

Future of PO5 and the place based approaches:

Interreg Knowledge Fair session report | March 2024

Overview

13 Interreg specialists including colleagues from D1 and D2 units in DG Regio joined the session on the future of Interreg Specific Objectives (ISOs) and the importance of cross-border services.

Methodology

The session addressed the place based approaches and in particular options to reshape PO5. Scene-setting on the issue prepared the ground for the interactive discussion part.

Key discussion points

Practical experience with the implementation of Policy Objective (PO) 5 in Interreg:

Major challenges identified are:

- Strategy-building process when previous expertise with such processes is lacking and suitable actors such as Euregios with capacity and experience are not in place
- Delegation of decision-making to actors other than the MC
- Managing the implementation as smooth and efficient co-work of strategy implementing bodies and MA/JS

Marcela from Interreg RO-BG reported lessons learned from their approach (65 MEUR under PO5; integrated approach to develop the territories along the Eurovelo route 6 along Danube). Building the structures from the scratch is a challenging process. A key take away is that the territory covered is too large to work close to communities – it is hard to bridge the lack of institutional capacity to encourage an integrated development impetus for such a large territory. In future territories would be smaller.

Martha from Interreg Baltic Sea region (BSR) briefly recalled the experience when discussing the option. In the end it was not chosen because programme stakeholders could not figure out how to make it work from the macro-regional strategy (MRS) over the programme strategy to local perspectives in distinct territories.

Gérard from Interreg Greater Region (DE, LU, BE, FR) highlighted the steep learning curve for MA/JS with the implementation of PO5. In the programme the diverse territories and their number (9 territories a major part of them has been defined as functional areas; thereof 3 with quite a lot of previous expertise in Interreg) and the diverse institutions managing the territories pose a major challenge. On the part of MA/JS a lot has been invested in capacity building and this 'institutional investment' will be continued.

The testimonials from programmes highlighted challenges but also the mutual learning effect for programme management and strategy stakeholders. The start-up in this period means a lot of investment in capacity and institution-building that should be considered an important pre-investment for the forthcoming period.

One lever to make PO5 more attractive for programmes in the next period could be a different approach to strategy-building. It does not require a technical approach with an in-depth socio-economic analysis and an elaborate system of objectives and types of actions. Small territories with distinct needs should develop a shared vision for their future development and invite diverse actors to join and bring their ideas to the process. Hence, an integrated development approach will emerge. It remains key to focus on the local dimension of the interventions and the ownership of results in the territory.

Regulations and articles of particular significance

Interreg Regulation	17 (contents of programmes), 20 & 21 (territorial development)
ERDF Regulation	3 (defining PO5)
CPR	28 (defining options for implementation)

Conclusions, plans for followed up

The meeting provided an insight on practical experience with the implementation of PO5 – with a view to continuation of it – and working for a larger uptake - in the forthcoming period.

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