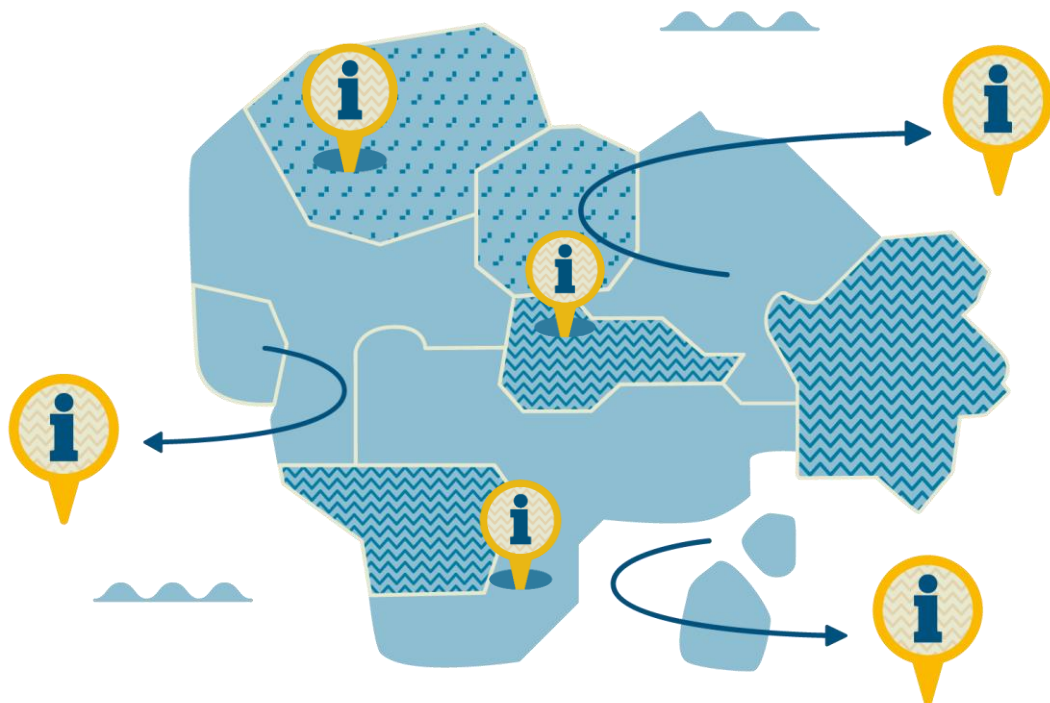


The role of regional & national contact points in 21-27

February 2022



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1. INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of the work has been to describe the possible scenarios on the future set-up and roles of Contact/National/Regional/Information Points structures in the 2021–2027 programmes, with the aim of providing a base of information and analysis for Interreg programmes setting up or developing their Contact (national/regional/information) Points.



The research methodology had three core components:

- 1) desk research;
- 2) questionnaires; and
- 3) semi-structured interviews.

Advancing previous work, most notably Interact’s background paper, the analysis has pulled together and summarised key trends and options. The surveys and interviews asked about the continuity of arrangements for Contact Points from 2007-2013 to 2014-2020, the planned legal and financial arrangements, the roles and responsibilities, as well as, more generally, the benefits and challenges of having a Contact Point network.

2. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL CONTACT POINTS IN INTERREG: CONTEXT

Contact Points are well-established in Interreg programmes...

Over successive programme periods and across the range of programme types (cross border, transnational and interregional) **national and/or regional Contact Points have become well-established components of Interreg programme management and implementation arrangements**. Generally, the work of Contact Points is coordinated by the programme secretariat, and the work plans are linked to annual programme planning, with regular activity reporting and ongoing communication with the Managing Authority and the secretariat.

Contact Points have specific advantages...

Programme evaluations highlight the **value of national/regional Contact Points** in a range of areas include: providing place-specific detail/inputs to the programme; supporting programme generation tasks; building engagement with local/strategic stakeholders; giving the programmes direct territorial 'roots'/representation across the whole programme area; breaking down cultural/linguistic/perceptual barriers; delivering direct/tailored assistance project partners; supporting dissemination and communication activities; enhancing synergies; and informing future planning.

Interact's background paper on arrangements for Contact Points going into the 2014-2020 period shows a high level of continuity, with 71 percent of surveyed programmes retaining Contact Points from 2007-13 into the 2014-2020 period and many planning an **increase in roles and responsibility**.¹ This included roles in communication, independent organisation of events, visiting projects, managing a new version of the website, consulting on visibility issues and national public procurement rules.

Although experiences vary...

Not all programmes have Contact Points and, where they are in place, **Contact Points vary in their specific role, function and format**. For example:

- approaches to recruiting and employment arrangements differ, with some staff employed by a host institution and others by the programme;
- for some Contact Points legal arrangements are in place between the programme Managing Authority or national authority and host organisations, in others a Technical Assistance contract is used;
- some receive money from the Technical Assistance budget while others are financially dependent on national authorities;² and
- some take on formal, proactive roles in programme planning, project selection and management while, in other cases, the role of Contact Points is limited to providing *ad hoc* support to publicise calls and support programme communication.


There are a range of challenges associated with Contact Points where they are in place including: a geographically variable quality of service; administrative complexity; the potential for key messages and information to be diluted/confused as they filter through 'another' organisation; a 'vested' regional/national input undermining the cross

¹ Interact 'National/regional contact/info points in Interreg programmes', Interact Background paper

² Interact 'National/regional contact/info points in Interreg programmes', Interact Background paper

border/transnational/interregional spirit of the programmes; complex relationships with local host organisations and programme bodies; and cost.

Table 1: NCP/RCP Advantages and Disadvantages



Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralisation and proximity to stakeholders • Knowledge and expertise of the region and relevant policies • Programme visibility in the region • Support to the secretariat • More scope for a closer role/relationship with projects • Reduced language barrier and more targeted communication • Value of personal contacts and networks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of common approaches/standardisation of practices • Varying interpretations of issues • Variable links and communications with secretariats • Patchy involvement and engagement in the overall programme • Institutional resources needed to make the time to coordinate with RCP/NCPs • Complex relationship with host organisation • Challenge for the programme to effectively manage • Challenge to find the right person for the role • Duplication of effort

Source: EPRC author's illustration drawing on Interact 'National/regional contact/info points in Interreg programmes', Interact Background paper

Looking to the future, the 2021-2027 draft regulatory proposal does not require the establishment of national/regional contact/information points for Interreg programmes, with the exception of programmes for the outermost regions. However, national and regional Contact Points can serve as a direct link between programmes and for beneficiaries. Greater expectations on project delivery and impact, emphasis on effective and efficient programme communications, and the need to ensure programme synergies and complementarity also **reinforce the potential value of high-quality, engaged national/regional Contact Points**. Further, the extreme uncertainties and complexities of the current policy and economic environment, and rapid pace of change, means a direct flow of information and exchange between programmes and territories is all the more important as a means to adapt and respond, as illustrated by the following areas.

1. **The regional economic impacts of coronavirus pandemic** are affecting economic and social systems at all levels. The economic impacts are already being felt on the global, European, national, regional and local economies. As ways out of the lockdown and longer term recovery plans are pursued, the

impacts on public finances, spending priorities, impact on transnational flows and exchanges, perceptions of cross-border and transnational activities, and sectoral and territorial resilience will become clearer. However, early studies are already noting the specific territorial development issues, but also the scope to build back with an even stronger focus on green and digital development.

2. **Travel restrictions and reductions as a result of the coronavirus pandemic** have impacted heavily on programmes. Travel restrictions remain in place in large areas at a crucial time for programme communications and engagement as they move into a new programme period and seek to generate high quality projects. While much can be provided remotely, the capacity to deliver some face-to-face meetings through more local networks could be extremely valuable and could also support programme efforts to cut down on travel and associated carbon emissions.
3. **The raft of new domestic and EU programme and policy interventions**, in particular linked to Green Transition and COVID recovery, present programmes with opportunities for complementarities and synergies. Given the scale, number and scope of initiatives being launched, having 'local' insights and an additional resource to monitor developments could be valuable.

Taken together, these factors suggest that Contact Points could have a more valuable role in the future. Equally, pressures on programme budgets, concerns over levels of bureaucracy and need for simplification, the established nature of many programmes, and pressure on programmes to deliver tight, effective coordination could lend weight to efforts to streamline programme implementation structures and systems.

3. CONTACT POINTS 2014-20 & 2021-27: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

The following discussion reflects on the different set-ups and structures in place for Contact Points. The work is based on the results of:

- **an online survey**, which was sent to all Interreg programmes in early October 2021 and obtained valid responses from 36 Interreg programmes³ (18 Interreg cross-border, 8 Interreg transnational, 4 Interreg IPA CBC, 6 ENI CBC), providing a balanced representation of different programme strands and geographies;
- **a follow-up online survey** sent to the Contact Points in early November 2021 and which obtained 46 valid responses from 27 programmes (CBC: 18 respondents, TN: 21 respondents, IR: 2 respondents, IPA CBC: 1 respondent, ENI CBC: 4 respondents). Some respondents are acting as Contact Points for various programmes;

³ Please see session 6.2 for a full list of the Interreg Programmes that answered to the survey.

- **ten semi-structured interviews** with programme representatives; and
- **documentary sources**, including programme impact and operational evaluations.

The bulk of the report focuses on the experience of programmes with Contact Points and plans for the future. The report highlights the **valuable roles played by Contact Points and the ongoing function they will play in the management and implementation of 2021-27 programmes**. However, as the following section notes, while many programmes have a system of Contact Points in place, not all programmes have chosen to establish them.

3.1 Contact points: in Interreg programmes

Of the responses received to the programme survey, 28 of the responding 36 programmes (77 percent) had a Contact Point system in place for the 2014-2020 period, and 8 (23 percent) did not. Reasons given for not having Contact Points relate to:

- **Nature of the programme area**
 - Small programme areas can be well covered by a single, active Joint Secretariat/Managing Authority (JS/MA), (e.g. Interreg Estonia - Latvia).
- **Role of JS and national representatives**
 - Robust role of national/regional representatives who play a strong role in informing and linking with local actors (e.g. Kolarctic ENI CBC; Interreg Italy - Switzerland).
 - Geographically dispersed JS structure, or branch offices covering Contact Point functions (e.g. Interreg IPA CBC Croatia - Bosnia and Herzegovina - Montenegro).
- **Operational issues**
 - Perceived risk of complexity and communication challenges (Kolarctic ENI CBC);
 - Diverse/opposing partner opinions on Contact Point role meaning a common approach was not adopted (Interreg Baltic Sea Region).⁴

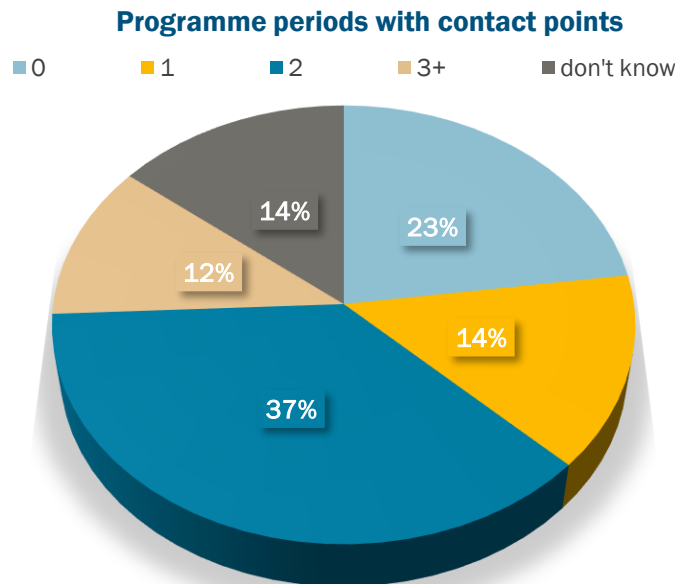
In a number of cases (4 programmes), an established system of Contact Points will not be taken forward to the 2021-2027 period. Reasons cited include:

⁴ Instead, for the new period 21-27 period a share of the TA set aside for national activities. It will be up to each country to decide about its use.

- **Limited role of Contact Points in the past** and, related, a lack of perceived added value;
- **Change in organisation/nature of tasks** (particularly in relation to communications)
 - communication tasks increasingly central to strategic programme management tasks and, therefore, dealt with centrally thus reducing the need for a Contact Point;
 - specialist consultant input on issues formerly covered by Contact Point, most notably, communication; and
 - increased use of virtual consultations with project partners, reducing the need for region specific face-to-face meetings.
- **Reduced/small programme area** can be covered by a central JS, or JS offices in each participating country (Interreg Italy - Croatia; Interreg IPA CBC Croatia - Bosnia and Herzegovina - Montenegro)
 - related, reduced programme geographies and cuts to programme (and in particular TA budgets) limit the scope for funding effective Contact Points.

Nevertheless, for many programmes **Contact Points remain established components of programme management and implementation systems** (see Figure 1). Forty-nine percent of programme respondents have had Contact Points for two or more programme periods.

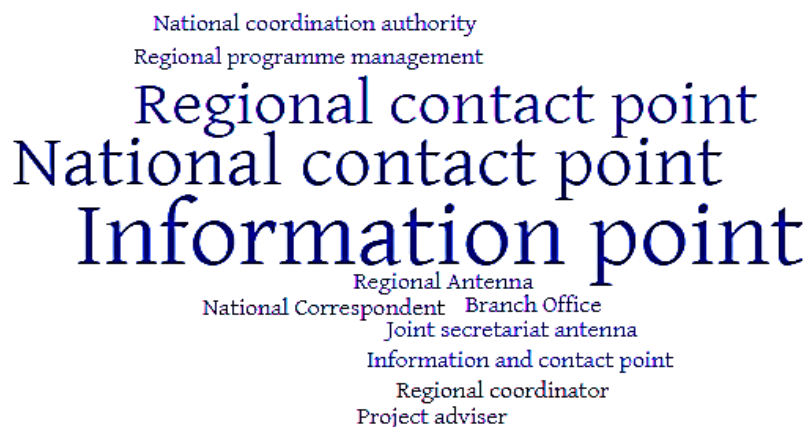
Figure 1: Contact points over successive programme periods



Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

Where they are in place, Contact Points vary in their 'title' (see Figure 2) which can be indicative of differences in their legal set up, structure, roles, and responsibilities, as subsequent sections of this report will discuss.

Figure 2: Contact point 'titles' wordcloud



Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

As has been noted, major shifts in the environments in which programmes are operating and new regulations for the 2021-27 programmes raise new challenges, issues and demands which impact on the use, role and responsibilities of Contact Points. Nevertheless, as in the past, Interreg programmes demonstrate high levels of continuity in their key management and implementation structures. 24 of the responding 36 programmes (70 percent) maintain a network of Contact Points in the 2021-27 period. The continuity of the approach suggests, in the right circumstances and managed well, a Contact Point network can support programme efficiency and effectiveness and, crucially, can benefit the programme area.

Key perceived benefits of maintaining the Contact Point system are summarised below:



Engagement, connectivity and links between programmes and programme territories:

- **Regional & local links**, ‘grounding’ activity in the programme area.
 - Physical proximity to (potential) applicants and beneficiaries (Poland-Russia ENI CBC; Interreg Slovakia - Hungary; Interreg Central Baltic; Interreg Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic; Interreg Mediterranean; Interreg Greece - Italy).
- **Strategic links**, which can be valuable for programme, project and territorial profile, and engagement.
 - Contact Points facilitate the liaison between the MA/JS and the regional/national authorities, strengthening programme ownership (Interreg Slovakia - Hungary; Interreg France (Guadeloupe - Martinique - Organisation Économique de la Caraïbe orientale); Mediterranean Sea Basin ENI CBC).

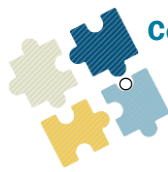
“

... contact to the grassroots - that's so important in terms of getting feedback and ideas.

Interreg TN Programme

...show beneficiaries and applicants in a concrete way the programme is very close to them.

Interreg CBC Programme



Complementary place-specific and programme expertise

- Contact Points provide **support and advice on the programme** in the national language to national applicants/beneficiaries (Interreg Greece - Cyprus; Interreg Euregio Meuse - Rhine; Interreg Slovenia - Hungary);
- Contact Points provide **place-specific insights to programmes** and can support MA/JS with local administration and checks (e.g. anti-fraud) (Interreg ADRION).



... Our partners are convinced that one of the success factors of this programme is that we have regional project officers in the region, close to the applicants, and who have a profound knowledge of the specific region.

Interreg CBC Programme



Operational efficiency and effectiveness

- **Speed up systems** due to familiarity with local systems, more effective partner search, enhanced flow of information and communication through the programme/territorial networks.
- **Improving quality**, building better quality projects, higher success rates, helping to avoid errors.
- **Maximising impacts**, roles in capitalisation and synergies.



Addressing specific programme area needs

- **Large, diverse and dispersed programme geographies**
 - Administrative and cost burdens involved in cross border travel to/from parts of a large programme can be prohibitive for partners. Similarly, in ENI, IPA programmes have very different administrative procedures on either side of the border which means a place-based specialist is valuable (Latvia - Russia ENI CBC).

- **Highly populated programme areas** with large numbers of (potential) stakeholders and beneficiaries can also benefit from Contact Points due to the volume of potential stakeholders and networks.

“

... As a maritime programme spanning large distances... it is important to have Contact Points.

Interreg CBC Programme

...we are a very large programme, maybe not geographically ...but there are about 12 million people in this programme area. That is why our partners believe in the importance of regional structures.

Interreg CBC Programme



Continuity and building on past experience

- Retain and develop a system that has supportive/durable networks and well-established relationships between partners.
 - Keep a **proven, well-working system**. (Interreg IPA CBC Italy - Albania-Montenegro; Mediterranean Sea Basin ENI CBC; Interreg Germany - The Netherlands; Interreg South Baltic; Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine).
 - **Building trust and relationships**.

“

... Having the same contact person at the NCP, someone who knows the laws and constraints of the region, who speaks the same language and who has strong expertise in several programmes, is reassuring.

Interreg CBC Programme

3.2. Contact Points: legal basis, funding, staffing

3.2.1. Legal basis

For the 2021-2027 period, Contact Points are established through a variety of means (see Table 2).

Table 2: Contact Point agreements

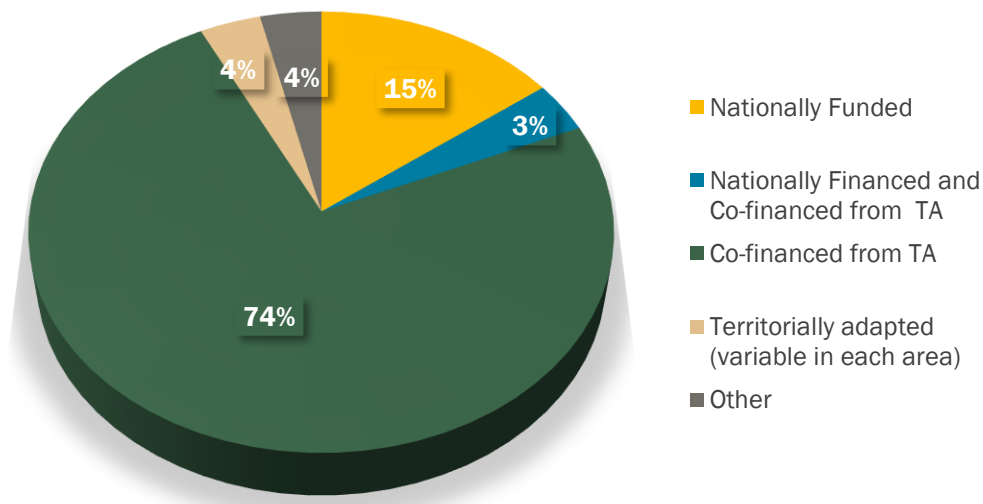
Approach	Rationale/requirement
TA Contract	Allocation of dedicated resource and ensures both complementarity and separation of tasks from the JS
TA Contract & agreement between MA/host organisation	Allows appointment by national authority and lump sum from TA
Agreement between programme and MA/host organisation	Most commonly in place where domestic resources are used
Agreement between national authorities and domestic host organisation	Accommodates financial agreement with non-EU Member States involved. Accommodates delegation from national authority to a regional authority or other agency/individual
Territorially variable arrangements	Different arrangements are made for different parts of the programme area, reflecting differing regulatory and legislative frameworks

Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

3.2.2. Funding

The approach to funding the Contact Points differs substantially (see Figure 3). Some programmes have chosen to avoid a TA contract due to concerns about potential conflict of interests in project development. In such cases, the Contact Points are funded by the national authorities. For others, Contact Points are integral parts of the TA budget.

Figure 3: Funding sources



Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

Survey responses highlight the fact that, due to programming delays, many programmes have not yet taken final decisions on the funding of Contact Points in 2021-27. Where plans are set out, the allocations range from 16-27 percent of the TA budget,⁵ with 28 percent of Contact Point respondents expecting an increase in funding and 25 percent anticipating a decrease in funding.

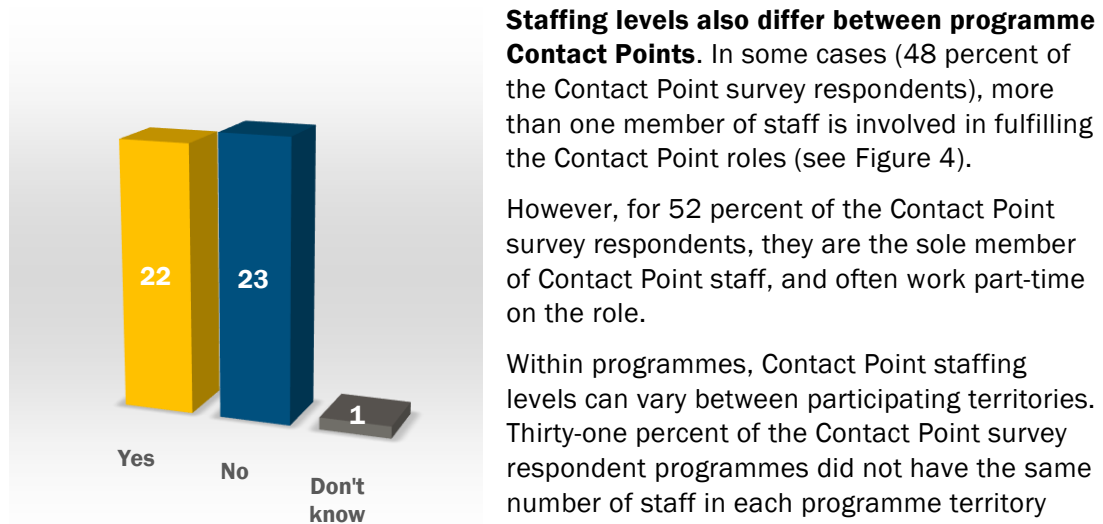
As programme budgets have come under pressure, how to finance Contact Points in the 2021-27 programme period can be a challenging issue for some programmes. The reduction of TA for the 2021-27 period poses a particular challenge, given the high percentage of Contact Points funded through the TA budgets.

3.2.3. Staffing

Linked to differing legal and financial set-ups for Contact Points, **the basis on which Contact Point staff are employed varies**, e.g. employed by MA/JS, employed by host organisation, or mixed (variation from place to place to reflect different Member States needs/requirements). The nature of the employment approach impacts coordination and reporting responsibilities, as discussed in Section 4.

⁵ For some programmes this is a fixed amount for the programme period. However, circumstances may arise which demand additional input from contact points. In this case additional one of payments are made (Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic).

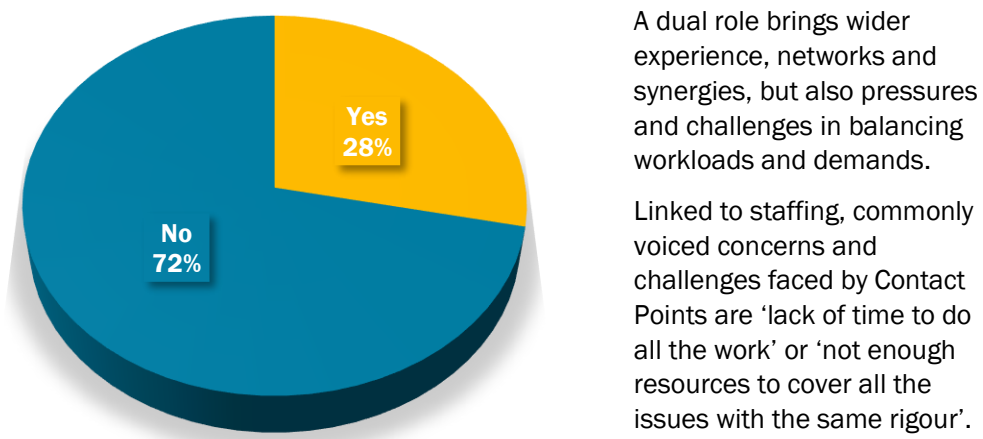
Figure 4: Contact Points with more than one member of staff



Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

For some programmes, Contact Point staff work full-time on behalf of the programme (72 percent of the Contact Point respondents). In other cases, Contact Point responsibilities are fulfilled by staff who take on the role as part of a wider remit, e.g. working with other programmes (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Contact Points covering more than one programme



Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

Increased emphasis on coordination and communication, dissemination and impact, policy and programme synergies and rapidly changing operational environments place increasing demands on staff resources and time, but with little flexibility in terms of additional resources. As a result, working to identify where Contact Point support is most effectively and efficiently used is important.

“

... We are not a mini Joint secretariat...often difficult to understand for the project partners.

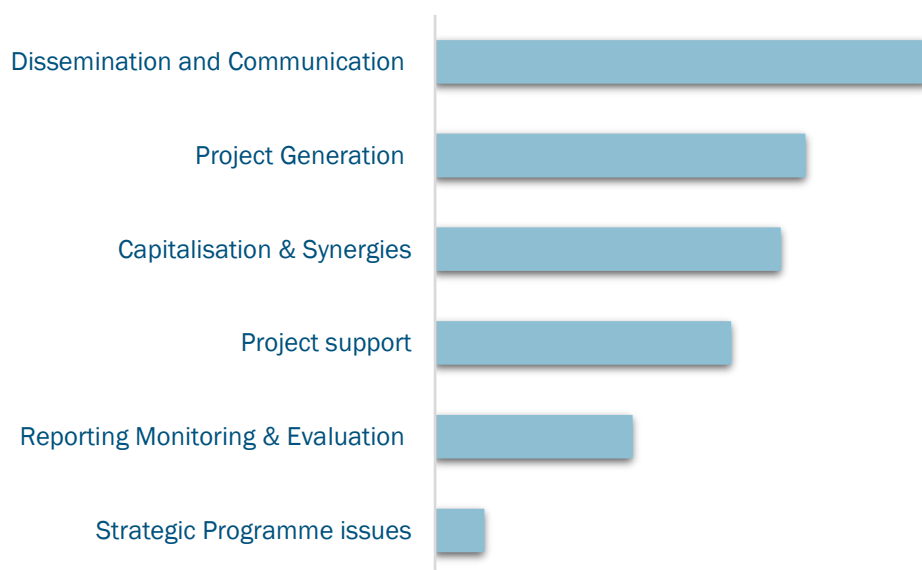
Contact point Interreg TN programme

Equally important is the quality and knowledge of staff. The value of excellent interpersonal skills and individual drivers in taking forward Contact Point roles and functions is highlighted in survey responses. Similarly, the benefits of retaining experienced staff over successive programme periods is evident as their experience and well established working relationships add value (e.g. Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic, Interreg Central Europe). In contrast, linked to domestic policy contexts, some programmes have to manage higher staff turnover rates, making the clear definition/prescription of tasks and efforts to share and retain institutional knowhow and expertise important.

4. CONTACT POINTS 2014-20 & 2021-27: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Reflecting differences in structures and set-up, the **roles and responsibilities of Contact Points differ**. Some Contact Points have a specific range of tasks concentrated around project support. Others are used more widely across a range of programme activities. As Figure 6 illustrates, Contact Points are most commonly involved in activities linked to project generation and dissemination and communication.

Figure 6: Key roles of Contact Points



Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

Roles and responsibilities can be set out in detail in, e.g. programme documentation or annual work plans. In other instances, programmes incorporate some flexibility around the roles, allowing for territorially variable needs and capacities and scope to respond to change. Roles are determined not only by the capacities and resources available to the Contact Points, but also the capacities of programme MAs/JS, needs on the ground, and the general role that is foreseen for Contact Points in the programme's architecture.

Looking to the future, a positive indication of the engaged and evolving role of Contact Points is the fact that 56 percent of the respondents to the Contact Point survey felt they could play more of a role in the future. Delays in the programming process mean that final decisions on Contact Point roles in 2021-2027 have not all been finalised. However, where plans are in place, anticipated changes range from 'fine-tuning' according to the new legislative framework to more substantial shifts in roles and responsibilities.



Modifying roles and responsibilities

- Emphasis on attracting new partners, e.g. predominantly work in project generation instead of having Contact Points involved in the project implementation;
- Focus on dissemination and programme communication activities;
- Working to build capitalisation and synergies; and
- Greater responsibility to tailor activities to regional needs and 'bringing the programme closer to potential beneficiaries' (Poland - Russia ENI CBC).



Simplified, clearer systems

- Clarifying the role of Contact Points, e.g. setting out specific functions for them; and
- Improved communication and coordination, e.g. simplifying management and reporting, more regular meetings, getting Contact Point inputs at key stages/points.



Change in financing

- Reductions in funding for Contact Points, e.g.
 - The number of Contact Points under TA is reduced (Interreg Euroregion Meuse - Rhine).
- Increased resource, e.g.
 - Possibility of additional staff.

The following sections consider these roles and changes in greater detail.

4.1 Strategic programme roles

The activities of Contact Points are primarily concentrated on operational aspects of programme delivery as opposed to programme development and strategy. However, there are areas where Contact Point input can add value at the strategic programme level. For example, Contact Points can be:

- an **integral part of the programme's delivery of the partnership principle**, ensuring broad participation and representation from across the programme area.

“

... We have beneficiaries with a great experience in the cooperation, but also new beneficiaries for which this is the first time to work with a cooperation programme. It is extremely important and relevant, to give evidence [through the Contact Points] that the cooperation is close to them - it is fundamental.

The national Contact Points are the link between the programme and the regions.

Interreg CBC Programme

- an **assured functional link** between the programmes and national legal/administrative frameworks, e.g.

“

The Member States insisted on having them [Contact Points] because they see the clear added-value of having regional Contact Points ... as they know the regional rules and procedures and speak the language of the beneficiaries.

Interreg CBC Programme

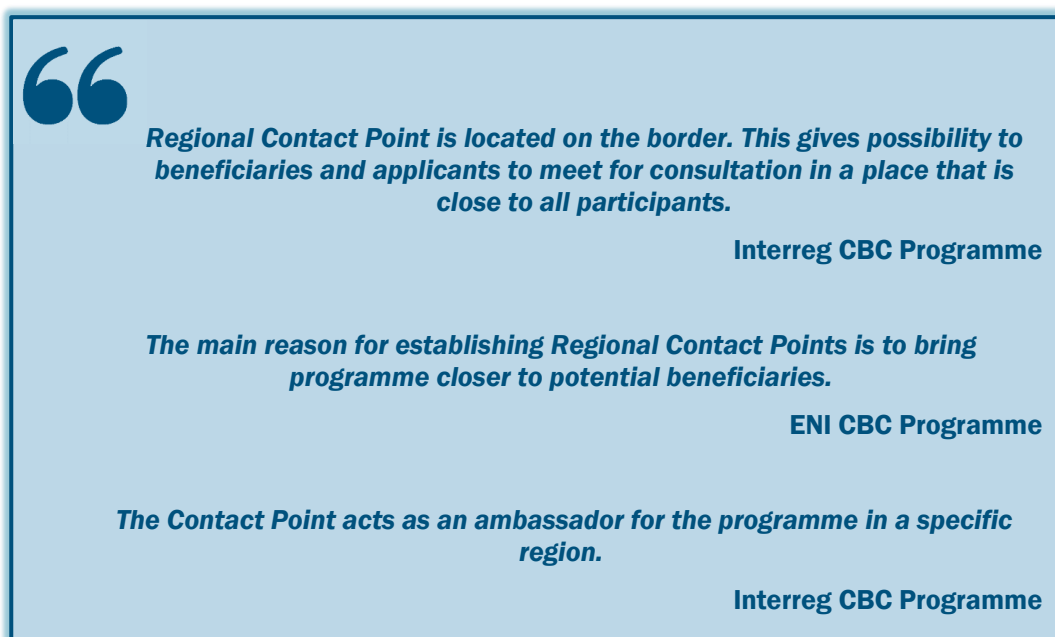
Related, Contact Points have a role in providing:

- **Insights and feedback** on area and policy context during programme development which are especially valuable during a period of rapid and large-scale change e.g.

- highlighting potential policy synergies and links, feeding into programme SWOT and /or PESTLE area analyses during programme development; and
- supporting programme Monitoring Committee members (Interreg South Baltic) with input and advice and facilitating decision-making at the national level (Interreg Central Europe).
- **Ongoing, informed engagement** during programme implementation.
 - Providing insights in practitioner feedback on programme management and implementation (Interreg South Baltic), e.g. commenting on programme indicators, programme communication strategy;
 - Representing a source of information on local perceptions of the programme, potential project pipelines, policy coherence, and area needs analysis etc;
 - Providing programme/territory specific input to programme Member State representatives who potentially cover a wide range of programmes/areas as part of their remit.
 - Providing representation on programme committees/working groups, e.g.
 - on working groups within JS (evaluation, communication, capitalisation) so their experience in the field is taken into account (Interreg Flanders – The Netherlands); and
 - observers in Monitoring Committee meetings (Interreg Central Europe), which allows shared understandings of decisions.

4.2 Project roles

In relation to projects, the role played by Contact Points can be as practical as offering a place for project partnerships to meet, moving to more active project partnership building and advisory work. Key functions cluster around the areas set out in the following sections.



“

Regional Contact Point is located on the border. This gives possibility to beneficiaries and applicants to meet for consultation in a place that is close to all participants.

Interreg CBC Programme

The main reason for establishing Regional Contact Points is to bring programme closer to potential beneficiaries.

ENI CBC Programme

The Contact Point acts as an ambassador for the programme in a specific region.

Interreg CBC Programme

4.2.1 Project generation

In relation to project generation activities, Contact Points have key roles as the “programme interface”⁶, promoting connectivity/accessibility/visibility to local partners. Contact Points are described as a resource to promote the programme in the region and ensure active regional participation. Particular functions include the following:

- **Access to information**
 - Providing an initial point of contact for information on the programme, procedures and processes, giving information as requested (e.g. Poland - Russia ENI CBC).
- **Technical advice**
 - Offering advice on, e.g. on national roles, regulations and procedures and how they relate to projects/partners (e.g. Interreg Germany - The Netherlands, Interreg Romania - Serbia, Interreg Greece - Cyprus).

⁶ Source: Interreg CBC Programme

- **Initial assessments**

- Conducting preliminary assessments of beneficiary eligibility – capacity and legal status (e.g. Interreg Germany - The Netherlands).
- Carrying out specific checks, e.g. anti-fraud checks (Interreg ADRION).

As well as providing administrative services on request, Contact Points also play a proactive role in project generation.

- **Active, mobilisation role**

- Identifying and mobilising cross-border and transnational cooperation actions:
 - working with local contacts and networks, ‘community building’ to actively generate interest and communicating and developing project ideas (Interreg South Baltic); and
 - using tailored system to mobilise interest in calls which reflects regional specificities (Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic).
- Guiding (not just informing) beneficiaries when calls are issued and directly promoting calls to potential partners, e.g.
 - boosting project quality, e.g. through capacity to work in national languages (Interreg IPA CBC Romania - Serbia, Interreg Slovenia - Hungary) and supporting partner search activities and partnership building and partnerships.
- Maintaining links with (potential) applicants and beneficiaries on an on going basis, not just around calls.

Contact Points, therefore, can take a very proactive role in project generation (with domestic and programme approval), drawing on extensive expertise, territorial networks and commitment to the area and the programmes. Looking beyond project generation and towards the more formal processes of project selection, experiences differ more substantially. Some Contact Points are considered an ‘extension’ of the Joint Secretariat and, as such, participate in the project selection procedures. For other programmes, the ‘closeness’ of Contact Points to potential projects and their role in project development raises conflict of interest issues. For this reason, some Contact Points no longer play a role in project assessment and project implementation (Interreg Euregio Meuse - Rhine).

Looking to the future, project generation is an area where Contact Points can play more of a role, but also where new challenges are foreseen. These include:

- programme ambitions to engage with a wider and more diverse range of stakeholders can mean that the Contact Points do not necessarily have all the required networks and contacts in place;
- not all Contact Points have the capacity to deliver the same level of service;

- ensuring consistency of approach for the outset, particularly where Contact Points have a role in project generation, but not selection. In this case, there can be uncertainty on how to advise the applicants, especially at the start of the programme period; and
- due to COVID impacts, additional work is needed to build partnerships.

“

With the COVID pandemic situation, it is difficult to keep relationships and find new partners.

Interreg TN Programme

Responses include the following:

- **Closer engagement between MA/JS and Contact Points** in the lead up to the first call as a means of ensuring consistency, shared understandings and knowledge (Interreg Euregio Meuse - Rhine) e.g. regular meetings and even provision of, or role in, some tailored partner training on management of projects / monitoring / programme rules / communication.

“

We believe in investing at the start, so we believe that if we support the applicants well at the very beginning of a project, then we will have less problems to face afterwards.

Interreg CBC Programme

- **Stronger role in finding new partners through:**
 - building and maintaining Contact Point (and programme) profile; and
 - working to extend and expand their project partnerships (Interreg Mediterranean), and encourage new partners, e.g. more NGOs and so called "smaller players" to apply for Programme funds (Interreg Lithuania - Poland).
- **Changed approaches to Contact Point role in initial checks:**
 - scope for a greater role for Contact Points as project gatekeeper/filter, e.g. a point of first contact, initial assessment with only suitably high

- quality applications going to JS and more involvement in administrative checks, eligibility of expenditure and first level control; or
- o reduced role in formal checks due to variations in Contact Point capacities and resources.

4.2.2 Supporting project delivery and results

As the results focus intensified for Interreg programmes, the role of Contact Points in project delivery and results became increasingly important. Expectations are that Contact Points can help in a variety of ways in relation to supporting smooth project implementation through the provision of ongoing advice and assistance:

- Contact Points can be fundamental for the understanding and application of national regulatory framework and project implementation processes (Interreg Greece - Cyprus.)
- Supporting project leaders through the life of their project in the definition, implementation and administrative and financial monitoring of their project (Interreg France (Guadeloupe - Martinique - Organisation Économique de la Caraïbe orientale)).

Crucially, advice and support from Contact Points can **reflect and incorporate local specificities and needs**. Contact Points can build strong links with local stakeholders and offer tailored support and advice consistent with the programme. This can include, for example, support to partners in the context of specific national rules, and coordination with JS when partners have difficulties related to national rules (Interreg Greece - Cyprus). The value of direct and 'close' contact with the programme, capacity in local languages, and even the possibility for getting personal consultation 'on the spot' for interested target groups (Interreg Hungary - Slovakia) are important. Contact Point involvement in mid-term project reviews (Interreg Central Europe) can help substantially in addressing any emerging problems and issues at an early stage (Interreg Central Europe). Looking to the future, in a number of cases, Contact Point involvement with projects could increase, particularly in relation to some aspects of project 'supervision'. This could include more involvement in the supervision of projects by the staff of Contact Points, in parallel with communication activities, as well as Contact Points taking a role in site visits and/or on-the-spot checks.

4.3 Synergies and Capitalisation

As programmes and projects are expected to deliver greater impact, **Contact Points have taken up a notable role in relation to capitalisation and synergies**. Through their engagement and awareness of wider policy and area specific networks (Interreg France

(Guadeloupe - Martinique - Organisation Économique de la Caraïbe orientale))⁷, Contact Points can be valuable in helping projects to deliver results or seek policy/project synergies (Interreg Atlantic Area).

Capitalisation and synergies are increasingly important aspects of project and programme development and delivery. For Contact Points involved in advising on and supporting project development, the embedding of capitalisation and synergy opportunities into project development and delivery processes at the outset represents an increased focus. Examples include:

- working with projects to develop ‘narratives’;
- understanding of impact and demonstrating visible results;
- focusing on real areas of value added from the programme and visible results; and
- communicating and transferring results.

Looking to the future, the wider role of Contact Points in supporting the mainstreaming of projects and working to build networks and links to support capitalisation can be identified. Contact points have worked to understand not only how projects engage but also how programme institutions can support transfer processes and capitalise on results.

At the same time, practical constraints pose challenges in developing this role. As has been noted, even within a single programme, not all Contact Points are organised in the same way, staff and financial resources differ, and the areas covered are diverse. Contact Points in some cases, such as small countries, may be able to work directly with municipalities and develop strong productive networks for capitalisation. Others in larger territories may not have the opportunity to develop such close, direct partner links, but may have wider capitalisation opportunities. While it may not be possible to ensure uniformity of approach/level of service, there may be scope for Contact Points

⁷ The Community of Regional Contact Points are positioned in the French regions of the Programme; in Martinique, Guyana and Saint Martin, they work in close coordination with the Joint Secretariat of the Caribbean Operational Programme. The non-EU RCPs are positioned in the international organizations with a regional vocation (Association of Caribbean States, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Caribbean Community / Caribbean Forum of ACP States, Economic Commission for Latin America & the Caribbean).

with more limited resources to benefit from lessons and experience of those that are able to engage in a wider range of actions.

“

National Contact Points have an important potential when it comes to developing synergies with other programmes”...the role of NCPs for the development of synergies, capitalisation and dissemination can be pointed out, NCPs can take a more proactive than reactive approach to liaising with, e.g. other programmes, national experts and work with the MA and JS on communication of results.

Spatial Foresight et al. (2019), Operational Evaluation of the Interreg Central Europe Programme Final Evaluation Report 21 (145), pp. 20-21

4.4 Communication & Dissemination

Effective and efficient communication and dissemination are key concerns for programmes. At the same time as ensuring consistent messaging, programmes and their partners are working with new modes of communication and changes in the way stakeholders engage (which have been intensified due to COVID). The results are differentiated approaches to the engagement of Contacts Points in communications.

- **Centralised** - for some programmes, communications is a centralised task. Efforts to ensure strategic, consistent communications led to more centralised systems, with communication a task for the JS (Interreg Germany - The Netherlands). Small programme size, the impact of changes in the way programmes are communicating, move to online events and communications, and the need for a specialist communications expert are also reasons that communication is not managed separately from the main programme JS/ MA office (e.g. Interreg Estonia - Latvia).
- **Close coordination** - in other cases, much closer coordination of communications efforts is planned for example:
 - Contact Points working in close coordination with the programme communications officer (Interreg Flanders - The Netherlands);
 - a JS-level communication unit coordinating the work of Contact Points on communication, arranging meetings and document sharing (Interreg Central Europe);
 - agreeing standardised messages (Interreg Mediterranean); and
 - planning joint internal training for the JS and contact points to build share understandings and approaches (Interreg Central Europe).

However, the active, flexible role of Contact Points in communications is also noted and is an aspect some programmes seek to emphasise or could be developed further. Contact Points take on a key role in planning and managing local programme events, providing invaluable local insights and presence, e.g. managing country specific communication tools/outputs, expanding communication channels for both projects, programmes and to support capitalisation and maximising impact, through access to wider and deeper (local) dissemination channels.

- **Early involvement**
 - Contact Points participate in the definition and implementation of the programme communication plan and ensure the promotion and publicity of the programme (Interreg France (Guadeloupe - Martinique - Organisation Économique de la Caraïbe orientale)).
 - In the future, especially at the start of the programme period, the importance of the Contact Point role could be recognised and supported by the programme, with promotional material readily available etc.
- **Calls to results**
 - Involvement in communication activities throughout the programme/project lifetime, e.g. place-based, tailored, targeted communication on calls (Interreg IPA CBC Italy - Albania - Montenegro), capacity to engage more effectively and efficiently with key networks and audiences (Interreg ADRION) and supporting communication on results (Interreg IPA CBC Italy - Albania - Montenegro).
- **Events**
 - Contact Points take on a key role in planning and managing local programme events, providing invaluable local insights and presence e.g. Contact Points help organise 'how to apply' seminars, lead partner events and annual conferences (Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic) and national information days (Interreg Central Europe).
- **Flexible and responsive**
 - Responding to change, e.g. COVID has made particular demands of Contact Points given the extensive array of communications material needing to be shared and the lack of opportunity for physical meetings (Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic).
 - Social media communication is another area where Contact Points can fulfil a role by creating content, following up project results and through dissemination.

Each of the above roles/activities can be particularly **important where programmes are incorporating new programme areas**, where a Contact Point devoted to providing first-hand information in national language in the country is beneficial.

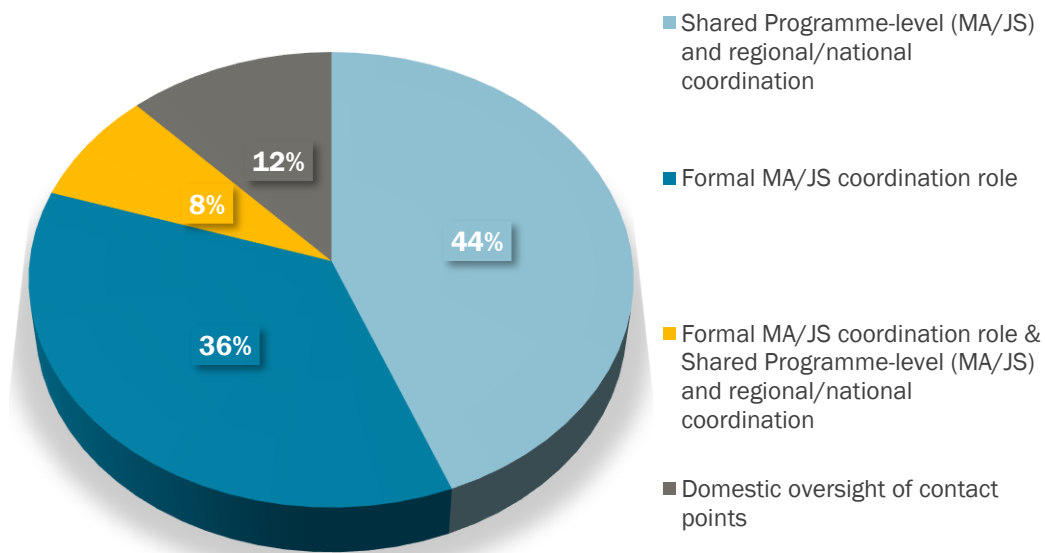
4.5 Coordination

Effective coordination of Contact Point activities is important in order to ensure **programme efficiency and effectiveness, consistency and quality of service provision**, and is a key consideration for the 2021-2027 period.

Differences in the legal set up of the Contact Points and the programmes themselves affect the ways and extent to which Contact Points are centrally coordinated. The result is substantial differences in approach (see below Figure 7).

- **The MA/JS takes a coordination role**, e.g. in the Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic programme the JS coordinates a Contact Point network. Terms of Reference are decided by the Monitoring Committee.
- **A system of domestic oversight of Contact Points**, e.g. Contact Points are mainly seen as a 'national responsibility', but with some content support and guidance from MA or JS.
- A **mixed/less structured approach** ranging from limited formal coordination to combined national and JS/MA involvement linked, e.g. to different tasks.

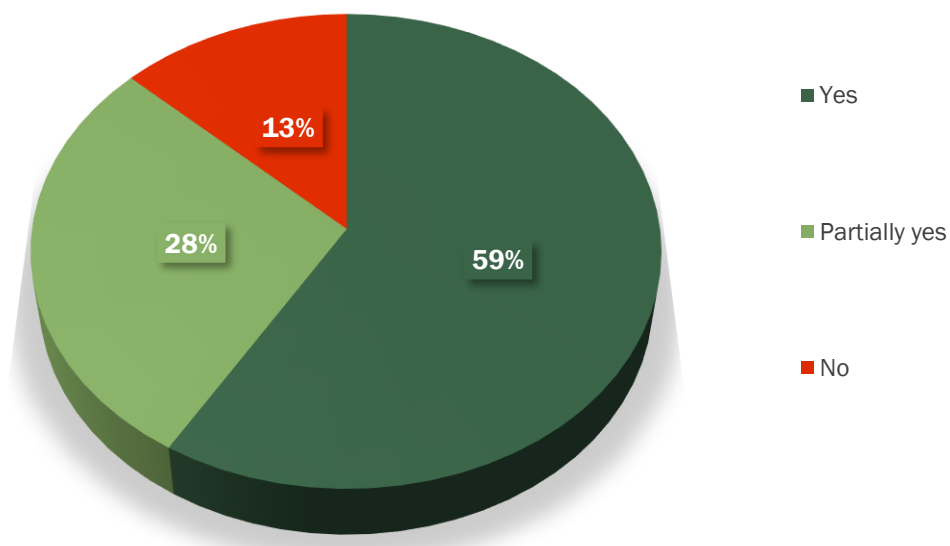
Figure 7: Contact Point Coordination Arrangements



Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

The formal systems in place are supported by a wide range of coordination activities, which for the current programme period have resulted in favourable views of the coordination between Contact Points and programme authorities (see Figure 8). Fifty-nine percent of respondents to the Contact Point survey rated coordination with the MA/JS as good. Similarly programmes can view Contact Points very much as ‘an essential part of the team’.

Figure 8: Good Coordination: Contact points and the MA/JS



Source: EPRC author's illustration based on programme survey results

The systems in place vary in terms of their approach and formality and include:

- **formal work planning**, with Contact Points presenting a work plan for each year that is approved by the Monitoring Committee and which is helpful in coordinating events and ‘peak periods’ where there may be pressures;
- **formal weekly/monthly meetings and reporting**, helping the Contact Points engage, ensuring that the same messages and understandings are built up across the team, and supporting agreement and insights on specific issues; and
- **informal meeting and flexible continual contact** maintained (either instead of, or as well as, formal systems).

The importance of viewing coordination as a productive exchange is highlighted and complete control and uniformity of approach are not always appropriate. Contact Points have valuable programme expertise to feed in so, as noted by the Interreg Euregio

Meuse - Rhine programme, effective coordination should aim to get inputs and ideas from Contact Points. Maintaining an engaged network of Contact Points is key to maintaining these connections. The Northern Periphery and Arctic secretariat work to keep a 'lively community so Contact Points are not isolated from the programme'. Contact Point placements at the Programme Secretariats are another approach to improving and deepening understanding and collaboration (Mediterranean Sea Basin ENI CBC). Vertical and horizontal coordination across Contact Points is also seen as valuable, e.g. with productive links with other Contact Points and regional networks (Interreg Austria - Hungary; Interreg Central Baltic) representing a means to share information and knowledge and solve problems, without burdening the MA/JS.

COVID-19 has had a dramatic impact on the importance of engagement and coordination efforts. The lack of face-to face meetings and limitations on travel can amplify a sense of separation from the main programme infrastructure and competing responsibilities. However, for some programmes, more frequent on-line meetings and contacts have boosted 'team-spirit' and links (Estonia - Russia ENI CBC).

Looking to the future, increased/better coordination is a recurring theme, with programmes seeking to ensure more coherent Contact Point services and address challenges. Managing coordination and, where relevant, harmonisation across what can be diverse programme areas, differentiated institutional environments and various Contact Points resources is a challenge. Particular challenges of note include:

- miscommunication between the JS and the Contact Points in some cases;
- Contact Points not linked enough to the programme and 'too rooted' in their specific areas, putting regional interests first;
- weak capacity to cover very different tasks, some of which are very practical and technical while others need more imagination, creativity and writing capacities (Interreg North West Europe); and
- impact of organisational changes in work of the National Authority (Interreg Danube Transnational).

As pressures on budgets and delivery intensify and roles increase, effective and efficient coordination and addressing these challenges becomes all the more important. Responses include:

- setting out more detail on roles and responsibilities in the Cooperation Programme documents;
- transfer of tasks from regional management to the JS (Interreg Germany - The Netherlands);
- integration of Contact Point into programme management to a greater extent;
- use of standardised tools and systems (e.g. HIT);
- specialist, targeted training on topics such as financial management / MIS application/E-form applications (Mediterranean Sea Basin ENI CBC);

- joint training and activities with programme JS and with other Contact Points; and
- ensuring adequate equipment (laptops of good quality and capacity) to work efficiently and ensure webinars function smoothly (a work tool more necessary now due to COVID-19).

“

Roles ...'are clearly defined, but not in a very prescriptive way. And I think this is great, because they [Contact Points], still have some room for manoeuvre'.

Interreg CBC Programme

However, coordination and harmonisation do not necessarily mean uniformity. For example, the Interreg Central Baltic programme notes the need for simplified management, clearer roles and bigger responsibility/independence of the NCP to do what is regionally relevant. Similarly, the challenge of balancing the need for coordination and a standardised approach with encouraging creativity, innovation and initiation of work by Contact Points is highlighted by the Latvia - Russia ENI CBC programme.

5. OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

The study gives a comprehensive and balanced overview of the different approaches to setting up and employing Contact Points in Interreg programmes. 49 programmes participated in the study⁸ and provided input through surveys and interviews. They represent a balanced mix of programmes from different strands and geographies: 2 Interregional programmes; 12 Transnational programmes; 24 Cross-border programmes; 5 IPA CBC programmes; and 6 ENI CBC programmes.

The sample of programmes shows fundamental differences in the approaches to Contact Points:

- some programmes have no Contact Points in place;
- some Contact Points are very decentralised from the programme and/or have very limited roles; and
- some Contact Points are highly engaged/integrated actors in programme management and implementation.

Variations in approaches to Contact Points are essentially down to:

- different programme needs and particular circumstances on the ground; and
- different programme architectures.

Programme needs and circumstances that favour the maintenance of a Contact Point network are, notably:

- **Programmes with extensive programme geography:** for programmes with extensive geographies and a large number of programme partners, Contact Points add particular value in promoting the programme domestically and as a means of feeding in place-specific information. This argument has been put forward in particular by a number of transnational programmes (e.g. Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic, Interreg Mediterranean, Interreg France (Guadeloupe - Martinique - Organisation Économique de la Caraïbe orientale)) with their large programme areas, but was also mentioned by (maritime) cross-border programmes with fragmented programme territory and (sea) borders (e.g. Interreg Central Baltic). Conversely, cross border programmes working across a highly integrated land border may have less need for distinct regional Contact Points.
- **Programmes covering areas with very different administrative structures and capacities:** findings indicate that these programmes may need to accommodate a level of variation in the role of specific national and regional Contact Points. Many programmes rely on Contact Points for tasks concerning national rules or for carrying out verifications of domestic partners or on-site visits. For programmes involving partners in non-EU Member States (mostly, IPA and ENI) or programmes with “new programme areas”, it seems even more pertinent to

⁸ Answering the survey to MA/JS and/or to Contact Points.

have local antennas in each country who can monitor and translate national legislation and rules and provide hands-on support to local partners.

- **Programmes without a common programme language:** for programmes with more than one programme language, Contact Points often play an important role in providing support to applicants and beneficiaries in the local language or even take on a vital role in the assessment of applications and monitoring of project progress. Typically, Contact Points organise local information or training events in the local language. In programmes with a common language (i.e. either the common language in the programme territory or another third language, typically English) partners generally do not need the language support.

Findings indicate that the role played by Contact Points also depends on the overall programme architecture.

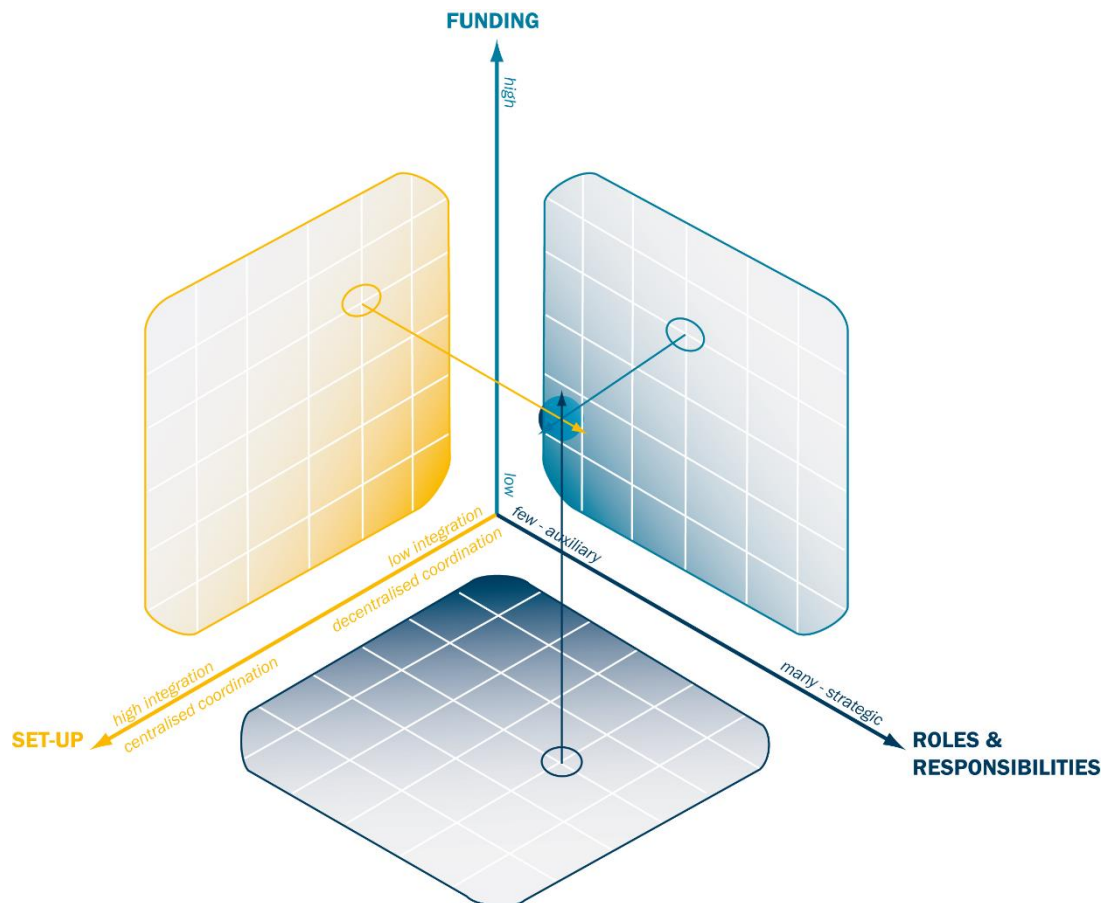
- While some programmes may opt for a strong and well-staffed joint secretariat, which concentrates most of the programme management tasks and responsibilities, others may choose a more decentralised structure with a strong role for national authorities and national/regional Contact Points that support them and the MA/JS.
- If a programme sets up branch offices of the JS in various programme countries, these are able to carry out tasks that would typically be done by Contact Points.

Large variations can also be observed in the scope of roles and responsibilities carried out by Contact Points, which can vary from involvement in strategic tasks like project assessment or programme evaluation to tasks linked mostly to programme communication. Most typically, Contact Point roles are concentrated at the beginning (e.g. promotion of calls, support on project generation) and end of the project cycle (e.g. communication and capitalisation).

And lastly, as regards funding and staffing, equally large variations can be noted. According to Contact Points self-assessment, their weekly engagement in Contact Point work ranges from a few hours to full-time (i.e. 38 or 40 hours/week). In some cases, Contact Points are even staffed by more than one person so that the total manpower available amounts to >40 hours/week. Variations do also exist within the same individual programme where some Contact Points are better staffed than others as their level of funding is determined nationally. This unequal distribution of resources makes it difficult to delegate a fixed number of programme management tasks to Contact Points.

Taking these three areas “set-up”, “roles and responsibilities” and “funding and staffing” together, survey responses and interviews show that effective Contact Point networks rely on these three dimensions to form a coherent (programme management) system.

Figure 9: Dimensions “set-up”, “roles and responsibilities” and “funding and staffing” working together to form an effective contact point arrangement



Source: EPRC author's own illustration

- **Set-up** refers to the degree to which Contact Points are integrated in the programme management system: do they work in isolation or rather are they well-embedded in the programme? How close and frequent is the exchange and coordination with MA/JS and across Contact Points?
- **Roles and responsibilities** refers to the number and type of tasks that are delegated/performed to Contact Points: do Contact Points carry out only a few tasks or auxiliary/technical tasks or are they involved in many stages in the project and/or programme cycle? Even when Contact Points carry out relatively few tasks, clarity of task definition and content, and a careful separation of tasks between the programme functions, is always key.
- **Funding and staffing** refers to level of resources (both human and financial) available for Contact Points (which may vary a lot within a programme as described above).

Arrangements in which all three dimensions are located at a similar range in the spectrum from low to high can be considered the most effective (see Figure 9). For example, a network of Contact Points that is highly integrated in the programme, disposes of good financial and personnel resources, and also has an extensive role in the implementation of the programme can be said to be effective. Concrete examples are the Interreg Flanders - The Netherlands where there is very close contact between MA/JS and Contact Points.

Conversely, arrangements in which one or two dimension/s are at odds with the other/s may be rather ineffective. For example, this could be an arrangement where Contact Points have a lot of responsibilities, but also low resources and/or receive little guidance and are excluded from the management decisions taken in the programme. In the survey, several Contact Points criticised lacking communication and coordination or the fact that they have to communicate rules to applicants and beneficiaries which they themselves have not designed.

Even though the study does not give a complete overview of all Contact Point arrangements, and there may be an element of self-selection bias in the survey results as programmes without Contact Points may have had less incentive to participate in the survey (only 8 of 36 programmes responding to the programme-level survey have no contact points). However, the results still provide a good understanding of the diversity of approaches. Results show that there is no 'one size fits all', even within a single programme, as national authorities are still powerful players in territorial cooperation and Contact Point arrangements are an important bridge between programmes and domestic frameworks.

There is no single model which should be considered as best practice. The selected model should respond to and reflect differing territorial and institutional needs and be designed to ensure that set-up, roles/responsibilities and funding/staffing form a coherent system.

Looking to the future, the next programming period challenges programmes to provide the same quality of support, often with less funding. Evidence from surveys and interviews shows that a range of steps are in place to help Contact Points, and the programmes, to support the territories even better and deliver greater impact. These steps include, in particular, more effective coordination and collaboration from the outset with regional Contact Points, the delivery and dissemination of results, and effective, clear, consistent communication within programme structures and with partners.

6. Annexes

6.1 Annex 1: Survey questionnaire sent to programmes' MA/JS

SECTION I: Contact Points Set Up 2014-2020 and 2021-2027

1) Does the 2014-2020 programme have a system of regional/national contact/information points? (Single choice)

- Yes
- No

1.1) If yes, what term is used?

- National Contact Point
- Regional Contact Point
- Information points
- Other

2) For how many programming periods have you maintained a system of regional/national contact/information points (not counting the 2021-2027 period)? (Single choice)

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- I do not know

3) Is it anticipated that the 2021-2027 programme will have a system of regional/national contact/information points? (Single choice)

- Yes
- No

SECTION II: Legal basis, financing and staffing in 2021-2027

4) Will there be changes in the set-up (legal basis, financing, staffing) of the regional/national contact/information points? (Single choice)

- To a great extent
- Somewhat
- Very little
- Not at all
- I do not know (yet)

4.1) In case any changes are foreseen, please outline the changes and the key reasons for them, if applicable

The role of regional & national contact points in Interreg
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- 5) On what basis will the regional/national contact/information points be established in 2021-2027? (Multiple choice)
- TA contract
 - Agreement between programme MA/host organisations
 - Agreement between national authorities/domestic host organisations
 - Territorially adapted (variable arrangements in each area)
If territorially adapted, can you please specify?
 - I do not know (yet)
 - Other
If other, please specify
- 6) Can you briefly explain what are the main reasons/rationale for this arrangement?
- 7) How will the regional/national contact/information points be financed in 2021-2027? (Multiple choice)
- Co-financed from TA budget
If co-financed from TA budget, what is the total budget available for the Programme's regional/national contact/information points in 2021-2027 (total and % of the Programme's total budget)
 - Nationally financed
 - Regionally financed
 - Territorially adapted (variable arrangements in each area)
 - Other
If other, please specify
- 8) Can you briefly explain what are the main reasons/rationale for this arrangement?
- 9) In your programme, regional/national contact/information points in 2021-2027 will be funded through: (Single choice)
- ERDF only
 - IPA only
 - NDICI only
 - OCTP only
 - National funds only
 - ERDF and IPA
 - ERDF and NDICI
 - ERDF and OCTP
 - ERDF and National co-financing
 - Interreg funds
 - I do not know (yet)
 - Other
If other, please specify
- 10) In general, how is the work of the regional/national contact/information points coordinated? (Multiple choice)

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- Formal MA/JS coordination role
- Domestic oversight of contact points
- Shared Programme-level (MA/JS) and regional/national coordination
- I do not know
- Other

If other, please specify

10.1) Can you please provide some more information on the option(s) you selected?

SECTION III: Roles and Responsibilities

11) In 2021-2027 will regional/national contact/information points have roles in relation to:
(Multiple choice)

- Strategic Programming issues
- Project generation
- Project support
- Reporting, monitoring evaluation
- Dissemination and communication
- Capitalisation and synergies

11.1) Can you please provide some more information on the option(s) you selected, in particular what you see at their key functions/tasks?

12) Are there any changes in the roles and responsibilities of regional/national contact/information points foreseen in 2021-2027? (Single choice)

- Yes
- No

12.1) Where changes are expected, can you explain briefly what these are and why they have been introduced?

6.2 List of Interreg programmes that participated in the survey

Estonia - Russia ENI CBC
Hungary - Slovakia-Romania - Ukraine ENI CBC
Interreg ADRION
Interreg Atlantic Area
Interreg Austria - Hungary
Interreg Baltic Sea Region
Interreg Central Baltic
Interreg Estonia - Latvia
Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine
Interreg Flanders - The Netherlands
Interreg France (Guadeloupe – Martinique – Organisation Économique de la Caraïbe orientale)
Interreg Germany/Sachsen - Czech Republic
Interreg Germany - The Netherlands
Interreg Greece - Cyprus
Interreg Greece - Italy
Interreg IPA CBC Croatia - Bosnia and Herzegovina - Montenegro
Interreg IPA CBC Greece - Albania
Interreg IPA CBC Italy - Albania - Montenegro
Interreg IPA CBC Romania - Serbia
Interreg Italy - Croatia
Interreg Italy - Malta
Interreg Italy - Slovenia
Interreg Italy - Switzerland
Interreg Mediterranean
Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic
Interreg Poland - Germany (Sachsen)
Interreg Slovakia - Hungary
Interreg Slovenia - Hungary
Interreg South Baltic
Interreg South West Europe
Interreg Sweden - Finland-Norway (Nord)
Karelia ENI CBC
Kolarctic ENI CBC
Mediterranean Sea Basin ENI CBC
Poland-Russia CBC

6.3 Annex 2: Survey questionnaire sent to programmes' NCPs

SECTION I: Contact Point – Staffing and funding

- 1) You are answering this survey as contact point for which Interreg programme?
- 2) Do you act as contact point for any other programme/s? (Single choice)
 - No
 - YesIf, yes please list
- 3) Apart from you, are there additional members of staff working as contact/information point for the selected programme? (Single choice)
 - No
 - I do not know
 - YesIf, yes please specify how many
- 4) How much of your working time (estimated average weekly hours) do you dedicate to your role as contact point?
- 5) If known, what will be the total budget available for your contact point in 2021-2027
- 6) Will there be a change in your contact points' budget between the periods of 2014-2020 and 2021-2027? (Single choice)
 - Substantial budget increase
 - Slight budget increase
 - Slight budget decrease
 - Substantial budget decrease
 - No change
 - I do not know (yet)
- 7) Do you think that the contact point(s) will have sufficient financial resources in the period 2021-2027 given its/their tasks and responsibilities? (Single choice)
 - Yes
 - NoIf, no can you please explain why
- 8) Do all contact points in the programme have the same level of staffing? (Single choice)
 - Yes
 - No
 - I do not know
- 9) Do all contact points in the programme have the same level of funding? (Single choice)
 - Yes
 - No

I do not know

10) If you have answered no to the questions 8 and/or 9, do you think that the differences in staffing and/or funding lead to differences in the quality and/or scope of the tasks that are undertaken by the contact points? Please explain what aspects of quality or scope are affected.

SECTION II: Contact Point – Role and responsibilities

11) As a contact point, do you have roles in relation to? (Multiple answers are possible)

- Strategic Programming issues
- Project generation
- Project support
- Reporting, monitoring evaluation
- Dissemination and communication
- Capitalisation and synergies
- Other

11.1) Can you please provide more information on the option(s) you selected. In particular, what are your concrete functions and tasks?

12) Do you think the programme makes best use of the contact points, e.g. are roles well defined and efficiently distributed? (Single choice)

- Yes
- No

If not, what would you like to change?

13) Are there areas of work where contact points could play a greater role (if time/resources allowed)?

- No
- Yes

If so, can you please list?

14) Are you satisfied with how the contact point network is organised and coordinated in the programme? (Single choice)

- Yes, to a large extent
- Yes, partly
- No

If yes, what works particularly well?

If no, where are the challenges?

SECTION III: Contact Point – Benefits and challenges

15) What do you see as the main benefits for the programme that come from your work as a contact point?

16) What do you see as the main challenges in relation to your work as a contact point?

6.4 List of Interreg programmes' NCPs that participated in the survey

Interact
Interreg ADRION
Interreg ALCOTRA
Interreg Alpine Space
Interreg Austria - Hungary
Interreg Central Baltic
Interreg Central Europe
Interreg Czech Republic-Poland
Interreg Danube
Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine
Interreg Europe
Interreg Flanders - The Netherlands
Interreg IPA CBC Italy - Albania - Montenegro
Interreg Italy - Austria
Interreg Lithuania - Poland
Interreg Mediterranean
Interreg North Sea Region
Interreg North West Europe
Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic
Interreg North - West Europe
Interreg Slovakia - Austria
Interreg Slovakia - Hungary,
Interreg Slovenia - Hungary
Interreg Slovenia - Hungary
Interreg South Baltic
Italy-Tunisia ENI CBC
Mediterranean Sea Basin ENI CBC

6.5 Annex 3: Semi-structured interview's questions

- If possible, could you say anything about how the role of contact points has evolved in your programme?
- Can you tell us more about the key contact points tasks for the current period, E.g.
 - what applicant/project support activities
 - what role would RCPs play in supporting project selection, reporting or monitoring/evaluation
 - what dissemination and communication activities, and what key target groups?
- Do you think these roles/responsibilities are clearly defined for contact points?
- Can you tell us a bit more about how contact point work is coordinated?
- Based on past experience, have there been resource/capacity issues faced by the contact point?
- In case, will the reduced TA budget have an impact on contact point activities/capacities?
- Variable financing arrangements in each territory may lead to differences in the available resources per region/country. Do you think this leads to variations in the quality/scope of the tasks undertaken by contact points?
- What do you see as the main ways in which contact points help effective and efficient management and implementation of the programme? Where do contact points add value in programme management?
- Are there specific factors in your programme area that make the role of a contact point particularly important? E.g. language barrier, physical distance to MA/JS etc.
- What do you think are the main challenges and barriers for contact points?
- What could be improved?
- Are there any other issues that you would like to raise?

6.6 List of Interreg programmes that contributed through semi-structured interviews

Estonia - Russia ENI CBC
Interreg Central Europe
Interreg Euregio Meuse - Rhine
Interreg Flanders - The Netherlands
Interreg Germany - The Netherlands
Interreg IPA CBC Romania - Serbia
Interreg Italy - Greece
Interreg Mediterranean
Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic
Mediterranean Sea Basin ENI CBC