EU Cohesion Policy – INTERREG IVC’s achievements in mainstreaming good practices

Event Report

28 November, Larnaca (Cyprus)
The Joint Technical Secretariat of the INTERREG IVC programme invited project partners, experts, Member States, European Commission to a one-day event ‘EU Cohesion Policy – INTERREG IVC’s achievements in mainstreaming good practices’ which was held on 28 November in Larnaca, Cyprus.

As the 20 Capitalisation Projects financed by the INTERREG IVC programme come to an end in 2012, this special event focused this specific type of project, and the lessons to be learned for the next programme period.

In the morning session representatives from the projects presented the process of the practices transferred to the ‘mainstream’ programmes, the benefits gained and the importance of experience exchange between the regions. This gave ground for fruitful discussions during the second half of the day which was focused on the future: what should be learned and improved in the next programming period?

During the event, the Programme presented two new publications. A special publication containing descriptions of 20 Capitalisation type projects and another one on control of EU funds from the perspective of the INTERREG IVC programme. Publications can be requested from the Joint Technical Secretariat or downloaded from the Programme website: [http://www.interreg4c.eu/publications.html](http://www.interreg4c.eu/publications.html)

All event-related content (presentations, events gallery) can be found for download at the INTERREG IVC website: [http://www.interreg4c.eu/viewPageEvent.html?page=event_capitalisation_projects_cyprus](http://www.interreg4c.eu/viewPageEvent.html?page=event_capitalisation_projects_cyprus)

**Main facts:**
- 20 Capitalisation type projects
- 204 partners involved
- EUR 34 million ERDF funding spent to finance projects
- ~ 20 leverage effect / EUR 665 million of Structural Funds foreseen for implementation

**About Capitalisation type Projects**
Capitalisation Projects are interregional cooperation projects focusing specifically on the transfer of regional development good practices into Structural Funds programmes.

One of the expected outputs is a concrete action plan which should ideally be signed by the respective Managing Authority and relevant stakeholders in each of the participating regions.

An action plan is understood as a strategic document which defines precisely how the good practices will be implemented in each participating region.
The event had its share of political speeches and interactive activities. The welcoming words came from Andreas Louroutziatis, Mayor of Larnaca. Then Jean-Marc Venineaux from DG Regio explained the importance of interregional, and, in general, European territorial cooperation. He pointed out that in a globalised world EU regions will not stand international competition unless they pool together their resources to face all challenges. In this sense, cooperation and competition among EU regions are compatible concepts according to him. For instance, some regional development aspects like transport networks can only be successfully tackled when actors from neighboring regions and countries are involved. For this reason, in the upcoming programming period the European Commission proposes to focus more on cohesion than on regional (local) policy. Mr. Venineaux emphasised the bulk of knowledge created by interregional cooperation in this programming period and called for “making this knowledge work” in European regions.

Michel Lamblin, the INTERREG IVC programme director was interviewed by the event moderator on the Programme results so far. He explained that the Capitalisation Projects are the best way to demonstrate the leverage effect of the INTERREG IVC programme. Twenty times more money has been invested or foreseen for investments using the Structural Funds in comparison with the ERDF financing of the INTERREG IVC programme for projects to prepare the ground for those investments. Mr. Lamblin explained that Capitalisation type of projects have reinforced the link between the programme and the European Commission. The moderator was eager to know how those who are not involved in the project implementation could access the results. Mr. Lamblin explained that information about the good practices is accessible for all interested parties through the INTERREG IVC online Good Practice Database (www.interreg4c.eu/findGoodpractices.html). The tool references over 500 good practices tested in European cities and regions in ten themes ranging from Innovation, Research & Technological Development, Entrepreneurship and SME’s, Human Capital and Education to Biodiversity, Water Management and Energy and Sustainable Transport. Also, the thematic programme capitalisation will help to bring the results to the regions. Experts working together with the project partners identify the most valuable good practices and draw conclusions for policy makers in 12 topics.

A concrete example of how some regions already make knowledge work was given by Andreas Karakatsanis from the Municipality of Larnaca. The municipality participated in several INTERREG IVC projects among which PIMMS CAPITAL, a Capitalisation project focusing on mobility management services. As a result of the exchange with partners from Germany, Italy, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, UK, Bulgaria, Greece and Sweden, the City of Larnaca is ready to put into practice three mobility solutions: a strategic walking & cycling plan, mobility centres in the city centre, and an urban traffic control system. Most of the financing for these practices will come from Structural Funds programmes and from the programmes for 2014-2020.

Benefits of mainstreaming good practices

Five representatives from INTERREG IVC projects (PLUS, WINNET 8, EU2020 Going Local, RAPIDE, MKW) were invited to the round table discussion on transfer of Good Practices. The objective of the round table was to provide concrete examples of the way projects managed to transfer practices and involve stakeholders in order to ensure the implementation of their Action Plan.

Methodology of the transfer process

Wim De Kinderen from the PLUS project started the session by presenting the ‘deep dive method’ they elaborated in order to prepare the transfer of good practices among partners. This method is based on the importance of preparatory work and on an objective process of selection of practices and recommendations. The 12 partners first collected facts and data on their lighting strategies in a ‘European Overview report’. They then all proceeded to their self-assessment: each partner provided a good practice and positioned himself on a benchmarking grid. On the basis of this information, an agenda of the site-visits to be made was established, and host cities were trained in the interview method in order to prepare for the visit. The site-visit lasted two days and was structured in workshops and interviews, organised by both visiting and host experts, and leading
to the drafting of recommendations. Only those recommendations expressed by at least two experts were retained.

Answering a question raised by the European Commission on the tools used to lobby the Managing Authority and the Operational Programme, Mr. De Kinderen insisted on the public-private partnership and the Quadruple Helix, which enables the project to have a permanent contact with the ‘outside’. For instance, being supported by the Regional Lighting Forum and being part of the Luci Network was identified as a real asset for the PLUS project.

Involvement of stakeholders

Elisabeth Langgren Lundov explained that in order to involve stakeholders in an efficient way, the strategy of the EU2020 going local project was based on the identification of one key public stakeholder (the ‘leading politician’) at different levels (from local to European), stated. These politicians were invited to participate in the working groups and in the Steering Group meetings throughout the life of the project, which can trigger and ensure a political will to implement the Action Plan and results of the project.

Britt-Marie Söderberg Torstensson from the WINNET 8 project presented their method, based on a good and well structured external communication strategy. The project developed indeed a European Communication Strategy, targeting different political levels (from local to European) and locally supported by Quadruple Helix partnerships and the Women Resource Centers. As a result of this strategy, the partners were invited for instance to Coordination Committee of Funds (COCOF) meeting and roundtables at European level.

Implementation of the Action Plan

But once you have managed to adapt the good practices and communicated on your project, how do you ensure the implementation of the Action Plan at the end of the project? – asked moderators of the session Elena Ferrario and Benoit Dalbert.

In order to ensure the implementation of the action plan, the strategy of the RAPIDE project was to involve the relevant stakeholders, in particular MAs, from the beginning in order to trigger a feeling of ownership and personal interest, even when the project has come to an end, – explained Rafał Modrzewski. In addition, while a bottom up approach should be followed at the first stage of the project, during its implementation one should move to a more top down, as a strategic and pragmatic approach must be taken in order to identify what measures can realistically be funded.

Hugo Russell told that the MKW project used the quadruple helix model to involve stakeholders. The politicians were involved in the drafting of the good practices guide and the citizens constantly update it via the website. In addition, the importance of involving the right policy officer since the beginning of the project was stressed, in order to ease the process of putting policies into action.

This session showed that a challenge for Capitalisation Projects is indeed to ensure implementation of results and commitment of politicians after the end of the project, in particular at times of economic crisis. The INTERREG IVC projects illustrated that a good communication strategy, a strong implantation at different levels through the participation in networks, public-private partnership and involvement of civil society, and a clever strategy identifying and involving the right stakeholders from the start, can ensure long-lasting and sustainable results.
Lessons for the future

The afternoon session on the lessons for the future was opened by Harma Albering, the C2CN project representative who talked about the main challenges of a project implementation. The C2CN project aims to reduce the use of raw materials in order to generate less waste and less environmental pollution. The project identified as most important challenges the cooperation between different administrative levels in European Regions, the transfer process in practice and the mainstreaming of the results in European Programmes.

Erika Fulgenzi, the INTERREG IVC project officer commented on other challenges the projects face such as involvement of MA and relevant stakeholders; finding the relevant section of the Operational Programme in which to transfer the practice; finding different sources of funds (e.g. ERDF-ESF); availability of funds; decision making process/signature of the Action Plan.

The representative from European Commission Vicente Rodriguez Saez talked about expectations for the next period. He focused on the legislative package and the architecture for 2014-2020, the key features of the ETC in the legislative package, the financial proposal, the state of play of negotiations between the EP and the Council and the timeline. He pointed out the overall reform principles of:

- Strategic approach: Europe 2020 alignment
- Thematic concentration
- Results orientation
- Simplification and Proportionality.

The financial proposal for European Territorial Cooperation is EUR 11.7 billion (an increase from current budget) and refers to 75 % uniform co-financing rate. It is estimated that in 2012-2013 the new legislative package and the agreement on the new budget post-2013 will be adopted and that in 2014 the new programmes will be adopted and will enter into force.

Active discussion: What should be taken on board in the future?

The event agenda continued with brainstorming about the future of interregional cooperation. All participants, divided into groups, were invited to discuss three questions related to the future of the programme. Key ideas from the group discussions are presented below.

1. What are the features of an ideal project to transfer good practices into national/regional Operational Programmes?

   Flexibility on:
   - duration
   - stakeholder involvement and partnership (private partners, observers)
   - definition of mainstreaming and “Managing Authorities”
   - Simplification (e.g. lump sum for staff costs)

   More demonstration activities: seeing is believing.
2. **What else could we do to improve national / regional Operational Programmes?**

- Better sell the results of interregional cooperation to Managing Authorities of national/regional programmes;
- follow-up on results of Capitalisation Projects so that the good work initiated is not lost in particular in the next programming period;
- allow increased flexibility in project’s implementation (e.g. in terms of content, strategy, duration);
- further simplify interregional cooperation programme’s rules and requirements;
- stronger requirements towards Managing Authorities (or bodies responsible for the Operational Programmes development) to integrate the lessons learnt from interregional cooperation;
- to include more systematically interregional cooperation as a measure within the national / regional Operational Programmes;
- improve bottom-up approach to ensure local needs are taken into consideration;
- ensure a better coordination between interregional cooperation and regional / national Operational Programmes;
- for the Managing Authorities at national / regional levels, to spend more time on content related guidance / expectations and less on administrative procedures / rules.

3. **How can we overcome the current challenges presented?**

- Operational Programmes should pre-allocate some funds for the follow up of Capitalisation Projects (bridging C programme with other Operational Programmes);
- the task of the Managing Authorities should be clarified;
- more tangible indicators should be identified this will allow to provide tangible results to policy makers;
- results already achieved shall be communicated to MAs;
- involvement of private sector for pilot actions (sustainability) and civil society to sensitise about the issue tackled;
- for better take-up of the results cross-sectoral cooperation should be ensured between ministries;
- financial incentives should be provided for the implementation of Action Plans and then followed-up by the programme;
- ensure sustainability of results (e.g. by checklist, database of results).
Conclusions

Michel Lamblin, the INTERREG IVC programme director, concluded that the event gave participants an opportunity to get an overview of this specific type of project. 20 Capitalisation Projects, having received EUR 34 million ERDF financing, have had an impact on improving the implementation of EUR 670 million of Regional Operational Programmes.

European Commission points that the use of public money has to be optimised and now it is even more important than ever to ensure successful transfer of good practices by financing them from the mainstreaming programmes.

Presentations of five INTERREG IVC projects (PLUS, WINNET 8, EU2020 going local, RAPIDE and MKW) showed that it is important:

- to identify an effective transfer methodology;
- to involve the right stakeholders (Managing Authorities, politicians, etc);
- to follow a pragmatic approach to select the good practices that will be transferred and to be realistic in terms of funds available, needs of regions and actors to be involved.

The C2C project presentation gave a lot of concrete examples of transfers achieved and of political and administrative commitments of Managing Authorities of the Structural Funds. Such key questions as methodology of the project, how to best exchange the experience, how to implement and finance remain crucial.

New EC regulations related to the European Regional Development Fund and European Territorial Cooperation focus on:

- EU 2020 strategy;
- the thematic concentration;
- the strong results orientation and the never ending simplification and proportionality combined.

Mr Lamblin summarised that global challenges cannot be faced individually; therefore the role of cooperation is crucial. If well done and managed, the interregional cooperation projects with a small budget can have a big impact. He drew the attention of the participants to project presentations which demonstrated how Capitalisation Projects developed innovative processes to ensure that action takes place on the right basis. As one of the project representatives said: "Capitalisation Projects put knowledge into practice". Mr Lamblin was happy that project partners together with the representatives of the Member States had fruitful discussions and identified the main challenges faced by Capitalisation type of project and brainstormed for possible solutions that the EC, the Member States and Programming Committee members should take into account.

At the very end Mr. Lamblin addressed to the audience with two questions and asked project representatives to provide any additional input to the Joint Technical Secretariat after the event or by email:

1) The INTERREG IVC programme gave co-financing to ensure implementation of the projects and transfer of good practices to the mainstreaming programmes. Was it simple and possible in the present programming period?
2) Was it easy to finance the transfer of the good practices into the Regional Operational Programmes because the project was labelled as a “Good Practice”? In case it was not as easy, what should be proposed to ease the process of financing?
Evaluation of the event

Event evaluation forms were distributed to all participants (80) during the event. 35 participants returned forms, which makes a response rate to 43.75%. All respondents indicated that the event met their expectations. Presentations, discussions were evaluated by all participants from good to excellent. 97% of all respondents evaluated as ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ the interactive methods used during the event: coffee shops, active discussion.

Participants also mentioned that they liked:
- Possibility to give input for the further development of the programme
- Concise precise overview on all capitalisation type projects
- To have an opportunity to meet programme stakeholders
- To learn about the experience made by other projects
- Very good organisation of the event and usefulness of it.

The event met all expectations of organisers and participants.

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