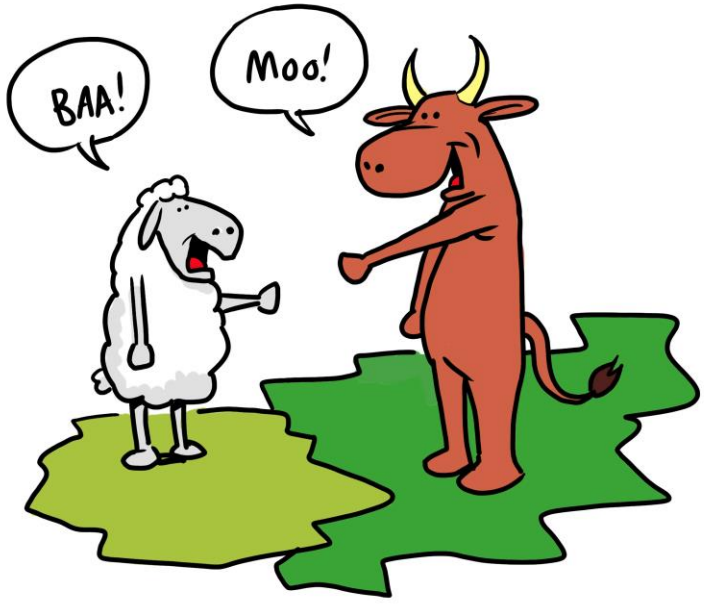
ENRD Contact Point

The State-of-play of the Implementation of Rural Development Programme Measure 421 in the EU-27

Final Report



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Glossary

AEBR: Association of European Border Regions

CLLD: Community Led Local Development

CoR: Committee of the Regions

CTA: Cooperation Technical Assistance

EGTC: European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

ELARD: European Leader Association for Rural Development

ITC: inter-territorial cooperation

LAG: Local Action Group

LDS: Local Development Strategy

MA: Managing Authority

MS: Member State

NRN: National Rural Network

NSU: Network Support Unit

PA: Paying Agency

SBSR: Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

TNC: transnational cooperation

Executive Summary

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the scale and scope of TNC and inter-territorial cooperation projects supported under Measure 421 of Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) during the 2007-2013 programming period. The research that formed the basis of this report was structured in two phases.

The **first phase** (Phase I) concerned an analysis, which was primarily carried out on the basis of the review of data submitted to the Commission by Member States about approved TNC projects (through the SFC 2007 system). Since the SFC data did not provide all the details about the notified projects (for instance the status of project, i.e. whether on-going or completed, or the theme of the project), Managing Authorities in all Member States were contacted in order to provide further details about their projects. They were also requested, to provide 'SFC-type' information and further details about approved inter-territorial cooperation projects, as Member States were not required to report these through the SFC 2007 system. 19 Member State responded to this request, providing additional details about projects to a varying degree. In addition to the SFC data, information contained in the Cooperation Offers Database and in the RDP Project Database managed by the ENRD CP was also assessed. The main purpose of this assessment was to better understand the specific themes covered by the projects as well as their objectives, target groups and activities.

The analysis of data showed that although LAGs in all Member States participate in TNC projects (either as a lead partner or partner), their **level of involvement varies widely**. At the same time, the number of LAGs operating within a country does not necessarily correlate with the number of projects in which the LAGs of the given country are involved. This raises the question on why some Member States are more active in TNC and inter-territorial cooperation than others (e.g. are there certain conditions that facilitate the development and implementation of TNC and inter-territorial cooperation in a given country?).

Additional data provided by some of the Member States with regard to the **'implementation status'** of projects (i.e. whether they are cancelled, ongoing or completed) shows that 45% of TNC and 49% of inter-territorial projects are still ongoing. The rate of ongoing (and completed projects) varies across Member States (from 37% in Denmark to 100% in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Italy[1]).

As far as the **project management structure** is concerned, relatively few projects (8% of TNC projects and 10% of inter-territorial projects for which data was reported) set up a legally constituted common structure. The most common approach is to assign the project management and coordination roles to the Lead partner LAG.

The **duration of TNC and inter-territorial projects** ranges from a few weeks to 75 and 81 months respectively. The average duration of projects is some 20 months in both cases. There are also indications (on the basis of available data) that project approval often takes long, and as a result many of the projects start their activities before the formal approval date.

[1] It has to be noted that not all of these Member States provided updated data about the status of their projects.

The average **budget** of TNC projects on the basis of (updated) SFC data is some 161,000 euro; while the same figure for inter-territorial cooperation projects in 19 Member States is 73,000 euro. Overall, the share of private funding is limited (amounting only to a few percent of total public budget), especially in the case of TNC projects. The majority of TNC and inter-territorial projects are relatively small-sized projects (with a budget of less than 100,000 euro); the share of small projects (i.e. of a budget of less than € 100,000) is 59% and 65% of all TNC and inter-territorial projects (where data was available) respectively.

Thematic analysis of all databases (i.e. enhanced SFC/TNC and newly established inter-territorial cooperation data for 19 Member States, and data provided in the Cooperation Offers and the RDP Project Databases) shows that the most common fields of TNC and inter-territorial cooperation are tourism and culture, followed by nature & environment. At the same time, the most common themes also vary across Member States. For instance, inter-territorial projects in Austria are mostly carried out in the field of 'education'.

Businesses, NGOs and LAGs are among the **most common beneficiary** groups of TNC projects based on RDP Project Database information. It has to be noted that the number of Measure 421 projects in the RDP database is relatively limited (52 projects at the time of analysis); therefore, this analysis is only indicative with regard to the beneficiary groups targeted by cooperation projects. The main beneficiary groups of inter-territorial projects also include farmers. The most typical activities of TNC projects include business development and knowledge sharing; while the most common activities carried out in the framework of inter-territorial projects are exchange visits, training and product development.

Overall, the 'quantitative' analysis of TNC and inter-territorial project data contributes to a better understanding of the scale and scope of Measure 421 activities. Based on these findings, further in-depth analysis was carried out in order to explain some of the quantitative findings.

During the **second phase** (Phase II) of research, based on the conclusions of the quantitative analysis, the an in-depth analysis focused on explaining some of the findings from the first phase and aimed to obtain further insight into the state of the Cooperation measure, the achievements, value added and challenges for further improvement of the measure in the future. Qualitative information was obtained from desk research, interviews with rural development stakeholders involved in transnational and inter-regional cooperation as well as detailed case studies of TNC projects and approaches/methods used to facilitate cooperation.

The qualitative analysis identified the main challenges that explain some of the findings of the quantitative analysis. **Differences in rules and procedures** between Member States and approaches for building-up transnational partnerships, along with language and cultural barriers, partly explain different level of involvement of LAGs in TNC projects in different MS.

The set-up of effective partnerships, where partners participate actively, and a detailed design of the project activities with a realistic timetable, are key elements for success implementation of inter-regional and transnational cooperation.

The analysis also showed that transnational cooperation benefits from the existence of **preparatory funding support and other support mechanisms** (especially technical assistance), partner search databases and tools, peer-to-peer exchanges, cooperation events and guidance material. These types of support have proved to be key factors for the set-up of effective partnerships and the production of results that serve the goals of Local Development Strategies.

Cooperation has proved to add value by reducing regional disparities and contributing to territorial cohesion, one of the key objectives of the European Union. Cooperation, especially transnational cooperation, enables the transfer of experiences and good practice from one region to another, which often brings innovation to a region. As a consequence of cooperation, by developing common solutions to address similar needs and developing common goals, some EU territories ´get closer´ and can overcome the feeling of isolation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

'*Implementation of cooperation projects*' is one of the key elements of Axis 4 (LEADER) under the 2007-2013 rural development policy (as defined under *Article 61* of the Rural Development Regulation[2]). Measure 421 (M421) is one of the three LEADER Axis measures, commonly referred to as the "cooperation" measure. It encourages and supports Local Action Groups (LAGs) to undertake a joint action with another LEADER group, or with a group taking a similar approach, in another region, Member State, or third country. According to *Article 65* of the same regulation, support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) shall be granted under the 'Cooperation' measure to **inter-territorial and transnational cooperation (TNC)** projects. "'Inter-territorial cooperation' (ITC) means cooperation within a Member State. 'Transnational cooperation' means cooperation between territories in several Member States and with territories in third countries."

As the European Commission Guide[3] for the implementation of the Cooperation measures (TNC Guide) states: "*For the Commission the expected added value of cooperation between rural territories is high. […] Collaboration beyond established borders has been a way to get access to information and new ideas, to learn from other regions or countries, to stimulate and support innovation and to acquire skills and means to improve delivery [...] Although interregional and trans-national cooperation is not always easy, it can often be the most effective way of achieving results on innovation and capacity building.*"

- ***The different types of cooperation***

Almost 5% (€265 million) of the total EAFRD funding was budgeted in the RDPs for implementing any of the two types of Cooperation foreseen under the LEADER Axis (article 65 of the EAFRD regulation):

- *Inter-territorial Cooperation* - cooperation between different rural areas within a Member State. This type of Cooperation involves at least one LAG selected under the LEADER axis and it is open to partnership with other local groups using a similar participatory approach.
- *Transnational Cooperation* - cooperation between different rural areas from at least two EU Member States. This type must also involve at least one LAG selected under the LEADER axis. Additional partners could include other LAGs or local groups using similar participatory approach. It is also possible to extend this cooperation to groups in third countries following an approach similar to LEADER. Such partners could be public private partnerships, local groups active in rural development with the capacity to draw up a development strategy, or open and wide partnerships

[2] Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

[3] Guide for the implementation of the measure cooperation under the LEADER Axis of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013, European Commission, 19.11.2008, Brussels

in which the participation of local actors from various socio-economic sectors, including associations, is encouraged.

Within this framework, Cooperation (i.e. Measure 421 of the national or regional 2007-2013 RDPs) may also include the possibility to conduct joint preparatory activities, which enable potential partners e.g. to meet, discuss and elaborate a potential joint action. This is commonly referred to as "preparatory technical support", and governed by article 39 (3) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 [4]. Although such partnership development activities do not always turn out a success, they have proven mostly useful to establish the viability of a shared cooperation idea. Not all Member States' RDPs foresee the funding of preparatory actions.

- ***Administrative rules and guidance***

Those interested to cooperate may face a variety of challenges. They range from differences in the partners' working approach to difficulties rooted in the fact that the planning and management of cooperation is resource-hungry. Cooperation is subject to different languages, culture and, most importantly, different administrative provisions if LAGs cooperate across regional RDPs or transnationally[5].

While the European Commission's (EC) administrative guide for the implementation of the Cooperation measure[6] appreciates these challenges, it still encourages LAGs to take them on: *"Although interregional and trans-national cooperation is not always easy, it can often be the most effective way of achieving results on innovation and capacity building."* In the same document, the Commission explains why it expects that cooperation between rural territories generates high levels of added value: "*Collaboration beyond established borders has been a way to get access to information and new ideas, to learn from other regions or countries, to stimulate and support innovation and to acquire skills and means to improve delivery."* Local Action Groups (LAG) are therefore encouraged to incorporate cooperation in their Local Development Strategies.

The EC's administrative guide, which was introduced as a reference document to support the Managing Authorities (MAs) and LAGs with the implementation of Measure 421, reflects the experience gained with LEADER over previous programming periods. It serves to introduce:

[4] Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 of 15 December 2006 laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

[5] See also the findings and recommendations of the LEADER Focus Group on the implementation of the Cooperation measure, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/LEADER/LEADER/focus-groups/en/focus-group-3_en.cfm

[6] Guide for the implementation of the measure cooperation under the LEADER Axis of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013, European Commission, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=6380C18C-05AD-2120-C7ED-E8B0C6DE8377

- Possible ways of selection and approval of cooperation projects (by LAG or MA);
- Common provisions for all cooperation projects (eligible operations, costs, and partners);
- Specific eligibility provisions for TNC or ITC projects;
- Reasons supporting the conclusion of a cooperation agreement among the project partners (including a cooperation agreement template).

The contents of this guide are, however, of indicative nature. What in the end matters to LAGs, who intend to engage in the preparation and implementation of cooperation projects, are the administrative provisions established by the competent authorities of their respective Member States.[7] These rules determine e.g., whether or not cooperation must be an integrated element of a LAG's local development strategy; which entity selects the cooperation projects to be funded; which operations and costs precisely are eligible for funding; and whether project applications are to be submitted for approval at a specific or any time during the programme period.

According to Article 39 (5) of Commission Regulation No 1974/2006 *"Member States shall communicate to the Commission the approved transnational cooperation projects"*. The Commission's administrative guide specifies that this should be done by means of a specific information exchange form[8], to be submitted via the Commission's "SFC 2007" system.[9]

1.2 Purpose of the report

The current study was organised in two phases:

- Phase I: Analysis of the state-of-play of cooperation based on available statistical data.
- Phase II: In-depth analysis through extensive desk research, interviews & case studies.

The **main purpose** of this report is to help to contribute to a better understanding of the scope and content of TNC and inter-territorial cooperation projects. More specifically, the report aims to contribute to a better understanding of the following:

Phase I:

- The state-of-play with regard to the implementation of TNC and inter-territorial cooperation, as far as available data allows.
- The nature/key characteristics of cooperation projects funded during this period, such as, thematic aspects, scope, typical activities, etc.;

[7] An overview and comparison of the Member States' rules governing the application and implementation of TNC projects has been established by the ENRD and is available at http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/LEADER/LEADER/en/transnational-cooperation_en.cfm

[8] The information exchange form that approval authorities in the Member States are requested to use is included in the annex of the administrative guide

[9] This notification procedure does, however, not apply to the approval of ITC projects and the approval of funding for the purposes of preparatory technical support under TNC

Phase II:

- What worked well/less well (challenges, difficulties, success factors, etc.) with a particular view to lessons learnt for the next programming period.

In order to achieve this, the report aims to bring together information from a wide range of information sources; in particular information about notified projects (EC's SFC 2007 database); ENRD Cooperation Offers and RDP Project Databases; desk research; semi-structured interviews; and case studies.

1.3 Methodology - Phase I

The main information sources analysed for the purpose of the report include:

a) The European Commission's SFC 2007 database on formally notified projects;
b) Information and data provided in the RDP Project Database and Cooperation Offers database managed by the European Network for Rural Development Contact Point (ENRD CP).

a) Data provided in the SFC 2007 database

According to *Article 39.5* of the Commission Regulation No 1974/2006[10], *"Member States shall communicate to the Commission the approved transnational cooperation projects".* According to the TNC Guide, the designated competent authority should notify the Commission of the provisional approval of any TNC project (joint action), by submitting a specific information exchange form via the EC's 'SFC 2007' system.

However, during the current programming period a **number of information gaps have been identified** with regard to the reporting of approved TNC projects. Examples include the absence of standardised descriptors to allow MAs/PAs to report via SFC 2007 about the 'nature' of the projects, such as the thematic focus, the common objectives, activities and beneficiaries of TNC projects. Furthermore, Member States have generally reported their approval of TNC projects to the EC with a delay. Therefore, information in the SFC database often does not provide a realistic overview on how many TNC projects were being implemented and how many were completed.

Furthermore, inter-territorial cooperation projects (i.e. cooperation by LAGs or similar groups within a Member State) were not covered by the SFC notification. In the absence of SFC-type information at European level, there is hence very little understanding about the progress of implementation and scope of inter-territorial cooperation within Member States.

[10] Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 of 15 December 2006 laying down the detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation No 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

In order to fill these information gaps as far as possible, the ENRD Contact Point undertook follow-up research between September and November 2013, by contacting the Managing Authorities (MAs) of 27 EU Member States (by email, including one follow-up email, if/as required)[11], in order to:

- Update as far as possible the information contained in the SFC database[12] (i.e. information on the title of TNC projects, their envisaged duration, budget, and cooperation partners). In addition, MAs were requested to enhance the quality of available SFC-data, by providing further information on the state of implementation, theme and scope of these projects;
- Establish an SFC-type overview of inter-territorial cooperation projects that did not exist before[13], comprising of the same type/detail of information as described for TNC above.

Responses were received from **19 Member States**[14]. The updated SFC information provides the main basis of the analysis on the implementation status of TNC & inter-territorial cooperation (*Sections 2 and 3* of the report). This part of the report focuses on a quantitative assessment of (a) the 'enhanced SFC database' of 470 TNC projects across the EU-27[15] and (b) newly obtained data for 579 inter-territorial cooperation projects from 19 Member States. Analytical findings were also drawn on the basis of this analysis, as far as the available data allowed.

b) Data provided in the RDP Project Database & Cooperation Offers database

In addition to the SFC data and follow-up research, the ENRD Contact Point screened cooperation data available on the ENRD website, namely in (i) the RDP Project Database and (ii) the ENRD Cooperation Offers database. The analysis of the cooperation projects contained in the RDP Project Database aimed to develop an analytical overview of key aspects of projects, such as Member State involvement, budget, thematic focus, objective, and main activities. The analysis of the Cooperation Offers database aimed to identify some trends with respect to the type of projects planned, by looking at cross-cutting aspects such as Member State involvement, thematic focus, objective and main activities (also allowing some comparison with approved projects).

On this basis, the key characteristics of RDP database projects (40 TNC and 12 inter-territorial cooperation projects at the time of analysis) and of project ideas/ cooperation offers (the Cooperation Offers database comprised of a total of 382 partnership offers at the time of analysis), were analysed (*Section 4* of the report). Based on information available in both databases, *Section 4* includes some

[11] See Annex 3

for details about the information requested and the guidance provided by the ENRD Contact Point.

[12] As of August 2013.

[13] Note that Member States only had to report on TNC projects through the SFC database.

[14] These Member States updated most of the data with regard to the notified projects (and in some cases added additional approved projects that were not notified through the SFC before). However, not all MS updated all data with regard to the project, partly because the MAs were often dependent on other data-providers.

[15] Existing SFC data has been used as is from all other Member States (i.e. Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden), as they did not reply to the Contact Point expert's request for inputs.

overall quantitative and qualitative analysis with regard to the nature of TNC and SFC projects. Finally, *Section 5* provides preliminary conclusions and suggestions for further analysis.

1.4 Methodology - Phase II

The findings from the factual/statistical information and data analysis of Phase I raised a list of questions and issues to analyse further through more in-depth research. Hence, Phase I was followed by further in-depth research in Phase II. The methodology adopted for Phase II followed a triangulation approach in information sources:

1. An extensive desk research building upon the literature identified during Phase I and extending this further to include comprehensive documentation in relation to transnational and inter-regional cooperation. This comprised relevant EU level documents and reports (including a review of the content of the ENRD website on transnational cooperation), national level reports and guidance documentation, regional and local level information on transnational cooperation projects and experiences, including expert reports and presentations. Annex 1 provides a list of references from the literature review.
2. Semi-structured interviews using a common interview guidance template, with experts, policy makers and practitioners at all levels: EU (namely the EC and other EU level networks such as ELARD), national (NRN and MA representatives and other national level actors) and last but not least, regional/local level actors, most notably LAG managers and LAG representatives. The choice of stakeholders took into account their experience in TNC, the sample therefore includes mostly actors with a proven track record in TNC and inter-territorial cooperation. Annex 5 lists all 27 interviewees. Annex 7 presents the two types of interview questionnaires that were used.
3. Case studies focusing on relevant transnational cooperation projects or transnational cooperation approaches (e.g. a technical assistance approach or a partner search method). The case studies analysed the key aspects of transnational cooperation and offer an evidence-based assessment on: types and effectiveness of support structures and tools; benefits and value added of transnational cooperation; key challenges and potential improvements in the implementation of the measure. Annex 4 provides the case study fiches.

In addition to the above, a brief survey to a sample of 10% of cooperation offers in the Cooperation Offer database was undertaken to identify the extent to which cooperation offers materialised in TNC projects. In case cooperation offers did not culminate in a TNC project, the reasons for this have been analysed.

2. State of play of Transnational Cooperation

According to Article 65 of the Rural Development regulation[16], TNC involves cooperation between territories in several Member States and with territories in third countries[17]. The Member States' designated approval authorities notify TNC projects to the European Commission, by submitting a specific information exchange form via the EC's 'SFC 2007' system (Article 39.5 of Commission Regulation No 1974/2006[18]).

This part of the report analyses the 'enhanced SFC database' for TNC across EU-27, which resulted from additional data collection as described in *Section 1.2*[19]. Based on the data, which has become available through this exercise, the analysis focuses on the quantitative assessment of the following aspects:

- LAG involvement in TNC projects by Member State;
- Project implementation status;
- Partnerships' chosen type of administrative and financial management;
- Type of action chosen by project partners;
- Time lapse between application approval and project launch, as well as project duration;
- Project budget range, frequency by size and funding sources.

2.1 LAG involvement in TNC projects by Member State

Based on the updated information provided by the MAs about **Lead partner LAGs** in TNC projects, 470[20] TNC projects were assessed. '**Frequency of LAG involvement'** as lead partners is defined as the number of times when LAGs from a given country were involved as lead partners in TNC projects. This means that if the same LAG is involved in more than one project as a lead partner, this is counted more than once. In other words, the 'frequency of LAG involvement' may exceed the overall number of LAGs in a given country. It has to be noted that since 8 Member States did not provide data in response to the survey, the number of projects in which LAGs are involved as lead partners are likely to exceed the number

[16] Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

[17] Cooperation between "territories" more precisely refers to Local Action Groups (LAG) undertaking a joint action with another LAG, or with a group taking a similar (LEADER-type) approach.

[18] Commission Regulation (EC) No 1974/2006 of 15 December 2006 laying down the detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation No 1698/2005 on support for rural development by the EAFRD

[19] The 'enhanced SFC database' relies on existing basic data for those 8 Member States, which did not reply to the ENRD Contact Point's request.

[20] Prior to the receipt of the MAs' responses, the number of known TNC projects (as notified via SFC) was 381. Responses were received for 502 projects; however 32 of these were reported to be cancelled.

displayed in the chart below (especially in the 8 MS that did not provide updated data). These Member States are indicated with a lighter colour in the chart.

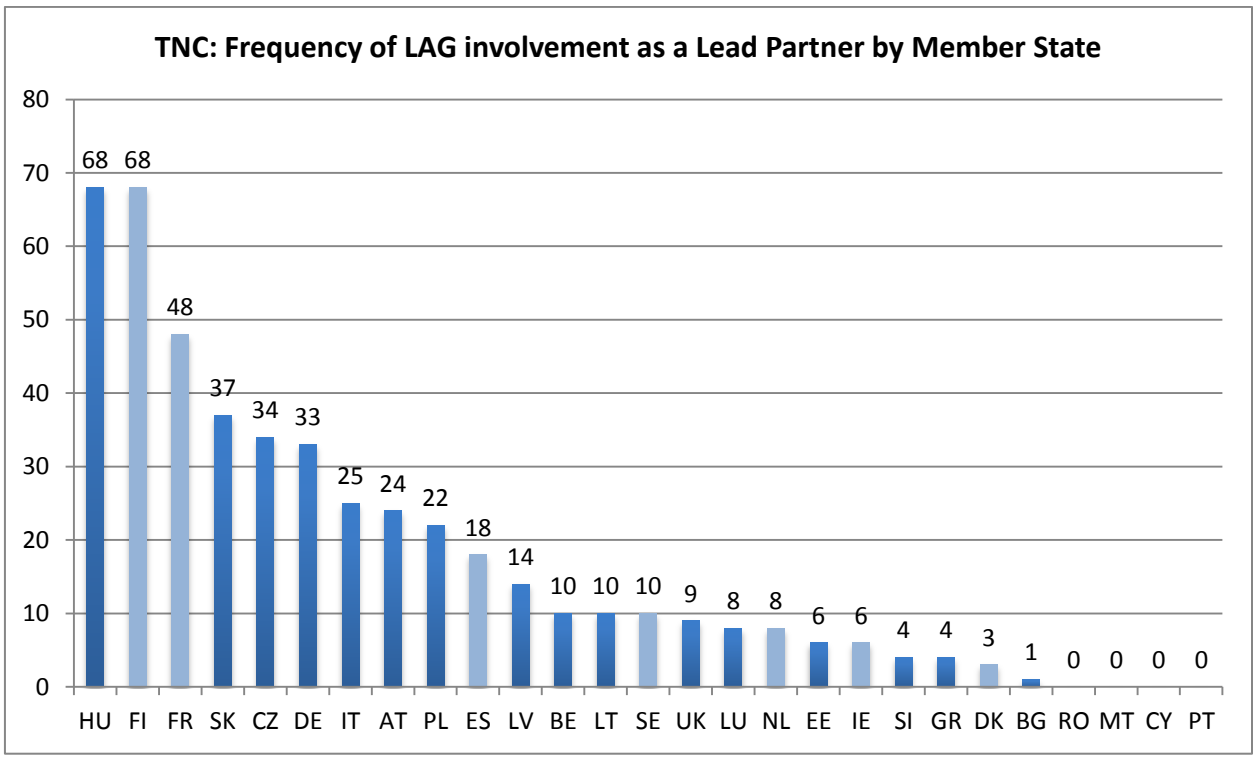
The attempt to determine the *actual number of individual LAGs*, which participated in TNC projects (thus excluding the multiple count of LAGs participating in more than one TNC project), was unfortunately compromised by the MAs' inconsistent use of the SFC information exchange form. More specifically, it has been observed that MAs used different names for the same LAG in several cases[21]. Due to the relatively large number of cases where Member States used different names for the same LAG, coupled with the large number of LAGs made it impossible to assess the actual number of LAGs participating in TNC projects.[22]

According to available data, 6 Member States display a relatively high frequency of LAG involvement in lead partner roles (more than 25 TNC projects per country respectively). *Chart 1* below shows that with 68 projects each, Finland and Hungary are among the Member States with the highest number of TNC projects where LAGs have agreed to take the lead partner role, followed by France (48 projects), Slovakia (37 projects) the Czech Republic (34 projects) and Germany (33 projects). LAGs in some of the Member States (i.e. Cyprus, Malta, Portugal and Romania) did not take part as lead partners in projects. It is interesting to note that the number of lead partner LAGs does not correlate with the number of LAGs in a given Member State. In other words, the Member States with the highest number of Lead partner LAGs are not necessarily those with the highest number of LAGs: e.g. there are 56 LAGs in Finland and 96 in Hungary, while the highest numbers of LAGs are in Poland (336), Spain (264), Germany (244) and France (221).

[21] Example: In the case of one Member State, ten different LAG names were found registered as TNC project partners. However, only four LAGs operate in the country in question. In total, this type of error in LAG name reporting was found in SFC notifications of at least seven Member States.

[22] To avoid such issues in the future, it is therefore strongly recommended that MAs as of the next programming period will be required to make use of the LAG codes of the ENRD's LAG database.

Chart 1 - Frequency of LAG involvement in lead partner role by Member State*

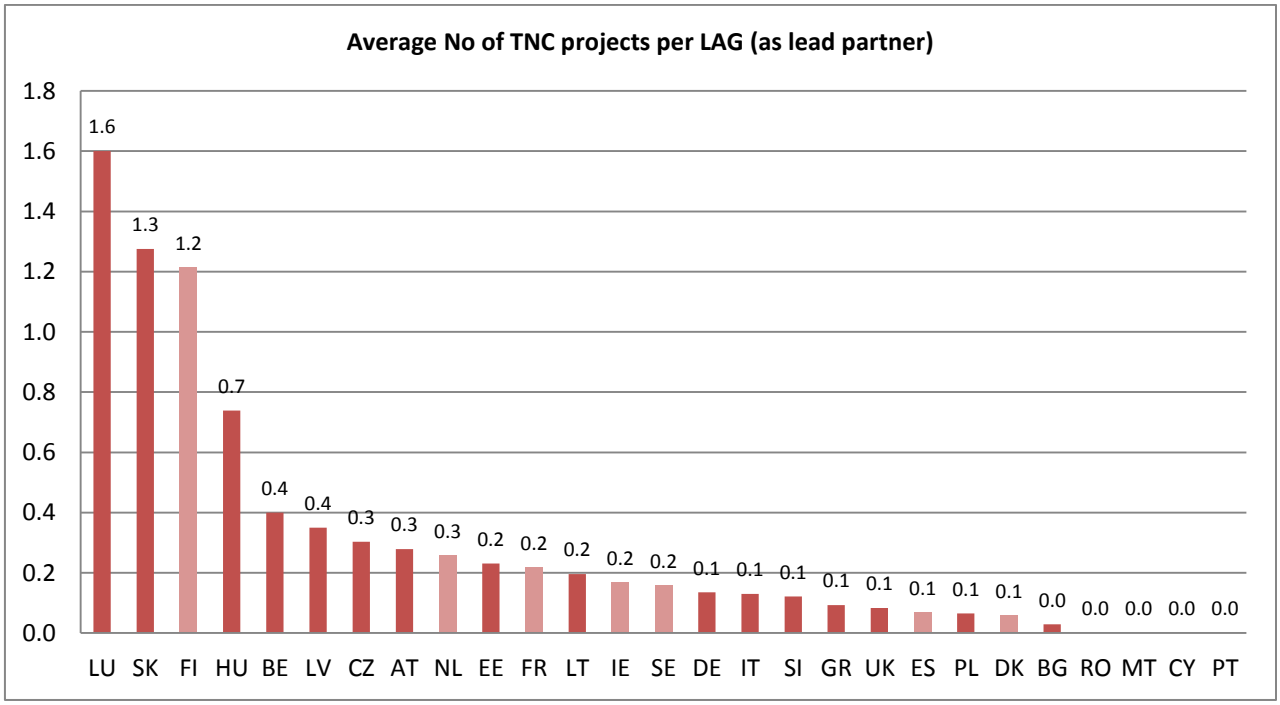


*Member States where no new SFC-type data were provided are marked with lighter colour.

However, a different picture emerges if we take into account the number of LAGs in a given Member State (as presented in *Chart 2* below). As indicated before, it was not possible to establish the *number of individual LAGs* involved as lead partners in projects in a given Member State (only the *number of projects* in which LAGs were involved as lead partners from a given Member State). However, the average number of projects per LAG (involved as lead partners) by Member State gives a more realistic picture of the level of activity of LAGs in TNC projects in a given Member State. Again it has to be noted that the average number of TNC projects is likely to be higher in those Member States, which did not respond to the additional data collection (highlighted in lighter colour in the chart).

According to the chart below, in relative terms LAGs in Luxembourg, Slovakia and Finland are the most active as lead partners in TNC projects, each of these Member States having more than 1 TNC project per LAG as lead partner on average. Other than Romania, Malta, Cyprus and Portugal (where LAGs were not involved as lead partners in TNC projects according to available data), on average only approximately every 10th LAG is involved as a lead partner in a TNC project in Denmark, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom, Greece, Slovenia, Italy and Germany.

Chart 2 – Average Number of TNC projects per LAG (as lead partner)



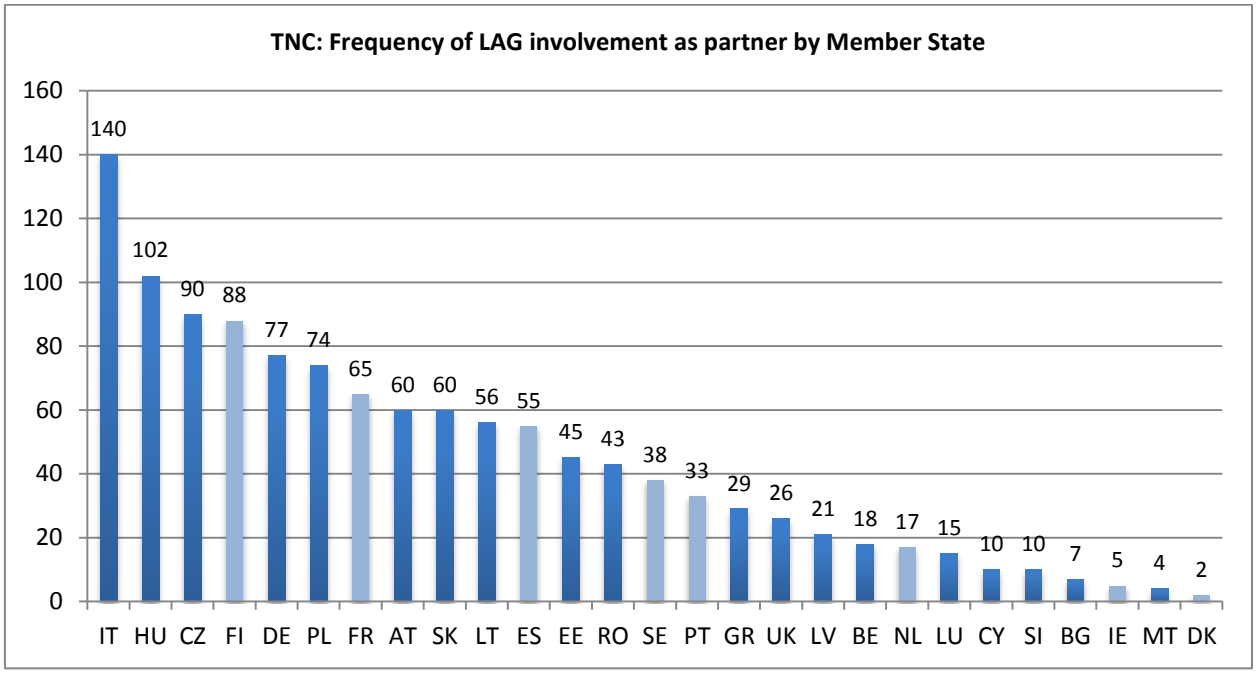
*Member States where no new SFC-type data were provided are marked with lighter colour.

Based on available data and additional data collected, **the involvement of LAGs as partners** in projects was also assessed. According to the updated SFC data (presented in *Chart 3*), in addition to the Italian LAGs (that are partners in 140 instances), LAGs from Hungary (102 instances), the Czech Republic (90 instances) and Finland (88 instances) are also frequently involved as partners in TNC projects[23]. Other Member States where LAGs are relatively actively involved in TNC projects as partners (i.e. 60 instances or more) were Germany (77 instances), Poland (74 instances), closely followed by France (65 instances), Slovakia and Austria (60 instances respectively). With 45 and 56 cases respectively, Estonia and Lithuania are also characterised by a relatively high number of LAG participation in partner roles in TNC projects (there are only 26 LAGs in Estonia and 40 LAGs in Lithuania). Denmark, Malta, Ireland and Bulgaria are the Member States with the fewest number of LAGs being involved as partners in TNC projects (i.e. less than 10 cases). Third countries (not presented in the chart), which have engaged in cooperation projects, include the (now) New Member State Croatia (3 instances) but also other countries, most importantly from neighbouring Ukraine (23 instances).[24] Again, it has to be noted that in the 8 Member States that did not provide data in response to the survey (see those marked with a lighter colour in the chart), the number of LAGs involved as partners are likely to be higher than the number displayed in the chart below.

[23] If LAGs participated as partners in multiple TNC projects, each instance of participation has been accounted.

[24] Other known cases of third-country participation include Belice, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Serbia (one project each) and Switzerland (2 projects).

Chart 3 – Frequency of LAG involvement as a partner by Member State

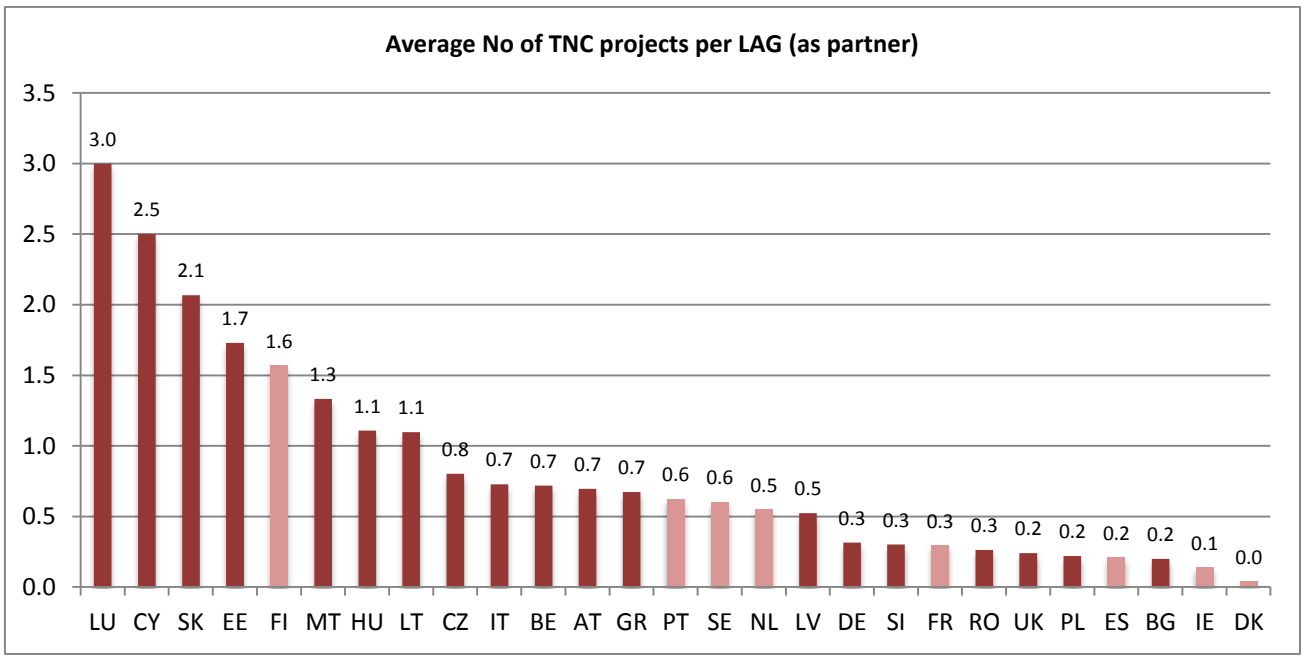


*Member States where no new SFC-type data were provided are marked with lighter colour.

A different picture arises if we take into account the number of LAGs in a given Member State (as presented in *Chart 4* below). As indicated before, it was not possible to establish the *number of individual LAGs* involved as partners in projects in a given Member State (only the *number of projects* in which LAGs were involved as partners from a given Member State). However, the average number of projects per LAG (involved as partners) by Member State gives a more realistic picture of the level of activity of LAGs in TNC projects in a given Member State. Again it has to be noted that the average number of TNC projects is likely to be higher in those Member States, which did not respond to the additional data collection (highlighted in lighter colour).

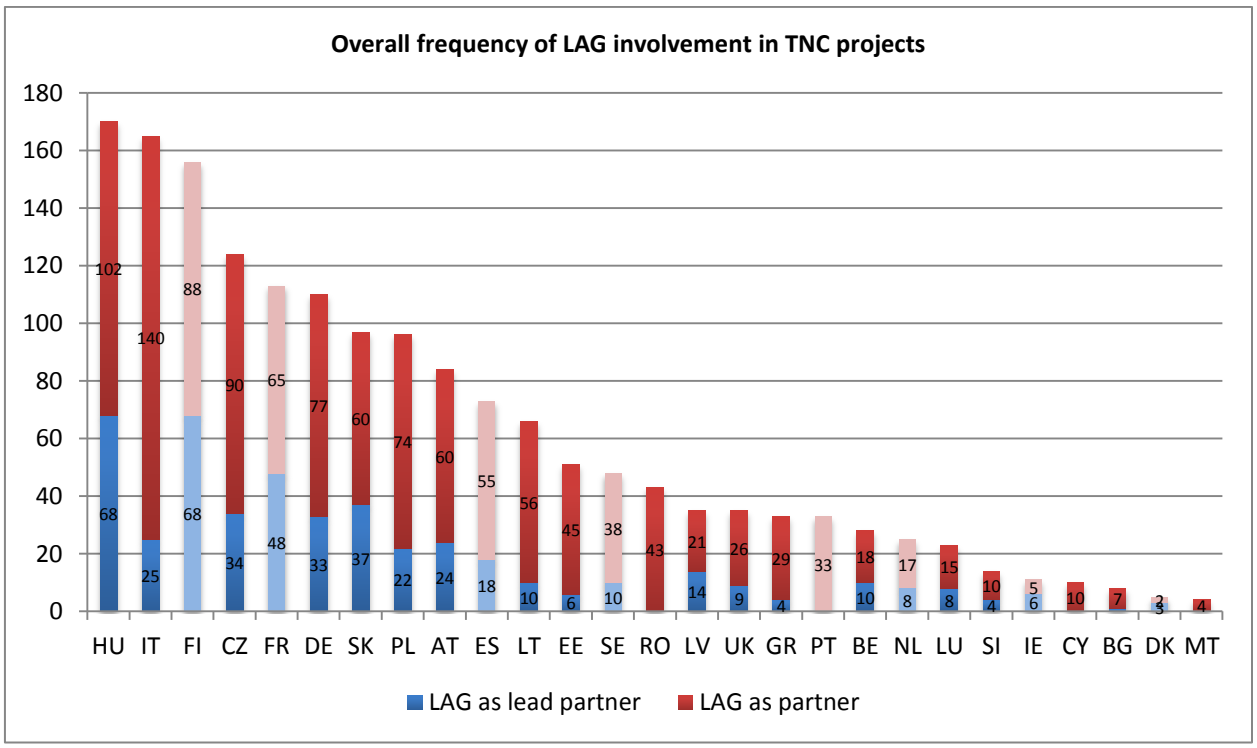
According to the chart below, in relative terms LAGs in Luxembourg, Cyprus and Slovakia are the most active as partners in TNC project, each of these Member States having more than 2 TNC projects per LAG as partner on average (and Luxembourg having 3). Other than Denmark (where only 2 LAGs were involved as partners in TNC projects according to available data), on average only approximately every 5th LAG is involved as a partner in TNC projects in Bulgaria, Spain, Poland and the United Kingdom, and approximately every 10th in Ireland.

Chart 4 – Average No of TNC projects per LAG as partner



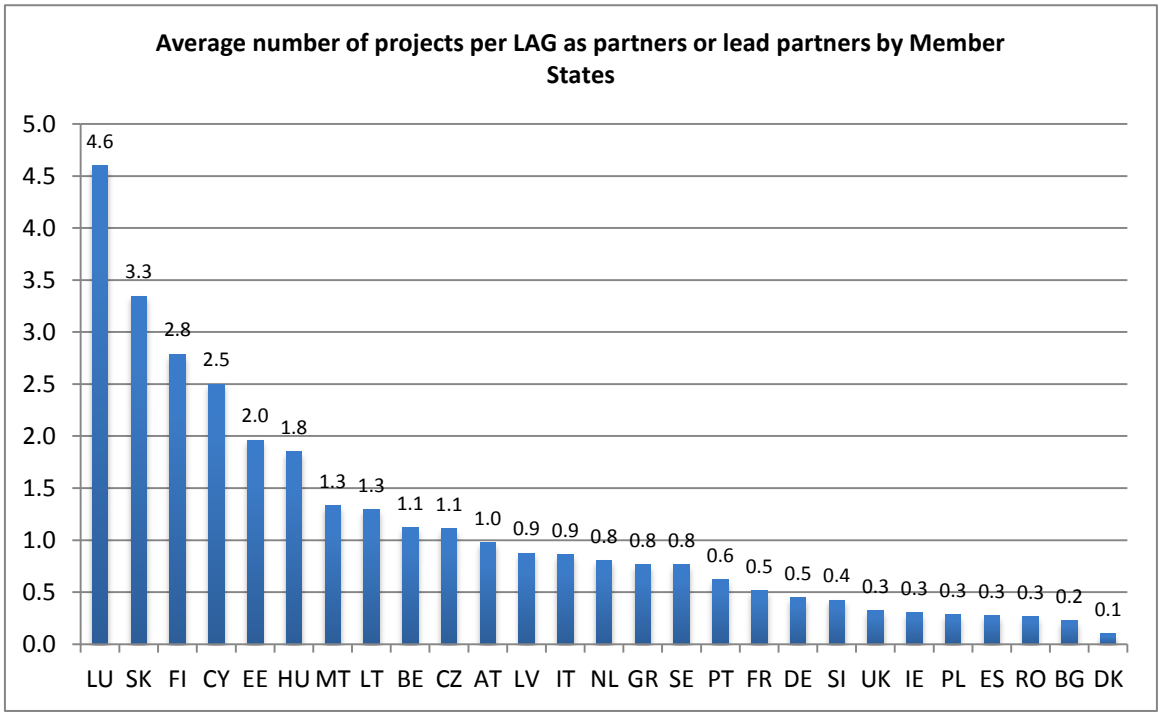
The combined findings of *Chart 1 and 3* are displayed in *Chart 5* below. As presented in *Chart 5*, Member States that most frequently have their LAGs involved as partners or lead partners in TNC projects include Hungary (170 instances), Italy, (165 instances), Finland (156 instances), the Czech Republic (124 instances) and France (113 instances), closely followed by Germany (110 instances), Slovakia (97 instances), Poland (96 instances) and Austria (84 instances). Estonia and Lithuania also relatively frequently (51 and 66 cases respectively) participate in TNC projects.

Chart 5 – Overall frequency of LAG involvement in TNC projects



When we consider the average number of projects per LAG (as partners or lead partners) by Member State (see *Chart 6* below), LAGs in Luxembourg are among the most active (on average 4.6 projects per LAG), followed by Slovakia (with more than 3 projects per LAG), Finland, Cyprus and Lithuania (with 2 or more projects per LAG). On the other end of the scale are Denmark (every 10th LAG is being involved as lead partner or partner in TNC projects on average), and Bulgaria (with every 5th LAG being involved in TNC on average).

Chart 6 – Average number of projects per LAG (as partners or lead partners) by Member State

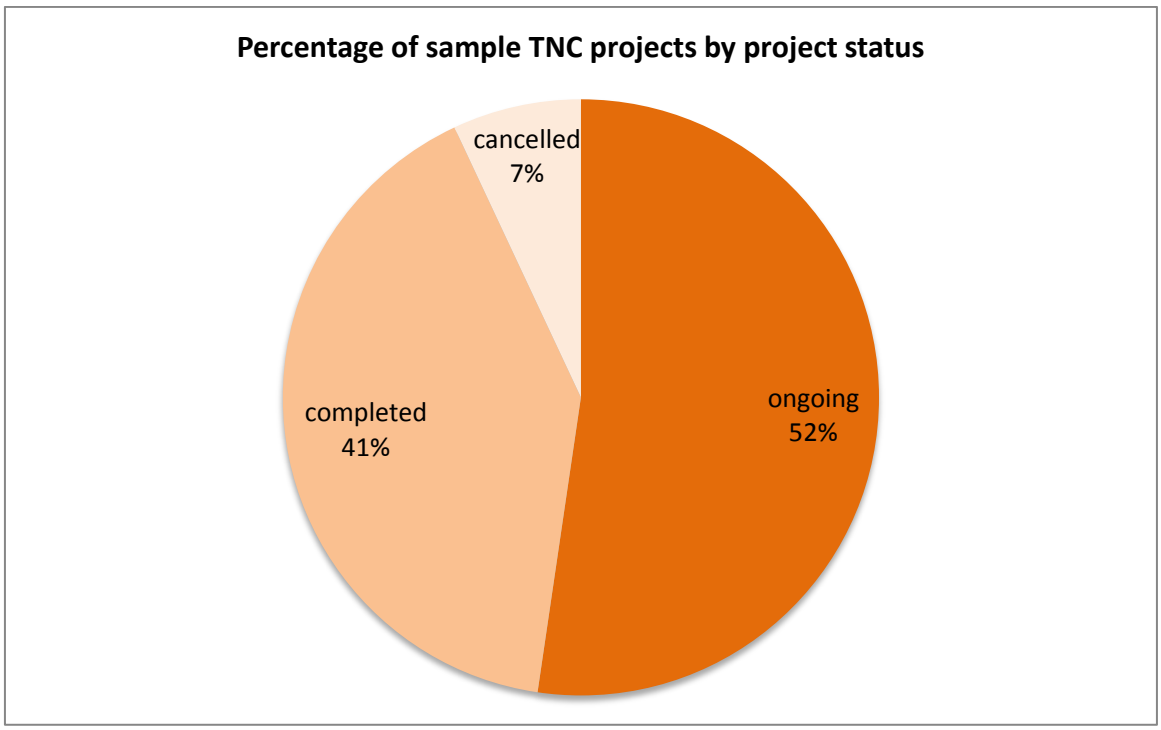


2.2 Implementation Status of TNC Projects

The SFC database contains information about notified TNC projects; however, no information is available on the status of these projects (i.e. whether they were completed). Therefore, during the follow-up data collection with regard to SFC data, Member States were asked to indicate the status of the projects notified: i.e. to provide the start/end dates of projects and to classify them under the categories of 'cancelled', 'ongoing' or 'completed'.[25] Altogether, 502 projects have been captured. 32 of these have been notified as "cancelled" by the Member States (7% of projects where data about the status of projects or the start/end date of project were available). Therefore, these projects have not been considered in the analysis of later sections of this report. 224 on-going projects (52% of projects where relevant data were available) represent the majority of TNC projects, compared to 178 projects (41% of projects where relevant data were available), which have been notified as completed. In the case of 68 projects (14%), Member States authorities did not provide information on the start and/or end date of the TNC project. These findings are displayed in *Chart 7* below.

[25] In those cases, where information on the status of project was not provided; the basis of information was the start and end date of projects. Therefore the information provided in Chart 4 and Tables 1 & 2 below are slightly biased: e.g. in those MS that did not provide information on the status of their projects , there are no reported projects that are cancelled.

Chart 7 - Implementation status of TNC projects



* The data in the chart is based on information provided on the status of projects by 19 Member States; and start/end dates of projects in those cases where MS did not provide this information (therefore, the data may be slightly biased (e.g. the rate of cancelled projects may be higher); as there are no cancelled projects reported in MS who did not provide information on project status).

The overview of the project status by Lead partner Member State provided in *tables 1 and 2* indicates that at this point in time (i.e. the closing year of the current programming period, with 2 years of implementation time remaining) the majority of TNC projects led by LAGs from Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, and Slovenia were already completed[26]. The rate of completed projects within Member States with the highest number of Lead partner LAGs vary: while according to available data Hungarian LAGs appear to have completed most of their projects (6% of projects still on-going), half of Finland's Lead partner LAGs have drawn their projects to conclusion (50% of them are still on-going). It has to be noted that according to available data, there are no completed projects in three of the Member States, namely Greece, Italy and Latvia. The implementation status of the majority of TNC projects led by LAGs from Spain and France remains to be clarified.

[26] This conclusion (as well as the percentage of ongoing projects displayed in the bottom line of tables 2a and 2b) is solely based on TNC projects, for which the status has been clarified by the Member States.

Table 1 - Project Status: lead partner countries with the lowest proportion of on-going projects

Project Status by Lead partner	CY	MT	PT*	RO	SI	HU	EE	IE*	DE	FI*	CZ	NL*	DK*	PL	UK
Completed	0	0	0	0	4	60	5	5	20	33	13	3	1	7	2
On-going	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	11	33	20	5	2	15	5
Cancelled	0	0	0	0	2	9	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1
Info not available	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	1
Percentage On-going	-	-	-	-	0%	6%	17%	17%	35%	50%	61%	63%	67%	68%	71%

Table 2 - Project Status: lead partner countries with the highest proportion of on-going projects

Project Status by Lead partner	AT	SK	LV	BE	SE*	FR*	LU	BG	ES*	GR	IT	LT
Completed	6	8	3	2	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
On-going	18	29	11	8	8	10	7	1	1	4	20	8
Cancelled	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	11
Info not available	0	0	0	0	0	36	0	0	17	0	0	2
Percentage On-going	75%	78%	79%	80%	80%	83%	88%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* 8 Member States (MS) did not provide additional data in the framework of the survey. For these MS the status of projects is identified on the basis of start/end dates of projects (whenever this was available); and therefore, the data may be slightly biased, e.g. at this stage there are no cancelled projects reported in MS who did not provide information on project status.

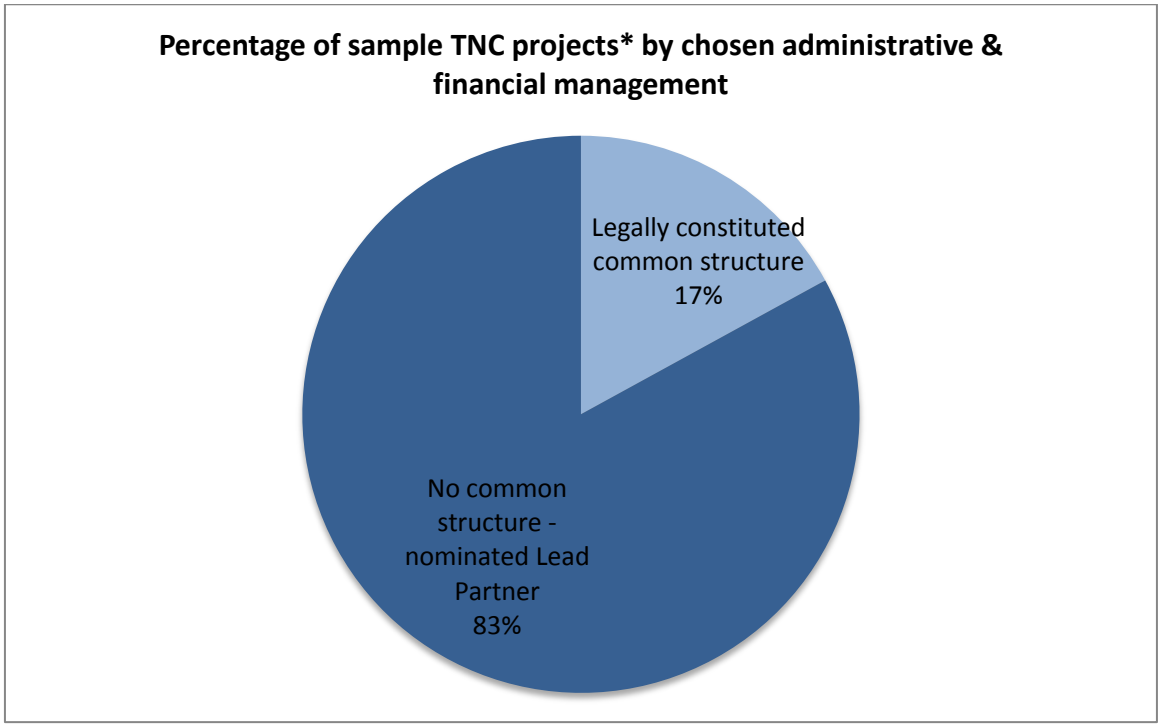
2.3 Management of TNC Projects

The MAs were also requested to specify for each TNC project notified via SFC, which administrative and financial project management structure LAGs have agreed upon. While one option is that the lead partner takes an overall coordinating role. Another option is (encouraged by section 2 of art 62 of Council regulation 1698/2005) is to create a legally constituted, common structure for project management.

In this respect the response rate with regard to the SFC updating exercise was, however, more limited. Only some of the MAs' responses revealed the way LAGs have agreed to administer and financially manage their TNC projects. This type of information remains unavailable for a majority of 246 (about 53%) of the 470 (ongoing or completed) TNC projects identified by the enhancement exercise), and therefore the data provided in the chart below may not be fully representative. The relatively limited data available indicates that only few partnerships (17% of project for which this type of data is

available, around 8% of all TNC projects) decided to put in place a legally constituted, common structure. *Chart 8* also shows that the administrative and financial management of a relative majority of projects (83% of projects where this type of data is available; 39% of all TNC projects) remains in the hands of the Lead partner LAG.

Chart 8 - Agreed mode for administrative and financial management



* Information was provided with regard to 47% of projects included in the enhanced TNC SFC database.

2.4 Type of Action Carried Out by TNC Projects

During the update/enhancement of the SFC database, MAs were asked to clarify whether the TNC projects notified in the SFC database actually represent preparatory (technical) support activities, joint actions or a combination of both. It is important to note that the EC guidance for cooperation projects established a requirement for the notification of "joint actions" only. This means that whenever there are projects in the enhanced SFC database that are reported to be 'preparatory actions only', this may be due to the misinterpretation of the notification requirements by MAs. Therefore, the actual number of preparatory actions is much larger than the percentage of projects identified as preparatory actions in the SFC database. In accordance with the European Commission's guidance for cooperation projects[27]:

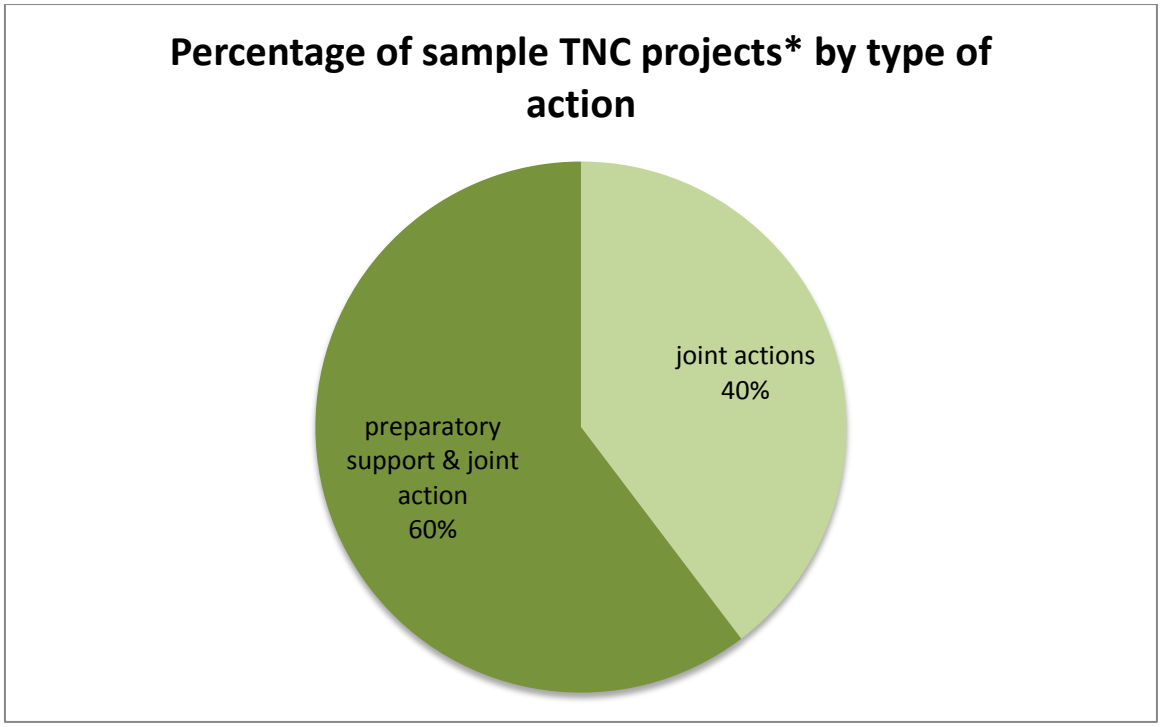
[27] Guide for the Implementation of the Measure Cooperation under the LEADER Axis of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 (RD12/10/2006 Rev3), see: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=6380C18C-05AD-2120-C7ED-E8B0C6DE8377

- *Preparatory support* is understood as a pre-development action which possibly, but not necessarily, leads to the elaboration of a cooperation project;
- *Joint Actions* involve a concrete cooperation project (coordinated by a lead partner LAG), in which the project partnership jointly works towards the development of common products (clearly identified deliverables producing benefits for the partnering territories). The motivation for such a project often is the exploitation of complementarities and achievement of critical mass through partnership.

Due to varying degree of detail in the responses received from the MAs of 19 Member States, and in the absence of feedback from further 8 Member States, it was impossible to determine the 'type of action' of 182 (about 39%) of the identified 470 TNC projects.

A small fraction (see *Chart 9* below) of 29 notified TNC projects (6%) were reported under the *preparatory support* category, which is explained by the fact that according to the notification requirements, preparatory actions should not be reported in the SFC database. While, among the projects where data were provided, 102 projects combined both preparatory and joint actions in the framework of a single project (22% of all TNC projects; 40% of projects where this type of data was available), a relative majority of 155 projects (33% of all TNC projects; 60% of projects where this type of data was available) were specified as joint actions by the MAs.

Chart 9 - Percentage of TNC projects by type of action



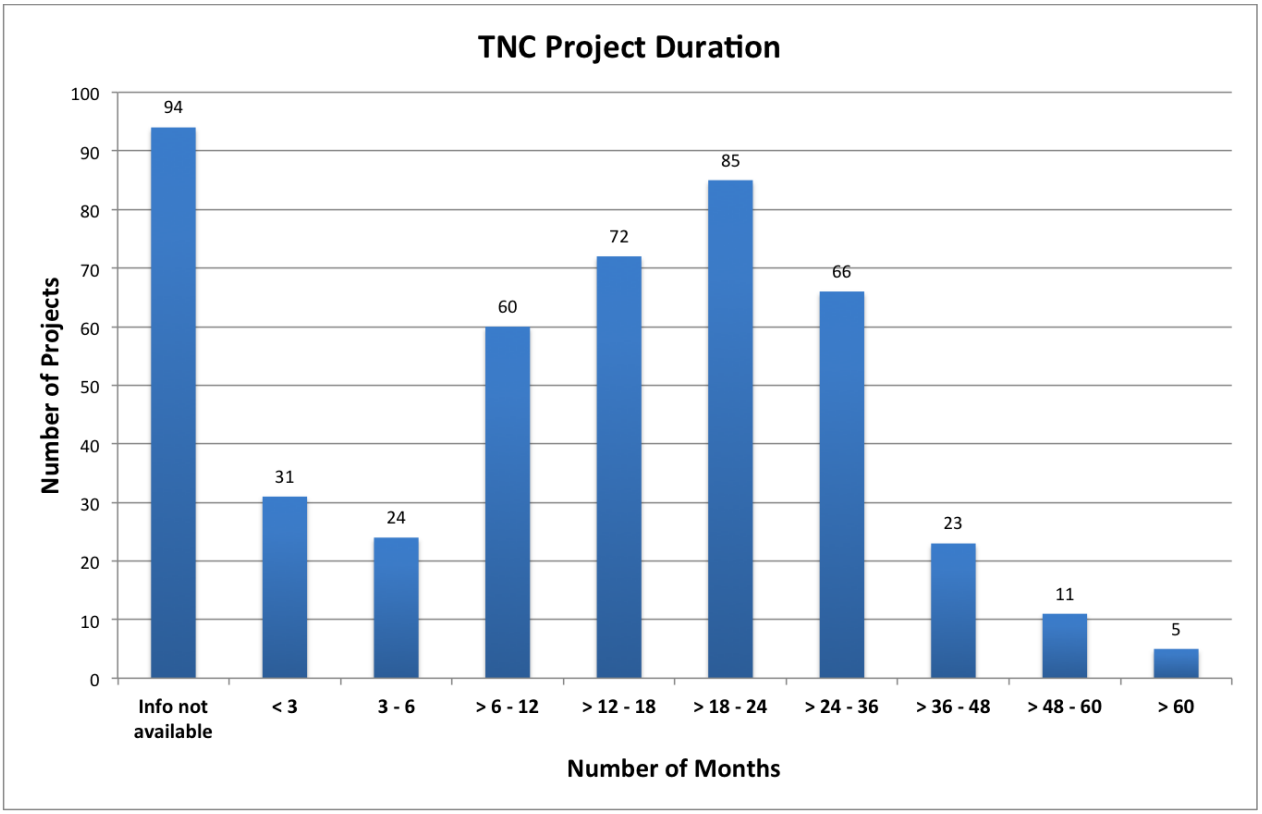
* Information was provided with regard to 61% of projects included in the enhanced TNC SFC database; 10% of the projects where data was reported, fall under the category of 'preparatory actions'. These were taken out of the sample, since preparatory support actions formally do not need to be reported in the SFC database (only if coupled

with joint actions within the same project). In this sense, 'preparatory actions' in the SFC may be due to wrong data reporting (and the real share of preparatory actions may be larger).

2.5 TNC Project Duration and Time Lapse Between Official Approval and Project Launch

The data in this section has been sourced from 377 TNC projects (about 80% of all TNC projects in the enhanced SFC database), for which Managing Authorities were able to provide both start and end dates of projects. According to indications provided, the duration of TNC projects ranges from a couple of weeks to a current maximum of 75 months. As demonstrated by *Chart 10* below, a majority of TNC projects (283) is of 6 to 36 months duration. Projects of a few weeks of duration (less than 3 months) are typically linked to preparatory support actions to establish the feasibility of a future cooperation project (joint action), and often are small in budget, e.g. to cover travel expenditure for consultative / first meetings between potential partner LAGs. On the basis of currently available data, the average TNC project duration is 20 months.

Chart 10 - Range of TNC project duration



The Member States' MAs were also asked to provide the approval date of each TNC project, in order to establish the average time transnational partnerships take to launch their joint projects. Interestingly, (as presented in *tables 3 and 4*), the average time elapsing between the Member States' administrative approvals of applications and the actual launch of TNC project shows frequently as a negative value in many of the Member States (i.e. the projects often start some 3 to 4 month before the formal approval

date). This is most likely due to the fact that in some cases the first expenditure could be eligible before the formal approval of all relevant authorities were provided.

Table 3 – Project launch ahead of approval

Lead partner MA	Average Time Lapse Project Approval / Launch (Months)
Italy	-13
Germany	-8
Sweden	-8
The Netherlands	-7
Greece	-5
Hungary	-5
Poland	-5
Austria	-3
Finland	-3
France	-3
Lithuania	-3
Slovenia	-3
Czech Republic	-2
Latvia	-2
Slovakia	-2
Belgium	-1

Table 4 – Project launch period following approval

Lead partner MA	Average Time Lapse Project Approval / Launch (Months)
Estonia	0
Denmark	1
Ireland	1
Luxembourg	2
United Kingdom	2
Bulgaria	-
Cyprus	-
Malta	-
Portugal	-
Romania	-
Spain	-

"-" indicates: not a lead partner or information is not available

2.6 Total Budget of TNC Projects and Spending by Type of Action

The budget of TNC projects ranges from a few hundred euro to a current maximum of EUR 1.9 million. Data for this section has been sourced from 408 TNC projects, for which Managing Authorities were able to provide a total budget (i.e. for about 87% of TNC projects identified by the current exercise). On the basis of currently available data, the average TNC project budget is EUR 161,047.

Chart 11 below shows that of all those TNC projects, for which the MA was able to provide the total budget, the relative majority (163 = 40%) is smaller-sized operation with a total budget ranging between EUR 20,000 and EUR 99,999. While there are currently 134 medium-sized projects ranging between EUR 100,000 and EUR 500,000, large-sized operations of more than EUR 500,000 are less frequent (32 projects = 8%) than the smallest sized projects of less than EUR 20,000 (79 projects = 19%).

Chart 11 – TNC projects by budget range

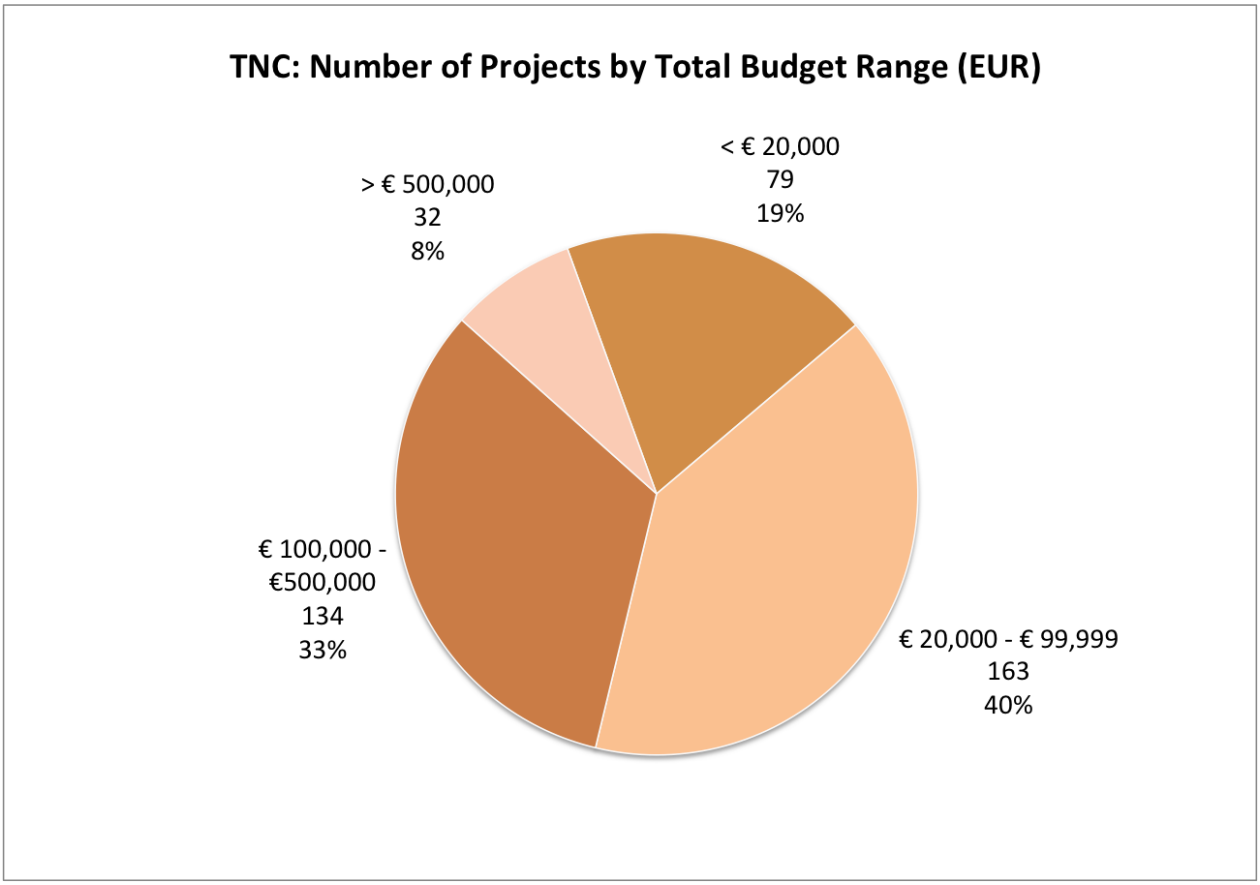
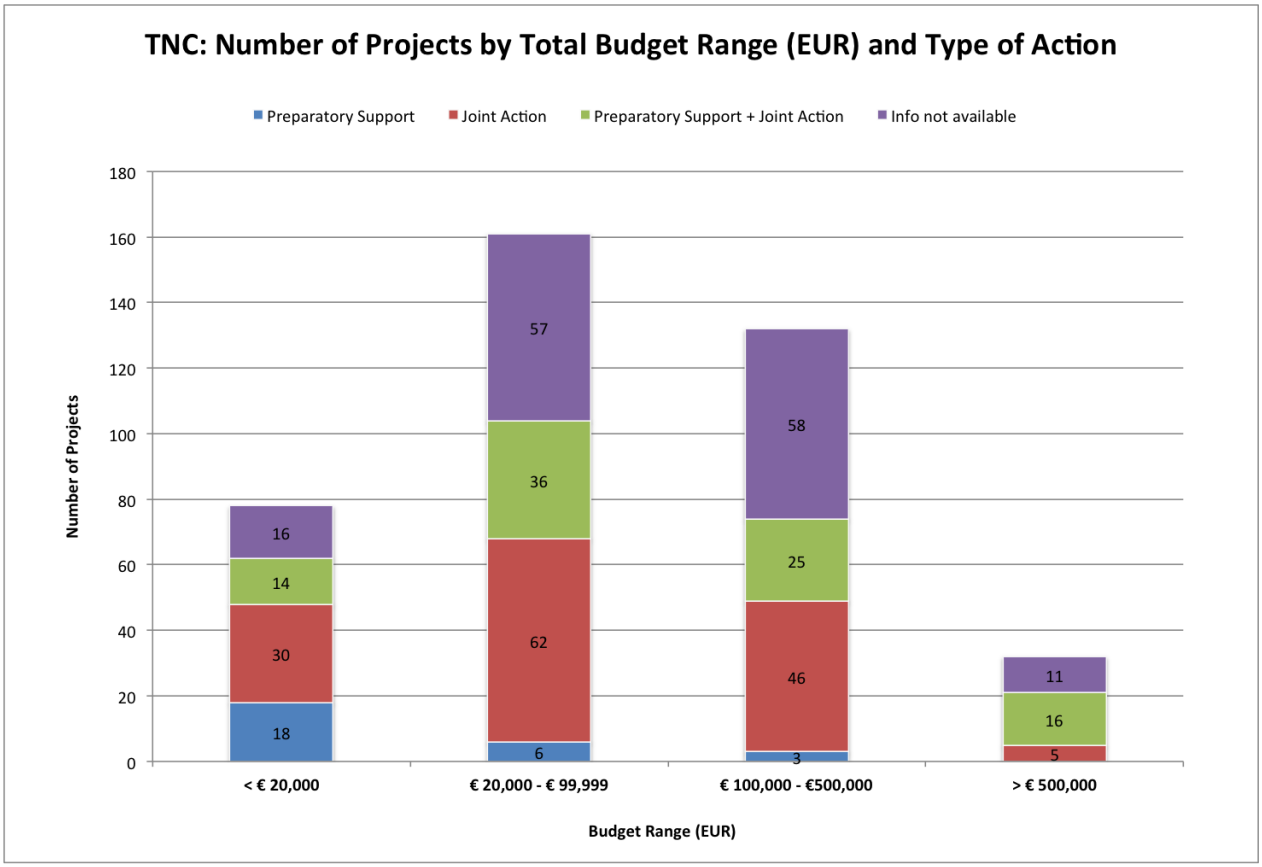


Chart 12 below, which combines the updated data on TNC project budget and type of action (available for 261 projects = 56% of TNC projects where data was provided), reveals that joint actions represent the relative majority among TNC projects of all budget categories except for operations of a budget range beyond EUR 500,000, where projects combining preparatory support and joint actions dominate.

Projects within a budget range of a few hundred to thousand of euro of budget are typically linked to preparatory actions to establish the feasibility of a future cooperation project (joint action), and often short in duration, e.g. to support travel for consultative / first meetings between potential partner LAGs[28]. Accordingly, 18 projects (67% of preparatory actions) have been identified in the category of smallest sized projects with a budget of less than EUR 20,000. It is likely that other projects reported as 'preparatory' actions within a budget between 20,000 and 100,000 euro are in reality a combination of preparatory support and joint actions (i.e. may be due to wrong data provision by MAs).

[28] As previously noted, the European Commission did not require from the MAs to notify preparatory support projects via the SFC 2007 system.

Chart 12 – TNC projects by budget range and type of action

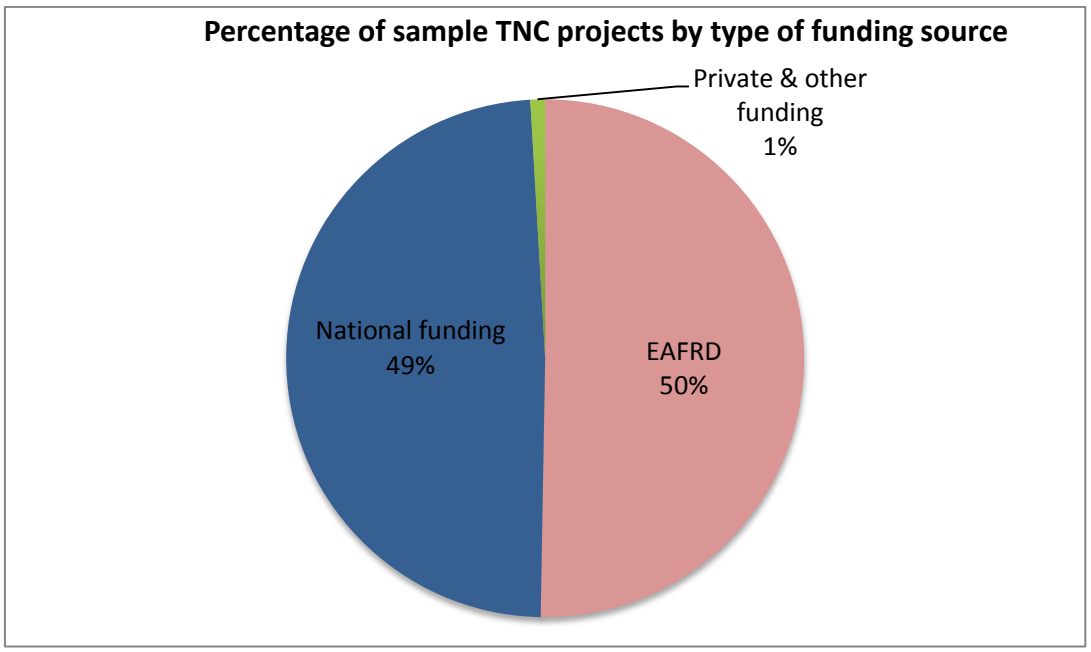


The approximate **total spending for 470 TNC projects** captured by the present exercise of updating the SFC database amounts to EUR 65,707,183. Data used in this section is based on the Member States' response to the ENRD Contact Point's request to complete missing information about the split of total funding according to the different sources used (i.e. EAFRD, national funding, private & other)[29], the result of which is shown in *Chart 13*.

The attempt to improve information about the split of the overall TNC project funding sources was, however, of limited success: information about the different funding sources used remains unavailable for 46% of the total TNC spending captured. Therefore the share of different funding sources (i.e. EAFRD, national funding and private & other funding) may not be fully representative.

[29] Although required in the SFC information exchange form, MAs often did not provide this detail of funding source information, when they notified TNC projects to the European Commission.

Chart 13 - Overall TNC spending - split of project funding sources



3. State of play of Inter-territorial Cooperation

While TNC involves cooperation between territories in several Member States and with territories in third countries, inter-territorial cooperation solely concerns the cooperation of territories within a single Member State[30]. Unlike TNC projects, inter-territorial cooperation projects are not the subject of a notification procedure and hence they are not covered by the European Commission's SFC system.

Therefore, there was only very limited information available about the progress of implementation and scope of inter-territorial cooperation within the Member States. Additional data collection carried out by the ENRD Contact Point, also aimed at collecting SFC-type data about inter-territorial cooperation projects comprising of the same type/detail of information as described in the previous section for TNC projects.

The Contact Point received responses from 19 Member States[31], providing basic information about projects (such as project title, duration, budget, cooperation partners, information on the theme and scope of these projects and their state of implementation (i.e. project cancelled, on-going or completed)). This part of the report analyses the information, which has become available through this exercise, focusing on a mainly quantitative assessment of the following aspects:

- Frequency of LAG involvement by Member State;
- Project implementation status;
- Partnerships' chosen type of administrative and financial management;
- Type of action chosen by project partners;
- Time lapse between application approval and project launch, as well as project duration;
- Project budget range, frequency by size and funding sources.

3.1 Frequency of Inter-territorial Cooperation by Member State

New information about inter-territorial projects was provided by MAs of 19 Member States, including 579 projects. This figure excludes projects notified as "cancelled" and inter-territorial cooperation projects from Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, whose MAs did not respond to the request of the ENRD Contact Point.

Adding up all LAGs the MAs identified in their respective country as inter-territorial cooperation project participants (both in lead partner and partner roles), *Chart 14* below shows that the LAGs from three EU

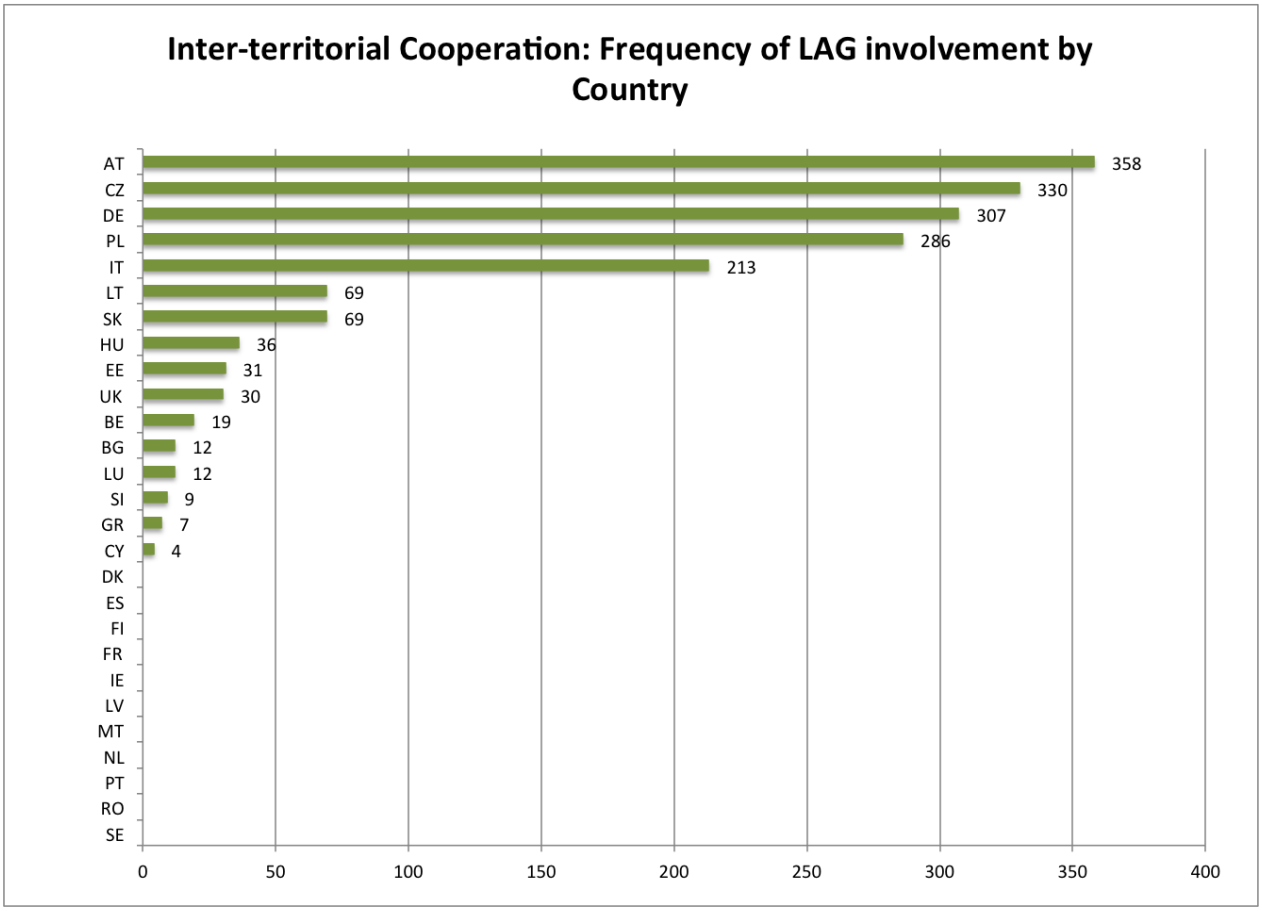
[30] Cf. article 65 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 of 20 September 2005 on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Cooperation between "territories" more precisely refers to Local Action Groups (LAG) undertaking a joint action with another LAG, or with a group taking a similar (LEADER-type) approach.

[31] The MAs from 19 Member States, which assisted the ENRD Contact Point with the identification of inter-territorial cooperation projects, include: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, and the UK.

Member State have engaged frequently (i.e. more than 300 times) in inter-territorial cooperation: Austria (358), Czech Republic (330) and Germany (306). Poland (286 instances) and Italy (213 instances) display also intensive levels of inter-territorial cooperation. Relatively high level of involvement in inter-territorial cooperation was also observed in Lithuania and Slovakia (69 in both cases).

Like for TNC, the attempt to determine the *actual number of individual LAGs*, which participated in inter-territorial cooperation projects (thus excluding the multiple count of LAGs participating in more than one inter-territorial cooperation project), was unfortunately compromised by the MAs' inconsistent reporting in response to the ENRD survey. Since at least four MAs used variations of official LAG names, the attempt to establish this data was not possible. To avoid such issues in the future, it is therefore strongly recommended that MAs as of the next programming period will be required to make use of the LAG codes of the ENRD's LAG database.

Chart 14 - Overall frequency of LAG involvement in inter-territorial cooperation[32]

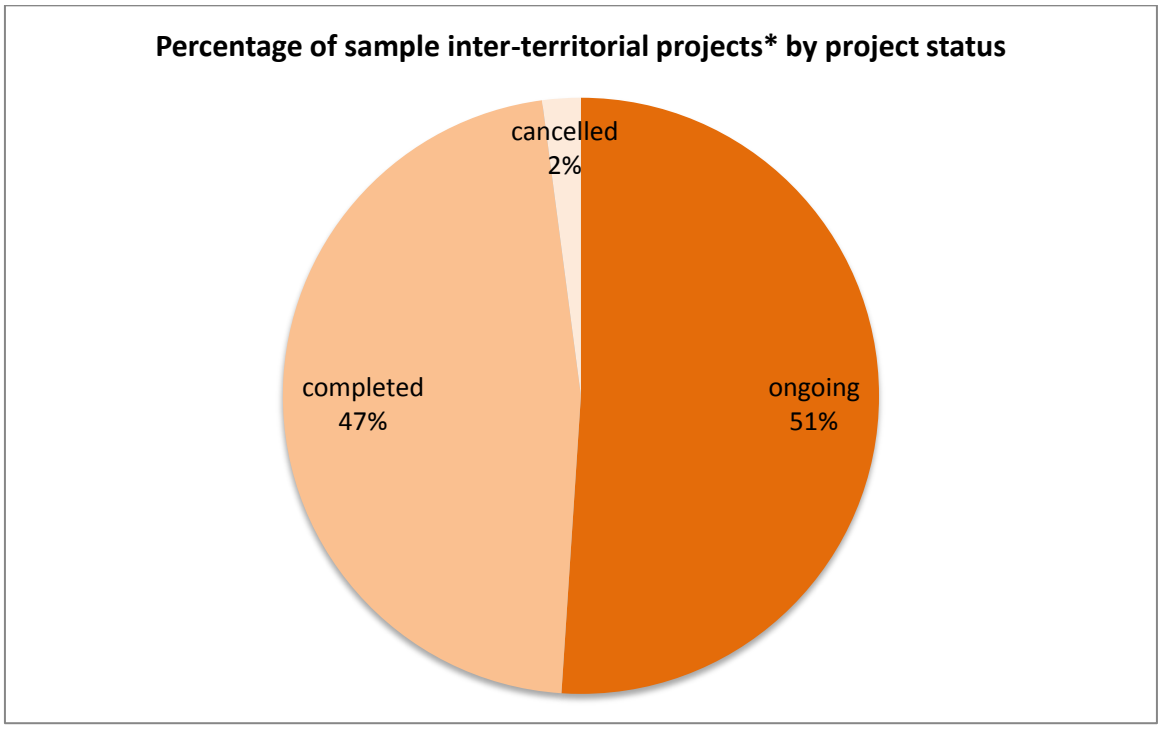


[32] According to feedback from the Latvian, Maltese and Romanian MAs these have not approved inter-territorial cooperation projects yet. As previously noted, the ENRD Contact Point's request to notify inter-territorial cooperation projects did not obtain a response from Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

3.2 Implementation Status of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects

For each newly identified inter-territorial cooperation project, the Member States' authorities were asked to indicate the status; i.e. to provide the start/end dates of projects and to classify them under the categories of 'cancelled', 'on-going' or 'completed'. Altogether, 591 inter-territorial cooperation projects have been identified through the ENRD Contact Point's follow-up survey to MAs. However, 13 of these they notified as 'cancelled' (2% of projects where information was provided). These projects have not been considered in later charts presented in this report. The majority of the inter-territorial projects (287 projects, i.e. 51% of projects where data were provided) is on-going, compared to 269 projects (47% of projects where data were provided), which were reported to be completed. In the case of 22 projects (4% of all inter-territorial projects captured by the survey), the relevant authorities of Member States did not report either the start or end date (or both) of a project. These findings are displayed in *Chart 15* below.

Chart 15 - Status of inter-territorial cooperation projects



* Information was not available for 22 projects (4%) of the inter-territorial project database sample.

The overview of the project status by Member State provided in *table 5* indicates that at this point in time (i.e. the closing year of the current programming period, with 2 years of implementation time remaining) the majority of inter-territorial cooperation projects in the Slovenia, Luxemburg, Germany, UK, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland were already completed[33]. However, the Czech Republic and

[33] This conclusion (as well as the percentage of ongoing projects displayed in the bottom line of tables 6 and 7) is solely based on Inter-territorial Cooperation projects, for which the status has been clarified by the Member States.

Germany are also among the Member States with the highest total number of inter-territorial cooperation projects, which is why they still have a substantial number of on-going operations (65 and 74 projects respectively). On the other hand, Latvia, Malta and Romania reportedly have not yet approved any inter-territorial projects yet.

Table 5 – Member States* with lowest proportion of on-going inter-territorial cooperation projects[34]

Project Status	LV	MT	RO	SI	LU	DE	UK	CZ	HU	PL	AT	EE	SK	BE	LT	CY	GR	BG	IT
Completed	0	0	0	4	5	74	9	65	6	52	42	4	5	1	1	0	0	0	0
On-going	0	0	0	0	0	43	6	52	5	42	48	7	23	7	22	1	1	5	25
Cancelled	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	9	0	0	0	0
Info not available	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Share of On-going projects (%)	0	0	0	0	0	37	40	44	45	45	53	64	82	88	96	100	100	100	100

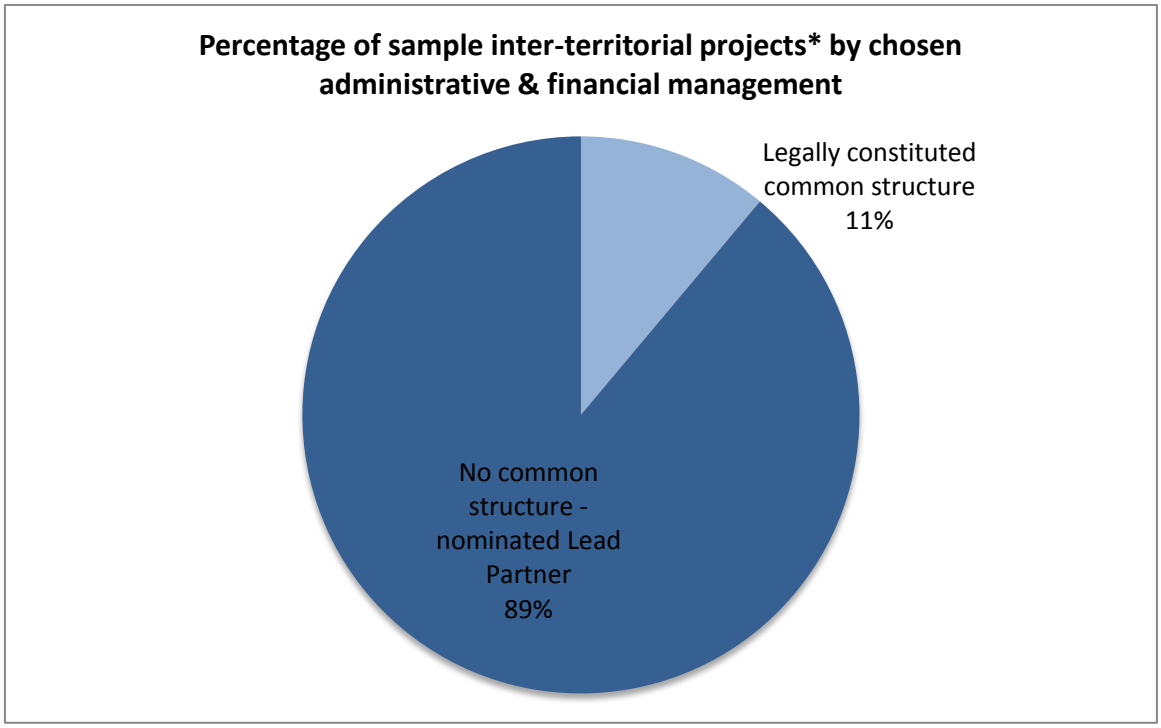
*Data was not provided on inter-territorial projects for 8 Member States, namely Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

3.3 Management of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects

MAs were asked to provide information on the administrative and financial project management structure LAGs have agreed upon, and this information was provided for 81% of the projects that are included in the database. According to this information only some 11% of projects (for which data was available) put in place a legally constituted, common structure (as suggested by section 2 of article 62 of Council regulation 1698/2005) to run the project and administer the project's funds. As *Chart 16* shows, the majority of 89% of all projects (where information about the partnership was provided) are coordinated by a Lead partner LAG. For this particular aspect, the response rate among MAs was considerably better than for TNC, making it therefore possible to establish the way of administrative and financial management for 81% (i.e. 469) of inter-territorial projects identified by the present exercise.

[34] NB: "-" indicates that no information was available, "0%" indicates there are either no ongoing projects or all projects have been completed.

Chart 16 - Agreed mode for administrative and financial management



* Information is based on 469 projects (81% of the inter-territorial project sample) where this type of information was received.

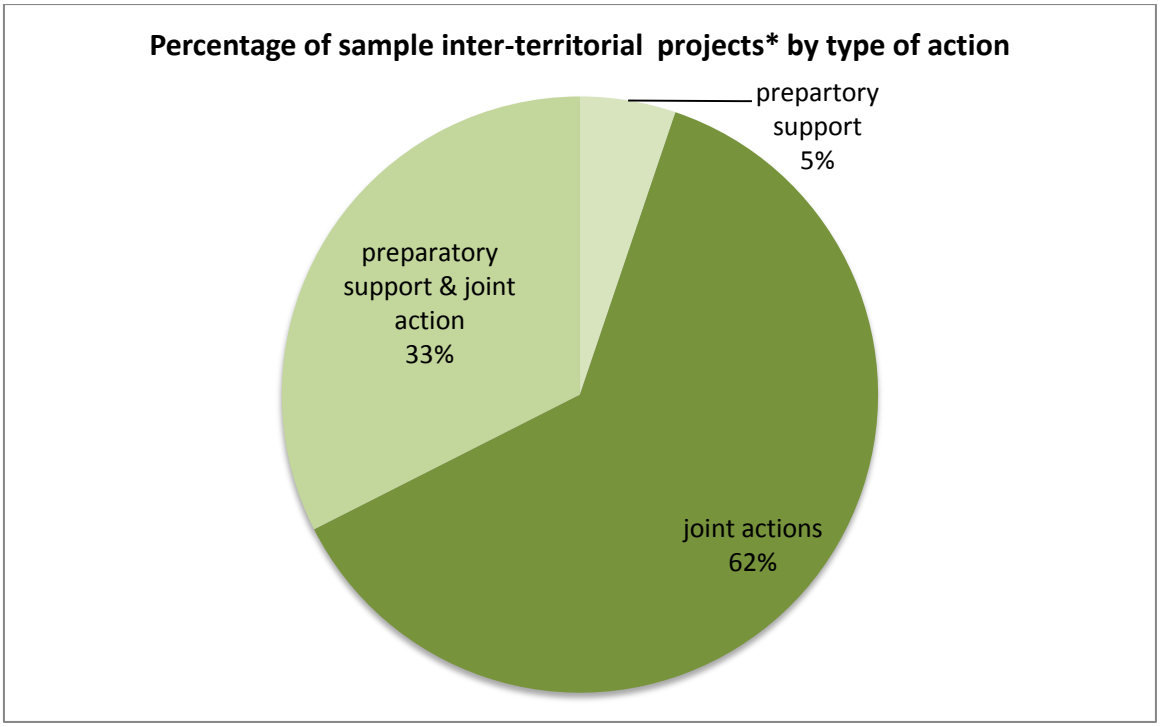
3.4 Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects' Type of Action

MAs were requested clarification, whether their LAGs' inter-territorial cooperation projects are implemented as preparatory (technical) support activities, joint actions or a combination of both[35]. As in the case of TNC projects, only a small proportion of the 579 projects, for which MAs provided data (see *Chart 17* below), were supporting the preparation or assessment of the potential of future cooperation partnerships (21 preparatory projects, i.e. 5% of projects where this information was provided). A quarter of all projects (147, i.e. 33% of projects where this information was provided) combined both preparatory and joint actions within a single project. The relative majority of projects (279) were implemented solely as joint actions (62% of projects where this information was provided).

[35] Reminder: while *preparatory support* is understood as a pre-development action, which possibly, but not necessarily, leads to the elaboration of a cooperation project; *joint actions* involve a concrete cooperation project (coordinated by a lead partner LAG), in which the project partnership jointly works towards the development of common products (clearly identified deliverables producing benefits for the partnering territories). The motivation for such a project often is the exploitation of complementarities and achievement of critical mass through partnership. Source: Guide for the Implementation of the Measure Cooperation under the LEADER Axis of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013 (RD12/10/2006 Rev3).

It has to be noted that in several cases the 19 Managing Authorities, which provided data for this exercise, have not specified the projects' type of action (23% = 132 of the 579 identified inter-territorial cooperation projects).

Chart 17 - Type of action for inter-territorial projects



* This type of information was not available for 132 projects (some 23% of the inter-territorial projects database).

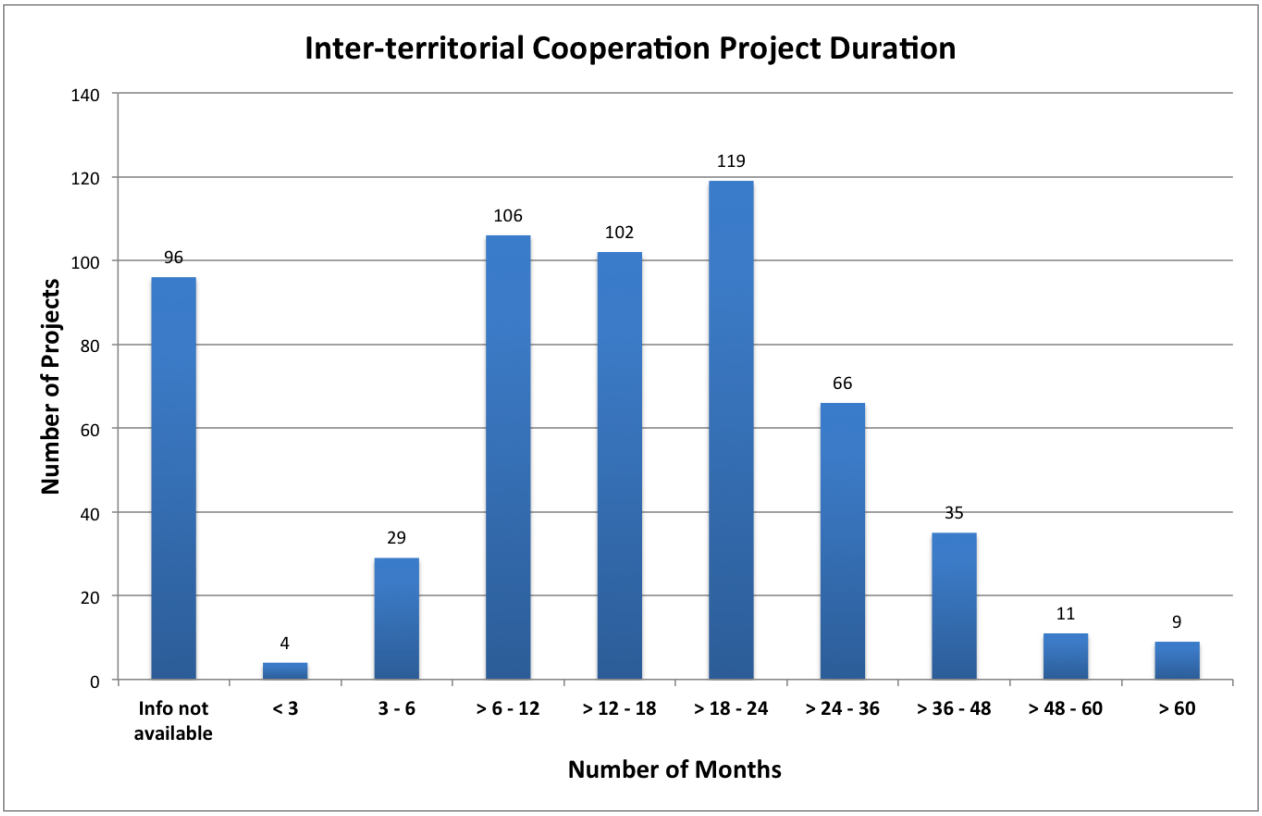
3.5 Duration of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects and Time Lapse between Official Approval and Project Launch

The data in this section has been sourced from 481 projects (about 84% of all identified inter-territorial cooperation projects), for which Managing Authorities were able to provide both the given project's start and end dates. According to indications provided, the duration of projects ranges from a couple of weeks to a current maximum of 81 months. On the basis of currently available data, an average project duration almost similar to TNC projects (slightly above 20 months) has been established.

As demonstrated by *Chart 18* below, a majority of 321 projects is of 6 to 24 months duration. Projects of a few weeks of duration are typically linked to preparatory actions to establish the feasibility of a future cooperation project (i.e. later joint action), and often are small in budget, e.g. to cover travel expenditure for consultative / first meetings between potential partner LAGs.

Chart 18 also shows that inter-territorial cooperation rarely lasts for longer than 60 months (9 projects, i.e. 1.5% of all identified projects), which again is consistent with related TNC statistics (the same data for TNC was 1%).

Chart 18 - Range of inter-territorial cooperation projects' duration



MAs were also asked to communicate the approval date of each project[36], in order to establish the average time elapsing between the Member States' administrative approvals of applications and the actual launch of a project. As in the case of TNC projects, *table 6* and 7 show frequently negative values. It is assumed that this phenomenon might be linked to lengthy procedures, thus often prompting partnerships to launch their cooperation projects ahead of the official approval by the MA/PA. Accordingly, on average inter-territorial cooperation projects are also launched 3 to 4 months before the official approval (which is likely to be due to the fact that projects could formally started before gaining the formal approval from all stakeholders involved).

[36] Such information was not available from Latvia, Malta, Romania (no inter-territorial cooperation projects), Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, and Slovenia (no response received from MAs).

Table 6 - Project launch ahead of approval

Member State MA	Average Time Lapse Project Approval / Launch (Months)
Italy	-11
Germany	-7
Poland	-5
Austria	-4
Cyprus	-2
Estonia	-2
Greece	-1
Luxembourg	-1

Table 7 - Project launch period following approval

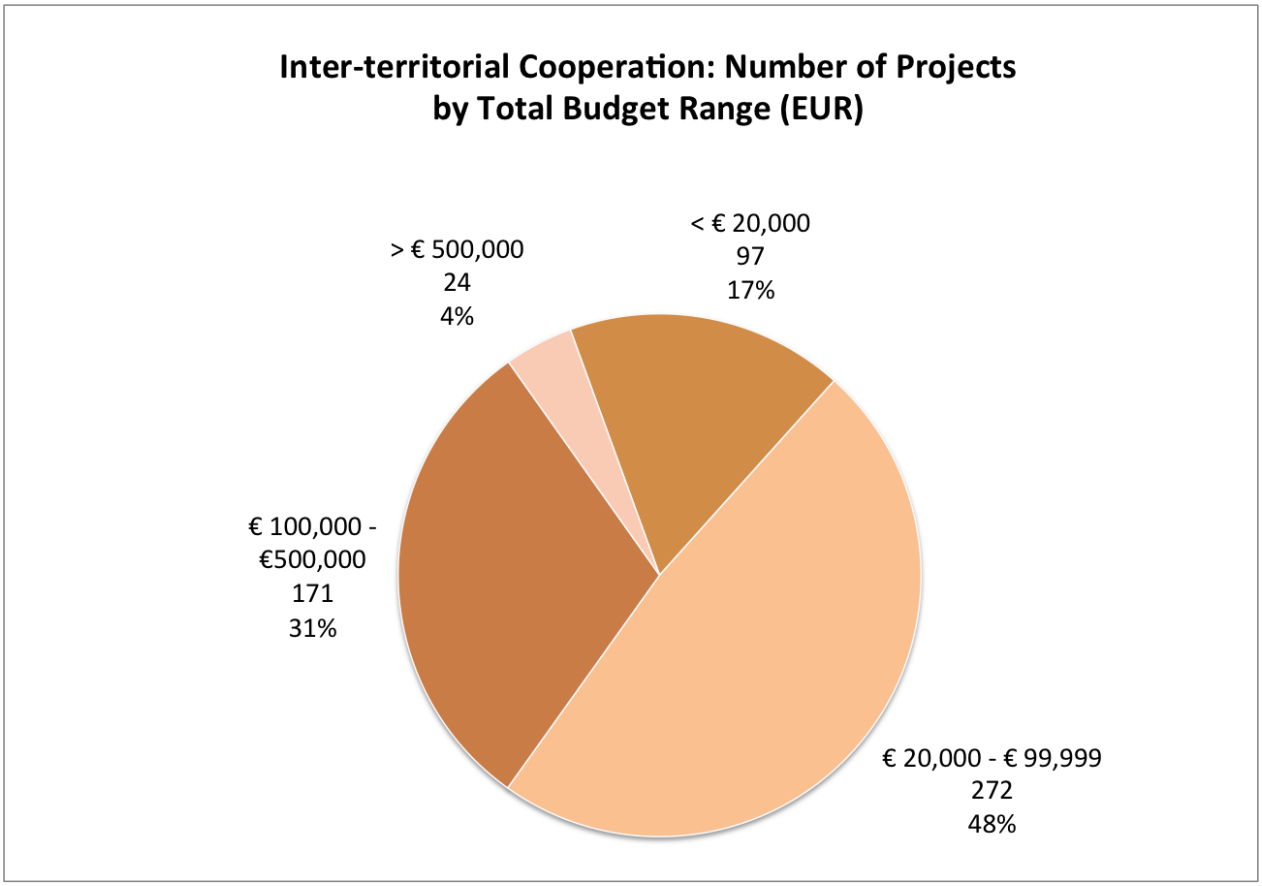
Member State MA	Average Time Lapse Project Approval / Launch (Months)
Lithuania	1
Slovakia	1
United Kingdom	1
Belgium	3
Hungary	6

3.6 Total Budget of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects and spending by Type of Action

Upon request by the ENRD Contact Point, the Managing Authorities have provided total budget information for almost all inter-territorial cooperation projects (564 = 98%). Their budget ranges from a few hundred Euro to a current maximum of 2.5 million Euros. On the basis of currently available data, the average budget of inter-territorial cooperation projects is EUR 72,805 (less than half of an average TNC project budget, c.f. section 2.9).

Chart 19 below displays findings consistent with the results of the classification of TNC projects by budget range: The largest share (272, i.e. 48%) of the 575 inter-territorial cooperation projects, for which the MAs provided total budget figures, are smaller-sized operations with a total budget ranging between 20,000 Euro and 99,999 Euro. There are currently 171 (31%) medium-sized projects ranging between 100,000 Euro and 500,000 Euro. Financially large operations (i.e. those with a budget of more than 500,000 Euro) are less frequent (24 projects, i.e. 4%) than financially small projects (of less than 20,000 Euro, 97 projects, i.e. 17%).

Chart 19 - Inter-territorial cooperation projects by budget range

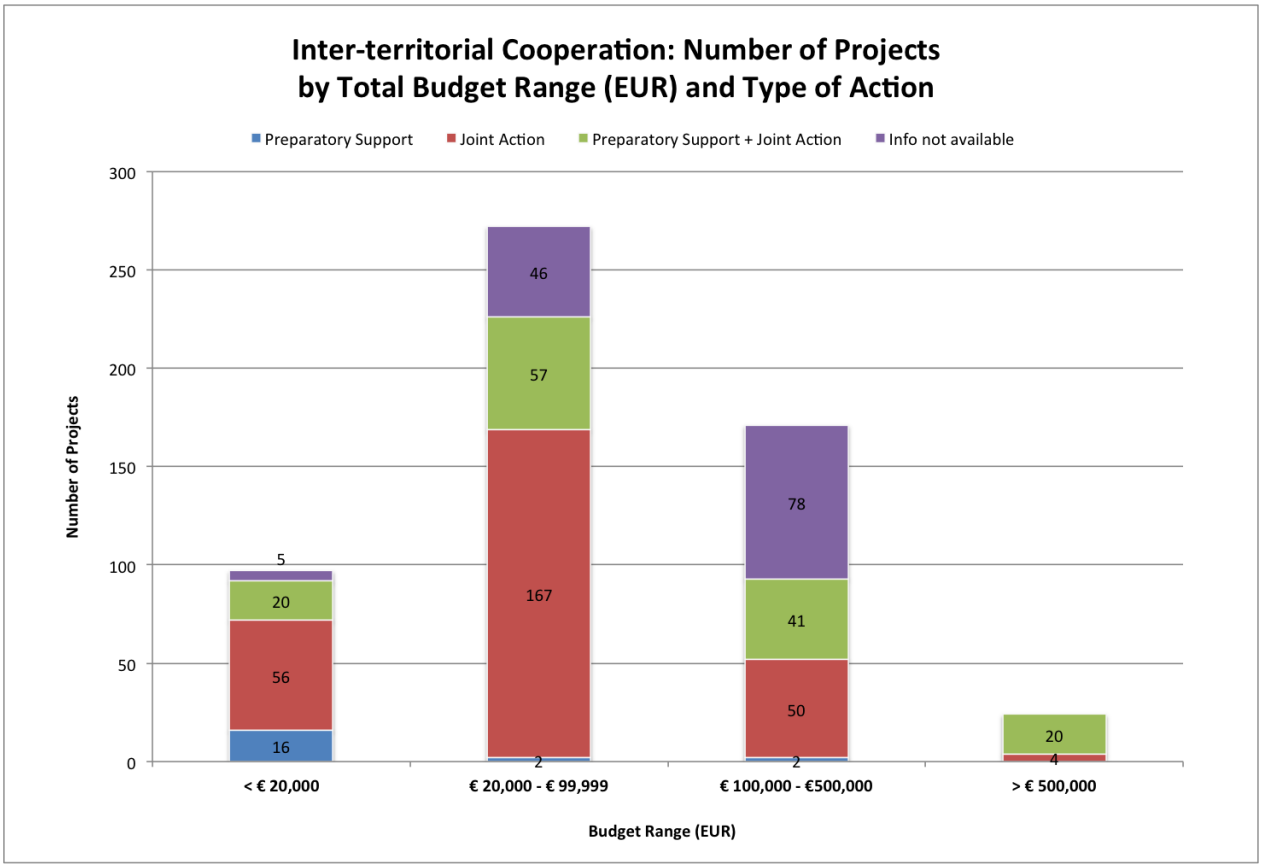


According to *Chart 20* below, which combines project budget data and chosen type of action (available for 435 projects = 75% of identified inter-territorial cooperation projects), joint actions – like in the case of TNC - represent the relative majority among inter-territorial cooperation projects of all budget categories except for operations of a budget range beyond EUR 500,000, where projects combining preparatory support and joint actions dominate.

Projects within a budget range of a few hundred to thousand of Euro are typically linked to preparatory actions to establish the feasibility of a future cooperation project (joint action), and often short in duration, e.g. to support travel for consultative / first meetings between potential partner LAGs[37]. 16 projects of this type have been identified in the category of smallest sized projects with a budget of less than EUR 20,000. It is assumed that further 4 preparatory support projects, which have been noted in the smaller and medium size budget categories represent erroneous indications that MAs made to the ENRD Contact Point in the context of this exercise. These projects most likely belong to the category of operations combining preparatory support and joint actions.

[37] As previously noted, the European Commission did not require from the MAs to notify preparatory support projects via the SFC 2007 system.

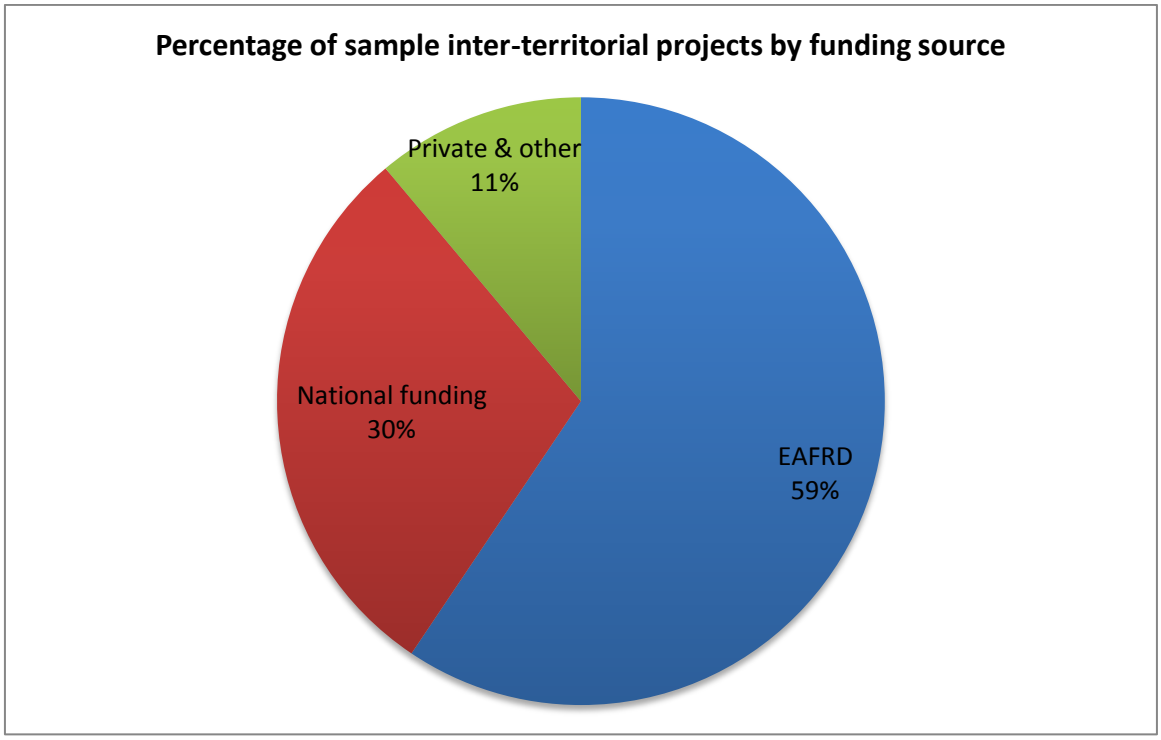
Chart 20 – Inter-territorial cooperation projects by budget range and type of action



3.7 Overall Funding and Funding Sources of Inter-Territorial Cooperation Project Budgets

The approximate total spending for inter-territorial cooperation projects captured by the present exercise (19 Member States) amounts to EUR 75,160,494. Based on the Managing Authorities' feedback, an attempt has been made to establish the split of funding sources among EAFRD funding, national funding and other (private) funding (see *Chart 21*). According to these findings, based on the information provided for the sample of inter-territorial projects, approximately 59% of the total budget has been funded from the EAFRD (EUR 28,900,106), 30% from national public budgets (EUR 14,334,708) and about 11% from private and other sources (EUR 5,407,585). However, 35% of the total funding of the inter-territorial projects identified to date remains unspecified, as Managing Authorities could not provide the details of the budget split.

Chart 21 - Split of inter-territorial cooperation project funding sources



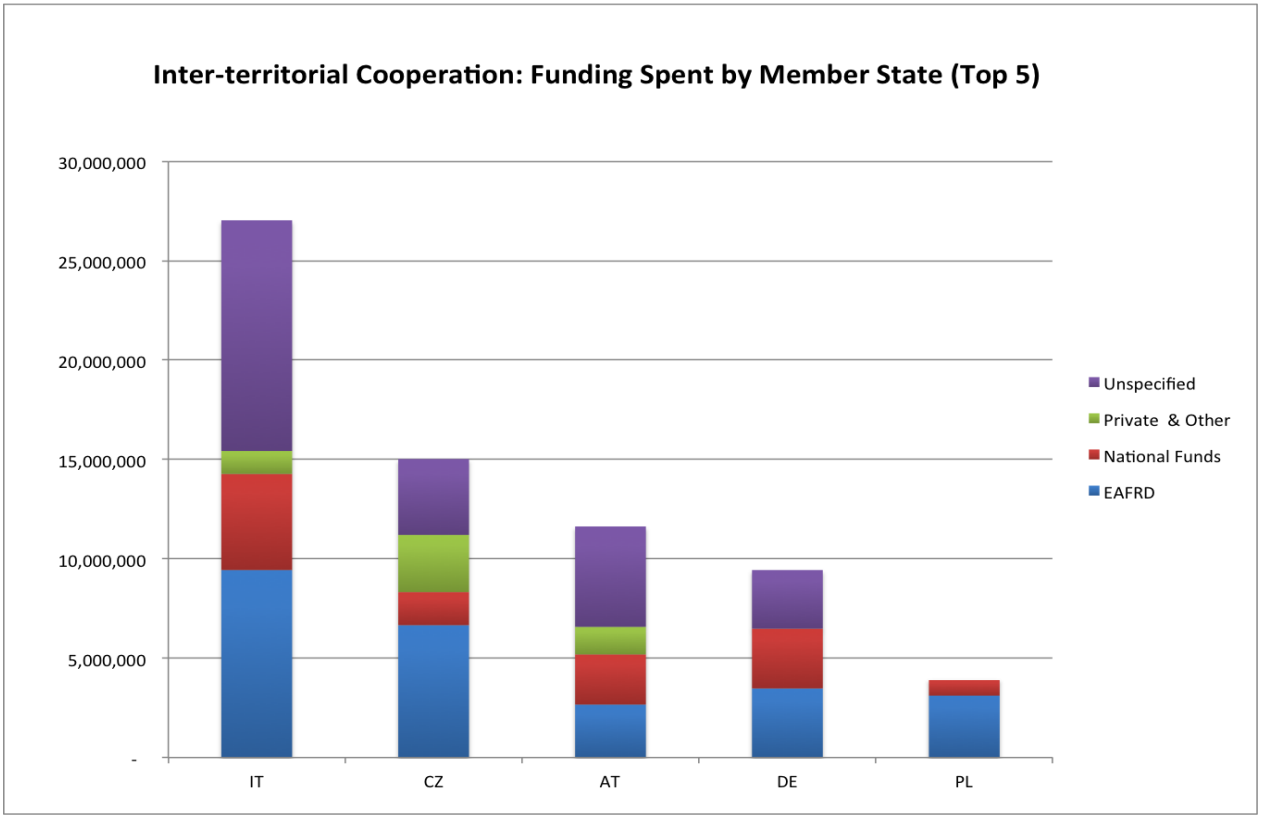
* The split between funding sources was not available for all projects (it only covered some 65% of the total funding used by the 579 inter-territorial projects captured by the additional data collection.

3.8 Funding of Inter-territorial Cooperation by Member State

According to available data Italy, the Czech Republic and Austria are among those Member States, which have invested the largest amounts of total funding into inter-territorial cooperation projects (more than EUR 10 million, see *Chart 22* below), followed by Germany (EUR 9.4 million) and Poland (EUR 3.9 million). This comes as no surprise, given that the LAGs from these Member States are also most frequently involved in inter-territorial cooperation projects (see section 3.1 above).

In several cases no specific data were provided with regard to the share of different financial resources, which prevented a meaningful comparison or analysis of the shares of co-funding between EAFRD, national and private/other funding with regard to the different Member States.

Chart 22 - Split of inter-territorial cooperation funding (top-5 Member States)



In *table 8* below the 7 Member States with the largest number of inter-territorial projects are highlighted (i.e. those with a budget between EUR 20,000 and 99,999), in line with the general trend identified in Chart 20 above. The table also shows that Italy's relative majority of projects are actually large-sized operations with a budget of more than EUR 0.5 million, while in the case of the Czech Republic and Belgium the medium-sized (between EUR 100,000 and EUR 500,000), and in the case of Hungary and the UK the smallest sized projects (less than EUR 20,000) dominate.

Table 8– Inter-territorial cooperation project budget clusters[38]

Project Budget Range / Number of Projects per Member State	DE	PL	AT	SK	LT	EE	SI	CZ	BE	BG	LU	CY	GR	HU	UK	IT
< € 20,000	24	32	13	0	1	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	11	10	0
€ 20,000 - € 99,999	70	57	44	28	15	6	3	40	1	1	2	0	0	1	3	1
€ 100,000 - €500,000	22	5	28	0	7	1	0	75	7	4	3	1	1	1	1	15
> € 500,000	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18

[38] Such information was not available from Latvia, Malta, Romania (no inter-territorial cooperation projects), Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden (no response received from MAs).

Table 9 - Average budget of inter-territorial cooperation projects by Member States

Member State	Total funding committed	Number of Projects	Average project budget
Italy	€ 27,033,354	34	€ 795,099
Belgium	€ 1,560,895	8	€ 195,112
Greece	€ 159,361	1	€ 159,361
Cyprus	€ 138,000	1	€ 138,000
Bulgaria	€ 671,647	5	€ 134,329
Austria	€ 11,629,029	89	€ 130,663
Czech Republic	€ 15,023,790	116	€ 129,515
Luxembourg	€ 602,098	5	€ 120,420
Lithuania	€ 1,869,220	23	€ 81,270
Germany	€ 9,453,921	118	€ 80,118
Slovakia	€ 1,744,524	28	€ 62,304
Poland	€ 3,897,885	94	€ 41,467
Estonia	€ 435,165	11	€ 39,560
Slovenia	€ 152,420	4	€ 38,105
United Kingdom	€ 473,359	14	€ 33,811
Hungary	€ 355,747	13	€ 27,365

4. Understanding the Nature of Cooperation Projects

In addition to the present report's objective to establish the progress of implementation of EAFRD-funded projects implemented under measure 421, this section aims to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the nature of cooperation projects. The information provided in Chapter 4 is the result of the analysis of the following Databases:

(i) The enhanced SFC database of notified TNC projects and data concerning inter-territorial cooperation projects provided by the Managing Authorities to the ENRD Contact Point (see section 1.2);

(ii) The ENRD website's Cooperation Offers Database;

(iii) The ENRD website's RDP Project Database.

Section 4.1 presents an insight into the *nature of TNC and inter-territorial cooperation projects*. The analysis of this section focuses on the following qualitative aspects of cooperation projects:

- Thematic Focus
- Beneficiaries
- Common Objectives
- Joint Activities

Since the three databases mentioned above provide different kind information, not all the databases could feed the analysis of every qualitative aspects analysed in this section.

Section 4.2 focuses on the *use of the Cooperation Offers Database*. More in specific it will present:

- Frequency of cooperation offers by Member State;
- Number of individual LAGs having submitted cooperation offers.

4.1 Findings related to the analysis of TNC Projects[39]

4.1.1 Thematic Focus of TNC Projects

Managing Authorities are not required to provide information on the thematic coverage of projects through the SFC notification. Therefore, no comprehensive or systematic information was available about the thematic focus of TNC projects. In order to overcome this lack of information on the thematic focus, the **current SFC updating exercise** invited the Managing Authorities to assign key themes[40] to TNC projects. Each TNC project could be assigned up to 3 thematic areas from a pre-defined list of themes.

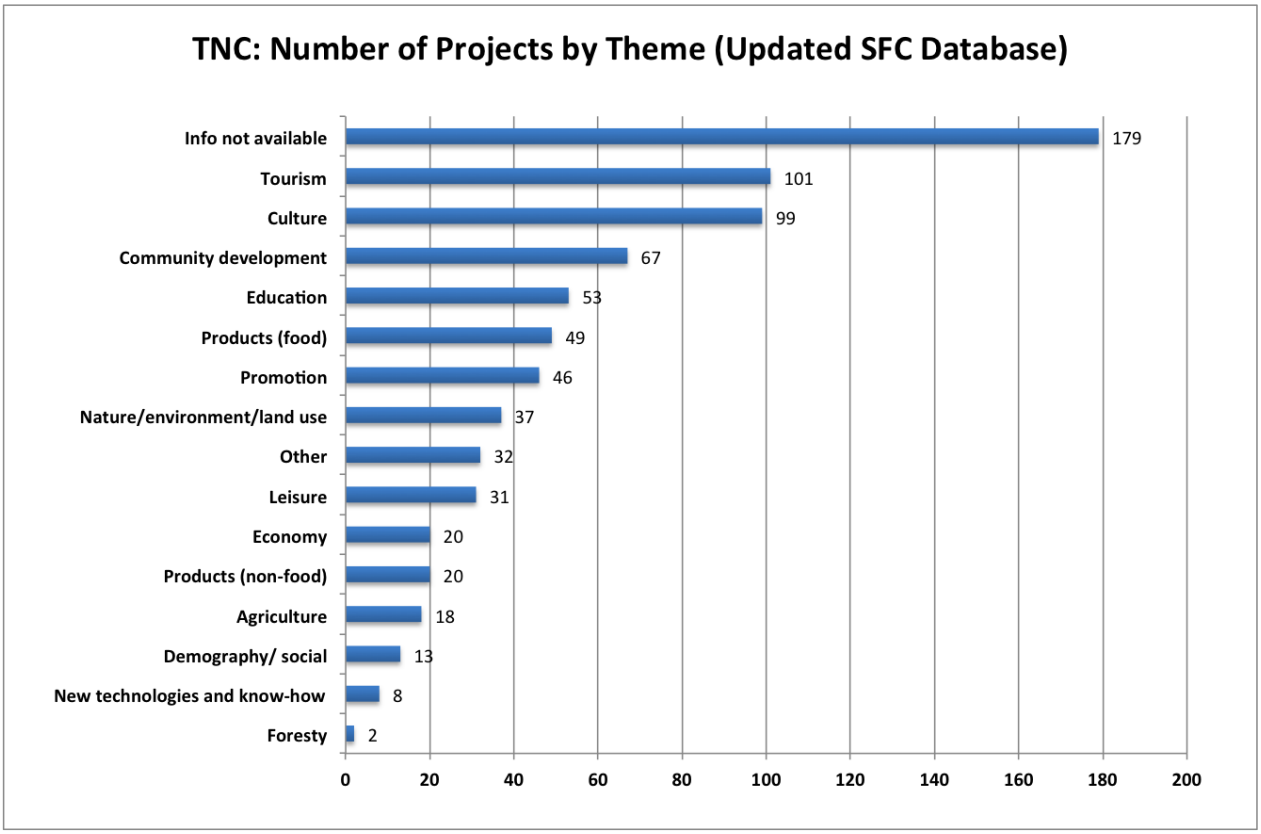
[39] Sources: the ENRD Contact Point's SFC updating/enhancement exercise and ENRD RDP Project Database, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/search/en/search_en.cfm

[40] The full list of thematic options and results are shown in Chart 25.

For the sake of consistency and in order to allow comparison, the list of thematic options, which MAs could choose from, was the same as the themes used by the ENRD's cooperation offers database[41].

Although there was varying degree of detail in the responses received from the MAs of 19 Member States and feedback was not received from further 8 Member States, the exercise established thematic specifications for all but 179 TNC projects, as displayed in *Chart 23* below. Based on the responses obtained it appears that the three most popular themes are tourism (101 projects), culture (99 projects) and community development (67 projects). Other themes frequently covered by TNC projects include education (53 projects) and food products promotion (49 projects).

Chart 23 - Thematic focus (updated SFC database) – number of projects by theme



The highlighted fields (top-3 thematic choices made by Member State) in *table 10* below confirm that at the level of Member States tourism and culture are popular themes across the EU-27 (i.e. the majority of respondent countries identified these themes for a number of projects). Other themes like, food products promotion (Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Italy, Latvia, Sweden, Slovakia, and Slovenia), environment (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Italy, Luxembourg and UK) and education (Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, Slovenia and UK) also appear to be common preferences.

[41] http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/LEADER/cooperation-platform/LEADER-cooperation-offers/en/LEADER-cooperation-offers_en.cfm

Table 10 – Top-3 thematic choices by lead partner

Top-3 thematic choices by Lead partner	Tourism	Culture	Products (food)	Promotion	Nature environment land use	Education	Community development	Leisure	Economy	Agriculture	Products (non-food)	Demography social	New technologies and know-how	Forestry	Other
AT	12	4	3	2	4	2	3	2	0	4	0	1	2	0	6
BE	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
BG	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CY	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CZ	8	10	1	15	3	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
DE	10	7	1	1	6	2	4	2	3	1	0	5	1	1	4
DK	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EE	2	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
ES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FI	4	5	1	1	0	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
FR	4	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
GR	2	1	1	2	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
HU	6	26	1	1	3	9	26	11	7	4	0	0	1	0	5
IE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT	11	4	9	3	5	1	3	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	3
LT	4	3	0	1	0	7	5	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
LU	5	3	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
LV	3	8	4	2	0	1	5	3	1	0	3	0	0	0	1
MT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NL	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
PL	12	14	1	3	7	10	4	2	0	5	1	1	0	0	1
PT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SE	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SI	1	1	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
SK	10	7	14	4	1	1	8	2	0	0	14	0	0	0	0
UK	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
EU MS	**17**	**13**	**9**	**7**	**7**	**6**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**3**

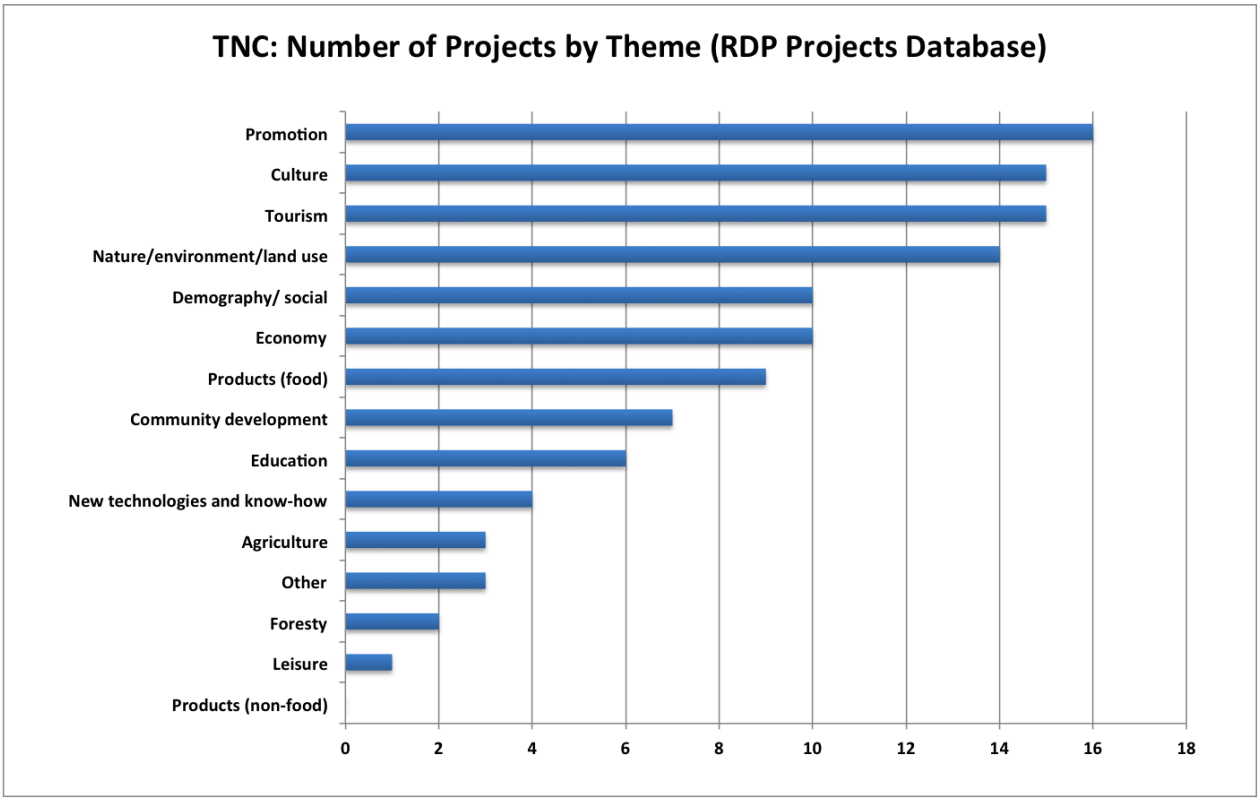
"-" indicates: not a lead partner or information is not available

In a similar way, the **thematic focus of projects included in the RDP database** was also assessed. For consistency (and possible comparison), the list of themes was the same as the themes used for the SFC

database analysis. The Contact Point assigned up to three themes to each TNC project, in accordance with their descriptions registered in the RDP Project Database (results are presented in *Chart 24* below). From the 40 registered TNC projects assessed it appears that the three most popular themes are the promotion of tourism, culture (15 projects each) and nature/environment/land use (14 projects). Other themes frequently covered by TNC projects registered in the RDP database include demography/social aspects, economy (10 projects each), food products (9 projects) and community development (7 projects).

Although the RDP Project Database includes 40 selected TNC projects only (covering only some 8.5% of all TNC projects that were captured by the enhanced SFC database), the above analysis shows that the main thematic coverage of the RDP database is generally representative of the thematic focus and coverage of TNC projects; as both tourism and culture projects feature among the most common themes (similarly to the thematic focus of a more comprehensive/larger sample of projects covered by the SFC database).

Chart 24 - Thematic focus of projects registered in the ENRD's RDP Project Database



The **RDP Project Database descriptions** also allow us to gain a better understanding about the content of TNC projects. In Box 1 below, selected examples of projects are presented that combine some of the most popular cooperation fields of tourism, culture and environment.

Box 1 - Examples of integrated tourism, culture and environment cooperation projects

Examples of integrated tourism, culture and environment cooperation projects

- *In the project "International Cultural Tourism" the LAGs Trakų krašto (Lithuania) and Kyläkulttuuria tuntureitten maassa (Finland) cooperated in order to address the negative effects of seasonal **tourism**. While the Lithuanians specialise in summer tourism, the Finnish are more experienced with winter sports. The idea was to capitalize on their **cultural heritage** and to jointly investigate the potential of such an enhanced offer to render their local tourism industry more viable[42].*

- *"CULTrips Europe" a cooperation between the LAG "Redange-Wiltz (Luxembourg)", and partners from Austria, Estonia, Finland and Italy, recognises the fact that **socio-cultural exchange** and dialogue have evolved as methods of a new niche **tourism**, making local heritage accessible and establishing positive and interactive relationships between visitors and local residents[43].*

- *With input from Welsh, Czech, Finnish, Italian and Slovenian partners the LAG Pembrokeshire Advance (United Kingdom) runs the LEADER TNC project "Adding Value to Community Tourism", which encourages local communities to identify and develop innovative **community tourism** activities, using **local traditions, storytelling, rural skills and heritage sites** in their area to further impose the image of local distinctiveness[44].*

- *In "Re-creation of the Landscape" the LAG Tielts Plateau (Belgium), another Flemish and a Polish LAG (all of which are in a different setting and phase of development), are jointly looking into interesting ways to apply both the bottom-up approach and TNC to develop action plans **promoting landscape conservation and tourism** development[45].*

- *Under the lead of the Regional Development Company of Parnonas S.A. (Greece), three rural areas located next to Mediterranean, Baltic and Northern Atlantic Sea have engaged in transnational cooperation (TNC) to balance their local economic needs with the necessity to responsibly manage their available natural resources. The idea of the "Parks Protection II" partnership with LAGs from Latvia and the UK is to **generate economic and tourism activity** through joint training, and the exchange of measures favourable to the **conservation of the environment**[46].*

[42] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=9420

[43] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=7660

[44] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=8640

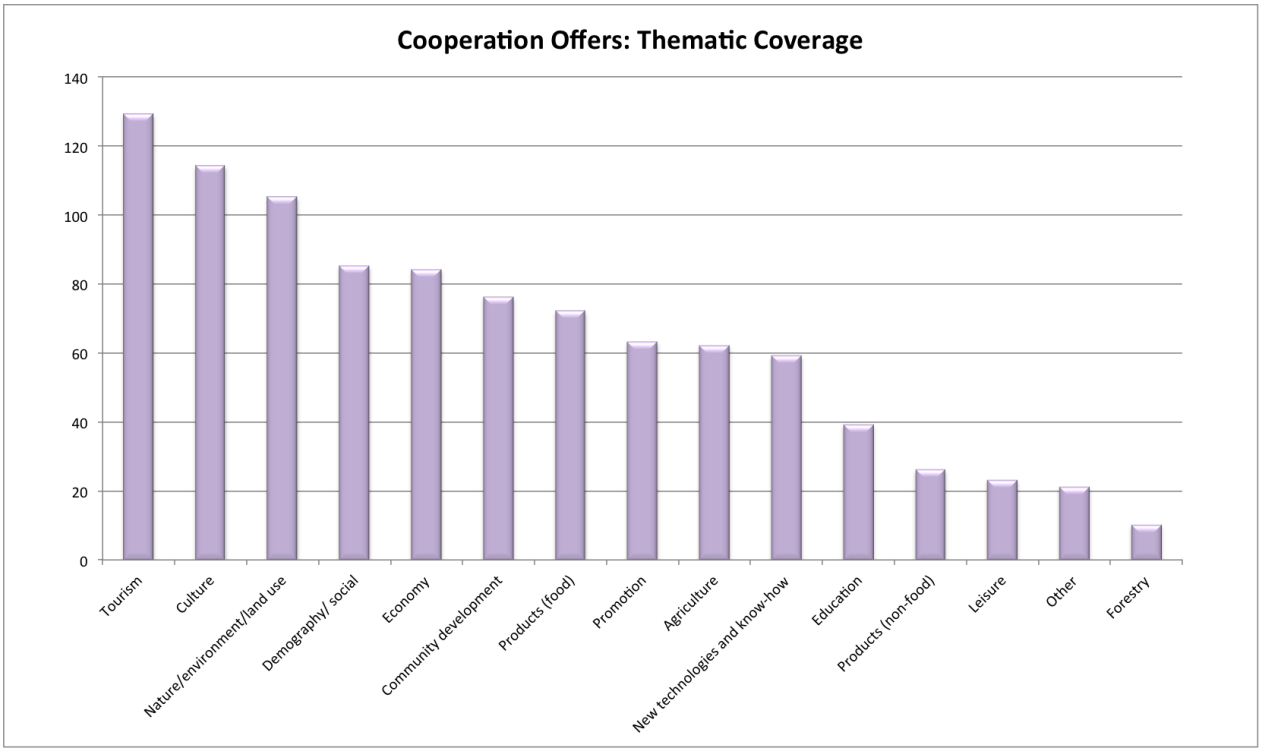
[45] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=10160

[46] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=10681

Finally, the exercise of **screening the ENRD's Cooperation Offers Database** gave the opportunity to better understand the thematic focus of the LAGs' TNC cooperation offers, i.e. the thematic areas where LAGs are most commonly searching for partners. Based on the description of the partnership offers, the ENRD assigned to each existing offer up to three key themes (out of some 15 pre-defined themes). *Chart 25* below displays the result of the screening performed. From the 380 available cooperation offers assessed it appears that the three most popular themes are tourism (129 partnership offers = 34%), culture (114 partnership offers = 30%) and nature/environment/land use (105 partnership offers = 28%). Other themes frequently covered by cooperation offers include demography/social aspects (85 partnership offers = 22%), economy (84 partnership offers = 22%) and community development (76 partnership offers = 20%). This trend is in line with the thematic focus of approved TNC projects, where tourism, culture and community development are the topics, which have been selected for the majority of actually implemented projects.

At this stage there is limited knowledge about how far TNC project offers were turned into concrete projects. This is an area where further research would be needed (i.e. a detailed comparison of the 380 project offer titles with the 470 projects identified in the enhanced SFC database, or interviews with selected lead partners of TNC projects currently implemented), in order to better understand the usefulness of the Cooperation Offers Database for partner search purposes.

Chart 25 - Thematic focus of TNC partnership offers

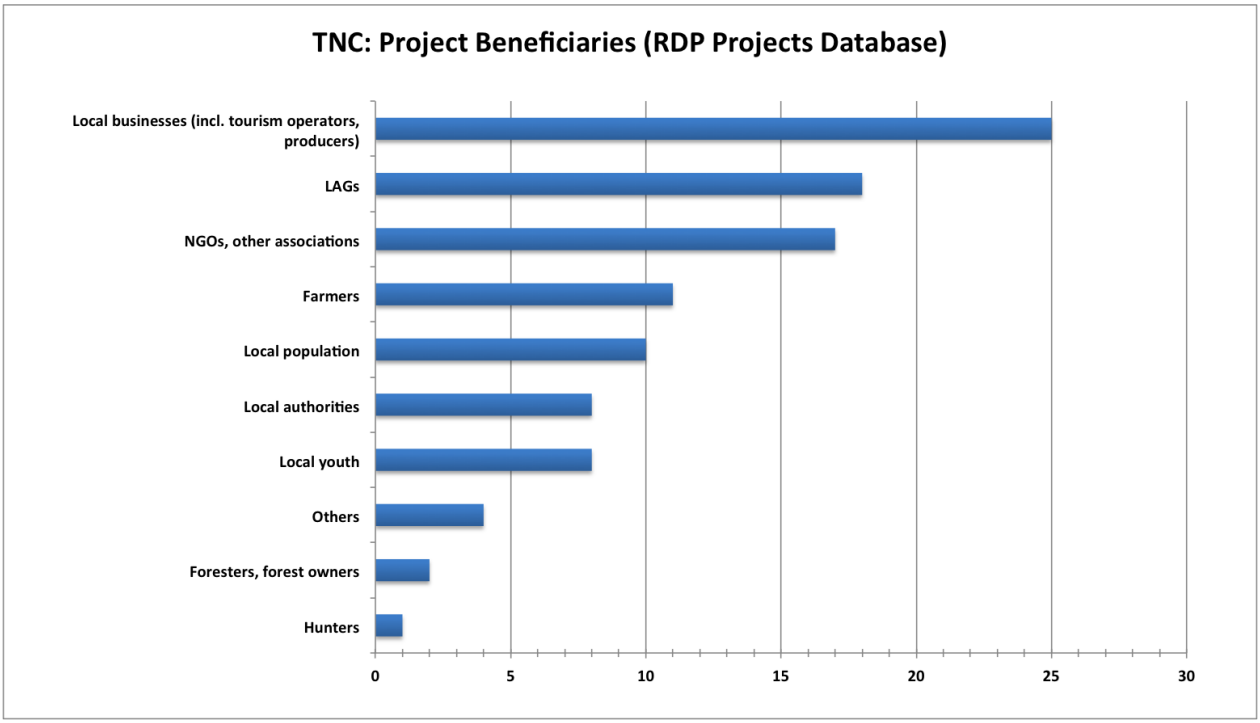


4.1.2 Beneficiaries of TNC Projects (RDP Project Database)

The assessment of 'typical' beneficiaries of TNC projects, is based on the information provided in the RDP Database, since this has been the only source that provided a more detailed description of beneficiary

groups. The screening of the detailed TNC project descriptions registered on the RDP Project Database also allowed the identification of typical projects' beneficiaries (see *Chart 26* below). The number of different types of beneficiaries, which the Contact Point assigned to a single TNC project in the context of this exercise, was left open to accommodate all those mentioned in the Database's project description (i.e. also beyond the pre-defined beneficiary categories of the RDP Project Database). As far as TNC projects included in the database are concerned, local businesses (including local producers and local tourism operators) represent the biggest group of end-beneficiaries (25 projects), followed by LAGs themselves (18 projects) and the NGOs/associations (17 projects) the LAG supported by offering them the possibility to engage in cooperation. Also frequently addressed by these TNC projects were farmers (11 projects) and the local population (10 projects).

Chart 26 - Beneficiaries of TNC projects registered in the ENRD's RDP Project Database



Box 2 presents project examples that address a combination of some of the most typical target groups of TNC projects, such as businesses, NGOs/associations, farmers, local population and youth.

Box 2 - Project examples addressing some of the most typical TNC target groups

Project examples addressing some of the most typical TNC target groups

- *In the TNC project "Medieval Festivals" LAGs from Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, and Portugal have brought together* ***play-actors, cultural associations, artisans and other entrepreneurs*** *typically*

*involved in festival activities, with the intention to innovate communication of cultural heritage. The partners also hope to generate interest among & employment for **rural youth**[47].*

- *LAGs from the Spanish regions of Asturias, Castilla y Leon and Galicia the Portuguese Norte region, as well as LEADER areas from Romania and Estonia apply the bottom up approach to jointly identify sustainable solutions supporting the coexistence of wildlife and farm livestock. Running the TNC project "WOLF", the partnership successfully managed to gather around the same table a variety of stakeholders representing adverse interests, such as **conservation associations, agricultural organizations, livestock farmers, rural entrepreneurs, as well as local and environmental authorities**[48].*

- *"Connect Farmers' Markets along the Border" re-activates Slovenian-Italian trade of local agricultural products on traditional marketplaces, where local farmers from the border area long time ago used to sell their own produce. Linking **producers and traders**, the TNC project established a common market for agricultural products from the areas of the three partner LAGs[49].*

- *Two LAGs areas from Burgenland (Austria) and Saxonia (Germany) partner in the TNC project "Fantastic for Families" jointly implemented by the **cultural association** "Burg Forchtenstein Fantastisch - Verein für Kultur und Wissen zum Angreifen" and the local community of Triebischtal, in order to develop and expand the local service offer for the **local population**, with a particular focus on families and children[50].*

4.1.3 Common Objectives of TNC Projects

Another important area, which the screening exercise of the ENRD's **RDP Project Database** aimed at, was the identification of the common objectives that LAGs aimed to achieve by implementing joint actions. *Chart 27* below shows the result of the Contact Point's screening for these common objectives, which the database provides. For the sake of consistency and comparison, the Contact Point applied a set of 20 generic objectives (also used for the analysis of cooperation offers). The Contact Point allocated up to three common objectives to each of the 40 registered TNC projects.

The three most frequently mentioned common objectives were business development (14 projects), knowledge sharing (including exchange of experience, 13 projects), and strategy development (9 projects). Other common objectives frequently covered by TNC projects include skills development and network development (7 and 6 projects respectively).

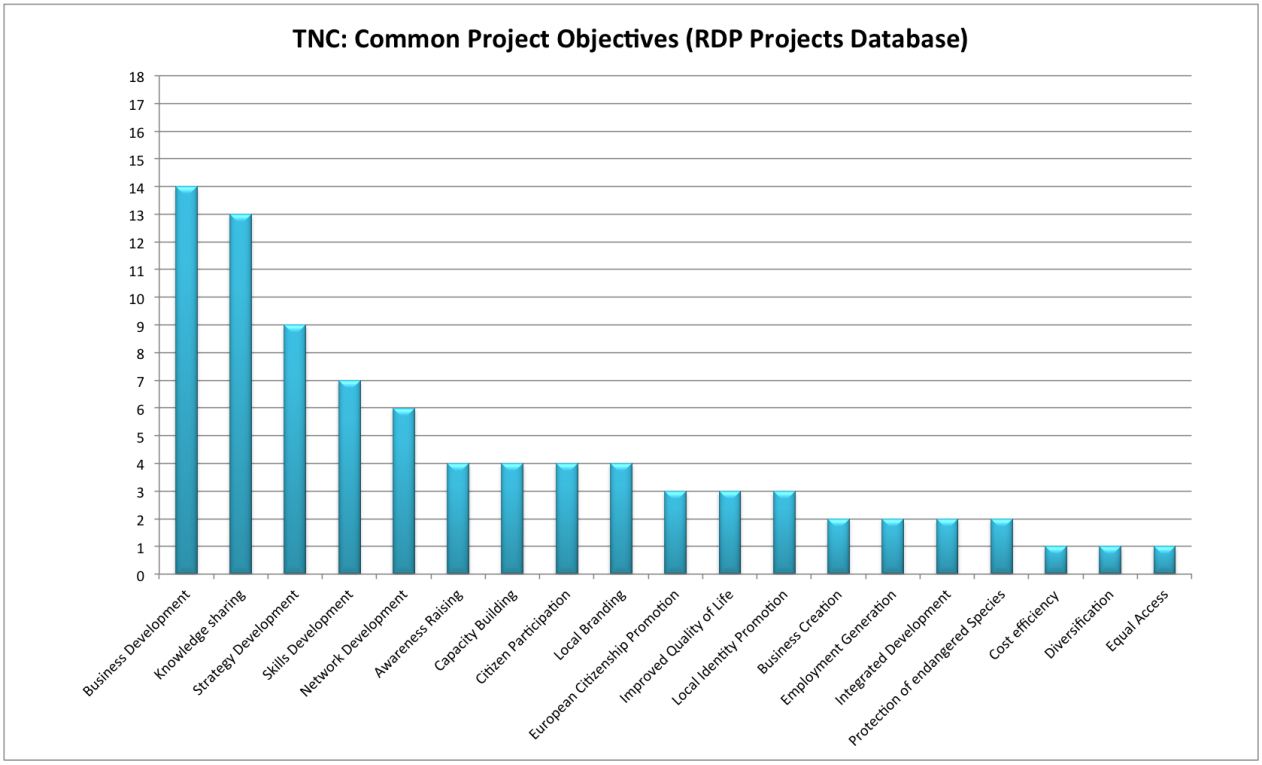
[47] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=8620

[48] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=8621

[49] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=7780

[50] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=8760

Chart 27 - Common objectives of TNC projects registered in the ENRD's RDP Project Database



Box 3 contains the description of some of the TNC projects from the RDP Database that aim to address more than one of the 'typical' common objectives.

Box 3 - TNC projects addressing challenges in an integrated way

TNC projects addressing challenges in an integrated way

- *The "FIN-GER-NET" project between the German LAGs Hunsrück, Welterbe Oberes Mittelrheintal, and the Finnish LAG PoKo aimed, among others, to jointly develop sustainable **business solutions** for common issues in the thematic fields of gastronomy, education and vocational training, tourism, and rural women, and to facilitate the exchange of experience and **sharing of knowledge** among similar groups of stakeholders*[51].

- *The common objective of the "Re-creation of the Landscape" project is to jointly **develop a strategy** for tourism and recreation. The lead partner region will pilot the concept, and **share** its **knowledge** and experience with the other partner areas. Ultimately, the project partners aim to stimulate **business development**, by capitalising on the ecologically valuable landscape of each region.*

- *In the project "Where was it, there it was …" the Slovak Local Action Group LEV exchanged experience with the Czech LAG Rýmařovsko with the objective to improve the partner regions' attractiveness and*

[51] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=11006

*to create new sources of income for both local communities through the **development of a comprehensive strategy**. For this purpose **knowledge was shared** on local culture and the human and cultural potential of the cooperating rural areas[52].*

- *The Austrian – Finnish TNC project "Woven Together - Miteinander Verwoben" aimed at **sharing the creativity and knowledge** and skills of artists from two European rural areas of different background & cultural origin. Ultimately, the objective was to support the **acquisition of new creative skills** and knowledge about presentational techniques to disseminate art among the wider rural public, thus stimulating village renewal[53].*

- *"Cross-border Entrepreneurs Blekinge / Warmia-Mazury" is a Swedish-Polish cooperation facilitating the generation of business ideas, the launch of micro-enterprises and the development of new partnerships in the field of rural tourism. Accordingly the LAGs' common objectives are to stimulate **business development** through the offer of new tourism services and the **development of cooperation networks**/business facilitators, business partnership groups, and/or product consortia[54].*

Similarly to the RDP Database, the **ENRD's Cooperation Offers Database** was also screened to identify common objectives that the LAG's aimed to achieve by their proposed cooperation offer. To analyse the specific project objectives (based on the description of the 380 projects), the Contact Point used the same set of 20 generic objectives as in the RDP Project Database.

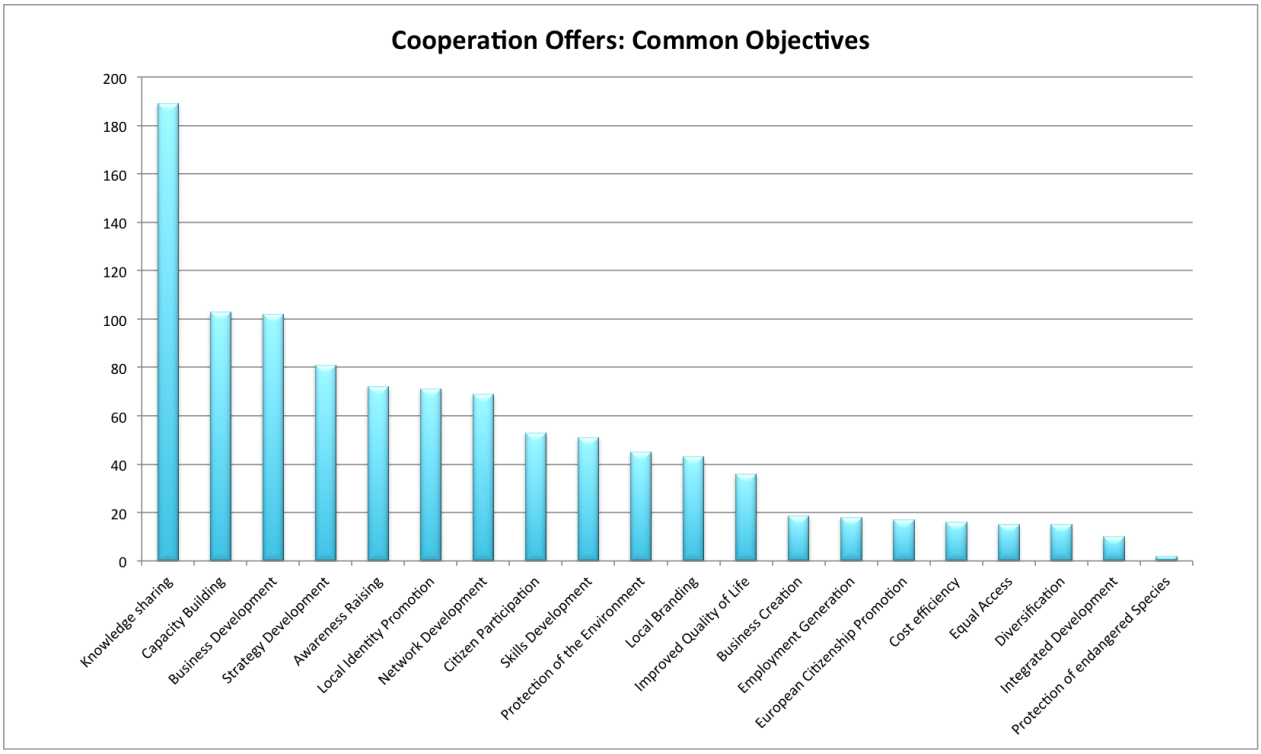
Chart 28 below shows the result of this analysis, during which the Contact Point assigned up to three common objectives to each existing TNC cooperation offer. From the available total of 380 Cooperation Offers assessed it appears that the three most frequently mentioned common objectives were 'knowledge sharing' (including exchange of experience, 189 partnership offers), 'capacity building' (including training, workshops, etc., 103 partnership offers) and business development (102 partnership offers). Other common objectives frequently sought to be addressed by cooperation offers include strategy development (81 partnership offers), awareness raising (72 partnership offers) and local identity promotion (71 partnership offers).

[52] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=9400

[53] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=5740

[54] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=11021

Chart 28 - Proposed common objectives of TNC partnership offers

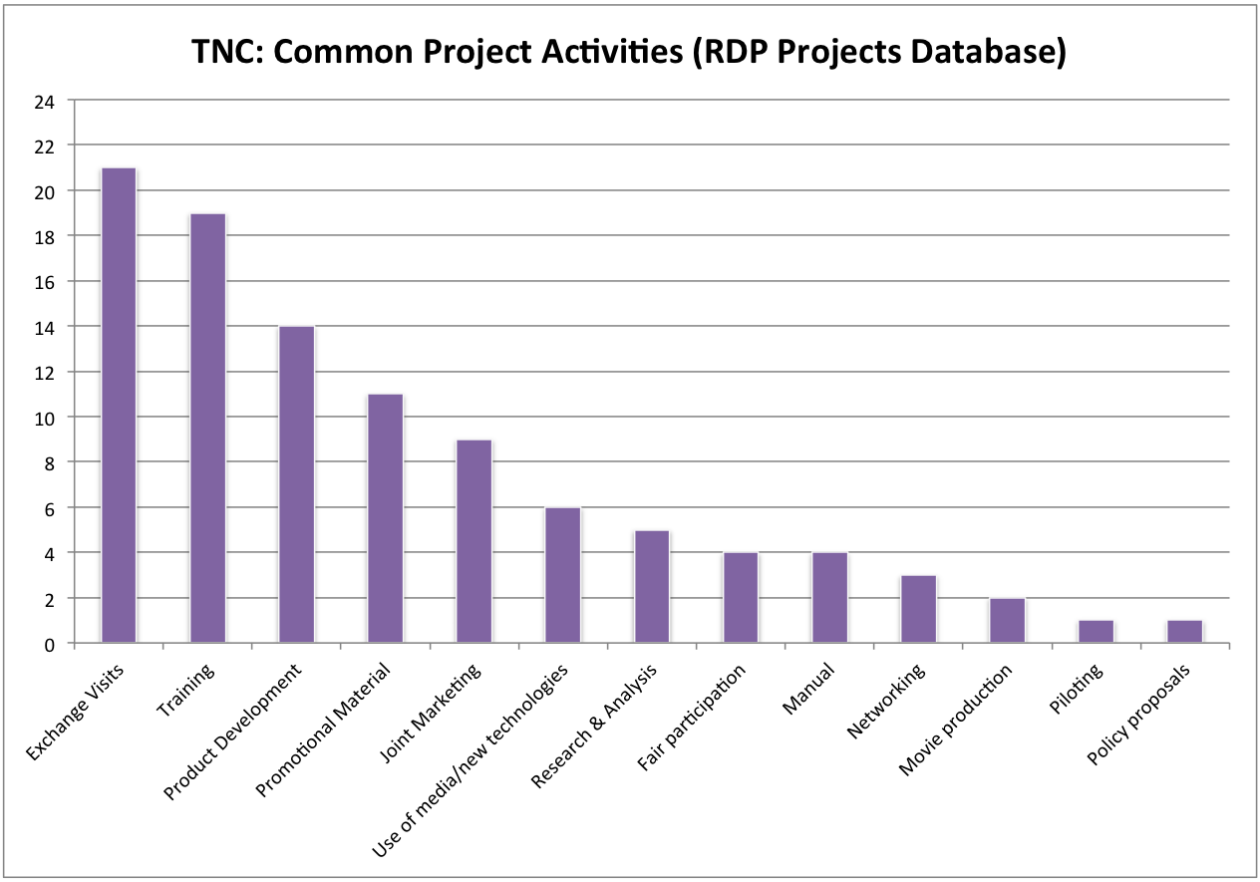


4.1.4 Common Activities of TNC Projects (ENRD RDP Project Database)

Finally, the screening the ENRD's **RDP Project Database** also aimed to identify the most typical project activities carried out by LAG partners. To capture the overall trend, the Contact Point developed a set of 13 generic activities on the basis of the common activities, which are described as part of each of the 40 individual TNC project profiles registered in the RDP Project Database.

Chart 29 below shows that exchange visits (21 projects), joint training measures (19 projects) and joint product development (14 projects) were among the most frequent project activities. Also frequently mentioned project activities included the joint production of promotional materials (11 projects) and the joint development of marketing measures (9 projects).

Chart 29 - Common activities of TNC projects registered in the ENRD's RDP Project Database



Box 4 below presents some of the TNC project examples that include the most typical project activities. A combination of the most frequent activities is reflected in many of the 40 TNC projects registered in the RDP Project Database.

Box 4 - Typical project activities carried out by TNC projects

Typical project activities carried out by TNC projects

- *In "CULTrips Europe" (see info box 1) the partner LAGs organise **exchange visits** in the form of 'pilot trips' to demonstrate their interpretation of the CULTrips approach. Thereafter, the visiting 'pioneers' from the partner LAGs provide their feedback, thus contributing to the joint **product development** of the CULTrips offer. **Joint marketing** work includes both development of a marketing strategy and marketing manual.*

- *The project "Quality of Life through Proximity (Lebensqualität durch Nähe - LQN)" develops and exchanges via a joint forum solutions that ensure the provision of basic services and local supplies for the rural population, thus addressing today's principal challenges - demographic change and the current economic climate. Joint German-Austrian **training** modules focus on know-how transfer on*

*these topics, and together with **exchange field visits** to fLAGship projects each partner obtains inputs for the elaboration of future solutions tailored to meet their own specific local needs[55].*

- *Partners of the "Medieval Festivals" project have organised **exchange visits** for play-actors, cultural associations, artisans and other entrepreneurs to introduce their LAG areas and **trainings** and workshops on the side-lines of their medieval festivals (medieval lifestyle camps; medieval crafts & arts workshops; artist exchanges on medieval music, theatre and other performing arts).*

- *Seven Local Action Groups (LAGs) from France, the United Kingdom, Slovakia, Germany, Finland, Denmark, and Belgium intend to preserve bees as pollinating insects, thus contributing to biodiversity. The partners of the "Bees and Biodiversity" project expect added value from sharing experiences and solutions elaborated throughout the project, mostly but not exclusively during common events, **including exchange visits** and **training** seminars[56].*

- *Geopark managements from Greece and Cyprus create new mechanisms for cooperation with local enterprises to promote the local economy by capitalising on the heritage and identity of the parks. . The "Geo-Products" project **develops and pilots** (i) Geopark **products**, (ii) qualitative criteria for the presentation and delivery of Geo - Products and Services, (iii) guidelines for the selection of Geo - Products and of the local businesses to produce and deliver them, and (iv) Geo - Product pricing directions. **Joint training** measures address the certification of these local products and services[57].*

- *The Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian and Estonian partners of the "WOLF" project engage also in the joint **development of promotional material** for rural tourism and local craftsmanship and related **sustainable quality products**, which particularly focus on the aspect of reconciliation between wildlife and human activity.*

4.2 About the use of the TNC Cooperation Offers Database

As described above, the use and usefulness of the TNC Cooperation Offers Database is an area where further research is needed. As part of the preliminary analysis, ENRD CP assessed how often LAGs from various Member States used the TNC Cooperation Offers Database.

4.2.1 Frequency of TNC Cooperation Offers by Member State

LAGs have the possibility to post their LEADER cooperation project ideas onto the ENRD website's Cooperation Offers Database. The purpose of this database is to help project promoters to identify cooperation partners willing to jointly work with them towards the solution of common issues and challenges. LAGs interested to join a cooperation project can review the list of "cooperation offers"

[55] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=5760

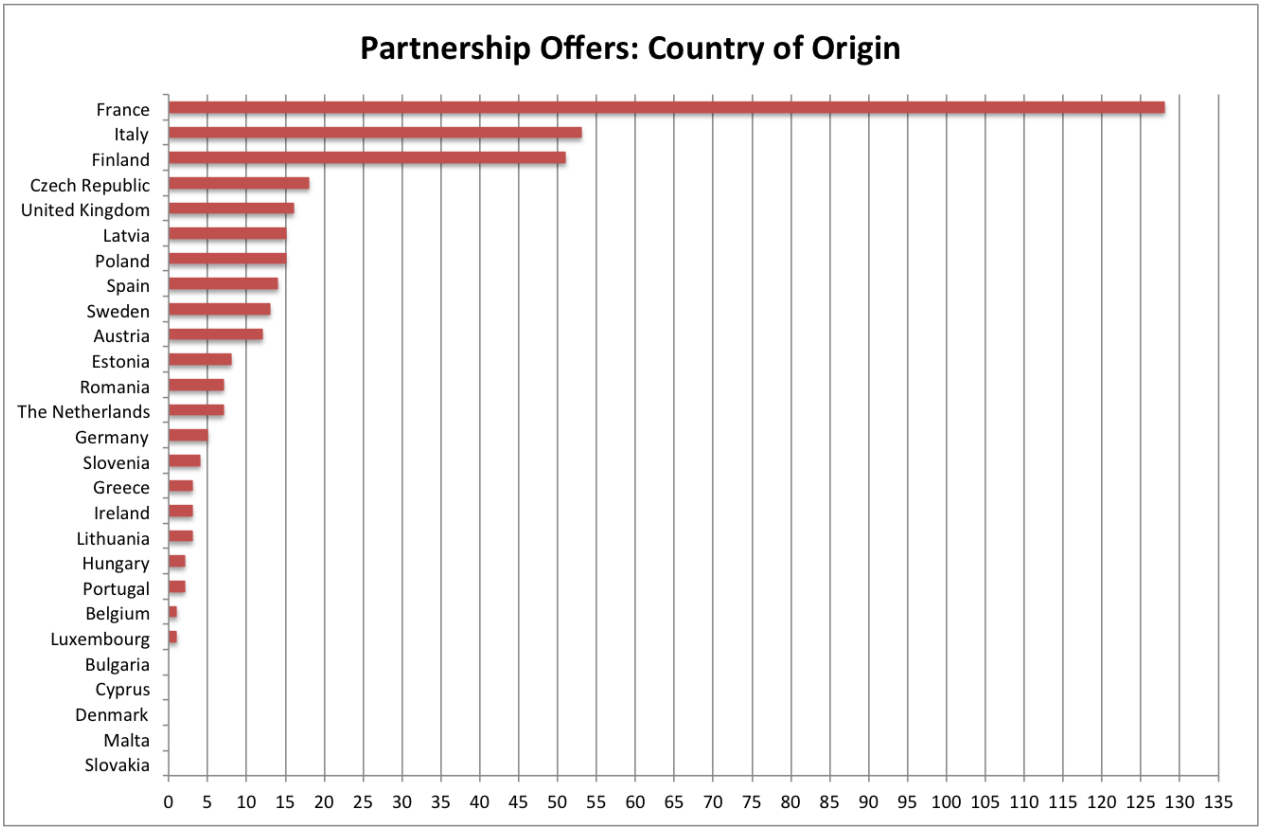
[56] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=10220

[57] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=10760

online and make direct contact with the project promoters to further discuss the cooperation proposal.[58] At the time of this analysis, the database contained about 380 cooperation offers.

As *Chart 30* below shows, LAGs in France have generated the highest number of Partnership Offers in the ENRD's Cooperation Offers Database. These LAGs have submitted more than 125 project ideas. Italian and Finnish LAGs also active in searching partners for cooperation projects, as they both published more than 50 cooperation project proposals via the ENRD website's facility. Generally, other Member States were less pro-active, with their LAGs submitting up to or around 15 cooperation project proposals to the ENRD Cooperation Offers Database. LAGs from 5 countries (namely Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Malta and Slovakia) have not published any proposals via the ENRD website's facility.

Chart 30 - Number of TNC partnership offers by Member State



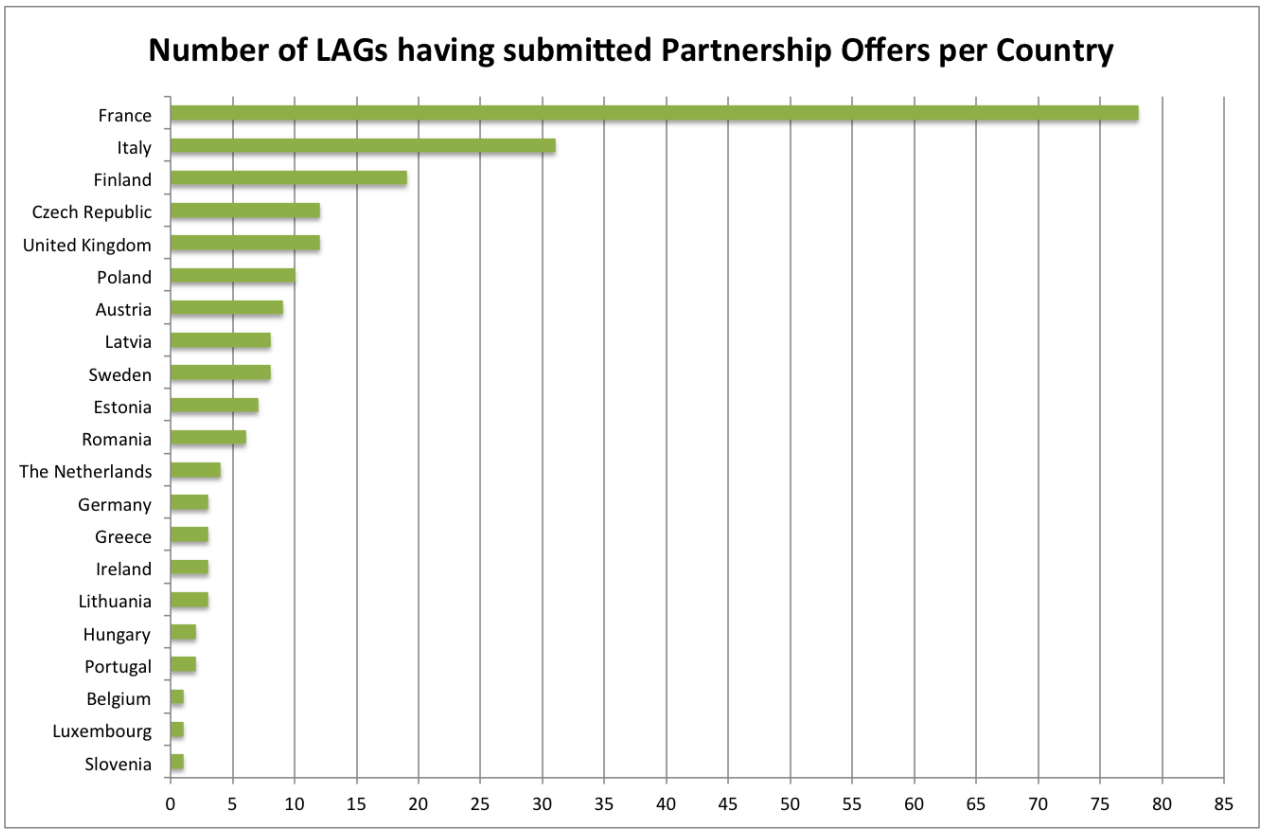
4.2.2 Number of LAGs creating TNC Cooperation Offers by Member State

As *Chart 31* below shows, France is also the Member State, with the highest number of LAGs that submitted partnership offers via the ENRD website. Over time, almost 80 French LAGs have submitted their project ideas to the ENRD Cooperation Offers Database. Again, Italian and Finnish LAGs were among the most active ones, as about 30 Italian and 20 Finnish LAGs have published cooperation project proposals via the ENRD website's facility. As a general trend, LAGs from other Member States were less

[58] Source: ENRD Cooperation Offers Database, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/LEADER/cooperation-platform/LEADER-cooperation-offers/en/LEADER-cooperation-offers_en.cfm

active, with most of them submitting between 2 and 10 cooperation project proposals to the ENRD website.

Chart 31 - Frequency of TNC partnership offer submission by individual LAGs



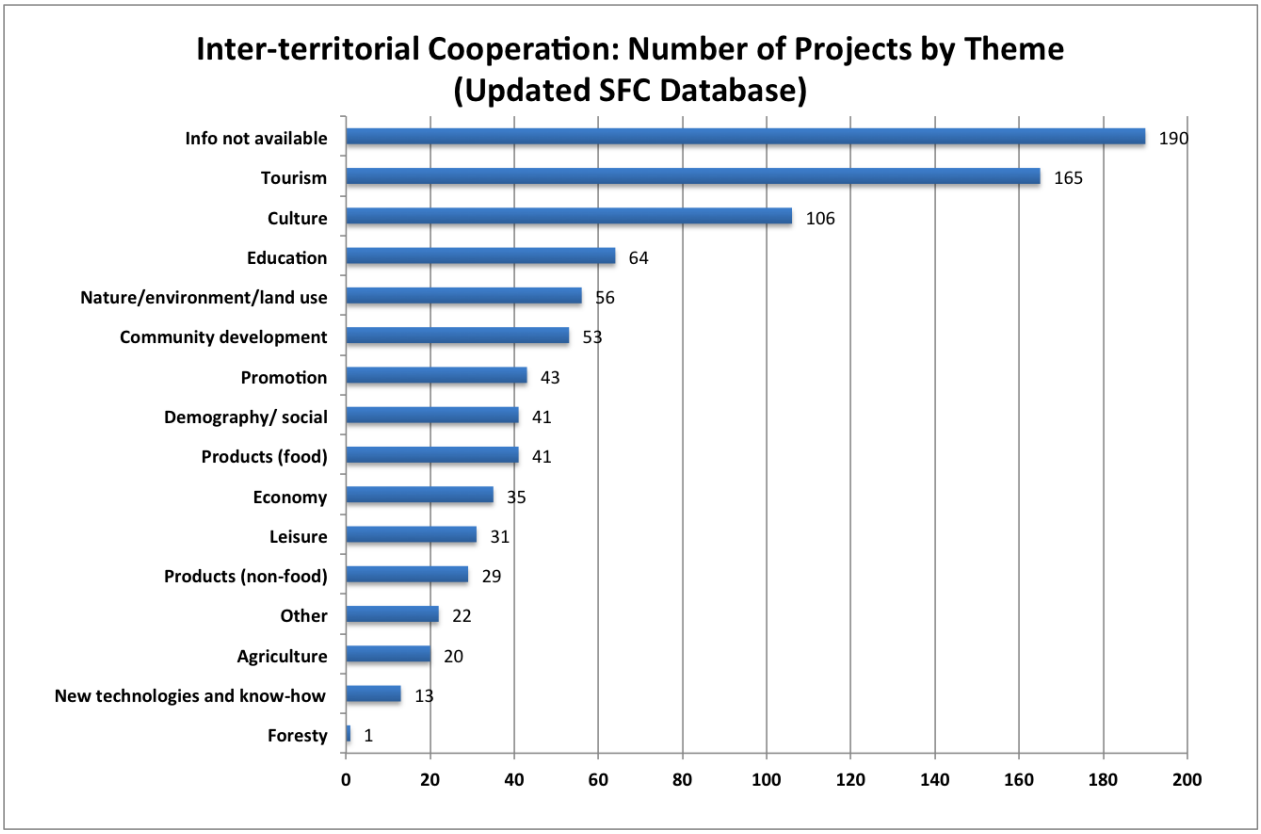
4.3 Findings related to the Analysis of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects

4.3.1 Thematic Focus of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects

In order to establish a better understanding of the thematic focus of inter-territorial cooperation, the ENRD Contact Point also requested the Managing Authorities to assign up to three themes to each project when providing **SFC-type information** (results are shown in *Chart 32* below)[59]. Based on feedback obtained to date from the MAs of 19 Member States, and similarly to observations made concerning the thematic focus of TNC projects (c.f. section 4.3.1 (a) above), tourism (165 projects) and culture (106 projects) are again the principal topics LAGs have chosen to address through cooperation projects. Other themes frequently covered by inter-territorial cooperation projects include education (64 projects), nature/environment & land use (56 projects) and community development (53 projects). For a fairly substantial number of projects the MAs did not specify the projects' thematic focus (190 projects, i.e. one third of the total number of 579 projects that were reported on).

[59] Like in the case of TNC projects, the list of thematic options, which MAs could choose from, was identical with the themes used by the ENRD's cooperation offers database.

Chart 32 - Thematic focus of inter-territorial cooperation projects



The highlighted fields (top-3 thematic choices made by cooperating LAGs in Member State) in *table 11* below confirm that the thematic preference of tourism is shared by several LAGs engaging in inter-territorial cooperation in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and UK. Culture was selected as a theme for cooperation for a relatively high number of inter-territorial cooperation projects in Austria, Germany and the Czech Republic; however, overall this theme does not represent a common preference across the 19 Member States that notified projects to the ENRD Contact Point.

Table 11 - Top-3 thematic choices by EU Member State

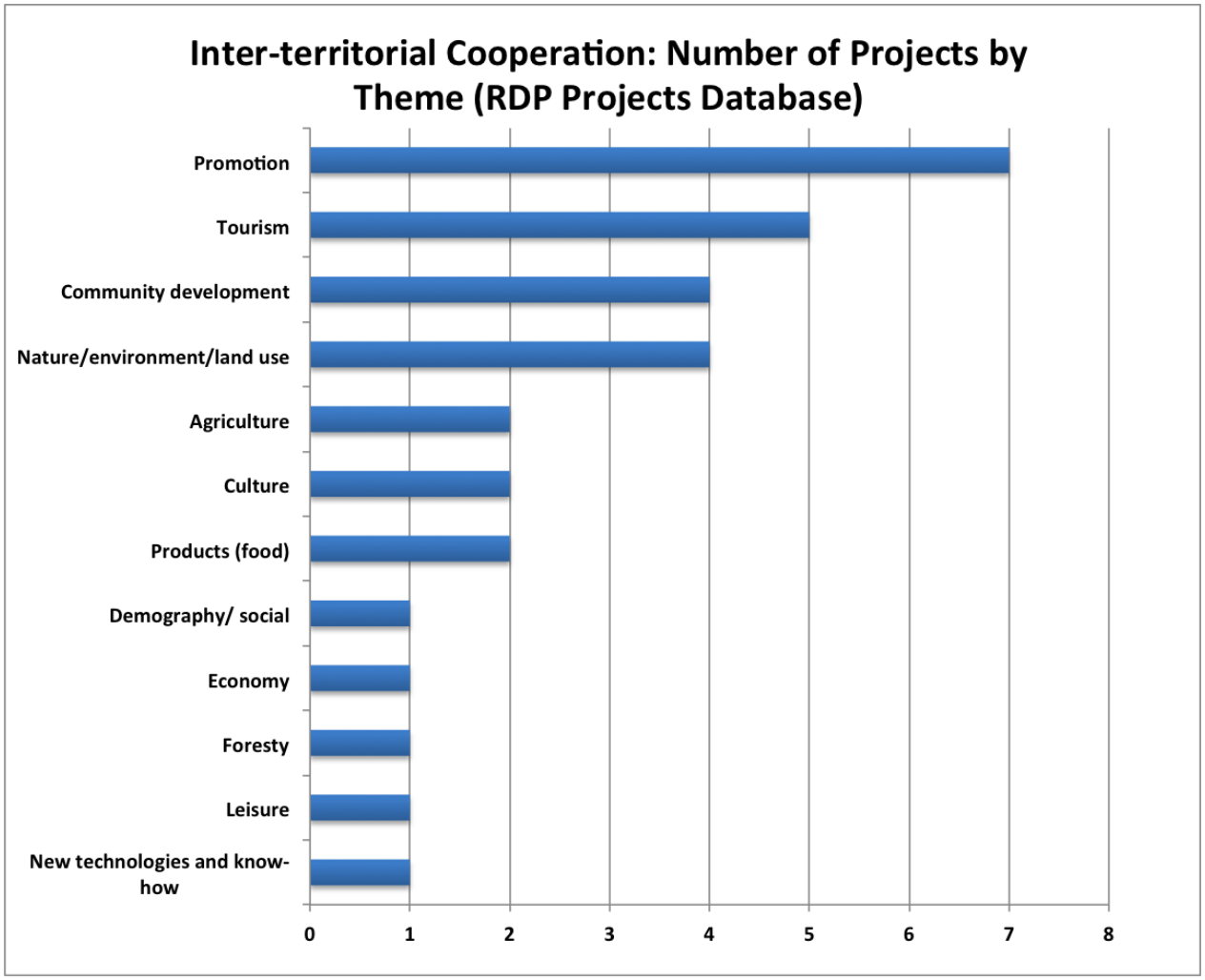
Top-3 thematic choices by EU Member State	Tourism	Culture	Promotion	Products (food)	Nature environment land use	Community development	Demography social	Products (non-food)	Education	Economy	Leisure	Agriculture	New technologies and know-how	Forestry	Other
AT	12	14	3	5	10	12	19	0	34	13	6	9	3	0	8
BE	0	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
BG	4	3	3	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
CY	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CZ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE	39	16	1	5	2	2	4	1	4	7	2	3	2	0	1
DK	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EE	3	0	8	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0
ES	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GR	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
HU	5	3	4	0	2	3	0	5	2	1	4	1	0	0	2
IE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT	25	9	4	11	10	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
LT	8	8	3	0	2	13	13	3	7	5	5	0	0	0	2
LU	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
LV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NL	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PL	64	47	9	3	24	7	0	2	11	3	7	1	6	1	4
PT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SI	1	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3	0	0	0
SK	4	2	5	11	2	11	1	14	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
UK	3	3	0	0	4	0	0	0	1	1	3	1	2	0	0
EU MS	**9**	**5**	**5**	**4**	**4**	**3**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**1**

"-" indicates: no projects or no information is available.

In addition to the analysis of the 'thematic focus' of inter-territorial cooperation projects (for which data was provided by MAs), a **screening of the 12 inter-territorial cooperation project entries available in**

the ENRD's RDP Project Database revealed that there is only little difference in the thematic focus when compared to the SFC-type information collected about inter-territorial projects (which indicates that the RDP Project Database is representative of the overall sample of inter-territorial projects). *Chart 33* below confirms that the three most popular themes[60] are the promotion of tourism (5 projects), community development and nature/environment/land use (4 projects each). Two of these top-3 themes (and of the top-3 themes in the enhanced SFC database) are the same as the thematic priorities identified as a result of the screening of the cooperation offers (section 4.2.3 above).[61]

Chart 33 - Thematic focus of Inter-territorial Cooperation projects registered in the RDP Project Database



[60] The range of themes applied for this analysis is again the same currently used by the ENRD's cooperation offers database.

[61] Given the limited number of inter-territorial cooperation projects registered in the database it, however, has to be noted that the outcome of this analysis may not be fully representative; only 12 projects were available for analysis, thus covering only some 2.1% of the 579 inter-territorial projects that were reported to the Contact Point by the Managing Authorities in the context of this exercise.

Box 5 provides some further details on how the most frequent combinations of thematic priorities (namely tourism, community development, environment, culture, and local products) are realised in the context of Inter-territorial Cooperation projects.

Box 5- Combination of typical thematic priorities within inter-territorial projects

Combination of typical thematic priorities within inter-territorial projects

- *Implemented by the Belgian LAGs Haute Sûre Forêt d'Anlier and Cuestas, the project "Developing a Network of 'Natural' Gardens in Wallonia" promotes the use of indigenous local plants and the non-use of pesticides. The Local Development Strategies of both LAGs revealed an opportunity to work on this topic as **a community development** initiative, as the development of new natural gardens enhances the appreciation of indigenous local plant species and the appreciation of **biodiversity** by the local population[62].*

- *The Flanders Moss **National Nature Reserve** (NNR) is located in central Scotland. It contains an 'actively raised bog' habitat which is protected by EU laws. In the past the local population had a negative perception of the bog and this hindered its conservation. Actions were required to reverse prevailing opinions among **local communities** and to convert the bog into a valued local asset[63].*

- *A dramatic decline in **tourism** in the Bavarian Forest region inspired the idea of "Creating a Cultural Event in the Bavarian Forest". Investigating possible ways of attracting tourists to the region, the lack of a regional music festival was identified as a major weakness. Expected to support the local economy, the new festival also provides visitors with an opportunity to enjoy and connect with **culture, environment, and local communities**[64].*

- *The Feistritz vintage railway in Austria, which features viaducts, original stations and water towers, in 2013 celebrates its 100th anniversary. "A Journey of Delight through East Styria" **promotes** the region's varied **tourism** offer, which includes **regional agricultural and gastro-culinary products** and activities[65].*

4.3.2 Beneficiaries of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects

As in the context of the TNC project analysis exercise, the number of beneficiary types the Contact Point assigned to each inter-territorial cooperation project was left open, in order to accommodate all those mentioned in the Database's project description (i.e. also beyond the pre-defined beneficiary categories

[62] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=2241

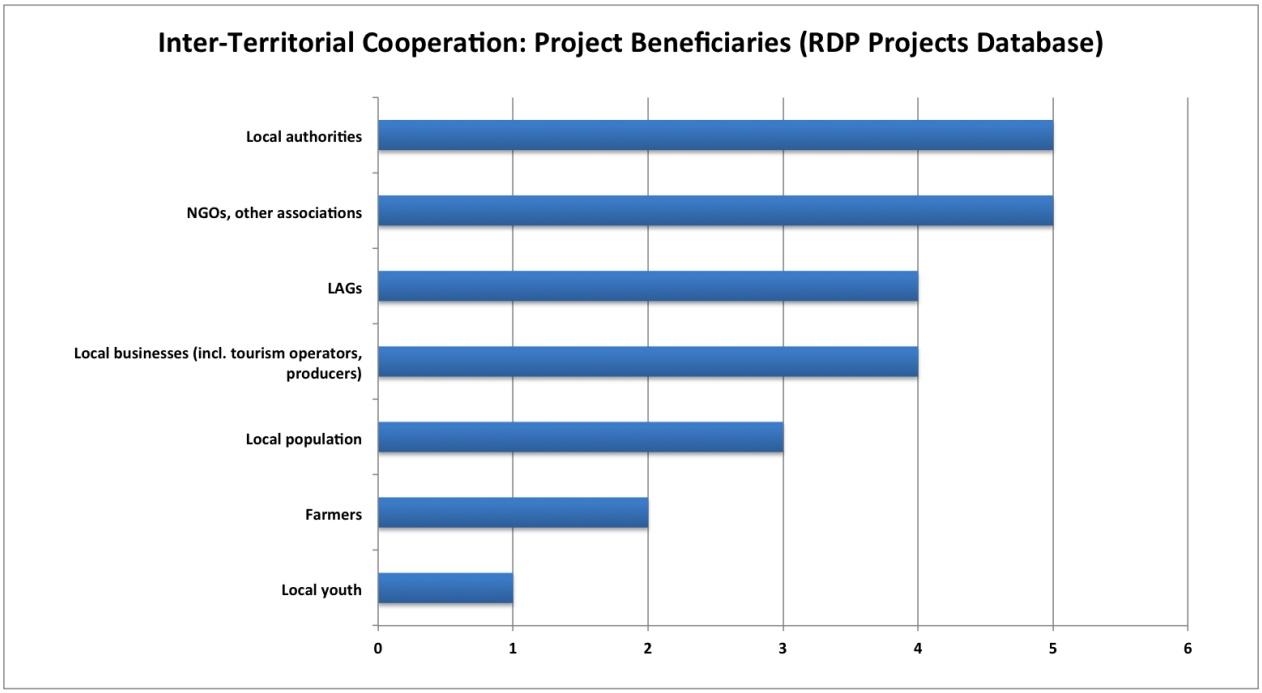
[63] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=2262

[64] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=2644

[65] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=4240

of the RDP Project Database). As *Chart 34* presents, NGOs/associations, local authorities (5 projects each), as well as local businesses, including local producers and local tourism operators (4 projects), and LAGs themselves (4 projects) are among the groups of end-beneficiaries most frequently addressed by inter-territorial cooperation projects registered in the RDP database, closely followed by the local population in general (3 projects). Keeping in mind the limited sample of projects in the RDP Project Database, these results differ from those of the TNC analysis to the extent that local authorities were not found among the top-5 target groups of TNC projects.

Chart 34 - Beneficiaries of Inter-territorial Cooperation projects registered in the RDP Project Database



Box 6 provides typical examples of combinations of beneficiaries (local authorities, associations, businesses and the local population) of inter-territorial cooperation.

Box 6 - Examples of inter-territorial cooperation beneficiaries

Examples of inter-territorial cooperation beneficiaries

- *The project "Developing a Network of 'Natural' Gardens in Wallonia" has developed increased communication and networking between the **local population, nature conservation associations and local authorities** (i.e. the Regional Centre for Environmental Education Anlier; the environmental planning authorities of Bastogne, Tintigny and Habay).*

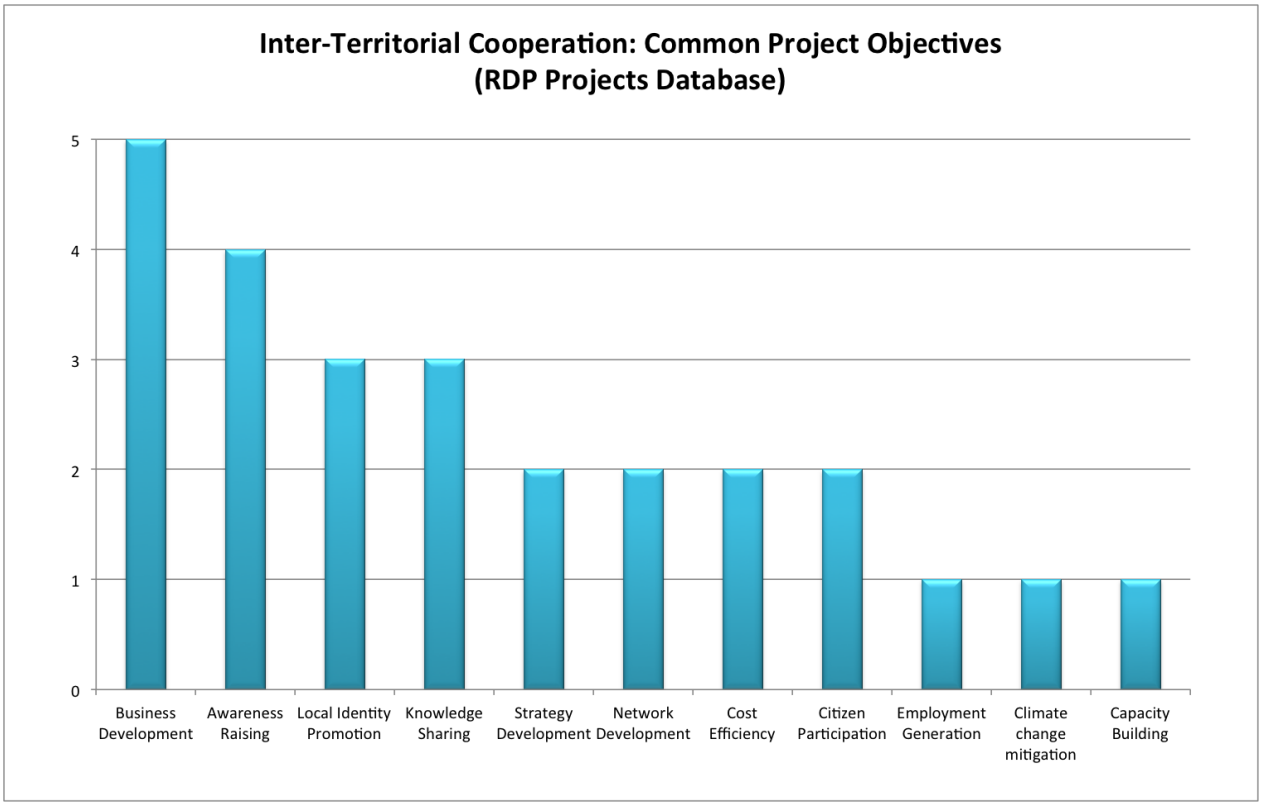
- *For the Feistritz vintage railway's "Journey of Delight through East Styria" the touristic bodies and regional administrations will obtain LEADER support for the coordination of the **local businesses, associations and municipalities**, which will be involved in different activities and the sponsoring of the railway's restored rolling stock.*

- *An inter-territorial cooperation project in Spain involved 30 LAGs in the regions of Navarra, Aragon, Castilla la Mancha, Castilla y Leon, Extremadura, Cantabria and Cataluna to determine the impact of the exploitation of natural and cultural resources such as birds for the development of rural areas, The "Reto Natura 2000: Tourism Network of Nature Observation Areas" project addressed **stakeholders from the environmental, tourism and public sector**, also to help to overcome conflicting positions*[66].

4.3.3 Common Objectives of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects

Slightly different results from those of the TNC analysis can be also reported from the screening of the **RDP Project Database** for the common objectives of inter-territorial cooperation projects. It has to be noted though that the sample of inter-territorial projects is relatively limited (i.e. even the 'most common' objectives are addressed by a few projects only). As *Chart 35* shows, business development (5 projects) is among the 'most frequently' identified objectives of inter-territorial projects. At the same time, (within the small sample of projects where information was available) inter-territorial cooperation projects also address areas that are relatively less common to TNC projects, such as awareness raising (4 projects), knowledge sharing (including exchange of experience) and local identity promotion (3 projects each).

Chart 35 - Common objectives of Inter-territorial Cooperation projects registered in the RDP database



[66] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=7720

Box 7 below presents inter-territorial cooperation project examples that aim to address more than one of the common objectives specified above in an integrated way.

Box 7 - Common objectives addressed by inter-territorial projects

Common objectives addressed by inter-territorial projects

- *A group of LAGs from western Austria has been working together to establish the Tyrol region as a centre of excellence for rock climbing, a 'Climber's Paradise'. To enter different new commercial niches the partnership's objective was to learn from each other by **sharing knowledge** on all-weather and all-season climbing. Coordinated investment in new climbing facilities and infrastructure aimed at the **development of new business** and shared economic benefits around the region[67].*

- *The objective of the Feistritz vintage railway project "Journey of Delight through East Styria" (see info box 5) was to stimulate business development by connecting, serving and promoting the varied tourism activities offer of four partner regions. Staging local culinary delights with the help of the popular Feistritz railway aimed at highlighting connections between agriculture, tourism and industrial heritage, and thus at the **generation of a local image and local identity** of the area.*

- *"Flanders Moss" (see info box 5) improved the accessibility of its peat bog with the help of a viewing tower, aiming to use the bog as a rural development tool for **knowledge sharing** (environmental education) and **business development** (eco-tourism). Building the viewing tower was also intended to encourage more local people to visit, in order to **raise their awareness**, understanding, and support for the bog conservation activities.*

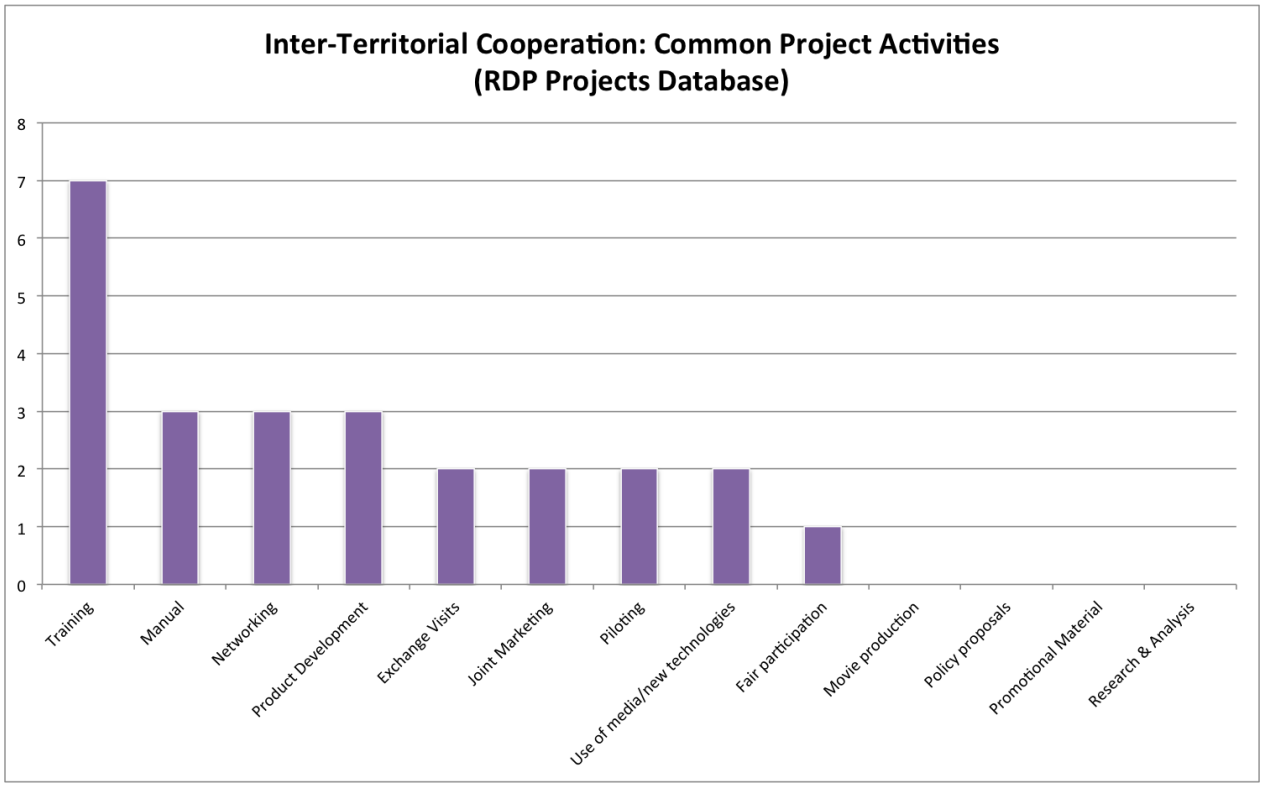
4.3.4 Common Activities of Inter-territorial Cooperation Projects

More than half of the inter-territorial initiatives registered on the **RDP Project Database** implemented joint training measures (7 projects). This appears to be inconsistent with the above finding, that only one inter-territorial cooperation project had the objective to support capacity building (section 4.4.3 above). From the screening exercise of the RDP Project Database it is, however, understood that in many other cases the narrative descriptions of inter-territorial projects provide more specific objectives (not necessarily directly stated among the objectives), including capacity-building.

Exchange visits do not seem to play as an important role as in TNC projects. As *Chart 36* indicates, the latter and all other common activities were almost evenly distributed among the screened project population, i.e. no particular activity stands out as being more prominent than others.

[67] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=2553

Chart 36 - Common activities of Inter-territorial Cooperation projects registered in the RDP database



Box 8 below shows project examples from the RDP database that combined 'training activity' with other types of project activities in inter-territorial cooperation.

Box 8- Training as the most common activities of inter-territorial projects

Training as the most common activity of inter-territorial projects

- *"Cheviot Futures" is the first 'cross-border' LEADER project between the Northumberland Uplands and Scottish Borders, aiming to **raise awareness** of the predicted threats and opportunities of climate change and the actions that should be taken. The project employed an expert to **work directly with farmers and landowners** in order to aid them in using practices to adapt to the effects of climate change (adopting practical approaches to land management; sharing best practice to support and, where appropriate, diversify rural businesses; developing and **piloting** new sustainable solutions to the impacts of climate change)*[68].

- *Through the project "Developing a Network of 'Natural' Gardens in Wallonia" the two cooperating Belgian LAGs have exploited the potential of providing opportunities for learning**, training**, and community participation. This included also the **development of a network** of gardens for events and activities to promote interaction between the participating local rural communities.*

- *Although geographically constituting a single area, the territory of Brkini and Kras in Slovenia is split into four municipalities and two local communities. "Marketing Tourist Farms" was an opportunity to implement a cooperation project jointly promoting and marketing tourism on farms in this rural area. Beneficiaries were **trained** on promoting tourism products**, developed and used new marketing tools**, such as a joint catalogue in different languages, websites, participation in fairs, and advertisements in the media*[69].

[68] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=6040

[69] Source http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=4100

5. Key Findings and Questions from Phase I Research

In this chapter some of the key findings and questions that arose from Phase I research are summarised, that formed the basis of Phase II research.

5.1 State of play of TNC and Inter-territorial Cooperation

- ***Frequency of Cooperation***

Although all Member States (MS) have taken part in TNC projects during this programming period, there are variations as far as the level of involvement of LAGs in different MS are concerned. Finnish and Hungarian LAGs are the ones most *frequently taking the lead partner role in TNC* projects, followed by France, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Italian LAGs strongly dominate the group of LAGs joining as *TNC project partners,* followed by Hungary, the Czech Republic and Finland. Summing up instances of *LAG involvement in partner and lead partner roles*, Hungary (170 instances), Italy, (165 instances), Finland (156 instances), the Czech Republic (124 instances) and France (113 instances) display the *highest frequency of engagement in TNC projects*. The relatively frequent participation (51 and 66 cases respectively) of the Baltic MS of Estonia and Lithuania in TNC has also been noted.

A completely different ranking can be observed when it comes to *LAG involvement in inter-territorial cooperation*[70]*.* The three Member States with the most active LAGs (i.e. where LAGs engaged more than 300 times in this type of cooperation project) are Austria (358), the Czech Republic (330) and Germany (306). Polish (286 instances) and Italian (213 instances) LAGs are also frequently partnering with each other. Relatively high levels were also observed in Lithuania and Slovakia (69 respectively).

The above shows that some Member States are more active in TNC and inter-territorial cooperation than others, and that the number of LAGs operating within a country does not necessarily correlate with the number of projects in which the LAGs of a given country are involved.

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ Whether there are certain conditions that facilitate the development and implementation of TNC and ITC in some countries?

- ***Financial Implementation***

Following the integration of data newly obtained by the Contact Point from the Member States, the enhanced SFC database reports an approximate *total spending for TNC of EUR 65,707,183 across EU-27*. Based on a sample of projects (approx. 46% of the total funding) where data was provided by MAs about the split of total funding between different funding sources, it can be established that approximately

[70] Data for Inter-territorial Cooperation projects from Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden was unavailable.

27% of this amount has been funded from the EAFRD, 26% from national public budgets and about 1% from private and other sources.

The estimated *total spending for inter-territorial cooperation projects* for which MAs provided SFC-type information in response to the ENRD's request for this research amounts to approximately EUR 75,160,494 (i.e. higher than the total funds estimated for TNC). Since inter-territorial cooperation projects are not notified through the SFC system, the Contact Point established this amount by directly addressing the competent authorities in the Member States. The actual total spending is expected to be higher, as the current estimate is only based on the reporting of 19 Member States. It excludes budget data from Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden, from where no response was received. Compared to TNC, overall MAs reported (covering 65% of the budget of identified inter-territorial projects) higher spending levels of 39% for EAFRD, and higher contributions from private and other sources of about 7%, but lower co-funding of 19% from national public budgets.

At project level, the budget of TNC projects ranges from a few hundred Euro to a current maximum of EUR 1.9 million (2.5 million for inter-territorial cooperation projects). A *relative majority of 163 TNC projects (40%) represent smaller-sized operations* (budget ranging between EUR 20,000 and EUR 99,999), compared to 134 medium-sized projects (EUR 100,000 to EUR 500,000). With 32 projects, large-sized operations (more than EUR 500,000) are less frequent (8%) than the 79 smallest sized projects (less than EUR 20,000 = 19%). Findings related to the budget range of inter-territorial cooperation are consistent with the results of the above ranking, i.e. a *relative majority of 277 projects (48%) are smaller-sized operations*. While there are currently 175 medium-sized projects, large-sized operations are less frequent (24 projects = 4%) than the smallest sized projects (99 projects = 17%). In contrast to the general trend, Italy's relative majority of inter-territorial cooperation projects are actually large-sized operations, while in the case of the Czech Republic the medium-sized and in the case of Hungary and the UK the smallest sized projects dominate.

On the basis of the currently available data, the *average project budget* of TNC projects with EUR 161,047 is more than double the size of the budget of inter-territorial cooperation projects, for which an average budget of EUR 72,805 has been established.

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ What types of activities, results and achievements are produced with the different budget sizes of cooperation projects.
- ✓ The extent to which there is any correlation between budget size and the type of activity.

- ***Project implementation status, duration and time lapse between official approval and project launch***

With 224 of altogether 502 identified operations, the relative majority of *45% of TNC projects are still in progress,* compared to 178 projects, which have been notified as completed. Managing Authorities (MAs) reported the status of 32 projects as "cancelled" (6%). In the case of 68 projects (14%), MS authorities have failed to communicate either the start or end date (or both) of their TNC projects. LAGs

from Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, and Slovenia appear to be among the *"early birds" of engagement in cooperation*, as the majority of TNC projects led by them have already completed their activities.

Member States notified 287 of the 591 reported *inter-territorial cooperation projects (49%) as still on-going*, which again is the relative majority compared to 269 completed projects. However, 13 projects were notified as "cancelled" (2%). For 22 projects (4%), Member States authorities did not indicate a start or end date (or both). Here, the *"early birds" of engagement in cooperation* come from the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Luxemburg, Poland, Slovenia and the UK, where the majority of inter-territorial cooperation projects have already concluded their activities. On the other hand, Latvia, Malta and Romania reportedly have not approved any inter-territorial projects yet.

The **duration of cooperation** projects ranges from a couple of weeks to a current maximum of 75 months for TNC, and 81 months of inter-territorial cooperation. Projects of a few weeks of duration are typically linked to preparatory actions to meet and discuss the feasibility of a future cooperation project. On the basis of currently available data, *the average project duration has been established as approximately 20 months both for TNC and inter-territorial cooperation projects*. The MAs' enhanced SFC data also shows that both types of Cooperation projects are *rarely of more than 50 months* (3%) of a duration, which also indicates that only a few projects implemented under Measure 421 were launched during the early stages of the 2007-2013 programming period. Another interesting conclusion from the data is that lengthy approval procedures apparently prompted most partnerships to *launch their cooperation projects 3 to 4 months ahead of the official approval* by the MA/PA. It may be worth to further investigate if there is a relationship between the length of projects and other project features (e.g. project theme or activity).

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ The relationship between the length of projects and the type of activity.
- ✓ The adequacy of project duration in relation to the envisaged objectives.
- ✓ The factors that contribute to delays in approval procedures.
- ✓ Any other factors that influence the start-up of projects.

- ***Cooperation Projects' Type of Action***

A small group of 29 TNC projects and 21 inter-territorial cooperation projects were identified as preparatory actions, preparing or assessing the potential of future cooperation projects. It has to be noted that preparatory actions do not need to be reported through the SFC system (i.e. the number of these projects is likely to be much higher). *LAGs included in the SFC are mostly implementing joint actions* (33% of TNC, 25% of inter-territorial cooperation projects), followed by TNC and inter-territorial cooperation projects combining preparatory and joint actions. At this point of time, for a fairly

substantial amount of cooperation projects (39% of TNC, 23% of Inter-territorial Cooperation projects), the type of action unfortunately remains unspecified.

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ The factors that determine how partners choose to implement a preparatory or a joint action.
- ✓ The relative advantages and disadvantages of preparatory and joint actions.
- ✓ The support available to undertake preparatory actions.

- ***Management of Cooperation Projects***

The MAs to date have made very little information available about the ways LAGs have agreed upon for the administrative and financial management of their joint projects. The current trend indicates that LAGs have opted for about 8% of all TNC projects, and slightly less than 10% of inter-territorial cooperation projects, to put in place a legally constituted, common structure (as suggested by section 2 of article 62 of Council regulation 1698/2005) to operate the partnership and administer the project's funds. Otherwise, *the coordination of the administrative and financial management of a relative majority of cooperation projects remains in the hands of the lead partner LAGs*. Given that this type of information is unavailable for a majority of about 53% of the TNC projects and for inter-territorial cooperation projects from 8 Member States, the above stated trend remains to be confirmed.

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ The preferences of LAGs to engage into formal (e.g. legally constituted structures) or 'lead partner' led patnerships.

5.2 Understanding the Nature of TNC and Inter-territorial Cooperation

- ***Thematic Focus***

Feedback obtained from Managing Authorities shows that *at EU-level the most popular themes are tourism and culture, both for TNC and inter-territorial cooperation projects*. Although the thematic specification for 35% of all currently known cooperation projects (179 TNC and 190 inter-territorial cooperation projects) is unavailable (only 19 of 27 Member States have provided information), a screening the ENRD's *Cooperation Offers database confirmed the validity of the above reported ranking of TNC priority themes:* of the 380 TNC project ideas published on the ENRD website's Cooperation Offers database, the most popular themes addressed are once more tourism (129 partnership offers) and culture (114 partnership offers). A closer look at the 40 *TNC projects* registered in the ENRD website's *RDP Project Database* also confirmed *tourism and culture* (c.f. the project examples: International Cultural Tourism, CULTrips Europe, Adding Value to Community Tourism), but also reveals

tourism and environment (c.f. the project examples: Re-creation of the Landscape, Parks-Protection II) *as common and successful thematic combinations for TNC projects*. *At Member State level*, the preferences for the TNC themes tourism and culture are shared by most LAGs throughout the EU-27. Other popular TNC themes include community development (Hungary, Lithuania, and Latvia), environment (Austria, Belgium, and Germany), food products promotion (Belgium, Estonia, Italy, Slovakia, and Slovenia) and education (Finland, Lithuania and Poland).

Most of the 19 Member States, which reported inter-territorial cooperation projects to the Contact Point, share the tourism thematic preference. However, the EU-level ranking of the culture theme does not represent a common preference across these Member States. Instead*, a more evenly distributed preference across inter-territorial cooperation themes applies*, with environment and food product themes slightly more often preferred than others. Among the RDP Project Database's 12 *inter-territorial cooperation projects, common and successful combinations of the themes environment and community development* (c.f. the project examples: Natural Gardens in Wallonia, Flanders Moss)*, tourism and culture* (c.f. the project example: Creating a Cultural Event in the Bavarian Forest)*, and tourism and local products* (c.f. the project example: A Journey of Delight through East Styria) have been found. Here, further analysis could be undertaken, in order to explore if there are specific reasons why in some Member States certain thematic combinations are more favored than others.

There is also limited knowledge about how far TNC project ideas of the Cooperation Offers Database were turned into concrete projects. This is an area where further research would be needed, in order to better understand the usefulness of the Cooperation Offers Database for partner search purposes.

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ The reasons why tourism and culture are the most common themes of TNC and ITC.
- ✓ The reasons why certain themes are more popular in certain countries than others.
- ✓ The extent to which project themes are related to local development strategies or other strategic priorities.
- ✓ The usefulness of the Cooperation Offers database for partner search purposes.

- ***Common Objectives***

A comparison of the ENRD's *Cooperation Offers and the RDP Project Database* established *knowledge sharing (including exchange of experience) and business development* as most frequently mentioned common objectives, which LAG's proposed to achieve by implementing joint actions in the future. Other common objectives frequently included in cooperation offers are *capacity building (including training, workshops, etc.)*, strategy development, awareness raising and local identity promotion.

Examples from the *RDP Project Database* show that *combinations of the three objectives business development, knowledge sharing (including exchange of experience), and strategy development are*

common (e.g. FIN-GER-NET, Re-creation of the Landscape). Other common objectives frequently covered include *skills development and network development, both in combination with knowledge sharing* (e.g. the projects: Woven Together, Cross-border Entrepreneurs Blekinge / Warmia-Mazury).

In the same database, *business development figures most frequently as common objective of inter-territorial cooperation projects, combined with* other common objectives, which were found to more evenly spread among the project population, such as *awareness raising, knowledge sharing* (including exchange of experience, e.g. the projects: Climber's Paradise, Flanders Moss) and *local identity promotion* (e.g. the project: A Journey of Delight through East Styria).

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ Factors that determine the effectiveness of cooperation projects.

- ***Beneficiaries of Cooperation Projects***

Local businesses (including local producers and local tourism operators) represent the target group frequently addressed both by TNC and inter-territorial cooperation projects. According to the RDP Project Database, cooperation is also of significant benefit to LAGs themselves, as their offer to engage with actors from other rural areas attracts local stakeholders and other members of the local community.

TNC reaches out to and thus integrates a combination of groups of local beneficiaries, e.g. NGOs/associations, businesses and youth (project example: Medieval Festivals), *farmers and businesses* (project example: Connect Farmers' Markets along the Border), *NGOs/associations, Farmers, Businesses, and local authorities* (project example: WOLF), *NGOs/associations and the local population* (project example: Fantastic for Families). Typical examples of *combinations of inter-territorial cooperation project beneficiaries include the local population, nature conservation associations and local authorities* (Natural Gardens in Wallonia), *local businesses, associations and local* authorities (A Journey of Delight through East Styria, Reto Natura 2000: Tourism Network of Nature Observation Areas).

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ The benefits of cooperation and who are the main beneficiaries.
- ✓ The impacts of cooperation on different beneficiaries.

- ***Common Cooperation Project Activities***

For TNC, *exchange visits, joint training measures and joint product development* were among the most frequent project activities. The screening of the RDP Project Database found a *combination of these activity features in a number of project examples* (e.g. Lebensqualität durch Nähe – LQN, Medieval Festivals, Bees and Biodiversity). Project activities also frequently mentioned in combination included the joint development of marketing measures, product development and production of promotional materials (e.g. in the projects: CULTrips Europe, WOLF).

More than half of the *inter-territorial initiatives* found on the RDP Project Database also implemented *joint training measures*. Possible combinations of training activity with other activity features observed include awareness-raising and piloting (project example: Cheviot Futures), network development (Natural Gardens in Wallonia), and joint marketing (Marketing Tourist Farms). Exchange visits do not seem to play as an important role as in TNC projects. Other joint activities were almost evenly distributed among the screened project population, thus not allowing for the identification of any further trends.

These findings suggest further research is needed to assess:

- ✓ The factors that determine the choice of activities.
- ✓ The extent to which the type of activities determine the success of cooperation projects.
- ✓ The achievements and impacts derived from the different types of activities.

Phase II

6. Lessons learned from TNC & ITC planning & implementation

According to the European Guide for the implementation of the measure cooperation under the LEADER Axis of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013[71], collaboration beyond established borders is expected to bring added value through access to information, ideas, knowledge and practices. Arguably, given that the transfer of experience from one region to another can bring new skills and means to improve the delivery of rural development policy, it can also be a source of innovation and capacity building. Inter-regional and especially transnational cooperation (the latter involving partners from different language and cultural backgrounds) are not always easy to establish. However, they can be an effective way of reducing the development gaps between rural areas and achieving territorial cohesion through the transfer of good practice and innovation.

These arguments constituted the principal hypothesis for the second phase of this study, which aspires to identify the factors that make cooperation fulfil the expectations set out in the TNC Guide as well as the barriers to it. A combination of research and factual analysis (statistical data and fieldwork) serve a twofold objective: to understand the current state of play of the Cooperation measure and to provide evidence-based conclusions and suggestions for improving its design and implementation in the future.

6.1 Regulatory and administrative framework

Key issues stemming from Phase I of the study:

- Lengthy administrative procedures between approval and launch of TNC projects
- Possible limitations/restrictions of national rules for TNC/ITC
- Type and quality of support offered to projects for understanding and complying with the regulatory framework.

There is an overarching perception amongst stakeholders that the differences in rules and regulations between Member States (MS) have been a key barrier to TNC. The main differences in MS rules which are considered a barrier to the effective development of cooperation, include:

> *""The problem that we are facing, as a LAG, for implementing TNC projects is the absence of a common regulation or common directions or a specific guidance on how to implement such a project."*
>
> Survey to participants in LEADER event, 2012

[71] Guide for the implementation of the measure cooperation under the LEADER Axis of Rural Development Programmes 2007-2013, European Commission, 19.11.2008, Brussels

1. Availability of funding for preparatory support. Many, but not all RDPs foresee funding for preparatory technical support. In case financial support is foreseen in the programme, there are differences as far as the maximum funding granted is concerned as noted in the table below.

Country/RDP	Max funding for preparatory support
FR	€6,000
BE/FL	€5,000
BE/WAL	€3,000
BG	€25,000 for TNC and €10,000 for ITC
HU	€6,000
IT	Certain but not all IT RDPs - though to a differing extent (Abruzzo, Calabria, Campania, Lombardia, Marche, Sardenia, Sicilia). For several of them, preparatory support represents 10% of measure 421.
LU	€5,000
PL	EUR depending on population ratio
PT	Global for all TNC projects, but max €50,000
SK	€4,000
SE	€5,000 globally plus 25% of a LAG's overall TNC budget
UK/NI	€5,000 of the LAG's global TNC budget
UK/Wales	€5,000
DK	€250,000 for all 51 LAGs
CY, FI, GR, MT, NL, RO	Eligible, but max. EUR not specified

Source: ENRD TNC fiches

These differences make for example the participation in preparatory meetings more difficult for LAGs from certain MS where they don't have access to funding for preparatory support. In certain cases (e.g. under the RDPs of Estonia, Ireland, UK-Scotland, and some federal states in Germany, where no preparatory support funding exists) LAG managers motivated to engage in TNC solved this issue by charging preparatory costs (to greatly varying extent) to the budget for the running/management of LAGs or by charging a previously launched TNC project (also possible in the Czech Republic, Latvia and - through national funding only - in Spain).

2. Requirements to include TNC in the LDS. Not all MS require LAGs to include cooperation into the local development strategy (LDS). 53% of programmes require TNC to be included in the LDS, although in the remaining 43% where TNC does not need to be included in the LDS, LAGs can still

apply for TNC[72]. In such cases, however, the objectives of proposed cooperation projects need to be consistent with the priorities/issues the LDS aims to address/resolve (e.g. BE-FL). When MS rules require the inclusion of cooperation in the LDS (which is evaluated favourably by the MAs in the context of LDS approval), the level of detail expected ranges from (i) the identification of those issues intended to be resolved with the help of cooperation (e.g. Italy Puglia, Piemonte, Sardinia), to (ii) the very specific requirement to already summarise a project idea (e.g. Italy Calabria, Emilia Romagna, Marche, Sardegna). This may include the option to already identify the names of the LAGs potentially involved in the planned partnership (e.g. Italy Basilicata).

TNC project selection. When rules foresee the selection of cooperation projects (or the approval of those selected/promoted by LAGs) by the MA and not by the LAG, doubts have been raised by some interviewees as to whether the MA has sufficient insight into and understanding of the needs of a local area. In some cases MAs get directly involved TNC project applications and approvals (i.e. this forms part of their competence). In such cases, it has been questions, especially by LAGs, whether the MAs has the capacity and understanding of the added value of projects in line with the objectives of local development strategies.

3. The timing of project applications. LAGs from MSs where project applications may be submitted any time throughout the year (about 56 RDPs[73]) need to be aware of the fact that the administrative rules of their potential partners (all others, e.g. LAGs from Belgium-Wallonia, the Czech Republic, certain Italian RDPs) may accept applications only during certain periods of time (note that some RDPs ran only one or few calls for applications, like Hungary in 2009, Portuguese Azores in 2010, and Wales in 2011). If all partners have to consider time-bound application periods, a coordinated project launch becomes even more complex, in particular if numerous partners are involved.

[72] Data calculated from the TNC fiches of the ENRD.

[73] Source: Screening of TNC fiches concerning rules and procedures (http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/LEADER/tnc_guide/member-states-tnc-rules-and-procedures/en/member-states-tnc-rules-and-procedures_en.cfm)

How to overcome differences in administrative barriers

The experience of Finland (Annex 4 - case study 5)

When planning a TNC project among 8 LAGs, administrative difficulties arose due to different national eligibility rules and different application periods, which hampered the smooth preparation of projects and created the need to synchronise the planning process.

In addition to the difficulties concerning different national eligibility criteria and different application periods, some MAs did not want to go ahead with the approval of TNC projects without obtaining approvals from the partners' MAs. This caused a vicious circle, which Finland aimed to break by adopting an approach of "preliminary approvals" to keep the process moving. This approach entailed preliminary exchanges to verify common objectives and expectations of partners, followed by personal meetings to discuss and develop the project concept based on common needs.

Source: Case study interview

4. Budget limits for TNC. In some MS there is a budget ceiling for cooperation projects; and there are variations in the (EU/national) co-financing rate (including the fact that Spain finances TNC without exception through national funds only). Here, the interviews conducted have shown, that this often depends on what RDPs expect from TNC under LEADER: either soft type actions, i.e. the exchange/transfer of knowledge and the subsequent conduct of feasibility studies and joint development of new concepts; or maybe also substantial, physical investments (e.g. in tourism infrastructure).

5. The number of cooperation projects per LAG. In some MS a minimum or maximum number of cooperation projects has been determined per LAG during the programme period. Determining the number of projects seems to be a practical choice of e.g. smaller Member States (like Malta) to ensure (inexperienced) LAGs make an attempt to exploit the benefits of cooperation.

6. Types of eligible project outputs. The types of eligible project outputs differ between MS (with some MS expecting outputs related to knowledge transfer while others expect also "tangible" type outputs, like small physical investments).

7. Types of eligible costs. Eligible costs per activity often differ between MS. "Common costs" virtually do not exist, because eligible cost types are over-specified, i.e. there is too much detail on eligible costs in each programme. Furthermore, as a general rule, a LAG's expenditure can only be incurred on its own territory. In addition, since costs only cover activities of EU partners, TNC with third countries is very difficult and relies solely on their capacity to finance their participation.

8. The priority MAs assign to TNC. Each partner has to apply for their own part of the project and there is no guarantee that the other parts of the project will be approved by the relevant authority in each Member State. There have been cases where the MA did not consider TNC as a priority, which in some cases also resulted in the project proposals being approved with delays

or ejected. This, among other factors (e.g. low technical quality of applications), partly explains the small number of approved project in some countries.

LAGs interested in TNC can obtain useful insight and information on the differences between MS rules for TNC in the TNC fiches produced by the ENRD: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/LEADER/tnc_guide/member-states-tnc-rules-and-procedures/en/member-states-tnc-rules-and-procedures_en.cfm. These fiches are useful support for LAGs at national and European level (because of the challenges stemming from the differences in rules and procedures, mentioned above). At the same time, some interviewees highlighted that it would be useful to have the relevant information available in the LAGs' original language, whenever this is possible (as currently they are only available in English language). Given the importance that preparatory support plays in some countries (e.g. France), it is particularly relevant for LAGs to be able to identify if and what type of preparatory support exists for LAGs from MS they are interested in cooperating with.

Summary of main findings of chapter 6.1

- Important differences between MS in the rules governing TNC create difficulties for the set-up of TNC projects. These differences are related to the availability of funding for preparatory support, the requirement for TNC to be part of the LDS, the project selection procedures, the timing of project applications, the budget limits for TNC, the number of cooperation projects permitted per LAG, the types of eligible project outputs, the eligibility of costs and the importance that MAs assign to TNC.

Tips and recommendations

- The Cooperation measure could be managed through the provision of some form of common framework so as to deal with the differences between MS rules.
- There is a need for awareness raising and information sharing for understanding and dealing with the differences between MS rules and procedures. This may include the provision of information such as the TNC fiches, which could be translated in other languages or focused guidance through the ENRD or dedicated support from the NRN to help LAGs in addressing the regulatory requirements.

6.2. Project planning and development

This chapter addresses the main challenges in setting-up cooperation partnerships and the key success factors for effective partnership building as well as other factors that contribute to the design of cooperation projects.

6.2.1 Setting-up the partnership

Key issues stemming from Phase I of the study to be addressed here:

- Explain what determines the intensity of cooperation
- Explain the different frequency of involvement of LAGs in TNC

- Assess the extent to which partner search tools and other support tools motivate cooperation.
- Assess the usefulness of funding for preparatory actions.

Setting up transnational and inter-regional partnerships is not easy and there are indeed large differences between Member States in terms of their LAG participation, especially in TNC. The most common problems identified by experienced stakeholders and TNC experts include:

- ***Cooperation with partners due to different languages and cultures***

The language can be a real barrier in the context of LAGs, which are small, local, with limited staff (i.e. less chances to have multilingual staff) and limited capacity to hire translators. For this reason, some LAGs chose to cooperate with LAGs in their own country (by developing inter-territorial cooperation projects) or with LAGs from other countries who speak a common language. This was the case for instance in Poland where LAGs find it easier to cooperate with German speaking counterparts. In Sweden too this issue has been stressed by some LAGs who prefer to cooperate with English speaking partners. In Finland, awareness of the language barrier has led to hiring multilingual coordinators. In Austria, the language barrier represented a key challenge for the TNC project "Cutlands" and to address this, the lead-partner employed two persons fluent in Spanish and Polish.

- ***Lack of experience and/or cooperation culture***

Lack of experience in TNC can hamper or delay cooperation. There is a clear difference between new LAGs and older ones (the latter tend to have more experience in TNC). When lack of experience is also coupled with low trust in the benefits of cooperation, then TNC is less likely to take place.

> "It is not always about TNC projects. A lot of TNC takes place outside projects."
>
> Juha-Matti Markkola. NRN.

In some countries, relevant decision making authorities (e.g. MA) are not aware of the benefits of TNC and sometimes consider that TNC merely offers travel opportunities to those who participate. As a consequence of this lack of commitment or support from decision-makers, TNC calls were opened with a delay, only through very few calls for proposals or not opened at all in some Member States and regions.

The lack of cooperation culture is not only a symptom of MAs, it is also observed at local (LAG) level due mainly to low awareness or lack of experience. This is particularly the case for new LAGs as they find it hard to explain to the locals and to the local government what cooperation means. There are some good examples of active LAG managers who participated in EU level events or visited other LAGs and brought back information and experiences that helped convince their local stakeholders that there is value in cooperation. What can be learnt from such experiences is that it is important to gain the local stakeholders' trust in cooperation before embarking on cooperation projects.

Finally, the participation in meetings/events that promote and raise awareness on TNC sometimes lack a follow-up so people "go back to their own work and TNC stays in the background".

- ***Finding the right partners***

Finding the right partner is key to successful partnerships. It is not only a matter of timing, or willingness, skills and capacities to implement cooperation projects are also needed.

Finding the right partners is a key to success

The experience of the ITC project "Growing Gastronauts" in Estonia (Annex 4 - case study 1)

The key challenges during the planning stage were to find the right partners that one can trust and think in the same way. "When you have the right partners, the planning stage is smooth". Although the main method used for finding partners were personal contacts, the ENRD database was identified as a complementary source of information, especially in a follow-up stage for identifying new partners working on the same topic.

The successful cooperation of partners who organised festive and educational events in 5 LAG territories resulted in multiple achievements, including short-supply chains of local food, networks of local school cooks, local farmers and teachers, awareness raising amongst school children on healthy food habits and children-friendly study material. The project received interest from the national media and promoted the concept of healthy food throughout Estonia.

Source: Case study interview

- ***Filling in application forms***

It is often difficult to obtain all the necessary details from partners for the application form. The requirements in terms of eligible activities, outputs and costs highlighted above (section 6.1) can render the application stage difficult.

- ***Partnership-building***

The **key success factors** for effective partnership building include:

"The chemistry must feel right, otherwise you'll have difficulties from the beginning."

Baltic Sea Nature Tourism

a. Personal relationships

Partner search assistance is very useful, but one needs to be confident to choose the right partner and create a trusty relation. Identifying suitable partners is not an evident task and very often LAGs struggle to establish a profile, i.e. the kind of partner they are actually looking for. Face-to-face meetings facilitate the preparation of projects built around common needs, objectives and expectations. The ex-post evaluation of LEADER+ has stressed that peer learning for LAGs must be further developed both within and between countries.

b. The availability of technical support

There are several NRN examples that offer support to LAGs through awareness rising on TNC, assistance with partner search, preparatory technical assistance, exchanges/study trips, organisation of events, etc. Most NRNs offer dedicated support services to LAGs. Most NRNs have developed and disseminated

cooperation guides and documentation. In addition, some NRNs organise cooperation fairs or workshops, exhibitions and market-place-type events to help with the identification of suitable partners.

Technical assistance for cooperation

The experience of France (Annex 4 - case study 2)

In France, the role of the NSU is to provide methodological support to LAGs, and to help with the identification of TNC partners (via its contact to the ENRD). Regional counterparts provide day-to-day support to their LAGs. The NSU support to LAGs is hence complementary, while in the Cooperation Technical Assistance (CTA) network the NSU and regional counterparts lead joint discussions on how to improve the support offer, based on previous experience and the state of progress achieved. They present different tools to each other, and exchange and improve them. Depending on their resource situation, some of the regional counterparts participate in a more dynamic manner than others. Essentially, the CTA network identifies the problems that LAGs meet on the ground, and its members try to solve such issues jointly. The participating regional network representatives appear satisfied with this method. The CTA has been highly successful in promoting TNC, with 144 of 222 French LAGs being involved in at least one TNC or ITC project.

Source: Literature review and case study interviews

Technical support has also been offered through the organisation of study visits. The **Swedish** NRN for instance put aside some budget and organised study visits abroad for LAGs in the beginning of the programming period. Approximately 15 Swedish LAGs used this opportunity and visited two LAGs in Scotland in 2008-2009. Exchange visits have also taken place with Ireland and Poland. The only drawback is that potential cooperation initiated during these study visits took a long time to materialise and it is only recently that TNC projects have been developed. Study trips are also part of the **Finnish** technical assistance to TNC (see example below).

> "When you have finally found something in common, you realise it has taken too much time and you may have lost the momentum"
>
> *Charlotta Heimerrson, Swedish LAG*

The benefits of holistic NRN support

The experience of Finland

The Finish NRN has developed a holistic approach for promoting TNC based on the principle that TNC is more than just projects, but includes also study trips, events and a regular flow of information. To this end, the NRN undertakes several TNC activities:

- training and meetings, addressed to all relevant stakeholders: MAs, rural actors, transnational coordinators and other LAG staff;
- a yearly transnational seminar hosted by the NRN;
- communication of TNC examples through the website and the activities organised

- study trips
- support in finding partners (several projects contact directly the NRN to ask for potential partner ideas)
- active participation in European level discussion groups (such as the ENRD Focus Groups).

At local level, those LAGs with experience in TNC or those with a strong TNC component in their LDS, have hired transnational coordinators to activate TNC in their area. Their role is to help rural actors to build and implement TNC projects.
Despite this holistic approach and its achievements (100 TNC projects in 2012 and cooperation with 17 countries), there is still one third of LAGs with no experience in TNC. TNC is not always seen as a tool for local development. It is considered to be "giving money away from our area" – as one of the interviewees stated. There is no continuation of TNC either because contacts and information are not properly disseminated or because contacts are lost or personnel changes.

Source: Interview with Finnish NSU

International staff exchanges have not been very common but there have been some initiatives. For instance, ELARD (European LEADER Association for Rural Development) launched an initiative following up from the recommendations of LEADER+ to foster peer learning. The initiative offers European LAGs the possibility for reciprocal, international staff exchange (the fourth round of staff exchanges is currently under progress). It aims to offer LAGs an opportunity to cooperate and network on an international level without necessarily having to create their own TNC project yet. The international staff exchange involves educational three week visits, arranged between two participating LAGs. The exchange is reciprocal meaning the same LAG sends and receives a visitor. In this way, LAGs are able to create better links with each other, develop closer working relationships, get to know each other and their respective territories and achieve more tangible results such as carry out an analysis of common challenges and share identified solutions. Staff exchanges are considered a very good way of building new TNC projects as LAG staff in both ends first get to know each and the territories.

c. *The availability of funding for preparatory actions*

Although not all programmes offer funding for preparatory support (see section 3.1 above), there are several examples when this was used to facilitate contacts and preparation of TNC projects, leading to better quality joint projects. There are for instance the examples in Sweden and France (see examples below). Preparatory support funds where they exist are relatively easy to access, which helps to quickly proceed with the organisation of meetings with potential partners. LAGs have generally found this support a very useful tool to develop better quality projects. Preparatory actions are particularly pertinent for LAGs with limited or no cooperation experience.

The preparatory funding support

The experiences of Sweden (Annex 4 - case study 6) and France (Annex 4 - case study 2)

The **Swedish cheque system** offered €6,000 for preparatory activities and has facilitated the set-up of partnerships for Swedish LAGs. More than half of Swedish LAGs have used their cheque to organise initial contacts with potential partners. This was an initiative of the Swedish NRN and the funding came out of the NRN's budget. As a consequence, a large number of Swedish LAGs have progressed from this

preparatory action to the application for a joint project under the Cooperation measure.

France offered similar **support to LAGs through a tool called "De l'idée au projet"** ("From the idea to the project"). This preparatory support, consisting of €6,000, aimed to help LAGs organise a first transnational meeting with potential partners. "From the idea to the project" proved to be a strong tool adopted by local actors to settle cooperation projects. The facilitating factor behind this tool was the supportive political context in France which motivated French LAGs to engage into TNC even when they could do only national projects. A large number of French LAGs used this system (45 of 107 projects were preceded by preparatory support), with an outstanding performance recorded in the Auvergne region. There, the regional rural network reports that "From idea to the project" funding was used 25 times, of which 22 culminated to the implementation of a transnational project. An exemplary feature in Auvergne was the role of the regional rural network that complemented the preparatory funding support with technical assistance, such translations, technical and methodological assistance, communication with partners as well as the organisation of English classes to LAGs in cooperation with the Cataluña LEADER network (ARCA) in Spain.

Source: Case study interviews

The preparation of TNC projects can be very demanding for LAG managers, especially if they lack cooperation experience or more concrete skills such as language skills. A good example is the "Bees and biodiversity" project (Case study 3) where the French lead partner assigned a "coordinator" with language skills to coordinate and manage the project preparation.

The benefits of preparatory support

The experience of the "Bees and Biodiversity" project (Annex 4 - case study 3)

Preparatory support of €3,000 to the German LAG Naturpak Dübener Heide enabled them to get to know each other, and to talk in more depth and face to face about the project idea. It was like a warm up – "does the chemistry work; are we at the same level with regards to the project's content and ambitions?" The French LAG invited all the interested LAGs, and after the meeting they all left with a clear idea of what they were going to do. They also brought a beekeeping expert with them, who turned really enthusiastic saying "we have to do this, because it is a learning opportunity that prevents us from reinventing the wheel!" What he referred to was the French partner's innovative beehive design, which enables the removal of honey without any risk of injury from the bees. "It was love at first sight! We knew that this TNC project will provide us with significant added value".

Source: Case Study Interview

d. The availability of user-friendly interactive tools

The ENRD has developed a range of interactive tools which include:

- A guide for LEADER TNC providing both practical and administrative information to LAGs and project holders;
- A database of registered LAGs in Europe, as well as a summary of their strategy themes and contact details;

- A thematic internet discussion forum accessible to LAGs;
- A database of Cooperation Offers which consists of a list of project ideas where project promoters are seeking to identify additional partners from other countries.

In relation to the latter, there are 409 cooperation offers in the database[74]. A sample of approx. 10% of the cooperation offers promoters was contacted to identify whether the offers materialised into cooperation projects. 42 cooperation offers were contacted and 19 responded. Out of these, 9 have actually materialised their offer into a cooperation project, mostly TNC and two ITC projects (in Italy), 3 have found partners but not because of the ENRD tool (in these cases they used support from ELARD or support from other organisations in their countries) and 7 responded that their offer did not materialise.

Useful comments were also obtained on the usefulness and relevance of the partner search tool, which included the following recommendations:

- The cooperation offers tool could be shared with other EU level networks such as ELARD.
- National coordinators may be more pertinent for helping LAGs find partners. Another option is to assign an "ENRD level coordinator" who could assist partner search in practice.
- The partner search tool can also complement the support offered by NRNs.
- Thematic classification of offers is useful in cooperation offers databases as it facilitates the search of the suitable project and partner.
- There could be a follow-up to the offers in the database in order to identify which projects have progressed and how. It was stated that some offers materialised with a slightly different scope and this is not evident if one only consults the database.
- The language issue needs to be considered as some LAGs may have difficulties reading the information in the tool.
- Interactive tools offer multiple possibilities and access to a wide range of information, however, many LAGs choose to approach the people they know. These can be either previous contacts in other LAGs or their respective NRNs who they know and trust. Case study interviews confirmed that LAGs in various Member States tend to contact their counterpart in the NRN when they need advice and/or support for TNC partner search.

> "One LAG who knew another LAG who knew some other LAG"
>
> *"Growing Gastronauts" Project*

e. The provision of guidance material

There are several cooperation guides developed either at EU level or at national level. What they have in common is that they reflect the accumulated experience over multiple programming periods, from the initiation of LEADER as a Community Initiative to its mainstreaming into EAFRD. The guidance material is available mainly online and also in printed form. The ENRD has also developed a TNC guide and the EC has an administrative cooperation guide.

[74] Until the end of March 2014.

However, the extent to which existing guides offer tools, case studies or other practical examples, in order to illustrate the different stages of the cooperation process, varies greatly. Based on the literature review and interviews, it is suggested that guides should follow a balanced approach on methodological guidance and case study examples. For instance, the French NSUs' guide provides both numerous examples of case studies and associated tools for each stage from preparation to implementation to capitalisation/communication.

Some of the guides reviewed dedicate a good part of their content to the national/regional rules governing the application procedure and the obligations pertaining to implementation (e.g. French Regional Rural Network of Languedoc Roussillon, Lithuanian NRN, Dutch NSU), which is important in particular with regards to aspects such as preparatory technical support, eligible project outputs, and eligible types of project expenditure.

f. The organisation of events

> "Networks are like snowballs: the important thing is to find the first snowball and start making it roll"
>
> *Interview with Christophe Arrondeau*

Cooperation events are organised at various levels, and include the ENRD LAG events, NRN events and cooperation events organised by LAGs. The ENRD LAG events, for instance the "LEADER as a driver for rural Europe: workshop to new LAGs" in January 2011 or the "Local development strategies and cooperation: key approaches to local development" in April 2012, gave LAGs the opportunity to find potential partners with similar interests and projects ideas for TNC. The successful elements of international cooperation events are the dynamic and participative networking tools and methods, e.g. cooperation market, thematic cooperation corners, a video corner. LAGs participants can experiment and cooperate on-site. The face-to-face interaction in events is their value added so potential partners resolve questions faster than having to wait for months when using other partner search methods. They also benefit from mentoring and assistance regarding the management of different project phases and partnership management with the support of NRNs and TNC experts.

Optimisation of opportunities for TNC
The example of the LEADER event 2012

Following on from the successful event for 'new' LAGs in January 2011, the ENRD organised the 'LEADER event 2012: Local Development Strategies and Cooperation', in Brussels in April 2012. The main objective of TNC component of the LEADER event 2012 was to promote a new wave of transnational cooperation projects to optimise the opportunities for TNC in the current programming period and foster potential added value for area development through cooperation among LAGs from EU countries. The event brought together 400 participants – including representatives of over 250 LAGs – to share experience and explore TNC in the context of the current and the next programming period.

The format of the event was one of its key success factors, namely, it was highly active and participatory aiming to encourage maximum interaction between participants. As a consequence of the event, there are 26 projects reported (by the 56 respondents to an evaluation survey) to be in the process of submission and 8 projects submitted to their MAs. Another value added of the event was the follow-up

visits among LAGs to share experience not necessarily within a TNC project.
In addition to the specific tangible results, the TNC format of the event was appreciated and multiplied as a method for promoting cooperation within other NRN events.

"TNC is not always about projects. There is a lot of TNC outside projects."

Juha-Matti Markkola, NRN FI

Sources: Final Evaluation Report of the results of the TNC aspects of the LEADER event 2012 and http://bit.ly/VsHfjy

NRNs support LAGs through capacity building and awareness raising events to facilitate TNC. For instance the **Polish** NRN has organised training events at two levels: a first training event addressed to regional offices and a second training event addressed to Polish LAGs. The **Lithuanian** NRN organised a TNC conference and designed training programmes for LAGs in cooperation with the MA and the 'LEADER Centre'. It also supports LAGs (through measure 423) to take part in EU level events considering these offer opportunities to develop contacts and/or obtain a list of contacts.

LAGs organise events to facilitate networking and promote TNC through opportunities to meet other LAGs and exchange ideas. These events often materialise in the development of some TNC projects, as seen below in the example from Bulgaria.

LAG events that facilitate cooperation – The experience of Bulgaria

The LEADER LAG in Troyan and Apriltsi in Bulgaria hosted a three-day conference about encouraging TNC in October 2012. Participants heard about cooperation experiences of long-established LAGs from Italy, Estonia and the Czech Republic. They were also given the opportunity to present their ideas for cooperation projects and a round table networking sessions fostered the setting up of new partnerships. As a consequence, two new TNC projects were developed in the fields of agro-food tourism and traditional local crafts.

Source: ENRD magazine, Winter 2012/2013

g. The existence of a thematic or geographic initiatives that promote TNC and ITC

NRN thematic joint initiatives bring together NRNs who gain additional experience and thus improve the quality of technical assistance delivered to LAGs. For instance, the French LAG `Pays Adour Landes Océanes`[75] participated in the NRN Forestry Initiative, which helped demystify the issues of TNC and culminated in a TNC project under the forestry theme about one year later.

Concerning geographic initiatives, there is the example of the successful Nordic-Baltic cluster. This is an outstanding example of genuine, stakeholder driven transnational cooperation that also contributed to LAG cooperation. NRNs in the Nordic-Baltic region began communicating in 2007 when the networks were set-up for the first time. It seemed natural to them to pick up the phone and talk to their

[75] EU Rural Review No 11, LEADER and Cooperation

neighbours. Since 2008, the NRNs have met regularly (twice a year). Nowadays, this has evolved into a geographic cluster that shares the common vision and goals of the Baltic Sea Strategy and promotes TNC and rural development in the Baltic Sea region.

The role of large regional networks in promoting TNC

The experience of the Nordic-Baltic cluster (Annex 4 - case study 8)

The Nordic-Baltic cluster promotes TNC through the organisation of meetings, study tours and events to raise awareness of the benefits of TNC. The competition for the Nordic-Baltic LEADER cooperation award is a good example for promoting TNC through: (a) the organisation of the competition itself and (b) the communication that followed though the NRNs' webpages and the attractive brochure dedicated to the competition finalists. A description of the objectives, activities and benefits of TNC projects that became finalists highlights what can be achieved with TNC for local rural development and can serve as an example or inspiration for others.

Source: Interview with Finnish and Swedish NSU

Summary of main findings of chapter 6.2.1

- A **preparatory stage** involving partner meetings, getting to know each other, exchanging ideas and developing concepts, is **highly valued** across the board.
- Institutional support to the set-up of TNC is not sufficient if not followed by awareness raising and dissemination to ensure continuity of TNC results and contacts.
- There is a lot **to learn from countries where TNC cooperation has been promoted** through specific approaches and tools (e.g. the French CTA, the Finish NRN holistic support) or the preparatory funding support (e.g. Sweden and France).
- Political commitment is a facilitating factor for the provision of preparatory funding support to LAGs to encourage them to engage in TNC. When preparatory funding was **complemented with technical assistance**, this resulted in a high proportion of preparatory activities culminating in the implementation of TNC projects (e.g. Auvergne, France).
- **Cooperation events**, especially at the European level, that use a participatory approach are considered very useful and could take place on a regular basis for facilitating the identification of partners.
- There are several barriers to effective partnership building that can be overcome through targeted assistance and tools.

Tips and recommendations

- In the future further actions could be taken (e.g. by ENRD) to address the language barriers in TNC through for instance capacity building, the provision of TNC facilitators/coordinators or simply raising awareness of LAGs about the need to hire multilingual staff (for instance, if a Lithuanian LAG wants to cooperate with a Swedish LAG, they could find a facilitator who speaks Swedish). Awareness-raising

at all levels, from European level to MAs (to improve their perception on TNC) to LAGs (to address lack of experience in TNC) is important. LAGs in turn can play an important role to motivate people and institutions at local level (e.g. municipalities) to participate in TNC. Dissemination of successful TNC experience can contribute significantly to awareness rising.

- Exchange of experience in TNC can be promoted between LAGs, i.e. peer-to-peer exchange (within and between countries), so the most experienced ones train/transfer knowledge to the less experienced ones.

6.2.2 Designing the project

Key issues stemming from Phase I of the study:

- The thematic focus seems to be on tourism; explain the rationale behind the choice of themes and the extent to which they reflect strategic/policy objectives.
- Only 8% of partnerships put in a legally constituted structure; assess this trend and its rationale.
- Assess the organisation of administrative and financial management.
- Assess what drives the choice of budget and the types of activities implemented.
- Assess complementarities with other Funds; this can be an indication of the extent to which cooperation is a wider need and brings benefits to those involved.

In addition to setting-up the partnership (analysed in section 3.2.1 above), the project planning phase involves designing the other aspects of a TNC project such as setting objectives, choosing the cooperation theme, the type of action (preparatory or joint action), defining the budget, the administrative structure of the partnership and the duration of the project.

In relation to the thematic focus of TNC, tourism is the theme most commonly chosen, although food and local supply chains, culture and heritage, youth and the environment, also feature strongly among TNC projects. The principal source for the choice of theme is the LDS, where the thematic focus is often pre-defined[76]. Cooperation is often seen as a way of solving some local problems or enabling something to be done that a LAG could not do on its own. A more elaborate and systematic search for ideas and partners is then undertaken by the LAG. Cooperation often starts at regional or international fairs and events, where personal contacts are established, which in turn serve to compare local issues, challenges and objectives. This is another instance when joint thematic interests are defined and then possibly refined to fit into the respective LDS.

All experts and project representatives interviewed confirm that it is not common for TNC partnerships to establish a legal structure. It is argued that informal partnerships are more flexible and there is yet more experience to be gained in order for partners to opt for legally constituted partnerships. Below we

[76] The TNC fiches containing the rules and procedures per country/region give evidence of many instances where the theme is already defined: http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/LEADER/tnc_guide/member-states-tnc-rules-and-procedures/en/member-states-tnc-rules-and-procedures_en.cfm

summarise the main reasons why informal partnerships play a more important role for most LAGs in comparison to formal partnerships:

- Informal partnerships can more easily be arranged;
- Entering into a informal partnerships is associated with less risk with regard to wasting resources;
- The establishment of formal partnerships entails comparatively high administrative effort.

The differences in TNC project budgets are related to the scope of the projects. Some projects choose to implement mainly small-scale exchange of experiences in the field of tourism and culture and budgets tend to be relatively small (i.e. €200,000 or less). Larger scale projects with higher budgets (can reach up to €800,000, occasionally as much as €900,000) are those implementing activities like creating web platforms, implementing large scale exchange programmes, developing new services, developing of small scale infrastructure (like forest trails), etc.

In relation to project duration, as a general rule, the duration depends on the nature of the cooperation project. Most common actions invest significant time in events and capitalisation, which lengthens a project's duration by definition. Very often, the launch/mobilisation of projects can become a time-consuming effort. During the development phase both these aspects are often underestimated, which is probably the reason why certain projects finally take longer than initially planned.

There are arguments for allowing greater flexibility to TNC projects, since they had to limit their scope often due to the limited timeframe that many of them started towards the end of the programming period. Longer duration is required to carry out more complex activities and to produce more tangible results, i.e. results that go beyond the exchange of know-how and experience.

As far as working with programmes/projects supported with funds is concerned, there is very little evidence of projects coordinated with other funds. One example is the cooperation between two LAGs from Austria and Germany which made possible the creation of a hiking path that used the ERDF for the marketing activities and the EAFRD for the real creation of the path (the physical investment). The coordination of the two funds has been possible mainly thanks to the coordination between the LAG and the relevant ministries. Another example is the TNC project "Bees and Biodiversity" (case study 3) where one German LAG financed the development of concepts, approaches and knowledge through the LEADER Cooperation measure and the investment in building beehives with the regional funding programme of the Ministry of Environment of Saxony-Anhalt.

Despite the limited evidence of coordination with other Funds, there would be potential to cooperate in the context of Interreg or the Youth in Action programme of the EU. LAGs could for instance participate in Interreg planning events, but there is no evidence of any LAGs taking part. Experts conclude there is indeed limited communication between Interreg actors and LEADER actors. There are however, some intentions and plans to extend the scope of existing projects and apply to other Funds (e.g. LIFE – see case study 5). There is also evidence that some local LEADER project evolved into TNC projects under other programmes, such as Leonardo in the example below.

From a local LEADER project to TNC under Leonardo

The example of Ireland, Sweden and Spain

The "Strengthening Local Meat Supply Chains" (SLMSC) project started off as a local LEADER project in Ireland, Duhallow a LAG area in the South-West of the country. It grew into a transnational Leonardo project and developed online training materials for small meat businesses. The Finnish LAG was involved because they had some earlier good cooperation with Duhallow. There were also other partners from Spain and Denmark (not LAGs but producer unions "La Unio" from Spain Valencia and the biggest meat processing college from Denmark).

The results of this project can be found at http://www.slmsc-project.eu/.

Source: Case study interview

Coordination between Funds is becoming more pertinent with the new approach introduced in the 2014-2020 programming. TNC and a multi-fund approach can through the Community-led Local Development (CLLD) approach create the possibility to exploit synergies between different countries. There is evidence already that the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) are interested in the CLLD approach. By the end of 2013, 45 EGTC were established in total. About half of the 21 EGTCs responding to a survey undertaken in the context of the study 'EGTC Monitoring Report 2013'[77] are interested in CLLD The general interest of EGTCs in the new instruments reflects the wish and potential to venture into more comprehensive undertakings. Preferred activities include supporting the set-up of cross-border LAGs as vehicles to develop strategic frames and subsequent actions at micro-regional scale. This implies use of the cross-funding opportunities and building on the aspect of multi-level governance. There is a need however, for further Commission guidance as to how this cross-funding to engage EGTC into CLLD will happen in practice. Experience to date shows, that EGTC programme management would need to take important steps in the future to support the development and elaboration of the instruments that make such an integration possible. There are also several conditions that need to be met such as EGTC having adequate capacities, the availability/eligibility of funding and the inclusion of an overarching approach to CLLD in the Member State Partnership Agreements. Letters have been sent by the Committee of the Regions and AEBR to the Commission calling for more participation of EGTC in Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes[78].

Summary of main findings of chapter 6.2.2

- The key challenges when designing a project include identifying local issues suitable for cooperation, ensuring coherence between the identified local issues and the local development strategy and consistency between partners on the chosen theme.
- There is no best practice identified in terms of partnership structures (legally constituted versus informal structures) but informal structures are preferred due to their flexibility, while they are

[77] Committee of the Regions, "EGTC Monitoring Report 2013, Towards the New Cohesion Policy". https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/en-US/Events/Documents/EGTC_MonitoringReport_2013_Paper_pdf.pdf

[78] https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/en-US/Events/Documents/D-2436-2013%20Letter%20Seminar%20participation%20LT%20PRESID%20DE%20v2.PDF

considered more suitable at the early stages of cooperation.

- There seems to be consistency between budgets and activities, the determining factor being the type of activity (softer exchange type activities against small infrastructure / new service creation type activities).
- The time required to set-up projects is often underestimated.
- There is hardly any evidence of LEADER cooperation projects coordinated with other Funds. There is however, a strong interest of EGTC in CLLD, but the potential to integrate the two is weakened by the relatively limited involvement of EGTC in the programming for 2014-2020 to date.

Tips and recommendations

- Capitalisation on the 2007-2013 cooperation experience may involve progression of some partnerships to more solid legal structures. However, strong support and advice will be needed.
- Flexibility in the duration of projects according to their scope can be re-examined so that the duration fits the scope more.
- The increased coordination of Funds is an innovative element of the new programming period 2014-2020. In this context, the coordination of LEADER TNC with other Funds can be promoted through awareness raising activities at EU level and increased EU guidance.

6.3 Project implementation

This chapter focuses on the following implementation aspects: partnership and the factors that contribute to effective cooperation at the implementation phase; and the lessons learnt from the achievements, impacts and added value of cooperation projects.

6.3.1 Partnership/ cooperation

Key issues stemming from Phase I of the study to be addressed here:

- Assess factors that drive active participation of partners.
- Assess the extent to which cooperation support structures exist and whether/how they contribute to effective implementation.

Detailed planning, including distribution of responsibilities and actions from the project design stage is a condition that contributes to effective implementation of TNC projects. However, partners do not always participate equally in TNC projects. The most common reasons for this include:

- Limited or lack of experience in TNC. This is the case of new LAGs or old LAGs that have not been involved in transnational projects. Experienced LAGs tend to find solutions to problems more easily, they even manage to find ways around the different rules and procedures that are a barrier to TNC in some countries.
- The motivation of partners. There is evidence that even inexperienced LAGs may identify how to participate actively if they have motivation and willingness.

> "Involve stakeholders and listen to what they say. Be open, creative and learn"
>
> *"Growing Gastronauts" Project*

This is the experience from some French LAGs (see example below). Factors that contribute to motivation include the relative pertinence/importance of the project theme, the commitment to the local development strategy and the personal motivation of LAG managers.

- The existence of a common goal. Although this is defined at the planning stage, when it comes to implementation, the partnership needs to continuously confirm and focus on the common objectives as deviations are possible due to changing priorities, evolving contexts and staff turnover in LAGs.

Factors that determine active participation of partners during implementation

The experiences of France (Annex 4 - case study 2) and Italy (Annex 4 - case study 9)

The experience from the CTA network in France (case study 2) suggests that there is clearly a difference between experienced and inexperienced LAGs. However, motivation also counts. Many new French LAGs are actively engaged in cooperation due to the LAG manager's motivation and willingness to invest time. There are examples of more inexperienced LAGs hiring trainees to improve human resources for project preparation purposes and sometimes they manage to keep them as TNC coordinators for animating project implementation. However, due to the lack of funds in France for financing both a LAG manager and a TNC coordinator, the CTA suggests training should be offered to LAGs from the beginning of the programming period to improve the capacity of LAGs to cooperate at transnational level.

The experience of the 'Green Line' project (case study 9) is a good example of how the partnership worked well during implementation, due to the pertinence of the topic for all partners: rural tourism around a lake that is part of the LDS of the LAGs involved. The Italian partners around Lake Garda initiated the project as an inter-regional one (within Italy). Being truly active, they set clearly from the beginning the objectives: to promote tourism and to create a green economy network. To this end, they aim to integrate all the LAGs in the regions around Lake Garda around a common concept of integrating the traditional coastal tourism with the local products and environment in the rural and mountain hinterland. The French partner became very interested in the development of the project and is exploring further cooperation in the new programming period.

Source: Case study interviews

- The capacity to speak languages. Communication is a key prerequisite for active participation in any transnational group. Many LAG staff lack language skills which limits them to a more passive role during project implementation. A facilitating factor in France has been the provision of English courses to LAG managers (according to the interviewees, 4-5 French regions have organised such courses; there is also the joint initiative between Auvergne in France and Cataluña in Spain who organised joint English courses for LAGs). Language training courses have proved to raise the confidence of LAG managers and to improve their performance and communication capacities.

> "Language training removed the anxiety to speak English in order to discuss relevant topics with foreign counterparts"
>
> *French NSU interview*

Coordination and communication in large partnerships

The experience of the "Gastronomy routes" TNC project (Annex 4 - case study 10)

The "Gastronomy routes" project is composed of 18 partners from 4 countries. Coordination would have been very difficult due to the large number of partners and the different languages. However, several factors contributed to effective partnership working:

(a) the fact that the partners new each other from the previous period contributed to successful cooperation. Due to this previous experience, it was easy to identify the cooperation theme and activities for the current project; (b) the designation of a central coordinator per country facilitated coordination at project level; (c) the provision of a translator for meetings facilitated communication during events, meetings and exchanges; (d) the language skills of the Greek coordinator who spoke Italian was also a facilitating factor for communication.

Source: Case study interview

- Legislative restrictions to the participation of third countries. Although TNC allows cooperation with third countries, the EAFRD regulation does do not allow expenditure incurred in third countries. As a consequence, there are TNC projects with a lot of potential to transfer experience and knowledge to and from third countries that become limited in scope and often restricted to meetings and seminars. There are various ways to overcome these restrictions, such as obtaining match funding for third countries from EuropeAid, bilateral cooperation programmes and international donors such as the World Bank. In Portugal for instance, there are examples of LAGs that have looked for these sources for cooperation with Brazil. In Spain however, where the Cooperation measure is managed by the NRN, TNC has relied only on LEADER funding (see example below).

Active participation of third country partners is limited

The experience of Spain (Annex 4 - case study 9)

The ICC (exchange, communication and cooperation) is a network project between Spanish LAGs and Central American countries. Many synergies are identified between Spain and Central American countries in addressing key local development issues related to the environment, water and natural resources. There is a breadth of experience that can be transferred from Central America to Europe, while EU LAGs can help transfer the LEADER approach and support local actors there to work together on their key development concerns by putting together local action groups. However, limited financial resources often create a restriction on cooperation, especially between cooperation partners located far from each other.

In order to fully exploit the potential of such a network, the TNC rules and procedures could possibly encourage synergies with other funding sources, such as EuropeAid or international donors (e.g. World Bank). In this way, funding could be secured from the beginning for truly joint actions and more tangible exchanges. The ICC project is an example of the important benefits that can be derived from the transfer of experience between Latin America and Europe on certain themes.

Source: Case study interview

There are some examples of cooperation support structures, which can play an important role in effective implementation. For instance, in France, regional network units help moderate project progress meetings, contribute to translations, etc. As an example, the Aquitaine network organises training on tools for cooperation projects (not just LEADER but also other Funds that support TNC, hence training seminars involve both LAGs and groups from urban areas).

In other countries, LAGs involved in TNC projects request help if needed from their NRNs or regional offices if they exist. The support provided by regional offices is determined by their experience and the existence of support tools. Training for regional offices on TNC can prove useful for improving their capacity to provide support to TNC projects during implementation.

Summary of main findings of chapter 6.3.1

- Active participation of partners depends on the experience of LAGs, the motivation of partners, the continuous pursuit of commons goals, the language skills and the rules that define third country participation.
- Support structures are not as critical for implementation as they are for the planning phase of TNC projects.
- Support structures contribute to training, moderation of project meetings, translations and any other support needed.
- TNC with third country partners is more limited due to TNC rules not permitting expenditure in third countries. There is evidence that both EU LAGs and third country rural actors can obtain many benefits from TNC.

Tips and recommendations

- The language barrier should be overcome in the future through relevant training, hiring of staff, provision of support, etc.
- More tangible cooperation with third countries is possible through synergies with other sources of funding like EuropeAid, bilateral cooperation programmes and other international donors such as the World Bank.

6.3.2 Achievements and potential impact

There are around 400 reported TNC projects during the 2007-2013 programming period (to date). In the presence of a limited monitoring system in place, it is difficult to answer the question of TNC achievements and impact on the socio-economic development of rural areas. Notwithstanding the above, there is some evidence collected during the current exercise from interviews and project reviews that mainly highlights the potential for long-term effects:

> "TNC projects are learning processes. We feel more European. We do something together.""
>
> *Krista Antila, Finish LAG*

- Increased knowledge and awareness-raising. Exchange of experience and sharing practices, approaches, strategies, and methods for promoting local rural development issues. With TNC, LAGs can learn from each other, what they do well and what they don't, it is a mutual learning experience. More specifically, the exchange of experience is achieved by (a) seeking answers outside one's own region when they are not available there, (b) learning from the know-how and capacity of partners who are more experienced in a specific topics, (c) accessing best/innovative rural practices in other countries. The acquisition of new knowledge survives after the end of a project, for instance the experience that Finnish LAGs transferred to their Finnish and Swedish partners in the management of fishing has balanced fishing communities and resulted in improved water quality and maintenance of biodiversity. This result will persist after the project has ended[79].

Exchange of experience

The experience of the ITC project "Meet your neighbours", Belgium

The Belgium/Wallonia led ITC partnership with Belgium/Flanders "Meet your neighbours" involved citizen meetings and joint projects carried out by local actors improved knowledge and understanding of the neighbouring regions. The actions were very diverse and covered various themes. Discovering each other's different working methods was rewarding, because it expanded the methodological approaches and views of each partner. Different areas of expertise usefully fed and contributed to a real exchange of knowledge.

Source: http://www.reseau-pwdr.be/menu-de-gauche/bonnes-pratiques/bonnes-pratiques-wallonnes/ontmoet-je-buren-a-la-rencontre-des-gal-flamands.aspx#

- Establishment or strengthening of long-term contacts. Establishment of continuous relationships, e.g. a Swedish LAG initiated cooperation with a Scottish LAG which is expected to materialise in the new programming period, while cooperation with the Irish group (South East Cork Area Development, SECAD) may continue outside the project in the future.

  Acquisition of new or improved skills and competences. On one hand, training actions undertaken in the context of some projects improve the capacity of LAGs, for instance, in Finland, LAGs acquired new skills in the artistic glass sector from visits to Italian LAGs with such experience. There are cases where new skills are used beyond the TNC project context. On the other hand, TNC contributes to the acquisition of technical skills, e.g. animate large groups in different contexts, manage a complex project, organise multi-cultural events, create new networks, etc. The example below is illustrative of how new skills have led to further exchange.

Creative skills of young people -

The experience of the Austrian ITC project "Create Your Region"

[79] TNC project "Developing methods of management fishery and utilisation of haul", Lead partner LAG Etpähä, Finland. The Nordic-Baltic LEADER Cooperation Award, Tallinn 2013.

An ITC partnership of 6 Austrian LEADER regions, the "Open Technology Laboratories" and the "Ars Electronica" understands the youth as designers of their regions' future, hence the basis for the development of its society. The world of adults is well advised to offer youngsters a chance not only to have dreams, but also to realise their ideas and to assist them in doing so.

The project encouraged youth to make use of their creative skills (in a variety of forms) that has enabled them to draw attention to and address their unrecognized needs. They generated new exchange platforms with a variety of representatives and members of rural society, e.g. municipal youth officers, citizen/public radio stations, youth pop/rock bands, elderly people etc.

Source: http://www.netzwerk-land.at/netzwerk/projekte-gute-beispiele/projektdatenbank-le-07-13

- Multiplier effects. Networking in the context of TNC can have multiplier effects such as leading to further networking (e.g. creation of tourism networks in Portugal) or further promotion projects (promotion of the territory, enterprise promotion).

- Building social capital. There are numerous examples of social capital creation (see Nordic-Baltic LEADER cooperation award finalists) through: (a) establishment of new personal contacts and the creation of new networks, (b) institutional and collective learning, experienced through a better understanding of common rural problems and development of ideas, concepts and systems, and (c) enhanced capacity of people to engage in cultural interaction and exchange. The latter is translated in increased tolerance towards cultural differences, illustrated with an example from France, where a theatre association in a French TNC integrated new students from other countries and thus contributed to social capital. The contact with other cultures enlarges the horizon of local people who become able to see beyond their small territories into other realities and experiences and respect and learn from the differences.

The benefits of TNC –
Experiences from the Nordic-Baltic LEADER cooperation award (case study 8)

The Nordic-Baltic cooperation award initiative demonstrates that it is easier to engage all relevant stakeholders into meaningful dialogue when discussions have relevance to the local (LAG) or the national (in the case of NRNs) context for all participants.

The competition focused on 5 award categories: (1) *youth* (involvement in community development, entrepreneurship); (2) *tourism* (promotion via common brand, local identity, festivals or thematic events); (3) *culture* (supporting art, handicraft, theatre, music, dance, folklore or research, publications, festivals, exhibitions ensuring heritage protection); (4) *local area development* (village development; solutions for delivering services and infrastructure; local business support or business diversification and innovation); (5) *local resources and environment* (local food incl. supply chains; better use of local raw materials; protection of the environment; organic farming; ecological entrepreneurship; development of renewable or alternative sources of energy).

The achievements of projects under each category highlight the benefits of TNC:

- *Youth* successfully involved in mitigation of the risks of vanishing musical and cultural heritage

often caused by rural depopulation.

- *Nature tourism* promoted responsible use of natural assets by the tourism sector to stimulate the local economy.
- *Cultural heritage* innovated through TNC among actors & artisans typically involved in medieval festival activities, generating also interest among & employment for rural youth.
- *Local area development* promoted via the generation of business ideas, the launch of micro-enterprises and the development of new partnerships in the field of rural tourism.
- Involving schools in the promotion of healthy eating habits and raising awareness of local food products and supply chains adds value to *local resources and supports environmental sustainability.*
- The competition has been a successful method for communicating the achievements and benefits of TNC, raising awareness and encouraging further TNC.

Source: Publication of the finalists "Nordic-Baltic LEADER Cooperation Award"

- Enhanced potential of LAG territories. Marketing/promotion of the territories and local products, and creation or initiation of business opportunities are important factors in increasing the potential of LAG territories. The benefits for the local population are even higher when business opportunities culminate in the development of new products and services, like in the case of the "Loving Local Values" TNC project in the Baltic Sea between Finnish and Estonian tourism entrepreneurs[80]. Other aspects of the territories are promoted as well such as their culture, heritage and natural environment.

How TNC raises awareness about one's comparative advantage –
The experience of the "Baltic Sea Nature Tourism" project (case study 5)

The main achievement of the TNC project for the Finnish partners was that it demonstrated the comparative advantage of their nature, which is still unspoilt and constitutes a major asset. The project was a learning exercise about nature tourism. Nature tourism is more than just running nature parks. This project has brought together a large network of local entrepreneurs. They now exchange about the nature tourism concept internationally and in a really fruitful way. One of the Finnish entrepreneurs e.g. focuses now on fishing tourism: he wasn't aware that fishing, something that's considered normal, regular activity in Finland, is considered a pleasure and relaxation for foreigners (i.e. it's a big opportunity in Finland, given the availability of large fishing areas). In the same way, sauna concept in Finland was shared with other partners.

Source: Case study interview

[80] Project nominated for award and presented in the Nordic-Baltic LEADER Cooperation Awards Brochure.

- Effects on administrative and legislative frameworks. There is evidence in some cases of legislative changes as a result of a TNC project, for instance, a new law was introduced in Finland on water quality and lake protection, as a result of a TNC environmental project[81].

- Indirect socio-economic impacts. TNC projects do not necessarily produce long-term impacts but they are valuable for creating the conditions that will lead to impacts in the future. An illustrative example is the TNC projects under the "Youth" theme in the Nordic-Baltic LEADER Cooperation Award, which established the conditions for job creation in the longer term. What is important to young people in rural areas is not necessarily the availability of jobs but an open/welcoming environment, the provision of social and commercial services and a good natural environment. If these conditions are met, young people will be attracted to stay in rural areas and it is more likely that jobs will eventually follow[82]. Youth projects in France have created the conditions that motivated young people (drop-outs) to go back to school. Another example is the establishment of conditions of the social integration of immigrants in Finland (see example below).

> "You don't always need to have a project, but exchange experience with continuity."
>
> *Charlotta Heimersson, Swedish LAG*

Social integration benefits of an ITC project, Finland

An immigrant integration project in Finland was awarded best project of the Huittinen, Hämeenkyrö, Punkalaidun and Sastamala municipalities from a total of 35 projects. The most remote and rural municipality has a refugee centre where many Balkan origin families, Somali people etc. are first placed when they seek asylum in Finland. The immigrant project has helped these people to integrate in the Finnish rural society that can be very different from what they are used to in their home countries. The project has set up a local football team for example where both Finnish and foreign kids play together and don't need to speak the same language. The project also finds jobs for immigrants, helps with everyday life. The refugee centre has 100-150 refugees all the time, once they get the asylum the LAG tries to keep them in its territory with the help of the project and the personal support network it has created. Information on the project can be found here: www.joutsentenreitti.fi

Source: Case study interview

6.3.3 Added value

The added value of TNC is difficult to measure and in the absence of an evaluation of the Cooperation measure at the moment, we can only assess what TNC has meant for LAG territories and rural

> "Europe will never be our common place to be without the transnational Cooperation measure"
>
> *"Growing Gastronauts" project*

[81] Case study interview.

[82] Source: Case study interview.

stakeholders that was only possible due to cooperation, in summary:

- Improved communication. One of the main added values of TNC is that LAGs learn to communicate with each other despite differences in cultures and contexts. "*Cooperation brings new ideas and skills, opens people's minds, improves the understanding of their own activities, and creates a new approach to undertake activities*"[83].

> "If we want innovating rural territories, we cannot leave them isolated."
>
> *DG AGRI official*

- Innovation. TNC is an important tool for transferring good practices from one country to another and thus contribute to territorial cohesion, a key objective of the European Union. The transfer of good practice reduces the isolation of rural territories and helps them progress. With TNC, each territory becomes a disseminator and a recipient of good practice. In this way, an activity, product or service that is common place in one territory may be a source of new inspiration in another. In addition, the learning experience is not only about the activities associated with the project but also more generally about the methods for managing and delivering local development strategies followed by different territories.

> "We visit projects or study an action group in work or what they have already implemented. We pick up some ideas there and adopt them at home to have something similar, which we would not have thought of ourselves."
>
> *Judit Racz. Hungarian LAG*

- Long-term relationships. Effective cooperation is more about the long-term relationships between individuals, organisations and businesses working across LAG areas than about the short-term projects that a partnership chooses to deliver. Hence the quality of partnership is the key to success and the resulting long-term relationship adds value to cooperation.

Cooperation is more than funding - The experience of Hungary from the Naturama project

The 'Rural Quality' trademark started as a cooperation project of Spanish LAGs and developed further to international level. In addition to their own trademark, participating LAGs get a common European logo and work along common values and marketing strategy.

The Naturama Society and Naturama cooperation gave Hungarian and Spanish LAGs an opportunity to cooperate under the 'Rural Quality' trademark.

Hungarian LAGs benefited from a study visit to Spain for 5 days with other Naturama group members to see the local brand in local practice. Although they all had a basic understanding of trademark, it was important to lean how you get it accepted, how you make people learn and how to use it to the benefit of the region. They visited Spanish LAGs and local producers who were ahead of them. There were discussions about how to design the logo and general trade-specific policies. *"It was an adventure for me*

[83] Source: Interviews

to experience a completely different atmosphere and a different world". In studying the local brand they learned how to create relations with local entrepreneurs and to think together how to support local products.

Source: Case study interviews & "Naturama" project video

Summary of main findings of chapter 3.3.2

- The main achievements of cooperation include: increased knowledge and awareness raising, establishment and strengthening of long-term contacts, improvement skills and competences, multiplier effects, building social capital and enhanced potential of LAG territories.
- Impacts cannot easily be discerned at this stage given the absence of an evaluation and the limited monitoring system. However, there is some evidence that cooperation projects produce new, long lasting knowledge and they have the potential to create a long-lasting effect on local economies and produce socio-economic impacts.
- The added value of TNC can be summarised in communication, innovation and long-term relationships.

Tips and recommendations

- The assessment of impacts and added value is paramount for a better understanding of the success and weaknesses of the Cooperation measure. An evaluation exercise should be undertaken promptly in order to inform the implementation of cooperation in the new programming period.

7. Key Findings and Conclusions

- ***Regulatory and administrative frameworks***

Phase I of the study concluded with some issues requiring further research and analysis, namely, an analysis of the conditions that facilitate the development of TNC projects, the factors that contribute to delays in approval procedures and any other factors that influence the start-up of projects.

Phase II has identified important differences between Member States in the rules governing TNC that create difficulties for the set-up of TNC projects. These differences have a clear impact on the start-up of cooperation projects, resulting in delays, changes in the composition and scope of projects and sometimes also a swift from TNC to ITC which is "easier" to set-up. The differences that are considered to be a barrier to effective development of TNC projects comprise: (1) the availability of funding for preparatory support, where some Member States offer support and some do not, while there are also differences in the amount of support provided; (2) requirements for TNC to be part of the LDS, including differences in the level of detail expected; (3) the project selection procedures; (4) the timing of project applications, which makes difficult a coordinated project launch; (5) the budget limits for TNC, with a contrast between Member States that impose a ceiling and those that do not; (6) the number of cooperation projects permitted per LAG in some of the Member States; (7) the types of eligible project outputs; (8) the eligibility of costs where there are large differences in the level of detail provided in different Member States, while cooperation with third countries is restricted due to ineligibility of expenditure outside the EU; and (9) the priority that MAs assign to TNC.

- ***Setting up partnerships***

Phase I of the study concluded there is need to analyse in detail the factors and conditions that facilitate the set-up of cooperation projects, the factors that determine how partners choose to implement a preparatory or a joint action, the relative advantages and disadvantages of preparatory and joint actions and the support available to undertake preparatory actions.

Phase II has identified some common problems for setting-up transnational partnerships, which may explain some of the differences between Member States in terms of their participation to TNC, observed in Phase I of the study. These include the language barrier and differences in cultures, the lack of experience or lack of / limited cooperation culture (either at MA or LAG level), the capacity to find the right partners, the lack of follow-up of cooperation events (which revokes their scope of promoting TNC) and technical problems such as filling in demanding application forms.

The above barriers can be overcome through targeted assistance and tools. Key success factors have been identified for effective partnership building, with evidence from several projects and countries where these factors are present. These factors include:

✓ **Personal relationships**, facilitated by pre-existing contacts or face-to-face preparatory meetings. A preparatory stage involving partner meetings, getting to know each other, exchanging ideas and developing concepts, is highly valued across the board.

- ✓ The availability of **institutional and technical support** to the set-up of TNC is paramount for effective partnership building. It embraces a wide range of actions such as awareness raising, training, study visits, preparatory technical assistance, promotional events and international staff exchanges. However, technical support is more efficient if it is complemented with awareness-raising and dissemination to ensure continuity of TNC results and contacts. There is a lot to learn from countries where TNC cooperation has been promoted through specific approaches and tools (e.g. the French CTA, the Finish NRN holistic support) or the preparatory funding support (e.g. Sweden and France).
- ✓ **Political commitment** is a facilitating factor for the provision of preparatory funding support to LAGs to encourage them to engage in TNC. When preparatory funding was complemented with technical assistance, this resulted in a high proportion of preparatory activities culminating in the implementation of TNC projects (e.g. Auvergne, France).
- ✓ The availability of **user-friendly interactive tools**, for instance the ENRD Cooperation Offers Database has overall been useful but there are several suggestions offered for technical improvements to the tool and for the creation of synergies with other networks and methods. In addition, there is evidence of other, less technical means that are effective due to the human interface (e.g. awareness raising, national coordinators).
- ✓ The provision of **guidance material** adds value if it helps to explain the differences in rules and procedures and examples that highlight how to engage and successfully implement TNC.
- ✓ **Cooperation events**, especially the ENRD ones that use a participatory approach are considered very useful and could take place on a regular basis for facilitating the identification of partners.
- ✓ **Thematic or geographic initiatives** that promote cooperation through the demonstration of good examples are useful tools for facilitating the setting-up and implementation of TNC projects.

- ***Project design***

Phase I of the study concluded that cooperation projects are often focused on tourism and culture through informal partnerships structures (very few legally constituted partnerships). It also found that there is a large variety of project budgets and project duration. Further research during Phase II of the study sought to identify any significant or relevant reasons that explain these findings.

The key challenges when designing a project include identifying local issues suitable for cooperation, **ensuring coherence between the identified local issues and the local development strategy** and agreement amongst partners on the chosen theme. The choice of theme lies in the needs identified, i.e. primarily in the local development strategies.

There is no best practice identified in terms of partnership structures (legally constituted versus informal structures) but **informal structures** are preferred due to their flexibility, while they are considered more suitable at the early stages of cooperation.

There seems to be **consistency between budgets and the types of activities**, the determining factor being the type of activity (softer exchange type activities against small infrastructure / new service creation type activities).

The **time required to set-up projects is often underestimated,** which leads to delays in implementation. The duration of projects should be in accordance with their scope.

There is hardly any evidence of LEADER cooperation projects coordinated with other Funds. There is however, a strong interest of EGTC in CLLD, but the potential to integrate the two is limited by the lack of active involvement of EGTC in the programming of 2014-2020.

- ***Partnership/cooperation during implementation***

Phase I of the study concluded that there are large differences between Member States in the frequency of cooperation. It suggested further research into the factors/conditions that determine active partner participation and effective implementation of cooperation projects.

Phase II has analysed the **reasons why partners do not always participate equally** in TNC projects and identified the key factors that contribute to active participation, namely: the experience of LAGs, the motivation of partners (e.g. relevance of the theme, commitment to the LDS), the continuous pursuit of commons goals and the capacity to speak languages. In addition, legislative restrictions to the participation of third countries limit their active participation, despite the identified benefits for both LAGs and third country rural stakeholders.

Support structures are not as critical for implementation as they are for the planning phase of TNC projects. Support structures contribute to training, moderation of project meetings and translations.

- ***Achievements/Impacts/Added value***

Phase I of the study suggested a need to assess the benefits of cooperation, the impacts of cooperation activities on beneficiaries and the extent to which the type of activities determine the success of cooperation projects.

Phase II devoted a substantial part of the research into **examples of cooperation projects** with the aim to identify their achievements, impacts and added value. The main achievements of cooperation include:

- ✓ increased knowledge and awareness raising,
- ✓ establishment and strengthening of long-term contacts,
- ✓ improvement in skills and competences,
- ✓ multiplier effects,
- ✓ building social capital
- ✓ enhanced potential of LAG territories.

These are mostly achieved through exchange visits, joint training measures and joint product development. There is no pattern of activities that produce more or better achievements, as activities are defined according to the project scope and objectives.

Impacts cannot easily be discerned at this stage given the absence of a detailed assessment and the limited monitoring system. However, there is some evidence that cooperation projects produce new,

long lasting knowledge and they have the potential to create a long-lasting effect on local economies and produce socio-economic impacts.

A key component of **the added value of TNC is innovation**. The transfer of good practice from one region to another reduces isolation of EU territories, contributes to their development and hence to territorial cohesion. TNC also adds value by enabling communication despite cultural and geographical differences. Long-term relationships are established and rural areas are given the opportunity to progress from the local to the national and to the EU level.

8. Recommendations

- ***Regulatory and administrative frameworks***

In order to address the differences in rules and procedures that present a barrier in cooperation, a few options could be considered:

Option 1 – some form of common framework would be useful to deal with differences between MS rules, for instance through a central digital platform.

Option 2 – Provision of detailed information such as the TNC fiches, which could be translated in other languages or focused guidance through the ENRD or dedicated support from the NRN to help LAGs in addressing the regulatory requirements.

Option 3 – Provision of training to MAs and NRNs on the EAFRD guidelines to facilitate their translation into national rules in a more homogeneous way.

- ***Setting up partnerships***

There is clearly a **need for preparatory support**, especially for new LAGs or for less experienced ones and more for TNC than for ITC projects, as the latter are developed under a common legal framework and common procedures. **Current approaches to preparatory support have been successful and merit capitalisation.** Preparatory support can be promoted for instance through guidance and demonstration of the good examples from this period (e.g. the Swedish cheque system, the French 'de l'idée au project' scheme or the French Cooperation Technical Assistance network).

Approaches to motivate transnational partnership building and project development include:

> "Cooperation needs to be thought through more. Build relationships. Think why cooperate and build gradually relationships that can last over time."
>
> *Charlotta Heimerrson, Swedish LAG*

- **Awareness-raising and capacity-building** at all levels, from MAs (to increase their awareness about the added value of TNC) to LAGs (to address lack of experience in TNC). LAGs in turn can play an important role to motivate people and institutions at local level (e.g. municipalities) to participate in TNC. Awareness-raising and capacity-building can take place through (a) targeted training to new LAGs, (b) tutoring offered to new LAGs through the NRNs, (c) national training events only for TNC (e.g. twice a year). Dissemination of successful TNC experience can contribute significantly to awareness rising. Examples like the Nordic-Baltic cooperation award should come at the forefront of dissemination.
- **Peer exchange** to promote the exchange of experience in TNC between LAGs (within and between countries), so the most experienced ones train/transfer knowledge to the less experienced ones. One option can be visits/exchanges where LAGs visit their peers in other countries or regions. This would be similar to "*… a market place of an event but for real, in the regions, where it is possible to*

have a feeling of the people and the places"[84]*.* Another option to be considered is meetings and exchanges based on the use of modern technologies. These could help LAGs getting into contact and foster the networks that are already in place.

- **More cooperation events** like the ones organised during the 2007-2013 period with a strong participatory approach. For instance, LEADER cooperation events with "corners" dedicated to TNC can facilitate the development of contacts and accelerate the initiation of cooperation projects.
- **Encourage NRNs to offer preparatory support** such as the 'Swedish Cheque system' for facilitating initial contacts with potential partners or the French technical assistance initiative.

The cooperation offers database (a) can include in the future a box to tick "we are interested in ….", (b) integrate follow-up of cooperation offers (currently there is no information about the evolution of cooperation offers), (c) can allow for attachments for discussing a project idea, (d) can include a discussion forum connected to the LAG in the ENRD LAG database.

Another barrier to transnational partnerships is language. This could be partly addressed through the provision of TNC facilitators/coordinators or simply raising awareness of LAGs about the need to hire multilingual staff (for instance, if a Lithuanian LAG wants to cooperate with a Swedish LAG, they could find a facilitator who speaks Swedish).

> "We need to think globally and work locally."
>
> *Dace Kalnina, Latvian LAG*

- ***Project design***

The legal structure of TNC projects does not seem to have played an important role in terms of achievements. However, the ENRD can provide advice and guidance to experienced partnerships so as to evolve into more formal cooperation structures and thus capitalise on the 2007-2013 cooperation experience.

Well-designed projects are those whose objectives serve a local need or address a key territorial challenge. Hence **coherence between TNC projects and the content of LDS** needs to be further stressed, while at the same time entailing the necessary flexibility to cater for multiple needs (i.e. those of partner territories) and for updates (especially if the duration is 2-3 years). Target setting consistent with the LDS, should start from the beginning of projects.

The **duration of projects should reflect the scope and the type of projects activities** and take into account the relative experience of partners in TNC, for instance, for less experienced partners, more time should be allowed for project design and partnership set-up. Realistic planning is therefore required and starting with small, secure steps to acquire the necessary upfront experience. Allowance can also be made for projects to last throughout the LDS period, especially if they are implemented as part of an LDS.

[84] Source: Interviews

Coordination of TNC with other Funds has not generally taken place, however, the increased coordination of Funds is an innovative element of the new programming period 2014-2020. In this context, the coordination of LEADER TNC with other Funds can be promoted through awareness raising activities at EU level and increased EU guidance. There is a strong interest for instance from the EGTC to engage into CLLD projects. This opens up the horizon for broader cooperation and increased interaction between regional and rural development through the exploitation of synergies to serve the overarching objective to contribute to territorial cohesion.

- ***Partnership/cooperation during implementation***

The most difficult part of TNC is **designing the project and partnership**. **This is where most support is needed.** At the implementation phase synergies can be exploited between LEADER groups and urban groups, especially if regional support networks address both types of groups (e.g. the regional support networks in France). This is relevant especially for more experienced LAGs and countries that have already set up regional support networks. Less experienced LAGs should possibly familiarise themselves with cooperation in the rural development context first, before embarking on wider cooperation networks.

Synergies with other Funds should also be exploited in order to make cooperation with third countries more tangible. DG AGRI could seek more coordination with EuropeAid for instance, and make information available to LAGs about programmes funded by bilateral cooperation schemes and other international donors such as the World Bank.

Last, but not least, language barrier should be overcome in the future through relevant training, hiring of staff, provision of support, etc.

- ***Achievements/Impacts/added value***

The assessment of impacts and added value is paramount for a better understanding of the success and weaknesses of the Cooperation measure. Evaluation of the Cooperation measure can take place earlier than the foreseen ex-post evaluations in the context of a focused study that aims to assess the outcomes of TNC and inform the implementation of cooperation in the new programming period. An assessment exercise should focus on (a) the quality of cooperation (intensity/depth of cooperation, durability/assessment of long-lasting cooperation and the reflection of LEADER principles), (b) impact on the territories, (c) impact on the lead partners and (d) impact on all partners involved. The evaluation would also identify impacts that go beyond the mere implementation of a TNC project, i.e. distinguishing the effects from cooperation and the effects from wider networking.

Future evaluation of cooperation projects should either be compulsory or include target indicators, such as “at least one TNC project per LAG” or “at least one TNC project where the LAG is a lead partner”. Other indicators can borrow the experience of Interreg to cover for instance the intensity of cooperation, the participation of territorial actors and the joint activity.

Annex 1: Library of available TNC Documentation by Member State

Member State	Brief description of relevant resources on TNC	Link to source
Austria	The TNC section of the NRN website informs about relevant information sources of EC DG AGRI and the ENRD website (e.g. the administrative guide for the implementation of the Cooperation measure; the ENRD CP's TNC Guide, LAG database, Cooperation Offers database, etc.).	http://netzwerk-land.at/LEADER/downloads/transnationale-kooperation-unterlagen-und-eu-kontakte
	The NRN website's project database via its search engine allows access to Cooperation project examples, of which 6 are also available in English language	http://www.netzwerk-land.at/netzwerk/projekte-gute-beispiele/projektdatenbank-le-07-13
Belgium – Flanders	This sub-section of the Flemish network website's LEADER area informs about the purpose of Cooperation and lists the criteria for approval of Cooperation projects.	http://www.ruraalnetwerk.be/pdpo/pdpo-ii-4/interterritoriale-en-transnationale-samenwerking
	The Flemish website's media section includes 2 press releases about interesting TNC projects	http://www.ruraalnetwerk.be/pdpo/pdpo-ii-4/de-pers
	On the Flemish website a separate section of its project database provides currently access to 6 Cooperation project examples (in Flemish language).	http://www.ruraalnetwerk.be/projecten/samenwerkingsprojecten
Belgium - Wallonia	The Walloon network runs a specific blog dedicated to Cooperation, providing links to a variety of information sources (in French language), among them: articles about fairs promoting TNC an inter-territorial cooperation, a Cooperation guide, and an introduction to and contacts of "Interface LEADER" (technical assistance) and the Network Support Unit (role and staff in charge of Cooperation).	http://guide-coope.blogspot.be
	The Walloon network website's good practice section includes also 3 cooperation project examples	http://www.reseau-pwdr.be/menu-de-gauche/bonnes-pratiques/bonnes-pratiques-wallonnes.aspx
Bulgaria	The Bulgarian NRN's cooperation section will provide information about criteria to be met for Cooperation projects to obtain approval, events discussing Cooperation ideas, and will facilitate transnational partnership search. For the time being, only a link to the ENRD website's TNC section is operational.	http://www.nsm.bg/en/cooperation

Member State	Brief description of relevant resources on TNC	Link to source
Cyprus	According to the Cypriot NRN website's section on Cooperation, all LAGs have included M421 in their LDS. In addition to a link to the ENRD's TNC guide, brief abstracts of one inter-territorial and two TNC projects are provided (in Greek language).	http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/da/ead/ead.nsf/All/9BF01690DEB7741CC2257B1900456DD8?OpenDocument
Czech Republic	Source for news and information about the implementation of Cooperation projects (in Czech language). Latest uploads: updated schedule for submission of projects for evaluation; updated project implementation rules; invitation to publicly present submitted Cooperation project proposals to the evaluation committee, etc.	http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/venkov/program-rozvoje-venkova/opatreni-osy-iv/realizace-projektu-spoluprace/
	Continuous publication of foreign TNC partnership offers. A single Czech TNC partnership offer is the sole TNC document available in the English language version (http://eagri.cz/public/web/en/mze/national-rural-network/cooperation-proposals/)	http://eagri.cz/public/web/mze/venkov/mistni-akcni-skupiny/nabidky-mezinarodni-spoluprace/
Denmark	Guidance on Cooperation and information about other LAGs interested in TNC: application rules, application schedules, application forms, Cooperation offers received from foreign LAGs, examples of agendas for foreign LAGs visiting Danish LAGs to explore the potential for a joint TNC project.	http://www.livogland.dk/lokale-aktionsgrupper/info-lokale-aktionsgrupper/samarbejdsprojekter-lokale-aktionsgrupper
Estonia	Cooperation criteria and requirements, including administrative rules download and list of TNC projects with Estonian participation (in English language).	http://www.agri.ee/LEADER-cooperation/
	Database of relevant EAFRD funded projects provides access to 14 Cooperation project examples. A presentation of Estonian TNC provisions and early TNC projects (2010) can also be found at http://www.maainfo.ee/public/files/2010_juuni_Leedu_Eesti.ppt	http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=3451&filter%5B36%5D=&filter%5B93%5D=LEADER&filter%5B95%5D=cooperation&filter%5B43%5D=&filter%5B105%5D=
	Information leaflet about the implementation of the Cooperation measure in Estonia (in English language, also available in FR, DE	http://www.maainfo.ee/public/files/LEADER_Info_leaflet_2011_ENG.pdf
	Cooperation offers database, hundreds of foreign LAGs' partnership offers translated into Estonian language	http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=3406
	Joint competition "Nordic-Baltic LEADER Cooperation Award" (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden): pdf booklet for download and online	http://www.maainfo.ee/index.php?page=3667

Member State	Brief description of relevant resources on TNC	Link to source
	database of 60 nominated TNC projects.	
Finland	Cooperation criteria, requirements, and approval procedure; Cooperation partnership offers by Finnish LAGs (all in English language).	http://www.maaseutu.fi/en/index/LEADER/transnationalcooperation.html
	International cooperation partnership offers, international study tours organized by the NRN, foreign good practice (in Finnish language)	http://www.maaseutu.fi/fi/index/kansainvalisyys.html
France	The NRN's resource material providing methodological guidance and administrative information about the implementation of Cooperation projects. In addition a tool-box including the resource materials developed or collected by the French regional network support units such as a glossary, document pool, communication and capitalization tips (in French language).	http://www.reseaurural.fr/territoires-LEADER/cooperation/comment-cooperer
	Frequently asked Cooperation questions answered by the French MA (in French language).	http://www.reseaurural.fr/territoires-LEADER/cooperation/faq
	Cooperation partnership offers (French inter-territorial, ENRD's TNC) and access to Member States' administrative procedures (ENRD) and country fiches (French)	http://www.reseaurural.fr/territoires-LEADER/cooperation/avec-qui-cooperer
	Database of on-going Cooperation projects. Also interesting, special newsletter on Cooperation 2013: http://www.reseaurural.fr/files/maquette_lettre_coope_n6_v14octt.pdf (in French language).	http://www.reseaurural.fr/territoires-LEADER/cooperation/decouvrez-projets
Germany	Cooperation offers from foreign LAGs (in German language).	http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/partner/kooperation/
	Materials supporting Cooperation projects, including the Commission's administrative guide, cooperation agreement templates, and templates of letter of intent and cooperation agreement prepared by the German NSU (various languages).	http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/partner/kooperation/materialien-zur-kooperation/
	The English language version of the guide for TNC, which the German NSU produced	http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-

Member State	Brief description of relevant resources on TNC	Link to source
	at the beginning of this funding period.	raum.de/fileadmin/sites/ELER/Dateien/05_Service/Publikationen/Kooperation/Reader_englisch_internet.pdf
	Examples of Cooperation projects with German LAG involvement (in German language)	http://www.netzwerk-laendlicher-raum.de/partner/kooperation/kooperationsprojekte/
Greece	Objectives of the Cooperation measure and explanation of requirements, eligibility criteria and procedure to follow to obtain project funding (in Greek language)	http://www.agrotikianaptixi.gr/Uploads/Files/m421_4v.doc
Hungary	Database providing access to potential project partners from Hungary (in English language)	http://www.mnvh.eu/english/partner-search
	Database providing access to potential project partners from Hungary (in Hungarian language)	http://www.umvp.eu/english/co-operation
Ireland	Cross-border Cooperation Guide (jointly published with the UK-NI NRN)	http://www.nrn.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Cross-Border-Project-Guidelines.pdf
Italy	Documents published by the Italian NRN and the ENRD on the subject of Cooperation (in English and Italian language), including e.g. first draft guidelines for Cooperation under LEADER 2014-2020; administrative implementation procedure of TNC under the LEADER axis; collection of Cooperation offers; etc.	http://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/1703
	Cooperation offers of received by the Italian NRN (in English language)	http://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/2026
	News, events and presentations on the subject of Cooperation	http://www.reterurale.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/387
Latvia	The Latvian translation of the ENRD's TNC Guide, the Cooperation agreement template, a ministerial decree on the European and national procedure for allocation of TNC funding to LAGs, the cooperation partners' offer form.	http://www.laukutikls.lv/biblioteka/cat_view/138-LEADER/229-starptautiska_sadarbiba
	News, presentations (in Latvian and English language) about partnership offers, calls	http://www.laukutikls.lv/LEADER/starp

Member State	Brief description of relevant resources on TNC	Link to source
	for Cooperation projects	tautiska_sadarbiba_elfla
Lithuania	Cooperation guide in Lithuanian language on the LEADER website's section (http://www.LEADERlietuva.lt/lt/naudinga-informacija/metodikos.html) for research, methodologies and studies	http://www.LEADERlietuva.lt/uploads/dokumentai/Metodikos/5%20(1)metodika%20lietuviu%20kalba%20TT.pdf
Luxembourg	The news section of the country's LEADER website provides insights into a number of on-going transnational cooperation projects (in French and German languages)	http://www.LEADER.lu/news/
	The LEADER website's downloads section offers access to a historical review of 20 years of LEADER implementation and a presentational document of the current programming period, both of which make references to TNC project experience	http://www.LEADER.lu/downloads/
Malta	Guidance Notes issued by the Maltese Paying Agency for the submission of applications for funding under Measure 421 (TNC)	https://secure2.gov.mt/mrra-ma/downloads-links?l=1
	The operating rules for LEADER introduce also the objectives of the Cooperation measure and provide explanation of requirements and eligibility criteria	https://secure2.gov.mt/mrra-ma/file.aspx?f=359
The Netherlands	Inspiring stories about cooperation providing new impulses for the countryside, published by the NRN (cultural, regional, renewable energy, international exchange projects – in Dutch language)	http://edepot.wur.nl/134209
	Guidance for TNC under LEADER, published by the NRN (in Dutch language)	http://translate.google.com/#nl/en/Leidraad%20Transnationale%20Samenwerking%20LEADER
Poland	Answers to TNC questions / Roadmap to Cooperation projects (in Polish language)	http://ksow.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/ksow.pl/pliki/LEADER/mapa_drogowa_projektu.pdf
	Partnership offers by foreign LAGs (in English language)	http://ksow.pl/LEADER/projekty-wspolpracy.html
	Partnership offers by Polish LAGs (in English language)	http://ksow.pl/en/LEADER.html
	The guide to cooperation projects in Poland under axis 4 RDP, 2007-2013 (in English)	Only found via Google search

Member State	Brief description of relevant resources on TNC	Link to source
Portugal	The NRN website's section for relevant sections allows to search for examples of cooperation projects (in Portuguese language)	http://www.rederural.pt/projetos-relevantes
Romania	No information available	The website of the NRN (www.rndr.ro) is offline. No TNC documentation on the MA website
Slovakia	Cooperation partnership offers by foreign LAGs are published in chronological order on the NRN's homepage (centre section titled news/aktuality), English language downloads, latest entries from France and Italy, May 2013)	http://www.nsrv.sk/index.php
Slovenia	MA's website section dedicated to measure 421: (1) ppt presentation of TNC in Slovenia; (2) EC administrative guide on implementation of the Cooperation measure; (3) link to ENRD LAG database	http://www.mko.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/program_razvoja_podezelja_2007_2013/vsebina_prp_2007_2013/4_os_LEADER/ukrep_421_spodbujanje_medregijskega_in_cezmejnega_sodelovanja/
Spain	Cooperation projects representing relevant experience	http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/desarrollo-rural/publicaciones/publicaciones-de-desarrollo-rural/PROYECTOS_COOPERACION_RRN_tcm7-209977.pdf
	Cooperation projects and preparatory actions: (1) calls for projects; (2) grant awards; (3) database / project sheets; (4) answers to frequently asked questions	http://www.magrama.gob.es/es/desarrollo-rural/temas/red-rural-nacional/proyectos-de-cooperacion-y-pilotos/consulta_basereguladora.asp
Sweden	List of Local Action Groups with transnational cooperation experience	http://www.landsbygdsnatverket.se/download/18.1d7062ed133ee6f948680000675/1322735911907/2011-12-01+Transnationellt+erfautbyte.pdf
	Practical examples of transnational cooperation involving Swedish Local Action	http://www.landsbygdsnatverket.se/hu

Member State	Brief description of relevant resources on TNC	Link to source
	Groups	vudomraden/LEADER/transnationellterfarenhetsutbyte/exempelpasamarbete.4.7e1323431288aff333480002933.html
	Cooperation partnership offers by foreign Local Action Groups, published in chronological order	http://www.landsbygdsnatverket.se/huvudomraden/LEADER/transnationellterfarenhetsutbyte/forfragningarompartnerskap.4.677019f111ab5ecc5be80009075.html
UK England	Guide to Cooperation measure 421 (download), including explanation of requirements, eligibility criteria and procedure to follow to obtain project funding and links and contacts for obtaining further information.	http://www.rdpenetwork.org.uk/assets/files/project-uploads/forum/Cooperation%20measure.doc
	Cooperation partnership offers by foreign Local Action Groups, are occasionally published (in chronological order) in the website's "news & publications" section	http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/news-and-publications
	The RDPE Network's project directory provides for an option to search for TNC projects	http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/projects/transnational
	The RDPE website's e-news section and email newsletters regularly provide updates on a variety of aspects of TNC under LEADER (events, partnership offers, ENRD updates etc.)	http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/news-and-publications/publications/rdpe-network-LEADER-e-news
UK Northern Ireland	The UK-NI website's Cooperation section (1) links to the ENRD's partnership offers database, but (2) provides also access to partnership offers which foreign LAGs have directly addressed to the UK-NI network. Additional information offered includes (3) the cross-border cooperation guide, which the network jointly developed with the Irish NRN, (4) the ENRD's TNC guide and (5) short profiles of the 7 Northern-Irish Local Action Groups.	http://www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/COOPERATION
	The UK-NI Network's project directory provides for an option to search for Cooperation projects	http://www.ruralnetworkni.org.uk/PROJECTS-DIRECTORY
UK Scotland	The Scottish MA's technical guidelines for LEADER implementation (including TNC)	http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/

Member State	Brief description of relevant resources on TNC	Link to source
		0039/00392191.pdf
	Cooperation partnership offers by foreign Local Action Groups, and other information on TNC fairs etc. are occasionally published (in chronological order) in the UK-SCO network website's news section	http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/en/news/news
UK Wales	List of approved joint actions between Local Action Groups in Wales and partners from within United Kingdom or other European Union Member States	http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/walesruralnetwork/ruralwalesnetworkdocument/axis4cooperationprojects/?lang=en
	Reports on study visits organized by the network to provide the opportunity for delegates to visit past and present projects (including TNC projects).	http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/farmingandcountryside/cap/walesruralnetwork/studyvisits/?lang=en

Annex 2: Suggestions for possible case studies

The following Cooperation projects are suggested to become the subject of case studies to further deepen the understanding of the nature of Cooperation projects. The idea is to focus on particular aspects of these projects, which could not be covered with the help of available information sources.

Previous presentation in ENRD events, and/or registration of certain LAGs and/or their TNC project activities on the ENRD's Cooperation Offers and/or RDP Project Database have led to their identification as relevant source of information. It is therefore suggested that a selected range of these case studies will be conducted in the form of interviews, involving direct contact with Lead partner LAGs, via e-mail and phone communication.

- During the earlier stages of the current programming period, the ENRD invited representatives of the ***Local Action Groups Northumberland Uplands (NULAG, UK) and LEADER Linné (Sweden)*** to a number of its events[85] to present its innovative approach to TNC preparatory actions. More precisely, both LAGs reported to have agreed on a ***framework for the joint implementation of LEADER-funded Cooperation*** projects. A case study could shed more light on the evolution of *preparatory action leading to partnership, the finally agreed shape of the cooperation framework*, and *conduct a deeper analysis of the concrete TNC projects implemented* as a result. Did the partnership meet *unexpected issues* when migrating to actual project implementation, *how were challenges met*, and *to which extent did the projects contribute to the successful achievement of the objectives of the cooperation framework* initially agreed between the partners? What are the *lessons learnt* for the future?
- It appears that the TNC projects ***"Bees and Biodiversity"*** and ***"Adding value to Community Tourism"*** are based on ***Cooperation Partnership offers***, which were published on the ENRD website. A case study could re-establish the way the cooperation partnership evolved, and if the implementation of the project was affected by *unexpected issues* when migrating to actual project implementation. In the case of both projects, *partners from 7 and 5 different Member States participated* - how were potential challenges such as *geographical distance and communication barriers (language) met?* In addition, the topic of bee conservation was also a "hot topic" at the European policy level, how did this affect the Bees and Biodiversity project and/or did the partnership have opportunity to contribute to the European policy debate?
- Both, the ***"Network of Transnational Eno-Gastronomic Itineraries" (TEI.Net)***[86] and ***"WOLF"*** have evolved from large Inter-territorial Cooperation projects into pan-European TNC projects. Aspects of interest include the management of the *particularly large number of project partners*, and how the *geographical distance and communication (language)* with partners was handled. In the case of WOLF, additional points of interest include the inclusive approach to stakeholder

[85] See, among others, http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=7C9871CE-B1CD-0D34-CE43-62CEC63B5DF7

[86] See http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=10722

involvement, given very diverse range of beneficiaries the project addresses, as well as the actual results and likely impact of the project, as its ambition was to shape policy beyond the local (i.e. at national and EU) level.

- During the screening of the RDP Project Database, *20% of the TNC projects were identified to address the rural youth as end-beneficiaries,* they hence may merit to be taken a closer look at. The objective of these projects like ***FENIX – Riverside Youth goes International***[87]***; A young Perspective on the Countryside***[88]***; Re-creation of the Landscape; Medieval Festivals; ZETHOVEN***[89] was often to *promote regional identity, culture, environmental protection, European citizenship, but also the improvement of employability and the prevention of "brain drain" from the countryside*. With most of these projects drawing to a close, what is left of all these ambitions? Is there a risk that projects for the youth are too results-focused, thus remaining a purpose in themselves – or are there interesting examples of impact and outcomes lasting beyond the duration of these activities?
- Finally, the project ***"Reto Natura 2000: Tourism Network of Nature Observation Areas"*** involves an impressive number of 30 Spanish LAGs. While this imposes obvious questions with regards to the approach to implementation, potential management issues met, and the way related challenges were addressed, it is also interesting to know that this *Cooperation partnership "downgraded" from Transnational Cooperation* during previous programming periods (LEADER II, LEADER+) *to Inter-territorial Cooperation*. Why?

[87] See http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=5700

[88] See http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=10140

[89] See http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/policy-in-action/rdp_view/en/view_projects_en.cfm?action=detail&backfuse=jsview&postcard_id=10180

Annex 3: Information requested from the Member States

	(1) LEADER Transnational Cooperation (TNC) project notifications submitted by the Managing Authorities via SFC2007																		
Nr	TNC Project Title	Theme			Kind of activity	Administrative & financial management	Status	Approval date	Start date	End date	Lead partner LAG Country	Budget			Lead partner LAG name	Partner LAG Country	Partner Country Approval date	Partner Name	Project website	Additional Information
		T 1	T 2	T 3								Total	EAFRD	National Funds						
274	Parks Protection II- Management, Protection and Economic Development of protected areas							No data available	1/11/12	20/12/13	GR	50,000.00			Regional Development Company of Parnonas	UK	No data available	Northumberland Coast and Lowlands		
																LV	25/9/12	LAG "Dobele District Rural Partnership"		

	(2) LEADER Transnational Cooperation (TNC) projects: ADDITIONAL PROJECTS (that do not appear in the list of Sheet 1 "Notified projects")															
Nr	TNC Project Title	Theme	Kind of activity	Administrative & financial management	Status	Approval date	Start date	End date	Lead partner LAG Country	Budget	Lead partner LAG name	Partner LAG Country	Partner Country Approval date	Partner Name	Project website	Additional Information

									y								
		T 1	T 2	T 3							Total	EAFRD	National Funds				

	(3) LEADER Inter-territorial projects																	
Nr	TNC Project Title	Theme			Kind of activity	Administrative & financial management	Status	Approval date	Start date	End date	Lead partner LAG Country	Budget			Lead partner LAG name	Partner LAG Country	Partner Country Approval date	Partner Name	Project website	Additional Information
		T 1	T 2	T 3								Total	EAFRD	National Funds					

Drop Down Menus

Kind of activity	Preparatory Support
	Joint Action
	Preparatory Support + Joint Action
	Info not available

Administrative & financial management	By legally constituted common structure
	No common structure-Lead partner LAG responsible
	Info not available

Status	Completed
	Ongoing
	Cancelled
	Info not available

Theme	Agriculture
	Community development
	Culture
	Demography/ social
	Economy
	Education
	Foresty
	Leisure
	Nature/environment/land use
	New technologies and know-how
	Products (food)
	Products (non-food)
	Promotion
	Tourism
	Other
	Info not available

Guidance for entry of Cooperation project data

In order to achieve high data validity and reliability for this report you are kindly requested to provide the most updated information concerning LEADER TNC and inter-territorial projects approved by your programme authority. The European Commission's DG AGRI and the ENRD need your help for this report to contribute to a better understanding of the scope and content of TNC and inter-territorial projects.

As second attachment to this email you will find an excel file, to assist you with the collection of the information needed. This excel file contains of three different sheets, which you can access by clicking on one of the three different tabs on the left bottom of the screen.

1. **Sheet 1 "Notified projects"** is a list of those TNC projects, which your programme authority has already notified to the European Commission through the SFC database 2007.
   - Please provide for each of the TNC projects listed 5 additional elements of information (project theme, kind of action, type of administrative and financial management chosen, project status, and budget split). Please select one of the drop-down menu options for each field.
   - **Themes**: in case your project can be characterised by one main theme, you can leave columns 'Theme 2' and 'Theme 3' blank. In case your project covers several different fields, please use columns 'Theme 2' and 'Theme 3' to indicate this.
   - **Kind of activity**: Please note that according to the Commission Guidance, projects may involve preparatory activities (i.e. preparatory technical support, e.g. to facilitate the search of partners); joint actions (i.e. concrete joint actions of partners with clearly defined deliverables); or both[90].
   - **Structure**: Please note that according to Article 62 of Council Regulation (No 1698/2005) it is possible to select for the management of partnerships an 'administrative and financial lead actor' (i.e. Lead partner LAG) or come together in a 'legally constituted common structure'.
   - **Status**: Some of the notified projects (through SFC) may be cancelled; projects may be still on-going or successfully completed.
   - **Budget**: Please indicate separately the amounts provided by EAFRD and national funding sources. Should the budget also include private contributions or funding from other sources, you may enter these under the last field 'Additional Information". If only the total budget amount is known to you, you can leave the EAFRD and national fields blank.
   - **Other fields** are as provided in notification through the SFC by the MA. If you are aware of any changes in these characteristics please feel free to modify. Please clearly indicate changes (using a different colour for the fields) that you make in existing data.

[90] For further information see http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/app_templates/filedownload.cfm?id=6380C18C-05AD-2120-C7ED-E8B0C6DE8377, p.4 & 5

- Please check if the list of "Notified projects" is complete. **If any approved TNC project is missing, enter it by using Sheet 2 "Additional projects"**.

2. **Sheet 2 "Additional projects"** is reserved for all the TNC projects your programme authority approved, but that do not appear on the list of Sheet 1 "Notified projects".
   - Please enter the missing TNC projects and provide all the information required.
   - Should you already have established yourself a complete list of approved TNC projects in a different format, you may send us your own list instead. However, please try to ensure your alternative list will provide us with the basic information about projects (i.e. budget, implementation period, lead partner, etc.); as well as the necessary 5 additional elements of information concerning project theme, kind of action, type of administrative and financial management chosen, and project status (see the dropdown menus on Sheet 1 "Notified projects").
   - Please note that completing information on additional projects do not replace MA's responsibility for notifying the Commission about these projects through SFC. Please also notify the Commission about these additional projects for consistency of information and databases.

3. **Sheet 3 "Inter-territorial proj."** is reserved for all the Inter-territorial projects your programme authority approved.
   - Please enter all Inter-territorial projects approved by your programme authority.
   - Should you already have established yourself a complete list of approved Inter-territorial projects in a different format, you may send us your own list instead. However, please try to ensure your alternative list will provide us with the basic information about projects (i.e. budget, implementation period, lead partner, etc.); as well as the necessary 5 additional elements of information concerning project theme, kind of action, type of administrative and financial management chosen, and project status (see the dropdown menus on Sheet 1 "Notified projects").

Please try to complete all the information requested in each of the three sheets. In case not all of the requested details are available to you, kindly return the table to us, even if it is not complete.

Thank you for sharing your experience with Cooperation measure 421 with the European Commission, the ENRD and the community of rural stakeholders across Europe!

Annex 4: Case study fiches

1. Inter-regional cooperation project "Awareness of healthy eating and short supply chains – Growing Gastronauts"

Background information

Leader LAG:	Hiiumaa LAG (Estonia)
Partners:	5 LAGs
Project theme:	Short supply chains and local food
Budget:	€245,354 (total for all LAGs)
Contact person:	Ms Reet Kokovkin
Contact details:	reet.kokovkin@hiiumaa.ee
	Tel: +372 5178597, office: +372 46 22807

Set-up and planning phase

- The project received sufficient support during the planning phase from the Estonian MA. Preparatory actions were not undertaken partly due to lack of awareness about preparatory action support and partly due to lack of time for inquiring into this.
- The partnership was set up following personal contacts from previous projects and in the context of events and meetings. There was not much awareness about partner search tools and therefore personal contacts were used instead for finding partners.
- According to Estonian rules, the project theme has to comply with the LDS, it was therefore chosen according to the regional needs and strategic priorities.

Implementation phase

- The most active partners were those with genuine interest in the theme that was chosen.
- The MA offered support when needed during the implementation phase. However, the administrative requirements of the PA were considered a burden (too much paperwork and translations into the native language).
- Through the organisation of festive and educational events in each of the 5 LAG territories, the project resulted in multiple achievements: (a) established working short supply chains of local food; (b) trained and set up networks of local school cooks, local administrators, farmers and teachers; (c) started work with school children, made them appreciate local healthy food and taught them to cook the food from scratch; (d) elaborated study material that is children friendly and ready to use.
- The most visible impact is that in the whole Estonia (not just in the two partner regions) children who learn to cook are called "Growing gastronauts – Sirguvad söögisellid". This means that the project got the interest of national media thanks to prominent chefs that were incorporated to it. The idea of local food as generator of local small jobs, the benefits of healthy food and organic food are now in the minds of local administrators. In addition, working networks between producers and schools have been established as a result of the project.
- There is interest in the future continuation of the project and it is considered that the ENRD database can be a useful tool to identify who is working in the topic of local food and potentially include more partners.

Key lessons in a nutshell

✓ The key challenge was to find the right partners that one can trust and that can think in the same way. "*When*

you have the right partners, the planning stage is smooth". At the implementation stage, the commitment of partners is a key to success.

- ✓ Good knowledge of what the needs of the region(s) is required.
- ✓ Language is a barrier to effective cooperation: not all partners spoke English and translations were time consuming.
- ✓ Wanting to make a difference is a key to success.
- ✓ Cooperation can be a powerful mechanism to increase awareness about common health issues such as the importance of healthy food in schools and the role that local supply chains can play in this.
- ✓ The ENRD database can play a role both on the planning and in the follow-up phase as a source for identifying new partners working on the same topic.
- ✓ Translation of good quality TNC guidebooks from other countries would serve as guidance and exchange of experience.
- ✓ TNC experience should be communicated through attractive means such as videos, web pages that are friendly and attractive and handbooks that tell a story.

2. The Cooperation Technical Assistance (CTA) Network in France

Background information

Promoter of the initiative:	French NSU
Contact person:	Severine Bressaud
Contact details:	severine.bressaud@eureka21.eu
	Tel: 0033 1 53 19 06 47

The set-up of the CTA network

The French NSU has set-up the CTA network which is in fact a continuation of an idea developed during LEADER+ (2000-2006). 26 regional networks participate in the CTA, some of which have their own regional network support unit. The aim is to provide cooperation support from a local level (LAGs) to a national/EU level. Specific objectives include: (a) tailor made support for each LAG and at each level of their cooperation project; (b) exchange of information on cooperation inside the rural development framework and further; (c) coordination of the support possibilities.

Support through the CTA takes place at two levels: (a) at national level through the NSU horizontal support is offered such as training, coordination, exchange of information, methodological support, direct assistance in the identification of partners, organisation of transnational cooperation fairs, dissemination of EU information and participation in European networking, etc.; (b) at regional level there is a person responsible for cooperation issues in each regional network offering tailored assistance to LAGs.

The working method of the CTA includes regular meetings (quarterly) of regional networks, exchange of good practice and creation of common tools such as methodological factsheets on TNC, a monitoring table, a contacts list and dissemination through regular newsletters and specific cooperation newsletters.

In 2012 the CTA compiled a "Questions Fair" with the most frequent questions about TNC which can be found in the CTA network: http://www.reseaurural.fr/files/faq_maaf_cell_nationale_dec_2012_1.pdf (http://www.reseaurural.fr/territoires-LEADER/cooperation/faq)

The outcomes of the CTA network[91]

As a consequence of the support offered by the CTA and regional networks, the number of cooperation projects in France has increased, with over 140 projects approved in July 2012 (both ITC and TNC, although the majority are TNC projects). It is one of the EU countries with the highest number of cooperation projects. Out of 222 French LAGs, 144 were involved in at least one cooperation project (ITC or TNC) in 2012. They involve partners from various EU countries, especially from Italy, Belgium and Spain on themes that are consistent with the LDS and falling primarily under 4 categories: tourism/heritage/culture, environment (awareness raising and eco-construction), agriculture/local products and youth.

Key lessons in a nutshell

- ✓ The achievement of truly European support for cooperation needs more than just one annual EU level meeting for LAGs.
- ✓ Training sessions and cooperation fairs should be offered from the programme period's very first year, in order to improve the access of LAGs to the European level. This is really crucial for the identification of partners, and the face-to-face discussion of potential collaboration, working methods, etc.
- ✓ Ideally, TNC could be actually managed/ administrated at central level or though common rules.
- ✓ As far as the development and implementation assistance for TNC projects is concerned, the support by national and regional level networks was successfully provided and should continue to be offered in this form.

3. Transnational cooperation project "Bees and Biodiversity"

Background information

Leader LAG:	LAG Pays Voironnais (France)
No of LAGs involved:	7 LAGs in 7 EU countries (DE, BE, DK, FI, FR, UK, SK)
Project theme:	Local resources and the environment
Budget:	€442,000 (total for all LAGs)
Contact details:	naturpark_duebener_heide_to@t-online.de
	Tel: +49 172 3420 542

Set-up and planning phase

The partnership was set up through the "word of mouth" approach, even though the lead partner published a cooperation offer on the ENRD website. Partners did not become aware of it. Instead, the LAG Naturpark heard from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in Saxony-Anhalt about the plans of the French LAG and they immediately came into contact with them and initiated cooperation. The number and variety of partners is an indication of the importance of the theme at EU level. Its main goals are land management, beekeeping activity and economy and information and education on how to preserve bees as pollinating insects.

"Our ambition was not to retain biodiversity exclusively "into" parks, but rather to bring it to the people and make it part of their life. There's nothing more important than a healthy, accessible, environment."

[91] Data from presentation in the Open Days 2012: "Cooperation: A key tool for CLLD"

The German LAG Naturpark obtained preparatory financial support of €3,000 for travel, translation and accommodation. It also obtained advisory support from the MA on regulatory aspects. The whole project preparation obtained support through the profile of a "coordinator" with language skills, made available by the lead partner to coordinate the preparation.

The regulatory framework for TNC presents several drawbacks: (a) very different administrative rules per Member State, specifically differences in the actions eligible for funding; (b) differences in the sequence of budget planning: some Member States allow relatively flexible budget categories, with overall money allocations for the whole project duration, while other Member States require relatively detailed budget categories, that determine expenses on an annual, or even quarterly basis; (c) delays in signing the cooperation agreement and putting the documentation together (it took a whole year) due to different persons responsible for documentation and signatures in each country.

The critical success factors at the planning stage include: (a) political commitment and support from the MA, which allowed the LAG Naturpark to budget on a multiannual basis and therefore made an exception to the rules which foresee only annual planning; (b) genuine interest of the partners to the project theme; (c) a meaningful allocation of the budget, for instance, one partner was responsible for the website costs and the others for translation into their respective languages; (c) the availability of dedicated human resources.

Implementation phase

The use of skype conferencing between the joint events proved to be a good means of keeping in frequent contact during implementation, while the MA provided all the necessary support when required.

The project resulted in multiple achievements related to awareness raising and knowledge transfer, including books for children about the importance of pollinating insects, eco-friendly schools, new pollination services, flower strips in towns and roads, a beginners guide to beekeeping and development of new products (e.g. herbal honey, with healing effects). As a result, the local population and stakeholders are now sensitive to the topic of biodiversity. The project has also facilitated new contacts and established solidarity amongst beekeepers and the honey production sector in general.

There was added value at local level from the project's know-how transfer. This transfer was the innovation of "Beepass", a secure beehive, from which bees escape high, so that beekeepers and even kids can approach and watch beehives without danger. The beehives, which were placed all around the towns, promote the local economy. Visitors have noted the beehives, and ask where they can go to buy honey. The project has brought the park into the village – no one needs to go to the nature park to see the bees and their beehives, they are now right amongst people in the villages.

The project is a **good example of coordination with other Funds**. The development of concepts, approaches and knowledge was made possible with the LEADER cooperation project, while the investment in building beehives was financed by the regional funding programme of the Ministry for Environment of Saxony-Anhalt.

There is sustainability of results as evidenced by the interest expressed by people in neighbouring areas who are interested in developing similar schemes and installing beehives. There is also sustainability of the contacts developed as some project partners keep regular contact and are invited to events to present the project.

Key lessons in a nutshell

- ✓ Political commitment and support from the MA are paramount for TNC.
- ✓ Investing time in preparation and developing a good/feasible plan contribute to success.
- ✓ Cooperation Offers databases would benefit from integrated, updated information.
- ✓ Preparatory support contributes to building a strong partnership with relevant and committed parters.

- ✓ The role of an external project coordinator can facilitate the set-up and implementation of cooperation given the language and administrative differences between Member States.
- ✓ TNC cooperation can benefit from more capacity building at the outset so that LAGs gradually acquire more competences to run TNC projects.
- ✓ Capitalisation and transfer of results are possible through the project internet site presenting the partners, their areas and the method followed.

4. Transnational cooperation project "Quality of life through proximity"

Background information

Leader LAG:	LAG Nordschwarzwald (Calw, Germany)
Partners:	7 LAGs from 2 Member States (AT, DE)
Project theme:	Basic services and local supplies (quality of life)
Budget:	89,568€ (total for all LAGs)
Organisation interviewed:	Ms. Ingrid Engelhart, SPES (a German-Austrian association)
Contact details:	engelhart@spes.de Tel: +49 761 5144 244

Set-up and planning phase

The project is working to ensure that basic services and local supplies are available in rural areas, addressing the principal challenges of rural demographic change and the current economic climate. Cooperation on the topic already existed between partners via the German-Austria association SPES. This association gathers local people from 15 local communities in the two countries to contribute to the strengthening of the quality of life, by developing methods for citizen participation, models ensuring local supply and help among neighbours, concepts responding to demographic change, initiatives for strengthening regional economic systems and other future models. The association supports communities and regions that want to implement these models. TNC between local communities was the next logical step.

Despite the existing contacts, this was their first LEADER project and they faced the following administrative difficulties: (a) fitting the project into the MA's eligibility criteria which were entirely different between Austria and Germany, for instance there can be no investments under LEADER in Austria, while Baden-Württemberg requires that even participatory projects have to lead to investments; (b) it was impossible to fund actions addressing demographic change, a social topic, under the Austrian rules and therefore not eligible under rural development.

Preparatory support was unavailable and direct and useful support was received from the LAG Nordschwarzwald itself, while the MA was a rigid and administrative counterpart.

Implementation phase

The key success factors of the project were its participatory processes and practical orientation. Most people working towards the improvement of their own quality of life on a voluntary basis. The association was leading the design and implementation of activities while the LAG Managers were responsible for coordination and reporting. As a result, new approaches to service delivery are transferred from one region to another, for instance, the supply structure of the Nordschwarzwald region was transferred to the Austrian region.

Innovative achievements include: (a) the project launched a "time bank", where the help one provides to

neighbours will be registered in an account, which entitles you to later help of the same amount by other neighbours; (b) a "help from home to home" scheme, organised at neighbourhood level has provided women in rural areas with a new part-time employment perspective (which is qualified, because it involves certification); (c) citizen cooperatives have been established, sharing income e.g. from the generation of energy (solar, water, wood chips) – rendering local communities independent from fossil fuel supplies; (d) new places have been established for the rural youth to meet and to learn professional activities; (e) the introduction of the first "on-call citizen electric car" offers local people a complementary public transport offer, to overcome mobility issues in rural areas. There are also spin-off effects like an ongoing exchange on energy cooperatives run by local citizens.

"We had a very practical orientation. And people quickly realized that the creative power of villages depends on the presence and participation of their citizens. Moderating the process with the help of our experts helped participants focus and be constructive."

The project can be sustainable as it targets directly the needs of communities, encourages the participation of committed local people and draws support from the transnational cooperation dimension. The positive experience from this project has led to the launch of a new TNC project on care options for the elderly.

Key lessons in a nutshell

- ✓ Administrative differences between Member States can delay significantly the project preparation phase.
- ✓ The approval process of TNC must become more streamlined between Member States (otherwise, there is a risk to demotivate LAGs from participating).
- ✓ The pre-existing contacts in the context of SPES implied intensive networking which facilitated the project implementation.
- ✓ Implementation by a structure that brings together local communities (namely SPES) added value by bringing in grassroots knowledge through participatory approaches involving the local communities.
- ✓ When new approaches introduced are previously tested in the field, they are easier to transfer and multiply.
- ✓ TNC enables the exchange of ideas and the development of new solutions, which would not have been possible without LEADER.
- ✓ TNC meetings contribute to the establishment of new contacts and stimulate the interest for more cooperation in the future.

5. Transnational cooperation project "Baltic Sea Nature Tourism"

Background information

Leader LAG:	Karhuseutu LAG, (Finland)
Partners:	7 LAGs (4 Member States: Hungary, UK/Scotland, France, UK/England, Portugal) and Island of Saint Anton (Cape Verde)
Project theme:	Tourism
Budget:	€728,000 (total for all LAGs)
Person interviewed:	Jaana Mälkki
Contact details:	jaana.malkki@karhuseutu.fi phone: +358 40 5599 412

Set-up and planning phase

The project promoted natural and tourism assets in rural areas by hosting in each area a nature/cultural tourism conference with the goal of networking and learning about best practices in local tourism.

The project theme stems truly from the grass-roots level: a local tourism entrepreneur was seeking help for creating and marketing a network of rural areas to exploit the natural resources for tourism in the Baltic Sea area in a sustainable manner. It attracted the interest and motivation of 7 LAGs.

The main challenges to setting up the partnership were administrative difficulties stemming from different national eligibility rules and different application periods. Another challenge related to the participation of non-EU partners. The project had a very interested partner from Cape Verde who participated to the maximum they could, given they were not able to host or organise seminars, due to the rules governing the participation of non-EU partners.

The support tools used to set-up the partnership include: a cooperation offer in the ENRD database, contacts with other LAGs through the Finish NSU and past contacts.

Synergies with other Funds are considered for the future, in particular, expanding the project's scope and applying for funding from the LIFE programme.

Key success factors during the planning phase include: (a) lots of preliminary exchanges to verify common objectives and expectations of partners, followed by personal meetings to discuss and develop the project concept based on common needs; (b) planning with flexibility to anticipate eventualities during implementation.

Implementation phase

The active participation of partners has been determined by two key factors: (a) availability of finance, for instance, Hungary had difficulties due to limited TNC funding, or Cape Verde who were only able to participate in a couple of events; (b) motivation and interest in the theme, for instance most participating partners have a genuine interest in nature and its potential for tourism.

Support during implementation was offered when needed by the NSU or the regional authorities, both very supportive of TNC. Regional authorities in Finland have understood the important role TNC plays in order to overcome isolation and to obtain access to new ideas, concepts and solutions. They know TNC is a way to usefully progress local action. The project has great potential to increase international tourism in the area and therefore reduce its isolation.

"TNC s important for Finland. It keeps us close to Europe and prevents us from being isolated."

The main achievement of TNC for the Finish partners was that it demonstrated the comparative advantage of their nature, which is still unspoilt and constitutes a major asset. New business opportunities were created in the field of fishing tourism, star watching and sauna related tourism, building on the area's natural assets.

Key lessons in a nutshell

- ✓ The long-term experience of the project coordinator in TNC facilitated the establishment of contacts, the set-up and implementation of the project.
- ✓ It is useful to complement the cooperation offers database with personal contacts, while support from the NRN has been helpful.
- ✓ The motivation of partners is stimulated when the cooperation theme reflects grass-roots level needs.
- ✓ Preliminary exchanges and meetings ensure that projects are built around common needs, objectives and expectations, while partners get the chance to know each other and discuss/test their ideas and concepts.
- ✓ Support from the relevant national and regional authorities is important but it can only come if they believe in the benefits of TNC.

- ✓ TNC achieves awareness raising about one's comparative advantages and opens up new business opportunities building on those assets.

6. The Swedish "cheque system"

Background information

Promoter of the initiative: Swedish NRN

Person interviewed: Hans-Olof Stålgren

Contact details: Hans-Olof.Stalgren@jordbruksverket.se

Tel: +46 725 265107, +46 36 156216

The set-up of the initiative

The Swedish NRN provides support for networking activities from the NRN budget. This includes four types of support: (a) transnational exchange and experience to prepare for possible TNC, known as the "cheque system"; (b) animation projects through the provision of a global grant to animate the organisation to make se of RDP measures; (c) seminars and conferences to raise awareness of the RDP; (d) cooperation in research and development.

The "cheque system" was designed to support the initial contacts for TNC with potential partners. If the initial meetings were successful, then LAGs could use the Cooperation measure.

LAGs could apply for a cheque by filling in an application form, providing inter alia the following information: the applicant's details, a description of the activities to be carried out, the time schedule envisaged and the expenses foreseen for the activities. To be eligible to apply, the LAG has to have a contact with another foreign LAG with activities or challenges that are relevant to the Swedish LAG. The applicant should have a clear idea about the aim for the visit to the foreign LAG and what kind of exchange is expected. This is why the application has to be clearly based on the LDS. The connection with the strategy has to be obvious also in the programme for the exchange visit. Each LAG can only apply for and use the TNC support on one occasion (i.e. for once international exchange visit). The NRN Steering Committee has earmarked a maximum amount of approx. €5,800 per LAG for this activity.

Eligible costs cover the expenses due to a TNC preparation and can only cover the LAG's own expenses and not for the partner LAG in another Member State. Reimbursement can be given to expenses due to travel, accommodation, rent of a venue and food during or in direct connection with the meeting.

The outcomes of the cheque system

The cheque system has been very successful with more than half of the 63 Swedish LAGs using their cheque. The system has been used as a reference by other countries who have set up similar schemes.

During 2012 the cheque system came to an end and the activities of the NRN were more strategically decided by the Network Steering Committee and not just following the applications for cheques.

Key lessons in a nutshell

- ✓ The proactive role of the Swedish NRN has been valuable for the start-up of TNC projects.
- ✓ With TNC preparatory support, LAGs were able to meet their partners, test and discuss their ideas and refine the TNC concept and objectives. As a consequence, a large number of Swedish LAGs have progressed from this preparatory action to the application for a joint project under the Cooperation measure.

✓ The fact that funding for preparatory exchanges and meetings came from the NRN budget has left the Cooperation measure with sufficient funding for joint actions.

7. The Nordic-Baltic cooperation cluster

Background information

Participating countries:	Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany
Person interviewed:	Hans-Olof Stålgren (SE NRN), Juha-Matti Markkola (FI NRN)
Contact details:	Hans-Olof.Stalgren@jordbruksverket.se
	Tel: +46 725 265107, +46 36 156216
	Juha-matti.markkola@

The set-up of the initiative

The Nordic-Baltic cooperation cluster is a cooperation network of NRNs. It was born out of the need of the member countries to communicate with each other on common issues, from the set-up of their NRNs to the implementation of their RDPs and the promotion of cooperation at transnational and inter-territorial level.

Neighbours communicate with each other more and the newer MS like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have been searching for experience in Finland, Sweden and Denmark. Therefore, when the NRNs were established, the idea sprung that the neighbouring NRNs should communicate with each other tightly. At the beginning there was acquaintance with the different cultures of the NRNs, RDP implementation, common and different regulations governing the LEADER measure. The focus was on the establishment and development of LEADER LAGs. New topics such as the role of NRNs in engaging the target groups in LEADER TNC also became the focus.

The Nordic-Baltic network is increasingly important in the context of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (SBSR). The strategy drives the themes of TNC projects developed in the by the countries of the Nordic-Baltic cooperation cluster, mainly the environment and sustainable rural development.

The outcomes of the cluster

With a view to promote TNC amongst its members, the network has organised regular meetings, mutual study tours and other events and conferences. Individual members of the network have also organised activities to promote TNC (e.g. Estonia and Finland organised joint study tours).

One of the fLAGship activities of the cluster has been the organisation of a competition “the Nordic-Baltic LEADER cooperation award” with the following aims: (a) to highlight the importance of TNC for rural development in the Nordic-Baltic countries; (b) to recognise and promote existing LEADER TNC “success stories” involving these countries; (c) to raise awareness amongst a wider audience of the interesting and diverse themes and activities which could be developed in future TNC projects with and between Nordic-Baltic countries; (d) to acknowledge the LAGs which are active in the Nordic-Baltic countries and inspire these and other LAGs to continue TNC during the new programming period 2014-2020; (e) to reinforce the role of LEADER in supporting implementation of the SBSR. The award categories comprised: youth, tourism, culture, local area development and local resource and environment. A total of 60 projects applied and 21 became finalists. These are presented in an attractive brochure detailed their objectives, activities and outcomes.

Key lessons in a nutshell

✓ Networks are much more likely to cooperate effectively – as well as learn from each other’s experience – when

they have well defined common interests.

- ✓ Communication between partners/networks is greatly enhanced by regular meetings focused on specific common issues of concern, either territorial or thematic.
- ✓ It is much easier to engage all relevant stakeholders in a meaningful dialogue when discussions have relevance to the local (in the case of LAGs) or national (in the case of NRNs) context for all participants.
- ✓ The competition for the cooperation award has been a successful method for communicating the achievements and benefits of TNC, raising awareness and encouraging further TNC.

8. Transnational cooperation project "Green line"

Background information

Leader LAG:	LAG Gardavalsabbia, IT
Partners:	5 LAGs from 3 Member States (IT, HU, FR)
Project theme:	Rural tourism
Budget:	€728,000 (total for all LAGs)
Person interviewed:	Nicola Gallinaro
Contact details:	nigallin@tin.it
	phone: +39 348 6729475

Set-up and planning phase

Interregional cooperation amongst Italian regions around Lake Garda was extended to transnational cooperation with Hungary (Lake Balaton) and France (Aquitaine). The objective is to promote rural tourism integrating natural resources and local products. The idea came from a group of tourist operators who saw the contrast between very developed tourism in the coastal parts of the lake and the declining activity in the hinterland/mountain areas above the lake. The objective was to promote all the areas around the lake and reduce the contrast between the lakeside and the hinterland/mountain areas above.

The main difficulties during the start-up phase were related to the different procedures in the different Member States, such as the different timetables which MAs set for project applications. The continuous application procedure in France facilitated the inclusion of the French LAG at a later stage of the project (the original Green Line Italian LAGs were approached by the French LAG in a Brussels event and asked to join). On the other hand, partnership with the Hungarian LAG was more difficult due to limited Calls for TNC. Long-term experience with LEADER+ helped the lead partner overcome these difficulties and manage the partnership effectivelyLEADER.

Another difficulty was the resistance of the Italian MA to accept a Scottish LAG interested in the project, because they did not speak Italian.

Implementation phase

The partnership has worked well during implementation. To a great extent this is due to the topic which pertinent to all partners: rural tourism around the lake is part of the LDS of the LAGs involved. Most active partners were the Italian partners who were the ones that initiated the project as an inter-regional one (within Italy) and who have a direct link with Lake Garda.

For the Italian LAGs this is not simply a tourism promotion project, they have a double objective, i.e. to promote tourism and to create a green economy network. To this end, they aim to integrate all the LAGs in the regions

around Lake Garda around a common concept of integrating the traditional coastal tourism with the local products and environment in the rural and mountain hinterland. The Hungarian LAG followed the project with interest so as to learn from the Italian experience.

One strength of the project is its management through a Steering Committee composed of 3 Italian LAGs, representatives from the rural wold, tourist operators and local institutions. In this way, a variety of stakeholders follow up the project to ensure it achieves its double objective.

The project has served as an example for the preparation of the new LDS and the new RDPs in Italy and was presented in various conferences. It has attracted the interest of French partners who are exploring further cooperation in the new programming period.

Key lessons in a nutshell

- ✓ MAs need to be supported with awareness raising to better understand the possibilities for TNC and benefits of it.
- ✓ TNC rules and procedures need to be better streamlined between Member States.
- ✓ Previous TNC experience helps overcome problems.
- ✓ Capacity building towards less experienced LAGs (e.g. in this case the Hungarian LAG) would enable them to participate more actively and obtain more benefits.
- ✓ A multi-stakeholder Steering Committee contributes to effective implementation in accordance with the LDS.

9. Transnational cooperation project "Network ICC"

Background information

LEADER:	Red Española de Desarrollo Rural (REDR: Spanish Network for Rural Development)
Partners:	8 LAGs from Spain
Project theme:	Development of LAGs / natural parks, water, environment, tourism
Budget:	€200 m (total) for 4 years
Person interviewed:	Maria José Murciano (REDR), Ana Perez (LAG ADECOM)
Contact details:	mjmurciano@redr.es, anaperezagudo@hotmail.com

Set-up and planning phase

The ICC (exchange, communication and cooperation) network between Spain and Central America (CA) is a TNC project born out of the initiative of Spanish LAGs, members of the Spanish Network for Rural Development (SNRD). It aims to construct continuous dialogue between actors involved in rural development policy making in Spain and Central American countries, including Panama, Belize and the Dominican Republic. Activities include good practice exchanges and identification of opportunities. The ICC network transfers knowledge to CA countries for the set-up of local action groups there.

The project is financed by measure 421 of the Spanish NRN. Several problems were encountered during the set-up and planning phase: (a) very much NRN driven and therefore LAGs had little influence; (b) very limited budget for 4 years which limits the scope of activities; (c) expenses in CA countries are not covered. CA counterparts look for other sources of funding such as the World Bank or the bilateral Spanish cooperation with CA countries.

The project budget is used for the creation of the project webpage, the publication of newsletters, contacts with organisations in CA and organisation of events/seminars (although local expenses for the latter in CA are not

covered). Synergies with other funding sources were not exploited, e.g. EuropeAid.

Implementation phase

The restrictions related to expenses make project implementation very difficult. For example, there is a seminar organised in Guatemala later this year and there are practical issues like having to transport conference material from Spain (e.g. projectors, flipcharts, etc.) because expenses for renting material there are not eligible. There has been an outstanding response to the seminar, with more than 2,300 Latin American organisations invited. However, there are only €43,000 available for this event, which will cover the expenses of Spanish LAGs and the experts invited to make presentations.

Despite the difficulties, the project is highly valued by Spanish LAGs and the Spanish Network for Rural Development. Benefits include: (a) development of contacts with local organisations in CA and support for setting-up local action groups; (b) transfer of experience from Spanish LAGs to CA countries and the other way around; (c) institutional cooperation between Spain and CA. In the long-term, the project envisages to open up business opportunities for companies in Spain and CA. There is a lot of potential for this network to promote transnational cooperation in local development issues related to the environment, water and natural resources since CA countries are very aware and active in these fields. Potentially more EU countries could become members of the network.

Key lessons in a nutshell

- ✓ The Cooperation measure should be implemented by the LAGs, if needed with support from NRNs (not to lose the local development character of TNC).
- ✓ Legislative changes would be needed so that TNC with third countries can be supported in a more tangible way, with funding flexibility to carry out activities there, potentially through the establishment of a control system so that no abuse of funds can take place. Otherwise, the contribution of third country partners is limited.
- ✓ Alternatively, synergies with other sources of funding should become explicit, for instance, EuropeAid from the EU or cooperation with other international donor organisations (e.g. the World Bank) from the planning stage so as to guarantee the funds and develop joint TNC on equal terms from the beginning.

10. Transnational cooperation project "Gastronomy routes and the Culture of flavours"

Background information

Partners:	18 LAGs from 4 countries (GR, IT, CY, PT)
Project theme:	Local food and tourism
Budget:	1 million euro in total (between 60-100 thousand per partner)
Persons interviewed:	Makis Papamichael (LAG Larnaca, CY), Eva Katsaraki (LAG Anher)
More information:	http://www.euroconsulting-geie.net/medeat/

Set-up and planning phase

The project builds on past cooperation from the previous programming period. New LAGs have joined during this period for a 6 year duration project on the promotion of local food and tourism. This past experience has helped LAGs deal with the differences in the rules and procedures in each Member State. The TNC guide of the ENRD was of great help for less experienced partners (e.g. the partner from Cyprus which joined the partnership this programming period).

The large number of partners in the partnership is considered an asset for the project. In this way, they can exchange more experiences and achieve more results. The existence of one coordinator per country (i.e. one LAG coordinating all other LAGs from the same country) was an important condition for the large number of partners not to be a problem in terms of coordination.

Implementation phase

Key success factors during implementation include: (a) the multiple communication channels (face to face meetings, facebook, email and telephone) made their joint activities possible; (b) the exchange and field trips included many diverse stakeholders form the participating territories, which was an important learning experience; (c) coordination meetings using a translator helped overcome language barriers and facilitated communication; (d) the language proficiency of the Greek coordinator who spoke Italian was also an important asset for communication purposes.

The project achieved several results, which build on capitalisation of the comparative advantage of each territory: (a) mobilisation of local actors for the promotion of local food as a tourism asset; (b) the provision of an alternative tourism product, i.e. combination of local food and tourism and creation of common gastronomy tourism routes; (c) awareness raising of young people. An exemplary project output is a booklet containing leaflets and maps from each territory with details on key points of interest and gastronomy points. This can potentially become an innovative IT application for further promotion of the territories and their local assets.

"We came closer to one another and opened horizons for our communities and for ourselves"

The project is exemplifying major LEADER principles: integrating tourism with the food sector to develop a territorial based strategy; innovating in each area; promoting cooperation within the areas among schools, producers, and other stakeholders, strong cooperation among areas and countries.

The integrated route for gastronomy across 4 countries provided great added value for tourism in the territories. Without the project it would not have been possible to conduct the activities promote local gastronomy routes and involve schools and young students.

Key lessons in a nutshell

- ✓ The fact that the partners new each other from the previous period contributed to successful cooperation. Due to this previous experience, it was easy to identify the cooperation theme and activities for the current project.
- ✓ The close and intensive exchange among LAGs motivated them and made them think of many new ways to work with their communities.
- ✓ Good coordination, with the provision of a central coordinator per country, as well as language translation in meetings, are all factors that facilitate communication of large partnerships.

Annex 5: List of interviewees

1. Alfonso Alcolea – Committee of the Regions
2. Ana Perez –Spanish LAG
3. Ave Bremse – Estonian NRN
4. Axel Mitzka – German LAG
5. Beata Krajewska – Polish MA
6. Charlotta Heimersson – Swedish LAG
7. Christophe Arrondeau – French LAG
8. Dace Kalnina – Latvian LAG
9. Gusztán Nemes – Hungarian Institute of Economics
10. Hans-Olof Stålgren – Swedish NRN
11. Ingrid Engelhart – SPES (German- Austrian association
12. Jaana Mälkki – Finnish LAG
13. Jean Michel Courades – Rural Development expert
14. Jolanta Vaiciuniene – Lithuanian MA
15. Judit Racz – Hungarian LAG
16. Juha-Matti Markkola – Finnish NRN
17. Krista Antila – Finnish LAG
18. Luis Chavez – Portuguese LAG
19. Makis Papamichael – Cypriot LAG
20. Maria José Murciano Sánchez – Spanish Network for Rural Development
21. Nicola Gallinaro – Italian LAG
22. Pedro Brosei – DG AGRI
23. Petri Rinne – ELARD
24. Reet Kokovkin – Estonian LAG
25. Severine Bressaud – French NSU
26. Thomas Mueller – Austrian LAG
27. Valentin Vaque – Auvergne Regional Network, France

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Annex 7: Questionnaire to different types of stakeholders

Questionnaire for LAGs on the state of play of TNC & inter-territorial cooperation

Basic information

Name of interviewee: .....

Name of organisation:.....

Publication of a TNC cooperation offer in the ENRD cooperation database: Yes/No

Type of action: Preparatory/Joint

Contact details:

email: .....

phone: .....

Set-up and planning

1. **How has your organisation been involved in TNC, inter-territorial cooperation or CBC?** How did you decide on the type of cooperation (TNC, ITC, CBC)?

2. **Was the regulatory and administrative framework easy to understand and interpret for the set-up of cooperation?** Did you receive any support for understanding and complying with the regulatory and administrative requirements? How do you value this support? Any suggestions for improvement?

3. **How did you find your partners?** Did you use the TNC cooperation database or other databases? Other partner search tools? How do you value each of the means/tools you have used for finding partners? How do you think that partner search can be facilitated/improved?

4. **How did you choose your project theme?** Does it correspond to any policy issues, local needs, transnational needs, etc.?

5. **How did you decide whether to implement a preparatory / joint action?** If your project is a joint action, was it preceded by a preparatory action? If yes was this useful and why? If not, why did you not start with a preparatory action? If your project is a preparatory action, has/will it continue into a joint action? Why yes/not?

6. **How is your project organised?** (legal form and administrative structure). What do you perceive are the strengths and weaknesses of your project structure?

7. **How much is your project budget? How did you arrive at this amount? What actions are covered by it?**

8. **Do you coordinate the project activities or the funding with other Funds (e.g. Interreg)?** Why? Benefits/difficulties?

9. **What is the project duration?** How is this timing justified?

10. **Overall, what are the three key challenges, strengths and weaknesses during the set-up and planning phase of TNC or ITC?**

11. **What are the key success factors for efficient partner search project planning?**

Implementation

12. **Who are the most active partners and why? What factors do you consider motivate active participation?**

13. **Are there any cooperation support structures that have helped you during implementation? Please assess their usefulness.** Were cooperation support structures important for the success of the project? Why yes/not?

14. **What were the strengths and weaknesses of the working methods of the project?**

15. **What were the main achievements of you project?** What factors contributed most to these achievements?

16. **What was the impact… on partners, beneficiaries, local communities, etc.?** What factors contributed to impact?

17. **Has your project evolved into something else?** (e.g. from preparatory action to joint action, from transnational cooperation to an EU thematic network, etc..)

18. **Do you think that TNC/ITC brings added value to those who participate and/or benefit from it?** Why yes/not? What kind of value added?

19. **Was your project completed / will it be completed on time? If not, why?** Has the timely completion of activities affected their effectiveness and impact?

20. **What support (if any) did you receive during project implementation? Is there any kind of support that you consider important for effective implementation of TNC/ITC?**

21. **Overall, what are the three key factors that contribute to effective implementation of TNC/ITC?**

22. **What can improve in order to further promote TNC/ITC in the future? And to make it more useful?** (e.g. information, capacity building, guidance, databases, support structures, etc.)

Questionnaire for other stakeholders on the state of play of TNC & inter-territorial cooperation

Basic information

Name of interviewee: ……

Name of organisation:……

Type of organisation: (MA, Other network structure –e.g. Interact, ELARD, national LAG networks -, EC, other): ……

Contact details:

email: ……

phone: ……

Set-up and planning

23. **What is your experience with TNC, ITC or CBC?** In what way have you been involved in cooperation? (e.g. advisory role, management, coordination, support, etc.)

24. **Do you consider the regulatory and administrative framework for TNC/ITC (at EU level and/or at MS level) is easy to understand and interpret for the set-up of cooperation?**

25. **Are you aware of support provided for understanding, interpreting and complying with the legal and administrative framework for TNC/ITC?** How do you assess this support?

26. **What tools are available for partner search?** (at EU/MS level, give examples) How effective do you consider these tools to be for promoting the set-up of cooperation? (give examples) How do you think that partner search can be facilitated/improved? (e.g. the State of Play report presents data on the number of partnership offers in the ENRD database but there is no information about the usefulness of this database or other databases/tools to this end).

27. **To what extent do the TNC/ITC themes correspond to needs and/or policy issues at EU or MS level?** Give examples. (e.g. the State of Play report found that most projects focus on tourism… why?)

28. **What do you think about the usefulness of preparatory and joint actions?** When are preparatory actions most needed? When are joint actions possible? Should there always be a preparatory action followed by a joint action? Explain/offer examples. (e.g. the State of Play report found that 33% of TNC were joint actions and 22% were preparatory actions? What can explain these %? Do preparatory actions evolve into joint actions?)

29. **Are you aware of good examples of TNC/ITC due to their legal form or their administrative structure?** (e.g. the State of Play report found that very few projects have a legally constituted structure. Why is this? How does the legal form contribute to better cooperation?)

30. **Overall, what are the three key challenges, strengths and weaknesses during the set-up and planning phase of TNC or ITC?** (this may help explain, inter alia, why there are cancelled projects: 6% according to the State of Play report or why some countries have a higher rate of completed projects than others)

31. **What are the key factors that contribute to the successful set-up and planning of TNC/ITC projects? (**refer to choice of budget, choice of theme, choice of partners, support tools/structures, management structure, etc.)

Implementation

32. **Are you aware of any TNC/ITC activities that are/were coordinated with other Funds (e.g. Interreg)?** What do you think were their benefits/results?

33. **What factors do you consider motivate active participation of partners in TNC/ITC?** (the State of play report gives number of LAGS as partners and as lead partners, does this make any difference in their motivation? Other factors that motivate partners to be active?)

34. **Are you aware of cooperation support structures that help projects during implementation?** Please assess their usefulness and scope for improvement.

35. **What were the main achievements of TNC/ITC projects?** Give examples. What factors contribute most to achievements?

36. **What is the impact of TNC/ITC?** What factors contribute to impact?

37. **Are you aware of TNC/ITC projects that have evolved into something else?** (e.g. from transnational cooperation to an EU thematic network, etc.. – give examples) Under what conditions? What benefits does this bring?

38. **Do you think that TNC/ITC brings added value to those who participate and/or benefit from it?** Why yes/not? What kind of value added?

39. **Overall, what are the three key factors that contribute to effective implementation of TNC/ITC?**

40. **What can improve in order to further promote TNC/ITC in the future? And to make it more useful?** (e.g. information, capacity building, guidance, databases, support structures, etc.)