

van der Zwet, Arno; McMaster, Irene; Bachtler, John

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# Governance approaches in European territorial cooperation programmes and the implications of macro-regional strategies.

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Paper presented

**Regions in Motion - Breaking the Path**

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Special Session: Territorial Cooperation and border issues

**Governance approaches in European territorial  
cooperation programmes and the implications of macro-  
regional strategies.**

(abstract 337)

Authors: Dr Arno van der Zwet and Dr Irene McMaster

Presenter: Dr Arno van der Zwet

European Policies Research Centre

University of Strathclyde

40 George Street

Glasgow G1 1QE

United Kingdom

Contact: [Arno.van-der-zwet@strath.ac.uk](mailto:Arno.van-der-zwet@strath.ac.uk)

This paper represents work in progress and should not be quoted without the authors' consent. However, comments and remarks are very welcome.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

Cohesion policy is often regarded as having strengthened the influence of sub-national actors in policy making (McMaster and Bachtler, 2008: 399). European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes are a salient example of how the EU has widened the scope and scale of sub-national involvement in territorial cooperation. However, the framework in which such an analysis has been carried out has been limited. First, much of the research undertaken to day focusses on the implementation phase rather than the whole governance framework. Second, governance is often conceptualised as either bottom-up or top down but other related but independent dimensions can also be identified. This paper provides a framework for analysing multi-level governance structures in territorial cooperation and utilises this to compare governance frameworks and dimensions in INTERREG programmes with macro-regional strategies.

The paper identifies four governance stages (policy making, programme initiation, programme management and programme implementation and animation) at which different levels of government (sub-national, national and supra-national) can exert influence over territorial cooperation. Furthermore, it identifies five underlying governance dimensions (bottom-up or top-down, institutionalised or loosely organised, closely managed or flexible, broad or narrow partnerships, centralised or locally driven). The paper analyses the influence of the different levels by examining the governance framework of INTERREG programmes and macro-regional strategies. It will particularly focus on the influence of sub-national actors in each of these structures for territorial cooperation. The analysis of INTERREG programmes is relevant for macro-regional strategies as the former is an embedded instrument for ETC whereas the latter is a relatively new instrument for ETC. However, the two are envisaged to complement each other (CEC, 2011b). Hence the paper contributes to understanding the role and impact macro-regional strategies have. The paper addresses two key questions. What is the role of sub-national actors in the governance framework of INTERREG programmes and how does this compare to their role in macro-regional strategies? What are the underlying governance dimensions that can be identified for both cases?

The discussion of the INTERREG governance frameworks and dimensions in this paper draw from data collected for the ESPON TERCO<sup>1</sup> project. It includes data from eight case studies that are based on a total of 224 in depth interviewees undertaken in 11<sup>2</sup> EU member states and Norway and five external countries<sup>3</sup>. It also draws from a documentary analysis of

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1 The ESPON Terco project analyses the impact of European Territorial Cooperation as a Factor of Growth, Jobs and Quality of Life.

[http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu\\_Projects/Menu\\_AppliedResearch/terco.html](http://www.espon.eu/main/Menu_Projects/Menu_AppliedResearch/terco.html)

<sup>2</sup> Belgium, France, Scotland, Sweden, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria, Germany, Finland, Poland, Czech Republic.

<sup>3</sup> Morocco, Ukraine, Turkey, Uruguay and Argentina.

programme documentation for all INTERREG A and B programmes. Furthermore, the findings here are in particular based on five targeted case studies which included specific questions surrounding governance frameworks in INTERREG. The case study areas were INTERREG A Flanders-Netherlands, Slovakia-Czech Republic, Slovenia-Austria, Central Baltic programme, and INTERREG B North Sea Programme. This part of the research included extensive and in-depth documentary analysis as well as 35 targeted interviews. The discussion concerning macro-regional also draws from the ESPON TERCO projects but relies more extensively on secondary data.

In the second section the influence of sub-national actors in territorial cooperation is discussed in relation to the literature on Europeanisation and new regionalism. This section sets out the framework for analysis, identifying governance frameworks and dimensions that relate to the potential role of regions. In the third and fourth section this framework is applied to both INTERREG programmes and macro-regional strategies.

## 2. THE REGIONAL DIMENSION OF TERRITORIAL COOPERATION

The EU is often said to have boosted sub-national actors' 'influence in policy making in areas which have traditionally been reserved for the central state (Marks *et al.*, 1996; Börzel, 1999; Bache, 1999). Many scholars have argued that the EU is perceived as more responsive to the desires and demands of sub-national actors (Keating and Jones, 1991; Haelsy, 2001; Elias, 2009; Keating, 2004). The perception is that through European integration sub-national actors have exerted influence in policy areas from which they were previously excluded as these were considered the domain of the central state. Some authors have presented this process as a zero sum game in which 'the EU has empowered sub-national levels at the expense of the nation state, which has had to accept a significant loss of control' (Bachtler and McMaster, 2008, see also:; Marks *et al.*, 1996, p. 346; Blom-Hansen, 2005). This loss of control is envisaged to have occurred through a process of Europeanisation of policy areas. For example, in relation to ETC, Brenner (Brenner, 2004, p. 288) argues that ETC programmes are 'viewed by both municipalities and by the European Commission as a means to circumvent national governments'.

Theoretical work on Europeanisation, multi-level governance and new regionalism highlights the increased role of sub-national actors in driving economic development and participating in external networking and cooperation activities (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Keating and Hooghe, 1996; Brusis, 2002). Theoretically, the EU is hypothesised to have increased the influence of sub-national actors in relation territorial cooperation in two manners. First, it has strengthened regional institutional structures (Coyle, 1997; Fabbrini and Brunazzo, 2003; Kleyn and Bekker, 1997; Svensson and Osthol, 2001). By stressing the importance of ideas such as subsidiarity and multi-level governance, regions have been afforded powerful concepts that help them accrue competencies and responsibilities in policy areas in which they previously had little influence. Second, through the partnership principle sub-national authorities have become increasingly involved in planning and implementation of structural fund programmes (Bachtler and McMaster, 2008; Kelleher *et al.*, 1999).

ETC policies and programmes can be perceived as a particular salient example of Europeanisation. Historically, cooperation across borders can be regarded as an area of activity dominated by central government actors (Perkmann, 1999, p.658; Dolez, 1996). However, increased European integration has meant that 'today, there are hardly any border areas in which public authorities are not involved in some kind of co-operative initiative with their counter parts' (Perkmann, 1999, p. 658). However, there is considerable variation in terms of the extent sub-national actors are included.

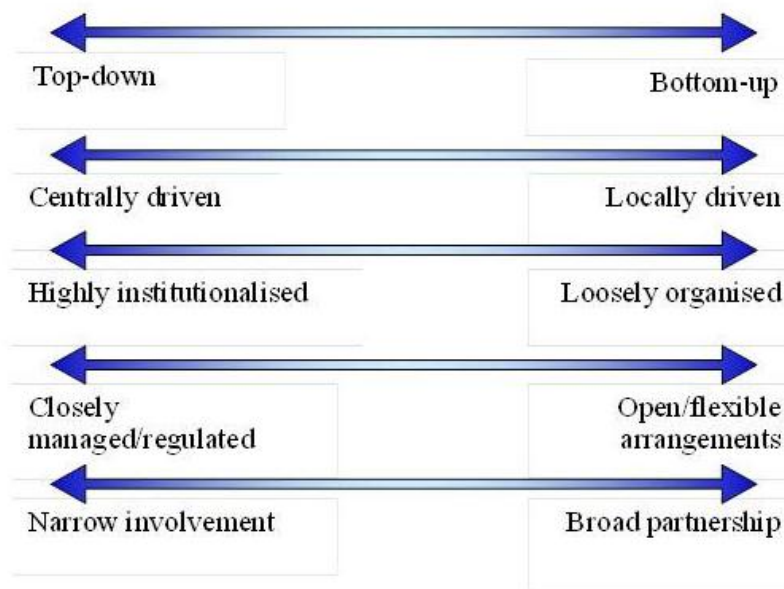
Developments at the EU level have had a distinct impact on the governance frameworks in which ETC takes place. Until the late 1980s many cross-border cooperation activities between Member States, regions and municipalities took place through informal intergovernmental committees (Dühr *et al.*, 2007). Many of these cooperation efforts between border regions have since become institutionalised and formalised and are now covered by the INTERREG A programmes. Transnational cooperation (INTERREG B) has in many cases had to start from a lower level of informal cooperation. These programmes have been imposed more artificially than in the case of cross-border cooperation programmes. However, similarly to cross-border cooperation they have become increasingly institutionalised within the EU framework. All regions in the EU are covered by either one or several INTERREG B programmes, providing opportunity for all sub-national actors to engage in TC initiatives that are supported by EU resources, policies and institutional framework. However, in terms of the scale and scope of these programmes there can be significant differences (ESPON, 2006b). Besides EU driven programmes also a multitude of bi-lateral and multilateral cooperation structures can be identified. Recently, macro-regional strategies have been presented as an instrument to coordinate cooperation activities in so-called functional regions.

Much of the analysis on the influence of sub-national actors in territorial cooperation seems to be based on participation in projects rather than analyse the full governance framework of ETC programmes. However, in practice the governance framework 'is complex and variable particularly in terms of the involvement sub-national actors' (Bachtler and McMaster, 2008). There are different stages in the governance framework in which sub-national actors can influence the process. In order to understand the full influence of sub-national actors in the complete governance process, their role in terms of policy and strategy making, initiation and mobilisation of programmes, management and monitoring of programmes, and implementation and animation of project activities of programmes should be considered. Such a framework allows for a more fine grained analysis. It is able to unpick variations and goes beyond the analysis provided in the current literature.

Furthermore, governance frameworks for the management and implementations of territorial cooperation programmes depend on the needs and the systems they operate within (Faludi, 2007; ESPON, 2006a). Besides breaking down a multi-level governance framework into a top-down and bottom-up dimension, several other - often related but independent - dimensions can be observed (See Figure 1). Although, these dimensions are related in the sense that bottom-up governance approaches are mostly associated with locally driven, loosely organised and flexible approaches as well as a broad partnership involvement, overall there is an increasing mix of bottom-up approach where cooperation activities are driven by local and regional actors but at the same time territorial cooperation is becoming more formalised and

institutionalised. Conceptualising multiple governance dimensions provides a more detailed picture of the nature in which ETC is organised.

**Figure 1: Governance dimensions territorial cooperation**



This paper contributes to the above literature by recognising the increased role of sub-national actors in ETC and compares the influence of these actors in INTERREG and macro-regional strategies. It shows that the influence that sub-national actors exert varies according to different stages in the governance framework and that the underlying governance dimensions identified in this paper are important variables in understanding sub-national actors' roles, impact and decision making power.

### 3. GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS FOR INTERREG

INTERREG has become an embedded form of territorial cooperation in the EU. It has a territorial focus which incorporates three spatial dimensions. There are 52 cross-border programmes (INTERREG A), 41 of these are bilateral but there are also 11 programmes include up to five member states. Ten programmes include semi-external partners.<sup>4</sup> In terms of territory 39 of these programmes overlap. The total budget available to these programmes is €7.41 billion of which around 75 per cent is community funded (€5.6 billion). Budgets range €16.5 million (Amazonia programme) to €354 million (Portugal – Spain).

<sup>4</sup> Involving cross-border cooperation with Lichtenstein, Andorra, Norway and Switzerland and one trans-continental programme

There are 13 transnational (INTERREG B) programmes who have anywhere from 2 – 16 partners countries. Eight of these programmes include semi-external partners and two (Indian Ocean and Caribbean) are development orientated. Except for the Island programmes the INTERREG B programmes all overlap. A total € 3.2 billion is available with 57 per cent (€ 1.8 billion) community funded. Budgets range from €47.2 million (Indian Ocean) to €696.7 million (North West Europe Programme)

There is one interregional programme which covers all 27 member states and includes 3 networking programmes (URBACT II, INTERACT II and ESPON) The networking programmes enable knowledge sharing and exchange of best practice between regional and local authorities. The total budget available for INTERREG IVC is €445 million.

### **3.1 Policy and strategy formulation**

The importance of EU cohesion policy has increased over the last budgetary period. The Lisbon treaty ensured that economic, social and territorial cohesion are now firmly embedded and has made it one of the community's core functions (CEC, 2007). The Commission favours a process of public consultation in its policy and strategy formulation. In November 2010 the Commission published the Fifth Cohesion Report. 'The aim of this Cohesion Report is to support the Europe 2020 strategy and highlight the contribution that regions, and Cohesion Policy, can make to meet these objectives' (CEC, 2010b). This report makes certain recommendations on how to further develop INTERREG for the future. The Commission received over 400 contributions to its public consultation held from November 2010 to January 2011, 227 of these contributions came from sub-national authorities. The report and the consultation as well as past evaluations, contributions of member-state experts, task force and an informal expert platform (high Level Group Reflecting on the Future of Cohesion Policy) contribute to formulating the cohesion policy draft regulation. Sub-national actors have a consultative role policy formulation stage. Ultimately, it is the central states and Commission that formulate strategies such as the EU2020 and negotiate regulations. Thus although there is some evidence of a bottom-up approach in terms of a consultative process, the key actors at the stage of policy and strategy formulation are clearly the Commission and central state actors.

### **3.2 Programme initiation**

National and regional authorities as well as the Commission are considered key actors for initiating and mobilising territorial cooperation in relation to INTERREG programmes. The involvement of local authorities and social, economic and civil society partners varies across programmes. In some programmes local authorities and other organisations such as non-profit and civil society organisations are considered key partners (Slovakia/Czech, Slovenia/Austria) in this process. In the France – Belgium programme supra-municipalities are identified as key mobilisers but also high level political support at the central state level is identified as crucial for initiating ETC. The North Sea Programme set up a Programme Preparation Group (PPG) in 2005 to plan for the 2007-13 programme period. On the PPG

each Member State and Norway had two representatives, one from the national and one from the regional level. Decisions were taken by consensus, and local authorities as well as social, economic and civil society partners were consulted. Similarly, in the Flanders – Netherlands programme both national and regional actors have a key role in the programme planning phase.

Within all programmes, the Monitoring Committee (MC) has ultimate responsibility in relation to agreeing its Operation Programme. The MC sets out the strategic framework and takes major operational decisions such as budget allocation. Voting rights in the MC are usually reserved for national and regional representatives, though can be extended to other relevant actors such as local authority representatives (for example in: Slovakia/Czech, France/UK, Greece/Italy) social and economic partners (for example in Slovakia/Czech, Estonia/Latvia, Greece/Italy, Italy/Malta) civil society (Slovakia/Czech), university and higher education (France/UK) and NGOs (Slovakia/Czech). These usually have observer status and are consulted. An EU Commission observer and a Managing Authority (MA) representative also have observer status, and JTS representatives including national contact points can be present. Some MCs are able to make use of special advisors in relation to specific issues. Despite the observer status of the Commission its role is crucial in terms of approving the OP. The Commission also has to approve any major changes to the OP during the implementation phase (usually reallocation of budget).

However, the influence and impact of sub-national authorities in the initiation and mobilisation phase depends on the institutional structures in states. The Central Baltic programme illustrates how different administrative levels in different countries can play an important role in the programme initiation stages. The Central Baltic programme consists of two sub-programmes which have their roots as separate programmes in the previous programme period (2000-2006). The Commission was keen to introduce a new multi-lateral and larger INTERREG A programme, which would introduce new connections (e.g. between Latvia and Finland, or between Latvia and Sweden). In establishing this overarching Central Baltic programme, Finnish regional actors had a major influence at an early stage of programme planning whereas in Sweden, Estonia and Latvia central state actors were considered important in the initiation and mobilisation stages of the programme. Although INTERREG programmes are heavily regulated there is enough flexibility to allow institutional traditions within Member States to shape programmes.

### **3.3 Programme management**

The involvement of sub-national actors in relation to managing INTERREG programmes reflect the different structures and systems for implementing Structural Funds across the EU and, more generally, differences in public management (Aalbu H., 2005). For INTERREG IVA programmes, the most common arrangement is for the Managing Authority (MA) and Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) functions to be placed within a public authority at national or regional level (Table 1). In 31 cases the function is placed in a regional authority and in 18 cases in a national authority. In a more limited number of cases (EUregion Maas Rhine, Greater Region and Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland)



the MA and/or JTS tasks are carried out by joint structures. The EGTC instrument is currently used by a single programme (Greater Region). However, it is envisaged that such joint structures are to become more numerous for INTERREG programmes in the next programming period. The introduction of EGTC facilitates further institutionalisation of cooperation activities. For INTERREG B programmes all but one programme has a management authority which is located at the regional level.

**Table 1: Institutional location Managing Authorities - INTERREG IVA**

Programme	Managing authority	Level
Alpenrhein Bodensee Hochrhein	Regional council of Tübingen (DE)	regional
Amazonia	Conseil Régional de la Guyane (French Guyana)	regional
Austria – Czech	Government of Lower Austria,(AT)	regional
Austria – Hungary	Regional management Burgenland GmbH (AT)	regional
Austria – Slovakia	City of Vienna (AT)	regional
Belgium – France	Wallonia (BE)	regional
Belgium – Netherlands	POM Antwerpen (BE)	regional
Botnia – Atlantica	The County Administrative Board of Västerbotten (SE)	regional
Central Baltic	Regional Council of Southwest Finland (FI)	regional
Czech - Germany (Bavaria)	Bavarian Min. for Eco., Infrastr., Transp. and Technology (DE)	regional
Denmark - Germany	Sjælland Region (DK)	regional
Estonia - Latvia	Ministry of the Interior (EE)	national
Euregio Meuse-Rhine	Stichting Euregio Maas-Rhine	joint
France - England (Channel)	Region of Haute-Normandie (FR)	regional
France - Spain -Andora	Community of the Pyrenees (ES)	regional
France - Switzerland	Region of Franche-Comté (FR)	regional
Germany (Bavaria) - Austria	Amt der Oberösterreichischen Landesregierung (AT)	regional
Germany (Saxony) - Czech	Saxony State Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour (DE)	regional
Greater Region	EGTC INTERREG	joint
Greece - Bulgaria	CIP INTERREG, ministry of Economy and Finance (EL)	national
Greece - Cyprus	CIP INTERREG, ministry of Economy and Finance (EL)	national
Greece - Italy	CIP INTERREG, ministry of Economy and Finance (EL)	national
Hungary - Romania	National development Agency (HU) ministry of Development, Public works and Housing (RO)	national
Hungary - Slovakia	National Development Agency (HU)	national
Ireland - Wales	Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly (IE)	regional
Italy - Austria	Autonomous province of South Tirol (IT)	regional
Italy - France (ALCOTRA)	Region of Piémont (IT)	regional
Italy - France (Maritime)	Region of Toscana (IT)	regional
Italy - Malta	Region of Sicilia. (IT)	regional
Italy - Slovenia	Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia (IT)	regional
Italy - Switzerland	la Regione Lombardia (IT)	regional
Latvia - Lithuania	Ministry of Regional Development and Local Governments (LV)	national
Lithuania - Poland	Min. of Interior of the Rep. of Lithuania Regional Policy Dep. (LT)	national
Netherlands - Germany	Min. of Eco. Affairs and Energy North Rhine-Westphalia (DE)	regional
North	The County Administrative Board of Norrbotten (SE)	regional
Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland	Special EU Programmes Body (UK Belfast)	joint
Oresund - Kattegat - Skagerrak	Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (NUTEK) (SE)	national
Poland - Czech	Ministry for Regional Development (CZ)	national
Poland - Germany (Lubeskie Brandenburg)	Ministry of Regional Development (PL)	national
Poland - Germany (Mecklenburg - Vorpommern /Brandenburg Zachodniopomorskie)	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Ministry for Economics, Infrastructure, Labour and Tourism (DE)	regional
Poland - Germany (Saxony)	Saxony State Ministry for Economic Affairs and Labour (DU)	regional
Poland - Slovakia	Ministry of Regional Development (PL)	national
Romania - Bulgaria	MA - the Minster of Reg. Dev. and Tourism (RO) NA - the Ministry of Reg. Dev. and Public Works (BG)	national
Slovakia - Czech	Ministry of Construction and Regional Development (SK)	national
Slovenia - Austria	Gov Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy (SI)	national
Slovenia - Hungary	Gov Office for Local Self-Government and Regional Policy (SI)	national
South Baltic	Ministry of Regional Development (PO)	national
Spain - Portugal	ministry of Economics and farming (ES)	national
Sweden - Norway	The County Administrative Board of Jämtland (SE)	regional
Syddanmark - Schleswig - kern	Region Syddanmark - Regional Udvikling (DK)	regional
Two seas	Nord Pas-de-Calais (FR)	regional
Upper Rhine	Alsace (FR)	regional

Source: Authors' elaborations; DG Regio

**Table 2: Institutional location Managing Authorities - INTERREG IVB**

Programme	Managing authority	Level
Açores-Madeira-Canarias (Macaronesia)	Dirección General de Planificación y Presupuesto del Gobierno de Canarias	Regional
Alpine Space	Government Office of the Land Salzburg	Regional
Atlantic Area	Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Norte	Regional
Baltic Sea	Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein	Regional
Caribbean area	Regional Council of Guadeloupe	Regional
Central Europe	City of Vienna	Regional
Indian Ocean Area	AGILE (Agence de Gestion des Initiatives Locales en matière Européenne)	Regional
Mediterranean	Conseil Régional Provence-Alpes Côte d'Azur	Regional
Northern Periphery	The County Administrative Board of Västerbotten	Regional
North Sea Programme	Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority	Regional
North West Europe	Direction Europe, Conseil Régional Nord-Pas de Calais	Regional
South East Europe	National Development Agency Authority for International Cooperation Programmes	National
South West Europe	Dirección General de Economía, Gobierno de Cantabria	Regional

Source: Authors' elaborations; DG Regio

The EC regulations set out the competencies of each of the institutions in INTERREG programmes.<sup>5</sup> However, institutions often delegate competencies and therefore there is considerable diversity in terms of the management, implementation and animation tasks for the JTS and contact points. In a number of programmes, sub-programme implementing bodies take on MA tasks such as application assessment, subsidy contracts and first-level control (and in a few cases, the development of selection criteria and approval of projects). This delegation exists in some cross-border programmes, where there are area-specific 'sub-programmes', 'territorial pre-programming committees', 'regional auxiliary MAs' or other arrangements. Each delegated body tends to operate in a specific cross-border area of the programme region, and each has its own steering committee and/or secretariat to prepare and pre-assess applications and proposals for decision-making (e.g. Central Baltic, Ireland/Northern Ireland/West of Scotland). The existence of such sub-programmes within larger programmes gives the programme a more sub-national dimension and increases the influence of regions.

### 3.4 Programme implementation and animation

More common among INTERREG programmes is the delegation of implementation functions, often through a network of regional or local offices, supporting JTS functions such as project generation and strategic project development, receiving project applications and undertaking initial checks on acceptability, monitoring and publicity (e.g. EUREGIO Maas-Rhein, Germany/Bavaria-Austria, Açores/Madeira/Canarias, Alpine Space and Northern Periphery). Cross-regional or cross-national working groups are also sometimes used to identify and prepare joint projects (e.g. Austria-Hungary, Austria-Slovakia, Austria-Czech Republic; Alpine Space).

<sup>5</sup> Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of July 5 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1783/1999.

Sub-national authorities as well as higher education institutions and local/regional development agencies often take prominent roles in the implementation stages of territorial cooperation. Depending on domestic governance arrangements, national governments can fulfil an important role as well (for example the Estonian and Latvian central governments are heavily involved in implementing territorial cooperation). On the other hand, despite the fairly centralised state structures in the Netherlands, in the Flanders-Netherlands programme central government has traditionally had little involvement in terms of programme implementation. This has been mainly the role of provincial actors in the Netherlands and also in Flanders.

Programmes use different project generation methods which impact the opportunities available to different actors. All programmes use open calls. Such calls are inclusive as a wide number of organisations within the area can form a partnership s and apply for funding. Some programmes use seeding funds (for example France-England (channel), Sweden-Norway, North West Europe IVB, Northern Periphery IVB,), shortlist projects (for example Austria-Slovakia, Romania-Hungary, North Sea IVB, Med IVB, Central Europe) and / or have special funds (for example: Two Seas, North West Europe, Slovakia-Czech Republic, Sweden-Norway, Germany (Bavaria)-Austria). In theory these processes allow smaller organisations to be included in the programme and are considered to facilitate a bottom-up approach. On the other hand, many programmes also make use of strategic calls for project generation (for example: Two Seas, Germany-Netherlands, Malta-Italy, Ireland-Northern Ireland-Scotland, Alpine Space, Central Europe). These calls are more narrowly defined and are applicable to fewer partners. Therefore they can be associated with a more top-down approach.

The end responsibility in terms of project selection lies in most programmes with either the Monitoring Committee (MC) or will be the main task of the Steering Group (s). Membership of these bodies includes representatives from the national and regional level in all instances, but can also include local representatives, social and economic partners, higher education representatives, and civil society (see above). However, even if regional and local actors are represented on the MC and SG this does not necessarily imply that they can always voice their opinion. National positions on certain issues and strategies towards project selection can be agreed in pre-meetings. Such national orientated positions have at least the potential to override sub-national interests.

Also common among INTERREG programmes are decentralised arrangements for information and animation purposes through regional offices or networks of local offices undertaking publicity, providing information and advice on project ideas, and encouraging project applications from beneficiaries (e.g. Italy-France Islands, Ireland-Wales, Saxony-Poland). Most transnational programmes also have networks of National Contact Points or regional equivalents with similar functions (e.g. Northern Periphery, Alpine Space, Atlantic Space, North West Europe). Activities aimed at project generation and support are particularly important in the context of INTERREG as it is essentially a 'hollow' system; it needs to find new partners for policy delivery, as it is prevented from direct policy implementation by organisational and legal limitations (Perkmann, 1999, p.664).

### 3.5 Governance dimensions

Throughout the different stages in a governance framework, tensions between the different governance dimensions (see Figure 1) can be identified. In bottom-up governance structures actions are implemented, decided and monitored locally. In top-down frameworks initiatives can be implemented decided and monitored centrally and communicated downwards. Although ETC in many cases started from bottom-up initiatives, a drive for increased impact of ETC has led to the formulation strategies that are more centrally driven by the Member States and the Commission. This has led to mixed implementation structures for ETC. In the previous section it was shown that the Commission favours broad consultations and includes sub-national actors in the policy making processes and formulation of strategic objectives in order to ensure buy-in and local relevance. At the same time, the Commission uses top-down methods to attempt to influence the structures of local bureaucracies by disseminating 'best practice'. In other words, there is a tension between 'teaching' best practice and maintaining respect for individual sovereignty (Sellar and McEwen, 2011, p. 291).

INTERREG programmes operate according to set regulations and procedures. As a result, institutionalised horizontal and vertical networks of cooperation involving public administration from local, regional, central and EU levels have been established to meet these requirements. Institutionalisation and regulation ensure continuity of cooperation efforts and can create lasting partnerships. On the other hand, the existing flexibility in the regulations allows for activities to be adapted to changing circumstances and gives them meaning in different contexts. The establishment of EGTCs as legal entities is one of the most notable examples of a trend of increased institutionalisation and formalisation in ETC but has, as of yet, had little impact on INTERREG. That said INTERREG as an instrument for territorial cooperation has had a considerable impact on the levels of formality and 'institutionalisation' of territorial cooperation arrangements.

In terms of partnerships ETC has tended to rely heavily upon the involvement of public authorities. The networks involved are generally policy networks with limited involvement of the private sector (Perkmann, 1999). Even in border regions with a strong tradition of cross-border territorial cooperation, such as North Belgium and Southern Netherlands and Greater Region, engaging the private sector in territorial cooperation initiatives has proved challenging (Scott, 1999, p. 610). ESPON project 2.3.2 (2006a) highlights similar concerns over the involvement of civil society organisations in territorial cooperation.

However, extending the reach and impact of territorial cooperation and finding ways to widen and deepen partner engagement and participation is an increasing concern (Barca, 2009; CEC, 2010b). A number of territorial cooperation programmes are making explicit commitments to more actively engage with private business, e.g. through supporting projects based on 'triple helix' partnership between higher education, private business and public authorities (McMaster, 2010). Looking to the future, pressure on cooperation initiatives to deliver tangible results and impacts could also lead to a greater emphasis on involving private enterprise (CEC, 2010b).

All in all, it can be concluded that there are many different governance frameworks for INTERREG programme. However, across the board, there is a trend for an increasingly mixed picture. In which bottom-up and top-down initiatives complement each other. Regulation and institutionalisation have become much stronger over the past decades and is generally considered a necessary condition to maintain effective and intensive cooperation efforts. However, institutional arrangements as well as regulations have been loose and flexible enough to ensure their relevance across Member States and programmes.

#### **4. GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKS FOR MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES**

The 2007-13 programme period has seen the emergence of new instruments for territorial cooperation, in the form of tailor-made responses to address macro-regional challenges. To date, the Commission has endorsed two macro-regional strategies, namely in 2009 the Baltic Sea region (2009) (EUSBRS) in and 2011 the EU strategies for the Danube Region (EUSDR). Both the EUSDR and EUSBRS cover large territories and are associated with natural structures which face specific common challenges. The two existing macro-regional strategies can to a certain extent be seen as blue prints for future strategies.

Other potential macro-regions identified include those for the Alpine, Black Sea, Mediterranean and North Sea areas (Schymik, 2011; Mirwaldt *et al.*, 2010). In addition, another strategy under elaboration is the proposed Adriatic and Ionian Sea macro-region, which is foreseen to involve national and regional authorities from three EU Member States (Italy, Slovenia and Greece) and five countries that are preparing to join the EU (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania).<sup>6</sup> In several other areas there have been some initial thoughts about the concept as well (Northern Periphery and Atlantic Arc).

Macro-regional strategies are broad-based integrated instruments that includes 'territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges' (Samecki, 2009) focussing on the alignment of policies and funding to increase policy coherence and overall impact of public spending. Spatially, macro-regions focus on multi-functional geographies (Danson and Green, 2011) and have to be designed to address market and policy failures (Samecki, 2009). Both territorial and functional aspects are important when defining a macro-region (Schymik, 2011, p. 8). Territory is important as macro-regions are based around a natural feature. However, the Commission emphasis that there should be flexibility in terms of borders as these borders could be differentiate depending on functional requirements (CEC, 2009).

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<sup>6</sup> Ministers from these countries have asked the European Commission to work with them on developing an EU strategy that would provide a framework for their cooperation in various fields, such as environmental protection, shipping and transport. Meeting in Brussels on 23 May 2011, ministers from the eight countries adopted a declaration asking for a 'formal acknowledgement of the strategy at the highest level' and confirming their willingness to work with the Commission (<http://www.euractiv.com>, press release, 24 May 2011).

According to the Commission, the macro-region is 'a concept' to be implemented with no additional funding, no additional institutions, and no additional legislation. According to these so-called 'three no principles', implementation of a macro-region strategy:

- does not provide any new EU fund. It emphasises that a better use of existing funds must be achieved. It is envisaged that macro-regional strategies are supported by 'reinforced trans-national strand, although the bulk of funding should come from the national and regional programmes co-financed by Cohesion Policy and from other national resources' (CEC, 2010b, p. xxix). Other funding sources are also available, such as those from international financing institutions like the European Investment Bank and via national, regional and local authorities. Mixing funding from the public and private sectors should be the rule to follow. In relation to the EUSBRS a number of stakeholders have called for a dedicated budget but the Commission has opposed this probably in order to secure support from the European council (Bengtsson, 2009, p. 6)
- does not set up additional legislation. Stakeholders must refer to already-implemented EU and national legislation.
- does not create new institutions. Implementation of the strategy will be via existing bodies.

#### **4.1 Policy and strategy formulation**

There is increasing support for macro-regional strategies in the EU. However, there has been no new regulation to support the concept. This has meant that there is also a certain level of uncertainty amongst Member States and also sub-national actors to what extent and into what direction the concept will develop. The Fifth Cohesion Report places particular emphasis on the development of Macro-regional strategies and embraces the concept by expressing support for an approach that defined geographies beyond national boundaries (CEC, 2010b). It is therefore likely that other areas in Europe will also be asked or encouraged to develop similar strategies (Danson and Green, 2011, p. 1). According to the Commission's analysis of the consultation process for the Fifth Cohesion Report both Member States and sub-national actors are supportive of macro-regional strategies and 'regard it as a useful tool to implement policies at a more functional level' (CEC, 2011a) and several sub-national authorities called for the development of additional macro-regional strategies.

The concept of macro-regional strategies is also mentioned in the new draft regulation for territorial cooperation (CEC, 2011b). The proposed regulation recognises the potential overlap between macro-regional strategies, sea basins and transnational programme areas (INTERREG B) and therefore explicitly foresees that transnational programmes can implement macro-regional strategies (CEC, 2011a, art. 6). The endorsement of the macro-regional as a concept and its future development depends on Commission and Member States support.

## 4.2 Programme initiation

In both the EUSBRS and EUSDR Member States played a key role in terms of initiating and mobilising the macro regional strategies. Salines (2010, p. 11) rightly asserts that Member States support is crucial for macro-regional strategies to be realised and in both cases it was the European Council that asked the Commission to develop the strategies. Danson and Green argue that the 'demand for the macro-regional strategies has stemmed from the participating regions' (Danson and Green, 2011, p. 2) but also stress that central state level buy in is essential. Their support is needed to drive the strategy and also part fund the process. Additionally, Danson and Green highlight the contrast in relation to initiation process between the two existing strategies and that of the proposed North Sea-Channel strategy, the subject of their investigation. The two existing strategies are initiated by top-down initiatives whereas in the latter case a more bottom-up approach is used. The proposal for a North Sea-Channel strategy is driven by sub-national actors and has strong CoR backing (Danson and Green, 2011). Central state actors have as of yet been lukewarm to the idea of a macro regional strategy in the North Sea- channel area. The proposed strategy of the Alps also currently enjoys strong backing of sub-national actors but not central actors (Regions, 2010). It yet remains to be seen if such a bottom-up approach can be an effective initiation process for macro-regional strategies which can set an example for others.

The initiation of the EUSDR exemplifies the relative importance of EU institutions and Member States in the process. The foundations of EUSDR were laid in Brussels in October 2008. The EU Commissioner for Regional Policy at the time, Danuta Hübner, called for a 'targeted policy for the Danube that meets its ecological, transport and socio-economic needs'. DG REGIO 'became the motor driving the process' (Schymik, 2011, p. 12). However, Hübner took the initiative knowing she had strong backing of some of the Member States (Romania, Austria and Serbia) as well as support from the regional government of Baden-Württemberg. Consequently, in June 2009, the European Council invited the Commission to develop a Strategy for the Danube region. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2010, the Commission adopted the Action Plan and Communication for the EUSDR with the participation of the Member States and stakeholders and defined the main pillars and actions. On 3 February 2011, Commissioner Johannes Hahn designated the Priority Area Coordinators (see below). Finally, following the adoption by the European Council in April, the EUSDR was endorsed by the Heads of State in June 2011.

The initiation process of the EUSBSR also illustrates the importance of EU institutions and central state actors. The European Parliament (EP) can be regarded as a pioneer of the EUSBRS (Schymik, 2011, p. 12) As early as 2005 the Baltic Inter Group in the European Parliament (EP) made calls for a comprehensive strategy for the region. EP adopted a resolution in November 2006 which called on the Commission and the European Council to formulate and adopt a strategy. From this point onwards the leadership role of the EP gradually moved to the Commission and European Council (Schymik, 2011). Subsequently, after neither the Finnish nor the German council presidencies had been willing to drive the strategy, the Swedish presidency took the initiative and called in December 2007 on the



European Council to take steps (Bengtsson, 2009). Sweden has been a main driver of the strategy throughout the initiation process and beyond.

However, the initiation of the EUSBRS and EUSDR are not solely top-down initiatives a bottom-up consultation process was introduced by the Commission to ensure the voices of sub-national and a broader set of actors were heard. In the EUSBRS a stakeholder conference was held in 2008. This was followed up by several round tables discussions after all the main themes had been identified and concluded with another stakeholder conference in 2009 (Joenniemi, 2009). The EUSDR followed a similar process of stakeholder engagement.

In the EUSDR sub-national actors show considerable support for the strategy and are of the opinion that the territorial boundaries of the present borders of the Danube Region which fit the catchment basin of the Danube River are useful. The strategy strengthens the idea of a privileged 'territorial structure' that can be supported through coordinated actions. As one regional official states: 'using the territory of the catchment area of any river to define an area of a Strategy globally, is a pretty good idea' but the geographical definition of the Danube region is also very pragmatic as it falls within the borders of administrative entities; 'if the Danube Region was not defined in accordance with the borders of these administrative units, it would probably have never worked'. Thus the partnership can be considered 'broad and large', mainly nationally driven at this stage.

Nevertheless, some sub-national actors do not believe in the potential of integrating such large geographical areas. They think that the potential for territorial cooperation can be found on the local level; the most important aspect being to implement projects on a local scale. Some also emphasised that the catchment area is too broad in terms of territorial cooperation. The Danube territory should be divided into different sectors (e.g. functional areas) instead of the integrative approach related to transnational territorial cooperation initiatives and programmes.

### **4.3 Programme management**

The lack of new institutions and regulation means that there is no pre-described way in which macro-regional institutional frameworks are expected to be monitored, managed and implemented. However, the two existing strategies can be taken as an example for future strategies. In the EUSDR the Commission together with the High Level Steering Group are responsible for the management and monitoring of macro-regional strategies. The High Level Steering Group which is comprised of senior officials from the Member States is responsible for the coordination of strategy. An annual forum has been created to discuss progress and is consulted in relation to any changes. The forum comprises Member States, EU institutions and stakeholders. It specifically targets inter-governmental bodies, private sector and civil society. Similarly in the EUSBRS the Commission plays a key role as 'an independent, multi-sector body that can guarantee the necessary coordination, monitoring and follow-up of the action plan, as well as regular updating of the plan and strategy if necessary' (CEC, 2010a, p. 11). The lack of dedicated resources for macro-regional strategies means that the Commission is facing challenges in relation to its coordination efforts (Bengtsson, 2009).

In both EUSBSR and EUSDR Priority Area Coordinators (PACs) play an important role in terms of coordinating cooperation efforts. Together with the Commission they are responsible for monitoring and reporting. PACs 'are national administrations (exceptionally regions or inter-governmental bodies) that take a 'first among equals' role for a Priority Area' (EUSBSR, 2009). There is a small technical assistance budget available for PACs to carry out their tasks.

#### 4.4 Programme implementation and animation

The four cornerstones of the EUSBSR are to make the Baltic Sea region more: environmentally sustainable (e.g. reducing pollution in the sea); prosperous (e.g. promoting innovation in small and medium enterprises); accessible and attractive (e.g. better transport links); and safe and secure (e.g. improving accident response). An action plan based on the four pillars was drawn up defining fifteen goals that convert these priorities into concrete policy action. The EUSDR mirrors this approach and defined four pillars and 11 priorities. Connecting the Danube Region (mobility and multimodality, sustainable energy, culture and tourism, people to people); protecting the environment (Water quality, environmental risks, biodiversity and landscapes, air and soil quality); Building prosperity (Knowledge society, competitiveness, people and skills); Strengthening the region (institutional capacity and cooperation, security).

For the EUSBSR fifteen actions have been identified which have been allocated a total of 80 so-called flagship projects. Over and above the action priorities, there are a number of horizontal actions that cut across priority areas, including urban, rural and maritime issues, territorial cohesion and spatial planning (CEC, 2009). As noted above, no additional financial resources are committed to the Strategy, instead the aim is to make better use of the funds that are already available and make their distribution more effective (Mirwaldt *et al.*, 2010).

In order to ensure that the strategy would have a tangible impact, concrete actions relating to main priority areas were formulated (CEC, 2009). However, the lack of funding, legislation and institutional framework mean that coordination challenges are likely to occur. There have been concerns about whether the strategies are not an empty vessel. The obvious question is how macro-regional strategies are supposed to achieve their goals without funding (Mirwaldt *et al.*, 2010). Considering that coordination is the fundamental reason for adopting a macro-regional strategy such lack of support is likely to reduce the strategies' effectiveness.

Implementation of macro-regional strategies is the responsibility of the participating states but the Commission also plays an important role. In the EUSDR each state is encouraged to lead on a particular objective. Steering Groups for each of the 11 priorities have been established 'to ensure an integrated and transparent approach' (INTERACT, 2011). PACs are appointed to ensure that the action plans are implemented and work closely with Steering Groups. It is the task of the PACs to consult and liaise with EU institutions as well as regional partners. The PACs are also responsible for chairing the Steering Groups.

Both in the EUSBSR and EUSDR a LabGroup has been established to work on 'implementing questions'. The Labgroup's mandate is to reflect on how PACs and funding sources can

operationally implement EUSDR projects in a coordinated way' (INTERACT, 2011). LabGroups comprise experts from other territorial cooperation programmes, convergence (Objective 1) and competitiveness coordination (Objective 2) units, PACs, Commission and International Financing institutions. As macro-regional strategies have no resources to generate projects themselves it is the PACs responsibility to identify relevant projects. The Labgroup functions as a coordination mechanism in which practical expertise can be exchanged.

In terms of implementation the Commission does not aim to take a leadership role but intends to facilitate actions and act as an honest broker (Armali *et al.*, 2011). The Commission is responsible for animation and facilitation assisted by National Contact Points (NCPs). NCPs have been established in each country. For example in the EUSBRS NCPs are centrally appointed (usually by the Prime Minister's Office) and usually sit within the foreign office. In both EUSBRS and EUSDR Labgroups and PACs also play a key role in the animation process as it is comprised by a large number of experts and, in the case of EUSDR is situated within INTERACT it provides a platform for communication and information flows by proposing tools and strategies.

#### **4.5 Governance dimensions in macro-regional strategies**

AS was the case with INTERREG a mix of governance dimensions can be identified in relation to the macro-regional strategies. The high level policy and strategy formulation stage is relatively similar to that of INTERREG. However, macro-regional strategies are less clearly defined than INTERREG programmes. The aim of macro-regional strategies is to contribute to the same high level policy agendas as INTERREG programmes do. They both aim to increase territorial cohesion and both contribute to the EU2020 agenda. In both cases these strategies and policies are centrally driven and the European Council is responsible for policy development but there is some room for consultation. Yet the extent to which sub-national actors can be successful at this stage is unclear.

Armali *et al.* (2011) argue that 'the EUSBRS is top-down initiative, followed by a bottom-up consultation process. Salines (2010) also argues that the in relation to the EUSBSR cooperation is a well balanced mix between a top-down and bottom-up approach. Mirwaldt *et al.* (2010) also points towards the inclusive nature of both the development of the EUSBSR and EUSDR. The discussion in the previous sections shows that in both the EUSBRS and EUDRS such a description seems accurate. Policy initiatives and programme planning are done centrally but sub-national actors are included in the process. Joenniemi (2009) demonstrates how the views of sub-national actors as well as a broad variety of other were taken into account and contributed to the development of the strategy. However, in terms of management and implementation, Schymik (2011, p. 6) points out that in both the EUSBRS and EUSDR, Germany is the only Member State 'whose participation in the macro-regional strategies is largely borne by sub-national actors'.

Within macro-regional strategies tensions between centralised and locally driven actions are also apparent. The appropriate institutional frameworks to support the macro-regional strategies are the subject of ongoing debate (Mirwaldt and McMaster, 2010). On the one

hand, there is a desire for locally driven projects which can address local issues, can attract local buy-in and have a tangible impact on people's lives. On the other hand, macro-regional strategies impose centralised themes, targets and projects in an effort to coordinate projects actions and increase their impact across a region. It has therefore been noted that the strategies are 'top-heavy with vertical and horizontal coordination and cooperation focussed on EU and Nation-State'. (Dühr, 2011). However, many sub-national actors favour a macro-regional approach. For example the drivers for a North Sea and Channel strategy comes are regional actors. There is sufficient flexibility in the applicability of the concept to alter framework and allow for a more bottom-up approaches in relation to management and implementation of macro-regional strategies which would afford more influence for sub-national actors should this be necessary. The question is how to combine a bottom-up approach with the macro-regions' primary function of coordination.

In terms of governance dimensions there is a lack of a pre-defined institutional framework for macro-regional strategies. The historical development of INTERREG shows that one of the great benefits of institutionalisation and regulation is that it provides continuity and allows partnerships to mature. The Commission has already noted that 'it may be necessary to set up a capability to monitor and facilitate progress on the strategy as a whole' (CEC, 2009). Particularly in relation to the EUSBRS it is often noted that the region had already numerous governance frameworks and did not require anymore. However, this does not necessarily apply to other macro-regions.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

This paper has shown that in both INTERREG and macro-regional governance framework sub-national actors play a significant but varying role. Due to the limited size and scope of many INTERREG programmes sub-national actors are able to exert more influence in various stages of the governance process than is the case for macro-regional strategies. This is particularly the case in the management and implementation stages of INTERREG where sub-national actors often perform key roles whereas in macro-regional strategies these stages are led by the central level (except Germany) and the Commission. In terms of programme initiation and policy formation sub-national actors play a limited consultative role, although in INTERREG programmes they also have a role as decision makers.

Table 3: Involvement of sub-national actors in different stages of the governance framework

Stage	INTERREG	MACRO-REGION
Policy	Consultative	Consultative
Initiation	Either decision makers or consultative role.	Consultative
Management	Mixed: in all programmes sub-national authorities sit on MC.	Weak: central state and Commission are responsible.
Programme Implementation and animation	Strong/ mixed: usually have a regional contact points. Often regionally led JTS as well as delegated procedures	Weak / mixed - central state and Commission are responsible but often have to attract funds through other programmes

In terms of governance dimensions there is in both cases a mix of top-down and bottom-up initiatives and sub-national actors are involved in several stages. However, there is a difference between the two. In INTERREG many sub-national actors act as decision makers whereas in macro-regional strategies they are involved more consultatively. So far, macro-regional strategies have heavily relied on central state and Commission backing although more bottom up initiatives (e.g. North Sea-Channel strategy) could provide a blueprint for a more bottom-up approach. Additionally, the implementation of macro-regional strategies appears top-heavy with actions set centrally. However, the desire for greater impact has also made INTERREG regulations more top-down with the Commission identifying key themes to which ETC should contribute.

A second difference in terms of governance dimensions concerns the lack of new institutions which should not be interpreted as a lack of institutions. However, there is no prescribed

institutional framework. There are benefits and drawbacks to this arrangement. It means that the concept of macro-regional strategies can be applied flexibly and be made fit for purpose on a case by case basis. On the other hand, dedicated institutional frameworks can ensure continuity and allows cooperation activities to mature. Both in INTERREG and macro-regional strategies there is a desire to create inclusive and broad partnerships to tackle issues at different scales. So far, both have been dominated by the involvement of public authorities and it has proven difficult to further involve private sector partners in cooperation efforts.

It is useful to end this paper with some further questions in relation to the issues raised in this paper. To what extent do macro-regional strategies suit sub-national actors? To what extent will macro-regional strategies change the way in which territorial cooperation takes place, especially considering the three no principles? Will the governance dimensions that have increasingly become apparent in INTERREG cooperation (regulation and institutionalisation) also transfer to macro-regional strategies? Is the concept of a macro-region sufficiently flexible to be applied to a range of different governance traditions that pre-exist in different regions? Answering such questions will provide us with better insights into the impact macro-regional strategies can have.

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