

Future of Interreg Brand: How we communicate Interreg

Interreg Knowledge Fair session report | March 2024

Overview

Over 45 Interreg specialists who prioritised a reflection on the future of the brand and narrative met and discussed the key provisions of the regulation.

In general, approaches introduced to simplify the approach of communication were felt to be good. The single fund name (Interreg) and the exception to allow it to appear next to the emblem and co-funding statement was strongly supported. Likewise rules on billboards and plaques were supported, but the rules post challenges based on the specification of projects.

Operations of Strategic Importance offer a more strategic challenge. There is a miss-match between the aim and the reality of implementation. Tightening the rules would pose a challenge to programmes, and using them as the basis to explain programmes misses significant projects that were not classified as OSIs.

Participants also exchanged on joint campaigns and came up with suggestions to strongly connect campaigns with different target audiences of Interreg.

Methodology

In early February a 30 question survey was shared with programmes, who provide insights with a one response collected per programme. In total 33 responses were received.

The respondents scored from 1 (bad) to 5 (great) various statements. The results of the survey were shared in advance and attendees were asked to pick priority areas to discuss.

The three topics discussed in the room were:

1. **Interreg Logo**, and the rules on plaques and billboards
2. **Operations of strategic importance**, focusing on how to select them, and how OSIs and the communication event support (or not) programmes own communication objectives
3. **Joint Campaigns** and how they can more strongly connect with programmes own communication objectives.

During the session, following a brief overview, participants were invited to pick the most pressing issue as they saw it, and to reflect on:

- What is working?
- What requires repairing / improvements?
- What is missing?
- What would be your vision for the future?

Key discussion points

The Interreg Logo, plaques and billboards

In the discussions of the logo, the importance of the singular identity of Interreg was affirmed. In general, there was appreciation that the evolution from 2014-2020 provided strong continuity of the fund and identity.

The strong rules of the logo shape and form provides clear and consistent visual representation, which is good. However, it also poses challenges where square formats are more appropriate, like on social media or where used in co-branding. Additionally, the long, narrow format is not often appropriate for promotional items.

Generally, the use of plaques and billboards is strongly supported. However, the opportunity to maximise their impact cannot always be realised due to the prescriptiveness of the rules. Enabling more variation would help to ensure that the required declaration is achieved, whilst having a stronger communication impact. Such variations would need be factor in the type of project, target audience and communication context, as well as if the beneficiary participates in multiple projects and programmes.

Operations of Strategic Importance

The concept of Operations of Strategic Importance (OSI) was a welcome approach to promote key projects. The monitoring aspects of OSIs was up and running, and posed few challenges to programmes.

However, the opportunity to use OSIs as a means to identify programmes most significant projects is not achieved. Programmes have often used OSIs to focus on niches and specific aspects of programme work (youth, citizens, capitalisation) rather than their most communicable or impactful projects. There is a danger in focusing on OSIs in 2021-2027, many impactful and communicable projects will be missed.

The idea to use joint events for several programmes to use their OSIs in a territory was discussed, as well as the support Interreg IVY offers to strengthen a project's communication.

Joint Campaigns

In the final part of the session, the five tables (once condensed) were invited to work together on a group activity to consider how new joint campaigns (those organised by Interact or DG REGIO) could be tailored, or new campaigns could be created, to support programmes more.

The five outcomes were:

- a. A beneficiary targeted campaign, to empower projects to communicate the programmes work. Training to support such a campaign would be the main tailoring required
- b. A policy maker campaign based on the previously run Transnational Cooperation that targeted MEPs and members of the COTER Committee at the CoR to leverage programmes own connections to leverage the wider successes of the programmes.
- c. An applicant focused campaign, modelled on Cooperation Day to find new potential applicants. The campaign would identify Interreg projects partners in a shared territory and guide them towards forthcoming calls in Interreg.
- d. An Applicant (and public) focused campaign built on current achievements. Billboards on public spaces could carry messages such as for examples: "Interreg has saved 500 (topics), can you help us do more?!"
- e. A policy maker focused campaign, targeted at the new EU REGI committee for instance, to introduce them to Interreg. An event could be organised in Brussels as a first teaser prior to a tour of Europe to visit project examples.

Regulations and articles of particular significance

(Copy and paste from preparation document)

Common Provisions Regulation	22 3 J, 40, 42, 46, 47, 48, 50 and Annex 12
Interreg Regulation	17 3 h, 32

Conclusions, plans for followed up

The meeting gave an overview of opinions shared on these issues. Little controversy was noted. A further consideration of the logo rules (including plaques and billboards), as well as the requirements for OSIs is needed ahead of the conclusion event in autumn 2024.

Ideas discussed in joint campaigns will be considered in the evolution of the Interreg.eu website and social media channels, and associated campaigns.

The conclusion of such follow up discussions will be presented at the next milestone event.

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ANNEX: Survey results

Question	Score	+/- Ave (3.9)
2. It is important that Interreg has a shared identity, supporting the shared approach of our specific work, and connecting programmes in a wider framework	4.7	0.8
3. The exception for Interreg, to allow the fund name to appear in addition to the EU emblem, should be retained in the next period	4.5	0.6
4. The rules on the use of the emblem (Annex IX CPR) are clear and understandable	4.2	0.3
5. The overall logo structure, as defined by the Commission and explained in the Brand Design Manual, should be retained in the next period	3.3	-0.6
6. The Interreg Brand Design Manual (developed by Interact and endorsed by the Commission) was useful in forming our programme identity	4.1	0.2
7. The Interreg brand narrative (developed by Interact) was useful in forming our programme identity	3.8	-0.1
8. The Commission established Policy Objective icons and colours were useful in forming our programme identity	3.4	-0.5
9. Setting out the programmes approach to communication and visibility in the Interreg programme document, was an improvement on the previous approach...	4.1	0.2
10. My programme is delivering a communication plan based on the other information set out in this chapter (objectives, audience, channels, social media, monitoring and evaluation)	4.3	0.4
11. My programme was able to state a budget for communication in the communication chapter, and that budget is still the planned budget for communication	3.8	-0.1
13. Our Monitoring Committee actively reviews and is engaged in the implementation of communication and visibility actions	3.7	-0.2
14. Our Monitoring Committee is (or will be) updated on the progress of implementing OSIs and is active in the required communication events co-organised with the Commission	4.1	0.2
15. The concept of Operations of Strategic Importance is a useful framework to promote our main projects, and our programmes impact	3.2	-0.7

16. The rules on durable plaques and billboards are clear and understandable	3.0	-0.9
17. The other requirements (i.e. excluding plaques and billboards) for beneficiaries to communicate EU funding are clear	3.8	-0.1
18. The requirements for beneficiaries allow enough flexibility to communicate in the local environment, and with the context of the project	3.8	-0.1
19. It is useful for a programme to have the ability to cancel up to 2% of the support from the funds (as a last resort) to enforce the communication obligations against a project	3.6	-0.3
21. My Interreg programme is well connected to our relevant single national websites for EU funding	3.4	-0.5
22. The single network for communication officers INFORM EU is useful for training and exchange with other funds	4.2	0.3
23. The Interreg country team meeting and ICON meetings are useful for training and exchange within Interreg	4.0	0.1
24. Joint campaigns organised by DG REGIO and Interact support us in reaching our programme communication objectives	3.9	0.0
25. My programme's named communication officer is easy to identify and contact through our programme website	4.4	0.5
26. The requirement to provide open data, and wider provisions on data sharing is good for Interreg	4.1	0.2
27. Providing information about forthcoming calls, updated three times a year and including indicative information on area, objectives, applicant eligibility, amount of EU funding available and approximate timeline is deliverable	4.0	0.1