

Specific provisions for European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and external financing instruments 2021–2027

2018/0199(COD) - 26/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, 1st reading/single reading

The European Parliament adopted a legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments.

The position of the European Parliament adopted at first reading under the ordinary legislative procedure has amended the Commission proposal as follows:

Purpose

The regulation would establish rules for the European Territorial Cooperation Objective (Interreg) to encourage cooperation between Member States and their regions within the Union and between Member States and third countries, partner countries, other territories or adjacent overseas countries and territories (OCTs) or regional integration and cooperation organisations, or groups of third countries forming part of a regional organisation.

Under the Interreg objective, support would be provided by the ERDF and, where appropriate, by the Union's external financing instruments for the following four strands: 1) cross-border cooperation between adjacent regions, 2) transnational cooperation and maritime cooperation, 3) cooperation involving the outermost regions and 4) interregional cooperation.

Members deleted the Commission's proposal to introduce a new strand 5 ("interregional investment in innovation").

The transnational and maritime cooperation component should aim to strengthen cooperation through actions promoting integrated territorial development linked to the priorities of the Union's cohesion policy, in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity.

The various strands of Interreg should contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development objectives (SDOs) described in the Sustainable Development Programme for 2030 adopted in September 2015.

Resources and co-financing rates

Parliament proposed that the resources allocated to the Interreg objective should amount to EUR 11 165 910 000 at 2018 prices from the total resources available for ERDF, ESF+ and Cohesion Fund budget commitments for the 2021-2027 programming period.

An amount of EUR 10,195,910,000 (91.31%) of these resources would be allocated as follows:

- EUR 7 500 000 000 (67.16%) for cross-border cooperation (strand 1);

- EUR 1,973,600,880 (17.68%) for transnational cooperation (strand 2);
- EUR 357 309 120 (3.2%) for cooperation involving the outermost regions (strand 3);
- EUR 365 000 000 000 (3.27%) for interregional cooperation (strand 4).

An amount of EUR 970,000,000,000 (8.69%) of the resources would be allocated to a new initiative on interregional investment in innovation that should be used to support thematic platforms for intelligent specialisation in areas such as energy, industrial modernisation, circular economy, social innovation, environment or agri-food and to help bring together actors in intelligent specialisation strategies.

Members proposed increasing the co-financing rate from 70% to 80%.

Thematic focus

Under the amended text:

- up to 15% of ERDF allocations and, where appropriate, EU external financing instruments for priorities other than those relating to technical assistance for each Interreg programme under components 1, 2 and 3 would be allocated to the specific Interreg objective 'better Interreg governance' and up to 10% could be allocated to the specific Interreg external objective 'a safer and more secure Europe';

- where an Interreg programme under strand 1 or 2 supports a macro-regional strategy or a strategy for a sea basin, at least 80% of the ERDF allocations should contribute to the achievement of the objectives of this strategy.

Small Project Fund

Parliament clarified the rules governing funds for small-scale projects, which are an important and effective instrument for removing border and cross-border obstacles. It proposed that the total contribution from the ERDF or, where applicable, from an external EU funding instrument to one or more funds for small projects under an Interreg programme should not exceed 20% of the total allocation for the Interreg programme and should amount, under an Interreg cross-border cooperation programme, to at least 3% of the total allocation.

Payments and pre-financing

Members believe that the rules on pre-financing should take due account of the specificities of European territorial cooperation, which is why they have provided for greater pre-financing, particularly at the beginning of the financing period.

State aid

Parliament stressed that, in the light of experience, support for European territorial cooperation projects should have only limited repercussions on competition and trade between Member States. Therefore, the Commission should be able to declare that this aid is compatible with the internal market and that funding provided to support European territorial cooperation projects can be block exempted.

Indicators

The proposal introduces specific Interreg indicators to measure the results and European added value of cooperation programmes. However, Parliament considered that it might be necessary, if necessary, to adapt the indicators, or to leave more room for manoeuvre in the programmes to define the system of indicators during the discussions.

Simplification

The provisions on the preparation, approval and amendment of Interreg programmes as well as on territorial development, selection of operations, monitoring and evaluation, programme authorities, audit of operations and transparency and communication should be adapted to the specificities of Interreg programmes and remain simple and clear to avoid over-regulation and additional administrative burden for Member States and beneficiaries.