



# From Complementarity to Synergy

The Added Value of Cross-Border Cooperation

*Martina Gaisch, Victoria Rammer*

# OVERVIEW – SETTING THE SCENE

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Introduction to  
INTERREG

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Goals of INTERREG  
projects

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objectives

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Conclusion

A top-down view of a wooden desk. On the left, a silver laptop is open, with its screen tilted back. To the right of the laptop is a white ceramic cup filled with dark coffee. Further right, a yellow pencil lies horizontally. There are several pieces of crumpled white paper scattered around the desk. The background is a light-colored wooden surface with a visible grain.

# Introduction to INTERREG

# INTRODUCTION TO INTERREG

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Launched in **1990** to foster the complementation of single markets through cross-border cooperation



Aims to stimulate cooperation between regions in the **European Union**, funded by the European Regional Development Fund

# INTRODUCTION TO INTERREG

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Covers all **28** EU Member States, **3** participating EFTA countries (Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein), **6** accession countries and **18** neighbouring countries



Budget of EUR **10.1 billion**, which represents **2.8%** of the total of the European Cohesion Policy budget

# INTRODUCTION ON INTERREG

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Consists of **three** strategic strands

Strand A

cross-border cooperation in  
regions with a common border

Strand B

transnational cooperation in  
regions without common border  
but within the EU

Strand C

interregional cooperation within  
regions all around the world

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interregional cooperation within regions all around the world

- This research focuses on **Strand A** only
- It is by far the **largest** strand in terms of budget and number of programmes
- In the present case, cross-border cooperation is funded between:
  - Lower/Upper Austria – Czech Republic
  - Upper Austria – Bavaria (Germany)



An aerial photograph of New York City, showing a dense urban landscape with numerous skyscrapers and buildings. The image is partially obscured by a semi-transparent white rectangular box in the center. The text 'Goals of INTERREG projects – Strand A' is centered within this box. The background shows the Hudson River on the left and the East River on the right, with the Freedom Tower being a prominent feature on the right side.

# Goals of INTERREG projects – Strand A

# GOALS I

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Strengthen cross-border relations and collaboration

Contribute to a common European understanding

Strengthen the economic, social, cultural, spatial and environmental capacity

# GOALS II

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Enhance specific identity while at the same time foster international profile of regions

Facilitate communication and knowledge transfer

Bring socio-economic benefits for European citizens

# GOALS III

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Facilitate cultural-related exchange

Address common challenges in border regions

Exploit the untapped growth potential in border regions

Provide support for employment, social integration, environmental protection, and gender equality

A top-down view of a wooden desk. On the left, a silver laptop is open. To its right is a white mug filled with dark coffee. Further right, a yellow pencil lies horizontally. Below the pencil are two sticky notes, one white and one light green. There are also some crumpled pieces of paper scattered on the desk. The text "Research objectives" is centered over the image in a black, sans-serif font.

# Research objectives

# RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

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By means of desktop research and experimental data it was sought to

- IDENTIFY
  - Lessons learned and benefits of cross border INTERREG projects
  - Defordances and limitations of cross-border INTERREG projects
- - PROVIDE
  - Recommendations on how to best profit from INTERREG collaborations

A person in a dark blue suit and white shirt is sitting at a desk, working on a silver laptop. A tan messenger bag is resting on the desk in front of them. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office space with a window and a potted plant. The word "Findings" is overlaid in the center of the image.

# Findings

# LESSONS LEARNED

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- Awareness of comprehensive dissemination strategy
- Focus on sustainability of innovation and genuine complementary interests
- Active involvement of variety of stakeholders from academic, industrial, economic and social sectors



# BENEFITS

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- Development of cross-border networks with social and economic impact
- Structural economic benefit for the specific border regions
- Contribution to a common European understanding of shared civic values

# DEFORDANCES / LIMITATIONS

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- Uneven institutionalization patterns /pecking order
- Co-operation practices have not reached sufficient power for the encouragement of more informal partnerships
- Red tape outweighs content-related matters

# DEFORDANCES / LIMITATIONS

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## Possible reasons

- Asymmetries in terms of size, reputation and network capacities
- Extensive administrative workload
- “Built-in inflexibility” and a „strong arm of bureaucracy” (During et al, 2009)

# REFLECTION

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Practical implications that were found to impede cross-border cooperation within INTERREG projects

- High vs low context communication (implicit expectations)
  - Joint interests may not be defined clearly enough
  - If common planning and coordination is not fully grasped, activities may be sketchy, stand-alone and with little impact
  - Lack of dedication
- Strict bureaucratic requirements of the INTERREG projects
  - Legal, administrative and bureaucratic jungle / “reinventing the wheel”
  - Time and financial constraint
  - Inflexible agenda

A scenic view of a two-lane road stretching into the distance, flanked by trees and vineyards under a clear sky. The road has a dashed white center line and solid white edge lines. The trees have yellow and orange autumn foliage. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

# **Conclusion and Recommendation**

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Need to reduce over-prescriptive bureaucracy and rigidity

Excessive red tape and administrative burden must not outweigh content

Technocratic approaches shall be limited to allow for substantial cooperation with sustainable impact

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Need for a sharp look at asymmetries in terms of size, network capacities and reputation

“Borders of bureaucracy” were considered the biggest barriers to INTERREG cross-border projects

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The project “CLIL” has been funded with support from the European Commission, the European Fund for Regional development (EFRE), and the Federal State of Upper Austria under the program INTERREG V-A Austria-Czech Republic 2014-2020.





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