



Terms of Reference for ESPON-INTERACT Thematic Study

Polycentric Urban Development and Rural-Urban Partnership

Urban development and rural-urban partnership are topics addressed by many INTERREG III projects. Furthermore, these issues are one of the meeting points between INTERACT, facilitating mutual learning between different INTERREG areas, and ESPON, analyzing spatial development trends at European scale. The present document outlines the study to be carried out, analyzing and comparing the various ongoing activities addressing polycentric urban development and rural-urban relationships in order to draw up proposals for future action, identify gaps and stimulate synergies. The study shall run from December 2005 and June 2006, with an important milestone being a INTERACT event based on findings of this study, probably April 2006. The size of the study is 30,000 Euro (incl. VAT if applicable).

In the following the INTERACT Programme and the ESPON Programme are presented, before outlining the general objectives of this study, the primary research issues envisaged, the timetable and key deliveries and the budget.

1. The INTERACT Programme and the IP Qualification & Transfer

Cooperation between countries and regions promoted by the Community Initiatives INTERREG II and III has become a fundamental element of EU cohesion policy. The positive impacts of INTERREG II and III programmes and projects on social, economic cohesion and territorial development are acknowledged. However, their implementation is not always easy, insofar as it requires specific transnational knowledge and know-how which might not be sufficiently available at national or regional level. This holds especially true for the transnational and interregional cooperation programmes under strands B and C of INTERREG III.

The major problems concerning the INTERREG programmes and the adjacent project implementation obviously stem from difficulties to “manage the difference”: differences of legal, administrative rules, traditions between countries etc. In order to overcome these obstacles, but also to explore major opportunities and gain more benefits from the results

of the programmes and projects, more exchange and provision of information and good practices and examples among the INTERREG community is required.

INTERACT as part of the Community Initiative INTERREG is designed to address these weaknesses, and also to take advantage of the previous and ongoing experiences, with a view to increasing the impact of INTERREG III on economic, social cohesion and cooperation throughout the EU and with neighbouring countries. By capitalising the broad expertise in the fields of regional development, cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation developed through INTERREG in all Member States of the EU the purpose is to provide support to the implementation of programmes and projects for all 3 strands of INTERREG.

More precisely, INTERACT aims at promoting the exchange of experience, making best practices accessible to interested stakeholders in the European Union through an active programme of dissemination, developing and offering decentralised training interventions and workshops for implementing bodies and project leaders.

In that perspective, major expected outcomes of the INTERACT programme are:

- To enable and encourage transfer of experiences and good practice between institutions and players in different geographical areas, programmes and INTERREG strands and to provide overviews of the variety of INTERREG activities carried out on different themes
- To provide a joint platform for INTERREG and establish common standards and procedures for the implementation of INTERREG programmes (especially for inter-regional and transnational cooperation and for cooperation with neighbouring countries)
- To enhance know-how, technical and organisational capacity of institutions, organisations and persons directly involved in the realisation of INTERREG programmes and projects and improve the link between regional and national instruments and INTERREG
- To enlarge the group of project applicants for all strands of INTERREG through broad information activities and support for project development and implementation
- To act as a platform for the transfer of data and information between related initiatives like ESPON, URBACT and the INTERREG programmes in both directions.

The services of the programme are developed by the Programme Secretariat and the five INTERACT Points:

- Information and Animation,
- Qualification and Transfer,
- IIC coordination,
- Tool Box
- Managing Transition and External cooperation

In this framework, the Interact Point Qualification and Transfer (QT) implements four key fields of actions:

- Larger transfer events with expert input and an opportunity for programmes and projects to meet independently of strand. Most conference are organized in cooperation with ESPON.
- Intensive training seminars for small groups. They focus on practical skills and include practice session where participants work with the subjects covered.
- Profession networks between INTERREG staff to share views and meet to work on more concrete issues, such as finance or communication.
- QT also documents know-how by producing reports covering some of the issues that are most relevant for INTERREG programmer.

These objectives are realized through a process involving all INTERREG operators in the discussion and identification of good practice, exchange of experience and training on this good practice, evaluation of results and subsequent improvement of the services offered.

2. Relation to the ESPON Programme

In this context, the participation of ESPON in the INTERACT Point Qualification and Transfer aims at ensuring interaction on thematic issues. The purpose of this activity is to build on the use and exchange of knowledge accumulated in ESPON projects and to combine the knowledge with the good practice experiences in INTERREG projects in order to support the project development and the generation of project ideas to the benefit of many of the INTERREG programmes.

Furthermore, by interlinking and exchanging experiences from INTERREG III A, B and C and ESPON, mutual learning and benefits can be obtained, which in turn can support the development of new project ideas within INTERREG A, B and C programmes as well as new research within the ESPON programme.

ESPON has been contracted to provide content for events (seminars) on thematic issues and will as an input to these seminars, guide studies crossing assessment of project activities within INTERREG programmes with state-of-the-art research, analyses, and concrete project ideas for implementation in different strands of INTERREG.

The seminars should address several of the main INTERREG interests, by providing:

- an opportunity for project promoters and project managers from different programmes to meet, exchange knowledge and know-how
- an opportunity for actors coming from outside the INTERREG community to be informed on the developments and results of INTERREG projects related to their field of activity.

As an essential input to thematic slots at INTERACT seminars, thematic studies need to be carried out, which are the subject of the present Terms of Reference. In order to address the mentioned interests, the thematic studies should concentrate on:

- scientific inputs on trends in a selected field, to “feed the content” of projects, better define the orientation that has to be given to the future projects in relation to ESDP

objectives and aims of European territorial cohesion and regional policies, and provide programme managers and project promoters with new project ideas. Indicators, tools and methods should also be partly envisaged in order to improve analytical skills, and subsequently, implementation and evaluation of the projects

- case studies based on good practices examples taken among a wide range of INTERREG projects within the thematic focus, representing, as far as possible, all strands, main geographic areas and a range of different INTERREG programmes.

Five themes of mutual interest have to be covered by ESPON based on INTERREG priorities, as well as on Commission priorities and ESPON's major areas of expertise:

- Transport, communication and accessibility
- Environmental hazards and risk management
- Polycentric development and urban-rural relations
- Cross-border cooperation
- Spatial visions and scenarios

3. General Objectives of the Study on Polycentric Urban Development and Rural-Urban Partnership

Under all strands of INTERREG there are projects addressing the issue of rural-urban partnership and polycentric urban development. Some of these more explicitly than others. Taken together they cover activities ranging from studies, via the development of strategies or strategic partnerships to infrastructure investments, and other types of activities. The perception and understanding of polycentric urban development and rural-urban partnership varies accordingly.

Within INTERREG – in particular strand B – the intensity of cooperation in the thematic field “polycentric urban structures, competition between towns and agglomeration areas” differs widely. Interestingly, European-wide important polycentric spatial structures like the Pentagon or other more national polycentric structures like the Randstad or Rhein-Ruhr are recognisable. Overall only most regions are participating in projects concerning metropolitan areas, cities and towns and also addressing polycentricity (cf. ESPON projects 2.4.2 or 2.2.2). Thus the issue is well covered in current INTERREG projects, however the understanding differs widely. The issues of metropolitan areas, cities and town as well as polycentric urban development need to be considered at three different geographical levels (cf. ESPON 3-Level-Approach), all of which have been addressed by both INTERREG projects and ESPON research (cf. ESPON projects 1.1.1 and 1.1.3):

- Polycentricity within a region, i.e. organisation of the urban systems and networks within a functional region.
- Polycentricity in national contexts or in transnational or cross-border regions, i.e. organisation of urban systems and networks within a wider region going beyond national borders, e.g. an INTERREG programming area.
- European polycentricity, i.e. urban systems and networks at European level.

In the field of rural-urban relations and partnership, not that many projects can be identified within strand B, however when considering the implicit contribution to improved rural development through rural-urban partnership a series of projects under strand A addresses this issue. Regarding the potentials that can be derived from cooperation between economically important cities or agglomerations and their surrounding rural areas, the INTERREG analysis of the ESPON project 2.4.2 shows clearly that cooperation particular in this field has to be further fostered. Therefore deeper going analysis is needed on which types of cooperation exist already and which cooperation forms are especially suitable for future INTERREG cooperation. This should take into account the analysis on rural-urban setting carried out by ESPON 1.1.2 and the current discussion at policy level on rural development poles.

At the same time, ESPON is analysing territorial patterns and spatial development trends in Europe with a strong emphasis on the urban system (polycentricity) focusing on functional urban areas and their various sizes, specific functions and development potentials. Also rural-urban settings are an important element of current ESPON research not at least in relation to rural development, and balanced development at national and regional level. In particular the ESPON studies on polycentricity (1.1.1), rural-urban relations (1.1.2), enlargement and polycentricity (1.1.3) and zooming into territories (2.4.2) are of interest in this context. However, also the cross-thematic studies under ESPON strand 3 (3.1, 3.2 and 3.3) offer valuable insights on these issues. Also the role of polycentricity as a bridging concept between competition and cohesion becomes evident.

Thus, there is a wide range of activities in the field of polycentric urban development and rural-urban partnership currently ongoing with various geographical and thematic foci, as well as different processes and intentions.

At the same time, the Community Strategic Guidelines 2007-2013 “Cohesion policy in support of growth and jobs” argues for promoting urban areas and in particular to investigate in development poles in rural areas (e.g. in small and medium-sized towns). This as well as the draft regulation for future Structural Funds need to be taken onboard by the project.

Bringing the material, processes and people involved together should provide a good opportunity for mutual learning and inspiration and an added value for the future development of INTERREG cooperation activities and further transnational activities within a future objective within Structural Funds dealing with territorial cooperation. It should enable project development officers and programme managers to better understand the distinct spatial characteristics and development trends within their programme area, to consider them in a wider European context and to make use of them in programme development and project selection.

For this purpose the present call for tender has been developed. The aim of this study is to provide a systematic and comparative overview on the work going on in various INTERREG projects (addressing metropolitan areas, cities, town, polycentric urban development and rural-urban partnership) and to draw up an analysis of the differences in

thematic priorities and approaches and in particular on how ESPON results can support the further development of activities within this field in INTERREG programmes and beyond. The analysis needs also to consider the 3-Level-Approach developed by ESPON.

The focus of this study has been set in close relation with the needs and expectations of the INTERREG programmes and projects, in order to provide appropriate answers to their needs, and stimulate synergies between them. Indeed, the study will be subject to an INTERACT seminar at which various actors of the INTERREG community will come together for discussing issues related to this study.

In order to assure “client oriented” and applicable results, following access points are to be considered:

- *Cooperation with the INTERACT Points*
For the implementation of the thematic study, cooperation with other INTERACT Points (IPs) will be necessary, notably with IP Qualification and Transfer. However, also Information and Animation or Tool Box and Managing Transition might provide some useful inputs to the thematic study.
- *Cooperation with INTERREG programme secretariats and projects*
Information on INTERREG projects and programmes is to varying degrees available from the Internet. In order to have a comprehensive view of programmes and projects, the contractor will get in touch directly with INTERREG secretariats and projects. The contractor will have the support of the ESPON CU and INTERACT Points regarding this particular task. In cooperation between ESPON and INTERACT already a first rough database on over 3500 INTERREG projects has been developed which offers a first point of departure.
- *Cooperation with ESPON Coordination Unit and projects*
Most of the knowledge on trends and policy impacts within the European territory as well as background and methodological information will have to be found in and collected from the ESPON results. Relevant ESPON projects are in this context in particular 1.1.1, 1.1.2, 1.1.3 and 2.4.2, but also 3.1 and 3.2 might offer interesting insights.

4. Primary Research Issues Envisaged

Taking into consideration the EU Cohesion Policy, as well as the objectives of INTERREG and ESPON related to the ESDP and recent policies addressing territorial cohesion, the thematic study needs to compile and compare INTERREG and ESPON projects/activities dealing with metropolitan areas, cities, towns and polycentric urban systems, as well as with rural development and rural-urban partnership. The main purpose of this exercise is to provide new insights and ideas for the discussion on future programmes and key projects. The strategic element of the above activities in giving impetus to project ideas and providing guidance for project selection are key aspects. More specifically, the study should try to answer the question of what are the most effective actions to support polycentric urban development as well as rural-urban partnership. Proposals on these issues will be of direct relevance for demonstrating which

are the links between INTERREG activities and overall development strategies on regional, national and European level.

The key deliveries of the thematic study should address:

1. Overview on INTERREG projects dealing with metropolitan areas, cities, towns, urban systems and rural-urban networks

A first brief overview of the topics dealt with under INTERREG and ESPON will address following aspects:

1.1. Project database

First comprehensive quantities and quantitative analysis of projects undertaken with INTERREG III (all III B and C and a selection of IIIA programmes) dealing with metropolitan areas, cities, towns, polycentric urban development and rural-urban partnership. The analysis shall be documented in a comprehensive database of INTERREG strands A (significantly representative samples), B and C (all) dealing with these themes.

1.2. Thematic Overview

A thematic overview on the various topics addressed in INTERREG project as compared to ESPON research has been provided – related to the topic of the study. This overview should consider topics as such the role of metropolitan areas, larger cities, small and medium sized cities, as well as urban networks, rural development as well as the importance of cities for rural development. The thematic overview should also take into consideration the 3 Level Approach.

2. Compilation of conceptual and analytical work carried out under INTERREG and ESPON

The study will compare the various projects regarding their conceptual and analytical approaches chosen:

2.1. Overview on differences in objectives pursued and definitions and approaches (i.e. which issues/topics are comprised) used in various projects.

2.2. Overview on analytical and thematic findings in (selected) INTERREG and ESPON regarding polycentric development at intra-regional, transnational / cross-border and European level.

2.3. Main similarities and differences of INTERREG and ESPON.

3. Compilation of concrete actions towards more polycentric development and rural-urban partnership carried out under INTERREG and ESPON

The study will compare the various projects regarding their concrete action proposed and/or taken:

3.1. Overview of concrete actions taken by INTERREG projects to improve polycentric development and rural-urban partnership at the three geographical levels.

3.2. Overview of areas in which INTERREG projects are active as compared to ESPON typologies on polycentric development and rural-urban partnership.

4. Provision on inputs for the definition of future cooperation themes and frameworks:

The thematic study is to be developed bearing in mind that the study and the interaction at the seminar will target mainly project officers and programme managers

within the secretariats of INTERREG programmes. However, also participants in INTERREG projects and future project partners are to be addressed.

Project ideas that will be proposed should be based on the above analysis. Taking into account the policy aims put forward in the ESDP, the Lisbon Strategy and, the Community Strategic Guidelines 2007-2013 and the Draft Structural Funds Regulations. Furthermore, project ideas will have to take into consideration budgetary aspects, in relation to the size of the programmes, size and type of projects, but also orientations and perspectives for the next programming period, as soon as the new regulation for Structural Funds 2007-2013 becomes public. Taking this into account a proposal for future cooperation themes must be elaborated:

4.1. Identifying gaps

Are there specific themes that are not sufficiently addressed in the current INTERREG programmes (strands A, B and C) and to what extent are existing spatial disparities, challenges and potentials as identified by ESPON, targeted in INTERREG?

4.2. Distinct developments in programming areas

To what degree are polycentric urban development and rural-urban partnership targeted in the various programmes distinct for the specific areas or of more general nature?

4.3. Concrete ideas for future projects

Based on ESPON knowledge on territorial trends and policy impacts, related to different parts of Europe and different types of territories, and on findings of INTERREG projects dealing with polycentric urban development and rural-urban partnership, ideas for new projects in relation to the cooperation themes and frameworks, must be proposed.

4.4. Ideas for applied ESPON research

The project should also come forward with ideas for applied ESPON research deriving from the analysis carried out.

5. Timetable and Key Deliverables

The implementation of the study should start early in December 2005, and be developed in accordance with the following timetable and deadlines for delivery:

- **December 2005 / January 2006: Kick-off meeting**

A kick off meeting is envisaged for December 2005 or January 2006 to take place either in Luxembourg or Brussels.

- **Mid-February 2006: Relevant projects and their contact information**

On the basis of the database being developed the contractor should collect contact details to relevant INTERREG projects to be especially invited to the conference in April.

- **31 March 2006: Draft Final Report**

- Draft Final Report presenting all the above mentioned elements in a draft version, that will be finalised and complemented by the conclusions of the thematic seminar.

- Report presenting in a summarised version of approx. 20 pages the main outcomes of the thematic study, including the following elements:
 - Introduction
 - Overview on INTERREG activities related to polycentric development and rural-urban partnership
 - Findings on topics, processes and results (cf. research issues envisaged)
 - Identification of potential cooperation themes by type of regions in meeting respective programme objectives
 - Good practice in INTERREG projects with reference to specific types of regions
 - Concrete ideas for new projects and future perspectives, both as regards possibilities for improvement and further development of activities addressing polycentric urban development and rural-urban partnership (considering all three INTERREG strands)
- The Draft Final Report will be disseminated at least two weeks before the seminar, in order to prepare the participants for the discussion.
- **Beginning of April to end of May 2006: Consultation process**
 The contractor, with the help of the Coordination Unit and the INTERACT Point Qualification & Transfer, will have to carry through a consultation process involving the INTERREG programmes secretariats, for the validation of the results presented in the draft report. The recommendations given by the secretariats will have to be integrated in the report for its finalisation.
 An essential feature of this process will be the comments and feedback on the intermediate findings of the study given by the seminar participants.
- **April 2006: INTERACT seminar**
 - The contractor will have to prepare and organise in collaboration with the INTERACT Point Qualification & Transfer team the thematic slot related to the study within the INTERACT seminar. The contractor should be prepared to make a presentation of the results of the study, to organise and lead the debate with the participants on the intermediate findings of the study, and to contribute to the conclusions of the seminar. Slides used in relation to the seminar will be made available to public in the internet.
 - The contractor needs to provide a short summary of comments and feedback received on the study by INTERREG programmes and projects at the seminar as well as during the rest of the consultation process.
- **End of June 2006: Final Report**
 - Presenting the finalised version of the thematic study, including conclusions from the INTERACT seminar.

The report is to be written in easily accessible English language which is appealing also to readers which are not familiar with polycentric urban development and rural-urban partnership issues.

In addition to the reporting a close cooperation with the ESPON CU will be necessary involving at least two meetings, one in the start of the programme and one in relation to the finalisation of the draft final report. The contracting authority can request brief written inputs (discussions papers) for the preparation of these meetings.

Throughout the study period, the contractor should regularly inform in relevant findings, overviews made or first conclusions. This should facilitate the coordinating of the findings of the study with other ongoing INTERACT and ESPON processes and also provide valuable input to the preparation of the seminar. The contractor should also inform beforehand when they plan to get in touch with programmes or projects directly as the ESPON CU and IP QT will be able to facilitate the process.

6. Budget

The budget allocated for the implementation of the thematic study is 30.000 € This includes VAT if applicable and travel expenses for one coordination meeting in Luxembourg or Brussels. Costs related to the participation to the seminar are not included.