

Improving Synergies across the Mediterranean for post 2020 III. HOW?

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Report

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I. Setting the context for the meeting.

With the new programming period there is a need for a more integrated approach to sectoral and/or territorial policy implementation. In this context, the Commission through the Orientation Papers encourages a stronger cooperation between Interreg programmes operating within the same geographical area. Based on this reality, improving synergies and inter coordination of the operations implemented by the most appropriate geographical scale (TN-CBC-IPA-NEXT) can increase its efficiency when giving response to territorial challenges.

A constant dialogue between the programmes is, therefore, essential, to agree on challenges and type of actions /interventions. This should be addressed from an early stage of the programming, as a basis for long term coordination during the programme's implementation.

There have been 3 meetings so far. The first one, last June, focused on **WHAT** theme programmes could work jointly. The second, last September, on **WHO does what** to ensure programme inter-coordination. And a third meeting focused on **How to improve interprogramme coordination** across Interreg programmes. Considering the following elements to brainstorm:

- Existing Interreg interprogramme coordination initiatives in and out the Mediterranean area.
- Definition and shape of common text to fill in section 1.2 and 2.1.2 of their Cooperation programmes.
- Existing territorial frameworks in the area: EUSAIR and WESTMED.
- Nature of the different programme Transnational and CBC (Interreg Internal borders, Interreg NEXT and Interreg IPA).

Disclaimer: This meeting had a technical purpose for exchange and brainstorm ideas. Decisions are only to be taken under the different programme's Task Force meetings.

II. European Commission updates on Next Regulations Interreg 2021-2027.

- Speakers: Pascal Boijmans and Jean Pierre Halkin. Head of Units D1 and D2.

Coreper 16/12/2020 adopted a consolidated version “confirmation of the final compromise text” including the annex – programme template.

Publication in official journal together with CPR, ERDF and ESF+ regulations: expected end May/early June

Interreg Budget.

Total budget **EUR 8 050 000 000** for Interreg

- Strand A cross border cooperation : 72.2% (EUR 5 812 790 000)
- Strand B transnational cooperation: 18.2 % (EUR 1 466 000 000)
- Strand C interregional cooperation: 6.1 (EUR 490 000 000)
- Strand D outermost regions: 3.4% (EUR 281 210 000)

Specific co-financing rate: 80% (85% for outermost regions programmes)

Interreg Regulation Architecture:

- Interreg A (cross-border), Interreg B (transnational)
- Interreg C (interregional cooperation) including URBACT and Interreg Europe.
- One new strand Interreg D: outermost region cooperation.
- Full integration of the external border dimension
- Inclusion of external Funds (IPA III, NDICI, Funding for OCTs) under one umbrella

Interreg Thematic concentration

- Interreg A, B and D: At least 60% of ERDF for maximum 3 policy objectives, PO2 compulsory
- Interreg A on land borders: at least 60% of ERDF for max 4 POs, PO2 and 4 compulsory
- Interreg A, B and D: up to 20% for “better Interreg governance” and 5% “a safer Europe”
- Interreg B: 80% on Macro-Regional Strategy or seas-basin strategy
- Specifics for 4 programmes under Interreg C

Next steps: Interreg Implementing Acts (in close cooperation with Member States) and Programme’s adoption

Two Implementing Acts (Articles 8 and 11 Interreg Regulation):

- Setting out the list of Interreg programme areas and allocations for cross-border (A), transnational(B), and outermost regions’ cooperation (D).
- Setting out a list of all Interreg programmes indicating per programme the global amount of the total support from the ERDF and external financing instruments of the Union.

Interprogramme coordination in the Programming Phase.

Section 1.2 template

Recommendation: a standard text on coordination which can be inserted in all Mediterranean and Adriatic/Ionian programmes

- Who? Programmes involved (focus on Interreg) with clear reference to MRS or sea-basin strategy
- What? Overview table with PO's and SO's per programme: early identification of common interests with opportunities for cooperation and synergies (Common excel table)
- How? Themes of potential cooperation: common events, combined calls or studies, timetables and deadlines for implementation, participation in MC's, regular exchange MA's/JS, interprogramme staff training.
- Use of harmonisation tools: Jems monitoring, HIT, Keep.

Section 2.1.1 template

- Justify the selected actions in relation to their territorial benefit/impact: reference to territorial/maritime frameworks.
- EUSAIR programmes: reference to relevant territorial challenges and prioritized actions of MRS action plan
- References to relevant parts of Mediterranean sea basin strategies
- Reference to overview table in section 1.2 .

Interprogramme coordination in the Implementing Phase.

Targeted cooperation on identified areas of common interest. Only those programmes with common interest. Project based.

Strategic, horizontal coordination. MS/country/regional administrations, MA's/JS: horizontal, strategic cooperation. Regular exchanges, mutual participation in MC's, governance structures. Common events, trainings etc.

See presentations in Annex 1

- **Clarification to the presentation.**

In what extend is compulsory for Interreg programmes to contribute MRS and SBS?.

The obligation comes when the geography of the programme corresponds 100% to the geography of the macro-regional or maritime strategy, as it is the case of ADRION for EUSAIR, For the rest of the programmes it is a recommendation and it should be decided by the Programme's TF members.

III. Some experiences to build upon. State of play of the existing interprogramme coordination mechanisms/solutions.

Objectives of the session: Learning about the existing Interreg interprogramme coordination initiatives in and out the Mediterranean area.

Speakers:

- Monica Bellisario. Dipartimento per le politiche di coesione. Italy.
- Jean Luc Frés. Agence nationale de la cohésion des territoires France.
- Interreg Italy France Maritime. Laura Righi.
- Interreg MED. Curzio Cervelli
- Interreg Next MED (jointly). Aldo Puleo and Martin Heibel
- Interreg Adrion. Lodovico Gherardi

The debate focused on 2 main questions :

1. With whom have the programmes considered such possible interprogramme coordination and what your focus would be?.
2. How far have you arrived in your discussions.

They all mentioned that still in a very early stage and everything is under discussion, however there is a shared understanding that such interprogramme coordination is an opportunity to use resources in a more efficient way. Find here the main ideas:

Italy follows a geographical approach with 3 coordination groups: Mediterranean, Central and Alpine and Adriatic Ionian, where coordination will not only be with Interreg but also there is a strong will to include the mainstream programmes.

France is working on a specific work plan based on capitalising Interreg results of French projects developed in the Mediterranean area.

From the programmes side, there have already been several meetings between Interreg TN MED, TN Adrion, Next Med and Interreg CBC Italy France Maritime. Such exchanges lead to draft a common text for section 1.2 and 2.1.2 of the CP Template that all will agree in other to improve synergies not only as a statement in the Programming but also during the programmes implementation for next programming period.


In particular Interreg CBC Italy France Maritime, the possible interprogramme coordination currently it goes in 3 levels. With Interreg Italy France (Alcotra) on an inland scope; with Interreg Italy Malta and Interreg NEXT Italy Tunisia on a maritime scope. the discussion is based on an ongoing work by matching the different programmes where there is a territorial coincidence and common thematic objective. And with TN programmes.

Interreg TN Adrion, has a different situation compared with the before mentioned programmes, since it is the only one with a full coverage with a MRS, the "EUSAIR". Adrion is working on programming coordination with the CBC programmes covered by the EUSAIR. This discussion still in an early stage.

IV. Shaping a common text for the programmes to fill in section 1.2 and 2.1.2 of their Cooperation programmes.

Before the meeting, a template (Annex 2), and an example for a common text (Annex 3) in sections 1.2 and 2.1.2 were shared with the participants to ease the discussion in the breakout rooms.

Objective of the breakout rooms: To discuss a possible common text for those programmes in the same sub geographical area where synergies are found.

INTERACT 

Shaping a common text for section 1.2 and 2.1.2 of the Cooperation programmes.

1. WHO: Programmes involved.
2. WHAT: S.O./themes.(joint excel table to be updated)
3. HOW:
 - a. Common management rules/Harmonisation tools (e.g. coordinated monitoring and reporting_Jems (before eMS); coordinated calls, coordinated assessment HIT. Keep.) in order to facilitate, as much as possible, a simplified communication to users (often the same bodies) and to the States
 - b. Timelines/deadlines for the implementation of the objectives of each programme?
 - c. Potential shared activities (e.g. joint programming, joint communication events by targeted theme/ policy, combined calls or studies, capitalization calls financed by the different programmes etc.....)
 - d. Other (e.g. interprogramme staff training/exchanges, joint virtual library, etc)
4. Territorial Framework/Strategies only for EUSAIR and Western Med area: Role of EUSAIR? ? Role of WestMed Initiative?

A. Group Discussion: Western Mediterranean area.

The group appreciated the fact of discussing a “common text” for section 1.2.1 and 2.1.1. Focusing more in the HOW element.

- Regarding the WHO. The programme will state the list of programmes it has synergies with, and it has agreed to work in coordination with.
- For the WHAT. The programme will attach the updated joint excel table (or a simplified version) with the list of selected PO, SO and themes, as well as a reference to its contribution to the EUSAIR and WESTMED Initiative, if relevant.
- In relation to the HOW. The template mentions several options to define HOW programmes could improve interprogramme coordination. These options cover from possible common tools, coordinated deadlines, specific shared activities to other ideas programmes may agree together. During the debate in the break out room, the following ideas were highlighted:
 - The options on HOW to improve interprogramme cooperation shall be enlarged or reduced depending on the programmes will.
 - European Commission stated that it is not mandatory to include the common tools paragraph in the common text.
 - It was mentioned the fact that this “Common text” should focus essentially on the strategic aspect of such interprograme coordination more that practical aspects. However, it was pointed out that together with the strategic view of the programming stage, the common text should also hold some practical content ensuring the implementation of the common

work in synergies and interprogramme coordination. Therefore, programmes should demonstrate in the Programming phase their commitment on working together to improve synergies during Interreg programmes' implementation.

About the role of WestMed Initiative as a territorial framework for interprogramme cooperation in the Western Mediterranean programmes. After WestMed Initiative Assistance Mechanism presented the 6 sectors where the WestMed is focusing. The following comments were highlighted:

- How to embed it? Is it through the visibility and alignment of projects financed by Interreg to WestMed?
- WestMed Initiative could capitalise Interreg results in the area in what Blue Economy is concern.
- WestMed Initiative could bridge Interreg results and national contributions.

B. Group discussion: Central Mediterranean Area.

Overall, the possibility to work on a shared text to be included in the Interreg Programme's template was appreciated and to be further elaborated. However, it was stressed that the practical approach should remain flexible (as far as regulation allows), simple and pragmatic, considering the resources available. It was also advised not to create any new structures to support inter-programme cooperation, but instead use the existing ones, such as, e.g., the informal network of Adriatic programmes. A pilot group could be set up to further specify the coordination possibilities. Moreover, it was pointed out that certain clarity of thematic focus is needed before discussing specific coordination approaches.

Among practical implementation steps, participants mention, e.g., a possibility to agree on parts of the call announcements (one or more criteria guiding project partners to coordinate their activities), joint communication and/or capitalization efforts (share and bring together project partners across programmes through, e.g., thematic conferences). A possibility to launch targeted calls in line with the aims of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic Ionian Region (EUSAIR) action plan and the approved flagships was also listed as an idea for practical implementation steps.

The group also pointed out that ISO1 (Interreg Specific Objective A better cooperation governance) could be used to support coordination measures.

C. Group discussion: Eastern Mediterranean Area.

Before attempting to shape a common text for section 1.2 and 2.1.2 of the cooperation programmes, participants appreciated the overall proposed structure with the four dimensions consisting in the WHO, WHAT, HOW and Strategic dimension. At the same time, several participants argued that it becomes a very difficult exercise to set the basis for synergies and cooperation when the definition of geography, budget and more importantly objectives have not come to a conclusion, which is the case, for instance, for the all the Interreg NEXT programmes in the area. At the same time, all the participants agreed on the fact that coordination should start from the very beginning and on the programming phase, while it has to be continued, and even reinforced, during the implementation phase. Participants are aware that the coordination is a long terms and open process where the following aspects need to be taken into account:

- tools for shared governance to be established among programmes;
- specific programmes with specific actions need to be identified;
- cooperation works if accurately targeted and objective driven;
- a good balance between bottom-up and top-down approach needs to be established.

Capitalisation have been perceived as a promising starting point for cooperation, where practices can be shared, projects can be scaled/replicated and lessons learned can be circulated.

The participants acknowledged the need of a coordination in the East of the Mediterranean where there is a series of similar geopolitical, social and climatic characteristics. At the same time, the need of connecting the actions in the region with a wider Mediterranean dimension and with the West and Central portions of the basin have been pointed out as a promising perspective.

The session ended with an alert: “not over coordinate the coordination!”. Simply by observing the map with all the Interreg programmes in the Mediterranean, it becomes clear that full coordination and full control will be simply impossible. Coordination between programmes should remain an opportunity, a permanent intention and a never-ending process.

V. Inter-programme coordination in Natural Disaster and risk reduction. Beneficiaries experience.

Illustration through projects TN –CBC based in outputs. Discussion awareness on what has been done in different strands:

- Calypso South Project. Giuseppe Ciruolo, Italy Malta
- PortoDiMare Project. Olga Sedioli, Adrion EUSAIR
- MEDISS Project. Amal Orabi, ENI CBC MED

See presentations in Annex 1.

VI. Switch from practice to a model. How to take inputs for a model based on the previous experience and day 1.

Sub geographical thematic discussions, taking into account the existing territorial frameworks in the Mediterranean area (EUSAIR, WESTMED) and Eastern Mediterranean programmes.

Objectives: Working on complementarities based on the kind of operations financed by Transnational and CBC (Interreg Internal borders, Interreg NEXT and Interreg IPA), within the different topics:

- Natural Disaster and risk reduction
- Clean Mediterranean
- Sustainable tourism and culture
- Blue Growth

The topics were chosen in the breakout rooms.

WestMed Assistance Mechanism and EUSAIR participated in the relevant breakout rooms.

A. Group Discussion: Western Mediterranean area.

The group selected Natural Disaster and Risk reduction to start the discussion with, however Clean Mediterranean was equally popular as a common theme, followed by Blue Growth and Sustainable tourism and culture.

With Natural Disaster and Risk reduction as a background topic, the Western Med participants had the following observations.

How can you use WestMed initiative to find synergies among your programmes?.

WESTMED Blue Economy Initiative	
GOALS	PRIORITIES
I. A safer and more secure maritime space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maritime safety and the fight against marine pollution
II. A smart and resilient blue economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maritime cluster development . Skills development and circulation Sustainable consumption and production
III. A better governance of the sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodiversity and marine habitat conservation and restoration. The development of coastal communities and sustainable fisheries and aquaculture

WestMed Assistance Mechanism reminded the 3 goals and 6 priorities.

WestMed has mainly 2 value added aspects for Interreg Programmes:

a) the Maritime Datahub with 300 projects on Blue Economy which could be very useful for capitalisation terms. Among these projects there are Interreg, ENI projects but not only also H2020 or Fisheries Funds.

b) WestMed can connect Interreg project results to a higher political level. Political agenda. Multiplier role. WestMed

may highlight the impact of Interreg project results in the area.

Programmes highlighted that WestMed could systematized project results being such initiative a common framework where the different programmes could work in complementarities.

There was a discussion on how to filter those Interreg results to be considered under WestMed. Should it be the TN programmes? The WestMed assistance mechanism mentioned that they are already working on such filter, so there is no need to start from scratch.

Additionally, there is a reflection from DG Mare and some of the programmes represented in the group to include as observers also the CBC programmes in the WestMed governance system. The fact that regions are implementers of the measures tackled under Blue Economy brought the idea that regions could also be involved in WestMed governance system.

Each Interreg Programme Task Force should decide if they will or not want to choose WestMed as a common framework and find such complementarity.

In parallel, when discussing about synergies, the participants highlighted that there are different kind of targets: 1) Political: WestMed and 2) Operational. Programmes should identify how to develop the process to such targets (ISO1 could be one option)

To the questions: What is the added value of being a TN or CBC when operating in a specific territory? Which is your experience as TN or CBC relation to the other? And How could it potentially be translated into coordination activities?

Programmes stated that in their working plan for next programming period they should check on the different possibilities and the different ways of capitalising results.

- CBC are closer to the mainstream programmes and could transfer results to the regional and national policies. CBC programmes could focus on the local implementation of an activity.

- While Transnational programmes could capitalise on specific kind of project results coming from the CBC. TN programmes could have a role between the local action and the political framework.

There should be a political and technical interaction. Some ideas from the previous discussion came along stressing that there are different levels of cooperation.

B. Group discussion: Central Mediterranean Area.

The breakout session was started with a brief presentation of the EUSAIR and the politically endorsed priorities /flagships, showing where investments and cooperation is needed in period 2021-2027. The presentation was followed by a discussion on how the EUSAIR could be used as a framework for programme cooperation. It was stressed, that the Strategy provides excellent links to multilevel governance actors, existing networks and Pillar Thematic Steering groups that could strengthen capitalization efforts. Moreover, it provides a common vision for the territory that can be translated back into practical activities and supported by programmes. ADRION capitalization projects closely implemented with the EUSAIR have identified gaps and needs for further activities, which could be another inspiration for the programming and coordination process. It is also important to link WestMed, EUSAIR and other territorial initiatives mutually reinforcing the efforts. The participants also exchanged on further ideas on practical cooperation steps, stressing the importance of exchange between involved colleagues, share info on planned activities, or jointly participate in the EUSAIR annual forum or similar events. Interreg ADRION invited colleagues to participate in the stakeholder survey on the scope of the coordination activities that could be financed through ISO1.

C. Group discussion: Eastern Mediterranean Area.

The first question addressed to the participants in the breakout room was “Do you see some common challenges for the Eastern Mediterranean?”. To start with, the experience of the CBC in the Mediterranean region has been considered a unique and very important experiment which proved that different territories, divided for historical, religious and geopolitical regions managed to smoothly cooperate together and shared a common agenda, based on common needs and challenges. A great opportunity is offered today by the Green Deal Agenda which makes us converging into a more shared CBC plan. CBC was able to push into a cooperation modality most of the countries within the region. In several cases, through the CBC cooperation, competition opened room to complementarity. This first and very important understanding makes possible and even natural to focus on “our common territories”. Within this perspective, creating inter-programme joint task forces is a natural good practice to be encouraged in order to solve constraints on implementation. In this respect, common aims for coordination are clear although, at the same time, it is difficult to see effective coordination if appropriate time and resources for coordination are not made available. And unfortunately, this is often not the case for programmes and projects.

Another question raised have been the follow one: “What is the added value of being a transnational (TN) or cross-border (CBC) programme, when operating in a specific territory? Which is your experience as TN or CBC relation to the other?” As a general feeling, cooperation in the Eastern side of the Mediterranean including our partner countries as the most important aspect to be emphasised, while the distinction between TN and CB should be minimised. Until a certain extent, in this group it was mentioned that the mainstreaming into regional policy is probably easier

in a TN perspective, while the CBC dimension keeps a certain flavour of bottom up and action-based perspective, with pilot experiences well rooted in cross-border territories. The bottom-up approach makes sure policies are embedded into successful practices. While ad hoc coordination needs also to be performed into a case-by-case perspective, creating group and clusters is another important step to be taken.

The final part of the conversation was devoted to the exploration of the possible ingredients for coordination. A plethora of possible actions was mentioned, from sharing calendar, joint thematic events, capitalisation activities. Also, building the cooperation from the bottom to the top is probably more valuable. Also, it has been noted, coordination and learning are two different dimensions both important even if they respond to two different purposes and path of action. More in general, in the opinion of most participants, the need to plan coordination at programme level and in advance and the identification of flagships and leaderships from specific programmes is needed (especially for facilitation and animation purposes). Again, to avoid that everything remains theoretical, participants felt the need to focus on topics and tools, with a good dose on planning, commitment and willingness.

Next steps.

- Future Meeting . April 2021.
- Content:
 - Tools for coordination.
 - Complementarity of operations between TN and CBC. Project chain approach. Territorial Framework for cooperation.
 - Confirming Specific Objectives and themes.

Annex 1. Presentations

Annex 2. Template for sections 1.2 and 2.1.2

Annex 3. Example of Common Text

Link to event documents and mural [here](#)