

**Discussion Paper**

**THE FUTURE OF MARITIME COOPERATION**

**November 1998**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to review the state of cooperation in maritime border regions in the context of Interreg IIA programmes, and to provide a basis for discussion on the future of maritime cooperation, especially in the context of Interreg III. The paper builds on the Background Document: *Cross-Border Cooperation on Maritime Borders*, which examines Interreg I and IIA maritime programmes and their implementation. It makes use of recent information, particularly quantitative and qualitative data obtained from a number of completed mid-term evaluation studies of maritime programmes, although there is still a shortage of comprehensive and comparable information on the progress of the implementation of these programmes. The paper will be presented at the LACE-TAP Annual Conference in Nice (23/24 November 1998) and may be revised in the light of discussion and additional information.

Interreg I was established in 1990. Its 31 Operational Programmes included four maritime programmes as “special cases”, namely Sardinia-Corsica (I/F), Kent-Nord-Pas-de Calais (UK/F), Bornholm (DK/Baltic Sea countries) and Storstrøm-Ostholstein (DK/D). Interreg IIA covers 59 Operational Programmes of which 16 are maritime programmes (11 concerning internal EU borders, and 5 concerning external ones)<sup>1</sup>. The programmes fall into three geographical groups: Northern (7 programmes); Western (3) and Southern European (6) - see *Table 1* below.

The paper is in three main parts. *Section 2* provides an overview of the current state of cooperation with a focus on the implementation of actions in the Interreg IIA Operational Programmes (by sector and nature of cooperation). It also reviews the operation of cross-border structures for programme development and management on internal and external maritime borders. *Section 3* considers the potential of maritime cooperation according to the scope and capacities for cooperation already achieved and in terms of other characteristics of maritime border regions. *Section 4* draws conclusions about the current situation and future maritime cooperation in the context of Interreg III.

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<sup>1</sup> OPs which include relatively small components of maritime cooperation have not been classified as maritime programmes for the purpose of this paper (eg Greece-External Borders). Of those covered in this paper, Kvarken-MittSkandia has been classified as “internal EU borders” because the main maritime component of the programme concerns cooperation between Finland and Sweden, whilst Bornholm has been classified as “external” as it concerns mainly cooperation with non-EU countries in the Baltic Sea.

**Table 1: Interreg IIA Maritime Programmes**

<b>Geographical Group</b>	<b>Internal EU Borders</b>	<b>External EU Borders</b>
<b>Northern</b>	9 - Fyn-K.E.R.N. <i>DK/D</i> 10 - Storstrøm-Ostholstein <i>DK/D</i> 11 - Oeresund <i>DK/S</i> 50 - Islands (Archipelago) <i>SF/S</i> 51 - Kvarken-MittSkandia <i>SF/S/N</i>	12 - Bornholm <i>DK/Baltic Sea Countries</i> 56 - Finland/Estonia <i>SF/EST</i>
<b>Western</b>	35 - Nord-Pas-de-Calais/Kent "Transmanche" <i>F/UK</i> 36 - Rives-Manche <i>F/UK</i> 40 - Ireland-Wales <i>Ir/UK</i>	
<b>Southern</b>	27 - Greece-Italy <i>GR/I</i> 33 - Corsica-Sardinia <i>F/I</i> 34 - Corsica-Tuscany <i>F/I</i>	31 - Spain-Morocco <i>E/MRC</i> 44 - Italy-Albania <i>I/A</i> 45 - Gibraltar <i>UK/MRC</i>

## 2. CURRENT STATE OF COOPERATION ON MARITIME BORDERS

### 2.1 Actions under Interreg IIA Programmes

This sub-section presents an analysis of actions under the maritime programmes in terms of their sector of activity and nature of cooperation. This analysis has taken into account the following classification.

In terms of thematic or sectoral orientation the programmes fall into two broad categories:

- programmes which have a main focus on “*hard*” actions, particularly in the sectors of communication and transport infrastructure, typically in Objective 1 border regions;
- programmes which have an emphasis on “*soft*” measures such as economic development, tourism, culture, environment and resource management – often in the form of “integrated” programmes.

The nature of cooperation reflects the basic typology of Trans-European cooperation as defined in the LACE-TAP Working Paper on the *EU Initiative Interreg and Future Developments* (July 1997):

- ***Cross-border cooperation:*** “direct neighbourly cooperation in all areas of life between regional and local authorities along the border and involving all actors; more organised because of longer tradition”;
- ***Inter-regional cooperation:*** “cooperation (between regional and local authorities) mostly in single sectors (not in all areas of life) and with selected actors; as yet, organisation not advanced because of short tradition”;
- ***Transnational cooperation:*** “cooperation between countries (sometimes allowing regions to participate) with regard to a special subject (for example, regional development) related to large, connected areas; organisation usually still under development”.

Cross-border cooperation is characterised by a bottom-up approach and *joint* actions in all sectors by partners from both sides of the border. The actions can be carried out in *common* (single entity projects serving both sides of the border) or in *parallel* (with actions serving only one side of the border). Indeed in the most advanced border regions there is a predominance of common actions. Inter-regional and transnational cooperation is predominantly of parallel nature, where an action is only on one side of the border, and common elements are restricted in the fields of “knowledge”, such as studies, seminars and exchanges.

**Table 2 : Sectoral Allocations in Maritime Programmes (in MECU)**

<b>Interreg IIA Maritime Programmes</b>	<b>Total EU Contribution (MECU)</b>	<b>Spatial Planning Studies %</b>	<b>Support to SMEs %</b>	<b>Tourism %</b>	<b>Rural Develt %</b>	<b>Environment %</b>	<b>Transport Energy Communication Infrastructure %</b>	<b>Education Culture Media %</b>	<b>Training Labour Market %</b>	<b>Facilitation of cross-border cooperation %</b>	<b>Technical Assistance %</b>
9- Fyn-Kern <i>DK/D</i>	3.6		25	20				25	20		10
10 -Storstrøm-Osth. <i>DK/D</i>	5.2		28	21	10	8	3	10	10		10
11 -Oeresund <i>DK/S</i>	13.0	10	13	12		6		25	16	13	5
12 -Bornholm <i>DK/Baltic Sea Countries</i>	2.0		25	25				30	10	5	5
27 - Greece-Italy <i>GR/I*</i>	169.2		9	14		21	47		6	2	1
31 - Spain-Morocco <i>E/MRC*</i>	100.0		14	11		8	52	1	1	12	1
33 - Corsica-Sardinia <i>F/I*</i>	33.6		5	20	4	25	36	3	2	4	1
34 - Corsica-Tuscany <i>F/I**</i>	18.3	4	5	7		9	62	4	2	5	2
35 -NPC-Kent <i>F/UK</i>	44.2	12	19	19		21	16	4	4	3	2
36 -Rives-Manche <i>F/UK</i>	34.1		15	17		15	11	8	21	10	3
40 - Ireland-Wales <i>Ir/UK**</i>	83.3		10	11		4	63		8		4
44 - Italy-Albania <i>I/AL*</i>	79.9		8	2	3	17	39	2	10	18	1
45 -Gibraltar <i>UK/MRC</i>	0.7	10	27				20	33		10	
50 - Islands <i>SF/S</i>	4.0		29	15	19	17		2	6	3	9
51- Kvarken-MittSk <i>SF/S/N</i>	6.5	4	13	12	10		31		24		6
56 -Finland/Estonia <i>SF/EST</i>	6.0		41	8	18			29			4

Source: Operational Programmes as originally approved (up-dated from mid-term evaluation reports in the case of programmes covered in Table 3)

(\* Wholly Objective 1)

(\*\* Partly Objective 1)

### 2.1.1 Actions by Sector

An overall analysis of the sectoral allocations in all the maritime programmes is presented in **Table 2**. It shows a major concentration of funding on transport and communication infrastructure. This is related to the Objective 1 status of certain maritime border regions where improvements to infrastructure have been accorded top priority. In the case of three programmes more than a half of the total EU contribution has been allocated to transport and related infrastructure projects: 63% of the Ireland-Wales OP budget has been allocated to mainly transport projects on the East coast of Ireland, while similarly large proportions are allocated to transport projects in Corsica-Tuscany F/I (62%) and Andalucia E/MRC (52%). Non-Objective 1 border regions have much smaller financial allocations for “hard” infrastructure projects and therefore more emphasis on “soft” actions. Sectors<sup>2</sup> allocated at least 20% of the EU contribution in more than one programme are:

- **support to SMEs** with 41% in Finland-Estonia, and 25% or more in Islands, Storstrom-Ostholstein, Gibraltar, Fyn-Kern, and Bornholm;
- **environment** with 35% in Corsica-Sardinia and 21% or more in Greece-Italy and Kent-NPC;
- **education, culture and media** with 33% in Gibraltar, and over 25% in Bornholm, Finland-Estonia, Fyn-Kern, and Oeresund;
- **tourism** with 25% in Bornholm and at least 20% in Storstrøm-Ostholstein, Fyn-Kern and Corsica-Sardinia;
- **training and labour market** with 24% in Kvarken-MittSkandia and at least 20% in Rives-Manche and Fyn-Kern.

A balanced allocation across several sectors is evident in several programmes, notably in the integrated programmes for Oeresund, Islands, Kvarken-MittSkandia in the Northern group and the two Channel programmes of Kent-Nord Pas de Calais and Rives-Manche in the Western group.

A number of recently completed mid-term evaluations provide the basis for a reliable assessment of progress in the implementation of the programmes by sector. A geographical balance has been sought between the three geographical groups, but this has not been possible since no mid-term evaluations have yet been conducted for any of the Southern group of programmes. The analysis is therefore based on two programmes from each of the other two geographical groups, supplemented with information from other sources.

**Table 3** below provides financial commitments by sector and Operational Programme for the four selected programmes of Bornholm, Oeresund, Rives-Manche and Ireland-Wales. It

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<sup>2</sup> There is no standardised typology of sectors used in the various OPs. The analysis is therefore based on groupings of priorities and measures with similar descriptions in the OPs and/or LACE-TAP OP summaries.

shows that the programmes with the highest commitment rate, at the time of their mid-term evaluation, are Ireland-Wales (67%) and Oeresund (61%). Bornholm has achieved 47% and Rives-Manche 23% overall rate of financial commitment.

Information about other maritime programmes broadly confirms this pattern in overall commitments. The Islands and Kvarken-MittSkandia have rates similar or even higher than that for Oeresund, the rate for Kent-NPC's rate is similar to Bornholm and the rate for Corsica-Sardinia<sup>3</sup> is broadly similar to that for Rives-Manche (and the cross-border measures of the Greece-Italy programme have not yet been activated<sup>4</sup>).

An analysis of project implementation by sector shows that the relatively high commitment rate for the Ireland-Wales Programme is mainly due to projects on transport and communication infrastructure. The great majority of this funding was allocated to the Irish side of the maritime border (which has Objective 1 status) and projects were not required to have a cross-border partner. Commitment rates for "soft" actions were low (except for the measure on marine coastal environment) at the time of the mid-term evaluation but has since increased.

The Oeresund Programme demonstrates a more balanced project implementation record with a majority of funds already committed on mainly "soft" actions in the sectors of culture and media (78%), spatial planning (70%), economic development/tourism (53%), and education and training (51%).

Bornholm has committed 50% of its allocated budget on economic development/tourism and culture and media but has no commitment on education and training.

The Rives-Manche Programme has committed approximately one quarter of its budget with the best progress in the sectors of culture and media (62%) and environment/conservation (37%). The implementation record for the sectors with the largest allocations of EU funds has been slow to date - economic development/tourism (18%) and education and training (12%).

The overall picture is one of a well advanced state in the implementation of the Northern group of programmes, but with very few cooperation actions taking place in the Southern programmes. From the information available it is difficult to discern a sectoral pattern, but there are indications that cross-border actions in the field of education/culture/media are the most advanced, followed by spatial planning/studies, and environment/ conservation. In the case of economic development /tourism there are major variations, whilst the progress in training and labour market measures is generally slow.

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<sup>3</sup> The rate of commitments is much lower for Corsica than for Sardinia, emphasising the lack of joint actions.

<sup>4</sup> 9 measures in the GR/I OP with a total allocation of 53 MECU (EU contribution) are regarded as of "cross-border character", requiring implementation through common projects.

**Table 3: Financial commitment by sector versus allocation (EU funds) in MECU**

SECTOR	Bornholm		Oeresund		Rives-Manche		Ireland/Wales	
	Total allocation	Commitment rate %	Total allocation	Commitment rate %	Total allocation	Commitment rate %	Total allocation	Commitment rate %
Spatial Planning and studies			1.4	70				
Economic Development/Tourism	1	50	3.3	53	11.3	18	12.6	14
Culture, Media	0.6	50	3.3	78	2.4	62	4.5	16
Education, Training and Labour Market	0.2	0	2.2	51	7.3	12	6.4	22
Environment/Conservation			0.2		5.1	37	3.4	44
Transport/Communications/ Infrastructure					3.9	0	55.6	94
Cross-border Cooperation Facilities	0.1	40	1.8	45	3.2	25		
Technical assistance	0.1	100	0.8		0.9	5	0.8	
<b>Total Commitment</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>83.3</b>	<b>67</b>

*Source: Mid-term evaluation reports: Ireland/Wales, May 1997; Bornholm, March 1998; Oeresund, March 1998; Rives-Manche, June 1998*

### 2.1.2 Nature of Actions

An analysis of programme implementation shows that the following types of actions are evident in maritime programmes:

- *stand-alone* actions with no partner organisation on the other side of the border;
- *joint* actions with partners on both sides of the border and with *common* and/or *parallel* implementation.

***Stand-alone*** actions, where project implementation is confined to one side of the border, are prevalent in the least developed border regions with Objective 1 status<sup>5</sup> and in “hard” actions. For example, the Ireland-Wales programme and Spain-Morocco programme have allocated 63% and 52% of their programme funding respectively to address “missing links” through improvements of their transport and communication infrastructures. The vast majority of such infrastructure projects are stand-alone projects which do not require a partner organisation or counterpart parallel action on the other side of the border. Moreover, they tend to be components of programmes with limited integration (eg they form a separate sub-programme in the Ireland-Wales programme).

An example of a stand alone action in the Spain/Morocco programme is the remodelling and widening of the port in the Spanish town of Algericas to cater for a greater number of ferries. In the Ireland-Wales programme a major project has been the building of a new passenger terminal at Dun Laoghaire and better connections to the rail and road network.

Similarly, stand-alone actions are the norm in the case of external maritime programmes even in the case of “soft” actions. For example, the Baltic House project in the Bornholm Programme provides services to local Danish organisations who would like to do business with the Baltic Sea countries.

In practically all the programmes on internal EU borders the criteria for project selection under “soft” measures require a cross-border ‘partnership’ with project partners and funding from both sides of the border. On the one hand, this has ensured ***joint*** actions and a much stronger cross-border dimension in projects approved under Interreg IIA than was the case under Interreg I. On the other hand, it is difficult to assess accurately the intensity of cross-border cooperation within the wide range of cross-border partnerships, ie to distinguish between “parallel” and “common” actions, and quantify their relative importance.

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<sup>5</sup> Differences in Objective status and funding (eg Ireland-Wales) and in funding programmes (eg Phare, Tacis, MEDA on external borders) inhibit further the development of joint actions.

The mid-term evaluation report of the Rives-Manche Programme shows that the majority of projects consisted of *parallel* actions, with elements of small-scale common actions in some cases, e.g. workshops. However, interviews with project managers also showed that cross-border partnership at project level is regarded of central importance and proving successful. The most prevalent activities have a strong networking and cooperation emphasis, including exchange of information, study visits, seminar/workshops and exchange of staff. These tend to be the main characteristics of inter-regional cooperation projects.

The Oeresund Programme has a wide range and relatively balanced distribution of projects. The mid-term evaluation report of the programme points out that the cross-border criteria for project partnership and the active involvement of regional/local actors on both sides of the border have largely been met by approved projects.

There are several examples<sup>6</sup> of projects involving predominantly *common* actions from the Oeresund and other programmes:

- the creation of a cross-border labour market council in Oeresund;
- an accredited training project for service personnel on ferries operating between Ireland and Wales entitled *Celtic Knots: Ferrying towards Excellence*;
- an environmental project called *Green Bridge over Kvarken* aimed at improving environmental protection in the Kvarken area;
- a resource management project in Kent-NPC entitled *Biodiversity and Cartography of Marine Resources* in the Dover Straits;
- a project (*Fit for Quality*) aiming to provide SMEs with know-how in the field of quality and environmental management in Storstrøm-Ostholstein.

## **2.2 Programme Development and Management Structures**

This sub-section considers existing cross-border structures and their functions in developing and managing Interreg IIA Operational Programmes. It draws on the findings of the LACE-TAP Working Document *Institutional Aspects of Cross-Border Cooperation*, which included an assessment of the institutional aspects of all 59 Interreg IIA OPs.

The main institutional characteristics of maritime programmes for the eleven internal EU maritime borders and the five external maritime borders covered by Interreg IIA are presented in **Tables 4 and 5**, below<sup>7</sup>:

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<sup>6</sup> For a fuller description see the LACE-TAP Background Document on Cross-Border Cooperation on Maritime Borders.

<sup>7</sup> See the LACE-TAP Discussion Document on Institutional Aspects of Cross-Border Cooperation for a fuller description.

- **Programme development** covering
  - the preparation by regional/local partners, or with their involvement of a cross-border concept/strategy and Operational Programme.
- **Technical management** concerning three stages in the project development/approval process:
  - development;
  - assessment (appraisal);
  - selection and approval.
- **Financial management** involving:
  - use of a common bank account for EU contributions;
- **Existing cross-border structures** with:
  - fully or partial responsibility for Interreg IIA management.

In the case of the *internal maritime border programmes* there are major differences, broadly corresponding to the geographic groupings.

All five programmes in the Northern group (Fyn-Kern; Storstrøm-Ostholstein; Oeresund, Åland and Kvarken-MittSkandia (S/F)) have permanent, regional/local level cross-border structures which have been responsible for practically all technical aspects of Interreg IIA programme development and management. With the exception of Oeresund, all these programmes have a common bank account for the EU contributions.

This contrasts with the three Southern European programmes (Greece-Italy, Corsica-Sardinia, Corsica-Tuscany) which are totally undeveloped in terms of cross-border institutional arrangements, and there are no signs of any major bottom-up initiatives to create permanent regional/local level structures.

An intermediate case is represented by the three Western European programmes (Ireland-Wales, Rives-Manche and Kent-NPC) where specific cross-border programme management arrangements have been created for the purposes of Interreg. These arrangements do not involve common structures, but instead the coordinated operation of the competent central and regional/local government authorities and social partners from either side of the border, through joint committees and working groups. In this way programme development and the technical aspects of programme management are operated with a high degree of cross-border cooperation.

Under Interreg IIA there are no cross-border structures and procedures in use for programme development and management for the *external maritime programmes*. The only exception is

the Swedish/Norwegian component of the Kvarken/MittSkandia programme (SF/S/N), where the Kvarken Council has responsibility for the programme management. However, this is a programme of a mixed nature, encompassing both internal and external EU borders and both land and sea borders.

For certain borders there are existing cross-border structures or new initiatives which have not yet been involved in Interreg IIA management. An example is the “Four Corner Cooperation” between Bornholm, South-East Skåne, Rügen and Swinoujście. There are also the Joint Programming and Monitoring Committees for Phare CBC which have cross-border membership (the Baltic Cooperation Committee, and the JPMC for AL/I). Overall, in the case of the Southern group of external maritime programmes there are no initiatives to create local/regional cross-border structures.

In general terms there are highly developed and fully operational cross-border structures and procedures in the Northern group of programmes and a total absence from the Southern group. The Western group of programmes occupies a middle position, with all three programmes having achieved a considerable degree of joint management without the creation of specific cross-border structures.

**Table 4: Institutional Aspects - Maritime Programmes (Internal Borders)**

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES	PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT	TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	CROSS-BORDER STRUCTURES
	Common development of concept/strategy and programme by regional partners or with their involvement	Common procedure for project development √ appraisal √√ selection √√√	Common bank account for EU contribution	Existing cross-border structure with responsibility for Interreg IIA
9 - Fyn/K.E.R.N <i>DK/D</i>	4	√ √√ √√√	4	
10 - Storstrøm/ Ostholstein <i>DK/D</i>	4	√ √√ √√√	4	4
11 - Øresund <i>DK/S</i>	4	√ √√ √√√		4
27 - Greece/Italy <i>GR/I</i>				
33 - Corsica/Sardinia <i>F/I</i>				
34 - Corsica/Tuscany <i>F/I</i>				
35 - NPC/Kent <i>F/UK</i>	4	√ √√ (partly) √√√		
36 - Rives- Manche <i>F/UK</i>	4	√ √√ (partly) √√√		
40- Ireland/Wales <i>Irl/UK</i>	4	√ √√ (partly) √√√ (only soft projects)		
50 - Islands <i>SF/S</i>	4	√ √√ √√√	4	4
51-Kvarken/MittSkandia <i>SF/S/N</i>	4	√ √√ √√√ (1)	4	4

**Table 5: Institutional Aspects - Maritime Programmes (External Borders)**

OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES	PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT	TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT	FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	CROSS-BORDER STRUCTURES
	Common development of concept/strategy and operational programme by regional partners or with their involvement	Common procedure for Project development √ appraisal √√ selection √√√	Common bank account for EU contribution	Existing cross-border structure With responsibility for Interreg IIA
12 - Bornholm <i>DK/Baltic Sea Countries</i>	4	√ √√ √√√ (2)		
31 - Spain/Morocco <i>E/MRC</i>				
44 - Italy/Albania <i>I/AL</i>				
45 - Gibraltar <i>UK/MRC</i>				
56 - Finland/Estonia <i>SF/EST</i>	4			

(1) not for external border *S/N*

(2) internal borders only *DK/S*

### **3. TOWARDS INTERREG III: CONCLUSIONS**

#### **3.1 General Conclusions on the Current Situation**

Interreg IIA introduced a large number of new maritime programmes, in some cases on borders lacking the tradition and experience of cross-border cooperation. Consequently, many of the programmes have, until recently, shown slow progress in generating, approving and implementing cross-border projects. This raised concerns that the extent of genuine cross-border cooperation which can be achieved will remain low, and indeed below the level of EU resources allocated to many programmes.

The mid-term evaluation studies completed to date have in part dispelled this concern. There are now maritime programmes with established and well-functioning cross-border structures and procedures, which are achieving substantial levels of cross-border projects. Moreover the approved projects tend to involve genuine cross-border partnerships, with the notable exception of “hard” measures in the internal programmes and generally all measures in the external programmes.

Specific programmes can be classified broadly into three groups in accordance with their overall performance.

In the first category - the most advanced maritime border regions and programmes – are those of the Northern Group, which have benefited from the long traditional and experience of Nordic cooperation, and have faced fewer challenges during implementation due to the small financial size of the programmes concerned. They show high levels of cross-border actions and, with few exceptions, have permanent cross-border cooperation structures managing the technical aspects of the programmes and partly the financial ones, in an integrated way. For all practical purposes maritime cross-border regions like Oeresund and the SF/S Islands are in a similar position to many<sup>8</sup> of the internal land borders.

In the second category – the least advanced – are the maritime programmes for the Southern group of border regions. In practically all cases there are negligible numbers of joint actions and a total lack of cross-border management structures.

The third is an intermediate category occupied by the Western group of border regions and programmes. Although they lack specific cross-border structures, they have achieved well functioning joint structures, and improving levels of cross-border actions.

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<sup>8</sup> They cannot however match the degree of cross-border integration achieved by the Euregios on the German and Dutch borders, as they have not yet achieved full integration of financial management.

### **3.2 Maritime Cooperation Programmes under Interreg III**

Assuming that trans-European cooperation under Interreg III will be subdivided into three strands – cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation - the key issue is under which of these strands should the maritime cooperation be supported.

Some of the maritime borders (eg those with a similar degree of integration to internal land borders) are already meeting the minimum conditions envisaged for Interreg IIIA, namely: common preparation of smaller regional/local level operational programmes focused on “soft” actions<sup>9</sup>; and programme management by a common cross-border structure which will also be the recipient of common allocation of the EU contribution for the whole of the OP. Practically all the regions in the Southern group are far from meeting such conditions.

However, the final decision of the European Commission regarding guidelines on eligibility of regions for inclusion in Interreg IIIA should be based on a number of transparent criteria, which will take into account not only the current position of each maritime border, but also its potential for genuine cross-border cooperation. It is suggested that these criteria should reflect the following crucial aspects:

- closeness influenced by costs, frequency and time of transport connections;
- existence or potential for development of cross-border networks of contacts and linkage points;
- common interests (eg joint socio-cultural traditions and economic issues) and problems (eg sea pollution, unemployment) which need to be addressed on a cross border basis<sup>10</sup>;
- existence of jointly prepared cross-border concepts/strategies;
- existence of a critical mass of cross-border projects already implemented through “common” actions, and availability of such project proposals for the future;
- existence of cross-border structures or potential for new ones with programme development and management capacity within the time horizon of the introduction of Interreg III.

It is expected that some of the maritime border regions will not meet these criteria and should therefore be included into the other strands of Interreg III: either B (transnational cooperation) or C (inter-regional cooperation). In either case the Interreg guidelines will need to specifically accommodate the needs and characteristics of the maritime border regions. For instance, if included in IIIB it will be appropriate to define sub-programmes or measures concerning maritime cooperation for a group of maritime border regions, within the OP of the wider IIIB eligible area. Similarly, if included in IIIC it will be appropriate to define separate multi-sectoral and multi-annual inter-regional cooperation programmes, specifically for

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<sup>9</sup> plus small infrastructure projects

<sup>10</sup> this may suggest a more restricted definition of the eligible areas, concentrating on the coastal part of the region

groups of neighbouring maritime border areas (eg those covered by the “B7 Islands Cooperation” and the “Four Corner Cooperation” in the Baltic Sea).

Special attention will be required on external EU borders. It is essential that any designation of an EU maritime border region, as eligible under any of the three strands of Interreg III, should be accompanied by the designation of its partner region(s) in non-EU countries, together with an explicit definition of the EU funding programme(s) and procedures under which the maritime cooperation actions of the non-EU partner will be financed.

*Lace 1196*