

ANNEXE 3: INTERACT III 2014-2020 – A CITIZEN’S SUMMARY

1. WHAT’S THE ISSUE?

1.1. Reducing the complexity of European Territorial Cooperation

The EU cohesion policy has made substantial amounts of financial support available in the 2014-2020 programming period. This is used to finance national and regional programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal. In addition, a smaller amount is used for the second goal of the EU cohesion policy; namely, European Territorial Cooperation (ETC also called Interreg). Despite its small financial weight, ETC is a key instrument in addressing the common challenges and obstacles existing at border regions and transnational cooperation areas, in sharing experiences, and in elaborating common development strategies within the EU cohesion policy. For more than 20 years these programmes have been bringing benefits to Europeans such as improving cross-border transport, encouraging entrepreneurship in European areas, and dealing with pollution in the seas, always with an approach that goes beyond national borders. Regional challenges do not recognise national borders.

INTERACT III 2014-2020 is one such territorial cooperation programme. While national/regional programmes work within a single Member State and apply one set of rules and administrative approaches, ETC programmes operate in a multi-national and more complex context. Moreover, their smaller budgets make their results less tangible and less visible. New and simplified administration approaches are necessary, and a great deal of lessons could be learnt from cooperation programmes, if their activities and results were widely known. Since 2003 INTERACT has been supporting ETC programmes, maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of territorial cooperation.

2. HOW WILL IT WORK AND WHO WILL BENEFIT?

The overall objective of INTERACT III is therefore to exchange experience, and identify and transfer practises and innovative approaches in implementing territorial cooperation. In doing so, it will focus on improving three specific areas:

- the management and control capacity of ETC programmes;
- ETC’s capacity in capturing and communicating programme results;
- the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches, e.g., through European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), Revolving Funds, macro-regional strategies, and cooperation in mainstream programmes.

INTERACT III services provided to achieve improvement in the above areas comprise events (ranging from tailor-made advisory services on specific issues through trainings, seminars, workshops, network meetings and conferences) and tools (including guidance material such as handbooks and studies, document templates, online information, data-bases, e-tools, EU-wide promotional campaigns, etc.).

These services will primarily target the bodies responsible for managing ETC programmes, but to a lesser extent other stakeholders (including national ETC networks and EU-level actors) will also benefit. This includes cooperation at external borders of the EU, financed by IPA II and ENI programmes.

In order to provide the above services to all 28 EU member states, plus Norway and Switzerland, during the 2014-2020 period, a total budget of EUR 46.34 million (EUR 39.39 million European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) co-financing complemented by EUR 6.95 million member state contribution, equalling 0,44% of the total ERDF Interreg allocation of EUR 8.948 billion) has been allocated to the programme. The programme management will remain in Bratislava, and the service delivery will be kept simple, with 4 offices (Turku, Valencia, Viborg and Vienna) building on their 10-year-long experience.

3. WHAT WILL CHANGE?

Improved management of ETC

INTERACT III aims to contribute to a tangible improvement in ETC, especially in aspects related to:

- management: wide-spread application of simplified, harmonised approaches and good practices, more result-oriented programme management, reduced administrative burdens for programme bodies and beneficiaries and reduced error risks;
- capturing and communicating results: increased thematic competence in programme bodies, availability of an online database of ETC projects including projects results, enhanced visibility of ETC and more efficient communication of programme results;
- cooperation capacity: increased knowledge about new cooperation instruments in ETC, such as EGTCs, revolving funds, cooperation in objective one programmes, macro-regional strategies approach etc., and increased synergies with other EU funding schemes.