



Public consultation on Interreg Europe for 2021-2027

Summary report of the webinar organised on 24 March 2021

On 24 March 2021, Interreg Europe organised a webinar as part of the public consultation launched for the upcoming 2021-2027 cooperation programme. The main purpose of the webinar was to present the key features of the new programme, in particular the strategy and the types of action, and to invite the participants to share their thoughts and ideas. It was also an opportunity to promote the public consultation online survey available at <https://www.interregeurope.eu/about-us/2021-2027/>.

Participants

Of the nearly 1,000 registered people, 647 of them actually participated in the webinar. The poll launched at the start of the webinar showed that around 66% of participants were already familiar with the Interreg Europe programme.

Key features of the new programme

The overall rationale of the Interreg Europe programme for 2021-2027 remains very similar to the current programme. As a Pan-European programme, Interreg Europe involves all 27 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland. The objective is to improve regional development policies through capacity building and exchange of experience. The programme supports interregional cooperation projects and a policy learning platform. Policy responsible organisations are the core target group.

The programme introduces a few new features for the period 2021-2027:

- The programme has one single priority: **Strengthening institutional capacities for more effective regional development policies**, underlining the programmes focus on capacity building.
- The scope of the programme is enlarged: projects can focus on capacity building in **all policy fields** covered by EU Cohesion policy.
- There is less emphasis on improving Structural Funds programmes. In projects at least one policy instrument addressed must be an Investment for Jobs and Growth programme. This means more flexibility for project to address other regional development policies.
- There are more possibilities for learning by doing: pilot actions can be proposed already at the start of the project under certain conditions.

Finally, regarding the policy learning platform, the current services will be continued as a starting point but further activities may be developed if they can better serve the regions' needs. Valuable ideas for additional services are therefore welcome and can be proposed via the online survey.



Overview of the Q&A session: main trends and questions

Participants were able to raise questions both at the registration phase and during the webinar. Most questions and requests for clarification focused on the types of actions, especially the features of the interregional cooperation projects and the main changes compared to 2014-2020.

One of the recurring questions referred to the **single priority** of the future programme and its presentation as 'cross-cutting'. Participants wondered in particular if projects could select **several thematic areas**. The experts clarified that, even with the enlarged scope of the new programme, projects still will have to demonstrate a clear focus on a specific area of regional development. From that perspective, there is no change from the current programme. This clear focus will be reflected in the choice of only **one specific objective per project** as well as in the choice of the policy instruments to be improved.

Several participants asked clarification on the '**lighter focus on improving Structural Funds**'. This is actually due to a change of requirements in the future programme. In 2014-20, at least 50% of the policy instruments addressed by a project had to be Structural Fund programmes, whereas in 2021-27, **only one policy instrument per project** will have to be an Investment for Growth and Jobs programme.

Another set of questions was about the **links to Interregional Innovation Investments (I3), smart specialisation strategies (S3)** and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The experts clarified that innovation policies and in particular S3 will continue to be an important topic in 2021-27. Projects will also need to be in line with the EU horizontal policies. Since I3 is primarily dedicated to direct investment (in innovation), there is no risk of overlap with the future Interreg Europe programme.

The **new possibilities open for pilot actions** attracted the attention of a high number of participants, who asked about the specific conditions and details. The conditions for pilot actions will remain similar in the future. Pilot actions could relate to the transfer of a practice from one region to another or to testing jointly a new approach. In any case, the contribution of the pilot actions to the improvement of the policy instruments addressed in the project would need to be clearly demonstrated.

The use of **simplified cost options** (SCOs) was also raised. The experts confirmed that the programme was fully committed to simplification. The possible use of lump sum or flat rate at project level will be further detailed in the programme manual.

A few questions were also submitted before the webinar. It was for instance whether the programme would support **small-scale projects**. Actually, small-scale projects, as introduced by the European regulations, are primarily relevant to cross-border programmes and do not apply to interregional cooperation. However, the policy learning platform will continue to support the regions in their need for targeted cooperation.

Finally, the way Interreg Europe will contribute to **macro-regional strategies** (MRS) was also raised. The experts clarified that the link to MRS will remain indirect, since the regional development policies which are at the heart of Interreg Europe are mostly developed at local, regional or national levels. Nevertheless, Interreg Europe could still support a project among different MRS interested in exchanging their experience and practices on the way they implement their strategies.