



PORTUGAL 2007

**EU INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION FORUM 2007
CELEBRATING INTERREG IIIC – LAUNCHING INTERREG IVC
20-21 SEPTEMBER 2007, LISBON, PORTUGAL**

LAUNCH of INTERREG IVC (Friday, 21 September 2007)

***Words of welcome to the 2007 Interregional Cooperation Forum
by Rui Nuno Baleiras, Secretary of State for Regional Development,
Portugal, acting as EU Presidency.***

*Mr. Gerardo Galeote, Chairman of Regional Development Committee, Member
of the European Parliament*

Mr. Michel Delebarre, President of the Committee of Regions

*Mr. Daniel Percheron, President of the Conseil Regional Nord - Pas de Calais,
Managing Authority INTERREG IVC.*

*Mme. Katharina Mathernova, Deputy Director General of DG Region, European
Commission*

Representatives from Member States and participating States

Representatives of the regions

Ladies and gentlemen

Opening remarks

Allow me first of all to express my pride, in the name of the Portuguese Government, the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union and of all the Member-States participating in this programme, in welcoming to Portugal an event of this size and importance for the European Regions at a time when Portugal presides over the Council of the European Union.

It is my great pleasure to be here with you at today's session to witness the unveiling of the new Programme for Interregional Cooperation, INTERREG IV-C.

The new Programme aims to bring the renewed Lisbon Strategy onto the stage of interregional cooperation, and so in a sense the Lisbon Strategy is returning to Lisbon courtesy of INTERREG IV-C!

I applaud the decision to gather in Lisbon so many enthusiasts of Territorial Cooperation (around 1,000 people over two days), bringing together the key

players in Regional Policy: project promoters, consultants, authorities and agents from central, regional and local administrations. To this extensive group we are pleased to add the European Parliament, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions.

We must, in the name of the Member-States, extend our warmest thanks for the support and dedication of the three institutions without which INTTERREG IV-C would not exist. I thank the **European Parliament** for its role in negotiating the financial aspects (via the Inter-Institutional Agreement) and for having supported and recognised the importance of European Territorial Cooperation and allowing this objective to emerge from the final phase of the negotiations on a more solid financial basis. The Interregional Cooperation Programme has benefited from this consolidation and we, the champions of 'interregionalism' are grateful for the confidence which the European Parliament has invested in us. To the **European Commission** I offer thanks for the swiftness and enthusiasm with which it greeted the Programme. Its dynamism has led to us being here today with the Programme already approved (on 11th September past). I am proud to be able to announce that the Interregional Cooperation Programme was the first Programme aimed at European Territorial Cooperation to be signed by Commissioner Danuta Hübner. Incidentally, we are delighted that further such programmes have been approved over subsequent days. Let me just mention the Atlantic Area Programme and the Azores-Madeira-Canary Islands Programme, in which the Portuguese are proud to be participating. To the **Committee of the Regions** credit is due for the support it has always given for Regional Policy and in particular, for continually including the national governments and the contribution of partnerships with local and regional authorities in the delivery of regional policy to their citizens.

Finally, I must add a word of appreciation for the Council for Region of Nord-Pas Calais in France for having accepted the challenge of leading this organisation for the next nine months and for having organized the Interregional Cooperation Forum 2007. This governing body is responsible for staging the event in Lisbon and, therefore, we the participants must thank them for all that follows.

Yesterday we looked back over the achievements of Interregional Cooperation for the period 2000-06 (INTERREG III-C). Today, we are launching the new Programme for Interregional Cooperation 2007-2013. But today we would like to go further. We would like to open the period of proposals for INTERREG IV-C. To this end, today's gathering will make available a series of search platforms for partners in future projects. The 21st September therefore provides an opportunity for the putting together of first proposals.

The new Interregional Cooperation Programme (IV-C). A more mature and sophisticated stage of cooperation.

It was with great pleasure that I heard that the Programme for Interregional Cooperation, or IV-C to put it more simply, had been approved on 11th September by the European Commission. It was on this same day that the first

Steering Committee was formed together with the conditions for the launch of the Programme itself (Internal Regulations, forms and procedural manual) commonly known as the 'application pack'.

This, however, is no 'virtual' launch because from today it will be possible for the promoters here in this room to begin presenting their projects for the new IV-C Programme. I hereby invite you to overcome your shyness and use today as a chance to establish contacts and partnerships that will result in solid IV-C projects in the near future.

On the subject of cooperation, I still remember the aims of INTERREG Initiatives launched in 1990. At that time, the core objective of cooperation was (and still is) to ensure that national boundaries did not constitute an obstacle to the harmonious development and socio-economic integration of European territory of Europe.

This wealth of experiences from the past has shown itself to be vital in moulding the present generation of cooperation programmes. There has in fact been a significant evolution in the cross-border and trans-national cooperation which has had an impact on joint programming and the creation of joint structures, involving the three levels of public governance (central, regional and local), as well as civil society.

We have come a long way since those early days. But between now and 2013 something, which until recently was unthinkable, will happen: interregional cooperation will be implemented through a single European Programme (EU 27 + Sweden and Norway) with projects that could involve 7, 8 or more partners from 4, 5 or more Member-States from every European Region, not to mention numerous other countries from around the world, which could become associated with us.

This advanced maturity in our cooperation foments and develops a spirit of partnership (fundamental in the process of development and growth) and the decentralization of decision-making processes, bringing them closer to each country and to its citizens. Thus, once more, it is possible to talk of a 'Citizens' Europe', here on the ground, which has significance for people's lives and welfare.

Our common ambition is to contribute to the well-being of the people of Europe and to the improvement in the efficiency of national and European policies. To achieve this objective, we will explore the sum of accumulated past experience within the scope of different measures and approaches to policy implementation; in other words, we will learn and be enriched through each other's experiences, sharing them through cooperation and interregional exchange.

The rationale for Cooperation rests in the idea that the European Regions are confronted by a large number of challenges and common problems whether they be city and urban regions, rural areas, border regions or regions in decline, to name but a few. An exchange of information in terms of solutions offered, measures applied and projects developed is a promising objective. The

programmes implemented within the scope of Structural Funds offer a world of opportunities that merits our attention.

This programme is in line with the Community Strategic Guidelines for Regional Policy 2007/13. These Guidelines determine the convergence of Transversal Approaches that favour balanced and sustainable development within the European Member countries. Fundamentally, it is on this notion of development that the actions of the European Parliament are based. This will lead to the financial strengthening of the Programme within the framework of the negotiation of the Inter-institutional Agreement on Financial Perspectives. It should be noted that another argument in favour of Interregional Cooperation is that INTERREG IV-C will lead to the deepening of 'Territorial Cohesion', a principle that the Portuguese Presidency considers so important that it may be included in the current revision of the EU Treaty.

From III-C to the new IV-C

This forum dedicated yesterday to a retrospective of the four III-C programmes included in the Interregional component of the INTERREG initiative. So today, it is time to talk about the future. Nevertheless, I would like to mention several outstanding highlights which serve as an excellent backdrop to the new cycle we are embarking upon today.

The INTERREG II-C programmes financed 264 projects involving more than 2,600 partnerships from 49 countries (including non-EU Members). This group of countries represented more than 97 regions of Europe. 94% of partnerships originated from Member-States. III-C was also able to mobilize 491 partnerships from non-member states. Another equally positive effect worth noting is the fact that, from the total number of partnerships, 1,202 promoters from Member-States come from Objective 1 regions.

Dear friends, these figures prove that interregional cooperation gets Europe moving, and that this programme is an excellent way of demonstrating a **Europe of Citizens**, representing a clear expression of the coming together of European citizenship. In other words, a United Europe!

However, the road here has not been easy. It has meant a year and a half of careful timetabling behind the scenes, many hours of meetings across the whole of Europe and a lot of dedicated work by all those involved (Member-States, the Commission, consultants) many of whom are present today. I would like to pay tribute here and now, on behalf of all the Member-States involved in the Programme, to your efforts and your dedication. Behind the scenes there have also been difficulties inherent in the timetabling for 2007-2013, presenting us with challenges to overcome together. I can mention, for example, the new Strategic Environmental Assessment, which has been implemented in full in the new Interregional Programme.

New policy option for the Interregional Cooperation Programme

The final contribution of this programme is in furthering the strategic objectives of the Europe's major economic agenda-: the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies. In fact, the Lisbon Agenda is one of the main concerns of the current Presidency. In this forum it is our intention, seven years down the road, to promote Lisbon in Lisbon.

INTERREG IV-C is based, therefore, on two and only two priorities: **innovation and the knowledge economy**, on the one hand, **and the environment and risk prevention** on the other. This is because policy loses its effectiveness when it has too many objectives. Concentrating the financial input and thematic focus around these two priorities will be a better use of the resources of its European participants.

Thus, there will be a clearer and more determined strategic approach centred around the main concerns of the European Union for the duration of the Programme, giving it a stronger strategic input than its predecessor.

The IV-C Programme is, then, strongly linked to the themes of 'Convergence' and 'Regional competitiveness and employment', the so-called mainstream of Regional Policy. This emphasis has not come about by chance: the European ambition reflected in this Programme today is to find solutions to the problems of economic growth and job creation, which leads inevitably to building participation in development strategies (both regional and local) in an open and global economy. And it is at this level that business networks are formed, that centres of learning and technological development are established and where local knowledge can in fact be mobilized.

The experience of INTERREG III-C has taught us that it is possible to do more and better in how we disseminate the products and services created from the projects we support through the community as a whole. Good practice deserves to be recognised, discussed and applied by many more players. To this end, the Presidency considers the Commission's 'Regions for Economic Change' initiative particularly useful, especially the fast track option. This option establishes a link between INTERREG IV-C and the mainstream programmes of Regional Policy, enabling these programmes to finance best practice in general in the execution of the Lisbon Strategy.

It is important at this point to clarify two common misconceptions.

Sharing good practice does not work in one direction only. All regions, rich and poor, advanced or only partially developed, undoubtedly have something to contribute. No-one is the best at everything: every region has its areas of expertise. Far from representing a barrier, differences between regions can act as a stimulus to cooperation.

The second preconception lies in the supposed tension between 'cooperation' and 'competition'. Success stories can be shared without endangering the competitiveness of the regions. Indeed, they will tend to strengthen them in the medium to long term.

More to gain by cooperation!

We have much to gain. Cooperation is worthwhile for its own sake, but above all trans-national and interregional cooperation are excellent ways to internationalize our regions. We are becoming more and more aware today of the importance of networking at national level and of its relevance for the international promotion of the competitive capacities of the Regions and nations. It is through national marketing campaigns that we can contribute by integrating less dynamic regions into knowledge and competition networks at the European level.

European National Cooperation has been adopted by the EU as the third goal of Regional Policy for the period 2007-2013. With the appropriate regulatory support, some states have opted to include the cooperation component in their National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF). Portugal has chosen this option. The same applies to the regional timetabling. Many of the regional programmes for 2007-2013 have also chosen to include a component for cooperation between regions. I believe the cooperation dimension is more far-reaching still.

If we go back further into our history it will be easy for us to understand the value of cooperation. To give you an example: my country has had the good fortune not to have experienced an armed conflict on its territory for all of the last century, and we have maintained a stable border with our neighbour Spain for the last 700 years. It was however, only in 1986, with our joint entry into the EEC that we finally stopped living with our backs turned on each other as we had done during the 50 years of dictatorship. I have no doubt that it was Regional Policy Programmes and the successive INTERREG A that did much to break down mistrust and allow the border regions to come closer both economically and socially.

Many of our fellow Europeans have, however, experienced terrible armed conflict, some, sadly, even during the last decade. Until 1989, our countries were divided by an iron curtain. It was only through the voluntary exchange of experiences and knowledge by companies, civic organisations and public authorities, in other words, **through actual daily cooperation** at regional and local levels that ideas of peace took hold and we began to work together with our former enemies.

And so it seems clear in my mind, and I am sure many of you share this vision, that cooperation between us lies at the very heart of what Europe is supposed to be about: Peace, Stability and Prosperity.

In the context of the growing integration of both the European and world economies, it is crucial that we encourage networking between individuals and regions in the future, not just within the EU but also to start thinking about cooperation with countries beyond Europe. With this in mind, we must be alert to the necessity of taking the goal of European Territorial Cooperation in other directions (as the experimental European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) has shown –taking cooperation beyond the borders of the

Union). We must try to find synergies between the policy implied by this goal and the **policy of EU cooperation with ACP nations** (Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) financed by the European Development Fund.

I am convinced that all of us here today believe that the future paradigm of regional development includes interregional cooperation, in one way or another, and that cooperation between Member States and the regions is the only contract that guarantees that we all emerge as winners.

I therefore wish the Interregional Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 the greatest of success and wish you all an excellent period of cooperation ahead. I sincerely hope that you leave Lisbon with the desire to come back once again, whether it be for work or pleasure.

Ladies and gentlemen, regions and project promoters: I now declare formally open the first call for proposals of the INTERREG IV C.

Thank you for your time and...may we see wonderful projects in the near future!