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Minutes: “Cross-Border Cooperations” Workshop 27 January 2011

Evaluation of the INTERREG Programmes Philippe Doucet, GEPHYRES

1. Evolution of the INTERREG Programmes

The management of the INTERREG programmes has gradually become more complex and now covers broad, overlapping transnational areas.

There has been a slight increase in INTERREG programmes, from 2% for the 2000-2006 programming period to 2.42% for the 2007-2013 programming period.

The notion of proximity has an important place in cross-border cooperation.

2. Ex Post Evaluation of INTERREG 3

Evaluation

The aim was to evaluate the political and territorial impact of cross-border cooperation.

Axis A: the evaluation emphasized:

- Very general and global strategies;
- The direct effects of physical investment on the development of cross-border areas and direct effects of less material soft cooperation (creation of networks, exchanges etc.);
- The intensity and depth of cooperation is quite good but varies according to the level of joint initiatives or lack of them.

Axis B: the evaluation emphasized:

- Strategies are not adequately targeted;
- Budgets are too small;
- Direct effects tend to result from soft cooperation;
- The most significant effect is the creation of large, sustainable networks;
- Above average levels of cooperation as strong cooperation was directly linked with the project rather than the programme.

Axis C: the evaluation emphasized:

- Very broad issues;



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- Low intensity and depth of cooperation;
- Management of the cooperation was emphasized to the detriment of content;
- Indirect effects on the territory.

Recommendations

The recommendations proposed on the basis of this evaluation were as follows:

- Cross-border programmes need to better target priorities and objectives;
- Project development (as opposed to a purely reactive posture) needs to be developed;
- Synergies between programmes need to be developed;
- Joint strategies need to be anticipated and worked out;
- Indicators to better measure the results and performance of cooperation and relations between regions need to be developed.

Governance tool:

EGTC could contribute to the sustainability of cooperation. EGTC could be a good tool for promoting better governance but governance systems have to be adjusted on a case by case basis.

There is a clear need to reinforce the territorial integration of the respective areas. The macro-regional tool could be very useful in this regard. There is also a need to strengthen links between the various EU interventions.

Financial tool:

FEDER means should be directly allocated to programmes rather than to Member States.

Evaluation:

It is necessary to evaluate not only the programmes but also the projects.

3. Conditions for Cooperation

Several reasons lead regions to cooperate:

- Opportunistic cooperation because available FEDER funds;
- Given increasing territorial interdependence, there is a genuine need for strategic cooperation for better territorial integration.

To reach this second objective, a place-based approach that goes beyond administrative borders is necessary. Whatever the administrative borders happen to be, cooperation between territories needs to be based on relations and flux in order to develop a cross-border cooperation strategy based on shared issues.

4. Discussion Issues

- What are the competences and skills necessary to carry out sound transnational cooperation development?
 - o Skills need to be strengthened.
 - o Intercultural exchange is complex and requires time.
 - o Training/diplomas must be oriented towards the strategic dimension of territorial cooperation rather than simply focus on program management.
- What are the dynamics of cross-border cooperation in the new Member States? Are such programmes adapted to this area?
 - o Developing cross border cooperation while at the same respecting community rights has been difficult.
 - o The main question is how the new members see their place and role in European institutions.



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- Doesn't the significant, ongoing economic competition between regions impede territorial integration?
 - o It is difficult to integrate the economic level in cross-border relations due to divergent rules (taxes, salaries etc.)
 - o Local and regional administrations are not ready to share rules, laws, etc.
- What type of conditionality can increase the efficiency of such a programme?
 - o How is conditionality to be developed without indicators?
 - o How can territorial integration be evaluated?
 - o The place-based approach is interesting but there are no funds available to finance it. In the Baltic Sea, cooperation existed long before structural funds: historical links are the best opportunity for organizing cross-border cooperation. But in most other cases, there would have been no cooperation without structural funds – i.e., without obligations, cooperation may fail.
 - o The place-based approach may also represent an opportunity for bringing actors together around a common territorial objective.

References:

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