

CONNECTED CITIES PROJECT QUALITY TEAM

CONDENSED EVALUATION OF THE CONNECTED CITIES PROJECT

GENERAL

This report summarises the evaluation of the project activities of the TU-Delft lead Interreg I I I C Project Connected Cities, by Virna Bussadori and Jan Vogelij, acting as independent quality team provided by the ECTP.

The project focuses on sustainable ways of transportation on the local level, the relation to spatial developments, technical innovations, and exchange of information about good practices and aims to provide assistance to the local authorities that are partners in the project.

In general it can be concluded that the project activities achieved the objectives.

During a total of seven meetings/workshops, lasting each two or three days, and taking place in (and around) respectively Brussels, Volos, Covilha, Toledo, Ancona, London and Paris, issues of transportation in relation to the urban developments, specific technical solutions, projects and organisations have been presented, studied, discussed and brain storming have been stimulated resulting in several recommendations.

On top of that, projects have been published and reflective articles have been written in four issues of the Nova Terra magazine that were specifically dedicated to the Connected Cities project. A guide to good practice and a very informative website have been delivered.

In some cases also the local public was informed about this European activity by local newspapers.

THE CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

During the project, six QTeam reports have been issued, evaluating the project objectives, the organisation of the project, the steering group meetings etc.

With regard to the content, relevant issues to be discussed were: should the focus, next to the spatial development aspects, include:

- technical innovations in the field of means of transportation;
- regional developments;
- governance in spatial development processes;
- relation to the EU cohesion policy.



(Technical innovation)

Within the QTeam it is felt that the main focus of the project is the relation between spatial development and the sustainability of transportation and mobility of people. Although it is clear that the technical solution of a transportation problem may include specific spatial consequences, the technical problems as such are not considered to be the most strategic ones to be addressed when striving for sustainable development. On the long term, the location of residential, economic or services related activities is most important since they create the origin and destination of traffic. Developing new specific technical solutions, f.i. cyber cars or specific underground infrastructural solutions, seems more appropriate to be addressed in EU funded research focusing on technical innovations. Such innovative techniques may provide solutions for given specific spatial problems. Still spatial planning approaches are to be considered at the base of any consideration regarding transportation, mobility and accessibility problems. Close and intensive cooperation among spatial planners and experts in the field of transportation and mobility, aiming at sustainability, should within this project be considered of utmost importance.

(The regional scale).

Apart from the large city railway station projects presented during the last Paris conference, the regional scale appeared to be essential in all projects that were taken into consideration. Without taking the wider bi-pole of Volos, the La Sagra region of Toledo, the province of Ancona, the Kent county, or the Sénart region into account, sustainable transportation can hardly be achieved. Maybe the sole exception was the town of Covilha in Portugal. Together with the previous item, this underlines the importance of horizontal and vertical integration, but also that of creating a common context for the longer term: a spatial development vision.

(Governance)

The way in which processes to achieve consent among all relevant stakeholders are organised is possibly even more important than the specific outcomes of the process.

Sub-optimal solutions related to fragmented approaches along sectoral divisions, are still quite common and large difficulties to organise integrative processes in spatial developments are still reality in many places.

Horizontal and vertical cooperation between public bodies as well as with private parties require next to professional spatial planning expertise and political leadership, sound transparent governance practices.

(Cohesion policy)

Although not explicitly mentioned in the project, the quite recent EU policy objective of territorial cohesion will probably be supported by the subject of this Interreg IIIC project: sustainable transportation. It would be good if a possible future project on sustainable transportation considers its significance in relation to the notion of territorial cohesion.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PROJECT

With regard to the organisation of the project and the steering group sessions, the size of the project team and the active involvement of the steering group are issues.

- What is an optimal size of an effective project team?
- How to create a shared responsibility for the project among project team members?

(Size of project team)

A project team consisting of 25 organisations is clearly too large for an effective management. The project leader will have less difficulty in getting more team members into action if their number is reduced to 12-15. It is well noticed that the Interreg IV Programme applies this lesson already.

(Co- responsibility)

The previous remark is related to this issue. Next to that it is recommended that representatives of team member organisations commit themselves explicitly to activities, in support of the project leader. More specifically the availability of local experts should have been secured, logistically supported by departments of f.i. European Affairs or Public Relations. Also the attempts to provide local and regional authorities with advice and recommendations would need some more support from local experts.

Finally, the financial and administrative requirements cause difficulties and are an extra burden to the project management. Next to the responsibility that each project partner should take to assure compliance to the required procedures, the EU should reconsider its heavy procedural requirements.

CONCLUSIONS

The Connected Cities Interreg IIIC Project is considered to be a **successful** project.

It resulted in:

- Substantial increased insight in possibilities to organise sustainable mobility in different spatial circumstances;
- Intensive exchange of experiences among about 20 organisations in North and South Europe;
- Better mutual understanding about the effects of the different legal and spatial situations in these countries;
- A series of publications, making the information, experiences and experts views accessible to the wider European professional world;
- The creation of friendly relations and even team spirit among persons in European institutions, based on common achievements resulting from working together.

As more or less **negative** experiences next items might be noticed.

The effectiveness of the team increased during the project, but it had to stop too early.

The commitment to real involvement was not equally strong among all team members.

The institutions involved were not adequately complying the Interreg administrative requirements; this created much extra work to the project leader. In order to provide local and regional authorities with professional advice, the involvement within the local project case of (some of) the team members should have been longer. Even the best expert will not be able to provide a sound advice in a few hours' workshop. Involvement of at least a weak would enhance the project's effectiveness considerably.

FOLLOW-UP

It is felt to be extremely useful to capitalise on the achievements of this project with regard to its content, as well as to the result of its team building process, which was a side effect of the project.

Lessons learned from this Interreg III C experience should be applied when considering a follow-up project.

Therefore the Qteam provides next recommendations for a possible INTERREG IV project.

1. The subject: **sustainable transport/mobility and spatial development** is not exhausted, further, targeted elaboration is needed.
2. The wider spatial context of the **regional level** offers the essential perspective for viable systems of transportation and interrelated solutions.
3. The need for enhanced horizontal and vertical cooperation demands for a focus on **organisational aspects**: how to organize sustainable transportation within longer and medium term spatial development processes.
4. The integrative approach aiming at a common vision among all relevant stakeholders on spatial development on the regional level requires a quite unusual practice of **governance**. This should be elaborated.
5. The relation of sustainable mobility to the EU Cohesion policy should be exposed. That would help to clarify part of the policy notion of **territorial cohesion** and also specify the significance of sustainable transport and mobility for social and economic cohesion.
6. Focused involvement in few regional projects should include **longer involvement** with that project area of at least a small group of experts, allowing them to really support the region/s with sound recommendations.

A provisional title to an INTERREG IV Project on that basis would be:
Sustainable Transport and Territorial Cohesion on the Regional Level.

JCV 13/12/2007
VB 14/12/2007