



REGIONS
& CITIES

European Week
Brussels 9-12 October 2017

Regions and change: The transformative power of transnational networks

Wednesday 11 October 2017

KEY MESSAGES

Context

The workshop aimed to increase appreciation of the contribution made by transnational co-operation networks in bringing about change. The organising regions are members of such networks. They wanted to showcase how PURPLE, FEDARENE, FECOF and ERIAFF bring value to the regions' work and the thematic areas they cover.

The four networks shared experiences, thoughts and future aspirations, giving the assembled group of 70+ from fourteen countries the chance to learn about transnational networks' role in policy development and project delivery. This paper brings together a number of key messages arising from the workshop.

- The value and contribution of transnational networks in the process of bringing about positive change seems evident.
- Transnational networks such as those featured in this workshop have a key role to play both in developing high-quality policy and in implementing that policy through projects, ongoing work and other means.
- Networks with either a thematic or territorial starting point/focus bring, by their very nature, a breadth of experience, a depth of understanding and a cross-representation of members.





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- Transnational networks bring value in different ways and are capable of achieving multiple positive effects, for instance they can add value:
 - ✓ to a project, by drawing on a group of experts from across the network;
 - ✓ to policy debates (and thence to the European institutions);
 - ✓ by acting as a communication platform;
 - ✓ to their members and the general public, by working to promote and shape key messages;
 - ✓ through enabling the delivery of local benefit that would not otherwise exist.
- Benefit can thus be found at all levels – local, regional, national and transnational. In the last regard it was salient to hear how different strands of the Interreg programme in particular had brought about positive impact/change in numerous project partner regions.
- In addition to broader (external) benefit, the networks share a key concern about ensuing continued benefit to their own members.
- Unsurprisingly, there are differences too at a more practical level, and transnational networks vary in size, age, membership structures and operational arrangements - points that audience members were keen to explore and learn more at the event.
- There are clear differences too in terms of the degree of formality with which different transnational networks operate, the extents to which members are contributive as opposed to recipients of a service, and the ways in which they operate in Brussels itself.
- What emerged was the realisation there are a large number of variables and possibilities in terms of how networks might organise themselves but each can be made to work, - and work well - as evidenced by the work showcased within the event.
- The practical dimension of the contribution and added-value brought by transnational networks was testified to by the interventions from each network, highlighting in turn a LIFE programme project; an innovative physical restoration work; an Interreg Europe project and a forthcoming transnational conference event.

