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

**Draft Final Review Report
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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 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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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 and the different main elements of the programme were in general elaborated successively, which permitted the evaluators to appraise new contents stepwise and also to formulate related recommendations for further improvements.

Remark on overall uptake of recommendations / changes of drafts, to be elaborated later

Programme Strategy

To be elaborated for the final report

Indicator system & programme-level arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

To be elaborated for the final report

Financial allocations of the Programme

To be elaborated for the final report

Contribution to Europe 2020 & to social, economic and territorial cohesion

To be elaborated for the final report

Programme delivery mechanisms & structures

To be elaborated for the final 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",¹ 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"² 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.³

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:**⁴

- **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 / actions 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 appraisal of synergies is one among the many evaluation questions to be addressed under the strategy evaluation, we have carried out **a pragmatic and**

¹ European Commission (2013a)

² INTERREG IVC Programme (2013b)

³ 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).

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

interactive synergy screening process. It covered two out of the three stages which are recommended by the MEANS-Handbook (i.e. identification of potential synergies & further analysis of key synergies)⁵ and included also a programme-level validation of the detected “key synergies” by members of the INTERREG IVC JTS.

- **Logical models** were drawn up for both 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 2014-2020 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) objective. This theory of change was articulated through a visual diagram which depicts (and clarifies) the various types of outcomes that have to occur on the “pathway of change” and also allows to examine whether the basic assumptions underlying the intended changes are sufficiently realistic for actually reaching the programme’s medium-term overall objective.

In addition, we also proposed **to organise specific “Feedback Workshops” at important stages of the programming process** in order to further intensify the iterative and interactive nature of the combined 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 originally proposed two 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 3rd of October 2013 in Lille which covered both aspects.

⁵ 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 process⁶ 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.*⁷

Due to this, we now provide a summary overview on the ex-ante evaluation process for the INTERREG EUROPE Programme and also highlight which improvements were made to the various programme drafts as a consequence of the ex-ante evaluation inputs.

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 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 successively⁸ which 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 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 out of 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.

⁶ 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

⁷ European Commission (2013a), p.22

⁸ I.e. assessment of needs/challenges → specific programme objectives & related types of intervention → related programme indicators → financial allocation & programme delivery structures.

Initial evaluation phase

In April 2013, the programme drafters carried out **an initial scoping of needs and challenges**⁹ 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 current 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 the 1st Review Report**.¹⁰ 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 **1st Draft of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme**.¹¹ In this draft, however, only sub-section 1.1 of the Commission template for ETC programmes was elaborated to larger, but 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 prevailing in the interregional cooperation territory (EU28+CH+NOR)¹² as well as of the operational challenges and opportunities for interregional cooperation was presented. Moreover, also a brief introduction to the very basic elements of the future programme strategy was elaborated.

The **ex-ante evaluators** appraised the contents of this document and **elaborated a shorter note with preliminary comments on the 1st Draft**.¹³ We observed that the analysis of the thematic needs and challenges now reflects quite well the most important core issues which are related to the wider policy and territorial context of the new programme, but also that some aspects should be further elaborated (i.e. there was still little analysis on the issue of enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs; concrete potentials for interregional cooperation could be mentioned under the respective thematic fields analysed). 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

⁹ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013c)

¹⁰ INTERREG IVC (2013d)

¹¹ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013e)

¹² The 1st 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.

¹³ INTERREG IVC (2013f)

of the ex-ante evaluation were also presented and discussed at the PC-meeting in Dublin end of June 2013.

Main evaluation phase

Further discussions and drafting work took place during the summer period, which then led to the presentation of the **2nd Draft of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020**¹⁴ at the **beginning of September 2013**. The new version now 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 the 2nd Review Report**¹⁵ 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, extensively discussed among the Partner State representatives present 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 3rd 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 future programme indicator system, **the Final Draft of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020**¹⁶ was presented in **early November 2013**. This new programme version was considerably improved and has also taken into consideration most of previously formulated recommendations of the ex-ante evaluation.

Final evaluation phase

Final draft & last changes, to be elaborated

Connection to SEA, to be elaborated

¹⁴ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013g)

¹⁵ INTERREG IVC (2013i), INTERREG IVC (2013j)

¹⁶ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k)

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 (...).*¹⁷

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 draft regulations for the new funding period 2014-2020 do no longer require programmes to include a full socio-economic analysis. According to Article 7 (2) (a) of the draft final ETC-regulation, however, a cooperation programme shall set out (...) *a justification of the choice of thematic objectives, corresponding investment priorities and financial allocations, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework; based on an analysis of the situation of [...] the programme area as a whole in terms of needs and the strategy chosen in response (...).*¹⁸ 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, wherefore the programme-related challenges and needs correspond in principle to those

¹⁷ European Commission (2013a)

¹⁸ Council of the European Union (2013a)

identified by the Europe 2020 Strategy. In sub-section 1.1.3 of the programme document, an assessment of needs and challenges is realised.

From our appraisal it appears that **a very concise but appropriate territorial situation analysis is carried out for the programme area**, which summarises well the more extensive assessment realised during the preparation phase (see: [Chapter 2](#)). This 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 regions-focussed 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 Strategy¹⁹: the EU-wide challenges/needs and targets of six fields of action are given high weight (“Innovation”, “Competitiveness”, “Combating climate change”, “Clean and efficient energy”) or medium weight (“Digital Society”, “Employment”) in the programmes’ situation analysis, 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”).

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 2014-2020 consists of four Thematic Objectives (TOs) - with each of them being related to one Priority Axis (PA) - and of six Investment Priorities (IPs) with six related Specific Objectives (SOs).

Our appraisal confirms that **the six SOs are consistently reflecting the identified challenges/needs and interregional cooperation potentials** (see: [Annex 2](#)). 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 the related challenges/needs and interregional cooperation potentials in the situation analysis is not reflected in a corresponding level of consideration by the SOs. However, this clear deviation is 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, for instance as an integrated part of innovation infrastructures (TO1) or through the development of e-services by SMEs.*²⁰

¹⁹ 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”).

²⁰ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.12

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 specificity of this Programme. INTERREG EUROPE has to address the identified EU-wide 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 transfers of good practice. 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 contributions 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 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, however, we briefly review 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.

Quality of the programme strategy

The programme document briefly introduces the wider strategy of INTERREG EUROPE under sub-section 1.1.4 and then describes in more detail, under section 2, the four Priority Axes (PAs) and their Thematic Objectives (TOs) as well as the six selected Investment Priorities (IPs) and their related six Specific Objectives (SOs).²¹

²¹ 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

(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.²² 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 choice of appropriate TOs for the INTERREG EUROPE strategy was transparent and also logic, although for interregional cooperation the regulations impose no thematic preference and financial earmarking for specific 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 pillars 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).²³ 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.*²⁴

(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 the INTERREG EUROPE Programme (i.e. 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 the 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.*²⁵

(4) Formulations 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 EU-level.²⁶ Although the specific programme objective 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 also the specific nature of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme is taken into consideration, then one can indeed support the use of such general SO-formulations and consider the programme’s own justification as being 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*

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”.

²² There are no Priority Axes which cover either more than one TO or combine one or more complementary IPs under one TO.

²³ 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 (2013k), p.12

²⁴ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), pp.12 & 13

²⁵ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.13

²⁶ 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.

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.²⁷

Hierarchical relations within the wider programme objective system

The wider objective system of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme **is reasonable and also logically coherent, but obviously more differentiated than what is formally required for 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](#)),²⁸ for which the hierarchical relations can be described as follows.

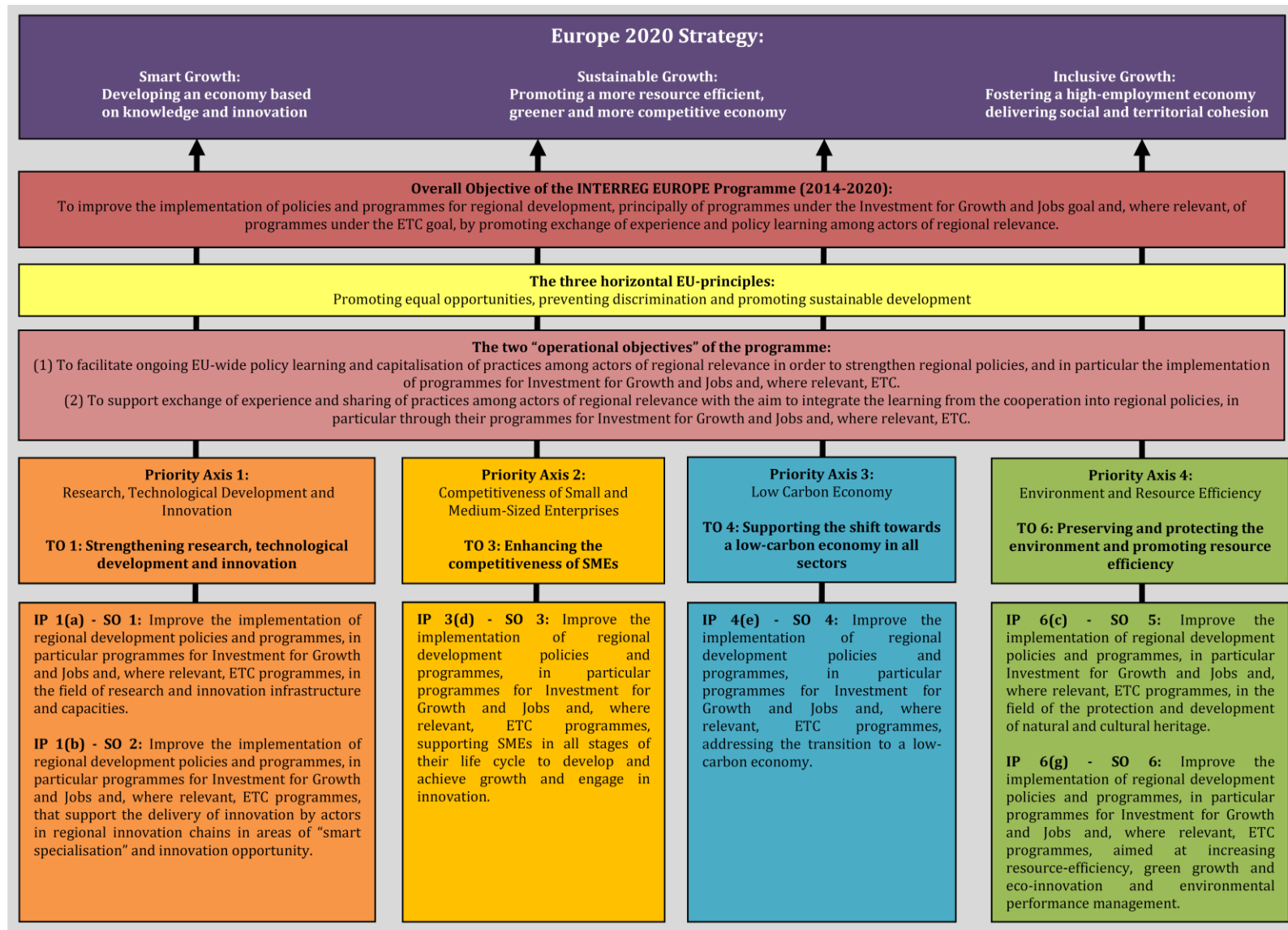
The **first two levels** cover the objectives which are directly related to the Programme’s intervention strategy. At the lowest level are **the six Specific Objectives** of the six Investment Priorities which are expected to contribute, at the next higher level, to an achievement of **the four Thematic Objectives** which 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.
- 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.

²⁷ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.13

²⁸ 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



The **third level** covers the two “**operational objectives**” of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. They are applicable to all fields of regional policy supported by the Programme and define the overall approach to interregional cooperation which will allow achieving the overall programme objective: the programme will facilitate on-going EU-wide policy learning and capitalisation of good practices (i.e. through “Policy Learning Platforms”) and it will also support a sharing and transfer of good practices in order to prepare their integration and implementation in regional policies (i.e. through “Policy Learning Projects”).

The **fourth level** consists of the **three horizontal EU-principles** which are ranking higher than the operational objectives, mainly because of the following basic regulatory provisions: the interventions delivering the thematic and specific programme objectives should also aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women, to combat discrimination and to promote sustainable development.

The **overall programme objective** is located at the **fifth level** and defines, from a broader viewpoint, what the INTERREG EUROPE Programme intends to achieve 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 cooperation²⁹ and the regulatory provisions of Article 2 (3) (a) in the draft final ETC-Regulation.³⁰

While pursuing and also achieving the previously mentioned objectives and normative provisions 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)**.

Interdependence relations between the specific programme objectives

For appraising the different types of interdependence relations³¹ which can exist between the specific objectives of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme, we examined the “Types of Action” (ToA) under each specific programme objective and then made assumptions on the potential impacts³² 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](#)).

²⁹ *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

³⁰ Council of the European Union (2013a)

³¹ 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.

³² 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 Policy Learning Projects (i.e. specific thematic focus of their actions).

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”,³³ 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. Policy Learning Projects under SO 1 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 Policy Learning 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.

The interdependence relations between specific objectives from different Priority Axes are widespread and the cross-impacts are generally positive in most of the cases (SO 1 – SO 4, SO 6), which means that a high level of “external” complementarity exists within the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. Neutrality exists only for and in relation to SO 5, but across all Priority Axes no conflict among specific programme objectives is observed.

In the cases of **SO 1 and SO 2 (PA 1)**, we assume that the Policy Learning 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

³³ “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.

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 the case of **SO 3 (PA 2)**, we assume that the Policy Learning 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 the case of **SO 4 (PA 3)**, we assume that the Policy Learning 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 the case of **SO 6 (PA 4)**, we assume that the Policy Learning 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 within the programme objective system

Our interactive synergy screening process allowed identifying, analysing and validating a number of **key synergies** which **exist within the objective system of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme**. These key synergies should be attentively considered during the future implementation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme in order to ensure the most optimal delivery of results.

For an identification of potential synergies that are significant, we have taken the matrix of cross-impacts as a point of departure (see: [Table 1](#)) and considered only the highest level of complementarity which exists between the specific objectives from different Priority Axis. 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 synergies”, we have drawn up a table which compares the different Types of Action applied 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 developed a detailed assumption for each potential key synergy (see: [Annex 3](#)). These assumptions were subsequently confirmed in their realism through a validation process which directly involved the core personnel of the INTERREG IVC JTS.

The key synergies existing in the context of Policy Learning 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) should be pro-actively encouraged. We recommended in our earlier evaluation of the programme strategy that this can be achieved by formulating concrete operational provisions in the relevant IP-descriptions under Section 2 (e.g. precise indication of cross-cutting issues targeting “neighbouring” SOs; inclusion of concrete project examples for such cross-cutting issues in the list of examples).³⁴ The Draft Final Programme, however, neither mentions the observed project-level synergies in the relevant IP-descriptions (e.g. under the heading “Contribution to the specific objective”), nor does it pro-actively encourage cross-cutting projects through specific provisions.³⁵ Instead, it is sought (but also not explicitly) of taking such thematic synergies and cross-influences into account when elaborating the terms of references for future regular calls for proposals.

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”).

³⁴ INTERREG IVC (2013i)

³⁵ The only remark on project-related synergies that could be found in the various IP-descriptions is the following: *Projects shall primarily contribute to the expected result of one specific objective of the programme, even if there may be synergies with the themes covered by other specific objectives.*

The key synergies existing in the context of the various TO-specific Policy Learning Platforms suggest in particular that during the exploitation and dissemination of project results, attention should also be paid to Policy Learning Projects which address aspects that are positively impacting on the expected results of other specific programme objectives. Should there be a sufficient number of such “cross-impact” projects in the portfolio of the programme or of a given SO, then also “joint” actions between the concerned Policy Learning Platforms could be organised. This option is foreseen by the IP-descriptions under Section 2 and formulated 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 programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) objective, which will be implemented during the 2014-2020 funding period throughout the EU. Due to this, our appraisal will mainly focus on the following two main evaluation questions:

- (1) In how far does INTERREG EUROPE consider and possibly contribute to other important 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 and 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;³⁶

- the “Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020”,³⁷ agreed by the Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development at their informal meeting in Gödöllő (Hungary) in 2011;
- the regulation proposal for a new EU-level programme on business and SME development “COSME”³⁸ of 2011;
- the regulation proposal for the new EU-level R&D framework programme “HORIZON 2020”³⁹ of 2011;
- the 2011 Communication of the European Commission on a “Roadmap for moving to a competitive low carbon economy in 2050”⁴⁰;
- the 2011 Communication of the European Commission on a “Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe”.⁴¹

The European Commission also issued in April 2013 a comprehensive EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change,⁴² which resulted out of the discussions following the publication of a White Paper in 2009.⁴³ 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 which are primarily addressed by the INTERREG EUROPE Programme.

Our in-depth review of the above-mentioned EU-level policy strategies and programmes and their comparison to key elements of **the INTERREG EUROPE strategy** shows that the **Programme has a high degree of external coherence**. The specific objectives of INTERREG EUROPE and the related types of action consider, either extensively or in a focussed manner,⁴⁴ 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.⁴⁵ 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

³⁶ European Commission (2010b)

³⁷ Informal Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning and Territorial Development (2011)

³⁸ European Commission (2011c)

³⁹ European Commission (2011b)

⁴⁰ 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.

⁴¹ 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.

⁴² 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.

⁴³ European Commission (2009)

⁴⁴ “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.

⁴⁵ 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.

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.

The observed high levels of consideration and contribution to other important EU-level strategies and policies which are closely related to the themes addressed by the thematic and specific objectives of INTERREG EUROPE **are also adequately acknowledged by the Programme:**

- Sub-section 1.1.2 describes the wider policy context of the programme and states explicitly that the programme 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.*⁴⁶
- Sub-section 6.2 of the programme 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.*⁴⁷

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.**

- A coordination is foreseen with programmes or instruments supporting actions in the fields of environment, low-carbon and climate-resilient economy or energy, because “LIFE 2014-2020” and also “Intelligent Energy – Europe III” are explicitly mentioned under Section 6.⁴⁸
- Also the important fields of research, development and innovation or cluster support is adequately covered: INTERREG EUROPE foresees to integrate and build on results generated by the 2007-2013 “Regions of Knowledge” (RoK) Initiative⁴⁹ and also plans establishing a close collaboration with the “Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3) Platform” developed by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS) in Seville/Spain.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), pp.4 & 5

⁴⁷ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.67

⁴⁸ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.68

⁴⁹ This aspect is indeed mentioned under Section 1 of the Programme (INTERREG IVC Programme, 2013k, p.9), but the way of how this will be done in practice is not further described in the following sections of the programme.

⁵⁰ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.69: *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.*

The role of INTERREG EUROPE in ETC & relations to other ETC-programmes

The **specific role** that INTERREG EUROPE should play during the funding period 2014-2020 is prescribed by the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) and the draft final regulation for the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) objective and defined in further detail by the programme's own strategic objectives (see: Box 1).

The CSF of 2012 sets out in its Annex II the EU-wide priorities for cooperation under the ERDF (i.e. cross-border, transnational & interregional cooperation) and the ESF (i.e. transnational cooperation), but also the expected contribution of mainstream programmes to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies.⁵¹ The CSF-priorities for ERDF-funded interregional cooperation are in larger parts confirmed by Article 2 (3) (a) of the draft final ETC-Regulation,⁵² but this article further widens the strategic target audience of INTERREG EUROPE by including also other programmes under the ETC-goal.

Box 1:

INTERREG EUROPE's specific role in 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.

Draft final ETC-Regulation, Article 2 (3) (a): To 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 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union on the identification and dissemination of good practice with a view to its transfer principally to operational programmes under the Investment for growth and jobs goal but also, where relevant, to programmes under the European Territorial Cooperation goal.

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 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**

⁵¹ European Commission (2012b), p.41

⁵² Council of the European Union (2013a)

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 end of sub-section 1.1.2,⁵³ 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 Policy Learning Projects under all IP-descriptions of Section 2.⁵⁴ Although this widening is not foreseen by the EU-level definition of the programme’s role, we consider this expansion beyond the Cohesion Policy programmes as being useful and appropriate. This is because INTERREG EUROPE will anyway mainly focus on the EU-level programmes and because there are also some pertinent reasons supporting an adoption of this wider perspective ([see: Box 2](#)).

Box 2:
Reasons for widening the strategic target audience under INTERREG EUROPE

By feeding in relevant practices and experiences from regions across Europe, and preparing their implementation through these Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes in the participating regions, the pace and quality of implementation of these programmes can be further enhanced. This approach will give a high degree of focus to the programme, necessary to ensure sufficient impact and EU-wide relevance of the results. 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, considering 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 EU regions (INTERREG IVC Programme, 2013k, p.10).

In a later stage of the programme period it may become more difficult for projects to establish a meaningful link to Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes, and the requirements related to the 2nd phase may need to be adapted for Projects approved after 2016. Those Projects might also link in with the preparation of Cohesion Policy programmes for the period 2021-2027 (INTERREG IVC Programme, 2013k, p.22).

Under section 6 of the programme document, **the relations of INTERREG EUROPE to other ETC-Programmes** (cross-border, transnational, interregional) **are appropriately specified through clear provisions on mutual cooperation and coordination:**

- 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 (...)*. This will be done in close articulation with the activities developed under the INTERACT III programme and on ground of operational prescriptions which shall avoid potential overlaps with cross-

⁵³ “The opportunity for INTERREG EUROPE: Policy learning in support of the Europe 2020 Strategy”: The needs analysis shows that European regions are dealing with a wide range of policy issues related to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. (...) Through their own regional policies and strategies, the regions of Europe can make an important contribution to the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. (...) 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. INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.10

⁵⁴ 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.*

border and transnational programmes and a double financing of activities.⁵⁵

- 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.*⁵⁶

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.⁵⁷

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 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 4](#)). This “outcome map” includes the Priority Axes and the different types of action as well as the

⁵⁵ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.67

⁵⁶ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.68. 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.

⁵⁷ European Commission (2013a), p.7

assumptions underlying their specific activities and depicts the causal links in relation to the various types of intended changes⁵⁸ that tend to occur in the short- and medium-term. If this outcome map is summarised in a very simplified manner, then a **“pathway of change” with three basic levels emerges:**

The “Policy Learning Platforms” and “Policy Learning Projects” create changes at the level of the directly involved staff members of regional-level actors and also within the programme itself in terms of greater awareness/knowledge & improved skills/capacities...

... so that ...

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

... so that ...

... more or better results are achieved by improved regional policies and programmes which reinforce the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy and allow to better delivering the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth priorities of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

We now examine if the basic assumptions underlying this pathway of change and also the identified causal links are sufficiently realistic and robust, mainly to see if INTERREG EUROPE can actually reach the targeted outputs (1st level), the intended results and the overall programme objective (2nd level) and thus also make its expected contribution to the final goal of interregional cooperation under ETC (3rd level).

The main assumption underlying an achievement of changes at the first level is that the activities realised by Policy Learning Platforms and Policy Learning Projects are directly inducing individual learning and different forms of collective learning processes, which then also generate substantial changes at the level of the directly involved staff members of regional-level actors and also within the INTERREG EUROPE Programme itself (e.g. greater awareness/knowledge & improved skills/capacities). In our view **this assumption and also the causal link is realistic and robust for both types of action**, especially if one looks at 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.⁵⁹

The main assumption underlying an achievement of changes at second and third levels is that the outcomes achieved at the 1st level trigger further policy-relevant actions which are undertaken more or less independently by partner organisations involved in Projects and by other organisations of regional relevance from across the EU participating in the Platforms. This assumption **is in general fairly realistic for both types of action**, but the **significance of the causal relationships is different in both cases** and also depending upon the existence of some important basic requirements.

In case of the **Policy Learning Platforms**, it is indeed fairly realistic to assume that a greater

⁵⁸ By using this formulation, we acknowledge that even more outcomes/changes can emerge (e.g. unintended outcomes) which, however, cannot all be included into our programme-wide outcome map.

⁵⁹ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013a)

awareness/knowledge and the improved skills/capacities of staff from regional-level actors from across Europe (i.e. intended outcome at the 1st 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 2nd level). For this to happen, however, the regional-level actors must already have appropriate core capacities in place and also need to succeed in creating new capacities: they should dispose of routines and processes which allow them to integrate the “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) and they also have to initiate themselves organisational-internal and often even inter-organisational learning processes in order to develop new or better designed policy approaches, measures and projects for their own regional policies and programmes. Only if these important preconditions are met, then one can also realistically expect that more and/or better results are achieved by the improved regional policies and programmes, which then reinforce the effectiveness of EU Cohesion Policy and ensure a better delivery of the Europe 2020 Strategy (i.e. intended 3rd level outcomes). Overall, however, it can be observed that the significance of causality in relation to the induced outcomes quickly becomes smaller when moving downwards this pathway of change. In other words, this means that the “direct ownership” of INTERREG EUROPE with respect to the changes induced further on decreases, as they are influenced and leveraged through actions that are largely out of the direct control of the programme.

In case of the **Policy Learning Projects**, the general assumptions made for achieving changes at the 2nd level are realistic and well supported by the findings of the recent INTERREG IVC study analysing the exchange of experience process. Also a solid causality relation exists between a greater awareness/knowledge and improved skills/capacities of staff or organisations directly involved in the projects (i.e. intended outcome at the 1st level) and an increased availability of newly developed or better designed policy measures/approaches through the regional Action Plans elaborated at the end of project phase 1 which, however, becomes somewhat more blurry with respect to the actual improvement of regional policies and Growth and Jobs/ETC programmes at the end of project phase 2 (intended 2nd level outcomes). This “break” in the overall causality chain results from the weak description of the phase 2 activities, as it does not provide information on how the INTERREG EUROPE projects can directly impact on the next step of change (or probably only indirectly influence it?). Due to this, we strongly advise that the current phase 2 activities of the Projects are better described and also that new activities which aim at framing or even pro-actively supporting organisational and inter-organisational policy learning processes in the involved project partner regions are envisaged. The assumptions for a transition to the intended 3rd level outcomes is again fairly realistic, because 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.

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.).

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 5](#)) on ground of which a complete table-based logical framework for IP 1(a) and SO 1 was subsequently drawn up ([see: Annex 6](#)). From the summary analysis of this table-based framework, one can **draw the following overall conclusions which also apply – mutatis mutandis – 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 & Policy Learning Projects) will lead to the expected outputs and that these outputs contribute to the intended result, which in turn allows achieving the specific programme objectives SO 1.

With respect to the **basic assumptions** that are **underlying the future implementation** (i.e. implicitly considered or explicitly formulated by the programme stakeholders), one can conclude as follows: The assumptions at each level of the IP 1(a)-intervention strategy **are in general valid**, which is either backed up by the details provided by the programme description or supported by other evidence (i.e. experience from the previous funding period, specific studies on interregional cooperation). However, **there are still some shortcomings that should be addressed:**

- The “main target groups” of the Projects and the “beneficiaries” of the Platforms are not yet sufficiently described. The current “target group” of IP 1(a) projects is only a specification of the “beneficiaries” (i.e. those being eligible to participate as partners in projects), but it does not cover other public or private bodies and organisations/structures or groups of persons which are intentionally affected a project. For the Platforms, no beneficiaries are mentioned who will be responsible for initiating the operation (e.g. in our view the INTERREG EUROPE Programme) and also implementing the operation (e.g. in our view the contracted consultancies or bodies actually developing & running the Platforms on behalf of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme).
- The activities for phase 2 of the Policy Learning Project are still weakly described by the programme document (i.e. only “monitoring & analysis of Action Plan results” and “pilot actions”). Our “theory of change” has clearly shown that the successful implementation of the action plans constitutes a crucial step in the programmes’ pathway of change towards reaching the overall programme objective. At this point, however, we also observed a certain “break” in the overall causality chain. Should the weak description of these phase 2 actions persist at the level of the individual IPs, then this can allow questioning the projects’ real influence on policy/programme improvements and thus also their actual contribution to the intended result and ultimately to the specific programme objective (e.g. by future evaluations etc.).

With respect to **potential risks** that might exist at different levels of the IP-intervention strategy, 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 related to most of the chosen IP-themes. **In the specific case of IP 1(a)**, however, the lack of previous experience in supporting projects that address “research and innovation infrastructure and capacities” might indeed represent minor potential implementation risk at all levels of the IP 1(a)-intervention strategy.⁶⁰ This aspect should already be addressed “preventively” by providing better examples for potential projects in the programme document and also be carefully followed up later on during the implementation process. **Finally**, in this wider context, it should also not be forgotten that the **“Policy Learning Platforms” are a novelty** for which no prior experience does exist. But 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.

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. Potential themes are e.g.

...policies & programmes which aim to developing world-class research (and ICT infrastructure), building on existing regional scientific excellence.

...policies & programmes which aim to establish networks of research facilities for less research intensive regions.

...policies & programmes which aim to developing research & excellence on some major societal challenges (climate change, energy and resource efficiency, raw material scarcity and demographic ageing) which make a co-ordinated approach at EU level necessary in order to find and deploy effective solutions.

Despite the above-observed shortcomings and the potential risks observed, we can conclude **that the causal links**, relating the different elements of the IP 1(a)-intervention strategy with the implementation assumptions and potential risks, **are still sufficiently robust to ensure that the specific programme objective SO 1 can be attained**. As a consequence of this, one can also expect that a positive change in relation to some of the interregional challenges and needs identified for the Europe 2020 field of action “Innovation” (i.e. those relating to IP 1a) can be generated and that the chosen intervention strategy thereby contributes to the achievement of the thematic objective of Priority Axis 1, which is to strengthen research, technological development and innovation (TO 1).

⁶⁰ 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-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 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.

3.5. The horizontal EU-principles

This part appraises to what extent the specific objectives and types of action of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020 will 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.

During the programme design stage, the three horizontal EU-principles were considered quite differently by the “initial scoping of needs and challenges”.⁶¹ 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.⁶² A quite different situation can be observed for the principle of promoting sustainable development, as a larger number of related core issues were assessed and most often also from a regional-territorial perspective.⁶³

For the appraisal we have reviewed the specific section of the programme document dedicated to the three horizontal EU-principles (Section 8), but also the detailed descriptions of the four priority axes (Section 2).

Promoting equal opportunities & preventing discrimination

Our review of the INTERREG EUROPE strategy shows that **most of the specific programme objectives (SO 1, SO 2, SO 4-6) and their related types of action do not consider the principles of promoting equal opportunities between men and women and of preventing discrimination and will also not actively support their concrete application.**

For those cases, however, **the indeed widespread non-consideration and non-application is adequate** and can be justified by the following two reasons:

- 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.*⁶⁴
- Secondly, the related types of action under these specific programme objectives do not entail an evident risk of discrimination and especially the Policy Learning 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 in the context of SO 3, which aims to improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes (esp. programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs

⁶¹ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013b)

⁶² 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.

⁶³ 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.

⁶⁴ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.72

Programmes and ETC-programmes, where relevant) supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop and achieve growth and engage in innovation, **both principles are indirectly considered and it is also likely that they will be actively supported in their concrete application.**

This indirect 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.⁶⁵ As a consequence, the description of IP 3(d) and 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.*⁶⁶ Finally, also the descriptions under sections 8.2 and 8.3 highlight that both principles are considered this way under SO 3.

As far as a potential active support to the concrete application of both principles is concerned, the clearest references can again be found in the descriptions under sections 8.2 and 8.3: Under SO 3 (...) *it is anticipated that certain Policy Learning Projects may emerge that focus on, or at least incorporate the equal opportunities principle (...) and that projects (...) could for instance address the issue of promoting entrepreneurship among specific target groups at risk of discrimination (e.g. unemployed youth, elderly persons, 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 operational programme document. (...) Moreover, it is also not unlikely that Policy Learning Projects under SO 3 (...) 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 operational programme document.*⁶⁷

For both horizontal principles, however, no specific selection criteria are foreseen under SO 3 to favour the development of projects dealing with these issues. Yet, project applicants will be invited (...) *to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen gender equality (...) or (...) equal opportunities and non-discrimination.*⁶⁸

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 the specific aspects which are related to the sustainable development principle** (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.

⁶⁵ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.7

⁶⁶ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.29

⁶⁷ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.72 & 73. The “specific objective 2.1” corresponds – according to our numbering – to SO3.

⁶⁸ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.72

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. During the previous steps of the ex-ante evaluation, however, we have already made a number of concrete suggestions which could help to further improving the situation for these three objectives.⁶⁹

The above-shown dual situation is clearly described under section 8.1 of the programme document and also a potentially stronger contribution of the specific programme objectives SO 1-3 to sustainable development is explicitly acknowledged as follows: *This may for instance be the case for R&D and innovation related projects that focus on capacities and skills for eco-innovation, or projects that concentrate on the internationalisation of SMEs in green technology sectors.*⁷⁰

However, the INTERREG EUROPE Programme does not adopt a more pro-active approach to promoting sustainable development under SO 1-3, because (...) *no specific selection criteria are foreseen to favour the development of projects dealing with this issue (...)*⁷¹ and also no specific project examples are included in the lists under the descriptions of SO 1-3 which can supporting sustainable development (Section 2.A). Instead, a more passive but largely adequate solution is foreseen which ensures that at least the likely contribution of projects under SO 1-3 to promoting sustainable development can be appraised: *Project applicants under these Priority Axes will be invited to explain in their application how their project will comply with and possibly even strengthen sustainable development.*⁷²

⁶⁹ 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.

⁷⁰ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.72

⁷¹ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.72

⁷² INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.72

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 Structural Funds programmes, which 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, and the new roles given to monitoring and programme-level evaluation.⁷³

This new approach significantly changes the way how programme indicators and the programme-level arrangements for monitoring and evaluation will have to be designed, which represents especially European Territorial Cooperation programmes an evident challenge. The ex-ante evaluation of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 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. suitability of procedures, adequacy of human and administrative capacity) and for evaluation (i.e. basic provisions, types of evaluation envisaged).

4.1. Programme indicator system

This chapter 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

⁷³ European Commission (2012c); European Commission (2013a); European Commission (2013b)

other words, programme result indicators should cover a dimension of the result which programme intervention could influence and which can be measured and captured.

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

	Specific Objectives	Output Indicators	Result Indicators
Axis 1	Priority Axis 1 (TO1) Strengthening research, technological development and innovation		
	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Action Plans in the field of research and innovation infrastructures developed - Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of research and innovation infrastructures. - Share of all European regions (NUTS2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1. - Number of policy learning events in the field of research and innovation infrastructures organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of [research and innovation infrastructures] as a result of INTERREG EUROPE - Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of [research and innovation infrastructures] with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE
	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Action Plans in the field of innovation delivery developed - Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of innovation delivery. - Share of all European regions (NUTS2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1. - Number of policy learning events in the field of innovation delivery organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of the delivery of innovation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE - Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of the delivery of innovation with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE
Axis 2	3 - Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs		
	SO3 - 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"> - Number of Action Plans in the field of entrepreneurship & SME support developed - Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of entrepreneurship & SME support. - Share of all European regions (NUTS2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2. - Number of policy learning events in the field of entrepreneurship & SME support organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 2. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of SME growth and entrepreneurship as a result of INTERREG EUROPE - Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of SME growth and entrepreneurship with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE

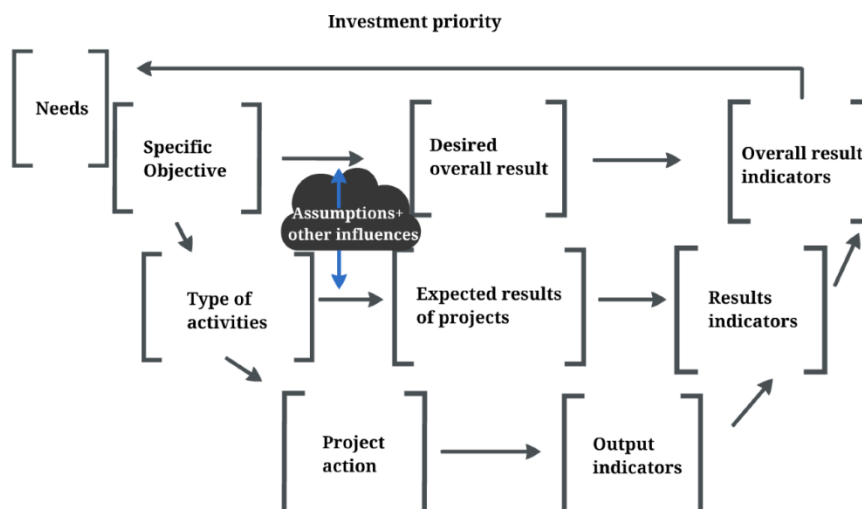
	Specific Objectives	Output Indicators	Result Indicators
Axis 3	4 - Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors		
	SO4 - Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes, in particular programmes for Investment for Growth and Jobs and, where relevant, ETC programmes, addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Action Plans in the field of low-carbon economy developed - Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of low-carbon economy. - Share of all European regions (NUTS2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 3. - Number of policy learning events in the field of low-carbon economy organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of low carbon economy as a result of INTERREG EUROPE - Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of low carbon economy with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE
Axis 4	6 - Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency		
	SO5 - 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Action Plans in the field of natural and cultural heritage developed - Number of people with increased professional capacity due to their participation in interregional cooperation activities in the field of natural and cultural heritage. - Share of all European regions (NUTS2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4. - Number of policy learning events in the field of natural and cultural heritage organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of <i>protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</i> as a result of INTERREG EUROPE - Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of <i>protection and development of natural and cultural heritage</i> with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE
	SO6 - 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of Action Plans in the field of resource efficiency and eco-innovation and environmental performance management developed - 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. - Share of all European regions (NUTS2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4. - Number of policy learning events in the field of eco-innovation and environmental performance management organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 4. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of <i>resource efficiency</i> as a result of INTERREG EUROPE - Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of <i>resource efficiency</i> with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE

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 7](#).

Figure 2: Model for checking the logic of the indicators



The 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.

Overall, **the output indicators are relevant** and allow to link outputs with the results and thus the change measured by the result indicators. Although, the output indicators are not meant to cover all possible outputs of a programme, the proposed output indicators are defined in a way that they do not cover all activities supported. The proposed indicators do not cover 'phase 2' activities of the Policy Learning Projects. The rationale for this is that the real output of 'phase 2' activities is either 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.

Recommendation no. 4: A relevant output 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')*.

The **logic and usability of the two types of result indicators are clear** and will contribute to a meaningful monitoring of the programme. For each specific objective one result indicator addresses directly the main result envisaged by the programme, i.e. targets the improvement of Growth & Jobs Programmes in the field addressed by the specific objective. Overall, the proposed result indicators have a rather narrow definition as they focus exclusively on results of the programme and do not cover other factors that can influence the wider results. This has

certainly advantages, but brings about also some challenges as discussed further down. Furthermore, basing the result indicators on surveys an appropriate approach given the types of results envisaged by the programme and requires also considerable efforts as regards the development of the survey and the identification of the stakeholders to be addressed. Also this will be further discussed later on.

The clarity of the proposed programme indicators

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

In general all four proposed **output indicators** are coherent. However, there are a few considerations to be made:

- Number of Action Plans developed (...): The indicator is coherent. Nevertheless, a clearer definition of the what is considered as “Action Plan” and as “developed” would make the meaning and the monitoring more precise.
- Number of people with increased professional capacity (...): The indicator seems coherent. However, also here the main point is to further clarify how “increased professional capacity” is defined and measured.
- Share of all European regions (NUTS2) registered to the policy Learning Platform (...): This indicator is coherent, although the alternative presented in an early version of the draft OP was maybe more appealing “Share of NUTS2 regions making use of the policy learning platform”.
- Number of policy learning events (...): The indicator is coherent.

Recommendation no. 5: The current output indicators should undergo a final review, while taking into account the above-made considerations.

Likewise, the two proposed types of **result indicators** are clearly defined and coherent. However a clear identification of the source of data is missing, this includes missing information on the content of the survey and the definition of the target groups. In section 4.2 this will be elaborated on further.

Recommendation no. 6: For the final programme version, include a clear identification of the source of data under the result indicators.

The quantified baseline and target values

The **targets of the output indicators seem to be realistic** and seem to strike a balance between ambitious and achievable and seem also to reflect the difference in allocation of the budget over the priority areas. However, the draft final Programme does not give clear indications on how these targets have been defined, though the figures suggest that they are

based on similar or past experience as well as own reflections.

The two **result indicators** measure the contribution to improvements of policies and programmes between 2014 and 2020. To actually measure the result of the programme (rather than changes in policy making in general) the result indicators specifically refer to INTERREG EUROPE and not interregional or territorial cooperation in general. This focus of the contribution by INTERREG EUROPE also implies that the baseline is 0, as the programme has not yet made any contribution to improving the implementation of the programmes, projects and policies, which it targets.

Whereas the rationale provided for a zero-baseline is understandable and serves a better focus of the result indicators, it has to be underlined that this is likely to be questioned and perhaps not accepted by the Commission. The same can be said about the narrow focus of the result indicator on the contribution of INTERREG EUROPE singling out other factors in the result indicator (see also definition of result indicators provided above).

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.

In addition, to assess positively the future evaluability of the impact (contribution of the Programme to the result indicator change), it is advised to focus the questions in the survey on contributions and impacts from different factors (e.g. territorial cooperation in general and INTERREG EUROPE in particular) and also to define different types of contributions in the survey. This would allow evaluating in the future the potential differences between the two impacts.

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.

The suitability of milestones

The draft final version of the Programme does only mention milestones for the output indicator “Number of developed Action Plans (...)”. The milestone is to have 40% of the Actions Plans (512 Action Plans) developed by 2018. At the same time 80% of the financial resources should be committed. The milestones are relevant and realistic.

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.

Measurability and quality 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 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 project questionnaire and collection procedures in the future work. As outlined above, also for other output indicators, more clarity in the definition would be beneficial.

Likewise the result indicator “*Share of regional policies and programmes (...) with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE*” lacks a clear defined method for information collection. Especially the definition of the surveys target group (“representative sample of NUTS2 regions”) is imprecise. We therefore again recommend for the future work, to put emphasis on the design and collection procedure of the survey.

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.

Collection method

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.

The proposed result indicators will be collected using a survey. This survey will be carried out in 2014, 2018, 2020 and 2022. A survey is a good tool to test the sharing of practices and policy learning of individual and organisations and thereby monitoring the progress of the 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.

A clear definition of the target groups and clearly formulated questions should be elaborated when the survey will be implemented. Therefore it is recommended that the operational

programme or more likely an additional document (Indicator or Monitoring Manual) should 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 (qualitative values, Lickert scale, or other). This is especially important in this case, since there is obviously no official data source for the indicator estimation.

Monitoring provisions

Given the character of the programme it is recommended that the monitoring will not only focus on the output and result indicators presented in the Programme but also consider the collection of relevant indicators which are located in-between output and result indicators. This has e.g. been discussed in relation to the issue of relevant outputs indicators of 'phase 2' actions. To ensure that a suitable monitoring system is built up, the work needs to start rather swiftly after the finalisation of the Programme.

Furthermore, the necessary administrative and financial provisions for monitoring data collecting need to be made. As the draft final Programme does not provides information on following points below, no serious assessment of this can be made at present:

- Role of the relevant partners in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme.
- applicable programme implementation conditions governing the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control of the participation of third countries in interregional programmes through a contribution of ENI and IPA resources.

(Final appraisal to be elaborated)

5. Appraisal of the programme's financial allocations

This part of the ex-ante evaluation appraises the consistency of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme's allocation of budgetary resources. Due to the specificity of INTERREG EUROPE, only two of the general evaluation questions need to be taken into consideration:

- (1) Is the allocation of the financial programme resources in line with the provisions as set out by the EU-Regulations (esp. Article 16 CPR-Regulation, Article 5 ETC-Regulation)?
- (2) Are the financial allocations to each priority axis and to categories of interventions concentrating on the most important objectives (and actions), 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, 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

Consistently with what is required by Article 87 (2) (d) (ii) of the CPR-Regulation and by Article 7 (2) (d) (ii) of the ETC-Regulation, the INTERREG EUROPE Programme specifies for each priority axis the amount of the total financial appropriation (i.e. tables 3.2.A and 3.2.B).

Article 5 (2) of the draft ETC-Regulation imposes no specific limitation to the interregional cooperation programmes as regards the number of Thematic Objectives (TOs) which have to be selected from the 11 TOs listed under Article 9 of the draft CPR-Regulation.

However, the Partner States of INTERREG EUROPE have agreed to apply the concentration principle to programme strategy and 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.

The € 359.326.000 of ERDF-funding available to INTERREG EUROPE are distributed as follows among five priority axes: 94% of this total funding is distributed in equal shares among the four thematic Priority Axes (PA 1-4), each of which covers only one TO, and 6% are allocated to Technical Assistance (PA 5).

If one considers the deliberately adopted concentration and the proposed financial allocation to the four thematic PAs (TOs), one can conclude that the INTERREG EUROPE Programme "over-complies" to the requirements 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 and related actions 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 strategy and the related types of action (i.e. Policy Learning Projects & Policy Learning Platforms).

Table 3: Consistency of the financial programme resources

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		
Priority Axis 1: Research, technological development & innovation	+++ (“Innovation”)	+++ (SO 1 & SO 2)	25%	Consistent
Priority Axis 2: Competitiveness of small & medium sized enterprises	+++ (“Competitiveness”)	+++ (SO 3)	25%	Consistent
Priority Axis 3: Low carbon economy	+++ (“Clean & efficient energy”)	+++ (SO 4)	25%	Consistent
Priority Axis 4: Environment & resource efficiency	+++ (“Combating climate change”)	+++ (SO 5 & SO 6)	25%	Consistent
(*) For further details, see also section 3.1 and Annex 2				

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

According to the draft CPR-Regulation for the EU Cohesion Policy in the period 2014-2020, there is a broad consensus among stakeholders that different structural policies should contribute to achieving the common objectives, headline targets and flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Whereas previous parts of the evaluation 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 section focuses on appraising the actual contribution of the programme to the following two main aspects:

- (1) What is the likely contribution of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme to achieving the common objectives, headline targets and flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy?
- (2) What is the likely contribution of the INTERREG EUROPE 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 Goal 1 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 the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 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 objectives from 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 target towards smart and sustainable growth.
- There are only smaller contributions to the inclusive growth objective.
- 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 sustainable growth.
- Sustainable growth has a focus on climate and business. The specific objectives address both these aspects, i.e. SO 3 mainly addressing 'strong business climate aspect' and SO 4 and SO 6 mainly addressing 'impacts for climate change'.
- SO 5 seems to be highly focused on some specific parts under sustainable growth; 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 objectives.
- 'Harnessing EU-scale networks' and 'improving business environment' are well covered thematic actions by the all specific objectives.

To conclude, while considering the character and focus (as defined in the regulations) as well as the overall capacity of the programme, **INTERREG EUROPE offers an indirect potential (rather than a direct potential) for contributing to an achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy**. In other words, the programme helps merely other policies and programmes to increase their contribution to the Europe 2020 objectives. The overall contribution to the Europe 2020 Strategy can be described as follows:

- The programme brings about **more indirect contributions to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**. It does so by supporting cooperation between European regions and by offering an opportunity for policy learning and transfer of good practices, thus creating added value to European regions. In doing so, the programme can assist the regions in improving their own regional development policies and in enhancing the effectiveness of their Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes. The primary focus on such indirect contributions can be justified by the specific nature and scope of the programme.
- **The specific programme objectives 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).

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)

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 again 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**.

7. Appraisal of the programme's implementation provisions and of the requirements for programme-level partnership

Cohesion Policy programmes with a much stronger orientation on results need to have adequate administrative capacity and human resources for their day-to-day management and operational delivery, but also efficient procedures and structures to ensure a smooth decision-making at the strategic level. This is particularly relevant for ETC-Programmes because they have to cope, different to the regional- or national-level Growth and Jobs Programmes, also with complexity resulting out of the cooperative dimension.

Against this wider background, our appraisal of the delivery mechanisms and structures of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme will therefore mainly focus on the following three main evaluation questions:

- (1) Considering the experiences from the previous funding period (INTERREG IVC 2007-2013), are there any persisting bottlenecks which might also impede the management and delivery of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme?
- (2) Are the management structures and the programme delivery mechanisms in line with what is required by the EU-Regulations and also appropriate to ensure a smooth and sound management of the programme?
- (3) Does INTERREG EUROPE comply with the regulatory requirements on programme-level partnership?

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

Experiences from the previous INTERREG IVC Programme

The mid-term evaluation for the INTERREG IVC Programme of 2010⁷⁴ and its update of 2013⁷⁵ highlighted a number of important features of and also shortcomings in the programme management, implementation and decision-making system that are worth considering before the provisions for the new funding period 2014-2020 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 still observed in the IPs' task-delivery process. The overall performance of the National Contact Points (NCPs) was also largely 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

⁷⁴ INTERREG IVC Programme (2010a), pp.8-9, 41-62, 70-81

⁷⁵ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013I), pp.10-12, 53-64

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 Programme 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. 2nd 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.).
- As regards 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 and thus deserve careful attention. 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 in the internal rules of procedures of the MC. 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 in the current implementation provisions. A good performance of the Policy Learning 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.

Provisions on management, implementation and decision-making

The implementation provisions for INTERREG EUROPE are extensively described in Section 5 of the programme document, although they are still subject to a review by the Managing Authority's legal services which may result in further modifications of the current text in the draft final programme version.

Sub-section 5.1 identifies the bodies acting as Managing Authority (MA), Certifying Authority (CA), Audit Authority (AA) and Joint Secretariat (JS), defines in detail the tasks of each of the bodies including the Monitoring Committee (MC) and also describes the relations between the different bodies in the various processes necessary for programme implementation.

The current description under sub-section 5.1 **fully complies with the general requirements of the ETC-Regulation** as laid down in Article 7 (4) (a) on the implementing provisions for the cooperation programme and in Article 7 (4) (b) on the body to which payments will be made by the Commission. Moreover, **the description also fulfils to a large extent the content-related expectations** which were set out by the instructions given in an earlier version of the template for ETC-Programmes (Version 2 of May 2013). The text describes

- briefly the setting-up of the Joint Secretariat, because 2007-2013 arrangements for the JTS were kept;
- in detail the role and tasks of the MA, the JS, the CA (not yet fully completed), 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 both the monitoring at programme and project level as well as the provisions on programme-level evaluation;

- the computerised exchange of data;
- in detail 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 managing authority/certifying authority to the lead partners);
- the Programme's information and communication activities;
- in detail the apportionment of liabilities among the participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority 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.

Only with respect to the organisation of audits, a final verification of the current description should be realised. The relevant paragraph highlights that the EU-Member States and Norway agree (...) *that the audit authority will not be authorised to carry out directly the audit functions in the whole territory of the INTERREG EUROPE programme. As a consequence of this, the audit authority will be assisted by a group of auditors comprising a representative of each EU-Member State and Norway participating in the cooperation programme carrying out the duties provided for in Article 116 of Regulation (EU) No [...] /2013 [CPR].*⁷⁶ For these cases, the instructions in the template for ETC-Programmes require that a description of “how the coordination among the members of the group of auditors is organised” is provided. The current programme text indeed describes who shall be responsible for the audits and who will be entitled to participate in decision-making within the group of auditors or how the group of auditors is organised (i.e. own rules of procedure), but not yet how the coordination among the members of the group is organised.

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.

Requirements for programme-level partnership

The present section examines whether the INTERREG EUROPE Programme complies with the prescription of Article 7 (4) (c) of the ETC-Regulation. This article requires cooperation programmes to identify the actions taken to involve the partners referred to in Article 5 (1) of the draft CPR-Regulation⁷⁷ in the preparation of the cooperation programme, and the role of these partners in the preparation and implementation of the cooperation programme, including their involvement in the monitoring committee.

Sub-section 5.2 is not yet fully elaborated and will be completed only in the final version of the programme document, based on public consultation modalities agreed. **(Final appraisal of public consultation & partnership to be elaborated)**

⁷⁶ INTERREG IVC Programme (2013k), p.59

⁷⁷ i.e. 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.

Annexes

Annex 1
First appraisal of the programme strategy: summary of conclusions & recommendations
(Ex-ante evaluation, 2nd 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 2nd 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 - nearby 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 (Consistency)										
Consideration of the identified challenges & needs by the specific programme objectives										
The Programme objectives consider the identified & weighted EU-wide challenges/needs & interregional cooperation potentials								
		Smart Growth: (weight given to “fields of action” in the situation analysis)			Sustainable Growth: (weight given to “fields of action” in the situation analysis)			Inclusive Growth: (weight given to “fields of action” in the situation analysis)		
Priority Axis (PA) & Thematic Objective (TO)	Specific Objective (SO)	Innovation	Education, training and lifelong learning	Digital Society	Competitive- ness	Combating climate change	Clean and efficient energy	Employment	Skills	Fighting Poverty
		(High)	(Low)	(Medium)	(High)	(High)	(High)	(Medium)	(Medium/Low)	(Low/No)
PA 1: Research, Technological Development and Innovation TO 1: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	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
	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	0
PA 2: Competitiveness of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises TO 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs	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	+++	++	++	++	0	+
PA 3: Low Carbon Economy TO 4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors	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.	0	0	0	0	+	+++	0	0	0
PA 4: Environment and Resource Efficiency TO 6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	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	+++	0	0	0	0
	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.	++	0	0	++	+++	+	0	0	0
Appraisal: +++ = Extensive and strong direct consideration ++ = Focussed and strong direct consideration + = Weak indirect consideration 0 = No consideration										

Annex 3 (Internal Coherence) Assumptions on “key synergies” existing within the programme strategy					
Expected results under the Specific Objectives Priority Axis & related Types of Action (*)	PA 1 - SO 1: 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.	PA 1 - SO 2: 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.	PA 2 - SO 3: 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.	PA 3 - SO 4: 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.	PA 4 - SO 6: 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.
PA 1 - Policy Learning Projects (SO 1) 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).
PA 1 - Policy Learning Projects (SO 2) 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).
PA 1 - Policy Learning Platform (SO 1 & 2) 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).
PA 2 - Policy Learning Projects (SO 3) 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).
PA 2 - Policy Learning Platform (SO 3) 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).
PA 3 - Policy Learning Projects (SO 4) 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).		-
PA 3 - Policy Learning Platform (SO 4) 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).		
PA 4 - Policy Learning Projects (SO 6) 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).	-	
PA 4 - Policy Learning Platform (SO 5 & 6) 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).	-	

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

→ **Policy Learning Projects:** 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&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&J, ETC) programme.

→ **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 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 Policy Learning 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.

Annex 4 (Intervention Logic)

A “theory of change for INTERREG EUROPE: Basic elements & outcome map

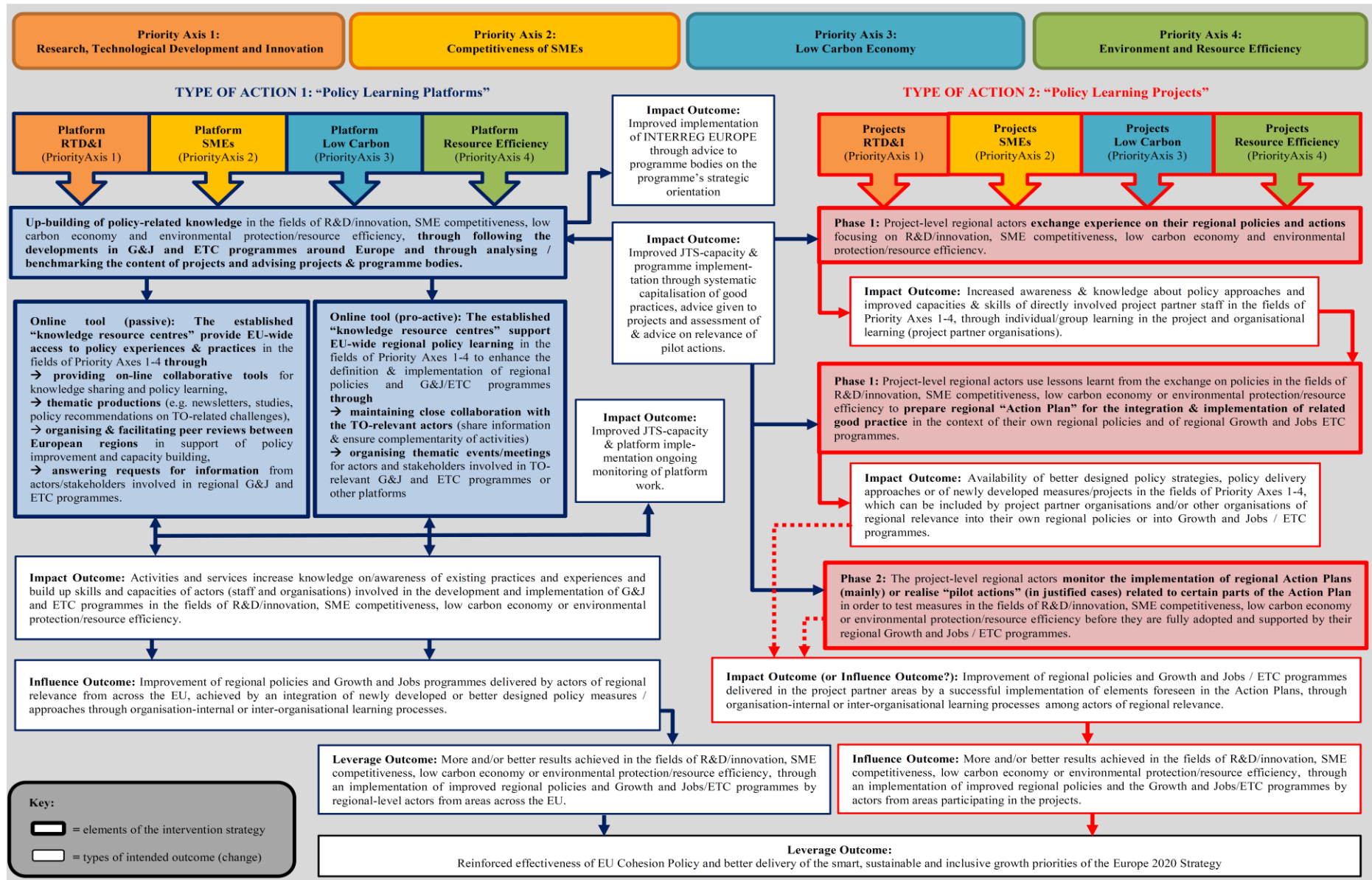
A theory of change differs from a logical model in so far that it describes a process of planned social change while taking (...) *a wide view of a desired change and carefully probing the assumptions behind each step in what may be a long and complex process* (...). This often entails thinking through 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 the 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 **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.) to be 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 5 (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

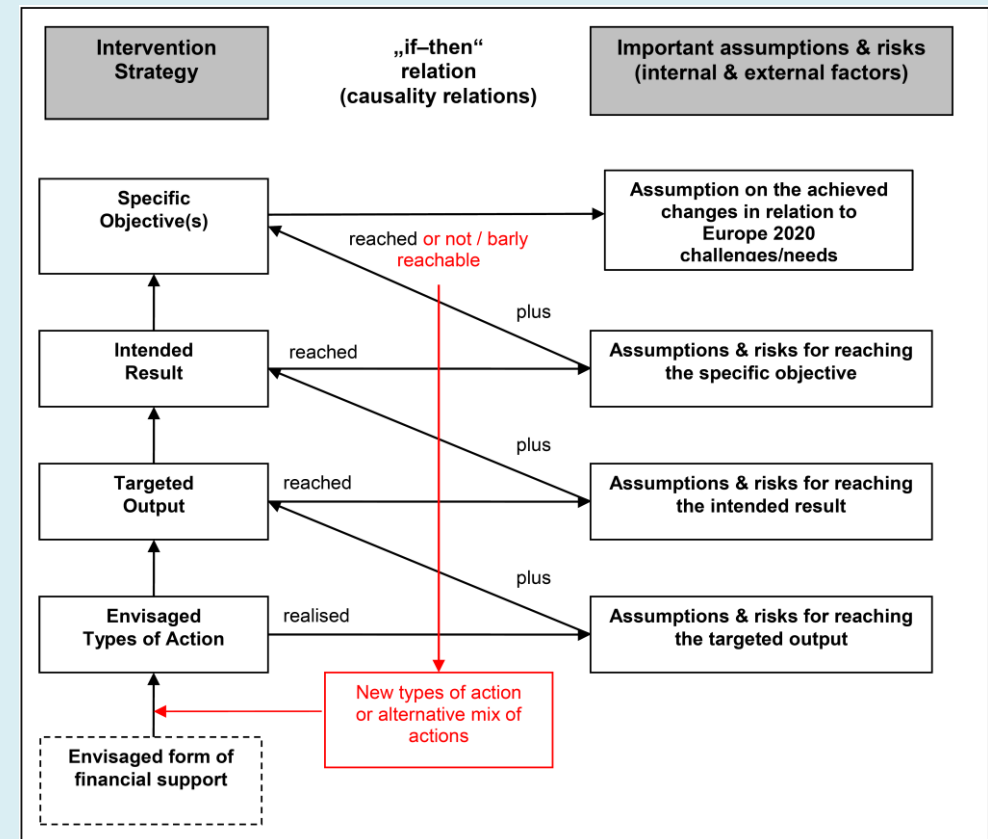
On the **left-hand side**, the different elements of the IP-intervention strategy are shown. For the statements and descriptions, text was directly drawn from the INTERREG EUROPE Programme. The intervention strategy shows – in a vertical upstream logic – what the IP intends to do, by establishing a relationship 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 evidence (text) from the programme document 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 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 relation 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 6 (Intervention Logic) Tabular logical framework drawn up for Investment Priority 1(a): <i>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 ...</i>			
Intervention Strategy		"if-then"	Basic assumptions on future support & assessment of potential risks (in red = evaluator assessment of assumptions & risks)
Specific Objective (SO)	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.	→	Assumption: The achieved specific objective generates a positive change in relation to the interregional challenges and needs identified by the Programme for this field of action of the Europe 2020 Strategy (Yes). 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 and innovation infrastructures will enable regions to accelerate and improve the implementation of their regional growth policies.
Intended Result	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. Result indicators: (1) Share of Growth & Jobs and ETC programmes with improved implementation in the field of [research and innovation infrastructures] as a result of INTERREG EUROPE. (2) Share of regional policies and programmes in the field of [research and innovation infrastructures] with improved implementation as a result of INTERREG EUROPE	↕	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 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. Assumption: The effects induced by the intended results (short-, medium- or long-term, direct or indirect) allow achieving the specific objective (Yes). As a result the (Policy Learning) 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. As a result these actors ... (connected to the Policy Learning Platform) ...will be able to improve the implementation of their programmes. The improvements of the implementation of G&J, ETC and other regional programmes can take place at different levels, notably: (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) and (c) a change in the strategic focus of the programme/policy (e.g. modification of a specific objective, integration of a new policy aim). This 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More effective management of research infrastructure - Better match between education curriculum and needs from innovative companies - Optimisation of public investment in R&I infrastructures - Increase attraction of region for researchers - Linking international research and innovation partners (also outside EU) - Stronger participation in Horizon 2020 projects ("Stairway to excellence")
Targeted Output	Policy Learning Projects: 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	↕	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 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.

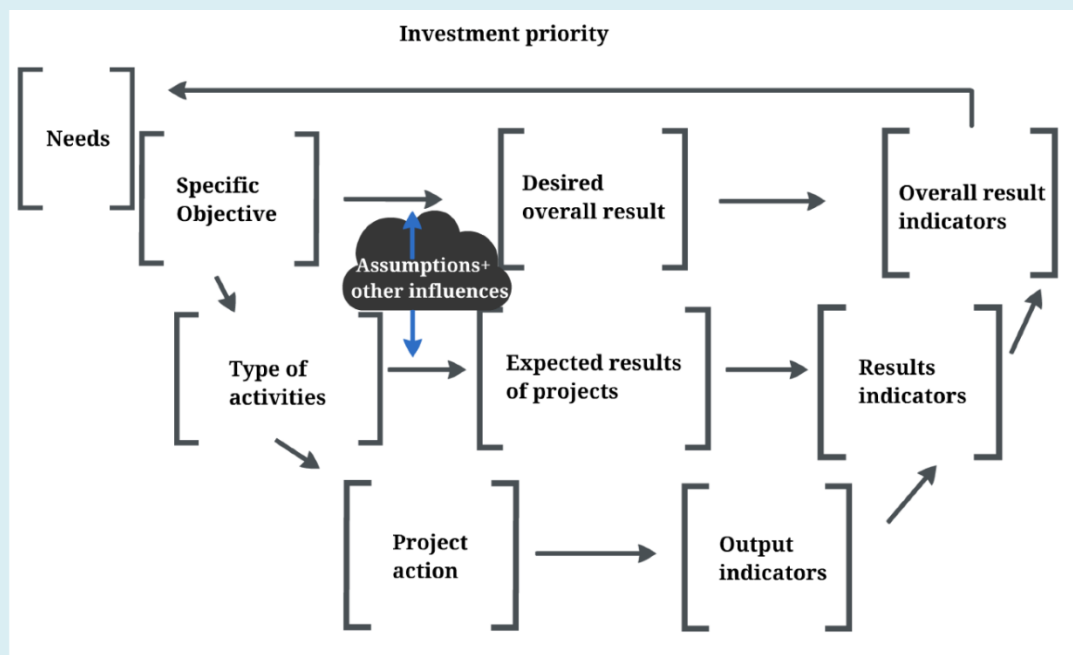
	<p>regional policies and actions by developing concrete Action Plans for each partner region.</p> <p>Policy Learning Platform: The Platform for this priority ... (will deliver) ... activities and services that enable policy learning in the field of infrastructures and capacities for research and innovation. 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&J and ETC programmes in this field.</p> <p>Output indicators:</p> <p>(1) Number of Action Plans in the field of research and innovation infrastructures developed</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 (NUTS2) registered to the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.</p> <p>(4) Number of policy learning events in the field of research and innovation infrastructures organised by the Policy Learning Platform for Priority 1.</p>		<p>Assumption: The targeted output focuses on the essential challenges/needs/potentials identified by the Programme (Yes) and allows therefore achieving the intended results (Yes).</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&I activity.</p> <p><i>The particular the regional-level challenges and needs (i.e. EU-wide disparities, need for policy improvements etc.) could be better highlighted, but this is prevented by the space limits for this section in the ETC-programme template.</i></p>
<p>Envisaged "Types of Action"</p>	<p>1. Policy Learning Projects (*) in the field of innovation infrastructures and capacities. Examples of initiatives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exchange of practices about innovation centre management among regional innovation agencies, resulting in Action Plans for establishing and/or improving innovation centres in each region through a project under their G&J programme. - 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&J programme or operated independently. - 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 		<p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Assumption: The envisaged "types of action" are delivered by the adequate beneficiaries (Yes, partly) for the right target groups (Yes, partly) and allow therefore achieving the targeted output (Yes).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Types of beneficiaries, Policy Learning Projects (**): Public authorities and bodies governed by public law. Private sector actors are not directly eligible to receive funding but can participate at their own costs. ▪ Main target groups, Policy Learning Projects (**): Regional and local public authorities responsible for innovation support; regional development agencies; universities, knowledge and research institutes and institutes for higher education; operators of science and technology parks, business incubation facilities and innovation centres; business support actors and organisations representing the business community, especially SMEs; other actors of relevance to the development of regional innovation infrastructures and capacities. <i>The mentioned "target group" is only a specification of the "beneficiaries" (i.e. those being eligible</i>

	<p>smart specialisation sectors.</p> <p>2. Policy Learning Platform on Research, Technological Development and Innovation (*) addressing both specific objectives of Priority Axis 1 combined. Examples of activities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication of policy recommendations for creating regional centres of competence for research and innovation based on successful experiences from different Projects and G&J programmes. - Seminar for regional actors on strengthening the role of universities in the regional innovation system. - Peer reviews among European regions which have similar sectors of smart specialisation to analyse and improve their regional innovation infrastructures. 	<p>to participate as partners in projects), but it does not cover other public or private bodies and organisations or structures and groups of persons which are intentionally affected a project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Types of beneficiaries, Policy Learning Platform (**): There are no beneficiaries mentioned who will be responsible for initiating the operation (e.g. in our view the INTERREG EUROPE Programme) and also implementing the operation (e.g. in our view the contracted consultancies or bodies actually developing & running the Platforms on behalf of the INTERREG EUROPE Programme). ▪ 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 of ETC programmes, whose competences and needs are in line with the issues tackled by the platform. <p>Assumption: The envisaged “types of action” are selected through adequate criteria (Yes) and allow therefore achieving the targeted output (Yes).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy Learning Projects Policy Learning Projects are selected through regular calls for proposals. These calls can be open to proposals addressing the full thematic scope of this specific objective. However, the programme authorities may also decide to issue more targeted calls for proposals focusing on certain key areas within the scope of this specific objective. Terms of reference for such targeted calls may take into account developments and (preliminary) results of previous calls, trends and policy developments in the scope of this investment priority, and possibly guidance by the policy learning platform. Projects shall primarily contribute to the expected result of one specific objective of the programme, even if there may be synergies with the themes covered by other specific objectives. In line with the overall programme objective, all Policy Learning Projects should have a minimum link with the implementation of programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal, and when relevant the European Territorial Cooperation (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 have this direct link; for a project with 5 regions, a minimum of 3 would need to have this direct link). The second phase of the Policy Learning 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 before being fully adopted and supported by their regional (Growth and Jobs) programme. A proposal for such a pilot action may be submitted to the programme at the end of the first phase. The JS would assess the relevance of these actions and make recommendations to the MC for decision. Where relevant, the experts of the platforms would provide advice to the JS on the assessment. In a later stage of the programme period it may become more difficult for projects to establish a meaningful link to Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes, and the requirements related to the 2nd phase may need to be adapted for Projects approved after 2016. Those Projects might also link in with the preparation of Cohesion Policy programmes for the period 2021-2027. ▪ The Policy Learning Platform will be established at programme level for the duration of the six year period from 2015 until 2020. 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 (likely 1 or 2 years). After this period the contract with the selected team of experts can be renewed several times depending on its performance, by decision of the Monitoring Committee. If needed and upon decision of the Monitoring Committee, some experts could also be added or substituted during its implementation stage. <p>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).</p> <p>INTERREG EUROPE targets the whole territory of the EU, including the Partner States Norway and Switzerland.</p>
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Envisaged form of financial support	ERDF-contributions to national/regional/local co-financing	↑	
<p>(*) Common provisions for the two Types of Intervention:</p> <p>Policy Learning Projects: 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&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&J, ETC) programme. Activities of the projects can include (indicative) studies and analysis of regional innovation infrastructure policies, meetings and activities with the (mandatory) 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, development of regional Action Plans, communication and dissemination of project results, monitoring and analysis of Action Plan results (phase 2 only) and pilot actions (phase 2 only).</p> <p>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 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 Policy Learning 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. Activities and services of the Platform include (indicative): Follow as far as possible the developments in G&J and ETC programmes 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 X and other priorities, if relevant. Write thematic productions such as newsletters, studies, policy recommendations related to regional TO-related challenges. Organise thematic events and meetings for the community of actors and stakeholders involved in TO-relevant programmes (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. 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.</p> <p>(**) Beneficiaries & Target Groups:</p> <p>Beneficiary: According to the definition provided in Article 2 (10) of the CPR-Regulation, 'beneficiary' means a public or private body (...) responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations. According to Article 2 (9) CRP, "operation" means a project, contract, action or group of projects selected by the managing authorities of the programmes concerned, or under their responsibility, contributing to the objectives of the priority or priorities to which it relates.</p> <p>Target Group: No definition is provided in Article 2 of the CPR-Regulation. Across the evaluation literature, there are quite differentiated definitions for "target groups" (e.g. the intended beneficiaries; main stakeholders expected to gain from the results of a programme etc.). For the sake of consistency, we proposed to adhere to the following definition: The "main target groups" cover those bodies responsible for initiating or initiating and implementing operations (beneficiaries) as well as other public or private bodies and organisations or structures and groups of persons which are intentionally affected by an operation.</p>			

Annex 7 (Indicators)

Basic elements of the model to assess the logic of the indicator and example 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 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

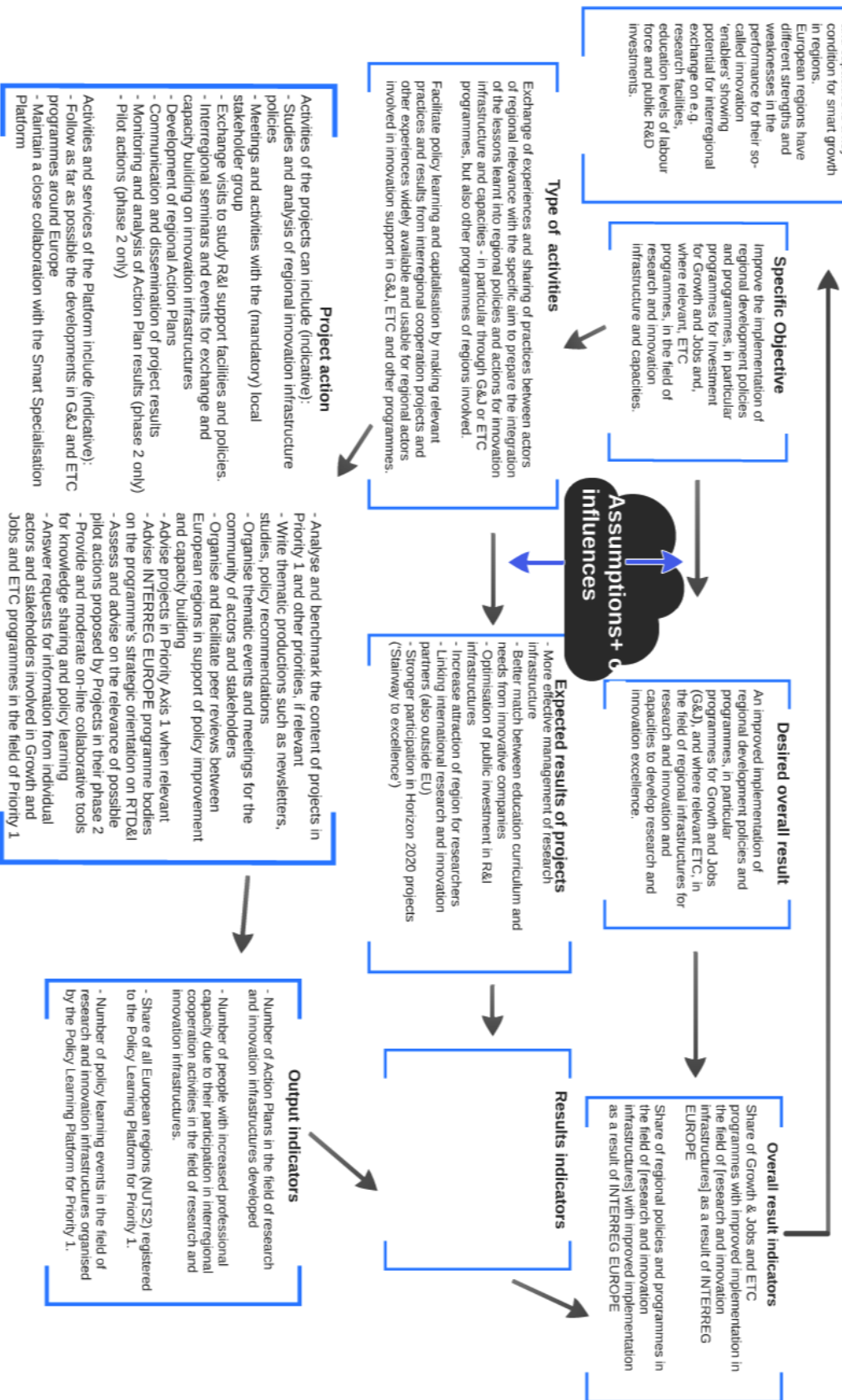
initially defined as a need in the programme area.

- **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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