

# Small projects in Interreg

## Repository of Interreg programme management practices

### February 2018

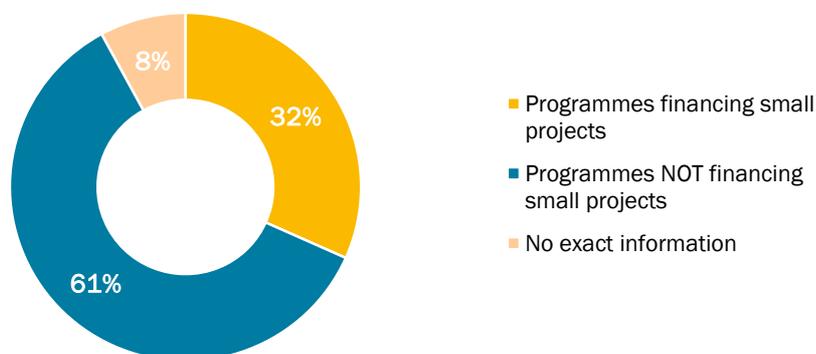


#### What does „small project“ mean?

Small projects (also called people-to-people, or micro-projects) are identified as relatively small budget projects which elaborate their objectives and implement their activities with the involvement of local civil societies.

Based on an analysis of available programme documents, Interact examined in detail Interreg Programmes<sup>1</sup> of the current period, to find out whether these programmes include small projects at all (see Chart 1).

**Distribution of Interreg Programmes financing/not financing small projects**



Small projects cover many topics; however, each project must contribute to the objectives of the relevant programme. Typically, small projects are implementing the following activities:

- organisation of cultural events, performances, festivals;
- exchange programmes in the field of culture, education, professional life, research;
- organisation of trainings, summer schools, summer academies, competitions;

<sup>1</sup> Interreg CBC, Interreg Transnational, Interreg-IPA CBC and Interreg ENI Programmes were checked by Interact based on the Programme documents available on their websites

- creation of common artworks, movies, theatrical performances;
- preparation of bigger scale projects, establishment of cross-border working groups, networks
- publishing brochures, books, booklets, DVDs;
- launching of TV or radio programmes, etc.;

In general, small projects are available for all eligible beneficiaries in the given programme, but usually programmes encourage smaller organizations – local communities, non-governmental organizations representing social groups, civil organizations, associations, clubs, SMEs etc. - to participate.

Besides the tangible outputs measured with output indicators (e.g. number of events, number of participants involved in project activities, etc.), the less-measurable **increasing of intercultural understanding** in the border regions, **diminishing cross-border (mental) obstacles** on many levels, are the added-value of small projects. **Funding of small projects can be a specific tool** in the hands of the programmes **to reach as many citizens as possible** in the border regions, making an important contribution to European integration and promoting European values.

### How do Interreg Programmes manage small projects?

In general, Interreg Programmes have two different approaches for managing small projects: selecting and implementing small projects through **regular calls**, or establishing a **Small Project Fund**. Besides their relatively small budget, the implementation of small projects has other common features:

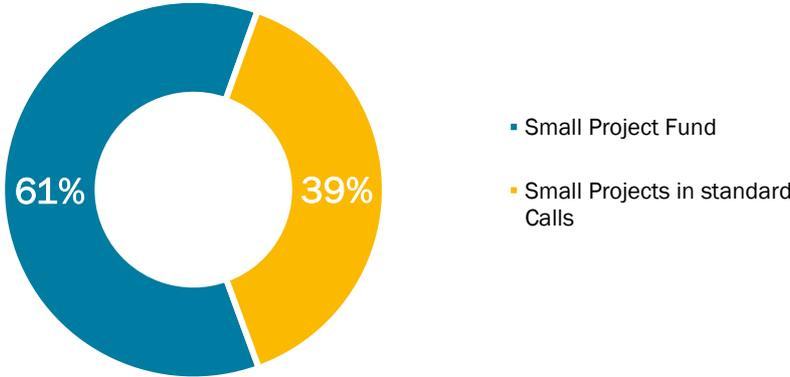
- Limited project duration (usually between 12 and 24 months)
- Use of simpler procedures (e.g. one-step selection process, simpler reporting etc.)
- Extensive use of financial tools (Simplified Cost Options, Lump sums, etc.)
- Large number of projects compared to regular projects
- Programme objectives and EU values are promoted directly to local inhabitants

### What are the main characteristics of the two main approaches?

Small projects in regular calls	Small Project Fund
The procedures are rather centralized and mostly the same for all projects, regardless of size or other characteristics	Programme selects an "Umbrella" project, which operates as an intermediary "Programme Body"
Specific objectives in the co-operation programme give a clear framework of measures, the programme opens the Calls directly	Specific measures are elaborated as part of the "Umbrella" project. Umbrella project organizations are responsible for opening a Call for small project proposals
The programme´s Monitoring/Steering Committee selects the small projects	Small projects are selected by a Selection Committee (different from the programme´s Monitoring Committee) established by regional stakeholders. Other programme bodies have an advisory role (sometimes with veto right)
Usual programme bodies are responsible for the programme management related activities of small projects, providing the sufficient resources	Majority of programme management related activities (e.g., preparation and launch of Calls, assessment of applications, selection and contracting of projects, etc.) are delegated to the Lead/Sole Beneficiary of the Umbrella project, which provides the sufficient human resources
First Level Control is carried out by the same institutions doing the validations for all projects	First Level Control is carried out by the same institutions doing the validations for regular projects and/or by the Umbrella project organizations
Small projects are recorded in the programme´s monitoring system the same way as regular projects	Small projects are not recorded in the programme´s monitoring system directly, only as part of the Small Project Fund

The majority of Interreg Programmes which implement small projects have established a Small Project Fund (see Chart 2.).

**Chart 2: Interreg programmes implementing small projects - proportion of different practices**



**What are the advantages?**

<b>Small projects in regular calls</b>	<b>Small Project Fund</b>
Same rules on programme level, easy to follow for beneficiaries	Extended simplification of procedures for beneficiaries
Decision made by the same Selection body of the programme	The Selection Committee has detailed and up-to-date knowledge on local level
No separate funds for intermediary bodies	Extensive involvement of local actors
No time needed for selection and contracting of Umbrella projects	Umbrella organizations are able to provide tailor-made advices to small projects "on-the spot"

## What are the challenges?

Small projects in regular calls	Small Project Fund
Involvement of real local actors, generating new interactions, avoiding the trap of "Beneficiaries as usual"	Conflict of interest (Umbrella organizations cannot participate in projects)
Large number of small projects requiring the same administrative procedures from the programme bodies like standard projects	Additional designation/audit requirements, e.g., the Umbrella organizations must have been audited
Link between local needs and programme objectives, contribution to programme level indicators	Potential overlapping of control levels
Small projects "compete" with regular projects	Costs of the Umbrella project must not exceed 20% of the Small Project Fund
Regulatory framework is not flexible enough	No specific regulatory framework

Please note that other (specific) types of "small scale" funding are also implemented by Interreg Programmes; e.g., "seed-money", "preparatory", or "B-light" projects. However, those special funding modes are not the subject of the current fact sheet.

For some examples of how Interreg Programmes manage their small projects, please check the following programme websites:

*Small Project Fund:*

[Interreg V-A Germany-Netherlands](#)

[Interreg V-A Slovakia-Hungary](#)

[Interreg V-A Germany\(Mecklenburg-Vorpommern/Brandenburg\)-Poland](#)

[Interreg V-A Poland-Slovakia](#)

*Small projects managed as standard projects:*

[Interreg V-A France\(Chanel-Manche\)England](#)

[Interreg V-B Northern Periphery and Arctic](#)

[Interreg-IPA CBC Bulgaria-Serbia](#)