



RUR@CT

European territorial cooperation in regional programs through Article 37-6b of Regulation 1083/2006

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Summary of conclusions

Attached documents:

- Participants list
- Speakers' Power Point presentations

34 persons took part in this training session, representing 29 European regions in 10 member states.

I- Article 37-6b of regulation 1083/2006 : contents, objectives and limits

(Patrice Baillieux, DG REGIO, European Commission)

Article 37-6b of Regulation 1083/2006 should be regarded primarily as a flexible instrument within the Operational Programmes (OPs) of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) that provides direction, a measure or a budget dedicated to cooperation. Indeed, no technical provision is forecasted in this short article.

Despite a great room for manoeuvre provided by this article, only 35 regions have taken on the challenge to apply it at European level (16 Regions mentioning the article and the wish to cooperate, and 19 Regions recognising the wish to cooperate without mentioning specific references). DG Regio encourages Regions interested in using the possibilities offered by this article to continue down that path.

II- Inventory and feedbacks at European level

(ChiaraValdesolo, INTERACT)

Article 37-6b can be regarded as a crossroad between regional programs and territorial cooperation. For regions that have limited access to territorial cooperation programmes, who are also aware of the added value of cooperation, the implementation of s.37-6b is a gateway to transnational cooperation projects without geographical barriers and thematic Territorial Cooperation programmes.

If this paper offers considerable scope for interpretation and great flexibility in its implementation, this freedom can also lead to some reluctance in certain regions accustomed to tighter control of their actions.

The brevity of the article, which does not specify any specific limits in terms of implementation, was able to create a feeling of doubt and uncertainty in some regions that ultimately chose not to apply it rather than taking the risk of misusing it.

Its brevity is perhaps also a reason for its lack of exposure, as many players are unaware of this possibility.

III- Case studies of the Limousin Region and the Land of Thuringia

(Sebastian Proeschel, Limousin Region, and Lars Wrage, Thuringia)

In the case of the Limousin and Thuringia, even if the modalities of implementation are quite different, the reasons which led to apply the s.37-6b are quite similar : to overcome the isolation of these territories and around the fact that these regions are not integrated within transborder programmes.

In the case of the Limousin region, it is part of an ERDF OP strategic line which is dedicated to cooperation. There is an additional tool for achieving the objectives of other OP guidelines with which funded inter-regional projects will need to be consistent. This guideline finances both

- The implementation of pilot projects, emanating from a transfer of good practice from another European Region, on the limousin territory
- The creation and participation of local limousin players within European networks

It also supports a Regional Framework Operation (the RUR@CT www.ruract.eu) which aims to transfer good european practices in rural development matters.

In the case of Thuringia, the use of s.37-6b is more oriented towards R&D and innovation. Moreover, its implementation is different. To generate projects, the “Land” organises project tenders regularly, so a selection at regional level is made which allows to choose those who will benefit from ERDF. It also offers the opportunity for project owners to benefit from advice on project management set up and assistance in searching for partners, especially within the 14 partner regions of Thuringia.

In both cases, it is reminded that only eligible expenses are those made by (or) partner (s) of Thuringia and Limousin.

IV- The opportunities offered by the midterm review of ERDF OP

(Patrice Baillieux, DG REGIO, European Commission)

Despite the national legal framework of each country, regional OPs can vary greatly within a single member state. This situation is largely due to the fact that the Regional Management Authority has a large discretion as regards the measurements of each guideline, and the financial distribution between them.

The European Commission cannot intervene on the Document Implementation (DOMO). It is directly amendable at regional level by the Managing Authority and the Programming Committee. It is therefore possible to integrate at any time the potential of s.37-6b by creating a joint "cooperation" measure within a guideline (including that of Technical Assistance) already existing within the OP.

However, it is advisable not to indicate in this measure which regions would be performing the cooperation projects. Indeed, the danger would be to limit oneself in terms of potential projects or have difficulty in finding partnerships and thus risking decommitment.

If a Region is planning to create a complete line of cooperation through s.37-6b in its OP, this is a profound change that will have to be negotiated with the Commission. The assessment and proposals for amendments to the ERDF OPs should take place by the end of 2010.

V- Complementarities with INTERREG

(Michel Lamblin, Director of INTERREG IVC - STC)

Since cooperation projects supported through s.37-6b must respond to the guidelines drawn in the ERDF OP, the prime interest in using this article lies in a systematic matching of projects also in line with the broader regional strategy. It is not always guaranteed with the INTERREG IV as the partners are not systematically regional public authorities.

In addition, the regional budgeting of these funds give access to small sub-regional structures linked to cooperation programmes that INTERREG IVC (for example) would not reach so easily . The range of potential players in the cooperation is therefore extended, especially as s.37-6b allows great flexibility for types of beneficiaries (associations, businesses, communities...) and eligible expenses (to be defined in DOMO), which INTERREG programmes do not always offer. For example, capital expenditure can be considered eligible with Article 37-6b, which is not the case for INTERREG IVC¹ .

However, it should be noted that in the context of joint cross-border investments, s.37-6b does not provide as much flexibility as an INTERREG programme. It is impossible to make heavy investments into one or several regional partnerships through this article because the funds dedicated to the development of a region cannot be invested in another, even if contiguous.

Next meeting on this theme : The European Commission is organising a seminar on Article 37-6b on the 6th October 2010 in Brussels (Borschetteà Center with the speaker Dirk Peters (representative for DG REGIO)).

¹ INTERREG IVC programme received 950 projects application under the two first call for proposals. These 950 projects represent 10 000 cities and regions having requested a total of fundings of 1,6 milliards of euros