



# INTERREG EUROPE 2014-2020

## Cooperation Programme document

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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 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.

### 1.1.2 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.

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

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<sup>1</sup> ETC regulation (draft) 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)

<sup>3</sup> Regulation laying down Common Provisions for the European Regional Development Fund [...] (draft). Article 9.

<sup>4</sup> ETC regulation (draft). Recital (7) and article 2(3)(a).

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

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.

### **1.1.3 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.

The programme area consists of 286 regions<sup>10</sup>. The situation and prospects of these regions in light of these challenges are very diverse. The 8th progress report on cohesion<sup>11</sup> also underlines this picture and identifies the need for cohesion programmes to support growth-enhancing and job-creating investments, with an emphasis on a few 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

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<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> Horizon 2020 - Framework Programme for Research and Innovation 2014-2020 (proposal). COM(2011)809 final

<sup>9</sup> Programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs 2014 – 2020 (proposal). COM (2011) 834 final

<sup>10</sup> Regions at NUTS 2 level

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

<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)

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 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' 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>. Territorial approaches are needed to reduce regional vulnerability and to develop, implement and enforce adaptation.

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<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)

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

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. 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 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 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

<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.

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

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.

#### 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

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<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).

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 "Regions of Knowledge" (RoK). This 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)

## ***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.

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.

#### **1.1.4 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 on 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.

As a general rule the beneficiaries of the programme are public bodies and bodies governed by public law. 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 as high as 80% for the 'more developed' and 'transition' 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 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

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<sup>29</sup> ERDF Regulation, Art 4.

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.

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.

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.

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<sup>30</sup> ERDF Regulation, Article 5.

**Table 1 - A synthetic overview of the justification for the selection of thematic objectives and investment priorities**

Selected TO	Selected IP	Justification for selection [Max 500 char]
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 innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, cultural and creative industries, 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>
	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**

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 programme investment strategy**

*The purpose of this section is to demonstrate in a synthetic manner the consistency between the needs identified, the thematic objectives and the investment priorities selected, as well as the specific objectives and the financial allocation proposed. It also provides an overview of the contribution of the cooperation programme to the Europe2020 strategy. (automatically generated based on information inserted under other sections of the cooperation programme).*

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Investment priorities	Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective [from result indicator tables]	ERDF support - EUR	Share of the total Union support to the cooperation programme (by Fund)			Justification for the selection of the thematic objectives and investment priorities with reference to section 2.1 (incl. references to national Europe 2020 targets, relevant country specific Council recommendations, where applicable).
						ERDF	ENI	IPA	
1	1	1.a	1		€	%			
		1.b	2						
2	3	3.d	3		€				
3	4	4.e	4		€				
4	6	6.c	5		€				
		6.g	6						
TA					€				

## Section 2. Description of the priority axes <sup>31</sup>.

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

#### Priority Axis 1: Research, Technological Development and Innovation

*Thematic objective 1 - Strengthening research, technological development and innovation*

##### Investment priority 1(a)

*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.*

##### Specific Objective 1.1

**Title** / 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.  
**Description** max. 500 char  
incl. spaces

**Results** max. 2000 char  
incl. spaces  
The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Growth and Jobs (G&J), and, where relevant, ETC, in the field of regional infrastructures for research and innovation and capacities to develop research and innovation excellence.

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.

Regional policies for innovation infrastructure and capacities must target such issues as the availability of research and competence centres and ICT infrastructures, ensuring that the education system provides the qualifications needed in innovative sectors and public facilities for funding and supporting R&I activity.

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&J or ETC programmes, but also other programmes of regions involved.

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&J, ETC and other programmes.

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&J and ETC) programmes and policies in the field of research and innovation infrastructures in the regions involved.

<sup>31</sup> Based on European Commission guidance:

- Draft template and guidelines for the content of the cooperation programme. Version 3 of 28.06.2013  
- Draft Model for the Cooperation Programme under the European Territorial Cooperation Goal. Version 1 - 21.05.2013

**Programme Specific Result indicators (specific objective 1.1)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of <i>[research and innovation infrastructures]</i> as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	0	2014	5%	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 will be developed in a separate document . This will take into account EC Guidance for the Design of Quantitative Survey-Based Evaluation (R. Scarpa, 2012).	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.
2	Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of <i>[research and innovation infrastructures]</i> with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all regional policies and programmes	0	2014	2%	Survey among a <u>representative sample</u> of NUTS2 regions in the partner states (EU28 + NO, CH).  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.

## **Actions to be supported under Investment Priority 1(a)**

### **Description of type and examples of actions and their contribution to the specific objectives (per investment priority)**

#### **A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED**

In line with the operational objectives, the programme supports two 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

##### **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 of innovation infrastructures and capacities can be improved as a result of the cooperation.

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 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. However, 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 projects can include (non-exhaustive):

- Elaboration of Action Plans (mandatory)
- Studies and analysis of regional innovation infrastructure policies
- Meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group
- Exchange visits to study R&I support facilities and policies.
- Interregional seminars and events for exchange and capacity building on innovation infrastructures
- 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 or bodies governed by public law<sup>32</sup>, 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;

<sup>32</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

- Business support actors and organisations representing SMEs and the business community
- 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 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.
- Exchange of experience among regional actors to improve policies in support of innovation addressing the key societal challenges in the field of health, demographic change and well-being.

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

It covers both specific objectives of Priority 1 combined. This platform will be a 'knowledge resource centre' to support 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.

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.

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

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes 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<sup>33</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 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

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<sup>33</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 smart specialisation strategies (process and methodology related issues). The Policy Learning 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).

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
- 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 Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes in the field of Priority 1

#### Main target groups and types of beneficiaries

The beneficiary<sup>34</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 of 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 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.

### **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 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 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:

- 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 infrastructures and capacities for innovation in the participating regions, for instance related to:

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

- 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
- 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.

#### **Guiding principles for selection of operations**

*NOTE: max. 3500 char incl. spaces*

**Interregional Cooperation Projects** are selected through regular calls for proposals. These calls can be open to proposals addressing the full thematic scope of the specific objective. However, the programme authorities may also decide to issue more targeted calls for proposals focusing on certain key areas within the scope of this specific objective. Terms of reference for such targeted calls may take into account developments and (preliminary) results of previous calls, trends and policy developments in the scope of this investment priority, and possibly guidance by the policy learning platform.

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.

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 European Territorial Cooperation (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 have this direct link; for a project with 5 regions, a minimum of 3 would need to have this direct link).

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 before being fully adopted and supported by their regional (Growth and Jobs) programme. A proposal for such a pilot action may be submitted to the programme at the end of the first phase. The JS would assess the relevance of these actions and make recommendations to the MC for decision. Where relevant, the experts of the platforms would provide advice to the JS on the assessment.

As a general rule the beneficiaries<sup>35</sup> eligible to receive funding as partner of a Project are:

- Public authorities
- Bodies governed by public law. This means any body<sup>36</sup>:
  - (a) established for the specific purpose of meeting needs in the general interest, not having an industrial or commercial character;
  - (b) having legal personality; and
  - (c) financed, for the most part, by the State, regional or local authorities, or other bodies governed by public law; or subject to management supervision by those bodies; or 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.

Further details on eligibility will be outlined in the programme manual. Private sector actors are in principle not directly eligible to receive funding but can participate at their own costs.

The **Policy Learning Platform** will be established at programme level for the duration of the six year

<sup>35</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

<sup>36</sup> As defined in directive 2004/18/EC, Article 1

period from 2015 until 2020. 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 (likely 1 or 2 years). After this period the contract with the selected team of experts can be renewed several times depending on its performance, by decision of the Monitoring Committee. If needed and upon decision of the Monitoring Committee, some experts could also be added or substituted during its implementation stage.

#### Planned use of financial instruments (if relevant)

*Not relevant*

#### Planned use of major projects (if relevant)

*Not relevant*

#### Common and Programme Specific Output Indicators (Specific Objective 1.1)

ID	Indicator	Unit	Target (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
	Number of Action Plans in the field of research and innovation infrastructures developed	Number	160	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	1897	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 level to be defined) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.	%	25%	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	14	Programme monitoring	annual

## Investment priority 1(b)

*Promoting business investment in innovation and research, and developing links and synergies between enterprises, R&D centres and higher education, in particular product and service development, technology transfer, social innovation, eco-innovation, cultural and creative industries, 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.*

### Specific Objective 1.2

**Title** / 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.

**Results** The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional policies and programmes, in particular for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&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 research-driven clusters, support to triple-helix cooperation and to business activities in innovation.

Regional authorities and their innovation partners need to facilitate cooperation and joint initiatives of the enterprises, R&D centres and higher education actors in their key regional areas of smart specialisation and innovation opportunity.

Creating effective ecosystems of innovation can improve technology transfer and the emergence and economic exploitation of new R&D results. Regions must develop and cultivate research-driven clusters in their main sectors of innovation potential to increase innovation-driven growth. Finally regional actors can also devise policies to trigger consumption of innovation, for instance through public procurement of innovation.

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&J, ETC and other programmes.

This interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of the involved individuals and organisations and plan the implementation of 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

### Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of the delivery of innovation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	0	2014	15%	Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes.  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.
2	Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of the delivery of innovation with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all regional policies and programmes	0	2014	5%	Survey among a representative sample of NUTS2 regions in the partner states (EU28 + NO, CH).  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.

### Actions to be supported under the investment priority 1(b)

#### Description of type and examples of actions and their contribution to the specific objectives (per investment priority)

##### A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED

In line with the operational objectives, the programme supports two actions to allow partners from the different Part

ner 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.

##### 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 support of innovation delivery can be improved as a result of the cooperation.

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 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. However, 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
- 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 or bodies governed by public law<sup>37</sup>, 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.

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.

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

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<sup>37</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

It covers both specific objectives of Priority 1 combined. This platform will be a 'knowledge resource centre' to support 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.

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.

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

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes 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>38</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 of 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

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<sup>38</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

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:

- 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 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 patents in innovation 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.

### **Guiding principles for selection of operations**

The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objective 1.1.

### **Common and Programme Specific Output Indicators (specific objective 1.2)**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Target (2022)</b>	<b>Source of Data</b>	<b>Freq. of reporting</b>
	Number of Action Plans in the field of innovation delivery developed	Number	160	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	1897	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS level to be defined) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.	%	25%	Programme monitoring	annual
	Number of policy learning events in the field of innovation delivery organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.	Number	14	Programme monitoring	annual

## Priority Axis 2: Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

### Thematic objective 3 - Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs

#### Investment priority 3(d)

supporting the capacity of SMEs to engage in growth in regional, national and international markets, and in innovation processes;

#### Specific Objective 2.1

**Title** / 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.

**Description**

**Results** 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.

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.

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.

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.

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&J, ETC and other programmes.

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&J or ETC programmes, but also other programmes and policies of regions involved.

### Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of <i>SME growth and entrepreneurship</i> as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	0	2014	20%	Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all <u>Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes</u> .  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.
2	Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of <i>SME growth and entrepreneurship</i> with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all regional policies and programmes	0	2014	8%	Survey among a <u>representative sample</u> of NUTS2 regions in the partner states (EU28 + NO, CH).  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.

### Actions to be supported under Investment Priority 3(d)

#### Description of type and examples of actions and their contribution to the specific objectives (per investment priority)

##### A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED

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.

##### 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 SME and entrepreneurship support can be improved as a result of the cooperation.

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 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. However, 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 entrepreneurship and SME support policies
- Meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group
- Interregional study visits e.g. to learn about partner regions' SME support facilities and entrepreneurship policies.
- Interregional seminars and events for experience exchange and capacity building on entrepreneurship and SME support
- 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 or bodies governed by public law<sup>39</sup>, 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.

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

This platform will be a 'knowledge resource centre' to support ongoing EU-wide regional policy

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<sup>39</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

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.

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

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes 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>40</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 of 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

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<sup>40</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

field of competitiveness of SMEs and entrepreneurship. .

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.

### **Guiding principles for selection of operations**

The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objective 1.1.

### **Common and Programme Specific Output Indicators (specific objective 2.1)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Target (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
	Number of Action Plans in the field of entrepreneurship & SME support developed	Number	320	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	3794	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS level to be defined) 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

## Priority Axis 3: Low Carbon Economy

*Thematic objective 4 - Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors*

### Investment priority 4(e)

*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;*

#### Specific Objective 3.1

**Title** / 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.

**Results** 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.

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. Another key field of action is reduction of the emissions of greenhouse gasses by businesses and households from energy consumption, mobility and other sources.

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 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.

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.

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&J and ETC) programmes and policies for the low-carbon economy.

### Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of <i>low carbon economy</i> as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	0	2014	20%	Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all <u>Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes</u> .  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.
2	Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of <i>low carbon economy</i> with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all regional policies and programmes	0	2014	8%	Survey among a <u>representative sample</u> of NUTS2 regions in the partner states (EU28 + NO, CH).  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.

### Actions to be supported under Investment Priority 4(e)

#### Description of type and examples of actions and their contribution to the specific objectives (per investment priority)

##### A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED

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: **Interregional Cooperation Projects** and **Policy Learning Platforms**.

##### 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.

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 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. However, 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
- 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 or bodies governed by public law<sup>41</sup>, 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;
- 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 be a 'knowledge resource centre' to support 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:

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<sup>41</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

- 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.

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

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes 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>42</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 of 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

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<sup>42</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

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;
- 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.

### **Guiding principles for selection of operations**

The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objective 1.1.

### **Common and Programme Specific Output Indicators (Specific Objective 3.1)**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Target (2022)</b>	<b>Source of Data</b>	<b>Freq. of reporting</b>
	Number of Action Plans in the field of low-carbon economy developed	Number	320	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	3794	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS level to be defined) 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

## Priority Axis 4: Environment and Resource Efficiency

*Thematic objective 6 - Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency*

### Investment priority 6(c)

*Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage.*

#### Specific Objective 4.1

**Title** / 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.

**Results** 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.

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 eco-system 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.

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 protection schemes, sustainable use of NATURA 2000 or other protected areas, increase knowledge and sensitisation of actors.

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.

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&J and ETC) programmes and policies for natural and cultural heritage.

### Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of <i>protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</i> as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	0	2014	8%	Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes.  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.
2	Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of <i>protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</i> with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all regional policies and programmes	0	2014	3%	Survey among a representative sample of NUTS2 regions in the partner states (EU28 + NO, CH).  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.

### Actions to be supported under Investment Priority 6(c)

#### Description of type and examples of actions and their contribution to the specific objectives (per investment priority)

##### A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED

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: **Interregional Cooperation Projects** and **Policy Learning Platforms**.

##### 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.

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 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. However, 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
- 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 or bodies governed by public law<sup>43</sup>, 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

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 be a 'knowledge resource centre' to support 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:

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<sup>43</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

- 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.

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

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes 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>44</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 of 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

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<sup>44</sup> Beneficiary means a public or private body responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (Common Provisions Regulation, Article 2.10).

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

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

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

### **Guiding principles for selection of operations**

The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objective 1.1.

### **Common and Programme Specific Output Indicators (Specific Objective 4.1)**

<b>ID</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Target (2022)</b>	<b>Source of Data</b>	<b>Freq. of reporting</b>
	Number of Action Plans in the field of natural and cultural heritage developed	Number	160	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	1897	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS level to be defined) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4.	%	25%	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

## **Investment priority 6(g)**

*Supporting industrial transition towards a resource-efficient economy, promoting green growth, eco-innovation and environmental performance management in the public and private sectors;*

### **Specific Objective 4.2**

**Title** / 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.

**Results** 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.

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.

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.

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. And regional authorities can invest in further improving (the governance of) waste management, water treatment and recycling.

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.

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&J and ETC) programmes and policies for resource efficiency, green growth and environmental performance management.

### Programme Specific Result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Unit	Base-line Value	Base-line Year	Target Value (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
1	Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of <i>resource efficiency</i> as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes	0	2014	12%	Survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes.  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.
2	Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of <i>resource efficiency</i> with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	% of all regional policies and programmes	0	2014	4%	Survey among a representative sample of NUTS2 regions in the partner states (EU28 + NO, CH).  The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document.	2014 (baseline) 2018; 2020; 2022.

### Actions to be supported under the investment Priority 6(g)

#### Description of type and examples of actions and their contribution to the specific objectives (per investment priority)

##### A. TYPES OF ACTIONS TO BE SUPPORTED

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: **Interregional Cooperation Projects** and **Policy Learning Platforms**.

##### 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 resource efficient economy can be improved as a result of the cooperation.

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 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. However, 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
- 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 or bodies governed by public law<sup>45</sup>, 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.
- 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 be a 'knowledge resource centre' to support ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the field of resource efficiency,

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<sup>45</sup> See "Guidelines for the selection of operations" section of this programme document for more details.

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.

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

- Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes 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>46</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 of 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 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.

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<sup>46</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 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.

### **Guiding principles for selection of operations**

The guiding principles for selection of operations under this investment priority/specific objective are the same as those described for specific objective 1.1.

### **Common and Programme Specific Output Indicators (Specific Objective 4.2)**

ID	Indicator	Unit	Target (2022)	Source of Data	Freq. of reporting
	Number of Action Plans in the field of resource efficiency and eco-innovation and environmental performance management developed	Number	160	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	1897	Programme monitoring	annual
	Share of all European regions (NUTS level to be defined) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4.	%	25%	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

### Performance Framework per Priority Axis

Priority Axis	Implementation step, financial, output or result indicator	Unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2022)	Source of data	Explanation if needed
1	Number of Action Plans developed	Number	128	320	Programme monitoring	
	Share of financial resources for Priority axis 1 committed	%	80%	100%	Programme monitoring	
2	Number of Action Plans developed	Number	128	320	Programme monitoring	
	Share of financial resources for Priority axis 2 committed	%	80%	100%	Programme monitoring	
3	Number of Action Plans developed	Number	128	320	Programme monitoring	
	Share of financial resources for Priority axis 3 committed	%	80%	100%	Programme monitoring	
4	Number of Action Plans developed	Number	128	320	Programme monitoring	
	Share of financial resources for Priority axis 4 committed	%	80%	100%	Programme monitoring	

### Additional qualitative information on the set-up of the performance framework

If needed – max 7000 char. incl. spaces

Part to be filled in when information is available

### Categories of intervention per Priority Axis

Dimension 1 Intervention field		Dimension 2 Form of finance		Dimension 3 Territory		Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanism		Dimension 8: Thematic objective	
Code	€ amount	Code	€ amount	Code	€ amount	Code	€ amount	Code	€ amount

### Summary of planned use of Technical Assistance to support participation per Priority Axis

#### 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

### Priority Axis 5: Technical Assistance

#### Specific Objective 5.1

**Title / Description** / To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.

**Results**  
(only if EU support to TA exceeds €15 million)

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.

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.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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.

#### Programme Specific Result indicators (only if EU support to TA exceeds €15 million)

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline Year	Target Value (2022)	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%	OP monitoring	annual
TA2	Share (%) of total programme ERDF budget decommitted	%	0	2013	5%	OP 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.

### Output Indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement Unit	Target (2022) - optional	Value	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.	No. of publications and appearances in other media of the programme	number	360		Programme monitoring	annual
4.	No of Monitoring Committee meetings	number	14		Programme monitoring	annual

*Part to be filled in when information is available*

### Categories of intervention

Table 13: Dimension 1 Intervention field		Table 14: Dimension 2 Form of finance		Table 15: Dimension 3 Territory	
Code	€ amount	Code	€ amount	Code	€ amount

## Section 3. Financing plan of the cooperation programme

### 3.1 Table specifying per year the amount of financial appropriation envisaged

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
ERDF	€ 17.823.000	€ 26.024.000	€ 37.164.000	€ 67.526.000	€ 68.877.000	€ 70.254.000	€ 71.658.000	<b>€ 359.326.000</b>

### 3.2.A. Financial plan by priority axis

	Fund	Basis for calculation Union support Total/public eligible cost	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-financing rate *) (f) = (a)/(e)	For information	
					National funding (c)	National private (d)			Contributions from third countries NO & CH **)	EIB contribution
<i>Priority Axis 1 - Research, technological development &amp; innovation</i>	ERDF	public eligible costs	€ 84.441.610	€ 20.154.403	€ 20.154.403		€ 104.596.013	81%	€ 1.365.000	n/a
<i>Priority Axis 2 - Competitiveness of small &amp; medium-sized enterprises</i>	ERDF	public eligible costs	€ 84.441.610	€ 20.154.403	€ 20.154.403		€ 104.596.013	81%	€ 1.365.000	n/a
<i>Priority Axis 3 - Low carbon economy</i>	ERDF	public eligible costs	€ 84.441.610	€ 20.154.403	€ 20.154.403		€ 104.596.013	81%	€ 1.365.000	n/a
<i>Priority Axis 4 - Environment &amp; resource efficiency</i>	ERDF	public eligible costs	€ 84.441.610	€ 20.154.403	€ 20.154.403		€ 104.596.013	81%	€ 1.365.000	n/a
<i>Priority Axis 5 - Technical Assistance</i>	ERDF	public eligible costs	€ 21.559.560	t.b.d.			t.b.d.	t.b.d.	€ 540.000	n/a
<b>Total</b>			<b>€ 359.326.000</b>	<b>t.b.d.</b>			<b>t.b.d.</b>	<b>t.b.d.</b>		

\*) The cofinancing rate of 81% is an average (the actual rate is 80,731%), based on the 3 different co-financing rates that will be applied. For **Interregional Cooperation Projects** two co-financing rates apply at partner level: 75% (partners from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom) and 85% (partners from Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia). The **Policy Learning Platforms** will be financed at 100%.

\*\*\*) Third country contributions are based on preliminary indications from CH and NO. To be confirmed by the Swiss and Norwegian authorities.

### 3.2.B. Financial plan by priority axis and thematic objective

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	€ 84.441.610	€ 20.154.403	€ 104.596.013
<i>Priority Axis 2 - Competitiveness of small &amp; medium-sized enterprises</i>	TO3 - Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs	€ 84.441.610	€ 20.154.403	€ 104.596.013
<i>Priority Axis 3 - Low carbon economy</i>	TO4 - supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	€ 84.441.610	€ 20.154.403	€ 104.596.013
<i>Priority Axis 4 - Environment &amp; resource efficiency</i>	TO6 - protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	€ 84.441.610	€ 20.154.403	€ 104.596.013
<i>Priority Axis 5 - Technical Assistance</i>		€ 21.559.560	t.b.d.	t.b.d.
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>€ 359.326.000</b>	<b>t.b.d.</b>	<b>t.b.d.</b>

## **Section 4. Integrated approach to territorial development**

### **4.1 Description of the programmes integrated approach to territorial development**

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.

### **4.2 Contribution of planned interventions to 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. Implementation 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 Identification of the 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 22: 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	To be specified
Certifying authority	To be defined	To be specified
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	To be specified
The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is: the managing authority / the certifying authority ( <b>to be defined</b> )		
Authority/body	Name of the authority/body	Head of the authority/body
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	Each EU-MS and Norway will designate the body or person responsible for carrying out control tasks defined in Article 114(4)(a) of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR]. The responsible body will be included in the agreement signed by each Partner State and a list will be provided at the same time as the Cooperation Programme to the EC. Updates of the list will be communicated to the EC with the annual control report.	To be specified
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	The audit authority will be assisted by a Group of Auditors. Each EU-MS and Norway will designate the body or person responsible for carrying out the audit tasks provided for in Article 116 of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR]. The responsible body will be included in the agreement signed by each Partner State and a list will be provided at the same time as the Cooperation Programme to the EC. Updates of the list will be communicated to the EC with the annual control report.	To be specified

### **5.1.2 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. Joint secretariat location: Lille (France). The joint secretariat is set up after consultation with the Partner States under the responsibility of the managing authority.

The joint secretariat assists the monitoring committee, managing authority, and where appropriate, the audit authority in carrying out their duties. The joint secretariat is funded from the technical assistance budget.

### **5.1.3 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 INTERREG EUROPE programme shall be implemented through the following main implementation structures: a managing authority, a certifying authority, a joint secretariat, a monitoring committee, an audit authority and a group of auditors.

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

The managing authority, assisted by the joint secretariat, 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 will ensure that the different programme bodies interact in a smooth way.

The joint secretariat 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 incl. 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 set 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. to manage 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 ensuring the certifying authority function 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 managing authority / joint secretariat 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 and/or addition 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 will carry out its functions in compliance with Article 126 of the Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR].

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

The audit authority will ensure that audits are carried out on the proper functioning of the management and control system and on an appropriate sample of projects in compliance with Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR].

According to Article 21 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], the audit authority shall be situated in the Member State of the managing authority. 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 and carry out the functions provided for in Article 127 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR].

In accordance with Article 23 (4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC] the EU-MS 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-MS 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-MS and Norway and a list will be provided at the same time as the cooperation programme to the EC. Updates of the list will be communicated to the EC 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 a 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***

According to Article 47 of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 [CPR], within three months of the date of notification of the decision adopting a programme, the Partner States will set up a committee to monitor implementation of the programme, in agreement with the managing authority. The monitoring committee will draw up and unanimously adopt its rules of procedure during the first monitoring committee meeting.

The monitoring committee 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, the joint secretariat and, where necessary and the certifying authority, will also participate in an advisory capacity.
- The audit authority can also participate as an independent observer.

The monitoring committee 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 monitoring committee will also adopt the methodology, criteria for selection of projects and the eligibility rules before the launch of each call for proposals. The detailed provisions will be drawn up in the monitoring committee's rules of procedure.

The monitoring committee 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 monitoring committee 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 monitoring committee it shall be ensured that decisions of the monitoring committee will be free from bias and must not be influenced by partial personal and/or organisational interest of any of the individual members of this committee. Any members who have a

conflict of interest in respect of any subject matter up for consideration by the monitoring committee shall declare such interest to the meeting and shall not take part in the decision. The monitoring committee 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 whose terms of reference will be published on the programme website. Details of the selection procedure will also be made available to all applicants through the programme manual. The applications submitted 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.

Project lead applicants are informed in writing about the reasons why an application was not eligible or 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 jointly by the chair of the monitoring committee and the managing authority/joint secretariat. The chair may decide to refer back a complaint to the monitoring committee, should s/he judge it necessary. An overview of complaints examined and answered by the chair of the monitoring committee and managing authority/joint secretariat will be provided to the monitoring committee in the following meeting. The same complaint procedure as described will also apply to other stages of the project implementation controlled by programme bodies, such as the progress monitoring.

### ***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 beneficiary (hereinafter referred to as 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 its 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 132 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. The subsidy contracts make reference to the control systems set up by the EU-MS 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 (MS) and Norway designates the bodies responsible for carrying out such verifications in relation to beneficiaries on its territory ('controller(s)'). The body responsible for the first level control system set up in each EU-MS and Norway is included in the agreement that is submitted as annex 2 to the cooperation programme.

Each EU-MS 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 (EC) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. When assessing this document the audit authority is authorised to request complementary information from the Partner State. The EU-MS and Norway shall without delay inform the managing authority of any changes of responsible body and the control system set up.

Each EU-MS and Norway will do its utmost to ensure that the expenditure is verified and confirmed by the controllers within a period of two months after the end of each reporting period so that the lead partner is in a position to submit the progress report to the managing authority/joint secretariat at the date set in the subsidy contract and so that the managing authority/certifying authority can declare regularly expenditure to the EC.

The cost for these verifications will be either carried by the EU-MS or Norway or by the project partners. In the latter case, these costs can in principle be considered eligible for an ERDF-reimbursement and thus 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-MS 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 result of any verification of the proper functioning of the first level control system carried out by the EU-MS 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-MS and Norway of the results and follow-up of any checks carried out by other programme bodies or the EC 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 paragraph xxx (***to be specified in a later stage***) of the current document.

In accordance with Articles 56 and 114 of the Regulation (EC) 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/certifying authority, 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 from the ERDF and national contributions from the 28 EU-Member States. The rate of co-financing from the EU-Member States for technical assistance is **xx%** (ERDF co-financing rate **xx%**). The share of each EU-Member State results from the number of inhabitants per country in relation to the current 28 EU-MS' overall population in 2012. An additional contribution to the technical assistance budget comes from Norway and Switzerland. The total budget for technical assistance is **XX Mio EUR** (incl. **EUR XX** from Norway and Switzerland).

The managing authority/certifying authority administers the ERDF and Norwegian funding of the programme as well as the national contributions to the technical assistance budget. Separate accounts will be set up within 3 months after the approval of the cooperation programme: one for technical assistance contributions, one for the ERDF and one for the Norwegian funding. 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 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-MS 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 managing authority/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 EC 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 managing authority/certifying authority will reimburse these funds.

### ***Main stages of Community funding from the managing authority/certifying authority 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/certifying authority. The maximum rates for reimbursement of the eligible expenditure are specified in Table **xx** in paragraph **xx**. The reimbursement is paid from the managing authority/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 (EUR). Funds will be disbursed in EURO (EUR) 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 managing authority/certifying authority undertakes the payment of the ERDF/Norwegian contribution to the lead partners. The managing authority/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 EC 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.

### ***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.

## **5.1.4 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-MS, 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 (EC) No 1303/2013 [CPR]. In parallel to / after reimbursement of the irrecoverable amount by the EU-MS to the managing authority, the EU-MS 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-MS 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].

In the case of irregularities discovered, for example, by the Court of Auditors or by the EC, which result in certain expenditures being considered ineligible and in a financial correction being the subject of a EC decision on the basis of Articles 136 to 139 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], the financial consequences for the EU-MS are laid down in the section “liabilities and irregularities” below. Any related exchange of correspondence between the EC and an EU-MS will be copied to the managing authority/joint secretariat. The latter will inform the managing authority/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 EC), the EU-MS will bear the financial consequences in proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the respective EU-MS territory. Where the systemic irregularity or financial correction cannot be linked to a specific EU-MS territory, the EU-MS shall be responsible in proportion to the ERDF contribution paid to the respective national project partners involved;
- For the technical assistance expenditure :
  - each Partner State will bear joint liability proportionally to their respective share in the technical assistance budget, for consequences of any decision supported by this Partner State; Partner State decisions are stated in each committee’s decision notes. The approval of an activity report does not transfer any liability to the Partner State
  - In case of technical assistance directly used 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-MS or Norway becomes aware of irregularities, it shall without any delay inform the liable EU-MS or Norway or the managing authority/joint secretariat. The latter will ensure the transmission of information to the certifying authority and AA/group of auditors, where relevant.

In compliance with Article 112 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], each EU-MS is responsible for reporting irregularities committed by beneficiaries located on its territory to the EC and at the same time to the managing authority. Each EU-MS shall keep the EC 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 authority 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.

### **5.1.5 Use of the Euro**

In accordance with Article 28 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 [ETC], and by way of derogation from Article 123 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 [CPR], expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro shall be converted into euro by the beneficiaries in the month during which expenditure was incurred. The conversion shall be verified by the managing authority or by the controller in the Member State or third country in which the beneficiary is located.

## **5.2 Involvement of partners**

*(this section will be fully developed in the final version of the OP, based on the public consultation)*

### **5.2.1. Role of the relevant partners in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme.**

#### ***Summary of the process of the preparation of the cooperation programme, with a specific focus on partnership***

- **The authority which has coordinated the preparation of the OP and the public institutions directly involved in this exercise**  
The preparation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme was coordinated by the Managing Authority, in close coordination with the Joint Technical Secretariat of the INTERREG IVC programme. The drafting of the OP was delegated to a European consortium of consultancies. Discussion and decision making among Partner States took place during Programming Committee meetings and Task-Force meetings.
- **Description of the involvement of the partners referred to in Art. 5 CPR in the preparation of the cooperation programme, in particular:**
  - *Selection modalities of the partners;*
  - *List of the partners involved;*
  - *Actions taken to facilitate a wide involvement and an active participation of the partners, including in terms of accessibility;*
  - *Main added value of the partnership in the preparation of the cooperation programme, in particular instances where the strategic choices have been significantly influenced by partners.*
  - *Main results of the consultation with partners, including significant concerns, comments and recommendations raised by multiple partners.*

During the preparation of the Cooperation Programme, the final draft version of the Cooperation Programme draft was sent out for consultation to the relevant bodies mentioned above on 10 January 2014. xxx comments from xxx authorities were received.

#### ***Description of how the relevant partners referred in Article 5 will be involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation 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. This will be done in close articulation with the activities developed under the INTERACT III programme.

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.

### **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 the Intelligent Energy – Europe III (IEE III), for the Competitiveness of enterprises and SMEs (COSME) 2014-2020, for the environment LIFE 2014-2020 which supports in particular a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy.

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.

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 between INTERREG EUROPE projects and similar projects in the other EU-funded programmes.

## **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**

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

The interim evaluation of the INTERREG IVC programme (2010)<sup>47</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.

### **7.1.2 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 the relevant provision of the Common Provision Regulation.

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>47</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 by the 2014-2020 regulations. 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).

### **7.1.3 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.

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 CO2 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 CO2 compensation measures within the existing eligibility limits

### **8.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination**

INTERREG EUROPE does not intend to develop specific actions uniquely aimed at the promotion of equal opportunities and the prevention of discrimination. The reason that this horizontal principle is not pro-actively supported primarily lies in the thematic scope of the programme strategy adopted.

With their focus on R&D and innovation, low-carbon economy and environment and resource efficiency, most of the specific objectives of the programme cover thematic areas that have no direct link to the horizontal principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination. Rather, the programme 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.

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, 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**

The horizontal principle of gender equality is not considered to be a primary focus of the INTERREG EUROPE programme. As with the previous point, the reason for this lies in the nature of the thematic programme strategy.

The specific objectives of the programme cover thematic areas that have no direct link to the horizontal principle of gender equality. This is in particular the case for the specific objectives linked to R&D and innovation, low-carbon economy and environment and resource efficiency.

In the case of the specific objective (2.1) dedicated to supporting SME development and entrepreneurship, also the primary focus is not on addressing this horizontal principle. But in this case, it is not unlikely that Interregional Cooperation Projects may emerge that deal with related issues. 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
- 9.2 The performance framework of the cooperation programme
- 9.3 List of relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme
- 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.

## **Annexes**

- 1. Draft report of the ex-ante evaluation with executive summary
- 2. Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme
- 3. A citizens' summary of the cooperation programme (optional)