

DEAR READERS,

Much is currently changing in Europe, but the existing challenges remain: overcoming the economic and financial crises, climate change, refugee crisis and demographic change know no limits and therefore require transnational solutions. The EU and its member states must face the task of mastering these challenges together. This is where transnational cooperation comes into play. Its goal is to find solutions through international, project-based cooperation. In the 2014 - 2020 programming period, Germany is involved in six transnational programmes: in the Alpine Space, the Danube Region, the North Sea Region, the Baltic Sea Region, Central Europe and North-West Europe. A total of EUR 1.39 billion of funds is available for these projects from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) between 2014 and 2020 to support project-oriented cooperation. For decision-makers representing municipalities and regions, associations, companies and universities, Interreg is an opportunity to develop shared strategies and possible solutions, and to implement them in pilot projects on site.

The Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI) is responsible for coordinating transnational cooperation in Germany. On its behalf, the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) supports the transfer of results, organises country-wide networking and represents the Federal Government in the programme committees. It also supports projects on behalf of the BMVI in the context of the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme. With this programme, the BMVI supports selected projects during the application and/or implementation phase.

In this English edition of the „Interreg Journal“, that normally appears quarterly in German, we would like to introduce examples of Interreg projects. We also explain how our national additional funding works and present our „Interreg ambassadors“. The latter are high-ranking experts who have encountered transnational cooperation in their day-to-day work and are now sharing their positive experience. They represent and strengthen the Interreg programme by giving it a face.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition!

Your Interreg team at the BBSR



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Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure co-finances projects of special interest

Through the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme the German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI) co-finances selected transnational projects that focus on issues of special national interest and that can make a contribution to sustainable spatial development.

The objective is to push forward transnational spatial development. The actors in Germany are to ‚get fit‘ for Europe. To this end, the Programme promotes the integration of new actors into transnational cooperation, the establishment of national and European cooperative relations and public-private partnerships as well as cross-border cooperative structures. In particular, it supports cooperation on spatial development policy, such as in European macro-regions.

Target group

The Federal Programme addresses German project partners in the field of transnational cooperation in all six Interreg B programmes with German involvement. The projects applying for funding must deal with issues that are of particular interest to the German Federal Government. Another requirement is that the projects must involve integrated approaches in spatial planning. Not one specific topic, but the sustainable development of regions should take centre stage in the project. Public, Germany-based institutions are eligible for funding. In some cases, private organisations may be funded, too.

Types of Funding

The Federal Government provides an annual sum of EUR 500,000 for the period 2014 to 2020. Three funding categories have been defined. In all three categories applicants must make their own financial contributions.

- Seed money: Funds the preparation of Interreg B applications and the European search for partners
- Co-financing: Provides support with the applicant's own contribution that each partner of an Interreg B project must provide
- Additional funding: Supports measures that cannot be realised as part of an Interreg B project or that were not yet foreseeable upon application

Topics and added value

The projects should be thematically linked both to the funding objectives of Interreg B and those of the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme. This means that not everything supported by Interreg B is automatically eligible for national funding! The German Federal Programme mainly funds projects that are demonstrably related to sustainable spatial development. During

the EU Structural Funding period 2014 to 2020, the German Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme supports the following priorities:

- Low-carbon transport, corridor development and hinterland connections
- Regional energy and climate protection concepts
- Social innovation, such as in the field of services of general interest
- Blue growth, development of coastal regions, maritime spatial planning
- Measures to protect the environment and resources as well as against risks - with relevance for regional development
- Other spatially significant projects

The German Federal Programme also supports the projects at political level. This creates greater attention among decision-makers and facilitates the local communication of topics.



BEA-APP: spatial planning for renewable energy projects



The „Baltic Energy Areas – A Planning Perspective“ (BEA-APP) project investigates the spatial planning requirements of the energy transition. To utilise renewable energy sources in the Baltic Sea Region, additional land need to be assigned in order to reach climate protection and renewable energy targets. In order to assign the most suitable areas for wind energy, bio-energy units or photovoltaic installations, the existing planning instruments have to be improved and harmonised between the various countries. At the same time, renewable energy competes with nature conservation, agriculture and tourism, all of which place different demands on land use. Compromises need to be found here. Furthermore, tact is essential when interacting with the local population. This is because renewable energy projects often face local resistance or a lack of acceptance.

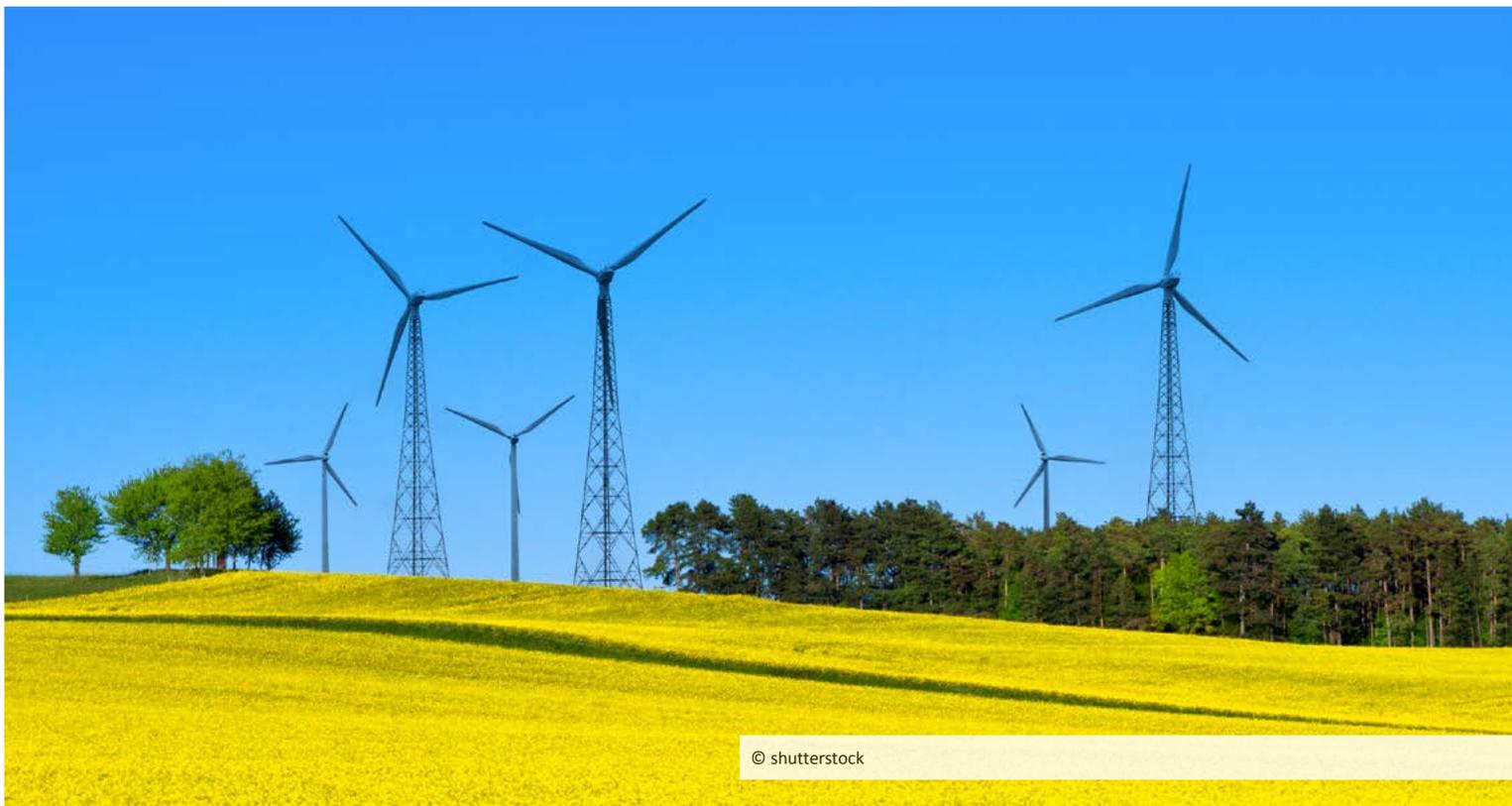
As the lead partner in the project, the Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure and State Development of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania has received seed money from the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme. It paid off when the application under the Interreg B Baltic Sea Region Programme was approved. Co-financing through the Federal Programme was approved for the BEA-APP project as well. The Ministry would like to improve planning practices in the regional/national spatial development and energy planning sectors jointly with ten other European partner institutions. In order to reach this goal, it will develop geo-

graphically optimised spatial planning instruments and approaches to establishing local acceptance in addition to setting the direction for the expansion of renewable energy generation through pilot measures.



Dr. Gabriele Hoffmann
Ministry of Energy, Infrastructure
and State Development of Mecklenburg-
Western Pomerania

„The transnational project approach is of special importance. A coordinated energy supply in the Baltic Sea states could be established by harmonising renewable energy planning in those states. Thanks to this objective, the project was rated as highly valuable for the implementation of the „EUSBSR Action Plan“ under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and assigned flagship status by the VASAB Secretariat. This means the project results will be made available to VASAB, serving as a basis for decisions made by the Secretariat. Furthermore, it gives BEA APP a special status that significantly boosts the functional and political impact of the project and the project results.



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SEMPRE: developing social services for and with socially disadvantaged persons



With the SEMPRE project, “Diakonisches Werk Schleswig-Holstein” (charitable organisation of Protestant churches in Germany) and its partners intend to improve the quality of social services offered in rural areas. The project consortium therefore supports social entrepreneurship as well as public-private partnerships that use innovative methods to give socially disadvantaged persons a voice and help them take initiative. Without funding under the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme, this pilot project would have remained nothing more than an idea.

Due to poor public transport connections and the low population density, disadvantaged groups such as the long-term unemployed, older people or migrants in rural areas are often at a greater risk of social exclusion. Diakonisches Werk Schleswig-Holstein (DW SH) allows these groups to participate in the development of social services in the SEMPRE project in order to minimise these risks. „We want to actively use the expert knowledge of socially disadvantaged persons about their specific situation, so that areas such as taxi and nursing services can be tailored more accurately,” explains Doris Scheer, European advisor at DW SH. Interreg funding has been approved for the project, which also aims to encourage a change in perspective: by focusing on deficits, the personal initiative, that can be developed by target groups when they are allowed to shape their own environment, is often overlooked.



It was the approval of seed money under the Federal Programme in February 2014 which allowed the partners to develop SEMPRE in the first place. „Close communication with transnational partners, the search for partners as such, but also cooperation with the partners in Schleswig-Holstein would not have been possible without this advance financing,” says Doris Scheer. The approval also internally served as an important signal, encouraging the management board to embark on the Interreg journey. „The approval motivated us to apply for co-financing.”

A total of 16 partners from Finland, Poland and the three Baltic states are involved. The project members are driven by the issue of social innovation. They develop networks at various levels so that different work approaches can be jointly identified, developed and tested. Needs analyses with the disadvantaged groups are conducted at the regional level to accomplish this. The results serve as the basis for micro-projects which focus on the development of suitable social services. These could for example be gatherings for families with and without a migration background. Such a programme promotes networking, offers parents help with the upbringing of their children and improves the chances of integration. The innovative aspect is that it is affected persons themselves rather than DW SH employees who bring the programme to life. Subsequently the partners jointly evaluate these micro-projects and the methods used, and share their experience. Through this transnational knowledge transfer, they are able to develop recommendations for actions for the social sector and politics in their countries, therefore having a positive impact on the quality of life in rural areas.

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Programme area: Baltic Sea Region
Status: project application approved
Project duration: 2016 – 2019
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Doris Scheer
European advisor at Diakonisches Werk
Schleswig-Holstein

„Our project is not like a CO2 filter, where you have concrete numbers to prove its success or failure after implementation. We work with people, who cannot be changed or turned in a specific direction at the push of a button. Instead the project consists of many small processes that then demonstrate the measurability of our work. We will definitely produce statistics. But the qualitative information we gain through personal interaction is more important to us here. This is the only way to obtain a description of life situations that goes beyond numbers.”



Balancing of interests for maritime spatial planning: NorthSEE and BalticLINES

From shipping routes for the transport of goods by sea to protecting biodiversity, from offshore wind farm power lines to the fishing industry: driven by many different and often conflicting interests, our use of the oceans is hotly disputed. To ensure that neither neighbouring countries nor companies nor conservationists are overwhelmed, maritime spatial planning serves as a breakwater against the storm surge of competing concerns. Investigating how such a balancing of interests can work in the North Sea or Baltic Sea is the object of the two Interreg projects „NorthSEE“ (North Sea Region) and BalticLINES (Baltic Sea Region) co-financed under the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme. The Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH) is actively engaged as a lead partner in both projects.

Principally, maritime spatial planning establishes who may use what part of the ocean and how. For the responsible authorities – in Germany the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH) – defining maritime spatial planning objectives is the first step. In a next step, it is analysed which areas of the ocean are suitable for which uses while balancing different interests. One example for such a conflict would be the planned construction of a pipeline on a route passing through a nature conservation area. Maritime spatial planners also want to realise synergy effects in order to promote economic growth in coastal regions. Until a few years ago, the neighbouring countries still lacked the structures, legal basis and determination of responsible authorities for coordinated maritime spatial planning. Baltic Sea Region projects from the previous programming period, such as BaltSeaPlan and PartiSEApate, have succeeded in building key foundations here: since 2014 the EU has been defining minimum standards for maritime spatial planning in a guideline and has been setting deadlines for the introduction of related national laws as well as the development of maritime spatial plans coordinated with the neighbouring countries. This is also where NorthSEE and BalticLINES start:

Baltic LINES aims to develop Baltic Sea planning solutions for shipping routes and energy transmission corridors. These are to be incorporated into the respective national maritime spatial plans. It ensures the harmonisation of cross-border planning and the efficient transnational use of the Baltic Sea. In order to accomplish this goal, a consultation process with national and transnational stakeholder bodies is conducted in the course of the project. The project partners are also establishing joint planning criteria, analysing data and conducting coordination processes. A Baltic Sea-wide information tool is being developed as a result, helping the planning authorities establish the most suitable basic parameters for „blue growth“.

In contrast to the Baltic Sea region, communication on spatial planning in the North Sea region is irregular and has not been institutionalised to date. Furthermore, most North Sea countries have already implemented their own maritime spatial plans – with different priorities and content, and inconsistent legal status. Within the scope of the North Sea Region project NorthSEE, the consortium partners in cooperation with planners and stakeholders therefore want to lay the foundation for ongoing transnational dialogue about maritime spatial planning and develop future scenarios up to 2050. Initially they want to develop principles and identify synergy potential based on national strategies. Joint objectives are to be subsequently developed, with proposals to implement them in the national plans. The project partners hereby focus on the three major transnational aspects of shipping, energy and the environment.

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Programme area: North Sea Region

Lead Partner: Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH)

Project duration: 2016 – 2019
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Programme area: Baltic Sea Region

Lead Partner: Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH)

Project duration: 2016 – 2018
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Interreg ambassador Dorothee Bär: „Thinking in European dimensions“

Dorothee Bär is Parliamentary State Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI) – and most recently also an Interreg ambassador. In this role, Dorothee Bär – who originally comes from Bamberg – wants to communicate that Federal Government, federal states and regional/local authorities have the opportunity to develop Europe from the bottom up through cooperation across borders. In her opinion, the leading goal of transnational cooperation is to find solutions and concepts with an added value for Europe by working on shared challenges. In this interview, she speaks about her experience with the programme and her personal impressions.

To what extent does transnational cooperation establish a general framework for a modern society?

Germany is not an island. The single European market supports our living conditions. Transnational cooperation offers the opportunity at all levels to test and practice collaboration with partners in various countries, with different administrative cultures and languages. Today we need such intercultural competencies more than ever.

What are the greatest challenges and biggest gains associated with transnational cooperation in Europe?

I believe the greatest challenges are that both the project partners and the programme stakeholders have to jointly communicate about the respective peculiarities of their region and how they want to take them into account in project work. Climate change for instance exists everywhere, but the issues involved on the coast are different from those in the Alpine region. This sounds very simple, but it is not always the case in practice. For instance, it is not enough to simply say „We want to support electromobility projects.“ Such projects need to be integrated into the respective topography. This spatial factor is very important and one needs to be aware of it. It is also what are the greatest gains of transnational cooperation: it becomes clear to the regions that they stand to gain a lot if they cooperate with their immediate cross-border neighbours jointly developing integrated solutions. As a result, the regions automatically learn to think in European dimensions.

What is your personal experience with transnational cooperation?

I recently attended the final conference for the „AlpInfoNet“ project in my Bavarian homeland. This was a project in the Interreg Alpine Space programme area. It was about the development of an online information system for tourists who want to visit the Alpine region without a car. The enthusiasm of the project partners was wonderful to see. Many things were simultaneously reached, namely the interplay of tourism and transport companies as well as promoting sustainable mobility and low-impact tourism that benefits the Alpine region as a whole. How well the partners understood each other and that they have be-

come friends was readily apparent as well. This is an aspect that should not be underestimated during times of European crises!

How can cooperation with European partners help strengthen Germany as a competitive economic business location?

The experience with European partners once collected in the context of an Interreg project can be applied in subsequent cooperation projects. This experience is infinitely valuable. Someone who has learned to work with European partners and has entered into cooperation agreements is highly qualified to survive in European and global markets.



Ambassadors promote the „Interreg mission“

Many administrative heads of a county are not entirely convinced that their county in particular can benefit from transnational cooperation, and most companies do not even know what Interreg is. This is why the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI) created an ambassador network in order to boost awareness and acceptance of the EU funding instrument in Germany. The ambassadors represent the Interreg programme, thereby giving it more political, economic and social strength. In addition to Dorothee Bär (see interview on page 7), five other ambassadors have been nominated so far.



Hubert Buhl
former mayor of the town of Sonthofen

„Transnational cooperation in Europe does not only require strong and focused policies but also great personal commitment from the participants. Operating at eye level within project consortiums and in dialogue with citizens is essential.“



Prof. Dr. Bernhard Müller
Director of the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER)

„Interreg is a wonderful initiative that succeeds in helping to bring people from various European regions closer together. This is of great importance, especially in Central Europe where communication or cooperation was virtually impossible until 1990.“



Christian Specht
Lord Mayor of the city of Mannheim

„Networking and cross-border development in European regions form the basis for the political and economic strength of the countries and therefore the EU as a whole. Interreg makes an important contribution here since it promotes dialogue.“



Anke Spoorendonk
Minister of Justice, Cultural and European Affairs of Schleswig-Holstein

„Cross-border exchange has always been a matter of course for me. I am convinced by the diversity of topics that Interreg projects are dedicated to: blue growth, demographic change, cultural heritage – there is a lot to be done!“



Barbara Woltmann
German member of parliament for the city of Oldenburg and the Ammerland region

„Transnational cooperation is becoming more and more important today.“ Problems can be jointly addressed across borders. The further development of economic and social cooperation brings Europe closer together.“



Interreg + ESPON = reducing the migration of young women from rural areas

Interreg is aimed at transnational cooperation and the exchange of experience. ESPON provides analyses, data and map materials for spatial monitoring in Europe. With their different focal points, the two European funding programmes could theoretically complement each other well. While this is generally known, it is seldom practised to date. An omission, since a combination pays off! This is demonstrated by the sister projects SEMIGRA (ESPON) and WOMEN (Interreg). Both projects address the problem of the migration of young, well educated women from rural areas in Europe. The Ministry for Regional Development and Transport of Saxony-Anhalt initiated the ESPON project SEMIGRA with the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL) as the lead partner. The related Interreg project WOMEN was led by the Ministry itself while the IfL was involved as a scientific partner.

A disproportionately large number of women aged 15 to 29 years is migrating out of rural areas in eastern Germany. Economic, demographic and social problems are exacerbated and shrinkage processes are accelerated. It also harms the regional image and intensifies the shortage of skilled workers, especially in traditional occupations for women and in the service industry. Entitled „Selective Migration and Unbalanced Sex Ratio in Rural Regions“ (SEMIGRA), the causes and consequences of the migration in eastern Germany and other affected European regions were first of all illuminated. Working in cooperation with local stakeholders, a transnational expert group compiled recommendations for target group-oriented and cross-departmental regional development strategies. The focus was on the applicability and practical orientation of results.

„Differentiated explanations for the migration of young women were derived through the ESPON project. This was based on Europe-wide analyses of demographic structures,“ says Karin Wiest, responsible for the project at IfL. „With the follow-up Central Europe project WOMEN, the recommendations from SEMIGRA were to be tested in the form of pilot activities in selected regions.“ For example, networks for female entrepreneurs and managers were set up in six European case study regions in order to improve career opportunities for women. Demographic coaching for regional companies was aimed at making them aware of the needs of female skilled workers. Image campaigns also attracted the attention of qualified young women to regional career opportunities. Building on the demographic and socio-economic indicators that were analysed as part of the SEMIGRA project, the IfL was able to classify the economic structures in the WOMEN partner regions within the European context. It thus became possible to evaluate the pilot measures in the context of regional particularities.

„In order to successfully link programmes, reliable cooperation with the European partners and a willingness to explore issues in greater depth and track them over the long term are crucial,“ Wiest says. „This simultaneously helps improve effectiveness and pre-

vents project results from „dissipating.“ Cooperation with various partner regions also enables the transfer of positive experience. One of the focal points of SEMIGRA was on partnerships with the Scandinavian countries. Experience with the migration of young women from rural areas, collected in Sweden over many years, and the pioneering role of the country in the field of gender policy is then brought into the planning policy context of Central European countries with WOMEN.

SEMIGRA

Programme: ESPON

Lead Partner: Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL), Leipzig

Project duration: October 2010 to April 2012

WOMEN

Programme: Interreg IV B Central Europe

Lead Partner: Ministry for Regional Development and Transport of Saxony-Anhalt, Magdeburg

Project duration: July 2012 to December 2014



Andreas Schweitzer

Ministry for Regional Development and Transport of Saxony-Anhalt

„Both EU projects – SEMIGRA and WOMEN – have resulted in tangible local measures. This also boosts visibility and acceptance among the stakeholders as well as citizens within the region. Here a key aspect is that insights that were gained are incorporated in national strategies and policies. Ultimately the projects contribute to raising awareness among persons responsible, even beyond the project term.“

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Editor:
Federal Institute for Research
on Building, Urban Affairs and
Spatial Development
within the Federal Office for
Building and Regional Planning

Contact:
Brigitte Ahlke
Deichmanns Aue 31–37 | 53179 Bonn
Tel.: +49 (0)228 99401-2330
E-Mail: interreg@bbr.bund.de
www.bbsr.bund.de | www.interreg.de

Editorial Team & Layout:
German Association for Housing,
Urban and Spatial Development
Littenstraße 10 | 10179 Berlin
E-Mail: info@deutscher-verband.org
www.deutscher-verband.org