

# The contribution of Trans2Care to the European Cohesion Policy: not just an administrative fulfilment

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Within the ‘2007-2013 European Territorial Cooperation’ objective, on 20th December 2007, the European Commission issued a decision to adopt the ‘Italy-Slovenia 2007-2013 Cross-border Cooperation Programme’.

The program has a total budget of over € 136 million and is divided into four Priority axes: ‘Environment, transport and sustainable territorial integration’, ‘Competitiveness and knowledge-based society’, ‘Social integration’ and ‘Technical support’.

In Italy the Programme is implemented in the provinces of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region (Trieste, Udine and Gorizia), in the Veneto Region (Venice, Rovigo, Padua) and in Ferrara and Ravenna in the Emilia Romagna Region. In Slovenia the project is implemented in the so-called NUTS 3 areas of Gorenjska, Goriška and Obalno-kraška. To a limited extent, the project may be implemented in the Italian provinces of Pordenone and Treviso and in Slovenia in the NUTS 3 areas of Osrednjeslovenska and Notranjsko-kraška.

The Operational Programme has its origin in the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cross-border Cooperation spelled out in the Regulations of 2006 which indicate that among the priorities laid down in the so-called ‘Lisbon strategy’, there is the need to promote ‘innovation, entrepreneurship and the development of a knowledge-based economy through the development of research and innovation’ including new information and communication technology.

This priority has been encompassed by the Italian and Slovenian National Strategic Frameworks. The Operational Programme stresses that Territorial Co-operation (in this case, cross-border) can effectively contribute to the general objective through the creation of scientific and technological cross-border networks and the enhancement of regional research and development, thus promoting the development of partnerships between producers of knowledge, increasing the degree of internationalization of the centers, developing new applied research skills and emphasizing existing excellence systems by making them available to local production systems.

That said, it is worth remembering what the overall objective of the Italy-Slovenia 2007-2013 Programme is: ‘Strengthening the attractiveness and competitiveness of the Programme area’.

When listing the main operational objectives of Axis no. 2, emphasis is given to joint actions promoted by business incubators, innovation centers, science and technology

parks, that can recognize the added value resulting from the sharing of experiences between Italy and Slovenia, in order to develop new capabilities to be made available to young entrepreneurs and researchers. The excellence of knowledge, the presence of experienced personnel and technical equipment and facilities should be shared within selected research themes and projects.

The Operational Programme foresees three types of projects: strategic projects, standard projects and small projects. All projects are selected through special calls.

Today, we will examine the characteristics of strategic projects, since TRANS2CARE belongs to this category.

Strategic projects should:

- contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the European strategies and Programme and have a significant sustainable impact on the Programme area, also through the identification of appropriate indicators;
- have a genuine cross-border character and meet the four requirements of Article 19 of the Regulation (EC) no. 1080/2006: joint development, joint implementation, joint staffing and joint financing;
- ensure that the cooperation continues even after the conclusion of the project through the creation of permanent cross-border networks and organizations;
- be designed and implemented by partners, who have an adequate level of expertise on project issues and are able to ensure the achievement of results.

This is the overall reference framework within which the TRANS2CARE project has been selected among those eligible for funding under the Call for strategic projects.

The project has a duration of three and a half years (until the 30th September 2014) and a budget of € 2,611,118. The partnership consists of thirteen partners which constitute an 'Interregional network for innovation and technology transfer for health improvement' in order to continuously develop new protocols and biotechnological devices for the prevention, early diagnosis and treatment of neurodegenerative, cardiovascular, oncologic and orthopaedic diseases.

Then, there are some characteristics that make this project original and unique: firstly, the mix of innovation, knowledge transfer and creation of new jobs for young and qualified researchers, who will be trained within the project.

Secondly, the project is built on a robust large partnership involving various subjects and possesses multiple skills and complementary and diversified knowledge since it involves universities and research institutions, hospitals and organizations for technology transfer.

In my opinion, the most important challenge TRANS2CARE will have to deal with is its consolidation beyond the time limits set by the Programme: as in Brussels they like to say, the project should lay the foundations for its future "sustainability": this could be achieved by implementing its activities in the next 2014-2020 programming period, by expanding the current partnership and by creating a project spin-off, that will ensure a stable and structural employment to the fourteen young researchers. The project should be able to involve the companies operating in the sectors concerned, but it should also be able to acquire the necessary skills in order to obtain additional funds, both public and private, to support the future of the network.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize that TRANS2CARE already has the characteristics and meets the requirements that the European Commission has identified for future programming within its document entitled 'Europe 2020: a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth':

- smart, since it is aimed at developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- sustainable, to promote a more efficient economy in terms of resources, and a more green and more competitive economy;
- inclusive, aimed at promoting an economy with a high rate of employment so as to promote the economic, social and territorial cohesion.

That said, a final thought is now required: what should we expect from the project results as not to reduce it to a mere fulfilment of administrative and accounting tasks?

This has always been the problem of all problems as community planning in concerned!

I believe it is important to remember, first of all, what is the purpose of the cohesion policy: promoting growth and economic development and, therefore, create wealth and additional employment.

### **IS TRANS2CARE IN LINE WITH THIS "MISSION"?**

**A**t present, it certainly is, but the problem that will arise after 2014 will be the need to consolidate the current project in order to make it stable, both in terms of employment of researchers and reduction of welfare costs for the community, and structural enlargement of the partnership: if that happens, and there is no reason to doubt it, TRANS2CARE will have fully achieved the objectives for which it was designed and it will not be limited to a proper spending of the funds allocated by the European Commission, but it will have spent them EFFICIENTLY!

### **CONTACT INFO**

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