

EX ANTE EVALUATION OF THE NEEDS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING AT REGIONAL LEVEL TO IMPLEMENT THE LONG TERM STRATEGY FOR THE ERB

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1. Aims of the ex ante evaluation

This ex ante evaluation of the Interreg IIIB Seagull-DevERB project (hereafter known as “Seagull”) is based on a series of in-situ personal interviews with selected Seagull participants during the period May 2005 to September 2005. As an ex ante evaluation, the position taken is forward looking, that is, evaluating the results of the project in terms of the possibilities for future regional development of the participating parties and of extended cooperation opportunities in the Euro Region Baltic (ERB) as a result of the Seagull project.

A factor that has particularly influenced this evaluation is one of the goals of the Seagull II project: *Strengthening institutional structures and spatial development capacities for implementing the Joint Transnational Development Programme (JTDP)*. Thus this evaluation focuses on both assessing the various types of institutional capacities among the involved Seagull regions and on prioritizing where further capacity building measures may be directed in the ERB in order to implement the JTDP as a long-term strategy for the ERB.

At the end, the evaluation will suggest measures to, i. a:

- Develop efficient regional and local administration
- Improve understanding of equal opportunities
- Exchange knowledge and compare democratic structures in the regions
- Develop expertise in methods for promoting regional development

The ex ante evaluation aims at an overview of the width and depth of the various resources and capabilities for regional development in participating institutions in the regions in ERB, including **Knowledge Resources** (or Human Resource Capabilities in the JTDP), **Relational Resources** (including Technical Capabilities in the JTDP) and **Mobilisation Capacity** (or Organisational Capacity for implementing the JTDP)

The evaluation was based on personal interviews of 3-5 leading politicians and administrators in seven of the nine participating regions in the ERB. Interviews were performed with the goal to ascertain information on the following types of capacity:

Knowledge Resources

1. Depth and width of knowledge of European Transnational Cooperation within the institution
2. Previous experiences of Transnational cooperation and cross border cooperation
3. Attitudes to Transnational Cooperation in the Baltic Sea region within the organization. Depth and width of commitment within the organization (frames of reference)
4. Expectations for the programme within the organization. Value added to the organization for cross-border and transnational cooperation

Relational Resources

5. Organization and reorganisation needed to foster efficient administration for cross-border and transnational cooperation (power and competency relations and their functioning)
6. Depth and width of commitment within the organization
7. Specific needs for capacity building in the field of transnational cooperation at local and regional level within the region

Mobilisation Capacity

8. Strong and weak competences for efficient Transnational co-operation in the organisation

2. Framework for Evaluation

Institutional capacities for Transnational Cooperation and regional development are vital attributes for participation in Interreg IIIB projects or as part of a Euroregion. However the concept of capacity, while widely used, remains ambiguous and the range of interpretations varies depending on if they are applied to the individual or to an entity or system. It also has different implications if viewed within a short or long term perspective resulting in different prerequisites and strategies.

The United Nations Development Programme provides a broad definition that refers to capacity as the *ability of societies, individuals or organizations to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably*.¹ However the concept still needs more operationalisation in order to be useful in evaluating the Seagull project.

de Magalhaes et. al. developed a method for evaluating institutional capacity in the analysis of urban governance and city centre regeneration². This method has also been

¹ UNDP (1997) Capacity Development. (Technical Advisory Paper 2), Management Development and Governance Division Bureau for Development Policy. New York, United Nations Development Programme

² De Magalhaes C., Healy P., Madanipour A. (2002). Assessing Institutional Capacity for City Centre Regeneration: Newcastle's Grainger Town. Urban Governance, Institutional Capacity and Social

used as a frame of reference for assessing the relationship between decentralisation processes and sustainable development in local institutions in France, Sweden and Russia³. The same framework (with some slight modifications) will be employed in this evaluation.

According to the de Magalhaes et al framework, for analytic purposes, institutional capacity can be divided into three main components:

- **Knowledge Resources**, including the range of knowledge and experience, frames of references and learning processes by which knowledge is exchanged
- **Relational Resources**, including the range of social networks on various levels, the integration of these networks and the power relations regulating their function
- **Mobilisation Capacity**, including the structures of collective actions and ability of institutions to mobilise knowledge and relational resources into action.

In order to ascertain the information needed about attitudes to and capacity for participation in the ERB, as well as competencies to realise gains from the cooperation for own regional and local development, interview questions were *not* formulated in accordance with aims of the evaluation on page 1. The above formulations are quite theoretic and deal with more academic questions. In order to make the interviews more understandable and relevant to participants and to avoid standardized answers, interview questions were made to be much more concrete. Therefore some interpretation was needed in understanding how responses to the concrete questions shed light on the more theoretical questions. Interview questions took up the themes of:

- Background information of interviewee, experience:
- Expectations
- Impact
- Relevance (Value Added)
- Sustainability
- The Joint Transnational Development Programme (JTDP)
- Dissemination
- The future of Seagull

Please see Appendices 1 and 2 for interview questions. After interviews were performed in Bornholm and Latvia (Appendix 1) the interview questions were amended slightly to better capture the type of information we wanted to examine and make it easier for respondents to understand questions (Appendix 2). Appendix 3 lists the interview persons, interviewers and dates on which the interviews were performed.

Milieux, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, England

³ Veylon, Baptiste (2004) Decentralization and Sustainable Development: Local Institutional Barriers and Opportunities for Sustainable Development, Master of Science Thesis 04-061, KTH Master Programme Series. Stockholm

This evaluation is both qualitative and quantitative. In the quantitative part, answers to interview questions were recorded in accordance with the concrete interview questions posed. The answers were then coded to reflect the three aspects of institutional capacity (knowledge resources, relational resources and mobilisation capacity), as well as the expectations, immediate results, challenges, value-added and use of the JTPD for the Seagull project. These and other interview questions are presented in diagram form throughout the text. In ascertaining the responses, a distinction was made between the answers of administrators/civil servants and politicians (as well as a small “other” category). Data is presented in percentage of responses, but because the data set was quite small (28 interviews in total) the actual percentage points are not as important as the patterns of responses that were evident. Since some interviewees gave multiple responses to some questions, the total number of answers is often more than 28 or 100%.

In making an evaluation of theoretical constructs of knowledge resources, relational resources and mobilisation capacity by posing concrete questions to interviewees, it was necessary to examine all and interpret responses in a qualitative and holistic fashion.

Daniel Folkesson and **Annika Carlson** of the Institute for Local and Regional Democracy (ID) in Växjö performed the interviews in the Warmia-Masurian Region (PL), Bornholm (DK), Kaliningrad (RU), Kurzeme Planning District (LV) and Klaipeda County (LT). **Sara Wrethed** from Nordregio performed the interviews in Kronoberg County (SE) and **Camila Cortés Ballerino** from KTH performed the interviews in the Pomeranian Region (PL).

Daniel Folkesson and **Annika Carlson** of ID were instructive in suggestions for the design of the evaluation and in helping with the formulation of the interview questions, as were **Ole Damsgaard** and **Jon Moxnes** of Nordregio.

Seagull’s Secretariate has been particularly instrumental in taking responsibility for selection of all interviewees and the booking of interviews.

Firas Hammami from KTH was very helpful with the quantitative analysis of the interviews.

Interpretations of the interview questions and analysis of the interviews has been made by **Lisa Van Well** of KTH, who also takes responsibility for any omission or misinterpretation that might have occurred.

3. Results of Interviews

Interviews with selected Seagull institutions and persons were performed during the period May 2005 – September 2005. In general, interviews yielded a great amount of interesting information regarding the capabilities of institutions for participation in transnational cooperative project, such as Seagull, or cooperation agreements, such as the Euroregion Baltic. However some interviews involved persons that have not had

much experience with Seagull, particularly in Kaliningrad, where some interview subjects were on holiday and instead interviews were made with persons with only a slight involvement in the project, or else had a special competence in one aspect of the project, such as “equal opportunities”. Therefore responses to many of the questions got the answer “No idea” or “ I have not been involved enough to answer”. This has primarily affected the quantitative elements of this evaluation. For the qualitative interpretations, information supplied by interviews, even those with sparse answers, has been quite useful.

Below, the various types of institutional capacities according to the framework for evaluation are discussed from the point of departure of the interviews. To ensure confidentiality of the interviewees, no personal names are mentioned, only their regional affiliations.

Knowledge Resources

Range of knowledge and Experience

Depth and width of knowledge of European Transnational Cooperation within the organization

Previous experiences of Transnational cooperation and crossborder cooperation

Nearly all of the interview subjects had a broad understanding of European transnational cooperation. The exceptions were often those interviewees that had to fill in for another more experienced person. As expected civil servants and administrators showed a much deeper knowledge of working with European, Interreg or other transnational projects, than did politicians. Politicians often were quite aware of the existence of Seagull and the ERB in terms of the concrete outputs, but did not possess a deeper understanding of the way that cooperation worked.

In **Kronoberg** (SE) respondents to the interview questions all had great knowledge of transnational cooperation, Interreg projects in general and of Seagull in particular. However one politician found it difficult to separate the work of Seagull from the cooperation arena of the ERB.

Also in **Bornholm**, politicians and administrators are quite active within the ERB and point out Seagull’s role in strengthening the ERB. At the same time they point out that Seagull has come some way in making the vague statutes of the ERB into more strategic objectives. Seagull has convinced some in Bornholm that they need a specific Baltic Sea Strategy. Seagull has made it possible for more people from various activities to become involved in the ERB work.

Identification with the Euroregion in the **Pomeranian Region** “is huge”, although not practically so active. Perhaps this is so since Seagull has been the first project to specifically call attention to the common problems of the Baltic Sea Region, as well as the problems of the Pomeranian Region. Politicians state that they are quite used to working with Transnational Cooperation, and especially within the ERB. Mr. Jan

Zozlowski was president of the Euroregion from Feb. 2004 to Feb. 2005 and active in many issues. One positive consequence of Seagull is that all members of the Euroregion have been able to see what they can accomplish together. Expectations for the project often were that Seagull could help reinforce the ERB capacity and lead to greater implementation activities at the local level. It was also mentioned the value of transnational cooperation and that the ERB secretariat was established in Elblag.

In **Warmia-Masurian** most of those interviewed (with the exception of one person) only came into contact with Seagull and ERB fairly recently, but the knowledge they possessed to answer the interview questions appeared to be quite sufficient

Latvians had quite broad experience with transnational cooperation and have deepened their knowledge with particular experience within Seagull, especially with the Work Packages. The administrators in the **Kurzeme** region have been quite used to working with Interreg projects and know how these are structured, in particular that the Interreg aims tend to be “soft” aims in terms of strategic thinking and long-term planning, rather than immediate concrete results. However politicians, perhaps with their lack of knowledge about the workings of Interreg IIIB seem not to have this same expectation with Interreg. They are looking rather for immediate outputs, which were not in the nature of the Seagull project and perhaps indicates that their knowledge of transnational cooperation is wider than it is deep.

The knowledge of transnational cooperation seems to be somewhat less high in **Kaliningrad** among both the politicians and administrators and for the interviews they seem to reply quite a bit on outside experts (such as from the Universities).

Interviewees in **Klaipeda** had a broad and deep knowledge of transnational cooperation and were involved at the early stages of Seagull and in the ERB cooperation. Expectations among other Lithuanian partners and politicians were for more concrete impacts of Seagull, but those deeply involved seem to know more of the strategic and long-term nature of Seagull.

Frames of Reference

Attitudes to Transnational Cooperation in the Baltic Sea region within the organization. Depth and width of commitment within the organization

Expectations for the programme within the organization. Value added to the organization for CBC

Attitudes to Transnational Cooperation in the BSR were overwhelmingly positive with all of the interviewees. Finding common ground and common areas for developmental cooperation in the regions was seen both as an important opportunity and as a challenge.

In **Kronoberg** there were some expressions of disappointment that the commitments from the other regions, particularly on the political side, were not as great as could be. There seems to be the acknowledgement that with these kinds of projects, it is not the *output* itself that is important, but rather the *process* and the work itself that leads to

greater competencies of those involved. It was mentioned that the important thing with Seagull was that it provided an arena for integration and cooperation in the region, as well as a forum for discussing issues such as environment and water protection and other issues, and therefore the fact that some characterised the project as a “paper project” was not unexpected.

In **Bornholm** it was mentioned that an important value added aspect of the Seagull project was that it has begun to create a *common identity* in the BSR and contributed to a new way of thinking about a specific Baltic Sea strategy. In this sense meetings were crucial. As one respondent put it “Meetings are crucial, they create a step forward and better understanding. The more you meet the more understanding...”. Bornholm’s geographical position, as an island in the Baltic Sea, made it impossible for them to isolate themselves and thus there was the need through cooperation to follow how others do “in order to develop and not die”. However the political side in Bornholm also stressed that perhaps too much time was spent discussing “problems” rather than concrete aspects of development.

In **Warmia-Masurian** the exchange between regions was seen as a good experience. Seagull has enabled the cooperation in the ERB, but it is still a challenge to cooperate and development this much further. ERB awareness is growing, although one respondent said it was difficult to know if this was due to Seagull or not.

In the **Pomeranian Region** there is knowledge of how Euroregions work and of Interreg IIIB projects, and therefore some of the respondents did not hope for many concrete results. However this said, there seemed to be some dissatisfaction anyway that Seagull had not seen the results it could have in the form of foreign investment, jobs or boosting of the economies in the area. The economic relationship with Sweden and Kaliningrad is especially important for the region and it was thought that participation in Seagull could strengthen this. Seagull has allowed for better relationships with Kaliningrad.

Among some politicians in the **Pomeranian** region, expectations were concrete: to increase the attractiveness of foreign investment to the region. For instance, the focus was on immediate economic results, with Sweden and Kaliningrad being the most important investment partners. “Seagull is a soft project. It is difficult to say how many jobs Seagull has created”.

Expectations for Seagull were divided in the **Kurzeme Region**. Civil servants seemed to be aware of the structure of Interreg projects and their “soft” aims for strategic thinking and long-term planning. There was not the expectation of immediate and concrete outputs (although this caused a problem for the politicians of the Kurzeme Region, who have now become somewhat disappointed. In fact one of the challenges incurred with the Seagull project was that many local politicians are reluctant to get involved in strategic planning projects. One administrator even noted “I am a bit unsure if Kurzeme is ready for a long-term strategic project as Seagull”, as everyday problems and challenges seemed to take up most of the time and energy. The thought was that perhaps Interreg projects should contain elements of concrete results in addition to the strategic planning so that everyone would be satisfied. “Most people do not pay very much attention to regional planning projects that are to be

implemented with long-term visions and goals”, stated one interviewee.

Another administrator also discussed this as an important generational difference in Kurzeme. Younger people are much more interested in cross-border cooperation and in EU funded projects, while older people, especially politicians are more reluctant to get involved in cross-border or transnational cooperation. Another Latvia respondent commented that for local politicians is it no longer OK to “just go around and get information about how society works” as it was in the beginning of the 1990s directly after independence. Now society demands that politicians be more active and produce concrete results. Strategic planning is still somewhat of a new concept in Latvia since many people still link the idea of “planning” to the communist system.

On the other hand attitudes to transnational and cross-border cooperation are slowly changing. While some in Kurzeme are still unsure or even sceptical to the ERB and the “ERB idea is not 100% evident here” (perhaps evident in the fact that Kurzeme has not signed on to Seagull II), the positive experiences with Seagull have also helped raise awareness for international cooperation. This is particularly true in the Talsi district of Kurzeme.

Expectations in **Klaipeda (Lithuania)** of the Seagull project were for a more *concrete* project with *concrete* results, even if it was specified that Seagull was to deal with long-term strategy and goals and visions for the future. Most participants, when first approached with the Seagull idea asked the same question: “What will I get from participating in this?). Actors in Klaipeda are not so interested in projects aiming towards long-term visions and values, but would rather see fast results for their immediate region. The transnational mentality for ERB cooperation seemed to be somewhat weak.

At the same time, administrators realised the long-term strategic nature of projects like Seagull and realise the value of visionary goals for the region. The international cooperative potential of Seagull and the ERB were seen as important.

In **Kaliningrad** the knowledge that authorities have of cross-border and transnational cooperation is not so high. One interviewee stated that there seems to be a lack of culture for participating in international projects in Kaliningrad and few understand the difference between investment and cooperation, where cooperation necessarily comes first and then could lead to investments. But participation in projects such as Seagull breathes fresh air into the increased interest for these types of projects. Considering that Kaliningrad’s geographical position as an enclave within the EU, there is the standard view that cooperation and communication with the EU is fruitful, particularly the Neighbourhood Programme,

In the **Pomeranian Region**, one of the main expectations of the Seagull project was that it could help reinforce the ERB capacity and implement activities at the local level.

Other expectations in the Pomeranian Region were for the establishment of a framework for the future creation of jobs. Yet there is the realisation that first the region needs to create the mechanisms and good conditions for investments.

Figure 1 below characterises in a quantitative way (percentage of total answers), the initial expectations partners had prior to becoming involved in the Seagull project. The interview question was open-ended and worded: “What were your initial expectations of the Seagull project when you first became involved?” Answers to this question were framed both negatively and positively, but all fell into the categories: 1) Cooperation, 2) Expectations for fruitful work within the WPs, 3) More foreign investment for the region, 4) Possibilities for equal opportunity work, 5) Strengthening the ERB work, 6) Expectations for the JTDP and its influence on the region, 7) Expectations for greater political involvement, 8) Expectations for more concrete results, 9) It is too early to tell, and 10) Not applicable or No answer.

The greatest expectation that administrators had was that the Seagull project would strengthen the ERB efforts. No politician mentioned this as an expectation, nor did they mention hopes for the JTDP. On the other hand politicians more generally had the frame of reference that participation in Seagull would increase cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, increase possibilities for foreign investment (answers from Pomeranian) and that the Work Packages would be beneficial. The answers to this question pointed out that politicians and administrators involved in Seagull have quite different frames of reference regarding transnational cooperation. Administrators tend to think more strategically with the idea that a strong and capable ERB is an initial, but crucial step to more concrete results; the JTDP is a step in this direction.

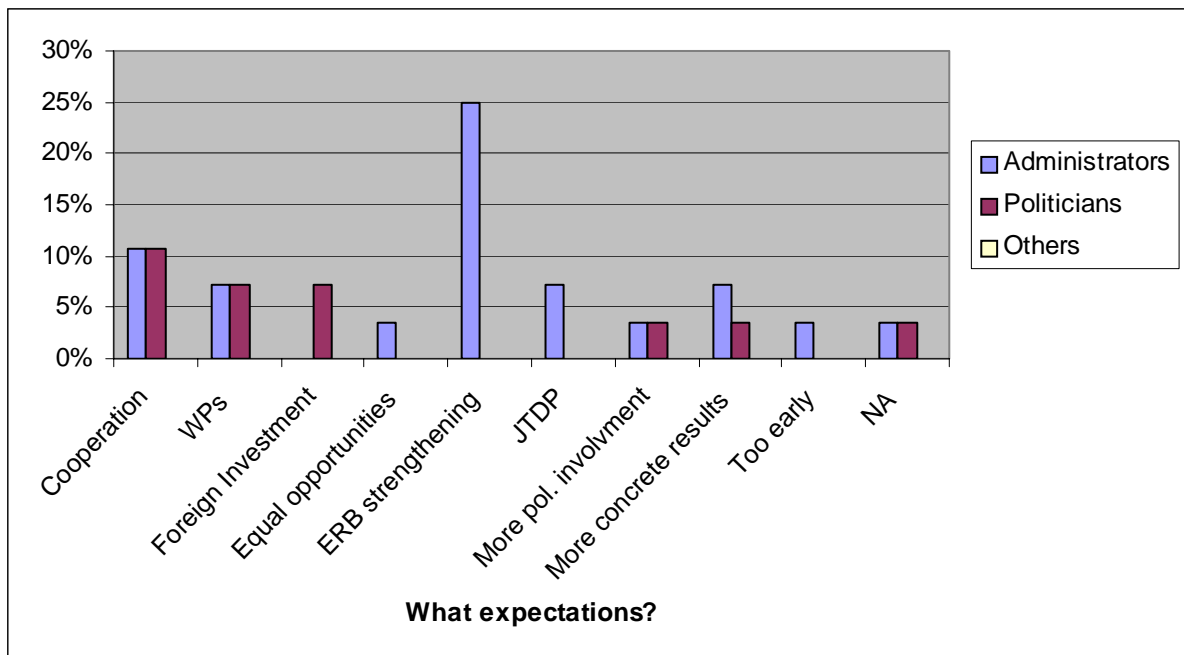


Figure 1: What Expectations did you have for the Seagull project?

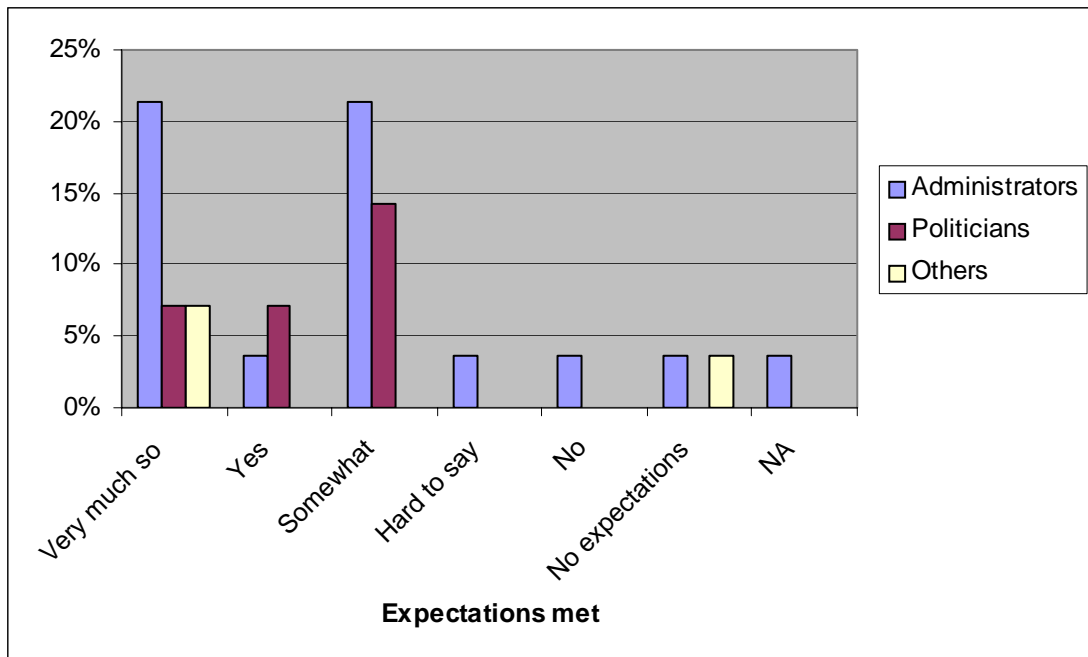


Figure 2: Were your expectations of Seagull met?

Figure 2 above shows the degree to which politicians and administrators felt their expectations were met. Answers ranged from “Yes, very much so, Yes, Somewhat, Hard to say, No, No expectations and Not applicable (NA)”. Administrators were much more satisfied by the results of Seagull in accordance to their expectations. Politicians, however, whose frames of reference were for more concrete project results were not as overall positive. The majority felt that expectations were “somewhat” met in certain areas, primarily those concrete areas. However it is important to remember that as a political project, politicians need to be careful to give the “right” answers. Seagull “must” have some added value that can be shown to constituencies.

Learning

The capacity to *learn* in transnational networks is one of the most important elements of assessing knowledge resources for institutional capacity. Roughly one third of the interview responses noted that various types of learning, in particular institutional learning within the ERB, were a value added aspect of the Seagull cooperation.

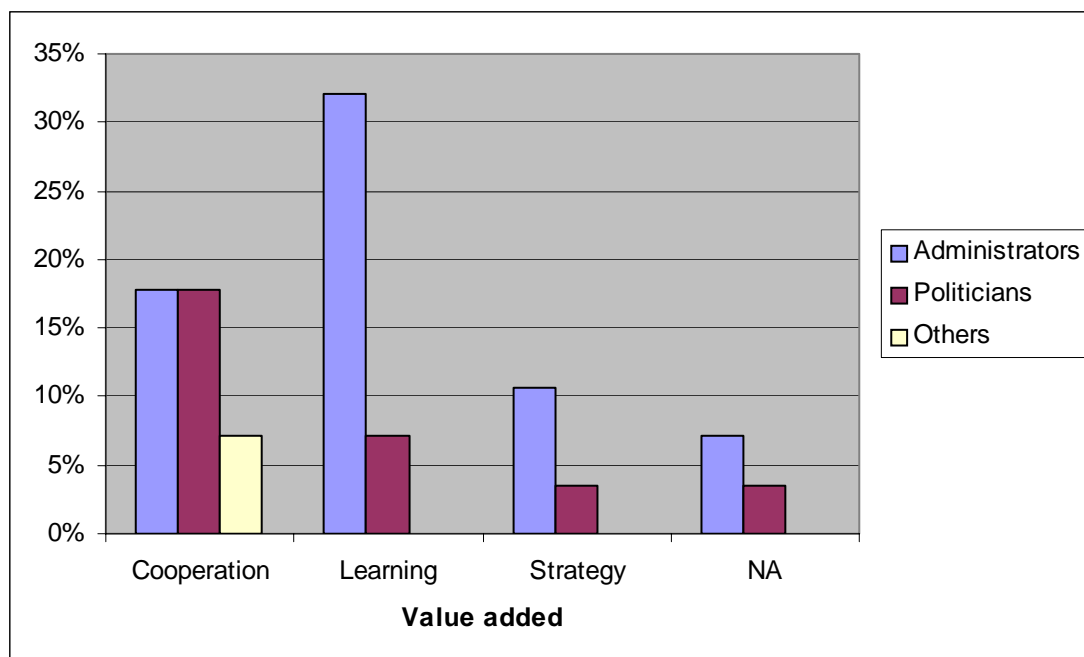


Figure 3: What have been the greatest benefits (value added) for your region of the Seagull Project?

Figure 3 above shows the responses to the question of valued added aspects of Seagull. Responses were open-ended, but then coded into categories dealing with cooperation networks (relational resources), learning (knowledge resources) and long-term strategy (including the JTDP). Possibilities for learning from other partners was definitely the most important value added aspect for administrators (over 30%), but even important for some politicians. Politicians again, were more interested in the cooperation aspects. Only a small percentage of politicians stated that a long-term strategy was a value-added result of Seagull, although over 10% of administrators felt that their region had gained from these strategic efforts.

Thus it appears from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses that knowledge resources (in the form of learning) has tended to be a positive outcome of Seagull.

The **Pomeranian Region** stated that one of the main results of the project has been that of understanding how the process can be used in understanding sustainability. Seagull has opened the eyes of many of those involved in the region to the aspects of “good governance” and “equal opportunities”. Seagull also seemed to impart upon the Pomeranian partners a better working knowledge of the EU and has helped with other EU projects. As one respondent put it: “Ideas can be replicated or adapted. This is a learning experience”.

A **Pomeranian** interviewee also noted that they were learning about commitment and keeping the resolutions and agreements taken during the project period for the next period (the timing of which coincides with elections).

Seagull itself has also helped in other EU projects and this experience has led to seeing how common issues could be handled and how political decisions can be taken as a learning experience.

In **Kurzeme** one thing that the “new” democracies have been able to learn from the “old” democracies is the importance of public participation and methods to listen to a range of actors involved in finding common solutions for the region. These participatory methods are more democratic, but take more time.

In **Kronoberg** there has been a greater awareness about the development of the ERB and that Kronoberg is part of that development. “It is the process, the work in itself that leads to higher competence among us involved”.

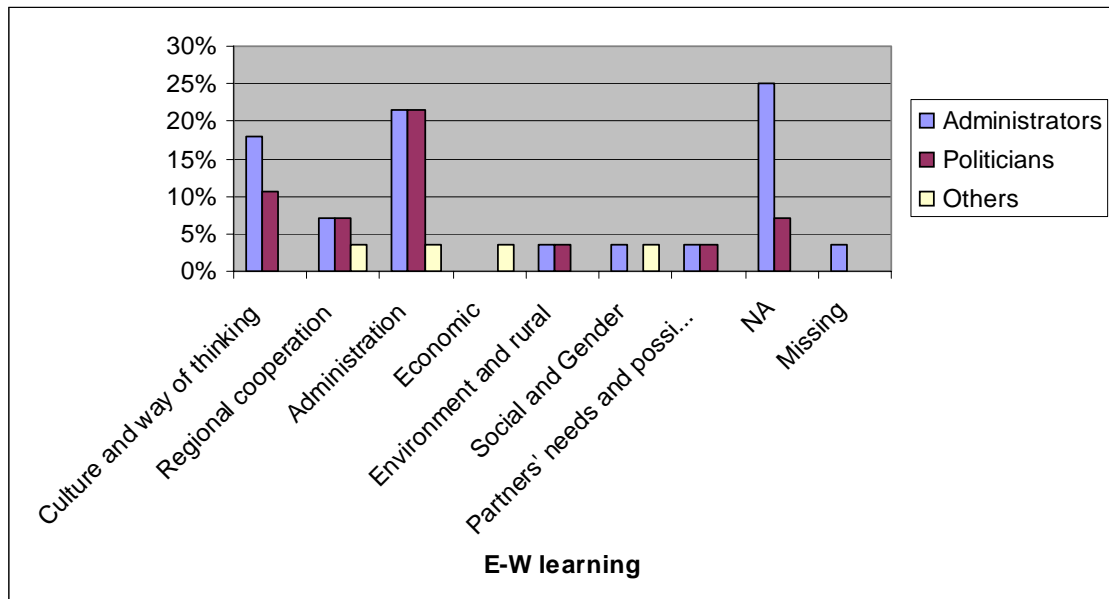


Figure 4: *Have you been able to learn anything across the E-W divide?*

In terms of “who learns from whom”, an interview question was formulated to find out if learning was being transmitted across the East-West divide of the Baltic Sea. The quantitative results of this question are seen in *Figure 4*, which reflects the range of answers to the question “*Have you been able to learn anything across the E-W divide within the Seagull project?*” This E-W learning did seem to occur, with most of interviewees stating that the direction of the learning was from the “old” democracies to the “new” democracies, but the opposite direction of learning also occurred, with especially the **Swedes** professing to have been surprised to learn from their “eastern” colleagues. This was a difficult question for interviewees to answer and 25% of the respondents answered NA (not applicable or no answer). However in the area in which it seemed that much East-West learning was happening was in that of regional and project administration. Several respondents also mentioned that learning about new cultures and ways of thinking had been facilitated by Seagull.

Relational Resources

Organization and reorganisation needed to foster efficient administration for cross-border and transnational cooperation

Depth and width of commitment within the organization

Specific needs for capacity building in the field of transnational cooperation at local and regional level within the region

Relational resources are the more structural aspects of capacity. They deal with how an institution is set up and managed, as well as the mandate it has to mobilise action. This is quite related to the commitment it has to transnational cooperation. Relational resources also deal with how institutional networks are utilised and function on various levels. An important element of this type of resource, not least for Seagull and the ERB, is the power relationships, i.e. the degree of decision-making power an institution or political body enjoys. Relation resources also include technical resources and funding resources.

In most cases, relational resources proved to be lacking in many of the Seagull institutions and in the interviews have been formulated as challenges to overcome and areas for capacity building. The only category within relational resources that most partners found to be sufficient and beneficial were the various types of networks that have been created through Seagull and ERB cooperation. These types of resources were formulated in an overwhelmingly positive manner by interviewees.

Financial and technical constraints

The most important element mentioned for efficient administration of a transnational project such as Seagull, was the necessary funding in order to be able to participate fully. With regard to Seagull, the interviewees from **Kurzeme, Klaipeda** and **Warmia-Masurian** all expressed their disappointment in the failure to secure financing from Phare, which according to the respondents, greatly limited their scope for participation. In all three of these regions, applications were sent to Phare two times, but were rejected each time.

One of the greatest difficulties mentioned by **Kurzeme** and which reflects the classical problem of EU funding, was not only the lack of Phare financing but the fact that Interreg, Phare and Tacis programmes do not overlap each other in project timing.

Klaipeda also suffered from lack of Phare funding, which was seen as the biggest problem in implementation of the project, and a factor in their restricted participation. “We have not been uninterested – we have just not had great possibilities to fully take part in everything due to the lack of Phare funds”.

Technical difficulties may seem trivial, but many respondents mentioned that a great restraint on participation capacity was problems (in terms of time and money) for obtaining visas to Kaliningrad.

Language is also still a problem. Many experts in the **Pomeranian Region** were unable to participate due to language barriers. Several respondents felt that greater efforts (and funds) should be increased to translate most of the documents into local

languages.

Political/Power constraints

The **Pomeranian Region** elucidated that a major challenge with the Seagull project has been the various levels of administrative efficiency possessed by the partners of the project. One interviewee remarked that the **Kaliningrad Oblast** was not perceived by the other partners as having the administrative efficiency for the Seagull project, since the Russian system is so centralised and all decisions must be approved by Moscow, rather than being decided at lower levels.

Even in **Pomerania**, with regard to the JTDP, it was previously unthinkable to work with a “plan” due to the negative connotations to the Soviet regime. However now a plan such as the JTDP is starting to gain ground. In Poland there is not such a strong tradition of participation as there is in Denmark or Sweden, for instance. Some transfer of experience from these countries was possible, but not all was applicable since the systems are very different. “ We cannot integrate all the good examples”

Another **Pomeranian** interviewee discussed the lack of “inter-cooperability” resulting for the various political and administrative procedures of the regions and partners, many of which were not applicable to the Pomeranian Region.

Still, Seagull was seen as a good “excuse” to put sensitive political issues in Poland, such as “equal opportunities” on the agenda.

However other respondents saw some of the same problems with centralisation in the **Polish** regions. Although the regions themselves are powerful and able to take decisions independently of the central government, the decisionmaking is not so participatory.

Nearly **all regions** bemoaned the fact that Seagull was not a high political priority. **Klaipeda** in particular was seen as problematic, mainly because the Seagull project was not a high-ranking priority for them.

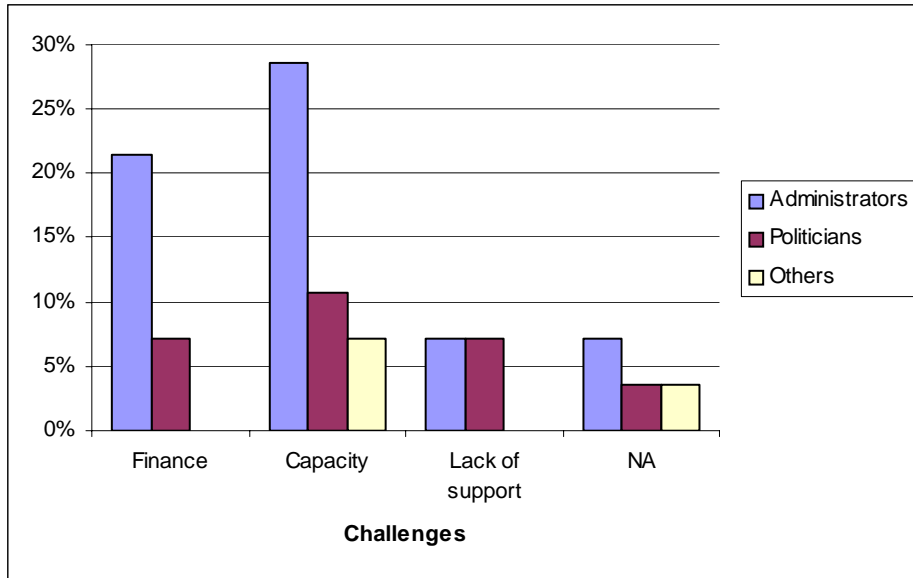


Figure 5: Greatest Challenges in the implementation of the Seagull project

Figure 5 above shows the greatest challenges in implementation of the Seagull project as experienced by the interviewed partners. All responses to the open-ended question were coded and the results were quite clear that three main categories of challenges were evident. Responses all centred on lack of financing, lack of capacity and lack of political support. Almost a third of the interviewed administrators cited lack of capacity (primarily relational resources) as the most challenging aspect of the project. Included in this conceptualisation of capacity was also the political power relationship, which made it impossible for some regions to work in the way they would have liked to within Seagull. Problems with financing were also stated as great challenges by over 20% of administrators and 7% of politicians.

Networking Synergies- the value added aspect of relational resources

In most cases, the networking opportunities provided by Seagull and the ERB as relational resources were citing as giving very positive results. The network provided by the ERB was highly appreciated by all respondents. However some experienced that the most difficult networking challenges were within their own region, but that the activities of Seagull were helping to overcome this.

Networking within the ERB

Seagull was one of the first projects in **Pomeranian** calling attention to the common problems of the BSR and the Pomeranian Region. But is has also been important in creating a common framework for the future, which helps the Pomeranian Region to see their position and identify their role in the region. Rather than solving their problems alone, there is now a common platform.

Another important aspect of networking within Seagull (and the ERB) mentioned by an interviewee from **Pomerania** was the relationship with China for opportunities for the whole region. Previously countries in the ERB had their own individual partnerships with China, but when it was decided that they could explore together the

opportunities of the whole region, this was seen as a vital value added aspect.

Seagull has also aided the **Pomeranian** Region in its contacts and relations with **Kaliningrad**, an area that is very important for Pomeranian.

In **Kurzeme** there was the attitude that the EBR is very important to the region, particularly with regard to strategic planning, which is not so widespread in Latvia. As one respondent put it, “We need this cooperation even though it takes enormous resources for us”. The politicians in Talsi seemed to be more positive than to ERB than others in the Kurzeme region

A respondent from **Kurzeme** also pointed out that one of the most important outcomes of the Seagull project was the greater sense of identification with some of the partners. In particular, Kurzeme seemed to appreciate the “bilateral” relations it had developed with **Sweden** as the result of Seagull. Both politicians and administrators mentioned several times that the transfer of knowledge from the Swedish side to the Latvian side was very good.

In **Klaipeda** the transnational contacts and feelings of identification were said to be most fruitful with the **Poles** and with **Kaliningrad**.

In **Kaliningrad** there seems to be a lack of information between the EU and Russia, one respondent mentioned, which makes cooperation difficult sometimes.

In **Kronoberg** one interview respondent said that without Seagull the regional development programme they are currently working on, would have looked different. There is the realisation in Kronoberg that they are part of a bigger context in terms of the transnational macro-region and that this can be made use of.

Bornholm had been about to leave the ERB prior to Seagull, since it was felt that the cooperation did not give them anything, but the decision to remain in the ERB and participate in Seagull was coloured by the opportunities to benefit Bornholm’s cooperation with **Kaliningrad**. This bilateral cooperation was already developed, but the transnational cooperation was thought to increase this even more. Now one Danish interviewee considered the ERB the strongest Euroregion in the EU, mainly due to the Seagull project.

Networking within the nation-state

In the “old” centralised system in **Poland**, regions could not plan for themselves and this mentality still holds true with some older politicians. The approach they prefer, according to one interviewee is to allocate and distribute money to farmers, for instance. However thanks to a project like Seagull there is the growing understanding that politicians can do more than distribute money; they can also create mechanisms for facilitating the system.

In **Warmia-Masurian** the concept of the ERB was important and one interviewee mentioned that is it a great advantage that regions can be represented in the ERB independently of the nation-state.

In **Warmia-Masurian** one of the challenges of Seagull was to involve the many partners in the region, as the institutional system is such that it involves many administrative institutions and there are large differences between these regions making it difficult to create a coherent strategy for all. However regions now appear to be cooperating rather than competing in areas such as tourism

A respondent from the **Pomeranian Region** noted that Seagull aided in closer cooperation between the regions in Poland, in particular with the Warmia-Masurian Region.

There is also a growing awareness in the **Pomeranian Region** that solving problems demands the participation of broader groups of society- NGOs, citizens and other civil associations. In particular, the **Scandinavian** examples of “good governance” have been useful.

Also in **Kurzeme**, municipalities are not used to cooperating with one another, but much as been learned within Seagull, especially through WP2 where Latvia municipalities have been shown new ways of cooperating with one another, in particular within Leader+.

One respondent mentioned that the greatest benefit in **Kurzeme’s** involvement in Seagull has been that the “Kurzeme Region” has now been acknowledged. Seagull has “put Kurzeme on the map” in a sense and this is useful for further cooperation

Another respondent from **Kurzeme** discussed how it was often a challenge to define what a “region” is within the nine regions involved. There are also great differences in the political competencies of the regions. For instance regions in Poland are large and powerful, while in Latvia they are basically only “on paper”, with no financial power at all. This makes it very difficult to cooperate on the regional level within the ERB.

Networking within the region

In **Klaipeda**, activities within WP 2 and the seminars that were organised in Klaipeda (EU Water Directive and Waster water cleaning) were good opportunities to involve persons and organisations from a variety of fields in the region, including private actors and companies. Although the organisation of the seminars was heavy work for Klaipeda and involved insufficient resources, the transnational forum seemed to bring together actors from the region itself and provided a boost to regional capacity and capacity to work with other neighbouring regions in Latvia.

Work Package 4 (Rural Development) also gave Klaipeda insights, not only about how other regions dealt with rural districts, but also about their own rural environmental of seven municipalities.

When the JTDP draft was introduced to the municipalities in Klaipeda, it met with positive responses, but more importantly, the JTDP has initiated important

discussions among the municipalities in Klaipeda, and regional authorities see this positive dialogue with local actors as a great opportunity.

One of the immediate results of Seagull that was mentioned by an interviewee from **Kaliningrad** was that it has helped establish a forum where smaller towns from the entire region have been involved and are able to coordinate actions. Previously there were few opportunities such as this.

A respondent from **Kronoberg** said that one of the value added benefits of the project was that it has led to greater understanding and better cooperation between the involved regions in Sweden.

Bornholm mentioned that Seagull has made it possible to involve more people from different activities in the region and this helps to anchor projects in a much better way.

Mobilisation capacity

Strong and weak competences for efficient Transnational co-operation in the organisation

Capacities for efficient transnational and cross-border cooperation vary within the Seagull regions. One of the biggest challenges that Seagull Partners face in the future is the implementation or adoption of the JTDP in their individual regional plans. This organisational capacity for implementing the JTDP (as the Seagull II puts it) will be a cornerstone for further development and integration of the ERB.

Mobilisation capacity is a synergy of knowledge and relational resources. It can thus be a benchmark for how a region can proactively cooperate for regional development.

The results of the interviews showed that there were, perhaps unsurprisingly, discrepancies in how partners saw their own capacities and how other partners assessed their capacities. Consequentially, the remarks made about the competencies of the partners (often referring to the countries, rather than the regions or specific partners) as highlighted below, tend not to be self-references (unless otherwise specified) but comments made by partners about other partners.

Seagull is very much a “**Swedish** project” remarked on respondent. The Seagull project is dominated by Swedes, not only as Lead Partner, but also as heads of all of the Work Packages. Other partners mentioned that the **Swedes** seemed very organised, prepared and had the necessary competence and resources to lead this type of project. In particular, **Kurzeme** benefited from the “bilateral” relationship with Sweden they gained during Seagull. One respondent mentioned that the Swedes involved in Seagull, particularly the leadership, were efficient, but that leadership was quite centralised.

Several interviewees in **Kronoberg** felt that it was the **East** that needed to learn from the **West**, at least regarding administrative capacity rather than the other way around. One respondent from **Kronoberg** remarked that there is a need of a breakthrough of the ERB in terms of legality: More politicians should be involved and the representatives in **Latvia** and **Lithuania** are administrators, rather than politicians, which could create a political vacuum. From the **Swedish** side there seems to be a confusion in these countries between the administration politics and makes it appear that they do not want to learn. At the same time the **Swedish** interviewee said they (Latvia and Lithuania) are “sick and tired of Swedes and Germans who want to tell them what good governance is about”.

On the other hand, another interviewee in **Kronoberg** has learned that the familiar Swedish ways are not always self-evident, although they feel safe. There was the broad feeling that countries on the other side of the Baltic Sea worked differently from Sweden and Denmark. Yet the countries on the **East** of the Baltic Sea have “surprised us and exceeded our expectations. We have learned that there are other ways of doing things”. As an example one respondent was impressed with the active NGOs in **Kaliningrad** and how a corresponding support in Sweden is lacking. Another respondent discussed that the **Poles** are very clever when it comes to working with administration and know how to handle projects. The **Russians**, it was commented, “do not like to talk, they want to get things done”.

A respondent from **Klaipeda** mentioned, that although she appreciated how much work and organisation the **Swedes** put into the project, that Klaipeda was somewhat disappointed that their ideas were not always heard by the Swedish leadership, particularly those ideas dealing with themes for Seagull II. Interviewees in Klaipeda felt somewhat on the outskirts of the project

The **Danes** were thought to possess the same capacities as the Swedes, but their resources were on a much smaller scale, and the Danes seemed more spontaneous in their way of managing things. In **Bornholm** there was also the opinion that it would be good if the democratic way of handling projects (as in Denmark or Sweden) would spill-over into the new democracies to increase good governance. Capacity building was an important concept in Denmark as an idea for Seagull II. At the same time the opinion was also voiced that although they (Bornholm) have a lot of experience, there is still more to learn.

Danish experiences of other Seagull partners are that in **Kaliningrad** the centrality of the political system hampers discussion. But the positive thing is that “*when* they do something, they do it good!”. In **Poland**, they are quite confident and feel that the Danes and Swedes are wasting too much time and resources talking. The Polish motto, as comprehended by the Danes is “Not talking – Doing!”

A respondent from **Bornholm** mentioned that he now understands why information seems to sometimes halt at different levels of politics and administration in the Eastern BSR. The Danes see the **Eastern BSR** countries as working in a *top-down* manner rather than *bottom-up*, as in **Sweden** and **Denmark**. However one respondent noted that Seagull itself seemed to be a very *top-down* project and that it would

benefit by greater *bottom-up initiatives*.

Poland, particularly the Pomeranian region, is generally thought to have very good competencies for transnational cooperation, with a strong organisation. They are capable in the sense of finding out how to manage the EU system to their advantage and to the advantage of the ERB. Many said that Seagull II would be a much different project with Poland running it. It was mentioned that knowledge and capability was needed in order to write a project like Seagull II.

Warmia-Masurian felt they definitely did not possess the necessary financial resources to participate in Seagull. One interviewee from Warmia-Masurian stated there were issues in the JTDP that Warmia-Masurian lack the competence for in the Marshals office. The JTDP is just too ambitious and too difficult to fulfil. “In order to have an effective implementation in Poland with our administrative system, we need to have lots of partners involved”.

In **Kurzeme**, local politicians are still looking for immediate concrete results with transnational cooperation projects and thus this makes long-term strategic planning difficult at the regional level in Kurzeme. Although they were told that Seagull is a strategic planning project, there was still a discrepancy in the frames of reference about the expected results. This reluctance to such projects was seen as a great challenge. One respondent mentioned that she doubted if Kurzeme was ready for a project such as Seagull.

In **Kurzeme** there was seen to be a power imbalance between strong regions, such as the Polish regions, and weaker regions such as those in Latvia.

As yet, the **Kurzeme** Region does not yet possess the mobilisation capacity for initiating and implementing strategic regional issues. Although the knowledge resources among administrators seems to show great understanding and possess competent of regional and transnational issues needed for long-term planning, the relational resources still appear to be lacking, primarily due to the weak political, administrative and financial competencies of the regions in Latvia. Lack of political understanding of strategic projects was also a great barrier. Perhaps this is one reason why the political decision was made to not participate in Seagull II.

Even in the **Latvia municipalities** there are limited resources and people who can work actively with project such as Seagull. This was thought to be the biggest problem with municipal participation.

Poland was seen as much more “politicised” in its capabilities for Seagull cooperation, whereas countries like **Sweden** and **Denmark** were considered to be more “practical” in their orientation.

In **Klaipeda**, actors are not used to thinking in strategic terms and would rather see smaller projects with short-term visible results. Perhaps this is why nearly all of the Lithuanian respondents mentioned that the greatest impact from Seagull emanated from the Work Packages, in particular WP2 (water management and the EU water directive). There seemed to be the widespread opinion that there has been too much

discussion and now is the time for implementation, especially since, as Klaipeda put it, they have been involved on a more or less “voluntary” basis, since their Phare applications were rejected. In addition it is more difficult to induce people to cooperation in “soft” projects like Seagull than it is in “hard” projects dealing with physical infrastructure, planning or building. However there still is commitment to strategic projects such as Seagull, enough even to justify working in the project “for free”.

One respondent from **Klaipeda** bemoaned that fact that there seems to be the misconception on **Western** side of the BSR that the **Eastern** side does not know anything about working within transnational projects. The situation is much improved from 10 years ago, when Lithuanians were content to sit back and learn from their Western neighbours. Today they are more active in thinking for themselves and confident enough to discuss and critically evaluate aspects of “good governance” themselves. They state that they do have the knowledge competency, but it is very difficult to cooperate within Seagull on equal terms without the necessary financing.

Klaipeda largely felt “outside” of the Seagull project, primarily due to their lack of Phare funding which limited their participation. In each interview, respondents mentioned Work Packages 2 and 4 as the value added aspects of the projects. The seminars in connection with these WPs that were organised in Klaipeda were seen as very instrumental in building regional capacity, not only in terms of the substance of the seminars, but perhaps even more so in providing a forum where various actors in the region – municipalities, private actors, civil society groups could get together and discuss. It seems like there has been a need for this type of regional dialogue in Klaipeda and that Seagull has helped fill this gap.

4. Conclusions: Specific needs for capacity building

1. The need for building common frames of reference among partners

Most of the interviewees had shown great knowledge of Seagull, the ERB and transnational/cross-border cooperation in general. Although the frames of references for Seagull implementation differed both across the E-W divide where partners in the Eastern ERB had expected more concrete and measurable results from Seagull. Many of these respondents had great knowledge of the way that Interreg IIB works and that projects are generally of a strategic, long-term nature. Yet still there were hopes for greater results in the form of short-term economic development of the regions.

Figure 6 below shows the answers to the question to interviewees of the immediate results of Seagull. The question was open-ended and thus there was a range of answers and comments. However these diverse comments were coded into the categories dealing with 1) The strengthening of the ERB, 2) The impact of the JTDP, 3) The creation of networks, 4) The creation of new opportunities, 5) The results of the Work Packages, 6) It is too early to see any immediate impacts, and 7) Not applicable, or No answer.

Strangely, however, when asked directly in the interviews what the immediate impacts of Seagull were for their regions (see *Figure 6* below), the highest percentage of responses were that the JTDP in itself was a main result, as was the strengthening of the ERB and the networking opportunities that Seagull provided. Both of these are of a long-term strategic nature. However, 10% of both administrators and politicians stated that it was too early still to discern any visible impacts of Seagull and almost 11% of administrators mentioned the results of the Work Packages.

Thus one suggestion that would benefit the future operation of a Seagull II would be:

To make very clear on the onset of the project for all partners, what activities would be planned to promote *long-term strategic* development of the ERB, and which activities that are planned that could have a *short-term* immediate economic, social or ecological impact on regional development.

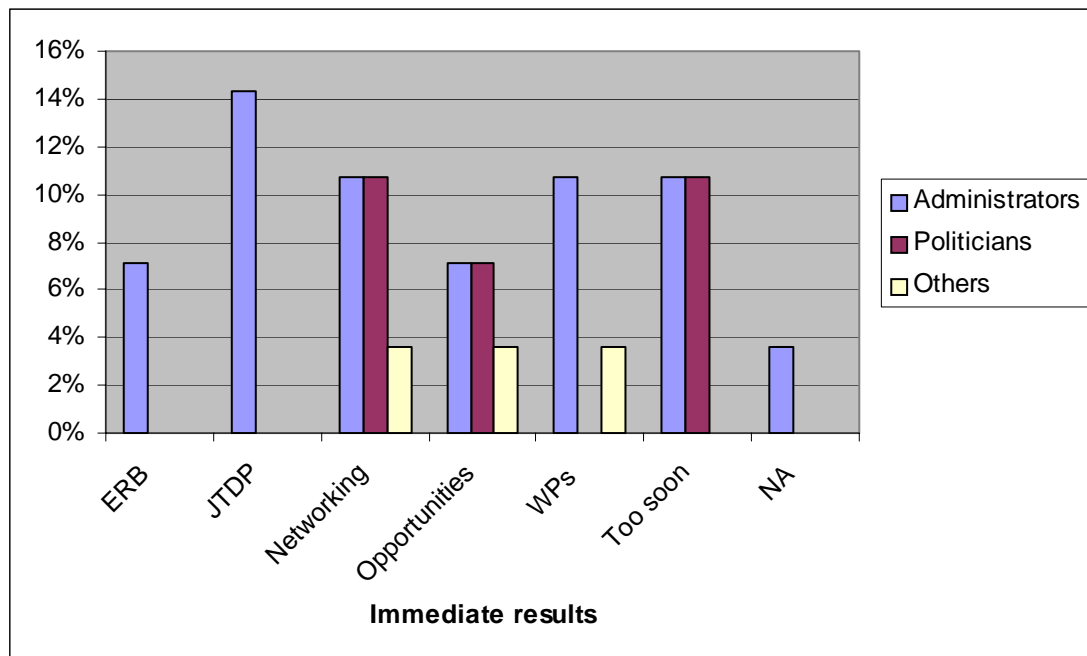


Figure 6: What immediate results have you and your region noticed from the implementation of the Seagull project and its work packages?

2. The need for greater capacity building dealing with relational resources

Results of the interviews and the qualitative/interpretative evaluation have shown that capacity gaps have tended to be located largely in *relational resources*, ie the technical (including language and visa problems), financial and power relations categories that are necessary for developing efficient regional and local administrations.

The second suggestion for Seagull II would then be unsurprising:

Capacity building measures should be directed to fulfilling relational (financial and technical resource needs) resources to a greater extent. Perhaps capacity building with regard to relational resources could be structured and financed through more cross-border initiatives, similar to Interreg IIIA, to encourage greater cooperation across border areas with similar problems and conditions.

While it is not the goal of Seagull or any other Interreg IIIB project to determine regional competencies, projects like this have a value in opening the eyes of administrators and particularly politicians that the regional level can be an important player in achieving economic, social and ecological development.

3. The need for building capacity for sustainable development, “good governance” and “equal opportunities”

As shown in *Figures 7, 8 and 9* below, results among interviewees were mixed when asked about how successful Seagull had been in achieving and promoting sustainable development, “good governance” and “equal opportunities”. In general respondents were not sure how to answer these questions. Most considered that little had been done in supporting sustainable development or had no opinion. Results were fairly evenly spread on the question of “good governance” and this question generated more discussion in interviews than the other two questions. It is interesting that here, administrators tended to have no opinion, while politicians were more positive to the results of good governance. Perhaps this reflects the political nature of the question. Also in terms of “equal opportunities” results among administrators were evenly split into those who thought the impact was great and those who thought there was no impact. It should be mentioned that the majority of the interviewees from **Kaliningrad** were experts in this area, and thus had a great interest in the question. Again this is a very political questions, as remarked by many respondents, so it probably is reflected in the relatively high percentage of politicians that thought there was some success in this area.

The third set of suggestions for a Seagull II project regarding the “buzz words” of sustainable development, “good governance” and “equal opportunities” are thus:

To rescue the concepts of sustainable development, good governance and equal opportunities from being simply rhetorical exercises, support capacity of partners to make concrete attempts to integrate these “soft” concepts into “hard” planning, economic and infrastructure projects. Develop easily measured and achievable indicators for marking the progress in a transnational forum.

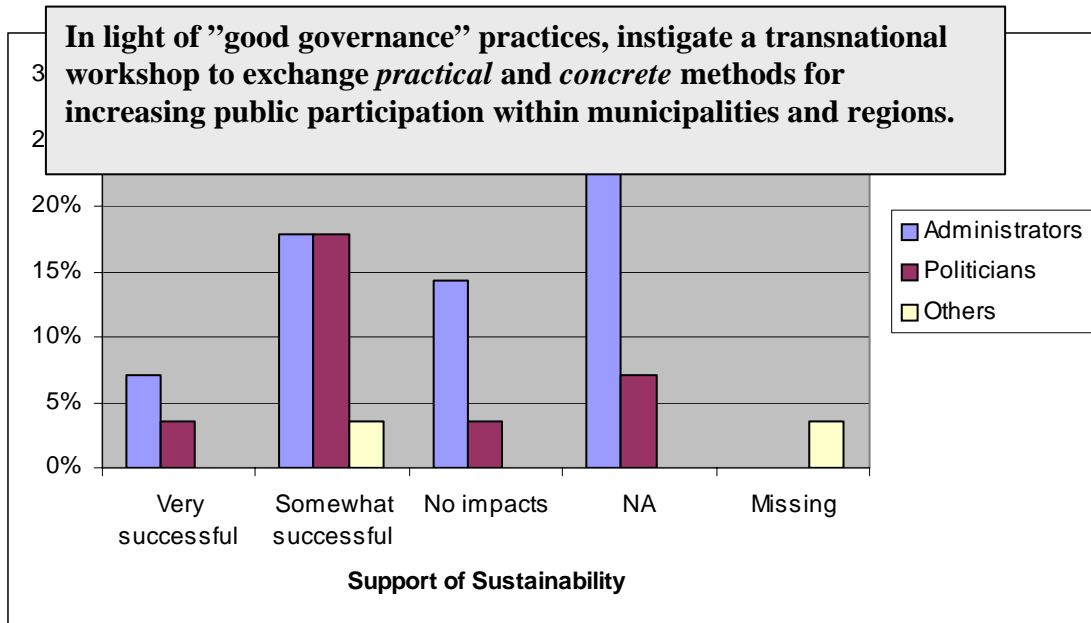


Figure 7: How successful has Seagull been in support of long-term sustainable development?

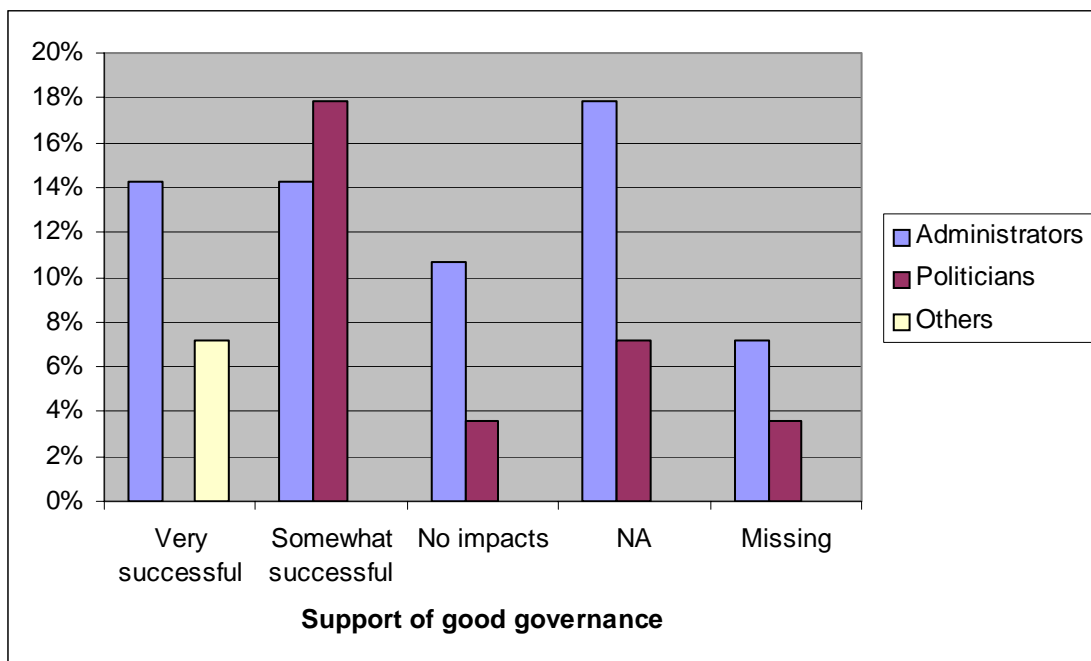


Figure 8: How successful has Seagull been in support of "good governance"?

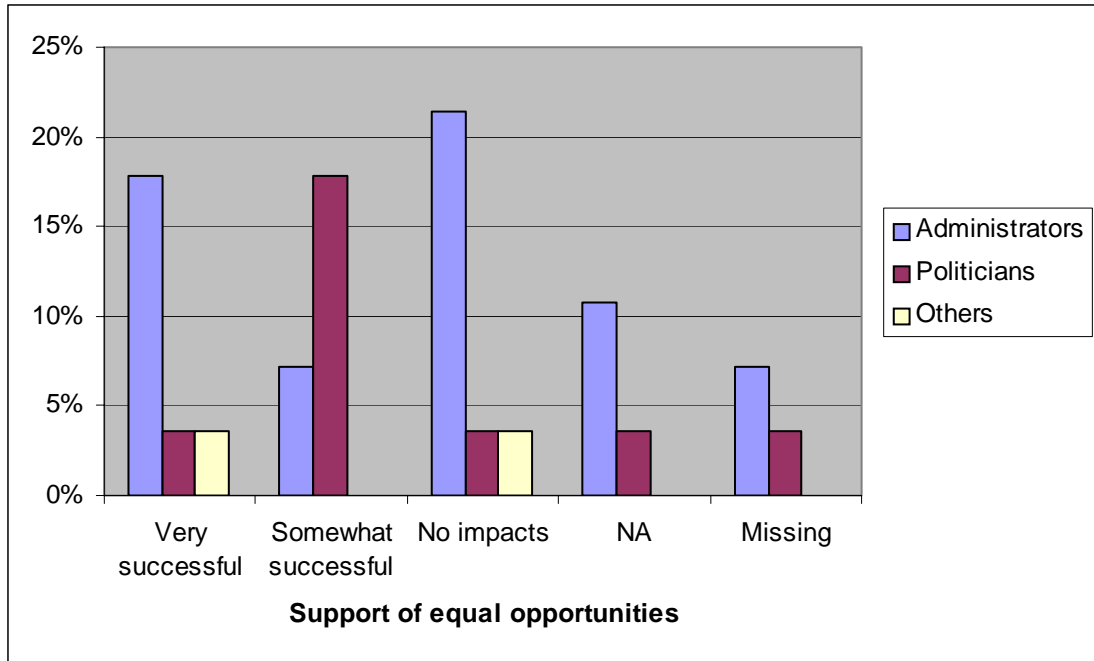


Figure 9: How successful has Seagull be in support of “equal opportunities”?

4. Institutional Capacity for promoting regional development

The role that the JTDP will play in regional development in the ERB will depend on the institutional capacity of the various Seagull partners to integrate the document in their own regional plans. The types of capacity more operative to do this are the *relational resources of networking* within and among various political levels and achieving a strong *mobilisation capacity* for action.

The JTDP, to have effect in implementation will have to span a variety of levels. Established networks as the result of Seagull I are important conductors of JTDP impact. Rather than sitting on the bookshelf of a regional administrator and gathering dust, the JTDP should be disseminated on the various levels of governance in each region, including the national level.

The results of the interviews have shown that the JTDP will be used or implemented on both the regional and local levels (internal use) and as a guiding document for development of the macro-region of the ERB (external use). Figure 10 below shows the coded answers to the open-ended question: “*What role will the JTDP have for the future of your regional development?*”. The diverse answers were interpreted and coded into those that felt the JTDP would have an *internal use*, those that felt the JTDP would have a primarily *external use*, and those that felt the JTDP would have *no influence*, as well as a “*Not applicable or No answer*” category. Politicians have stated to a much greater degree that the JTDP has value primarily as an internal strategy, while administrators recognised both its internal and external uses.

Regions will not go under without the JTDP, but it is imperative that a wide variety of actors, both municipal and region, public and private, enter into a discussion about how implementation can proceed in accordance with the very different regional

capacities, knowledge, resources and mobilisation possibilities each ERB region possesses. Only this way is there hope that the strategy will have an impact on regional development.

This leads to the final recommendation on the implementation of the JTDP:

Within the framework of Seagull II, regions should encourage building networks of municipalities and other regional actors (both public and private) to find ways of making at least parts of the JTDP a living document and a springboard for inter and intra-regional capacity building for development.

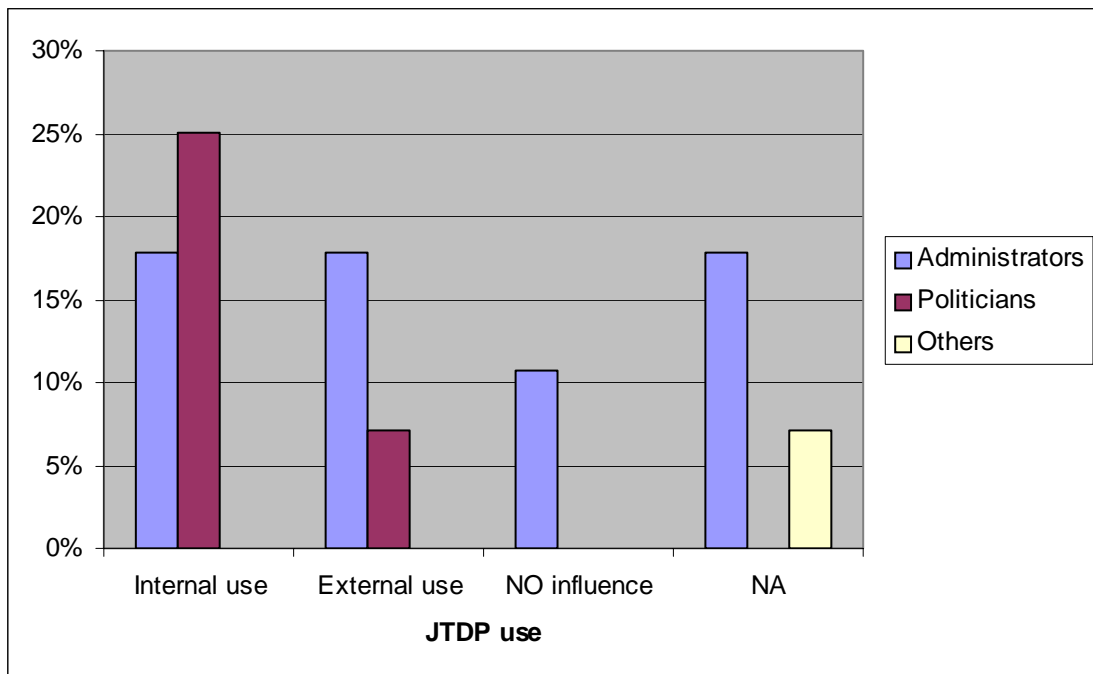


Figure 10: What role will the JTDP have for the future of your regional development?