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European Regional Development Fund

*Ex-ante evaluation  
of the  
“INTERREG EUROPE” Programme  
under the  
European Territorial Cooperation Objective  
(2014-2020)*

**Final Review Report  
(June 2014)**

**Prepared by**



The ex-ante evaluation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 was commissioned by the “GECOTTI - Groupement Européen de Coopération Transfrontalière, Transnationale et Interrégionale” (Lille/France) to an international consortium consisting of “EureConsult S.A.” (Luxembourg), “Spatial Foresight GmbH” (Luxembourg) and “t33 S.r.l.” (Italy).

EureConsult was the main contractor and in charge of coordinating the international consortium. EureConsult also evaluated the programme strategy as well as the delivery mechanisms and structures of the “INTERREG EUROPE” Programme. Spatial Foresight evaluated the programme indicators and provisions for monitoring & evaluation as well as the contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy, while t33 evaluated the consistency of programme’s financial allocations.

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The present final ex-ante evaluation report does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the members of the Programming Committee / Monitoring Committee.

This final ex-ante evaluation report exists only in an electronic version.

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## Content

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. Methods and techniques used by the ex-ante evaluation</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2. Overview on the ex-ante evaluation process and on improvements made to the various programme drafts</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Appraisal of the programme strategy</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1. Consistency of the programme objectives	15
3.2. Internal coherence of the programme	17
3.3. External coherence of the programme	26
3.4. Intervention logic of the programme	31
3.5. The horizontal EU-principles	36
<b>4. Appraisal of the programme-level indicator system and the arrangements for monitoring and evaluation</b>	<b>40</b>
4.1. Programme indicator system	40
4.2. Programme-level arrangements for monitoring/data collection and evaluation	46
<b>5. Appraisal of the programme's financial allocations</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>6. Appraisal of the programme's contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy and to social, economic and territorial cohesion</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>7. Appraisal of the programme's provisions on implementation and partnership</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>8. Summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Annexes</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>83</b>

## Executive Summary

The ex-ante evaluation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 combined various methods and techniques which are mainly relating to theory-based evaluation and especially to Programme Theory.

**The entire ex-ante evaluation process was truly interactive and also iterative.** The independent evaluators worked closely with a number of structures and key actors that were directly involved in the elaboration of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. In general, the different main elements of the programme were elaborated successively which permitted the evaluators to appraise new contents stepwise and also to formulate related recommendations for further improvements. These recommendations were always presented to and discussed by the Programming Committee and nearby all of them were also considered during the next steps of the programming process.

### *The programme strategy*

**The INTERREG EUROPE Programme contains a very concise but appropriate territorial situation analysis** for the entire cooperation area (EU28+Norway+Switzerland), bearing in mind the little space available for this description in the Programme template and the vast area that needs to be covered. This situation analysis was elaborated on ground of an “initial scoping of needs and challenges”, which was carried out during the programme preparation phase and also assessed by the ex-ante evaluation. **The specific objectives of INTERREG EUROPE are consistent** because they well reflect the regional-level challenges/needs and interregional cooperation potentials which are identified in the Programme’s territorial situation analysis.

**INTERREG EUROPE shows a high degree of internal coherence.** This overall conclusion is supported by the following key findings of our in-depth appraisal:

- The wider objective system of INTERREG EUROPE is reasonable and also logically coherent, but obviously more differentiated than what is formally required for the period 2014-2020. Beyond the four thematic objectives and the six specific objectives, also an “overall objective” and two “operational objectives” are formulated.
- When looking at the nature of the interdependence relations which exist between the six specific objectives of INTERREG EUROPE, we observed widespread and positive cross-impacts and in some cases neutrality but no conflict among the specific programme objectives. This means that the types of action realised under a given specific objective are most often also positively contributing to an achievement of other specific objectives. This complementarity relationship occurs more frequently between the specific objectives of different Priority Axes than between the specific objectives of the same Priority Axis (only existing in the cases of Priority Axes 1 and 4).
- Finally, also a larger number of key synergy potentials within the objective system of INTERREG EUROPE were identified, analysed and validated which are also pro-actively considered by the Programme.

**INTERREG EUROPE also shows a high degree of external coherence.** This overall conclusion is supported by the following key findings of our in-depth appraisal:

- The specific objectives and types of action of INTERREG EUROPE consider quite substantially many objectives, principles or actions which are promoted by a number of important European-level policy strategies and programmes (esp. Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020, “COSME”, “Horizon 2020”, EU-level roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy by 2050; EU-level roadmap to a resource efficient Europe). INTERREG EUROPE has therefore clear potentials for making strong complementary contributions which support the realisation of those European-level policy strategies and programmes.
- The process-related elements of interregional cooperation and the strategic target audience, both prescribed by the ETC-Regulation, are correctly translated by the overall objective and the two operational objectives of INTERREG EUROPE. However, by including also the “own” policies and strategies of the regions in Europe, INTERREG EUROPE further expands the strategic target audience beyond the envisaged Growth & Jobs and ETC-programmes. Yet, we consider this expansion as being useful and appropriate and share the justification provided by the Programme.
- INTERREG EUROPE contains clear and also appropriate provisions showing how complementarity, mutual cooperation and coordination will be achieved in relation to the other ETC-Programmes (cross-border, transnational, interregional).

**The intervention logic of INTERREG EUROPE is clearly articulated** at the level of each Investment Priority and also across all Investment Priorities, **which enables the Programme in principle to attain the specific objectives and also its overarching strategic objectives** (i.e. the two Operational Objectives and the Overall Objective). For the two types of action which are always the same across the different Investment Priorities (i.e. Policy Learning Platforms & Interregional Cooperation Projects), the basic assumptions underlying their future implementation are valid and also the causal links to the intended outcomes are in general robust. However, the scope of “direct ownership” which can be claimed in relation to the induced changes will be wider in the context of the Projects than in case of the Platforms. The **only aspect which should be taken care of in the future** is the deeper cause of the “break” which was detected in the overall causal chain of the Interregional Cooperation Projects (i.e. activities for phase 2 of the Projects are not extensively described by the Programme). The envisaged concretisation of the phase 2 activities in the new Programme Manual should be prepared with care and also on ground of an intense discussion in the Monitoring Committee in order to achieve a purpose-oriented and also practicable solution.

**The horizontal EU-Principles** referred to in Articles 7 and 8 of the CPR **are quite differently considered and supported in their concrete application by INTERREG EUROPE.** The principles of promoting equal opportunities between men and women (incl. an integration of the gender perspective) and of preventing discrimination are not directly considered by most of the specific programme objectives and also not pro-actively supported in their concrete application by the related types of action. This, however, can be justified by the particular thematic focus of these specific programme objectives. A clear exception to this general picture is the specific objective of Priority Axis 2, as it directly considers and will also actively support both of these horizontal principles. The sustainable development principle, on the contrary, is extensively

considered by the specific objectives of Priority Axes 3 and 4 and the related types of action can make a very strong direct contribution to actively promoting particular aspects which are related to this principle (esp. environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation). The specific objectives of the Priority Axes 1 and 2 consider sustainable development very weakly. Therefore, mostly an indirect contribution to the promotion of sustainable development can be expected from this side. This dual situation in the consideration of and contribution to sustainable development is acknowledged by the Programme and also adequately addressed by specific provisions in this respect.

### ***Indicator system and arrangements for monitoring and evaluation***

The **output indicators** are relevant and only minor issues for improvement were discussed. Likewise the target values are sensible and the arrangements for monitoring appropriate.

The **result indicators are clearly defined and coherent** with regard to the specific objectives, but they are too narrowly focussed on the Programme (i.e. focus on “*measures inspired*” or “*funding influenced*” by INTERREG EUROPE). However, considering the particular mission of INTERREG EUROPE and the specificity of its types of actions (i.e. supporting and facilitating knowledge sharing and good practice transfer among actors of regional relevance to improve regional policies and Cohesion Policy programmes), the adoption of this narrow result indicator definition may indeed be justified. Quantified baselines for the result indicators are not yet indicated in the Programme. They will be determined in the second half of 2014 through a survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes. The target values set for the indicator “*measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE*” are realistic, whereas the target values for the indicator “*amounts of Structural Funds influenced by INTERREG EUROPE*” are generally appropriate but not very ambitious.

**The monitoring provisions seem sensible and likely to provide the necessary support to the decision-making and evaluation of the programme.** Nevertheless, some more details on administrative and financial matters relating to data collection and monitoring could have been given in the Programme. This in particular applies to the survey which will be conducted for the result indicators. As the design of the survey, the definition of target groups and the collection method deserve careful attention, some aspects could have been more clearly defined already in the programme document (i.e. Who is responsible for the survey? What is the timeframe for the preparation and implementation of the survey?). Nevertheless, as INTERREG EUROPE anyway envisages elaborating a specific secondary programme document on these issues at a later stage, the evaluators encourage the Programme to define there in detail the methods, responsibilities and processes and to make sure that also sufficient Technical Assistance resources are available for these tasks.

### ***Financial allocations of the Programme***

The ETC-Regulation does not require interregional cooperation programmes to limit the number of thematic objectives to be selected, but **INTERREG EUROPE deliberately adopted a concentration on four thematic objectives** (TO 1, TO 3, TO 4, TO 6) **which also implies that**

**the bulk of the total ERDF funding available to the Programme (94%) is allocated to these objectives.** Considering also that the total financial appropriation is adequately presented in the Programme document, one can conclude that INTERREG EUROPE “over-complies” to the requirements as set out by the EU-Regulations.

**The equal distribution of the financial resources among the four thematic objectives and Priority Axes of INTERREG EUROPE is adequate:** it reflects not only the high weight given to the challenges/needs and targets of the Europe 2020 fields of action “Innovation”, “Competitiveness”, “Energy Efficiency” and “Combating Climate Change”, but also the high level of consideration of these fields of action by the thematic and specific programme objectives and the related types of action (i.e. Interregional Cooperation Projects & Policy Learning Platforms).

### *Contribution to Europe 2020 and to social, economic and territorial cohesion*

**INTERREG EUROPE brings an indirect contribution to the achievement of the Europe 2020 targets.** It does so by offering regions the opportunity to participate in policy learning and knowledge transfer and thereby bring an important contribution by improving the effectiveness of the Europe 2020 related policies and projects. The main contribution of the specific programme objectives focuses on smart and sustainable growth, while only a small contribution to inclusive growth is seen.

**Likewise the contributions to social, economic and territorial cohesion are of an indirect nature.** The core of INTERREG EUROPE’s purpose is to increase the capacities of all regions in delivering better results of policies and programmes, which is why the programme targets both socio-economic and territorial cohesion. However, the main focus lies within economic cohesion. Furthermore the programme supports territorial cohesion, although at a more variable scope. The programme does not bring any significant contribution to social cohesion.

### *Programme implementation structures & partnership*

A review of the experiences in the period 2007-2013 shows that **some critical features characterising the management, implementation and decision-making system of the INTERREG IVC Programme continue to be of relevance during the new funding period 2014-2020.** Issues such as the complex and challenging decision-making within the Monitoring Committee, a clarification of the role of the system of National Contact Points and a reinforcement of the Joint Secretariats’ communication unit should therefore be carefully observed and addressed in the future.

**The description of the management and control system of INTERREG EUROPE fulfils to a large extent the content-related expectations which were set out by the European Commission in the commented “Model for the Operational Programme under the ETC-goal” and therefore fully complies with the requirements of Article 8 (4) (a) and (b) of the ETC-Regulation.**

INTERREG EUROPE also identifies **a wide range of actions which are adequate for reducing the administrative burden on beneficiaries.**

**The partnership arrangements** adopted during the preparation of INTERREG EUROPE and also for the future implementation of the Programme **fulfil the qualitative requirements as set out by the “European Code of Conduct on Partnership”**.

### *The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)*

The SEA determined the status of the environment and existing environmental problems and assessed in particular **potential environmental effects**: these are mainly indirect effects and contributions because of the specific nature of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme (i.e. the impact chains from the programme’s interventions to direct environmental effects of projects are quite long), whereas the risk of negative effects and contributions is very limited. Recommendations were formulated in relation to the draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme of November 2013 and were partly considered already in the revised final draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme of December 2013.

The **SEA-consultation** was conducted in each Member State individually according to the respective national legal requirements and led to comments and suggestions from a total of 39 authorities, institutions and private persons (status 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2014). The contributions provided cover a wide range of issues and quite a considerable number of comments underline statements provided in the environmental report.

## 1. Methods and techniques used by the ex-ante evaluation

The European Commission's Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) issued a "Guidance document on ex-ante evaluation"<sup>1</sup> which clearly highlights that the role of ex-ante evaluations is reinforced in the new programming period 2014-2020. The Guidance document sets out qualitative expectations and gives recommendations on how to address the main components of an ex-ante evaluation, with a view to support national and regional authorities in charge of the programming as well as the independent external experts which are appointed to carry out ex-ante evaluations.

**For the ex-ante evaluation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020**, an "Inception Report"<sup>2</sup> was elaborated at the very beginning of the process. It describes the overall procedural and methodological approach of the ex-ante evaluation and also the specific combination of methods and techniques applied at the level of the five mandatory evaluation components.<sup>3</sup>

In order to fully meet the quality expectations as set out by the Commission's Guidance document, **we combined the following methods and techniques which are mainly relating to theory-based evaluation and especially to Programme Theory:**<sup>4</sup>

- **Document review** and **desk research** were used as a starting point under all components and were complemented by shorter interviews with key stakeholders directly involved in the programming process (esp. JTS personnel of the INTERREG IVC programme).
- **Matrix-based assessment techniques** were used under many components of the ex-ante evaluation in order to organise and compare complex sets of information and to make the evaluator's reasoning more systematic and transparent. They allowed to identify and qualify the extent to which the specific programme objectives are reflecting the identified EU-wide challenges/needs (appraisal of the consistency), the nature and scope of the interdependence relations and potential synergies existing between the specific programme objectives (appraisal of the internal coherence), the contribution of the specific programme objectives to other EU-wide policy strategies or programmes (appraisal of the external coherence) and helped to appraise the overall consistency of the programme's financial allocations.
- **Objective-tree analysis** was used for unveiling the general structure of the wider programme objective system and the hierarchical relations among the individual types of objectives (appraisal of the internal coherence).
- As the verification of an existence of potential synergies within the programme objectives system is only one among the many evaluation questions that have to be

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2013a)

<sup>2</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013b)

<sup>3</sup> The terms of reference for this ex-ante evaluation prescribed the following main components: Evaluation of the programme strategy (Component 1), evaluation of the indicators and the programme provisions for monitoring and evaluation (Component 2), evaluation of the consistency of financial allocations (Component 3), evaluation of the contribution to Europe 2020 strategy and more generally to social, economic and territorial cohesion (Component 4) and evaluation of the programme delivery mechanisms and structures (Component 5).

<sup>4</sup> On theory-based evaluation and Programme Theory, see for example: Cojocar (2009), European Commission (2012d), Mackinnon/Amott/McGarvey (2006), Organizational Research Services (2004), Riché (no date mentioned), Stame (2004), Vogel (2012).

addressed in the context of the strategy appraisal, we conceived a **pragmatic and interactive process of synergy screening**. Based on the definitions for synergy which are given in the MEANS-Handbook and the EVALSED-Guide of DG REGIO,<sup>5</sup> this process covered two out of the three recommended assessment stages (i.e. identification of potential synergies & further analysis of key synergies)<sup>6</sup> and also included a validation of the identified and analysed synergy potentials by members of the Joint Technical Secretariat of the INTERREG IVC Programme.

- **Logical models** were drawn up for the evaluation of the programme strategy and the appraisal of the programme-level indicator system. In the first case, a table-based logical framework was drawn up for one investment priority in order to examine its intervention logic (i.e. the vertical means-ends continuum) and the causality relation linking it to important assumptions underlying the future implementation and to potential risks that can negatively influence the realisation of the intervention strategy. In the second case, such models were drawn up for each specific programme objective in order to check the logical linkage of the proposed result and output indicators to other related elements such as the specific needs, the main types of intervention and the envisaged project-level actions.
- A **theory of change** was drawn up for the entire INTERREG EUROPE Programme in the context of the strategy evaluation mainly with a view to better understand the specificity of this programme in the wider context of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) goal. This theory of change, articulated through a visual diagram, describes the “pathway of change” which allows the Programme to actually reach its medium-term overall objective.

In addition, we originally proposed to **organise two “Feedback Workshops” at important stages of the programming process** in order to further intensify the iterative and interactive character of the programme elaboration and ex-ante evaluation activities. By bringing together the ex-ante evaluators and staff of the INTERREG IVC programme JTS as well as the experts in charge of drawing up the programme, the proposed workshops were meant to discuss how the intermediate conclusions and recommendations of the ex-ante evaluations’ appraisal of the programme strategy (Workshop 1) and of the programme indicator system (Workshop 2) could be put into practice in the next programme draft. Due to changes in the initially planned programme drafting and decision-taking process, however, only one compact one-day workshop was organised on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2013 in Lille which covered both aspects.

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<sup>5</sup> European Commission, 1996, p.6: *Synergy can be defined simply as the product of a system, the programme, which is aimed at a global impact that is greater as the sum of the individual impacts of different actions within the same programme. The fact that several public interventions (or several components of an intervention) together produce an impact which is greater than the sum of the impacts they would produce alone (...).* European Commission, 2012d, p.112: *Synergy generally refers to positive impacts. However, phenomena which reinforce negative effects, negative synergy or anti-synergy may also be referred to (...).*

<sup>6</sup> The third stage, “empirical verification”, is to be carried out only if the previously identified and analysed synergies are essential for the continuation of a programme. The analysis at this stage mainly involves interviews with the targeted beneficiaries of those measures belonging to a “synergy window” (see also: European Commission, 1996, pp.31-33).

## 2. Overview on the ex-ante evaluation process and on improvements made to the various programme drafts

The European Commission's "Guidance Document on ex-ante evaluation" gives practical recommendations for carrying out an interactive and iterative ex-ante evaluation process<sup>7</sup> and also requires that the final evaluation report (...) *should reflect the process (...), identify the different parties involved (...)* and (...) *present the changes and improvements to the programme which have been made through the evaluation process.*<sup>8</sup>

Due to this requirement, we now provide a summary overview on the ex-ante evaluation process for INTERREG EUROPE and also highlight which improvements were made to the various programme drafts as a consequence of the inputs from the ex-ante evaluation. As the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was carried between late 2013 and early 2014 by a team of external experts being independent from the ex-ante evaluation team, a short summary overview on the SEA-process is given in a specific chapter at the end of the present ex-ante evaluation report ([see: Chapter 8](#)).

### *Main features of the ex-ante evaluation process*

**The entire ex-ante evaluation process was truly interactive**, because the independent evaluators worked closely with a number of structures and key actors directly involved in the elaboration of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. These were namely the 28 EU-Member States plus Switzerland and Norway (i.e. Partner States) as well as the European Commission and the Managing Authority (MA), all represented on the Programming Committee (PC) and partly on the Task Force (TF) of the Programming Committee, but also the INTERREG IVC Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) and the team of external experts in charge of drafting the programme. The MA, in close cooperation with the JTS, coordinated the overall programme drafting and ex-ante evaluation activities and both structures also elaborated content-related inputs for the subsequent programme drafts (i.e. discussion notes, topical papers, etc.). The actual decisions on the development of the programme and also on the follow-up given to recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation were prepared in the TF and later on taken jointly among the Partner States in the PC.

**The entire ex-ante evaluation process was also truly iterative**, because the different main elements of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme were in general elaborated successively.<sup>9</sup> This permitted the evaluators to appraise new contents stepwise and also to formulate related recommendations for further improvements. From the perspective of the ex-ante evaluation, this iterative process can be sub-divided into three different phases: the initial evaluation phase (spring to early summer 2013), the main evaluation phase (late summer to late autumn 2013) and the final evaluation phase (winter 2013/2014). However, we have to observe that the "time

<sup>7</sup> It is (...) good practice that the ex ante evaluators work in close interaction with the authority responsible for the preparation of the programme (...) and that they (...) undertake work in stages, depending on when elements of the programme are available and give their feedback to the programmers. European Commission (2013a), p.19

<sup>8</sup> European Commission (2013a), p.22

<sup>9</sup> I.e. assessment of needs/challenges → specific programme objectives & related types of intervention → related programme indicators → financial allocation & programme delivery structures.

windows” allocated to some steps of the ex-ante evaluation were particularly tight, especially during the main evaluation phase. The reason for this was the tightening of the overall time planning which resulted from the combined effect of a slower than planned progress in the programming activities during spring/early summer 2013 and of the strict maintenance of the deadline for an approval of the Draft Final Programme in early December 2013.

### ***Initial ex-ante evaluation phase***

In April 2013, the programme drafters carried out **an initial scoping of needs and challenges**<sup>10</sup> in order to set the thematic and operational context for the future INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020. The thematic EU-wide challenges and needs were analysed from a regions-focussed perspective for each of the three main priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth), while indicating also specific potentials for future regional action. The main challenges and needs relating to the implementation-related dimension of the new programme were assessed by reviewing key lessons from the past INTERREG IVC experience and also the regulatory requirements for the new funding period 2014-2020.

**The ex-ante evaluators** appraised the quality of this initial scoping document and **formulated related observations in their 1<sup>st</sup> Review Report**.<sup>11</sup> We observed that the thematic analysis put a somewhat stronger emphasis on matters relating to inclusive and sustainable growth, whereas smart growth was mainly addressed by focussing on R&D/innovation question. We also stressed that for each topic analysed the main territorial divisions should be better highlighted (European level e.g. East/West, core/periphery and at the regional level, e.g. urban/rural) and that especially the opportunities for interregional cooperation could be better described. Overall, however, we concluded that the analysis provided was sensible.

In **early June 2013**, the programme drafters presented a **1<sup>st</sup> Draft of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme**.<sup>12</sup> In this draft, however, only Sub-section 1.1 of the Template for ETC-programmes was elaborated to larger extent, while other parts of the strategy description were still missing (esp. the entire section 2). On ground of the initial scoping of EU-wide needs and challenges and by considering the previous comments formulated by the ex-ante evaluation, a more concise and also further improved analysis of the thematic needs and challenges in the interregional cooperation territory (EU28+CH+NOR)<sup>13</sup> and of the operational challenges and opportunities for future interregional cooperation was presented. Moreover, also a brief introduction to the very basic elements of the programme strategy was elaborated.

**The ex-ante evaluators** appraised the contents of this document and **elaborated a shorter note with preliminary comments on the 1<sup>st</sup> Draft**.<sup>14</sup> We observed that the analysis of the thematic needs and challenges now reflects quite well the most important core issues which are

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<sup>10</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013c)

<sup>11</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013d)

<sup>12</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013e)

<sup>13</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Draft now contained a shorter paragraph on issues relating to climate change, also summarising ESPON results on the capacity to react to climate change challenges and climate change vulnerability. The description also highlighted more frequently the main territorial divisions existing within the EU in relation to certain thematic issues. Finally, a reference to the European Territorial Agenda (TA 2020) was included.

<sup>14</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013f)

related to the wider policy and territorial context of the new programme. However, there was still little analysis on the issue of enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs and also concrete potentials for interregional cooperation under the respective thematic fields analysed could have been mentioned. As regards the short section introducing the programme strategy, we suggested a more streamlined and logic presentation and also recommended concrete changes in this respect. The conclusions and recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation were also presented and discussed at the PC-meeting in Dublin end of June 2013.

### ***Main ex-ante evaluation phase***

Further discussions and drafting work took place during the summer period which then led to the presentation of the **2<sup>nd</sup> Draft of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020**<sup>15</sup> at the **beginning of September 2013**. The new version described all elements of the programme strategy (i.e. EU-wide challenges/needs, justification for the selection of thematic objectives/Investment Priorities, specific programme objectives, expected results, envisaged types of action etc.) and also defined a provisional set of output and result indicators for the six specific programme objectives.

The **ex-ante evaluators appraised this draft** of the programme **in their 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Report**<sup>16</sup> and carried out a first and nearby complete evaluation of the programme strategy as well as a provisional assessment of the programme indicators. The report presented the detailed assessment of the programme strategy according to the four mandatory tasks (i.e. consistency, coherence, intervention logic, horizontal principles) and formulated related overall conclusions as well as 10 recommendations for further improving the programme strategy (**see: Annex 1**). Furthermore, our appraisal of the still provisional programme indicators allowed highlighting a number of weaknesses and logical inconsistencies which the next steps of the programming process should address.

The conclusions and recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation on the programme strategy were presented at the PC-meeting in Druskininkai (Lithuania) end of September 2013. They were extensively discussed among the Partner State representatives and finally endorsed as a guideline for carrying out further programming activities. Shortly after the September PC-meeting in Lithuania, also a one-day “Feedback Workshop” was organised on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2013 in Lille, at which more specific matters relating to the programme strategy evaluation and in particular the indicator system were jointly discussed.

After further discussions and programming work mainly on the programme indicator system during October 2013, the **Final Draft of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020**<sup>17</sup> was presented in **early November 2013**. This final draft was considerably improved if compared to the earlier programme version, because it addressed most of previously formulated recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation as well as a larger number of comments made by the Partner States.

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<sup>15</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013g)

<sup>16</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013i), INTERREG IVC Programme (2013j)

<sup>17</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k)

On this new version of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme, **the evaluators were now able to carry out a nearby complete appraisal** for all five main components of the ex-ante evaluation **in their Draft Final Review Report**.<sup>18</sup> The progress made in the drafting process allowed us to conclude positively on many aspects of the Programme contents. Still, a total of 10 recommendations were formulated in the report which suggested further improvements of the Programme. Some of these recommendations were related to the Programme's intervention logic, but most of them to the more recently elaborated set of programme-level output and result indicators (see: [Annex 2](#)).

The conclusions and recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation on the Final Draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme were presented at the PC-meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 in Vilnius (Lithuania) and discussed among the Partner State representatives. The suggested improvements have been accepted by the PC and were expected, together with a larger number of other recommendations for changes which resulted from comments made by the Partner States, to form the basis for a further revision of the Draft Final Programme.

### *Final ex-ante evaluation phase*

Shortly after the Vilnius PC-meeting of December 2013, a **Revised Final Draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme**<sup>19</sup> was presented which took into consideration all of the previously formulated recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2014, this version of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme was submitted to an online public consultation in order to gather input and feedback on the proposed programme from any interested individual or organisation (i.e. local, regional and national authorities, economic and social partners as well as bodies representing thematic groupings and civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations etc.). After the closure of the public consultation and ultimate changes which were made to the previous Programme draft on ground of the survey results and other inputs, **the final draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme**<sup>20</sup> was presented on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2014.

The findings presented in this **Final Review Report of the Ex-ante Evaluation** thus relate to the most recent status of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme right before its submission to the European Commission, but they also draw upon and refer to still relevant findings of prior ex-ante evaluation activities.

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<sup>18</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013m)

<sup>19</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013n)

<sup>20</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a)

### 3. Appraisal of the programme strategy

The European Commission highlights in the “Guidance document on ex-ante evaluation” that Cohesion Policy (...) *must be strongly orientated towards results in order to contribute to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (Europe 2020 Strategy). To this end the regulation increases the importance of well-designed programmes taking into account European, national and regional needs, and focused on the results they want to achieve (...).*<sup>21</sup>

These remarks underline that an appraisal of the programme strategy is particularly important, wherefore ex-ante evaluations are expected to address a larger number of evaluation questions relating to

- the consistency of the programme objectives;
- the internal coherence of the programme;
- the external coherence of the programme;
- the intervention logic of the programme and the linkage between supported actions, expected outputs and results;
- the horizontal EU-principles.

#### 3.1. Consistency of the programme objectives

The ESI-Funds Regulations for the period 2014-2020 do no longer require programmes to include a full socio-economic analysis. According to Article 8 (2) (a) of the ETC-Regulation, however, a cooperation programme shall set out (...) *a justification for the choice of thematic objectives, corresponding investment priorities and financial allocations, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework (...), based on an analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, (...), taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation (...).*<sup>22</sup> Due to this, our appraisal will focus on the following three main evaluation questions:

- (1) Are the EU-wide challenges/needs and targets identified by the Europe 2020 Strategy sufficiently well analysed with respect to their territorial dimension and which weight is given to them in the situation analysis?
- (2) Are the specific objectives of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme consistently reflecting the identified challenges/needs?
- (3) Are the specific objectives sufficiently precise to demonstrate how the programme can contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy while addressing the EU-wide challenges/needs in practice?

#### ***Analysis & weighting of the Europe 2020 challenges & needs***

The INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 covers the EU28 plus Switzerland and Norway,

<sup>21</sup> European Commission (2013a)

<sup>22</sup> European Parliament / Council of the European Union (2013a)

wherefore the programme-related challenges and needs correspond in principle to those identified by the Europe 2020 Strategy.

From our appraisal it appears that **a very concise but appropriate territorial situation analysis is carried out for the cooperation area** in Sub-section 1.1 of the programme document, which summarises well the more extensive scoping of needs and challenges that was realised during the preparation phase.<sup>23</sup> The territorial situation analysis identifies, for each of the three main priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy (i.e. smart, sustainable and inclusive growth), a number of regional-level challenges and needs as well as related potentials for future interregional cooperation.

The challenges/needs and interregional cooperation potentials identified in this situation analysis address to variable extents the nine fields of action of the Europe 2020 Strategy<sup>24</sup>: the weight given to the EU-wide challenges/needs and targets of six fields of action is either high (“Innovation”, “Competitiveness”, “Combating climate change”, “Clean and efficient energy”) or medium (“Digital Society”, “Employment”), whereas the EU-wide challenges/needs and targets of the three remaining fields of action are either given medium-low and low weight (“Education, training and lifelong learning”, “Skills”) or even no substantial weight at all (“Fighting Poverty”) in the programmes’ situation analysis.

We consider this deliberate focus on some Europe 2020 fields of action as being adequate, especially if one takes into account the EU-wide coverage of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme and its “soft” way of acting (i.e. supporting exchange of experience, policy learning and a transfer of good practices).

### ***The identified challenges/needs and the specific programme objectives***

The intervention strategy of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme consists of four thematic objectives (TOs) being each related to one Priority Axis (PA) and of six Investment Priorities (IPs) with six related specific objectives (SOs). As regards the latter, we preferred to use a “consecutive” SO-numbering throughout the entire ex-ante evaluation report instead of the “axis-related” SO-numbering in the programme document,<sup>25</sup> mainly in order to make referencing in the text easier.

Our appraisal confirms that **the six SOs are consistently reflecting the regional-level challenges/needs and interregional cooperation potentials as identified by the territorial situation analysis (see: Annex 3)**. The weight given to the EU-wide challenges/needs and targets of the nine Europe 2020 fields of action in the programmes’ situation analysis is in nearby all cases reflected in a corresponding level of consideration by the specific programme objectives. Only for the Europe 2020 field of action “Digital Society”, the medium weight given to

<sup>23</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013c)

<sup>24</sup> Although the notion “field of action” does not directly appear in the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010a), it can be derived from the phrases which are always preceding the main bullet points in the three sections describing smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (i.e. “Europe must act”). Always three fields of action are related to smart growth (“Innovation”, “Education, training and lifelong learning”, “Digital Society”), to sustainable growth (“Competitiveness”, “Combating climate change”, “Clean and efficient energy”) and to inclusive growth (“Employment”, “Skills”, “Fighting Poverty”).

<sup>25</sup> Equivalents of “consecutive” and “axis-related” SO-numbering: SO 1 = SO 1.1; SO 2 = SO 1.2; SO 3 = SO 2.1; SO 4 = SO 3.1; SO 5 = SO 4.1; SO 6 = SO 4.2.

the related challenges/needs and interregional cooperation potentials in the situation analysis is not reflected in a corresponding level of consideration by the SOs. This clear deviation is, however, adequately justified in the programme because (...) *the introduction of ICT is perceived as a cross-cutting theme that links in with the other thematic objectives (...)*.<sup>26</sup> Due to this, development issues related to the availability of ICT-infrastructures are addressed under SO 1 (IP 1b) and references on other specific ICT-development opportunities are included under the IP-descriptions of the specific programme objectives SO2 – SO6.<sup>27</sup>

**A verification of whether the specific objectives are sufficiently precise** to demonstrate how INTERREG EUROPE can address the EU-wide challenges/needs in practice **is difficult to realise**, mainly because of the particular nature of this Programme. INTERREG EUROPE has to address the identified challenges/needs and interregional cooperation potentials in a very extended territorial context (i.e. EU28+CH+NOR), which will expose the Programme in practice to an extreme structural and operational diversity (i.e. specific regional-level situations/constellations as regards the general EU-wide challenges & needs identified; different regional-level policies/approaches and actors dealing with the EU-wide challenges & needs etc.). INTERREG EUROPE does also not intend to tackle EU-wide challenges/needs directly, but intervene “indirectly” through generating changes in topic-related policies that are induced by exchange of experience and learning processes and a transfer of good practices. Bearing this in mind, it then becomes clear that the Programme must rather adopt specific objectives that are sufficiently wide in order to achieve its specific own contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy.

### 3.2. Internal coherence of the programme

An appraisal of the internal coherence usually looks at the wider objective system of a programme in order to provide information on whether the different objective-levels are coherently linked to each other and on how each of the specific programme objectives contributes to the achievement of higher-ranking programme objectives or of other specific programme objectives. To achieve this, we will examine the INTERREG EUROPE programme strategy alongside the following three main evaluation questions:

- (1) What are the hierarchical relations within the wider objective system of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme?
- (2) Which interdependence relations exist between the specific objectives of each Priority Axis and between the specific objectives of the different Priority Axes?
- (3) Which potential synergies exist within the programme objective system that should be considered during the programming process or later on during the programme implementation process?

Before examining these questions, we start with a brief review of the quality of the programme strategy in order to see if it meets the basic EU-level requirements and if the specific programme objectives were also carefully elaborated.

<sup>26</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.14

<sup>27</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), on p.28 for IP 1(b); p. 35 for IP 3(d); p.40 for IP 4(e); p.46 for IP 6(c); p.52 for IP 6(g).

### ***Quality of the programme strategy***

The programme document introduces the wider strategy of INTERREG EUROPE under Sub-section 1.1.1.5 and then describes under Section 2 in more detail the **main elements of the programme strategy**:<sup>28</sup> the four Priority Axes (PAs) and their thematic objectives (TOs) as well as the six selected Investment Priorities (IPs) and the related six specific objectives (SOs).

**(1) Allocation of TOs to PAs and selection of IPs from TOs:** The overall set-up of the main strategy elements is fully in line with the formal requirements of the EU-regulations. The INTERREG EUROPE Programme consists only of PAs which correspond to one TO.<sup>29</sup> These axes comprise either one IP (PA 2 & PA 3) or two IPs (PA 1 & PA 4) which were always rightly chosen from their corresponding TO.

**(2) Justification for the choice of the four TOs:** The selection of appropriate TOs for the INTERREG EUROPE strategy was transparent and also logic, although for interregional cooperation the regulations do not impose a thematic preference for particular TOs. Still, the Partner States of INTERREG EUROPE have agreed to apply the concentration principle to programme strategy in order to increase (...) *its potential to make a substantial impact on regional policies across the EU* (...). They selected four TOs which correspond mainly to the smart and sustainable growth priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy (TO 1, TO 3, TO 4, TO 6). The choice of TO 1, TO 3 and TO 4 is justified by the shared opinion of the Partner States that preference should be given to the most relevant of the four TOs on which the Growth and Jobs programmes will have to concentrate their ERDF-support (i.e. on TO 1, TO 2, TO 3, TO 4).<sup>30</sup> The choice of TO 6 is justified by the fact that the (...) *Partner States have identified a shared need to address issues related to the protection of the environment and promotion of resource efficiency in their regions*.<sup>31</sup>

**(3) Justification for the choice of the six IPs:** The selection of appropriate IPs among the range of options available under the four TOs was transparent and also logic. For making their choice, the Partner States applied a few main principles which all relate to the particular context and mission of INTERREG EUROPE (i.e. the Programme covers EU28+CH+NOR; adequate response to the obvious diversity of regional-level policies in the programme area; focus only on “soft” improvement of policies & absence of physical/material interventions). On ground of these principles, the Partner States then gave preference to IPs which (...) *can support interregional exchange and policy learning on a wide range of issues representative of the thematic scope of the corresponding thematic objective*.<sup>32</sup>

**(4) Formulation of the six SOs:** From a strictly formal point of view, we have to observe that the SO-formulations are in general not corresponding to the basic requirements as set out by the

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<sup>28</sup> Beyond these main elements of the programme strategy, Section 2 also describes other important aspects such as the two “types of action”, the expected outputs/results, the main target groups and types of beneficiaries, the territories targeted and also the project selection criteria (only once for SO 1, while using those also for SO2-SO6). These other aspects of the strategy are reviewed more in-depth under the evaluation task “Intervention Logic”.

<sup>29</sup> There are no Priority Axes which cover either more than one TO or combine one or more complementary IPs under one TO.

<sup>30</sup> *Concerning support to TO2 - Information and Communication Technologies the Partner States consider that it is less opportune to deal with the challenges related to the digital society through a separate Priority Axis. Rather, the introduction of ICT is perceived as a cross-cutting theme that links in with the other thematic objectives, for instance as an integrated part of innovation infrastructures (TO1) or through the development of e-services by SMEs. Therefore, thematic objective 2 is not separately included in INTERREG EUROPE.* INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.14

<sup>31</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.14

<sup>32</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.14

EU-level:<sup>33</sup> although the specific programme objectives are in general consistent with the IPs in question, their formulations are not detailing the IPs further and remain either as broad as the IP (e.g. SO 3, SO 5, SO 6) or even slightly broader (e.g. SO 1, SO 2, SO 4). If, however, the specific nature of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme and our previous evaluation conclusions at the end of the Section 3.1 are taken into consideration, then one can indeed support the use of such general SO-formulations. Therefore, also the programme's own justification can be considered adequate: (...) *If the programme aims to trigger policy change and improve the implementation of (Growth & Jobs and ETC) programmes in regions across the whole EU, it is crucial that the programme acknowledges the diversity of regional needs and opportunities within the fields of the thematic objectives selected. This diversity is reflected in different accents, priorities and levels of ambition in the policies and (Growth & Jobs and ETC) programmes in each European region, even if they address the same overall thematic objective. The programme should therefore be open to the full range of topics within each of the selected thematic objectives as defined by the regions of Europe in their individual (Growth & Jobs and ETC) programmes.*<sup>34</sup>

### ***Hierarchical relations within the wider programme objective system***

**The wider objective system of INTERREG EUROPE is reasonable and also logically coherent, but obviously more differentiated than what is formally required from programmes in the period 2014-2020.** Beyond the four TOs and the six SOs, also an “overall objective” and two “operational objectives” are formulated. The inclusion of these additional objective layers can be justified by the necessity to better explain the particular role of the Programme (i.e. to improve the implementation of policies and programmes) and its exclusively “soft” way of acting (i.e. support to exchange of experience, policy-oriented learning and transfer of good practices). The wider programme objective system consists of **six different levels (see: Figure 1)**,<sup>35</sup> for which the hierarchical relations can be described as follows.

The **first two levels** cover the objectives which are directly related to the Programme's intervention strategy. At the lowest level one can find **the six specific objectives** of the six Investment Priorities which are expected to contribute, at the next higher level, to an achievement of **the four thematic objectives**, which in turn define the general intervention focus of each Priority Axis.

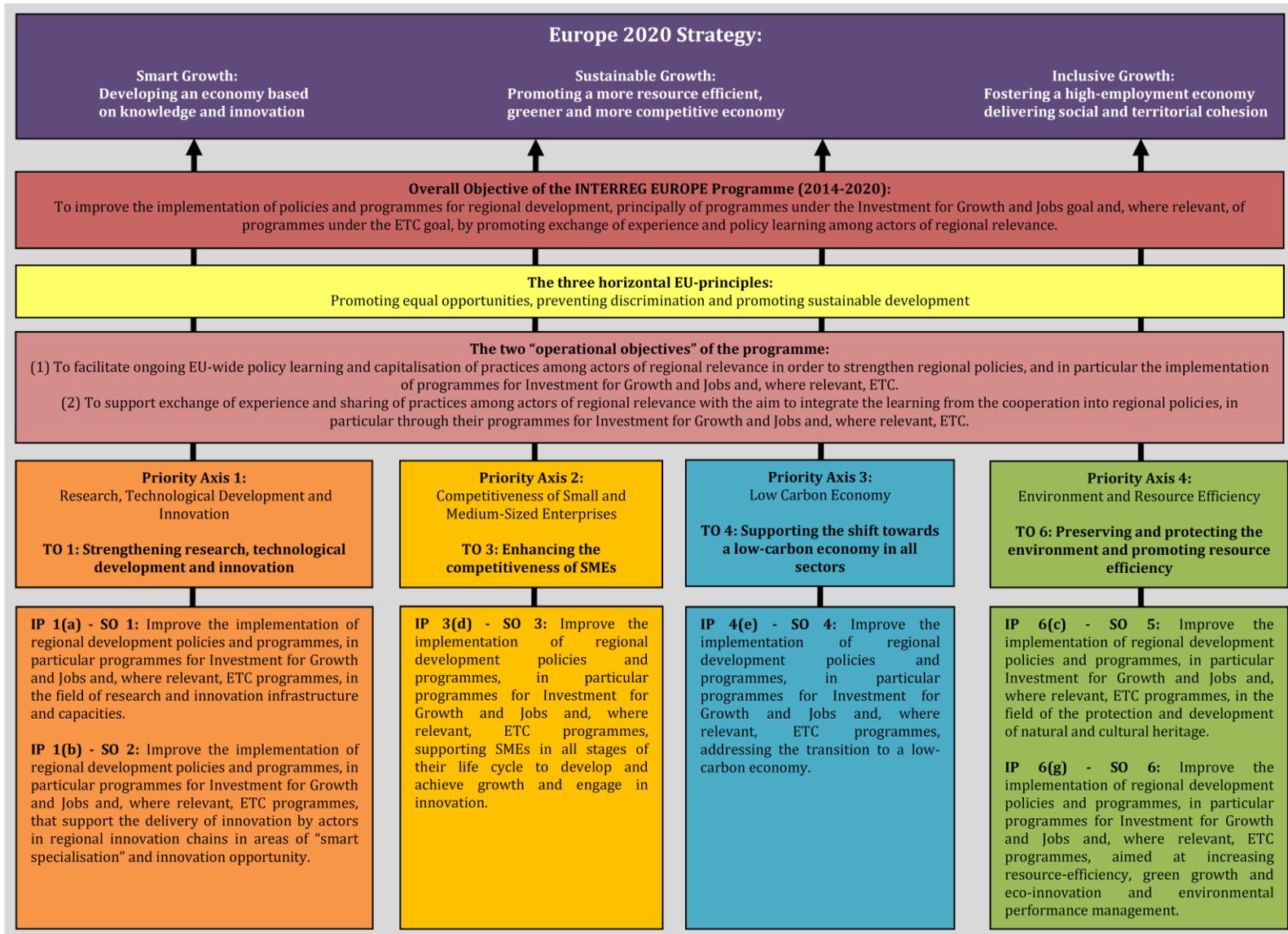
- Priority Axis 1 focuses on the thematic objective “Strengthening research, technological development and innovation” (TO 1), which is expected to be achieved by the lower-ranking specific programme objectives SO 1 and SO 2.

<sup>33</sup> In the commented version of the “Draft Template and Guidelines for the Content of the Cooperation Programme” (European Commission, 2013c), clear expectations were formulated as regards the specific objectives.

<sup>34</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.14

<sup>35</sup> We are aware of the fact that INTERREG EUROPE also sets out a “mission statement” and considers the inclusive growth objective of the Europe 2020 Strategy (...) *in more general terms as a cross-cutting theme*. For the following reasons, however, we did not include both aspects as elements of the wider programme objective system: As the mission statement refers to the main priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy (*The programme will contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe...*) and to the overall programme objective (... *by supporting and facilitating knowledge sharing and good practice transfer among actors of regional relevance to improve regional/Cohesion policy*), it is not considered in the wider programme objective system because the Europe 2020 priorities and the overall programme objective are already included. The cross-cutting theme inclusive growth is not considered in the wider programme objective system, because it is neither addressed by an appropriate thematic objective (TO 8, TO 9, TO 10) nor by one of the related Investment Priorities.

**Figure 1: The wider objective system of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme**



- Priority Axis 2 focuses on the thematic objective “Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs” (TO 3), which is expected to be achieved by the lower-ranking specific programme objective SO 3.
- Priority Axis 3 focuses on the thematic objective “Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors” (TO 4), which is expected to be achieved by the lower-ranking specific programme objective SO 4.
- Priority Axis 4 focuses on the thematic objectives “Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency” (TO 6), which is expected to be achieved by the lower-ranking specific programme objectives SO 5 and SO 6.

The **third level** covers the two “operational objectives” of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. They are applicable to all the thematic fields of regional policy which are supported by the Programme and define the two-fold interregional cooperation approach: (1) to facilitate on-going EU-wide policy learning and capitalisation of good practices through “Policy Learning Platforms” and (2) to support a sharing and transfer of good practices in order to prepare their integration and implementation in regional policies through “Interregional Cooperation Projects”.

The **fourth level** consists of the **three horizontal EU-principles** which are ranking higher than the thematic and operational programme objectives, mainly because of the over-arching provisions set out by Articles 7 and 8 of the CPR: the future implementation of programmes and thus also the delivery of their thematic and specific programme objectives shall also promote equality between men and women and the integration of gender perspective, prevent any discrimination and be pursued in line with the principle of sustainable development.

The **overall programme objective** is located at the **fifth level** and defines what the INTERREG EUROPE Programme intends to achieve in an EU-wide perspective during the funding period 2014-2020. The objective statement directly takes up or slightly rephrases the general EU-level expectations set out by Annex II of the Common Strategic Framework in relation to ERDF-funded interregional cooperation<sup>36</sup> and the specific provisions of Article 2 (3) (a) ETC-Regulation.<sup>37</sup>

While pursuing and also achieving the previously mentioned objectives and principles during the years 2014 to 2020, INTERREG EUROPE will then - at the **sixth level** - also contribute to deliver **the three EU-wide and mutually reinforcing priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy (i.e. smart, sustainable & inclusive growth)**.

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<sup>36</sup> *Interregional cooperation should aim to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by encouraging exchange of experience between regions and cities to enhance design and implementation of operational programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal.* (...) European Commission (2012b), p.41

<sup>37</sup> *Interregional cooperation shall reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by promoting (...) exchange of experience focusing on thematic objectives among partners throughout the Union, including in relation to the development of regions referred to in Article 174 TFEU on the identification and dissemination of good practices with a view to their transfer principally to operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal but also, where relevant, to cooperation programmes; (...).*

### ***Interdependence relations between the specific programme objectives***

For appraising the different types of interdependence relations<sup>38</sup> which can exist between the specific objectives of INTERREG EUROPE, we examined the types of action (ToA) under each specific programme objective and then made assumptions on the potential impacts<sup>39</sup> they may have on the achievement of specific objectives from the same Priority Axis and from other Priority Axes. These potential impacts were also qualitatively weighted and the result of this weighting was finally included into a programme-wide matrix of cross-impacts (see: [Table 1](#)).

**Interdependence relations between specific objectives of the same Priority Axis only exist in the case of PA 1 “Research, Technological Development and Innovation” and PA 4 “Environment and Resource Efficiency”,<sup>40</sup> but the significance of the respective axis-internal cross-impacts is quite different.**

**A high level of complementarity** exists **within PA 1** because we assume that the ToA applied under both SOs will also generate a strong positive impact on the achievement of the respective other SO. Interregional Cooperation Projects improving the implementation of policies/programmes in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities (SO 1) can also strongly support the delivery of innovation by actors in regional innovation chains in areas of “smart specialisation” and innovation opportunity (SO 2), while projects under SO 2 can also improve the performance of such R&DI infrastructures and capacities through creating new links for better using their outcomes or exploiting synergies. A strong positive cross-impact can also be generated by the single Policy Learning Platform which is established for PA 1, as it will be able to systematically integrate both sides of the “RTDI-coin”.

**Within PA 4**, on the contrary, only **a low level of complementarity** does exist between the two SOs. Although we assume that the single Policy Learning Platform for PA 4 will also be able to integrate the core issues addressed by SO 5 (Environment) and SO 6 (Resource Efficiency), we do not expect that especially the Interregional Cooperation Projects under both SOs will generate a strong positive impact on the achievement of the respective other SO. This means that projects improving the implementation of policies/programmes which conserve, protect, promote and develop the natural and cultural heritage (SO 5) will - at the most - only have a weak but still positive impact on further increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation as well as on improving environmental performance management in the private and public sector (SO 6) and vice versa.

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<sup>38</sup> There are basically three types of interdependence relations: (1) Complementarity, which means that a given specific objective is positively impacting the achievement of another specific objective or that specific objectives are even mutually reinforcing their achievement. (2) Conflict, which means that a specific objective is negatively impacting the achievement of another specific objective. (3) Neutrality, which means that a specific objective has neither a positive nor a negative impact on the achievement of another specific objective.

<sup>39</sup> In the case of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme, these assumptions on potential cross-impacts are much more speculative than those which can be made for regional-level or cross-border programmes. This is mainly due to the EU-wide coverage of the Programme (i.e. wide spread of project partners & projects effects) and because of the high level of uncertainty which still exists about the very nature of future Interregional Cooperation Projects (i.e. specific thematic focus of their actions).

<sup>40</sup> “Axis-internal” cross-impacts cannot be determined for PA 2 “Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises” and for PA 3 “Low Carbon Economy”, because each PA consists of only one specific objective.

**Table 1: Interdependence relations between specific objectives of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme**

Likely impact of Types of Action (ToA) under SO(x) ...	... on the achievement of SO(y)	PA 1 (TO 1)		PA 2 (TO 3)	PA 3 (TO 4)	PA 4 (TO 6)		Sum of cross-impacts		
		SO 1	SO 2	SO 3	SO 4	SO 5	SO 6	Σ int. (*)	Σ ext. (**)	Σ tot. (***)
<b>PA 1 (TO 1)</b>	ToA of SO 1: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities.		++	+	++ development of R&I excellence & centres of competence in the field of low carbon	0	++ development of R&I excellence & centres of competence in the field of resource-efficiency & environment	2	5	7
	ToA of SO 2: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, that support the delivery of innovation by actors in regional innovation chains in areas of "smart specialisation" and innovation opportunity.	++		++ set-up of innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation with SME involvement	++ set-up of innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation in the field of low carbon	0	++ set-up of innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation in the field of resource-efficiency & environment	2	6	8
<b>PA 2 (TO 3)</b>	ToA of SO 3: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop and achieve growth and engage in innovation.	+	++ general innovation in SMEs, stimulating the set-up of new innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation		++ eco-innovation in SMEs, stimulating demand for SME low carbon solutions or a regional low carbon strategy for SMEs	0	++ eco-innovation in SMEs, stimulating demand for resource efficiency & environmental management solutions in SMEs	0	7	7
<b>PA 3 (TO 4)</b>	ToA of SO 4: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy.	++ stimulating the development of new low carbon solutions through R&I excellence & centres of competences	++ stimulating the set-up of new innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation in the field of low carbon	++ direct uptake of low carbon solutions for SMEs & development of regional low carbon strategies for SMEs		0	+	0	7	7
<b>PA 4 (TO 6)</b>	ToA of SO 5: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage.	0	0	0	0		+	1	0	1
	ToA of SO 6: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, aimed at increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation and environmental performance management.	++ stimulating the development of new solutions for resource efficiency & environment through R&I excellence & centres of competences	++ stimulating the set-up of new innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation in the field of resource-efficiency & environment	++ direct uptake of SME-focussed solutions for resource efficiency & environmental performance management	+	+		1	7	8
<b>Significance of the potential cross-impact:</b> ++ = strong positive impact (high level of complementarity)    + = weak positive impact (low level of complementarity)    0 = no impact (neutrality)    - = negative impact (conflict of objectives)										
<b>Sum of cross-impacts:</b> (*) Σ internal = all cross-impacts of a specific objective in relation to other specific objectives of the same Priority Axis (**) Σ external = all cross-impacts of a specific objective in relation to the specific objectives of the other Priority Axes (***) Σ total = all cross-impacts of a specific objective in relation to all specific objectives of the Priority Axes 1-4										

**Interdependence relations between the specific objectives from different Priority Axes are widespread and the cross-impacts are generally positive in most cases (SO 1 – SO 4, SO 6).** This means that a high level of “external” complementarity exists within the INTERREG EUROPE Programme, as neutrality was observed only for and in relation to SO 5. Moreover, across all Priority Axes, no conflict among specific programme objectives can be found.

In cases of **SO 1 and SO 2 (PA 1)**, we assume that the Interregional Cooperation Projects and the activities of the joint Policy Learning Platform can also strongly support the achievement of SO 3 (PA 2), SO 4 (PA 3) and SO 6 (PA 4).

- An improved implementation of policies/programmes which support research and innovation infrastructures and capacities (SO 1) can also generate positive cross-impacts if this allows to develop R&I excellence and centres of competence in the fields of low carbon (contribution to SO 4) or of resource-efficiency and environment (contribution to SO 6).
- Positive cross-impacts are also generated by an improved implementation of policies/programmes supporting the delivery of innovation, the promotion of business investment in innovation and cooperation among actors in innovation chains or key areas of “smart specialisation” (SO 2), especially if they lead to the setting up of innovation clusters/triple helix cooperation among SMEs (contribution to SO 3) or the establishment of innovation clusters/triple helix cooperation focussing on the fields of low carbon (contribution to SO 4) and resource-efficiency or environment (contribution to SO 6).

In case of **SO 3 (PA 2)**, we assume that the Interregional Cooperation Projects and the activities of the Policy Learning Platform can also strongly support the achievement of SO 2 (PA 1), SO 4 (PA 3) and SO 6 (PA 4). Positive cross-impacts on these objectives are generated if an improved implementation of policies/programmes which support SMEs to stronger engage in general research/innovation and more specifically in eco-innovation also

- stimulates the setting up of SME-specific innovation clusters or triple helix co-operations (contribution to SO 2),
- creates demands for SME-specific low carbon solutions or even for the elaboration of SME-focussed regional low carbon strategies (contribution to SO 4),
- creates demands for SME-specific resource efficiency and environmental performance management solutions (contribution to SO 6).

In case of **SO 4 (PA 3)**, we assume that the Interregional Cooperation Projects and the activities of the Policy Learning Platform can also strongly support the achievement of SO 1, SO 2 (PA 1) and SO 3 (PA 2). Positive cross-impacts on these other specific programme objectives are generated if an improved implementation of policies/programmes which address the transition to a low-carbon economy also

- stimulates the development of new low carbon solutions by existing R&I excellence or centres of competences (contribution to SO 1),
- stimulates the setting-up of new innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation in the

- field of low carbon (contribution to SO 2),
- leads to a direct uptake of SME-specific low carbon solutions or the development of regional-level low carbon strategies focussing in particular on SMEs (contribution to SO 3).

In case of **SO 6 (PA 4)**, we assume that the Interregional Cooperation Projects and the activities of the joint Policy Learning Platform can also strongly support the achievement of SO 1, SO 2 (PA 1) and SO 3 (PA 2). Positive cross-impacts on these other specific programme objectives are generated if an improved implementation of policies/programmes which increase resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation or improve environmental performance management in the private and public sector also

- directly delivers SME-focussed solutions on resource efficiency and eco-innovation (contribution to SO 3),
- stimulates the development of new solutions for resource efficiency and green growth through R&I excellence and centres of competences (contribution to SO 1) or if they lead to the setting up of new innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation in the field of resource-efficiency and environment (contribution to SO 2).

### *Synergies potentials within the programme objective system*

Our pragmatic and interactive process of synergy screening (see: [Chapter 1](#)) allowed to identify, analyse and validate a number of **synergy potentials<sup>41</sup> within the objective system of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.**

For an identification of significant synergy potentials, we took the matrix of cross-impacts as a point of departure (see: [Table 1](#)) and considered only the highest levels of complementarity which exist between the specific objectives from different Priority Axes. On ground of this, we assumed that “key synergies” tend to exist mainly between the specific programme objectives from Priority Axis 1 (SO 1 & SO 2), Priority Axis 2 (SO 3), Priority Axis 3 (SO 4) and Priority Axis 4 (SO 6).

For a further analysis of these “key synergy potentials”, we have drawn up a table which compares the different types of action under the concerned Priority Axes to the expected results of the specific programme objectives SO 1, SO 2, SO 3, SO 4 and SO 6 and then developed a detailed assumption for each synergy potential (see: [Annex 4](#)). These assumptions were subsequently confirmed in their realism through a validation process which directly involved the core personnel of the INTERREG IVC JTS.

**In order to ensure the most optimal delivery of results** during the future implementation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme, **it is important that** the identified and validated **key synergy potentials are also directly considered by the Programme.**

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<sup>41</sup> A “synergy potential” is the theoretically achievable effect, resulting from the interaction of multiple elements in a system (here: the specific objectives and types of activities) under optimal conditions, which is different from or greater than the sum of the individual effects of these elements. A “synergy effect”, on the contrary, is the effect which is actually produced by the real-life interaction of multiple elements in a system. As such real-life interactions do not exist at this stage, it is evident that ex-ante evaluations can only identify and analyse synergy potentials.

**(1) The key synergy potentials existing in the context of “Interregional Cooperation Projects”** suggest that the setting-up of projects generating positive impacts on the result of other specific programme objectives (i.e. to SO 1, SO 2, SO 3, SO 5 or SO 6) is pro-actively encouraged. The various IP-descriptions under Section 2 of the Programme all contain explicit and adequate statements which make reference to this important dimension of cross-cutting impacts. Firstly, under the heading “Contribution to the specific objective”, it is frequently stated that projects may also (...) *have synergies with themes covered by other specific objectives of this programme* (...) and the relevant topics for which this is most likely to happen are also indicated (i.e. for IP 1a, IP 1b, IP 3d, IP 4e and IP 6g, but not for IP 6e).<sup>42</sup> Secondly, under the heading “Guiding principles for selection of operations”, it is always explicitly stated that projects having (...) *cross-cutting synergies with the themes covered by other specific objectives are welcome* (...),<sup>43</sup> although as a general rule they shall primarily contribute to the expected result of one specific programme objective.

**(2) The key synergy potentials existing in the context of the various TO-specific “Policy Learning Platforms”** suggest in particular that during the future exploitation and dissemination of project results, attention is also be paid to Interregional Cooperation Projects which address aspects that are positively impacting on the expected results of other specific programme objectives. If there will be a sufficient number of projects with cross-impacts in the portfolio of the Programme or of a given SO, then also “joint” actions between the concerned Policy Learning Platforms should be organised. In the context of nearby all IP-descriptions under Section 2 of the Programme, this option is explicitly foreseen through relatively similar formulations (i.e. for IP 1a, IP 1b, IP 3d, IP 4e and IP 6c, but not for IP 6g).<sup>44</sup> In the cases of IP 1(a) and IP 1(b), for example, the related formulation reads as follows: *Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC in the field of Priority 1 (with other Platforms where there are strong thematic synergies).*

### 3.3. External coherence of the programme

An appraisal of the external coherence usually examines in how far the strategy of a programme is also connected to other relevant policy strategies, programmes and instruments which exist at the European, national or regional levels.

As the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 covers all EU-Member States and also some neighbouring Third Countries (i.e. Norway and Switzerland), it is literally impossible to appraise the connection to and influence of all existing national or regional-level policy strategies and domestic support programmes on the expected programme results. The same holds true for the many regional-level Growth and Jobs programmes and also for the other ETC-Programmes, which will be implemented during the 2014-2020 funding period throughout the EU. Due to this, our appraisal mainly focuses on answering the following three main evaluation questions:

(1) In how far does INTERREG EUROPE consider and possibly contribute to other important

<sup>42</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), pp.24, 32, 38, 44, 56

<sup>43</sup> This statement is only made once in the Programme document (INTERREG IVC Programme, 2014a, p.26), because the guiding principles for a selection of operations under IP 1a /SO 1 are the same under all other IPs and SOs.

<sup>44</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), pp.24, 31, 37f, 43, 49

EU-level strategies and policies which are closely related to the themes addressed by the thematic and specific objectives of the programme?

- (2) Does INTERREG EUROPE adequately reflect the specific role which the EU-level expects the programme to play in the wider context of ETC?
- (3) Are the relations between INTERREG EUROPE and other ETC-programmes (cross-border, transnational and interregional) complementary?

### ***Consideration of and contribution to other EU-level strategies and policies***

Since the publication of the Europe 2020 Strategy in 2010, a large number of European-level policy documents, strategies and programmes were issued. They further specify most often the delivery of the Union's smart, sustainable and inclusive growth strategy or address its territorial cohesion dimension. The documents, strategies and programmes which we considered most relevant for the themes addressed by the TOs and SOs of INTERREG EUROPE are

- the Commission's Communication of 2010, showing how regional policy can contribute to smart growth;<sup>45</sup>
- the "Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020",<sup>46</sup> agreed by the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development at their informal meeting in Gödöllő (Hungary) in 2011;
- the EC-regulation for a new EU-level programme on business and SME development "COSME"<sup>47</sup> of 2013;
- the EC-regulation for the new EU-level R&D framework programme "HORIZON 2020"<sup>48</sup> of 2013;
- the 2011 Communication of the European Commission on a "Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050"<sup>49</sup>;
- the 2011 Communication of the European Commission on a "Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe".<sup>50</sup>

The European Commission also issued in April 2013 a comprehensive EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change,<sup>51</sup> which resulted out of the discussions following the publication of a White Paper in 2009.<sup>52</sup> Although important as it relates to one of the core societal challenges mentioned in the Europe 2020 Strategy, we have not reviewed this EU-level strategy because it has little connections to the themes primarily addressed by the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.

Our in-depth review of the above-mentioned EU-level policy strategies and programmes and

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<sup>45</sup> European Commission (2010b)

<sup>46</sup> Informal Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development (2011)

<sup>47</sup> European Parliament / Council of the European Union (2013d)

<sup>48</sup> European Parliament / Council of the European Union (2013e)

<sup>49</sup> European Commission (2011d): The roadmap sets out key elements that should shape the EU's climate action, helping the EU to become a competitive low carbon economy in the long term. This Roadmap is also a key deliverable under the "Resource Efficiency Flagship Initiative" of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

<sup>50</sup> European Commission (2011a): The roadmap is closely connected to the Europe 2020 flagship initiative on "A Resource Efficient Europe", which called for a roadmap to define medium and long term objectives and means needed for achieving them.

<sup>51</sup> European Commission (2013d): This Strategy sets out a framework and mechanisms for bringing the EU's preparedness for the current and future impacts of climate change up to a new level. It is proposed to do this by encouraging and supporting action by the EU Member States on adaptation, by creating a basis for better informed decision-making on adaptation in the years to come, and by making key economic and policy sectors more resilient to the effects of climate change.

<sup>52</sup> European Commission (2009)

their comparison to key elements of **the INTERREG EUROPE** strategy shows that the **Programme has a high degree of external coherence**.<sup>53</sup> The specific objectives of INTERREG EUROPE and the related types of action consider, either extensively or in a focussed manner,<sup>54</sup> a substantial number of issues which are addressed by the objectives, principles and actions of those EU-level policy strategies and programmes. These degrees of consideration are most widespread if the specific programme objectives are strongly corresponding to the respective thematic focus of a given EU-level strategy or programme.<sup>55</sup> In all these cases, the INTERREG EUROPE Programme has therefore clear potentials for making very strong or strong direct contributions which can support a realisation of the concerned objectives, principles and actions promoted by those European-level policy strategies and programmes. These direct contributions will of course not be “physically measurable”, due to the limited financial means and the particular mission/form of acting of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. They will rather emerge as changes or improvements of the regional-level EU-programmes and policies which are induced in the relevant fields by the interregional exchange of experience and policy-oriented learning processes as well as by a transfer of good practices.

**This high consideration of and contribution to these important EU-level strategies and programmes** which are closely related to the thematic and specific objectives of INTERREG EUROPE **is also adequately acknowledged by the Programme:**

- Sub-section 1.1.1.2 of the Programme document describes the wider policy context of INTERREG EUROPE and states explicitly that it can contribute to the “Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020” (...) *by enabling regions to develop place-based responses to the Europe 2020 challenges of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (...)*, but also that it can contribute (...) *to the aims of several other sectoral and thematic policies and programmes, such as the EU Roadmaps for Low Carbon and Resource Efficiency and the Horizon2020 and COSME programmes*.<sup>56</sup>
- Sub-section 6.2 of the Programme document envisages establishing coordination with other Union instruments that address issues close to INTERREG EUROPE and directly mentions the Horizon 2020 and COSME programmes. This coordination (...) *will be ensured through exchange of information between the managing authority and the bodies in charge of the implementation of these programmes on applications, projects and where relevant, results. This exchange of information will also include the potential redirection of project applicants towards a more suitable programme, where necessary*.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, it is also envisaged that Interregional Cooperation Projects build on experiences and practices funded by such other Union instruments or use them for implementing (parts of the) Action Plans that will be developed by the project partners and that outcomes from those EU initiatives Policy may also be integrated in the learning activities and outputs developed by the Learning Platforms.

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<sup>53</sup> An extensive and matrix-based cross-referencing exercise was realised for qualitatively determining the “degree of consideration” between the various strategy contents and INTERREG EUROPE in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Report of the ex-ante evaluation. See: INTERREG IVC (2013i) and INTERREG IVC (2013j).

<sup>54</sup> “Extensively” means that the full range of issues addressed by a particular objective/principle/action under those EU-level strategies and programmes is considered, while “focused” means that only parts of the issues addressed are considered.

<sup>55</sup> For SO1-SO3 relating to R&D/innovation and SMEs, the extensive or focused consideration is most widespread in the case of the 2010 Communication on regional policy contributing to smart growth, COSME and Horizon 2020. For SO4-SO6 relating to a low carbon economy and the environment or resource efficiency, the extensive or focused consideration is most widespread in the case of the EU-level roadmaps on a competitive low carbon economy and on a resource efficient Europe.

<sup>56</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), pp.5 & 6

<sup>57</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.86

Further to the above-mentioned EU-level strategies and policies, **INTERREG EUROPE directly considers other EU-level programmes or instruments (past and future ones) and also envisages establishing coordination with some of those.** Coordination is explicitly foreseen with EU-programmes or instruments that will support actions in the fields of environment (LIFE 2014-2020) low-carbon and climate-resilient economy or energy (Intelligent Energy – Europe III), but also a pro-active integration of experiences from previous EU-cooperation initiatives in the fields of innovation and cluster support (e.g. the 2007-2013 "Regions of Knowledge" Initiative<sup>58</sup>) as well as a future close collaboration with the "Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) Platform" developed by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) in Seville / Spain is envisaged.<sup>59</sup>

### ***The role of INTERREG EUROPE in the wider context of ETC***

The **specific role** that INTERREG EUROPE should play during the funding period 2014-2020 is **defined at three levels (see: Box 1)**. First, by the provisions of Annex II of the Common Strategic Framework (CSF), which set out the EU-wide priorities for cooperation under the ERDF (i.e. cross-border, transnational & interregional cooperation) and the ESF (i.e. transnational cooperation) and also the expected contribution of mainstream programmes to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies.<sup>60</sup> Second, by Article 2 (3) (a) of the ETC-Regulation<sup>61</sup> which confirms in larger parts the original CSF-priorities of 2012 for ERDF-funded interregional cooperation, but further widens the strategic target audience by including also other ETC-programmes. Third, by the strategic objectives of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.

#### **Box 1:**

#### **Role of INTERREG EUROPE in the context of European Territorial Cooperation**

**Common Strategic Framework, Annex II:** *Interregional cooperation (...) should aim to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by encouraging exchange of experience between regions and cities to enhance design and implementation of operational programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal. It should, in particular, foster cooperation between innovative research-intensive clusters and exchanges and research institutions building on the experience of "Regions of Knowledge" and "Research Potential in Convergence and Outermost Regions" under the Seventh Framework Programme for Research.*

**ETC-Regulation, Article 2 (3) (a):** *(...) the ERDF shall support (...) interregional cooperation to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by promoting (a) exchange of experience focusing on thematic objectives among partners throughout the Union, including in relation to the development of regions referred to in Article 174 TFEU on the identification and dissemination of good practices with a view to their transfer principally to operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal but also, where relevant, to cooperation programmes;*

**INTERREG EUROPE, overall objective:** *To improve the implementation of policies and programmes for regional development, principally of programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal and, where relevant, of programmes under the ETC goal, by promoting exchange of experience and policy learning among actors of regional*

<sup>58</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), pp. 6, 10-13

<sup>59</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.86: *With regard to TO1 policy learning platform of the current INTERREG EUROPE programme, a close collaboration will be established with the S3 platform. The PLP will complement the work of the IPTS by focusing on content related issues, i.e. what is financed in the regions through the S3, while the S3 platform keeps on developing strategy/concept related aspects (e.g. the six steps of the RIS3 Guide). The interregional cooperation programme learning platform will in a way represent the "arm" of the S3 platform with regard to thematic content and its development. Further references to the "S3 Platform" can be found in Section 2 on pp. 23 & 31*

<sup>60</sup> European Commission (2012b), p.41

<sup>61</sup> European Parliament / Council of the European Union (2013a)

relevance.

**INTERREG EUROPE, operational objectives:**

1. To facilitate ongoing EU-wide policy learning and capitalisation of practices among actors of regional relevance in order to strengthen regional policies, and in particular the implementation of programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC.
2. To support exchange of experience and sharing of practices among actors of regional relevance with the aim to integrate the learning from the cooperation into regional policies, in particular through their programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC.

If the different statements are compared to each other, then it can be seen that **the overall objective and the two operational objectives of INTERREG EUROPE are correctly translating the expected process-related elements of interregional cooperation** (i.e. EU-wide exchange of experience focusing on TOs; identification, dissemination and transfer of good practice; enhance design and implementation of operational programmes) **and also the prescribed strategic target audience** (i.e. Growth and Jobs programmes & ETC-programmes).

With respect to the latter aspect, however, there is **an important feature** worth being highlighted: **INTERREG EUROPE further expands its strategic target audience towards the “own” policies and strategies of the regions in Europe.** This wider perspective is introduced at the beginning of Sub-section 1.1.1.4 of the programme document,<sup>62</sup> then reflected in the specific phrasing of the overall and operational programme objectives (i.e. ... *programmes for regional development, principally of programmes under ...; ... regional policies, and in particular ...*) and finally made more explicit by the “common provisions” on Interregional Cooperation Projects in all IP-descriptions of Section 2.<sup>63</sup>

Although this widening is not foreseen by the EU-level provisions defining the role of INTERREG EUROPE, **we consider this expansion beyond the Cohesion Policy programmes as being useful and appropriate** and share the justification provided by the Programme. INTERREG EUROPE will anyway strongly focus on the EU support programmes in order to (...) *to ensure sufficient impact and EU-wide relevance of the results (...), but this should (...) not prevent the programme however from incorporating relevant contributions from regional level actors that are not directly involved in the implementation of Growth and Jobs or ETC programmes.* Furthermore, it should also be considered (...) *that other regional level policies and programmes can also contribute significantly to achieving the Cohesion policy aims of strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion to stimulate growth in European regions.*<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.11: *The needs analysis shows that European regions are dealing with a wide range of policy issues related to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. It also illustrates the diversity among these regions in their progress and performance in tackling the related challenges. Through their own regional policies and strategies, the regions of Europe can make an important contribution to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Cohesion policy equips all European regions with instruments to tackle their respective growth challenges, by means of the regional (or national) programmes of Investment for Growth and Jobs and of the European Territorial Cooperation programmes. Interventions in the context of programmes for Growth and Jobs related to research and innovation should build on national or regional 'smart specialisation strategies' (S3 strategies). Here INTERREG EUROPE can bring added value by offering European regions the opportunity for policy learning and transfer of good practices. In doing so, the programme can assist the regions to strengthen their policies, to enhance their regional development situation and ultimately to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.*

<sup>63</sup> Under the sub-headings “Actions to be supported”, the following is repeatedly stated: *However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies in the field of (...) can be improved as a result of the cooperation.*

<sup>64</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.11

### *The relations of INTERREG EUROPE to other ETC-programmes*

The relations of INTERREG EUROPE to other ETC-Programmes (cross-border, transnational, interregional) are described under Section 6 of the programme document. Overall, the description sets out **clear and appropriate provisions showing how complementarity, mutual cooperation and coordination will be achieved in relation to the other ETC-Programmes.**

With respect to **cross-border and transnational programmes**, INTERREG EUROPE will encourage cooperation among programme areas (...) *in order to enable an exchange of experience and a transfer of best practices on specific topics (...)*. The synergies with these other ETC-Programmes can go in two directions: *On the one hand cross-border or transnational cooperation projects can become the foundation for wider exchanges of experiences at EU level, funded by INTERREG EUROPE (“upstream” complementarity). On the other hand, exchanges and policy learning through INTERREG EUROPE projects subsequently lead to more concrete joint projects with cross-border or transnational dimension (“downstream” complementarity).*<sup>65</sup> INTERREG EUROPE will work closely with the INTERACT III Programme to explore such synergies and also elaborate, through its future Monitoring Committee, operational prescriptions to avoid potential overlaps with cross-border and transnational programmes and a double financing of activities.

With respect to the other ERDF-funded **interregional cooperation programmes** (i.e. ESPON, INTERACT and URBACT), INTERREG EUROPE intends to further expand on the already existing “resolution on coordination & cooperation” for the 2007-2013 period and proposes in particular the implementation of complementary activities (...) *for which programmes could use and share their know-how and committed staff.*<sup>66</sup> In relation to INTERACT III, more specifically, INTERREG EUROPE envisages to maintain a “specific link” in relation to their respective missions for improving the implementation of ETC-Programmes<sup>67</sup> and for avoiding double work.

## **3.4. Intervention logic of the programme**

Cohesion Policy for the period 2014-2020 must be strongly orientated towards results in order to contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy, which requires that programmes dispose of an intervention logic that is clearly articulated.<sup>68</sup>

The intervention logic of INTERREG EUROPE is appraised at the level of the entire programme and at the level of the Investment Priorities in order to adequately address the following four main evaluation questions:

- (1) Are the proposed actions to be supported in each Priority Axis, including the main target groups identified, the specific territories targeted and the types of beneficiaries

<sup>65</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.84

<sup>66</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.85: The concrete activities suggested are (1) bilateral cooperation events, (2) joint capitalisation and dissemination activities (development and promotion of European indicators, tools, data and methods, proven good practices) and (3) joint exhibitions, workshops, information / awareness-raising actions concerning territorial development.

<sup>67</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.85: *Where INTERACT aims mainly at providing support to actors at the programme level, INTERREG-EUROPE projects and platforms provide the opportunity to build on and give input to projects under these ETC programmes. INTERACT III intends to support ETC programmes also in the thematic objectives not covered by INTERREG EUROPE to the extent possible.*

<sup>68</sup> European Commission (2013a), p.7

sufficiently described and will the proposed actions lead to the expected outputs and intended results?

- (2) How will the expected outputs contribute to the intended results (i.e. are the outputs conducive to results and to what extent?) and what is the change that the programme intends to bring in the cooperation area?
- (3) Which are the causal links between the proposed actions, their outputs and the intended results?
- (4) Were external factors that could influence the intended results identified and are the policy assumptions underpinning the programme logic backed up by evidence (e.g. from previous experiences, evaluations or studies)?

In a first step, we have drawn up a “theory of change” for the entire INTERREG EUROPE Programme to illustrate from a strategic viewpoint which types of changes have to occur on the way towards reaching the overall programme goals. Then, in a second step, we carried out a logical framework analysis for only one Investment Priority (i.e. IP 1a / SO 1), because the IP-descriptions under Section 2 are with a few exceptions nearly identical.

### ***A “theory of change” drawn up for the entire programme***

Our theory of change for the INTERREG EUROPE Programme was developed on ground of a number of basic methodological elements and articulated through a visual diagram (see: [Annex 5](#)). This “outcome map” includes the four Priority Axes of INTERREG EUROPE as well as the assumptions which are underlying the implementation of the specific activities of the two types of action. Furthermore, the map also depicts the main causal links between the implementation assumptions and the various types of intended outcomes<sup>69</sup> which have to occur in the short- and medium-term.

If this complex outcome map is summarised in a very simplified manner, then **the following “pathway of change” with three basic levels emerges (see: [Box 2](#))**.

**Box 2:**  
**The “pathway of change” of INTERREG EUROPE**

*The “Policy Learning Platforms” and “Interregional Cooperation Projects” create change in terms of a greater awareness/knowledge and of improved skills/capacities at the level of the directly involved staff of regional-level actors ...*

*... so that ...*

*... regional-level organisations or other actors of regional relevance can undertake further actions for improving their own regional policies and their Growth and Jobs/ETC programmes ...*

*... so that ...*

*... more or better results are achieved by an implementation of the improved regional policies and Growth and Jobs/ETC programmes which then also reinforce the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy and allow to better delivering the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy.*

<sup>69</sup> By using this formulation we acknowledge that even more outcomes can emerge (e.g. unintended outcomes) under INTERREG EUROPE, but they cannot all be included into our programme-wide outcome map.

On ground of the information in the visual diagram, we now examine if the basic assumptions underlying this overall pathway of change are sufficiently realistic and if the identified causal links are also robust. This will help us to see if INTERREG EUROPE can actually reach the targeted outputs (1<sup>st</sup> level), the intended results and the overall programme objective (2<sup>nd</sup> level) and thus also its expected contribution to the final goal of interregional cooperation under ETC (3<sup>rd</sup> level).

**The main assumption underlying an achievement of change at the 1<sup>st</sup> level is** that the activities realised by Policy Learning Platforms and Interregional Cooperation Projects directly induce individual learning processes which then generate a greater awareness/knowledge and also improved skills/capacities at the level of the directly involved staff members of regional-level actors, but also within the INTERREG EUROPE Programme itself. This assumption is **realistic and also the causal link is robust for both types of action**. Our judgement is supported by the findings of a recent INTERREG IVC study which analysed the exchange of experience process within projects, the associated forms of learning at different levels and also the types of (policy) changes that were resulting from both.<sup>70</sup>

**The main assumption underlying an achievement of change at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> levels is** that the 1<sup>st</sup> level outcomes trigger further policy-relevant actions which are undertaken by organisations of regional relevance from across the EU which participate in the Platforms and by the partner organisations which are involved in the Projects. This assumption **is in general realistic under both types of action, but the robustness of the causal chain and also the scope of “direct ownership” with can be claimed in respect to the induced changes are different in either case**.

In case of **Policy Learning Platforms**, it is fairly realistic to assume that a greater awareness/knowledge and the improved skills/capacities of staff from regional-level actors from across Europe (i.e. intended outcome at the 1<sup>st</sup> level) can induce further actions which then lead to an actual improvement of regional policies and of Growth and Jobs/ETC programmes (i.e. intended outcome at the 2<sup>nd</sup> level). For this to happen, however, regional-level actors must have appropriate core capacities already in place or even might have to develop new capacities if this is needed in a specific regional/local context. Appropriate routines and processes have to exist for enabling regional-level actors to actually integrate “external” policy-relevant knowledge (e.g. on new approaches and instruments or good practices) into their own context (i.e. organisation, wider regional policy-subsystem). Very often, regional-level actors may also have to initiate further organisation-internal or even inter-organisational learning processes which allow them to develop new or better designed policy approaches, measures and projects and to integrate those in their regional policies and programmes. Only if such capacities exist or are developed, one can realistically expect that more and/or better results are achieved by the improved regional policies and programmes, which then also reinforce the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy and ensure a better delivery of the Europe 2020 Strategy (i.e. intended 3<sup>rd</sup> level outcomes).

The above-described constellation suggests the following **overall conclusion for the Policy Learning Platforms**: despite the robustness of the causal chain linking the implementation assumptions and the intended outcomes across all levels, one has to acknowledge that the

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<sup>70</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013a)

“direct ownership” which the Policy Learning Platforms can claim in relation to the induced changes will be relatively limited in scope. This is mainly due to the fact that most outcomes on this pathway of change are influenced and leveraged by voluntary stakeholder actions which are largely dissociated from the original Platform activities.

In case of **Interregional Cooperation Projects**, the general assumption made for achieving changes at the 2<sup>nd</sup> level is in general realistic and largely supported by the findings of the recent INTERREG IVC study analysing the exchange of experience process. Also here, robust causal links exist between the intended outcomes at the 1<sup>st</sup> level (i.e. greater awareness/knowledge & improved skills/capacities of staff or organisations directly involved in the projects), the regional Action Plans elaborated at the end of project phase 1 and an increased availability of better designed policy strategies, policy delivery mechanisms or newly developed measures/projects which can be integrated by the project partner organisations and/or other organisations of regional relevance into their own regional policies or into Growth and Jobs / ETC programmes (i.e. intended intermediate outcome at the 2<sup>nd</sup> level). Then, **however, a sort of “break” appears** in the overall causal chain at the end of project phase 2. This break is mostly due to an uncertainty about the very nature of the effect which will result from primarily monitoring the implementation of Action Plans during phase 2. Will these activities directly generate an improvement of regional policies and Growth and Jobs/ETC programmes (intended final outcomes at the 2<sup>nd</sup> level) or will they rather indirectly influence this important outcome? The assumption for a transition to the intended 3<sup>rd</sup> level outcomes is again realistic and also the causal link appears to be robust: the subsequent implementation of successfully improved own regional policies or Growth and Jobs/ETC programmes is indeed able to achieve more or better results in the related policy fields, which then also contribute to reinforce the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy and allows to better deliver the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The above-described constellation suggests the following **overall conclusion for Interregional Cooperation Projects**: the causal chain linking the implementation assumptions and the intended outcomes across all levels is in general robust and the “direct ownership” which the Interregional Cooperation Projects can claim in relation to the induced changes will be wider than in case of the Platforms. This is mainly due to the fact that project activities will directly support an acquisition of new policy-relevant knowledge and the design of new measures for policy improvements in the involved project partner regions and also initiate the necessary processes of organisation-internal or inter-organisational policy learning. However, the above-identified “break” represents a certain limitation to an even greater direct ownership of the Projects in relation to the induced changes.

### ***Intervention logic of the Investment Priorities***

For appraising the intervention logic of the Investment Priorities (IPs) selected for INTERREG EUROPE, we have developed a basic model for the logical framework analysis (see: [Annex 6](#)). On ground of this, a complete table-based logical framework was drawn up for IP 1(a) and SO 1 (see: [Annex 7](#)). From the summary analysis of this logical framework, one can **draw the following overall conclusions which also apply to all other IPs of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.**

**The vertical elements of the intervention strategy are logically interlinked.** This means that the proposed “types of action” (i.e. Policy Learning Platforms & Interregional Cooperation Projects) will lead to the expected outputs and that these outputs will contribute to the intended result, which in turn allows achieving the specific programme objectives.

**The basic assumptions underlying the future implementation process,** either implicitly presumed by the programme stakeholders or explicitly stated in the programme document, **are in general valid at each level of the IP-intervention strategy.** This judgement is supported by further details in the IP-description and by other evidence such as the funding practice under INTERREG IVC or the findings of external studies analysing interregional cooperation under INTERREG IVC. **The only aspect which should be taken care of in the future is the deeper cause of the “break” in the overall causal chain of Interregional Cooperation Projects** which was identified by our theory of change: the activities for phase 2 of the Projects are not extensively described in the Programme (i.e. only a reference is made to the “monitoring & analysis of Action Plan results” and to “pilot actions”), although they represent a crucial step on INTERREG EUROPE’s pathway of change towards reaching its overall objective. Certainly, a short sentence can be found in each IP-description which states that (...) *further modalities (... for the Projects ...)* will be defined in the Programme Manual (...). Due to this rather general remark, **the future concretisation of the phase 2 activities** in this secondary programme document **should be prepared with care and on ground of an intense discussion in the Monitoring Committee** in order to achieve a purpose-oriented and also practicable solution.

With respect to **potential risks** that might exist at different levels of the IP-intervention strategies, we observe that **in general there are no major factors** more or less under direct control of the programme management **which might have a negative influence** on the achievement of the expected outputs/intended results and ultimately also of the specific objectives (not considered are “unmanageable risks”). This is mainly supported by the fact that the INTERREG IVC Programme 2007-2013 has already gained substantial experience in funding projects which are related to most of the chosen IP-themes. Although it should not be forgotten that the Policy Learning Platforms are a novelty for which no prior experience does exist, we do not consider this lack of experience an implementation risk but rather a challenge to which the programme stakeholders will have to pay careful attention to in the future. **Only in case of IP 1(a),** a lack of previous funding experience exists in relation to projects addressing “research and innovation infrastructure and capacities”. This might indeed represent potential minor implementation risk at all levels of the IP 1(a)-intervention strategy,<sup>71</sup> which should therefore be attentively observed during the future implementation process.

Despite the above-observed “break” in the overall causal chain of all IPs and the potential minor implementation risk observed in the context of IP 1(a), we can formulate the following **overall conclusion across all IPs: the causality relations** between the different elements of the IP-intervention strategies and the implementation assumptions or potential risks **are sufficiently**

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<sup>71</sup> The INTERREG IVC programme 2007-2013 has funded a substantial number of R&D/innovation related projects under the respective sub-theme (37 in absolute terms or 31% out of the 201 projects supported in total), but only very few of those relate more specifically to a cooperation among basic research infrastructures. In a wider sense, however, the latter can also concern ICT-infrastructures having an innovation- or R&D-related character, for which also cooperation experience exists. In the period 2014-2020, all projects are oriented towards the newly introduced two-phase approach and are - more than before - required to establish strong links with the respective regional Growth and Jobs programmes. If both aspects are considered together, there might be a minor potential risk for getting enough projects with the right actors on board. If not enough and also adequate projects should be submitted and approved, then there are also minor potential risks for achieving the targeted output and the intended result.

**robust to ensure that the specific programme objectives can be attained.** As a consequence of this, one can expect that a positive change in relation to some of the thematically corresponding interregional challenges and needs will be generated and that the chosen intervention strategy thereby contributes to the achievement of the respective thematic objectives under the individual Priority Axes.

### 3.5. The horizontal EU-principles

This part appraises to what extent INTERREG EUROPE complies with the provisions as set out by Articles 7 and 8 of the CPR: they require that during the preparation of programmes and their future implementation equality between men and women and the integration of gender perspective is promoted, that any discrimination is prevented and that the programme support is delivered in line with the principle of sustainable development.

During the **preparation of INTERREG EUROPE**, these horizontal EU-principles were considered quite differently by the “initial scoping of needs and challenges” document.<sup>72</sup> The principles of promoting equal opportunities and preventing discrimination were not explicitly assessed, but some aspects have been examined which are more or less closely related to the non-discrimination principle.<sup>73</sup> For the principle of promoting sustainable development, however, a larger number of related core issues were assessed and most often also from a regional-territorial perspective.<sup>74</sup>

With respect to the **future implementation of INTERREG EUROPE**, we now appraise to what extent the specific programme objectives and types of action might help to eliminate inequalities and to promote equal opportunities between men and women, to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and to promote sustainable development. In order to get an impression of the degree of consideration of these horizontal principles and the likely contribution of INTERREG EUROPE to their direct application, we reviewed the specific sections of the Programme document dedicated to the three horizontal EU-principles (i.e. Section 8) and also the detailed descriptions of the four thematic Priority Axes (i.e. Section 2).<sup>75</sup>

#### *Promoting equal opportunities & preventing discrimination*

With respect to both principles, the programme document states the following: INTERREG EUROPE adopts as cross-cutting themes social inclusion, also implying equal opportunities and non-discrimination, as well as gender equality, which will be applied in relevant cases within the scope of the programme’s action. As a consequence, the programme will strive to promote equal

<sup>72</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013b)

<sup>73</sup> e.g. national differences and regional disparities in youth unemployment and educational drop-out; territorial patterns of low-skilled population and of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

<sup>74</sup> e.g. greenhouse gas emissions; clean & energy efficient transport including clean urban public transport; energy consumption & energy dependency of some regional industries; development of renewable energies in Europe; protection of ecosystems & prevention of biodiversity loss.

<sup>75</sup> A first qualitative appreciation exercise was already realised in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Report of the ex-ante evaluation. See: INTERREG IVC (2013i) and INTERREG IVC (2013j).

opportunities and preventing any discrimination during all stages of its life cycle (i.e. implementation, monitoring and evaluation of operations) and in particular in relation to access to funding. It will take into account the needs of the various target groups at risk of such discrimination and in particular the requirements of ensuring accessibility for persons with disability.<sup>76</sup>

The detailed descriptions of the four Priority Axes show that **most of the specific programme objectives (SO 1, SO 2, SO 4-6)** and their related types of action **do not directly consider the principles of promoting equal opportunities between men and women, of integrating the gender perspective and of preventing discrimination.** These specific programme objectives will therefore **not actively support the concrete application of these principles**, but there are reasons which can adequately justify this:

- Firstly, the thematic focus of these specific programme objectives (i.e. on R&D and innovation, low-carbon economy and environment & resource efficiency) covers thematic areas that have no direct link to the horizontal principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination.
- Secondly, the related types of action under these specific programme objectives do not entail an evident risk of discrimination and especially the Interregional Cooperation Projects do not offer a possibility to actively promote equality between men and women or to ensure an integration of the gender perspective during the operational implementation phase.

**Only the description of IP 3(d) and SO 3** (i.e. improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, esp. programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs Programmes and ETC-programmes where relevant, supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop and achieve growth and engage in innovation) **shows that both principles are directly considered and also that it is likely to achieve an active support in their concrete application.** This direct consideration becomes visible already in the situation analysis, because section 1.1.3 highlights that interregional cooperation can contribute to inclusive growth by supporting policy learning and experience transfer on regional policies and programmes for the development of SMEs as main creators of new jobs and for promoting female or young entrepreneurship.<sup>77</sup> As a consequence, the result description of SO 3 explicitly states that (...) *certain priority target groups of entrepreneurship policies (e.g. young people, migrants or female entrepreneurs) may also require specific support.*<sup>78</sup> However, no specific selection criteria are foreseen that favour the development of projects under SO 3 which deal with issues relating to both horizontal principles.

The clearest references to this direct consideration of both principles under SO 3 and also to the potential active support in their concrete application are made in the descriptions of Sections 8.2 and 8.3 of the Programme document. It is (...) *anticipated that certain Interregional Cooperation Projects may emerge that focus on, or at least incorporate the equal opportunities principle (...) and this way (...) may benefit the innovation climate to encourage diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion and age, etc. to provide a broadened framework for the projects. Diversity in this respect may also increase the possibilities of reaching new markets, improve market positions,*

<sup>76</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), pp.89 & 90

<sup>77</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.9

<sup>78</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.34

*broaden the recruitment base and increase creativity. (...) Projects under SO 3 (...) could for instance address the issue of promoting entrepreneurship among specific target groups at risk of discrimination (e.g. unemployed youth, elderly persons, disabled people, women, long-term unemployed and migrants). The development of such Projects, among the possible applications that may come forward in the corresponding Priority Axis, would be welcomed by the programme bodies, as also indicated in the presentation of specific objective 2.1 in section 2 of the cooperation programme document. (...) Furthermore, there (...) is evidence indicating a positive correlation between gender equality and factors promoting economic growth (...) wherefore support schemes (...) for innovation clusters and SMEs might also have an impact on gender equality as men and women tend to be involved in different industry sectors. (...) Under SO 3 (...) Projects could for instance address the issue of promoting female entrepreneurship. The development of such Projects as part of the wider thematic scope of specific objective 2.1 would be welcomed by the programme bodies, as also indicated in the presentation of specific objective 2.1 in section 2 of the cooperation programme document. Finally, also (...), the activities and thematic coverage of the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2 Competitiveness of SMEs may address relevant regional policy experiences and practices related to equal opportunities (...) and (...) gender equality.<sup>79</sup>*

Ultimately, Sections 8.2 and 8.3 of the Programme document also contain **general provisions for an indirect consideration of both principles which apply across the four thematic Priority Axes of INTERREG EUROPE**. All project applicants will be invited (...) *to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen equal opportunities and non-discrimination (...) or (...) gender equality*. Furthermore, at the end of the project, (...) *partners will be asked to report how their project activities and outputs actually contributed to this horizontal principle. Based on the aggregated contributions reported by projects INTERREG EUROPE will be able to monitor and demonstrate how the programme concretely contributed to equal opportunities and non-discrimination (...) as well as (...) to equality between men and women*<sup>80</sup>

### ***Promoting sustainable development***

It appears from our appraisal of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme that **the specific objectives SO 4-6 and their types of action consider a larger number of aspects which are closely related to sustainable development** (esp. environmental protection requirements, resource efficiency, climate change mitigation). These specific programme objectives and their related types of action **will therefore make a very strong direct contribution to actively promoting sustainable development** during the future implementation.

Our appraisal reveals a quite different situation for **the specific programme objectives SO 1-3 and their types of action, because they consider sustainable development very weakly**. Due to this, **only an indirect contribution to the promotion of sustainable development can be expected** from this side. This is also acknowledged by the Programme, but at the same time, a concrete reference on a potentially stronger contribution of the specific programme objectives SO 1-3 to sustainable development is made: *However, it is quite likely that projects supported under those priorities (i.e. Priority Axes 1 & 2) also address aspects of sustainable development in their work. This may for instance be the case for R&D and innovation related projects that focus on*

<sup>79</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), pp.89 & 90. The "specific objective 2.1" corresponds, according to our consecutive numbering, to SO3.

<sup>80</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.89 & 90

*capacities and skills for eco-innovation, or projects that concentrate on the internationalisation of SMEs in green technology sectors.*<sup>81</sup> Previous steps of the ex-ante evaluation formulated suggestions for achieving a more pro-active approach under the three specific objectives.<sup>82</sup> However, the Programme does not foresee specific selection criteria to favour the development of projects dealing with this issue.

Under Section 8.1 of the programme document, the above-described overall situation is **adequately reflected in a specific approach which requires future projects under the four Priority Axes to differently consider and promote sustainable development:**

- Under Priority Axes 3 and 4 (SO 4-6), having as their primary aim to improve the implementation of regional policies and programmes related to sustainable development issues, Interregional Cooperation Projects (...) *will have to clearly demonstrate in their application that the activities they propose will make the implementation of those regional policies better, in order to eventually contribute to the sustainable development of their regions. Projects that fail to demonstrate this clear contribution to improving regional sustainable development policies will not be selected.*<sup>83</sup>
- Under the Priority Axes 1 and 2 (i.e. SO 1-3), which do not directly focus on sustainable development issues, Interregional Cooperation Projects (...) *will be invited to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen sustainable development. At the end of the project the partners will be asked to report how their project activities and outputs actually contributed to this horizontal principle.*<sup>84</sup> This ensures at least that the likely contribution of Projects under SO 1-3 to promoting sustainable development can be appraised.

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<sup>81</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.89

<sup>82</sup> i.e. projects which focus on R&D/innovation in the GreenTech sector or on eco-innovation (SO 1 & 2) and projects which develop business opportunities based on eco-innovation (SO 3) should be explicitly mentioned in the list with concrete project examples.

<sup>83</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.89

<sup>84</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.89

## 4. Appraisal of the programme-level indicator system and the arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

The Commission highlights in various guidance documents issued for the programming period 2014-2020 that with the increased focus on results also the identification of indicators and the arrangements for monitoring and data collection gain an increased importance. This is also underlined by Commission's new approach on viewing the intervention logic of ESI-Funds programmes: it is now less linear than in the past and more in line with the reality of policies and how they interact with other policies and general developments in the context of a programme, which also monitoring and programme-level evaluation a new role.<sup>85</sup>

The new approach significantly changes the way how programme indicators and the programme-level arrangements for monitoring and evaluation have to be designed. This represents a real challenge especially for the ETC-Programmes. The ex-ante evaluation of INTERREG EUROPE is therefore expected to address a larger number of evaluation questions relating to

- (1) the programme indicator system (esp. relevance & clarity of the proposed programme indicators, relevance of the quantified baseline and target values, suitability of the milestones);
- (2) the programme-level arrangements for monitoring and data collection (i.e. measurability of indicators & data collection method, suitability of procedures, adequacy of human and administrative capacity) and for evaluation (i.e. types of evaluation envisaged).

### 4.1. Programme indicator system

This section provides an assessment of the output and result indicators included in the final draft of the INTERREG EUROPE programme, for which the table below provides an overview ([see: Table 2](#)). Our assessment and is based on the following distinction between output and result indicators.

**Outputs** are the direct products of programmes and they are linked to activities. They are intended to contribute to the results. The baseline for programme output indicators is always zero. To define output indicators, programmes should first look at and select from the common output indicators (annexed to the ETC Regulation) where they apply. Where these cannot cover the scope of programme activities, programme-specific output indicators should be developed. In the case of interregional cooperation, output indicators are mainly to be defined programme specific. **Result** is defined as the specific dimension of well-being and progress for people that is intended to be changed with the contribution of the interventions designed. The contribution of other factors affecting the change is also taken into consideration. Result indicators in turn, are variables that provide information on specific aspects of this result that lend themselves to be measured (either in qualitative or quantitative terms). In other words, programme result indicators should cover a dimension of the result which programme intervention could influence

<sup>85</sup> European Commission (2012c); European Commission (2013a); European Commission (2013b)

and which can be measured and captured. Furthermore, a result indicator should show what the situation is like when the programme starts (i.e. show why interventions are needed) and how the situation evolves as the programme progresses, i.e. has a baseline unequal zero.

Indicators in an ETC-programme face specific challenges as they are supposed to measure thematic outputs, process-related progress (learning, capacity-building, networking) as well as programme-related results that are probably less observable than in regional or national Jobs- and Growth programmes. The assessment of indicators needs to take into account these specific challenges and possible structural constraints.

**Table 2: Overview on the indicators of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme**

Axis	Specific Objectives	Output Indicators	Result Indicators
<b>Research, technological development &amp; innovation</b>			
<b>PA 1</b>	<b>SO 1</b> - Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of Action Plans developed in the field of research and innovation infrastructures</li> <li>- Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of research and innovation infrastructures.</li> <li>- Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1 in the field of research and innovation infrastructures</li> <li>- Number of policy learning events in the field of research and innovation infrastructures organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share of Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG Europe were implemented in the field of research and innovation infrastructures</li> <li>- Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of research and innovation infrastructures</li> </ul>
	<b>SO 2</b> - Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, that support the delivery of innovation by actors in regional innovation chains in areas of "smart specialisation" and innovation opportunity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of Action Plans developed in the field of innovation delivery</li> <li>- Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of innovation delivery.</li> <li>- Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1 in the field of innovation delivery</li> <li>- Number of policy learning events in the field of innovation delivery organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share of Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG Europe were implemented in the field of the delivery of innovation</li> <li>- Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG Europe in the field of the delivery of innovation</li> </ul>
<b>Competitiveness of small &amp; medium sized enterprises</b>			
<b>PA 2</b>	<b>SO 3</b> - Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop and achieve growth and engage in innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of Action Plans developed in the field of entrepreneurship &amp; SME support</li> <li>- Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of entrepreneurship &amp; SME support.</li> <li>- Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2.</li> <li>- Number of policy learning events in the field of entrepreneurship &amp; SME support organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share of Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG Europe were implemented in the field of SME growth and entrepreneurship</li> <li>- Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG Europe in the field of SME growth and entrepreneurship</li> </ul>

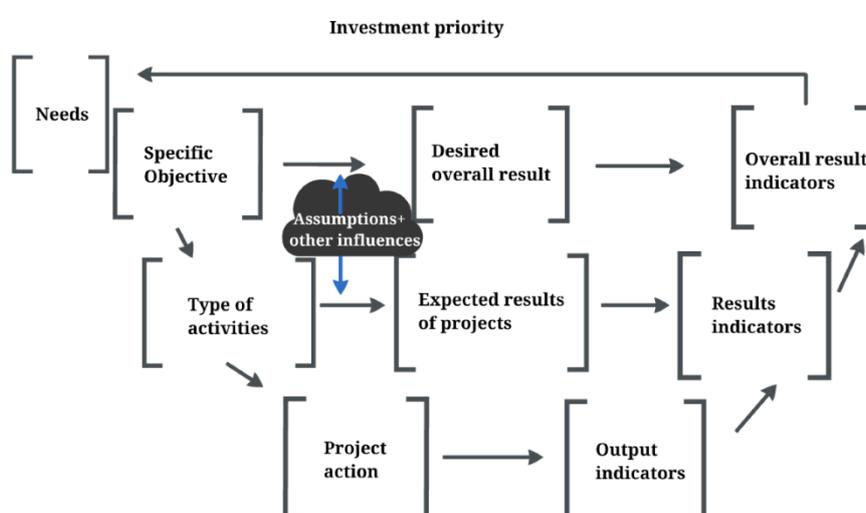
Axis	Specific Objectives	Output Indicators	Result Indicators
PA 3	<b>Low carbon economy</b>		
	<p><b>SO 4</b> - Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of Action Plans developed in the field of low-carbon economy</li> <li>- Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of low-carbon economy.</li> <li>- Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 3.</li> <li>- Number of policy learning events in the field of low-carbon economy organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 3.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share of Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG Europe were implemented in the field of low carbon economy</li> <li>- Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of low carbon economy</li> </ul>
PA 4	<b>Environment &amp; resource efficiency</b>		
	<p><b>SO 5</b> - Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of Action Plans developed in the field of natural and cultural heritage</li> <li>- Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of natural and cultural heritage.</li> <li>- Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4 in the field of natural and cultural heritage.</li> <li>- Number of policy learning events in the field of natural and cultural heritage organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share of Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</li> <li>- Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of protection and development of natural and cultural heritage with improved implementation</li> </ul>
	<p><b>SO 6</b> - Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, aimed at increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation and environmental performance management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of Action Plans developed in the field of resource efficiency and eco-innovation and environmental performance management</li> <li>- Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of eco-innovation and environmental performance management.</li> <li>- Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4 in the field of eco-innovation and environmental performance management</li> <li>- Number of policy learning events in the field of eco-innovation and environmental performance management organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share of Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of resource efficiency</li> <li>- Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of resource efficiency with improved</li> </ul>
PA 5	<b>Technical Assistance</b>		
	<p><b>SO 7</b> - To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the management and implementation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No of interregional Cooperation Projects approved</li> <li>- No of projects visits and participations in project events by JS</li> <li>- Average no of visits to programme website</li> <li>- No of Monitoring Committee meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Share (%) of all supported operations (projects and platforms) that is implemented successfully, demonstrated by the achievement of planned outputs</li> <li>- Share (%) of total programme ERDF budget decommitted</li> </ul>

### *A model for checking the logic of indicators*

To get a better overview on the logic of the proposed indicators and to check the coherence between supported actions, expected outputs and results with the proposed indicators, the ex-ante evaluation employed a logical model that outlines the links between the different elements of each specific objective (see: [Figure 2](#)).

The model has both a horizontal and vertical logic. The horizontal logic focuses on the processes in the programme implementation and the vertical logic focuses on the level of detail and influence. The vertical logic goes from needs and actions to the indicators of the programme, the horizontal logic addresses more abstract or more concrete and modifiable actions, results and indicators by the programme. A more detailed description of the model is provided in [Annex 8](#).

**Figure 2: Model for checking the logic of the indicators**



### *Relevance of the proposed programme indicators*

There is a coherent logic linking the specific objectives, the proposed types of action, the results and the indicators, and the proposed programme indicators are relevant. The indicators for the different specific objectives are, however, rather similar and do only differ with regard to their thematic focus, which is related to the specific objective. Therefore the different types of indicators are just discussed once and not separately for every specific objective, except in relation to the indicators for technical assistance (SO 7).

Overall, **the output indicators are relevant** and allow to link outputs with the results and thus the change measured by the result indicators. The output indicators are not meant to cover all possible outputs of a programme, and the proposed output indicators are defined in a way that they do not cover all activities supported.

- The proposed indicators for SO 1 – SO 6 do not cover ‘phase 2’ activities of Interregional Cooperation Projects. The real output of ‘phase 2’ activities is limited to the monitoring

of the implementation of action plans (e.g. number of action plans monitored) and thus would be of rather limited added value, or it would need to cover implementation actions which are funded by or carried out under other schemes than INTERREG EUROPE. Whereas this rationale might be acceptable for the output indicators, **the programme is advised to not neglect the 'phase 2' actions in its monitoring system.**

- The output indicators for SO 7 are coherent and relevant, as they cover the main aspects of the Priority Axis 5.

**The logic of the two types of result indicators for SO 1 – SO 6 is clear, but the design of the indicator scope is rather narrow.** For each specific objective one result indicator addresses directly the main result envisaged by the programme, i.e. targets the improvement of Growth & Jobs/ETC Programmes in the field addressed by the specific objective. Overall, the proposed result indicators have a rather narrow definition as they focus exclusively on (1) “*measures inspired*” or (2) “*amounts of Structural Funds influenced*” by INTERREG EUROPE. This suggests that the Programme result indicators do not cover other factors that can influence the wider results. If this holds true, then the proposed indicators do not (as suggested in the regulations) monitor the development the programme area faces.

Accordingly, there might be a risk that this narrow focus is criticized by the European Commission. To minimise that risk, the evaluators recommended already at earlier occasions to further broaden the focus of the result indicators (i.e. focus on general interregional cooperation within the eligible programme area). This suggestion of the ex-ante evaluators, but also a number of other alternative proposals, were intensively and controversially discussed among a large range of Programme stakeholders (i.e. INTERREG IVC JTS, Commission, programme drafters, Member States) until the last moments of the programme preparation process. Finally, given the particular nature of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme and the specificity of its types of actions, we think that this rather narrow definition of result indicators can be justified. An alternative and broader result indicator focus would hardly allow capturing a substantial share of the envisaged Programme results, as the also expected improvement of other regional policies and programmes is already “excluded” from the current indicator focus.

**The results indicators for SO 7 are relevant and coherent** with the envisaged results.

### ***Clarity of the proposed programme indicators***

**The indicators are rather clearly defined, but there are some points left for consideration.** Moreover, the generic description of potential activities makes it difficult to assess the coherence of the selected indicators in detail.

**All of the four proposed output indicators are generally coherent.** However, there are a few considerations to be made:

- “*Number of Action Plans developed (...)*”: The indicator is coherent. We encouraged a further description of what is understood as “Action Plan” and as “developed”, which now is envisaged by INTERREG EUROPE to be done in the programme manual.
- “*Number of people with increased professional capacity (...)*”: The indicator seems coherent. We encouraged a further clarification of how “*increased professional capacity*”

is defined and measured, which now is also envisaged by INTERREG EUROPE to be done in the programme manual.

- *“Share of all European regions (NUTS 2) registered to the policy Learning Platform (...)”*: This indicator is coherent, although the alternative presented in an early version of the draft Programme was maybe more appealing (i.e. *“share of NUTS2 regions making use of the policy learning platform”*).
- *“Number of policy learning events (...)”*: The indicator is coherent.

**Likewise, the two proposed types of result indicators are clearly defined.** Nevertheless, a certain risk emerges from some elements in the current indicator statement. This risk relates mainly to the understanding of when a measure is inspired by INTERREG EUROPE and of when an amount of Structural Funds is influenced by INTERREG EUROPE. In other words, what is the exact understanding of a measure, and when does a measure qualify as *“inspired by INTERREG EUROPE”*? We would recommend a rather wide understanding of measures focusing on concrete actions and projects and not on measures as understood in the 2007-2013 period. We therefore recommend specifying the term “inspired” with a number of criteria to be used in the survey, i.e. when is a programme measure inspired. Very similar observations can be made with respect to the second financial result indicator, especially as regards the term “influenced”. For both indicators and the above-mentioned terms, specifications should be elaborated in a technical document outside the Operational Programme.

As regards the data source for the two result indicators, it is stated that information will be gathered through surveys among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes. This is an appropriate approach, given the types of results envisaged by INTERREG EUROPE. A further definition of the survey is envisaged in a separate document,<sup>86</sup> but it should be borne in mind that the development of this survey and the identification of the stakeholders to be addressed require considerable efforts to be undertaken by the future Joint Secretariat.

### ***Relevance of the target values and of the quantified baseline***

**The targets of the output indicators for SO 1 – SO 6 seem to be realistic** and strike a balance between ambitious and achievable. The justification and assumptions on which the target values are based are explained in a separate document.<sup>87</sup> The target values are based on the average budget per project, which is calculated as the allocation is known, the number of project partners and projects envisaged. This is based on experience. A slightly lower number of projects is expected due to a more challenging nature of projects. This is realistic and qualified as logic given the changes in the programme.

**For both types of result indicators for SO 1 – SO 6, which capture the contribution of INTERREG EUROPE to an improvement of future Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes between 2014 and 2023 (i.e. measures inspired & amounts of Structural Funds influenced), no quantified baselines are currently indicated** in the Programme document. They still have to

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<sup>86</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.21: *The content and approach of this survey will be developed in a separate document. This will take into account EC Guidance for the Design of Quantitative Survey-Based Evaluation (R. Scarpa, 2012).*

<sup>87</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014b)

be determined through a survey among the Managing Authorities (or relevant intermediate bodies) of all Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes which will be realised in 2014. For this survey, however, (...) *the definition of the result indicators would need to be adapted (...) to refer to INTERREG IVC and not INTERREG EUROPE. The wording would also refer to the influence in the design of the Structural Funds and not in their implementation.*<sup>88</sup> Bearing in mind the long-lasting discussion on the definition and conceptualisation of the result indicators, we consider this a largely appropriate approach because it avoids that the Programme is submitted with a zero-baseline for all of its result indicators.

The justification and assumptions on which the **target values for the two types of result indicators for SO 1 – SO 6** are based are explained in a separate document.<sup>89</sup> The assumptions and logic presented in this document is clear and thoroughly elaborated. The target values set for the measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE are realistic. The target values for the amounts of Structural Funds influenced by INTERREG EUROPE (from Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes), which are between 25 MEUR and 100 MEUR per specific objective<sup>90</sup>, are generally appropriate but not very ambitious. Questions could be raised if the 400 MEUR to be influenced in total by INTERREG EUROPE are put in relation to the Programme's own resources (app. 360 MEUR) or the total Community funding available for Growth & Jobs and ETC-programmes.

With regard to **the result indicators of SO 7**, it is acceptable that these result indicators have a zero-baseline given the provisions of Article 8 (2) (c) of the ETC-regulation 1299/2013. The target values are furthermore realistic.

### *Suitability of the milestones*

The draft final version of the Programme does mention milestones for the output indicator "Number of developed Action Plans (...)". **The milestones are relevant and realistic.**

The milestone is to have 90 action plans developed by 2018, of the final target of 230 in 2023. At the same time 13% of the financial resources are to be spent in 2018. These figures appear to be realistic given that the delivery of action plans and in particular that the money spent tends to accelerate over time.

## **4.2. Programme-level arrangements for monitoring/data collection and evaluation**

A Cohesion Policy that is more strongly oriented towards results requires adequate human resources and administrative capacity as well as suitable procedures for programme-level monitoring and data collection. Also adequate provisions for ensuring high quality evaluations to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and impact for each programme have to exist. The following paragraphs therefore review the provisions for monitoring, data collection and evaluation activities of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.

<sup>88</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.21

<sup>89</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014b)

<sup>90</sup> i.e. 25 MEUR for SO 1; 50 MEUR for SO 5 & SO 6 each; 75 MEUR for SO 2; 100 MEUR for SO 3 and SO 4 each

### ***Measurability of the indicators***

**The proposed indicators are in general considered measurable. However, some unsolved aspects remain** which need to be paid attention to in the in the continuous work of the programme monitoring. These have in principle already been mentioned above.

The output indicator “*Number of people with increased professional capacity (...)*” is less straightforward to measure. We therefore recommend putting special emphasis on the design of the template for the regular progress reporting by the projects . As outlined above, also for other output indicators, more clarity in the definition would be beneficial.

Likewise the result indicator “*Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG Europe were implemented*” lacks a clear defined method for information collection. This concerns both the target group of the survey (at last to the degree that Intermediate Bodies are to be included) and the design and collection procedure of the survey. The evaluators encourage the programme to proceed with the elaboration of a separate technical document on these aspects. The same goes for the result indicator on funding influenced, for which it indeed might be even more difficult collect reliable information.

### ***Data collection method***

**Data for the output indicators** will be collected annual, which seems to be appropriate in order to provide data to the decision-making, reporting, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

**Data for the proposed result indicators will be collected on ground of a survey which is carried out in 2018, 2020 and 2023.** A survey is a good tool to test the sharing of practices and policy learning of individuals and organisations and thereby to monitor the progress of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. A survey can, however, be rather expensive and demands clear definitions of target groups as well as targeted and clearly formulated questions. Furthermore a procedure to ensure a smooth process running the survey ensuring time and high quality data should be defined. Finally, also sufficient financial resources should be allocated to this task.

A clear definition of the target groups and clearly formulated questions should be elaborated when the survey will be implemented. Therefore, it is supported that an additional secondary programme document (e.g. an Indicator or Monitoring Manual) will describe more in detail the data collection process for the result indicators (survey, self-assessment, studies, etc.) and give clear instructions on how to assess it and how to permit normative interpretation (e.g. qualitative values, Lickert scale, or other). This is especially important in case of INTERREG Europe, since there is obviously no official data source for the indicator estimation.

### ***Adequacy of the monitoring and evaluation provisions***

In accordance with Article 125 (2) (d) and (e) and Article 125 (8) of the CPR, the Managing Authority is formally responsible for establishing a computerised information system with data on the operations that are necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management,

verification and audit and - subsequently - also for collecting, entering and storing data in this monitoring system which have to correspond to the delegated acts that are issued by the European Commission.

In the context of INTERREG Europe, these monitoring tasks and also the related control and implementation reporting tasks are in the responsibility of the Managing Authority and of the Joint Secretariat. Especially the latter will play a key role in this context as it will have to establish the online project monitoring system, collect and compile information from the Projects' progress reports and from the activities of the Policy Learning Platforms and draw up the annual and final implementation reports. Furthermore, the responsibility of the Joint Secretariat will presumably also include the preparation and running of the survey to collect data on the result indicators. It is therefore advisable to have some points clearly defined with respect to the survey already in the programme document: who is responsible for the survey and what is the timeframe for the preparation and implementation of the survey?

**It is positive that INTERREG Europe puts emphasis on the importance of monitoring to ensure a high quality and effective implementation of the Programme.** Given the specific character of INTERREG Europe, it is recommended that this monitoring will not only focus on the output and result indicators as presented in the Programme but also consider a number of other relevant indicators which are located in-between the output and result indicators. One concrete example has already been discussed earlier when the relevance of the outputs indicators was appraised (i.e. the Projects' phase 2 actions). The Programme already contains a clear indication that efforts will be made in this direction, as it states that in addition to the set of programme-level result and output indicators (...), *the INTERREG Europe programme may define complementary indicators that will enable the programme bodies to effectively monitor the progress and quality of programme and project implementation.*<sup>91</sup> To ensure that a suitable monitoring system is built up, this work should start rather swiftly after the submission of the Programme.

The described **overall framework for project reporting and a further compilation and evaluation of the evidence are sensible.** Also the described preparation and submission of the annual and final implementation reports are in line with the provisions of the ETC-Regulation.

It is difficult to make a more substantial assessment of the adequacy at this point, as a detailed description of the administrative provision and processes for monitoring and of the data collection process will only be provided in a separate document which is prepared by the Joint Secretariat at a later stage. The same difficulty appears when it comes to appraising if sufficient resources are allocated to monitoring, although this is an essential aspect for ensuring a robust monitoring result. Yet, the evaluators cannot assess this aspect because an overview on the allocation of Technical Assistance funding to the different monitoring task is not available in the Programme.

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<sup>91</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.77

## 5. Appraisal of the programme's financial allocations

Article 92 (9) of the CPR specifies the global resources which are available for budgetary commitment from the Funds for the ETC goal (2.75% or a total of EUR 8 948 259 330) and Article 4 (1) (c) of the ETC-Regulation sets out the share and amount which is dedicated to the four interregional cooperation programmes (i.e. 5.59% or a total of EUR 500 000 000).

Against this wider background, the ex-ante evaluation now appraises the consistency of the allocation of budgetary resources under the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. Due to the specificity of INTERREG EUROPE, only two of the general evaluation questions need to be taken into consideration:

- (1) Is the presentation and allocation of the financial programme resources in line with the requirements as set out by the provisions of the EU-Regulations?
- (2) Are the financial allocations to each Priority Axis and to the categories of interventions concentrating on the most important objectives and are they in line with the identified challenges and needs?

Our appraisal is based on the information contained in sections 1.2 and 3 of the Programme document. Furthermore, in order to appraise the consistency of the financial allocations, the ex-ante evaluator has reviewed the Priority Axes of the Programme, the categories of interventions (Sections 2.A.8 and 2.B.6) the identified challenges and needs, the objectives and the planned actions (Sections 1 and 2 of the programme document).

### *Compliance with the provisions of the EU-Regulations*

Article 6 (2) of the ETC-Regulation does not impose a limitation to interregional cooperation programmes as regards the number of thematic objectives (TOs) to be selected, but the Partner States of INTERREG EUROPE have agreed to apply the concentration principle to programme strategy. They selected four TOs (TO 1, TO 3, TO 4, TO 6) which correspond mainly to the smart and sustainable growth priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Of the total ERDF-funding of EUR 359 326 000 available to INTERREG EUROPE, 94% is allocated in equal shares to these four thematic Priority Axes (PA 1-4) and TOs. The remaining 6% are allocated to Technical Assistance (PA 5).

As required by Article 8 (2) (d) (ii) of the ETC-Regulation, the INTERREG EUROPE Programme adequately specifies the amount of the total financial appropriation of the support from the ERDF for each year (Section 3, Table 15) and the indicative breakdown of the national counterpart, for the whole programming period, for the cooperation programme and for each Priority Axis (Section 3, Table 16). The co-financing rate at the level of each thematic Priority Axis is not higher than 85%,<sup>92</sup> therefore largely consistent with what required by Article 120 (3) of the CPR for the ETC programmes.

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<sup>92</sup> The co-financing rate of 85% is an average, based on the 3 different co-financing rates that will be applied. For Interregional Cooperation Projects a co-financing rate of 85% will be applied to public partners as well as to public law bodies. A co-financing rate

Article 4 (2) of the ETC-Regulation requires to set aside an amount of EUR 50 000 000 from the total budget dedicated to the interregional cooperation. In this sense, **it appears recommendable to also specify in Section 6.1.3 which arrangements will be made for assuring a financial coordination with the other three interregional cooperation programmes.** As required by Article 8 (2) (b) (vii) and (c) (v) of the ETC-Regulation, Sections 2.A.8 and 2.B.6 of the Programme present the breakdown of the total ERDF budget per categories of intervention based on the nomenclature adopted by the Commission's implementing regulation (EU) No 184/2014 of 25 February 2014.

If one considers the deliberately adopted thematic concentration which also leads to a financial concentration on only four PAs and TOs and the adequate financial presentation, one can conclude **that INTERREG EUROPE “over-complies” to the requirements as set out in the EU-Regulations.**

### ***Concentration on the most important objectives & needs/challenges***

Here we aim to verify whether the financial programme resources are adequately distributed among the programme objectives, their related types of action and the proposed categories of interventions so that they can address and tackle the most important challenges and needs identified.

If one excludes the funding dedicated to technical assistance (PA 5) and considers only the total amount of the ERDF-resources which is dedicated to the four thematic Priority Axes, then the following pattern appears:

- 25% of the ERDF budget is concentrated on TO 1 which addresses the EU-wide challenges/needs relating to the Europe 2020 field of action “Innovation” that belongs to the Smart Growth priority of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
- 75% of the ERDF budget is concentrated on TO 3, TO 4 and TO 6 which address the EU-wide challenges/needs relating to the Europe 2020 fields of action “Competitiveness” (TO 3), “Clean & Efficient Energy” (TO 4) and “Combating Climate Change” (TO 6), all belonging to the Sustainable Growth priority of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

It becomes evident from our overview below ([see: Table 3](#)) that **the equal distribution of the financial resources among the four Priority Axes (and TOs) is consistent:** it adequately reflects both the high weight given to the challenges/needs and targets of the Europe 2020 fields of action “Innovation” and “Competitiveness”, “Energy Efficiency” and “Combating climate change” as well as the high level of consideration of these Europe 2020 fields of action by the thematic and specific programme objectives and the related types of action (i.e. Interregional Cooperation Projects & Policy Learning Platforms).

For what concerns the categories of interventions, if one excludes the interventions related to the TA assistance, the INTERREG EUROPE Programme is exclusively focused on interventions

related to the institutional capacity. This approach reflects the characteristics of the Programme with the same typologies of actions and outputs expected under all the priority axes.

**Table 3: Consistency of the allocation of financial programme resources to the thematic Priority Axes**

Axes	Results of the strategy appraisal (*)		Breakdown of financial resources 2014-2020	Conclusions of consistency assessment
	Weight given to challenges/needs in the situation analysis ("Europe 2020 field of action")	Level of consideration of the identified challenges/needs by the related specific objectives and the types of action		
<b>Priority Axis 1: Research, technological development &amp; innovation</b>	+++ ("Innovation")	+++ (SO 1 & SO 2)	25%	Consistent
<b>Priority Axis 2: Competitiveness of small &amp; medium sized enterprises</b>	+++ ("Competitiveness")	+++ (SO 3)	25%	Consistent
<b>Priority Axis 3: Low carbon economy</b>	+++ ("Clean & efficient energy")	+++ (SO 4)	25%	Consistent
<b>Priority Axis 4: Environment &amp; resource efficiency</b>	+++ ("Combating climate change")	+++ (SO 5 & SO 6)	25%	Consistent

(\*) For further details see also Section 3.1 and Annex 3 of this report

## 6. Appraisal of the programme's contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy and to social, economic and territorial cohesion

Article 4 of the CPR states that the ESI-Funds and their programmes shall provide support (...) *to deliver the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as the Fund specific missions pursuant to their Treaty based objectives, including economic, social and territorial cohesion taking account of the relevant Europe 2020 Integrated Guidelines and the relevant country specific recommendations adopted (...).*

Accordingly, but different to the previous parts of this evaluation which examined the correspondence of the challenges/needs and objectives or the intended results with the Europe 2020 Strategy (e.g. appraisal of the consistency and the intervention logic), this chapter appraises the actual contribution of INTERREG EUROPE to the following two main aspects:

- (1) What is the likely contribution of the Programme to achieving the common objectives, headline targets and flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy?
- (2) What is the likely contribution of the Programme to social, economic and territorial cohesion?

### *Contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy*

Due to the specificity of INTERREG EUROPE (i.e. width of the covered area; small overall financial volume in relation to the area covered; very small funding volume available to individual project partners), the assessment of the extent to which the programme will contribute to the Europe 2020 Strategy has to differ from the one recommended for appraising the Growth and Jobs programmes. Instead, an alternative and qualitative approach with two steps is carried out. (1) An assessment of direct or indirect relations between the specific programme objectives and the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth). (2) An assessment of potential impacts of the desired overall result on the headline targets, thematic actions and flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The matrices below ([see: Tables 4 & 5](#)) present the contribution of INTERREG EUROPE to the Europe 2020 headline targets and thematic actions. Although the characteristics of INTERREG EUROPE imply a limited direct relationships between the specific programme objectives and the Europe 2020 priorities, all headline targets, thematic actions and flagship initiatives have been included in the assessment, although this might have resulted in relative more indications of '0' (no / minor contribution) in the matrices. The matrices presented show the contribution in a summarised approach.

The types of actions and desired results are to a large extent similar between the specific programme objectives, i.e. improving implementation due to interregional sharing of practices, policy learning and improved capacities (skills, knowledge). However, one specific programme objective might contribute more (or less) to specific headline targets, thematic actions or flagship initiatives from the Europe 2020 Strategy. The assessment does furthermore take into consideration that the funding is equally shared among the Priority Axes. This means that there

is relative less funding available for those axes with more specific objectives (PA1 with SO 1 & SO 2; PA 4 with SO5 & SO6).

Since there are no contradictions between the specific programme objectives, their desired overall results and the priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the **main points from the assessment** can be summarised as follows:

- Although SO 1, SO 2, SO 5 and SO 6 have relatively less funding, the specific objectives are mainly targeted towards the Europe 2020 priorities of smart and sustainable growth.
- SO 1 and SO 2 contribute mostly to the headline targets, thematic actions and flagship initiatives of smart growth, more on innovation and R&D aspect than on creating jobs.
- SO 4 and SO 6 are mostly contributing to the priority of sustainable growth.
- The sustainable growth priority of the Europe 2020 Strategy has a focus on climate and business. The specific programme objectives of INTERREG EUROPE address both these aspects, i.e. SO 3 mainly the 'strong business climate aspect' and SO 4 and SO 6 mainly the aspect 'impacts for climate change'.
- SO 5 seems to be highly focused on some specific parts under the sustainable growth priority; this is no problem as long as it does not contradict other contributions.
- The headline targets '3% of GDP in R&D' and 'resource efficiency' seem to be best covered by the all specific programme objectives.
- 'Harnessing EU-scale networks' and 'improving business environment' are well covered thematic actions by the all specific programme objectives.
- The specific programme objectives only make smaller contributions to the inclusive growth priority.

**To conclude**, while considering the specific character and overall capacity of the Programme, **INTERREG EUROPE offers an indirect potential (rather than a direct potential) for contributing to an achievement of the headline targets and thematic actions of the Europe 2020 Strategy.** The overall contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy can be described as follows:

- **INTERREG EUROPE brings about indirect contributions to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth by helping regions to improve their own policies and EU-programmes with a view to increase their contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy.** INTERREG EUROPE will support cooperation between European regions and offer an opportunity for policy learning and transfer of good practices, thus creating added value to European regions. In doing so, INTERREG EUROPE assists the regions in improving their own regional development policies and in enhancing the effectiveness of their Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes in the thematic fields selected for the Programme. When this is achieved, then the improved policies and programmes can also better contribute to the relevant aspects of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
- **The specific objectives of INTERREG EUROPE have reinforcing effects and can therefore contribute to different aspects of the Europe 2020 Strategy.** The improvement of regional policies and EU-programmes can, for example, contribute to SMEs in improving their innovative capacities (smart growth), but also raise business opportunities (sustainable growth) and create new jobs (inclusive growth). Moreover,

the funding to actions under one SO is often also influencing the contribution to the Europe 2020 priorities in other specific objectives as well (i.e. cross-impacts, see internal coherence appraisal).

### ***Contribution to social, economic and territorial cohesion***

Due to the already mentioned specificity of INTERREG EUROPE, it is not very likely that any “measurable” contributions to these wider Treaty objectives can be achieved. The contributions to social, economic and territorial cohesion will thus be of indirect rather than of a direct nature.

The overall aim of INTERREG EUROPE is to enable and facilitate a better implementation of policies and programmes through stimulating exchanges of experience and policy-oriented learning among regions in Europe. In doing so, it contributes to increasing the capacities of the involved regions for better delivering regional policies and programmes which target economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The specific programme objectives of INTERREG EUROPE contribute to these aspects of cohesion differently, but without contradicting each other:

- **SO 1, SO 2, SO 3 make a clear contribution to economic cohesion**, mainly by ensuring global competitiveness of regions, based on strong local economies. By focusing on the improvement of the innovative capacity of regions (i.e. through more and better cooperation in and between regions), SO3 supports that innovations are commercialised and empowers SMEs to give them competitive advantage in terms of knowledge and access to international markets.
- **All specific programme objectives contribute to territorial cohesion**, albeit at a variable scope. The external coherence appraisal has already shown that the specific programme objectives address many issues raised under the development priorities of the “Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020”.
- **SO4, SO5 and SO6 contribute to achieve a sustainable dimension of cohesion**. SO4 and SO6 do this by focussing on resource efficiency and a low-carbon economy. These are major societal challenges and ideas how to cope with it will be shared and developed interregionally. SO5 is more focused on specific regional assets like the cultural values or the natural heritage of regions and it also aims at a better management and sustainable use or connection of ecological landscapes, Natura 2000 areas and other protected areas.
- Only with respect to **social cohesion** and its constituent elements such as social inclusion, social capital and social mobility, **INTERREG EUROPE will not make a significant contribution**.

**Table 4: Potential contribution of INTERREG EUROPE to the headline targets of the Europe 2020 Strategy**

	Headline Targets						
	75% of the 20-64 year-old population to be employed.	3% of the EU's Gross Domestic Product to be invested in R&D.	20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.	20% of energy from renewable sources	20% increase in energy efficiency	At least 40% of 30-34 year-old population completing third level education.	At least 20 million fewer people in or at-risk-of-poverty and social exclusion.
SO 1	(+)	(++)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(+)	(0)
SO 2	(0)	(+++)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(0)
SO 3	(++)	(+)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
SO 4	(0)	(+)	(+++)	(++)	(+++)	(+)	(0)
SO 5	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(++)	(0)	(0)
SO 6	(0)	(+)	(+)	(+++)	(+++)	(0)	(0)

**Table 5: Potential contribution of INTERREG EUROPE to the thematic actions of the Europe 2020 Strategy**

	Thematic Actions													
	Research / Innovation	Education, training & life-long learning	Digital Society	More competitive low carbon economy	Protecting the environment	Efficient smart electricity grids	Harnessing EU-scale networks	Helping consumers	Improving the business environment	New green technologies	More and better jobs	Investment in skills & training	Modernising	Benefits of growth reach all
SO 1	(++)	(+++)	(++)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+++)	(0)	(+++)	(+)	(0)	(++)	(+)	(++)
SO 2	(+++)	(++)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+++)	(0)	(+++)	(+)	(0)	(+)	(+)	(++)
SO 3	(+)	(++)	(+)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(+++)	(0)	(+++)	(0)	(++)	(+)	(+)	(++)
SO 4	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+++)	(+)	(+)	(0)	(++)	(0)	(++)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(+)
SO 5	(0)	(0)	(0)	(+)	(+++)	(+)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
SO 6	(++)	(0)	(0)	(+)	(+)	(0)	(0)	(++)	(0)	(++)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)

## 7. Appraisal of the programme's arrangements for management, implementation and partnership

Cohesion Policy programmes with a much stronger orientation on results need to have adequate administrative capacity and human resources for delivering their day-to-day management and control activities, but also efficient structures and procedures to ensure smooth implementation and strategic decision-making process. This is of particular importance for all ETC-Programmes. Different to the regional- or national-level Growth and Jobs Programmes, ETC-Programmes have to cope with the complexity that is inherent to a joint delivery of all aspects relating to administrative and financial management, control and strategic monitoring.

Bearing this in mind, our appraisal of INTERREG EUROPE's delivery structures and mechanisms will therefore mainly focus on the following four evaluation questions:

- (1) Considering the experiences from the previous INTERREG IVC funding period 2007-2013, are there any persisting bottlenecks which might also impede the management and implementation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme?
- (2) Are the INTERREG EUROPE arrangements for management and implementation in line with what is required by the EU-Regulations and are the processes conceived in a way to ensure a smooth and sound delivery of the Programme?
- (3) Does the INTERREG EUROPE Programme include actions to achieve a reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries?
- (4) Does INTERREG EUROPE adequately translate the regulatory principle on partnership and multi-level governance into its own context?

The following sections will not cover the programme-level provisions on monitoring and evaluation, because they were already appraised under Chapter 4 of the present report.

### *Experiences from the INTERREG IVC Programme*

The mid-term evaluation for the INTERREG IVC Programme of 2010<sup>93</sup> and its update of 2013<sup>94</sup> highlighted a number of important features and also shortcomings of the programme management, implementation and decision-making system. They are worth being considered before the provisions for management, implementation and partnership of the INTERREG EUROPE programme are appraised.

Already in 2010, the mid-term evaluation observed that the entire and **relatively complex programme management and implementation system was operating at its upper capacity limits** and that only a few potentials did exist for substantially improving this situation already during the period 2007-2013. The overall performance of the Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) was in general positive and efficient and also the four decentralised Information Point (IPs) performed reasonably well, despite a number of weaknesses that were observed in the IPs' task-delivery process. The overall performance of the National Contact Points (NCPs) was also largely

<sup>93</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2010a), pp.8-9, 41-62, 70-81

<sup>94</sup> INTERREG IVC Programme (2013I), pp.10-12, 53-64

positive, despite their voluntary and irregular involvement in the current programme implementation and their relatively limited and also variable means. At the time of the updated mid-term evaluation in spring 2013, the overall situation of a programme governance system operating at its upper capacity limit did not really change and thus remained a continuing reality. Although the programme management functions were in general perceived to be at a very good level (esp. the technical & financial management), the operation of the decentralised IPs was increasingly seen critical (e.g. distance of the IPs to the JTS; high central coordination efforts with respect to the different tasks allocated to IPs; IPs were not fully operating in the same way). Therefore, the updated mid-term evaluation also recommended reconsidering the role and position of the IPs in the future programme. As regards the existing NCPs (none in Germany and the UK), no significant changes are observed in their current activities and their potential role. Although their work is generally perceived useful, the volume of their tasks as well as the motivation and involvement varies greatly from country to country. It was also not observed that the NCPs really play a stronger role in communication and only around 25% of MC-members advocate that they should be given a stronger role in the project development phase.

**Decision-making within the INTERREG IVC Monitoring Committee (MC)** worked reasonably well within the large group of involved Partner States (i.e. all EU-Member States plus Norway and Switzerland), especially because majority voting was applied (instead of consensus) since an early stage of the programme (i.e. 2<sup>nd</sup> MC-Meeting). However, the mid-term evaluation of 2010 also pointed out that MC decision-making **had to cope with a number of important challenges that were clearly under-estimated at the outset by all parties involved**: more stakes and stakeholders needed to be accommodated, more time was needed for decision-taking and also more communication efforts and “diplomatic skills” were required from the Managing Authority, the JTS, the MC-Chair and the programme Troika. It also appeared that discussions and decision-taking in the Monitoring Committee should be realised in a more efficient and also qualitatively better way. Although the MC-process remained challenging, concrete efforts were made since 2011 to introduce a more interactive MC-working style (e.g. work in smaller groups or “coffee corners”, task delegation to MS etc.). Despite this, however, the mid-term update observed a continuing need to further increase ownership of the MC-members and pointed to further aspects which could be added to the already started interactive MC-working style (e.g. more taskforce meetings, more preparatory discussions in smaller groups, introducing more social elements in the MC-meetings etc.).

With respect to the **“Communication Strategy” of the INTERREG IVC programme**, it was observed in 2010 that the actual output/result achievement of the communication and information activities is well under-way, but also that these activities were **only in part successful in raising the level of awareness & knowledge among regional/local authorities in Europe** about the existence and functioning of the INTERREG IVC programme and with respect to an information of/communication with some external but strategic stakeholder groups (i.e. EU-institutions, EU-wide associations representing local & regional authorities).

Bearing in mind the overall set-up of INTERREG EUROPE and the new provisions for programme-level management/implementation and decision-making, one can conclude that **most of the above-mentioned features continue to be of relevance during the new funding**

**period 2014-2020. As a consequence, the following issues deserve careful attention in the future:**

- Although the Programme's structural complexity is now reduced because the former decentralised Information Point (IPs) do not exist any longer, decision-making within the Monitoring Committee will remain complex and challenging due to the large group of involved Partner States. The latter aspect, however, cannot be addressed by the general implementation provisions of the programme, because it requires specific functional and procedural arrangements that are usually defined by the MC's internal rules of procedures.
- INTERREG EUROPE should also continue to discuss and further clarify the actual role of the entire NCP-system which, by the way, is not explicitly mentioned under the programme's description of the implementation provisions.
- A good performance of the Interregional Cooperation Projects and of the new Policy Learning Platforms, both focussing much stronger than before on improving the implementation of ERDF-programmes, will also require that more intensive contacts with all Member States are established (i.e. programme managing authorities, project beneficiaries, adequate other policy-relevant actors). This need can indeed be addressed by a further reinforcement of the Joint Secretariats' communication unit, but also by a stronger and more homogenous role given in this respect to the NCPs.

#### ***Programme-level management and implementation arrangement***

Many articles of the general and specific ESI-Funds regulations contain provisions relating to the monitoring, management and control system to be established by the operational programmes. The most important general provisions defining the scope of the management, implementation and control tasks and also the functions of the involved actors/structures are laid down in Part IV of the CPR (Articles 122-148). The specific provisions for arrangements to be adopted by cooperation programmes are set out by Chapter VI of the ETC-Regulation (Articles 21-25) which, in accordance with Article 8 (4) (a) and (b) of this regulation, have to be described by each cooperation programme.

The implementation provisions for INTERREG EUROPE are set out in Section 5 of the programme document. This section identifies only the bodies acting as Managing Authority (MA) and Audit Authority (AA), because the functions of the Certifying Authority (CA) are expected to be taken over by the Managing Authority in line with the provisions of Article 123 (3) of the CPR.<sup>95</sup> This section also briefly refers to the setting up the Joint Secretariat (JS), which in fact will continue to be located in Lille (France) because the implementation arrangements from the 2007-2013 programming period are kept. In the following, the tasks of each of the bodies including the Monitoring Committee (MC) are defined in more detail and also the relations between the different bodies within the various programme implementation processes are described. More specifically, the text describes

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<sup>95</sup> The Programme document states that (...) *the managing authority intends to take over the functions of the certifying authority. This however requires compliance with already existing French budgetary laws and principles. At the moment of adoption of the cooperation programme by the Partner States, the regional and national level are working towards defining the exact requirements for the internalisation of the CA function by the MA and reaching a final decision.* INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), p.71

- very briefly the setting-up of the Joint Secretariat, because the 2007-2013 arrangements for the JTS were kept;
- in detail the role and tasks of the MA, the JS, the CA, the AA, the “Group of Auditors and the MC;
- the organisation of the assessment and selection of operations and the resolution of complaints;
- the procedure for the signature of the document setting out the conditions of support (“subsidy contract”) and the financial control of beneficiaries;
- the provisions on monitoring both at the project and at the programme level;
- the provisions on reporting (annual and final implementation reports), on the closure of the programme and on programme-level evaluation;
- the computerised exchange of data;
- the mobilisation and circulation of financial flows (i.e. for contribution of the various partners to the financing of the programme and for the main stages of Community funding from the MA/CA to the lead partners of operations);
- the Programme’s information and communication activities;
- the approach for an apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the MA or the Commission (i.e. for the reduction and recovery of payments from beneficiaries as well as for liabilities and irregularities);
- the use of the Euro.

**The description under Section 5 fulfils to a large extent the content-related expectations which were set out in an earlier version of the Commission’s “Model for the Operational Programme under the ETC-goal” (Version 2 of May 2013) and also fully complies with the requirements of Article 8 (4) (a) and (b) of the ETC-Regulation.**

### *Reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries*

According to Article 27 (1) of the CPR, each programme shall include (...) *actions to achieve a reduction of the administrative burden on beneficiaries*. Of particular relevance in this wider context are also the formal requirements for establishing a complete electronic data exchange under the ESI-funds in the period 2014-2020. The most relevant provisions for this are set out by Article 72 (d), Article 74 (4), Article 122 (3) and Article 125 (2) (d) of the CPR<sup>96</sup> as well as by the requirements of the e-Cohesion initiative for electronic data exchange under the ESI-Funds.

**INTERREG EUROPE identifies a wide range of actions which are adequate for reducing the administrative burden on beneficiaries.** Some of these actions were already introduced

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<sup>96</sup> **Article 72 (d):** Management and control systems shall, in accordance with Article 4(8), provide for (...) computerised systems for accounting, for the storage and transmission of financial data and data on indicators, for monitoring and for reporting. **Article 74 (4):** All official exchanges of information between the Member State and the Commission shall be carried out using an electronic data exchange system. The Commission shall adopt implementing acts establishing the terms and conditions with which that electronic data exchange system is to comply. Those implementing acts shall be adopted in accordance with the examination procedure referred to in Article 150(3). **Article 122 (3):** Member States shall ensure that no later than 31 December 2015, all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and a managing authority, a certifying authority, an audit authority and intermediate bodies can be carried out by means of electronic data exchange systems. **Article 125 (2) (d):** As regards the management of the operational programme, the managing authority shall (...) establish a system to record and store in computerised form data on each operation necessary for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit, including data on individual participants in operations, where applicable.

during the period 2007-2013 (in 2011) to reduce or remove some of the complexities related to administrative and financial management and reporting of projects and are continued in the period 2014-2020 (i.e. application of fixed rate for administration costs in line with the relevant CPR provision; online reporting and online request for changes for projects). New actions are envisaged which shall help to comply with the principles of e-Cohesion and to reduce the rate of non-eligible applications (i.e. introduction of online project applications) or which are taking forward the results of the harmonisation work carried out jointly by various ETC-programmes in preparation of the 2014-2020 period (i.e. introduction of a range of common templates and model forms, fact sheets, handbooks and guidance documents). Further actions towards simplification will also be taken in the field of financial reporting (i.e. use of simplified cost options for the reporting of costs under other budget lines) and activity and result monitoring (i.e. significant reduction of the number of indicators on which the projects will have to report).

Finally, the Programme document also highlights that **the electronic data exchange system operated under INTERREG IVC already largely complies with the requirements of the e-Cohesion initiative** and that INTERREG EUROPE will continue to operate fully in line with these principles from the start of the Programme.

### *Programme-level partnership arrangement*

Article 5 of the CPR defines the principle of “partnership and multi-level governance” under the ESI-Funds which is relevant for both the Member States’ Partnership Agreement and the individual operational programmes. The approach to be adopted for a concrete application of this principle is described in a specific Commission Staff Working Document<sup>97</sup> and in a fiche for a delegated act of the Commission on the “European Code of Conduct on Partnership” (ECCP).<sup>98</sup>

In order to fully comply more specifically with the provisions of Article 5 (1) and (2) of the CPR, the ETC-Regulation requires programmes through Article 8 (4) (c) to describe (...) *the actions taken to involve the partners referred to in Article 5 (...) of the CPR (...) in the preparation of the cooperation programme, and the role of those partners in the preparation and implementation of the cooperation programme, including their involvement in the monitoring committee.* The partners referred to in Article 5 (1) of the CPR are competent urban and other public authorities, economic and social partners, relevant bodies representing civil society, including environmental partners, non-governmental organisations, and bodies responsible for promoting social inclusion, gender equality and non-discrimination.

**During the preparation of INTERREG EUROPE, a broad range of actions were taken which allowed involving intensively the partners referred to in Article 5 (1) of the CPR.** Frequent meetings of the **Programming Committee (PC)** were organised and the delegations of the States represented often involved both the national and regional levels. Also the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) were represented in the Programming Committee. The draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme was also put out for **an online public consultation** over a prolonged period of 10 weeks (from January to March

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<sup>97</sup> European Commission (2012e)

<sup>98</sup> European Commission (2013e)

2014),<sup>99</sup> which resulted in a largely positive feedback (also on the most innovative feature of INTERREG EUROPE, namely the introduction of phase 2 for the projects and the development of Policy Learning Platforms) and did not lead to any major changes in the proposed Programme strategy. However, several contributions led to a direct modification of the draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme and are briefly described under this section of the Programme document. Furthermore, a **stakeholder workshop** with over 50 representatives of pan-European organisations and networks of European relevance, EU institutions and organisations and selected Brussels based regional offices was organised in February 2014 (a list of the participating organisations is provided in Section 9.3 of the Programme document). Finally, in the context of the **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) procedure**, the environmental assessment report was put to public consultation (in parallel the consultation on the draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme) which allowed that the relevant environmental authorities were informed ([see: Chapter 8](#)).

**For the future strategic monitoring and implementation of INTERREG EUROPE**, the provisions in Sub-sections 5.3 and 5.6.2 of the Programme document explicitly foresee that the Monitoring Committee will – among others – include up to three representatives per Partner Country from appropriate governance levels and also representatives of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in an advisory capacity. Bearing the already complex and challenging decision-taking process within the INTERREG IVC Monitoring Committee in mind, we consider this approach appropriate for ensuring an adequate representation of the partners as referred to in Article 5 (1) of the CPR. This approach is therefore in line with the requirements as set out by the “European Code of Conduct on Partnership”.

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<sup>99</sup> According to the information in the INTERREG EUROPE Programme (...), *the online public consultation survey was completed by 350 individuals and organisations, coming from 31 countries (including Albania and Georgia). These contributions included more than 500 individual comments and suggestions for modification or clarification of the programme. Public authorities represent more than 50% of the respondents, followed by universities and research institutions (13%) and business support organisations (11%). (...) A significant number of respondents were familiar with interregional cooperation and are therefore aware of the benefit it brings. But still, half of the respondents were not involved in any INTERREG IVC projects.* INTERREG IVC Programme (2014a), pp.82f

## 8. Summary of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)<sup>100</sup>

Pursuant to the Directive 2001/42/EC adopted by the European Parliament and European Council the assessment of possible effects on the environment of the Interregional Cooperation Programme 2014-2020 is obligatory.

On 5th November 2013, the scoping note was sent to the National Contact Points of INTERREG EUROPE in order to forward it to the national authorities with environmental responsibilities. The deadline for the scoping consultation was the 19 November 2013. Due to the short period and other obligations of the authorities, some comments were submitted after the deadline. In total, twelve (12) responses were received by the INTERREG EUROPE members. Overwhelmingly the authorities had no objections regarding the drafted scoping note. Few suggestions were made regarding further strategies to include as well as the consideration of NATRURA 2000 aspects in the assessment.

Based on the Revised Final Draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme (dated 20 December 2013), the environmental report was prepared for the 2014-2020 Interregional Cooperation Programme under the European Territorial Cooperation Objective. Jointly, the Revised Final Draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme and the environmental report were subject of the consultation of authorities responsible for environmental protection and of the public consultation, as required in Article 6 of the Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

### *Results of the environmental report*

**(1) Status of the environment and existing environmental problems:** According to the territorial scope of the Programme the environmental objectives and indicators relate to the EU policies. Existing environmental problems were defined. European Union faces challenges particularly referring to:

- Air pollution: Though in the past decades the air pollution has declined, especially in urban areas exceedances of air quality standard occur. This damages the health of a significant proportion of Europe's population
- Biodiversity: Europe is not on the track to meet its objective "to halt the loss of biodiversity". In terrestrial as well as in marine ecosystems the trend is still decreasing.
- Soil: Unsustainable use and management of land causes soil degradation.
- Water: During the last 25 years significant progress in the quality of European waters can be stated. However, more than 50 % of the surface water bodies in Europe are less than good ecological status or potential. 25 % of the groundwater (by area) was stated poor chemical standards. Regarding the objective "To achieve good ecological and chemical status of water bodies" as well as concerning water exploitation and the

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<sup>100</sup> This chapter is an "external" contribution to the present final review report, as it was elaborated by the expert team in charge of the SEA-process (Dr. Dräger & Thielmann PartG, Germany) which did not form part of the consortium responsible for carrying out the ex-ante evaluation.

objective “To achieve good quantitative status of water bodies” the EU is attested a “mixed progress” by remaining overall problem and stable trend.

- Global Climate: The world is not on the track, to meet its objective “to limit increases to below 2° C globally”. Europe is close to reach its 20 % GHG-reduction target.

Regarding the objective “To decouple resource use from economic growth, to move to a recycling society”, European Union shows a mixed progress across the member states. The overall problem remains with positive development (increasing trend).

Waste generation is still increasing. According the objective “to substantially reduce waste generation” Europe is not on the track with negative developments (increasing trend).

Contrary, “Waste management (recycling)” shows a positive trend. Regarding “Several recycling targets for different specific waste streams” Europe is on the track and shows a positive development.

**(2) Assessment of potential environmental effects:** The assessment reveals that due to the nature of INTERREG EUROPE only highly indirect effects and contributions can be realised by the Programme. The impact chains from the Programme’s interventions to direct environmental effects of projects are quite long.

Concerning the potential effects of the Programme as a whole on the environment and contributions to the EU environmental objectives and general EU environmental policy, the Programme is differentiated into two parts: Priority Axes 1 and 2 show little, highly indirect effects and contributions; nevertheless by linking the implementation of Priorities Axes 1 and 2 with environmental issues the likely indirect positive effects could be strengthened. Priority Axes 3 and 4 can realise also indirect effects and contributions but due to their explicit focus on environmental issues this will be more effectively.

But even more important for the effect and contribution for the Programme as a whole than the individual Priority Axes are the character and type of interventions planned. The improvement of framework conditions and mechanisms for more effective implementation of regional programmes, policy learning and exchange of interregional experiences expands the scope of (positive) effects. Knowledge and capacities generally open opportunities for an effective consideration and integration of environmental issues in programming and implementation of regional programmes.

The risk of negative effects and contributions is very limited. Only connected to the promotion of specific renewable energy sources potential negative effects have to be considered, e.g. in case of promotion of wind power plants, hydro power plants or biomass power plants. Although the effects of the Programme are highly indirect and problems will actually appear quite distant on the impact chain, it seems necessary to put those possible effects on the agenda in an early stage of the impact chain.

‘Sustainable development’ is included in the Programme as a horizontal principle. The consideration in the implementation of the different Priority Axes is formulated. This provides the obligation to consider environmental issues also in the realisation of Priority Axes 1 and 2, however, the consideration could be forced more strictly.

**(3) Recommendations:** Most of the recommendations for increasing the potential of positive effects aim on implementation structures of the Programme. The stricter consideration of the horizontal principle 'sustainable development' as well as mutually linking the different Priority Axes could support the generation of positive effects regarding Priority Axes dealing with RTD&I and competitiveness of SMEs. For both, a pronounced orientation on eco-innovations, green procurement and circular flow economy can improve their contributions to EU environmental objectives and the EU environmental policy.

The given recommendations are based on the draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme dated 19.11.2013. In the revised draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme (11.12.2013), the recommendations are partly considered already.

**(4) Monitoring:** The highly indirectness of potential environmental effects of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme does - due to its nature - not allow the identification of measures to monitor possible impacts on the environment by projects funded by this Programme. Thus, the monitoring must aim to ensure that no adverse effects to the EU environmental objectives and the EU environmental policy are supported by INTERREG EUROPE, even if the direct impacts will occur in the long run only. It is proposed to safeguard the consideration of clear environmental criteria in project application manuals of the Programme. Furthermore, the project applications and reports have to cover expected and actually initiated environmental effects even if indirect only. A regular assessment of expected and initialised effects by projects supported by INTERREG EUROPE has to be done in order to avoid incompatibility of the Programme's implementation orientation with the EU environmental objectives and general environmental policy.

### ***Results of the SEA-consultation***

The SEA-consultation was conducted in each Member State individually according to the respective national legal requirements.

In total, thirty-nine (39) authorities, institutions and private persons responded to the consultation and have submitted comments and suggestions regarding the strategic environmental assessment.

The contributions provided cover a wide range of issues. Quite a considerable number of comments underline statements provided in the environmental report.

Some highlight particular sectors to which more detailed information should have been given like forests, water or soil; others refer to aspects which might have been elaborated more clearly in the environmental report.

All received comments and suggestions were taken into consideration and listed in the consultation report. Suggestions important for better understanding and complementing of particular statements of the environmental report were integrated into the environmental report.

## Annexes

## Annex 1

### First appraisal of the programme strategy: summary of conclusions & recommendations (Ex-ante evaluation, 2<sup>nd</sup> Review Report)

Our **appraisal of the “consistency”** concluded that the analysis of the EU-wide needs and challenges is concise (i.e. presented on a little more than four pages) and now also addressed issues which are related to an enhancement of the competitiveness of SMEs. Under each main priority of the Europe 2020 Strategy, also concrete potentials for interregional cooperation were identified (i.e. in form of “conclusions” on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth). Still, we suggested that the issue “resource efficiency” should be mentioned under the interregional cooperation potentials for sustainable growth and that Table 1 under section 1 of the 2nd Draft Programme should be more adequately completed (**Recommendations no. 1 & 2**). Overall, however, we observed that the six specific programme objectives are already adequately reflecting the identified EU-wide challenges/needs and the related interregional cooperation potentials.

Our **appraisal of the “internal coherence” of the programme** concluded that the “strategy backbone” of the 2nd Draft (i.e. four Priority Axes & Thematic Objectives, six Investment Priorities and Specific Objectives, two homogenous Types of Intervention) already shows a high degree of internal coherence. Still, we observed that the strategy description has to be further improved and also that the observed potential synergies should be used for making the current IP-descriptions more theme-specific and also operational (**Recommendations no. 3-5**).

Our **appraisal of the “external coherence”** concluded that the specific programme objectives and types of intervention consider quite substantially many of the reviewed European-level policy strategies or programmes and that the future INTERREG EUROPE programme has clear potentials for making a strong direct contribution to support a realisation of their objectives, principles or actions. Still, we observed that most of the reviewed European-level policy strategies and programmes were not yet explicitly mentioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Draft and suggested further improvements in this respect (**Recommendation no. 6**).

The **“programme intervention logic”** was appraised, firstly, on ground of one single exemplary logical framework analysis for the Investment Priority IP 1(a), because the descriptions of the different Investment Priorities were - with a few exceptions - nearly identical in the 2nd Draft Programme. Our first appraisal of this logical framework revealed a number of weaknesses and inconsistencies which have to be eliminated, while taking also into account the concrete suggestions for improvements of the evaluators (**Recommendation no. 7**). We concluded that only if those weaknesses and inconsistencies are eliminated and if also potential implementation risks are considered carefully (**Recommendation no. 8**), then it can be expected that the Investment Priorities will attain their specific objectives and thus also generate positive changes in relation to the challenges and needs identified. Secondly, a “theory of change” drawn up for the entire programme which confirmed that the assumptions underlying the achievement of the different types of outcomes (changes) are in larger parts already sufficiently realistic. Still, we identified some gaps in the scope of the planned actions that will be delivered by the “Policy Learning Platforms” and the “Projects” that should be addressed in the next Programme Draft (**Recommendation no. 9**).

Our **appraisal of the three “horizontal EU-principles”** showed that only the sustainable development principle is extensively considered and also pro-actively promoted by the future programme, whereas this is not (yet) the case for the two other EU-principles. However, we identified additional potentials by which the current level of consideration and also the degree of direct contribution could be further raised for all three horizontal EU-principles and suggested further improvements in this respect (**Recommendation no. 10**).

## Annex 2

### Appraisal of the Final Draft INTERREG EUROPE Programme: overview on recommendations (Ex-ante evaluation, Draft Final Review Report)

#### 1. Evaluation of the programme strategy:

- **Recommendation no. 1:** The final version of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme should at least mention the observed project-level synergies in relation to other SOs within the relevant IP-descriptions (i.e. under the sub-heading “Contribution to the specific objective”) and also explicitly state that in the terms of references for future regular calls also proposals also thematically cross-cutting projects having an impact on other SOs are welcomed (i.e. under the sub-heading “Guiding principles for selection of operations”).
- **Recommendation no. 2:** The programme document should provide a more detailed description of the phase 2 activities of Policy Learning Projects in order to ensure that a clear causal link can be established between them and the intended result and the specific objective. Alternatively, one could also think of better describing the “Action Plan” (esp. the expected causal link to policy improvement, but also examples for mandatory contents or processes etc.).
- **Recommendation no. 3:** The observed shortcomings for the “main target groups” of the Projects and for the “beneficiaries” of the Platforms should be eliminated. Furthermore, the examples for Policy Learning Projects provided in the description of IP 1(a) should be further improved, because they are not yet fully adequate. The DG REGIOs document on “Regional policy supporting smart specialisation” and also in the draft regulation for HORIZON 2020 can provide some inspiration for this.

#### 2. Evaluation of the indicators and the programme provisions for monitoring and evaluation:

- **Recommendation no. 4:** A relevant indicator should be included into the programme monitoring system, which is related to the monitoring of the implementation of the projects and action plans. A concrete suggestion could be: Number of successful implemented Action Plans (developed in ‘phase 1’).
- **Recommendation no. 5:** The current output indicators should undergo a final review, while taking into account the above-made considerations.
- **Recommendation no. 6:** For the final programme version, include a clear identification of the source of data under the result indicators.
- **Recommendation no. 7:** The programme is strongly advised to consider a ‘Plan B’ as regards the narrow definition and the zero-baseline. This could e.g. imply widening the focus and using the planned survey in 2014 to create a baseline. This would then also result in a change of target values, which ought to be defined as percentage change in relation to the baseline. Another alternative could be to use the survey on INTERREG IVC retrospectively. This would also take into account the natural time gap between the programme results and the possible impact of these.
- **Recommendation no. 8:** It is recommended to devote sufficient resources, time and attention to the development of a robust and meaningful survey and a careful selection of the target groups to which the surveys will be sent. Otherwise, there is a risk that the focus on the survey approach will not result in any usable information.
- **Recommendation no. 9:** It is recommended to further improve the measurability of output indicators by putting special emphasis on the design of the project questionnaire and collection procedures in the future work. Also for some result indicators, a clearly defined method for information collection should be established.

#### 3. Evaluation of the consistency of financial allocations:

- none

#### 4. Evaluation of the contribution to Europe 2020 strategy and more generally to social, economic and territorial cohesion:

- none

#### 5. Evaluation of the programme delivery mechanisms and structures:

- **Recommendation no. 10:** It should be verified for the final version of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme if the current description of the organisation of audits is fully complying with the instructions of the template for ETC-Programmes. Probably the organisation of the coordination among the members of the group of auditors should be better described.

<b>Annex 3 (Consistency)</b>										
<b>Consideration of the identified challenges &amp; needs by the specific programme objectives</b>										
The Programme objectives consider ...		... the identified & weighted regional-level challenges/needs & interregional cooperation potentials for the nine "fields of action" of the Europe 2020 Strategy								
Priority Axis (PA) & Thematic Objective (TO)	Investment Priority (IP) & Specific Objective (SO)	Smart Growth: (weight given to "fields of action" in the territorial situation analysis)			Sustainable Growth: (weight given to "fields of action" in the territorial situation analysis)			Inclusive Growth: (weight given to "fields of action" in the territorial situation analysis)		
		Innovation (High)	Education, training and lifelong learning (Low)	Digital Society (Medium)	Competitiveness (High)	Combating climate change (High)	Clean and efficient energy (High)	Employment (Medium)	Skills (Medium/Low)	Fighting Poverty (Low/No)
PA 1: Research, Technological Development and Innovation  TO 1: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	IP 1(a) - SO 1: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities.	+++	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
	IP 1(b) - SO 2: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, that support the delivery of innovation by actors in regional innovation chains in areas of "smart specialisation" and innovation opportunity.	+++	0	+	++	0	0	0	0	0
PA 2: Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises  TO 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs	IP 3(d) - SO 3: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop and achieve growth and engage in innovation.	++	0	+	+++	++	++	++	0	+
PA 3: Low Carbon Economy  TO 4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	IP 4(e) - SO 4: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy.	0	0	+	0	+	+++	0	0	0
PA 4: Environment and Resource Efficiency  TO 6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	IP 6(c) - SO 5: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage.	0	0	+	0	+++	0	0	0	0
	IP 6(g) - SO 6: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, aimed at increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation and environmental performance management.	++	0	+	++	+++	+	0	0	0
<b>Appraisal:</b> +++ = Extensive and strong direct consideration    ++ = Focussed and strong direct consideration    + = Weak direct or indirect consideration    0 = No consideration										

<b>Annex 4 (Internal Coherence)</b>					
<b>Validated assumptions on “key synergies” existing within the programme strategy</b>					
<b>Expected results under the Specific Objectives</b>	<b>PA 1 - SO 1:</b> The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Growth and Jobs (G&J), and, where relevant, ETC, in the field of regional infrastructures for research and innovation and capacities to develop research and innovation excellence.	<b>PA 1 - SO 2:</b> The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional policies and programmes, in particular for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&J) and where relevant ETC, that provide support to the actual delivery of innovation in regional innovation chains by measures related to i.a. development of research-driven clusters, support to triple-helix cooperation and to business activities in innovation.	<b>PA 2 - SO 3:</b> The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Growth and Jobs and ETC, that support the creation, development and growth of small and medium sized enterprises.	<b>PA 3 - SO 4:</b> The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular the programmes for investment and Growth and Jobs and ETC, in support of the transition to a low-carbon economy.	<b>PA 4 - SO 6:</b> The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular for Growth and Jobs and ETC, that support the regional transition to a resource efficient economy based on green growth and eco-innovation and improve environmental performance management.
<b>Priority Axis &amp; related Types of Action (*)</b>					
<b>PA 1 - Interregional Cooperation Projects (SO 1)</b> on a shared regional policy issue in the field of innovation infrastructures and capacities.			-	The policies improved by SO 1 projects can also develop R&I excellence and/or centres of competence in the field of low carbon technologies or solutions. The project partners can use these capacities for better delivering regional-level strategies which aim to achieve the transition to a low-carbon economy (→ positive impact on SO 4 result).	The policies improved by SO 1 projects can also develop R&I excellence and/or centres of competence in the fields of resource-efficiency, eco-innovation or private / public environmental performance management. The project partners can use these capacities for supporting their transition to a resource efficient economy and for enhancing green growth (→ positive impact on SO 6 result).
<b>PA 1 - Interregional Cooperation Projects (SO 2)</b> on a shared regional policy issue related to supporting the delivery of innovation or cooperation in the innovation chain/triple helix.			The policies improved by SO 2 projects can also promote the setting up of innovation clusters and/or triple helix cooperation with a strong SME involvement. The project partners can use these capacities for better supporting SMEs in their efforts to engage in innovation-driven growth (→ positive impact on SO 3 result).	The policies improved by SO 2 projects can also promote the setting up of innovation clusters and/or triple helix cooperation in the field of low carbon technologies or solutions. The project partners can use these capacities for better delivering regional-level strategies which aim to achieve the transition to a low-carbon economy (→ positive impact on SO 4 result).	The policies improved by SO 2 projects can also promote the setting up of innovation clusters and/or triple helix cooperation in the fields of resource-efficiency, eco-innovation or private / public environmental performance management. The project partners can use these capacities for supporting their transition to a resource efficient economy and for enhancing green growth (→ positive impact on SO 6 result).
<b>PA 1 - Policy Learning Platform (SO 1 &amp; 2)</b> on “Research, Technological Development and Innovation”.			The PA 1 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 2 projects showing a strong SME involvement, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with	The PA 1 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 1 & SO 2 projects focussing on R&I excellence, centres of competence or innovative cooperation in the field of low carbon, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed	The PA 1 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 1 & SO 2 projects focussing on R&I excellence, centres of competence or innovative cooperation in the fields of resource-efficiency, eco-innovation or environmental performance management, widely

			the PA 2 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 3 result).	capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 3 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 4 result).	disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 4 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 6 result).
<b>PA 2 - Interregional Cooperation Projects (SO 3)</b> on a shared regional policy issue related to supporting SME growth and entrepreneurship.	-	The policies improved by SO 3 projects which support SMEs to engage in innovation-driven growth can also stimulate the setting-up of innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation among SMEs. This helps the project partners to further improve their regional innovation capacities and to expand cooperation / networking among innovation actors (→ positive impact on SO 2 result).		The policies improved by SO 3 projects which support SMEs to engage in eco-innovation can also focus on enterprise-based low carbon solutions or even initiate the establishment of a comprehensive regional low carbon strategy for SMEs. This helps the project partner regions to better achieve their transition to a low-carbon economy (→ positive impact on SO 4 result).	The policies improved by SO 3 projects which support SMEs to engage in eco-innovation can also focus on enterprise-based solutions for resource-efficiency, environment friendly production processes or SME-based environmental performance management. This helps the project partner regions to better achieve their transition to a resource efficient economy and to promote green growth (→ positive impact on SO 6 result).
<b>PA 2 - Policy Learning Platform (SO 3)</b> on "Competitiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises and Entrepreneurship".	-	The PA 2 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 3 projects supporting SMEs to engage in innovation-driven growth, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 1 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 2 result).		The PA 2 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 3 projects supporting SMEs to engage in eco-innovation & enterprise-based low carbon solutions, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 3 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 4 result).	The PA 2 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 3 projects supporting SMEs to engage in eco-innovation & enterprise-based solutions for resource efficiency & environmentally friendly production processes, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 3 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 4 result).
<b>PA 3 - Interregional Cooperation Projects (SO 4)</b> on a shared regional policy issue related to the transition to the low-carbon economy.	The policies improved by SO 4 projects can also stimulate the development of new solutions in this field through already existing R&I excellence & centres of competence. This helps the project partners to strengthen their R&I infrastructure and to develop excellence / competence in this particular field of European interest (→ positive impact on SO 1 result).	The policies improved by SO 4 projects can also stimulate the setting up of new innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation focussing on this particular field. This helps the project partners to further improve their regional innovation capacities and to expand cooperation / networking among innovation actors (→ positive impact on SO 2 result).	The policies improved by SO 4 projects can also lead to a direct uptake of low carbon solutions in SMEs or stimulate the development of regional-level low carbon strategies specifically for SMEs. This helps SMEs in the project partner areas to remain competitive and at the same time to contribute in a more sustainable way to regional economic growth (→ positive impact on SO 3 result).		-
<b>PA 3 - Policy Learning Platform (SO 4)</b> on the "Transition to a Low-carbon Economy".	The PA 3 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 4 projects developing low carbon R&I excellence & centres of competence,	The PA 3 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 4 projects setting up innovation clusters/triple helix cooperation in the field of low	The PA 3 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 4 projects delivering SME-specific solutions / approaches in the field of low		-

	widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 1 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 1 result).	carbon, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 1 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 2 result).	carbon, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 2 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 3 result).		
<b>PA 4 - Interregional Cooperation Projects (SO 6)</b> on a shared regional policy issue related to increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation and improving environmental performance management in the private and public sector	The policies improved by SO 6 projects can also stimulate the development of new solutions in all these fields through already existing R&I excellence & centres of competence. This helps the project partners to strengthen their R&I infrastructure and to develop excellence / competence in these fields of particular European interest (→ positive impact on SO 1 result).	The policies improved by SO 6 projects can also stimulate the setting up of new innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation focussing on one or more of these fields. This helps the project partners to further improve their regional innovation capacities and to expand cooperation / networking among innovation actors (→ positive impact on SO 2 result).	The policies improved by SO 6 projects can also stimulate a direct uptake of SME-focussed solutions in all these fields. This helps SMEs in the project partner areas to remain competitive and ensures at the same time that they contribute in a more sustainable way to regional economic growth (→ positive impact on SO 3 result).	-	
<b>PA 4 - Policy Learning Platform (SO 5 &amp; 6)</b> on "Environment and Resource Efficiency".	The PA 4 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 6 projects developing R&I excellence & centres of competence on resource efficiency / eco-innovation / environmental performance management, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 1 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 1 result).	The PA 4 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 6 projects setting up innovation clusters or triple helix cooperation in the fields of resource efficiency / eco-innovation / environmental performance management, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 1 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 2 result).	The PA 4 Policy Learning Platform exploits the results of SO 6 projects supporting SME-focussed solutions in the fields of resource efficiency / eco-innovation / environmental performance management, widely disseminates those results across Europe and pro-actively supports a focussed capacity up-building of regional policy actors, preferably in close cooperation with the PA 2 Policy Learning Platform (→ positive impact on SO 3 result).	-	
<b>(*) Common provisions for the two Types of Action:</b>					
<p>→ <b>Interregional Cooperation Projects:</b> The objective (...) is to improve the implementation of the policies of participating regions by supporting exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. Through the projects, INTERREG EUROPE intends to improve primarily the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&amp;J) of the participating regions, and where relevant the implementation of programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies in support of innovation delivery can be improved as a result of the cooperation. Phase 1 is dedicated to the exchange of policy experience and to preparing the implementation of lessons learnt. By the end of this phase each partner region shall produce an Action Plan for the integration of lessons learnt from the cooperation in their regional policies and (Growth and Jobs, ETC) programmes. The Action Plans shall identify the measures to be integrated and their timeframe, work steps, responsible actors, costs (if any) and funding sources. The partners shall actively involve relevant regional stakeholders in all activities. Phase 2 is dedicated to the monitoring by each partner region of the implementation of their Action Plan by the responsible actors in their territory. The actual implementation of these actions is not funded by INTERREG EUROPE. This monitoring primarily takes place within the context of in each region. However, the interregional partnership may decide to organise joint activities in this monitoring phase to continue their policy learning process. In duly justified cases, phase 2 may also include pilot actions to test certain parts of the Action Plan before they are fully integrated in a regional (G&amp;J, ETC) programme.</p> <p>→ <b>Policy Learning Platforms:</b> Platforms cover either one specific objective of a Priority Axis (PA 2 &amp; PA 3) or the two specific objectives a Priority Axis combined (PA 1 &amp; PA 4). Each Platform will be a 'knowledge resource centre' to support ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the field of respective TO/SO(SOs) covered, mainly with regard to the implementation of the Growth and Jobs and where relevant, ETC goals. The Platforms aim to contribute to EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant actors related to Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes and to exploit the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects and make them available to a wider audience of regional policy actors across Europe. Each Platform offers activities and services for the whole community of regional policy actors and stakeholders, in particular those involved in Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes across Europe.</p>					

## Annex 5 (Intervention Logic)

### Basic elements of the “theory of change” for INTERREG EUROPE & outcome map

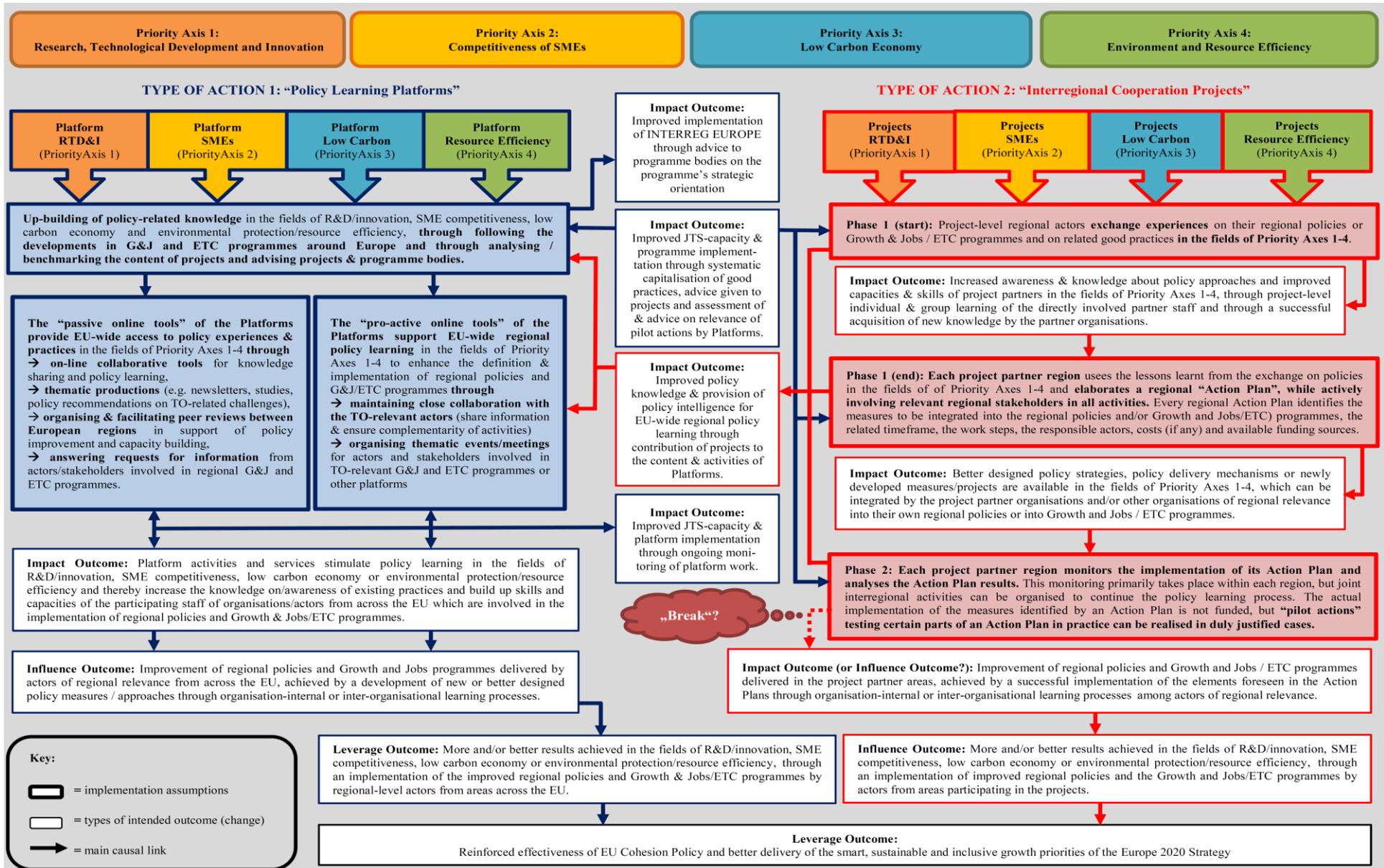
A theory of change differs from a logical model in so far that it describes a process of planned social change while taking (...) *a wide view of a desired change and carefully probing the assumptions behind each step in what may be a long and complex process* (...). This often entails thinking through all the steps along a path towards a desired change (...), *identifying the preconditions that will enable (and possibly inhibit) each step, listing the activities that will produce those conditions, and explaining why those activities are likely to work* (Mackinnon/Amott/McGarvey, 2006, p.3). The central idea of theory of change thinking is that the assumptions, acting as a set of “rules of thumb” which influence the choices of individuals and organisations, need to be checked to see if they are guiding us to act in ways that are optimal for actually reaching the changes and goals that we are seeking to achieve (Vogel, 2012, p.26).

As **different changes can or even must occur on the way towards reaching a desired final goal**, we have to define more closely the different types of outcomes which are likely to affect an achievement of the medium-term overall objective and the wider goal of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. For this, we have taken inspiration from an already existing labelling of three outcome types (Organizational Research Services, 2004. pp. 2-9), but the description of the scope and nature of the related changes was adapted to the specific context of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.

- **Impact Outcomes:** They occur in the organisations directly receiving the programme support and benefitting from it, but also within the INTERREG EUROPE Programme itself. Impact outcomes can include changes in attitudes (perceptions & beliefs), awareness, knowledge, skills and behaviour of a beneficiary organisation’s staff (or of the programme JTS staff) as well as changes in a beneficiary organisation’s internal political will, institutional settings, policy concepts and policy delivery practices or in the programmes’ overall implementation practices.
- **Influence Outcomes:** They occur in the wider system or environment within entities or groups other than the direct beneficiary organisations. Influence outcomes can include changes in regulations, institutional settings, policy contents, policy delivery or service provision practices, general public or political will, issue-related partnerships and issue visibility.
- **Leverage Outcomes:** They also occur in the wider system or environment and are closely related to influence outcomes, but they result from a multiplication of the outcome without a corresponding increase in the consumption of resources. Leverage outcomes can include changes in a public actors’ intervention strategy (e.g. introduction of new intervention approaches or funding methods, redistribution or shifts of existing funding, availability of new funding resources, previously uninvolved target groups are now addressed and funded etc.) or changes in a private actors’ strategy and actions.

In our theory of change we also consider that **well-functioning “core capacities”** (e.g. a collective policy vision & results framework; governance structures for decision-making, problem solving and conflict resolution; support for collective learning & accountability to results etc.) **are the essential elements which enable impact, influence and leverage to happen**. Core capacities are part of the continuum to achieve comprehensive change, although the (...) *line between capacities and influence, leverage and impact can sometimes be blurry* (...). These capacities usually (...) *include people, processes, supports, models, techniques, structures, plans, frameworks and other inputs needed to enact, bring to scale and sustain powerful change* (Organizational Research Services, 2004, p. 9 & 10).

The existence of such core capacities is particularly important in the context of INTERREG EUROPE, as policy change is mainly based on different forms of learning processes that have to be prepared and also to take place at various levels (INTERREG IVC Programme, 2013a). For policy change to happen, regional-level actors need to ensure that adequate organisational capabilities (routines & processes) or even systemic capacities (e.g. specific issue networks or policy coalitions in the regional subsystem) are in place, which allow them to take up “external” policy-relevant knowledge (e.g. strategies, instruments or practices) and to integrate this knowledge into their own context. But core capacities are not only important preconditions for achieving change. They are also an essential part of the sought change under INTERREG EUROPE (i.e. the intended result). The exchange of experience and the organisational-internal and often also inter-organisational learning processes allow them to develop new or better designed policy measures / approaches that are integrated into their own regional policies or into Growth and Jobs/ETC programmes, which builds up new capacities for a more efficient policy making and policy delivery.



## Annex 6 (Intervention Logic)

### Basic logical framework model and tabular logical framework drawn up for one Investment Priority of INTERREG EUROPE

#### Explanation of the basic model used

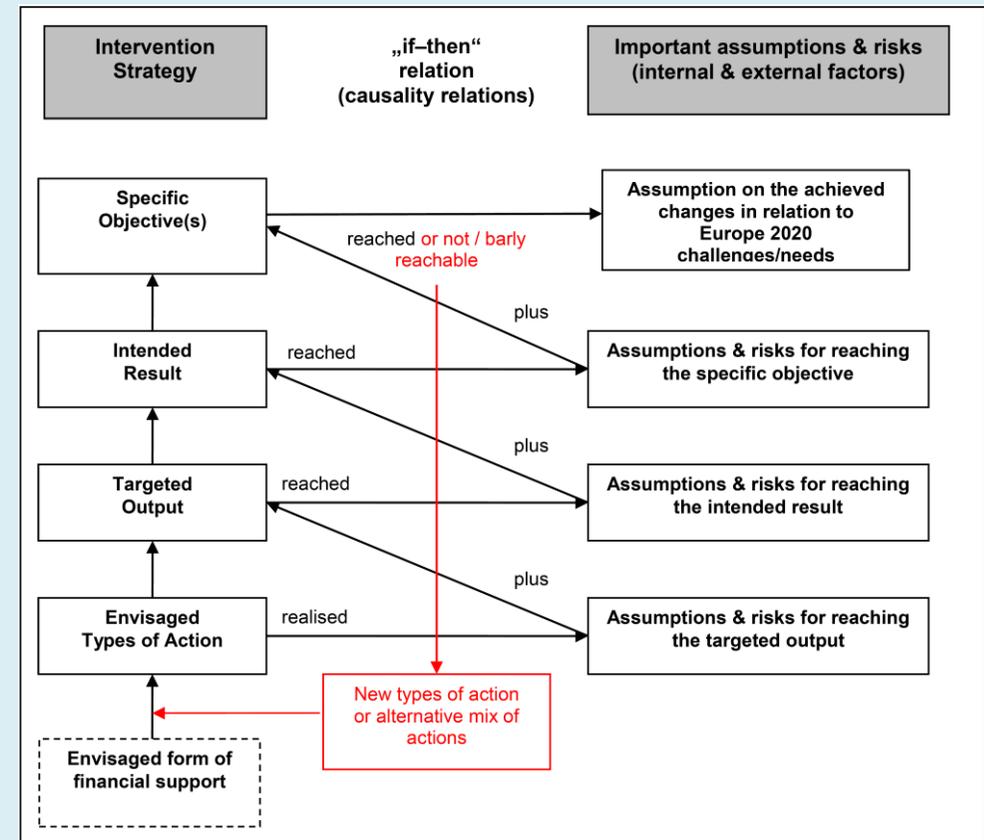
On the **left-hand side**, the different elements of the IP-intervention strategy are shown. For the statements and descriptions, text was directly drawn from the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. The intervention strategy shows – in a vertical upstream logic - what the IP intends to do, by establishing a relationship between the “means” (what will be done) to the “ends” (what will be achieved).

The **right-hand side** shows, for each level of the IP-intervention strategy, the basic assumptions and the potential risks that might exist.

→ An assumption is the underlying hypothesis on which the cause-effect relationship and the future implementation are based. Assumptions are implicitly considered by the programme stakeholders or they can be explicitly formulated in a programme. At each level we “pre-formulated” a number of assumptions which are then underpinned by further evidence (i.e. text from the programme document or additional analysis by the evaluator) in order to see if they actually hold true.

→ A risk is an external factor that may negatively influence the achievement of expected outputs/results and finally also of the objective(s). We considered only risks which are more or less under direct control of the programme management, but no unmanageable risks. Potential risks were assessed by the evaluator through looking at the already existing funding experience in a similar thematic field during the period 2007-2013 and by appraising whether significant changes in the new funding context 2014-2020 do exist.

**In the middle**, the causality relations linking the intervention strategy and the assumptions/risks through “if-then” relations are shown. To illustrate this, one example is given: *If all types of action necessary for the attainment of the output are realised and if the corresponding assumption are holding true and no major risks are existing, then the targeted output will be reached.* Should, at the top of the relations-chain, the specific objective not or only be barely reachable, then it is advised that new types of actions are introduced or that an alternative mix of actions is considered.



Annex 7 (Intervention Logic)			
Tabular logical framework drawn up for Investment Priority 1(a): <i>Enhancing research and innovation (R&amp;I) infrastructure [...] and capacities to develop R&amp;I excellence and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest ...</i>			
Elements of the intervention strategy & means of verification (indicators)		"if-then"	Basic assumptions on future support & assessment of potential risks (in red = evaluator comments and assessment of assumptions & risks)
<b>Specific Objective (SO)</b>	SO 1: Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities.	→	<b>Assumption: The achieved specific objective generates a positive change in relation to the wider interregional challenges and needs as identified by the Programme for this field of action of the Europe 2020 Strategy (Yes).</b> (Text from section 1.1.1.3): Interregional cooperation can contribute to smart growth by enabling European regions to improve their regional policies and programmes for innovation and R&D support. Experience exchange and policy learning in key areas like, for instance, cluster support, research-to-business technology transfer, skills development, innovation in SMEs and innovation infrastructures will enable regions to accelerate and improve the implementation of their regional growth policies.
<b>Intended Result</b>	<p>The main change sought is an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Growth and Jobs (G&amp;J), and, where relevant, ETC, in the field of regional infrastructures for research and innovation and capacities to develop research and innovation excellence.</p> <p><b>Means of verification (result indicators):</b>            (1) Share of Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC programmes where measures inspired by INTERREG EUROPE were implemented in the field of [research and innovation infrastructures]            (2) Amount of Structural Funds (from Growth &amp; Jobs and ETC) influenced by INTERREG EUROPE in the field of [research and innovation infrastructures]</p>	↕	<p><b>Assessment of potential risks: Already existing funding experience 2007-2013 (Yes, but very limited) and/or new framework conditions for support in 2014-2020 (Yes) may lead to risks in the future (Yes, but small).</b>  <b>Supporting evidence:</b> The INTERREG IVC programme 2007-2013 has funded only very few projects focussing on cooperation among basic research infrastructures. In the period 2014-2020, all projects are oriented towards the newly introduced two-phase approach and are - more than before - required to establish strong links with the respective regional Growth and Jobs programmes. If both aspects are considered together, there might be a minor potential risk for achieving the intended result if not enough projects are producing the targeted outcome.</p> <p><b>Assumption: The operations induce effects (short-, medium- or long-term, direct or indirect) which contribute to the intended overall result and to an achievement of the specific objective (Yes).</b>            The (...) interregional sharing of practices and policy learning will improve capacities (skills, knowledge) of individuals and organisations involved and prepare the implementation of the lessons learnt. This results in a better implementation of (G&amp;J and ETC) programmes and policies in the field of research and innovation infrastructures in the regions involved.  <b>Effects of Interregional Cooperation Projects:</b> The programme will support exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions for innovation infrastructure and capacities - in particular through G&amp;J or ETC programmes, but also other programmes of regions involved. (...) As a result the Projects lead to an improved implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes, in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities.  <b>Effects of Policy Learning Platforms:</b> The programme will facilitate policy learning and capitalisation by making relevant practices and results from Interregional Cooperation Projects and other experiences widely available and usable for regional actors involved in innovation support in G&amp;J, ETC and other programmes. (...) As a result these actors (... connected to the Policy Learning Platforms ...) will be able to improve the implementation of their programmes.  <b>The improvements of the implementation of G&amp;J, ETC and other regional programmes can take place at different levels, notably:</b> (a) the implementation of a new project/practice/tool funded by the programme, (b) a change in the management of the programme/policy (e.g. revised set-up of calls for proposals, alternative monitoring methods), (c) a change in the strategic focus of the programme/policy (e.g. modification of a specific objective, integration of a new policy aim). The improved implementation of policies and programmes should eventually have an effect on the infrastructures and capacities for innovation in the participating regions, for instance related to:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More effective management of research infrastructure</li> <li>- Better match between education curriculum and needs from innovative companies</li> <li>- Optimisation of public investment in R&amp;I infrastructures</li> <li>- Increase attraction of region for researchers</li> <li>- Linking international research and innovation partners (also outside EU)</li> <li>- Stronger participation in Horizon 2020 projects ('Stairway to excellence')</li> </ul>
<p><b>Targeted Output</b></p> <p>(*)</p>	<p><b>(1) Interregional Cooperation Projects:</b> The exchange of experience in projects on innovation infrastructure and capacities will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and build up skills and capacities of professionals (partner staff, other stakeholders) involved in the project activities. The projects will also ensure that these lessons learnt are integrated in regional policies and actions by developing concrete Action Plans for each partner region. However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies in the field of innovation infrastructures and capacities can be improved as a result of the cooperation. Projects are also expected to contribute to the content and activities of the Policy Learning Platform for this Priority Axis (see below) to ensure that relevant policy intelligence generated by projects can find its way to other regional actors in Europe.</p> <p><b>(2) Policy Learning Platform:</b> The Platform for this priority contributes to the specific objective through activities and services that enable policy learning in the field of infrastructures and capacities for research and innovation. These activities and services will increase knowledge and awareness of existing practices and experiences in this field and build up skills and capacities of actors (staff and organisations) involved in the development and implementation of G&amp;J and ETC programmes in this field.</p> <p><b>Means of verification (output indicators):</b></p> <p>(1) Number of Action Plans developed in the field of research and innovation infrastructures</p> <p>(2) Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of research and innovation infrastructures.</p> <p>(3) Share of all European regions' (NUTS 2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1 in the</p>	<p><b>Assessment of potential risks: Already existing funding experience 2007-2013 (Yes, but very limited) and/or new framework conditions for support in 2014-2020 (Yes) may lead to risks in the future (Yes, but small).</b></p> <p><b>Supporting evidence:</b> The INTERREG IVC programme 2007-2013 has funded only very few projects focussing on cooperation among basic research infrastructures. In the period 2014-2020, all projects are oriented towards the newly introduced two-phase approach and are - more than before - required to establish strong links with the respective regional Growth and Jobs programmes. If both aspects are considered together, there might be a minor potential risk for achieving the targeted output if not enough projects with the right actors on board are approved.</p> <p><b>Assumption: The targeted output focuses on the essential challenges/needs/potentials identified by the Programme (Yes) and allows therefore achieving the intended results (Yes).</b></p> <p>To achieve innovation-driven growth, regional authorities and other actors of regional relevance must strengthen their innovation 'enablers': the infrastructures and capacities needed for research and innovation to flourish in sectors with strong innovation potential. Many EU regions identify these key sectors in Regional Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation. Regional policies for innovation infrastructure and capacities must target such issues as the availability of research and competence centres and ICT infrastructures, ensuring that the education system provides the qualifications needed in innovative sectors and public facilities for funding and supporting R&amp;I activity.</p> <p><b>The particular regional-level challenges and needs (i.e. EU-wide disparities, need for policy improvements etc.) could have been better highlighted in the IP section, but this is obviously prevented by the very limited space which is foreseen by the ETC-programme template.</b></p> <p><i>(Text from section 1.1.1.3):</i> Performance in R&amp;D and innovation varies markedly across the EU Member States (MS) and regions. The Regional Innovation Scoreboard (2012) shows that most European countries have regions at different levels of innovation performance. Regions that qualify as 'Innovation leader', mainly in the centre and north of Europe, can be found directly next to weaker innovation regions, even within one MS. EU regions have different strengths and weaknesses in their innovation systems, reflected by differences in the performance for their so-called innovation 'enablers' e.g. education levels of the labour population and public R&amp;D investments. R&amp;D resources are concentrated in a few leading regions mainly in the 'European science-based area', where R&amp;D spending can be as high as 7% of GDP, while they can be very low (under 1%) in others. A region's investment in human capital also supports its ability to be innovative. There is evidence that in weaker regions, mainly in parts of eastern and southern Europe, the share of population holding a tertiary degree has a higher impact on regional production than R&amp;D expenditure has. This regional diversity calls for regional innovation support programmes tailored specifically to the needs of individual regions. One of the instruments available to MS and regions is to develop smart specialisation strategies to concentrate resources for innovation support on key areas of intervention, clusters or sectors which represent a competitive advantage and support the delivery of innovation in those key areas throughout the innovation chain. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) contribute importantly to smart growth, as enablers of innovation, knowledge creation and e-commerce and employment. Today the differences in quality of ICT infrastructures and e-commerce use are mainly between countries rather than regions, with a clear north-west – south-east divide with the north-west of Europe being most advanced. The regional distribution of ICT employment shows an urban-rural divide with concentrations of people working in ICT in metropolitan regions.</p>

	field of research and innovation infrastructures. (4) Number of policy learning events in the field of research and innovation infrastructures organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.
<b>Envisaged “Types of Action”</b>  (*)	<p>The programme supports <b>two types of action</b> to allow partners from the different Partner States to work together on a shared regional policy issue in the field of innovation infrastructures and capacities.</p> <p><b>1. Interregional Cooperation Projects</b> in the field of innovation infrastructures and capacities. Examples of possible projects are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Regional authorities and business support actors sharing experiences on public funding schemes for innovation support as key element of innovation infrastructure, resulting in Action Plans for the creation in each region of a revolving fund for technology innovation either as a ‘financial instrument’ in a regional G&amp;J programme or operated independently.</li> <li>(ii) Exchange of experience among regional authorities on policies and programmes to create research facilities and set up international R&amp;D cooperation networks in less research intensive regions, and prepare the creation of such facilities and networks through Action Plans.</li> <li>(iii) Exchange of experience among regional development agencies to plan actions for improving the match between curricula of higher education institutes and human capital needs of businesses in their regional smart specialisation sectors.</li> <li>(iv) Exchange of experience among regional actors to improve policies in support of innovation addressing the key societal challenges in the field of health, demographic change and well-being.</li> </ul> <p>Projects in this Specific Objective can also have synergies with themes covered by other specific objectives of this programme, for instance related to innovation in the field of low-carbon technology or resource efficiency.</p> <p><b>2. The Policy Learning Platform on Research, Technological Development and Innovation</b> covers both specific objectives of Priority Axis 1 combined. Examples of possible actions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) Publication of policy recommendations for</li> </ul>



**Assessment of potential risks: Already existing funding experience 2007-2013 (Yes, but very limited) and/or new framework conditions for support in 2014-2020 (Yes) may lead to risks in the future (Yes, but small).**

**Supporting evidence:** The INTERREG IVC programme 2007-2013 has funded a substantial number of R&D/innovation related projects under the respective sub-theme (37 in absolute terms or 31% out of the total 201 projects supported), but only very few of those relate more specifically to a cooperation among basic research infrastructures. In a wider sense, however, the latter also concern ICT-infrastructure having an innovation- or R&D-related character, for which also cooperation experience exists. In the period 2014-2020, all projects are oriented towards the newly introduced two-phase approach and are - more than before - required to establish strong links with the respective regional Growth and Jobs programmes. If both aspects are considered together, there might be a minor potential risk (i.e. getting enough projects with the right actors on board) which should be carefully monitored in the future.

**Assumption: The envisaged “types of action” are delivered by the adequate beneficiaries (Yes) for the right target groups (Yes) and allow therefore achieving the targeted output (Yes).**

- **Types of beneficiaries, Interregional Cooperation Projects:** Public bodies, bodies governed by public law or private non-profit bodies such as (1) national, regional and local public authorities responsible for stimulating all forms of innovation (incl. technological, organisational, social innovation); (2) regional development agencies; (3) universities, knowledge and research institutes and institutes for higher education; (4) operators of science and technology parks, business incubation facilities and innovation centres; (5) business support actors and organisations representing SMEs and the business community and (6) other actors of relevance to the development of regional innovation infrastructures and capacities.
- **Main target groups, Interregional Cooperation Projects:** Next to actors as mentioned above, the wider target group that can play an active role in the activities of the Projects also includes relevant local stakeholders, SMEs or other actors in the field of innovation. Each partner in a Project may set up a local stakeholder group to ensure that relevant actors in the region are involved in policy learning and development of action plans. Members of these local stakeholder groups could come from the same target groups mentioned above (when they are not partner in the project) and from regional innovative SMEs.
- **Types of beneficiaries, Policy Learning Platform:** The beneficiary of the Platform is the Managing Authority of INTERREG EUROPE.
- **Main target groups for the services and activities of the Policy Learning Platform:** Actors involved in management and implementation of Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes (or of similar thematic policies in the case of Norway and Switzerland). Actors involved as (potential) beneficiaries of such programmes. Actors not directly involved in the Growth and Jobs or ETC programmes, whose competences and needs are in line with the issues tackled by the platform.

**Assumption: The envisaged “types of action” are selected through adequate criteria (Yes) and allow therefore achieving the targeted output (Yes).**

- **Interregional Cooperation Projects** Interregional Cooperation Projects are selected through regular calls for proposals. These calls can be open to proposals addressing the full thematic scope of the specific objective. The programme authorities may also decide to open targeted calls for proposals focusing on key areas within the scope of this specific objective. Terms of reference for targeted calls may take into account developments and results of previous calls, policy trends in the scope of this investment priority and possible guidance by the policy learning platform. Beneficiaries eligible to receive funding are public authorities, bodies governed by

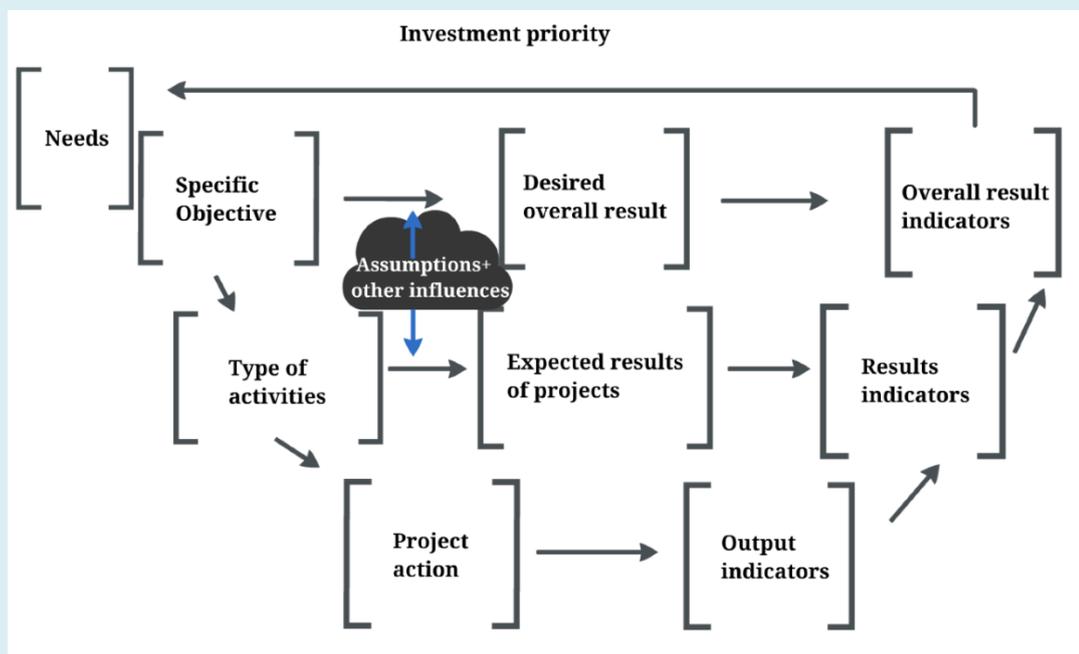
	<p>creating regional centres of competence for research and innovation based on successful experiences from different Projects and G&amp;J programmes.</p> <p>(ii) Seminar for regional actors on strengthening the role of universities in the regional innovation system.</p> <p>(iii) Peer reviews among European regions, which have similar sectors of smart specialisation to analyse and improve their regional innovation infrastructures.</p>		<p>public law (...) and bodies governed by private law (...). Selection criteria and additional performance indicators will be defined in the Programme Manual. They will ensure that result oriented projects are selected. Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate clear policy relevance (e.g. direct involvement of policy makers, compliance with regional strategies such as Smart Specialisation Strategies for Priority Axis 1) and credible paths for implementation (including sound monitoring system). In line with the overall programme objective, all Projects should have a minimum link with the implementation of programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal, and when relevant the ETC goal. In each project at least half of the participating EU regions have to address the implementation of their Operational Programme (e.g. for a project with 4 regions, a minimum of 2 would need to demonstrate this direct link; for a project with 5 regions, at least 3 must demonstrate this direct link). Projects shall primarily contribute to the expected result of one specific objective of the programme. But Projects that have cross-cutting synergies with the themes covered by other specific objectives are welcome. The second phase of the Projects is dedicated to the monitoring of the Action Plan implementation. In justified cases Projects may also propose to perform pilot actions during this phase, if a part of the Action Plan needs testing. A proposal for such a pilot action may be submitted to the programme at the end of the first phase. The JS will assess the relevance of these actions and make recommendations to the MC for decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>The Policy Learning Platform</b> will be established at programme level for the duration of the seven year period from 2015 until 2021. It will be run by a team of experts selected and contracted through a tendering procedure. The platform runs its activities based on a work plan for a limited period. After this period the contract with the selected team of experts can be renewed depending on its performance, by decision of the Monitoring Committee.</li> </ul> <p><b>Assumption: In order to achieve the targeted output, the envisaged “types of action” have also to consider specific types of territories (NO) and target groups which are most threatened by exclusion (NO).</b> INTERREG EUROPE targets the whole territory of the EU, including the Partner States Norway and Switzerland.</p>
<p><b>Envisaged form of financial support</b></p>	<p>ERDF-contributions to national/regional/local co-financing</p>	<p>↑</p>	

**(\*) Common provisions for the two Types of Action:**

**Interregional Cooperation Projects:** The objective of the projects is to improve the implementation of the policies of participating regions by supporting exchange of experiences and sharing of practices between actors of regional relevance with the specific aim to prepare the integration of the lessons learnt into regional policies and actions. Through the projects, INTERREG EUROPE intends to improve primarily the implementation of the programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs (G&J) of the participating regions, and, where relevant, the implementation of programmes for European Territorial Cooperation (ETC). However, also the implementation of other regional programmes and policies in (a given thematic field) can be improved as a result of the cooperation. Interregional Cooperation Projects as a general rule have two phases: Phase 1 is dedicated to the exchange of policy experience and to preparing the implementation of lessons learnt. By the end of this phase, each partner region shall produce an Action Plan for the integration of lessons learnt from the cooperation in their regional policies and/or (Growth and Jobs, ETC) programmes. The Action Plans shall identify the measures to be integrated and their timeframe, work steps, responsible actors, costs (if any) and funding sources. The partners shall actively involve relevant regional stakeholders in all activities. Phase 2 is dedicated to the monitoring by each partner region of the implementation of their Action Plan by the responsible actors in their territory. The actual implementation of these actions is not funded by INTERREG EUROPE. This monitoring primarily takes place within the context of each region. However, the interregional partnership may decide to organise joint activities in this monitoring phase to continue their policy learning process. In duly justified cases, phase 2 may also include pilot actions to test certain parts of the Action Plan in practice. Further modalities will be defined in the Programme Manual. **Activities of projects can include (non-exhaustive):** Elaboration of Action Plans (mandatory), studies and analysis of regional innovation infrastructure policies, meetings and activities with the local stakeholder group, exchange visits to study R&I support facilities and policies, interregional seminars and events for exchange and capacity building on innovation infrastructures, contributions to Policy Learning Platform activities and outputs, communication and dissemination of project results, monitoring and analysis of Action Plan results (phase 2) and pilot actions (phase 2). Projects are also expected to contribute to the content and activities of the Policy Learning Platform for their respective Priority Axis.

**Policy Learning Platforms:** Platforms cover either one specific objective of a Priority Axis (PA 2 & PA 3) or the two specific objectives a Priority Axis combined (PA 1 & PA 4). Each Platform will (...) provide policy intelligence in support of ongoing EU-wide regional policy learning in the (respective thematic field), mainly with regard to the implementation of the Growth and Jobs and where relevant, ETC goals. The Platforms aim to: (1) Contribute to EU wide capacity building by supporting networking and exchange of experience among relevant actors related to Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes. (2) Exploit the results of Interregional Cooperation Projects and make them available to a wider audience of regional policy actors across Europe. The Platforms offer activities and services for the whole community of regional policy actors and stakeholders, in particular those involved in Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes across Europe. **Activities and services of the Platform include (non-exhaustive):** Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes and other relevant sources around Europe on topics related to the TO-theme to identify possible interesting experiences. Maintain a close collaboration with the TO-relevant actors to share information and ensure complementarity of activities. Analyse and benchmark the content of projects in Priority Axis and other priorities, if relevant. Write thematic productions such as newsletters, studies, policy recommendations related to the TO-theme. Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC in the field of the Priority Axis (with other Platforms where there are strong thematic synergies). Organise and facilitate peer reviews between European regions in support of policy improvement and capacity building. Advise projects in Priority Axis when relevant. Advise INTERREG EUROPE programme bodies on the programme's strategic orientation on the TO-theme. Assess and advise on the relevance of possible pilot actions proposed by Projects in their phase 2. Provide and moderate on-line collaborative tools for knowledge sharing and policy learning. Answer requests for information from individual actors and stakeholders involved in Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes in the field of the Priority Axis.

**Annex 8 (Indicators)**  
**Basic elements of the model to assess the logic of the indicator and example<sup>101</sup> of a completed model for checking the logic**



The model has both a horizontal and vertical logic. The horizontal logic focuses on the processes in the programme implementation and the vertical logic focuses on the level of detail and influence. The vertical logic goes from needs and actions to the indicators of the programme, the horizontal logic addresses more abstract or more concrete and modifiable actions, results and indicators by the programme

Following the horizontal logic, the model has four main steps. First the objectives and actions are defined, then the desired and expected results and finally the indicators.

### 1. Needs

- **Needs:** This first step identifies the need or challenge that the programme area faces. It serves as a justification for choosing the specific objective.

### 2. Objectives and Actions

- **Specific Objective:** As the development needs have been identified, the appropriate specific objective should be chosen in accordance.
- **Type of Activities:** Measures for improving the situation are suggested to support the SO and address the development needs. This element defines in broad terms the types of action, which the programme intends to support.
- **Project Action:** The project actions are the concrete activities carried out by the projects funded. They do actually generate the output of the programme.
- **Assumptions and other influences:** For both the actions and desired result, there might be underlying assumptions and external influences which could have a strong impact. They might be taken into consideration, as they influence the possibilities to achieve expected results.

### 3. Desired results

- **Desired overall result:** The output of the activities and the focus of the specific objective, will

<sup>101</sup> The example was elaborated on ground of the text of a previous version of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.

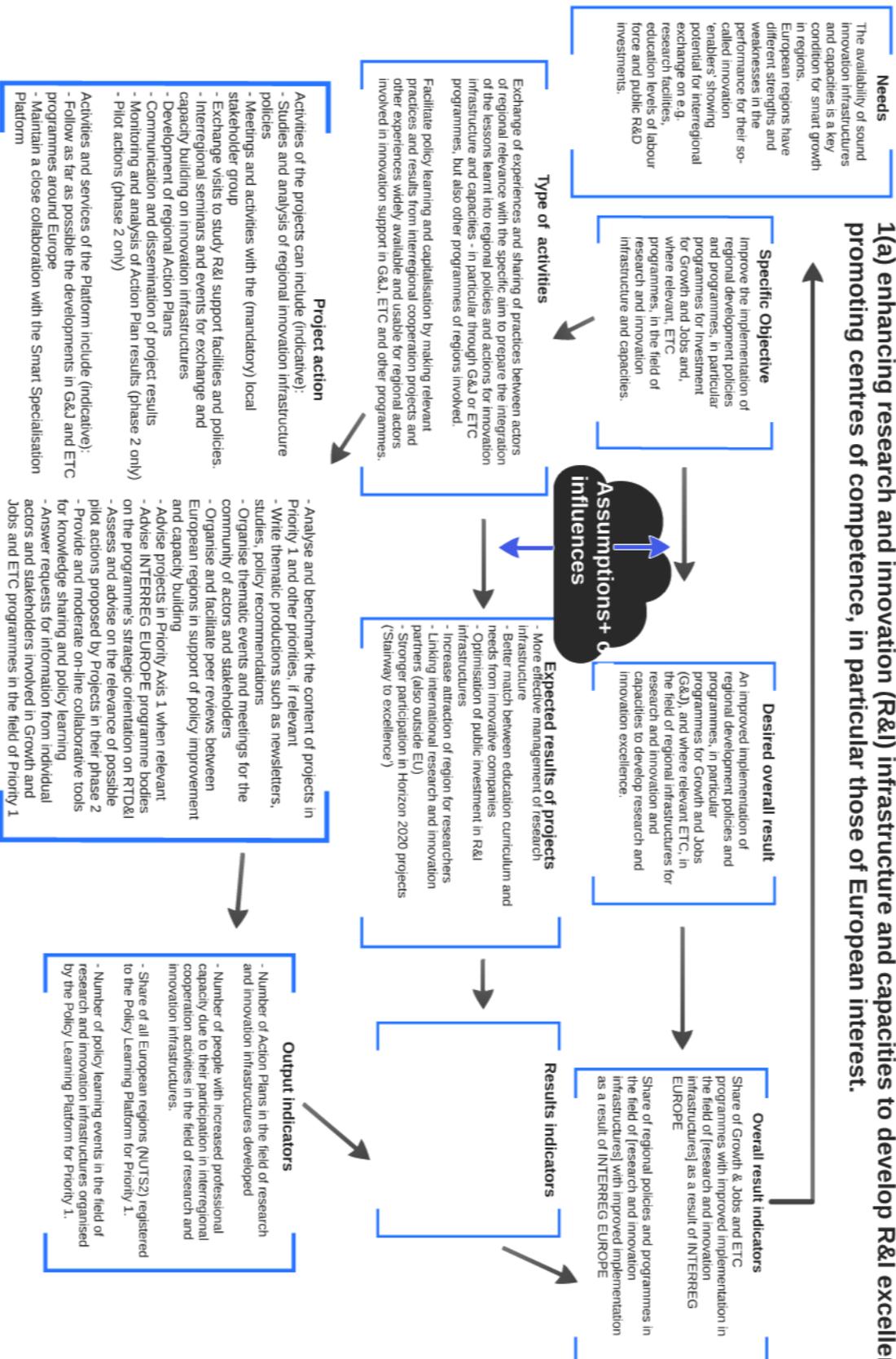
lead to an improvement of the situation in the programme area. The desired overall result is supposed to bring about a solution and thereby a better situation in relation to what was initially defined as a need in the programme area.

- **Expected result of projects:** The expected result comes as a logic consequence of the project actions. The expected results of the projects are more concrete than the desired overall results.

#### 4. Indicators

- **Result indicators:** Result indicators should be strongly related to the desired overall results and expected result. Thereby it should directly measure the results that are envisaged. Results indicators can however be split in two categories: overall results indicators and (intermediate) result indicators. Following the EU regulations the OP needs to focus on the overall result indicators. However, for a proper understanding of what is going on in a project, it might be advisable to also address the (intermediate) result indicators in the monitoring system of the programme. This intermediate level can be more easily influenced by the programme.
- **Output indicators:** Output indicators are closely monitoring if the output of the project actions are as intended. This is furthermore a first assurance of the likelihood that the envisaged expected results can be reached.

## 1(a) enhancing research and innovation (R&I) infrastructure and capacities to develop R&I excellence and promoting centres of competence, in particular those of European interest.



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