Interreg - IPA CBC Programmes 2014-2020 managed by Bulgaria do you see ahead?

We expect the programmes to be approved by the European Commission by the middle of this year and the sooner we start, the better we will cope with the implementation phase. One of the main challenges that we are facing now is to find a balance between control and simplification. On the one hand, the Managing Authority has to ensure that the overall organisation and control systems are functioning in a proper way, but on the other hand we should strive to find a way to facilitate the implementation process and to reduce the administrative burdens for our beneficiaries. We should also find a mechanism to link more closely the financing of projects to the implementation of macro-regional strategies of the EU.

“the established partnerships in 2007-2013 will further expand their potential in 2014-2020”

“The key word for the implementation of CBC programmes is partnership”

Maria Duzova

Director General of Directorate General ‘Territorial Cooperation Management’, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works, Republic of Bulgaria

Credit: Maria Duzova



How can Interreg - IPA CBC programmes really make a difference for the regions (despite their limited funds)? In this respect, have these programmes, in your opinion, contributed to better EU integration of participating non-EU countries?

Nowadays, it is clear that cross-border cooperation has an important role to play in invigorating the economic competitiveness of the border regions. Despite relatively small budgets, the IPA CBC programmes manage to contribute to the balanced and sustainable development of border regions and have a significant role in process of overall social cohesion along EU external borders. At the very foundation of our project is the idea to bring together regions and people. The positive cooperation attitude enables the establishment of long-lasting contacts between people, and joint cross-border activities to help economic development, support small-scale infrastructure, protect the environment, and foster culture and education.

I do believe that these programmes embody in a unique way the idea of the European Union, namely the existence of a united Europe without territorial boundaries. Additionally, the programmes also contribute to the implementation of one of the main tasks of the EU, namely to support preparation of candidate countries for their future EU membership.

How did the European Cooperation Day initiative resonate with the Interreg - IPA CBC Programmes and what is your experience with the EC Day events?

European Cooperation Day is a wonderful initiative that allows us to join our “neighbours” in celebrating the achievements of territorial cooperation in Europe. It is also an opportunity for us to show how our programmes make a visible difference for the regions. We actively participate in this initiative from the very beginning and each year we organise various events that are always associated with projects

funded by the programmes. This is a way to promote not only the programme but the projects as well.

From your experience, what recommendations would you give to other CBC programmes in Europe?

The key word for the implementation of CBC programmes is partnership. All authorities need to work closely, to have good communication and to be ready for mutual compromises. This is the right way for the successful implementation of any cross-border programme. Another key factor is to ensure good communication with beneficiaries. The management structures should act as a facilitator and a guide to the beneficiaries rather than as an authority.

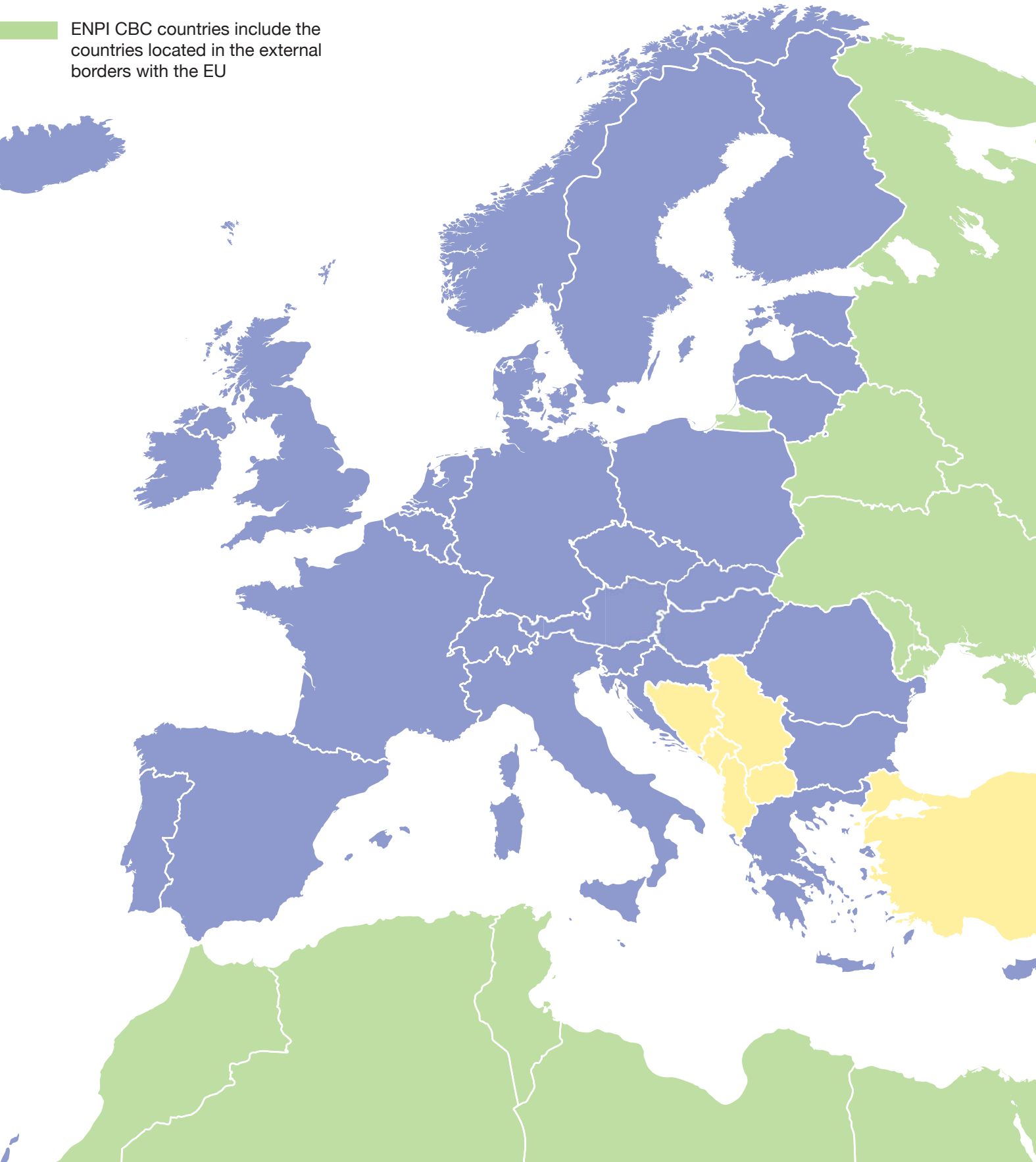
What do you think about the initiative for harmonised branding of Interreg in Europe and that IPA CBC now joined this brand?

This is a great initiative and we are very grateful to the European Commission and INTERACT for all their efforts to make IPA CBC Programmes part of this initiative. Using a common brand will facilitate cooperation among programmes and will increase awareness of territorial cooperation as a valuable objective of EU Cohesion Policy. Programmes and projects can clearly be identified as part of Interreg no matter of their location of implementation - Edirne, Blagoevgrad, Nis or Stip. In the light of the forthcoming first call for proposals the joint brand will also help ensure better reach of potential new beneficiaries as well as policy makers.

On a personal level, what do you find most interesting about your work as Head of MA for IPA programmes?

As Head of MA I have the most interesting outlook on how the work processes between the Programme structures evolve, how the projects improve, and how the partnership between the beneficiaries strengthen. I am really grateful for the opportunity to be part of this “world” of territorial cooperation.

- Interreg ETC countries typically include EU countries
- Interreg IPA CBC countries include the pre-accession countries to the EU
- ENPI CBC countries include the countries located in the external borders with the EU



THE GOALS

MORE **BALANCED** DEVELOPMENT



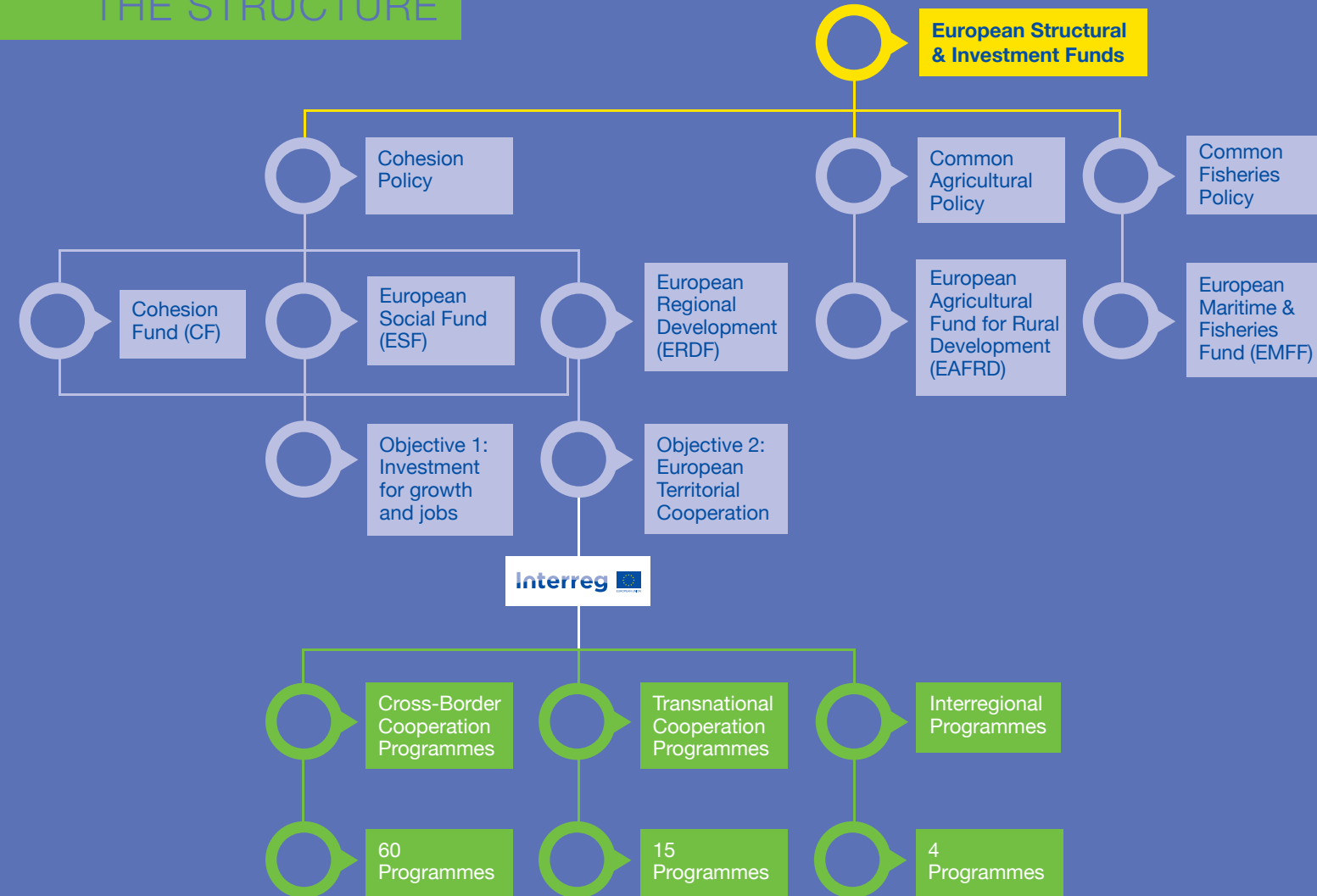
REINFORCING COHESION



ENCOURAGING **OPTIMAL** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



THE STRUCTURE



THE FUTURE

Deliver the Europe 2020 Strategy for **smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**

4 key priorities

- 1 Innovation and research
- 2 The digital agenda
- 3 Support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
- 4 The low-carbon economy

11 thematic objectives

- Better education training
- Better public administration
- Combating climate change
- Competitiveness of SMEs
- Employment and mobility
- Environment
- Information
- Low-carbon economy
- Research and innovation
- Social inclusion
- Sustainable transport

Luxembourg hosts the Interreg festivities

Discover achievements, reflect and be inspired on 15-16 September 2015 in Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg.

By **Guillaume Terrien**, INTERACT

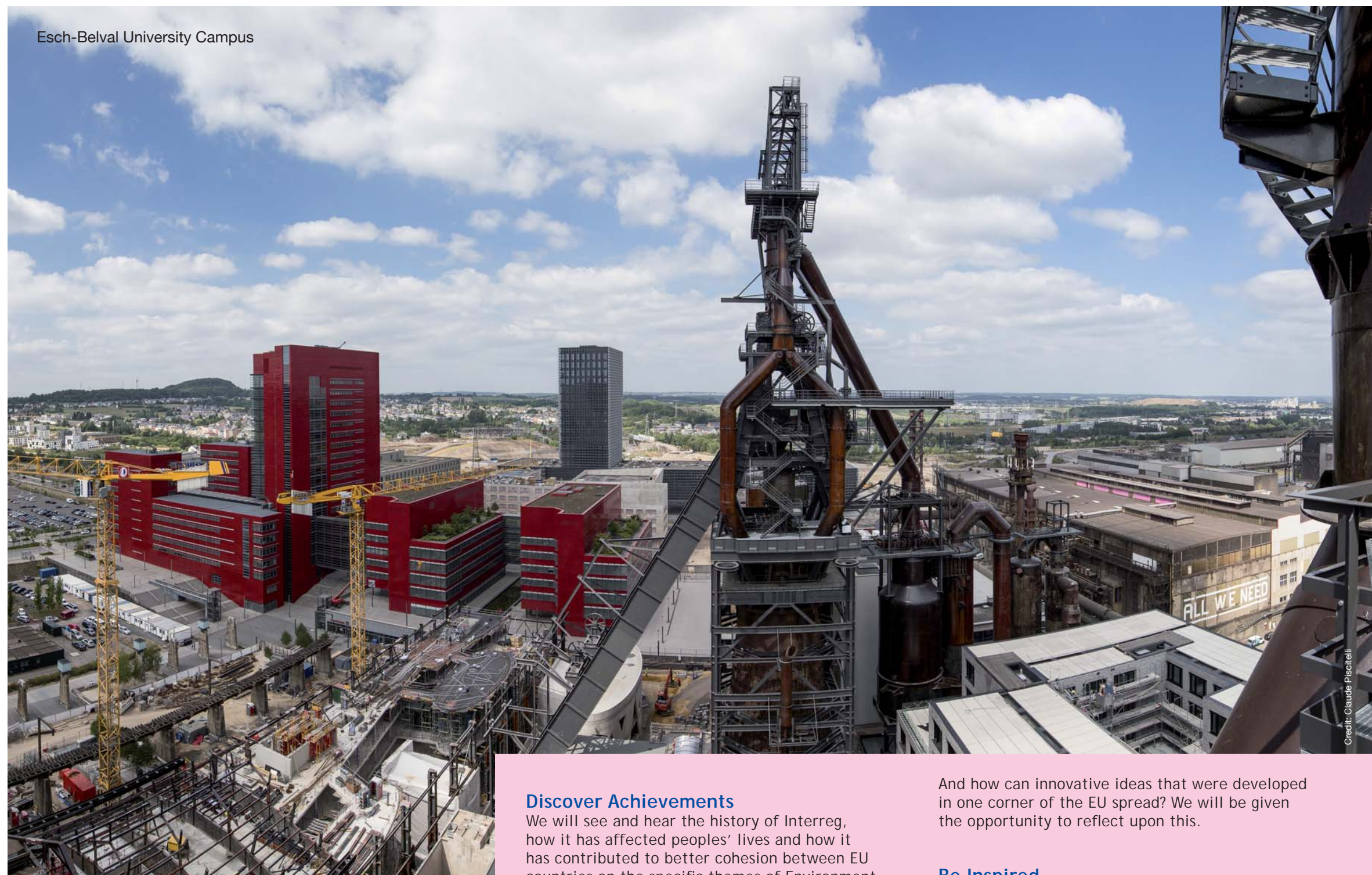
The **Luxembourgish Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, the **European Commission** and **INTERACT** invite you to celebrate 25 years of Interreg, discover its achievements, reflect and be inspired.

We believe in a Europe where Interreg would not be necessary anymore and where borders would stop being an obstacle in people's everyday life. We believe that cooperation is the means to overcome these obstacles.

Interreg has made life easier for millions of citizens. It has supported the development of regional economies and supported a better and more sustainable development of our environment. Interreg's goal 25 years ago when it was created was to get people together from across borders in Europe, in order for them to find solutions to the challenges in front of them and discuss their aspirations.

Today, European territorial cooperation is one of the two goals of European cohesion. Much has already been achieved in terms of actual project results. However, perception has also changed for some of our European neighbours because of the good cooperation which has given concrete solutions for regional development.

Luxembourg has always been confronted with border challenges. Cooperation with neighbours was never a choice, but a necessity. Over the decades the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg and the surrounding regions from three countries have become a territorial laboratory for a more integrated cross-border area. Holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union, Luxembourg took the initiative for a conference, celebrating 25 years of Interreg and offering a



space for reflection on both what Interreg has changed and what it still needs to achieve.

We will also look at cooperation outside Europe. The European Commission and INTERACT welcomed this initiative and will fully take part in its organisation. The event will coincide with the launch of the European Cooperation Day 2015.

Save the dates 15-16 September 2015 at Campus Belval, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg.

Discover Achievements

We will see and hear the history of Interreg, how it has affected peoples' lives and how it has contributed to better cohesion between EU countries on the specific themes of Environment, the labour market and demographic changes.

Interreg projects are also invited to come and present their achievements on stage with a twist of fun, participating in the first Europe wide Interreg Project Slam.

Reflect

Interreg has not only financed the achievements of projects. The concept and perception of cooperation in Europe has evolved. How is that?

And how can innovative ideas that were developed in one corner of the EU spread? We will be given the opportunity to reflect upon this.

Be Inspired

Cooperation across borders is not specific to the European Union. While we will see how Interreg can certainly be considered as one model for countries outside the EU, we might also get inspired by other models of cooperation from outside the EU.

How can we build on 25 years of Interreg? Where do you see your region/territory in 25 years? What role might Interreg play to get there? Based on the collective intelligence from a broad community of contributors, panellists will discuss with the audience.

Interreg



25 years

ACTIVITIES

PROJECT SLAM

5 projects will showcase their achievements:

- ✓ INTERSYC - CBC GR-BG
- ✓ EUROJOB Viadrina - CBC PL-BB
- ✓ Cross-border wine routes - CBC IPA HU-HR
- ✓ CENTRAL MARKETS - TN CENTRAL EUROPE
- ✓ ENGAGE - Interreg IV C

LAUNCH OF EUROPEAN COOPERATION DAY 2015

WE WANT YOUR SLOGAN HERE

slogan contest

Presentation of the winning slogan from the slogan contest for Interreg

song

Live performance of an original song, written and produced especially for European Cooperation Day

FOLLOW ON TWITTER

This celebration conference is a place where participants will be involved inside the room but also outside via web streaming and Twitter. Incoming tweets will be visible directly on screen during the conference itself.

Webpage
for registration

<https://scic.ec.europa.eu/fmi/ezreg/INTERREG2015/start>

IN A NUTSHELL

1 dates
15 – 16 september

2 location
Esch-Belval, Luxembourg

3 agenda
summary



History of Interreg, including personal stories



Role of Interreg, with examples on labour market, demographic change and environment



Thinking outside the box: behavioural dimension and diffusion of innovation



Territorial cooperation, taking a global view – Africa, Latin America



Building on 25 years - vision for Europe 2040: What would be the role of Interreg

4 high profile
speakers



European Commission, National Governments, Academic Institutions, Businesses, Government Agencies, European Parliament, Committee of the Regions, UNDP and other international organisations

5 more than **500** participants

Organisers



Interreg engages local communities for the fourth year in a row

This year's European Cooperation Day will have a special touch to it, as it supports the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of Interreg and its launch will take place during the event in Luxembourg on 15 September.



Interreg in a few words

an EU-wide contest will decide the most original slogan

By **Sarie Bongers**, INTERACT

European Cooperation Day is an EU-wide initiative showing citizens from the EU and its neighbouring countries how European cooperation across borders has impacted the quality of life for the population in different areas. It takes place every year on 21 September and the surrounding weeks in the form of local events aiming to engage local communities. It is coordinated by the INTERACT Programme and performed by Interreg programmes and projects.

Now is the time to celebrate what we've accomplished through cooperation

The 25th anniversary of Interreg will be highlighted in a number of ways. We have created a song especially about European cooperation across borders and what the past 25 years of cooperating have brought us,

despite and because of our differences. This tailor-made song together with a creative video will serve as an attractive promotional tool, available on the European Cooperation Day website for everyone to download, to share on social media and to display during events.

After last year's success of the video contest, we decided that everyone's creative input could be of great use to find a catchy slogan to complement the Interreg logo. In continuation of the branding process, we are now looking for an Interreg slogan to complement the logo which represents what Interreg is all about. The winner of the slogan contest will be invited to the event in Luxembourg to witness the live revelation of his or her slogan, interpreted and showcased by a street artist. It could be yours!

together standing strong

a promotional music video for European Cooperation Day 2015

Everyone was invited to submit their slogan during the month of May. After a jury selection, public voting through Facebook between 1 to 31 July will decide who the winner is.

It is a special year and that should be celebrated!

Join us in celebrating Interreg's 25th birthday! Everyone involved in cooperation, past and present, is invited to take part in the festivities in their region. Interreg programmes will be organising local events open to the public in the week surrounding European Cooperation Day on 21 September. Please go to the website on www.ecday.eu, listen to the song created about European cooperation across borders, and take part in the contest to find an Interreg slogan to accompany the new logo.



You can find all info on European Cooperation Day at www.ecday.eu, on www.facebook.com/CooperationDay and on Twitter [@CooperationDay](https://twitter.com/CooperationDay)

“Interreg should inspire the regions”

This is the view of the President of the European Committee of the Regions **Markku Markkula**. The President was elected in February earlier this year and will lead the Committee over the next two and a half years. Besides being the President he is also continuing his work in Finland. He is an advisor to Aalto University Presidents, focusing on European Union strategy affairs. Having been both a Member of the Parliament in Finland and worked with large scale and small scale projects he sees that the Interreg world as having great potential for Europe.

By **Ulf Wikström**, INTERACT



“Cities and regions need to take an active role in cooperation, in building European Partnerships. We need to build and use innovation platforms. We need to learn how to co-create.”

Markku Markkula
President of the European Committee of the Regions

Why is Interreg important to you?

We need to live in the here and now. We cannot rigidly stick to a plan for the next three to five years as our surrounding environment is constantly changing and we need to be ready to react. There might be new good initiatives where we need to find and connect multiple funding sources. Here I think different Interreg projects are fostering spin off and also spin-in effects.

There are possibilities to use an Interreg project as the basis for a larger concept where other actors and funding opportunities can be used to get the most from a good idea. It's important to also consider “spin-in” effects. With that I mean that the networks should be able to accept also new partners when those appear and are relevant for the planned work.

How can the regions benefit from Interreg activities?

It is important that we direct the funds that will be made available by the EU Investment Plan towards concrete small-scale projects which can then form bigger concepts. We need to take advantage of already existing knowledge and expertise. Interreg has been and is good at knowledge management and it is an excellent resource for networking. However, we need to go further: all those initiatives that have been and will be developed under Interreg need to foster larger networks of networks. More actors should join forces to bring in more resources and money to make these projects bigger and get real results. We can gain synergy through jointly organised collaboration between parallel projects with joint interests.

“Interreg should inspire the regions”

Which are the relevant partners who need to bring cooperation further?

We also need to see this attitude of collaboration spread through the Member States and regions. EU cohesion funding should not be used to fill the gaps in national budgets. It should be used to experiment and pilot the activities undertaken by regions to work across borders, in a transnational concept. To make that possible we need to mobilise interest and actions also in the regions. This opening of doors for societal innovation is one of the most important tasks I have as the President of the Committee of Regions. We simply need new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations.

Are the regions ready to cooperate across borders?

I have to admit that we still see many regions trying to cope alone. In too many instances there is not enough capacity and willingness to connect to the other regions in other countries. Far too often they try to survive on their own when working together will give so much more. This is why we need to establish stronger regional investment platforms which should be managed jointly by the regional authorities and promotional banks. This is one part of how we can integrate new combinations of funding with more traditional methods. We need to see innovation hubs that can create good conditions for start-up companies.



Do you see cooperation as the basis for growth?

If we want to foster growth and jobs, we need to bring actors together that can bring added value. I think specifically about using research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation (S3 platforms)¹. We can find new ideas and develop our way of working. This will in the end create - or even better co-create - innovative solutions of which everyone can benefit. If we get the SMEs to grow, they will hire more people transferring the idea of growth and job into more than just words. Europe's regions need to be proactively supported also by building links to the European Fund for Strategic Investments. That includes financing R&D infrastructure and smart specialisation strategies on the local and regional levels.

¹ <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/guides>

How can you as the President influence the development?

I want to encourage cities and regions to take a more active role. In practical terms this means using existing knowledge available through universities and research centres to all channels that are ready for use in the EU. We also need to sufficiently integrate the private sector and tackle societal challenges together. This is why regional innovation strategies are high up on the agenda. We - at the Committee - integrate these ideas with our work which I regularly share with other European Commissioners. As the Committee's President, I often emphasise the importance of taking a bottom-up approach with the objective of giving the regional dimension a much stronger presence on the Commission's agenda in the coming years.

strategic partnerships to support local authorities

Synergies between EU and UNDP can help implement sustainable development goals. Interreg can be used as a source for strengthening policy support.

By **Johannes Krassnitzer**, Programme Specialist, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The Post-2015 Development Agenda process will culminate with September's United Nations Summit, whose outcome will define principles, goals and targets of the next fifteen years of development. The implementation of the new universal development Agenda will be guided by the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]; therefore, the need to clearly define tools, mechanisms and processes able to support countries in effectively delivering the future SDGs is key, particularly in light of the importance of landing them at the local level.

In this regard, the UN Secretary-General's Synthesis Report, representing the reference document for the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations, clearly emphasises the renovated importance of the local level as well as the crucial role of Local Authorities [LAs] and innovative partnerships in fostering innovation, inclusive growth and ultimately sustainable human development. Moreover, the new Agenda will be rooted in a universal principle entailing that every country will have to adapt itself to the new global development framework.

The European Union is actively contributing to this new framework through several communications - aimed at both guiding the Union's future development cooperation activities and influencing the ongoing intergovernmental negotiations, as



Local stakeholders discussing the future development agenda

Credit: UNDP El Salvador

well as through the European Year for Development initiative aimed at raising citizens' awareness on international development practices.

Both the Post-2015 Development Agenda process and the current European context offer a unique opportunity to consolidate and capitalise on already-existing partnerships, as well as to establish new ones to promote the implementation of the future SDGs. The EU communication on empowering LAs¹, as well as UNDP's Integrated Local Governance and Local Development [LGLD] Strategy² are the basis of a new way of promoting local governance and local development through a territorial approach, aiming at establishing enabling local development frameworks that ultimately promote development effectiveness and positively impact the lives of people.

Against this background, the EU and UNDP are very well placed to take the lead in facilitating and promoting the implementation of the future SDGs - specifically at local level. Discussions on a potential EU - UNDP strategic partnership aimed

at supporting partner countries in landing the SDGs at the local level are currently ongoing. The UNDP approach on implementing the future SDGs is guided by the UNDG strategy for delivering effective support to countries for the Post-2015 implementation: MAPS - Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support. Mainstreaming refers to landing the new agenda at the national and local levels, and integrating it into national and local plans for development; Acceleration means targeting priority areas identified in the mainstreaming process, paying special attention to synergies and trade-offs across sectors, bottlenecks, financing and partnerships, and measurement; and Policy Support by making the skills and expertise held in the UN development system available in a timely and effective way.

Within this context, Interreg's long-standing experience and systematised knowledge on regional/territorial development policies and processes could become a unique source for strengthening the SDGs related policy support to partner countries. Such engagement would allow the development experience of European regions to become a key driver for localising the post 2015 agenda by strengthening policy responses and practices of LA and key local governance stakeholders globally. Interreg's

innovative knowledge sharing systems could be linked to UNDP's global development knowledge networks, thereby providing key inputs to the aforementioned partnership between both organisations. UNDP, through its global presence and large LGLD programme portfolio, could assure that such knowledge exchange would also lead to a systematic integration (and consequent implementation) of relevant policies in national and local development strategies and plans of partner countries.

A strategic partnership between the EU/DEVCO and UNDP on localising the post 2015 agenda is a promise for the future and can become a key driver for promoting inclusive and sustainable local development processes globally. Interreg and its UNDP equivalent, the Hub for Territorial Partnerships (ART Initiative, Brussels) could become close partners in assuring that the European experience on implementing and managing regional policies can systematically inform national and local development processes in partner countries - with an emphasis on concrete solutions to make the new development agenda an effective tool for improving people's lives.

Key Message: *Interreg involvement outside the European borders and within a potential EU-UNDP strategic partnership framework would represent a crucial step forward in helping countries to implement the future SDGs at the local level, particularly contributing to the universal principle laying the foundations of the global Post-2015 development Agenda.*



**United Nations
Development
Programme (UNDP)**

<http://www.undp.org/eu>
[Issuu.com/artpublications](http://issuu.com/artpublications)

**Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.**

it's time to learn from cooperation culture

The Interreg experiences can be extrapolated to other policies.

By **Tomasz Petrykowski**, INTERACT

The 25th anniversary of Interreg is being celebrated at the start of a new programming period, when the success of the European Structural and Investment Funds depends more than ever on cooperation as a skill, as a culture and as an obvious necessity. This can be a great opportunity for Interreg to share its cooperation experience in a wider policy context, and achieve better recognition on a more strategic level.

Having heard about results orientation, thematic focus and indicators for the past 3 years, it is true that this strategic recognition may come as a surprise. Cooperation was not highlighted to the same extent as those 3 issues were, even during INTERACT events. Still, if we come back to the legal framework, the Common Provisions Regulation insists quite intensively on partnership and cooperation. Partnership is mentioned 155 times, while cooperation receives a nice round 100 mentions. These may seem like dry and seemingly indifferent statistics, but chances are that this policy process was not accidental.

Actually, a more qualitative analysis of the Common Strategic Framework annexed to the Regulation shows no accidents, but rather strategic, disciplined and purposeful intervention logic. All funds must contribute to Europe 2020 in an integrated way, where the relevant programmes, actors and actions are coordinated to ensure complementarities and synergies. Member States and the Commission are expected to put in place appropriate coordination and technical support mechanisms to ensure such an alignment and encourage cooperation and engagement of relevant actors at different levels.

Drawing on the experience of existing partnerships and cooperation practices creating new frameworks

for cooperation are thus necessary. This is of course easier said than done. The past programming periods usually started with similar ambitions but failed to deliver on the promise, due to lack of recognition of the challenges of the implementation phase. However, it seems that the new programming period starts with a full recognition of what academics already noticed some time ago. Public policies are implemented in a complex network of bundled policies, constituencies, bureaucracies, sectors, actors, etc. The focus on partnership principle and multi-level governance is an expression of that recognition in this programming period.

Interreg has been there

However, this is all institutional, and unfortunately it does not guarantee that people representing these institutions with their mandates and budgets will have an interest or indeed the willingness to cooperate. There is a need to recognise the importance of this human factor in these complex networks. The big focus on capacity building in the 2014-2020 period is of course an expression of this. Still, the conference 'Local and Regional Partners Contributing To Europe 2020', organised by the European Commission at the beginning of March 2015, showed that there is still some way to go in terms of truly applying multi-level governance in practice. As stated ironically by one of the speakers things are better today than they were 25 years ago, but still not all Member States believe in the partnership principle.

Still, the panellists and some 260 participants at this conference believed that this is the only way to go. There was a feeling of a truly positive cooperative spirit in the conference room in Borschette that

it's time to learn from cooperation culture

day. The participants focused especially on the human side of policy implementation, citing the importance of long-term thinking, trust and social capital building, networks and relationships. Some went as far as saying that trust was more important than financing. There was a call for a paradigm shift in the administrative culture towards an environment where cooperation is actively promoted and sustained. Suddenly, as one of the few participants with an Interreg background, I could not help thinking that cooperation had made itself indispensable - within national borders as well.

As the participants exchanged on the challenges of cooperation with their national ministries, regional and local authorities or NGO's, it became more and more apparent that actors in this multi-governance process are experiencing borders, be they administrative, cultural or personal. This is where 25 years of Interreg experience in dealing with borders (or removing borders between people in the policy process) can and should be used actively. We have a long experience in trust-building between actors, respect between partners and the whole programme and project management cycle specificities in a cooperation context. Still, the fact that there was no Interreg speaker in the panel shows that the parallels and potential learning are currently not that obvious. Through 25 years of cooperation Interreg has managed to build a community with a true cooperation culture, where borders are here to be crossed, and where we meet authorities as people and equals who discuss at eye level.

Use the Interreg community

This openness is not yet widespread in other policy instruments, and when it happens it still depends

on those few 'burning souls', who dare to try to make people cooperate. The same was true for the Interreg community a decade or so ago. Interreg is beyond that stage now. We can speak about a cooperation mindset, where of course policy issues are dealt with holistically, because it is natural to invite different actors to the table to find the best innovative and acceptable solutions for all the partners involved. We know that good partnerships take time and resources, and that the quality of results will suffer if this is not respected. However, this is by no means common knowledge. There are initiatives being launched now where partnerships need to be formed within two months and with budgets where the partnership development is not factored in. We know that in such situations there is a high risk of poor results and frustrated partnerships.

Certainly, Interreg does not hold all the answers to these challenges, and in fact has challenges of its own. As put by one of the participants of the conference, policy without process may be empty, but process without policy is useless. While Interreg is still working towards a stronger link to the policy, it certainly has managed to get the process right. As cooperation seems to spread to other policy tools (Horizon 2020, European Social Fund, Financial Instruments, etc.), it is worth exchanging with the Interreg community on how to do this most effectively. With thousands of Interreg projects and even more beneficiaries, chances are that you have an Interreg person in your organisation. Make sure to use their 'mindset' in building your future partnerships. INTERACT is of course ready to share Interreg cooperation experience in wider institutional contexts.

growing through challenges: achievements of EU external border cooperation

ENPI CBC (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument Cross Border Cooperation) is the name given to the financing that supports cooperation across the external borders of the EU (European Union). The resulting projects are managed and implemented by thirteen programmes and are based on mutual partnerships between EU member states and neighbouring countries.

By the **INTERACT ENPI** project

ENPI CBC

More than six years have passed since the ENPI CBC programmes began implementing projects to benefit both member states and neighbouring countries. During these years project participants “crossed the road for each other” countless times; taking care of their joint affairs has certainly made them better neighbours.

“We become neighbours when we are willing to cross the road for one another. (...) There is a lot of road crossing to do. We are all very busy in our own circles. We have our own people to go to and our own affairs to take care of. But if we could cross the road once in a while and pay attention to what is happening on the other side, we might indeed become neighbours.”

Henri J. M. Nouwen

Bread for the Journey: A Daybook of Wisdom and Faith

Based on the four objectives defined in the 2007-2013 strategy, programmes have been implementing projects which: foster social and economic development, deal with common challenges, establish efficient and secure borders, and promote local cross-border people-to-people actions. More than 900 projects supported by the programmes have either been already completed or are still running. In this article, a very small snapshot is provided of the project achievements of ENPI CBC in its three main geographical areas.

Next stop: ENI CBC

The following project examples only begin to touch on what has been done within ENPI CBC. Building on this success, ENI CBC draft operational programmes are currently in development. The total number of programmes will increase from 13 to 17 as three trilateral programmes will split into bilaterals and one new programme will join the family: the Mid-Atlantic. The European Commission has defined a different approach for the 2014-2020 period, requiring that the programmes concentrate on a limited number of concrete thematic objectives to ensure that financing is more targeted.

Since the consequences of the global economic crisis are still affecting recovery in Europe, programmes are very much focused on improving the business environment, and have selected either thematic objective 1 (on business and SME development) or thematic objective 2 (on support to education, research, technology development and innovation). Most programmes are also opting for thematic objective 6 (on environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation) addressing the sustainable use of available joint natural resources.

Land border programmes will look to improve border management and security on the external EU borders, focusing on further developing border-crossing procedures and infrastructure. Many programmes also consider the promotion of local culture and historical heritage as an important priority.

So the second generation of CBC programmes is enabling the continuation of established partnerships and the creation of new ones. An old saying goes ‘When enough people take the same path many times, it becomes a road’ – to all countries participating in the programmes, we hope that these paths you’re taking together will eventually become paved two-way streets!



Credit: The INTERACT ENPI project

success stories

North

As a child, did you enjoy days spent by the seaside or a river? Neither sea nor rivers recognise borders so ensuring clean water is an issue that countries must come together and address across borders.

It is often a treat to be able to spend a day at the beach during the weekend or holidays. Imagine arriving at the beach only to discover that the sand is a grey/black colour due to pollution, the water is not safe to swim in and there is a foul smell in the air! Well, this was once the reality in Sopot, a seaside town in Poland. With the help of the NEFA BALT II project (and its predecessor NEFA BALT I) financed under the Lithuania-Poland-Russia ENPI CBC programme, Sopot has cleaned up the surrounding waters of the Baltic Sea, as well as its beach and pier, thus boosting its local economy. As a leader in this project, Sopot has acted as a good example for project partners in Tolkmicko, Poland and across the border in Mamonovo, Russia.

A highly developed wastewater treatment system has been established in Sopot, which has significantly improved the treatment of rain and other wastewater. Not to mention, it has also helped the prevention of flooding that was prevalent in the town beforehand. An underground water retention reservoir has been constructed, which absorbs wastewater and rainwater, all of which is then

disposed of by an underground pipe. This perhaps sounds like an easy feat, but the engineers overcame several problems while putting this system into place: the construction and laying of the underground pipe had to be carefully planned due to the risk of unexploded World War II bombs in the sand dunes of Sopot. There was also the risk of stormy weather at sea to the boats carrying the part of the pipe to be laid there.

The seaside town has certainly felt the benefits of the wastewater treatment system. Numerous residents can now relax with the knowledge that their homes and businesses are now at a much lower risk of flooding. As project manager, Malgorzata Kowalewska explains,

“The project was voted number one by Sopot residents in a recent poll of funded projects. This is a positive sign that residents are aware of what the project does and how significant it is for the local area.”

The increase in the quality of life brought about by a cleaner beach and town has also led to a boom in tourism with around 2 million tourists visiting annually. Aleksandra grew up in Gdansk and spent her weekends in Sopot as a child. She recalls,

“I remember coming here and not being able to enjoy the water. The difference now is incredible... there are so many tourists and we can actually swim in the sea.”



Credit: The INTERACT ENPI project

Thanks to the same project, partners in neighbouring towns have been implementing similar changes. In Tolkmicko, a sewage system has been constructed which links four villages to the same plant. Over the border in Mamonovo, Russia, the project partner there has been cooperating closely with Polish partners to develop a concept for a rainwater treatment system. These three towns are all located on the Baltic Sea and through the NEFA BALT II project, they are working together to guarantee a cleaner Baltic Sea and contributing to boosting the local economy.

East

The Black Sea Silk Road Corridor (BSSRC) project funded under the Black Sea Basin ENPI CBC



Credit: The Black Sea Basin ENPI CBC programme

programme is the first, but hopefully not the last, EU project which the Armenian Monuments Awareness Project (AMAP) NGO has participated in. The founder of this NGO is an American enthusiast, Richard Ney, who came to Armenia 22 years ago, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, at a time when Armenia had no official relations with Europe. He fell in love with the country and since then has done everything possible to broadcast his enthusiasm and to get others to visit. For the past two years he has done this through the Black Sea Silk Road Corridor project. The western part of the route historically known as the Silk Road, passing through Greece, Turkey, Georgia and Armenia, is now a unique 3000 kilometres of cooperation between those four countries.

The project partners have followed the traditional trail to create a modern touristic route, where the historical-cultural sites are clearly marked, with information panels, and signs on the monuments. A smartphone application for a virtual tour is now in development.

Richard says:
“We share the same vision as our Georgian partners: these are incredibly beautiful and compelling places to visit, but people do not know about them. However many people have come to the South Caucasus so far, it’s just a fraction of those who could come.”

In the space of 24 months, 192 historical sites were marked, not only on the real but also the virtual roads in Armenia, Georgia, Greece and Turkey.

For Richard, “Cross border effort is particularly important because this is a difficult part of the world. Armenia and Georgia are going in different political directions right now, but at the fundamental, humanistic level, people love to meet people, people love to cooperate, and people prefer not to fight. That is why when you cross borders, you cross cultures.”

South

About a quarter of all the medicines we use today come from plants, and yet researchers have barely scratched the surface when it comes to exploring the medical potential growing all around us. A new process developed at Rutgers University makes it easier to screen large quantities of plants for potential medical purposes. The people involved in the Bio-Xplore project have already screened 4,500 plants in the cooperating territories of Israel, Palestine, Spain and Greece. Plants with medicinal potential can lead to breakthroughs that save lives. Meanwhile, the project has also encouraged fruitful cooperation among young Israelis and Palestinians.

“A very fruitful and close cooperation was built, especially between the Israeli and Palestinian students and scientists,” says Professor Bertold Fridlender, President of Hadassah Academic College and the project’s coordinator. “Specifically, they facilitated each other’s work by providing materials difficult to obtain by one of the partners, and by arranging student visits from both sides.”

Yet these are only side benefits envisioned by the project’s partners. The main goal is to create jobs and to boost local industry in the spheres of agriculture, food, cosmetics, pharmaceutical supplements and biotech, while at the same time protecting natural resources. For the first time, through Bio-Xplore an in-depth study has been carried out to discover the bioactivity present in Mediterranean plants. The results were impressive:

“We found that local trees that are very common in Israel actually have medicinal activity,” says Dr. Gili Joseph, one of the Bio-Xplore project’s managers. “There are trees that anyone can go out from their house and pick the leaves and use them in their tea, or as a cream, and it’s effective.”

The commercially viable discoveries of the project are to be patented and sold to local and regional enterprises, with the royalties being divided among the four partner countries.

Omi Duev, a student working with the project in Israel, speaks of how it helped advance his career:

“My final undergraduate project was conducted within Bio-Xplore. I aimed to develop a method, a new work protocol, to scan plant extracts for any anti-cancer activity.”

Thanks to Bio-Xplore, Duev, and other students like him, are able to work in a field that actually may provide us with a cure for cancer, or wrinkly skin.



Credit: The ENPI Info Centre

Iskra Mihaylova



Credit: European Parliament

She has been recently appointed chair of the Committee on Regional Development (REGI) in the European Parliament. Prior to this, she's had an extensive career in the field of Interreg. For instance, she served as Deputy Minister of Regional Development, responsible for territorial cooperation programmes. In this interview, she enlightens us about some key elements that will be crucial on the Parliament's agenda during the new term.

By **Laura Belenguer**, INTERACT

You have always been a firm defender of the European Cohesion Policy and worked on its implementation. How has Bulgaria, your homeland, benefited from this policy along the years?

During recent years Cohesion Policy has become even more important due to the economic and financial crisis, because it has remained a vital source of public investment across the EU. Bulgaria joined the European Union in 2007 and since then it has benefitted from the Cohesion Policy in terms of implementation of projects and initiatives amounting to EUR 6,7 billion – including for European Territorial Cooperation, the Cohesion Fund and the European Social Fund. As result of all projects completed, the following main outputs were achieved as to year 2014: 4,514 jobs created, 223 km new roads constructed, 164 railroads reconstructed, above 950 renovated buildings of the educational, social and cultural infrastructure (universities, schools, libraries, etc.), above 70 centres for providing family-care of children at risk, 250 supported enterprises for implementation of new technologies/products - and the list is even longer!

In the renewed Cohesion Policy for 2014-2020 Interreg became Goal 2, showing that cooperation among regions is a key element for Europe.

What are the actions planned by the European Parliament to make Interreg more visible and known by citizens?

As a Chair of the REGI Committee, I would like to highlight the importance of focusing our attention on the implementation and overall impact of Cohesion Policy investment. Territorial cooperation should be more open to private stakeholders; innovation cannot fully be promoted if private research centres and companies are not involved. The European Parliament will be vigilant on focusing on priorities and projects of real trans-regional and cross-border

relevance to achieve the impact needed. Within the work of REGI Committee we also intend to elaborate an initiative report based on European territorial cooperation development that will highlight the 25-year anniversary of Interreg.

As you just said, Interreg celebrates its 25th anniversary. Territorial cooperation has achieved a great deal of good results but some challenges still need to be resolved. How would you like to tackle these issues as the chair of the REGI Committee?

The greatest challenge for us now is to fully develop the Cohesion Policy potential through the adopted Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes. The European Parliament will be vigilant to ensure all that potential is fully used in order to tackle such challenges like migration and demographic issues through making regions more competitive, innovative, and to provide a higher quality of life in order to encourage people to live and work therein.

In your opinion, what are the biggest strengths of the European Union? What would you say to the euro-skeptical members to bring them closer to the European values?

I would remind them the EU has achieved crucial goals, such as free trade and free movement of labour and capital. Europe has enabled people to travel freely across national boundaries making trade and tourism easier and cheaper. Also, 1.5 million young people have completed part of their studies in another member state with the help of the Erasmus programme. Mutual recognition of safety standards and rules has helped reduce costs for firms. In my opinion, people are not against Europe. They simply don't understand sufficiently what Europe actually does. The benefits and impact of the EU funding have to be explained and made more visible among people.

meet the team

Coming from over 15 different countries and a wide range of backgrounds, the INTERACT team is a diverse group of people who are passionate about cooperation in Europe. The purpose of this section is to let you know a bit more about us by introducing you to a different team member.

By **Maria Baetti**, INTERACT

Name: Katerina Staneva Kring

Nationality: Bulgarian

Working at INTERACT since: September 2006



Credit: INTERACT

Can you tell me about a cross-border experience that has impacted your life?

I studied environmental management and policy in Lund, Sweden. While living there, the Øresund

Bridge was built connecting Sweden and Denmark. All of a sudden, visiting Copenhagen was just a short drive away, as opposed to the time-consuming, expensive ferry ride. Immediately you could see the difference on both the Swedish and Danish side of the border – it really left a lasting impression on me to see how much difference a single bridge can make.

Why did you decide to work in the field of territorial cooperation?

My first job at INTERREG IIB North Sea Region Programme came about because they were looking for a project officer in the field of sustainability and environmental management. At that point, it was a fairly new competence that programmes were focusing on, and my academic background made me stand out for this position. I got to work with many interesting projects in the field of sustainability and it was a great introduction to the field of territorial cooperation.

So you've been in this sector for a while—almost ten years. How have you seen Interreg evolve in that time?

I can see that cooperation between programmes has become much more natural. When I started working for Interreg, it was not a normal practice to exchange with programmes, to inspire each other and to share ideas and work together to find common solutions. Now, almost everything programmes do is supported by experiences of others in the wider community. I also see that the approach within Interreg has changed – we've become more extroverted, collaborating with other policy areas on topics such as energy and maritime

issues. Creating these links on the EU level is very interesting and can also be very valuable for our work.

In your position as quality and evaluation manager, what part is most difficult and which part is most fulfilling?

Maybe I'm too optimistic, but I don't see it as difficult – I see it as interesting and sometimes challenging. What motivates me is that by working with INTERACT as a whole, and trying to provide support to the entire team, we can improve our service to our stakeholders, to the programmes. There are so many aspects to quality management and at the moment I'm still exploring – I've just scratched the surface. I want to see what there is out there and of that, what would be most useful to INTERACT.

What has been your favourite project at INTERACT so far and what was that project about?

I have two favourite projects: working with the network of maritime cross-border programmes and the Project Management Summer Camp, but I will just elaborate on the second. During the Summer Camp we are planning, we will take programme officers through the project management cycle, talk about what happens at each stage of the cycle, and discuss the main differences related to the 2014-2020 period in comparison to 2007-2013 period. We want participants to see things through the projects' perspectives and inspire them to develop stronger communication skills when reaching out to potential applicants and working with beneficiaries. This includes helping them with their facilitation and presentations skills.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I have a six-year-old son, so of course I spend a lot of time with him. I also love nature, so if I have the chance to go walking or hiking I do that. Lately I've also gotten interested in public speaking – reading tips and listening to speeches from good orators.

Are you reading any books at the moment?

Well, going along with my newfound interest in public speaking, I'm reading a book called 'Talk Like TED: The 9 Public-Speaking Secrets of the World's Top Minds' by Carmine Gallo. It includes a lot of solid research behind public-speaking, and I think it is a very useful read for anyone who wants to improve their presentation and facilitation skills.

Interreg



25 years

The 2015 Luxembourgish Presidency of the Council of the European Union,
the European Commission and INTERACT invite you to

celebrate together the 25 years of Interreg

Discover achievements, reflect and be inspired

*See what Interreg has changed
and what Interreg can achieve within and outside the EU*

Mark the date: 15-16 September 2015

Join us at Campus Belval, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg

Participation will also be possible via
live streaming and Twitter

Interreg
project slam,
exhibition of
programme results
and much
more

Visit the
INTERACT
event calendar
for more
details

Credit: ©Stockphoto.com@antishock