



EUROPEAN REGIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FUND



**TRANSNATIONAL
COOPERATION**

Conference conclusions

JOINT TRANSNATIONAL CONFERENCE

13 PROGRAMMES – 1 GOAL:
TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPEAN REGIONS

15 – 16 SEPTEMBER 2011 KATOWICE, POLAND



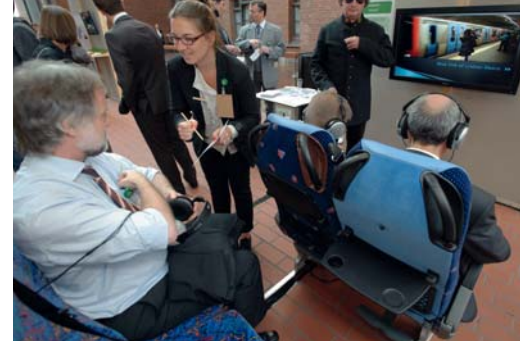
For the very first time, all 13 Transnational Cooperation Programmes from the third objective of the European Cohesion Policy were brought together on 15th and 16th September 2011 at a conference in Katowice organised by the Programmes themselves, under the Polish presidency.

About the conference

Transnational Programmes stimulate practical collaboration in large geographical areas with common interests. Together they cover the complete territory of the EU and most of its neighbours, and even embrace unexpected areas where there are shared activities, such as the Caribbean or Indian Ocean regions. At the conference, the Transnational projects which were showcased demonstrated strong impact and real results. Workshops explored the EU added value of these initiatives.

The following month, the experience of the Katowice conference was brought to Brussels at a special workshop during the Open Days event, with speakers from the Commission, Parliament and Polish Presidency of the Council reviewing the impact of Transnational Cooperation and looking ahead to the next funding period.

This workshop took place shortly after the publication of the Commission's legislative package for the new Programming period (2014–2020), so the outcomes of the Katowice event could be discussed in the context of the new regulations.



Conclusions:

1 Transnational Cooperation is demonstrably a very efficient instrument for achieving greater cohesion in Europe, advancing EU integration in practical ways, close to its citizens and with limited funding. Transnational Cooperation can be clearly seen as a specific financial instrument for Territorial Cohesion.

These practical ways for integration include enhancing territorial assets through joint innovation activities by SMEs, research institutes and public organisations in different countries and joint addressing of territorial challenges, such as reducing flood or fire risks or transport bottle necks in different countries.

2 The Transnational Programmes operate in zones with different territorial specificities and a wide variety of cooperation experiences, so projects differ from one Programme to another. But they all have common features, stimulating growth and jobs and improving quality of life – improving territorial cohesion.

It became clear however that Programmes could improve the delivery of more strategically aligned actions if they could improve the territorial justification of their choice of themes for cooperation. The ESPON knowledge database could be helpful in this respect.

3 Some projects entail investments; but projects without investments can also demonstrate a high level of transnationality, with the proposed actions leading to concrete results for the benefit of all partners. Examples of such outputs include: defining transnational quality labels or marketing strategies; carrying out feasibility studies and tests that will develop a project to a pre-investment stage; setting up virtual universities, establishing SME networks; developing common strategies.



4

Half-way through implementation of the current Programmes, six topics can be identified as common denominators of the variety of initiatives in progress: Innovation, Environment, Transport, Demographic Change, Renewable Energy and Cooperation with neighboring countries.

5

An important special feature of Transnational Cooperation is that its projects create –often informal– structures on a broad geographical level that no existing level of governance covers. This is particularly apparent in projects dealing with integrated rail transport and ‘green corridors’, flood protection in river catchment areas, or supply-chains in SME networks.

6

Since they have no specific sectoral focus, Transnational Programmes can play the role of coordinators between various financial instruments at different governmental levels. For example, Transnational Programmes in the Baltic and Danube regions became the basis for new macro-regional strategies.

7

In the future, Transnational Programmes need to improve the efficiency of delivery mechanisms and develop common sets of data for comparative reporting.



8

Differing rules in different countries can cause transnational projects major difficulties during the joint implementation of their action plans in more than one country. Therefore participants welcomed the proposal of the Commission about harmonisation of eligibility rules.

9

However participants confirmed a major improvement could still be attained on 3 sets of rules that complicate the execution of transnational projects. Therefore participants asked the Commission to also harmonise rules on public procurement, state aid and audit to simplify the implementation of transnational cooperation projects.