

Questions and Answers Interreg Knowledge Fair Plenary session

June 2024



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Please note, the responses to questions have been drafted by Interact, and agreed with DG REGIO.

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1. Introduction

1. About these answers

The reflection on the future of cooperation is just starting. The consultation process has not been finalised. The proposal by the Commission is not yet drafted and the discussion with the Council of the European Union and European Parliament will take place later, most likely in the second half of 2025. Hence, at this stage, the situation is rather open. The replies provided below are based on the best of our knowledge on the direction the future of cooperation could take. All this may change during the process.

2. About these questions

The questions are answered on the basis of rank, per the Slido ran during the plenary sessions. Duplication and overlaps are largely ignored, even if that means duplicating answers.

3. A further cautionary note

This subject is fast evolving, the Interact website, and in particular the pages devoted to Post 2027 are the best places to find up to date information.

2. Your questions

1. Will all current programmes be confirmed? Will the geographical areas be redesigned?

There is no current discussion of this. Logic alone would suggest that less funding would mean less programmes while more funding does not necessarily mean more programmes. We should all focus on building awareness of the achievements of Interreg and its EU added value. The likely alternative to reducing the number of programmes would be more demonstrable success in coordination and synergy building, showing where more programmes means more value-added.

2. The term chosen is 'performance based' and not 'result based', 'output based' or 'outcome based'. What does that mean?

This phrase is based on Recovery and Resilience Facility terminology, it means paying on the basis of fulfilling a jointly agreed milestone (often meaning a reform or a target related to this reform) and managing and reimbursing based not on costs, but on value. Implementing it in Interreg is an idea for further discussion and could be an option to have a more streamlined approach to implementation.

3. Is it foreseen that the EC will take over a more active role in methodological terms (e.g. Harmonized Standard Unit Costs - staff costs)?

It is too early to comment here, especially if the philosophy behind financial flows evolves to take on board more RFF-type systems as described above. Everything is still open, including a performance-based payment system that would no longer be based on expenditure incurred and therefore make cost-related methods redundant.

4. What are the special areas of the transnational Programmes in future from your point of view?

There are several areas for transnational programmes – from supporting wider strategies from MRS and SBS, to deepening cooperation and coordination in common geographical areas, to supporting coordination in shared territories with CBC programmes and more. But in essence it is a task for programmes to show work and achievements in important policy fields with a convincing transnational dimension.

5. Could the Interreg programmes be finally acknowledged as strategy for the programmes area? This could enable use of PO5 without additional strategies, ITIs etc.)?

If the territory of the integrated territorial strategy and its implementation would be the same as the programme (same strategy, same governance), there would be no point in having PO5. The point of having PO5 is to do something different: address the needs of a functional area (generally much smaller than the territory of a programme) and empower local authorities, stakeholders and citizens (not the same as in the programme's monitoring committee). The programme document does not go far enough to form a strategy in its own right, especially considering the overlaps that need to be mapped. Hence, the current approach to programming most likely does not meet this key requirement. PO5 and ISO1 both enable the development of strategies based on additional input, to build this level of detail into the programme document itself, and in time for adaptation, would be ambitious.

6. May PO5 support the development of integrated strategies instead of requesting them as a pre-condition? How to ensure these strategies in the external borders?

Having the integrated territorial strategy is already not a pre-condition. PO5 funds can be used to prepare the integrated territorial strategies, its governance and of course also to implement the actions under the strategy. This should continue.

The future of PO5 is to be discussed, ways to make PO5 more appealing to Interreg are worth exploring. For this period, it was not a pre-condition to have the strategy ready before programme start. For some programmes using PO5 the process of strategy-building is not yet finished.

7. Is a mode for the distribution of funds already graspable? Please no disadvantage for border regions being not densely populated

In the current period, the allocation of funds was made by the Member States. To be fair and transparent this required criteria. One of them was indeed the number of people living along the border (simply, because the more people, the more impact you can have on EU citizens). We are aware that it is not as simple (e.g. cross-border natural areas, without people, also require funding to have measures on biodiversity, climate change, etc.). This is why we left it for the Member States to decide how to allocate the funds by border. For the future, we have not yet established the mode of distribution.

8. Any information about financial allocation method? Will the 25km principle be reconsidered?

See also the answer to Q7. For the time being, there are no discussions about the allocation method. The focus so far is on where Interreg will have its place under future MFF. Funding is likely to be a very challenging discussion.

9. Could we quit thematic concentration requirements? How Independent from other EU policies Interreg could become, to be more place- and people-based?

In line with the outcomes of the High Level Group of Experts for future Cohesion policy, the recommendation for Interreg is to be even more people and place based, whilst contributing to shared indicators and achievements – even if some of them may be Interreg Specific. However, within this context, Interreg still needs to contribute to the wider challenges identified and prioritised by Union policy.

10. Do you think more emphasis should be put on small projects and people to people actions?

Yes, particularly as an expression of the value of Interreg to citizens. Compared to other EU funds and instruments, Interreg, and especially Small Project Funds, are often implemented by small municipalities and local associations, making the EU visible on local level, including in rural, peripheral areas.

11. Are there plans to address the border regions which cannot participate in CBC Interreg due to the ongoing military aggression on Ukraine?

In addition to the immediate actions to ensure funding in 2021-2027 is reallocated in ways which ensure best access to these funds for these regions, the future of Interreg and the wider cohesion policy will need to respond to the changing nature of borders in the north east of Europe, where several regions are impacted and there are no longer possible cooperation partners.

12. Can we imagine a NEXT+, enlarging to neighbours of partner countries, engaging Sahel countries?

It is possible to imagine a lot for the future. Please feel free to explore this more, and how it can strengthen the concept of a European neighbourhood.

13. Will all programmes in external borders merged in one single strand with same rules? If so, will current pre-financing schemes in NEXT be kept?

The changing status of several NEXT countries poses a challenge to any 'business as usual' approach to external cooperation. It is important to maintain the movement towards a simplified and harmonised approach, build on the same rules. Achieving this is always an ambitious challenge.

14. Will OMR programmes be able to manage NDICI funds as the current Interreg NEXT?

The changing status of external cooperation creates many possibilities. If this is something OMR programmes would like, the implications of this should be more fully explored.

15. Does the HLG include a mix of experts with long experience in cohesion and those that can give a fresh perspective? That complementarity would be valuable.

More information about the members of the high level group, including their CVs, is available here: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/how/future-cohesion-policy_en