



JOINT REPORT

**How is being enhanced the border effect
in the protection and development of natural
and cultural cross-border heritage in Europe**



Environment &
resource
efficiency



**Interreg
Europe**



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Thematic Experts:

José Palma Andrés (experts group coordinator - Atlantic Axis of Peninsular Northwest)

Ana Ladeiras (Iberian Association of Riverside Municipalities of Duero River)

Mónika Komádi (Tokaj Wine Region Nonprofit LLC)

Massimiliano Gini (Agency for the Development of the Empolese Valdelsa)

Kostas Karamarkos (Regional Development Fund on behalf of the Region of Western Macedonia (EL))

Peeter Unt (Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation)

Bogdan Georgescu (Satu Mare County Intercommunity Development Association)

Tomas Raboch (Regional Development Agency of the Pilsen Region)

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In the framework of EPICAH project (Effectiveness of Policy Instruments for Cross-Border Advancement in Heritage), co-financed by the European Union through the INTERREG EUROPE programme 2014-2020, nine partners from seven European cross-border areas, on the basis of their territorial experience and of a specific online survey that covered all the borders tackled by the project, have elaborated the present JOINT REPORT about how the border effect should be seen as an opportunity to enhance the cross-border heritage in Europe.

The project partners are:

- Atlantic Axis of Peninsular Northwest (PT)
- Regional Development Agency of the Pilsen Region (CZ)
- Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation (EE)
- Regional Development Fund on behalf of the Region of Western Macedonia (EL)
- Atlantic Axis of Peninsular Northwest (ES)
- Iberian Association of Riverside Municipalities of Duero River (ES)
- Tokaj Wine Region Nonprofit LLC (HU)
- Agency for the Development of the Empolese Valdelsa (IT)
- Satu Mare County Intercommunity Development Association (RO)

This Report is divided in the following chapters:

- Chapter 1 –Introduction. It highlights the following messages:
 - The reasons why EU is, and should continue intervening in border areas
 - How border areas actors perceive EU intervention
- Chapter 2 – State of Art in Europe. It covers three areas:
 - Cross-border cultural heritage
 - Cross-border natural heritage
 - Cross-border tourism

Along with comments on their “relevance for border development”, “main constraints and fields of improvement”, and suggesting “good practices” in each of them.

- Chapter 3 – Role and Support of Interreg A programmes on the three above mentioned fields.
- Chapter 4 – Findings. It offers a SWOT analysis of each of the three fields covered by the study, together with a set of recommendations for the next EU programming period starting on 2021.

1. INTRODUCTION

Why EU is, and should continue intervening in Border Areas

By placing co-operation as the third objective of Cohesion Policy, the European Union stressed the key role of territorial cooperation in building a common European area, helping to ensure that borders are not physical barriers, where people can share experiences and that work towards common goals can be a tangible reality.

European territorial cooperation is today the main instrument to support the full realization of the single market. Bearing in mind that the internal cross-border regions and maritime territories are today the European Union regions where the need to fully achievement of the single market is perceived. The European territorial Cooperation is, as well, perceived as the main answer to the need to create an effective European citizenship felt by European citizens in their daily lives.

Cohesion Policy, like other European Union investment policies, is one of the important components of the response to the current economic and financial crisis and the current major challenges: the emerging phenomena of ultranationalism and antidemocratic populist movements, the pressure of migration, globalization, climate change, demography, etc. But it is certainly a key element in responding to these challenges, as well as the European Union's main response to the need to deepen the increasingly necessary building of effective and inclusive European citizenship.

The European Union is a place of many countries and hence many national borders. Between the 28 Member States and Norway, Switzerland, Lichtenstein and Andorra, there are close to 40 land borders and 17 maritime borders.

Around 150 million Europeans (border regions correspond to around 20% of the European territory) live in these regions (corresponding to around 37,5% of the European Union population). In the early 1990s, with the introduction of the Single Market, it was recognized that these regions and their citizens could potentially suffer from loss of employment through the disappearance of many border-related jobs, for instance in the customs administrations or in logistics and transport sector.

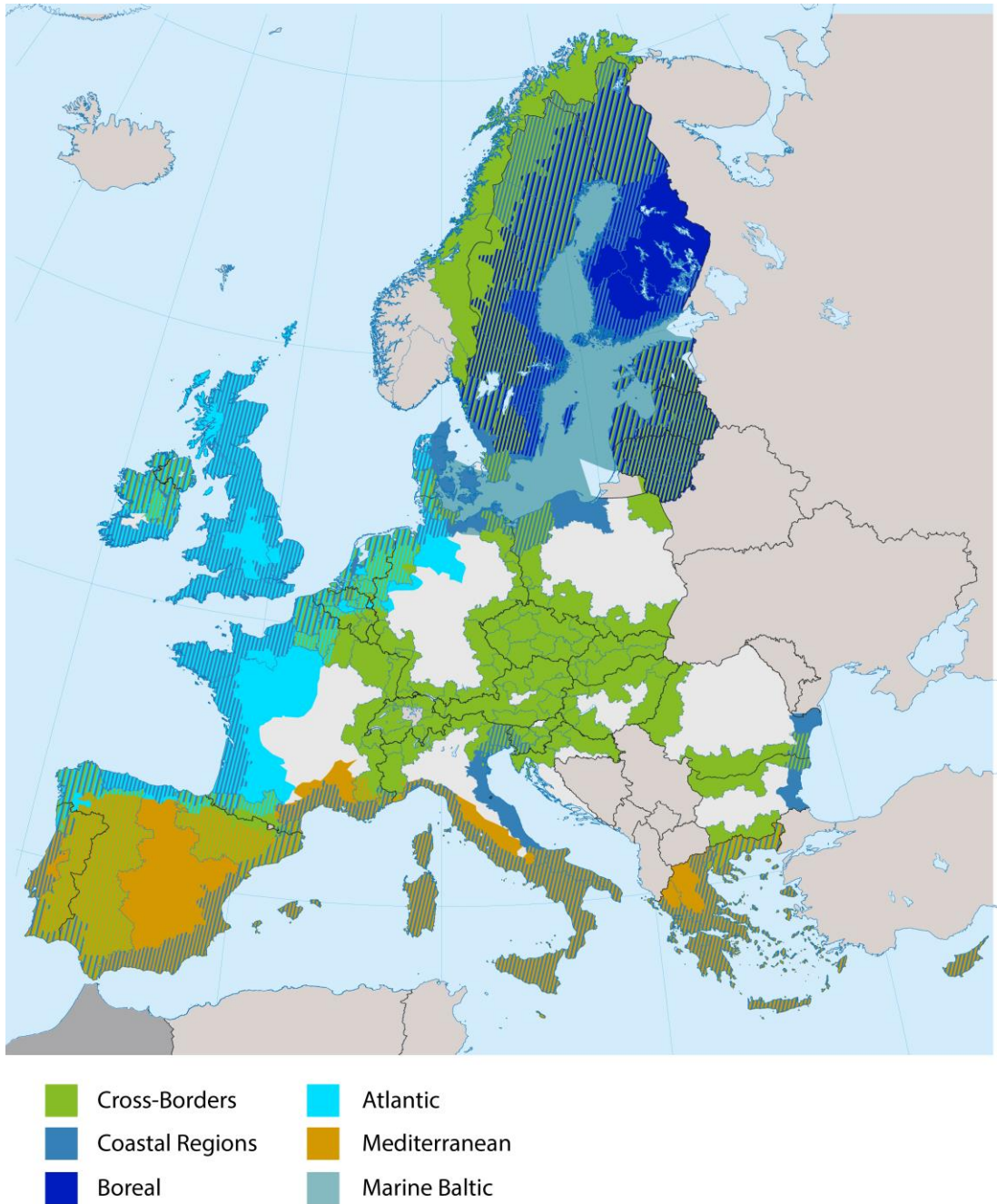


Figure 1: Map of the terrestrial and maritime border regions along internal EU28 and EFTA borders
Source: Self elaboration

At the time, the European Union established a financial instrument to enable border regions to cooperate more closely with the objective of exploiting their common potential in order to alleviate the possible losses described above. The Interreg initiative was then created. This initiative has now become a fully-fledged objective under the Union's Cohesion Policy. For the period 2014-2020, over 6 billion euros from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is being invested along European internal borders. Thousands of projects receive financial support to exploit border regions' potential better and to overcome existing difficulties such as reduced accessibility, lack of healthcare or educational infrastructures.

European cross-border cooperation aims to tackle common challenges identified jointly in the border regions and to exploit the untapped growth potential in border areas, while enhancing the cooperation process for the purpose of the overall harmonious development of the Union.

European Territorial Cooperation, better known as Interreg, is one of the two goals of Cohesion Policy and provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States. The overarching objective of European Territorial Cooperation is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole. Interreg is built around three strands of cooperation: cross-border (Interreg A), transnational (Interreg B) and interregional (Interreg C). Five programming periods of Interreg have succeeded each other: INTERREG I (1990-1993) - INTERREG II (1994-1999) - INTERREG III (2000-2006) - INTERREG IV (2007-2013) - INTERREG V (2014-2020).

There were 60 cross-border cooperation programmes for the period 2007-2013 with an allocation of 6 billion euros (60% of which have been spent), involving a wide variety of activities linked to the maturity of border cooperation. For the period 2014-2020 there are the same number of programmes with an allocation of 6,6 billion euros.

Cross-border cooperation programmes support NUTS III regions laying directly on the borders, or adjacent to them. They are managed by joint structures, situated in one of the countries, responsible for the whole programme.

The fifth period of Interreg (2014-2020) is based on 11 thematic objectives laid down in the ERDF Regulation contributing to the delivery of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. At least, 80% of the budget for each cooperation programme has to concentrate on a maximum of 4 thematic objectives among the eleven European Union priorities:

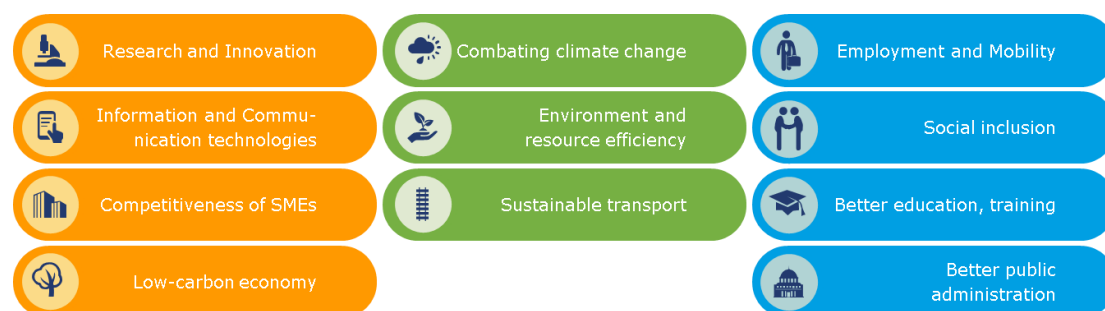


Figure 2: 11 (eleven) investment priorities

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/

The fifth programming period of Interreg has a budget of 10.1 billion euros invested in over 100 cooperation programmes between regions and territorial, social and economic partners. This budget also includes the ERDF allocation for Member States to participate in European Union external border cooperation programmes supported by other instruments (http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/outside-the-eu).

CROSS BORDER	TRANSNATIONAL	INTERREGIONAL
<p>*60 Cross-border – Interreg V-A - programmes along 38 internal European Union borders. ERDF contribution: 6.6 billion euros.</p> <p>*12 IPA cross-border: Instrument for Pre-Accession and European Neighbourhood Instruments</p> <p>*16 ENI cross-border: International Cooperation and Development.</p>	<p>*15 Transnational – Interreg V-B - programmes covering larger areas of co-operation such as the Baltic Sea, Alpine and Mediterranean regions. ERDF contribution: 2.1 billion euros.</p>	<p>*The interregional co-operation programme, Interreg Europe, and 3 networking programmes (Urbact III, Interact III and ESPON) cover all 28 Member States of the European Union. They provide a framework for exchanging experience between regional and local bodies in different countries. ERDF contribution: 500 million euros.</p>

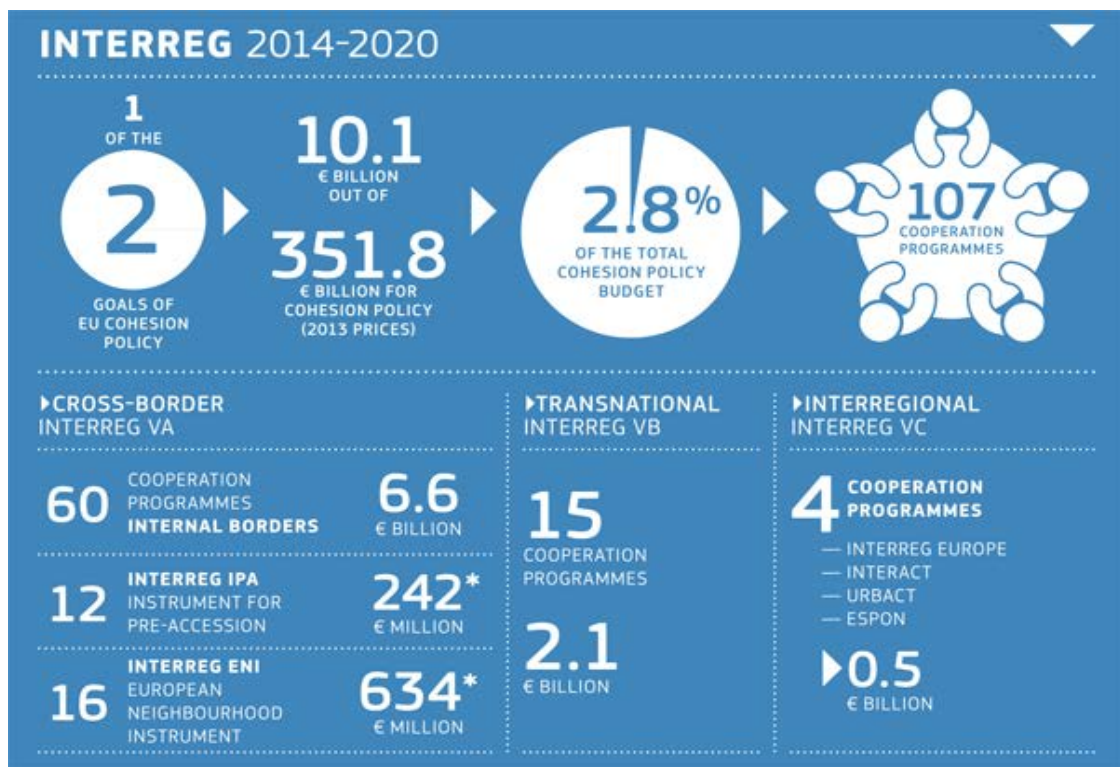


Figure 3: Interreg 2014-2020 main figures

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/

The three thematic objectives applying to the cross-border cultural and natural heritage and tourism are the thematic objectives 3, 5 and 6 (in particular the last one) as described below.

Thematic Objective 3 – Competitiveness of SME
<p>These investments will help SMEs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Access finance for investments through grants, loans, loan guarantees, venture capital, etc. o Benefit from targeted business support, e.g. know-how and advice, information and networking opportunities, cross-border partnerships. o Improve their access to global markets and international value chains o Exploit new sources of growth such as the green economy, sustainable tourism, health and social services including the “silver economy” and cultural and creative industries o Invest in human capital and in organisations providing practice-oriented vocational education and training o Forge valuable links with research centres and universities to promote innovation

For the 2014-2020 programming period:

Tourism has not been included as a thematic objective in the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) regulations, as it constitutes a means or a sector rather than an objective. However, the regulations foresee many possibilities for smart tourism investments.

The Commission has published a thematic guidance for tourism investments. It recommends that these:

- Are aligned with one or several of the thematic objectives and investment priorities.
- Are coherent with the SWOT analysis of the relevant national/regional/transnational OPs
- Focus on better valorising local cultural and tourism assets,
- Drive product, process and service innovation and diversification, as well as specialisation for niche markets, in order to overcome dependency on low added value, temporary work and ensure economic activity and jobs outside the tourist season.
- Particular attention should be given to triple upgrading the capacity for excellence, innovation and internationalising of SMEs and clusters, (cross-) clustering activities, including through enhancing internal and external links.
- As one of the particular advantages of the tourism sector is that barriers to market entry is particularly low, a focus should be put on support to entrepreneurship and new company creation.

Thematic Objective 5 – Adaptation to climate change and risk prevention

Cohesion Policy plays an important role in supporting risk prevention efforts to adapt to the present and future impacts of climate change. It supports adaptation measures by promoting ecosystem-based approaches, developing new infrastructures or retrofitting existing infrastructures. Moreover, it contributes to developing disaster resilience at regional and local level, also for other types of risks. Through the investments to this objective, which amount is up to 8 billion euros, Cohesion Policy can address various types of risks, whether or not related to climate change adaptation. The predominant focus is on flood prevention.

Investments from Cohesion Policy funds allow addressing specific risks through disaster resilience and disaster management systems. For instance, measures to address the 'knowledge gap' such as the necessary academic research, studies and reports, strategy development, ICT support or awareness and education measures can be co-funded.

Where do the investments go?

Many activities to support risk prevention and management can be funded, including:

- Development of strategies and contingency plans,
- Reinforcement of coordination, monitoring and early warning systems,
- Awareness-raising and education,
- Flood and coastal defence,
- Protection against forest fires and wildfires,
- Equipment for civil protection units,
- Ecosystem-based solutions or
- Disaster-resilience and climate proofing of public infrastructure.

Thematic Objective 6 – Environment and resource efficiency

The ESIF helps to protect and preserve natural assets such as water, nature and biodiversity, clean air or raw materials.

Cohesion Policy also supports investments that boost the implementation of the European Union's biodiversity and nature policies, in particular through the Habitats and Birds Directives and by strengthening the Natura 2000 network of protected areas. In addition, during the programming of the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy, a strong emphasis was placed on supporting green infrastructure (e.g. flood plains, green walls and roofs), especially in cities.

Furthermore, Cohesion Policy also contributes to eco-tourism by conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage. It is taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites, reduce air pollution and promote noise-reduction measures. It supports the industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors.

In line with Article 3 of the ERDF regulation (Regulation No 1301/2013) support for investments in cultural and tourism infrastructure is limited to small-scale type only. The Commission considers an investment in built infrastructure as being a small-scale one if its total cost is below or equal to EUR 5 mil.; this ceiling is raised to EUR 10 mil. in the case of infrastructure considered as world cultural heritage in the sense of Article 1 of the 1972 Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage listed by UNESCO. (Commission's position on small-scale infrastructure [Ref. Ares(2015) 481089 - 05/02/2015]). The Commission is planning to raise these limits.

The programs evolution shows that there is a growing concern and interest of partners and potential partners on the thematic of natural and cultural heritage. This interest is related not only with the

environment protection in particular, but as well with the potential for development. In fact, nature and culture, associated with tourism promotion, can have a positive impact in the sustainability of development in the border areas, by the potential creation of sustainable jobs contributing for fixing populations and the collateral development of other activities like local agriculture and forest, and circular economy.

How border areas actors perceive EU intervention? (The results of an on line survey in 7 Border Areas of the Union)

On the 17th and 18th of May 2017, the EPICAH project Steering Committee launched an online survey targeting the cross-border cooperation actors in each of the 7 border regions concerned, with the aim to get an informed opinion about the regional status of the management and development of cross-border natural and cultural heritage. The survey took place between July and September, in 2017.

The EPICAH project involves 7 of these cross-border territories in Europe: **Spain-Portugal, Italy-France, Estonia-Latvia, Germany-Czech Republic, Hungary-Romania, Hungary-Slovakia and Western Macedonia in Greece**. Its goal is to assess the current situation, identify the main constraints and define possible areas of improvement.

At the outset, it should be presented some comments on the quality of the survey and the received answers. There were a significant number of respondents (179) of all the regions involved that not all of them have a deep administrative knowledge of the policy instrument.

Another relevant conclusion to be note was that that there is a noticeable distinction between the answers of Managing Authorities, Joint Secretariats, intermediate bodies and those of the applicants: the first group's mind-set is nearly always on a more positive opinion than the second group's.

Regarding the allocation of resources, it is relevant that a significant percentage of the respondents are not aware of the exact or approximate amount of funds dedicated to all three topics addressed (cross-border Cultural and Natural Heritage, and cross-border tourism). This is not necessarily due to the lack of information, since it is possible that they chose the 'I don't know' option for a different reason altogether, for example if there is no funding foreseen for a certain topic yet. It can also means that they are not sure about their own exact needs or the exact needs of their border in a certain field.

The EPICAH survey had also highlighted (and is also presented as transversal to all the following chapters) the importance tourism activity has as tool for the protection, valorisation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage.

Tourism arises almost as the only mean to improve and spread knowledge about the regions identity values and heritage and as the sole activity able to make profitable the investments made in its promotion and preservation.

Finally, as central point of the discussion presented in the following chapters is that administrative borders still have to much importance in the management of cross-border cultural and natural heritage despite those heritage assets have their own limits and that those limits normally do not correspond to the administrative ones. In this context, one of the main challenges to improve the policy instruments of EPICAH project (mainly EU programmes) is how they should addressed – through cooperation - the elimination of the border effect and border context costs in the aim of the management of cross-border cultural and natural heritage.

2. STATE OF THE ART

2.1 CROSS-BORDER CULTURAL HERITAGE

In the field of culture, individual European Union Member States are responsible for the planning and implementation of their own policies and therefore the European Commission’s agenda narrows down to address common challenges: promoting cultural diversity, protecting cultural heritage, helping the mobility of cultural professionals, and supporting the contribution of cultural and creative industries as key factors to boost growth and jobs across the EU (e.g. 2015-18 Work Plan for Culture, European Agenda for Culture, Creative Europe, Joint Communication Towards an European Union strategy for international cultural relations).

These goals are in line with the Europe 2020 strategy and international agreements, like the United Nations Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, too.

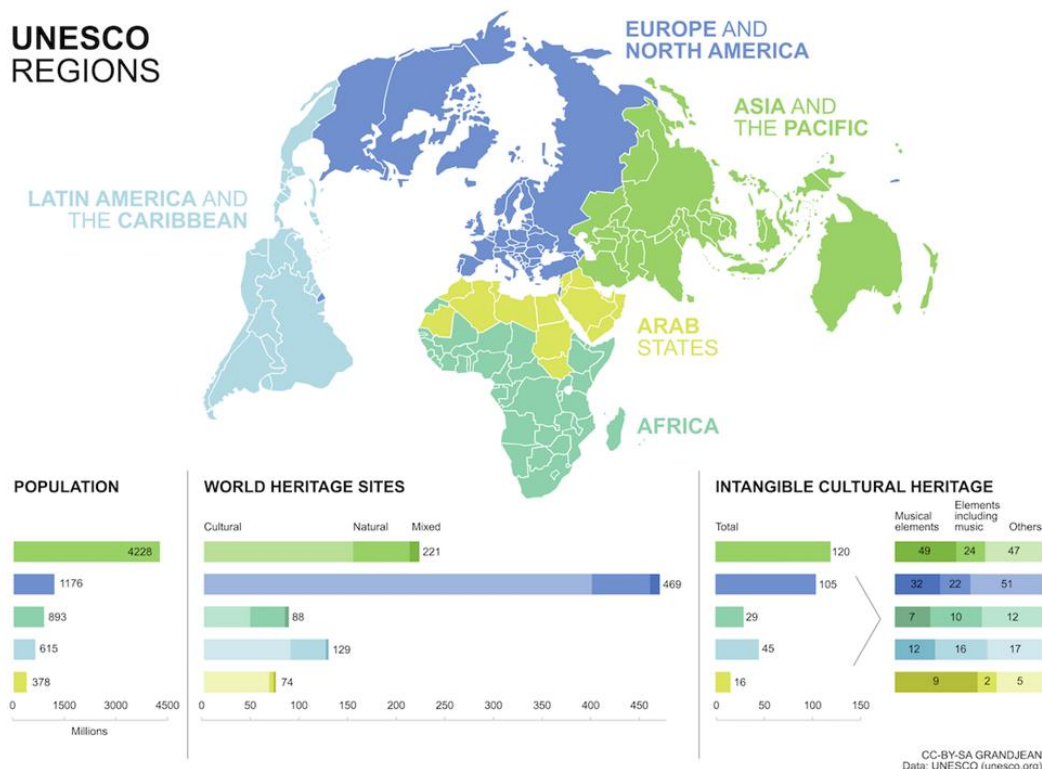


Figure 4: World heritage and intangible cultural heritage distribution between continents
Source: Martin Grandjean

To this extent, protecting and preserving Europe’s cultural heritage is a particularly important subject.

According to relevant data published at UNESCO website (2014), Europe and North America host 48% of the UNESCO World Heritage sites even though their population is only 16% of the world population. (Figure 4) European Cultural Heritage is a rich and diverse mix of cultural, artistic and creative expressions and values, forming altogether the common European inheritance and legacy.

A common distinction of the cultural heritage is the one of tangible and intangible (ICOMOS 2002). UNESCO's definition for the cultural heritage considers as tangible cultural heritage the immovable (monuments, archaeological sites etc.), movable (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts etc.) and underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities), while intangible cultural heritage includes oral traditions, rituals, performing arts etc. Additionally, a much wider definition of the cultural heritage – published in the occasion of the official presentation of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 in the official EU portal (Europa.eu) – emphasizes in the universal dimension and value of the cultural heritage for individuals, communities and societies and to the necessity for all of them to contribute to its preservation for the future generations. Within this approach, the following shapes and forms of cultural heritage are identified.

TANGIBLE	Buildings, monuments, artefacts, clothing, artwork, books, machines, historic towns, archaeological sites
INTANGIBLE	Practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - and the associated instruments, objects and cultural spaces - that people value (including language and oral traditions, performing arts, social practices and traditional craftsmanship)
NATURAL	Landscapes, flora and fauna
DIGITAL	Resources that were created in digital form (for example digital art or animation) or that have been digitalised as a way to preserve them (including text, images, video, records)

Taking into consideration the above definitions, cultural resources are much more than simple resources able to contribute to the economic growth; cultural heritage and resources reflect global and local history, culture, traditions and ethics, shape people's identities, define and inspire people's lives, while their preservation for the future generations can ensure sustainable growth. It is also clear that there is a direct linkage between cultural heritage and resources promotion and valorisation with the sustainable tourism growth. The main European Union actions concerning cultural heritage are the following:

- European Capital of Culture Title is an initiative that initiated in 1985 on the initiative of the Greek Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri and has, to date, been awarded in 58 cities across the European Union. According to the Initiative's Official Presentation Brochure (available at https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en), the idea is to place cities at the heart of cultural life across Europe. Through culture and art, European Capitals of Culture improve the quality of life in these cities and strengthen their sense of community. Citizens can take part in the year-long activities and play a bigger role in their city development and cultural expression.
- European Heritage Days provide access to rarely opened sites and unique events to over 20 million people every year since 1985, free of charge.
- European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage rewards the best achievements in heritage care in the fields of conservation projects, research, dedication to the cause, education, training, and awareness raising.
- European Heritage Label complements the UNESCO World Heritage List by focusing on cultural elements connected to European values and history, not just aesthetics.

Moreover, throughout 2018, European Union celebrates the diverse cultural heritage across Europe - at EU, national, regional and local level, having characterised 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage. The aim is to encourage more people to discover and engage with Europe's cultural heritage, and to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space. The slogan for the year

“Our heritage: where the past meets the future” illustrates even more the sustainable dimension of the cultural heritage.

Culture is also among the main themes of almost all the macro-regional strategies in Europe. In the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the Policy Area “Culture” focuses on cultural and creative sectors and industries in the Baltic Sea region. In the EU Strategy for Danube Region (EUSDR), the Priority Area 3 aims to promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts”, while Action 6 of the EU Strategy for Alpine Region aims to preserve and valorise natural resources, including water and cultural resources. Finally, the EU Strategy for Adriatic - Ionian Region, approaches the valorisation of cultural resources “indirectly” within the theme of tourism (Theme 9 “Diversified tourism offer (products and services) & 10 Sustainable and responsible tourism management/ innovation and quality).

In the previous programming period, the ERDF alone allocated 3.2 billion euros for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, which is not surprising since its regulation mentions this topic among its main investment priorities under the objective “Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency”.

It should also be noted that as a whole between 2007-2013, EU invested totally 6 billion euros in cultural and creative sectors where 3 billion were invested in the protection and the preservation of the cultural heritage, 2.2 billion euros in the development of cultural infrastructures and 775 million euros in the support of cultural services (InfoRegio, information available at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/culture/).

According to the study “Inspiring Creativity” published by Interact (November 2013), between 2007 and 2013, border regions invested 11% of the available ERDF budget of all ETC Programmes in cultural and creative projects. More precisely, in an absolute amount of 1.019 billion euros was allocated in art fields (420 million euros), cultural tourism (299 million euros), creative industries (236 million euros) and cultural industries (64 million euros).

EU continues to invest in culture during the current programming period (2014-2020) as well. While national and regional authorities are advised to focus ERDF assistance on supporting new cultural sectors that are closely linked to innovation and creativity, the European Commission's framework programme for support to the culture and audiovisual sectors called “Creative Europe” has a budget of 1.46 billion euros (9% higher than its predecessors: Culture Programme and MEDIA programme, Creative Europe).

Additionally, various European Union programmes and initiatives support cultural heritage in regions and cities, such as INTERREG, URBACT, HORIZON, etc. Pouring resources into this agenda is economically justified: the cultural sector has a very strong economic and social impact. It makes a significant contribution to the construction industry and tourism, among many others. Cultural heritage can also help brand cities and regions, attracting talented individuals and investments. On the other hand, promotion and understanding of cultural diversity contributes to the social inclusion and integration, the promotion of the European Citizenship and the transnational cooperation and the territorial cohesion especially in the cases of the cross-border areas. The fact that 2018 will be the European Year of Cultural Heritage highlights the importance of this area even more.

Following the aforementioned facts, it is evident that the protection, preservation and promotion of cultural heritage is in the top of the cross-border cooperation agenda. Understanding and promoting cross-border cultural diversity is apparently a crosscutting issue that could enhance and facilitate territorial cohesion and cooperation at all levels and sectors. Of course, there are various existing perceptions concerning culture and borders; sometimes culture acts as a bridge that brings communities closer and other times is the main issue of conflict, the main obstacle to cooperate. In

these regions, protecting, managing and valorising the cultural heritage should be a common goal and a joint effort between the neighbouring countries.

Cross-border cultural heritage is understood as cultural assets (material and immaterial) that are shared by border regions and managed/owned by entities from different sides of the border making indispensable the cooperation between them in order to assure their protection and correct conservation.

2.1.1. Relevance for the border development

As previously stated, cultural heritage – and culture in general – has multiple uses and applications in different aspects of life. Before we discuss its management's main problems and opportunities, it is important to focus on some of the – qualitative and quantitative – positive impacts that emerge of a proper care of cross-border cultural heritage.

Contribution to GDP, growth, employment, local and regional development

In 2012, the cultural and creative sectors boasted 535.9 billion euros in value added to GDP which represented 4.2% of EU GDP ("Creating growth: Measuring cultural and creative markets in the EU", EY, December 2014).

The sector's growth was also faster than the general economy, thus, it became a driving force behind development in Europe. Overall, cultural heritage has become a powerful instrument in the economic and territorial development of a community, when properly valorised and promoted, often in the context of tourism. World tourism has considerably increased over the past years, and this phenomenon will likely continue and expand in the future. Tourism centred on heritage represents a major potential for local and national economic development since it can be a source of many types of financial gain: entrance fees to sites and museums, guided tours, sales of handcrafts, documents and photos, the development of the craft industry, the hospitality industry, transportation and restaurant services or local taxes.

Cultural employment also grew faster than total employment and usually represents more of an 'atypical' nature, maybe foreshadowing tomorrow's job market: flexible, project-led, requiring mobility and high qualifications. The preservation of cultural heritage generates new employment opportunities in the areas of rehabilitation and maintenance (for local artisans and construction companies), research and management (for researchers, administrators, marketing and communication professionals, gardeners and guardians, etc.) and many others. In 2012, the cultural and creative sectors offered approximately 7 million full time equivalent jobs which represented 3.8% of total EU.

Regarding the expenditure on public services, cultural spending by governments yet accounts for only 1% of government outgoings in the EU28 (62 billion euros for 2012) – a share unchanged during the decade to 2012 and far behind education (10.7%).

Culture-based development can have a stimulating effect on creativity and entrepreneurship both in 'convergence' regions – areas with a GDP/capita of less than 75% of the average GDP/capita of the EU – and more competitive regions. From a local development perspective, the creative sector tends to be socially responsible, inclusive and environmentally friendly, therefore, it generates positive externalities, agglomeration and cluster effects and, all in all, a high proportion of total value, built on partnerships between public authorities, cultural organisations and relevant business interests. The borderlands involved in the EPICAH project can especially benefit from these outputs since most of them – the notable exception being Italy-France – belong to a less developed convergence region. (Figure 5)

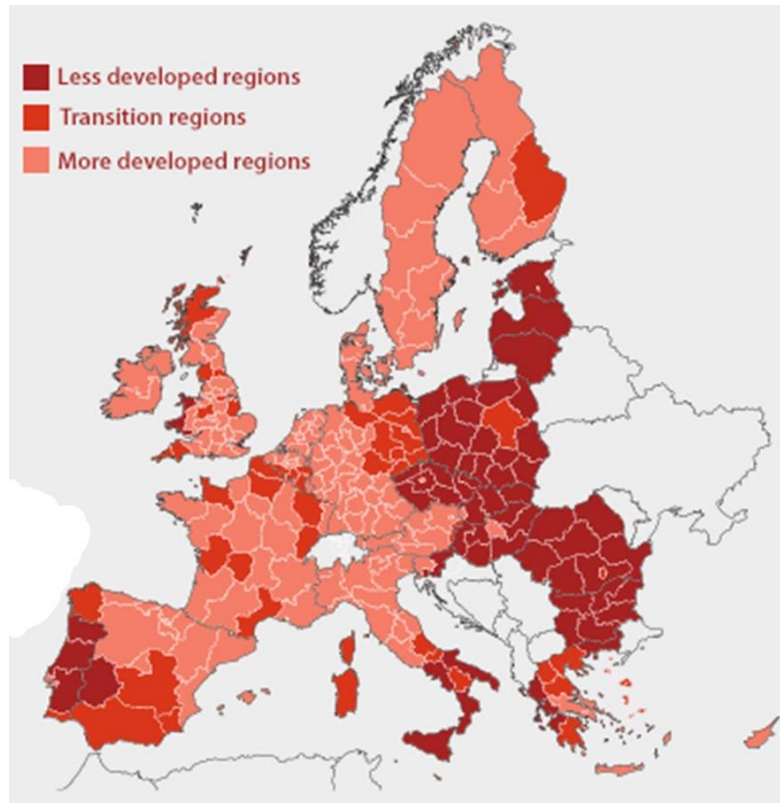


Figure 5: Regions in the EU sorted by their development level
Source: European Commission

At the cross-border cooperation level, cultural heritage represents an asset for the border cohesion and an added value for the promotion and differentiation of the border regions.

However, in border regions, the cultural sector (including creative industries) does not have the economic impact (GDP, employment and growth) that has in other European regions mainly because these territories seem not to have an especial capacity to attract talents, do not have population with higher qualification rates or entrepreneurship capacity and are fighting every day a hard battle against the population loss and population-aging.

In this context, tourism emerges as the main cross-border tool to deploy the cultural heritage potential for cross-border regions development.

On the other hand, this same potential (especially regarding shared cultural heritage) is often taped because of the differences between protection and conservation laws and multiple bureaucratic/administrative requirements each border imposes to the same and shared heritage. To those obstacles must be added the lack of resources the majority of the border regions face making of cultural heritage preservation a secondary priority of local governments (reducing the generation of new employment opportunities).

Finally it should be referred the difficulties border regions face regarding the establishment of cooperation partnerships (between public and private entities and between public entities of the different sides of the border), presented in the EPICAH survey as one of the main obstacles to cross-border cooperation.

Contribution to investment, social innovation and well-being

The valorisation of the cultural heritage of a given city or territory constitutes a factor of attraction not only for tourists but also for many investors which could contribute to the local economy through the implementation of new industries and development projects. ICT technologies may have abolished distance and time constraints, but physical location is still a decisive component of economic success. Cities and regions are competing, and one of the keys of their attractiveness is their cultural offering.

Culture plays a key role in generating social innovation, too. Social cohesion means shared norms and values in a society, which considers the diversity of people's different backgrounds and gives them the same opportunities. Cultural activities and heritage can help express these backgrounds while developing positive relationships despite the differences. In the meantime, they can also tackle social problems in different policy areas: urban regeneration, crime prevention, health, environmental protection, etc.

Moreover, cultural heritage gives the people from the region or territory a form of collective identity. As a common property, it tells their history and is transmitted from one generation to the next: the world can change but cultural heritage is an element of stability helping to cope with the rapid changes in society and understand our place in the world. Maintaining this heritage results in social harmony, a mutual recognition and respect of each community, which can be a determining factor in the implementation of a sustainable development policy, especially when two or more neighbouring countries are concerned.

At the cross-border level, it should be notice that border regions are often far from the decision-making centres and represent the end of the communication ways network making from accessibilities/border location a liability once, as mentioned, physical location is still a decisive component of economic success.

Moreover, border are not fully exploiting the attractiveness capacity of cultural assets for two main reasons: they seem not able to develop common cultural offers (based on the cultural heritage they shared) and they privilege the promotion of their own cultural heritage over the common one (fostering the competition between the border sides over the cooperation).

Finally, it should be highlighted the relevant role of culture to social cohesion in the border territories promoting a better understanding of each side of the border reality and supporting the creation of a border/European identity.

2.1.2. Main constraints and fields of improvement

Due to the specificity of the topic in presence, EPICAH online survey represents a relevant source of information to analyse the main constraints and fields of improvement of the policy instruments that support the protection, valorisation and promotion of cross-border cultural heritage.

In the topic of culture, the respondents had to distinguish between tangible ('movable' paintings, sculptures, coins and manuscripts, 'immovable' monuments and archaeological sites and 'underwater' shipwrecks, ruins and cities) and intangible (oral traditions, performing arts, rituals) heritage.

The primary focus of the survey was the level of cross-border cooperation and the policy instrument's involvement in promoting it. The overall cross-border cooperation level shows a little

difference between the main topics: tourism has a centre role so in the topic of cultural heritage, culture-based tourism is a priority while cultural heritage protection is less prominent. In a closer look, tangible assets are usually overrepresented (probably because creating strategies to protect them are easier), but the attention is mostly focused on monuments and archaeological sites.

The underwater heritage seems to deteriorated the average score obtained in the evaluation of cultural heritage in cross-border areas mainly because there are few internal European Union maritime borders (around 16% of the current Interreg A programmes) and this thematic are not relevant for most of them.

The survey also shown that cooperation can be significantly influenced by the diverse ownership structure of cultural values: for example, sometimes it is not easy to establish cooperation between a small municipality and a big museum.

All in all, respondents view the cooperation level concerning cultural heritage as good or at least sufficient, although it gets left behind by the other two priority areas. The assessment is mostly the same about the policy instruments' role in cross-border cooperation (Figure 6) leading to the question of how to improve the role of those policy instruments in favour of the promotion and protection of cultural heritage (especially of the share cultural assets).

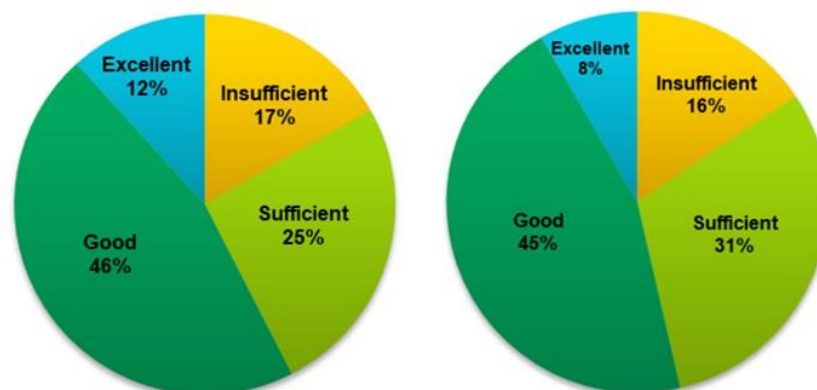


Figure 6: Assessment of the overall cross-border cooperation level and the studied policy instruments' role in it
Source: EPICAH online survey

When we consider the allocation of resources, it is interesting that a significant percentage of the respondents are not aware of the exact or approximate amount of funds dedicated to heritage protection and tourism. This is not necessarily due to the lack of information, since it is possible that they chose the 'I don't know' option for a different reason altogether, for example, if there is no funding foreseen for a certain topic yet.

In the other part of the survey sample, the amounts allocated to cultural heritage are mainly considered as not quite enough but the proposed raised amounts are very small (they can be rather interpreted as an ideal project size) so even the respondents who answered this part of the questionnaire are not sure about their exact needs, although at least they recognize them. The Managing Authorities and Joint Secretariats are also more forgiving of and satisfied with the current funding than the applicants. (Figure 7)

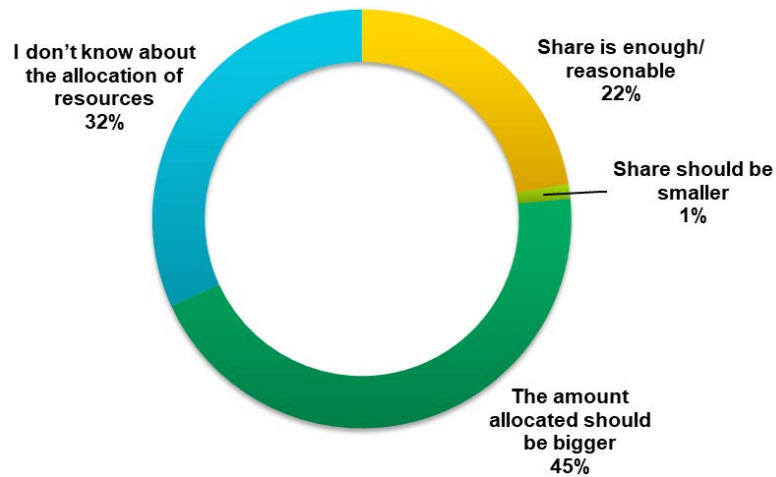


Figure 7: Opinions about the policy instruments' financial plan
Source: EPICAH online survey

The respondents had to prioritize between the three studied areas and the most popular first choice was cultural heritage. Since the level of cooperation in this area seemed the least prominent according to the previous answers, this evaluation can mean that these organizations aim to raise this level by concentrating on the most overlooked topic. Tourism (despite its third place) is also on the rise which is positive for cultural heritage protection, too, since there is some overlap between touristic cooperation and developing and using cultural values. To summarize, there is – thankfully – a definitive and quantifiable interest in the cultural field (first for 48.15%, second for 40.74% and third only for 11.11%) of cross-border cooperation according with the EPICAH survey. (Figure 8)

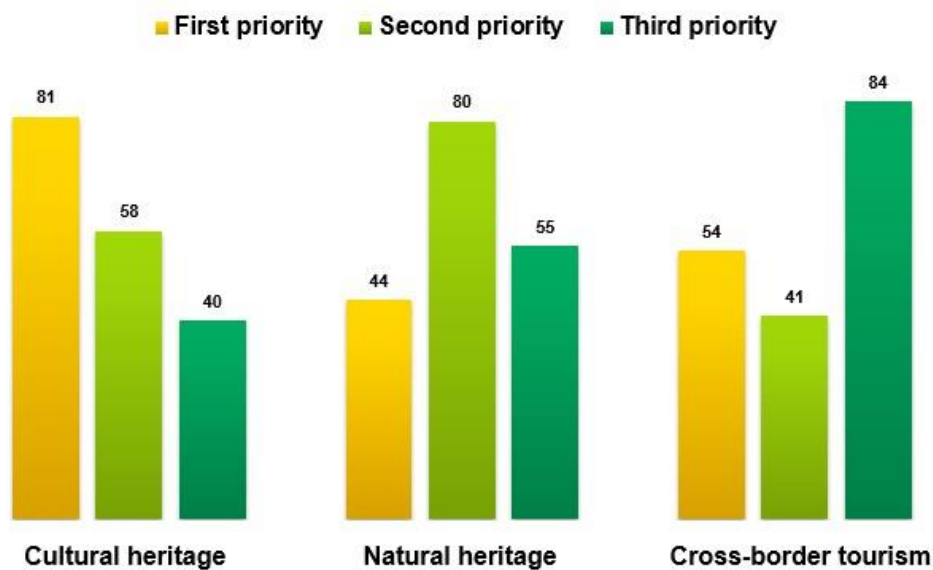


Figure 8: The fields the respondents are interested in concerning cross-border cooperation by priority
Source: EPICAH online survey

Some of the respondents' "raison d'être" is the existence of cross-border cooperation problems so it is understandable that they think there are serious difficulties within each policy instruments areas. But this is not the sole reason for these to come to the surface in this questionnaire: actual cooperation experience decreases the scepticism towards cross-border cooperation but still cannot hide the existing obstacles.

Other existing constraints are shared with the other two fields in study, mainly explaining the difficulties in establish effective and fruitful cross-border cooperation in their management that are explained and developed in the Chapter 4.1 Findings (weakness and threats).

Although common cultural heritage can be seen as a strong foundation for cross-border cooperation, some improvements are necessary to preserve and develop it effectively across the borders:

- the legal environment differs from country to country – it affects among others the level of protection, the institutional system or the available financial resources, and it is particularly important in case of cross-border cultural heritage;
- the affected organisations are not always aware of the benefits from common preservation and development;
- sometimes, partnerships between cultural organisations function on an ad hoc basis – mainly driven by financing goals and not by joint long-term objectives;
- some parts of the cultural heritage (mainly intangible ones) includes ethnic content that can strengthen the real or perceived cross-border conflicts;
- common cultural heritage should be used as assets for place branding.

2.1.3. Best Practices

After examining the – real or imagined – main constraints of cross-border cooperation, particularly in the field of cultural heritage, it should take note of some of the success stories that highlight cross-border cooperation as not just a possible, but a worthwhile endeavour, with quantifiable benefits. Identifying white areas, previously missed demands and concentrating on them can be a sound lesson to take away from these good practices.

Common Cultural Connections

A change of perspective can certainly help when facing intercultural differences and competitiveness, for example. The Common Cultural Connections (CCC) project of the United Kingdom, France and Spain – co-funded (60%) by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union – has showcased this by focusing on their shared cultural heritage through an innovative mobile exhibition.

They tried to highlight a very underrepresented part of said heritage: archaeological evidence from coastal and marine sites, many of which – due to their ‘invisible’ nature – are overlooked as ‘out of sight, out of mind’.

The project has reached new audiences by improving access to cultural heritage for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, but most importantly, it has built links between institutions of the partner countries to continue to learn and exchange information about the topic, addressing – and solving – one of the biggest problems mentioned before: the lack of strategic cooperation between border institutions.¹

¹ <http://commonculturalconnections.maritimearchaeologytrust.org>

Réseau Tramontana

This project continued, broadened and deepened a previous networking project including eight partner organizations from France, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

They also focused on an often overlooked, intangible part of their culture: oral heritage.

Their objective was the documentation, treatment, restitution and dissemination from rural and mountainous communities of Europe. To reach these goals, they conducted 400 field surveys, presented a rich series of publications and organized community-driven cultural events in an interdisciplinary approach (considering socio and ethnolinguistic, anthropology, history, ethnomusicology and choreology, soundscapes and contemporary art). The project began in 2011 and the Creative Europe Culture Programme of the European Union financed it.²

Contain (era)

The European Mobility and Materialized Information Transfer in the Post-Internet Era

Highlighting shared elements is not the only way to defeat cultural divides: reaffirming European unity through emphasizing our differences can be an equally powerful tool.

In this project, eight shipping containers were turned into mobile galleries, each providing space for a multimedia exhibition of one contemporary artist from one of the participating countries. These exhibitions travelled on a route connecting all participating cities, presenting the artistic information without any distortion by local influences.

One of the project's outcomes was a network of personal relations in the topic of European culture. Funded by the Creative Europe Programme, the project was implemented in 2015-2016.³

European Conflict Archaeological Landscape Reappropriation

Cultural heritage protection must have a meaning to general audiences, too. When people are involved in a cultural project, some of the inevitable results will be a deeper understanding of and connection with their cultural background and a feeling of personal investment, which can drive bottom-up approaches further (IKEA effect).

This project treats conflict heritage (especially the World Wars) as a central part of the collective memory of Europe. It has a sociological vibe, offering healing intervention by turning traumatic memories into indispensable resources for the construction of a common European identity.

It is basically talking about cultural reappropriation: calls went out to young creative practitioners under 35 to imagine sustainable and innovative interactions between this cultural heritage and contemporary art forms. Additional motivation was given by offering prizes for the best ideas and designs.

On a side note, the project promoted transnational mobility, too. Implemented between 2012-2014, the project was co-financed by Creative Europe Programme.⁴

² www.re-tramontana.org

³ <http://studio.c3.hu/en/containera-2>

⁴ <http://www.recall-project.polimi.it>

Parol! writing and art beyond walls, beyond borders

Following the previous example, it can be useful to focus on not just the general audience but marginalized or disenfranchised groups, this way connecting the preservation of cultural heritage with social inclusion.

The main goal of the above-mentioned project is: professional writers and artists led creative workshops in 13 prisons in Belgium, Greece, Italy, Poland and Serbia with 'borders' and 'cultural heritage' becoming the source of inspiration. The created materials were exchanged among European prisons and public spaces for dissemination. Besides raising awareness about cultural heritage, the project promoted artistic work, intercultural awareness, social responsibility and reintegration into society.

The project received financial support under the Culture Programme of the European Union between 2013 and 2015.⁵

Archaeological Resources in Cultural Heritage, a European Standard

In 2008, the Europae Archaeologiae Consilium held a symposium on archaeological archiving, which revealed that many member countries shared common problems: the provision of good access to archaeological archives, setting and sustaining digital archive standards and wide variations in the archaeological recording practice.

As stated in the EPICAH survey, national legislation – and most importantly, the variations by country – can be a hindrance to successful heritage preservation, so the project's proposal was to agree on a common set of guidelines, basically creating joint recommendations based on existing country - and state-specific standards and guidance documents, providing standards on areas where there was none before, and guiding the implementation of these shared rules in all the participating countries.⁶

ENBaCH

This project at the beginning had more of a historical nature. The 17th century European cultural heritage can still be detected in a lot of different areas of life on the continent: visual arts; literature; architecture; the urban plans of European cities; the structure and contents of libraries, archives and museums; legal assets; diplomatic and political etiquette; marriage patterns and the structures of the family, etc.

First, the partners collected historical data in these areas, but this in and of itself cannot be considered among any kind of good practices since it was 'only' research. The modern impact comes into play when they decided that they must realise an integrated system of dissemination to achieve a deeper historical consciousness of this cultural heritage. They elaborated a kit for young historians to how to best reach their (mostly) younger audience: by organising exhibitions, tourist circuits and radio shows, among other things. This collaborative effort did not connect institutions across the borders, but instead created an entirely new one – the European Network for Baroque Cultural Heritage – as a background organization that can operate without borders.

⁵ <http://www.parol-art.eu/>

⁶ <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/arches>

The project was economically supported by the European Commission through the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and was implemented between 2011-2013.⁷

Capacity building in Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013

One of the intervention areas within the Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Programme 2007-2013 was the 'Joint development of networking, partnership, programme and project planning and management capacities'. This action aimed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the policy instrument through networking and capacity building. Some of the supported projects addressed cultural issues (e.g. establishment a network for cultural heritage, creation of value map, development of castle routes, joint planning and capacity building, etc.) – involving and mobilizing of the organisation that are responsible in heritage protection.

Potential activities included the following measures (at any relevant thematic field):

- Institution development: development of integrated organisational structures and joint sustainable thematic co-operation networks for joint regional development activities;
- harmonisation of the existing development plans, programmes, and elaboration of joint strategies,
- development of joint project planning and management capacities, common trainings for organisations concerning project development and management skills;
- public relations work including different types of media to promote and develop crossborder activities to the public.⁸

Project “Seto – Suiti Renaissance”

Both ethnic cultures - *setos* in Southeastern Estonia and *suiti* in west Kurzeme are unique. Nowadays, *setos* and *suiti* walk the same path to preserve and develop their cultural heritage. The living habitat of *suiti* in the Alsunga area is a small Roman Catholic island amongst Lutherans, while the *setos* are a Russian Orthodox community near the Russian border. Both ethnic groups are small and their cultures are on UNESCO's list of intellectual cultural heritage. The 21st century has been a sort of awakening for both communities and their daily routines have much in common. They both have an enthusiastic younger generation dealing with preserving and passing along the heritage. They are both currently mapping our traditional architecture and since the summer of 2013, they have been co-operating steadily. *Suiti* were invited to the summer university in Setomaa to exchange thoughts on different workshops. For example, they discussed creating an alphabet book in the national dialect. *Setos* already have an alphabet book and are working on an accompanying CD. They are creating materials in English, introducing the neighbourhood. In the summer of 2014, a joint camp for *seto* and *suiti* children was organized. They visited and participate in each other's big events.

The social and cultural co-operation of the two communities was supported by the Seto Institute, the Alsunga municipality and the Ethnic Cultural Center “Suiti” Foundation.

Project “Cultural Heritage”

“Preserving our heritage is a responsibility. Even if we ourselves don't find it interesting, we should give our descendants the chance to remember our historical background”. This is why the Estonian-Latvian database was created, mapping over 35 000 objects across Estonia alone. 100 people were picked out to map the heritage, and taught to find answers to questions like what is heritage. The most important part of mapping heritage is communicating and working with other people. It is important to find someone who can tell stories about local rocks, tracks or trees, so information could be stored for future generations. Latvians started mapping their own heritage only half a year later. They organized their mapping action a bit differently - used more modern means - and the

⁷ www.enbach.eu

⁸ <http://www.husk-cbc.eu/en>

result was impressive. The co-operation with Latvians was mostly about maintaining cultural heritage objects. For example, they cleaned the Koiva river banks together, looked up local tracks and fit them with road signs. The toughest part of protecting heritage is educating people and raising their awareness. Working on mapping cultural heritage objects brought participants closer to nature and taught them to understand the connections between different things in life. “It is not always easy to identify yourself with what your ancestors have left behind, especially when their heritage goes back centuries”.

The project for mapping cultural heritage objects was carried out in co-operation with Estonian State Forest Management Centre, the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve of the Latvian Nature Conservation Agency and the Latvian State Forest Management Centre.

The Route of St. Elizabeth in the land of the Rákóczi

Financed by Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013⁹, this project main objective was to increase tourist activities in the area between Sárospatak and Košice on both sides of the border.

The person of St. Elizabeth is very important for the inhabitants of both towns – she was born in Sárospatak, while the Cathedral in Košice was named after her. The St. Elizabeth Route Foundation was established in Sárospatak with the aim of creating a pilgrimage path linking this site with the most important Gothic church of the Carpathian Basin in Košice (which was built in honour of St. Elizabeth). The project created a pilgrimage route as a common touristic product that starts from Sárospatak through the Zemplén Mountains to Košice with the following settlements: Bodrogolaszi, Komlóska, Erdőhorváti, Regéc, Mogyoróska, Telkibánya, Hollóháza, Füzér, Nižná Myšľa and Kokšov-Bakša. The foundation undertook the project to mark the route between Sárospatak and Košice with its own touristic signs (rose emblem), organize five workshops and inform/train organizations, institutions and businesses based in the pilgrimage area. They published a four-language travel guide to showcase the cultural and natural treasures along the way and provided information to pilgrims on a designated website. All in all, the pilgrimage is not just a religious and spiritual experience but also a learning opportunity concerning the region’s history.

The main outputs of the project were the restoration of selected parts of St. Elizabeth Cathedral in Košice, creating a new pilgrimage route between the towns of Sárospatak and Košice and the joint touristic guide.

This integrated approach to culture can be implemented in other border areas, too, where a common historical event or a significant person can be identified and respected on both sides.

Project “Prespas”

The project “PRESPAS”¹⁰ was developed and implemented within the third call of the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Greece – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007-2013 Programme and in particular under the Priority 2. Promotion and development of the environmental and natural and

⁹ <http://www.szenterzsebetut.hu>

¹⁰ <http://prespas.eu/en/the-project>

cultural resources - Area of intervention 2.2 Promote and protect the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

The project entitled "New Prespas Festival: the Ladies of the Prespas Lakes" aimed at underline the rich cultural heritage of the area, as well as to significantly enhance the contemporary dynamics through the introduction and establishment of a new institution - milestone, the "Prespas International Festival".

The project partners worked closely together with a particular focus on highlighting the women's presence and role in the cultural heritage and promotion of the area through the introduction of a series of activities and events such as: the "Ancient Greek tragedy and music: Work in Progress", the performance "Ancient Blood", theatrical / dance happening "the Ladies of the Lake", concert "the Ladies of the Lake", the organization of an international Symposium "Women of Prespas - Women of the World", the production of a short film "From Florina to Bitola: the female soul of the lands by the lakes", among others.

2.2 CROSS-BORDER NATURAL HERITAGE

Ecosystems do not respect political boundaries and cooperation is essential to effectively manage shared ecosystems, address cross-border tourism and address other issues of mutual interest.

A variety of types of agreements to accommodate different needs, strong communication amongst individuals and organizations involved in cross-border issues, and an enabling environment that promotes transboundary cooperation are essential ingredients for success.

The first transboundary conservation areas were established in the 1930s in North America and Europe. However, it was only during the last two decades of the 20th century that transboundary conservation projects were developed in all parts of the world - thus following a similar increase in the number of protected areas designated at national levels.

The term "natural heritage" was taken into wider use in 1970s by the charitable environmental organisation The Nature Conservancy in the United States.

Nowadays, the most prominent global player in the field of natural heritage protection is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO seeks to encourage the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. This is embodied in an international treaty called the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972. It links together in a single document the concepts of nature conservation and the preservation of cultural properties, as it recognizes the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.

The first 12 UNESCO World Heritage natural and cultural sites were inscribed in the list in 1978. As of January 2018, the list includes 1073 cultural, natural and mixed sites. 16 UNESCO World Heritage sites are transboundary natural heritage sites, 6 of them located in Europe.

Transboundary natural heritage sites in Europe, inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list	Countries
Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and Other Regions of Europe	Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine
Białowieża Forest	Belarus, Poland
Caves of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst	Hungary, Slovakia

Transboundary natural heritage sites in Europe, inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list	Countries
High Coast / Kvarken Archipelago	Finland, Sweden
Monte San Giorgio	Italy, Switzerland
Wadden Sea	Denmark, Germany, Netherlands,

In addition, UNESCO had also distinguish 12 European natural heritage sites as Transboundary Biosphere Reserves (among a total of 31 existing all over the world) that are managed by cross-border cooperation bodies responsible for implementing common development strategies.

UNESCO European Transboundary Biosphere Reserves	Countries
Ohrid-Prespa	Albania/The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
West Polesie	Belarus/Poland/Ukraine
Mura Drava Danube	Croatia/Hungary
Krkonose/Karkonosze	Czech Republic/Poland
Mont Viso / Area Della Biosfera Del Monviso	France/Italy
Vosges Du Nord / Pfälzerwald	France/Germany
Tatra	Poland/Slovakia
East Carpathians	Poland/Slovakia/Ukraine
Romania/Ukraine	Danube Delta
Geres - Xures	Portugal/Spain
Meseta Ibérica	Portugal/Spain
Tejo/Tajo Internacional	Portugal/Spain

Some of these cross-border initiatives are being implemented and developed with the support of Interreg A programmes.

Another global initiative that includes transboundary protected areas is the Ramsar Convention, on the conservation and wise use of wetland sites that came into force in 1975, as the first modern global intergovernmental agreement. Of the 2293 designated Ramsar sites by the end of 2017, 20 are recognized as transboundary, 18 of them in Europe.

The pillars of the European Union nature legislation are the Birds and Habitats Directives that are put in practice via Natura 2000 network. It is a network of core breeding and resting sites for rare and threatened species, and some rare natural habitat types which are protected in their own right.

Natura 2000 is not a system of strict nature reserves from which all-human activities would be excluded. While it includes strictly protected nature reserves, most of the land remains privately owned. The approach to conservation and sustainable use of the Natura 2000 areas is much wider, largely centred on people working with nature rather than against it. However, Member States must ensure that the sites are managed in a sustainable manner, both ecologically and economically.

Although Natura 2000 sites are all established on a national level, the European Commission encourages and supports cooperation and best practice exchange between Natura 2000 sites throughout Europe.

Stretching over 18 % of the European Union's land area and almost 6 % of its marine territory, it is the largest coordinated network of protected areas in the world, consisting of over 27000 sites, and offering a haven to Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats.

In this particular case, EPICAH survey had also shown examples of initiatives like Natura 2000 once they don't take in account nor the transboundary ecosystems and biodiversity nor the differences between national legislations regarding the attribution of this protection label. A particular case reported by a stakeholder participant in the survey describe how a administrative border divide a shared ecosystem protecting it as Natura 2000 site on one side and not having any protection at all on the other side because national governments have different understandings about the relevance and protection needs of the same natural heritage.

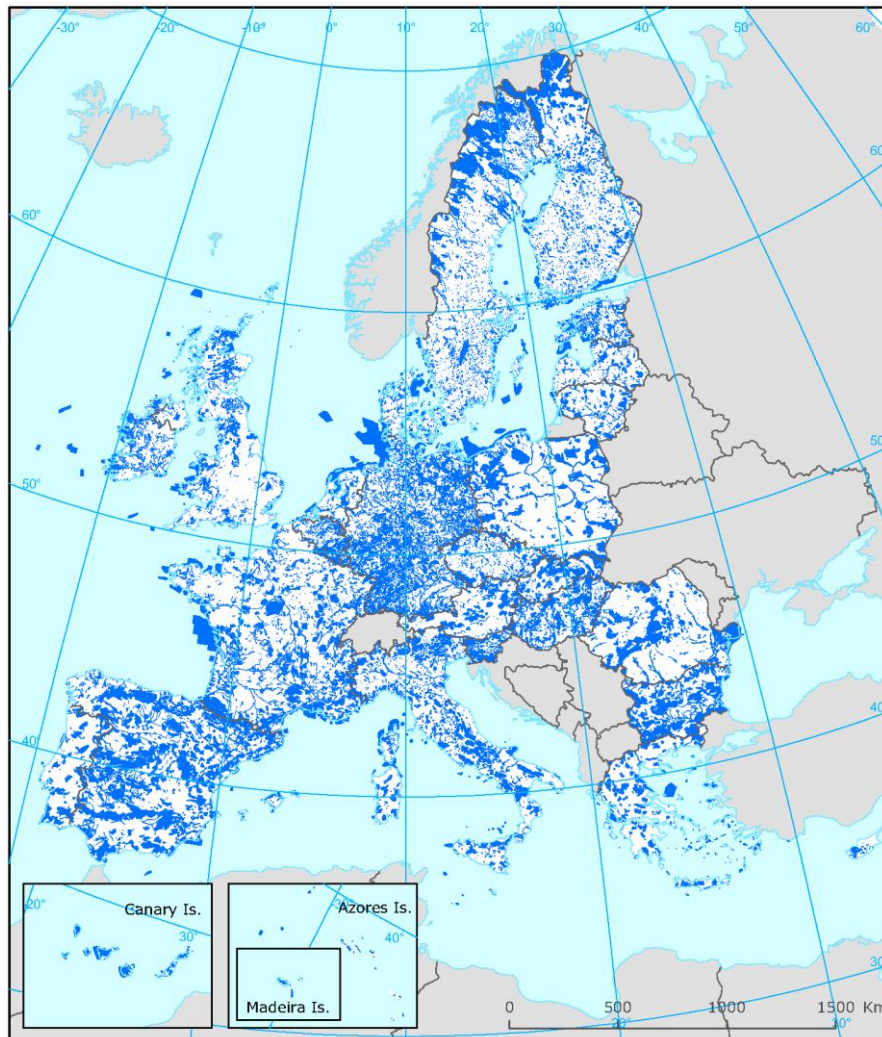


Figure 9: Distribution of Natura 2000 sites across EU member states

Source: European Environmental Agency

In addition to State budgets, the main financial instrument to support national and international environmental, nature conservation and climate action projects in the European Union has been the LIFE programme. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed nearly 4000 projects with a total budget over 3 billion euros. For the 2014-2020 funding period, LIFE will contribute approximately 3.4 billion euros to the protection of the environment and climate.

Another outstanding organisation promoting transboundary conservation in Europe, is the EUROPARC Federation. EUROPARC's Transboundary Parks Programme initiative is a special verification and certification system that aims to promote and facilitate transboundary cooperation between European protected areas. There are four elements to the system:

- The unique EUROPARC Basic Standards for trans frontier cooperation,
- A verification process carried out by external verifiers,

- The formal certification as a “EUROPARC Transboundary Area”, if the application was successful,
- The renewal of the Certificate every five years.

Since 2003, the following protected areas are successfully certified as Transboundary Parks under the EUROPARC programme “Transboundary Parks – Following Nature’s design”.

Transboundary Parks of the EUROPARC, members of TransParcNet.	Countries
Maas-Schwalm-Nette Nature Park	Netherlands and Germany
Neusiedler See-Seewinkel & Fertő-Hanság	Austria, Hungary
Saxon-Bohemian Switzerland Transboundary Parks	Czech Republic, Germany
Podyjí-Thayatal Transboundary Parks	Czech Republic, Austria
Julian Alps Transboundary Ecoregion	Italy, Switzerland
Oulanka-Paanajärvi Transboundary Parks	Finland, Russia
Hainaut-cross-border Nature Park	France, Belgium
Pasvik-Inari Trilateral Park	Finland, Norway, Russia
Šumava and Bavarian Forest National Park	Czech Republic, Germany

In order to gain attention for nature conservation efforts in Europe, the following campaigns are held annually:

- Natura 2000 awards since 2014 to reward excellence in the management of Natura 2000 sites and showcase the added value of the network for local economies in 6 categories, including cross-border cooperation and networking.
- European Natura 2000 Day. Since 2017, 21 May is officially designated as “European Natura 2000 Day”, as 25 years earlier - on 21 May 1992 - EU Habitats Directive and LIFE programme were approved. This Directive together with the Birds Directive (approved earlier in 1979) became a base of Natura 2000 Network and has successfully contributed to the preservation of unique European natural heritage.
- Selection of best LIFE programme projects since 2005 to help improve the dissemination of LIFE projects’ results by clearly identifying those projects whose results, if widely applied, could have the most positive impact on the environment.

Winners of the NATURA 2000 awards in the field of cross-border cooperation and networking

2014: Networking for better Natura 2000 site management in Spain.

Spain’s government structure means that over 20 different public administrations draw up and implement site-management plans. Two non-profit organisations, Fundación Fernando González Bernáldez and EUROPARC, have worked together to foster a consistent approach and to make sure that Natura 2000 achieves its goal of protecting all habitat types and species. They launched a technical cooperation network covering local, regional and national administrations.

2015: The DANUBEPARKS project.

The project helped bridging Natura 2000 sites along the Danube representing 30 Natura sites in nine Danube countries and helping managers of the protected areas to systematically tackle common challenges on a Danube-wide scale.

2016: Project "Europe’s rarest water bird benefits from a team effort in conservation".

Implementation of a successful ‘flyway approach’ covering 15 countries and spanning the entire Eurasian migration path of the lesser white-fronted goose. Implemented by stakeholders from Greece, Finland, Bulgaria, Hungary and Norway, the project has played a key role in implementing a standardised monitoring programme and securing patrolling and habitat restoration work.

2.2.1. Relevance for the border development

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), Europe was the most frequently visited region in the world in 2016, accounting for close to half (49.8%) of the 1.24 billion international tourist arrivals. The wealth of European cultures, the variety of its landscapes and the quality of its tourist infrastructure are likely to be among the varied reasons why tourists choose to take their holidays in Europe.

Across the European Union, more nights were spent in tourist accommodation establishments located in rural areas (than in cities); many of these were coastal areas or Alpine regions, including border areas.

There is no official statistics gathered on pan-European level about tourism related to natural heritage. Partly, because such tourism can fall under different categories of tourism, for example ecotourism, nature tourism and rural tourism with partly overlapping definitions. In the context of EPICAH project it is important to stress that those overlapping definitions of nature related tourism nearly always stress the well-being of local people, respecting local cultural values and/or sustaining cultural heritage. It means that visitors interested in natural values appreciate also the cultural heritage of the region that serves as an additional reason for travelling for this target group.

Although formalities commonly associated with international boundaries are sometimes considered bothersome and often add a perceived distance to certain tourist destinations, borders do, in many cases, function as tourist attractions.

The economic benefits of tourism at the protected areas are obvious, but too much dependence on it as the key source of income can be unsustainable. In general, it is important that a share of profits remain in local communities and protected areas, rather than being dispersed elsewhere. In a transboundary context there are additional complications, for example if infrastructure is more developed in one country than another, it may result in an uneven distribution of profits. Thus, a cooperative approach is needed to tourism planning and management in transboundary conservation areas (TBCAs), otherwise the results can be environmental degradation and conflict between communities and interests.

The participation of a wide range of stakeholders and institutions, including local people, in transboundary tourism initiatives is crucial to maximize the socio-economic benefits. Conservation authorities need to collaborate with the private sector to ensure that transboundary tourism initiatives are responsive to market need. They should encourage the private sector to involve local people in the supply of goods and services, and to operate in ecologically sustainable ways.

Despite the importance of tourism activity as tool for the protection, promotion and valorization of natural heritage, there are other economic activities with relevance and impact upon this heritage that should also be faced under a transboundary approach.

Economic activities like agriculture, livestock or forestry may have deep impact in shared biodiversity, ecosystems and protected natural areas making, once more, essential to develop a common strategy for the spatial planning as well as common and joint measures to address existing or potential conflicts.

On the other hand, the same activities named before can also be “used” as tool for the protection, promotion and valorisation of natural heritage if implemented under models of organic farming, for example, or answering to sustainable partners defined for circular economy (like biomass recollection activities).

If properly develop, border areas can benefit from scale economies and critical mass, once those activities can represent attractive activities for fix population but mainly because their joint development can also address phenomenon like the climate change or even rationalize the shared water courses management and usage, tackling together pollution events or developing joint protection plans to face floods.

Features supporting cross-border cooperation at protected areas

Naturally, the status of adjacent natural heritage sites on opposite sides of the border as World Heritage Site, EUROPARC or any other internationally recognised label would provide an additional catalyst for cross-border cooperation.

However, several studies point out that the most significant variables that correlate with the level of cooperation are human variables relating to human relationships. Also, practice has shown that many transboundary conservation initiatives are governed through informal arrangements.

While international organizations and financing plays crucial role in educating, equipping, and facilitating transboundary conservation, they cannot impose it. Regardless of the agreements signed, clusters formed or networks launched, eventually the durability of cooperation depends on the people working at the sites - whether they are open and willing to cooperate across borders and communicate.

Another important handicap both for cross-border cooperation strategies and actions and for its durability in the field of natural heritage is the need of involving local authorities in its implementation once in most case have different levels not only of means (not only financial) to dedicated to it but also different levels of legal competences (and autonomy) to do it.

Adding to that, as mentioned before, legal competences to intervene in the protection and conservation of natural heritage are dispersed in several bodies (many of them without any sensitivity or knowledge to establish effective cross-border policies in this aim).

Last, but not least, there is no single ideal model for initiating and implementing transboundary conservation. Each initiative needs to be designed and adapted to meet the unique needs and interests of each specific geographical area and the countries involved. Transboundary conservation governance is increasingly adaptive. It is based on the premise that uncertainty is a given - that social, economic and environmental variables change, landscapes evolve and unanticipated impacts occur. Rather than waiting until more complete information is available, adaptive governance means that we should learn by doing and create an expectation of learning as we go.

2.2.2. Main constraints and fields of improvement

In order to analyse, which are the most common obstacles and constraints relevant for people dealing with natural heritage in the seven targeted cross-border regions, a sub-group of people were extracted from the overall set of EPICAH survey respondents. This sub-group comprises of people, who chose *natural heritage* as their first priority, when answering both the question “In which of the following fields are you interested in cross-border cooperation” and the question “Do you have an interest in the policy instrument in the following fields?”

Altogether, there are 29 persons in this “natural heritage sub-group”, presumably representing organisations, who have more experience with managing cross-border natural heritage (projects) than the rest of the respondents of the survey. 6 persons out of these 29 represent MA/JS and 18 persons have been beneficiaries in the cross-border programmes.

22 respondents of the 29 persons, who belong to the “natural heritage sub-group”, gave a ranking 1st... 10th for ten pre-defined cross-border cooperation difficulties and obstacles. In order to distinguish the most acute and common difficulties and obstacles, we compared, how many respondents ranked a certain problem as 1st, 2nd or 3rd priority.

As the number of pre-defined obstacles and difficulties was 10, the dispersion of responses is quite wide. Nevertheless, a few problems stand out more clearly than the others. The problem that received the biggest number of 1st, 2nd or 3rd priority rankings (altogether 11) was “**lack of cross-border cooperation between public authorities**”. The second most highlighted problem was “**lack of cross-border development strategy**” (10 rankings, as the 1st, 2nd or 3rd priority problem), and thirdly came “**legislation**” and “**language**”, both receiving 8 rankings from the 22 respondents.

In short, the main problems related to management of cross-border natural heritage are related to missing or limited structured (legal) framework that could support cooperation, and on the level of individuals’ limited skills of a common language hinder cooperation.

Hence, the policy instruments could support development and enforcement of the structured frameworks for cooperation in the field of management of natural heritage. However, such support must be accompanied with real cooperation activities (i.e. regular meetings, joint monitoring activities, job shadowing, staff exchange, etc.) between practitioners “on the field”. It is important, because eventually a successful and durable cooperation does not depend on the institutional and legal framework, but regular joint actions of the specialists from both sides of the border.

17 respondents of the 29 persons, who belong to the “natural heritage sub-group”, gave a ranking 1st... 5th for five pre-defined difficulties related to implementation of the policy instruments. In order to distinguish the most acute and common difficulties, we compared, how many respondents ranked a certain problem as 1st, 2nd or 3rd priority.

All the 17 respondents ranked “**administrative requirements**”, as the 1st, 2nd or 3rd priority difficulty, and 9 respondents ranked it as the 1st priority. The second most important problem drawn attention to was “**delay of the payments**” (11 rankings) and thirdly “**partnership difficulties**” (9 rankings).

To sum up, persons of the “natural heritage sub-group” are not satisfied with the administrative requirements practiced by the policy instruments and the limited speed of work of financial controllers at the first-level control bodies and the JSs that often leads to delay with payments.

The results show clearly that the MAs/JSs have a long way to go to step out of their comfort zone and have guts to make stronger efforts to introduce and implement simplifications in the administration of the cross-border cooperation programmes. In order to change the image of cumbersome bureaucratic structures for real, the simplifications must be drastic and clearly communicated.

2.2.3. Best Practices

The previous chapters had presented an overview about the current management of natural heritage as well as the main opportunities and weakness the protection, promotion and valorisation that this type of heritage is facing in the border regions, especially regarding the natural resources that are shared by two regions from different member States.

Taking in to account the main findings of those chapters, it was possible to present some successful case studies that could support the partners of EPICAH project in the development of their action plans.

Lake Neusiedl National Park in Austria and Seewinkel Fertő-Hanság National Park (Hungary)

In the following case the obstacles and constraints highlighted by the respondents of the EPICAH survey (lack of cross-border cooperation between public authorities and lack of cross-border development strategy) have to large extent been overcome and the daily work of professionals from both sides of the border supports efficient management of cross-border natural heritage.

These parks are transboundary wetland areas in the western part of the Carpathian Basin, at the last foothills of the Alps, Austria and Hungary. The bilateral national park was formally opened in 1994. The setting up of this transboundary protected area (TBPA) marked the end of years of division along the so-called Iron Curtain. On the Austrian side, the national park is situated on private property belonging to more than one thousand families, whereas in Hungary the park has been established on state land.

Several years of joint planning, starting in 1988 when the last communist government was still in place in Hungary, led to a new spirit in transboundary cooperation in general - not only in the conservation sector but mainly allowing rebuilding the regional identity-around the shared natural heritage that occurs within the two parks.

The area also has a rich cultural heritage, which was recognized in its designation as a transboundary UNESCO World Heritage Cultural Landscape in 2001.

This area has a joint commission – the Austro-Hungarian National Park Commission - representing the respective governmental authorities and the parks' management bodies, that acts as a Steering Committee for the development of the TBPA. Day-today cooperation is achieved through regular meetings, coordinated by the directors, and covering various fields of work.

For the time being, the state constitutions do not allow for the establishment of one joint national park management body, but this remains a long-term goal for both countries.

The Alpine Convention - International treaty on the protection of the European Alps

Similarly to the first example, the Alpine Convention illustrates a positive solution, which is not commonplace throughout Europe, as respondents of the EPICAH survey point out lack of cross-border cooperation between public authorities and lack of cross-border development strategy, as the most acute constraints for cross-border cooperation.

The Alpine Convention came into force in 1995 and binds eight countries (Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland) and the European Union.

It constitutes a regional multilateral environmental agreement following an integrative, all-encompassing, and transboundary approach. The core aim of the Alpine Convention is to safeguard the Alps. Its Parties agreed on the creation of Protocols which detail implementation mechanisms. Among them is the 'Conservation of the Nature and the Countryside' Protocol, which sets out various requirements for the conservation of nature, including the obligation to preserve natural and near-natural biotope types in sufficient amounts and to guarantee their effective spatial distribution.

The Alpine Convention finds its origin in a coordinated response to common challenges in transboundary conservation areas. Over the years it has built a sense of ownership and responsibility across political and administrative borders. It has promoted stronger transboundary conservation.

The Convention set up an 'ecological network platform' which coordinates research activities and projects on the ground. It promotes the establishment of functioning networks of protected areas. It also facilitates the participation of Alpine stakeholders in European Union-led initiatives such as the 'green infrastructure' initiative of the European Union Commission and the LIFE+ programmes.

The Convention also promotes connections with other relevant international legal frameworks through Memoranda of Understandings, such as with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Carpathian Convention, partly with the aim of supporting the protection of wildlife migration corridors. The Alpine Convention serves as a blueprint for other mountainous regions of the world where there is a need to integrate transboundary conservation measures and help meet human needs in a sustainable way.

Dinaride area of South-Eastern Europe

The case of Dinaride area stresses that joint management and protection of natural heritage can be a significant positive contributor to the general political climate between countries with complicated shared history. However, many of the participating countries speak similar languages that could have supported the joint actions, as language problems were underlined as one of the major constraints by the respondents of the EPICAH survey.

A number of transboundary conservation initiatives in the **Dinaride area of south-eastern Europe** can help support regional stability. This region was impacted by armed conflict in the early 1990s, resulting in the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, with grave consequences for diplomatic, economic, and social relations between most of the countries involved.

It is now criss-crossed by many international boundaries, requiring regional cooperation in the conservation of nature and the management of protected areas along the borders.

The Dinaric Arc Initiative was launched in 2004 by key international players in the region. Within four years, this led to the signing of a Joint Statement that recognized the importance of transboundary cooperation in protected areas (the statement was signed by six governments—Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia—during the Big Win for the Dinaric Arc event at the 9th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in Bonn, Germany, in 2008). While this had enormous political value for the Dinaric Arc region, it was also an important impetus for protected area management. In 2013, the six countries were joined by Kosovo and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in endorsing the second Joint Statement for enhanced regional cooperation.

A number of other regional cooperation initiatives have emerged in recent years (Dinaric Arc Parks, Conservation Planning Platform, etc.), all evidence of how transboundary conservation can foster political dialogue and stability.

TransParcNet

The example of TransParcNet could be called Cooperation 2.0, as the international cooperation network consists of natural areas that are divided between at least two countries. It is a cooperation network of cooperation professionals, who want to go beyond the already reached high level of cooperation. Such approach should be the aim of all the EPICAH target areas that currently struggle with limited or lacking cross-border cooperation in the field of management of joint natural heritage.

The EUROPARC Federation launched a certification process 'Transboundary Parks—Following Nature's Design' at the IUCN Vth World Parks Congress in Durban in 2003, and since then it has been implementing this in Europe.

The criteria for certification are used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of partnerships, analyse the quality of cooperation and identify examples of good practice. Experience and expertise have

been exchanged among members of the TransParcNet, currently a network of 23 certified protected areas from 13 countries, all of which fulfil the Basic Standards requirements.

The re-evaluation of all EUROPARC Transboundary Areas is done every five years in order to see if the certificate should be retained. Oulanka (Finland) and Paanajärvi (Russia) National Parks are an example of a EUROPARC certified Transboundary Area.

The process of self-assessment, reviewed by EUROPARC's Transboundary Steering and Evaluation Committee and followed by field verification by external experts, has been extremely useful for the parks' management in taking the cooperation to a new level. The parks have found the recommendations valuable. The certificate, 'Transboundary Parks-Following Nature's Design', awarded at EUROPARC's annual conference, has been used to convince donors of the commitment and practical cooperation between the parks.

Peer review by experts is often the most effective way to obtain trustworthy guidance on how to overcome difficulties and improve the quality of protected area management. As a membership network that can organize such reviews, TransParcNet is an excellent way to bring together the best expertise from across the region and apply it to the challenges that are facing individual managers of TBCAs.

Project "Eagles Cross-borders"

Majestic white-tailed eagles with a wingspan of up to 2,5 meters are Estonian biggest birds of prey. White-tailed eagles use their talons for catching fish. The smallest eagle, Pandion haliaetus or osprey, is also a skilled fisherman, diving after their prey. Both can be found rather numerous in Estonia and Latvia, but they are still considered to be amongst rare species. Three years ago, the ornithologists of neighbouring countries discovered that it would be useful to raise the awareness of people who become in contact with eagles during their daily jobs: foresters, fish breeders, hunters etc. Within two years, thousand people learned more about the lifestyle of eagles and why they need protection.

"A small car can take steep curves with ease, while a big tractor drives off the road. Likewise, small birds can react to environmental changes rapidly while bigger birds have more trouble. If we change the life conditions of eagles by a great deal, they cannot adjust". This is why eagles nesting in the woods shouldn't be disturbed or scared away from their "restaurants" at bodies of water so the life of those beautiful birds can now also be observed via webcams. An Estonian osprey was viewed almost five million times a year. It was constantly viewed by an average of 3.000 people and by 45.000 people in a day. The eagle had audience from 140 countries, most of them from Germany, Sweden, Russia and Taiwan. Receivers attached to birds allowed the researchers to collect information on their nesting habits, migration etc. White-tailed eagles don't migrate much but one of them took a summer vacation near Arctic Ocean, while ospreys vacationed in Africa. Scientists also developed a harmonized methodology for observing birds.

Latvian Fund of Nature and Estonian Ornithological Society worked together to make the joint enterprise Eagles a success.

Joint development of the UNESCO caves of Aggtelek carst and the Slovak carst

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee listed the Cave of Aggtelek and the Slovak Karst as a Natural World Heritage Site in 1995, on the basis of a joint proposal by Hungary and Slovakia. This natural wonder is not a common occurrence so at first it is hard to see how it can be relevant as a good

example to any border area. Partners have been implementing several common projects to improve the level of nature protection, biodiversity as well as attractiveness of the UNESCO World Heritage site. Due to the abundance of their shapes, the karst objects of the Aggtelek Karst and the Slovak Karst are internationally significant. Annually, more than 200.000 visitors come to see the cross-border cave system, having an appropriate entrance on both sides of the border.

In the aim of the Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Co-operation Programme and supporting the Joint development of the karsts, it should be mentioned 3 projects:

- Handling the UNESCO caves of Aggtelek karst and the Slovak karst: that supports researching the hydro-geological links of the Aggtelek karst and the Slovak karst caves. The research was focused on the special hydro-geological links of the caves in order to facilitate their joint management, the caves morphology and the species living in them as well as on the identification of the pollution originating from the surface in order to plan how to prevent it in the future.
- Medical/wellness tourism development in the world heritage caves of the Aggtelek and Slovak Karst: that supports the creation of a common tourist attraction in the cave system of Aggtelek Karst and Slovak Karst. This infrastructure was necessary for the operation of the therapeutic caves (internal and external construction works, procurement of the assets required for the performance of speleotherapy).
- Birds without borders: that supports the protection of the bird species and their habitats and to broad the services of the ornithological camps for both professionals and the general public.

Ecological Education and Air Quality Monitoring Complex in a Transboundary Context

This project was completed in October 2009 by rehabilitating the former communal bath in Satu Mare, in the Garden of Rome, an architectural monument building dating back to 1901, and transforming it into the "ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND MONITORING AIR QUALITY COMPLEX IN CONTEXT TRANSFRONTALIER", known to the community as the "Green House", which aims at expanding the air monitoring infrastructure in the border area and developing the institutional capacity of action and cooperation in the environmental field.

Through refurbishment, the building acquired numerous functions related to ecological education: IT classroom facilities, exhibition and conference room where there are ample awareness actions on the importance of environmental protection, namely: actions within the framework of the "Eco-School" international program, "Schools for a Green Future", "Environment for Life, Life for Man", environmental education classes, environmental debates with citizen participation, launch of programs and projects on environmental financing, seminars/symposiums organized on the occasion of marking of environmental events, exhibitions of objects made from recyclable materials, exhibitions of artistic works on environmental issues, annually decorating the eco tree with ornaments made from recyclable materials, practical works within the laboratory within the complex, etc.

Another result was the monitoring of air quality: setting up and equipping a laboratory with the European standards that ensure continuous air quality monitoring through the interconnection of the Romanian air quality monitoring network with the accidental pollution warning in the Halmeu border area through the project, respectively biomonitoring of the effects of pollution produced by road traffic in the border area.

The biomonitoring of the air quality was insured for the first time in the country, through the laboratory of the complex.

Prespa Park

The Prespa Park¹¹, the first transboundary protected area in the Balkans, was established on 2 February 2000, World Wetlands Day, with a joint declaration by the Prime Ministers of Greece, Albania and FYROM, following a proposal from the Society for the Protection of Prespa and the WWF. Nine years later, the Prime Ministers of the three countries met in Prespa (27 November 2009) and agreed on the signing of a binding agreement for the protection and the sustainable development of the Prespa Park.

On the tenth anniversary of the Prespa Park, 2 February 2010, the three states and the European Union signed an international agreement, which strengthens the institutional operation of the park, ushering in a new era for the Prespa Transboundary Park. The Society for the Protection of Prespa (SPP) has supported the operation and activities of the park from its inception, believing transboundary collaboration to be the only way of tackling both the environmental problems and the economic development of the area. For ten consecutive years the SPP participated in the park's operation as a member of the Prespa Park Coordination Committee (PPCC) while at the same time supported the operation of the PPCC secretariat. Moreover, under the transboundary cooperation it has carried out a variety of projects in collaboration with official bodies from the three countries.

2.3 CROSS-BORDER TOURISM

It is clear, from the previous chapters that tourism probably is taken as the main and more efficient tool for the protection, promotion and valorisation of cultural and natural heritage and that this premise also is valid in the border regions.

In the last few decades, the European Union border regions are gradually being opened to visitors and making more visible the value of their landscapes (built and natural), culture (material and immaterial) and identity. The consequence is they are each day more attractive and competitive as tourism destinations, especially if developed in a cooperative and strategic way.

Moreover, tourism in border regions is having an important role in bringing local populations closer and overcome the remaining linguistic, cultural and social barriers being a net contributor to the achievement of the European cohesion policy.

All these reasons justify the strong support the European Union is giving to foster, promote and develop cross-border tourism, transnational tourism products and European thematic routes linked to tourism (not only through Interreg programmes but also through specific calls launched by the Directorate-general Growth)

Nowadays cross-border tourism has many definitions: it can be applied to describe the flows of tourist from one side of the border traveling to the other side or to tourism activities that includes offers and products from both sides of the border. Depending on the definition, neighbouring regions can be competitors or partners and border can be coincident with the administrative ones or be "erased" by the tourism activities.

¹¹ http://www.spp.gr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10&Itemid=15&lang=el?&lang=en

In the aim of the present report, cross-border tourism correspond to tourism based on the common and/or shared natural and cultural heritage of the border regions (that are partners in its strategic development) having as main offer transboundary tourism products and attractions aiming at making tourists move along the border and experience and know both regions involved.

Crossing the border for tourism purposes and contributing for a sustainable development of both neighbouring regions are, therefore, the central element of cross-border tourism.

2.3.1. Relevance for the border development

The relevance of tourism as regional development factor is, nowadays a common sense sentence, repeated by all sort of private and public socio-economic actors. It is also a phenomenon present in several research studies in multiple fields (from psychology to history).

Its capacity to generate income and jobs in the most recent financial/economic crisis period that the European Union had faced, had made from tourism an essential milestone of local and regional growth and development strategies.

However, cross-border territories seems to not be able to see or reach all the potential tourism can represent to those territories if strategically and cooperatively plan based on the common natural and cultural assets and resources of the border areas, especially in terms of generate differentiating factors to face the global competition that characterizes the tourism industry.

For border regions (corresponding to around 20% of the European territory) tourism can have a real impact on local economies. If, in one hand, tourism sector allows to improve the protection and sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage adding value and promoting them as core elements of the territories identity and way of life. On the other hand, it should disclose new border areas opportunities and help to overcome developmental weaknesses:

- At the economical level: by attracting new investments (including foreign investment); by promoting the economic activities diversification; by leveraging local business (like handicraft or agriculture production and selling); by increasing the demand of qualified human resources.
- At the sustainability level: by helping to maintain, protected and preserve local natural and cultural heritage.
- At the social level: by improving the quality and quantity of establishments, services and infrastructures contributing for the improvement of locals' quality of life.

The mutualisation of resources, assets and facilities at the cross-border level can represent a real development opportunity if territories can address it by establish a common and shared strategy supported in the “the essence of a cross-border territory's identity” making from the border itself a tourist attraction.

As in other types of territories, tourism in border territories relays on cultural, historical and natural heritage and in the leisure (joint or individual) facilities and should be developed by making optimal use of those endogenous potential.

A successful example of the emergency of a territories cross-border identity reinforced by tourism activities is the UNESCO “Transboundary Biosphere Reserves” where different levels of governance and stakeholders from the involved borders work together and share the objective of protecting the common natural heritage (they assume as their own) and of promoting it as tourism attraction.

It represents, in fact, a real approach to functional geography (where the relationships and effective usage of the territories overlap the political geography) centring the efficiency of the policies adopted in their results without limiting it by the administrative and bureaucratic barriers other sectors have to face. The focus is, therefore, in the cultural and natural landscape instead of in the administrative

delimitation of the territories. As a result the joint development and management of the border areas are a need and not a wish.

To assure those positive impacts, tourism should be envisaged as a cross-border and cooperative activity to be implemented and developed in a strategic common way (under a territorially integrated approach that creates the necessary synergies between all local economic sectors) taking in to account aspects like border areas spatial planning to avoid overlaps and assure a correct use of the common resources.

Borderlands increase their competitiveness through cross-border cooperation creating new forms of “tourist appeal” (and generate new strong brands) based on the assets they shared and the conditions, products and services they are only able (technical and/or financially) to develop in a larger scale (that is, together).

Aims like the environmental quality, type and preservation of landscape play a vital role in determining tourism potential of the territories and, in the case of border areas, these are common aims that should be taken care of by all the responsible stakeholders, following the same objectives and rules. Moreover, it is fundamental to jointly define the type of tourism envisaged (for example, mass tourism versus ecotourism or alternative forms of tourism) because this will be the key element in defining the type of visitors and the needs and expectations they have regarding the “cross-border destination”.

In this context, cross-border tourism can be joined with “tourism in neighbouring borders” as a tool of increasing the average length of stay in the territories and for reducing seasonality.

In addition, as border territories are in its vast majority, inland, rural and aged/depopulated regions (borderlands are the extremities of their countries not only in administrative terms but also in terms of communication networks that let them far from the main political decision centres making of them “unimportant” areas), cross-border tourism also represents a population retention tool through the job opportunities creation and investment attraction capacity.

In these territories, the development of cross-border tourism allows not only the generation of scale economies (at the promotional level, for example) but also to develop more rich and competitive tourism products portfolio (by the aggregation to the tourism products – fostering the tourism in neighbouring borders – with cross-border tourism products jointly offered).

According with the online survey launched within the EPICAH project (targeting main stakeholders of the 7 border regions concerned), it is possible to identify the main strengths and assets of the European cross-border cooperation in the field of tourism.

First of all, it points out that 55% of the stakeholders consider the cross-border cooperation level in the field of tourism to be good/excellent.

Even higher is the percentage of those who believe that the investigated policy instruments are promoting cross-border cooperation in the field of tourism at a good/excellent level.

Despite the risk of perceiving themselves as competing with each other, the responses of the stakeholders show that tourism is a strong point of the cross-border cooperation and it is considered as a relevant tool for the preservation and promotion of transboundary natural and cultural heritage:

- Cross-border cooperation is stronger in the field of tourism when compared with the fields of natural or cultural heritage;

- However, 41% of stakeholders inquired believe that the amount of resources allocated to cross-border tourism development should be higher in order to enable a stronger border areas development.

On the other hand, according with the same survey, the main European (internal) border assets for the cooperation in the field of tourism have been identified as:

- Cultural routes;
- Protected natural areas;
- UNESCO sites;
- Thermal water;
- Typical products and wine;
- Landscape;
- Naturalistic itineraries;
- Cycleways.

Those stakeholders opinion, corroborates that a further growth of tourist flows in cross-border areas will require:

- Joint marketing strategies;
- Packages with joint cross-border offer;
- A continuous comparison of best practices to identify the key replicable success factors.
- Integration of tourist information between border areas.

Finally, it is relevant to point out that for the European Union as a whole, cross-border tourism represents also a development opportunity as it contributes to connect citizens (bringing people closer together, breaking down mental boundaries and promoting cultural differences and historical disagreement acceptance), to reinforce the cross-border identity (thus consolidating also the European identity) as well as the belonging feeling to Europe among cross-border communities. In this way, cross-border tourism also is a relevant tool of the European Union Cohesion Policy.

The support of the European Union to the development of the cross-border tourism, namely through Interreg A programmes, is a way of recognizing its relevance and contribution to add value and promote:

- A European identity;
- A responsible and sustainable way to use environment and natural heritage;
- An efficient and sustainable usage of cultural heritage;
- The protection and preservation of border heritage and identity values.

2.3.2. Main constraints and fields of improvement

As above explain, according with the results of EPICAH's on line survey, the overall assessment made of the cross-border cooperation level in the tourism sector can be considered quite good.

Since the tourism topic cannot exist by itself, it is always connected with exploring a cultural or/and natural heritage, or other point of interest. In other words, Tourism had gained popularity, but needs to be considered as associated to usually cultural/natural values.

Nevertheless, although with today's basically free system of travelling within Europe for its citizens, there are of course constrains and obstacles to be found.

Cross-border cooperation in tourism is a cross-sectorial process, thus the obstacles are determined to be cross-sectorial as well and are perceived in macro factors, such as:

- Historical, social and cultural factors
- Economic factors
- Legal factor
- Factors linked to the level of expertise of the partners involved

- Factors defining the degree of intensity of cooperate of the partners involved
- Administrative factors

Although the assessment made of the cross-border cooperation level in the tourism sector can be considered quite good according with the EPICAH survey results, if we go deeper into detail (thanks also to the results of that survey), the main obstacles can be divided mainly into these several categories according to its character:

1. Knowledge about the other part of the border in general
2. The lack of knowledge and interest about the other part of the border
3. The lack of cross-border development strategies
4. Legislation and legal aspects
5. Mobility and infrastructure
6. Historical and/or social background
7. Language
8. Lack of cross-border cooperation between entities with different approaches
9. Maritime distance (in specific cases)
10. Administrative factor

These constrains can be also identified as fields of improvement at the same time.

Knowledge about the other part of the border in general	Overall, it can be said that the general knowledge of the other side of the border region is not very deep. Although, often the cross-border regions share the same history, there is a lack of the knowledge about the basic facts of the bordering region.
The lack of knowledge and interest about the other part of the border	Sharing the same border, but partners on each side of the border have very often very low knowledge of the of partner side. The cultural and even natural heritage, that are well known and visited by domestic visitors, often stay without greater attention of the potential visitors on the other side of the border. Many people have even never been to the places that are famous for the other region and are not interested because of the lack of the information about it.
The lack of cross-border development strategies	In some cross-border regions, there is no or underdeveloped strategy for cross border tourism cooperation. Some regions are still missing the common strategy for tourism development and projects. The regions concentrate on the tourism issues within their region, forgetting about the common projects and that many visitors being a target group could be attracted from the other part of the border. Fortunately, the positive trend towards further development can be seen in many countries with cross-border tourism projects. Therefore it is necessary (tourism in neighbouring borders) to seek these projects and learn from them in accordance to implement the best practices within the local environment. The strategies are usually developed on a national level within each state. And these strategies are rolled down to the regions. Therefore, it is important that the cross-border tourism issues are addressed already on a national level too. What is more, it is essential that the national strategies take already in accordance the EU Tourism strategies and programs. Common International Marketing Concept would be the solution so the products / national and international packages with joint offers for border tourism can be developed and offered.

<p>Legislation and legal aspects</p>	<p>The level of cross-border cooperation, not only in the field of tourism, is very much dependent on legal and legislative framework that makes the cooperation easier in some regions than in others. These involve the European Union membership of the two countries involved, degree of each state centralization, local authorities competences etc.</p> <p>Also, an important role will always play the relationships between the neighbouring states. These can of course vary even within the states depending on specific regions and change in time.</p>
<p>Mobility and infrastructure</p>	<p>Often, we can observe quite different level of infrastructure in each country of cooperating regions. And we are not talking only about transportation possibilities that have to do often with an economic development of the country. So we can find places with attempts for a cross border cooperation in tourism, where one country is able to offer much better developed system of transport for tourists than the other.</p> <p>However, as already mentioned, infrastructure does not mean only transportation, essential for tourist traveling and tourism projects to be successful. It is important also to mention for example common materials to promote joint tourism projects, materials in all languages needed, described in more details in further parts.</p>
<p>Historical and/or social background</p>	<p>Cooperating regions in the field of tourism often face obstacles because of its historical or/and social background. And this can be either having a shared history and background or not having strong or positive common history. The differences that might be causing difficulties on both sides of the border might also be of ethnic or religious character.</p> <p>To illustrate the example, World War II topic can still be a reason why some people in the neighbouring regions might feel negative about the possibility of potential cooperation, not only in tourism of course.</p>
<p>Language</p>	<p>Language barriers are considered to be a natural obstacle when considering and forming the tourism cross-border cooperation.</p> <p>Firstly, the partner participants face the elementary difficulties when trying to develop the common projects. For this purpose, it might be useful to set an international language (e.g. English) for all participating entities. Even it is not a mother tongue for any of the states, it will make the communication easier and one country will not feel “stronger” than another. Also, this approach might make it easier for further steps of the project on the European or international level.</p> <p>However, when we get to the implementation part of the common project, it is always necessary to think about all language variants involved. And that is valid not only for the basic level of the project, but also going deeper in the project as well. For example, if I want to attract both sides of the border involved in the project, all the promotion materials have to be in the language of the other country as well. So the potential visitors can get the information about it in their language. Then, if they decide to come and visit the other part of the border, it is also essential to be ready on the spot. Which means having the materials in the language of the other country – expositions, guides, texts, audio-guides, etc. Thus the project can be successful also in real life, not only on the paper.</p>

<p>Lack of cross-border cooperation between entities with different approaches</p>	<p>One of the most important reasons, why the cross-border tourism projects face difficulties, is the fact that the partners on different sides of the border do not know about each other. Or they are missing a platform/possibility to meet appropriate partners for the cross-border cooperation in tourism. Although, also according to different surveys, they would be interested in this kind of cooperation and even would have the projects ready. Those projects are sometimes dealing even with the same issues, the problem is however, that the potential partners just do not know about each other.</p> <p>Therefore, it is important within the tourism strategies to keep in mind to form some kind of an intermediate body - platform that would help to mediate the contacts and link the tourism partners and projects together.</p>
<p>Maritime distance (in specific cases)</p>	<p>In some regions, the maritime distance might cause obstacles in cooperation with in tourism development.</p> <p>These obstacles include:</p> <p>(1) Poor accessibility of some cross-border maritime territories. The provision of links within some maritime cross-border areas is very limited (in terms of connections and capacity) and often is related to seasonality. For example, 40% of the citizens of the IT-FR Maritime area stressed that poor accessibility represented one of the greatest perceived problems (it's one of the highest cross-border rates, where the average is 30% - Eurobarometer survey, 2015).</p> <p>(2) Absence of the concept of 'cross-border territorial continuity' for cross-border maritime areas and of the adequate legal instruments to guarantee it.</p> <p>(3) The opportunities for 'blue growth' in cross-border maritime areas are not explored sufficiently nevertheless they represent new opportunities for development and employment in the tourism sector (nautical and coastal tourism, etc.).</p> <p>But still, once the bordering regions have a clear strategy that takes in accordance also this fact, it can be overcome and cross-border projects still can be successful.</p>
<p>Administrative factor</p>	<p>Just like in other categories for cross-border cooperation, administrative difficulties of common cross-border tourism projects tend to be rather considered to be one of the main reasons, why the partners do not cooperate and do not apply for joint cross-border projects.</p>

The Tourism cross-border cooperation is somehow developed in most European regions. In many of them, we can find successful projects, although there are still constraints and fields of improvement as mentioned above.

To find solutions, it is essential to prepare well cross-border Tourism strategies, concepts and platforms for cross-border cooperation. Also, we can always learn from good examples and best practices from all over Europe as these can show us the way to overcome obstacles through exchanging experiences. Even though the conditions are different in each country. Some of the best practices are mentioned below

2.3.3. Best Practices

Several of the problems and fields of improvement listed in the previous chapter are already being addressed by cross-border projects and networks representing for the EPCIAH project successful case studies that can represent good practices to be taken in to account when developing the policy instruments improvement action plans.

Bärnau – Tachov historical park and archeocentrum

The Bärnau-Tachov Historical Park (German Geschichtspark Bärnau-Tachov) is the largest medieval archeopark in Germany, not far from Tachov, west of Bohemia, towards the border crossing Pavlov Studenec – Bärnau as a joint cross-border project. The founder of the Park is the beneficial association Via Carolina e.V. The Archeopark presents the life of people in the early and high Middle Ages with an early medieval Slavic village, a fortress from the 11th century and a settlement from the Middle Ages. There is also a classical museum exposition in the main building of the park which was established in 2010 and is constantly expanding.

The main objective of the project is the establishment of ArchaeoCentre Bohemia-Bavaria as an institution that continuously and extensively informs the general public with a common cultural and natural heritage on the territory of the project. In addition to this, numerous planned project activities will lead to sustainable support for cross-border tourism.¹²

Treffpunkt

“Treffpunkt” is the Czech-Bavarian Cultural Platform and joint project of Pilsen 2015 (Czech) and the city of Regensburg (Bavaria). Its objective is to network cultural actors and organizers on both sides of the border.

Through networking meetings and exchange channels, participants have the opportunity to meet and explore their partners. The most visible element of the platform is the Czech-Bavarian cultural days - the "Treffpunkt" festival held in Pilsen in October and in Regensburg in March.

The European Union funds the Czech-Bavarian Cultural Platform project.¹³

Schönsee - Bavaria Bohemia centre

The centre of Bavaria Bohemia (CeBB in Bavaria) is located in the former "Schönsee" municipal brewery, which was refurbished and expanded to host this cross border project founded in January 1, 2006. The founder was "Bavaria Bohemia eV" Association, which was established in 2004 and is responsible for the operation.

The intention of the project is to create cultural centre in the Centre of Bavaria Bohemia to support the cultural life of the Bavarian and Czech neighbouring regions with aims to contribute to an even greater deepening of cross-border cultural and partnership relations in the Bavarian and Czech neighbouring regions. It offers cultural life on both sides of the border for public to make interconnection much closer enabling cooperation between organizers of cultural events in all areas of the Bavarian and Czech neighbourhoods.

Main topics of the centre:

- the organization of cultural events and cross-border impact programs;
- creation of a cross-border cultural network - creation and extension of a bilingual and cross-border cultural data bank;
- information platform for all those interested in culture about the cultural offerings of neighbouring regions;

¹² <https://www.geschichtspark.de/> | <https://www.archaeocentrum.eu>

¹³ <https://treffpunkt.cz>

- “good neighbourliness” in 3D projection and other media forms;
- synergies of partners in the cultural field, the media, cross-border initiatives and organizations, public and political life, tourism and education, universities and adult education.¹⁴

IC “Bavaria - Czech”

Joint project of the Bavarian and Czech tourism partners with information centres in Pilsen and Budweis.

ARBERLAND REGIO GmbH, with its branches in Pilsen and České Budějovice, has set its goal in 2008 to promote this very important tourist region of Bavarian Forest - Šumava. Together with partners from both Bavaria and Bohemia, both branches represent an important information link in this cross-border location between the Danube and Vltava and offer the possibility of presenting the current offer of all tourist-interesting events and possibilities.

With the Internet site, information is available anywhere in the world almost continuously, the objective is to inform both sides of the region about tourist and cultural activities.¹⁵

European cultural routes

European Cultural Routes are examples of cross-border cooperation joint development strategies and actions as they represent networks of territories that “exploit” and develop natural and cultural share assets in a coherent and sustainable way.

Their development are based on the establishment of a common and participated governance structure funded in strict principles regarding the preservation, management and promotion of the heritage.

They create/develop a common identity (and also a common brand) based in the uniqueness of the assets and resources territories share. At the same time, its development and consolidation normally generates a stronger feeling of belonging and shared ownership.

By definition (Council of Europe, 2006), the European cultural routes are “networks of interactions and economic exchange based on culture and creativity that incorporating principles of sustainability, fairness and inclusion based on” cooperation and on cross-border cooperation, making of them also good practices for the promotion of the objectives of the European Union Cohesion Policy.

Nowadays, the main cultural European route is the Way of Saint James that also represents one of the main thematic of cross-border tourism projects in the Spain-Portugal borders and Spain-France borders.

Hungary-Croatia (IPA) Cross-border Co-operation Programme

This cross-border European cooperation programme use an unique methodology (comparing to other cross-border co-operation programmes) as it had developed a Regional Tourism Product Plan (RTPP) and the Handbook to Tourism Projects as a basis for launching tourism related call(s) for proposals.

¹⁴ <http://www.bb kult.net/>

¹⁵ <http://bavorsko-cechy.eu/home/>

In the implementation of the priority 2 “Sustainable Use of Natural and Cultural Assets” the Handbook to Tourism Projects¹⁶ is used as a background document for the interventions in tourism the programme will approve establishing a strategic concept applied to all tourism projects: one common framework aiming in strengthening the full achievement the programme outcomes and results.

This procedure can be also useful in defining both the limits and targets of the “usage” of the tourism activity as tool for the protection, promotion and valorisation of natural and cultural heritage.

NecsTour Network

The European NECSTOUR network, project of which Tuscany is the promoter region with Catalonia in Spain and PACA in France, is an instrument for the exchange of a route of actions among a group of regions, local autonomies, member states and European Commission, but also with the industrial, social and consuming universe. NECSTOUR proposes itself as a permanent debate lab, a platform of exchange of good practices, experiential exchange, experimentation of shared models of measurement of phenomena and social dialogue.

The common element is the will of confrontation on the one hand, about the analysis and the exchange of good practices and on the other hand on the application of the sustainable objectives of the Agenda 21 in the regions and the tourist realities, keeping up with the trends of the international debate and with the positions of big institutions, such as the United Nations.

Ten main points: from the life and work quality, to the impact of transport, to the strategy of deseasonalization, from the active protection of the cultural and environmental protection and of the identities of the destinations to the diminution and optimization of the natural resources, firstly water and then the consume of energy and the waste management. The tourist places will be valued according to five indicators: social and environmental responsibilities, deseasonalization of the tourist fluxes and transport and mobility.

Thirty regions and twenty-one support institutions took part in the network, among them international institutions and research institutes, category associations and labour unions.

This network of regions is a good practice able to offer solutions to some of the problems mentioned above, in particular with reference to the "Lack of cross-border cooperation between entities with different approaches"

The network has in fact developed a methodology for the sustainable and competitive management of tourism that provides work tools and a shared language that can facilitate dialogue and cooperation between different entities, public and private, profit and non-profit.

This methodology could be adopted for the improvement of the policy instruments, making it a guideline that all projects focused on cross-border tourism should follow.

Creation of a water amusement trail on the river Bodrog and its tributaries

Water tourism has been active for a long time on the river Bodrog and its tributaries. On the Slovak side, of the five tributaries of the river Bodrog, only the rivers Laborec and Latorica are appropriate for the performance small vessel traffic, in addition to the special protection area denoted by the Ramsar agreement, situated along the river Laborec and a similar area - Bodrogzug - near the city of Tokaj. These two protected areas are connected by the natural green corridor of the river Bodrog.

¹⁶ <http://www.huhr-cbc.com/uploads/editors/Handbook%20to%20Tourism%20Projects.pdf>

This project aims at the development of a comprehensive attraction package built on active eco-tourism performed on the 80 km cross-border section of river Bodrog and its tributaries between Tokaj and Oborín. The comprehensive nature is shown also in the fact that these activity types shall be implemented at multiple settlements and venues, with the help of multiple partners performing tourism services, as well as municipalities.

The direct goal of the project is to increase the attractiveness and make the tourism attractions at the river Bodrog and its tributaries available to the public by establishing waterways, bicycle trails, horse riding trails and by creating the natural, architectural and IT infrastructure necessary for all of this.

To achieve this objective, the project proposes, among other activities, the procurement of assets and training of local service personnel for the purposes of sustainability and the creation of a mentor program popularising boat sports.

Carpathian Culinary Heritage Network

The project was implemented in Ivano-Frankivsk region of Ukraine, Maramures and Satu Mare counties of Romania, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county of Hungary and Kosice region of Slovakia with the overall objective of conserving and popularize the role and range of the different traditional Carpathian food products and cuisines as a catalyst for sustainable regional development and preservation of local cultural heritage.

The project fosters cross-border cooperation to unify the efforts and potential of local traditional food and tourism related stakeholders throughout the Carpathian Regions to promote the widely diverse styles and products, whilst assisting to build capacity, networks and sustainable supply chains between the various producers and the public in order to meet the challenges and requirements of present day needs in the food and tourism industries.

At the same time it works for raising the local awareness and appreciation of the potential of the Carpathian culinary heritage whilst identifying the links between traditions and the local environment. The local producers having inherited tradition and know how, together with other local stakeholders must be motivated to engage in a value creation and preservation process.

It will also work in the develop new business opportunities and support small-scale businesses operating in traditional food and gastronomy sectors in the Carpathian regions of Romania, Hungary, Ukraine and Slovakia by building strong links and networks with the tourism sector and promoting Carpathian traditional culinary heritage and culture to a national and international clientele.

Culinary tourism is seen as a tool for the reinforcement of the cultural identity of the border regions as Carpathian tourist destinations and promote each regions identity through.

Eixo Atlantico strategy to boost tourism at border between Galicia (ES) and North Portugal

Historically tourism promotion was a small-scale practice, in which each city was promoted on its own, trying to compete for tourism against others that were understood as rivals by the same market. In these years, Eixo Atlántico (a cross-border association of municipalities from Galicia and the North of Portugal Region) has managed to implement the philosophy that together border regions are stronger and more attractive getting better opportunities and being able to extend the tourists stays.

This is currently done under the slogan “Two Countries, One Destination” by valorising the complementarity of the cities of Galician-North of Portugal urban system and also the crossborder character of destination value proposition as a differentiating factor for seducing the demand. This strategy is already applied in many touristic products boosted by Eixo Atlantico, like, for instance, the Eurocity Chaves-Verin¹⁷ “the eurocity of water”; a project promoted by Eixo Atlantico and that in 2015 won a RegioStar award.

Likewise, the strategy followed by the Eixo Atlántico in the field of tourism is focused mainly (although not exclusively) on the promotion of local tourism, valorisation the internal market of 7 million inhabitants that the Eurorregion Galicia-North of Portugal has, with the capacity to move within the territory 52 weekends a year. Thereby, the strategy is oriented to promote mutual knowledge, the creation of wealth in the territory and to avoid as much as possible the phenomenon of seasonality.

To implement the strategy, several key-elements are used:

- **Touristic guides of thematic content** (ethnography, history, gastronomy, natural resources) that we edit (in paper) each two years. In addition, they are produce in electronic version, in Portuguese, Spanish and Galician.
- **EXPOCIDADES**, a tourism fair focused on tourism of proximity. This fair is organized each two years in one of the cities members of Eixo Atlantico. At this fair, the Eixo Atlantico’s cities show their touristic offer while gathering touristic operators to boost the market in the proximity field.
- **Seminar to Exchange Experience**. Once a year, Eixo Atlantico organizes a meeting between its members tackling tourism. At this seminar, cities discuss around a central theme, being invited to think about common strategies and having the opportunity to present their news in the field of tourism promotion.

Border territories within the EU have similar characteristics. For them the border is not an obstacle but it should be seen as an opportunity to create critical mass and to differentiate these territories from the others.

In short, the creation of cross border tourism strategies is a way to create synergies between territories and capitalize important tourism assets.

The experience accumulated in the Galician-North Portugal border can be valuable and transferable for other regions, regarding not only the idea but also the way of implementing and update it according to the evolution of the territory.

Project “Biotourism”

The project “Biotourism”¹⁸ was developed and implemented within the first call of the IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Greece-Albania 2007-2013 Programme and in particular under the Priority 1. Enhancement of cross-border economic development (Area of intervention 1.2. Promote sustainable tourism).

The project BIOTOURISM aimed to introduce Innovative Practices in Biotourism as a natural consequence in order to promote sustainable economic development with a view to further expand the cooperation on common business initiatives for the support of the local communities of Korca in Albania and Prespa in Greece.

¹⁷ <http://en.eurocidadechavesverin.eu>

¹⁸ <http://cbc-biotourism.biopolitics.gr/>

The project assisted the development of a bilateral tourism platform with e-services involving Greek and Albanian businesses around Korca and Prespa cross-border region and construct a dynamic structure for the promotion of the comparative advantages of the area.

The “BIOTOURISM” project resulted in a specific common touristic product of added value to be promoted and contracted out to international tourism operators. This common product was to further support the cooperation of Greece and Albania on common marketing initiatives.

GREEN BOAT

The project “Green Boat”¹⁹ was developed and implemented within the first call of IPA Cross-Border Cooperation 2007-2013 Programme and in particular under the Priority 1. Enhancement of cross-border economic development (Area of intervention 1.2. Promote sustainable tourism).

The two Municipalities involved in the project (the Greek Municipality of Prespes and the Albanian Municipality of Liqenas) have developed during the past few years close collaboration in order to create conditions of common planning for joint actions concerning preservation and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of the area, protection of the environment, improvement of the tourism product of the area and overall development of the Prespes Lakes area. This collaboration has been ‘officially’ acknowledged with the signing of a Protocol of Collaboration on 4 December 2007.

Having been developed in line with the strict requirements implemented by the Trilateral Formal Agreement signed in February 2010 between Greece, Albania and FYROM for the protection of Prespes Lakes, the project aimed to keep a balance among the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development in the area, in order to guarantee long-term benefits to the recipient cross-border communities of Greece and Albania.

The main tangible output of the project was the supply and operation of two Solar Powered Boats in the Greek side of the lake and one Solar Powered Boat in the Albanian side of the lake. A joint action plan for Solar Boats Trips Promotion and Prespes Lakes Area tourism development was also developed by the two partner municipalities.

The organisation of trips around the Prespes Lakes area using solar powered boats can be utilised as an effective tool for increasing attractiveness of the area of interest, aiming at promoting different aspects of the cultural and natural heritage, demonstrating at the same time in real life the endless potentials and advantages of solar power, especially in this part of the world. In this way, the project contributed to a high increase of the Prespes Lakes area popularity both in the local and foreign touristic market.

¹⁹ <https://www.green-boat.eu/index.php/en/about-the-project>

3. ROLE AND SUPPORT OF INTERREG A PROGRAMMES

3.1. INTENSITY AND QUALITY OF THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE PROTECTION AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE CROSS-BORDER NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Border Regions differ from one another in their contextual features (natural framework and conditions, demographics situation, population density, socio-economic structure, public services availability, communication ways, overall level of development, etc.). In this sense, the internal borders of the European Union are, in most cases not only administrative (despite opened to the free circulation of people by the Schengen agreement and to the free circulation of services and goods since the establishment of the European Economic Community), but also geographic (see borders, for example), linguistic, social and historical barriers.

The elimination/mitigation of those types of barriers to a free and (really) united Europe, is one of the main objectives of the Cohesion Policy; therefore Interreg programmes have been created as a primary tool to achieve it through an effective promotion of territorial cooperation.

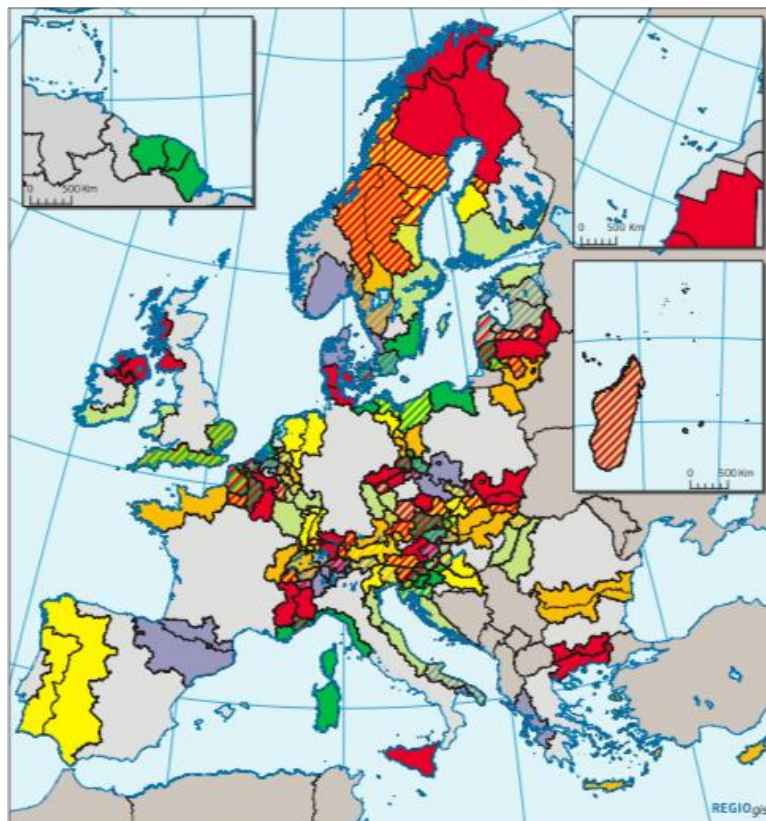


Figure 10: European cross border cooperation programmes 2014-2020

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border/#4

All the Interreg V-A programmes follow a similar structure (strategic axis linked to the European Union thematic objectives; justification of the selected investment priorities, identification of the main typology of actions to be funded). This structure must be fully justified by a territorial diagnosis

which will highlight the main characteristics of the border - weaknesses and opportunities - that should be addressed as common challenges, in order to be successfully managed through the cooperation (in a efficient way, in more economically advantageous way, using scale economies, developing critical mass, etc.).

At the beginning of 2018, according with www.keep.eu Interreg V-A had already approved 2.301 projects (within the 3.353 projects approved under all the territorial cooperation programmes of the programming period 2014-2020). This figure was of around 6800 projects for the programming period 2007-2013.

The current European Union cross-border cooperation programmes have selected different methodologies for launching the correspondent calls for proposals:

- Periodical calls for proposals by types of projects (soft project versus hard projects - Romania-Bulgaria Interreg V-A Programme; projects and small projects - Austria–Germany/Bayern; ...);
- Call for proposals per strategic axis (of the programme);
- Periodical calls for proposals per programme (like, for example, Spain-Portugal Interreg V-A or Greece-Italy Interreg V-A);
- Call for proposals in two phases (concept note in the first phase and application form in the second) like the 2Seas Interreg V-A programme;
- There are also programmes operating under an open call system (meaning applicants can submit project proposals continuously once the call is launched as long as funds are available) like, for example, the Slovakia-Hungary Interreg V-A;
- Restricted calls for proposals for specific beneficiaries within a specific thematic/ investment priority (for example, the Greece-Bulgaria V-A programme or the Greece-Cyprus programme²⁰) in order to develop very important projects for the cross-border area (like a vertical road axis connecting Greek-Bulgarian borders, a strategic project for managing refugees' crisis in the Greek-Cypriot area);
- A combination of ordinary and strategic calls for project proposals differing concerning the level of the maximum budget (strategic ones have a higher one), the type of potential beneficiaries (strategic calls may include only regions and/ or ministries), the priority axis addressed by the call (Interreg V-A IPA CBC Program Greece-Albania Interreg V-A Greece-Cyprus Program).

As it is possible to understand in the analysis of Annex I²¹, Interreg A 2014-2020 programmes present the following characteristics:

- They support cross-cooperation projects through ERDF with co-funding rates that vary from 50% up to 85% (note that the programme technical assistance are normally funding at a different rate);

²⁰ The INTERREG VA Greece-Bulgaria and Greece-Cyprus Programmes publish both open (to all beneficiaries & priority axis) calls as well as restricted ones.

²¹ Data available in http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border/#4 for 57 Interreg V A Programmes.

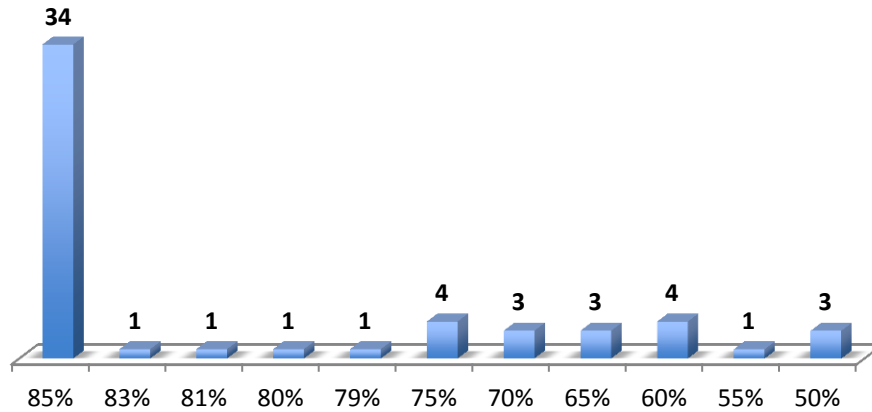


Figure 11: Interreg V-A co-funding rates

Source: Self elaboration based on http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border/#4

- The average ERDF funding budget per cross-border programme is of 115,6 million euros;
- These programmes' thematic priorities cover all eleven thematic objectives defined for the 2014-2020 programmes. Thematic Objective 6 (TO6 - environment and resource efficiency) was chosen as priority by 51 cross-border programmes (around 90% of the programmes);

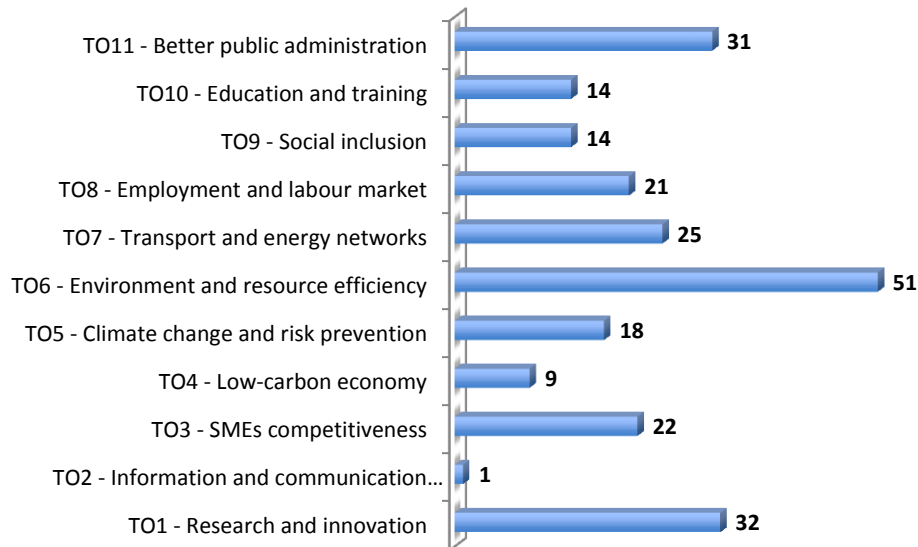


Figure12: Interreg V-A thematic objectives

Source: Self elaboration based on http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border/#4

- The average amount ERDF dedicated by the programs to fund projects under TO6 is of 32,5 million euros. In terms of relevance, this thematic objective represents a maximum between 25% and 50% of the total ERDF available in each programme;

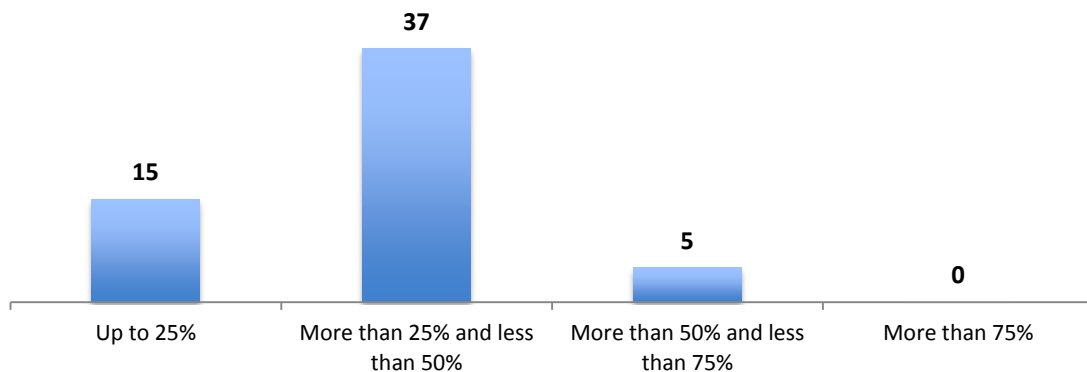


Figure 12: Interreg V-A – relevance of TO6

Source: Self elaboration based on http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/cross-border/#4

- With regards to the investment priority “Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage” (European Union priority PI 6C) where the EPICAH project focuses in order to improve the project policy instruments, only 5 of the 51 Interreg V-A programmes that have chosen TO6, do not include it among their investment priorities.
- On the other hand, only 11 of the 47 programmes that support PI 6C specify the amount dedicated to it. This amount varies from 1,5 million euro to 77,5 million euro.

In general, all Interreg V-A programmes aim at the mobilization of endogenous potentials and the participation of a wide range of regional stakeholders with special emphasis in fostering the participation of the private sector border stakeholders.

In particular, TO6 and PI 6C intend to the preservation and to add value to cultural and natural resources by increasing and disseminating knowledge, by increasing the efficiency in their usage and finding new usages for them, and by developing/consolidating the cross-border regional identity based in those shared resources.

The dimension of this investment priority (PI 6C) within Interreg V-A can be assessed by:

- The importance given to the cultural heritage as unlocker tool of cross-border cooperation by increasing the knowledge about counterpart communities, promoting mutual understanding, overcoming linguistic barriers, having as a result a more cohesive border area.
- Considering natural and protected areas as opportunities not only for the development of new business and economic activities (like green tourism or eco-agriculture, for example), but also for border stakeholders’ awareness rising for the adoption of a more sustainable and environment friendly behaviour.

Within this thematic objective and investment priority, EPICAH project survey (see Introduction) specifies that cross-border cooperation policy instruments, according with the opinion of the European Union internal border main stakeholders:

- Are being efficient in the promotion of the cross-border cooperation in the fields of cultural heritage, natural heritage and cross-border tourism. However, the allocation of the policy instruments resources to these three fields is insufficient to deploy all the potential they have to promote cross-border cooperation.
- Despite the contribution of Interreg A to reduce the border impact and to reach the Cohesion Policy objectives and despite all the improvements these policy instruments had made along

- the different programming periods, cross-border cooperation is still facing obstacles within those programmes.
- To improve the effectiveness of Interreg A in the fields of cultural heritage, natural heritage and cross-border tourism, it is important to properly address the main obstacles detected:
 - Working in the reduction of legislations disparities in the border areas;
 - Promoting a better knowledge about the other part of the border, here included the promotion of the acceptance of social, cultural and historical differences;
 - Acting in overcome the language barriers;
 - Improving (and facilitating) mobility between and along the borders;
 - Establishing shared cross-border cooperation strategies.

3.2. MANAGING AUTHORITIES AND JOINT SECRETARIATS ASSESSMENT VS BENEFICIARIES AND COMMUNITIES ASSESSMENT

The aim of the present chapter is to identify and analyse the differences as well as the common points of view expressed by the Managing Authorities and the Joint Secretariats comparing to those expressed by the local/ regional stakeholders, beneficiaries and communities, concerning the cross-border cooperation with regards to the conservation, the protection, the promotion and development of the natural and cultural heritage (PI 6C).

Answers collected during the online survey implemented within EPICAH project will facilitate this identification and analysis that also will be presented in this chapter.

However, before studying the results of EPICAH online survey, it would be useful to examine some important outcomes generated within the ex-post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007-2013 as a whole, focusing on the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund (CF) and in particular related to the fields of culture and tourism (European Commission 2016).

Based on the ex-post evaluation’s findings, Managing Authorities addressed within the study, identified the following rationales for ERDF intervention in culture and tourism to which it is added some additional considerations collected in other reports regarding natural heritage²²:

Culture	Tourism	Natural Environment & Heritage
To support socio-economic development		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supporting tourism and economic diversification by enhancing place branding and identity ▪ Improving the quality of life of local stakeholders by increasing the accessibility of cultural assets ▪ Supporting social and territorial cohesion, with culture seen as a driver for social interaction and dialogue between communities ▪ Increasing employment opportunities ▪ Supporting innovation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upgrading tourist infrastructures and marketing services ▪ Increasing employment opportunities generating both high and low skill jobs ▪ Developing new business models to strengthen the role of tourism and extend tourism destinations (e.g. ‘diffused hospitality’ or ‘Agri-tourism’ in rural areas; tourism facilities and services accessible to the elderly or the disabled etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Valorising natural resources as development resources ▪ Supporting innovation through the adoption of the quadruple helix model of sustainable development ▪ Putting natural environment and heritage in the economic production processes in local and regional level ▪ Correlating nature with local quality and marketing procedures

²² Since the aforementioned study do not approach the issue of natural environment and heritage from the same point of view and the evaluation focuses on the protection of environment (biodiversity, air, ground) there is an extra column on the specific field based on international studies and bibliography regarding the issue. By no means, this column expresses the results of the evaluation of ERDF and the Cohesion Fund (CF) and in particular related to the fields of culture and tourism, however it reflects the experience obtained by EPICAH partnership members within the past years and it is very important to be included, since natural heritage is one of our project main topics.

Culture	Tourism	Natural Environment & Heritage
To address market failures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preserving and enhancing existing cultural assets (i.e. public goods) ▪ Promoting a greater involvement of private and Third Sector operators in the provision of cultural products and services ▪ Generating highly qualified employment and overcoming shortages of skills in the management, marketing and promotion of Cultural or Tourism products to improve competitiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promoting a more equal territorial distribution of tourism destinations and revitalizing marginal urban and rural ▪ Increasing the attractiveness of destinations and preserving natural and cultural assets (public goods) ▪ Diversifying the tourist offer and reducing seasonality ▪ Overcoming the shortage of capital for investment and development of the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mitigating regional disparities and development divergences valorising local environmental asset ▪ Increasing destination attractiveness through new points of interest ▪ Surpassing infrastructure issues through innovative storytelling techniques and branding methods

According to the above main characteristics of the three sectors - culture and tourism - and the rationales for public intervention discussed previously, four potential broad strategic approaches for investment in cultural and natural heritage and in tourism are proposed:

1. Economic diversification;
2. Regeneration and social cohesion;
3. Enhancing innovation and competitiveness;
4. Socio-economic and environmental sustainability.

The close integration between ERDF and national/regional policies for culture and tourism – highlighted within the ex-post evaluation study was considered as a positive feature for ERDF Operational Programmes in 2007-2013. while in some cases, Operational Programmes had not include their own strategy in the above mentioned fields, but specific measures directly linked to the national or regional strategies.

In the case of natural heritage the main concerns of the ERDF Operational Programmes in 2007-2013 are linked to waste management and water also without defining a specific strategy for its protection and sustainable usage.

In the particular case of cross-border cooperation ERDF programmes, the ex-post evaluation European Commission report states that those programmes had well captured the need for an integrated environmental approach and management, in special, regarding:

- the share of a common natural resource (both from a conservationist point of view or from the perspective of ensuring resilience against common risks)
- the potential for mainstreaming of the environment in other sectors as an opportunity for development of new products or services (here included the tourism activity).

In the field of environment and regarding cross-border cooperation ERDF programmes, projects were focused on issues related to the management of natural resources, of natural threats, and on issues related to climate change and biodiversity.

At the same time, it was identified that interventions in the fields in study had been included in other Structural Funds programmes, especially the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Social Fund, as well as various national and regional funds.

For tourism, for example, the Directorate-general for Enterprise and Industry had launch the “Guide on EU Funding for the Tourism Sector” to help potential beneficiaries to understand the range of EU thematic programmes that can support it.

Economic diversification as an answer to the deindustrialization or the declining of rural areas, aiming to increase jobs and economic opportunities is the basis of almost all the strategies developed in the fields of culture and tourism. However, there are some differences between culture and tourism strategies.

In particular, the strategies related to culture most of the times give emphasis on urban regeneration and social cohesion, aiming thus to the improvement of residents’ well-being and social inclusion, through the upgrading local cultural and natural assets, supporting sport and cultural infrastructures and promoting events.

Strategies in the field of tourism have a stronger are usually developed in the basis of socio-economic growth, particularly through innovation & competitiveness.

In the case environment (natural resources) as the focus were on water, wastewater and waste management, ERDF programmes envisage also the improvement of residents’ wellbeing for one side and he reduction of the impact of the growth of economic activities impacts in those areas (here included not only the industry but also the management of the charge capacity of tourism destinations). In this context, ERDF programmes were key in supporting member States in the accomplishment of the targets established by the European Union Directives for those areas.

As illustrated in the ex-post evaluation study, in the case of culture, the largest share of Managing Authority respondents said the focus was on regeneration and social cohesion as the sole strategy.

By supporting the construction, recovery or extension of the cultural infrastructure, the refurbishment or recovery of historical monuments and heritage as well as organization of cultural events, while a significant number of them said that the focus was on economic diversification alone, or combined with a social cohesion strategy. Finally, around 20 out of the 95 Managing Authorities reported that within their operational plans they had adopted a combined strategy designed to support both economic diversification and social cohesion.

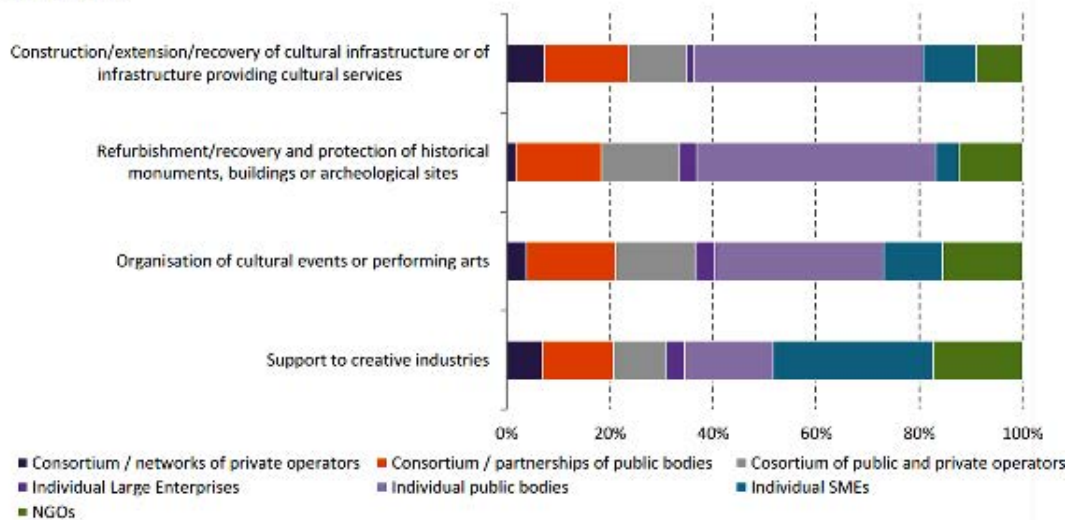
The case of tourism is different since a more diverse combination of strategies can be observed amongst the Operational Programmes, with innovation – combined in most of the cases with economic diversification to be their predominant aspects. A joint strategic approach combining economic diversification and economic and environmental sustainability was also recorded in a smaller number of Operational Programmes. Two other interesting findings of the ex-post evaluation study refer to the types of interventions implemented in the fields of culture and tourism and the beneficiaries funded for this purpose by ERDF in the period 2007-2013. Regarding the types of interventions funded, it seems that there was a great focus on infrastructure investments, especially in the field of culture (related mostly to the protection of the cultural and natural heritage, emerging thus the necessity to find ways on how to move from ‘hard’ physical investment interventions to softer types of interventions in the future. The only exemption was the cross-border programs, where only small-scale infrastructures are financed.

In the field “environment” the report states that almost every cross-border programmes have delivered specific outputs related to the protection of common natural assets (mainly of a “soft” character: studies, strategies, protocols, ...). Under the other topics (water management, Risk prevention and management) outputs had both “hard” and “soft” character but because of the smaller budgetary size of these programmes, “hard” projects doesn’t represent a significant part of the programmes investments (mainly small structures and pilots development).

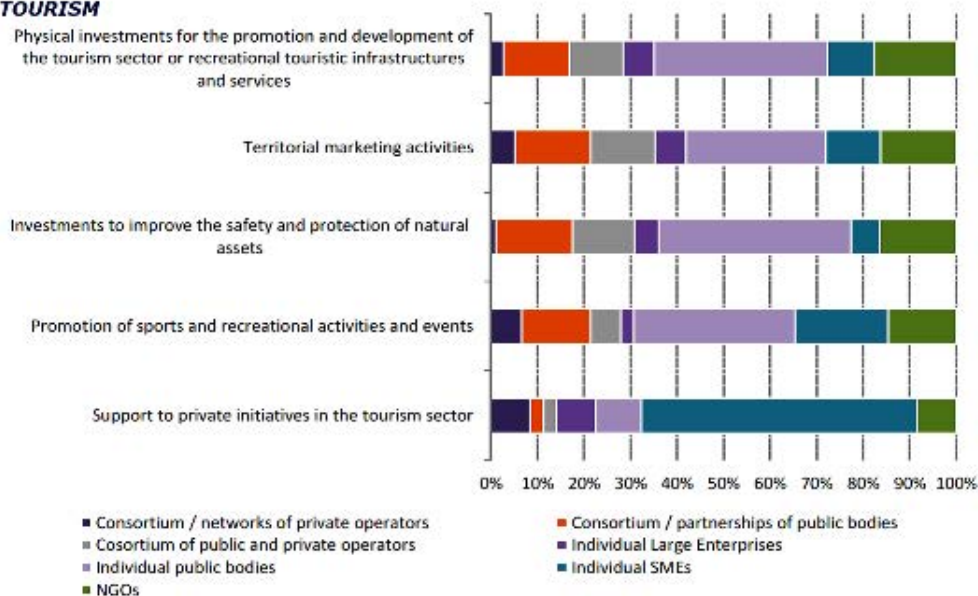
As far as beneficiaries are concerned, the majority of them were large municipalities and other public bodies. This fact also reveals the question on how could be involved more private and Third Sector organisations in the co-financing and implementation of culture and tourism interventions. A variation in beneficiaries is only reported in the case of interventions supporting the ‘Creative industries’ and ‘Private initiatives in the tourism sector’ where the principal beneficiaries are mostly

individual SMEs (Tourism) and Third Sector organisations (Culture). It should be noted though that although most of times the initial direct beneficiaries are public bodies, SMEs and social actors are likely to represent a higher share of final beneficiaries in an indirect way (e.g. through subcontracting).

a) CULTURE



b) TOURISM



Source: Managing Authority survey data.

Note: More than one response is possible.

Figure 13: Beneficiaries by type of intervention

Source: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/evaluations/ec/2007-2013/#11

Some more conclusions concerning types of beneficiaries include:

- The infrequency of public and private partnerships in the intervention fields of culture and tourism (probably due to the small size of most private operators in the culture and tourism sectors, which do not generally have the human resources or skills to manage the administrative burden of Public Private Partnerships);
- As main reasons for the higher participation of public authorities as beneficiaries in cultural and tourism projects' implementation could be considered their institutional role as public interest protectors or competent authorities, the difficulties experienced in the past concerning the involvement of private sector etc., while often calls of Operational Programmes are open only to public bodies and/or bodies governed by public law;
- High involvement of public bodies as main beneficiaries may well have had some negative effects, such as the deliberate over-scaling of infrastructure projects, with the risk of hampering their sustainability, as in the case of municipalities undergoing cuts to public budgets; or due to a strong political drive in favour of prestige culture and tourism interventions.

Ex-post evaluation study also revealed the stakeholders' points of view, concerning European Union value added²³ underlying:

1. the importance of ERDF in supporting (large) infrastructure projects and the upgrading of services that would not have been supported otherwise, especially given the lack of resources at national and regional level in the period following the financial crisis in 2008 and in particular for cultural sector,
2. The increased administrative and professional capacity of actors involved in planning and implementing culture and tourism interventions,
3. The contribution of the programmes to the development of new governance models involving the activation of new actors and partnerships at both national and local level.

Last, within the ex-post evaluation study and especially through the analysis of particular case studies, the main drivers associated with the success of strategies and interventions and the main obstacles faced by culture and tourism strategies and interventions were identified as presented below. Regarding natural heritage this table also includes the main drivers associated to the successful intervention in this field based on other reports and studies²⁴:

²³ European Union value added can be defined as the increased value resulting from Community action, and the extent to which ERDF intervention adds 'value' to the interventions of other administrations, organizations and institutions that would not otherwise be gained to the same extent (Mairate, 2006).

²⁴ As stated above, since the aforementioned study do not approach the issue of natural environment and heritage from the same point of view and the evaluation focuses on the protection of environment (biodiversity, air, ground) there is an extra column on the specific field based on international studies and bibliography regarding the issue. By no means, this column expresses the results of the evaluation of ERDF and the Cohesion Fund (CF) and in particular related to the fields of culture and tourism, however it reflects the knowledge and the experience obtained by EPICAH partnership members within the past years and it is very important to be included, since natural heritage is one of our project main topics.

Main drivers associated with the success of strategies and interventions	Main obstacles faced by culture and tourism strategies and interventions	Main drivers associated with the success of strategies interventions regarding natural environment and heritage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a strong involvement of local actors (i.e. public, social, economic, experts) from the initial programming phase forwards ▪ the integration of the ERDF interventions with wider regional/ national frameworks in culture and tourism ▪ the desirability of using a strategic approach in the selection of projects was noted, together with a strong capacity to assess the financial and environmental sustainability of projects; ▪ the individual tailoring of specific forms of support to small private and Third Sector operators to enhance their participation and management capacity; ▪ the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems based on the definition of appropriate output and result indicator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ weak integration between culture and tourism interventions, and between these interventions and existing regional tourist products ▪ distribution of ERDF funds on a non-competitive basis hindered the full potential of the ERDF support in these sectors ▪ weak ex-ante selection criteria; ▪ limited involvement of private and Third Sector organizations (in all cases), due to low economic returns (especially in the case of Culture), high administrative burdens and long times for reimbursement of expenditures made ▪ weak implementation capacity of local actors, and in particular of small social and economic actors ▪ limited monitoring and evaluation systems that hampered the effective implementation of programmes and projects ▪ weak integration between natural resources and tourism interventions, ▪ presentation of environment and environmental resources as obligatory limitations and no as developmental tools ▪ limited participation of reliable metrics and indices regarding natural environment and heritage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the integration of the ERDF interventions with national operational programmes ▪ the adoption of European Directives to local level ▪ the upgrade of environment importance and the enhancement of sustainable approach ▪ the empowerment of bottom-up approach to the planning giving the potential of strong local involvement

After the overview presented above where points of views of managing authorities, stakeholders and beneficiaries concerning ERDF investments during the period 2007-2013 and in particular in the fields of interest for EPICAH project, an comparative analysis of EPICAH online survey results follows demonstrating also the managing authorities and Joint Secretariats approaches comparing to those of final beneficiaries and rest of stakeholders.

To be noted though that the results of the EPICAH online survey have a particular interest since 151 people representing 130 beneficiaries, stakeholders, etc. and 21 managing authorities and joint secretariats participated. As far as their geographical distribution is concerned, respondents come from 7 cross-border territories all over Europe: Spain-Portugal, Italy-France, Estonia-Latvia, Germany-Czech Republic, Hungary-Romania, Hungary-Slovakia and Western Macedonia in Greece.

In synthesis, within the EPICAH online survey, respondents were invited to assess the following issues in regards to the cross-border cooperation and relative policy instruments in the fields of cultural heritage, natural heritage and tourism.

As far as the overall cross-border cooperation level in the regions of respondents is concerned and in particular in the fields of cultural heritage, natural heritage and tourism, according to the weighted average of their answers (varying from insufficient-1 to excellent-4), the managing authorities and joint secretariats tend to assess in a more positive manner the overall cross-border cooperation in

the fields of cultural and natural heritage, comparing to the beneficiaries and other stakeholders, while the opposite happens in the case of cross-border tourism. However, the average of both categories' answers is in between sufficient and good "level"²⁵.

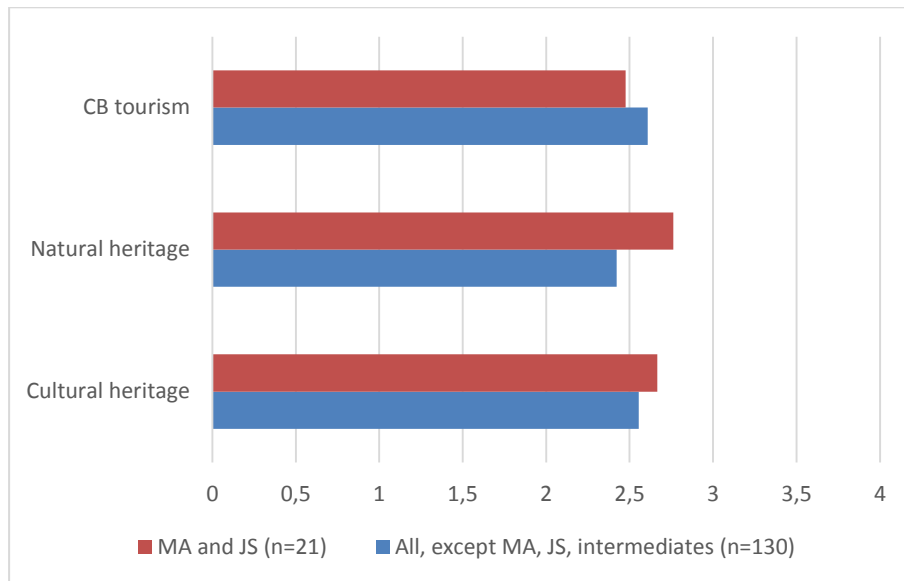


Figure 13: Assessment of overall cross-border cooperation level in the CB regions participating in EPICAH online Survey
Source: EPICAH online survey

Respondents also commented on the extent that the policy instrument promotes the cross-border cooperation in their regions and once again, according to the weighted average of their answers, the conclusions are pretty similar to the previous question.

More precisely the managing authorities and joint secretariats continue to assess in a more positive manner the role of the policy instrument for the promotion of the cross-border cooperation in the fields of cultural and natural heritage, while the beneficiaries and other stakeholders, have a more positive point of view in the case of cross-border tourism.

Also in this case, the average of both categories' answers are in between sufficient and good "level". It should be noted though that the average opinion of managing authorities and Joint secretariats as far as the contribution of the policy instrument in the cross-border cooperation in the fields of culture and nature is concerned is much more closer to "good".

²⁵ The answers' rating ranges from 0 to 4: 0-- I have not sufficient knowledge/not applicable, 1 – insufficient, 2 – sufficient, 3 – good, 4 - excellent

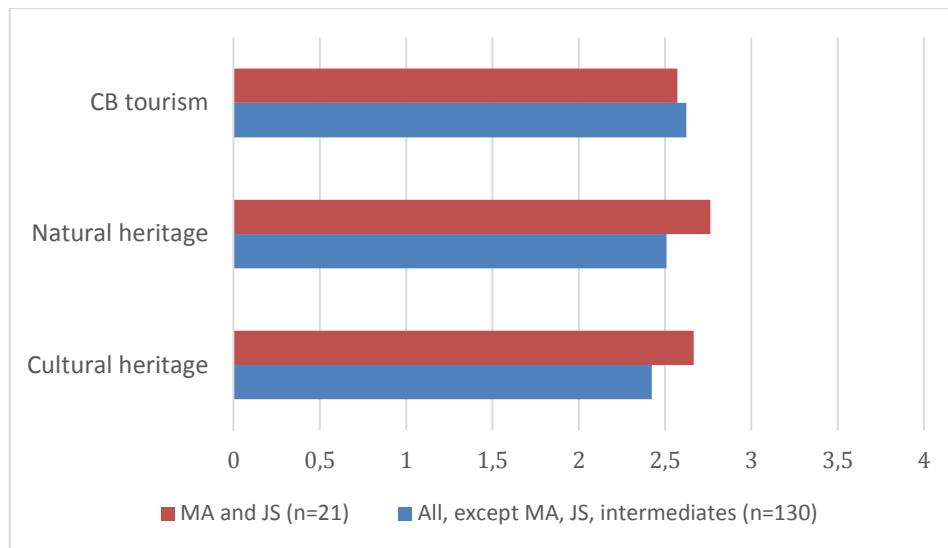


Figure 14: Assessment of the extent that the policy instrument promotes the cross-border cooperation in the CB regions participating in EPICAH online Survey

Source: EPICAH online survey

Concerning the allocation of resources, an initial interesting finding is that a remarkable percentage of respondents of both categories seem not to know about the resources' allocation per sector (cultural heritage, natural heritage, cross-border tourism).

This percentage is higher in the case of natural heritage reaching 48% for managing authorities and joint secretariats respondents and 33% for the beneficiaries and the rest of stakeholders and lower in the case of cross-border tourism (19% for managing authorities and joint secretariats respondents and 30% for all the others).

The graphics below demonstrate the opinions of the two major groups concerning the allocation of the resources where possible answers within the online survey were 0-don't know, 1-enough, 2-should be smaller and 3-should be bigger.

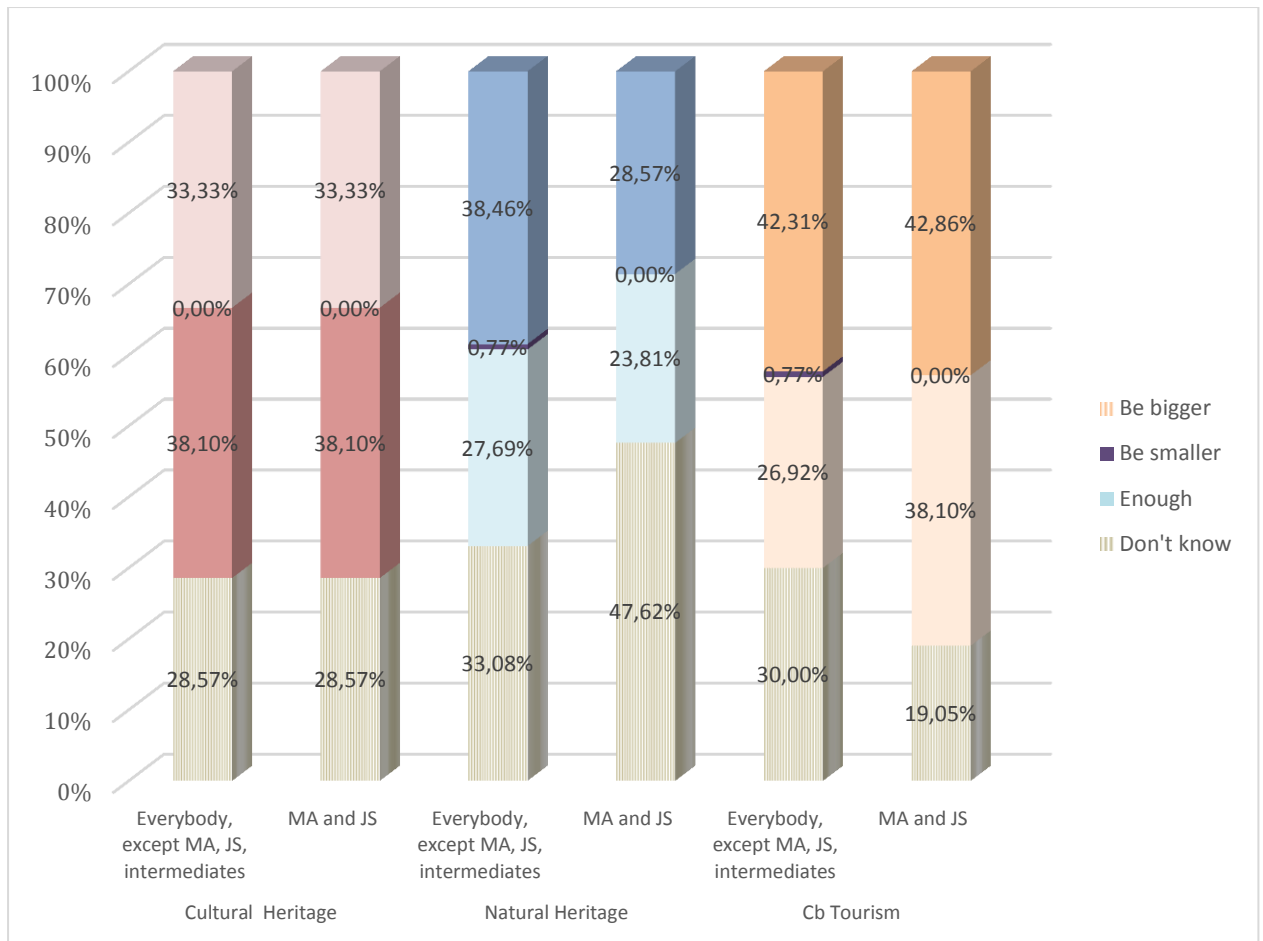


Figure 15: Opinion of the respondents regarding the resources allocation concerning cultural heritage, natural heritage and CB tourism
Source: EPICAH online survey

Studying the graphic above, there is a clearly higher interest for the increase of funds allocation for cultural heritage projects expressed by the beneficiaries and other stakeholders, while a greater percentage of managing authorities and joint secretariats respondents consider that more funds should be allocated for cross border tourism projects, being in accordance at this point also with the beneficiaries (43% versus 42%).

Finally, a last important finding of the EPICAH online survey is that beneficiaries and other stakeholders identify equally difficulties in the cross-border cooperation as well as in the policy instrument (65% of the respondents), while managing authorities and joint secretariats recognize more difficulties and obstacles in the cross-border cooperation as a whole (71%) comparing to the difficulties identified with regards to the policy instrument (57%).

4. FINDINGS

4.1 SYNTHESIS OF STRENGTHS, OPPORTUNITIES, WEAKNESSES AND THREATS

As shown in the previous chapters the three thematic cultural and natural heritage and tourism they have strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats that should be necessarily taken in to account when placed in a cross-border environment as listed below.

This analysis is even more relevant in the context of the search for the improvement of cross-border cooperation policy instruments aiming at a more effective and efficient protection, promotion and valorisation of cross-border natural and cultural heritage adding to that the analysis of the key-factor influencing the development of cross-border cooperation itself.

The next tables summarise the main strengths and opportunities as well as weaknesses and threats that should be addressed to support project proposals and actions with potential to successfully contribute to a correct management of natural and cultural heritage in border areas.

4.1.1 Strengths and opportunities

Cultural Heritage	Natural Heritage	Tourism
<p>*Preserving and developing Europe's rich cultural heritage can be a base for strong intercultural connection across the borders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Culture and creativity can be important drivers and enablers of innovation as well as an important source for entrepreneurship. ▪ Culture is a key driver for increasing tourism revenue, with cultural tourism being one of the largest and fastest growing tourism segments worldwide. ▪ Culture also has an important role to play in promoting social inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Variety of landscapes ▪ Quantity and variety of cross-border protected natural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tourism activity is considered a main tool for promotion, protection and valorisation of natural and cultural heritage ▪ Tourism is of course closely connected to the use and development of natural, historical and cultural assets and to the attractiveness of cities and regions as places to live, work and visit. ▪ The eye@RIS3 database that documents the emerging landscape of regional smart specialisations in Europe (run by the Smart Specialisation Platform) shows that many regions are prioritising service innovation and business model innovation in tourism in their smart specialisation strategies and will allocate substantial funding towards that objective.

4.1.2 Weaknesses and Threats

	Cultural Heritage	Natural Heritage	Tourism
Legislation and administrative requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative requirements of the supporting policy instruments is one of the main reasons for agents (especially private entities never applying or failing the application process for programme funds). National laws are seen as restrictive and not as facilitators of the activities/cross-border cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incompatible legal and policy arrangements across adjacent jurisdictions. The development of a 'donor-dependency' culture among some transboundary conservation practitioners. Tension between economic and environmental interests and concerns about conflict and security at the borders. Incoherent and uncoordinated (often-conflicting) funding strategies. Lack of capacity to understand and package transboundary conservation initiatives in ways that show how ecosystem goods and services can be strategically important in meeting social and economic aspirations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The level of cross-border cooperation, in the field of tourism, is very much dependent on legal and legislative framework. Administrative difficulties of common cross-border tourism projects tend to be rather considered to be one of the main reasons, why the partners do not cooperate and do not apply for joint cross-border projects. Absence of the concept of 'cross-border territorial continuity' for cross-border maritime areas and of the adequate legal instruments to guarantee it.
Cross-border cooperation between entities with different approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes these institutions view their counterparts across the border as competitors, not partners. Even if they do cooperate, public and private entities rarely mix. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of trust between governments and other stakeholders, restricting opportunities to pool limited resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of the knowledge about the basic facts of the bordering region. Lack of a platform/possibility to meet appropriate partners for the cross-border cooperation in tourism.
Cross-border development strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of cross-border development strategies 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regions concentrate on the tourism issues within their region The strategies are usually developed on a national level within each state (making essential that the national strategies take already in accordance the European Union tourism strategies and programs).
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of a common language and the historical background resulting in intercultural differences. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language barriers are considered to be a natural obstacle when considering and forming the tourism cross-border cooperation. Potential visitors need to get the information about tourism activities and resources not in the languages of the border but it in their language.
Historical background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of a common language and the historical background resulting in intercultural differences. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This obstacle can either result from having a shared history and background or not having strong or positive common history.
Economic considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lack of strategic cooperation between institutions makes cross-border services – like cultural heritage protection – hard to provide. Financial difficulties can also cause liquidity problems when facing delayed and small amount of advance payments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty in exploiting 'blue-growth' and 'blue-economy' opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different level of infrastructure in each country of cooperating regions

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS²⁶

According to the experience mentioned in above chapters in the European Union border areas there is room for improvement in the next European Union funds programming period starting in 2021.

The improvements recommended are the most important in the following aspects:

- Simplification of Rules and procedures.
- Governance.
- The entities created for the development of initiatives for European Territorial Cooperation, including Cities, Cities networks and Metropolitan Areas should have the right to be associated to the reflexion (European Territorial Cooperation strategies and Operational Programmes definition).
- Audit and Control Rules.

4.2.1 - Simplification of Rules and procedures

- **Implementation of the Final conclusions and recommendations of the High Level Group on Simplification for post 2020** created by the Commission decision COM(2015)4806 – 10 July 2015, in general and in particular those related to the European Territorial Cooperation.
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/newsroom/pdf/simplification_proposals.pdf
- Despite the efforts so far, border stakeholders voice their concern at the existence of persisting challenges faced by border citizens and businesses when interacting across the border. These have direct and indirect impacts on their daily life: certain activities are still more complicated to perform across an internal EU border than they are inside a Member State. For instance, it is still difficult to take up a job on the other side of the border or to get treated in a hospital there even if there is very close proximity. Border obstacles are all the more visible in highly integrated border regions with a high level of interaction across the border – the more you want to interact with the other side of the border, the more the challenges become visible.

So far, work undertaken by the Commission services has highlighted a number of legal and administrative obstacles along many EU internal borders. Over the past 24 months, the European Commission has unveiled evidence to demonstrate that significant obstacles negatively affect life in border regions. Many aspects are affected such as difficult access to employment, difficult access to healthcare, complex access to education and training, use of different technical standards, non-recognition of qualifications, lack of local cross-border public transport. Even in sectors where there is a comprehensive European legal framework obstacles appear which can be clearly linked to the presence of a national border.

On the other hand, there are in Europe numerous examples of institutional cooperation across borders that have made cross-border activities simpler, less costly and altogether more attractive. Cooperation associations such as the Benelux Union or the Nordic Council of Ministers aim at reducing the negative border effects between their members. At regional level, there are also examples such as the Upper Rhine Convention. However, the picture is rather patchy and is far from covering the entire EU territory.

²⁶ To be extracted to be presented to the European Commission

Other non-governmental entities, with a legal nature and a permanent activity and with extensive experience in promoting cooperation initiatives and in the monitoring of integrated programs in the various European territorial cooperation plans, exists. Like EGTC's and other cross border and transnational associations, they are also giving their important and sometimes decisive contribution to improve citizen's life in the internal and external border areas of the Union.

For the purpose of responding to main stakeholders concerns as mentioned in this report **Regulations for the future (2021 onwards) should be less extend and more clear and simplified in what concerns Governance (thematic flexibility, programming, program management) financing and pre-financing, evaluation and control.**

- A **Common Strategy for European Territorial Cooperation** should be adopted prior to the identification of programmatic instruments for its implementation. This Strategy should be prepared by Commission Services in close consultation with all stakeholders, cities and metropolitan areas, and other non-governmental entities, with a legal nature and a permanent activity and with extensive experience in promoting cooperation initiatives and in the monitoring of integrated programs in the various European territorial cooperation plans.
- Profitable private sector should be considered as a final beneficiary (as grant beneficiaries) as long as their participation is dully justify in terms of provision of maximum sustainability, consistency with the project scope and results durability for the whole project.

4.2.2 - Governance

European territorial cooperation should continue to be structured in the current cooperation levels, and a new generation of transnational programs should be set up to implement formalized macro-regional strategies or to prepare regional strategies where macro-regional strategies do not exist

While there is a need to introduce significant adjustments, European territorial cooperation should continue to be structured in the current cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation levels.

At the cross-border level, European territorial cooperation should cover internal cross-border regions, border regions with neighbouring countries of the European Union (southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean, North Africa, pre-accession countries, IPA-CBC (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance - Cross Border), Russia, ENI CBC (European Neighbouring Instrument for Cross Border Cooperation) and the Outermost Regions and neighbouring ACP countries.

Cooperation at the external borders of the European Union should stimulate direct articulation between institutions without the necessary participation of central States, in particular with the Portuguese-speaking countries (PALOP), Morocco, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Palestine, Israel, Ukraine and Moldova, where local and regional authorities and other entities are already very active.

This cooperation level should focus not only on solving the problems of citizens in cross-border territories and on the implementation of economic, environmental and social development strategies for cities, urban and metropolitan areas and border areas but also on their capacity to assume, as the engine of change, innovation and living lab on a scale of new policies close to the citizen.

At the interregional level, common responses should be found to the new problems posed by globalization and the new digital economy – maintaining the focus on the exchange of knowledge and good practices - , with valuing the circumstance that it is the only programme affecting the whole of the European Union.

The effectiveness of responses and 'joint' solutions to the obstacles of cross-border maritime cooperation can only be determined at the level of homogeneous and functional geographical areas.

The concept of maritime neighbourhood cannot be conditioned by the anomalous administrative condition of fixing a single distance kilometre for cross-border area that does not comprises the diversity of the existing dynamics nor to the history of the relationships.

The current transnational programs show a significant dispersion of objectives and disarticulation with mainstream programmes and cross-border cooperation programs. They also show an inertia of continuity in the respective management structures, and they are often mere instruments of affirmation by the regional authorities, reducing the intervention of cities and metropolitan areas to simple monitoring.

A new generation of transnational programs should be set up to implement formalized macro-regional strategies, or to support the development of regional strategies where they do not exist, which means that priority should be given to defining such strategies, while respecting the principle of subsidiarity and a process bottom up, the programs becoming instruments of their implementation.

Macro-regional strategies should emerge from regional policy and be based on participation and consensus with regional, local and urban authorities as well as entities set up for European territorial cooperation with a legal nature and a permanent activity, observing the principle of partnership. Territorial agents (local, regional, economic, and social actors) should participate in both the definition and the management bodies of the macro-region, which should also be recognized by the COM.

The cross-border and peripheral regions of the European Union are likely to benefit greatly from this approach, in particular as regards macro-regional strategies for the Danube, the Atlantic, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Adriatic and the Black Sea, among others.

In several programmes, despite the existence of evaluation criteria's and priorities of investment and thematic, partnerships composition are more relevant to the evaluators than the quality of the project proposals (or because there are partners with significant (political) power to influence the evaluators decision or because evaluators doesn't have technical knowledge to evaluate the quality of all the proposals in presence due to the wide range of themes they can address or even because it is more important to assure a partnership with sufficient experience and financial capacity to asseverate a relevant level of execution of the approved projects).

In this context is relevant to question if cross-border cooperation programmes should have as single beneficiaries (formal and informal) cross-border entities regarding not only their daily work in the promotion of cross-border cooperation but also as main agents of the implementation of cross-border cooperation programmes and activities.

Observatory of Territorial Cooperation + Annual Forum of ETC

Effective monitoring of European territorial cooperation programs in the strategic and operational levels is a critical element in targeting objectives and achieving the desired results. Entities created for the development of initiatives for European territorial cooperation, with a legal nature and a permanent activity should have a greater participation in the definition of objectives and programs and their monitoring.

At European level, the European Commission should promote the creation of a European forum of entities set up for European territorial cooperation with a legal nature and a permanent activity, integrating local authorities and their networks. With them COM can promote an annual evaluation of the European territorial cooperation in the various levels and spaces, as an equivalent to the figure of the annual meeting of the Commission with each of the Member States, with a possibility to operate as well in a thematic forums approach.

The work of this **European Forum for Territorial Cooperation** should be supported and stimulated through the creation of a **European Observatory for Territorial Cooperation**, independent from the European Commission in its operation and supported by the technical assistance budget of European Commission.

In order to support the intended strategic focus, **monitoring committees should play a more important and effective role in monitoring programs**. A revised model of the functioning, representation and organization of the monitoring committees, in order to favour their role in strategic and operational monitoring, presupposes and requires a greater and more effective participation of the entities created for the development of initiatives for territorial cooperation European Union, with a legal nature and a permanent activity.

Programming

- **Reduction of Programs?**

Every 7 years when a new set of Regulations and Commission Rules is discussed it comes the idea of reducing the number of programs.

In case of Cross Border programs in most of cases, Member States did not accept COM proposals because there is a case for continuing a cooperation that exists for many years and local actors want to keep and deep it. In any case, any modification must take into consideration a dully-objective justification and the opinion of potential partners.

The same procedure must be applied to change eventually Transnational programs territorial configuration, and take into consideration the close relationship with existent Macro Regions Strategies or future ones (ex. Atlantic Area, Mediterranean Area, etc).

- **Each border area should have an agreed development strategy, before programs design.**

In each border area partners must agree in a development strategy, based on a SWOT analysis, strategic thematic and priorities to be developed.

The cross-border cooperation level should focus of course on solving the problems of citizens in cross-border territories and on the implementation of economic, environmental and social development strategies for border areas. However, it should also contribute to their capacity to assume, as the engine of change, innovation and living lab on a scale of new policies close to the citizen.

- **Each Transnational and Interregional area should have an agreed development strategy, before programs design.**

The same methodology as for cross-border areas should apply, with adaptations, to the Transnational and Interregional programs.

The cross-border and peripheral regions of the European Union are likely to benefit greatly in particular as regards macro-regional strategies for the Danube, the Atlantic, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Adriatic and the Black Sea, among others.

- **The concept of maritime neighbourhood**

The future geography of the programs must be based on the objective relevance of challenges and opportunities for a **homogeneous and functional area**.

The concept of maritime neighbourhood cannot be conditioned by the anomalous administrative condition of fixing a single distance kilometre (150 km) for cross border areas that does not comprises the diversity of the existing dynamics nor to the history of the relationships.

The criteria to consider the maritime neighbourhood shall take into consideration aspects like:

- Mutual interest in developing economic relations (commerce, tourism, etc.)
- Tradition in economic ties and cooperation
- Regular maritime transport lines existing
- Existence of economic development projects

Peripheral and Ultra peripheral regions of the EU are concerned. In particular areas like the Atlantic (Azores, Madeira and Canarias with the nearest West Coast of Africa; French Overseas Departments with the Caribbean Countries). In the Indian Ocean, French Overseas departments with Madagascar, Mauritius and the nearest Eastern Africa coast. In the Mediterranean Sea; in the Black Sea where Romania, Bulgaria and Greece are the mains interested.

Financing

- **European territorial cooperation must be provided with common more significant and more effectively allocated financial resources in order to better achieve the objectives of the Cohesion Policy**

European territorial cooperation is today the main instrument to support the full realization of the single market. Bearing in mind that the internal cross-border regions and maritime territories are today the EU regions where the need to fully achievement of the single market is perceived, and is, as well, the main answer to the need to create an effective European citizenship felt by European citizens in their daily lives.

On the other hand, the new challenges facing the European Union as a whole, in particular on neighbouring regions, as regards the need to find answers to the growing migratory pressures, by highlighting opportunities for greater trade, scientific and cultural exchanges with neighbouring and

pre-accession countries, open up a new front for European territorial cooperation, since it is best way to find structured and effective responses, rather than merely police ones.

Consequently, to European territorial cooperation should be allocated more and more significant common financial resources, more effectively distributed in order to achieve in better conditions the objectives of the Cohesion Policy, by doubling current financial resources. (Beneficiaries should be clearly informed about the funding available and its distribution).

The dimension of cross-border maritime cooperation should be maintained and strengthened at such a level that corresponds to the one given to the land CBC. The added value of the cross-border maritime cooperative actions must be recognized as a fundamental aspect of European post-2020 Territorial Cooperation, and the necessary continuity and allocation of adequate resources must be guaranteed to it.

The contribution of European structural and investment funds should adopt sufficiently significant pre-financing mechanisms to stimulate the participation of organizations with less organizational capacity and fewer resources, increasing and generalizing the value of pre-financing projects to facilitate their implementation and, at least, maintaining the current levels of co-financing.

- **European structural funds and investment appropriations for European territorial cooperation should be allocated to the program and not to the Member States, even for indicative purposes only;**

The rules for the application of European structural and investment funds to European territorial cooperation have so far not been able to reconcile and deepen the principles of transnationality of cooperation with the principle of Member States' financial responsibility for the use of such funds.

By allocating appropriations of funds for European territorial cooperation to each of the Member States, even if it is said that is indicative, the regulations end up subordinating these resources to the national financial and budgetary discipline rules, and place a significant constraint on the appropriate implementation according to the strict objectives of the programme. (once again the quality of the project and its potential impact on the border are less important than the partnership composition and of the budget distribution between partners of the different countries).

What is the meaning and purpose of allocating funds for European territorial cooperation by Member State rather than the program when the supranational nature of the interventions is encouraged? Even if an indicative nature is invoked, the allocation of an appropriation for European territorial cooperation to each member state implies submission to national rules.

Structural and investment European structural funds should be allocated to the program rather than to the Member States and should be given the model already successfully applied in the European Neighbouring Instruments for Cross Border Cooperation²⁷. It will thus be possible to promote a better articulation of the principle of transnational cooperation principle with the one of financial responsibility of the Member States for the resources allocated to them.

Thematic concentration and achievement of the program objectives should also be encouraged, while safeguarding the necessary flexibility in the thematic definition of programs, to promote a better and more responsive response to the challenges and particularities of each territory, city or metropolitan area.

²⁷ Each MS contributes with an allocation from the ERDF not indicated in the Operating Programme and not previously recorded (pooled funding)

- **N+3 Rule**

This Rule should continue to apply to ETC programs.

- **Pre-financing**

In order to motivate civil society and non-governmental organisations to participate in ETC programs is very important the accessibility of these entities to a different funding procedure.

These entities they do not have the same administrative and financial capacity than public bodies, and therefore the pre-financing is of crucial importance for their participation. The current situation is that most of the participants are public bodies.

The programmes pre-financing by the European Union Funds should go entirely in the beginning of the programme for the final beneficiaries, and not retained by national or regional authorities as managing authorities (MA). (Having as a good practice model, the pre-financing schemes and conditions of COSME programme.

To be considered, and legally accepted as derogation, the possibility to increase up to 25-30% of the project financing to allow these final beneficiaries to start in time the project and do not need to go to the banking system and pay interest rates. These pre-financing to be made available by the MA's.

Programme Management

- **Definition of Programme Axis (Thematic)**

Thematic concentration and achievement of the program objectives should also be encouraged, while safeguarding the necessary flexibility in the thematic definition of programs, to promote a better and more responsive response to the challenges and particularities of each territory.

Cultural and Natural Heritage in many cross-border areas are of crucial importance for their development when associated to the development of Tourism attractively. Therefore, these circumstances should be taken into account in the definition of concentration and flexibility.

To these axes, a more important resource allocation should be given in the next programs.

- **The identification of management, certification, payment and audit authorities and the definition of their responsibilities should better incorporate the supranational nature of European territorial cooperation programs and be better articulated with the principle of Member States' financial responsibility.**

The same supranational nature reinforces the indispensable safeguard of full application of the principle of prior publication of all the rules, rules and procedures to be used in the implementation of the program. The deadlines to be observed in the application of management acts must be publicized and effectively observed.

The responsibilities of the joint technical secretariats should be better adapted to the tasks assigned to the managing authorities in order to avoid the regrettably frequent disarticulation and repetition of tasks observed today.

The Code of Conduct for Multilevel Governance should be effectively implemented by encouraging the participation of regional, local and urban authorities and entities set up for European territorial cooperation with a legal nature and a permanent activity in the definition of programs and rules for its application and the management and evaluation model.

Greater scrutiny should be ensured for the desirable participation of external experts in the evaluation of applications, ensuring prior qualification practices (the establishment of experts' data basis) and the dissemination of the experts involved. (In addition, assuring an appropriated level of technical knowledge regarding the thematic of each project proposal by the evaluator).

The management model of European territorial cooperation programs should take into account the specificities of cooperation and its supranational impact and cannot be a mere copy of the regulatory model for the mainstream sectorial or regional programs.

Participation should be encouraged in the development of initiatives for European territorial cooperation, by entities with a legal nature and a permanent activity, in the management of the programs. This participation shall exist through an open and objective legal framework, contrary to the priority given so far to intervention of regional and central government authorities, whose intervention should be reoriented to perform the functions of compliance, control and certification.

In this perspective, the involvement of local authorities and cooperation networks should be strengthened in line with urban policy and multilevel governance stimulated by the European Commission and the dynamics created by the Urban Agenda.

New and increased responsibilities in the management of programs by entities set up to develop initiatives for European territorial cooperation, with a legal nature and a permanent activity, will make a significant contribution to administrative simplification and the necessary segregation of duties.

- **The entities created for the development of initiatives for European territorial cooperation, with a legal nature and a permanent activity, including EGTCs, must have a proper and common legal, financial and fiscal regime. This one takes into account the nature and supranational scope of its action and that it should not be subject to the rules applicable to the place of its registered office.**
- **The concept of e-cohesion must be generalised and full implemented by all managing authorities in the next programming period (this creates confidence, attracts potential applicants, and reduces number of arbitrary decisions:**
 - Transparency (criteria for projects application) and large publicity of call for proposals and calls with a significant opening period (with a view to ensuring the establishment of stronger partnerships and the participation of all beneficiaries in the design of the applications)
 - Applications on line
 - Deadlines for decisions on applications approval (ex. maximum 5 months?)
 - Possibility of consulting 'files application' instruction procedure on line.

- **Evaluation (continuous evaluation)**

For each program or group of programs, if it is feasible according to their similar characteristics, must exist an independent evaluator. This evaluator is chosen between MA and EU Commission based on an agreed terms of reference.

The evaluator presents its report every year N+1 by March. This report is discussed in the annual Monitoring Committee, by June-July of the same year.

This report must contain a financial analysis of the programs execution, an analysis of the existing problems related with the implementation, and recommendations for the future including proposal to revise the OP as the case maybe.

- **Adopt a model of calls for proposals and for the management of projects more in phase with the requirements and particularities of European Territorial Cooperation.**

European regulations for the *post 2020* period should develop and implement a model of calls for proposals that is better suited to the requirements and particularities of European territorial cooperation and the need for greater strategic focus, including namely:

- Launch more structured and territorially oriented needs calls for proposals, favouring a better evaluation of the relative merits of the applications submitted, a better analysis work distributed throughout the year, with shorter decision times and adjusted to the expectations and needs of the promoters;
- To encourage the submission and approval of multi-annual work plans, in particular for entities created for the development of initiatives for European territorial cooperation, with a legal nature and permanent activity, thus improving the strategic coherence of the program and the predictability of action for the promoters of cooperation;
- Promote the pre-qualification of the promoters of the operations to support, by means of a two-stage application, the first one based on a proposed project summary and the second phase, only for the preselected ideas, based on the detailed and complete application;
- Limit the number of applications to be presented by each partner, favouring the concentration of approved funds;
- Facilitate the principle of relating each operation to a specific objective and the corresponding main axis result indicators, avoiding the artificial reduction of the impact of operations that tend to have a wide range of actions;
- Simplify management, reporting and payment procedures by promoting a better balance between the weight of management resources allocated to the achievement of objectives (effectiveness) and the necessary safeguarding of the regularity of operations and the use of funds, in line with the principles of financial regulation;
- Provide for adaptation of the rules for the application of European structural and investment funds to the specific constraints of the EU's neighbouring countries in the context of external cross-border cooperation;

- Facilitate the participation of partners from territories outside the program boundaries that can add value to the achievement of the objectives of the operations;
- Promote more flexible forms of participation, such as support for the operation of city networks, town twinning, peer-reviews, capacity building, etc., enabling cities with less technical resources and less experience to benefit from European territorial cooperation;
- We agree with the orientation of the European Commission to reinforce the relevant cooperation partners (stakeholders), but there is a need to clarify their concept, role and funding possibilities for their participation.
- The European Commission should promote the clarification and dissemination of state aid rules that should apply to European territorial cooperation programs.

4.2.3 – The entities created for the development of initiatives for ETC, including Cities, Cities networks and Metropolitan Areas should have the right to be associated to the reflexion (ETC strategies and OP definition)

European territorial cooperation could become the area of application of the European structural and investment funds which better and more widely apply the principles of subsidiarity and multilevel governance, as long as there is a greater involvement of the entities created for the development of initiatives for European territorial cooperation, with a legal nature and a permanent activity, such as associations and networks of cities.

The management model of European territorial cooperation programs should take into account the specificities of cooperation and its supranational impact and cannot be a mere copy of the regulatory model for the mainstream sectorial or regional programs.

Participation should be encouraged in the development of initiatives for European territorial cooperation, by entities with a legal nature and a permanent activity, in the management of the programs. This participation shall exist through an open and objective legal framework, contrary to the priority given so far to intervention of regional and central government authorities, whose intervention should be reoriented to perform the functions of compliance, control and certification.

In this perspective, the involvement of local authorities and cooperation networks should be strengthened in line with urban policy and multilevel governance stimulated by the European Commission and the dynamics created by the Urban Agenda.

New and increased responsibilities in the management of programs by entities set up to develop initiatives for European territorial cooperation, with a legal nature and a permanent activity, will make a significant contribution to administrative simplification and the necessary segregation of duties.

The functions of managing authority should not be attributed to the MS or the entities to which they decide to arbitrarily allocate. The regulation of European territorial cooperation for the post 2020 period should provide for and define an open and objective framework for initiatives that demonstrate transnationality, organization and management capacity.

The entities created for the development of initiatives for European territorial cooperation, with a legal nature and a permanent activity, including EGTCs, must have a proper and common legal,

financial and fiscal regime, which takes into account the nature and supranational scope of its action and that it should not be subject to the rules applicable to the place of its registered office.

The EGTC implementation experience also highlights that for their creation there is a need to release them from the obstacles, constraints and uncertainties of the Member States' administrations and to simplify the procedures for transforming to EGTCs of already established legal entities.

The Regulation establishing the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) represents until now the only regulatory initiative of the European Union that goes beyond the strict application of European structural and investment funds, which is applauded and recognized as important.

However, European legislation is silent on the tax regime for EGTCs and establishes the principle of the location of the EGTC headquarters in one of the Member States (two in most EGTCs) and the inherent submission to its administrative, financial and tax rules. That is to say, it encourages the creation of a supranational organization with legal personality, oriented to a uniform operation in a supranational cooperation space, but that is conditioned and submitted to the rules of one of the Member States. (This generates, for example, an unbalanced distribution of the EGTCs along the border because they all will chose to have its headquarters in the country with a more flexible/favourable legislation).

4.2.4 – Audit and Control Rules

Other than what is recommended by the High Level Group mentioned in 4.1.1 on this issue is of crucial importance for the sake of a good management and avoid loss of time with several audit missions (one audit mission can take at least one week), sometimes in the same year, is recommended that:

- Commission Services should make joint audit missions together with national audit authorities, no more than once every two years.
- These audits should be coordinated as well with European Union Court of Auditors.

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6. Annexes

ANNEX I – INTERREG V-A 2014-2020

Cross-border Programme (Interreg V-A)	Co-funding Rate (up to)	Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	Thematic Objectives											TO6 Priority Aix				
			TO1	TO2	TO3	TO4	TO5	TO6	TO7	TO8	TO9	TO10	TO11	Funding	% of the total budget	Observations		
Austria-Czech Republic	85%	97,814,933.00 €	X						X					X	X	45,419,549.00€	46,43%	
Austria-Hungary	85%	78,847,880.00 €			X				X	X					X	24,691,650.00€	31,32%	
Austria-Germany/Bayern	85%	54,478,064.00 €	X						X						X	16,725,370.00€	30,70%	Rate for TO6: up to 75% PI6.C: 10.681.714,00€
Belgium-France (France-Wallonia-Vlaanderen)	60%	169,977,045.00€	X		X			X	X		X	X				42,494,261.00€	25,00%	
Belgium-Germany-The Netherlands (Eurorregio Maas-Rijn)	70%	96,000,250.00 €	X		X								X	X	X	Not applicable	0,00%	Not applicable
Belgium-The Netherlands	50%	152,575,585.00 €	X			X			X		X					33,566,629.00€	22,00%	PI6.C not included
Czech Republic-Poland	85%	226,221,710.00 €						X			X		X	X		12,215,972.00€	5,40%	PI6.C not included
Estonia-Latvia	85%	38,020,684.00 €			X				X	X	X					13,645,790.00€	35,89%	
Finland-Estonia-Latvia-Sweden (Central Baltic)	79%	122,360,390.00 €			X				X	X			X			37,381,099.00€	30,55%	
France (Mayotte-Comores-Madagascar)	75%	12,028,883.00 €			X								X	X		Not applicable	0,00%	Not applicable
France (Saint Martin-Saint Maarten)	83%	10,000,000.00 €						X	X							5,500,000.00€	55,00%	PI6.C: 1.500.000,00€
France-Belgium-Germany-	60%	139,802,646.00 €	X		X				X		X	X				37,532,000.00€	26,85%	

Cross-border Programme (Interreg V-A)	Co-funding Rate (up to)	Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	Thematic Objectives											TO6 Priority Ais				
			TO1	TO2	TO3	TO4	TO5	TO6	TO7	TO8	TO9	TO10	TO11	Funding	% of the total budget	Observations		
Luxembourg (Grande Region)																		
France-Belgium-The Netherlands-United Kingdom (Two seas)	65%	256,648,702.00 €	X			X	X	X								43,630,280.00€	17,00%	PI6.C not included
France-Germany-Switzerland (Rhin supérieur/Oberrhein)	60%	109,704,965.00 €	X		X			X	X	X				X		42,784,973.00€	39,00%	Rate for TO6: up to 50% PI6.C not included
France-Italy (ALCOTRA)	85%	198,876,285.00 €	X			X	X	X				X	X			84,124,668.00€	42,30%	PI6.C: 52,344,238.00€
France-Switzerland	75%	65,890,505.00 €	X					X	X	X						17,000,000.00€	25,80%	Rate for TO6: up to 65%
France-United Kingdom (Manche)	70%	223,046,948.00 €	X			X		X								62,899,240.00€	28,20%	
Germany (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern-Brandenburg) - Poland	85%	134,000,414.00 €						X	X				X	X		42,880,132.00€	32,00%	
Germany-Austria-Switzerland-Liechtenstein (Alpenrhein-Bodensee-Hochrhein)	70%	39,588,430.00 €	X			X		X		X				X		14,845,661.00€	37,50%	
Germany-Denmark	75%	89,634,975.00 €	X					X		X				X		18,957,797.00€	21,15%	
Germany-Saxony (Poland)	85%	70,000,069.00 €						X	X				X	X		21,700,065.00€	31,00%	PI6.C: 21,700,065.00€
Germany-The Netherlands	50%	222,159,360.00 €	X			X								X		Not applicable	0,00%	Not applicable
Germany/Bayern-Czech Republic	85%	103,375,149.00 €	X					X					X	X		39,724,061.00€	38,43%	
Germany/Brandenburg-Poland	85%	100,152,579.00 €						X	X				X	X		32,048,827.00€	32,00%	
Germany/Sachsen-Czech Republic	85%	157,967,067.00 €					X	X					X	X		68,715,674.00€	43,50%	
Greece-Bulgaria	85%	110,723,408.00 €			X		X	X	X			X				36,450,000.00€	32,92%	
Greece-Cyprus	85%	48,011,092.00 €		X	X	X	X	X	X							20,682,695.00€	43,08%	
Greece-Italy	85%	104,700,362.00 €	X		X			X	X							40,833,141.00€	39,00%	
Hungary-Croatia	85%	60,824,406.00 €			X			X					X	X		35,779,654.00€	58,82%	
Italy-Austria	85%	82,238,866.00 €	X					X					X	X		24,879,920.00€	30,25%	PI6.C: 24,879,920.00€
Italy-Croatia	85%	201,357,220.00 €	X				X	X	X							70,475,027.00€	35,00%	
Italy-France (Maritime)	85%	169,702,411.00 €			X		X	X	X	X						97,588,869.00€	57,51%	PI6.C: 38,284,864.00€

Cross-border Programme (Interreg V-A)	Co-funding Rate (up to)	Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	Thematic Objectives											TO6 Priority Aix			
			TO1	TO2	TO3	TO4	TO5	TO6	TO7	TO8	TO9	TO10	TO11	Funding	% of the total budget	Observations	
Italy-Malta	85%	43,952,171.00 €	X		X		X	X		X					20,294,651.00€	46,17%	
Italy-Slovenia	85%	77,929,954.00 €	X			X		X						X	27,275,484.00€	35,00%	
Italy-Switzerland	85%	100,221,466.00 €			X			X	X			X		X	30,146,617.00€	30,08%	PI6.C: 30,146,617.00€
Latvia-Lithuania	85%	54,966,201.00 €						X		X	X			X	13,950,421.00€	25,38%	
Lithuania-Poland	85%	53,153,883.00 €						X		X	X			X	17,009,242.00€	32,00%	PI6.C: 17,009,242.00€
Poland-Denmark-Germany-Lithuania-Sweden (South Baltic)	81%	82,978,784.00 €			X			X	X	X				X	39,773,703.00 €	47,93%	
Poland-Slovakia	85%	154,988,723.00 €						X	X				X		77,500,000.00€	50,00%	PI6.C: 77,500,000.00€
Romania-Bulgaria	85%	215,745,513.00 €					X	X	X	X				X	53,936,379.00€	25,00%	
Romania-Hungary	85%	189,138,672.00 €					X	X	X	X	X			X	41,227,417.00€	21,80%	
Slovakia-Austria	85%	75,892,681.00 €	X					X	X					X	27,820,000.00€	36,66%	
Slovakia-Czech Republic		106,046,429.00 €	X					X					X	X			
Slovakia-Hungary	85%	155,808,987.00 €						X	X	X				X	55,427,808.00€	35,57%	PI6.C: 55,427,808.00€
Slovenia-Austria	85%	47,988,355.00 €	X					X						X	17,564,263.00€	36,60%	
Slovenia-Croatia	85%	46,114,193.00 €					X	X						X	28,074,358.00€	60,88%	
Slovenia-Hungary	85%	14,795,015.00 €						X						X	10,000,000.00€	67,59%	PI6.C: 10,000,000.00€
Spain-France-Andorra (POCTEFA)	65%	189,341,397.00 €	X		X		X	X	X	X	X				48,054,847.00€	25,38%	
Spain-Portugal (Madeira-Açores-Canarias (MAC))	85%	126,506,503.00 €	X		X		X	X						X	31,206,918.00€	24,67%	PI6.C: 18,204,036.00€
Spain-Portugal (POCTEP)	75%	297,540,039.00 €	X		X		X	X						X	111,952,102.00€	37,63%	
Sweden-Denmark-Norway (Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak)	50%	135,688,261.00 €	X			X			X	X					Not applicable	0,00%	Not applicable
Sweden-Finland-Norway (Botnia-Atlantica)	60%	36,334,420.00 €	X		X			X	X						10,900,326.00€	30,00%	
Sweden-Finland-Norway (Nord)	65%	41,951,870.00 €	X		X			X		X					11,340,000.00€	27,03%	
Sweden-Norway	50%	47,199,965.00 €	X		X			X	X	X					4,419,996.00€	9,36%	

Cross-border Programme (Interreg V-A)	Co-funding Rate (up to)	Regional Development Fund (ERDF)	Thematic Objectives											TO6 Priority Ais			
			TO1	TO2	TO3	TO4	TO5	TO6	TO7	TO8	TO9	TO10	TO11	Funding	% of the total budget	Observations	
United Kingdom-Ireland (Ireland-Northern Ireland-Scotland)	85%	240,347,696.00 €	X						X	X		X			72,000,000.00€	29,96%	PI6.C not included
United Kingdom-Ireland (Ireland-Wales)	80%	79,198,450.00 €	X				X	X							15,047,706.00€	19,00%	
Peace (Ireland-United Kingdom)	85%	229,169,320.00 €										X			Not applicable	0,00%	Not applicable

TO1 - Research and innovation TO2 - Information and communication technologies TO3 - SMEs competitiveness TO4 - Low-carbon economy TO5 - Climate change and risk prevention TO6 - Environment and resource efficiency	TO7 - Transport and energy networks TO8 - Employment and labour market TO9 - Social inclusion TO10 - Education and training TO11 - Better public administration PI 6.C - Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
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EPICAH (Effectiveness of Policy Instruments for Cross-Border Advancement in Heritage), an interregional cooperation project for improving natural and cultural heritage policies.

Project Partners:

- Atlantic Axis of Peninsular Northwest (PT)
- Regional Development Agency of the Pilsen Region (CZ)
- Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation (EE)
- Regional Development Fund on behalf of the Region of Western Macedonia (EL)
- Atlantic Axis of Peninsular Northwest (ES)
- Iberian Association of Riverside Municipalities of Duero River (ES)
- Tokaj Wine Region Nonprofit LLC (HU)
- Agency for the Development of the Empolese Valdelsa (IT)
- Satu Mare County Intercommunity Development Association (RO)

May 2018

*#SustainableTourism #CulturalHeritage
#NaturalHeritage #Cooperation
#PolicyLearning #InterregEurope*



<http://www.interregeurope.eu/epicah>

May 2018



European Union | European Regional Development Fund



EIXO ATLÁNTICO
DO NOROESTE PENINSULAR



BORVIDÉK FEJLESZTÉSI TANÁCS



REGION OF WEST HUNGARY



JUOKTUL
SATU MARE



Associação Ibérica
de Municípios Ribeirinhos do Douro
Associação Ibérica
de Municípios Ribeirinhos do Douro



obiettivo sviluppo



Peipsi
Center for
Transboundary
Cooperation



PLZEŇSKÉHO KRAJE