

LEARNING IN EU PROJECTS FOCUSING ON CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN THE WATER SECTOR: AN ASSESSMENT OF OUTCOMES AND CONDITIONS



In recent years, climate change adaptation (CCA) has been recognized as new approach to deal with the changing climate. CCA is especially relevant to the water sector, where the adverse effects of climate change has led to severe impacts like flood hazard and drought. European countries have different levels of knowledge about CCA making European cooperation projects a suitable environment for transnational learning.

In this study learning in two similar INTERREG B projects were assessed with the goal of making proposals for improving learning in similar projects. INTERREG B projects are European cooperation projects subsidized by the European Commission and are characterised by their transnational and practice-orientated nature. We assessed learning in such projects using an existing evaluation framework (Vinke-de Kruijf and Pahl-Wostl, 2016: see Figure 1). This framework is organized around three learning outcomes and ten conditions that may produce these outcomes. It distinguishes between three learning outcomes: group learning (learning by project participants), organizational learning (learning by partner organizations represented by their project participants) and network/societal learning (learning by external actors in the wider contexts). For the assessment of the learning outcomes and conditions, both were given scores based on studied project documents and interviews with ten project participants.

Based on the case study results, we found that most interviewees scored high for the group learning and its respective conditions. The scores for organizational and network/societal learning varied among the interviewees mirroring the scores given to their respective conditions. Through the comparison of case results, the most relevant conditions were determined. For group learning the most relevant conditions were the three conditions found in the evaluation framework. For organizational learning the most relevant condition was the need for project participants to spend more time in transferring project knowledge inside their partner organization. Regarding network/societal learning, the most relevant conditions were the involvement of external actors through collaboration structures and making the project results available as wide as possible.

After identifying the most relevant conditions, proposals for improving learning in INTERREG projects were determined. For improving group learning we suggest inviting interpreters to ease communication, giving sufficient time for participants to take part in the project, a consortium represented by diverse types of partner organizations and designing an interaction process that allow project participants to jointly work on actions. For improving organizational learning we suggest designing knowledge transfer activities directed at colleagues and external actors. For improving network/societal learning we suggest that external actors should be invited to participate in the project through Learning & Action Alliances and online portals should be used to make project documents available. These suggestions can be used by future project participants and the monitoring committees of the INTERREG programs to improve learning in similar projects.

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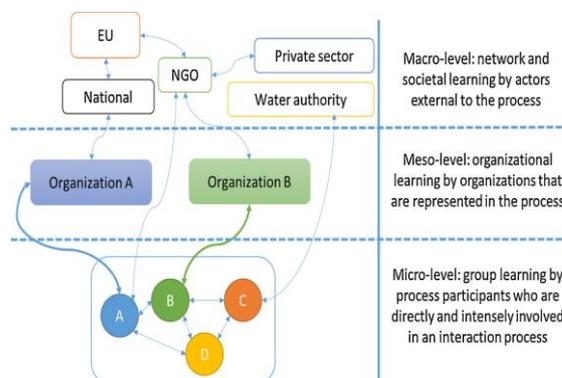


Figure 1: Multiple learning outcomes in European cooperation project (Vinke-de Kruijf and Pahl-Wostl, 2016)

Vinke-de Kruijf, J. and Pahl-Wostl, C. (2016). A multi-level perspective on learning about climate change adaptation through international cooperation. *Environmental Science & Policy*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2016.07.004>