



# Transnationality

## Background

Transnationality in the context of North Sea Region Programme encourages highly integrated partnerships that work across and represent different levels of government and administration (**vertical integration**) and embrace both public and private sector entities and different sectors of policy (**horizontal integration**), whilst acting beyond national boundaries in a large territory (**geographic integration** in the NSR as a transnational macro-region). Through these partnerships, transnational cooperation projects are enabled to develop, prepare and implement joint solutions so that they can exploit what transnational cooperation is uniquely equipped to achieve.

**Transnational cooperation is designed to achieve** and generate **added value in the form of strengthened social, institutional and territorial capital in the North Sea Region** through a shared and integrative process. With its unique focus transnationality strives to deepen the integration between regions and trigger structural changes in the way regional development policies are run and actions conducted. It is, therefore, **best employed as a working method where obstacles posed by national borders, natural, geographical, institutional or organisational barriers hinder integration and the qualitative improvement in regional development policy performance**. To achieve this, the NSR programme supports the cooperation between relevant institutions, organisations and (groups of) stakeholders in the North Sea Region.

Transnational programmes, through projects, thus occupy an important 'niche' in the European Structural Funds system since they can act as a catalyst to trigger larger initiatives and ultimately be a **driving force for regional integration**.

## Guidance

### A rationale for transnational cooperation

North Sea Region Programme funds are targeted on NSR wide development issues that are linked to specific needs of regions. **Projects with a transnational perspective can best address the common problems and meet common challenges that are inherent in a large part of the North Sea Region**. Projects must demonstrate that the transnational approach taken adds value to the way in which a topic is addressed to achieve significant impact in the NSR.

Transnational cooperation addresses the territorial dynamics in urban, rural, remote, maritime and other types of areas in the NSR. It is hence imperative that a broad variety of stakeholders from the public and the private sector, as well as research and educational institutions are involved to reflect this territorial diversity. This enables transnational projects to reinforce regional innovation, economic growth, increased employment, competitiveness and sustainable and balanced development of the North Sea Region. It is through this focus that the NSR programme contributes to the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agenda and, respectively the EU Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS).

### Minimum requirements

A project must include partners from **at least three different countries** within the cooperation area, two of which must be from an EU member state. Furthermore, transnational collaboration is required to take place in **at least two of the following ways**: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing<sup>1</sup>. This rule acknowledges the fact that the quality of a transnational project is dependent on its ability to build highly integrated partnerships and pool all the skills and competences of relevant actors in a consortium in order to effectively address issues of regional development in transnational projects. It should be noted, however, that bidding for project funds is a highly competitive process and that **meeting the minimum requirements may not be sufficient**.

### Partnership composition

Due to the nature of the issues addressed in the NSR, transnational cooperation typically requires the involvement of national level institutions as a complement to diverse and complete partnerships at the regional level in the respective national contexts (**combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches**), reflecting the project objectives. At the same time, projects will need to create **strong links to the private sector**, for example businesses (SMEs), business incubators, technology transfer centres, and chambers of commerce to promote public-private partnerships (PPP). Wherever the partner organisations are located it is imperative that the activities benefit the programme area. Projects need to demonstrate the role of each partner in the partnership and make the case why and how the actors are relevant and take part in the project as well as how they interact. Generally, it is vital to consider both, **stakeholders/decision-makers, target groups and user groups** alike to trigger concrete effects of a project.

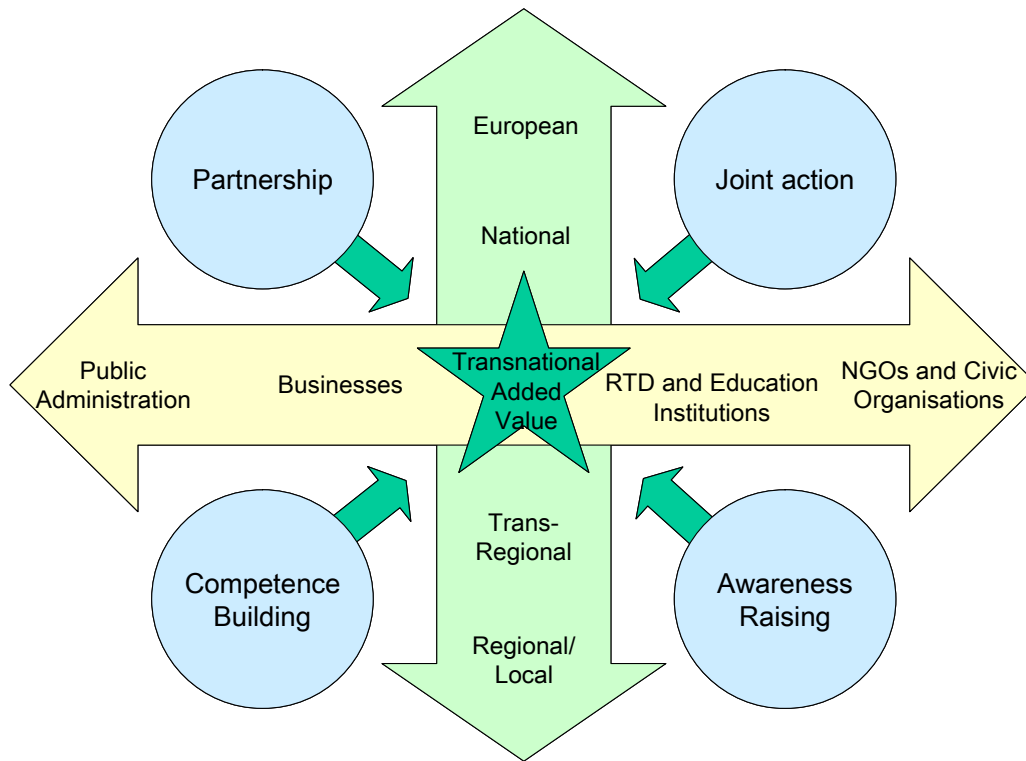
### Project actions and results

There is a strong emphasis not only on the **transnational working arrangements of projects but also on the transnational dimension of the planned results**, with funds being primarily earmarked for transnational actions and less to networking and exchange of experience. Projects should typically contribute to a long-term vision, a big idea as a source for strategic action, e.g. in the field of NSR maritime policy, inter-modal transport corridors, urban and rural networks or transnationally interlinked innovation systems. In this way, transnational cooperation projects can greatly contribute to a **better coordination of sector policies with a territorial impact**. In order to maximise their leverage effect funded initiatives may connect to relevant national policies of the partner countries involved in the project, such as the National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRF) and to other funds and initiatives and consider experiences and outcomes from former ERDF-funded activities. Concrete and tangible transnational results in this respect, for example establishing organisational structures outliving the project implementation period, may serve as the foundation for preparing major projects in other (larger) programmes and initiatives (e.g. future investments, operating business clusters, implemented master plans and business plans etc.). Studies, 'road-maps' or action plans are possible but can only be an element of the transnational activities rather than a main result by themselves. This will lead to the **transnational impact on the NSR, functional or territorial**, becoming evident. Finally, effective dissemination and communication activities are vital to demonstrate the added value of transnational cooperation projects, particularly with regards to their contribution to higher-level regional development objectives at programme and European level.

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<sup>1</sup> ERDF Regulation EC 1080/2006, Art. 19

**Figure 1: Demonstrating the genuinely transnational character of projects within the North Sea Region Programme**



**References:**

- Operational Programme Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme 2007 – 2013
- Project Development Notes, particularly No. 1
- General Regulation EC1083/2006 of 11 July 2006
- ERDF Regulation EC1828/2006 of 8 December 2006, particularly Article 19