



NORDREGIO
Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

Crossing Borders

Linkages between EU policy for territorial cooperation and Nordic cross-border cooperation

Lisa Hörnström and Aslı Tepecik Diş

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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland. *Nordic co-operation* has firm traditions in politics, the economy, and culture. It plays an important role in European and international collaboration, and aims at creating a strong Nordic community in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation seeks to safeguard Nordic and regional interests and principles in the global community. Common Nordic values help the region solidify its position as one of the world's most innovative and competitive.

The Nordic Council

is a forum for co-operation between the Nordic parliaments and governments. The Council consists of 87 parliamentarians from the Nordic countries. The Nordic Council takes policy initiatives and monitors Nordic co-operation. Founded in 1952.

The Nordic Council of Ministers

is a forum of co-operation between the Nordic governments. The Nordic Council of Ministers implements Nordic co-operation. The prime ministers have the overall responsibility. Its activities are co-ordinated by the Nordic ministers for co-operation, the Nordic Committee for co-operation and portfolio ministers. Founded in 1971.

Nordregio – Nordic Centre for Spatial Development

conducts strategic research in the fields of planning and regional policy. Nordregio is active in research and dissemination and provides policy relevant knowledge, particularly with a Nordic and European comparative perspective. Nordregio was established in 1997 by the Nordic Council of Ministers, and is built on over 40 years of collaboration.

Stockholm, Sweden, 2013

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Preface

Cooperation across national borders is a means to enhance regional development and growth in border areas. Institutions, authorities and organisations on both sides of the border see that there is much to gain from cooperation and, sometimes, that it is even necessary to cooperate. Cross-border cooperation is thus naturally an important part of Nordic cooperation on regional policy. The Nordic Council of Ministers provides funding for 12 cross-border committees in different parts of the Nordic Countries. EU funding for cross-border and transnational cooperation projects through the European Territorial Cooperation programmes (also called INTERREG) also has a significant impact on Nordic cross-border cooperation. In 2009, a Nordic working group was set up with the aim of functioning as a platform for exchange of knowledge, especially when it comes to the removal of border obstacles, between the Nordic cross-border committees, national authorities and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

In the mandate formulated for the Nordic working group on Globalisation and cross-border cooperation the following is stated: *“Nordic cross-border cooperation has been and still is an important prerequisite for the relatively high level of Nordic participation in the INTERREG programmes. Experiences and perspectives from INTERREG project, in many cases prepared and run by Nordic cross-border committees, form an important source of knowledge for Nordic and European integration*

in the future. What is the role of cross-border regions in preparation and implementation of INTERREG projects? What do the INTERREG projects bring to Nordic cooperation and vice versa?”

In this report, the linkages between EU Cohesion policy focusing in particular on the European Territorial Cooperation Objective (ETC), the Nordic policy for cross-border cooperation and the Nordic cross-border committees, will be described and analysed. The target groups of the report include readers already familiar with the policy instruments used, both on the EU level and in the Nordic context, to enhance cross-border and territorial cooperation and those that are less familiar with the “world” of cross-border and territorial cooperation.

The report was written by Lisa Hörnström and Asli Tepecik Diş. The authors would like to thank Harry Ekestam for his most valuable quality assurance of sections 2, 3 and 5. We also would like to thank Ole Damsgaard, Lisbeth Greve Harbo, Lukas Smas and Lisa Van Well for insightful comments and suggestions at different stages of the writing process. The authors also would like to thank the members of the Nordic Working group on globalisation and cross-border cooperation for initiating the project.

Stockholm February 2013

1. Introduction

Transnational and cross-border cooperation play a central role both in EU Cohesion policy and in the Nordic cooperation process. The objectives and priorities of EU Cohesion policy and of the Nordic cooperation are interlinked via priorities identified on the national level and can therefore be considered as closely connected.

The European Territorial Co-operation Objective (ETC), one of the three overall objectives of EU cohesion policy, and the programmes initiated to reach this objective (INTERREG programmes) have already had a significant impact on cooperation, exchange and networking across borders in the Nordic countries. The Nordic countries and autonomous territories which are not EU members, Norway, Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Greenland are, for obvious reasons, not affected in the same way as the Nordic EU members. Norwegian regions and municipalities are however affected by the ETC objective since they are eligible for funding from several of the Cross-Border Cooperation programmes. In the programme period 2007-2013 all the Nordic non-EU members are eligible for funding through the Northern Periphery programme and Norway is also eligible for funding from the North Sea programme (see map 1).

The aim of this report is to describe and analyse the linkages between the ETC Objective, the objective of the Nordic Council of Ministers to promote cross-border cooperation and the Nordic cross-border committees.

The following questions will guide the description and the analysis that follows:

- What are the key objectives, instruments and funding mechanisms of EU Cohesion policy when it comes to cross-border and transnational cooperation?
- What are the main objectives, instruments and funding mechanisms on the Nordic level when it comes to cross-border cooperation?
- What similarities are there between the objectives of the EU programmes on cross-border and transnational cooperation, Nordic cooperation in this area and the Nordic cross-border committees? Where are the differences?

- Have the EU cross-border cooperation programmes implied a new role for the Nordic cross-border committees? In what way?

1.1 Disposition of the report

In the second section of the report, the overall objectives of EU Cohesion policy in regards to cross-border and transnational cooperation and the different strategies and instruments used to enhance territorial cooperation will be outlined. Thereafter, the priorities of Nordic cooperation with a focus on cross-border cooperation will be defined. In the fourth section, the linkages between the ETC objective, the objective of the Nordic Council of Ministers' focus on cross-border cooperation and the Nordic cross-border committees will be illustrated by analysing two cases; the Kvarken Council and the TRUST Hedmark Dalarna committee (see map 2). This will be followed by a section analysing the more general similarities and differences between EU policy for cross-border and territorial cooperation and the Nordic objectives in this area. In the last section a set of conclusions will be drawn from the principal findings of the analysis undertaken.

1.2 Cooperation across national borders – a background

Many European cross-border regions have a common identity based on various historical, political and cultural features and sometimes also on a common language. European integration and the successive enlargement of the EU have contributed to restoring and strengthening links across national borders in Europe.

The long tradition of intergovernmental cooperation in the Nordic countries in combination with well-developed links between local and regional authorities across national borders has shaped the basis for stable cross-border cooperation (e.g. Greve Harbo, 2010). More or less formalised cooperation and exchange across the borders has existed for several de-

ades but in recent years the level of cooperation has increased and changed in character. Some of the most important driving-forces behind this development are the significant levels of investment made in infrastructure (the building of the Öresund bridge is the most obvious example), and also, the focus on cross-border cooperation in EU Cohesion Policy. Cross-border and territorial cooperation can be considered as one of the main elements of the European integration process and has thus been identified as an important instrument in the promotion of territorial cohesion (EU Green paper on Cohesion Policy, 2008). In cross-border areas there is a daily exchange between people, companies and organisations. People are commuting across the border to work and study and thus their daily lives are constantly affected by the obstacles created by the national border: differences in labour-market rules, tax systems, education systems and social insurance systems. Companies operating across the borders and with employees who are citizens in the other country are also affected by these border obstacles.

Cross-border cooperation is an important instrument in the enhancement of territorial cohesion in practice since its aim is to address common prob-

lems and exploit unused potential across the borders. Cross-border cooperation also has the objective of reducing the adverse effects that are caused by borders which include administrative, legal and physical barriers. Local and regional authorities and organisations cooperate across borders to promote territorial development by improving infrastructure and public transport, and by managing and monitoring common cultural and natural heritage. Cross-border cooperation can also be a way of compensating for a lack of critical mass, e.g. by agreeing upon common welfare service solutions or creating cross-border clusters of companies and research institutions in order to enhance innovation activities. Furthermore, through the joint management of programmes and projects, cross-border cooperation enhances organisational and policy learning, while contributing to the removal of border obstacles and thus improves the living conditions for people living within a cross-border region. Cross-border cooperation creates and strengthens mutual understanding and can in the long run also increase the level of trust across borders (e.g. Hörnström, Smed Olsen and Van Well, 2012).

2. Cross-border cooperation as an instrument of EU Cohesion policy

Territorial cohesion is an essential part of EU Cohesion policy¹⁾, serving as a tool for the coordination of regional, environmental, agricultural, transport and other sector policies, ensuring that sector policies acquire added value by forming coherent packages, taking account of where they take effect, the opportunities and constraints there, now and in the future.

In the ESPON BSR-Temo project, it is stated that there is no precise common definition of the concept of territorial cohesion” but that the main aspects can be summarised as follows:

- Territorial cohesion as a measure for enforcing territorial aspects in general; and in economic matters, social planning and decision-making in particular,
- Territorial cohesion as a method of planning and development, which considers the territorial capital (potential) of places, settlements and regions, and their interrelations,
- Territorial cohesion as an addition to economic and social cohesion, to consider also areas with geographic disadvantages (like mountain areas, islands, areas with a severe climate, geographically remote areas or border areas). (ESPON BSR-Temo, Inception Report, version 06/06/2012, p.5)

Thus, EU Cohesion policy has the most explicit spatial dimension of all EU policies and thus instead of being sector-based, it involves the development of spatially targeted policies for regions and places. The added value of having a territorial dimension in policy development is underpinned by a process led by a process of intergovernmental cooperation between Member States, with the aim of sharing best practices and learn-

ing from each other.

The overall ambition of EU Cohesion policy is to ensure balanced development across all territories of the EU. EU Cohesion policy addresses many significant spatial development perspectives that have a cross-border or transnational character, affecting an area cutting across national and regional borders (i.e. water management, air pollution and transport infrastructure across national borders). Regions seek comparative ideas and an exchange of knowledge on how their problems within their own jurisdictions could be improved. This calls for new forms of cooperation to improve land use planning, the sharing of common challenges and the management of joint problems. Thus, cross-border and territorial cooperation are important instruments in EU Cohesion policy.

The role of institutional factors and capacity building has long been considered as an important prerequisite in promoting territorial development. As expressed in the Barca Report (2009): *“It is widely agreed that both formal and informal institutions are a prerequisite for a place to make full use of its potential”* (p.22). The Barca report basically states that all regions should be able to realise their full endogenous potential including all the actors within the region, in improving their economic development. Here, the role of subsidiarity is highly emphasised. The subsidiarity principle refers to managing the re-allocation of tasks at the most appropriate level.

It is clear that EU Cohesion policy has a spatial scope even though territorial cohesion is a term vague enough for each Member State to fill with its own content (Van Well, 2011). The term territorial cohesion is used and interpreted throughout the EU and its member states by applying varied meanings. The Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion started a debate among all member states, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, research institutions as well as individual citizens on how to develop a common understanding on the concept of territorial cohesion (CEC, European Commission, 2008). The consultations undertaken on the Green Paper revealed that there was an emerging

1) In this report it is neither possible nor necessary to give a complete overview of EU Cohesion policy or to cover the academic and policy debate on the concept of territorial cohesion. The intention of this section of the paper is to provide a description of EU policy for territorial cooperation as a framework that permits an analysis of the linkages with Nordic cross-border cooperation. To read more about the concept of territorial cohesion and how it is perceived in different territorial settings and on different policy levels see for example; Van Well, 2011; Van Well, 2012; Nordregio News Issue 1, Oct 2011; ESPON BSR-Temo, Inception Report, version 06/06/2012 and Faludi, 2010.

shared vision on what territorial cohesion means: the common territorial knowledge base, the importance of territorial cooperation, the cross-sectoral coordination aspects and multi-level governance.

2.1 Objectives of EU Cohesion policy

While territorial cohesion was implicit in EU Cohesion Policy from the outset, it was not always explicitly referred to in the 2007-2013 Cohesion Policy Instruments, but subsequently became an important goal during the implementation of the programmes (Nordregio 2009; Van Well 2012). For the programme period 2007-2013 the following three objectives for EU Cohesion policy were set out:

- Convergence – solidarity among regions
- Regional competitiveness
- European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)

Programmes set up to attain the objectives are financed through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund. In this report the focus will be on the third objective, European Territorial Cooperation and on the strategies outlined and programmes established to attain the objective. Financing for all projects within the European Territorial Cooperation objective comes solely from the ERDF.

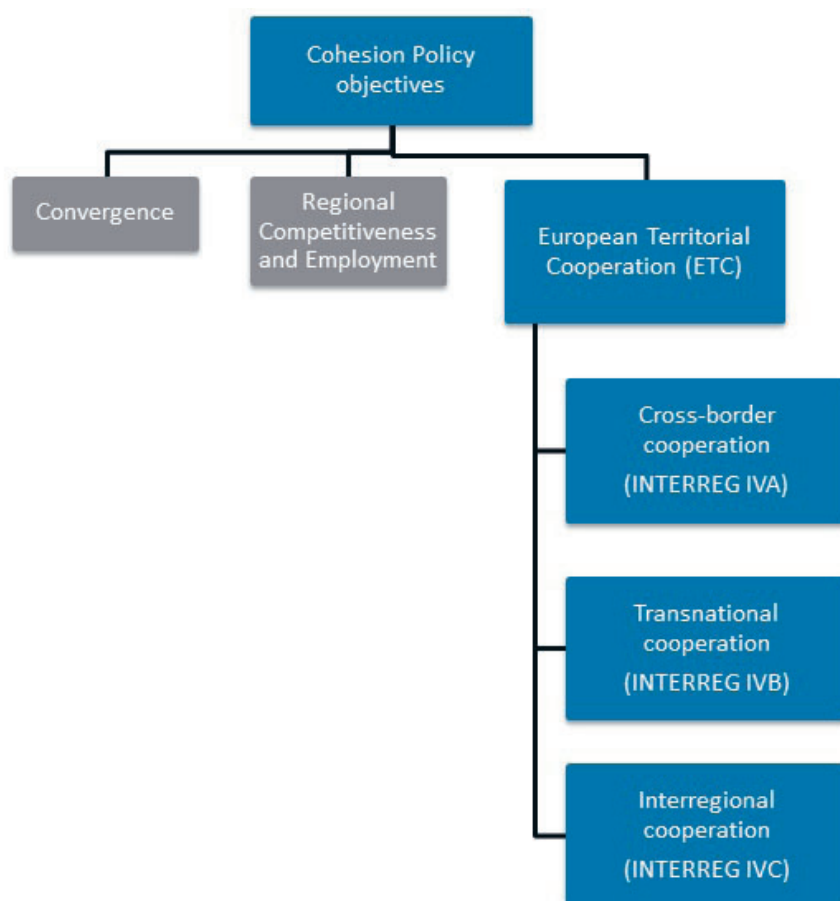


Figure 1: The three objectives of EU Cohesion Policy 2007-2013 and the three strands of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective

2.2 European Territorial Cooperation objective (current period 2007-2013)

The EU distinguishes between three types (strands) of territorial cooperation (see also figure 1):

■ **Cross-border Cooperation**²⁾ (A) supports regions that are located adjacently on both sides of an internal and/or external EU border and helps them to develop into strong economic and social poles. Entrepreneurship, joint management of natural resources, improving links between urban and rural areas as well as access to transport and communication networks, joint use of infrastructure, building competence, improving employment opportunities, increasing community interaction, culture and social affairs are some of the actions that are encouraged.³⁾

■ **Transnational Cooperation** (B) aims at the promotion of cooperation at a larger regional scale for instance around sea basins (e.g. Baltic Sea Region, North Sea, Mediterranean and Atlantic Area) or over mountain ranges (i.e. Alpine Space). Here the objective is to address the common challenges that include flood management, transport and communication corridors, international business, research linkages and urban development among others. Outermost and island regions (i.e. Indian Ocean, Caribbean Area) are given special attention.⁴⁾

■ **Interregional Cooperation** (C) aims at assisting regional and local actors across Europe to exchange experiences enabling them to better contribute to the EU's strategies on growth, jobs and sustainable development while aiming to reduce discrepancies between the less advanced and the most advanced regions by bringing them together in the various policy fields, for instance in relation to environmental issues, innovation and demographic change.⁵⁾

There is however an important difference between transnational cooperation on the one hand and cross-border cooperation on the other. Transnational cooperation aims at covering wider territories or macro-regions, e.g. the Baltic Sea Region, whereas cross-border cooperation has a narrower geographical scope, typically cooperation in a border area between two (or several) countries. There are 8 programmes within the Cross-Border Cooperation strand (INTERREG IVA) and 3 programmes within the Transnational Cooperation strand (INTERREG IVB) in the period 2007-2013 in which Nordic regions are eligible (see map 1). The priority areas of each of these programmes are outlined in table 1.

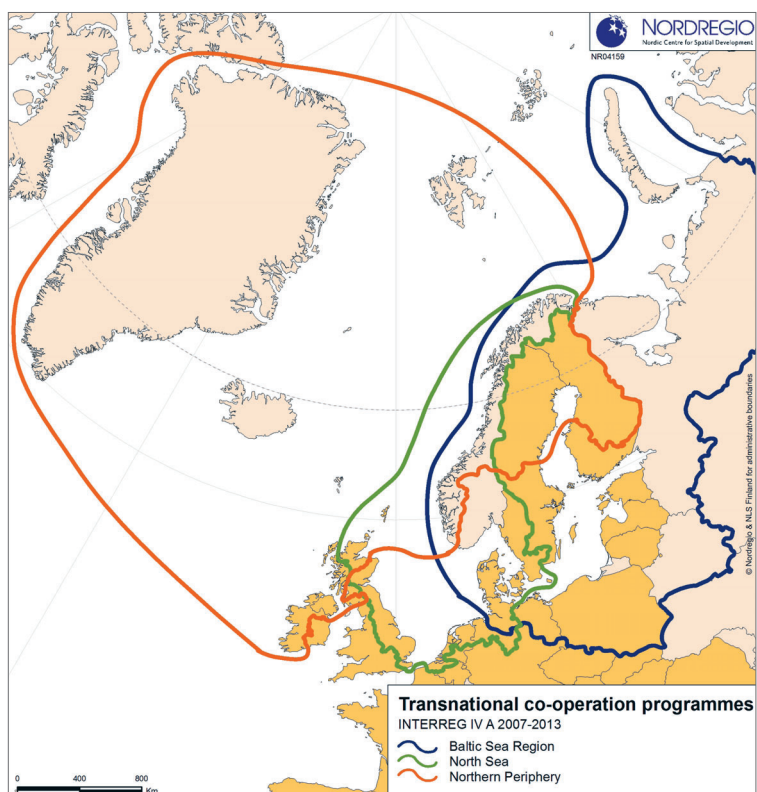
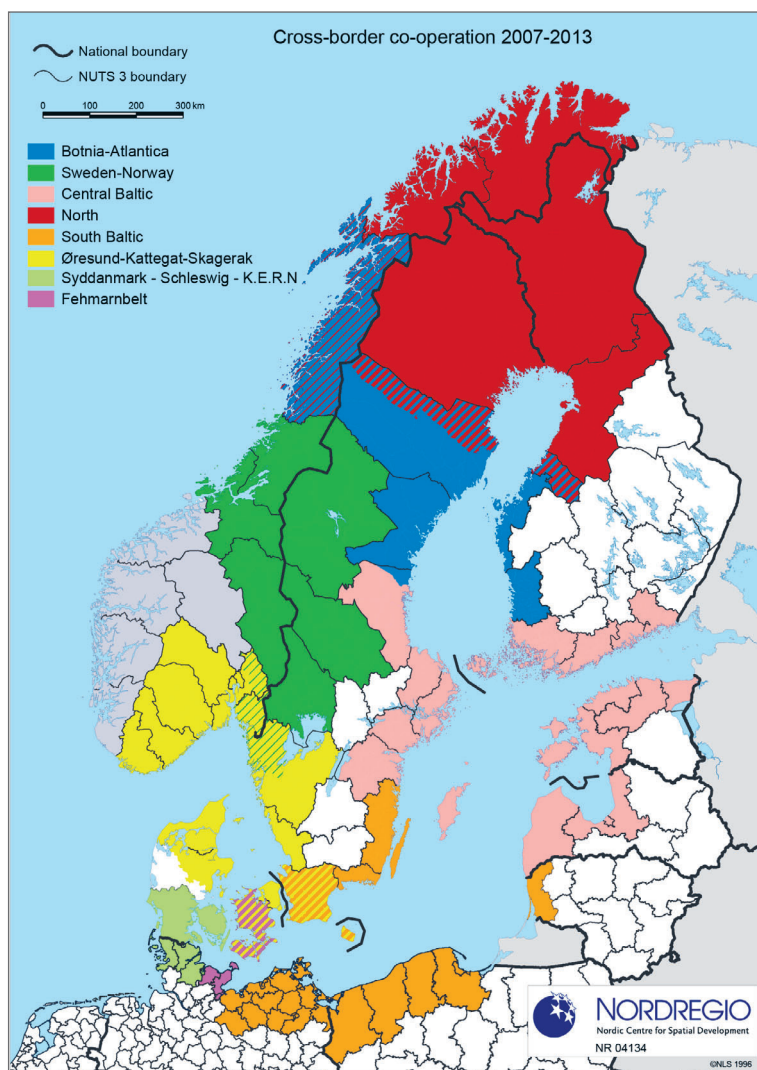
The EU also supports cross-border cooperation on its external borders, e.g. through the cross-border element of its European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). ENPI CBC is an external policy instrument which incorporates some of the elements of Cohesion policy. Nordic countries, in particular Finland, participate in a few ENPI CBC programmes (see Map 1).

2) To avoid confusion Cross-border Cooperation as a strand of the Territorial Cooperation Objective is written in this report in capital letters, while more general cross-border cooperation is written in lower case.

3) A list of examples can be seen at: <http://www.interact-eu.net/cbcprogrammes/18>, Accessed 2012.11.28

4) A full list of transnational cooperation programmes can be seen at: http://www.interact-eu.net/transnational_programmes/110, Accessed 2012.11.28

5) <http://www.interreg4c.net/> Accessed 2012.11.29



Map 1: Nordic/Baltic ETC programme areas 2007-2013

Programme	Priority areas	Total programme budget
CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMMES		
North	Development of trade and business	€ 57 000 000
Main programme Nord and the sub- programme Sápmi.	Research and education Regional functionality and identity Sub-programme Sápmi – borderless development	
Botnia-Atlantica	Structures for cooperation Growth through cooperation	€ 61 000 000
Sweden-Norway	Economic growth Local attractiveness	€ 68 000 000
Three “regions” or sub-programmes: The Nordic Green Belt, Inner Scandinavia and Borderless Cooperation.		
Central Baltic	Safe and healthy environment Economically competitive and innovative region	€ 136 000 000
Three sub-programmes: Central Baltic programme, Southern Finland-Estonia sub-programme and the Archipelago and island sub-programme	Attractive and dynamic societies	
South Baltic	Economic competitiveness Attractiveness and common identity	€ 75 000 000
Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak	Increased sustainable economic growth An integrated region Increased daily integration	€ 223 000 000
Syddanmark-Schleswig-K.E.R.N	Reinforcement and consolidation of the region's knowledge-based economy Development of framework conditions in the area Day-to-day cooperation and functional integration in the border region Technical assistance	€ 69 000 000
Femahrbelt	Business community, innovation, maritime development and the environment Cross-border structures and human resources	€ 31 000 000
TRANSNATIONAL PROGRAMMES		
Baltic Sea Region	Fostering of innovations across the Baltic Sea Region External and internal accessibility of the Baltic Sea Region Management of the Baltic Sea as a common resource Promoting attractive and competitive cities and regions	€ 293 000 000
Northern Periphery	Promoting innovation and competitiveness in remote and peripheral areas. Sustainable development of natural and community resources.	€ 59 000 000
North Sea	To increase the overall level of innovation taking place across the North Sea Region. To enhance the quality of the environment in the North Sea Region To improve the accessibility of places in the North Sea Region To deliver sustainable and competitive communities	€ 134 000 000

Table 1: Nordic/Baltic Cross-border and transnational programmes 2007-2013: priority areas and total programme budget

2.3 European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)

EGTC is an EU legal instrument established in 2006 with the aim of creating better conditions for cross-border cooperation in the EU. The Committee of the Regions was the main driver behind the establishment of the EGTC instrument but the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) also played a key role in the process (Hörnström, 2011). The partners in an EGTC can be regional and local authorities, member states, associations and other public bodies. EGTC makes it possible to create a legal entity across national borders. The establishment of an EGTC must be approved by the national governments of each country from which there are partners. As of 2011 there were 15 such EGTCs established throughout the EU but this far none have been established in the Nordic countries.

Examples of EGTCs already in place include the *Euro-metropole Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai*, cross-border cooperation arrangement between three cities in Northern France and Belgium, the EGTC *Hospital de Cerdanya* which fosters cooperation between regions in Southern France and Northern Spain focusing on the management of a hospital and EGTC *Galicia-Norte de Portugal* which is a cooperative arrangement between Galicia in Spain and the North of Portugal (see Hörnström, 2011). These examples show that an EGTC can be established with the purpose of dealing with a single question that is of concern to actors on both sides of the border, as in the case of *Hospital de Cerdanya*. It can also be established with a focus on more general cooperation within many different fields, as in the case of *Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai* and *Galicia-Norte de Portugal*.

2.4 Macro-regional strategies

In June 2009 the European Commission presented a document on a strategy for the Baltic Sea macro-region which was adopted by the Swedish presidency in October 2009. The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is the first comprehensive strategy, covering several Community policies, to target a 'macro-region'. The EUSBSR is "*thought to be a pioneer document in the work of the European Commission towards greater territorial cohesion*" (Dubois *et al.*, 2009). The strategy aims to meet common challenges and create a balanced development within the larger region through cooperation. The idea behind the EUSBSR is

to develop common goals for the macro-region but without adding new funds, new legislation or any new institutions. A number of priority areas are listed in an Action Plan and these should guide local, regional and national stakeholders in the implementation of the strategy. The implementation of the strategy is to be funded by existing financing instruments, i.e. programmes under the three objectives of EU Cohesion Policy, including the ETC objective. It is also the European Commission's ambition that the EUSBSR serves as a pilot case for the development of other macro-regional strategies in Europe such as those for the Danube and North Sea regions.

2.5 Preparation for the next programming period 2014-2020

In October 2011 the EU Commission presented the legislative package for the programming period 2014-2020, including a general regulation with common provisions for the five European Structural and Investment Funds. In the new programming period greater thematic concentration within the programmes will be required. The following 11 themes contributing to the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth were formulated in the Commission's proposal: (1) Research, technological development and innovation, (2) Information and communication technologies, (3) Competitiveness of SMEs, (4) Shift towards a low-carbon economy, (5) Climate change adaptation and risk prevention and management, (6) Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency, (7) Sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructure, (8) Employment and support for labour mobility, (9) Social inclusion and combating poverty, (10) Education, skills and life-long learning and (11) Institutional capacity and an efficient public administration (Commission Staff Working Document, 2012).

During autumn 2012, national and regional authorities in the Nordic countries started the drafting of new ETC programmes on the basis of the draft documents. The priorities of transnational and cross-border programmes will need to be coordinated both on the national level with the national programmes and across national borders in relation to each of the programming areas. All of the Nordic/Baltic programmes must also take the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) into consideration. In addition, the financial crisis has affected regions in different ways and this development needs also to be taken into consideration (see also Hörnström, Smed Olsen and Van Well, 2012).

3. Nordic focus on cross-border co-operation

Cross-border cooperation has a long tradition in the Nordic countries but the prerequisites for cooperation have changed due to new investments in infrastructure, changing consumption patterns and changes in attitudes when it comes to working and living in neighbouring countries. In addition, the introduction of the ETC programmes for cross-border and transnational cooperation in the Nordic countries when Sweden and Finland became members of the EU have had a crucial impact on cross-border cooperation in the Nordic context (e.g. Hanell *et al.*, 2002).

Perhaps the most obvious example of increased levels of exchange across a national border in the Nordic countries is cooperation across the Öresund where the building of the Öresund bridge has reinforced exchange and cooperation. This process had however begun well before the physical building of the bridge thus indicating this change in attitudes when it comes, for instance, to working in another country. The number of people commuting from Sweden to Denmark increased four-fold during the period 2001-2008 (SOU 2011:74). This increase in the flow of commuters across the Öresund also however revealed new problems due to differences in tax and social systems. In the land border area between Sweden and Finland the level of cooperation and exchange has also increased particularly between the “twin” towns of Haparanda and Tornio. In addition to this the daily commuting is rather frequent in the border areas between Sweden and Norway, particularly from a number of municipalities in Värmland in Sweden, to neighbouring municipalities in Norway (Nordiska Ministerrådet, Nordisk pendlingskarta, 2011).

The ambition of creating a common well-functioning labour-market is at the core of Nordic cooperation. In the early 1950s the Nordic passport union was established while the first agreement on the creation of a common Nordic labour-market was signed in 1954. One of the primary practical means used to create this common labour-market was to facilitate cross-border

commuting for those who lived in border regions. Efforts to reduce border obstacles have therefore become an important task of Nordic cooperation and demand that measures are taken in this regard at all levels of the political system.

3.1 Nordic regional policy cooperation programme 2009-2012

The aim of Nordic cooperation in the field of regional policy is to increase the level of integration between the Nordic countries. The Nordic regional policy cooperation programme 2009-2012 focused on three overall themes:

- Cross-border cooperation (e.g. developing new initiatives to promote freedom of movement),
- Exchange of experience and knowledge building in areas important to regional policy (e.g. the development of metropolitan areas and of more sparsely populated rural areas) and,
- The development of so-called ‘third generation’ regional policy

Thus, in the programme period 2009-2012 cross-border cooperation was highlighted as one of the key elements of Nordic cooperation on regional policy. In the Nordic regional policy cooperation programme for the period 2009-2012 the following is formulated: “*The Nordic Council of Ministers believes that the border regions should be highlighted as key players with a new weight in Nordic integration work.*” It is further emphasised here that cross-border cooperation will increase Nordic integration and strengthen the position of the Nordic region in an increasingly globalised world.

3.2 Nordic cross-border strategy and financial support to cross-border committees

As part of the development of the Nordic regional policy cooperation programme for the period 2009-2012 a separate cross-border strategy was formulated. The priorities of the strategy are as follows:

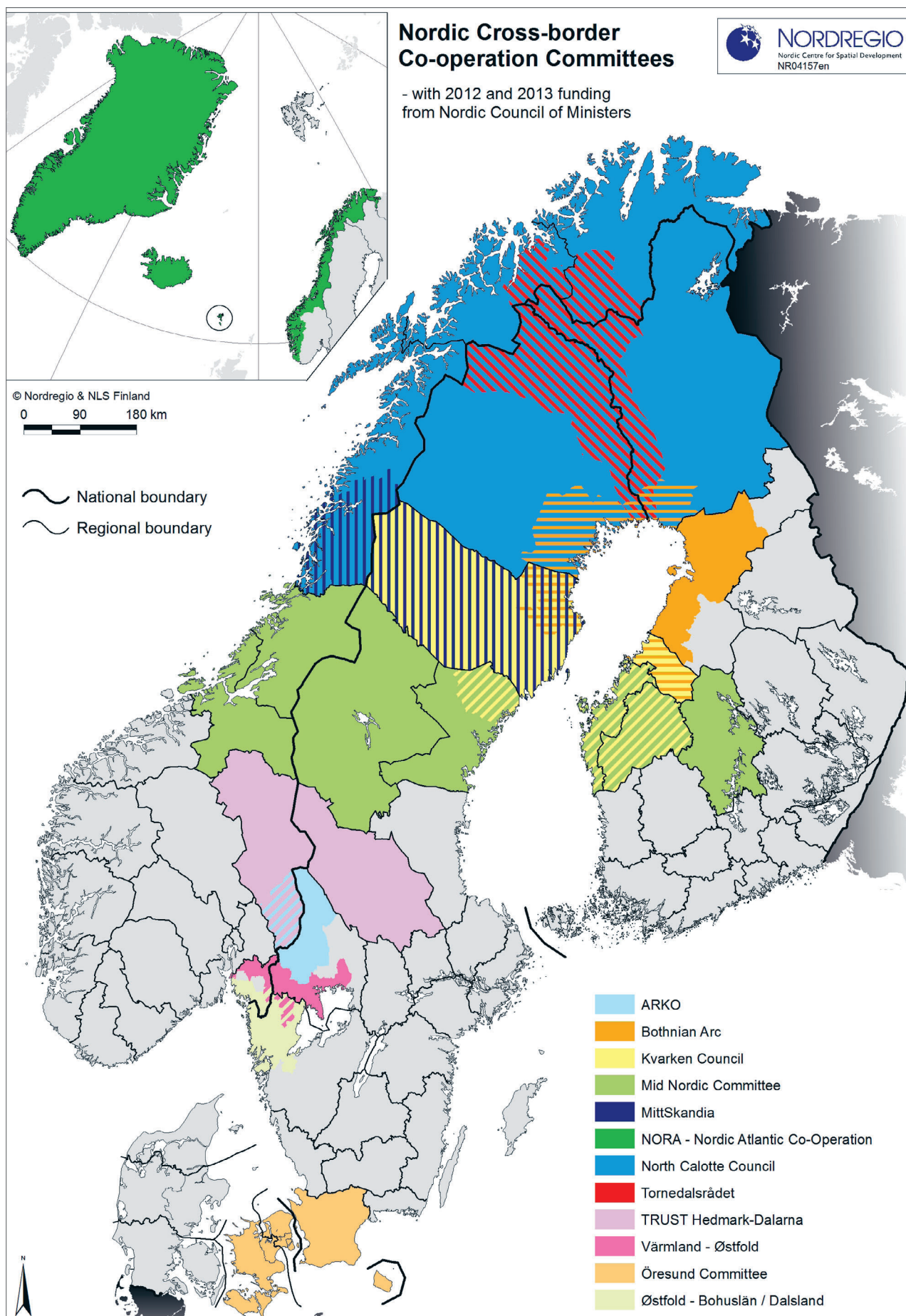
- Develop competitiveness among companies in the cross-border regions, developing innovation and entrepreneurship. Focusing especially on initiatives targeting young people,
- Identify and reduce border obstacles,
- Climate friendly and sustainable energy solutions and
- Improved infrastructure and public transport.

When it comes to reducing border obstacles the governments in the Nordic countries have set up a forum (*Gränshinderforum*) to detect cross-border obstacles and to – in close dialogue with the national governments – suggest solutions on how these obstacles can be removed, thus enhancing the free movement of both people and companies in the Nordic countries. Significant cooperation also exists between the statistics authorities in Sweden, Denmark and Norway to provide cross-border statistics on migration and commuting throughout the Nordic countries.

Of the Nordic budget for cooperation on regional policy, which is approximately 30 million DKK per year, almost half is allocated to the Nordic cross-border committees. 12 cross-border committees received funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) in 2012 (see map 2). Eight of these were already in-

cluded in the NCM funding system in the 1970s or 1980s and for a long time enjoyed an almost fixed sum of annual funding. NCM funding to the cross-border committees has been provided both for the purposes of upholding cooperation structures and for cooperation projects. In 2009 however the financing system changed and annual open calls for funding were introduced. This meant that changes occurred in the level of NCM funding for the original cross-border committees while also bringing a number of new cross-border committees into the funding system (see, for example, Lindqvist, 2010).

These cross-border committees are also financed through their member organisations (regional and local authorities, business organisations etc). Significant differences however exist between the various committees when it comes to the size of their budgets, their organisation and their possibility to become involved in projects. In addition there are significant differences between the committees when it comes to their overall scope and objectives. The cross-border committees have a common purpose to enhance regional growth and development within their regions by engaging in cooperation across national borders. The underlying assumption here is that better integration within the cross-border region creates a larger critical mass of people, companies, research institutions etc., that will help create better conditions for regional growth on both sides of the border. The Nordic cross-border committees are involved in a wide range of different policy fields but most focus on business development, tourism, infrastructure, environment and energy or cultural activities. In addition, most cross-border committees focus on identifying and reducing border obstacles as well as on network building (Greve Harbo, 2010, p.11f).



Map 2: Nordic cross-border cooperation committees with Nordic Council of Ministers funding for 2012 and 2013

3.3 The next period for Nordic cooperation on regional policy 2013-2016

The new Nordic cooperation programme on regional policy for the period 2013-2016 was approved by the Nordic ministers in October 2012. The new programme has three overall objectives:

- Contribute to regionally sustainable welfare development
- Promote sustainable regional development in the Arctic and
- Stimulate green growth in all regions.

The NCM will continue to provide financial support to Nordic cross-border committees, but the funding system will be reviewed in 2013. It has also been decided that the total NCM budget will be reduced from 2014. This is something which will probably affect all cooperation sectors. This also raises questions about the issue of longer term Nordic financial support to the cross-border committees. Representatives of the cross-border committees emphasise that Nordic funding is important as it enables them to maintain a permanent base organisation for the cooperation. Funding from the European Regional Development Fund cannot be used to do this and thus the specific Nordic funding here is crucial.

	EU	Nordic
Overall aim	Cohesion	Integration and Nordic added value
Strategies	Europe 2020 strategy Macro-regional strategies	Nordic cooperation programme Nordic cross-border strategy
Instruments	ETC programmes ■ Cross-Border Cooperation ■ Transnational Cooperation ■ Interregional Cooperation	Nordic cross-border committees Border obstacle forum (Gränshinderforum)

Table 2: Summing up chapters 2 and 3

4. Illustrations

In order to illustrate and analyse the interplay between EU Cohesion policy and the ETC programmes in particular, and the Nordic initiatives and priorities for cross-border cooperation, two Nordic cases have been chosen. The first case is that of the Kvarken council which has played an active role in the programming, management and implementation of the Botnia-Atlantica programme as well as the previous INTERREG programmes (see figure 2). This case illustrates the linkages between cross-border cooperation, established in the beginning of the 1970s, the Nordic priorities and the ETC programmes. The second case is the cross-border cooperation between Dalarna in Sweden and Hedmark in Norway. This was formalised through an INTERREG project named TRUST Hedmark Dalarna that ran from 2008 to 2012. The aim of the project was to find a more formal structure for cooperation across the border. This case is also highlighted to illustrate the link between an INTERREG programme and a Nordic cross-border committee.

4.1 The Kvarken Council

The Kvarken Council is a cooperation organisation between local and regional authorities and organisations on both sides of Kvarken in the Bothnian Sea (see map 2). The organisation was established at the first Kvarken conference in Vasa in 1972 with cooperation here having its roots in the extensive process of city twinning-cooperation within the framework of the interest organisation “Föreningen Norden” (Norden Association)⁶. In 1979 the Kvarken Council became a formal part of the Nordic cooperation process and received financial support from the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). After a long period of fairly stable annual funding from the NCM, the situation has changed in recent years. In 2009, the Nordic funding system for cross-border cooperation changed introducing increased competition for funding. This has not yet hit the Kvarken Council but has undoubtedly increased uncertainty. The reshaping of the financing system and an overall reduction in the NCM budget (see section 3.3), moreover, suggest that the coming years will likely see even more significant changes. In 2009, NCM funding accounted for some 27% of the Kvarken Council’s total budget.



Figure 2: Development of the INTERREG programmes (total funding including ERDF, national and Norwegian funding)

⁶ Source: Kvarkenrådet, http://www.kvarken.org/Pa_Svenska/Historia; see also Greve Harbo, 2010.

The Kvarken Council had an important role to play when Finland and Sweden entered the EU and the INTERREG II programme was established. Since Finland and Sweden became EU members during an ongoing programme period the first programme period was, for them, rather short (1996 to 1999). In this period an INTERREG programme was set up covering the same area as that of the Kvarken Council and the MittSkandia cross-border committee. One of the major arguments for the setting up of this INTERREG programme over the sea-border was the successful pre-existence of the Nordic cross-border cooperation process. In this first stage the Kvarken Council had an important role to play both as manager of the programme and as a (successful) project applicant. The Kvarken Council continued to play a key role in the management and implementation of the programme in the second period 2000-2006 when the Kvarken-Mittskandia programme was established. In the third period 2007-2013

the programme geography was extended with the new programme, Botnia-Atlantica, including the entire county of Västernorrland on the Swedish side, Norðanstig municipality in Gävleborg County (Sweden) and the entire county of Nordland in Norway (see map 1). At the same time the role of the Kvarken Council changed with the council now having a less central role in the preparation and implementation of the new programme.

Existing cooperation within the Kvarken Council is strongly focused on infrastructure and public transport with one of the key issues here being to secure the ferry link between Finland and Sweden and also to secure the east-west transport link from the Norwegian coast across Västerbotten in Sweden over to the Finnish side of the border. In the Botnia-Atlantica programme 2007-2013 *infrastructure and public transport* is one prioritised field.

Facts about the Kvarken Council

Members:

Sweden: Region Västerbotten and Örnsköldsvik municipality
 Finland: Ostrobothnia, Southern Ostrobothnia and Central Ostrobothnia regional councils, and Vaasa, Kokkola, Seinäjoki and Jakobstad municipalities.
 Others: 21 members (municipalities, schools, organisations, associations, etc.)

Profile of the border region

The Kvarken region has 750 000 inhabitants. The cross-border area covers 550 km x 250 km and is divided by an 80 km wide sea border which is served by a regular ferry crossing. Approximately 22% of the population on the Finnish side of the Kvarken region are Swedish-speaking.

Organisational structure

The Kvarken Council, established in 1972, is a non-profit association registered in Finland. The association is led by a board consisting of 12 members. Each member has a personal alternate. The board meets 4-5 times per year, and in addition an annual meeting is held. At the annual meeting representatives from all key members are invited, a total of 26 persons who all have voting rights. Other members are entitled to attend and voice their opinions. The project activities are led by their own separate steering groups. The secretariat of the Kvarken council is

located in Vaasa, with another office in Umeå. The Kvarken Council has two permanent staff members, a director and an assistant. In 2009, the Kvarken council employed 8 project employees – full-time as well as part-time – and 8-10 consultants linked to different projects.

Financing

The activities of the Kvarken Council are financed through member fees, funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers, and project funding. In 2009, the Kvarken Council had a total turnover of approximately 1 million Euros. The revenues of the year were distributed as follows: member fees 22%; Nordic Council of Ministers 27% and project funding 51%. In 2009, the funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers co-financed four projects led by the Kvarken Council, and five projects led by another partner.

Focus areas

The Kvarken Council follows 3-year action programmes. The focus areas for 2010-2012 are: transportation and infrastructure; environment and energy questions, and bridging border obstacles in the broadest sense.

Source: Greve Harbo, L., (2010), *Nordic Cross-border cooperation committees and Cross-border authority integration*, Nordregio WP 2010:3

4.2 TRUST – Hedmark-Dalarna⁷⁾

The cross-border committee Hedmark-Dalarna began as a project within the INTERREG IVA Sweden-Norway programme. Before the establishment of this more formalised cooperation process cooperation had previously occurred between the border municipalities in Dalarna and Hedmark, particularly in the field of tourism. The aim is now to develop a cross-border tourist destination linking the ski-resorts in Hedmark and Dalarna. The decision to establish an airport between Sälen in Dalarna and in Trysil in Norway is a crucial part of the creation of the region as a joint tourist-destination. The aim is also to increase cooperation across borders within other areas such as local attractiveness, housing and innovation activities. Commuting in the area is however rather limited compared to that between Värmland (in Sweden) and Hedmark.

A pre-study of the cooperation between Hedmark County in Norway and Dalarna County in Sweden was initiated and reported in 2007. When the current programming period for the Sweden-Norway programme began the whole of Dalarna County was included in the programme area. This opened up the possibility to initiate projects between Hedmark and Dalarna counties (Slutrapport TRUST Hedmark Dalarna). In May 2007, a cross-border event attracted 130 persons representing university colleges, upper secondary schools, municipalities and regional organisations. Even though the event did not attract any business representatives it was nevertheless acknowledged as a good way of mobilising different actors in the cross-border area. In November 2008, an application for a project including the County Governor in Hedmark, the County Council in Hedmark, Region Dalarna and the County Administration Board in Dalarna was sent to the INTERREG IVA Sweden-Norway programme. The aim of the project was to prepare for a more institutionalised cooperation between Hedmark and Dalarna. Before the project began no formalised cooperation process existed across the border though some common activities had already taken place such as the cross-border event mentioned above. The actors involved in the project application were highly committed and keen to highlight the

common challenges currently faced by Hedmark and Dalarna while arguing that, through increased cooperation, common approaches and solutions to these challenges were more likely to be found. They were also committed to an ‘institutional’ anchoring of formalised cooperation across the border. The project, named TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna formally began 1st November 2008. A project coordinator was not hired until 6 April 2009 and therefore the organisations responsible for the project applied for a prolongation. The prolongation was approved and the project formally ended 30 April 2012 (Slutrapport TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna).

In 2008 Hedmark-Dalarna also applied for funding from the NCM, their application was approved in December 2008 and they received 500 000 DKK for 2009. Thus, the cross-border committee Hedmark-Dalarna was formally established building on the INTERREG project. Hedmark-Dalarna is one of the most recent cross-border cooperation processes to receive funding from the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM).

The central stakeholders in the cross-border committee TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna agree that funding from the ERDF for the project enabled the cooperation as it subsequently developed to occur. The support from the NCM was also very important because of the symbolic value of being part of the Nordic funding system. NCM funding also guaranteed a “seamless” continuation of the cooperation after the INTERREG project had been closed. Integration within the cross-border region is thus facilitated and acted, essentially, as a prerequisite for the deepening and broadening of the cooperation process. The wish is now, on both sides of the border, that the cross-border committee will facilitate cooperation in new fields, for example when it comes to innovation and clusters. The added value of cross-border cooperation between the two sparsely populated counties of Hedmark and Dalarna can be to create critical mass, not least when it comes to cluster-building. Universities and other education institutions, companies and business organisations on both sides of the border together make up a critical mass and thus represent a better base from which to construct ‘regional’ clusters. The cross-border committee TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna has an important role to play in this development as a link between different actors and as a cooperation facilitator.

7) This case-study is partly based on interviews undertaken by Lise Smed Olsen at Nordregio within the framework of an ongoing OECD study on Cross-Border Innovation, read more about the project here: <http://www.hedmark.org/Hedmark-fylkeskommune/Nyheter/Grensekomiteen-deltar-i-spennende-OECD-prosjekt>

Facts about the cross-border committee TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna

Members:

Norway: Hedmark county council and the county governor of Hedmark

Sweden: Region Dalarna and the county administration board of Dalarna.

Profile of the border region:

Hedmark and Dalarna cover a combined area of 56 000 km² with approximately 465 000 inhabitants in a mountainous area.

Organisational structure:

TRUST Hedmark-Dalarna is organised by a steering group consisting of one representative from each of the four collaborating institutions. The steering group meets twice a year. In addition a project and management group has been set up which consists of representatives from the administration and project leaders from the four collaborating institutions. The project and management group meets at least six times per year. The project formulation also makes it possible to establish thematic coordination groups

and specific working groups where necessary. The daily management of the project is carried out by a project leader employed by Hedmark county and a project coordinator from Region Dalarna.

Financing

The total budget for the three years is approximately 14 million SEK. The INTERREG funding covers 87% of the total budget, while the Nordic Council of Ministers' contribution makes up the remaining 13%.

Focus areas

The project is guided by an action programme for the years 2009-2011. The prioritised target areas in the programme area: 1) Development and establishment of networks and collaborative areas in order to strengthen the innovative capacity in the region; 2) Marketing and enhancement of the strengths of the region; and 3) Establishment and development of tools, methods, and models that can boost the cross-border cooperation.

Source: Greve Harbo, L., (2010), *Nordic Cross-border cooperation committees and Cross-border authority integration*, Nordregio WP 2010:3

5. Similarities and differences between EU objectives and Nordic cross-border policy

Many of the Nordic priorities and objectives concerning regional policy in general and cross-border cooperation in particular are similar to the ones expressed in EU policy for territorial cooperation. The opportunity to fund cross-border and transnational projects and activities in the Nordic countries however increased significantly when Sweden and Finland became EU members in 1995. The existing Nordic focus on cross-border cooperation was thus reinforced while the EU structural funds opened up new possibilities for cooperation across borders. The connections and interplay between EU policy for territorial cooperation and Nordic cross-border cooperation are of course complex but in this section the intention is to try to describe and analyse the linkages between them. The two case studies reported on in the previous section also helped to illustrate the interplay between EU policy for territorial cooperation, Nordic policy for cross-border cooperation and the Nordic cross-border committees.

The objectives, strategies and instruments of EU policy for territorial cooperation influence Nordic cooperation via the involvement of regional and national actors. At the same time, the long tradition of cross-border cooperation in the Nordic countries has influenced the approach to the implementation of EU territorial cooperation policy in these countries.

5.1 Objectives and thematic priorities

Similarities undoubtedly exist between Nordic and EU policy definitions in this field as they share many of the same elements such as integration, gradual interest in opening up national programmes, and increasing joint activities. A strong ambition for the next EU programming period is to prioritise and ensure a critical mass in resource deployment and the greater coherence of

policies and initiatives. The Nordic cooperation priorities will also have to take this ambition into account particularly as the Nordic budget will be reduced in the coming years.

Nordic cooperation on regional policy can even be seen, to some extent at least, as the 'regionalised' implementation of EU Cohesion policy. Denmark, Sweden and Finland (including Åland) as EU Member States are of course the ones bringing the EU objectives and priorities into the Nordic cooperation whereas the non-Member States Norway, Iceland and the autonomous territories of Greenland and the Faroe islands might have other objectives and priorities. This is however something of a two-way process as Nordic EU member countries undoubtedly also bring Nordic perspectives and strategies into the EU system.

The Nordic cross-border strategy, formulated as part of the development of the Nordic regional policy cooperation programme, focuses on increasing the competitiveness of companies in the cross-border regions while developing innovation and entrepreneurship. The focus on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurship is also a priority area in all of the Nordic/Baltic ETC programmes. Most of the Nordic cross-border committees also focus on innovation and entrepreneurship even though this is more pronounced in some committees than in others. There has however been little or no focus on cultural and social issues in either the Nordic cross-border policy or the ETC programmes. As far as the ETC programmes in the new period 2014-2020 are concerned the Europe 2020 strategy on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth marks an intended increased focus on social issues. The demand for greater thematic concentration may however also lead to the opposite situation, that the themes related to inclusive growth will be less prioritised than other themes related to *smart* and *sustainable* growth. The Europe 2020 strategy focus on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth is mirrored in

the priorities set up in the Nordic regional policy cooperation programme 2013-2016. The objective of contributing to *regionally sustainable welfare development* is linked to the thematic objectives related to inclusive *growth* in the Common Strategic Framework for EU Structural funds: (7) Employment and support to labour mobility (8), Social inclusion and combating poverty (9) and Education, skills and life-long learning (10). The Nordic priority on sustainable development in the Arctic is primarily linked to the thematic objectives related to sustainable growth. In addition, the Nordic priority of green growth is linked to the thematic objectives related to smart and sustainable growth.

5.2 Instruments

Nordic cooperation on regional policy has a strong focus on removing border obstacles in the belief that this will help create a better integrated Nordic labour-market and better conditions for companies to operate successfully across national borders. The Swedish presidency of the Nordic Council Ministers in 2013 underlines the importance of continuing to identify border obstacles and to suggest solutions to them. In the Nordic context, there is a strong focus here on legal obstacles such as differences in taxation and social security systems.

The EU legal instrument, EGTC, established to help create better conditions for cross-border cooperation has this far not been used in the Nordic countries, even if the Öresund region and the Kvarken Council have investigated the possibility of establishing an EGTC in their respective cross-border regions (see Hörnström, 2011). On the national level in both Finland and Sweden questions have been raised as to whether the new instrument really adds anything to existing cross-border cooperation. It has even been pointed out that the instrument may challenge the fundamental principle of local self-government. Since an EGTC *must* consist of at least two partners from EU member countries, bilateral cooperation arrangements between Sweden and Norway cannot form an EGTC. These are probably some of the reasons why there is, as yet, no EGTC established in the Nordic countries (Hörnström, 2011).

5.3 Funding

The Nordic Council of Ministers has funded cross-border cooperation since the 1970s and has also contributed to facilitating the exchange of experiences between the cross-border committees. Even if NCM financing has only formed a part of the cross-border committees' total budgets, it has been of crucial importance in raising local, regional and EU funding. Nordic funding is very limited compared to that potentially available from the EU but is still of significant importance to the Nordic cross-border committees and thus for Nordic cross-border cooperation in general. In addition to the funding itself, the Nordic Council of Ministers "label" has also been important.

In a European context, the first Euroregions were established in the 1960s but it was not until the 1980s that the European institutions began to really see the need to support cross-border cooperation. The deepening of the European Integration process that occurred in relation to the establishment of the Single Market in 1992 opened the way for EU incentives to be provided for better integration in the border areas. In 1990 INTERREG was launched as a financial instrument to support cross-border and transnational cooperation. In 1995, when Sweden and Finland became EU Member States, it made it possible for Nordic cross-border committees, as well as regional and local actors, to apply for EU funding for cross-border cooperation.

One of the key principles in relation to the EU structural funds is the requirement for national and regional/local public and private co-funding. The NCM has encouraged the cross-border committees to use Nordic funds as co-funding in INTERREG projects but it has not always been possible to use the Nordic funding because of EU regulations (e.g. for purely cultural projects). The INTERREG programmes and currently also the ETC programmes only provide funding for projects and not for the basic organisation or on-going activities of institutions. The cross-border committees therefore consider the Nordic funding component to be highly important as it can be used to finance the base organisation and on-going activities and thus secure a continuation of the cross-border cooperation outside specific projects.

6. Concluding discussion

The objectives of EU Cohesion policy and the European Territorial Cooperation objective in particular on the one hand and the Nordic priorities on the other are interlinked via the national priorities and the priorities set by the regional and local authorities and by the cross-border committees. This is a highly complex pattern where more extensive studies would be required to give a clearer answer to the questions originally posed in the introduction to this report. Despite the limited nature of the research undertaken here some tentative conclusions can nevertheless be drawn.

In terms of overall aims and priority areas there are many commonalities between the ETC programmes and the Nordic priorities as well as the priorities of cross-border cooperation. Innovation, entrepreneurship, SME competitiveness, transport and the environment are prioritised areas whereas social and cultural issues tend to play a minor role both in current ETC programmes and the Nordic priorities. The cross-border committees however express the need to focus on cultural and social issues since they are judged as being highly important for the better integration of cross-border regions.

The European Territorial Cooperation Objective (including the preceding INTERREG Community Initiative) and the programmes and funding designed to reach this objective have undoubtedly been very important in the promotion of cross-border activities in the Nordic countries. This funding source has enabled regional and local actors to initiate projects that were simply not possible before. The Nordic funding has facilitated the construction and maintenance of a solid institutional base thus opening the way for new arenas of cooperation to be developed. It should be noted however that it is not only the funding itself that has

been important here but also the positive signal that it gives to regional and local actors, namely, that cross-border and transnational cooperation is now being actively prioritised.

The Nordic cross-border committees have in many cases played a very active role in the preparation and implementation of the ETC programmes. This is illustrated by the case of the Kvarken Council presented in section 3. The role of the Kvarken Council in the preparation and implementation of the INTERREG programmes was central to the process from the beginning but as the awareness of, and interest in, cross-border cooperation increased among regional and local actors more broadly the role of the Kvarken Council changed and somewhat diminished. The cross-border committees are effectively established to facilitate and encourage cross-border cooperation. When cross-border cooperation is 'mainstreamed' into national, regional and local organisations and into different policy sectors the role of cross-border committees can similarly be reduced. As shown in the TRUST Hedmark case, the need for an organisation that can co-ordinate cross-border cooperation may also increase and therefore the cross-border committee can still have an important role to play.

Both the European Territorial Cooperation objective and Nordic cross-border cooperation are instruments designed to enhance integration across national borders and effectively also to strive for territorial cohesion. The ETC objective is however part of EU Cohesion policy whereas the Nordic priorities are not. The Nordic priorities do however, in many ways, mirror the EU priorities and it is clear that the intentions and the aims behind these priorities are similar.

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