

ClusterPoliSEE

Smarter **Cluster Policies** for **South-East Europe**

1.3

ClusterPoliSEE Overall Evaluation Report



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Acronyms

ClusterPolise: Smarter Cluster Policies for South East Europe

ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

ENPI: European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument

ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

ESF: European Social Fund

ETC: European Territorial Cooperation

EUSAIR: EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

EUSDR: EU Strategy for the Danubian Region

IPA: Instruments for Pre-Accession Assistance

JTS: Joint Technical Secretary

LP: Lead Partner

SC/STC: Steering Committee and Scientific Technical Committee

SEE: South East Europe

WG: Working Group

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Abstract

English version

ClusterPoliSEE is a strategic project, co-financed in the framework of the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme (SEE). The overall project budget is worth more than 5 million euros. Between March 2012 and December 2014, 25 partners covering 11 different South East Europe countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Albania, and Serbia) cooperated to strengthen the capacity of policy makers to deliver effective smart specialisation strategies for improving cluster policies. An additional Moldavian partner of high institutional level joined the partnership in 2013. This transnational project on cluster cooperation mobilised therefore both strong performing regions and weak performing regions, three quarter of the SEE Programme countries being represented. Other three elements enrich this complex multilevel partnership. Different governance levels are indeed represented, promoting vertical coordination among partners. National authorities cooperate with regional ones and with other locally grounded organisations. Multi-actor coordination also proved important within ClusterPoliSEE as both public and private stakeholders were involved. This particular provision facilitated unlocking the tacit territorial knowledge hold by local stakeholders. Finally, functional coordination also happened when same level territories - sharing challenges collectively - coordinated their response in order to provide a higher leverage effect. This complex multilevel partnership demonstrates European territorial cooperation projects' potential towards achieving policy learning and knowledge transfer through the so called 'Europeanisation' of policy practice, a central process in anchoring the idea of European and transnational integration in national, regional and local governance practices. The most important ClusterPoliSEE outputs (collaborative ICT platform, foresight exercise reports, study visits, pilot actions, and reflective policy learning mechanism pattern) generated results of three categories: stakeholders' and policy makers' involvement, increase of institutional and administrative capacity, improvement of (cluster) policies. Most transnational activities consisted of analysis and networking, and this seemed to influence the partners' expenditure capacity. Partners whose activities involved high reporting and managerial

competences e.g. WP leaders or Pilot action promoters were generally able to commit more funds than partners having operational responsibilities. International networking activities were carried out intensively during the whole lifecycle of the project, while capitalisation activities suffered a delay in the last project's phase. The ultimate step of the policy cycle has to be reached by truly enhancing cluster policies at regional level, and this will be monitored in relation to the follow-up of the project's pilot actions. Capitalisation elements are also relevant at EU level, in particular in the framework of the two macro-regional strategies covering the cooperation area, the EUSDR and the recently endorsed EUSAIR. ClusterPoliSEE can therefore be seen as a step in strengthening the capacity of policy makers to deliver effective smart specialisation strategies for improving cluster policies in South East Europe, accelerating the differentiation and structural change towards an economy based on knowledge.

Versione italiana

ClusterPoliSEE è un progetto strategico, cofinanziato nell'ambito del Programma Transnazionale di Cooperazione South East Europe (SEE). L'ammontare complessivo del progetto è di oltre 5 milioni di euro. 25 partner che coprono 11 Paesi dell'Europa sud orientale (Austria, Bulgaria, Croazia, Grecia, Ungheria, Italia, Romania, Slovenia, Slovacchia, Albania e Serbia) hanno cooperato, dal mese di marzo 2012 fino al mese di dicembre 2014, per rafforzare la capacità dei decisori politici di stabilire strategie efficaci di *smart specialisation* per migliorare le politiche di cluster. Un partner moldavo aggiuntivo di alto livello istituzionale si è unito al partenariato nel 2013. Questo progetto transnazionale di cooperazione sui cluster ha mobilitato quindi sia regioni con buone performance che regioni con performance deboli, con la capacità di rappresentare tre quarti dei Paesi del Programma SEE. Altri tre elementi arricchiscono questo complesso partenariato multilivello. Diversi livelli di governo sono infatti rappresentati, per promuovere il coordinamento verticale tra i partner. Le autorità nazionali cooperano con quelle regionali e con altre organizzazioni di livello locale. Anche il coordinamento multi-attore si è dimostrato importante all'interno di ClusterPoliSEE per come sono stati coinvolti sia i soggetti pubblici che privati. Questo particolare aspetto ha facilitato il passaggio di conoscenze tacite da parte degli stakeholder locali. Infine, il coordinamento funzionale si è manifestato anche quando territori dello stesso livello – attraverso la condivisione di sfide – hanno coordinato la loro risposta in modo da generare un effetto leva più elevato. Questo complesso partenariato multilivello dimostra il potenziale dei progetti europei di cooperazione territoriale per il conseguimento dell'apprendimento delle politiche e il trasferimento delle conoscenze attraverso la cosiddetta

'Europeizzazione' della pratica politica, un processo centrale nell'ancoraggio dell'idea di integrazione europea e transnazionale nelle prassi di governo nazionale, regionale e locale. Gli output più importanti di ClusterPolisee (*collaborative ICT platform, foresight exercise reports, study visits, pilot actions, and reflective policy learning mechanism pattern*) hanno generato risultati di tre categorie: coinvolgimento degli *stakeholders* e dei decisori politici, aumento della capacità istituzionale e amministrativa, miglioramento delle politiche (di cluster). La maggior parte delle attività transnazionali hanno riguardato analisi e creazione di reti e questo sembra aver influenzato la capacità di spesa dei partner. Partner le cui attività hanno richiesto elevate competenze manageriali e di rendicontazione, per esempio i leader dei WP o i promotori delle azioni pilota, sono stati generalmente in grado di impegnare più risorse rispetto ai partner con responsabilità di tipo operativo. Le attività di *networking* internazionale sono state svolte intensamente durante l'intero ciclo di vita del progetto, mentre le attività di capitalizzazione hanno subito un ritardo nell'ultima fase del progetto. La fase finale del ciclo della politica deve essere raggiunta realmente migliorando le politiche di cluster a livello regionale e questo sarà monitorato in relazione al *follow-up* delle azioni pilota del progetto. Gli elementi di capitalizzazione sono rilevanti anche a livello UE, in particolare nel quadro delle due strategie macro-regionali che coprono l'area di cooperazione, la EUSDR e la recentemente approvata EUSAIR. ClusterPolisee può quindi essere visto come un passo verso il rafforzamento della capacità dei decisori politici di stabilire strategie efficaci di *smart specialisation* per il miglioramento delle politiche di cluster nell'Europa sud orientale, accelerando la differenziazione e il cambiamento strutturale verso un'economia basata sulla conoscenza.

Methodological approach

The evaluation of the ClusterPoliSEE project was carried out from March to December 2014 on the basis of the requirements set out in the contract assignments and of the inputs received during the formal and informal meetings with the ClusterPoliSEE project partners. Keeping in mind the specificities of innovation-related projects and using relevant methodological tools, the evaluators examined the organisation of the ClusterPoliSEE project partnership, appraising also the outputs and results produced, and the change achieved at policy level, each time comparing the intended actions to the one effectively implemented. The theoretical framework, the evaluation process and the evaluation tools are illustrated below.

Theoretical framework

ClusterPoliSEE main objective *is to enhance the capacity of regional policy makers to confront, prevent and anticipate change, developing smart specialization strategies for cluster improvement, thus accelerating differentiation and structural change towards a knowledge-based economy.* Bearing this in mind, the approach adopted by the evaluators is organised around the following three theoretical pillars:

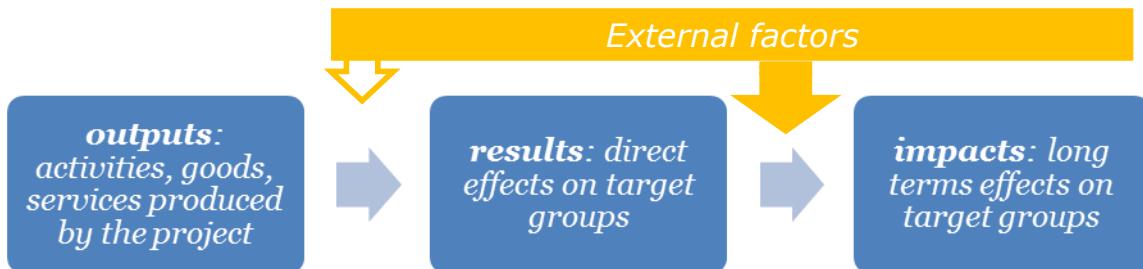
1) The reference to the 2007-2013 logical framework¹, with a clear distinction among:

- Outputs, which are the direct result of a certain operation², under the direct control of the project partnerships;
- Results and impacts, intended as the short-term (results) and long-term (impacts) effects on the project target groups, both also influenced by factors out of the direct control of the project partnership (see Figure 0-1).

¹ DG Regio, August 2006, *The New Programming Period 2007-2013 INDICATIVE GUIDELINES ON EVALUATION METHODS: MONITORING AND EVALUATION INDICATORS Working Document No. 2.*

² DG Regio, August 2006, p.6.

Figure 0-1 : 2007-2013 Logical Framework



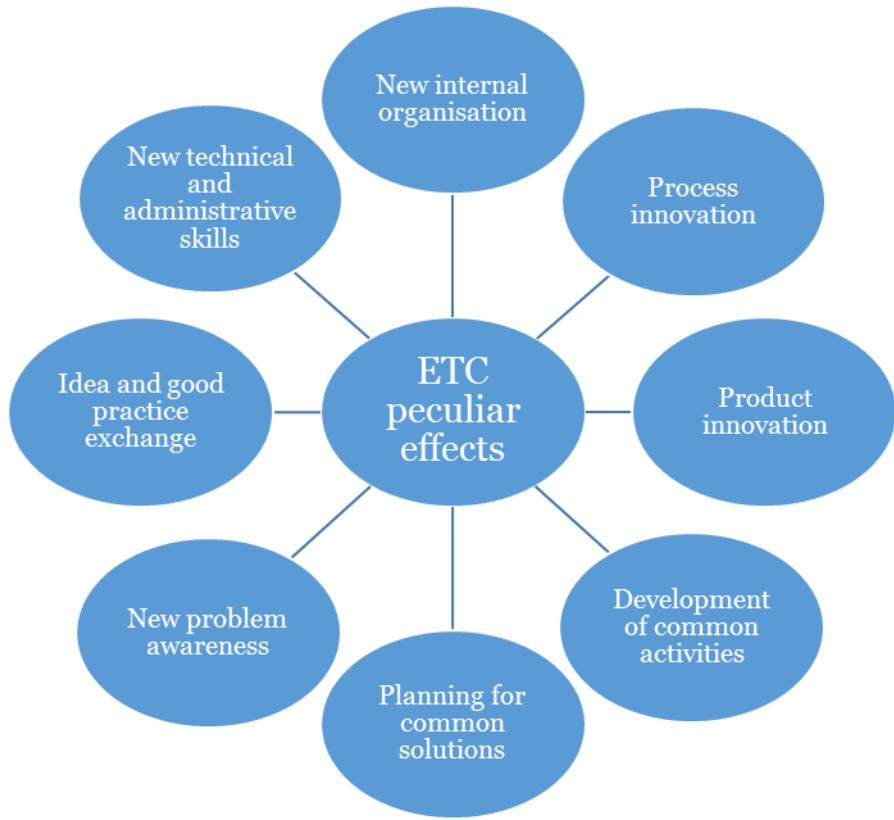
Source: t33

2) The reference to the peculiar effects (*results* and *impacts*, see Figure 0-1) of the territorial cooperation: as it clearly emerges from several European studies³, due to the geographical amplitude of reference, to the spending eligibility constraints and to the limited budget (especially when compared to other instruments of cohesion policy) ETC projects realise limited results in terms of tangible outcomes (e.g. employment or increases in infrastructures) but primarily produce changes in terms of behaviours and attitudes. The following Figure 0-2 synthetizes the typical effects/results that evaluators shall consider as typical of the ETC projects.

³ Interact (2013) 'The typology System in ETC programmes', ESPON (2012) TERCO - European Territorial Cooperation as a Factor of Growth, Jobs and Quality of Life. Applied Research 2013/1/9.

Final Report | Version 31/12/2012.

Figure 0-2: ETC peculiar effects

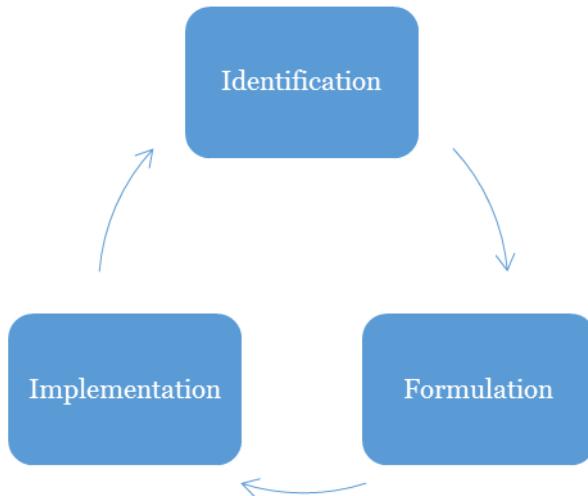


Source: Alpine Space Programme, 2012

3) The reference to the policy cycle framework, which helps to clarify the different types of effects which the project can achieve on the policy sub systems (See Figure 0-3). The project can in fact:

- Improve/modify the awareness of the policy makers and relevant stakeholder on specific needs, and in this way change the policy agenda → effects on the identification phase;
- Improve/modify the formulation of specific policies → effects on the formulation phase;
- Improve/modify the solutions adopted for tackling a specific problem/need → effects on the implementation phase.

Figure 0-3: Three main steps of the policy cycle



Source: t33

Evaluation process

Evaluation activities successively address key aspects of the project, covering all six project work packages (WPs):

- (1) Partnership: ***evaluation of the project management and coordination*** (focus on WP 1).
- (2) Outputs and results: ***evaluation of the project results***:
 - a. evaluation of the project's pilot actions (focus on WP 5), here briefly mentioned and extensively conducted in a second thematic report;
 - b. evaluation of the project's thematic interventions (focus on WP 3 and WP 4).
- (3) Capitalisation: ***capitalisation of the project results*** (focus on WP 2 and WP 6).

The comprehension of the project was facilitated by a continuous participation at the project meetings and events. During the evaluation work, t33 experts participated indeed at the 4th Technical and Scientific Committee and Steering Committee Meeting of Bucharest (31 March – 1 April 2014), contributed to the 5th Technical and Scientific Committee and Steering Committee Meeting of Maribor (10-11 June 2014) by facilitating a focus group on the Pilot actions, took part at the extraordinary Technical and Scientific Committee and Steering Committee Meeting of Brussels (7 October 2014) by presenting the evaluation of the Pilot actions. A t33 expert facilitated the interactive session (7 October 2014), which followed up the thematic debate 'Boosting innovation through interclustering strategies and smart specialisation policies', jointly organised – in the framework of the Open Days 2014 - by the transnational projects

ClusterPoliSEE (South East Europe) and CluStrat (Central Europe). Finally, a t33 expert facilitated the round table 'Boosting clusters policies and policy learning mechanisms in Europe', in the framework of the project Final Conference organised in Venice (26 November 2014). The evaluators took part therefore at five project meetings or events, organised in four different European countries. Thanks to this approach, the evaluation work turned to be embedded in the actual project development during a period of eight months, from end March until end November 2014.

As a strategic project, ClusterPoliSEE gathers a large number of project partners (25 PPs) coming from all across the SEE programme area and representing both public and private organizations active at different territorial levels. The evaluation shall first scrutinize ClusterPoliSEE's wide project partnership with the aim to verify the effectiveness of its management and coordination, focusing on WP1 'Transnational project and financial management'.

A smooth project development should allow each partner's implication in the projects' activities, visible through the amount of funds committed, and also looking at the delivered outputs and results. The second step of the evaluation shall thus assess the project outputs' capacity to influence cluster policies. This achievement can be reached at regional/national level e.g. in the regional/national Operational Programme 2014+ or at European/macroeconomic level e.g. macro-regional strategy. Learning during a project, which is based on networking and exchange of experiences, occurs more easily at project level and within partner organizations, than at regional or EU level. Three WPs are here analysed, WP 3 'Cluster Policy Learning Platform', WP 4 'Learning Process for Reflective Policy Making' and WP 5 'SEE Cluster Policy Learning Mechanism'.

Since a project is by definition time framed, partners shall capitalise on the expertise gained at the end of the project. The knowledge gained during ClusterPoliSEE implementation should help improving regional innovation policies as well as transnational policies. This last part of the evaluation intends to give project partners inputs on how to better capitalize on the project results to support the development of clusters in the cooperation area, thus strengthening the project results sustainability. WP 6 'Future Development of Clusters in SEE Area' is here considered, together with WP 2 'Communication activities', which prepared the ground for capitalisation through networking and dissemination.

As highlighted in the conclusion of the evaluation report dedicated to the pilot actions, their impact will be monitored during 2015 and will be the object of an additional evaluation report, to be issued at the beginning of 2016. This report is expected to provide some new elements related to the ClusterPoliSEE capitalisation at regional level.

Evaluators went through all evaluation steps resorting to appropriate evaluation tools.

Dedicated evaluation tools

The methodological approach followed by the evaluators builds on three main tools:

- (1) desk research, focusing on project documents and scientific sources;
- (2) guideline-based telephone interviews, and
- (3) a focus group, for a direct collection of stakeholders and partners views.

Desk research is the first tool evaluators have to use each time they start with a new evaluation stage. It is the basic starting point under all evaluation tasks because each requires documents originating from different actors and addressing evaluation relevant aspects at a variable scope to be reviewed. It grants a rapid framing of the political and economic context but also ensures a consistent informative basis for the following qualitative and/or quantitative analysis, allowing thus the evaluator to draw attention on strategic issues. Desk research focused on a significant series of ClusterPolisee project-related documents and of other printed or non-printed sources. Progress reports including the financial and output indicators represented the primary source. The most recent progress report available was the No. 6, covering a period from the project's beginning until May 2014. The great majority of the documents consulted (mainly studies corresponding to project's outputs) were available on the project on-line platform. Additional documentation was provided by the Lead Partner and by Sviluppo Marche, the Regional Development Agency of Marche Region.

Interviews and a focus group were then organised to impart the stakeholders and partners' perspective. **Guideline-based telephone interviews** were carried out to the lead partner Marche Region (Italy) and the other partners having carried out Pilot actions: IDA (Croatia), Region of Central Macedonia (Greece), North East Region (Romania), Trnava Region (Slovakia), Maribor Development Agency (Slovenia). In many assessment activities planned, information collected using document analysis need to be supplemented by semi-structured interviews. Indeed, individual interviews allow the evaluator to collect first hand qualitative information.⁴ The information gathered is elaborated by the evaluator who uses them to formalise his assessments, to comfort his insights and/or feed the debate with other evaluation stakeholders.⁵ The information collected through the interviews provided the basis for the thematic evaluation report dedicated to the pilot actions.

Furthermore, **a focus group** has been organised to appraise the pilot actions. Well-established method of qualitative research, the focus group takes the form of an organised and structured discussion with a selected

⁴ W.Bingham B. Moore, *How to interview*, New York, Harper

⁵ Lewis Anthony Dexter, *Elite and specialized interview*, Oxford, University of Oxford.

group of individuals to gain information about their views and experience, giving rise to divergent opinions for obtaining several perspectives about a single topic.⁶ It is a form of participatory evaluation, which turned to be particularly productive because it was immersed in an already structured process of monitoring and self-evaluation by the partners organising the pilot actions. It is well known that when project stakeholders are involved as co-participants, the conclusions of the evaluation study are more credible and more readily accepted.⁷ During this event held in Maribor (Slovenia) on the 10-11 June 2014 information collected by the desk research and the interviews were discussed and validated. Lessons learnt on the field and practical solutions adopted were also collectively formulated by the projects partners. The thematic evaluation report on pilot actions was presented by a t33 expert during the SC Meeting held the 7th of October 2014 in Brussels.

⁶ Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2002). *Qualitative Communication Research Methods*, 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

⁷ W Gibbs A (1997). Focus Groups Social Research Update Winter, University of Surrey, UK.

1. Partnership

1.1 Analysis

'Smarter Cluster Policies for South East Europe' (ClusterPoliSEE onwards) is a strategic project co-financed in the framework of the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme 2007-2013 (SEE onwards), under the priority 'Facilitation of Innovation and Entrepreneurship' - area of intervention 'Develop technology and innovation networks in specific fields'. The project is based on the Terms of Reference 1 'Policy Learning Mechanisms in Support of Cluster Development', published within the third call of March 2011 with the overall objective to improve public administration ability and capacity to enhance, develop and implement effective regional cluster policy through transnational development of policy learning understanding and mechanisms. ClusterPoliSEE objective consists indeed of enhancing the capacity of regional policy makers to confront, prevent and anticipate change, developing smart specialization strategies for cluster improvement, thus accelerating differentiation and structural change towards a knowledge-based economy in which all SEE regions can position themselves.

ClusterPoliSEE started in May 2012 and will be closed in December 2014. The project is led by Marche Region, an Italian regional authority. With a budget amounting to EUR 5.186.352, the project is based on a large partnership, covering **eleven different SEE programme countries**: eight EU Member States and three IPA countries when the project started. The strategic nature of the project required to cover all EU countries participating to the programme. Furthermore, the Terms of Reference explicitly encouraged the participation of non EU member programme country partners. The lead partner Regione Marche was encouraged therefore to involve partners based in IPA countries. Organisations from three Western Balkans countries (Croatia, Albania, and Serbia) became members of the partnership. It is worth noting that the first country, Croatia, entered the EU in 2013 and that Albania and Serbia are part of the recently endorsed EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). In addition, the Ministry of Economy of Moldova - an ENPI country - joined the project in 2013. The procedure was peculiar, as the partner applied directly to the SEE programme⁸ and the Lead Partner, in May 2013, issued a statement to express the acceptance of the inclusion of the new partner in the project. The reason of this enlargement of the partnership was of geopolitical level, referring to the improvement of the integration,

⁸ Considering that the ENPI funds were not available to the programme for the first and second call for proposals, SEE published in March 2013 the "Additional ENPI Call for partners from the Republic of Moldova".

competitiveness and consequently territorial cohesion of the SEE space in the area of cluster policies supporting economic development. It was considered that the opportunities of policy learning and policy improvements among the regions could allow weaker regions to gain from stronger ones, so supporting Republic of Moldova in reducing the gap with EU countries. Table 1-1 provides a complete picture of the project's geographic coverage.

Table 1-1: SEE countries coverage by ClusterPolisee

| SEE countries | Status | Funding | Cluster-PoliSEE | No. of partners |
|--|--|----------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Albania | Candidate | IPA | Yes | 1 |
| Austria | EU MS | ERDF | Yes | 2 |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina | <i>Potential candidate</i> | <i>IPA</i> | <i>No</i> | - |
| Bulgaria | EU MS | ERDF | Yes | 1 |
| Croatia | EU MS (since July 2013) | IPA | Yes | 1 |
| The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia | <i>Candidate</i> | <i>IPA</i> | <i>No</i> | - |
| Greece | EU MS | ERDF | Yes | 3 |
| Hungary | EU MS | ERDF | Yes | 2 |
| Italy | EU MS | ERDF | Yes | 4 |
| Republic of Moldova | <i>Neighbouring associated country</i> | <i>ENPI</i> | <i>n.a.</i> | 1⁹ |
| Montenegro | <i>Candidate</i> | <i>IPA</i> | <i>No</i> | - |
| Romania | EU MS | ERDF | Yes | 4 |
| Serbia | Candidate | IPA | Yes | 2 |
| Slovakia | EU MS | ERDF | Yes | 3 |
| Slovenia | EU MS | ERDF | Yes | 2 |
| Ukraine | <i>Neighbouring associated country</i> | <i>IPA</i> | <i>No</i> | - |

Source: t33

⁹ In this report the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Moldova is not included in the number of the ClusterPolisee partners. This choice is due to the fact the Republic of Moldova had a direct relationship with the programme and did not participate in the project administrative and financial reporting process. It has to be emphasised, however, that the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Moldova fully participated in the project activities, including the organisation of the last study visit (WP4), organised in Chisinau in February 2014.

The necessity to develop a strategic project suggested designing an extended partnership, not only in terms of countries but also in terms of number of participating members. In case of eight countries, it was decided indeed to involve more than one partner. Italy and Romania have four partners each; Greece and Slovakia have three partners each, while Austria, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia have two and Albania, Bulgaria and Croatia only one. This choice can be explained by the necessity to guarantee a variety of governance levels in the partnership potentially bearing the multifaceted elements needed to enhance policy learning mechanisms. The partnership subsequently includes both national and regional authorities, universities/scientific/research bodies, a chamber of commerce, non-governmental/not-for-profit organisation, regional development agencies. In Italy, a country featured by significant regional competences and experiences in the area of cluster policies, the national Ministry of Economic Development decided to join the project.¹⁰ It was the first case of participation of this ministry in an ETC project. This is the proof of the high priority given to this attempt to exploit the transnational dimension to improve the policy learning mechanisms in the area of clusters development in three Italian regions. More in detail, the Ministry demonstrated a particular interest in the possibility to exploit the synergy between ERDF and ESF tools, facilitated in the LP region because the same public official plays the role of both managing authorities.

The actors involved in the project present different characteristics not only in terms of territorial levels (national, regional or local), but also in terms of status (public or private organisation) or of specific functions/competencies¹¹. Table 1-2 provides a global picture.

¹⁰ The Italian Ministry of Economic Development did not manage financial resources within ClusterPolise. According to the programme flexibility rule, it was sponsored by the LP and had the possibility to participate at the SC/STC meetings (WP1), at the intermediate workshop (WP2), at the S3 the training session (WP3), at six study visits (WP4), in the WG final transnational workshop and at the final conference (WP2).

¹¹ The Terms of Reference required to involve in the partnership: (1) as a priority Regional public institutions responsible for cluster policy development and implementation (associated policy too); (2) national public institution responsible for cluster promotion and regional economic development; (3) academic and research departments involved in cluster studies; (4) R&D transfer and innovation promotion bodies and organisations; (5) cluster associations, confederations of clusters and networks; special interest groups.

Table 1-2: Multilevel governance categorisation of ClusterPoliSEE partners

| Cluster-PoliSEE countries | National authority | Regional Authority | University, scientific body | Chamber of commerce | NGO/Non-profit | Regional development agency |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Albania | 1 | | | | | |
| Austria | 1 | | | | | 1 |
| Bulgaria | 1 | | | | | |
| Croatia | | | | | | 1 |
| Greece | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Hungary | 1 | | | | 1 | |
| Italy | 1 | 3 | | | | |
| Romania | 1 | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Serbia | | 1 | 1 | | | |
| Slovakia | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | |
| Slovenia | | | 1 | | | 1 |
| Total | 7 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 4 |

Source: t33

In this sense the ClusterPoliSEE partnership represents an example of complex multilevel governance platform:

- 1) **First of all in terms of vertical coordination among partners from different territorial levels:** authorities of national level cooperate with regional authorities and in some cases with other organisations with a clear regional/local focus (regional development agencies, chamber of commerce). The Austrian partners, for instance, are a national authority and a regional development agency, whereas in Hungary a national authority and a non-governmental body are involved. Vertical coordination corresponds to the policy mechanisms that aim at promoting a better integration of the work of different government levels, on the basis of the subsidiarity principle, in order to make a more efficient use of public investments. These vertical coordination mechanisms should not be confused with hierarchical mechanisms, which are based on higher levels of government imposing policy decisions on lower tiers of government, and the participation to a common cooperation project is of great help to experiment this more sophisticated coordination potential. Indeed, it allows a common

understanding of a policy framework, in this case related to cluster development, and prepares the ground for a possible adoption of classical vertical coordination solutions, such as co-financing. In this sense, the project activities can be considered as an important occasion to increase the vertical coordination among actors of different territorial levels, and this has to be considered as particularly relevant in the perspective of future actions aiming at capitalising on the project activities (see for instance the Cluster initiative under WP 6).

- 2) **Secondly in terms of its capacity to mobilise both public and private stakeholders (multi-actor coordination).** Two non-governmental organisations are involved in ClusterPoliSEE, in Hungary and Slovakia. Furthermore, four universities/scientific bodies belong to the partnership, and one of them is governed by private law (Corallia). This dimension, which has been a key aspect of collaborative planning at the local and urban scales, only emerged recently in the European policy making discourse and associated practices. The mobilisation of stakeholders becomes a necessary step in order to activate 'their' specific knowledge and incorporate 'their' claims and concerns throughout the decision-making process, from policy design to implementation. Hence, a major added-value of stakeholder mobilisation has to do with accessing specific territorial knowledge that can improve the compatibility between the programme level overarching objectives and the territorial realities. Finally, an important benefit relates to unlocking new funding sources, especially when the private sector gets involved. In this sense ClusterPoliSEE can be considered as an important experience also in terms of the mobilisation of different types of actors dealing with cluster policies. However, it is important to underline that in the occasion of the pilot actions some partners encountered relevant difficulties in involving private actors. Even if it was reported how these difficulties were overcome, a not sufficient knowledge of the private dimension emerged, at least in the ex-ante phase when the actions to be developed on the territory were designed.
- 3) **Thirdly, in terms of functional coordination.** The case of Italy is peculiar: the lead partner is a regional authority (Marche Region), and decided to involve two more regional authorities (Emilia Romagna and Veneto Regions). This is a case of functional coordination in the sense that territories at the same level, sharing a certain set of challenges, collectively coordinate their response in order to provide a higher leverage effect. The contribution of the Veneto Region in the development of the ClusterPoliSEE project did not allow fully exploiting this potential.

The ClusterPoliSEE Final Working Group transnational meeting, organised in Brussels on the 7th of October 2014, was a valuable occasion to observe the multilevel governance potentials in action. During the project meeting, the partners were requested not only to report on their own activities, but they were also invited to participate in a series of quick workshops, dedicated to

Figure 1-1: Working Group transnational meeting session on 'Capitalisation and synergies with mainstream policies'



Source : t33

October 2014, after the debate 'Boosting innovation through interclustering strategies and smart specialisation policies', organised in the framework of the Open Days and in cooperation with the Central Europe funded project CluStrat (see chapter 3 for more details), three interactive sessions were also organised. They were attended by almost all ClusterPoliSEE project partners and were intended to cover three key issues: Capitalisation and synergies with mainstream policies, Smart specialization strategies, and Territorial cooperation. The first session, facilitated by Alessandro Valenza (project external evaluator), showed the capacity of the partners to interpret the ClusterPoliSEE products potential in relation with the 2014-2020 programming period, by indicating relevant Thematic Objectives, actors to be involved, solutions to be adopted. The second session, facilitated by Manuel Palazuelos Martinez (European Commission - DG Joint Research Center), demonstrated the awareness of the partners that a stronger involvement of the business sector in the design of a smart specialisation strategy is necessary. The third session, facilitated by Erika Fulgenzi (INTERREG Europe) demonstrated a good level of knowledge of the ETC tools, also in reference with the 2014-2020 period. It was also highlighted, however, that other opportunities of cooperation outside the ETC should be considered, as for instance: ESF, HORIZON 2020, COSME,

the main project issues: Innovation, R&D driven Cluster Development, Sustainability through Cluster Development, International Cluster Cooperation and networking, Financial Framework Improvement (Cluster Financing), Cluster and Regional Specialization, New skills and Jobs creation. The capacity to give an original contribution to all or at least to the majority of the workshops was shown by a high number of partners. This demonstrated that the development of ClusterPoliSEE has created a common understanding of the policy framework, and that the partners are more focused on the project contents and capitalisation than on administrative and budgetary issues, which often tend to gain a central role when a project comes to its conclusion. On the 8th of

ERASMUS +, EU networks dealing with clusters, EU Thematic Platforms. To summarise, the wide range of project partners involved in the networking sessions (belonging to different administration levels and also, even if in a more limited extent, to different typologies) showed the potential of ETC projects to consolidate the capacity to share experiences and propose solutions in a European context. ClusterPoliSEE can therefore be considered as a project contributing to the so called 'Europeanisation' of policy practices¹², an already observed policy learning and knowledge transfer phenomenon, which has been over the last programming periods a central process in anchoring the idea of European and transnational integration in national, regional and local governance practices.

On the other hand, the **functioning** of such a large partnership, exceeding the size of 10-20 partners indicated by the Terms of Reference, can be critically observed. The project is correctly based on a mechanism of sharing the managerial responsibilities. As often in ETC projects, the lead partner is responsible for the WP1 (Transnational project management), whereas other partners take on the responsibility of the remaining WPs. WP2 (Communication) is led by Maribor Development Agency (Slovenia), WP3 (SEE Cluster policy learning platform) is led by North East Regional Development Agency (Romania), WP4 (Learning process for reflective policy making) is led by Austria Wirtschaftsservice, WP5 (Cluster Policy Learning Mechanisms) is led by Corallia (Greece) and, finally, WP6 (Future development of cluster in SEE area) is led by Veneto Region (Italy). In spite of this balanced organisation where other partners have more definite but explicitly defined managerial responsibilities, the partners themselves demonstrated during the course of the project that they were fully aware of the difficulties to exploit the potential of the network. In the occasion of the 4th Technical and Scientific Committee and Steering Committee Meeting organised in Bucharest on the 1st of April 2014, all partners were required to give feedback on four aspects: (1) Relations among the partners, (2) WPs activities coordination, (3) Financial management and reporting and (4) Communication and dissemination. As foreseen by the project, an 'Assessment loop' has been produced. It emerged that a high involvement of all interested parties and a fluid co-operation between all project partners was difficult to achieve. A second sticking point concerned ineffective communication tools. Since the main issues deal with failing coordination and communication, the solutions envisaged were a closer project management, built on a well-defined steps and activities, borne by a fully operational tool ("the platform") and newly appointed communication managers.

¹² Böhme, K. & Waterhout, B. (2007) The Europeanization of planning, in: A. Carbonell & A. Faludi (Eds) *Gathering the Evidence – The Way Forward for European Planning?* pp. 1–27 (Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy); Adshead, M. (2013) EU cohesion policy and multi-level governance outcomes in Ireland: How sustainable is Europeanization?, *European Urban and Regional Studies* published online 3 July 2013.

Table 1-3: Three ClusterPolisee feedbacks shared during the assessment loop

| | PROBLEMS RAISED | SOLUTION |
|------------|---|---|
| (1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practical solution to involve inputs from ENPI partner (Moldovian Ministry of Economy). - No constant and effective communication among WPs leaders and partners. | To plan in a more structured way the next WPs activities, defining a constant and clear communication from the WGs and WPs leaders. |
| (2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness of partners regarding their particular tasks and responsibilities (exact timing and coordination by WPs leaders). - Lack of punctual definition of activities and clear schedule of the timing. - No practical and operative approach of the study visit. | To fix in a clearer way the next activities by the WPs responsibles, planning specific partner's roles and deadlines. |
| (3) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budget and project modification with necessary immediate reaction for the approval. - Lack of content oriented feedback from JTS. | NO SOLUTION, because it is not possible to change the SEE Programme rules. |
| (4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effective external show of the project. - Effective communication and dissemination activities. - Confusion between the platform and the website inputs requested from PPs. - Effective communication of project, main outputs through variable network in a coordinated manner (social networks, press, etc). - Strong platform with material and enhancement of user friendliness. - Difficulty in using the project platform. | Definition of a platform promotion strategy. Appointment of a communication manager from each partner. |

Source: ClusterPolisee Assessment loop, adapted by t33

However, there is a key element, which demonstrates the not effective involvement of the ClusterPolisee partnership in the sound management of the project. As reported by the lead partner, and as it emerges from an analysis of the quality of the progress reports (see next chapter), the

contribution given by the partners to the process of project reporting is not consistent and required a special care by the lead partner in reconstructing the information relevant to the result indicators. This observation should be matched with the overview of the financial reports. In the first period, only four partners reported certified expenditures, and three of them reported costs amounting to less than EUR 10.000. In the second period, the partners reporting less than EUR 20.000 were four, with more than ten partners not having started the financial reporting, yet. The average size of the third partner financial report amounts to less than EUR 30.000, covering a range from about EUR 3.000 to about EUR 50.000 and with several partners still not having started the financial reporting.

This picture clearly indicates a difficult situation in terms of project management, with the necessity for the lead partner to govern such a large partnership not entirely committed in the sound administration of the project.

1.2 Key findings

- The ClusterPoliSEE partnership is of key value in terms of multilevel governance and reflects the strategic nature of the project.
- The administrative capacity building process is clearly recognisable in the final phase of the project.
- Differences among the partners in terms of commitment in the project (managerial, results generation, financial) emerged, in spite of the LP efforts to guarantee a project balanced governance.
- An insufficient level of reporting, both on the technical and on the financial side, was reached by several partners.

2. Outputs and results

2.1 Analysis

As anticipated in the previous chapter, ClusterPoliSEE is articulated into six work packages (WPs) with the overall aim to enhance the capacity of regional policy makers to develop smarter cluster policies and with a particular focus on the transnational development of policy learning understanding and mechanisms.

This chapter is based on the analysis of the output and result indicators system as it was built by SEE Programme. The difficulties related to the evaluation of the European Territorial Cooperation are well known by the evaluator.

The complexity of this evaluation depends on the fact that cooperation should be understood as a continuous dynamic process that presents an intermediate target to reach other ultimate goals. This is particularly true in the case of ClusterPoliSEE, as far as the 'policy learning mechanism' is considered. Cooperation needs to develop over time and requires 1) a **favourable environment** enabling cooperation (including trust, a general interest in cooperation, a common language, etc.). In this environment, effective cooperation needs then to be developed along subsequent steps: 2) **Acquaintance and Interaction**: people and organisations need to become acquainted, start to interact and develop the necessary trust and interest in further cooperation, 3) **Working together**: people and organisations are able to address common challenges in an effective way and find solutions, 4) **Learning together**: people and organisations are committed to joint learning through the diffusion and exchange of knowledge and good practices. This latter is considered as the highest performance level of cooperation and a particularly ambitious goal in case of transnational cooperation, especially when such a wide cooperation area like the SEE is concerned. Seen under this perspective, and as underlined in the previous chapter, ClusterPoliSEE demonstrates its value as a robust exercise of capacity building done by a partnership strongly oriented towards the policy making side.

This rich and multifaceted understanding of the cooperation should not prevent, however, to 'account' the outputs and results of the cooperation projects. If the 'object' of the cooperation is peculiar, the 'system' of accountability is indeed common to the mainstream programmes. The ex post evaluation of the ETC is indeed fundamentally based on the indicators systems generated by the programmes using the information provided by

the projects. Preliminary results of the ex post evaluation indicated that ETC programmes make limited use of core indicators which were conceived primarily for the Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment (RCE) programmes. Whereas more than 90% of the Convergence and RCE programmes make use of these core indicators, less than one-third of the ETC programmes do so (including SEE Transnational Programme). As a consequence, programme specific indicators are widely used. Several of these refer to general achievements that are typical of the ETC objective, e.g. networks, cooperation, partnerships, solutions, while others are sector-specific. In order to provide ex post evaluators with clear evidence of cooperation achievements, all ETC programmes have been requested to provide in their 2013 Annual Implementation Reports a one page summary, identifying what the programmes has achieved, who has benefited and to provide evidence for these achievements.

As a conclusion, the key responsibility by each project to provide indicators-related information to the authorities managing the programme has to be underlined, as far as the overall evaluation of the European Territorial Cooperation is concerned.

ClusterPoliSEE indicators system

The **huge number of indicators** used makes a synthetic comprehension of the ClusterPoliSEE indicators system difficult. This is not just the case of ClusterPoliSEE, but is common to SEE funded projects. Each WP is has a series of output and result indicators. Not considering WP0, which concerned the preparation of the project, the output indicators are 56 and the result indicators amount to 34, as shown in the table below.

Table 2-1: Number of ClusterPoliSEE indicators

| | WP1 | WP2 | WP3 | WP4 | WP5 | WP6 | WP6 |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Output indicators | 9 | 11 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 56 |
| Result indicators | 5 | 6 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 34 |
| Total | 14 | 17 | 12 | 18 | 14 | 15 | 90 |

Source: ClusterPoliSEE application form

The Application Form includes an additional overall list of indicators, where the indicators are classified in two groups. The first groups is just entitled 'Indicators', whereas the second one is called 'Project specific indicators'. The list includes both output and result indicators. It shows some inconsistencies with the list of indicators referred to the single work packages, with 38 output indicators (18 programme indicators and 20

project specific indicators) and 35 result indicators (19 programme indicators and 16 project specific indicators).

This duplicity is reflected in the progress reports, to be filled in at partner and at lead partner level. As a first step, it is necessary to insert the output and result indicators in the sheet 3 'Activities per WPs', after the description of the activities carried out under each WP. In case of sheet 3, either the partner or the lead partner has the responsibility to type the indicator description, as it is formulated in the Application Form with reference to each WP. On a second step, the information relevant to the indicators have to be inserted in sheet 4 'Indicators', where the programme indicators are already listed (output and result indicators), and where there is the possibility to add the project specific indicators (output and result).

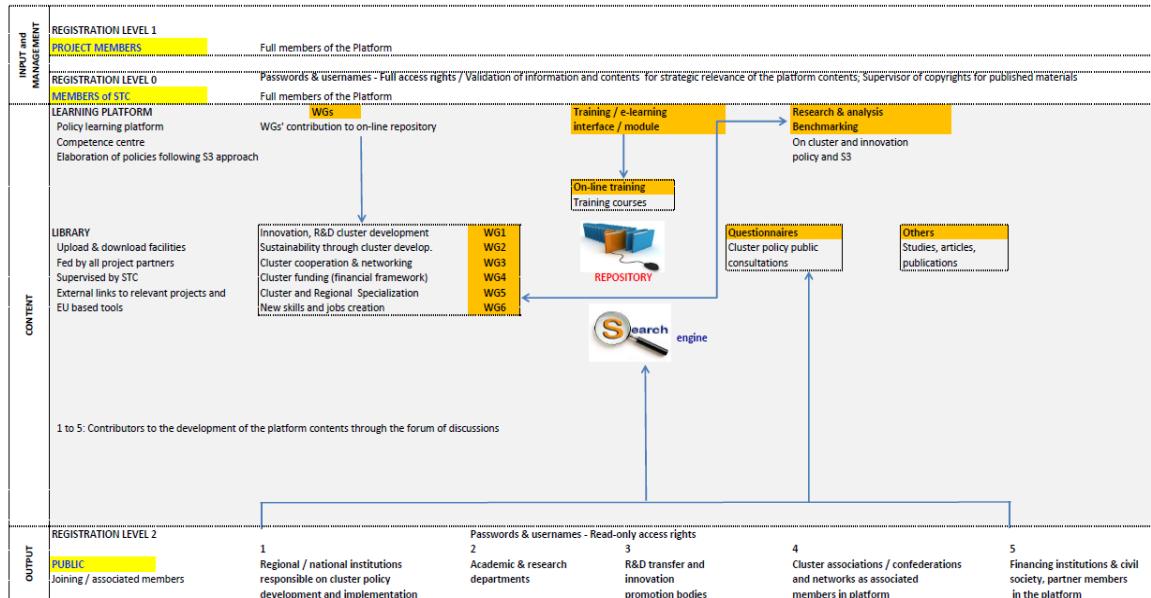
It clearly emerges that the ex-ante indicators system is rather rich and complex, and the use of the indicators in the implementation phase requires a profound knowledge of the application form and the capacity to replicate the information in a not fully consistent framework. These elements could have contributed to the low level of transmission of the indicators-related information, already mentioned in the previous chapter.

ClusterPolisee on-line platform

An element having enormously facilitated the shared understanding of the project achievements is the on-line platform (see: Figure 2-1). Thanks to the platform, it is possible to access to most outputs produced by the project. This also facilitated the elaboration of the present chapter, focused on the outputs and results generation by the project. The Cluster PoliSEE Learning Platform was created with the aim to set up a collaborative ICT platform to improve SEE (South East Europe) cluster policies by cooperative learning, policy transfer and information exchange between SEE policy makers through an interactive web-based support for mutual learning.



Figure 2-1: Architecture of the on-line platform



Source: ClusterPolisee

The official language of the learning platform is English. On the Homepage a search engine and links to social networks (LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter) are available. The platform provides both, an open and a reserved access area. The first one is open to the general public also considered as 'external users' who have read-only and download rights on the documents posted on the public section of the platform reachable through a search engine. Other publicly accessible information includes sections like: *News*, *Library*, *Meeting Point*, *Market Place* and *Partners* (containing an interactive map with the location, the website and other information about the partners). The reserved area is dedicated to the project partners or any other potential subsequent members who can access through personal login data. This private area in addition to the search engine provides:

- Document management space for file sharing and archiving, private messaging, discussion forums, video-audio conferencing (webinars), etc;
- Online repository (upload of documents and internal repository structuring module);
- Task and project management.

In the platform Concept Paper it is indicated that there are two different access patterns within the reserved area and this decision was motivated on the following grounds:

- the log in process of **all the full partners**, based on the personal access pattern, will reveal accurately which partners created folders, subfolders, uploaded, changed or deleted documents, made notifications, private messaging, participated to webinars, at what

time, etc. by so contributing to make the workspace easy to be managed and understood;

- the second accessing pattern is designed **for the STC members only**, as they are the only ones meant to strategically provide the platform operation by validating uploaded documents (in respect with the Intellectual Copyright), providing inputs and constant feedback and relevance of the platform content.

There is therefore a permanent traceability of the users and activity carried out within the platform structure. Taking into account the fact that all full members have full writing/reading-changing rights on all the internal documents, they will be simultaneously, equally and seamlessly held responsible for both inputs and outputs.

The individual profile provides access to: DOCS, CAPITALIZATION, COMMUNITY IDEAS, FAQ, WP AREA and E-LEARNING. Moreover, an interactive calendar is available in the personalized Desktop. This calendar, however, is not fully updated and events are shown only by month and not by date.

The **Documents** Section is further divided into seven (Working Group) sections containing documents related to the responsibility area of each working group.

The **E-learning** section is available in English and Italian. It has a separated homepage containing: the virtual WGs Meeting Rooms, the Message Box and Chat Box of the users, the managers, tutors and academics profiles. This is the actual interaction area between the project partners and stakeholders, which provides services such as instant messaging and chatting, forums and site blogs and other navigation facilitating tools such as:

- a research engine by *Tags*;
- *Site Badges* (not available yet);
- *Calendars* (where partners can manage the subscriptions and export the files of the previous events).

ClusterPoliSEE achievements: analysis per WP

The following analysis is based on the progress reached by the project at the date 31/05/2014, which means seven months before the project's conclusion, postponed to 31/12/2014 from the original date 31/10/2014. The sixth report covers therefore a period of twenty-five months, starting from 01/05/2012, the date when the project started. Looking at WP 2 and WP 6, it is worth noting that the evaluators considered in addition the outputs generated until the end of November 2014, as they were transmitted by the LP.

As already mentioned, ClusterPoliSEE is articulated into six work packages. Each of them will be analysed in terms of fulfilment of the output and result

indicators, relying on the information provided in the report. On the one hand, it is necessary to underline that the whole evaluation exercise - at project, at programme and at EU level - is based on the assumption that information supplied by the indicators are regularly transmitted by all the parties involved. On the other hand, it is also necessary to recognise that in case of ClusterPoliSEE the lead partner had in several cases the necessity to reconstruct the indicator actual values, starting from the evidences generated by the outputs. This was due to the not regular receiving, by the lead partner, of the technical information from the partners' progress reports. This element represented an additional managerial work for the lead partner, and also an additional responsibility. Seen from another perspective, this reduces the possibility to appraise the administrative capacity building generated by the project. Accountability is one of the key concepts when institutional and administrative capacity is concerned, and ClusterPoliSEE represents a not balanced and fully shared case of project accountability.

WP 0 is dedicated to project preparation and does not include indicators. **WP 1** concerns Transnational and project management and was necessarily guided by the lead partner, Marche Region (Italy). The analysis of the output indicators shows that the project progressed regularly, with the creation (appointment format and regulation) of the Steering Committee, the organisation of the Working Groups, the elaboration of the monitoring and elaboration plan and the already mentioned assessment loop report, aimed at facing the main difficulties encountered by the partnership. Considering the duration of the project and the number of partners, meetings organisation was an important aspect in the project development. Six ordinary and an extraordinary Technical and Scientific Committee and Steering Committee Meetings were organised from September 2012 until November 2014. They were located in five project countries (Italy, Austria, Greece, Romania, Slovenia), and in Brussels. The evaluator participated at the 4th and 5th Technical and Scientific Committee and Steering Committee Meetings, respectively organised in Bucharest on the 1st of April and in Maribor on the 10th and 11th of June 2014, and at the extraordinary Technical and Scientific Committee and Steering Committee Meeting of Brussels organised on the 6th of October 2014. In all occasions, it was possible to verify on field the high participation and interaction by the project partners. To measure the results, the 'Setting up of the Steering Committee' and the 'Establishment of the common monitoring and evaluation systems' were selected as indicators. It is worth noting that the conceptual level of these results is not significantly different from this of the outputs. It is therefore hard to assess the regularity, timeliness and completeness of the information flow, which is the main achievement in each WP 1. This kind of information is provided in the description of the activities fulfilled, where it is underlined that the lead partner managed to obtain all the technical and financial information, which were necessary to guarantee a regular reporting process. As emerged from the desk analysis

and as already underlined, the information provided by the partners was not always complete and this required an additional effort by the lead partner.

As usual in EU funded projects, **WP 2** is dedicated to Communication and is led by the Maribor Development Agency (Slovenia). The outputs include a communication plan, promotional paper materials, web solutions, multimedia materials, events, press releases. The level of fulfilment of the output indicators is high, even if additional efforts are required on two sides. 23% of the expected press releases have still to be issued, and this seems to be feasible in the last project period, especially if the Brussels and Venice based events are considered. It is suggested to produce a complete press clipping, if possible with short summaries in English of the press releases in the different project languages, in order to make the project's press communication easily accessible (and measurable) when the project will be concluded. At the moment, ten press releases are published on the project website. Simple press releases and articles actually published by the press are listed together. More evidence could be given to this second group, considering that it represents the information actually received by the wide public. A second point requiring additional efforts is the production of the project leaflets in the national languages. According to the relevant output indicator, less than 50% of the leaflets were produced. According to the evaluator's findings in a series of recent case studies, the spreading of traditional communication tools in the national languages is still to be considered as a necessary communication action. On the other side, the multimedia outputs production and dissemination has to be appreciated. The ClusterPoliSEE videoclip, based on solutions facilitating the comprehension also by viewers with a modest command of the English language, is not only published on the project website, but is also published on Vimeo, a social network allowing to access high quality videos. It is also worth noting that ClusterPoliSEE opened its own YouTube channel, the most used platform for sharing video contents. These kinds of solutions are expected to help reaching the target value related to the indicator 'Wide public reached through social media, networking tools and ClusterPoliSEE videoclip'. It has to be underlined that under WP 2 two international events were organised. The intermediate workshop entitled 'Cluster Policies in the Programming Period 2014-2020' was organised in Novi Sad (Serbia) in November 2013, with the participation of Serbian ministers, a representative of the Marche Region's government and a representative of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development. The final conference was organised in Venice (Italy) one year later, in November 2014, with contributions by the European Commission, the SEE JTS and the Italian Ministry of Economic Development. Among the results, the one demonstrating the strongest logical relationship with the above mentioned outputs is 'Website monthly visits during the project'. In this case, the target value was particularly low, amounting to 50. It is surprising that the actual value reached amounts only to this modest target value. This could be explained by technical problems related with the insertion of actual data higher than the target ones. Concerning the two remaining result indicators,

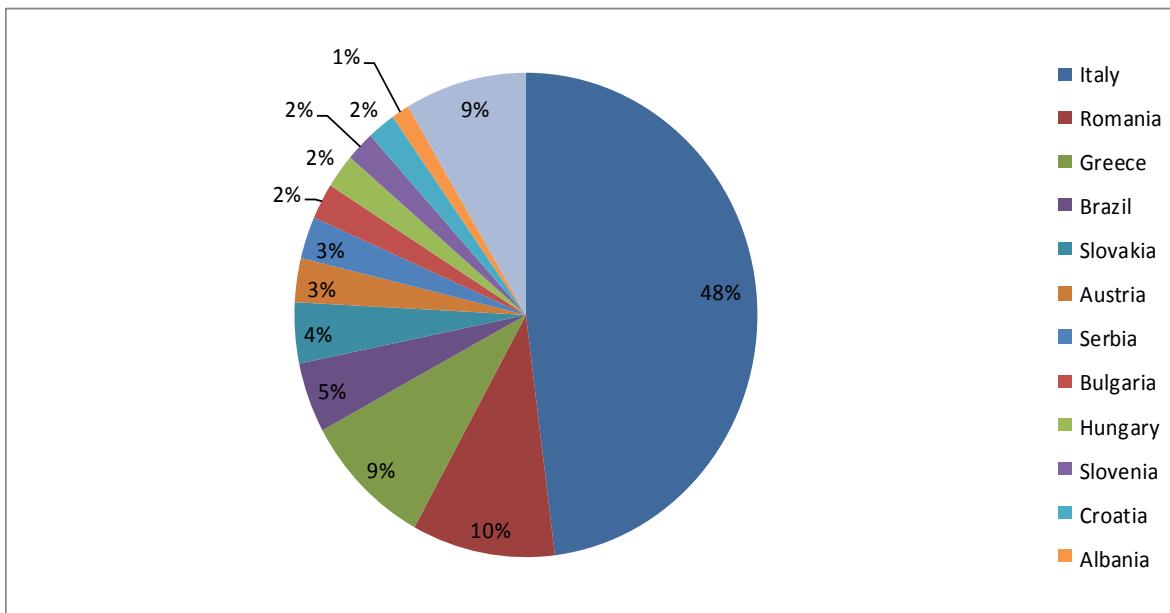
i.e. people reached by the periodical newsletters, it must be observed that they seem to be more of output level. This means that they do not totally capture the 'change', which could be in this case the actual interaction and use of the contents received by the policy makers and stakeholders.

WP 3 is entitled 'Cluster policy learning platform' and is led by the North East Regional Development Agency (Romania). It is aimed at setting up the already mentioned collaborative ICT platform, which offers the basis for the policy learning process. When used by the project partners, and therefore accessed through username and password, the platform enables to enter a series of areas (My Desktop, Partners, Docs, Capitalization, Community ideas, FAQ, WP area, E-learning) and so to access all significant project documental outputs, as it was explained in the previous paragraph. This opportunity is particularly valuable in a project of such a significant size and mainly focused on a common learning mechanism. More in detail, it can be observed that the regular use of definite templates, for instance in case of the reports of the Pilot actions (WP 5 act. 5.2), cannot be considered as an obvious starting point, but has to be appreciated as a result in terms of harmonisation, especially when such a large partnership is considered. If seen by an external user of the platform, it makes the ClsuterPolisee outputs understandable and usable. The on-line platform, however, reflects the project structure, which is rather complex and difficult to be shared by the organisations not having followed its progress since the formulation phase. This is the reason why a more intuitive organisation of the platform, joined with activities promoting its main contents, could be part of the capitalisation phase (see next chapter). The envisaged outputs were therefore produced, including the Training pack for sharing S3 approach. When the Marche Region Pilot Action was developed, it was however observed that the use of the on-line platform was not significant as it was expected. This point is confirmed by the result indicator 'Stakeholders with increase awareness involved in platform public consultation (rate 1 to 20 for each PPs involved in mutual learning activities)', which target value was not reached.

Google Analytics data allow inquiring the actual use of the platform (Figure 2-2). The platform started to be used from the 1st of September 2013. There are in total 3.083 sessions, 42.8% of which are new sessions. A session corresponds to the time period in which a user interacts with the website. The rest (57.2%) are returning visitors. The total number of visited pages is 30.589, hence 9.9 pages per session. There are in total 1.318 users (including public users and users accessing by personal account) and the average accession time is of 9.22 minutes. Most o sessions (1.111) lasted 0-10 seconds, instead for the visited pages. Most of them (13.337) were visited for 1801+ seconds. The longer time period spent for visiting particular pages than for the sessions can be explained by the fact that public users started very short term sessions and account users instead visited pages for working and thus for a longer time period.

A country based analysis/classification shows that Italy is the country from where the platform was used the most (48.04%), both in absolute terms and among the project partner countries. The percentage of use of the platform from Romania and Greece was also significant. Slovakia, Austria, Serbia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia and Albania follow.

Figure 2-2: Use of the on-line platform by Country



Source: t33, data gathered from Google Analytics

The use from Brazil is an anomaly, which could be justified as a series of attempts to attack the web system.

Looking at the other countries, the difference between the countries that used the platform the most and the ones that used it the least is important in terms of percentage. However, two factors should be considered:

- 1- Brazil taken out of the classification, the first eleven countries making a consistent use of the platform correspond to the eleven project countries.
- 2- The number of project partners from each country also influences the use intensity, i.e. four project partners are from Italy and four are from Romania, and these countries are the ones using the platform the most. On the other hand, Albania and Croatia – the last two countries – are represented only by one partner each.

The last note can be confirmed also by the number of new users for each country: 29.54% for Italy and only 2.26% for Albania. On a city based analysis/classification, Genoa (Italy) is the city which accessed more often and has an average time spent on the website of about 16 minutes. This is due to the fact that the platform was generated by a company situated in Genoa. Hence it is a technical use of the platform rather than a use of its

content. Ancona (Italy) is the second city in terms of use of the platform. This can be linked to this city being the LP's location.

Access to the platform – from 1st of December 2013 – is also made from the social networks. This amounts to 4% of the total accesses. The most used social network is Facebook, followed by Blogger, Twitter and LinkedIn, which surprisingly (even if it is a professional network) is the least used one.

The most clicked destination pages within the platform are: the *Homepage*, the *Reserved Area*, the *Documents* area (*WGs* and *AREAs*) the *Forum* and the *News*.

WP 4 content is the 'Learning process for reflective policy making'. It is intended to create a common framework of understanding among the partners and to develop a policy learning mechanism consisting of the following steps: consideration of past actions, visions in the future, analysis of current contexts, working with parallel contexts. These steps are clearly recognisable from the outputs published on the on-line platform, where the documents related to Act. 4.1 'Learning inputs from past actions analysis', Act. 4.2 'New contribution from innovative data sources gathered from study visits', Act. 4.3 'Policy learning from current regional policies framework', Act. 4.4 'Learning by understanding and working with parallel contexts' are accessible. Activity 4.4 implied a series of study visits involving several members of the partnership and covering seven countries. The study visits were the following: Sophron (Hungary) in January 2013, Vienna (Austria) in March 2013, Athens (Greece) in April 2013, Sofia (Bulgaria) in June 2013, Nitra (Slovakia) in June 2013, Novi Sad (Serbia) in November 2013, Chisinau (Moldova) in February 2014. The correct development of WP4 is reflected in the output indicators as they are presented in the sixth Progress Report: all actual values correspond to the target values, and this demonstrates a careful management of such a crucial work package. However, result indicators do not really allow capturing the information related to a clearly recognisable change. When 'Staff members with increased capacity' are mentioned, the way to verify this figure is for instance related to the participation in a study visit. This is more to be associated to an output and does not clearly represent a change in terms of administrative capacities. If we consider that these figures were in a certain extent reconstructed by the lead partner on the basis of the project outputs, it emerges that the quality of the monitoring process could be enhanced.

WP 5, which content is the 'Cluster policy learning mechanism', is the most easily interpretable, not only because of the clear link between the activities, but also because of the presence of pilot actions, an on-field activity presenting clear evidences. The pilot actions are the object of a second specific evaluation report, based on an advanced self-assessment by the partners involved and on a series of interviews, which culminated in a focus group. The effective leadership of WP 5 by Corallia, which culminated with the key contribution given in the occasion of the Final Working Group

transnational meeting of Brussels (October 2014), has to be considered as another successful factor. WP 5 starts with the development of new policy learning mechanisms, prepared by the **six vertical working groups** (Innovation/R&D driven Cluster Development, Sustainability through Cluster Development, International Cluster, Cooperation and Networking, Financial Framework Improvement, Clusters and Regional Specialisation, New skills and Jobs creation). The working groups produced **six new policy learning mechanisms** (1 per thematic area) and respective set of measures and one multi-level cross department policy learning mechanism (WG7) that crosscuts all six thematic areas. This complex achievement is presented in the report 'Development of new policy learning mechanisms in SEE priority area', prepared by Corallia. It illustrates the concept of systemic innovation, agreeing with the conclusions of the NESTA study 'Joined-Up Innovation – what is systemic innovation and how can it be done effectively?' issued in 2013, and deepens the relationships between smart specialisation strategies and cluster policies. WP 5 also includes an output dedicated to the reflection on the policy making mechanism pattern, which highest value consists of presenting the reflective policy making perspectives of ClusterPoliSEE project partners (representing eleven different South East Europe countries). This WP provided also a set of policy measures, which represent an important basis for the WP 6, which is focused on the capitalisation of the project main achievements. The outputs of the projects, including also the mentioned Pilot actions, are clearly related with the two results envisaged in WP5. They are the cooperation network, which consolidation emerges from the sharing of the WP 5 methodology and the improvement of the regional-based cluster policies by mutual learning. The issue of the actual application in the regional/national policies and programmes of the policy measures identified in the framework of ClusterPoliSEE is still open, and represents the main challenge in terms of sustainability of the project. This will be further discussed in the next chapter dedicated to capitalisation. Even if this concept does not belong to the 2007-2013 programming period debate on the indicators, in this case also the term 'impact' could be used. Only a successful capitalisation phase, will really allow continuing monitoring such a key element for the long-lasting effects of the project.

WP 6, as already mentioned, is dedicated to the 'Future development of cluster in SEE area'. Led by Regione Veneto, suffered some delay. The sixth Progress Report did not include any information on the outputs produced and results generated by this WP. In September 2014 the report 'Transnational Foresight for South East Europe' was issued, with the aim to aggregate the results of the foresight exercises done at regional level and to draw conclusions in a SEE perspective. Finally, in October 2014 the 'Foresight exercise: Diagnosis report' was made available to the partnership. This document offers an analysis of the materials collected during WP4 and by the working groups to prepare the ground for the SEE Cluster Initiative and the development of the Joint Strategy and Sustainability Plan. This report culminates with the elaboration of a model allowing to connect the issues emerged within the 6 WG areas

(Innovation/R&D driven Cluster Development, Sustainability through Cluster Development, International Cluster, Cooperation and Networking, Financial Framework Improvement, Clusters and Regional Specialisation, New skills and Jobs creation). For each area the various aspects related to the cluster policy are investigated, always looking at the possibility to exploit the links with the other areas. The analysis confirmed the profound diversity that features the SEE area, but also indicated that training and evaluation are common challenges. Furthermore, it emerged that in this area of Europe the creation of suitable infrastructures and the improvement of the cluster well-functioning still represent key factors.

The next chapter is aimed at contributing to the capitalisation solutions to be adopted. This is indeed the main challenge of ClusterPoliSEE at this stage, and is considered by the lead partner as the highest priority.

The delay of WP 6 had also an impact on the project's financial performance. The expenditure, however, has to be considered not only in relation to WP 6. ClusterPoliSEE is indeed a project featured by a modest level of spending, which cannot be simply related to the delays suffered in WP 6. ERDF partners' accumulated expenditure amounts to 42.27%, whereas IPA partners reach the slightly lower percentage of 40.55%. If linked with the good level of achievement of the project outputs, these data seem to suggest that the transnational activities, mainly consisting of analysis and networking, can be carried out with less resources than it is originally planned. At this regard, the case of partners like Ecoplus and UKS, having contributed to the project activities with competence but having reduced their own financial resources, is remarkable. This element could encourage working on the sustainability of the network.

Table 2-2 shows that the expenditure capacity tends to rise, when the partners are involved in management activities or when they are involved in on-field activities. Among the WP leaders, only Veneto Region is below the average expenditure level while among partners having promoted pilot actions, only PKM and TTSK are below the average expenditure level. This could be due to a higher competence in the reporting activities, or could also indicate that the managerial activities, in transnational cooperation, are still particularly demanding.

Table 2-2: Expenditure per partner at Progress Report 6

| | <i>Country</i> | <i>Accumulated expenditure – Report 6</i> | <i>Lead partner</i> | <i>WP leader</i> | <i>Pilot action promoter</i> |
|------------------------------|----------------|---|---------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| Marche Region | <i>Italy</i> | 66,43% | X | X | X |
| Emilia Romagna Region | <i>Italy</i> | 64,01% | | | |
| Veneto Region | <i>Italy</i> | 8,07% | | X | |

| | <i>Country</i> | <i>Accumulated expenditure – Report 6</i> | <i>Lead partner</i> | <i>WP leader</i> | <i>Pilot action promoter</i> |
|--------------------|-----------------|---|---------------------|------------------|------------------------------|
| PBN | <i>Hungary</i> | <i>43,12%</i> | | | |
| MDA | <i>Slovenia</i> | <i>44,94%</i> | | <i>X</i> | <i>X</i> |
| BSMEPA | <i>Bulgaria</i> | <i>53,52%</i> | | | |
| UHCC | <i>Greece</i> | <i>49,32%</i> | | | |
| PKM | <i>Greece</i> | <i>5,91%</i> | | | <i>X</i> |
| Corallia | <i>Greece</i> | <i>57,95%</i> | | <i>X</i> | |
| AWS | <i>Austria</i> | <i>50,78%</i> | | <i>X</i> | |
| Ecoplus | <i>Austria</i> | <i>42,73%</i> | | | |
| ADR Nordest | <i>Romania</i> | <i>70,79%</i> | | <i>X</i> | <i>X</i> |
| IPE | <i>Romania</i> | <i>47,90%</i> | | | |
| NASR | <i>Romania</i> | <i>0%</i> | | | |
| UKS | <i>Slovakia</i> | <i>24,27%</i> | | | |
| TTSK | <i>Slovakia</i> | <i>36,32%</i> | | | <i>X</i> |
| UP SRC | <i>Slovenia</i> | <i>32,14%</i> | | | |
| MH SR | <i>Slovakia</i> | <i>0%</i> | | | |
| MAG | <i>Hungary</i> | <i>17,01%</i> | | | |
| MININD | <i>Romania</i> | <i>4,57%</i> | | | |
| IDA | <i>Croatia</i> | <i>52,38%</i> | | | <i>X</i> |
| PSE | <i>Serbia</i> | <i>64,26%</i> | | | |
| AIDA | <i>Albania</i> | <i>1,71%</i> | | | |
| UNNSEFS | <i>Serbia</i> | <i>49,99%</i> | | | |

Source: t33, data gathered from Progress Report 6

ClusterPoliSEE results' contribution to change

In the previous chapter the limited capacity of some result indicators to capture the change generated by the project was underlined. However, looking at the project as a whole it emerges the orientation of the project toward the realization of three distinct categories of changes:

1. Improvement of the skills and competences of the involved staff members;
2. Increase of awareness of relevant stakeholders and policy makers on the clusters' potentials;
3. Improvements of the formulation of the innovation policies of the area.

Table 2-3: Link between result indicators and categories of change

| WP | Result indicators | Category |
|----|---|--|
| 3 | Nr of Regional based cluster policies improved by sharing policies* | |
| 4 | Nr of regional based cluster policies improved by fulfilling information gap data | |
| | Nr of regional policies with improved policy making process and content in effective regional support cluster development | |
| 5 | Nr of Regional based Cluster Policies improved by mutual learning | |
| | Nr of Regional Based cluster policies improved by joint strategic policy plan and sustainability plan | policies improved |
| | Nr of Strategies adopted at governmental level* | |
| 6 | Nr of EU cluster policies in SEE (2013-2020) improved by foresight exercise recommendation* | |
| | Nr of EU cluster policies in SEE area re-addressed due to ClusterPoliSEE recommendations* | |
| 1 | Nr of Project partners staff members with increased project management capacity and skills (financial and administrative)* | |
| 2 | Nr of Strengthening of the PPs staff members capacity and skills to manage and implement communication tools* | |
| 3 | Nr of Staff members with increased capacity on learning mechanism though platform management (knowledge/skills) | |
| | Nr of staff members with increased capacity (knowledge/skills) in learning process due to the removal of main barriers to learning | staff increased capacity |
| 4 | Nr of staff members with increased capacity (knowledge/skills) in shaping effective regional cluster policies due a better understanding of effects of policy instruments, of current framework and future challenges | |
| | Nr of staff members with increased capacity (knowledge/skills) in shaping effective regional cluster policies due to a better knowledge of parallel contexts involved in regional cluster policy | |
| | Nr of policy makers directly reached by the periodical newsletters, press conferences and releases in the involved areas* | |
| 2 | Nr of cluster stakeholders directly reached by the periodical newsletters, press conferences and releases in the involved areas* | |
| | Nr of wide public reached through social media, networking tools and ClusterPoliSEE videoclip* | |
| 3 | Nr of policy makers with increased awareness through platform public consultation (knowledge/skills)Regional based cluster policies improved by sharing policies* | |
| | Nr of stakeholders with increase awareness involved in platform public consultation (rate 1 to 20 for each PPs involved in mutual learning activities)* | stakeholders/policy makers involvement |
| 4 | Nr of Stakeholders involved in learning process (through platform and consultation mechanism) with increased awareness on current situation and future challenges | |
| | Nr of stakeholders involved in spreading over study visits lesson learnt (rate 1 to 20 for each PPs involved in mutual learning activities) | |
| 5 | Nr of Policy makers with enhanced capacities to identify and evaluate factors of competitiveness (critical mass) and concentrate | |

| WP | Result indicators | Category |
|----|--|----------|
| | resources on key priorities | |
| | Nr of Policy makers with enhanced ability and capacity due to a reflective policy making | |

Source: t33, data gathered from Progress Report

Bearing in mind the theoretical framework described in the initial chapter 'Methodological approach', the three categories of changes can placed:

a) Under a **different degree of influence of the external factors**. According to the 2007-2013 logical framework results (and impacts) should be considered as the effects on the target groups and in this sense are submitted to the influence of factors which are not under the direct control of the project. In this sense, even if the information provided in the project progress reports (result indicators achievements) attest of significant results being realized, the potential influence of other external factors is not clarified. To cover this gap, evaluators have analysed project outputs (in particular WPs 3, 4 and 5 outputs) and collected specific qualitative inputs from the interviews. From these analysis it emerges that project expected results can be placed under a different degree of influence of the external factors. More precisely:

- the influence of the external factors appears lower in the case of the contribution to the *Improvement of the skills and competences of the involved staff members* (category 1). In other terms, even if the progress reports do not provide specific information regarding training activities external to the project involving project partners, the analysis of the project outputs highlights that project partners were strongly committed towards analysis, study visits and reporting activities, which have certainly contributed to increase their skills and competences.
- The influence of external factors appears higher in the case of the contribution to the *Increase of awareness of relevant stakeholders and policy makers on the clusters potentials* (category 2); *Improvements of the formulation of the innovation policies of the area* (category 3). In particular, the qualitative information collected through the interviews attest the difficulties faced by the project partners in involving the policy makers and relevant stakeholders as well as in estimating the influence on the formulation of the 2014-2020 innovation policies due that in several case the formulation of the policy still need to be completed.

b) At a **different level of intensity in terms of contribution to the 2014-2020 policies**. Bearing in mind the policy cycle framework project expected results can be placed at different levels of intensity in terms of influence on the 2014-2020 policies (see Figure 2-3).

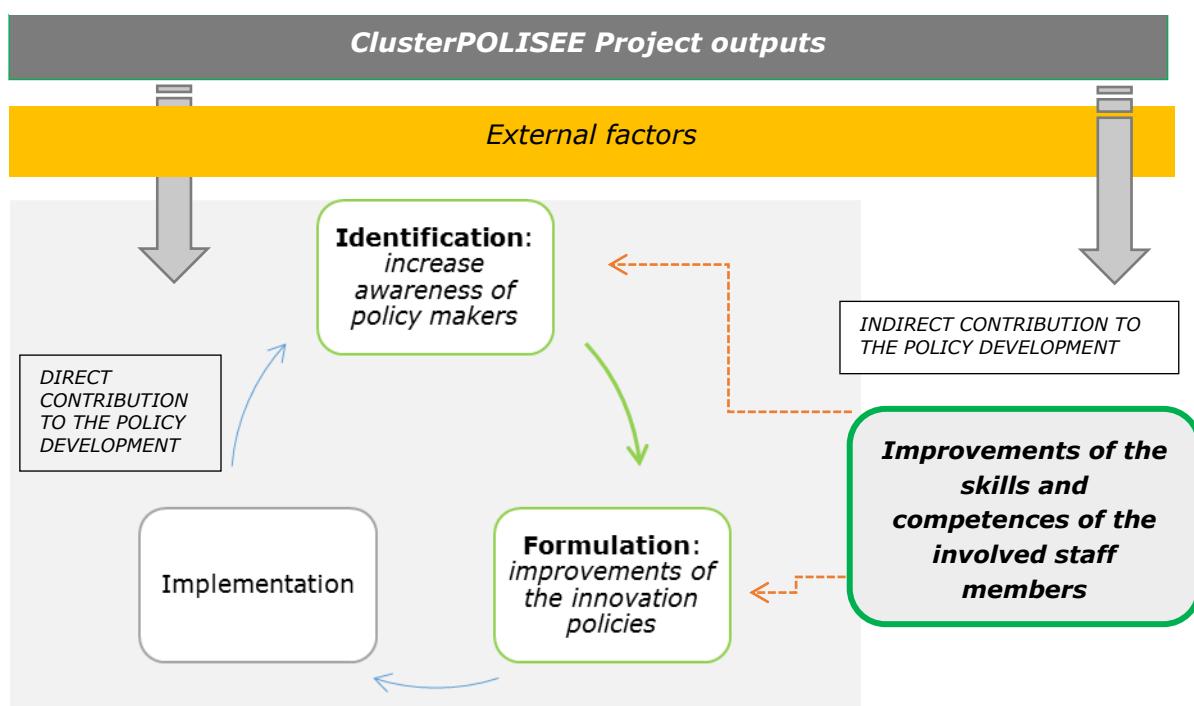
1. Indirect contribution → *Improvement of the skills and competences of the involved staff members*: by improving the skills and competences of the involved staff members the project aims to improve the ability

of the project beneficiaries to interact with all relevant stakeholders and policy makers.

2. Contribution to the identification 2014-2020 policies → *Increase of awareness of relevant stakeholders and policy makers on the clusters potentials*: the project directly contributes to increase the awareness of the relevant stakeholders and consequently paves the way to the elaboration of new innovation policies (identification phase).
3. Contribution to the formulation of the 2014-2020 policies → *Improvements of the innovation policies of the area*: the project directly contributes to formulate new policies (formulation phase).

Figure 2-3 synthetizes the key evaluation findings regarding the project contributions to the policy cycle.

Figure 2-3: ClusterPolisee contribution to the cycle of the policy



Source: t33

From the analysis it comes up that:

- ClusterPolisee project outputs have contributed to the development of the regional, national and European policies both directly – by improving the skills and competences of the involved staff members – and indirectly – by increasing the awareness of relevant stakeholders

and policy makers on the clusters potentials and improving of the formulation of the innovation policies of the area.

- However, the analysis of the project outputs and the qualitative information collected by the evaluators show that the project's direct contribution to the policy development i.e. increase awareness of the policy makers and improvements of the innovation policies strongly depends on factors, which are out of the direct control of the project.

2.2 Key findings

- The on-line platform played a positive role in giving evidence and allowing sharing the project outputs.
- The indicators system is too structured and generates too many information, hindering a focused evaluation.
- The outputs were punctually generated by the project.
- Some result indicators often do not capture a change, and could be more defined as output indicators.
- Three categories of change can be identified: stakeholders/policy makers' involvement, staff increased capacity, improved policies.
- The project's direct contribution to the policy development is significantly affected by external factors.
- The serious underspending does not correspond to the good level of outputs achievement and suggests the possibility to develop transnational activities with more limited resources.

3. Capitalisation

Transnational cooperation is of added-value when needs can be better met and problems resolved by organisations from several countries coming together and coordinating their actions by exchanging information and by continuously communicating.

This ambitious approach and the broad geographical range of the reference areas come up against the limited budget of transnational cooperation projects - especially compared to other cohesion policy instruments - and their spending eligibility constraints.

For this reason, it cannot be expected from transnational cooperation that it will produce qualitative and quantitative impacts and effects similar to other cohesion policy programmes e.g. in terms of employment, added-value to companies or increases in infrastructure provision.

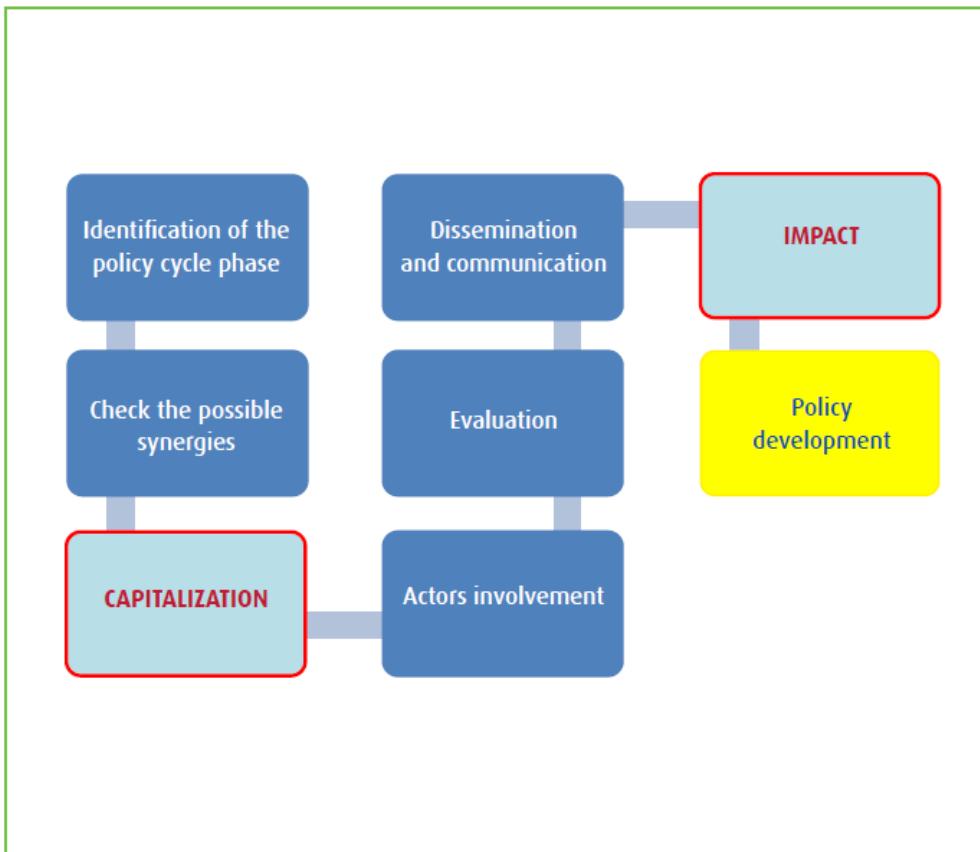
Transnational cooperation impacts and effects are therefore largely qualitative and related to the intangible assets of the beneficiaries. In case of ClusterPoliSEE, they depend on the effective support to transnational development of policy learning mechanisms, which is indissociably linked to the capacity of regional and - depending on the contexts - national authorities to manage the change and to develop effective strategies for cluster improvement. The skills, knowledge and relationships developed through the project should improve the ability to face development problems. In other words, helping policy development, they should also affect governance, supporting policy development.

This level of understanding clearly emerges from the joint effort to share the capitalisation ideas made by the ClusterPoliSEE partnership in view of the Final Working Group transnational meeting to be organised on Brussels on the 7th October 2014. Eleven partners indicated ideas for capitalisation, their relevant source in the project in terms of output or result, and the EU and regional programmes or networks potentially able to develop these ideas. Finally, the target groups to whom the idea could be disseminate in view of its implementation were indicated.

Figure 3-1 represents possible steps of a capitalisation process. It was designed to facilitate the capitalisation process at transnational programme level, in the framework of an Alpine Space Programme study. The figure allows visualising the logic applied by the ClusterPoliSEE project in its capitalisation exercise.

Indeed, it appears necessary to facilitate the comprehension of the capitalisation potential of the project, provided that the WP6 'Future development of cluster in the SEE area' has not progressed as it was planned (see previous chapter).

Figure 3-1: Capitalisation logic



Source: t33 Alpine Space, Capitalization of results and impact on policy in Italy

During Brussels meeting, the lead partner summed up the ideas for which there was the highest convergence among the partners. These contents prepared the ground for a series of considerations articulated on the basis of two territorial dimensions. In particular:

- elements for capitalisation at regional (or national, depending on the contexts) level;
- elements for capitalisation at transnational (macro-regional) and European level.

3.1 Regional and national dimension of capitalisation

In the evaluator's view, regional and national dimensions are the most crucial for capitalising on the ClusterPolisee results. The project has represented a significant investment in the area of transnational policy learning, with the possibility for the partners:

- to learn by being trained (WP3 – Activity 3.4 Training session);
- to learn by evaluating past policies and rethinking them (WP4 – Activity 4.1 Evaluation of past policies);
- to learn by exchanging knowledge and experiences (WP4 – Activity 4.4 Study visits organised in SEE countries – Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Moldova, Slovakia and Hungary);
- to learn by doing (WP5 – Activity 5.2 Testing by pilot initiatives of policy learning mechanisms).

In these cases, transnational added value was brought in terms of administrative capacity building, as it emerged from the already mentioned interactive exercises done in the occasion of last project's meeting. It seems now is necessary to capitalise on these achievements where cluster policies are designed and implemented, i.e. respectively at regional and national levels. According to the evidences produced by the project, in many SEE countries cluster policies are developed at national level e.g. Hungary, Greece, Romania, and in some at regional level e.g. Austria, Italy. The approaches how to support clustering range from strictly bottom-up concepts e.g. through competitive calls, to concepts foreseeing a stronger role of the public sector e.g. centralised mapping of cluster potentials, implementation of cluster policies through regional development agencies, etc... Public funding for cluster organisations in SEE countries ranges therefore from 0% to 100%, depending not only on the age of the cluster initiative but also on the main goal pursued by the cluster policy.

As regards the general policy cycle, it has to be assumed that the transnational ClusterPolisee project was launched when the issue of the cluster policies had been already identified and put on the political agenda (**identification**). Furthermore, the project should have urged all involved territories to start formulating appropriate responses, through studies and SWOT analysis, thanks to exploration activities, and in some cases by experimenting pilot actions (**formulation**). When capitalised at regional or national level, ClusterPolisee should allow reaching the phase where concrete support is given to the enhancement of the cluster policies (**implementation**). This does not necessarily take the form of funding but can also be seen in terms of regulative framework or elaboration of public/private partnerships, e.g. the access to technological services and to internationalisation networks. In particular, capitalisation should consist in the adoption of the approaches and solutions experimented in the course of the project by regional/national strategies and programmes. If the Smart Specialisation Strategies and the ERDF Operational Programmes are the

most relevant tools to implement the ClusterPoliSEE achievements at regional/national levels, other policy/programme tools should also be considered such as sectoral strategies, plans, sectoral programmes, public-private partnerships or agreements.

With regard to this level of capitalisation, a definite idea emerged from the discussion among the partners, and was presented by the lead partner in the occasion of the Brussels meeting of 7th October 2014.

Based on the project outputs 'Regional based foresight' / 'SWOT regional based analysis' (WP4 – Act 4.2) and 'Comparative benchmarking analysis' (WP4 – Act. 4.4), this idea answers the challenge of **improving the framework conditions supporting cluster development**. The proposed focus is the *improvement of public funding for clusters, including as a key element the innovation infrastructure*. It is also specified that the regional authorities and business support actors should share experiences on public funding schemes for innovation support.

In the evaluator's view, this is the most promising idea for the ClusterPoliSEE capitalisation. First of all, the focus on the **framework conditions** clearly reflects the main achievements of a project dedicated to the *policy dimension*. Secondly, this idea is directed to the **regional level**, addressing both the regional authorities and actors supporting businesses, recognising that the steps of identification and formulation were followed at transnational level, and that the implementation phase is a regional responsibility. Thirdly, its core activity regards **public funding**.

This latter element could appear as controversial, funding being only one of the elements improving the framework conditions for clusters development. However, it has to be reminded, that this strong focus is consistent with the 'Comparative benchmarking analysis, out of which the key importance of funding clearly emerges. A survey questionnaire was addressed to cluster organisations, and especially to cluster managers, with a target respondent group of about three to four respondents per region/country. The lack of financial resources was clearly indicated as the biggest barrier to cluster development, and the role of the state was primarily interpreted in terms of co-financing of joint projects carried out in the cluster. As a conclusion, the central role of funding, and especially of public funding, can be considered as an evidence emerged from the project, even if it was registered that several clusters in the SEE area do not rely at all on public funding such as the clusters initiatives based in Romania and Slovakia, and also some in Italy, are 100% totally privately funded i.e. mainly through membership fees.

In order to be implemented, this capitalisation proposal would require the possibility to access the ClusterPoliSEE outputs through an **improved on-line platform**. At the present stage, the public access to the on-line platform allows to consult a library, where documents are simply listed. The

reserved area, on the contrary, allows consulting the documents according to the six areas identified by the project: Innovation/R&D driven Cluster Development, Sustainability through Cluster Development, **Cluster Funding (financial framework)**, Clusters and Regional Specialisation, New skills and Jobs creation, and Multiple level and Cross-Department. This architecture allows to directly access the area (in bold) where are provided analysis and recommendations for improving financial practices of the involved countries/regions in terms of cluster support. The access through username and password could be kept, but with the aim for the user to acquire privileges in terms of interactivity with the ClusterPolisee network. At the same time, for promotional purposes a more intensive use of the social networks could be experimented. The project started using Twitter, which is a powerful social network when fresh messages have to be associated with web contents. In case the network will continue to carry out common activities, twitter could be an effective communication solution to associate the main documents generated by the project with ongoing initiatives in the different territories. In order to share contents, also **social networks** like Slideshare could be experimented, whereas a more systematic use of LinkedIn to strengthen the network could be encouraged. ClusterPolisee is already actively using YouTube (with the already mentioned dedicated channel) and Vimeo. Finally, the platform could be promoted through the use of Yammer, an enterprise social network intensively used by the DG REGIO officials and experts, when a group willing to share information and documents e.g. related to the Open Days) has to be created and moderated. Social networks are considered as cost-effective means of communication. However, another aspect should be mentioned. If information has to be made accessible to regional and national policy makers, also beyond the network of ClusterPolisee partners, then the **language** issue should also be considered. The English language represents a barrier for most policy makers at regional and national level. Therefore, translating the key project outputs into the national languages could be considered as a reasonable option, even if this element implies significant additional costs.

A second capitalisation proposal, emerged from the partnership, consists in creating a short Common Transnational Cluster Vademedum, using the documents produced by the project partners. This could be an important element for the success of the mentioned capitalisation ideas. Nevertheless, it should be underlined that technical means and support will not drive the success of the capitalisation process at regional/national level.

A more strategic element has to be added. The recent literature on policy transfer questions the idea that a governance practice could be effectively replicated in other geographical and institutional setting. It is indeed not only a matter of institutional proximity – since the innovative practices can be more easily be adopted in rather similar institutional settings - and of territorial preconditions, which allow to compare specific targets and objectives. Field observation from a DG Regio study highlighted that “*policy*

learning needs to be conceived and implemented as a reciprocal process of exchange of information and not as a mere diffusion of some information from one place to another: the exchange of knowledge needs to be embedded in the institutional practices in both the origin and destination regions".¹³ The reflections on the policy learning mechanisms developed in the course of ClusterPoliSEE demonstrate full awareness of this delicate point. As underlined by the European study, **the institutional level has to be involved for the success of the policy transfer process**. This is the reason why the evaluator recommends paying particular attention to the institutional preconditions allowing any successful implementation of a transferred policy.

This necessity could be considered when designing the **Cluster Initiative**, envisaged under WP6. This Work Package, as it was already commented, did not progress as planned and did not yet produce an institutional agreement to establish a South East Europe Cluster Initiative (act. 6.1). More precisely, the evaluator recommends to the lead partner, responsible of WP 6, to consider the possibility of implementing the Cluster Initiative by adopting the solution of the agreement: all the partners that will adhere to the Cluster Initiative shall agree on a set of **implications for policy** related to the cluster development and shall include them in the Joint Strategy and Sustainability Plan (act. 6.3). In addition, from the evaluator perspective, under the Cluster Initiative it could be envisaged to impose to each new member, not necessarily belonging to the ClusterPoliSEE project, the elaboration of a specific document detailing its territorial specification linked to the policy implications. This document shall also highlight all necessary preconditions to adopt the ClusterPoliSEE Initiative, which are not fully present in the territory, also indicating the specific measures to be taken. As an example, in case of the general policy implication related to the improvement of the framework conditions supporting cluster development, the solutions to create favourable preconditions, e.g. the smooth cooperation among companies and research centres when funds have to be attracted, could be added by the national/regional authorities, if these elements are not present in their territorial context.

As a third element, regional/national capitalisation requires the commitment by the authorities to **monitor the actual adoption**, in the regional/national strategies, plans and programmes **of the policy measures shared in the framework of the ClusterPoliSEE project**. This element should be explicitly mentioned in the Cluster Initiative, and should become a fundamental responsibility to be verified yearly. It is worth noting that not only the EU-funded programmes should be monitored, but also national and regional programmes, if present. This is the occasion to emphasise, once again, the great differences existing in the South East Europe space, where it was observed in the course of the project that

¹³ DG Regio, Study on promoting multi-level governance in support of Europe 2020, 2013. P. 14.

shares of national/regional funds can be particularly small where cluster initiatives rely on private and EU funds, for instance in Hungary and Greece.

To summarise the approach proposed to national/regional capitalisation:

- It is recognised that the ClusterPoliSEE capitalisation at regional/national level requests the implementation of policies for cluster development;
- Access to the information generated by the project should be improved possibly considering different levels of investment;
- It is recognised that the capitalisation at regional/national level implies a political commitment;
- The difficulties related to policy transfer are faced by making the institutions translate the policy implications generated by the project into the territorial setting, and this by indicating the creation of the necessary preconditions;
- The monitoring of the actual adoption of the shared ClusterPoliSEE policy measures into the national/regional strategies and programmes is guaranteed.

3.2 Transnational (macroregional) and European dimension of capitalisation

The Transnational Co-operation Programme "South-East Europe" for the period 2007-2013 gathers the biggest number of participating countries: 16 in total, to which 8 are EU Member States (AT, BG, EL, HU, IT, RO, SI, SK), 6 are candidate and potential candidate EU countries (AL, BA, HR, ME, MK, RS), and 2 are third countries participating in the European Neighbourhood Policy (UA, MD).

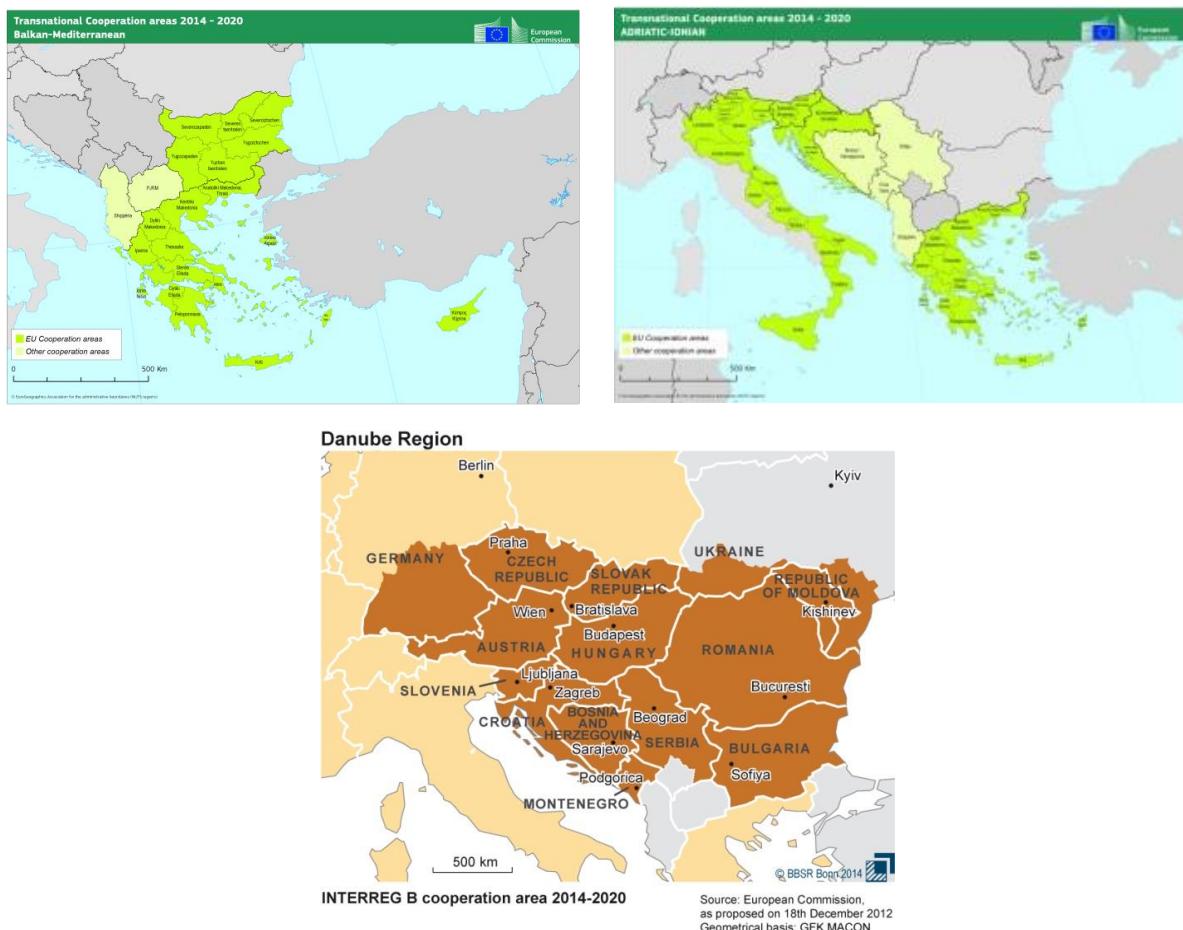
The South-East Europe area represents a total population of 200 million people. It is also the most diverse, heterogeneous and complex transnational cooperation area in Europe, made up of a broad mix of countries.

A transnational capitalisation process was implemented at programme level in the SEE area. A presentation entitled 'SEE Thematic Capitalisation Strategy and synergies between projects' was given by the Programme officer Eloy Gomez Giron, in the occasion of the ClusterPoliSEE intermediate workshop of Novi Sad (Serbia) on the 22nd of November 2013. This strategy was based on fourteen thematic poles, a programme annual conference and two thematic seminars. The SEE capitalisation shall improve the quality and sustainability of projects' deliverables, strengthen their communication to common stakeholders, and enable the reinforcement of existing or forming of new cooperation networks and projects while also



increasing the knowledge of programming bodies about cooperation-gaps, territorial needs and/or potentials in the Programme area. The long term impact of such a capitalisation process is hardly appraisable, provided that the SEE Programme area will be dismantled to form three above-mentioned new cooperation areas, as explained below.

Figure 3-2: Balkan-Mediterranean, Adriatic- Ionian and Danube, three programmes in south-eastern Europe



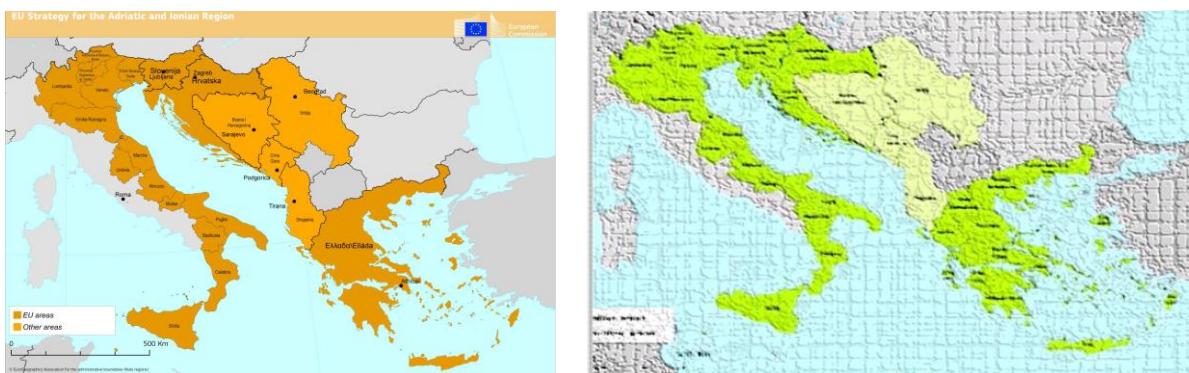
At the end of the 2000 -2006 period, due to its complexity, the CADSES area (Central, Adriatic, Danubian and South-Eastern European Space) had already been divided into two cooperation areas: Central Europe and South East Europe. For the 2014+ funding period, while Central Europe will keep the same, the South East Europe Programme area will again be split up. From 2015 onwards, three new transnational programmes will cover the present SEE area: Balkan-Mediterranean, Adriatic- Ionian and Danube, as shown Figure 3-3.

One underlying reason is the will to support the two forthcoming Danube (EUSDR) and Adriatic-Ionian (EUSAIR) macro-regional strategies. New Danube and Adriatic-Ionian Programmes should enable a better development and implementation of the EU macro-strategies.

Geographically, the **Danube Programme** area overlaps indeed with the territory addressed by the EUSDR, comprising also the Danube river basin. The Danube Transnational Programme may contribute to EUSDR by providing assistance to the governance of the Strategy, either by supporting the activity of the PACs or by ensuring that proper quality, mature projects are prepared for the implementation of the EUSDR goals. Moreover, the programme can enhance the sense of ownership by providing the platform for communication among different stakeholder representing the regional governmental bodies and civil society.

Also the **Adriatic Ionian Programme** corresponds to the macro-regional area (Figure 3-3).

Figure 3-3: Maps of EUSAIR and of the Adriatic Ionian Cooperation Programme



Source: EC Communication on EUSAIR, Draft of Adriatic and Ionian Programme of July 2014

The issue, in June 2014, of the EUSAIR Communication and Action Plan allowed the programmes, which were still in the drafting phase, to improve the coherence with the strategy, which was finally endorsed by the European Council on the 24th of October 2014.

The Adriatic Ionian Programme will guarantee the possibility to implement transnational projects of macro-regional interest. More specifically, this programme should support the governance and the implementation of EUSAIR, mainly under the Thematic Objective 11.

Cross-border cooperation is guaranteed in the macro-regional areas by a series of programmes, which strictly belong to the European Territorial Cooperation when Member States are concerned, and are funded by IPA

when candidate or potential candidate countries belong to the area of cooperation.

In spite of this coverage by the EU funded programmes, an unequal access to the resources, which would be necessary to finance the actions allowing to reach the EUSAIR targets, is foreseen in case of an area featured by such a fragmented political and socio-economic landscape. In addition, it must be underlined that for the achievement of some of the ambitious EUSAIR targets, a strong contribution from the national and regional programmes seems to be necessary. This aspect, which was already studied in the EUSDR - implemented from 2011 after the endorsement by the European Council – could have a negative impact on the regional/national capitalisation discussed in the previous paragraph.

This political picture suggests that a South East Europe transnational space for the capitalisation of the ClusterPoliSEE results is hardly recognisable, if the programming period 2014-2020 or a longer perspective is considered. The significant differences among the approaches to the cluster policies, which were well studied in the course of the ClusterPoliSEE project, are reflected in the history of the European Territorial Cooperation, which divided this wide geographical area. At this stage, it is questionable if the Cluster Initiative promoted by ClusterPoliSEE should be strongly anchored to the South East Europe space. According to the project, it is undoubtable that this initiative should start involving the ClusterPoliSEE partners. On the other side, if the capitalisation proposals emerged by the partnership are considered, the added value of a European space of cooperation seems to emerge, as suggested by Table 3-1.

Table 3-1: Analysis of the transnational added value of the capitalisation ideas

| ClusterPoliSEE outputs | Objectives/ Challenges | Proposed capitalisation ideas | South East transnational cooperation added value | EU cooperation added value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strengthening of relationship between Policy makers, R&D centers and Universities, Cluster Organizations, Regional | <i>To increase level of cluster internationalization services</i> | <i>Support networking with suppliers in the international value chains, create networking opportunities and a marketplace</i> | <i>Low</i> | <i>High</i> <i>Internationalization potential can be better tackled in the EU space</i> <i>The identified supporting programme is</i> |

| ClusterPoliSEE outputs | Objectives/ Challenges | Proposed capitalisation ideas | South East transnational cooperation added value | EU cooperation added value |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| development agencies, Cluster Networks.. (results) Collaborative ICT Platform (WP3 – Act 3.3) | | for knowledge also to better identified SMEs innovation needs and create a inter-clustering network to share knowledge, experiences, information about possible EU calls for clusters, using and empowering Cluster PoliSEE S3 Platform | | of EU level (H2020) |
| Collaborative ICT Platform (WP3 – Act 3.3) | To develop new policy learning mechanisms/ improve the implemented policy learning mechanisms by the identification of factors, tools, (...) related to the six thematic priority areas, based on overall picture of the past and current regional framework | Improve Cluster PoliSEE S3 platform connecting it to other cluster platforms, as a common bottom-up fed space for fostering and strengthening transnational cooperation among EU clusters and Networks | Low | High The connection to other cluster platforms is possible when the wide EU space is considered The identified supporting programme is of EU level (Interreg Europe), even if belonging to |
| | To Integrate with/ to contribute to the work of | To create dedicated online cluster training | | |

| ClusterPoliSE E outputs | Objectives/ Challenges | Proposed capitalisation ideas | South East transnational cooperation added value | EU cooperation added value |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| | <i>existing European clusters support bodies and initiatives</i> | <i>programs with multimedia lessons, (e.g. video lessons and training) for new expert skills and for public managers</i> | | <i>ETC</i> |
| In-depth assessment <i>(WP4 – Act 4.1)</i> SWOT regional based analysis <i>(WP4 – Act 4.3)</i> Comparative benchmarking analysis <i>(WP4 – Act.4.4)</i> | <i>To improve the understanding and usability of existing data and information related to clusters development</i> | <i>Creating a special country monitoring tool to overview the innovation development and to foster international commercialization in a multilevel perspective way</i> | <i>Medium</i> <i>The country monitoring tool could have a South East Europe specificity</i> | <i>Medium</i> <i>The identified supporting programme is of EU level (H2020)</i> |
| Policy learning mechanisms <i>(WP5 Act.5.1, 5.2)</i> Reflective policy making mechanism pattern | <i>To develop new policy learning mechanisms/ to improve the implemented policy learning mechanisms by the identification of factors, tools, (...) related to the</i> | <i>Enhance a comprehensive set of indicators and success key factors in order to evaluate the developmental stage of a cluster</i> | | |

| ClusterPolise E outputs | Objectives/Challenges | Proposed capitalisation ideas | South East transnational cooperation added value | EU cooperation added value |
|--|---|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| (WP5 act.5.2) | <i>six thematic priority areas, based on overall picture of the past and current regional framework</i> | <i>Create a short Common Transnational Cluster Vademedicum using the documents produced by the project partners</i> | <i>High The Vademedicum could be more focused if concentrated in the South East</i> | <i>Low</i> |
| Regional based foresight SWOT regional based analysis (WP4 – Act 4.2) Comparative benchmarking analysis (WP4 – Act.4.4) | <i>To improve the framework conditions supporting cluster development</i> | <i>Improvement of public funding for clusters. Key element of innovation infrastructure: Regional authorities and business support actors should share experiences on public funding schemes for innovation support</i> | <i>This capitalisation idea was considered as primarily applicable at regional/national scale</i> | |

Source: Presentation of Regione Marche, elaboration by t33

The emphasis on the European dimension of cooperation is confirmed by a specific networking aptitude, demonstrated by the ClusterPolise during its whole lifecycle. Project representatives took part to a long series of international conferences and events organised in eight different EU countries, six of which in the SEE area. The initiatives were mainly focused on innovation and cluster policies and allowed also to enhance the relationships with other ETC projects with a similar thematic focus. The box below allows appreciating these intensive activities of international networking, developed from April 2013 until October 2014.

Box 3.1: Participation at international conferences and events

- *Presentation of the RIS3 of Marche Region – Lille (France), 25 April 2013 (WP 2.3)*
- *SEE Annual Event 2013 "SEE achievements in view of the new programmes in the area" – Bucharest (Romania), 19 June 2013 (WP 2.3)*
- *Digital Strategy and EU Funds 2014 - 2020 – Ancona (Italy), 20 June 2013 (WP 2.3)*
- *CluStrat Cross-fertilization Workshop – Budapest (Hungary), 18 September 2013 (WP 2.3)*
- *Innovation Union Workshop – Brussels (Belgium), 27 October 2013 (WP 5.2)*
- *EVAL-INNO Final Conference "Developing RTDI evaluation culture in South East Europe" – Vienna (Austria), 25-26 March 2014 (WP 2.3)*
- *6th Cluster Forum in Baden-Württemberg "Future Technologies and Modern Services for Enhancing the Quality of Life" – Stuttgart (Germany), 8 May 2014 (WP 5.3)*
- *Joint Communication Training for project partners of the SEE and MED programmes – Bled (Slovenia), 2-3 June 2014 (WP 2.3)*
- *Final Conference of CluStrat project – Venice (Italy), 18 September 2014 (WP 2.3)*
- *International conference on clusters - Iasi (Romania), 22-23 September 2014 (WP 3.3)*
- *SEE Annual Conference – Lubiana (Slovenia), 24-25 September 2014 (WP 2.3)*
- *Final conference of ClusteriX project – Vienna (Austria), 22 October 2014 (WP 2.3)*

Source: ClusterPolisee Lead Partner

A sort of 'special relationship' was created with the 'twin' project **CluStrat**, co-financed in the framework of the Central Europe Transnational Programme and focused on the competitiveness of the clusters, in the light of new emerging industries and cross-sector issues. In 2014 the two strategic projects jointly organised a seminar in the framework of the **Open Days** - 12th European Week of Regions and Cities, an annual four-day event during which cities and regions showcase their capacity to create growth and jobs, implement European Union cohesion policy, and prove the importance of the local and regional level for good European governance. The seminar was prepared through a significant collection of letters of interest, which reflected the critical mass of the two projects and attracted the attention of the Open Days Secretariat. The seminar, entitled 'Boosting innovation through interclustering strategies and smart specialisation policies', required a preparatory meeting with the Secretariat in May, the finalisation of the application form by the end of May and a new meeting with the Secretariat in June 2014. A further meeting in Brussels with the

moderator of the seminar, the representative of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development Rossella Rusca, was organised in September. The seminar was held on the 7th of October in the venue of the Committee of the Regions in Brussels, with the participation of the following speakers: Vicente Rodriguez Saez (European Commission – DG REGIO), Helen Köpman (European Commission – DG CONNECT) Mr. Stephen Halligan (SEE JTS), Mauro Terzoni (Marche Region – LP of ClusterPolisee), Luca Ferrarese (Central Europe JTS), Norbert Höptner (Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum – LP of CluStrat). The attendance to the seminar was high and the interaction of the participants with the speakers was remarkable, with a series of contributions and questions on the opportunities to support the cluster policies at different geographic scales and in the different areas of Europe.

The Final Working Group transnational meeting of Brussels (October 2014) and the Final Conference of Venice (November 2014) were the occasion to involve not only the 'twin' project CluStrat, but also Eval-Inno project (South East Europe Transnational Programme), Alps4EU project (Alpine Space Transnational Programme), ClusterIX (Interreg IVC Interregional Programme). These intensive exchanges in the capitalisation phase prepared the ground for the new programming period, allowing discussing advanced issues like the capacity of ETC to support the macro-regional strategies, or the ETC added value in comparison with sectoral cooperation.

Furthermore, the round table organised in the framework of the Final Working Group transnational meeting of Brussels was also the occasion to involve a series of European networks:

- S3 Platform – IPTS Sevilla;
- European Secretariat for Cluster Analysis;
- European Foundation for Cluster Excellence Initiative;
- European Cluster Collaboration Platform.

The capitalisation ideas, which European added value is more evident, could be further developed in cooperation with some of these European networks, also including the European Cluster Observatory and the European Cluster Alliance. The strong point of the ClusterPolisee network consists indeed of the capacity to cover a wide European area, featured:

- by a strong need for EU funding, as it was noted when territories without national/regional funding instruments for the cluster development policies were mentioned;
- by a great potential in terms of administrative capacity building at national, regional and local level, as it can be noted in case of the Romanian Regional Development Agencies, which are acquiring new key competencies related to the management of the regional programmes.

3.3 Key findings

- Difficulty, due to the disappearance of the SEE space and to the modest progress of WP6, to identify a capitalisation strategy.
- Priority to be given to the regional/national level of capitalisation, if the policy cycle is considered.
- Opportunity to interpret the Cluster Initiative as an occasion to share the ClusterPoliSEE policy implications and to verify their preconditions in the different territorial contexts, so that the exchange of knowledge is embedded in the institutional practices in both the origin and destination regions.
- Necessity to interpret the SEE space according to the new macro-regional paradigm, with regard to EUSDR and the recently endorsed EUSAIR.
- Tendency to interpret the transnational cooperation more at European level than at south eastern one, and opportunity to enhance the relationships with existing European initiatives dealing with cluster policies.