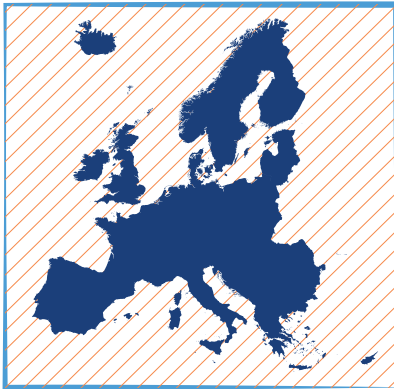




EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL AND INVESTMENT FUNDS: Making the difference, everyday

2019 STATE OF PLAY ON IMPLEMENTATION

EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION INTERREG PROGRAMMES AND MACRO REGIONAL STRATEGIES



1. EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION - PROGRESS OF INTERREG PROGRAMMES IN TERMS OF FUNDING AND RELEVANT PROJECTS

European territorial cooperation (Interreg) is a key pillar of EU Cohesion Policy. It aims at bringing countries & regions from different countries to work together to tackle their common challenges.

Better known as Interreg programmes, the common actions are implemented at different levels:

- ▶ **53 cross-border programmes** aim to improve citizens' lives along EU internal borders;
- ▶ **5 transnational cooperation programmes** are strategically acting on national territories that have similar characteristics and face similar challenges they can only tackle together;
- ▶ **4 interregional cooperation programmes** deal with crosscutting issues, such as capacity building, data collection or cooperation between urban areas, across the European continent.

Non-EU countries also benefit from:

- ▶ **10 cooperation programmes with Accession countries**, namely the Interreg Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) Cross-Border Programmes (most of them in the border areas with Balkan countries and Member States).
- ▶ **15 cooperation programmes with Neighbourhood East and South Countries**, namely the Interreg European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) Cross-Border Programmes.

Overall, Interreg programmes made substantial progress in 2019. Programmes' budgets are to a large extent already allocated to selected projects, accounting for 88% of the total European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) allocation for Interreg in 2014-2020.

Most of these programmes contribute to implementing the priorities of the European Commission. A large share of investments go to **environment** (protection of biodiversity, flood and fire prevention measures) and **research and innovation** (more than **4,500 firms** and almost **2,300 research institutions** involved). for the European Union's sustainable future.

2. COOPERATION IS AT THE HEART OF THE EUROPEAN SPIRIT: BEYOND FUNDING, WE FUND SOLIDARITY & DIALOGUE TO TACKLE COMMON CHALLENGES

- The four Macro Regional Strategies, namely the European Strategies for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the Danube Region (EUSDR), the Adriatic & Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the Alpine Region (EUSALP) are platforms for political cooperation, which have helped to achieve important progresses so far;
- They provide an opportunity for multi-sectoral, multi-country and multi-level governance **helping to change mind-sets** (e.g. EUSALP: Green Infrastructure Conference; Forest summit 'Protection.Forest.Climate'; Mobility Conference in the Alps);
- They **boost the European continent's development** throughout cooperation actions in the field of 3 thematic priorities they have in common, such as environment and climate change, research/innovation and economic development and connectivity;
- They can **mobilise several funding opportunities** such as Interreg programmes, all Cohesion Policy funds, European Investment Bank funds, and also private investments.

3. BEYOND FUNDING, WE SUPPORT POLICIES TO ALLEVIATE LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE OBSTACLES IN CROSS-BORDER REGIONS

Lack of harmonisation at European level frequently makes it difficult to achieve completely open borders. This can give rise to real difficulties for citizens living along borders who represent one third of the EU's population. If only 20% of the legislative, administrative and institutional bottlenecks were solved, it could lead to 2% regional GDP growth in border regions.

The European Commission (DG REGIO) hosts a 'Boosting EU border regions' platform which is part of the 10 measures proposed by the Commission's Communication „Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU Border Regions“. This aims to highlight ways to reduce complex, long and costly cross-border interactions and promote the pooling of services along the EU's internal borders. The platform is meant for border stakeholders, including the managing authorities and joint secretariats of the Interreg programmes, but is not only limited to these. It is a place for discussion on border issues, exchange of good practices and solutions found on border obstacles. On the platform, discussions and items can be published under the different topics highlighted by the Communication.

DG REGIO has organized highly successful seminars on issues that impact on the day-to-day lives of citizens. These include dedicated well-attended conferences involving relevant stakeholders and decision-makers on the subjects of health (December 2018) and the recent (November 2019) conference on missing links in cross-border transport.

DG REGIO also seeks to facilitate concrete support to remove obstacles in the context of the b-solutions project. This project, managed by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), under the supervision of DG REGIO, aims to tackle legal and administrative obstacles/difficulties along EU internal borders.



Challenges exist with regard to enhancing, for example, the scope of **dual education** in some cross-border regions, the creation of seamless **emergency joint medical and fire responders**, the **recognition of qualifications** for highly demanded professions and **tackling administrative issues** that hinder the movement of qualified workers. These represent only some of the issues that are attracting our attention. To date, 43 pilot projects in different categories have received support; a conference on sharing the experiences under b-solutions is scheduled for the first quarter of 2020.



Interreg and Macro Regional Strategies pay attention to youth and civil society involvement, in line with the new Commission's headline ambitions:

- ▶ The 4 macro regional strategies involve young citizens participating in the political debate. Young people from the Baltic Sea Region participate in the Baltic Sea Youth Camp on their regional identity, while alpine youngsters are taking part in the "Pitch Your Project" competition where the Commission awards their best projects. In the Adriatic and Ionian, 600 people including young people participated in the project DRAW THE COAST to plan the future of the Coastal Roads. This year again, the 6th Participation Days in the Danube gave the chance to young people to be part of the discussion on education and employment in the area.



- ▶ The Interreg Volunteer Youth (IVY) project, managed by the Association of European Border Regions since March 2017 thanks to DG REGIO support, aims at involving young people as financially supported volunteers in Interreg activities both at programme (i.e. Managing Authorities) and project (i.e. project beneficiaries) levels. Almost 400 volunteers have been deployed since the start of IVY and around 180 started their experience in 2019 in various Interreg areas.

- ▶ Since 2019, IVY volunteers are also organising „Citizens Engagement Activities“ (CEAs) during which the volunteers invite civil society and citizens to discuss on what the EU, and especially Interreg, already does and should do in future for their region. This is a way to boost general citizens' engagement across Europe by empowering young people who organise these events, with the opportunity to develop a real bottom-up approach.

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

(1) Environment - Interreg MED



The project "MOBility for nearLy-zero CO2 in medITerranean tourism destinAtionS- MOBILITAS" tends to reduce negative impact on environment and traffic of tourism flows in seaside resorts. HOW DO WE INTEND TO REDUCE TRAFFIC IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT? By elaboration of mobility scenarios, documents on sustainable tourism mobility, using IT tools, introducing electrical and sharing mobility solutions and issuing sustainable tourism mobility handbook.

▶ Total project's budget €2.5M, ERDF co-financing €2.1 M, 10 partners
<https://mobilitas.interreg-med.eu/>

(2) Environment: Interreg VA – Slovenia Croatia Cross-border harmonised flood risk reduction – FRISCO (Cross-Border Harmonised Flood Risk Reduction)



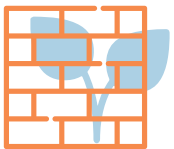
This is a significant flood-risk mitigation project situated along the Slovenia Croatia border which is crisscrossed by a number of rivers (among them Mura and Drava) causing important floods. As climate change is expected to result in even more extremes, anti-flood defences in the cross-border area need to be reinforced.

The project (which has 4 components) consists of a range of measures, including the upgrading of dams, the management of the river basins as well as measures for adaptation to climate change (e.g. construction of high-water embankments to protect downstream settlements from flood risk).

The project contributes to the INTERREG V-A Slovenia- Croatia programme under the specific objective „Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Drava and Kolpa/Kupa river basins through application of a structural flood risk management measure“. Cross-border cooperation is vital as any flood risk reduction measure on a transboundary river needs to be coordinated between partners to avoid one-sided approaches that could endanger the other side.

► **The total investment of this project amounts to €11.5M of which the ERDF contribution is €9.7M**
<http://www.si-hr.eu/en2/projects/approved-projects-2>

(3) Innovation: Interreg VA – France, United Kingdom Channel, Manche Programme - CobBauge



The CobBauge Project, a winner of a EuroStars award in 2019, has developed a new and innovative walling material using an ancient method of building from earth and fibres. This has been updated for modern methods of construction, allowing the threads of culture to be blended with crisp modern building design. The new material is used in a composite wall that will pass current thermal regulations and create energy efficient high-performance homes that people will find comfortable, healthier to live in and inexpensive to run.

► **The ERDF contribution amounts to €2.8M**
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/regio-stars-awards/2019/finalist?r=cobbaugue

(4) Innovation – Interreg Baltic Sea Region BaltSe@nioR



The project develops prototypes of intelligent furniture and upgrading design trends for companies that deals with home design. This project increase companies' capability to work in a transnational environment and enhances their capacity of innovation to create smart products adapted to senior needs, making the companies more innovative and competitive. This is a unique opportunity to raise seniors' comfort and level of safety and at the same time enhance capacity of innovation.

► **Total project's budget €2.39M, ERDF co-financing €1.72 M; 10 partners**
<https://projects.interreg-baltic.eu/projects/baltseio-30.html>

(5) Innovation – Interreg Northern Ireland, Ireland, Scotland – BREATH



BREATH (Border and Regions Airways Training Hub) is a unique, world class, cross-border cluster of researchers who are helping to address the causes, treatment and prevention of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). COPD is an incurable and slowly progressive condition that causes breathing difficulties and irreversible lung damage. COPD is relatively overrepresented in Ireland, Northern Ireland and parts of Scotland. As it is often unrecognised and undiagnosed, it is sometimes called the 'invisible disease', yet it will soon be the 3rd leading cause of death world-wide.

Central to BREATH's mission is to train a cohort of approximately 20 of the best young scientists to help fight and raise awareness of COPD within the Region and cooperate with pharmaceutical firms in the region (some are spin off's from university)

► **The project's total budget is €8.5M, ERDF co-financing amounts to €8.5M**
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/projects/united-kingdom/enhancing-r-d-to-reduce-lung-disease-in-ireland-scotland-cross-border-region

(6) Innovation – Interreg VA France, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg (Grande Région)



The German, Belgian, French and Luxembourgian governments commissioned IZES gGmbH to develop an introductory technological programme for the take-up of stationary fuel cells. The use of highly efficient fuel cell heating systems for the combined production of heat and electricity makes a valuable contribution towards the achievement of these governments' energy and climate protection targets and has a positive impact on their economies.

Each of the four energy cells in the Grande Région is a virtual power plant balancing electricity production and consumption by using storage capacities within the cell or by exchanging excess power with other interconnected cells (also as cross-border transfer) via smart grids on distribution grid level. The overall balancing is managed by a digital online controller in each energy cell driven by the electricity market. The objective is to integrate large shares of renewable energy into the power systems. This project was also a winner of a RegioStars award in 2019.

► **The ERDF contribution amounts to €0.9M**

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/regio-stars-awards/2019/finalist?r=energy-cells-gr