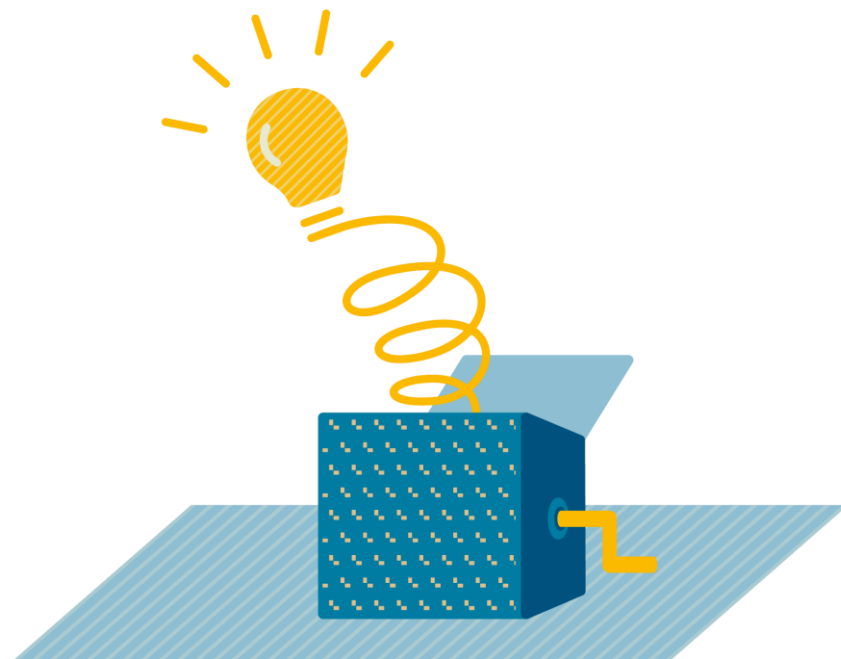


Coordination and cooperation: how?

October 2017

**Working document presenting ideas on coordination and cooperation:
how can we achieve these in Interreg?**



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Introduction

Since 2014, we - Interact – have been working to address the questions of inter-programme capacity and competence, and coordination and cooperation across programmes. The background idea for our work has always been to provide programme staff with knowledge and skills to better coordinate and cooperate with other funding sources. We have introduced the concept of inter-programme capacity and competence, and the questions why to coordinate and cooperate, with whom and how. Steps have been set out along a logical path, allowing for some detours, from *why coordinate and cooperate* to *with whom* and, subsequently, *how to coordinate and cooperate*.¹

Based on observations we have made, coordination and cooperation among Interreg programmes is not yet a daily practice; it seems to be more an exception. Although programmes have taken some good initiatives, the full potential of the coordination and cooperation process is yet to be exploited. Programmes need more information and explanation on how to see themselves in a wider territorial context and how to contribute to aligning their efforts before they can actively work in this way. In our view, a programme's passiveness to engage in coordination and cooperation with other programmes is often due to a lack of information on how coordination and

¹ Study "Inter-programme capacity and competence and Interreg Monitoring/Steering Committee members and National Coordinators", Interact, 2017, www.interact-eu.net/library#1207.

cooperation could happen, as well as missing of realising benefit of it, lack time and human resources.

However, we see coordination and cooperation questions being raised more and more. The importance of contributing to functional territories for mutual benefit via closer synergies and more complementarities across funding programmes are key issues that have been raised again and again since the post-2020 discussion started.

To address the question of how to coordinate and cooperate for the benefit of a programme, a small group of Interreg programmes – a Task Force – was set up. The objective of the Task Force was to develop and describe different options of coordination and cooperation that could inspire Interreg programmes to action.

Let us thank all our Interreg colleagues for their active contributions to this document: Monika Schönerklee-Grasser (Interreg Central Europe), Gianluca Ferreri (Interreg 2 Seas), Anca Radu (Interreg IPA Cross Border Cooperation Romania – Serbia), Marcela Glodeanu (Interreg V-A Romania-Bulgaria), Tarja Richard, Sophie Scarvellis and Nicolas Garnier (Interreg Mediterranean Programme), Samu Numminen (Interreg Central Baltic), Jakub Fedorowicz and Vassilen Iotzov (Interreg South Baltic, both until mid-2017) and Ronald Lieske (Interreg Baltic Sea Region); Thorsten Kohlisch (Interreg V-A Euregio Meuse–Rhine), Vivien Bodereau and Vincent Hagnere (Interreg VA France (Channel) England). We would also like to thank two Interact Monitoring Committee members who have followed us throughout the process: Anamaria Dunca, Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration, Romania and Adam Radvanszki, Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR), Germany (until mid-2017).

We would also like to thank the Interreg colleagues participating in the event “Coordination and cooperation across programmes with a focus on employment and labour mobility”, held on 13-14 September 2017 in Tallinn, Estonia for their additional inputs to this document.

For more information about the Task Force and outcomes of the descriptions presented below, please contact Interact III Programme managers Baiba Liepa, baiba.liepa@interact-eu.net, and Mercedes Acitores Franzon, mercedes.acitores@interact-eu.net.

1. Coordination and cooperation: how are they linked?

On our journey to address the questions **why, with whom** and **how** to coordinate and cooperate, it was clear that these terms are differently perceived among stakeholders. Taking this into account, and following developing discussions, a distinction between the terms *coordination* and *cooperation* was provided in the Interact study “Inter-programme capacity and competence and Interreg Monitoring/Steering Committee members and National Coordinators”, where it is stated²:

1. **coordination** – an attempt at reaching an agreement on sharing tasks and responsibilities in working together; focusing on identifying ex-ante complementarities and possible synergies;
2. **cooperation** – reaching an agreement on working together where everyone needs to give up something, both to gain individually and for the common benefit; using complementarities in practice, and developing them even further.

The two terms are closely interlinked and applied while establishing and implementing coordination and cooperation processes. Coordination is needed for cooperation to start and for it to continue. It is difficult to always distinguish the two from one another. Therefore, both terms are used in the descriptions of various coordination and cooperation options.

Furthermore, while developing the discussion on **how** to coordinate and cooperate, it became clear that the question can be addressed from two perspectives: purely as **a process with specific steps to be taken**, and then as **a process defining activities**. These two processes are described briefly in the sections that follow.

² Study “Inter-programme capacity and competence and Interreg Monitoring/Steering Committee members and National Coordinators”, Interact, 2017, www.interact-eu.net/library#1207.

2. Advantage of Interreg in coordination and cooperation process, skills and competences

While developing coordination and cooperation ideas further, several additional questions can be identified contributing to this discussion:

- a) **what are strength and what is the role of Interreg programmes** when getting involved in coordination and cooperation process?
- b) **to what extent can a programme take initiative** in regard to coordination and cooperation activities on the Managing Authorities/Joint Secretariats level and in what extent is the MC to be involved?
- c) **what skills and competences are needed** for the Managing Authorities' and Joint Secretariats' staff to take part in coordination and cooperation process?

In reply to the first question above, one can agree that every Interreg programme can provide own justification of its role and strength (advantage) in a particular case/situation. The definition could vary depending on the coordination and cooperation option the programme wishes to engage in. However, overall strength and uniqueness of Interreg is in addressing local, regional and transnational needs through cooperation actions; providing opportunities to build common ownership of the desired results; engaging multi-level stakeholders and building capacity to local, regional and national authorities; innovating and sharing experiences within functional territories; looking for solutions to shared territorial challenges; etc.

Regarding 'authorisation' of programmes Managing Authorities and Joint Secretariats to engage or initiate coordination and cooperation activities, the recent study on "Inter-programme capacity and competence and Interreg Monitoring/Steering Committee members and National Coordinators" confirms that support to the initiative from the programme Monitoring Committee is much appreciated. It is also concluded that making coordination and cooperation actually happen is something consisting of many small steps which all together create an environment leading to coordination and cooperation. This first of all requires "openness, entrepreneurial attitude, active contribution and support by all structures, hence also the Monitoring/ Steering Committee members as well as the National Coordinators".³

Regarding skills and competences needed in establishing and implementing coordination and cooperation, the above-mentioned study concludes that most of the staff feel prepared and ready for engaging in coordination and cooperation processes. Some improvements are needed on the structural level (programme level) and on the individual level (for staff members). However, based on the replies, the main reason for the lack of coordination and cooperation capacity and competence the respondents mention is "too strong focusing on own programme, going hand in hand with a too strong focus on technical project management"⁴. In addition, the process of coordination and cooperation requires time before the actual results can be seen.

³ Study "Inter-programme capacity and competence and Interreg Monitoring/Steering Committee members and National Coordinators", Interact, 2017, www.interact-eu.net/library#1207.

⁴ Study "Inter-programme capacity and competence and Interreg Monitoring/Steering Committee members and National Coordinators", Interact, 2017, Chapter 3, p 54, www.interact-eu.net/library#1207.

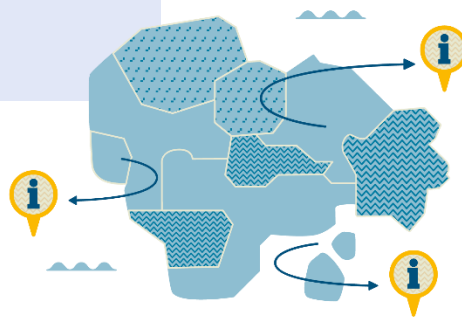
3. Coordination and cooperation: ideas for building a process

Coordination and cooperation as a process was addressed in the discussion at the Interact event “Improving the cross-programme work environment”⁵. Coordination and cooperation process contribute well to the descriptions of cooperation and coordination activities, and therefore is integrated in this document.

Examples of how to kick off the process of coordination and cooperation:

1: Geographic connection as a starting point

1. Define a geographical cross-programme area and select the programmes you would like to cooperate with
2. Establish contacts
3. Agree on a need to cooperate
4. Choose topics (a few)
5. Meet (special role of facilitator/leader)
6. Continue and expand



2: Cross-programme capitalisation at an event

1. Define a geographical cross-programme area
2. Define a thematic scope (involvement of relevant programmes)
3. Define stakeholder groups
4. Draft event agenda (programme stakeholders, projects, public at large and politicians, other programmes)
5. Define further steps on cross-programme capitalisation
6. Invite for next meeting

⁵ Report from the event “Improving the cross-programme work environment”, Interact, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1210>.

3: Let the beneficiaries talk

1. Identify projects from more than one programme with a common beneficiary
2. Ask the “joint” beneficiary to present and explain its activities and involvement in these two projects and programmes to both Monitoring Committees; present a need for coordination and cooperation across projects activities: benefits, complementarities, developments
3. Organise a study visit to the beneficiary either for both Monitoring Committees together (best option) or separately – showcasing that this beneficiary is in fact already working across programmes, and that closer inter-programme coordination and cooperation would actually be beneficial

4: Connect through thematic focus

1. Identify thematic fields of relevance/covered by several programmes
2. Establish thematic network between programmes
3. Exchange between programmes and thematic network to improve results of individual projects and programmes, to capitalise on existing results, streamline results of individual projects.



4. Coordination and cooperation: descriptions and example activities

The following section provides descriptions of different options (levels) of coordination and cooperation, based on the discussion within the Task Force.

The following options of cooperation and coordination were defined:

- A. Coordination and cooperation with other Interreg programmes on programme procedures
- B. Coordination and cooperation within an Interreg programme and with other Interreg programmes on programme thematic objectives (priorities) and projects
- C. Coordination and cooperation between Interreg, national and regional (ESIF) programmes
- D. Coordination and cooperation between Interreg and other EU-wide programmes and funds.

The list of coordination and cooperation options **is not exhaustive** or **hierarchical**.

The following activities proposed for the different options can be complemented with other activities, based on the needs and interests of a programme. The listed ideas for activities are complementary, and do not constitute any 'hierarchy' of coordination and cooperation options. Various ideas can be combined to reach the desired objective.

For each coordination and cooperation level, the Task Force provided a short description of an **objective**, **benefits** and **difficulties** in establishing the coordination and cooperation process, as well as - where they exist - **examples** of programme practices. In addition, some of the descriptions include specific proposals for further activities to be considered and implemented.

Questions and concerns that influence coordination and cooperation

The four descriptions of coordination and cooperation are developed and presented below. However, the Task Force shared several more general questions and concerns that influence the process:

- How to raise awareness of programmes and generate shared interest in looking beyond programme territory, thematic, projects and partnerships?
- How to ensure that requests for complementarities are a natural feature of programmes; would top-down or bottom-up initiatives be preferred?
- How to establish coordination and cooperation if programme management models differ significantly?
- If overlaps of programme territories or themes are identified – how to turn these into an opportunity, and build synergies across programmes?
- How to make project applicants aware of coordination and cooperation possibilities and benefits?
- What tools are available and would need to be developed to enable coordination and cooperation?
- How to promote and better communicate Interreg and complementarities between Interreg and other funding sources?

Coordination and cooperation need to be built step-by-step, starting with small, specific activities that bring results that can be evaluated and can inspire.



A. Coordination and cooperation with other Interreg programmes on programme procedures

This coordination and cooperation option is relatively widely applied by Interreg programmes. Similarities in administrative structures, working methods and procedures of Managing Authorities, Joint (Technical) Secretariats, Certifying and Audit Authorities are seen as a fruitful starting point for coordination of activities.

This coordination helps programme bodies not only to gain new contacts, knowledge and experience in different programme management, monitoring and evaluation procedures but also, if more programmes are managed by the same authority, saves programme resources (time, human, financial) by harmonising procedures. Even more, these coordination and cooperation activities are not only aiming to help programmes to establish sound programme procedures; but also about searching for a common benefit for project applicants and beneficiaries.

Objective (why?)

To find synergies and harmonise programming and implementation procedures (programme management, monitoring and evaluation processes) across programmes.

Implementation (how?)

The following activities could be used to establish and strengthen coordination and cooperation across programmes:

- meetings of the programme staff (regular meetings or upon request) to find solutions to common management and implementation challenges/issues;
- internal staff rotation between programmes and programme bodies (e.g., thematic exchange, exchange on eMS, designation, staff exchange). As a starting point, “Recommendations and considerations on an Interreg staff exchange”⁶ could be considered;
- regular contacts and exchanges among programme authorities;
- events addressing specific issues organised by a programme or other institution; e.g., national authority, programme body, Interact, European Commission;
- jointly-organised events for beneficiaries, applicants;
- inter-programme competence trainings for programme bodies;
- exchanges and tools; e.g., ‘virtual library’ that could be initiated and managed by Interact, and would gather different procedures and rules of Interreg programmes.

In addition, while negotiating legislative framework for post-2020, coordination across programmes could provide a critical mass of Interreg opinion to a discussion through:

⁶ Publication “Recommendations and considerations on an Interreg staff exchange”, Interact, 2016, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#857>.

- establishing a platform for discussions dedicated only to the legislative framework for post-2020;
- events dedicated to the subject of post-2020 legislative framework;
- cross-programme meetings at the beginning of the programming phase to coordinate actions of various programmes. Such a meeting could be facilitated by Interact, programme bodies, etc. In addition, cooperation with national, regional EU co-financed programmes would help in creating complementarities⁷.

A precondition for the successful implementation of this coordination and cooperation is to agree (formally or informally) among programmes on the issues to be addressed and how to tackle them, as well as on the commitments per programme (allocation of time, human and financial resources). Jointly preparing and agreeing on a common action plan would be recommended for structured coordination. Having a clear mandate from each programme's representative is important in order to allow real and practical exchanges and harmonisation to happen.

Benefits and difficulties

Benefits	Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• simplifying and harmonising procedures by applying the same rules, templates and procedures will bring a benefit for the applicant/beneficiary• learning from others and getting new ideas• sharing programmes' resources: saving efforts and resources (time, human, financial)• potential for promoting good programme practices• joint visibility of Interreg towards other institutions (national, regional institutions, European Commission)• good contacts among programme bodies that would encourage further joint (content) events• shared responsibilities and tasks, in case an action plan is agreed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• competition across programmes, especially between those sharing the same territory and priorities/thematic objectives• lacking strategic vision of the programme as a part of a wider community• lack of contacts with other programmes beyond Interreg• limited resources (time, human, financial)• low level of interest and involvement of programmes• harmonisation of the implementation schedule of the programmes is hard to manage• losing individuality of each programme• no programme body committing to a coordination initiative• possible delays in the implementation schedule for

⁷ Report from the event "Improving the cross-programme work environment", Interact, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1210>.

	programmes (where coordination is desired)
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Table 1: Benefits and difficulties to consider in implementation

Examples

Interreg South Baltic and Interreg Central Baltic Programmes have had regular cooperation since the 2007–2013 period, holding annual meetings between the Joint Secretariats. Meetings have been held around topical issues at the given time, focusing on the programme implementation phase; for example, programme procedures, priorities, project contents, assessments as well as State Aid have been discussed. The programmes have had joint communication activities, such as attending events together, providing information about the other programme at the events when the other one has been unable to participate. Lately, the emphasis has been more on thematic cooperation. Gaining added-value by bringing together projects that are working with similar topics is one of the goals of this cooperation. <http://interact-eu.net/#o=news/watch-two-interreg-secretariats-cooperating>

In **Romania**, coordination and cooperation happens between the following Interreg programmes from different strands: Interreg Romania-Bulgaria, Interreg Romania-Hungary, Interreg IPA CBC Romania-Serbia, ENI Programme Romania-Ukraine, ENI Programme Romania-Republic of Moldova and ENI Black Sea Basin Programme, and is facilitated by sharing the same Head of MA and hosted by the same institution.

These programmes also share staff for the following processes: project monitoring, authorisation process of the reimbursement claims, payment of reimbursement claims and complaints. Thus, a continuous sharing of information, ideas and procedures takes place between the programmes, allowing for a unified implementation approach within the limits of the legislative requirements and specificity of each fund. Coordination and cooperation across programmes offers the possibility of avoiding repeating errors, and of using shortcuts in order to save efforts and resources.

Interreg Romania-Hungary Programme started exchanges across first level controllers already in 2007–2013 and it is continued also in the current programme. A joint First Level Control manual and Check lists for verification of project costs are developed and used by controllers. Joint meetings and events are organised across the programmes (Interreg Romania-Bulgaria, Interreg Romania-Hungary, Interreg IPA CBC Romania-Serbia, ENI Programme Romania-Ukraine, ENI Programme Romania-Republic of Moldova and ENI Black Sea Basin Programme).

Interreg 2 Seas Programme in cooperation with Interreg North West Europe and Interreg Europe Programmes exchange on many topics from eligibility rules to contractual templates. This structured exchange has led in various cases to a full harmonisation of templates. This included full templates of the Subsidy Contract and Partnership Agreement, Programme manual as well as rules on eligibility of expenditure for each budget line.

Depending on the issue/topic, some of the Interreg programmes are invited to participate in Internal Staff Meetings (ISM) of the **Interreg Baltic Sea Region** Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat. The ISMs take place twice a year. The aim of inviting other Interreg programmes to the meeting is to review all topics of programme implementation and to provide an outlook on tasks and events for the following six months. At the ISM in June 2016, six colleagues from the Interreg Central Europe Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat took part. For the meeting in June 2017, Interreg South Baltic and Interreg Central Baltic Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat were invited. Back-to-back with the ISM, meetings between the programmes staff and in a smaller groups are organised on selected themes.

Since 2007, a total of 15 “user group meetings” have taken place, during which Interreg programmes have exchanged on monitoring systems/databases including the technical as well as the user experience side of the systems.

Interreg Mediterranean Programme (Interreg MED) organised a first meeting among the transnational Interreg programmes (SUDOE, Interreg Central Europe, Alpine Space, Danube Transnational Programme, ADRION, BALKAN MED and Interreg Europe) and ENI CBC MED; in other words, among programmes whose eligible areas cover the Mediterranean Region, or parts of that region. The overarching objective of the meeting was to initiate a structured dialogue and an exchange among programmes characterised by partially overlapping geographical areas, therefore most probably sharing a portion of stakeholders and decision makers/policy actors, in order to identify potential cross-programme complementarities, synergies and coordination processes.

The initiative is particularly focused on the Mediterranean cooperation area and related specificities and dynamics. In particular, the discussion was based around some leading issues:

- State of the art of programmes' implementation: launched calls, programmed projects, monitoring systems, programmes' evaluation processes, alignment process with EU macro regional strategies for concerned programmes, management of IPA partners/funds for concerned programmes, audit strategies, use/contribution to Keep.eu;
- Need to systematise coordination among programmes in order to detect proposals and projects with similar themes, partners and content, and identify potential complementarities or duplications;
- Supporting the quality of submitted and programmed projects, both in terms of programmes' expectations, and in durability and capitalisation of results;
- Showcasing and transferring results and related key messages, with a coordinated approach, towards the Member States, EU, thematic networks, private stakeholders, policy actors, etc., knowing that in many cases the target groups are common;
- Using communication as a tool to further enhance the impact of results achieved by the projects. Promotion beyond each individual programme aggregated categorized projects' outputs;
- Coordinating programmes' presence in joint events promoted under Interact or other institutions to ensure enhanced impact. A systematic joint

participation of programmes geographically focused, even partially, on the Mediterranean basin, might be envisaged;

- Contributing to the elaboration of a strong joint message of programmes towards EU on post-2020 discussion.
- Interact might develop its coordination role on aspects of common interest, such as programmes' geographical coverage and related dynamics, thematic pillars and cross-sector synergies, help programmes to liaise, systematically, with EU thematic programmes (Horizon2020, Life, ESARMUS +, Connecting Europe Facility, etc.)

A second meeting is planned for late 2017 or early 2018.

Interreg Central Europe strives for regular exchanges with other transnational programmes. Such structured exchange has taken place, for instance, in the frame of visits to and from the Interreg Baltic Sea Region, Alpine Space and the MED Programmes. Other informal exchanges take place during events and meetings (e.g., evaluation group, project manager, financial and communication networks, eMS core group, etc.). The exchange covers several programme management related topics such as programme/project implementation, finances and control, programme evaluation, State Aid, monitoring system, communication, etc.

Interreg Estonia-Latvia Programme is developing similar methodology for simplified cost options with the Estonia-Russia ENI Programme. Where possible, also implementation of communication activities will be coordinated.

Coordination and exchanges across Interreg programmes can be facilitated also by participation to the Monitoring Committees of other Interreg programmes, like in case of the **Interreg Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak Programme** where the head of the programme is a Monitoring Committee member of **Interreg South Baltic Programme**.

Coordination and cooperation with programmes along the German-Polish border between the **Interreg Germany (Brandenburg)-Poland**, **Interreg Germany (Sachsen)-Poland** and **Interreg South Baltic Programmes** was started by **Interreg Germany (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern-Brandenburg) –Poland Programme** Joint Secretariat in 2017. The exchanges started with coordinating marketing and promotion activities, like the common participation in the celebration of the EC Day or annual conferences foreseen in the Communication Strategies of the programmes, organising joint trainings for the programmes teams, e.g. on public procurement rules, good practices of cooperation with the beneficiaries ('taking care' after receiving financing, application evaluation procedure, including the involvement of national experts in the evaluation of applications. Involving national experts from ministries and local government in the Interreg programme project assessment is seen very valuable as it gives possibilities for comparing the projects applied in Interreg and regional funds as well as to avoid double funding.

Another idea for future cooperation is to organise the common training with another programmes to presentation techniques and cooperation in international teams.

In general, coordination and cooperation can also happen through active participation of the programme in working groups and networks organised by other organisations, for example, Interact; such as Harmonised Implementation Tools working group (HIT), eMS core group, programme managers, finance managers and

communication managers' networks and other programme management related working groups.



B. Coordination and cooperation within an Interreg programme and with other Interreg programmes on programme thematic objectives (priorities) and among projects

This coordination and cooperation option describes activities that could be used to exchange within an Interreg programme or among Interreg programmes where these are addressing the same or complementary themes (thematic). It implies engaging at different programme implementation stages: planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and capitalisation. This option is different from the one described in the section above as thematic coordination and cooperation is in its focus.

Coordination and cooperation can happen at two levels:

- **across programme bodies** on a related theme (programme/strategic coordination and cooperation);
- **across projects** addressing a related theme – with the intention to create synergies and complementarities, and in this way raise the value of combined efforts, capitalise results and show the impact of the programme (or programmes) in addressing a particular subject within the respective territory.

Thematic coordination and cooperation across Interreg programmes provides an opportunity for knowledge and practice exchanges for programme staff. Through closer coordination and cooperation there is more opportunity to avoid double funding, limit repetitive projects, sustain outputs of already implemented projects, and contribute to transferability of results to other territories. At a more general level, coordination and cooperation across programmes and building synergies across projects within a specific theme could be used to measure the contribution of a programme to achieving the objectives of a wider territory (could be contribution to sea basin/ macro-regional strategies, Smart Specialisation Strategies, regional initiatives, etc.). Furthermore, coordinating and cooperating within a specific theme leads to a more effective use of resources (not only financial). By applying this coordination and cooperation option, programmes benefit from greater visibility.

In addition to above said, thematic coordination and cooperation for projects offers opportunities to meet, exchange, analyse current experiences and develop further ideas.

Objective (why?)

Bearing in mind that every Interreg programme is an important funding tool for implementing local, regional and transnational cooperation initiatives, the overall objective of coordination and cooperation is to capitalise on single achievements, to give wider perspective to what programmes and projects have achieved in a specific theme, and to generate greater impact on the particular territories.

Implementation (how?)

Coordination and cooperation can happen via three major groups of activities:

A. Thematic networks and community platforms

- setting up thematic networks for programmes addressing similar themes/priorities;
These networks can exchange on the state of play of implementation, visions and foreseen developments, achievements, etc. The networks can be led by Interact, Interreg programmes, EC or other bodies;
- establishing thematic clusters within the programme, building co-ownership of project results, and being able to contribute to such thematic policy.
Thematic project platforms can be launched (within the same or across different Interreg programmes) at different implementation stages, such as Interreg MED Horizontal projects, Interreg Baltic Sea Region thematic platforms initiative or Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme project clustering⁸. Another option is to provide opportunities for exchange across projects for the purpose of capitalising project results towards the end of project implementation, where Interreg 2 Seas cluster initiative and Interreg Central Europe capitalisation studies are more in line with this philosophy;
- joining existing thematic networks and platforms, such as ESF Baltic Sea Region or ESF Danube Region networks, ERDF Managing Authorities network within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Interreg MED Horizontal projects, Interact Capitalisation Networks, Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platforms⁹ or any other such network/platform;
- establishing a platform for discussions between Interreg programmes, dedicated to the legislative framework for the post-2020 period in order to provide a critical mass of Interreg opinion to a discussion, showcasing the added-value of Interreg to the selected thematic priorities, capitalising on Interreg results and experiences, etc.

B. Actions

- meetings, inter-programme competence trainings (capacity building) for Interreg programme staff responsible for the particular theme/priority;
- participation in meetings organised by other actors and showing results achieved by the programmes and projects, such as events of the EU macro-regional and sea basin strategies, regional initiatives;
- conferences/events to showcase examples of complementary projects¹⁰;
- joint events addressing a specific theme where contribution from more programmes can be presented and greater visibility achieved;

⁸ <http://www.interreg-npa.eu/news/new-preparatory-project-types/>.

⁹ <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/>.

¹⁰ Report from the event “Improving the cross-programme work environment”, Interact, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1210>.

- cross-programme meetings of Joint Secretariats / Task Forces of Joint Secretariats of different programmes to discuss thematic topics, communication activities, how to raise project quality¹¹;
- exchange on received applications across programmes;
- new calls based on capitalisation themes;
- allowing exchanges among monitoring committee's members in order to participate in other monitoring committees' meetings (e.g., Cross-border to Transnational, etc.)¹²;
- information to and involvement of Monitoring and/or Steering Committee members in clustering exercise.

C. Tools

- coordinated calls: although this could be challenging and only happen in exceptional cases, there is a possibility for coordinating calls with other programmes (calls are organised individually by programmes, coordination happens when defining thematic orientation for the call; exchanging information on applications, etc.);
- coordinated assessment: a) labelling of project proposals following the 42 [Keep.eu](#) keywords in order to ensure that overlapping is easily tracked and actions could be taken at an early stage, even before approval; b) extra assessment scores to the projects showing and describing complementarities with other projects in the project application;
- coordinated monitoring and reporting: during reporting process to assess how results of earlier identified complementary projects are considered/used;
- projects results analysis based on [Keep.eu](#); link the [Keep.eu](#) database to the programme website for easier access and use;
- joint promotional and information materials;
- establish thematic forums / blogs to encourage peer review between similar projects within the same programme or a different one;
- create a position for a Joint (Technical) Secretariat Officer for capitalisation and cooperation with other programmes¹³.

¹¹ Report from the event "Improving the cross-programme work environment", Interact, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1210>

¹² Report from the event "Improving the cross-programme work environment", Interact, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1210>

¹³ Report from the event "Improving the cross-programme work environment", Interact, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1210>

Benefits and difficulties

Benefits	Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building synergies between thematically related projects • avoiding thematic and territorial overlaps and duplications of projects in different programmes • showing collective contribution and impact of Interreg programmes within a thematic field • exchanging thematic experiences and practices between Interreg programmes, learning from others • ensuring joint promotion activities (e.g., thematic events) • opening up for new applicants • strengthening joint communication towards other institutions (national, regional institutions, macro-regional/sea basin coordinators, EC) • gathering various inputs to the theme if different programmes (Transnational, Cross-Border, ENI, IPA) come together • creating greater policy impact • ensuring greater value for money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most Interact capitalisation networks have only been established quite recently • limited resources (time, human, financial) for coordination within Managing Authority/Joint (Technical) Secretariat • lack of structured exchange between programmes • different status of programme implementation • possible competition across programmes • thematic and territorial overlaps • lack of interest from the Monitoring and/or Steering committees • insufficient coordination role by the EC • limited availability of tools • limited information on other projects • vague understanding of the added value of coordination and cooperation • sustainability of cooperation beyond the programming periods (changing programmes, changing people, changing priorities, etc.)

Table 2: Benefits and difficulties to consider in implementation

Examples of coordination plans and experiences across Interreg programmes

Interreg Mediterranean Programme organised the first meeting among Interreg Transnational Programmes (SUDOE, Interreg Central Europe, Alpine Space, Danube Transnational Programme, ADRION, BALKAN MED and Interreg Europe) and ENI CBC MED, whose principal aim is to structure and stabilise a minimum exchange and coordination. For the time being, punctual exchanges took place.

More specifically, exchange was done on:

- Approved projects and launched calls - with Interreg Central Europe and ADRION;
- Programme evaluation approach and methodologies - with Interreg Central Europe;
- Capitalisation and thematic platforms - Interreg Europe and ADRION;
- Contribution to EU macro regional strategies – ADRION;
- IPA partners and funds – Danube Transnational Programme;

- Potential complimentary calls and Mediterranean governance issues – with ENI CBC MED;
- [KEEP](#) database - with Interreg Central Europe.

It is worth mentioning that in parallel to the listed actions, the programmes ADRION, BALKAN MED, Interreg Europe, Interact Office Valencia and ENI CBC MED, together with other key actors and decision-makers active in the Mediterranean, are associated partners of the Axis 4 governance project PANORAMED.

It is therefore expected that further coordination and synergy opportunities and inputs, specifically on thematic and capitalisation aspects, will also be developed within that framework.

For further details on the Axis 4 governance project PANORAMED, please refer to the Interreg Mediterranean Programme's contribution to the example section provided under the description of *Coordination and cooperation between Interreg and national and regional (ESIF) programmes* below.

Interreg 2 Seas: Regular exchange with other Joint Secretariats of the same Managing Authority in Lille, France (Interreg 2 Seas, Interreg North West Europe, Interreg Europe) on approved projects is ensured, aiming to exploit synergies among projects during their implementation. They mainly take the form of meetings once a month between project unit coordinators/head of content unit in an informal way about state of play of approved projects, ongoing calls, themes covered, etc. Furthermore, officers responsible for specific themes may meet across programmes to exchange on difficulties and opportunities.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region: Information about applications received is regularly exchanged between Interreg Baltic Sea Region, Interreg Central Europe, Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic, Interreg South Baltic and Interreg Central Baltic, as well as the BONUS Programme financed from Horizon 2020. The aim is to indicate potential complementarities between projects in the different programmes and to reduce the risk of double funding.

Interreg Central Europe: Active participation in thematic working groups and networks facilitated by Interact (e.g., on migration, energy and transport, project managers network, etc.) and exchange with other transnational programmes (e.g., Interreg Baltic Sea Region, Interreg Mediterranean Programme, Alpine Space Programme, Interreg North-West Europe) in particular during quality assessment on applications received, in order to avoid overlaps and make use of synergies. Such synergies with thematically-related projects are then reflected in the conditions for approval.

Interreg South Baltic: A Joint Secretariat Officer's position for capitalisation and cooperation with other programmes has been created. It was initiated following discussions among groups from Interreg programmes, as well as existing experiences of staff exchanges in Interreg¹⁴.

¹⁴ Interreg staff exchange - Recommendations and considerations, Interact, 2016 http://www.interact-eu.net/library?field_fields_of_expertise_tid=32#857-publication-interreg-staff-exchange-recommendations-and-consideration.s

Interreg programmes operating in the Arctic have decided to work more closely together. This collaboration is coordinated by **Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme**, and involves Interreg Botnia-Atlantica, Interreg Nord, Kolarctic ENI CBC and Karelia ENI CBC. Other programmes could join this collaboration platform. As a specific outcome of this collaboration, programmes have organised joint events for their projects and partners, like the Arctic Project Clustering Event held in Skellefteå, Sweden on 10-11 May 2017. The event gathered project partners from the programme areas of Botnia - Atlantica, Interreg Nord, Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme as well as Kolarctic ENI CBC. The aim of the event was to find synergies between on-going projects in the different programmes, share good examples and challenges, and identify future cooperation possibilities¹⁵.

Interreg Estonia-Latvia Programme has consulted with other ESIF funding programmes in Estonia mainly on selection of thematic objectives and activities to be implemented within the priorities. This was primarily done in the programming phase in order to avoid overlapping and have better synergies between the programmes.

Examples of coordination plans and experiences across projects

Interreg Mediterranean Programme: To ensure a systematised coordination and cooperation between projects, the programme has developed a “MED Architecture”, with the aim of ensuring greater visibility and impact of project results, by facilitating synergies and capitalisation between projects and by ensuring three levels of impact:

- Modular projects respond to the needs of territories with a *bottom-up* approach, ensuring local impact and feeding the programme with outputs and results.
- Horizontal projects capture valuable elements from the modular projects within each specific thematic objective and sub-themes foreseen by the three thematic axes, and summarise and disseminate them on a transnational level, whilst providing a framework to enhance synergies. They have a crucial part to play in capitalising and transferring the transnational impact of the modular projects through the development of thematic communities at a Mediterranean level.
- Governance platform project (PANORAMED), through an evidence-based approach ensured by modular and horizontal projects, will develop strategies and models at policy level for the whole Mediterranean area, ensuring high-level impact.

In this framework, each type of project has its own specific role that is just as complementary as it is essential to develop sound, ‘win-win’ dynamics within the architecture itself. A shared methodology is being built between the Joint Secretariat, horizontal and modular projects, to systematise synergies, exchange and dialogue between the three levels of impact.

¹⁵ See for more information event report on Interreg Botnia-Atlantica website: <https://www.botnia-atlantica.eu/arctic-cooperation/arctic-project-clustering-event-10-11-may-2017/>.

In addition, here are some specific existing examples of coordination across projects:

- Horizontal projects build common communication and capitalisation strategies for their thematic community of projects;
- Examples of outputs from horizontal projects: modular projects results' analysis on specific themes, common policy recommendations or papers addressed to high-level decision makers, joint databases joint communication actions (newsletters, events), joint capitalisation events;
- Through their activities, horizontal projects enhance bilateral and multilateral cooperation between projects: e.g., shared calendar and organisation of joint events, exchange of data, exchange of methodologies, sharing of databases and contacts;
- Two horizontal projects are developing, together with the programme, a shared database that will consist of a joint knowledge database, a library of key outputs, and a GIS database, for sustainable tourism and biodiversity protection;
- Some modular projects have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work together on complementary activities, during and after the project lifetime.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region: Plans to launch thematic 'project platforms' – frameworks for cooperation between core partners of projects funded by different funding programmes. The aim of the project platforms is to strengthen the impact of projects' outcomes in the selected thematic field.

The project platforms are expected to:

- Deepen the knowledge basis in the selected field;
- Create a platform for exchange, to streamline activities of different stakeholders and to avoid duplication of efforts;
- Support strategic communication of projects and programmes in their core thematic fields;
- Ensure more intensive use, stronger durability and better transferability of the projects' outcomes.

The first call for project platforms will be open in autumn 2017. The first topics are planned to be smart specialisation, clear waters, blue growth, transport, inter-operability, maritime safety, and environmentally friendly shipping.

Interreg 2 Seas: The cluster initiative was a capitalisation action during the 2007-2013 programme period, aimed at clustering approved projects dealing with similar themes to consolidate their results, exploit synergies and take a step forward. This initiative was not only open to other Interreg projects funded in other programmes but also to any other funded project (EU or even at national level). Four topics were addressed:

1. Applied research, innovation and business support;
2. Accessibility of the area;
3. Social inclusion;
4. Risk management in the framework of Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

In a nutshell, the conclusions are positive, as the initiative has allowed good consolidation of the results and transfer of practices. It has also helped sustain the cooperation dynamics during the in between programming periods. This has made it

possible to maintain the cooperation links in the period in which 2007-2013 was over and 2014-2020 was not yet launched.

However, at this stage it is unlikely that it will be replicated in the future because the initiative was concentrated on soft actions which were sometimes perceived as not specific enough by some of the Member States. The new programming period very much focuses on results and therefore may even reinforce the scepticism around this initiative.

[CaSYPoT](#) project of **Interreg South Baltic Programme** expressed their interest to coordinate and cooperate further with [GaYA](#) project funded under **Interreg Alpine Space Programme**. Both projects address the same challenges - low youth involvement in policy making and how the local and regional authorities can work to develop tools improving the situation for young people. Results to be achieved in both projects are complementary. During their first meeting projects discussed the thematic overlap, expected outcomes and the potential for sharing good practices. The [CaSYPoT](#) project hopes for further coordination and cooperation as well as further developments, with direct exchanges already planned during the [CaSYPoT's](#) conference in Słupsk, Poland in December 2017.

Within **Hungary-Slovakia cross border cooperation programme 2007-2013** the project Restoration of the basilica in Sárospatak (Hungary) and the Saint Elizabeth Cathedral in Košice (Slovakia) was funded, where the complete restoration of the Saint Elizabeth Cathedral in Košice was ensured by combining resources from different funding programmes/instruments: Hungary-Slovakia Programme, Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine ENPI Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013, Norwegian Fund and allocation from the European Capital of Culture resources in different stages. The Hungary-Slovakia Programme took an active part in the discussion on funding allocations and the promotion of the joint financing with the ENPI programme, therefore the European Cooperation Day was also co-organized by the two affected programmes in the Saint Elizabeth Cathedral in Košice in 2013.

Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme launched a project clustering initiative in mid-2017. Clustering activities can take place between projects from different programmes addressing the same theme, or between projects that are addressing the same territorial challenges. The cooperation should happen between projects funded by different cooperation programmes with the objective of ensuring better implementation of the cooperating projects, more efficient use of funding, better results and wider dissemination. The purpose for the initiative is:

- synergy, mutual inspiration, complementation and cross-fertilisation among projects;
- ensuring more resources and critical mass for solving important problems;
- ensuring higher quality of outputs;
- ensuring more resources for dissemination activities and bigger outreach;
- extending existing partnerships and developing new¹⁶.

¹⁶ Terms of Reference for Clustering and Micro Projects – July 2017, Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic programme, <http://www.interreg-npa.eu/news/new-preparatory-project-types/>.

Open issues to be addressed to implement this cooperation and coordination form

1. How could Interreg programmes use the Interreg Europe learning platforms or Interact capitalisation networks for such coordination and cooperation?
2. Is there a need for a top-down approach in coordination between programmes?
3. How could support to the coordination and cooperation initiatives be better ensured – how could the coordination and cooperation process be funded?
4. How can data in [Keep.eu](#) support wider analysis on investments to a specific thematic by different Interreg programmes?
5. How could cross-programme evaluation be done to analyse the specific thematic results of Interreg?



C. Coordination and cooperation between Interreg and national and regional (ESIF) programmes

This description provides ideas on coordination and cooperation between Interreg and other European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programmes¹⁷ (later referred also as mainstream programmes). The ESIF programmes referred to here are implemented at national and regional levels.

Interreg programmes are a significant funding instrument to implement local, regional and transnational initiatives, pilot new practices, bring various stakeholders together to develop common solutions to shared challenges, and network. However, it is clear that real investment lies with mainstream ESIF programmes. Bringing closer Interreg and ESIF programmes contributes mainly to capitalising on existing experiences, sustaining outputs of already-implemented projects, showing the importance and specific nature of investments of different programmes, thus promoting the role of Interreg. Complementarities and synergies across projects create a benefit for a wider territory by contributing to achieving the shared objectives of a territory (sea basin, macro-region, etc.).

Establishing coordination and cooperation among Interreg and mainstream funding programmes would contribute to better achieving EU policy objectives more efficiently.

By implementing this kind of coordination and cooperation, Interreg programmes benefit from reducing the risk of double funding, by sharing achievements, learning about beneficiaries, etc. capitalisation, transferability and roll-out of Interreg project results are obvious benefits.



¹⁷ Programmes under European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, Cohesion Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.

Objective (why?)

Capitalisation, transferability and roll-out of Interreg project results are the main objectives of this coordination and cooperation option for Interreg programmes. Combining efforts of projects and programmes contributes to achieving the shared objectives of the territory, and attaining a greater impact from programme/project outputs.

What to be done to improve the environment for coordination and cooperation

In order to establish coordination and cooperation processes among Interreg and ESIF programmes, and to set up a practice for the post-2020 period, it is required that:

- a) Coordination and cooperation across Interreg and other ESI programmes becomes a requirement rather than an exception in the post-2020 period.
- b) Needs and benefits of coordination and cooperation are recognised by relevant actors: any ESIF project is seen as part of a process contributing to achieving the strategic objectives of a territory (through clustering of project activities, developing 'project-to-policy-to-project loops', 'project chains', finding complementarities among individual initiatives and projects, etc.). Relevant actors should be involved throughout the process to ensure interlinking of Interreg and the mainstream ESIF programmes and projects.
- c) Programmes need to focus on interfaces and build closer links based on gap analysis. Benefits from cooperation possibilities under Interact capitalization networks and Interreg Europe learning platforms to be further exploited.
- d) Allocate additional resources for coordination and cooperation processes.
- e) When good practice examples exist, these should be promoted and shared, to encourage further developments.

Implementation (how?)

Coordination and cooperation can happen via three major groups of activities:

A. Thematic networks and community platforms

- organising joint meetings of relevant mainstream ESIF programmes and Interreg on complementary topics;
- joining existing programme networks; e.g., national/ regional networks, macro-regional networks, Interact Capitalisation Networks, Interreg Learning Platforms, and suchlike;
- establishing or joining project platforms and building co-ownership from the programme side;
- organising thematic networks for projects exchanging on state of play, visions, sharing achievements, etc.;

- establishing working groups in cooperation with mainstream ESIF programmes; e.g., defining and clarifying each programme's role, exchanging on implementation and achievements, linking projects and building 'project chains';
- promoting cases where mainstreaming of Interreg project results has happened.

B. Actions

- meetings, inter-programme competence training (capacity building) of the programme staff on particular topics selected by more programmes;
- information and involvement in establishing this coordination framework to Monitoring and/or Steering Committee members of Interreg, them becoming members of both – mainstream ESIF and Interreg programmes;
- information to beneficiaries and applicants on funding possibilities in other programmes – through applicant seminars, programme manuals;
- developing 'project chains': piloting a case where the initial stage of a project would be done by Interreg, then further implemented and expanded by other ESIF programme(s);
- learning events on relevant ESIF national and regional programmes for a particular country/region/functional territory;
- coordinating calls across programmes (calls are organised individually by programmes, coordination happens when defining thematic for a call, identifying niche and specificity of each programme, in exchanging information on applications, etc.);
- joint events across programmes addressing a specific theme;
- establishing working groups with other programmes defining and clarifying each programme's role.

C. Tools

- joint promotional and information materials;
- established requirements and tools at the programme level on coordination and cooperation with other programmes (e.g., in the application form) and monitoring of this throughout the project implementation;
- monitor projects in connection with other projects in a broader territorial and strategic context;
- analysing projects results already available in [Keep.eu](http://www.keep.eu), especially relevant for ESIF programmes to learn about Interreg contributions;
- create a position of a Joint (Technical) Secretariat Officer for capitalisation and cooperation with other programmes¹⁸.

¹⁸ Report from the event "Improving the cross-programme work environment", Interact, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1210>.

Benefits and difficulties

Benefits	Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exchanging experiences and practices, learning from others • different inputs to a theme/priority by different programmes • support from the programme Member States and regions • existing national and regional coordination structures • managing authorities located in the same national/regional institution • mainstreaming Interreg project results to the ESIF programmes • showing programme contribution in a wider framework (cumulative effect of programme contribution and complementarity of funds) • joint communication towards other institutions (national, regional institutions, macro-regional, sea basin coordinators, EC) • bringing value for money • sharing responsibility for achieving goals of Cohesion Policy • defining a niche for Interreg • new networks, contacts • staff exchange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited knowledge about Interreg and ESIF programmes within one or another programme • lacking strategic vision of a programme as part of a bigger community • lacking structured approach • limited resources (time, human, financial) • high number of national and regional programmes overlapping territory with Interreg Transnational Programmes • national programmes/projects are implemented and documented in national languages, which can hamper exchange of information • lack of exchange between representatives involved in implementation of Interreg and other ESIF programmes • lack of seeing added-value of coordination and cooperation at national and regional levels • lack of coordinators/supporters/leaders for coordination and cooperation • different application procedures and programme requirements • overlapping projects • overlapping partnerships

Table 3: Benefits and difficulties to consider in implementation

Examples

In the framework of priority Axis 4 – Enhancing Mediterranean Governance - **Interreg Mediterranean Programme** has planned a specific structured measure on mainstreaming activities. The following actions are yet to be tested. What is described below was started in September 2017.

The experiment was carried out through the Axis 4 governance platform project PANORAMED.

PANORAMED includes a high-level partnership of 12 ministries and 6 regions identified by the Programme Monitoring Committee through a top-down process.

The overarching objective is to strengthen the capacity of programmes' National and Regional Authorities to contribute to governance processes in the Mediterranean region in terms of identification and implementation of shared approaches and policies, informed decision-making policies and strategic projects, creating sound synergies and complementarities with relevant strategies and dynamics active in the Mediterranean.

The project will develop its activities for five years, until spring 2022, therefore ensuring a medium-/long-term perspective and impact on the post-2020 discussion. Specifically, concerning the mainstreaming exercise, PANORAMED projects' deliverables/results will be collected and analysed through a specific methodology, in order to identify the possibilities of potential integration into current ESIF national/regional mainstream programmes, as well as evidence to better address regional and national planning of 2020-2026 programmes.

A test group of National and Regional Managing Authorities of ESIF programmes, as well as of Interreg programmes of the Mediterranean area (to be identified), will test the envisaged mainstreaming exercise.

Specific reports will not only contain the results of the experiment and relevant evaluation/conclusions. They will also set out in detail the transferability options to other Managing Authorities, as well as relevant modalities.

This initial exercise might provide interesting input to specific processes towards future exploitation of mainstreaming as an 'ordinary', structured, cross-cutting pillar that Interreg programmes might initiate during this programming period and fully develop in the framework of post-2020 programmes.

Interreg Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak Programme will arrange a conference on green energy/green transport in November 2017 together with the Swedish National Programme (the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and the Swedish Energy Agency). It will aim to disseminate project results achieved under the Swedish National Programme to the programme beneficiaries in Southern Sweden and East Denmark. The aim is to inspire "their" inhabitants to create similar/develop further on the ideas/projects presented.

Similarly, the programme arranged the seminar in cooperation with the Danish National Operational Programme 'Educational and Entrepreneurial Growth – ESF' 2014-2020 with the main aim to inform project applicants on funding possibilities under Interreg.

Interreg Slovakia-Hungary Programme launched a **Call for proposals for territorial action plans** - SKHU1703 in the frame of the third priority axis – *Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility*. The programme explicitly mentions that since expected results of the priority axis require complex interventions – as a first step of the two round selection procedure – applicants are obliged to create a complex development plan called Territorial action plan for employment (TAPE). In TAPE, applicants have to identify territorial needs of the target area and propose interrelated group of projects with an overall view to create new jobs and enhancing cross-border labour mobility. Each TAPE has to contain from three to eight project proposals that are in synergic or complementary relation and are absolutely necessary for the overall success of the TAPE. Strategic coordination

and cooperation as well as coordination and cooperation at intervention level will be rewarded with extra assessment scores.

This call requires for applicants to coordinate and cooperate with other national and regional projects and initiatives.

Interreg Central Europe: National committees in the programme Member States have been set up. The aim of the national committees is to support the monitoring committee members in involving representatives of institutions participating in the implementation of ESIF national and regional programmes, seeking (to the extent possible) to achieve coordination at all stages of the programme lifetime. Dedicated meetings of national committees are organised – for example, before the funding decisions of the Monitoring Committee.

A national coordination structure of all the different funding programmes implemented in **Romania** has been established. The Ministry of European Funds is the overall responsible for coordination of EU funds at the national level. The coordination process was initiated already during the programming period in which thematic groups were established (including Interreg representatives) during the programming process.

To continue with this coordination task during the programme implementation, four functional working groups dedicated to different aspects of programme implementation were established. The most relevant for the coordination and cooperation tasks are the Operational Functional Working Group (focusing on simplification (administrative burdens), working procedures, audit, irregularities and fraud, electronic systems, communication, public procurement, technical assistance, horizontal aspects, State Aid) and the European Territorial Cooperation Functional Working Group (specifically dedicated to Interreg questions, implementation of EU Strategy for the Danube Region objectives, coherence/complementarity of instruments and EU/national programmes).

The existence of a coordination mechanism for the implementation of EU-Funded programmes allows for better coordination between various ESIF programmes within Romania.

Within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) and by initiative of the Member States, National Coordinators of the EUSBSR and institutions responsible for the ERDF operational programmes agreed in December 2015 to establish an **ERDF Managing Authorities (MA) Network**. The general purpose of establishing the pilot ERDF MA Network focusing (as a pilot topic) on innovation in the EUSBSR is to work out ways of more efficient financial support to the EUSBSR implementation by ESIF programmes, as well as increase coordination across relevant macro-regional stakeholders.

The discussion in the Network led to the development of four pilot initiatives (projects). These projects will be implemented through agreeing on activities of common interest, coordinating implementation of these activities, and working to achieve planned results. Partners joining the project will be funded by national or regional ESIF programmes, either through applying for a separate project or by expanding existing project activities to transnational collaboration; e.g., via

Transnational Cooperation Component in Sweden¹⁹. They will be implemented by individual partners in the Member States via coordinating activities. In 2018, the ERDF MA network will aim at piloting a coordinated call across the MA of the Baltic Sea Region.

It was concluded by the ERDF MA network that:

- implementing pilot collaboration projects is seen as an opportunity to fulfil the objectives of the ERDF programme in a new way.
- good use of ERDF funding is another key conclusion.

The network also opens up for Interreg programmes.

In 2011 the **Baltic Sea Network** was established in order to develop a common understanding of the role of the **European Social Fund (ESF)** in relation to the European Union Strategy of the Baltic Sea (EUSBSR) (known also as ESF BSN).

The objectives of the network are:

- to develop a common understanding of the role of ESF in relation to the EUSBSR;
- to develop and consolidate the network between the Managing Authorities in order to further increase cooperation, promote joint projects, identify policy gaps as well as exchanging good practices;
- to facilitate and strengthen the transnational cooperation between project promoters / projects in the ESF in the Baltic Sea Region;
- to help implementing the social dimension in the EUSBSR in relevant priority areas and to identify relevant priorities for the future;
- to integrate the network into the Common Framework and by doing so have a platform for common calls on specific themes.

So far the ESF BSN has established a solid network between the Managing Authorities and intermediate bodies in the Baltic Sea Region; The network ensures coordination of themes/priorities for calls for proposals in the ESF in the Member States focusing the social dimension in the EUSBSR; the network has arranged partner search forums for project promoters in the ESF; has created a Flagship [‘School 2 Work’](#) within the policy area ‘Education’ in EUSBSR and reached an agreement on themes for cooperation in the Common Framework (Youth employment and Inclusion).

The network consists of Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies for the ESF around the Baltic Sea: Sweden, Åland Islands, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Land of Hamburg. More about the network can be read at www.esf.se/sv/Sidhuvud/The-swedish-ESF-council/Baltic-Sea-Network

¹⁹ Concept paper Macro Regional Strategies in the ESI Operational Programmes 2014-2020–proposal for a Transnational Cooperation Component to support the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region –EUSBSR, http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/images/olddocs/20140120+SE+concept+paper+Cooperation+in+ESI_Updated.pdf.

Open issues to be addressed to implement this cooperation and coordination form

1. How could support to the coordination and cooperation initiatives be better ensured – how could the coordination and cooperation process be funded?
2. How to build transnational cooperation among national and regional programmes and projects? Models for aligning funding are not yet fully developed and exploited.

D. Coordination and cooperation between Interreg and other EU-wide programmes and funds

This option of coordination and cooperation can be applied by Interreg programmes willing to coordinate and cooperate with EU direct management programmes. An extensive list of programmes referred to in this model is available [here](#).

Several EU direct management programmes address the same or similar thematic topics as Interreg. Interreg could benefit from coordination and cooperation across programmes through finding complementarities and synergies between programmes, capitalising on existing projects, and sustaining outputs and results on Interreg, adding value to new projects as well as on an operational level (addressing double funding, learning about beneficiaries, etc.). However, clear positioning of Interreg in the value chain of EU financial support is required (e.g., territorial proof of concept following Horizon 2020 prototyping, preceding large investments).

Close coordination and cooperation between the programmes would contribute to showcasing Interreg investments into EU policy objectives such as EU2020, the Investment Plan for Europe, the Territorial Agenda 2020, etc.

Objective (why?)

Interreg programmes are significant funding instruments to implement cooperation initiatives at local, regional and transnational levels. Establishing coordination and cooperation among Interreg and EU-wide programmes contributes to sustainability and roll-out of Interreg project results, as well as greater visibility and impact of project and programme results.

What to be done to improve the environment for coordination and cooperation

- a) Establish a clear mandate and common ownership to set and implement coordination and cooperation.
- b) Coordination and cooperation across Interreg and EU-wide programmes should be made a requirement, not an exception.
- c) Promotion of existing cooperation practices and experiences would contribute to the process.

Implementation (how?)

A. Thematic networks and community platforms

- inter-programme competence training of programme staff in certain fields (e.g., innovation policy, environment, etc.);

- inviting the EU-wide programmes to meetings of existing networks; e.g., national/ regional networks, macro-regional networks, Interact capitalisation networks, Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platforms, and suchlike;
- cross-programme exchanges on state of play, visions, sharing achievements, etc. These exchanges could be organised by Interact, coordinators of macro-regional strategies, programmes and the EC.

B. Actions

- joint meetings with a common denominator (topic/territory) between Interreg programmes and EU-wide programmes/funds;
- establishing direct contacts among programmes, finding the relevant level of officers for a successful coordination;
- organise more structured exchange between Interreg and EU programmes at the programme application phase, as well as to leverage project results;
- information to beneficiaries and applicants on funding possibilities in EU-wide programmes addressing the issue in question – e.g., applicant seminars, programme manuals and other meetings.

C. Tools

- appoint ‘competence agents’ (interfaces) providing a link from the EU-wide programmes to Interreg programmes;
- promote coordination and cooperation practices among Interreg and the EU-wide programmes/funds;
- consider and establish [Keep.eu](#) API²⁰ with other EU-wide programmes;
- create a position of an Officer for capitalisation and cooperation with other programmes²¹.

Benefits and difficulties

Benefits	Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• contribution to achieving the common goals of the EU policies• showing programme contribution in a wider framework (complementarity of programme funds)• greater value for money• avoiding overlaps and making use of synergies• greater policy impact and higher sustainability of results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• lack of knowledge and information of other funding programmes• lack of interest and seeing added value in the coordination and cooperation (at national and EU levels)• competition among programmes• lacking structured and formalised approach for exchange and coordination with EU-wide programmes/funds

²⁰ An application program interface (API) is a code that allows two software programs to communicate with each other.

²¹ Report from the event “Improving the cross-programme work environment”, Interact, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/library#1210>.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• exchanging experiences and practices• expanding partnerships• increasing capacities of beneficiaries to mobilise investments• contributing to post-2020 debates (integrated approach to territorial development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• different application procedures and programme requirements• limited resources (time, human, financial)• insufficient coordination at national/regional levels• insufficient and unclear positioning of programmes (Interreg and others)
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Table 4: Benefits and difficulties to consider in implementation

Examples

Interreg Central Europe: Attempts were made to coordinate with the European Investment Bank (EIB) on project results which could potentially apply for EIB loans and funding. For this purpose, Interreg Central Europe also invited representatives of EIB to its project events to establish contact with beneficiaries.

Exchanges with the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme have happened through the Interact Energy platform; likewise, some exchange with Horizon 2020 has taken place.

Interreg Central Europe also strives for coordination with LIFE, since LIFE Integrated projects (IP) are asked already at the application stage to identify complementarities with other funds. For Interreg Central Europe projects dealing with similar thematic issues in the same territories as LIFE projects, both programmes have exchanged their respective application forms. Interreg Central Europe has included specific conditions for approval to make use of synergies and avoid duplication of activities. Representatives of LIFE have been invited to programme events to sensitise applicants and beneficiaries.

A cooperation with DG REGIO S3 has been set up with the aim of setting a specific focus for the bottom-up implementation of S3 strategies through transnational cooperation. This thematic focus is reflected in the 3rd call for proposals. The coordination with DG REGIO S3 aims in particular to attract new competent players of the knowledge triangle. Dedicated preparation activities such as matchmaking workshops have already been organised by DG REGIO S3.

Interreg Mediterranean Programme: When preparing the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the 1st call for proposals under Axis 1, 2 and 3 (six ToRs, for each of the specific objectives of the programme), the Joint Secretariat invited European Commission DGs, European and international platforms and networks, and other policy frameworks (UN) to participate in thematic brainstorming meetings. The objective of these meetings, held in February 2015, was to collect inputs and suggestions from these stakeholders, on the basis of the definition of key actions in the cooperation programme, to improve complementarity with other programmes and policies, and to further define the most important actions to finance under each theme. This was a first step in approaching key stakeholders and policy-makers in order to start a structured dialogue with them.

Participating institutions:

AXIS 1, Innovation: (DG GROW, DG RESEARCH, DG CONNECT, DG EAC, EASME, ERRIN, Eurocities, EnoLL).

AXIS 2, Energy: (DG ENERGY, DG MARE, DG MOVE, DG REGIO, EASME, European networks of cities (e.g., Eurocities, CMCR), EU industrial energy associations, Covenant of Mayors).

Axis 3, Environment: (DG ENVI, DG MARE, COSME, LIFE, DG GROW, EEA, Farnet, Adriplan, Medpan, Plan Bleu, PAP/RAC, NECSTOUR).

This constructive dialogue has helped the Interreg Mediterranean Programme Joint Secretariat team better understand potential complementarities and to establish a contact with thematic DGs and other key stakeholders. In some cases, these exchanges continued with participation in thematic events, participation in workshops in the programme kick-off, and sharing information regarding the programme on their web platforms. However, these exchanges are still based on personal relationships and specific interests developed by programme staff. This first exercise of exchange showed that both sides, Interreg Mediterranean Programme as well as the thematic DGs and European-wide networks, are asking for structured dialogue, and that this gives valuable input and increases awareness of parallel activities. The action taken was only a first 'ad hoc' step aiming at drafting more relevant Terms of Reference for the first programme calls. The structured dialogue must be built throughout the programming, in order to reinforce and improve the results of Interreg Mediterranean Programme financing.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region has already been cooperating with the HORIZON 2020-funded BONUS programme for six years. BONUS is a research programme focusing on environmental matters and blue growth in the Baltic Sea. Interreg Baltic Sea Region Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat is part of the BONUS Advisory Board. Programmes exchange on project applications and approved projects. Interreg Baltic Sea Region Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat members regularly present the programme and relevant projects to BONUS project partners and stakeholders. The BONUS programme was also consulted in the programming process. The programme also established cooperation with the S3 Platform. The platform is hosted by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) in Seville, part of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. The S3 Platform assists EU countries and regions to develop, implement and review their Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3). The Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat regularly exchanges with representatives of the platform on project applications and approved projects working with smart specialisation approaches. The platform experts take part in selected Interreg Baltic Sea Region project events (e.g., BSR Star S3). The programme and the S3 Platform both take part in the EUSBSR PA Innovation Steering Committee meetings to improve information flows.

Interreg South Baltic has established a fruitful cooperation with the following EU-wide programmes/funds:

- FARNET / CLLD;
- Horizon 2020 (for transport projects);
- European Investment Bank (for maritime transport).

Joint information events have been organised with Horizon 2020 and the European Investment Bank.

Open issues to be addressed to implement this cooperation and coordination form

1. How to establish structured and systemic practice for coordination and cooperation between Interreg and EU-wide programmes and funds?
2. Coordination and cooperation across programmes should be made a requirement in the regulatory framework for post-2020.
3. How the support to the coordination and cooperation initiatives could be better ensured – how could the coordination and cooperation process be funded?
4. Good practices and experiences in coordination and cooperation should be promoted.
5. There is a need to develop tools or a support structure to establish the exchange and ensure follow-up among Interreg and EU-wide programmes.
6. Synergies between Interreg thematic networks and thematic funding programmes such as COSME and LIFE need to be established.

