

Communication on cross-border cooperation within the framework of the Tacis programme (Brussels, 27 May 1997)

Caption: This Communication, dated 27 May 1997, sets out the European Commission's policy regarding cross-border cooperation within the Tacis programme until 1999. The Commission aims to further cross-border development between the European Union (EU), the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs) and the Newly Independent States (NIS), and to support sustainable projects that have a cross-border impact and can generate sustainable regional cooperation. The Commission also highlights the fact that projects will be funded to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of border control and transit.

Source: Commission of the European Communities. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, and the Committee of the Regions on Cross-border Cooperation within the framework of the Tacis programme, COM (97) 239 final, Brussels: 27.05.1997, 9 p.

Copyright: European Union

URL:

http://www.cvce.eu/obj/communication_on_cross_border_cooperation_within_the_framework_of_the_tacis_programme_brussels_27_may_1997-en-3df91de6-b75f-492b-9e59-002d109bba2b.html

Publication date: 12/12/2013



COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

Brussels, 27.05.1997
COM(97) 239 final

COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

TO THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,
AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

on Cross-border Cooperation within the framework of the Tacis
programme

1. Context

1.1 The purpose of this Communication is to outline the Commission's policy towards cross-border cooperation within the Tacis programme until 1999. The European Community has long recognised the importance of cross-border cooperation. The development of cross-border cooperation between the Newly Independent States (NIS) and the EU and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEEC) has become of increasing importance in recent years. This follows the introduction of a common border with the NIS following Finland's accession to the EU, the increased importance of the Baltic Sea Region in the enlarged EU and the development of the eastern borders of the CEECs as they prepare for accession. At the initiative of the European Parliament, a new budget line was created specifically for this purpose in 1996.

1.2 A key factor behind the reinforcement of cross-border cooperation in this region is the need to ensure stability on the common EU/NIS border. The difference in living standards on either side of the border is extreme. As a result reinforcement of cooperation between the communities on either side of the border, laying the foundation for sustainable economic and social development, is seen as a priority. While facilitating bilateral links, the development of effective border control is also important.

1.3 In 1996 the European Parliament proposed the need for the coordination of the Tacis and Interreg programmes as a cross-border instrument on the Finnish-Russian border¹. The Committee of the Regions stressed the need to involve the border regions in the planning and implementation of cross-border cooperation measures². Furthermore it was proposed to integrate Russian local and regional authorities into the Baltic Sea cooperation programme in the same manner as authorities in the CEECs³

1.4 Tacis cross-border cooperation can also contribute to the pre-accession process in the CEECs. Firstly, through complementary funding for border-crossing facilities to address the increasing concern which has arisen about the adequacy of the eastern CEEC borders. Secondly, through the promotion of cross-border relations, particularly where there are minorities, such as in Baltic States, to help improve the stability of border regions.

¹ Resolution of the European Parliament of 19.1.1996 on the Commission Communication on the allocation of funds and the implementation of Community Initiatives in Austria, Finland and Sweden - COM(95)0123 - A4-0328/95

² Opinion adopted by the Committee of the Regions on 12 June 1996 on "The Northern Dimension of the European Union and Cross-border Cooperation on the Border between the European Union and the Russian Federation and in the Barents Region".

³ Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 13 November 1996 on "Current and future EU policy on the Baltic Sea region with specific reference to local and regional aspects".

context which seeks to further cross-border development between the European Community, CEECs and NIS through a number of instruments. The following events have played an important role in shaping this policy:

- Since the late 1980's the EC has supported cross-border and transnational cooperation through its Structural Funds, notably under the Community Initiative Interreg. The Interreg IIA Initiative provides finance for programmes covering border regions on all internal and external borders of the Union for the period 1994-99, the INTERREG IIC initiative provides finances for transnational cooperation in several areas including around the Baltic sea.
- In 1994, at the European Parliament's initiative, a separate budget line was created within Phare to support cross-border cooperation on the borders between the CEECs and the Member States. This led to the development of the Phare Cross-border cooperation programme, which is modelled on Interreg, and governed by a separate Commission Regulation⁴, with programmes approved annually.
- The Essen European Council meeting of December 1994 defined the main policy parameters for cross-border cooperation in the CEECs and NIS. It was agreed to "establish a programme of regional cooperation and bon voisinage, to promote multi-annual, multi-country cooperation in land and maritime border regions encompassing EU-CEEC, CEEC-CEEC and CEEC-NIS countries, in areas such as transport, utilities, environment, economic development, human resources and agriculture". This framework was further strengthened by the "Pact on Stability in Europe" in March 1995, which emphasized the "common and continuing effort to put an end to threats of tensions and crises and to create an area of lasting good-neighbourliness and cooperation in Europe".
- The Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) between the Communities, their Member States and respective countries include the objective of a gradual rapprochement with a wider area of European cooperation. The Action Plans for Russia and Ukraine state the importance of cross-border cooperation with the EC and associated countries. This point was included in the new Tacis Regulation.⁵

2. Objectives and tools

2.1 Against this background the aim is to support sustainable projects, (transfer of know-how, development of cross-border contacts, funding of small-scale infrastructure and joint ventures) which have a cross-border impact and are supported by communities on both sides of the border. This should allow the development of relationships that last beyond the duration of any project, leading to sustainable regional cooperation. Priority will be given to projects where there is demonstrable local or regional commitment and a systemic impact.

⁴ Commission Regulation No 1628/94 of 4 July 1994 concerning the implementation of a programme for cross-border cooperation between countries in central and eastern Europe and Member States of the Community, in the framework of the Phare programme. OJ L171, 6 July 1994, p 14

⁵ Council Regulation No 1279/96 of 25 June 1996 concerning the provision of assistance to economic reform and recovery in the New Independent States and Mongolia. OJ L165 4 July 1996, p 1

2.2 Projects will be funded which contribute to the achievement of the following objectives.

- to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of border control and transit.

The tools to be used are the strengthening of border networks, through improved border crossing procedures and appropriate infrastructure, and the strengthening of border security through joint border management programmes on both sides of the border. Priority will be given to:

- the facilitation of local transit across the borders, a pre-requisite for cross-border cooperation and regional development.
- those border-crossings linking the EC, CEECs and NIS countries, which are located on the Crete Corridors⁶, in view of the EC's Common Transport Policy and the development of an integrated Pan-European Transport Network of multi-modal corridors

- to assist border regions in overcoming their specific development problems which stem from being on the periphery of their national economies.

The tools to be used are the creation of co-operation and business development between communities, which, together with the establishment of links between border networks, will develop trade and economy in the regions. Projects on the border with the EU requiring equity investment will be funded through the Joint Venture Programme (JVP).

- to address two main types of local transfrontier environmental problem. Firstly, where dual activity is needed simultaneously on both sides of the border (e.g. pollution in border lakes), and secondly where investment is needed in the NIS to deal with a problem whose effects are felt on the other side of the border (e.g. up stream waste).

The tools to be used are studies of local environmental problems, often as part of a regional approach, detailed project design and proposals for follow up investment by third parties for supporting infrastructure. Special consideration will also be given to activities which support wider Community policy, such as the EC's 5th Environmental Action Plan⁷.

Moreover a portion of the budget will be set aside for supplementary activities which support the programme's objectives and match the priorities of Interreg IIA⁸, and Phare programmes.

2.3 A precondition for the successful implementation of any cross-border cooperation activity is the regional and local capacity to generate and develop projects, including the development of sustainable relationships between border communities.

⁶ Priority multi-modal transport corridors linking the Union with its Eastern neighbours, as identified by the 2nd Pan-European Transport Conference 1994 in Crete

⁷ EC 5th Action Plan "Towards Sustainability".

⁸ The key sectors identified in the Interreg IIA programme for the Finnish-Russian border are: Transport and telecommunications, Development of business and business environment, Environment, and Increasing know-how and conditions for regional cooperation.

3.1 In the early years of the programme priority will be given to institutional support. This will make it possible for regional and local authorities to play a fuller role in the programme as it develops. Simultaneously, in the first instance, focus will be given to the development of border networks and management. In addition to key border crossings priority will be given to projects directly linking border communities, such as business development. Environmental projects will maintain a key role in all years of the programme.

4. Geographical focus: eligible regions

4.1 The geographical orientation of the Tacis cross-border cooperation programme will focus on the borders between the NIS and the EC, and the NIS borders with the Baltic States. In addition the programme will cover the land borders of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova with the CEECs. Details of the eligible regions are provided in the map at annex 1. Activities in the area of Archangelsk will be considered only in exceptional circumstances, in order to complement activities funded under the Interreg IIA programme.

4.2 To ensure a coherent approach the Commission intends to consider cross-border cooperation activities on NIS-NIS borders under the Tacis Inter-State programme. First initiatives in this respect have been taken.

5. Methodology

5.1 Appropriate procedures will be developed to take into account the objectives of the cross-border cooperation programme and the framework within which it fits. These will incorporate the strong involvement of regional and local authorities and the flexibility to take into account small scale grassroots projects. Specific project selection criteria will include the need for cross-border impact, consideration of synergy with other Community programmes and absorption capacity.

5.2 Synergy with other Community programmes

5.2.1 Cross-border cooperation under the Tacis programme will be implemented in such a way that a maximum of synergy is achieved with the Interreg and Phare Cross-border Cooperation Programmes. This will be of particular benefit for the Barents Region and Baltic Sea Region, in accordance with the approach adopted in the Baltic Sea Region Initiative at Visby in May 1996, which called for more effective complementary action by EC funding instruments (Interreg, Phare and Tacis).

5.2.2 Interreg and Phare Cross-border cooperation programmes are making determined efforts to harmonise their approach where practicable, to make the overall EC funding system as simple and understandable as possible to final beneficiaries. Tacis cross-border cooperation will also adopt this approach, while working within the existing Tacis framework. The specific procedures for Tacis cross-border cooperation will not detract from the general procedures applicable under the Tacis Regulation, such as the role of the Tacis Management Committee.

- 5.2.3 Learning from the experience of other Community cross-border cooperation programmes, it is intended to use existing regional frameworks as much as possible. Obviously, where necessary, support will be given to their further development.
- 5.2.4 Where relevant, existing Committee structures set up under Phare/Interreg Cross-order cooperation programme will be consulted. Thus, for example, to ensure harmonisation with other actions in the Baltic Sea Region, the Commission will consult with the Baltic Coordination Committee on developments within the Tacis cross-border cooperation programme.

5.3 *Small project facility*

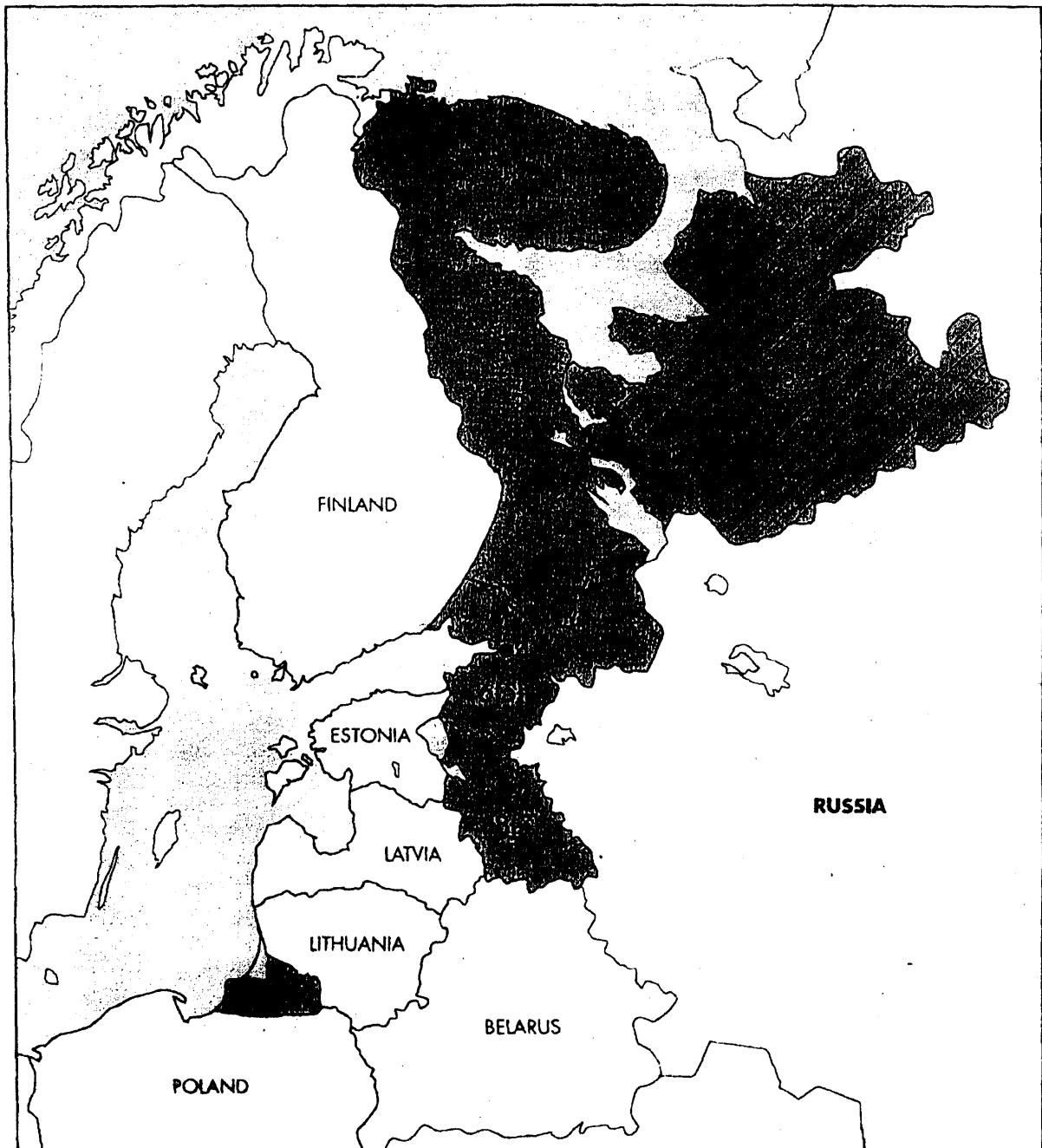
Small-scale local cross-border cooperation actions are given a high priority by regional authorities and communities, in order that they can work together with funds of an appropriate size. Projects of this size will be funded under the cross-border cooperation programme through the Tacis small-scale project facility. It is proposed that funding in this area will link Tacis activities with complementary Community programmes, based upon the successful model developed for the Baltic Small Project Facility (BSPF). The facility will be demand driven and flexible, to cover a wide range of areas of economic cooperation including support to the democratic process.

5.4 *Role of regional/local authorities*

Identification and preparation of activities will be carried out at the regional and local level as far as possible drawing on contacts and advice from Interreg regions. National authorities, in accordance with normal Tacis principles, will retain a role in the programme, in particular with regard to projects of national importance, such as border-crossings, and final programme approval.

5.5 *Awareness Raising*

- 5.5.1 A first step will be to organise meetings for each NIS border concerned, where national, regional and local authorities will be represented. Through this framework the relevant authorities will be involved in project identification, development and selection.
- 5.5.2 Separate meetings will be held for regional and local authorities to discuss the development and implementation of the Tacis small-project facility. Workshops to assist in project identification and development will play an important part in increasing the local and regional capacity for involvement in the programme.



ELIGIBLE BORDER REGIONS OF RUSSIA

Russian - Finnish Border

- 1 Murmansk oblast
- 2 Republic of Karelia
- 3 Archangelsk oblast
(eligible in exceptional circumstances only to complement activities funded under the Interreg IIA Programme)
- 4 City of St Petersburg
- 5 Leningrad oblast

Russian - Estonian Border

- 6(5) Leningrad oblast
- 7 Pskov oblast

Russian - Latvian Border

- 8(7) Pskov oblast

Russian - Polish/Russian - Lithuanian Border

- 9 Kaliningrad oblast

ISSN 0254-1475

COM(97) 239 final

DOCUMENTS

EN**11 01 15**

Catalogue number : CB-CO-97-231-EN-C**ISBN 92-78-19866-8**

Office for Official Publications of the European Communities**L-2985 Luxembourg**

9