



EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION BEYOND 2013

Themes for cooperation; Strategic approach to cooperation; Capitalisation

14 - 15th April 2010 | Brussels, Belgium

RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT - THEMES FOR COOPERATION AND CAPITALISATION

Introduction

The event held in Brussels on 14th and 15th April is part of a discussion process on the future of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) beyond 2013 that was started by INTERACT in mid-March 2010. The aim was to collect fresh ideas from ETC practitioners, i.e. the people who are directly involved in ETC in their daily work. The overall process seeks to facilitate a discussion among regional experts (most of them representatives of Managing Authorities and Joint Technical Secretariats of Objective 3 programmes), representatives of the Member States (dealing with ETC), DG Regio Desk Officers (European Commission), as well as representatives of associations and networks dealing with ETC.

Three concrete topics were chosen for the event:

- Strategic approach to cooperation
- Capitalisation
- Themes for cooperation

The overall organisation of the workshop was structured in a way that through a sequence of parallel working sessions and plenary discussions the three topics could be discussed by all the participants in smaller groups and the results were then shared and better formulated in common sessions, so as to ensure the most effective contribution of all the participants.

The event began on Wednesday 14th April 2010 with a **keynote presentation** by Mr Jean-Marc Venineaux of the European Commission, DG REGIO, on 'Strategic approach to co-operation'.

Mr Venineaux's presentation focussed on a number of key questions to stimulate an open discussion and debate during the event:

1. The most fundamental question being what do we want to do? Specifically for territorial cooperation what do we want to achieve? What will success look like in 2020 and beyond? It was felt that there are currently ideas and proposals but no common understanding of a future territorial cooperation strategy. Traditionally objectives for territorial co-operation are very difficult to measure. Should future achievements be more specific and measurable?



2. Should any objective for territorial cooperation fit with the greater EU vision for 2020 - smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and/or Regions 2020? Should there be stronger links with Objectives 1 and 2? Can any European Territorial Cooperation strategy fit with the greater vision in reality, remembering that we need to work in consensus with 27 Member States? Should it be a more place-based vision?
3. Can territorial co-operation be strategic and what does this mean in reality remembering that there are very diverse situations at European borders, often with distinct political issues, local expectations, lack of policies, varying levels of competence and a view from some Member States that we should not be too ambitious? ETC programmes have largely adopted a bottom up approach which is not necessarily strategic at a policy making level.
4. What could be done with the macro-regional strategies approach remembering that the 2 existing examples are relatively new and currently developing from projects into strategies?

Workshops

I. Strategic approach to cooperation

The workshops on Strategic approach to cooperation continued the discussion initiated in the keynote presentation and were structured on addressing the following three sets of questions:

1. Overall strategic approach:

- How can ETC best contribute to the achievement of EU priorities?
- Is the current structure of ETC adequate to address the needs of Europe 2020?
- How can the strategic focus of ETC programmes be sharpened?

2. Macro-regional strategic approach:

- How can ETC programmes be designed so they best contribute to the macro-regional approach?
- What kinds of measures might be feasible and what other possibilities could there be?
- How can the links with the Convergence and Competitive programmes and with the Regions for Economic Change initiative be better ensured in the future?

3. Programme based approach to co-operation:



- How should future ETC architecture be designed in order to support improved delivery of its objectives?
- Should the three strands be kept?
- Which options would you favour and are there other possible options?
- Co-operation at external borders: how to overcome the specific challenges?

Whilst in the workshops the questions were presented separately, the discussion often brought them together and this report therefore presents the key points raised for all the discussions and for both workshops.

- There was some difficulty in addressing the first set of questions as participants considered that there was currently a lack of strategic focus, no clear understanding of which objectives territorial strategy should address.
- ETC programmes have wide priorities; there is a need to focus at a programme level. Whatever the focus of the programmes, as long as they are focussed, this would be welcome.
- However it was generally agreed that there needed to be a balance between a top down and a bottom up approach. Whilst a clear EU focus would be very welcome many programme strategies related to place-based issues. The requirement for action to be evidenced by need should be a consideration.
- The new objective of territorial cohesion was noted but there was a question as to whether ETC should address territorial cohesion or territorial cooperation. ETC could provide the 'added value' for territorial cohesion. Cooperation is often more effective in softer activities.
- The future of ETC should be down to national and regional debate. Stakeholders should be involved in the development of any strategy.
- The current heavy administrative burdens placed on Secretariats prevent any focus on strategic delivery.
- Territorial cooperation could work better in the future with improved linkages with the convergence and competitiveness objectives. Each operational programme (convergence and competitiveness) could pinpoint priorities which could use transnational territorial cooperation to improve delivery with MS working together, facilitated and coordinated by ETC Secretariats. Capitalisation can also create better links with mainstream programmes.
- It was considered that any contribution to EU 2020 would be difficult because of lack of flexibility in ETC programmes. ETC programmes in reality can only provide a marginal contribution to EU 2020.
- There should not be too much expectation in what ETC programmes can deliver. Small steps can be very important.



- In some cases rationalisation of programmes is necessary to improve delivery, particularly strategic delivery.
- Cross border programmes should have greater flexibility to adapt to local circumstances avoiding situations where 'innovation' is featured in every programme in every region of Europe. Additionally there should be greater flexibility in the number of countries which can participate in cross border activities.
- A macro regional strategic approach requires a lot of work and political commitment is essential. ETC is limited in what it can deliver for macro-regions. Major funding is necessary from mainstream programmes as only part of the strategy can be implemented through the ETC programmes.
- Strategies in this area should be better formulated - more targeted and with indicators.
- The current examples, Baltic Sea and Danube frameworks are quite different. It may be too ambitious to generalise this approach.
- The principle of macro-regional strategies is not new, transnational regions can be likened to macro-regions. The real aim is good cooperation to allow the delivery of the strategy.
- The current ETC structure including the A, B and C strands are based on certain needs and clear differences and work well and should not be changed though there is always room for improvement. Continuation should not be excluded building on what works well and using the skills and expertise of existing people.
- More flexibility is required and there are advantages to inter linkages of strands A and B. A merger of A and B could be considered.
- Improvements are possible for links with external borders particularly IPA countries. Coordination of the regulatory framework is the problem. It should be possible to have one instrument/regulation to cover both sides of the border. Additionally it is important to be able to respond quickly to political changes which have an effect on programme implementation.
- For ENPI the theory of implementation is not always what happens in reality. Legal harmonisation is often very difficult with slow progress. The bureaucratic requirements are onerous.
- It would be helpful if there was a common approach/harmonisation of the rules governing every euro spent from EU funds to avoid confusion amongst partners who access different funds e.g. structural funds and framework funds. ETC fund rules are seen as particularly complex and can discourage applicants.
- DGs should work closely together and agree on a common approach and mechanisms to implement ETC programmes.



Rapporteur's summary

The key points arising from the day's discussion and debate are summarised as follows:

1. There was a consensus that there is no overall strategic focus at present and this is urgently needed. The lack of focus and too wide priorities are unhelpful, a visible and understandable focus is required. The EU 2020 framework is relevant but more detail is needed. Realistically ETC is a marginal contributor to EU 2020 so clear priorities would help. ETC will not solve the big problems.
2. Any strategic approach should include a national and regional debate including the stakeholders. The specificity of regions should provide the strategy details but actions should be needs based. Softer actions are often more suitable for cooperation activities rather than infrastructure investments.
3. A strategic approach should be maintained during the implementation of programmes, current experience is that a high administrative and technical burden is distracting from a strategic focus.
4. Better links with mainstream programmes are needed. During the workshop a model was suggested of how transnational cooperation could be used to coordinate thematic priorities, e.g. renewable energy, identified in mainstream programmes. This would allow the implementation of the theme in a more strategic regional context.
5. Consideration of the need to maintain or change the current three (A, B, C) strands in Objective 3 resulted in widely differing views. These ranged from leaving everything as it is to abandoning all three strands. There was a view from a number of participants that there was a need for rationalisation and flexibility (in particular towards strand A) and that strands A and B could be merged. No changes were put forward for strand C.
6. There was a great deal of discussion regarding Macro-regions which concluded that macro-region cooperation is not a new concept, but it is a concept that requires further debate. However it should be looked at as having a value not as a threat. It is not suitable for everyone.
7. External cooperation needs to be improved. In particular regulatory requirements should be improved. One set of regulatory requirements for cooperation may be useful. For IPA the regulatory requirements could easily be improved. ENPI appears to be greater challenge. It was suggested that there could be general approach that for every Euro of EU funds spent there could be common rules. This would avoid the present inconsistencies between structural funds and Framework funds.
8. In moving forward it should be remembered that a great deal of experience and skills have been developed in current programmes and any future should build on these experiences. Continuation of what works is also a possibility.



II. Capitalisation

Capitalisation is a rather broad and comprehensive concept that was introduced at the beginning of the session, in order to highlight the role it can have in ETC. There is no official definition of the term, it is most likely derived from the concept of “putting something into capital letters”. INTERACT usually employs the following definition:

Capitalisation is the possibility to reuse the result of a previous activity (or methodology/programme) in order to amplify and increase its impact and/or value

(O. Baudalet, EC)

There are ETC programmes that are very active in capitalisation processes, INTERREG IVC being one of them, but there are also other A and B programmes. Capitalisation is an exercise that can give further strategic focus to the programmes.

The working session on capitalisation was opened by the knowledge management expert, Jean-Yves Prax. Please refer to his Power Point Presentation in a separate background document.

Workshop discussion

The workshop was developed in two subsequent sessions having split up the audience into two groups. In the following the main points of the discussion will be summed up.

- **Concept:** The concept of capitalisation, before defining and adopting its methodology, needs a common definition and understanding, since it appears to depend largely on the context. Some confusion of the terms may be caused since capitalisation can be sometimes understood also as ‘dissemination’ that can be done in a more active or passive way. In fact capitalisation is a very narrow concept: the process implying certain re-use (or institutionalisation) of the knowledge and cross-fertilising is something which should be rather called knowledge management¹.
- **Capitalisation as a process.** Capitalisation is a learning experience, hence it is a process. There are different contexts and different starting conditions: the elements of ‘motivation’ and ‘stimulation’ shall also be considered as part of the capitalisation process. In order to approach the theme it is important to clarify some key questions (some first answers have been roughly drafted to be further investigated):

Why undertake capitalisation?

¹ Quoting Mr Jean-Yves Prax



For ETC and Structural Funds in general, capitalisation helps to increase the efficiency of public expenditure, since in ETC the Managing Authorities are public actors, dealing with public money. That is to say it ensures more quality in operations and more sustainable results.

What is part of the capitalisation process?

ETC projects and programmes: while it is quite clear how to capitalise on projects, there is still a lot to do in terms of capitalisation of programmes.

How to do that?

Confining capitalisation to one programme would be limiting.

INTERREG in the past programming periods (since 1990) and ETC Objective 3 in the current programming period means altogether about 20 years of experience. It is necessary to consider how to work on such accumulated experience in order to define a suitable methodology for future capitalisation exercises.

For whom? Who will benefit of capitalisation?

The potential beneficiaries of capitalisation are varied: the staff managing the programmes (not only ETC programmes but the whole cohesion policy system), the project practitioners and final beneficiaries of the interventions. Particular emphasis should be given to ETC as bridge to facilitate capitalisation in objective 1 and 2 programmes.

- **Current experiences:** There are already some experiences of capitalisation in ETC to learn from. Examples: in INTERREG IVC good practices are identified before the projects are being approved and then they are expected to be implemented in mainstream programmes (inside the regions participating in the capitalisation project). Currently, INTERREG IVC is conducting a pilot capitalisation exercise on innovation. 21 projects are divided into clusters in order to compare and analyse the results and create network among the project actors involved. In the trans-national North West Europe OP “clustering” implies bringing together correlated projects and promoting their collaboration. In various other programmes thematic seminars and events were held so to take advantage of previous experiences, information is being disseminated and project databases organised.
- **Future of capitalisation:** In the future, in order to facilitate capitalisation, more exchanges among programmes shall be fostered and facilitated adopting a harmonised approach (in particular linking ETC and objective 1 and 2 programmes) and specific incentives should be more oriented to the content and the quality (not just good administration and fast expenditure). The responsibility mix shall be accurately conceived by sharing it among the European Commission, Member States, Managing Authorities and supporting programmes (INTERACT role).



- **Capitalisation and communication.** For capitalisation to be effective a rational and systematised source of information and expertise should be made available, in order to make use of 'the best'. (The example comes from the innovation experience: it is highly relevant to understand what are the actual needs and expectations but also the context where the good experience will be brought in, in order to be able to select and adapt the most suitable case to that given context).

In general terms the communication and visibility issue is perceived as a primary need in ETC programmes for capitalisation being successfully adopted. The appraisal of the current capacity of programmes to achieve effective communication is quite variable and largely depending on the specific programme considered. For the future it is recommended to undertake a more systematic and multi-level action in order to enhance the visibility of ETC and thus to pave the way to good practice identification and capitalisation: peer review for best practice identification, increased incentives for wider dissemination of project outputs and enhanced networking actions (communication among project managers, inventory of results, improved coordination among programmes).

- **Links to objectives 1 and 2.** A key issue for capitalisation is the linkage between ETC programmes and Objective 1 and 2 programmes. In order to be effective at first there should be an improvement in the general perception of ETC programmes vis-a-vis the other two objectives. From the organisational point of view the coordination between the management of ETC and the other two mainstream programmes must be improved: more strategic orientation to capitalisation processes (not just case by case) should be pursued. To that purpose reinforcing the principle of including budget provisions for territorial cooperation in Objective 1 & 2 programmes (working on the improvement of art. 37.6.B of ERDF Regulation), defining new coordination mechanisms between ETC and Objective 1 & 2 should be considered.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** are key issues if we assume that capitalisation is primarily a process and approach for learning organisations. In fact, evaluation is the main tool for such a learning process. Current monitoring systems are still perceived to be more oriented to financial performances than to substantial and content information. They lack any harmonisation and thus appear weak in terms of effective interchange of information between programmes. The evaluation approach should be improved as well as the attitude of the Managing Authorities towards it, in terms of acceptance of honest and critical evaluation. At the same time an improvement in the dialogue between the actors shall be promoted alongside a more flexible attitude towards learning processes based on the acceptance and disclosure of possible mistakes. More resources devoted to evaluation as a first step to capitalisation should be made available, including joint cross-cutting evaluation exercises concerning specific themes on more programmes.



III. Themes

Preliminarily to the workshop INTERACT Staff had decided to base the discussion on a series of selected themes for cooperation, which have been or are currently being dealt with by ETC programmes. The seven selected themes had been identified and analysed in a study on the beneficial effects of ETC². This decision was taken in order to ensure a concrete and effective starting point to the working session. However, the themes were not considered as a fixed list. They made up a first tentative list to be revised and updated on the basis of the discussion results and of the wider debate on the future development strategy stemming from Europe 2020, published in early March.

The seven themes for cooperation considered include: *climate change, renewable energies, innovation, demographic change, maritime cooperation, risk prevention and transport*.

In order to facilitate the discussion and to enable all the participants to provide their inputs and comments, three key questions were raised.

- What is the ETC added value for this theme? Which are the criteria to have a relevant ETC project on each of the 7 selected themes?
- Recommendations for best programme structures for this thematic area (e.g. cross-border, trans-national or interregional strand).
- What are the lessons learned from the past looking into the future (Regions 2020 - Europe 2020 perspectives)?

The objective of these first two questions was to draw lessons from the current ETC programming experience, to be considered in the planning of future cooperation themes and criteria, for identifying and structuring their approach.

The latter question was to open a brainstorming session that, from the suggestions and the remarks gathered during the previous questions, was intended to trigger further discussion on the possible themes of future ETC.

1. Climate Change

- In the past the focus was given to the environment in a broader and more comprehensive sense than focusing on climate change only, thus including other high priority issues. Climate change is undoubtedly a global priority, but the concern was raised in order not to neglect other environmental sensitive issues in future priority setting.

² "Study on beneficial effects of INTERREG/European Cooperation - Programmes and Projects - Final Report - PANTEIA, Zoetermeer, December 2008". The study was commissioned by INTERACT in August 2008.



- The theme has a clear territorial and border cross-cutting character, so ETC is definitively a suitable means for undertaking actions. However, it should also be considered to establish better links or improve the integration with EU sectoral policies, in order to enhance and ensure the efficiency of actions.
- Commitment and involvement of all relevant actors, also in neighbouring areas of third countries (cf. the case of Russia in the Baltic area), is a determining factor for effective actions implementation. It is therefore necessary to provide for an effective cooperation framework and shared commitment.
- The approach witnessed in projects executed under the three cooperation strands tends to differ according to the levels of ETC: cross-border cooperation operations are more oriented to networking, common analyses, developing guidelines, etc.; trans-national projects are more oriented to implement concrete actions; interregional to good practice exchange and the setting up of policy-oriented networks.
- Climate change has been mostly considered as a specific priority, but for its specific features, it might be properly taken as a more “horizontal” issue, closely linked with a number of relevant topics (e.g. transport, health care, green industries). In addition, ETC should focus only on projects where it could provide a substantial contribution in terms of added value.
- Climate change, as theme for cooperation, is stimulating new innovative actions to be addressed through ETC (e.g. coping with challenges such as drought - as it happened in the North West Europe OP). Moreover, it is also important to strengthen the synergetic effect of the relevant projects and not to consider them separately: the analysis of cumulative impacts should be carefully addressed, in doing so, one facilitates the transfer and adaptation of good practices.

2. Demographic Change

- The theme ought to be considered in its full complexity, not just by emphasising the migration aspects. Broad scope of demographic issues and themes should be addressed: education, labour market, health services, public services, cultural and economic integration, ageing of population, ethnic and minority questions. Demographic change is a politically sensitive issue - even more so during and after the current economic crisis - since it implies various potentially sensitive aspects: labour market, social inclusion, education and integration of migrants, etc. The role of ETC is therefore important since most of the issues cannot be always solved at national level.
- Demographic issues should be strongly represented in all programmes and should be open for all levels of intervention, even become one of the priorities. So far programmes have had strong focus on innovation and economy but circumstances have changed and without proper treatment of demographic



aspects we can have significant social instability in border regions. We cannot talk about true European integration without true demographic balance.

- The cross-border strand is very relevant and can have big impact in solving and addressing problems because of the more focused territorial approach. In fact, smaller projects with soft measures are very suitable for this theme. The transnational and interregional level should be allowed to strengthen their focus also in relation to demographic issues in order to facilitate exchange of experiences and exchange of practices in dealing with demographic problems. More integrated and structured approach is needed and ETC plays a substantial role in that.
- Differences in demographic situation between internal and external EU borders should be considered more carefully given the fact that the two cases show different characteristics and solution to similar problems require more complex approaches. Improved and more balanced cooperation mechanisms shall be considered.

3. Innovation

- In principle, the innovation concept is quite clear in general terms, but difficult to be defined just as a theme for cooperation, since most often it should be considered as cross-cutting aspect relevant in a variety of cases. In addition, acting directly on innovation means dealing with various factors at the same time, such as competitiveness, new jobs, smarter economy, etc.
- Innovation is a relatively new topic in ETC, since only in the current programming period the theme was directly considered as such, so there is insufficient information on the achievements available. Instead it is considered being of prime importance counting on reliable and specific analysis and evaluation on how and to what extent ETC programmes are performing as far as the innovation theme is concerned and how they differ from other EU-funded initiatives on the same theme.
- Actors interested in innovation, at project level as well as at policy level, generally consider the theme from a global competition perspective. The way to grass-root innovation on territories depends on the presence of “innovation drivers” in place (e.g. innovation centres). This means that the link between ETC and innovation, under the global competition point of view, at least partially relies on the capacity of being active in pulling together the best players from a certain area, in order to reach a critical mass and become able to play in the global arena.
- There is perception and feeling - shared by some of the participants to the workshop - that ETC programmes are not getting the “best” projects but rather the “rest” of the projects, meaning that innovation projects first apply for other funding opportunities and then if they do not succeed they apply for ETC



programmes . For preventing that to happen, the same rules should be adopted for all EU channels funding innovation projects.

- Some of the most remarkable features of ETC approach to innovation in the three strands: at cross-border level place-based strategic and integrated approach, at trans-national level clustering, triple helix (company-public-university) networks in wider territorial context, knowledge transfer, as for the interregional cooperation exchange of know-how, good practices and multiplying best solutions.

4. Maritime cooperation

- Maritime issues are a natural field for ETC, the cooperation provides the right set of opportunities and tools for initiatives and projects. The result is that most of the projects have been very successful and effective in terms of achieved results. A wide variety of themes have been subject for ETC projects (from risk prevention to depopulation, from exploitation of natural resources to transports and tourism). Maritime cooperation is possibly one of the best cases to prove the added value of ETC.
- More than in other cooperation themes the perception is that the experience is particularly valuable in the cases of large maritime areas and corresponding approaches (Baltic Sea, North Sea, Mediterranean Sea): in fact they are clearly perceived as
 - a. an issue of inter-programme coordination (see the Umbrella Operation - MSUO)
 - b. the weakness deriving by the fact that no real opportunity is given to coordinate programmes or at least for facilitating “north - south” exchange of experiences.
- Maritime cooperation experiences raise the issue of improving the effectiveness and the working mechanisms with third country partners: nowadays it is rather difficult to work with non-member state partners, in particular for the discrepancies in the regulatory framework of the different EU funds available for co-financing the project participation of third country partners in the two areas: Baltic and Mediterranean.
- ETC oriented to maritime issues, ideally complements local and national funds: whereas the latter mostly deal with physical infrastructures, ETC provides resources for other complementing operations. Concrete experiences show that possibly trans-national cooperation proved to be more effective for maritime cooperation since they include larger cooperation areas.

5. Renewable energy and energy efficiency



- Energy efficiency and energy generation are key topics in ETC. Cooperation projects encompass a wide range of topics reaching from strategic analyses and planning to the preparation of actual investments in the regions. Examples of cooperation projects include the joint analyses of regional alternative energy potentials, the development of joint strategic plans for more independence of the energy supply, the transfer of practices and piloting of energy efficiency measures and the preparation of investments in power plants. Cooperation programmes and projects would benefit from a closer integration with other EU as well as national funding sources. Examples include a better exploration of synergies with Objective 1 and 2 operational programmes and other regional initiatives as well as better links to the Research Framework Programme. Closer cooperation and coordination with DG Transport and DG Energy would help focus resources.
- The energy sector is highly internationalised and privatised. Most of the big private players in the energy sector such as big multi-national energy companies are rather unlikely partners in cooperation projects. ETC's focus is on developing strategic plans for the benefit of the general public. The geographic scope of projects tends to be local or regional. This should be kept in mind when developing potential thematic focus areas of cooperation programmes.
- Cooperation in the energy sector would benefit from improved mechanisms for cooperation across external borders.

6. Risk prevention

- ETC plays a fundamental role in this theme: the risks are passing over borders and for regions alone it is impossible to undertake effective actions. As a matter of fact, in various areas a long-term tradition in risk prevention and reaction cooperation has been developed. In other areas, the need of improving such cooperation - also in terms of joint investments - is still perceived as a priority, but that also means to improve the multi-level governance, since in some contexts the municipalities or regions only allocate few capacities and resources to risk prevention.
- Improved approaches to risk prevention, in particular in the new member states and at the external EU borders, are needed: to enhance the resources to analyse the problems, to coordinate the actions in border areas in case of disasters, to join the investments supporting the cooperation initiatives, to raise awareness since not in all European areas the same priority ranking is given to risk prevention, sometimes dealing with particularly sensitive topics (nuclear power plants, airports, transport of hazardous materials and goods).
- The different cooperation strands have all a primary role to play in dealing with risk prevention: cross-border cooperation is good for targeting local cooperation projects (e.g. joint procedures and actions of civil protection units), trans-national cooperation for wide area prevention and intervention



strategies (e.g. surveillance of ships traffic, pollution prevention along river basins), interregional for exchanging knowledge, experiences solutions and capitalising on previous projects.

- Funds should be better coordinated in the future to allow for joint trans-national investments and there should also be certain flexibility while allocating the funds.

7. Transport

- ETC contributed substantially in shaping EU scale transport corridors, since it facilitated the setting up of European partnership and the implementation of cooperation projects conceived according to EU strategy perspectives. Often the national and regional levels undertook their decisions on such a basis.
- The ultimate need of any transport initiative is to count on a consistent strategic framework - from the international/European level to the national, regional and local one - and coherent actions at every level. That implies a stronger and closer link between ETC programmes and Objective 1 and 2 programmes and national strategies.
- The bottom line of transport cooperation in the future shall focus on “transport & logistic corridors”. On the basis of such a principle the three strands of ETC shall act in a coordinated way, with a clear definition of the respective tasks.
- As for other cooperation themes, in transport the issue of coordinating intra-EU transport projects and strategies with EU external bordering countries and regions is critical. Better coordination and more consistent funding and operating rules and mechanisms shall be pursued and designed.
- The issue of having public and private entities working together - which is quite normal provided that each partner accomplishes its respective role - raises the need of reviewing and updating the legislations and the ETC regulatory framework, or even general Structural Funds regulations, so to make such a private-public cooperation easier.

General recommendations for the future

The concluding part of the session was structured as a brainstorming session aimed at providing open inputs concerning the future discussion on themes to be considered for ECT, considering the present state of the debate concerning the future EU development strategy beyond 2013.

Key points raised for the discussion are outlined here, trying to provide a complete picture of the vivid discussion. It is to be underlined that the openness of the approach led the discussion to crucial issues that are not just strictly confined to



the cooperation themes but widened the scope of the discussion to strategy and capitalisation at the same time. Also ETC management was somehow touched.

- The proposed seven themes are not to be considered under any circumstances as binding for the future. Moreover, the target group - i.e. the participants of the workshop are not specialists on the themes but rather generalists at programme management level. At present it would be more appropriate to consider the overall discussion on Europe 2020 and on the future of EU cohesion policy, and to focus the discussion more on the criteria, methodologies and approaches that are applied in the selection of cooperation themes.
- Additionally, the current discussion on themes should at least be complemented, if not anticipated, by a discussion on how to get to focused ETC programmes and how to ensure “evidence-based” programme development and implementation, the need to keep a more focused approach to programming, by selecting a few basic priorities, giving substance to a place-based approach.
- The ETC process shall allow a real involvement of all interested stakeholders and maintain, or even improve, its flexibility to be adapted to the territorial needs and priorities. In particular cross-border cooperation should be more flexible in order to act on all those themes that are really crucial in the respective local contexts.
- The need of keeping a bottom-up approach in programming and project development, shall be counterbalanced by the capacity of either the Managing Authority or the JTS of the programmes, to select specific priorities for the programmes in accordance with the general strategy: the effectiveness of the operations shall be ensured by a real capacity to choose a few priorities the ETC programme shall address, in doing so introducing a top-down intervention, as needed for a really strategy-oriented programme. Often current programmes lack such clear orientation, resulting instead in too broad and poorly focused projects.
- The territorial dimension is rather weak in the current EUROPE 2020 concept; this aspect should be improved and clarified while drafting the new cohesion policy framework. The process how to address the themes for cooperation shall be defined as well as how ETC must provide inputs to the achievement of new EU general developments and cohesion strategy.
- Private sector involvement in ETC is a problem: this issue is generally perceived and in particular in some cases (such as innovation, transport and renewable energy) it raises major obstacles to effectively pursuing stated programme objectives. Often Structural Funds programmes do not correspond to the needs of private sector stakeholders. The ETC programmes are not flexible enough for them.
- Pursuing a more strategy-oriented future role of ETC requires an improved integration and interlink of territorial cooperation with the other mainstream programmes (both Convergence and Competitiveness & Employment), in order to ensure a more consistent overall structure, a higher impact and evidence of



such impact. That would allow giving a more substantial value to ETC as territorial bridging factor (see as relevant case Regions for Economic Change initiative under INTERREG IVC and Urbact II) in the overall cohesion policy structure.

- The three strands are considered to be preferably maintained, but possibly either more flexibility mechanisms or improved forms of coordination should be introduced among the three strands. Increased flexibility should be pursued also in the way the themes will be identified, selected and possibly adapted and revised over the time in the various programmes, so to stress the respective complementarities and to prevent overlapping and duplications.