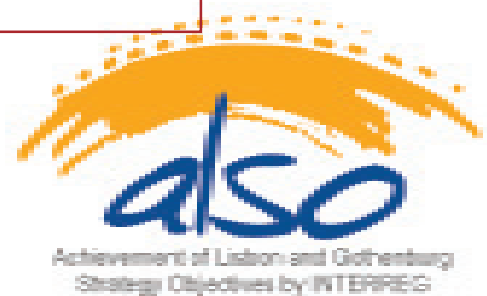


Matching the Also Assessment Model with the New European Territorial Cooperation Objective 2007-2013



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Second Progress Report on the INTERACT Project (Achievement of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategy Objectives by INTERREG-ALSO)¹

Brief review

In its revised version, adopted at the Luxemburg European Council in 2005, the Lisbon Strategy² stressed its shift to strive for economic growth, employment and sustainable development, at the same time reiterating the original priorities and simplifying the implementation system. In order to achieve the ambitious objectives set by the Lisbon Strategy and overcome the bottleneck that has since developed, the European Commission re-emphasised the priorities in its communication entitled *Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs*.³ Member States, regional and local authorities as well as social partners were summoned to participate in the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, since a joint effort is deemed essential for achieving its overall goals effectively.

In the current Structural Funds programming period (2007-2013), the new Cohesion Policy has been identified as an important vehicle to achieve the Lisbon (and Gothenburg) objectives. The policy aims to integrate the Lisbon priorities into national and regional development and reform programmes. The definition of the *Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013*⁴ reflects this new approach, stating that cohesion investments will concentrate on three main pillars linked to the Lisbon process. These are:

1) to improve the attractiveness of Member States, regions and cities, their accessibility, level of services and environmental potential;

- 2) to encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and a knowledge-based economy by research and innovation; and
- 3) to create more and better jobs, improve adaptability of workers and enterprises and increase investment in human capital.

The new EU Cohesion Policy is divided into three main objectives (replacing the previous objectives 1, 2 and 3): *Convergence* (supporting growth and jobs in the least developed Member States and regions), *Competitiveness and Employment* (dealing with economic and social change, globalisation and the transition to a knowledge-based society), and *Territorial Cooperation* (fostering cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation).

With this new approach and focus, the EU aims to find a response to a reality in the midst of a new context characterised by major developments and changes at the European and global levels. On the one hand, the recent EU enlargement (to 27 members) has dramatically increased the disparity levels and given rise to new territorial imbalances. In addition, the increased globalisation of markets affects European competitiveness in the world economy; meanwhile, the ageing of the EU population is having a strong impact on the labour markets. At the same time, and no less relevant, encroaching climate change poses an ongoing threat to European territory.⁵

Against this backdrop, the *European Territorial Cooperation Objective* shall provide impetus to the Lisbon Strategy's general goals by setting its priorities on *cross-border cooperation* (in economic, social and environmental activities), *transnational cooperation* (in the fields of innovation, environment, accessibility and sustainable urban

development) and *interregional cooperation* (on innovation and knowledge-economy, environmental protection and risk prevention, dissemination of best practices and analysis of territorial development trends).⁶

The ALSO Project⁷ was launched in 2005 under the INTERACT Programme. Its original mission was to assess INTERREG III projects in terms of their contributions to the Lisbon (and Gothenburg) Strategy objectives from a regional perspective. In its current phase, the Project is working to extend its operations – especially its assessment model – to serve the planning of the new European Territorial Cooperation Objective, thereby helping to achieve its mission of delivering sustainable growth and jobs.

In this context, the ALSO Project aims to serve as an instrument for assessing (ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post) future projects developed in this new funding period. This second project report presents the final ALSO Assessment Model, including its criteria, indicators and scoring methodology (evaluation and selection process) as well as its main visible outputs (the ALSO Software Tool, the Good Practice Manual and Checklist).

select final good practices entailed two project screening processes and an in-depth assessment of six pilot projects using the initially loose ALSO Assessment Framework. After the first Workshop in Barcelona in spring 2006, it was agreed that 18 more projects (from the 24 previously selected) following the same framework would be assessed to further shape the tool. The process-based development of the Framework has enhanced the ALSO Assessment Model's utility as an ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post assessment tool.

How to Use the ALSO Instrument: Its Criteria and Indicators

Inevitably, the main body of criteria consists of the so-called "output-impact" or "results dimension", which is directly based on the Lisbon Strategy core fields, i.e. the results to be obtained in the project are linked to the contribution they actually make to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy. As shown in the figure below, a list of 20 indicators has been compiled to qualitatively measure the potential and real impacts of the project.

Figure 1: Indicators for the Results dimension



The ALSO Assessment Framework⁸ – A Process-Based Model Development

The conceptual framework of the ALSO Assessment Framework (ALSO AF) as described in EIPASCOPE 2006/3 relies on the model of the Balanced Scorecard, a multidimensional and balanced view of performance that defines the elements essential for a project's success (called critical success factors (CSF)). At the same time, a list of targets and indicators is set for each CSF.

The development of the methodology to evaluate and

The ALSO "results" indicators were mainly selected according to the EU Logical Framework, which concentrates on programme or project objectives (outputs, results, impacts). In this context, the 20 ALSO "results" indicators can be used to generate an assessment of a given project's socio-economic impacts. For the mid-term or ex-post evaluation, the indicators can measure the utility and sustainability of a project as well as evaluate its impact with respect to furthering the Lisbon Strategy objectives. For the ex-ante evaluation, the ALSO "results" indicators serve as a tool to check internal and external coherence/relevance

and the quality of implementation systems.

The other dimensions are called “enablers”; these represent the criteria that lead to positive project results. As shown in the figure below, this set of indicators is divided into three dimensions, *cooperation, resources and project management*, consisting of 20, 10 and 10 indicators, respectively, for a total of forty.

How to Conduct Project Assessment and Scoring

In order to complete the ALSO Assessment Model, the ALSO Scientific Committee, of which the EIPA-ECR is an active member, had to create a scoring process. During the developmental phase of the scoring procedure, the Committee found it necessary to impose some practical

Figure 2: Indicators for the Cooperation, Resources and Project Management dimensions



The EU Logical Framework again served as the source of inspiration for the creation of these 40 indicators, which are categorised as “project indicators” for the “enablers” dimensions. For mid-term and ex-post evaluation, these indicators can be used to track the commitment and payment of funds and to measure the level of activity. For the ex-ante assessment, the indicators serve to evaluate the quality of the project proposal and implementation system as well as analyse the potential risks posed by related policy choices or the project’s proposed implementation structure, process and system. The elaboration of these criteria also focuses on the project proposal’s coherence as well as the quality of the approach and management, dissemination and partnership issues, i.e. efficiency and effectiveness.

More concretely, the indicators for the *cooperation* dimension aim to measure the coherence of the project consortium, the level of internal and external communication, and the degree of joint implementation. For the *project management* dimension, the indicators reflect the project management system and capacity, the project management experience of the partners and the level of joint development. Finally, the indicators for the *resources* dimension measure the soundness of the project’s financial management as well as joint financing and staffing levels in the projects.

restrictions on the indicators (in terms of relevance and data availability).

First, given the variety of projects (i.e. different projects with different objectives pertaining to different Integrated Guidelines), not all Lisbon Strategy indicators could be used and scored for the assessment of every project; only those matching the specific Integrated Guidelines in a given project could be scored. For each project, only the relevant indicators were therefore selected and scored.

Second, the problem of information deficits had to be taken into account. Sometimes, even though relevant, certain indicators could not be scored because the necessary information was not available.

The methodology had to consider all of these restrictions and still manage to scale all of the scores to a common base so that the final results would be fully comparable.

During the developmental phase of the scoring procedure, it was also necessary to adapt all of the strictly quantitative indicators, such as “private investment” or “venture capital”, for example (see figure 1), because it was not possible to obtain precise private investment or venture capital figures for the corresponding projects. As it had been agreed that each indicator would be given a score from 0 to 4, it was also necessary to exclude all indicators involving a simple yes/no answer, as these obviously could

not be scored on a scale like this.

In order to facilitate scoring, the indicators are quantified according to their impact (adapted from the Common Assessment Framework, EIPA, 2002) as follows:

Assessment scale:	0	low	medium	high	very high
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Score:	0	1	2	3	4

or, to represent a percentage:

Assessment scale:	0%	0-25%	25-50%	50-75	>75%
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
Score:	0	1	2	3	4

Lisbon Strategy objectives rather than to evaluate its general merits. As shown in the figure below, a score is given to each indicator (from 0 to 4), which permits an ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post assessment. This way, indicators are quantified according to their impact. Two additional scoring categories were introduced to address the issues of data irrelevance or insufficiency. NA (not available) scores were introduced to connote missing information, while NR (not relevant) scores designate the irrelevance of a given indicator to each project. According to the relevance, availability and scores of the indicators, the Excel spreadsheet calculates a project's overall contribution to the Lisbon Strategy objectives and thus generates the final ALSO project performance overview.

Below is a facsimile of the project-scoring Excel spreadsheet for the Seagull Dev ERB (III B) project (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Scoring sheet

Project: Seagull DevERB (IIIB)			
Indicator	Score	Scaled average index %	Weight
Cooperation dimension			
1. % PPs with contacts before project	4		
2. % PPs with experience of cooperation	4		
3. % PPs previously working together	4		
4. Number and quality of dissemination activities/ outputs	3		
5. Number of target group reached	4		
6. Number of new cooperation agreements	4		
7. Commitment to future cooperation	4		
8. Number of policy-makers involved	4		
9. Number of provisions for sustainability	4		
10. Number provisions for qualitative communication	3		
11. Quality of internal communication tools	3		
12. Level of commitment of all PPs	4		
13. Clear and balanced responsibilities	3		
14. Balanced involvement of all PPs	3		
15. Degree of exchange of experience	4		
16. Contribution to new methods/tools	2		
17. Improving existing methods	3		
18. Number of new policy instruments introduced	3		
19. Acceptance of changes on regional level	4		
20. Common approaches in regional policies	4		
Total score for dimension	71	88.8	17.8
Project management			
21. % Reports submitted in due time	NA		
22. % Progress reports approved instantly	NA		
23. Clear management and co-ordination	3		
24. Flexibility and problem solving ability	3		
25. Shared and effective administration	3		
26. % Partners with Interreg experience	4		
27. Quality of SWOT analysis	NA		
28. Quality of project evaluation	NA		
29. Number of future contacts among PPs	4		
30. New international networks created	2		
Total score for dimension	19	67.5	13.5

Resources dimension			
31. Effective financial and accounting procedures	3		
32. Number of seminars for financial management	NA		
33. Budget spent within agreed timetable	NA		
34. Absorption of the operation	NA		
35. Timely submission of financial claims	NA		
36. Co-financing from regional authority	2		
37. Participation of PPs in co-financing	3		
38. Clearly defined resources	2		
39. Costs for PPs clearly defined	3		
40. Balanced number of skilled staff	2		
Total score for dimension	15	57.5	11.5
Lisbon Strategy indicators			
1. Private investment	4		
2. Renewable energy sources	4		
3. Contribution to dom expenditure on R&D	4		
4. Science and technology graduates	NR		
5. Participation in lifelong learning	3		
6. Business expenditures on R&D	4		
7. EPO high-tech patent applications	NR		
8. Venture capital	NA		
9. Contribution to job creation	4		
10. Impact on job-loss prevention	4		
11. Impact on establishing new companies	4		
12. Creating innovation & entrepreneurship culture	4		
13. Facilitating access to technology & service providers	4		
14. Contribution to creation of new products	NR		
15. Impact on number of start-ups	4		
16. Private initiative within regional clusters	NA		
17. Public initiatives for networks & clusters	NA		
18. International networks	NR		
19. Increased coherence of regional policies	4		
20. Increased contact in inter-regional level	4		
Total score for section	51	89.1	35.6
Total average score		75.7	78.4

The above-developed method allowed the ALSO Scientific Committee to overcome the added difficulty of scoring quantitative indicators for which complete information was not available, and thereby enabled the qualitative assessment of the entire final list of indicators. As all indicators are supposed to be scored, the objective of using the scales was to assess the indicators' relative impact according to the information retrieved from the in-depth analysis (interview/questionnaire/documents) rather than to assign quantitative values to them.

In order to integrate the above features into the scoring system, a formula that calculates the score for each dimension was developed by one of the scientific partners, the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). The total score is weighted in order to measure the project's effect on the

Good Practices Selection


After a meeting of the ALSO Scientific Committee in July 2006, agreement was reached on the final scores of each project as well as on the overall and final ranking of the projects. This consensus-based approach ensured the transparency, independency and impartiality of the process. The list of all projects scored and the final recommendations on the ranking were finally approved by all partners at the second ALSO Workshop in Barcelona in October 2006.




As illustrated in the figure below, good practices were sorted for each dimension and according to the total score per strand.⁹ The strands were assessed separately due to their specific characteristics. The best selected practices of **Strand A** were demonstrated by the **3+3 Educational**

Network project; the **Seagull** project, which will be profiled in the following sections, and the **STIMENT** project, which achieved the overall highest score, were the *Strands B* and *C* “winners”, respectively. These three projects also achieved a very high score in each dimension.

In the third place, the team had strong project management experience, which led to effective project coordination. Many actors (politicians, public decision-makers, etc.) were involved right from the project’s inception, and were kept abreast of the project’s progress via a discussion and

Figure 4: Project “winners”

 <h2 style="text-align: center;">Selection of Best Practices</h2>				
<i>STRAND</i> <i>DIMENSION</i>	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	The best of 3 Strands
<i>Cooperation</i>	<i>3+3 Educational Network</i>	<i>Isamap + Seagull DevERB</i>	<i>Perou</i>	<i>ISAMAP + Seagull DevERB</i>
<i>Project Management</i>	<i>3+3 Educational Network</i>	<i>SmartLIFE</i>	<i>ICT + Stiment</i>	<i>SmartLIFE+ ICT + Stiment</i>
<i>Resources</i>	<i>3+3 Educational Network</i>	<i>SmartLIFE</i>	<i>ICT</i>	<i>3+3 Educational Network</i>
<i>Results</i>	<i>Galileo</i>	<i>Seagull DevERB</i>	<i>Stiment</i>	<i>Stiment</i>
<i>Total Score (all 4 dimensions and relative weight considered)</i>	<i>3+3 Educational Network</i>	<i>Seagull DevERB</i>	<i>STIMENT</i>	

Seagull DevERB: The “Winner” for Strand B

Seagull is a development cooperation project whose objective is to develop a Joint Trans-national Development Programme (JTDP) for the Euroregion Baltic area. The project partnership involved 34 organisations from the Euroregion Baltic member regions and consisted of a consortium created by the Regional Council in Kalmar County, the Region Blekige, the Association of Municipalities and the County Council in Kronoberg County, the Baltic Sea Coastal Planning Region, Klaipeda County Governor’s Administration, Warmia-Masury, Pomerania and Kaliningrad.

The Seagull project owes its success to four main factors. First of all, the JTDP included the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategy objectives right from the project planning phase. The implementation focused on four main areas: a competitive business environment, an improved transport infrastructure, a strong social dimension and a sustainable environmental and energy policy. A second success factor was the project partners’ strong mutual trust, based on a history of cooperation spanning more than 10 years. The development of a joint strategy for 9 regions from 6 different countries is an ambitious undertaking that probably would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment and mutual respect among the project partners.

information-sharing process. This information-sharing process facilitated agreement between the partners regarding the final project programme. Finally, strong political and personal commitment ensured the financing of the project. This was critical, as non-EU partners at that time either received little or no EU funding; additional self-financing was therefore necessary.

Driven by strong “enablers”, the Seagull project achieved very high scores in the “results” dimension, which is the key dimension of the ALSO Assessment Model. The project embraces a high number of Lisbon Strategy pillars and is therefore aligned with several of the Lisbon guidelines. Eight of the 24 guidelines are fulfilled by the project, and the in-depth analysis conducted by the ALSO evaluators concluded that the project could have a strong potential impact on the following indicators: *increased level in private investment, increased level of business expenditure in R&D, contribution to renewable energy resources, contribution to domestic expenditure in R&D, contribution to job creation, impact on job-loss prevention, impact on establishing new companies, impact on number of start-ups, creating regional innovation culture and entrepreneurial culture, increased participation in lifelong learning, facilitating access to technology and service providers, increase in coherence in regional policies and increased contact at the interregional level.*

Launching the ALSO Software Application – the ALSO Cube

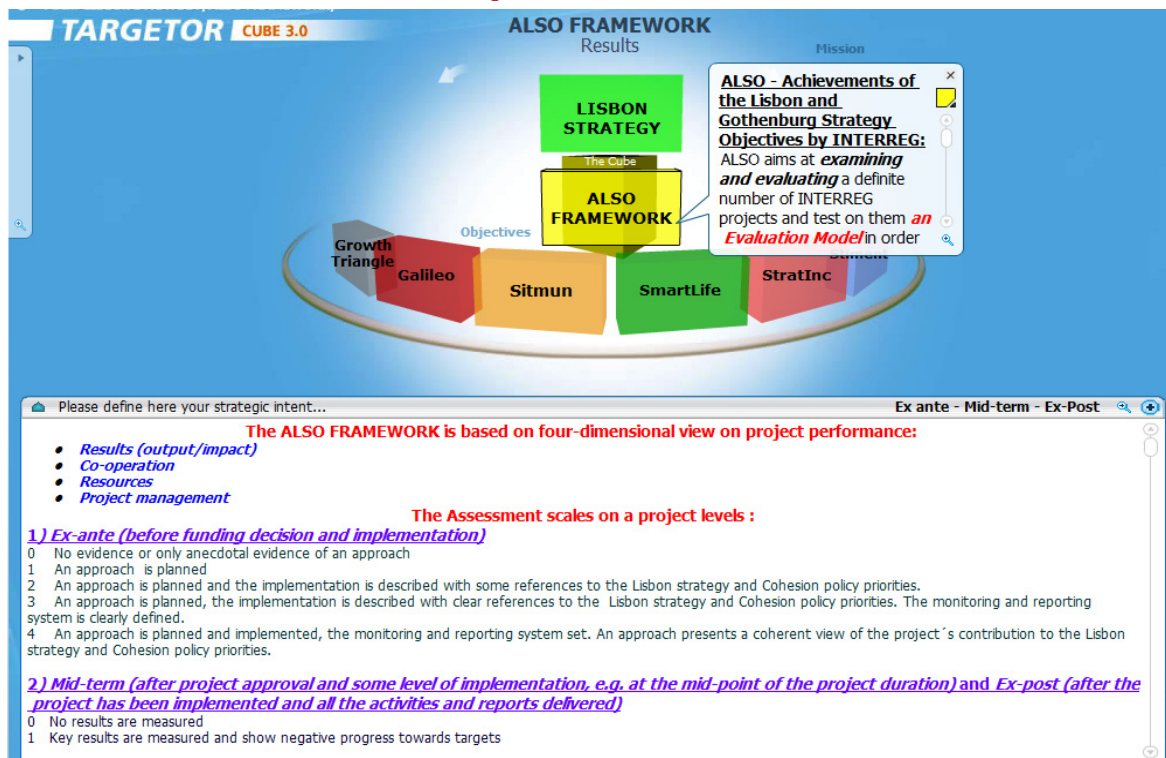
In order to boost the ALSO Assessment Model's efficiency as a project assessment instrument, the powerful Targetor¹⁰ Cube software was adapted to steer and manage the Model's implementation. The ALSO software application is designed to enable common public processes. It is a tool for ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post assessment and project monitoring. In this context, it allows users to both test the quality of a new project application for subsequent funding submission (ex-ante) and to enable, accelerate and monitor the implementation of a project in conjunction with the ALSO Assessment Model (mid-term and ex-post). The software application thus constitutes an ideal tool – with easy-to-use interface – to grasp and visualise a project's approach.

for Project Assessment and the ALSO Checklist are indispensable references for users drafting new projects in line with the Lisbon Strategy, and particularly with the new European Territorial Objective 2007-2013.

As its name suggests, the Good Practice Manual describes the good practices that have emerged from the application of the ALSO Assessment Model and provides in-depth analyses of projects. The Manual also highlights the critical success factors to be considered in any project assessment.

The ALSO Checklist enumerates the most important "do's" and "don'ts" for drafting new projects. It is a set of key success factors for obtaining effective results with new projects and aligning them with the Lisbon Objectives. For this reason, the Checklist may be applied both by regional actors to assess the impact of the new INTERREG IV projects as well as by the INTERREG Secretariats as a supplementary tool to evaluate INTERREG projects.

Figure 5: ALSO Cube



The ALSO application is multifunctional: it can extract project reports, match specific Lisbon Integrated Guidelines or Lisbon pillars with project targets/objectives, show a ranking of best practices, evaluate new projects with the ALSO Assessment Model or search for evaluated projects matching individual users' needs or expectations.

The ALSO Cube, as shown in the picture below, consists of three levels: the Lisbon Strategy, the ALSO Assessment Framework and the project level. The project level is particularly helpful, as it allows the user to find specific information on good practices and to simulate the assessment of a new project (idea or application) by introducing data into an empty cube.

Concluding Outputs for Future Project Development: The ALSO Manual for Project Assessment – Looking for Guiding Principles and the ALSO Checklist

In addition to the ALSO Assessment Model and its Cube software application mentioned above, the ALSO Manual

All the outputs can be individually downloaded free of charge from the project site <http://www.alsoproject.eu/>; hard copies can also be requested from the ALSO partners. In addition, these materials were presented and disseminated at the ALSO Final Conference which was held on 4 and 5 October 2007 in Ancona (IT) under the patronage of the Italian Minister of European Affairs.

In conclusion, at the end of the project development phase, the ALSO consortium is confident that it has produced an instrument that directly serves European policy and will greatly contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon (and Gothenburg) Strategy, which – as stated by the German Presidency¹¹ – remains the key to ensuring Europe's economic, social and environmental future. However, sustainable growth – including the creation of better jobs – will not happen on its own. It is therefore imperative for regional and local actors to take a pro-active approach, i.e. to assume the role of strategy-maker rather than strategy-taker.¹²

NOTES

- * Alexander Heichlinger is a Senior Lecturer and Project Leader, Member of the ALSO Scientific Committee; Núria Suero Comellas is an ALSO Student Assistant, EIPA-ECR Barcelona.
- ¹ See Heichlinger, Alexander; Määttä, Seppo and Martí, Oscar (2006): *Growth, Jobs and the European Regional Development Fund. The ALSO Project: An Assessment Tool to Follow?*, EIPASCOPE, No. 2006/3.
- ² The Lisbon Strategy was adopted at the Lisbon European Council of March 2000 with the aim of making the European Union “the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment, by 2010”.
- ³ European Commission: Communication to the spring European Council: Working together for growth and jobs. Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs (2005-2008).
- ⁴ Communication from the Commission: Cohesion Policy in Support of Growth and Jobs: Community Strategic Guidelines, 2007-2013.
- ⁵ European Regional Development Fund 2007-2013: The Interregional Cooperation Programme (INTERREG IVC), Contributing to the European Commission initiative “Regions for Economic Change”, 20 December 2006.
- ⁶ See ERDF 2007-2013, Objective 3: European Territorial Cooperation: The Interregional Cooperation Programme, and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Interregional Cooperation Programme.
- ⁷ The ALSO Project involves 15 partners: Marche Region (Italy), SVIM – Sviluppo Marche S.p.A. (Italy), ERVET – Emilia Romagna Valorizzazione Economica Territorio S.p.A. (Italy), CEI – Central European Initiative, A Dél – alföldi Régióért (Hungary), MRDPW – Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (Bulgaria), Regional Council of Southwest Finland (Finland), Regional Council of Itä-Uusima (Finland), Klaipeda RDA (Lithuania), Hiiumaa County Government (Estonia), Regional Council of Lorraine (France), Arco Latino (Spain), Cambridgeshire County Council (United Kingdom), ULB – Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) and EIPA-ECR – European Institute of Public Administration – European Centre for the Regions (Spain).
- ⁸ See also *ALSO Manual – Looking for guiding principles*.
- ⁹ Interreg III was implemented in three operational strands: Strand A (cross-border cooperation between neighbouring territories), Strand B (transnational cooperation between national, regional and local authorities) and Strand C (interregional cooperation). For further information, see http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/interreg3/abc/abc_en.htm
- ¹⁰ Targetor Oy, which was chosen through a public procurement procedure, is headquartered in Oulu (FI) and has delivered applications supporting strategy and development projects to several branches, including the public sector and the telecommunications, electronics, construction, pharmaceutical, commercial and service industries. Its clients include public administrations and companies, such as the Finnish Ministry of Finance, the City of Oulu, NCC, Pfizer, Celectus, Ouman and the social and healthcare unit of Ruukki Group.
- ¹¹ “Europe – succeeding together”. Presidency Programme. 1 January to 30 June 2007.
- ¹² See further Heichlinger, Alexander and Määttä Seppo, “Good governance in delivering sustainable growth: Regions and municipalities as promoters of the Lisbon strategy”, background paper for the High Level Group on Governance and the EU, Finnish Presidency, Turku 2-3 October 2006.

**THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES
(with EIPA-ECR contribution
and dissemination of the
ALSO activities) TOOK PLACE
DURING THE PERIOD COVERING
THIS REPORT**

- 12-13 March 2007, Zaragoza (ES)
Seminar on “La puesta al día en asuntos europeos”.
Organised by *Instituto Aragonés de Administración Pública*.
- 19-30 March 2007, Barcelona (ES)
Master and Individual Courses in European Integration and Regionalism (MEIR); Module IV: Regional and Social Cohesion. Organised by the EIPA-ECR and the European Academy of Bolzano.
- 26-27 April 2007, Metz (FR)
Strand C Conference, ALSO-INTERACT Project (Achievement of the Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategy objectives by INTERREG). Organised by the Region of Lorraine.
- 10 May 2007, Barcelona (ES)
Workshop on “Lisbon and Gothenburg Strategy at a local level and its relation with the new Territorial Cooperation Objective”. Organised by ARCO Latino – Diputació de Barcelona.
- 23-25 May 2007, Barcelona (ES)
1st Seminar on “How to develop a convincing project strategy for EU funding?: Do’s and don’ts for Local and Regional Actors”. Organised by EIPA-ECR.
- 15-16 June 2007, Krk (CR)
Conference “Learning Europe. Advanced Training in EU Matters”. Organised by the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Konrad Adenauer Foundation.
- 1-3 October 2007, Barcelona (ES)
2nd Seminar on “How to develop a convincing project strategy for EU funding?: Do’s and don’ts for Local and Regional Actors”. Organised by EIPA-ECR.
- 4-5 October 2007, Ancona (IT)
ALSO Final Conference on “The Contribution of the Regional and Local Institutions to the Cohesion Policy: the Dimension of Territorial Cooperation in the Lisbon Strategy Contest”. Organised by the Marche Region.