

**Territorial Cooperation Programmes play an important role for the development of Europe**

*Programme investments enable the mobilization of under-used territorial potentials, contributing to the competitiveness of Europe and to the necessary economic growth and job creation.*

*Territorial Cooperation projects promote growth, job-creation and life quality through new innovative ideas and strategies as well as education, institutional capacity-building and staff professionalization. In particular, they facilitate flows of people, goods and capital, which otherwise would not cross the borders.*

*These are findings of several ESPON projects, among others the recently concluded TERCO project (European Territorial Cooperation as a Factor of Growth, Jobs and Quality of Life).*

**Types of Territorial Cooperation**

**In Europe, different types of cooperation take place across the borders and beyond**

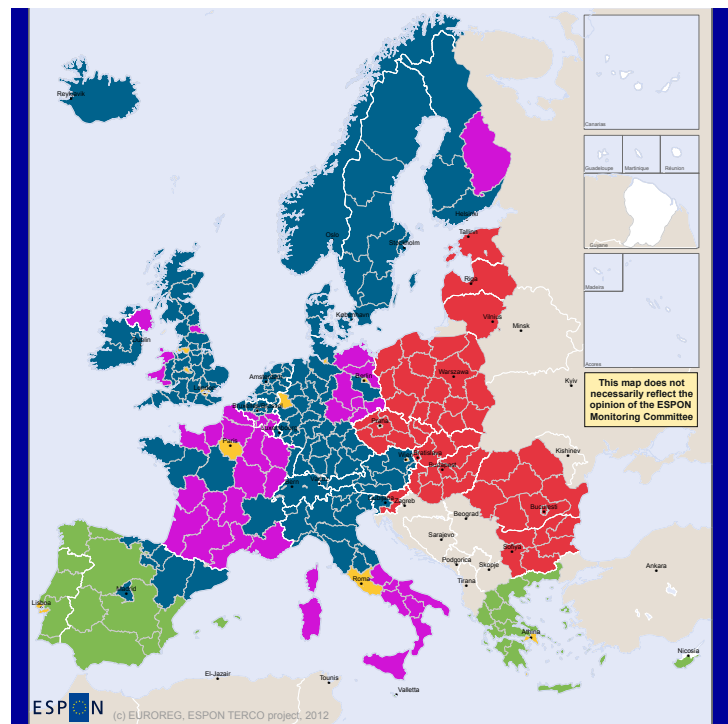
EU Structural Funds facilitate financing of three main types of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC): cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.


In addition, European regions and cities cooperate with counterparts located in other continents (transcontinental cooperation), as well as with cities or municipalities in Europe and beyond through twinning agreements.

Regions across Europe show interesting differences in what type of territorial cooperation they engage in:

- Cross-border, transnational and inter-regional types of cooperation are strongest in the regions of Northern and Central Europe.
- Member States in the Eastern part of Europe have a preference for twinning-city cooperation, which is a relatively inexpensive way to cooperate and connect with other parts of Europe and the neighbouring countries.
- Besides cooperating in ETC programmes, Spain, Portugal and Greece tend to cooperate, more than other countries, in transcontinental contexts.

**Map 1 - Territorial Cooperation preferences by regions**



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Regional level: NUTS 2, 2006; NUTS 0 for NO and CH  
Source: EUROREG, University of Warsaw, 2011  
Origin of data: ESPON TERCO Project, 2012  
© EuroGeographics Association for administrative boundaries

**Territorial cooperation preferences by regions**

- Red: Twinning city oriented territorial cooperation
- Green: High territorial cooperation beyond the ESPON area
- Pink: Relatively low range and intensity of territorial cooperation
- Yellow: Hubs of territorial cooperation (resulting from specific administrative divisions)
- Blue: Medium range and intensity of territorial cooperation (constituting the ESPON average)
- White: No data

**Facts on Territorial Cooperation**

- Territorial Cooperation received 4.9 Billion € in funding from ERDF for the period 2000-2006, and 7.8 Billion € for the period 2007-2013, an increase of 62%. In total 70% of the funds went to cross-border cooperation, 24% to transnational cooperation and 6% to interregional cooperation.
- Under the cross-border cooperation programmes, it is estimated that about 14 500 projects were implemented during the period 2000-2012.
- Under the transnational cooperation programmes, almost 1500 projects were implemented during the period 2000-2010, involving about 15 000 partners.
- Under the interregional cooperation programmes, 384 projects were implemented during the period 2000-2010, involving over 4000 partners.
- All regions are involved in cooperation in the form of twinning cities. The largest number of twinning cities agreements was found in Germany (3300), France (2500), Italy (2000) and Poland (1200). The highest number of twinning cities agreements per local administrative unit are found in Finland (1,15), Sweden (1,00), and Estonia (0,59).

**Themes of Cooperation**

**Territorial cooperation addresses a large variety of themes**

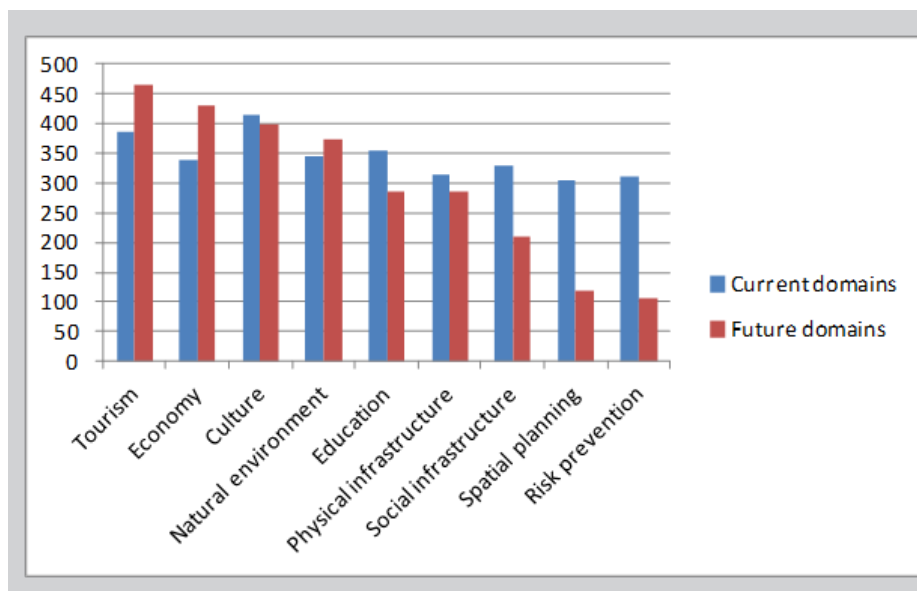
In general, the current situation shows that slight preference exists for projects dealing with culture, tourism and education. At a closer look, each type of cooperation has different characteristics:

- Closest to the general picture is cross-border cooperation, with tourism and cultural events being the favoured themes.
- Transnational and interregional cooperation give a clear preference for projects on natural environment, followed by tourism and cultural events.
- Economy and tourism are the preferred themes in transcontinental cooperation, followed by educational exchange.
- In twinning cities arrangements, the preferred themes for cooperation are cultural events, followed by tourism and educational exchange.

In the future, it appears that territorial cooperation will pay increasing attention to project investments focusing on the economy and natural environment. However, tourism and culture will still rank high.

This is in particular voiced by the more experienced actors involved in European Territorial Cooperation, while actors engaged in transcontinental and twinning cities cooperation also put growing emphasis on social infrastructure respectively educational exchange.

Interestingly, territorial cooperation related to infrastructure seems to become less important in the future, which also is the case for projects on risk prevention and spatial planning.



**Figure 1: Current and future themes of all five types of territorial cooperation**

**Source:** Based on answers from TERCO standardised electronic survey (frequency of responses).

**Background:** The TERCO project analysed the thematic areas of cooperation by using questionnaires and conduct interviews among local and regional officials in nine case studies covering 19 countries. The respondents/stakeholders reflected, among others, on the importance of specific thematic areas of territorial cooperation for their regions, currently and in the future.

## Thematic Preferences of Countries

### "Older" and "newer" member states have different thematic preferences

Striking differences appear when looking at the themes of cooperation preferred by different EU countries:

- Actors in the 'older' EU member states, involved in transnational and interregional cooperation, consider natural environment as the most important theme for future cooperation, closely followed by economy. In cross-border cooperation, economy is the preferred theme for future cooperation.
- Actors in 'newer' EU member states have a different approach, emphasizing physical and social infrastructure as well as joint spatial planning as the most important themes for future transnational and interregional cooperation, while tourism is clearly still the most preferred theme in future cross-border cooperation.
- Actors in non-EU member states such as Morocco, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine, emphasize economy as the most important theme for future cooperation, followed by tourism, cultural events and educational exchange.

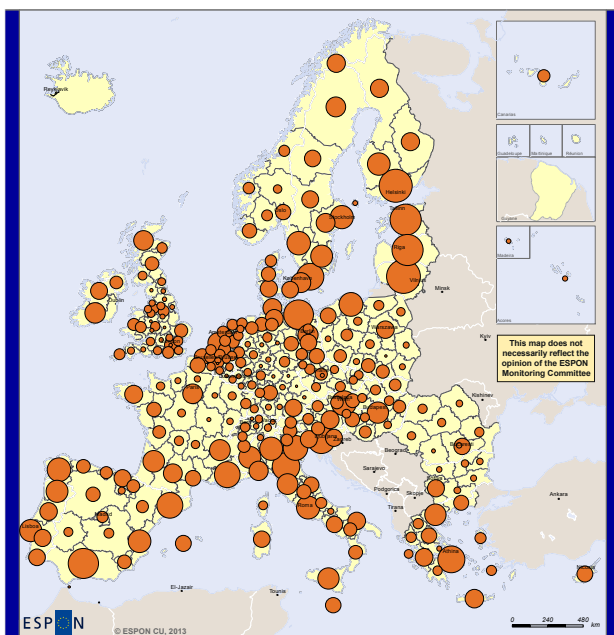
## Intensity of Territorial Cooperation

### Peripheral regions have higher intensity of territorial cooperation

Measuring territorial cooperation (as number of project partners) in absolute and relative terms reveals some interesting patterns. For the ETC Programmes on transnational and inter-regional cooperation, this is expressed as:

- The absolute number of cooperating partners is very high in regions in north-west Europe, southern France, Italy, Greece and the coastal regions of the Iberian Peninsula.
- In relative terms (the number of ETC project partners related to the population) particularly regions in Scandinavia, the Baltic States and Scotland show a high intensity of territorial cooperation.
- This relative pattern is in line with the general trend that engagement in territorial cooperation is very high in peripheral and specific types of European regions, such as sparsely populated areas and islands.

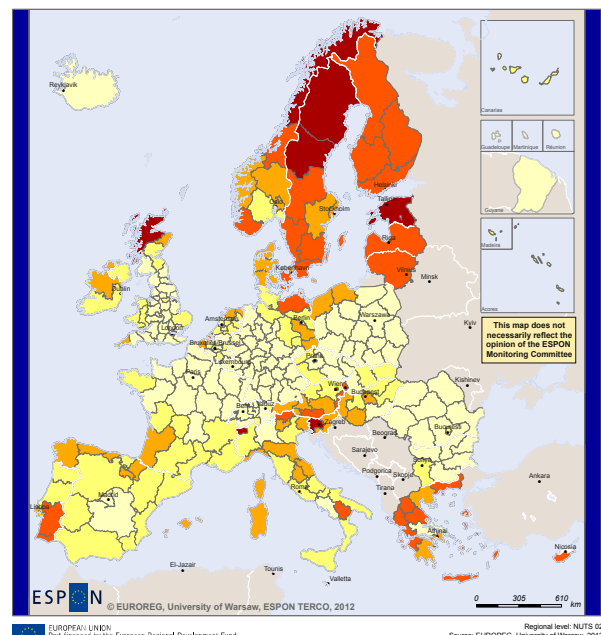
Map 2 - Partners in Territorial Cooperation



Number of project partners in transnational and inter-regional cooperation projects

- 1
- 10
- 100

Map 3 - Intensity of Territorial Cooperation



Number of project partners in transnational and inter-regional cooperation projects per 100 000 population

- 0,0 - 2,5
- 2,6 - 5,0
- 5,1 - 10,0
- 10,1 - 25,0
- 25,1 - 43,0
- No data

## Impacts of Territorial Cooperation

### Actors recognise positive impacts of cooperation

Actors involved in Territorial Cooperation consider the projects having a positive impact on the socio-economic development, although mainly indirectly.

- The influence on economic growth and job creation occurs mostly through the facilitation of knowledge exchange used to solve common problems vital for the development of the cooperating regions.

- Territorial cooperation is considered to have a particular positive influence on quality of life followed by quality of natural environment and service provision.
- A positive impact on flows and exchanges is also recognised, in particular tourism and leisure related, whereas the impact on migration and FDI is regarded as more limited.

## Key Factors for Success

### Start simple and develop towards strategic, place-based cooperation

Starting with simple forms of cooperation gives the highest probability for territorial cooperation to develop into a fruitful and long-term relationship.

This involves exchanging experiences, sharing tools exploring economies of scale, and advising each other on how to tackle a common problem or solve similar problems.

More advanced forms of cooperation, such as joint strategies, actions or investments, require more experience to bring the desired effects in terms of growth and jobs.

Other success factors which may determine the success of territorial cooperation are:

- The linkage with cultural events, tourism, economy, natural environment or physical infrastructure;
- The involvement at early stage of NGOs and local or regional public authorities.

Projects in which the cooperating regions jointly work on solving cross-border problems and developing existing opportunities, i.e. project with a high degree of territorial integration, appear to have a particular positive impact on socio-economic development.

Despite the extensive territorial cooperation arrangements, currently, territorial integration remains somewhat limited but seems to have unleashed potentials.

A move from the present focus on thematic objectives towards a more place-based approach could encourage the cooperating regions to act stronger together on common challenges and opportunities.

By strategically considering comparative advantages, and by taking into account the global competition and connections of today, neighbouring regions and cities can gain from joining forces.

Actors involved in territorial cooperation should give priority to such strategic and place-based cooperation with the aim of exploring common strengths together and achieve an added value that cannot be achieved by the individual regions and cities in isolation.

In this way territorial cooperation can play an even more important role in strengthening the competitiveness of the European economy and contribute to growth, creation of jobs and quality of life.

### The ESPON 2013 Programme

4, rue Erasme L-1468 Luxembourg - Grand Duchy of Luxembourg  
Phone: +352 42 59 91 4700  
Fax: +352 42 59 91 4701  
Email: [info@espon.eu](mailto:info@espon.eu)  
[www.espon.eu](http://www.espon.eu)

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