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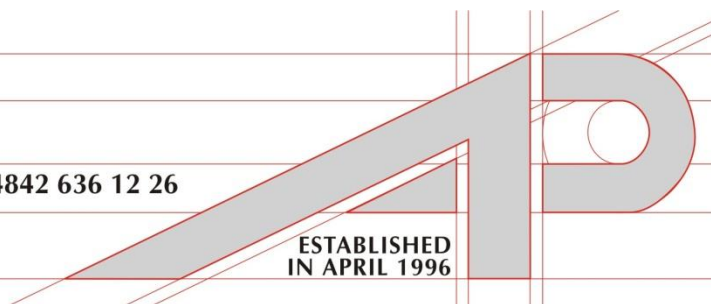
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**Added value of European Territorial Cooperation
for regional development of Poland
in the context of cohesion policy after 2013 planning**



**NATIONAL
COHESION STRATEGY**
for Poland's development



**MINISTERSTWO
ROZWOJU
REGIONALNEGO**

**UNIA EUROPEJSKA
EUROPEJSKI FUNDUSZ
ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO**



PROJECT IMPLEMENTED WITHIN THE CALL FOR PROPOSAL ORGANIZED BY THE MINISTRY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND,
PART-FINANCED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME "TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE"

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November 2009

Foreword

Despite the fact that in the current programming period Poland is the beneficiary of the greatest part of assistance within the cohesion policy, the Polish part in utilization of the resources within the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) is relatively low. Polish public institutions successfully manage to participate in cross-border programmes, yet their activity in transnational and transregional is decidedly insufficient. For example, out of 24 projects approved for financing in the first application round of BSR 2007-2013 there was not even one project with the applicant from Poland. In the second application round, out of 86 applications that were submitted from the Baltic Sea Region, only 4 were submitted by the institutions from Poland. These figures prove that the Polish position towards the perspectives for the European Territorial Cooperation after 2013 should be based on an in-depth analysis of programming and organizational premises, financial flows, principles of monitoring and evaluation, as well as on the experiences of the beneficiaries of the ETC support and of the institutions involved in the implementation of programmes, gathered as a result of the implementation of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation in the previous and current financial periods.

The significance of the European Territorial Cooperation for Polish public institutions within the cohesion policy after 2013 should increase noticeably. The European Territorial Cooperation should become a significant stimulus that will encourage international and transregional cooperation, as well as application of the European best practices (benchmarking) and will contribute to making development chances of Polish regions (catching-up) equal to chances of the other EU regions. It is important that the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation after 2013 should constitute real support for Polish regional policy in facing the challenges caused by globalization and the transformation of the world economy to the low-carbon economy.

The general goal of this research, which was commissioned by the Polish Ministry of Regional Development and conducted in the period from June to December 2009, was to work out recommendations for the Polish position towards the EU cohesion policy after 2013, especially concerning the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. Within this research, it was planned to gather experiences of a few important groups – stakeholders in the European Territorial Cooperation: Polish institutions participating in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in 2004-2006 and 2007-2013, Joint Technical Secretariats of the ETC Programmes implemented within Poland's territory, and the Monitoring Committees. InterAct Programme's staff also participated in this research.

On the basis of the collected information, conclusions and recommendations for the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation after 2013 were formulated in the context of building an added value for sustainable regional development of Poland.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. SUMMARY	7
1.1. THE GOAL AND SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH.....	7
1.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	9
1.3. KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	9
2. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	18
3. KEY ASPECTS OF THE ADDED VALUE OF THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	19
4. RESEARCH PREMISES	23
4.1. RESEARCH GOAL	23
4.2. RESEARCH CRITERIA.....	24
4.3. RESEARCH SCOPE.....	26
5. METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES.....	29
5.1. RESEARCH CONCEPTION AND METHODOLOGY	29
5.2. DATA SOURCES	33
5.3. WAYS TO GUARANTEE RESEARCH RELIABILITY.....	37
5.4. THE SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH GROUP	37
6. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH	39
6.1. RESEARCH RESULTS AT THE LEVEL OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEES PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION AND INTERACT.....	39
6.2. THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AT THE LEVEL OF JOINT TECHNICAL SECRETARIATS OF THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION PROGRAMMES.....	44
6.3. THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AT THE LEVEL OF THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE CROSS-BORDER AND TRANSREGIONAL PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION	48
6.4. THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH AT THE LEVEL OF TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION.....	67
6.5. SWOT ANALYSIS.....	75
7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	76
8. ANNEX	88
8.1. STANDS OF THINK-TANKS FROM GERMANY, BULGARIA, AND LATVIA IN THE CONTEXT OF COHESION POLICY AFTER 2013 PLANNING	88
8.2. EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION GROUP.....	95

9. LIST OF TABLES, PICTURES AND DIAGRAMS	97
9.1. LIST OF TABLES	97
9.2. LIST OF PICTURES	97
9.3. LIST OF DIAGRAMS	97

1. SUMMARY

1.1. THE GOAL AND SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

The main goal of the research was to conduct an expert analysis and then draw conclusions which will be helpful in working out the Polish position on the EU cohesion policy planned for the period after 2013. This expert report has concentrated on indicating the added values for the regional development of Poland resulting from planning the cohesion policy for 2014 onwards. On the one hand this report was placed in the current socio-economic reality and was connected with the Polish regional policy for 2014 onwards, and on the other hand it took into consideration European and global developmental trends.

Particular goals:

- Conducting an in-depth analysis of premises, guidelines, as well as financing and evaluation principles of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with a view to indicating an added value for the regional development of Poland in the light of the cohesion policy for 2014 onwards.
- Gathering experiences of the Polish public institutions that participated in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in 2004-2006 and 2007-2009, and on this basis drawing conclusions for the application in the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2014 onward.
- Gathering experiences of InterAct as a programme supporting the structures of the European Territorial Cooperation in order to improve their performance in the next programme period and gathering good practices from other European countries concerning their participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and on this basis formulating guidelines for the Polish Ministry of Regional Development.
- Gathering experiences of the Joint Technical Secretariats concerning the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with a view to engaging the potential of the Polish beneficiaries and on the basis of this material drawing conclusions for the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2014 onwards.
- Gathering experiences of the Monitoring Committees concerning the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with a view to engaging the potential of the Polish beneficiaries and on the basis of this material drawing conclusions for the application in the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2014 onwards.
- Drawing conclusions that will be helpful in formulating the Polish position towards the vision of the coherence policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2014 onward in the context of the regional sustainable development of Poland.

The research covered 3 types of operational programmes within the European Territorial Cooperation:

- cross-border cooperation;
- transnational cooperation;
- interregional cooperation.

Within the cross-border cooperation programmes, the research covered the institutions and beneficiaries of the following programmes:

- Poland (West-Pomeranian Voivodship) – Germany (Mecklenburg / East Pomerania – Brandenburg);
- Poland (Lubuskie Voivodship) – Germany (Brandenburg);
- Poland (Lubuskie Voivodship and Lower-Silesian Voivodship) – Germany (Saxony);
- Poland – the Czech Republic;
- Poland – the Slovak Republic;
- Poland – Lithuania;
- Poland – Sweden – Denmark – Lithuania – Germany (the Southern Baltic).

Within the transnational cooperation programmes, the research covered the institutions and beneficiaries of the following programmes:

- Baltic Sea Region Programme BSR;
- Central Europe Programme CE.

The research was also conducted among the institutions and beneficiaries of the INTERREG IV C interregional cooperation programme.

1.2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted on the basis of the following research tools:

- desk research and the analysis of available documents;
- individual in-depth interview;
- group interviews;
- homogeneous dyads;
- SWOT analysis.

The research methodology chosen enabled the diagnosis of the research problem in two dimensions:

- firstly – in an ontological dimension: the research team prepared the descriptions of the analysed issues as they were observed;
- secondly – in an etiological dimension: the research team formulated the diagnosis of the factors which have an impact on the assessment of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes by particular groups of legal entities.

The research covered:

- 14 beneficiaries of cross-border programmes;
- 8 beneficiaries of transnational programmes;
- 4 beneficiaries of interregional programmes;
- 10 Joint Technical Secretariats;
- 2 Monitoring Committees;
- InterAct.

1.3. KEY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The European Territorial Cooperation inadequately contributes to the regional development of Poland.

Conclusion:

The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are known among potential beneficiaries in Poland, mainly among the voivodship self-governments and the institutions of higher education. However, their significance for the regional development is not adequately appreciated.

It stems from the following reasons:

- firstly – international cooperation do not present any value for most public entities;
- secondly – the availability and ubiquity of structural funds nowadays push the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes to the position of secondary importance;
- thirdly – the application and implementation procedures for the projects within the European Territorial Cooperation are complicated and difficult;
- lastly – Polish institutions lack financial means necessary to secure their own financial contributions, to provide funds for the implementation of the projects and wait a lot of months for the reimbursement of the costs.

Recommendation:

The change of the situation described above requires deep system changes and commencing the integrated actions at the national and regional levels. Thus it is recommended that a widespread public discussion concerning the regional development after 2013 - when the structural funds will be significantly lower - should begin.

The European Territorial Cooperation inadequately contributes to solving particular problems common for all regions of the European Union.

Conclusion:

The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are one of the very few EU instruments which involve partners from various countries and motivate to undertake international cooperation. Thanks to joint implementation of the projects European integration and partnership become a reality. However, it seems that the European Territorial Cooperation do not comprehensively meet the challenges facing the European regions. Thus the exchange of experiences between partners in the projects financed by the European Territorial Cooperation should contribute to solving territorial problems at the regional level, e.g. ageing societies, limiting emission of CO₂, energy independence on the local scale. Therefore, the European Territorial Cooperation should be the response of the regions to the progressing global processes whose impact reaches beyond the European Union.

Recommendation:

Due to the inequalities in the socio-economic development and multifaceted character of differences between the EU member countries, the processes of European integration should be seen in the longterm perspective. However, the most efficient implementation of these processes is joint

implementation of projects focusing on the basic European problems. Although the list of these problems is well-known, the efforts should be concentrated on presenting practical examples and methods of their resolution. This goal should be reached by intensified information and promotion measures, in conducting of which all the institutions of the European Territorial Cooperation (Joint Technical Secretariats, Monitoring Committees, InterAct), as well as the Ministry of Regional Development and local administrations, should be involved.

The European Territorial Cooperation inadequately involves the European Union external policy.

Conclusion:

The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in their present form involve partners from the European Union and the countries directly bordering the European Union. The European Territorial Cooperation does not fully use the synergy of cooperation within the EU and the countries from outside the Union. For instance, in the cross-border programmes only selected regions can cooperate, while it would often be beneficial for their development if they could utilize the experiences and achievements of the regions from other areas, which at present are not included in the programme.

Recommendation:

The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes should integrate the European regional development policy with the external EU policy, therefore the actions within the European Territorial Cooperation should be taken in many directions, which for example may mean possible extension of the transnational programs – BSR Programme and Central Europe Programme – to the neighbouring countries or it may mean the integration of the Eastern Partnership Programme, which is so important from the Polish point of view, with the European Territorial Cooperation. This last recommendation comes down to making it possible for the countries of the Eastern Partnership to participate in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes on the basis of the rules for the countries from outside the European Union.

The European Territorial Cooperation inadequately generates intersectoral cooperation.

Conclusion:

In the projects implemented within the European Territorial Cooperation, there are mainly partners from the same field that cooperate with one another – institutions of higher education cooperate with other institutions of higher education and scientific and research institutes, public administration

collaborates with its counterparts in other countries. There are rare undertakings which would truly involve, for example, public administration at various levels, various types of schools (academic centres, high schools or middle schools) and non-governmental organizations. It seems that the reason for this is the fact that the intersectoral cooperation, that is the cooperation of institutions with different specific characters, goals and value systems, would give rise to such complications which together with the already complicated ETC procedures make it impossible to cope with. Thus a conclusion can be drawn that the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes inadequately meet the needs of intersectoral cooperation.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the conditions of application selection – the system of project assessment and selection – should support commencing intersectoral cooperation. The recommended approach is in line with the EU horizontal policies and will be conducive to achievement of a spill-over effect in a short time.

Introducing any alterations which are in the regions' interests is difficult because the management of the European Territorial Cooperation is conducted at the level of the European Union.

Conclusion:

The system of managing the European Territorial Cooperation is assessed as complicated and sometimes even as making cooperation more difficult. It especially concerns the issues of financial procedures, audits and reimbursement of expenses connected with the implementation of projects. The issues concerning promotion and information measures are also controversial. It seems that there are possibilities of moving some operational managing functions from the level of the European Union to the national level.

More difficulties in managing and promoting cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation can be found in diversified requirements towards beneficiaries from various countries in which particular programmes are implemented, and in inadequate matching of the areas of support of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with the needs of beneficiaries in particular regions, especially concerning specific geographical, economic and social characters of these areas.

Recommendation:

It is necessary and possible to introduce changes in the management system of the European Territorial Cooperation in such a way that will ensure efficient operational management of organizational or financial issues without violating the horizontal goals of the European Territorial Cooperation.

Simultaneously, it is extremely urgent that the requirements towards partners from different countries should be unified. Even small facilitation for some partners gives rise to disproportionately big sense of frustration and discrimination among others, which in consequence negatively influences the possibilities of further cooperation.

Moving some parts of current managing of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes to the national level will contribute to the development of international cooperation and to the real European integration.

Self-governments do not have enough knowledge about the effects of the projects implemented within the European Territorial Cooperation in their regions.

Conclusion:

Monitoring the effects of the implementation of the programmes in terms of the added value for the regional development should be conducted not only at the level of the European Commission, but also at the regional level.

The cross-border programmes attract the greatest interest of regional authorities. It is so because first of all the scope of problems that can be solved together with the institutions from the other side of the border is well-known. In the transnational or transregional there are no problems that are directly defined as “mine”, they are “European” in character which means that the European Union is responsible for solving them. There is a clear barrier in the perception of common European Union's interests and identifying them with benefits for Poland and Polish regions. At the same time the potential foreign partners are not aware of the benefits that cooperation with the Polish partners could bring them.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that Marshal's Offices, as the institutions running Regional Operational Programmes in Poland, should engage in the actions within all the European Territorial Cooperation projects implemented in their regions. The synergy of the European Territorial Cooperation and the regional developmental policy is desired for achieving an added value for regional development.

It is also recommended that campaigns informing about the achievements of the Programmes at the regional level - “regional success stories”, should be organized using more spectacular visual resources than only websites of regional administration or of the Programmes.

The action that is necessary, yet very difficult to introduce by means of administrative tools, are building regional identity in the European context, territorial integration at the local level and placing local problems in the context of European solutions.

It is advisable that regional authorities should disseminate good examples of international cooperation, which apart from the declarations about partnership, produced concrete benefits for the region. Visualisation of joint actions in regional media and on local websites seems to be a better form of disseminating the European Territorial Cooperation than their descriptions in English on the Joint Technical Secretariats' website.

In order to intensify project cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation, one should think about a long-term promotion of potential Polish partners in the projects, which will be addressed to potential foreign partners and which will present Polish institutions of higher education, cities and districts as competent entities that local authorities trust. An extremely important task of voivodship self-governments consists in declaring publicly their support for Polish project partners and creating friendly atmosphere during implementation of projects.

Polish institutions eligible for participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes demonstrate inadequate interest in establishing project partnerships within the ETC.

Conclusion:

The short-term character of international cooperation undertaken by Polish self-governments is its characteristic feature. There is shortage of long-term strategies for development of international contacts and of skills in utilizing foreign good practices. The foreign experiences are rarely used in the implementation of regional voivodship operational programmes for 2007-2013 and in the management of regions. Thus the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are not attractive for the greater part of voivodship self-governments. The lower level self-governments additionally do not have logistic skills, financial resources and willingness to establish international cooperation.

The most important reason for a limited collaboration of Polish institutions of higher education and scientific institutes with foreign partners is the legal and organizational system of higher education in Poland with all the consequences of this situation.

There is no incentive and support system for Polish entities willing to play the role of Leading Partners.

Recommendation:

It is necessary to head for such a technical organization of an application process which will create possibilities to utilize the experiences of Polish beneficiaries gained during their application for structural funds. It is recommended that the role of the members of the Monitoring Committee should be strengthened in the process of promoting the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, in activation and building real lobbying for Polish beneficiaries. And most importantly, an active role of

regional self-governments which are aware of benefits and requirements for regions that go together with the ETC Programmes should be reinforced.

Polish institutions are in a more difficult situation during the implementation of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation in comparison with the countries from EU-15 group, due to the fact that many countries from the old Union offers the beneficiaries of ETC Programmes from their countries partial or full refund of these institutions' own financial contributions.

Conclusion:

The lack of their own financial resources which would enable them to pre-finance the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation projects is one of the key obstacles facing Polish institutions eligible for the participation in the ETC programmes. Another such obstacle is the lack of a system offering such financial resources at the level of the government or a region.

Polish beneficiaries feel that they are in a worse position due to additional bureaucratization of the accounting and reporting system resulting from the national regulations. The centralized system of audits as well as the Joint Technical Secretariat and auditing institutions which do not work efficiently enough in this field generate additional problems.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the system ensuring continuation of those international projects which have brought regions notable effects should be introduced at the regional level. The system of individual negotiations should replace calls for application.

In order to make it easier for the beneficiaries, especially from Poland and other new member-states to finance the projects within the European Territorial Cooperation, the system of uniform requirements should be introduced and first of all it should make the chances equal with the applicants from other countries participating in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

Polish applicants expect support in financing their own contribution and in maintaining their financial liquidity, such as creation of target reserves by municipality, introduction of "grants for grants", diversification of own contribution depending on the legal status of beneficiary, introduction of down payment system and shortening of the reimbursement process.

Apart from that, the change in the Polish system of management of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes is necessary. It should alter from the bureaucratized one based on distrust to the one based on 'on honour' declarations.

Public administration at the regional level should consider the possibility of creating a loan fund or a loan guarantee fund for those entities which plan the implementation of projects within the European

Territorial Cooperation. In the case of cross-border programmes, one could think about a loan fund established together by partner countries and accessible to institutions from the countries involved in the programme.

In order to even out the chances of Polish institutions of applying for the resources to implement the projects, it is recommended that a renewable/rotational fund should be established, similar to the Italian one, or some other form of financing entities' own contributions and/or of crediting the implementation costs of ETC Programmes should be introduced. Voivodship self-governments should consider organizing subsidies contests within which it would be possible to obtain a grant that would constitute the applicant's own contribution when applying for the funds from the European Territorial Cooperation.

The organization of the system of financial support of applicants in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes at the level of regions would result not only in the increased interest among local beneficiaries, but also it would be a strong signal for the bodies assessing projects (members of the Monitoring Committees) that the project is important for the regional development and it would be supported by authorities.

It also seems justified to introduce changes in the auditing system through:

- decentralizing it and introducing external audits;
- individual approach in the case of beneficiaries implementing a few projects from various European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with one auditor for a particular institution;
- introduction of greater flexibility of transfers between the cost categories, approved of by the LP.

2. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Table 1.: List of abbreviations

BSR	Baltic Sea Region
CE	Central Europe
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Economic Area
ENPI	European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EP	European Parliament
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETCG	European Territorial Cooperation Group
EU	European Union
EU-15	15 Member States of European Union, so called „old Union”
HC OP	Human Capital Operational Programme 2007-2013
HRD SOP	Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2004-2006
IaE OP	Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment 2007-2013
ICE SOP	Sectoral Operational Programme Improvement of the Competitiveness of Enterprises 2004-2006
IDI	Individual in-Depth Interview
IE OP	Innovative Economy Operational Programme 2007-2013
IROP	Integrated Regional Operational Programme 2004-2006
JTS	Joint Technical Secretariat
LP	Lead Partner
MC	Monitoring Committee
MRD	Ministry of Regional Development
NMS	New Member States
NSRF	National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013
OP	Operational Programme
OP TA	Operational Programme “Technical Assistance” 2007-2013
PCL	Public Procurement Law
R&D	Research and Development
ROP	Regional Operational Programme 2007-2013
SWOT	Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats Analysis

3. KEY ASPECTS OF THE ADDED VALUE OF THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes create a number of added values for regional development – especially now when the world, the European Union and the European regions cope, on the one hand, with a financial crisis, on the other hand, with the necessity to face up to global problems.

The European cohesion policy provides tangible tools; it supports regions in solving key and prospective developmental issues.

Firstly, the European Regional Development Fund supports structural changes at the regional level and enables regions to flexibly join global socio-economic changes.

Secondly, the European Social Fund supports the European labour market; it facilitates life-long learning, increasing competencies – in accordance with developmental trends in industry and an increasing role of the tertiary sector – preventing phenomena of social exclusion and promoting equal opportunities.

Lastly, the Cohesion Fund, which concentrates on sustainable development and supraregional approach to environmental protection issues, as well as on combating climate changes.

The European Territorial Cooperation is a distinct goal of the EU cohesion policy and its task is to facilitate undertaking cross-border, transregional or transnational cooperation by partners from the European Union. The assumed outcomes of the cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation are the increase in the EU territorial cohesion and the production of the added value jointly by partner regions.

The added value of the European Territorial Cooperation in the area of financing regional development

The international cooperation undertaken within emerging project partnerships makes true European integration possible and enables regions to focus on regional potentials with a view to solving common problems. In this difficult period for regions, the funds within the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes assist in maintaining levels of investment and of economic development in a rising trend or at least unchanged. Financing investments, ensured in cross-border programmes, create real chances for regions of carrying out difficult investment enterprises in areas situated close to borders – difficult because they mean bringing in regions' own financial contributions, which frequently are beyond financial possibilities of one of partner regions. Thus it seems that a lot of significant problems of border areas would not have found a solution without resources from the common European treasury.

In case of transnational and transregional programmes, European financing facilitates the implementation of advanced projects such as technology transfers, environmental protection investments, development of renewable energy sources – such projects that weaker regions could not afford.

Moreover, EU financing facilitates implementation of investments which in present conditions on markets would be unprofitable, yet are still necessary for social and environmental reasons.

The European regional policy stimulates trade, development of trans-European transportation, communications and telecommunications, at the same time contributing to the increase in territorial cohesion.

Provision of financing within the European Territorial Cooperation is important for shortening developmental distance between the most and the least developed regions of the European Union.

The added value in the area of planning and programming regional development

Planning and programming of regional development, thanks to long-term – 7-year-long – ETC perspective, makes local self-governments lengthen vistas of planned development at the regional and local levels. Building true European cooperation at the regional level is a long-term process, extending beyond the 4-year tenure of local self-governments. The stages of preparing and planing an enterprise in an international partnership, and then of its implementation, requires a huge – several-year-long – expenditure of work which partners should treat as a kind of a long-term investment. An international cooperation that commences for an implementation of a particular project within the European Territorial Cooperation gives a durable, solid base for planning future joint transregional initiatives. The projects that are being implemented in regions within the European Territorial Cooperation, thanks to external financing provided, enable safe extension of a scope of planning other self-governments' tasks.

The added value in the area of managing regional development

The cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation touch key areas of managing regional development and concentrate on solving joint problems engaging many different problems in it. Thus it is necessary to develop and improve a transparent management system of complex and long-term projects, supplemented by building an effective organizational structure for managing the ETC Programmes and the European Territorial Cooperation as a whole. Familiarity with procedures of permanent monitoring and evaluation and following them, as well as a necessity to anticipate dangers for implementation of projects are the duties of the beneficiaries of the ETC Programmes.

The added value for managing at the regional level lies in the skill of introduction in a modern way of strategic goals into processes of operational planning brought in by the European Territorial Cooperation.

Gaining experience in managing during implementation of international partnerships increase competencies of regions, assist in better identification of problems, and at the same time in doing it in a multicriteria way, thus increasing their abilities of facing up to main challenges, common for all European regions. Moreover, it makes integration processes more dynamic.

The European Territorial Cooperation contributes to elimination of developmental barriers, territorial barriers among regions, and as a result it helps to maximize spill-over effects and to concentrate efforts and resources on EU priority measures, seen in a regional perspective.

The added values for local communities

The European regional policy facilitates cooperation of partners from different countries, sectors and environments. Simultaneously, it offers tools for management at the regional level and at the level of particular projects developed in accordance with the goals stated in the Maastricht Treaty, the Lisbon Strategy and other Community documents and approved by the societies of the EU member states. The citizens of the European Union are the subject of regional development, and joint European enterprises must be organized in such a way that they will create true social added values for local communities, for example partnerships with the participation of governmental and local administrations, business circles, scientific and research institutes and grassroots organizations. Integrating all partners possessing diversified knowledge, competencies and experiences concerning solving all the social problems contributes to transferring the best practices in particular areas and to energizing social initiative. The cooperation of local communities and professional groups is the best form of social dialogue, in both regional and European scales, because it makes social equality and partnership come true.

Equal opportunities, building information society and society based on knowledge contribute to social development, building local democracy and increasing EU human capital.

The added value for regional development in the context of building cooperation with regions from outside the EU

The scope of EU regional policy that is implemented thanks to the European Territorial Programmes has a positive impact on building beneficial socio-economic relationships with regions from outside the Community, especially those situated near borders. Through engagement in the EU external policy and in the programmes aimed at partners from outside the EU, particularly significant for the EU interests, regions may build beneficial economic and trade relationships outside European Union, and at the same time transfer European standards concerning environmental protection, single market and human rights.

Simultaneously, the European Territorial Cooperation assists regions in confronting with the necessity of competing with Chinese, Indian or Russian economies by building common, integrated attitudes towards such issues as low-carbon economy or innovativeness.

4. RESEARCH PREMISES

4.1. RESEARCH GOAL

The main goal of the research was to conduct an expert analysis and then draw conclusions which will be helpful in working out the Polish position on the EU cohesion policy planned for the period after 2013. This expert report concentrates on indicating the added values for the regional development of Poland resulting from the cohesion policy for 2013 onwards. On the one hand this report is placed in the current socio-economic reality and is connected with the Polish regional policy for 2013 onwards, and on the other hand it takes into consideration European and global developmental trends.

Particular goals

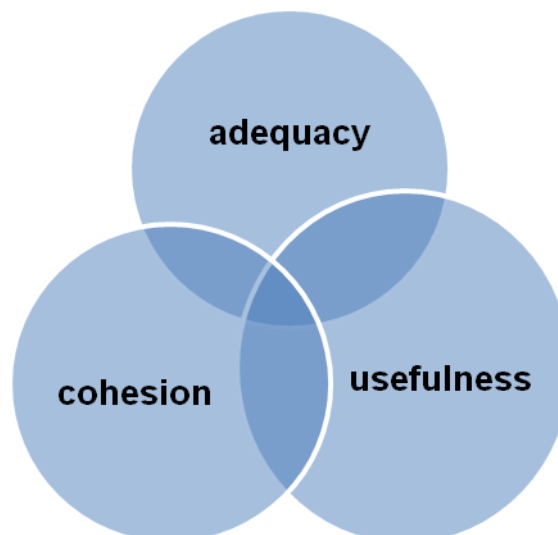
- Conducting an in-depth analysis of premises, guidelines, as well as financing and evaluation principles of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with a view to indicating an added value for the regional development of Poland in the light of the cohesion policy for 2013 onwards.
- Gathering experiences of the Polish public institutions participating in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in 2004-2006 and 2007-2009, and on this basis drawing conclusions for the application in the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2013 onward.
- Gathering experiences of the Joint Technical Secretariats concerning the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with a view to engaging the potential of the Polish beneficiaries and on the basis of this material drawing conclusions for the application in the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2013 onwards.
- Gathering experiences of the Monitoring Committees concerning the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with a view to engaging the potential of the Polish beneficiaries and on the basis of this material drawing conclusions for the application in the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2013 onwards.
- Drawing conclusions that will be helpful in formulating the Polish position towards the vision of the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2013 onward in the context of the regional sustainable development of Poland.

4.2. RESEARCH CRITERIA

The research took into account the following research criteria::

- *cohesion* – understood as the internal and external conformity and complementarity of the programme documents of the European Territorial Cooperation and the recommendations for the Cohesion Policy for 2013 onward with the strategic documents on the national and regional levels.
- *adequacy* – understood as the conformity of suggested solutions within the European Territorial Cooperation with the Cohesion Policy for 2013 onward and with the strategic documents at the national and regional levels.
- *usefulness* – understood as the extent to which the needs of beneficiaries and institutions involved in managing the European Territorial Cooperation are satisfied in the areas of principles, guidelines and knowledge in connection with the Cohesion Policy for 2013 onward and other strategic documents at the national and regional levels.

Picture No 1. Research criteria



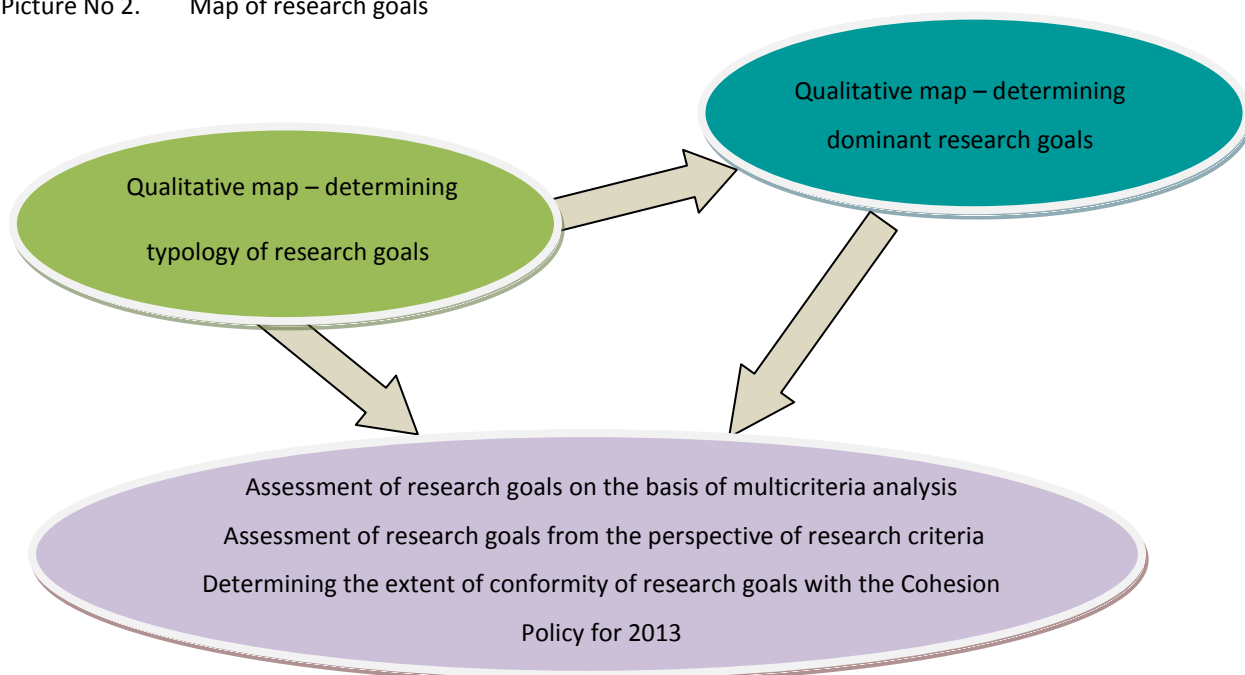
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Map of goals

Building of the map of research goals, both qualitative and quantitative, made it possible to show what goals played a dominant role in the research and to conduct a multicriteria analysis, i.e. to appraise the collected material from the perspective of the research criteria.

The map of goals also made it possible to determine the extent of conformity of research goals with the binding priorities of the European Territorial Cooperation Programme and the Cohesion Policy for 2013 onward.

Picture No 2. Map of research goals



Own source

4.3. RESEARCH SCOPE

Factual scope of the evaluation research

Factual scope of the evaluation research included the following issues having influence on the appearance of an added value for Poland's regional development thanks to the participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programme in the context of planning cohesion policy for 2013 onward:

- assessment of the added value that international cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation generates for development at the regional level;
- to what extent the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes contribute to the European integration in the social, economic and territorial dimensions;
- assessment whether the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes constitute a sufficient and effective set of strategic tools to face the progressing globalization processes whose impact extends beyond the European Union;
- assessment of how effectively the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes contribute to solving territorial problems such as ageing societies, limiting CO₂ emission, energy independence.

The issues mentioned above create challenges both for Polish regions and the whole of the European Union.

Institutional scope of the research

The research was comprehensive in character and was conducted with the participation of all types of entities taking part in preparation, implementation and organizing the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, as well as applying for them and utilizing them.

The research covered 3 types of operational programmes within the European Territorial Cooperation:

- cross-border cooperation;
- transnational cooperation;
- interregional cooperation.

Within the cross-border cooperation programmes, the research covered the institutions and beneficiaries of the following programmes:

- Poland (West-Pomeranian Voivodship) – Germany (Mecklenburg / East Pomerania – Brandenburg);
- Poland (Lubuskie Voivodship) – Germany (Brandenburg);
- Poland (Lubuskie Voivodship and Lower-Silesian Voivodship) – Germany (Saxony);
- Poland – the Czech Republic;
- Poland – the Slovak Republic;
- Poland – Lithuania;
- Poland – Sweden – Denmark – Lithuania – Germany (the Southern Baltic).

Within the transnational cooperation programmes, the research covered the institutions and beneficiaries of the following programmes:

- Baltic Sea Region Programme BSR;
- Central Europe Programme CE.

The research was also conducted among the institutions and beneficiaries of the INTERREG IV C interregional cooperation programme.

For the purpose of the research the following structure of 39 respondents was chosen:

1. 10 Joint Technical Secretariats in:
 - Poland: Gdańsk, Zielona Góra
 - Germany: Schwerin, Dresden, Rostock
 - The Czech Republic: Olomunec
 - Lithuania: Vilnius
 - Austria: Vienna
 - France: Lille
2. 2 Monitoring Committees
3. 1 additional institution beyond programme: InterAct

4. 14 beneficiaries of cross-border cooperation and the following programmes:
 - Poland (West-Pomeranian Voivodship) – Germany (Mecklenburg / East Pomerania – Brandenburg) – 2 institutions;
 - Poland (Lubuskie Voivodship) – Germany (Brandenburg) – 2 institutions;
 - Poland (Lubuskie Voivodship and Lower-Silesian Voivodship) _Germany (Saxony) – 2 institutions;
 - Poland – the Czech Republic – 2 institutions;
 - Poland – the Slovak Republic – 2 institutions;
 - Poland – Lithuania – 2 institutions;
 - Poland – Sweden – Denmark – Lithuania – Germany (the Southern Baltic) – 2 institutions.
5. 8 beneficiaries of transnational programmes:
 - Baltic Sea Region Programme BSR – 4 institutions;
 - Central Europe Programme CE – 4 institutions.
6. 4 beneficiaries of transregional programmes:
 - INTERREG IVC.

5. METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCES

5.1. RESEARCH CONCEPTION AND METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using triangulation of data sources and research methods in order to achieve objective and reliable findings. The variety of research methods proposed made it possible to test basic hypotheses without burdening them with errors resulting from the limitations and flaws of particular tools.

The utilization of diversified and complementary research methods made it possible to collect comprehensive and exhaustive information, and additionally the research team obtained the effects and cumulation and of data complementation. In the research a wide selection of secondary data was used, together with primary data.

The research triangulation was understood as the multiplication of:

- research methods and techniques;
- information sources;
- data types;
- analytic techniques;
- explanatory theories;
- number of people conducting the research.

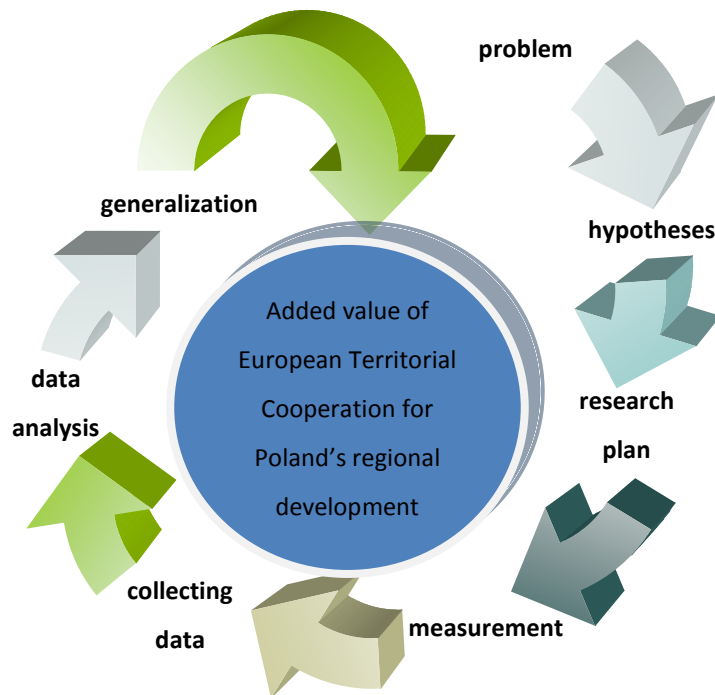
Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods were used in this research, because the research process concentrated on single people or small groups chosen in accordance with the research goal, and on the factors that are hard to measure, relative and incomparable. Qualitative methods assisted in conducting this research also due to the fact its goal was to explain and understand the reasons for some actions, to reveal in a direct or indirect way the motives of these actions, to determine the beliefs, opinions and emotions, and on this basis to conduct the processes of extrapolation and to draw conclusions.

The qualitative research was carried out by experienced researchers – experts with experiences similar to the respondents' practice.

The order of research activities was in line with the following diagram of the research cycle:

Picture No 3. The conception of evaluation research



Own source

The research methodology chosen enabled the diagnosis of the research problem in two dimensions:

- firstly – in an ontological dimension: the research team prepared the descriptions of the issues as they were observed;
- secondly – in an etiological dimension: the research team formulated the diagnosis of the factors which have an impact on the assessment of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes by particular groups of legal entities.

The research was conducted on the basis of the following research tools:

- desk research and the analysis of available documents;
- individual in-depth interview;
- group interviews;
- homogeneous dyads;
- SWOT analysis.

Desk research

The analysis of the secondary data from the documents connected with the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and the cohesion policy in 2007-2013 and with plans for 2013 onward was conducted by means of the desk research. The available information, analyses, research and statistics concerning the European Territorial cooperation, which can be obtained from the websites of the European Commission, the Ministry of Regional Development and other institutions, were analysed. The analysis was conducted using available publications as well as databases illustrating the ways of implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes by Polish beneficiaries, which made it possible to conduct an in-depth comparative analysis. The factors which enabled the identification of a multifaceted nature of the phenomena accompanying the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes were analysed. First of all there were social, political, managerial, human resource and psychological factors. Owing to the utilization of the desk research, a collection of guidelines for the preparation of research questionnaires was compiled on the basis of the conclusions and recommendations created in the research.

Individual In-depth Interview

The Individual In-depth Interview was conducted with two members of the Monitoring Committees of the programmes within the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 and with representatives of InterAct on the basis of scenarios prepared in advance.

The research was based on the premise that the conditions of the effective participation of Polish beneficiaries in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in such a way that creates an added value at the regional level, both in institutional and project aspects, are not fully known. That is why the questionnaire interview, in which to a large extent the researcher verifies only his/her own hypotheses (being certain that he/she knows a lot about the researched reality), may be insufficient. We can learn about a real state only analysing available materials, yet the findings of the Individual In-depth Research with the members of the Monitoring Committees (i.e. people playing an important role in an effective utilization of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes by Polish beneficiaries) and with the employees of InterAct (a programme which promotes and supports the European Territorial Cooperation) may point out to these areas which, for example, need changes, to the legal and non-legal barriers, to the areas which need strengthening, first of all in the systemic dimension from the point of interests of Polish beneficiaries.

Individual In-depth Interview was also utilized in the case of the chosen beneficiaries of cross-border, transregional and transnational programmes.

Homogeneous dyads and group interviews

Homogeneous dyads can be described as loose interviews conducted simultaneously with two participants on the basis of interview scenarios which were created at the first stage of evaluation. The methodology of dyads is similar to the methodology of Individual In-depth Interview with such a difference that in the case of dyads not one, but two respondents participate in them.

The involvement of two representatives from the institutions in the research – beneficiaries of the European Territorial Cooperation – increased the dynamics of interaction among the researched and the researchers, and it enabled obtaining the synergy effect – the participants in the interviews inspired one another to draw new conclusions and to raise new research issues which would not have been raised in an individual interview with each of the interviewees separately.

The research using the methodology described above encompassed the respondents who were the beneficiaries of cross-border and transregional programmes.

Group interviews as the research method were utilized in most interviews with the beneficiaries of cross-border, transregional and transnational programmes. The respondents and the experts conducting interviews jointly decided about the selection of this research method.

SWOT Analysis

SWOT Analysis as a tool summing up and synthetically presenting findings from the research of secondary data, i.e. EU, national and regional documents concerning the European Territorial Cooperation and the cohesion policy, was used to present, in a compact form, legal and organizational environment in which the analysis of primary data obtained in questionnaire research and in in-depth expert interviews was carried out.

The experience of the research team obtained while conducting earlier research and consulting projects was utilized. Moreover, extended SWOT analytical tool were also used. These tools consist in carrying out a comparative in-depth analysis of legal and organisational aspects concerning the European Territorial Cooperation which result from documents and affect the implementation of the projects by Polish beneficiaries.

It is worth stressing that conducting SWOT Analysis for secondary data is a non-standard action in evaluating research, and their conclusion constitutes an added value for the research and helps to understand the context of regional policy, the European Territorial Cooperation and the cohesion policy after 2013.

5.2. DATA SOURCES

5.2.1. The sources of secondary data

Legal foundations (EU and national ones)

The projects that are implemented and carried out within the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 Programmes are co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund. The basic European Community legal acts regulating their functioning include:

1. Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of the 5th July 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and repealing Regulation No 1783/1999;
2. Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11th July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999;

3. Commission Regulation (EC) No 1828/2006 of 8th December 2006 setting out rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 and Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006.

Moreover, separate legal European Community acts regulate the implementation of projects within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership instrument, especially:

1. Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24th October 2006 laying down general provisions establishing the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument.
2. Commission Regulation (EC) No 951/2007 of 9th August 2007 laying down implementation rules for cross-border cooperation financed under Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006.

At the same time while implementing projects co-financed from the EU resources under the European Regional Development Fund or other EC supporting instruments, the beneficiaries are obliged to fully abide by national legal acts. The key ones in Poland are:

1. Act of 6th December 2006 on the rules of conducting developmental policy (Dz.U. 2006, No 227, pos. 1658 with further changes);
2. Act of 7th November 2008 on the changes of some acts connected with the implementation of the structural funds and the Cohesion Fund (Dz.U. 2008, No 216, pos. 1370)

It should be stressed that the European Union resources must be subject to the Polish discipline of spending public resources, among others stated in:

1. Act of 30th June 2005 on public finances (Dz.U. 2005, No 249, pos. 2104 with further changes);
2. Act of 29th January 2004. Public procurement law. (Dz.U. 2007, No 223, pos. 1655; Dz.U. 2008, No 171, pos. 1058; Dz.U. 2008, No 220, pos. 1420; Dz.U. 2008, No 227, pos. 1505; Dz.U. 2009, No 19, pos 101; Dz.U. 2009, No 65, pos. 545; Dz.U. 2009, No 91, pos. 742).

Moreover, depending on the type of a beneficiary and its organizational and legal status particular EU and national legal acts apply, among them especially secondary law acts and executory provisions (e.g. regulations). The implementation of projects must take into account various regulations depending on the themes of projects (e.g. Act on social assistance, Act on employment promotion and the institutions of a labour market, Construction Law Act, Civil Code Act, Act on Value Added Tax).

European Union Programming Documents

The implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation projects requires conformity with the EU documents and other strategic programming documents and supplementary documents. The most significant include:

1. Council Decision of 6th October 2006 on Community strategic guidelines of cohesion (2006/702/EC), the Official Journal of the European Union L291/11;
2. Strategy for economic growth and unemployment and the reform of the European cohesion policy. Fourth Report on Economic and Social Cohesion, COM (2006) 281 final version;
3. The Lisbon European Council – An Agenda of Economic and Social Renewal for Europe, Lisbon 200 (with further changes);
4. Documents and reports concerning the effectiveness of the Community cohesion policy and the shape of the cohesion policy after 2013 (e.g. An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy. A place-based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations, independent Report prepared at the request of Danuta Hübner, Commissioner for Regional Policy by Fabrizio Barca, 2009)

National Documents

Among the national documents, first of all programming and strategic documents prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development should be indicated. The key ones are:

1. National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013 supporting economic and employment growth. National Cohesion Strategy, Ministry of Regional Development, Warsaw 2006;
2. Guidelines for the qualification of expenses and projects in cross-border cooperation programmes within the European Territorial Cooperation implemented with the participation of Poland in 2007-2013;
3. Guidelines for inspections in particular programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation;
4. The Programme of Cross-border, Transnational and Transregional Cooperation;
5. The Programme of Cross-border Cooperation Lithuania-Poland-Russia 2007-2013;
6. The Programme of Cross-border Cooperation Poland-Belorus-Ukraine 2007-2013;
7. Analyses and reports concerning the utilization of the supporting instruments within the EU cohesion policy in Poland, especially those connected with the evaluation of projects which are supranational in character.

Moreover, the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation projects needs coordination at the regional and local levels. The actions should take into consideration local development strategies and programmes prepared by self-governments, among them also regional operational programmes implemented under the National Cohesion Strategy 2007-2013 and co-financed from the European Union resources within the European Regional Development Fund.

5.2.2. The sources of primary data

The assessment of regulations concerning the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation in the secondary documents was confronted with the opinions of their implementation that were presented by the respondents in the research. The opinions were similar, despite decidedly different roles and interests connected with the implementation of the projects within the European Territorial Cooperation.

With regard to various researched groups, the experts put emphasis on various issues accompanying implementation or on following the guidelines in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes:

- in the Individual In-depth Interview with the members of the Monitoring Committee of the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 and in the interview with the representative of the InterAct, the interviewers primarily searched for the answers to strategic and perspective questions: What are the benefits from the participation in the European Territorial Programmes for Polish beneficiaries? What legislative, organizational and financial problems accompany this participation? What, in the context of the respondents' experiences, should be changed in the new programming perspective after 2013 in order that the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation will serve Poland's regional development in a better way?;
- in interviews with the management staff of the Joint Technical Secretariats of the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 Programmes, the emphasis was placed on current problems connected with the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 Programmes and on what solutions of technical, information and organizational nature would be conducive to the initiative of Polish applicants. Moreover, in the interviews with the Joint Technical Secretariats, the examples of good practices at the operational level, which are utilized by Polish applicants and can be implemented at the level of Polish regions, were searched for.
- in the interviews with the beneficiaries of the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 Programmes, not only the level of familiarity with the documents and regulations concerning the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 was researched, but also the motivations for submitting applications and commencing implementation of the projects within the European

Territorial Cooperation, as well as the assessments of the Programme management system, its effectiveness and its benefits for the applicants.

The questions whose addressees were the groups mentioned above and each of which had different points of reference in relation to the management system and the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, allowed the interviewers to gather rich knowledge and carry out reliable evaluation of the the assigned issues.

The report ***Added Value of the European Territorial Cooperation for Poland's regional development in the context of the planned cohesion policy after 2013*** has an integrated, comprehensive and objective character. The strong and weak points of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes were identified and on this basis the conclusions and recommendations for the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation after 2013 were formulated from the perspective of the Poland's regional development.

5.3. WAYS TO GUARANTEE RESEARCH RELIABILITY

The reliability of the collected data was guaranteed by:

- direct involvement of experts at every level of the research, without the participation of questionnaire interviewers;
- restricting the influence of situational factors thanks to the systematized research methods utilized.

Field research including Individual In-depth Interviews, group interviews and homogeneous dyads, was conducted by experts with research and subject experience.

All procedures ensuring confidentiality and security of data in accordance with the security policy in effect in AEC Pro-Akademia and with the act on personal data protection were followed.

5.4. THE SELECTION OF THE RESEARCH GROUP

Three groups of respondents, which fundamentally differed from one another, were researched: the Joint Technical Secretariats, the Monitoring Committees of the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 and the beneficiaries of these Programmes.

The selection of respondents in each of these groups was conducted differently:

Joint Technical Secretariats – the research encompassed the Joint Technical Secretariats of all the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in which institutions from Poland may participate;

Monitoring Committees – the Monitoring Committees of transnational and transregional programmes were chosen because of the introductory assumption that they have decidedly different specific character of project selection process than cross-border programs. Moreover, Polish applicants simultaneously compete and cooperate with numerous EU partners, ENPI partners and Norway within the submitted projects.

It seems that Polish representatives – the members of the Monitoring Committees – have a completely different role to play in these programmes than the members of Monitoring Committees of cross-border programmes.

InterAct – including a supraprogramme institution playing the supporting role for the institutions managing particular European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and beneficiaries of the programmes aimed at providing as wide a view as possible on the issues of current effectiveness of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, as well as on the utilization of experiences and observations at the pan-European level in order to formulate correct recommendations for the Polish position towards the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes after 2013.

Beneficiaries of transnational programmes – the selection of this group of respondents was done in the way that secures representativeness of various organizational forms and of the legal statuses of the researched institutions. Inviting people directly involved in the management of material and financial schedule and in project reporting procedures was an important criterion.

Beneficiaries of cross-border and transregional programmes – the research included the chosen beneficiaries of the operational programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation and of the Community Initiative INTERREG IIIA and INTERREG IIIC. Among the beneficiaries, the majority consisted of the institutions from the public finances sector, among them territorial self-government units and public institutions of higher education. More than half of these institutions were simultaneously the beneficiaries of the INTERREG programs and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESULTS OF RESEARCH

6.1. RESEARCH RESULTS AT THE LEVEL OF THE MONITORING COMMITTEES PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION AND INTERACT.

The research encompassed the members of two Monitoring Committees representing Poland: Monitoring Committee of Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013 and Monitoring Committee of INTERREG IVC Programme 2007-2013. In the opinion of the members of the Monitoring Committees, the management structure of the programmes is appropriate and it does not generate any obstacles for institutions involved in their implementation. The rules of procedure of the Monitoring Committees in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes involved in the research are equally friendly for the representatives of all countries involved in their implementation. However, despite the fact that vote of every member is equally important, the weight of votes of Polish representatives is various depending on programmes: in smaller programmes in which participate, for example, 8 countries, it is different than in the transregional programme. At the same time, the difference between the INTERREG IVC Programme and the BSR Programme should be stressed. In the former voting is decided according to the majority criterion, and in the latter the agreement of all the members is necessary. This results in serious consequences for the voting processes and for taking decisions. In the Monitoring Committee of INTERREG IVC the coalitions are established for the purpose of voting, while in the Monitoring Committee of BSR Programme long discussions precede reaching a consensus.

Both the documents themselves (guidelines, contest regulations, principles of preparing and assessing projects) and the system of informing about them are appropriate. There is no doubt that due to the complexity of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes the documents accompanying them are relatively difficult. However, in the opinion of the members of the Monitoring Committees, good communication procedures between potential applicants and both the information points and the Joint Technical Secretariats exists. Professional websites of the programmes are in operation and information meetings preceding the beginning of each application round in each of the programmes are held, as well as meetings facilitating encounters with potential project partners and promotional seminars all over Poland are organized a few times a year.

Particular European Territorial Cooperation Programmes organize more or less active promotional and information measures and this partly depends on the size of their budgets earmarked for this purpose.

For example, in INTERREG IVC Programme the resources from technical assistance are distributed at the national level which greatly increases effectiveness of their utilization.

Contacts with the Joint Technical Secretariats are assessed positively. The members of the Monitoring Committees are notified about the current activities of the Joint Technical Secretariats and receive information about results of recruitment and recommendations concerning particular projects in due advance.

The members of the Monitoring Committees consider the interest of Polish institutions in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes as insufficient. According to the respondents of the research, the reasons for this situation should be seen not only in the lack of experience in submitting applications to the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and in lesser possibilities of obtaining support concerning institutions' own contributions in comparison with applicants from EU-15, but primarily in the fact that Polish public institutions, especially self-governments and institutions of higher education, have much greater possibilities of obtaining external financing for their own projects within the structural funds at national level.

The formal aspects of submitting applications are difficult for Polish applicants, but the members of the Monitoring Committees of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes observe a positive tendency of increasing numbers of Polish partners in each application round. In the INTERREG IVC Programme, as far as their numbers are concerned, Polish institutions rank 6 among partners eligible for participation in this programme. These statistics look decidedly worse when it comes to the proportion of Polish institutions in positions of Leading Partners. Polish institutions very rarely have the position of applicants in the BSR, Central Europe and INTERREG IVC Programmes. In the last application periods the situation looked as follows:

Table 2nd: **Number of applications submitted within BSR, Central Europe and Interreg IVC Programmes**

ETC Programme	Total number of applications		Number of applications submitted by Polish Lead Partners		Number of applications accepted for co-financing with Polish Lead Partners	
	Call 1	Call 2	Call 1	Call 2	Call 1	Call 2
BSR 2007-2013	110	86	3	5	0	0
Central Europe 2007-2013	95	179	5	14	4	2
INTERREG IVC 2007-2013	491	481	4	5	0	1

Source: Information from the Joint Technical Secretariats of the BSR, CE and INTERREG IVC Programmes

Table no. 2 shows insignificant interest of Polish institutions in participating as project's Lead Partners. At best, Polish applications amounted no more than 7% of submitted applications (Application period II in the Central Europe 2007-2013 Programme), and out of all the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for 2007-2013 other than cross-border ones, Polish applicants implement only 7 projects.

Polish partners willingly accept invitations for participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, but there are situations in which Polish partners, due to their lack of full knowledge about the principles and guidelines in the ETC Programmes, assume passive attitude both at the stage of creating projects – division of tasks, schedule and budget – and during its implementation.

In the opinion of the members of the Monitoring Committees, the greatest benefits from the participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are gained by the institutions characterized by the following features: with experiences in the implementation of projects from the pre-accession and structural resources, with a project team consisting of well-educated people with fluent command of English, with flexible organizational structures, with little staff fluctuation, with multiple income sources allowing them to maintain financial liquidity in the conditions of long reimbursement periods, and with abilities to work in multicultural teams. Some relatively small, specialized scientific institutes can serve as the examples of such entities.

According to the members of the Monitoring Committees, technical and formal aspects of application process (complicated application procedure, agreement form, reporting etc.) and lengthy reimbursement procedures significantly affect interest of Polish institutions in participating in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. Nevertheless, the members of the Monitoring Committees assure that in order to make the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes more attractive for the new EU members, the Monitoring Committees themselves and the European Commission aim at simplifying procedures, at extending and presenting in greater detail the list of qualified costs and at shortening the time of processing applications for payment.

The INTERACT Programme promotes and supports good management of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and offers practical support, training and counselling to the institutions engaged in the management and implementation of the ETC Programmes in the areas of management techniques, communication, building international cooperation strategy within the European Territorial Cooperation. The program is a unique cooperation forum for the structures of the European Territorial Cooperation and it enables the construction of institutional and thematic links in order to increase the effectiveness of actions within the European Territorial Cooperation. It creates and reinforces the cycle of exchanging information and examples of good solutions among the institutions of the European Territorial Cooperation in order to “learn together and from each other” and strengthen territorial cooperation.

INTERACT provides expert opinions in the following areas:

- Programming and managing finances.
- Managing projects and technical assistance.
- Activating cooperation within programmes and projects.
- Programming and strategic planning.
- Auditing and inspecting.
- Monitoring and assessing programmes and projects.
- Communication.

InterAct also provides support for cooperation programmes between the EU member states and both candidate countries and potential candidate countries co-financed by Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. Moreover, InterAct is also interested in the cooperation programmes along the external borders of the European Union financed by the European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument. InterAct carries out its actions through the Secretariat in Bratislava and through four points: in Turku (Finland), Valencia (Spain), Viborg (Denmark) and Vienna (Austria). The total budget of the programme for 2007-2013 amounts to €40 million (85% is financed from the European Regional Development Fund).

The representatives of InterAct invited to participate in the research expressed their opinions about the value of the European Territorial Cooperation for regional development, and simultaneously they indicated the following problems that should be removed in order to successfully manage and implement the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes:

- Firstly – the ideas of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are not fully transparent, and because they are insufficiently promoted, they are frequently incomprehensible;
- Secondly – the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are “exclusive” in character due to the degree of their complication and the need of cooperation with partners from various cultural environments. The established partnerships often have difficulty in working out the transnational character of projects;
- Lastly – in order to increase the effectiveness of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for regional development, cooperation of all their players is necessary – Joint Technical Secretariats, Monitoring Committees, Consultation Points, as well as Marshal Offices and local administration. Moreover, the number of information points should be increased.

Simultaneously, the employees of InterAct remarked that the geographical position of our country offers a lot of possibilities to Polish institutions and declared their readiness to greater engagement in the promotion of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in Poland.

They recommended that the cycle of meetings in Poland that would promote the European Territorial Cooperation should be organized. It should happen with the participation of the representatives of the Joint Technical Secretariats, members of the Monitoring Committees and auditing institutions, as well as the beneficiaries having some experience in implementation of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation.

They recommended some events organized in Great Britain and Denmark with the participation of InterAct as good examples that could be emulated. “Road Show” in Great Britain consisted in preparing and conducting presentations all over the country of all the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes available to Britons. In Denmark, all the ETC Programmes implemented in this country were demonstrated during a series of presentations.

6.2. THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AT THE LEVEL OF JOINT TECHNICAL SECRETARIATS OF THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION PROGRAMMES

The Joint Technical Secretariats are this element in the system of managing the European Territorial Cooperation which join the processes of programme implementation and maintains direct contacts with potential applicants. The Joint Technical Secretariats come under the Managing Institutions which is linked with the necessity of producing considerable reporting material. This, together with the necessity of meeting numerous procedural requirements, occupies a lot of JTS employees' time, which could be used in other ways – e.g. for promotional actions or assistance for beneficiaries.

In the assessment presented by the Joint Technical Secretariats, the structure of managing the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes is not clear, and the Secretariats should be more independent. The issues connected with tenure and with the legal status of the Joint Technical Secretariats as legal entities constitute some problems for the effective and efficient management.

The employees of the Joint Technical Secretariats remarked that in order to better implement the European Territorial Cooperation a wider cooperation among all the Secretariats should take place – such as an exchange of good practices and experiences. Additionally, these employees' professional development should be taken care of – increasing their expertise and their command of foreign languages.

Polish entities interested in obtaining some information about the European Territorial Cooperation often turn to the Joint Technical Secretariats. When comparing the number of inquiries to the Joint Technical Secretariats from Polish institutions with the number of inquiries from institutions from other EU countries, one can observe that the situation depends primarily on the type of the programme. In the case of cross-border programmes (i.e. bilateral programmes), where the levels of activity of Polish institutions and institutions from the other side of the border can be compared, the result is much more favourable for the Polish side. In case of the transnational and transregional cooperation, the Polish level of activity is lower.

The research respondents – the Joint Technical Secretariats – stressed that great interest in trainings and consultations is shown by Polish entities. The greatest activity in the cross-border programmes is demonstrated by the units of public administration at the local level, while in transnational programmes the institutions of higher education are second to none.

In the opinion of Joint Technical Secretariats, the information and promotion measures concerning the European Territorial Cooperation are conducted correctly, which is proved by a big and still increasing number of application with every application round. Some of the Secretariats stresses that the system of joint information sharing is needed and that the Marshal Offices should be more involved.

However, in the opinion of the Joint Technical Secretariats, the application procedures within the European Territorial Cooperation are difficult. The problems commence at the stage of drafting and signing the partnership agreement. The period between the submitting a project and signing an agreement is too long (the whole process takes about 10 months, which makes it necessary to introduce changes in the project, for example as far as its budget and the agenda of its actions are concerned).

In many cases, the problems with the procedures of signing the agreement getting longer and longer are applicants' fault, because they do not provide documents necessary to sign agreement concerning project co-financing or they motion to introduce changes to the already approved projects. Sometimes, these changes are so significant that they must be approved of by the Managing Institution, which additionally prolongs the procedure of agreement signing. Not infrequently it happens that one of the partners withdraw from the project or some stages of project implementation are not adjusted to the reporting periods.

In the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, the institutions of the same type – i.e. institutions of higher education with institutions of higher education or public administration units with their counterparts – are most willing to cooperate. It happens rarely that projects are carried out by three types of institutions: non-governmental organizations, private enterprises and institutions of higher education. This situation is common and it concerns entities from many countries involved in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

This means that the European Territorial Cooperation inadequately generates intersectoral cooperation.

In the opinion of the Joint Technical Secretariats, the following are the main obstacles for Polish institutions preventing them from participation in project partnerships within the European Territorial Cooperation:

- Financial barriers – lack of resources for implementation of projects;
- Linguistic barriers – difficulties in communicating with partners;
- Cultural differences – connected with keeping deadlines, diligence and care in carrying out tasks for which each partner is responsible;
- Difficulty in finding partners due to the strictly determined common support areas – for example in cross-border programmes there are too strict geographical restrictions;
- Time-consuming and labour-consuming procedure from submitting an application to project implementation.

The applications submitted by Polish applicants often contain formal flaws such as:

- incomplete attachments;
- incompatibility of various linguistic versions of applications;
- lack of a document confirming the possession of funds for co-financing a project;
- lack of the status of legal entity;
- lack of document or inadequate documents confirming cross-border cooperation of partners “pseudopartner” mentioned only with a view to acquiring support by a Lead Partner);
- building “forced” partnerships without factual and substantial justification for the participation of particular partners.

The experiences gained by the Joint Technical Secretariats so far lead to the conclusion that the best way to avoid errors in the process of application for the European Territorial Cooperation is to organize consultations conducted by the employees of the Secretariats with the participation of all project partners. The Joint Technical Secretariats systematically conduct such consultations. The greatest number of the consultations take place close to the end of the application period. The consultations assist applicants in understanding programming documents prepared in a specific, expert language, which very often is incomprehensible for those people who undertake the task of submitting an application to the European Territorial Cooperation for the first time.

The beneficiaries of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes indicate the following problems in project management procedures:

- badly organized tenders;
- badly estimated expenditures;
- covering joint expenses;
- maintaining financial liquidity;
- providing financial guarantee (e.g. credit) for the project implementation period;
- linguistic barrier in contacts among financial and accountancy services and among 1st-rank inspectors.

Preparing financial reports concerning project implementation poses problems for all applicants. Inspectors return 95% of first versions of applications to applicants. It is a problem for Lead Partners that they are fully responsible for the whole project and for unpunctuality of other partners. Problems multiply and increase if more partners are engaged in the implementation of projects. The procedures of public procurement law do not make the tasks easier.

The lack of down-payment system within the European Territorial Cooperation is a serious problem. In connection with this, project budgets are very frequently badly calculated – sometimes calculated sums are insufficient and sometimes excessive which leads to spending money for unnecessary items.

6.3. THE RESEARCH FINDINGS AT THE LEVEL OF THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE CROSS-BORDER AND TRANSREGIONAL PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

6.3.1. The description of the group of respondents

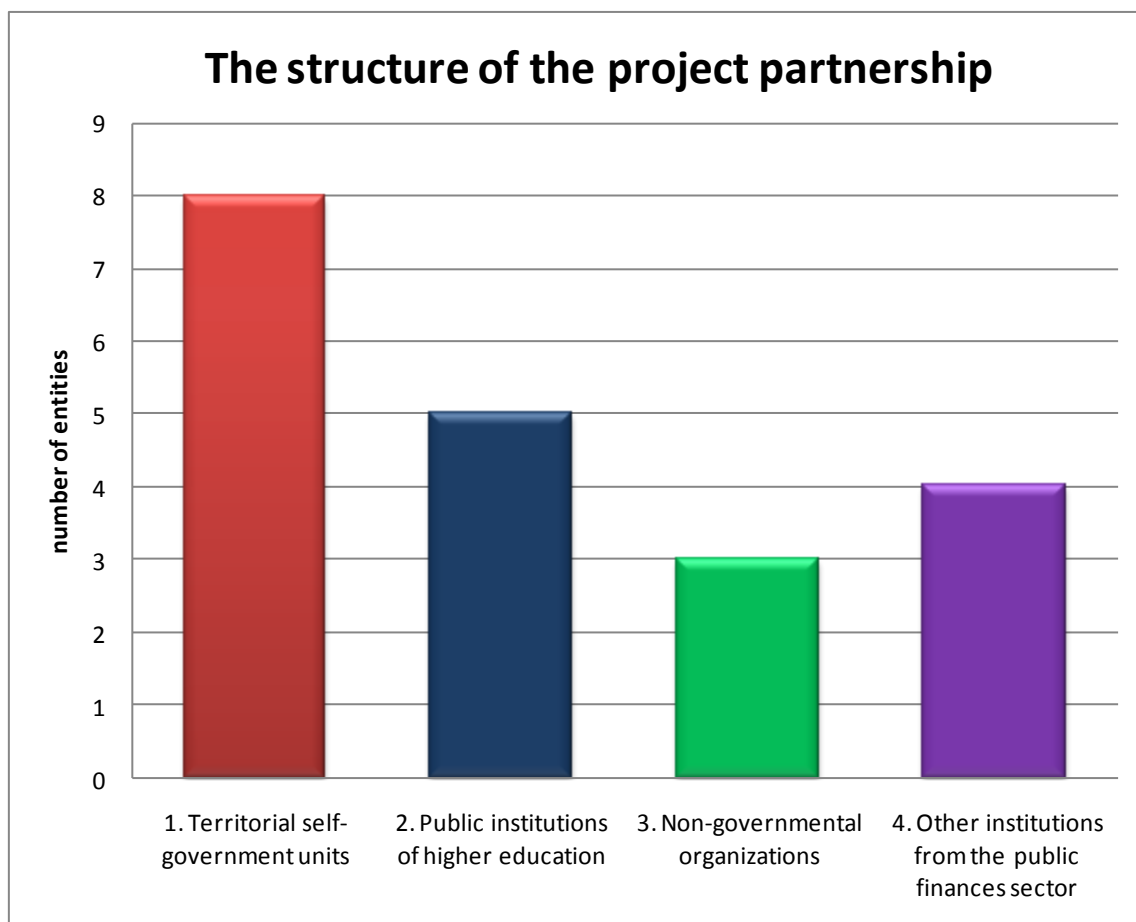
The research was conducted among the beneficiaries of the Operational Programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation and the Community Initiative INTERREG IIIA and INTERREG IIIC. Among the beneficiaries, the majority consisted of the institutions from the public finances sector such as, for example, territorial self-government units and public institutions of higher education. In more than 50% of the cases, these institutions were the beneficiaries of both the INTERREG Programmes and the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. However, not all the beneficiaries of the programmes co-financed by the Community Initiative INTERREG (2004-2006) applied for the support within the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes (2007-2010) (more in the table and on the diagram below).

Table 3rd: The structure of the researched beneficiaries with regard to their legal and organizational status

No.	Legal and organizational status of the beneficiary	The number of the institutions researched	Participation in the Programmes		Participation in the ETC and INTERREG IIIA and INTERREG IIIC Programmes
			INTERREG IIIA	INTERREG IIIC	
1.	Territorial self-government units	8	3	0	6
2.	Public institutions of higher education	5	1	4	0
3.	Non-governmental organizations	3	0	0	3
4.	Institutions from the public finances sector	4	2	0	2
Total:		20	6	4	11

Source: own sources on the basis of the research findings

Diagram No 1.: The structure of the researched beneficiaries with regard to their legal and organizational status



Source: own sources on the basis of the research findings

In the table below, the partnership structures dominating in the researched projects (INTERREG, ETC) are presented.

Table 4th: The structure of the project partnership (selected examples)

No.	Legal and organizational status of the beneficiary	Other institutions participating in the project
1.	<u>Territorial self-government units</u>	a. Territorial self-government units b. Self-government organizational units c. Euroregions (associations)
2.	<u>Public institutions of higher education</u>	a. Public institutions of higher education b. Non-public institutions of higher education c. Territorial self-government units d. Advisory and expert institutions e. Scientific institutes f. Public regional centres of entrepreneurship promotion and of regional development g. Territorial self-government units, among them their organizational units responsible for education h. Public administration at the national level including Ministries responsible for science, education and institutions of higher education i. Institutes, councils and other public bodies j. Institutes responsible for education
3.	<u>Non-governmental organizations</u>	a. Territorial self-government units b. Non-governmental organizations
4.	<u>Other institutions from the public finances sector</u>	a. Budgetary units b. Non-governmental organizations

Source: own sources on the basis of the research findings


From these tables and the diagram one can draw a conclusion that partnerships are mainly created by the institutions with the same legal and organizational status and with the similar substantial scope of conducted activities.

The territorial self-government units concentrated on the implementation of the so-called “hard” projects (i.e. bringing measurable and direct material results – infrastructural projects) within the Community Initiative INTERREG and the Operational Programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation. They were, for example: investments in construction of roads, bicycle paths, sports facilities, water pipe systems and others. In the projects of the institutions of higher education, the problems of education, regional development and support for entrepreneurship dominated. Other units from the public finances sector implemented projects diversified in their character – both “hard” and “soft” ones. Among others, these were: revitalization of historic buildings, purchase of medical equipment, construction of landing sites for medical helicopters, as well as organizing and conducting trainings. The associations mainly implemented projects which were “soft” in their character. These were: trainings, counselling, editing and publishing of publications connected with local and regional cultural and historical issues, and other projects.

Table 5th: The division of the researched projects into infrastructural and investment ones ("hard" ones) and non-investment projects ("soft" ones)

No.	Beneficiaries	„Hard” projects	„Soft” projects
1.	Territorial self-government units	8	1
2.	Public institutions of higher education	0	5
3.	Associations	1	2
4.	Budgetary units	3	1
Total:		12	9

Source: own sources on the basis of the research findings

 To sum up, the subjects, goals and activities of the projects analyzed in the research are closely connected with the scope in which the beneficiaries function, but at the same time they are directly or indirectly linked with the horizontal aspects of the EU regional policy in the context of cross-border and transregional cooperation.

6.3.2. The assessment of the project management system from the point of view of their beneficiaries

The researched institutions assessed their cooperation with the Joint Technical Secretariats primarily in terms of obtaining required information, assistance in submitting project applications, solving emerging problems and current project handling. The general assessment of the cooperation with the Joint Technical Secretariats is satisfactory, although it is diversified in character. In the synthetic assessment on the scale of 1 to 5, half of the researched assessed the cooperation on the very good level (mark 5). Others (two cases) gave lower marks - 3 points (which is a satisfactory mark) was the lowest mark. Nobody assessed the quality of the cooperation with the Secretariat as being of low or very low standard, which undoubtedly indicates satisfactory level of quality of handling the beneficiaries in cross-border and transregional programmes.

The beneficiaries which were most satisfied by the cooperation indicated an open attitude of the employees of the Secretariats towards them. They stressed efforts to maximally simplify the procedures and minimize the formal requirements ("no bureaucracy") within the framework of existing regulations and guidelines. The high competency of the Secretariats' employees, who could explain all the problems connected with submitting application in practical terms, were emphasized. Many times, the beneficiaries talked about the effectiveness and swiftness of replying. They stressed that sometimes the Secretariats agreed for the explanation of the problematic issues after the approval of the applications. The friendly atmosphere towards them in the Joint Technical Secretariats was not without significance for the beneficiaries. Part of the beneficiaries indicated that after the approval of the projects the Joint technical Secretariats set for themselves the same goal as beneficiaries, i.e. the correct implementation and accounting of the project.

Among the assessments showing flaws in the cooperation with the Joint Technical Secretariats, an insufficient number of people employed was indicated, as well as placing too many duties on them which results in difficulty in contacting them. Sometimes, the frequent changes of the person responsible for the project, impossibility to obtain some information and poor command of English among the employees of the Secretariats were stressed. Quite often the employees of the Secretariats did not know the specific organizational character of the institutions – e.g. of the institutions of higher education – the competencies, structures, and people authorized to take decisions. They often did not know acts, regulations, internal and detailed documents regulating the functioning of certain types of

beneficiaries. During the cooperation in implementing the project, some of these barriers between beneficiaries and the employees of the Secretariats lost their significance.

Good cooperation with the Joint Technical Secretariats was contrasted with not such good cooperation with Voivodship Offices and Marshal Offices. The assessment of the cooperation at the regional level were usually much worse than in the case of the Joint Technical Secretariats. Among the negative points the beneficiaries indicated lack of competence, of communicativeness and of real assistance of the employees providing information about the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. It was stressed that the beneficiaries were often advised to search for the information on the websites or to go to the Joint Technical Secretariats. However, the beneficiaries expected a precise interpretation of regulation points and detailed explanations concerning them. They stressed that if a certain officer was absent, frequently nobody else was able to substitute him/her, answer the questions or sign documents. Too frequent rotation of staff was emphasized. Generally, the respondents indicated very formalized, very inflexible and bureaucratic attitude towards the beneficiaries – potential and actual ones.

To sum up, the general assessment of the cooperation between beneficiaries and the Joint Technical Secretariats is positive, although the functioning of the Joint Technical Secretariats in the area of management and staff competencies should be improved, which in turn can cause greater interest of Polish beneficiaries in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

The introductory condition of commencing the implementation of particular projects is having foreign partners. The researched institutions found them in various ways. They did it primarily through earlier contacts that had been established during previous cooperation with particular institutions or thanks to an agency from a particular country. In the opinion of the beneficiaries, personal contacts also played a very important role.

According to the researched, finding German partners was relatively uncomplicated, which was also the case for the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. It was usually done via administrative units situated in the border belt, for example via border towns. Usually, these units have already cooperated with their counterparts on the other side of the border for quite a long time. This cooperation frequently dated back to the beginning of the 1990s, and some of its forms were carried out even earlier within the framework of, for example, agreements of partnership towns.

The cross-border cooperation was intensified after the accession of Poland to the European Union, it encompassed various areas and was deepened. Thus the German, Slovak and Czech administrative units became natural partners for cooperation with Polish public institutions within the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and earlier within the Community Initiative INTERREG IIIA/C.

The geographical closeness of the partners results in the situation in which a number of problems must be solved together and the awareness of this fact is sometimes the key factor making finding a foreign partner for the towns and districts situated directly next to the border with a view to implementing the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes a relatively easy task. The geographical proximity was also a factor conducive to establishing contacts by other institutions, for example healthcare units, educational institutions or cultural institutions.

Personal contacts were an important factor helping in finding partners for the institutions situated in the border belt. The ease of establishing and maintaining of such contacts hugely increased after opening of the borders. The development of telecommunication technologies is also conducive to the development of international cooperation.

The difficulties emerge in the case of looking for partners for cooperation by the institutions not directly situated in the border belt. It was stressed that finding such a partner was much easier in the projects implemented in the INTERREG IIIA/C Programme, because the formal requirements concerning cross-border cooperation were much more lenient than for the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. The participation of the foreign partners in some projects implemented within the INTERREG IIIA/C Programme was very limited and formal, often restricted only to issuing a declaration, so it was hard to talk about commencing a real cooperation between the partners on both sides of the border. In some cases, after finishing the projects from the INTERREG IIA programs the cross-border cooperation was terminated due to the inability to find a partner, the requirements toward which were much higher than previous requirements concerning the participation in the project.

It must be stressed that finding a partner is not sufficient for the effective implementation of the projects. It is important that the involvement of all project partners should be comparable. They should equally actively participate in all the stages of the implementation of the project, maintain the contacts, come to the meetings, be knowledgeable about all activities. All partners, not only Lead Partners, should feel responsible for achieving the effects and parameters of the project.

To sum up, from the opinions of part of the research respondents, the conclusion that establishing the cross-border and transregional cooperation is not at present a key problem for Polish beneficiaries can be drawn. However, in order to gain real benefits for the regional development, all Polish partners should implement the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with greater involvement and they should not leave full responsibility for the project outcomes to Lead Partners.

From the angle of the added value of the European Territorial Programmes for the regional development are important such features of the partners as effectiveness, organizational flexibility, reliability, punctuality, keeping obligations, assertiveness, communicativeness, command of foreign languages, professional financial and book-keeping services, and first of all possessing enough financial resources, guaranteeing financial liquidity, by a partner.

The assesment of German partners

The institutions carrying out actions from the area of cross-border cooperation usually indicated high organizational effectiveness of German partners which positively influenced the quality of the cooperation and the implementation of the joint projects.

There was quite harmonious agreement that German partners are reliable and diligent, they follow the agreed schedule of actions very well. It was indicated that they work in a more systematic way than the Polish side. When considering joining the project, they usually commission external preparation of the conception of the undertaking and the assessment of its advisability. German public institutions sometimes delegate even 3 people to work on the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation project. The respondents emphasized that Polish institutions cannot afford such an approach due to the scarcity of available resources.

At the same time they stressed that despite all their order, German side works relatively slowly. The respondents in the research remarked in unison that historical burden did not play any role in the joint implementation of the projects. The attitude of the German side was characterized by directness and assertiveness, although some respondents added that there was some slight anxiety about the Polish partner connected with the possibility the Polish side can perform tasks in an unsatisfactory way.

The assessment of the Lithuanian partners

Polish partners positively assess the cooperation with the Lithuanians. Good organizational effectiveness of Lithuanian institutions was stressed, although it was remarked that their knowledge about the European Programmes is sometimes superficial.

The assessment of the Czech partners

In the case of the Czech and Slovak partners, the good contacts and understanding were stressed which were often supported by the cooperation of self-governments that started many years ago. In the case of the institutions of higher education, the scientific cooperation dominates, and it usually is not the cooperation of the whole institutions but between the institutes, chairs, academics and researchers.

To sum up, in the researched cases no significant barriers for the cooperation which are characteristic of any country of origin were indicated. The solution introduced by some German partners in which the beneficiaries are supported by consulting and advisory institutions, especially when it comes to the advisability of the participation in the project, seems interesting.

The assessment of technical and formal aspects of applying for ETC projects

The preparation of documents connected with applying for the European Territorial Cooperation projects encounters obstacles and difficulties of technical and formal nature.

The respondents agreed that the procedure of the preparation of applications is very labour- and time-consuming. What is understandable, this factor was stressed to a greater extent in the institutions having smaller experience in applying for the EU grants and without properly qualified staff. The necessity of gathering a great number of attachments was emphasized. Although the respondents said that in comparison with the INTERREG Programme the number of attachments required in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes is smaller, the application itself "is equally difficult".

The representatives of the public administration offices stressed that labour-consuming nature of the projects necessitates permanent delegation of the employees to deal with them or increasing the employment. This is an unwilling step, because the offices face employment restrictions. Some respondents indicated that increasing the number of workers in the departments dealing with the EU funds would significantly increase the level of participation in the European programmes at the local

level, among them in the European Territorial Cooperation. They even indicated that the municipal or district offices could assist other institutions, primarily from the budgetary sector, in filling in applications and gathering documents, thinking that they are not able to go through the procedure of preparing applications and accounting for project funds. It was indicated that it would be justified to create permanent consultation points at the level of cities, towns or districts. These opinions were expressed in the administrative units possessing quite a big experience and successes in obtaining EU funds.

Some institutions did not have staff with the qualifications enabling them to prepare applications and this task was commissioned to external companies. The preparation of technical documents was quite often moved to the third parties on the basis of the Public Procurement Law. High costs of the preparation of technical project documents, e.g. construction designs, were stressed. The institution applying for the EU resources runs the risk connected with financing of these costs in the situation when the project is rejected.

Some respondents indicated that the application documents use very special language that can create serious difficulty for the people with non-economic education or not having specialized preparation in this area.

The difficulties connected with the necessity of translating the documentation into a foreign language were mentioned. The need to improve the adjustment of the application generator to the specific character of Polish or German language requirements (e.g. taking into consideration different length of words in these languages) was also talked about.

Mixed feelings are generated among Polish beneficiaries implementing programs together with German partners. Respondents stated that Polish and German institutions must meet unequal requirements and the formal requirements that German institutions must meet in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are more lenient. Polish partners must supply more documents than German partners. The applications do not differ, but Polish institutions must supply more attachments concerning, for example, financial premises and technical documentation of the project. To some extent the internal laws in both countries are responsible for this situation - Polish regulations require gathering more documents than German ones. The interviews conducted indicate that this more lenient treatment of German institution is perceived as a kind of discrimination against Polish institutions, although these increased requirements for the Polish sides result in swifter implementation of projects among by Polish institutions than by German ones.

Legislative issues constitute a separate group of problems, especially the issue of conformity with the Public Procurement Law. These problems often result from a complete lack of knowledge of the employees preparing project documents. That is why the budget is often written without taking into consideration particular provisions of the Public Procurement Law. The beneficiaries are sometimes

unaware that the EU funds are obliged to follow the rules connected with regulations from the Public Procurement Law. Thus there is a need and obligation to rationally arrange spendings. This problem is more rarely spotted by the employees of the territorial self-government units who possess practical and theoretical preparation in this area. These problems are often a novelty to many institutions. This is indicated by, for example, academics in the institutions of higher education who are obliged to follow the regulations of the Public procurement Law, because they have administrative positions in the projects (heads/coordinators of projects).

The beneficiaries stressed that each project should be consulted with expert in public procurement before the preparation of the task-based budget and then during its implementation. However, it often happened that this was the task that burdened the employees who additionally dealt with the project and did not have proper knowledge and preparation concerning the Public Procurement Law and the procurement procedures, including procedures involving estimate values of commission below the equivalent of €14,000 in zlotys (article 4, point 8 of the Law). Moreover, the employees, and especially those from outside the territorial self-government units, could not count on the support of the departments which in their offices deal with public procurement, because the project was treated as a separate activity co-financed from external resources, which meant that it was beyond their normal duties.

To sum up, contrary to common opinions, the application process, especially the preparation of the application together with the attachments, did not create significant barriers to the access to the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for most of the potential beneficiaries. However, from among the indicated problems, one should emphasize staff shortages in particular units and the lack of expertise knowledge necessary for the appropriate preparation of the application (e.g. in an area of public procurement).

At present, the institutions involved in the research do not have big experiences connected with the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. First applications have been approved this year. Thus the analysis of technical and formal issues connected with the implementation of the programmes was partly based on the experiences of the institutions participating in the implementation of the INTRREG IIIA and INTERREG IIIC Programmes.

Among the difficulties emerging during the implementation of the projects, the respondents first of all emphasized the need to pre-finance project activities. They indicated a very long period that passed from the moment of submitting the request for payment to the transfer of financial resources. It was highlighted that in some cases this period exceeded one year. In the case of one of the projects, the

period of prefinancing lasted even two years, taking into account the earlier start of its implementation and a long period of processing the application. Due to the lack of free financial resources in appropriate amount, the beneficiaries faced the necessity to take bank credits which was connected with bearing the costs of interest and commission. The beneficiaries expected that the transfer of resources within the next call for proposals within the European Territorial Cooperation would be swifter, and in the next programming period a down-payment system would be introduced.

Financial difficulties in the implementation of the projects were especially strongly felt by non-governmental organizations, which constitutes the main barrier in their participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. Territorial self-government units did not mention any problems with pre-financing – they possessed sufficient own resources or they obtained credits without much effort. The offer of credits on preferential terms from the Polish National Economy Bank earmarked for pre-financing of the European projects is assessed very positively.

The obligation to secure one's own contribution to the project creates some barrier. However, the respondents agree that one's own contribution is a much smaller difficulty than the necessity of providing pre-financing. Some budgetary units obtained resources for this purpose from the national budget or from the budgets of particular self-governments for this purpose. Other, non-governmental organizations among them, felt that one's own contribution is a serious barrier for the participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

During the implementation of the projects in the cooperation with foreign partners no cultural barriers were encountered. The respondents stressed many times that the partners of Polish institutions are the people willing to solve concrete problems.

There were no greater difficulties connected with communication. The language barrier occurred rarely in the direct contacts. However, there were some problems linked with the translation of technical and financial documents. The problems also appeared with the written language, for example in the case of joint publications, leaflets and information materials. Sometimes, the linguistic problems caused misunderstandings connected with the clear defining of task and duties of particular people and institutions. A diversified level of language command caused some problems during international meetings. The cooperation with German partners was based on the German language. Swedes and Lithuanians communicated with Poles in English. Sometimes Lithuanians communicated with Poles in Polish. With Czechs and Slovaks there was no linguistic barrier in direct contacts.

Clear cultural and legal barriers were signalled as far as Kaliningrad Oblast was concerned with which the establishment of cooperation in cross-border programs was possible. These barriers were visas, ineffective postal service and communication, differences in legal regulations (especially concerning

children's rights), different attitude towards cross-border cooperation. Not always could these obstacles be overcome in a satisfactory way.

Sometimes a great distance between the partners becomes an obstacle, e.g. a considerable transportation distance from Gdańsk to Kretynga on the coast of the Baltic Sea where the Lithuanian partner was situated (the trip leads across the Polish-Lithuanian border sidestepping the Kaliningrad Oblast). This is the factor that made cooperation more difficult, though not impossible. Some problems with the Lithuanian postal service were also indicated.

To sum up, in the context of the project management, the beneficiaries stress the need to limit the number of current documents which will make it possible to devote more attention to various actual aspects of the project implementation. Linguistic and cultural barriers which would block international cooperation do not exist.

The majority of comments concerning the stage of accounting for the projects resources were about the system of inspections and accounting. Similarly as in the case of the comments concerning the realisation of the projects, they were based on the experiences of beneficiaries from the participation in the Community Initiative INTERREG IIIA/C.

The opinions concerning the system of balancing the projects resources were diversified. Next to the very critical assessments, there were also such ones that indicated that at this stage no bigger problems were encountered. It is worth noticing that critical opinions were formulated also by the beneficiaries with greater experience in the implementation of the EU projects.

As far as the inspections were concerned, the majority of the beneficiaries assessed positively the way of conducting them, though only in very few cases the inspection played also an educational role – the inspectors offered valuable and matter-of-fact instructions and information concerning especially the ways of preparation and keeping of project documents and of solving concrete problems.

Some beneficiaries were inspected a few times by various institutions – Internal Revenue Service and Voivodship Office among them. They stressed that not infrequently the opinions issued by various inspectors were contradictory.

Quite often the respondents complained that project accounting procedures are onerous – with complicated financial reporting model forms – that they are difficult to calculate in Euro, time-consuming in describing documents (invoices), requiring production of multiple copies and generally full of bureaucracy. They stressed that during the implementation of the projects the reporting documentation changed.

Duties connected with technical handling of projects often rested on the employees having their own job descriptions not including projects. So this was their additional work. Especially academics at the institutions of higher education stressed the burden of dealing with office matters, accounting, reports, financial flows and assisting controllers. At this time the actual activities of the projects, scientific and implementation research among them, were of the second importance.

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[REDACTED] To sum up, it seems that the most important postulate of the beneficiaries in the context of inspecting projects and accounting for their resources is a greater information, advisory and educational support.

Motivations and benefits from participation in the European Territorial Cooperation

The researched institutions were characterized by considerable pragmatism in connection with the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. They indicated quite in unison that the main reason which made them join the projects was willingness to carry out some undertakings connected with solving concrete problems with their relatively small financial contribution. It primarily concerned the projects as a result of which “hard” results were obtained such as constructions, extensions, modernization and improvement of transportation and communication infrastructure, environmental protection, purchase of equipment and others. They indicated that thanks to the EU sources these problems could be solved with smaller own financial contribution and stressed positive impact of the big proportion (85%) of the EU resources in financing projects. Territorial self-government units emphasized a positive character of utilizing the EU financial resources in view of the tight budgets of cities, towns, regions or districts. In most cases, it was stated that the implementation of projects would not have been possible or would have had to be postponed due to the limitations in budget. The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes boosted hopes especially in towns and districts situated close to the borders. The need for them was especially emphasized by administrative units of the areas that were affected by considerable unemployment, seeing in the ETC a chance to overcome structural problems (“we were waiting for them as for the salvation”).

The respondents also mentioned other benefits motivating to apply for the resource for the development of cooperation with foreign institutions, although usually they were of smaller significance. Personal benefits of people dealing with handling the projects were stressed – increased qualifications and acquiring new skills thanks to gaining new professional experiences.

The increase in the prestige of the applicants was highlighted many times, especially of public institutions of higher education. The possibility of conducting research on a supranational scale and of carrying out the tasks which were not placed in the basic budget of the institution was stressed. Motivations were also connected with initiatives of foreign partners known from earlier cooperation.

Various opinions concerning the influence of the superior bodies and the founding bodies on taking a decision about applying for the EU resources. Generally, one can state that superior bodies do not motivate their subordinate units to undertake international cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation. The lack of involvement in applying for the resources from the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes does not endanger personal positions of the top management of these bodies.

In case of the institutions situated closer to the border, motivation to establish cooperation with a foreign partner was greater due to the necessity of solving practical problems together, for example the construction of a joint network of bicycle paths or provision of water.

The selection of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, or earlier the Community Initiative INTERREG IIIA/C, resulted primarily from the themes of designed enterprises, connected with cooperation with foreign institutions. To some extent this choice was also motivated by the opinion that the competition in applying for these resources is smaller than, for example, in the Regional Operational Programmes, and that the resources from these programmes are easier to obtain than in other European programmes. This concerned mainly the beneficiaries who were situated in the districts near the border and who found it easier to incorporate the cross-border element into their projects.

To sum up, Polish beneficiaries of cross-border and transregional programmes join projects with very concrete expectations, primarily counting on the so-called “hard” effects of these actions. However, they take into consideration also other factors such as the increase in the prestige of the institution or opportunity of professional development. While noticing other sources of co-financing the projects that are available within the National Strategic Reference Framework, they appreciate the possibility to participate in the projects which are international in character, even if they do not bring direct and measurable financial benefits. It is worth mentioning that presented selected benefits resulting from the implementation of cross-border and transregional programmes refer not only to the direct actions of the beneficiary, but most importantly they contribute to solving concrete problems in particular regions. Additionally, they are conducive to the improvement of the situation in the key areas for economic, social and territorial development of the European Community (in such areas as environmental protection, entrepreneurship, research and development, innovativeness and job creation to mention a few).

As the beneficiaries often indicate, the implementation of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation contributes to yielding additional effects which are not directly connected with the project outcomes and products planned in the application for financing.

The following are the most important:

1. The improvement of utilization of national public and private resources. The structural funds, including the European Regional Development Fund, co-financing the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, constitute a significant element of budgets at the EU, national and regional levels. At the regional and local levels, the implementation of the projects that are socially significant is an advantage for the participants in a socio-economic life, and their success is identified with the representatives of managing and implementing institutions, as well as of the designers of the project (beneficiaries). These procedures are conducive to the transparency of the public investment implementation procedures and are also utilized in national projects. As a result the utilization of national public and private resources improves.
2. Dissemination of the best practices. Those experiences gained in working with the EU Funds, and with the European Territorial Cooperation among them, increase the chances of potential beneficiaries of obtaining grants in the calls for proposals announced by various international institutions and organizations such as the World Bank, the UN Offices, the European Commission, Coordinating Offices of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, EEA Financial Mechanism and the Swiss Financial Instrument. Simultaneously, the effectiveness and active searching for resources, as well as long-term strategies in place of single uncoordinated actions are promoted.
3. Partnership Development. Utilizing the instruments of the cohesion policy is conducive to developing partnership and to implementing joint projects by private and public institutions (also on the basis of principles of the public-private partnership). A unique role in this process falls on territorial self-government units and on their subordinate institutions which implement or coordinate a significant portion of the projects which are social in character at the regional and local levels. The European Territorial Cooperation projects contribute to the development of international partnerships in their unique way.
4. Building of the civil society. The European Territorial Cooperation programmes are conducive to the building of the civil society through supporting foundations, associations and other non-profit organizations. The EU funds create an opportunity of the development of non-governmental organisations in the areas requiring considerable financial resources, and at the same time remaining beyond the interest of private business institutions. Providing additional financial resources makes it possible to implement innovative projects, piloting projects and the projects which are socially significant. The possibility of obtaining external financing is conducive to hiring

highly-qualified groups of specialists and creates lasting foundations for functioning of such a type of institutions and organizations.

5. Support for unprivileged groups. The positive effect of the EU projects, and also of the European Territorial Cooperation, is the assistance for the handicapped and for the people at risk of social exclusion, as well as for the organizations working with them.
6. Building of the information society. Supporting building of the information society are both very important effects of the projects co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. These goals were reflected in the programming documents for 2007-2013.
7. Promotion of regions. The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes create opportunities of promoting regions and their products on an international market. It can bring long-term benefits consisting in increasing the number of investment, improving touristic attractiveness and increasing interest in the culture, tradition and the richness of particular areas.
8. Development of the system of education. The European Territorial Cooperation creates new opportunities of supporting the development of the European educational system at all levels. Scholarship programmes, language courses, international exchange, trainings in companies and supranational institutions, distance learning using the latest e-learning technologies, life-long learning, infrastructural development of educational institutions, using IT in teaching and many other forms of support can to a large extent increase the quality and effectiveness of education.
9. Development of the institutions of business surroundings. A considerable part of the structural assistance for companies reaches them by means of the institutions of business surroundings. It is conducive to creating the new forms of services and developing the support network, to carrying out projects financing research and development sphere, to creating and developing industrial and technological parks, incubators of entrepreneurship, regional strategies of innovations and to the cooperation within regional and local industrial clusters.
10. Environmental protection. The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in a unique way co-finance investments in the field of environmental and natural resources protection. The promotion of the idea of sustainable development in the projects co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and organized within the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes is an important contribution of the member states and of the European Commission in the improvement of the condition of the natural environment in the European Union.
11. Supporting culture, arts and national heritage. The European projects promote culture, arts and the national heritage in the national, regional and local dimensions. In particular, these are the investments that enable revitalization of sites of special historical and cultural significance. The structural funds constitute an enormous opportunity to improve the condition of monuments, to develop cultural infrastructure and to increase the standard of cultural institutions. The role of culture in the development of regions adjacent to the borders is multifaceted. Firstly, culture

constitute the foundations for building of the society of knowledge; secondly, cultural services are one of the most dynamically developing sectors of economy. At the same time, the projects promoting the equality of chances, tolerance, freedom are implemented, as well as the projects promoting the idea of the European integration and the knowledge about Europe among its citizens.

12. Scientific research. It is worth drawing attention to the possibilities of supporting scientific research within the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. Numerous studies confirm that in the long run the countries investing in science, research and innovativeness increase their prosperity. Thus these programmes by financing scientific research contribute to the improvement of socio-economic situation of countries and regions – beneficiaries of this assistance.

To sum up, the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, due to their supranational dimension and their wide scope of support, may contribute to achieving one of the main goals of the EU regional policy, i.e. to the increase of the socio-economic cohesion level on the area of the European Union.

6.4. THE FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH AT THE LEVEL OF TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

6.4.1. The methodology of the research and the structure of the research sample – beneficiaries of the Baltic Sea Region Programme and the Central Europe Programme

8 respondents were involved in the research:

- 4 beneficiaries of the Baltic Sea Region Programme;
- 4 beneficiaries of the Central Europe Programme.

In the research, the selection of respondent was done in order to secure appropriate representation of various types of institutions in accordance with their legal status. The following table presents the structure of the research sample.

Table 6.: Structure of research sample

Researched institutions	Lead Partner's country of origin	Countries participating in the project
Baltic Sea Region Programme		
Wroclaw Politechnics – Wroclaw Centre of Technology Transfer	Germany	Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Norway, Sweden
Marshal Office of the Lower Silesia Voivodship	Germany	Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Norway, Sweden
All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions; Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity"	Finland	Germany, Sweden, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Russia, Belgium
Łódź Technical University	Finland	Finland, Denmark, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Latvia, Russia
Central Europe Programme		
Gryf Forum Foundation	Germany	Germany, Hungary, Slovak Republic, Austria, Slovenia, Italy
Institute of Logistics and Storage	Italy	Italy, Poland, Germany, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Czech Republic
Amber Road Cities Association	Italy	Poland, Italy, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Austria, Germany
Silesian Centre of Agricultural Counselling in Częstochowa	Germany	Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak republic, Austria, Ukraine

Source: own source

The research was conducted on the basis of the In-depth Interview with the interview scenario. The evaluator did not encounter any obstacles during the research.

6.4.2. General characteristics of the research sample

The group of respondents was characterized by some common features which determined the findings of the research and differentiated it from the institutions involved in transregional and cross-border programmes.

- Firstly – all researched entities possessed some experience in implementation of projects in international partnerships, and their participation in the current project resulted from continuing their cooperation with foreign partners.
- Secondly – the researched institutions possessed sufficient institutional base which allowed them to carry the burden of their own contributions or of “crediting” the implementation of their projects.
- Lastly – the researched beneficiaries possessed at least the minimum number of qualified staff providing correct communication with the Leading Partner.

6.4.3. The assessment of the management system from the point of view of the beneficiaries of the Baltic Sea Region Programme and of the Central Europe Programme

The assessment of the aspect of informing about the Baltic Sea Region and the Central Europe Programme

a) Websites and programme documents

The complicated arrangement of the websites was indicated, as well as very difficult access to current documents. The respondents remarked that the databases of partners and projects that are placed on the websites are updated too rarely. The website devoted to the Baltic Sea Region Programme gathered more positive assessment than the website devoted to the Central Europe Programme.

The documents of the programmes were assessed as clear. The need to use uniform translation of financial terms in English into relevant phrases in other languages which will secure unambiguous interpretation was indicated. These translations should take into consideration a specific character of Polish accounting.

b) Information meetings

The need to organize a greater number of workshop meetings enabling the discussion of particular problems and examples was indicated. These meetings would also create better conditions for beneficiaries to get acquainted with each other.

c) The role of the Joint Technical Secretariats and Consultation Points in the area covered by information actions

The respondents indicated that the Joint Technical Secretaries and Consultation Points perform a passive function as far as the contacts with potential beneficiaries in the regions and informing about the possibility of starting a partnership are concerned.

They indicated the lack of clear division of competencies and of sufficient qualifications of people employed in these institutions. The main problem which was indicated was the inability to obtain an unambiguous reply to the questions connected with details concerning qualification of costs.

Additionally, the respondents stressed that there is a lack of the system supporting promotion of Polish institutions as reliable and competent Lead Partners. It was emphasized that Polish institutions feel worse, because they lack some support from the effectively functioning structures that operate on the basis of the principles close to those that foreign partners use.

As one of the main problems in the area of searching for and building partnerships is the lack of financial support for the participation in the meetings which are mainly organized abroad as part of the project management and for individual meetings. The possibility of including these costs in the project was perceived by the respondents as insufficient for Polish beneficiaries, because their skills as Lead Partners are being shaped now, and this results in lesser certainty of success in applying for the projects and of claiming expenses.

To sum up – limited and closed system of informing about the Baltic Sea Region Programme and the Central Europe Programme makes them exclusive and only the most experienced Polish institutions gain access to them. This system does not generate the participation of new beneficiaries and does not contribute to the increase in knowledge about possibilities that the European Territorial Cooperation offers to regional development.

Regional authorities insufficiently support the participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

Assessment of the aspect of submitting applications within the Baltic Sea Region Programme and the Central Europe Programme

The respondents assessed the application form and other application documents. Due to the fact that none of the researched institutions played a role of a Lead Partner, the full assessment of the application process was not obtained. The respondents did not indicate any problems connected with the construction of the application form.

The researched group indicated the fact that the existing division of costs leads to difficulties at the stage of implementation of projects and does not create the possibility of utilizing the experiences gained while constructing project budgets within other programmes financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The 6th Framework programme was presented as the one that had a model application form and procedure.

The respondents critically assessed the role of the members of the Monitoring Committees as far as supporting Polish beneficiaries at the application stage is concerned. They mentioned frequent changes of people on those positions, which makes it impossible to build relations with the members from other countries and to perform effective lobbying.

The respondents expressed the opinion that a more active role of the Polish members of the Monitoring Committees would be a factor encouraging Polish institutions to assume the roles of Lead Partners.

Institutions of higher education as well as research and development centers, as the entities possessing an intellectual base to play the role of Lead Partners, stressed that there is no such a system that motivates institutions to participate in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, the perception of which is, on the one hand, worse than in the case of the Framework Programmes and on the other hand they mean more requirements and bureaucracy.

The level of remuneration referred to the average one in a particular institution, together with difficulties, responsibility and time consumed by coordination of international projects, does not motivate employees of these institutions to submit applications within the European Territorial Cooperation. The point system within parametric assessment of scientific units, where the size of projects, level of their difficulty and the time or their implementation is not taken into consideration, is another demotivating factor.

To sum up, there is no system of stimuli and support for Polish institutions so that they will be willing to become Lead Partners.

Polish beneficiaries cannot transfer the experiences gained in other programmes, because there is no uniformity of cost categories in all programmes financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Assessment of the aspect of project implementation within the Baltic Sea Region Programme and the Central Europe Programme

The researched institutions did not indicate problems concerning logistics and substantial aspects of implemented activities. The greatest number of difficulties at the stage of the project implementation is caused by the financing system:

- The necessity of having one's own financial contribution and the lack of the first down-payment eliminate those institutions that do not have financial base (it mainly concerns non-governmental organizations).
- The existence of various project accounting systems in various countries participating in a partnership (more detailed requirements for Polish beneficiaries) leads to the situation in which Polish partners delay the qualification of the whole partnership, and sometimes they are excluded from particular reports, which in turn leads to disturbing their financial liquidity.
- The directive of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy concerning the level of travel and accommodation costs (Dz.U. of 2002, no. 236, pos. 1990 with further changes) puts Polish institutions in a worse position when it comes to activities connected with trips abroad.
- Difficulties with proper referring English financial terms to the proper terms in Polish.
- The current audit system in Poland used within the European Territorial Cooperation contributes to lengthening the procedures of acquiring auditing certificate by Polish partners. There are the following reasons for this situation:
 - centralized audit – no possibility of conducting audits by external, independent units;
 - frequent changes of auditors during project implementation;
 - auditors possessing no knowledge about specific character of accounting systems used by particular beneficiaries.
- The principles of qualifying and managing finances do not take into account the following issues:
 - specific character of projects lasting many years, as well as economic and social changes;
 - using the added value by jointly organizing activities from various projects which are financed from various sources;
 - the status of an institution and accounting conditions adjusted to it.

Polish beneficiaries have a feeling that they are in a worse position in connection with additional bureaucratization of an accounting and reporting system resulting from national regulations. The centralized audit system and insufficiently effective Joint Technical Secretariats (employees lack knowledge; frequent rotation of employees; lack of updated information about changes in qualifying costs) generate additional problems.

To sum up, Polish institutions participating in the present programming period in the Baltic Sea Region Programme and in the Central Europe Programme possess a very big potential concerning actual implementation of projects and functioning in international partnerships.

The existing financing and accounting system constitute the main barrier in utilizing the existing potential.

6.4.4. Motivations and benefits resulting from the participation in the European Territorial Cooperation

█ The respondents, when asked about their motivations and benefits resulting from the participation in the programmes at the regional level, had difficulty in indicating adequate examples. This may prove that there is no awareness of the main goal of the European Territorial Cooperation.

The most often indicated motivations and benefits include:

- reaching the goals that without financing by the European Territorial Cooperation could not be reached by beneficiaries;
- taking over know-how concerning project management from Lead Partners;
- developing contacts and perspectives for future projects;
- professional development of people involved in implementation.

█ **To sum up, there are no systematic actions directed at Polish potential beneficiaries which show benefits resulting from the participation in the European Territorial Cooperation at the levels of an institution and of a region.**

6.5. SWOT ANALYSIS

Table 7.: SWOT analysis

<i>Strengths of ETC Programmes for regional development of Poland</i>	<i>Weaknesses of ETC Programmes for regional development of Poland</i>
Increasing interest in international cooperation and utilization of foreign good practices.	Insufficient knowledge of potential applicants about the principles and practical benefits of the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes for the socio-economic development at the level of single institutions and regions.
Wide knowledge of the principles and needs of the beneficiaries of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes among the staff of the Joint Technical Secretariats of the ETC Programmes.	Inadequate promotion of the European Territorial Cooperation and the potential of its programmes among potential beneficiaries.
Easy access to information and effectively functioning system of trainings and meetings assisting in matching partners within the European Territorial Cooperation, open to possible updating and increasing effectiveness.	Insufficient communication and cooperation between the institutions managing and implementing the ETC Programmes and the applicants and potential applicants.
High awareness of the significance of the culture of evaluation and constant monitoring of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes implementation processes.	Unclear criteria of the selection of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation.
Increasing awareness of the significance of the utilization of the European Territorial Cooperation resources.	Long and complicated reporting and financial procedures.
Increasing skills assisting in establishing contacts with foreign partners in order to jointly implement projects, among them increasing command of foreign languages and ability to manage projects.	Lack of stable financial situation of the majority of Polish beneficiaries and trouble with guaranteeing their own contribution.
Integration of partners and so-called associated partners in order to better implement projects.	
<i>Opportunities for ETC Programmes in the context of regional development of Poland</i>	<i>Threats of ETC Programmes in the context of regional development of Poland</i>
Rich database of European good practices concerning preparation and implementation of the projects within the European Territorial Cooperation.	Individualized, aimed at quick effect attitude of partners from the "old European Union" towards the implementation of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation which involve Polish institutions.
Full legislative database at the levels of the European Union, Poland and the regions, regulating the cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation.	The huge scale of current needs in the infrastructural areas, which causes the projects with a long implementation perspectives to be moved to the position of lesser importance.
Huge involvement in the preparation of applications to the European Territorial Cooperation of the so-called Associated Partners which are important supporters in the implementation of the ETC Programmes.	The necessity of resisting public pressure whose priority is to meet current regional needs and to resign from long-term goals determined in the European Territorial Cooperation.
Evening out social, economic and cultural differences among partners from Poland and other EU states.	Great discrepancy between project declarations and a real perception of the significance of the project for partners and regional development.
Increasing understanding and acceptance of the goals of the European integration.	

Source: own source

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the conducted research the following problems were successfully diagnosed. These problems are significant as far as the benefits resulting from the participation of Polish institutions in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are concerned:

The European Territorial Cooperation inadequately contributes to the regional development of Poland.

Conclusion 1:

The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are known among potential beneficiaries in Poland, mainly among the voivodship self-governments and the institutions of higher education. However, their significance for the regional development is not adequately appreciated.

It stems from the following reasons:

- firstly – international cooperation do not present any value for most public entities;
- secondly – the availability and ubiquitousness of structural funds nowadays push the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes to the position of secondary importance;
- thirdly – the application and implementation procedures for the projects within the European Territorial Cooperation are complicated and difficult;
- lastly – Polish institutions lack financial means necessary to secure their own financial contributions, to provide funds for the implementation of the projects and wait 12 months for the reimbursement of the costs.

Recommendation 1:

The change of the situation described above requires deep systemic changes and commencing the integrated actions at the national and regional levels. Moreover, it is recommended that the widespread public discussion concerning the regional development after 2013 - when the structural funds are said to be significantly lower - should begin. (For example: In the budget of Opole Voivodship in 2007-2013 the structural funds amount to 60%, so it is difficult to expect that the regions will treat the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and the structural funds at the national level on an equal basis.)

The European Territorial Cooperation inadequately contributes to solving particular problems common for all regions of the European Union.

Conclusion 2:

The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes are one of the very few EU instruments which involve partners from various countries and motivate to undertake international cooperation. Thanks to joint implementation of the projects European integration and partnership become a reality. However, it seems that the European Territorial Cooperation do not comprehensively meet the challenges facing the European regions. Thus the exchange of experiences between partners in the projects financed by the European Territorial Cooperation should contribute to solving territorial problems at the regional level, e.g. ageing societies, limiting emissions of CO₂, energy independence on the local scale. Therefore, the European Territorial Cooperation should be the response of the regions to the progressing global processes whose impact reaches beyond the European Union.

Recommendation 2:

Due to the inequalities in the socio-economic development and multifaceted character of differences between the EU member countries, the processes of European integration should be seen in the long-term perspective. However, the most efficient implementation of these processes is joint implementation of the projects focusing on the basic European problems. Although the list of these problems is well-known, the efforts should be concentrated on presenting practical examples and methods of their resolution. This goal should be directed at by intensified information and promotion measures, in conducting of which all the institutions of the European Territorial Cooperation (Joint Technical Secretariats, Monitoring Committees, InterAct), as well as the Polish Ministry of Regional Development and local administrations, should be involved.

The European Territorial Cooperation inadequately involves the European Union external policy.

Conclusion 3:

The European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in their present form involve partners from the European Union and the countries directly bordering the European Union. The European Territorial Cooperation does not fully use the synergy of cooperation within the EU and the countries from outside the EU. For instance, in the cross-border programmes only selected regions can cooperate, while it would often be beneficial for their development if they could utilize the experiences and achievements

of the regions from other areas of the European Union, which at present are not included in the programmes.

Recommendation 3:

In the opinion of the research team, the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes should integrate the European regional development policy with the external EU policy, therefore the actions within the European Territorial Cooperation should be taken in many directions, which for example may mean possible extension of the transnational programs – BSR Programme and Central Europe Programme – to the neighbouring countries or it may mean integration of the Eastern Partnership Programme, which is so important from the Polish point of view, with the European Territorial Cooperation. This last recommendation comes down to making it possible for the countries of the Eastern Partnership to participate in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes on the basis of the rules for the countries from outside the European Union.

The European Territorial Cooperation inadequately generates intersectoral cooperation.

Conclusion 4:

In the projects implemented within the European Territorial Cooperation, there are mainly partners from the same field that cooperate with one another – institutions of higher education cooperate with other institutions of higher education and R&D institutes, public administration collaborate with its counterparts in other countries. These are truly rare undertakings which would involve, for example, public administration at various levels, various types of schools (academic centres, high schools or middle schools) and non-governmental organizations. It seems that the reason for this is the fact that the intersectoral cooperation, that is the cooperation of institutions with different specific characters, goals and value systems, would give rise to such complications which together with the already complicated ETC procedures make it impossible to cope with. Thus a conclusion can be drawn that the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes inadequately meet the needs of intersectoral cooperation.

Recommendation 4:

It is recommended that the conditions of application selection – the system of project assessment and selection – should support commencing intersectoral cooperation. The recommended approach is in full agreement with the EU horizontal policies and will enable to achieve a spill-over effect in a short time.

Introducing any alterations which are in the regions' interests is difficult because the management of the European Territorial Cooperation is conducted at the level of the European Union.

Conclusion 5:

The system of managing the European Territorial Cooperation is assessed as complicated and even as making cooperation more difficult. It especially concerns the issues of financial procedures, audits and reimbursement of expenses connected with the implementation of projects. The issues concerning promotion and information measures are also controversial. It seems that there are possibilities of moving some operational managing functions from the level of the European Union to the national level.

More difficulties in managing and promoting cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation can be found in diversified requirements towards beneficiaries from various countries in which particular programmes are implemented, and in inadequate matching of the areas of support of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with the needs of beneficiaries in particular regions, especially concerning specific geographical, economic and social characters of these areas.

The member states, and especially the local and regional authorities, cope with a number of problems that has resulted from the diversified legal systems functioning in particular member states.

Recommendations 5:

It is recommended that the Marshal Offices, as the institutions that run the Regional Operational Programmes, should engage in the activities of all European Territorial Cooperation projects that are implemented in their regions. In order to achieve an added value for regional development, the synergy of the European Territorial Cooperation and the development policy implemented in the region is desired.

Moreover, it is recommended that the campaigns informing about the achievements of the Programme at the regional level should be organized. So-called "regional success stories" should be presented using more spectacular visual means than only websites of local administration or of the Programme.

Building local identity in the European context, territorial integration at the regional level and placing local problems in the European context are necessary tasks, although it is difficult to carry them out with the available administration tools.

Regional authorities should disseminate good examples of international cooperation, which apart from the declarations about partnership brought real benefits to the region. The visualization of joint actions

in the local media, on the local websites seems to be a better form of disseminating the European Territorial Cooperation than their descriptions in English on the websites of the Joint Technical Secretariats.

In order to intensify project cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation, one should consider a long-term promotion of potential Polish partners in projects which is addressed to potential foreign partners and which presents Polish institutions of higher education, cities and districts as competent entities trusted by local authorities. Public declaration of support for Polish project partners and creating a friendly atmosphere during the implementation of projects are extremely important tasks of voivodship self-governments.

Public institutions are inadequately interested in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in terms of utilizing them for the commencement of international cooperation.

Conclusion 6:

Territorial self-government units, institutions of higher education and scientific institutes, which constitute a main group of potential beneficiaries of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, are moderately interested in undertaking international cooperation.

Recommendation 6:

In order to promote and popularize the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes among potential beneficiaries, the following are recommended :

- undertaking intensive promotional actions at the regional levels in close cooperation with public administration at the regional region;
- organizing workshops and trainings;
- activating contact points;
- placing instruction programmes and how-to manuals for the applicants on the websites in the languages of all countries involved in the programme;
- preparing a dictionary of basic concepts of the Programme, of e-mail models, etc.
- gathering good practices from the implementation of the projects within the European Territorial Cooperation;
- conducting a comparative analysis of tender procedure in the countries involved in the European Territorial Cooperation, especially from outside the European Union.

Information and promotion measures organized by the institutions implementing the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes in Poland are not supported by the institutions on the regional level.

Conclusion 7:

An inadequate interest of Polish applicants in the European Territorial Programmes, especially different than cross-border ones, results mainly from the lack of knowledge about them. Although there are good and clear websites of the Programmes, which are run by the Joint Technical Secretariats, this form of promotion is decidedly insufficient. There is no presentation, especially of the examples, of chances that exist in international cooperation for local communities. Thus it is necessary to transfer the macro-premises of the policy of the European Territorial Cooperation onto the level of solving concrete local problems. The utilization of such a perspective by regional institutions may best assist in popularization of the Programmes and in creating an authentic need to undertake international cooperation.

One of the main problems in the area of searching for and building international project partnership is the lack of financial support for Polish institutions so that they can participate in information meetings organized abroad as part of project management and in individual meetings. The possibility of including these costs in the project preparatory costs is insufficient for Polish institutions, whose skills in becoming Lead Partners are still being shaped, which results in smaller success rate of their applications and in lesser chances of claiming these expenses.

A restricted and closed system of informing about transnational programmes makes them exclusive - access to them have only the most experienced Polish institutions. The present information system does not generate the participation of new beneficiaries and does not contribute to the increase of knowledge about the opportunities that the European Territorial Cooperation creates for regional development. As a result, there is a low awareness among Polish institutions of benefits for regional development that the participation in the European Territorial Cooperation creates.

Recommendation 7:

It is recommended that local administration in cooperation with the Joint Technical Secretariats and the members of the ETC Monitoring Committees should organize information meetings and cooperation fairs, which already in the information stage would encourage potential beneficiaries to submit applications. presentations of good practices within the European Territorial Cooperation, as well as examples of international cooperation contributing to regional development are necessary. The examples of good practices are better promotion tools than any lectures or seminars.

Moreover, the traditional information meeting organized by, for example, the Joint Technical Secretariat should be replaced by “model-meeting” type of seminars in the regions which are closer to workshops in form. They should be organized with the participation of local authorities and during these seminars the rules of partners' cooperation and plans of submitting joint projects which are important for regional development would be worked out.

It is necessary to increase the role of Consultation Points in getting potential partners together and in dissemination of information about the programmes.

It is also recommended that the strategy of promoting potential Polish beneficiaries among appropriate foreign partners should be created and then coordinated with the strategy of promoting Poland abroad which is carried out by the Departments of Promotion, Trade and Investment in the Polish Embassies.

Application and reporting procedures in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, and especially in transnational and transregional programmes, are difficult

Conclusion 8:

The level of complexity of application, implementation and financial reporting procedures is a barrier for applicants.

The issues of a proper construction of budgets and of paying expenses in accordance with the public procurement law constitute significant obstacles in implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. Numerous studies and analyses indicate that Polish beneficiaries tend to avoid, for example, multicriteria procedures of selecting contractors in the procedure of public procurement and they excessively utilize non-competitive forms of selection.

One can conclude, that despite so many critical opinions concerning the system of public procurement, it can play a positive role in the European Territorial Cooperation, contributing to increased transparency of funds utilization and to increased economic effectiveness of project implementation.

Reporting and implementation inspections make up a special group of problems in the management and implementation of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation. The quality of inspection activities is varied, and it seems that the most important goal that inspecting teams dealing with beneficiaries should pursue is supporting beneficiaries through education and counselling (in addition to securing the conformity of performed actions with the schedule and budget).

Recommendation 8:

In order to fully utilize the developmental potential existing in the European Territorial Cooperation, one should consider:

- two-stage procedures of application and introduction of other organizational facilitating elements;
- unification of inspection requirements taking into consideration specific characters of various sectors;
- introduction of educational and informative activities concerning project implementation and financial reporting into inspecting procedures;
- checking qualifications and organizing continual trainings for inspectors;
- organizing trainings for beneficiaries concerning documentation requirements.

Moreover, the links between the system of public procurement and the realization of the programmes co-financed by the European Territorial Cooperation should be reinforced through:

- intensive trainings for the beneficiaries concerning public procurement;
- promotion among beneficiaries of competitive forms of placing orders and of multicriteria forms of selection which is conducive to improving the quality of services, deliveries and construction work;
- starting support by experts for the beneficiaries of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes concerning the preparation of documents in the public procurement procedures.

Self-governments do not have enough knowledge about the effects of the projects implemented within the European Territorial Cooperation in their regions.

Conclusion 9:

Monitoring the effects of the implementation of the programmes in terms of the added value for the regional development should be conducted not only at the level of the European Commission, but also at the regional level.

The cross-border programmes attract the greatest interest of regional authorities. It is so because first of all the scope of problems that can be solved together with the institutions from the other side of the border is well-known. In the transnational or transregional there are no problems that are directly defined as “mine”, they are “European” in character which means that the European Union is responsible for solving them. There is a clear barrier in the perception of common European Union's interests and identifying them with benefits for Poland and Polish regions. At the same time the potential foreign partners are not aware of the benefits that cooperation with the Polish partners could bring them.

Recommendation 9:


It is recommended that Marshal's Offices, as the institutions running Regional Operational Programmes, should join the actions within all the European Territorial Cooperation projects implemented in their regions. The synergy of the European Territorial Cooperation and the regional developmental policy is desired for achieving an added value for regional development.

It is also recommended that campaigns informing about the achievements of the Programme at the regional level, so-called "regional success stories", should be organized using more spectacular visual resources than only websites of regional administration or of the Programmes.

The action that is necessary, yet very difficult to introduce by means of administrative tools, are building regional identity in the European context, territorial integration at the local level and placing local problems in the context of European solutions.

It is advisable that regional authorities should disseminate good examples of international cooperation, which apart from the declarations about partnership, produced concrete benefits for the region. Visualisation of joint actions in regional media and on local websites seems to be a better form of disseminating the European Territorial Cooperation than their descriptions in English on the Joint Technical Secretariats website.

In order to intensify project cooperation within the European Territorial Cooperation, one should think about long-term promotion of potential Polish partners in the projects, which will be addressed to potential foreign partners and which will present Polish institutions of higher education, cities and districts as competent entities that local authorities trust. An extremely important task of voivodship self-governments consists in declaring publicly their support for Polish project partners and creating friendly atmosphere during the implementation of projects.

 **Polish institutions eligible for participation in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes demonstrate inadequate interest in establishing project partnerships within the ETC.**

Conclusion 10:

The short-term character of international cooperation undertaken by Polish self-governments is its characteristic feature. There is a shortage of long-term strategies for development of international contacts and of skills in utilizing foreign good practices. The foreign experiences are rarely used in the implementation of Regional Operational Programmes for 2007-2013 and in the management of regions. Thus the European Territorial Cooperation Projects are not attractive for the greater part of voivodship self-governments. The lower level self-governments additionally do not have logistic skills, financial resources and willingness to establish international cooperation.

The most important reason for a limited collaboration of Polish institutions of higher education and scientific institutes with foreign partners is the legal and organizational system of higher education in Poland with all the consequences of this situation. There is no incentive and support system for Polish entities willing to play the role of Leading Partners.

Recommendation 10:

It is necessary to aim at such a technical organization of an application process which will create possibilities to utilize the experiences of Polish beneficiaries gained during their application for structural funds. It is recommended that the role of the members of the Monitoring Committee should be strengthened in the process of promoting the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes, in activation and building real lobbying for Polish beneficiaries.

Polish institutions are in a more difficult situation during the implementation of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation in comparison with the countries from EU-15 group, due to the fact that many countries from “the old Union” offers the beneficiaries of ETC Programmes from their countries partial or full refund of these institutions' own financial contributions.

Conclusion 11:

The lack of their own financial resources which would enable them to “prefinance” the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation programmes is one of the key obstacles facing Polish institutions eligible for the participation in the ETC programmes. Another obstacle is the lack of a system offering such financial resources at the level of the government or a region.

Polish beneficiaries feel that they are in a worse position due to additional bureaucratization of the accounting and reporting system resulting from the national regulations. The centralized system of audits and the Joint Technical Secretariats and auditing institutions which do not work efficiently enough generate additional problems.

Recommendation 11:

It is recommended that the system ensuring continuation of those international projects which have brought regions notable effects should be introduced at the regional level. The system of individual negotiations should replace calls for applications.

In order to make it easier for the beneficiaries, especially from Poland and other new member-states to finance the projects within the European Territorial Cooperation, the system of uniform requirements should be introduced and first of all it should even out the chances with the applicants from other countries encompassed by the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes.

Polish applicants expect support in financing their own contribution and in maintaining their financial liquidity – creation of target reserves by municipal authorities, introduction of “grants for grants”, diversification of own contribution depending on the legal status of beneficiary, introduction of down payment system and shortening of the reimbursement process.

Apart from that, the change in the Polish system of management of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes is necessary. It should alter from the bureaucratized one based on distrust to the one based on “*on honour*” declarations.

Public administration at the regional level should consider the possibility of creating a loan fund or a loan guarantee fund for those entities which plan the implementation of projects within the European Territorial Cooperation. In the case of cross-border programmes, one could think about a loan fund established together by partner countries and accessible to institutions from the countries involved in the European Territorial Cooperation.

In order to even out the chances of Polish institutions of applying for the resources to implement the projects, it is recommended that a fund should be established, similar to the Italian one, or some other form of financing entities' own contributions and/or of crediting the implementation costs of ETC Programmes should be introduced. Voivodship self-governments should consider organizing subsidies contests within which it would be possible to obtain a grant that would constitute the applicant's own contribution when applying for the funds from the European Territorial Cooperation.

The organization of the system of financial support of applicants in the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes at the level of regions would result not only in the increased interest among local beneficiaries, but also it would be a strong signal for the bodies assessing projects (members of the Monitoring Committees) that the project is important for the regional development and it would be supported by authorities.

It also seems justified to introduce changes in the auditing system through:

- decentralizing it and introducing external audits;
- individual approach in the case of beneficiaries implementing a few projects from various European Territorial Cooperation Programmes with one auditor for a particular institution.

The introduction of greater flexibility of transfers between the cost categories, approved of by a Lead Partner.

InterAct Programme inadequately contributes to the increase in the effectiveness of the management structures within the European Territorial Cooperation available to Polish beneficiaries.

Conclusion 12:

The possibilities and offer of the InterAct programme are not fully utilized by Polish institutions engaged in the management and implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation. Additionally, the Marshal Offices and lower level local administration often possess insufficient knowledge about this issue. InterAct gives life to many interesting initiatives conducive to increasing the significance of the European Territorial Cooperation for regional development in the EU countries.

Recommendation 12:

Since the representatives of the InterAct invited to the participation in the research declared a far-reaching readiness to participate in promoting the European Territorial Cooperation at the national and regional levels, it is recommended that a plan of cooperation between Poland and InterAct, which will be implemented with the interests of potential Polish applicants in mind not only by the ETC institutions, but primarily by regional, municipal and district authorities.

Moreover, a proposal to create the database of good practices in the management, implementation and promotion of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes should be offered the InterAct.

Due to the significance of Poland in the European Union and the geographical position of our country it is worth trying to set up an InterAct Point in Poland, which surely would contribute to the dissemination of the European Territorial Cooperation, to strengthening the Polish structures of the European Territorial Cooperation and to the promotion of the idea of international cooperation among Polish public institutions through commencing endeavours to solve problems important for regions and the whole of the European Union.

8. ANNEX

8.1. STANDS OF THINK-TANKS FROM GERMANY, BULGARIA, AND LATVIA IN THE CONTEXT OF COHESION POLICY AFTER 2013 PLANNING

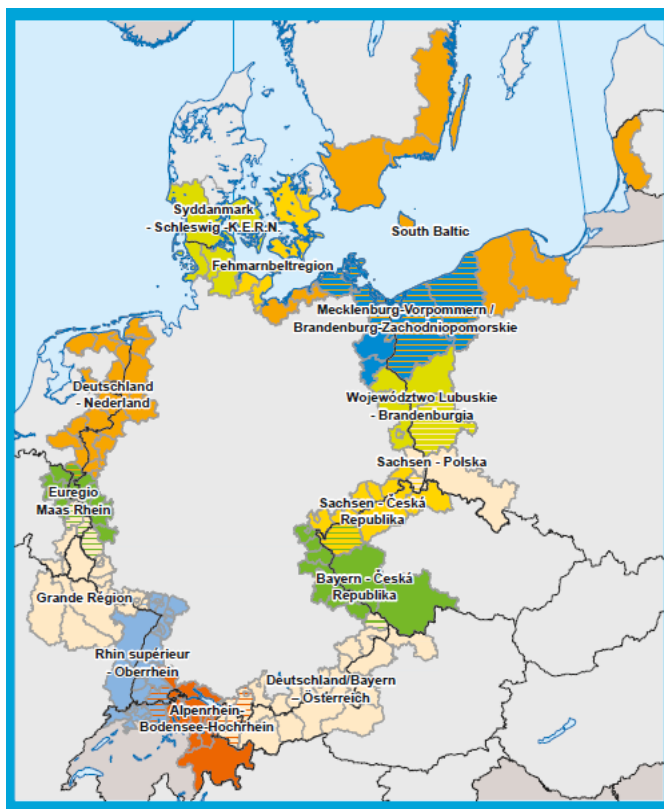
POSITION OF GERMAN THINK-TANKS TOWARDS THE COHESION POLICY AFTER 2013

In the discussion about the cohesion policy after 2013, which is taking place in Germany, its territorial dimension, qualifying systems, distribution of financial resources and way of planning programmes seem to be the most important issues.

In the opinion of the partner scientific and research institutions, involved in preparing the German position towards the cohesion policy after 2013, intensified developmental measures should be financed from the cohesion policy funds, especially those within cross-border regions and “metaregions” as, for example, the Baltic Sea region.

The analysis of the level of pan-European economic development and welfare leads to the conclusion that the policy of territorial cohesion should concentrate on supporting sustainable development and competitiveness in all EU regions. In the new financial perspective 2014-2020, the EU funds should be allocated in such a way that will make it possible to create symmetric, multipolar and sustainable Europe, an first of all Europe aiming at cooperation.

Thanks to their involvement in the implementation of the European Territorial Cooperation, German regions learn from their European partners and share their experiences within such programmes as “Regions for economic changes”, “Regions based on knowledge” and “European Neighbourhood Programme”.



Source: www.ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/country2009/de_en.pdf

Germany has a strong tradition of transregional and cross-border cooperation. Germany and German Lands participate in 23 programmes of territorial cooperation with the EU budgets of €851 million

Cross-border programmes:

- 2 programmes in partnership with Denmark;
- Southern Baltic Programme with participation of Sweden, Denmark, Poland and Lithuania;
- 3 programmes with Poland;
- 3 programmes with the Czech Republic;
- 1 programme with Austria;
- 1 programme with Switzerland, Lichtenstein and Austria;
- 1 programme with Switzerland and France;
- “Grande region” programme with France, Belgium and Luxemburg;
- Euregio Meuse-Rhine with the participation of Belgium and the Netherlands;
- 1 programme in cooperation with the Netherlands.

Transregional programmes:

- Alpine Space;
- Baltic Sea region;
- Central Europe;
- North Sea;
- North-West Europe.

Transnational programmes:

- INTERREG IVC;
- URBACT;
- INTERACT;
- ESPON.

Germany identifies the following elements of the territorial cohesion: sustainable development, territorial integration and networking. Territorial integration is not a new approach – it was reflected in the European Security and Defence Policy accepted by Germany, as well as in the Territorial Agenda and in Leipzig Charter. These documents are coherent with the German strategy of “top-down” development. As far as the weakest European regions are concerned, in German opinion not only should particular solutions be created, but the cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation should work out general frameworks, suitable for all regions and not only for some. At the same time, Germany wants the same criteria of directing regional assistance to remain within the cohesion policy after 2013. They should be directed in accordance with the GNP per capita level.

German Lands emphasize the significance of territorial cohesion and of an added value for regional development in the form of international cooperation within cross-border, transnational and transregional programmes. They stress the need to improve the system of communication and of European funds management, and insist that they should be based on the awareness of the significance of territorial integration for social and economic policy at the regional regions.

What is interesting, both the German government and the authorities in particular Lands stress the necessity of energizing international cooperation and involving non-governmental organizations in it within the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes. The civil society should be an active player in the regional development..

THE POSITION OF LATVIAN THINK-TANKS TOWARDS THE COHESION POLICY AFTER 2013

Latvia participates in the European Territorial Cooperation 2007-2013 Programmes with the budget of €90 million and participates in the following programmes:

1. cross-border ones
 - 3 programmes with Estonia and Lithuania;
 - Central Baltic Programme in cooperation with Estonia, Finland and Sweden;
 - 1 programme with Lithuania.

2. transnational ones
 - Baltic Sea Region Programme.

3. transregional ones
 - INTERACTII;
 - URBACT II;
 - ESPON/ORATE;
 - INTERREG IVC.

Latvia is the European Union borderline country belonging to the group of member states which still have the lowest GNP per capita level, and due to this fact it claims that there exists the need of harmonious and sustainable development, of competitiveness improvement, and at the same time of protection of natural resources, especially rural areas not developed for housing, commerce and industry. According to Latvian think-tanks, such a vision of the European Union development in the next programming period will guarantee the European social cohesion and reducing inequalities in the development of the EU regions. Moreover, it will support these regions which have limited opportunities of benefiting from international cooperation.

THE POSITION OF BULGARIAN THINK-TANKS TOWARDS THE COHESION POLICY AFTER 2013

Accession to the European Union gave Bulgaria the opportunity to benefit from the funds provided by the Community under its Cohesion Policy, the principal goal of which being to minimize social and economic disparities between Member States and regions. Specific targets have been set for the successful implementation of EU Cohesion Policy in Bulgaria, notably (i) a 15 % increase in GDP by 2020; (ii) increase in the employment rate up to 64% and (iii) expenditure on research & development (R&D) from 0.4% to 1.15% of GDP in 2013.

Bulgaria is subject to two of the three objectives of the EU Cohesion Policy – Convergence and European Territorial Co-operation. Operational programmes under the first objective are funded through the Structural funds – the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF). Territorial co-operation projects are financed through the ERDF.

As regards Objective 3 of the EU Cohesion Policy, Bulgaria participates in two cross-border co-operation programmes within the internal borders of the Community (Greece – Bulgaria and Bulgaria – Romania), three cross-border co-operation initiatives with countries outside the territory of the EU (Bulgaria-Turkey, Bulgaria-FYRoM and Bulgaria-Serbia), as well as in several transnational and four interregional co-operation programmes.

The general objectives of the territorial co-operation instruments are related to:

- stimulating the entrepreneurship, tourism, culture and cross border trade;
- stimulating and improvement of the joint preservation and management of the natural and cultural resources, as well as prevention of natural and technological risks;
- support for the relations between the urban and rural areas;
- improvement of the access to transport, information and communication networks and services and by cross border systems and equipments for water, waste and energy;
- elaboration of the cooperation, capacity and joint use of infrastructure;
- stimulating the development of cross border labour markets, local initiatives for employment, gender equality and equal opportunities, education and social inclusion and
- elaboration of the institutional and administrative capacity at regional and local level and giving technical assistance to the preparation of new projects.

Except for the Romania – Bulgaria programme, the first calls for proposals for the rest of the cross-border programmes were opened in the end of 2009.

Bulgaria - FYRoM

23 Bulgarian and 27 Macedonian municipalities can take part in this programme. Its total budget for 2007–2009 is EUR 7.8 million, EUR 4.1 million will be invested through the first stage of its implementation. Projects dealing with economic and social services and improvement of quality of life will receive funding between EUR 10 000 and 300 000.

Bulgaria - Serbia

This programme is aimed at six regions within the territory of Bulgaria and six in Serbia. The total envisaged amount of funding for 2007–2009 is EUR 13.5 million, EUR 7 million of which shall be invested under the first procedure. Project proposals must refer to development small scale infrastructure, improvement of the joint planning capacity problem solving

Bulgaria - Turkey

29 municipalities of 3 Bulgarian regions and 17 districts of 2 provinces in Turkey can benefit under the programme. EUR 11.814 million are allocated for the period 2007–2009. EUR 6.2 million will be provided for this call for proposals, of which EUR 2.797 million for sustainable social and economic development, and EUR 3.496 for improvement of quality of life. The amount of funding per project will vary between EUR 10 000 and 600 000.

Greece - Bulgaria

The maximum total funding within the first call for proposals shall amount to EUR 60 million. The overall budget of the programme for the period 2007 – 2013 is EUR 130.2 million, as 85% of it will be provided through the ERDF. Projects eligible for funding must deal with the following priority axes: "Quality of Life" (ecology, culture, healthcare, social assurance), "Accessibility" (improvement of infrastructure), "Competitiveness and human resources" (promotion of entrepreneurship and new technologies, innovations and elaboration of networks between research and scientific centres and business).

Romania – Bulgaria

This programme is the fourth largest in scale among similar programmes launched by the EU, its total budget until 2013 being EUR 262 million. Projects under the following three priority axes are already being financed: accessibility (approximately EUR 95.4 million for infrastructure), environment (nearly EUR 88.9 million), economic and social development (approximately 56.5 million). EUR 20 million has been envisaged for technical assistance for the implementation of the programme. The first call for

proposals for project which did not require investments (strategies, research, exchange of practices, event planning etc) was closed at the end of 2007. 18 projects of total amount of EUR 8 million were approved. A second call was opened on 1 October 2008 with budget of EUR 101.5 million. However, candidates submitted proposals which exceeded this maximum amount by almost 300% and project submission was temporarily suspended.

In view of the fact that European territorial co-operation projects are still at a very early stage of progress in Bulgaria, it is still a hard task an objective assessments of the expected results to be made. On basis of the results obtained, new strategies, priorities and mechanisms will be drawn up for the next programme period after 2013.

The preliminary expectations regarding to the future of the European Territorial Cooperation Programmes and the Cohesion Policy after 2013 mainly focus on their contribution to:

- increased employment rate compared to the preceding period in the cross border regions;
- strengthened development of the border regions – both in view of administrative and business capacity
- increased investments in research in different fields of industry
- improved cooperation in the fields of border security and natural resources' management
- enhanced exchange of experience and best practices related to urban development

8.2. EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION GROUP

The idea of the European Territorial Cooperation Group is aimed at multidimensional management of large supranational areas, such as mountain ranges or agglomerations lying within the border of a few countries as well as common territories of a much smaller size.

The idea of establishing the European Territorial Cooperation Group appeared in the directive of 2006, in response to the pressure of cross-border Euroregions and similar entities which appealed for the creation of legal basis for their cooperation. The institutions from at least two member countries may participate in the European Territorial Cooperation Group. There also exists a potential possibility of members from outside the European Union joining the European Territorial Cooperation Group. The entities involved may represent any level of authorities – regional or local – these may also be associations or other public bodies.

The European Territorial Cooperation Group, which public law entities at any level can belong to, seems to be a symbolic EU tool.

The European Territorial Cooperation Groups are to be established in order to undertake one of the following main types of activity:

- implementation of the European programmes or projects concerning territorial cooperation;
- implementation of other actions consisting in international cooperation and co-financed by the European Union;
- conducting actions which are completely not connected with the projects financed by the European Union.

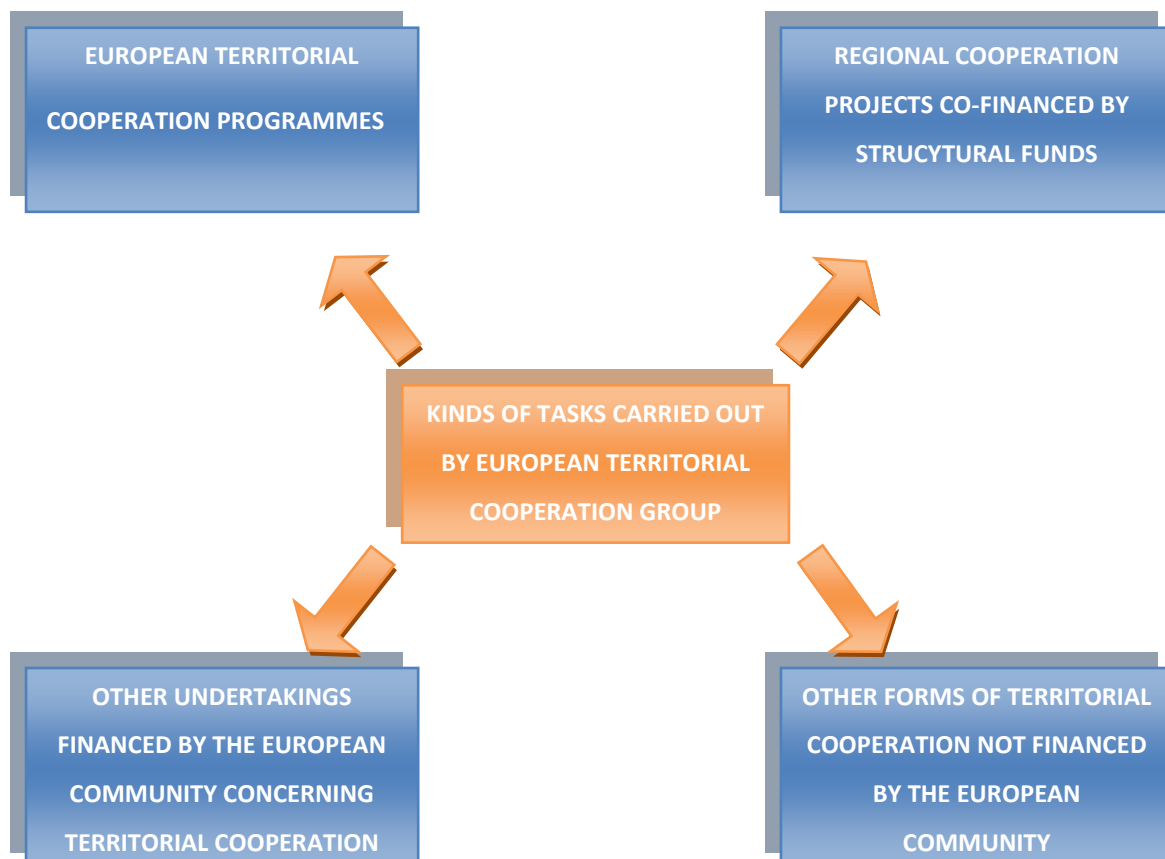
The complexity of procedures may a bit put off establishing the European Territorial Cooperation Groups. However, when the first steps are already, the obstacles in cross-border cooperation such as different legal systems, different administrative structures and different cultures cease to be a problem, because the group works under one flag and according to one standard collection of laws and regulations. In such a way all its members are given a legally recognized platform of cooperation which enables them to coordinate various levels and forms of management, in the form of a valid legal structure. They gain an appropriate size, political involvement, resources, and what is more important they can utilize the available know-how in order to develop and implement territorial strategies on the basis of the assessment of real needs.

The international cooperation of a type such as the European Territorial Cooperation Group already exists – it is Eixo Atlantico Association in Spanish Galicia and northern Portugal. The Eixo Atlantico, comprising 34 cities from Galicia and northern Portugal, was set up in 1992, primarily in order to combine efforts to obtain subsidies from the EU INTERREG Initiative. With the passing of time, the scope

of its actions was widened, for example by promoting political debate on the strategies of international cooperation that were conducive to sustainable development. Despite the fact that along this way there were difficult moments (before the European Territorial Cooperation Group there were no legal structures regulating international cooperation, which meant that other entities treated Eixo Atlantico as an intruder encroaching on their action areas) this regional group was successful. In the year of its 15th anniversary, the group works within its budget, is engaged in the creation of the European Territorial Cooperation Group and implements such strategies as the Local Digital Agenda i2020 which stimulates the development of new technologies and the building of research services which make it possible for the scientists to establish contacts.

Cross-border cooperation between regions in the form of the European Territorial Cooperation Group may bring bilateral benefits. The regions situated on the territories of Hungary and the Slovak Republic enthusiastically welcomed the possibility of setting up the European Territorial Cooperation Group, because so far there has been a shortage of common institutions which in turn has hampered regional development.

Picture No 4. **ETCG**



Source: www.ewt.gov.pl

9. LIST OF TABLES, PICTURES AND DIAGRAMS

9.1. LIST OF TABLES

<i>Table 1.:</i> List of abbreviations.....	18
<i>Table 2nd:</i> Number of applications submitted within BSR, Central Europe and Interreg IVc Programmes.....	40
<i>Table 3rd:</i> The structure of the researched beneficiaries with regard to their legal and organizational status.....	48
<i>Table 4th:</i> The structure of the project partnership (selected examples)	50
<i>Table 5th:</i> The division of the researched projects into infrastructural and investment ones (“hard” ones) and non-investment projects (“soft” ones)	51
<i>Table 6.:</i> Structure of research sample	67
<i>Table 7.:</i> SWOT analysis.....	75

9.2. LIST OF PICTURES

Picture No 1. Research criteria	24
Picture No 2. Map of research goals	25
Picture No 3. The conception of evaluation research.....	30
Picture No 4. ETCG.....	96

9.3. LIST OF DIAGRAMS

<i>Diagram No 1.:</i> The structure of the researched beneficiaries with regard to their legal and organizational status.....	49
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