Guidelines on Cooperation under IJG goal 2020+

Using "Cooperation" in 2021-2027 Investment for jobs and growth programmes: setting up interregional and transnational actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State.

November 2021

Annexes - Available knowledge and literature & Repository:

Publication | Mapping of Section 4.4 of all Operational Programmes 2014-2020 (art. 96.3.d)

Interact Study | Added value and efficiency through the use of article 37.6(b) and EGTC

Interact Fact sheet | Territorial development tools

Interact Publication | New tools for territorial development and cooperation

Interact Publication | Added value of the macro-regional strategies for projects and programmes

Study | Embedding macro-regional strategies

Overview "Investment Guidance on Cohesion Policy Funding 2021-2027"

'Enhancing Cooperation in EU Regions' Workshop at European Week of Regions and Cities 2020

Report | Best practice related to the use of art. 96.3.d CPR – Basilicata Region (IT) 2014-2020

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> *Interact Programme provides support to all interested Managing Authorities, Regions, stakeholders willing to establish cooperation actions under the provision(s) described in this publication.*

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1. Introduction

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The story of cooperation within the Investment for growth and jobs (IGJ) goal originated during the Open Days 2010, at a workshop about the challenges posed by application of Article 37(6) (b) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006: a few lines that give the possibility to operate cooperation activities outside the framework of Objective 3 of Cohesion Policy, one of the goals of European Territorial Cooperation.

The spirit that drove participants' motivation was to attempt to join as many European stakeholders as possible and to clarify the methodology and activities that could be implemented through this tool. On the one hand, despite an increasing interest in this subject, the wording in the Regulation leads to difficulties when it comes to implementing cooperation. On the other hand, this 'new tool' seemed to allow for a degree of flexibility that could not be underestimated.

Over the last seven years, a few points have always remained firm: Interregional cooperation as understood within the framework of Articles 37(6)(b) and 96(3) (d) is not supposed to be a new type of cooperation, but rather an instrument for cooperation. Cross-border, transnational and interregional are strands or types of cooperation under the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) goal, while this provision is an innovative tool to strengthen and explore new ways of working together.

Even though not much is explained by the Regulation, compliance with the general principles of the Regulation is expected, i.e., complementarity, consistency, coordination, conformity with EU law, partnership, proportionality, additionality.

Over the last two programming periods, the same questions, doubts, and wonderings kept being raised, together with the eagerness to explore and know more, especially concerning how to apply this tool.

However, the main issue is the lack of information about it, as well as the many doubts related to the real possibilities offered by these provisions.

The overall aim was to unlock all the available knowledge and experience about this tool, and make regions cooperate with different partners, both within and outside the European Union, thus unlocking potential and benefits.

Now more than ever, after seven years of study, acknowledgements, analysis and attempts, it is time to pave the way to a single approach to cooperation, benefitting from inspiration and different pilot techniques and methods used to implement cooperation projects under the Investment for growth and jobs goal.
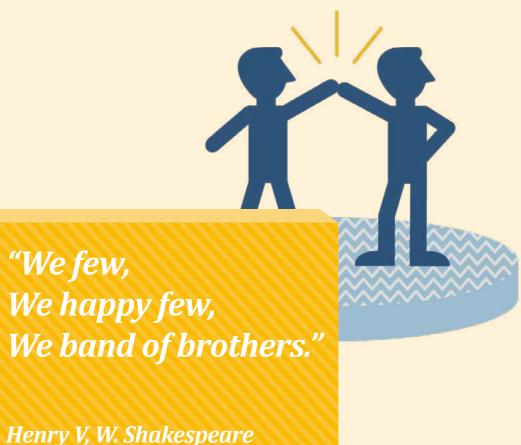
Due to the limited number of experiences and practices currently available, neither a single interpretation of this provision nor common methods could be streamlined yet. However, we have recently gained a deeper insight about the needs and possibilities that the use of this opportunity could unlock, even more, in view of the 2021-2027 programming period. Thus, a stronger impetus to this is now intrinsically laid down in the Common Provision Regulation[1], that requires programmes to set out *the interregional and transnational actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State*[2].

The consolidated knowledge and operational guidelines on how to set up these actions will be described further on in this publication, with the necessary technical details, based on two pilot projects run by Interact together with the European Commission and pioneer programmes in 2011 and in 2019-2020.

It was a pleasure to see how a bottom-up initiative, organised out of enthusiasm and real care, turned, little by little, into a project that raised both interest and awareness and produced a trickle-down effect inside and outside EU borders. To complete the circle, the pilot project will finish its activity during 2021, when hopefully we will all get together at the 2021 European Week of Regions and Cities, the same place where it all started, but with many more people involved and more knowledge to share!

The objective of these guidelines is two-fold: to inform operational programmes funded under the Investment for growth and jobs goal about this provision and the innovative possibilities it may unlock for Cohesion Policy 2021-2027, and to provide insight into its potential and the flexibility that it allows in terms of improving the efficiency of territorial development through cooperation actions.

*"We few,
We happy few,
We band of brothers."*

Henry V, W. Shakespeare

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1. Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (from now on *Common provisions regulation - CPR*).

2. Art. 22(3)(d)(vi) of the Common provisions regulation (CPR)

2. Starting points and legislative background

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In the Regulation, cooperation is just a one-line concept, and the European Commission has not issued any official guidelines to provide the regions with details on how to implement it. As a result, interpretation of this article is left to those stakeholders wishing to apply it, on condition that they comply with the general statements of the relevant regulations.

Based on the basic rules laid down in the ERDF regulation, a region or territory can establish priorities within their own programmes in order to define the framework of action for interregional cooperation. No new institutions are needed, and the provision is to be understood as the first attempt to link cooperation with regional policies, that is, to actually satisfy the need to bridge ETC with the other two objectives.

As a general statement deriving from the interpretation of this article, when implementing a cooperation action under this provision, each partner has to ensure a benefit for its own region and full compliance with ROP objectives and strategy, supporting cooperation, otherwise the final objective of implementing cohesion policy would be denied.

Along the last two programming periods, the relevant regulatory provisions have been gradually upgraded, but they have always kept alive the very deep meaning and spirit of enhancing cooperation:

According to the overall and general meaning of both legislative provisions, a Regional Operational Programme (ROP) under the Investment for growth and jobs goal—thus excluding ETC/Interreg programmes—can plan activities to be developed in collaboration (in partnership) with other EU regions.

This means that a region can perform joint activities with another European region working on the same topics or priorities.

In order to do so, the region must state all necessary information and arrangements in its ROP.

In the framework of the relevant legislation for the 2014-2020 programming period, such activities are subject to certain eligibility limitations (geographic and financial) as stated in Article 70(2) of the same Regulation[3]:

2007-2013 Programming Period.

Article 37(6)(b) of Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

*At the initiative of the Member State, the operational programmes financed by the ERDF may also contain for the Convergence and Regional Competitiveness and employment objectives [...], **actions for interregional cooperation with, at least, one regional or local authority of another Member State.***

2014-2020 Programming Period.

Article 96(3)(d) of Reg. (EU) No 1303/2013 "Common Provisions Regulation"

Taking into account its content and objectives, an operational programme shall describe the integrated approach to territorial development, having regard to the Partnership Agreement, and showing how that operational programme contributes to the accomplishment of its objectives and expected results, specifying, where appropriate, the following:

*(c) the arrangements **for interregional and transnational actions, within the operational programmes, with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State;***

Eligibility of operations depending on location

2. The managing authority may accept that an operation is implemented outside the programme area but within the Union, provided that all the following conditions are satisfied:

(a) the operation is for the benefit of the programme area;

(b) the total amount from the ERDF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD or EMFF allocated under the programme to operations located outside the programme area does not exceed 15 % of the support from the ERDF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD or EMFF at the level of the priority at the time of adoption of the programme;(

*c) **the monitoring committee has given its agreement** to the operation or types of operations concerned;*

(d) the obligations of the authorities for the programme in relation to management, control and audit concerning the operation are fulfilled by the authorities responsible for the programme under which that operation is supported or they enter into agreements with authorities in the area in which the operation is implemented.[4]

3. Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 , "Common Provisions Regulation".

4. Art. 70 of Reg. (EU) No 1303/2013 "Common Provisions Regulation"

Thus, Article 70(2) of CPR regulates the expenditure of funds outside the programme area, i.e., outside the Region itself, and imposes financial limitations (b) and control and audit rules (d).

Starting from the 2014-2020 programming period, these provisions apply to the Investment for growth and jobs goal set by the Cohesion Policy.

Regarding the 2021-2027 programming period, a new provision is included in the CPR'. Such provision has evolved by introducing a radical change in both context and approach, resulting in a clearer wording that requires to specify whether or not the programme uses this opportunity:

2021-2027 programming period.

Art. 22(3)(d)(vi) of the "Common Provisions Regulation"

Article 22

(3) Each programme **shall set out:**

[…]

(d) **for each specific objective:**

[…]

(vi) **the interregional [and transnational][5] actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State or outside the Union, where relevant**

This provision, allows all types of cooperation actions among regions from at least two countries (interregional), including the "Transnational actions" under the European Social Fund, as well as any kind of cross-border action, if needed.

By virtue of Article 63(4) of the Common Provisions Regulation, geographical limits will not exist anymore:

All or part of an operation may be implemented outside of a Member State, including outside the Union, provided that the operation contributes to the objectives of the programme".

Moreover, Article 3(4) of the proposal for a Regulation on the ERDF and on the CF[6], with a wording that is even stronger than before, establishes two horizontal activities for the IJG goal, including cooperation actions:

Within the specific objectives set out in paragraph 1, the ERDF or the Cohesion Fund, as appropriate, **may also support activities under the Investment for jobs and growth goal, where they either:**

(a) improve the capacity of programme authorities, and bodies linked to the implementation of the Funds;

(c) **enhance cooperation with partners both within and outside a given Member State.**

Cooperation referred to in point (c) shall include *cooperation with partners from cross border regions, from* **non-contiguous regions** *or from regions located in the territory[7] covered by a* **macro-regional or sea-basin strategy** *or a* **combination thereof.**

As set out by the new architecture for the 2021-2027 programming period, all **information relating to cooperation actions must be defined at specific objective level.**

Even **inside the same programme and even inside the same Policy Objective, there could be different degrees of possible cooperation, since the specification must be done at specific objective level.**

5. Transnational actions refer to the application under the ESF context, therefore, refer to any cooperation activity across borders. Transnational cooperation in the ESF helps develop better and more effective employment and social policies and improve the delivery of reforms, essentially by enabling people to learn from experiences and good practice in other countries. Transnational cooperation is implemented in three different ways: 1) On the basis of common themes, whereby Member States benefit from an EU-level platform established and operated by the Commission (the Common Framework); 2) Without central coordination (the flexible approach); 3) Through a combined approach of the above. Source: *https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/*

6. Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1058

7. Provisional Common Understanding of legislators: a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

ADDED VALUE

Mainstream activities benefit from cooperation in IJG as they imply it **as a methodology: instead of working on their own,** they work together with another European regional partner to pursue their objectives.

On the contrary, European Territorial Cooperation/Interreg is naturally based on cooperation and uses this element not only as a methodology but also as an objective. In this way, the ETC/Interreg "acquis" can unlock a more **tailor-made cooperation** when it comes to **specific themes of regional interest and geographical scope** or partnerships, without the limitations under ETC.

Key points to keep in mind

*To anticipate the **need for cooperation** according to strategic interests of the development strategy and the territory, from the definition of the Operational Programme with clear objectives, possible actions, concrete modalities, and distribution of roles.*

*To **explain and communicate the added-value of cooperation** to all stakeholders - possible beneficiaries or projects promoters - to make them aware of the interest of cooperation for the territory.*
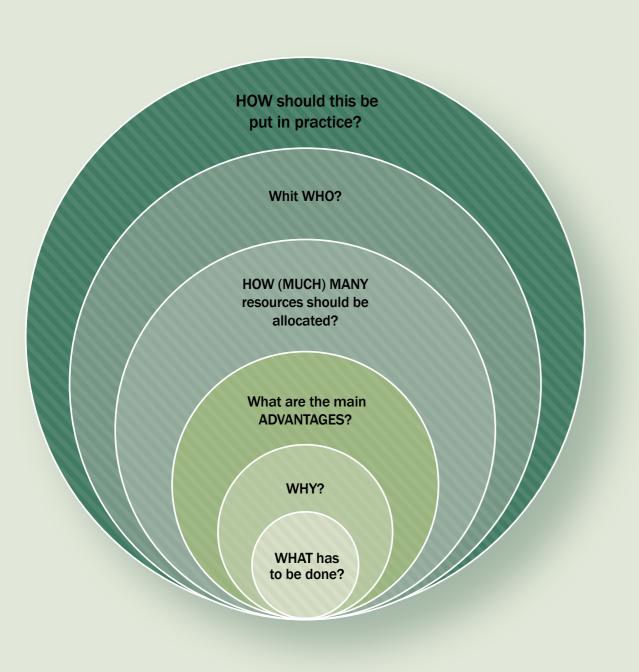
3. Elements to be considered

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To apply cooperation actions in IJG in concrete terms and to make it successful, preparatory work — including research of partners and internal assessment of administrative and management capabilities — is required at programme level. The intentions and plans to use cooperation must be stated in the Operational Programme of the Region. Such intentions should cover the following topics and information:

HOW should this be put in practice?

Whit WHO?

HOW (MUCH) MANY resources should be allocated?

What are the main ADVANTAGES?

WHY?

WHAT has to be done?

▶ What are the main ADVANTAGES?

Allowing the possibility to use ROP funds to fund joint cooperation actions outside the eligible OP area (i.e., the regional territory) confers a direct advantage on the consistent implementation of actions complementary to OP priorities, as well as on other Thematic Objectives/Priority Investments excluded from, or not tackled by, ETC/Interreg programmes that involve the same regional area.

Moreover, cooperation actions may also enable cooperation with beneficiaries outside the eligible areas of the ETC Programmes that involve the regional area. In addition, cooperation actions may help unlock the possibility to integrate actions funded by ETC/Interreg Programmes, which often have very limited financial resources, with local pilots or specific project extensions and continuations, in the framework of mainstream and local policy areas of interest, cooperating on focused topics and on a direct, bilateral or multilateral basis.

▶ WHY?

Cooperation beyond borders can bring great added value to regional development. In fact, cooperation allows partners to exchange practices and experiences for their joint development. In addition, partners can address shared regional, national and global problems among regions all over Europe, especially those that are excluded from ETC because of their unfortunate geographical position and those having specific interests and priorities that cannot be easily tackled by the (sometimes limited) means available to ETC.

In this regard, it is understood that cooperation is at the core of ETC, while IJG has a unique mission and scope for development. Yet, *it must be highlighted that there is a lot of common benefit and learning potential in cooperating, even if real investment for regions and countries can be unlocked and provided only under IGJ.*

▶ WHAT has to be done?

The current framework designed by the Regulation for 2014-2020 programming period states that every Region must describe, per each Regional Operational Programme (ROP), its content according to the thematic objectives and investment priorities. Even if the provision described above is supported by Section 4.4 of the template for Operational Programmes[8], completion of such Section is not mandatory.

According to the guidance provided by the European Commission[9], Section 4.4 of the Operational Programme template should contain *'an overview of circumstances where actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State are planned under the operational programme in question, the expected contribution of such actions to the achievement of the programme's objectives and the expected benefit of such actions for the programme area. Where applicable, a description of arrangements ensuring audit trail and control. This section is generally not relevant for operational programmes dedicated to technical assistance. However, where actions are envisaged under such operational programmes specifically to support or promote interregional and transnational actions within other national operational programmes, it should be indicated'.*

The orientation of the Region should be supported by evidence (SWOT analysis or reference to ex-ante evaluation in the Partnership Agreement) and it should also include a description of the types of activities the Region plans to carry out to improve the situation or tackle the difficulties.

At this point, it is also possible to indicate how the Region intends to bridge its development gaps by setting up an interregional partnership with other European regions. The choice of theme(s) should be coherent with the priorities established by the Region and may relate to a specific sector of one priority included in the ROP strategy.

For example, if the priority of a Region is its economic development, a possible sector where cooperation can be used could be the 'internationalisation of its enterprises to create interregional clusters', 'networks of SMEs'.

Arguments to challenge based on experiences	Positive effects
▣ Relatively unknown provision (by IGJ MAs and political level)	▣ Possibility to **focus on specific needs of each region (and avoid unspent funds)**
▣ Lack of interest due to administrative burden and complexity	▣ **Flexibility** in the generation (and selection) process!
▣ ROPs tend to focus only on their local/territorial dimension	▣ **Less competition** for funding under IGJ (in comparison with ETC limits)!
▣ Technical implementation (lack of clear guidelines): eligibility, audit&control, commitment/trust	▣ Easing the **transfer of knowledge in specific themes**
▣ Still weak organisation assets and pitfalls of regional administrations,	▣ **Link to regional strategies** (cross-cutting synergies and complementarity)
▣ Different regional administration governance model	▣ Involvement of **private and public** stakeholders
▣ Inadequate skills and knowledge (also linguistic)	▣ **Win-win approaches** for the benefit of regions and their competitiveness
▣ Lack of human resources with consequent overload for qualified officials	▣ **Complementary to Interreg C**
	▣ Unlocks **concrete coordination** and integration tools for regional planning and development
	▣ Could guarantee a **continuation/extension of ETC pilots at regional level**

▶ **HOW (MUCH) MANY resources should be allocated?**

Specifying how much money or resources a territory or programme intends to allocate to this type of cooperation is not mandatory. Of course, if a territory or programme wishes to do so, it can specify either the actual amount or a percentage from the financial plan budget.

▶ **With WHO(M) to cooperate?**

The territory or programme should identify as 'cooperation partner' a region that can exchange interesting and useful practices in the same field of interest or thematic priority. This choice should be the result of the partner search activity carried out as part of the preparatory work. Partner search can be conducted thanks to the help of the European Commission (desk officers), other EU platforms, Chambers of Commerce or Regional Offices and representations. Where the regions operate in the existing macro-regions[10] or sea basins[11], orientation for cooperation is provided by these territorial frameworks, or thematic platforms (i.e., Interact Capitalisation Networks). Active dialogue across participating countries and regions happens within the framework of the so-called 'embedding' process, and in some cases is supported by networks of Managing Authorities operating in these territories (see Chapter 8). Another source of inspiration are the international agreements signed by Regions or existing Networks of Regions or Regional Partnerships.

▶ **HOW should this be put into practice?**

The only obligation is to state the concept and plan to work in cooperation in the ROP. If a Region wishes to devote a specific ROP section or annex to describe this cooperation, it is welcome to do so. This document, usually the 'implementing document', can describe all the technical details and administrative procedures related to the actual implementation of cooperation activities at programme level. In some actual practices, all details have been incorporated within the 'Call for project proposals' package.

Implementation of these methods and approaches may be carried out through a set of activities that the regional administration has to staff, undertake and oversee, such as:

- creating call(s) for proposals with the corresponding administrative steps,
- drafting specific application form(s),
- organising networking and partnership event(s),
- setting up technical assistance services.

The actual use of cooperation at regional level (management, administration, technical assistance) cannot be easily improvised, but it should be the result of an internal assessment and commitment of the regional administration, which should understand and ensure to have the skills needed to manage international relations and development projects involving international partners.

Territories using cooperation approaches under IJG may choose to set up an additional technical assistance service to manage calls, assess projects and arrange partner meetings. Staff hired by the regional administration should be prepared and skilled in foreign languages and international project management.

Key points to keep in mind

*To consider the **relevant strategic interests of the territory and its assets***

*To consider the **necessary resources** and activities to be undertaken in order to prepare the approach and procedure*

*To define the **scope of such cooperation** vis-à-vis ETC general objectives and specialisations in the territory*

*To bear in mind the **advantages of such cooperation***

*To promote and continue possible **ETC pilots** at benefit of the whole territory*

*To dedicate **financial and human resources** adapted to the ambition defined for such cooperation approaches*

*Do not **under-estimate time needed to identify potential targets** and type of activities*

*To base the **definition of cooperation** priorities on the necessities and expectations of potential "interested actors and beneficiaries" located in the OP territory or other strategic or political interests*

When filling the relevant OP template section, a possible wording could be the following:

*The Region/Programme (...) plans/aims to create **partnerships** and carry out cooperation activities at interregional level with other EU regions whenever it judges that such methodology can lead to a valuable added value or to a greater benefit to the Region's objectives.*

By using this wording, the Region leaves a door open for cooperation and, in case such opportunity does not arise, there will be no need to amend the ROP.

4. How to create cooperation under IJG: possible degrees of cooperation

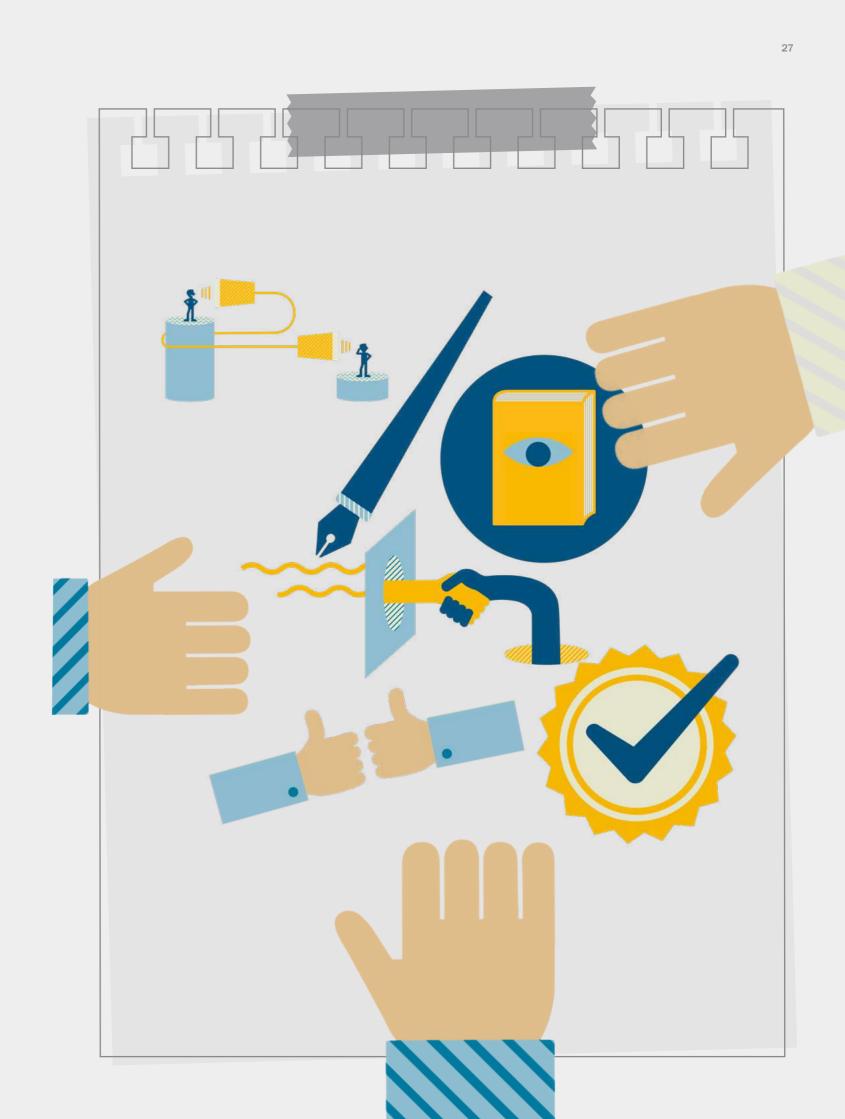# 4. How to create cooperation under IJG: possible degrees of cooperation

When establishing a cooperation approach within IJG, the above-mentioned conceptual aspects to be considered can be grouped and combined around the WHO and WHAT, which means the partners to be identified or the topics (thematic objectives, specific objectives) to be tackled, as well as the allocation of funds, co-financing rates. As a consequence, the technical implementation of these types of actions, **the HOW,** and related operations, requires taking into consideration several technical aspects, such as project selection criteria and procedures, project implementation procedures, financial control and audit, especially when the expenditure is incurred outside the programme area.

In this regard, **there is no 'one-size-fits-all'** approach and the **combination of the elements listed** in the previous paragraph **under each specific objective, can lead to several 'degrees of cooperation'**[12] **to be applied** (according to the topic, type of partner regions and technical features) to **unlock and enable cooperation actions.**

For all degrees of cooperation, **political will and commitment of all OP staff and structures is necessary**, but not sufficient, in order to put in place the necessary administrative steps and procedures.

Only the first degree of cooperation is mandatory; all other degrees **are not an obligation**[13], they are meant to **set out what is possible**. As a matter of fact, **different degrees could be applied under the same OP or under the same SO.**

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12. This type of cooperation (and its different degrees) differs from ETC/Interreg cooperation, especially strand C (Interregional cooperation), because it is possible between, at least, two regions of two different Member States, without sharing a cooperation or border area and the possible allocation could be different. This type of cooperation is fully complementary to Interreg C.

13. This does not refer to programmes operating in the existing macro-regions or sea-basins. Here, it is generally expected that countries strive for at least 2ⁿᵈ degree of cooperation..

NO cooperation
No cooperation under the terms of Article 22(3)(d)(vi) CPR

As provided for by this provision, a general description or declaration of intention would not be sufficient in order to fulfil the conditions and requirements established by the article that allows 'interregional and transnational actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State'. In this regard, it is thus mandatory to fulfil this requirement by mentioning, at least, the list of possible partner region(s) per specific objective.

Vague and uncertain statements have to be considered as 'NO COOPERATION' under the terms of Article 22(3)(d)(vi) CPR, equivalent to **no interest or possible agreement on any aspect with other or similar Regions.**

Key element 1

Sources where to draw inspiration for partnerships:

• PO1: COM(2017) 376 of 18.7.2017 on Innovation in Europe's regions, SWD (Section 3.2.6: 18 thematic platforms).

• PO1 and other POs: Regional Partnerships coming from European Week of Regions and Cities: https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/

• Smart Specialisation Thematic Platforms: https://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/thematic-platforms

1st Degree
One-sided cooperation

This first degree implies a reflection and agreement on **WHO** (partners) is the partner identified, at least in one region. In this case, a ERDF programme in region A refers to a partner region B, but partner programme of region B may NOT refer back to region A. This may be due to partnership interests or under the description of its specific objectives or other reasons (e.g. being a different category of regions).

Therefore, in this first degree of cooperation, when region A refers to region B, region A is considered to be implementing interregional cooperation, defined as *one-sided cooperation with certain interregional scope.*

2nd Degree
Mirror cooperation

In this degree of cooperation, both Regions need to reach an agreement on the **WHO** (partners), but not necessarily on the **WHAT**. When partner regions are identified in two OPs, where

• programme of region A states that the Region has an interest in cooperating with region B and

• programme of region B states that the Region has an interest in cooperating with region A,

this is defined as ***mirror cooperation***. In order to do so, a coordination process involving both regions is needed. Thus, according to this option, both regions, A and B, do interregional cooperation, even if this cooperation may not be on the same topics due to several reasons, such as belonging to different regional categories, or making different political choices or having different fields of regional specialisation or S3. Under this category it is still possible that each programme establishes, *unilaterally, a different list of projects of macro-regional importance or certain cooperation projects under the 'list of planned operations of strategic importance', that is an Annex to the programme.*

3rd Degree
Agreed cooperation

This third degree of cooperation, called 'agreed cooperation', goes a step further, as it implies an **agreement on WHO** (partners) and **WHAT** (subject).

Partner regions define the same topic(s) in their respective programmes by using a similar text and specifying common and agreed interests: 'We (region A) cooperate with region B on agri-food smart specialisation' / 'We (region A) cooperate with region B on flood prevention' and 'We (region B) cooperate with region A on agri-food smart specialisation' / 'We (region B) cooperate with region A on flood prevention'.

Regarding the WHAT, the provisions that regulate what is included in and excluded from ERDF scope (Article 5 and Article 7 ERDF regulation[14] respectively) apply to this cooperation degree, and partners should abide by them when deciding what to work on. On the contrary, Article 5(5) ERDF laying down the additional ERDF scope under Interreg does not apply to this cooperation degree.

Key element 3

In the case of regions not eligible under Interreg strand A (cross-border cooperation) such as the Balearic Islands, this degree may allow a stricter and structured cooperation within the Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean EGTC (Catalonia, Occitanie, Balearic Islands) and the EGTC could implement the whole selection procedure.

Moreover, in the case of **adjacent regions with established joint bodies** such as the Eurodistrict PAMINA EGTC (Südpfalz (RP), Mittlerer Rhein (BW), Nordelsaß (FR)), this degree of cooperation may allow these regions to work jointly by drawing from funds from Interreg and ERDF programmes in RP, BW and Grand-Est in order to fund common projects related to the 'Innovation region' around Karlsruhe or activities related to the integration of labour markets under ESF Programmes.

5th Degree
Joint formal (integrated) cooperation

Building on the previous steps, this degree implies a complete agreement on the **WHO** (partners), **WHAT** (subject), and **HOW** (type of actions) as well **as on the procedures,** through the **integration of formal aspects.** This cooperation degree constitutes a step forward towards a **joint formal and integrated cooperation.**

Once the two OPs reach this cooperation degree, they have the option to 'pool' their respective amounts to create a 'joint money pot' that will be managed by a single body set up by the two regions (e.g., ITI; 'global grant', managed by an Intermediate Body; EGTC or other legal body). *IN ADDITION* the decision-making organ of this single body selects joint projects in a **formal and joint way.**

4th Degree
Joint informal (harmonised) cooperation

The following degree implies a clear agreement on the **WHO** (partners), **WHAT** (subject) and partially on the **HOW** (type of actions). As a matter of fact, both OPs agree on harmonised selection procedures and details (method, timing, information etc.) or on harmonised selection criteria (bonus, scoring etc.) or on both. For this degree, both OPs act in parallel, under their respective procedural framework, defining a **joint informal cooperation.**

Project selection is performed under the rules and procedures of each OP. HOWEVER, they may also agree on a step further, by setting up a common 'Selection Committee'. This Selection Committee should be composed of representatives from the two OPs, having the responsibility to select cooperation projects (at the same venue and at the same time) on behalf of, or to be formally validated by, each of the two OPs.

Key element 2

For both the 2nd (Mirror cooperation) and 3rd Degree (Agreed cooperation):

1. there will be a separate allocation: the relevant amount for interregional cooperation has to be specified for each Specific Objective (text only) and the Financial Plan will set out an amount only at Priority level. Setting this amount per each SO would facilitate to set-up this cooperation and allow more flexibility.

According to the draft regulation there is no obligation to set aside amounts specifically, thus several options are possible:

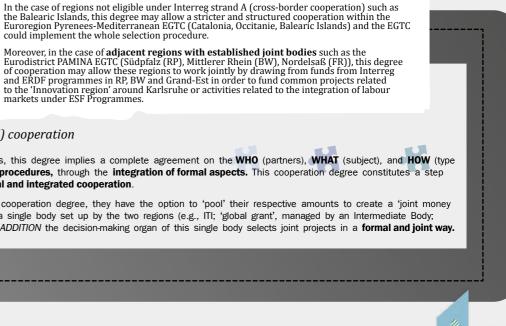• absolute amount in EUR or

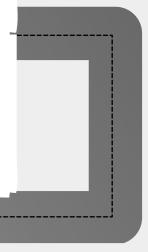• percentage (%) per Specific Objective or

• top-up for already selected "normal" projects (from previous programming period and ready to add a cooperation element)

The co-financing rate per priority will be applied according to each participating programme.

2. Each programme defines its own selection criteria and procedure: although the regulation does not require any specific procedure, programmes can apply the 'normal' selection procedure (option to work with open calls or with an on-going system for project submission). In any case, the selection procedure(s) must be based on competitive principles.

The competent body in charge of selecting cooperation projects does not need to change. On the basis of Article 73 of the CPR regulation, operations may be selected by the Managing Authority through a 'prioritisation of operations to be selected' (e.g., scoring system or bonus points for cooperation aspects). Allocation of extra (bonus) points to cooperation projects or projects contributing to macro-regional targets and actions is highly recommended and already an existing practice.

14. Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund - https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32021R1058

Different degrees of cooperation

Different degrees of cooperation between different regions and Member States are possible inside the same programme and even inside the same Policy Objective, since the specification must be done at specific objective level:

0. NO cooperation:

Under this degree, programmes have to set out '*interregional, cross-border and transnational actions with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State or outside the EU, where relevant*'. This provision, as well as the programme template (point 2.1.1.1.1 – page 348 of the CPR), require the programme authorities to indicate which cooperation actions they intend to implement under each specific objective.

1. One-sided cooperation

If an ERDF/CF programme in region A contains at least one, or a list of, possible actions with beneficiaries located in region B in another Member State or outside the Union per specific objective under each policy objective: in this first degree of cooperation, when region A refers to region B, region A is considered to be implementing one-sided cooperation. The territory or programme should identify as 'cooperation partner' a region that can exchange interesting and useful practices or with which there is possibility of joint actions in the same field of interest or thematic priority. This choice should be the result of the partner search activity carried out as part of the preparatory work. Partner search can be conducted thanks to the help of the European Commission (desk officers), other EU platforms, Chambers of Commerce or Regional Offices and representations. Where the regions operate in existing macro-regions or sea basins, orientation for cooperation is provided by these territorial frameworks, or thematic platforms (i.e., Interact Capitalisation Networks). Active dialogue across participating countries and regions happens within the framework of the so-called 'embedding' process, and in some cases is supported by networks of Managing Authorities operating in these territories. Another source of inspiration are the international agreements signed by Regions or existing Networks of Regions or Regional Partnerships.

2. Mirror cooperation

When actions with beneficiaries located in another Member State or outside the EU are identified in the programmes of two Member States or in the programme of a third country: Mirror cooperation. When partner regions are identified in two programmes, where programme of region A states that the Region has an interest in cooperating with region B and programme of region B states that the region has an interest in cooperating with region A, this is defined as mirror cooperation. In order to do so, a coordination process involving both regions is needed. Thus, according to this option, both regions, A and B, cooperate, even if this cooperation may not be on the same topics due to several reasons, such as belonging to different regional categories, or making different political choices or having different fields of regional specialisation or Smart Specialisation Strategy. Under this category it is still possible that each programme establishes, unilaterally, a different list of projects of macro-regional importance or certain cooperation projects under the 'list of planned operations of strategic importance', that is an Annex to the programme.

3. Agreed cooperation

A third degree of cooperation, called 'agreed cooperation', goes a step further, as it implies that regions from different Member States define the same topic(s) in their respective programmes by using a similar text and specifying common and agreed interests. For instance: 'We (region A) cooperate with region B on agri-food smart specialisation' / 'We (region A) cooperate with region B on flood prevention' and 'We (region B) cooperate with region A on agri-food smart specialisation' / 'We (region B) cooperate with region A on flood prevention'. What could be included in and excluded from ERDF scope (Article 5 and Article 7 ERDF/CF Regulation respectively) apply to this cooperation degree, and Member States should be abide by them when deciding what to work on. On the contrary, Article 5 (5) of the ERDF Regulation laying down the additional ERDF scope under the ETC goal (Interreg) does not apply to this cooperation degree which takes place under the Investment for jobs and growth goal.

For both degrees, Mirror cooperation and Agreed cooperation, it is recommended that a separate allocation within the ERDF is allocated to each region: the relevant amount for interregional, cross-border or transnational cooperation should be specified for each Specific Objective (text only, but without being an obligation). However the Financing Plan will set out amounts only at Priority level. Setting out this amount in the description of each Specific Objective would facilitate to set-up this cooperation and allow more flexibility. According to the new Regulations there is no obligation to set aside amounts specifically, thus several options are possible, either an absolute amount in EUR, or a percentage (%) per Specific Objective, or a top-up for already selected "normal" projects (from previous programming period and ready to add a cooperation element). The co-financing rate per priority will be applied according to each participating programme. Each programme defines its own selection criteria and procedure: although the regulation does not require any specific procedure, programmes can apply the 'normal' selection procedure (option to work with open calls or with an on-going system for project submission). In any case, the selection procedure(s) must be based on competitive principles. The competent body in charge of selecting cooperation projects does not need to change. On the basis of Article 73 of the CPR, operations may be selected by the Managing Authority through a 'prioritisation of operations to be selected' (e.g., scoring system or bonus points for cooperation aspects). Allocation of extra (bonus) points to cooperation projects or projects contributing to macro-regional targets and actions is highly recommended and already an existing practice.

4. Joint informal cooperation

Cooperation may even go further when programme A from one Member State and programme B from another Member State or third country act in parallel, under their respective procedural framework, defining a joint informal cooperation. Project selection is performed under the rules and procedures of each programme. However, they may also agree on a step further, by setting up harmonized selection procedures (method, timing, etc.) or harmonized selection criteria (bonus, scoring, etc.) and even a common 'Selection Committee'. This Selection Committee should be composed of representatives from the two programmes, having the responsibility to select cooperation projects (at the same venue and at the same time) on behalf of, or to be formally validated by, each of the two programmes.

Example under Priority Area 8 (Competitiveness of enterprises) of the EUSDR: In this model, several managing authorities agree on the thematic focus, conditions, types of activities, duration of the call and duration of projects which are to be developed. In each country, the call takes place in accordance with the rules of the relevant operational programme. One managing authority acts as coordinating body and administrative secretariat. In order to maximise the effect, it is recommended to set up a transnational evaluation committee to assess submitted projects and recommend to the managing authorities which projects to approve (without managing authorities being formally bound by the committee's recommendations).

5. Joint formal cooperation

Building on the previous steps, this degree implies a complete agreement on the partners, the subject, and the type of actions as well as on the procedures, through the integration of formal aspects. This cooperation degree constitutes a step forward towards a joint formal and integrated cooperation. Once the two programmes reach this cooperation degree, they have the option to 'pool' their respective amounts to create a 'joint money pot' that will be managed by a single body set up by the two regions (e.g., ITI; 'global grant', managed by an Intermediate Body; EGTC or other legal body). In addition, the decision-making organ of this single body selects joint projects in a formal and joint way: "Joint formal cooperation". However, specifying how much money or resources a region or programme intends to allocate to this type of cooperation is not mandatory. Of course, if a region or programme wishes to do so, it can specify either the actual amount or a percentage from the financial plan budget.

Examples: In the case of regions not eligible under Interreg strand A (cross-border cooperation) such as the Balearic Islands, this degree of cooperation under the Investment for jobs and growth goal may nevertheless allow a more structured cooperation within the Euroregion Pyrenees-Mediterranean EGTC (Catalonia, Occitanie, Balearic Islands) and the EGTC could implement the whole selection procedure. Moreover, in the case of adjacent regions with established joint bodies such as the Eurodistrict PAMINA EGTC (Südpfalz (RP), Mittlerer Rhein (BW), Nordelsaß (FR)), this degree of cooperation may allow these regions to work jointly by drawing funds from Interreg and ERDF programmes in RP, BW and Grand-Est in order to fund common projects related to the 'Innovation region' around Karlsruhe or activities related to the integration of labour markets under ESF Programmes.

How to put this into practice:

The programme should set out its approach as regards cooperation in the relevant programme section. If a region wishes to devote a specific programme annex to describe this cooperation, it is welcome to do so. This document, usually the 'implementing document', can describe all the technical details and administrative procedures related to the actual implementation of cooperation activities at programme level. In some actual practices, all details have been incorporated within the 'Call for project proposals' package. Implementation of these methods and approaches may be carried out through a set of activities that the regional administration has to staff, undertake and oversee, such as:

- creating call(s) for proposals with the corresponding administrative steps,
- drafting specific application form(s),
- organising networking and partnership event(s),
- setting up technical assistance services.

The actual use of cooperation at regional level (management, administration, technical assistance) cannot be easily improvised, but it should be the result of an internal assessment and commitment of the regional administration, which should understand and ensure to have the skills needed to manage international relations and development projects involving international partners. Territories using cooperation approaches under the Investment for Jobs and Growth goal may choose to set up an additional technical assistance service to manage calls, assess projects and arrange partner meetings. Staff hired by the regional administration should be prepared and skilled in foreign languages and international project management.

Common features to all Degrees of cooperation:

1. Governance:

to ensure that interregional cooperation actions in OPs are correctly set up and implemented, it is important to underline that good governance and commitment are fundamental for its success:

a. the whole procedure should be **set up** and agreed among the National/Regional coordinator at political level (politician, minister, responsible elected member etc.) and the relevant Managing authority(ies) and endorsed by the Monitoring Committee(s);

b. during **Programme preparation**, it is strongly recommended to define partner region(s) by screening the respective Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) in order to 'agree' on topics and allocation for interregional cooperation actions, where relevant, also considering the framework provided by the macro-regional strategies and sea-basins;

c. **programme implementation** allows the relevant managing bodies to agree on timing of calls, selection criteria and the features and timing of selection procedures.

2. Expenditures outside the own programme area:

Whether expenditure is incurred outside the programme area (region) is not a relevant condition to assess whether a region is carrying out cooperation actions in accordance with point (d)(vi) of Article 22 (3) of the CPR. Relevant expenditures must contribute to the objectives of the programme under Article 63 (4) of the CPR. Relevant amounts falling into this category must be encoded under Code 171 "Enhancing cooperation with partners both within and outside the Member State (related to interregional cooperation)[15].

3. Project implementation rules and procedures:

unless agreed jointly, each programme defines eligibility rules and all necessary project implementation rules, as well as rules for the eligibility of individual beneficiaries or a sole beneficiary in case of a highly integrated partnership. It consideredshould be taken into account that the **final date for eligibility of expenditure is 31 December 2029.**

4. Financial control and audit:

a. The European Commission will only communicate with Programme authorities;

b. The Programme authorities bear the ultimate responsibility for legality and regularity of all expenditures, including off-shore expenditure;

c. The obligations of the authorities of the programme in relation to management, control and audit concerning the operation can be fulfilled either by the authorities responsible for the programme under which that operation is supported (directly or via outsourcing) or by authorities in the area in which the operation is implemented if relevant agreements are available and can be concluded;[16]

d. The Description of the Management and Control System shall reflect the arrangements in place to ensure adequate management verifications for operations located outside the programme area;[17]

e. The Audit Strategy shall reflect the arrangements in place to ensure adequate audits for operations located outside the programme area;

f. The arrangements for management verifications should be verified by the Audit Authority in system audits in order to make sure the necessary measures are in place in due time;

g. Where EU funds are spent outside the EU, the law of the state where (part of) the operation is realised will be applicable, subject to further conditions in the grant agreement between the Managing Authority and the beneficiary.

4.1. A possible scenario:

ENCOURAGEMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS CREATION (2014-2020 example)

Valencia Region in Spain wants to help its enterprises that are lagging behind, and is therefore looking for innovative solutions that will allow its ERDF funds to be spent through efficient and effective activities. The Region decides to establish contact with a Swedish region that has developed a strong SME support policy and created links among entrepreneurs to boost thematic objectives 1, 2, 3 and 7.

Valencia Region wants to set up an activity of professional exchange and know-how sharing because it believes that it lacks useful hints and practices, while the Swedish region sees that the knowledge-management exercise with a region where the emigration flux of its citizens is high may be an opportunity to develop branch offices and hubs.

The two regions therefore declare such intentions in their Regional OPs.

They would not have the opportunity to cooperate under the ETC goal because there is no ETC programme that would allow just these two regions to establish this type of contact. Besides, both regions decide to pursue this choice because they believe that there is an advantage for both. Now the two regions can decide how to organize their activities according to the limits imposed by the Regulation and by their own OPs.

One possibility is that each region launches a call for proposals aimed to enterprises working in specific sectors they wish to tackle (i.e., food packaging industry, ICT, construction). The call may propose to such enterprises the possibility to take part in a staff exchange or in a knowledge exchange and the possibility to develop joint projects to launch new products on both national markets as pilots.

Each region will fund its own enterprises with its own money, so no Spanish money will fund Swedish firms and vice versa, unless the need for such a situation arises. Should that be the case, the operation would be performed according to the limits established by Article 60. If an Authority had no choice but to spend part of its budget across the border, i.e., in the other Member State and outside the programme area, then it should refer to the limits established in Article 70(2)(b):

the total amount [...] allocated under the programme to operations located outside the programme area does not exceed 15 % of the support from the ERDF, Cohesion Fund, EAFRD or EMFF at the level of the priority, at the time of adoption of the programme;

If we imagine that the Swedish region is planning to use a priority from a specific ERDF thematic objective, then up to 15 % of that amount may be spent in Spain upon need.

All other management activities, such as assessment of proposals, signing of contracts, first level control, reporting and evaluation will be carried out by each region according to its internal regulation.

Key points to keep in mind

*To **ensure political** will and commitment of all staff and structures of the OP*

*To clearly define the **WHO** (partners), **WHAT** (subject) and **HOW** (type of actions)*

*To consider **all features related to governance, expenditures, procedures and implementation**, as well as financial control and audit*

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15. This code includes cooperation with partners from cross-border regions, from non-contiguous regions or from regions located in the territory covered by a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, a macro-regional or sea-basin strategy or a combination thereof (legal basis: see Art.3(4)(c) of the ERDF/CF regulation at page 4 above).

16. In this case specific rules for Interreg under the draft ETC Regulation DO NOT APPLY. However, they could constitute a good source for inspiration, as proved by existing practices, see Articles 45 and 47 of ETC (Interreg) Regulation.

17. Joint body (i.e., EGTC) may perform management verifications in all regions and territories involved in cooperation projects.

5. Steps to set up a cooperation approach under IGJ from a 2014-2020 experience: Basilicata Region - Italy

5. Steps to set up a cooperation approach under IGJ from a 2014-2020 experience: Basilicata Region - Italy

Identifying and outlining the main cornerstones on which to base effective steps and procedures to establish cooperation with other Regions by means of ERDF-funded programmes under the IGJ goal was a long and complicated path that demanded considerable research efforts.

Over the last two programming periods a few attempts and initiatives had been experimented, but on a very isolated and limited basis: starting from specific needs, sectorial and economic linkages or, last but not least, political commitment and common interests between a few EU territories.

Interact gathered and analysed information on the cases of European regions implementing the provision; outstanding and remarkable **examples from the previous programming period 2007-2013 came from Thuringia (DE), Limousin (FR) and North Sweden (SE).**

It is interesting highlight the fact that each one of them started from a different basis and developed its approach in a very unique way, proving that freedom of interpretation of the article, together with administrative skills and will, is the perfect recipe for success, despite the complexity of the definition and implementation of such approaches.
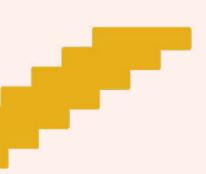
🖥 **LINKS ONLINE**

These examples are extensively described in the

• Interact Study "Added value and efficiency through the use of article 37.6(b) and EGTC.

• Appendix I.

Nowadays, in **2020, a new pioneer approach and methodology has been put in place by Basilicata (IT)**, leading to the publication of a 'Call for the selection of interregional and transnational projects according to Article 96(3)(d) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013'[18,19].

Thanks to close collaboration, and extensive analysis of these practices, with the Managing Authority of the ERDF OP Basilicata 2014-2020, we drew a few conclusions and outlined the **steps to set up a 'cooperation approach under IGJ' in accordance with Article 96(3)(d) that can be defined as shown below.**

STEPS TO SET UP A COOPERATION APPROACH UNDER IGJ BASED ON 2014-2020 EXPERIENCE

Step 01

• Compilation of needs and assessment of requirements

• Acknowledgement of development strategies and strategic objectives of the territory, the OP's strategy as well as allow a consultation with sectoral representatives, according to the territorial goals and challenges, thematic specialisation of theterritory (S3 strategies, territorial development challenges, macro-regional strategies or any combination thereof)

• Identification of possible applicants/beneficiaries' specialisations, previous experiences and possible partnerships in the fields matching with territorial strategic objectives

• Collection of needs for the exploitation of territorial specialisations and skills, as well as strategic needs.

• Consider the relevant skills and knowledge, as well as the administrative capacity for the implementation of this kind of operations and related activities

• Aknowledgement of an opportunity for action by setting cooperation as a relevant priority or possibility by earmarking sufficient budget allocation to it, under the IJG OP

Step 02

• Outline specific advantages and design the approach

• Acknowledgement and definition of opportunity for a simplified and tailor-made framework for potential beneficiaries in the territory

• Acknowledgement of the approach as a simplified way to access EU fundings from beneficiaries based in the territory.

• Design the approach by taking into accopunt the opportunities for investments on territory's skills and assets

• Identify the main direct advantages based on needs

Step 03

• Definition of the strategy and goals

• Assign responsibilities and nominate a team in charge of drafting the strategy of the approach as well as its goals and actions to be undertaken

• Setting-up the favourable conditions for political support and endorsement of the overall strategy and goals by the political level

• Involve all relevant policy-making level (Regional Government hierarchy, Public Administration hierachy, Political groups involved in the legislative process)

• Involvement of European Commission Regional Unit (DG REGIO)

• Where relevant, cross-check with National Authorities responsible for Cohesion Policy implementation.

Step 04

• Definition of the concept, methodology and procedure

• Ensure an integrated dialogue with sectoral representatives and potential beneficiaries. Verify interests and needs.

• Check consistency with territorial development strategies.

• Definition of the type of actions, interventions and operations to be undertaken

• Drafting of the approach and its features by responsible team (technical level)

Step 05

• Drafting of the approach and its features

• Set up a working group in charge of examining the relevant background documents, steering the alignment of the goals to the administrative rules and procedures, define of the approach and its features as well as the type(s) of actions to be implemented

• Check consitency and compliance with OP structure and procedures

• Involve sectorial experts or responsible bodies for contribution or validation

• Use role-play simulation in order to define and check the specific rules, implementation features and improve the draft procedure and documents

• Benchmark with procedures and rules of Interreg programmes involving your territory or the possbile partner territories.

• Foresee the necessary arrangements for the modification of internal administrative procedures or Programme Management and Control system. Programme Manual should also include these features

• Define the set of documents needed for setting up the procedure

Step 06

• Set up internal administrative procedures

• Involve the responsible political decision-maker(s), administrative bodies in charge of the implementation of sectoral policies

• Check overall compliance with programmes' procedure and public subsidy's legislation as well as applicable administrative rules and procedures

• Approval of the approach and its related procedure(s), budget and selection criteria, as well as the implementing documents (text of the call and annexes) by political level and Monitoring Committee

• Involvement of communication experts for publicity and promotion to local stakeholders and organisations (according to the topics or eligible partners)

Step 07

• Approach's specific procedures and implementation

• Define the schedule for assessment/selection procedures as well as the relevant decision-making steps

• Set-up the relevant selection bodies and assign responsibilities

• Foresee the involvement of sectoral experts for assessment and selection, if needed

• Define the contracting phase procedures

• Set up information and communication activities (infodays, etc.) as well as specific Help Desk or FAQs support to applicants

Step 08

• Project implementation and follow-up

• Set up the internal procedures for projects‰ follow-up and monitoring

• Assign the relevant staff or body to perform monitoring tasks as well as controls according to OP's management and control system and rules

• Make sure the allocated staff or body has the necessary skills and knowledge of management and follow-up of international cooperation projects (language, IT skills, etc.)

• Provide all technical information about project's implementation, eligibility rules, monitoring and follow-up, payment claims, communication etc., together with the official documents

• Provide the necessary templates for contracting, implementation and, follow-up, expenditure and financial claim reporting, communication, as well as the access to the relevant monitoring system

• Provide technical support for implementation, Help Desk or FAQs, and communciation activities

Tips and suggestions based on lessons learned

• Define detailed rules and expenditure categories, as well as a menu for type of actions, outputs and deliverables.

• Define thematic eligibility criteria, where relevant.

• Define the financial rules as well as control features for partners located outside the programme area.

• Pre-financing is a good incentive for small organisations at local level and could ease their participation

• Simplify project structure and activity framework to the maximum extent.

• Establish clear rules about the maximum number of applications that a single partner may submit.

• Take advantage of existing international partnerships or networks of Regions (S3, EURegionsWeek, sectoral or thematic networks, MRS or geographic network) in order to simplify and establish strategic cooperation objectives and partnerships.

• Member State could support the identification of partner regions.

• Make available a list of partners with whom the territory has often created partnerships or international agreements with other Regions, according to topics, geographical and/or political interest.

• Provide robust support for partner search (most time-consuming activity for partners).

• Provide incentive features to support specific activities aimed at building partnerships and networks (reimbursement of preparation costs, etc.).

• Establish a Help Desk support for specific doubts. Organise specific info days and publish FAQs and updates.
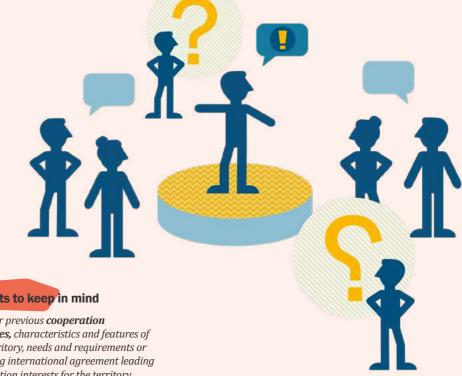
More details about the *Best Practice* from Basilicata
All procedural documents (Call, Application form, selection criteria and FAQs) are available in Italian, here: https://portalebandi.regione.basilicata.it/PortaleBandi/detail-bando-altri.jsp?id=6557.

For more information:

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Presidency of the Council of Ministers - Department for Cohesion Policies:
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Agency for Territorial Cohesion:
area.progetti.uf6@agenziacoesione.gov.it

Key points to keep in mind

*To consider previous **cooperation experiences,** characteristics and features of the OP territory, needs and requirements or any existing international agreement leading to cooperation interests for the territory*
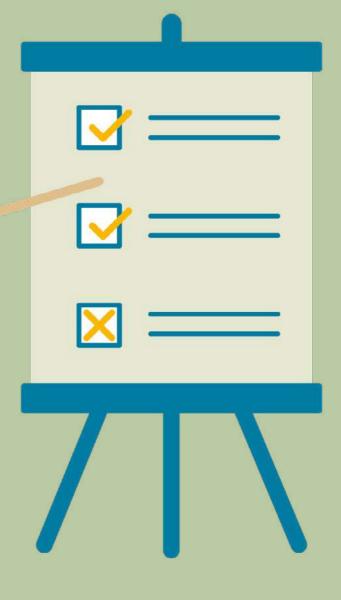
*To ensure a **coherent and appropriate** process as well as administrative procedures, in line with relevant laws and rules*

*To benchmark with relevant **ETC/Interreg experiences** available on the territory*

*To **dedicate financial and human resources** adapted to the ambition defined for such cooperation approaches ensuring a sufficient level of skills and competences for the management of cooperation projects*
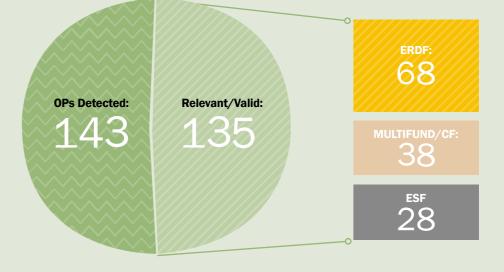
6. Inspiring cooperation actions: first hints from pilot mapping

6. Inspiring cooperation actions: first hints from pilot mapping

During the second pilot project implemented by Interact (2019-2020), one of the main outcomes was represented by the first **mapping exercise** that started with an extraction of the **contents of Section 4.4 of all Operational Programmes 'The arrangements for interregional and transnational actions, within the operational programme, with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State (where appropriate)'**[20] gathered from the SFC monitoring system and provided by DG REGIO.
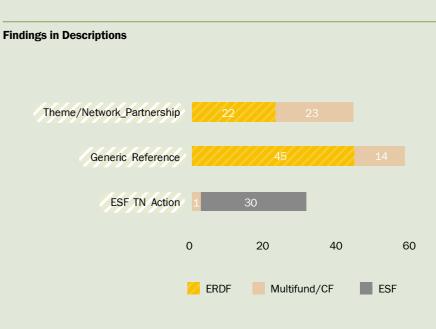
Interact analysed Section 4.4 of **338 Operational Programmes.** Out of them **143 contained valid information and 135 contained relevant information to be analysed, including 5 from UK.**

Relevant OPs Analysed

OPs Detected: **143**

Relevant/Valid: **135**

ERDF: **68**

MULTIFUND/CF: **38**

ESF **28**

Out of the **135 operational programmes that contained relevant and valid information:** 50 % (68) were ERDF-funded programmes, 28 % (38) were multi-fund or Cohesion Fund programmes and 21 % (29) were ESF programmes. During the mapping exercise it emerged that 59 (44 %) out of the 135 descriptions analysed contained a generic or blurry reference.

All descriptions containing 'not relevant' or 'not applicable' were excluded from the start, as mentioned above. Forty-five programmes (33 %) had relevant information with sufficient detail or
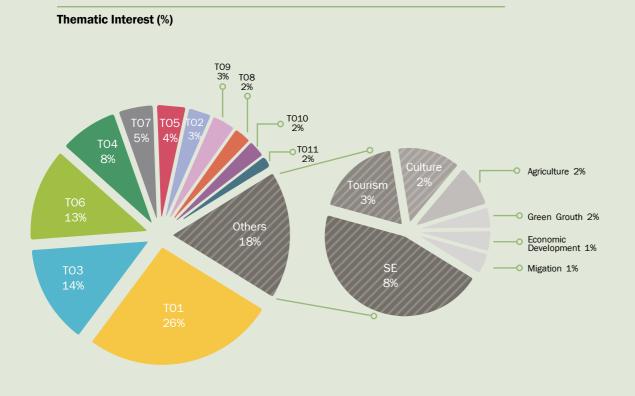
narrative regarding 'thematic' interests (i.e., Thematic Objectives) as well as possible networks or partnerships were the cooperation interest could be deployed. Among the networks and partnerships, several layers could be distinguished.

Furthermore, 31 programmes (33 %) described merely the opportunity and possibility provided by the ESF regulation for transnational actions in the framework of this fund.

Programmes per Country

Findings in Descriptions

Theme/Network_Partnership: 22 | 23

Generic Reference: 45 | 14

ESF TN Action: 1 | 30

0   20   40   60

■ ERDF   ■ Multifund/CF   ■ ESF

20. https://www.interact-eu.net/library#3194-publication-mapping-section-44-all-operational-programmes-_2014-2020-art-963d

According to these findings a certain predominance could be identified in terms of **thematic interest**: most of the programmes mentioned a specific theme or described an interest for **'innovation aspects'** related to R+D+I as well as themes within the **RIS3 and Smart Specialisation**. In addition, another topic of interest was represented by the **competitiveness of small enterprises.**

The second block of thematic predominance was represented by **'green topics'** related to environmental protection, risk prevention, low-carbon economy and energy efficiency.

Going into further detail, in this first mapping analysis we observed the interest according to EU Cohesion Policy's Thematic Objectives: **the main interest is for TO 1 and TO3** in the first place, followed by a relevant interest in **TO6, TO4 and TO5**. The remaining TOs are equally represented in general.

The third block **'Others' (non-thematic or cross-cutting topics)**, if analysed in deeper detail, shows that 8 % is constituted by S3, 3 % by Tourism, and the rest can be aggregated into green topics. This **reinforces the interest in innovation and green** topics.

As per the geographic interests, partnerships and existing networks to cooperate with, programmes described specific interests in cooperating within macro-regional strategy frameworks, where relevant (EUSBSR, EUSAIR, EUSDR), well as bordering territories or adjacent regions within the same Member State — for proximity or metropolitan continuity — or Euroregions.

As per the interest in partnership, we can see that the 'interest for cooperation' is based on geographic and political proximity. Within the analysed sections, the following predominance was observed:
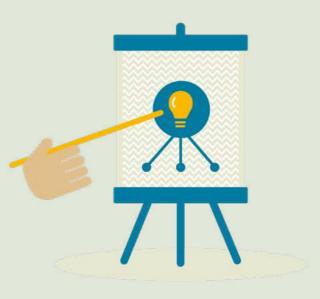
1. territories involved in existing networks (S3, KICs, Vanguard Initiative);

2. territories with similar conditions or proximity/political common elements (Visegrad group, Outermost Regions, Mediterranean);

3. specific, adjacent border regions and regions of the same Member State, in order to address common cross-border challenges.

This information provides a first orientation step regarding the possible interest for the topic or WHAT and the WHO in terms of opportunities for Cooperation actions under IGJ.

The extended report is available on http://www.interact-eu.net/; the list of regions **with relevant information as for** Article 96(3)(d) in Section 4.4 of the template and in Appendix II.

Thematic Interest (%)

Key points to keep in mind

To consider any **existing international agreement** *leading to cooperation interests for the territory*

To consider **thematic interests** *and specialisations of the territory (i.e. RIS4)*

To ensure a **clear and coherent scope for cooperation** *in the OP strategy*

To differentiate possible interests in **ETC/ Interreg from the territory** *(topics or wider partnerships, limited actions or scope) from the opportunities for cooperation within the OP such as complementary actions, combination of interests for alignment with MRSs or other relevant strategies.*

To avoid **overlap** *with other funding instruments*

To benchmark the **matching of interest** *with other possible partners regions or territories*

To ensure a **detailed reference** *and approach within the OP template*

Ask support *to the relevant national coordination authorities or other competent organisations (technical assistance, Interact, etc.)*

7. Starting from what? Mainstreaming of results from ETC to IJG

7. Starting from what?
Mainstreaming of results
from ETC to IJG

The link between the two objectives of
EU Cohesion Policy has emerged as the
necessary element to make cooperation
more durable and sustainable by
complementing ETC within IGJ. The kind
of activities funded under IGJ can be very
different than those eligible under ETC
only. In fact, Article 96(3)(d) allows funding
of infrastructures and other activities
relevant to ERDF OPs, while ETC refers
mainly to 'softer' cooperation at strategic
level (exchange/transfer of experience and
know-how).

7.1 Capitalisation and Mainstreaming: opportunities to transfer results from ETC/Interreg projects

For several years, implementation of **Capitalisation activities** in Interreg has led to a
due reflection on the results produced within this objective by thousands of projects:
which ETC/Interreg project results can be mainstreamed and properly transferred
to IGJ or other policies? A policy paper, an action plan, but also a monitoring
methodology, or the main findings of a pilot action that can help define policy
regulations or practices or that can be adopted in the framework of programming/
implementation tools (i.e., a call of an IGJ Operational Programme), in order to
facilitate the *mainstreaming*[21] of what has already been done and delivered.

CAPITALISATION (in Interreg):

Can be defined as an integrated process aimed at consolidating the capital built by Interreg projects and programme results, with the objectives of:

• making the knowledge and results generated by projects more accessible, thus improving the transfer of knowledge;

• obtaining additional results through benchmarking and detailed content analysis, building on existing knowledge and experience;

• promoting the re-use and/or transfer of this knowledge and these results, to boost performance and delivery;

• raising awareness and improving the communication of results in specific fields of regional policy.

Based on these assumptions, the main results that can be capitalised and transferred to
other policy frameworks are those that may somehow influence the regulatory processes
up to being directly mainstreamed in the programming tools and funding sources.

MAINSTREAMING:

Also called 'transfer process', it is the process of integrating new knowledge and good practices into regional, national or European policy-making levels.

In general, the concept of mainstreaming can be defined as
the process by which innovations or good practices tested
in a given area or context are transferred, disseminated and
institutionalised at a wider system level.

21. Source: Interreg Med Glossary: https://interreg-med.eu/documents-tools/glossary/lexique/M/

Thanks to this process, those practices that have been positively experienced in other frameworks, for example through pilot projects, small-scale interventions, soft actions, exchanges and transfers of good practices, etc. are introduced into the territory's 'main stream of policies'. In this way, what has been developed in delimited areas or spaces can rise to the rank of general principle or be applied at higher levels and over wider territories.

However, the **goal of mainstreaming** is not the mere horizontal (in space) or vertical (in the governance hierarchies) transfer of innovative or more performing solutions, but rather the real contribution to modify or improve quality within the system in which they are carried out to the system's benefit, being an integral part of it. In fact, thanks to this approach new results, different from the original ones of each single project, can be obtained through mutual contamination, enhancement of knowledge, networking among all organisations involved, thus generating effects and impacts that are longer-lasting and sustainable over time.

The relevance of this step is essential to properly exploit ETC/Interreg project results, as it allows embedding findings in other contexts, different from the ones in which they emerge, assuming that the result of a project derives from the combination of inputs and the context in which they are applied. Obviously, context could be similar or challenges faced could be similar even in different territories.

This step opens the door to the concept of 'territorialisation of results', that will be one of the main pillars of the next programming period.

7.2 Key steps for a successful and effective transfer and re-use of ETC results under IGJ

Transfer and re-use of results into IGJ, from whichever framework or experience, is still an unexplored area of knowledge within the EU Cohesion Policy or EU funds management theories. In the context of the Cohesion Policy, and more specifically of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective Programmes, the widespread use of the term 'mainstreaming' began during the 2007-2013 programming period for three main reasons:

• implementation of the transformation process that involved the four community initiative programmes present up to 2000-2006 (EQUAL, URBAN, LEADER, INTERREG) and their integration (mainstreaming) in shared-management programming, with the creation, in the case of Interreg, of the ETC goal;

• the need to easily distinguish ETC from everything else, that led to the identification of all other EU Cohesion Policy programmes (and, more generally, those financed by EU funds that have always represented the main programming tools of European resources) with a single term: mainstream;
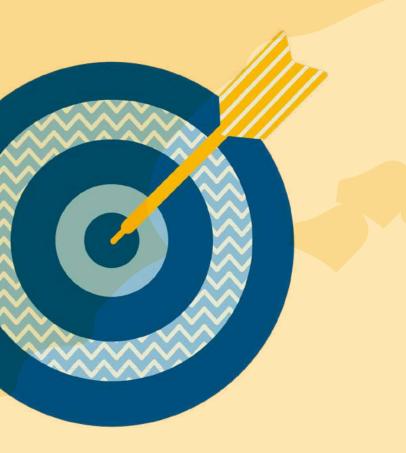
• the need to guarantee greater visibility to the added value that territorial cooperation can bring to the territories and to favour - more concretely - synergies with other Funds and Programmes. Thus, we can consider mainstreaming as the ability of ETC results, achieved thanks to cooperation with other States, to be transferred, enhanced and reproduced into other Cohesion Policy Programmes and/or in national and local policies, generating new value chains in a given territory.

Coordination and integration among European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) represented a cornerstone for the **2014-2020 programming period. In the Common Strategic Framework**[22], which provides strategic guidelines to achieve an integrated development approach using ESI Funds in coordination with other EU instruments and policies, Member States are encouraged to pursue complementarity between cooperation activities and other actions supported by ESI Funds.

This approach was confirmed and indeed consolidated in the current negotiation debate on the forthcoming **2021-2027 programming period**, which outlines, in the folds of the new regulatory framework proposed by the EC, a more careful supervision already in the programming and negotiation phase of the various Programmes, to ensure proactive coordination. Thus, this calls for the identification of potential interregional cooperation actions for each specific objective of ERDF programmes also through the proposal of Policy Objective 5 'Europe closer to citizens', which specifically supports integrated local and urban strategies.

Moreover, In the light of a reduced budget for 2021-2027 programming period and the constant call for integration and linkages between the two goals of the EU Cohesion Policy, for an increased and enhanced efficiency of EU Funds and impact of the policy itself, it is of utmost importance that robust methodologies and steps are identified and undertaken for more structured 'mainstreaming' approaches.

As inspiration and valuable example, the **following methodologies and steps are based on the pilot experience** run by the National Contact Point for Italy of the Interreg MED Programme (ART-ER) that developed a working process aimed at identifying possible orientation actions to adopt **procedural tools** and methodologies enhancing the coordination and integration between ETC, mainstream programmes and **other** sectoral programming tools.

Territorial Focus Groups on mainstreaming in Italy (Interreg Med Programme)

This initiative started in the framework of the activities of Interreg MED National Contact Point for Italy had a twofold objective: on the one hand, to involve regional administrations into the analysis of their ability to integrate results from ETC projects into mainstream programming, and, more generally, to influence the regional planning framework; on the other hand, to **outline the relevant governance framework that can best facilitate the transfer and capitalisation of ETC project results (mainly from Interreg MED) and their effective integration into regional planning.**

To achieve this ambitious goal a strongly dynamic and active working method was set up, in the form of Focus Groups (a qualitative survey technique typical of social research that favours informality, free expression and interaction between experts and practitioners).

In fact, experts were invited to take part in these Focus Groups to foster an exchange of ideas and a comparison of experiences aimed at developing hypotheses and work methodologies that would contribute to the objective of this initiative.

The proactive participation of stakeholders and the variety of experiences analysed allowed to develop some main considerations that can be extended to the entire reference framework of the ETC and Interreg Med area.

This exercise started in autumn 2018 and, over one year, it allowed participants to deepen their knowledge, practices, and themes related to the transfer of results and real joint mechanisms to build up new ideas and methodologies.

Main questions addressed:

• How can results from MED projects affect the regional, national, and European planning framework?

• How are mainstreaming and/or transfer practices developed and structured? And how could these practices be improved and applied through a transferable model?

• Which governance system is necessary to support the effective transfer of ETC project results within policy instruments at regional, national and European level?

• Which are the main key players capable of targeting mainstreaming actions?

The concept of **mainstreaming** has thus been interpreted as the process allowing the transfer of results achieved by ETC/Interreg projects (i.e., through pilot or soft actions, small-scale interventions, exchanges of good practices). Moreover, these results could be integrated and institutionalised into a wider system, and could even influence and/or modify the programming framework of reference.

Timeline

- **Bari, 12 October 2018**

- **Rome, 5 December 2018**

- **Trieste, 30-31 January 2019** - Implementation: tools and practices for enhancing funds integration at programme and project level

- **Reggio Calabria, 12-13 March 2019** - Communication & Capitalisation: practices and methods aimed at mainstreaming the results at programme and project level

- **Genoa, 15-16 April 2019** - Territorial governance: ETC regional governance systems (mechanisms, tools, dialogue and connecting structures to enhance integration, stakeholder engagement and empowerment methods)

- **L'Aquila, 30-31 May 2019** - Monitoring & Evaluation: ETC monitoring and evaluation systems at regional and national level; practices and methods to evaluate the contribution of ETC projects to programming phases.

- **Final event on-line, 23 November 2020**

https://progeu.regione.emilia-romagna.it/it/medncpitalia/news-ed-eventi/news/news-inhomepage/_la-capitalizzazione-dei-progetti-med-in-italia).

Involved stakeholders:

• Presidency of the Italian Council of Ministers - Department for Cohesion Policy

• Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

• Agency for Territorial Cohesion

• Three MAs of mainstream Programmes (Basilicata, Emilia-Romagna, Puglia Regions)

• Six Regional Coordination Units of ETC programmes (Abruzzo, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Puglia, Valle d'Aosta)

• Two Regional Units for the programming of structural funds (Calabria and Campania)

• Seven ETC MA/JS: Italy-France (Maritime) and Italy-Slovenia, Greece-Italy, Italy-Albania-Montenegro and MED, and NCPs ENI CBC MED, ESPON and MED

• Twenty-four Lead partners and project partners of best practices on mainstreaming processes

7.3. Possible actions for 'mainstreaming'

The following actions were identified according to specific target groups: ETC and IGJ Managing Authorities, ETC regional coordination offices, lead and project partners. These key actors are strategically called to coordinate their efforts to better exploit and integrate project results into sectoral programming tools.
The following practical tips refer to both the implementation and programming phases of programmes.

Target: Managing Authorities (ETC, ERDF and ESF)

Programming
• Strengthening ETC and IGJ **programmes' governance mechanisms** through a better involvement of all key players in the definition and planning of mainstreaming actions, including the design of strategic and integrated development plans to ensure adoption of results.

Implementation
• Intensifying **driving and orientatio**n actions on mainstreaming, also through information and training activities managed by the programmes.
• Introducing specific mechanisms to transfer results to policies **in the project proposal requirements** (based on the experience of INTERREG EUROPE and URBACT regarding the creation and implementation of local stakeholder groups)
• Introducing **additional** bonus points (by defining an additional evaluation criterion) to be awarded to those projects that integrate and transfer results coming from ETC (for mainstream programmes) and mainstream (for ETC programmes).
• Developing a specific **evaluation** of project results in terms of transferring and mainstreaming.
• Intensifying **targeted communication integrated processes** between ETC and mainstream programmes and identifying 'joint' thematic communities of projects (starting from the experience of thematic communities, also developed under ETC Programmes and projects).

Target: ETC regional coordination units

Programming
• Creating a **structured exchange and confrontation mechanism** between ETC and mainstream programmes and projects and the institutional departments in charge of defining sectoral programming tools.

Implementation
• **Structured collection of data and information on ETC projects**, aimed at highlighting the results achieved by projects and enhancing capitalisation processes.
• Improving dialogue with stakeholders at local level (reinforcing **ETC regional governance**), with the purpose of **strengthening skills** on mainstreaming processes.
• Developing r**egional living labs on strategic themes** to enhance project integration into regional policies.
• Developing **targeted and sectoral actions** to communicate and transfer **results.**

Target: Beneficiaries (ETC and mainstream)

Implementation
• Identifying and describing specific solutions to transfer results to policies in the project proposal.
• Improving **dialogue between public administration sectoral departments and lead or project partners,** starting from the project generation phase.
• Intensifying **targeted and sectoral actions** to communicate and transfer results.[23]

23. The final report and deliverables produced in the framework of the Focus Groups on mainstreaming in the MED Programme (in IT language) can be downloaded from this page: www.ervet.it/?page_id=15622.

Some examples of mainstreaming activities performed by Interreg MED modular projects
ARISTOIL: communication and institutional actions to change the regulation at European level and sustain small, high-quality producers of olive oil.
CHEBEC: supporting the regional programming for the start-up of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) and putting the basis for the creation of regional Competence Centres.
CHIMERA: testing innovative models for CCIs and promoting the creation of regional clusters to manage regional policies and funds addressed to the cultural and creative sector.
LOCATIONS: joint designing of local projects for sustainable mobility integrated into local planning tools, through the involvement of policy makers, technical providers and citizens.
MD.NET: development of integrated actions with the ERDF ROP, the Rural Development Plan and the Internal Areas Strategy in Italy for the promotion and dissemination of the Mediterranean diet.
MEDSEALITTER: adoption of protocols to monitor floating marine litter and waste on high seas by regional agencies for environmental monitoring, in accordance with the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
SISMA: adopting tools implemented by the project by the Managing Authority of the ERDF ROP of Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, to launch a call on the promotion of public building energy efficiency.

LINKS ONLINE

More information here:

https://interreg-med.eu/projects-results/our-projects/

Key points to keep in mind

*To consider the **opportunities for the transfer** of results from ETC/Interreg projects*

*To **identify possible ETC/Interreg projects** as a basis for capitalisation and re-use of results*
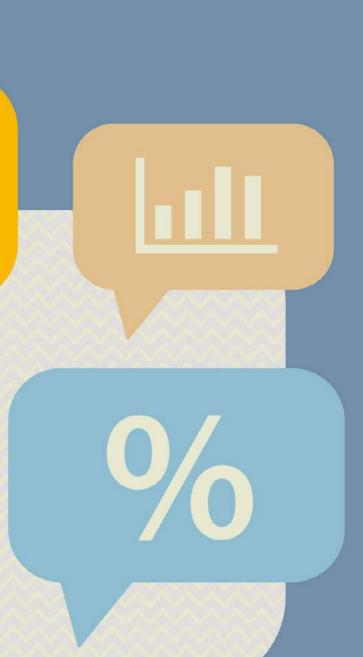
*To identify **potential interregional cooperation actions** for each of the specific objectives of the OP, also throughout integrated local and urban strategies, RIS4, etc.*

*To consider the **relevant actions** to be undertaken during the programming and implementation phases of the OP*

*To define the relevant **targets of mainstreaming** actions during the programming and implementation phases of the OP*

8. Fund alignment and 'embedding' for the support of territorial frameworks

8. Fund alignment and 'embedding' for the support of territorial frameworks

The principles highlighted for the 2021-2027 funding period aim to ensure that actions and investments that have a higher EU added value when implemented jointly are promoted. This objective can be reached, not only through an increased funding of interregional initiatives (as outline above), but also through synergies and alignment with the priorities of macro regional strategies (MRS) and sea-basin strategies/initiatives (SBS), where such strategies exist.

> *Territorial strategies, such as macro-regional and sea-basin strategies, inspire and provide orientation for more effective cooperation and investment, to deliver greater coordinated impacts in regions affected by shared challenges and needs.*

There are certain commonalities between MRS and SBS. They both provide strategic and agile frameworks for long-term cooperation on clearly defined priorities (to deal with existing shared problems) and actions. They both provide orientation for cooperation in a certain territory, acting as amplifiers of public investments. In this chapter, however, we will take a closer look at the example of MRS support.

The Council, in the conclusions on the implementation of EU Macro-Regional Strategies[24] adopted on 5 June 2019, calls on the participating countries and regions to **take into account priorities of the macro-regional strategies** and **'embed'** them in the programming and implementation of post-2020 relevant programmes under shared management. The preparation phase of post-2020 programming offers a unique opportunity to plan and organise the consistent use of EU funds to support MRS objectives. Coordination between authorities of EU funding programmes and MRS key implementers should take place both within and among countries involved in a MRS.

EMBEDDING:

Can be defined as a comprehensive process aimed at taking into account the priorities of the macro-regional strategies in the programming and implementation of post-2020 relevant programmes under shared management.
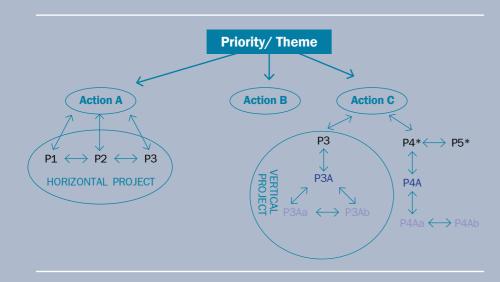
8.1 Macro-regional strategies in a nutshell

The four EU macro-regional strategies today (EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region[25], EU Strategy for the Danube Region[26], EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region[27] and EU Strategy for the Alpine Region[28]) reach out to 19 EU members, 9 non-EU states, with a population of 236 million and 33.5 million within and outside the Union respectively. By now, they are embedded in the EU's institutional framework as an important instrument that promotes both the EU Cohesion and Enlargement agenda. By design, the Strategies, addressing common challenges faced by a defined geographical area, are connecting policies, thematic sectors and disciplines, at national, regional, and local levels. As a policy-action framework, endorsed by the EU Council, MRSs tackle common economic, social and territorial challenges that go beyond national borders. This is done in an integrated and coordinated manner, i.e., through alignment of policy, funding, and so-called actions.

24. https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/cooperate/macro_region_strategy/pdf/council_conclusions_21052019.pdf

25. https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/

26. https://danube-region.eu/eu/

27. https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/

28. https://www.alpine-region.eu/

In other words, MRSs do not only provide a set of agreed priorities, targets and outlined responsibilities (e.g., National Development Plans), but they also combine them with coordination and implementation mechanisms (including governance structures) and processes. A typical macro-regional process involves a number of coordinated activities that are aimed at creating a broad impact and achieving the objectives (targets and indicators, where defined) of the priority/policy within the MRS. This process responds to the actions defined in the Action Plan that are implemented through interlinked activities (e.g., meetings, groups, networks, platforms) and operations[29] (also known as flagships, example projects, strategic projects, strategic topics, collaboratives, etc.) that can refer either to single operations or to an umbrella process/project chain[30].

In this way, alignment with MRS helps ensure a stronger and more efficient policy coherence, regarding both programme design and implementation, among all territorial levels concerned (from EU to macro-regional, sea-basin, national, regional and local, as appropriate). At the same time, it also allows reaching long-term impact for public investments by linking them to macro-regional processes.

But let us have a closer look.

8.2. Why to align with MRS framework?

MRS offer	Additional information
Strategic framework to shape programme priorities	In accordance with Article 22(3)(d)(i) of CPR, MS have to indicate types of actions, including a list of planned operations of strategic importance, and their expected contribution to MRS and SBS. To support this task, MRSs have specified prioritised actions, flagships, and cross-cutting initiatives (called slightly different in each strategy). Together with the Action Plans of the MRS, the shortlisted activities that have been politically endorsed by MRS member states, provide a good basis for alignment and implementation of cooperation activities across MRS.
Coordination framework	MRS as a framework does not only offer a possibility to reach out to stakeholders from different governance levels and sectors and link single projects to policy-action processes, but it also enables a more coordinated cooperation among MAs. Moreover, MRS member states that share more than one MRS can benefit from a cross-MRS perspective. In preparation for funding period 2021-2027, MRS stakeholders in all four MRS are organising so-called 'embedding processes'. One element includes a dialogue with fund authorities. The dialogue can be organised within a region, country or MRS. In several cases, cooperation is more formalised and takes the form of MA networks (see example below). This in turn, allows MS and regions to discuss level 3 and level 4 cooperation potentials.
Possibility to pool and combine resources to address certain regional challenge	Challenges addressed by countries, regions, and MRSs, such as economic recovery from COVID 19, green transition, flood management, biodiversity, mobility, creation of equal opportunities for various society groups (e.g., migrants, Roma communities), etc. require complex solutions. These challenges cannot always be addressed by a single funding source. MRSs offer a possibility to bring different funding sources together to solve such challenges (region's own resources, ERDF, ETC Programmes[31]). Moreover, such regional challenges, e.g., flood prevention, may require investments outside the country/ region as the source of flood is elsewhere. The new regulatory framework allows MS to explore the possibilities offered by Article 57(4) of the proposed CPR Regulation that provides that 'all or part of an operation may be implemented outside of a Member State, including outside the Union, provided that the operation contributes to the objectives of the programme'.
Platform to engage with and jointly work with non-EU countries	EUSDR, EUSALP and EUSAIR cover not only EU Member States but also non-EU countries. Neighbours participate in MRSs as equal partners sharing coordination and governance tasks. Incompatibilities between EU members and neighbours matter less. Funding can be mixed from different sources, as mentioned above.
Long-term impact	Unlike programmes, MRSs are not limited to a funding period. MRSs allow linking individual operations (regardless of their size and duration) to long-term processes, in this way helping the new generation of projects and processes to build on the outcomes of completed initiatives.
Collaboration capacity of all involved grows through learning-in-action	Cooperation is a relatively new form of operation for IGJ programmes. MRSs offer a framework for mutual exchange and learning (among MAs but also in exchange with MRS on solutions developed). Through this, members increase their capacity to integrate transnational cooperation in the strategic development of their own institutions.

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29. How do macro-regional strategies deliver: workflows, processes and approaches. http://www.interact-eu.net/download/file/fid/13242

30. Project chain' is a process where several operations (projects) are interlinked within one priority, policy, pillar, action of the MRS. Linking ongoing projects, helping the new generation of projects build on the outcomes of the completed ones, is allowing any programme and project, despite its scope (in terms of territory, partnership, funding amount, etc.), to contribute to a MRS.

31. https://navigation.danube-region.eu/dream-danube-river-research-and-management/

8.3. Going beyond thematic alignment – 2021-2027 funding period

Since the establishment of MRSs, countries and regions have allocated funds to implement MRS priorities, with different levels of mutual coordination involved.

MRS support practices in 2014-2020

• Specific selection criteria benefiting MRS relevance (extra points attributed to MRS-labelled projects).

• Targeted calls (to support both regional activities and transnational cooperation activities having thematic link to MRS).

• Participation of MRS key implementers[32] in programme monitoring committees.

• Inclusion of transnational component (already approved projects having a possibility to apply for an additional cooperation package).[33]

• Alignment of call timelines allowing synergies among thematic projects.

• Pooling of resources to address territorial challenges (combining ROP with several Interreg programmes).

• Regional multilateral calls[34] (due to grant size, in the 2014-2020 period calls were mostly financed from regional funds, only few countries/regions used ESIF).

• Coordination of MAs work and exchange through MA networks.

As MRSs do not have own funding resources, MRS implementation depends on bundling funding from different sources. The priorities of national/regional ESI Fund programmes are, to a large extent, consistent with those of MRSs. This is also reflected in the increased support given to MRS initiatives, as reported by 2014-2020 programmes. However, a comprehensive and strategic coordination with MRSs and among programmes in the macro-regions would Commission on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies[36], and was highlighted during preparatory work for the 2021-2027 funding period.

During preparatory work for the 2021-2027funding period, MRSs have identified and prioritised actions and activities that present agreed potential for joint financing. This was done considering Action Plans accompanying MRS, as well as 2019 and 2020 European Semester Country Reports and Communication. These lists of priorities are available on each

This presents an opportunity to:

• finance strategic projects (pilot projects) in line with the priorities;

• align content and actions, e.g., through the launch of thematic or specific/targeted calls;

• operationalise project ideas by (co-)developing proposals and selecting actions/projects for funding;

• implement certain priorities jointly across MRSs.

As the MRSs have matured, MAs are urged to look beyond pure thematic alignment and general attribution of support. Instead, MAs are encouraged to use MRS framework and develop agreed cooperation (3rd degree) and joint informal cooperation (4th degree) initiatives. Of course, national-scale projects, e.g., measures improving agriculture practices and reducing nutrient inflow into the sea, flood prevention measures, can also have a significant impact and help reach MRS objectives. However, even when projects are implemented at national level, it would be beneficial to proactively recognise their impact on the wider MRS context, e.g., by linking these initiatives to MRS processes (e.g., labelling these projects, marking them clearly in the monitoring systems and urging an active exchange with MRS stakeholders)[35].

3rd Degree – Agreed cooperation in MRS context

MRSs serve as a platform to develop coordinated cooperation, in this way providing a clear link to **WHY** to cooperate and **WHAT** can be jointly financed by proving thematically agreed and politically endorsed shortlist of activities. Based on this information, MAs can discuss and agree to jointly work on certain issues with clear macro-regional relevance. Depending on the selected topic, the cooperation can be implemented involving the entire MRS, or cover certain regions or states concerned. Agreed cooperation means that operations (projects) are implemented following national/regional programme rules (selection, implementation, reporting). However, as this type of cooperation provides for 'prioritisation of operations to be selected' that have a transnational cooperation element and links to MRS, it is advisable that partners agree on certain joint elements to be included in the respective application forms and to be later reflected in monitoring systems. This could be, for example, an agreement to include a field in the application form that would reflect on links to MRS (e.g., *do you foresee a transnational cooperation with partners from other countries*, if confirmed, an additional field could be added asking to specify partner outreach strategy and links to MRS), or tackled during assessment.

During the 2014-2020 period, contribution to MRS was often reported in general terms, by counting financial allocations to projects thematically linked to MRS. The agreed cooperation model enables a more specific monitoring of contribution to MRS implementation. Countries/regions can agree to integrate specified questions in the monitoring checklist (monitoring systems) so as to enable generation of comparable and more detailed monitoring statistics and evaluation data. This could include, for example, data on links to specific thematic areas, levels of contribution to MRS, etc.[36]

Moreover, MAs can also agree on a harmonised approach towards relevant programme evaluation, assessing the impact of supported operations and their contribution to MRS implementation. A harmonised approach towards ESIF programme evaluation would provide comparable data on progress achieved, fund contribution to MRS thematic objectives and processes, and impact (change brought about by supported operations) of funded operations in the MRS context.

32. Here, key implementers of MRS include national coordinators, thematic coordinators and thematic steering group members

33. https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/news-room/documents-materials/7-embedding-the-eusbsr

34. https://danube-region.eu/2016/07/call-for-applications-multilateral-scientific-and-technologicalcooperation-in-the-danube-region-2/

35. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1600880135115&uri=CELEX:52020DC0578

36. Each MRS is governed by national coordinators, which could be one entry point. Thematic fields are coordinated by thematic coordinators acting on behalf of all MRS countries/regions, and supervised by steering groups. Steering groups are composed of line ministries and responsible authorities. This is the easiest way to reach country representatives in a thematic field. Contacts are available on each MRS website.

4th Degree – Joint informal (harmonized) cooperation in MRS context

In this 4th degree of cooperation, just like in the previous one, the **WHAT** is defined at MRS level and can be taken as basis for a joint informal cooperation. Partner (country/region) involvement depends on the issue tackled and OP/ROP priorities, as well as MS interest. However, the development of such a cooperation form usually requires a smaller group of countries/regions that are able to commit time and resources to setup a coordination mechanism.

Although OPs act in parallel, under their respective procedural framework, the experience of joint calls organised in this period indicates that agreement on certain shared elements is required (e.g., agreed single deadline for application, harmonised or same application form, harmonised [to a large extent] call assessment criteria, comparable budgets for project partners, and similar eligibility rules). Moreover, the implementation of such cooperation also requires a leader, or a rotating leadership (coordination of exchange between participating regions, call promotion). Partners may also consider organising partner matchmaking events.

Innovation_Express

Transnational call for proposals for the internationalisation of SMEs through clusters in the Baltic Sea Region

Based on a good practice developed in France, Innovation Express was adapted to the EUSBSR context and extended later to other partners, such as Catalonia. The instrument was launched in 2013. The last 24 projects launched their activities in early 2018.

Depending on national requirements, partners could apply for support to organize workshops and study trips, networking and speed-dating activities, market research, technology/knowledge transfer, recruitment/training and education, cross-sectoral inter cluster activities, feasibility studies and piloting prior to RDI projects, inter-cluster strategy development activities. Small grant: EUR 10,000 to 60,000.

Applicants had one entry point (joint application portal) and one deadline, but partners (at least 3 partners) had to submit separate applications. Applications were distributed to responsible national/regional authorities for assessment. Based on national assessments a joint shortlist of projects was prepared, followed by joint selection discussion. Individual funding agreements with each partner were concluded by the responsible country/region. Reports were submitted to partner national implementation agencies/ministries.

Coordination was provided by an external institution and supported by an external funding assured by the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM). This support financed coordination staff position, matchmaking events for SME internationalisation and joint branding.

Main conclusions from the evaluation stressed that this simple, pragmatic approach involved all countries in developing and implementing a common instrument that addresses shared policy objectives – showing engagement and commitment to act together.

• Common branding and coordination, and involvement of regional/national ministries and agencies (and the NCM) strengthens visibility and legitimacy.
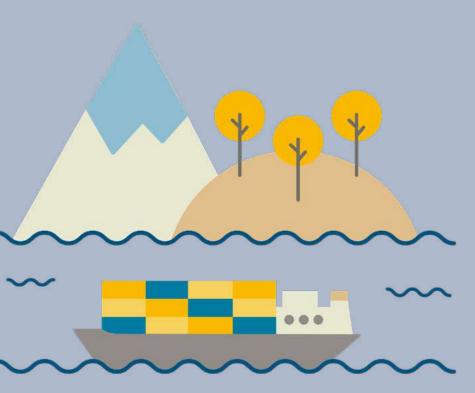
• Cluster organizations felt that Innovation Express provided a flexible approach to initiate projects and get SMEs involved in international activities.

The experience also showed that an instrument can be started by few committed partners and later enlarged by adding additional regions. More streamlined understanding of eligible activities among partners is helpful to simplify partner cooperation.

Coordination efforts require resources from the MAs and resource planning should not be undermined. However, the experience from MA cooperation in this period, shows that possibility to exchange with colleagues from other regions/countries is seen as one of the biggest benefits. In a more formalised cooperation, the coordination elements can be taken over by the so-called MA networks.

ERDF Managing Authorities Network

European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) MA network in the Baltic Sea region was established in 2016. It is composed of representatives of Managing Authorities and/or relevant ministries and intermediate bodies. A key aim of the network is to facilitate, on a voluntary basis, the funding of transnational collaboration by the ERDF regional/national OPs in order to support the activities of the EUSBSR, as well as to increase coordination across relevant macro-regional stakeholders. It also aims to foster learning on transnational cooperation within the ERDF programme in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond. The network supports exchange of experiences on the implementation of Operational Programmes within the Baltic Sea Region and with the EU Commission. In preparation for the 2021-2027 funding period, the network is working towards a more formalised cooperation regulated by a jointly developed Mission statement.

ESF Managing Authorities Network

European Social Fund (ESF) MA network in the Danube region was established in 2015. It is composed of representatives of Managing Authorities and/or relevant ministries and intermediate bodies. A key aim of the network is to facilitate, on a voluntary basis, the funding of transnational collaboration by the ESF regional/national OPs in order to support the activities of the EUSDR, as well as to increase coordination across relevant macro-regional stakeholders. It also aims to foster learning on transnational cooperation, elaborating good practises within the ESF programme in the Danube Region and beyond. The network supports exchange of experiences on the implementation of Operational Programmes within the Danube Region and with the EU Commission. In preparation for the 2021-2027 funding period, the network is working towards a more formalised cooperation regulated by a jointly developed Mission statement.

Key points to keep in mind

*To shape **OP priorities** according to the strategic framework of reference, prioritised actions and flagships*

*To ensure the necessary **steps for coordination***

*To consider the **possibility to pool** and combine resources to address certain regional challenges*

*To consider **MRSs as a framework** assuring long term impact of cooperation activities*

*To consider the **opportunity to increase** the capacity to integrate transnational cooperation in own institutions' strategic development.*

Appendix I

Limousin Region, France

In the case of Limousin, a specific axis of the ERDF ROP was dedicated to cooperation. It constituted an additional tool to help achieve the objectives of the other axes and it had to be consistent with them.

This axis financed:

• pilot projects, resulting from transfers of good practices from another European area to the Limousin territory;

• the creation and participation of local actors from Limousin in European networks.

It also financed a Regional Framework Operation (RUR@CT network) aimed at promoting the transfer of European good practices in the field of rural development.

The French region of Limousin was the Lead partner and head of RUR@CT, a network active in the exchange and transfer of 100 best practices at interregional level in the rural field with 62 members from 17 EU Member States.

The RUR@CT project was coordinated by Region Limousin at the service of the various partners: it provided technical assistance to partners in the network and enabled them to identify good practices with a view to a concrete transfer of experience.

The implementation of the network was based on three complementary components:

Component 1: CAPITALISATION (*at European level*)

Region Limousin piloted and funded the following actions through the interregional cooperation axis of its ERDF PO 'competitiveness':

1. identifying good practices,

2. collecting operational information on implementation,

3. evaluating the general conditions for transferability in other contexts

4. integrating all this information in a database.

Component 2: TRANSFER PREPARATION (*at regional level, with bilateral approach*)

The RUR@CT network put the 'importing' Regions in contact with the corresponding 'exporting' Regions. The 'importing' Region then piloted and coordinated the following actions:

1. selecting transferable good practices,

2. identifying targeted stakeholders to pilot the transfer process,

3. organising a preparatory meeting to analyse the needs and expectations,

4. organising an on-site visit and training session in the exporting region to perform an in-depth analysis,

5. transferability study and elaboration of a detailed action plan with specific adaptations.

Component 3: TRANSFER IMPLEMENTATION (*at regional level, in importing region*)

1. mainstreaming the action plan by applying for funding on ROP,

2. effective and operational implementation of the action plan,

3. transfer assessment and organisation of a seminar to present its results.

Expenditure required to set up, manage and coordinate the network (Component 1 for the whole network; Component 2 for Limousin only) was estimated at 2 million euros for a period of 7 years (2007-2013). This budget was funded 50 % by Limousin Region and 50 % by the ERDF under its PO 'Competitiveness'. Within Component 2, other 'importing' regions of the network financed all these actions. Different sources of funding were possible related to project engineering in the framework of cooperation processes (INTERREG IV B, IVC, 7th Framework programme, axis of cooperation within OP objective 1 or 2, other). Within Component 3 related to the effective implementation of the transferred operation, the 'importing' region had the possibility to find opportunities to programme it under ERDF within their OP objective 1 ('convergence') or objective 2 ('competitiveness'), or under ESF or EARDF, thus allowing for optimal synergies between European funds.

• **Was the article present in the ROP?**

Yes, it was present and clearly defined in the form of an axis specifically dedicated to cooperation. This axis represents a sum of ERDF 4 million euros.

• **What kind of projects did it fund?**

It funded networking actions to share experiences on common themes with European partners (i.e., European network on amphibian diseases or on traditional tapestry). It also funded the Regional Framework Operation called RUR@CT: a transnational cooperation platform to share and transfer good practices in rural development. Then, the pilot projects developed on the basis of these good practices exchanged between European partners may be funded (ex: intergenerational housings, a good practice exported from Wallonia to Limousin, or Seniorpolis on elderly people well-being, a Finnish good practice). The aim was to make access to European funds for cooperation easier for infra-regional players, through an acculturation process: first, networking actions with the objective of implementing; then, exchange or creation of good practices through other cooperation projects. Some actors that felt more comfortable with cooperation used RUR@CT as a sort of 'fast track' to go straight to good practices transfer.

• **How did your region organise itself to manage the projects (creation of other bodies, planning, drafting of guidelines and so on, nothing at all)?**

Since Limousin Region devoted a complete axis to this provision, it had to establish eligibility rules in its 'Document de Mise en OEuvre/Implementing Document' (ineligible Local Action Groups, minimum cost for a project, compliance with other ERDF OP objectives). A communication plan was also implemented to incite projects to emerge. Regarding Rur@ct, a specific regional steering committee was created to run the exchanges of good practices. A methodological guide was edited in order to help local players with their transfer of good practices

Region of Thuringia, Germany

Thuringia is a *Land* (state) in the centre of Germany.

First of all, it interpreted broadly the possibilities offered by article 37(6)(b) and applied it both to its ERDF and ESF OPs, although none of the two Operational Programmes explicitly mentions it.

Due to the lack of national borders, this region is not eligible to become involved in cross-border programmes. It only has access to other programmes, such as Interreg V Central Europe, Interreg Europe and Urbact. It does have, however, a strong need for internationalisation that cannot be satisfied through ETC only; for this reason, in the 2007-2013 Programming period the region introduced internationalisation in its OPs.

After having analysed different European regions with similar structures, challenges, chances, and priorities 12 EU regions and 2 extra-EU regions suitable for a closer cooperation were identified. Thuringia created a dedicated office, the Thuringian Coordination Office for Transnational and Interregional Activities (TNA), in order to cooperate at international level preferably with those regions. On behalf of the Thuringian Ministry of Economy, Employment and Technology (TMWAT), the State Development Corporation of Thuringia (LEG) runs this Thuringian Coordination Office TNA.

As a result of these activities, Thuringia funded 20 projects by means of ERDF. These projects exclusively focused on R&D and innovation. Within ESF, eight transnational projects received funding. These projects focused on topics defined in Priority Axis E of Thuringia's ESF OP. Furthermore, five strategic partnerships were approved in the Call for proposals on how to keep and train skilled workers in the region of Thuringia.

Within ERDF, a ERDF-TNA Call was carried out annually to fund transnational and interregional projects. Each Call determined its own topics, eligible actions and eligibility criteria. It was published in the 'Thüringer Staatsanzeiger' and on the website http://www.tna-thueringen.de/. In the case of the Land of Thuringia, the use of Article 37(6)(b) was mainly directed towards R&D and innovation. In this respect, it was different from the case of Limousin listed above.

Within the ESF OP, Priority Axis E contained various so-called 'actions' to be dealt with in transnational projects, such as career-integrated training, promotion of entrepreneurship, vocational training, promotion of lifelong learning, improvement of access to employment, social integration of disadvantaged people, improvement of equal opportunities.

Thuringia also created a specific body, the Steering Committee for Transnational and Interregional Activities (TNA Steering Committee). This body was established to accompany the transnational and interregional activities in Thuringia. It was composed of the Thuringian ERDF and ESF Managing Authorities and representatives of Thuringian Ministries and institutions. It aimed at assuring a close coordination between the OPs ERDF and ESF as well as with further Thuringian programmes funded by the EU.

Examples of transnational and interregional projects funded by the Thuringian ERDF OP are published on this website: http://www.tna-thueringen.de/projektdatenbank-tna

• **Was the article present in the ROP?**

Article 37(6)(b) was not explicitly mentioned in Thuringia's ERDF and ESF OPs.

• **What kind of projects did it fund?**

In regard to ERDF: projects dealing with R&D and innovation; there was one annual Call launched by the Thuringian Coordination Office TNA.

In regard to ESF: initiatives and conferences dealing with a so-called 'action' of Priority Axis E of Thuringia's ESF OP.

The Thuringian Coordination Office (TNA) prepared a vote, funding was performed by the Thuringian ESF Intermediate Body, the GFAW. Calls were organized and launched by GFAW

• **How did your region organise itself to manage the projects (creation of other bodies, planning, drafting of guidelines and so on, nothing at all)?**

The so-called 'Handbook TNA' was the legal basis for Thuringia's transnational activities. It provided an overview and orientation on how to apply grants of Thuringia's ERDF and ESF OPs in regard to transnational and interregional cooperation. The handbook was based on the concept 'Innovation by Cooperation'.

North Sweden Region, Sweden

The region of North Sweden, through the support of the Swedish Regional Development Agency Tillväxtverket, developed a Regional Operational Programme expected to create 8000 new jobs and 3000 new businesses. Some 400 companies participated in international cooperation and 15 projects to safeguard the environment and cultural heritage.

Interventions focused also on a sustainable transport system for goods and people. Cold climate testing and space exploration were other areas expected to grow, together with the use of biofuel and other environmental techniques. The Programme provided funding for 50 projects connecting industry, research institutes and the public sector.

The article was clearly mentioned in the ROP, as well as the reference to international and cooperation activities, in order to reach the results outlined in the list of priorities.

Priority 1: Innovation and renewal [approximately 73.0% of total funding]

Stimulation of entrepreneurship and business creation together with cooperation between the academic world, industry and the public sector are at the heart of the priority. It has the following four sub-priorities:

1. entrepreneurship and creation of new businesses

2. innovative environment

3. international co-operation: co-operation with international partners to benefit researchers and SMEs

4. regional attractiveness, with an emphasis on development of activities based on nature, culture and cultural heritage.

Thanks to the basis set in the ROP, the region of North Sweden developed a project that joined four eminent Swedish institutions into a Research Centre called MCN-Northern Sweden Soil Remediation Centre. This institution performed studies, research and innovation plans to improve the environmental situation in the Northern area of Sweden, but it also started strategic partnerships at European level to apply for other grants, such as ETC, LIFE and FP7. In 2010 this Centre was awarded a FP7 grant with a proposal called GREENLAND.

The project was very specific and tailor-made for the needs of the region: the emphasis was on creating the right conditions for creativity, innovation and new businesses and to build on earlier success in cooperation between the academic world, industry and the public sector, particularly directed towards small and medium enterprises.

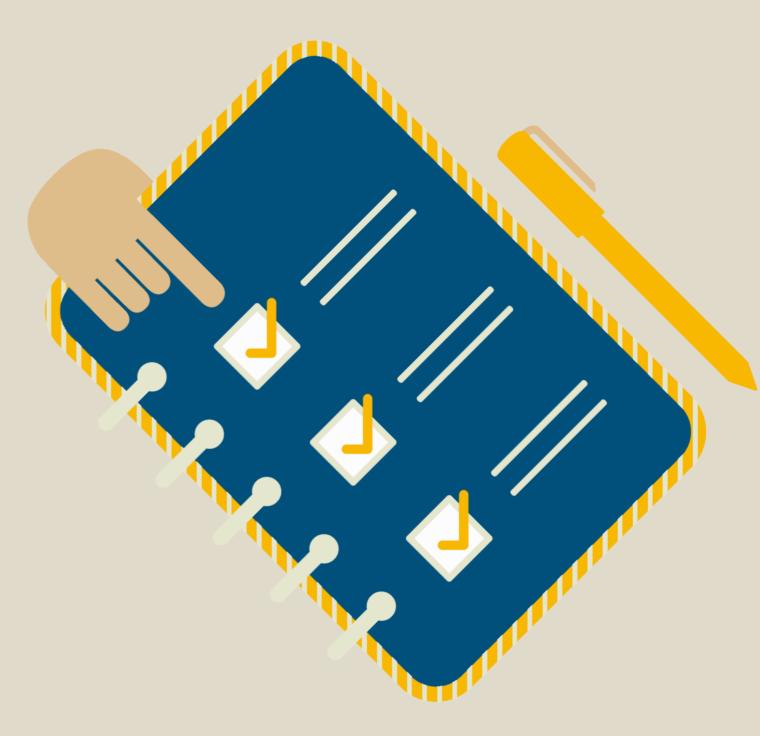• **Was the article present in the ROP**?

    The article was present (page 34 of the document) and the region of North Sweden clearly stated that the main objective of the OP, which was innovation and renewal, had to be accomplished also through international and cooperation activities. A specific measure (1.3) was set for this purpose.

• **What kind of projects did it fund?**

    The project where article 37(6)(b) was used was the MCN IO project.

Appendix II:

List of Programmes with relevant information under Section 4.4 of the Operational Programme

Apendix II. List of Programmes with relevant information under Section 4.4 of the Operational Programme [37]

MS	CCI	CCI Title	Fund
BE	2014BE05SFOP001	European Social Fund 2014-2020 German Speaking Community of Belgium	ESF
BE	2014BE05SFOP002	Operational Programme ESF Flanders 2014-2020	ESF
BE	2014BE16RFOP001	OP Brussels Capital Region	Multifund
BG	2014BG05M9OP001	Operational Programme Human Resources Development	ESF
BG	2014BG16RFOP002	Operational Programme 'Innovation and Competitiveness'	ERDF
CZ	2014CZ05M9OP001	Operational Programme Employment	Multifund
CZ	2014CZ16RFOP001	Enterprise and Innovation for Competitiveness	ERDF
DE	2014DE05SFOP003	Operational Programme ESF Baden-Württemberg 2014-2020	ESF
DE	2014DE05SFOP006	Operational Programme ESF Brandenburg 2014-2020	ESF
DE	2014DE05SFOP012	Operational Programme ESF Sachsen 2014-2020	ESF
DE	2014DE05SFOP013	Operational Programme ESF Sachsen-Anhalt 2014-2020	ESF
DE	2014DE05SFOP016	Operational Programme ESF Bremen 2014-2020	ESF
DE	2014DE16M2OP001	OP Niedersachsen ERDF/ESF 2014-2020	Multifund
DE	2014DE16RFOP001	OP Baden-Württemberg ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP002	OP Bayern ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP003	OP Berlin ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP004	OP Brandenburg ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP005	OP Bremen ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP006	OP Hamburg ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP007	OP Hessen ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP008	OP Mecklenburg-Vorpommern ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP009	OP Nordrhein-Westfalen ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP010	OP Rheinland-Pfalz ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP011	OP Saarland ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP012	OP Sachsen ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP013	OP Sachsen-Anhalt ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP014	OP Schleswig-Holstein ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
DE	2014DE16RFOP015	OP Thüringen ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
ES	2014ES05SFOP014	OP ESF 2014 C.A. CANARIAS	ESF
ES	2014ES16RFOP003	Andalucía ERDF 2014-20 OP	ERDF
ES	2014ES16RFOP006	Baleares ERDF 2014-20 OP	ERDF
ES	2014ES16RFOP011	Cataluña ERDF 2014-20 OP	ERDF
ES	2014ES16RFOP021	País Vasco ERDF 2014-20 OP	ERDF
FI	2014FI05M2OP001	Entrepreneurship and skills, land Structural Fund Programme 2014-2020	Multifund

MS	CCI	CCI Title	Fund
FR	2014FR05M0OP001	Operational Programme ERDF-ESF le-de-France et Seine 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P001	Regional programme Aquitaine 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P006	Regional programme Languedoc-Roussillon 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P007	Regional programme Midi-Pyrénées et Garonne 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P008	Regional programme Picardie 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P009	Regional programme Guadeloupe Conseil Régional 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P011	Regional programme Martinique Conseil Régional 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P013	Regional programme Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P014	Regional programme Bourgogne 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M00P015	Regional programme Lorraine et Vosges 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M2OP001	Regional programme Basse-Normandie 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M2OP003	Regional programme Bretagne 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M2OP004	Regional programme Corse 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M2OP006	Regional programme Limousin 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M2OP008	Regional programme Pays de la Loire 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16M2OP011	Regional programme Guyane Conseil Régional 2014-2020	Multifund
FR	2014FR16RFOP002	Interregional programme Loire 2014-2020	ERDF
FR	2014FR16RFOP004	Interregional programme Pyrénées 2014-2020	ERDF
FR	2014FR16RFOP005	Interregional programme Rhône 2014-2020	ERDF
FR	2014FR16RFOP007	Interregional programme Réunion Conseil Régional 2014-2020	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M1OP001	TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP001	COMPETITIVENESS, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP002	CENTRAL MACEDONIA OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP003	THESSALY OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP004	EPIRUS OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP005	WESTERN GREECE OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP006	WESTERN MACEDONIA OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP007	CONTINENTAL GREECE OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP008	PELOPONNESUS OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP009	IONIAN ISLANDS OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP010	NORTH AEGEAN OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP011	CRETE OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP012	ATTICA OP	ERDF
GR	2014GR16M2OP013	SOUTH AEGEAN OP	ERDF
GR	22014GR16M2OP014	EASTERN MACEDONIA-THRACE OP	ERDF

MS	CCI	CCI Title	Fund
HR	2014HR16M1OP001	Competitiveness and Cohesion OP	ERDF
HU	2014HU05M3OP001	Public Administration and Civil Service Development OP	Multifund
IE	2014IE05M9OP001	ESF Operational Programme 2014-2020	ESF
IT	2014IT05M2OP001	National Operational Programme on Education	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP001	National Operational Programme on Social Inclusion	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP002	National Operational Programme on Systems for Active Employment Policies	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP003	ROP Emilia Romagna ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP004	ROP Friuli Venezia Giulia ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP005	ROP Lazio ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP006	ROP Liguria ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP008	ROP Marche ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP011	ROP Valle d'Aosta ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP013	ROP Piemonte ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP014	ROP Sicilia ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP017	ROP PA Bolzano ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP018	ROP PA Trento ESF	ESF
IT	2014IT05SFOP020	ROP Campania ESF	ERDF
IT	2014IT16M2OP001	ROP Molise ERDF ESF	Multifund
IT	2014IT16M2OP005	National Operational Programme on Research and Innovation	Multifund
IT	2014IT16M2OP006	ROP Calabria ERDF ESF	Multifund
IT	2014IT16RFOP003	National Operational Programme on Enterprises and Competitiveness	ERDF
IT	2014IT16RFOP009	ROP Friuli Venezia Giulia ERDF	ERDF
IT	2014IT16RFOP011	ROP Liguria ERDF	ERDF
IT	2014IT16RFOP012	ROP Lombardia ERDF	ERDF
IT	2014IT16RFOP013	ROP Marche ERDF	ERDF
IT	2014IT16RFOP015	ROP Sardegna ERDF	ERDF
IT	2014IT16RFOP016	ROP Sicilia ERDF	ERDF
IT	2014IT16RFOP019	ROP Umbria ERDF	ERDF
IT	2014IT16RFOP022	ROP Basilicata ERDF	ERDF
LU	2014LU16RFOP001	Operational Programme ERDF Luxembourg 2014-2020	ERDF
NL	2014NL16RFOP001	OP North Netherlands ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
NL	2014NL16RFOP002	OP West Netherlands ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
NL	2014NL16RFOP003	OP South Netherlands ERDF 2014-2020	ERDF
PL	2014PL16M2OP007	ROP 7 Regional Operational Programme for Mazowieckie Voivodeship 2014-2020	Multifund
PL	2014PL16M2OP010	ROP 10 Regional Operational Programme for Podlaskie Voivodeship	Multifund
PL	2014PL16M2OP011	ROP 11 Regional Operational Programme for Pomorskie Voivodeship	Multifund
PL	2014PL16M2OP016	ROP 16 Regional Operational Programme for Zachodniopomorskie Voivodeship	Multifund
PL	2014PL16RFOP001	OP Smart growth	ERDF

MS	CCI	CCI Title	Fund
PT	2014PT16CFOP001	Sustainability and Resource Use Efficiency OP	Multifund
PT	2014PT16M2OP001	Regional OP Norte	Multifund
PT	2014PT16M2OP002	Regional OP Centro	Multifund
PT	2014PT16M2OP003	Regional OP Alentejo	Multifund
PT	2014PT16M2OP004	Regional OP Azores (Autonomous Region)	Multifund
PT	2014PT16M2OP005	Regional OP Lisboa	Multifund
PT	2014PT16M2OP006	Regional OP Madeira (Autonomous Region)	Multifund
PT	2014PT16M2OP007	Regional OP Algarve	Multifund
PT	2014PT16M3OP001	Competitiveness and Internationalisation OP	Multifund
RO	2014RO05M9OP001	Operational Programme Human Capital	ESF
RO	2014RO05SFOP001	Operational Programme Administrative Capacity	ESF
RO	2014RO16RFOP002	Regional Operational Programme	ERDF
SE	2014SE05M9OP001	National Operational Programme ESF for investments in growth and employment 2014-2020	ESF
SE	2014SE16M2OP001	Community-led local development programme with support from ERDF and ESF 2014-2020	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP001	South Sweden	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP002	Småland and islands	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP003	West Sweden	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP004	East-Central Sweden	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP005	Stockholm	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP006	North-Central Sweden	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP007	Central Norrland	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP008	Upper Norrland	ERDF
SE	2014SE16RFOP009	National regional fund programme for investments in growth and jobs 2014-2020	ERDF
SK	2014SK16RFOP001	Research and Innovation	ERDF
UK	2014UK05M9OP001	ESF England	ESF
UK	2014UK05SFOP001	United Kingdom - ESF West Wales and the Valleys	ESF
UK	2014UK05SFOP002	United Kingdom - ESF East Wales	ESF
UK	2014UK16RFOP004	United Kingdom - ERDF Scotland	ERDF
UK	2014UK16RFOP006	United Kingdom - ERDF East Wales	ERDF

List of abbreviations

CBC Cross-border cooperation

CF Cohesion Fund

CP Cooperation Programme

CPR Common Provisions Regulation (Reg. (EU) No 1303/2013)

EAFRD European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

EC European Commission

EGTC European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

EMFF European Maritime and Fisheries Fund

ENI European Neighbourhood Instrument

ERDF European Regional Development Fund

ESF European Social Fund

ESI(F) European Structural and Investment (Funds)

ESPON European Spatial Planning Observation Network

ETC European Territorial Cooperation

EU European Union

EUSAIR EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

EUSALP EU Strategy for the Alpine Region

EUSBSR EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

EUSDR EU Strategy for the Danube Region

IJG (goal) Investments for Jobs and Growth (goal) (2021-2027)

IP Investment Priority

IPA Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance

JS Joint Secretariat (2014–2020)

MA Managing Authority

MC Monitoring Committee

MED Interreg MED Programme

MRS macro-regional strategy/strategies

NCP National Contact Point

PO Policy Objective

R&D Research & Development

RIS3 Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy

(R)OP (Regional) Operational Programme

S3 Smart Specialisation Strategies

SBS sea-basin strategy/strategies

SC Selection Committee

SO Specific Objective

SWOT (analysis) Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threads (analysis)

TA Technical Assistance

TN Transnational (Cooperation)