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Cooperation, transnational



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Cooperation, transnational

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Transnational cooperation refers to cooperation between national, regional and municipal partners involving several member states of the European Union. This cooperation is promoted as part of European regional policy for the purposes of integrated spatial development.

1 Definition and relevance

The term *transnational cooperation* refers to cooperation between national, regional and municipal partners involving several member states of the European Union (▷ *European Union*). Transnational cooperation is closely linked to the European Territorial Cooperation objective of European regional policy (▷ *European regional policy*). In addition to cooperation in border regions (▷ *Cooperation, cross-border*) and interregional cooperation (sharing experiences of regional policy; just one cooperation area in the European Union), transnational cooperation is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in specifically defined cooperation areas.

The Treaty of Lisbon, which came into effect in December 2009, identified ▷ *Territorial cohesion* as one of three objectives of the European Union alongside economic and social cohesion (EU 2008: Article 174 et seq.). One of the key challenges here is overcoming the territorial imbalances in Europe (Ahner/Fuechtner 2010: 544 et seq.). In order to overcome these imbalances, European regions should be supported in making better use of their development potential and their specific regional qualities. Cooperation in Europe is one of the factors that plays a key role in promoting the exchange of experiences between regions and municipalities, developing model solutions and achieving a more coordinated policy (European Commission 2009).

Other challenges requiring transnational cooperation include:

- transport and accessibility,
- reducing greenhouse gases, increasing the share of renewable energies, energy efficiency,
- environmental and risk management,
- demographic development and social cohesion as well as
- strategies for special types of space such as metropolitan regions (▷ *Metropolitan region*) or special geographical spaces (e.g. mountainous regions, coastal regions) (Ahlke/Schön 2010: 526 et seq.).

2 INTERREG – Transnational cooperation

In 1997 the INTERREG II C strand (1997–1999) was set up for transnational cooperation, in particular for spatial planning and flood protection, as part of the INTERREG Community Initiative – initially for cross-border cooperation in Europe. The background to this was previous flood events in Europe as well as the realisation that a more coordinated spatial planning and development policy was needed between the member states (Dühr/Colomb/Nadin 2010: 236).

The follow-up programme INTERREG III B (2000–2006) was considered a key instrument for implementing the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (1999) (▷ *European spatial development policy*). The INTERREG programmes for transnational cooperation (INTERREG IV B 2007–2013 and INTERREG V B 2014–2020) also play an important role when it comes to implementing the follow-up documents Territorial Agenda of the European Union (2007) and Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 (2011). The overarching funding objectives of transnational cooperation in the 2007–2013 funding period were:

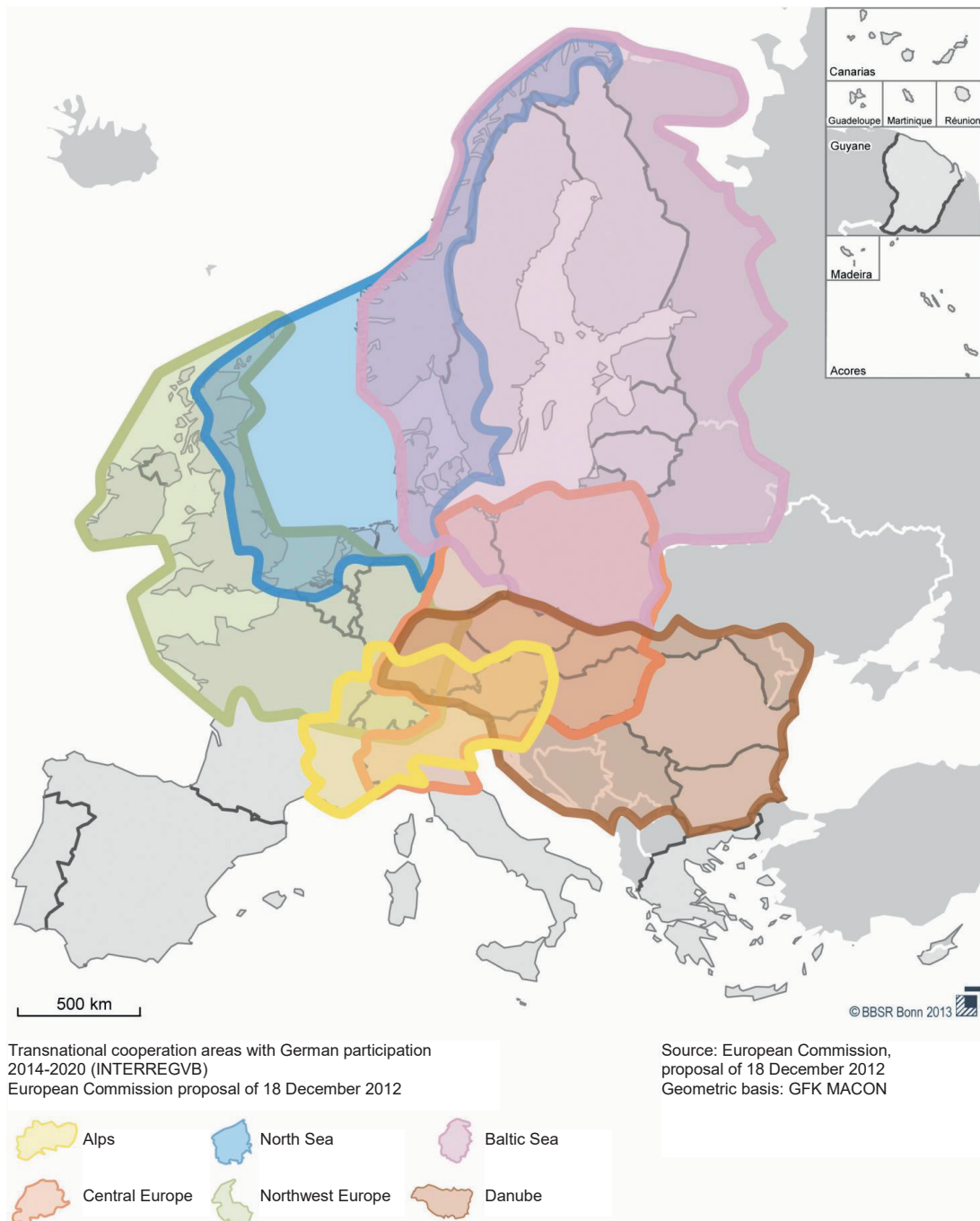
- innovation and economic development,
- the environment, resource conservation, climate change and risk management,
- accessibility and mobility,
- integrated urban and regional development (*BMVBS* [Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Urban Development] 2012: 5).

Project-oriented cooperation for the development and testing of model and transferable solutions are at the forefront of transnational cooperation (*BBSR* [Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development] 2012: 134). A total of 13 programmes for transnational cooperation are planned in the relevant cooperation areas as part of INTERREG V B in the 2014–2020 funding period. Germany is involved in six of these programmes and cooperation areas (Alps region, Danube region, Central Europe, North Sea region, North West Europe and Baltic Sea area) (see Fig. 1) (*BBSR*, undated).

Each of the cooperation areas has its own Operational Programme (OP) for specifically shaping the content and the organisation of the cooperation to the programme areas. These are developed jointly by the national and regional authorities of the member states involved, with the participation of local authorities, business and social partners as well as non-governmental organisations. The member states involved are responsible for managing the respective programmes; they usually appoint an administrative authority and a Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) to support them, and set up a national contact point in the respective partner region. The programmes are implemented jointly in specific projects, for which partners from several countries must meet.

There are several studies about the effects of transnational projects in Germany. In 2006 the effectiveness of transnational cooperation in spatial development for east German federal states was examined (*BBR* [Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning] 2006). A study is currently underway on how transnational cooperation is used by regions and municipalities to promote sustainable growth and on the use of marine resources (*BBSR* 2014). A project database can be found on the 'INTERREG B. Cooperation. Boundless.' website of the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (*BBSR*, undated).

Figure 1: Transnational cooperation areas with German participation 2014–2020 (INTERREG V B)



Source: Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development 2013

3 Federal programme – Transnational cooperation

The Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (*Bundesministerium für Verkehr und digitale Infrastruktur, BMVI*) funds selected transnational cooperation projects as part of the federal programme Transnational Cooperation. These include projects that focus on topics of particular national interest which contribute to sustainable spatial development in Germany. In this respect, funding is based on the qualification of project applications, national co-financing and effective public relations to help raise awareness about matters of transnational cooperation at a national and European level (*BBSR*, undated; *BMVBS* 2012: 6 et seq.; *BMVBS*, undated).

Objectives of the German Federal Government's Transnational Cooperation programme include tackling supranational challenges by sharing experiences internationally and developing joint solutions, promoting integrated spatial development and territorial cohesion in the respective areas, as well as consolidating the European competencies of the players involved (*BBSR* 2012: 134).

4 Macro-regions and macro-regional strategies

The term *macro-regions* refers to European sub-regions with similar ecological, economic or security-related challenges or development potential. So-called macro-regional strategies are intended to help coordinate the many different political approaches in these macro-regions and thereby bundle powers and develop activities (*BBSR* 2012: 138). Guiding principles, strategies and policies for spatial development in several INTERREG-B programme areas/macro-regions have emerged over recent years (e.g. Northern vision for the North Sea region or Vision Planet for central and south eastern Europe) as part of the various INTERREG programmes for transnational cooperation. During the 2007–2013 funding period, the European Commission adopted two macro-regional strategies for the Baltic Sea region and the Danube region. Two more are being drawn up for the Adriatic and Ionian Sea region and the Alps region. Several member states are involved in all of these strategies (European Commission 2014: 185; European Commission 2011: 127 et seq.).

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