



Ministero degli Affari Esteri

Cooperazione Italiana
allo Sviluppo
Ministero Affari Esteri

DGCS | Evaluation Office

FRONTERAS ABIERTAS: INTERREGIONAL NETWORK FOR CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND LATIN AMERICAN INTEGRATION



2012. 07

EVALUATION



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The picture of the cover shows a wall of the Art and Craft Centre “El arbol de dios” of San Salvador, where the work of Fernando Llorca is exposed. For a long time Llorca’s activity has been developed in La Palma, a town not far from the border with Honduras (photograph by Gianfrancesco Costantini).

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ACRONIMI

ACOFAPE	Asociación Coordinadora de Familiares de Peruanos Migrantes y Migrantes Retornados de Europa
ACRA	Cooperazione Rurale in Africa e America Latina
ADEL	Agencias de Desarrollo Económico Local
ADESO	Asociación para el Desarrollo Local
AMOP	Associação dos Municípios do Oeste do Paraná
ASORECH	Asociación Regional Campesina Ch'orti
BID	Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo
BRIT	Border Regions in Transitions
CAF	Corporación Andina de Fomento
CAN	Comunidad Andinas de las Naciones
CENPROMYPE	Centro para la Promoción de la Micro y Pequeña Empresa en Centroamérica
CeSPI	Centro Studi Politica Internazionale (Center for International Policy Studies)
CEUTA	Centro de Estudios Regionales (Universidad de Tarapacá. Arica- Chile)
COPEI	Coordinadora de Profesionales y Empresarios Peruanos
DG RELEX	Directorates-General External Relations
ECUASIF	Ecuatorianos Sin Fronteras
FCCR	Foro de Ciudades y Regiones del Mercosur
IDELCA	Instituto para el Desarrollo Local de Centroamérica
IILA	Istituto Italo-Latino Americano (Italian-Latin American Institute)
INA-FICT	Istituto Nuova Africa - Federazione Italiana Comunità Terapeutiche
INTE	Instituto de Estudios Internacionales (Universidad Arturo Prat, Iquique, Chile)
INTERREG	Programma INTERREG di Cooperazione Regionale
IReR	Istituto Regionale di Ricerca della Lombardia
LAIF	Latin American Investment Facility
MAE	Ministero degli Affari Esteri
MERCOCIUDADES	Rete di municipi del MERCOSUR
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur
MFA	Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MTRL	Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Rio Lempa

OCO	Oficina de Coordinación y Orientación
OICS	Osservatorio Interregionale Cooperazione Sviluppo
ONG	Organizzazione Non Governativa
PADIF	Programa de Apoyo al Desarrollo e Integración Fronteriza
PIDET	Plan Integrado de Desarrollo Transfronterizo del Golfo de Fonseca
PRESANCA	Programa Regional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional para Centroamérica
PRODERE	Progetto di sviluppo in favore dei rifugiati in Centroamerica
SEBRAE	Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas
SICA	Sistema de la Integración Centroamericana
UE	Unione Europea
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
URB-AL	EU Urban Regional Aid Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UTT	Unidad Técnica Trinacional Plan Trifinio

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The institutional Context

In July 2007, the Italian-Latin American Institute (IILA) launched the “Fronteras Abiertas” project, in cooperation with the Centre for International Policy Studies (CeSPI), and thanks to the financing provided by the General Directorate for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This project was concluded in 2011 and received overall funding of €1,500,000, subdivided into three annual payments (€600,000 for Year 1, 2007; €600,000 for Year 2, 2008; €300,000 for Year 3, subdivided into two payments, one for 2009 and the other for 2010).

The project, formulated in January 2007, was based on a feasibility study conducted in 2006 by the CeSPI and the IILA, which made it possible to analyse the processes for cross-border dialogue existing in Latin America and resulted in the proposal of an “*interregional network for cross-border cooperation and Latin American integration*”. The financing from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was provided as part of the voluntary contribution for 2007, the voluntary contribution for 2008, the voluntary contribution for 2009 and the voluntary contribution for 2010.

The IILA and the CeSPI played different roles in the management of the project:

- in addition to maintaining relationships with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the principal entity supporting the project, the IILA also maintained relationships with the embassies of the Latin American nations in Italy – as representatives of their governments – facilitating the identification of the geographic areas considered within the project, the identification of any local partners and the resolution of political problems, and, above all, providing the project with political and institutional legitimacy; although the IILA also maintained relationships with some Italian embassies in Latin America, it did not – in the context of the “Fronteras Abiertas” project – perform any missions in the field;
- the CeSPI identified and formulated the actions for the project and managed all associated activities, both in Italy and in the Latin American regions concerned, performing studies, field-based assignments, meetings with European and Latin American administrative entities, training initiatives, etc.; the CeSPI also performed functions associated with monitoring and formulation of periodic reports, which were then submitted to the IILA.

The MFA did not perform any direct role in supporting the project, although meetings with Italian embassies took place at various points, and the embassies themselves participated in some seminar activities and in certain events in Latin America, were informed of the progress of the project and – at least in some cases – performed support activities for the project activities.

2. The results of the evaluation

The evaluation of the project showed a very diversified situation, according to the criteria adopted. However, beyond the different elements observed, it seems appropriate to emphasize a general characteristic of the project, which influenced the performance. It is the **lack of a true general objective** able to steer the direction of the project from the point of view of its general strategies and therefore of its ultimate goals.

The absence of a true general objective, and therefore a long-term vision, both for processes of integration in cross-border zones and the possible development of those processes, and for the “mission” of the project in relation to those processes, represents a genuine “**original sin**” that has profoundly influenced not only the remainder of the construction of the logical framework but also the very possibility of performing evaluation activities from the exterior without an operation involving logical reconstruction of what was the basis of the project. In fact, without a general long-term objective, each action tends to be self-referential.

2.1. Relevance/Pertinence

As illustrated in the following sections, from the point of view of relevance, the project has somewhat **diverse results**. In particular, while a high level of thematic relevance has been observed, with regard to the relevance of the actions, the identifying entities and the methodological approach used, there is a very limited degree of pertinence.

In fact, the identification of the **issue** at the heart of the project, which is the process of integration in the border areas, is **relevant** with regard to the considered Latin American areas, since in these areas **key processes of cross borders social and economic integration are under way**. Consequently, also the importance of the **choice of the regions** within which the actions were carried out is high (the area of Trifinio, between Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador, the Gulf of Fonseca, between El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua; the border between Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay, the border between Chile, Peru and Bolivia, the border between Ecuador and Peru, the border between Bolivia, Peru and Argentina).

The **relevance of the project was significantly diminished** by the decision to use, as direct contacts – or as beneficiaries – almost exclusively the “intermediate authorities.

Despite having often been involved in initiatives and communication activities (such as the numerous meetings and events held in the context of the “missions” and participation in seminars and public events), national governments were for the most part considered to be “**external**” referents in terms of the cross-border development initiatives and cross-border integration processes.

In the same way, although their importance was recognised, the international entities used in the promotion of forms of regional integration were involved above all as **indirect contacts**, as possible sources of financing or as contacts for activities associated with communication or theoretical discussion or in initiatives oriented towards influencing international policies.

A similar situation can be seen with regard to **civil society organisations**. Despite the fact that the organisations of citizens and **associations of producers** and businesses located in regional areas such as the Gulf of Fonseca or the region of Trifinio are among the entities that have long been committed to integration initiatives, these entities have not been involved in the actions conducted as part of the project.

Thus, in fact, the project has been implemented through **entities whose ability to perform effective cross-border cooperation initiatives independently is limited**: local authorities are required to comply with national laws, to act within their own jurisdictions and in some cases are not even able to maintain “collaborative relationships” with the local authorities across the border. **A consequence of this situation has been the fact that, in some cases (such as the case with the Gulf of Fonseca), the cross-border cooperation initiatives have been blocked because of factors such as opposition by national authorities.**

With regard to the identification of the entities involved in Italy and in Europe, it also appears that the relevance of the choices made by the project is relatively low. The involvement of the European regions seems to have generated **more problems than benefits, rarely took the form of a permanent commitment.** One problematic element in terms of the involvement of the European regions would seem to have been the tendency of some regions to commence cooperation projects based on their own experience and “good practices”, **without taking into account the need for adaptation** and the difficulties in transferring practices to contexts and entities different from the original setting.

Also the **identification and selection of the individual initiatives implemented, there does not always seem to be significant relevance in terms of achievement of the objectives of the project.**

At least in some cases, in fact, the activities performed have been shown to be **inappropriate to support local entities**, to encourage reinforcement of those entities or to satisfy their requirements, above all because of the methods chosen for implementation. In other cases, the **relevance** of the initiatives in terms of the objectives of the project **is not obvious.**

A further area in which the relevance of the project shows critical weaknesses is in terms of the ability to take into account the **legal dimension** of the region considered. In identifying the local entities involved, in formulating the activities and in implementing those actions, no consideration has in fact been given to the differences existing between national legislative contexts and those relating to the legal status of the various entities concerned. In some cases, this has meant that it was impossible to adequately reinforce the subjects of cross-border cooperation and in other cases situations of conflict actually emerged.

Notwithstanding the fact that the project document mentions adjustment of the project to local requirements and characteristics, in fact “Fronteras Abiertas” adopted an approach based on the distribution of a **single set of instruments**, predominantly based on European experience of transregional cooperation. This set of instruments does not appear pertinent in all cases in terms of local realities, both because of the absence in many cases of legal and organisational situations that are similar to those in Europe, and because of the absence in Latin America of a single reference social and political context.

In brief:

we observed that while the relevance of the project in thematic and geographical terms was very high, its relevance in terms of the entities identified as principal referents, the identification and formulation of the actions, and the legal dimension and methodological approach reveal significant critical aspects.

2.2. Validity of the logical framework

The logical framework of the project "Fronteras abiertas" was probably formulated **after** the drafting of the project document and in an independent way both with respect to such document, and with respect to the documents related to the financing of the same project (project fiches 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010).

The focusing of the logical framework on activities also results in its being **not very useful** as a tool for steering and monitoring the project: the set objectives and expected results are identified with the activities being performed. This results in the automatic correspondence of the activity performed in relation to project goals: objectives are achieved when activities are carried out.

Indeed, this very **lack of attention to existing external conditions** – such as relations among national States, the legislation framework in which administrations operate, the internal stability of states, municipalities' interest in local development (rather than simply the construction of works) – is one of the factors that have contributed to **diminishing the relevance** of the project in relation to the context in which it is placed.

Some activities that have proved to be important in the implementation of the project, such as **study and research activities**, are not included at all in the logical framework.

In brief:

Perhaps due to the fact that it was drafted after and independently of the project itself, the logical framework of the project betrays some serious shortcomings, having consequences on the management of the project and a bearing on both its relevance and effectiveness.

2.3. The effectiveness

Going beyond a purely quantitative description of project output, it is possible to observe some **problematic** situations.

As for the "construction of a network of actors" from both Latin America and Europe, consisting chiefly of local and intermediate administrations (provinces and regions), it would appear that apart from the involvement in the project of OICS **very few** European local and regional administrations are actually involved in cross-border collaboration initiatives.

The involvement of these administrations **does not appear** to be that typical of "network" collaboration. They would appear to be single forms of involvement occasioned by the active intervention of an external agent, calling for and seeking the participation of organisations, rather than actual "networking", i.e. the taking of interesting opportunities, in the form of cooperation and coordination in order to attain shared goals (such as that of influencing the agendas of national states and international agencies, and public opinion), and share experiences, information and knowledge.

It would also appear that the active involvement of European administrations in cooperation initiatives is closely tied up with the **possibility of accessing economic resources**.

For many Latin American local and intermediate administrations interest in constructing and participating in a network going beyond the local dimension is undoubtedly evident, and is the subject of **greater awareness** than is the case for European administrations. Nevertheless, **even for Latin American local and intermediate administrations the network is still in an embryonic phase**. In this case too **it does not yet seem possible to talk of a veritable network**. What we have are single cooperation initiatives brought together through the activity of an external actor (CeSPI).

Fronteras Abiertas has performed **two sets** of training activities: study visits in Italy, involving 22 representatives and operators of Latin American administrations, and two online courses, in which about 300 students have taken part.

In the case of study visits **one should not talk about work placements**, i.e. the type of training activity initially planned for the project. The element typical of work placement, namely the sharing of working activity or supply of services performed by the visited organisations, was thus missing. In the absence of this element it is difficult to talk of forms of experiential learning typical of work placements.

Even in the case of **online courses** is rather difficult to refer to the modality of "distance learning" inasmuch both the use of tools such as tutors, and the use forms of interactivity between teachers and learners and between learners themselves are missing.

A **lack of definition** of activities and objectives has probably had an impact on the effectiveness of actions to build capabilities and on the possibility of initiating South-South cooperation initiatives.

In practice, for both the construction of projects to be submitted for funding from international organisations and the formulation of local development initiatives financed directly by the project a central role – and sometimes exclusive

role – has been played by the European actors involved. This has certainly **not favoured the possibility of developing local capabilities**.

To this end, rather than supporting South-South cooperation initiatives it would appear that the project has supported – sometimes successfully, sometimes with temporary effects – North-South-South cooperation initiatives, within which local organisations are in danger of taking on more the role of **beneficiaries** than that of protagonists.

The limitations of the project with regard to the development of capabilities among the actors involved are to a certain extent exposed by the fact that the **effectiveness of activities has depended heavily on the capabilities that the actors involved** in the project already possessed at the outset a **certain difficulty in adapting the project to local conditions**.

It would thus appear that the effectiveness of training activities performed has been limited. With regard to training activities, greater effectiveness has been observed by beneficiaries for the visits to Italy.

A further element that has had an impact on the effectiveness of the project is the state of **relative institutional confusion**.

The link between the activities of the “Fronteras Abiertas” project and activities promoted or performed by implementing agencies within the framework of other projects **is not always clear or well defined**, and in some cases the **very persons** involved in the project have acted at various times within **different institutional frameworks**.

The project has undoubtedly promoted and performed **sweeping communication actions** in relations with local administrations, governments and international organisations of Latin America, particularly for fostering a debate on cross-boundary integration. Evidence of this process may be seen by the fact that some of the transnational actors involved in communication actions (such as SICA and CAF) have promoted initiatives regarding cross-border cooperation and the role that local administrations can play in the regional integration process, often involving directly or indirectly the subjects involved in the project. SICA for example started up a regional initiative for the drafting of a “Carta Centroamericana de la Autonomia Municipal”, entered into a memorandum of understanding with CeSPI for research activities and reflections on cross-border development and is financing the opening of a section on local administrations on the website of the SICA – IILA training project. As will be mentioned in greater detail below, on the one hand agreements reached by SICA and CeSPI may appear to be positive project results, but on the other they may lead to situations that are **incompatible** with the role taken on by CeSPI within the same project: legal ownership of the project and its actions should indeed be recognised as being held by IILA, consequently the legitimacy of an action that establishes a direct relationship between an external organisation and the implementing agency of the project is at the very least open to **doubt**.

Finally, it's important to refer to unexpected effects. In fact, exactly the communication activity conducted in the project can bring to light an aspect of “Fronteras abiertas” which is not very evident either in the project document, or in the forms of ventilation and it's **completely absent** in the logical framework formulated. It is, in particular, the production and spreading of knowledge about the processes of regional integration and cross-border cooperation.

Communication and networking actions with SICA, other regional organisations and some government agencies have led to the **sharing of a vision on border areas and to the perception of possible bottom-up integration processes**

In brief:

Although all planned project activities have been performed, in terms of effectiveness the project presents a number of critical elements. Project effectiveness is in doubt in particular with regard to the construction of a network of Latin American and European intermediate and local administrations (still in its early stages), supported projects (which are not always pertinent and have always had the effect of strengthening the capabilities of the actors involved), training activities and the construction of institutional capabilities (mostly initiatives entailing the transfer of information and knowledge). A particularly critical aspect for the effectiveness of the project has been the state of institutional confusion: it is not clear what is “of the project” and what belongs to “other projects”. However, the project also has positive aspects, including one of great importance that may be counted as an unexpected result: the production of knowledge about cross-border integration processes in Latin America. The production of knowledge – which was not specified in the logical framework – has enabled the project to impact on the policies of some Latin American actors, in particular regional integration organisations.

2.4. The efficiency

The project showed a **great capacity of leverage**, given that through the activities carried out - either directly or indirectly - resources for about 11 million euros (with a total investment of about 1.5 million euros) have been generated. Despite this capacity with regard to the use of resources one must point out the presence of **some**

problems: global project overheads (13% budget 2007; 9.73% budget 2008; 10.13% budget 2009); **cost of some activities** (e.g. training, in Italy and online; totalling approximately 361,700 Euro) in which the efforts made and resources invested **did not produce benefits as perceived by local actors**; the resources deployed in “**direct actions**” generated effects that might be defined as redundant, and in any case of little relevance for the programme’s aims; despite the global investment, the formed network, especially in the case of European organisations, still appears to be **rather small and endowed with little enterprise**; the use and management of project resources have in some cases been a **cause for conflict** among the actors involved in Fronteras Abiertas activities.

Apart from the above problems, it appears necessary to report that the way the project has been managed, with Ministry funding granted to an international organisation, and management of the project then entrusted almost entirely to a **third party**, has probably been at the origin of some of the problems regarding the efficiency of actions performed.

The appropriateness of the **two steps** ought to be re-considered, bearing in mind the roles played by the various organisations involved.

Furthermore, as shown by the number of CeSPI publications that have been issued in relation to the project and the existing difficulties in determining which study and research activities are to be attributed to Fronteras Abiertas and which to other projects, it might be assumed that the project itself has to an extent become a **means of financing for CeSPI’s research activity**, irrespective of the specific aims of the project.

Project activities furthermore have been used to mobilise financing for new projects in which **not only** associations of municipalities and intermediate administrations of cross-border areas but also CeSPI itself (which performs project assistance and monitoring activities) actually participate and derive benefits. In this case too it might be assumed that a not insignificant percentage of invested resources has not been reserved for strengthening the actors engaged in cross-border cooperation and integration initiatives.

In brief:

As seen, the most important aspect in terms of efficiency has been the ability of the project to mobilise new resources for cross-border cooperation. Nevertheless, some problems have been detected regarding the use of resources. Some problems relate to the management of project activities, others to financing methods and the initial design of the initiative.

2.5. The sustainability

Project activities appear to be partly dependent on the presence and enterprise of the promoting agencies that have also managed the project. In those cases in which these actors have “left” the field, activities have often been **suspended**. In cases in which these actors have maintained a steady presence – even one limited to specific functions and activities – activities have continued, and developed further.

The sustainability of initiatives started up thanks to the project appears to be **better** where the presence of the promoters of “Fronteras Abiertas” has been less evident, limiting their action to putting local actors in contact with European actors. In these cases, the **greater independence** of actors involved as “beneficiaries” has enabled the emergence of autonomous initiatives that are continuing

The continuity and sustainability of integration initiatives has in many cases been evident in situations in which project actions have proved to be quite ineffective or sporadic. This is no coincidence: the choice **not to create new subjects**, but to support and assist existing and operative subjects has meant that also in areas where Fronteras Abiertas has not succeeded in bringing in “new resources”, integration dynamics that the project has sought to reinforce can continue, sometimes with local resources and other times by continuing – even without the support of the project – to perform fundraising activities or thanks to resources already mobilised by other international actors.

An element that favours the continuity of commenced activities appears to be the **mobilisation of new actors**, as promoters of cross-border cooperation initiatives or as donors: this is so for SICA or for some local governments of South America, or OICS, which continues to act as a mediator between Italian and Latin American regions.

In brief:

In terms of sustainability, while the continuity of actions is dependent on the presence and action of project promoters, partly because of varying levels of continuity and the active involvement of local actors, it must be duly noted that two of the project’s main strategies, namely that of not creating new organisations but of supporting existing/ongoing processes, and that of seeking to spread the topic of “bottom-up cross-border integration”, have tended to allow the continuation of cooperation and development initiatives in border areas.

2.6. The impact

The paragraphs below seek to provide not an actual appraisal of impact but rather an attempt to identify and examine some **general trends or directions** that have developed with reference to project actions and that might provide a clue as to the impact that the project might have in the medium and long run.

Fronteras Abiertas has mobilised – directly and indirectly – about **11 million Euro thanks to the creation of new projects**. A first set of impacts is thus to be identified through the likely effects that these resources would have in the mainstreaming of the topic of cross-border regional development, as well as on the capacity of involved local actors.

A second and not less important area of impact is the **growing alertness** to the question of cross-border cooperation in the agendas and development policies of many international bodies engaged in integration initiatives in Latin America, such as SICA, the European Union and UNDP.

With reference to the programme it is however possible to single out **missed impacts**. In particular, the project has been unable to **aggregate all the actors involved in cross-border development initiatives** for fostering shared strategies. An attempt was made to reach agreement and create forms of participation in the programme in relations with international organisations and – to a lesser extent – with the central administrations of different states. Similar attempts were not adequately made in relations with NGOs and bilateral cooperation bodies. As a result, even though these actors promote integration initiatives that are often better and more rapid than those of local administrations, they tended not to join the other actors involved from a common standpoint, and still less on the basis of project proposals (indeed the project was sometimes perceived as a rival, attempting to “claim paternity” of ongoing processes and initiatives).

Moreover, the project had no impact in creating a context for aggregating, structuring and defining a shared strategy among the numerous projects supported by Italian Cooperation in the Latin American region: while CeSPI has been an integral part of some IILA projects in the region, the project has remained separate from Italian cooperation and from local development initiatives generated by Italian cooperation in the past.

In brief:

Again with regard to impact the Fronteras Abiertas project presents a varied picture. The project has certainly had an important impact in terms of the mobilisation of fresh resources and the dissemination of a vision of “bottom-up” cross-border cooperation. There have also been some missed impacts however, particularly the possibility of increasing integration for cross-border cooperation initiatives and of having an influence on other Italian cooperation projects.

2.7. The visibility

Considering the resources deployed in this sphere it might be thought that the project has been given a great amount of visibility at both international and local levels. It was observed however that in this sphere too there were some **problems**, namely:

- Irrespective of the local actors directly involved (the persons taking part in initiatives), the **visibility of the Fronteras Abiertas project was very limited in the areas of intervention**.
- **Project visibility was also limited among the actors directly involved. Visibility of the set of actors involved in the project was limited:** while all the actors involved in the project are aware of the role of CeSPI, almost no one was aware of the involvement and role of IILA. The visibility of IILA and of Italian Cooperation was reduced for most project participants to the presence of their logos on publications and on project documents.
- **The visibility of Italian Cooperation as an actor involved in promoting a new approach to cross-border cooperation was almost null, especially at a local level:** apart from the presence of the symbols of Italian Cooperation on publications, the presence of a few references to Italian contributions in publications, the inclusion of the project among those identified in the mentioned brochure on Italian projects in Latin America.

In brief:

Despite the amount of resources devoted to communication activities, visibility of the project as a strategic action of Italian and IILA cooperation remained very limited. The role played by CeSPI in the field generated a certain confusion among project participants. Fronteras Abiertas has indeed often been identified with the organisation carrying out actions, while the role of IILA was rarely perceived.

2.8. Functioning of the implementing tool

Despite Project complexity the implementing mechanism **that was quite unstructured and unorganised**, not providing any management and control system capable of coordinating, managing and sometimes acting as a go-between for numerous emerging interests with reference to the many dimensions of the project.

Although the project was financed by the MFA and entailed action in a region where Italian Cooperation has a long history, as well as interaction with numerous actors involved on various levels with Italy's presence overseas, once it had agreed on financing the MFA does not appear to have played **any role in the external control and monitoring of actions**, if not, indirectly through the administrative management of IILA's contribution, communication between embassies and Italian diplomats and IILA, participation in workshops and public events, some meetings with project staff, especially at a local level and the undertaking of small-scale communication initiatives.

Despite the breadth of relations forged through the project, the project itself does not appear to have been the subject of special focus, of actions designed to have a bearing on project management, or to have been given a **specific strategy**.

Even though the project involved numerous subjects, no steering committee was set up, no formal monitoring system was set in place, there was not even a formal difference between the roles of the various actors involved in the organisation. In short, **no management structure was created** in which it might be possible to allow these actors to take part in a collective and organised communicative, interactive and decision-making process.

The possibility of identifying and solving the problems that inevitably emerge in a project as complex as "Fronteras Abiertas" was **left to the initiative and capabilities of the various actors involved** in its rollout, without these being able to refer to a structure that might support them in meeting both the daily management needs of the numerous planned activities and needs relating to the analysis, assessment and management of the numerous dynamics generated by project activities as it came into contact with the political, social and economic reality of the territories and actors involved.

It is no surprise then that in addition to **the relevance of the issue tackled by the project there emerged elements of lesser relevance regarding its "contact with reality", as well as problems regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of actions**.

The lack of an effective monitoring system made the implementing mechanism **little suited** to a project as complex as Fronteras Abiertas. The non-definition of expected results and lack of a formalised system of result indicators probably had a strong bearing on the possibility of carrying out effective monitoring. The shortcomings of the monitoring system (undoubtedly suitable for managing activities "visible" to governments and embassies, but **less suitable for managing intangible activities** marked by the participation of many actors and the influence of numerous dynamics) were compounded by the **lack of independent assessment activity**.

The role of the IILA in the implementation of the project related to some specific activities: the definition of basic strategies, handling of relations with governments, assistance with the organisation of some workshop events. Field actions on the other hand were **fully prepared and managed** by CeSPI.

This resulted in **lesser visibility** for IILA and produced a high degree of **overlap between project activities and activities performed in other areas by CeSPI**. If IILA had taken a more active role in the management of activities and been more present in the field, this would probably have reduced problems regarding "institutional confusion", visibility and perhaps also efficiency.

In the field, the presence of the project was chiefly felt through the **short-term missions**. Only in a few cases did the project make use of the presence of "agents", whose **stay was longer** in the regions involved or of local agents entrusted with the job of helping with activities. In such cases activity in the field was in any case performed **without having an adequate supply of resources and technical tools**.

The centralisation of project management in Italy probably had an impact on the **limited effectiveness** of the project in terms of building local capabilities, and in any case did nothing to stop the emergence of problems in the implementation stage regarding the lack of project visibility as perceived by local actors.

In brief:

In terms of the project's implementing tool one should highlight a state of inadequacy, especially if one considers the complexity of the project. In this sense, particularly relevant aspects are the lack of a well-structured management system involving the various actors; the absence of the MFA, in terms of both strategy and external control; the secondary role played by IILA; the lack of an adequate monitoring and continuous assessment system; the lack of adequate presence in the field.

The following table shows the overview of the results of the evaluation according to the different criteria.

	Satisfactory	Poor
Relevance or pertinence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the theme of the project - the geographical areas identified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the identification of the reference entities - the actions - the legal dimension
Logical framework		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relationship between results and activities (some activities are not identified) - drawing up of objectives and results - indicators are tautological in relation to the processes they should be helping to evaluate
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activities performed corresponding to those indicated in the project - Training activity in Italy deemed to be useful by the actors involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-border content is doubtful in the cases of some projects. The relationship between the project and some activities is not evident - In some cases there is no involvement of European administrations. The number of European local and regional organisations involved is very limited - Cooperation appears to be based not so much on a network as on individual relations - The interest in the network is not clear for many actors, apart from that of acquiring resources - The Latin American network is still in an embryonic state and depends on the actors implementing the project - The results of training activities are not measurable - The site does not work as a platform - An analogue, imprecise use of the concepts defining activities - Institutional confusion - Non-consideration of political and institutional interplay - Undifferentiated approach to actors - Few cases of South-South cooperation - In some cases the project does not manage to really increase capabilities, but merely supports subjects already possessing considerable capabilities. Training activities appear to have limited effectiveness.
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generation of projects having a value of 11 million Euro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The budget has been drafted on a year by year basis. There is no correspondence between the project budget formulated in the project document and the final budget. The way the budget has evolved is unclear. - The cost of some activities appears to be very high compared with results actually achieved (e.g. training in Italy) - Invested resources have not always brought benefits as perceived by local actors - In some cases direct actions have generated redundant effects or effects of little relevance to programme objectives - The most evident result of the project (new projects) appears to be detached from many of the activities performed - The institutional mechanism is at odds with the role of each actor - The project also appears to be aimed at financing CeSPI's activities rather than simply aiding support given by CeSPI to local actors - Conflicts have emerged between the actors involved regarding resources

	Satisfactory	Poor
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilisation of new actors - Integration of project activities in ongoing/existing processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dependence on project promoting agencies for some cooperation initiatives - Different levels of continuity and active involvement of local actors
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mobilisation of fresh resources - processes of change and development, involving the actors of “border areas” where initiatives have started up - processes to formulate regional and international policies, in particular strengthening the vision of “bottom-up” cross-border cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-aggregation in a strategic context shared by numerous actors involved in cross-border development initiatives - the non-creation of a context for the re-aggregation of Italian Cooperation in Latin America - the impossibility of gauging medium- and long-term impact due to the lack of real objectives within a logical frame of reference
Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop activities and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project is lacking in visibility in the areas where it has been rolled out - In the eyes of local actors there is no difference between CeSPI and the project - The presence of IILA is perceived by a small number of actors. Activity performed by IILA is not recognised by local actors - The project is not visible, nor perceived as part of an Italian cooperation strategy
The implementing tool		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a structured implementing tool with the participation of all actors involved - Lack of MFA intervention in terms of strategies and external control - Peripheral role of IILA in managing activities - Lack of a monitoring system - Lack of continuous project assessment - Limited presence in the field

3. Recommendations

The formulation of the recommendations requires a pre-condition placed first. In effect, the main question, as explained in the course of the evaluation, lies in the **nature of the project**. A possible new project or a possible new phase will also rely, not only on the clearness of the objectives, but especially on the **clarification if the project deals with a research or with a development cooperation intervention**. It is evident that a compromise between the two possible identities cannot be practicable. The recommendations are as follow:

- i. Give **continuity** to the initiative in border regions and to bottom-up integration in border areas, in order to make the most of the investments undertaken up to this point.
- ii. Define the **strategic framework within which the initiative is inserted**, with special reference to Italian Cooperation, and define relations between the initiative and other activities of Italian Cooperation.
- iii. Adopt an **institutional framework** within which well defined roles are established for each actor, avoiding overlaps and the possibility of “conflicts of interest”, ensuring the correct performance of different functions and the possibility of checks and controls. This framework should include a system of governance for the project in which the various actors involved in its implementation can participate in a structured manner.
- iv. Adopt a **structured implementing tool capable of managing a complex action** .:
- v. Define the **project budget clearly and precisely**, avoiding variations that entail additional expenses and avoiding subsequent annual reviews – in order to adequately monitor efficiency.
- vi. Adopt a method that ensures **actual assistance to the actors involved (Latin American and European)**, with an adequate presence in the field and adequate involvement of local actors, reducing “hit and run” intervention types (e.g. short missions not followed by a constant presence in the field).
- vii. Include in the project **research and study activities** as an assistance tool, also defining relative methods and expected results in terms of the production of new knowledge and of innovation.
- viii. **Focus actions on a region or on a small number of regions**, avoiding the project’s “migration” to other areas, thus reducing the risk of dispersion of resources and increased management complexity.
- ix. Create in the regions in which the programme acts **local governance mechanisms** that make it possible for all relevant local actors to take part in the management of the initiative.
- x. Focus the project on **well-defined sets of actions (components, sections)**, maintaining forms of flexibility but avoiding the proliferation of actions and initiatives that might result in the dispersion of resources.
- xi. Avoid the adoption of exclusive choices with regard to the **local actors to be involved** – in both the international network and when starting up local initiatives – using, when selecting actors, criteria that relate to the sustainability (social, economic, political and legal) of actions embarked upon and the identification of interests that these actors might have in taking part in actions.
- xii. Adopt a **diversified approach** to assistance for local actors, founded on the analysis of these actors, identifying intentions and tendencies, the need to strengthen capabilities, etc. and followed up by the identification and rollout of specific plans of action or development.
- xiii. Adopt action methods based on **transparency and visibility** (e.g. call for projects for the selection of local initiatives to support, adoption of formal selection criteria, etc.).

1. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Through a brief dated 13 December 2011 (file number 1518) Office IX of the General Directorate for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs entrusted the company STEM-VCR with the task of performing an ongoing evaluation of the project “Fronteras Abiertas: interregional network for cross-border cooperation and Latin American integration”.

For this purpose, STEM-VCR created a team composed of three experts, which was formally activated on 23 April 2012 following notification of commencement of works by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The experts responsible for the evaluation, authors of this report, are the following:

- Gianfrancesco Costantini, senior expert, socio-economist, who has extensive work experience in the field of development cooperation, in particular in Central America;
- Maurizio Floridi, senior expert, sociologist, who has extensive experience in the formulation and evaluation of development cooperation projects;
- Andrea Floridi, junior assistant, development economist.

The evaluation was performed in three separate phases:

- a. A **preparatory phase**, from 23 April 2012 to 5 May 2012, which involved, in addition to the initial briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the participation of the various offices involved, acquisition and analysis of the basic project documents, interviews with representatives of the Italian-Latin American Institute (IILA) and the Centre for International Policy Studies (CeSPI), and scheduling of the various activities in the field in Central America;
- b. The **field phase**, from 6 May 2012 to 20 May 2012, in which the experts Gianfrancesco Costantini and Andrea Floridi conducted a series of meetings with all of the entities involved in the project in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua and, more specifically, in the two areas on which the project was concentrated: the Trifinio region (a border area between El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras) and the Gulf of Fonseca (a border area between El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras);
- c. The **phase involving drafting of the final report**, during which the information gathered in the field was verified through meetings, interviews and targeted contacts with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CeSPI, the IILA, the Lombardy region and the Interregional Observatory on Development Cooperation (OICS), with entities involved in the implementation of the project and qualified representatives. During these meetings and contacts, the team of experts also verified the principal conclusions of the evaluation, in order to determine the degree to which these conclusions were shared by the various institutional entities involved in the project.

2. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL CONTEXT

2.1. The objectives of the evaluation

According to the terms of reference stated in the brief, provided in Annex 1, the evaluation of the “Fronteras Abiertas” was required to:

- Express an opinion as to the relevance of the objectives and the degree to which these had been achieved;
- Express an opinion on the efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project;
- Examine the project in terms of its structure and completeness, to identify associated good practices and lessons learned, so that these could be used as a knowledge base for development of possible future technical support programmes;
- Analyse the strategies and methods for performance, such as providing recommendations for possible future initiatives in the same sector;
- Take into consideration factors associated with the sustainability and the impact of project implementation on integration processes currently under way in the border areas in question.

The evaluation was also required to express considerations on the following points:

- The effectiveness and impact of the technical support and training provided and the instruments used for this purpose;
- The effectiveness and impact of the role of “Fronteras Abiertas” as a platform for regional development projects;
- The effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the direct intervention actions in the region.

In addition to these objectives, the team believed it appropriate, given the particularly complex institutional architecture of the mechanism, to address also the aspect of visibility, with particular reference to that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as principal donor entity and of the IILA, which is the beneficiary of the MFA funding for completion of the project.

2.2. Evaluation criteria

With regard to the evaluation criteria, in accordance with the terms of reference, these have been defined as follows:

- **relevance or pertinence**, understood as consistency of the objectives of the project with the needs of the beneficiary border areas and the degree of involvement of local entities;
- **validity of the logical framework**, understood as analysis of the logic underlying its preparation and the compliance of the activities with the results, and compliance of those results with the objectives that the project was intended to achieve; particular attention has been paid by the team to analysis of the indicators proposed in the logical framework;
- **efficiency**, analysed in terms of optimisation of the resources intended for achievement of the objectives for the project, considering the following in particular: whether the results have been achieved on the basis of the envisaged costs; whether the results have been achieved within the envisaged deadlines; and whether the resources used have been the most efficient possible;
- **effectiveness**, understood as a measure of the degree and extent to which the objectives for the project have been achieved, in particular taking into consideration the following: to what extent have the general and specific objectives of the project been achieved; whether the activities performed are consistent with the general and specific objectives; and an analysis of the principal factors that have influenced achievement of the objectives;
- **impact**, understood as an analysis of the effects of the project on the actual local situation;
- **sustainability**, considered as the ability of the project to produce and reproduce benefits over time.

As has already been pointed out in part, the evaluation examined three additional aspects that have been isolated in the treatment of the exercise, given their importance. This relates in particular to the following:

- **analysis of the visibility** of the institutional entities responsible for financing or promoting the project, with particular attention being paid to the perception of the Italian Government (as donor entity) and of the ILLA;
- **analysis of unexpected results and effects created** that, although not envisaged, do have a certain interest, including the possible continuation of the commitment by the Italian Government in the same area and on the same theme beyond the “Fronteras Abiertas” project;
- **analysis of the functioning of the implementation mechanism**, which is characterised, as we have already stated, by a fairly complex structure.

2.3. The methodological difficulties encountered

From a methodological standpoint, the evaluation needed to address a series of **difficulties** associated with the very nature of the project and its implementation that should be detailed in order to illustrate the measures adopted to obviate the associated problems.

- a. The **difficulty in generally extrapolating the information collected in the field to the entire project**. Indeed, notwithstanding the fact that the “Fronteras Abiertas” project covers the entire Latin American continent, the evaluation did however relate, because of understandable reasons associated with the available regions, to only two regions, both located in Central America (the Trifinio region and the Gulf of Fonseca) out of all of those involved. This difficulty was not so much associated with the functioning of the mechanism as a whole, as it is naturally the same for the entire project, but rather with the specificities of Central America compared to the other border areas in the remainder of Latin America, and above all continental areas. While, therefore, the conclusions on how the project operated in the two zones, and therefore the recommendations made, can certainly be taken as generally valid, the general scope of the specific actions analysed in the four Central American nations should naturally be viewed in relative terms. To obviate this difficulty, the evaluation team paid particular attention to the documentary analysis of the entire project and not only to the Central American areas. These areas can therefore be considered in methodological terms as paradigmatic of the problems characterising the project as a whole and therefore in other areas also, although with a value that cannot be viewed in absolute terms with regard to the information drawn from the specific actions observed during the activities in the field.
- b. The **non-availability of a consistent, complete and exhaustive logical framework**. In addition to the changes in the general and specific objectives over time – which certainly did not facilitate the work of either the evaluation team or, above all, those individuals who were responsible for implementation -, the various formulations all present an underlying problem: the absence of a true general objective able to orient the direction of the project in terms of its general strategies and therefore its ultimate aims. Although the analysis of the logical framework and its consistency is covered by a specific section dedicated to the results of the evaluation (see Section 4), we should also highlight the difficulty associated with using this as a serious instrument for comparison of what has been achieved with what was envisaged, naturally in addition to the observable effects of the project. The change in the objectives over the course of time, the logical confusion between the concepts of result, activity and indicators, and, more generally, the construction of a logical framework “ex post” have created an objective difficulty for the evaluation team, who, also lacking the possibility to refer to a monitoring system, have necessarily been required to limit their activities to a qualitative analysis, without performing any quantitative evaluations.
- c. The **non-availability of a clear framework for the actions performed and the budget initially envisaged and then actually used**. This difficulty represented a significant obstacle because, in the absence of summary documents (the annual programme in fact entailed changes from time to time, both in the actions planned and above all in the budget, with this budget not being comparable in its various different annual versions because the accounting items from time to time assumed different names) and above all of an exhaustive final report, the evaluation team was forced to reconstruct and reinterpret the realities of the project, an operation that could have resulted in certain inaccuracies.
- d. The **impact analysis** for a project such as “Fronteras Abiertas”, which addresses social, political and institutional processes, can only be effective if it is conducted from a **medium-/long-term perspective**. Because the project had ended only a few months previously, the evaluation team was in the contradictory

position, as is usual in projects of this type, of having to analyse the impact of actions conducted within a short period on processes that however have a much longer dynamic in terms of time. While admitting the usefulness of an impact analysis conducted in the short term, the value of the conclusions should be understood in terms of **guidelines** or **general trends** indicating what will actually be, in the future, the impact on long-term processes, such as those associated with cross-border integration.

- e. The **difficulty in distinguishing between dynamics related to processes under way and those more specific to the project**. The “Fronteras Abiertas” project undoubtedly has the merit of acting on processes and dynamics that are already under way (which has a positive influence on its pertinence), and does not impose a structure on the existing realities, moulding them to its requirements. While this aspect certainly represents a significant asset, it is nonetheless true that it is often difficult to distinguish between the dynamics and effects specific to the processes that are already under way a long time before commencement of the project and those that are however linked directly to that project. To obviate this difficulty, the evaluation team considered all of the information collected or phenomena observed using a diachronic perspective and analysis, which is useful *inter alia* in establishing the direction of relationships with reciprocal influence between the project and the procedural reality in which that project takes place.

2.4. The approach and the methodological principles adopted

Given the nature of the project, based above all on “soft” elements and on the relative minor importance of “hard” intervention, with the exception of some rare forms of “direct” actions, the evaluation adopted an **approach that was almost exclusively qualitative** and was therefore based on the analysis of processes and dynamics associated with the issue of cross-border integration.

This approach took the form of a verification of what the “Fronteras Abiertas” project represented in terms of the dynamics under way in the two zones of Central America, i.e. the region of Trifinio and the region of the Gulf of Fonseca, for the purposes of the themes associated with cross-border integration on the basis, above all, of **mapping** of the entities involved in the processes under way and, subsequently, of an analysis of the **role of the entities involved** directly in the project.

More specifically, the qualitative approach took the specific form of the adoption of **three methodological principles**: analysis of the relationship between the project and the context (above all in terms of the criterion of pertinence); identification of the **warnings and lessons learned** as an element that could enhance the role of the project in terms of cross-border integration processes (above all in terms of the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency and impact); and the hierarchisation of the themes (priority themes for evaluation purposes).

2.4.1. Analysis of the relationship between project and context

This analysis made reference to a **model based on recognition of two areas**, the project itself and the context. From a theoretical point of view, this model provides that the consistency between the project and the context in which it is located results in high levels of pertinence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability, which diminish as the discrepancies between the two areas increase. The two areas can in turn be structured according to a variety of dimensions, which include – on the one hand – the formulation of the project and the policies of the local entities and – on the other – the system of actions, resources, opportunities and problems specific to the project and to the local context as a set of “conditions and opportunities”.

The project	The local context
The formulation of the project	The policies of local entities
The actions of the entities promoting the project	The actions of local entities
The resources mobilised by the project	The resources and opportunities present
	The existing problems

2.4.2. Identification of lessons learned

For the **identification of lessons learned**, reference was made above all to the following:

- a) identification of the obstacle factors identified during formulation of the project and those actually encountered during its implementation, and identification of the actions and methods used to overcome those obstacles;
- b) the practices recognised and replicated by other entities, both in the local context and in other contexts (such as the Andean community);
- c) identification of the obstacle factors and problematic elements emerging in the course of implementation of the project (causes of ineffectiveness of actions, inefficiencies, unexpected negative impacts, etc.) and that need to be considered in the design and management of cooperation initiatives similar to the project analysed.

2.4.3. Hierarchisation of themes

Considering the nature of the project, the evaluation also considered the **interactions between the project and:**

- the **previous and current initiatives supported by the Italian cooperation** in the region (from the PRODERE programme to local development programmes; programmes supporting female-owned businesses, programmes for management of environmental emergencies and reduction of vulnerability, initiatives for “decentralised cooperation”, etc.);
- the **political processes of regional integration**, both within Central America and between Central and South America;
- the processes of management and **limitation of factors and processes associated with social risk** present in the regions involved;
- the processes of **aggregation and development of businesses** (and in particular small and medium-sized businesses);
- the processes of **innovation in public administrations** at local level;
- the processes associated with creation of **partnerships between public administrations and non-government entities** (civilian organisations, businesses, etc.);
- the dynamics of **innovation in local economic processes**.

In particular, in this context, the evaluation attempted to understand the following: to what extent has the project been able to generate or sustain processes of **innovation** (social, political, economic, technological); to what extent has it been able to **involve and mobilise local entities** and bring them into **contact with external entities**; to what extent has it been able to sustain and generate the **institutional development** of the entities involved and the construction of systems of **regional governance**.

2.5. Sources

The evaluation was conducted through integration of various sources of information (live and documentary sources) belonging to two broad categories: **first-level sources** (direct) and **second-level sources** (indirect). The following table shows the various sources according to the two categories described above.

	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES	LIVE SOURCES
DIRECT SOURCES (1st level)	Project document	Representatives of the project management unit
	Logical framework	Representatives of the beneficiaries
	Forecast budget	Representatives of other entities directly involved in the project activities
	Final budget	Project activities under way

	DOCUMENTARY SOURCES	LIVE SOURCES
INDIRECT SOURCES (2nd level)	Project reports	Representatives of the international organisations and NGOs present in the areas considered
	Documents on cross-border networks in the region	Representatives of national governments
	Other documents from local and international entities	Representatives of local authorities in the areas considered
		Other qualified representatives

3. THE “FRONTERAS ABIERTAS” PROJECT

The section describes the basic elements of the project, both in terms of the actions implemented and the budget requested and then actually committed. As we have already mentioned in the section on the methodological difficulties, the drafting of this section entailed painstaking work to reconstruct aspects of the project associated with the actions performed and with the resources committed to the project, because the documents available, including the final report, did not provide an exhaustive and comprehensive framework for that information.

Even though it may contain some inaccuracies as a result of having been developed ex-post, the evaluation team nonetheless believes that this work to reconstruct what was achieved by the project was of fundamental importance in providing an objective base of data and information that could then be analysed during the evaluation, the results of which are provided in Section 4 below.

3.1. The institutional context

In July 2007, the Italian-Latin American Institute (IILA) launched the “Fronteras Abiertas” project, in cooperation with the Centre for International Policy Studies (CeSPI), and thanks to the financing provided by the General Directorate for Development Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This project was concluded in 2011 and received overall funding of €1,500,000, subdivided into three annual payments (€600,000 for Year 1, 2007; €600,000 for Year 2, 2008; €300,000 for Year 3, subdivided into two payments, one for 2009 and the other for 2010).

The project, formulated in January 2007, was based on a feasibility study conducted in 2006 by the CeSPI and the IILA, which made it possible to analyse the processes for cross-border dialogue existing in Latin America and resulted in the proposal of an “*interregional network for cross-border cooperation and Latin American integration*”¹. The financing from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was provided as part of the voluntary contribution for 2007, the voluntary contribution for 2008, the voluntary contribution for 2009 and the voluntary contribution for 2010.

A project fiche was provided for each of the contributions requested, as follows:

- **the project fiche for the voluntary contribution for 2007**, relating to the annual payments for 2007-2008, envisaged actions in seven geographical areas within Latin America (the Aymara region between Chile, Bolivia and Peru; the cross-border region in the North-West of Argentina, the South-West of Paraguay and the South of Bolivia; the Amazon cross-border region; the cross-border region in the West of Brazil, the North-East of Paraguay and the South-East of Bolivia; the cross-border region in the South of Ecuador and the North-West of Peru; the cross-border region in the East of Argentina, the South of Brazil and Uruguay; the Mesoamerican cross-border region of Mexico - Guatemala - El Salvador - Honduras; and the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and the involvement of the CeSPI, of 12 Italian regions (Lazio, Tuscany, Marches, Umbria, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Piedmont, Basilicata, Alto Adige, Campania, Lombardy and Valle d’Aosta) and of the regions of Spain and Latin America; the total budget envisaged for the first year of activity of the project was €750,000, of which €600,000 was requested from the MFA while the other €150,000 constituted the contribution from the participating regions;
- **the project fiche for the voluntary contribution for 2008**, relating to a three-year project, envisaged actions in four geographic areas in Latin America (the cross-border region between Chile, Bolivia and Peru; the cross-border region between Ecuador and Peru; the cross-border between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay; and the cross-border region between El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua) and the involvement of six Italian regions and provinces and of the OICS; the total budget envisaged for the three-year period was €2,250,000, with a contribution from the MFA of €1,800,000 and a contribution from the Italian regions of €450,000; the annual contribution requested from the MFA for the second year of activity of the project was €600,000;

¹ IILA-CeSPI, *Fronteras Abiertas Project. Interregional network for cross-border cooperation and Latin American integration. Promotion of cooperation by the Italian and European regions with the sub-national bodies in Latin America and the Caribbean*, January 2007

- **the project fiche for the voluntary contribution for 2009** envisaged actions in five geographical areas in Latin America (the cross-border region between Chile, Bolivia and Peru; the cross-border region between Ecuador and Peru; the cross-border region between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay; the cross-border region between El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua and the cross-border region between El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala) and the involvement of six Italian regions and provinces and of the OICS; the total budget envisaged for the three-year period was €1,850,000, with a contribution from the MFA of €1,500,000 and a contribution from the Italian regions of €350,000; the annual contribution requested from the MFA for the third year of the project was €200,000, envisaging a request for a further €100,000 for the following year;
- **the project fiche for the voluntary contribution for 2010** – a continuation of the profile for the previous year – envisaged actions in five geographical areas in Latin America, and the involvement of six Italian regions and provinces and of the OICS; the annual contribution requested from the MFA was €100,000.

In essence, the financing provided by the MFA for the project was €1,500,000, distributed as follows:

- €600,000 for Year 1 (voluntary contribution for 2007)
- €600,000 for Year 2 (voluntary contribution for 2008)
- €200,000 for Year 3 (1st part, voluntary contribution for 2009)
- €100,000 for Year 3 (2nd part, voluntary contribution for 2010)

A **project document** was prepared in January 2007 by the CeSPI. This project related to an action lasting two years, conducted jointly by the CeSPI and the IILA, with the involvement and active participation of Italian, European and Latin American regions and the institutional involvement of the OICS and the OLAGI (an association grouping together more than 200 Latin American local authorities).

3.2. The objectives, methodology and activities envisaged

This section provides information resulting from the analysis of the project documents. As already illustrated, both the objectives and the activities envisaged have undergone, over the years, a series of adjustments that have never been indicated in the original logical framework. The analysis of the extent of these changes, and the absence of any clear and consistent notification of these changes to the MFA, are discussed more extensively in Section 4 below.

The objectives

At the time when the financing was granted (factsheet for 2007), the following project objectives were formally defined.

- a) General objective
“to contribute to strengthening processes of regional integration under way among Nations in Latin America. The project proposes the construction of an Interregional Network for Cross-border Cooperation and Latin American Integration (Fronteras Abiertas Network) on the basis of five priority themes: (a) Regional planning; (b) Local economic development; (c) Social cohesion; (d) Environmental management; and (e) Institutional strengthening”.
- b) Specific objective:
“the creation and implementation of a network that brings together intermediate Latin American bodies with Italian and Spanish regions committed to processes of cross-border dialogue and integration, with tangible effects in terms of improving integrated management of cross-border problems by intermediate institutions in the various countries involved”².

This objective was then restated, although the logical framework was not updated and above all no formal notification of the corresponding changes was provided. The **final report on the project** therefore lists three specific objectives that presumably should be substituted for the objective previously stated:

² The project document (January 2007), however, mentions “Italian and European regions” and there is greater specification of the effects, which are identified as the adoption of new laws, strategic plans, and new organisational and management systems.

- 1) "To stimulate and contribute to the structuring of a systematic cross-border dialogue among the various institutional levels, promoting the creation of a network of subnational institutions within border areas and the strengthening of permanent mechanisms for inter-institutional coordination".
- 2) "To support public policies for development and social cohesion among border regions, with particular focus on the issues of regional planning, local economic development, combating social exclusion, cultural cooperation and conservation of the environment and natural resources".
- 3) "To increase and improve the ability of subnational institutions to formulate and implement cross-border cooperation and integration projects, through activities associated with technical support, training and analysis for project financing opportunities".

The **logical framework** attached to the project document – which is written in Spanish, while the remainder of the document is in Italian – identifies one general objective and four specific objectives that are in part different from those described in the project document and project fiche.

The **general objective** indicated in the logical framework is defined as "*Fortalecer la cooperación transfronteriza como modalidad estratégica de los procesos de integración regional entre los países de América latina*"³.

The **specific objectives** are: "*1) Mejorar la capacidad de los gobiernos intermedios y locales para elaborar, formular y realizar proyectos de cooperación fronteriza; 2) Identificar proyectos para la coordinación transfronteriza de las políticas públicas de desarrollo entre territorios de frontera; 3) Impulsar las relaciones de los gobiernos intermedios y locales con los organismos multilaterales de cooperación internacional; 4) Favorecer un permanente dialogo transfronterizo sistemático multinivel, incluyendo la creación o el fortalecimiento de instancias permanentes de coordinación inter-institucional abiertas a universidades, mundo empresarial y sociedad civil*"⁴.

Quite apart from these changes, the fundamental issue, as illustrated in the section describing the methodology for the evaluation, is the absence of a true general objective that could orient the direction of the project in terms of its general strategies and therefore its ultimate aims.

The absence of a true general objective, and therefore a long-term vision, both for processes of integration in cross-border zones and the possible development of those processes, and for the "mission" of the project in relation to those processes, represents a genuine "**original sin**" that has profoundly influenced not only the remainder of the construction of the logical framework – as illustrated further below and in 4.2 – but also the very possibility of performing evaluation activities from the exterior without an operation involving logical reconstruction of what was the basis of the project. In fact, without a general long-term objective, each action tends to be self-referential.

Expected results

The **project fiche does not define expected results**, even though these are however described in the project document, with a distinction made between *output* and *outcome*.

The **Outputs** include the following:

- "a certain number of trained operators (remote and through work experience programmes)";
- "provision of technical support";
- "cross-border cooperation projects constructed with the support of international operators".

³ To reinforce cross-border cooperation as strategic method in processes of regional integration between the nations of Latin America.

⁴ 1) To improve the ability of intermediate and local governments to prepare, formulate and implement cross-border cooperation projects; 2) To identify projects for cross-border coordination of public development policies between border regions; 3) To promote the relationships of intermediate and local governments with multilateral international cooperation organisations; 4) To promote a systematic, multi-level and ongoing cross-border dialogue, including the creation or reinforcing of permanent mechanisms for inter-institutional coordination open to universities, the business world and civil society.

The **outcomes** include the following:

- “the definition of hypotheses for innovation in regional management such as the design of laws, drafts of strategic plans, models for innovation in cross-border relationships and in the management of specific fields of cooperation among regions in several countries, projects for institutional and functional reform and restructuring”.

The **logical framework** already cited above identifies five expected results, although the formulation of those outcomes relates more to the planned activities (or at most the result indicators) and not to the results of the project. The results indicated are in any case the following:

- *cinco acciones directas realizadas en áreas de fronteras;*
- *cinco proyectos presentados a la cooperación internacional financiados e implementados en colaboración con otros tantos gobiernos subnacionales europeos;*
- *30 gobiernos intermedios y redes de gobiernos locales participando en formas de intercambio y coordinación sobre los temas de la integración transfronteriza;*
- *250 dirigentes, funcionarios y técnicos de gobiernos nacionales y subnacionales participan en dos cursos on-line;*
- *seis eventos organizados en América Latina e Italia sobre integración transfronteriza con la participación de cuatrocientos delegados*⁵.

The project methodology

The methodology for the project is defined in the **project fiche for 2007** in the section on the “operating outline for the project”.

That outline describes, as a starting point for the definition of a plan of activities, the identification of **four Latin American regions** within which cross-border integration/development projects exist, which had already been contacted in the course of a study conducted by the CeSPI and the IILA in 2006, and **seven Italian regions** that had joined the project. In two of these regions (the Ecuador-Peru border and the Chile-Bolivia-Peru border), the project envisaged the commencement of cooperation activities including work experience programmes, specialist consulting, support for the design and distribution of technical manuals on cross-border cooperation, remote training and public events. In another two regions (the Brazil-Peru-Colombia border and the Pampean area of Rio de la Plata between Brazil-Argentina-Uruguay), the project envisaged reinforcing decentralised cooperation initiatives already present within the region.

The **project fiche for 2008** provides a description of the project that contains significant innovations compared to the description for the previous year. Indeed, in 2008, the project fiche stated an intention to make the project a “**platform for regional development projects, for which Fronteras Abiertas will offer its training and technical support services for activities associated with formulation, fund raising and management**”. Furthermore, this factsheet states that the projects supported by the Fronteras Abiertas project are proposed as “**projects that define the cross-border process**”, i.e. as projects based on thematic issues that are able to structure the entire process of regional development, seen in terms of its cross-border significance⁶.

The project document already cited contains a more comprehensive definition of the methodology. The most important elements of the methodology are organised according to a process that envisages the following stages:

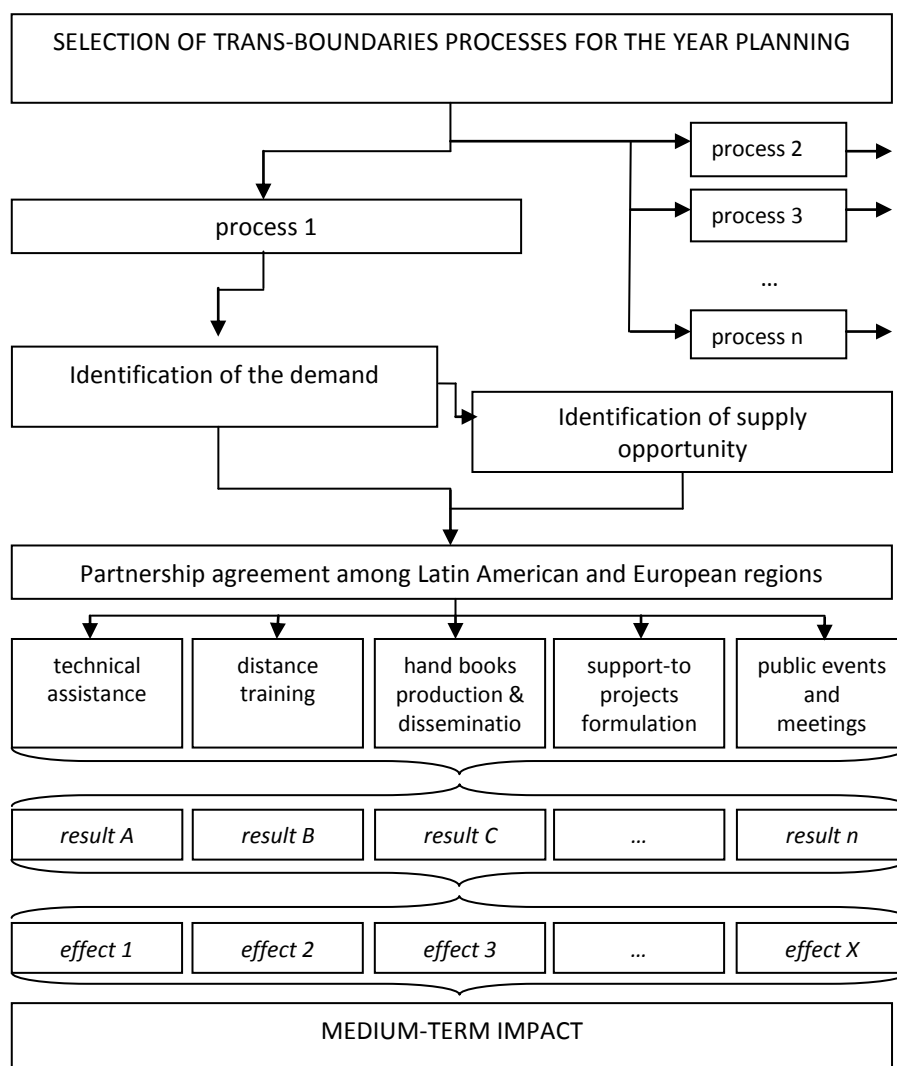
- identification of demand for institutional reinforcement from intermediate Latin American governments;
- identification of European and Latin American experience with content that can be replicated;

⁵ a) Five direct actions performed in Latin American border areas; b) Five cross-border cooperation projects presented to international cooperation and implemented in cooperation with the same number of European subnational governments; c) 30 intermediate governments and networks of local governments involved in forms of exchange and coordination on issues of cross-border integration; d) 250 directors, officials and technicians from national and subnational governments involved in two on-line courses on cross-border cooperation; and e) six events organised in Latin America and in Italy on the themes of cross-border integration, with the participation of 400 delegates.

⁶ See CV 2008, Fronteras Abiertas Project Sheet, section entitled “Description and Objectives”.

- conclusion of partnership agreements among local networks of intermediate Latin American governments involved in a given cross-border region and the European authorities;
- analysis of the strong and weak points and the major players in the regions in question, in terms of the themes identified in the first stage;
- construction of a plan for exchange, through a series of instruments including the following: work experience for operators with active European or Latin American institutions with experience of particular interest; technical support visits by Italian, European and Latin American regional operators to the various cross-border areas in Latin America; activities associated with remote training through the use of electronic IT platforms; preparation and distribution of manuals on cross-border cooperation and regional planning; activities associated with training and support in the design of new initiatives to be proposed to international financing bodies; public events on priority themes for the development of cross-border regions⁷.

The process is then described using the following diagram.



Source: IILA-CeSPI, *Fronteras Abiertas Project, Interregional network for cross-border cooperation and Latin American integration. Promotion of cooperation by the Italian and European regions with the subnational governments of Latin America and the Caribbean*, January 2007 (page 8)

⁷ IILA-CeSPI, “Fronteras Abiertas” Project, January 2007, page 9

The envisaged activities

The instruments identified above in relation to the final element of the methodology correspond to the types of activities envisaged for the project. These are in fact the following:

- a) preparation and distribution of manuals on cross-border cooperation and regional planning;
- b) activities associated with remote training through the use of online IT platforms;
- c) public events on priority themes for the development of cross-border regions;
- d) work experience for operators with active European or Latin American institutions with experience of particular interest;
- e) technical support visits by Italian, European and Latin American regional operators to the various cross-border areas in Latin America;
- f) activities associated with training and support in the design of new initiatives to be proposed to international financing bodies.

3.3. The budget for the project

Before the project was financed, no overall budget was prepared. Each of the project fiche presented to the MFA was accompanied by an annual budget in which the items, as we have already noted, are not completely comparable because they change from one year to the next. On the basis of the annual budgets submitted, the evaluation team has reconstructed the overall budget shown in the following table.

Cost items – Activities	2007	2008	2009- 2010	TOTAL
Scientific management (a)	56,000	70,000	45,000	171,000
Technical staff	131,000			131,000
Support for cross-border networks (f)		169,000	53,700	222,700
Specialist consulting		50,000	54,600	104,600
Training (b)		124,000	26,700	150,700
Other Italian personnel	45,000			45,000
Personnel in Latin America	34,500			34,500
Work experience for Latin American personnel	180,000			180,000
Missions	92,000			92,000
Institutional governance (h)			39,000	39,000
Network of cross-border experts (h)			13,000	13,000
Meetings and events (c)	49,000	46,000		95,000
Fund for direct action (d)	74,500	203,000	96,000	373,500
Documentation (g)	10,000		9,000	19,000
Intermediate evaluation		15,000		15,000
CeSPI management costs	43,000		21,000	64,000
IILA management costs (e)	35,000	73,000	17,000	125,000
TOTAL	750,000	750,000	375,000	1,875,000
MFA contribution	600,000	600,000	300,000	1,500,000

(a) In the first year, scientific management included the Director (CeSPI), an expert from the IILA and an expert from the OICS.

(b) In the second year, this overall figure included a cost of €22,000 for training, a cost of €90,000 for work experience programmes and a cost of €12,000 for the website.

(c) With regard to the second year, the item “meetings and events” included the costs relating to “training seminars and exchange” (€21,000) and those relating to “public events to end of second year” (€25,000).

(d) With regard to the second year, the fund included the costs relating to “pilot actions for cross-border development”.

(e) In the budget for the second year, the general overheads were not divided between the CeSPI and the IILA; therefore, they have been allocated in this table to the IILA as the project owner.

(f) In the budget for the third and fourth years, there is no item for “support for cross-border networks”, but there is an item for “project formulation”, which has been included in this item.

(g) The budget for the third and fourth years has an item for “Communication and distribution” (website is specified); this item has been allocated to documentation functions.

(h) This item appears in the budget for the third and fourth years and is not present in those for the preceding years.

3.4. The mechanism for implementation of the project

The project was conducted jointly by the CeSPI and the IILA. The first project fiche envisaged the creation of a tripartite management team, made up of a director from the CeSPI and two experts, one from the IILA and one from the OICS⁸. However, there is no trace of this management unit in the documents (annual reports, etc.), while, in interviews conducted throughout the evaluation, representatives of the IILA and the CeSPI referred to a joint management structure taking the form of informal contacts between the management of the CeSPI and the IILA each time this was necessary.

The IILA and the CeSPI played different roles in the management of the project:

- in addition to maintaining relationships with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the principal entity supporting the project, the IILA also maintained relationships with the Latin American embassies in Italy – as representatives of their governments – facilitating the identification of the geographic areas considered within the project, the identification of any local partners and the resolution of political problems, and, above all, providing the project with political and institutional legitimacy; although the IILA also maintained relationships with some Italian embassies in Latin America, it did not – in the context of the “Fronteras Abiertas” project – perform any field missions;
- the CeSPI identified and formulated the actions for the project and managed all associated activities, both in Italy and in the Latin American regions concerned, performing studies, field-based assignments, meetings with European and Latin American administrative entities, training initiatives, etc.; the CeSPI also performed functions associated with monitoring and formulation of periodic reports, which were then submitted to the IILA.

The MFA did not perform any direct role in supporting the project, although meetings with Italian embassies took place at various points, and the embassies themselves participated in some seminar activities and in certain events in Latin America, were informed of the progress of the project and – at least in some cases – performed support activities for the project activities⁹.

The budget for the second year of the project envisaged an amount for financing of the intermediate evaluation of the project. However, no report on any such evaluation has been made available, and it is never mentioned in the documentation on the project (including the annual reports and the final report). Apparently, no formal system of monitoring for the project was put in place, either by the IILA or by the CeSPI, as will be described in more detail in Section 4.

3.5. The activities performed and the results achieved during the project

Through an analysis of the annual reports and the final report for the project, it is possible to reconstruct all of the activities performed, reorganised below according to the outline defined in the project document.

a) preparation and distribution of manuals on cross-border cooperation and regional planning

Publication of the volume entitled “*Cooperación transfronteriza e integración en América Latina*” (an

⁸ See budget attached to the factsheet for 2007.

⁹ See Technical Note sent by the Italian Embassy in Honduras to the IILA on 9 February 2009; Notes from the Italian Embassy in San Salvador on 18 and 20 February 2008 and on 19 July of the same year.

overview of the project activities and reflections on processes of integration in Latin America) – (Rome, 2009), of which the table of contents is shown below.

<p style="text-align: center;">Cooperación transfronteriza e integración en América Latina. La experiencia del Proyecto Fronteras Abiertas</p> <p style="text-align: center;">José Luis Rhi-Sausi, Dario Conato (coordinadores)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Índice</p> <p>Prefacio, Paolo Bruni</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Fronteras y cooperación transfronteriza en América Latina: introducción al Proyecto Fronteras Abiertas (José Luis Rhi-Sausi y Nahuel Oddone)2. La experiencia europea como marco general de referencia (Raffaella Coletti)3. Fronteras e Integración Transfronteriza en el MERCOSUR ((José Luis Rhi-Sausi y Nahuel Oddone)4. Fronteras de tierra y de mar: de áreas conflictivas e espacios de colaboración e integración centroamericana (Dario Conato)5. La integración fronteriza en la CAN: la frontera Ecuador-Perú (Raffaella Coletti, Dario Conato, Silvia Marteles Moreno y Juan Velasquez Quispe)6. La cooperación transfronteriza en la Triple Frontera de Bolivia-Chile-Perù (Silvia Marteles Moreno)7. Fronteras Abiertas: Lecciones aprendidas

b) activities associated with remote training through the use of online IT platforms

As part of the project, a website (<http://www.fronterasabiertas.org>) was created and maintained, and the following could be obtained through that site:

- The remote, on-line course entitled “La frontera como área de desarrollo: introducción a la cooperación transfronteriza y acercamiento a la experiencia europea”, available from the website www.fronterasabiertas.org; the course is made up of four training modules represented by integrated texts with bibliographic references, presentations and in-depth materials made available through the internet. Each module also includes self-assessment tests.
- The remote on-line course entitled “Procesos de integración transfronteriza en America Latina”, available from the website www.fronterasabiertas.org; in this case also, the course is made up of training modules represented by integrated texts with bibliographic references, presentations and in-depth materials, and a self-assessment test. The course modules relate to the following: introduction; the European experience as a reference methodological framework; processes and projects for cross-border cooperation in Latin America, the “Fronteras Abiertas” project as concrete experience.
- A bibliography of studies on borders (approximately 30 on-line publications, document and papers) in a specific section of the website (<http://www.fronterasabiertas.org/biblio/index.php?action=frontNoMenu>).
- Web connections with Latin American entities (research centres, press, national public institutions, intermediate governments, development entities, regional organisations) and with European entities (decentralised cooperation entities, research centres, local development and regional and cross-border integration entities) in a specific section of the website (http://www.fronterasabiertas.org/index.php?option=com_bookmarks&Itemid=36&mode=0&catid=73&navstart=0&search=*).

The course does not envisage on-line tutorship, but rather the possibility of interacting with the entities responsible for the course through a specific electronic mailbox.

c) public events on priority themes for the development of cross-border regions

- **Work seminars in the border area between Peru and Ecuador** for definition of a binational agreement on a sustainable rural tourism programme in cooperation with the Piedmont and Tuscany regions, with the participation of referents from the Ecuador-Peru Binational Plan, four Peruvian districts (Piura, Tumbes,

Cajamarca and Lambayeque), three Ecuadorean provinces (El Oro, Zamora and Loja) and the Piedmont region (October 2008) and for consolidation of the cooperation (October 2008, March 2009);

- **Participation of the Piedmont region in the “Peru-Italy” Conference and presentation of the Fronteras Abiertas project (March 2009);**
- **International seminar at Tacna** (Peru) on cross-border integration between **Peru, Bolivia and Chile**, with the participation of representatives from the three governments, two regional governments from Chile, two regional governments from Peru and three prefectures from Bolivia; and with the participation of an association of local entities from the region (Alianza Estrategica Aymaras Sin Fronteras), the OICS, the Tuscany region and the autonomous province of Bolzano (March 2008);
- **Participation of the Fronteras Abiertas project¹⁰ in the BRIT Congress¹¹ “Fronteras del Cono Sur de America y del Mundo” (Arica, Chile; Tacna, Peru) (March 2009);**
- **Missions, work seminars and cross-border seminar in the border area between El Salvador-Honduras and Nicaragua** (September 2007, November 2007, February 2008, June 2008; November-December 2009; February 2009), including meetings with municipal authorities, government institutions and international entities (Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE), Inter-American Development Bank (BID), EU); formulation and approval of a declaration for commencement of a decentralised cooperation project between territories in the Gulf of Fonseca and the Lombardy region, coordinated by Fronteras Abiertas, a technical mission for the Lombardy region and approval by local entities of the progress of a feasibility study on the integrated development plan for the cross-border area of the Gulf (PIDET¹²) performed by the Lombardy region;
- **Missions in the state of Paraná (Brazil) and in the province of Misiones** (Argentina), with the participation of the Lombardy region, the Microenterprise and Small Business Support Service (SEBRAE) (Brazil) and the Multilateral Investment Fund (FOMIN)/BID for presentation of the “Fronteras Abiertas” project and discussion of transnational projects promoted by the SEBRAE (Fronteiras do Brasil) and the province of Misiones;
- **Organisation of the Argentina-Brazil-Paraguay Cross-border Cooperation Forum** (29 – 30 April 2009), with the support of Italian Cooperation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay, the district of Alto Paraná (Paraguay) and the municipality of Ciudad del Este (Paraguay), and with the participation of more than 150 individuals, representatives of national institutions, intermediate governments, and non-government entities from the three countries in the region;
- **Organisation of the seminar “Cross-border cooperation in Latin America: the contribution of Italian decentralised cooperation”** (Turin, July 2009), in cooperation with the Piedmont region and with the participation of representatives of the regions of Lombardy, Umbria and Piedmont, Ambassadors in Italy from certain Latin American nations (Paraguay, Bolivia, Nicaragua), international research and development organisations (MERCOCIUDADES, IDELCA, SEBRAE) and some local administrations (province of El Oro, Ecuador; municipality of Acora, Peru; municipality of Canelones, Uruguay);
- **IILA-CeSPI mission to Brussels** (February 2010) and meeting with the Directorate General RELEX to promote inclusion of measures to support cross-border cooperation as part of the LAIF (Latin American Investment Facility) European Fund;
- **Missions to Buenos Aires, Foz de Iguazu, La Paz** (March 2010; April 2010) **and to the border area of Paraguay-Argentina-Brazil**, to a) participate in the Forum on the “Fronteiras do Brasil” programme of the SEBRAE (Brazil); b) meet the “Advisory Forum for Mercosur Cities and Regions” (FCCR) and the Paraguayan

¹⁰ The programme presented two papers at the congress: one on reinforcing cross-border governance in Latin America and the other on European experience of cross-border cooperation (http://www.fronterasabiertas.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=166&Itemid=1).

¹¹ BRIT (Border Regions in Transition) is network of researchers, lecturers and scholars from throughout the world committed to the study of border regions. Created in 1994, the network organises a congress approximately every 18 months. The 2009 Congress, held in Latin America, was organised by the Instituto de Estudios Internacionales INTE of the Universidad Arturo Prat, Iquique, Chile, with the cooperation of the Centro de Estudios Regionales (CEUTA) of the Universidad de Tarapacá, Arica, Chile and the Universidad Privada de Tacna, Peru (http://www.uta.cl/prontus_uta/archivos/BRIT.pdf).

¹² Integrated Cross-Border Development Plan for the Gulf of Fonseca, Fronteras Abiertas, Unión, 19 February 2009.

institutional referents for the project¹³; c) complete the design for cultural cooperation in border cities; d) support the commencement of the “Fronteras Musicales Abiertas” initiative;

- **Mission in cooperation with IILA-SICA Advanced Training Course in San Salvador** (September 2010), commencing a cooperative initiative with the Secretary General of the SICA (Central American Integration System) relating to performance of a study including the following: analysis of the state of the art of cross-border cooperation in Central America; the status and summary of the efforts made in conceptualisation of cross-border cooperation; formulation of proposals to include cross-border integration on the agenda of the SICA; in the course of the mission, meetings were held with CENPROMYPE (SICA’s programme for promotion of small and medium-sized businesses) and PRESANCA (SICA’s food safety programme);
- **Training seminar on cross-border themes with the AMOP** (the association of municipalities of Western Paraná), as part of a cooperation agreement concluded between “Fronteras Abiertas” and the Paraná SEBRAE (10-11 November 2010), and signature of a cooperation agreement between the AMOP and “Fronteras Abiertas”;
- **Participation in the Feria Internacional de Integración Fronteriza**, organised in Lima by the CAN (Community of Andean Nations) and by the Peruvian Government (19-20 October 2010);
- **Participation in the event “Compromiso Centroamérica”**, organised by the SICA and by the UNDP Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean (Panama, 25-26 October 2010), in the course of which “Fronteras Abiertas” was selected as one of the experiences in promotion and creation of networks for management of safety at local level, even though the activities presented did not fall completely within the activities of the project but included those of another initiative by the CeSPI financed by the IILA as part of the IILA-INAFICT project¹⁴;
- **Organisation, at the IILA in Rome, of a concluding conference day for the programme**, in the context of the V Italy-Latin America Conference (7 October 2011), with the participation of the authorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Latin American governments and institutions present in Rome.

Given the complexity and quantity of the activities relating to the events and missions performed as part of the project, the following table provides an overview of all of the information collected.

¹³ During the mission, meetings were held with the Italian Ambassador to La Paz and the manager of the UTC for Andean nations.

¹⁴ In particular, the study “Cohesión social y seguridad democrática en las ciudades-puerto” performed as part of the IILA-INAFICT project, Sistema para la inclusión social de grupos marginales en Centroamérica y Caribe (2005 – 2010).

Year	Activity	Reference border	Results	Latin American local authorities	European local authorities	Other entities involved
Year I	Work seminars	Peru-Ecuador	Agreement for a sustainable rural development programme	Four districts from Peru (Lambayeque, Piura, Tumbes, Cajamarca) Three provinces from Ecuador (El Oro, Zamora Chinchipe, Loja)	Piedmont region	Community of Montana Valle Grana Parco Alpi Marittime
Year II	Work seminars					
Year II	Participation in the Peru-Italy Conference				Piedmont region	
Year III	Participation in the Feria Internacional de Integración Fronteriza					CAN Government of Peru
Year I	International seminar	Peru, Bolivia and Chile	Creation of a linking committee between local and national entities	Two regional governments from Chile Two regional governments from Peru Three prefectures from Bolivia	Tuscany region Autonomous province of Bolzano	National governments Alianza Estrategica Aymaras Sin Fronteras OICS
Year I and Year II	Missions, Work seminars, Cross-border seminars	El Salvador – Honduras and Nicaragua	Cooperation between the Lombardy region and the Gulf of Fonseca	Four communities from Honduras Three municipal associations from El Salvador Two municipal associations from Nicaragua	Lombardy region	Meetings with international and regional entities including BID, SICA, EU, BCIE, CCAD and some Ministries from El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua Research entities such as IDELCA and UCA
Year III	Mission in cooperation with the IILA-SICA Advanced Training Course		Cooperation with the SICA			SG-SICA PRESANCA CENPROMYPE

Year	Activity	Reference border	Results	Latin American local authorities	European local authorities	Other entities involved	
	Participation in "Compromiso Centroamérica"		Inclusion of Fronteras Abiertas among good practices			UNDP SICA	
Year I	Missions	Brazil-Argentina-Paraguay	Cooperation between "Fronteras Abiertas" and the SEBRAE	State of Paraná (Brazil)	Friuli Venezia Giulia region Lombardy region	SEBRAE MERCOSUR The governments of the three countries OICS	
Year II	Forum on Argentina-Brazil-Paraguay cross-border cooperation		Round table with border parliamentarians	Provinces of Corrientes, Formosa, Misiones (Argentina) States of Mato Grosso do Sul and Paraná (Brazil) Municipalities of border cities Municipal association of Mato Grosso do Sul (Brazil) Districts of Alto Paraná, Alto Paraguay, Canindeyù, Concepcion, Itapua, municipalities of border cities (Paraguay)	Umbria region, Lombardy region, Marches region	MERCOSUR Mercociudades PARLIM International Municipal Parliament J.Caballero, Consultative Forum of Municipalities FCCR Government of Argentina Government of Brazil Government of Paraguay SEBRAE	
Year II	Seminar on "Cross-border cooperation in Latin America: the contribution of Italian decentralised cooperation"			Province of El Oro (Ecuador) Municipality of Canelones (Uruguay) Municipality of Acora (Peru)	Lombardy region, Umbria region, Piedmont region	SEBRAE Paraná Mercociudades Embassy of Paraguay Embassy of Bolivia Embassy of Nicaragua IDELCA	
Year III	Missions to Buenos Aires, Foz de Iguazu, La Paz			Cooperation with "Fronteiras do Brasil" programme (SEBRAE)			SEBRAE FCCR Academic entities from the region

Year	Activity	Reference border	Results	Latin American local authorities	European local authorities	Other entities involved
			Cooperation with the FCCR Commencement of “Fronteras Musicales abiertas”			
	AMOP-SEBRAE training seminar		Cooperation agreement with the AMOP	Municipalities from the state of Paraná (Brazil)		AMOP SEBRAE
Year III	Mission to Brussels					EU – DG Relex
Year III	Concluding conference day for the programme – V Italy-Latin America Conference					MFA - Italy Latin American Embassies in Italy

d) study visits for operators with active European or Latin American institutions with experience of particular interest

During the first year of the project (July 2007 – July 2008), study trips were made for three of the four border areas involved in the project. In particular:

- For the border area **Ecuador-Peru**, a study trip to Italy was completed over a period of **25 days** (31 March-24 April 2008), which involved the participation of **two directors and consultants from the provincial governments in Ecuador and four directors of regional governments in Peru**. The trip was focused on “responsible tourism as an area for local economic development” and visited Rome (six days), Tuscany (six days) and Piedmont (eight days). In addition to an **introductory course** on the Italian institutional context, decentralised cooperation, tourism in Italy and cross-border cooperation in Europe (with particular focus on the INTERREG programme), the trip envisaged **visits** to entities involved in the promotion or performance of tourism initiatives in **Piedmont and in Tuscany** (each visit related to a theme: from instruments for regional planning to techniques and types of tourism promotion to individual projects¹⁵).
- For the border area **Bolivia-Chile-Peru**, a study trip was completed over a period of **21 days** (3 June-24 June 2008), with the participation of **three officials from Chilean regional governments, three officials from Peruvian regional and municipal governments and intermunicipal associations, and two Bolivian local authority technicians**. The trip had the same theme and the same characteristics as the trip organised for the Ecuador-Peru area, and visited Rome, the autonomous province of **Bolzano** and **Tuscany** (the visits were different, at least in part, from those undertaken in April).
- For the border area **El Salvador-Honduras-Nicaragua**, a study trip took place over **21 days** (21 June-11 July 2008), with the participation of **three officials from municipalities and intermunicipal associations from Nicaragua, two officials from intermunicipal associations from El Salvador, and two local authority technicians from Honduras**. The trip was focused on the management and treatment of wastes. After an introductory course in Rome, visits were paid to the IreR (Research Institute of the Region of Lombardy) and to four waste management and disposal plants in the Lombardy region.

The numbers of study visits undertaken

Year	Theme	Duration (days)	Border regions	Italian regions	Number of beneficiaries
2008	Tourism	25	Ecuador-Peru	Piedmont-Tuscany	6
2008	Tourism	21	Bolivia-Chile-Peru	Bolzano-Tuscany	8
2008	Wastes	21	El Salvador-Honduras-Nicaragua	Lombardy	7

e) technical support visits by Italian, European and Latin American regional operators to the various cross-border areas in Latin America

The technical support visits were described as “missions” among the events described in point c). The support activities are identical to those of training and support in the design of new initiatives (**point f**).

f) activities associated with training and support in the design of new initiatives to be proposed to international financing bodies

The activities associated with support in the design of new initiatives for development were structured around two different sets of actions: collaboration in the design of initiatives to be proposed to international entities, and collaboration in the design of financial initiatives directly by the “Fronteras Abiertas” project (referred to as “direct actions”).

Support actions for design

- Identification of opportunities for sustainable tourism in the Ecuador-Peru border area; commencement of contacts with associations of migrants present in Italy - COPEI (Asociación de profesionales Peruanos en

¹⁵ See Report on IILA-CeSPI Fronteras Abiertas project. Report for the first year of activity (July 2007-July 2008)

Italia), ECUASIF (Asociación de Inmigrantes Ecuatorianos Sin Fronteras), ACOFAPE (Asociación Coordinadora de Familiares de Inmigrantes Peruanos en Europa); performance of training seminars in the city of Huaquillas, Ecuador (May 2009); identification of a project hypothesis for supporting tourism in the area of the Tumbes-Puyango River basin with the participation of the consortium formed by COPEI, ACOFAPE and some municipal governments; facilitation of the relationship with the Piedmont region for financing of the production chain for organic cheese in the indigenous community of Saraguro.

- Collaboration in the identification and formulation of the project entitled “*Recuperación, Fomento y Puesta en Valor del Patrimonio Cultural y Natural Aymara*”, financed by the BID (border of Bolivia-Chile-Peru) (US\$500,000 – approximately €400,000).
- Collaboration in the formulation of the “Tourism without borders” project, proposed for financing by the European URBAL programme, in part by the local NGO ADESO (Asociación para el Desarrollo Local) in partnership with the province of Frosinone and with the participation of the OICS (the project was then approved and has a budget of €3 million).
- Support for the study by the IRER for formulation of a development plan for the area of the Gulf of Fonseca (PIDET)¹⁶.
- Collaboration in the presentation of a project proposal relating to the area of Trifinio to the EU as part of the URBAL programme (*Social cohesion and regional integration of border municipalities of Trifinio*), with the participation of some local communities, the Lombardy region, the Provincial Council of Huelva (Spain), the CeSPI and the OICS (€4 million); this project has been approved and commenced in January 2009¹⁷; the CeSPI is performing activities within the project associated with monitoring and leading discussion on cross-border development processes.
- Collaboration in the presentation of the project entitled “Ciudades limpias” for financing by the EU (“Environment” programme), through a consortium comprising UCODEP (now Oxfam Italia), the Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Rio Lempa (MTRL), three communities located in the border areas of Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, and the CeSPI, which is performing monitoring for the initiative; the project has a budget of approximately €1,200,000 and was approved in 2010.
- Performance of a diagnostic study in the border area of Argentina-Brazil-Paraguay and identification of a series of cross-border cultural micro-projects (dance and music schools, border libraries, border museum network, literature festival, typical local fairs, cross-border sports competitions) to be supported through direct financing by “Fronteras Abiertas”¹⁸.
- Collaboration in the formulation of the project by a centre for production integration of small and medium-sized businesses along the borders of Brazil, in part by the SEBRAE.
- Promotion of a collaboration relationship between the Deputy Ministry of Labour in Paraguay and Italia Lavoro (technical agency of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy), for the purpose of replicating the active policy project that Italia Lavoro has completed in Argentina and Uruguay (in this context, a technician from Italia Lavoro performed an assignment in the border area with Brazil).

¹⁶ The study was presented to municipalities, associations of municipalities and representatives of governments and international organisations after approximately one year of work. However, this did not result in financing being obtained. The Lombardy region, after the experience of preparation of the PIDET, however commenced a design initiative in cooperation with the Italian NGO ACRA, subsequently obtaining financing for a project relating to the management of wastes in the border municipalities of Nicaragua.

¹⁷ The project was proposed by a consortium led by the Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Rio Lempa (MTRL) and including six communities from three countries, the Lombardy region, the province of Huelva, the OICS and the CeSPI. The project activities also involve the participation of some government entities from the three countries, some regional organisations (SICA, CCAD) and research entities such as IDELCA. At the time of the evaluation, IDELCA had suspended its activities and the Lombardy region had abandoned the project. The project was designed around three principal components: an increase in the regional planning capability of associations of municipalities; the institutionalisation of municipal, regional and trinational spaces for regional management and sustainable cross-border development; and the formulation of public policies for regional planning.

¹⁸ This activity has resulted in the financing of the project “Fronteras musicales abiertas”.

Direct actions

- Formulation and direct financing of an initiative to extend the Health Centre in the province of Cajamarca (Peru), also used by users in Ecuador (Ecuador-Peru border) (supply of equipment – US\$41,000).
- Direct financing of the “Fortalecimiento de la red Ganadera de la Región Trifronteriza Bolivia-Chile-Perú” project for improving the processing of llama and alpaca hides through technical and mobile training support activities for approximately 100 farmers (Bolivia-Chile-Peru border) (€61,000).
- Installation of computers and an internet network in seven communities and associations of municipalities in the Gulf of Fonseca (El Salvador-Honduras-Nicaragua) (€30,000).
- Financing of the “Twin cities” project between the border towns of Brazil and Paraguay (€57,000).
- Identification and financing of the “Pequeña Spondylus” project for tourist development through improvements in signage on the “Spondylus” circuit between Ecuador and Peru (€70,000).
- Financing of the advanced artistic training project in baroque music “Fronteras Musicales Abiertas” with the objective of promoting cross-border cooperation between Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil on the basis of common musical heritage in the area of Reducciones Jesuíticas (€37,687), in cooperation with the Universidad Católica de Nuestra Señora de Asunción (San Ignacio Guazú), the Escuela de Música “El Principito” (Encarnación) and the FCCR.

g) Other activities

The project also involves the performance of other activities identified in the course of implementation and that are external to the groups of activities described above, and the following in particular:

- **cooperation with the Coordination and Guidance Office (OCO) for the European URBAL programme**, of which the CeSPI is a collaborating entity, in particular for capitalisation and exchange of good practices between regions taking part in programmes financed by URBAL;
- **cooperation with the SICA**, in the context of which the CeSPI (as part of Fronteras Abiertas) has performed a study and drafted a report on cross-border cooperation in Central America;
- **publication of volumes on cross-border cooperation** by the CeSPI (in Spanish and in Italian) – see documents attached to the final report.

4. THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION

As already noted, the absence of true general and specific objectives, the presence of an incomplete and inconsistent logical framework, furthermore developed ex-post, and the absence of comparable information for each year of the project have meant that the evaluation of the project was particularly **complicated**.

Furthermore, what we have described as the “**original sin**” (the absence of objectives able to orient and guide the action of the project) has entailed a significant “**logical criticality**” in relation to at least two other questions, both in terms of the plan for design of the activities and in terms of their implementation.

The first critical issue relates to what we can define as the “**initial tautology**”. Indeed, if we look at the root of the logic for the general objective, we arrive at the paradox that “we need to reinforce processes of cross-border integration so that we can reinforce cross-border cooperation”. In other words, through the absence, in all of the various formulations of the documents, of the reason or the purposes for which we need to reinforce these processes of integration, not only the general objective but the very sense of the project becomes “**reinforce to reinforce**”.

The fact that this aspect is a highly critical factor is demonstrated by the fact that the action of reinforcing, and therefore the activity, remains not only the **only supporting element** for the logical framework but becomes the **criterion for identity** between objectives, results and activities (and also indicators), as will be shown in the next few pages.

In essence, what has been defined as the objective for the project is lacking its most important part, which justifies its existence and the associated action within the context provided by the processes of integration under way in the cross-border areas of Latin America. Indeed, the reinforcement of something must always have a **clear purpose**, or otherwise there is a risk that a tautology or circular logic will be created for the action, which thus justifies itself.

The second critical issue is associated with the fact that the general objective (but the same also applies for the specific objectives), as it is formulated, does not allow a serious verification of the contribution of the project in terms of the regional integration processes under way in the cross-border regions of Latin America. Indeed, because the activities are dissociated from any general or specific objectives, the exercise of internal evaluation and or external evaluation in order to measure the associated impact (although only in terms of the immediate impacts) could be forced to consider these activities within a context that is the result more of **subjective interpretations** than of a clear objective context that has been stated from the outset.

In this case also, therefore, there would seem to be an absence of the fundamental element on the basis of which the **impact** must be measured, both in the short term and in the medium and long term.

To this, we must add the fact that in reality, as we will observe in the following pages, the project is more in the nature of “**research**” than intervention. Indeed, the very idea of the project, its open implementation and the methods of implementation are more in line with an explorative research project on the theme of integration of cross-border regions, the objectives of which are linked to the assertion of that theme within national, supranational and international organisations, than with a project designed to develop development cooperation in those areas.

Naturally, the fundamental question is to determine in which of these two contexts the project lies, as the criteria for evaluation are **applied very differently** in the two cases cited. If, for example, the context and the final rules constituting the action of “Fronteras Abiertas” are those of an **explorative research project** on the theme of cross-border integration in Latin America, then the final result and the evaluation criteria must be applied to an action that does not wish to change the real situation but rather only influence the agendas of policymakers on this question.

If, rather, we consider “Fronteras Abiertas” to be a **development cooperation project**, even if in the context of a particular, relatively innovative theme, then, as we have previously shown, the “original sin” of the absence of a true general objective and of the existence of a substantially incomplete logical framework could reduce the

project to a handful of activities that seem to be dissociated from each other and in any case have an impact that is very difficult to evaluate, specifically because of the absence of points of reference as to the real intentions of the action.

In reality, although it is by its nature a research project, albeit a very interesting one, – a fact that is completely obvious given the nature of the entity responsible for conceiving it and implementing it, with relative autonomy, i.e. the CeSPI –, it does in fact behave as a development cooperation project, adopting, partially and incompletely, the corresponding operational methods for implementation. In other words, the “Fronteras Abiertas” project is characterised by an **identity that is not completely clear and by basic underlying ambiguity**, at least in logical terms, if we apply the categories usually used in the context of international development cooperation.

From the point of view of this evaluation, the **choice made** was to proceed with the application of the various criteria to the actual situation of the project, considering it by its nature to be a development cooperation project, even though another possible option could have been to dwell extensively on the logical and conceptual contradictions, merely providing a quick review of the principal actions.

It is in this **particularly delicate and in some ways critical context** that the evaluation, the results of which are described in this section, was required to be performed.

4.1. Relevance/Pertinence

The first category adopted in the evaluation of the “Fronteras Abiertas” project relates to **relevance or pertinence**, defined as the measurement of how the project has responded to the problems and issues present in the region considered.

As illustrated in the following sections, from the point of view of relevance, the project has somewhat **diverse results**. In particular, while a high level of thematic relevance has been observed, with regard to the relevance of the actions, the identification of stakeholders and the methodological approach used, there is a very limited degree of pertinence.

Thematic relevance

The identification of the **question** at the centre of the project, i.e. the process of integration in cross-border areas, appears to be **pertinent** in terms of the Latin American areas considered.

In these areas – both in those in which actions were directly performed and in those that were considered only as cases for analysis – **there are in fact cross-border social and economic integration processes under way**, which are subject to political and institutional dynamics that are often contradictory.

In some cases, such as that of the two regions considered in Central America – the Trifinio region, between Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, and the area of the Gulf of Fonseca, between El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua – it has been possible to observe a situation characterised by the following:

- processes of significant **economic integration**, consisting of the presence of substantial commercial flows between the cross-border regions and of economic activities conducted often without taking into account the separation between States: it frequently happens that the citizens of a State are the owners of land on the other side of the border and perform their employment activities over that border, that the products of a border region have their principal commercial outlet in markets across the border, that the currency of a State is commonly accepted in transactions that take place in the neighbouring State, that there exists significant mobility of the work force between the various cross-border regions (in the sense that the labour force will move to employment markets in regions in cross-border areas), that businesses and economic entities in one country also perform activities in the other or in cooperation with economic groups in the neighbouring country, etc.;
- processes of significant **social integration**, demonstrated by the presence of situations of continuity between families belonging to one country or the other, by continuity in the regional distribution of the ethnic groups present, by the presence of cultural exchanges and common social activities (musical groups of one country participate in fairs and popular festivals of the other, mixed marriages are frequent, etc.) and

by the presence of forms of continuity in the use of social and healthcare services (the populations in one country use those of the other);

- **processes of collaboration** between the local authorities and between the governments of the various countries in the management of certain resources (such as water resources and basins);
- the presence of **international cooperation initiatives** that cross the border or that relate to border areas of the countries involved (in the case of the Trifinio region, from the beginning of the 1990s, local development and environmental conservation actions have been implemented, with the support of the European Union and the SICA and subsequently of other international entities; in the case of the Gulf of Fonseca, certain environmental protection projects are under way, financed by Spanish cooperation, by US Aid, by the SICA and by certain international entities);
- the presence of potential **situations of conflict**, relating to the use of certain resources and the maintenance of full national sovereignty over the region (for example, the reinforcing of border controls or the deployment of forces at the border, as instruments for territorial control and to combat illegal trafficking).

Similar situations, in which there is a **gap between the processes of integration in the region and the development policies defined** and implemented by the various entities, also appear to be present in the other border zones considered by the programme. In these zones, promoting greater consistency between policies, development initiatives and processes for social and economic integration under way appears to be particularly important and may require the following, as has also been demonstrated by experience and the studies conducted in the context of “Fronteras Abiertas”:

- a) **recognition** of the specificities of the border areas and the dynamics specific to those areas;
- b) formulation of **specific development policies and initiatives** for border regions;
- c) support for actions associated with **advocacy and mobilisation** that the entities involved in border dynamics perform vis-à-vis central governments, including through the creation of network-based initiatives that increase the visibility of border areas, both in national and international terms;
- d) reinforcing of **the local entities** involved in processes of integration, compared to those involved in creating means to increase isolation or implementing actions to strengthen borders (these entities include both certain municipalities, which are threatened by forms of association between different authorities, and which in some way tend to remove their resources; and national authorities, which in some cases see cross-border cooperation between local authorities both as a threat to national sovereignty and as a trend towards increased independence of local authorities from the central authority of the State).

Regional relevance

In addition to the relevance of the choice of issues around which it is structured, the project also has considerable **relevance in terms of the choice of regions** within which the actions have been performed: the area of the Trifinio region, between Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador; the Gulf of Fonseca, between El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua; the border between Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay; the border between Chile, Peru and Bolivia; the border between Ecuador and Peru, and the border between Bolivia, Peru and Argentina.

In all of the areas considered, there do in fact exist both processes of economic and social integration and processes involving formation of transnational entities, such as “mancomunidades” and associations of municipalities, associations between producers and economic entities, coalitions of citizens’ organisations, multinational project management units, etc..

In fact, the choice of the areas was made **gradually over the course of implementation**: some of the areas identified at the time when the project was commenced were replaced by others, where the possibility of supporting processes of integration appeared to be greater, and – still according to the presence of processes of integration in which it was possible to intervene – new areas were added alongside those originally identified.

The choice of the areas was influenced both by the ability of the project to address **local demand** (for example, this is the case with the Trifinio region, in which the project was included as a response to the request for support from the “Mancomunidad Trinacional” of Rio Lempa), and by the **communication** activities facilitated by

the IILA (through its relationships with the Latin American Ambassadors in Italy, certain areas were discarded, such as the border area between Guatemala and Mexico, which was originally included among the areas considered for the project).

Relevance of the contacts and referents in the border areas

The **relevance of the project was significantly diminished** by the decision to involve as direct contacts – or as beneficiaries – almost exclusively the “intermediate authorities”, represented in the various countries by various types of entities, such as:

- the states, regions, districts and “prefectures” in South America;
- the associations of municipalities, “mancomunidades” and, in some cases, the municipalities themselves in Central America¹⁹.

Despite having often been involved in initiatives and communication activities (such as the numerous meetings and events held in the context of the “missions” and participation in seminars and public events), national governments were for the most part considered to be “**external**” referents in terms of the cross-border development initiatives and cross-border integration processes.

In the same way, although their importance was recognised, the international entities engaged in the promotion of forms of regional integration (such as the SICA in Central America) were involved above all as **indirect contacts**, as possible sources of financing or as contacts for activities associated with communication or theoretical discussion or in initiatives oriented towards influencing international policies.

A similar situation – with the exception of the organisations of migrants and academic entities involved in some initiatives in South America – can be seen with regard to **civil society organisations**. Despite the fact that the organisations of citizens and **associations of producers** and businesses located in areas such as the Gulf of Fonseca or the Trifinio region are among the actors that have long been committed to integration initiatives, these entities have not been involved in the actions conducted as part of the project.

Thus, in fact, the project has been implemented through **entities whose ability to perform effective cross-border cooperation initiatives independently is limited**: local authorities are required to comply with national laws, to act within their own jurisdictions and in some cases are not even able to maintain “collaborative relationships” with the local authorities across the border. **A consequence of this situation has been the fact that, in some cases (such as the case with the Gulf of Fonseca), the cross-border cooperation initiatives have been blocked because of factors such as opposition by national authorities**²⁰.

The very international organisations considered to be preferred contacts by the project – such as the SICA – have a **limited influence** on governments and on authorities – other than in the context of specific intergovernment treaties (as was the case of the Trifinio Plan). Unlike the European Union, in fact, entities involved in Latin American regional integration have limited influence on national governments and – in some cases – could end up responding to a greater extent to the international entities that support them financially than to the countries of which they form a part.

On the contrary, it is specifically those **actors considered to be peripheral** in the context of the “Fronteras Abiertas” project – such as associations of businesses and producers and civilian organisations – that are however often involved in cross-border cooperation initiatives in the areas considered and that enjoy considerable autonomy in terms of the possibility of taking on initiatives and managing cross-border cooperation initiatives. As has been demonstrated by some of the initiatives conducted on the basis of the relationships

¹⁹ Although there exist in Central America “intermediate” institutions such as districts, these are decentralised bodies that represent the central governments. At the level of the district or region, however, there are in many cases “councils” and participatory bodies, for the most part with tasks related to the definition of development and investment plans.

²⁰ In the Gulf of Fonseca, despite the presence and the continuation over time of certain cross-border cooperation initiatives by civilian organisations, cooperation between municipalities and associations of municipalities was blocked for the first time following the coup occurring in Honduras in 2009 (which was followed by a freezing of relations between Nicaragua and Honduras) and then because of the warning from the government to the municipalities intended to avoid a situation where those entities signed cross-border agreements that were not previously approved by the government.

created by the Fronteras Abiertas project (such as those between Chile, Peru and Bolivia), it is the involvement of these actors that could in many cases have facilitated the achievement of the cross-border initiatives, perhaps also facilitating the involvement of the local authorities²¹. In the border area between El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, for example – despite the difficulties existing in direct cooperation between municipalities and associations of municipalities – numerous cooperation initiatives are in place, promoted by certain NGOs (in particular in the management of environmental resources)²² and by the ADEL (Agencias de Desarrollo Local).

With regard to the identification of the entities involved in Italy and in Europe, it also appears that the relevance of the choices made by the project is relatively low. In fact, despite the central objective of the project being to create a network of intermediate Latin American authorities and Italian and European authorities, the project initiatives only involved the active participation of a few European entities: the Provincial Council of Huelva (Spain), the Lombardy region, the provinces of Frosinone and the autonomous province of Bolzano, the Piedmont region and – limiting its commitment to facilitating the visits by foreign technicians to Italy – the Tuscany region.

Moreover, on the one hand - in some cases – the involvement of the European regions seems to have generated **more problems than benefits**²³, and on the other, the involvement of the European regions **rarely took the form of a permanent commitment**, both in terms of the exchange and development of cross-border cooperation experiences and in terms of political support for the Latin American regions in the formulation of public policies and in advocacy actions vis-à-vis national states. In this sense, it seems difficult to speak of a network of authorities. One problematic element in terms of the involvement of the European regions would seem to have been the tendency of some regions to commence cooperation projects based on their own experience and “good practices”, **without taking into account the need for adaptation** and the difficulties in transferring practices to contexts and entities different from the original setting²⁴.

We should also note in this context that, while for the Latin American authorities, the value of participating in a network that is based around the central idea of borders as areas for development is fairly clear (a network between authorities can, in fact, both continue to increasing the visibility of border areas as areas characterised by specific interests and problems, and contribute to mobilising resources for the development of regions that are normally considered as peripheral), the value of taking part in a network of this type is **less clear** for the European authorities²⁵ (which, furthermore, already have their “European networks”).

²¹ This relates, *inter alia*, to the “Fronteras turísticas” project.

²² *Inter alia*, we can cite the case of the “Corredor del Mangle” project, which involved the participation of certain NGOs as well as organisations of producers and associations of municipalities within the Gulf of Fonseca, and the case of the cooperation of the ADEL Morazan (El Salvador) with the ADEL del Valle (Honduras).

²³ For example, the intervention of the Lombardy region was the subject of controversy, both in terms of the URBAL project “Social cohesion and regional integration”, commenced in the Trifinio region (in fact, the Lombardy region left the partnership implementing the project), and in the context of the preparation of the Development Plan for the Gulf of Fonseca (which, according to some local entities, created expectations to which no response has to date been provided).

²⁴ One difference that can generate difficulties is, for example, the fact that often there are no intermediate administrative levels between local level (municipal) and regional or state level and there are therefore no entities with points of view in terms of the dynamics of broader areas compared to those of the municipalities, but less broad compared to the regions. Sometimes, in order to address problems relating to areas of this type, “mancomunidades” have been formed, which are associations or consortia of municipalities, but these usually have operational functions (such as management of common infrastructures) and not functions associated with governing.

²⁵ In the specific case of the European regions involved in the project, it is possible to identify various types of interests, which are sometimes never formalised. In addition to the general interest of cooperation or international solidarity, other interests are emerging, relating to the following: optimisation of the contribution of immigrant communities to the development of their countries of origin as an instrument in improving integration in host countries (e.g. in Piedmont and in Tuscany); optimisation of international relationships for the purpose of increasing international support for the initiatives and policies of the regional authorities (this is probably the case with Lombardy, for which one of the objectives of cooperation was to obtain support for its candidacy for the world expo); optimisation of international relationships as an instrument for accessing international financing (this is probably the case with some entities that have agreed to participate in European projects).

With regard also to the **identification and selection of the individual initiatives implemented**, there does not always seem to be significant relevance in terms of achievement of the objectives of the project.

At least in some cases, in fact, the activities performed have been shown to be **inappropriate to support local entities**, to encourage reinforcement of those entities or to satisfy their requirements, above all because of the methods chosen for implementation. This is the case both for some “direct actions” – such as the supply of equipment to associations of municipalities and communities in the Gulf of Fonseca, which in some cases were “redundant” (the organisations already had the equipment donated) and in others not very effective (in at least one case, the equipment was no longer available after two years) –, and for some “indirect actions” – such as the formulation of the PIDET discussed above, which in fact did not generate any subsequent initiative – and for some activities managed directly by the project, such as those related to remote training. These actions have been implemented with **difficulty** by some participants, because of the absence of the figure of the tutor and the absence of practical activities, and even for some of the study trips to Italy, in which the methods for selection of the participants have been shown in some cases to have been inadequate to promote an effective transfer of knowledge to the local Latin American authorities (some of the participants in the trips to Italy have left their authorities, either to join central government– in which they do not however use the knowledge acquired as part of the project – or in fact to emigrate abroad).

In other cases, the **relevance** of the initiatives in terms of the objectives of the project is **not obvious**. This is the case, for example, for the final initiative directly supported by “Fronteras Abiertas”, the “**Fronteras Musicales Abiertas**” project. This initiative – which envisaged the performance of teaching activities, the provision of musical instruments and a cycle of concerts of baroque music in the region of Misiones – certainly reinforces cooperation between academic institutions within a cross-border region²⁶ and reinforces awareness of the existence of a shared “cultured” cultural heritage, but it is not clear how it reinforces cooperation between local authorities (in particular between intermediate authorities – even though the initiative included the participation of the FCCR), or how it is linked to the needs of cross-border cultural projects – such as dance and music schools, border libraries, network of border museums, literature festivals, typical local fairs and cross-border sports competitions – determined in the field. It should be noted, furthermore, even if as a secondary observation in respect of an objection to the dubious relevance of the action, that, while these projects appear above all to be oriented towards promoting the emergence of a common reality in terms of popular culture (where the distinctions and differences are often taken to extremes, including for the purposes of creating identity), the project implemented had at its centre an initiative of “elite culture” and reference to a cultural context – that of baroque music – for which the transnational dimension is obvious and which is enjoyed by a public for which the existence of a common cultural heritage among Latin American nations is already known and understood.

The relevance in terms of the implementation of a network between intermediate authorities is **not at all obvious** in other cases too, such as for example that of the SEBRAE project (which involves a national entity performing an action for entities in other countries) or those conducted within a single country, even if in border areas (such as the project on waste in the province of Chinandega, implemented by the Italian NGO ACRA in cooperation with certain municipalities), or even in the support for the network of researchers on border areas and in participation in the BRIT Congress.

Certainly, there are also many initiatives where the relevance for the purposes of the project is **obvious**, such as the URBAL programme, “Social cohesion and regional integration” in the Trifinio region or the “Fronteras Turísticas” project in the border area between Bolivia, Peru and Argentina, with European funding and the involvement of authorities and associations from three countries and of Italian authorities (province of Frosinone, autonomous province of Bolzano and the OICS).

²⁶ Universidad Católica de Nuestra Señora de Asunción (San Ignacio Guazú), Escuela de Música “El Principito” (Encarnación), etc..

Relevance of the legal and institutional framework

A further area in which the relevance of the project shows critical weaknesses is in terms of the ability to take into account the **legal dimension** of the considered regions. In identifying the local entities involved, in formulating the activities and in implementing those actions, no consideration has in fact been given to the differences existing between national legislative contexts and those relating to the legal status of the various entities concerned. In some cases, this has meant that it was impossible to adequately reinforce the subjects of cross-border cooperation (in Central America, for example, at the time the “mancomunidades” were not registered as “international” entities and therefore had significant limitations in terms of their ability to acquire and use resources) and in other cases situations of conflict actually emerged (this was the case for example with the initiatives implemented in the Gulf of Fonseca, which resulted in the emergence of a conflict between the local Nicaraguan authorities and the central government authority).

Methodological relevance

Notwithstanding the fact that the project document mentions adjustment of the project to local requirements and characteristics, in fact “Fronteras Abiertas” adopted an approach based on a **single set of instruments**, predominantly based on European experience of transregional cooperation. This set of instruments does not appear pertinent in all cases in terms of local realities, both because of the absence in many cases of legal and organisational situations that are similar to those in Europe, and because of the absence in Latin America of a single reference social and political context.

As has in fact been revealed by the experience of the projects supported by Fronteras Abiertas²⁷, probably a **diversified approach** to the various local realities would have facilitated the implementation of the integration actions.

In brief:

we observed that while the relevance of the project in thematic and geographical terms was very high, its relevance in terms of the entities identified as principal referents, the identification and formulation of the actions, and the legal dimension and methodological approach reveal significant critical aspects. This is completely in line with the observations made about the unclear identity of the project (exploratory research project or development cooperation initiative) and about certain basic ambiguities.

	Satisfactory	Poor
Relevance or pertinence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- the theme of the project- the geographical areas identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- the identification of the reference entities- the actions- the legal dimension

4.2. Validity of the logical framework

The second aspect of the project considered in the evaluation regards the validity of the logical framework.

The following have been considered: a) relations between objectives, results and planned actions; b) the ability of identified indicators to provide the information needed to measure the extent to which objectives and expected results have been achieved; and c) the ways of identifying external factors that may have a bearing on project implementation.

The **inadequacy** of the above elements constitutes a risk condition for the project, regarding both consequences and effects and the management of invested resources.

²⁷ Notwithstanding the fact that its states that the projects involve intermediate governments, often these are managed and run by organisations of other types: NGOs, academic entities, operational “consortia”, municipal authorities, etc..

A logical framework unrelated to project design

As already mentioned, in the case of the project “Fronteras Abiertas” the logical framework was put in place **after** the drafting of the project document, and independently of that document and documents regarding the funding of the project (2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 factsheets).

Moreover, while the project document refers to the need to assist with ongoing cross-border integration and development processes and the actions of actors involved in these processes, in the logical framework the project is represented simply as a **set of activities**:

- **to strengthen** cross-border cooperation (general objective);
- **to improve the capabilities** of intermediate governments...; **identify projects...**; **foster** relations... **promote** dialogue... (specific objectives).

This situation has meant that in rolling out the project there has been a constant risk of separation between **reflections** on the strategic aspects of cross-border cooperation and the integration and **consolidation of actions** actually performed. This has probably led to a partial loss of the ‘heart’ of the project, originally seeking the development of a network among Latin American and European intermediate governments, replaced by a more central implementation of activities.

The focusing of the logical framework on activities also results in its being **not very useful** as a tool for steering and monitoring the project: the set objectives and expected results are identified with the activities being performed. This results in the automatic correspondence of the activity performed in relation to project goals: objectives are achieved when activities are carried out.

External conditions

External conditions for the project appear to be very much referable to the aims of the project, and thus a consequence of activities rather than a condition whereby these activities may help to produce results: the priority ascribed by regional institutions and national governments to regional integration; recognition of the role of intermediate and local institutions in integration actions; recognition of cross-border cooperation as a strategic element of integration processes are some of the ends of project activities (it is no coincidence that many resources have been deployed for missions, workshops, publications and courses based on these three aspects). The same can be said with regard to the “ability of intermediate and local governments to act independently”, the “sensitivity of European decentralised cooperation”, the “willingness of national, intermediate and local governments to seek dialogue”. Only the reference to “political stability” can actually be acknowledged as an external condition.

Indeed, this very **lack of attention to existing external conditions** – such as relations among national States, the legislation framework in which administrations operate, the internal stability of states, municipalities’ interest in local development (rather than simply the construction of works) – is one of the factors that have contributed to **diminishing the relevance** of the project in relation to the context in which it is placed.

Paradoxically, defined external conditions, with regard to activities – which are indeed external, relating to the “continuity of politics in intermediate and local governments” – are in **no way related** to the activities themselves, defined as a set of inputs originating from a single actor, represented by the project itself.

Activities, results, objectives

As already mentioned, results and objectives are defined in the logical framework in terms of activities. Moreover, relative identified indicators are either **redundant** (e.g. the indicator for the result “five direct actions performed in border areas” is the “number of direct actions performed”) or **not measurable** (e.g. the indicator for the objective “identifying projects for the cross-border coordination of public sector policies” is defined as the “level of cross-border coordination of public sector policies”). This makes it impossible to verify results and objectives, and to verify the actual impact of activities. At the same time this prevents a consideration of the relationship between activities performed and ongoing social, economic and political processes, rendering management activities **self-referential**.

Relations between objectives and results

Another aspect of the logical framework is the **lack of connections** between objectives and results.

There is no logical implication between the former - 1) “enhanced capability of local and intermediate governments to conceive, draw up and produce cross-border cooperation” projects; 2) “identification of cross-border coordination projects for public sector policies”; 3) “impetus for relations between intermediate and local governments with multilateral cooperation organisations”; 4) “facilitating permanent multilevel cross-border dialogue” – and the latter – 1) five direct actions performed in border areas; 2) five projects submitted for international cooperation, financed and implemented; 3) 30 intermediate governments and networks of local governments participating in exchange networks on cross-border integration themes; 4) 250 operators from governments taking part in online training courses; 5) six events organised on cross-border integration.

Some of the results correspond to activities that are relevant to some of the objectives, but they are not related by either needs or by univocity. Rather than “results” relating to set objectives they are activities that have been planned as part of the project.

Correspondence between results and actions

The fact that results are defined in terms of activities does not, paradoxically, result in a greater correspondence between the former and the latter. Activities indeed are defined as **inputs**. It is as if in the logical framework there were a sort of **semantic slide** downwards: instead of highlighting the relationship between the project and external realities, so as to render the (expected and unexpected) effects of the project controllable and verifiable, the framework merely lists project components.

The logical framework moreover is completely lacking some activities that have proved to be important in the implementation of the project, such as **study and research activities**.

So, on the one hand, external events and processes that may have a bearing on the project are **difficult to control**, and on the other the effectiveness of actions performed becomes **unverifiable**.

In brief:

Perhaps due to the fact that it was drafted after and independently of the project itself, the logical framework of the project betrays some serious shortcomings, having consequences on the management of the project and a bearing on both its relevance and effectiveness.

	Satisfactory	Lacking
Logical framework		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relationship between results and activities (some activities are not identified) - drawing up of objectives and results - indicators are tautological in relation to the processes they should be helping to evaluate

4.3. Effectiveness: expected and unexpected results

Direct project output

As might be imagined, in quantitative terms the activities performed are **consistent** with the planned project, indeed – as can be observed in the table below – the project has been able to produce more direct output than that planned.

Planned Output	Actual Output
5 projects submitted for international cooperation, financed and implemented	6 projects started up in cross-border areas with the funding of international organisations and involvement of European and/or local regional bodies
5 direct actions performed in border areas	6 initiatives backed directly by the project

Planned Output	Actual Output
250 operators from governments taking part in online training courses	300 public operators have taken part in the 2 distance learning courses
30 intermediate governments and networks of local governments participating in exchange networks on cross-border integration themes	22 operators have taken part in training initiatives in Italy
	relations have been forged with some regional integration organisations (CAN, Mercosur, SICA) and with the governments of 16 Latin American countries
	cooperation relations have been forged with some European regional and local bodies, such as the Tuscany Region, Lombardy Region, Piedmont Region, Province of Bolzano and Province of Huelva (Spain)
	collaboration activities have started up with 20 research institutes and approximately 100 experts and Latin American academics
Six events organised on cross-border integration	Six international events plus numerous regional and local events

Projects started up in cross-border areas

Going beyond a purely quantitative description of project output, it is possible to observe some more **problematic** situations.

With regard to projects started up in cross-border areas, as already noted in previous paragraphs:

- projects undertaken with the funding of international organisations **do not always** possess real cross-border “content”: in some cases they are projects for the development of local infrastructures in border areas, involving only the administrations of one country (an example is the Chinandega waste management project);
- in some cases the connection between ongoing development initiatives and the Fronteras Abiertas project is **not evident** (in the Chinandega area the Lombardy Region started up the project, together with the NGO ACRA, after the completion of Fronteras Abiertas activities. In Gulf of Fonseca the ongoing consolidation of the “mancomunidad trinacional” appears to be detached from the project, but bound to other initiatives undertaken in the area; in the area between Peru, Bolivia and Argentina the “Fronteras Turísticas” project has been planned and commenced without the involvement of the project);
- in some cases the involvement of European administrations is **absent** or has **significant shortcomings**: in the Trifinio, in the “Ciudad limpia” project only local inter-municipal associations and one Italian NGO are involved; in the project “Social cohesion and regional integration of municipalities in Trifinio border areas” – financed as part of the URBAL programme – the Lombardy Region apparently left the partnership at the outset of activities, according to information gathered, because of conflicts about resources and about the possibility of adopting in Central America the planning model tried out in Lombardy – the same project entails the involvement of OICS, the role of which is not clear.

The effectiveness of some performed actions has **fallen significantly due to the non-consideration of some political and institutional interplay** and **to the adoption of an approach that fails to take into account differences among actors**. This is the case in particular with support for *mancomunidades* in Gulf of Fonseca, which was unable to undertake any subsequent tri-national cross-border cooperation initiative due to the lack of consideration of the dynamics and institutional frameworks of different countries (in Nicaragua in particular there is limited autonomy of action – especially at the international level of municipalities, even though the *alcaldia* are considered as the *trait d’union* between citizens and the national government). The possibility of gaining access to international funding is in most cases related to the presence of an adequate “legal

personality". Except in a few cases, the *mancomunidades* do not have transnational status, and this prevents them from accessing funds, unless it is through the municipalities.

Networks of actors: European local and regional administrations

As already noted, a central theme of the project was the "construction of a network of actors" from both Latin America and Europe, consisting chiefly of local and intermediate administrations (provinces and regions). It would appear that apart from the involvement in the project of OICS – an operational agency of Italian regions, which is detached from the regions and their policies and has played a role in facilitating contacts with Italian regional administrations – **very few** European local and regional administrations are actually involved in cross-border collaboration initiatives.

The involvement of these administrations **does not appear** to be that typical of "network" collaboration. They would appear to be single forms of involvement occasioned by the active intervention of an external agent (like the entire project, directly or through the involvement of OICS), calling for and seeking the participation of organisations, rather than actual "networking", i.e. the taking of interesting opportunities, in the form of cooperation and coordination in order to attain shared goals (such as that of influencing the agendas of national states and international agencies, and public opinion), and share experiences, information and knowledge.

It would also appear that the active involvement of European administrations in cooperation initiatives is closely tied up with the **possibility of accessing economic resources**: the most relevant cooperation initiatives are funded by European Union programmes, which finance not only "development actions" at a local level but also activities performed by European administrations. Although it can be observed that some administrations (such as the autonomous province of Bolzano) have maintained constant cooperation ties with their Latin American counterparts even when external financial resources have been unavailable, in more than one case the lack of external funding has led to a rupture of cooperation ties – an example is the non-funding of development action in Gulf of Fonseca from the Italian trust fund c/o the BCIE.

The "dimension" of the commitment and involvement of European regions is also **limited**: only the Piedmont Region, Lombardy Region, Province of Frosinone, autonomous province of Bolzano and the Diputacion provincial de Huelva are taking an active part in development initiatives. The other regions involved in the project have mainly hosted training initiatives or study visits (e.g. Tuscany).

Networks of actors: Latin American local administrations

For many Latin American local and intermediate administrations interest in constructing and participating in a network going beyond the local dimension is undoubtedly evident, and is the subject of **greater awareness** than is the case for European administrations. Some of the interviewees pinpointed for example the interest in creating networks making it possible to raise the visibility of single administrations and to raise and access demand, both national and international, facilitating the exchange of information, best practices and experiences and allowing the construction of shared agendas and the ability to influence the agendas of "counterparts". Nevertheless, **even for Latin American local and intermediate administrations the network is still in an embryonic phase**. It is becoming consolidated – with direct intervention performed by CeSPI – particularly within the context of the URBAL programme and the project "Social cohesion and regional integration of border municipalities in the Trifinio" (as part of this project a conference was held at the end of May 2012 attended by many of the local administrations involved in the "Fronteras Abiertas" project of both Central America and South America).

In this case too **it does not yet seem possible to talk of a veritable network**. What we have are single cooperation initiatives brought together through the activity of an external actor (CeSPI). It does not appear indeed that the network of Latin American local administrations has the ability to continue its activity without the presence of an external actor performing support and stimulus actions (it is no coincidence that the "Fronteras Abiertas" website, which was to have been an IT platform for the network, has basically remained a project communication tool).

One of the factors that make the functioning of the network difficult is the **non-uniformity and asymmetry of the different actors involved**: in some cases they are municipalities (whose interests are often quite immediate

– also in view of the need for *alcaldias* to gain the local town’s approval), in other there are “*mancomunidades*” or “associations” of municipalities (which not only have different legal statuses but also different interests: sometimes they are organisation endowed with a veritable “subjectiveness” and a veritable strategic or political intentionality – one example is the Mancomunidad Trinacional of Rio Lempa – others are actors more interested in finding solutions to the current problems they are facing), in yet other cases they are provincial, regional or even state governments that are called upon to perform a governance function in border regions.

Training

As has been seen, Fronteras Abiertas has performed **two sets** of training activities: study visits in Italy, involving 22 representatives and operators of Latin American administrations, and two online courses, in which about 300 students have taken part.

In the case of study visits **one should not talk about work placements**, i.e. the type of training activity initially planned for the project. As has been seen, visits in Italy were for a limited period, and were in the form of some workshops and a series of visits to see concrete experiences. The element typical of work placement, namely the sharing of working activity or supply of services performed by the visited organisations, was thus missing. In the absence of this element it is difficult to talk of forms of experiential learning typical of work placements.

As regards **online courses**, it appears difficult to refer to the “distance training” mode: participants were given some texts, some bibliographic materials and self-evaluation tests, but elements allowing for a learning process and above all a training process – which should have an influence not only on available knowledge but also on the ability to apply this knowledge and to interpret reality – to take place were lacking. No use was made of instruments such as tutors or forms of interaction between teachers and pupils and among pupils.

It might be observed then that when defining the project the concepts pertaining to activities were adopted chiefly in **analogue** mode. This has led to a degree of confusion when planning, implementing and making use of activities (leading to expectations that have not been met and the emergence of perspectives and perceptions not shared by the various actors involved) and to a greater difficulty in assessing effectiveness (in terms of the objectives it should be measured for).

Irrespective of the formal definition and the methods used for training activities, it must be noted that:

- actual results obtained through **distance training activities do not appear to be measurable**: information is not available about the acquisition and above all actual use of knowledge on which the courses are based; at the end of the course self-assessment tests were given, but they did not make it possible to gauge the impact of the course; in Central America only a few people took part in activities, and do not consider them as being relevant;
- although the project has a website, which has been used for distance training activities, its use as a “platform” for cross-border cooperation and for creating a network among organisations involved in cross-border initiatives has been **questioned** by some operators, who have not managed to join this network due to technical problems;
- visits to Italy have apparently achieved **sensitisation results, rather than the actual transfer or development of skills**; moreover, from short visits to production units and to see experiences it would be difficult to hope for a transfer of knowledge of any real complexity. Even so, visits have been deemed to be useful by participants, and in some cases it has been possible to verify their actual usefulness for the project’s ends (e.g. for the *alcaldia* of Marcovia in Honduras, where work has started on the planning of a waste management and treatment plant, based in part on information acquired during the visit to Italian plants);
- the selection of participants for training activities **has not always been effective**: in some cases those participating in these activities have left their workplaces; in other more numerous cases the possibility of using acquired information has proved to be very limited. In this sense it is possible to say that training activities have failed to pay due attention to the dynamics and processes of managing knowledge within organisations. Rather than actually building up the capabilities of local governments and intermediate bodies, activities have been geared towards transferring information to single individuals.

Construction of South-South capabilities and cooperation

A **lack of definition** of activities and objectives has probably had an impact on the effectiveness of actions to build capabilities and on the possibility of initiating South-South cooperation initiatives.

In practice, for both the construction of projects to be submitted for funding from international organisations and the formulation of local development initiatives financed directly by the project a central role – and sometimes exclusive role – has been played by the European actors involved. This has certainly **not favoured the possibility of developing local capabilities** (it is no coincidence that in some cases at least the project has not led to local and independent initiatives of cross-border development and cooperation, and that in those cases in which these initiatives appear to have been most successful – like in the case of URBAL projects – there remains an “important” European presence).

To this end, rather than supporting South-South cooperation initiatives it would appear that the project has supported – sometimes successfully, sometimes with temporary effects – North-South-South cooperation initiatives, within which local organisations are in danger of taking on more the role of **beneficiaries** than that of protagonists. This situation might also be related to some shortcomings as to the relevance of the choice of actors (the “subjectiveness” of local administrations indeed is expressed more in grasping opportunities to improve local conditions than in starting up “political” and strategic initiatives aimed outwards), and the identification of actions (sometimes these have been “led” by European actors, more interested in disseminating their “best practices” and showcasing their abilities than in comparing and contrasting them with local practices and capabilities).

Generally speaking, in this context it may be observed that although **South-South cooperation** is a fundamental element of the FA project, there are still few actual cases of South-South cooperation covering the exchange of information, skills and resources, transfer of technologies or support for promoting policies and new cross-border development initiatives. Especially if one considers relations among the subjects of different regions. This does not mean that Latin American actors involved in the project do not have ties with those of other Latin American regions. Nevertheless, in many cases these relations are more related to opportunities afforded by **other programmes** than to the activities of Fronteras Abiertas (examples of this sort are visits to Colombia of Central American waste management experts, in contexts pertaining to bilateral and multilateral South-South cooperation, and collaboration started up between *mancomunidades* of the Trifinio area and those of the Gulf of Fonseca area, supported chiefly by regional entities such as the PRESANCA project and CENPROMYPE project – that have in any case benefited from knowledge produced by Fronteras Abiertas).

The limitations of the project with regard to the development of capabilities among the actors involved are to a certain extent exposed by the fact that the **effectiveness of activities (e.g. start-up of cross-border development initiatives, participation in the network, use of knowledge, etc.) has depended heavily on the capabilities that the actors involved** in the project already possessed at the outset. In the case of local authorities or “strong” and “structured” *mancomunidades* activities appear to be marked by a greater strategic relevance and greater sustainability. If weaker authorities or *mancomunidades* have been involved – entities more dependent on political dynamics in place locally or on relations with national governments – results have been of less relevance and in many cases less acknowledged by the subjects themselves. In the Gulf of Fonseca area for instance the adoption of “development plans” founded on the analysis of demand and the surveying of ongoing and planned projects was greeted with greater interest where *mancomunidades* were more structured (e.g. in the North of the Union Department) and with scepticism or suspicion where *mancomunidades* were weaker (like in Nicaragua). It might be noted on this point – despite the fact that in more than one case the project “landed” somewhere because of local demands – that there has been a **certain difficulty in adapting the project to local conditions**.

Considering the process of strengthening the **capabilities of local actors**, this appears to be more relevant where these actors are already in possession of greater capabilities. Nevertheless – except perhaps for the Mancomunidad transnacional of Trifinio – it has been seen that the projects that have received funding have all entailed close collaboration with CeSPI. **It would thus appear that the effectiveness of training activities performed has been limited**. With regard to training activities, greater effectiveness has been observed by beneficiaries for the visits to Italy.

A further element that has had an impact on the effectiveness of the project is the state of **relative institutional confusion**.

The link between the activities of the “Fronteras Abiertas” project and activities promoted or performed by implementing agencies within the framework of other projects **is not always clear or well defined**, and in some cases the **very persons** involved in the project have acted at various times within **different institutional frameworks**. Once again this has made it difficult to adequately manage some activities, reducing effectiveness (an example is that of actions in Central America, where the approaches proposed by different actors have sometimes clashed, and effective forms of action to support local actors have not been agreed upon).

In some cases the activities of the organisation most involved in the implementation of the project (CeSPI) have been performed within projects and within different funding frameworks without there being clear differences between activities and their relations (including potential synergies and forms of mutual consolidation). This is true for the already mentioned study on port cities (conducted with the resources of the IILA - INAFICT project), and for cooperation with SICA (initiated at the conclusion of the project, and included in an agreement reached by SICA and CeSPI, but rolled out with Fronteras Abiertas funding). It is also true for the drafting of projects submitted for European Union funding, in which CeSPI is involved not only from the outside – as a facilitator – but also from the inside, using the resources of projects in a position of **potential conflict of interests**, or at the very least a state of institutional ambiguity.

Workshops, communication

The project has undoubtedly promoted and performed **sweeping communication actions** in relations with local administrations, governments and international organisations of Latin America. Central and South American governments have participated with top-level representatives (from presidential offices, planning and interior ministries, foreign affairs ministries) in initiatives promoted by Fronteras Abiertas. A number of effects have been produced through workshops and bilateral meetings held during the course of missions undertaken by project staff – often in company with the representatives of Italian regions:

- the development of a **favourable context** (in theory at least) for the start up and support for cross-border cooperation initiatives, with local authorities being the main actors;
- a **fortifying** of the importance attached to the issue of border areas, within single countries and in terms of regional integration organisations;
- initial reflections – involving governments, local administrations and international organisations – on the **“bottom-up construction”** of cross-border integration and regional integration.

Evidence of this process may be seen by the fact that some of the transnational actors involved in communication actions (such as SICA and CAF) have promoted initiatives regarding cross-border cooperation and the role that local administrations can play in the regional integration process, often involving directly or indirectly the subjects involved in the project. SICA for example started up a regional initiative for the drafting of a “Carta Centroamericana de la Autonomía Municipal”, entered into a memorandum of understanding with CeSPI for research activities and reflections on cross-border development²⁸ and is financing the opening of a section on local administrations on the website of the SICA – IILA training project. As will be mentioned in greater detail below, on the one hand agreements reached by SICA and CeSPI may appear to be positive project results, but on the other they may lead to situations that are **incompatible** with the role taken on by CeSPI within the same project: legal ownership of the project and its actions should indeed be recognised as being held by IILA, consequently the legitimacy of an action that establishes a direct relationship between an external organisation and the implementing agency of the project is at the very least open to **doubt**.

²⁸ CeSPI and SICA signed a collaboration agreement. CeSPI has also conducted, with funds from the FA project, a study for SICA, the main product being the reflection paper called “Conceptualización de la Cooperación Fronteriza en el Sistema de la Integración Central Americana”. The document – to be published by SICA – is presented as the result of collaboration between CeSPI and SICA. In this case too one must note the presence of a situation of doubtful legitimacy and a measure of conflict of interest between the management role in the project, ownership of the initiative and the use of project resources for ends that are (at least partially) different from the original ends.

Unexpected effects: incidence on policies and on knowledge

The above comments on communication activities performed in the project make it possible to highlight an aspect of Fronteras Abiertas that is not clear in the project document and in the factsheets, and is **completely absent** in the formulated logical framework. This aspect is the production and dissemination of knowledge about regional integration and cross-border cooperation processes.

Probably because of the main methods adopted for project actions – based chiefly on short missions, even though in some cases personnel were present in situ for relatively long periods – the production of knowledge and relative dissemination activity is one of the areas in which the project has been **most effective**. In addition to the already mentioned publication “Cooperación transfronteriza e integración en América Latina”, the project has produced other publications, research papers and reports presented at political and academic events.

Communication and networking actions with SICA, other regional organisations (e.g. PRESANCA, CEMPROMYPE) and some government agencies in Central America have led to the **sharing of a vision on border areas and to the perception of possible bottom-up integration processes**, while up until the Fronteras Abiertas project, the few cross-border development initiatives undertaken were almost always based on agreements among states and on top-level political processes (the possibility of bottom-up regional integration is perceived as being problematical by some governments, which nevertheless identify this process in top-level treaties and reports as the “main way” towards integration²⁹). The same process has happened in South America, through the staging of meetings with the representatives of governments and international organisations and participation in academic networks and workshops.

The incidence on public sector policies has had **various levels of effectiveness**: effectiveness has been high in relations with the local offices of the United Nations and on regional cooperation organisations (which are increasingly supporting “bottom-up integration” initiatives, also supporting the actors of civil society), but still relatively low with states and governments. Apart from public declarations of support, actual support for bottom-up integration processes clashes with existing interests in maintaining territorial sovereignty. In particular, preoccupation over security, the need to control illegal trafficking and the sovereignty of border areas have led to the suspension of the C4 agreement, which facilitated citizen circulation in the states of El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala. There has been a tightening of border procedures on the part of both Honduras and Nicaragua and the setting up of the El Salvador army along its borders, to the detriment of the populations of those areas.

Another context in which the knowledge and information generated through Fronteras Abiertas appear to have had an impact on the policies of international organisations is that of the **Orientation and Coordination Office (OCO) of the European Commission’s URBAL Programme**. It appears possible to observe in this case a situation of concordance between the Fronteras Abiertas project and the URBAL programme, actually leading to the selection and funding of some projects within the URBAL framework that originated from the experience of Fronteras Abiertas or from relations that have been developed through the project.

In brief:

Although all planned project activities have been performed, in terms of effectiveness the project presents a number of critical elements. Project effectiveness is in doubt in particular with regard to the construction of a network of Latin American and European intermediate and local administrations (still in its early stages), supported projects (which are not always pertinent and have always had the effect of strengthening the capabilities of the actors involved), training activities and the construction of institutional capabilities (mostly initiatives entailing the transfer of information and knowledge). A particularly critical aspect for the effectiveness of the project has been the state of institutional confusion: it is not clear what is “of the project” and what belongs to “other projects”. However, the project also has positive aspects, including one of great importance that may be counted as an unexpected result: the production of knowledge about cross-border integration processes in Latin America. The production of knowledge – which was not

²⁹ It is no coincidence that ongoing cooperation processes in the Trifinio area, including relations among local administrations, have been legitimised by the presence of the “Trifinio Plan” treaty, entered into as part of the peace process of the 1990s. In the same way, cooperation between the municipalities of the Gulf of Fonseca has been hampered by the lack of a collaboration agreement among states, and now it will probably be relaunched thanks to the recent signature of an agreement between the presidents of Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

specified in the logical framework – has enabled the project to impact on the policies of some Latin American actors, in particular regional integration organisations.

	Satisfactory	Lacking
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activities performed corresponding to those indicated in the project - Training activity in Italy deemed to be useful by the actors involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cross-border content is doubtful in the cases of some projects. The relationship between the project and some activities is not evident - In some cases there is no involvement of European administrations. The number of European local and regional organisations involved is very limited - Cooperation appears to be based not so much on a network as on individual relations - The interest in the network is not clear for many actors, apart from that of acquiring resources - The Latin American network is still in an embryonic state and depends on the actors implementing the project - The results of training activities are not measurable - The site does not work as a platform - An analogue, imprecise use of the concepts defining activities - Institutional confusion - Non-consideration of political and institutional interplay - Undifferentiated approach to actors - Few cases of South-South cooperation - In some cases the project does not manage to really increase capabilities, but merely supports subjects already possessing considerable capabilities. Training activities appear to have limited effectiveness.

4.4. Efficiency

Efficiency has been assessed considering the relationship between resources deployed and activities performed. An **obstacle** to the adequate analysis of efficiency is the **lack of a single budget**. The project budget has been developed and amended during the course of project implementation, as has the duration of the project. At the time of its conclusion the resources made available by the Foreign Affairs Ministry have been spent almost in full (out of the overall financing just 15,000 Euro, set aside for the performance of continuous assessment activity, has not been spent, as this activity was not done).

The ability to leverage resources

As the final report of the project notes, activities performed have generated – directly or indirectly – **resources amounting to about 11 million Euro** (with a global investment of approx. 1.5 million Euro). In greater detail, resources generated include:

- some projects financed by the European Union (some formulated as part of the Fronteras Abiertas project, others formulated and proposed by subjects coming into contact thanks to project activities);
- initiatives of Italian local administrations undertaken as part of the project (sometimes however with doubtful success, like the case of PIDET financed by the Lombardy Region);
- initiatives and resources mobilised directly by Latin American actors involved in the project.

Problems with project implementation

Despite this **great power of leverage**, with regard to the use of resources one must point out the presence of **some problems**:

- although expected overheads for each of the partners are close to 5%, **global project overheads are: 13% (budget 2007); 9.73% (budget 2008); 10.13% (budget 2009)**. These percentages are considerably higher than those normally allowed by most international organisations (7% for EU, 9% for United Nations);
- the **cost of some activities** (e.g. training, in Italy and online; totalling approximately 361,700 Euro³⁰) appears to be **very high** compared with results achieved (acquisition of general knowledge about cross-border cooperation; acquisition of general knowledge about waste management activities and local development), and with the number of beneficiaries actually involved;
- in some cases (e.g. planning activity in Gulf of Fonseca) the efforts made and resources invested **did not produce benefits as perceived by local actors**; indeed, they appear to have raised expectations that were not subsequently met, leading some local actors to lose interest in the topic of “cross-border cooperation”;
- in one or two cases the resources deployed in “**direct actions**” generated effects that might be defined as redundant, and in any case of little relevance for the programme’s aims (such as the supply of computers to municipalities that already have an adequate IT infrastructure);
- despite the global investment, the formed network, especially in the case of European organisations, still appears to be **rather small and endowed with little enterprise**;
- the use and management of project resources have in some cases been a **cause for conflict** among the actors involved in Fronteras Abiertas activities. In particular, the dropping of the URBAL project on the part of the Lombardy Region appears to be related to arguments arising over the use of resources. The emergence of conflicts about resources might be viewed as an indicator of the presence of organisational problems that have not been adequately handled, and in any case of a situation in which some of the project’s resources – reserved for creating the network – have produced lower than expected results.
- the most evident result of the project – **the proposing and financing of new projects in cross-border areas** – appears to be detached from many of the activities performed. With regard to projects submitted for URBAL funding in particular it would probably have been sufficient to put into contact the actors that then became promoting agents (furthermore, one must note that just for the “formulation” of projects approximately 103,700 Euro was spent, and a similar figure was used for “specialist technical missions”. This is a high figure if one considers that in all 15 projects were “generated” by Fronteras Abiertas³¹).

Some problems relating to the nature of the project

Apart from the above problems, it appears necessary to report that the way the project has been managed, with Ministry funding granted to an international organisation, and management of the project then entrusted almost entirely to a **third party**, has probably been at the origin of some of the problems regarding the efficiency of actions performed.

The appropriateness of this **two steps** ought to be re-considered, bearing in mind the roles played by the various organisations involved – IILA has acted as facilitator in relations with some countries, especially through communication with Latin American embassies in Rome, while CeSPI has identified, drawn up and implemented the whole project, performing all field work.

Furthermore, as shown by the number of CeSPI publications that have been issued in relation to the project and the existing difficulties in determining which study and research activities are to be attributed to Fronteras

³⁰ This global figures considers: spending for work placements of Latin American personnel and spending for distance training lecturers, as per the 2007 budget; spending on training from the 2008 budget; spending on training from the 2009 budget.

³¹ One should also consider the fact that when drawing up some of these projects – such as “Fonteras Turisticas” or the project of the ACRA NGO in the department of Chinandega – the project did not play a direct role. If however one considers the global value of “generated” projects (estimated in programme reports at 11,515,000 Euro – of which 315,000 Euro corresponding to projects financed directly by Fronteras abiertas) one would obtain a project design value of about 9%. Undoubtedly rather high.

Abiertas and which to other projects, it might be assumed that the project itself has to an extent become a **means of financing for CeSPI's research activity**, irrespective of the specific aims of the project.

Project activities furthermore have been used to mobilise financing for new projects in which **not only** associations of municipalities and intermediate administrations of cross-border areas but also CeSPI itself (which performs project assistance and monitoring activities) actually participate and derive benefits³². In this case too it might be assumed that a not insignificant percentage of invested resources has not been reserved for strengthening the actors engaged in cross-border cooperation and integration initiatives.

In brief:

As seen, the most important aspect in terms of efficiency has been the ability of the project to mobilise new resources for cross-border cooperation. Nevertheless, some problems have been detected regarding the use of resources. Some problems relate to the management of project activities, others to financing methods and the initial design of the initiative.

	Satisfactory	Lacking
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generation of projects having a value of 11 million Euro 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The budget has been drafted on a year by year basis. There is no correspondence between the project budget formulated in the project document and the final budget. The way the budget has evolved is unclear. - The cost of some activities appears to be very high compared with results actually achieved (e.g. training in Italy) - Invested resources have not always brought benefits as perceived by local actors - In some cases direct actions have generated redundant effects or effects of little relevance to programme objectives - The most evident result of the project (new projects) appears to be detached from many of the activities performed - The institutional mechanism is at odds with the role of each actor - The project also appears to be aimed at financing CeSPI's activities rather than simply aiding support given by CeSPI to local actors - Conflicts have emerged between the actors involved regarding resources

4.5. Sustainability

Another criterion used for assessment is that regarding sustainability, defined as the ability of activities and results obtained through the project to **sustain** actions over time.

Dependence on promoting agencies

As has been noted, project activities appear to be partly dependent on the presence and enterprise of the promoting agencies that have also managed the project. In those cases in which these actors have "left" the field, activities have often been **suspended**. In cases in which these actors have maintained a steady presence – even one limited to specific functions and activities – activities have continued, and developed further. This has happened, for example, in the Trifinio area for the two projects financed by the European Union.

³² In one case CESPI's participation in the URBAL project was deemed by one of the leading partners as a sort of repayment of a "debt" deriving from the granting of funding.

The ways in which project actions have been implemented – characterised by a largely **uniform** approach in the various zones in question – have resulted in a varying degree of participation and activation of local actors. In many cases the initiatives embarked on have been formulated and implemented chiefly by the actors promoting Fronteras Abiertas (e.g. PIDET, for which the plan was actually discussed “ex post” with local actors, which had only provided the information required for its drafting). The same can be said regarding activities for the transfer of knowledge and skills, which have rarely generated dissemination processes at a local level.

The integration of programme actions in ongoing processes

Perhaps a little paradoxically, the sustainability of initiatives started up thanks to the project appears to be **better** where the presence of the promoters of “Fronteras Abiertas” has been less evident, limiting their action to putting local actors in contact with European actors. In these cases, the **greater independence** of actors involved as “beneficiaries” has enabled the emergence of autonomous initiatives that are continuing (such as the “Fronteras Turisticas” project).

The continuity and sustainability of integration initiatives has in many cases been evident in situations in which project actions have proved to be quite ineffective or sporadic. This is no coincidence: the choice **not to create new subjects**, but to support and assist existing and operative subjects has meant that also in areas where Fronteras Abiertas has not succeeded in bringing in “new resources”, integration dynamics that the project has sought to reinforce can continue, sometimes with local resources and other times by continuing – even without the support of the project – to perform fundraising activities or thanks to resources already mobilised by other international actors.

In Gulf of Fonseca for example the process for the institutionalisation of integration initiatives – which suffered a sudden interruption following the coup d’etat in Honduras in June 2009 – has been relaunched through a new agreement between the presidents of the states involved, and has **attracted resources** from USAID, Spanish Cooperation, the IADB and the European Commission.

The mobilisation of new actors

An element that favours the continuity of commenced activities appears to be the **mobilisation of new actors**, as promoters of cross-border cooperation initiatives or as donors: this is so for SICA (in particular through CEMPROMIPE and PRESANCA programmes) or for some local governments of South America, or OICS, which continues to act as a mediator between Italian and Latin American regions.

In brief:

In terms of sustainability, while the continuity of actions is dependent on the presence and action of project promoters, partly because of varying levels of continuity and the active involvement of local actors, it must be duly noted that two of the project’s main strategies, namely that of not creating new organisations but of supporting existing/ongoing processes, and that of seeking to spread the topic of “bottom-up cross-border integration”, have tended to allow the continuation of cooperation and development initiatives in border areas.

	Satisfactory	Lacking
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobilisation of new actors - Integration of project activities in ongoing/existing processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dependence on project promoting agencies for some cooperation initiatives - Different levels of continuity and active involvement of local actors

4.6. Impact

As already mentioned in the paragraphs on methodology, analysis of a project’s impact on social, political and institutional processes requires a **medium to long-term perspective**. Taking such a view does not appear to be possible as regards the activities of “Fronteras Abiertas”, which in some cases concluded just a few months ago. An evaluation of impact would also need to be able to identify the factors that have actually had an influence on ongoing processes. This is a particularly delicate activity when evaluating what is a chiefly “**intangible**” initiative such as “Fronteras Abiertas”, undertaken over a relatively short space of time and regarding processes that are

particularly complex, long and marked by interaction among a large set of actors. Added to this is the difficulty of assessing impact in a framework in which objectives are expressed only in terms of activities to be performed, and not realities for which change is sought.

In this sense, the paragraphs below seek to provide not an actual appraisal of impact but rather an attempt to identify and examine some **general trends or directions** that have developed with reference to project actions and that might provide a clue as to the impact that the project might have in the medium and long run.

Regional integration and raising the capabilities of local actors through the mobilisation of new resources

As already stated, Fronteras Abiertas has mobilised – directly and indirectly – about **11 million Euro thanks to the creation of new projects**. A first set of impacts is thus to be identified through the likely effects that these projects will have. These may include:

- “regional integration” processes, through the drawing up of plans and development initiatives, management of environmental and social crises, more intense cultural relations, start-up of new business activities, etc.;
- the increased availability of services in border areas of Latin America;
- the development of capabilities of actors involved, first and foremost local governments, municipalities and associations of local administrations;
- the development of new legal frameworks at a local level (through administrative acts promulgated by local authorities), and at a national and regional level (e.g. the “Carta Central Americana de la Autonomia Municipal”, formulated with the collaboration of SICA and project experts);
- the emergence of new actors at a local and international level, within the context of intermediate administrations (such as the ongoing development of some new “associations of municipalities”), and through the mobilisation of a larger set of actors (such as the “comité de frontera” now operating in Chile, Peru and Bolivia).

Growing awareness to the question of cross-border cooperation

A second and not less important area of impact is the **growing attention** to the question of cross-border cooperation in the agendas and development policies of many international bodies engaged in integration initiatives in Latin America, such as SICA, the European Union and UNDP. The space that these organisations are devoting to this question is undoubtedly not only the result of project activities, however through project activities some ways of handling the question have been included in international agendas, in particular:

- the definition of a bottom-up approach to cross-border cooperation and integration;
- the identification of border areas as priority areas within regional integration processes;
- the identification of local administrations and relative associations as “key actors” (unlike approaches that identified central state administrations and chancelleries as key actors);
- the idea of a multi-tiered governance system, in which the lowest level (municipalities) and highest level (states) can find a meeting point with the creation of cross-border cooperation initiatives;
- the identification of cross-border “micro-regions” in Central and South America and of criteria for defining border regions;
- the identification of “key issues” for cross-border development (security and democracy; management of the environment and of natural resources; economic integration; economic inclusion and social cohesion; consolidation of institutions);
- the identification of local development projects as a structure for promoting cross-border integration.

Missed impacts

With reference to the programme it is however possible to single out **missed impacts**. Two in particular can be stated:

- **the aggregation of all the actors involved in cross-border development initiatives** for a set of shared strategies (those referring to the perspective briefly described above). An attempt was made to reach

agreement and create forms of participation in the programme in relations with international organisations and – to a lesser extent – with the central administrations of different states. Similar attempts were not adequately made in relations with NGOs and bilateral cooperation bodies. As a result, even though these actors promote integration initiatives that are often better and more rapid than those of local administrations, they tended not to join the other actors involved from a common standpoint, and still less on the basis of project proposals (indeed the project was sometimes perceived as a rival, attempting to “claim paternity” of ongoing processes and initiatives);

- **the creation of a context for resuming efforts aimed at aggregating, structuring and defining a shared strategy among the numerous projects supported by Italian Cooperation in the Latin American region:** while CeSPI has been an integral part of some IILA projects in the region (such as the programme “Inclusión Social de grupos marginales en Centro América y el Caribe” or the IILA course for civil servants from Central American governments), the project has remained separate from Italian cooperation and from local development initiatives generated by Italian cooperation in the past (e.g. ADEL). Exceptions in this sense are two initiatives: the publication of a folder – at the initiative of SICA, the regional Cooperazione Office and the Cooperazione Office of San Salvador – regarding “La cooperación italiana en Centro América contribuye a la integración regional” and participation in the PNUD, SICA and Spanish Cooperation initiative “Compromiso Centroamérica. Feria de conocimiento” (Panama, 2010). In the latter case, the Fronteras Abiertas project was selected as a best practice on the “management of security at a local level” even though that experience actually had nothing to do with the project (in the presentation of the project one of the activities introduced was a research conducted by CESPI within the framework of another programme supported by IILA).

In brief:

Again with regard to impact the Fronteras Abiertas project presents a varied picture. The project has certainly had an important impact in terms of the mobilisation of fresh resources and the dissemination of a vision of “bottom-up” cross-border cooperation. There have also been some missed impacts however, particularly the possibility of increasing integration for cross-border cooperation initiatives and of having an influence on other Italian cooperation projects.

	Satisfactory	Lacking
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mobilisation of fresh resources - processes of change and development, involving the actors of “border areas” where initiatives have started up - processes to formulate regional and international policies, in particular strengthening the vision of “bottom-up” cross-border cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non-aggregation in a strategic context shared by numerous actors involved in cross-border development initiatives - the non-creation of a context for the re-aggregation of Italian Cooperation in Latin America - the impossibility of gauging medium- and long-term impact due to the lack of real objectives within a logical frame of reference

4.7. Visibility

An important aspect to be assessed is project visibility. Visibility has been furthered and promoted through bilateral meetings, workshop activities and publications. Considering the resources deployed in this sphere it might be thought that the project has been given a great amount of visibility at both international and local levels. It was observed however that in this sphere too there were some **problems**, namely:

- Irrespective of the local actors directly involved (the persons taking part in initiatives), the **visibility of the Fronteras Abiertas project was very limited in the areas of intervention:** only the persons directly met or directly involved in the project were able to talk about it. The communication tools used (Internet, publications aimed at a specialist audience, reference to a community of diplomats and academics, etc.) prevented communication from spreading to the local public at large.
- **Project visibility was also limited among the actors directly involved.** Many of the interviewees in Central America for instance were able to talk about the contribution made to the activity of their administrations

by the main actor involved in the implementation of *Fronteras Abiertas* (CeSPI) but not about the project as a whole.

- **Visibility of the set of actors involved in the project was limited:** while all the actors involved in the project are aware of the role of CeSPI, almost no one was aware of the involvement and role of IILA (only those taking part in visits to Italy and those taking part in other IILA activities, such as SICA officials). The visibility of IILA and of Italian Cooperation was reduced for most project participants to the presence of their logos on publications and on project documents. It is no coincidence that the project has led to new collaboration opportunities with local authorities especially for the organisation most involved in its implementation, namely CeSPI.
- **The visibility of Italian Cooperation as an actor involved in promoting a new approach to cross-border cooperation was almost null, especially at a local level:** apart from the presence of the symbols of Italian Cooperation on publications, the presence of a few references to Italian contributions in publications, the inclusion of the project among those identified in the mentioned brochure on Italian projects in Latin America, **there did not emerge, with reference to the project, any visible and perceivable Italian policy regarding cross-border cooperation and development processes in Latin American countries** (indeed none of the actors consulted – including the cooperation office of the Italian Embassy in El Salvador – spoke of the project as being part of a broader strategy of Italian cooperation).

In brief:

Despite the amount of resources devoted to communication activities, visibility of the project as a strategic action of Italian and IILA cooperation remained very limited. The role played by CeSPI in the field generated a certain confusion among project participants. *Fronteras Abiertas* has indeed often been identified with the organisation carrying out actions, while the role of IILA was rarely perceived.

	Satisfactory	Lacking
Visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Workshop activities and publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project is lacking in visibility in the areas where it has been rolled out - In the eyes of local actors there is no difference between CeSPI and the project - The presence of IILA is perceived by a small number of actors. Activity performed by IILA is not recognised by local actors - The project is not visible, nor perceived as part of an Italian cooperation strategy

4.8. Functioning of the implementing tool

Another element considered in the assessment is the implementing tool. Despite a relatively low budget, the “*Fronteras Abiertas*” project was marked by a **high degree of complexity**, such as to require a management mechanism capable of facing up to and to some extent rendering controllable the dynamics of the project, with regard to both “internal” aspects (organisation and performance of planned activities) and aspects connected with external relations (interaction with actors present in territories, etc.).

To give a better idea of the degree of complexity of the project’s implementing tool, one should recall the various dimensions and aspects covered in *Fronteras Abiertas*. Without wishing to be exhaustive, the following might be mentioned:

- the geographic dimension (project actions covered not only the whole of South America and Central America, areas in which 14 countries were directly involved, but also Europe and Italy in particular);
- the broad set of activities (research, training, technical assistance, communications, pilot projects, financing of local initiatives, etc.)
- action on various regional and administrative levels (local, regional, national, transnational, international);
- action regarding numerous dimensions: political, economic, social, cultural, etc.;

- the need to operate in numerous legal contexts (different from nation to nation and on an administrative level);
- the need to work with numerous actors, belonging to different categories (municipal administrations; “associations” of municipalities and “mancomunidades”; intermediate administrations, such as regions, provinces, states and “prefeituras”; central state administrations; regional and international organisations; organisations of civil society and different families of non-state actors; the world of research);
- the need to work on chiefly intangible aspects (such as relations among actors).

Faced with such a complex project, the assessment identified an implementing mechanism **that was quite unstructured and unorganised**. It was as if the **implementing agent had been left on its own to manage a situation that would have required not just an overall political direction** – such as that offered by IILA through direct interaction with CeSPI and the performance of mediation and communication activity with the governments of Latin American countries and with Italy’s foreign affairs Ministry – **but also a management and control system capable of coordinating, managing and sometimes acting as a go-between for numerous emerging interests with reference to the many dimensions of the project**.

Foreign Affairs Ministry absent

Although the project was financed by the MFA and entailed action in a region where Italian Cooperation has a long history, as well as interaction with numerous actors involved on various levels with Italy’s presence overseas, once it had agreed on financing the MFA does not appear to have played **any role in the external control and monitoring of actions**, except through:

- the administrative management of IILA’s contribution;
- communication between embassies and Italian diplomats and IILA;
- participation in workshops and public events;
- some meetings with project staff, especially at a local level (these meetings were aimed at checking ongoing activities, and were generally attended by the officials of embassies and not by specialist personnel capable of understanding and assessing the complexity of the project);
- the undertaking of small-scale communication initiatives (such as the already mentioned brochure prepared by UTL in Guatemala in collaboration with the embassy in El Salvador).

Despite the breadth of relations forged through the project, the project itself does not appear to have been the subject of special focus, of actions designed to have a bearing on project management, or to have been given a **specific strategy**.

An unstructured, unformalised management system

As already mentioned, **the implementing mechanism was not formally structured**: no steering committee was set up, no formal monitoring system was set in place, there was not even a formal difference between the roles of the various actors involved in the organisation.

Even though the project involved numerous subjects (IILA, CeSPI, OICS, which has mediated relations with some regions, and potentially Italian Cooperation), **no management structure was created** in which it might be possible to allow these actors to take part in a collective and organised communicative, interactive and decision-making process.

The possibility of identifying and solving the problems that inevitably emerge in a project as complex as “Fronteras Abiertas” was **left to the initiative and capabilities of the various actors involved** in its rollout, without these being able to refer to a structure that might support them in meeting both the daily management needs of the numerous planned activities and needs relating to the analysis, assessment and management of the numerous dynamics generated by project activities as it came into contact with the political, social and economic reality of the territories and actors involved.

It is no surprise then that in addition to **the relevance of the issue tackled by the project there emerged elements of lesser relevance regarding its “contact with reality”, as well as problems regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of actions.**

Monitoring

IILA’s monitoring of the project was done chiefly through **two sets of actions**: the gathering of feedback from the Italian diplomatic network overseas and feedback through the diplomatic network of Latin American countries in Italy. In both cases the feedback collected was always very positive, therefore it was not necessary to perform further initiatives to verify project activities and relative results. Some project results moreover were given visibility through workshops and publications.

A monitoring system of this kind proved to be **little suited** to a project as complex as Fronteras Abiertas. The non-definition of expected results and lack of a formalised system of result indicators probably had a strong bearing on the possibility of carrying out effective monitoring.

Lack of independent ongoing evaluation

The shortcomings of the monitoring system (undoubtedly suitable for managing activities “visible” to governments and embassies, but **less suitable for managing intangible activities** marked by the participation of many actors and the influence of numerous dynamics) were compounded by the **lack of independent assessment activity**. Even though it had been planned, mid-term project evaluation was not undertaken, as it was considered unnecessary in view of project time frames. Mid-term evaluation, particularly if undertaken by external actors not responsible for programme management, would probably have produced higher levels of effectiveness and efficiency and identified emerging problems, allowing them to be solved.

The role of the IILA

The role of the IILA in the implementation of the project related to some specific activities: the definition of basic strategies, handling of relations with governments, assistance with the organisation of some workshop events. Field actions on the other hand were **fully prepared and managed** by CeSPI.

This resulted in **lesser visibility** for IILA and produced a high degree of **overlap between project activities and activities performed in other areas by CeSPI**. If IILA had taken a more active role in the management of activities and been more present in the field, this would probably have reduced problems regarding “institutional confusion”, visibility and perhaps also efficiency.

Presence and resources in the field

In the field, the presence of the project was chiefly felt through the **short-term missions** (a few days in a whole border region, including visits and meetings in the capitals), undertaken by project staff, sometimes accompanied by the representatives of Italian and European local and intermediate administrations (both directly and represented by OICS).

Only in a few cases did the project make use of the presence of “agents”, whose **stay was longer** in the regions involved (e.g. in Gulf of Fonseca) or of local agents entrusted with the job of helping with activities. In such cases activity in the field was in any case performed **without having an adequate supply of resources and technical tools** (in Gulf of Fonseca, work done to assist with the formulation of the PIDET, requiring visits to over 40 municipalities, gathering information on intervention priorities in each area, was performed without even a vehicle being made available).

The centralisation of project management in Italy probably had an impact on the **limited effectiveness** of the project in terms of building local capabilities, and in any case did nothing to stop the emergence of problems in the implementation stage regarding the lack of project visibility as perceived by local actors.

In brief:

In terms of the project's implementing tool one should highlight a state of inadequacy, especially if one considers the complexity of the project. In this sense, particularly relevant aspects are the lack of a well-structured management system involving the various actors; the absence of the MFA, in terms of both strategy and external control; the secondary role played by IILA; the lack of an adequate monitoring and continuous assessment system; the lack of adequate presence in the field.

	Satisfactory	Lacking
The implementing tool		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Lack of a structured implementing tool with the participation of all actors involved- Lack of MFA intervention in terms of strategies and external control- Peripheral role of IILA in managing activities- Lack of a monitoring system- Lack of continuous project assessment- Limited presence in the field

5. LESSONS LEARNED

With regard to lessons learned, and despite the observed **criticalities**, the “Fronteras Abiertas” project offers many points for reflection thanks to the **innovative topics** it has tackled and its highly **experimental** nature. In this sense, the results of the assessment exercise have made it possible to identify the following aspects, which deserve to be capitalised for their theoretical and methodological relevance, with special reference to the possibility of a second phase of the project.

- i) **The exploration of new working paths on the question of cross-border regional integration in Latin America:** the identification of specificities of border areas and their political, economic and social relevance paved the way for the definition of new cooperation strategies with countries that have now reached relatively high levels of social and economic development, but where there remain areas of significant poverty and social exclusion.
- ii) **The inclusion of the matter of “bottom-up integration” in the question of integration of cross-border regions:** the identification of a political, social and economic area at grassroots level – local administrations, organisations of civil society and economic actors – makes it possible to identify new pathways for handling situations of political and economic tension. Within this new institutional “area” there already appear to be both practices and actors that can be placed at the centre of new strategies regarding not only “local development” but also the development of new types of relations among countries and the development of more advanced ways of exercising democracy.
- iii) **The experimental nature of the project aimed at producing new knowledge:** the project has shown how the undertaking of development initiatives (and actions in the field) can produce a tool, especially when there is the possibility of comparison, that is important for generating new knowledge and thus innovation, regarding the political, social, economic and environmental dimensions.
- iv) **The production of knowledge as a tool for influencing policies:** the ability to have an impact on the policies of numerous actors, both international and local, promoting and facilitating the drawing up of new strategies and new policies, shows that the production and dissemination of knowledge can have an impact, even when the actions performed are far from perfect.
- v) **The institutional fecundity of the decision to bring together local actors having converging interests while operating in very different contexts:** the start-up of a large number of development initiatives, not only through direct facilitation, technical assistance or financing, but also based on the autonomous action of subjects that came into contact through the project, shows the fecundity of an indirect approach to the promotion of development initiatives;
- vi) **An awareness of the importance of not “inventing” new processes but of assisting ongoing processes:** despite the project’s shortcomings, in all areas the processes of integration and cooperation identified and, in part, supported, are continuing, sometimes making use of and enhancing contributions made through the project. This shows that the decision to not create or start up new processes, but merely to support the actors already operational and facilitate their access to new resources in the forms of knowledge, skills and social capital tends to generate situations of sustainability for development initiatives.
- vii) **The importance of institutional legitimation** (relating to the role of IILA and to that of other Latin American supranational organisations) to act in a complex context such as that of integration in cross-border regions;
- viii) **The “leverage” function** as an instrument to broaden and multiply the impact of rather modest resources and sometimes very small-scale actions.

With regard to information and how to **adjust the aim** in a possible second phase of the project, below are some points for reflection bearing in mind two basic aspects of “Fronteras Abiertas”: its complexity and its ability to involve a large number of actors belonging to sometimes very diverse categories (local administrations, national governments, international organisations, European regions and administrations, etc.). The issues listed below should not be seen as aspects to be avoided in a possible second phase, but rather as elements that need to be discussed or handled differently than they have been during the course of the project. It will thus be necessary to:

- a. **adopt a strategic point of view.** It is necessary to choose a viewpoint, define medium-term goals and a long-term perspective, on the basis of which one should then determine existing needs and demands and thus the type of actions to promote, in the knowledge that in itself a topic cannot also be a strategy;
- b. **seriously apply the logical framework** as a design tool, not as a complement when drawing up a project or as a rhetorical instrument for its implementation. It is thus necessary to avoid setting objectives and results on the basis of activities, maintaining the internal logic and identifying external conditions and the risk factors that the project is exposed to;
- c. **determine the project's scope and activities** starting with the definition of the strategic viewpoint;
- d. **define the project's dimension in keeping with available resources;**
- e. **avoid activities that are not related to the defined strategy and set goals;**
- f. **define the implementing tool in keeping with the project's dimensions,** avoiding situations of "informality";
- g. **involve local actors and make the best use of local resources and experiences;**
- h. **when constructing networks, start with the identification of the interests and traits of potential actors;**
- i. **adopt a diversified approach** that takes into account the situation and the characteristics of different types of actors;
- j. **determine a communication strategy,** identifying communication needs and defining relative expected results as well as actions and the target group.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The issue of practical and concrete recommendations is usually an exercise that serves to draw from **the positive aspects** that characterise a project and to not repeat the same mistakes in future actions. In the case of “Fronteras Abiertas” this task appears to be more difficult if one fails to deal with the issues – or contradictions – underpinning the project itself. In other words, before giving what we believe are concrete recommendations, we should explain the **“precondition”** for these recommendations. This is of great importance, as one of the fundamental questions of the assessment is whether the project under review might have a future, or a follow-up.

The fundamental question, as explained during the assessment, lies in the **nature of the project**: a possible new project or a new phase of the project cannot fail to take into due consideration not only the clearness of the objectives being set but also and above all **whether the project is an exploratory research or a development cooperation initiative**. Naturally, while research is fundamental as a means of raising knowledge and assisting with actions, in that it provides valuable information on the strategies to be adopted in order to achieve objectives, an exploratory research context is very different, when actions – e.g. so-called “direct” actions of Fronteras Abiertas – are not guided by a clear strategy but respond only to a logic bound to immediate and emerging needs in terms of knowledge production. It appears clear that a compromise between the two possible identities (exploratory research or development action) is not only not feasible, but would engender at least three types of risk:

- For the efficiency of actions, with the risk of squandering resources;
- For the effectiveness of actions, with the risk of not coming up to expectations;
- For impacts, with the risk of actions that may even be harmful (a phenomenon typical of the “sorcerer’s apprentice”).

Having **satisfied** this basic question or precondition, it is possible to make the following recommendations:

- i. Give **continuity** to the initiative in border regions and to bottom-up integration in border areas, in order to make the most of the investments undertaken up to this point. Continuity should in particular be given to:
 - support for forms of decentralised cooperation in border areas;
 - the construction of a network among actors involved in initiatives at various levels;
 - study, research and “*advocacy*” activities on border integration.
- ii. Define the **strategic framework within which the initiative is inserted**, with special reference to Italian Cooperation, and define relations between the initiative and other activities of Italian Cooperation.
- iii. Adopt an **institutional framework** within which well defined roles are established for each actor, avoiding overlaps and the possibility of “conflicts of interest”, ensuring the correct performance of different functions and the possibility of checks and controls. This framework should include a system of governance for the project in which the various actors involved in its implementation can participate in a structured manner.
- iv. Adopt a **structured implementing mechanism capable of managing a complex action**, including:
 - the definition of a logical framework that clearly identifies the objectives, results and related activities and determines indicators for controls;
 - the definition and time frames of a monitoring and evaluation system and a possible system of related researches and studies – in this sphere the “quality” of actions performed should also be kept under control;
 - the definition of operating procedures and methods used (which may be used for the qualitative monitoring of activities);
 - the definition of a clear strategy for furthering relations with local actors (Latin American and European);
 - the definition of a clear communication and visibility strategy.
- v. Define the **project budget clearly and precisely**, avoiding variations that entail additional expenses and avoiding subsequent annual reviews – in order to adequately monitor efficiency.

- vi. Adopt a method that ensures **actual assistance to the actors involved (Latin American and European)**, with an adequate presence in the field and adequate involvement of local actors, reducing “hit and run” intervention types (e.g. short missions not followed by a constant presence in the field).
- vii. Include in the project **research and study activities** as an assistance tool, also defining relative methods and expected results in terms of the production of new knowledge and of innovation.
- viii. **Focus actions on a region or on a small number of regions**, avoiding the project’s “migration” to other areas, thus reducing the risk of dispersion of resources and increased management complexity.
- ix. Create in the regions in which the programme acts **local governance mechanisms** that make it possible for all relevant local actors to take part in the management of the initiative.
- x. Focus the project on **well-defined sets of actions (components, sections)**, maintaining forms of flexibility but avoiding the proliferation of actions and initiatives that might result in the dispersion of resources.
- xi. Avoid the adoption of exclusive choices with regard to the **local actors to be involved** – in both the international network and when starting up local initiatives – using, when selecting actors, criteria that relate to the sustainability (social, economic, political and legal) of actions embarked upon and the identification of interests that these actors might have in taking part in actions.
- xii. Adopt a **diversified approach** to assistance for local actors, founded on the analysis of these actors, identifying intentions and tendencies, the need to strengthen capabilities, etc. and followed up by the identification and rollout of specific plans of action or development.
- xiii. Adopt an action approach based on **transparency and visibility** (e.g. call for projects for the selection of local initiatives to support, adoption of formal selection criteria, etc.).

ANNEXES



MINISTERO DEGLI AFFARI ESTERI

DIREZIONE GENERALE PER LA COOPERAZIONE ALLO SVILUPPO

*Ufficio IX
Sezione Valutazione*

**TERMINI DI RIFERIMENTO
PER LA VALUTAZIONE INDIPENDENTE
“PROGETTO FRONTERAS ABIERTAS: RETE
INTERREGIONALE PER LA COOPERAZIONE
TRANSFRONTALIERA E L’INTEGRAZIONE
LATINOAMERICANA”**

MINISTERO DEGLI AFFARI ESTERI

DIREZIONE GENERALE

PER LA COOPERAZIONE ALLO SVILUPPO

TITOLO DEL PROGETTO: “Fronteras Abiertas: rete interregionale per la cooperazione transfrontaliera e l'integrazione latinoamericana”

LUOGHI DEL PROGETTO (selezionati per la valutazione): area di frontiera tra El Salvador, Honduras e Nicaragua (Golfo di Fonseca); area di frontiera tra El Salvador, Guatemala e Honduras (Trifinio).

LINGUA DEL PROGETTO: italiano e spagnolo

AGENZIA ESECUTRICE: Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI)

DURATA PREVISTA: 3 anni (data inizio progetto: 2007)

DURATA EFFETTIVA: 4 anni (data fine progetto: 2011)

BUDGET: 600.000 EURO I annualità (c.v. 2007)
600.000 EURO II annualità (c.v. 2008)
200.000 EURO III annualità (I partec.v. 2009)
100.000 EURO III annualità (II partec.v. 2010)

DONATORE: DGCS attraverso IILA

1. Obiettivi del progetto

Il progetto “Fronteras Abiertas: rete interregionale per la cooperazione transfrontaliera e l’integrazione latinoamericana” è stato finanziato dalla DGCS del Ministero degli Affari Esteri attraverso l’IILA e realizzato dal CeSPI.

L’obiettivo del progetto è quello di rafforzare i processi d’integrazione regionale in atto tra i Paesi dell’America Latina, in particolare mettendo in relazione le amministrazioni intermedie latinoamericane attive in processi di dialogo regionale, con amministrazioni italiane ed europee aventi specifiche esperienze sui temi inerenti alle problematiche della integrazione transfrontaliera. In questo senso, il progetto sostiene processi d’integrazione transfrontaliera che i partner latinoamericani sentono il bisogno di avviare, approfondire e consolidare, ma di cui hanno scarsa o nulla esperienza riguardo alle metodologie e agli strumenti operativi.

Nello specifico, il progetto “Fronteras Abierats” si articola in:

1. formazione e assistenza tecnica specialistica allo scopo di rafforzare le istituzioni subnazionali e promuovere una *governance* del processo sia in termini verticali (locale-nazionale-internazionale) che orizzontali (istituzioni locali e attori operanti nel territorio). La formazione si realizza sia attraverso la messa in rete di un corso a distanza, sia attraverso attività formative nei Paesi destinatari e in Italia;
2. creazione di una piattaforma per progetti di sviluppo territoriale, nelle cui attività di formulazione, *fund raising* e gestione, “Fronteras Abierats” offre i suoi servizi formativi e di assistenza tecnica. I progetti così concepiti sono poi presentati ai partner latinoamericani per la loro approvazione e co-finanziamento agli organismi regionali e comunitari di cooperazione allo sviluppo. In termini metodologici, queste iniziative si propongono come *progetti qualificati* a sostenere organicamente il *processo transfrontaliero*. Ciò significa che i progetti debbono fondarsi su assi tematici capaci di fornire una struttura organica all’insieme dello sviluppo territoriale e questo ultimo deve essere trattato e organizzato nella sua valenza transfrontaliera;
3. azioni dirette nelle aree di frontiera le quali possono essere destinate sia a piccole realizzazioni d’impatto immediato, sia a cofinanziare progetti di maggiori dimensioni;
4. creazione di un sito Internet, articolato in un insieme di pagine web correlate, ovvero una struttura ipertestuale di documenti facilmente accessibili agli utenti.

Il progetto è stato avviato nel luglio 2007 ed è stato finanziato in tre annualità per un valore totale di euro 1.500.000. La terza annualità è stata erogata in due *tranches* su un arco temporale di due anni, motivo per il quale la durata complessiva del progetto è stata estesa a 4 anni.

2. Scopo della valutazione

La valutazione dovrà:

- esprimere un giudizio sulla rilevanza degli obiettivi e sul grado di raggiungimento degli stessi;
- esprimere un giudizio su efficienza, efficacia, impatto e sostenibilità del progetto;
- esaminare il progetto nella sua struttura e completezza, per identificare le buone pratiche e gli insegnamenti appresi, in modo da utilizzarli come base conoscitiva per sviluppare in avvenire eventuali programmi d’assistenza tecnica;
- analizzare le strategie e le modalità di realizzazione, come ad esempio fornire raccomandazioni per eventuali future iniziative nello stesso settore d’intervento;
- tenere in considerazione i fattori di sostenibilità e l’impatto che la realizzazione di tale progetto ha sui processi d’integrazione in atto nelle aree di frontiera interessate.

Infine la valutazione dovrà esprimere considerazioni sui seguenti punti:

- efficacia ed impatto dell’assistenza tecnica, della formazione fornita e degli strumenti utilizzati a tal fine;
- efficacia ed impatto del ruolo di “Fronteras Abiertas” come piattaforma per progetti di sviluppo territoriale;

- efficacia, impatto e sostenibilità delle azioni di intervento dirette sul territorio.

3. Quadro analitico suggerito

Il valutatore potrà includere altri aspetti in conformità con le finalità della valutazione.

La valutazione ruota attorno ai seguenti aspetti:

- **Rilevanza:** il valutatore dovrà specificare il grado d'importanza del progetto tenendo in debito conto le realtà locali. La valutazione dovrà riesaminare in quale misura gli obiettivi del Progetto sono coerenti con le necessità delle aree di frontiera beneficiarie e il grado di coinvolgimento degli attori locali.
- **Validità del Quadro Logico del progetto:** la valutazione esaminerà le logiche che sottendono l'elaborazione del QL e la rispondenza delle attività con i risultati e di questi ultimi con gli obiettivi che il Progetto intende raggiungere.
- **Efficienza:** analisi dell'ottimizzazione nell'utilizzo delle risorse per conseguire i risultati del Progetto. Nel valutare l'efficienza sarà utile considerare:
 - se i risultati sono stati raggiunti con i costi previsti;
 - se i risultati sono stati raggiunti nei tempi previsti;
 - se i mezzi utilizzati sono stati i più efficienti (minori costi o minori tempi) possibile.

La valutazione indicherà come e in quale misura le interdipendenze settoriali sono state convertite in risultati.

- **Efficacia:** la valutazione misurerà il grado e l'entità di raggiungimento degli obiettivi del progetto. Nel valutare l'efficacia del progetto sarà utile considerare:
 - in che misura l'obiettivo generale e gli obiettivi specifici del progetto siano stati conseguiti;
 - se le attività realizzate risultino coerenti con l'obiettivo generale e gli obiettivi specifici;
 - l'analisi dei principali fattori che hanno influenzato il raggiungimento degli obiettivi.
- **Impatto:** la valutazione misurerà gli effetti del progetto sulle realtà locali (globalmente intese).
- **Sostenibilità:** Si valuterà la capacità del progetto di produrre e riprodurre benefici nel tempo. Nel valutare la sostenibilità del progetto sarà utile considerare in che misura i benefici del progetto continueranno successivamente al termine del progetto e qualora si verificassero contingenze tali da influenzare il raggiungimento o il non raggiungimento della sostenibilità del progetto stesso.

4. Risultati

I risultati attesi dall'esercizio di valutazione saranno:

- Un rapporto finale in spagnolo ed italiano con i risultati e le raccomandazioni utili per eventuali altri interventi in tale settore d'intervento.
- Due pagine di sommario del Rapporto di Valutazione del Progetto.

5. Metodologia

La valutazione sarà effettuata attraverso analisi di varie fonti informative. Inoltre saranno utilizzate interviste con le controparti governative, con i co-attori del progetto, con i beneficiari diretti, ovvero con la popolazione delle suddette zone, con i gestori e con il personale responsabile del progetto e le agenzie partner.

6. Disposizioni gestionali, piano di lavoro e quadro temporale

1. Ufficio	Revisione dei documenti chiave del progetto (documenti di progetto, rapporti annuali, rapporti di missione, pubblicazioni e pagine internet (web))	7 giorni lavorativi
2. Interviste	Il valutatore intervista le parti interessate, i beneficiari e raccoglie informazioni supplementari.	X giorni lavorativi (1)

3. Rapporto di valutazione	Bozza di valutazione.	7 giorni lavorativi
4. Commenti e risposte delle parti interessate	La relazione abbozzata viene trasmessa alle parti interessate per commenti e eventuali integrazioni. Queste quindi sono inglobate e coordinate e successivamente, inviate al valutatore.	7 giorni lavorativi
5. Seminario ???	Seminario sulla presentazione della bozza della relazione.	3 giorni lavorativi
6. Relazione finale	Il valutatore predispone la relazione incorporando organicamente i commenti.	5 giorni lavorativi

(1) La tempistica varia in funzione del numero di Paesi oggetto della valutazione e, quindi, degli attori intervistati.

È previsto che il valutatore dovrà condurre consultazioni ed incontri con i rappresentanti delle numerose istituzioni regionali, nazionali e locali che – a vario titolo – hanno preso parte al progetto. Si indicano qui di seguito le Ambasciate italiane competenti in loco, nonché i dirigenti e funzionari che hanno seguito in modo costante e sistematico le molteplici iniziative realizzate.

Ambasciate italiane in:

San Salvador, Tegucigalpa, Managua e Città del Guatemala

Sistema dell'Integrazione Centroamericana (SICA)

Segreteria Generale del SICA

Edgar Chamorro, Direttore Esecutivo della Segreteria Generale del SICA

Presidenza della Repubblica di El Salvador

Roberto Turcios, consigliere presidenziale

Istituto Nicaraguense de Fomento Municipal INIFOM

Rafael Urbina, Direzione Cooperazione Internazionale

Mancomunidad trinacional Fronteriza Rio Lempa

Héctor Aguirre, Direttore

Mancomunidad ASIGOLFO (Golfo de Fonseca – El Salvador)

Membri del consiglio direttivo

Mancomunidad NASMAR (Golfo de Fonseca – Honduras)

Membri del consiglio direttivo

CENPROMYPE

Ingrid Figueroa, Direttore Esecutivo

Programa PRESANCA

Patricia Palma, Direttore

Mercosur:

Foro Consultivo de città e regioni (FCCR) di Mercosur

Celso Santiago Riquelme, Coordinatore aggiunto FCCR, MFA, Paraguay

SEBRAE Panamá, Brasile

Luiz Rolim de Moura, Direttore del Progetto Transfrontaliero CDT – AL de SEBRAE Paraná

Municipalità della triplice frontiera Argentina – Brasile – Uruguay

Eduardo Leonel Galantini, Intendente di Monte Caseros, Corrientes, Argentina

Associazione delle municipalità dell'ovest dello Stato di Paraná (AMOP), Brasile

Aprecido José Weiller Junior, Presidente dell'AMOP

Comunità andina di nazioni (CAN):

Comisión Bi-nacional Perú – Ecuador

Armando Martin Ludeña, Dirección Nacional de Desarrollo Fronterizo, MFA, Perú

Consorzio di comuni della frontiera Perú – Bolivia

Mario Edgar Mamani Cariapaza, Alcalde della municipalità distrettuale Platería, Puno, Perú

Consorzio di municipalità della frontiera Perú – Ecuador

Marjorie Jmenéz González, Municipalidad Provincial de Tumbes, Perú

Organismi internazionali:

IOM Perú

Dolores Cortez, Seguridad fronteriza

PADIF – CAF

Hernando Arciniegas, Coordinatore integrazione delle aree di frontiera

Juan Pablo Rodríguez, Coordinatore integrazione delle aree di frontiera

Università e istituzioni accademiche:

Università Cattolica, sede San Ignacio Guazú, Paraguay

Prof.ssa Maria Esperanza del Puerto, Direttore

FLACSO

Francisco Rojas, Segretario Generale

Profilo del valutatore

- Ottima conoscenza nel settore della valutazione di progetto di cooperazione allo sviluppo.
- Laurea magistrale.
- Eccellenti capacità di analisi e di sintesi.
- Eccellenti capacità comunicative e di scrittura.
- Eccellente padronanza della lingua spagnola parlata e scritta.

FORMATO SUGGRITO DEL RAPPORTO DI VALUTAZIONE

Copertina	Riassume i dati chiave del Progetto (Titolo e numero del progetto, donatore, data d’inizio e di completamento, budget, area tecnica, amministratore dell’unità della DGCS, reportage geografico) e i dati chiave della valutazione (tipo di valutazione, data di inizio e completamento della missione valutativa, data di presentazione e nome del valutatore autore del rapporto valutativo).
1. Riassunto	Massimo di 3-5 pagine. Dovrebbe mettere a fuoco i risultati chiave e le raccomandazioni. Nel preparare il riassunto si dovrebbe tenere presente che ciò comparirà nel database di valutazione, accessibile sull’intranet della DGCS e sul sito web pubblico.
2. Breve contesto del progetto e della sua logica	- Breve descrizione delle necessità che il Progetto Integrato ha inteso soddisfare. - Analisi del QL del progetto. - Stato di realizzazione delle attività e stima dei tempi di completamento del progetto.
3. Obiettivo	- Tipo di valutazione - Breve descrizione dello scopo della valutazione
4. Metodologia	- Breve descrizione della metodologia applicata.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fonti informative, inclusi commenti sulle divergenze e sulle limitazioni - Commenti sui limiti della metodologia e dei problemi incontrati nella raccolta e nell'analisi dei dati
5. Revisione della realizzazione	Breve revisione dei principali stadi di realizzazione del progetto evidenziando le pietre miliari e sfide più rilevanti.
6. Presentazione dei risultati	Basata su domande chiave da parte del valutatore.
7. Conclusioni	Concludere la valutazione facendola derivare dai risultati e dalle comunicazioni principali.
8. Raccomandazioni	Le raccomandazioni dovrebbero essere volte al miglioramento dei progetti futuri e delle strategie generali della DGCS e dovrebbero essere presentate in modo conciso e operativo.
9. Insegnamenti appresi	Osservazioni, intuizioni e pratiche estratte dalla valutazione che sono di interesse generale al di là della sfera del progetto e che possano fornire al contempo suggerimenti validi per la predisposizione di una eventuale successiva fase del Progetto.
10. Allegati	Dovrebbero includere i Termini di Riferimento e la lista delle persone contattate come qualsiasi altra informazione rilevante.

ANNEX 2 LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Gerarquía de objetivos (strategia)		Indicadores	Fuentes de verificación	Condiciones externas
Objetivo general	Fortalecer la cooperación transfronteriza como modalidad estratégica de los procesos de integración regional entre los países de América latina.	Número de procesos de integración fronteriza activados y/o fortalecidos en distintas regiones de América latina	Firmas de convenios y declaraciones Proyectos de cooperación transfronteriza activados	---
Objetivos específicos	1) Mejorar la capacidad de los gobiernos intermedios y locales para elaborar, formular y realizar proyectos de cooperación fronteriza.	Nro. y dimensión de proyectos transfronterizos financiados por la cooperación internacional	Información oficial	Prioridad asignada por las instituciones regionales y los gobiernos nacionales a la integración regional Reconocimiento del rol de las instituciones intermedias y locales en la integración Reconocimiento de la cooperación transfronteriza como componente estratégica de los procesos de integración Estabilidad política
	2) Identificar proyectos para la coordinación transfronteriza de las políticas públicas de desarrollo entre territorios de frontera	Nivel de coordinación transfronteriza de políticas públicas	Entrevistas Acuerdos inter-institucionales Medios de comunicación	
	3) Impulsar las relaciones de los gobiernos intermedios y locales con los organismos multilaterales de cooperación internacional	Calidad de las relaciones establecidas	Entrevistas	
	4) Favorecer un permanente diálogo transfronterizo sistemático multinivel, incluyendo la creación o el fortalecimiento de instancias permanentes de coordinación inter-institucional abiertas a universidades, mundo empresarial y sociedad civil	Número de instancias de coordinación inter-institucional activas	Convenios entre actores de las fronteras	
Resultados esperados	Cinco acciones directas realizadas en áreas de fronteras	Número acciones directas realizadas	Informes proyecto Entrevistas	Capacidad de iniciativa autónoma de los gobiernos intermedios y locales Sensibilidad de la cooperación descentralizada europea Disposición de los gobiernos
	Cinco proyectos presentados a la cooperación internacional financiados e implementados en colaboración con otros tantos gobiernos subnacionales europeos	Número proyectos presentados y en ejecución Alianzas territoriales en los proyectos	Informes proyecto Entrevistas	

	30 gobiernos intermedios y redes de gobiernos locales participando en formas de intercambio y coordinación sobre los temas de la integración transfronteriza	Número gobiernos intermedios y locales y redes integrados en las actividades de intercambio promovidas por el proyecto	Informes proyecto Entrevistas	nacionales, intermedios y locales al diálogo multinivel
	250 dirigentes, funcionarios y técnicos de gobiernos nacionales y sub-nacionales participan en dos cursos online	N.ro de personas que han participado en los cursos	Informe proyecto	
	Seis eventos organizados en América Latina e Italia sobre integración transfronteriza con la participación de cuatrocientos delegados	N.ro eventos realizados	Informe proyecto	
Actividades	Asistencia técnica en diseño de proyectos transfronterizos			Continuidad de políticas en los gobiernos intermedios y locales
	Formación in situ y on line de funcionarios y técnicos de gobiernos intermedios y locales en regiones fronterizas			
	Asistencia técnica en establecer relaciones con socios internacionales e intercambio de buenas prácticas			
	Promoción de eventos de reflexión estratégica sobre integración regional y cooperación transfronteriza			
	Financiamiento de acciones-piloto (acciones directas) de integración transfronteriza			
	Página web			

ANNEX 3 LIST OF THE PERSONS MET

	Nome e cognome	Qualifica	Ente	Recapito
1.	Héctor Alonso Aguirre	Gerente Generalde	Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Río Lempa Guatemala – Honduras – El Salvador	Barrio San Andrés, 3ª. Avenida y 3ª. calle Suroeste, cuadra y media de la Parroquia San José; Ocotepeque, Honduras Tel (504) 2653-2324 (oficina) haguirre63@hotmail.com
2.	Kelin Prado Arce		HAMUNORCHI	Somotillo, Nicaragua kelinprado@yahoo.com
3.	Annalisa Bracaglia		OICS Osservatorio Interregionale Cooperazione Sviluppo	Via del Serafico, 127 00142 Roma, Italia Tel +39(06) 5140504 a.bracaglia@oics.it
4.	Alejandro Bravo	Consultor	S.G. SICA	Final Bulevar Cancillería, Distrito El Espino, Ciudad Merliot, Antiguo Cuscatlán La Libertad, San Salvador Tel. (503) 2248-8800
5.	Annarita Caselli		MAE – DGCS Ufficio IX	
6.	Claudia Castro	Coordinadora	Proyecto de Seguridad SICA/PNUD Unidad de Seguridad Democrática	Boulevard de Orden de Malta, Edificio Eben Ezer, 3 ^{er} Nivel Santa Elena, Antiguo Cuscatlán, La Libertad, El Salvador Tel (503) 2248-6915 ccastro@sica.int Claudia.castro@undp.org
7.	Simonetta Cavaliere	Direttore Generale	IILA – Istituto Italo-Latino Americano	Via Giovanni Paisiello, 24 00198 Roma, Italia Tel +39 (06) 6849-2202 s.cavaliere@iila.org
8.	Patricia Palma de Fulladolsa	Directora	PRESANCA II – Programa Regional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional para Centroamérica	Boulevard del Hipódromo, 523, Colonia San Benito, San Salvador, El Salvador Tel (503) 2527-9200 ppalma@sica.int
9.	Giancarlo Del Grosso		MAE – DGCS Ufficio II	
10.	Hedi Deman	Coordinadora	PRESANCA II – Programa Regional de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional para Centroamérica	Boulevard del Hipódromo, 523, Colonia San Benito, San Salvador, El Salvador Tel (503) 2527-9200 hdeman@sica.int
11.	Marlon Enamorado	Coordinador general	ASORECH	Colonia Santa Filomena, Quezaltepeque, Chiquimula, Guatemala Tel: 7944-0341; 7944-0348
12.	Hector Estrada		ASORECH	Colonia Santa Filomena, Quezaltepeque, Chiquimula, Guatemala Tel: 7944-0341; 7944-0348
13.	Mara Frigo		MAE – DGCS Ufficio IX	
14.	Mario Gay	Vice direttore	OICS Osservatorio Interregionale Cooperazione Sviluppo	Via del Serafico, 127 00142 Roma, Italia Tel (+39 06) 5140504 mario.gay@oics.it

	Nome e cognome	Qualifica	Ente	Recapito
15.	Hugo Alexander Guerrero Guerrero	Gerente Técnico Unidad Técnica Institucional Mancomunidad	ASINORLU – Asociación de Municipios del Norte de la Unión Republica de El Salvador	Avenida Principal Barrio El Centro Ciudad de Anamorós Tel (503) 26470692, gerentecnico@asinorlu.com
16.	Edgar Herrera Scott	Coordinador	Proyecto Corredor del Mangle Golfo de Fonseca	Carretera Conchagua, Colonia Lomas de Bellas Vista, Poligono 36, Casa No. 5, La Uniion, El Salvador Tel. (503) 2605-2255, eherrera@sica.int
17.	Miriam Hirezi	Directora Ejecutiva Nacional del Plan Trifinio	Vicepresidencia de la República	Calle Poniente, 5147, Block 122, Colonia Escalón, San Salvador, El Salvador Tel (503) 2263-9870 mhirezi@sica.int
18.	Simone Levolella		MAE – DGCS Ufficio II	
19.	Mauro Massoni		MAE – DGCS Ufficio II	
20.	Massimo Meccheri	capo-progetto Ciudad Limpia Guatemala – El Salvador – Honduras	Oxfam Italia	Tel (504) 2653-2324 massimo.meccheri@oxfamitalia.org
21.	Andrea Monaco	Servizio per la Cooperazione	IILA – Istituto Italo- Latino Americano	Via Giovanni Paisiello, 24 00198 Roma, Italia Tel +39 (06) 6849-2253 a.monaco@iila.org
22.	Carolina Mónico Delgado	Coordinadora de Proyecto	CENPROMYPE – Centro Regional de Promoción de la MIPMYPE	Colonia San Benito, Calle Circunvalación, 294, San Salvador Tel (503) 2264-5207 ext. 121 cmonico@cenpromype.org ,
23.	Juan Carlos Montufar Celada	Gerente Técnico Unidad Técnica Trinacional	Plan Trifinio	1ª. Avenida 7-01 Zona 5 Colonia San José Obrero, Esquipulas Guatemala Tel (502) 7943- 1548, directo (502) 7943-1577 Fax Trabajo:(502) 7943-1554 info.settrifinio@sica.int
24.	Michele Morana		MAE – DGCS Ufficio IX	
25.	Dina E. Morel		CODEFFAGOLFE	San Lorenzo, Honduras
26.	Marco Antonio Peña	Alcalde	Municipio de Sinuapa	Sinuapa, Honduras sinuapalcade@hotmail.com
27.	Giuliano Perseu	Gestor de Proyectos	Delegación de la Unión Europea en El Salvador	Calle Cortez Blanco Poniente y Calle Holcim, 2 Urbanización Madreselva III etapa, Antiguo Cuscatlán, La Libertad, El Salvador Tel (503) 2243-2424 Giuliano.PERSEU@eeas.europa.eu
28.	Luigi Pierleoni	Coordinatore	Programma di Emergenza della Cooperazione Italiana in Guatemala	av. 6-54, zona 14, colonia el Campo, Città del Guatemala, Guatemala Tel (502) 2366-8809 luigi.pierleoni@cooperaitalia.org , luigipierleoni@hotmail.com
29.	Edgardo Arita Pinto		CENOC	Tel (504) 2653-1353 edgardoarita@hotmail.com
30.	Marco Rago	Capo del servizio cooperazione	IILA – Istituto Italo- Latino Americano	Via Giovanni Paisiello, 24 00198 Roma, Italia Tel +39 (06) 6849-248

	Nome e cognome	Qualifica	Ente	Recapito
				m.rago@iila.org
31.	Horatio Lanzas Reyes	Gerente	HAMUNORCHI	Somotillo, Nicaragua Horacio.lanzas@gmail.com
32.	Roger Reyes		CODEFFAGOLFE	San Lorenzo, Honduras
33.	Wendy Patricia Reyes P.	Coordinadora Unidad Tecnica	Mancomunidad de Municipios del Sur NASMAR Honduras	Nacaome, Honduras Tel (00504) 787-4060/ 3358-5915; wd_reyes@yahoo.com
34.	Julio Edgardo Santos		CENOC	Tel (504) 9903-3831 chinchillajs@yahoo.com
35.	Dina Sagastume Cerón	Vice-gerente	Mancomunidad Trinacional Fronteriza Río Lempa,	Tel (504) 2653-2324 (oficina), dinasagastume@gmail.com
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43.	Rafael Urbina	responsable cooperación esterna	Instituto Nicaragüense de Fomento Municipal INIFOM	Entrada Principal al Reparto Los Arcos. Carretera a la Refinería. Managua Tel (00505) 2266-6050 ext. 154, rafael.urbina@inifom.gob.ni
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ANNEX 4 CALENDAR OF THE MISSION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Data	Luogo	Descrizione
6 May		Travel Roma – San Salvador
7 May	San Salvador (El Salvador)	Organisation work
		Meeting with the Italian Embassy in San Salvador
8 May	San Salvador (El Salvador)	Meeting with CEMPROMYPE
		Meeting with CT Plan Trifinio
		Meeting with MTFRL
		Meeting with European Union Delegation in San Salvador
9 May	San Salvador (El Salvador)	Meeting with PRESANCA
		Meetings with SICA, BID, BM, PNUD ecc.
		Desk work: analysis of documents
		Visit to the International ex position on European development initiatives in El Salvador
10 May	Ocotepeque (Honduras)	Meetings with MTFRL and visits to MTRL offices
		Meeting with Proyecto “Ciudad Limpia”
	Sinuapa (Honduras)	Meeting with CENOC
		Meeting with the Alcalde of Sinuapa
11 May	Esquipulas (Guatemala)	Meetings with UTT - Plan Trifinio
	Quetzaltepeque (Guatemala)	Meetings with ASORECH
	Ocotepeque (Honduras)	Visit to the Alcaldia of Ocotepeque
12 May	San Salvador (El Salvador)	Meetings with SICA
		Desk work: analysis of documents
		Transfer to the Gulf of Fonseca
13 May	La Union (El Salvador)	Organisation and preparation work in the Gulf of Fonseca
		Visit to the harbour of La Union
14 May	Nicaome (Honduras)	Meetings with Mancomunidad NASCAR
	San Lorenzo (Honduras)	Meetings with CODEFFAGOLFE
	Marcovia (Honduras)	Meetings with Municipalidad de Marcovia
15 May	Managua (Nicaragua)	Meeting with INIFOM
		Meetings with ACRA (Proyecto en la Provincia de Chinandega)
16 May	Somotillo (Nicaragua)	Meetings with AMUNORCHI (Proyecto en la Provincia de Chinandega)
17 May	La Union (El Salvador)	Visit to the CCAD “Corredor del Mangué” project
	Anamoros (El Salvador)	Meetings with ASINORLU
	San Francisco Gotera (El Salvador)	Meetings with ADEL Morazan
	San Miguel (El Salvador)	Meeting with the director of the CCAD “Corredor del Mangué” project

Data	Luogo	Descrizione
18 May	San Salvador (El Salvador)	Meeting with the El Salvador President's Office advisors
		Meetings with SICA experts
19 May	San Salvador (El Salvador)	Desk work: analysis of documents – Departure to Italy
20 May	Travel	Arrival in Rome

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ANNEX 6 THE PROJECT AREAS

