



## **Terms of Reference for ESPON-INTERACT Thematic Study**

### **Cross-Border Cooperation**

Cross-border cooperation has a long tradition within INTERREG and relates to various findings of ESPON projects, not at least the typologies of border regions. ESPON findings show that cross-border cooperation remains a crucial tool for achieving economic and social cohesion in Europe. Furthermore, these issues are one of the meeting points between INTERACT, facilitating mutual learning between different INTERREG areas, and ESPON, analyzing spatial development trends at European scale. The present document outlines the study to be carried out, analyzing and comparing the various ongoing activities addressing cross-border cooperation in the light of ESPON findings in order to draw up proposals for future action, identify gaps and stimulate synergies. The study shall run from December 2005 and July 2006, with an important milestone being a INTERACT event based on the findings of this study, probably June 2006. The size of the study is 60,000 Euro (incl. VAT if applicable).

In the following the INTERACT Programme and the ESPON Programme are presented, before outlining the general objectives of this study, the primary research issues envisaged, the timetable and key deliveries and the budget.

#### **1. The INTERACT Programme and the IP Qualification & Transfer**

Cooperation between countries and regions promoted by the Community Initiatives INTERREG II and III has become a fundamental element of EU cohesion policy. The positive impacts of INTERREG II and III programmes and projects on social, economic cohesion and territorial development are acknowledged. However, their implementation is not always easy, insofar as it requires specific cross-border knowledge and know-how which might not be sufficiently available at national or regional level. This holds especially true for the cross-border cooperation programmes under strand A of INTERREG III.

The major problems concerning the INTERREG programmes and the adjacent project implementation stem from difficulties to “manage the difference”: differences of legal,

administrative rules, traditions between countries etc. In order to overcome these obstacles, but also to explore major opportunities and gain more benefits from the results of the programmes and projects, more exchange and provision of information and good practices and examples among the INTERREG community is required.

INTERACT as part of the Community Initiative INTERREG is designed to address these weaknesses, and also to take advantage of the previous and ongoing experiences, with a view to increasing the impact of INTERREG III on economic, social cohesion and cooperation throughout the EU and with neighbouring countries. By capitalising the broad expertise in the fields of regional development, cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation developed through INTERREG in all Member States of the EU as well as along borders with neighboring countries the purpose is to provide support to the implementation of programmes and projects for all 3 strands of INTERREG.

More precisely, INTERACT aims at promoting the exchange of experience, making best practices accessible to interested stakeholders in the European Union through an active programme of dissemination, developing and offering decentralised training interventions and workshops for implementing bodies and project leaders.

In that perspective, major expected outcomes of the INTERACT programme are:

- To enable and encourage transfer of experiences and good practice between institutions and players in different geographical areas, programmes and INTERREG strands and to provide overview of the variety of activities carried out on different themes
- To provide a joint platform for INTERREG and establish common standards and procedures for the implementation of INTERREG programmes (especially for inter-regional and transnational cooperation and for cooperation with neighbouring countries)
- To enhance know-how, technical and organisational capacity of institutions, organisations and persons directly involved in the realisation of INTERREG programmes and projects and improve the link between regional and national instruments and INTERREG
- To enlarge the group of project applicants for all strands of INTERREG through broad information activities and support for project development and implementation
- To act as a platform for the transfer of data and information between related initiatives like ESPON, URBACT and the INTERREG programmes in both directions.

The services of the programme are developed by the Programme Secretariat and the five INTERACT Points:

- Information and Animation,
- Qualification and Transfer,
- IIC coordination,
- Tool Box
- Managing Transition and External cooperation

In this framework, the Interact Point Qualification and Transfer (QT) implements four key fields of action:

- Larger transfer events with expert input and an opportunity for programmes and projects to meet independently of strands. Most conferences are organized in cooperation with ESPON.
- Intensive training seminars for small groups. They focus on practical skills and include practice sessions where participants work with the subjects covered.
- Professional networks between INTERREG staff are being set-up to share views and meet to work on more concrete issues, such as the networks of finance and communication staff.
- QT also documents know-how by producing reports covering some of the issues that are most relevant for INTERREG programmes. These reports are also being used as handbooks for training seminars.

These objectives will be approached through a process involving all INTERREG operators in the discussion and identification of good practice, exchange of experience and training on this good practice, evaluation of results and subsequent improvement of the services offered.

## **2. Relation to the ESPON Programme**

In this context, the participation of ESPON in the INTERACT Point Qualification and Transfer aims at ensuring interaction on thematic issues. The purpose of this activity is to build on the use and exchange of knowledge accumulated in ESPON projects and to combine the knowledge with the good practice experiences in INTERREG projects in order to support the project development and the generation of project ideas to the benefit of many of the INTERREG programmes.

Furthermore, by interlinking and exchanging experiences from INTERREG III A, B and C and ESPON, mutual learning and benefits can be obtained, which in turn can support the development of new project ideas within INTERREG A, B and C programmes as well as new research within the ESPON programme.

ESPON has been contracted to provide content for events (seminars) on thematic issues and will act as an input to these seminars, guide studies, crossing assessment of project activities within INTERREG programmes with state-of-the-art research, analyses, and concrete project ideas for implementation in different strands of INTERREG.

The seminars should address several of the main INTERREG interests, by providing:

- an opportunity for project promoters and project managers from different programmes to meet, exchange knowledge and know-how
- an opportunity for actors coming from outside the INTERREG community to be informed on the developments and results of INTERREG projects related to their field of activity.

As an essential input to thematic slots at INTERACT seminars, thematic studies need to be carried out, which are the subject of the present Terms of Reference. In order to address the mentioned interests, the thematic studies should concentrate on:

- scientific inputs on trends in a selected field, to “feed the content” of projects, better define the orientation that has to be given to the future projects in relation to ESDP objectives and overall European territorial development, and provide programme managers and project promoters with new project ideas. Indicators, tools and methods should also be partly envisaged in order to improve analytical skills, and subsequently, implementation and evaluation of the projects
- case studies based on good practices examples taken among a wide range of INTERREG projects within the thematic focus, representing, as far as possible, all strands, main geographic areas and a range of different INTERREG programmes.

Five themes of mutual interest have to be covered by ESPON based on INTERREG priorities, as well as on Commission priorities and ESPON’s major areas of expertise:

- Transport, communication and accessibility
- Environmental hazards and risk management
- Polycentric development and urban-rural relations
- Cross-border cooperation
- Spatial visions and scenarios

### **3. General Objectives of the Study on Cross-border Cooperation**

Cross-border cooperation remains crucial for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion in Europe, particularly with regard to the borders between new and old EU Member States, between new EU Member States and between the new EU Member States and the Neighbouring Countries.

In general the performance of border regions tends to be lower than EU average. ESPON as well as INTERREG activities address some of the existing barriers and opportunities of border regions for economic and social cohesion.

Yet, the physical, economic and ethnic composition of border regions varies widely across the territory and thus also the needs and preconditions for social and economic integration into the EU.

The cross-border issue is also reflected in the recent policy debate. The draft regulations for the future Structural Funds stress the development of cross-border economic and social activities through joint strategies for sustainable territorial development, and a range of different activities such as:

- By encouraging entrepreneurship and, in particular, the development of SMEs, tourism, culture, and cross-border trade
- By encouraging the protection and joint management of the environment

- By reducing isolation through improved access to transport, information and communication networks and services, and cross-border water, waste and energy systems
- By developing collaboration, capacity and joint use of infrastructure in particular in sectors such as health, culture and education

In addition, the ERDF may contribute to promoting the integration of cross-border labour markets, local employment initiatives, equal opportunities, training and social inclusion, and sharing of human resources and facilities for R&TD

At the same, the Community Strategic Guidelines 2007-2013 “Cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs” argues for promoting knowledge and know-how transfer, the development of cross-border business activities, cross-border education/training and healthcare potential and integrating the cross-border labour market, and joint management of the environmental and common threats. Increasing cross-border competitiveness through innovation and research development, connecting intangible networks (services) or physical networks (transport) to strengthen cross-border identity, the promotion of integrated labour markets; cross-border water management and flood control are seen as potential fields which might bring additional value added to cross-border cooperation.

Taking into consideration the EU cohesion policy, as well as the objectives of INTERREG and ESPON, the thematic study needs to compile and compare INTERREG and ESPON projects/activities with regard to the territorial dimension of cross-border cooperation. This involves mainly INTERREG IIIA activities but also IIIB and IIIC projects are to be considered. Furthermore it needs to be considered that the areas for cross-border cooperation are likely to be enlarged in 2007-2013.

The main question to be answered by this project is: Which are the main “territorial” topics addressed by current cross-border cooperations and how does this correspond to (a) topics dealt with by ESPON, and (b) the pictures and typologies of border areas developed by ESPON? (c) How can use and synergies be enhanced in the future.

For this, two main aspects need to be addressed by the project:

- *Cooperation in areas with potentials for cross-border functional regions*  
Integrated functional areas/regions are an important element for territorial development. National borders still present obstacles to the development of functional regions. Therefore it is necessary to assess where and with regard to which topics INTERREG programmes and projects contribute to strengthening cross-border functional regions and how this relates to ESPON findings in the field. This relates in particular to the fields of activities envisaged in the above mentioned policy documents.
- *Cooperation and different types of border areas*  
Border regions differ widely not at least as regards the type of borders and the territorial/geographical context. Therefore it is necessary to assess where and with regard to which topics INTERREG cooperation addresses the specifics of certain types of borders and how this relates to ESPON findings in the field.

Thus, there is a wide range of activities in the field of cross-border cooperation currently ongoing with various geographical and thematic foci, as well as different processes and intentions.

Bringing together all this material, processes and people involved should provide a good opportunity for mutual learning and inspiration and an added value for the future development of INTERREG cooperation activities and further cross-border activities within a future objective within Structural Funds dealing with territorial cooperation. It should enable project development officers and programme managers to better understand the distinct spatial characteristics and development trends within their programme area, to consider them in a wider context and to make use of them in programme development and project selection.

For this purpose the present call for tender has been developed. The aim of this study is to provide an systematic and comparative overview on the cross-border work going on in various INTERREG programmes and projects and to draw up an analysis of their differences in thematic priorities and approaches and in particular on how ESPON results can support the further development of cross-border cooperation in INTERREG programmes and beyond.

The focus of this study has been set in close relation with the needs and expectations of the INTERREG programmes and projects, in order to provide appropriate answers to their needs, and stimulate synergies between them. Indeed, the study will be subject to an INTERACT seminar at which various actors of the INTERREG community will come together for discussing issues related to the themes of this study.

In order to assure client oriented and applicable results, following access points are to be considered:

- *Cooperation with INTERREG programme secretariats and projects*  
Some information on INTERREG projects and programmes is available from the Internet. In order to have a comprehensive overview of programmes and projects, the contractor will have to get in touch directly with INTERREG secretariats and projects. The contractor will have the support of the ESPON CU and INTERACT Points regarding this particular task. In cooperation between ESPON and INTERACT already a first rough database on over 3500 INTERREG III projects has been developed which offers a first point of departure.
- *Cooperation with ESPON Coordination Unit and projects*  
Most of the knowledge on trends and policy impacts within the European territory as well as background and methodological information will have to be found in and collected from the ESPON results. Relevant ESPON projects are in this context in particular 1.1.3 but also the projects 1.1.2, 1.2.1, 1.2.2, 2.2.2 and 2.4.2, but also 3.1 and 3.2 might offer interesting insights.
- *Cooperation with the INTERACT POINTS*  
For the implementation of the thematic study, cooperation with other INTERACT Points will be necessary, notably with Qualification and Transfer. However, also

Information and Animation or Tool Box and Managing Transition might provide some useful inputs to the thematic study.

#### **4. Primary Research Issues Envisaged**

Taking into consideration the EU Cohesion Policy, as well as the objectives of INTERREG and ESPON related to territorial cohesion policies, the thematic study needs to compile and compare INTERREG and ESPON projects/activities dealing with cross-border cooperation. The main purpose of this exercise is to provide new insights and ideas for the discussion on future programmes and key projects. The strategic element of the cross-border activities in giving impetus to project ideas and providing guidance for project selection are key aspects.

The key deliveries of the thematic study should address:

**1. Overview on the main issues of border cross-border cooperation**

A first overview on the topics dealt with under INTERREG and ESPON will address following aspects:

**1.1. Policy debate in the field of cross-border cooperation**

An overview on the key aspects addressed in the current policy debate on the future of cross-border cooperation.

**1.2. Main issues of INTERREG cross-border cooperation**

Brief overview on the main issues dealt with by the current 64 INTERREG IIIA programmes and the wide range of projects implemented.

**1.3. Main findings of ESPON on border situation**

Synthetic summary of ESPON findings on cross-border issues and ESPON typologies on borders and border regions.

**2. Further development of Cross-border Typology**

The existing barriers and opportunities of border regions differ widely, not at least depending on the nature of the border. The physical, economic and ethnic composition of border regions is a decisive factor for cross-border integration. Under the framework of ESPON project 1.1.3 a typologies of border situation has been developed for the new Member States.

**2.1. Extension of ESPON cross-border typologies to all EU internal borders at NUTS3 level (geographic types of border regions, ethnic-historical types of border regions, density of border crossings, dimension of economic disparities) and if possible some of the borders between Member States and non-Member States.**

**3. Compilation of INTERREG and ESPON work with regards to cooperation in areas with potentials for cross-border functional regions**

The main part of the work will consist in analysing the activities carried under INTERREG according to a number of thematic orientations and their relation to latest ESPON findings.

**3.1. Overview on intangible networks supported by INTERREG and their contribution to the strengthening of cross-border urban systems and labour**

markets as identified by ESPON. As far as possible this should also take into account the issues of economic growth, job creation and SMEs etc.

- 3.2. Overview on transport infrastructure and ICT related activities supported by INTERREG and their contribution to strengthening accessibility and access to information (as compared to the level identified by ESPON).
  - 3.3. Overview on cross-border activities supported by INTERREG related to entrepreneurship, tourism and culture and their contribution to build successful regions with strong regional identity. This relates to ESPON findings in the field of cultural and natural heritage and labour market.
  - 3.4. Overview on cross-border activities supported by INTERREG related to natural protection and environmental heritage and their relation to ESPON findings in the field of rural-urban settings and naturalness.
  - 3.5. Main fields in which INTERREG contributes to strengthening cross-border functional regions and relation to ESPON typologies.
4. **Compilation of INTERREG and ESPON work with regard to cooperation in different types of border areas**

In addition to the topic of cooperation also the area of cooperation is of interest. Drawing on the extended ESPON typology of border regions, classifications of activities according to their specific border situation are to be developed.

- 4.1. Overview on specific topics and location of cross-border cooperation in rural and urban areas (according to ESPON typologies).
  - 4.2. Overview on specific topics and location of cross-border cooperation in central and peripheral both as regards the national and European perspective.
  - 4.3. Overview on specific topics and locations of cross-border cooperation according to geographic types of borders (green, river, mountainous or maritime borders).
  - 4.4. Overview on specific topics and locations of cross-border cooperation according to ethnic-historical types of border regions
  - 4.5. Overview on specific topics and locations of cross-border cooperation according to the density of border crossing points.
  - 4.6. Overview on specific topics and locations of cross-border cooperation according to the intensity of cooperation (e.g. number of projects or number of projects per inhabitant or number of people involved in cooperation projects).
  - 4.7. Summing up the main specifics of INTERREG cooperation with regard to the type of border area and corresponding ESPON typologies.
5. **Provision on inputs for the definition of future cooperation themes and frameworks:**

The thematic study is to be developed bearing in mind that the study and the interaction at the seminar will target mainly project officers and programme managers within the secretariats of INTERREG programmes. However, also participants in INTERREG projects and future project partners are to be addressed.

Project ideas that will be proposed should be based on the above analysis of themes addressed by cross-border cooperation and different types of border regions, and take into account the aims of current territorial cohesion and European regional policy. In particular the Community Strategies Guidelines and the Draft Structural Funds Regulations are important points of reference. Furthermore, project ideas will have to take into consideration budgetary aspects, in relation to the size of the programmes,

size and type of projects, but also orientations and perspectives for the next programming period, as soon as the new regulations for Structural Funds 2007-2013 becomes public. In this respect also the challenges emerging from geographically wider cross-border cooperation areas need to be addressed.

Taking this into account a proposal for future cooperation themes must be elaborated:

5.1. Identifying gaps

Are there specific themes that are not sufficiently addressed in the current INTERREG programmes (mainly strand A) and to what extent are existing spatial disparities, challenges and potentials as identified by ESPON, targeted in INTERREG?

5.2. Distinct developments in programming areas

To what degree is cross-border cooperation targeted in the various programmes with regard to the territorial specificities of the border situation?

5.3. Concrete ideas for future projects

Based on ESPON knowledge on territorial trends and policy impacts, related to different parts of Europe and different types of territories, and on findings of INTERREG projects dealing with cross-border cooperation, ideas for new projects in relation to the cooperation themes and frameworks, must be proposed.

5.4. Ideas for applied ESPON research

The project should also come forward with ideas for applied ESPON research deriving from the analysis carried out.

## 5. Timetable and Key Deliverables

The implementation of the study should start early in December 2005, and be developed in accordance with the following timetable and deadlines for delivery:

- **December 2005/ January 2006: Kick-off meeting**

A kick off meeting is envisaged for December 2005 or January 2006 to take place either in Luxembourg or Brussels.

- **2 May 2006: Draft Final Report**

- Draft Final Report presenting all the above mentioned elements in a draft version, which will be finalised and complemented by the conclusions of the thematic seminar.
- Report presenting in a summarised version of approx. 40 pages the main outcomes of the thematic study, including the following elements:
  - Introduction
  - Findings on the European level, background information on current cross-border cooperation and their foci and implications
  - Overview on INTERREG cross-border activities
  - Findings on topics, processes and results (cf. research issues envisaged)
  - Identification of potential cooperation themes by type of regions in meeting respective programme objectives

- Good practice in INTERREG projects with reference to specific types of regions
- Concrete ideas for new projects and future perspectives, both as regards possibilities for improvement and maintaining momentum in programming areas that have developed territorial strategies, and as regards beneficial approaches for programming areas that have not engaged with this kind of work (considering all three INTERREG strands)
- Prior to the elaboration of the drafting of the Final Report a list of 10 key points is to be provided for coordination of the report with ongoing Interact and ESPON processes.
- The Draft Final Report will be disseminated at least two weeks before the seminar, in order to prepare the participants for the discussion.
- **Beginning of May to end of June 2006: Consultation process**  
The contractor, with the help of the Coordination Unit and the INTERACT Point Qualification & Transfer, will have to carry through a consultation process involving the INTERREG programmes secretariats, for the validation of the results presented in the draft report. The recommendations given by the secretariats will have to be integrated in the report for its finalisation.  
An important feature of this process will be the comments and feedback on the intermediate findings of the study given by the participants of the seminar.
- **June 2006: INTERACT seminar**
  - The contractor will have to prepare and organise in collaboration with the INTERACT Point Qualification & Transfer team the thematic slot related to the study within the INTERACT seminar. The contractor should be prepared to make a presentation of the results of the study, to organise and lead the debate with the participants on the findings of the study, and to contribute to the conclusions of the seminar. Slides used in relation to the seminar will be made available to public in the internet.
  - The contractor needs to provide a short summary of comments and feedback received on the study at the seminar as well as during the rest of the consultation process.
- **End of July 2006: Final Report**
  - Presenting the finalised version of the thematic study, including conclusions from the INTERACT seminar.

The report is to be written in easily accessible English language which is appealing also to readers which are not familiar with spatial development visions or territorial strategies.

In addition to the reporting a close cooperation with the ESPON CU will be necessary involving at least two meetings, one in the start of the programme and one in relation to the finalisation of the draft final report. The contracting authority can request brief written inputs (discussions papers) for the preparation of these meetings.

Throughout the study period, the contractor should regularly inform in relevant findings, overviews made or first conclusions. This should facilitate the coordinating of the findings of the study with other ongoing INTERACT and ESPON processes and also provide valuable input to the preparation of the seminar. The contractor should also inform beforehand when they plan to get in touch with programmes or projects directly as the ESPON CU and IP QT will be able to facilitate the process.

## **6. Budget**

The budget allocated for the implementation of the thematic study is 60.000 € This includes VAT if applicable and travel expenses for two coordination meetings in Brussels or Luxembourg. Costs related to the participation to the seminar are not included.