

## **Position Paper by the Network of INTERREG Projects on Demographic Change**

An ageing and declining population and the related change processes are the key challenges many European regions will be faced with in the future. Hence, demographic change has been on the political agenda of the EU for several years, which is also reflected in the strategy Europe 2020.

In order to find answers to similar problems responding to the challenges of demographic change, maintain the quality of life in urban as well as in rural areas and ensure social services and infrastructure, players in many regions of the entire EU have joined forces in numerous INTERREG projects.

These projects have helped raise awareness of the effects of change among the regional players, develop strategies for integrated, and also specific, solutions, exchange experience and transfer good practice. The INTERREG projects have been a major contribution enabling the regions to positively deal with change and regard it as an opportunity for various regional solutions.

Therefore, the projects and organisations involved in the network of INTERREG projects supported by the German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development point out that it is very important to maintain the possibility of carrying out cooperation projects addressing demographic change also under the European Territorial Cooperation programmes in the funding period 2014-2020.

As demographic change is regarded as a horizontal issue in the Structural Funds Regulations, the topic should also be included in all priorities of future ETC programmes and be considered accordingly, taking into account the high relevance of the topic, when funds are allocated.

To ensure that the topics and projects concerned with demographic change address many different areas, the term “innovation” should be defined as widely as possible and include also process innovations and social innovations.

We appreciate that the European Territorial Cooperation programmes want to become more attractive for small and medium-sized enterprises.

However, when planning programmes, and also when developing and selecting projects, it should be taken into account that shrinking regions will generate no or just little growth in the future. Demographic change is irreversible and has to be seen as an interaction of many different processes which may have different effects and vary considerably with respect to time and region. Therefore, special priority should be given to project approaches aimed at improving the quality of offers in the regions.

For a better networking of projects across priorities, we suggest that projects addressing the same topic should be linked within and also throughout the European Territorial Cooperation programmes from the beginning of the funding period 2014-2020.

We encourage all European regions which have not yet participated in European Territorial Cooperation projects to take advantage of the opportunities of European networking in the upcoming funding period in order to develop, try and test innovative approaches, exchange experience and transfer good practice.

Some examples of innovative approaches for future INTERREG projects to actively address demographic change and use regional potentials:

- linking the smart specialisation strategy to the conditions of demographic change, in particular a shrinking population
- boosting social innovations as a strategy to cope with demographic change
- Smart Homes and new solutions for the housing market including the private real estate industry
- new forms of mobility in rural areas, linking public transport and individual transport, car sharing and other forms of mobility
- ICT applications for education and health

The exchange between INTERREG projects and the pilot project on spatial development and demographic change (Modellvorhaben der Raumordnung zum demografischen Wandel, MoRo) should be continued to acquaint regions with transnational and interregional cooperation and develop new, innovative approaches making the regions in Germany a driver for innovative processes related to demographic change in Europe.

30 October 2013

