Study on

Exchange of Experience Processes

Final Report
January 2013

Elaborated by:

in co-operation with
The present study was elaborated in parallel to the Thematic Capitalisation of the INTERREG IVC Programme (2007-2013) by “EureConsult S.A.” (Luxembourg) in co-operation with “Spatial Foresight GmbH” (Luxembourg) and “t33 S.r.l” (Italy).

The INTERREG IVC Programme promotes the interregional exchange and transfer of knowledge and best practices among European regions with the aim to improve the effectiveness of regional policies and instruments. It is implemented as part of the European Community’s European Territorial cooperation objective and financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

The partnership behind the INTERREG IVC Programme consists of the EU Commission and the Member States of the EU27, plus Norway and Switzerland. Each partner is represented in the INTERREG IVC Monitoring Committee.

This study does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members of the Monitoring Committee.

Information on the INTERREG IVC Programme and the supported projects can be found on www.interreg4c.eu

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1. Introduction

Exchanges of experience are an element of EU-funded European Territorial Cooperation since its very beginnings in the late 1980s. Under the various cooperation types, however, they are considered at different levels of importance. Exchanges across a broad variety of themes relating to local and regional development were supported as a core element by the early EU-funded interregional co-operation, first through the “Exchange of Experience Programme” and its continuation “PACTE” (between 1989 and 1995) and later through the next generation of funding schemes (i.e. RECITE I & II between 1996-1999; ECOS-OUVERTURE I & II between 1990-1999). Since the integration of interregional cooperation into the INTERREG III Community Initiative (2000-2006), the new C-strand focussed its full attention on facilitating an exchange of experience and best practice on various priority topics to improve the effectiveness of policies and instruments for regional development and cohesion. Exchanges of experiences are also present in the context of cross-border and transnational cooperation, but here they are less visible in overall terms. Such exchanges are under both types of cooperation mostly used by projects as an optional element for addressing a specific need (e.g. to become more familiar with other partners; to gain better knowledge about shared problems or challenges) and normally play a secondary role when compared to the importance of direct implementation activities. This overall situation is clearly most present under cross-border cooperation, but it also started to become more prominent in the context of transnational cooperation especially since the 2000-2006 programmes of INTERREG III (i.e. under INTERREG IIC, the sill novel transnational cooperation projects usually comprised a stronger exchange of experience component).

During the 2007-2013 programming period, the INTERREG IVC programme provides funding to interregional cooperation across Europe with the overall objective to improve the effectiveness of regional policies and instruments. Under its thematic Priorities 1 and 2 (i.e. innovation & the knowledge economy; environment & risk prevention), the programme supports the following two types of intervention: “Regional Initiative Projects” (Type 1) and “Capitalisation Projects” including “Fast Track Projects” (Type 2).

In 2012, after 4 project calls, the INTERREG IVC programme has committed all of the funding available under these two Priorities and currently supports a total of 204 projects with 2,276 partners (see: Figure 1). The bulk of these 204 projects are the 184 Regional Initiative Projects which all comprise, as a common operational feature, a specific “Component 3” that focuses on the interregional exchange of experience dedicated to an identification and analysis of good practices. However, these Regional Initiative Projects are not at all similar to each other because from the outset they could select one among three different “levels of co-operation intensity” which envisage, each, a specific set of co-operation activities that directly concern the interregional exchange of experience (see: Annex 1).
At this point of the programme implementation process, INTERREG IVC has decided to launch a Thematic Programme Capitalisation that aims to exploit the knowledge capital gained from projects working on a similar topic for the benefit of all regions in Europe. It focuses by definition on the thematic content and not on the interregional cooperation process.

In parallel to this thematic capitalisation, INTERREG IVC launched another complementary exercise to address a need which exists both at the project and programme levels: to learn from the different ways how the 184 approved Regional Initiative Projects organise and deliver their exchange of experience processes. The Programme has responded to this need by two specific initiatives:

- It has organised an international seminar dedicated to the exchange of experience approaches which took place in Barcelona on the 19th of June 2012 and involved around 115 lead partners and partners representing 84 projects.\(^1\)

- It has launched a specific study on exchange of experience processes which has the following overall objectives: it should provide a better understanding of how the projects organised their exchange of experience among partners under the operational element dedicated to this aspect in the application form (Component 3) and of how the exchange of experience process can directly influence the policy framework of the concerned regions. Moreover, the study should highlight successful or less successful approaches and practices from the exchange of experience processes and draw recommendations with a view to further improve the way the exchange of experience is carried out in the present but also in the future programming periods.

This study on exchange of experience processes was commissioned to an international consortium led by “EureConsult S.A.” (Luxembourg) and involving also “Spatial Foresight GmbH” (Luxembourg &

\(^1\) INTERREG IVC (2012e), INTERREG IVC (2012f)
Germany) and “t33 S.r.l.” (Italy). The research team consisted of the study coordinator Dr. Thomas Stumm (EureConsult) and of Dr. Kai Böhme (Spatial Foresight), Dr. Sabine Zillmer (Spatial Foresight), Dr. Silke Haarich (Spatial Foresight), Nicola Brignani (t33) and Alice Colin (t33). During the months of July to December 2012, this team accomplished the following main research activities:

For the analysis of the interregional exchange of experience process, an overall conceptual framework was developed by the study coordinator on ground of an extensive review of scientific literature and other empirical works from various disciplines. Two online-surveys were conceived by Spatial Foresight and EureConsult alongside the specific aspects addressed by the overall conceptual framework. The 1st survey addressed the partners of the already finalised or nearby completed 102 Regional Initiative Projects approved after the 1st and 2nd calls with a comprehensive set of questions covering all aspects to be investigated (i.e. aspects relating to organisation/structuring & policy influencing). The 2nd survey addressed the partners of the 82 projects approved after the 4th call with a more reduced set of questions, as these projects are still at a very early phase of their implementation process (i.e. aspects relating to organisation/structuring only). Spatial Foresight then conducted both surveys during the months of July-October (see: Annex 2) and also elaborated - together with t33 – a detailed analysis of the survey outcome. Also case studies on 12 selected Regional Initiative Projects from the 1st and 2nd calls were realised and involved all members of the international team (see: Annex 3). Each case study was elaborated on ground of the available project-specific documentation, the survey responses and semi-structured phone interviews (where required). They covered all aspects addressed by the overall conceptual framework (i.e. aspects relating to organisation/structuring & policy influencing) and adopted a similar structure for facilitating cross-case comparison, which was subsequently carried out by the study coordinator. Finally, all team members actively contributed to the elaboration of overall conclusions and recommendations for the present and future programming periods.

This final report of the study presents a specific conceptual framework for understanding and analysing the interregional exchange of experience process (Chapter 2), the overall result of our empirical analysis of the Regional Initiative Projects approved under INTERREG IVC (Chapters 3 & 4) as well as the final conclusions and recommendations for the current and forthcoming programming periods (Chapter 5). Upon request, the interested reader can also obtain from the INTERREG IVC JTS a compilation of the 12 case study analyses which were realised on selected INTERREG IVC Regional Initiative Projects from the 1st and 2nd calls.

The study coordinator would like to thank all members of the research team for their hard work and dedication to this project and also the many other persons from the INTERREG IVC projects who have helped - through their active participation in the online surveys and the case study analyses – that this study could be successfully carried out. Furthermore, in the name of all members of the research team, the study coordinator would like to express his gratitude to Michel Lamblin (Programme Director), Erwin Siweris (Deputy Programme Director), Nicolas Singer (Senior Project Officer), Elena Ferrario (Project Officer) and Benoît Dalbert (Project Officer) for their always helpful, flexible and also dedicated support and guidance which they have provided throughout this challenging research project.
2. A conceptual framework for understanding and analysing the interregional exchange of experience process under INTERREG IVC

This chapter briefly re-visits the strategic own expectations of the INTERREG IVC programme in order to define more precisely the very nature of the interregional exchange of experience process. Then, it develops a comprehensive overall conceptual framework which identifies a number of “over-arching key issues” and core questions that will later be at the heart of our empirical analysis of the different dimensions of the exchange of experience process.

The programme’s own expectations – defining the interregional exchange of experience

INTERREG IVC sets out a number of strategic expectations in relation to the interregional exchange of experience process which can be found at various places in the original programming document and also in the now updated Programme Manual. By pulling together the most important statements that are made in these documents (see: Annex 4), one can sketch out a simplified “means-ends logic” which summarises the specific approach adopted by INTERREG IVC:

- Bringing together authorities and other actors at regional/local levels, to enable them to learn from each others’ experiences in the fields of innovation, knowledge economy, environment and risk prevention.
- Exchanging experiences and knowledge on good practices and transferring good practices from one region to another, to achieve short-term policy effects in the project partner areas.
- Exchanging experiences on the different policy frameworks in the regions to approach practices in their wider policy context and developing new and/or innovative approaches/solutions to improve policies, to achieve long-term structural changes in the project partner areas.
- Striving for EU-wide relevance and realising programme-level capitalisation, to widely disseminate successful experiences and practices and to create a European added-value.
- Exchanging, sharing and transferring policy experience, knowledge and good practices, to improving the effectiveness of regional development policies and to contribute to the development of a sustainable and economically competitive Europe (overall programme objective).

This specific approach to interregional cooperation under INTERREG IVC is also one of the main criteria by which the programme explicitly aims to distinguish itself from cross-border and transnational cooperation programmes despite the direct links which exist to both of these co-operation types.

From a careful reading of these statements, one can also see that the interregional exchange of experience process under INTERREG IVC covers the following four levels:

1. The project itself and the persons who are directly and intensively involved in it.

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Footnotes:

3 Other distinguishing criteria mentioned in the Programme Manual (INTERREG IVC, 2012a) are the “geographical coverage”, because interregional cooperation is the only type of cooperation where all EU regions are eligible, and its nature as a “capitalisation programme”, because it is not a pure ‘implementation’ programme supporting investments in infrastructure or a ‘experimentation’ programme.
2. The organisations acting as main partners in projects as well as the entirety of their specific objectives, operational routines and actions.

3. The regional/local policy subsystems in the project partner areas and a variety of other regional/local institutions and organisations connected to it.

4. A broad range of other project-external organisations and social subsystems which are located in the wider domestic context of the project partners or in other parts of the EU territory.

INTERREG IVC considers the interregional exchange at policy level to be a tool which enables authorities and other actors at the regional and local levels to learn from each others’ experiences, which makes learning the main catalyst for generating the expected policy change in the involved partner areas. This basic assumption of the programme is confirmed by the abundant general scientific literature on learning which originates from various disciplines: most of the theorists agree that “learning” is commonly associated with a “change” in how we understand and interpret the reality that surrounds us. But the literature also shows that especially learning in a policy context can not be purely intellectual (i.e. an acquisition of knowledge or skills through studying or teaching etc), because (...) it is not enough to identify a problem and to propose a solution (...) as a (...) solution must be put into practice before learning can occur. Bearing this in mind, one has to conclude that under the interregional exchange of experience process also different forms of learning need to occur across the four levels identified above and that the overall outreach of this learning will strongly determine the scope of policy change emerging in practice.

The INTERREG IVC programme primarily supports “soft” cooperation, but it did not set out any formal requirements for the way how this exchange of experience should take place in practice. It expected that the exchange under Component 3 involves at least interregional networking activities for identifying, analysing, disseminating and transferring good practices in specific policy fields as well as for approaching these practices in their wider policy context. A more “implementation-oriented” project conceptualisation was also considered, but only in a fairly limited way and in duly justified cases. Regional Initiative Projects with a medium-level cooperation intensity had the possibility to include specific activities which envisage a light experimentation or testing of certain aspects relating to their exchange of experience process or to a transfer of practices and an improvement of local/regional policies or strategies through pilot actions (see: Annex 1). For those actions the INTERREG IVC JTS clearly preferred to include them into a “new” Component 4, but several Regional Initiative Projects also included them into their Component 3 (i.e. we refer to those in the following as “implementation-related activities”). Other examples with an implementation-oriented conceptualisation are the Regional Initiative Projects having opted for a high level of cooperation intensity (i.e. the mini-programmes), which implemented under their specific Component 4 a limited number of sub-projects involving other actors from the partner areas.

These different types of actions which are adopted by the Regional Initiative Projects for delivering their exchange of experience process should lead to variable forms of policy change, which in turn were

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4 Across this rich scientific literature on learning, however, there is neither a single definition for learning nor a generally shared concept of learning.

5 Carlsson/Wohlgemuth (2000).
expected to increase the effectiveness of regional development policies in the areas of innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention (i.e. the INTERREG IVC programme objective). While a “successful transfer of a good practice” from one partner area to another is considered to achieve mostly immediate and less far reaching policy effects (short term results), an “approaching of these practices in their wider policy context” and also the so-called “policy improvements” are supposed to achieve "structural changes" in the public institutional framework of each participating region and thus a long-term policy impact. These own expectations of the INTERREG IVC programme, although further elaborated in the recently updated Programme Manual, are still too strictly related to either a short term result or a long-term policy impact and therefore do not always correspond to the very nature and scope of the policy effects that can be observed in practice. 

INTERREG IVC also expects that Regional Initiative Projects, through their exchange of experience, **strive for EU-wide relevance and thereby contribute to create a European added value.** This should allow other organisations and actors not participating in a given project or the INTERREG IVC programme to actually benefit from the outcomes achieved and to use them for stimulating policy learning and change in a much wider perspective.

Our brief review of these own expectations of INTERREG IVC allows to **define the interregional exchange of experience process** as follows: its very nature is in fact that of a multidimensional and dynamic learning process which is geared towards achieving various forms of policy changes within the partner areas and also beyond. This process should ideally start with learning at the project-level, which then stimulates learning within the individual project partner organisations and also learning between them and other organisations of the concerned regional/local policy subsystems in order to achieve policy change in the involved project partner areas as well as learning in an EU-wide perspective (see: Figure 2).

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6 INTERREG IVC (2012a)

7 Our study will show that a successful transfer of a good practice did often also generate structural changes in the public institutional framework of each participating region (i.e. a long-term impact), whereas policy improvements did often “only” allow achieving punctual or less wide-ranging policy effects in a partner area (short term results).
Figure 2: Interregional exchange of experience – a multidimensional process of learning & policy change
Over-arching “key issues” for an empirical analysis of the exchange of experience process

Addressing the interregional exchange of experience process under INTERREG IVC primarily from a perspective of learning and policy change appears to be a good point of departure for developing a conceptual framework for our empirical analysis, because there is a well-developed scientific knowledge stock on learning and policy change: abundant literature originating from various disciplines addresses learning from different perspectives or at different levels\(^8\) and also examines more specifically the links between collective learning and policy change.

However, the existing scientific literature which addresses both aspects more specifically in the context of European Territorial Cooperation is still very small in number (see: Bibliography). These analyses focus mostly on transnational cooperation and sometimes also on cross-border cooperation, but not yet on interregional cooperation. As especially transnational and interregional co-operation share a number of basic features, one could assume that the analytical concepts of the existing transnational studies are also applicable under our study. Although these concepts indeed have an important cognitive value of their own, our in-depth literature review showed that they are quite different from each other and are also not fully covering the above-outlined research scope of the present study.\(^9\)

This overall situation calls for the elaboration of a conceptual framework tailored to the specific needs of the present study, which will focus on five over-arching “key issues” that are further developed below.

(1) The specific forms of learning within each dimension: The main reason for addressing this issue is the significant difference which exists between the more person-bound forms of learning that tend to occur at the first and partly also at the second level of this multidimensional process (i.e. individual learning & learning in smaller groups) and the obviously much more complex forms of collective learning that tend to occur mostly at the second, third and fourth levels (e.g. organisational learning, policy learning, society-wide learning). If we assume that these multiple forms of learning can and should in principle take place throughout the interregional exchange of experience process, then it becomes evident that the qualitative outreach of the entire learning exercise will also strongly condition the nature and scope of the policy change that is achieved in practice. However, the experience from transnational cooperation projects suggests that this ideal process is not always perceived this clearly by the actors involved, because learning is almost “invisible” (i.e. not alike to a tangible product) and usually runs in parallel to many other cooperation activities that have to be delivered (e.g. management, coordination, coordination, management, coordination, management, coordination).

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\(^8\) Learning processes are addressed by a multitude of scientific works which originate from various disciplines such as anthropology, cognitive science, psychology, educational science and pedagogy, sociology, political sciences, economy and business management. The different disciplines address and examine specific aspects which are related to learning such as the cognitive processes of individuals, group learning, intra-organisational learning, policy learning (often associated to the aspect of policy change) or even macro-soctial learning (i.e. frequently referred to by the notion of the “learning society”).

\(^9\) Several of these studies adopt a more “bottom-up driven” conceptualisation of learning and policy change, which primarily drew on an empirical observation of earlier transnational cooperation practices in some areas under INTERREG IIC or the beginning of INTERREG IIIB (e.g. Lähteenmäki-Smith/Dubois 2006; Böhme, 2005; Lähteenmäki-Smith/Böhme, 2004; Böhme/Josserand/Haraldsson/Bachtler/Polverari, 2003). Other concepts are more strongly departing from pre-established approaches of the learning theory literature and/or the literature on policy learning and policy change and then look into the practice of more recent transnational co-operation under INTERREG IIIB (e.g. Colomb, 2007; Hachmann, 2008).
As a consequence of this, we have to explore in more detail for each of the four learning dimensions the general questions of “Who learns?”, “Which kind of learning can potentially take place?”, “What has been learned?” and “To what extent have actors learned something?”.

(2) The inter-connection between the various learning processes: The main reason for addressing this issue is rooted in the multidimensionality of the entire learning process itself. In such a context, the project-level actors have to ensure that their new knowledge acquired from learning in the exchange of experience is also pro-actively transferred to the next higher levels. Assuming, instead, that learning outcomes are automatically passed on to the next higher levels is rather simplistic. Such a view would largely ignore the scientific debate on knowledge transfer and on the organisational absorption of externally generated knowledge, but also the observations made in studies about learning in transnational cooperation. As a consequence of this, we have to explore by which kind of tools or processes and mental facilitators it can be ensured that the project-level learning outcomes are successfully “carried” onwards to the other levels of this multidimensional learning process (e.g. integrating other project-external actors into the exchange process, own participation at external events or structured capitalisation processes, communication & dissemination etc).

(3) The causality links between learning and policy change: The main reason for addressing this issue is that the collective forms of learning which occur “outside” the projects (i.e. organisational learning & policy learning) and also the associated policy change are actually taking place in the partners’ regional/local subsystems or even in their national policy subsystem. These subsystems are highly interwoven, because they usually consist of different policy-development, decision-making and policy-delivery processes which involve various types of actors having their specific normative and causal beliefs or value sets that are also dynamically evolving over time. Considering this, we have to accommodate ourselves to the fact that the relationship between policy-oriented learning and policy change will most likely not follow a linear and “mechanistic” causality pattern, but rather adopt the form of a multidirectional and cross-influenced process that is often also blurring the original knowledge base on ground of which a process of policy change was initiated. This apparently abstract reflection is of imminent practical relevance for interregional cooperation, because its current practice confirms that a successful good practice transfer or the achievement of a policy improvement is rarely a linear or mechanistic process. It is indeed true that interregional cooperation projects can in most cases evidence a

10 Verena Hachman (Hachmann, 2008) rightly highlights that while being engaged in cooperation (…), very few participants are even aware of all the parallel processes taking place, and seldom about the learning as such. In any attempt to increase the quality of transnational cooperation, this “invisible” level has to be explored (…) and the conditions for learning improved.

11 Most of these studies clearly highlight that the “learning knowledge transfer” from projects to other levels is one of the most crucial aspects which deserves particular attention. See on this e.g. Hachmann (2008), Colomb (2007), Böhme (2005).

12 The sociological systems theory considers the political system, together with a number of other social systems (economy, community & legal system, socio-cultural system), as a part of the wider functional differentiation pattern of our post-modern societies. Within the wider domestic political system, also policy subsystems can exist both at different governance levels (e.g. national, regional, local) and also for specific policy fields (e.g. transport policy, health care & social policy, economic policy etc). Policy subsystems are generally understood as interactive networks of legislatures, agencies, interest groups and beneficiaries in which no actor can individually pursue goals without taking into account the cooperative behaviour of other actors. Policy subsystems may under special circumstances resemble “iron triangles”, while under other conditions they are more alike to an issue network.
very high degree of causality between learning and the achieved policy change,\textsuperscript{13} but it also happens in some cases that the formal reporting of such policy change is difficult or even impossible.\textsuperscript{14} As a consequence of this, we have to explore the processes and tools or facilitators which can help that the project-level learning benefits are actually used by the partner organisations or by other stakeholders of a policy subsystem to prepare and decide the actions which will put into practice the envisaged policy change (e.g. initiating information & further learning in partner organisations, general awareness raising & active persuasion of other key stakeholders, seeking of pro-active support & establishment of issue-focussed policy coalitions etc).

\textbf{(4) The very nature of the achieved policy change:} The main reason for addressing this issue is the still rather unspecific view which INTERREG IVC has in relation to policy change and the fact that this change is resulting from learning processes which take place at different levels within in the project partner areas. Individual partner organisation can indeed achieve policy change largely "on their own" without having to involve other external actors beforehand (i.e. through organisational learning). More fundamental changes of policy, on the opposite, can most often not be reached by a single organisation alone and therefore require a joint effort of various actors or stakeholders from the policy subsystem (i.e. through collective learning among various actors of a policy subsystem). For reflecting these qualitatively different learning processes also at the level of the wider policy outcome, \textit{we suggest to sub-divide the general notion of "policy change" into the following two effects:}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{Policy improvements} are mostly technical corrections of an already existing policy instrument or of a specific action, but also a limited adaptation of an established conceptual framework of a policy. These technical corrections and limited adaptations are achieved at the level of individual institutions or organisations if those are directly and fully in charge of implementing an instrument or a policy. Their purpose is to help better reaching already existing organisational goals by a fine-tuning of specific interventions or of other policy-relevant tools and actions, but also to achieve an increased problem-solving capacity of a given policy through a punctual modification of its underlying norms, functions, structures or procedural routines. However, these policy improvements neither change fundamentally the principles or basic structural settings governing an organisation nor do they question the proper existence of the specific instrument or policy addressed.

\item \textbf{Structural policy changes}, on the contrary, are much more wide-ranging modifications which lead to fundamental adaptations of an already existing policy instrument or of the conceptual framework for a wider policy field in place (e.g. a revision of the basic principles and of the wider purpose, leading to a visible change in the overall intervention rationale), but also to the introduction of a completely new instrument or policy concept which previously did not exist.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{13} e.g. a good practice will never be transferred from one to another region, if this region (or the partnership) has not previously identified it within the project.

\textsuperscript{14} This can happen when the original cause (i.e. the learning benefits from interregional co-operation) looses its visibility and traceability in the finally induced effect (i.e. the policy change), which can due to a highly complex topic which is cross-cutting various policies or a policy design and decision making process which involving various actors.
Such structural policy changes are most often only achieved at the level of the entire policy subsystem,\(^1\) because they usually involve an intense preparation, bargaining and consensus-building process and most often also a formal political decision taking process in which various public institutions, government departments or even other non-governmental organisations are interacting among each other.

(5) The factors influencing on learning & policy change: The main reason for addressing this issue is the fact that learning and policy change do not take place in an environment which is exempt from various positive or negative influences. The scientific literature shows, for example, that learning is strongly conditioned by different influences which are originating from specific process-internal settings (e.g. pre-conditions of individuals, specific group constellations, inter-personal / collective dynamics, conceptualisation of learning processes, structural facilitators etc). But also policy learning and policy change are exposed to a plethora of influences. They can originate from specific settings within larger organisations or institutions and especially from the complex interplay within the policy subsystem itself,\(^1\) but also from changes in the wider external context. Such influences can facilitate learning and policy change, but they can of course also inhibit learning to occur and create obstacles for an achievement of short-term policy changes. In the latter case, this might then require that alternative solutions are searched for which only allow achieving policy change in a medium or even long-term perspective. As a consequence, we have to identify the most important factors generating influences which are conductive or adverse to an achievement of learning and policy change within the interregional exchange of experience process and also search for solutions which might help avoiding or at least mitigating negative influences.

These over-arching key issues are now further explored for each level of the interregional exchange of experience process, mainly with a view to draw up a holistic picture of the complex dynamics which are existing in this multidimensional process of learning and policy change.

**Learning within interregional projects**

At this level we only look at the persons who are directly and intensively involved in the ongoing implementation of a Regional Initiative Project, but also at the joint working methods and the associated processes/techniques which are used by projects to deliver their exchange of experience process. A common feature of all interregional cooperation projects is that they bring together partners from different countries which makes that the involved persons are generally working in a cross-cultural environment.\(^1\) This cross-cultural dimension indeed also exists under other European Territorial

\(^1\) There might also be intermediate cases where an individual project partner organisation can already achieve a much more wide-ranging modification of an exiting policy/instrument alone, especially if it is fully in charge of conceiving and delivering this policy or instrument (e.g. a regional or local administration).

\(^1\) Such influences can result from "vested interests", formal rules and informal guidance, feed-back loops, inter-personal relations, person-specific aspects etc.

\(^1\) This cross-cultural working environment is primarily created by the basic socio-structural partnership settings (e.g. participants having different institutional and professional backgrounds; different traditions in conceiving, administrating and delivering policy etc), by the communicative settings (e.g. multi-linguistic context, although there is generally one single "working language" which is
Cooperation projects, but its overall significance is very high especially within interregional cooperation projects.\textsuperscript{18}

Learning within interregional projects (see: Figure 3) can generally occur at the level of each person who is directly involved in the delivery process (i.e. individual learning) and also in the context of smaller group settings where most or all of the directly involved persons are closely working together towards an achievement of specific or general project goals (i.e. cross-cultural group learning). The \textbf{usual outcomes} of these cognitive processes are \textbf{person-bound immaterial learning benefits}, mainly in form of an improved awareness/knowledge and of increased capacities/skills,\textsuperscript{19} but also \textbf{non-person-bound material learning benefits} such as an identified & transferable good practice, a new policy strategy or a jointly developed new policy tool etc. Individual learning and group learning are generally addressed and examined by an abundant scientific literature which provides interesting insights that can also help us to further develop our concept for an assessment of this issue within interregional projects.

\textbf{Individual learning} holds variable meanings across the world and is also defined in different ways throughout the scientific literature. We follow here the view of Katherine Sinitsa\textsuperscript{20} who defines individual learning as (…) the capacity to build knowledge through individual reflection about external stimuli and sources, and through the personal re-élaboration of individual knowledge and experience in light of interaction with other and the environment. If individual learning is understood this way, then it also becomes clear that within the cross-cultural working environment of interregional projects a number of important factors will strongly condition the cognitive capacity of an involved person (e.g. foreign language proficiency, adequate communication skills, receptiveness & openness to new knowledge etc)\textsuperscript{21} and thus influence upon his/her possibility to experience learning.

Despite this challenging context, the past experience from European Territorial Cooperation confirms that individual learning indeed took place to a larger extent within projects and was therefore also an important part of their wider outcome achieved. This is shown by specific analyses of cross-border and especially of transnational cooperation,\textsuperscript{22} with the latter emphasising that individual learning in projects occurred most often from an exchange of experience and good practices (e.g. learning about co-operation, learning about policy contents which exist in other local/regional contexts, socio-cultural learning by usually English) and by culturally-rooted behavioural settings (e.g. different mentalities & ways of thinking or perceiving/understanding apparently similar issues etc).

\textsuperscript{18} The significance of this cross-cultural working environment is variable across the different types of European Territorial Cooperation. It is highest in the context of interregional and also transnational cooperation because projects usually bring together a relatively high number of participants from different countries which, in addition, are also located more or less far from each other. In the case of cross-border cooperation it is comparatively lower because projects usually involve actors from only two or three different countries which are also in a close-by neighbourhood relation along a common border.

\textsuperscript{19} Person-bound immaterial learning benefits consist of two qualitatively different components which should be clearly distinguished. (1) An improved individual or collective awareness and knowledge is the more "passive" outcome component of a learning process, because this allows better understanding a particular issue at stake and thus generates a changed mental perception of / attitude towards that issue. (2) Increased individual or collective capacities and skills are the more "pro-active" outcome component of a learning process, because they represent the concrete change in persons’ abilities / capabilities to act and react more adequately in relation to a particular issue at stake.

\textsuperscript{20} Sinitsa (2000)

\textsuperscript{21} See on this also Hachmann (2008).

\textsuperscript{22} In the case of cross-border cooperation see, for example, INTERACT (2010), while for transnational cooperation see, for example Hachmann (2008), Lähteenmäki-Smith/Dubois (2006), Colomb (2007), Böhme (2005), Lähteenmäki-Smith/Böhme (2004), Böhme/Josserand/Haraldsson/Bachtler/Polverari (2003).
being confronted to other mentalities or ways of thinking and doing etc). More recently, also the Commission’s ex-post evaluation of INTERREG III has systematically evidenced such effects across all co-operation strands and at different levels (i.e. projects & programmes).

**Figure 3: Project-level learning processes**

Also under the current INTERREG IVC programme, significant results are already achieved in terms of individual learning. The learning effects directly resulting from the interregional exchange of experience process are captured by the monitoring indicator "number of staff members with an increased capacity", which includes different aspects such as (personal) awareness, knowledge and skills. The most recent aggregated monitoring data for this indicator show that for (...) the 122 projects from the three first calls, the exchange of experience has already contributed to increasing the capacity (skills) of 3,596 staff members.

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23 Böhme (2005)
24 European Commission, DG Regio (2010)
involved in the projects. This represents an average of 29.5 people per project who have enhanced their skills thanks to their involvement in interregional activities.25

Learning in smaller group settings, which educational sciences lively discuss under the headings of “cooperative learning” or “collaborative learning”, has distinct advantages over individual learning as long as it is effective.26 However, the general literature also shows that a variety of difficulties and conflicts can arise in small learning environments which tend to obstruct group learning if they remain unaddressed.27 Group learning is of particular importance for the interregional exchange of experience process, as INTERREG IVC requires the projects to establish intense mutual working relations among the partners coming from different countries. To achieve this under the exchange of experience process, interregional projects can use a number of classical networking activities (e.g. interregional workshops & conferences, study visits etc) and more sophisticated working methods (e.g. surveys, benchmarking, peer reviewing etc), but in some cases also implementation-related activities (e.g. joint development of policy support tools, realisation of joint pilot actions or sub-projects etc). Although the combination of activities and working processes or techniques applied by interregional projects varies considerably in practice, they all share the feature that group learning in such joint work processes is always cross-cultural by nature.

Initiating cross-cultural group learning processes is very challenging in practice, because interregional projects have not only to avoid the usual difficulties or conflicts which can emerge in collaborative learning environments but also need to consider specific influences which can emerge from their specific cross-cultural working environment. This can again be illustrated by looking at the past transnational co-operation experiences. Due to the fact that this co-operation took place in a much wider geographical frame (i.e. considerable distance among the partners), hampering influences on group learning often emerged from strong differences in the respective administrative cultures of the partners and also from the involvement of partners with variable competences and responsibilities in a given policy field.28 Other examples show that also behavioural factors and personal language-proficiency played an important role. They often were more decisive for an active participation in cross-cultural group work and for an input-provision to such processes than the proper expert knowledge of a person.29 For group learning to emerge in interregional projects, it is therefore important that the involved persons dispose of additional capabilities which enable them to fully cope with the demanding cross-cultural working and learning

25 INTERREG IVC (2012b): These figures also include projects which are not analysed by the present study (i.e. capitalisation projects).
26 As the limits of learning groups are bound only by the limits which the group sets on itself, cooperative learning can create an array of advantages: existence of a wider knowledge base & use of distributed knowledge resources to address a common need, development of individual & group accountability, development of interpersonal & group skills, emergence of face-to-face interaction, group reflection & group processing leading to a development of group ideas & new ideas not thought of before etc. For these advantages to become reality, however, group learning has to be effective. Effective group learning has three basic characteristics: (1) active participation of all team or group members for successful learning; (2) existence of a guided and purposeful task and (3) reflection as part of the learning process.
27 Difficulties can include a preference of some group members for individual over group learning, a lack of adequate resources such as venues or facilitators or a resistance to new approaches to learning by some group members. Conflicts can mainly arise in fields such as the relationships among group members, the differences in opinion about the task and differences in opinion about the process of achieving the task. On the above, see for example the overview provided by Asgari/Dall’Alba (2011).
28 European Commission, DG Regio (2010)
29 Hachmann (2008)
environment of these projects. Furthermore, also the interregional working process itself needs to be well-managed and conceived in an intelligent way if one expects group learning to take place. This, again, is supported by the past transnational cooperation experience under INTERREG III, but also by the conclusion of some observes that an effective “framing” of joint transnational working processes would be helpful to ensure that more strategic and content-focussed group learning occurs (see: Annex 5). These organisational and procedural matters are thus also important for the interregional exchange of experience process under all projects, but in particular for projects which realise regional/local pilot actions or specific sub-projects (i.e. mini-programmes). The latter should, from the outset, put into place a process of “strategic feedback loop learning” which allows the partners to jointly observe, share and aggregate the achievements of such pilot actions or sub-projects.

With respect to the important question of “What has been learned jointly?” at the project level, however, one has to observe that European Territorial Cooperation still very vaguely perceives the actual group learning benefits achieved. The literature, especially on transnational cooperation, observes that project learning resulted less often from a joint conceptualisation of common solutions to a shared problem, which also suggests that group learning processes have actually played a rather weak role in the projects analysed. This indeed very punctual observation can of course not lead to the conclusion that also within interregional projects the scope of cross-cultural group learning is limited. But it points to a weakness which exists in the context of INTERREG IVC: the extremely limited information about the actual outreach of group learning within projects and also about the scope of the group learning benefits achieved. The lack of information is mainly caused by the current practice under INTERREG IVC to capture such learning effects also by the general monitoring indicator “number of staff members with an increased capacity”. This obviously creates the problem that group learning benefits can not be clearly separated from individual learning benefits.

Independently from the scope of learning processes and the learning benefits that might occur, one has to bear in mind that the project-level learning itself does not lead to any kind of practical policy change. This is mainly due to the fact that the learning benefits originating from the interregional exchange of experience process are generated “outside” the participating organisations or institutions, on which the projects themselves have in principle no direct influence. For improvements and structural changes of policy to become a reality in the partner areas or even in other European regions, it is first of

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30 In addition to those already mentioned under individual learning, these are primarily the capability to build up intensive interpersonal contacts and trust, a comparable problem-solving capacity and the willingness to share own knowledge. See on this also Hachmann (2008).
31 European Commission, DG Regio (2010)
32 A good overview on basic requirements for such a strategic framing was developed by Verena Hachmann (2008) through her “methodological approaches for the de-contextualization of case-based knowledge” which, however, is primarily related to transnational cooperation.
33 Such a structured and dynamic process can lead to a higher-order type of group learning if the project partners are (1) constantly interacting with the pilot actions/subprojects and also monitoring their work, (2) jointly reflecting on their observations and drawing strategic-level conclusions and finally (3) also feeding their own ongoing work process with the newly generated aggregated knowledge.
34 Böhme (2005)
35 In the future, it would be better to draw up a separate indicator for this issue. It could, for example, explore how many strategies and policy support tools were jointly developed by the partners through working together in project-level group settings and to what extent this contributed to increase joint awareness and knowledge about the issue at stake (i.e. by establishing a qualitative judgement scale for the entire project).
36 Hachmann (2008)
all necessary that the participants in interregional projects ensure that these “external learning benefits” are effectively

- transferred towards the involved partner organisations and also embedded into their organisational memory,
- introduced into the complex processes of the partners' regional and local policy subsystems and also actually taken up by other policy-relevant actors in these subsystems,
- channelled towards the wider project-external environment for supporting a European-wide learning process in the field of territorial development.

Learning at the level of the project partner organisations

At this level we look more specifically at the partner organisations which are connected to a Regional Initiative Project's delivery process through one or more of their staff members (i.e. administrative departments at the local, regional or national levels; other types of public-equivalent and policy-relevant structures or bodies\(^\text{37}\)), but also at the wider objectives, internal sub-structures, operational routines and corporate actions of these organisations.

Learning within a private or public organisation can generally occur at the individuals who work for it\(^\text{38}\), but also within organisation-internal groups (e.g. functional units or other formal sub-structures and less formal groups such as project-teams) and at the level of the entire organisation itself. Learning of organisations is generally understood as a process by which new internal knowledge is created with the purpose of using this knowledge for helping organisations to adapt themselves to a change of external conditions or for proactively changing their environment. These issues are addressed by a multitude of scientific works on “organisational learning”\(^\text{39}\) and on “learning organisations”\(^\text{40}\), which can also help us to further develop our conceptual framework.

This learning dimension is of particular importance for the interregional exchange of experience process, because the project partner organisations usually seek to gain better information and new knowledge or technical know-how about a specific issue in order to improve their own policy-making processes or even to transform an instrument or policy which is delivered by them. Although one can in principle adhere to this basic rationale that is underlying a participation of organisations in interregional co-operation

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\(^\text{37}\) e.g. specialised agencies involved in particular policies, Chambers of commerce and industry, other intermediary organisations etc.

\(^\text{38}\) The individual learning perspective is usually the domain of human resources development (including activities such as: training, increasing skills, work experience and formal education).

\(^\text{39}\) Organisational learning is an area of knowledge within organisational theory that studies models and theories about the way an organisation learns and adapts to a changing external environment. Organisational learning, as a field of academic research and professional practice, started in the early 1960s and was developed further during the 1970s and 1980s through a number of “milestone publications” which studied various aspects of individual and collective learning processes within organisations as well as the link between both.

\(^\text{40}\) This concept generally use the theoretical findings of organisational learning (and also other research in organisational development, system theory and cognitive science), but it also advocates a pro-active creation, capturing, transferring and mobilisation of knowledge for enabling an organisation’s adaptation to a continuously changing environment. Therefore, a “learning organisation” actively promotes, facilitates and rewards collective learning. According to the “father” of this concept, Peter M. Senge, a learning organisation exhibits five main characteristics: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, a shared vision and team learning.
projects, several analyses of past transnational cooperation show that learning benefits have mainly remained with the individuals who were directly involved in the activities and also that wider organisational learning was in practice not a substantial outcome of the projects. This rather pessimistic observation was nuanced more recently by the findings of the Commission’s ex-post evaluation of INTERREG III, which provided extensive case-study based evidence for all European Territorial Cooperation strands that organisational learning indeed took place at the project and the programme levels.

All this partial evidence should not hide that many of the existing analyses on learning in European Territorial Cooperation only looked at organisational learning in a rather general way, wherefore the related organisation-internal sub-processes and their cross-influence on each other has largely remained a “black box”. This missing insight can probably also explain why until now no concrete attempts were made to conceive a coherent approach for monitoring more systematically the effects of European Territorial Cooperation programmes and projects in terms of organisational learning and change.

Be this as it may, these observations suggest that our conceptual framework for the study on interregional exchange of experience processes should contain a model which provides a more differentiated understanding of organisational learning and change (see: Figure 4). This model consists of three main elements which allow to shed light on the complex processes that are taking place from (1) the organisational reception of external project-level learning benefits over (2) their further uptake through the organisation-internal learning cycle until (3) their actual use for achieving concrete policy-relevant improvements or changes at the organisation level.

The first element concerns more specifically the process of introducing externally generated new knowledge into an organisation. An organisation’s ability to integrate external knowledge and information is addressed by the still on-going scientific discussion about the “knowledge absorptive capacity” of firms (see: Annex 6). Important works in this respect pinpointed a number of internal factors which determine an organisation’s absorptive capacity and also highlighted that the actual knowledge absorption process of organisations follows a multidirectional, fluid and iterative path rather than a strictly linear pattern of acquisition and exploitation. This, in turn, requires that specific capabilities need to be embedded in an organisation’s routines and processes which allow it to effectively acquire, assimilate, transform and finally exploit external knowledge for its own purposes.

41 There are indeed also several other factors motivating such a participation, among which the perspective of getting EU-funding for supporting “own” activities should certainly not be underestimated in its importance.

42 Böhme (2005), Hachmann (2008)

43 European Commission, DG Regio (2010)

44 A noteworthy exception is the analysis of Hachmann (2008).

45 First ideas in this direction were developed for transnational cooperation in an earlier work of Claire Colomb (2008). This paper has also served as a basis for a currently ongoing research project which investigates policy learning and the Europeanisation of urban and spatial planning policies in the Mediterranean area and is funded by a Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship (European Union 7th Research Framework Programme).

46 This discussion started with a paper published by Cohen and Levinthal (1990) and was taken further by works of Szulanski (1996) and especially of Zahra and George (2002).
Figure 4: Model for a more differentiated perception of organisational learning & organisational change
These theoretical reflections are also important for our understanding of the interregional exchange of experience process, because they shed light on a crucial stage in the wider multidimensional process which deserves particular attention: the organisational “entry” and initial diffusion of project-level learning benefits. The externally generated learning benefits first have to find their way into the wider organisational context and also need to be disseminated more widely before they can be processed further. Should this not be the case, then especially the individual project learning benefits will be lost if a previously involved person is leaving the organisation or institution. However, several analyses of cross-border and transnational projects highlighted that it was especially difficult for direct project participants to spread their new experiences and learning within their home base organisation towards other persons or structural layers (groups) that were not actively involved in the delivery of a project.47

This clearly suggests that the partner organisations involved in an interregional exchange of experience should either already dispose of adequate knowledge acquisition and assimilation capabilities or put such capabilities into place if they do not yet exist. These capabilities are not only essential for importing the project learning benefits into an organisation and for diffusing them among a wider range of the organisation’s staff, they are also paving the way for a subsequent uptake of this external learning knowledge by the mainstream organisation-internal learning cycle. Moreover, organisations also need adequate transformation and exploitation capabilities especially if the external learning benefits are expected to generate immediate effects on the instruments or policies delivered by an organisation already within a projects’ lifetime.

The above-said leads us directly to the second element of this model, which is the complex and multi-directional process of initiating and institutionalising learning within an organisation. The literature on organisational learning and the learning organisations concept clearly highlights that a simple summing up of individual learning within an organisation does not automatically guarantee that organisational learning and thus also new higher order knowledge for initiating organisational change occurs. For this, instead, a complex and multi-directional process of experience accumulation, knowledge articulation and knowledge codification is required within an organisation. Based upon these general observations, Crossan, Lane and White developed in the late 1990s their widely known framework of organisational learning (the “4I-framework”)48 which was subsequently discussed and further developed by other scientific works.49 This framework indicates two main routes of learning (i.e. from the individual to the organisation & from the organisation to the individual) and inter-relates the observable levels of intra-organisational learning (i.e. individual, group and organisation) by four cognitive processes (intuition, interpretation, integration, institutionalisation), to which more recent works also added a number of intra-organisational socio-political processes (see: Annex 7).

Being aware of this intrinsic complexity is also important for our understanding of the interregional exchange of experience process, as it shows that a further use of already “imported” project learning

48 Crossan/Lane/White (1999)
49 See for example the contributions of Lawrence/Mauws et. al. (2005), Castaneda/Perez (2005), Castaneda/Rios (2007) and Wiseman (2007).
benefits by the established organisational learning cycle is in fact a challenging endeavour. This is also supported by the past experience from transnational cooperation: some observers rightly point to the fact that an (...) institution as a whole needs to be able to draw lessons from its participation in (...) networks and generalize from the learning experience (...) and that the (...) project participants need to communicate the project’s objectives, findings, results, etc., to their colleagues (...) to make the new knowledge transferable in order to (...) be able to influence the actors’ routines and practices.\textsuperscript{50} However, several empirical analyses of transnational cooperation show that learning benefits resulting from projects actually remained most often at an individual level or only reached the organisation-internal group level (e.g. through discussion & sharing with colleagues),\textsuperscript{51} whereas their further integration and institutionalisation at the level of the organisation itself as well as their inclusion into an organisations’ collective memory was only achieved in parts or even not at all.

These observations suggest that also the partner organisations involved in interregional projects should in particular pay attention to two important aspects: (1) they need to ensure that already “imported” project-level learning benefits are actually finding their way throughout all stages of the organisation-internal learning cycle, but in doing so (2) they have also to consider carefully the variable influences which can result especially from various intra-organisational socio-political processes that are associated to learning cycle (e.g. a potential conservative effect of other learning knowledge that is already part of the organisational memory). If this is observed, then a basic pre-condition is fulfilled which allows organisations to make practical steps towards initiating incremental or even more substantial modifications of the instruments or policy they deliver directly.

This brings us finally to the third element of the model, which is the process of achieving improvements or even of more substantial changes within an organisation through learning. The scientific literature on organisational learning and the learning organisations concept clearly highlights\textsuperscript{52} that the scope of organisational change is strongly conditioned by the quality of the collective learning processes which occur within an organisation. At a lower level one can find the so-called incremental or technical learning processes which mostly involve an accumulation of experiences about existing routines or actions (e.g. “learning by doing”, “learning by using”), rather than a reflection about the assumptions or patterns of behaviour that are underlying these routines and actions. This “single-loop” learning helps individuals to acquire new skills and capabilities and allows organisations to achieve mostly punctual improvements of already existing instruments or activities. In stark contrast to this more basic type of collective learning are the conceptual or problem-oriented learning processes (double-loop learning) and the processes which entail “learning about learning” or “learning how to learn” (triple-loop learning). Especially these higher-order types of learning are required if more substantial changes of an organisation’s overall culture and interests, norms and objectives or of its structures, functions, decision-making contexts and working routines are to be achieved (see: Annex 8).

\textsuperscript{50} Hachmann (2008).
\textsuperscript{51} Hachmann (2008), Böhme (2005), Böhme/Josserand/Haraldsson/Bachtler/Polverari (2003).
A good understanding of these qualitative differences in organisation-internal learning is also very important for the interregional exchange of experience process. If the link between organisational learning and change is considered this way, then it also becomes clearer which type of organisational learning process has to be initiated if the project-level learning benefits are expected to achieve either an incremental improvement or a real quantum leap in terms change at the level of an instrument or policy which is directly delivered by an organisation.

However, these reflections also show that the INTERREG IVC programme still has difficulties in producing more aggregated evidence on the cause-and-effect relation between organisational learning and policy change in the context of the exchange of experience process. The monitoring system indeed carefully captures the final outcomes achieved in terms of an improvement or change of policies and the programme also asks each project to provide qualitative or quantitative evidence that can further substantiate every achievement (i.e. in the half-yearly progress reports). Detailed information on the way how these results were achieved (e.g. the type of organisational learning processes used) is not yet systematically gathered by the monitoring system. But if this information becomes available in specific cases, then it is also included in the qualitative reporting on the programme implementation. This up to now only case-based evidence makes it obviously very difficult to seize the overall scope and quality of organisational learning that occurs within the exchange of experience process. This problem is further amplified by the fact that the current result monitoring indicators also do not allow to clearly identify at what level the policy change was actually produced (i.e. action of a single organisation or joint action of various organisations, nature of the processes etc).

**Learning at the level of the regional and local policy subsystems**

At this level we look at the wider regional and local policy subsystems in the partner areas which are directly addressed by the activities of a project. As policy is usually prepared, designed and implemented by more than only one single organisation, this level differs significantly from the previous one: it includes a much wider range of policy-relevant stakeholders which can be influential individuals (i.e. local/regional government members, other politicians from different parties) and also other organisations belonging to the wider policy subsystem (e.g. parliaments, sector-specific administrations, agencies, intermediaries, pressure groups etc).

The interregional exchange of experience process brings together regional/local public authorities or specific departments of their administrations being directly in charge of conceiving and implementing specific policies, but also other types of regional/local stakeholder organisations and even national-level

53 In 2012, the overall outcomes is already quite substantial: The currently operating 204 projects of the first three calls have successfully transferred 110 good practices and improved 102 policies (in terms of policies influenced and policy instruments modified) and also generated 88 spin-off activities. INTERREG IVC (2012d)

54 see for example: INTERREG IVC (2011), INTERREG IVC (2012d)

55 This suggests that in the future an appropriate monitoring approach should be developed by which the programme can keep track of the nature and scope of learning processes within the partner organisations. This would then show more clearly how the externally generated project learning benefits have actually led to organisational-level policy change.

56 These actors can be other public or public-equivalent but policy-relevant organisations and can typically also belong to other social subsystems (e.g. Chambers of Commerce ➔ economic subsystem; universities ➔ educational subsystem).
administrations which are relevant for the policies addressed, with a view to achieve improvements or even more wide-ranging structural changes of policy in their respective domestic context. But here, each project partner organisation is embedded into a complex policy subsystem which is characterised at the same time by relations of inter-organisational interdependence, co-operation and competition. In this subsystem a project partner organisation is only one influential actor among several others, because the latter are also part of the wider design and decision-making or delivery process of policies (interdependence & co-operation) and act in this context according to their specific own set of interests and operational routines that do not necessarily have to be the same than those of the project partner organisation (co-operation or competition).

**Learning at the level of a policy subsystem** (i.e. policy learning) and its relevance for policy change are partly addressed by the sociological literature on systemic learning, but more intensively so by a variety of works from political science. If we take Hall’s early and well-known definition of policy learning as a point of departure, then we also have to take a brief look at the very nature of the policy learning process itself. The core feature which comes to the fore from a summary review of other scientific works is that policy processes are very broad in scope and that learning at the level of a policy subsystem is consequently a collective process which involves a variable number of different organisations.

Collective learning in such a multi-organisational context obviously adds further complexity in terms of “who learns what and why”, since there is not only interaction between individual frames of thinking in an organization but also interaction between collective frames of thinking of different organizations. Policy learning thus needs to involve thinking and reflecting together about complex issues in order to generate new insights and possibilities. Such thinking must rise above the lowest common denominator of understanding often associated with debate to tap the full potential of collective intelligence and wisdom and also enable actors from different social, cultural, political or geographic backgrounds to bring out their differences productively and begin to make sense of them in understanding the larger issue that brings them together.

There are, however, also a number of adverse influences which can prevent policy learning and policy change to occur in practice. They result from specific obstacles to learning which are inherent to the

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57 see for example Miller (2002).
58 There are several works which examine the relation between collective learning processes and policy change, albeit in different perspectives: Some works analyse policy learning and policy failure (e.g. May, 1992) or use the three basic types of organisational learning to explain changes in policy (paradigms) as a social learning process of the policy system (e.g. Hall, 1990), while others adopt a systems view for assessing how to handle complexity in public policy-making and for overcoming “mechanistic policy thinking” that reduces complex problems into separate, rationally manageable components (e.g. Chapman, 2004). A number of other important works propose the “Advocacy Coalition Theory” as a new model of policy formation, in which policy learning and change occur through networks or “coalitions” of people from various governmental and private organizations who both (1) share a set of normative and causal beliefs and (2) engage in a nontrivial degree of co-ordinated activity over time (…) and who operate within the same policy subsystem (e.g. Sabatier/Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Ike, 2009; Nohrstedt/Weible, 2009). The protagonists of this model consider it to be a radical departure from the “stages of the policy process” framework and one can also observe its growing application for an analysis of very concrete policy phenomena (e.g. Albright, 2009).
59 Peter Hall (1990) defined policy learning as a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in the light of past experience and new information, learning is indicated when policy changes as the result of such a process.
60 The number of involved organisations usually depends upon the actual level of governance concerned: local = low number of involved organisations; regional = higher number of involved organisations; national or EU-level = very high number of involved organisations).
62 Laberge (2006)
process of government and policy-making, but they can also originate from the complex process of realising innovation and change in the public sector which usually requires a modification of already pre-established “policy beliefs” (i.e. ideas, norms, political strategies & doctrines etc) that are framing problems and directing attention to particular solutions.

This systemic perception of policy learning and policy change has also a direct implication for the interregional exchange of experience process and for the actual achievement of the expected policy change. We have already shown that it is indeed possible for projects to induce technical improvements or even structural adaptations within individual organisations or institutions if adequate collective learning processes are taking place at this level. But the above-said also makes clear that more fundamental modifications of policy instruments and especially substantial changes of an entire policy field are usually requiring complex preparation, interest-arbitration and decision-making processes that are in practice not “steered” by a single organisation alone. In those cases it is therefore required that project experiences and learning benefits also find their way into the wider policy arena. Experience from transnational cooperation shows, however, that (...)

As a consequence of this, the partner organisations of interregional projects need to share their specific project-level experiences and learning benefits with a wider range of other actors from their own policy subsystem that are not directly involved in the project but which are relevant to inducing policy change. This helps generating a broader awareness about the particular issue at stake and also a greater acceptance of it. But this attempt to indirectly change the collective frames of thinking of these other organisations is alone not sufficient. These other players in the policy subsystem need also to be directly mobilised (e.g. through the establishment of issue-specific “coalitions”) in order to obtain from them a robust commitment to and also a direct support for launching decisions and actions that will lead in practice to more substantial structural changes in policy (see: Figure 5).

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63 According to Chapman (2004), the most important ones are: (1) an aversion to failure, exacerbated by the political process, which uses failures to score points rather than learn lessons, (2) the pressure for uniformity in public services, (3) shared assumptions between civil servants and ministers that command and control is the correct way to exercise power, (4) lack of evaluation of previous policies, (5) lack of time to do anything other than cope with events, (6) a tradition of secrecy used to stifle feedback and learning, (8) the dominance of turf wars and negotiations between departments, effectively making end-user performance secondary to other considerations, (7) the loss of professional integrity and autonomy under the knife of efficiency in policy-making, and resistance and protection of vested interests by some professional and intermediary bodies.

64 Kemp/Weehuizen (2005).

65 e.g. through an improvement of existing policies or policy instruments which are applied / implemented by the involved organisations or through an adaptation/transformation of organisation-internal norms, structures and processes.

This level significantly expands our view towards a broad range of other types of actors which are not directly involved in a specific Regional Initiative Project or in any of the INTERREG IVC projects, but which might be indirectly concerned by the outcomes of the projects or at least be interested in using some of the lessons learnt for their own purposes. These external actors can be located in the wider domestic context of each project partner area (i.e. country-wide) and also in the rest of the European territory. Learning at the level of an entire society is admittedly the most difficult to grasp form of collective learning, although the theoretical foundations for the concept of a “Learning Society” exist since quite a while. However, the related analytical frameworks are up to now much less elaborated if compared to those applied for assessing the previous learning dimensions and they also differ quite strongly in focus.67 In the 21st century, the learning society is increasingly seen as something which is

67 For a brief theoretical overview see Smith (2001 & 2011): The concept of the “Learning Society” dates back to the late 1960s and early 1970s, when a first wave of important thinkers developed its theoretical foundations (e.g. Donald Schön, Robert M. Hutchins, Amitai Etzioni, Torsten Husén). Especially Schön developed in his path-breaking book “Beyond the Stable State” the idea that change is constant in a modern state and that states therefore have to adapt to this change through a constant process of learning within
required if states and regions are to remain competitive within an increasingly global economy, but also as a basic premise for better coping with other global challenges such as world-wide underdevelopment and poverty or demographic change and the future sustainability of our planet (i.e. see the positions of various international organisations such as the OECD, the UNESCO or the World Bank on this concept). However, the ongoing IT-revolution and our increasingly networked world are creating new opportunities but also evident challenges for such a learning society: the “information-wired-environment” indeed provides world-wide access to an abundant and also rapidly growing knowledge, but it also requires a new understanding of learning and also new learning modes adapted to the needs of the digital era which differ from those of the established learning theories (e.g. systemic learning capable of filtering/mediating the accessible knowledge, “connectivism” as a model where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity etc).

In order to better understand how learning can occur at a European-wide scale, we first took inspiration from John McClellan’s short but interesting framework which he developed for envisioning learning societies (see: Annex 9) according to his approach, European-wide learning can occur as a result of a macro-societal process in which a variety of individual or corporate learning agents (i.e. persons, organisations, social subsystems etc) are at the same time creating, continuously improving and further expanding a society’s “shared lesson set” about specialised domains (i.e. McClellan’s ideal type of a “knowledge society”) and also further integrating and maturing this specialised lesson set with a view to yield a collective and coherent sense of the whole in order to obtain guidance over time in a variety of circumstances (i.e. McClellan’s ideal type of a “common wisdom society”). If European-wide learning can be generated this way, then also another related question should be explored which, unfortunately, was not addressed by McClellan’s framework: how can this macro-learning process function in practice? For this we assume that society-wide learning, just alike other learning process at a smaller scale, requires some kind of overall framework. Such a process-related framing can be established through a formal structuring (e.g. by establishing a programme, focal point or network for learning etc), but obviously also though self-organised and open virtual forums or platforms for learning because such online communities or social networks have flourished rapidly over the past decade and are nowadays a well-established reality of our societies.

Their society. Departing from Schön’s general argument that “change is a fundamental feature of modern life and that it is necessary to develop social systems that could learn and adapt”, the wider concept of the “Learning Society” developed further during the following decades alongside a number of main discourses which Richard Edwards has summarised in 1997 as follows: the discourse on the learning society as being an “educated society” (i.e. being a product of modernism), the discourse on the learning society as a “learning market” (the currently dominating orientation) and the discourse on the learning society as “a society in which learners adopt a learning approach to life” (a typically post-modern orientation). For a general overview on these more recent developments see also: Cisco Systems (2010). Occelli (no date mentioned) Siemens (2005), Cisco Systems (2010) Siemens (2005), Cisco Systems (2010) McClellan (2000).

72 I.e. the shared knowledge and ways of acting, thinking, feeling and communicating.
73 This ideal type resembles in terms of contents very much to the same notion which is nowadays as buzz word in many policy discourses at the EU-level and also within the individual Member States. When compared to the more specific notion of the “knowledge economy”, however, this resemblance is already less present. The wide policy-level introduction of both terms is mainly a result of the adoption of the Lisbon Agenda back in 2000 and also of the still on-going debate on the competitiveness and technological future of Europe. On the latter, see for example: European Commission, DG Research (2007), European Commission, DG Enterprise & Industry (2009), Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communications of Sweden (2009).
By considering what has been sketched out above, one can see that such a macro-societal learning process indeed exists in the context of the EU Cohesion Policy. Already since more than a decade, a shared knowledge stock on the specialised domain of local and regional development is continuously built up and also further integrated and matured in order to get a better understanding of territorial development as a whole. This EU-level process is driven, on the one hand, by the Cohesion Policy itself, mainly through a provision of funding to specific EU-level programmes or initiatives. The fundamental objectives of these specific EU-level programmes are to achieve knowledge up-building and learning in specific fields such European Territorial Cooperation (INTERACT) or sustainable urban development (URBACT), but also to generate a more strategic knowledge and understanding of EU-wide territorial development as a whole (ESPON). Also the more recently established initiative "Regions for Economic Change" (since 2007) belongs to this EU-driven process: as a specific policy learning platform for EU regions, it originally supported the delivery of the EU policy objectives of the Lisbon Strategy and nowadays those of the "Europe 2020 Strategy". The initiative aims to highlight good practice in urban and regional development (with a particular focus on innovation) for speeding up their transfer to enhance the quality and impact of the EU regional development programmes and their implementation by the EU Member States and regions. EU-wide learning on territorial development is, on the other hand, also driven by European Associations which represent the interests of different regional or local authorities and by a wide range of other European issue networks which address matters relating to regional/local development. Such associations and networks often act themselves as independent learning platforms for their members, but are also corporate learning agents in the EU-driven learning process especially if they directly provide inputs for further improving the implementation of Structural Funds programmes.

The above-exposed aspects are also of relevance for our analysis of the interregional exchange of experience process, because the INTERREG IVC programme is actively contributing to this EU-level process of up-building a shared knowledge set in the field of regional and local development. This is done since the outset through a provision of programme funding to “interregional fast track networks” in the context of the Regions for Economic Change initiative (together with the URBACT II programme) and also by motivating interregional projects to strive for EU-wide relevance or to create a European added value. Since more recently, INTERREG IVC has also engaged into an initial testing of a programme-level “capitalisation process” which was subsequently further broadened in its conceptual approach and is currently implemented through a follow-up initiative during the years 2011-2013. Bearing this in mind, it is then obviously of interest to see if and how the exchange of experience process under the Regional Initiative Projects has actually generated outcomes with an EU-wide relevance or a wider European added value and also to explore if these outcomes became “integrated” into the Cohesion Policy’s shared lesson set on regional/local development or into any other EU-level policy context.

The Regions for Economic Change platform includes the “Annual Regions for Economic Change Conference”, the “RegioStars Awards” competition, the “interregional fast track networks” (testing innovative ideas & working on their rapid transfer into regional policies and programmes) and also a “Policy Learning Database”. This searchable on-line database of DG-REGIO was developed primarily for project promoters, policy makers and other practitioners to promote policy learning. It was further expanded in 2010 and now includes also specific ex-post regional analyses and a “project section” in which also case studies of specific EU-funded projects from 2000 onwards can be found. http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/projects/practices/index_en.cfm

An example for this is the independent inter-regional network "IQ-Net", which operates since 1996 and aims to improve the quality of Structural Funds programme management through an exchange of experience. See on the latter for example: Bachtler (2011) and Bachtler/Taylor (2003).
3. Ways of organising and carrying out the interregional exchange of experience process in practice

3.1. Focus of the empirical analysis

This part of our empirical analysis focuses in particular at the project-level and thus serves the first central aim of the present study: to better understand how more generally the exchange of experience among the partners is organised and carried out under Component 3. Such a better understanding is required because the approaches proposed to deliver Component 3 can vary considerably between the approved Regional Initiative Projects. These variations originate partly from the fact that projects could at the outset select one of the three different “levels of co-operation intensity” (i.e. each involving a different scope of potential activities), but more importantly from the limited guidance which is provided by the INTERREG IVC programme on the way how the interregional exchange of experience should actually take place in practice.\footnote{The updated “Programme Manual” (INTERREG IVC, 2012a) states in section 2.2.1.4 that the programme (…) \textit{does not have any specific requirement regarding the way the exchange of experience should take place}. It is up to each Regional Initiative Project to organise activities in this component in order to ensure an efficient exchange of experience amongst the partners (…), whereas the Manual proposes in section 2.2.2 a list of indicative activities dedicated to the exchange of experience. (…) However, in order to contribute to the capitalisation at programme level, Regional Initiative Projects have to ensure a proper record and follow up of these exchanges. In particular, at the end of the exchange process, the production of a concrete document such as a good practice guide, or a case study collection or a policy recommendations paper is required (…).}

Due to this we now analyse in more detail the organisation and structuring of Component 3 as well as the specific activities and working methods adopted for delivering the interregional exchange of experience process, but also whether the persons directly and intensively involved in a Regional Initiative Project could successfully work with the originally proposed approaches (Section 3.2). Furthermore, we explore to what extent and how the project partner organisations themselves as well as other organisations or stakeholders from the partners’ regional/local policy subsystems and from the wider external context were actually involved in the project-level exchange of experience process and in what way they have contributed to its overall success. Examining this widening of the exchange of experience process is important, because it is often crucial for a successful delivery of specific Component 3 actions and also a basic prerequisite for the multidimensional process of learning and the achievement of the envisaged policy change (Section 3.3).

The analysis under sections 3.2 and 3.3 draws upon the evidence gathered by the two on-line surveys which were carried out among the already closed or still running 1st and 2nd call projects (1st survey) and among the just staring projects approved after the 4th call (2nd survey), but also upon a summary of the main findings of the 12 in-depth case studies which were realised in the context of this project.
3.2. Interregional exchange of experience at the level of the Regional Initiative Projects

As already mentioned earlier, the INTERREG IVC programme provided only little guidance to the Regional Initiative Projects with respect to the overall organisation of their Component 3. Also with respect to the concrete delivery of the interregional exchange of experience process, the programme did not make any distinction in the nature of the activities to be carried out. Only the activity examples which were suggested by the INTERREG IVC programme manual\(^7\) for the three levels of cooperation intensity allow identifying some basic types of activities which the projects have actually used at various degrees. (1) Traditional “networking activities” are the standard under Component 3 for all projects, but they were quite often complemented by other (2) “more sophisticated working methods or tools” to support the exchange of experience process. (3) Projects did sometimes also realise so-called “implementation related activities” under their Component 3, but the JTS advised especially projects with a medium cooperation intensity to carry out those activities under a separate Component 4.

Despite the obvious differences between the Regional Initiative Projects, we will now analyse more in depth the organisation and structuring of the interregional exchange of experience process under Component 3 and explore in how far the originally envisaged set-up of the working method and the applied activities have functioned in practice.

### Overall organisation & efficiency of Component 3

The main features characterising the overall organisation of Component 3 under the Regional Initiative Projects can be summarised as follows (see: Figure 6).

- Under most of the projects of the first and second call, the general responsibility for Component 3 is not ensured by the Lead Partner alone because in 2/3 of the cases also other project partners play a particular role in the coordination of Component 3.
- The first and second call projects implement their Component 3 in almost 50% of the cases through a gradual step-by-step process, which also comprises in one third of the cases a subdivision into different work packages.

The picture is pretty much the same for the projects approved under the fourth call, which give some less emphasis to the role of the lead partner and more emphasis to a step-by-step implementation.

However, our case study evidence shows that even these few structural features lead to quite considerable differences among the projects as regards their basic set-up of Component 3: some projects adopted a quite ambitious and complex work-organisation for their exchange of experience process (ChemClust, GraBS, MORE4NRG), while many others adopted a relatively “simple” and straightforward organisation with either a linear delivery process (SEE, I-SPEED) or a gradual step-by-step delivery process (CLIQ, CeRamiCa, CLUSNET, DART, SUSTAIN, REVERSE, POWER).

\(^7\) INTERREG IVC (2012a)
The work process under Component 3 includes in nearby all projects experts (internal or external) to help with the interregional exchange of experience process. The projects approved under call 1 and 2 involved in 72% of the cases a mix of external and internal experts, while in 15% of the cases they rely only on external experts and in 5% only on internal experts (in 8% of the cases no experts are involved). The projects approved under the fourth call envisage roughly the same approach, with a strong focus on a mix of both internal and external experts to be involved (73% of the lead partners indicated this option).

The surveyed projects see the added value of expert involvement in the wide range of technical knowledge provided and in experiences both in the specific subject treated and in the interregional exchange of experience processes. In the words of respondents, experts give a “deeper inside on how to address the relevant problem and to develop practical solutions” providing an “external and objective analysis of the good practices”, “a more theoretical and neutral approach” and “facilitating the exchange of experience process”.

Also several of our case study projects (e.g. CLUSNET, G RaBS, POWER, ChemClust, I-Speed) confirm the beneficial effects of expert involvement in the exchange of experience process, most often though if a mix of internal and external expert involvement or an involvement of only internal experts was chosen. Under CLUSNET, for example, the internal expert involvement (i.e. through the participation of the Stockholm School of Economics) generated an added-value for the interregional exchange of experience process in so far as it ensured coherence, consistency and qualitative findings even following “weak” interregional seminars. It also increased participants’ theoretical understanding of clusters and cluster policies through the use of theoretical concepts. Another example is G RaBS where the expert involvement, due to a lack of awareness, knowledge and data, helped many local or regional authorities to better grasp and understand the complex topic of climate change at local level (see: Box 1).
Climate change adaptation is a new area of expertise and it was still difficult to know which effective approaches should be promoted. Therefore, GRaBS worked with an Expert Panel and with Expert Papers that were supposed to indicate the state of the art in climate adaptation issues, facilitate access to other work of experts and avoid duplication of work on specific issues. Apart from the technical work, it is equally difficult to launch community involvement and participation processes and to communicate the risks and possibilities for action in this specific field to stakeholders. Therefore, one of the Expert Papers was the topic of “Participation in Climate Change Adaptation” (by the Amsterdam City District of Nieuw-West). It was considered by the project partners surveyed and interviewed as an important input for partner organisations to support the processes of elaboration of the Adaptation Action Plans (AAPs).

Quite a number of Regional Initiative Projects also established specific groups among their partners\(^79\) to ensure a proper exchange of experience under Component 3 (see: Figure 7). The projects approved under the first two calls have in 37% of the cases created thematic working groups, but there are also cases where expert groups (7%) and local/regional stakeholder groups in each partner area (15%) or other types of groups were set up (e.g. “peer review groups”, “advisory groups with the involvement of policy makers” and “additional groups for the preparation of joint agreements”). The projects approved under the fourth call, intend to give a stronger emphasis to local and regional stakeholder groups, which are envisaged to be used by as many projects as thematic working groups. As far as could be told so far by lead partners of projects approved under the first two calls, 98% of the responses indicate that the various groups set up for facilitating the exchange of experience provide added value.

Figure 7: Were specific groups created under Component 3?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific groups to ensure exchange of experience within the projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thematic working groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local or regional stakeholder groups in each partner area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Setting up specific groups under Component 3 can be of added value especially if a project deals with a complex cooperation topic, which is also shown by two of our case study projects. In the case of DART, for

\(^{79}\) e.g. thematic interregional working groups, expert groups, local/regional stakeholder groups in the partner areas etc
example, three thematic working groups were established from the outset and helped to structure the exchange process on the complex combination of sub-topics addressed (i.e. “health & social services”, “education, lifelong learning & job market”, “innovative & traditional economy”). This thematic organisation was the basis for the identification of good practices, with workshops and conferences being the main activities in the exchange of experiences process. In the case of CLIQ, however, the creation of thematic groups was not intended at the very beginning of the project and they were only developed in the course of the project as a result of the project’s cooperation achievements. Once established, these groups then helped to structure the complex topic of innovation and entrepreneurship support towards the overall local and regional innovation system in a quadruple helix context.

An interesting result of our survey is that only 23% of the lead partners for projects approved under the first two calls characterise the overall organisational rational underlying Component 3 as being efficient. For the projects approved under the first two calls, the observed main weaknesses include difficulties in establishing common approaches due to the heterogeneous nature of the partnership (e.g. due to region-specific development contexts), difficulties to involve decisions makers and difficulties due to the timeframe as the time needed for the transferability is often longer than the project duration. Other common problems concern the unbalanced involvement in the project by each partner which led to problems in the identification of good practices, and difficulties due to possible political and administrative changes (elections, changes in the political staff involved, reorganisation of administrative bodies). For the projects approved under the 4th call, problems at the moment are mainly of organisational nature (changes of Component 3 leader, problems on getting the partners starting, late start of the project etc). These observations also indicate that there might be room for further improvements in the organisation of some of the still running Regional Initiative Projects.

Many of these qualitative statements made by the survey respondents confirm the important role of a good organisation and management of Component 3, which is also supported by the experiences made by several of our case study projects. Under MORE4NRG, for example, the management of a very large group of partners with their geographic and cultural differences was a major challenge especially because the Lead Partner had the responsibility for all Components, while under CeRamiCa the absence of specialised thematic groups implied that a bigger number of organisations had to be coordinated within Component 3. A specific case is the mini-programme POWER where, from the outset, no clear concept or focus existed for the interregional exchange activities under Component 3 and where - within the overall set-up – also no clear approach was conceived to ensure that the outcomes of the sub-projects under Component 4 will feed the mini-programme’s final policy-level results to be achieved under Component 3.

Overall, the above-said clearly shows that organising the exchange process under Component 3 is not simply about taking over a general operational responsibility. More important, it is also about ensuring in a pro-active way the ongoing operational steering of the joint working process which also requires the establishment of an effective “framing” at an early stage.

**Traditional “networking activities” realised under Component 3**
Our survey allows to give an overview on the different kinds of networking activities\(^\text{80}\) that are often realised by projects which also includes a judgement about whether they had been helpful to ensure the success of the exchange of experience process (see: Figure 8): the figure shows that among the networking activities carried out, study visits and interregional seminars and workshop are considered most helpful for the exchange of experience. This is followed by local and regional events complementing the interregional events. Interregional conferences with a larger range of stakeholders are considered largely helpful but not at the same level as the afore-mentioned activities. Staff exchanges have only been rarely organised and received a mixed albeit positive feedback.

**Figure 8: Which networking activities were helpful for ensuring the success of the exchange of experience?**

This picture fits also pretty well to the list showing the most successful networking activities (see: Figure 9) which results from an assessment of the responses provided by projects approved under the first two calls: 65% of the respondents considered the networking activities carried out by their projects well connected with each other, 35% give a more mixed picture where some are well and others were less well connected.

Looking at the responses from projects of call 4, they largely follow a similar pattern: most projects focus on study visits and interregional workshops, which is followed by local and regional events, and interregional events involving a larger range of workshops. Staff exchange is envisaged by less than 10% of the responding projects.

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80 e.g. organisation of interregional workshops / seminars and of larger interregional conferences, realisation of study visits or of staff exchanges/secondments, organisation of other complementary local or regional events etc
Although traditional networking activities are the backbone of the exchange of experience process under all Regional Initiative Projects, our case study evidence shows that especially those projects with a relatively "simple" and straightforward organisation of their work processes have put particular emphasis on this type of activity:

- Many of these projects (CLIQ, SEE, CeRamiCa, I-SPEED, DART, SUSTAIN, REVERSE) realised only a few networking activities to identify and analyse good practices and to deepen their understanding of good practices (esp. interregional meetings & study visits). However, it appears from the case studies that those more focussed approaches are only successful for the exchange of experience process if the few activities were well-connected to each other and also well-conceived in methodological terms (see: Boxes 2-3).

- Other projects realised a more extended range of networking activities (CLUSNET, GRaBS, POWER) and under most of them this combination also proved successful for achieving the expected results because they were well connected to each other and also implemented in an integrated manner (see: Box 5).

**Box 2: SEE – well organised thematic interregional workshops**

The SEE project realised five extremely well-organised thematic interregional workshops, each of them including guest speakers and an exchange on design programme practices as well as interactive sessions with partners and policy-makers. All workshops were characterised by a clearly goal-oriented working style and involved presentations, panel discussions, interactive joint in-depth work in smaller group settings (creative sessions, brainstorming session etc), scenario-building and mapping exercises. Following each thematic workshop, a very well-done publication was issued which extensively summarised the workshop outcomes and also embedded those in a wider policy-context (i.e. the “SEE Policy Booklets”).
Box 3:  
**CLIQ – a successful combination of a round-table discussion & study visit**

Under CLIQ, the Cadiz Foundation for Economic Development, Spain, organised a round table in combination with a study visit in November 2010 which dealt with the integration of the civil society in the innovation system. The round table started with an introduction of the regional tools for promoting innovation, and the presentation of the present situation and forecast of Andalusia. This was followed by a detailed outline of the Andalusian research and innovation capacity under inclusion of the academic and enterprise sector. On basis of a general understanding created by the theoretical and regional introductions the round table discussed how to integrate the civil society in the regional innovation system. The study visit of the following day was organised around the technologies and economic sectors included in the first day’s round table activities. The round table’s success was particularly nurtured by the small size of the group and an excellent theoretical presentation of social media, which supported a common understanding.

Box 4:  
**DART – a specific approach for good practice selection**

One principal objective of DART was the development of policy recommendations relevant for any European region facing ageing and shrinking. In order to select good practice experiences from the partner regions, which are suitable for transfer, the project applied a specific methodology. Out of the 89 collected good practices the project team selected 26 as most ‘worthwhile’ for transfer. The methodological approach was as follows:

- Each participating region could suggest up to three good practices for each thematic field. The partners had to describe the project in a formalised way. On a general level, this contained information concerning the objectives, the background and regional needs, the process of the practical implementation. This was complemented by some formal issues (location, time period, involved organisations, target group, activities), main results regarding the beneficiaries, success factors, lessons learned and main difficulties encountered as well as some information on possible exploitation of the practice (used media, extent of transferability, standards and use of indicators).

- The good practices were presented at the workshop. In an evaluation coffee break all participating people (project team and experts/guests) received six stickers (six because of six best good practices were to be chosen for a presentation at the thematic conference) to vote for the best good practices. They could vote for six different projects (not from their own region) or cumulate stickers on fewer good projects. The assessment was to be based on a checklist, which among others included the questions regarding fairness in terms of generation and gender, the degree of transferability to other regions, the degree of newly developed standards and the degree of indicator use and development.

Box 5:  
**GRaBS - a successful combination of networking activities**

Under GRaBS, the mixture of methods and the combination of activities for the exchange of experiences was considered as extremely useful, despite the complicated topic and the diversity of partner organisations and expertise. Thematic Seminars were linked to study visits where guest speakers, decision-makers in policy and also community representatives participated. Study Visits targeted good practice case studies, located within and outside the partnership in order to illustrate the scale of the issue addressed by the project (i.e. development/regeneration required) and the solutions offered through the project. Each site visit was supported by thematic Expert Papers and documentation. Based on the Seminars and Study Visits, there were published 7 Expert Papers (engaging known experts in the field). In addition, 4 Mentoring Partnerships were formed to support the partners with less experience and to guarantee a balanced process of exchanging experiences and to promote the transfer of adequate good practices.
Sophisticated working methods & tools applied under Component 3

Among the potential range of more sophisticated working methods or tools which can be applied under Component 3 (see: Figure 10), one can see that thematic or area-specific studies are clearly the tools / method used most to facilitate interregional exchange of experience by projects approved under the first two calls. This is followed by surveys and benchmarking.

The projects approved under the fourth call, envisage a somewhat different mix of tools and methods. They give much more emphasis to territorial or sector specific SWOT analysis and evaluations.

Figure 10: Sophisticated tools & methods used to support the exchange of experience process

For the projects of the first two calls, the added value of these working methods or tools is seen first of all in the possibility to compare and assess different experiences and, secondly, in the possibility to raise the awareness and the involvement of policy makers and stakeholders. One respondent, for example, stated that “local analyses and action plans had added value on partner level by identifying local strengths, weaknesses and possibilities based on a common methodology. The project level synthesising documents served for partners to see the knowledge and experience of other European regions in the same thematic areas.” For the projects of the 4th call, the added value of the tools and the working method adopted is mostly seen in the possibility to better identify and detail the different territories requirement and to dispose of more qualitative and quantitative information.

The strong added value resulting from a use of more sophisticated working methods or tools is also confirmed by several of our case study projects, which realised joint benchmarking (ChemClust, I-SPEED),

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81 e.g. thematic or area-specific evaluations and studies, territorial or sector-specific SWOT analyses, surveys, benchmarking, Peer Reviews etc
surveying *(ChemClust)*, SWOT-analysis *(CeRamiCa, I-SPEED, REVERSE)*, thematic and area-specific self-evaluations *(SUSTAIN)*, case study analysis *(CLUSNET)* and Peer-Reviewing *(MORE4NRG)*. For the latter two projects, a short insight into the actual application of such methods is provided below *(see: Box 6)*.

**Box 6:**

**Using sophisticated working methods for the exchange process**

**CLUSNET,** for example, applied a strong methodological approach which was developed by the Component 3 responsible partner from Sweden *(Stockholm School of Economics)*. The “Cluster Initiative Performance Model” *(CIPM)* facilitated and disciplined the exchange of experiences and offered a theoretical background that allowed each partner to better understand the characteristics and potentials of the different cluster models presented. This individual cluster analysis was supported by two reports. A first analysis was drafted by the case study city *(pre-report)* as a first analytical introduction to the visited cluster. During the city seminar a study visit was organised, followed by a policy analysis at which the conclusions were discussed with relevant key decision makers. After each such event, policy recommendations were then summarised in a seminar report.

Under **MORE4NRG,** Peer-Reviewing was used as the key method for realising the exchange of experiences under Component 3, although all partner had to learn first how to do it. The central element in the exchange process of **MORE4NRG** was the application of a formal peer review methodology. During a series of 5 peer reviews, multinational teams of regional experts from more experienced partners visited a less experienced host-region to review its regional energy strategy. The Peer Review processes consisted of a preparation phase by questionnaire, a 4-day study visits during which the visiting experts met regional energy stakeholders and made relevant site visits and review report with recommendations. Each host region then used the recommendations in the review report to prepare the action plan for their implementation. The peer review methodology was regarded as very useful by the project partners and also facilitated the exchange of experience. An asset was also the possibility to adapt expert advice to the specific situation of a region, which also represented an added value to the ordinary exchange process based on seminars, shorter visits and reports. All the experiences and lessons from the previous stages of the project were also exchanged during a mutual learning seminar, to ensure full knowledge transfer between all partners.

**Implementation-related** activities

About 18% of the lead partners of projects approved under the first two calls responded that no implementation related activities were carried out within the project to complement the interregional exchange of experience process, but already about 30% of the lead partners of projects approved under the fourth call noted that they do not intend to carry out such activities.

Among the projects which carried out such activities either under Component 3 or under a specific Component 4, they mainly focus on individual implementations of pilot actions for testing previous outcomes and on the joint development of specific international policy tools. Joint implementation and the development of individual policy tools are more rare, when looking at projects approved under the first two calls *(see: Figure 11)*. Projects approved under the fourth call provide so far a rather undifferentiated picture, which mainly indicates that the joint implementation of interregional pilot actions is not so much

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82 e.g. a joint development of specific interregional policy tools or an individual development of specific local/regional policy tools generating an added value or benefit for other partners (strategies, methodologies, software etc), a joint implementation of one or more interregional pilot actions or an individual implementation of one or more local/regional pilot actions for testing previous outcomes (e.g. the context of a transfer of good practices).
envisaged. The other implementation activities are envisaged all to similar degrees, and time will show which ones will be the most used in the end.

For both categories of projects (first two calls and 4th call projects) the added value of these implementation activities is seen in the possibility offered to really concretise the experiences exchanged. This led to an effective increased awareness within the partner organisations and for policy makers and also allowed to access to specific knowledge otherwise not accessible or available. Furthermore, implementations activities contributed to make project outputs more visible and sustainable. As mentioned by a respondent, "pilot actions are an interesting outcome, which give the project more value. It is more concrete and easy to disseminate".

Figure 11: Implementation-related activities

Also among the few of our case study projects which carried out implementation-related activities under Component 3, their benefit for the exchange of experience process is clearly confirmed: Under ChemClust, for example, the implementation-related pilot actions improved the understanding of regional specificities and also provided insights on possible obstacles to an implementation of policy tools, whereas under SUSTAIN they were important drivers for the exchange of experience process. Only the mini-programme POWER is somehow an exception to this overall picture, because its nine sub-projects implemented under Component 4 had a relatively limited connection to and added value for the interregional exchange of experience process under Component 3. Important reasons for this were the limited time available to the sub-projects (i.e. between 12-18 months) and, more importantly, the significant weakness observed in managing the working relationship between delivering the sub-projects (Component 4) and producing the regional good practices and Regional Road Maps under Component 3.
Factors influencing the working style under Component 3

58% of the lead partners for projects approved under the first two calls stated that the nature of the partners (i.e. status as "public authority" or as "bodies governed by public law") did not influence the working method adopted in Component 3, whereas 42% did see that the work was influenced by the status of the partners involved. Where present, the influence of the partner status is referred in particular to the positive role played by the partner organisations with academic background in developing and carrying out of the methodology and to the larger bureaucracy procedures needed by public authorities if compared with the other types of partners, which was negatively perceived. As summed up by a survey respondent "the nature of partner determines the selection of activities. E.g. surveys are better carried out by partners with an academic background and policy round tables are better initiated by public authorities". In some cases projects of the 4th call respondents also highlight the peculiar role played by the bodies governed by public law that provide specific knowledge and know-how regarding the impact and validity of the good practices. "Research institute will develop research methodology and analyse related results. Local authorities will provide all relevant data, organise stakeholder consultation and develop implementation plan". In summary, as exemplified by a survey respondent, the activities carried out by bodies governed by public law and those implemented by public authorities in a way complement each other.

This overall picture is also largely confirmed by our case study evidence, because only under a few projects one could observe that the specific legal status of the partners actually had an influence on the working style under Component 3. This was observed in the case of SUSTAIN, where a sort of cleavage in the working style existed between some involved research institutes and the local authorities, and also in the case of the mini-programme POWER, where the rather opposite status and functions between public authorities and bodies governed by public law led to a different emphasis on "policy creation" as opposed to "policy implementation".

More often, evidence from several of our case study projects suggests that the heterogeneous nature of the project partnership and also the qualification of the directly involved persons were issues of much stronger relevance. Under ChemClust and POWER, for example, the heterogeneous nature of the partnership (e.g. region-specific development contexts) and the different structures or experiences in the regions did not make it easy to compare those during exchange of experience process. Under CLUSNET, many city representatives present were generalists without any specific knowledge of the issues being discussed and where policy experts (i.e. from biotech clusters) and persons having influence on political decision-making were too often absent, which resulted in a negative impact on the overall quality of the policy exchanges. Other examples are REVERSE, where it was difficult to get partners' feedback on themes of the project they were not specialised in (e.g. agriculture, land planning or tourism), and GRaBS, where the diverse levels of knowledge and expertise made it difficult at the beginning to establish a common working basis. In the latter case, however, this initial problem could be solved by using the “Task Schemes” and “Mentoring Scheme” which provided effective support to partners with less experience.
Our empirical analysis of the work organisation and of the combination of activities under Component 3 does not reveal specific patterns for developing a general typology of Regional Initiative Projects and for identifying one or more standard concepts to successfully deliver the interregional exchange of experience process. There are, however, two main project groups which share a number of basic operational features:

- The first group covers all Regional Initiative Projects having opted for both a basic level of cooperation intensity and a medium level of co-operation intensity, which can be further differentiated according to three basic sub-groups: (1) Some projects have deliberately opted to deliver the exchange of experience on their respective co-operation topic through a relatively “simple approach” and considered it sufficient to realise a sequence of only traditional networking activities. (2) Other projects, having opted for both a basic or a medium intensity of cooperation, address their co-operation topic through a more “elaborated and differentiated approach”. This often involves the setting-up of specific project-internal groups and the realisation of a set of traditional networking activities in combination to other more sophisticated working methods or tools. (3) Some other projects with medium co-operation intensity realise, in addition to networking activities or to sophisticated working methods, also some “implementation-related activities” which serve different purposes within the wider exchange of experience process.

- The second group is formed by the Regional Initiative Projects which have opted for a high intensity of co-operation (i.e. the mini-programmes), because their exchange of experience process is clearly more complex. Mini-programmes were expected under Component 3 to carry out an exchange of experience at the strategic level among the main participating regions, but they usually also realised a more topic-focussed exchange of experience within the sub-projects that were implemented in parallel under their Component 4. For the strategic exchange of experience under Component 3, the mini-programmes often developed specific activities which further deepened the identification and analysis of good practices and also ensured that the results of the sub-projects were further consolidated at a more strategic level. However, the survey responses from several mini-programmes show that frequently only some core activities of Component 3 were well connected to each other and that the interrelation between Component 3 and 4 was sometimes not quite well planned or understood by the main participating regions, which then led to weaknesses in terms of policy influencing or overall policy relevance.

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83 The general expectations are described in section 2.1.1 of the INTERREG IVC “Programme Manual” (INTERREG IVC, 2012a). The sub-projects under Component 4 are selected through open calls for proposals and involve other stakeholders from the main participating regions (i.e. the so-called “sub-project participants”). They focus on a specific topic which is related to the wider project theme and carry out actions that should have a particular focus on the exchange of experience and contribute to improving regional/local policies or instruments (e.g. identification & transfer of good practices, elaboration of new tools or policy concepts etc).
3.3. The role of the partner organisations and of other project-external actors in the interregional exchange of experience process

Although INTERREG IVC made suggestions on some basic operational aspects which can be used for delivering the joint work process among the persons directly and intensively involved in a project, the programme did not formulate any explicit requirements for Regional Initiative Projects on how to integrate or associate other external but policy-relevant stakeholders into their exchange of experience process under Component 3.84

Yet, there are a number of good reasons which argue in favour of linking up more strongly and also systematically with the wider project partner organisations and also with various other project-external actors from the partner areas or the European context. This was also well-understood by many of the approved Regional Initiative Projects, because they deliberately conceived their interregional exchange of experience as an “open process” which also involved a wider range of other actors from outside the immediate project partnership.

3.3.1. Integrating the wider project partner organisation into the interregional exchange of experience process

A good integration of other departments or units/branch offices of the wider project partner organisations can be important because it allows obtaining a wider range of technical expertise or content-related inputs which both might be useful or needed for the interregional exchange on policy experiences and good practices. Furthermore, this integration can also facilitate a better delivery of certain types of actions (e.g. study visits, staff exchanges, studies etc) or help to avoid that potentially adverse influences emerge from within a partner organisation which can hamper the wider exchange process. Finally, an early integration can also facilitate that the project-level learning benefits are at a later stage more smoothly taken up by the partner organisations and thus helps to pave the way for actually achieving the envisaged policy improvements or structural policy changes.

Our survey results show that in approximately half of the Regional Initiative Projects, other elements of the project partner organisations (e.g. other departments or units or branch offices etc.) were actually integrated into the interregional exchange of experience process. As for projects approved under the first two calls, 56% of the lead partners and 43% of the projects partners indicated this. Such involvement occurred in the form of a participation of other departments of the partner organisation in events, meetings or seminars or through collaborating with colleagues specialised in other fields. One survey

84 The current Programme Manual (INTERREG IVC, 2012a) only refers to a direct involvement of policy-makers or of other policy-relevant actors in the case of “Capitalisation Projects: If the project tackles one of the sub-themes of Priority 1 (Innovation and the knowledge economy), the participation of regional development agencies and other important regional economic development actors may be essential. The direct involvement of these ‘deep delegations’ (i.e. policy makers and bodies responsible for policy delivery) in each participating region is a core element of the Capitalisation Projects. Moreover, it is essential for this kind of project that the findings are disseminated widely beyond the partnership of the project. Furthermore, an indirect reference is also included under the provisions for Component 2 which is dedicated to communication & dissemination tasks: Activities carried out under this second component are aimed at disseminating the project’s activities and achievements outside the project to the relevant stakeholders in Europe (e.g. policy makers at the local, regional, national and European levels). These tasks are particularly important in a capitalisation programme such as INTERREG IVC where the project results should not only benefit the partners directly involved in the projects but also benefit other possible interested local and regional authorities in Europe.
respondent mentioned the specific involvement of the IT unit to develop a web tool. Some others explained that they resort to other departments’ specific experience (e.g. in launching surveys, benchmarking), pointing out that “it was not an official/direct involvement in the project and rather like taking advice”.

This mixed overall picture is also confirmed by our case study evidence, because some of the examined projects integrated other elements of their partner organisations into the Component 3 work process while others did not.

- Under several projects an intense integration emerged only in a few of their partner areas (*SUSTAIN, REVERSE, POWER*), but it then allowed to obtain additional knowledge on the identification of good practices in the various issues addressed (*REVERSE*) or to make a connection between the project team and the policy teams within the partner organisations at the highest level (*POWER*). Other projects achieved a more systematic integration by using specific elements of their Component 3 working method (*MORE4NRG, CLIQ, DART, G RaBS*). In the case of *MORE4NRG*, other departments/units & experts from several partner regions were involved during the hosted interregional events or during the Peer Review visits, while under *CLIQ* an extended exchange was enhanced by involving partner organisations in the different interregional events, roundtables, master classes and study visits.

- Under some other projects, however, the integration of other departments/units or branch offices of a partner organisation was less extensive. This was either caused by project-internal problems (*I-SPEED*) or because integration was not pro-actively pursued during the interregional exchange of experience process (*ChemClust, CeRamiCa, CLUSNET*), but also due to the fact that this integration was not needed as a result of a unique project status (*SEE*).85

Although the own motivation of each project partner is indeed the strongest determinant for the scope of organisational integration and involvement into the project-level exchange of experience process, we have examined through our survey a number of other *aspects which also have potentially affected this project-level integration*:

- An already existing European cooperation experience, which can create a raised awareness in an organisation about the challenge of co-operation or increase their preparedness to become more strongly involved in a project.
- The specific legal status of a given partner organisation (i.e. the status as “public authority” or “other body governed by public law”), which can especially in mixed project partnerships influence whether an organisation is “fitting well” into the wider project partnership or not86.
- Diffuse other influences which can come from within the wider partner organisations (i.e. specific actors or sub-structures).

85 *SEE* holds a unique position among the approved INTERREG IVC regional initiative projects, because it is the only project which did not involve partner organisations from the regional or local levels that are themselves delivering policy.

86 The complex issue of the proper nature and quality of an international project partnership can not be extensively developed here, but several analyses and especially the INTERREG IVC mid-term evaluation (INTERREG IVC, 2010) show that this aspect is often a crucial determinant for the success of a co-operation project (i.e. Are there too many partners or too few partners included into the project? Are the right partners with the appropriate policy competences included in the project for adequately addressing the issue at stake? Were some partners only included into the project as “alibi partners” to fulfil some formal application criteria? etc).
When looking at the “historical background” of the surveyed projects, it appears that they generally build on a solid ground of previous cooperation experience: in approximately 1/3 of the projects all current project partners had cooperated previously (36% in call 1&2, 29% in call 4 projects), while in approximately 2/3 of the projects some of the current project partners had cooperated previously (62% in calls 1&2 and 70% in call 4 projects). Only in 2% of the projects it seems there is no previous cooperation experience of the project partners involved. The response of lead partners from projects approved under call 1 and 2 indicate that the previous experience is seen to have contributed positively to the exchange of experience work carried out. 55% even considered it as having contributed very positively, only 3% of the respondents assume that the previous cooperation experience had no actual influence. The expectations aired by lead partners of projects approved under call 4 point to the same direction, i.e. previous cooperation experience is considered positively.

The positive effect of a previous cooperation experience on the integration of the wider partner organisations into the exchange of experience process is also confirmed by several of the case study projects. Such experience was often gathered jointly in the context of a previous INTERREG III C project (e.g. ChemClust, POWER, SEE, SUSTAIN), but also through an individual project participation in other European projects (CLIQ, DART, GRaBS) and mutual connections established within European-wide associations (MORE4NRG, CLUSNET) or issue-specific networks (DART, REVERSE).

When it comes to the influence, the specific status of project partners has on the exchange of experience, there is rather mixed evidence. Approximately half of the respondents stated that it had no influence, whereas the other half largely indicated that it had a positive influence. Only about 5% experienced it as having a negative influence, according to the lead partners of call 1&2 projects.

As regards eventually catalysing or hampering influences coming from specific actors or sub-structures within a project partner organisation, the large majority (70%) of the survey respondents from call 1&2 projects indicated that there have been no such influences on the interregional exchange of experience process in their project. About 28% of the respondents think that there have been influences from within their organisation which catalysed the exchange of experience: respondents mentioned here most often the positive role of the specific technical skills of local/regional authorities and of local stakeholders or of external experts. As regards the influences from within the partner organisation that hampered the exchange of experience (only 2% of the respondents actually saw this), reference is most often made to negative effects related to changes in organisational structures of the partners or to negative effects of “political and economic crises”.
3.3.2. Integrating other organisations and stakeholders from the partners’ regional/local policy subsystem into the exchange of experience process

Integrating other organisations and stakeholders from the partners’ regional/local policy subsystems into the exchange of experience process is advised especially if the topic addressed by an interregional project is highly complex or cross-cutting various policies. In those cases, the involvement of other policy-relevant actors can provide a complementary view or policy-expertise and thereby facilitate that specific instruments or practices are considered more appropriately against their wider policy context (e.g. this is relevant especially if many project partners are bodies governed by public law). An integration of those other policy-relevant actors even becomes a necessity if it is already foreseeable that policy change in a given partner area can only be achieved through a concerted action. In those cases, an early involvement of other policy-relevant organisations and stakeholders can help to further increase their awareness about and acceptance of the concerned topic, but also facilitate the search of additional pro-active support or firm commitment for jointly putting into practice the intended policy change. Within this wider context, one has to bear in mind that especially the integration of policy-makers is of course much easier and even “natural” for partners being a local or regional public authority than for partners being another body governed by public law.

Our survey shows (see: Figure 12) that in 2/3 of the projects approved under the first two calls, external local or regional politicians and public authorities as well as other stakeholder organisations from the partners’ regional/local policy subsystems (e.g. semi-public local and regional agencies, NGOs) were involved in the interregional exchange of experience process under Component 3. Their involvement happened mainly via specific activities such as general or dedicated seminars, study trips, local events (workshop, conferences), training sessions or through the organisation of specific projects steering groups gathering public authorities. In other cases, the involvement was mainly realised via direct personal contacts. The involvement of external stakeholders envisaged by projects approved under the fourth call presents a similar picture, however with slightly higher levels of the planned involvement.

Figure 12: Which types of other policy-relevant actors from the partner areas were involved?
Also in the context of our case study projects, one can observe that projects pursued different approaches to ensure the involvement of policy-relevant regional/local actors from outside their immediate partnership. Many projects included such actors into the exchange of experience process through interregional networking activities such as workshops, study visits or larger conferences (ChemClust, CLIQ, CeRamIca, CLUSNET, SEE, DART). This approach was particularly successful under SEE, where regional-level policy makers were systematically and also pro-actively integrated into the joint work on the still very novel issues of "design" in the field of R&D/innovation (see: Box 7). Also some sophisticated working methods applied under Component 3 can be used for this purpose, because MORE4NRG integrated other local and regional stakeholders into the main sequence of its exchange process through the regional workshops which were organised in the context of the Peer Review process. Other projects such as I-SPEED achieved this by setting up a "Political Steering Group" (see: Box 8) or by establishing several "Thematic Policy Working Groups" (POWER) at the interregional level, at which the also present policy-makers were able to give their feedback to the projects’ work and outcomes achieved. Only a few projects did not focus their integration effort at the interregional level, but favoured the organisation of systematic local/regional events (REVERSE) and other specific measures (GRABS created & strengthened “Community Networks” in each partner region and “Regional Networks of Policymakers”) or took individual action in some of the project partner areas (SUSTAIN).

**Box 7:**
SEE – a close collaboration with & positive engagement of policymakers

As under SEE none of the partners was a regional/local public authority, the project was extremely successful in ensuring a continuous participation and a positive engagement of policy-makers and government representatives from each partner region which were really “external” to the partner organisations. This success was achieved because it was agreed that all SEE partners had to bring a policy-maker to as many of the project workshops and study visits as possible, simply by inviting them to attend and by asking them to contribute. This enabled the partners to develop a good rapport with the policy-makers and programme managers responsible for innovation and allowed them to produce valuable findings that can effectively influence regional policies and programmes for innovation. The policymakers attending the five thematic workshops of SEE were actively integrated into the joint work process which also involved an identification of successful strategies and programmes in the field of innovation and design. During the two study visits organised, policymakers were either participating as external visitors or actively contributing to the programme of the study visits as speakers.

**Box 8:**
I-SPEED – working with a “Political Steering Group”

Under I-SPEED, the link between the interregional exchange of good practices and the policy level was strongly promoted by the creation of a specific Political Steering Group. During project life time, two Political Steering Group meetings took place. The first meeting focused on the identified good practices. During the second meeting, policy recommendations were presented to key stakeholder and policy makers and discussed by them. These meetings led not only to increase decision makers' awareness on the use of ICT in the tourism economic development, but it also ensured a close collaboration and a positive engagement of policy makers and government representatives from each partner region throughout I-SPEED lifetime. Policy-makers engaged in the project and made an effective use of these meetings, e.g. by encouraging partners to go into the details of possibilities offered by social media.

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87 The cases of I-SPEED and POWER are interesting as an “approach” (i.e. group establishment), but under both projects the actually involved policy-makers were of course those directly linked to the respective regional partner organisations.
Our case study projects also show a considerable variation in the types of regional/local actors being involved in the exchange of experience process, which was in general strongly determined by a projects’ specific co-operation topic addressed. Most of the case study projects focussed – similar to the mainstream of the INTERREG IVC projects – at local/regional politicians and other local/regional public authorities or sector-specific and horizontal administrative departments/units which were concerned by the projects’ cooperation topic. Beyond these main target groups involved, however, several other projects also included a much wider range of other stakeholders from their areas into the exchange of experience because they were needed for adequately addressing rather complex or cross-cutting policy topics. This can be observed for local / regional cluster policy as in the cases of CLUSNET and ChemClust (see: Box 9), for sustainable development and biodiversity as in the case of REVERSE, for climate change adaptation and the promotion of local/regional low carbon economies as in the cases of GRaBS and POWER (see: Box 10) or for the local development of a specific small craft sector as in the case of CeRamICa (see: Box 11).

**Box 9:**

**ChemClust - working with a wide range of local/regional cluster stakeholders**

From the outset, ChemClust partners were committed to engage their chemical clusters and innovation units into the co-operation and to reach out to the political leadership in the regions. Furthermore, ChemClust also envisaged collaborating with regional chemical associations in order to provide the project-level cooperation with a good regionally based input and focus on implementation. This initial commitment was actually kept, as other local or regional politicians and public authorities (e.g. sector-specific or horizontal administrative departments or units) as well as regional development agencies, cluster structures and in a few cases also local / regional interest groups or NGOs were involved in the interregional exchange of experience process under Component 3. These actors were invited to join interregional seminars and Interregional Working Group meetings organised by the partnership to share their individual experiences and to voice their opinions or to learn about approaches from other regions. As an individual benefit, these external actors were also offered the opportunity to establish contacts and networking with interregional partners having similar interests. The involvement of other actors catalysed the exchange of experience process because it helped to gain better insight into triple helix collaborations or the lead positions in the cluster system and provided helpful support to identify gaps in the teaching of chemistry lessons at the schools (input from NGOs organisations connected with the chemistry industry/education).

**Box 10:**

**POWER – a “catchy” topic attracting wider external interest**

The regional partners involved in the mini-programme POWER also integrated other relevant actors from their local/regional policy subsystems into the interregional exchange of experience process under Component 3. These actors from outside the immediate project partnership were most often local or regional politicians and other sector-specific or horizontal administrative departments of public authorities and specific public or semi-public local / regional agencies concerned by the topic addressed, but sometimes also specific local or regional interest groups and NGOs. This broad external interest in POWER was generally favoured by the “catchy” topic of low carbon economies and the practical involvement of those actors was achieved through the establishment of inter-organisational contacts and close joint working relationship, through promotional activities (conferences etc.) and through project specific forums.
Box 11: CeRamICa – working with a wide range of sector-specific local/regional stakeholders

Under CeRamiCa, the promotion and valorisation of the ceramic and small craft sector was realised with a strong integration of actors from the local/regional policy subsystem into the project activities. The partners of CeRamiCa established at organisational level a close joint working relationship with other stakeholders outside the immediate project partnership (e.g. local craftsmen, artisans, educational institutions, chambers of commerce, decision making & funding bodies). The partners organised events throughout the project where all involved actors could meet and exchange their views, share problems, bring together ideas for future development and build relationships with each other. This has been done through site visits, study tours and interregional workshops involving staff of CeRamiCa partners and relevant local/regional stakeholders, which overall intensified the exchange and transfer of experiences.

Our survey shows that in the majority of the projects approved under the first two calls (56%) this involvement did allow for an effective sharing of the outcomes of the Component 3 work process with those other project-external actors from the local/regional policy subsystem. In addition approximately 38% of the respondents replied that it largely did and only 6% had their doubts about it. This strongly positive view about the beneficial effects resulting from a pro-active involvement of other policy-relevant actors in the exchange of experience process under Component 3 is also clearly confirmed by all of our case study projects.

Bearing the above-said in mind, it is therefore also not astonishing that 80% of the survey respondents indicated that there have been no other influences coming from specific actors or structures of their wider local/regional policy subsystem which hampered the interregional exchange of experience process in the projects.

3.3.3. Associating other actors from the wider external context to the interregional exchange of experience process

Associating other actors from the wider external context to the interregional exchange of experience process can be important if a project is striving for EU-wide relevance (e.g. by elaborating policy support tools or policy concepts which are relevant for a European-wide audience) and needs for its ongoing work an additional outside expertise or a much wider general overview on the policy field addressed. These external actors can be associated either by involving them in some way into the project’s ongoing work progress (e.g. asking them for punctual contributions, invitation to specific key events of the project, keeping them regularly informed about the project etc) or through a projects’ own participation in other national, transnational or EU-wide events which are organised by external actors. An early association of other external actors can also be very helpful if, at a later stage, a project envisages to disseminate its final outcomes towards a specific EU-wide target group (i.e. specific types of regions or public authorities) or wishes to integrate its results into policies which are delivered by other levels of governance (e.g. national or EU-level).

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88 e.g. other local/regional administrations or other national institutions/politicians and national interest groups/NGOs from the countries of the project partners; other local/regional/national administrations or politicians from countries not covered by the project partners; EU-level politicians or institutions and EU-level interest groups / NGOs; other EU-funded projects etc.
Our survey evidence shows that external actors from the wider context were frequently associated to the interregional exchange of experience process of Regional Initiative Projects (see: Figure 13): in over 50% of the cases these are other local and regional administrations from the countries of the project partners, followed by national-level actors from countries of the project partners. Indeed, only in about 20% of the cases, stakeholders from other countries than those of the project partners have been involved and EU-level actors or other EU-funded projects have been involved in between 20 and 30% of the cases. This picture provided by the respondents from projects approved under the first two calls, is largely followed by the envisaged involvement of external actors in the projects approved under the fourth call.

Figure 13: Who was involved from the wider external context?

The positive effect of this involvement appears to be biggest when external actors are involved throughout all stages of the exchange of experience process (see: Figure 14). When there is a more focused timing for their involvement, it appears that the engagement of external actors only towards the end of the exchange of experience process is more beneficial than an involvement only towards the beginning. In this respect the experience of projects approved under the first two calls and the expectations of projects approved under the fourth call are congruent (i.e. the numbers in the graph are the total responses.)

Also many of our case study projects have associated other actors from the wider external context to their exchange of experience process, although only a few of them were explicitly working towards generating outcomes being of EU-wide relevance (i.e. DART by developing an integrated strategy for dealing with demographic change and SUSTAIN by developing an EU-wide applicable policy tool for sustainable coastal management). Most of the projects carried out an intensive exchange with other local/regional or national administrations and national-level or Europe-wide interest associations concerned by the respective cooperation topics addressed (ChemClust, CLIQ, CeRamiCa, CLUSNET, SEE, DART, GRaBS, I-SPEED, SUSTAIN, MORE4NRG, POWER), while some of them also made use of their project
partners' direct membership in EU-wide issue networks or European umbrella organisations (*CLIQ, ChemClust, CLUSNET, MORE4NRG*). *REVERSE* was also particularly successful in building up a constant direct exchange with various directorate generals of the European Commission to present their project mid-term and final results (i.e. DG Environment, DG Enterprise DG Agri, DG Regio and DG Sanco). Finally, a few projects have also established a direct working relationship with other interregional or EU-level cooperation projects that address a theme which was close to their own topic (*MORE4NRG, POWER*).

**Figure 14: When were external actors involved?**

The projects approved under the first two calls did also participate actively in events and activities organised by others (see: Figure 15): around 2/3 of the projects participated in national thematic events or activities, about 50% in events organised by EU bodies and a few less at INTERREG IVC capitalisation events. ESPON and INTERACT events have hardly caught their interest. As for the projects approved under the fourth call, the pattern of participation in external events is largely the same. However, the envisaged level of participation is somewhat higher, which is expression of ambition and does not necessary imply that the final result will be like that.
In about 60% of the cases the respondents from projects approved under the first two calls stated that the participation in the external events had a positive effect on the exchange of experience within the project. For the positive effects of their participation to external events, respondents affirm that it led to a gain of new knowledge, to familiarise with other approaches and to improve language skills. As emphasised by one participant such events give project partners “new perspectives to deal with relevant issues”, while others stressed the gain of “direct knowledge of the activities of the various partners [and the] experimentation of specific tools” or the “face to face communication on specific topics, [and the] contacts established with experts in the same field of activity but from various EU countries.” The remaining 40% of the respondents from projects approved under the first two calls did not see that this participation at external events had any notable effect on their exchange of experience.

This strong own initiative of projects’ to participate at other national, transnational or EU-wide events which were organised by external actors can also be observed across all our case study projects and they consider in nearby all cases that this had also a positive effect on their exchange of experience process. Among the most active projects in this respect were POWER, I-SPEED, SUSTAIN and REVERSE, which participated at external events having altogether attracted an audience of respectively around 2,500, 3,500, 3,900 and 10,000 participants.
4. Ways of linking the interregional exchange of experience process to policy change

4.1. Focus of the empirical analysis

This part of our empirical analysis serves the second central aim of the study which is to better understand how the exchange of experience among the partners can directly influence the policy frameworks of the involved regional/local authorities and also policies delivered by other actors in Europe (i.e. other regional/local, national and EU-level actors). Chapter 2 of this study has already shown that the main driver linking the exchange of experience to a direct influencing of policy frameworks is the multidimensional learning process, but also that the individual dimensions of this process have to be well-connected to each other in order to ensure that project-level learning outcomes can effectively “feed” the learning processes at those levels where the expected policy change is achieved.

Due to this, we first look at the Regional Initiatives Projects themselves and examine how the policy-level exchange on experiences, knowledge and good practices has actually initiated learning processes and to what extent these processes have also generated immaterial learning benefits for those persons who were directly and intensively involved in the delivery of the exchange (Section 4.2). Secondly, we look more closely at those levels which have to take up and use the project-level learning benefits (immaterial & material) for achieving concrete policy changes in the partner areas. An influencing of a specific policy instrument or of a wider policy field requires frequently a learning process “only” within an individual project partner organisation that is in charge of a given instrument or policy, while in some other cases a more complex learning process involving a partner organisation and a number of other project-external but policy-relevant organisations or stakeholders from the local/regional policy subsystem might be needed. With respect to both levels, we will analyse to what extent such learning processes have actually taken place and also look more closely at the causality relation between this learning and the qualitatively different policy effects that emerged in practice (Section 4.3). Thirdly, we also assess in how far the exchange of experience process among public authorities and other public-alike organisations has generated outcomes of EU-wide relevance and added value and in how far these outcomes contributed to the EU Cohesion Policy's learning process on territorial development or to any other EU level policy (Section 4.4).

The analysis under sections 4.2 - 4.4 draws upon the evidence gathered by the on-line survey which was carried out only among the already closed or still running 1st and 2nd call projects (1st survey) and also upon a summary of the main findings of the 12 in-depth case studies which were realised in the context of this project. The projects approved after the 4th call are not considered, because they just started operating and therefore have achieved only very limited or even no results in terms of policy change.
4.2. Identifying operational practices and approaching these practices in their wider policy context within a Regional Initiative Project

Learning of the persons and also learning among the persons who are directly and intensively involved in the project-level exchange of experience process generates the immaterial learning benefits (e.g. improved awareness/knowledge & capacities/skills) and the material learning benefits (e.g. an identified & transferable good practice, a new strategy or a jointly developed new policy tool etc) which are the basis for subsequently influencing and changing policy instruments or even an entire policy field in the project partner areas and beyond.

We have already shown that all INTERREG IVC projects achieved up to now significant results especially in terms of individual learning. Despite the impressing figures, very little is known about the actual scope of cross-cultural group learning within the exchange of experience process and likewise also not about the operational elements and specific factors which have either positively stimulated or hampered all sorts of project-level learning to emerge. For identifying especially cross-cultural group learning, we have assumed that such processes usually occur in project activities by which the partners jointly identify and analyse good practices or jointly approach practices and different policy frameworks in a wider policy context, but also in actions which lead to a joint elaboration / testing of a new policy (support) tool or which foresee a group-level reflection on the outcomes achieved by individual regional/local pilot actions or sub-projects (mini-programmes).

Bearing the above-said in mind, we now explore for both forms of learning especially the scope of increased awareness/knowledge and capacities/skills and also examine which operational elements of Component 3 (i.e. activities, working methods etc) were most successful in initiating those effects of individual or cross-cultural group learning processes. Finally, we also take a closer look at factors which hampered individual and cross-cultural learning and especially at those aspects which are related to the organisation or on-going delivery of the exchange of experience process.

**Individual & cross-cultural learning**

Below, the aggregated picture for 280 responses from project partners and lead partners of Regional Initiative Projects approved under the first two calls are presented (see: Figure 16). Our survey evidence suggests that the project-level exchange of experience process under Component 3 has contributed to a substantial increase of awareness and knowledge both at individual and group level, according to the

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89 The exchange of experience under the 122 projects from the three first calls (also including capitalisation projects) has already contributed to increasing the capacity (i.e. awareness, knowledge and skills) of 3,596 staff members involved in the projects. INTERREG IVC (2012b).
90 The current indicator “no. of staff members with increased capacity (awareness, knowledge and skills)” does not allow identifying the proportion of persons involved in group learning.
91 An improved individual or collective awareness and knowledge is the more “passive” outcome component of a learning process, because this allows better understanding a particular issue at stake and thus generates a changed mental perception of / attitude towards that issue.
92 Increased individual or collective capacities and skills are the more “pro-active” outcome component of a learning process, because they represent the concrete change in persons’ abilities / capabilities to act and react more adequately in relation to a particular issue at stake.
project participants. However, there is a stronger focus on the individual level, than on the group level. The same is true when it comes to the increase of capacities and skills related to the project theme, although the increase is generally less strong there as compared to the increase in awareness and knowledge.

**Figure 16: Project-level learning and the associated learning benefits**

![Graph showing increase of awareness and skills](image)

At *individual level*, the overwhelming majority of the survey respondents (>90%) have seen a strong or moderate increase in both their awareness/knowledge and in their capacities/skills related to the project theme, while the remaining experienced at least a low increase. Among the respondents, the increase of their awareness and knowledge was slightly more significant (i.e. more than 50% of the respondents having experienced a strong increase on the project theme) than the increase of their capacities and skills on the project theme. From our survey it also appears that the most important operational elements of the interregional exchange of experience process which helped to initiate widespread learning processes within the projects are thematic seminars, workshops focused on exercise in practical sense, interviews, presentations, literature search and in general the exchange with experts. For what concern these organisational aspects, respondents underlined the importance of the elaboration of criteria defining good practices and the standardisation of good practice presentation.

Individual learning was also strongly present under all of our case study projects. This learning usually occurred during interregional workshops and seminars, addressing specific aspects of the projects’ cooperation topic or identifying and assessing good practices, and also during study visits which most often were organised in connection to those events. In some cases such as *CLUSNET*, learning emerged
also from separately organised staff exchanges (see: Box 12). There are also several examples where the applied sophisticated working methods such as SWOT-analysis (CeRamlCa, I-SPEED), benchmarking (I-SPEED) or the Peer Reviews (MORE4NRG) contributed quite strongly to increase the awareness/knowledge and capacities/skills of the involved individuals.

### Box 12: CLUSNET - individual learning through staff exchanges

One of the main achievements of CLUSNET lies in its success to have increased staff members’ capacity (awareness, knowledge and skills) in relation to the sensitive topic of cluster policies. Under the project, particular emphasis was laid on the improvement of individual competences through a series of staff exchanges. Officers from the partner cities participated in exchanges to other partner cities. They engaged into in-depth policy exchanges with their colleagues from other partner cities and contributed to the creation of inter-cluster links and prepared further contacts/visit between clusters. Even if the project reports an underachievement with a total of 19 staff exchanges over 5-days each organised (out of 28 mentioned in the application form), the exchanges involved a relevant number of members from the partner organisations and allowed for a more person-to-person way of exchanging experiences. Overall, the project identified a total of 63 staff members with increased capacity (awareness / knowledge / skills) resulting from the interregional exchange of experience.

However, the immaterial benefits resulting from individual learning are not necessarily occurring in a balanced way across all the partners’ staff members involved in a project. The scope of learning is in fact often strongly determined by the general constellation of the project partnership and the individual pre-conditions of the persons directly involved, as can be illustrated by the experience from our case study project DART.

- Firstly, not all partners contributed similarly to the three themes as regards the presentation of good practices (esp. for the theme “innovative & traditional economy”). Some of the partners were experts in only one of the three covered fields and may have gained only limited additional skills as they were most likely not as interested in the other themes of the project. For the partners representing a region the gathering of good practices across themes and policies may have increased individual learning more strongly.

- Secondly, not all partners contributed to a similar extent to the presentation of good practices. Partners from regions with a large variety of presented good practices may have gained less additional knowledge and skills than partners who have presented only two or three good practices.

- Finally, the intensity of the partners’ involvement differed and the partners started with different levels of knowledge into the project. Some partners had already tested different approaches of dealing with ageing and shrinking population and have thus not gained much new knowledge, while other partners have been still more strongly searching for solutions on how to deal with an ageing and shrinking society. In Brandenburg, for instance, different approaches were already known at the beginning of the project and among the practices presented by other partners there was also not the one and only suitable solution for their own challenges.
The survey shows that also **cross-cultural group learning** occurred to a substantial extent under the projects and that the overwhelming majority of the respondents (>90%) have also gained from this a strong or moderate increase in both their awareness/knowledge and their capacities/skills related to the project theme. About one third of the survey respondents experienced a strong increase of both their awareness/knowledge and capacities/skills related to the project theme, but the levels are clearly lower than those at the individual level. Moreover, a few respondents did not notice any increase due to group learning processes. This latter feature is not noticed at individual level and also the share of those having experienced a low increase is higher at group level than at individual level. The most important organisational aspects or operational elements of the interregional exchange of experience process which helped initiating widespread cross-cultural group learning processes within the projects are study visits, workshops and seminars focused on specific actions, technical workshops and in general, by quoting a survey respondent, “all the occasions to discuss in group how good practices are developed and implemented”.

Our twelve case study projects follow in general the overall patterns observed above, both as regards the actual outreach of the associated immaterial group learning benefits and the main organisational elements having strongly contributed to group learning. However, a closer look at them reveals quite significant differences with respect to the learning focus and the learning approaches adopted.

Among the case study projects, **group learning focussed most often on the process of jointly identifying and analysing good practices and of approaching these practices in their wider policy context**. Under several projects such as SEE, this group learning emerged from a few networking activities (e.g. interregional events & study visits) which were well-organised and also well-conceived in terms of contents (see: Box 13). Other projects like I-SPEED, CeRamICa, CLUSNET, REVERSE and MORE4NRG succeeded to initiate group learning by combining various networking activities with other more sophisticated working methods and tools (see: Box 14). ChemClust indeed demonstrates that group learning also occurs in a more complex work process which includes pilot actions (see: Box 15), but the mini-programme POWER shows that this kind of learning is limited if an adequate “strategic feedback loop learning process” across such pilot actions or subprojects is missing.

| Box 13: |
| **SEE - group learning through joint workshops & study visits** |
| Under the SEE project, cross-cultural group learning was strongly promoted by the five extremely well organised thematic interregional workshops with their clearly goal-oriented working style. During these workshops, but also through the two study visits which allowed gaining new knowledge about specific policies or concrete regional/local projects, the project partners have identified a total of 41 good practices in the field of design and innovation. They focus on how to integrate design into traditional innovation support programmes or on practical ways by which design can contribute to new priorities such as service innovation. This end result was twice as much as the initially expected 20 good practices. These good practices identified were in general also addressed in their wider policy context, either directly at the interregional thematic workshops or indirectly by the extremely well-done thematic publications which were issued after each workshop. |
### Box 14: Group learning - combining networking activities & sophisticated working methods

Under **I-SPEED**, real cross-cultural group learning has emerged and built upon the methodology used to analyse and exchange good practices. Particularly important was the deep analysis of good practices within and beyond the partnership. The analysis of good practices within the partnership was carried out by a multi-step process started with a SWOT-analysis produced by each partner following a common methodology (presented by the city of Venice during the kick-off meeting). The task of identifying good practices beyond the partnership that could be of interest for transfer was appointed to a specific working group in charge of collecting best practices and benchmarking at EU level. These analyses formed the starting point for exchanging and sharing experiences and for improving mutual knowledge among partners. Benchmarking and networking outside the partnership was particularly important for improving cross-cultural group learning because it allowed filling gaps when partners noticed that they were not experienced enough on one particular issue.

Under **CeRamICa**, the thematic seminars organised by the some project partners, but also joint events and the cross-partner SWOT-analyses were the most successful operational elements of the interregional exchange of experience process for initiating widespread cross-cultural group learning processes. An important aspect in this respect was the joint sharing of the results stemming from the individually realised SWOT-analyses at the first interregional event, which were then compiled in a booklet entitled "CeRamICa project: Transnational market and situation analysis of the ceramics and small crafts sectors of the European partnership".

Under **CLUSNET**, widespread cross-cultural group learning was initiated by the joint workshops and study visits organised, but also by the strong scientific approach introduced by the project partner responsible for Component 3. Joint workshops were organised the same way, following a pre-established and constant methodology. After having visited the case providing the basis for policy analysis, partner organisations' representatives were proposed to discuss and to analyse the performance of the case study applying the drivers identified in the methodology developed by the Stockholm School of Economics, which also conducted the workshops discussions.

Under **REVERSE**, cross-cultural group learning at the scale of the entire partnership emerged from the three thematic interregional seminars and the numerous content-related exchanges that preceded. A substantial work was indeed commonly carried out prior to the meetings as for each thematic seminar all partners had to (1) collect thematic good practices on their territories and (2) provide further analytical information on these good practices. Increased joint awareness and knowledge about biodiversity was thus reached through joint analyses of individual recommendations formulated by each partner, while joint capacity and skills were improved through the joint development European recommendations and the drafting of three Charters, submitted to both local and European levels.

Under **MORE4NRG**, the peer reviews, study visits and the project conferences were considered by the project partners the most successful activities to promote group learning. The peer reviews in particular were perceived as extremely useful by the host regions and also by the expert regions. It gave the host regions a clear view on their strengths and weaknesses, detailed recommendations, and generated a lot of media attention (thus attributing to the awareness raising). Apart from that, the peer reviews provided for a joint in-depth understanding of the issues of the reviewed region, by both the host organisation and the involved partner organisations and provided with invaluable input by the visiting experts from the other partner regions. Moreover, the MORE4NRG team jointly evaluated the peer review instrument during a mutual learning seminar and made concrete proposals for improvement. Overall, most partners have really benefited from the interregional exchange of experience and also the ‘advanced partners’ were able to improve their good practice, so the exchange was not a one way process.
Cross-cultural group learning processes, although more difficult to initiate, occurred during the thematic interregional seminars, during the thematic working groups and the associated study visits, during the joint benchmarking exercise and within the three pilot projects. Cross-cultural group learning at the scale of the entire partnership emerged from the identification of good practices as they were jointly discussed in the IWG-meetings and further screened during the thematic interregional seminars and finally described in the "ChemClust Best Practice Inventory". Also the information compiled in the project’s Benchmark Study helped partners to better understand the specific regional experiences from the point of view of local actors and to identify key problems that need to be addressed in their own context. Cross-cultural learning among a more limited number of ChemClust partners emerged from the specific workshops which were organised between the partners taking part in the three pilot projects on "Open Innovation", "Knowledge Sites" and "Skills foresight".

Less frequent though are projects under which group learning emerged in the context of a joint development of specific interregional policy tools which aim to generate an added value or benefit for a wider audience (strategies, methodologies, software etc). A good example is SUSTAIN, where group learning occurred during the interregional workshops which were dedicated to the joint development of a fully applicable policy tool that helps coastal authorities and communities throughout Europe to deliver sustainability along the shores. The framework methodology for measuring sustainability was jointly elaborated, the grouping of the Sustainability Development Indicators (SDI) into a number of "key Core" and "non-core Issues" was jointly discussed and further developed and a scoring methodology was agreed which allowed a Sustain Index to be affixed to these indicators. The final product is a user-friendly, spreadsheet-based, self-assessment and decision-support tool, which has also been used by each partner to measure their own sustainability effort. Furthermore, at the end of the project, the project has also developed a checklist-based tool for a group-wise recognition and assessment of good practices which can also be used for improving the sustainability of projects. To test and demonstrate this, the SUSTAIN partners have jointly selected a limited number of their good practices identified and jointly assessed those on ground of specific question-sets relating to four sustainability dimensions (environmental quality, economics, governance, social well-being).

But also in the case of cross-cultural group learning, the associated immaterial benefits do not necessarily have to occur in a balanced way across all the partners’ staff members involved in a project, because they are strongly conditioned by an array of different factors among which the wider constellation of the project partnership is again playing an important but ambivalent role. This can in particular be illustrated by the evidence from our case study project POWER (see: Box 16).

Under POWER, the regional differences in the priorities and points of view about the overall issue at stake were felt to be both a great help and sometimes also a hindrance to the joint learning process. On the one hand, it clearly appears that the well-balanced partnership linking ‘old’ Member States (i.e. Netherlands, Spain, UK, Italy) to new or recent ones (i.e. Poland, Estonia) opened many potentials for exchanging a variety of experiences with respect to the broad challenge of climate change (e.g. by looking into different contexts and by hearing other points
of view on how low carbon issues are and can be addressed in different regions).
- provided real opportunities for actually learning from other practices (e.g. by examining the fundamental factors that contributed to the success or failure of regions in taking up certain approaches or technologies, which was helpful in providing a really good understanding of the nature of the problem as well as of a potential solution).

In this joint project-level learning process, it was not necessarily the case that the old states are always more experienced than the new, but it appears from the external project evaluation of POWER that especially the partners in Poland and Estonia gained significantly from the experience of partners in the ‘old’ States. On the one hand, however, the external project evaluation of POWER also observed that frustrations have sometimes emerged if the partners’ views diverged too largely.

**Factors hampering individual & group learning processes**

Our survey shows that the factors hampering project-level learning differ markedly between individual and cross-cultural learning processes. The overview below (see: Figure 17) reflects how often hinders have been mentioned by partners and lead partners of the projects approved under the first two calls, but the use of the absolute numbers of responses\(^\text{93}\) also shows that the hinders were in general not a main concern of the respondents.

Figure 17: What hampered project-level learning to emerge?

\[^{93}\text{There have been in total 206 responses to this question and the figures in the graph reflect the number of responses.}\]
The most important **hinders indicated for individual learning** are communication problems, followed by a low participation of partners in joint events (such as workshops, seminars and conferences), and a lacking continuity of the entire exchange of experience process. Looking at **hinders for cross-cultural group learning**, and thus at aspects that need to be better taken care of in future, it appears that inadequate partnerships, communication problems (e.g. lack of language proficiency), lacking continuity of the entire exchange of experience process and weaknesses in the overall organisations of Component 3 are the most important ones. Thus the main weaknesses - apart from language skills - seem to be of an organisational nature.

This overall picture resulting from the survey is also well-reflected by our twelve case study projects: among those are many which have not seen their learning processes being substantially influenced by such hindering factors (**SEE, I-SPEED, DART, REVERSE, MORE4NRG**), but several others indeed experienced a variety of different influences which negatively affected the quality or scope of their project-level learning (**ChemClust, CeRamICa, CLIQ, CLUSNET, GRaBS, SUSTAIN, POWER**). The factors mentioned most frequently by the latter projects were communication problems due to a lack of language proficiency and weaknesses in the overall organisations or delivery of Component 3, but in some cases in addition also a low participation of partners in joint events (**CLUSNET**) and an inadequate status/capacity of project partners (**ChemClust, POWER, GRaBS, SUSTAIN**) or even a loss of several project partners (**CLIQ**).
4.3. Achieving policy change in the project partner areas through learning processes

We have shown in our analytical framework that policy change is achieved as a result of specific learning processes which are actually taking place “outside” a Regional Initiative Project, but also that the general notion of policy change has to be further differentiated in order to better reflect the specific nature of the policy effects generated by these learning processes. According to this differentiation, policy change in the project partner areas can in principle be achieved through learning within an individual project partner organisation (“policy improvements”) and through collective learning among a project partner organisation and various other actors from a partners' regional or local policy subsystem (“structural policy changes”), but there might also be intermediate cases which cannot be allocated this clearly to one of the effects indicated above (e.g. an individual partner organisation generating a more far reaching structural change of an existing policy/instrument alone).

In order to shed light on the way how the project partners have directly influenced policies in their area, this section will primarily analyse the main features of the qualitatively different learning processes and, on ground our case study evidence, also explore the very nature of the achieved policy effects as well as their causality links with the learning that takes place within the current types of policy-relevant actions of INTERREG IVC (i.e. successful transfer of good practices; approaching of practices in their wider policy context; policy improvements).

4.3.1. Organisational learning and the improvement of regional and local policies

For policy improvements to occur, a partner organisation involved in an operation must first integrate the immaterial or material benefits from project-level learning into its own settings and then also use them for preparing the technical corrections or limited adaptations to an instrument or policy which it directly implements. The following therefore explores in how far the project partners have actually incorporated these “external” learning benefits into their organisations’ policy-related planning processes and operational routines and also to what extent they have initiated wider internal learning processes for sharing this external learning more widely within their organisation (e.g. information provision & further training). We will furthermore take a close look at the kind of policy improvements which were achieved in practice and finally explore which kind of organisation-internal aspects have influenced upon the process of learning and change.

The scope of organisational learning

About 2/3 of the survey respondents from call 1 and 2 projects state that the learning benefits from the interregional exchange of experience processes were actually incorporated into the planning processes and operational routines of their organisations. The main effects of this integration of project-level learning results were, according to the respondents, quite diverse. As far as planning processes are concerned, they state in particular that local and regional action plans influenced
by the project outcomes were adopted or that "some new regional policies have been created or are on the move to be created thanks to the exchange of experience". As regards the operational routines, project partners see improvements in their management systems following "good practices transfer (complete or partial) inside new or existing administrative/technical tools" or quoted that the "exchange of experience of another partner gave us ideas and suggestions to implement a new service".

Furthermore, about 45% of the respondents indicated that their organisations also organised a wider and structured internal learning process for sharing more widely the direct project learning benefits with a larger number of their staff members. In some cases other employees were directly involved in specific project activities, while in other cases a wider learning process was initiated through organising internal meetings, trainings and workshops or through other dissemination activities such as the direct presentation of the project results to other departments or the use of internal websites. Unfortunately, the survey respondents did not provide many answers to the question of how this further widened organisational learning has actually affected the policy improvement process. Yet, some of them explained that the regional recommendations issued by a project were - after a first internal discussion - politically validated or stated that the widened organisational learning process led to an "upgraded regional law and regulation" in the region.

Our case study evidence shows that under nearly all projects the partners have actually incorporated the project-level learning outcomes into their policy-related planning processes or operational routines and also initiated more widespread organisation-internal learning processes (ChemClust, CLIQ, CeRamiCa, CLUSNET, I-SPEED, DART, GRaBS, SUSTAIN, MORE4NRG, REVERSE, POWER). Only under SEE, the project partners did not see a need for building up their own organisational capacity through internal learning processes to prepare policy improvements because none of them was actually delivering a policy directly. Under some of the above-mentioned projects, organisational learning was also enhanced more systematically through the sophisticated working methods applied during their exchange of experience process (i.e. SWOT analysis for CeRamiCa; benchmarking for DART; case study analysis for CLUSNET; Peer Reviewing for MORE4NRG). However, within each of the projects one can observe strong variations in the scope and intensity of organisational learning, in particular when it comes to launching more widespread organisation-internal learning processes. This can be illustrated well by the experiences from the projects I-SPEED, DART and GRaBS (see: Box 17).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Box 17: A variable scope of organisational learning within projects</th>
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<tr>
<td>For the majority of partners of DART, intra-organisational learning can not yet be confirmed although a collection process of other transfers is currently organised. In some partner organisations, however, the outcomes of the interregional exchange of experience process under Component 3 have been actually incorporated into the specific or general planning processes and operational routines. This is mainly related to the identified good practices and the benchmarking indicators. One example is the inclusion of demographic change in the Slovenian programming of the strategy development, which has been achieved by utilising the project's indicator study. Another case is the partner region of Brandenburg, where the project has been crucial for providing arguments in the lobbying process in favour of the transition regions for the next Structural Funds period.</td>
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Under **I-SPEED** a relatively similar mixed overall picture appears if one explores whether the partners have also initiated a wider and structured organisation-internal learning process for sharing the direct project benefits with a larger number of their staff members. While some partner organisations have not been active in this respect, others did pro-actively share the lessons learned from their project participation. The Lead Partner (City of Venice), for example, has involved different departments (EU policies, IT, Tourism) to internally disseminate the key findings and already conveyed different areas of the administration to internally promote concepts such as ‘open data’, transformation through digital technology, use of social networks, and E-commerce dynamics for local authorities.

Under **GRaBS**, some partner organisation also initiated a wider and structured internal learning process for sharing the direct project benefits with a larger number of its staff members. This was achieved namely by the introduction of the colleagues to the project and the production of an own guide for planners, by the insertion of other parts of the organisation into the monitoring and evaluation system and in the awareness campaign about climate change and by the wider learning programme on the software tool. In the case of the Nieuw West District in Amsterdam, for example, this intra-organisational learning raised awareness and facilitated an integration of climate adaptation aspects into overall formal spatial planning processes and procedures.

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**Policy improvements achieved – evidence from our case studies**

Despite the variable scope of organisational learning, our case studies clearly show that this learning dimension is pivotal for an achievement of concrete policy improvements in the project partner areas. All case study projects have to variable extents realised technical corrections of already existing policy instrument or of specific policy actions and sometimes also achieved a limited further adaptation of an established policy framework if the organisation was directly and fully in charge of conceiving and implementing a policy. In general, these policy improvements helped public organisations or institutions to better reaching their already existing policy goals and further increased their problem-solving capacity in relation to the respective topics at stake. Among the many detailed examples which can be found in the second volume of this study, we only present below a summary for six case study projects examined.

**(1)** Under **CLIQ**, organisational learning is demonstrated by the various successful good practice transfers and by the project’s mini-pilots which all have improved local policies or policy instruments. Examples can be found in Leeuwarden (NL), where the municipality has adjusted its cluster and innovation policy and updated its procurement policy, but also among the Spanish and Italian partners where the approach and thinking of the CLIQ project have influenced their innovation strategy development. Although these policy improvements did not everywhere take place at the same extent and intensity, they indeed show that wider organisational learning processes have actually taken place across the CLIQ partnership.

**(2)** Under **CeRamIca**, the incorporation of the project-level learning outcomes has in seven partner municipalities led to concrete local policy improvements in the ceramics field. For achieving these policy improvements, each project partner has drafted local/regional policy recommendations and an Action/Implementation Plan document. Within the seven municipalities mentioned, these documents were then discussed by each level of decision making and finally approved in an official way by the responsible municipal council or, in case of non-city partners, by the board of directors of the
organisation. The project partner organisations have thus achieved the direct improvement of the policies or instruments largely on “their own”, because the municipalities carried out a formal endorsement of their policy recommendations to ensure that the planned actions will really be turned into concrete changes later on. It seems that this organisational learning worked well if the organisational interest into the topic was high (a factor that mattered most) and in the cases where the relevant representatives of the municipality (i.e. the partner organisation) were intensively involved.

(3) Under **CLUSNET**, an effective improvement of organisational knowledge and competences took place in the specific theme of developing efficient cluster policies. The strong methodological approach developed by the partner responsible for Component 3 (i.e. the “Cluster Initiative Performance Model”, CIPM) allowed for individual high quality assessments of at stake city clusters, which in turn efficiently influenced policy making. Concrete examples are the cities of Leipzig and Göteborg, which both updated their policies for economic development and for cluster development according to the recommendation made by the project.

(4) Under **GRaBS**, several organisation-driven policy improvements have actually taken place. These improvements have led, for example, to the elaboration and adoption of Climate Adaptation Action Plans in the 11 participating regions, provinces or municipalities. The North-West Development Agency (UK) incorporated Green Infrastructure into its Sustainability Policy for the Built Environment, through a Green Infrastructure Toolkit. This has been achieved from the exchange of experience and expertise from partners during the GRaBS project – particularly the Green Space Factor tool which was transferred from the City of Malmö via study visits, thematic seminars and an expert paper. In London Borough of Sutton (UK), several local development documents have been improved and Guidance Documents have been developed. Moreover, specific instruments aimed at planners and developers to introduce green and blue infrastructure into the Borough, particularly the Hackbridge redevelopment zone, have been designed.

(5) Under **SUSTAIN**, many project partner organisation being primarily in charge of a specific policy have achieved a variety of punctual or even more substantial policy improvements largely on their own, which also points to a high degree of organisational learning. These organisation-driven improvements of specific policies were most often generated by a successful transfer of good practices. Such policy improvements took place in the partner areas from Portugal (Certifying fish caught in maritime protected areas as an economic incentive), Cyprus (Converting organic, agricultural waste into material suitable for surfacing local footpaths), the United Kingdom (Improvement of Litter Education Policy) and Germany (Addressing large jellyfish aggregations at the coast & marine litter accumulation at beaches).

(6) Under the mini-programme **POWER**, the exchange of experience under Component 3 has actually generated learning processes within many of the involved regional partner organisations. This allowed a building up of new knowledge with respect to low carbon initiatives or led to changes in the established knowledge stocks in several partner organisations, thus raising their awareness about potential policies which could be improved. The new knowledge has subsequently also led to an improvement of
institutional planning processes, structures or actions as well as to changes in the performance of some partner organisations. Concrete examples for organisation-driven policy improvements are several of the successful good practice transfers (e.g. the “Tallinn Energy Strategy”, the “Climate Agreements” in the City of Tallinn, the “Energy Saving Agreements” for companies in Malpolska) and also various improvements of national or regional-level policies (e.g. the influencing of the UK national policy on Fuel Poverty, the influencing of the “Emilia-Romagna Regional Plan” for the installation of renewable power installations, the influencing of the “Energy Agenda Noord Brabant 2010–2020” and the influencing of the Governmental Transport Action Plan in Estonia).

**Factors influencing on organisational learning & policy improvement**

As the scope of organisational learning was variable in overall terms and also within each project, it is obviously interesting to see which factors have facilitated or inhibited organisational learning and thus also conditioned the extent to which organisation-driven policy improvements were achieved.

Within larger organisations and especially within public institutions, learning and change can be hampered by adverse influences emerging from their own structural settings (e.g. hierarchies, established procedures, sub-structures or departments with different tasks etc) or from specific behavioural patterns which are a result of collective or individual human action. Our survey shows that those factors indeed played an important role in the Regional Initiative Projects, because only just about half the respondents did not experience influences which hampered organisational learning processes and the achievement of organisational change (see: Figure 18). For the other half of the respondents that indicated the existence of such adverse influences, the main issue was indeed the lack of time and resources for initiating processes of organisational learning and change. Other influences originating from the organisation-internal settings or from specific internal behavioural patterns were only of minor influence.

Also many of our case study projects experienced such adverse influences coming from within the wider project partner organisations, albeit at variable degrees. Especially the involved regional or local public authorities mentioned as hampering factors

- a lack of time and resources for initiating processes of organisational (CLIQ, CeRamICa, I-SPEED, DART, GRaBS, POWER),
- a lack of internal evaluation of previous policies (ChemClust, I-SPEED, GRaBS),
- specific higher-level hierarchical decisions or a “command & control” attitude in exercising power (DART, GRaBS),
- a general aversion to initiate changes or modification (ChemClust, DART, POWER),
- a dominance of turf wars (but also negotiations) between different sub-structures or departments which led to a prevalence of other considerations (POWER),
- an existing practice of secrecy which is used to stifle feedback and learning (DART).
Learning and change can also be influenced by the specific legal status of a project partner organisation (i.e. local/region/national public authority or other body governed by public law) and by a previous European co-operation experience which a partner organisation has gained in ETC projects or other EU-funded projects. Our survey shows that previous European cooperation experience was clearly conductive to organisational learning and also helped to achieve a change of organisational goals, structures, instruments or working routines (see: Figure 19). This was reported by more than 80% of the respondents from projects approved under the first two calls. Only in 3% of the cases it was reported that previous experience did not help. Also the specific legal status of the involved partner organisations was generally perceived as conductive, in particular when the partners were local, regional or national authorities. For other bodies governed by public law, their status was to equal degree perceived as either conductive or of no influence. Hampering effects of a partner status were only rarely reported and here it does not seem to make a difference whether the partner is a public authority or has another status.
All our case study projects largely confirm the positive effect of a previous European cooperation experience and especially most of the projects with a mixed project partnership (ChemClust, CLIQ, CeRamICa, CLUSNET, GReBS, REVERSE) perceive the factor “legal status” as being conducive to an achievement of organisational learning and change. Although the latter fact might differ from what some observers expect or assume (e.g. a negative influence of the status “other bodies governed by public law”), evidence from CLIQ and POWER can provide explanations for this and the experience from ChemClust might help drawing attention to the ambivalent influence which the INTERREG IVC partnership requirements can have on learning and policy change (see: Box 18).

These indeed individually different examples show that scope of the achieved conceptual and instrumental policy improvements strongly depends upon whether from the outset the “right partners are on board of a project”, be they regional/local public authorities or other policy-relevant bodies governed by public law.

<table>
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<th>Box 18: Other factors explaining variable degrees of policy improvement</th>
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<td>Under CLIQ, the actual influence a partner had on the local policy system depended more on its role in the domestic policy subsystem rather than on its legal status properly speaking. For instance in Finland, the participation of local authorities was crucial for being of immediate policy influence whereas in other countries, especially in southern Europe, chambers of commerce were much more influential than in the northern European countries. In southern European countries local politicians are members of the chamber of commerce boards and can easily attract media coverage or access the immediate policy subsystem. And there are also examples of innovation centres, especially those in Cadiz and Barcelona (ES), which could directly contribute to policy improvements. Thus, the effectiveness of influencing policies seemed to depend more on the role of the project partners in their local environment and thus on the wider institutional arrangements rather than on the partners’ formal status.</td>
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<td>Under POWER, the external project evaluation highlighted that not all partners were able to influence or directly change policy through good practices, as the regional partner organisations had a variable functional role in their domestic policy delivery process. In fact, the majority of the regional organisations in POWER were not policy delivery bodies in this field (i.e. with the exception of the Spanish and Italian partners being energy or environmental agencies), wherefore it was also too challenging for them to get involved into the practical transfer of good practices. Instead, the regions had to rely on other bodies to support the transfer of good practices.</td>
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<td>ChemClust realised only a few policy improvements if compared to what was originally expected, which can also be explained by the wider influence the specific INTERREG IVC partnership requirements had on the delivery process. The “matching of more experienced with less experienced partners” led in fact to a quite heterogeneous partnership which was composed of regions already having a (well-developed) chemical cluster and several regions which were still in search of building up a chemical cluster (e.g. PL, CZ). As the setting-up of an innovation cluster requires that a number of structural pre-conditions exist in a given area and also that there is a readiness among the concerned stakeholders to co-operate, one can understand why especially the less experienced regions could not achieve significant policy improvements within the lifetime of the project. But also several of the more developed regions could not easily achieve noticeable policy improvements, as working on the specific project topic of “open innovation” is in fact quite complex and demanding and can not be pushed by a regional authority alone.</td>
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4.3.2. Collective learning within the local/regional policy subsystem and structural policy change

At the level of the partners’ regional/local policy subsystems, the external project learning has first to become known to a wider range of policy-relevant actors before it can find its way into a concrete policy learning process that paves the way for achieving the intended structural change in practice. The following therefore explores whether a project partner organisation was successful in generating a broader awareness among other non-involved but policy-relevant actors (i.e. for increasing their general understanding & acceptance of the issue at stake) and was also able to obtain a pro-active support or commitment from those other actors for jointly putting into practice the intended policy change. Moreover, we also take a closer look at some concrete structural policy changes achieved in practice and finally explore which kind of influences coming from other external organisations or stakeholders of the local/regional policy subsystem have hampered collective policy learning and structural policy change.

The scope of collective learning in the regional/local policy subsystem

In order to get an “neutral” impression about the overall policy situation prevailing in each partner area at the outset of a project, we asked project partners and lead partners whose organisation is not a local or regional public authority to judge the position of the specific theme addressed by their project on the local/regional policy agenda of their public authority. The survey outcome shows (see: Figure 20) that the themes were quite often at a high or medium-level importance in most of the partner areas. This is in particular true for project lead partners, while the project partners see the themes as of somewhat lower importance at the policy agendas. Of the lead partners, 50% considered the theme as being at a very high position on the policy agenda. When it comes to the project partners (who are not a local or regional authority) 37% considered the project theme as being of medium-level importance on the policy agenda, and 29% considered it is being of very high importance.

Figure 20: Position of project theme on the policy agenda
An important first step of collective learning in a regional/local policy subsystem is the successful raising of awareness about the projects’ theme among a wider range of other actors which are relevant for the subsequent achievement of structural policy change. Our survey shows (see: Figure 21) that positive developments in this respect did indeed take place under most projects, as about 70% of the respondents stated that their project did (largely or very) successfully raise awareness. Among the lead partners the figure amounts even to almost 90%. However, the results also show that a number of cases exist where this was already more challenging because about 30% of the project partners concluded that the awareness raising was hardly or not successful. This broader awareness led to addressing the project topic more widely as one of high priority, while in other cases it resulted in the development of spin off activities, to the introduction of “collaborative tool methods into the thematic area” or of “new tasks to regional agencies”. Broader awareness by policy-makers was highlighted by one survey respondent as facilitating the funding of actions related to the project theme. Indeed, as mentioned by a survey respondent, “interested and informed stakeholders can influence national/regional/local authorities in achieving policy improvements and/or changes proposed by the project.”

Figure 21: Did other actors from the policy subsystem become more aware about the project’s theme?

![Graph showing the success of project awareness raising](image)

Many of our case study projects were successful in generating a broader awareness on their specific topic addressed among key policy-makers closely linked to their own partner organisations and also among other actors from their wider policy subsystems, albeit at variable degrees within the respective partnerships and by applying different approaches. An increase of awareness was most often achieved through the specific interregional events which were realised under Component 3 (e.g. workshops, seminars or larger conferences), but also through the policy documents (e.g. strategy papers, policy recommendations, action plans etc) and specific promotion materials produced. Very good examples in this respect are the projects SEE, I-SPEED, GRaBS, SUSTAIN, REVERSE and POWER (see: Box 19). An important aspect which clearly supported this successful raising of awareness was that most of the case study projects have pro-actively integrated other external local/regional politicians and public authorities or other stakeholder organisations from their policy subsystems already during the exchange of experience process (see: Section 3.3.2). Other projects like CLIQ or CLUSNET had problems in reaching the political levels for generating a broader awareness due to their highly complex cooperation issue.
addressed (i.e. cluster policy & triple helix or quadruple helix models), or experienced that the regional/local policy environment was not yet open to discussions and learning about the complex issue of demographic change (DART).

### Box 19:

**Projects having successfully raised the awareness about their cooperation topic addressed**

SEE was very successful in generating an increased awareness on the role of design in innovation policies among other actors from the wider national and local/regional policy subsystems. The “SEE Policy Booklets” were particularly useful for the partners to arrange meetings with key policy actors in their regions, whereas the “SEE bulletins” were useful for raising awareness of design more generally among a broader range of stakeholders. This is also reflected by the high number of regional/local policy makers and government representatives which an increased awareness on design policies due to the activities of SEE (89), which exceeded by far the originally envisaged target (55 policy makers).

Throughout the entire duration of I-SPEED, the exchanges between the project partners have created an increased body of knowledge within many regional partner organisations and also raised their awareness about which potential policies could be improved. Exchanges were particularly fruitful between the various groups created (i.e. the Political Steering Group, the Steering Group and the working group in charge of collecting best practices and benchmarking), which involved mostly policy-makers from the project partner areas. Due to this, I-SPEED was largely successful in generating a broader awareness about the information and communication technologies (ICT) as key to improve the European Tourism Economy competitiveness and sustainability among other actors from the wider local/regional policy subsystem. The project was also reported to have successfully raised the awareness on ICT potential at the level of key decision makers (i.e. top management of administrations and the political level).

Under GRaBS, the creation or strengthening of Community Networks (stakeholders, environmental networks, LA21 groups, schools, etc.) and of Regional Networks of Policymakers (mayors, local and regional authorities) was crucial to the awareness-raising processes. In this context, the project’s results and information on climate change consequences and risks at local/regional level were fed into already existing or new processes to promote local sustainable development. On the other side the creation or strengthening – through dissemination of information, invitation to seminars and conferences or the organisation of round tables – of Regional Networks of Policymakers helped to communicate the topic to local and regional authorities in the partner areas. For example, TCPA established a new regional stakeholder network: the ‘Green Infrastructure Network’, to influence green infrastructure policy in the south-east of England (and raise awareness of its crucial adaptation role).

Although sustainable coastal development was in all partner areas already high on their respective policy agendas, one can say that SUSTAIN was largely successful in generating a broader awareness about this theme among other actors from the wider local and regional policy subsystem. This broader awareness sometimes enhanced cooperation with other public authorities or allowed to further clarify the complex issue of sustainability. In the latter case, for example, SUSTAIN has allowed the partner Down District Council (UK) to present sustainability to local communities in a more practical way and thereby to create an increased sense of awareness about the whole issue, as previously the term was widely used by many people but largely misunderstood by the majority of them.

REVERSE was in several partner areas successful in generating a broader awareness about the project theme among other actors from the local and regional policy subsystems. This broader awareness was mainly achieved through the participation of project members to groups at regional level including officials and politicians where they communicated their experience and made provision of specific recommendations in the formulation of the Regional Strategic Plan. A survey respondent also stressed that “during the project, internal meeting with officials and politicians were organised, this raised many people’s awareness about the importance of preserving biodiversity and improving regional policies to better take into account the biodiversity into sector policies”.

Under POWER, the exchange of experience process was largely successful in generating a broader awareness among other actors from the wider local/regional policy subsystem. Other regional low carbon networks or associated initiatives received a further boost from the additional resource and
profile low carbon policy received during the delivery of POWER. Moreover, the regional experts and also the sub-project lead participants held countless additional presentations and attended many conferences, all of which helped that the impacts of knowledge transfer were spread more widely than only at the sub-project or mini-programme level. This was further re-enforced by the broad awareness-raising effect of the Component 4 sub-projects: they enabled over 78,000 citizens, industrials and public authorities to have an increased capacity and awareness in reducing their carbon footprint (i.e. achieved through interregional events, e-newsletters, workshops, eco-calendars & other communication materials), which was significantly more than what was originally expected (i.e. 15000 citizens, industrials and public authorities with increased capacity and awareness).

When it comes to the second important step in collective policy learning, one can observe that other external actors from the wider local/regional policy subsystems often supported pro-actively the “transformation” of project outcomes into concrete structural policy changes (see: Figure 22). Again, the assessment of the lead partners is more positive than that of the project partners: only 25% of the lead partners indicated that there was no such support, whereas 37% of the partners did not see such a support. Still in the majority of the cases the project partners and lead partners perceived that they were supported by external actors.

Figure 22: Which type of actors supported the translation of project outcomes into policy change?

![Chart](chart.png)

In about 30% of the projects, local or regional politicians supported the translation of project outcomes into the concrete policy changes. This is followed by local and regional administrations (about 22%), albeit 45% of the lead partners indicate concrete support by local and regional administrations. A survey respondent, for example, mentioned that “local and regional politicians have started a process to adopt some actions in the area related to the topic of the mini-programme”. Some other survey respondents mentioned that project outcomes will be integrated in the regional operational programme for 2014-2020 or stated that the regional policy learning has helped introducing new instruments, stressing on the importance of the “co-planning” activity between public and private sectors”. Public agencies and NGOs at
local and regional level have also been supportive in about 20% of the projects. Such external experts were useful in lobbying local politicians and others stakeholder to engage into the project. Other respondents mentioned a direct implementation role of these actors, as "one NGO agreed to co-organise pilot action in their area of activity". But most often, survey respondents highlighted the help provided in disseminating the project outcomes.

To see in how far structural policy changes have actually taken place in each partner area as a result of a broader awareness and a support provided by other actors to successfully transform the project outcomes, we asked all project partners and lead partners to re-appraise the importance of the specific theme addressed by their project on the local/regional policy agenda towards the end of the implementation process. However, the survey outcome does not allow drawing a clear picture on whether the projects contributed to increasing the importance of the topics addressed at the local and regional policy agendas. Indeed, about half of the respondents said that they did, and half said that they did not. 47% of the respondents said that there was no change, while 52% indicated an increasing importance of the policy theme and 1% a decreasing importance.

In summary, the above–said suggests that at least in some project partner areas the collective policy learning processes have also led to more wide-ranging structural policy changes. But the survey does not allow establishing a direct causality link between the project outcomes and the indicated change in importance of the specific theme addressed, wherefore we now use our case study evidence to shed light on how structural policy changes were actually achieved.

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<th>Structural policy changes achieved – evidence from our case studies</th>
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There are several case study projects under which real collective policy learning processes involving project partner organisations and a range of other institutions or stakeholders from the policy subsystems have taken place which also led to more wide-ranging structural policy changes.

(1) Under CLIQ, the mini-pilot action called "Kaupungin Kangas" improved the urban planning policy in Jyväskylä (Finland) by developing completely new planning processes under the inclusion of local citizens which were previously unknown in Finland. This new experience with participative city planning was perceived as being very helpful by the local city planning department in Jyväskylä. The great interest shown by the citizens and the high quality plans gained during this process convinced the planners of the value and the usefulness of this approach, also in the future. The approach is under discussion and has already changed the city's planning procedures. There is now strong will for listening to the ‘city’s sense’ and the project has considerably contributed to inducing a more smoothing planning process. The citizen consultation process like this is becoming the new norm, against which other plans are viewed and evaluated.

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Structural policy changes include, according to our view, also to the introduction of a completely new instrument or policy concept which previously did not exist.
(2) Under SEE, the project partners were themselves not policy implementing organisations. Therefore, the projects’ overall approach strongly focussed on building up an increased awareness on the role of design in innovation policies among other actors from the wider national and local/regional policy subsystems (i.e. mainly politicians) and also on pro-actively searching for a result transformation support of other external actors (i.e. various regional or national public authorities, other professional organisations). The induced collective policy learning led to concrete structural policy changes which had tangible impacts in the partner regions and even beyond. These structural policy changes comprise a first-time inclusion of the aspect of design into regional or national policy plans stimulating R&D/innovation, economic renewal and competitiveness (e.g. Wales/UK, Flanders/BE, Estonia, Denmark, Slovenia, Catalonia/ES), the successful influencing of existing design-specific national policies (e.g. Finland) or of long-term strategies focussing on design (e.g. Denmark), the initiation and feeding of new policy debates on design and innovation (e.g. Rhône-Alpes/FR, Ireland), the establishment of new regional-level policy support structures in the field of design and innovation (e.g. Flanders/BE: creation of the “Flanders Design Platform”. Tuscany/IT: launching of a “Pole of Innovation”, in which design will play a key role in realising innovation in the region) and the creation of new regional policy programmes supporting design (e.g. Wales/UK, Silesia/PL). This has, overall, also considerably increased the importance of the issue “design” on the general innovation policy agendas of the SEE partner regions and countries.

(3) Under GRaBS, the policy changes induced by the project were variable from region to region, depending on the initial level of awareness about the topic of climate change in the partner regions. In the regions where the awareness about climate change and its local effects was rather low at the beginning of the project, the project helped to raise the awareness and the level of knowledge on the risks and practical options for municipalities and regional authorities. This was mainly done via the specific Adaptation Action Plans. In partner areas where awareness was already at an advanced level, at least among the planning authorities, the project helped to spread the knowledge and awareness among other agents within the same organisation and within the local and regional policy subsystem. In three partner areas, also concrete structural policy changes were induced:

- The UK-Lead Partner “Town and Country Planning Association” (TCPA) improved and enhanced the work of the Planning and Climate Change Coalition – a stakeholder network established by the TCPA as part of its role in GRaBS. The work resulted in improving a national Planning Policy Statement (PPS) on climate change in March 2010. Subsequent to the change in Government of UK, this PPS is now being developed by the TCPA and other cross-sector stakeholders into guidance to accompany the emerging National Planning Policy Framework in England.

- In Slovakia, the non-governmental partner organisation “Regional Environment Centre for Eastern Europe” developed National Open Space Standards as a support to land use planners. The Standards, influenced by a best practice in Styria, were adopted in December 2010 by the Slovakian Ministry for Construction and Regional Development.

- As regards the UK partner Southampton City Council, the project results influenced widely the development of the local Low Carbon City Strategy and Delivery Plan, with the Strategy being
formally approved in June 2011. The development plan sets out the key priorities for the Council over the next 10 years (up to 2020) to support development, strengthen and build the low carbon economy in the city, respond to the impacts of climate change and mitigate the impact on the environment by reducing the city’s carbon emissions. To deliver this strategy, the “Southampton Low Carbon Group” was established as a kind of horizontal policy stakeholder coalition, in which all businesses can become involved from the construction and marine to transport providers.

The increased awareness and these actions have resulted in a change of the project’s theme on the political agendas of local authorities and the external support furthered recognition of the need to adapt urban areas through planning systems.

(4) For achieving policy change in the field of an integrated and sustainable coastal development, two partner areas of SUSTAIN also engaged in collective policy learning processes which led to the establishment of specific policy coalitions between a partner organisation and other actors from the wider local/regional policy subsystem.

- A successful formation of a vertical public policy coalition has taken place in the Province of Teramo (IT), which substantially transforms the current coastal policy in the area and paves the way for achieving long-term sustainable change. By making use of a good practice that was previously identified by the Italian partner in the Spanish partner region of SUSTAIN, a completely new consortium was established between the Province and seven other coastal municipalities. The consortium held its first formal meeting on the 6th of February 2012 and its further work will focus on the sustainable rehabilitation of public infrastructure and private homes, through a strategic unitary vision for the 45 km long coastal strip area (i.e. the “Urban Redevelopment Plan”). The consortium has already decided to establish and manage a “Provincial Observatory on Coastal Sustainability” which is based on the indicators developed by SUSTAIN, for which a convention was publicly signed at the Final International Event of SUSTAIN in September 2012 in Southport (UK) by 5 mayors and a regional representative.

- A successful influencing and formation of a horizontal policy stakeholder coalition can be observed in the North West of England (i.e. the partner Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council), where marine planning has to cope with the extremely complex situation in the whole of the Irish Sea and in the UK also with differing national legislative constraints. After a SUSTAIN visit to Cyprus, the UK partner got motivated to further broaden a joint work process which was about to be kick started by the “North West Coastal Forum”, Liverpool University and the National Oceanography Centre. The “Irish Sea Trans-national Partnership Working Seminars” in Liverpool and Dublin (spring 2011) aimed at exploring stakeholder views on the future development of transnational partnership working to support co-ordinated marine spatial planning in the Irish Sea. Both stakeholder events had been very successful and involved – though the inspiration from Greece - a much wider range of people and non-government organisations than initially sought. In June 2012, follow-up work converged towards the formal establishment and launching of the “Irish Sea Maritime Forum” which now pools all stakeholders having an interest in the Irish Sea.
Also the project MORE4NRG was very successful in generating a broader political awareness and technical knowledge at regional level on energy efficiency and technical possibilities for energy efficiency. In this respect, the peer reviews were perceived as extremely useful by the host regions and also by the expert regions. The peer review regions have written regional action plans based on the peer review recommendations and for some partners of MORE4NRG this was really the starting point to develop a regional policy on renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. Such structural policy changes occurred in partner area of Greece and partly also in Romania.

- In Western Greece, though the action plan was not officially adopted yet by the regional government, the project induced the development of a new instrument, namely the formation of an energy cluster. This cluster implements part of the peer review recommendations by bringing together all energy players in the area, by promoting Renewable Energy Sources projects in the region, by creating public awareness about RES and EE and by designing activities relative to business development of the energy sector. The Region of Western Greece participates in the Board of Directors of the Cluster Structure.

- The new Energy Action Plan in Prahova (RO) is a result of the peer review and can be considered the starting point of a regional energy policy in the region. Due to reorganisations in the administrative structure of the region, the plan is not officially adopted yet, but has already led to a raise in sustainable energy projects in the region.

Under POWER, finally, clear elements of collective learning among partner organisations and various other organisations or stakeholders can be observed in the concerned local/regional policy subsystems of Poland, Sweden and Finland.

- Malopolska Region developed their first Regional Energy Plan and now monitors baseline carbon emissions to track changes over time. The whole process engaged multiple stakeholders from across the region working in the field of energy. The initiative for this plan resulted from partnership exchanges at regional and sub-project level, but especially from the particularly intense cooperation between PL, NL and SE partners.

- The knowledge gained through the POWER sub-project TIMBER allowed to influence the “Regional Action Programme for Energy and Climate” of Stockholm County Council, strengthening specifically the work with organic waste as a source for renewable energy (biogas). This has resulted in an increased cooperation in the region between policy-relevant stakeholders and an increased knowledge and discussion about Stockholm’s own means and possibilities to produce more biomass itself. The improvement of these policies/instruments were – among other actions – achieved by seminars with the county’s municipalities to discuss regional obstacles and opportunities, which also led to political decisions on organic waste collection in 20 out of the 26 municipalities of the district.

- Starting with a transfer of a good practice applied in Uppsala region, “EcoDriving” was presented to 13 of Tallinn’s biggest municipal service companies. This practice is now being embedded in Estonia and has already generated a significant amount of CO2 reduction from major municipal services in Tallinn by ca 0,25%. Overall, 50% of the companies have applied EcoDriving as it
reduces CO2 emissions in the long term by 5%. Regular EcoDriving training and fuel consumption monitoring would result in annual CO2 savings of 1,330 tons (ca. 0.25% of total emissions in Tallinn transport) and annual savings from fuel expenses could be up to € 465,300.

**Factors influencing on policy learning & structural policy change**

Policy learning and the achievement of concrete structural policy changes was not hampered by external influences coming from the local or regional policy subsystems, as in more than 2/3 of the projects such influences were not observed. In those cases where hampering external influences were noted, they concerned mainly financial cut-backs in public budgets due to the economic downturn after the economic crisis or to a reduction of high public indebtedness or the fact that local and regional issues addressed by the project had been solved in the meanwhile by other means than the INTERREG IVC project.

Also our case study projects largely follow this overall pattern, although under several projects some of the partners indeed experienced negative influences which hampered collective policy learning and change. These influences sometimes resulted from changing regional/local political priorities (ChemClust, DART, SUSTAIN, CLUSNET, GraBS, POWER), often due to elections, and from an insufficient lack of interest shown in the projects' topic by local/regional authorities and other stakeholders (DART, GraBS, CLUSNET) or from adverse policy-level decisions due to major external shocks (POWER, CeramiCa, GraBS), but more seldom though from adverse positions or actions of other external actors or stakeholders of the local/regional policy subsystems (ChemClust, POWER). Among these projects, it appears that especially POWER was affected by a larger number of those external influences which – in combination – hampered the programmes achievements in terms of policy change (see Box 20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 20: POWER – adverse external influences hampering policy learning and change</th>
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<td>Under POWER, there had been various other external influences which hampered in several partner areas policy learning and the achievement of structural policy change, some of which were also clearly pin-pointed by the external project evaluation. One can, for example, observe in some areas that other administrative departments also concerned by the project theme have created major obstacles to policy learning and policy changes or that local/regional elections led to new political majorities which changed the previous policy priorities and which made policy learning or policy change in the field addressed impossible. A good example is the Tallinn Region (EE), where policy influencing was affected by two elections to the State Parliament and to the local municipal assembly. These political changes were considered to make it hard to engage senior politicians and where they are engaged there is a danger of undermining long-term programme and sub-project objectives with the latest political imperatives. Also dramatic cut-backs in local/regional public expenditure, due to the economic downturn after the economic crisis, have made it impossible to achieve progress in the field addressed. This led in several cases to major systemic changes which had adverse effects on the mini-programme for delivering or influencing policy. In the South East England, the UK Government decision to abolish regional development agencies, regional government offices, regional assemblies and all regional economic and spatial planning documents represented a major blow to the opportunities of POWER to influence policy. Similarly, the Stockholm Region (SE) underwent a major reorganisation and many of the county councils which make up the wider region – Uppsala and Gotland – experienced significant public sector cuts.</td>
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4.4. Achieving relevance and added value in an EU-wide context

Although most of the Regional Initiative Projects did from the outset not pursue the primary objective of directly producing outcomes with an EU-wide relevance or of generating a wider European added value, some of our case study projects have intentionally worked towards such kind of outcomes and thus also towards generating benefits for interested third parties throughout the European Union. Examples for such projects are DART, SUSTAIN and REVERSE (see: Box 21), but also the project I-SPEED.

Box 21: INTERREG IVC projects working intentionally towards EU-wide relevance & added value

**DART** aimed at developing recommendations for an integrated strategy to deal with demographic change and to maintain the quality of life in demographically declining and ageing areas. Beyond policy recommendations showing how regions can organise themselves and adapt public and private services to demographic changes so as to exploit chances for new jobs and innovation, the integrated strategy combines a “DART-Monitor” which allows analysing an individual region’s strengths and weaknesses with regard to demographic change and a “Tool Box” of measures, reaching from specific projects to regional strategies and ‘Regional Demographic Action Plans’, from which any region can choose to use or adapt their approach for regional transformation in demographic change. A key objective of **SUSTAIN** was to have in place after three years a policy tool that is usable for sustainable coastal development in all 22 states of the EU bordering seas. As there was currently no way of measuring whether or not any particular coastal activity is leading towards or away from sustainable development, the SUSTAIN tool will ensure that the integrated management of coastal issues is measurable. This led to the development of a unique set of indicators which incorporate objective quality information and targets related to key aspects of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy\(^{95}\) and the SUSTAIN tool thus helps to initiate new ways of thinking about sustainable coastal management. This new policy tool can most likely be applied at a very local level for improving sustainability and by addressing issues sociologically and environmentally.

**REVERSE** was directly striving for EU-wide relevance throughout its exchange of experience process, because a strong aim of the project was the elaboration of tools or approaches which improve the effectiveness of regional development policies in the area of biodiversity protection. The project partners jointly elaborated a common Charter to assist with fighting biodiversity loss, including recommendations relevant for both European and local levels, and also the sector-specific recommendation charters (on land planning, agriculture and tourism) so that local and regional authorities throughout the EU will be able to implement the REVERSE project recommendations independently after the project has ended.

Yet, our survey shows that many of the Regional Initiative Projects of the first and second calls consider to have generated either outcomes which were of EU-wide relevance or of a wider European added value (i.e. this was stated by 83% of the lead partners and 73% of the project partners). Respondents refer in particular to outcomes such as policy recommendations, strategic policy papers and policy guidelines, but also to specific European benchmarking studies and databases or EU-wide policy support tools.

Among our case studies there are also many of such other Regional Initiative Projects which have actually achieved outcomes that are of EU-wide relevance and added value (**ChemClust, CLIQ, SEE, CLUSNET**,\(^{95}\) i.e. nature and biodiversity, carrying capacity, water & environmental quality, climate change and socio-economic aspects)
The project GRaBS, for example, created a tested and also transferable tool set for local and regional-level climate change adaptation (e.g. Adaptation Action Plan Guidance, Risk & Vulnerabilities Tool, an international database of case studies, 7 Expert Papers and several additional Briefing Papers, ample document repository on climate adaptation), while MORE4NRG elaborated a good-practice-catalogue and a tool-kit to strengthen the delivery of regional strategies for renewable energy sources and energy efficiency that are of importance for all regional and local authorities in Europe.

When working towards outcomes that are of EU-wide relevance or of a wider European added value, projects could in principle seek inspiration from the wider external context (e.g. other organisations & stakeholders, other EU-projects) and also participate in specific external “capitalisation” exercises or external EU-level events for disseminating more widely those outcomes towards an interested wider public.

• Our survey shows in fact that a lot of projects got help or inspiration from other organisations or other EU-projects in the wider external context. This was indicated by 60% of the lead partners and 49% of the project partners. In particular respondents refer to important role played by either other INTERREG IVC projects, ongoing EU-projects or even previous projects funded under INTERREG IIIC. Many survey respondents also mentioned the initiative role of some European interest organisations or other European-wide issue networks such as the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Association of the European coalfield regions (EUR-COM), the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing (EC-EIP-AHA), some of which have also particularly influenced the project development (e.g. PURPLE Network, Inter@ct, Rur@ct).

• The added value of a project’s participation in external capitalization events seems to be rather limited. Only 34% of the project partners and 40% of the lead partners said that the participation in external capitalization events did help the projects to spreading their outcomes. A survey respondent underlined, for example, that “the participation in the specific events organised by the JTS is a possibility to check the efficiency of the methodology”, while another one stated that “the INTERACT Thematic Poles formed a very good platform of exchanging experiences and capitalising knowledge acquired during project lifetime.”

There have been hardly any major external influences which prevented the projects from generating outcomes with an EU-wide relevance or added value, as 80% of the respondents did not see any such hindering external influences. For the remaining 20%, some quoted that hindering influences are the “short 3 year timescale: the project aims to implement changes which are more on the medium to long term” and the fact that “regional elections changed the awareness and relevance of the topic”. Among the latter group are also several of our case study projects which have experienced variable influences coming from the wider external context that prevented them from generating better or possibly additional outcomes with an EU-wide relevance or added value (ChemClust, DART, GRaBS, SUSTAIN, MORE4NRG, POWER). Hindering influences which were experienced by some or all project partners relate
to the financial and economic crisis (2008-2010) or a reduction of high public indebtedness due to the on-going Euro-crisis (DART, GRaBS, SUSTAIN, POWER);

- to the fact that other EU-level actors/structures apply in the meanwhile policy approaches or problem solutions for which it was originally envisaged to generate outcomes with an EU-wide relevance (ChemClust DART, MORE4NRG, POWER);

- to major changes of EU-level policy priorities (ChemClust, DART) or of national policy priorities in the field addressed (ChemClust, POWER) which made it obsolete to generate outcomes with an EU-wide relevance,

- to regional or national elections changing the relevance of the topic addressed (DART).

### The take-up of INTERREG IVC project outcomes by the wider external context

Getting an overall impression on the extent to which the project-level outcomes with an EU-wide relevance or added value were actually taken up by the EU Cohesion Policy’s wider learning process on territorial development or by any other EU level policy and by other regions or local authorities in Europe is obviously difficult and can - up to now - only be evidenced on a case-to-case basis.

**A first general indication** could be the inclusion of INTERREG IVC projects into the RegioStars Awards selection, because this actually demonstrates a projects’ wider relevance for EU-wide learning on regional and local development and is also able to mobilise a wider interest in and awareness about the respective project outcomes due to the high communication-related effect of this EU-event. If one looks only at the events that included projects from the current programming period 2007-2013, one can indeed see that the INTERREG IVC projects GRABS, SEE, FLIPPER and PASE have been among the finalists of the 2011, 2012 and 2013 “RegioStars Awards”. For our case study project SEE, the RegioStars Jury stated that (…)

_This is an interesting policy-building project in a forward-looking area – design as a source of innovation. Its broad partnership and EU endorsement gives credibility to the statement that it paves the way towards new innovation policies, suited to regions outside the Science and Technology hubs._

96 Nevertheless, it should be highlighted for all these INTERREG IVC projects that it is not because they were selected or even have won an award that they will also generate a much wider direct learning effect going beyond the partner regions.

**A second source of information** is of course the evidence from our case studies which clearly shows that many projects have successfully reached out more widely in terms of their policy effects achieved. Beyond the already mentioned projects intentionally working towards outcomes with an EU-wide relevance (DART, SUSTAIN, REVERSE, I-SPEED), effects on the EU-level enterprise and innovation policies were achieved by ChemClust and SEE through providing new or wider insights on specific matters (see: Boxes 22 & 23) or by CLIQ through introducing more widely a specific concept in the field of innovation policy (see: Box 24).

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The outcome of the ChemClust project has a wider effect on the EU-level policy for the chemical sector, especially as regards the role of open innovation and of cluster policy. In 2012, the European umbrella organisation of the ChemClust partners, the “European Chemical Regions Network” (ECRN), was working closely with the European Commission in the context of a study entitled “Analysis of policies in chemical regions to support the competitiveness of the chemicals industry”. This study covers 26 different regions across Europe which in most cases are also members of ECRN. The key objective of the study is to provide information on efficient policy measures which can be implemented at the regional level. The final study outcome will be a collection of best practices from different regions and policy recommendations that will benefit regional public authorities and provide valuable information for the Member State and EU decision makers. A validation workshop for stakeholders was held in Brussels at the end of September 2012 and the good practices uncovered by ChemClust were prominently featured in the final report of this study. Furthermore, the ECRN also seeks to support the dissemination of the findings from ChemClust at the 10th ECRN Congress that was organised in Warsaw in October 2012.

Two important aspects demonstrate that SEE generated outcomes of an EU-wide added value which were also strongly recognised by the European Commission. Firstly, SEE has during its operation actively searched for, monitored and reflected upon inspiring developments in the field of design and innovation in an EU-wide and even world-wide perspective and also integrated such examples into its ongoing work and publications. On ground of this, an extensive European-wide knowledge stock was created on design and innovation which previously did not exist. Secondly, the project still continues under to operate as “SEE-Platform” - a network of 11 European partners engaging with national and regional governments to integrate design into innovation policies and innovation programmes – and is between 2012 and 2015 a part of the European Commission’s European Design Innovation Initiative (EDII). EDII seeks to embed design for user-centred innovation in government policies and company strategies across the European Union. It aims to convince a wider audience of the potential for design to foster innovation in small companies and deliver innovative solutions for products, services, society and the public sector.

CLIQ worked on developing close links between “quadruple helix partners” at local level (universities, business, local authorities, civil society) and on exchanging models of civil society engagement in innovation. Beyond some project outcomes having a wider European added value of (e.g. tested good practices, Policy Action Plan, CLIQ-o-Meter, CLIQ Toolkit), CLIQ has also contributed to introduce more widely the new “quadruple helix” concept which – before the project start – was barely used at the EU level.

For influencing EU-level policies and for spreading their outcomes more widely towards other EU regions and local authorities, various approaches were applied by the case study projects examined: some of them used their European-wide umbrella organisations or issue-specific networks of which they are members (ChemClust, CLIQ, CLUSNET, MORE4NRG), while others established for this purpose external working relations with other existing or newly created European-wide issue networks (I-SPEED, DART, MORE4NRG) or approached the relevant external audience directly through specific own initiatives (SEE, SUSTAIN, REVERSE).
Further relevant information on these aspects can finally be found in the INTERREG IVC Programme’s annual reporting, which in the most recent available version\(^\text{97}\) shows that also a number of other projects have already demonstrated a clear EU-wide relevance or added value:

- The air quality index developed by CITEAIR II has been adopted by the European Environmental Agency.
- C2CN has contributed to the introduction of the ‘circular economy’ concept into the 2014-2020 cohesion policy.
- The final good practice guide of EUROPROC may become an official DG Enterprise publication.
- WINNET 8 was invited to present the project to the European Parliament (High Level Group for Gender Equality) and to a meeting of the EU Coordination Committee of the Funds (COCOF).
- The projects SCINNOPOLI and RAPIDE were selected as interesting projects by the ‘Regional Innovation Monitor’ initiative of DG Enterprise.
- The projects ENSPIRE EU and YES appear on the website of the Commission’s DG Employment.

\(^{97}\) INTERREG IVC (2012d).
5. General Conclusions and Recommendations

This final chapter integrates the main aspects raised under our conceptual framework (see: Chapter 2) with the key findings that emerged from our empirical analysis (see: Chapters 3 & 4) in order to develop general conclusions for the main dimensions of the exchange of experience process under INTERREG IVC and to elaborate recommendations for the current programming period 2007-2013 as well as for the forthcoming period 2014-2020.

**Conclusions on the process of project-level exchange of experience and learning**

Our analysis has shown that the exchange of experience process under INTERREG IVC projects is indeed a powerful concept through which substantial effects in terms of policy change can be produced, provided that some basic pre-conditions in terms of structure and interaction are observed and that the crucial role of learning is well understood by the involved actors.

The findings of our empirical analysis did not allow identifying specific working approaches or activity-combinations which are more appropriate than others for putting into place the interregional exchange of experience process, which then also allows concluding that there is no standard concept for successfully delivering Component 3. However, one can indeed derive two general conclusions with respect to the organisational and operational dimension:

- Rather “simple working methods” under Component 3, either delivered in a sequential or in a non-sequential manner, can in general be as successful as more “elaborated and differentiated approaches”. Under both constellations, certain types of interregional networking activities (e.g. events such as workshops/seminars or larger conferences; study visits) and complementary regional/local events were especially valued by the participants for having contributed to the overall success of the interregional exchange of experience process. Many projects also combined traditional networking activities with more sophisticated tools or working methods or even with some implementation-related activities, which also proved to be very successful because it often gave more substance to the exchange of experiences process.

- An intelligently conceived and well-integrated working concept involving the best-placed persons from the involved partner organisations strongly matters for the wider success of both a rather simple and also of a more elaborated Component 3 approach. Successful methodologies usually followed a logical path which is started by a phase dedicated to a pre-reflexive analysis of the different partner situations and to an identification of good practices, followed by a phase of analysing more in-depth the practices and of selecting and concretely transferring some of these practices and concluded by a phase during which the results of these good practice transfers and

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98 However, a combination of only such networking activities can easily give raise to a criticism that this moves a project’s exchange of experience to a kind of “administrative tourism.”
other actions are distilled and further aggregated into policy-relevant findings at a more strategic level and finally disseminated within the project and beyond (e.g. policy concepts with recommendations, action plans, policy road maps etc).

The proper **structural set-up of the exchange of experience process under Component 3** was as such not influenced by the simple fact that all or most partners have already worked together in the past or by the legal status of the partners involved in the cooperation (e.g. bodies governed by public law of public authorities). However, both factors did have an influence on the successful delivery of the exchange of experience process: a previous European cooperation experience was strongly supportive in the overwhelming majority of the cases while the legal partner status had either a neutral or a slightly positive influence. This means in a nutshell that an experienced partnership, be it composed of only territorial authorities or of a mix between territorial authorities and other policy-relevant bodies governed by public law, mattered in all cases for the success of the exchange of experience process. This conclusion is also not very surprising, because policies are delivered very differently in the different European countries and in particular at the different territorial administrative levels (i.e. with sometimes a more administrative-centred approach and sometimes with more “horizontal” approach also involving other semi-public, intermediary or even private organisations).

**An expert involvement during the interregional exchange of experience processes** was in general of added value under most Regional Initiative Projects: this holds true for a hiring of only external experts from a consultancy and for an involvement of only in-house expertise from the partner organisations or for a mix of both approaches. The input and assistance provided by experts usually allowed to frame the entire exchange of experience process and helped to go deeper into the details of a project’s topic or to have more focussed and high quality discussions going beyond the usual “me too” pattern (e.g. through their participation as speakers or facilitators at exchange of experience events). Experts could also help less experienced project partners to deal with specific challenges of the joint work process and allowed to “bridge” weaknesses in terms of communication (e.g. use of technical English language). However, a too substantial external expert involvement can sometimes also hamper subsequent learning at the level of a partner organisation or even within the wider regional/local policy subsystem. This is mainly due to the fact that the knowledge already “owned” or additionally acquired by external experts within the project hardly benefits the partner organisations after a project’s end. Or in other words, the support services provided by external experts to partner organisations (often the Lead Partner) are in fact always own skills that an organisation would otherwise have to (or be able to) develop on its own.

Another key issue which came to the fore from our empirical analysis is that the majority of the Regional Initiative Projects have actually conceived their exchange of experience under Component 3 as an “open process”. They have involved other persons or units from the project partner organisations as well as other external actors from their local/regional policy subsystems or from the wider context, with the degree of involvement usually depending upon the specific cooperation topic addressed and also upon the scope of policy change which was expected to be achieved (i.e. generating policy change at the
local/regional levels and/or striving for EU-wide relevance and added value). Astonishingly, this involvement was highest for other external actors from their local/regional policy subsystems but comparatively lower for other persons or units from the project partner organisations and also less pronounced when it came to associate actors from the wider external context to the exchange process (i.e. the latter could be expected because not all projects were explicitly striving for EU-wide relevance & added value). Despite the differences, this openness was in general very helpful because it ensured the necessary transition of project-level learning benefits towards the other dimensions of the exchange of experience process where other forms of learning were generating the expected policy change (i.e. organisational & policy learning but also EU-wide learning).

When it comes to the project-level learning process properly speaking, one can observe that both individual and cross-cultural group learning occurred extensively under the Regional Initiative Projects. This learning was initiated by many of the traditional networking activities and also by combining traditional networking with other types of interregional activities (i.e. sophisticated tools & methods, implementation-related activities), always provided that the set of activities is delivered in an integrated manner and also conceived in an intelligent way. These learning processes have contributed to increase the awareness/knowledge and also the capacities/skills of those persons who were directly and intensively involved in the projects’ exchange of experience on the cooperation topics addressed, albeit at variable extents. Various factors are still hampering project-level learning processes, but their respective influence markedly differs between individual and cross-cultural learning. However, as most of these hindering factors are under the direct control of either the involved persons (e.g. individual pre-conditions) or the project as a whole (e.g. organisation of processes & delivery of activities), there is obviously still considerable scope for further improving the overall scope of learning within projects.

Conclusions on organisational learning & policy improvements

Bearing in mind that the basic type of policy change induced by Regional Initiative Projects is most often that of “policy improvements”, it becomes clear that a high level of preparedness for and commitment to learning within the involved project partner organisations are key factors which strongly condition the wider success of interregional cooperation projects.

From the empirical evidence we can conclude that organisational learning processes have indeed taken place under most INTERREG IVC projects, but also that the actual outreach of organisational learning was quite variable among the projects and also within each project. About two thirds of the project partner organisations incorporated the material and immaterial benefits resulting from project-level learning into their internal policy-related structures, planning processes or operational routines. This uptake was in many cases also supported by two other aspects for which, however, the overall outreach across all project partners remained relatively modest (approximately 50% in both cases):

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99 According to our understanding, these are mostly technical corrections of an already existing policy instrument or of a specific action but also a limited adaptation of an established conceptual framework of a policy which can already be achieved at the level of individual institutions or organisations if those are directly and fully in charge of implementing an instrument or a policy.
A first more direct aspect was that many partner organisations indeed organised specific internal learning processes to share the project outcomes with a wider range of their staff members (e.g. regular internal meetings or workshops, trainings etc), but in those cases where this was absent one can conclude that the preparedness to collective learning within an organisation was still weakly developed.

A second more indirect aspect was that other elements from the project partner organisations were actually integrated into the project-level exchange of experience process (e.g. departments or units or branch offices etc), but for the many cases where this did not happen one can conclude that the capacity of external knowledge absorption was still weakly developed within the concerned organisations.

Be this as it may, the indeed variable overall level of organisational learning was still sufficiently substantial to achieve manifold policy improvements at the regional/local or even national levels. These improvements usually included technical corrections of already existing policy instrument or of specific policy actions and sometimes also led to a limited further adaptation of an established policy framework if a project partner organisation was also directly and fully in charge of conceiving and implementing this policy. This process of learning and change occurred within all types of partner organisations independently from their respective legal status (e.g. public authorities; other bodies governed by public law), but it was clearly influenced in a positive way by a partner organisations’ previously acquired European cooperation experience.

Yet, our empirical evidence also points to a variety of adverse influences which reduced the potentially reachable scope of organisational learning and change. Those influences emerged in most cases from a partner organisations’ own structural settings (e.g. hierarchies, established procedures, sub-structures or departments with different tasks etc) and also from individual or collective organisation-internal behaviour. Further influences which have sometimes also prevented organisational learning and successful change to emerge resulted from the composition of the project partnerships and from the specific role which individual partner organisations actually play in their domestic policy subsystems.

Conclusions on collective policy learning & structural policy change

Although less important in overall terms when compared the achieved policy improvements, one can observe that the Regional Initiative Projects also induced quite often processes of collective learning among a project partner organisation and a wider range of other actors from the regional/local policy subsystems which then also allowed to achieve more substantial "structural policy changes".100

The large majority of the Regional Initiative Projects was successful in making a first step towards collective policy learning, because they generated a broader awareness among other external actors

100 According to our understanding, these are more wide-ranging modifications leading to substantial adaptations of an already existing policy instrument or of the conceptual framework for a wider policy field in place (e.g. a revision of the basic principles and of the wider purpose, leading to a visible change in the overall intervention rationale), but also to the introduction of a completely new instrument or policy concept which previously did not exist.
from their policy subsystems about their specific topic addressed. Although this was achieved at variable
degrees within each project, one can conclude that a generally supportive aspect was that a large number
of projects have integrated project external local/regional politicians and public authorities or other
stakeholder organisations (e.g. semi-public local and regional agencies, NGOs) into their interregional
exchange of experience process under Component 3. Less frequent though was that Regional Initiative
Projects have also made the second step in collective policy learning, as only around one third of the
partner organisations received pro-active support from other project-external actors of their
local/regional policy subsystems to transform project outcomes into structural policy changes. This,
however, should not be interpreted negatively because many of the local or regional authorities involved
in projects did most likely not need such external support to achieve the expected policy change. By the
way, this also suggests the conclusion that the project partnerships were most often composed of right
partners actually having the capacity to achieve such changes.

For those cases where both steps of this collective policy learning process were taken, our case study
evidence allows concluding that more or less wide-ranging structural policy changes were actually
achieved through a common effort: they range from a substantial joint modification of a policy field over a
joint improvement or establishment of specific policy structures (e.g. vertical public policy coalitions,
horizontal stakeholder coalitions) to the joint introduction of completely new policy concepts or even
entire policies for addressing specific problems or challenges.

Conclusions on EU-wide learning & “external” policy change

The most important conclusion in this respect is that, beyond the admittedly few Regional Initiative
Projects which were intentionally striving for EU-wide relevance (e.g. by elaborating specific approaches
or EU-wide applicable support instruments), also many other projects have actually generated outcomes
which were of EU-wide relevance or of a wider European added value. When working towards such
outcomes a lot of projects got help or inspiration from other organisations or other EU-projects in the
wider external context, but it seems that a participation in external capitalisations processes (not
including that of INTERREG IVC) or in other external events was less supportive in this respect.

Although there is no information source which would allow to generally appraise at what degree these
outcomes were actually taken up by the EU Cohesion Policy's wider learning process on territorial
development or by any other EU level policy and by “external” regional/local authorities, evidence from
several of our case studies shows that effective policy influencing has actually taken place (i.e. mostly of
EU-level policies) and also that various services of the European Commission were seeking direct contact
with those Regional Initiative Projects and pro-actively took forward some of the achieved project
outcomes in their own context.

Recommendations for the current programming period 2007-2013
As no further projects will be approved under the INTERREG IVC programme and because the basic structural and budgetary settings of the still running Regional Initiative Projects are already established through their approved applications (i.e. working method, nature & sequence of activities etc), we have to focus our recommendations for the current programming period 2007-2013 on those aspects of the exchange of experience process for which a margin of manoeuvre still exists within the projects or the programme.

(1) Still running projects should be aware of the fact that generating policy-relevant knowledge through learning and also transmitting this knowledge is something that happens stepwise and over time and thus can not be expected to emerge at one specific moment during the project implementation process (e.g. usually towards the end of the project). Bearing this in mind, the partners responsible for Component 3 should therefore carry out a careful time-management. Moreover, also the other project partners should pro-actively support these endeavours because successful learning from experiences and a transfer of practices depends also of their contributions and not only on the “process-framing” established by the Lead Partner or the partner responsible for Component 3.

(2) The still running projects should themselves carefully monitor and address the factors which are hampering project-level learning processes, especially if those are under the direct control of the project partners. Although these factors differ markedly between individual learning and cross-cultural learning processes, many of them can be addressed by the involved individuals (e.g. communication problems & lack of language proficiency of the involved persons) and by the project management (e.g. lacking continuity of the entire exchange of experience process, weaknesses in the overall organisations of Component 3).

(3) When experts are used to support the exchange of experience process, the still running projects should give preference to experts coming from the local/regional partner organisations and involve them throughout the entire project, but at the same time also take care that external expert involvement is not “replacing” the necessary learning of the partner organisations’ own staff.

(4) The partner organisations of still running projects should themselves take appropriate action to stimulate and better frame organisational learning processes, because our analysis uncovered persisting weaknesses in this context (i.e. individual preparedness for organisational learning & organisational capacity of external knowledge absorption). As organisational learning plays an important role in the current pattern of policy change that is achieved by Regional Initiative Projects, the partner organisations should especially initiate more structured internal learning processes within their own context in order to share the external immaterial and material benefits of project-level learning with a larger number of their staff members.

(5) The partners of still running projects should carefully examine in how far the expected policy changes in their areas require additional support from other project-external actors or
stakeholders from their local/regional policy subsystem. If this is the case, then they should start at an early stage to involve such external but policy-relevant actors in their ongoing exchange process and also take appropriate actions for launching a collective policy learning process with them (e.g. through a combination of wider awareness raising, pro-active support-seeking and a formation of policy coalitions).

(6) The still running projects should themselves carefully monitor and address the factors which are adversely influencing organisational learning and collective learning in the regional/local policy subsystems. This is particularly important in the field of organisational learning, because our analysis has shown that in this case the scope of adverse influences is highest and most often originating from aspects which are more or less still under the direct control of a project partner.

(7) The still running projects should themselves carefully observe that the causality links between various forms of learning and the induced policy changes are as clearly as possible described in their progress reporting to the INTERREG IVC programme.

(8) Especially the still running projects which are not deliberately striving for EU-wide relevance but generating outcomes that might be of wider European added value should carefully consider how to involve or associate other external actors to their exchange of experience process in order to better influence national or EU-level policy discourses and to contribute to policy learning at a European scale.

Recommendations for the next programming period 2014-2020

Recommendations for the programming period 2014-2020 can in principle address a wide range of aspects relating to the exchange of experience process, but up to now very little is known on the basic thematic orientation of the new programme and on the organisational/operational elements which are foreseen for the future projects. Bearing this in mind, our recommendations developed from the main findings of this study will also link up to some reflections about the “role and orientation of future interregional cooperation” which were presented in the final report of the intermediate evaluation of the INTERREG IVC programme.101

(1) Our empirical analysis has shown that a good composition of the project partnership (i.e. adequate combination of context conditions & policy experiences; appropriate policy capacity not always related to the legal status of the partners) and also a previous cooperation experience of the partners were key success factors for the exchange of experience process. These findings support some of the conclusions of the intermediate evaluation of INTERREG IVC, which suggests that a future programme should revise the current project partnership requirements in order to make the exchange of experience process clearly result-oriented and that only “purpose-oriented project partnerships” should be established (i.e. by applying only the current criteria “experienced-less experienced partners”, “organisations having

101 INTERREG IVC (2010).
appropriate competencies & skills”, but not any longer the criterion “extent of geographical coverage”).

Although the important positive role of previous cooperation experience is of course acknowledged, we would like to sound a note of caution in this respect: a new programme must avoid the danger of turning the future interregional exchange of experience and its wider learning process into a “closed shop”, but instead remain open also for less experienced project partnerships and the innovations they can bring to the programme. This could be achieved by setting out restrictive conditions for project proposals including mostly the same authorities or organisations that were already involved in a predecessor project.

(2) Due to the fact that our analysis could not identify a “one-size-fits-all concept” for successfully delivering Component 3 under all Regional Initiative Projects, future applicants should continue to have the largest possible freedom for setting up their own working methods and also for selecting the most appropriate combination of activities to carry out the interregional exchange of experience process. Traditional networking activities should remain the backbone of the exchange of experience process because under all project constellations they have proved most successful (esp. interregional events & study visits) if they were also delivered in an integrated and well-organised manner. But also sophisticated working tools and methods should – where appropriate – continue to form part of the wider set of proposed activities, because they clearly demonstrated in the present period to be of added value for the exchange of experience process. The new Programme Manual should therefore stronger highlight that an integrated and also well-conceived delivery of such activities is essential for the success of the exchange process and give supporting advice showing how to conceive and organise such a process already during the project elaboration phase.

(3) The role and stronger use of “implementation-related activities” which are directly connected to the exchange of experience process should be carefully (re-)considered under the future programme, because they can make beneficial contributions to policy-oriented learning and change both at the level of the partner organisations and within the wider local/regional policy subsystems.103 If proposed, these activities should remain light experimentations which mainly demonstrate how good practices or policy strategies/action plans are successfully transferred and applied in order to achieve the expected policy change. If especially individual or joint pilot actions are realised in the future, then the projects should be required to put into place an appropriate process of “strategic feedback loop learning” under their exchange of experience process in order to ensure that the partners jointly observe, share and aggregate the achievements of such pilot actions. Bearing in mind the frequently observable weaknesses under the current INTERREG IVC mini-programmes,104 it should also be critically reviewed whether this type of intervention is continued in the next period or if it can be replaced by a new “two-phase

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102INTERREG IVC (2010), pp. 138-139.
103We highlighted earlier that policy-oriented learning and change does not only occur from identifying a problem and from proposing a solution; it also requires that a solution is put into practice.
104I.e. only some core activities of their Component 3 were well connected to each other; the interrelation between Component 3 and Component 4 (sub-projects) were sometimes not quite well planned or understood by the main participating regions etc.
Regional Initiative Project” which interlinks more clearly the project-level exchange of experience and learning process (1st phase) to subsequent processes of policy change in the partner areas (2nd phase).105

(4) Instead of simply assuming that the interregional exchange of experience process involves learning among the partners, the new programme should more clearly highlight the important role that the multidimensional learning process is playing as a key driver for achieving policy change in the project partner areas. The new Programme Manual should also better explain to future applicants the learning processes which should be initiated at the different levels and also provide supporting advice on how to conceive and organise those processes already during the project elaboration phase (e.g. through showing project examples, through developing “learning models”). The new Programme Manual should furthermore highlight the advantages of conceiving the exchange of experience as an “open” process, because good links to other external actors are important for transmitting project-level learning to other learning levels and ultimately also for achieving policy change in practice. It should therefore be better explained how to conceive an interactive exchange process involving various types of external actors which is also illustrated by concrete examples. For all these aspects, the new Programme Manual should also give concrete examples for pitfalls that have to be avoided.

(5) A future interregional cooperation programme should re-consider the overall implementation timeframe which is allocated to projects. The current period showed that especially projects addressing cross-cutting or highly complex co-operation topics would quite frequently have needed more time than only 3 years for learning about good practices, for successfully transferring some practices among the partners and for achieving concrete policy changes in the local/regional context.

(6) The future monitoring indicator system, both at the level of the entire programme and at the level of the projects (i.e. periodic progress reports), should be designed in a way to better capture the qualitatively different learning processes and also the different nature of the associated effects. For project-level learning, a basic differentiation between individual and group learning and also a better specification of the associated immaterial learning benefits (i.e. increase of awareness/knowledge & of capacities/skills) should be introduced. A new monitoring approach should be introduced for capturing the scope and effects of organisational learning and of collective learning within a policy subsystem, but also for appraising the scope of a project’s contribution to EU-wide learning. This can be achieved by combining a quantitative monitoring approach106 with a systematic qualitative monitoring approach, with the latter focusing on the learning effects and more specifically on the induced effects in terms of policy change. Such a new approach was also suggested by the intermediate evaluation of the INTERREG IVC programme.107

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105 i.e. only some core activities of their Component 3 were well connected to each other; the interrelation between Component 3 and Component 4 (sub-projects) were sometimes not quite well planned or understood by the main participating regions etc.

106 By developing appropriate indicators such as: “no. of other persons from the partner organisation involved in wider organisational learning processes”; “no. of other external actors from the partners policy subsystems involved in collective policy learning processes”; “no. of other external actors associated to the generation of project outcomes with EU-wide relevance or added value” etc.

107 The INTERREG IVC mid-term evaluation already suggested such a “two-phase project” type in its recommendations for the new programming period, especially in the case of a high-intensity level of cooperation. INTERREG IVC (2010), pp. 137 & 138.
As many of the current Regional Initiative Projects did not intentionally strive for EU-wide relevance but have indeed achieved outcomes which are of a European added value, the future interregional cooperation programme should clearly strengthen its own role as a European platform for policy learning. This can, on the one hand, be achieved by stronger motivating future projects to achieve also more outcomes with a clear European added value and by providing them in the new Programme Manual with concrete examples or working approaches for doing so. On the other hand, the new programme should from the outset establish a formal structuring for such a platform stimulating an EU-wide learning process in order to ensure that the shared lesson set about regional/local development is continuously expanded and improved. This can be achieved by creating a “virtual resource centre for learning” which is continuously fed with new inputs and at which interested third parties can get access to those experiences, but also by organising specific programme events which aim at further maturing these learning resources (e.g. theme-specific seminars, regular capitalisation processes etc) and by pro-actively establishing links to other external virtual communities or learning platforms.
### Annex 1: Regional Initiative Projects, Levels of Co-operation Intensity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensity of Co-operation</th>
<th>Main Focus</th>
<th>Example of Activities</th>
<th>Expected Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic intensity</strong></td>
<td>Projects which propose ‘traditional networking activities for an exchange and dissemination of experience.’</td>
<td>- Thematic seminars&lt;br&gt;- Study visits&lt;br&gt;- Exchanges of staff&lt;br&gt;- Conferences&lt;br&gt;- Websites, newsletters, brochures&lt;br&gt;- Production of good practice guides</td>
<td>- New knowledge and skills&lt;br&gt;- Possible successful transfer of practices between partners&lt;br&gt;- Possible improvement of regional / local policies and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium intensity</strong></td>
<td>Projects which propose, in addition to normal networking activities (exchange &amp; dissemination of experience) also more demanding work for instance related to pilot actions or to the transfer of good practices / the development of new approaches.</td>
<td>In addition to ‘example 1’ activities:&lt;br&gt;- Pilot actions (for instance in the context of a transfer of practice)&lt;br&gt;- Development of regional policy tools (methodologies, software)</td>
<td>In addition to ‘example 1’ results:&lt;br&gt;- Successful transfer of practices between partners&lt;br&gt;- Direct improvement of regional / local policies and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High intensity</strong></td>
<td>Projects which propose the creation of a ‘mini-programme’ under which sub-projects will be supported. These ambitious cooperation projects require the setting up of joint decision making procedures to decide on the sub-projects and in addition to an exchange &amp; dissemination of experience also the joint development of new approaches.</td>
<td>In addition to ‘examples 1 &amp; 2’ activities:&lt;br&gt;- Development of sub-projects</td>
<td>In addition to ‘examples 1 &amp; 2’ results:&lt;br&gt;- Improvements of policies / strategies at the sub-projects’ level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Own adaptation according to information provided by the INTERREG IVC Programme Manual.
Annex 2:
Technical background of the surveys

Scope of the surveys:
1937 individual invitations have been issued to project partners and lead partners; in some cases this implied multiple persons within the same organisation. In total 716 responses have been received:
- 128 Lead Partners (17 call 1; 45 call 2; 63 call 4 project; 3 unknown\(^{108}\)), and
- 588 Project Partners (90 call 1; 176 call 2; 294 call 4 projects; 28 unknown\(^{109}\))

Who answered:
Overall, 57% of the answers concern priority 1 (innovation & knowledge economy) and 43% regard priority 2 (environment & risk prevention). The below graphic provides further details on the share of responses by priorities and sub-themes. As for the Lead Partners of the first two calls, 65% come from standard regional initiative projects, 21% from projects with pilot actions / joint experimentation, and 15% from mini-programmes. As for projects approved under the fourth call, 83% were standard regional initiative projects and 17% projects with pilot actions / joint experimentation.

**Figure 1.** Priorities and sub-themes

![Priorities and sub-themes](image1.png)

Furthermore, 59% of the responses come from public authorities and 41% from bodies governed by public law. The composition of the partnerships is presented in the graphics below. They illustrate that most projects include both public bodies/authorities and other bodies governed by public law.

**Figure 2.** Characteristics of the project partnerships

![Characteristics of the Project Partnerships](image2.png)

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\(^{108}\) "unknown" means that the respondents have not indicated under which call their project has been approved.

\(^{109}\) "unknown" means that the respondents have not indicated under which call their project has been approved.
### Annex 3: Case study sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Lead Partner</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>EureConsult</th>
<th>Spatial Foresight</th>
<th>t33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 1: Innovation &amp; the knowledge economy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ChemClust</td>
<td>Ministry of Science and Economy of Saxony-Anhalt (DE)</td>
<td>Innovation, research and technology development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLIQ (*)</td>
<td>City of Jyväskylä (FI)</td>
<td>Innovation, research and technology development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CeRamiCa (*)</td>
<td>Municipality of Hódmezővásárhely (HU)</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship &amp; SMEs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLUSNET</td>
<td>Greater Lyon (FR)</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship &amp; SMEs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEE</td>
<td>Design Wales (UK)</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship &amp; SMEs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-SPEED</td>
<td>City of Venice (IT)</td>
<td>Information Society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DART</td>
<td>InvestitionsBank des Landes Brandenburg (DE)</td>
<td>Employment, human capital and education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Priority 2: Environment &amp; risk prevention</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRaBS</td>
<td>Town and Country Planning Association (UK)</td>
<td>Natural and technological risks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSTAIN</td>
<td>EUCC (NL)</td>
<td>Water management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVERSE</td>
<td>CONSEIL REGIONAL D’AQUITAINE (FR)</td>
<td>Biodiversity and preservation of natural heritage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MORE4NRG</td>
<td>Province of Flevoland (NL)</td>
<td>Energy and sustainable transport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POWER (*)</td>
<td>SEEDA (UK)</td>
<td>Energy and sustainable transport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) Projects which were case studies already under the INTERREG IVC intermediate evaluation
ANNEX 4: The interregional exchange of experience process – own expectations of INTERREG IVC

INTERREG IVC encourages regional and local authorities to view interregional cooperation as a means of enhancing their development (...) and (...) the core element in interregional cooperation is the exchange of experiences at policy level. All types of projects (...) supported under this programme should demonstrate how they build on the stock of experiences gained under past or existing regional development programmes including Structural Funds programmes. This exchange at the policy level should enable (...) authorities and other actors at regional and local level to learn from each others’ experiences and to develop new and/or innovative approaches and solutions in the fields of innovation, knowledge economy, environment and risk prevention.

Regional Initiative Projects (...) build on the experiences gained by the partners; experiences that will be enriched through interregional cooperation. Therefore, regardless of their intensity of cooperation, all Regional Initiative Projects (including mini-programmes) must have a particular focus on the exchange of experience and on the identification, analysis and dissemination of good practices in the policy area tackled by the project. It is under the Component 3 (...) that the good practices developed by the partners in the domain tackled by the project have to be identified and exchanged. The programme does not have any specific requirement regarding the way the exchange of experience should take place. It is up to each Regional Initiative Project to organise activities in this component in order to ensure an efficient exchange of experience amongst the partners (...). Projects (...) approved in the fourth call have in addition to elaborate ‘Implementation Plans’. The implementation plan is defined as a document that specifies how each ‘region’ participating in the cooperation will work to integrate the lessons learnt from the cooperation into its local / regional or if relevant national policies. The aim is to go beyond the above mentioned requirements (which usually remain at the project level) by focusing on a more specific output at ‘partner’ level.

With respect to the expected policy-level effects that should result from a “transfer of good practices” and from an approaching of these practices in their wider policy context as well as from an “improvement of policies”, the following is highlighted: A good practice is defined (...) as an initiative (e.g. methodologies, projects, processes and techniques) undertaken in one of the programme’s thematic priorities which has already proved successful and which has the potential to be transferred to a different geographic area. Proved successful is where the good practice has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective. (...) Only a practice introduced by one partner and that has a concrete and measurable impact on another partner (for instance, through the initiation of a pilot project or through the adoption of a certain methodology by this other partner) can be considered as a transfer. The dissemination of good practices or the intention of a partner to adopt a new practice is not sufficient to consider the practice as transferred. (...) The work on operational practices is (...) important but it should be considered as a step towards policy improvements. Even if by transferring practices from one region to another, regions can contribute to enrich and renew the way they implement their policies, the transfer of practices is usually not sufficient to ensure long term policy effects. (...) From that point of view, transfers of practice shall be more considered as results (short term effects of the cooperation). The exchange of experience should also involve an approaching of these practices in their wider policy context and an improvement of policies. (...) The notion of ‘policy’ relates to the public institutional framework of the regions and is therefore broader (...) than the notion of practices (...). By approaching the practices in their wider policy context, partners in a project should also exchange their experience on the different policy frameworks of their regions. It is through this strategic approach that the cooperation can achieve more structural changes in each of the participating regions (e.g. modification of a specific policy measure or the creation of a new priority in a policy document). Also from the improvement of policies such structural changes are expected to emerge, because it is specified that (...) a policy can be considered as improved only when a concrete change has occurred in the policy framework of the region thanks to the exchange of experience carried out within the project. (...) From that point of view, (...) policy improvements relate more to impacts (long term effects of the cooperation).

Another (...) important result of INTERREG IVC projects will be the creation of added-value not only at partner level but also at European level. In other words, INTERREG IVC projects should strive for EU-wide relevance. For this reason, experiences and know-how generated through these projects should be relevant not only to the partners of the project but also to organisations outside the partnership (...). Due to this and (...) in order to contribute to the capitalisation at programme level, Regional Initiative Projects have to ensure a proper record and follow up of these exchanges. In particular, at the end of the exchange process, the production of a concrete document such as a good practice guide, or a case study collection or a policy recommendations paper is required. Finally, the Programme will also realise (...) a strong dissemination effort to communicate the results of activities to all EU regions (...) with a view to (...) facilitate as far as possible the unlocking and use of valuable information on innovative solutions or best practices.

By this (...) exchange, sharing and transfer of policy experience, knowledge and good practices, authorities and other actors at regional and local level will contribute to achieve the overall objective of the INTERREG IVC programme which is (...) to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies in the areas of innovation, the knowledge economy, the environment and risk prevention (...) and also make a contribution to achieve in a sustainable way (...) the economic modernisation and increased competitiveness of Europe.
## Annex 5:
### Methodological approaches for a “de-contextualization of case-based knowledge”

- **Communication and dialogue**: group interaction and investigation are of major importance; knowledge and experience need to be exchanged (with recording and processing of all relevant verbal information).

- **Participation**: transferable findings need to be developed jointly and then subsequently “owned” by the project.

- **Negotiation and validation**: partners need to discuss and negotiate what could be learned from both individual and common experiences (by making the knowledge more abstract and deducting any case-based peculiarities).

- **Cooperation** (...) from the start also prevents partners from thinking too much about their specific case and forces them to get used to developing joint conclusions.

- **Thinking in thematic rather than in geographical categories** helps to formulate common findings and leads to overcoming the limitations of case-based experience.

- **Facilitation**: to keep the discussions going, to ensure equal participation, to steer the process of de-contextualization by means of communication and visualization techniques.

**Source**: Hachmann (2008)
Annex 6: Organisational absorption of externally sourced knowledge – a general overview

By looking at investments in R&D as a means for developing a firm’s ability to absorb externally-sourced knowledge and information, Cohen and Levinthal (Cohen/Levinthal, 1990) introduced with their paper the notion of the ‘absorptive capacity’. They generally defined the ‘absorptive capacity’ as (...) an ability to recognise the value of new information, assimilate it and then apply it to commercial ends (...). But this capacity (...) refers not only to the acquisition or assimilation of information by an organization but also to the organization’s ability to exploit it. Therefore, an organization’s absorptive capacity does not simply depend on the organization’s direct interface with the external environment. It also depends on transfers of knowledge across and within subunits that may be quite removed from the original point of entry.

Further to this, Cohen and Levinthal also identified a number of internal mechanisms which determine or influence a firm’s absorptive capacity, namely the existence of:

- “prior related knowledge” within an organisation (i.e. basic skills, a shared language, knowledge of the most recent scientific or technological developments in a given field etc) to assimilate and use new knowledge,
- “a sharing & distribution of knowledge and expertise in the organization”, which is essential for an effective internal communication between individuals holding an “interface function” (e.g. specialists standing at the interface of either the firm and the external environment or the different subunits within a firm) and a larger group of employees also concerned by such matters (e.g. specific sub-units, project teams etc),
- “cross-function absorptive capacities” such as the establishment of relationships between corporate and divisional structures of the same function or close links between different functional divisions or sub-units (etc. R&D, design, manufacturing, marketing).

More recent works relating to the concept of ‘absorptive capacity’ suggested its application to the intra-organisational absorption of knowledge (Szulanski, 1996), highlighted the role which absorptive capacity and reflective capacity respectively play in the development of project-based learning within firms (Scarbrough/Laurent et.al., 2002) or argued, on ground of a network perspective on organisational learning, that organisational units can produce more innovations and enjoy better performance if they occupy central network positions (Tsai, 2001).

Especially Zahra and George (Zahra/George, 2002) reviewed the original concept of ‘absorptive capacity’, which led to a more refined definition and a further expansion of the concept. The refined definition for the absorptive capacity considers it to be “a set of organizational routines and processes by which firms acquire, assimilate, transform and exploit knowledge to produce a dynamic organizational capability”. They expanded the concept by differentiating between two main dimensions and four distinct but complementary capabilities that make up a firm’s absorptive capacity:

- The “potential absorptive capacity”, which makes the firm receptive to acquiring and assimilating external knowledge. (1) Knowledge acquisition “refers to a firm’s capability to identify and acquire externally generated knowledge that is critical to its operations.” (2) The assimilation capability “refers to the firm’s routines and processes that allow it to analyse, process, interpret and understand the information obtained from external sources.”

- The “realized absorptive capacity”, which is a function of the transformation and exploitation capabilities. (3) Transformation capability can be defined as “a firm’s capability to develop and refine the routines that facilitate combining existing knowledge and the newly acquired and assimilated knowledge.” (4) The exploitation capability of a firm is basically the capacity of a firm to apply the newly acquired knowledge in product or services that it can get financial benefit from.
Annex 7:
Levels & processes of organisation-internal learning - a general overview

In the late 1990s Crossan, Lane and White (Crossan / Lane / White, 1999) developed a widely known framework of organisational learning (i.e. the “4I-framework”) which integrates the three observable levels of learning - namely individual, group and organisational learning - into one model. This framework indicates two routes of learning, namely "from the individual to the organisation" and "from the organisation to the individual".

This model identifies four basic processes of learning, namely intuiting, interpreting, integrating and institutionalising (see table 1 below):

- The first process, intuiting, only takes place at the individual level and was defined as (...) the preconscious recognition of the pattern and/or possibilities inherent in a personal stream of experience (...). In other words, this process occurs when individuals recognise patterns in their own past or present experiences and identify their potential use in their current work environment or when they comprehend something new for which there was no prior explanation.

- The second process, interpreting, is the transition from the individual to the group level and was defined as (...) explaining, through words and/or actions, (...) an insight to one's self and to others (...). As the interpretation process moves beyond the individual and the ideas become embraced by the group, integration starts to occur.

- The third process, integrating, is the first process that occurs at the group level and was defined as (...) the process of developing shared understanding among individuals and of taking coordinated action through mutual adjustment (...). Or in other words, when new ways of thinking and acting are recurrent and have a sufficiently significant impact on organisational action, then the changes start to become institutionalised.

- The fourth process, institutionalising, takes place at the organisational level and was defined as (...) the process of embedding learning that has occurred by individuals and groups into the institutions of the organization including systems, structures, procedures, and strategy (...). It is the process of ensuring that routinised actions occur, which implies that there is a deliberate effort to embed knowledge at the organisational level so that it may persist and be repeated in the future.

Figure 1: The original “4I-framework” by Crossan, Lane and White

In the following years, organisational learning studies that followed the “4I framework” of Crossan, Lane and White have further explored and elaborated on the initial processes of organisational and suggested elements for completing the original model:

- Based upon a reflection of Bandura’s social cognitive theory, some authors developed a broader concept of
the individual learning level by including the additional processes "attention", "retention", "production" and "motivation" (Castaneda/Perez, 2005) and later also suggested the inclusion of two new processes at the group learning level which are "conversation" and "social modelling" (Castaneda/Rios, 2007).

- Another interesting contribution reflected and further elaborated upon the processes of institutionalising organisational learning for embedding knowledge in the organisational memory, mainly by using the neo-institutional theory as a conceptual basis and by looking at organisational learning from a social construction perspective (Wiseman, 2007).

- A final and important contribution explored the political dynamics of organisational learning within the model developed by Crossan, Lane and White and argued that the role of power and politics are important aspects for better understanding which new ideas or insights will become institutionalised and why others will not (Lawrence/Mauws et. al., 2005). They proposed that different forms of power in organisations are connected to specific learning processes (i.e. intuition is linked with discipline, interpretation with influence, integration with force and institutionalisation with domination) and modified the original model as follows (see figure 2 & table 1 below).

Figure 2: The revised "4I-framwork" by Lawrence, Mauws et. al.

Table 1: Main characteristics of the forms of power associated to learning processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Associated Form of Power</th>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Force</th>
<th>Domination</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>Episode</td>
<td>Systematic</td>
<td>Systematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How it works</td>
<td>Affecting costs/ benefits of behaviors</td>
<td>Restricting available behaviors</td>
<td>Restricting available behaviors</td>
<td>Affecting costs/ benefits of behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples</td>
<td>Moral coercion</td>
<td>Agenda setting</td>
<td>Material technologies</td>
<td>Socialisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>Limiting decision</td>
<td>Information systems</td>
<td>Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Removing opponents</td>
<td>Physical layout</td>
<td>Tacit-based work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex B: The three basic types of organisational learning – a general overview

“Single-loop Learning”: This type focuses mostly on incremental learning or technical learning about effects how the instruments may be improved to achieve the goals set. Learning is based on a process of error detection and correction by looking at an organisation’s results and actions (assuming that problems and their solutions are close to each other in time and space, although they often are not), but learning does not question the fundamental goals/norms or the already existing structures of an organisation.

“Double-loop Learning”: This type is mostly about conceptual learning or problem learning, which stimulates that things are seen from a different evaluative viewpoint (in a ‘new light’) or that change occurs in the outlook on a ‘problematique’. This learning considers results and actions in the wider framework of their operating assumptions, this leads to insights about why a solution works. This form of learning occurs when error detection and correction also involve a change of the underlying norms, functions (policies) and structures of an organisation (i.e. a rethinking of existing rules, internal processes and procedures).

“Triple-loop Learning”: This type focuses mostly on learning about learning or on learning how to learn and inquires into previous episodes of organisational learning. Ideally, triple-loop learning links all of the individual organisational learning units into one unified learning organisation. Here, the members of an organisational learn how to tap the collective knowledge embedded in various parts of the organisation and also discover over time what facilitates or inhibits their learning, thus enabling them also to produce new strategies for developing their knowledge. This type of learning can also involve a “rethinking” of the basic principles and purposes of an organisation or even question the organisation as a whole (esp. adaptation of the fundamental rationale in relation to the external context).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of change</th>
<th>“Single-loop Learning”</th>
<th>“Double-loop Learning”</th>
<th>“Triple-loop Learning”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate for what situation</td>
<td>Tackling routines or repetitive issues</td>
<td>Tackling complex, non-programmable issues</td>
<td>Learning how to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results in a change of actions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results in a change of assumptions and mental models</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results in a change of context perception</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus of learning</td>
<td>Improving</td>
<td>Understanding, improving</td>
<td>Transforming, understanding, improving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex 9: The four ideal types of learning societies

John McClellan (McClellan, 2000) developed a short but very interesting analytical framework which combines the following two dimensions by which the status of a learning society may be classified:

1. **The degree of change through learning in a society**: This dimension is determined by both a “change in the individual lesson set” (i.e. a change in a learner’s personal knowledge, behaviours, thinking, and feeling through individual learning) and a “change in the supra-individual lesson set” (i.e. a change in a larger groups’ learning, e.g. its shared knowledge and ways of acting, thinking, feeling and communicating).

2. **The scope of the learning that occurs in a society**: This dimension is determined by both a “learning on fragments of knowledge” (i.e. fragmentary learning about specialised topics which offers the prospect of better products, better health and better lives etc) and a “learning on knowledge of the whole” (i.e. emphasising the integration of the parts into a coherent whole that is akin to wisdom, which in turn requires both experience and reflection on it).

As a result of this combination, McClellan identified **four ideal types of learning societies**:

1. The **“Skilled Society”** is the sort of society in which the emphasis is on individual learning of specialized fragments of knowledge and in which learners improve their “individual lesson sets” by gaining the skills of literacy, numeracy and of technical or specialized vocations. It is a society of traditional basic education, technical schools, and doctoral dissertations in narrow fields.

2. The **“Personal Wisdom Society”** is the society whose emphasis is on personal learning of the whole which strives for enriched individual lesson sets that integrate specialized knowledge domains into a personal sense of the whole.

3. The **“Knowledge Society”** is the society of science, technical research and development or of specialized journals and academic disciplines that puts emphasis on expanding a society’s shared lesson set about specialised domains.

4. The **“Koinosphic” or “Common Wisdom Society”** which focuses on maturing society’s shared lesson set (or collective wisdom) to yield a coherent sense of the whole by seeking to integrate the disparate knowledge contained in its members’ individual lesson sets, by reflecting self-critically on diverse experiences and by searching for unifying principles that give guidance over time and in a wide variety of circumstances.

McClellan highlights, however, that **real societies are likely to incorporate elements of each ideal type**, albeit at variable extents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in Shared Lesson Set</th>
<th>Change in Individual Lesson Set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Society</td>
<td>Skilled Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koinosphic Society</td>
<td>Personal Wisdom Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Parts</td>
<td>Learning the Whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selected literature about the INTERREG IVC programme:

EURADA (2010): Results of the experiment in programme-level capitalisation on INTERREG IVC projects in the subtheme innovation, research and technology development. Final Report (June 2010).


Selected literature about individual, group and organisational learning:


This bibliography only contains the works which are referred to in the footnotes of the present report, whereas the detailed sources used for elaborating the case studies can be found in the second volume of this study (compilation of case studies).


**Selected literature about policy learning, policy change and the learning society:**


Selected literature about learning processes & policy change in the context of European Territorial Cooperation:


Other literature sources referred to in this study:

