

Spotlight on “How to measure territorial cohesion and cooperation”

Reflection points on indicators for Interreg in the post-2020 period

March 2018

Background

This paper is based on several Interact workshops involving experts from different bodies of Interreg programmes, e.g. Heads of Joint Secretariats, Managing Authorities and National Authorities. It aims at providing input for the preparation of Interreg post-2020. Opinions and proposals presented here include Interreg programme implementers' point of view.

Intent

It is evident that the new set of regulations for post-2020 cannot consider all aspects of the future indicator system for Interreg in full detail. It can set up a common frame which should again allow to develop programme-specific indicators.

We strongly recommend that the new requirements in the regulation(s) as regards common output and result indicators but also the future evaluation requirements incentivize to reflect the key achievements of Interreg. The future indicators should thus be pointers which support the perception of Interreg programmes as transformative force in terms of cooperation and governance.

In our view it is quite important that the subsequent guidance on indicator development at programme level takes the aspects of cooperation and governance into account. It should be seen as a shared process where, next to the indicators, many 'adjusting screws' can be turned – e.g. re-visiting the cooperation criteria and raising their profile, support the due emphasis on these aspects in selection criteria or evaluations etc., We will seek to provide supportive information to programme stakeholders based on the achievements of ESPON and we would very much welcome to join forces with the colleagues in the relevant units of DG Regio.

Key messages

- **Territorial Cooperation and Governance are integrated elements of Territorial Cohesion.**
- **In order to measure the success of European Territorial Cooperation we need to look at indicators addressing cooperation and governance.**
- **It is useful to distinguish between indicators addressing changes in the respective territories/populations and indicators that measure the contribution and performance of programmes and projects.**
- **There are already operational indicators and data available, for example from ESPON and KEEP.**
- **It needs additional effort in order to bring together data users and data producers.**

The key messages in more detail

1) Territorial Cooperation and Governance are integrated elements of Territorial Cohesion.

Therefore, it makes sense for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) respectively Interreg programmes to measure their performance in terms of improving cooperation and governance.

What is Territorial Cohesion?

The Star of Territorial Cohesion



Source: Prof. Eduardo Medeiros

It is evident that territorial cohesion is a multi-dimensional phenomenon and it cannot be captured and transported easily to stakeholders and policy makers. E.g. compound indicators on cohesion at European level will help to understand trends but may not be easily understood by policy-makers at regional and national levels. In the following sections we seek to raise awareness for key elements which firstly have to be considered when approaching the measurement of territorial cohesion and cooperation, secondly which should be suitable for awareness-raising towards policy-makers.

- 2) **Capturing the policy context and the programme performance:** in order to effectively measure Cooperation and Governance, it is useful to distinguish between **two types of indicators/measurements**:
- indicators**, which measure the **situation in the territory/for populations**, also known as “context” indicators. (e.g. accessibility with public transport)
 - indicators**, which measure the **performance of policies, programmes and projects, etc.**

3) **Underlying key questions:** if we measure the performance, three questions are useful⁴:

- How much did we do? (quantity)
- How well did we do? (quality)
- Is anyone better off? (direct result)

The last question is the most important to answer and can indicate the **performance respectively the direct result**. (e.g. has a new strategy or policy approach been developed in a project and do the partners implement it? This could refer in practice to approaches like: is a new ticketing system in public transport applied after the project partners have worked on the methodologies on how to set up e-ticketing systems?). A major drawback of current measurement systems at most levels is the inherent emphasis on quantity at the expense of quality and results. This is clearly to the detriment of Interreg as one of the European governance instruments which cannot compete with mainstream programmes in terms of quantitative deliverables.

4) **Indicators should reflect the character of key contributions:** concerning the contributions which Interreg can provide towards territorial cohesion, we can look especially at:

- Improved coordination between stakeholders
- More effective cooperation and enhanced cooperation capacity in partnerships, clusters, networks etc. in order to share good practice and learn
- Enhanced governance capacity based on enhanced institutional capacity (on key thematic, on dealing with EU-funding, etc.)
- Reduction of border obstacles as result of enhanced cooperation and governance capacity (it is evident that a policy focus on cooperation and governance is a pre-requisite for the removal of obstacles)
- Development and testing in the frame of common pilot actions heading for scale-up and leverage effects (also in financial terms)
- Stronger involvement of rural – intermediate – urban territories based on functional cooperation approaches, involvement of more and less developed regions
- Considering also the time-scale, e.g. long term.

These qualitative contributions should be considered when developing a common set of Interreg indicators - the obvious challenge is to choose indicators which are relevant for cross-border and transnational and interregional activities. Partly these could be cross-strand indicators such as on cooperation and governance partly the specificities of strands have to be considered.

5) **Major potentialities based on the work of ESPON:** it has already made many useful contributions:

- relevant indicators and data for ETC, existing studies e.g. TerrEvi, ongoing targeted analysis.
- Monitoring of Macro-Regional Strategies (ongoing)
- Indicators for integrated territorial and urban development
- Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA), also cross-border (although for the moment this is a pilot, the usefulness to capture the impact of Interreg has yet to be explored)

Already existing sources resulting from the work of ESPON and Interact are:

- KEEP-Database (Interreg projects, statistics on cooperation, overlays possible with thematic maps from ESPON – a base which reveals significant potentialities for further development).
- ESPON-Database (further development towards improved accessibility ongoing).

6) **Improved data availability as a key requirement:** In order to be able to work along these lines, data availability is a crucial precondition.

Next to the (ongoing) European pilot survey on data collection for border areas – strengthening the involvement of statistical offices - there is a need for:

- Joint communication and action between data users and data producers across sectors and geographical levels.
- Increased efforts to collect qualitative data, e.g. degree of cooperation/networking of public institutions in the field of transport /versus institutions working in “isolation”. (for example this could be an implicit result of the ongoing work on the ‘missing links’ study initiated by DG Regio)

Due to lack of data, there is the risk of a bias towards measuring *competitiveness* at the expense of measuring *cohesion* (one of the outcomes of a recent evaluation study for the Interreg NWE programme). This is a mid- to long-term process

7) In the end the key question is “**Does Interreg work well?**”

In order to answer this question we will look at:

- a) Data, maps which will reflect
 - developments with regard to territories/context indicators, also qualitative and cross-sectoral indicators;
 - the performance results /“better offs” at programme level
- b) Achievements (positive activities not covered or visible in statistics)
- c) Story-telling (explaining, how Interreg activities contribute to positive changes, also for the lives of the people).

In a next step we will seek to investigate the potentialities addressed, i.e. to establish links between documented achievements of Interreg as part of KEEP, the work of ESPON and promising approaches developed by programmes.

One of the goals is to find suitable context indicators in order to ‘embed’ future Interreg programmes in a European scenario of governance and cooperation.

It is foreseen to propose possible indicators to measure territorial cohesion and cooperation (Workshop October 2018, tbc.)

Annex: I Summary of main ideas which have been discussed in previous Interact events

How could the future measuring for Interreg look like, with an improved result-oriented approach, based on the idea of measuring cooperation and governance?
 The distinction of two levels for measuring is extremely useful.²

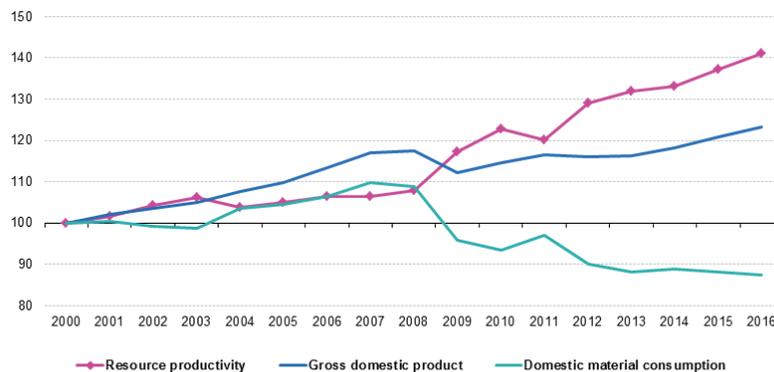
Territorial/Population level:

In the programming phase, results for a cross-border/transnational/interregional territory must be formulated and the given territories imperatively have to define their state of “Territorial Cohesion” and to make references to territorial strategies.
 E.g. result: “a circular economy”. For instance, in the Alpine Space: The Alpine Space is more sensitive to the consequences of climate change than other areas and therefore needs a joint strategy on how to reduce CO₂ emissions and other factors which drive climate change. In addition, due to geography, some areas have a particularly low accessibility, which increases the need for circular economy.
 In general many policies and actors exert an influence on the result on territorial/population level.

Measuring:

What is the situation with regard to the territorial result? Indicators and baselines, looking at the theme and if possible at the territorial feature.

E.g. “Domestic material consumption (it would need regional data for the territory concerned, also to identify regional



Note: GDP in chain-linked volumes, reference year 2010
 Source: Eurostat (online data code: nama_10_gdp; env_ac_mfa)

E.g., “Number/percent of regions covered by joint circular economy strategies, percent of relevant institutions/stakeholders who think they have a good knowledge on “circular economy”.



Performance level

What is the programme strategy, what can Interreg contribute via cooperation?
 What does the programme propose to do? (priorities, objectives)
 E.g. increasing the capacities of relevant institutions and stakeholders on the issue of “circular economy”. Accelerating the transition to a circular economy through cooperation.

Measuring:

How much do we do? How well do we do? Is anyone better off? (the latter is a “performance/direct result”).

Indicators related to thematic piloting, capacity building, governance, cooperation and their relevance for territorial cohesion.

E.g. number/percent coverage of circular economy schemes, recycling schemes, new strategies (developed in projects). Have the numbers of actors/organizations involved increased? What kind of areas do they come from: rural areas/medium sized cities/peripheral areas, are they truly transnational (i.e. do they involve partnerships from more than 2 countries)?

Experience shows, that with target setting figures have been continuously under- or overestimated and had to be readjusted. Therefore, it is proposed to work also with the concept of “turn the curve”. Such also “role out” and leverage over time can be well illustrated.

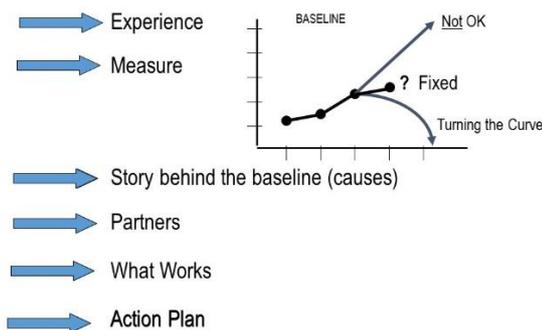
A curve, possibly also starting with 0.

Explanation to “turn the curve”

Rather than working with targets, the concept of a “turn the curve” process offers an opportunity to engage stakeholders and to monitor change. This is where different policies and instruments can contribute in an integrated territorial approach.

“Turn the curve”: a concept developed by Mark Friedman, that works with a baseline with a past, present and future part (if no intervention takes place). If the future part is expected to develop in an undesired way, there is reason for intervention. The actual development of the baseline value is now monitored and a turning of the curve is seen as success. If the turn of the curve does not take place or not in the expected way (in relation to interventions) the causes are explored. A similar process works for a performance curve. In an iterative process, partners can work towards commonly agreed results, based on data, considering also good practices.

“Turn the curve” process



^{1.2} Friedman Mark. 2015. Trying Hard Is Not Good Enough 10th Anniversary Edition: How to Produce Measurable Improvements for Customers and Communities. Parse Publishing

Annex: II it is foreseen to propose possible indicators to measure territorial cohesion and cooperation (October 2018, tbc.)