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1 Introduction

1.1 Scope of the evaluation

EU 2020 Going Local is an interregional cooperation project part-financed by the INTERREG IV C programme. The project is a so-called capitalisation project that revolves around the transfer of good practices among EU regions. Key outputs of this project will be action plans for the implementation of these best practices in each of the partner regions. The project runs for two years, from October 2010 to September 2012, and is now halfway through its implementation period.

The aim of this evaluation is to assess the interregional cooperation work done during the first year of the project and to make recommendations to help focus the activities in the remaining year of project implementation, in order to maximise the impact of the project outputs. The evaluation addresses the following interrelated aspects of the EU2020 Going Local project:

- *the good practice identification and transfer*
 - nature, quality and relevance of the good practices collected
 - the transfer and exchange process among the partners
- *the action planning process*
 - steps taken and modalities created for the action planning process so far
 - outlook on action planning activities and tools for the final year
- *the regional impact of the good practice transfer*
 - regional impact achieved and/or expected in the partner regions
 - involvement of regional stakeholders and Managing Authorities
 - recommendations on maximising the regional impact of the project

The evaluation exercise results in a qualitative review of the effects of the project during its first year of implementation and of the perspectives for the final year. It is not intended to be an elaborate quantitative evaluation of the performance of the project. The primary scope of the evaluation does not include project implementation and management structures, or project communication activities.

1.2 The EU2020 Going Local project

The INTERREG IVC project “EU 2020 going local - From detached Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategies to a regionalised indigenous EU2020” is a joint initiative of 14 partners from 9 EU Member States:

- Sörmland Regional Council (SE) – Lead Partner
- Örebro Regional Development Council (SE)
- Ministry of Economic Affairs, Energy, Building, Housing and Transport, North Rhine-Westfalia (DE)
- City of Duisburg (DE)
- Regional Development Agency of the Ljubljana Urban region (SLV)
- Riga Planning Region (LV)
- Zemgale Planning Region (LV)
- Stoke-on-Trent City Council (UK)
- Municipality of Schaerbeek (BE)
- Ministry for sustainable development and infrastructure (LUX)
- Province of Gelderland (NL)
- Regio Achterhoek (NL)
- Local Government Yorkshire & Humber (UK)
- Cartaxo Municipality (PT)

The overall objective of the project is to capitalise on experiences and good practice regarding the project’s sub-theme: energy and sustainable transport. Good practice that has proven to be very successful in one of the partner regions shall be transferred into another partner’s regional mainstreaming programme, for instance the Objective 1 or 2 Programmes. This will enable the

different partners to further improve and modernise their regional policy. By adapting good practises learnt through the partnership or via the new projects which will be initiated via the Action Plans.

To achieve this objective the following consecutive steps are foreseen:

- Collecting and documenting relevant good practices from the partners
- Workshops dedicated to presentation of models/practises per region
- Smaller working groups to match regions specific interests with the good practises provided
- Start composing Action Plans parallel to exchange of good practises
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders in the respective region
- Exchange and discussion of all Action Plans within the partnership
- Finalising Action Plans

The project will deliver 10 regional Action Plans for further implementation in regional strategy-plans/tools, adopted by the regional authorities. Twelve good practice examples or projects will be successfully transferred within the partnership.

1.3 Evaluation approach

This evaluation is based on a combination of desk-based research and interviews with partners of the project. The evaluation was performed in October and November 2011.

The desk-based research consisted of a review of available project documentation. In particular the application form/project plan, the good practice documentation (summary table, good practice templates, presentations), documents related to the action planning (template, draft action plan) and progress reports.

For the interviews all project partners were invited to participate. Nine partners responded to this invitation and were interviewed. A standardised questionnaire was used for all interviews, which addressed the partners experiences and appreciation of issues related to the good practice identification and transfer, the action planning and the impact of the EU2020 Going Local project. The questionnaire and list of interviewees are included in the Annex to this report.

The findings of the evaluation work are presented in this document. Chapters 2,3 and 4 consecutively address the good practice exchange, the development of action plans and the impact of the project. Each of these chapters briefly presents the context and activities and modalities planned in relation to these areas, and then presents the observations that emerge from the evaluation work. Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and recommendations related to these three main areas targeted by this evaluation.

2 Identification and transfer of good practice

2.1 Good practices in the context of INTERREG IVC

INTERREG IVC supports the exchange, sharing and transfer of policy experience and good practices among European regions. In the context of this INTERREG programme a good practice is defined as¹:

“... an initiative (e.g. methodologies, projects, processes and techniques) [...] which has already proved successful and which has the potential to be transferred to a different geographic area. Proved successful is where the good practice has already provided tangible and measurable results in achieving a specific objective.”

INTERREG IVC capitalisation projects, like EU2020 Going Local, are expected to focus specifically on the transfer of regional good practices into mainstream EU Structural Funds programmes (e.g. European Regional Development Fund, other INTERREG programmes) of the regions participating in the project. This implies that these projects have to be well aware of existing good practices in their field of cooperation.

2.2 Identification and transfer of good practices in EU2020 Going Local

The EU2020 Going Local partnership has collected a large number of good practices from almost all partners. In total 54 good practices are presented in a Good Practice Summary overview document that briefly lists their main features². Good practices are grouped in four categories ('sub-themes'). The following table present the number of good practices in each sub-theme³:

• Local/regional climate impact programmes and sustainable management control systems	10
• Renewable energy and waste to energy	9
• Energy efficiency measures	20
• Sustainable public transport and non-motorised transport	17

Individual good practices are described in more detail on the basis of a standard good practice example template. Of the 54 good practices, 43 are available in this form

Three thematic workshops were organised during the first year of the project, dedicated to more detailed presentation of good practices in front of the whole partnership. In total 20 of the good practices were presented by partners during these sessions.

The project plans to create a number smaller working groups for more detailed exchange among partners with a shared interest in certain good practices. Preparation of these groups was planned for the first half of 2011 and meetings of 4 working groups are foreseen for the end of 2011, with the activity continuing into 2012.

2.3 Observations related to the good practice identification and transfer

Based on the desk-research and interviews the following observations are made relating to the good practice identification and transfer.

¹ INTERREG IVC Programme Manual, Section 1.1, page 2

² To be exact: 57 are mentioned, of which 3 are left blank.

³ Some good practices address two sub-themes, therefore the total adds up to 56

2.3.1 The range of good practices collected

The total range of good practices, as documented in the Good Practices Summary overview, represents a very wide variety, in terms of themes addressed, types of actions, geographical scale, etc. This variety reflects the diversity and size of the project partnership.

Among the good practise collected, roughly five types of actions can be distinguished. The table below gives an indication of the distribution of collected good practices over these types of actions. Although it should be noted that 33% of the good practices fit more than one category.

1. Strategies, plans	18
2. Education, information and awareness raising	18
3. Technical measures, infrastructures and hardware	21
4. Services	10
5. Studies	5

The quality and level of detail of the individual practices documented (by means of the Good Practice Example Template) is also very diverse. In particular it should be noted that a part of the practices listed, have not yet been implemented by the corresponding partner. They are intentions and ambitions rather than proven practices. While these intentions may be interesting and relevant to the project partners, they do not qualify as 'good practices' as defined by INTERREG IVC.

The high number (54) of practices collected makes it difficult to get a good overview of what exactly is 'in store'. Although the use of 4 thematic categories is a helpful tool for the user to filter out potentially relevant practices, the variable quality of (documentation about) the practices, makes it difficult to value the relevance of individual good practices included in the collection. This relates of course to the good practices that have not been documented on the basis of the template, but also part of those that have been documented.

Interview respondents see strong variation in the relevance for their own organisation of the good practices documented. Most of them see the collection as a wealth of examples and ideas that are interesting and that provides at least a few practices that are potentially useful in their region. However, most stated it was difficult to get a real understanding of a good practice on the basis of the documentation – the detailed presentations during the thematic workshops were essential for that. A few respondents stated they do not see how they could apply any of the practices in their context.

2.3.2 The good practice example template

The good practice example template makes it possible to describe all practices in a standardised way. The template consist of a fixed set of questions that helps to structure the description of the nature and context of the good practice. While the template does not follow the proposed framework for such a template offered by INTERREG IVC⁴, it does cover most of the issues proposed by IVC.

The list of questions in the template is quite extensive and puts quite some emphasis on institutional aspects (e.g. regarding multi-level of governance, cross-sectoral networking, relation to larger plans, sustainability), that are relatively abstract to the actual content of the good practice.

On the other hand a few aspects that seem relevant for possible users to properly appreciate a good practice, are not addressed in the template. Concretely this concerns the following points:

- The template does not give budgetary information. It seems relevant to describe the costs of the original practice. If possible this should be further detailed in to unit costs (e.g. costs per head of population, costs per year) to enable comparison. And to provide other relevant details, for instance a distinction between start-up and operating costs.
- More concrete questions could be included about success factors and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the original good practice. The present template includes a rather

⁴ INTERREG IVC Programme Manual, Annex 2, page 63

general question about lessons learned, which is mostly answered in abstract and general terms.

- There is no specific possibility to attach additional documents explaining the good practice. The present template only asks for a web-site address.
- It could be useful to include a reference in the template to the project 'sub-theme(s)' a good practice corresponds to.

It should be noted that INTERREG IVC has in autumn 2011 provided a new template that must be used by the project to describe (a selection) of the good practices identified.

Most interview respondents stated that the quality of good practice template descriptions is rather uneven. Some had difficulty to judge the actual nature and value of practices on the basis of the templates. Respondents all stated that the presentations during the partner workshops were needed to get an understanding of the good practices. It was reminded by a few respondents that the templates were filled in almost 1 year ago, so they may be outdated.

2.3.3 Thematic workshops for good practice exchange

Three thematic workshops for the whole partnership took place, dedicated to one or more of the projects sub-themes. The workshop programmes included presentations and discussion of individual good practices and visits to local good practice examples. The following sessions took place:

- Riga (November 2010) – Sub-theme: Energy and sustainable transport
- Eskilstuna (February 2011) – All sub-themes
- Cartaxo (April 2011) – Sub-theme: Renewable energy and waste to energy

In total around 20 good practices were presented during these sessions. This implies that 34 of the good practices identified, have not been presented (yet) to the partnership.

Interview respondents widely agreed that the presentations have been the main tool for them to get an understanding of individual good practices. The workshops also provided an opportunity to get in direct contact with experts representing a good practice, for more detailed follow-up discussions. Most partners confirmed that they were able to identify one or more relevant good practices on the basis of the workshops.

A recurring point of criticism from participants is that the programme tended to include too many presentations, that were still quite general in nature. On the other hand there was not enough time for more concrete, technical exchanges about individual good practices, which is so important to start up the transfer process.

2.3.4 Further activities for good practice exchange and transfer

Next to thematic workshops, several activities took place or are planned to take place for more detailed exchange and transfer of good practices.

Several partners engaged in bilateral exchange and interaction in parallel to the 'official' work programme of the project. Based on a shared interest these partners started a more detailed exchange a certain theme or good practice, by means of e-mail and phone contact, as well as bilateral visits. Partners involved in such exchanges are Luxemburg, Schaerbeek, Stoke-on-Trent, Sörmland, Yorkshire and Humber, North Rhine-Westfalia and Duisburg.

As part of its activities, the project plans to install a number of smaller working groups of partners with a shared interest, to get into a concrete and more technical exchange on certain good practices. The preparation of these groups was planned for the first half of 2011, and up to four working group meetings are foreseen for the second semester of 2011.

At the time of writing of this evaluation, one such working group has been activated, dedicated to the theme of e-mobility. Their first meeting took place in Rotherham in September 2011. Participants

included Yorkshire and Humber, Schaerbeek, Ljubljana and Duisburg. This meeting was experienced as successful and relevant by participants.

The start of more working groups is expected. However, no concrete proposals are laid down yet at project level regarding their numbers, thematic focus and composition, or about the process of identifying these groups. Many interview respondents said it was not clear to them how this element of the project will be organised – a clear road map and purpose for these groups is much needed.

A few respondents stated they have little finances left for this work.

Respondents suggested numerous working group themes, including: biomass/biogas, waste/recycling, cycling, energy consumption/energy affordability, solar energy, energy efficient construction.

3 Developing action plans

3.1 Action plans – the INTERREG IVC context

INTERREG IVC capitalisation projects are expected to produce Action Plans to specify how identified good practices will be implemented in each of the partner regions. These action plans are defined by the INTERREG IVC programme in the following terms⁵:

An Action Plan is a strategic document that defines precisely how the good practices will actually be implemented under the Structural Funds programme of each region participating. In particular, it needs to include detailed information concerning:

- the good practices that have been selected for implementation in the region
- names and roles of main stakeholders in the region that will be involved in the implementation
- the precise steps and actions that need to be undertaken to ensure successful implementation
- the relevant indicators for implementation (including baseline and target values)
- details of the provisional mainstream funds allocated for implementing the Action Plan.

These strategic documents are supposed to be more than a simple statement of intent. In order to ensure its official and binding character, it should ideally be signed by the respective Managing Authority of the Structural Funds mainstream programme and relevant stakeholders in each of the participating regions. The Action Plan therefore reflects the political endorsement of each region.

3.2 Action plans in EU2020 Going Local

To facilitate the action planning work of the partners, a template for a local action plan has been developed at project level. Partners can take this template as a starting point to develop their action plans. The template for the action plan was presented and explained at several partner workshops.

The EU2020 Going Local project plan anticipates the drafting of the action plans to start in the second semester of 2011, continuing into the first semester of 2012. Exchange and discussion among the partners of the (draft) action plans is planned to take place during the partner meeting in April 2012. After that the action plans will be finalised.

Local/regional stakeholders will be involved during the action planning work as part of local stakeholder groups. Managing Authorities of regional Structural Funds programmes will be informed about the project regularly from the start of the project. Towards the end of the project regional 'fine tuning' meetings are foreseen to ensure all relevant actors in each region are on board for the actual realisation of the action plans.

3.3 Observations related to the action plans

On the basis of the desk-research and the interviews the following observations are made relating to the process of developing the action plans.

3.3.1 The action plan template

The action plan template provides a clear structure that will be helpful for partners to develop their action plans in a harmonised and complete way. The template is intended to provide partners with a starting point for their work, that can be slightly modified and amended should this be needed.

⁵ INTERREG IVC Manual, section 2.1.2, page 9/10

The main elements introduced in the template are:

- General context introduction
- More detailed elaboration per 'sub-theme' of the project (only themes relevant for the partner)
 - thematic context
 - local steering group
 - analysis of local stakeholders and their interests (text and table)
 - problems and their solutions (text and table)
 - proposed actions (table: describing the action, actors budgets and timeline)
- Political statement and signatures

Against the background of the INTERREG IVC programme context, a few points of attention are noted in relation to the action plan template.

First of all, the good practices play a very modest role in the action plan. The only reference to good practices is inserted in the 'problems and solutions' table, where partners are required to list their 'Problems', describe corresponding 'Solutions' and in final instance list 'Benchmarks from good practice examples'.

Since the initial purpose of the action plan (according to INTERREG IVC and in the EU2020 Going Local project objective) is to enable the transfer of good practices into partner regions, a more prominent appearance of the good practices throughout the Action Plan structure would have been expected. Of course in filling out the template, partners may well target their action plans toward the implementation of selected good practices. However, the present template does not steer the user in that direction.

Another point of attention is the role of the regional Structural Funds Managing Authorities. These actors are expected to play an important role in the provision of funding for the actions. However they are not explicitly mentioned in the template either as stakeholders, or as co-signatories of the final action plan.

The interview respondents generally valued the template as a useful tool, although it is seen by many of them as a somewhat challenging or complex model. One respondent stated that the template could not really be used in the own region, and would rather be filled in to satisfy EU/INTERREG requirements.

3.3.2 Action plans in relation to the good practices

The link between the action plan and the collected good practices is perceived in different ways by interview respondents. Most of them (5 of the 9) stated that the good practices should be the only or at least main ingredient of their action plan. But others rather stated that they did not know what the relation between good practices and action plan was, or that the action plan should perhaps include good practices, but go much further than that. One partner stated that the regional action plan would probably not include good practices.

Several partners warned that the good practices should not get out of sight, now that the project attention turns to the action plan work.

3.3.3 Involvement of stakeholders and Managing Authorities

All partners that responded to the interviews have identified regional/local stakeholder groups. In many cases existing platforms of actors related to regional development and/or sustainable energy and transport issues were involved. Other partners set up new groups of internal and external stakeholders or held ad-hoc meetings with these actors. These groups of actors were informed about the project in meetings and in most cases already contributed to the project activities in some form. For instance in the identification of regional good practices, workshop presentations and selection of good practices to be 'imported'. All respondents plan to involve these stakeholders in the development of their regional action plan.

The Managing Authorities of regional Structural Funds programmes are also involved in most cases. While one or two partners see some possibilities to submit applications to their regional programme at short notice, in most partner regions the budgets of present Structural Funds programmes have been depleted. The work with the Managing Authorities therefore necessarily concentrates on providing input for the development of future programmes of the 2014-2020 period.

Two partners had not yet set up interaction with their Managing Authority to identify possible use of regional EU funds for the implementation of their action plans. As reasons for this these partners respectively reported a fundamental reorganisation of the regional structural funds management structure and lack of clarity about the expected role of these authorities and the link to the regional funds in the action plan.

3.3.4 Action planning process

The initial work plan for the action planning process, as outlined in the project application form, plans the creation of an action plan template October 2011. The drafting of the action should also start in the second semester of 2011, continuing into the first semester of 2012. Exchange and discussion among the partners of the (draft) action plans is planned during the partner meeting in April 2012. After that the plans will be finalised, to be presented at the projects' final event in September 2012.

The action plan template has been produced ahead of this planning (summer 2011). Most of the interview respondents reported that they have already made a start with the action planning work. The state of their progress varies.

Some partners have produced a first draft of their action plan, or another document intended to contribute to the development of an action plan. Concretely Luxemburg and Duisburg have already produced such documentation, and reportedly also Yorkshire and Humber (not interviewed) has developed a first draft. Several other respondents had identified good practices they would like to bring to their region, and were ready to start drafting their plan in the second semester of 2011 or early 2012. The others were in the stage of identifying the good practices and/or other content elements to include in the plans, or planning to start this step in the near future. A few respondents reported having difficulties to understand what exactly was the expected nature of the action plan. They would welcome additional support or information from the project management in this stage.

Most partners, including the lead partner, reported that they are not fully aware of how others are advancing in this respect. Partners are basically working in isolation on their action plans. A few partners reported that they had bilaterally shared their experiences and draft plans, and found this exchange had been beneficial to their own action planning work.

Most of the draft action plans and related documents that partners produced, were not available to the Lead Partner. And none of these documents have been made accessible for all partners in some form, for instance on the partners area of the project website.

Interview respondents generally stated they had no clear sight of the next steps at project level in relation to the action planning process. There is no clear, shared notion of deadlines, or steps to be taken in this context. More coordination would be needed at project level, to steer the timely delivery of the action plans and ensure that they are in line with expected quality standards.

Many respondents expressed that they would value a form of exchange with other partners about their experiences with the action planning. This could involve both issues related to process and approach (involvement of stakeholders, type of information included in the action plan) as well as on content (general thematic feedback, detailed feedback from good practice 'donors'), with the aim to improve individual action plans, and to harmonise the plans. Respondents were not aware of any intentions or plans at project level to facilitate this type of exchange.

4 Impact of the project

4.1 Introduction

EU2020 Going Local aims to transfer good practices and experiences among its' project partners, in the form of regional action plans that prepare the implementation and funding of these practices. This part of the evaluation explores what noticeable effects the project has had or is expected to have in the partner regions. An important feature of the project in this respect, is the Political Board that directs the EU2020 Going Local project. The involvement of political leaders during the whole project, could contribute considerably to the regional support for the actions plans and good practices.

4.2 Observations related to the impact of the project

4.2.1 The impact of the project in the partner regions

Interview respondents were asked to describe what noticeable effects they observed in their region that could be attributed to their participation in EU2020 Going Local. All partners emphasised that it was still very early on in the project, and two stated that it was too early to see effects.

Three partners explained that project activities in their own region (identification of good practice, preparing action plan) brought local energy and sustainable transport stakeholders together that had previously not been working together. The project led to a better awareness among these actors of the full range of activities in their region related to. One partner also reported the project activities contributed to new cooperation among different levels of governance.

Three partners noticed that the project has already inspired new policy thinking and approaches in their region or has acted as a catalyst for internationalisation and an enhanced, more positive EU awareness among stakeholders in their region.

Regarding the expected impact after completion of the project, four partners mentioned the (planning of the) implementation of one or more concrete good practices as the expected effect of the project in their region. Two partners said they might still be a possibility to submit a project to the current structural funds programme in their region, although available resources are very limited.

Most other partners stated they expected their action plans to act as input for the new structural funds programmes 2014-2020, and consequently expect the project impact to be of a more strategic rather than operational nature. These partners stated that the project would be successful for their organisation if it identifies future funding opportunities to implement concrete new project including

4.2.2 Role of the Political board

Respondents appreciated the inclusion of a Political Board in the project structure. Many stated it was the first time they have such a political body integrated in a (European) project. Their expectation is that this body will contribute to the understanding and political support for the action plans, making the future implementation of identified good practices in the regional/local policy context easier.

Looking back at the first year of the project, respondents found that the Board has operated in a positive spirit. However, participation of the partner regions has not always been constant and complete. Some respondents felt that the meetings of the Political Board thus far focused too much on project steering issues. They would like future Board meetings to focus more on the content of the project – good practices, action plans – for instance relating to their governance and political aspects. This approach should build up a stronger, joint political ownership of project results.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

5.1.1 Good practice identification and transfer

1. EU2020 Going Local has identified a large number of good practices in the field of energy and sustainable transport as a basis for transfer and action planning by the project partners. The collected practices have a good coverage of the four 'sub-themes' of the project. Measures in the sub-theme of energy efficiency are particularly well represented. Five types of good practices can be identified, notably: strategies, education and information, technical and hardware, services, studies. However, the high number of practices and the varied quality of (documentation about) the practices makes it difficult to identify potentially relevant good practices from this collection.
2. The good practice example template provided a good basis for documenting individual good practices. Still, the quality of information provided in the templates varies considerably. The documentation lacks information on several relevant points, in particular financial aspects.
3. Thematic workshops dedicated to good practice presentations were crucial activities for partners to get an understanding of good practices and identify those relevant to their organisation. These sessions were generally appreciated by participants.
4. A considerable number of partners initiated bilateral or multilateral contacts and meetings to have more detailed exchange and transfer of specific good practices activities. These activities are mainly additional to the project work plan. This indicates the commitment and good thematic match of members of the partnership and the high potential value of certain good practices.
5. The activities of the smaller thematic working groups have made a slow start. One such group has been created on the topic of e-mobility. The initial project plan aimed at creating a joint format for the working groups by mid 2011 and having 4 of these groups active and meeting by end of 2011.

5.1.2 Developing action plans

6. The action planning process is under way in line with the general work plan of the project. Partners have generally set up the necessary links to regional stakeholders, and also to regional structural funds actors. A template for local action plans is available, ahead of planning. And partners have started the process of preparing and even writing their action plans.
7. The local action plan template provides a generally clear framework to assist partners in developing their regional/local plans. Two important elements (given the INTERREG IVC context) could have been more prominently and elaborately featured, notably the integration of good practices as the main 'subject' of the action plan, and the relation to the regional structural funds actors and programmes.
8. The process of action planning is very decentralised within the project. In practice the partners mainly work on their action plans in isolation. This leads to divergence in approaches and understanding of this key element of the project. This is underlined by the following findings:
 - partners have different interpretations of the relation between good practices and action plans;
 - some partners find the action planning element of the project unclear, and need additional guidance and information on this aspect;
 - partners have only fragmented information on each others progress, experiences and (draft) outputs of the action plan work;
 - partners have no clear idea of next steps at project level in the action planning process;
 - most partners would appreciate the opportunity to exchange experiences and/or work more closely with the other partners in the process of developing their action plans.

5.1.3 Impact of the project

9. The project is still in an early stage of implementation. Noticeable effects of the project in the partner regions so far mostly concern creation or strengthening of stakeholder networks within partner regions. In some regions the project already inspired new policy approaches or a more generally increased EU-awareness.

The impact following completion of the project anticipated by around half of the partners will be the planning of the introduction of one or two concrete new practices imported from partners. Other partners mainly expect to see an influence of their local action plan in the content of their future regional structural funds programme.

10. The EU2020 Going Local Political Board is appreciated by the partners for its potential to strengthen the support for integration of the project results in the local/regional context. To achieve this potential in the final year of the project the project the Political Board should concentrate on governance and political aspects of the projects' good practices and action plans.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Good practice identification and transfer

1. It is advisable to reduce the present good practice collection to a smaller selection of homogenous quality. As an indication, 1 or 2 good practices on average per project partner seems realistic (i.e. around 20 in total), although quality and relevance should be the main selection criteria. The following filters could be used to reduce the numbers of good practices:
 - include practices that have already been selected by partners for transfer to their regions;
 - remove practices that have not been described in a template;
 - remove practices that are in fact intentions and are not a proven practice yet.
2. Descriptions of the selected good practices should be revised and updated. Regardless of the template that has to be used (own version, or INTERREG IVC version) descriptions should be made more concrete and practice oriented. It is strongly advised to include information about financial aspects and about success factors and difficulties related to implementation. It is also recommended to ensure that all good practice descriptions are proof-read and edited at project level, preferably by an English native speaker to ensure that they are all of uniform, high quality.
3. It should be considered to compile the remaining collection of good practices into a publication of some form. This could be in the form of a printed book or guide, or as a web-based publication. In any case it would require processing the good practices collected into an appealing, reader-friendly format. This would be in addition to the good practice templates, which are mainly for use by practitioners. Although such a publication is not foreseen in the project plan, it could be an asset of considerable added value for dissemination of the results of EU2020 Going Local.
4. For the remaining plenary thematic workshop events, a slightly revised set-up could be considered for the good practice presentations, to allow for more interaction and exchange among partners. Speakers could be invited to give a short (5 – 10 minutes) presentation to 'pitch' their good practice to the assembled participants. After a series of those presentations, a considerable part of the programme could be dedicated to parallel sessions by the 'owners' of a good practice, to engage in more detailed exchange with interested partners. Multiple rounds of these parallel sessions could be envisaged so partners can cover all their interests.
5. Concrete actions are needed at project level to get to a coordinated approach and speed up the working group activity. It is important to determine the numbers, thematic focus and composition of the working groups, decide on the main features of their work process, and identify responsibilities and tasks of participants, including working group leadership. The project management has to take up a pro-active, leading role in this to come up with proposals, ensure decision making and facilitate the implementation of the working groups.

5.2.2 Developing action plans

6. A stronger coordination at project level of the action plan development would considerably benefit the efficiency, quality and homogeneity of this core element of the project. This improved coordination should consist of the following elements:
 - a. A clear work plan for the final year. This plan should develop a good understanding of the purpose of all the activities that will take place at project level, like workshops and conferences, meetings, smaller working groups (see recommendation 5.). It should also provide the partners with a timeframe and framework of requirements for their local activities (writing action plan, work with stakeholders), to ensure that these are in line with the overall project level work. This work plan would have to be produced under responsibility of the Lead Partner, and could require the involvement of the Component 3 leader.
 - b. Regular bilateral interaction at the initiative of the project management with all project partners to identify their progress, address questions and difficulties they may have, etc. This allows the project management to steer the quality of the project delivery as a whole and act as a liaison among partners that face similar issues. This would be an activity of the Lead Partner, as overall responsible for the project. Specifically on the action planning and good practice work, also Component 3 leader could play a role in this.
 - c. Project partners can be more active in sharing their experiences, draft outputs and questions with the members of the partnership. The project website provides an online platform for documentation and discussion, that is hardly being used for this purpose.
7. It is advisable to develop more detailed guidance on some of the key elements of the action plans, to ensure that all partners work on the same basis and get the most out of their action plan. Elements to include would be:
 - Explanations regarding the relation between the good practices and the action plans, which seems to be understood differently by partners. And also the relation to the regional structural funds programmes, that leads to questions among partners. This guidance should of course take into account minimum INTERREG IVC requirements for action plans. And it can point at the possibilities to expand the scope of the action plans beyond these basic requirements.
 - A point that could be emphasised is the possibility to involve other partners on a bilateral basis in developing action plans. In particular regions that provide the original good practice subject of an action plan, could provide valuable input to the importing partner.
 - The partners should also consider exploring alternative opportunities for funding as part of their action plans. There may be national and regional funding opportunities in each partner region. And several other EU funding programmes may also provide possibilities to finance actions. A particularly interesting possibility is the Intelligent Energy Europe programme, that is dedicated to promoting sustainable energy and transport, seems relevant. This programme has annual calls for proposals and supports EU-wide cooperation projects.⁶
8. Project meetings and events in the final year should include sufficient opportunity for partners to exchange and discuss their action plans-in-progress. Allowing partners to get feedback on their action plans, would contribute to the quality of individual plans and to the homogeneity of plans. This could be organised in the form of peer-review sessions where plans are presented and discussed among smaller groups of partners. These could be arranged on the basis of thematic synergies, or on the basis of similar institutional character (e.g. regions, cities).

⁶ see: <http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/>

5.2.3 Impact of the project

9. To support the anticipated stronger focus of the Political Board on project content and results, the partners could consider to work towards a concrete joint output for this board. The Board could develop a joint statement of its members that underlines political support at interregional level for the project results, and confirms the ambition of the board members to take these results further in their own territory. It could also be a basis for continued cooperation among partners in new EU project to build on the present activity.

Alternative joint outputs of the Board could also be considered. On such alternative could be a video message with a compilation of statements from the board members, that could be shown at the final conference, and on the public project website.

The initial project plan does not include any specific output of the Political Board. However, it could enrich the work of the Political Board and act as a powerful additional communication and dissemination tool.

Annex - Interview documentation

List of Interviewees

- Sebasti n Daneels *Stoke-on-Trent City Council (UK)*
- Robert Tonks *City of Duisburg (DE)*
- Sabine St lb *Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure (LU)*
- Bernard Enklaar *Province of Gelderland (NL)*
- Joke Emaus *Regio Achterhoek (NL)*
- Ilka Meisel *Ministry of Economic Affairs, Energy, Building, Housing and Transport of North Rhine-Westphalia (DE)*
- Claudia Schultze *Schaerbeek (BE)*
- Christine Smeysters *Schaerbeek (BE)*
- Elisabeth Langgren Lundov *S rmland Regional Council (SE)*
- Lilijana Madjar *Regional Development Agency of the Ljubljana Urban Region (SLV)*

Interview questions

The good practice identification and transfer

- How do you value the nature and relevance of the good practices collected?
- Do you think you have a good and complete overview of all GPs available?
- How do you appreciate the quality of the documented good practices (are they clear, sufficiently detailed, ready-to-use, ...)?
- How did you select interesting GP for your organisation?
- What is your experience with project activities dedicated to good practice transfer and exchange among the partnership (thematic workshops, partner meetings, good practice working groups)?
- How is the participation of all partners in the small working groups?
- Has your organisation been involved in other activities related to the transfer of the good practices among partners (as 'donor' or recipient). What kind of activities were these (e.g. bilateral contacts, exchange visits, correspondence, ...)?
- What are your expectations and needs for good practice transfer in the final year of the project?

The action planning process

- How do you regard the modalities created for the action planning process at project level (action plan templates, working groups)? Is any concrete guidance foreseen to support the partners during the drafting process of their action plans?
- How do you interpret the relation between the Action Plan and the collected Good practices?
- What steps has your organisation taken in the action planning process so far?
- In what way has your organisation engaged the relevant stakeholders (local, regional and national) that are key to the successful implementation of the action plan?
- In what way has your organisation involved Managing Authorities of relevant EU Structural Funds programmes in your region in the action planning?
- What are your expectations and needs regarding the action planning activities and tools for the final year of the project?

The regional impact of the good practice transfer

- In what ways has the EU2020 Going Local project already influenced policies, strategies or instruments of your region?
- What future impact in your region do you foresee based on the good practice transfer and action planning work that is currently ongoing?
- How do you perceive the involvement and activities of the Political Board?
- What are your needs and concerns for the final year of the project in view of maximising the overall impact of the EU2020 project in your region?