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Preconditions for successful cross-border cooperation on environmental issues

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# **Preconditions for successful cross-border cooperation on en- vironmental issues**

European experiences

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# 1 Introduction

The objective of the study is to identify conditions for success in - and, concomitantly, obstacles to - cross-border cooperation on environmental matters between neighbouring sub-regions within formalised or emerging cross-border Regions in Europe.

The subject of the study is thus situated in the overlap of two areas of public policy: cross-border cooperation and the environment.

The two areas have a number of characteristics in common. First, they are relatively new areas of policy - or rather, their saliency and political profile have risen substantially since the 1970s. Cross-border cooperation became an issue only when a number of barriers were lowered sufficiently to require some administrative response to new patterns of exchange. Similarly, the environment has moved progressively, if unevenly, up the ladder of political priorities as the evidence of cumulative strains on ecosystems has become increasingly difficult to ignore.

For the purposes of empirical analysis, notably the identification of cause and effect, the fact that both areas of policy are recent creates major difficulties: since much of the policy output is in the form of more or less formalised expressions of intent rather than solid achievements on the ground, judgments concerning the key dependent variable, "success", are especially difficult.

Secondly, both areas of public policy are areas of Community interest. On the one hand, this increases the potential value of the study as a guide to policy. On the other hand, the Community intervenes heavily in both policy areas to the point of overshadowing purely local factors and, at the extreme, creating Potemkin villages: activities which justify the acquisition of funds from INTERREG.

The two elements mentioned above, newness and Europe, combine in recent regulatory developments - the Internal Market, the European Economic Area and CEFTA on the one hand; and the increasing alignment of European environmental legislation on the other. Studying an object while the (in this case policy) environment changes radically makes standard tools of scientific analysis, e.g. time series and intertemporal comparisons in general, difficult if not impossible to use.

Looked at from a more specifically environmental perspective, cross-border areas are of particular interest. For many, periphery status has meant relatively low levels of development. Moreover, the very geographical features which often define borders - mountains and rivers - tend to be areas of relative natural interest. There is thus the possibility of sharing, and defending, a common resource.

On the other hand, low population density or more sinister motives have led national authorities to choose these border areas disproportionately as sites for particularly dangerous or polluting industrial plants, forcing neighbours to share the risks.

Even if none of the foregoing applies, the reduction of periphery status as the result of European integration at the very least implies a fairly radical transformation of the economy. All things being equal, this transformation will increase economic growth and hence put new strains on the environment. Alternatively, the new situation not only creates very strong incentives for conscious planning, but more particularly opportunities for the creation of "post-industrial" patterns of activity. Between these extremes lies a strategy of safeguarding and/ or restoring the natural environment inherited from peripheral status as an incentive for industrial and/ or agricultural investment or as a basis for tourism.

While the *laissez-faire* approach may lead to cross-border cooperation in a purely problem-solving context, the strategies of putting an absolute or merely instrumental value on the environment would require purposeful and positive cooperation.

The definition of "success" is the area of overlap of the two public policies would thus seem to have at least two dimensions: one, the intensity of cooperation as measured by

the existence of joint consultation, study and planning, decision-making, or project management institutions; the other, the quality of output as measured by ecological criteria.

While, from a scientific point of view, the second dimension will not be answered satisfactorily, from an environmental policy point of view the answer matters a great deal. As pointed out, areas of natural interest are disproportionately concentrated around the Community's internal (4.000 km) and external (6.000 km) borders. European integration, unwittingly, puts these under threat. At the same time, of course, it provides new avenues for cooperative action by removing some of the administrative barriers between States and providing funding mechanisms for joint undertakings. A combination of firm regulatory guidance from the Union and funding for innovative, "post-industrial" transformation can create pilot areas of good practice which point the way to a sustainable future.

This Report has three components:

- a description of the Regions investigated;
- a consideration of conditions conducive to success or failure in cross-border activities on the environment, as demonstrated through Regional policy, projects and structures;
- an analysis of the implications of current Regional work for the potential of cross-border action as a significant means of environmental protection.



## 2 International analysis

### 2.1 Study design

The design of the study involves two elements: a comparative study of 15 cross-border ("Euro-") Regions within the Community or at its external borders; and in-depth studies of two Regions on the Upper Rhine. (In the following, Region with a capital "R" refers to cross-border or Euro-regions, while "region" refers to their constituent parts. The latter are not necessarily regions in the formal sense, but may be other administrative subdivisions taking part in cross-border schemes.)

In our original design, the relationship between the two projects was largely sequential: the comparative, multi-regional study was intended to be open-ended and essentially inductive as regards methodology, furnishing elements - "factors contributing to success" - to be tested in depth in the two Rhine case studies.

During the preparatory phase, and in an effort to ensure maximum comparability of approach and data between the two studies, the relationship between the two studies, and hence the nature of the comparative work, changed substantially.

This essentially involved using the already acquired experience of the local teams charged with the in-depth studies, i.e. EURES (Freiburg) as project leader, and St. Gallen, to substantially reduce the open-ended nature of the comparative study, through joint elaboration of a largely closed and very detailed questionnaire. Accordingly, the design phase of the international project merged with the design phase of the in-depth study. This involved the drafting and exchange of theoretical papers, three workshops in St. Gallen, Freiburg, and Brussels, and the pre-testing of the resulting questionnaire. The methodology finally adopted is described in the following section.

The plan for the "international" section of the project was to carry out a comparative study of 15 regions throughout Europe, excluding the two in-depth studies of the Oberrhein and Bodensee regions. The Regions investigated are as follows:

1. Ireland/ Northern Ireland (Republic of Ireland, UK)
2. Saar-Lor-Lux (Germany, Luxembourg, France, Belgium)
3. Euregio Maas-Rhein (Belgium, Germany, Netherlands)
4. Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées (CTP, Spain, France, Andorra)
5. Euroregion Pyrénées (Spain, France)
6. Transmanche Euroregion (UK, France, Belgium)
7. EUREGIO (Germany, Netherlands)
8. Benelux Middengebied (Belgium, Netherlands)
9. European Development Pole (France, Belgium)
10. Euregio Scheldemond (Netherlands, Belgium)
11. Extremadura/ Alentejo (Spain, Portugal)
12. Cross-border Community of Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra (France, Spain)
13. Friuli-Venezia Giulia/ Slovenia (Italy, Slovenia)
14. Comunidad de Trabajo Galicia-Norte de Portugal (Spain, Portugal)
15. PACTE (Belgium, France)
16. The Archipelago (Sweden, Finland [Aland])

## 17. COTRAO (France, Italy, Switzerland)

Regions have been chosen on the basis of one of two criteria. Some Regions, such as the Nordic Archipelago or Extremadura/ Alentejo, responded positively to letters of enquiry sent to some 50 Regions about their work in the field of environment. Similarly, some Regions, such as the European Development Pole and Italy-Slovenia, were chosen because they described themselves as having environmental priorities in their literature. Other Regions, such as PACTE and Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra, were chosen because they played a double regional role - as parts of larger cross-border systems, and as Regions in their own right. This has presented some interesting insights into effectiveness in relation to Regional size and coherence.

One clear lesson learned from unresponsive Regions is that the term "environment" is currently being used as a catch-all phrase useful for creating interest within donor committees and obtaining funding. In one particular case - that of COTRAO - numerous approaches, including a trip to the Regional General Assembly in Switzerland, were unable to produce even a single document. The Region has an environment Committee, with offices in Torino, yet interviews were refused and phone calls and faxes went unanswered. We have also met with non-response in a much deeper sense, in that the existence of an environmental component to a Regional programme was unknown. Such was the case for the European Development Pole, for example. The Region is described by an INTERREG brochure as strongly concerned with the environmental consequences of economic growth. However, repeated phone calls with the Regional secretary-general failed to elicit acknowledgement of a Regional environment dossier, much less published information or an interview.

It can be argued that from a methodological view the sample should include Regions where little or no environmental cooperation takes place. We have concluded that the variance within a positive range in the dependent variable - successful cooperation - yields more important insights than juxtaposing Regions which do or do not include the environment among their core activities. This is all the more the case since effective environmental action at the cross-border level varies so enormously between Regions that such a juxtaposition has anyway taken place to some extent.

## 2.2 Methodology

As already stated, the revised methodology for the comparative, multi-Regional study has been harmonised with the in-depth studies and depends on the collection of a large number of factual and behavioral data according to pre-established criteria for all Euroregions to be studied. The three "fiches" collected data on three levels:

- (1) The socio-economic, including environmental characteristics of the (sub-) regions and the Euroregion concerned, the political system, degree of economic and cultural integration, etc.;
- (2) The institutional maturity of cross-border cooperation in general;
- (3) The environmental problems of the Region and the cooperative response to these problems.

For some purposes, the information gathered in these three fiches allows the identification of causal relationships, where fiche (1) furnishes independent variables (e.g. the degree of structural similarity of two regions, the relative autonomy of local vs. central government, etc.); (2) represents an intervening variable; and (3) represents the dependent variable.

In other cases, (2) and (3) (general cross-border cooperation, and its environmental component) can form cause-and-effect patterns in either direction, e.g. poor general cooperation can be an obstacle to effective action on the environment, or common environmental management may be the main impetus for more general cooperation.

Lastly, fiche (3) itself contains data which allow the discovery of causal relationships or the falsification of hypotheses, notably whether the severity of environmental problems or the nature of the vectors (water, etc.) has an impact on the quality of cooperation.

As regards the methods of data collection, interviews were relevant for all three fiches, but published sources - many of them collected during interview visits - furnished a relatively larger share of data for fiches (1) and (2).

While the fiches proved important for the creation of a large and comparable database, open questions were retained in the interview schedule and furnished some of the most important insights.

For many of the categories of the fiches, hard data - statistics or institutional information - were available. For others, including such items as "environmental awareness", "regional identity", etc. the researchers had to rely largely on the judgments of respondents.

In general, the adjustment of the fiches was a continuous process which was not necessarily terminated with the preliminary phase. A number of categories that initially seemed of possible relevance were removed from the finished questionnaire - such as specific permitting regimes and the existence of financial instruments in the environmental field - because they were found to have no or very little relevance to environmental problems and problem-solving at the Regional level. On the other hand, the responses to open-ended questions by Regional officials indicated useful new avenues of enquiry and were integrated into the questionnaire where applicable.

Interviews were carried out with Euroregion officials involved in environmental management and/ or cooperation, general administration, and technical development in the chosen regions.

Further interviews included Regional administrators involved in INTERREG programme supervision, groups involved in more specific regional environment work (Fedarene, Worldwide Fund for Nature) and academics specialised in the Regions.

It would have been extremely useful midway through the project to have compared our findings with those being gathered by the Commission within the INTERREG programme. Unfortunately, the relevant department of DG XVI refused us a meeting, following repeated requests.

One of the most complex methodological tasks still to be accomplished, notably through a workshop of all participants, is to formalise the dependent variable, i.e. "success". As indicated in the Introduction, this may have two components, one relating to effort (intensity and sophistication of cooperation), the other to results in environmental terms.

## **2.3 Findings**

The first part of this report concentrates on some counterintuitive findings - falsifications of original assumptions - and on the discovery of unexpected relationships across a representative but not exhaustive range of indicators.

This account follows the methodological approach reported above, i.e. it looks first at general social, economic and institutional variables and then at environmental variables as explanatory factors. In addition, however, European Union policy in general, and INTERREG in particular, turned out to have a strong influence on the phenomenon under study, and thus warrant a separate analysis.

### **2.3.1 Structural Factors and Background Conditions**

#### **2.3.1.1 Cultural factors**

We made the assumption that cultural differences or similarities among participating Regions, notably regarding the value put on the environment, would have an impact on the

success or intensity of environmental cooperation. The problem was assessing such differences with some degree of reliability. In practice, a consistent picture emerged on the basis of peer assessments and self-assessments by officials working in Euroregions.

**2.3.1.2 Environment as value**

Three patterns could be distinguished which linked performance to environmental awareness: the key partners all accorded low priority to the environment (low-low); the opposite (high-high); and a mixed pattern (high-low). Our findings do not suggest, as one might expect, a systematic progressive ranking as regards outcome (environmental cooperation), but rather, in most cases:

Environmental Priority	Outcome
high-high	good
high-low	poor-intermediate
low-low	poor

**Table 1** Environmental priority and policy outcome

In other words, one significant partner in cross-border cooperation not sharing the commitment of its partners could condemn to failure even elaborate and institutionally ambitious (secretariat, working groups, etc.) efforts at environmental cooperation. An additional finding of potentially great significance is that the pattern of national rather than local value preferences largely determines outcome.

**(1) Low-low :**

These were areas in which all Regional partners had a relatively low commitment to the environment and where environmental activity tended to be limited to discussion and information exchange. In some cases, this had to do with a national "culture" of indifference to environmental questions (see profiles of national governments, below). Other factors came into play as well, however.

In **Saar-Lor-Lux**, an industrial culture common to all the regional partners has not taken on board an environmental awareness, partly because of the difficulty in doing so in view of the significant differences in national legislation and competence among Regional partners. While there is a high degree of Regional awareness among the Region's populations, it is based on a common history of heavy industry and oriented towards becoming a leading European economic entity.

Not surprisingly, given the above configuration common to the entire area, the Euroregion's environmental goals, such as they are, are centred around economic upturn, and focus on problems of waste management.

**Transmanche Euroregion.** In the United Kingdom, a low level of environmental concern on the part of the national government is compounded by a cultural tendency to equate environmental concern with nature conservation. This, combined with the traditional environmental insouciance of France and Belgium, has had negative consequences for the wider and deeper environmental concerns expressed by Kent County.

The **Comunidad de Trabajo Galicia-Norte de Portugal** suffers from a complex system of administrative failings that make effective action extremely difficult. Portugal has no decentralised regional policy. Norte therefore has no competence, but must pass all projects through the central Government for approval.

Galicia, for its part, has an enormous degree of competence but suffers from serious blockages within the region itself. Four levels of administration apply in Spain: central, regional, provincial and local. While some Spanish regions have managed to create a more-or-less smoothly functioning whole out of these, Galicia's other problems - poverty, demographic disequilibria, poor relations with Madrid, industries severely affected by EC accession (agriculture, fisheries) - have led to extremely limited work on the environment.

A similar, but even more severely handicapped, configuration was seen in the Region **Friuli-Venezia Giulia/ Slovenia**. Although this is an INTERREG Region, one of the partners - Slovenia - is a sovereign non-EU State. As a result, all project agreements must by definition be inter-Governmental international agreements.

As is the case with certain parts of Spain, the Italian State is seen as a serious obstacle to effective Regional action. Friuli-Venezia Giulia is one of the five most autonomous of Italy's 20 regions. Funding, however, has been a problem, and it is only through INTERREG that the Region has been able to undertake specific projects rather than merely engage in information exchange. In fact, 63% of INTERREG I funding is allocated to environmental projects.

This INTERREG involvement required a decision at national level on funding, which then had to be translated into regional law, which in turn had to be approved yet again by the national government. The administrative problems peculiar to the Region have prevented the development of any general environment policy, as well as making it impossible to set up an environment working group or permanent technical teams. These problems faithfully mirror the low priority accorded environment by the national government.

Another Region of this type is **Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra**. Environmental awareness is not high in any of the Regional partners, and the national Governments (France, Spain) do not consider the environment a priority. Nevertheless, there is very effective cooperation among the regions. This is seen as being due to a strong will to work together in order to compensate marginalisation within the respective Member States - thereby effectively bypassing national government - combined with a very strong common background and culture.

Here again, as in the case of PACTE (see below), we see a smaller Region working more effectively than the larger one (CTP) of which it is a part. While the CTP can only really be effective in dealing with the Pyrénées, Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra addresses more immediate concerns.

Of special note is the creation of an independent regional Common Cooperation Fund of 250 million pesetas. This makes it easier to bring both private and public agents into cross-border cooperation than would otherwise be the case. It should be noted in this connection that both Euskadi and Navarra have competence over a wide range of services and policy areas. They are the only two regions of Spain to have negotiated Economic Agreements with the central Government.

## (2) High-low:

This is typified by three of the Euroregions where Belgium is a partner (**Maas/ Rhein, Benelux Middengebied, Euregio Scheldemond**). Both Flanders and Wallonia tend to exhibit a lack of interest in the environment as compared to the traditional strong concern shown by partners such as the Netherlands and Germany.

In these cases, "autonomy" from central government appears as an intervening factor reinforcing non-cooperation. To the newly enfranchised Flemish and Walloon Regions, demonstration of their "federal" powers in their respective priority areas is more rewarding than cross-border environmental cooperation. In addition, their powers are such that they have no need of Regional partners to strengthen their hand against a "distant" central government, as is the case with a number of other Regions studied.

The problems posed by Belgian partnership is less serious for Benelux Middengebied than for Euregio Maas Rhein. Without both Wallonia and Flanders as a partner, it avoids certain

intra-Belgian conflicts, as well as sharing a sense of "Dutchness" with its Flemish partners. The outcome of this high-low case can therefore be judged "intermediate". The same is true of Euregio Scheldemond, which also is a purely "Dutch" Region.

Geography also plays a role in the Scheldemond Region. The Scheldt Estuary and its extended coastline are of central importance for all three provincial partners, providing a unifying "motif" for Regional action.

A similar outcome, for rather different reasons, is evident in the case of the small Euro-region **PACTE**, where Hainaut in Wallonia is paired with Nord-Pas de Calais in France. The Region is theoretically a good candidate for "low-low" membership: Belgian regions, as noted above, tends to prove troublesome partners. Nord-Pas de Calais, for its part, is a member of the low-low Transmanche Euroregion.

In PACTE, however, given a different configuration, the same partners are engaged in a very different style of management from that of the larger Transmanche Euroregion.

Both PACTE regions consist of depressed industrial areas, with traditional associated water and soil problems, interspersed with green belt areas. Local public administrations are very aware of the need to develop the area's economy without further damaging the environment, particularly since "soft" tourism is seen as a potential growth sector.

It is likely that geography also plays a key role here. No part of the Region is very far from the border, which is in turn extensive. Thus, actors within the Euroregion tend to be locals and acutely conscious of the existence of the border. In addition, decision-making in the Region functions at a much less abstract level than is the case for the Transmanche Euroregion.

One way in which the Region has circumvented some of the problems inherent in low-environmental-interest national structures and hugely differing competence levels has been to put joint and complementary actions on a par with one another. Where joint action is impracticable in dealing with a common problem, owing to differing levels of competence, infrastructure or economic conditions, parallel but complementary action takes its place.

Similar conditions determine the results in the Region of **Extremadura/ Alentejo**. Alentejo suffers from all the usual problems stemming from Portugal's lack of a decentralised regional policy. Extremadura, however, has taken full advantage of its powers as a Spanish autonomous region. Based on these powers, and its stringent regional Environmental Impact Assessment law, it has developed a very full environmental programme with Portugal.

This cannot be termed joint action in the full sense. Extremadura develops the programmes to be carried out, based on the region's development aims and environmental problems. Alentejo, which shares Extremadura's geography, climate, and demography - as well as its main economic sectors and environmental problems - simply agrees to cooperation, via a State accord. The results, however, are that of effective joint consultation and development.

A more traditional outcome is that seen in the **Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées** (CTP), where the highly industrialised, highly environment-conscious autonomous region of Catalunya is paired with seven less environmentally aware - and far less powerful - partners. Environmental projects tend to be limited to the common area of concern - the Pyrénées.

Despite the size and involvement of Catalunya's Environment Department, which has a large number of programmes backed up by legislation that goes well beyond that of the national government, projects are difficult to carry out. Much of this has to do with the inability of the French regions to determine their own activities in the environmental field because of their lack of competence.

The same situation applies in the **Euregio Pyrénées**, despite its smaller size. Here again, the French lack of competence creates administrative and practical problems. In addition,

the disparity between Catalunya's development and economy and that of its partners leads to disparate priorities within the Region.

### (3) High-high:

This constellation generally applies to bilateral Regions with German partners on one side and Dutch, Swiss, Nordic or Austrian partners on the other. The varied performance of these Regions shows, however, that the high-high pairing may be a necessary but not sufficient condition for success.

**Euregio**, for example, brings together two environmentally strong partners - Germany and the Netherlands - in an efficient environmental administration. This is certainly due to the policies of the respective national governments to some extent. Probably far more important, however, is the efforts made by the Regional authorities to develop an administratively and financially independent Regional structure to determine and plan cross-border activities. Such efforts are, of course, facilitated by compatible environmental policies at the federal and national levels.

The clearest example of the efficiency and environmental effectiveness of a relatively uniform high-high grouping was the Aland-Finland-Sweden **Archipelago Region**. However, it must be pointed out that the effective environmental efforts being made in the Region had almost nothing to do with the Regional context and everything to do with the fact that the partner national States have a very high level of environmental awareness. In addition, Finland has accorded Aland - the Region's most environmentally vulnerable member - a right to frame more stringent laws where it sees fit.

Environment legislation is quite good in both Finland and Sweden. Interestingly, the general framework for such legislation is not particularly "environmental" in orientation. Both countries place a strong emphasis on ownership rights. In fact, Finland had no specifically environmental regulations until quite recently; introduction of an environmental impact assessment requirement represents its first real environmental law *per se*.

In both Sweden and Finland, environment law is strongly sectoral in nature. These sectoral laws are relatively stringent - more stringent than corresponding Community legislation, for the most part. Within the Region, therefore, most environmental legislation is either national or international, covering regional aspects. These laws are stronger than the Regional instruments, although there is a perceived need to strengthen them for particular issues, as been done by the region of Aland in regard to water.

The Archipelago Region is particularly aware of environmental concerns as the result of its geographical peculiarities (see section on Vulnerable Ecosystems). At the same time, however, there seems little doubt that effective environmental action in the Region has been facilitated by the strength of national regimes, and particularly of shared approaches and concepts concerning the need for environmental protection.

Both Regional States are consequently heavily involved in water-related activities within bilateral and multilateral fora, including the Committee for the Gulf of Bothnia,<sup>1</sup> the Nordic Council, and the Helsinki Convention. This reflects a shared perception that the most serious Nordic environmental problem areas - the Baltic and the Gulf of Bothnia - are most efficiently dealt with at the national and multinational rather than the Regional level. Within this framework, Regional participation and coordination are considered extremely important at the level of collecting and disseminating information.

In addition, all three Regional partners have a relatively strong commitment to certain general principles of environmental action, including the precautionary principle, the polluter pays principle, and the use of Best Available Technology (BAT). These are seen

<sup>1</sup> Activities of the Committee for the Gulf of Bothnia include monitoring of marine waters of Finland and Sweden, open sea investigations, and national coastal investigations. Partners include the Finnish Institute of Marine Research, the Finnish National Board of Waters and the Environment, and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency.

as essential not only for the health of the environment, but also for the creation of a "level playing field" for business and economies of scale.<sup>2</sup>

Of course, there is little doubt that the Region's limited economic base, as well as its extreme ecological vulnerability, go a long way towards explaining the ease of cooperation in the area. It should also be noted that the Region is carrying out almost no environmental projects in common, but rather in parallel.

### **2.3.1.3 Regional identity and achievement**

It was assumed that the existence of a cross-border sense of shared identity and a common future would facilitate action. Certain Regions, particularly those involving Swiss partners, have strongly advocated that environmental policy be initiated in the Regions rather than at the national level. The argument put forward is that the Regions often have a higher degree of awareness and concern than the centre, which is moreover more coherently - and therefore effectively - articulated.

This appears to be the case in some Regions, although Regional identification is by no means sufficient to ensure efficient joint effort. More important, the lack of strong identification does not seem in any way to hinder strong Regional action.

#### *2.3.1.3.1 Strong identification*

The population of the **Euregio Maas-Rhein** shares a developed sense of geographic and cultural identity, reinforced over decades by their strongly marginal status in their respective States. This has not, however, led to a sense of Regional responsibility and the realisation of regional potential, for the Region has no competence and no parliamentary body. Thus, existing administrative borders are perceived as the real borders for the Region, despite the strong sense of identification felt by Regional populations.

Furthermore, the establishment of a parliamentary body for the Region was not seen as a sufficient precondition to increased Regional responsibility, which could only be brought about through a greater confluence developing between Regional perceptions of needs and national assistance.

The **Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées** (CTP) faces similar problems. The Pyrénées provide a sense of identity for all the Regional partners, who also share social and cultural traditions. At the same time, of course, the mountains form a very real physical barrier between the parts of the Euroregion.

The most important factor in preventing a sense of Regional responsibility, however, is not the presence of the Pyrénées but rather the enormous differences in competence and development between the Spanish and French partners. This is particularly true for Catalunya, which sees itself as very different from its largely rural, poorer, less "communautaire" neighbours in both France and Spain. The French regions, for their part, have little sense of Regional responsibility because they have no power, as they are not departments.

In this Region, realisation of potential closely follows the lines of Regional identification. Thus, the CTP acts together primarily in regard to the Pyrénées, for which all partners feel concern and responsibility. Little can be achieved on a larger scale, since Catalunya, the "motor" for the Region, sees itself as having closer ties to other groupings than to the Region. (For example, it is an active member of the Quatre Moteurs, which unites several non-capital but nevertheless "motor" regions sharing high-level development and technology concerns.)

Cultural and linguistic links, with a very long history, join the two eastern partners in the **Euregio Scheldemond**. The Scheldt Estuary itself also acts as a unifying factor. Indeed,

<sup>2</sup> Working paper, "On the environmental legislation of Aland", 1994



the Region's population has always tended to divide itself psychologically along existing physical lines - that is, below the Scheldt or above the Scheldt. Netherlands south of the Scheldt is very different from north of it, in terms of activities, population density and geography.

This has not translated into a Regional culture. Sense of responsibility for the Region is based on cultural, linguistic and geographic affinities, not on the formal construct of "Region". The Euregio is very young, however, and the strong sense of identification that already exists among sections of the Region's population is likely to make the Regional context an easily assimilable one.

The two main obstacles to the realisation of Regional potential are seen as lying with the authorities rather than with local populations. First, there is a difference in competence levels between the Netherlands province and the Flemish Region that creates problems in administration at the Regional level. Secondly, the authorities of the respective Regional partners have for their part always perceived a border to exist. This is the case not only for East Flanders and Zeeland, which lie in different States, but for East and West Flanders as well. Frequent Regional meetings seem to be altering these perceptions.

**Extremadura/ Alentejo** presents a very different picture. Here, rural identification has translated into effective political action and consequent success in joint efforts.

Geographic identification is strong. Both regions feel themselves to have been "forgotten" by their national Governments, creating a sense of Regional identity. This is true despite the fact that the partners do not share a common language and that psychological barriers exist because of past relations between Spain and Portugal.

At the same time, the sense of political responsibility on both sides of the border is very high. The regional governments have introduced cross-border language training to further the process of integration. Moreover, there is an enormous amount of press attention given to both Regional partners, within both regions. As a result of this shared political vision, the Region has undertaken quite a bit of successful activity, despite its youth.

The same sort of political motor is at work in the cross-border Community of **Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra**. Regional populations share a strong sense of responsibility for the Region, based on common topography and climate and, in particular, a shared Basque culture and language (although more so in some parts of the Region than others). As the latter is completely different from the surrounding Romance language culture, it has led to a strong sense of shared apartness.

This is a sub-Region of the larger CTP (see above), and it is clear that its smaller size, involving greater identification among partners, has resulted in more efficient joint planning and action.

While the regions differ enormously in character, owing to the traditional heavy industry specific to Euskadi, the political will to work together is very strong at the political level. The partners share commercial interests best achieved jointly, particularly the TGV and other infrastructure projects. A great deal has been done to integrate the Euroregion, and specifically to find new sectors to effectively replace old industrial patterns. Environmental projects are few, but well planned.

Strong Regional identification and achievement does not, however, necessarily imply success in the field of environment. **Saar-Lor-Lux-Trier/ Westpfalz**, for example, has a strong sense of regional identity based on long-established coal and steel communities. The partners are thus all industrial border areas with similar economic and environmental problems. In addition, partners identify with a traditional heavy industrial "culture".

Regional authorities clearly understand the need to cooperate in order to gain advantage from European unity by transforming the area from one of declining heavy industry to a leading economic entity. As a result, they are working to realise Regional potential in several areas.

This has not, however, translated into any kind of serious environmental activity. There, potential remains unrealised. The partners are keenly aware of serious common problems

arising from their industrial past. Yet environmental goals, such as they are, tend to be centred around economic upturn since the Regional partners are all industrial areas in decline.

A very similar result is seen in the **Comunidad de Trabajo Galicia-Norte de Portugal**. These two regions share many social, cultural and economic characteristics as the result of their common history. In addition, they both feel a strong sense of marginalisation and see joint structures as a way to achieve greater autonomy vis-à-vis their national centres. One would expect this strong cultural identification to translate into effective joint action.

Yet, while Regional authorities are attempting to develop geographic Regional identification among Regional populations, this has not yet been achieved. As a result, Regional potential has yet to be realised. Administrative differences between the regions and blockages within the regions themselves are seen as responsible for this lack of progress. Incomplete integration of financial institutions creates additional problems.

These administrative conflicts have had serious results in the field of environment. Joint projects are limited to natural reserves; environmental awareness among the Regional population has not been addressed; and the articulation and organisation of environmental interests are weak. These problems have been exacerbated by the serious contradiction between development needs and the environment, which is particularly acute given the area's enormous reserves of flora and fauna.

Precisely the opposite is the case in the **Archipelago Region**. Here, there are strong cultural, social and geographic ties among the partners. Aland and Finland share traditional trade similarities. Sweden and Aland share a common language and history. There is a large Swedish community in Finland and vice versa.

In addition, the Archipelago partners generally share a unique and fragile ecosystem which is a dominant element in their lives (this is less true of the Swedish partner, which consists in large part of the municipality of Stockholm). This has translated into a concern for the marine environment specifically which, combined with a general Nordic preoccupation with environmental and health protection, has led to strong cooperation among the partners in the area of environment.

#### 2.3.1.3.2 *Weak identification*

At the opposite end of the spectrum, **PACTE** partners are largely unaware of what is going on on the other side of the border. Nevertheless, a shared language and, particularly, a common industrial history have created the basic conditions for joint (or parallel) remediation activities (see section on Water). Regional potential has not been anywhere near fully realised, but there is keen awareness of the prospects for parallel development capable of strengthening both parts of the Euroregion.

**Benelux Middengebied** is quite similar. Geographic identification is strong, with the Euroregion covering almost the whole Belgian-Dutch border. In addition, a certain sense of identification arises from the fact that the Region shares a common language and a strong general feeling of "Dutchness". Social and cultural identification, however, are absent. The Euroregion is a construction based on economic interests held in common.

Sense of responsibility for the Region is not high, although growing on both sides, with increasing visitor streams in both directions. However, joint projects do not have any effect on feelings of "heimat".

The Region has enormous economic and educational potential, with different abilities among the partners complementing each other well. Potential is currently underutilised, however, due to a lack of information and to cultural barriers. Joint projects are seen as a big help overcoming these barriers.

The Region has undertaken some particularly innovative projects in the environmental field, despite a difficult political constellation (see section on National Positions). It has also had significant success in exchange of know-how between partners (see section on

Application to Best Practice). The impetus for these results has largely been the Dutch Government's creation of a strong environmental agenda, although this top-down approach has included extensive consultation with and dissemination to all levels of Dutch society.

A variation of this configuration may be seen in the Region of **Italy-Slovenia**. Ethnic closeness is entirely absent, and there is no shared language. In addition, the partners have very different general attitudes, with Slovenia feeling a strong closeness to Austria while Friuli-Venezia Giulia sees itself as a more Latin culture.

At the same time, the Regional partners are aware of their effects on each other as the result of sharing similar problems. Moreover, the crisis in former Yugoslavia has created a strong desire among both partners to retain stability in the area. Thus, although the scope for action is extremely limited, joint programmes are being undertaken.

As noted elsewhere, realisation of Regional potential is extremely slow because all agreements are of necessity international accords. Nonetheless, common concerns for important ecosystems (see Vulnerable Ecosystems) and industrial pollution produced by industries common to both partners have led to limited but effective action.

The extreme of weak identification among the Regions studied is **Kent-Nord Pas de Calais**. This Region in fact includes Flanders, Brussels Region and Wallonia as well as the British and French partners. There is thus an *a priori* problem represented by Belgian internal differences. Beyond Belgium, regional identification among Belgium, France and the UK is almost nil.

Aside from Wallonia/ Brussels and Nord-Pas de Calais, there are language differences among the partners. While a certain degree of cultural identification exists between francophone Belgium and France, there is no such identification among the remaining Regional partners. In addition, of course, the separation of the UK and France/ Belgium by the Channel represents a major obstacle to an easy sense of Regional identity.

Sense of responsibility for the Region is lacking, since it is an artificial construct for the most part. As a result, realisation of potential is very low as well. An enormous disparity in competence exists among the regions; large-scale efforts to realise potential consequently have been and will continue to be very difficult.

#### **2.3.1.4 Economic factors**

Originally, we postulated an important role for factors such as tax structures, currency differences, and wage and price differentials, with these having a significant effect on determining the capacity for and success of cooperation in the environmental field.

In fact, these differences have little effect on cooperation itself, but in some cases influence another crucial variable: the degree and quality of cross-border interdependence. Here, broadly, the greater the difference the larger the incentive to exploit these differences in local goods, services and labour markets (commuters). While this creates high levels of inter-regional exchange (interdependence), it also tends to be associated with rivalry and competition.

##### **2.3.1.4.1 Environment and economic development**

One fruitful area of enquiry lies in the value put on the environment on the one hand, and the structural economic differences between the regions on the other.

Most Euroregions view their needs and priorities in economic terms. Any definition of serious environmental problems is therefore likely to be followed by a determination of the opportunities or obstacles these problems pose for economic development. Very few regional partners have the employment, income or investment levels to act otherwise.

Common action is therefore particularly likely if the regions share an important economic sector, e.g. agriculture, whose further development is threatened by unsolved environmental problems.

In some cases, inadequate attention to cross-border environmental aspects posed a (more indirect) risk to the viability or growth prospects of productive investments in manufacture and services, triggering remedial action. Such risks include:

- (1) Polluting activities reducing the attractiveness of a location in terms of health and quality of life (Ex. Benelux Middengebied, which is experiencing forest death through acid rain, as well as serious air and soil pollution; Transmanche Euroregion, where growing traffic congestion has been matched by a growing incidence of asthma among children in Kent County; all Regions which include the Belgian coastline, where tourism will certainly suffer if cleanup is not undertaken);
- (2) Pollution affecting manufacturing needs (Ex. Saar-Lor-Lux needs to deal with its waste heritage if it is to attract new investment; the Irish Border Region must raise water quality standards if it wants to attract agrobusiness; Euregio Maas-Rhein needs better water infrastructure for economic development to be efficient; Euregio Scheldemond must clean up its harbours and coastlines if it is to continue to attract businesses);
- (3) Pushing tolerance margins in local vectors (air, water) to the point where further emissions and discharges are not possible (Ex. manure contamination of soil and water in the Benelux Middengebied has reached the point where it threatens local agriculture and industry, as well as drinking water supplies; marine pollution is seen by the Archipelago Region as threatening the area's mainstays of tourism and fishing; agricultural pollution poses a threat to the largely intact ecosystem of Extremadura/ Alentejo, which attracts the hunters that constitute an important source of Regional income; the Belgian coast is so polluted that it poses a threat to the Scheldt Estuary, which is vital for all economic activities within the Euregio Scheldemond);
- (4) Disrupting extra-regional infrastructure links (Ex. failure to accept the need for intelligent transport planning by the UK is endangering the efficiency of the Channel Tunnel; insistence on long-distance motorway development at the expense of long-distance fast rail and local road networks is detrimental to the sound economic development of Galicia/ Norte de Portugal, as well as Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra).

#### 2.3.1.4.2 *Comparative environmental advantage*

A much more complex (and relatively rare) potential basis for cooperation arises from different but complementary patterns of economic activity and environmental constraints, with these differences being exploited by a regional division of labour:

In **Kent - Nord Pas de Calais**, Euroregion officials are suggesting that the complementary nature of the French and British partners be used as a basis for orderly development. Largely rural Kent, whose natural fabric is under threat from transport congestion and new industrial investment, would act as a service centre for the Euroregion. Nord-Pas de Calais, with large amounts of unused and inexpensive land, good transport infrastructure, and planning permission for mixed development, would be used to build up Regional industrial infrastructure. If such development could be carried out, it is expected it would also shift the demographic centre of the Euroregion further south, thus relieving the current serious congestion caused by Kent's large community of London commuters.

The **Benelux Middengebied's** Belgian partners have an economy based largely on services and high-tech SMEs, while the Dutch partners' economy is mainly one of industrial manufacture. In addition, the abilities in different parts of the Region complement one another well. This complementarity is already being applied to best practice in the area of education and economic strengths: basic factory skills are better in Belgium, so the Belgians are undertaking training projects in Dutch firms, while the Dutch have superior skills in logistics, statistics and the environment.

Given the existing high level of cross-border employment, the Euroregion sees further, planned use of natural complementarities as being desirable. Such action is currently

hampered by a lack of information and continuing cultural barriers, despite a shared language, but joint projects are in fact seen as very helpful in overcoming those barriers. Currently, the area from Gent to Terneuzen, which takes in both national partners of the **Euregio Scheldemond**, essentially forms a single industrial/ harbour zone. In addition, the areas north and south of the Scheldt are already seen by the Zeeland (NL) population as being separate entities: north Zeeland is sparsely populated, with small towns engaged in agriculture, fishing and tourism for the most part; southern Zeeland is an industrial and port area.

The Region is thus in a very good position to allow the three Regional partners to continue to complement each other, while the Estuary and coastline provide an important zone of common interest. On a complementary basis, West and East Flanders, as well as southern Zeeland, could concentrate industrial, service and port activities in what is anyway becoming an urban conurbation, while north Zeeland remains an agricultural and tourist area. For this to happen, however, there will need to be marked improvements in Belgian water and waste infrastructure, and a significant increase in rail infrastructure covering the entire area.

### **2.3.1.5 Efficiency gains in public investment**

At a more basic level, we asked what effect cooperation might have on environmental costs - administrative and budgetary - and what steps might be taken at the outset to reduce the costs of environmental projects.

Here, administrators pointed out two sources of savings. First, infrastructure projects in particular - water treatment facilities, river inundation barriers, tourist walking and bicycling facilities, waste management schemes - were simply cheaper if costs were shared. Moreover, if these projects were carried out jointly, they were eligible for EU funding, which brought Regional costs down even further.

Secondly, if projects were carried out across borders, partners took care of the obstructions that could be costly in terms of both time and money for a single regional administration to sort out. Some examples follow.

- (1) In Euregio Maas-Rhein, a surface water project was planned for a river that went from Belgium into Germany and back to Belgium. The area of Germany it passed through was a natural reserve, but since the project was Euroregional, planning permission was much easier to obtain than it would have been otherwise.
- (2) Alentejo would find it difficult to set up complex regional environment projects because of the highly centralised nature of the Portuguese government. Extremadura's high degree of autonomy, combined with its strong environmental commitment, allows it to establish projects for the Region that facilitate the involvement of the Portuguese partner.
- (3) In the Benelux Middengebied, Dutch environment law necessitates certain actions on problems of strong concern, such as soil contamination from agriculture, which are highly relevant to its Belgian partner but are not considered Belgian priorities. Dutch suggestions and planning for such projects facilitate action by the Belgian regional partner.
- (4) In the Region of Italy-Slovenia, participation by Friuli-Venezia Giulia in the EC INTERREG programme allows the Italian partner to carry out a more thorough competition for project contractors than would be possible by the Slovenian partner alone, as the result of funding constraints.

### **2.3.2 Institutional Arrangements**

Methodologically, the form and degree of institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation can be conceived of as both an indicator of success (dependent variable) and a condition of success.

Institutional arrangements in the Euroregions range from informal groupings to highly formalised inter-regional cooperation agreements, including in the area of environment specifically. One of our goals was to see if there was any way in which one or more of these could be determined to be more effective than others.

- **Extremadura/ Alentejo:** The Region has a Grupo de Trabajo, two Gabinetes de Iniciativas Transfronterizas, and a number of working committees. The Group includes five political officials from each of the two regions, appointed by the regional authorities; other participants may be invited to attend meetings, which are held several times a year. It draws up an annual plan of activities, to be approved by the regional authorities and to serve as the basis for joint action.

The Gabinetes are specialised offices responsible for working committees. There is one office in each region (Evora in Portugal and Merida in Spain). These offices initiate and coordinate projects realised under the Regional Protocol, including those proposed for INTERREG funding. Strengthening institutional cooperation and extending it to further sectors of society is considered a priority for the Region and is being instituted as the second phase of official cooperation. Towards that end, the two offices hold meetings about 5 times a year.

Working committees specialise in particular subjects: representatives include bodies with responsibility for particular areas, coordinated by the Grupo de Trabajo. These working committees meet constantly, as the need arises.

- **Comunidad de Trabajo Galicia-Norte de Portugal:** The Region's administration has three levels:

- (1) The Comision de Coordinacion consists of the Presidents of the Region of Norte de Portugal and the Xunta de Galicia;
- (2) The Consejo de la Comunidad de Trabajo monitors cooperative activities, sets the work programme, adopts agreements, recommendations and proposals, and approves resolutions setting new working norms.

The Council is made up of official representatives of the Autonomous Community of Galicia and the Coordination Committee of the Region of Norte. These two delegations are to have an equal number of delegates, including representatives of subregional border associations and coordinators of sectoral committees.

Others, including national and European representatives and representatives of Hispano-Portuguese cross-border cooperation groups may be invited to attend as participants or observers. Representatives of socio-economic groups, universities and research centres, as well as experts in specific subjects, may also be invited.

- (3) The Comite de Coordinacion groups general coordinators from each region, together with experts, officials and technicians. It meets four times a year to coordinate the work done by the sectoral groups, ensure the functioning of the secretariat, monitor progress of projects, and prepare the groundwork for the formulation of work programmes.

The Region has also created two ad hoc committees: one on the internal market and its implications for the Regional partners and, in particular, their border areas; and the second to work on INTERREG.

- **Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra:** The Region has a tripartite organisational structure:

- (1) The Comision Permanente Institucional includes the Presidents of the regions (President of the Regional Council of Aquitaine, Lehendakari of Euskadi, and President of the Government of Navarra, or their representatives) and four other members from each region, including from the communes. There are 15 members altogether.

The Permanent Committee supervises the Fondo para la Cooperacion Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra, set up in 1990 through a Protocolo Anexo. It proposes projects likely to benefit from Regional funding, and suggests objectives, actions, annual

budgets and implementation procedures for such projects to the competent authorities of each Regional partner.

Owing to problems of competence, the Protocol of Collaboration has no legal standing. For the same reason, projects are undertaken in areas in which the regions do have competence to act. Problems of competence have been minimised by having representatives of the French departement for Aquitaine on the Permanent Committee.

- (2) The Oficina Permanente is a secretariat with a delegation from each region. These delegations work in each region separately; there is no joint secretariat structure, nor has one been found to be necessary.
- (3) Committee and Working Groups are usually composed of 10 or more technicians from the specialised services of the regions. These are organised by the technicians themselves, but projects begin at the top, in the Permanent Committee. Once ideas are agreed upon there, the Committee calls upon technical groups.

- **Irish Border Region:** The Region itself has no environmental staff or resources. The secretariat is run by two individuals, on a voluntary basis.

In the inter-Governmental context, "cross-border" work is being done, including 24 environmental staff who carry out programmes under INTERREG (with initiatives provided by the municipalities, water authorities and the private sector).

- **Euregio Maas-Rhein:** The Regional Executive is the Governors' Conference, comprising three representatives from each region (regional heads and parliamentarians). The Stichting Euregio Maas-Rhein (Secretariat) has a staff of five. It is a private law entity and may therefore not take decisions. As a result, national-regional cooperation is absolutely essential in this Region; without the goodwill of national governments, which have competence and provide partial funding, the Region would be unable to act.

For the environment, an Environment Working Group brings together experts to recommend individual projects to be carried out within the context of INTERREG. This in turn comprises four expert groups: on air quality; waste; soil, groundwater and surface water; and nature. Experts are all political appointees, and the Group does not have decision-making powers in the environment field.

Each regional partner has its own working group on the environment as well, which sends a representative to the general Working Group.

- **PACTE:** The Region's political decision-making body is the Comite de suivi. This brings together national (France), regional (Wallonia, department of Nord, Nord-Pas de Calais region) and Community (DG XVI) representatives. The Francophone Community of Belgium is also represented, although at a slightly lower level, since they provide less financing and have more restricted areas of decision-making (education, social affairs, etc.). Intercommunal associations may also be invited to participate. Usually, some 15 people attend meetings, which take place once or twice a year.

The Groupe technique is administrative, bringing together six French and Belgian administrators and experts to coordinate their work on various dossiers. Operators may be invited. The group meets once or twice a year.

In addition, technical teams act as a cross-border secretariat for day-to-day management of the Region. There are two teams (one per region), of three people each. These six technicians meet twice a week.

- **Italy-Slovenia:** The Region has a Monitoring Committee which meets once or twice a year. Representatives of the Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia region include the President of the region and officials from the planning department, environment agency, industry office, the agriculture office and the office of Community affairs and Eastern relations; a representative from the Department of EC Policy Coordination, a Treasury representative, a Foreign Affairs Ministry representative, and representatives of any other administration with formal powers over a subject being discussed at the State level; and a Community

coordination representative and relevant Structural Fund representative at the EC level. The Community, State and local authorities designate their own representatives.

Under INTERREG, the Dept. of EC Policy Coordination is generally responsible for programmes involving both internal and external Italian borders (coordination and monitoring). Provincial or regional authorities are competent for the external borders of each Italian region.

The Monitoring Committee decides projects to be carried out. There are no working groups to make recommendations to the Committee, but these are expected to be formed eventually. However, technical institutes are working together under the INTERREG programme.

Slovenia may be invited to be present at meetings. However, it is not part of INTERREG, under which all the environmental and economic projects for the cross-border Region are being carried out.

- **Saar-Lor-Lux:** The Regional administrative structure is its Inter-regional Committee. This is well structured, with four regions participating. It took 12 years to get it working satisfactorily for its original three members, but addition of a fourth was thereafter no problem.

In the field of environment, the Region has a private Inter-regional Environment Committee, CIE 5, in which four regions participate. However, the Committee has absolutely no official role, even of consultation. It is essentially a talking shop, without any permanent staff.

- **Transmanche Euroregion:** The Region has a Euroregion Joint Standing Committee, with subsidiary working groups. Working Group III is the environment working group (but no joint institution exists).

- **Benelux Middengebied:** A Comite van Toezicht, with administrative and political responsibility for the Region, brings together appointed representatives from each region. It includes four political representatives from the four provinces (Antwerp, North Brabant and the two Limbours), one from the Netherlands government, three from the Flemish government, and one from the European Community.

There is also a permanent Secretariat (IGRES) for inter-regional economic cross-border cooperation, with a permanent full-time staff of four. The main forum for Regional cooperation is INTERREG; thus, no distinction is made between the INTERREG structure and the Regional structure at this level.

The Region has no independent cross-border environment committee.

Instead, working parties dealing with water, air pollution, nuclear safety, etc. hold regular meetings.

- **EUREGIO:** Three local groupings (two Dutch, one German) representing 109 towns, counties and villages nominate elected officials to serve on the Euregio Council. The Council has a tripartite structure:

- (1) the Executive (EUREGIO Rat), with 29 Dutch and 31 German members, which acts as the Region's parliamentary assembly;
- (2) the Steering Group, consisting of 20 members, which carries out the Council's decisions and coordinates the activities carried out by the Regions. The Group also prepares meetings, coordinates INTERREG activities for the Region, and supervises the Region's archival and information activities.

Six Council representatives attend Steering Group meetings as advisors, but there is a distinct separation between the political level represented by the Council and the management level of the Group.

- (3) Working Groups dealing with specialised subjects of Regional interest (transport, environment, agriculture, etc.).

The Region also has a permanent Secretariat in Gronau.



Euregio is the most administratively independent, and well developed, of all Europe's Regions. A 1991 Treaty between the Netherlands and the Länder of Lower Saxony and North-Rhine Westphalia provides a common legal framework for the Euroregion. The Regional programme is administered by a single cross-border committee, which also allocates funding. Regional administrative bodies include representatives from the the European Union, national economic affairs ministries, national governments, German Länder, Dutch provinces, municipal authorities and the Region itself. Meetings of the Rat and Steering Group take place several times each year, and the Working Groups meet frequently.

- **Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées:** The CTP organisational structure has three levels:

- (1) a Conference of Presidents, bringing the Presidents of each regional partner together annually;
- (2) a coordinators' group, including technical and administrative officials and meeting twice a year;
- (3) committee presidents.

Catalunya, the largest Regional partner, has a large staff in its environment department. It has initiated a number of programmes, backed up by legislation that goes well beyond the framework measures set by the national Government. The other Spanish partners have less fully developed environmental structures and bodies of legislation.

The French partners, for their part, have very little power in themselves. They can only undertake action following consultation with and decision-making by the departement.

Andorra has until now done nothing in the area of the environment, but sovereignty may eventually alter this situation.

There is a CTP Environment Committee, as well as working groups that deal with various aspects of the environment (public works, waste, water, etc.). However, these groups tend to be based on theoretical needs rather than responses to common problems. As a result, their effectiveness is not high.

The Midi-Pyrénées environment Secretariat has assumed the same role for the Euroregion as a whole. The Secretariat has one staff member, who follows the political agenda of Regional members, coordinates meetings and action, and pushes partners to get things done.

This is a case where the extensive terrain - both geographical and political - covered by the Region has resulted in a very weak administrative structure. Consequently, only problems of serious concern to a number of partners receive serious consideration. In the field of environment, it is the Pyrénées and the Mediterranean coast which represent the main areas of common concern, and therefore of action.

- **Euroregion Pyrénées:** The Region has an annual meeting of the Presidents of the Regional partners. There is also an environment committee, but it meets infrequently. When it does meet, there are two serious obstacles to effective action: the French representatives to the group are not environmental specialists, and sometimes, for a given project, there will be no regional (as opposed to central or departmental) representation on the French side.

- **The Archipelago:** There is a double administration in both Sweden and Aland, although not in the Finnish mainland partner: this consists of one regional administration appointed by the government, and one regional administration elected at the regional level. Local and State levels of administration are also involved.

Regional regional administrations are primarily involved with health care and infrastructure. State regional administrations deal with issues such as taxation, environment, appeal courts, etc.

The Region has a specific administration of its own. This is comprised of:

- (1) a Political Board (Samarsbetsradet), which includes the Governor of Stockholm and Landsting members (for Sweden), Aland government representatives (for Aland), and, for Finland, the Governor of Turku and the Landskapverbund (community council of the Finnish regional partner, which includes a separate representative for the Archipelago);
- (2) an Executive Council, comprising civil servants of the three regions, who develop projects and act as project leaders for most of these. The Council acts as a permanent secretariat for the Region, and is located in Mariehamn. It also takes on consultants. Projects are carried out with local participation as well.

About 50% of projects are financed by actors of the three regions, and about 50% by Nordic funds. The budget for the Region is 1.5 million Danish kroner.

Administration meetings take place annually and usually have a theme; that is, they essentially take the form of conferences or seminars. These conferences also consider both long- and short-term projects suitable for cross-border cooperation. The initiative for projects may arise from any source.

- **Euregio Scheldemond:** There are two administrations working within this Region: that relating to INTERREG, which applies to parts of the three Regional partners, and the Euregio, which represents the partners in their entirety. So far, experience of common action has been solely within the INTERREG context, which has been in place since 1991. No independent cross-border planning organ exists.

The Euregio administration consists of:

- (1) the Scheldemondraad (Council), which includes the three Regional partners - the provinces above - and local authorities. The themes dealt with are those within the operational programme of INTERREG, as well as more general themes (transport, tourism, environment, land use, health, social-economic issues).
- (2) the Dagelijks Bestuur (Executive Committee), which prepares meetings of the Raad and carries out its decisions. Consists of three Raad members and three appointees dealing with Regional affairs from the provinces.

The INTERREG programme for the Region has its own administration, consisting of:

- (1) the Steering Group: Three governors of the provinces, three deputies in charge of the Euregio, three civil servants, and representatives from the Flemish Executive, the Flemish Community, the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, DG XI of the European Commission, and two private advisors. The Steering Group meets 6 times a year.
- (2) the Working Group: Examines projects and advises on their suitability. Consists of Regional affairs representatives from each province, and representatives from the Dutch Economic Affairs ministry, the Flemish Community, the East Flanders Regional Development Corporation, the East Flanders Economic Council, the West Flanders Office of Economic Studies and DG XVI. The Group meets some 10 times annually.
- (3) the Secretariat, which has three provincial officials working half-time, and one full-time staff member.

Expert groups, bringing together provincial and local experts, report to both the Secretariat and the Working Group. Projects are generated by the provinces rather than by the administration (bottom-up approach).

The interests of the Raad (whole Region) are much broader than those of the INTERREG group, including wide-ranging socio-economic issues. However, INTERREG's scope is expected to increase significantly under INTERREG II. Increased levels of funding, together with longer time frames, should lead to greater attention to basic issues and deeper cooperation with project formulators.

There is no cross-border Regional fund. The Dutch Economic Affairs Ministry and the Flemish executive cofinance 50% of project costs altogether, with INTERREG providing the remaining 50%.

The descriptions above show a certain uniformity in formal patterns, but that apparent uniformity conceals great differences in actual power and working methods, and large variances in performance ("success"). At the very least, this suggests that formal structures themselves cannot be taken as an indicator for the dependent variable.

Most Regions have a tripartite structure, comprising an executive level, an administrative level, and working groups. The structure of the administration seemed to be less important, however, than the composition of the various levels and the source of suggestions for eventual joint action.

For the executive level, three elements seemed generally to be conducive to a measure of success. The first was the number of representatives. In the case of Italy/ Slovenia, for example, the number of representatives is so high that decisions become difficult to make. In the Euroregion Pyrénées, on the other hand, the executive is so small that it cannot base its decisions on wide enough consultation.

The second element is the presence of representatives with competence. Thus, for example, the Region of Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra has made a point of inviting French departmental representatives to its meetings, although Aquitaine is a region rather than a department. Since all decisions for the region must be referred to the department, this representation eliminates a great deal of paperwork and extra meetings, as well as avoiding possible misunderstandings. It allows the competent authority for the French partner to have a say at the time decisions are discussed.

PACTE has taken the same path, including French departmental and Belgian federal representatives on its executive committee.

This does not, however, mean that only competent authorities should be represented at Regional consultations. For example, the French government will sometimes invite only the department, and not the region, to take part in CTP working groups. This allows representation to the competent authority, but denies it to the regional authorities who are the best source of information about their resources, problems and needs.

The third element conducive to success is the inclusion of local representatives, since it is at the local level that most decisions will actually be carried out. The Archipelago Region, Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra, PACTE, SaarLorLux, Italy/ Slovenia, Euregio Scheldemond and EUREGIO all include local representation at the executive level, while several other Regions routinely invite local representatives to meetings.

Administration was seen to be most effective when, as in EUREGIO, there is a specialised secretariat with independent staff. An independent physical structure, considered quite important by EUREGIO, was not universally considered necessary, however.

Extremadura/ Alentejo, for example, has its offices located in the regions, as does Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra. PACTE has its technical teams, which meet twice a week, functioning as a Regional secretariat. The Archipelago has a permanent secretariat in Åland, which brings together civil servants from the three Regional partners.

Clearly, therefore, no single form of administrative structure is objectively better than another, as long as the above elements are taken into account in one way or another.

One element, however, was strikingly consistent: in those Regions where the factors discussed above were not effectively incorporated into the Regional administrative structure, there was a significant degree of ignorance about Regional partners. Representatives supposedly speaking for the Region would present enormous amounts of information about their own region; when asked to respond to questions specifically in terms of the cross-border Region, they were able to answer only partially because they were not deeply familiar with conditions throughout the Region. Needless to say, these were the Regions that were the most ineffective in terms of carrying out common action.

### 2.3.2.1 **Local involvement**

One area which would need to be examined in much greater detail than has been possible in the context of this study is the relationship between local and regional authorities. This goes to the heart of the current debate on subsidiarity being carried on within the Union. Regions often complain that while Member States insist on subsidiarity in relations with the EU, they do not pass on the freedom of action thereby obtained to the regions. However, the same can be said in most cases for the regional-local relationship. This is a crucial roadblock in carrying out effective cross-border work, because it is at the local level that most Regional decisions are, at the end, implemented.

The results from our study of the **Benelux Middengebied** point to the importance of involving local authorities in both the planning and implementation stages of projects in order to achieve maximum efficiency. This Euroregion has implemented an impressive range of serious - indeed, innovative - environmental projects, with intensive involvement by local authorities, universities, research institutes, and parastatal and private organisations. BENEGO, an association of 34 municipalities on both sides of the border, is acquiring legal status in order to be able to manage projects.

It is worth noting that this widely consultative approach is based on that developed by the Dutch government as the basis for its National Environment Plan.

This width of consultation and partnership is repeated in the **Euregio Scheldemond**. Constant involvement in decision-making and planning extends in both directions from the Region: "downwards" to local authorities, as well as "upwards" to the bodies which have competence to finalise adoption of plans - the provincial authorities and national ministries in The Netherlands, and the Flemish Regional Executive for Belgium.

Projects are carried out with all the above participating, as well as governmental and parastatal research institutes, environmental groups, and other relevant bodies, depending on the subject being addressed.

Local involvement is also central to **EUREGIO**, which pairs the Netherlands with Germany. Local administrations have strong input into Regional activities. In addition, public hearings are held in cases where environmental or Regional issues would be affected by national projects, as in the case of motorway construction. Regional authorities see these as an extremely important step in ensuring that local populations as well as local authorities are involved in the Region's decision-making.

Local authorities also play an important role in the **Archipelago Region** involving Finland, Sweden and the autonomous province of Åland. Local authorities are not "officially" represented in the Region's administrative structures. However, they have the right to initiate projects, and accepted projects are carried out with local participation. In general, local government is involved in decision-making about the environment, and is consulted before decisions are taken. Information about such decisions is made public locally.

Universities and research institutes of all Archipelago partners routinely take part in studies and cooperative action. As noted by Madekivi and Rytönen in their study of the environmental effects of marine traffic - a problem of major concern for the Archipelago: "The need for research becomes increasingly evident in multidisciplinary cause-effect evaluation work, where it is found appropriate to use research groups comprising experts from various fields."<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the Region, regional and local levels may determine the extent of construction allowed through permitting regimes; all partners have similar requirements, which significantly lessens potential sources of tension. Åland, in addition, has developed a form of economic blockade that goes well beyond standard permitting. Aimed at improvement of

<sup>3</sup> Madekivi and Rytönen, "The environmental effects of marine traffic - aspects of studying shipborne waves and currents", in *Fartygstrafikens miljökonsekvenser*, ed. Ea Maria Blomqvist (Nordiska Ministerrådets Skarsgardssamarbete), 1993:5. In practice, "various fields" has been translated into disciplinary but also administrative terms.

water quality, these laws allow an area to be economically "blocked" by the authorities. If quality standard limits have been reached or surpassed, no further discharge may be allowed before an improvement plan is adopted. Such plans must be revised at least every three years.<sup>4</sup>

An interesting variation of widespread local participation occurs in the **Extremadura/Alentejo Region**. The widest possible participation is sought in Extremadura, in order to solve regional problems with the least amount of resistance. When, for example, crops in the region were attacked by locusts, it seemed possible that extensive use of pesticides might be required. The question was put before a meeting comprising agriculture experts, the regional environment ministry, scientists and technical experts, in an attempt to deal with the problem with the least amount of environmental damage - as well as the greatest possible agreement, in order to ensure compliance.

Although strongly Extremadura-led, this involvement inevitably pulls in actors from the Portuguese partner within the context of the Euroregion. In addition, given the very similar problems faced by the two Regional partners, intense local participation by the Spanish partner to some extent translates into greater enfranchisement for its Portuguese counterparts.

A further question is the importance of local population involvement. Environmental and citizens' group cross-border initiatives have generally had minimal influence in the Regions studied. Whether this is due to population-local authority communication or is caused by problems further up the administrative line needs to be clarified.

The latter seems likely to be the case; indeed, a few (less successful) Euroregions have commented on the fact that their communes and municipalities often feel (correctly) that they are not represented by Regional administrations.

The **role of local authorities** vis-à-vis regional authorities often mirrors the role of the latter vis-à-vis national authorities. It is not by accident that the above list of Regions which are the most concerned to involve local authorities and populations includes a number of Dutch, Scandinavian and German partners, whose national authorities widely appreciate - whether because of legal structures or political culture - the importance of decentralisation of competence.

Local authorities are represented in the cross-border institutions of some Regions, generally by a local authority association, as indicated above. More usually, however, local consultation is minimal and local competence non-existent. This may act to render Regional initiatives less efficient than might be the case, since local authorities in many cases represent the level at which implementation of environmental policy must take place.

### **2.3.2.2 Command over financial resources**

Our original hypothesis was that funding could have an impact on cooperation in two ways: through differences between the Regional partners as regards freedom to allocate resources (role of central government); and in respect to the absolute levels (tax base, etc.) of resources available.

However, most Regional administrators stated that funding *per se* is not a constraint on cooperation. If a problem was agreed to be sufficiently important, funding for specific action could almost always be found, either from their own budgets, through regional/ - national ministries and agencies (transport, energy, technology, etc.), and from EU sources.

By implication, this suggests that even low-level activities, such as joint studies, have a real effect by leveraging resources from all levels of the political systems.

Sometimes, cross-border projects arise in one partner of a Euroregion. The other Regional partners are then brought in to obtain matching funds from regional, State and EC

<sup>4</sup> Working paper "On the environmental legislation of Åland", 1994

budgets. This happens relatively often in the case of Regions with several partners, but is not unknown in small Regions, where action that could be taken regionally is raised to a cross-border level to gain matching funds and/ or room for political manoeuvring.

There are three common configurations for funding requests:

- (1) Some or all of a Region's partners become involved in a project, with joint financing being the rule. Sometimes, a Regional partner will pay slightly more than its set percentage for a project that it accords particular priority and which might not otherwise be accepted by another Regional member.

Such has been the case for certain projects in Benelux Middengebied and Euregio Maas-Rhein, where Dutch partners viewed soil and water remediation measures as a political priority and were willing to pay somewhat more than half of project financing in order to convince Belgian partners to join in cooperative efforts.

- (2) Projects will be cross-border in name only. They will reflect the needs of one or two Regional partners, with the others acting merely as paper partners for funding purposes. In these cases, an outside institute or other group is often hired to carry out project coordination, in order to avoid having to hold repeated meetings with non-involved parties.

This has been a method used, for example, by the Communauté de Travail de Pyrénées. Here, the large number of actors would anyway render regular meetings of all Regional parties an obstacle rather than an aid to action. Putting projects forward as representing the wishes of the entire Region makes funding easier to obtain and puts more political weight into funding requests. This is also the case for whitecliffs projects in the Transmanche Euroregion.

- (3) Some Regions have a degree of autonomous funding; their representatives have all brought up the importance of such funds to Regional effectiveness.

In the Nordic Archipelago Region, about 50% of Regional project funding comes from the three Regional actors, and 50% from Nordic funds. The Region's budget is 1.5 million Danish kroner. Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra has a Regional Cooperation Fund.

EUREGIO has independent funding, and sees this as crucial. Their experience has shown that once a Region has carried out its planning, if it is not willing to put forward some of its own money to back those plans, no one else will be eager to fund them either. Funding is also seen as psychologically important: when Regions bring funds to a project, it means that all partners will have agreed on the project's importance. Regional financial involvement will in turn act to ensure realisation.

### 2.3.3 Regional autonomy

Generally, we found that environmental standards, as embodied in legislation or permitting regimes, provided the environmental "signals" that generated a perceived need for joint studies or projects related to environmental problems.

Implementation of most environmental legislation is, at the end of the day, carried out (or not carried out, as the case may be) at the regional and local level, no matter where enactment of such legislation takes place. If subsidiary levels within States have no competence, the likelihood of effective implementation is slight.

As Reh binder has observed, de facto procedures are therefore needed to render EU environment Directives effective in practice.<sup>5</sup> According to Reh binder, this will depend on a certain degree of "renationalisation" of such Directives. Our interviews seemed to support this view, to the extent that Regions which had the most knowledge about ap-

<sup>5</sup> Eckard Reh binder, "L'implementazione di fatto delle direttive ambientali della Comunità europea: carenze e rimedi", in *Studi parlamentari e di politica costituzionale*, 23 (87), 1990, p. 20

plicable EU environment standards were the best placed to develop measures to "implement" those standards.

In turn, the autonomy to transpose or implement EU and national measures at the regional level tended to correspond to both a good degree of knowledge about pertinent environmental measures - and, equally important, their practical implications - and to well-planned efforts to carry out these measures at the regional/ Regional level.

Appropriate mechanisms (and initial funding to establish these mechanisms) must exist at lower levels if implementation and verification are to be carried out effectively. One very successful example of such a mechanism is that of US-Canada "regional contracts". For instance, the US Great Lakes Commission has made possible establishment of an autonomous body with federal representation, independently regulating water-related problems.

This type of structure is particularly relevant for purely local/ regional issues, such as water, waste management or natural spaces. It is no accident that it is precisely these areas which are the focus of joint environmental activities for the Regions studied.

A Regional environment policy oriented towards facilitating such efforts would therefore be a great deal more useful than the current free-for-all that characterises Regional activity. Yet in order for such a policy to come into being, Regions - or at least one important Regional partner as well as the common administrative structure - must have a reasonable degree of competence - in both the legal and technical sense - and autonomy.

There are two principal ways of creating these prerequisites to strong environmental action: through national grants of competence to regional (Regional) authorities in respect to specific matters of concern, and through granting of autonomous status to regions.

Autonomy does not, of course, ensure effective environmental action on either the sub-national or cross-border levels. For example, both the Spanish autonomous region of Galicia and the Belgian federal region of Wallonia have relatively poor records in the area of environment, while the German state of Baden-Wurtemberg and the Spanish autonomous region of Catalunya are less successful in the cross-border than in the national context.

Autonomy does, however, ensure that a region wishing to undertake such action in order to carry out Regional environmental projects or policy may do so with minimal interference or hindrance from authorities removed from the problems being addressed. This is clearly demonstrated by Aland in the Archipelago Region and the autonomous regions of Catalunya, Extremadura and Euskadi in Spain.

National grants of competence may be awarded in the form of full permitting authority. This is, for example, the case for the Netherlands provinces, which issue permits under laws dealing with waste, air pollution and noise. An important reason for the preponderance of nature-related projects in the Regions throughout Europe is the fact that these are often under the control of regional or local authorities.

Often, in the case where a sub-national authority is given a high degree of competence for an environmental medium, environmental concern is an important factor at national level. Countries such as the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, where national government has significant concern for the environment, see decentralised authority as a means of easing the task of administration and allowing local/ regional authorities, which understand local/ regional problems, to deal with environmental problems in a more direct, effective way. Countries with less interest in environmental action, such as Portugal or the UK, prefer to keep a relatively tight control over licensing arrangements, and thereby over policy.

### **2.3.3.1 National policy**

The relationship between Regional partners and their respective national centres (Governments) clearly has a major effect on cross-border cooperation. However, as noted

above, it would be wrong to conclude that greater autonomy always means easier cross-border cooperation, or vice versa.

Actual outcomes seem to be determined by the combination of three variables: the relative strength of central government, the strength and direction of its environmental stance, and the congruence or otherwise between national and regional governments as regards this stance. This last variable has already been mentioned in the section on "Values".

Turning to **national policy stances**, the large variance in the Regions studies can be summarised as follows.

- **Belgium:** The national government has little power in the environmental area. Even where it has competence, there is a tendency to express verbal commitments to the environment which are not backed up by either strong action or financial commitments. The environmental commitment at the regional (federal) level tends, for its part, to be fragmented. Thus, Wallonia and Flanders, in particular, will often be working at cross purposes, with a resultant weakening of action in cases where shared ecosystems are involved.

Flanders, as a general rule, is more environmentally aware than the Wallonia region. This is partly the result of Wallonia being home to traditional heavy industries, while Flanders is increasingly becoming a service and high-tech region. In part, however, this can also be ascribed to the influence on the regions of same-language neighbours: France in the case of Wallonia, and environmentally progressive Holland in the case of Flanders.

- **Finland:** Although Finland does not have a strong body of specifically environmental legislation, national commitment to environment and awareness of nature conservation is strong.

Åland, originally a part of Sweden, is now an autonomous region of Finland. This autonomy is quite advanced; the region has its own Parliament, representation in the Nordic Council, and independent participation in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers. It has full competence for environmental legislation, and may decide on the use of funds allocated it by the State.

- **France:** The central government plays a very strong role in decision-making. However, its commitment to the environment is rather weak, since environmentally dictated actions are perceived as obstructing rapid and profitable industrial development.

Regions in France are doubly handicapped. In addition to the very real power of the centre, decentralised environmental power structures are in the control of the departments rather than the regions. This includes all water and waste issues.

- **Germany:** There is a limited role for the national government, which has nevertheless been strongly pro-environment on most issues until quite recently and has passed national laws which mirror this stance.

- **Ireland:** The Irish Government, although in principle committed to environmental protection, has tended on many issues to be swayed by economic concerns, to the detriment of the environment. There is, however, a national awareness of the value of Ireland's natural resources and the threat posed to these by unplanned development. This awareness does at times serve as a source of environmental protection in the face of otherwise attractive, but environmentally damaging, development options.

All decisions about the environment are taken at the national level; there is no decentralised regional policy in Ireland, although local authorities are generally responsible for sewerage and land planning.

- **Italy:** Italian regions have much less autonomy than their Spanish or Belgian counterparts. The Italian Government, wracked by years of governmental crisis, does not regard the environment as a priority. In addition, Italian administrative procedures tend to complicate cross-border cooperation to an unusual extent. Some of these complications are merely time-consuming procedural demands; for example, Regional officials leaving



the country to participate in Regional meetings must request permission from Rome to do so two months in advance.

Others are more serious in providing obstacles to efficient participation in Regional work: for example, the Italian State plays a very strong role in the INTERREG process. The national Comitato Interministeriale di Programmazione Economica (CIPE) must take a decision on the level of Italian funding for each INTERREG programme in which Italy participates. Once CIPE has committed State funds for an INTERREG programme, the programme must be translated into regional law, which must in turn be approved once more by the national government.

- **Netherlands:** The national government has instituted a strong national environment programme. The country has recently concluded its first national programme and begun on a second. The National Environment Plan provides for extensive integration of the environment into all sectors of society, and constant monitoring and adjustment. This translates into strong regional (provincial) and municipal powers, local policing of compliance, and a great deal of self-policing expected of important industry and agricultural sector actors.

- **Portugal:** Portugal did not have an environment ministry (as opposed to State services) until 1986. Until that time, the State Secretariat for the Environment was constantly being shifted around between other departments of State. On paper, the Government has evolved from an environment policy that was corrective to one that is integrative and preventive, stressing reduction at source. In practice, the Environment Ministry is still impotent in relation to the Industry Ministry, with the former's positions on a number of important issues being dictated by the latter.

Portugal is also to some extent prisoner to EU funding practices, with their stress on agricultural monoculture, motorway construction and waste incinerators, as well as to its need to accelerate economic development, often at the expense of the environment.

The national government has sole responsibility for the formulation and execution of environmental policy. Thus, while regional representatives may take part in Regional institutions, any cross-border project must be approved at the national level.

- **Slovenia:** Slovenia has strong concern for its natural resources, which are a source of national pride as well as tourist income. At the same time, however, it is home to a number of inefficient heavy industries, whose needs conflict with those of its natural spaces. Thus, for example, bauxite production - carried out with imported raw materials and an enormously inefficient use of energy - is seen as an important industrial activity, warranting the damming of several rivers located in important natural reserve areas.

- **Spain:** The central government commitment to the environment is extremely weak, with environmental responsibility scattered among several ministries. Each Ministry has representatives at the regional level, but these are not necessarily from the environment unit of a given Ministry.

The application of environment legislation is largely within the power of the autonomous regions, yet the competence of the regions varies widely, as does the significance assigned to the environment by regional structures and within the context of regional economic needs. Of the Spanish regions considered in this study, Extremadura, Euskadi and Catalunya have a particularly strong commitment to the environment.

The national government on the whole considers Spain a developing, agricultural country, needing extra time and funding from the Community to catch up with northern Member States. Any autonomous region caring about the environment must therefore take the decision to legislate and manage environmental programmes more stringently than the State.

At the same time, the generally poor quality of coordination between the central and regional levels, and between the regional and local levels, may lead to policy fragmentation and inefficient implementation. Coordination, including basic information exchange, is particularly poor between the regions and Madrid, especially in cases where the regions

are governed by opposition parties. Consultation among environment ministers, regional and national, has recently improved greatly, but increased consultation has not always led to stronger measures because both regional and national environment officials tend to be politically weak in comparison with their industry and agriculture counterparts.

In addition, administrative structures in the regions tend to be immature, with responsibilities for several areas.

- **Sweden:** The Swedish government is strongly committed to environmental and consumer protection. Although environmental legislation tends to take the form of sectoral rather than horizontal measures, it is stringent and generally far advanced in comparison with other industrialised countries. This is accentuated by Swedish membership in the Nordic Council, whose environmental policy is also quite progressive.

- **UK:** The UK central government exercises strong rule, coupled with extremely weak environmental commitment, bordering on hostility in regard to most environmental issues. This has translated into an intensive push towards deregulation in the environmental area, which was never very strongly regulated to begin with. In addition, the government has recently proposed a consolidation of a number of environmental regulatory agencies, with a concomitant weakening of several of their powers.

### **2.3.3.2 National-regional interaction**

As already stated, a Regional partner's stand on the environment cannot necessarily be predicted on the basis of the stand taken by its national Government. We have tried to determine specifically to what degree the relationship between a region and the national centre actually determines cross-border efforts, and have found these interactions to fit into one of two categories.

#### **(1) Concurrence**

Here, the Regional partner's efforts are usually a continuation of the national effort at the regional (and local) level. Concurrence may be positive, as for the Regional partners we have interviewed in Germany, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, or negative, as is the case for Belgian Regional partners.

The most striking example of positive concurrence was found outside the European Community, in the Archipelago Region. The quasi-independent autonomous region of Åland, consisting entirely of a fragile marine ecosystem, has acted to increase the environmental content of both Finnish and Swedish legislation. Specifically, the region has recently replaced Finnish water legislation with its own, strengthened Water Act.

As a whole, however, the Archipelago Region is able to depend on its interests being relatively well protected by national environment regulations in force in both Sweden and Finland. As a result, the Region is much less administratively active in the environment than are many others. In cases where perceptions of necessary levels of protection differ, general principles of environmental care are nonetheless shared.

#### **(2) Conflict**

Again, there are two variations on this theme. The first is where the national government has a position on the environment different from that of the Regional partner, but the latter has the autonomy to take an independent stand, as is the case for Catalunya or Extremadura vis-à-vis the Spanish Government.

The other possibility is that a partner differs from its national government's position but does not have the power to act against the State; this is the case for French regions such as Midi-Pyrénées, and for Kent County in the UK.

We further tried to determine to what extent national environment policies determined the effectiveness of Regional efforts on the environment.

Negative concurrence was seen to strongly influence effectiveness. Belgium, for example, is a partner in Euregio Maas-Rhein, Benelux Middengebied, and the Transmanche Euroregion; it throws up obstacles to environmental action in all of these, to a greater or lesser extent. The federal (i.e. independent) nature of the regions exacerbates this stance; if a Belgian federal region wants to take action, it can do so without having recourse to cross-border cooperation. For weaker regions, on the other hand, cross-border cooperation is often perceived as a means of strengthening their hand vis-à-vis their central governments.

While negative concurrence is a sufficient condition for failure, positive concurrence is merely a necessary but not a sufficient condition for success. If a Belgian partner refuses to join in a cross-border environment project, that is the end of the story. If a Dutch region partnering a Belgian region wants to take action, in a case of Belgian refusal it can only act unilaterally and hope to convince the Belgians of the usefulness of wider regional action or offer to pay a slightly larger share of costs, which apparently is not unusual in this particular configuration.

Conflict between centre and region will, to a large extent, be resolved according to respective formal powers. Where central government is strong, as in the UK, it may stymie any effective Regional action on an issue (e.g., transport planning for Kent County within the Transmanche Euroregion).

The same pattern is repeated in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, where a politically precarious situation makes national governments wary of handing over any significant degree of autonomy to a sub-national body. This, combined with the highly centralised structure of both States, has permitted national governments to keep tight control over any cross-border Regional activity and to effectively prevent any autonomous cross-border institution from developing. In the case of autonomous regions, as noted above, the conflict is more likely to be resolved in favour of the region's position.

The strength of the regional position in conflict configurations hinges on several factors. These include the scope of areas of competence, degree of control over funding allocations, economic base, strength of administrative structures within the autonomous region, clear establishment of priorities and, crucially, political goodwill between the centre and the region.

The Spanish regions studied demonstrate the possible permutations of this configuration. All the Spanish regional partners (Aragon, Catalunya, Euskadi, Extremadura, Galicia, Navarra) have a high degree of competence, although some are stronger than others. In particular, Euskadi and Navarra are the only two regions in Spain with the power to raise and distribute taxes. Catalunya and Euskadi have a strong economic base, while Extremadura, Euskadi and Catalunya all have strong administrative structures. Yet the single region which seems to enjoy an excellent relationship with the centre is Extremadura, and this is the region which considered itself most in control of determining its environmental priorities and acting accordingly.

The regions that fulfil conditions of economic administrative strength have been able to carry out their own regional programmes very effectively. That effectiveness does not necessarily extend to Regional cooperation, however. This is not entirely the result of region-centre discord; Catalunya, for example, has greater affinities with regions other than its direct neighbours and sees its strongest role as a partner in these other, more appropriate, forums.

At the same time, lack of political agreement between regional partners and the central government over priorities and outlook has translated into a failure by the central government to consult with these regions effectively. This has had implications for the government's allocation to the regions of EU funds that could be used for environmental activities to benefit the cross-border Regions as a whole. In some regions, such as Galicia, funds which would be used regionally for small-scale infrastructure developments which comprise a prerequisite to other, more specifically environmental projects and to cross-

border environmental activities have instead been allocated to regionally located but nationally determined (and sized) projects with little or no value for local environments.

In addition, lack of agreement may lead to region-centre disagreements about those areas where there are conflicts of competence. The areas of transport infrastructure and energy development, as well as water engineering projects, are subject to complex interactions between national and regional competence, in which the centre can effectively prevent regional projects from being carried out despite its limited competence in a region.

Such problems are of course exacerbated where a Euroregion as a whole has a weak administrative structure and no independent budget. Thus, the CTP, the Pyrénées Euro-region and Galicia-Norte are significantly less successful on a Regional basis than the more structured, better financed Regions of Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra and Extremadura/ Alentejo.

Extremadura, which has good political relations with the centre in addition to a strong Regional administration, has been able to control allocations much more effectively than many other Spanish regions, to some extent refusing funding that it considers environmentally damaging and determining its own projects for EU funds. These, as described elsewhere, have in turn been translated into fruitful cross-border projects with Alentejo in Portugal.

In some situations, however, effective action may be taken even in unresolvable situations of conflict - that is, cases where the Region does not have the competence to do as it wishes to any significant degree. For example, although the region of Midi-Pyrénées does not have the power to override the French government's apathy on environmental matters, it carries out the unofficial function of environment secretariat for the Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées, in a division of labour that leaves Midi-Pyrénées to carry out all the administrative work on projects while Catalunya takes on the role of power broker vis-à-vis the French government.

Obviously, conflictual relationships often create situations where, in order to take any action at all, a cross-border Region must act at the level of the lowest common denominator. This may of course lead to situations where regions in a relationship of positive concurrence must forgo joint Regional action so as to be able to meet national requirements.

#### **2.3.4 Environment**

An alternative method for explaining different levels of performance was to look at the nature of the environmental problems which were potential subjects of cooperation. We examined the following:

- Shared ecosystems
- Nature and Tourism
- Waste
- Water
- Air
- Agriculture
- Transport

These categories follow the usual organisation of environmental policy, including that of the Community's Fifth Action Programme. In addition, a horizontal area of cooperation - exchange of information on best practice - has been considered (see Table 2).

Environmental fields →	Nature	Waste	Water	Air	Agr.
Regions ↓					
Irish Border	(x) <sup>1</sup>		(x)		(x)
CTP	x	x	x		
Maas-Rhein	x		x	x	
SaarLorLux	x	(x)	x		
Kent-NPC	x		x	x	
Middengeb.	x	x	x	x	x
PACTE	x		(x)		
Aq/ Eus/ Nav	x		x		
Extrem/ Alen	x	x	x		x
Gal/ Norte	x				
EUREGIO	x	x	x	x	x
Italy/ Slov.		x	x		x
Eur Scheld.			x		
Eur. Pyr.			x		
Archipelago	(x)		x		(x)

<sup>1</sup> Parentheses indicate that a project is being carried out outside a strictly Regional context or is at a very preliminary stage

**Table 2** Regional environmental projects, by field

#### 2.3.4.1 *Vulnerable shared ecosystems*

Our original hypothesis was that such systems would provide a basis for relatively conflict-free integrated action across borders. The most interesting confirmation of this thesis was furnished by the Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées and the Euroregion Pyrénées, whose constituent regions have few common economic links and which thus had limited success in (or need for) cross-border cooperation in general. However, they have been quite effective in developing and implementing actions related to the Pyrénées, which represent a common and valued natural resource for those living in and near them.

By the same token, the natural barrier created by the Pyrénées for the most part precludes other shared ecosystems - aquifers, rivers, soils, etc. - as well as the common problems which might provide a focal point for joint action.

It should be noted that although the shared ecosystem in the case of the CTP is a mountain range, the projects being executed are in fact natural reserve work. This was in many cases the underlying rationale for successful shared work based specifically on ecosystem.

**PACTE** has had good results in extending an already existing natural reserve across the border (Scarpe-Escaut), and plans to extend the cross-border protected area even further. Wetlands form the basis for cooperation on nature protection among all the partners in the **Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra** Region. This natural area, with strong biodiversity implications, is the subject of an extensive study, in preparation for a joint protection project. In the **Italy-Slovenia** Region, the common ecosystem of concern is the Timavo river basin, whose grottoes are recognised by UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) as an area of special interest. Common concern has led to joint cleanup and measuring efforts. These, however, have not thus far led - and probably, given the extreme difficulty of EU/ non-EU cooperation, will not in the near future lead - to a more integrated protection approach.

An interesting case for the utility of shared ecosystems as the basis for cooperation was seen in the **Transmanche** Region. This highly artificial Region has two main partners - Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais - separated by the Channel. The Region embodies extreme disparities of competence, problems, and culture and language. Moreover, it represents three environmentally insensitive national Governments (France, Belgium and the UK). Given the resultant lack of Regional identification and commitment to joint effort, the area which has the best chance of success is that of coastal projects. France and the UK share a coastal white cliffs ecosystem that provides a common focus for studies and projects, while all three national partners share coastlines suffering from similar forms of environmental degradation.

A very different basis for joint concern was seen in the **Euregio Scheldemond**. Here, the Scheldt Estuary is first and foremost an economic concern. The Region is acting to protect it as an ecosystem, but its function is not that of a natural reserve, but rather of a functioning, heavily used industrial port area. The partners are considering the area in terms of an integrated plan that would provide a deepening of the Estuary to allow large ships to use it, while at the same time carrying out an extensive cleanup of its severely polluted waters.

Despite the examples above, however, a common concern for shared ecosystems does not seem to be the "motor" for joint action very often. There are several explanations for this.

First, fragile ecosystems may extend to regions beyond those involved in a Euroregion. For example, the **Euroregion Pyrénées** has, as noted above, undertaken joint coastal protection projects. But since these cannot have a decisive impact because other, non-Euroregion States share the same coastline and are not taking protective or remedial action, the Region's efforts have purposely remained modest in this direction. Similarly, a fair amount of **Benelux Middengebied** air pollution comes from non-Regional areas, discouraging the Region from undertaking what must necessarily be marginal action (which would additionally create a free rider problem).

The only area where an ecosystem was a sole sufficient basis for joint action was the marine ecosystem which forms the great majority of the Archipelago Region (with the exception of Stockholm municipality). Even in this case, however, there is potential for serious disagreement between economic goals (tourism, fishfarming) and environmental protection. In this Region, moreover, other factors such as common culture and shared environmental concern in general probably play as great a role in Regional cooperation as does the ecosystem itself.

Secondly, Regional partners may take widely varying positions on vulnerable ecosystems, depending on the "value" parameter discussed earlier and on economic and employment needs and priorities. For example, within the **Benelux Middengebied**, the Netherlands sees manure reduction as a major priority, while Belgium took much longer to arrive at this position because of economic needs that were perceived as being more important. In the Archipelago Region, there is some disagreement between the extent to which fishfarming should be allowed to add to the nutrient load of Archipelago waters, with mainland Finland

balancing economic interests against water quality, while Aland looks at the problem from a purely environmental point of view.

Another, related finding suggests that cooperation on shared ecosystems may be selective (and not necessarily based on an ecologist's identification of priority) because there needs to be an additional factor of "emotional identification" which helps to enlarge political support for such projects. For example, while the Transmanche Euroregion has had success in projects involving vulnerable - and nationally valued - white cliffs ecosystems, this has not led to more intensive cooperation in other areas.

Similarly, as noted above, the **Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées** has cooperated successfully on projects involving the Pyrénées, and to some extent the Mediterranean coastline, but disparities of competence and differences in economy and settlement patterns among partners make joint action on any other issue quite difficult.

For the most part, therefore, shared ecosystems were not seen as leading to wider common Regional action. Most Regions instead describe their environmental activities as being based on either a comprehensive policy approach or a problem-related approach.

#### 2.3.4.1.1 *Policy-oriented Regions*

They are few in number.

The **Transmanche Euroregion** has published an Environment Charter. This is a wide-ranging policy statement based on the concept of sustainable development. In practice, however, the Region lacks the political power to carry out extensive action in the environment field. In fact, it has been more successful in dealing with specific problem, particularly coastal protection projects.

**EUREGIO** sees its goal as coordination of an integrated study and action on cross-border environment problems (including an integrated environment programme project). This is also meant to provide a basis for further cross-border activities in other fields.

**Extremadura/ Alentejo** is a particularly interesting, because rather special, case of policy orientation. The Portuguese partner is almost powerless, with all agreements having to go through the central government. It therefore has no overall strategy and little competence even to propose projects.

Extremadura, on the other hand, has a great deal of competence. Regionally, the Spanish partner has 18 natural areas, and two regional horizontal laws applicable to these - environmental impact assessment and a hunting law. Both of these legal instruments are much stricter than either the corresponding national or EC laws, and the region has a very clear understanding of the need to protect its environment from damage while developing its economy.

Alentejo does not have a determined strategic concept for regional development, which would require far greater competence than it enjoys. However, by being in agreement with its Spanish partner's orientation, it shares in the legislation-based "horizontal" strategy developed by Extremadura.

#### 2.3.4.1.2 *Problem-oriented Regions*

More commonly, cooperation on environmental issues is entirely problem-driven, without an attempt at comprehensive diagnosis, much less an elaborate Regional plan for environmental cooperation. **Problem-oriented Regions** included the majority of Regions studied.

**Euregio Rhein-Maas** currently has not set wide targets or developed a joint Regional concept, although these may be developed under INTERREG II. The problems that affect the Region are too specific to depend for their solution on a sense of general environmental awareness.

The Region can only measure; it does not have the power to initiate clean-up projects. There is general agreement among Regional partners that something must be done about the environment, but there are huge differences in the priority accorded to action. Germa-

ny has very high standards (seen as too high in certain areas); the Netherlands has high standards; and Belgium has relatively low standards. The question that arises is therefore whether to carry out regional action at the level of the lowest common denominator, or forgo joint action at the Regional level so as to be able to act to satisfy national standards and local wishes.

As a result of these disparities among partners, this Region - although carrying out a large number of environment projects within the context of INTERREG - sees itself limited to non-innovative, "safe" joint actions such as bicycle paths and water treatment facilities.

**Benelux Middengebied** has opted to follow a problem-oriented approach, but with extensive consultation at all levels and with all sectors of society. In this respect, it has implicitly adopted the strategic approach of the Dutch National Environment Plan, which of course applies to the Dutch Regional partner. While the Region has taken a diversified project approach, based on dealing with specific problems in common, environment is increasingly being regarded as a key factor in regional economic policy.

The **Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées** has been most successful in specific nature and tourism projects dealing with the Pyrénées, for which all partners feel a sense of responsibility. The general view here is that cross-border problems can only be dealt with effectively at the technical level. Thus, environmental problems that should be the subject of cross-border action are those of natural reserves, and water-related problems.

The **Cross-border Community of Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra** has defined the need to integrate the environment into other areas of action, using Regional funds to achieve this goal. More specifically, a general strategy is considered important for coastal problems (which, as already mentioned, can be of only limited utility as the result of non-participation by some coastal States). Otherwise, a specific approach is preferred, directed at small problems (structural, studies, administration). For the three partners together, this generally results in specific projects for protection of the Pyrénées.

More ambitious work is seen as being hindered by the absence of environment ministries for the regional partners.

Most of the actions undertaken by the **Euregion Pyrénées**, another subset of the CTP, have been limited to seminars and other presentation activities, including publication and press work. The almost total lack of corresponding powers between autonomous Catalunya and the French regional partners makes more involved activities difficult to agree. As a result, the Region has only one project - coastal management - and even this can expect only limited success (see above).

In the **Comunidad de Trabajo Galicia-Norte de Portugal**, the Galician environment agency would prefer to develop a general strategy for environmental protection. However, this is seen as being too complicated to achieve owing to administrative problems. On the one hand, Portugal's strongly centralised structure means that Norte has no competence and all agreements must pass through the national government. At the same time, Galicia - despite its enormous autonomy - finds it difficult smoothly to adjust the workings of Spain's four administrative levels to its advantage.

**PACTE** is a small Euroregion which aims to deal with aspects of development without destroying the environment. Work involving both partners tends to be carried out in parallel rather than in common, owing to the competence imbalance between the Belgian federal region and the French departments. This trend to parallel activity is accentuated by the fact that both partners are depressed industrial areas, with traditional soil and water problems caused by industrial waste. Thus, a great deal of remedial work needs to be done within each region as a precondition for the development of more extensive, integrated environmental projects.

At the same time, over 40% of the current INTERREG I budget for the Region is being used for projects relating to tourism and environment. These actions are viewed as falling between a strategic and project-specific approach. INTERREG II is seen as providing a chance to translate current plans into concrete activities which would extend current action



in both scope and depth, leading to greater integration both regionally and developmentally.

The same attitude prevails in the **Euregio Scheldemond**. The Regional authorities see a fairly wide scope for a policy of integrated action, based on the importance to all partners of the Scheldt and the coastline, as well as the Region's close cultural, linguistic and geographic links.

At present, however, differences in competence between the Dutch province and the Flemish Region are such that changes in legal and administrative procedures are considered a prerequisite for any change in approach. For now, the Region is keeping to a problem-solving approach, while working on the creation of administrative structures that would allow more integrated work to be carried out within the next several years.

A general environmental policy is an impossibility for **Italy/ Slovenia**, owing to the economic and State problems peculiar to an EC/ non-EC cooperation effort. Nevertheless, one of the two priorities the Region has set itself is improving the quality of life and health in the Region by addressing common environmental problems.

Joint action in the environmental sphere is also seen as reinforcing institutional collaboration generally. Such collaboration, in turn, is considered to have a strongly stabilising effect given the political problems facing the entire region of ex-Yugoslavia. The Region is funded (through Italy, see general description) by INTERREG; 63% of funds have been allocated to a series of studies about the local environment. Suitable physical projects will be formulated on the basis of these studies as the next stage of environmental cooperation.

**The Archipelago Region** has no particular environmental strategy. Environment is very important for all the Regional partners, but strict national regimes make a general Regional strategy less necessary than might otherwise be the case. Rather, environmental fine-tuning is carried out within the existing national regimes by Regional partners with specific environmental problems and needs. In the case of the Archipelago itself, the main area of concern is marine ecology and the primary actor the Aland region, since this area is nothing but archipelago, unlike its partner- and parent States.

Accordingly, means and programmes tend to take place within national contexts (and the regional context, in the case of Aland). However, since these frameworks are very similar, strenuous Regional efforts are seen as being less efficient than region-specific action by partners.

In addition to relatively parallel and strict national regimes, a great deal of parallel work on the environment is generally carried out within the Region, thereby still further reducing the need for Regional environment projects.

In some cases, working within a Regional context is purposely avoided because funding is a problem. Within the Region, parallel bodies are often competing for funding; if partners go outside the Region to carry out projects, funding is easier to find, particularly through the Nordic Council.

From the Regions we have analysed, we must conclude that the project-driven approach seems to be more effective than the comprehensive approach, especially for any Euro-region that does not have the funding and staff levels of EUREGIO. This is particularly the case because environmental decision-making structures in most Regions are relatively weak.

Overstretched Regional workers are not willing to draw up detailed projects if they are not sure they will be taken seriously by the participating regions and, at time of funding, by national governments and possibly the EU as well. The more relevant to Regional development an environmental problem, the more likely it is to be examined, detailed and considered a candidate for solutions at the cross-border level.

A project-directed approach also provides greater flexibility in developing cooperative efforts in ways which are most appropriate to the problem at hand. Some Regional partners remarked that - precisely because of staff and funding inequalities, competence

problems, and differing priorities - environmental problems might at times be more effectively and rationally addressed through groupings that did not depend on contiguity. The **Transmanche Euroregion**, for example, faces severe geographical and political obstacles in the way of effective cross-border cooperation (see sections on Administrative Structures and Vulnerable Ecosystems). Its most effective area of cooperation - whitecliffs management - is dealt with within the Regional context as the result of a formalisation process resulting from shared problems. At the same time, the Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais partners work together within EUROSITE, which twins natural sites for conservation purposes.

Kent also participates in the work of Fedarene, the Brussels-based agency for energy and environment funded by the European regions and DG XVI. This umbrella grouping deals with energy, waste and coastal management projects.

Similarly, problems of imbalance in several areas make effective cooperation difficult for Catalunya within the framework of the Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées (CTP) (see Administrative Structures). Within the context of Spain, Catalunya's problems - those of an environment-conscious industrialised country - sit uneasily with the national problems of drought, agricultural production and erosion, and a perceived need for rapid industrialisation without environmental constraints.

As the result of its high degree of industrialisation, Catalunya is seeking a "politique de pointe" in the area of environment, rather than an environment policy meant for a developing region. Therefore, with its strong degree of autonomy, it sees cooperation within the Euroregion as being less directly relevant to its main problems than within the Quatre Moteurs grouping to which it also belongs. The latter grouping corresponds to an industrial reality, uniting industrially strong regions which are not State capitals. Members share a similar level of development and, with some exceptions, of competence. In the area of environment, the group concentrates on clean production, which is of concern to all members.

#### **2.3.4.2 Nature and tourism**

In some respects, concern over the preservation of areas of natural beauty as a basis for tourism can be considered a special case of economic development-driven cooperation. Our consideration of the subject will be limited to the most environmentally ambitious variant of this concern, i.e. "soft" tourism. Interest in this subject seems to be widespread among the Euroregions studied. The question which has not been sufficiently clarified yet - and it is unclear whether further study, or only time, can clarify it - is to what extent soft tourism measures can be successful, since their success would of course also entail prolongation of the tourist season and an increase in the number of tourists.

Turning its lack of industrial development to advantage, the **Irish Border Region** aims to encourage angling holidays and non-mass tourism, emphasising boating, cycling and walking holidays.

Increased tourism is also the objective of certain water projects, such as rejuvenation of the Ballinamore/ Ballyconnell Canal (see Water section). This raises the question of what effect an extended tourist season, with greater numbers of visitors, will have on the environment, despite the "soft" nature of the tourism foreseen.

It should be noted that this and other plans/ projects are being developed by inter-Government cooperation rather than through the Regional Association for the cross-border area.

As noted earlier, most projects for the **Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées** are really nature projects, since the Pyrénées provides the most obvious focal point for common regional responsibility. Catalunya is leading a Regional mapping exercise for the Pyrénées, by means of a report mapping legally protected areas in all the Regional partners. A second stage has set out to centralise information on those managed protected areas within each region which lie within the Massif Pyreneen.

Some of these spaces will simply be left alone. Those to be managed will be described individually: what is their status, who works there, what are the current worker qualifications? The overall aim of the exercise is to discover lacunae which can be dealt with jointly at the cross-border level through the creation of biological corridors between similar areas.

This particular project presents an excellent example of possible conflict between environmental needs and other priorities within a single partner. Catalunya's work on the project is being carried out by the environment department. Management, however, is under the control of the Agriculture Ministry, which often does not provide necessary information to its environment colleagues, thus hampering effective cross-border cooperation.

The **Euregio Maas-Rhein** is currently carrying out four projects involving cycling paths: enlargement of a network of paths along the Ruhr, development of a cycling path in the Fourons, extension of existing paths from Voer to Berneau, and a cooperative project in Mergelland to develop a hiking/ cycling route as part of a nature conservation project.

Two soft tourism projects have also been initiated. One is a general study of soft tourism; the other aims at publication of the first Regional guide on the subject.

Nature conservation is the area in which the **Saar-Lor-Lux** Region finds it easiest to agree on common action. Projects are being carried out on wetlands, forests, biodiversity, reserves, parks and tourism.

The **Transmanche Euroregion** is undertaking work aimed at the protection and management of natural habitats, and coastline management (see section on Water, below). Habitats work comprises exchange of ideas, identification of issues of concern, comparative studies, mapping of protected areas, and preparation of a report. All Regional partners are represented within the Working Group carrying out this project.

**Benelux Middengebied** has initiated projects on both forests and tourism. The former consists in a cross-border forest plan, to develop practical measures aimed at furthering the economic, social/ recreational and natural/ environmental functions of the Region's woods. The plan is based on extremely wide consultation and involvement, including recreational, industry, agriculture, forestry, nature and environmental groups. A geographic information system for the Region's forests, and a forestry management plan, are part of this project.

The Region has three tourism projects:

- (1) the development of bicycle paths for tourists in the region Baarle-Hertog/ Baarle-Nassau;
- (2) development of bicycle paths in the Benego area, with partners including all local administrations;
- (3) a bicycle path project for the De Kempen border park, developed by five administrations.

**PACTE** has established an integrated programme of "soft" tourism for the Botte de Hainaut-la Veroy area. This comprises joint management and promotional activities, and either joint or complementary investment by the Belgian and French partners.

Local product promotion has also been undertaken, with the aim of stimulating tourism while encouraging traditional small-scale food industries. The aim of this project is to provide an infrastructure for these local products, by showing and selling locally to tourists to the area. In addition, assistance for further development of these products is foreseen. This has already been carried out in the French region, and is now being begun in Hainaut.

The third tourism project of the Region is a jointly coordinated and promoted renovation of the ramparts of the historic fortified towns of Biche (B) and Maubeuge (F).

PACTE has two nature projects, both of which are currently underway. The first, being carried out with good results, is the creation of a cross-border natural park (Scarpe-Escaut). This already existed on the French side and has now been joined to the Belgian side of the border. Work (under INTERREG I) is being carried out on the basis of well-defined common ecosystems.

This particular project is seen as having knock-on effects for administrative cooperation as well. Work is being executed by regionally appointed planners in consultation with local communes. Local intercommunal groups already exist in France; they are now being created in Belgium in order to take part in projects such as this.

Extension of the Region's natural parks under INTERREG II is foreseen, by recreating the Scarpe-Escaut effort elsewhere along the border in the southern part of the Region.

A "projet d'hautes pays" (Mons Basin and its counterpart in France) is also awaiting INTERREG II funding. This natural park project is being carried out by the cross-border asbl ETAP, which was created to promote local products. The work thus far has been paid for largely by private funds, with some public assistance.

**Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra** is carrying out a project on circulation in and protection of the wetlands shared by all three Regional partners. The area being studied is also a crucial migratory bird path between Europe and Africa, and thus incorporates an important biodiversity element.

The regions are carrying out separate projects on this theme, which will consequently be consolidated. Specific subjects are criteria and protection methods, education about the significance of wetland areas, and conservation and recuperation of wetland systems.

A joint Regional team will subsequently develop the activities to be undertaken on the basis of separate studies. These will include ecological mapping, risk assessment, use evaluation, protection criteria, description of existing legal mechanisms for protection, competence issues, proposals for action; information dissemination, including trilingual publications and maps; and publication of a joint statement of intent to protect fragile wetlands.

The Region is also carrying out a study of coastline contamination, including origins, distribution and cleanup methods. A highly integrated programme, the study will address: (1) identification and quantification of the causes and consequences of water-borne and point-source coastal pollution; (2) examination of existing treatment facilities and future needs; (3) contamination by port activities; (4) marine dispersion mechanisms; (5) examination of coastal uses and impacts (urban, industrial and touristic); (6) plans for improvement of waste treatment systems; (7) possible mechanisms for beach cleanup; (8) conservation plans for sensitive areas such as wetlands and estuaries.

Natural protection, in this case, allows in-depth examination of and remedial proposals for an enormous range of issues which might, taken individually, be more contentious as the focus for common action (e.g., industrial and port pollution, waste facilities).

**Extremadura/ Alentejo** is carrying out a study of the various techniques used to protect and improve park ecosystems. Technical teams are being sent to visit reserves in both regions, and information exchange is seen as one of the main goals of the study.

The **Comunidad de Trabajo Galicia-Norte de Portugal** has three nature projects in motion. Two projects involve the reintroduction of species in the area. One is being carried out within the framework of improved management for the Region's national parks (see below). The other, more specific activity is the reintroduction of Cabra Montesa in the Serra do Xures. This species has become extinct in Galicia owing to a series of historical hardships. With this in mind, in addition to a study of the ecological characteristics of the area, aimed at ensuring successful reintroduction, the Region is establishing a long-term management model for the area.

Integrated planning and management is also the aim of the project intended to merge the Parque da Baixa Limia and Parque Nacional de Peneda-Xeres into a large cross-border nature park. Areas of concern include forest fires, environmental education, mapping and agriculture, in addition to the reintroduction of species (see above). In preparation for the merger, the Region has carried out an environmental study of the area, including land use, economic activities, management factors, objectives and management options, mapping and analysis, and definitive planning.

It must be noted that this is the only field in which the Region is carrying out joint projects. On the one hand, this reflects shared concern for the Region's enormous reserves of flora

and fauna, which are threatened by the conflict between development needs and the environment. Negatively, however, the limited field of joint action points up the consequences of the administrative problems facing the regions in working together, as well as the difficulties Galicia - for all its autonomy - has in dealing with several administrative levels nationally.

**EUREGIO** is one of the few Regions to articulate the economic development-environment dichotomy in its project development activities. Within the framework of its wetlands protection programme, it is carrying out a project on the improvement of economic structures which attempts to resolve the goal conflict between agriculture, nature protection and environmental protection in border areas.

Within this project, farmers are being encouraged voluntarily to undertake measures aimed at species protection and biotope preservation and improvement.

The project comprises an analysis of agricultural structures, geohydrological studies, mapping of endangered species, and analysis of practical biotope improvement measures. On the basis of these combined studies, a long-term management structure for agricultural practices in fragile ecosystems will be developed.

Although the Region does not have extensive forest cover, it is looking at forest-related nature protection measures, with the intention of promoting cooperation between forestry and nature protection in general.

EUREGIO is also developing "soft tourism" cross-border networks of bicycle paths.

#### **2.3.4.3 Waste**

Waste is an area that is particularly important for Regional agendas, whether agricultural, industrial or domestic. Agricultural areas, particularly in northern States, suffer from organic waste problems. Industrial (sub)regions suffer from environmental degradation caused by industrial waste products, find that potential investors are putting an increasingly high value on the existence of a waste infrastructure, and in some circumstances find themselves at the receiving end of dumping by neighbours, including at times Regional partners.

Joint action on waste is cost effective, but because farmers and industries tend to be sensitive about the issue it is a difficult one on which to act at the Regional level.

**Saar-Lor-Lux** has carried out research and planning on contaminated land, including the publication of detailed studies, but actual results have been less than hoped for thus far.

Saar-Lor-Lux, with a shared background of heavy industry and contamination, is very involved with the issue of waste cleanup. This is particularly pressing since new industries looking at the area are saying they want to see a waste management strategy, including in the area of water quality. Regional partners have up to now been carrying out waste efforts separately, leading to a fairly serious amount of waste dumping among neighbours.

**Benelux Middengebied** has a particularly innovative and highly integrated waste programme. Its efforts clearly demonstrate the Region's determination to find economic advantage in sound environmental practices.

Indeed, one project will not be fully completed at this time precisely because the costs of the waste treatment examined have proved to be prohibitive. The project aimed to find ways to extract the heavy metals that constitute 2-5% of waste water from galvanisation treatment and to find an environmentally sound way of dealing with the resultant sludge. Technical and economic aspects of the problem were considered, including a qualitative and quantitative inventory of the industry's sludge production, as well as treatment by hydro- and pyrometallurgy. Partners in the project included the Flemish waste agency OVAM, the province of North Brabant, and the private Union Miniere, together with private consultancy groups.

A review of relevant legislation and measures in both the Netherlands and Belgium was foreseen as part of the project but has now not been undertaken. However, initiatives by

the Dutch environment ministry (VROM) and the interprovincial administrative body, in the context of a multiyear hazardous waste plan, are seen as potentially useful to continuation of the study.

Three other waste projects will be carried to completion. One involves waste management for offices with over 50 employees, its goal being to reduce waste and improve waste management through efficient sorting for treatment. Partners are OVAM, North Brabant, and their respective employers' organisations.

A second action, entitled Rapido, is a Regional plan for preventing waste and emissions as an instrument for common development. Partners include the Dutch provinces of Limburg and North Brabant and the Flemish region, as well as OVAM and several research institutes. Industries to be studied include ferrous and non-ferrous metals, wood and furniture, galvanisation, food processing, and automotive. The most important aim of the project is to raise industry awareness of waste and pollution issues.

Steam (Stimulation of energy savings and waste prevention in SMEs), initiated by OVAM and the North Brabant energy agency (PNEM) and including research institutes as partners, is intended to develop an environmental information centre, with initial emphasis on the agribusiness and metals sectors. The project will also result in handbooks for best practice, and diagnostic methods for developing environmental management strategies in industry.

The Region has in addition carried out one particularly successful waste project, in which a treatment was developed to turn abattoir waste into an earning product. Currently, water use in abattoirs is increasing rapidly, and the resulting polluted sludge spread on agricultural land. This practice is being curtailed by new legislation regulating soil and groundwater pollution. The treatment developed by the Regional project allows the waste water to be used as animal feed. This method cuts pollution, is cost effective, and is expected to reduce the production of abattoir sludge by 220.000 tonnes/ year.

**EUREGIO** has a separate, integrated waste management and recycling programme based on existing EC, national and lower level laws. In this context, a detailed written comparison has been carried out of the similarities and differences between regimes.

The cross-border programme examines opportunities for waste prevention, recycling and general management. A primary goal of the programme is to ensure the avoidance of cross-border "waste tourism". Altogether, 12 concrete project themes are being dealt with within the framework of this programme, among them disposal of hazardous waste, packaging avoidance and recycling, and avoidance of the transboundary transport of waste.

As is the case in other Regions with Dutch, German and/ or Belgian partners, extensive husbandry gives rise to serious waste problems for soil and water. EUREGIO has set up a pilot project intended to concentrate excess manure for export and use leftover liquid as local fertiliser, thereby reducing the total load to land in the Region.

The **Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées** is carrying out a rather complex scheme under INTERREG I. It should be noted, however, that this "waste" project in fact centres around protection of the Pyrénées, the one ecosystem truly common to the Region.

Again, owing to the size of the Region and disparities among Regional partners, this project is being carried out for the most part by a sub-group of regions - in this case, Midi-Pyrénées, Catalunya and Aragon, with the other partners providing "paper support".

The project is in fact an integrated waste/ natural reserve/ tourism project aimed at preventing littering by the Region's tourists. (Actual waste disposal is up to the municipal authorities.) The project has selected a few valleys in the Pyrénées where it will develop and disseminate tourist information about waste minimisation, provide containers for waste, and distribute maps of waste collection points and regional information. Guides will also provide useful telephone numbers and environmental hints.

The project is being carried out in cooperation with the relevant municipalities, which will meet the need for collections points and decide on disposal methods.

The **Italy-Slovenia** Region is home to a fair amount of lumber activity, which produces a large amount of waste. A project is being undertaken to use that waste to generate energy. Stages of the project are:

- (1) definition of the relevant cross-border area;
- (2) census of industrial activities in the sector and analysis of the usefulness of a consortium for cogeneration;
- (3) development of an easy-access database;
- (4) analysis of the catchment area and energy flow of the project.

Cogeneration is viewed as a cleaner alternative to the current use of high-sulfur coal and wood burning, which is creating serious air pollution in the border area. However, this INTERREG-financed project represents a highly end-of-pipe, non-integrated approach to energy needs. Slovenia has in recent years planned a series of dams to provide hydroelectric power for the use of highly inefficient aluminium smelters. An integrated plan for development in this Region should ideally consider less polluting, more energy-efficient industrial development and the use of limited hydro to replace polluting coal and wood use.

**Extremadura/ Alentejo**, as part of an integrated environmental strategy (see sections on Water and Policy-oriented Regions), is carrying out a joint investigation of the biological, chemical and physical properties of olive oil waste, which is a serious contaminant of the Region's surface waters. The resulting study is intended to serve as a basis for the development of cleaner technology for this industry. It will also examine possible practical applications for these residues, such as fertiliser, animal feed, or energy sourcing. An ecolabel forms part of this project.

A second waste project concerns the eco-recuperation of quarries. Carried out within the framework of INTERREG I, activities will seek to recover land and plant cover that have been damaged by quarry waste (granite in Extremadura and marble in Alentejo).

#### **2.3.4.4 Water**

We started with the hypothesis that since water is a common and often localised resource, joint action would be more efficient and equitable for this medium. That hypothesis has been corroborated in the areas studied: water is the single most important area of Regional cooperation.

For one thing, water projects are among the easiest for the Regions to plan and carry out, since water policy is based on basin catchment areas in a number of States. Thus, only basins going through a number of regions will be managed by the State; the majority of basins will be under the control of regional authorities, who can therefore take action without reference to State-set priorities and dependence on central government approval. In addition, water of reasonable quality is seen as a prerequisite for almost all the activities which would lead to economic development for the cross-border Regions: industry, agriculture, fisheries and tourism.

The **Irish Border Region** has carried out the rejuvenation of 39 miles of the Ballinamore/Ballyconnel Canal, at a cost of 30 million ECU, largely with the aim of encouraging tourism. This project was carried out through INTERREG I, by the Governments of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

This very successful project has been commended by the DG XVI of the Commission for excellence in cross-border planning. It should be noted, however, that it has bypassed the Regional Association that brings together representatives of the border counties in both partners.

Water is by far the most important environmental sector for the **Euregio Maas-Rhein** Region in terms of projects undertaken. Seven initiatives are currently underway. Three of these concern hydrotechnical measures to regulate water flow, providing lock and dam

systems in order to prevent inundations in the Aabeek and Itterbeek valley, the Fouron river, and the Bosbeek and Witbeek valley.

Four other projects are aimed at providing improved wastewater treatment:

- (1) connection of sewage and treatment systems from the Selfkant and Gangelt to the Dutch Limbourg network;
- (2) a treatment facility for wastewater from Losheim-Hergersberg;
- (3) a treatment facility for Wihogne. This project involves Belgium and the Netherlands and represents a case where the Dutch partner made a number of concessions to obtain action which it considered important while its Regional partner did not;
- (4) sewage and treatment facilities for Wehr-Sittard.

This latter system, involving Germany and the Netherlands, demonstrates some of the advantages to be gained from joint action. The system had to go from the Netherlands through German territory back into the Netherlands. The German land it crossed was a protected natural area, however, and national permission was thus required for the project to be completed. Although this introduced a delay into what could have been done more quickly in one region alone, the final system is both more efficient and cost-effective than two single systems would have been. Cooperation within the cross-border context allowed joint work to be carried out with fewer administrative obstacles than would have been the case if joint action had been decided by two unlinked border regions.

Water is seen as very important by both the Dutch and German partners of the Region, but has been given a low priority by the Belgians. (Belgium has minimal water treatment facilities generally; this has given rise to problems throughout the Region because of interconnections between river systems.) The Belgian Regional partner has high levels of unemployment and low income levels; water infrastructure is not seen as a priority.

**Euregio Scheldemond's** environmental projects are all water-related, reflecting the economic importance of the Scheldt Estuary to the area's well-being. Three projects are currently being carried out:

- (1) A study project on creeks. The Region's strongly branched creeks are an important component of the Scheldt Estuary system. Agricultural and industrial activities are threatening these creeks. The study is looking at potential and actual negative effects, in order to develop concrete action to achieve rectification of these environmental problems. One of the study's objectives will be to satisfy recreational and tourist needs without further damage to the Region's creek system.

Partners in the project include all the provinces, as well as municipalities, water companies, and government and parastatal institutes.

- (2) A canal zone environmental project, integrating spatial, economic and environmental aspects of the area in order to develop a framework for management of the Region's canal zone as a whole.

The wide range of partners for this project includes employers' federations, environment associations, provincial authorities, and parastatal and other research institutes.

- (3) The Prosa/ Prisma water project, which aims at reducing industrial effluents into the Scheldt Basin through prevention and preparing a handbook to guide firms.

Partners include the Dutch water and environment ministries, the Belgian public works and economic affairs ministries, provincial governments, parastatal waste and environment institutes, municipalities, and universities.

**Saar-Lor-Lux** is undertaking several Sur River initiatives (Luxembourg and Germany) to treat water and effluent. In addition, all Regional partners have made efforts to clean up the Moselle, although these actions have been carried out separately and in parallel rather than jointly in the context of the Region.

**Transmanche Euroregion** has two water projects: coastal management and marine protection, and a study on groundwater quality.



The latter has come to be of particular concern precisely because of the infrastructure that will finally physically link the Region's partners - the Channel Tunnel. This is expected to bring industrial development in the wake of increased mobility. As the Regional project description correctly notes: "The environmental impact of [resulting increased settlement] would hardly differ; the legislations, the rules and their implementation, however, will very often be quite different."

The study therefore aims to draw up a harmonised methodology for dealing with (agro)-industrial settlements. Focal points will be the qualitative and quantitative demands increased settlements will make on groundwater. All Regional partners are involved in this study.

The coastal management and marine protection project is more complex, incorporating several sub-projects into an overall study framework. Partners include the English and French Regional Councils, English district councils, the National Rivers Authority, the French Observatoire de l'environnement littoral et marin, the Nord-Pas de Calais Direction de l'aménagement du territoire, French and British nature groups, British Rail, and the private P&O Ferries company.

The goals are exchange of best practice, common research, transregional environmental auditing, volunteer group networking, and development of joint action and management structures. Specific sub-programmes include (1) a Straits of Dover handbook, (2) a feasibility study for establishing a voluntary marine nature reserve, (3) a study to determine joint approaches to coastal habitats, (4) parallel volunteer coastal cleanup actions in Kent and Calais, (5) a pilot study of marine archaeology resources in the Region.

**Benelux Middengebied** is carrying out a measuring project for the Mark-Vliet river system coming from Belgium into the Netherlands. The project is being coordinated through a complete, one-computer cross-border measuring system.

No legislation is being pushed on the back of this project. Rather, Belgo-Dutch joint analysis is leading to common development of action. At the practical level, this is expected to lower the cost of dredging.

Project partners include the University of Gent hydraulics laboratory, the Zeeland and North Brabant water agencies, the Flemish environment administration AMINAL, the province of North Brabant, and several local water authorities.

**EUREGIO** has developed an integrated surface water programme. It is also carrying out work on building water treatment facilities, particularly for biological treatment.

Water depletion measures (wetlands management) are described under the section on Nature, above.

In the **Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées**, as noted earlier, the physical separation of the Region created by the Pyrénées provides a focal point for natural reserve work on the one hand, while at the same time largely precluding further common problems, except water problems involving one or another subset of Regional partners.

One project, a report on river quality and trout protection for the Bidasoa River, is being carried out primarily by the Euskadi and Aquitaine (see Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra, below). Other projects include fisheries and bathing water studies. Actions in these areas can have only limited impact because the Euroregion does not represent the entire coastal area involved.

In the project framework of the CTP, a number of proposed water studies have never reached the implementation stage owing to a lack of technical information. Regional efficiency has been greatest in areas where the most complete amount of information was available. In turn, information has been most forthcoming for those proposals where the Regional Environment Secretariat (Midi-Pyrénées) did the most pushing.

The **Euroregion Pyrénées** has widely discussed and is carrying out a coastal management project. Phases of the project include:

(1) exchange of data about water quality and beaches, and technical visits;

- (2) elaboration of coastal conservation measures;
- (3) related summer courses (conceptual stage only).

This sub-Region faces the same problem as the larger CTP, however, in that Mediterranean pollution cannot be dealt with effectively at the Regional level, without the cooperation of all coastal States.

Several water projects are being considered for the **PACTE** Region, which suffers from extensive water pollution as the result of being an area of early industrialisation. All of these are still in the planning stage; active work is expected to begin under INTERREG II. The Tournai aquifer is seen as the most important of these projects. The aquifer has been a problem for decades, and the two regions have had informal contacts on the subject for many years. However, formalisation of these existing relations is seen as facilitating cooperative cleanup activities, thereby rendering them more effective.

The Tournai aquifer is used as a drinking water source for both regions. The aquifer suffers from degraded water quality, as well as from excessive extraction. Research is underway to create monitoring pumps, allowing both level and quality to be tested regularly. The Region is also studying the problem of quarry waters, in order to treat these when they are brought up by quarrying activities. Once treated, waters would be reinserted into the aquifer.

Three treatment facility projects are being considered. The first is the cleanup of the Roubaix-Moucron canal and river. Most of this work is being done around Lille, with the aim of preventing the river that runs the length of the canal from being polluted as the result of overflow from the canal's polluted waters. Joint action is being taken at the level of a feasibility study, including database, information exchange and consultation.

Also under consideration is a water treatment plant to be built on the Belgian side of the Region, but serving both regions. Under INTERREG II, actual construction based on the results of current study would be undertaken. However, the realisation of this project is not certain, because not all the Regional actors are sure that they would want to devote a sizeable proportion of the Region's funds to such an end.

A third project also comprises a study, being carried out jointly by IPALLE (the Belgian intercommunal waste treatment group) and CUDL (Communauté urbaine de Lille), on how technically to connect local populations to the existing water treatment plant serving the area.

The single project being considered in regard to surface water relates to treatment of the Escaut river. The project points up the potential problem inherent in parallel rather than joint action: the aim of the project would be to treat the river's waters to the point where they can serve as household and drinking water. Hainaut would prefer that each partner treat its own section of river; however, it is not sure that the French will be able to attain the levels that have been set.

No joint action has thus far been taken as a result, even to the point of carrying out a joint study. However, both sides are considering the issue for future study and action. Such disequilibria are of course a much greater risk when action is taken in parallel rather than jointly.

Within the wider context of the Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées (see above), the **Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra** Region is taking part in a project aimed at the conservation and protection of the Bidasoa river system (salmon and faura specifically). Based on a recently concluded CTP study of the system, the Region has chosen as priority actions: (1) the construction of collection and treatment facilities for residential wastewater; (2) adjustment of flows of hydroelectric installations situation in Navarra; (3) construction and remodelling of fish runs, especially in mini-hydro areas; (4) improvement of the water volume monitoring station of Endarlaza, and possible installation of an automatic contamination monitoring station; (5) construction of a volume monitoring station on the Ezcurra

rier; and (6) execution of the Special Plan for the Protection and Recuperation of Txingudi, harmonised with projects currently being carried out in the bay.

The **Italy-Slovenia** Region has two water projects, both INTERREG financed and centred around the Region's grotto system. A surface water project addresses the cleanup of the Timavo river basin. The basin comprises a grotto area recognised as an area of special interest by UNEP. It is considered particularly important by both Italy and Slovenia and acts as an important source of water for local populations on both sides of the border. Significant urban and industrial pollution makes cleanup quite important.

The current project comprises three stages: (1) hydrological study of the river system and the degree of pollution; (2) mapping of data collected; (3) analysis and evaluation.

Under INTERREG II, the Region foresees a further project involving continuous sampling and analysis, cleanup of toxic/ harmful wastes dumped in the caverns beneath the river, the establishment of permanent equipment to be available for cleanup, and an information and education campaign.

The other project focuses on the area's groundwater, and involves an isotopic study of grotto aquifers, especially as regards pesticide pollution of the Natisone river basin. Project stages are (1) sampling and measurement *in situ* of surface and subterranean waters in both Slovenia and Italy; (2) laboratory measurements of the samples; (3) analysis of data and comparison of results.

The **Extremadura/ Alentejo** Region has planned three projects in the area of water. The first, being carried out in connection with the Region's olive oil waste problem (see section on Waste), involves planning for adequate treatment facilities for the Guadiana and Tajo rivers.

Treatment facilities are a very common choice for Regional projects. In the Extremadura/ Alentejo Region, however, treatment is to be carried out as part of the Region's integrated planning to deal with the pollution problems arising from the olive oil industry, rather than merely as an end-of-pipe solution to a pollution problem which is not addressed at source, as is so often the case.

The two further water projects for the Region both involve mapping, conservation and environmental recuperation of rivers. The Guadiana River project is a study of the problem of effluents arising from agro-industries and urban and industrial waste, as well as the consequences of flooding caused by construction of the Presa Dam in Portugal. The other river system being studied is the Ardila and its tributary river, the Murtega. These rivers have also been adversely affected by the Presa Dam, as well as by the exploitation of surrounding pastures for the grazing of livestock.

Water in all its aspects is the main area of joint concern for the **Archipelago Region**. The Region does not have a great deal of polluting activity, since industry is minimal. However, the marine ecosystem is extremely fragile and has been severely damaged in both the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia. National Archipelago environment regimes seem to be working rather successfully. Thus, parallel actions tending towards the same ends have for the most part taken over from cross-border actions within the context of the Region.

There are currently three Regional projects on water-related issues. The first is an aquatic ecology project, dealing with the marine ecosystem, including fisheries aspects. Its aims are the collection and dissemination of information. A water quality and fish populations study is being carried out, especially for salmon, with the participation of the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute and the Swedish Salmon Research Institute. This is examining ways of increasing fish populations without producing pollutants in the process. It is also considering how to carry out water treatment in the area for fish processing plants.

Aland and Finland are carrying out controls on the level and quality of groundwater for the second project (Aland field station in cooperation with the National Water and Environment Board in Helsinki). This project is not being carried out within the context of the Region, however.

The third project is being carried out by a fisheries and environment group involving all three partners in an examination of the problems affecting salmon hatcheries and coastal sweet water fish in the Archipelago as the result of phosphorus and nitrogen discharges from fishfarming and agriculture. The project is based in Mariehamn (Åland) and is being financed partly by the Region (Game and Fisheries Research Institute, Helsinki; Åland provincial government; Swedish National Fisheries Board) and partly by the Nordic Council.

#### **2.3.4.5 Air**

We had originally seen this as another shared, and therefore fruitful, area of cooperation. This has turned out not to be the case. First, air pollution and acid rain are often partly caused by regions outside a given Euroregion, and expensive cleanup projects are thus seen as not being a good investment for limited funds.

Secondly, air pollution is often caused largely by transport. Even States with progressive positions on the environment, however, are generally reluctant to take strong action in the area of transport, and they are certainly not anxious to leave such decisions up to the regions.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the universal priority for the Regions is economic development. While Euroregions as well as national governments are increasingly aware of the need to reduce emissions to air in order to encourage investment and reduce health-related costs, stringent regulation of industrial emissions remains a sensitive issue. This is even true in Germany and the Netherlands, where it has not infrequently led to conflicts at national level between ministries of environment and those of economic and/ or internal affairs.

Conversely, of course, this makes air an area where decisions taken at national level in favour of inter-national action will of necessity lead to enhanced cross-border action at the regional level. This explains the fact that few Regions are actively involved in air-related activities and that, where they are, involvement tends to be at the level of monitoring, except in cases where there is a national government interest in action.

**Euregio Maas-Rhein** has undertaken two air quality monitoring projects, within the context of INTERREG. One is development of a monitoring network for the Region, the other an atmospheric monitoring system using potassium paper.

The first stage of the projects involved sending out questionnaires to assess what exactly needs to be measured, as well as to determine appropriate measurement methods and locations for monitors. Targets were set on the basis of responses to these questionnaires.

Air-related work suffers greatly from the problem (which plagues other areas as well) of differences in national standards. In the case of air, Germany's TU-Luft legislation is much more rigorous than the laws in force in either Belgium or the Netherlands, making common action difficult. EC environment legislation is seen by Regional administrators as providing a useful common standard for this type of work.

The **Transmanche Euroregion** is studying air pollution, particularly as it relates to childhood asthma, through a data collection project. The goal of the project is to devise a research protocol capable of determining the nature of any association between childhood asthma and particular airborne pollutants.

Study phases include identification of schools at particular risk, teacher training in methodology, questionnaires, data collection, and protocol refinement. All regions are participating, through regional steering groups composed of medical, environmental and regional authorities.

**Benelux Middengebied** is working on development of a goods transport terminal at Roosendaal. Undertaken as a transport project, this could nonetheless have significant implications for air pollution from road haulage. The project would establish port-to-

terminal rail transport for goods arriving in the ports of Antwerp and Rotterdam. From there, goods would be shuttled anywhere in Europe - by rail.

Partners include the Dutch and Belgian rail transport agencies and the province of North Brabant.

**EUREGIO** has undertaken a pilot project aimed at combatting acid rain. On the basis of a study of the effects of acid rain on the countryside in Twente (NL) and Bentheim (D), the project developed a bridging strategy to protect these areas until internationally agreed measures to reduce SO<sub>2</sub> emissions have entered into force and have had some success.

Random checks by local farmers on the health of copses and hedges in the study areas provide an element of air-nature integration into this study, as well as ensuring local participation in Regional activities.

#### **2.3.4.6 Agriculture (including forestry, fisheries)**

Although agriculture is not in reality a cross-border activity, it has cross-border impacts, through soil contamination, erosion, effects on groundwater, and run-off into surface/ - coastal waters. Thus, agricultural practices inevitably affect the well-being of the environment. In addition, they may have implications for the development of certain types of tourism, since high water quality is of considerable importance in this sector.

This area is particularly fraught with conflict, however, since it is often the case that the Community provides funds for polluting agricultural practices on the one hand while allocating further funds for environmentally sound management of water, soils, forests etc. with the other. This conflictual arrangement is often mirrored within States, pitting national environment ministries against their agricultural colleagues.

**EUREGIO** has developed a series of integrated agricultural projects. Their objectives are twofold. On the one hand, they aim to strengthen the agribusiness complex on both sides of the border. Strategies deal with questions of production, marketing and restructuring of the agricultural sector as a whole.

At the same time, a number of actions are being carried out to reduce the environmental impact of agricultural activities. Activities include a pilot project on alternatives to conventional agricultural methods, species and biotope protection, and studies on agricultural chemicals and the use of excess manure. These projects are expected to lead to the development of a long-term infrastructure which will eliminate the conflicts between agriculture and nature/ environment protection in the cross-border area.

Other Regional studies are equally relevant to the area's practical problems. In the field of agriculture, the Region has also set up a "Permaculturpark", which it uses to examine the effects of monoculture avoidance methods and the practice of set-aside.

Most of the Region's forests are owned by farmers and are thus also linked to agricultural use. The Region has therefore undertaken a forestry project with parallel goals to those for agriculture described above, examining the conflict between forest as raw material and as an element of nature conservation.

**The Irish Border Region** has plans for two projects in the agricultural field. Again, these have been planned by the respective national Governments, without consultation with the Regional Association. First, there is a perceived need to develop the fisheries industry, through maintenance of an unpolluted medium for commercial stock. The Central Fisheries Board has drawn up plans to develop fish resources in the regional partners, including improved protection and control services. A coordinated training programme for fisheries officers in advanced pollution and protection measures will be introduced in order to meet Regional goals.

The Governments are also planning a forestry policy that has the potential to integrate environmental protection and economic development: Irish forests have unusually high growth rates, while much of the Region's agricultural land is marginal and much better suited to forests than to crops. Yet the Region's forestry is way below the EC average. The

plan is to develop this potential significantly, thereby simultaneously eliminating harmful agricultural practices (too much fertilizer, etc.) and at the same time providing sustainable industry (including afforestation) and a basis for biodiversity.

**Benelux Middengebied** is carrying out a joint study on the effects of manure on land and water, in order to deal with the practical problems caused by the Region's sizable husbandry sector.

**Italy-Slovenia** has initiated a qualitative study of agro-food product contamination, from air-, water- and soil-based sources.

**Extremadura/ Alentejo** is carrying out a forestry project comprising three activities:

- (1) stimulation of cooperation between private and public actors and agencies to improve the protection and maintenance of border forests;
- (2) a study of methods for the prevention of forest fires in Mediterranean ecosystems, including their effects on soil, flora and forest cover;
- (3) an afforestation project.

A second project is examining the possibility of using agricultural and forestry residues as biomass fuel.

Two livestock projects are also being carried out. The first (with INTERREG financing) is aimed at encouraging ecological husbandry, specifically the natural production of chicken and eggs, by providing natural feeding and habitats. The second project has as its goal the protection of indigenous species of livestock, which are in danger of extinction.

Two of the three **Archipelago Region** partners are carrying out a project monitoring air quality and emissions, but this is not being done in the context of the Region.

Some of these Regions show up the potential for conflict between environmental needs, including those foreseen in regional (and INTERREG) projects, and EU agricultural subsidies in border areas. These include:

- (1) EUREGIO, where high CAP subsidies go to Germany for raising grain and to the Netherlands for dairy farming, despite the fact that the area suffers from severe environmental problems caused by monoculture and by high levels of manure, nitrates and phosphates;
- (2) the Irish Border Region, where an entirely small-scale agricultural sector is highly dependent on the CAP;
- (3) Alentejo/ Extremadura, where CAP funds are being provided for extensive eucalyptus plantations. This monoculture badly depletes the soil. In addition, eucalyptus is a thirsty crop, with roots that can go many metres down in search of water. In this Region, which is particularly arid, these trees therefore deprive other plantings of much-needed water.

#### **2.3.4.7 Transport**

Transport is a gray area in environmental Regional work. On the one hand, many cross-border Regions suffer from inadequate or poorly planned transport infrastructure - a consequence of their peripheral location and status - and from congestion and air pollution as a consequence of unplanned development. On the other hand, transport policy is rarely in the hands of the Regions or of their constituent regional partners.

Even in cases where the Regions have a say, however, they must keep one eye firmly fixed on attracting investment and improving distribution infrastructure. In reality, the Regional role in transport is most often that of putting pressure on the national authorities to consider regional needs and interests.

The situation is further complicated by questions of competence. While regions may have control of local road networks, major transport infrastructure is decided on by national, and even supranational, bodies.

The **Irish Border Region** has a need for better rural road networks, bus services and trains (there are very poor connections between north and south for this area). However, transport development is generally carried out using EU funds and focuses on national road networks.

Kent County is trying to find a way to develop the **Transmanche** Region without causing further congestion to its own area. It is unlikely to have much success in this, since the UK Government is currently involved in an erratic and politically driven roadway construction programme.

The Channel Tunnel, by contrast, which could potentially affect the Region as a whole enormously, has proved of little interest to the UK. As a result, the Channel trains run at some 160 km/ hour in Belgium, 200 km/ hour in France - and 85 km/ hour in the UK, on poorly maintained and outdated track structures.

**Benelux Middengebied** and **EUREGIO** need to deal with air pollution and acid rain problems caused by congestion. These, however, are both areas where solutions to the problem are only partially to be found at the Regional level. Without an EU-wide strategy to cut emissions, any investment made in transport-related measures at the Regional level will be money partly lost.

**Euregio Scheldemond** is acutely aware of its East-West transport lacunae, and of the generally poor level of passenger rail infrastructure, and is carrying out studies on these issues.

**Spanish Regions** tend to feel competence discrepancies very strongly. While Catalunya and Euskadi have some say over motorways in their regions, this is not the case for their Regional partners. The latter (in Spain) must look to Madrid for transport decisions, since the central government has competence over national motorway infrastructure.

This has two consequences. First, it almost ensures that no attention will be given the environment in making motorway decisions. Spain has no central environment ministry; environment is dealt with largely within the Ministry of Public Works. There is thus an intrinsic and permanent conflict of interest between providing public contracts and protecting the environment within a single ministry.

Secondly, it means that unless regions can fund their own road construction, emphasis will always be on national infrastructures - that is, motorways rather than local networks.

The situation in respect to train transport is even worse. All Spanish regions, and thus the Regions in which they are partners, have infrastructure problems. **Extremadura/ Alentejo** has very poor connections, although Alentejo has good transport infrastructure for both road and rail. In Extremadura, where train connections are practically non-existent, the Spanish government is currently building a new motorway, despite the fact that the existing motorway is enormously underutilised.

In **Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra**, Euskadi will change train gauge to become compatible with France and the rest of Europe. The central government has stated that it has no money to allocate for this task, so the Spanish Regional partners will pay for the transformation themselves.

This is particularly important since, while road connections in this Region are rather good, train and bus systems are seriously deficient. Moreover, the Euroregion as a whole wants to become a part of the Paris-Madrid TGV path, in order to counter problems of peripherality. TGV access would facilitate the movement of goods as well as people, and intermodal plans for container ports connecting to trains are currently being considered.

Transport problems are extreme in the **Galicia-Norte** Region. The cross-border system is extremely poor. This is exacerbated by the fact that the individual regional systems are also extremely limited. Some inter-regional transport exists, but communication between the region of Galicia and the rest of Spain is generally only possible by going through Madrid.

Rail systems are poor both in the cross-border direction and in connecting regional partners to their respective countries, although bus systems and regional airports do exist. Shipping facilities exist at several points in both Galicia and Norte, but infrastructure is poor and congestion common.

This has serious implications for future transport-related emissions, since goods transport can be expected to be entirely by road. It also has serious implications for the extent to which regions can expect to be consulted in the development of transport policy. In Galicia-Norte, increased emissions are certain to result from new motorway construction in the area. That construction has been decided on by the national government and financed by EU funds, against the wishes of the Regional partners.

### **2.3.5 Dissemination/ Exchange of Information - Application of Best Practice**

In many cases, the dissemination and exchange of information among Regional partners is as far as cooperative effort gets, owing to problems of funding, legal obligations, national competence, etc. Most respondents, however, saw these exchanges as being extremely valuable irrespective of whether they led to concrete projects.

This was particularly the case where partners were on a relatively equal footing but faced rather different problems, or where one or several partners had expertise that others largely lacked.

In **SaarLorLux**, extensive discussion, planning and preparation of reports relating to a waste strategy have not yet led to concrete action because the relevant committees have no official standing within the Region. Nevertheless, discussions on Regional problems and possible solutions to these are seen as extremely important in terms of best practice and an on-going advantage of discussion and research, even if official results are not forthcoming.

**EUREGIO** represents a case where exchange of information may in fact lead to effective action over an extensive Region. As far as the EUREGIO Secretariat is concerned, even when projects do not result, meetings between partners are important for the transfer of expertise that takes place as the result of individual partners specialising in specific technical areas (ex. Germany's extensive experience with acid rain).

A similar exchange of important technical information occurs in **Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ - Navarra**, particularly with respect to the first two partners. Euskadi has long experience in dealing with industrial pollution, which Aquitaine lacks, while Aquitaine has know-how in *aménagement du territoire*.

Roughly the same sentiments were expressed by **PACTE**. Regional partners have taken up ideas from each other, and operators work well together in general, exchanging information and ideas. As a result, the Region works well at the cross-border technical level, as well as that of joint studies and decision-making.

INTERREG is seen by PACTE as being important in encouraging the application of best practice at a more general level. That is, the existence of the programme has allowed cross-border relations to become stronger than they would otherwise have been. In addition, it has made environmental needs more evident by encouraging larger projects than would have been possible under existing contacts and arrangements. This is expected to lead to a shift in future from end-of-pipe solutions to the application of specific integration strategies for environmental projects, based on best practice on a wider scale.

In **Benelux Middengebied**, too, the regions' strong points were seen as highly complementary, making information exchange quite valuable. This is particularly true in the areas of education and economic strengths, and in specialised technical fields.

Strong expression of environmental interest by the Netherlands, which as a whole is much more environmentally concerned and sophisticated than is Belgium, is seen as serving to increase awareness of environmental problems in Flanders. In one specific case - that of



soil contamination by manure - action by the Netherlands hastened the adoption of appropriate legislation by Flanders, via the INTTERREG programme.

Almost precisely the same conditions were seen as applicable in **Euregio Scheldemond**, which again pairs The Netherlands with parts of the Flemish Region in Belgium. Application to best practice was judged extremely important, with meetings serving to break down psychological barriers between East and West Flanders as well as between Belgium and The Netherlands, while at the same time leading to exchanges of expertise.

More important, however, the mere fact of putting people together frequently was seen as educating all parties about Regional problems. Project-based meetings generated successful discussions on a common subject, as well as a shared desire to succeed. As a result, such meetings led to the development of a wider vision of cooperation, and convinced both sides to attempt action they would probably not have taken left to themselves.

This type of information exchange becomes even more important when the partners differ widely in environmental expertise, as is the case for the Region of **Extremadura/ Alentejo**. Here, application to best practice was seen as one of the most important results of meetings and discussion. Joint Regional projects must conform to the provisions of Extremadura's stringent environmental laws. Given Portugal's inexperience in environmental management, the gains in know-how and environmental standards for Alentejo, as the result of exchanges with Extremadura, have been enormous.

**The Archipelago Region** represents an interesting exception to the consensus on the value of exchanges among experienced, informed partners. Representatives from this Region felt that meetings did not contribute particularly to the development of best practice, since Regional partners were all at approximately the same level of environmental awareness and expertise.

Valuable exchange of information and application to best practice was conspicuously not the case when all partners were inexperienced in environmental work or lacked expertise in the field, such as in Galicia-Norte or the Irish Border Region.

Action may be almost entirely limited to information exchange in cases where there is a weak environmental commitment by national administrations or a lack of commitment at regional levels, as is the case for the **Transmanche Euroregion** or **SaarLorLux**.

Administrators we have interviewed universally acknowledge the efficacy of exchange of information and know-how in raising environmental awareness and even, albeit rarely, speeding up the adoption of proposed projects or legislation needed to deal with environmental problems.

Exchanges can also lead to new and more effective structures being put in place by Regional partners. Catalunya, for example, is speaking to France's parastatal Conservatoire de littoral to discover whether it would be possible to establish a Spanish equivalent. Although 20% of Catalunyan territory is legally protected, a parastatal arrangement would be more flexible than the current mechanism.

Thus, even when agreement about specific action to be taken is not reached, education and transfer of know-how take place simply because a problem has been defined and the need for remedial action discussed.

## 2.4 Definitions of success

Although, as stated earlier, no single measure of the dependent variable "success" has been chosen, the cases of environmental cooperation discussed above can be grouped into a typology which, although qualitative, can be taken as a proxy of a scale for "success".

(1) Achievers:

Real centres of innovation (Benelux Middengebied, EUREGIO, Extremadura/ Alentejo, The Archipelago)

- (2) Tryers:  
Regions exhibiting high levels of interest (Euregio Maas-Rhein, PACTE, Italy-Slovenia, Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra, Euregio Scheldemond)
- (3) Pretenders:  
Showcase regions, where discussion takes place, but very little action (Transmanche Region, Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées, Euroregion Pyrénées, Irish Border Region, SaarLorLux, Galicia-Norte).

Where success does take place, it must still be considered from three separate vantage points: success of communication between Regional partners, success of achievement of Regional efforts, and success in protection of the environment.

#### **2.4.1 Successful Communication**

As described in the section on Dissemination of Information, exchanges of knowhow and information are considered extremely valuable by most Regional partners whether or not they lead to concrete joint projects. Given the degree to which these exchanges do eventually lead to either joint projects, the adoption of new standards or measurement methods, enactment of new legislation or administrative methods, or simply increased awareness of the need to take the environment into consideration in the course of other activities, we consider this assessment to be valid.

Preconditions for successful efforts at joint consideration of problems centre on the choice of existing, relevant problems as the topic for such discussions, frequency of meetings, and inclusion of participants with practical knowledge in the area under discussion.

#### **2.4.2 Successful Action**

Successful action is an exercise in translation, from successful discussion to concrete result. This is a much more complicated exercise than its predecessor. It generally requires similar levels of competence between Regional partners; access to funding from the Regional, regional or State level; structures ensuring that competent and allocating authorities are represented at the time of decision-making; some degree of independence for Regional decision-making structures - or, failing this, positive concurrence between the regions and their national governments; and agreement on the importance of environmental action in the Regional context.

Within this category, there are two categories of success. The first is by far the most common, and consists in carrying out projects related to Regional - that is, localised - resources such as natural reserves or water. Projects in these fields would be carried out at the regional level in any case, for the most part. Transferring them to the Regional context is a sensible way to ensure efficiency and cut costs. This type of success could be made much easier by the creation of mechanisms ceding State competence for nature- and water-related decision-making to the regions/ Regions. This system seems to work well in those Member States where it is already the norm; there is no reason not to generalise it.

The much more difficult, and consequently rather rare, category of successful action is that where Regions have gone beyond the obvious and have evolved programmes of action embodying the integration of development and environment. Integrated programmes have been carried out by all the Regions listed as "achievers" above. It is no accident that all but one of these number regions belonging to States where environment has a high priority (and that the one exception contains an autonomous region). While integrated successful action requires the same conditions as the first category of successful action, its *sine qua non* is a national government with a progressive environmental position.

### 2.4.3 Successful Environmental Protection

This is not, strictly speaking, a subject that falls within the purview of this study. However, the extent to which successful Regional cooperation may be rendered meaningless by forces outside Regional control is so glaring that some consideration must be made of this complication.

Some Regions claim that they are the most logical and effective centres for policy and project development - including in the area of environment - and have called for a "Europe of regions rather than States". For the most part, however, European Regions include at least one Community partner and are therefore within the Community's sphere of influence. Environment policy and projects, whose hold on the public imagination and purse strings are particularly tenuous in times of recession, are especially sensitive to EU policy, planning and funding, both within and outside of the environmental sphere.

#### 2.4.3.1 EU environment legislation

We began with the idea that since the Regions deal with joint ecosystems and problems, presumably of relatively equal concern to all partners, the Regional level would prove to be a very effective level for undertaking well-planned and efficient environmental action. In fact, however, there has been almost universal agreement among the Regional administrators interviewed that stronger EU legislation would be enormously helpful to the success of Regional environmental efforts.

As noted by Yearly *et al.*, '... the EU has so far played its largest role in shaping the environmental condition of member states, not through its environmental policy measures, but through the consequences of its free-trade, economic development and agricultural enhancement provisions. A policy of fostering sustainability has to begin by acknowledging this fact.'<sup>6</sup>

By providing strong common standards, the EC could save the Regions from constantly having to sink to the lowest common denominator among Regional partners in order to take any effective action in the environmental field. Standards become critical in countries such as Spain, where "Spanish environmental policy is absolutely based at present in the mere - and...critically defective - incorporation of EU directives."<sup>7</sup> A weak central regime has a knock-on effect among the multiplicity of regional, provincial and local environment agencies throughout Spain, most of which have a strong degree of autonomy coupled with insufficient budgets. This is a recipe for confusion.

EU environmental legislation was also, in the case of less progressive countries, seen by the Regions as being extremely useful in allowing Regional partners to bypass obstacles to environmental improvement put in place by central government. Administrators in Regions involving Spain, Italy, France and Belgium mentioned this as an important role for the EU in the Regions.

One of the most striking instances of the potential role of EU legislation is to be found in the Region of **Extremadura/ Alentejo** (Spain/ Portugal). This is a highly unbalanced Region, in the sense that Extremadura is an autonomous region with a high degree of competence, while Alentejo must go through its national government for any project it wants to undertake. Normally, a strong imbalance of this type would lead to minimal cooperation because of the planning problems it presents.

<sup>6</sup> Yearly *et al.*, "Environmental Policy and Peripheral Regions in the European Union: An Introduction", in *Protecting the Periphery: Environmental Policy in Peripheral Regions of the European Union* (Frank Cass, London, 1994), p. 3

<sup>7</sup> Santiago Garrido de Las Heras, 'Adaptation of Spanish Legislation to the European Environmental Policy', paper presented at the European University Institute workshop on Environment in Europe: The Implementation Challenge, July 1994

Such has not been the case for this Region, however. One of the most important reasons for this is the strong Regional enactment of the EU's Environmental Impact Assessment Directive - legally in the case of Extremadura, and tacitly in the case of Alentejo. This Directive has, in fact, been incorrectly transposed by the Spanish Government, and consequently incorrectly transposed from national law by a number of the autonomous regions. Already weaker than originally intended, it has thereby been weakened still further in several cases.

Extremadura has not been thus affected. The region's enacting Decree requires a full EIA for EU Annex I projects, which include electricity generating plants, motorways, airports, watercourses, waste treatment plants, hazardous waste storage, and electric lines; and abbreviated but nonetheless extensive EIAs for Annex II projects, which include small waste treatment plants, low tension electric lines, afforestation projects, fisheries, logging, industrial plants, sports centres, tourism facilities, radio and television stations, introduction of non-native species, and others.<sup>8</sup>

Alentejo has no corresponding legislation, since Portuguese regions have no competence and the national government has full responsibility for legislative initiatives. In practice, therefore, proposed Regional projects must pass an EIA carried out by Extremadura. They will then be accepted or rejected by Alentejo and submitted to the national Government for approval. Thus far, there have been no objections to this method of project approval either by Alentejo or by the Portuguese Government. The effect is to ensure that all Regional projects have submitted an environmental impact assessment and been approved on the basis of that assessment.

One of the most environmentally aware and active of the Regions studied - the **Archipelago** Region of Finland, Sweden and Åland - also views the EIA as a useful tool for ensuring that environmental considerations are taken into account in economic activity. Finland has EIA legislation. Sweden does not, but has nevertheless carried out certain minimal EIA-type tasks. Åland has developed its own EIA legislation, in two parts: an Act, specifying how to carry out an EIA; and a Decree, determining when an EIA should be carried out. Åland, which does not have to - and does not intend to - join the EU despite accession by Finland, will harmonise its law with the ECE convention on environmental impact assessments.

In the Cross-border Community of **Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra**, international conventions and EU legislation which require wetlands protection are seen as extremely helpful in justifying protection of the Region's shared wetlands, which also comprise a crucial path for bird migration from Africa to Europe. One part of a wetlands protection project being undertaken jointly by all three Regional partners involves a description of the various legal mechanisms ensuring wetlands protection (international, State and regional standards) and the consequent distribution of competence among the three regions.

In other cases, no action is possible precisely because of the absence of common standards. For example, the rigour of German air legislation makes it difficult for German regional partners to meet national requirements when trying to work cooperatively with partners from other States with less stringent regulations.

Equivalency of serious standards has enormous economic implications. First, environment projects are almost inevitably less expensive when carried out jointly. Secondly, stringent - and common - standards would ensure that levels of clean-up required are less extensive - and therefore less expensive - than would otherwise be the case. This is particularly true for water treatment and soil cleanup. In addition, of course, carrying out projects on the Regional level makes available some types of EU funding that would not be accessible to partners acting separately.

<sup>8</sup> Decreto 45/ 1991, de 16 abril sobre medidas de proteccion del ecosistema en la Comunidad Autonoma de Extremadura

### **2.4.3.2 Obstacle or promoter?**

What institutional arrangements and programmes allow the Regions to be heard by the EU (and vice versa), and how effective are they? There was quite a bit of unhappiness expressed about exchange of information, in both directions, between the Regions and the Commission.

First, there was some confusion about appropriate sources of EU information about the environment, particularly at the technical level. DG XI does not speak to regional representatives at an official level. Thus, Commission information reaching the Regions about the environment is not necessarily complete. Offices within Regional partners may present an additional bottleneck in those Regions where they do not deal with the environment themselves, since they receive EU information but do not necessarily pass it on to those charged with the environment for the Euroregion.

Some authorities felt that the Regions are not being consulted sufficiently in the development of regional environment programmes, despite the establishment of the Committee of the Regions. Decisive consultation tends to take place between the EU and national governments. Regional lobbying is carried out within the Commission, but it takes place at a political level, by government officials concerned with the economy and industry - not by environmental specialists.

Some Regional officials saw this as being unfortunate for environment at the EU as well as the Regional level, since Regional input could be very useful in establishing practical and realistic norms for EU environment legislation.

Even more useful would be a dialogue among environmental experts. Commission coordination of an extensive dialogue of this type - either through DG XVI or DG XI - would allow for a much more comprehensive discussion of problems and provide an enormously useful source of information exchange, on both technical and administrative issues (see section on Dissemination of Information).

DG XVI does not appear to be encouraging such a dialogue. We approached DG XVI for an appointment at the end of 1993, at the halfway mark of our project, in order to exchange information about environment in the Regions and pick up useful pointers for further study. After several phone calls and faxes, we were refused an interview - with anyone working in the area - on the grounds that DG XVI had no information about environmental work within INTERREG.

One of the more progressive Regions studied, which receives a very high level of EU funding and has a great deal of power to initiate projects, felt the EU should be kept to a framework role, with actual cooperation being carried out solely by Regional partners. This was seen as being particularly important because the EU takes too long to adopt and implement legislation, thus hindering effective Regions. National laws were considered much more useful in achieving Regional goals.

However, the strength of this view was almost inevitably directly proportional to the degree of competence held by the Region, and to the extent of positive concurrence between Regional partners and national centres.

Funding priorities also create more environmental problems than they solve. As Yearly et al. have written,<sup>9</sup> "The lack of a regional dimension has been pointed out, for example, in the criticism made of the Structural Funds, which have also been severely criticised for their lack of adequate environmental safeguards."

One reason for this is the tendency of EU funding to go to public infrastructure projects, which in most Member States are largely under the control of national governments. This trend may be exacerbated by already existing regional disparities, so that least advantaged

<sup>9</sup> Yearly et al., op cit., p. 12

regions are likely to remain so. In the case of Portugal, for example,<sup>10</sup> "a more extended use [of Community Funds] highly depends on the institutional mechanisms of reception, coordination and canalisation of these funds", so that weaker and poorer regions, although they may receive higher per capita amounts than the national average, will have very little say in how such funds are used.

The same process was found to apply to agricultural fund distribution in Portugal, with larger and more efficiently structured agricultural enterprises benefitting disproportionately from CAP funds.<sup>11</sup> This phenomenon will eventually exacerbate regional disparities within receiving countries. More seriously, larger and more efficient units will tend to represent agri-business rather than traditional agricultural methods, and be oriented purely towards economic development. This type of funding is therefore all too likely to lead to monoculture, with its (severe) accompanying environmental costs.

In cases such as these, the lack of a Regional dimension is less important than the fact that projects being funded are simply environmentally harmful while also being economically short-sighted. Thus, the eucalyptus plantations spread throughout Portugal and Spain thanks to Union funding deplete the soil, require heavy chemical inputs, monopolise scarce water supplies, and destroy wildlife habitats. At the same time, they displace traditional labour-intensive agriculture, often providing raw materials to a small number of large enterprises; they thus add very little to the economic health of the regions where they are to be found. Indeed, Extremadura will no longer accept funding for such plantations.

The Cohesion Fund also acts to endanger rather than protect the environment. Project-specific, this fund for Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece is meant to be used only for transport and environment projects. Yet a full 70% of the Cohesion Funds have gone to building roads. Most of the rest of the environment tranche of this Fund goes to end-of-pipe technologies for water supply and treatment.

Certain such projects are needed by recipient Member States. For example, water treatment is seen as a priority for Regional cross-border cooperation by many of the Regions visited (see section on Water). Local road networks are also crucial for the survival of a number of peripheral regions. Yet in a number of border regions, EU funds are being used to build motorways which are simply replications of existing, under-utilised roads, while local networks continue to languish (see section on Transport). Such construction may profit long-distance haulers, but it does nothing for the environment and - more important, given the logic of these Funds - very little for local economies. The fact that Cohesion projects must cost over ECU 10 million rules out small, innovative, labour-intensive environment projects in favour of large infrastructure projects.

The same phenomenon takes place within INTERREG, despite the much smaller amounts available for project funding. For example, a breakdown of expenditures for Portugal and Spain together under INTERREG I show that sub-programme 1 (highways) received MECU 424.3 during the life of the programme, while sub-programmes 2-7 (agricultural and rural development; support for industry, services and crafts; exploitation of tourism heritage; conservation and purification of water resources; measures for transfrontier cooperation; and management and monitoring) together received MECU 131.

This is a further example of the absence of effective communications mechanisms, as well as the more serious problem of lack of interest in regional needs at the central level. Several Spanish regions, for example, complained that funds for transport projects were allocated by the central Government to motorways, which are within the competence of the State, while regional and local networks were ignored because of the shift of control over funds that such projects would entail. Complaints were also made about the fact that

<sup>10</sup> Pedro Nunes Liberato, "The Environment in the Context of the Internal Market: The Situation in Portugal", June 1989

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43

the central government did not pay attention to regional/ Regional input demanding better rail links.

If good communications existed between the Commission and the Regions, this type of problem could be resolved more easily than is currently the case. In fact, however, frequent complaints were voiced about the lack of such communication. To what extent the Committee of the Regions will ultimately redress this imbalance - of which it is well aware<sup>12</sup> - is not at all clear, particularly since regional/ Regional demands can confidently be expected to clash with both national and Community agendas at a number of points.

One of these is agriculture. In Regions such as Ireland/ Northern Ireland, Galicia/ Norte and Extremadura/ Alentejo, natural areas and their flora and fauna have been preserved far beyond the level of most of the Community as the result of the absence of industrial development and transport infrastructure. Extremadura/ Alentejo, for example, is home to (prospering) species of birds which are threatened with extinction in most of Europe.

Such areas are not likely to become sites for industrial development in the heavy industries. They are, however, counting on the development of agro-industry for their economic development. The food processing industry tends to be a source of relatively serious effluents, and requires a good motorway network for distribution of its products. Thus, development of this industrial base will conflict with the desire to protect natural reserve areas. Further, it may conflict with the other major source of development for these areas - that of tourism, and particularly ecotourism.

Conflicts may be aggravated by two other factors. First, the trend of several years ago towards EU environment legislation taking the form of Regulations has been very much reversed. Indeed, most Directives are now, in content if not in name, Framework Directives, with means of implementation being left to national Governments. This increases the scope for (already extensive) incorrect enactment of EU measures into national law. Thus, a Member State whose government sees development as more important than environment will have greater leeway to put its interpretation into practice.

Secondly, the poorer Member States are increasingly being given derogations under EU law. Thus, Cohesion States will not have to meet CO<sub>2</sub> abatement limits under the Climate Convention; indeed, under a system of Community burden-sharing, they expect to increase their emissions by 25% by the year 2000. Emissions of SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> will also be allowed to increase, under Large Combustion Plant Directive derogations. Waste management derogations are provided in the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive.

Such derogations do not always reflect the wishes of Regional environment authorities, or even national ones. In Portugal, for example, the Environment Ministry strongly urged that no derogation be taken under the Packaging Directive, only to be bested by the Industry Ministry, which insisted that Portuguese industry could not meet the Directive's (low) standards in any other way.

Extremadura/ Alentejo has taken an enormous step in the direction of integrating developmental and environmental needs by enacting its Environmental Impact Assessment Decree and seriously applying it. This is, however, the exception rather than the rule.

It is clear, however, that this and other types of "horizontal" measure, if applied seriously, would provide a common baseline for the regions that would make Regional cooperation much easier in the long run, and ensure compatibility between the economic development of peripheral regions and the protection of their environment.

#### **2.4.3.3 INTERREG**

Although the Community has a commitment to and programmes in support of cross-border cooperation in general, and the environment in particular, certain Regions saw the

<sup>12</sup> Committee of the Regions, "Opinion on the proposal for a Council Regulation (EC) establishing a Cohesion Fund" (94/ C 217/ 01), OJ C 217, 6.8.94, pp. 2-4

Community's role, via INTERREG, as problematic for the Regions, notably in cases where Regional priorities were clear but the EU could not be made to agree on these.

This creates planning problems at the Regional level: the EU requires detailed proposals to be submitted for funding, but overstretched Regional workers are not willing to draw these up if they are not sure they will be taken seriously by the EU (and national governments).

On the other hand, a good number of the Regions we considered have been able to engage in environmental projects largely as the result of INTERREG funding. Indeed, this has proved a serious complicating factor in our attempt to isolate conditions conducive to successful environmental action.

INTERREG is seen as providing much more than simply funding. One Regional administrator said that it provided the impetus in his Euroregion (one in which Regional partners have very different priorities) for more effective project planning and management: planning, because INTERREG lays down planning guidelines for projects to be accepted for funding and because full agreement from all Regional partners must be given before a project can be submitted to INTERREG; and management because of oversight by a non-Regional body, which creates pressure to produce results.

This can have effects beyond mere project management. In Benelux Middengebied, for example, INTERREG funds have made it possible to deal with serious problems of excess manure, thereby speeding up the adoption of needed legislation in Flanders. Without these funds, farmers' costs would have been too high to allow the project to be carried out.

On the other hand, some Regions have complained that INTERREG procedures hamper efficient planning by setting funding application deadlines that do not take into account the time needed to carry out detailed evaluation of projects. As a result, Regions may apply for funding for unnecessary or badly planned projects in order to meet a deadline, thereby diverting money and energy from more important but complex initiatives.

The degree to which the environmental tranche of INTERREG corresponds to Regional priorities also needs further investigation. First, it is not clear to what extent DG XVI allows the national level to act as a "filter" which to some extent shuts out the Regions in the process of project identification.

In addition, action programmes carried out as environmental measures under INTERREG are often infrastructure activities such as water supply and treatment systems. This leaves little funding for other, perhaps equally important measures such as research or wider-reaching cross-border pollution control. This is not necessarily a bad thing, since - as noted earlier - water projects tend to be the easiest for Regional partners to agree on. Moreover, Regional administrators agree that such projects are very cost-effective if carried out jointly. The fact remains, however, that such projects are end-of-pipe and will do nothing to resolve potential development-environment conflict in participating Regions.

## **2.5 Conditions of success**

As stated under "Methodology", the interviews we conducted were not limited to closed questions, but allowed for open questions where respondents provided their own explanations for the record achieved. While many of these responses are *ad hoc* and specific, they often fit into broad categories. These are summarised below.

### **2.5.1 Obstacles to Successful Cooperation**

(1) Lack of geographical identification



This obstacle characterises three relatively ineffective Regions where Regional partners are separated by significant physical barriers. In the Transmanche Euroregion, separation by the Channel inhibits common attitudes except on coastal issues.

In both the Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées and the Euroregion Pyrénées, the Pyrénées form the basis for cooperation, but at the same time separate a very rural French area from Spanish partners dominated by two highly industrial autonomous provinces. The difference is so great that complementarity cannot come into play.

#### (2) Lack of common language/ culture

Regional populations, we discovered, for the most part identify much more strongly with national than with Regional contexts. This is often the case even when the national government is resented and regions see themselves as marginalised in the national context (e.g., Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra, Extremadura/ Alentejo, Galicia/ Norte, Euregio Maas-Rhein). At this point, lack of a common language and/ or culture makes cross-border identification even more difficult to achieve than would otherwise be the case.

#### (3) Serious discrepancies in competence

This was the crucial factor in successful action at the Regional level. Yet most of the Regions studied suffer from severe discrepancies in the competence of Regional partners. In the Transmanche Euroregion, UK and French regional offices have very little real power, while the Belgian regions have federal competence levels. Similarly, in the Region of Euregio Maas-Rhein, the German and Dutch subregions do not have the autonomy of their Belgian partners.

In the Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées, environmental action varies widely by region, largely on the basis of competence. Andorra has done nothing in the area because of a total lack of sovereignty until recently; the French partners can only act by going to the department level; the smaller Spanish partners see the environment as having low priority than other issues and have no control over important environmental infrastructures; Catalunya has a large Department of the Environment (staff of 400), with a number of programmes backed up by autonomous legislation.

In extreme cases such as this, one of the Regional partners may be more comparable to a State. Thus, Catalunya is more closely equivalent to the French national government than to any of its Regional partners in terms of competence and, concomitantly, in staffing, funding and decision-making abilities.

In the Comunidad de Trabajo Galicia-Norte de Portugal, Norte suffers from the absence of a positive, decentralised regional policy within Portugal. In practical terms, this translates into no regional competence whatsoever. Thus, all Regional agreements must, on the Portuguese side, go through the central government.

#### (4) Discrepancies in regulation

In principle, EU Member States should have equivalent legislation in force wherever an environmental area has been regulated. In practice, however, this is not always the case. Sometimes States simply put off enactment of EU laws; at other times, in the case of EU Directives, transposition differs widely from State to State.

Further discrepancies exist in the administrative level competent to carry out regulations (see point (3) above). At the more practical level, methods of measurement and sampling are not standard across the Union, creating potential problems of compatibility when joint Regional projects are to be carried out.

#### (5) Project implementation structures

A number of respondents felt that while programme management should be a Regional matter, the actual carrying out of projects should be left to a third party - either a consultancy or research institute, or a single Regional partner chosen to be in charge of one area. Otherwise, each stage of action would be subject to endless meetings and nothing would ever get done. This was particularly the case in multiple-partner Regions.

A number of respondents also stated that while the localities should make their needs known, too much consultation once the planning stage had been reached made things less rather than more efficient.

#### (6) Lack of knowledge

Many Regions had no inventory of the laws and programmes in place within Regional partners or their respective States. Without such an inventory, they had no clear idea of what actions were working well, what deficiencies could be remedied at a cross-border level, or what actions could not work because they would come up against national priorities or prohibitions.

Lack of technical knowledge can also hamper action. The Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées, for example, has been very successful in action on the Pyrénées, for which extensive information exists. On the other hand, it has been unable to implement several water project proposals because of a lack of technical information among some of the Regional partners and insufficient time and funding to obtain that knowledge.

#### (7) Disparities in training and parallel positions

Related to the preceding point is the problem of differing levels of training for personnel working on common issues. Even where training and background are similar, the absence of parallel positions in all Regional partners may create bureaucratic and practical barriers to efficient functioning.

In the Transmanche Region, for example, the Environmental Planning Unit of Kent has no exact counterpart in Nord-Pas de Calais. Similarly, environmental experts for the region of Catalunya find their nearest counterparts within parastatal research institutes or French departments rather than in the French regions which constitute their Regional partners.

#### (8) Differences in infrastructure and industrialisation levels

While differences within a certain range may make Regional partners complementary to each other, too great a difference allows no basis for serious cooperation. For example, Catalunya, although involved in two cross-border Regions to good effect in regard to the Pyrénées and coastal management, in other environmental matters sees itself as having more in common with other highly industrialised but non-capital areas than with its Regional partners.

#### (9) Duplication of political responsibility

Agriculture is the area in which this difficulty often becomes paralysing. In many Regions, it is difficult to carry out environmental projects because the environment ministry (or its regional offices) is likely to come up against conflicting interests represented by the agriculture ministry. The conflict between development needs and environment priorities is of course a general problem, affecting many areas. In agriculture, however, it has become particularly acute precisely because Union trends in this field are so inherently inimical to the environment.

Duplication is particularly harmful to the environment because environment ministries are almost always a great deal less powerful than other national bodies. Thus, when both an

agriculture/ industry/ economic affairs ministry and an environment ministry have competence over a single physical or thematic area, the environment ministry is certain to lose.

(10) Exclusion of decision-making elements from administrative structures

Structures that exclude representatives from competent administrative levels because they are not directly involved in Regional decision-making often waste a great deal of time making decisions that are blocked when they get to the central government level. The most effective Regions studied all included representation of nationally and sub-nationally competent levels, even if only as observers, in their Regional assemblies so as to avoid unpleasant surprises further down the line.

(11) Conflict between development needs and the environment

Most Regions, lagging behind average Union development levels to begin with, have neither the funding, the institutional structures nor the degree of national government support to permit integrated planning. As a result, environmental programmes tend to be project-specific. Consequently, while they may be valuable at the project level, they are generally reactive rather than proactive. They thus often perpetuate an end-of-pipe environmental approach, whereby economic development is sought, brings with it environmental problems, and is then dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

At the level of Regional policy, the above approach results in piecemeal policy-making beyond the confines of the environment. Positive policy goals are replaced by a brush-fire approach which consists in dealing with problems as and when they occur, if sufficient funding is available. This was strongly brought out by comments about INTERREG II, which is universally seen by the Regions we interviewed as finally allowing a more integrated approach to Regional development to be undertaken, secure in the knowledge that funds would be available.

(12) Competition between Regional partners

Most often, competition occurs because Regional partners are vying for scarce industries. In the Euregio Maas-Rhein, for example, there is political concern that differences in national environment standards among partners may give rise to distortions of competition. Similarly, in SaarLorLux, lack of a harmonised, strong waste management strategy is seen as creating distortion of competition between new industries settling in the area.

In the Archipelago Region, parallel efforts are allowed to remain the norm since researchers in marine environment, the Region's main concern, are often competing for funding.

## 2.5.2 Elements for Success

(1) Correspondance to reality

This correspondance functions at two levels: the procedural and the substantive. In the former case, it is evidenced in sufficient and similar levels of competence among Regional partners.

In terms of substance, it translates into technical cooperation rather than an attempt to work at the political level. Most cross-border problems in the environment exist primarily at the technical level: natural reserves, water, waste. This is a particularly urgent point in Regions where competence, staffing and funding are seriously imbalanced (i.e., the majority of Regions).

This also implies the establishment of committees on the basis of existing common problems rather than theory: for example, waste working groups in a Region with no

common waste problems on any scale simply tie up resources without producing any effective action.

(2) Single coordinating unit for the environment

There are two successful variants. One is a secretariat at Regional level which has no executive powers and therefore has time to devote to coordination. The other is delegation of the secretariat task to the executive/ administrative unit of a Regional partner which is doing much the same kind of work anyway and is therefore well staffed and funded. Working groups are generally not sufficient as coordinating mechanisms since they often simply write reports which are never integrated into other areas of Regional activity and/ or reach a level of effective decision-making.

(3) Coordination within regional partners

A clearcut definition of areas of competence and fields of expertise within a given partner makes regional coordination more effective and greatly facilitates the task of establishing equivalence across borders. In Catalunya, for example, planning in the environmental field is carried out by the Environment Department. Often, however, management is carried out by the Agriculture Ministry, which does not provide further information on projects to the Environment Ministry.

(4) Expertise requirements

In the past decade, the environment has become a "growth" area, with the result that unqualified people are thrown into the ring because their field - be it a natural science, law, economics, or administration - at some point overlaps with environmental concern.

In Regions which have taken this approach as the result of understaffing, it is important that one environmentally qualified person have an overview of all discussions and efforts being undertaken in the field.

(5) Efficient use of available frameworks

Two or three of the more environmentally successful Regions mentioned international efforts as a framework for their own undertakings. For example, EUREGIO is developing a bridging mechanism to prevent SO<sub>2</sub> acidification until such time as the SO<sub>2</sub> Protocol to the Convention on transboundary air pollution has some effect on the ground; the Archipelago Region carries out its marine projects to complement the Helsinki Convention; and Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra and Extremadura/ Alentejo see their efforts at nature conservation fitting into international species and habitat Conventions.

(6) Definition of the possible

Related to the preceding point, and point (1), is an understanding of the differences between global and local levels of environmental action. There is a tendency towards widespread discussion about "the environment", as if this were an indivisible problem. It is not.

Local environmental problems - preservation of natural areas, surface water pollution, waste cleanup - are most easily solved at the local/ regional/ Regional level, and can be approached effectively with the funds and expertise likely to be available at that same level. Global problems, on the other hand, while they obviously must be implemented at the local level as well in order to be effective, must be dealt with in a supranational context, with extensive funding and international expertise.

(7) An environmental "culture"

This is common to all the most progressive of the Regions studied. EUREGIO, for example, is comprised of partners belonging to two environmentally sensitive, economically developed Member States. These conditions have set the parameters for the Region to develop and implement an integrated, "precautionary" environment policy. The same is true of the Archipelago system.

An environmental culture has been unilaterally created in other Regions, such as Extremadura/ Alentejo, through extensive use of a horizontal instrument, the Environmental Impact Assessment. We suspect, however, that this has been possible solely because of the unique conditions prevailing in Extremadura: extremely low population density, virtual absence of industry, high value of biodiversity for future development, and autonomous status. It is unlikely that this Region could fruitfully serve as a model: the "average" Region is both more populous and more polluted, with a far lower level of competence.

Nonetheless, the use of serious horizontal instruments at the Union level - stringent impact assessment, liability for environmental damage, mandatory eco-auditing, extensive habitats legislation - would serve to help create an environmental culture within which Regional cooperation on the environment would be a great deal more successful than can currently ever be the case.

## **3** Regional Descriptions

### **3.1 Irish Border Region**

The Irish Border Region Association (IBRA) was established in 1989, bringing together counties in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), in order to provide some economic and social cohesion in an area of extreme political difficulties.

#### **3.1.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.1.1.1 *Environmental quality***

The environmental situation is very similar throughout the Region. These are not serious in any area, but some water problems already exist as the result of Regional dependence on agriculture. Attempts to develop agribusiness and tourism will lead to greater problems in the areas of water and waste in the future.

Water quality management programmes are needed throughout the area. There is also some marine pollution of the Irish Sea, with potentially severe problems being caused by dumping of radioactive waste by the United Kingdom from its Sellafield reprocessing plant.

The Region boasts quite extensive biodiversity, particularly for wild birds, owing to its poverty and subsequent underdevelopment. It is therefore very vulnerable to industrial development.

##### **3.1.1.2 *Settlement and population***

The Region is heavily rural, with a high proportion of young people, but also with a high rate of emigration for this age group, as the result of the political problems and endemic high unemployment.

##### **3.1.1.3 *Technical infrastructure***

Road infrastructure within Northern Ireland is good; transport towards the south is relatively poor. This is also true of bus and train services.

National priorities in both Regional partners have concentrated almost entirely on domestic primary routes. Non-national, as well as county, roads have consequently been neglected. The resultant poor access has led to feelings of remoteness and marginalisation. This is particularly true of the southern parts of the Euroregion.

Waste and water systems are currently underdeveloped, while energy is still largely supplied by burning of coal and peat.

##### **3.1.1.4 *Economic structure***

The Region is characterised by owner-run, low-income agriculture. Other important economic sectors are tourism and fishing.

Industry centres around food processing and textiles. Much agriculture is given over to dairy and cattle farming.

The narrowness of the economic structure, in connection with the area's political problems, has led to high unemployment throughout the Region, particularly young people, although skill levels are reasonably good in both regional partners.

The political situation also precludes any serious integration in formal terms taking place before the political problems of the area are solved.

#### **3.1.1.5 Regional awareness**

The Euroregion possesses a natural homogeneity, giving rise to strong geographic identification. This is reinforced by a shared language and problems, particularly since the Regional partners comprise a single population separated on political grounds.

Although there is a strong sense of concern for the entire island among both populations, political and religious divisions between the two parts of the island made any concrete sharing of responsibility inconceivable under the conditions prevailing when the research related to this study was carried out. Realisation of Regional potential will consequently depend on the success of the Peace Process initiated at the end of 1994.

#### **3.1.2 Organisational structure**

The Irish Border Association is an entirely voluntary association, run by two individuals who comprise the secretariat and carry out all the functions of the Association. There is no formal structure at all.

Most county councils (nine) on the border have joined the association. Representatives from these councils are brought together four times a year to discuss cross-border problems and cooperation.

The Association is a member of the Association of European Border Regions. However, it received no funding from INTERREG I and no longer receives funding from the councils. These originally contributed a small annual sum to running costs. Now, however, there is a free rider problem. Because of non-payment by one or two councils none is paying any longer. Hence the Association is unlikely to continue in existence.

#### **External influences**

INTERREG funding for the Region has almost entirely gone to a cross-border project to rejuvenate 39 miles of the Ballinamore/ Ballyconnell canal and build tourist facilities there, initiated and carried out by the national governments of the Region. The IBRA had no part in consultation and received only minimal funds as consultants to the inter-governmental project.

Two further limited, county-based cross-border partnerships have since been formed in the Region. In addition, some chambers of commerce have joined to create a partnership, but their interest is not in cross-border work.

The border Region has essentially been coopted by the national governments of the partners, with the help of the EU. The Union has made it a matter of principle to assist Objective 1 areas, and particularly cross-border areas, which are feeling the brunt of national economic problems. However, in the case of Ireland/ Northern Ireland, the funds they have set up to assist the Region have not filtered down to the local level.

Instead, national governments have taken over management of these funds and claimed sole expertise for Regional problems. In theory, national governments are consulting with local authorities in use of these funds. In practice, however, local populations feel themselves excluded, and consequently give up on developing initiatives for the immediate cross-border area. Local councils consult across the border to some extent, but this tends to be done in a very piecemeal fashion, insufficient to lead to any real results. Many more local councils simply do not speak to each other.

As a result, basic administrative structures for cross-border cooperation are non-existent. This is partly the result of the fact that both the Republic of Ireland and the UK are so strongly centralised that the regions have almost no power.

Regional non-cooperation is also, of course, the result of the political situation in the area. Northern Ireland has felt itself unable to formally recognise any cross-border institution, whatever its character, on political grounds. Ireland has been friendlier to the idea of a cross-border Rregion, but while it has kept in touch with the IBRA, it gave it no status in consultations and no funding. Those structures which have been set up by the respective national governments have tended to be talking shops, as this has been the safest way to go politically.

A need is seen for an independent body, provided with funding, capable of dealing with Regional affairs outside of and below the level of central government.

### **3.1.3 Environment**

Although 20% of financing through INTERREG, the major source of funds, will go to Regional environmental projects, there is a real danger that the need to promote economic growth in the area will conflict with the maintenance of what is at present a non-problematic rural environment. Some indication of this has already been given in the use of parcelling for road projects in the area in order to avoid the EU requirement for a major environmental impact assessment.

In agriculture, particularly, the (possibly mutual exclusive) aims of funding programmes have been stated as maintaining a safe and clean agricultural sector while, at the same time, "providing an environmentally attractive area for industrial development" ("Seminar papers of the Cavan Conference on cross border cooperation in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, LACE, p.83).

The IBRA has carried out no projects, for the reasons given above. At the inter-governmental level, an environment programme employs 24 staff, with projects being undertaken within the context of INTERREG. Funding from the ERDF, national administrations, and the International Fund for Ireland (total: 20.837 million ECU).

The governments have had good results in the area of revitalisation of surface waters. The Erne catchment area, with both a water and a tourism component, was highly commended by the European urban and regional planning awards, 1990-1991. Fisheries boards have also drawn up plans to develop fish resources in both regions, including improved protection and control services. Sewerage schemes are seen as complementary to water quality management programmes and are being planned on government initiative.

LACE, which brings European cross-border regions together in a loose association, is seen as being very useful for exchange of information not in the sense of best practice, but more importantly, in that it has brought Irish Regional partners together and thereby enabled political "enemies", at the State level, to speak to each other in a neutral context.



## **3.2 Saar-Lor-Lux-Trier-Westpfalz**

Regional cooperation, based on a common tradition of heavy industry (European Coal and Steel Community), brings together the Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany, Lorraine in France, Belgian Luxembourg, and the State of Luxembourg.

### **3.2.1 Regional characteristics**

#### **3.2.1.1 *Environmental quality***

The Region, as a result of its heavy industrial and agricultural character, suffers a number of environmental problems. These include air pollution due to industry, and soil and water contamination from agriculture.

In addition, the Region generates a very high volume of waste, especially in the Saar, owing to high population and intense industrial production.

Sectors with a high potential for environmental damage include the iron and steel industry, and, to a lesser extent, the coal industry which has largely managed to master its traditional problems.

#### **3.2.1.2 *Settlement and population***

Regional settlement patterns are mixed, combining rural areas and a number of industrial concentrations. Lorraine is by far the most rural of the regions, with a large number of very small communes, although the north is an industrial area in decline, with larger concentrations of population.

Lorraine also, exceptionally, has a young population and high birth rate. Other parts of the Euroregion have the more typical northern European aging population.

#### **3.2.1.3 *Technical infrastructure***

Generally, transport infrastructure is good throughout the Region. Extensive rail networks and good motorways are present in all three countries.

Energy and water systems are also good. Public water treatment plants exist in all parts of the Region except Belgium, although major efforts are currently underway to increase the number of plants to satisfy growing industrial demand. Waste as a whole remains a serious problem, with dumping across borders common. This is the primary focus of the Region's environmental efforts at present.

#### **3.2.1.4 *Economic structure***

Predominant industries in Lorraine are coal and iron and steel in the north of the region, and textiles, tourism, and service industries in the south. The State of Luxembourg is home to significant iron and steel works, but services (financial, especially, as well as insurance, reinsurance, media) play a role in the economy, as does the presence there of European Community institutions. Saar is also primarily coal, iron and steel, while Trier/ Westpfalz has a more diversified economic base, including the shoe and tobacco industries, automotive and machine tools, jewelry, intensive agriculture (particularly wine), and tourism.

Levels of unemployment are generally high, although varying widely throughout the Euroregion (from 1.8% in Luxembourg to 25% in parts of Belgium). The average rate is 7-8%. Skill levels, however, are average or above. The active population is well educated, tends to be bi- or trilingual, and has industrial training/ experience.

There is a high degree of integration of production; the iron and steel industry, in particular, is completely integrated. There is also a high degree of cross-border employment: 90.000

people cross borders each day to go to work, although some of these also go to areas that are not part of the Region.

Extensive integration exists in the retail sector, and cross-border shopping is common.

### **3.2.1.5 Regional awareness**

Geographic identification is widespread, on the basis of the established coal and steel community - that is, an identification between industrial border areas with shared problems. Social and cultural identification, based on a traditional industrial culture, exists and is growing.

The Treaty of Maastricht is seen as increasing the relevance of Regional cooperation,

### **3.2.2 Organisational structure**

The Region has an Interregional Committee, which is very well structured, with four regions participating. It took 12 years to get it working properly when it only had three members. But once it was settled, the addition of a fourth proved easy. The Committee meets five or six times a year.

The Committee brings together representatives from the Land of Sarre (D), four departments of Lorraine (F), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (L), the Regions of Trier and Westpfalz (D), and Luxembourg province (B).

The Region engages in general political cooperation as well as regional planning. Sectoral cooperation exists in the areas of infrastructure planning, economic, cultural and social affairs, and education and training. There is no provision for Regional cooperation on the environment.

The normative framework for cooperation is a mix of non-legally binding agreements, other official (inter-regional) agreements, and private law contracts.

There is also a wide mix as regards the basis for membership in Regional administration: by direct election, by delegation as a member of a parliamentary assembly, and through membership based on political office, administrative office or on a voluntary basis.

### **3.2.3 Environment**

The Region has no general environmental policy and is not aiming to develop one. Work on the environment is carried out entirely through an informal, private, advisory and consultative group, the CIE 5 (Committee Interregional d'Environment) with no permanent staff. CIE 5 has no official consultative mandate. Work in the area of environment is, as a consequence, primarily at the planning and discussion stage.

The background of the Euroregion is one of shared heavy industry and the concomitant problems common to Europe's declining industrial areas. The "environmental" goals, such as they are, tend therefore to be centred around economic upturn. Towards this end, the Region is very involved with the issue of waste, since new industries looking at the area are saying that they want to see a waste management strategy, including in the area of water quality.

Most waste efforts at the moment are being carried out regionally and separately, leading to a fairly serious amount of waste dumping. The Region hopes to achieve improved, concrete cross-border efforts in the optimisation of waste management in order to create a coherent zone of environmental protection despite the area's borders.

It is felt that more harmonised and stronger EC legislation would be helpful, since all firms would then have to follow the same basic rules. This would eliminate a certain amount of competitive discrimination based on national laws.

Some research and planning has been done on contaminated land, but actual results have been less than hoped for. The area of water has been one of greater success. The Sur River (L/ D) has been the object of several initiatives for the treatment of water and

effluents. In addition, all Regional members have made efforts to clean up the Moselle, although these have been carried out separately. Work is being done on protection of wetlands, forests, biodiversity and nature reserves.

The Region has no common environmental awareness, owing to the great differences in national legislation and competence. It is understood, however, that this must change for the Regional good. Within each region, official groups are working on the environment, but no cross-border institute exists except the above-mentioned private CIE 5.

However, the Region has extensive environmental potential. Research bodies exist at governmental, regional and private levels. In addition, a European Degree in Environmental Sciences is awarded at nine of the Region's universities. It thus seems likely, particularly given the Region's successful efforts in other areas, that at some point the environment will become a serious topic for discussion and action at the Regional level.

### **3.3 Euregio Maas-Rhein**

The Region brings together the Belgian provinces of Limburg and Liege, Regio Aachen in Germany (Regierungsbezirk Köln), and Herstrukturierungsgebiet, which is part of Limburg province in the Netherlands. The Land of North-Rhine Westphalia, originally involved in the Region, proved to be far too big to act as an efficient partner; the region therefore returned to the geography of the Bezirk Aachen (with competence held by the Regierungsbezirk Köln).

Cooperation is based on the existence of a number of problems that needed to be addressed jointly. This is particularly the case since regional ties in certain cases predate existing borders (Belgium, for example, did not exist before 1830).

Regional economic and cultural ties were already strong under Napoleon, particularly in the textile sector, and in copper and steel. As a result, family and personal ties are both extensive and long-standing, and the border has traditionally been viewed by the Region's inhabitants as a nuisance.

The three national governments, in turn, have always considered the Region vaguely suspect; as a result, the Region has been the victim of benign neglect and has needed strengthening in a number of areas for some time.

#### **3.3.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.3.1.1 *Environmental quality***

Although there is heavy industry and related environmental problems these are far less serious than those of Alsace or the Ruhrgebiet. Industrial pollution is nevertheless being discussed, as is incinerator siting. Air pollution is a particular problem in Hasselt and around Liege (B), in Geleen (where Dutch chemical giant DSM is located), and in Weisweiler (D). Acid rain from industry and transport sources is serious in parts of the Region.

Water pollution affects both groundwater and surface waters, as the result of industrial, especially mining-related, discharges. The closure of mines has also given rise to pollution of surface waters. Over-extraction of water has led to the reduction of aquifers used for drinking water supply.

Soil contamination is widespread in areas housing the non-ferrous metals industry, particularly in Belgium and Germany. The Netherlands is requiring significant cleanup of contaminated soils, but Belgium is for the most part ignoring the problem. Abandoned mining areas also show significant soil contamination. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that hazardous waste treatment facilities are inadequate in parts of the Region, particularly Belgium.

Agricultural problems do exist, although again these are less serious. They may receive more attention once groundwater quality has been carefully monitored.

##### **3.3.1.2 *Settlement and population***

The entire Region is very densely populated. This is particularly troublesome in Belgium, where permitting regulations are quite lax, with negative consequences for orderly development of settlements and, consequently, for the environment and natural areas as well.

Aachen (D) and Limbourg (NL) mining areas tend to be conglomerations, often with sub-standard housing, making it difficult to put environmentally sound practices into place. In addition, Germany also a large number of commuter communities - a development the government is trying to curb because it is seen as detrimental to sound development of the Region.

### **3.3.1.3      *Technical infrastructure***

Road transport systems are reasonably good inside each of the Regional partners but need improvement across borders. Bus and train services tend to be poor. A Working Group for Transport Planning has been set up by the Executive Council to deal with these problems.

Energy infrastructures are good throughout the Region. Water, on the other hand, is a problem. Considered quite important by the Germans and, particularly, the Dutch, water systems are accorded low priority by the Belgians. Belgium has minimal water treatment facilities; this has given rise to problems throughout the Region because of interconnections between river systems.

### **3.3.1.4      *Economic structure***

The services sector is rapidly expanding within the entire Region. The Dutch partner of the Region is more agricultural than the others. The German partners and the Belgian province of Liege have the characteristics of declining industrial areas.

Coal, metallurgy, textiles, and the electrotechnical and leather industries are predominant throughout the Region. The Netherlands has significant chemicals production in addition.

Levels of unemployment in the Region are far above national averages (mostly due to closure of coal mines), particularly in Belgium. Incomes throughout the Region also tend to be well below national averages.

Economic integration occurs chiefly at the level of workers, with some 20.000 commuters crossing borders daily, mostly out of Belgium. Maastricht and Aachen both attract a large number of shoppers, primarily from Belgium. Food brings shoppers to Belgium when rates of exchange are favourable.

### **3.3.1.5      *Regional awareness***

A strong sense of geographic identification with the Region antedates the drawing up of existing national borders. Strong cultural and social identification intensifies Regional feeling. In reality, however, "Dusseldorf decides the agenda". Administrative centres will determine all the most important questions affecting the region. The Region is not completely without influence. In the area of language, for example, a Regional curriculum in three languages has been circulated. The national governments do not promote it, but they accept it.

Belgium is a particular obstacle in this respect. Belgium has an internal identification problem to begin with. In addition, the German-speaking Belgian community is represented within the Region by French-speaking Wallonia, which has its own agenda vis-à-vis Flanders and is not terribly concerned about the German part of Belgium. Internal Belgian politics also throws up obstacles to attempts at cultural integration, since very little German is taught in Wallonia, and French is no longer compulsory in Flanders.

There is little sense of responsibility for the Region because there is no Regional competence and no Regional parliamentary body: however, discussions are taking place on this, as well as on other items of structural change seen as necessary for the Region.

Regional potential cannot be realised at present, since the Executive Council is not elected. The communes and municipalities do not feel themselves to be represented by this arrangement. But even an elected assembly would not have competence; if it took decisions, it would not be able to force these on to the agenda at higher levels.

An elected body might well lead to greater feeling of responsibility among the Region's population. Whether it would lead to greater Regional effectiveness is not certain.

## **3.3.2 Organisational structure**

The Regional Executive is the Governors' Conference, which assembles three representatives from each region (regional heads and parliamentarians). The Stichting Euregio Maas-Rhein (Secretariat), with a staff of five, is a private law entity and may therefore not take decisions.

Meetings are attended by the Flanders Executive (B), the German Language Gemeinschaft (B), the Wallonia Executive (B), the Land of North Rhine Westphalia (D), with informal cooperation from Rhineland Palatinate, and the Province of Limburg (NL).

Germany and the Netherlands have a treaty for the other Euregios in which they are joined, and for the Ems-Dollart Region. This provides a framework within which new institutional structures can be developed. Euregio Maas-Rhein has no such treaty, which hinders its development (although discussions to remedy this are under way).

### **3.3.3 Environment**

The Region has no comprehensive target or joint regional concept, although these may be developed under INTERREG II. Environmental problems are not serious at the Regional level. Environmental awareness in general is higher in Germany and Netherlands than in Belgium, but the problems affecting the Region are too specific to depend for solution on a sense of general environmental awareness, although environmental improvement is generally considered a prerequisite for economic development of the Region.

The Region can only measure: it cannot initiate clean-up projects. There is agreement that something has to be done for the environment, but there are huge differences in the priority accorded to action. Germany has very high standards (seen as too high in some quarters); The Netherlands has high standards; Belgium has very low standards. The choice therefore often arises between carrying out Regional action at the level of the lowest common denominator (i.e., Belgium's standards) or forgoing joint Regional action so as to be able to meet national standards and local wishes. In this respect, EU environment Directives can prove very useful by providing a high standard.

It has proved clear already that environment projects are cheaper when they are carried out jointly; in addition, of course, carrying them out at the Regional level makes available Eu funding that would not be available to partners separately.

An Environment Working Group brings together experts (political appointees) who recommend individual projects carried out within the context of INTERREG.

Twelve environmental projects have been undertaken thus far: eight dealing with water (including three hydrotechnical and four sewage evacuation/ treatment); two relating to air quality measurement; one on hedge management; two related to tourism (Sanfter Tourismus); one in the field of energy and environment, and one on nature conservation.

The Region was formerly a mining area, and this has left a legacy of soil contamination. The mines are now being closed and are therefore at present being seen more as an economic than an environmental problem. A major soil decontamination project is being carried out by DSM in Geleen (NL), but this is being done within the framework of the Dutch national environment plan. The Region does not have the competence that would allow it to hook into this programme and use it as an impetus for further Regional cleanup.

The absence of major problems at the Regional level has prevented any truly Regional awareness of the environment from developing. Environmental awareness in general is higher in Germany and Netherlands than in Belgium.

At the same time, general awareness of the environment, and particularly nature conservation, is growing. In particular, firms thinking of relocating to the Region are requiring certain standards to be met. In addition, employment in some existing industries, such as tourism and agriculture, depends on the environmental health of the area. In addition, political concern is developing that differences in national standards relating to the environment may give rise to distortions of competition.

The Region has no formal organised body with decision-making powers in the environmental field. Each Regional partner has a Working Group on the Environment, which sends a representative to the general Working Group on Environmental Protection, which is composed of four expert groups. In June 1993, experts in each of these groups, from each region, presented joint recommendations to the overseeing group, which has its own experts, as well as a degree of administrative competence (standing permission from ministries to take action under certain conditions).

A constant problem with these groups is that all experts are politically appointed. These positions, although held by competent technicians, thus remain intensely (party) political, even at the lowest level.

Even when agreement about specific action is not reached, however, education and know-how transfer take place. Funding is not a problem: when a problem is agreed to be sufficiently important, the Regional joint budget (much smaller than INTERREG funds) will be used to provide funding. The problem, when there is one, is always competence. Even when the Region as a whole considers as important, it may come up against a conflict between national and regional priorities, and thus be denied permission to act.

### **External influences**

The suggestion for a Regional framework first arose in 1975, when Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands turned her attention to border problems, leading to a provincial governors meeting. For quite a while thereafter, Regional activity was limited to cultural exchanges; more ambitious activities only began once INTERREG funding was available. INTERREG II is expected to widen consultation to include non-governmental groups, including federations, chambers of commerce, etc.

The fifty percent INTERREG matching funding provides impetus for more effective project planning and management. Planning, because INTERREG sets guidelines for a project to be accepted for funding, and because full agreement from all Regional partners must be given for a project to be submitted in the first place. Management, because a non-Regional body is overseeing cooperation, and thereby creating pressure to produce results.

The Region's secretariat has a staff of only five. It is a private-law entity and therefore may not take any decisions. National-regional cooperation is thus essential; without the goodwill of the national governments, which have competence, the regions would not be able to do much.

Overstretched regional workers are not willing to draw up detailed plans if they are not sure they will be taken seriously by the EU (and national governments). Also, given differences in the weight accorded to the environment by one of the three partners and the requirement for unanimity for funding decisions, a certain prudent realism characterises the attitude of the secretariat.

### **3.4 Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées (CTP)**

The Region, set up in 1982, comprises the Spanish regions of Aragon, Catalunya, Euskadi and Navarra, the French regions of Aquitaine, Languedoc-Roussillon, and Midi-Pyrénées, and Andorra.

It was established in order to deal with socio-economic problems posed by the existence of regional and State borders and, more specifically, to allow joint action on the Pyrénées. It is impossible to generalise about Regional characteristics, given the size and diversity of the regions that comprise the CTP.

### **3.4.1 Regional characteristics**

#### **3.4.1.1 Environmental quality**

Generally, Spain has some degree of atmospheric pollution as the result of high energy consumption and transport. This is more a problem for Catalunya and Euskadi - both heavily industrialised regions - than for Aragon and Navarra. The French partners and Andorra, much more rural in character, have no particular problems of air quality.

Euskadi has problems of water pollution stemming from its long history as a centre for heavy industry. The other Spanish regions are experiencing some groundwater contamination as the result of livestock breeding and agriculture.

Such pollution can be expected to increase, as what has traditionally been a pattern of primarily small farms is increasingly replaced by agro-business. Deforestation is intensifying these problems.

Tourism and agriculture have produced water pollution in the French partner regions as well. In general, increased water consumption for a wide range of uses is leading to quality deterioration and loss of quantity, particularly as the French partners are prone to drought.

Marine pollution is a general problem for the Region, caused by a combination of industrialisation and insufficient waste treatment facilities. However, this is seen as a problem that should be dealt with within MEDSPA rather than in a Regional context, since its solution requires all pollution sources to participate in remedial action, including authorities outside the Region.

Aragon and Euskadi both face the need for soil remediation, owing to open-cast mining in the former and traditional heavy industry in the latter.

#### **3.4.1.2 Settlement and population**

Certain areas of settlement disequilibria exist. In Catalunya, most of the population is concentrated along the coast. Midi-Pyrénées has density disequilibria between Toulouse and the rural rest of the region. Both Aragon and Navarra are largely rural, but with settlement occurring in geographically limited areas. In traditional small-scale agricultural areas, emigration from rural areas to urban centres or towns has significant negative consequences for the land, which is either neglected or given over to monoculture.

Population density differs considerably from one part of the Region to the next. While Catalunya and Euskadi are densely populated, highly industrialised areas, Aragon, Navarra, Midi-Pyrénées, Languedoc-Roussillon and Aquitaine are all predominantly rural, with correspondingly low population density.

#### **3.4.1.3 Technical infrastructure**

Transport in all the Spanish regions is a problem. Roads are good in Euskadi and Catalunya, but train and bus systems are quite poor. All systems are in need of improvement in Navarra and Aragon.

In France, regional transport tends to be quite good. Cross-border transport remains a problem, however. This is particularly true for train connections, as the result of the Spanish gauge differing from that of France (and the rest of Europe).

#### **3.4.1.4 Economic structure**

Sizable differences in structure of production exist among the Regional partners. Catalunya alone produces 20% of Spain's total GNP, and is a diversified, high-tech region, counting metalworking, chemicals, textiles, construction, and food among its industries. Euskadi, long a centre for metal working and machine tools, is now shifting to high-tech R&D and services. It represents 5.8% of Spanish GNP. Navarra specialises in high productivity agriculture. Aragon accounts for 6.5% of Spain's energy production capacity (hydro



and conventional). It also has high levels of activity in the areas of agri-good, railway equipment, forestry, and tourism.

Languedoc-Roussillon, Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrénées are all highly agricultural, with relatively low rates of industry. Toulouse, in addition, is a centre for advanced electrical and electronic engineering, aeronautics, and textiles, with strong universities and a highly skilled workforce. While Aquitaine and Midi-Pyrénées both have some large firms solidly established in the region, particularly in the aeronautics sector, Languedoc-Roussillon tends to very small firms in a number of industries (textiles, electronics, agrifood, construction).

Integration is poor among all these regions, primarily because the Pyrénées form a physical barrier between the partners, but also because of the very different characters separating industrial Euskadi and Catalunya on the one side, and the more rural French regions on the other side. It is striking how much better regional connections are within the smaller Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra unit of this Region.

#### **3.4.1.5 Regional awareness**

While the Pyrénées provide a sense of geographical identity to the Region, they of course also form a real border between its partners. While some parts of the Region are bound by cultural and linguistic ties related to their Basque character, this is not true of the entire Region.

Sense of responsibility for the Region is low. Catalunya sees itself as very different from its more rural, poorer, and not very Communautaire neighbours in both France and Spain. Euskadi and Navarra have a more efficient framework for cooperation in their smaller Region with Aquitaine. The French regions, for their part, have little sense of responsibility because, not being départements, they have no power.

Consequently, the CTP acts together primarily in regard to the Pyrénées, for which all partners feel a sense of concern and responsibility. Very little can be achieved on a larger scale, since Catalunya sees itself as having other, closer ties, and since even agreed common projects are difficult to carry out because of the administrative impotence of the French partners. All this translates into real differences at the technical level of problem-solving.

#### **3.4.2 Organisational structure**

The Region has a tripartite structure, consisting of (1) a Conference of regional Presidents, (2) coordinators (Presidency cabinets), and (3) Committee presidents.

Horizontal cooperation is carried out in the area of regional planning for the Pyrénées. Sectoral cooperation takes place in a number of areas: infrastructure planning, environment, economic affairs, cultural and social activities, and education and training. Work is carried out on the basis of non-legally binding agreements.

In practice, there is an almost total lack of corresponding power between the French and Spanish parts of this Euroregion. Catalunya has maximum competence in all areas except defense, finance, international treaties, etc. Its legislation is so decentralised as to be almost federal in nature. Euskadi and Navarra also have high levels of competence. Euskadi and Navarra are the only two Spanish regions to have negotiated Economic Agreements with the Spanish government. In fact, Euskadi has far more competence even than Catalunya, including the right to collect and allocate taxes.

The French partners, for their part, are regions rather than departments - that is, they have no formal powers, except for their competence in the area of nature reserves. Their means of attaining competence is through contracts with the State ("contrats Etat-regions"), under which the region pays for schemes and the State puts technical officers at the region's disposal. In effect, the regions are buying competence, both technical (one or two people

per project from Paris) and legal, from the State. The Spanish regions are generally therefore closer to the French State than to the departments.

### **3.4.3 Environment**

The Region has no general environment policy, and few joint actions of a practical nature since ecosystems, aside from the Pyrénées themselves, are not shared.

Catalunya has a large staff (400 employees) in its Environment Department, which includes six sections dealing with various areas of the environment. In addition, environment sections exist within the Departments of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, and Trade, Consumer Relations and Tourism. The region also has a number of concrete environment programmes, backed up by legislation that goes well beyond the framework measures set by the national government. In addition, it has the right to legislate in those areas where the State has failed to legislate. The other Spanish regional partners are less advanced than Catalunya in terms of environment legislation.

Euskadi and Navarra see themselves as hampered by their lack of environment ministries in carrying out effective environmental work on a large scale.

The French partners can only act by going to the level of the department. Andorra has until now done nothing in the area of environment, but this may change over time now that they have gained sovereignty.

At the inter-regional level, Midi-Pyrénées has become the Environment Secretariat (ARPE) for the CTP. This Secretariat is theoretically only for Midi-Pyrénées, but in fact it has assumed this role for the Region as a whole. It consists of one person, who follows the political agenda, coordinates, and pushes the others to get things done.

Practical results in the Region tend to be at the level of inventories, guides, maps, education, etc. Projects are less successful. Several proposed water projects, for example, have not been able to get off the ground because of a lack of technical information and of time to obtain it.

The two areas of serious common concern are the Pyrénées themselves, and the coastline. The Pyrénées are the subject of several projects, involving various mixes of Regional partners within the CTP but with paper support from all. These include a report on the typology of the Region's protected areas, with an eye to eventual joint area management, and a "Clean Pyrénées" programme to develop tourist information on ways of minimising waste.

The coastline is a much more difficult system to manage, since no coastal management of the Mediterranean is possible without the cooperation of all coastal States, including those outside the Region.

A number of projects are being successfully undertaken within the smaller Region comprising three CTP partners. These relate to water management and nature reserves.

There is very high environmental awareness as regards the Pyrénées, among most of the regional partners. Catalunya is very aware of environmental problems, but for the most part does not see this in the context of the Euroregion. Midi-Pyrénées has taken it on itself to act as the environmental conscience of the CTP and is strongly aware of various problems but, as always, is itself frequently stymied in its attempts to act and provide an impetus for others by its lack of competence.

The absence of very urgent common problems leads to a low level of environmental concern for the Region as a whole. This is unlikely to change, given the widely divergent natures of the economies in the Region.

Regionally, the CTP has an Environment Committee, as well as working groups that deal with various aspects of the environment, such as public works, waste, water, etc. However, these tend to be based on what is needed in theory rather than as a response to common problems and therefore do not get a great deal accomplished.

There are also cross-border associations (illegal under Spanish legislation), set up to deal with tourism, walking paths, and certain local pollution problems.

The Environment Committee, composed of appointed members, has a consultative and advisory role.

### **External influences**

Lack of consultation with the Regions on the part of the European Commission is seen as a serious problem. Regional lobbying of the Commission takes place, but at a political level and by non-environment people. Indeed, usually lobbying is left to those interested in economic development, and particularly industrial development.

Although this applies to the Union as a whole, Regional spokesmen made a point of regretting that the Commission's environmental Directorate, DG XI does not speak to Regional representatives at an official level (although they will give informal information). Regions are regularly informed, but are given no room for participation. (This is of course meant to change with the establishment of the Committee of the Regions.)

The States thus determine the final shape of legislation. Often, as a result, norms at the EU level are purely theoretical and not practically useful to local conditions or means of implementation.

### **3.5 Euroregion Pyrénées**

Created in 1989, the Euroregion represents a subset of the far larger Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées (CTP), bringing together Spanish Catalunya and the French regions of Midi-Pyrénées and Languedoc-Roussillon. The Region was developed in order to deal with socio-economic problems posed by the existence of the French-Spanish border, and to allow joint action on the Pyrénées and other matters of common interest. In particular, the Region aims to take action on communications infrastructure, research, education and European programmes. Projects in these areas have already begun within the framework of the CTP, and via bilateral agreements among the three Regional partners.

#### **3.5.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.5.1.1 *Environmental quality***

As a heavily industrialised region, Catalunya is subject to air pollution as the result of high energy consumption and transport. Water pollution results primarily from industrial processes.

The French Regional partners are much more rural and have no particular problems with air quality. They have, however, suffered a certain amount of water pollution as the result of both tourism and agriculture. Increased water consumption for a wide range of uses is leading to quality deterioration and loss of quantity, particularly as these regions are prone to drought.

Marine pollution is a general problem for the Region, caused by a combination of industrialised areas and insufficient waste treatment facilities. However, its solution requires all pollution sources to participate in remedial action, including those States outside the Region.

##### **3.5.1.2 *Settlement and population***

Settlement disequilibria exist throughout the Region. In Catalunya, most of the population is concentrated along the coast. Midi-Pyrénées has density disequilibria between Toulouse and the rural rest of the region, while Languedoc-Roussillon has population leaving the interior for the coast and the growing regional centres.

In traditional small-scale agricultural areas, emigration from rural areas to urban centres of course has significant negative consequences for the land, which is either neglected or given over to monoculture. This is the case for both the French partners in the Region.

##### **3.5.1.3 *Technical infrastructure***

Transport in all Spanish regions is a problem. Roads are good in Catalunya, but train and bus systems are quite poor, with the exception of the city's municipal systems. The French regional transport systems are quite a bit better. Cross-border transport remains a problem, however. This is particularly true for train connections, as the result of the Spanish gauge differing from that of France (and the rest of Europe).

##### **3.5.1.4 *Economic structure***

There is no parallel between the economic structures of Catalunya and those of its French partners. Catalunya produces some 20% of Spain's total GNP, and is a diversified, high-tech region, counting metalworking, chemicals, textiles, construction, and food among its industries. Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées are highly agricultural, with relatively low rates of industry.

Midi-Pyrénées has some large firms solidly established in the region, particularly in the aeronautics sector. Toulouse is a centre for advanced electrical and electronic enginee-

ring, aeronautics, and textiles, and has both a strong university system and a highly skilled workforce. Languedoc-Roussillon, however, tends to very small firms in a number of industries (textiles, electronics, agrifood, construction).

Integration is poor among the regions, with the Pyrénées forming a physical barrier between the partners. In addition, industrial Catalunya and the more rural French regions on the other side simply do not have a great deal in common.

#### **3.5.1.5 Regional awareness**

The Pyrénées provide a sense of geographical identity for the Region. At the same time, of course, they also form a real border between its partners. There is a certain amount of social and cultural identification as well; this is strengthened by linguistic links, since Languedoc-Roussillon speaks Catalan.

However, sense of responsibility for the Region is low. Catalunya sees itself as very different from its French partners, which are not departments and therefore have no competence, in stark contrast to the autonomy of Catalunya.

#### **3.5.2 Organisational structure**

The Region has a tripartite structure: (1) the Conference of Presidents, which meets annually; (2) the Tripartite Cooperation Committee, which brings together technical and administrative officials from each region to examine dossiers. The Committee may include representatives from the city of Perpignan, the department of Pyrénées Orientales, and local border communities. Experts from this Committee prepare annual reports to present to the Presidents; (3) a rotating secretariat, with a 2-year mandate.

The Region only carried out regional planning, for the most part in relation to the Pyrénées. Cooperation is extremely limited, because there is an almost total lack of corresponding power between the French and Spanish partners. Catalunya's legislation is almost completely decentralised, while the French partners have no formal powers except for their competence over natural reserve areas.

Most of the Region's cooperation is therefore limited to seminars and other presentation activities, including publications and press work.

#### **3.5.3 Environment**

The Region has an environment committee, but it meets infrequently. When it does meet, there are two serious obstacles to effective action: the French representatives to the group are not environmental specialists, and sometimes, for a given project, there will be no regional (as opposed to central or departmental) representation on the French side. On the other hand, Midi-Pyrénées has been very useful in playing the role of one-man environment secretariat to the CTP.

One of the Euroregion's main spheres of action has been in joint coastal protection projects. However, these cannot have a decisive impact because other, non-Euroregion States share the same coastline and are not taking protective or remedial action; thus, the Region's efforts have purposely remained modest in this direction.

Phases of the project include: (1) exchange of data about water quality and beaches, and technical visits; (2) elaboration of coastal conservation measures; (3) related summer courses (conceptual stage only).

The Pyrénées form the basis for Regional cooperation, but at the same time they separate the two rural French areas from a highly industrial autonomous province. While the Pyrénées themselves are thus a fitting subject for cooperation, they also form a physical barrier preventing shared ecosystems or shared environmental problems to any great extent. Together with the enormous disparities between Catalunya on the one side and the French partners on the other, this leads to very limited work on the environment in a joint context.

The other sub-Region of the CTP - Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra - is much more successful in its cooperation than the Euregio Pyrénées. However, it has a much more fully developed administrative infrastructure than the latter. In addition, the Basque culture tying the partners together plays a much stronger role in that Region than does Catalan in this one. This lack of "cement" is reinforced by the fact that Catalunya sees its substantive interests in cooperation as lying elsewhere than with its Regional partners. Euskadi, on the other hand, while an industrialised region, considers itself as having a good deal in common with its partners, so that the basis for strongly directed common activity exists.

## **3.6 Transmanche Euroregion**

This Region, bringing together the United Kingdom, France, and Belgium, was created in 1987. Originally, it consisted of Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais; Belgium was brought in because of the importance of coastal problems for the Region. Current partners are Kent County (UK), Nord-Pas de Calais (F), and Wallonia, Brussels and Flanders (B).

The impetus for cooperation was a perceived need to find a way to develop Kent without causing further congestion, while at the same time making better use of areas of industrial decline in NPC: that is, a "division of labour" taking into account the infrastructure needs and environmental concerns of both regions.

### **3.6.1 Regional characteristics**

#### **3.6.1.1 *Environmental quality***

All the regions have problems of coastal management and of groundwater pollution; France and the UK share a problem of delicate chalk cliffs management, with further implications for groundwater.

Flanders also suffers from soil contamination due to agribusiness. In addition, all of Belgium has a serious waste problem, due to both lack of treatment facilities and extensive dumping of contaminated waste.

Sectors with a high potential for environmental damage include industry, in Belgium; transport in the UK; and disused mines in France.

#### **3.6.1.2 *Settlement and population***

In the UK, eastern Kent includes deteriorating industrial areas, while the rest of the county consists largely of "rural" towns. Aside from Lille (large, urban), Nord-Pas de Calais tends to be one of smaller

towns and cities, including many rundown mining and shipping areas.

Flanders is a mix of towns and rather prosperous small cities, as is Wallonia, although with a larger rural component.

#### **3.6.1.3 *Technical infrastructure***

Kent County suffers from serious traffic congestion (motorways). In relation to its Regional partners, it also has wrong-side-of-the-road driving, and different weight gauges and weight allowances from the others. It suffers further from the general English problem of short-sighted and underfunded transport planning by the national government. This is causing particular problems in relation to the Channel Tunnel.

Nord-Pas de Calais and Brussels have now been provided with TGV links and a modern motorway system, including efficient Channel Tunnel hookup. Flanders and Wallonia also both have extensive motorway and rail systems. There are good ferry connections throughout the Euroregion.

Water treatment systems are largely absent in Wallonia and Brussels, thereby creating environmental problems for the coastline which is the major component of Regional cooperation. Belgium also has significant waste problems, with consequent damage to surface waters, marine resources, groundwater and soil. It is the largest importer of toxic waste in Europe, and there is no indication that this situation will change in the near future.

Recent UK national decisions about relaxation of water standards are set to further aggravate the pollution problems affecting the marine environment in the Region.

#### **3.6.1.4 *Economic structure***

The Region has a thorough mix of services and industry as its economic basis. Main areas of industry are mining, advanced technologies, chemicals, and agrobusiness.

There is higher unemployment in Nord-Pas de Calais than in the rest of the Euroregion, since this is a depressed industrial area. The same is true of eastern Kent. Rural Kent presents a rather odd situation, possessing a rather highly skilled and educated workforce, many of whom do not, however, work in the region.

Skill levels are high throughout the Region. However, neither cross-border working nor production exist. This is partly due to the time difference between the UK and its partners, and largely of course to the physical divide between the UK and the continent.

Geographic identification among the Regional population, for the same reasons, is almost nil. Indeed, there is not even Regional awareness among the three regions of Belgium, much less among Belgium, France and the UK.

There is a certain amount of cultural identification between francophone Belgium and France, but none between the UK and its partners.

Consequently, as one would expect, sense of responsibility for the Region, which is a highly artificial construct, is non-existent.

Piecemeal cooperation among Regional partners is possible, but political cooperation is not. There are, in addition, enormous problems of disparity of levels of competence. As a result, large scale efforts to realise Regional potential will be very difficult, with marine projects having probably the best chance of success in principle.

### **3.6.2 Organisational structure**

The Regional administrative structure is a Joint Standing Committee, with subsidiary working groups. Working Group III is the environment working group.

Regional cooperation takes place in the areas of infrastructure planning, environment, and education and training. The normative framework for cooperation is non-legally binding agreements, as well as a formal cooperation agreement, the Protocole d'Accord, of 1987. Membership in the Regional administrative is through administrative office or voluntary in nature.

There has been no devolution of powers to a cross-border body. Some INTERREG involvement has taken place, but only by the UK and France.

Generally, this Region is an example of cross-border cooperation as a fund-raising exercise in the first instance. The Euroregion has no coherence whatsoever, and chances of successful action are only reasonable for limited projects, without universal participation (ex. UK-F white cliffs management).

### **3.6.3 Environment**

The Region has put out a very progressive statement of overall environmental goals ("Euroregion Environmental Charter"); in practice, the main area of action is marine coastal management. Several projects have been undertaken, in the area of white cliffs and coastal management, air quality, groundwater and nature conservation.

Unfortunately, the Region suffers from being entirely composed of entities whose national (or federal, in the case of Belgium) governments put little emphasis on environmental action. This is inevitably mirrored in the coherence and energy with which projects in the area can be planned and carried out.

A general project to raise awareness has been carried out with the participation of all the regions: an exhibition on the Environment Charter made a tour of the Region from April to Nov 1993, culminating in a two-day conference in Antwerp.

Specific projects include coastal management and marine protection, with the participation of the UK and French regions, as well as parastatal bodies and private groups. A drinking water project has been established to draw up a harmonised methodology for dealing with



(agro)-industrial settlements, starting with the qualitative and quantitative demands they make on groundwater. A comparison of various legislation, rules and implementation currently in use in the regions is a component of this project, as is the establishment of a combined methodology. All the regional partners are participating.

A further project is intended to establish the relationship between air quality and childhood asthma by devising a research protocol capable of determining the nature of any association between asthma and particular airborne pollutants. All regions are participating.

Protection and management of natural habitats and landscape areas is also being carried out, as is work to protect nature reserves and parks.

Kent has a high awareness of the value of environment to its quality of life; unfortunately, this awareness is not matched by the national government, which has competence. Moreover, the UK has a historical tendency to see environmental concern almost entirely in terms of nature conservation.

Flanders has a greater perception of environment than Wallonia, Brussels or Nord-Pas de Calais, but still well below the level of the more concerned Member States of the European Union. In all of Belgium, the level of environmental concern is significantly lower than perception, because of the overriding importance of Belgian regional competence, funding, and linguistic issues.

In terms of on-the-ground administrative practices, UK and French regional offices have very little real power, while the Belgian regions have assumed much of the power reserved to the central State in the other two countries.

There is a corresponding discrepancy in the level of power of regional environmental institutions. These have little power in either the UK or France. In Belgium, however, they largely substitute for, and have levels of competence equivalent to, national ministries in non-federal States.

As a result of all the above problems, the Regional administration plays a purely consultative and advisory role.

## **3.7 EUREGIO**

EUREGIO is the oldest cross-border Region in Europe. Originally created in 1958, its Council was officially set up in 1978, bringing together three communal associations - the Rhine-Ems grouping (D), and the Twente and Oost-Gelderland groupings (NL) - representing 109 districts and municipalities. Its original purpose was to prevent further degradation of the area, which was marginal and largely rural, and enhance economic development. It has been extremely successful in work within its own area, as well as providing assistance and guidance to other cross-border Regions of Europe.

### **3.7.1 Regional characteristics**

#### **3.7.1.1 *Environmental quality***

The area suffers from a number of environmental problems. The most important of these are related to the Region's agricultural activities. Excessive use of fertiliser and the Region's high level of manure production have led to soil contamination from ammonia deposition, while excessive phosphates and nitrates have led to eutrophication and drinking water contamination. Intensification of agriculture, with its tendency to monoculture, is also posing a threat to the Region's biodiversity.

Industrial emissions are also causing water pollution, and industrial activities have caused sinking of the water table as the result of abstraction. Acid rain is also a problem, as is the generation of industrial and agricultural waste in general.

#### **3.7.1.2 *Settlement and population***

The Region has average to high population densities, with a high percentage of young people. Settlement patterns are relatively even throughout the Region, with no particular geographical disequilibria.

#### **3.7.1.3 *Technical infrastructure***

Transport systems are reasonably good at the national level within both Regional partners. Cross-border connections, however, could be better. This is particularly true for railway links. In 1981, the Enschede-Gronau railway line was closed, despite local protest and objections from the Regional administration.

Water supply systems and waste and water treatment facilities tend to be good throughout the Region.

#### **3.7.1.4 *Economic structure***

Agriculture plays a very important role in the Region, particularly cattle (dairy) farming. Grain production is also a significant economic activity. On the whole, Dutch farmers in the Region are far more prosperous than their German counterparts.

The textile and clothing industries are traditionally important to the area. Chemicals, steel and metalworking also have a significant presence. Most businesses throughout the Region are SMEs.

Unemployment in the Region is high, with serious losses having been suffered in industry in particular. Skill levels are on the whole quite high.

There has traditionally been a good deal of cross-border activity. The rate of commuting is still strong, although it has dropped from previous levels. Retail integration also exists to a large extent. Integration of production is much less important at the Regional level.

#### **3.7.1.5 *Regional awareness***

Identification with the Region is strong. Geographic features are very similar in both areas, and social and cultural links have a long tradition. In addition, all partners consider themselves to be peripheral to their national centres. There is some degree of language identification.

The long-standing relationship created by Euregio has led to a high sense of Regional responsibility. This can be seen vividly in the context of Regional activities at the general level. The EUREGIO secretariat has an excellent relationship with DG XVI, and the Region has become something of a model for European cross-border cooperation. The Region has formalised this position through LACE, also located in Gronau, which provides assistance and information to other cross-border Regions throughout Europe.

### **3.7.2 Organisational structure**

EUREGIO's administration has a tripartite structure: (1) the Council (EUREGIO Rat), with 29 Dutch and 31 German members, is the Region's parliamentary assembly (Executive); (2) the Steering Group, consisting of 20 members and six advisors from the Council, carries out day-to-day management; (3) eight working groups deal with specialised subjects of Regional interest (transport, environment, agriculture, etc.).

There is a distinct separation between the political level represented by the Council and the management level of the Group. Council advisors are not permitted to hold double membership; they go to the Group purely as advisors.

The Region also has a permanent Secretariat in Gronau.

Euregio is the most independent of the Regions, including in the area of funding. A 1991 Treaty between the Netherlands and the Länder of Lower Saxony and North-Rhine Westphalia provides a common legal framework for the Euroregion. The Regional programme is administered by a single cross-border committee, which also allocates funding. Regional administrative bodies include representatives from the European Union, national economic affairs ministries, national governments, German Laender, Dutch provinces, municipal authorities and the Region itself. Meetings of the Rat and Steering Group take place several times each year, and the Working Groups meet frequently.

Cooperation takes place both at the level of general political cooperation and Regional planning. It is carried out in a number of fields: infrastructure, environment, economic activities, cultural and social activities, and education and training.

Local involvement is considered crucial. Local administrations have strong representation in Regional bodies. In addition, public hearings are held in cases where environmental or Regional issues would be affected by national projects, as in the case of motorway construction.

The normative framework for cooperation is non-legally binding agreements. In addition, a 1991 treaty between the Netherlands and the Laender of Lower Saxony and North-Rhine Westphalia (see above) provides a common legal framework for the Region. Private law contracts are also used to carry out certain activities.

### **3.7.3 Environment**

EUREGIO is aware of the potential for conflict that constantly exists between activities aimed at economic development and the need to protect the environment. In particular, the Region's natural environment is under constant threat from intensive agriculture activities.

In this respect, the EU is not very helpful. High CAP subsidies go to Germany for raising grain and to the Netherlands for dairy farming, despite the fact that the entire EUREGIO area suffers from severe environmental problems caused by monoculture and by high levels of manure, nitrates and phosphates.

Within the framework of its wetlands protection programme, EUREGIO is carrying out a project on the improvement of economic structures which attempts to resolve the goal

conflict between agriculture, nature protection and environmental protection in border areas. This is an area of inter-regional conflict as well to some extent, since Germany has continued to cut peat, impeding the progress of Dutch attempts to protect and restore the area's wetlands.

The project includes analysis of agricultural structures, geohydrological studies, mapping of endangered species, and analysis of practical biotope improvement measures.

Although the Region does not have extensive forest cover, it is looking at forest-related nature protection measures, with the intention of promoting cooperation between forestry and nature protection in general.

EUREGIO has developed an integrated waste management and recycling programme based on existing EC, national and lower level laws. A detailed comparison has been carried out of the similarities and differences between regimes. Such comparisons are seen as quite important, because they allow planners to get a good understanding of what laws, programmes, etc. exist, which of these are working, and where there are lacunae that could be filled at the cross-border level.

The cross-border programme examines opportunities for waste prevention, recycling and general management. A primary goal of the programme is to ensure the avoidance of cross-border "waste tourism". Altogether, 12 concrete project themes are being dealt with within the framework of this programme, among them disposal of hazardous waste, packaging avoidance and recycling, and avoidance of the transboundary transport of waste.

In relation to agricultural waste, the Region has set up a pilot project intended to concentrate excess manure for export and use leftover liquid as local fertiliser, thereby reducing total load to land.

A pilot project has been undertaken aimed at combatting acid rain. On the basis of a study of the effects of acid rain on the countryside in Twente (NL) and Bentheim (D), the project developed a bridging strategy to protect these areas until internationally agreed measures to reduce SO<sub>2</sub> emissions have entered into force and have had some success. Random checks by local farmers on the health of copses and hedges in the study areas provide an element of air-nature integration into this study, as well as ensuring local participation in Regional activities.

A series of integrated agricultural projects has a twofold objective: to strengthen the agribusiness complex on both sides of the border, while at the same time taking measures to reduce the environmental impact of agricultural activities. Components of the plan include a project on alternatives to conventional agricultural methods, species and biotope protection, and studies on agricultural chemicals and the use of excess manure. These projects are expected to lead to the development of long-term infrastructure which will eliminate the conflicts between agriculture and nature/ environment protection in the cross-border area.

The Region is also studying agricultural problems through its "Permaculturpark", used to examine the effects of monoculture avoidance methods and the practice of set-aside.

The Region believes that the potential for conflict between agriculture and environment should be capable of resolution. Many problems that arise in this respect are seen as being due to lack of coordination between natural protection management structures on either side of the border, insufficient data exchange - as well as incompatible data - and general problems of organisation. This is becoming less of a problem as environmental awareness in the Region rises. Although the Region is badly in need of investment, it is determined that environmental considerations should be an integral part of the planning process.

The Region regards programme management as a Regional matter in general, but believes that projects should be carried out by someone other than the Region. This is meant to keep the planning and administration of projects as non-political as possible. Towards this end, the Region sees it as very important to have permanent environmental

staff at the Regional level, which are acceptable to all members and then remain politically independent.

Funding is seen as another important aspect of success for environmental projects. EUREGIO believes the Region should put forward its own money wherever possible, because this means that all partners have seriously considered their backing for a project and are interested in its realisation within a reasonable amount of time.

### **3.8 Benelux Mittengebiet**

This Region has been unofficially working together for some 25 years. It is based on economic considerations. Within the Benelux, this was the first border to be minimalised in order to further cooperation. Cross-border working parties have been working together for many years, before formal regionalisation, especially on roads and infrastructure issues.

Regional partners include the Antwerp, Limburg and North Brabant provinces and the Leuven area (Brabant province) in Belgium, and North Brabant and Limburg provinces in the Netherlands.

#### **3.8.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.8.1.1 *Environmental quality***

Serious air pollution problems exist in the Region, largely caused by industrial emissions from other areas (for example, the Ruhrgebiet). Air pollution from transport is also a serious problem. Acid rain is killing the area's forests.

Too much manure is causing water and soil pollution in both Belgium and the Netherlands. New legislation was passed some time ago in the Netherlands, and recently in Flanders, with both governments committed now to taking a tough stand on the issue.

Agribusiness (primarily livestock) is seen as a continuing threat to water and soil quality, while the galvanising industry is a source of severe heavy metal problems which also affect both water and soil.

##### **3.8.1.2 *Settlement and population***

The Region is home to a primarily aging, high-density population.

##### **3.8.1.3 *Technical infrastructure***

Generally, transport systems are good: the Region has major ports, extensive rail connections and motorway systems. Problems tend to be at the local level, between towns.

Waste is a problem for the Region, with Belgium still behind in waste treatment facilities and a thought-out waste management strategy as a whole. However, growing interest is being expressed by Flanders in this area, with cross-border efforts becoming more effective.

##### **3.8.1.4 *Economic structure***

The Belgian partners are largely involved in services (trade, finance, real estate), with a fair number of high-tech SMEs as well. The Dutch part of the Region is largely industrial, specialising in the electrotechnical and automotive industries. It is also largely composed of SMEs, but has some large industrial plants in addition.

Skill levels are high in both Regional partners.

Phillips and DAF trucks are integrated production in the Region; historically, there has been a pattern of facilities on both sides of the border. Otherwise, production tends to remain in the home area of a company. There is a great deal of cross-employment in both directions. Sixty percent of companies on both sides of the border employ people from the other side. A high percentage of cross-over also exists in the retail sector.

##### **3.8.1.5 *Regional awareness***

There is strong geographical identification with the Region, which covers almost the whole length of the Belgo-Dutch border. This is not, however, paralleled by a sense of social and cultural identification. The Region is a construction based on economic interests held in common. Some sense of identification, expressed through a strong general feeling of "Dutchness", is provided by the fact that the Region shares a language.

There is a growing interest in the Region, from both sides, with visitor streams in both directions growing. However, joint projects do not translate into feelings of "heimat". The Region thus has enormous potential, with the Regional partners complementing each other quite well. But this potential is currently underutilised, owing to a lack of information and to cultural barriers. Joint projects are seen as helping to overcome these problems.

### **3.8.2 Organisational structure**

There are two levels of Regional administration. The Comité van Toezicht (monitoring committee) includes appointed representatives from each province, with administrative and political responsibility for the Euroregion. The permanent secretariat (IGRES) is responsible for the daily workings of inter-regional economic cross-border cooperation.

The Comité includes four political representatives from the four provinces (Antwerp, North Brabant and the two Limburgs), one from the Dutch government, three from the Flemish government, and one from the EU (the main cooperation forum for the Euroregion is INTERREG, and there is no distinction between the INTERREG structure and the Regional structure at this level). IGRES has a permanent full-time staff of four.

Members of cross-border institutions include Antwerp province, Limburg province (B), North Brabant province (NL), Limburg province (NL), and the Flanders region (B). The Dutch municipalities are also involved in Regional decision-making. There is some involvement at the Belgian local level, but it is functioning less well than the Dutch. Also involved in cooperation are universities, chambers of commerce, and research institutes, as well as other societal groups.

This Region has a particularly wide basis for project initiation and decision-making, and projects tend to be carried out by a large number of partners representing a wide range of society.

Horizontal cooperation takes place both at the level of general political cooperation and of regional planning, in the areas of infrastructure, environment, economy, and education and training.

The normative framework for cooperation is non-legally binding agreements and private law contracts (bank contracts financing the Regional programme, in both NL and B). Membership in the Regional administration is through administrative office (within elected bodies of Regional politicians).

### **3.8.3 Environment**

The Region has opted to follow a problem-oriented approach, with extensive consultation at all levels and among all sectors of society, much as the Dutch government has done with its National Environment Plan. The goals are to define the biggest problems facing the Region and to determine the opportunities, particularly economic opportunities, inherent in these problems.

The Regional environment programme is almost entirely carried out within the framework of INTERREG, which is seen as having been an enormous boost to the financing and efficient financing of Regional cooperation. The development of a cross-border environment policy is not an issue; a diversified project approach is considered much more effective.

Environment goals are provincial in nature: On the one hand, those of the Flanders region, and on the other hand those set down by the Dutch National Environment Plan. There is

no separate cross-border environmental group. Instead, there are working parties on water, nuclear safety, air pollution, etc. with regular meetings.

The Region's experience has been that carrying out limited projects that are economically feasible and useful provides impetus to further consideration and work in problem areas, and has in some cases even speeded up legislative processes.

Projects have included disposal of hazardous waste in the galvanisation industry, where partners included OVAM, the province of North Brabant, and the private Union Miniere, together with consultancy groups. The project aimed to find ways to extract the heavy metals that constitute 2-5% of waste water from the galvanisation treatment and to find an environmentally sound way of dealing with the remaining sludge. The end phases of this project were not undertaken because the costs of such waste treatments were found to be prohibitive. The results of initiatives by the Dutch environment ministry (VROM) and the interprovincial administrative body for their multiyear hazardous waste plan may eventually prove useful to continuation of this study.

Three other projects have dealt with waste. One, on waste minimisation and management for offices, involved the Flemish waste agency (OVAM), North Brabant, and their respective employers' organisations. A second considered the prevention of waste and emissions as an instrument for common development, bringing together the Dutch provinces of Limburg and North Brabant and the Flemish Region, as well as OVAM and several research institutes. Industries to be studied included ferrous and non-ferrous metals, wood and furniture, galvanisation, food processing, and automotive. A third aimed to stimulate energy savings and waste prevention in SMEs. This was initiated by OVAM and the North Brabant energy agency (PNEM), and included research institutes as partners. An important objective of this project was to evolve diagnostic methods for developing environmental management strategies in industry.

Water projects include the Mark-Vliet project, a low-key "measuring" project (quantitative, pollution, flows, etc.) being coordinated through a complete, one-computer cross-border measuring system. There is a serious water problem in smaller rivers coming from Belgium to the Netherlands. This project is intended to develop a means of joint analysis capable of leading to common developments. At the practical level, it is expected to lead to reducing the cost of dredging. Project partners include the University of Gent Hydraulics Laboratory, the Zeeland water agency, the North Brabant water agency, AMINAL (Flemish environmental administration), the province of North Brabant, and several local water authorities.

A treatment facilities project is aimed at improving abattoir water treatment. Currently, water use in abattoirs is increasing at a rapid rate, with the resultant, polluted sludge being spread on agricultural land. That use is being curtailed as the result of Dutch and Belgian legislation adopted to deal with the problem of excess manure. The project has found alternative methods of dealing with this water by using it as animal feed following chemical and microbiological treatment. Partners include North Brabant province and OVAM, as well as research institutes, private consultancy groups and a number of industry partners (abattoirs, animal feed manufacturers). The new method is cost effective and is expected to reduce the production of abattoir sludge by 220.000 tonnes a year.

The Region has also initiated a transport project with possibly significant implications for air pollution. The Roosendaal terminal would provide port to terminal (Roosendaal) rail transport for goods arriving in the ports of Antwerp or Rotterdam. From Roosendaal, goods would be shuttled anywhere in Europe, by rail. Partners include the Dutch and Belgian rail transport agencies and the province of North Brabant.

In the field of agriculture, a joint study has been undertaken of the effects of manure on land and water. Work is also being done in the area of forestry, to develop practical measures aimed at furthering the economic, social/ recreational and natural/ environmental functions of the Region's woods. This project was developed with extremely wide consultation and involvement, including recreational, wood industry, agricultural, forestry, nature and environmental groups.



Three "soft" tourism projects, to develop bicycle paths, have been initiated as well.

In general, the Regions' strong points complement each other well. This is particularly true in the areas of education and economic strengths. Exchange of know-how is seen as extremely important for both sides, while the high level of environmental interest in the Netherlands is raising the awareness of Flanders.

The "pushing" partner (simply in cooperative terms), as well as EU money, are seen as being much more useful than finger-pointing would be in speeding up processes of problem-solving and decision-making, as well as legislative processes, in the environmental and other fields.

The Netherlands Environment Plan (NMP) is in effect in the Dutch part of the Region, as are the provincial plans developed in line with the NMP. Both of these did not reach their targets set under the recently ended first Plan, and the general economic situation at present in both countries is exacerbating pressure against meeting further Plan targets. Therefore, the environment in the Region must come down to economically feasible projects, with support from the chemical, agricultural, etc. sectors. Working together via projects and stressing the economic importance of projects makes it easier to interest and engage normally uninterested parties in environmental work.

Waste recycling and management is a very active sector in both the Netherlands and Belgium, although it is more of a public than private sector interest. The Euroregion is playing on this interest and waste needs throughout the area and using EU money, especially in the cross-border areas, where regions are able more easily to influence each other's legislation.

The Regional approach to manure pollution is an example of this approach. Without EU funding, the economic feasibility of dealing with excess manure would have been insufficient because farmers' costs would have been too high. Manure treatment still will not be cheap, but it can be pushed by the new legislation that has been put through and assisted by EU and Regional funding. Projects in the Region generally aim to provide real solutions to problems posed, with legislation following more easily once solutions are regarded as practical and practicable.

### **3.9 Euregio Scheldemond**

The Region is a new creation, formally established in 1993, although business connections and movements of people between the Regional partners have always existed. Regional partners include the provinces of

East Flanders and West Flanders in Belgium, and of Zeeland in the Netherlands, with consultation routinely involving the mayors/ aldermen from Hulst, Stekene, and Damme, the Government of Flanders, and the the Dutch Minstry of Economic Affairs.

#### **3.9.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.9.1.1 *Environmental quality***

Quality of the Scheldt is the primary environmental problem for the Region, owing to effluents from agriculture and industry, the latter primarily from the Antwerp area. The Belgian coastline is injured beyond repair, with the area nearest the coast classified as ecologically dead. Zeeland's coastline is intact because it was isolated for so long. However, Belgium is now aware of its marine problems. The provincial authorities have taken care to preserve the area inland from the coast, and are now considering remedial action for the coastal area itself.

Zeeland has ammonia (manure) problems, caused by both East and West Flanders. A debate on the issue is currently going on, but Flanders does understand the importance of the issue.

##### **3.9.1.2 *Settlement and population***

The Region is composed of small towns and medium-sized cities (Gent, Terneuzen); the entire area from Gent to Terneuzen essentially forms a single industrial zone. Terneuzen, with a population of 40.000, is the largest settlement in the Region.

The Region's population has increased 1.4% between 1980 and 1990, but a decrease in population is predicted for 1996-2000. This would be unfavourable for Regional development.

##### **3.9.1.3 *Technical infrastructure***

There is no rail connection in Dutch Flanders except for cargo. Boat connections are merely sufficient; only road infrastructure is actually good. North-south connections are generally less poorly developed than East-West ones because of the barriers posed by the Scheldt and the national border.

Both Regional partners rely largely on coal for energy. Waste systems are quite good in The Netherlands, but not particularly good in Belgium. Belgium also has problems with its water supply systems. Both water and energy supply as seen as areas where joint action would benefit all Regional partners.

##### **3.9.1.4 *Economic structure***

The Dutch Regional partner has an economy based primarily on agriculture (sugar beets, potatoes, grain) and fishing, although the latter activity consists primarily in fish processing (desanding) and the distribution of seafood grown in the Waddensee. Tourism is also important.

Incontrast, Belgium is home to several major industries: chemicals, metals, textiles, and foodstuffs. The entire Region is involved in extensive shipping of bulk goods, with harbours at Flushing, Ghent, Terneuzen, Zeebrugge, Ostend and the Waaslandharbour (Antwerp, a major port, does not form part of the Region).

There are a number of large industrial firms in the Region (chemicals, aluminium, shipbuilding - for the most part located in the Belgian partners), and a large number of both SMEs and, particularly in Zeeland, one-person businesses.

The Region has a low unemployment rate and, for the most part, a skilled workforce, with good linguistic and technical skills (this is somewhat less the case in Zeeland than in Flanders).

Employment in the Region is largely integrated, with residence chosen for tax purposes, and for quality of life by those who commute from northern Zeeland to the southern parts of the Region. Cross-border custom is common, with the flow going primarily from the Netherlands to Belgium, for cheaper shopping as well as cultural activities.

#### **3.9.1.5 Regional awareness**

The Region has had strong historical connections for centuries, as well as sharing a language. The border, formed by the Scheldt, is not an issue between the partners physically. At the same time, however, it does form a psychological barrier. In addition, southern Zeeland has always had strong ties with Belgian Flanders. As a result, the Regional population sees itself as living "north of the border" or "south of the border", and the latter group includes that part of the Netherlands living south of the Scheldt.

Those living north of the Scheldt are almost entirely involved in agriculture, tourism and fishing; there is little reason for them to want to go to the southern part of the Region very often, except for cultural outings.

There is a growing sense of responsibility for the Region, although this is based on geographical, language and cultural links rather than on a formal grouping. The concept of a Euroregion has not yet been assimilated at all, but this is partly because of its recent formation.

Socio-economic, environmental and other problems in this Region can only be solved jointly and regionally. There is high Regional potential, but differences in competence are creating problems in carrying out action. This is exacerbated by the fact that the authorities of the respective Regional partners have always perceived a border to exist. Recently, perceptions in this regard have been changing, as the result of frequent meetings between East Flanders and Zeeland, but also between East and West Flanders. This is seen as one of the important purposes of a formal Region.

#### **3.9.2 Organisational structure**

There are two administrations working within this Region: that relating to INTERREG, which applies to parts of the three Regional partners, and the Euregio, which represents the partners in their entirety. So far, experience of common action has been solely within the INTERREG context, which has been in place since 1991. No independent cross-border planning organ exists.

The Euregio administration consists of (1) the Scheldemondraad (Council); and (2) the Dagelijks Bestuur (Executive Committee), which prepares meetings of the Raad and carries out its decisions.

The INTERREG programme for the Region has its own administration, consisting of (1) a Steering Group, which meets six times a year; (2) a Working Group, which examines projects and advises on their suitability, meeting some 10 times annually; and (3) a Secretariat, with three provincial officials working half-time, and one full-time staff member.

Expert groups, bringing together provincial and local experts, report to both the Secretariat and the Working Group. Projects are generated by the provinces rather than by the administration (bottom-up approach).

The INTERREG Steering Group brings together provincial representatives, municipal representatives, and delegates from the Flemish government, the Dutch Ministry of

Economic Affairs, the Benelux Economic Union, consultancies, and DG XVI of the Commission.

The interests of the Raad (whole Region) are much broader than those of the INTERREG group, including wide-ranging socio-economic issues. However, INTERREG's scope is expected to increase significantly under INTERREG II. Increased levels of funding, together with longer time frames, should lead to greater attention to basic issues and deeper cooperation with project formulators.

There is no cross-border Regional fund. The Dutch Economic Affairs Ministry and the Flemish executive cofinance 50% of project costs altogether, with INTERREG providing the remaining 50%.

The Region suffers from serious competence disparities: in the Netherlands, the Regional partner is the province, while Flanders is a regional executive with almost State levels of competence. Both East and West Flanders, for their part, must go to the Flemish regional government for decisions; they themselves have little say in the the field of environment.

Environmental planning in particular has developed in quite different directions in the two States involved because of their respective centres of competence. These differences have been exacerbated by the fact that Belgium and the Netherlands use differing measurement methods and standards.

### **3.9.3 Environment**

Environment is approached on a problem-solving basis. The Region hopes, within the next six years, to get to the point where it has developed a vision of policy on both sides of the border, but this will take time. Creating an organisational structure for more integrated environmental planning is seen as very important for the Region, in order to develop a more integrated, policy-based approach in the coming years. This will require changes in legal and administrative procedures by all partners.

Spatial planning exists in the Netherlands and is now being introduced in Belgium, where there are some planning regulations, but none that are environmentally oriented. At the same time, however, the Belgian partners are looking at the Scheldt in terms of a more integrated environment plan (deepening to allow large ships while carrying out cleanup at the same time), while the Netherlands still prefers to deal with the Scheldt on a problem-by-problem basis.

Given the differences in environmental priorities between the two national partners, Regional authorities see it as useful that INTERREG II specifies an Environmental Impact Assessment for each project carried out within context of the programme.

Currently, the Region has limited itself to carrying out water projects: these include a study project on the Region's strongly branched creek system, which forms an important component of the Scheldt Estuary system. Agricultural and industrial activities are threatening these creeks. The study is looking at these negative effects, in order to develop concrete action to achieve rectification of these environmental problems, and planning to satisfy recreational and tourist needs without further damage. All provinces, as well as municipalities, water companies, and government and parastatal institutes, are taking part in the project.

A canal zone environmental project, integrating spatial, economic and environmental aspects of the area in order to develop a framework for management of the Region's canal zone as a whole, has also been undertaken.

Again, there is a wide range of partners, including employers federations, environment associations, provincial authorities, and parastatal and other research institutes.

A water project funded under the European Community's Prosa/ Prisma programme is aimed at reducing industrial effluents into the Scheldt Basin through prevention; partners include the Dutch Water and Environment Ministries, Belgian Public Works and Economic

Affairs Ministries, provincial governments, parastatal waste and environment institutes, municipalities, and universities.

Further environmental programmes will be developed as the Region becomes more firmly established. There is a strong awareness of environmental problems, particularly on the Dutch side.

In addition, regional authorities on both sides of the border have strongly expressed environmental concerns, especially regarding coastal waters, tourism, surface waters, agriculture, and atomic energy. NGO involvement in the Region is strong.

Formal comparisons of existing environmental legislation are beginning to be carried out. Licensing procedures are being compared at present (for all, not just industrial, activities), and a Regional congress has been held, bringing together local and regional authorities to discuss this topic. In the legislative context, EU legislation and standards are seen as useful because they set achievable objectives for laggards.

Work on even the limited number of projects thus far undertaken, together with studies and conferences of the type described above, are considered extremely useful in promoting exchange of best practice. Simply putting things on paper is considered not to lead anywhere, while putting people together has proved to be extremely valuable. In the Region, people are being put together frequently and effectively on a project basis. This gives them a common objective and a shared desire to succeed. In the long run, practice in joint efforts will make possible the development of a wider vision of cooperation.

### **3.10 Extremadura/ Alentejo**

The Region of Extremadura/ Alentejo was officially established in 1992, bringing together the Spanish Comunidad Autonoma de Extremadura and the Portuguese Region de Alentejo. These are represented by the Junta de Extremadura and the Comision de Coordinacion de la Region de Alentejo.

The aim of cooperation was to improve economic development for the Region, but it was political as well - the Constitution of Extremadura calls for the region to have relationships with Portugal and South America: this is a legal mandate.

The Protocol of Cooperation between the two countries calls for protection of the environment but also stresses the possibility of developing the Region's food processing capability, based on the importance of agriculture and husbandry for both Regional partners. Protocol priority areas are therefore agriculture, the environment and natural resource protection. Cooperation in all these areas takes place primarily at the institutional level.

#### **3.10.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.10.1.1 Environmental quality**

Environmental quality for the Euroregion is excellent on the whole, with no serious problems. Poverty has left the Region barely industrialised, thereby preserving biodiversity. There is some degree of water pollution, caused by industrial and urban waste.

Most environmental concerns are nature-related. Soil depletion has taken place as the result of (EU-funded) eucalyptus plantations. Further damage to soils is threatened by agricultural monoculture, including - in Alentejo - the continued planting of eucalyptus plantations, as well as extensive cereal cultivation. Increased irrigation is expected to lead to diversification of crops.

Irrigation has been a source of some controversy, however. While local administrations see it as relieving a potential environmental problem, some local environment groups consider these EU-funded irrigation schemes environmentally foolish and dangerous, because they extend the irrigation system to poor and unsuitable soils instead of repairing existing networks to save water and improve efficiency (Coordinadora Extremena de Proteccion Ambiental, in *The Ecologist*, Vol.22, No.3 (1992), p.95).

The Region has the highest rate of biodiversity in Europe, with a wide variety of flora and fauna. Four bird species now considered rare in the rest of Europe here are increasing in population. The Region is also home to certain threatened plants and animals, which here thriving locally.

##### **3.10.1.2 Settlement and population**

The Region is entirely composed of small villages and small and medium sized towns. In Alentejo, depopulation of smaller villages is a problem, with people increasingly moving to areas along the main motorways and along the coast. Extremadura also is suffering settlement disequilibria. Certain centres, around the main towns, are expanding, while rural areas are suffering from depopulation and accompanying economic and social decline.

##### **3.10.1.3 Technical infrastructure**

Alentejo has good transport infrastructure for rail and road. Extremadura, however, like the other regions of Spain, has poor rail and road connections - regionally and nationally, as well as cross-border.

Extremadura has invested heavily in the treatment of solid waste and is now planning structures for collection. As of next year (1995), the region will have material recycling set up. No incineration will be permitted.

#### **3.10.1.4 Economic structure**

Agriculture and services are hugely predominant throughout the Region. In Extremadura, the industry sector is also agricultural in nature (agrifood); other activities include cork, hydroelectricity production, and textiles. Alentejo is very similar: agrifood, livestock, forestry (cork, eucalyptus), and textiles are of primary importance. Both regions have extensive quarries.

Enterprises are generally small. In Extremadura, however, much of the agricultural activity takes the form of latifundia.

Both regional partners have relatively low levels of education and professional qualifications, but this is changing among the younger generation.

There is no cross-border integration of production or employment. Customers do shop across borders, primarily at border towns. There is also cross-border traffic for those going to fiestas, or eating out.

#### **3.10.1.5 Regional awareness**

The Region has strong geographical identification, because of very similar landscape and climate. In addition, both regions have felt themselves to be "forgotten" regions; this has created a strong sense of Regional identity, although somewhat less so in Portugal than in Spain. There has been a great deal of press attention on both regions, in both regions, accentuating this feeling of identity.

At the political level, the sense of responsibility for the Region is very high. At the popular level, psychological barriers exist but are being broken down. Cross-border language training is being introduced to further this process.

#### **3.10.2 Organisational structure**

The Region has a tripartite administrative structure: (1) the Grupo de Trabajo, comprising political officials; (2) the Gabinetes de Iniciativas Transfronterizas, with one specialised office for each region, at Evora in Portugal and Merida in Spain, responsible for the working committees. Strengthening of institutional cooperation, and its extension to further sectors of society, is considered a priority for the Region and is being instituted as the second phase of official cooperation; (3) working committees specialised in particular subjects.

The Working Group and Gabinetes each meet from 3-6 times a year. The working committees meet constantly.

Cooperation may be undertaken through non-legally binding agreements. In addition, the Convention de Madrid allows the Extremadura region to sign accords. Extremadura followed the procedure for the Convention, and the Spanish Parliament agreed it. Extremadura has also signed a Protocol with the Centro region in Portugal.

#### **External influences**

The President of the Extremadura region has been very firm with the central government. Thus, while other regions of Spain feel that their needs and desires are frustrated by the national Government, this has not been the case for Extremadura, which gets funding and permission for the projects the region wants to develop, rather than merely those being pushed by central government. Funds for the region are decided by the EC and Madrid, but the uses are determined by the region: an example of this is agriculture, where the Spanish partner has refused funding for eucalyptus groves and is in fact replacing all the eucalyptus plantations dating from the 1960s and 1970s.

Dissemination of information by the European Commission is seen as being extremely limited. For its part, however, the Region has put out two large, clearly formatted and well written volumes of relevant material. One is a description of all working committees and

their area projects, as well as Regional basic documentation; the second is a collection of press articles about the Region's efforts.

### **3.10.3 Environment**

Generally, there is a strong understanding in Extremadura of the need to improve the economy without damaging the environment. This forms the basis for the Spanish partner's strategy. Regionally, there are 18 natural areas, and the regional law that applies to them is much stricter than either the relevant EC Directives or Spanish law.

While Portugal does not have as determined a strategic concept, Alentejo is in agreement with the Extremaduran orientation.

The Region has a Working Committee on the Environment. The widest possible consultation is attempted in order to resolve problems with the least amount of resistance and the least degree of environmental damage.

The most important tool for the Region, however - legally in the case of Extremadura, and tacitly in the case of Alentejo - is the Extremaduran decree transposing the EC environmental impact assessment Directive. The Decree requires a full EIA for Annex I projects, which include electricity generating plants, motorways, airports, watercourses, waste treatment plants, hazardous waste storage, and electric lines; and abbreviated but nonetheless extensive EIAs for Annex II projects, which include small waste treatment plants, low tension electric lines, afforestation projects, fisheries, logging, industrial plants, sports centres, tourism facilities, radio and television stations, introduction of non-native species, and others.

Extremadura manages its wetlands and nature reserves as environmental areas. One of its main tools for this is a second piece of legislation, regulating hunting. Hunting is very important economically to the region, but the law lays down stringent requirements for use of hunting areas and treatment of regional species.

In Portugal, Alentejo does not have anything like this decision-making ability. Moreover, the Portuguese structure makes it hard to deal with the central government. Nevertheless, the region successfully uses Extremadura's environmental expertise and structures to leverage a stronger position for itself vis-à-vis the Portuguese government.

Regional programmes already carried out include an information day on environmental impact and the recuperation of quarries; programmes under way include an information day on environmental education and a natural parks project; proposed programmes include further information days on development and environment; an international conference on the Guadiana river; creation of a nature study network; treatment and recuperation of waste from the olive oil and oil processing industry; mapping, preservation and recuperation of the cross-border Guadiana river; and conservation of natural spaces in the area of Mourao (P) and in Jerez de los Caballeros (S).

Further projects include forest protection and maintenance, the prevention of forest fires in Mediterranean ecosystems, an afforestation project, and natural reserve work.

Extremadura's environmental impact assessment law, which applies to almost all activities, means that Regional industry and agriculture projects have an environmental component as well.

Examples include a project on the eco-recuperation of quarries, to recover land and plant cover damaged by quarry waste (granite in Extremadura and marble in Alentejo), and the treatment and recuperation of olive oil and olive processing effluents.

In agriculture, the Region has a project aimed at the natural production of chicken and eggs: this comes under heading of ecological husbandry and attempts to provide natural feeding and habitats for livestock. A separate project aims to protect indigenous species of livestock in danger of extinction.



The Region population is overwhelmingly rural. People understand the need for nature protection. At the same time, the Region is largely dependent on agriculture for its economy, so there are certain conflicts.

Extremadura is undertaking environmental education, and there are strong regional environmental groups. An attempt is also being made to ensure compliance with environmental regulations: forest rangers travel the Spanish regional partner and monitor protection of the environment.

### **3.11 Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra**

The Cross-border Community of Aquitaine/ Euskadi/ Navarra was created in 1989 (Euskadi/ Aquitaine), with Navarra joining in 1992 through a Protocolo de Colaboracion. Motivation for cooperation was to a large extent the desire to participate in the TGV and other infrastructure projects, so as to allow these three regions to open up. The regions share a common Basque character, with both Navarra and Aquitaine having some Basque parts (although Bordeaux, the capital of the French region of Aquitaine, is not Basque).

A strong risk of marginalisation confronting all these areas meant that it was much easier for the three to work together than for each to work separately, particularly since there was strong complementarity among them.

The Region brings together the Autonomous Region of Euskadi and the Foral Community of Navarra in Spain, and the Region of Aquitaine in France.

#### **3.11.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.11.1.1 Environmental quality**

Euskadi was a region of rapid industrial growth in the 1970s. This brought disequilibria that are creating problems today: over-specialisation in basic and transforming industries; slow development in the services sector and infrastructure; strong technology and energy dependence; and inadequate environmental safeguards. Euskadi is today the most heavily industrialised, and thus the most polluting, of the three regions. Its situation is generally improving, however, as a result of closing older industries, a switch to natural gas for energy needs, and plans to clean up existing contamination. Navarra and Aquitaine are relatively undamaged.

Air pollution is a problem in a number of areas, caused by urbanism and industry in Euskadi, and by transport in the Region as a whole.

Euskadi is seeking to reduce discharges to water and to integrate clean production, as well as building more wastewater treatment plants. Navarra has some solid and urban waste pollution of rivers. Aquitaine's water-related pollution problems are very different, resulting from agriculture and tourism.

The coastal areas of both Aquitaine and Euskadi have become increasingly polluted over the past several decades as the result of significant industrialisation, concomitant with insufficient treatment of solid and liquid wastes (coming from Euskadi to the Aquitaine coast, particularly). Further marine pollution is caused by maritime accidents (hydrocarbons, chemical spills) and marine and platform wastes.

Euskadi also must cope with contaminated soil problems, stemming from old industries and mines. Heavy industry (steel, shipbuilding, chemicals, paper) is seen as a continuing source of problems in this respect.

Navarra is experiencing erosion due to deforestation, causing desertification in some areas.

##### **3.11.1.2 Settlement and population**

Euskadi consists largely of cities of various sizes. Spatial, industrial, social and environmental disequilibria have been caused by rapid development in the 1970s, accompanied by migration to the cities and urban overpopulation in narrow geographical areas. Thus, 40% of the regional population lives in greater Bilbao, while 60% of the region's territory is forest. The latter has very low population density, and a heavy dependence on agriculture and forestry.

Navarra is largely rural, but also has settlement disequilibria, with some 50% of the population being found in the regional capital Pamplona, where the region's industrial base

and services are centred. The Pyrénées area of the region is sparsely settled in small hamlets, engaged in animal husbandry and forestry. Larger towns are concentrated in the southern part of the region.

#### **3.11.1.3 Technical infrastructure**

The general transport situation in Euskadi leaves a great deal to be desired. Roads are good, but the bus systems, and particularly the train systems, are a serious problem. Euskadi will change its rail gauge so as to be able to connect to France. The State, which would usually be responsible for such a transformation, has said it has no money for this task, so the regions involved will pay for the transformation themselves, since the project is too expensive for INTERREG.

In Navarra, motorways linking the region with other parts of Spain are now being built. Train and bus systems remain a problem, as in Euskadi - and, for that matter, most of Spain. Aquitaine, for its part, has good internal transport.

The Euroregion as a whole will try to become a part of the Paris-Madrid TGV path. They are working together on a study to this end, to facilitate the movement of goods as well as people. Intermodal plans for container ports connecting to trains are also being studied.

Waste treatment systems in the Region are insufficient, leading to coastal pollution. Treatment plants are currently being built for rivers.

#### **3.11.1.4 Economic structure**

Euskadi's industrial production was for a long time centred around the metals, metal transformation, and machine tools industries. The region has now shifted to new activities, including high-tech R&D and services. Euskadi is responsible for 5.8% of Spanish GNP, with one-third of this provided by its well-established and diversified industrial sector.

Navarra specialised in high-quality and high productivity agriculture. Most of its industry is multinationals (chemicals, transport equipment, electronics).

Aquitaine has a strong agricultural sector, with some multinational industry (Pioneer, aeronautics) and strong tourism.

The Region has a skilled workforce. Euskadi has many people with university qualifications, but this is partly due to the fact that there are many perpetual students because there is no work. This costs the region a lot of money.

There is very little integration of production within the Region, owing to structural differences. The actual border is quite small, and there is little coastline between industrial Euskadi and rural Aquitaine. In Aquitaine, the main activity is tourism, since most of the region is made up of the huge Landes forest. For this reason, Basque production has until now been oriented towards the internal Spanish market. However, integration is now being strongly encouraged by all Regional partners.

There is already some exchange of workers across borders (between 1000-2000 people). Although the number is not huge, a special tax system has been established in eastern Euskadi for cross-border workers. Thus, the importance of cross-border exchange is understood, even though the actual number of people currently involved in exchanges is not large.

A great deal of cross-border shopping takes place, primarily in the direction of France, because the Spanish population in Euskadi and Navarra is so much greater than the population of Aquitaine. Border supermarkets exist, with prices marked in both pesetas and French francs.

#### **3.11.1.5 Regional awareness**

There is a strong sense of shared topography and climate in the Region, although somewhat less so in France than in Spain. This is reinforced by a shared Basque culture and

language, for all of Euskadi, and bordering areas of Navarra and Aquitaine. These areas are in some sense therefore completely different from the Romance languages areas surrounding them.

Sense of responsibility for the region is consequently strong. Work is still needed to translate this fully into Regional achievement, but a great deal has already been done to integrate the parts of the Euroregion.

Common commercial interests, such as the TGV and other infrastructure projects, are seen as one way of accomplishing that integration. One problem still to be solved in this respect is that of finding new sectors that can effectively replace old industrial patterns.

### **3.11.2 Organisational structure**

The Region has a tripartite administrative structure:

- (1) a Comision Permanente Institucional, which also supervises the Fondo para la Cooperacion Aquitania-Euskadi (and Navarra), set up in 1990 through a Protocolo Anexo. Owing to problems of competence, the Protocol of Collaboration has no legal standing. For that reason, projects are undertaken only in areas in which the regions have competence to act;
- (2) an Oficina Permanente (secretariat), with a separate delegation in each region. There is no joint structure, nor has one been found to be necessary;
- (3) Committees and Working Groups, composed technicians from the specialised services of the regions.

The Permanent Committee includes representatives of the French Department, in order to avoid conflict of competence problems. The region remains the interlocuteur for cross-border activities. At the Regional borders, cities work together and finance joint projects, in the form of city councils.

Cooperation is generally limited to planning for concrete projects.

Areas of cooperation include infrastructure planning, environment, economic projects, cultural and social activities, and education and training.

These activities are undertaken in the context of non-legally binding agreements and private law contracts (the latter is exceptional, applicable only for the TGV Atlantique, which is private).

Cooperation between the partners is seen as being very effective. There is a strong will to work together, as well as a common background, culture and interests. In the larger context of the Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées, these regions are less effective; there, the Pyrénées are the common point of cooperation, but there are no Pyrénées in Euskadi, the "motor" of this smaller, constituent Euroregion. Their smaller tripartite grouping allows them to address more immediate concerns and is thus more effective.

Euskadi has much more competence than even Catalunya. It is able to collect and distribute taxes, as well as having competence over a wide range of services and areas of policy (health, police, education at all levels, land use planning, etc.) Euskadi and Navarra are the only two regions of Spain to have negotiated Economic Agreements with the central government.

That high level of autonomy should exacerbate problems in working with a French region, which has no competence at all. However, the Euroregion has dealt with this to a certain extent by having the relevant French Departments represented on the Permanent Committee.

The Euroregion allows extremely wide-ranging participation. Regional funds are used for projects, but private actors may be involved in enacting these. Many projects are initiated on the basis of suggestions submitted by private associations, which present a large number of ideas to the Region. This flexibility has been facilitated by the creation of an independent Regional 250 million peseta Common Cooperation Fund, which makes it easier to bring both private and public agents into cross-border cooperation.

### **External influences**

The Spanish regions of this Euroregion have a great deal of competence within Spain. In Brussels, however, national ministers have the last say (on the issue of fishing, for example).

The role of the EU is considered quite important, as are EU-wide standards. Euskadi has become a major recipient of EU Structural Funds: between 1989-1993, the area received ECU 384 million as an Objective 2 area (that is, 28% of the total allocated Spain), ECU 9 million as an Objective 5B area (3.5% of Spanish total), and some Objective 3 and 4 funding as well.

The Basque Operative Programme for the same period has focused on four areas in order to remedy the disequilibria affecting the region:

- (1) creation and development of productive activities, including the improvement of industrial infrastructure and energy diversification;
- (2) protection and improvement of the environment, including rehabilitation of former industrial sites, management of natural resources, promotion of the environment, and measures to prevent contamination;
- (3) training and education;
- (4) communications networks.

But the Region needs to be given more power and presence in consultations on the preparation of legislation. For example, the Spanish State and the Autonomous Regions have a certain degree of shared competence over environmental issues. But the regions do NOT have an efficient consultation procedure with the State on these matters, because the State does not want it.

In the field of environment, EU legislation that would be more closely geared to the Regions is seen as being potentially very useful and facilitating action (for example, water legislation tends to be based on northern Member State problems, while those of the southern States are often quite different but equally severe). Equal implementation among Member States is also viewed as quite important. This would suggest that Regulations might be more useful in certain situations than Directives, even though less flexible.

#### **3.11.3 Environment**

The Region's eventual goal is integration of the environment into other areas, using regional funds. A general strategy is seen as important for problems such as the Atlantic coast. Otherwise, a specific approach is preferred, directed at small problems (structural, studies, administration). In dealing with France, this results largely in specific projects for protection of the Pyrénées.

Environmental projects begin at the top (Permanent Committee) as ideas which are then given to technical working groups to elaborate. Ten or more technicians from the specialised services (ministries of the regions) may take part in such groups.

Euskadi has a large degree of autonomy; even here, however, not having an environment ministry is seen as a serious obstacle to effective environmental work. Both Spanish regions tend to have coordination problems with the centre, particularly in terms of those areas where the State retains competence (waterways, infrastructure, etc.).

As with other French partnerships, there is also the problem of the lack of competence on the part of the French regional partner, limiting areas where projects can be undertaken. Nevertheless, coordination on environmental problems is seen as quite good.

One Regional environment project is being carried out under INTERREG, and several within the context of the Communauté de Travail des Pyrénées. The CTP presents funding requests to the Commission for all the regions comprising it.

Current projects deal with (1) surface water conservation and protection;

(2) protection of wetlands which form a crucial path for migratory birds; and (3) a coastline contamination study, comprising a highly integrated programme of identification and quantification; examination of existing treatment facilities and future needs, contamination by port activities, marine dispersion mechanisms, coastal uses and impacts; plans for improvement of waste treatment systems; possible mechanisms for beach cleanup; and conservation plans, especially for sensitive areas such as wetlands and estuaries.

The Region uses a wide mix of instruments as the basis for its wetlands programme: international conventions on habitat protection, EU legislation, and Euskadi regional legislation. It has also carried out a formal comparison of wetlands law, in order to use existing measures to best advantage.

Within the Region as a whole, consciousness of environmental problems that affect people is high, but not of the environment in general. Education and information dissemination about the environment is, however, being undertaken on a large scale.

### **3.12 Italy-Slovenia**

Italy and Slovenia have been engaged in cooperation at the political level for a number of years. INTERREG presented them with the possibility of putting projects into effect by providing funding, with the programme's two aims in the area being to solve environmental problems requiring closer Regional cooperation, and to realise economic potential, especially in the agriculture sector and for SMEs. They are trying to fit projects into other initiatives being cofinanced by Structural funds in Italy and PHARE in Slovenia.

Regional partners include the Italian provinces of Udine, Gorizia and Trieste (region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia) and the State of Slovenia.

#### **3.12.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.12.1.1 Environmental quality**

Air pollution is to sometimes a problem, since parts of the Region burn poor quality coal for energy. The wood processing industry burns lumber waste as well. The Region also suffers from a certain amount of agriculture-generated pollution. On the whole, however, environmental problems are not severe.

##### **3.12.1.2 Settlement and population**

Udine consists of a large number of small settlements; Gorizia comprises 25 small and medium communes, only two of which have a population greater than 20.000. Trieste, on the other hand, has a high urban concentration, with 90% of the population of the province living in the city of Trieste.

Generally, the Region is one of sharply declining, as well as aging, population. This is particularly the case in Trieste, Gorizia and the mountain regions, for economic reasons.

##### **3.12.1.3 Technical infrastructure**

There are 15 cross-border road crossings and three train crossings. However, these tend to be peripheral and inefficient. Thus, while connections exist, they need to be improved. Trieste is not included in Italy's high-speed train project and feels it should be.

##### **3.12.1.4 Economic structure**

There are strong variations in the productive sector within the Region, although tourism is strong throughout the Region.

Trieste has recently shown a strong increase in services, while undergoing an industrial crisis because of Japanese and Korean competition to its shipbuilding industry. It has consequently been designated an Objective 2 area. The area is also experiencing a steel crisis due to general overproduction in the sector. Udine is industrial and commercial in nature, with particular orientation towards eastern Europe, while Govizia's main activities are viniculture and tourism.

All the Italian partners have important services sectors, particularly banking and insurance, as well as merchant shipping. Their main industries are electricity generation, appliances, leather, furniture, heavy metal industry and oil refining.

The Italian partners include a few large multinationals, mostly exporting to eastern Europe. However, large firms are primarily active in traditional industries which are currently undergoing a crisis and are partly State-owned (shipbuilding, metallurgy, electromechanics). As a whole, the Region has too few SMEs.

There is no integration of production, due to the peculiar nature of cooperation in this Region, which joins an entire sovereign State and a few Italian provinces.

On the other hand, there is quite a bit of cross-border employment. Special passports have been issued for cross-border workers, to allow them to go through border areas that are open exclusively to them. A fair amount of illegal cross-border work also takes place, particularly given the crisis in ex-Yugoslavia. In addition, considerable numbers of shoppers cross from Slovenia into Italy.

### **3.12.1.5 Regional awareness**

Geographical identification with the Region is not particularly strong, but the partners are strongly aware of the effects they have on each other as the result of having similar problems.

Ethnic closeness is totally lacking. This is to be expected, given the language difference and political divide separating the partners. Differences in attitude, with Slovenia feeling close to Austria while the Italian part of the region has a more Latin culture, exacerbate these divisions.

Nevertheless, the political crisis in Yugoslavia has served to create a strong desire among the partners to retain stability in the area. Progress in cooperation is slow, however, because all agreements are of necessity international agreements and must be ratified by the State.

### **3.12.2 Organisational structure**

The Region has a Monitoring Committee which decides projects to be carried out. This Committee has a large number of members, all of them representing the Italian partner. Slovenia may be invited to be present at meetings but is of course not officially part of the INTERREG programme, under which environmental and economic projects are carried out for the cross-border Region.

The Region has no working groups to make recommendations to the Committee, but these are expected to be formed eventually. In practice, however, technical institutes from both Italy and Slovenia are working together under the INTERREG programme.

Cooperation is being carried out in the area of regional planning to some extent, but only at a technical level, because the Region is not allowed to make "foreign policy". Areas of cooperation include infrastructure planning for transport, although differing rules of procedure make joint action difficult, environment, and, to a much greater extent than in other areas, cultural and social activities, particularly town twinning activities.

The normative framework for cooperation is provided by international treaties (which includes all Regional agreements, by definition), as well as official agreements between national ministers.

Friuli-Venezia Giulia is one of the five regions (of the 20 that make up Italy) with greater autonomy than the others, in certain areas. At the same time, however, the fact that Slovenia is not a region, but rather a non-EC State, means that all cross-border agreements for this scheme are in effect international agreements and must be approved by the Foreign Minister of Italy. In addition, Italy does not allow regions to spend money outside of the country, so that funding for cross-border efforts are more difficult than they would be between EC States.

During the period under investigation, INTERREG did not permit funding in non-EC States (the Phare/ Interreg procedures were not yet in place). However, the environmental projects undertaken on a cross-border basis have been made possible by INTERREG funding. The procedure for each project has therefore been that Italy has taken the lead and "invited" Slovenia to join. The difficulties presented by this procedure should be dealt with under INTERREG II.

Further complications are created by the strong role of the Italian State in the INTERREG process. The national Comitato Interministeriale di Programmazione Economica (CIPE)



must make a decision on the level of Italian funding for each Interreg programme in which Italy is involved. Once CIPE has committed State funds, the Slovenia-Italy INTERREG programme must be translated into a regional law, which then has to be approved by the national government.

### **3.12.3 Environment**

There is no general Regional policy for the environment because of the economic and political problems peculiar to this cross-border Region. However, one of the two priorities of cooperation is seen as being improvement of the quality of life and health in the Region by addressing common environmental problems. That objective is also seen as reinforcing institutional collaboration.

The Region has no environment working group or permanent technical teams. Only the central governments have environmental competence. However, it is the Friuli-Venezia Giulia environment agency that puts out public calls for tender to get contractors to carry out joint projects. Only then will (possibly multinational) firms chosen in these competitions cooperate with both Slovenian and Italian technicians; institutes and research centres in both Slovenia and FVG are working together under INTERREG in any event (see above).

Sixty-three percent of INTERREG funds for the Region are going to environment programmes, in a series of studies intended to provide sufficient knowledge about the local environment to allow suitable projects to be formulated. Local authorities have been involved, and physical projects will be undertaken in a next stage.

EU legislation on the environment is seen as being extremely useful by the Italian partner, since it allows the regions to circumvent obstacles to environmental improvement raised by central government.

The Region is carrying out a waste project meant to encourage the use of lumber waste to generate energy. This is seen as a cleaner alternative to the current use of high-sulphur coal and wood burning, which create serious air pollution in the border area.

A cleanup of the Timavo river basin (a grotto area recognised by UNEP) has been undertaken. The river basin is accorded particular importance by both Slovenia and Italy and is an essential source of water for local populations. Significant urban and industrial pollution makes cleanup urgent. A second, far more complex stage of this project will be entered into under INTERREG II. Grotto aquifer systems are also being studied, particularly with a view to the dangers posed by pesticide pollution of the Natisone river basin (with sampling in both Slovenia and Italy). The Region is also carrying out a qualitative study of agro-food product contamination, from air-, water- and soil-based sources.

Although limited in number, the Region's projects are already highly integrated, and INTERREG II is expected to allow more complex patterns of cooperation to be developed.

## **3.13 Comunidad de Trabajo Galicia-Norte de Portugal**

The original cooperation between the Autonomous Community of Galicia and the Region of Norte de Portugal dates from 1985 and focused on cross-border infrastructure and communication projects. The Region was officially established in 1986. The motivation for cooperation was the

need to ensure coordinated economic development of the Region.

### **3.13.1 Regional characteristics**

#### **3.13.1.1 Environmental quality**

Norte has some pollution in areas of urbanisation/ industrialisation, especially from stone quarrying. Its main problems are water-related. Certain industries create large-scale

industrial effluents, and rivers passing through densely populated and industrialised coastal areas receive raw sewage and other pollution.

Galicia's problems are for the most part those caused by the mineral exploitation (granite) traditional to the region's interior.

### **3.13.1.2 Settlement and population**

Over 65% of the Region's population lives in towns of fewer than 2000 inhabitants. Both parts of the Euroregion show a sharp distinction between the coast and the interior.

In Galicia, 75% of the population is rural; the two cities of any size are Vigo and Coruna. The interior is comprised of small towns, engaged in small-scale agriculture for the most part.

Norte lacks important urban centres in the interior of the region, but Porto has a population of over 1 million and there are a number of small urban concentrations on the coast. This configuration has led to a high population density in these areas and puts a strain on basic infrastructure. It also means that while the coast develops, the interior languishes.

Norte has a high rate of population growth: it is one of the youngest regions in Europe (29% of population less than 15 years old). This offers enormous labour force potential. However, here again there is a coastal-interior split. The aging portion of the population is higher in the interior, and migration of young people from the interior to the coast continues as well. This trend has a potential to create serious environmental problems by increasing the pollution load of the coast while depriving the interior of a settled population devoted to managing the land.

Galicia, for its part, has low population growth, but suffers from the same phenomenon of emigration from the interior to the coast.

### **3.13.1.3 Technical infrastructure**

As noted above, the Region suffers from extremely unequal patterns of settlement and employment. This makes infrastructure more difficult and expensive to provide than might otherwise be the case (industrialised, dense urban development vs agricultural, sparsely populated interior).

The cross-border transport system is extremely poor. Individual regional systems are also extremely limited, with inter-regional transport being provided, but all communication between the region and the rest of the country being extremely difficult, and generally only possible by going through the capital.

Regional rail systems are particularly poor, both in the cross-border direction and in connecting regions to their respective countries, although bus systems and regional airports exist. This has implications for the future levels of pollution that can be expected as the result of increased commercial transport by lorry. New motorways are already being built with EC funds, replicating existing - underutilised - long-distance networks.

Shipping facilities exist at several points in Galicia and Norte, but infrastructure is poor and congestion common.

Electricity and water supply and treatment systems are generally below the national average in Norte. Waste treatment facilities for urban and industrial effluents are quite inadequate, with only 5% of the population served by sewage treatment plants.

Galicia has abundant natural energy resources. Mini-hydroelectric stations are being planned, but the need for State approval, combined with national-regional disputes about installation placement, is complicating the development of these stations.

With Regional underdevelopment of essential infrastructure suffering from such basic inadequacies, it is unlikely that environmental considerations will receive a great deal of attention or funding.

#### **3.13.1.4 Economic structure**

The agricultural sector is particularly important in both regions but suffers from a high degree of fragmentation. In Galicia, poor production structures have resulted in low productivity. Fishing, also very important, suffers similar problems. Geographical and sectoral overconcentration of industrial infrastructure is hindering industrial development.

Galicia's main industrial sectors are ship construction, automotive, aluminium (all in need of restructuring), and textiles. The number of industrial jobs has fallen in the past decade, with services rising. In addition, shipbuilding is suffering side effects from the problems affecting the region's fishing industry, as well as strong competition from Taiwan and Korea. Aluminium is also in trouble, because of competition from Russia.

Norte is the most developed region of Portugal. Modernisation has taken place in certain agricultural sectors (milk, wine, fruit), but the relevant active working population is declining. Tourism potential remains unrealised. Sectors tend to be concentrated geographically: agriculture in the interior, industry on the coast, and services around Porto.

The Region is characterised by numerous minifundias. Thus, everyone with a tiny parcel of land and minimum self-sufficiency is statistically viewed as being employed. However, the structure of employment inhibits economic development and perpetuates low incomes.

Illiteracy is a significant problem, although much higher in Portugal than in Spain. In Norte, the lack of middle- and higher level managers is a serious brake on future technical development. The work force as a whole tends to be relatively unskilled. Galicia has a skilled industrial labour force, with other sectors relatively unskilled.

There is a certain amount of Regional integration at the agricultural level, particularly in fishing and the construction industry. This has not translated into a cross-border employment pattern, although there is exchange at the retail level.

#### **3.13.1.5 Regional awareness**

A political effort is under way to develop regional identification, which does not exist at this time. Both regions, however, share the desire for greater autonomy from their national centres; this is easier to achieve jointly.

The Region has social and cultural, as well as economic, characteristics in common as the result of a common history. Problems in joint action nevertheless arise from administrative differences between the regions and blockages within the regions themselves. Norte suffers from the absence of a positive, decentralised regional policy. Galicia for its part is hindered by the conflicts arising from four levels of administration: central, regional, provincial and local. This has led to reduced efficiency in some political sectors.

In addition, Norte has no competence whatsoever. This is one of its reasons for being interested in union with Galicia, but it means that all agreements must, on the Portuguese side, be government agreements. Incomplete integration of financial institutions creates additional problems.

#### **3.13.2 Organisational structure**

The Region's administration comprises a Comision de Coordinacion, bringing together the Presidents of the Region of Norte de Portugal and the Xunta de Galicia; a Consejo de la Comunidad de Trabajo; and a Comite de Coordinacion. The Council is made up of official representatives of the Autonomous Community of Galicia and of the Coordination Committee of the Region of Norte de Portugal. These two delegations are to have an equal number of delegates, including representatives of subregional border associations and coordinators of sectoral committees.

Others, including national and European representatives and representatives of Hispano-Portuguese cross-border cooperation groups, may be invited to attend as participants or observers. Representatives of socio-economic groups, universities and research institutes,

as well as experts in specific subjects, may also be invited. The Comision de Coordinacion may also call on invited experts.

The coordination Committee meets four times a year to coordinate work done by the sectoral groups, ensure the functioning of the secretariat, follow projects being carried out, and prepare the groundwork for the formulation of work programmes.

The Euroregion has also created two ad hoc committees: one on the Internal Market and its implications for the two regional partners and, in particular, their border areas; and the second to work on INTERREG.

### 3.13.3 Environment

Galicia sees both the EU and the national government as important sources of regional - including environmental - problems. Agriculture and fishing are major activities for the Region, with Galicia alone representing 40% of Spanish milk production. EU milk quotas are resented. In fishing, accession is seen as having transformed a small-scale and labour intensive activity into an industrial activity, centralised and automated, with harmful consequences for fish populations, the marine environment and Regional development.

EU funds have also been used in Galicia to construct effluent outfall pipes into the sea in tourist areas. This has led to the pollution of local fishing grounds. Treatment plants now being constructed to deal with the problem.

There are four levels of activity within the Spanish regional partner: local, provincial, regional and State. These are seen as lacking coordination and, in some cases, obstructing one another. They lead to uneven development generally, with progress in an area depending on whose competence it belongs to. This is particularly serious for the environment in those areas under national competence, since environmental priorities are not high on the State's agenda.

For an area that considers Community funds essential, the second problem relates to the allocation mechanism of such funds. Cohesion Funds, for example, are allocated to the State, which in turn provides them for State structures only within Galicia (for example, long-distance motorways). In the area of environment, these funds are being used for afforestation and fighting forest fires, but not for other projects which the Region sees as essential. The Portuguese government's allocation is similar in pattern.

The Region would like to have a general environment strategy, but this would be too complicated because of the administrative levels involved and huge discrepancies between the competence of the two regions. The Portuguese State must enter into all Regional agreements on behalf of Norte; if Norte had regional competence, cooperation could be a great deal closer and easier to achieve. EU norms are seen as very important because they provide a bridge between unequal regional capabilities.

This is complicated even further by the fact that Galicia cannot sign international agreements, which all agreements with Portugal perforce are. It must therefore have State agreement for projects involving rivers, for example, although the areas **around** rivers are the competence of the region in Spain.

Galicia has three levels of environmental administration: (1) RAHMIMP, the State environmental impact assessment, enacted through two Galician decrees, various environmental counsellors, and an industrial environment section (air pollution, etc.); (2) an agriculture structure, dealing with forests, reserves, fisheries, biodiversity, forest fire prevention and planning; and (3) a water section.

Here again, the State is seen as a serious obstacle to effective action. Galicia, for example, submitted 25 region/ Region-relevant project proposals for EU LIFE funds. However, these had to be submitted via the State, and not one was forwarded to Brussels, because they were considered too environmentally oriented (i.e., hindering development) by the national government.

As a result of these competence and administrative complications, the Region has only been able to carry out nature protection projects in the environmental field. These have been in the area of biodiversity, particularly for the reintroduction of species, and in planning and management of reserve areas.

A further complication in carrying out environmental projects is the serious contradiction between development needs and the environment in this Region. This conflict is exacerbated owing to the the Euroregion's enormous reserves of flora and fauna.

Galicia has tried to deal with this to some extent by providing very high penalties for pollution within its part of the Region. This has not been extended to the Portuguese partner, however. Nor is it clear to what extent the system has been successful in Galicia itself.

### **3.14 PACTE**

This small Euroregion, bringing together Hainaut in Belgium and Nord-Pas de Calais in France, was officially created in 1989, although informal cooperation has been going on between the partners since 1987. Partners in cooperation are the Walloon region and the French Community (B), and the Region of Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Departement et Prefecture du Nord (F).

Creation of the Region was meant to formalise already existing relations and ease cooperative activities. For example, the problem of the Tournai aquifer has existed for decades, but informal contacts had proved ineffective.

#### **3.14.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.14.1.1 Environmental quality**

The Region's environmental problems generally stem from the past as well as present industrial activity (coal and steel, metal-working). Pollution from coal/ steel activities has affected both surface and ground waters. This is particularly true of four areas: (1) Basin de Mons: firms situated the length of the cross-border river La Haine are polluting leisure fishing waters in France; (2) Lille-Tournai Basin: groundwater is being contaminated by industrial discharges from Lille and agricultural effluents from western Hainaut; (3) abstraction of water is becoming a serious problem for the Euroregion's aquifers;

(4) serious pollution of the Roubaix-Moucron canal from urban and industrial discharges. There is also soil contamination arising from former and current industrial activities. In Hainaut, agricultural pollution is a problem as well.

Unfortunately, potential for continuing pollution is rather high. As a whole, the Euroregion is an old industrial area running through a green zone. Particularly in the metal-working sector, the Lille-Mons-Charleroi area contains a number of firms which retain their old infrastructure and respect environmental laws only minimally.

##### **3.14.1.2 Settlement and population**

The Region comprises several urban areas, and many small villages (industrial/ green zone division), with a high population density in both Regional partners.

##### **3.14.1.3 Technical infrastructure**

The Regional motorway system between Lille and Tournai is good, but otherwise the system is relatively poor. Local networks are good. There are no cross-border bus services; it is necessary to change at the frontier, with only one exception. A bus service linking Maubeuge and Mons is planned within the next year or so.

The only cross-border train link is Mons-Autois on the Paris-Brussels line. However, service within each region is good, with the exception of the south of Hainaut, which is very poorly served.

Water and energy provision systems are excellent. Water treatment plants exist nationally, but none are jointly managed in cross-border cooperation.

##### **3.14.1.4 Economic structure**

Hainaut is largely engaged in the services sector. In NPC, although agriculture accounts for only 4% of sectoral activity, is quite important. The Region supplies 25% of the French fish catch and 75% of its frozen fish production.

Wallonie is home to iron and steel and electromechanical firms, and is expanding into aeronautics, new materials, electronics, and computing. Nord-Pas de Calais (NPC)

focuses on metalworking and industrial and transport equipment, textiles, chemicals, plastics and paper, and agrifood.

Parallel to its shift from traditional heavy industry to high-tech activities, Wallonian industry is experiencing a shift from large firms to SMEs. NPC still has a number of large industries as well as many SMEs; in this region, however, the latter tend to have low productivity and lack advanced technology and strong investment.

The Region has a sizable skilled workforce, but is also experiencing high unemployment. Regional projects will arise when they serve economic development; for the moment this is not the case. Until now, the only successful cross-border economic cooperation has been information exchange and cross-border investment promotion.

A large number of workers cross the border. Projects are in place to encourage such transfers of firms and people, in order to help solve the unemployment problems of the regions. There is a great deal of cross-border shopping.

#### **3.14.1.5 Regional awareness**

Geographic identification exists, but functions primarily along river systems. The partner regions share a common language and industrial history.

Many people in the Region, however, are unaware of INTERREG and cross-border activities and of what is going on generally on the other side of the border. This lack of knowledge is being addressed by educational activities.

Regional potential has not been fully realised. But there is a perspective of parallel development, which would strengthen both parts of the Euroregion.

Certainly, there is much more interest in Regional development within the framework of PACTE than is the case for the larger Euroregion which includes Kent-NPC (see description of the Transmanche Euroregion). Actors within PACTE tend to be local and are therefore more interested in cross-border activities because of their awareness of the border. They are also more able to act effectively than their larger counterpart, because Kent-NPC functions at a higher, more abstract level than the local initiatives of PACTE.

#### **3.14.2 Organisational structure**

The Region has a tripartite administrative structure: (1) a Monitoring Committee (Comite de suivi), which acts as a political, decision-making body, bringing together national (France), regional (Walloon region, Nord departement, Nord-Pas-de-Calais region) and European Community (DG XVI) representatives;

(2) a technical group (groupe technique), which is administrative in nature; and (3) technical teams (equipes techniques), which functions as a cross-border secretariat for day-to-day management of the Euroregion. There are two teams (one per region) of three people each.

The Comite de suivi has four permanent members, and invitees (usually totalling about 15 members in all), and the technical group has six members. These both meet once or twice annually. The technical teams meet twice a week.

Actors in the Euroregion are almost entirely public authorities and parastatal groups. There is no real private involvement, partly because of the parameters for cofinancing set down within the Structural Funds and Objective 1 funds, and partly because private actors are simply not very well mobilised in this direction.

The Region does, however, have a specific non-profit making association (asbl), ETAP, dedicated to Regional cross-border work. This arrangement means that cross-border structures and actors already exist for public authorities to join, thus avoiding certain public conflicts of interest. Moreover, asbl members tend to be local non-professionals keeping in close contact, whose primary concern is solving cross-border problems.

The disadvantage of this involvement of private actors thus far appears to be that the very fact that they are committed amateurs means they lack professional management and political skills, as well as suffering from limited funding.

### **3.14.3 Environment**

PACTE is an INTERREG Euroregion, with a budget allocation of 32 MECU (50% EC funded). INTERREG describes the "two principal thrusts of the programme [as] economic development and the environment." At the moment, however, environment is not being integrated into the development plans for the Region, except in the area of tourism, which is oriented towards "soft" projects. Most strictly "environmental" actions are end-of-pipe.

At the same time, certain environmental projects have arisen because of INTERREG. For example, water treatment schemes are being seen in a cross-border context as the result of the INTERREG programme and funds.

The Region sees cross-border activities as being equally valid whether they are joint or complementary. For example, in developing small-scale tourism in the southern part of the Region, France has put its efforts primarily into infrastructure investment and restoration within small villages. Belgium, in its corresponding area, has prioritised development of local artisans and products, including training local unemployed to take positions in soft tourism for the region.

The Region has no overall strategy, but rather attempts to deal with aspects of development without destroying the environment. This is particularly true in the area of tourism. Together, tourism and environment account for over 40% of the Region's budget.

Regional goals are thus seen as falling somewhere between "strategy" and specific actions, with the latter predominant for the moment. This is partly attributable to the overriding need to rehabilitate the environment while encouraging economic redevelopment in what are depressed industrial areas, with traditional soil and water problems caused by industrial waste.

France and Flanders are considering a project to treat the water of L'Escaut to the point where it can serve as household and drinking water. Hainaut wants each partner to treat its own water and is not sure the French can reach the levels they have set. No joint action has so far been taken, even to the point of a formal study, but both sides are considering the issue for future study and action.

Work is also being done on the Tournai aquifer, used for drinking water by both regions. The aquifer suffers from degraded water quality, but also from excessive extraction. Research is underway to create monitoring pumps, allowing both level and quality to be tested regularly.

The Region is also studying the problem of quarry waters, in order to treat them when they are brought up by quarrying activities, and then reinsert them into the aquifer. Action would be taken under INTERREG II.

Three water treatment projects are under active consideration.

Tourism projects include a local tourist bus to make the circuit of natural areas of special interest. This was promoted by a private asbl in Hainaut together with the French Tourist Agency.

An integrated programme of tourism, comprising joint management and promotional activities, and either joint or complementary investment, is being carried out for Botte de Hainaut-la Veroy.

Local product promotion (beer, sausage, etc.) is seen as an economically useful element of soft tourism. The aim is to provide an infrastructure for these products, for showing and selling locally to tourists, and to provide assistance for further development. The joint coordination and promotion of the renovation of parts of the historic ramparts of Binche-Maubeuge is a further part of the tourism package.



Natural park work (Scarpe-Escaut) has already been carried out, with good results. This reserve already existed on the French side, and has now been joined on the Belgian side. Work has been done on the basis of well-defined common ecosystems, carried out with funding from INTERREG 1.

Under INTERREG II, PACTE intends to recreate this effort elsewhere along the border, in the southern part of the region.

There are relatively strong local groups defending the environment: these include urban community groups (especially in Lille), and intercommunal political and financial associations. In Belgium, however, intercommunal groups have much less financial and decision-making capacity; these are at the level of the region.

The Region has no separate institution in charge of the environment. Environment dossiers are prepared by the Euroregion's technical teams and considered by all three levels of administration. Final decisions about them are taken by the Monitoring Committee.

At the more general level, Wallonia has a Direction generale des ressources naturelles et de l'environnement, and France has its equivalent (DRENE). However, the regions have no common competence. Hainaut works within the priorities of Wallonia, and the French partner works within the priorities of its departments.

As a result of the disparity of competence between the partners, the EU's role in setting solid minimum standards through Community legislation is seen as extremely useful, in that it could save a great deal of expense in the regions (water treatment, soil cleanup, etc.). The Region has carried out a formal comparison of legislation for projects, identifying laws relevant to its needs; the Walloon region has carried out a more general comparison.

At the technical level, notably as regards studies and decisionmaking, PACTE works well in addressing cross-border environmental concerns. The regional partners have taken up ideas from each other, and operators work well together in general, exchanging information and ideas.

INTERREG is seen as allowing the application of best practice at a more general Regional level. That is, the existence of the programme has allowed cross-border relations to become stronger. In addition, it has made environmental needs more evident by encouraging larger projects than would have been possible under existing contacts and arrangements. In future, this is seen as leading to a shift as well from end-of-pipe solutions to the application of specific strategies for projects integrating environmental concerns into development and based on best practice on a wider scale.

### **3.15 The Archipelago Region**

The ARCHIPELAGO Region, bringing together Finland and Sweden, was created, on an informal basis, in the 1970s. The current partners are Stockholm (Sweden), Åland (autonomous province of Finland), and Aboland (Finland).

Originally, cooperation was between land planners from these three areas working on very concrete projects to eliminate administrative obstacles to joint efforts. Gradually, that cooperation became more highly formalised, although cooperation has remained very informal in practice.

This is one of nine cross-border regions established as part of the regional cooperation policy being carried out within the Nordic Council of Ministers.

#### **3.15.1 Regional characteristics**

##### **3.15.1.1 Environmental quality**

The Archipelago is precisely that. Although the Region includes a large part of the municipality of Stockholm, it is for the most part a very fragile marine archipelago system stretching from the Swedish to the Finnish coast. Water is therefore an over-riding concern.

The Helsinki Committee to Protect the Baltic (HelCom) has pointed out a number of environmental hotspots for the area, but the most important is eutrophication in the Åbo-Åland stretch of the Archipelago, caused by the nutrient load from fish farming (80-90% of total in many areas) and coastal agriculture.

There is an extremely high degree of biodiversity in the Region, making this a second very vulnerable element of the environment.

##### **3.15.1.2 Settlement and population**

The entire Archipelago is some 400 km wide, stretching essentially from the Swedish to the Finnish coast and taking in little of the two partners' interiors. The Archipelago consists of some 40,000 islands and skerries, of which 250 are (sparsely) inhabited.

The Stockholm area of the Swedish partner is of course one of urban density; Åland is sparsely settled, while Åbo is a low density small city.

This pattern - a densely populated capital abutting a highly vulnerable ecosystem with a small population - is one that would have provoked serious environmental problems in most Regions. That this has not been the case in the Archipelago says a great deal for efficiency of Sweden's environmental regime.

##### **3.15.1.3 Technical infrastructure**

Transport systems are good everywhere, although by the nature of the area they are limited to plane and boat connections. As a result, no serious Regional integration has taken place. The ferries that form the main transport for the area pose a certain degree of environmental threat since ferry traffic becomes extremely heavy in the tourist season.

##### **3.15.1.4 Economic structure**

The main Regional activities are tourism, agriculture, fishing and shipping, and services. Even Stockholm is primarily a service economy, with no significant industrial production. Åland lives from specialised agriculture, fishing, and the beginnings of fish processing. Development of specialised high-tech industry (electronics) is now taking place. Aboland depends heavily on fish farming and fishing.

The area's most heavily polluting industries are pulp and paper, which are economically important for both Sweden and Finland as a whole.

Finnish production is to some extent expanding into Sweden, but a customs border still exists between the two countries. Integration has also been hampered by a one-hour time difference between the two halves of the Region and differences in administrative regulations. Regional administration is expected to become easier as the result of recent EC accession.

The labour market is highly seasonal. Unemployment for the area is lower than the general national levels for Sweden and Finland. The big areas of unemployment tend to be further north, in industrial zones. However, unemployment is a problem now spreading to non-industrial sectors.

Educational levels are high throughout the area, but Åland has the lowest educational level of all of Finland and is therefore constantly importing competence.

#### **3.15.1.5 Regional awareness**

The area has a strong sense of geographic awareness. Åland and Finland also share traditional trade similarities. Stockholm is different, but regional identities tend to overlap anyway, owing to the large Finnish community in Sweden and the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland.

Actors of cooperation for the Region are all Swedish-speaking, and presumed to be so.

As a result of the special ecology of the area, these elements of regional awareness are inevitably tied up with a strong environmental awareness. The clear aim of cooperation is therefore to make archipelago life possible, especially in regard to the summer tourist influx and its environmental consequences.

#### **3.15.2 Organisational structure**

There is a double administration in both Sweden and Åland, although not in the Finnish mainland partner: one regional administration appointed by the government, and one regional administration elected at the regional level. There are also local and State levels of administration.

The Communities' regional administrations are primarily involved with health care and infrastructure. State regional administrations deal with issues such as taxation, environment, appeal courts, etc.

Specifically, the Region has a Political Board (Samarbetsradet = Cooperation Council) and an Executive Council. Annual meetings usually have a theme (that is, they are essentially conferences or seminars). They also consider long- and short-term projects for cooperation, with the initiative for projects arising from any source.

National governments are involved only indirectly (via the Nordic Council). National ministries may take part in carrying out projects, although they are not represented on the Council. Regional governments are the centres for decision-making, with the local level officially involved to the extent that the Swedish regional level include Stockholm, which is regional and local by nature.

Sectoral cooperation takes place in the fields of infrastructure planning, the environment (but very little), cultural and social projects, and education and training.

Non-legally binding agreements form the normative framework for cooperation. Members are delegated from parliamentary assemblies or holders of administrative office.

#### **3.15.3 Environment**

Until 1809, Sweden and Finland were a single country. Both States have retained their legal traditions, and their legislation is thus still very similar. In addition, they share a general 'Nordic' legislation.

Environment legislation is quite good in both Finland and Sweden, although the general framework for such legislation, with a very strong emphasis on private ownership rights, is

not as "environmental" as the specific regimes. In fact, until recently Finland had no specifically environmental regulations; recent introduction of an environmental impact assessment requirement represents its first real environmental law. For the most part, both Governments' laws are strongly sectoral in nature (i.e., water, air, etc.).

Aland represents a very particular situation. Originally a part of Sweden and now officially a region of Finland, Aland is an autonomous province, with UN recognition as such. Moreover, Aland has its own representation in the Nordic Council and participates independently in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Its new Autonomy Act (1993) extends even further Aland's already extensive areas of competence. More important, perhaps, is that Aland will under the new Act be free to decide on the use of funds allocated it by the State.

Aland has increased the environmental content of Finnish and Swedish legislation within its area of competence. For environmental legislation, Aland has full competence in principle, although Finnish legal institutions have the final say over Aland's laws, with the Finnish President able to veto laws passed by the Aland Parliament if the latter has exceeded its legislative competence or if a law affects external or internal security.

Throughout the Region, regional and local levels may determine the extent of construction through permitting, and all partners have similar requirements, lessening possible sources of tension. However, the local communities on the Swedish side are much bigger than those of Abo and Aland and also have greater competence. Norrtälje has its own body dealing with environment and health, as do Stockholm, Mariehamn and Abo city, whereas smaller communities may not even have a single person in charge of these issues.

Most environmental legislation and instruments are national or international, covering regional aspects. These are stronger than the Regional instruments, although there is a perceived need to strengthen them generally, as has been done by Aland separately.

Finnish and Swedish sectoral regimes are for the most part oriented towards water, including facilitation of the exploitation of water. They serve well as environmental protection laws, but this was not their original purpose. Aland has for its part specifically tailored these laws to an environmental point of view.

There is no particular environmental strategy for the Region. Environment is very important for all partners, but strict national regimes make a general Regional strategy less necessary than might otherwise be the case. Rather, environmental fine-tuning is carried out within the existing national regimes by regional partners with specific environmental problems and needs. In the case of the Archipelago, the main area of concern is of course marine ecology and the primary actor the Aland region, since this area is nothing but archipelago, unlike its partner and parent States.

In general, however, the Nordic Convention specifies that if a single State allows a hazardous venture in a border region, it must inform and consult its closest neighbour. The latter may then demand that certain safeguards be built into any plans drawn up. This in effect functions as a blanket environmental impact assessment law, placing Regional efforts in an environmentally demanding context.

The most serious environmental problem areas, the Baltic and Gulf of Bothnia, are more efficiently dealt with at national and multinational than Regional level (e.g., through the Helsinki Convention). However, Regional cooperation is extremely important at the level of collecting and disseminating information.

Means and programmes, as noted above, tend to take place within the national contexts (and, in the case of Aland, the regional context). However, since these are very similar, special Regional efforts are seen as less relevant than region-specific action by partners.

The Archipelago does not have a great deal of polluting activity, since industry is minimal. However, the marine ecosystem is extremely fragile, and in general has been severely damaged in the Baltic and Gulf of Bothnia. In this perspective, the national Archipelago environment regimes seem to be relatively successful, although they are being carried out in parallel rather than jointly.

The activity which may eventually become contentious for the Region is that of fishfarming. The heavy nutrient load contributes to the Baltic Sea's eutrophication; if Åland gets its own law regulating this activity, the Archipelago will face a Regional problem between Finnish and Åland laws.

In addition to relatively parallel and strict regimes, a great deal of parallel work on the environment is generally carried out within the Region, thereby still further reducing the need for Regional environment projects. In some of these cases, working within a Regional context is hampered by lack of funding. Within the Region, parallel bodies are often competing for funding; if the partners go outside the Region to carry out projects, it is easier to find funding, particularly through the Nordic Council.

The Region is carrying out an aquatic ecology project, dealing with marine ecosystems, including fisheries aspects. Åland and Finland are carrying out controls on the level and quality of groundwater, although in parallel rather than within the structure of the Region. A fisheries and environment group including all three partners is examining problems for salmon hatcheries and coastal sweet water fish in the Archipelago as the result of phosphorus and nitrogen discharges from fishfarming and agriculture.

The Region is generally very successful in protecting the environment, since awareness has been raised substantially by national governments. In addition, there are a number of groups involved in conservation issues. WWF is protecting seals and sea eagles in the entire Region, including through cooperation with local governments. Regional environmental information is disseminated to the public through newspapers, seminars, and talks given by specialists throughout the Region.

Local government is closely involved in decision-making about the environment, and consulted before decisions are taken. Information about these decisions is made public locally. Both Finland and Sweden have special agencies dealing with the environment below the ministerial level.

## 4 Abstract

The study was designed to identify and analyse the preconditions leading to successful cross-border cooperation on environmental matters between neighbouring partners within formalised or emerging cross-border Regions in Europe. Preconditions considered were of both an administrative and practical nature. Assessing these preconditions meant attempting to define the key dependent variable 'success'. In the course of these processes of analysis and definition, consideration was also, necessarily, given to those elements in cross-border cooperation that impeded or prevented successful cooperation.

The definition of 'success' was seen to have two dimensions: first, intensity of cooperation as measured by the existence of joint consultation, study and planning, decision-making, and/or projects and projects management institutions; and secondly, ecologically valuable results.

The study comprised a comparative analysis of 17 cross-border Regions within the Community or at its external borders. Analysis was carried out using three methods. The first was a largely closed and very detailed questionnaire, serving to collect data on three levels: the socio-economic, the institutional, and the environmental.

The second method comprised visits to the Regions and interviews with Regional and sub-regional administrators - technical, environmental, and political. Open questions played an important part in the interview schedule. The third method was the use of published sources, either independently written or published by the Regions themselves.

Regions were chosen on the basis of one of two criteria. Some had responded positively to letters of enquiry sent some 50 Regions about their work in the field of environment. Others had described themselves as having environmental priorities in their literature.

A third group was selected because they played a double Regional role - as part of larger cross-border systems, and as Regions in their own right. These provided some interesting insights into effectiveness in relation to Regional size and coherence.

We found that Regional success could be defined in three ways: success of communication between Regional partners, success of achievement in Regional efforts, and success in protection of the environment.

Using the above criteria, the Regions studied showed a relatively low level of achievement in environmental protection. Most successful cooperation was at the level of studies and information exchange. Joint projects were far rarer and tended to relate to water and waste infrastructure. These required efficient administrative structures; independent secretariats fully informed about all Regional partners showed the greatest degree of efficiency. Even in such cases, however, successful Regional efforts required support at the national level, preferably from all national partners - that is, governments which accorded priority to environmental protection.

A great deal of what has been achieved would probably not have happened without the incentives provided by the Community's INTERREG programme. The existence of strong Community standards was also seen by most administrators as being very valuable to successful cooperation.

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- With environmental experts: Aquitaine/ Euskadi, Archipelago Region, Navarra, EUREGIO, Euregio Scheldemond, Extremadura-Alentejo, Galicia-Norte, Transmanche Euroregion
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