

An Interreg Europe proposal idea

03/02/2023

SPRINT DNSH – Support to PRogrammes for the ImplemeNTation of the Do No Significant Harm Principle

The Interreg Europe programme

Interreg Europe supports interregional cooperation projects. The supported projects involve policy organisations that come together for four years to learn from each other and address a regional policy issue of common concern.

The programme's objective is to enable public authorities and other relevant organisations to actively learn from the experience of other regions. This is a learning process which involves identifying, analysing, and transferring good practices with the aim of improving regional development policy instruments and ultimately delivering solutions that benefit all citizens.

The terms 'region' and 'regional development policy' are used in a broad sense. 'Region' refers to any territory represented by a public authority. It can relate to any of the different administrative levels that contribute to regional development (e.g., municipality, city, county, province, region, country). Organizations/agencies supporting such public authorities by institutional mission can be involved as well.

Interreg Europe projects:

- are carried out in two phases (a 3-year core phase and a 1-year follow-up phase);
- are designed to improve regional policy instruments;
- use interregional learning and exchange of experience to catalyse policy change;
- must achieve the objective of improving the policy instruments by the end of the core phase.

- ✓ Call **deadline**: 9th June 2023
- ✓ Project **budget** size: around 1,5-2 M€ overall (to be shared among partners to cover technical assistance & functioning costs)
- ✓ More **info**: www.interregeurope.eu/apply-for-the-call

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SPRINT DNSH

Issue addressed and objective

The Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) establishes that 2021-2027 Funds should support activities that would do no significant harm to environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of Regulation (EU) 2020/852 (known as the Taxonomy Regulation).

According to the Taxonomy Regulation, the “Do No Significant Harm” (DNSH) principle considers the following 6 environmental objectives: climate change mitigation; climate change adaptation; sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources; circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling and raw materials use; air, soil and water pollution prevention and control; protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

Compliance with the DNSH principle has been assessed ex ante for all the types of action included in the 2021-2027 Funds Programmes, according to Commission explanatory note “Application of the “Do no significant harm” principle under cohesion policy” (EGESIF_21-0025-00 27/09/2021).

Where potential risks to the compliance with the DNSH principle were identified, the proposed action had to be adjusted taking into account necessary mitigating measures that will be implemented to prevent and offset any significant harm with regard to the six environmental objectives covered by the Taxonomy Regulation.

Member States are responsible for the effective implementation of this principle throughout the programming period. This requires selecting those operations for funding that comply with applicable EU and national laws and that are coherent with the types of actions assessed in the programme in the ex ante phase, including the mitigation measures defined for the different types of actions.

As DNSH application is a new requirement for the 2021-2027 period, the Managing Authorities are dealing for the first time with the definition of a pathway to ensure that an appropriate application of the DNSH principle is carried out in the implementation phase of the Programmes. One of the core activity is defining an appropriate set of selection criteria, assuring that the operations selected for financing are coherent with the types of actions evaluated in the ex ante phase and their mitigation measures.

Based on the exchange of experiences and good practices, the objective of SPRINT DNSH is to improve the addressed policy instruments (in particular ERDF Programmes) with regard to DNSH implementation and verification, thus contributing to a higher level of environmental sustainability of the Programmes and promoting governance efficiency and non-duplication of assessments (e.g. SEA, DNSH, etc.)

Partnership, policy instruments addressed and topic

So far, the organisations engaged in the proposal are:



1. Regione Lombardia (IT) – partner (particularly interested in the application of the DNSH principle under PO1 Smarter Europe)



2. Poliedra (IT) – advisory partner - Poliedra is a Consortium of Politecnico di Milano with specific competence and experience in [supporting public administration](#) at national, regional and local level as regards Strategic Environmental Assessment and mainstreaming of the sustainable development principle in ERDF Programmes since the 2007-2013 period. In the last two years Poliedra has been in charge of SEA and DNSH evaluation for five 2021-2027 ERDF Programmes, including the Lombardy’s Programme. Poliedra has an extensive experience in [EU funded projects](#) and in particular contributed as advisory partner to the development and implementation of two IE 2014-2020 projects ([PROMETEUS](#) and [APPROVE](#)) and worked on Lombardy’s policy instruments in another IE project ([P-IRIS](#)).

Each regional partner ought to identify a policy instrument to be addressed. Considering the topic, the preferable instruments are the ERDF Regional or National Operational Programmes. Depending on the partners' interests, the projects could either develop a general approach to DNSH assessment in ERDF, therefore being candidate on "governance" topic, or focus on a specific Policy Objectives (PO1. Smarter Europe or PO2. Greener Europe).

Project approach

Core phase – interregional learning (3 years)

The first phase will be dedicated to the exchange of experience among project partners and to the integration of the lessons learnt from the cooperation activities into the policy instruments addressed by the project.

The typical activities related to this learning process will include workshops, thematic seminars, staff exchanges. Each partner will involve a group of regional stakeholders, that will participate in the learning process and will be invited to input their ideas and opinions into the project.

The starting point for the project activities will aim at building a common knowledge and at identifying and sharing good practices through comparative analyses and discussions about:

- the methods adopted in the DNSH ex ante assessment in the ERDF Programmes of the partner Regions and / or in Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) Plans;
- the different governance systems put in place for DNSH implementation and verification;
- approaches adopted, issues encountered and results obtained with the first applications of the DNSH principles in the implementation of the ERDF Programmes (e.g criteria for call for tenders, ...).

Building on the analysis and experience exchange, the project partners could explore possible tools/actions such as:

- the appropriate project selection criteria for different types of projects, in order to ensure the coherence of the selected operations with the types of actions evaluated in the ex ante phase and the specific mitigation measures;
- check lists for DNSH verification, specific for different types of projects;
- guidelines for objectives such as climate change adaptation, that requires case-by-case and site-specific evaluation;
- capacity building activities for the people involved in Programme implementation and for the beneficiaries;
- monitoring DNSH implementation and its effectiveness in achieving the expected results, preventing environmental harm and promoting environmental sustainability.

This process will result in specific changes made by each partner Region before the end of the 3rd year of the project in the actual application of the DNSH principle in the implementation of its ERDF Programme.

Follow-up phase (1 year)

The activities of the second phase will refer to:

- Monitoring results
- Exchange of experience on policy improvements (if relevant)
- Pilot actions (if relevant)