

Citizen summary

Preface

Interreg Europe helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. Financed by the European Regional Development Fund to the tune of €359 million from 2014-2020, it supports regional policymakers through cooperation projects and policy learning platforms. During 2014 and 2015, chaired by Greece, Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg, the 30 countries involved in the programme discussed, debated, consulted and came to an agreement by consensus on the programme's aim, set-up and means available.

This report will be produced annually, to give the wider public an insight into how European funds are being spent, if the programme is on track to reach its objectives, and how the actions funded are benefitting the population at large.

We welcome your interest, questions and requests for information.

Anne Wetzel

Hauts-de France Region

Managing authority

Erwin Siweris

Interreg Europe Programme Director

Joint secretariat

Introduction

The European Union works to reduce differences in the levels of development, growth and quality of life in European regions through its Cohesion policy. It promotes actions to make the European territory more innovative, more sustainable, and more inclusive. This is the EU policy agenda called EU2020 strategy.

While the large majority of the funds designated to reduce these disparities are managed nationally, the EU and member states believe that regional development can be improved through cooperation and exchange of experiences and practices across borders.

The Interreg Europe programme, financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), is designed to support policy learning among public authorities **to improve the performance of policies and programmes for regional development**. It allows public authorities across Europe to exchange practices and ideas on the way public policies work thus finding solutions to improve their strategies for their own citizens.

Four topics were selected in order to make the best use of limited funds. The more focused the actions, the higher the chances they deliver effective results.

1. Research, technological development and innovation
2. SME competitiveness
3. Low-carbon economy
4. Environment and resource efficiency

Interreg Europe will finance two actions:

- a) Interregional Cooperation projects: Public organisations from different regions in Europe work together for 3 to 5 years on a shared policy issue. An action plan, specific for each region, will ensure that the lessons learnt from the cooperation are put into action. Regional partners will monitor how far the action plans are implemented. Calls for project proposals are launched throughout the programming period.
- b) Policy learning platforms open up the programme's knowledge for the benefit of all the project partners and the whole community of regional policy makers. There is one policy learning platform for each of the four topics covered by Interreg Europe. The main aim is to provide a space for continuous learning, to improve regional development policies in Europe without

engaging in a project. This community of peers features a knowledge bank, networking and partnering opportunities and expert support.

2014-2015 main activities

The main action in these months concerned setting up the programme, its administration and procedures. This programme is managed by and for regional policymakers by their representatives in Interreg Europe's monitoring committee. As decision-making between the 30 participating countries during the programme preparation process has been by consensus, efforts from all sides were needed to find an agreement, without compromising on quality and standards! Interreg Europe was finally adopted by the European Commission on 11 June 2015.

Besides the 30 partner states and the European Commission, the following organisations have been designated to support Interreg Europe's implementation:

- Managing authority: Hauts de France (Nord-Pas de Calais – Picardie) Region (France)
- Joint secretariat: based in Lille, under the responsibility of the managing authority
- Certifying authority: Province of East Flanders (Belgium)
- Audit authority: Interministerial Commission for the Coordination of Controls regarding European Structural Funds (CICC) (France)

Information campaign and first call for project proposals

Many information seminars, applicant seminars and Europe-wide partner search events took place in 2014 and 2015 to promote the funding available and attract suitable applicants to apply during the first call for projects.

- *Programme launch event in Bologna (Italy) in December 2014*
- *Organisation of information campaign from 2 April 2015 until 22 June 2015*
- *57 national and regional information seminars organised*
- *2 lead applicant workshops organised*
- *349 applicants advised on their project idea*
- *First call for proposals organised: 22 June – 31 July*

In total, 261 applications were received during the first call. 175 of these were eligible for quality assessment (67%). . The quality assessment is split into two steps: strategic and operational. Only the strategic assessment was completed by the end of 2015, with 67 projects progressing to the next step. No funds were allocated to projects in 2015. We can provide details of the projects that were finally approved in 2016 report.

What has changed?

Since the main activities financed by the programme have not kicked off in 2015, we have laid the groundwork for supporting future policy change. Over 2500 policymaking organisations in all 30 participating countries have shown their willingness to better improve citizens' lives through learning from their peers. We will describe here in future reports what effect this will have.

For more information

The latest programme news and details of activities can be found on the programme website:

www.interregeurope.eu

For any queries, please contact:

Interreg Europe secretariat

info@interregeurope.eu / +33 328 144 100

Les Arcuriales, Entrée D 5^{ème} étage

45 rue du Tournai, 59000 Lille, France