



# INTERREG EUROPE 2014-2020

CCI 2014 TC 16 RFIR 001

## Cooperation Programme document

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# Table of Contents

<b>Section 1. Strategy</b> .....	<b>6</b>
1.1 Strategy for the contribution of the programme to the Union strategy on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion .....	6
1.1.1 <i>Description of the cooperation programme’s strategy for contributing to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion.</i>	6
1.1.1.1 <i>Introduction</i> .....	6
1.1.1.2 <i>Context of the programme</i> .....	6
1.1.1.3 <i>Assessment of needs and challenges for the programme</i> .....	7
1.1.1.4 <i>The opportunity for INTERREG EUROPE: Policy learning in support of the Europe 2020 Strategy</i>	12
1.1.1.5 <i>Strategy of the INTERREG EUROPE programme</i> .....	13
1.1.2 <i>Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework, based on an analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure, taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation</i> .....	17
1.2 Justification of the financial allocation.....	19
<b>Section 2. Priority axes</b> .....	<b>22</b>
Section 2.A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance .....	22
<i>Priority Axis 1</i> .....	22
<i>Research, Technological Development and Innovation</i> .....	22
<b>2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<i>Priority Axis 2</i> .....	37
<i>Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises</i> .....	37
<b>2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<i>Priority Axis 3</i> .....	44
<i>Low Carbon Economy</i> .....	44
<b>2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)</b> .....	<b>44</b>
<i>Priority Axis 4</i> .....	50
<i>Environment and Resource Efficiency</i> .....	50
<b>2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results</b> .....	<b>50</b>
<b>2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results</b> .....	<b>56</b>
Section 2.B. Description of the priority axis for technical assistance .....	66
<i>Priority Axis 5</i> .....	66

<i>Technical Assistance</i> .....	66
<b>Section 3. Financing plan</b> .....	<b>70</b>
3.1 Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in EUR).....	70
3.2.A. Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in EUR).....	71
3.2.B. Breakdown by priority axis and thematic objective .....	72
<b>Section 4. Integrated approach to territorial development</b> .....	<b>73</b>
Description of the integrated approach to territorial development.....	73
4.1 Community-led local development (where appropriate).....	73
4.2 Integrated actions for sustainable urban development (where appropriate).....	73
4.3 Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (where appropriate) .....	73
4.4 Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and Sea basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the relevant Member States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate).....	74
<b>Section 5. Implementing provisions for the cooperation programme</b> .....	<b>75</b>
5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies.....	75
5.2 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat.....	79
5.3 Summary description of the management and control arrangements.....	80
5.4 The apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission.....	88
5.5 Use of the Euro .....	89
5.6 Involvement of partners .....	89
5.6.1 <i>Actions taken to involve the partners and their role in the preparation of the cooperation programme.</i>	90
5.6.2 <i>Role of the partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme, including their involvement in the monitoring committee</i> .....	91
<b>Section 6. Coordination between funds</b> .....	<b>92</b>
6.1 Coordination with the other ESI Funds .....	92
6.1.1. <i>Coordination with programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs Goal</i> .....	92
6.1.2. <i>Complementarity with cross-border and transnational programmes</i> .....	92
6.1.3. <i>Coordination with other Interregional Cooperation Programmes</i> .....	93
6.1.4. <i>Coordination with ESF, EAFRD and EMFF</i> .....	93
6.2. Coordination with other Union instruments.....	93
6.3 Coherence / coordination with other EU policies and tools .....	94
6.3.1 <i>Coordination with the Smart Specialisation Platform</i> .....	94
6.3.2 <i>Coherence with state aid rules</i> .....	95
<b>Section 7. Reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries</b> .....	<b>96</b>
7.1 Assessment of the administrative burden of beneficiaries .....	96
7.2 Main actions planned to reduce the administrative burden of INTERREG EUROPE .....	96
7.3 e-Cohesion .....	97
<b>Section 8. Horizontal principles</b> .....	<b>98</b>
8.1 Sustainable development .....	98
8.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination .....	98
8.3 Equality between men and women .....	99
<b>Section 9. Separate elements</b> .....	<b>100</b>

9.1	A list of major projects for which the implementation is planned .....	100
9.2	The performance framework of the cooperation programme.....	100
9.3	Relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme .....	101
9.4	Applicable programme implementation conditions governing the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control of the participation of third countries in interregional programmes through a contribution of ENI and IPA resources. ....	107
<b>Annexes .....</b>		<b>108</b>
	Annex 1 - Report of the ex-ante evaluation with executive summary .....	108
	Annex 2 - Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme .....	108
	Annex 3 - Map of the programme area .....	108
	Annex 4 - Citizens' summary of the cooperation programme.....	109

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# Section 1. Strategy

## 1.1 Strategy for the contribution of the programme to the Union strategy on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion

### 1.1.1 Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion.

#### 1.1.1.1 Introduction

To reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy, the INTERREG EUROPE programme promotes exchange of experience on thematic objectives among partners throughout the Union on the identification and dissemination of good practice with a view to its transfer principally to operational programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal but also, where relevant, to programmes under European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) goal<sup>1</sup>. This will be done via the support and facilitation of policy learning, sharing of knowledge and transfer of good practices between regional and local authorities and other actors of regional relevance. The programme covers the whole territory of the European Union (EU) and Norway and Switzerland. The programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a budget of €359 million for the 2014-2020 period.

This first section of the Cooperation Programme provides an overview of the context of the programme in terms of regulations, territorial and policy needs and challenges and lessons from previous interregional cooperation programmes and presents the overall strategy and objectives of the programme.

#### 1.1.1.2 Context of the programme

INTERREG EUROPE is one of the instruments for the implementation of the EU's **cohesion policy**. With this policy, the EU pursues harmonious development across the Union by strengthening its economic, social and territorial cohesion to stimulate growth in the EU regions and Member States. The policy aims to reduce existing disparities between EU regions in terms of their economic and social development and environmental sustainability, taking into account their specific territorial features and opportunities. For the 2014-2020 funding period, cohesion policy concentrates on supporting the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy.

**Europe 2020** is the strategy to turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Europe 2020 is an agenda for the whole Union, taking into account Member States' different starting points, needs and specificities to promote growth for the whole EU. Europe 2020 has three mutually reinforcing priorities:

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation.
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy.
- Inclusive growth: fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

The **Territorial Agenda 2020**<sup>2</sup> underpins the territorial dimension of the Europe 2020 strategy. In this context INTERREG EUROPE can contribute by enabling regions to develop place-based responses to the Europe 2020 challenges of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The regulatory framework for INTERREG EUROPE is provided by the **regulations for cohesion policy 2014-2020**. These are accompanied by a **Common Strategic Framework (CSF)** setting out key actions to address EU priorities and giving guidance to ensure coordination between funds.

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<sup>1</sup>Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (ETC regulation), article 2(3)(a).

<sup>2</sup> Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020 - Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions (May 2011)

The potential thematic scope of INTERREG EUROPE is provided by 11 thematic objectives described in the Common Provisions Regulation<sup>3</sup>. The European Territorial Cooperation regulation<sup>4</sup> and the Common Strategic Framework<sup>5</sup> outline that the programme should aim to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by encouraging exchange of experience between regions on thematic objectives. In particular the programme should contribute to the transfer of good practices principally into operational programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal of Cohesion policy, but also, where relevant, to programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) goal. The programme should also integrate and build on results generated through previous EU initiatives in relation to innovation and cluster support, for instance the "Regions of Knowledge" initiative.

Next to this framework of EU Cohesion policy, INTERREG EUROPE can also contribute to the aims of several other sectoral and thematic policies and programmes, such as the EU Roadmaps for Low Carbon<sup>6</sup> and Resource Efficiency<sup>7</sup> and the Horizon2020<sup>8</sup> and COSME<sup>9</sup> programmes.

### **1.1.1.3 Assessment of needs and challenges for the programme**

For INTERREG EUROPE to be fully effective, it should be firmly based on the real needs of its overall target group: the public authorities and other actors at regional level in Europe. The following paragraphs identify the main policy challenges and needs for regions in Europe for each of the three pillars of the Europe 2020 Strategy and indicate the main patterns of territorial variation for these themes. This serves to identify the key policy areas where interregional policy learning and experience transfer can contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Based on the lessons and experiences gained from the implementation of the interregional cooperation programme 2007-2013 key requirements are also presented that will help to ensure that the exchange and transfer of experience on the thematic objectives will have the maximum effect and generate a lasting impact.

#### ***Policy challenges for European regions***

At the start of the 2014-2020 programming period Europe faces several challenges that strongly impact on a wide range of policy fields at EU, national, regional and local level. The main challenge is the capacity of the European economy to grow, innovate and generate jobs on the way out of the crisis still affecting parts of Europe at the start of programme period. In parallel Europe needs to respond to demographic change and climate change and turn around its resource dependency. Many of these economic and societal challenges are defined by increasing international dependencies and interrelations - on a European and even a global scale.

The programme area consists of 286 regions<sup>10</sup>. The characteristics, situation and prospects of these regions in light of the described challenges are very diverse. They include metropolitan regions that are home to a growing share of the European population and have become important drivers of economic growth. But this concentration of people and economic activities also brings specific challenges. At the same time the largest part of the European territory consists of regions with a variety of peri-urban, rural, coastal, mountainous or other territorial characteristics, which host their own specific mix of regional opportunities and challenges for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

The 8th progress report on cohesion<sup>11</sup> underlines this picture and identifies the need for cohesion programmes to support growth-enhancing and job-creating investments, with an emphasis on a few

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<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (Common Provisions Regulation). Article 9.

<sup>4</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (ETC Regulation). Recital (7) and article 2(3)(a).

<sup>5</sup> Common Strategic Framework, Annex II (draft) – Priorities for Cooperation

<sup>6</sup> A Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050. COM(2011)112final

<sup>7</sup> Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe. COM(2011) 572 final

<sup>8</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1291/2013 - Regulation establishing Horizon 2020 - Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2014-2020.

<sup>9</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1287/2013 – Regulation establishing Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME 2014 – 2020)

<sup>10</sup> Regions at NUTS 2 level in the EU28 Member states + Norway and Switzerland

<sup>11</sup>The regional and urban dimension of the crisis. 8th progress report on economic, social and territorial cohesion. European Commission (2013).

important areas such as innovation and SMEs, energy efficiency and a low-carbon economy, employment and education.

The regional diversity in the EU, where regions have vastly different characteristics, opportunities and needs, requires going beyond 'one-size-fits-all' policies. It calls for a place-based approach that gives regions the ability and means to deliver policies that meet their specific needs<sup>12</sup>.

At the same time this diversity is an asset allowing each place to develop to its own strengths while benefitting from other regions through various forms of interaction. The character of each region lays the foundation for its role in Europe's push for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

### **Smart Growth**

Performance in R&D and innovation varies markedly across the EU Member States (MS) and regions. The Regional Innovation Scoreboard<sup>13</sup> (2012) shows that most European countries have regions at different levels of innovation performance. Regions that qualify as 'Innovation leader', mainly in the centre and north of Europe, can be found directly next to weaker innovation regions, even within one MS. EU regions have different strengths and weaknesses in their innovation systems, reflected by differences in the performance for their so-called innovation 'enablers' e.g. education levels of the labour population and public R&D investments.

R&D resources are concentrated in a few leading regions mainly in the 'European science-based area', where R&D spending can be as high as 7% of GDP, while they can be very low (under 1%) in others<sup>14</sup>.

A region's investment in human capital also supports its ability to be innovative. There is evidence that in weaker regions, mainly in parts of eastern and southern Europe, the share of population holding a tertiary degree has a higher impact on regional production than R&D expenditure has<sup>15</sup>.

This regional diversity calls for regional innovation support programmes tailored specifically to the needs of individual regions. One of the instruments available to MS and regions is to develop smart specialisation strategies to concentrate resources for innovation support on key areas of intervention, clusters or sectors which represent a competitive advantage and support the delivery of innovation in those key areas throughout the innovation chain.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) contribute importantly to smart growth, as enablers of innovation, knowledge creation and e-commerce and employment. Today the differences in quality of ICT infrastructures and e-commerce use are mainly between countries rather than regions, with a clear north-west – south-east divide with the north-west of Europe being most advanced. The regional distribution of ICT employment shows an urban-rural divide with concentrations of people working in ICT in metropolitan regions<sup>16</sup>.

*Interregional cooperation can contribute to smart growth by enabling European regions to improve their regional policies and programmes for innovation and R&D support. Experience exchange and policy learning in key areas like, for instance, cluster support, research-to-business technology transfer, skills development, innovation in SMEs and innovation infrastructures will enable regions to accelerate and improve the implementation of their regional growth policies.*

### **Sustainable Growth**

Creating sustainable growth in the EU requires the creation of a strong climate for business and enterprise. SMEs account for over 99% of businesses in Europe, providing two thirds of all private employment and 80% of new jobs created across the EU. However during the years of economic crisis since 2008 many SMEs suffered and over 3 million jobs in SMEs have been lost<sup>17</sup>. SME value added and employment growth are slowly recovering since, and have returned to their 2008 levels in several MS in the central and northern parts of Europe. Interestingly, SME growth rates (number of enterprises, employment, value added) in the EU12 ('new' Member States) outperformed those of the EU15 ('old'

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<sup>12</sup> Investing in Europe's future. 5th report on economic, social and territorial cohesion. European Commission (2010).

<sup>13</sup> DG Enterprise & Industry - Regional Innovation Scoreboard (2012)

<sup>14</sup> Regional policy contributing to smart growth in Europe 2020 - COM(2010) 553 final

<sup>15</sup> ESPON 2<sup>nd</sup> Synthesis Report (DRAFT) - 2013

<sup>16</sup> ESPON 2<sup>nd</sup> Synthesis Report (DRAFT) - 2013

<sup>17</sup> European Commission (2011): Small Business Act Review (MEMO/11/109)



Member States) before the crisis. However, their fall was also much bigger in 2009 than that of the EU15. Both groups of Member States follow a similar growth pattern from 2010 onwards<sup>18</sup>.

To support SMEs as drivers for growth and employment in Europe, several challenges and obstacles need to be addressed in priority. These include the need to encourage entrepreneurship, to give SMEs better access to finance, to improve SME internationalisation, both in the EU internal and global markets<sup>19</sup>. All this calls for better rules, support and facilities for SMEs and this is where regions all over Europe have a role to play.

Sustainable growth also requires policymakers to engage with the challenges of climate change. The impacts of climate change are not just environmental; they are also economic and social. The main aggregated negative impacts will be felt in coastal regions, and more generally in southern Europe<sup>20</sup>. But all territories, including urban or mountainous areas, will experience specific and significant impacts of climate change. Territorial approaches are needed to reduce regional vulnerability and to develop, implement and enforce adaptation.

To achieve the target of 20% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, European regions need to invest in the development and use of renewable energies. They also need to develop cleaner and more efficient forms of transport and innovative mobility patterns. Investment in energy efficiency measures in the built environment can provide an important contribution to reducing energy consumption.

The EU has significant potential for meeting its 20% renewable energy target. Renewable energies present an opportunity for the development of new industries, particularly in the wind, tidal power, solar power and biomass sectors. They offer specific opportunities within the more peripheral or rural parts of Europe, particularly in northern Europe for wind power and in southern Europe for solar power<sup>21</sup>.

Regions play a key role in protecting ecosystems and preventing biodiversity loss. With around 17% of European jobs indirectly linked to natural assets, current biodiversity loss has clear economic consequences, estimated to correspond to a 3% annual loss in GDP<sup>22</sup>.

Regions can invest in sustainable growth through policies in support of green investment, eco-innovation and a shift to a low-carbon, climate resilient economy. An integrated approach to sustainable regional development, taking into account specific territorial contexts and opportunities can bring improved resource efficiency and new jobs to European regions<sup>23</sup>.

*Interregional cooperation can support European regions in delivering sustainable growth by enabling them to integrate successful experiences and policies from other regions into their own regional programmes in areas including promoting energy efficiency and the use of sustainable mobility options, investing in biodiversity and green infrastructures as a source of eco-system services and improving resource efficiency. The programme can also enable regions to build better policies in support of entrepreneurship, business support services and developing business opportunities based on eco-innovation.*

### **Inclusive Growth**

In 2011, the employment rate in the EU was 69% with significant differences between EU countries and regions. Regions with employment rates above 75% are mostly located in northern Europe, while eastern and southern Europe show rather low employment rates. The economic crisis had a particularly striking effect on youth unemployment. Both national and regional disparities in youth unemployment levels are striking, with the highest levels observed in southern and south-eastern regions of Europe<sup>24</sup>.

The share of low-skilled population is largely defined in the national context, with few regional or rural-urban disparities. The education drop-out rate varies considerably among European regions with the

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<sup>18</sup> SME Performance review 2012, Ecorys for European Commission

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, DG Enterprise & Industry – 2012 SME Assembly

<sup>20</sup> ESPON 2nd Synthesis Report (DRAFT) - 2013

<sup>21</sup> ESPON 2nd Synthesis Report (DRAFT) - 2013

<sup>22</sup> EU Biodiversity strategy to 2020, COM (2011)244 and <http://ec.europa.eu/environment>

<sup>23</sup> Regional policy contributing to sustainable growth in Europe 2020 - COM(2011) 17 final

<sup>24</sup> 2011 figures reported in the ESPON mapfinder tool.

highest rates found in south-west Europe and in outermost regions. In 2010, one third of European regions did not meet the target of reducing the share of early school leavers to less than 10%<sup>25</sup>.

*Interregional cooperation can contribute to inclusive growth by supporting policy learning and experience transfer on regional policies that will get people back into employment. Key fields of action are, for instance, policies supporting the development of SMEs as main creators of new jobs, programmes promoting female and young entrepreneurship, and skills development for the knowledge economy.*

### ***Interregional cooperation - experiences and lessons learnt***

The INTERREG IVC programme has successfully generated interregional cooperation initiatives across Europe. A crucial factor for achieving the INTERREG IVC programme goal to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies was the extent to which supported projects succeeded in actually influencing the policy frameworks of the regions involved.

Several novelties were introduced to encourage and stimulate this process:

- From the start of the programme, Capitalisation Projects were a specific type of project, dedicated exclusively to preparing the implementation (in Action Plans) of pre-identified good practices through regional ERDF programmes. The first generation of Capitalisation Projects showed promising results regarding their potential to improve implementation of Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and Employment programmes. However, the share of Capitalisation Projects remained limited, at around 10% of all projects. It proved challenging for projects to secure the necessary involvement of Managing Authorities and in later years of the programming period the depletion of ERDF means in many regions hindered Action Plan implementation.
- During the programme period an additional requirement was introduced, stipulating that each participating region in a project develops an 'Implementation Plan' to specify how they would continue to work to integrate the lessons learnt from the cooperation into their local / regional policies<sup>26</sup>.
- The Programme launched a thematic capitalisation process, focusing on collecting, analysing, storing and disseminating the thematic knowledge gained from projects working on the same topic. First interim results (mid-2013) already show that the expert-driven analysis and benchmarking of project results offer added value to programme and project stakeholders.

Capitalisation is a key block of the whole knowledge management cycle, which is a very demanding task considering the geographical scope of the programme, the widespread lack of habits to store and valorise in an effective manner public actions, the existence of linguistic barriers, etc.

In addition to these experiences, ongoing analysis and evaluation during the INTERREG IVC programme implementation<sup>27</sup> provided several valuable lessons and recommendations for the 2014-2020 programme:

#### *Programme content and development*

- Bring stronger thematic focus to the programme to ensure greater visibility of project results, a more even spread of knowledge in the programme area and to ease drafting of targeted calls for proposals.
- Explore different approaches to ensure fewer, higher quality proposals (e.g. 2-step procedure or targeted calls for proposals).
- Better integrate the territorial dimension into the future project selection to ensure that projects and partnerships are equipped to respond to the different needs and potentials of all kinds of territories across Europe.
- Ensure **commitment and support of relevant bodies and stakeholders** (e.g. Managing Authorities of regional Programmes) and check before and during the development of action plans if funding will be available for its implementation.

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<sup>25</sup> ESPON mapfinder tool: <http://mapfinder.espon.eu/?p=1593>

<sup>26</sup> The effect of this approach will only start to become visible when the related projects are completed in the course of 2013/2014.

<sup>27</sup> Notably: INTERREG IVC Interim evaluation (2010) and Interim evaluation update (2013) and the Exchange of experience study (2013).

### Intervention logic of the programme and learning process

- Ensure that “purpose-oriented project partnerships” are established (i.e. characterised by an adequate combination of context conditions, policy experiences & policy capacity), but remain open for less experienced partners and the innovations they can bring to the programme.
- Reconsider the role and possible **stronger use of “implementation-related activities”** directly connected to the exchange of experience.
- Highlight the **importance of the multidimensional learning process** (i.e. a process that ensures policy learning at project, organisational, regional and wider EU level) as a driver for policy change.
- **Learning outcomes need to be more effectively transferred and embedded in the partner organisations in order to lead to policy change.**
- Put more emphasis on the demand side to clearly identify the real needs of potential end-users of good practices developed by other projects.
- Make sure that the **capitalisation process and the external communication** effectively reach the final target groups.

Key lessons are that INTERREG EUROPE must step up its effort to ensure that supported activities do in fact lead to tangible policy changes in the partner regions. Projects should be geared to preparing the actual implementation of actions based on the exchange. This implies that relevant local stakeholders in each partner region need to be more systematically involved from the start of all supported activities. Opportunities for “implementation-related activities”, e.g. pilot actions should also be provided, as part of this stronger orientation to prepare implementation of actual policy changes.

To strengthen the multidimensional learning and capitalisation processes, the programme should also develop new forms to reach the wider target group of regional policy actors in Europe, and allow them to have easy access to and learn from the thematic knowledge and experience gathered in other regional policies and programmes.

These lessons are translated into the operational objectives of this programme (section 1.1.4) and in the types of actions to be supported (Section 2).

The ETC regulation specifies that Interregional Cooperation should integrate the experiences from other EU cooperation initiatives for innovation and cluster support, in particular the FP7 “Regions of Knowledge” (RoK) and ‘Research Potential’ action. The RoK initiative, with a budget of €126 million (2007-2013), encouraged EU-wide co-operation among partnerships in the ‘triple helix’ of universities/research centres, enterprises and regional authorities to develop research-driven clusters. Activities targeted the coordination of mutual research agendas, knowledge exchange and new research-driven clusters for which projects developed joint action plans.

Evaluation of the RoK-initiative<sup>28</sup> demonstrated a positive contribution to the development of regional innovation strategies, also in less-developed regions. Key recommendations to improve future RoK-type activities are to strengthen inter-project learning, to ensure early involvement of key regional stakeholders and to consider funding pilot actions as part of the projects.

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<sup>28</sup> Assessment of the impact of the Regions of Knowledge programme, Technopolis (2011)

#### **1.1.1.4 The opportunity for INTERREG EUROPE: Policy learning in support of the Europe 2020 Strategy**

The needs analysis shows that European regions are dealing with a wide range of policy issues related to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It also illustrates the diversity among these regions in their progress and performance in tackling the related challenges. Through their own regional policies and strategies, the regions of Europe can make an important contribution to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Cohesion policy equips all European regions with instruments to tackle their respective growth challenges, by means of the regional (or national) programmes of Investment for Growth and Jobs and of the European Territorial Cooperation programmes. Interventions in the context of programmes for Growth and Jobs related to research and innovation should build on national or regional 'smart specialisation strategies' (S3 strategies).

Here INTERREG EUROPE can bring added value by offering European regions the opportunity for policy learning and transfer of good practices. In doing so, the programme can assist the regions to strengthen their policies, to enhance their regional development situation and ultimately to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In this respect the ETC regulation gives the programme the specific task of supporting the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs but also, where relevant, of programmes under the ETC goal. By feeding in relevant practices and experiences from regions across Europe, and preparing their implementation through these Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes in the participating regions, the pace and quality of implementation of these programmes can be further enhanced.

This approach will give a high degree of focus to the programme, necessary to ensure sufficient impact and Europe-wide relevance of the results. This should not prevent the programme however from incorporating relevant contributions from regional level actors that are not directly involved in the implementation of Growth and Jobs or ETC programmes, considering that other regional level policies and programmes can also contribute significantly to achieving the Cohesion policy aims of strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion to stimulate growth in European regions.

To achieve this, the programme needs to support cooperation initiatives between European regions to improve the effectiveness of their policies. Similar to interregional cooperation in previous programming periods, this support revolves around policy learning based on the identification, exchange, adaptation and transfer of practices among regions. To maximise the impact of this cooperation, the emphasis must be on the planning and preparation of specific actions to implement and apply the practices addressed in the participating regions.

In addition, there is a need for more continuous policy learning to capitalise on regional policy good practices, to actively bring the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects to all regional actors engaged in a certain policy field. If European regions can tap into good practice examples, knowledge and expertise related to a specific policy need, directly when this need occurs, this maximises the reach and impact of the INTERREG EUROPE programme. The programme will have to provide facilities to the European regions to give them continuous access to this wealth of regional policy expertise that they can use directly in their policies and strategies in support of Europe 2020 goals.

In supporting this policy learning, attention needs to be paid to the demand side: what need and use do potential end-users have for these approaches and tools? By definition, a capitalisation process can only be qualified as successful when the experiences involved have been effectively re-used by the recipient end-user. The governance of capitalisation must therefore focus on the factors of effective re-use. It has also to be driven by the end-user and not be set up exclusively as a push process.

The INTERREG EUROPE programme can further support European regions by integrating the experiences from a number of related European initiatives. These include in particular the Regions of Knowledge initiative that promoted Europe-wide cooperation between public and private research centres, enterprises and authorities and supported regional research-driven clusters.

### 1.1.1.5 Strategy of the INTERREG EUROPE programme

The regulations state that the INTERREG EUROPE programme should aim to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by encouraging exchange of experience between regions on thematic objectives. In particular, the programme should contribute to the transfer of good practices principally into the operational programmes of the Investment for growth and jobs goal and, where relevant, into those of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) goal. The programme should also integrate and build on results generated through previous EU initiatives related to innovation and cluster support, for instance the Regions of Knowledge initiative

Taking into consideration the main territorial needs and challenges, and the specific needs derived from previous interregional cooperation experiences identified previously, the Partner States have defined the following **mission statement** for the programme:

*The programme will contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe by supporting (and facilitating) knowledge sharing and good practice transfer among actors of regional relevance to improve regional/Cohesion policy.*

Building on this overall mission statement the programme strategy is further defined in the following paragraphs presenting the overall objective of the programme and the corresponding operational and thematic objectives as well as investment priorities that will be targeted.

#### **Overall objective of Programme**

On the basis of the objectives defined for interregional cooperation in the regulations for cohesion policy and of the needs and challenges identified above, the following **overall objective** is defined for the INTERREG EUROPE programme:

*To improve the implementation of policies and programmes for regional development, principally of programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal and, where relevant, of programmes under the ETC goal, by promoting exchange of experience and policy learning among actors of regional relevance.*

This overall objective can be further specified to reflect how INTERREG EUROPE can intervene to realise the strategic objective of improving Cohesion policy through knowledge sharing and good practice transfer.

The strategy of the programme is two-fold. On one hand, building on the experience with interregional cooperation (see section 1.1.3), the programme will meet a need to facilitate policy learning and capitalisation of regional policy good practices on a continuous basis, to enable regional level actors from across the EU to tap into relevant experiences and practices whenever they need them to strengthen their policies.

On the other hand, the programme will support interregional cooperation between regional actors, dedicated to policy learning and transfer of good practices with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt from the cooperation into regional policies and actions, in particular through programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC.

In doing so, the programme aims to make a direct contribution to the implementation of programmes under the Growth and Jobs, and, where relevant, ETC goals.

Based on these considerations the following **operational objectives** are defined:

1. *To facilitate ongoing EU-wide policy learning and capitalisation of practices among actors of regional relevance in order to strengthen regional policies, and in particular the implementation of programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC.*
2. *To support exchange of experience and sharing of practices among actors of regional relevance with the aim to integrate the learning from the cooperation into regional policies, in particular through their programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC.*

These operational objectives at programme level are applicable to all the fields of regional policy supported by the programme.

To fulfil its overall mission and meet the operational objectives defined above, the programme will adopt the following approach to interregional cooperation.

In support of the first operational objective of **facilitating ongoing EU-wide policy learning** and capitalisation of good practices, 'policy learning platforms' will be created for different thematic policy fields. These platforms will be active throughout the duration of the programme, to provide on a regular basis services and support to the regions of Europe with the intention to inform and enhance the definition and implementation of their regional policies, and primarily their programmes for Growth and Jobs and ETC.

In support of the objective of **exchanging experience and sharing practices** to prepare their implementation in regional policies, the programme will support and fund Interregional Cooperation Projects among relevant partnerships of regional actors. The purpose of these projects will be to induce policy learning and to prepare the implementation of good practices in the participating regions, in particular through their respective programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and where relevant ETC. The experience and practices that are at the basis of the exchange can come from various sources, including various EU-programmes and projects such as for instance national or regional Structural Funds, ETC, Regions of Knowledge (RoK), CIP, LIFE+, FP7, etc.

As specified in the overall and operational objectives above, INTERREG EUROPE targets 'actors of regional relevance'. These can be both regional and local authorities as well as other categories of actors playing a role in the definition and implementation of regional policies and programmes. A more elaborate description of these actors of regional relevance for each of the priority axes of the programme is provided in section 2 of this document.

As a general rule the beneficiaries of the programme are public bodies and bodies governed by public law. Bodies governed by private law may also be beneficiaries under certain conditions (see also Section 2 of this document). Detailed provisions will be outlined in the programme manual.

SMEs are an important target group and when relevant they are encouraged to participate in the activities of INTERREG EUROPE actions and benefit from the exchange of experience, although they cannot directly receive EU funding as a beneficiary.

### ***Thematic objectives of the programme***

Structural Funds programmes for the programming period 2014–2020 are required to focus on a limited number of thematic objectives, corresponding to the main needs of the programme area where the programme could make the most relevant contribution.

In the regulations this principle of thematic concentration is further developed by stipulating that programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal must allocate a minimum share of their ERDF budget to only four thematic objectives: (1) Research & Innovation, (2) Information and Communication Technologies, (3) Competitiveness of SMEs and (4) Low Carbon Economy. This share is at least 50% for 'less developed' regions, and amounts to 60% and 80% respectively for the 'transition' and 'more developed' regions of Europe<sup>29</sup>.

For interregional cooperation the regulations impose no specific limitation to the (number of) thematic objectives to be selected. However, the Partner States of INTERREG EUROPE have agreed to apply the concentration principle as part of the strategy of the programme. A concentration of the programme on a limited number of thematic objectives increases its potential to make a substantial impact on regional policies across the EU within the selected fields. It will also give the programme more mass in terms of the clustering and capitalisation of aggregated project results in the supported themes, which will increase the strategic relevance of the programme at the European level.

A selection of a limited number of thematic objectives (TO) can be made starting from the aim of the programme to contribute to the implementation of programmes under the Investment for Growth and

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<sup>29</sup>Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 (ERDF Regulation), Art 4.

Jobs goal. In this context it is essential that the programme addresses the thematic objectives where these 'Goal 1' programmes should concentrate most of their means. As indicated above, between 50% and 80% of all ERDF means available to the Growth and Jobs programmes will be allocated to the Thematic Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Concerning support to TO2 - Information and Communication Technologies the Partner States consider that it is less opportune to deal with the challenges related to the digital society through a separate Priority Axis. Rather, the introduction of ICT is perceived as a cross-cutting theme that links in with the other thematic objectives, for instance as an integrated part of innovation infrastructures (TO1) or through the development of e-services by SMEs. Therefore, thematic objective 2 is not separately included in INTERREG EUROPE but the contribution of the projects to the Digital Agenda for Europe will be followed up through the programme monitoring system.

A similar approach applies to climate change. Regions have a strong role to play in climate resilience strategies. The Thematic Objective 4 is obviously related to climate change but a climate related dimension can also be covered under other thematic objectives, for instance through research and innovation on renewable energy (TO1) or through the adaption of ecosystems to climate events (TO6).

The Partner States have identified a shared need to address issues related to the protection of the environment and promotion of resource efficiency in their regions. Many regions across Europe are dealing with challenges related to the protection and development of their biodiversity and natural and cultural assets, and creating green growth based on eco-innovation and sound environmental management. This corresponds to thematic objective 6, which is therefore also incorporated in the INTERREG EUROPE programme.

This results in the following selection of thematic objectives that will be addressed by INTERREG EUROPE:

1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation (TO1)
2. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs (TO3)
3. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors (TO4)
4. Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (TO6)

This selection of TOs corresponds mainly to the smart and sustainable growth pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy. The element of inclusive growth will also have a place in the programme, in more general terms as a cross-cutting theme. The key issue of employment will for instance be addressed through the support to the competitiveness of SME as well as in relation to (eco-)innovation as new drivers for growth and jobs.

### ***Investment priorities***

To focus the programme implementation within the selected TOs, a number of Investment Priorities is selected out of the available options in the cohesion policy regulations<sup>30</sup>. A few main principles are applied in making this selection, in recognition of the nature of the INTERREG EUROPE programme.

The programme is an instrument for changing and improving policies and (Growth & Jobs and ETC) programmes of European regions. It does so by means of experience transfer and policy learning between actors of regional relevance, with a view to preparing the implementation of actions at the regional level in a follow-up stage. The programme does not support any large scale material investments, technical measures or research within the regions.

If the programme aims to trigger policy change and improve the implementation of (Growth & Jobs and ETC) programmes in regions across the whole EU, it is crucial that the programme acknowledges the diversity of regional needs and opportunities within the fields of the thematic objectives selected. This diversity is reflected in different accents, priorities and levels of ambition in the policies and (Growth & Jobs and ETC) programmes in each European region, even if they address the same overall thematic objective. The programme should therefore be open to the full range of topics within each of the selected thematic objectives as defined by the regions of Europe in their individual (Growth & Jobs and ETC) programmes.

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<sup>30</sup>Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 (ERDF Regulation), Article 5

Based on these considerations one to two Investment Priorities are selected per thematic objective that can support interregional exchange and policy learning on a wide range of issues representative of the thematic scope of the corresponding thematic objective. Table 1 below presents an overview of the investment priorities that are selected for INTERREG EUROPE, including a brief justification for their selection.



**1.1.2 Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework, based on an analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure, taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation**

**Table 1 - Justification for the selection of thematic objectives and investment priorities**

Selected TO	Selected IP	Justification for selection
1 - Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	1a - enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>The availability of sound innovation infrastructures and capacities is a key condition for smart growth in regions.</i></li> <li>- <i>European regions have different strengths and weaknesses in the performance for their so-called innovation 'enablers' showing potential for interregional exchange on e.g. research facilities, education levels of labour force and public R&amp;D investments.</i></li> <li>- <i>TO1 is one of the TOs on which all Growth and Jobs programmes must concentrate a large part of their means.</i></li> </ul>
	1b - promoting business investment in R&I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Smart growth requires adequate support to the delivery of innovation throughout the innovation chain.</i></li> <li>- <i>Regions need to concentrate innovation support in key areas with high innovation potential (smart specialisation).</i></li> <li>- <i>Performance in innovation delivery varies across regions, showing potential for interregional cooperation on e.g. support to research-driven clusters, triple-helix cooperation and technology transfer.</i></li> <li>- <i>TO1 is among the prioritised TOs for all Growth &amp; Jobs programmes.</i></li> </ul>
3 - Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs	3d - Supporting the capacity of SMEs to engage in growth in regional, national and international markets, and in innovation processes;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Sustainable regional growth requires a healthy climate for business and enterprise.</i></li> <li>- <i>Regions need to encourage entrepreneurship and support SMEs in e.g. improving product and service development, internationalisation on internal and global markets and access to finance, knowledge and networks.</i></li> <li>- <i>Interregional cooperation can enable regions to build better policies in support of entrepreneurship and business support services.</i></li> <li>- <i>TO3 is among the prioritised TOs for all Growth &amp; Jobs programmes.</i></li> </ul>
4 - Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	4e - Promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multi-modal urban mobility and mitigation relevant adaptation measures;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>To reduce CO2 emissions, regions must put in place strategies for the development and use of renewable energies, sustainable mobility options and the adoption of energy efficiency measures to reduce energy consumption.</i></li> <li>- <i>Interregional cooperation can enable regions to deliver sustainable growth by integrating successful experiences and policies from other regions into their regional low carbon strategies.</i></li> <li>- <i>TO4 is among the prioritised TOs for all Growth &amp; Jobs programmes.</i></li> </ul>
6 - Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	6c - conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Regional actors need to protect ecosystems, landscapes and biodiversity and prevent (further) degradation of their natural and cultural assets.</i></li> <li>- <i>At the same time the natural and cultural heritage are important resources for sustainable growth in European regions.</i></li> <li>- <i>Interregional cooperation can improve regional sustainable growth strategies by inducing policy learning on the sustainable management and exploitation of those assets.</i></li> </ul>

Selected TO	Selected IP	Justification for selection
	6g - supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>To generate sustainable growth, regions need to create an economy where resource-efficiency, green technologies and eco-innovation are drivers for growth and jobs.</i></li> <li>- <i>Regional green growth also requires environmental policies that steer towards a more efficient use of air, water, waste and soil.</i></li> <li>- <i>Interregional cooperation can enable regions in developing integrated sustainable regional growth strategies based on more efficient use of resources.</i></li> </ul>

## **1.2 Justification of the financial allocation**

Justification for the financial allocation (i.e. Union support) to each thematic objective and, where appropriate, investment priority, in accordance with the thematic concentration requirements, taking into account the ex-ante evaluation.

The total ERDF budget of the INTERREG EUROPE programme will be distributed evenly over the thematic objectives selected. Each of the four thematic objectives receives an allocation of 25% of the available ERDF budget (excluding the means dedicated to technical assistance).

This equal distribution underlines that all of the selected thematic objectives have the same importance and legitimacy in the programme strategy. And it ensures that the opportunities for interregional cooperation are at the same level for each of the four thematic pillars of the programme.

At the same time this distribution ensures that a significant part of the available ERDF budget (75%) is allocated to the three selected thematic objectives (i.e. TO1, TO3, TO4) where, according to the ERDF Regulation, the programmes for Investment in Growth and Jobs should concentrate most of their means. This is important, as it reflects the specific task of INTERREG EUROPE to support those programmes (as well as ETC programmes, where relevant).

**Table 2: Overview of the investment strategy of the cooperation programme**

Priority axis	ERDF support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund)			Thematic objective	Investment priorities	Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
		ERDF	ENI	IPA				
1	84.441.686	23,5%			<i>Thematic objective 1 Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</i>	1(a)	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities.	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>[research and innovation infrastructures]</i> Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>[research and innovation infrastructures]</i>
						1(b)	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, that support the delivery of innovation by actors in regional innovation chains in areas of "smart specialisation" and innovation opportunity.	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of the delivery of innovation Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of the delivery of innovation
2	84.441.685	23,5%			<i>Thematic objective 3 Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs</i>	3(d)	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop and achieve growth and engage in innovation.	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>SME growth and entrepreneurship</i> Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>SME growth and entrepreneurship</i>
3	84.441.685	23,5%			<i>Thematic objective 4 Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</i>	4(e)	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy.	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>low carbon economy</i> Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>low carbon economy</i>
4	84.441.685	23,5%			<i>Thematic objective 6 Protecting the environment and</i>	6(c)	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</i>

Priority axis	ERDF support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund)			Thematic objective	Investment priorities	Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
		ERDF	ENI	IPA				
					<i>promoting resource efficiency</i>		programmes, in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage.	Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</i> with improved implementation
						6(g)	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, aimed at increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation and environmental performance management.	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>resource efficiency</i> Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>resource efficiency</i> with improved
5	21.559.579	6%			n/a	n/a	To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.	Share (%) of all supported operations (projects and platforms) that is implemented successfully, demonstrated by the achievement of planned outputs. Share (%) of total programme ERDF budget decommitted

## Section 2. Priority axes.

### Section 2.A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance

#### 2.A.1 Priority Axis

ID of the Priority Axis	<b>Priority Axis 1</b>
Title of the Priority Axis	<b>Research, Technological Development and Innovation</b>

<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	<2A.3 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	<2A.4 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	<2A.5 type='C' input='M'>

#### 2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

<2.A.0 type='S' maxlength='3 500' input='M'>
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#### 2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)

#### 2.A.4 Investment priority

Investment priority	<b>Investment priority 1(a)</b> <i>Enhancing research and innovation (R&amp;I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&amp;I excellence and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.</i>
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#### 2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 1.1
Specific objective	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities notably in the framework of Smart Specialisation Strategies.
The result that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Growth and Jobs (G&amp;J), and, where relevant, ETC, in the field of regional infrastructures for research and innovation and capacities to develop research and innovation excellence.</p> <p>To achieve innovation-driven growth, regional authorities and other actors of regional relevance must strengthen their innovation 'enablers': the infrastructures and capacities needed for research and innovation to flourish in sectors with strong innovation potential. Many EU regions identify these key sectors in Regional Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation.</p> <p>Regional policies for innovation infrastructure and capacities must target such issues as the availability of research and competence centres with SME support services and ICT</p>

	<p>infrastructures, ensuring that the education system provides the qualifications needed in innovative sectors and public facilities for funding and supporting R&amp;I activity.</p> <p>The programme will support exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions for innovation infrastructure and capacities - in particular through G&amp;J or ETC programmes, but also other programmes of regions involved. In line with Annex I, 7.2.1. of regulation 1303/2013 (CPR) and recital (7) of regulation 1299/2013 the programme will support projects that aim at reinforcing the capacity of research institutions located in convergence and outermost regions to promote the development of joint smart specialisation approaches, in particular by connecting them to excellent research institutions in other regions.</p> <p>The programme will facilitate policy learning and capitalisation by making relevant practices and results from Interregional Cooperation Projects and other experiences widely available and usable for regional actors involved in innovation support in G&amp;J, ETC and other programmes.</p> <p>This interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of individuals and organisations involved and prepare the implementation of the lessons learnt. This results in a better implementation of (G&amp;J and ETC) programmes and policies in the field of research and innovation infrastructures in the regions involved.</p>
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**Table 3: Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>[research and innovation infrastructures]</i>	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	2.62%	2014	8%	<p>Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of <u>all Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes.</u></p> <p>The content and approach of this survey is developed in a separate document. This takes into account EC Guidance for the Design of Quantitative Survey-Based Evaluation (R. Scarpa, 2012).</p> <p>For the baseline value, the definition of the result indicators was adapted in the 2015 survey to refer to INTERREG IVC and not INTERREG EUROPE. The wording also referred to the influence in the design of the Structural Funds and not in their implementation.</p>	2018; 2020; 2023.
2	Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>[research and innovation infrastructures]</i>	EUR	3.5M	2014	48M	As above	2018; 2020; 2023.

## 2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

### 2.A.6.1. Description of type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories and types of beneficiaries

Investment Priority	1(a)
<b>A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED</b>	
<p>In line with the operational objectives, the programme supports 2 types of action to allow partners from the different Partner States to work together on a shared regional policy issue in the field of innovation infrastructures and capacities: Interregional Cooperation Projects and Policy Learning Platforms.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> (from here on 'projects'):</li></ul>	
<p>The objective of the projects is to improve the implementation of the policies of participating regions by supporting exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions and, where relevant, to explore the possibility for aligned and/ or joint actions across partner regions. Through the projects, INTERREG EUROPE intends to improve primarily the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&amp;J) of the participating regions, and, where relevant, the implementation of programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). The implementation of other regional programmes and policies in the field of innovation infrastructures and capacities can also be improved as a result of the cooperation.</p>	
<p>Projects are also expected to contribute to the content and activities of the Policy Learning Platform for this Priority Axis (see point 2 below) to ensure that relevant policy intelligence generated by projects can find its way to other regional actors in Europe.</p>	
<p>Projects as a general rule have 2 phases:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phase 1 is dedicated to the exchange of policy experience and to preparing the implementation of lessons learnt. By the end of this phase, each partner region shall produce an Action Plan for the integration of lessons learnt from the cooperation in their regional policies and/or (G&amp;J, ETC) programmes. The Action Plans shall identify the measures to be integrated and their timeframe, work steps, responsible actors, costs (if any) and funding sources. The partners shall actively involve relevant regional stakeholders in all activities.</li><li>• Phase 2 is dedicated to the joint monitoring by each partner region of the implementation of their Action Plan by the responsible actors in their territory. The actual implementation of these actions is not funded by INTERREG EUROPE. This monitoring primarily takes place within the context of each region but it is implemented through a common methodology with dedicated indicators. The interregional partnership may decide to organise joint activities in this monitoring phase to continue their policy learning process. In duly justified cases, phase 2 may also include pilot actions to test certain parts of the Action Plan in practice.</li></ul>	
<p>Further modalities will be defined in the Programme Manual.</p>	
<p><u>Activities of projects</u> can include (non-exhaustive):</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Elaboration of Action Plans (mandatory)</li><li>• Studies and analysis of regional innovation infrastructure policies</li><li>• Meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group</li><li>• Exchange visits to study R&amp;I support facilities and policies.</li><li>• Interregional seminars and events for exchange and capacity building on innovation infrastructures</li><li>• Contributions to Platform activities and outputs</li><li>• Communication and dissemination of project results</li><li>• Monitoring and analysis of Action Plan results (phase 2)</li><li>• Pilot actions (phase 2)</li></ul>	
<p><u>Main target groups and types of beneficiaries</u></p>	



As a general rule the beneficiaries for Projects in this specific objective are public bodies, bodies governed by public law or private non-profit bodies<sup>31</sup>, with responsibilities relevant for the project such as:

- National, regional and local public authorities responsible for stimulating all forms of innovation (incl. technological, organisational, social innovation)
- Regional development agencies, technology or innovation agencies
- Universities, knowledge and research institutes and institutes for higher education
- Operators of science and technology parks, business incubation facilities and innovation centres
- Business support actors and organisations representing SMEs and the business community, notably cluster organisations
- Other actors of relevance to the development of regional innovation infrastructures and capacities

Next to actors as mentioned above, the wider target group that can play an active role in the activities of the Projects also includes relevant local stakeholders, SMEs or other actors in the field of innovation.

Each partner in a Project may set up a local stakeholder group to ensure that relevant actors in the region are involved in policy learning and development of action plans. Members of these local stakeholder groups could come from the same target groups mentioned above (when they are not partner in the project) and from regional innovative SMEs.

#### Examples of possible Projects

- Regional authorities and business support actors sharing experiences on public funding schemes for innovation support as key element of innovation infrastructure, resulting in Action Plans for the creation in each region of a revolving fund for technology innovation either as a 'financial instrument' in a regional G&J programme or operated independently.
- Exchange of experience among regional authorities on policies and programmes to create research facilities with SME support services and set up international R&D cooperation networks in less research intensive regions, and prepare the creation of such facilities and networks through Action Plans.
- Exchange of experience among regional development agencies to plan actions for improving the match between curricula of higher education institutes and human capital needs of businesses in their regional smart specialisation sectors.
- Cooperation among regional authorities and business support actors to exchange practices on the digital networks connectivity needs for R&I and the ways to address them.
- Exchange of experience on innovation supply policies exploring opportunities for sharing research or innovation infrastructure operating in domains of smart specialisation shared between the partners.
  
- **Policy Learning Platform ('Platform') on Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTD&I)**

It covers both specific objectives of Priority 1 combined. This platform will provide policy intelligence in support of ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the field of RTD&I, mainly with regard to the implementation of the G&J and where relevant, ETC goals. The Platform aims to:

- Contribute to EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant actors related to G&J and ETC programmes
- Exploit the results of Projects and make them available to a wider audience of regional policy actors across Europe
- Assist/support programme targets/clients in the creation of interregional smart specialisation partnerships for building critical mass and developing joint roadmaps for their industries through the appropriate interactive methodologies and formats

The Platform offers activities and services for the community of regional policy actors and stakeholders, in particular those involved in G&J and ETC programmes across Europe. It will contribute to the development of new policy intelligence and to synergies with other relevant initiatives in particular other existing platforms addressing similar topics and target audience.

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<sup>31</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

In order to ensure a user-driven character, the platform will be selected through a tendering procedure that will allow flexibility in terms of activities and services offered, as well as of their administration to ensure quality performance. Its services will be adapted to the needs of the territories and to the demand of the users. The overall monitoring of the platform is ensured by the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the programme. An annual meeting will also be organised with the relevant thematic DGs of the Commission in order to ensure their contribution to the work of the platforms.

Activities and services of the Platform can include (non-exhaustive):

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes and other relevant sources around Europe on topics related to RTD&I to identify possible interesting experiences
- Maintain a close collaboration with the S3 Platform<sup>32</sup> to share information and ensure complementarity of activities
- Analyse and benchmark the content of projects in Priority 1 and other priorities, if relevant
- Write thematic productions such as newsletters, studies, policy recommendations related to regional RTD&I challenges
- Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in programmes for G&J and ETC in the field of Priority 1 (with other Platforms where there are strong thematic synergies).
- Organise and facilitate peer reviews between European regions in support of policy improvement and capacity building
- Advise projects in Priority Axis 1 when relevant
- Advise programme bodies on the programme's strategic orientation on RTD&I
- Assess and advise on the relevance of possible pilot actions proposed by Projects in their phase 2
- Provide and moderate on-line collaborative tools for knowledge sharing and policy learning
- Answer requests for information from individual actors and stakeholders involved in G&J and ETC programmes in the field of Priority 1

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The beneficiary<sup>33</sup> of the Platform is the Managing Authority of INTERREG EUROPE. The main target groups for the services and activities of the Platform are:

- Actors involved in management and implementation of G&J and ETC programmes (or of similar thematic policies in the case of Norway and Switzerland)
- Actors involved as (potential) beneficiaries of such programmes
- Actors not directly involved in the G&J or ETC programmes, whose competences and needs are in line with the issues tackled by the platform

Examples of possible actions of the Platform

- Publication of policy recommendations for creating regional centres of competence for research and innovation based on successful experiences from different Projects and G&J programmes.
- Seminar for regional actors on transferring experience gained in various EU regions about strengthening the role of universities in the regional innovation system.
- Peer reviews among European regions, which have similar sectors of smart specialisation to analyse and improve their regional innovation infrastructures and identify joint opportunities for linkages between their sectors.

## **B. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE**

The exchange of experience in projects on innovation infrastructure and capacities will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and build up skills and capacities of professionals (partner staff, other stakeholders) involved in the project activities. The projects will also ensure that these lessons learnt are integrated in regional policies and actions by developing concrete Action Plans

<sup>32</sup> This complementary platform is operated by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (Seville, ES) and is dedicated to the exchange of experience on how to prepare S3 (process and methodology related issues). The Platform will complement the work of the IPTS by focusing on the content related issues (i.e. what is financed in the regions through the S3).

<sup>33</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

for each partner region. As a result the Projects lead to an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular G&J and ETC programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities.

Projects in this Specific Objective can also have synergies with themes covered by other specific objectives of this programme, for instance related to innovation in the field of low-carbon technology or resource efficiency.

The Platform for this priority contributes to the specific objective through activities and services that enable policy learning in the field of infrastructures and capacities for research and innovation. These activities and services will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and experiences in this field and build up skills and capacities of actors (staff and organisations) involved in the development and implementation of G&J and ETC programmes in this field. As a result these actors will be able to improve the implementation of their programmes.

The improvements of the implementation of G&J, ETC and other regional programmes can take place at different levels, notably:

- the implementation of a new project/practice/tool funded by the programme
- a change in the management of the programme/policy (e.g. revised set-up of calls for proposals, alternative monitoring methods)
- a change in the strategic focus of the programme/policy (e.g. modification of a specific objective, integration of a new policy aim).

The improved implementation of policies and programmes should eventually have an effect on the infrastructures and capacities for innovation in the participating regions, for instance related to:

- Further development of smart specialisation strategies through implementation of adequate innovation infrastructure
- More effective management of research infrastructure
- Better match between education curriculum and needs from innovative companies
- Optimisation of public investment in R&I infrastructures
- Increase attraction of region for researchers
- Increase of private investment in research and education of the R&I infrastructures
- Increase attraction of regions for companies, including SMEs
- Linking international research and innovation partners (also outside EU)
- Stronger participation in Horizon 2020 projects('Stairway to excellence')

**C. SPECIFIC TERRITORIES TARGETED (IF ANY)**

INTERREG EUROPE targets the whole EU territory and Norway and Switzerland.

**2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for selection of operations**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>1(a)</b>
<p>The guiding principles for selection of operations are crosscutting to all specific objectives. The overall approach is first described below and further information on the selection criteria for Projects are provided under the specific objective 1.2.</p> <p><b>Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> are selected through regular calls for proposals. These calls can be open to proposals addressing the full thematic scope of the specific objective. The programme authorities may also decide to open targeted calls for proposals focusing on key areas within the scope of this specific objective. Terms of reference for targeted calls may take into account developments and results of previous calls, policy trends in the scope of this investment priority and possible guidance by the policy learning platform.</p> <p>Beneficiaries<sup>34</sup> eligible to receive funding are:</p>	

<sup>34</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

- Public authorities
- Bodies governed by public law. This means any body<sup>35</sup>:
  - (a) they are established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
  - (b) they have legal personality; and
  - (c) they are financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; or are subject to management supervision by those authorities or bodies; or have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law; [...]

It is important to highlight that private non-profit bodies cannot take on the role of a lead partner in INTERREG EUROPE projects.

- Private non-profit bodies. In INTERREG EUROPE, this means any body
  - (d) they are not having an industrial or commercial character;
  - (e) they are having a legal personality; and
  - (f) they are not financed, for the most part, by the state, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law; or are not subject to management supervision by those bodies; or not having an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, more than half of whose members are appointed by the State, regional or local authorities, or by other bodies governed by public law.

Selection criteria and additional performance indicators are defined in the Programme Manual. Further information on these criteria are provided in the specific objective 1.2.

Projects shall primarily contribute to the expected result of one specific objective of the programme. But Projects that have cross-cutting synergies with the themes covered by other specific objectives are welcome.

The second phase of the Projects is dedicated to the monitoring of the Action Plan implementation. In justified cases Projects may also propose to perform pilot actions during this phase, if a part of the Action Plan needs testing. A proposal for such a pilot action may be submitted to the programme at the end of the first phase. The JS will assess the relevance of these actions and make recommendations to the MC for decision.

The **Policy Learning Platform** will be established at programme level for the duration of the seven year period from 2015 until 2021. It will be run by a team of experts selected and contracted through a tendering procedure. The platform runs its activities based on a work plan for a limited period. After this period, the contract with the selected team of experts can be renewed depending on its performance, by decision of the Monitoring Committee.

### 2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>1(a)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

### 2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>1(a)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

<sup>35</sup> As defined in directive 2014/24/EU Article 2 (1)

## 2.A.6.5 Output Indicators (Investment Priority)

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Target (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
	Number of Action Plans developed in the field of research and innovation infrastructures	Number	76	Programme monitoring  Further explanations on the concept of Action Plans will be presented in the progr. manual	annual
	Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of research and innovation infrastructures.	Number	1000	Programme monitoring  Definition of "increased professional capacity" and survey method will be detailed in separate document (progr. manual)	annual
	Share of all European regions' (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1 in the field of research and innovation infrastructures.	%	7%	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of policy learning events in the field of research and innovation infrastructures organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.	Number	10	Programme monitoring	annual

## 2.A.4 Investment priority

Investment priority	<p><b>Investment priority 1(b)</b></p> <p><i>Promoting business investment in R&amp;I, developing links and synergies between enterprises, research and development centres and the higher education sector, in particular promoting investment in product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, public service applications, demand stimulation, networking, clusters and open innovation through smart specialisation, and supporting technological and applied research, pilot lines, early product validation actions, advanced manufacturing capabilities and first production, in particular in key enabling technologies and diffusion of general purpose technologies;</i></p>
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## 2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 1.2
Specific objective	<p>Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, that support the delivery of innovation by actors in regional innovation chains in areas of “smart specialisation” and innovation opportunity.</p>
The result that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional policies and programmes, in particular for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&amp;J) and where relevant ETC, that provide support to the actual delivery of innovation in regional innovation chains by measures related to i.e. development of clusters, support to triple-helix cooperation and to business activities in innovation.</p> <p>Regional authorities and their innovation partners need to facilitate cooperation and joint initiatives of the enterprises, R&amp;D centres and higher education actors in their key regional areas of smart specialisation and innovation opportunity.</p> <p>Regional authorities and their innovation partners also need to facilitate aligned or joint initiatives, in particular cross-regional European cluster partnerships, with other regions that have related areas of smart specialisation and with whom they share "intra-regional objectives" and which would address specific territorial needs of each participating region.</p> <p>Creating effective ecosystems of innovation can improve technology transfer and the emergence and economic exploitation of new R&amp;D results. Regions must develop and cultivate research-driven clusters in their main sectors of innovation potential to increase innovation-driven growth. Following the RoK initiative, regions must also develop more open innovation support and expand the linkages through aligned or joint initiatives spanning across borders. Finally regional actors can also devise policies to trigger consumption of innovation, for instance through public procurement of innovation.</p> <p>Under this specific objective and in line with the smart specialisation strategies, regional authorities and their partners are encouraged to work on the whole innovation value chain in order to better integrate the supply side ('upstream part') and the demand side ('downstream part') of these policies.</p> <p>In this specific objective, the cross-cutting theme of ICTs can for instance be reflected in regional policy support to innovation in digital technologies.</p> <p>The programme will support the exchange of experience among actors of regional relevance from across Europe in this field to prepare the integration of lessons learnt in the regional programmes for Growth and Jobs, ETC or other relevant regional programmes. The programme will also facilitate policy learning and capitalisation by making relevant practices and results from Interregional Cooperation Projects and other experiences widely available and usable for regional actors involved in innovation support in G&amp;J, ETC and other programmes.</p> <p>This interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of the involved individuals and organisations and plan the implementation of</p>

	the lessons learnt. This results a better implementation of (G&J and ETC) programmes and policies in the field of innovation delivery in the regions involved
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**Table 3: Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of the delivery of innovation	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	3.66%	2014	25%	Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes.  The content and approach of this survey is developed in a separate document.  For the baseline value, the definition of the result indicators was adapted in the 2015 survey to refer to INTERREG IVC and not INTERREG EUROPE. The wording also referred to the influence in the design of the Structural Funds and not in their implementation.	2018; 2020; 2023.
2	Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of the delivery of innovation	EUR	3.5M	2014	144M	Same as above	2018; 2020; 2023.

## 2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

### 2.A.6.1. Description of type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories and types of beneficiaries

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>1(b)</b>
<p><b>A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED</b></p> <p>In line with the operational objectives, the programme supports two actions to allow partners from the different Partner States to work together on a shared regional policy issue related to supporting the delivery of innovation in the regional innovation chain: Interregional Cooperation Projects and Policy Learning Platforms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> (from here on 'projects')</li> </ul> <p>The objective of the projects is to improve the implementation of the policies of participating regions by supporting exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance</p>	

with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. Through the projects, INTERREG EUROPE intends to improve primarily the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&J) of the participating regions, and where relevant the implementation of programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies in support of innovation delivery can be improved as a result of the cooperation.

Projects are also expected to contribute to the content and activities of the Policy Learning Platform for this Priority Axis (see point 2. below) to ensure that relevant policy intelligence generated by projects can find its way to other regional actors in Europe.

Interregional Cooperation Projects as a general rule have two phases:

- Phase 1 is dedicated to the exchange of policy experience and to preparing the implementation of lessons learnt. By the end of this phase each partner region shall produce an Action Plan for the integration of lessons learnt from the cooperation in their regional policies and/or (Growth and Jobs, ETC) programmes. The Action Plans shall identify the measures to be integrated and their timeframe, work steps, responsible actors, costs (if any) and funding sources. The partners shall actively involve relevant regional stakeholders in all activities.
- Phase 2 is dedicated to the joint monitoring by each partner region of the implementation of their Action Plan by the responsible actors in their territory. The actual implementation of these actions is not funded by INTERREG EUROPE. This monitoring primarily takes place within the context of in each region but it is implemented through a common methodology with dedicated indicators. The interregional partnership may decide to organise joint activities in this monitoring phase to continue their policy learning process. In duly justified cases, phase 2 may also include pilot actions to test certain parts of the Action Plan in practice.

Further modalities will be defined in the Programme Manual.

Activities of the projects can include (non-exhaustive):

- Elaboration of Action Plans (mandatory)
- Policy related analysis and studies, e.g. on stimulation of regional triple helix cooperation
- Meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group
- Interregional study visits e.g. to learn about cluster management in partner regions
- Interregional seminars and events for capacity building on innovation delivery
- Contributions to Policy Learning Platform activities and outputs
- Communication and dissemination of project results
- Monitoring and analysis of Action Plan results (phase 2)
- Pilot actions (phase 2)

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

As a general rule the beneficiaries for Projects in this specific objective are public bodies, bodies governed by public law or private non-profit bodies<sup>36</sup>, with responsibilities relevant for the project such as:

- National, regional and local public authorities responsible for stimulating all forms of innovation (incl. technological, organisational, social innovation);
- Regional development agencies;
- Universities, knowledge and research institutes and institutes for higher education;
- Operators of science and technology parks, business incubation facilities and innovation centres;
- Business support actors and organisations representing SMEs and the business community;
- Other actors of relevance to the development of regional innovation chain.

Next to actors as mentioned above, the wider target group that can play an active role in the activities of the Projects also includes relevant local stakeholders, SMEs or other actors in the field of innovation.

<sup>36</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.



Each partner in a Project may set up a local stakeholder group to ensure that relevant actors in the region are involved in policy learning and development of action plans. Members of these local stakeholder groups could come from the same target groups mentioned above (when they are not partner in the project) and from regional innovative SMEs.

#### Examples of possible Projects

- Exchange of practices among regional authorities, universities and innovation agencies to develop for each partner region facilities and methods to support knowledge transfer and strengthen opportunities for open innovation between businesses and academia in the field of green technologies within and between partner regions.
- Regional innovation agencies exchanging practices on cluster development and management in life-science related clusters, resulting in Action Plans for establishing new regional and cross-border clusters through projects under their respective regional Growth and Jobs and cross-border ETC programmes.
- Cooperation among regional authorities and business support actors from regions with strong ICT/new media sectors to exchange practices and prepare action to increase intra- and interregional business cooperation for the commercialisation of R&D results.
- Cooperation among regional authorities and business support actors to exchange practices on the relevance, the use and the management of ICT innovation vouchers schemes.
- Exchange of experience among regional actors to improve policies in support of innovation addressing the key societal challenges in the field of demographic change, well-being, medical science and health technologies (possible contribution to the Cross-border Healthcare Directive (2011/24))

#### • **Policy Learning Platform('Platform') on Research, Technological Development and Innovation**

It covers both specific objectives of Priority 1 combined. This platform will provide policy intelligence in support of ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the field of research, technological development and innovation, mainly with regard to the implementation of the Growth and Jobs and where relevant, ETC goals. The Platform aims to

- Contribute to EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant actors related to Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes.
- Exploit the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects and make them available to a wider audience of regional policy actors across Europe.
- Assist/support programme targets/clients in the creation of interregional smart specialisation partnerships for building critical mass and developing joint roadmaps for their industries through the appropriate interactive methodologies and formats.

The Platform offers activities and services for the whole community of regional policy actors and stakeholders, in particular those involved in Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes across Europe. It will contribute to the development of new policy intelligence and to synergies with other relevant initiatives in particular other existing platforms addressing similar topics and target audience.

In order to ensure a user-driven character, the platform will be selected through a tendering procedure that will allow flexibility in terms of activities and services offered, as well as of their administration to ensure quality performance. Its services will be adapted to the needs of the territories and to the demand of the users. The overall monitoring of the platform is ensured by the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the programme. An annual meeting will also be organised with the relevant thematic DGs of the Commission in order to ensure their contribution to the work of the platforms.

#### Activities and services of the Platform include (non-exhaustive):

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes and other relevant sources around Europe on topics related to Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTD&I) to identify possible interesting experiences
- Maintain a close collaboration with the Smart Specialisation Platform to share information and ensure complementarity of activities
- Analyse and benchmark the content of projects in Priority 1 and other priorities, if relevant

- Write thematic productions such as newsletters, studies, policy recommendations related to regional RTD&I challenges
- Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC in the field of Priority 1 (with other Platforms where there are strong thematic synergies).
- Organise and facilitate peer reviews between European regions in support of policy improvement and capacity building
- Advise projects in Priority Axis 1 when relevant
- Advise INTERREG EUROPE programme bodies on the programme's strategic orientation on RTD&I (e.g. recommendations for thematic calls for proposals)
- Assess and advise on the relevance of possible pilot actions proposed by projects in their phase 2
- Provide and moderate on-line collaborative tools for knowledge sharing and policy learning
- Answer requests for information from individual actors and stakeholders involved in G&J and ETC programmes in the field of Priority 1.

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The beneficiary<sup>37</sup> of the Platform is the Managing Authority of INTERREG EUROPE. The main target groups for the services and activities of the Platform are:

- Actors involved in management and implementation of Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes (or of similar thematic policies in the case of Norway and Switzerland);
- Actors involved as (potential) beneficiaries of such programmes;
- Actors not directly involved in the Growth and Jobs or ETC programmes, whose competences and needs are in line with the issues tackled by the platform.

Examples of possible actions of the Platform:

- Publication of an overview of successful examples cluster support projects and measures implemented through Growth and Jobs programmes across Europe.
- Peer reviews among European regions (involving authorities and actors in their innovation chains) related to the organisation and governance of their triple helix cooperation.
- Workshop for procurement managers of regional authorities to disseminate regional practices in public procurement for innovation.

**B. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE**

The exchange of experience in projects on innovation delivery will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and build up skills and capacities of professionals (partner staff, other stakeholders) involved in the project activities. The projects will also ensure that these lessons learnt are integrated in regional policies and actions by developing concrete Action Plans for each partner region. As a result the projects lead to an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes, in support of the delivery of innovation in regional innovation chains.

Projects in this Specific Objective can also have synergies with themes covered by other specific objectives of this programme, for instance related to cluster policies involving SMEs, or innovation cooperation linked to low-carbon technologies, eco-innovation or resource efficiency.

The Platform for this priority contributes to the specific objective through activities and services that enable policy learning in the field of delivery of innovation in regional innovation chains. These activities and services will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and experiences in this field and build up skills and capacities of actors (staff and organisations) involved in the development and implementation of G&J and ETC programmes in this field. As a result these actors will be able to improve the implementation of their programmes.

The improvements to the implementation of G&J, ETC and other regional programmes can take place at different levels, notably:

- the implementation of a new project/practice/tool funded by the programme

<sup>37</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

- a change in the management of the programme/policy (e.g. revised set-up of calls for proposals, alternative monitoring methods)
- a change in the strategic focus of the programme/policy (e.g. modification of a specific objective, integration of a new policy aim).

The improved implementation of policies and programmes should eventually have an effect on the delivery of innovation in the participating regions, for instance related to:

- Stronger business/academia and triple helix collaboration
- Acceleration in the commercialisation of R&D results
- Increased number of SMEs and employees in R&D
- Increased number of intellectual property exploited in the region
- Increased investment of private sector (including banks) in innovation

### **C. SPECIFIC TERRITORIES TARGETED (IF ANY)**

INTERREG EUROPE targets the whole EU territory and Norway and Switzerland.

## **2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for selection of operations**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>1(b)</b>
	<p>In addition to the guiding principles defined for specific objective 1.1, the selection criteria defined in the manual will ensure that result oriented projects are selected. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate clear policy relevance (e.g. direct involvement of policy makers, compliance with regional strategies such as Smart Specialisation Strategies for Priority Axis 1) and credible paths for implementation (including sound monitoring system). Particular consideration will be given to projects which demonstrate a strong focus on developing inter-regional value chains, in line with smart specialisation priorities, which are developing systematic approaches to industry-led inter-regional collaboration. These projects should aim at demonstrating EU replication potential in their methodologies, which could be transferred to different domains and areas of EU industrial strength.</p> <p>In line with the overall programme objective, all Projects should have a minimum link with the implementation of programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal, and when relevant the ETC goal. In each project at least half of the participating EU regions have to address the implementation of their Operational Programme (e.g. for a project with 4 regions, a minimum of 2 would need to demonstrate this direct link; for a project with 5 regions, at least 3 must demonstrate this direct link). A balanced combination of regions of varying development levels will be encouraged in the project partnerships.</p> <p>The Programme Manual will provide a detailed description of the 6 selection criteria used for selecting the projects. The following elements will be covered in these criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Quality of monitoring and evaluation plans</b> in each of the partner regions. The quality of project-specific impact indicators foreseen in the project is important in this regards.</li> <li>○ <b>Coherence with policy context:</b> i.e. alignment with <b>ESIF programmes, regional policies and Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3)</b> and demonstration of relevance of the project with respect to existing policies and strategies in the partner regions. Linkages with ESIF and/or national/regional policies need to be demonstrated in order to avoid selecting ad hoc projects with little chance of implementation and continuity. Synergies with other EU programmes such as Teaming or Twinning or Cluster related projects in Horizon 2020, or INTERREG A and B projects, is another positive element. The extent to which the projects can contribute to further leverage the results of the H2020 and COSME actions promoting cross-sectoral and cross-regional partnerships involving clusters are also considered.</li> <li>○ <b>Quality of regional partnership:</b> Involvement of relevant policy-makers (having a stake with respect to the topic of the project) and involvement of wider group of local/regional stakeholders (relevant to the project topic);</li> <li>○ <b>Private sector</b> involvement: companies are not eligible as beneficiaries but can be closely associated projects activities. Cooperation between clusters will notably be encouraged since INTERREG Europe builds on Regions of Knowledge experience;</li> <li>○ <b>Aligned/joint actions:</b> seeking cross-border or interregional opportunities. Many aspects of regional policies can benefit from opening up to transnational aligned or joint actions.</li> </ul>

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**2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>1(b)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

**2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>1(b)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

**2.A.6.5 Output Indicators (Investment Priority)**

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Target (2023)</b>	<b>Source of Data</b>	<b>Freq. of reporting</b>
	Number of Action Plans developed in the field of innovation delivery	Number	154	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of innovation delivery.	Number	2000	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1 in the field of innovation delivery.	%	18%	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of policy learning events in the field of innovation delivery organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.	Number	18	Programme monitoring	annual

## 2.A.1 Priority Axis

ID of the Priority Axis	<b>Priority Axis 2</b>
Title of the Priority Axis	<b>Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises</b>

<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	<2A.3 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	<2A.4 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	<2A.5 type='C' input='M'>

## 2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

<2.A.0 type='S' maxlength='3 500' input='M'>
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## 2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)

## 2.A.4 Investment priority

Investment priority	<b>Investment priority 3(d)</b> <i>supporting the capacity of SMEs to engage in growth in regional, national and international markets, and in innovation processes;</i>
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## 2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 2.1
Specific objective	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop and achieve growth and engage in innovation.
The result that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Growth and Jobs and ETC that support the creation, development and growth of small and medium sized enterprises.</p> <p>The potential for enterprises to create new or use existing market opportunities begins with the presence of entrepreneurial skills. Regional policies therefore need to actively support entrepreneurship development and capacity building as a building block for business creation and growth.</p> <p>It is equally crucial that regional authorities and business support actors respond adequately to the key challenges that obstruct businesses on their path to growth, such as access to finance (e.g. through facilities for start-up capital or guarantees) and knowledge and to international markets. Certain priority target groups of entrepreneurship policies (e.g. young people, migrants or female entrepreneurs) may also require specific support. The same relates to regional policies to support the development of social enterprises.</p>

ID	Specific Objective 2.1
	<p>A transparent and dependable business climate is crucial for all economic actors. Regional procedures can be made more business-friendly, e.g. related to public procurement or e-invoicing.</p> <p>In this specific objective the cross-cutting theme of ICTs can for instance be tackled through business support to the digital economy.</p> <p>The programme will support exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt in regional policies and actions for entrepreneurship and SME support And the programme will facilitate policy learning and capitalisation by making relevant practices and results from interregional cooperation and other experiences widely available and usable for regional actors involved in innovation support in G&amp;J, ETC and other programmes.</p> <p>This interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of individuals and organisations involved and prepare the implementation of the lessons learnt. This results in a better implementation of G&amp;J or ETC programmes, but also other programmes and policies of regions involved.</p>

**Table 3: Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>SME growth and entrepreneurship</i>	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	1.83%	2014	33%	<p>Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of <u>all Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes.</u></p> <p>The content and approach of this survey is developed in a separate document.</p> <p>For the baseline value, the definition of the result indicators was adapted in the 2015 survey to refer to INTERREG IVC and not INTERREG EUROPE. The wording also referred to the influence in the design of the Structural Funds and not in their implementation.</p>	2018; 2020; 2023.
2	Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>SME growth and entrepreneurship</i>	EUR	0	2014	192M	Same as above	2018; 2020; 2023.

## 2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

### 2.A.6.1. Description of type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories and types of beneficiaries

Investment Priority	3(d)
<p><b>TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED</b></p> <p>In line with the operational objectives, the programme supports two actions to allow partners from the different Partner States to work together on a shared regional policy issue related to supporting SME growth and entrepreneurship: Interregional Cooperation Projects and Policy Learning Platforms.</p> <p><b>1. Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> (from here on 'projects'):</p> <p>The objective of the Projects is to improve the implementation of the policies of participating regions by supporting exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. Through the projects, INTERREG EUROPE intends to improve primarily the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&amp;J) of the participating regions, and where relevant the implementation of programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies in the field SME and entrepreneurship support can be improved as a result of the cooperation.</p> <p>Projects are also expected to contribute to the content and activities of the Policy Learning Platform for this Priority Axis (see point 2. below) to ensure that relevant policy intelligence generated by projects can find its way to other regional actors in Europe.</p> <p>Interregional Cooperation Projects as a general rule have two phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Phase 1 is dedicated to the exchange of policy experience and to preparing the implementation of lessons learnt. By the end of this phase each partner region shall produce an Action Plan for the integration of lessons learnt from the cooperation in their regional policies and/or (Growth and Jobs, ETC) programmes. The Action Plans shall identify the measures to be integrated and their timeframe, work steps, responsible actors, costs (if any) and funding sources. The partners shall actively involve relevant regional stakeholders in all activities.</li><li>• Phase 2 is dedicated to the joint monitoring by each partner region of the implementation of their Action Plan by the responsible actors in their territory. The actual implementation of these actions is not funded by INTERREG EUROPE. This monitoring primarily takes place within the context of in each region but it is implemented through a common methodology with dedicated indicators. The interregional partnership may decide to organise joint activities in this monitoring phase to continue their policy learning process. In duly justified cases, phase 2 may also include pilot actions to test certain parts of the Action Plan in practice.</li></ul> <p>Further modalities will be defined in the Programme Manual.</p> <p><u>Activities of the Projects</u> can include (non-exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Elaboration of Action Plans (mandatory)</li><li>- Studies and analysis on entrepreneurship and SME support policies</li><li>- Meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group</li><li>- Interregional study visits e.g. to learn about partner regions' SME support facilities and entrepreneurship policies.</li><li>- Interregional seminars and events for experience exchange and capacity building on entrepreneurship and SME support</li><li>- Contributions to Policy Learning Platform activities and outputs</li><li>- Communication and dissemination of project results</li><li>- Monitoring and analysis of Action Plan results (phase 2)</li><li>- Pilot actions (phase 2)</li></ul>	

### Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

As a general rule the beneficiaries for Projects in this specific objective are public bodies, bodies governed by public law or private non-profit bodies<sup>38</sup>, with responsibilities relevant for the project such as:

- National, regional and local public authorities responsible for entrepreneurship and SME support;
- Regional development agencies;
- Business support actors, cluster organisations, other organisations representing SMEs;
- Chambers of commerce and trade;
- Education and vocational training actors;
- Other actors of relevance to the development of regional entrepreneurship and SME competitiveness.

Next to actors as mentioned above, the wider target group that can play an active role in the activities of the Projects also includes relevant local stakeholders, SMEs or other actors in the field of entrepreneurship and SMEs.

Each partner in a Project may set up a local stakeholder group to ensure that relevant actors in the region are involved in policy learning and development of action plans. Members of these local stakeholder groups could come from the same target groups mentioned above (when they are not partner in the project) and from regional SMEs, civil society organisations and possibly individuals (future potential entrepreneurs).

### Examples of possible Projects

- Cooperation among regional authorities and business support agencies to exchange practices on the set-up and management of seed-capital facilities to support SMEs, to prepare the creation of such financial support schemes through the partners' programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs or other regional business support programmes.
- Regional authorities and business support actors sharing experiences on awareness raising and building entrepreneurial qualities among young people and developing action plans for the introduction of young entrepreneur support schemes in their regions.
- Exchange of practices about SME internationalisation and export support facilities among regional development agencies, resulting in Action Plans for establishing new and improving existing SME internationalisation support facilities in each region through a project under the regional Growth and Jobs programme or other regional programmes.
- Cooperation among regional authorities, business support players and education and vocational training players to exchange experience and best practices on the development of ICT skills for SMEs
- Cooperation among regional authorities and business support actors to exchange practices on broadband connectivity needs for SMEs, including in rural areas and on the ways to address them

## **2. Policy Learning Platform ('Platform') on competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurship.**

This platform will provide policy intelligence in support of ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the field of SME and entrepreneurship policies, mainly with regard to the implementation of the Growth and Jobs and where relevant, ETC goals. The Platform aims to:

- Contribute to EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant actors related to Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes.
- Exploit the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects and make them available to a wider audience of regional policy actors across Europe.

The Platform offers activities and services for the whole community of regional policy actors and stakeholders, in particular those involved in Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes across Europe. It will contribute to the development of new policy intelligence and to synergies with other relevant initiatives in particular other existing platforms addressing similar topics and target audience.

<sup>38</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.



In order to ensure a user-driven character, the platform will be selected through a tendering procedure that will allow flexibility in terms of activities and services offered, as well as of their administration to ensure quality performance. Its services will be adapted to the needs of the territories and to the demand of the users. The overall monitoring of the platform is ensured by the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the programme. An annual meeting will also be organised with the relevant thematic DGs of the Commission in order to ensure their contribution to the work of the platforms.

Activities and services of the Platform include (non-exhaustive):

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes and other relevant sources around Europe on topics related to the competitiveness of SMEs and entrepreneurship to identify possible interesting experiences
- Analyse and benchmark the content of projects in Priority 2 and other priorities, if relevant
- Write thematic productions such as newsletters, studies, policy recommendations related to entrepreneurship and SMEs
- Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC in the field of Priority 2 – if relevant in cooperation with other Platforms where there are strong thematic synergies.
- Organise and facilitate peer reviews between European regions in support of policy improvement and capacity building
- Advise projects in Priority 2 when relevant
- Advise INTERREG EUROPE programme bodies on the programme's strategic orientation on competitiveness of SMEs and entrepreneurship (e.g. recommendations for thematic calls for proposals)
- Assess and advise on the relevance of possible pilot actions proposed by projects in their phase 2
- Provide and moderate on-line collaborative tools for knowledge sharing and policy learning
- Answer requests for information from individual actors and stakeholders involved in G&J and ETC programmes in the field of Priority 2.

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The beneficiary<sup>39</sup> of the Platform is the Managing Authority of INTERREG EUROPE. The main target groups for the services and activities of the Platform are:

- Actors involved in management and implementation of Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes (or of similar thematic policies in the case of Norway and Switzerland);
- Actors involved as (potential) beneficiaries of such programmes;
- Actors not directly involved in the Growth and Jobs or ETC programmes, whose competences and needs are in line with the issues tackled by the platform.

Examples of possible actions of the Platform:

- Publication of recommendations for regional SME development programmes based on an analysis of successful experiences from different projects and Growth and Jobs programmes.
- Seminar for regional authorities on the design of SME-friendly policies, including design of public procurement processes and the reduction of administrative burdens and barriers for SMEs.
- Peer reviews among regional development agencies and education institutes of regional entrepreneurship development programmes in different European regions

## **B. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE**

The exchange of experience in projects on entrepreneurship and SME policies will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and build up skills and capacities of professionals (partner staff, other stakeholders) involved in the project activities. The projects will also ensure that these lessons learnt are integrated in regional policies and actions by developing concrete Action Plans for each partner region. As a result the projects lead to an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes, in the field of competitiveness of SMEs and entrepreneurship. .

<sup>39</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

Projects in this Specific Objective can also have synergies with themes covered by other specific objectives of this programme, for instance related to policies supporting SMEs on environmental performance management (EMAS) or resource efficiency issues in SMEs.

The Platform for this priority contributes to the specific objective through activities and services that enable policy learning in the field of competitiveness of SMEs and entrepreneurship. These activities and services will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and experiences in this field and build up skills and capacities of actors (staff and organisations) involved in the development and implementation of Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes in this field. As a result these actors will be able to improve the implementation of their programmes.

The improvements to the implementation of G&J, ETC and other regional programmes can take place at different levels, notably:

- a) the implementation of a new project/practice/tool funded by the programme
- b) a change in the management of the programme/policy (e.g. revised set-up of calls for proposals, alternative monitoring methods)
- c) a change in the strategic focus of the programme/policy (e.g. modification of a specific objective, integration of a new policy aim).

The improved implementation of policies and programmes should eventually have an effect on the SMEs and entrepreneurship in the participating regions, for instance related to:

- Increased share of regional SMEs active on international markets
- Increase in number of successful business start-ups
- Increased number of jobs in regional SMEs
- Increased availability of regional start-up and growth capital for SMEs

### **C. SPECIFIC TERRITORIES TARGETED (IF ANY)**

INTERREG EUROPE targets the whole territory of the EU and Norway and Switzerland.

#### **2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for selection of operations**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>3(d)</b>
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The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objective 1.1 and 1.2.

#### **2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>3(d)</b>
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*Not relevant*

#### **2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>3(d)</b>
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*Not relevant*

#### **2.A.6.5 Output Indicators (Investment Priority)**

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Target (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
	Number of Action Plans developed in the field of entrepreneurship & SME support	Number	230	Programme monitoring	annual

	Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of entrepreneurship & SME support.	Number	3000	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2.	%	25%	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of policy learning events in the field of entrepreneurship & SME support organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2.	Number	28	Programme monitoring	annual

## 2.A.1 Priority Axis

ID of the Priority Axis	<b>Priority Axis 3</b>
Title of the Priority Axis	<b>Low Carbon Economy</b>

<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	<2A.3 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	<2A.4 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	<2A.5 type='C' input='M'>

## 2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

<2.A.0 type='S' maxlength='3 500' input='M'>
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## 2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)

## 2.A.4 Investment priority

Investment priority	<b>Investment priority 4(e)</b> <i>Promoting low-carbon strategies for all types of territories, in particular for urban areas, including the promotion of sustainable multi-modal urban mobility and mitigation relevant adaptation measures;</i>
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## 2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 3.1
Specific objective	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy notably in the framework of Smart Specialisation Strategies
The result that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular the programmes for investment and Growth and Jobs and ETC, in support of the transition to a low-carbon economy.</p> <p>Regional policies in this field include support actions and investments to increase levels of energy efficiency, including in public buildings and the housing sector. They also aim at raising the share of energy from renewable sources in the overall energy mix, by encouraging and facilitating production and distribution of renewables, while preventing possible adverse effects on biodiversity, landscape or water. Policies must facilitate the move to more sustainable, low-carbon alternatives for transport and mobility by introducing cleaner transport modes and systems, and by promoting alternative mobility behaviour. Another key field of action is reduction of energy consumption by businesses and households.</p> <p>The introduction of ICT-based solutions can also play a key role in regional low carbon strategies, for instance in relation to reducing the need for physical mobility, increasing the energy performance of public buildings, or as a part of public awareness strategies.</p> <p>Integrated regional low-carbon strategies are needed to identify the most promising areas of action, mobilise stakeholders, facilitate and channel public and private investments and</p>

	<p>increase the awareness of inhabitants, business and other actors of the need for and opportunities of using low-carbon alternatives. Regional authorities can also facilitate the development of low-carbon innovations and speed up their application through green public procurement, regional pilots and investment schemes.</p> <p>The programme will support exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. And the programme will facilitate policy learning and capitalisation by making relevant practices and results from Interregional Cooperation Projects and other experiences widely available and usable for regional policy actors.</p> <p>This interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of individuals and organisations involved and plan the implementation of lessons learnt. This results a better implementation of (G&amp;J and ETC) programmes and policies for the low-carbon economy.</p>
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**Table 3: Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>low carbon economy</i>	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	1.31%	2014	33%	<p>Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of <u>all Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes.</u></p> <p>The content and approach of this survey is developed in a separate document.</p> <p>For the baseline value, the definition of the result indicators was adapted in the 2015 survey to refer to INTERREG IVC and not INTERREG EUROPE. The wording also referred to the influence in the design of the Structural Funds and not in their implementation.</p>	2018; 2020; 2023.
2	Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>low carbon economy</i>	EUR	13M	2014	192M	Same as above	2018; 2020; 2023.

## 2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

### 2.A.6.1. Description of type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories and types of beneficiaries

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>4(e)</b>
<b>A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED</b>	
<p>In line with the operational objectives, the programme supports two actions to allow partners from the different Partner States to work together on a shared regional policy issue related to the transition to the low-carbon economy: <b>Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> and <b>Policy Learning Platforms</b>.</p>	

### **1. Interregional Cooperation Projects** (from here on 'projects').

The objective of the projects is to improve the implementation of the policies of participating regions by supporting exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. Through the projects, INTERREG EUROPE intends to improve primarily the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&J) of the participating regions, and where relevant the implementation of programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies in the field the low-carbon economy can be improved as a result of the cooperation.

Projects are also expected to contribute to the content and activities of the Policy Learning Platform for this Priority Axis (see point 2. below) to ensure that relevant policy intelligence generated by projects can find its way to other regional actors in Europe.

Interregional Cooperation Projects as a general rule have two phases:

- Phase 1 is dedicated to the exchange of policy experience and to preparing the implementation of lessons learnt. By the end of this phase each partner region shall produce an Action Plan for the integration of lessons learnt from the cooperation in their regional policies and/or (Growth and Jobs, ETC) programmes. The Action Plans shall identify the measures to be integrated and their timeframe, work steps, responsible actors, costs (if any) and funding sources. The partners shall actively involve relevant regional stakeholders in all activities.
- Phase 2 is dedicated to the joint monitoring by each partner region of the implementation of their Action Plan by the responsible actors in their territory. The actual implementation of these actions is not funded by INTERREG EUROPE. This monitoring primarily takes place within the context of in each region but it is implemented through a common methodology with dedicated indicators. The interregional partnership may decide to organise joint activities in this monitoring phase to continue their policy learning process. In duly justified cases, phase 2 may also include pilot actions to test certain parts of the Action Plan in practice.

Further modalities will be defined in the Programme Manual.

Activities of the projects can include (non-exhaustive):

- Elaboration of Action Plans (mandatory)
- Studies and analysis related to regional low-carbon strategies
- Meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group
- Interregional study visits to learn about partner regions' facilities and programmes linked to i.a. renewable energy generation, energy efficiency and sustainable mobility.
- Interregional seminars and events for experience exchange and capacity building the low-carbon economy
- Contributions to Policy Learning Platform activities and outputs
- Communication and dissemination of project results
- Monitoring and analysis of Action Plan results (phase 2)
- Pilot actions (phase 2)

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

As a general rule the beneficiaries for Projects in this specific objective are public bodies, bodies governed by public law or non-profit private bodies<sup>40</sup>, with responsibilities relevant for the project such as:

- National, regional and local public authorities responsible for energy, mobility and other low-carbon economy related policy fields;
- Regional energy agencies;
- Regional development agencies;
- Transport and mobility agencies;
- Regional environmental agencies;
- Universities, knowledge and research institutes;

<sup>40</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

- Other public authorities or bodies governed by public law active in the low-carbon economy.

Next to actors as mentioned above, the wider target group that can play an active role in the activities of the Projects also includes relevant local stakeholders, SMEs or other actors in the field of the low carbon economy.

Each partner in a Project may set up a local stakeholder group to ensure that relevant actors in the region are involved in policy learning and development of action plans. Members of these local stakeholder groups could come from the same target groups mentioned above (when they are not partner in the project) and from regional SMEs and civil society organisations (e.g. local energy cooperatives).

Examples of possible Projects:

- Exchange of experience and good practices of regional and local authorities resulting in Action Plans to plan for setting up regional structures to promote and facilitate local sustainable energy generation and distribution systems in rural areas.
- Regional and city authorities sharing experiences on sustainable mobility measures, resulting in Action Plans that prepare actions and investments to increase the use low-carbon transport options to be funded from Growth & Jobs programmes or other regional programmes.
- Cooperation among regions and regional energy agencies on practices to encourage and support businesses to invest in energy-efficiency measures, resulting in the preparation of regional support programmes for energy efficiency in companies.

**2. Policy Learning Platform ('Platform') on the transition to a low-carbon economy.**

This platform will provide policy intelligence in support of ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the field of the low-carbon economy, mainly with regard to the implementation of the Growth and Jobs and where relevant, ETC goals. The Platform aims to:

- Contribute to EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant actors related to Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes.
- Exploit the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects and make them available to a wider audience of regional policy actors across Europe.

The Platform offers activities and services for the whole community of regional policy actors and stakeholders, in particular those involved in Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes across Europe. It will contribute to the development of new policy intelligence and to synergies with other relevant initiatives in particular other existing platforms addressing similar topics and target audience.

In order to ensure a user-driven character, the platform will be selected through a tendering procedure that will allow flexibility in terms of activities and services offered, as well as of their administration to ensure quality performance. Its services will be adapted to the needs of the territories and to the demand of the users. The overall monitoring of the platform is ensured by the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the programme. An annual meeting will also organised with the relevant thematic DGs of the Commission in order to ensure their contribution to the work of the platforms.

Activities and services of the Platform include (non-exhaustive):

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes and other relevant sources around Europe on topics related to the Priority 3 theme of the low-carbon economy to identify possible interesting experiences
- Analyse and benchmark the content of projects in Priority 3 and other priorities, if relevant
- Write thematic productions such as newsletters, studies, policy recommendations related to regional low-carbon economy issues
- Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC in the field of Priority 3 – if relevant in cooperation with other Platforms where there are strong thematic synergies.
- Organise and facilitate peer reviews between European regions in support of policy improvement and capacity building
- Advise projects in Priority 3 when relevant

- Advise INTERREG EUROPE programme bodies on the programme's strategic orientation on the transition to the low-carbon economy (e.g. recommendations for thematic calls for proposals)
- Assess and advise on the relevance of possible pilot actions proposed by projects in their phase 2
- Provide and moderate on-line collaborative tools for knowledge sharing and policy learning
- Answer requests for information from individual actors and stakeholders involved in programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC in the field of Priority 3

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The beneficiary<sup>41</sup> of the Platform is the Managing Authority of INTERREG EUROPE. The main target groups for the services and activities of the Platform are:

- Actors involved in management and implementation of Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes (or of similar thematic policies in the case of Norway and Switzerland);
- Actors involved as (potential) beneficiaries of such programmes;
- Actors not directly involved in the Growth and Jobs or ETC programmes, whose competences and needs are in line with the issues tackled by the platform.

Examples of possible actions of the Platform:

- Creation of a web-based database of successful pilots and demonstrations of sustainable energy applications delivered with the support of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes.
- Seminar for regional authorities and energy agencies to present regional practices in supporting the development of energy cooperatives for decentralised renewable energy generation.
- Peer reviews among regional energy agencies of regional tools and strategies for investment in renewable energy sources.

**B. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE**

The exchange of experience in projects on low-carbon economy will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and build up skills and capacities of professionals (partner staff, other stakeholders) involved in the project activities. The projects will also ensure that these lessons learnt are integrated in regional policies and actions by developing concrete Action Plans for each partner region. As a result the projects lead to an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes, in the field of low-carbon economy.

Projects in this Specific Objective can also have synergies with themes covered by other specific objectives of this programme, for instance related to the uptake of low-carbon measures or stimulating innovation by SMEs.

The Platform for this priority contributes to the specific objective through activities and services that enable policy learning in the field of the low carbon economy. These activities and services will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and experiences in this field and build up skills and capacities of actors (staff and organisations) involved in the development and implementation of Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes in this field. As a result these actors will be able to improve the implementation of their programmes.

The improvements to the implementation of G&J, ETC and other regional programmes can take place at different levels, notably:

- a) the implementation of a new project/practice/tool funded by the programme
- b) a change in the management of the programme/policy (e.g. revised set-up of calls for proposals, alternative monitoring methods)
- c) a change in the strategic focus of the programme/policy (e.g. modification of a specific objective, integration of a new policy aim).

This improved implementation of policies and programmes should eventually have an effect on the low-carbon economy in the participating regions, for instance related to:

- Increased share of renewable energy in the regional energy mix;

<sup>41</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).



- Accelerated application of energy efficiency measures (e.g. in buildings, mobility, etc)
- Lower greenhouse gas emissions from transport, heating etc.
- Creation of regional low-carbon partnerships (authorities, businesses, research and public)
- Accelerated investment in low-carbon technology
- Increased application of green public procurement

**C. SPECIFIC TERRITORIES TARGETED (IF ANY)**

INTERREG EUROPE targets the whole territory of the EU and Norway and Switzerland.

**2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for selection of operations**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>4(e)</b>
The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objectives 1.1 and 1.2.	

**2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>4(e)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

**2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>4(e)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

**2.A.6.5 Output Indicators (Investment Priority)**

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Target (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
	Number of Action Plans developed in the field of low-carbon economy	Number	230	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of low-carbon economy.	Number	3000	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 3.	%	25%	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of policy learning events in the field of low-carbon economy organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 3.	Number	28	Programme monitoring	annual

## 2.A.1 Priority Axis

ID of the Priority Axis	<b>Priority Axis 4</b>
Title of the Priority Axis	<b>Environment and Resource Efficiency</b>

<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	<2A.3 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	<2A.4 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	<2A.5 type='C' input='M'>

## 2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

<2.A.0 type='S' maxlength='3 500' input='M'>
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## 2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)

## 2.A.4 Investment priority

Investment priority	<b>Investment priority 6(c)</b> <i>Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage.</i>
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## 2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 4.1
Specific objective	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage.
The result that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular for Investment in Growth and Jobs and ETC, dealing with protecting, promoting and developing natural heritage, biodiversity and ecosystems as well as supporting cultural heritage.</p> <p>Regional actors need to protect ecosystems and vulnerable landscapes and prevent biodiversity loss and soil degradation in their territories to prevent (further) degradation of these natural assets. Sustainable management and exploitation of the natural environment can also foster sustainable regional development based on so-called ecosystem services (e.g. pollination for agriculture, or natural flood retention areas) and natural quality (e.g. tourism, regional attractiveness). A similar logic applies to the preservation and exploitation of regional cultural heritage. Preservation and exploitation strategies can incorporate ICT applications for instance to raise public awareness and ownership of natural and cultural heritage or by introducing applications or e-culture.</p> <p>Regional actors in management of natural and cultural heritage must define coordinated, place-based strategies and actions that balance measures of preservation with sustainable exploitation of these assets. This can include improvement of biodiversity</p>

	<p>protection schemes, sustainable use of NATURA 2000 or other protected areas, increase knowledge and sensitisation of actors.</p> <p>The programme supports exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the aim to prepare the integration of lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. And the programme will facilitate policy learning and capitalisation by making relevant practices and results from Interregional Cooperation Projects and other experiences widely available and usable for regional policy actors.</p> <p>This interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of individuals and organisations involved and plan the implementation of lessons learnt. This results a better implementation of (G&amp;J and ETC) programmes and policies for natural and cultural heritage.</p>
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**Table 3: Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</i>	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	1.57%	2014	16%	<p>Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of <u>all Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes</u>.</p> <p>The content and approach of this survey is developed in a separate document.</p> <p>For the baseline value, the definition of the result indicators was adapted in the 2015 survey to refer to INTERREG IVC and not INTERREG EUROPE. The wording also referred to the influence in the design of the Structural Funds and not in their implementation.</p>	2018; 2020; 2023.
2	Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of <i>protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</i>	EUR	19M	2014	96M	Same as above	2018; 2020; 2023.

## 2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

### 2.A.6.1. Description of type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories and types of beneficiaries

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>6(c)</b>
<b>A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED</b>	
<p>In line with the operational objectives, the programme supports two actions to allow partners from the different Partner States to work together on a shared regional policy issue related to supporting the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage: <b>Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> and <b>Policy Learning Platforms</b>.</p>	

## **1. Interregional Cooperation Projects** (from here on 'projects').

The objective of the projects is to improve the implementation of the policies of participating regions by supporting exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. Through the projects, INTERREG EUROPE intends to improve primarily the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&J) of the participating regions, and where relevant the implementation of programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies related to supporting the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage can be improved as a result of the cooperation.

Projects are also expected to contribute to the content and activities of the Policy Learning Platform for this Priority Axis (see point 2. below) to ensure that relevant policy intelligence generated by projects can find its way to other regional actors in Europe.

Interregional Cooperation Projects as a general rule have two phases:

- Phase 1 is dedicated to the exchange of policy experience and to preparing the implementation of lessons learnt. By the end of this phase each partner region shall produce an Action Plan for the integration of lessons learnt from the cooperation in their regional policies and/or (G&J, ETC) programmes. The Action Plans shall identify the measures to be integrated and their timeframe, work steps, responsible actors, costs (if any) and funding sources. The partners shall actively involve relevant regional stakeholders in all activities.
- Phase 2 is dedicated to the joint monitoring by each partner region of the implementation of their Action Plan by the responsible actors in their territory. The actual implementation of these actions is not funded by INTERREG EUROPE. This monitoring primarily takes place within the context of in each region but it is implemented through a common methodology with dedicated indicators. The interregional partnership may decide to organise joint activities in this monitoring phase to continue their policy learning process. In duly justified cases, phase 2 may also include pilot actions to test certain parts of the Action Plan in practice.

Further modalities will be defined in the Programme Manual.

Activities of the projects can include (non-exhaustive):

- Elaboration of Action Plans (mandatory)
- Studies and analysis on natural and cultural heritage policies
- Meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group
- Exchange visits to study partners' natural and cultural heritage interventions.
- Interregional seminars and events for capacity building natural and cultural heritage policies
- Contributions to Policy Learning Platform activities and outputs
- Communication and dissemination of project results
- Monitoring and analysis of Action Plan results (phase 2)
- Pilot actions (phase 2)

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

As a general rule the beneficiaries for Projects in this specific objective are public bodies, bodies governed by public law or non-profit private bodies<sup>42</sup>, with responsibilities relevant for the project such as:

- National, regional and local public authorities responsible for natural and cultural heritage
- Regional development agencies
- Environmental agencies
- Organisations responsible for management, exploitation of natural areas and/or cultural heritage
- Universities, knowledge and research institutes and institutes for higher education
- Actors in economic sectors with a strong impact or dependence on natural and cultural heritage (fisheries, agriculture, tourism...)
- Other actors relevant to the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage

<sup>42</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

Next to actors as mentioned above, the wider target group that can play an active role in the activities of the Projects also includes relevant local stakeholders, SMEs or other actors in the field of natural and cultural heritage.

Each partner in a Project may set up a local stakeholder group to ensure that relevant actors in the region are involved in policy learning and development of action plans. Members of these local stakeholder groups could come from the same target groups mentioned above (when they are not partner in the project) and from regional SMEs.

Examples of possible Projects:

- Exchange of practices between regional authorities and nature management agencies in urbanised regions on nature management to prepare development and integration of regional green infrastructures in zones under urban pressure as part of regional (Growth and Jobs) programmes.
- Regional authorities and knowledge institutes exchanging experiences on methods to assess vulnerability of regional and cross-border ecosystems, identify mitigative measures and plan their application through regional Growth & Jobs and ETC/cross-border cooperation programmes.
- Exchange of experience among regional authorities and nature park management bodies on governance models for regional nature parks and NATURA 2000 areas to prepare the introduction of new management and exploitation models for their regional parks.

**2. Policy Learning Platform ('Platform') on Environment and resource efficiency, addressing both specific objectives of Priority Axis 4 combined.**

This platform will provide policy intelligence in support of ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the field of environment and resource efficiency, mainly with regard to the implementation of the Growth and Jobs and where relevant, ETC goals. The Platform aims to:

- Contribute to EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant actors related to Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes.
- Exploit the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects and make them available to a wider audience of regional policy actors across Europe.

The Platform offers activities and services for the whole community of regional policy actors and stakeholders, in particular those involved in G&J and ETC programmes across Europe. It will contribute to the development of new policy intelligence and to synergies with other relevant initiatives in particular other existing platforms addressing similar topics and target audience.

In order to ensure a user-driven character, the platform will be selected through a tendering procedure that will allow flexibility in terms of activities and services offered, as well as of their administration to ensure quality performance. Its services will be adapted to the needs of the territories and to the demand of the users. The overall monitoring of the platform is ensured by the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the programme. An annual meeting will also be organised with the relevant thematic DGs of the Commission in order to ensure their contribution to the work of the platforms.

Activities and services of the Platform can include (non-exhaustive):

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes and other relevant sources around Europe on topics related to Environment and resource efficiency to identify possible interesting experiences
- Analyse and benchmark the content of projects in Priority 4 and other priorities, if relevant
- Write thematic productions such as newsletters, studies, policy recommendations related to environment and resource efficiency
- Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC in the field of Priority 4 (with other Platforms where there are thematic synergies)
- Organise and facilitate peer reviews between European regions in support of policy improvement and capacity building
- Advise projects in Priority 4 when relevant
- Advise INTERREG EUROPE programme bodies on the programme's strategic orientation on environment and resource efficiency (e.g. recommendations for thematic calls for proposals)

- Assess and advise on the relevance of possible pilot actions proposed by projects in their phase 2
- Provide and moderate on-line collaborative tools for knowledge sharing and policy learning
- Answer requests for information from individual actors and stakeholders involved in G&J and ETC programmes in the field of Priority 4

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The beneficiary<sup>43</sup> of the Platform is the Managing Authority of INTERREG EUROPE. The main target groups for the services and activities of the Platform are:

- Actors involved in management and implementation of Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes (or of similar thematic policies in the case of Norway and Switzerland)
- Actors involved as (potential) beneficiaries of such programmes
- Actors not directly involved in the Growth and Jobs or ETC programmes, whose competences and needs are in line with the issues tackled by the platform

Examples of possible actions of the Platform:

- Creation of an online compendium of successful regional policy measures and projects for the promotion and preservation of biodiversity and nature implemented through regional programmes for investment for Growth and Jobs.
- Seminar for regional authorities and nature managers to present and disseminate regional practices for integrated coastal zone management in view of the new EU framework regulation on maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal zone management.
- Peer reviews among European metropolitan regions on their approaches to management and exploitation of cultural heritage in the built environment.

**B. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE**

The exchange of experience in projects on natural and cultural heritage will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and build up skills and capacities of professionals (partner staff, other stakeholders) involved in the project activities. The projects will also ensure that these lessons learnt are integrated in regional policies and actions by developing concrete Action Plans for each partner region. As a result the projects lead to an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular G&J and ETC programmes, in the field of natural and cultural heritage.

The Platform for this priority contributes to the specific objective through activities and services that enable policy learning related to cultural and natural heritage policies. These activities and services will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and experiences in this field and build up skills and capacities of actors (staff and organisations) involved in the development and implementation of G&J and ETC programmes in this field. As a result these actors will be able to improve the implementation of their programmes.

The improvements to the implementation of G&J, ETC and other regional programmes can take place at different levels, notably:

- a) the implementation of a new project/practice/tool funded by the programme
- b) a change in the management of the programme/policy (e.g. revised set-up of calls for proposals, alternative monitoring methods)
- c) a change in the strategic focus of the programme/policy (e.g. modification of a specific objective, integration of a new policy aim)

This improved implementation of policies and programmes should eventually have an effect on the preservation and exploitation of natural and cultural heritage in the participating regions, for instance related to:

- Increased resilience of regional ecosystems and biodiversity
- Improved organisation of management and exploitation of cultural heritage
- Increased volume of natural areas with a protected status
- Increased attractiveness of regions

<sup>43</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

**C. SPECIFIC TERRITORIES TARGETED (IF ANY)**

INTERREG EUROPE targets the whole EU territory and Norway and Switzerland.

**2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for selection of operations**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>6(c)</b>
The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objectives 1.1 and 1.2.	

**2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>6(c)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

**2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>6(c)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

**2.A.6.5 Output Indicators (Investment Priority)****Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Target (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
	Number of Action Plans developed in the field of natural and cultural heritage	Number	115	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of natural and cultural heritage.	Number	1500	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4 in the field of natural and cultural heritage.	%	12%	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of policy learning events in the field of natural and cultural heritage organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4.	Number	14	Programme monitoring	annual

## 2.A.4 Investment priority

Investment priority	<b>Investment priority 6(g)</b> <i>Supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors;</i>
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## 2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 4.2
Specific objective	Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, aimed at increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation and environmental performance management.
The result that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular for Growth and Jobs and ETC that support the regional transition to a resource efficient economy based on green growth and eco-innovation and improve environmental performance management.</p> <p>Natural resources like metals, minerals, fuels and timber but also water, land and clean air are becoming scarcer. Making use of these resources in an efficient and conscious manner is essential to achieve sustainable growth in Europe and also brings major economic opportunities.</p> <p>Regional actors can enable businesses to pursue green growth and eco-innovation to develop new products and services, reduce inputs, minimise waste and improve management of resource stocks. And they can lead in the introduction of new green products and services, for instance by means of green procurement.</p> <p>They can also create awareness and provide incentives to businesses and households to provoke change in consumption patterns and reduce waste and emissions of pollutants to air, soil and water. The introduction of digital technologies to contribute to more efficient use of resources (green ICT) can be an important part of this. Finally, regional authorities can invest in further improving (the governance of) waste management, water treatment and recycling.</p> <p>The programme will support exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance, intended to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. And the programme will facilitate policy learning and capitalisation by making relevant practices and results from Interregional Cooperation Projects and other experiences widely available for regional policy actors.</p> <p>This interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of individuals and organisations involved and prepare the implementation of the lessons learnt, resulting in a better implementation of (G&amp;J and ETC) programmes and policies for resource efficiency, green growth and environmental performance management.</p>



**Table 3: Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of <i>resource efficiency</i>	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	0.52%	2014	16%	Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of <u>all Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes.</u>  The content and approach of this survey is developed in a separate document.  For the baseline value, the definition of the result indicators was adapted in the 2014 survey to refer to INTERREG IVC and not INTERREG EUROPE. The wording also referred to the influence in the design of the Structural Funds and not in their implementation.	2018; 2020; 2023.
2	Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth & Jobs and ETC) in the field of <i>resource efficiency</i>	EUR	19M	2014	96M	Same as above	2018; 2020; 2023.

## 2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the Investment Priority

### 2.A.6.1. Description of type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories and types of beneficiaries

Investment Priority	6(g)
<p><b>A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED</b></p> <p>In line with the operational objectives, the programme supports two actions to allow partners from the different Partner States to work together on a shared regional policy issue related to increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation and improving environmental performance management: <b>Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> and <b>Policy Learning Platforms</b>.</p> <p><b>1. Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> (from here on 'projects').</p> <p>The objective of the projects is to improve the implementation of the policies of participating regions by supporting exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. Through the projects, INTERREG EUROPE intends to improve primarily the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&amp;J) of the participating regions, and where relevant the implementation of programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies in the field resource efficient economy can be improved as a result of the cooperation.</p> <p>Projects are also expected to contribute to the content and activities of the Policy Learning Platform for this Priority Axis (see point 2. below) to ensure that relevant policy intelligence generated by projects can find its way to other regional actors in Europe.</p> <p>Interregional Cooperation Projects as a general rule have two phases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase 1 is dedicated to the exchange of policy experience and to preparing the implementation of lessons learnt. By the end of this phase each partner region shall produce an Action Plan for the</li> </ul>	

integration of lessons learnt from the cooperation in their regional policies and/or (Growth and Jobs, ETC) programmes. The Action Plans shall identify the measures to be integrated and their timeframe, work steps, responsible actors, costs (if any) and funding sources. The partners shall actively involve relevant regional stakeholders in all activities.

- Phase 2 is dedicated to the joint monitoring by each partner region of the implementation of their Action Plan by the responsible actors in their territory. The actual implementation of these actions is not funded by INTERREG EUROPE. This monitoring primarily takes place within the context of in each region but it is implemented through a common methodology with dedicated indicators. The interregional partnership may decide to organise joint activities in this monitoring phase to continue their policy learning process. In duly justified cases, phase 2 may also include pilot actions to test certain parts of the Action Plan in practice.

Further modalities will be defined in the Programme Manual.

Activities of the projects can include (non-exhaustive):

- Elaboration of Action Plans (mandatory)
- Studies and analysis on regional policies linked to resource efficiency, eco-innovation and environmental performance management
- Meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group
- Study visits to learn about partner regions' policies for a resource efficient regional economy
- Interregional seminars and events for capacity building on resource efficiency
- Contributions to Policy Learning Platform activities and outputs
- Communication and dissemination of project results
- Monitoring and analysis of Action Plan results (phase 2)
- Pilot actions (phase 2)

Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

As a general rule the beneficiaries for Projects in this specific objective are public bodies, bodies governed by public law or private non-profit bodies<sup>44</sup>, with responsibilities relevant for the project such as:

- National, regional and local public authorities responsible for environmental quality and resource efficiency
- Regional development agencies
- Environmental agencies
- Business support actors and SME/business community representatives
- Universities, knowledge, research and higher education institutes
- Other actors of regional relevance involved in resource efficiency

Next to actors as mentioned above, the wider target group that can play an active role in the activities of the Projects also includes relevant local stakeholders, SMEs or other actors in the field of resource efficiency.

Each partner in a Project may set up a local stakeholder group to ensure that relevant actors in the region are involved in policy learning and development of action plans. Members of these local stakeholder groups could come from the same target groups mentioned above (when they are not partner in the project) and from regional SMEs.

Examples of possible Projects:

- Regional business support actors sharing experiences on support measures and schemes to encourage manufacturing SMEs to assess their resource use and introduce more resource efficient work processes, and to prepare the introduction of these instruments through a regional Growth & Jobs programme or other programme.
- Exchange of experience among regional authorities and waste management agencies on policies and measures to reduce waste volumes and increase recycling rates among small businesses and households to plan the implementation of those measures as part of regional waste management programmes.

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<sup>44</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

- Exchange of practices among regional and local authorities on methods for the monitoring, management and improvement of air quality in urban and industrialised areas, resulting in Action Plans for establishing air quality and monitoring and mitigation schemes through projects under their regional Growth and Jobs programmes.

## **2. Policy Learning Platform ('Platform') on Environment and resource efficiency**

It covers both specific objectives of Priority Axis 4 combined. This platform will provide policy intelligence in support of ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the field of resource efficiency, mainly with regard to the implementation of the Growth and Jobs and where relevant, ETC goals. The Platform aims to:

- Contribute to EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant actors related to Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes.
- Exploit the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects and make them available to a wider audience of regional policy actors across Europe.

The Platform offers activities and services for the whole community of regional policy actors and stakeholders, in particular those involved in G&J and ETC programmes across Europe. It will contribute to the development of new policy intelligence and to synergies with other relevant initiatives in particular other existing platforms addressing similar topics and target audience.

In order to ensure a user-driven character, the platform will be selected through a tendering procedure that will allow flexibility in terms of activities and services offered, as well as of their administration to ensure quality performance. Its services will be adapted to the needs of the territories and to the demand of the users. The overall monitoring of the platform is ensured by the Monitoring Committee (MC) of the programme. An annual meeting will also be organised with the relevant thematic DGs of the Commission in order to ensure their contribution to the work of the platforms.

*Activities and services of the Platform* include (non-exhaustive):

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes and other relevant sources around Europe on topics related to Environment and resource efficiency to identify possible interesting experiences
- Analyse and benchmark the content of projects in Priority 4 and other priorities, if relevant
- Write thematic productions such as newsletters, studies, policy recommendations on issues related to resource efficiency
- Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in G&J and ETC programmes in the field of Priority 4 (with other Platforms if relevant)
- Organise and facilitate peer reviews between European regions in support of policy improvement and capacity building
- Advise projects in Priority 4 when relevant
- Advise INTERREG EUROPE programme bodies on the programme's strategic orientation on resource efficiency
- Assess and advise on the relevance of possible pilot actions proposed by projects in their phase 2
- Provide and moderate on-line collaborative tools for knowledge sharing and policy learning
- Answer requests for information from individual actors and stakeholders involved in G&J and ETC programmes in the field of Priority 4

### *Main target groups and types of beneficiaries*

The beneficiary<sup>45</sup> of the Platform is the Managing Authority of INTERREG EUROPE. The main target groups for the services and activities of the Platform are:

- Actors involved in management and implementation of Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes (or of similar thematic policies in the case of Norway and Switzerland)
- Actors involved as (potential) beneficiaries of such programmes
- Actors not directly involved in the Growth and Jobs or ETC programmes, whose competences and needs are in line with the issues tackled by the platform

<sup>45</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

Examples of possible actions of the Platform:

- Publication of examples and recommendations of regional development policies and tools to accommodate green technology and eco-innovation based companies to locate and develop in regions, based on Growth & Jobs projects around Europe.
- Seminar for regional authorities and development agencies to present practices and methods to promote eco-management in companies, based on examples from Growth & Jobs programmes.
- Peer reviews among European regions to assess and improve their programmes for monitoring and managing water quality in river basins and wetlands.

**B. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE**

The exchange of experience in projects resource efficiency, eco-innovation and environmental performance management will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and build up skills and capacities of professionals (partner staff, other stakeholders) involved in the project activities. The projects will also ensure that these lessons learnt are integrated in regional policies and actions by developing concrete Action Plans for each partner region. As a result the projects lead to an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular G&J and ETC programmes, in the field of resource efficiency, eco-innovation and environmental performance management.

Projects in this Specific Objective can also have synergies with themes covered by other specific objectives of this programme, for instance related to stimulating the increase of resource efficiency by SMEs.

The Platform for this priority contributes to the specific objective through activities and services that enable policy learning in the field of resource efficiency, eco-innovation and environmental performance management. These activities and services will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and experiences in this field and build up skills and capacities of actors (staff and organisations) involved in the development and implementation of G&J and ETC programmes in this field. As a result these actors will be able to improve the implementation of their programmes.

The improvements to the implementation of G&J, ETC and other regional programmes can take place at different levels, notably:

- a) the implementation of a new project/practice/tool funded by the programme
- b) a change in the management of the programme/policy (e.g. revised set-up of calls for proposals, alternative monitoring methods)
- c) a change in the strategic focus of the programme/policy (e.g. modification of a specific objective, integration of a new policy aim)

This improved implementation of policies and programmes should eventually have an effect on the resource efficiency, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the participating regions, for instance related to:

- Reduction of waste flows and increased volume of waste being recycled
- Improved air and water quality
- Creation of regional transition strategies to establish a resource efficient circular economy
- Increased application of 'green technology' in production processes
- More companies applying environmental performance management standards

**C. SPECIFIC TERRITORIES TARGETED (IF ANY)**

INTERREG EUROPE targets the whole EU territory and Norway and Switzerland.

**2.A.6.2 Guiding principles for selection of operations**

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>6(g)</b>
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The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objectives 1.1 and 1.2.

### 2.A.6.3 Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

Investment Priority	6(g)
<i>Not relevant</i>	

#### 2.A.6.4 Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

<b>Investment Priority</b>	<b>6(g)</b>
<i>Not relevant</i>	

#### 2.A.6.5 Output Indicators (Investment Priority)

**Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Target (2023)</b>	<b>Source of Data</b>	<b>Freq. of reporting</b>
	Number of Action Plans developed in the field of resource efficiency and eco-innovation and environmental performance management	Number	115	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of eco-innovation and environmental performance management.	Number	1500	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4 in the field of eco-innovation and environmental performance management.	%	12%	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of policy learning events in the field of eco-innovation and environmental performance management organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4.	Number	14	Programme monitoring	annual

## 2.A.7. Performance Framework

**Table 5: Performance framework of the Priority Axis**

Priority Axis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation if needed
1	output indicator		Number of Action Plans developed	Number	70	230	Programme monitoring	
	financial indicator		Amount of financial resources for Priority axis 1 spent	EUR	11,000,000	84,441,686	Programme monitoring	
2	output indicator		Number of Action Plans developed	Number	70	230	Programme monitoring	
	financial indicator		Amount of financial resources for Priority axis 2 spent	EUR	11,000,000	84,441,685	Programme monitoring	
3	output indicator		Number of Action Plans developed	Number	70	230	Programme monitoring	
	financial indicator		Amount of financial resources for Priority axis 3 spent	EUR	11,000,000	84,441,685	Programme monitoring	
4	output indicator		Number of Action Plans developed	Number	70	230	Programme monitoring	
	financial indicator		Amount of financial resources for Priority axis 4 spent	EUR	11,000,000	84,441,685	Programme monitoring	

**Additional qualitative information on the establishment of the performance framework**  
(optional)

<2A.3.11 type='S' maxlength='7000' input='M'>

## 2.A.8. Categories of intervention

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and indicative breakdown of Union support

<b>Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field</b>		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	096 - Institutional capacity of public administrations and public services related to implementation of ERDF or actions supporting ESF institutional capacity initiatives	€ 84.441.686
2	096 - Institutional capacity of public administrations and public services related to implementation of ERDF or actions supporting ESF institutional capacity initiatives	€ 84.441.685
3	096 - Institutional capacity of public administrations and public services related to implementation of ERDF or actions supporting ESF institutional capacity initiatives	€ 84.441.685
4	096 - Institutional capacity of public administrations and public services related to implementation of ERDF or actions supporting ESF institutional capacity initiatives	€ 84.441.685

<b>Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance</b>		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	01 - Non-repayable grant	€ 84.441.686
2	01 - Non-repayable grant	€ 84.441.685
3	01 - Non-repayable grant	€ 84.441.685
4	01 - Non-repayable grant	€ 84.441.685

<b>Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type</b>		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	07 – Not applicable	€ 84.441.686
2	07 – Not applicable	€ 84.441.685
3	07 – Not applicable	€ 84.441.685
4	07 – Not applicable	€ 84.441.685

<b>Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms</b>		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	07 – Not applicable	€ 84.441.686
2	07 – Not applicable	€ 84.441.685
3	07 – Not applicable	€ 84.441.685
4	07 – Not applicable	€ 84.441.685



**2.A.9. A summary of planned use of Technical Assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes (where appropriate)**

**Priority 1**

*Not relevant*

**Priority 2**

*Not relevant*

**Priority 3**

*Not relevant*

**Priority 4**

*Not relevant*

## Section 2.B. Description of the priority axis for technical assistance

### 2.B.1 Priority Axis

ID of the Priority Axis	<b>Priority Axis 5</b>
Title of the Priority Axis	<b>Technical Assistance</b>

<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	<2A.3 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	<2A.4 type='C' input='M'>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	<2A.5 type='C' input='M'>

### 2.B.3. Specific objectives and expected results

ID	Specific Objective 5.1
Specific objective	To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.
The result that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The main result of the Technical Assistance priority axis will be the effective and efficient delivery of the INTERREG EUROPE programme over the 2014-2020 period, i.e.in line with the requirements and timeline set in the regulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the targets set in the cooperation programme</li> <li>• to the clients' satisfaction.</li> </ul> <p>The effectiveness and efficiency has to be maximized considering that compared to the INTERREG IVC programme with a reduced technical assistance budget, new features and characteristics will be taken on board such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 more Partner State</li> <li>• longer programme duration (+ 1 year)</li> <li>• new regulatory requirements (e.g. annual closure of accounts)</li> <li>• content input to 4 platforms,</li> <li>• longer project duration: up to 5 years and 2 project phases (covering now also the monitoring of action plan implementation)</li> <li>• integration of the Regions of Knowledge programme,</li> </ul> <p>This requires the establishment of support structures and the development of tools and activities at programme level to provide the highest levels of effectiveness and efficiency in programme management and implementation.</p> <p>These include an effective project generation and selection system that leads to manageable numbers of applications of good quality and programme relevance with a realistic change of approval.</p> <p>To bring about this result it is also necessary to provide adequate support and facilities to the actors involved in the funded Interregional Cooperation Projects and policy learning platforms, enabling them to perform their planned activities in an efficient way. It also requires a monitoring and control system that provides adequate insight in the regularity and quality of the supported actions with as little administrative burden to beneficiaries and programme bodies as possible ("simplification"). This contributes to assuring that the outputs and results of supported actions are relevant and also ensures the proper use of community funding distributed by the programme.</p>

	<p>The full exploitation of the possibilities offered by IT tools will also play an important role to make all processes as efficient as possible (e.g. online application, further developed online monitoring system).</p> <p>Key to achieving this result will also be the development of suitable channels and activities for the communication, dissemination and capitalisation of the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects and policy learning platforms.</p> <p>Finally it is essential to enable the programme management bodies to make informed decisions and give effective steering to the implementation of interregional cooperation actions and to the strategic course of the programme.</p>
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## 2.B.4. Result Indicators

**Table 10: Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)**

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2023)	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
TA1	Share (%) of all supported operations (projects and platforms) that is implemented successfully, demonstrated by the achievement of planned outputs.	%	0	2013	90%	Programme monitoring	annual
TA2	Share (%) of total programme ERDF budget decommitted	%	0	2013	0%	Programme monitoring	annual

## **Actions to be supported under Technical Assistance**

### **Description of the actions to be supported and their contribution to the specific objective**

*NOTE: max. 7000 char incl. spaces*

Technical Assistance will finance the programme's Joint Secretariat as well as certain activities undertaken by the Managing Authority and Certifying Authority.

The Joint Secretariat needs a team of professionals bundling the skills and competences needed for the management, content delivery, financial and communication tasks related to implementing this EU-wide cooperation programme. Staffing and equipping this Joint Secretariat is a core part of the Technical Assistance budget expenditure.

In addition to sustaining the personnel of the Joint Secretariat, the Technical Assistance priority will support a range of activities and tools that are instrumental to achieving the specific objective of this priority. These include following types of activities:

#### Project generation and selection

- Developing application forms, calls for proposals/terms of reference and guidance documents for potential project applicants.
- Providing assistance and advice to potential applicants in the process of developing their project application, e.g. through lead applicant seminars, bilateral consultations and contacts.
- Performing quality assessments of applications for projects.

#### Support to the actors involved in Interregional Cooperation Projects

- Providing tools and guidance documentation (manuals, supporting project beneficiaries implement their project).
- Providing assistance and advice to lead partners and partners on the implementation of their project e.g. through lead partner seminars, first level control seminars and bilateral contacts.
- Participating in project related meetings and events and performing "on-the-spot visits" to projects to address project progress, outputs and results as well as obstacles in the implementation.

#### Development and support for the policy learning platforms,

- Developing terms of reference and guidance documents for policy learning platforms.
- Liaising with for and monitoring of the work of the individual policy learning platforms and ensuring the coherence and consistency as well as the quality of services and activities provided by the different platforms.

#### Monitoring, control and reporting

- Installing and operating a computerised system for programme management, monitoring, audit and control.
- Providing guidance and support to ensure adequate control of the programme actions at all levels (partners, controllers, Partner State bodies responsible for first level controller approbation) e.g. through seminars, guidance documents and advice.
- Coordinating and organising of programme level audit activities, including the (external) audits on projects and supporting the Group of Auditors.
- Regular reporting to the European Commission on progress of the programme.

#### Communication, dissemination and capitalisation

- Continuous development of the programme website.
- Creation and printing of programme information and publications.
- Organisation of events to generate interest for participation in the programme, showcase and disseminate results of the programme supported actions to professional audiences and the wider public and facilitate inter-project interaction and cooperation.

#### Programme management and steering

- Organisation, preparation and facilitation of meetings of the programme bodies, in particular the Monitoring Committee and Group of Auditors meetings.

- Evaluations, analysis and studies related to the delivery of the programme in support of the continuous improvement of its management and implementation.

In addition to the activities and programme bodies described above, the Programme may decide to use Technical Assistance funding to contribute to activities carried out by Partner States.

## 2.B.5.2 Output Indicators expected to contribute to results (Priority axis)

**Table 11: Output indicators**

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Target Value (2023) - optional	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
1.	No of Interregional Cooperation Projects approved	number	200	Programme monitoring	annual
2.	No of project visits and participations in project events by JS	number	200	Programme monitoring	annual
3.	Average no. of visits to programme website	Number/month	15,000	Programme monitoring	annual
4.	No of Monitoring Committee meetings	number	14	Programme monitoring	annual
5.	No of employees (FTEs) whose salaries are co-financed by TA	number		Staff contracts	annual

## 2.B.6. Categories of intervention

Categories of intervention corresponding to the content of the priority axis, based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission, and indicative breakdown of Union support.

**Tables 12-14: Categories of intervention**

Table 12: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
5	121 - Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection	€ 19.352.417
	122 - Evaluation and studies	€ 316.456
	123 - Information and communication	€ 1.890.706

Table 13: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
5	01 - Non-repayable grant	€ 21.559.579

Table 14: Dimension 3 Territory		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
5	07 – Not applicable	€ 21.559.579

## Section 3. Financing plan

### 3.1 Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in EUR)

Table 15

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
ERDF	0	€ 43.846.687	€ 37.163.641	€ 67.526.070	€ 68.876.592	€ 70.254.124	€ 71.659.206	<b>€ 359.326.320</b>

### 3.2.A. Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in EUR)

**Table 16 - Financing plan**

	Fund	Basis for calculation Union support Total/public eligible cost	Union support	National counterpart	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding	Co-financing rate *)	For information	
			(a)	(b) = (c) + (d)			(e) = (a) + (b)	(f) = (a)/(e)	Contributions from third countries NO & CH **)	EIB contribution
					National Public funding (c)	National private (d)				
<i>Priority Axis 1 - Research, technological development &amp; innovation</i>	ERDF	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)	84,441,686	14,902,946.00	13,465,446.00	1,437,500.00	99,344.632.00	84.99%	€ 1,409,205.00	n/a
<i>Priority Axis 2 - Competitiveness of small &amp; medium-sized enterprises</i>	ERDF	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)	84,441,685	14,902,944.00	13,465,444.00	1,437,500.00	99,344.629.00	84.99%	€ 1,409,205.00	n/a
<i>Priority Axis 3 - Low carbon economy</i>	ERDF	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)	84,441,685	14,902,944.00	13,465,444.00	1,437,500.00	99,344.629.00	84.99%	€ 1,409,205.00	n/a
<i>Priority Axis 4 - Environment &amp; resource efficiency</i>	ERDF	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)	84,441,685	14,902,944.00	13,465,444.00	1,437,500.00	99,344.629.00	84.99%	€ 1,409,205.00	n/a
<i>Priority Axis 5 - Technical Assistance</i>	ERDF	total eligible expenditure (incl. public and private)	21,559,579	7,371,520.00	7,371,520.00	0,00	28,931,099.00	74.52%	€ 364,007	n/a
<b>Total</b>			<b>359,326,320</b>	<b>66,983,298.00</b>	<b>61,233,298.00</b>	<b>5,750,000.00</b>	<b>426,309,618.00</b>	<b>84,29%</b>	<b>€ 6,000,827</b>	

\*) The co-financing rate of 85% is an average, based on the 3 different co-financing rates that will be applied. For **Interregional Cooperation Projects** a co-financing rate of 85% will be applied to public partners as well as to public law bodies. A co-financing rate of 75% will be applied to private non-profit bodies. The Policy Learning Platforms will be financed at 100%.

### 3.2.B. Breakdown by priority axis and thematic objective

**Table 17**

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
<i>Priority Axis 1 - Research, technological development &amp; innovation</i>	TO1 - Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	€ 84,441,686	14,902,946.00	99,344.632.00
<i>Priority Axis 2 - Competitiveness of small &amp; medium-sized enterprises</i>	TO3 - Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs	€ 84,441,685	14,902,944.00	99,344.629.00
<i>Priority Axis 3 - Low carbon economy</i>	TO4 - supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	€ 84,441,685	14,902,944.00	99,344.629.00
<i>Priority Axis 4 - Environment &amp; resource efficiency</i>	TO6 - protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	€ 84,441,685	14,902,944.00	99,344.629.00
<i>Priority Axis 5 - Technical Assistance</i>		€ 21,559,579	7,371,520.00	28,931,099.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>€ 359,326,320</b>	<b>66,983,298.00</b>	<b>426,309,618.00</b>

**Table 18: Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives**

*The content of this table will be generated automatically on the basis of tables on categories of intervention under each priority axis.*

Priority axis	Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (€)	Proportion of the total allocation to the programme (%)
<i>Priority Axis 1 - Research, technological development &amp; innovation</i>	0	0
<i>Priority Axis 2 - Competitiveness of small &amp; medium-sized enterprises</i>	0	0
<i>Priority Axis 3 - Low carbon economy</i>	33,776,674.00	9.4%
<i>Priority Axis 4 - Environment &amp; resource efficiency</i>	0	0
<i>Priority Axis 5 - Technical Assistance</i>	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>33,776,674.00</b>	<b>9.4%</b>



## Section 4. Integrated approach to territorial development

### Description of the integrated approach to territorial development

*Description of the integrated approach to territorial development, taking into account the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, including in relation to regions and areas referred to in Article 174(3) TFEU, having regard to the Partnership Agreements of the participating Member States, and showing how it contributes to the accomplishment of the programme objectives and expected results*

The objective of the INTERREG EUROPE programme is to improve the implementation and the effectiveness of regional development policies and programmes, in particular under the Investment for Growth and Jobs Goal and, where relevant, under European Territorial Cooperation.

It requires the development of integrated strategies addressing the main common challenges facing the regions in Europe such as the capacity of the European economy to grow, innovate and generate jobs, as well as its capacity to respond to demographic change and climate change and turn around its resource dependency.

The regional diversity in the EU, where regions have vastly different characteristics, opportunities and needs, requires going beyond 'one-size-fits-all' policies. It calls for a place-based approach that gives regions the ability and means to deliver policies that meet their specific needs. At the same time this diversity is an asset allowing each place to develop to its own strengths while benefitting from other regions through various forms of interaction. In view of this diversity INTERREG EUROPE can contribute to the integrated territorial development of regions across Europe by enabling them to make the implementation of their regional development policies better by learning from the experience and practices of other regions.

Given the geographical scope of the INTERREG EUROPE programme and its focus on policy learning to improve policy implementation, the use of specific instruments related to integrated approaches, such as community-led local development instruments, integrated actions for sustainable urban development or integrated territorial investments, is not appropriate.

However, the implementation of integrated approaches to territorial development can constitute a topic for cooperation, giving the opportunity to promote interregional exchange of knowledge and transfer of good practices on this issue. The support of Interregional Cooperation Projects directly or indirectly linked to this issue in the Investment for G&J and ETC programmes will be taken into consideration.

#### 4.1 Community-led local development (where appropriate)

Does not apply.

#### 4.2 Integrated actions for sustainable urban development (where appropriate)

Does not apply.

**Table 19: Integrated actions for sustainable urban development – Indicative amounts of ERDF support**

Fund	Indicative amount of ERDF support (EUR)
	(does not apply)

#### 4.3 Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) (where appropriate)

Does not apply.

**Table 20: Indicative financial allocation to ITI other than those mentioned under point 4.2 (aggregate amount)**

Priority axis	Indicative financial allocation (Union support) (EUR)
	(does not apply)

#### **4.4 Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and Sea basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the relevant Member States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate)**

(Where Member States and regions participate in macro-regional and sea basin strategies)

According to the European guidance, the Interregional Cooperation programme as other programmes co-financed by the ESI Funds should prioritise operations with a clear cross-border or macro-regional impact, such as those deriving from the macro-regional strategies, in order to support and enhance the implementation of their objectives.

The Common Strategic Framework (Annex 2 CPR) proposes three options to be used in all appropriate programmes:

- ring-fencing part of the programme funds for the implementation of strategic projects developed in the framework of Macro Regional Strategies,
- organising specific calls for projects with a clear cross-border or macro-regional impact, or
- giving priority to these operations in the selection process (i.e. more points in the selection process).

As provided for ETC programmes, it will be up to the Monitoring Committee to decide which of the options are the most appropriate in the framework of the programme.

Given the pan-European nature of the INTERREG EUROPE programme, the programme bodies find it not opportune to introduce a specific focus on or give priority to Interregional Cooperation Projects or activities that target a specific macro-region. However, proposals for Interregional Cooperation Projects that include issues related to one or more macro-regional strategies, as part of the practise sharing and policy learning among regional actors from different parts of Europe will be welcome by the programme.

## Section 5. Implementing provisions for the cooperation programme

This section describes the bodies acting as managing authority (MA), certifying authority (CA), audit authority (AA) and joint secretariat (JS). It defines the tasks of each of the bodies involved, including the monitoring committee (MC). It also describes the relations between the different bodies in the various processes necessary for programme implementation.

The working language of the programme shall be English.

### 5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

The management of this programme follows the management structure applicable for a Structural Funds programme and is made up of:

- a **managing authority**,
- a **certifying authority**,
- an **audit authority**,
- a **monitoring committee**,
- a **joint secretariat**

The characteristics, tasks and responsibilities of each of these bodies are described in the following paragraphs.

**Table 21: Identification of and contact details for the relevant authorities and bodies**

Authority/body	Name of the authority/body	Head of the authority/body
Managing authority	<b>Région Nord-Pas de Calais Conseil régional</b> 151, Avenue du Président Hoover F 59555 LILLE CEDEX France	Daniel Percheron Président du Conseil régional Nord-Pas de Calais
Certifying authority, where applicable	Provincie Oost-Vlaanderen Gouvernementstraat 1 9000 Gent Belgium	Jan Briers Gouverneur van de provincie Oost-Vlaanderen
Audit authority	<b>Commission Interministérielle de Coordination des Contrôles des actions cofinancées par les Fonds structurels (CICC)</b> 5 Place des Vins de France 75012 PARIS - France	Mr Jean-Louis Rouquette Inspecteur général des finances Président de la CICC
The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is: the managing authority <b>X the certifying authority</b>		

**Table 22: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks**

#### (1) Body or bodies carrying out control tasks

PARTNER STATE	NAME OF THE AUTHORITY	ADDRESS	HEAD OF THE AUTHORITY/ CONTACT PERSON	EMAIL
Austria	Federal Chancellery , Division IV/4	Ballhausplatz 2, 1014 Vienna	Luise Fasching	Luise.fasching@bka.gv.at
Belgium- Brussels	Brussels Region Public Service – ERDF Department	CCN, Rue du Progres 80, boîte 1, 1035 Brussels	Corentin Dussart	c.dussart@sprb.irisnet.be

Belgium-Flanders	Agentschap Ondernemen – Entiteit Europa Economie	Koning Albert II Laan 35 bus 12, 1030 Brussel	De heer Werner Van den Stockt	Werner.vandenstockt@agentschapondernemen.be
Belgium-Wallonia	Wallonie-Bruxelles International	Place Sainctelette 2, 1000 Bruxelles	Christian Carette	c.carette@wbi.be
Bulgaria	Territorial Cooperation Management, Directorate General, Ministry of Regional Development	St. Cyril and Methodius Street 17-19, Sofia 1202	Maria Duzova, Director General	mduzova@mrrb.government.bg
Croatia	Agency for Regional Development and EU Funds	Vlaska 108, Zagreb	Natasa Kulakowski, Assistant Director	Natasa.kulakowski@arr.hr
Cyprus	DG EPCD	29 Vryonos Street, 1096 Nicosia	Despina Stavrou	dstavrou@treasury.gov.cy
Czech Republic	Centre of Regional Development of the Czech Republic	Vinohradská 46, 120 00 Prague 2	Jiri Jansa	Jansa@crr.cz
Denmark	Danish Business Authority	Vejlsovej 29, 8600 Silkeborg	Niels Bjerring Hansen	njbjha@erst.dk
Estonia	Ministry of the Interior	Pikk 61, 15065 Tallinn	Nele Ivask	Nele.ivask@siseministeerium.ee
Finland	Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finland, Regional Department, Coordination and Finance	PO Box 32, FI-00023, Government	Tuula Manelius	Tuula.manelius@tem.fi
France	Région Nord – Pas de Calais	151 Avenue du Président Hoover, 59555 Lille Cedex	Christophe Uliasz	Christophe.uliasz@nordpasdecalais.fr
Germany	Ministry of Economic Affairs, Climate Protection, Energy and Regional Planning	Stiftsstr. 9, 55116 Mainz	Christoph Linscheid	Christoph.linscheid@mwkel.rlp.de
Greece	Single Paying Authority, First Level Control Unit	Navarchou Nikodimou 11 & Voulis, 105 58 Athens	Christos Tsikmanlis	ctsikmanlis@m nec.gr
Hungary	Széchenyi Programme Office Consulting and Service Non-profit Limited Liability Company (Széchenyi Programiroda Non-profit Ltd.)	Szép utca 2, 1053 Budapest	Márta Gordos	mgordos@vati.hu
Ireland	Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly	Assembly House, O'Connell Street, Waterford, Ireland	Stephen Blair	sblair@seregassembly.ie
Italy	State General Accounting Department	Via XX Settembre 97, 00187 Roma	To be communicated later	To be communicated later
Latvia	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	25 Peldu street, Riga 1494	Artis Lapins	artis.lapins@varam.gov.lv
Lithuania	Regional Policy Department to the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania	Sventaragio str. 2, 01510 Vilnius	Deimante Jankunaite	Deimante.jankunaite@vrm.lt

Luxembourg	Direction du Controle Financier	3, rue de la Congrégation, 1352 Luxembourg	Patrick Gillen	Patrick.gillen@dcf.etat.u
Malta	Funds and Programmes Division	Triq il-Kukkanja, Santa Verena, SVR 1411	Raphael Scerri	Raphael.scerri@gov.mt
Netherlands	Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland	P.O. Box 8242, 3503 RE Utrecht	Nancy Karjantiko	nancy.karjantiko@rvo.nl
Norway	Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation	Postbox 8112 Dep, 0032 Oslo	Mee Eline Eriksson	Mee-eline.eriksson@kmd.dep.no
Poland	Ministry of Infrastructure and Development	Wspólna 2/4, 00-926 Warsaw	Magdalena Rudzinska	Magdalena.rudzinska@mir.gov.pl
Portugal	Agencia para o Desenvolvimento e Coesao I.P.	Avenica 5 de Outubro, 153-1050-053 Lisboa	Raquel Rocha	Raquel.rocha@adcoescao.pt
Romania	Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, General Directorate for European Programmes	Bvd. Libertatii nr. 12, sector 5, cod postal 040129, Bucuresti	Lorant Para	Lorant.para@mdrap.ro
Slovakia	Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic	Mierová 19, 827 15 Bratislava	Miroslava Dianiskova	Miroslava.dianiskova@economy.gov.sk
Slovenia	Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy	Kotnikova 5, 1000 Ljubljana	Natasa Franetic	Natasa.franetic@gov.si
Spain	Dirección General de Fondos Comunitarios, Ministerio de Hacienda y Administraciones Públicas	Paseo de la Castellana, numero 162, 18th floor, 28071 Madrid	Fernando Fernández Melle (Deputy Director)	ffmelle@sepg.minhap.es
Sweden	Tillväxtverket, Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth	Box 4044, SE 12061 Stockholm	Håkan Flykt	hakan.flykt@tillvaxtverket.se
Switzerland	n/a			
United Kingdom	Department for Communities and Local Government	2 Marsham Street, London	Sam Lucas	Sam.lucas@communities.gov.uk

## (2) Body or bodies carrying out audit tasks

PARTNER STATE	NAME OF THE AUTHORITY	ADDRESS	CONTACT PERSON	EMAIL
Austria	Federal Chancellery , Division IV/3	Ballhausplatz 2, 1014 Vienna	Susanna Rafalzik	susanna.rafalzik@bka.gv.at
Belgium-Brussels	Brussels Regional Public Service – Financial Control Department	Rue du Progrès 80, boîte 1, 1035 Brussels	Abderrahmane JAICHI	Ajaichi@sprb.irisnet.be
Belgium-Flanders	Agentschap Ondernemen – Afdelning Inspectie an Ondersteuning	Koning Albert II Laan 35 bus 12 1030, Brussel	De heer Dirk de Rijck	Dirk.derijck@agentschaponondernemen.be
Belgium-Wallonia	Inspection générale des finances, Cellule Audit de	Avenue Prince de Liege, 133 (3e etage),	Gerard Quinet (Inspector of	info@caif.wallonie.be

	l'Inspection des finances pour les fonds européens	5100 Jambes (Namur)	Finance), Genevieve Demarche (inspector of finance)	
Bulgaria	Audit of EU Funds Executive Agency	Slavyanska Street 4 Sofia 1040	Dobrinka Mihaylova	d.y.mihaylova@minfin.bg
Croatia	Agency for Audit of the European Union Programmes Implementation System	Alexandera von Humboldta 4/V, 10000 Zagreb	Zvonko Siric (Head of Service for ETC and IPA II Audit)	Zvonko.siric@arpa.hr
Cyprus	Internal Audit Service of the Republic of Cyprus	13 Limassol Avenue, 2112 Aglantzia, Nicosia	Christos Karoulas	ckaroulas@internalaudit.gov.cy
Czech Republic	Ministry of Finance of the Czech Republic	Letenska 15, 118 10 Prague 1	Evzen Mrazek	Evzen.Mrazek@mfcz.cz
Denmark	Danish Business Authority	Langelinje Alle 17, Kobenhaven O	Svend Holger Welleberg	Svewel@erst.dk
Estonia	Ministry of the Interior / Enterprise Estonia (EAS)	Pikk 61, 15065 Tallinn	Aive Adler	Aive.adler@siseministeerium.ee
Finland	Ministry of Finance, Government financial controller's function Audit Authority Unit	PO Box 28, FI-00023, Government	Jan Holmberg	Jan.holmberg@vm.fi
France	Région Nord – Pas de Calais	151 Avenue du Président Hoover, 59555 Lille Cedex	Touhami Gherissi	Touhami.Gherissi@nordpasdecalais.fr
Germany	Ministry of Finance and Economics, EU Financial Control	Neues Schloss, Schlossplatz 4, 70173 Stuttgart	Christian Debach, Julia Münch, Sarah Kretschmann	Christian.debach@mfw.bwl.de; julia.muench@mfw.bwl.de, sarah.kretschmann@mfw.bwl.de
Greece	General Accounting Office, Financial Audit Committee (EDEL), Directorate 56	57 Panepistimou str., 105 64 Athens	Vasileios Katrivesis	gddde@mof-olk.gr, audit56_esf_eff_etc@edel.gr
Hungary	Directorate General for Audit of European Funds	Kálmán Imre u. 2., Budapest, H-1054	András Schneider	Andras.Schneider@eutaf.gov.hu
Ireland	Internal & EU Audit, Department of Public Expenditure & Reform	3rd floor, Lansdowne House, Dublin 4	Dermot Byrne	Dermot.byrne@per.gov.ie
Italy	Ministero dell'Economia e delle Finanze, Dipartimento della Ragioneria Generale dello Stato, Ispettorato Generale per I Rapporti Finanziari con l'Unione Europea, Ufficio XII	Via XX Settembre 97, 00187 Roma	Annia Giorgi Rossi	Anna.giorgirossi@tesoro.it
Latvia	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development	25 Peldu street, Riga 1494	Zanda Janusauska	Zanda.Janusauska@varam.gov.lv
Lithuania	Internal Audit Division of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania	Sventaragio str. 2, 01510 Vilnius	Rasa Rybakoviene	Rasa.Rybakoviene@vrm.lt

Luxembourg	Inspection Générale des Finances	2, rue de la Congrégation, 1352 Luxembourg	Jeannot Waringo	Jeannot.Waringo@igf.etat.lu
Malta	IAID Internal Audit and Investigations Department	Lower Ground Floor, Valletta Buildings, South Street, Valletta	Kenneth Farrugia	Kenneth.a.farrugia@gov.mt
Netherlands	Auditdienst Rijk	P.O. Box 20401, 2500 EK The Hague	R.C. (Ruud) van As	r.c.as@minfin.nl
Norway	Office of the Auditor General of Norway	Pilestredet 42, Postbox 8130 Dep, 0032 Oslo	Tor Digranes	Tor.digranes@riksrevisjonen.no
Poland	Ministry of Finance	Swietokrzyska 12 00-916 Warsaw	Rafal Manikowski	Rafal.Manikowski@mofnet.gov.pl
Portugal	Inspecao-Geral de Financa	Rua Angelina Vidal, 41 -1199-005 Lisboa	Carlos Trigacheiro	Carlostrigacheiro@igf.min-financas.pt
Romania	Romanian Court of Accounts – Audit Authority	Str. General Ernest Brotesteanu nr 20, sector 1, cod postal 010528 Bucuresti	Ioan Aron Popa (president)	Aron.popa@rcc.ro
Slovakia	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic	Stefanovicova 5, 817 82 Bratislava	Zusana Dolinakova, Zusana Slaninova	Zusana.dolinakova@mfsr.sk; zusana.slaninova@mfsr.sk
Slovenia	Budget Supervision Office, Ministry of Finance	Fajfarjeva 33, 1000 Ljubljana	Natasa Prah	Natasa.prah@mf-rs.si
Spain	Intervención General de la Administración del Estado (IGAE) Ministerio de Hacienda y Administraciones Públicas	C/María de Molina, numero 50 floor 15th, 28006 Madrid	Mercedes Vaga García (Auditora Nacional Jefe de División Oficina Nacional de Auditoria) Mercedes Lebranon Cortás (Auditora Nacional Directora de Area Oficina Nacional de Auditoria)	divisionfondos@igae.minhapp.es mlebranon@igae.minhapp.es
Sweden	Ekonomistyrningsverket, The Swedish National Financial Management Authority	Box 45316, SE-10430 Stockholm	Barbro Nordgren	barbro.nordgren@esv.se
Switzerland	n/a			
United Kingdom	Government Internal Audit Agency (GIIA)	G/08 Temple Quay House Bristol, BS1 6PN	Desmond Mulcahy	desmond.mulcahy@communities.gsi.gov.uk

## 5.2 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

Arrangements are already in place at the time of programme submission because implementation arrangements are kept from the 2007-2013 programming period. The joint secretariat is set up after consultation with the Partner States under the responsibility of the managing authority. The location of the joint secretariat is in Lille, France.

The joint secretariat assists the monitoring committee, managing authority, certifying authority and where appropriate, the audit authority in carrying out their duties.

The assistance provided by the joint secretariat to the audit authority is strictly limited to administrative support, like the organisation of the group of auditors meetings, ensuring the communication flow between the different bodies involved (audit authority, group of auditors members, external audit firm), the follow-up of written procedures (decision notes of the group of auditors meetings, validation of sample for audits on operations etc.) and updating the list of the group of auditors members.

This support does not interfere with the tasks of the audit authority as defined in article 127 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR] and in article 25 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC]. The joint secretariat is not at all involved in the definition of the audit strategy, in drawing the sample of audits to be audited or in the drafting of the annual opinion of the audit authority for example.

The joint secretariat is funded from the technical assistance budget.

### **5.3 Summary description of the management and control arrangements**

The following paragraphs provide a description of the arrangements for the management and control of the INTERREG EUROPE programme.

#### ***Joint implementation structure of the programme***

The programme shall be implemented through the following main implementation structures: a managing authority (MA), a certifying authority, a joint secretariat (JS), a monitoring committee (MC), an audit authority and a group of auditors.

#### ***Role and tasks of the managing authority and the joint secretariat***

The MA, assisted by the JS, will be responsible for managing the cooperation programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management as described in Article 125 of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR] and Article 23 of the Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 [ETC]. It ensures that the different programme bodies interact in a smooth way.

This includes the following tasks and responsibilities:

- accuracy and legality of payment
- information and publicity measures related to the cooperation programme
- liaison between the authorities implementing the programme and other interested parties where necessary
- liaison with the European Commission and the implementation of all accepted recommendations for amending management and monitoring procedures
- supervision of the joint secretariat and management of the technical assistance budget
- preparation of the committees and advices to the monitoring committee regarding strategic orientations

The MA is assisted by the joint secretariat in the implementation of its responsibilities and related tasks. They work closely together to ensure the fulfilment of its duties.

The JS is set up under the legal responsibility of the managing authority. Under its supervision, the joint secretariat assists the monitoring committee, the managing authority and, where appropriate, the audit authority in carrying out their respective functions and especially:

- a. to prepare, implement and follow-up decisions of the monitoring and programming committee, to organise the monitoring committee/programming committee and task force meetings;
- b. to liaise with the implementing authorities and the European Commission, to ensure that the relevant implementation reports and any other relevant information is made available to them;
- c. to cooperate with organisations, institutions and networks relevant for the objectives of the programme;
- d. to distribute information and publicise the programme, its various components and its projects, including running a programme website and events;



- e. to establish a programme database and project online monitoring system to provide data in computerised form necessary for the monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit;
- f. to develop for approval by the monitoring committee a transparent selection procedure, selection criteria, terms of reference for the calls for applications, application pack including funding rules;
- g. to manage the project application process for all projects, including providing information and advice to applicants (e.g. by means of an applicants' pack), checking, assessing applications on the basis of approved criteria and procedure, and informing partners on monitoring committee decisions;
- h. to assist and organise activities to support project generation and development;
- i. to organise partner search events concerning the whole EU territory;
- j. to monitor commitments and payments of ERDF funds at programme level by categories of intervention;
- k. to provide advice and assistance to projects regarding implementation of activities and financial administration;
- l. to monitor progress made by projects through collecting and checking project monitoring reports, monitoring outputs, results and financial implementation;
- m. to ensure that payments to projects are made within the agreed timeframe;
- n. to manage and coordinate the policy learning platforms, including the tendering and contracting of the thematic expertise, the steering and monitoring of the activities and the reporting to and involvement of the programme stakeholders;
- o. to support the managing authority in setting up a coherent programme management and control system ensuring the legality, regularity of declared expenditure and the respect of the principle of sound financial management and liaise with first level controllers designated by the programme partner states to carry out the verifications pursuant to Article 23 (4) of the ETC regulation;
- p. to support the managing authority in drawing up the management declaration of assurance on the functioning of the management control system;
- q. when necessary to support the managing authority in managing the technical assistance budget (accounting, procurement, payments, reporting);
- r. to fulfil the usual work of a programme secretariat, i.e. organisation of meetings, preparation of documents, drafting of minutes, etc.;
- s. to liaise with the body carrying out the functions of the certifying authority and to make all relevant data available to them;
- t. to support the audit authority and the group of auditors: organisation and following up of meetings, following up of members' lists, following the procurement procedure for the externalisation of audits, ensure a good communication flow between the audit authority, the group of auditors members, audited projects and the external audit firm, making relevant data available to these actors to allow for a smooth implementation of their tasks.

With regard to the management of projects, the managing authority / joint secretariat have the following discretionary powers:

The MA / JS can decide on changes as long as the purpose and the other basic features of the project are not altered. It can also decide on changes in projects which do not have consequences on the eligibility or the results of the project. In particular the managing authority/joint secretariat can decide on:

- additional minor conditions to approved projects in case additional mistakes, errors or clarification requests are found during the phase of fulfilment of conditions with the lead partner;
- a reallocation of the budget as stated in the approved application, if the content and the implementation of the main activities do not change (without any increase of the ERDF);
- changes in activities which do not change the overall objectives of the project;
- an extension of the duration of the project not extending the programme deadline;
- an extension of the date by which progress reports have to be presented by the lead partner;
- a reduction of the approved project budget when a project partner withdraws or reduces its activities;
- the replacement of project partners, provided that the respective Partner State on whose territory the new project partner is located gives its approval.

The monitoring committee decides in cases of doubt and in all other cases and shall be informed on the decisions taken by the managing authority/joint secretariat on the cases mentioned above.

### ***Role and tasks of the certifying authority***

The certifying authority of the programme is the Province of East Flanders, a Belgian public institution.

The certifying authority will comply with all functions and responsibilities in accordance with Article 126 of Regulation (EC) 1303/2013 [CPR].

The certifying authority will also be the paying body and as such shall be responsible for:

- receiving the payments made by the Commission;
- making payments to the beneficiaries.

### ***Role and tasks of the audit authority and group of auditors***

The audit authority will comply with all functions and responsibilities in accordance with Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR].

According to Article 21 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC] and in compliance with the administrative provisions in France for the audit of actions co-financed by the European Structural Funds, the “Commission Interministérielle de Coordination des Contrôles des Opérations co-financées par les Fonds Européens” (CICC) shall act as audit authority.

In accordance with Article 25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC] the EU Member States and Norway agree that the audit authority will not be authorised to carry out directly the audit functions in the whole territory of the programme. As a consequence of this, the audit authority will be assisted by a group of auditors comprising a representative of each EU-Member State and Norway participating in the cooperation programme carrying out the duties provided for in Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. Each EU Member State and Norway shall be responsible for the audits carried out on its territory. As a consequence, the representatives have to be entitled to participate in decision-making within the group of auditors on behalf of the respective Partner State and be from a unit independent from the monitoring committee members, the controllers designated according to Article 23 of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 [ETC] and any project’s activities and finances. The contact details of the respective independent body/unit representing the Partner States in the group of auditors will be included in the agreement signed by each EU Member State and Norway and a list will be provided at the same time as the cooperation programme to the Commission. Updates of the list will be communicated to the Commission with the annual control report.

The group of auditors will be set up within three months of the decision approving the cooperation programme. It will be chaired by the audit authority. The group of auditors shall draw up and approve its own rules of procedure during its first meeting. Furthermore, the audit authority shall within eight months of adoption of the cooperation programme prepare an audit strategy for performance of audits. The audit strategy shall set out the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on projects and the planning of audits in relation to the current accounting year and the two subsequent accounting years.

The audit authority, in agreement with the group of auditors (and the monitoring committee for the budgetary provisions), may decide to contract an external audit firm to carry out audits on the proper functioning of the management and control systems and on an appropriate sample in compliance with Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. The quality and completeness of the audit work carried out will be ensured by the audit authority together with the group of auditors, assisted by the joint secretariat. The joint secretariat will inform the monitoring committee of the results of the audit work and necessary follow-up. The coordination among the members of the group of auditors with regard to the above will be formalised in the rules of procedure of the group of auditors, in the audit strategy and in the management and control system description.

### ***Role and tasks of the monitoring committee***

In accordance with Article 47 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR], a MC will be set up. The MC will draw up and unanimously adopt its rules of procedure during its first meeting.

The MC is made up of:

- up to three representatives per country (EU 28, Norway, Switzerland) at the appropriate governance level;
- representatives of the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) will participate in advisory capacity;
- The managing authority and the joint secretariat will also participate in an advisory capacity.
- The audit authority can participate as an independent observer.

The MC in accordance with Article 49 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR] shall review the implementation of the programme and progress towards achieving its objectives, and more specifically the functions listed in Article 110 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. It will select the projects financed by the cooperation programme in line with Article 12 of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 [ETC]. The MC will also adopt the methodology, criteria for selection of projects and the eligibility rules. The detailed provisions will be drawn up in the monitoring committee's rules of procedure.

The MC will validate the management and control system description that will form the basis for the designation of authorities according to Article 124 (2) of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR].

The representatives of the MC will ensure that on the national level all relevant partners are involved in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme as referred to in Article 5(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR].

With regard to the tasks of the MC it shall be ensured that decisions of the monitoring committee will be free from bias and must not be influenced by partial interest of any of the individual members of this committee. Any members who have a conflict of interest with respect to any subject matter up for consideration by the MC shall declare such interest to the meeting and shall not take part in the decision. The MC will set out the details of this procedure in the monitoring committee's rules of procedure.

### ***Organisation of the assessment, selection of operations and resolution of complaints***

Project applications can be submitted following calls for proposals. The documents related to the application process will be published on the programme website. They will include the terms of reference and the programme manual, which outlines the funding rules. Details of the selection procedure will be outlined in the programme manual. All applications will be made available to the members of the monitoring committee. The joint secretariat organises the impartial assessment of these applications based on the eligibility and quality criteria approved by the monitoring committee, and makes a proposal for a decision to the monitoring committee.

Each Partner State is in charge of checking the eligibility and, where applicable, of confirming the relevance of each project partner located on its territory. This should be preferably done prior to the project approval by the monitoring committee and at the latest within two weeks following the project approval by the monitoring committee. Any Partner State can reject the participation of project partners on their territory for justified reasons without rejecting the whole project proposal. Following the monitoring committee's decision, the managing authority will prepare a subsidy contract between the managing authority and the lead applicants of the approved projects.

Project lead applicants of rejected project proposals are informed in writing about the reasons why an application was not eligible or not approved. Any questions in relation to the assessments will be examined and answered by the managing authority/joint secretariat. If needed, remaining complaints will be examined and answered by a complaint panel involving the previous, present and future chairs of the monitoring committee and the managing authority/joint secretariat. If deemed necessary, the complaint panel may decide to refer back a complaint to the monitoring committee. An overview of complaints examined and answered by the panel will be provided to the monitoring committee in the following meeting. Detailed procedures will be put down in the programme's manual and thus be available to applicants.

This complaints procedure is without prejudice to any mechanism or process for legal redress at national level.

Complaints against decisions of the programme's managing authority/joint secretariat during project implementation will follow the rules laid down in the subsidy contract that is concluded between the managing authority and the lead partner. Complaints related to first or second level control have to be lodged against the responsible national authority according to the applicable national rules.

### ***Procedure for the signature of the document setting out the conditions of support “subsidy contract”***

Following the decision of the monitoring committee for project-related expenditure, the managing authority will use a standard form of subsidy contract which is approved by the monitoring committee and lays down further details concerning the responsibilities and liabilities of the beneficiaries. The subsidy contract is signed by the managing authority, and will be addressed to the project lead partner.

In cases where the managing authority exercises its right to terminate the subsidy contract, the Partner States involved in the project will be informed by email 1 month prior to such decision and given the possibility to provide their opinion. The monitoring committee will be informed of the termination of a subsidy contract during the following meeting.

The managing authority shall ensure that the subsidy contracts clearly state that the lead partner and the project partners will produce all documents, provide necessary information and give access to their business premises to any authorised body of the EU, the Partner State or to the audit authority, the certifying authority, the managing authority or joint secretariat for control and audit purposes in compliance with Article 140 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. The subsidy contracts make reference to the control systems set up by the EU Member State and Norway in accordance with Article 23 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC].

### ***Financial control of beneficiaries***

According to Article 23 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [ETC] and considering that the managing authority cannot carry out verifications under Article 125 (4) (a) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR] throughout the whole programme area, each EU-Member State and Norway designates the bodies responsible for carrying out such verifications in relation to beneficiaries on its territory ('controller(s)'), as set out in annex 2.

Each EU Member State and Norway submits also to the managing authority a detailed description of the control system set up using the form provided by the managing authority/joint secretariat. The full description will be included in the description of the management and control system in accordance with Article 72 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. When assessing this document the audit authority is authorised to request complementary information from the Partner State. The EU Member State and Norway shall without delay inform the managing authority of any changes of responsible body and the control system set up.

In compliance with article 23 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], each EU Member State and Norway will ensure that for the verification of expenditure the maximum period of three months for the submission of the documents by the beneficiary / partner is respected. For this purpose, each EU Member State and Norway will do its utmost to ensure that the expenditure of each beneficiary / partner of the project is verified and confirmed by the controllers within a period of two months after the end of each reporting period set in the subsidy contract so that the lead partner of the project is in a position to submit the progress report to the managing authority/joint secretariat in due time and so that the certifying authority can declare regularly expenditure to the Commission.

The cost for these verifications will be either carried by the EU Member States or Norway or by the project partners. In the latter case, these costs can in principle be considered eligible for an ERDF-reimbursement and reported within the project.

In order to ensure coherence among controllers from all countries participating in the programme, standard documents (such as standard control confirmation, control reports incl. checklist) shall be decided by the monitoring committee and used as minimum requirements across all EU Member States and Norway.

With regard to technical assistance payments to the managing authority/joint secretariat, the managing authority ensures that the expenditure is certified in line with the control system set up by France. Further modalities may apply in case technical assistance is used to finance actions at national level.

The respect of the EU public procurement rules and in particular (i) Directives 2004/18/EC and 2004/17/EC, (ii) Directives 2014/23/EU, 2014/24/EU and 2014/25/EU once transposed into national

legislation, (iii) Directives 89/665/EEC and 92/13/EEC and (iv) the general public procurement principles derived from the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU has to be ensured by all national authorities.

The result of any verification of the proper functioning of the first level control system carried out by the EU Member States or Norway shall be communicated to the managing authority/joint secretariat for coordination purposes (and follow-up action if necessary). The managing authority/joint secretariat will also inform the EU Member States and Norway of the results and follow-up of any checks carried out by other programme bodies or the Commission or European Court of Auditors.

### ***Project monitoring***

The managing authority/joint secretariat shall monitor the activity and financial progress of projects. For this purpose, three main types of information need to be considered:

- the use of the ERDF subsidy for the purpose mentioned in the subsidy contract and the approved application;
- the progress made in implementing the project in compliance with the subsidy contract and the approved application;
- the confirmation of expenditure by the lead partner controller in compliance with the system set up in each partner state according to Article 23 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC].

The managing authority/joint secretariat shall assess the reports and monitor the proper implementation of the approved project referred to in the subsidy contract according to the procedure laid down in the description of the management and control system.

### ***Programme monitoring***

The monitoring of this programme will provide information on the implementation at any given time. It will cover financial issues and achieved results considering the targets fixed for the different milestones in the performance framework.

Monitoring will encourage high quality, effective implementation by monitoring the progress of the projects against the goals and intended results of the programme. Monitoring will be mainly based on regular reports from the projects and in a more general perspective on the activities carried out by the policy learning platforms.

The programme specifies a set of indicators for monitoring and evaluating its progress. The programme specific result and output indicators are presented in Section 2 of this document. They relate directly to the different specific objectives of the programme. In particular, result indicators are the cornerstone of the performance analysis of the programme. They relate to parts of the intended results that can be captured. Those programme specific indicators have been designed in line with certain strict requirements (applicable to all Cohesion policy programmes). In addition to this set of result and output indicators, the INTERREG EUROPE programme may define complementary indicators that will enable the programme bodies to effectively monitor the progress and quality of programme and project implementation.

Projects will be obliged to report regularly on the effects and tangible results achieved by the cooperation actions developed by the partnerships. They will be required in these reports to provide strong evidence of the changes that derive from their actions.

The joint secretariat will collect and compile the data stemming from these reports in order to allow for conclusions on the programme level. The managing authority will use this documentation – together with additional information on the financial implementation – to draft the annual and final reports and submit them to the monitoring committee.

### ***Annual and final implementation reports and closure of the programme***

The managing authority will, in accordance with Article 14 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], submit to the Commission implementation reports in accordance with the requirements of Article 50 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. They will be approved by the monitoring committee before they are sent out to the Commission. A final report on implementation will be submitted to the Commission by 31 December 2023.

The closure of the programme will be carried out in compliance with Article 141 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR] by the competent programme authorities of the 2014-2020 programme. The programme closure will be prepared to a maximum within the eligibility period of the 2014-2020 programme to limit the closure activities and costs to be financed by the Partner States or the successor programme afterwards.

### ***Evaluation***

The programme has been subject to an ex-ante evaluation of independent evaluators with the aim of improving the overall quality of the programme and to optimise the allocation of budgetary resources and the quantification of target values in the performance framework. The recommendations of this evaluation have been taken into account during the drafting of this programme, as described in annex 1 of the current document.

In accordance with Articles 56 and 114 of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR], the managing authority will draw up an evaluation plan for the programme. The evaluation plan shall be submitted to the first meeting of the monitoring committee.

One or several evaluations will be carried out to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme on the basis of the evaluation plan. All evaluations will be examined by the monitoring committee and sent to the Commission.

By 31 December 2020, the managing authority will submit to the Commission a report summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programming period, including an assessment of the main outputs and results of the programme.

### ***The computerised exchange of data***

Computerised systems for the management and monitoring of programme and project data will be set up no later than 31 December 2015. Online project reporting systems will also be set up in compliance with the requirements set out in Article 122(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. These systems will allow all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and the managing authority, the certifying authority as well as the audit authority to be carried out by means of electronic data exchange systems. The system will facilitate interoperability and allow for the beneficiaries to submit all information as referred to in Article 122 (3) only once.

The development of the programme's computerised systems will take into consideration the database and online functions developed in the context of the predecessor programme.

### ***Mobilisation and circulation of financial flows***

#### ***The contribution of the various partners to the financing of the programme***

On programme level the technical assistance is financed as indicated in table 16 and the share of each EU MS is based on the number of inhabitants per country in relation to the 2012 EU-28 total population.

The certifying authority administers the ERDF and Norwegian funding of the programme as well as the national contributions to the technical assistance budget in three separate accounts which will be set up within 3 months after the approval of the cooperation programme. The Swiss funding for projects will be paid out directly by the responsible national body to the Swiss project partners. The Norwegian and Swiss funding for technical assistance will be paid to the technical assistance account.

The Partner States will transfer their technical assistance contribution in up to seven instalments during the period 2014 to 2020. The payment of the annual contribution is due by the end of January of the year to be funded. An extension of this deadline is possible only in duly justified cases. The joint secretariat will send a written request three months prior to the due date in accordance with the financial tables of the national contributions to the technical assistance budget 2014-2023 approved by the monitoring committee. The written request will indicate the account number, the amount of the annual contributions and the payment due dates. The technical assistance budget is based on the financing plan of the cooperation programme. It is shared by the EU Member State according to their number of inhabitants. It also comprises a contribution from Norway and Switzerland. Further modalities may apply in case technical assistance is used to finance actions at national level.

A report on the payment situation and on interest generated on the account will be given by the certifying authority to the monitoring committee on a regular basis. In compliance with Article 44 of Regulation No 1303/2013 [CPR] any interest raised by the ERDF and Norwegian pre-financing shall be posted to the programme, being regarded as a resource for the EU-MS and Norway in the form of a national public contribution. The interest raised by the ERDF pre-financing and its use shall be declared to the Commission at the time of the final closure of the programme. The use of any interest raised by the national technical assistance contributions will be decided by the Partner States.

In the case that – at the end of the programme implementation period – the Partner States have transferred more funds than have actually been used for technical assistance, the certifying authority will reimburse these funds.

### ***Main stages of disbursement of Community funding to the lead partners***

All projects have to be pre-financed by the project partners. The lead partner collects the certified declarations of expenditure of all project partners and makes a claim for reimbursement within the progress report to the managing authority. The maximum rates for reimbursement of the eligible expenditure are specified in Table 16 in paragraph 3.2.A. The reimbursement is paid from the certifying authority to the lead partner; and the lead partner distributes the money to the partners as set out in the progress report and the project's partnership agreement. All amounts referred to in the subsidy contract are expressed in EURO. Funds will be disbursed in EURO to the bank account specified by the lead partner in the project application. The exchange rate risk is borne by the lead partner.

Pursuant to Article 21 (2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC] and Article 132 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], the certifying authority undertakes the payment of the ERDF contribution to the lead partners. The same applies to the Norwegian funds for partners from Norway as also the Norwegian funds are handled by the programme. The certifying authority ensures that the lead partners receive payment in full and as quickly as possible, i.e. within 6 weeks on average after approval of the reports by the managing authority/joint secretariat provided that the funds are made available by the Commission and, if Norwegian partners are participating in the project, by the Kingdom of Norway. No deduction, retention or further specific charges which would reduce the amount of the payment shall be made. It is up to the lead partners to forward the ERDF/Norwegian contribution to the project partners as set out in Article 13 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC].

Should there be any suspicion of irregularities, the managing authority/joint secretariat or the certifying authority shall inform the competent Partner State administrations listed as indicated in the annex of the submitted agreement in compliance with the description of the management and control system and suspend the reimbursement of the ERDF or Norwegian financing related to the project partner and expenditure under examination. Payments to project lead partners will be made after approval of the reports by the managing authority/joint secretariat.

The contributions for Swiss partners are not handled by the programme but at national level and will therefore be managed by the responsible Swiss authorities. Consequently, it is the Swiss authorities who are responsible for overseeing the audit and financial control activities.

### ***Information and communication***

The managing authority, assisted by the joint secretariat, will draw up a communication strategy which will be discussed and approved by the monitoring committee no later than 6 months after the adoption of the cooperation programme, in accordance with Article 116 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. Any revision of the communication strategy shall be discussed in, and approved by, the monitoring committee.

The managing authority will inform the monitoring committee at least once a year of progress in the implementation of the communication strategy and its assessment of the results, as well as on the planned information and communication activities to be carried out in the following year.

The managing authority will designate one person to be responsible for information and communication at cooperation programme level and shall inform the Commission of those designated. This person shall participate in any network(s) set up by the Commission to exchange on the results of the implementation of the communication strategy, as per Article 117(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. The interaction between the person(s) responsible for information and communication at programme level and in each Partner State will be defined in the communication strategy.

The communication strategy will be implemented by the communication team in the joint secretariat, under the direction of the programme director and the managing authority. It will work in partnership with the partner states and other bodies identified in Annex XII (3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. In particular, the programme partner states will support the communication activities through providing, where necessary, national specific information including on potential beneficiaries; providing a point of contact for potential applicants; ensuring wide dissemination of programme information; organising national events.

A budget for the implementation of the communication strategy will be made available as part of the programme's budget for technical assistance, in accordance with the principle of proportionality. The communication strategy aims in particular to inform potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under this cooperation programme and to publicise to citizens the role and achievements of cohesion policy, through information and communication actions on the results and impacts of the programmes and projects. It will take into consideration the elements detailed in Annex XII of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR].

To ensure transparency in the support of the funds, a list of projects with at least the information set out in Annex XII (1) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR] will be published on the programme website, updated at least every six months, and exportable in a format which allows the data to be sorted, searched, extracted, compared and easily published on the internet.

#### **5.4 The apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission**

##### ***Reduction and recovery of payments from beneficiaries***

The managing authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the project via the lead partner. Project partners shall repay the lead partner any amounts unduly paid. The managing authority shall also recover funds from the lead partner (and the lead partner from the project partner) following a termination of the subsidy contract in full or in part based on the conditions defined in the subsidy contract. If the lead partner does not succeed in securing repayment from another project partner or if the managing authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the lead partner or sole beneficiary, the EU Member State, depending on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located or, in the case of an EGTC, is registered, shall reimburse the managing authority based on Article 27 (3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC]. Details on the procedure will be included in the description of the management and control system to be established in accordance with Article 72 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. In parallel to / after reimbursement of the irrecoverable amount by the EU Member State to the managing authority, the Member State holds the right to secure repayment from the project partner or sole beneficiary located on its territory, if necessary through legal action. For this purpose the managing authority and the lead partner shall assign their rights arising from the subsidy contract and the partnership agreement to the EU Member State in question. The possibility of securing repayment from the project partner located on its territory and the assignation of rights arising from the subsidy contract and partnership agreement shall also apply to Norway.

The managing authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States as laid down in the cooperation programme and in Article 27 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC].

With regard to financial irregularities being the subject of a Commission decision on the basis of Articles 144 to 147 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], financial consequences for the EU Member States are laid down in the section "liabilities and irregularities" below. Any related exchange of correspondence between the Commission and an EU Member State will be copied to the managing authority/joint secretariat. The managing authority/joint secretariat will inform the certifying authority and the audit authority/group of auditors where relevant.



### **Liabilities and irregularities**

The Partner State will bear liability in connection with the use of the programme ERDF, Norwegian and Swiss funding as follows:

- For project-related expenditure granted to project partners located on its territory, liability will be born individually by each Partner State.
- In case of a systemic irregularity or financial correction (the latter decided by the Commission), the EU Member State will bear the financial consequences in proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the respective Member State territory. Where the systemic irregularity or financial correction cannot be linked to a specific EU Member State territory, the Member State shall be responsible in proportion to the ERDF contribution paid to the respective national project partners involved.
- For the technical assistance expenditure :
  - Partner States will bear joint liability for decisions of the monitoring committee in proportion to their respective share in the technical assistance budget.
  - If technical assistance is used directly by a Partner State, this Partner State will bear full liability for this expenditure.
  - Being responsible for the day-to-day implementation of technical assistance, the managing authority bears full responsibility for consequences of any decision made on its behalf.

If the managing authority/joint secretariat, the certifying authority, any EU Member State or Norway becomes aware of irregularities, it shall without any delay inform the liable EU Member State or Norway or the managing authority/joint secretariat. The latter will ensure the transmission of information to the certifying authority and audit authority or group of auditors, where relevant.

In compliance with Article 122 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], each EU Member State is responsible for reporting irregularities committed by beneficiaries located on its territory to the Commission and at the same time to the managing authority. Each EU Member State shall keep the Commission as well as the managing authority informed of any progress of related administrative and legal proceedings. The managing authority will ensure the transmission of information to the certifying and audit authority.

If a Partner State does not comply with its duties arising from these provisions, the managing authority is entitled to suspend payments to all project partners located on the territory of this Partner State.

## **5.5 Use of the Euro**

For beneficiaries from Partner States which have not adopted the euro as their currency on the date of the submission of a report and in accordance with Article 28 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], and by way of derogation from Article 133 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro shall be converted into euro by the beneficiaries using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which that expenditure was submitted to the controller for verification. The conversion shall be verified by the controller in the Partner State in which the beneficiary is located.

## **5.6 Involvement of partners**

***Actions taken to involve the partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 in the preparation of the cooperation programme, and the role of those partners in the preparation and implementation of the cooperation programme, including their involvement in the monitoring committee.***

As specified in article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 the cooperation programme should involve the relevant partners in the preparation and implementation of the programme. Concretely, the programme should build on a partnership with the competent regional and local authorities and also include competent urban and other public authorities, economic and social partners and relevant bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination.

### **5.6.1 Actions taken to involve the partners and their role in the preparation of the cooperation programme.**

#### **Programming Committee**

The preparation process of the INTERREG EUROPE programme started in June 2012 with the setting up of a Programming Committee (PC) with the specific task to prepare the interregional cooperation programme for the 2014-2020 period. The PC was composed of up to three representatives per Partner State (EU Member States and Norway and Switzerland). These representatives should, where applicable, come from both national and regional levels of the States represented to ensure efficiency and broad representation, in coherence with their administrative system and institutional organisation.

In addition to the representatives of the Partner States, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) were also represented in the Programming Committee. These two pan-European bodies were invited to partake in the committee to ensure that the interests of regional and local authorities and of socio-economic partners and civil society across Europe were represented throughout the programming process.

The PC met frequently during the preparation process to discuss and decide on the subsequent steps of the programming process. When needed members of the PC had additional meetings in the context of a Task Force (without right of decision) to discuss progress and prepare decision making by the PC. The Joint Technical Secretariat of the INTERREG IVC programme acted as Secretariat of the PC.

Following the completion of a draft version of the Cooperation Programme in December 2013, the Programme Committee took several actions to consult a wide array of partners all over Europe on their views and proposals for the programme.

#### **Public consultation**

First of all, the draft Cooperation Programme was put out for a public consultation over a prolonged period of 10 weeks from January to March 2014. Participation in this public consultation, which took the form of an on-line survey, was open to all actors interested throughout Europe. The survey was published on the web-site of the INTERREG IVC programme. Representatives of the Partner States actively communicated the possibility to participate in this consultation to the relevant stakeholders in their countries.

The online public consultation survey was completed by 350 individuals and organisations, coming from 31 countries (including Albania and Georgia). These contributions included more than 500 individual comments and suggestions for modification or clarification of the programme. Public authorities represent more than 50% of the respondents, followed by universities and research institutions (13%) and business support organisations (11%). A list of the respondents is provided in section 9.3 of this document.

#### **Stakeholder workshop**

In parallel to the on-line public consultation process, a dedicated 'stakeholder workshop' was organised to consult pan-European organisations and networks of European relevance, EU institutions and organisations, and selected Brussels based regional offices. Over 50 representatives participated in this workshop that took place in Brussels in February 2014. A list of the participating organisations is provided in section 9.3 of this document.

#### **Strategic Environmental Assessment**

The preparation of the INTERREG EUROPE programme was subject to a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) procedure. This process served to identify the potential adverse effects of the programme on the environment during preparation and made amendments where necessary.

The report of the environmental assessment was put to public consultation in parallel the consultation on the draft Cooperation programme. In compliance with article 9 of the SEA directive, Partner States also ensured that national rules for the consultation process were respected and in particular that the relevant environmental authorities were informed.

### **Integration of partner contributions in the cooperation programme**

One of the main lessons learnt from the public consultation and in particular from the online questionnaire is the overall positive reaction on the programme's strategy and main features. A majority of the respondents agreed on the different aspects of INTERREG EUROPE. This may be partly explained by the fact that a significant number of respondents were familiar with interregional cooperation and are therefore aware of the benefit it brings. But still, half of the respondents were not involved in any INTERREG IVC projects. This positive feedback also applied to the most innovative feature of INTERREG EUROPE, namely the introduction of phase 2 for the projects and the development of Policy Learning Platforms.

As a consequence, the outcomes of public consultation did not lead to any major changes in the proposed strategy. Nevertheless, several contributions led to a direct modification of the Cooperation Programme, by enhancing the completeness or clarification of certain aspects of the strategy of INTERREG EUROPE. For instance, the importance of the global context and of the international dependencies were reminded in the strategy of the programme. The importance of climate change for all EU territories was clarified. Additional information was included on a few topics like transport in the third priority axis. The role of ICT as a cross-cutting notion of the programme was better highlighted. The possible synergies between INTERREG EUROPE and other EU programme was also further described in section 6.2 of the cooperation programme.

The overall positive feedback does not mean there are no challenges that INTERREG EUROPE will have to face. In particular, the specific focus on improving Structural Funds was noted by several respondents as interesting but difficult due to several constraints. From that point of view, the public consultation also contributed to fine-tuning the strategic approaches to the implementation of the programme and in particular its communication strategy.

### **5.6.2 Role of the partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme, including their involvement in the monitoring committee**

As indicated in Section 5.3 above, the INTERREG EUROPE Monitoring Committee includes representatives from each Partner State at the appropriate governance level. In addition the involvement of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) will be continued. These two pan-European bodies participate in the Monitoring Committee in an advisory capacity. This will ensure that the perspective of the regional and local authorities and of socio-economic partners and civil society across Europe will be represented throughout the implementation of the programme.

## Section 6. Coordination between funds

This section addresses the coordination of INTERREG EUROPE with other EU-funded programmes. Ensuring a better coordination with other policies and programmes is necessary in order to promote synergies and complementarities between them. Coordination is essential to strengthen the respective objectives of these programmes but also to avoid overlaps in the double EU-financing of identical actions.

### 6.1 Coordination with the other ESI Funds

#### 6.1.1. Coordination with programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs Goal

The programme INTERREG EUROPE will be focused on improving the implementation of regional development policies, in particular, but not exclusively, related to the implementation of European structural and investment (ESI) funds. It aims to facilitate and improve the added value of ESI related programmes, notably those developed under the “Investment for Growth and Jobs” Goal.

The coordination between both types of programmes will be ensured through an increased involvement of regional managing authorities responsible for these Goal 1 programmes, in particular by making them aware of good practices developed within the INTERREG EUROPE and by providing them with services and information. Regular liaison will be ensured between the PLP and managing authorities responsible for the implementation of Goal 1 programmes. These platforms will allow exchange of information and will contribute to enhance the implementation of regional programmes.

In order to make these PLP well-known throughout Europe and to put under way a stronger relationship with regional decision-makers, events will be organised assemble the representatives of (NUTS 2 regions with) Growth and Jobs programmes that target the 4 Thematic Objectives supported by INTERREG EUROPE. Such events shall be organised in close cooperation with DG Regio, at least twice during the programming period, preferably at the beginning and at mid-term. A launching event will be organised for each of the four PLP upon invitation of DG Regio towards all regions in Europe. A mid-term event will be organised following the same logic.

The Interregional cooperation programme will also support and fund Interregional Cooperation Projects aiming at mainstreaming good practices in the participating regions, in particular through their respective programmes under the “Investment for Growth and Jobs”.

Areas where the Interregional cooperation programme can achieve synergies with other ESI funds will be in particular:

- Innovation support policies
- Competitiveness of SMEs
- Low-carbon economy policies, including energy efficiency and renewable energy topics
- Protection and development of natural and cultural heritage

Project applicants will be required to include information on the past, the current and the envisaged EU assistance and indicate how coordination and articulation with activities of other programmes will be carried out, especially to avoid overlaps between INTERREG EUROPE projects and similar projects in the other mainstream programmes.

#### 6.1.2. Complementarity with cross-border and transnational programmes

The INTERREG EUROPE Programme will encourage cooperation among cross-border and transnational programme areas in order to enable an exchange of experience and a transfer of best practices on specific topics.

The synergies with these other European Territorial Cooperation programmes can go in two directions. On the one hand cross-border or transnational cooperation projects can become the foundation for wider exchanges of experiences at EU level, funded by INTERREG EUROPE (“upstream” complementarity) On the other hand, exchanges and policy learning through INTERREG EUROPE projects subsequently lead to more concrete joint projects with cross-border or transnational dimension (“downstream” complementarity)

In exploring these synergies, INTERREG EUROPE will work closely with the INTERACT III programme (see point 6.1.3.)

In addition, operational prescriptions will be elaborated by the Monitoring Committee to avoid potential overlaps with respect to the future European territorial cooperation programmes dealing with cross-border and transnational cooperation. These operational prescriptions will ensure that there is no double financing of activities.

### **6.1.3. Coordination with other Interregional Cooperation Programmes**

Since 2000, the four European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) Programmes – ESPON, INTERACT, INTERREG IVC and URBACT - have been in charge of different aspects of improving the quality and the efficiency of EU Regional Policy. Their common pan-European geographical scope and increasing maturity of operations have been gradually explored. More and more complementarities have been showcased in an increasing number of events, such as for instance at the Open Days. Additionally, their know-how and committed staff were brought together on a number of concrete activities, in particular for a framework for joint capitalisation and dissemination activities.

These Operational Programmes all included during the 2007-2013 period a resolution saying in substance: *“Synergies between the three network programmes INTERACT, ESPON and URBACT as well as the interregional cooperation programme (“INTERREG IVC”) shall be looked for through a strong coordination in elaborating their yearly activities and through regularly providing information on the activities of and results achieved in the other programmes to the Monitoring Committees. Furthermore, a close cooperation is intended as regards all technical programme implementation matters.”* The current Cooperation Programmes expand on this, on the basis of the increasing cooperation and efforts to ensure complementarities.

Arrangements for the coordination of Interregional Cooperation Programmes include in particular the implementation of activities for which programmes could use and share their know-how and committed staff for the following actions:

- Bilateral cooperation events
- Joint capitalisation and dissemination activities (development and promotion of European indicators, tools, data and methods, proven good practices)
- Joint exhibitions, workshops, information / awareness-raising actions concerning territorial development.

A specific link will be maintained with the INTERACT III programme in relation to their mission to improve the implementation of ETC programmes. Where INTERACT aims mainly at providing support to actors at the programme level, INTERREG-EUROPE projects and platforms provide the opportunity to build on and give input to projects under these ETC programmes. INTERACT III intends to support ETC programmes also in the thematic objectives not covered by INTERREG EUROPE to the extent possible. Both programmes have established ways of working to benefit from each other and avoid double work.

### **6.1.4. Coordination with ESF, EAFRD and EMFF**

Considering the thematic focus selected for INTERREG EUROPE, the risk of overlapping between the projects co-financed by this programme and those co-financed by the ESF, EAFRD and EMFF is extremely limited.

However, the applicants will be asked to include information on the past, the current and the envisaged EU assistance and indicate how coordination and articulation with activities of other programmes will be carried out, especially to avoid overlaps.

## **6.2. Coordination with other Union instruments**

The coordination with other Union instruments addressing issues close to INTERREG EUROPE will be mainly carried out by checking carefully the coherence between them.

It relates mainly to the EU programmes for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020, including with its part IV, on actions for Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation (Teaming, ERA Chairs

&Twinning) and Industrial Leadership part (Innovation in SMEs – INNOSUP-2015-1 “Cluster facilitated projects for new industrial value chains”). It also includes the Intelligent Energy – Europe III (IEE III), for the Competitiveness of enterprises and SMEs (COSME) 2014-2020 (in particular COSME cluster activities, Cluster Excellence and Cluster Internationalisation Programmes for SMEs, as well as previous CIP cluster related actions), for the environment LIFE 2014-2020 which supports in particular a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

Concerning transport and sustainable mobility, Member-States and their partners will build further from already existing efforts, leverage and link with the Commission's existing initiatives and more specifically:

- The Civitas Initiative (which supports innovative action for more sustainable urban mobility and transport ) – [www.civitas.eu](http://www.civitas.eu)
- Eltis (for getting information and tools in the area of sustainable urban mobility)
- Specific financing schemes such as the CEF (urban nodes being a new priority under the new TEN-T policy as of the 2014 call), IAB's ELENA and JASPERS programmes and the European Energy Efficiency Fund
- The work of their national authorities regarding the development of a national framework for the deployment of alternative fuels recharging and refuelling infrastructure (due to be submitted to the Commission by October 2016)
- The Covenant of Mayor (which encourages and supports the development of Sustainable Energy Action Plans) - [www.covenantofmayors.eu](http://www.covenantofmayors.eu)
- The European Platform on Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans – (which facilitates cooperation on new approaches for policy making and planning for urban transport and mobility) – [www.mobilityplans.eu](http://www.mobilityplans.eu) [linked to the Commission's Urban Mobility Package of 2013 - [http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/urban/ump\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/urban/ump_en.htm) ]
- The Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership - <http://ec.europa.eu/eip/smartcities/>
- URBACT - <http://urbact.eu/>

Coordination will be ensured through exchange of information between the managing authority assisted by the Joint Secretariat and the bodies in charge of the implementation of these programmes on applications, projects and where relevant, results. This exchange of information will also include the potential redirection of project applicants towards a more suitable programme, where necessary.

Applicants will be asked to include information on possible past and/or current EU funded initiatives. They will have to demonstrate clear added-value compared with these other initiatives.

This does not prevent Interregional Cooperation Projects from building on experiences and practices funded by other Union instruments. Where relevant, outcomes from other EU initiatives may also be integrated in the learning activities and outputs developed by the INTERREG EUROPE Policy Learning Platforms.

Union instruments for the 2014-2020 period may also be used for implementing (parts of the) Action Plans that will be developed by the partners of Interregional Cooperation Projects.

## **6.3 Coherence / coordination with other EU policies and tools**

### **6.3.1 Coordination with the Smart Specialisation Platform**

Based on the Innovation Union commitment text, the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) in Seville (Spain) developed as of 2010 a Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) Platform aiming at assisting regions and Member States to develop, implement and review regional smart specialisation strategies so that they comply with the ex-ante conditionality imposed by the regulation.

With regard to TO1 policy learning platform of the current INTERREG EUROPE programme, a close collaboration will be established with the S3 platform. The PLP will complement the work of the IPTS by focusing on content related issues, i.e. what is financed in the regions through the S3, while the S3 platform keeps on developing strategy/concept related aspects (e.g. the six steps of the RIS3 Guide). The interregional cooperation programme learning platform will in a way represent the "arm" of the S3 platform with regard to thematic content and its development.

### **6.3.2 Coherence with state aid rules**

The Member States confirm that any state aid that might be provided under this programme shall comply with the procedural and substantive State aid rules applicable at the time when the public support is granted.

## **Section 7. Reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries**

### **7.1 Assessment of the administrative burden of beneficiaries**

The interim evaluation of the INTERREG IVC programme (2010)<sup>46</sup> identified some sources of complexity in the programme's rules and procedures leaving room for simplification notably in the following areas:

- The general set-up and implementation framework of the programme (e.g. programme management structures, type of actions, co-financing rates, etc.).
- The programme-level application, appraisal, selection and approval process of operations.
- The general set-up and implementation of projects (e.g. scope of partnership & type of partners, type of actions).
- The administrative and financial management & reporting at the level of projects.

### **7.2 Main actions planned to reduce the administrative burden of INTERREG EUROPE**

Already during the 2007-2013 period several steps were taken by the INTERREG IVC programme to reduce or remove some of the complexities related to administrative and financial management and reporting of projects. INTERREG EUROPE will build on these experiences and take further steps to reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries.

One important step toward simplification already taken by INTERREG IVC was the introduction of a flat rate for administration costs (overhead costs). Starting from the 4<sup>th</sup> call for proposals (2011) the calculation and reporting of administration costs was considerably simplified by introducing a flat rate of 12% of the partner staff costs for administration costs. The fixed rate is automatically applied to the staff costs and no further supporting evidence or documentation is required from the partners. This change considerably reduced the administrative and reporting burden for project (lead) partners. At the same time it also simplified the tasks of first level controllers and auditors, who previously had to spend a disproportionate share of their control efforts on a relatively small part of the project budgets.

INTERREG EUROPE will continue to apply the flat rate for administration costs also in the 2014-2020 programme period. The fixed rate will be built in line with Articles 67 and 68 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 481/2014.

Another major step towards simplification already carried out by INTERREG IVC was the introduction in 2011 of online reporting and online request for changes for projects. The previous standard templates using an excel file format were replaced by direct on-line system into the programme database. The main advantages of this are as follows:

- Elimination of compatibility problems between different software versions
- The form can be filled by multiple users (e.g. coordinator, finance manager and partners) which accelerates the reporting
- Completeness of the form is checked automatically, which reduces errors and delays in the process

The online system will also be continued under the INTERREG EUROPE programme. Additionally, also a system for online project applications will be introduced in for the new programme which should help to reduce also the rate of non-eligible applications. The use of these systems will ensure compliance of INTERREG EUROPE with the principles of e-Cohesion (see below).

An additional move towards simplification is the harmonisation work carried out jointly by various ETC programmes in preparation of the 2014-2020 programme period. This initiative aims at streamlining programme implementation and procedures through a range of common templates and model forms, fact sheets, handbooks and guidance documents. This harmonisation work was coordinated by

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<sup>46</sup> Intermediate evaluation of the Interregional Cooperation Programme INTERREG IVC, 2010



INTERACT and actively supported by INTERREG IVC. INTERREG EUROPE will build on this work when setting up the implementation tools for the period 2014 – 2020.

Further steps toward simplification will be taken. As far as finances are concerned, the use of simplified cost options for the reporting of costs under other budget lines will be also proposed in order to reduce the administrative effort at all levels, making use of the possibilities offered in accordance with Articles 67 and 68 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Commission Regulation (EU) No 481/2014. Concerning the activity and result monitoring, the number of indicators the projects will have to report on will be significantly reduced (under INTERREG IVC, projects had to report every six-month on more than 15 indicators).

### **7.3 e-Cohesion**

The Common Provision Regulation (Article 112(3)) states that at the latest by the end of 2015 programmes should ensure that all data exchanges between beneficiaries and programme authorities can be carried out electronically. More precisely the e-Cohesion initiative for the structural funds sets the following requirements for electronic data exchange in the 2014-2020 period:

- Beneficiaries do not have to enter the same data more than once in the system.
- Interoperability is guaranteed, which means that data entered by beneficiaries is shared between different bodies within the same cooperation programme.
- The electronic audit trail complies with relevant articles of the Common Provision Regulation (Articles 112 and 132) as well as with any national requirements on the availability of documents.
- The system for electronic data exchange guarantees data integrity and confidentiality, authentication of the sender and storage in compliance with defined retention rules (Article 132 of the CPR).

The electronic data exchange system operated under INTERREG IVC already largely complied with these norms. The INTERREG EUROPE programme will continue to operate fully in line with these principles from the start of the programme period.

## Section 8. Horizontal principles

### 8.1 Sustainable development

Sustainable development is one of the main pillars of INTERREG EUROPE. The programme supports several Priority Axes and specific objectives that focus fully on sustainable development, notably: Low-carbon economy (Priority 3/Specific Objective 3.1) and Environment and Resource efficiency (Priority 4/ Specific Objectives 4.1 and 4.2).

Under these specific objectives, the programme will support Interregional Cooperation Projects that have as their primary aim to improve the implementation of regional policies and programmes related to sustainable development issues. Projects will have to clearly demonstrate in their application that the activities they propose will make the implementation of those regional policies better, in order to eventually contribute to the sustainable development of their regions. Projects that fail to demonstrate this clear contribution to improving regional sustainable development policies will not be selected.

INTERREG EUROPE will also address climate change through Thematic Objectives 4 but also potentially through all the other Thematic Objectives (e.g. research and innovation on renewable energy in TO1, support to renewable energy sector in TO3 or adaption of ecosystems to climate events in TO6).

Also the Policy Learning Platforms for Priorities 3 and 4 will evidently focus entirely on policy learning related to sustainable development.

The other two Priority Axes of the programme deal with R&D and Innovation (Priority 1) and Competitiveness of SMEs (Priority 2) and do not directly focus on sustainable development issues. However, it is quite likely that projects supported under those priorities also address aspects of sustainable development in their work. This may for instance be the case for R&D and innovation related projects that focus on capacities and skills for eco-innovation, or projects that concentrate on the internationalisation of SMEs in green technology sectors. Project applicants under these Priority Axes will be invited to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen sustainable development. At the end of the project the partners will be asked to report how their project activities and outputs actually contributed to this horizontal principle. Based on the aggregated contributions reported by projects INTERREG EUROPE will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the programme concretely contributed to sustainable development. However, no specific selection criteria are foreseen to favour the development of projects dealing with this issue.

The activities and thematic coverage of the Policy Learning Platform for Priorities 1 and 2 may address relevant regional policy experiences and practices related to the principle of sustainable development.

The activities of INTERREG EUROPE are likely to generate a lot of travel which leads to related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. While these travels are an essential aspect of interregional cooperation activities, beneficiaries of the programme will be encouraged to use modes of interaction that do not require travelling when possible.

The programme will explore the possibilities to support CO<sub>2</sub> compensation measures within the existing eligibility limits.

### 8.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

INTERREG EUROPE adopts social inclusion, which also implies equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as a cross-cutting theme, to be applied in relevant cases within the scope of the programme's action.

The programme strives for promoting equal opportunities and preventing any discrimination based on for instance sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during its life cycle and in particular in relation to access to funding. It will take into account the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination and in particular the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disability.

This cross-cutting theme is most likely to emerge in projects under the specific objective (2.1) dedicated to supporting SME development and entrepreneurship. Even if the primary focus of this specific

objective is not on addressing the equal opportunities/non-discrimination principle, it is anticipated that certain Interregional Cooperation Projects may emerge that focus on, or at least incorporate the equal opportunities principle. It may benefit the innovation climate to encourage diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion and age, etc. to provide a broadened framework for the projects. Diversity in this respect may also increase the possibilities of reaching new markets, improve market positions, broaden the recruitment base and increase creativity.

Under this specific objective Projects could for instance address the issue of promoting entrepreneurship among specific target groups at risk of discrimination (e.g. unemployed youth, elderly persons, disabled people, women, long-term unemployed and migrants). The development of such Projects, among the possible applications that may come forward in the corresponding Priority Axis, would be welcomed by the programme bodies, as also indicated in the presentation of specific objective 2.1 in section 2 of the cooperation programme document.

Project applicants will be invited to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen equal opportunities and non-discrimination. At the end of the project the partners will be asked to report how their project activities and outputs actually contributed to this horizontal principle. Based on the aggregated contributions reported by projects INTERREG EUROPE will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the programme concretely contributed to equal opportunities and non-discrimination. However, no specific selection criteria are foreseen to favour the development of projects dealing with this issue.

Also the activities and thematic coverage of the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2 Competitiveness of SMEs may address relevant regional policy experiences and practices related to equal opportunities.

### **8.3 Equality between men and women**

INTERREG EUROPE adopts the horizontal principle of gender equality as a cross-cutting theme, to be applied in relevant cases within the scope of the programme's action.

The programme will strive to promote equality between men and women throughout all stages of programme implementation, including the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of operations.

This cross-cutting theme could emerge for instance in projects under the specific objective (2.1) dedicated to supporting SME development and entrepreneurship. There is evidence indicating a positive correlation between gender equality and factors promoting economic growth. Support schemes for innovation clusters and SMEs might also have an impact on gender equality as men and women tend to be involved in different industry sectors. Under this specific objective Projects could for instance address the issue of promoting female entrepreneurship. The development of such Projects as part of the wider thematic scope of specific objective 2.1 would be welcomed by the programme bodies, as also indicated in the presentation of specific objective 2.1 in section 2 of the cooperation programme document.

Project applicants will be invited to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen gender equality. At the end of the project the partners will be asked to report how their project activities and outputs actually contributed to this horizontal principle. Based on the aggregated contributions reported by projects INTERREG EUROPE will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the programme concretely contributed to equality between men and women. However, no specific selection criteria are foreseen to favour the development of projects dealing with this issue.

Also the activities and thematic coverage of the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2 Competitiveness of SMEs may address relevant regional policy experiences and practices related to gender equality.

## Section 9. Separate elements

### 9.1 A list of major projects for which the implementation is planned

Does not apply.

### 9.2 The performance framework of the cooperation programme

Priority Axis	Indicator or key implementation step	Unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)
1	Number of Action Plans developed	Number	70	230
	Amount of financial resources for Priority axis 1 spent	EUR	11,000,000	84,441,686
2	Number of Action Plans developed	Number	70	230
	Amount of financial resources for Priority axis 2 spent	EUR	11,000,000	84,441,685
3	Number of Action Plans developed	Number	70	230
	Amount of financial resources for Priority axis 3 spent	EUR	11,000,000	84,441,685
4	Number of Action Plans developed	Number	70	230
	Amount of financial resources for Priority axis 4 spent	EUR	11,000,000	84,441,685

## 9.3 Relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme

### Respondents to the on-line public consultation survey

#### **Albania**

CRDLS Albania

#### **Austria**

Ecoplus

Upper Austrian Tourist Board

Austria Wirtschaftsservice

Federal Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water (BMLFUW)

AustriaTech

AREC Raumberg-Gumpenstein

European Garden Association - Natur im Garten International  
City of Graz

Austrian Federal Forests

AKL - Abt 4

#### **Belgium**

International PRESS Agency

ECOLISE

UNU-CRIS

Provincie Vlaams-Brabant

VVIA - Flemish Association for Industrial Archaeology

Cluster Eco-construction

PURPLE - Peri-Urban Regions Platform Europe

FLEMISH ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (VMM)

Technopolis Group

ERRIN for ECOREGIONS Interreg IVC Project

Future of Rural Energy in Europe (FREE) initiative

ERRIN Network

#### **Bulgaria**

Sofia Development Association

Associaton "Euroregion Pleven-Olt"

Dobrich Municipality

National association of municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria

Euro Perspectives Foundation

South-West University "Neofit Rilski"

Regional authority Kyustendil

Sevlievo Municipality

Ministry of Environment and Water

European labour institute

Executive Forest Agency/Ministry of Agriculture and Food

Regional administration - Vidin

Agency for Regional and Economic  
Development-Vratsa

Municipality of Varna

Yambol Region

#### **Croatia**

Zagreb County Regional Development Agency

Vukovar Srijem County

Zagorje Development Agency

Primorje-Gorski Kotar County

Brod-Posavina County

VIDRA - Virovitica-Podravina County's Development  
Regional Agency

#### **Cyprus**

Cyprus energy agency

Department of Antiquities, Cyprus

Agricultural Research Institute

ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY OF CYPRUS

CYPRUS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The Cyprus Institute of Neurology and Genetics

Cyprus Forestry Department

Politeia: Renewal - Participation - Democracy

Federation of Environmental Organizations of Cyprus  
(NGOs)

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Department of Environment (Ministry of Agriculture, Natural  
Resources and Environment)

#### **Czech Republic**

UPOL

HZS MSK - Fire brigade of Moravian-Silesian region

Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Science

#### **Denmark**

University of Copenhagen

#### **Finland**

Ruralia Institute, University of Helsinki

Regional Council of North Karelia

Savonia University of Applied Sciences

Kainuun Etu Oy

Uusimaa Regional Council

Regional Council of Central Finland

Lahti Region Development LADEC Ltd  
Regional Council of Häme  
MTT Agrifood Research Finland  
Regional Council of Päijät-Häme

### **France**

POLE EMPLOI PACA  
AViTeM  
Conseil régional d'Auvergne  
ADRAMAR  
COLLECTIF VILLE CAMPAGNE  
Région Midi-Pyrénées  
Collectivité Territoriale de Corse  
POLITICAL SCIENCE INSTITUTE  
GRENOBLE  
Conseil Général du Pas-de-Calais  
Chambre de Commerce & d'Industrie  
Marseille Provence  
Chambre d'Agriculture Savoie Mont Blanc  
Agropolis International  
PROMES/CNRS  
CARINNA  
Pole emploi Paca  
INRA  
Lille Métropole  
EGCT Aquitaine-Euskadi  
Energy Cities  
Ville de Reims  
Conseil régional de Lorraine  
Technopôle Brest-Iroise  
Brest métropole océane  
Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière  
CRITT agroalimentaire PACA  
REGION CENTRE  
Euromontana  
Acom France  
Eurisy

### **Georgia**

Association for Farmers Rights Defense, AFRD

### **Germany**

Kompass Innovation & Incubation Center  
REM • Consult  
IdE Institut dezentrale Energietechnologien GmbH  
Ministerium für Ländlichen Raum und Verbraucherschutz  
Baden-Württemberg  
Universität Trier  
GIZ GmbH

City of Munich Department of Labor and REconomic  
Development  
Technische Universitaet Dresden  
Energieagentur Rheinland-Pfalz GmbH  
Regional Authority FrankfurtRheinMain  
Internationaler Bund  
VHS Hannover  
Kompass Innovation & Incubation Center  
VBB Verkehrsverbund Berlin-Brandenburg GmbH  
Gartenakademie Sachsen-Anhalt e.V.  
HWK für Ostthüringen  
Technologiepark Heidelberg GmbH  
Region Hannover  
Ministry of Economics, Energy, Transport and Regional  
Development, State of Hessen  
VDI Zentrum Ressourceneffizienz  
IOER  
City of Munich / Dept. of Labor and Economic Development  
City of Duisburg  
IHK Schleswig-Holstein  
Ministry for economic and European affairs, State of  
Brandenburg  
Steinbeis-Europa-Zentrum  
IUWA Heidelberg

### **Greece**

SMR Consultants  
SUSTCHEM  
Region East Macedonian & Thrace  
The Athens Chamber of Small-Medium Industries  
REGIOEUROPA  
FM-EPIXEIREIN  
Proopsis Consulting S.A  
GEOGNOSIS LTD  
MAICH  
TEI of Crete  
DIADYMA SA  
Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies  
Managing Authority of Rural Development Plan

### **Hungary**

Grants Europe  
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Zala County  
Chamber of Commerce and Industry for Győr-Moson-Sopron  
County  
Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Hajdú-Bihar County  
Zala County foundation for Enterprise Promotion  
Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Ipoly Erdő Zrt.  
National Institute of Environmental Health (NIEH)  
Észak-Alföld Regional Development Agency

#### **Ireland**

MRA  
Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly

#### **Italy**

Regione Emilia-Romagna  
Università di Torino  
DIAEE - Sapienza Università di Roma  
ASEV - Agenzia per lo Sviluppo Empolese Valdelsa SpA  
City of Terni  
Comune di Pordenone  
AGENZIA SVILUPPO LAMORO  
Gect -ezts go  
Istituto per le Piante da Legno e l'Ambiente S.p.A.  
University of Torino  
University of Torino - Department of Chemistry  
Arpa Piemonte  
ARSIAL  
ARPA ER  
Politecnico di Torino  
Calabria Region  
Consorzio RINAVE  
Albergo ristorante edelweiss  
Councillor Parity  
Comune Pordenone  
ARPA PIEMONTE  
Province of Bologna  
Provincia di Venezia  
SOPRA TUTTO IMPRESA  
Regione Lazio -Direzione Territorio Urbanistica mobilità e rifiuti  
Regione del Veneto  
UNIONCAMERE PIEMONTE  
University of Padova - Italy  
Comune di Genova - Municipality of Genoa - Italy  
COMUNE DI MALNATE  
Provincia di Messina  
University of l'Aquila  
Acarbio Costiera Amalfitana Onlus  
REGIONE MOLISE  
Legambiente Onlus  
GAL ALTO BELLUNESE  
Provincia di Genova

Unioncamere-Union of the Italian chambers of Commerce  
Local Action Group Patavino

#### **Latvia**

Pļaviņas County Council  
Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments  
Vidzeme Planning Region

#### **Lithuania**

Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania  
Alytus district municipality administration  
Ministry of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania

#### **Luxembourg**

Tudor  
CRP Tudor  
FMR sàrl

#### **Malta**

2M Management Consultancy Ltd  
Malta Resources Authority  
University

#### **Netherlands**

Provincie Flevoland  
Educore  
Gemeente Heerlen  
Bureau PAU  
Overijssel  
RVO.nl  
  
Movares  
Municipality of Westland  
Subvention BV  
Landschapsbeheer Nederland  
Hoogheemraadschap Schieland en de Krimpenerwaard  
Municipality Heerhugowaard (NL)  
ProRail  
Delft University of Technology

#### **Norway**

Directorate for Cultural Heritage

#### **Poland**

Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Voivodeship  
UMWD  
TEB AKADEMIA

Westpomeranian Marshal's Office in Szczecin, Poland  
City of Warsaw  
Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Region  
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy  
Central Statistical Office  
The General Directorate for Environmental Protection  
Ministry for Infrastructure and Development  
Polish State Railways Joint Stock Company

#### **Portugal**

COMPETE  
Online consulting  
LISBOA E-NOVA  
IrRADIARE  
Micare - associacao microcredito portugal  
ADRAT  
Municipality of Loures  
Lisbon Municipality  
Sociedade de Gestão Ambiental e Conservação da Natureza  
- AZORINA, S.A.  
European Affairs Department of Autonomous Region of Madeira

#### **Romania**

UEFISCDI  
Vulcan Town Hall  
GIURGIU COUNTY COUNCIL  
University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine  
"Dunarea de Jos" University  
Danube Delta National Institute  
Maramures County Council  
South-East Regional Development Agency  
Iasi Municipality  
Prahova County Council  
Oradea Metropolitan Area  
Consiliul Judetean Vrancea  
RDA North-East Romania  
CITY HALL OF PIATRA NEAMT  
West Regional Development Agency Romania  
BOTOȘANI City Hall  
Primaria Pecica  
Harghita County Council  
Primaria Municipiului Resita  
UTCB  
Prahova County  
Ministry of Regional Development & Public Administration  
ASSOCIATION OF LIFELONG EDUCATION  
BN Chamber of Commerce

North-West Regional Development Agency  
Alba Iulia Municipality  
INMA

#### **Slovak Republic**

REC Slovakia  
European Union Knowledge Economy Pass n.o.  
Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Slovak Audit Authority  
Trencin Region  
Presov Self-Governing Region  
Mesto Veľký Meder  
Bratislava Self-governing Region  
Trnava Self-governing Region  
The Ministry of Environment  
Government Office of the Slovak Republic  
City of Prešov  
Žilina Regional Authority  
Government Office of the Slovak Republic, Central Coordination Authority Section  
Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, Climate Department

#### **Slovenia**

Eudace  
Slovenski gradbeni grozd - GIZ  
Jozef Stefan institute  
Prlekija Development Agency (Prleška razvojna agencija,giz)  
RC Preko d.o.o.  
Ministry of agriculture and the environment  
Mariborska razvojna agencija

#### **Spain**

AVILA COUNTY COUNCIL  
AGENCY OF TOURISM OF BALEARIC ISLANDS (SPAIN)  
Granada County council  
Council of the Basque Country  
Acció  
Entidad de Infraestructuras de la Generalitat Valenciana  
Girona City Council  
PYME  
JUNTA DE CASTILLA Y LEÓN  
ULPGC  
ECONET, SL  
Agencia de Medio Ambiente y Agua de Andalucía (Spain)  
Parc de Recerca UAB  
Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Ordenación del Territorio de Andalucía



BCD Barcelona Design Centre  
EREN

**Sweden**

Örebro Regional Development Council  
Mid Sweden University  
East Sweden Regional Council  
Winnet Sweden - Europe  
Region Blekinge  
Teknikdalen Foundation  
Norrbottens läns landsting  
Region Västra Götaland

**Switzerland**

REGIO BASILIENSIS

**United Kingdom**

North of England EU Health Partnership Opportunity  
Peterborough  
Hampshire County Council  
Westcountry Rivers Trust  
  
Kent County Council  
European Division, Dept of Finance and Personnel , NI Civil  
Service

University of Greenwich  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
University of East London  
Eleanor Dearle  
Hull City Council  
Marches Local Enterprise Partnership  
New Economy Manchester  
Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership  
University of Ulster Centre for Sustainable Technologies  
Aberdeen City Council  
Natural Resources Wales  
Brighton & Hove City Council  
Scottish Government

**European scope**

INTERACT  
Triple E consulting  
AEIDL  
RENREN Network  
BIO-EN-AREA Network  
WWF Germany (acting for WWF in Europe)

## Participants in the stakeholder consultation workshop

Brussels, 5 February 2014

AEBR	Greater Birmingham and West Midlands Brussels Office
Bureau Aquitaine Europe	Hamburg / Schleswig-Holstein
Castilla y León Permanent Delegation to the EU	Hanse-Office
CKO - Center for Cultural and Experience Economy	INTERACT POINT VALENCIA
Climate Action Network	Leibniz Association
Committee of the Regions	Lower Silesia Regional Office in Brussels
Council of European Municipalities and Regions	Lower-Normandy Brussels Office
EARTO - Research and Technology Organisations	Méditerranée Technologies/PACA
East and North Finland EU Office	Merseyside Brussels Office
ELARD	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
Emilia-Romagna Region	Neth-ER
Energy Cities	North of England
ENRD Contact Point	Office of the State Government of Lower Austria NÖVBB
EPA	Peacefulfish
ERNACT EEIG	Région PACA
ERRIN	Representation of the Olomouc Region
Eszak-Alfold Region Hungary	Saxon State Ministry for Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport
EUROCITIES	Saxony Liaison Office Brussels
Euromontana	Scotland Europa
European Commission - DG REGIO	Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs
European Commission - DG RTD	Steiermark
European Commission, DG Environment	Tuscany Region
FEDARENE	Vysočina Region Regional Authority, Czech Republic
Fundacion Galicia Europa	West Norway Brussels Office
Government of Flanders	Wielkopolska Region

**9.4 Applicable programme implementation conditions governing the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control of the participation of third countries in interregional programmes through a contribution of ENI and IPA resources.**

Does not apply.

# Annexes

Annex 1 - Report of the ex-ante evaluation with executive summary

Annex 2 - Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme

Annex 3 - Map of the programme area



## Annex 4 - Citizens' summary of the cooperation programme

### INTERREG EUROPE SUMMARY

#### What's the issue?

The European Union works to reduce differences in the levels of development, growth and quality of life in European regions through its Cohesion policy. It promotes actions to make the European territory more innovative, more sustainable, and more inclusive. This is the EU policy agenda called EU2020 strategy.

While the large majority of the funds designated to reduce these disparities are managed nationally, the EU and member states believe that regional development can be improved through cooperation and exchange of experiences and practices across borders.

The INTERREG EUROPE programme, financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is designed to support policy learning among public authorities **to improve the performance of policies and programmes for regional development**. It allows public authorities across Europe to exchange practices and ideas on the way public policies work thus finding solutions to improve their strategies for their own citizens.

#### How will it work?

The INTERREG EUROPE programme has a budget of €359 million ERDF for the 2014-2020 period.

INTERREG EUROPE will work on the following four topics, all related to regional development:

1. Research, technological development and innovation
2. Competitiveness of SMEs
3. Low carbon economy
4. Environment and resource efficiency

INTERREG EUROPE will finance two actions:

- a) Interregional Cooperation projects: partnerships coming from different countries in Europe work together for 3 to 5 years to exchange their experiences on a particular policy issue. Each region involved in the cooperation project will produce an Action Plan. This specifies what will be done in the region to ensure that the lessons learnt from the cooperation are put into action. Projects are also asked to monitor what happens to the Action Plan, to see how well the cooperation has worked.

Calls for project proposals will be launched throughout the programming period.

- b) Policy Learning Platforms: a space for continuous learning where any organisation dealing with regional development policies in Europe can find solutions to improve the way they manage and implement their public policies in the four topics above.

#### Who can access funding?

Organisations based in the 28 EU member states, Norway or Switzerland are eligible for INTERREG EUROPE funding if they are:

- National, regional or local public authorities
- Other institutions governed by public law (e.g. universities, regional development agencies, business support actors, etc.)
- Private non-profit bodies.

Each country defines which institutions are eligible according to national regulations.

### **Who will benefit, in the end?**

Staff and organisations involved in policy-making and implementing policy in the four topics listed above, throughout all EU regions, Norway and Switzerland can directly benefit from this programme. As a result of this, the citizens and groups impacted by those policies will benefit from improved governance or implementation.

### **What exactly will change?**

Individual staff members and organisations will be better equipped to propose new policies or implement improved techniques.

Institutions on regional, national and EU-level will be more effective in implementing regional policies and programmes.

### **How is this different from what existed before?**

This type of cooperation has existed for around 20 years. However, new features have been introduced to make sure that the use of EU funds is more effective:

1. Selection of more focused topics: the more focused the topics, the more chances there are to have effective results
2. Mid to long-term monitoring: EU cooperation projects have been criticised in the past over the difficulty of capturing projects' results (on policy change) after the funding of the activities has ended. Now, regional partners will be asked to spend some time monitoring the impacts of the projects on their territories. This "monitoring phase" is essential for participating regions to demonstrate the value of the cooperation and to make sure that the results of cooperation (and of the investment of EU money) are captured more systematically.
3. Policy Learning Platforms: while many European networks exist on countless topics of regional development, none has the main aim of supporting local and regional governments to be more effective when planning and implementing policies for the benefit of citizens. Policy Learning Platforms seek to redress this: it is a tool to allow a faster and better share of knowledge to help governments do their job better.
4. Greater emphasis on improving policies and programmes that are part of the European Union's Cohesion policy.
5. For the first time, private non-profit bodies can benefit from INTERREG EUROPE funding, in addition to public bodies and bodies governed by public law.