

# Processes of transnational learning for regional development

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## Research Aims

The research analyses learning processes on regional development issues in transnational cooperation projects in the framework of the EU's Structural Funds' INTERREG programme. It explores the distinctiveness of transnational learning in interdisciplinary, inter-organisational and inter-cultural networks cooperating on issues of regional development, in particular INTERREG and analyses the conditions under which learning in INTERREG takes place.

Research into and analysis of transnational cooperation has so far concentrated on either the outcomes or effects of cooperation or on structural descriptions of the cooperation programmes as well as their contribution to territorial cohesion. However, there is not yet enough profound knowledge on interaction processes within transnational cooperation groups or on learning processes within and outside of the group. This research will aim to fill these gaps and will look into how these processes in transnational projects could be improved in order to foster organisational learning.

This research will provide a comprehensive analysis of learning processes in transnational cooperation programmes at the level of actors and the institutions involved (who learns), into the distinctiveness of knowledge production from case studies and best practice (how they learn) as well as how the newly gained knowledge is implemented in organisational contexts (implementation learning results).

Research questions are:

1. How do actors in INTERREG projects engage in learning processes?
2. How can the case-based knowledge be generalised and transnational lessons distilled for dissemination and knowledge transfer?
3. How is learning embedded in institutions?

## Research Methodology

Based on a literature study into the processes of learning and knowledge transfer as well as (inter-)organisational learning, a range of final reports of INTERREG projects are being analysed in terms of learning effects. Two complementary strands are followed for the analysis of specific projects:

(I) Ex-post analysis of finalised projects: in order to analyse methods of generalising knowledge as well as the extend of organisational learning, 2 INTERREG projects were chosen for qualitative in-depth interviews. In this context it will be particularly relevant to study any changes in working routines, daily procedures and organisational practices that indicate a long-term change and impact of learning processes. Qualitative interviews will be particularly useful for getting the 'story' behind the participant's experience in the wider context.

(II) Participatory observation in ongoing projects: For the examination of learning processes and the transfer of knowledge within projects, a method had to be chosen that allows directly studying interactive processes between project partners in real time and one that does not need to rely on (subjective) memories of participants. The method of participatory observation of 2 projects will enable a more comprehensive analysis from the inside of a project through monitoring of project activities and interactions.