Neighbouring territories are very rarely consulted when it comes to the adoption of regional innovation and smart specialisation strategies and are even less likely to be involved in strategic and operational governance systems.

This situation is not unique to France. Other border regions are no better in this regard, even where they too see a benefit in developing innovative sectors and fostering technology transfer and clusters at cross-border level. This finding inevitably raises questions regarding the coherence of regional innovation practices and points to a risk of a lack of synergies between the approaches adopted and the strategic priorities recommended in the context of the innovation component of INTERREG programmes in these territories.

Nevertheless, encouraging initiatives can be observed:

- **The Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion** (Midi-Pyrénées, Languedoc-Roussillon, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands) has drawn up a Euroregional Innovation Strategy[132] following the establishment of a Euroregional Innovation Partnership in January 2013 and a territorial assessment of the strategic sectors and innovative potential of the four partner regions. The identification of common ground in the four SRI-SIs, in consultation with the relevant institutional and economic players, has enabled the targeting of the three shared development pillars in the Euroregional strategy: e-health, water and agri-food (which are bundled together under the title "Innovation for a healthy life and active ageing"). Thus, this strategy acts as a complement to the SRI-SIs of the member regions.
- It should also be noted that the **Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion** initiated a similar process in the context of the drawing-up of its 2014-2020 Strategic Plan.

The example of the Euroregional Innovation Strategy is thus revealing as regards the nature of the strategic reflection process that takes place within cross-border structures. Rather than devising ad hoc approaches, common ground needs to be found in the strategies of the various partner entities, highlighting shared interests in the cross-border territory.

This methodology stems from various constraints. First of all, drawing up an economic strategy is a very costly business, given all the studies required (SWOT analyses, territorial and forward-looking assessments, different scenarios, etc.). And once the strategy has been drawn up, it then needs to be implemented and monitored by means of various bodies and tools (political and technical committees, sets of indicators, observation, communication, etc.). Capitalising on what is already in place is inevitably quicker – and, above all, more desirable in the current context of reductions in budgets for public spending. It can also be regarded as a way of improving coordination between the structures involved, thereby limiting any duplication or competition. Thus, combining the various strategic frameworks can be seen as a means of ensuring that there is no overlapping or inconsistency.

This approach is, however, coloured by the perception that the general interest (i.e. that of the crossborder territory as a whole) is the sum of the interests of the individual parts (i.e. those of the various partner entities). Yet, innovative potential at the level of a territory is generally identified, as indicated above, on the basis of analysis that looks at only half the picture (without truly taking account of the neighbouring economic system), as well as tools and processes that use inconsistent data and analytical frameworks for the two sides of the border. Thus, a change of territorial level when determining strategic orientations involves far more than simply aggregating and combining existing strategies. It requires the repositioning of analysis in order to take full account of the crossborder ecosystem from both an economic and a statistical perspective.

[132] The Project Factsheet on page 121.