

# Position paper for the future Interreg IVC programme 2014-2020 (hereinafter Interreg 2020)

## 1. Programme 2007-2013

Interreg IVC current main objective is to contribute to the improvement of regional policies through exchange of experience and good practice EU-27 wide. INTERREG IVC enables cooperation between regional and local authorities from all EU countries as well as Norway and Switzerland.

It is a popular programme, with considerable over-subscription, managed by Nord/Pas-de-Calais Region<sup>1</sup>. Currently it has 2 priorities: innovation/knowledge economy; and environment/risk prevention, which cover altogether 12 subthemes (e.g. innovation, research and technology development – information society - natural and technological risks- energy and sustainable transport, etc.).

The programme has now reached its programming period end and has grown to some 204 projects (out of which 20 are capitalisation projects<sup>2</sup>) selected after four calls for projects, and around 2300 partners are already involved (in 218 NUTS II regions out of 271). These 204 projects mobilise the whole amount of ERDF co-funding (320 M€) for a total cost of 405 M€.

In order to make best use of the results of the different projects approved, the Monitoring Committee of the programme decided in 2011 to launch a "capitalisation" exercise at programme level. This action is underway and experts are working on clusters of projects covering twelve specific subthemes (e.g. creative industries, energy efficiency, sustainable transport, etc.) in order to analyse the content of the projects and draw recommendations from the results that could hopefully be used as policy improvements to be disseminated. The conclusions of this analysis will be known in June 2013.

## 2. Results delivered in the current period

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<sup>1</sup> Nord/Pas de Calais Region has been confirmed in February 2013 as the managing authority of this programme for the next period after a vote of the Member-States (27 for, 2 against, 1 abstain) who had to decide between two applicants, the other one being Euregio RheinWaal.

<sup>2</sup> There are two types of projects:

**“Regional Initiative Projects”** initiated by regional actors aiming to exchange experience in a specific policy field in order to identify good practice and to develop new tools and approaches for implementation.

**“Capitalisation including Fast Track projects”** in order to ensure that good practice identified, for instance, by the regional initiative projects mentioned above, finds its way into the Convergence, Regional Competitiveness and Employment and European Territorial Cooperation programmes.

The annual implementation report for 2011 (the 2012 report will be published in June 2013) marks somehow the mid-term programming period of this programme, which has now reached a critical mass in terms of achievements. More than 99% of all approved projects have a partnership composed of members coming from both 'Objective Convergence' regions and 'Objective Competitiveness' regions.

Through the exchange of experience and practice among them, almost 4000 staff members of the regions involved in the projects have increased their capacity (in terms of knowledge/skills/expertise), 102 regional and local policies have been improved, 110 good practices have been transferred from one region to others, and 88 spin-off activities have been established.

This work will be complemented by the above mentioned analysis currently undertaken by experts and that will provide policy recommendations in the areas investigated.

However, an issue is the capacity of the programme to disseminate widely at European level the good practices that have been identified. This will be a challenge for the next programming period.

To give some examples:

*a) Improvement of local and regional policies*

- Within the context of the project "ERIK ACTION" on innovation, partner 5 (Bretagne Innovation, FR) has adopted three specific new approaches, among them 'Innovation Assistance', imported from Lower Austria (AT), and Fabrica Ethica, from the Tuscany region (IT). These two transfers had further policy impact in the French region, as described below.
  - Innovation Assistance has become a core programme of the Regional Innovation Strategy under the acronym 'SIDE' ([www.bdi.fr/notre-action/programmes](http://www.bdi.fr/notre-action/programmes)). It is developed within the Regional Innovation Network (150 business advisers from more than 40 organisations) and is the backbone of the regional innovation system in Bretagne. It is co-financed by ERDF through the Regional Operational Programme.
  - The Fabrica Ethica practice led to a team in charge of developing a strategy on social innovation and Corporate Social Responsibility being created within Bretagne Development Innovation, building on good practice from other partners, and now integrated into the region's future Smart Specialisation Strategy: 'Regional Strategy for Development and Innovation'.
- The Hungarian partner in the project "EuroPROC", a key organisation in the government's Business Support Policy in collaboration with the Hungarian Public Procurement Council and organisations in this sector, and based on good ideas from elsewhere, worked with the National Government as well as Regional Administration of Budapest to approve new rules improving SME access to Public Procurement.

*b) Identification, sharing and transfer of good practices*

- "Higher Level Skills pathfinder", from North West England, provides a structure to improve matchmaking between SME training needs and the training provided by educational institutes. As a result of the project networking, a new body named 'Innovation Transfer Office' was created at the University of Patras in Western Greece, to adapt the UK practice to the Greek Region.
- The "GraBS" project on adaptation of urban development to climate change ('Green Space Factor', developed by the City of Malmö, was integrated by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (UK) into a Green Infrastructure approach to accompany the Sustainability for the Built Environment policy. It was also taken up by Southampton City Council (UK) to improve green infrastructure within development sites, as well as by the London Borough of Sutton to ensure that an appropriate amount of green space is incorporated into new developments. The Amsterdam approach to community participation in climate change adaptation strategies was also adopted in the UK.
- The "CITEAIR" project on air quality cities works on 'traffic and mobility indicators', including monitoring and benchmarking urban traffic. The work to define, test and apply the best approaches was driven by Rome Mobility, utilising large amounts of real-life traffic data for testing purposes, in collaboration with Paris and Maribor. Thanks to a methodology comprising 12 indicators, both the status of the transport network and the related effect on the environment are now available.

### **3. Proposal for the next programming period 2014-2020**

Preparation 2014-20 is already well under way, as part of the informal dialogue to make progress with programming work. Although the draft Regulation 2014-2020 proposes a wider range of options, the programming dialogue to date indicates a strong desire to focus on key Europe 2020 topics (namely smart, sustainable and inclusive growth).

In this respect, the programme will be advised to develop links with the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives. By mainstreaming Europe 2020 objectives and concentrating funding on key priority areas, the programme will directly contribute to sustainable growth, employment and competitiveness.

In line with works in the current period, the programme is seeking to become more strategic in the good practice it makes available and its relevance for the mainstream Structural Funds investments. This is based especially on the experts' capitalisation exercise, as well as the Regions for Economic Change" initiative (which put an emphasis on linkages to specific actions/approaches in country-specific OPs and other policy/programming) Those participating indicate their desire to go further with this, strongly supported by the Commission, since these initiatives only cover a certain % of the current OP, and are not necessarily operating at strategic level.

The experience so far and the draft regulations<sup>3</sup> highlight the need to:

- be more strategic in terms of cooperation themes, objectives, project partnerships and results;
- focus on key Europe 2020 topics and roadmaps, where inter-regional cooperation can bring clearer „added-value“;
- be more process-oriented, rather than showcasing projects;
- ensure better take-up in country-specific and other programmes/policies (in particular by involving at an early stage of the projects the managing authorities in charge of the country-specific programmes and by asking them to commit to use the results of the projects in these programmes);
- involve more concretely key actors, especially policy-makers/programmers;
- establish policy and operational linkages with other relevant EU initiatives, if appropriate in the context of concrete thematic cooperation, etc.

Although, article 5 of the ETC draft regulation states that "all thematic objectives may be selected for interregional cooperation programmes pursuant to Article 2(3)(a)" the Commission (and indeed most partners) indicate that the preferred approach should

- reinforce the result-oriented approach;
- be coherent with country-specific activities, in particular the smart specialisation strategies approach;
- focus on the thematic concentration called for in the investment and growth for jobs goal;
- embed the "regions of knowledge" initiative, and reinforce links to other policies (requests from the European Parliament).
- ensure a good coordination with IPTS activities in Seville on regional innovation strategies.

Key elements of the discussion to date (after the programming committee meeting in Lille on 25-26 April 2013) are as follows:

**1. Member-States have agreed on a "semi" thematic concentration**, which will be organised as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Recital 7 of draft ETC regulation: "Interregional cooperation should aim to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by encouraging exchange of experience between regions to enhance design and implementation of operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal. It should, in particular, foster cooperation between innovative research-intensive clusters and exchanges between researchers and research institutions, based on "Regions of knowledge" and "Research potential in Convergence and Outermost regions" under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research".

- The whole budget of the programme (except the part for technical assistance) will be dedicated to **Thematic Objectives 1, 3, 4 and 6<sup>4</sup>**. For TO1, the areas for cooperation are identified in the research and innovation **smart specialisation strategies** (RIS3) across the EU that all European regions must prepare as thematic ex-ante conditionality; the programme will focus on enhancing design and implementation of operational programmes, especially under the Investment for growth and jobs goal by sharing good practice, and developing joint approaches. The smart specialisation strategy based approach will be very inclusive and will allow for cooperation in various areas (e.g. mainstreaming of climate action mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, ICT, etc.)

2. The programme will support the following **two types of interrelated actions**:

- **Policy Learning Platforms,**
- **Mainstreaming Projects.**

3. The **policy learning platforms** would:

- **maximise EU wide policy learning** by supporting exchange of experiences, in particular in the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal,

- **consolidate and make best use of the results** achieved within the Mainstreaming Projects,

- be each dedicated to a TO, reinforced by a consortium of experts and co-ordinated with the S3 Platform established at JRC-IPTS in Seville (with respect namely to TO1), which is currently aimed at supporting Member-States and regions in establishing and implementing their RIS3 (<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu>). In particular, the S3 Platform could play a leading role in steering the activity of the TO1 platform, taking into consideration other ERA-related trans-national cooperation initiatives, in the field of research and innovation, as well as developing policy lessons/advice from these activities. It would also build on in-depth involvement with associated work on the monitoring and analysis of transnational cooperation in research and innovation.

These platforms will be open to any region interested in getting information, exchanging knowledge, testing ideas from other regions or partners as well as to any of them willing to develop projects with others. The results of all exchanges and projects supported will be widely disseminated and made available to any partner or region in Europe. These platforms would be the fora to coordinate the analysis, project development and consortium-building under the correspondent TOs (which would lead to the mainstreaming projects described below).

4. Under each TO, **mainstreaming projects** would be selected through calls for proposals. Their overall objective would be **to improve the effectiveness of the regional policies** of the 'regions' participating in the projects.

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<sup>4</sup> Namely: R&D and innovation, SMEs and entrepreneurship, low-carbon economy and environmental protection

These would include a policy-exchange phase, and an action-oriented phase, with e.g. projects based on triple helix innovative research-intensive clusters, principle building on the experience of "**Regions of Knowledge**" flagship projects are also being considered secondary. Also projects supporting collaborations between regions beyond policy learning could be included.

The biggest challenge – and the most important to achieve – is to ensure committed real take-up of the new approaches in a significant share of country-specific programming design and implementation.

#### **4. Results expected**

Each partner acknowledges that the next programme should be more strategic, in order to better identify beforehand the results expected from its implementation, while leaving initiative to projects managers to test and develop new ideas. It should therefore find the right balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches.

The analysis launched in the current period (see points 1 and 2 above) is a first attempt to assess what policy developments the programme has been able to influence, and in which areas. It will be one of the continuous tasks of the experts participating in the facilitation of the learning platforms in the next programming period.

To be more effective, the Interreg 2020 programme must be particularly closely aligned to Europe 2020 objectives and strategic priorities. It must especially support the implementation of research and innovation strategies for smart specialisation, building on the exchange of experience, networking and joint actions that an EU-28 (+2) wide cooperation programme facilitates.

To measure the success of the programme in this respect, a survey will be launched when the programme is approved to measure what knowledge of the programme the managing authorities of country-specific programmes have. This could then act as baseline against which further surveys (in the mid-term and at the end of the programme) are made.

Interreg 2020 should also particularly capitalise on the results from the cooperative work in the current programming period notably the Regions for Economic Change (REC) and the Regions of Knowledge (RoK) initiatives. It should further exploit the results obtained by cluster initiatives, complementary to those that are currently developed in the framework of COSME. In all this, it should build on its already substantial link with other Commission services, their policies and actions. The number of new cluster-type initiatives (provided a common definition can be agreed on) resulting directly from the exchange of experience and from projects in the thematic objectives concerned could be the indicator of the performance of the programme in its capacity to maximise the potential of regions involved in these cluster activities. Other indicators like cooperation platforms, public-private partnerships, etc. could also be used.

The overall aim is to promote cooperation between EU regions with a view to increasing regional economic growth, by capitalising on different of regional experiences and building stronger transnational networks and clusters, with an emphasis on activities linked to a number of areas identified in the research and innovation smart specialisation strategies.

Strengthening links between the Interreg 2020 programme and the country-specific programmes will above all mean that good approaches are directly translated in concrete and operational terms into these programmes, improving the results of the regional policies promoted in the regions concerned.

As the results expected are more ambitious than in the current programming period, the quality and the relevance of the project selection criteria will be of paramount importance (evidence of the involvement of the managing authorities of country-specific programmes, evidence of the link with programme priorities and in particular with smart specialisation strategies for thematic objective 1, actions of dissemination, governance of the projects, creation of local action groups, etc.).