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5 TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION ALONG CORE NETWORK CORRIDORS: THE ROLE OF CORRIDOR FORA

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Abstract

Corridor Fora is a young, yet important tool to promote transnational cooperation along TEN-T corridors, worthwhile scrutinizing. They bring together various stakeholders and perspectives. Public authorities and infrastructure providers and operators are the main stakeholder groups in the Corridor Fora. Experience shows that the members use the forum meetings for policy coordination and lobbying, networking and learning, but also as a source of inspiration. However, it is also important to note that some interests are underrepresented in the Fora and synergies between the corridors are not yet fully exploited. Corridor Fora are embedded in a wider system of European transport and cooperation policies. To promote transnational cooperation along the Orient/East-Med Corridor and develop understanding and trust, additional tools such as INTERREG A, INTERREG B, macro-regional strategies and bottom-up initiatives are important complementary activities. In this way, corridor development can be addressed from different perspectives to further build on cooperation traditions.

Keywords

Corridor forum – transnational territorial cooperation – Orient/East-Med Corridor

Transnationale Zusammenarbeit entlang der Kernnetzkorridore: Die Rolle der Korridor-Foren

Kurzfassung

Korridor-Foren sind ein junges, aber bedeutsames Instrument zur Förderung der transnationalen Zusammenarbeit entlang von TEN-V-Korridoren, das sich für eine vertiefte Betrachtung anbietet. Die Foren bringen verschiedene Akteure und Perspektiven zusammen. Öffentliche Behörden sowie Anbieter und Betreiber von Infrastrukturen sind die zentralen Akteursgruppen in den Korridor-Foren. Die Erfahrung zeigt, dass die Mitglieder die Forumssitzungen zur Koordination und Lobbyarbeit, zur Netzwerkpflege und für Lernprozesse, aber auch als Inspirationsquelle nutzen. Es muss jedoch auch darauf hingewiesen werden, dass einige Interessen in den Foren unterrepräsentiert sind und Synergien zwischen den Korridoren noch nicht vollständig genutzt werden. Korridor-Foren sind in ein umfassendes System der europäischen Verkehrspolitik und Zusammenarbeit integriert. Um die transnationale Zusammenarbeit entlang des Orient/East-Med Corridors zu fördern und gegenseitiges Verständnis und Vertrauen zu entwickeln, stellen Instrumente wie INTERREG A, INTERREG B, makroregionale Strategien und Bottom-up-Initiativen wichtige ergänzende Maßnahmen dar. Auf diese Weise kann die Korridorentwicklung aus verschiedenen Perspektiven betrachtet werden, um so auf bereits bestehenden Kooperationsbeziehungen aufzubauen.

Schlüsselwörter

Korridorforum – transnationale Kooperation – Orient/East-Med Corridor

1 Introduction

The article seeks to explore linkages between different transnational cooperation approaches and corridor development at different administrative levels to obtain a better understanding of the role of the Corridor Fora instrument in support of TEN-T corridor development. Based on experience from two Core Network Corridors, conclusions are drawn on how to achieve better integration of different interests along the Orient/East-Med Corridor.

To build the basis for conclusions on transnational cooperation along the Orient/East-Med Corridor the following reviews the role of TEN-T corridors and their impact on different elements of corridor development (Chapter 2). In consequence, this chapter discusses why transnational transport may be organized along corridors and what impact may be expected from enhancing transnational transport corridor development.

This perspective is complemented by a review of territorial cooperation in support of TEN-T corridor development (Chapter 3). By discussing first the general European policy framework for transnational territorial cooperation this chapter highlights access points for transnational corridor development by means of territorial cooperation. These access points are illustrated from program and project perspectives

thereafter, including a review of approaches to enhance transport corridors at different scales, especially by focusing on cross-border and transnational projects to support overall corridor development.

Before concluding on potentials for enhancing transnational cooperation along the Orient/East-Med Corridor, Chapter 4 provides additional insights into a specific instrument implemented to further transport corridor development. Based on a literature review and interviews, the set-up, approach and achievements of the Corridor Fora, which were implemented after the latest TEN-T reform, are reviewed. This is done by comparing three examples: the Orient/East-Med Corridor and two other corridors with different institutional settings, namely the Rhine-Alpine Corridor and the North Sea-Baltic Corridor. This review provides the basis for recommendations on the Orient/East-Med Corridor in Chapter 5.

2 TEN-T policy in Core Network Corridors

This chapter explores the role of TEN-T corridors. First, the corridor concept is introduced and the role it plays in the context of TEN-T policy 2014–2020 and spatial development is briefly described (Chapter 2.1). Afterwards, impacts in four different dimensions are highlighted that are relevant for a comprehensive and integrated perspective on corridor development (Chapter 2.2).

2.1 The corridor concept

The spatial concept of corridors plays an important role in both spatial research and planning practice. Priemus and Zonneveld (2003: 167) define corridors as “bundles of infrastructure that link two or more urban areas”. According to Witte (2014: 21 f.), four aspects are relevant for a comprehensive corridor approach: (1) Corridor links usually refer to the three **transport modes** of road, rail and inland waterways. In a broader interpretation of the concept, they can also comprise air connections as well as power transmission lines, pipelines for oil, gas, drinking water or sewage and, especially in the context of digitalization, ICT infrastructure. (2) Another important element lies in the distinction between **passenger and freight** transport. (3) Furthermore, corridors can refer to different **spatial scales**. At local level a corridor can be an inner-city tramway, at regional level a railway between a sea port and an industrial zone in the hinterland, at national level corridors may link agglomeration areas in the same country, and they cross borders at transnational level. (4) Finally, corridors have different impacts that vary between transport modes, passenger and freight transport, and spatial levels. Hence, the **multi-dimension nature** of corridors needs to be taken into consideration for their development. Transport corridors and their enhancement influence not only (a) the transport sector, but also (b) spatial development, (c) economic development and (d) institutional settings and governance arrangements (see Chapter 2.2).

In the context of TEN-T development, the corridor concept is considered for the funding period 2014-2020 through so-called Core Network Corridors. They are an instrument for the coordinated implementation of the core network (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013: article 42.1). These corridors cover the most important long-distance transport flows in the core network (*ibid.*: article 43.1), which consists of those parts of the infrastructure network in the EU that are of highest strategic importance for achieving the objectives of the TEN-T policy (*ibid.*: article 38.1). The Core Network Corridors shall support the Member States to coordinate and synchronize their national approaches and manage their capacities efficiently (*ibid.*: article 42.2). They cross borders and shall furthermore address at least three transport modes (*ibid.*: article 43.2). In short, the corridor concept with nine different and partly overlapping Core Network Corridors is an important cornerstone for the process of completing the TEN-T core network by 2030.

However, the role of the corridors for the TEN-T network goes beyond infrastructure development, interoperability and modal integration. Adelsberger (2012: 347) sees them as prototypes of 'green corridors', where multimodal transport hubs are linked with innovative traffic management systems and where emissions are reduced through smart multimodal solutions, the promotion of the most environmentally friendly transport modes and low-carbon technologies (e.g. electrification in rail transport, alternative fuels).

This understanding of EU transport policy goes back to the European Spatial Development Perspective which underlines the need for "a shift to environmentally friendly transport systems and a more efficient use of existing infrastructures" (EC 1999: paragraph 109) and states that "improvement of infrastructure and accessibility requires more than just providing the missing links" (*ibid.*: paragraph 111). From a territorial perspective, so-called 'Euro corridors' are furthermore relevant for territorial development as they promote linkages between different sectoral policies such as transport, infrastructure, economic development, urbanization and the environment. Due to concentration and polarization tendencies in the EU, spatial development policies and spatial planning must ensure that all regions have adequate access to infrastructure, and high-speed rail lines and motorways do not lead to 'pump effects', i.e. the removal of resources from structurally weaker and peripheral regions, or 'tunnel effects', i.e. that areas are crossed without being connected (*ibid.*: paragraph 108). From the above one can conclude that a policy aiming at corridor development cannot solely focus on the extension of physical infrastructure but needs to consider the multi-faceted, multimodal, multi-scalar and multi-dimensional nature of corridors. The further development and implementation of transnational transport corridors requires, but can also enhance, integrated approaches of coordination and cooperation across sectors, administrative levels and national borders.

2.2 Impacts related to TEN-T Core Network Corridors

As described in Chapter 2.1, TEN-T corridors are multi-dimensional. They have impacts that reach far beyond transport development, i.e. beyond merely expanding and upgrading physical elements of the transport infrastructure. Furthermore, transnational corridors have (different) impacts on different spatial scales, from local and regional to national and transnational. Some impacts are directly related to the formulation of TEN-T policy, whereas others refer to actual implementation on the ground; some are specifically related to the Core Network Corridors whereas others are more generally related to transport and infrastructure development. The following dimensions and fields of impacts are especially relevant and hence need to be taken into consideration in order to promote integrated corridor development and to analyze the potential role of Corridor Fora.

(a) **Transport sector.** The main instrument at EU level to support transport development and the implementation of the core network for the funding period 2014–2020 is the ‘Connecting Europe Facility’ (CEF) (Regulation (EU) 1316/2013). The CEF provides grants for ‘projects of common interest’, which can refer to new as well as existing infrastructures and measures in the field of resource efficiency (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013: article 7.1). Already after the first calls in 2014–2015, EUR 19.3m, i.e. more than 80% of the entire CEF budget was allocated to about 450 signed grant agreements. The demand was even 2.3 times higher: more than 1,000 proposals applied for grants of EUR 45m (Innovation and Networks Executive Agency 2017: 10 f.). Almost 90% of the allocated funding (EUR 17m) is invested in cross-border infrastructures, of which 90% are invested in cross-border infrastructures in Core Network Corridors (ibid.: 14 f.). Hence, one can conclude that the CEF definitely will have an impact on the transport sector in TEN-T corridors. This, however, not only includes physical transport infrastructure but will affect the transport system as a whole, and consequently, i.a., transport flows, the deployment of technologies, transport safety and interconnections between transport modes. The actual impact of the CEF instrument has been subject to a mid-term evaluation, which was completed in February 2018¹ (Regulation (EU) 1316/2013: article 27.1). A survey to assess the CEF performance 2014–2015 revealed that the CEF is “somehow insufficient to achieve wider infrastructure network objectives” (Papi/Sanz/Blomeyer 2016: 22). The extent to which it will be possible for the Core Network Corridors to become prototypes of ‘green corridors’ as claimed by Adelsberger (see above), therefore remains to be seen.

(b) **Spatial development.** Relevant aspects in the field of impacts of transport development on spatial development refer to (i) population development (incl. effects on transport demand), (ii) accessibility by transport mode (incl. effects on the modal split) and (iii) the environment. The question whether and to what extent the comple-

¹ The report is available at <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/legislation/com-2018-00-66-report-mid-term-evaluation-cef.pdf>. The report is accompanied by a staff working document (consisting of two parts) available at <https://ec.europa.eu/transport/sites/transport/files/legislation/swd-2018-0044-mid-term-evaluation-cef-ia-part2.pdf> and https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/mid-term_evaluation_cef_swd_2018_44_2.pdf

tion of European transport networks affects spatial development, has been at the center of various research projects that applied socio-economic models (e.g. Bröcker/Capello/Lundqvist et al. 2005; Spiekermann/Wegener/Květoň et al. 2013; Zillmer/Lüer/Spiekermann et al. 2015). Other projects looked at the influence of complex policy packages on future development, i.a. taking into account changes in transport policy (Böhme/Holstein/Wergles et al. 2018, MCRIT 2014). Depending on the respective research questions and the thematic and geographic focus, the precise assessment of the impact of transport development on spatial development varies but is always visible. Another relevant consequence in the context of spatial development is the further development of existing or the elaboration of new territorial development strategies, especially at regional and cross-border level. Examples of such strategies and approaches are presented in Chapter 3.3.

(c) **Economic development.** The abovementioned research projects not only looked at spatial development. The models also covered economic aspects such as GDP growth, productivity and employment. Corridors can make a difference in this context. If they are developed carefully, they can provide opportunities for economic development that would otherwise not take place (de Vries/Priemus 2003: 225). As for accessibility, the models confirm diverse impacts of infrastructure development on economic development. The specific impacts on the ground, however, depend, i.a., on the regional characteristics and the type of measures (of regional or corridor relevance) (Zillmer/Lüer/Spiekermann et al. 2015: 4 f.).

(d) **Institutional settings and governance arrangements.** Finally, also the framework for cooperation in terms of institutional settings and governance arrangements is affected by Core Network Corridors. The corridor approach as such already underlines the pan-European dimension of transport and leads to more and new forms of cooperation and governance approaches. Again, it is important to distinguish between spatial scales. At European level, for example, for each Core Network Corridor a European Coordinator² was designated who, i.a., shall support the coordinated implementation of the Core Network Corridor, develop a work plan and monitor as well as report on the implementation process (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013: article 45.1). Together, the nine coordinators regularly report on their activities in the corridors and the progress made in implementing the core network (Balázs/Bodewig/Brinkhorst et al. 2016). They also draft issue papers about areas that are especially relevant for integrating transport policy issues into the further development of the Core Network Corridors (Balázs/Cox/Trautmann et al. 2016). Furthermore, each corridor has a Corridor Forum, a consultative forum with different members from the Member States concerned to support the implementation process (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013: article 46.1). The examples of the European Coordinators and the Corridor Fora show that Core Network Corridors have led to new institutional settings at European level

2 The European Coordinator is not a new position, though. It was introduced in 2004 with the second revision (Decision 884/2004/EC) of the first TEN-T guidelines (Decision 1692/96/EC). In 2005, the European Commission designated a group of Coordinators to evaluate the progress of selected TEN-T Priority Projects and develop recommendations on how to implement these projects effectively (https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/ten-t-policy/priority-projects/european-coordinators_en).

that involve players from various territorial levels and integrate their perspectives and feedback into the process of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. These fora will be at the center of attention below in Chapter 4.

Besides the European level, governance structures and processes at local and regional level are also affected. Corridors have become more important reference points for new forms and structures of cooperation especially at transnational and cross-border level. Selected examples of such approaches are presented in Chapter 3.

3 Territorial cooperation along TEN-T corridors

The 6th Cohesion Report stated that “European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) is one of the two main goals of Cohesion Policy in the present period, providing a framework for joint action and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors in different Member States. (...) The challenges faced by Member States and regions increasingly cut across national and regional boundaries and cooperation at an appropriate territorial level is needed to tackle them effectively” (EC 2014c: 254). This is also supported in the 7th Cohesion Report (EC 2017b: 124). Consequently, ETC – also better known as INTERREG – can contribute to enhancing the objective of territorial cohesion as outlined in the Treaty. In this context, territorial cooperation may fulfill several functions including:

- > jointly overcoming cross-border challenges that concern regions on both sides of a border, thereby avoiding one-sided efforts and related costs;
- > providing a basis for sharing good practices and creating and sharing joint know-how;
- > creating economies of scale by involving more citizens, players etc. that support a critical mass for action;
- > improving governance of policy measures through coordinating them and taking a cross-border perspective when deciding about investments;
- > enhancing safety and stability between neighboring countries and
- > improving the management of eco-systems of larger areas in favor of sustainable development (EC 2014c: 254, 258).

More specifically with regard to transnational cooperation, the 7th Cohesion Report highlights that transnational cooperation may support the development of functional links in the area concerned. These links can be related to natural resources, such as above-mentioned eco-systems, or social and economic functions (EC 2017b: 127) and they typically cover larger geographic areas than cross-border cooperation areas. To enhance different functions across national borders new means of governance are required for the development, planning and implementation of spatial development

objectives. This is mirrored both in the general framework for territorial cooperation in the EU (Chapter 3.1) and the sector-specific framework for TEN-T (Chapter 3.2). Three examples complement the analysis by highlighting how local and regional stakeholders proactively work on integrated corridor development by utilizing different means of territorial cooperation (Chapter 3.3).

3.1 European framework for transnational territorial cooperation

European territorial development objectives date back to the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) (EC 1999) and were further specified in the *Territorial Agenda 2020* (TA 2020) (MSPTD 2011). With regard to territorial development across countries, the TA 2020 points out that the integration of territories is crucial to fostering competitiveness: “Territorial integration and co-operation can create a critical mass for development, diminishing economic, social and ecological fragmentation, building mutual trust and social capital. Cross border and transnational functional regions may require proper policy coordination between different countries” (MSPTD 2011: paragraph 31). The TA 2020 stresses, furthermore, that to obtain development results of transnational relevance, European Territorial Cooperation and national and sub-national development strategies need to be coordinated (ibid.: paragraph 32). Cooperation aims to achieve an integrated approach to territorially relevant measures that identifies possible land use conflicts and achieves the best possible use of a territory (BBSR 2012: 127) – a transnational territory in the case of transnational transport networks.

Today, the second strand of ETC or INTERREG is assigned to support transnational cooperation. It is financed by the ERDF and implemented under the shared responsibility of the European Commission and the Member States. Transnational cooperation is justified when effects resulting from any activities impact more than one country (Dühr/Colomb/Nadin 2010: 33). Acknowledging that effects may not only occur across borders but may be relevant for larger multi-national territories, in 1997 the second INTERREG programming period was extended by a transnational strand (ibid.: 233). This extension was initiated by the environmental impacts of severe floods that made the need for transnational territorial cooperation self-evident. It provided the chance to:

- > promote the harmonious and balanced spatial development of the EU territory;
- > enhance transnational cooperation within spatial planning at different administrative levels and across stakeholders;
- > support better effectiveness of EU policies regarding spatial development;
- > enhance proactive approaches to jointly tackle spatial development issues (ibid.: 236).

INTERREG created common structures for organizing, administering and financing transnational projects. Over time, the thematic fields supported by transnational cooperation programs have been enlarged and for the period 2014–2020 may now cover all investment priorities defined in the ERDF Regulation (Regulation (EU) 1301/2013), as well as enhancing public institutional capacity and an efficient public administration addressing macro-regional and sea-basin strategies (Regulation (EU) 1299/2013: article 7). In this context, the mutual use of financial resources, the development of functional areas and the mutual use of infrastructure across national borders are central to achieve an improved use of the resources available in transnational territories.

The framework for transnational cooperation has been further enhanced in recent years by introducing additional instruments such as macro-regional strategies and the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). At transnational level, new governance structures shall be enhanced, inter alia, by the endorsement of macro-regional strategies. Until 2017, four macro-regional and six sea-basin strategies were adopted by the European Commission³ and about 70 EGTCs founded since the adoption of the EGTC Regulation in 2006 (Regulation (EC) 1082/2006).

3.2 Transnational cooperation in support of TEN-T development

Transnational territorial cooperation has been strengthened in the field of transport and the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in particular. The ESDP hinted generally at the need for efficient links between urban centers and highlighted that all regions should have adequate infrastructure access while at the same time disadvantages from congestion need to be overcome (EC 1999: 26). The ESDP did not request transnational action to address these issues; instead, it focused on the need for accompanying measures in different policy areas that support regional development in combination with infrastructure measures.

The corresponding transnational needs for action became more specified thereafter in the Territorial Agenda 2020 (MSPTD 2011: paragraph 35 f.) by focusing more strongly on creating linkages in the networks and developing different transport modes and an integrated network for minimizing infrastructure barriers.

With the broadening of topics covered by INTERREG and the more recently introduced instruments for cooperation across Member States (macro-regional strategies and the EGTC) European transport networks are not only tackled through transport policy measures but through explicit cooperation measures as well:

- > In the programming period 2014–2020 transport measures can be supported by INTERREG through specific objectives under thematic objective 7 ‘Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructure’. These measures include support for investments in TEN-T, enhancing regional

³ See http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/de/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/ and https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/sea_basins_en

mobility in connection to TEN-T infrastructure, improving low-carbon transport systems and developing high-quality railway systems (Regulation (EU) 1301/2013: article 5). In particular investment priorities 7a and 7b are directly linked to TEN-T measures and TEN-T links to secondary networks.⁴ As outlined in Table 1, only a few transnational cooperation programs actually engage in investment priority 7b (highlighted in bold) to contribute to enhanced mobility and functioning along the TEN-T corridors. Nevertheless, transnational cooperation programs that have a transport axis allocated at least 12% to 20% of their resources to measures under TO 7.⁵ The examples in Chapter 3.3 illustrate how, inter alia, INTERREG programs are used for supporting corridor development.

- > All macro-regional strategies adopted so far have certain objectives, sub-objectives or policy areas and actions focusing on one or another transport aspect. While other policy fields vary strongly between the macro-regional strategies, this policy field is covered in all of them. As detailed in Table 2, most of the relevant activities within macro-regional strategies are targeted at improving intermodality, connectivity and mobility of people.
- > Most EGTCs have been founded so far in the context of cross-border cooperation, some of them have a certain transport focus. An example with an exclusive focus on TEN-T development is the PROUD EGTC focusing on a new railway line between Dresden and Prague to overcome a TEN-T bottleneck. In addition, two transnational EGTCs were specifically founded to support integrated development along transport corridors. These are the Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC and the Central European Transport Corridor (CETC) EGTC (Zillmer/Hans/Lüer et al. 2017).

Despite the potential importance of these activities facilitating cooperation and coordination in transnational territories, the analysis indicates that other policy measures are of much higher importance for TEN-T corridor development, at least for funding physical infrastructure (see Chapter 2.2).

4 Investment priorities under TO 7: IP 7a – supporting a multimodal Single European Transport Area by investing in the TEN-T; 7b – enhancing regional mobility by connecting secondary and tertiary nodes to TEN-T infrastructure, including multimodal nodes.

5 In some cases this also includes energy network related measures.

INTERREG V B program	Specific objective	Volume allocated
Central Europe	To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks (Investment priority (IP) 7b)	EUR 30m (12 % of OP budget)
	To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environmentally friendly freight solutions (IP 7c)*	
Danube Region	Support environmentally friendly and safe transport systems and balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas (short title). Improve planning, coordination and practical solutions for an environmentally friendly, low-carbon and safer transport network and services in the programme area contributing to a balanced accessibility of urban and rural areas (IP 7c)	EUR 42m (19 % of OP budget)
North Sea Region	Develop demonstrations of innovative and/or improved transport and logistics solutions with potential to move large volumes of freight away from long-distance road transportation (IP 7c)	EUR 28m (17 % of OP budget)
	Stimulate the take-up and application of green transport solutions for regional freight and personal transport (IP 7c)	
North-West Europe	To facilitate the implementation of transnational low-carbon solutions in transport systems to reduce GHG-emissions in NWE (IP 7c)	EUR 48m (12 % of OP budget)
Adriatic- Ionian Region	Enhance capacity for integrated transport and mobility services and multimodality in the Adriatic-Ionian area (IP 7c)	EUR 15m (18 % of OP budget)
Baltic Sea Region	Interoperability of transport modes: to increase interoperability in transporting goods and persons in north-south and east-west connections based on increased capacity of transport actors (IP 7b)	EUR 66m (24 % of OP budget)
	Accessibility of remote areas and areas affected by demographic change: to improve the accessibility of the most remote areas and regions whose accessibility is affected by demographic change based on increased capacity of transport actors (IP 7b)	
	Maritime safety: to increase maritime safety and security based on advanced capacity of maritime actors (IP 7c)	
	Environmentally friendly shipping: to enhance clean shipping based on increased capacity of maritime actors (IP 7c)	
	‘Environmentally friendly urban mobility’: to enhance environmentally friendly transport systems in urban areas based on increased capacity of urban transport actors (IP 7c)	

INTERREG V B program	Specific objective	Volume allocated
Amazonia	Accroître la mobilité des personnes et des biens au sein de l'espace de coopération (IP 7c)	EUR 6m (33 % of OP budget)

* Investment priority 7c – developing and improving environmentally-friendly (including low-noise) and low-carbon transport systems, including inland waterways and maritime transport, ports, multimodal links and airport infrastructure, in order to promote sustainable regional and local mobility.

Tab. 1: Thematic foci of INTERREG VB programs 2014–2020 in the field of transport /Source: INTERREG ADRION 2015; INTERREG Amazonie 2014; INTERREG Baltic Sea Region 2015; INTERREG Central Europe 2016; INTERREG Danube 2017; INTERREG North Sea Region 2015; INTERREG North-West Europe 2015

Macro-regional strategy	Relevant policy field / pillar	Specific objectives, priorities and actions
EUSAIR (Adriatic-Ionian)	Pillar 2 – Connecting the Region	Two of three objectives and topics are linked to transport: > to strengthen maritime safety and security and develop a competitive regional intermodal port system; > to develop reliable transport and intermodal connections with the hinterland, both for freight and passengers.
EUSALP (Alpine)	Pillar 2 – Mobility and Connectivity	One relevant action: > to promote intermodality and interoperability in passenger and freight transport.
EUSBSR (Baltic Sea)	Objective – Connect the region, with one of three priorities: improve internal and external transport links	One of four sub-objectives is explicitly linked to transport: > good transport connections
EUSDR (Danube)	Pillar 1 – Connecting the Danube Region	One of three priority areas is linked to transport: > to improve mobility and multimodality

Tab. 2: Thematic foci of macro-regional strategies related to TEN-T development /Source: EC 2009, 2010a, 2010b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2017a

3.3 Existing approaches on different scales

The cooperation of regions, municipalities, chambers of commerce, infrastructure operators and other public and private players along transport corridors already existed before Core Network Corridors were established. Especially INTERREG B projects⁶ were used by regional and local players to strengthen the orientation towards transport corridors and corridor development. The following examples illustrate the diversity of existing activities and approaches on different spatial scales and how especially local and regional players currently support integrated corridor development by means of bottom-up initiatives.

Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC. The origins of the EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation), which was founded in April 2015, go back to the INTERREG IV B project and the INTERREG V B Strategic Initiative CODE24. In contrast to cooperation on a project basis, the EGTC with its own legal personality allows for long-term and more sustainable cooperation. 21 members from six countries along the Rhine-Alpine Corridor (BE, CH, DE, FR, IT, NL) cooperate together to represent local and regional interests on higher levels (see Fig. 1), coordi-

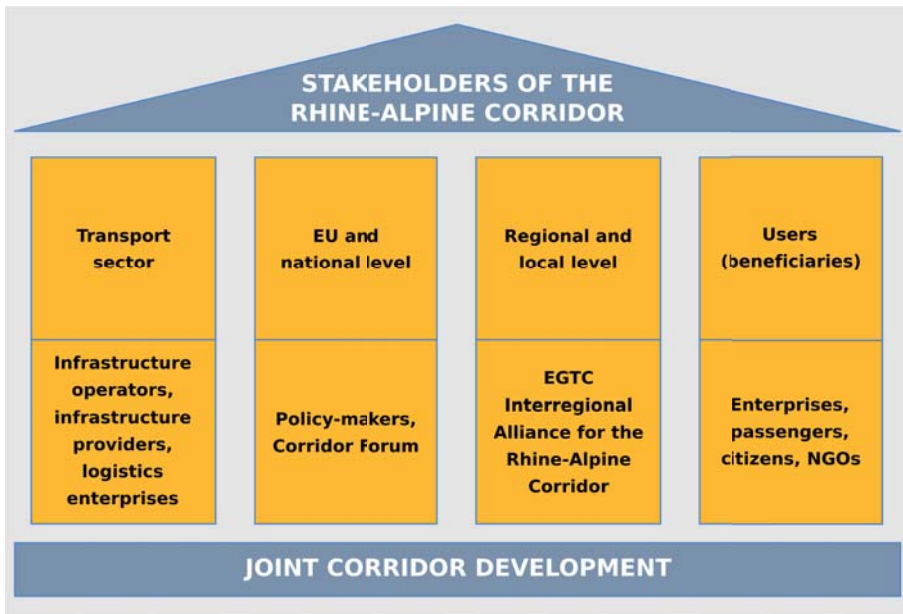


Fig. 1: Stakeholders along the Rhine-Alpine Corridor / Source: Authors' representation, based on Inter-regional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC 2017: 2

6 Relevant examples from the funding period 2007–2013 are, i. a., “SONORA – South-North Axis. Improving Transport Infrastructure And Services Across Central Europe” (2008–2012), “SCANDRIA – The Scandinavian-Adriatic Corridor For Growth And Innovation” (2009–2012), “TRANSITECTS – Transalpine Transport Architects – Improving Intermodal Solutions For Transalpine Freight Traffic” (2009–2012) and “CODE24 – Corridor Development Rotterdam-Genoa” (2010–2015).

nate regional development in the corridor, apply for funding conjointly, provide a platform for exchange and improve the visibility of the corridor (Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC 2015: 5). The EGTC was approved as a full member of the Corridor Forum of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor in May 2015, only one month after its foundation. Gaining access to the forum would not have been possible for most individual members of the EGTC. It is furthermore easier now to get access to relevant information and promote local and regional interests at EU level (Zillmer/Lüer 2017: 16). The EGTC leads a CEF project on high-speed rail integration⁷ and is a partner in a Horizon 2020 project on the integration of urban nodes in the Core Network Corridors⁸.

Scandria®. Scandria® is an umbrella for various activities, projects and initiatives along the Scandinavian-Adriatic Corridor, which mainly overlaps with the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Core Network Corridor. So far, 13 projects are part of the Scandria® project family, all of which have been or are currently implemented with funding from different INTERREG B programs.⁹ Some projects refer to single sections of the corridor, e.g. the Baltic Sea, the area from the Öresund Region to Hamburg, or the

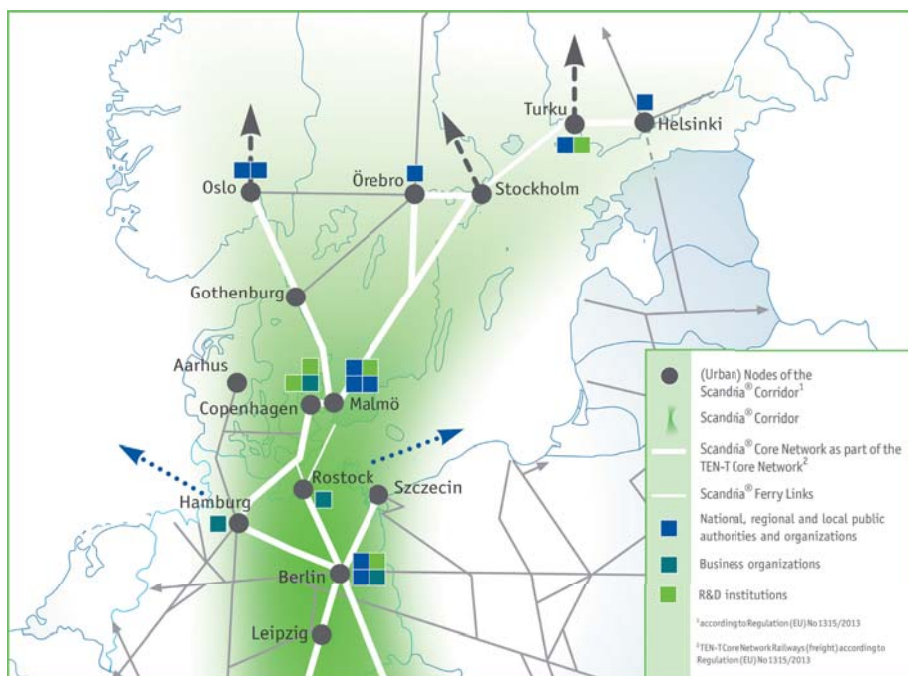


Fig. 2: Stakeholder structure of the Scandria®2Act project / Source: <https://www.scandria-corridor.eu/index.php/de/scandria-2act/partnership> (edited)

7 <http://egtc-rhine-alpine.eu/projects/>

8 <http://egtc-rhine-alpine.eu/news/2187-2/>

9 In the funding period 2014–2020, the Scandria®Corridor intersects four INTERREG B programs: the Baltic Sea Region, Central Europe, the Danube Region and the Alpine Space.

Alps, whereas other projects cover the entire corridor. All of them, however, look at different aspects of corridor development, from sustainable transport modes and green corridor development to governance and cluster cooperation.¹⁰ The Scandria[®] Alliance is a transnational platform of different transport associations, logistics initiatives, political committees and other relevant networks for exchange, communication and cooperation on logistics, economic cooperation and governance issues.¹¹ The most recent activity is the Scandria[®] 2Act project¹² (2016–2019) with Finish, Scandinavian and German partners (see Fig. 2) working on the deployment of clean fuels and multimodal transport services. In addition, the project intends to develop further the Scandria[®] Alliance as a laboratory and platform for permanent dialogue and exchange between different players from the nodes and the corridor.¹³

EUREGIO Freight Corridor. In the German-Dutch border region of the EUREGIO, local and regional players (see Tab. 3) intend to elaborate a joint strategy about how to further develop the cross-border logistics sector along the TEN-T corridor crossing their region.¹⁴ Based on an analysis of the infrastructure networks, transport flows and interoperability issues, an action program with a comprehensive set of measures and approaches on various scales was developed (Lüer/Schürmann/Harmsen et al. 2017: 60 ff.). On corridor level, the activities in the EUREGIO are acknowledged as a regional effort to develop (a) alternative solutions for an important missing cross-border link (between the Twente Canal and the Mittelland Canal) and (b) a strong logistics hotspot on the North Sea-Baltic Corridor (Proximare 2014: 243 f.).

Level	Germany	Netherlands
Sub-national	2 federal states ('Land')	4 provinces ('provincie')
Regional	5 districts ('Landkreis')	2 regions ('regio')
Local	2 municipalities ('Stadt')	2 municipalities ('gemeente')
Cross-border	EUREGIO with 129 member municipalities (104 DE + 25 NL)	
Others	2 Chambers of Commerce ('IHK')	

Tab. 3: Project partner structure of the EUREGIO Freight Corridor project / Source: Authors' representation

These three approaches give a hint at the diversity of existing activities. The comparison of the two figures and the table above highlights the individual approaches to involving specific stakeholders. Although they differ in many regards (e.g. territorial scale, degree of institutionalization, thematic focus, involved players), they all have in common that they refer to the integrated development of Core Network Corridors

10 <http://www.scandria-corridor.eu/index.php/en/projects>

11 <http://www.scandria-corridor.eu/index.php/en/alliance>

12 <http://www.scandria-corridor.eu/index.php/en/projects/scandria2-act>

13 <http://www.scandria-corridor.eu/index.php/en/scandria-2act/corridor-governance>

14 <https://www.keep.eu/keep/project-ext/42848/EUREGIO%20G%C3%BCterkorridor>

and the integration of local and regional perspectives and interests in corridor development. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that such activities are organized bottom-up. They refer to, but do not necessarily depend on, the existence of the Core Network Corridors – in contrast to the nine Corridor Fora.

4 Corridor Fora as a new instrument for transnational cooperation in TEN-T corridors

The Corridor Fora are directly related to the nine Core Network Corridors, i.e. each Core Network Corridor has its own Corridor Forum. The Forum has the task to bring together various players from the Member States concerned, such as national and regional authorities, transportation companies and infrastructure operators to support the implementation process. Hence, the Corridor Fora are an important new transnational instrument, set up for the funding period 2014–2020 for the first time. Their potential role is also stressed by the European Commission who points out that the Corridor Fora can provide a basis for various dialogues, ranging from identifying Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and further project-list development to exchange on specific corridor development topics within and between different corridors (Balázs/Bodewig/Brinkhorst et al. 2016: 4). This chapter starts with a general review of the role of Corridor Fora (Chapter 4.1). It then analyzes this role in view of stakeholder involvement (Chapter 4.2) and contents discussed in the fora (Chapter 4.3) using the example of three Core Network Corridors. Based on these findings, Chapter 4.4 develops some pointers for potential improvements of Corridor Fora in general. In turn, these provide the grounds for more specific conclusions on the Orient/East-Med Core Network Corridor in Chapter 5.

4.1 The role of the Corridor Fora

The Corridor Fora are meeting places for stakeholders from the corridor and impact on transnational cooperation between members. Three main elements can be identified that are particularly relevant for the stakeholders:

- > **Policy coordination and lobbying.** Corridor Fora are defined as consultative fora (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013: article 46.1), and are, hence, not decision-making bodies with regard to the formulation or implementation of national transport and infrastructure policies. Instead, a Corridor Forum rather allows its members to coordinate and compare their respective policies and lobby for their own interests. The forum helps its members to get an overview and better understanding of project plans, priorities and relevant activities in other countries, i.e. their respective implementation status, what progress has been made, which challenges need to be tackled etc. In this way, the forum shall help to develop and work on the European dimension of national transport policies. This is especially relevant for smaller countries. For them, the forum is a good opportunity to present their activities and ideas of cross-border, transnational or European relevance to public authorities and infrastructure operators from big or neighboring countries.

- > **Networking and learning.** Besides its official role as recorded in the TEN-T regulation, a Corridor Forum also allows its members to learn from each other and exchange good practices and experience. Such networking activities often take place bilaterally outside the meeting room. The Corridor Forum can thus contribute to the development of transnational networks between stakeholders from different Member States and exchange that reaches out to activities that are not directly related to the Corridor Forum.
- > **Activation and stimulation.** Following from the above, one can conclude that forum meetings are also a source of inspiration. Members make use of the forum to look for cooperation partners to prepare joint project proposals and apply for funding. It is a place where new ideas are generated and information on available funding sources (e.g. loans for green shipping) is provided. Stakeholders can furthermore benefit from the forum as they realize the need and added value of preparing and implementing activities related to corridor development, e.g. to develop regional transport strategies or lobby for the interests of cross-border regions.

When discussing the role of the Corridor Fora, two further elements are to be considered that are crucial for the success of the Corridor Fora and the role they play in the process of further developing the implementation of the TEN-T Core Network:

- > **European Coordinators.** Each corridor has a European Coordinator who chairs the forum meetings. They are key persons for preparing and holding forum meetings. According to the TEN-T regulation, the Corridor Forum is directly related to the European Coordinator. The Forum shall assist him/her in implementing the work plan (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013: article 46.1). The work plan includes an analysis of the development of the corridor as well as a description of the characteristics, cross-border sections and objectives of the corridor (ibid.: article 47.1). It is nevertheless important to consider that the European Coordinator has no real power. She/he cannot commit members to taking, preparing or implementing certain measures. Instead, it is his/her responsibility to prepare meetings, develop appealing formats, produce inputs, moderate the meetings and find common ground in case of controversy. This makes the Coordinator the key person to keep everybody motivated and maintain a high level of participation, which is the actual added value of the forum. The success of the Corridor Fora therefore depends on an appealing format and new ideas to attract as many stakeholders as possible, and in this way maintain and further develop the Corridor Fora as relevant meeting places.
- > **Working groups.** The European Coordinator can set up thematic working groups with regard to modal integration, interoperability and cross-border sections (Regulation (EU) 1315/2013: article 46.2). Here, more content-oriented discussions take place. In the Corridor Fora of the three corridors concerned, working groups were set up with regard to ports and terminals, inland waterways, cross-border rail sections, urban nodes and regions. The working groups complement the Corridor Fora as they are more focused on specific issues and allow for de-

tailed discussions about different views on relevant issues, exchange of experience, existing needs and approaches on how to address these needs. In this way, the working groups help prepare the actual forum meetings, and the outcome of the working group meetings feed into, and are presented at, the Corridor Fora. Especially for stakeholders from regional and local levels and the business sector, these meetings are interesting as the meetings of the Corridor Fora often focus on national stakeholders and coordination between Member States.

4.2 Stakeholders in three Corridor Fora

The main stakeholder groups that are represented in the Corridor Fora are public authorities, infrastructure operators and network providers. Furthermore, transportation companies and consultants are invited to the meetings. The following focuses on the Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Baltic Corridors in comparison with the Orient/East-Med Corridor.

Public authorities mainly come from the national and regional level, with a higher share of regional authorities in the Rhine-Alpine and North Sea-Baltic corridors, respectively, than in the forum of the Orient/East-Med Corridor, in which national authorities are more present and make up the largest individual group of stakeholders (see Tab. 3).

At national level, mainly transport ministries, agencies and other regulatory authorities are involved. Regional authorities comprise a wide range of administrative levels, from county to state level, and also include associations and other groupings of cooperation (e.g. Association of Hungarian County Administrations, Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC). Individual local authorities are not found in any forum. In some cases though, they are represented by associations (Union of Cyprus Municipalities, Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania). The German city states of Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg are an exception as they are also municipalities but are counted here as regional authorities due to their status as German *Länder*.

The largest stakeholder groups in all three Corridor Fora are infrastructure operators and network providers. They own, maintain and provide physical infrastructure for transportation and handling of freight and can be both privately and publicly owned. Within this group, representatives of node infrastructure (ports, terminals, airports) are more visible than network infrastructures (railways, roads, waterways). However, it is important to consider that this is due to the fact that there are fewer networks than nodes, i.e. in many cases one stakeholder covers the network of an entire country.

A third group of stakeholders represented in the Corridor Fora are transportation companies, i.e. companies that offer logistics services or intermodal transport chains, not only but mainly in the railway sector. It is important to note that many stakeholders are active in different fields as they both operate infrastructure and provide trans-

port and logistics services.¹⁵ For example, the Dutch railway organization ProRail is a government agency that is responsible for the building, maintenance, management and security of the Dutch railway network and the allocation of railway capacities to transportation operators. It is therefore both a national supervisory authority and a network provider but was counted here as a network provider due to its very specific role and function for the Dutch railway system. Another example is the German stakeholder RheinCargo, owned by local port authorities and railway companies. RheinCargo operates several ports. Here it offers port logistics services, but in addition also transportation services by train. Hence, RheinCargo is both an infrastructure provider and a transportation company, and was therefore counted twice for the North Sea-Baltic Corridor Forum.

Type of stakeholder	Rhine-Alpine	North Sea-Baltic	Orient/ East-Med
Public authorities	23	39	46
National authorities	9	12	26
Regional authorities (incl. EGTC)	14	26	19
Local authorities	-	1 (association)	1 (association)
Infrastructure operators and providers	30	58	49
Ports and terminals	12	27	20
Airports	6	16	12
Railways	6	9	9
Roads	3	5	8
Waterways	2	1	-
No specific mode	1	-	-
Transportation companies	2	3	6
Railways	2	3	5
Roads	-	-	1
Transport consultants	6	-	-
Others	7	9	15
Total	68 (0)*	107 (2)*	116 (4)*

* In brackets: Number of institutions that were counted twice

Tab. 4: Types of stakeholders invited to Corridor Fora Meetings / Source: Authors' analysis of available stakeholder lists

¹⁵ For this reason, some stakeholders have been counted twice. The forum-specific number of double counts is mentioned in the table; under 'Total' in brackets. In order to avoid a high number of double counts, which would distort the overview, a stakeholder was only counted twice if no clear focus could be identified. The categorization nevertheless depends on the personal assessment of the authors and might be biased by the quality and up-to-dateness of available information (in English) and the language competences of the authors.

Besides the general structure of stakeholders that are invited to forum meetings, several differences between stakeholders from different administrative levels, Member States or types of stakeholders can be identified when it comes to their role and actual influence in the Corridor Fora.¹⁶

In general, public authorities from the national level are considered as the main players. Nevertheless, they are a heterogeneous group of stakeholders. The involvement and level of activity differ depending on the respective administrative structure, for example. Smaller countries like Latvia and Lithuania but also bigger countries with a strong focus on the central level like Poland or a strong public sector like Germany tend to send mainly government representatives to the meetings, whereas other countries like Belgium or the Netherlands are represented by a higher diversity of stakeholders. However, also geographical proximity to Brussels, where the forum meetings usually take place, might play a role. Yet, the actual influence of individual Member States does not depend on the number of representatives but on their capability to lobby for their interests.

The involvement of all stakeholders eventually depends on the approval of membership through the Member States. Hence, the main decision-making power in the fora lies with the national authorities. The influence of the regions furthermore depends on their role in the specific administrative system of the Member State to which they belong. Whereas Finnish regions or German states are strong players, regions are comparatively weak entities in the Baltic countries, for example. Within the group of nodes, ports play an important role and are very active. They are often the start and end points of corridors and are therefore especially affected by, and relevant for, corridor development.

As the Corridor Forum is usually the only meeting place for stakeholders that are located along a corridor, it is important that all relevant interests along the corridor are represented and taken into consideration. Examples of stakeholders that are relevant but are often not or only indirectly represented, or are underrepresented, in the Corridor Fora, are citizens, transportation/shipping companies, local authorities, and research institutions. As it is difficult to involve citizens directly, local authorities could be a suitable stakeholder to represent citizen and other bottom-up interests and maybe even enhance the scope of the Corridor Fora towards a broader understanding of corridor development (cf. Chapter 4.3). Research institutions could help bridge the knowledge gap about the impacts of infrastructure investments and measures on the environment, the labor market and regional and urban development, and develop approaches and ideas on how to ensure that all spaces along the corridor benefit from corridor development.

16 The following paragraphs as well as Chapters 4.2 and 4.3 are based on telephone interviews that were conducted with four members of the North Sea-Baltic and the Rhine-Alpine Corridor Forum in August and September 2017.

4.3 Contents discussed in the Corridor Fora

Screening the available agendas¹⁷ of the Corridor Fora meetings of the three Core Network Corridors that took place between April 2014 and June 2017 reveals that the Fora meetings follow the same or at least a similar structure. The following meetings can be highlighted as rather interactive and especially relevant for stakeholders:

- > **1st meeting (April 2014).** At the launch, the forum defined its actual framework, i.e. (a) the infrastructure belonging to the corridor, (b) responsible persons within the Member States and (c) possible stakeholders in the Corridor Forum.
- > **3rd meeting (October 2014).** At this meeting, the Progress Report on the corridor, its outline, characteristics, objectives and the work plan were presented, and, i.a., working groups, nodes, infrastructure managers and regional representatives had the chance to give their feedback on the state of play.
- > **4th meeting (November 2014).** Here, reports from the working groups (e.g. ports, regions) and cross-cutting issues (e.g. Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS); European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS)) were presented and discussed.
- > **5th and 6th meetings (September / December 2015).** The 5th and 6th meetings informed the stakeholders about the outcome of the 2014 CEF call, the 2015 CEF call and relevant activities of the European Investment Bank. Hence, it was about funding opportunities, which is important for activation and stimulation of cooperation outside the Corridor Forum.
- > **8th meeting (September 2016).** Besides the provision of information on the CEF calls, the state of play of the Second Work Plan was presented and the working groups (regions and urban nodes, ports and rail-road terminals) reported from their meetings (North Sea-Baltic).
- > **10th meeting (June 2017).** Here, the Third Work Plan (incl. final project list, mapping etc.), flagship projects as well as reports from the working groups (urban nodes and regions, rail-road terminals, inland waterways and ports) were discussed. For the North Sea-Baltic, also other activities (e.g. on ITS; Rail Baltica) were presented.

It is furthermore worthwhile emphasizing that many forum meetings also included a restricted meeting with national representatives from the Member States. This underlines the abovementioned assessment that the ultimate (decision-making) power in the fora lies with national ministries.

¹⁷ For the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, see: https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/rhine-alpine_en; for the North Sea-Baltic Corridor, see: https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/north-sea-baltic_en; and for the Orient/East-Med Corridor, see: https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/orient-east-med_en.

Sometimes the thematic focus of the actual discussions seems to be more on individual infrastructure projects and national transport policies than on the coordination of projects and development of a joint European corridor perspective. National differences also influence what is discussed and in which detail; e.g. German stakeholders focus on strategic development in transport whereas Dutch stakeholders promote ITS and smart solutions. In general also an east-west divide can be identified. Stakeholders from western Europe are more interested in ITS, LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) and sustainability whereas stakeholders from eastern Europe stress the importance of (new) physical infrastructure projects. These different perspectives of course root in differences as regards the completeness and status of the respective national transport networks.

The added value and contribution of the Corridor Fora, nevertheless, lies in promoting cooperation and coordination beyond national borders and between stakeholders to increase the European dimension of the transport network and national transport policies. Hence, discussions in the forum focus, i.a., on cross-border projects and common challenges such as shared environmental concerns, sustainability, smart solutions, synchromodality or the use and exchange of open data.

4.4 Potential for improvement

The Corridor Fora are a comparatively young tool that has existed only since 2014. However, after about ten meetings per forum, it is time to reflect on experience so far and see what can be improved to further strengthen the added value and impact of the Corridor Fora. Some first pointers at potential for improvement are the following:

- > **Broad involvement and manageability.** Some interests and perspectives are underrepresented in the Corridor Fora or not represented at all. To get the full picture, however, it is important to include all relevant interests. Additional stakeholder groups that could be invited to join are logistics/shipping companies, local authorities and research institutions, for example. In order to ensure the functioning of the Corridor Fora, it is nevertheless important to maintain a clear and manageable structure. One approach to combine both elements could be to involve associations (e.g. business associations, city networks) and non-governmental organizations (e.g. environmental and social groups).
- > **Synergies between Corridor Fora.** The nine Core Network Corridors may be viewed as being based on an artificial concept. Actual transport flows do not follow the track layout of a corridor from the starting point to the end point. Instead, goods are transported on optimized routes that only partially overlap with one or several corridors. In addition, some thematic issues are relevant for more than one corridor. Hence, it is important to ensure not only coordination along one corridor but between different corridors. In some cases, fora meetings could even be merged (which has occasionally been tested). This would also strengthen the role of the European Coordinators who would function as interfaces and ensure integration and cooperation between corridors.

- > **Alignment of the schedule.** In many cases, the dates of the fora meetings are not in line with the opening of project calls. Application processes at EU level are often complex, yet short. Better access to funding or at least the provision and exchange of information and experience, however, is an important added value of the fora for many stakeholders. It would therefore be helpful to align the schedule of the fora meetings with other relevant schedules in the context of EU funding and policies.
- > **Strengthening of working groups.** Fora meetings usually have a full agenda and a large number of participants. The abovementioned points would further increase the requirements for the Corridor Fora. Alternatively, more weight could be put on the working groups and their role could be strengthened. New working groups or more frequent meetings of the existing groups would allow the increasing complexity of stakeholders and topics to be better addressed without overburdening the Corridor Fora. Selected additional stakeholders who are particularly relevant for specific topics could be invited to the working groups. The working groups could be used to exchange experience about application procedures. To limit the increase of new meetings, joint cross-corridor meetings could be held for cross-cutting and overarching issues.

5 Conclusions for the Orient/East-Med Corridor

Based on the understanding of territorial cooperation along TEN-T corridors developed above, experience made in the selected Corridor Fora and the comparison of observed structures in the three corridors, this final chapter provides some conclusions and starting points to enhance transnational cooperation along the Orient/East-Med Corridor between Hamburg and Athens. Thereby it addresses the topic of overarching interest of this publication.

The Corridor Fora are an important and successful tool to promote transnational cooperation, exchange good practices, knowledge and experience, and mutual learning. They bring together various stakeholders with different perspectives on corridor development. The main stakeholder groups are public authorities, and providers and operators of network and node infrastructures, whereas other stakeholders are not involved at all or are at least underrepresented. Similarly, as for the other Corridor Fora, it can also make sense for the Orient/East-Med Corridor to involve these stakeholder groups, e.g. research institutions, NGOs or shipping/logistics companies. If their perspectives are not covered in the Corridor Forum, it is difficult to develop a fully integrated perspective on corridor development. On the other hand, it is important to ensure that the Corridor Forum meetings can be managed and do not become lengthy conference meetings, especially taking into account the relatively large number of forum members in the Orient/East-Med Corridor Forum. For this purpose, it is worthwhile to make better use of the working groups, e.g. by scheduling more regular meetings or establishing new working groups (see below). In any case, it is important to convince the Member States' representatives of the added value of broader involvement and the potential of the forum. As they have to approve new forum members, they hold the main decision-making power in the Corridor Forum.

Despite their importance, it is worth noting that the Corridor Fora are not the only tool in the context of corridor development. Many European Territorial Cooperation programs (especially INTERREG B on transnational cooperation but also INTERREG A on cross-border cooperation) and all macro-regional strategies are linked directly or indirectly to corridor and TEN-T development. To increase the added value of the Corridor Fora, their members should try to make best use of all existing approaches and develop synergies, e.g. by using the meetings as a tool to complement their own activities. In relation to the Orient/East-Med Corridor, especially the Central Europe and Danube Region INTERREG B programs may provide good access points for enhancing soft elements of corridor development as they cover large parts of the center of the Orient/East-Med Corridor. In particular, the Central Europe INTERREG B program includes an explicit focus on support for better TEN-T connections. In relation to macro-regional strategies, it can be concluded that the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) may be of highest interest for enhancing integrated approaches towards the Orient/East-Med Corridor development, since it is again the most centrally located strategy in relation to this corridor. The Corridor Forum could be used strategically to find partners for joint project applications and other activities, to present on-going activities, reach out to a wider audience and raise awareness for local and regional interests. For this, it is however necessary that relevant stakeholders from other regions along the corridor are represented in the Corridor Forum or at least in the working groups.

The working groups are the places where issues can be really discussed. They are less formal character than the forum meetings and their influence and relevance seem to have been underestimated so far. Irregular meetings and a limited number of working groups (usually three to four) imply that the working groups are considered rather as a tool to occasionally supplement the forum's activities. From the reports, however, we can conclude that working groups are used in a more strategic way. Here, in-depth discussions of specific issues take place. This implies potential for broader, yet targeted involvement of additional stakeholders, match-making activities for transnational partnerships or consortia, or detailed information about, and exchange of experience in, application procedures. The European Coordinator would be the key person to strengthen the role of the working groups and to make sure that the Corridor Forum takes up the outcomes of the working groups.

For continuous and stabilized coordination, more advanced instruments than individual projects may be necessary. An example is provided by the use of the EGTC instrument in the Rhine-Alpine Corridor. This is based on a long tradition of transnational cooperation that has established trust and understanding between the stakeholders along the corridor. In the Orient/East-Med Corridor, however, transnational cooperation may first need to become more advanced, e.g. through a combination of working group activities and transnational projects, to develop this understanding and trust. Bilateral, more stable cooperation structures as established at the Saxon-Czech border for the new railway line between Dresden and Prague (PROUD EGTC, see section 3.2) can be first steps towards more intensive and comprehensive cooperation, gradually shifting the focus from cross-border links to corridor development.

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