INTERACT Programme Complement

MSC004/2003/Rev6(Final)

February 2003

CONTENT

Foreword

INTERACT is part of the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) INTERREG. The programme seeks to build on the experience and lessons of INTERREG I and INTERREG II, and to increase the effectiveness of INTERREG III during the current programming period.

The permanent generation of new know-how is one of the characteristics of INTERREG. The different focus of each of INTERREG's three strands combined with the heterogeneous socio-economic development paths of European border regions, have combined to make of INTERREG a fascinating pool of experiences and know-how. INTERACT with its cross-strand perspective seeks to exploit this resource to the benefit of all INTERREG players.

As a specific support programme for the INTERREG initiative, INTERACT deals with one of the most dynamic fields of cohesion policy. Because of this, the Programme Complement has been drafted with a great deal of awareness of the need for a flexible and responsive approach. The core of the INTERACT programme is to set-up information and communications networks, to define information frameworks and flows, to pro-actively disseminate information and to stimulate exchange of experiences. INTERACT is an innovative and experimental programme operating within a dynamic context. This is due, among other things, to the fact that during the programme period new Member States will join the European Union. Thus, the implementation of the programme requires a flexible framework that leaves ample room for adjustment and adaptation to a dynamic environment that is going through a period of constant change.

The Managing Authority (MA) of the INTERACT programme is the Federal Chancellery of the Republic of Austria. On behalf of all the Member States, the MA submitted the INTERACT Programme for approval to the Commission on July 16th, 2002. The financial allocation for the programme is €35.11 million. Of this, €25 million is financed by the ERDF and €10.11 million is co-financed from national funds.

This document is the Programme Complement. It has been prepared in accordance with Regulation 1260/1999, which outlines the general provisions to be followed in the management and implementation of structural funds.

The Programme Complement contains a description of the implementation framework for the INTERACT Programme.

Chapter 1 provides a brief description of the various priorities and measures that will be covered by the Programme.

Chapter 2 provides a description of the coordination framework for the programme and an important statement regarding compliance with EU environmental policies.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the requirements for the development of the programme. In particular it looks at the role of the INTERACT Secretariat and examines a number of initial development tasks that need to be undertaken.

Chapter 4 provides an account of the outline work programmes, priorities and measures which will form the basis for the development of detailed work programmes aimed at implementing the priorities and measures envisaged under the Programme.

Chapter 5 describes the eligibility and selection criteria to be used in selecting institutions that will be responsible for INTERACT Points and for specific projects and the procedure that will be followed in making that selection.

Chapter 6 contains a brief statement regarding the agreements between Member States.

Chapter 7 describes the communications plan for the programme, in compliance with EC Regulation 1159.

Chapter 8 contains a description of the agreement on data exchange that has been arrived at with the management of the INTERREG Programmes.

Chapter 9 deals with the question of monitoring and evaluation of the programme and summarises the key indicators that will be used for that purpose.

Chapter 10 outlines the financing plan for the programme.

Chapter 11 contains the ex-ante evaluation for the programme

Chapter 12 contains a summary of the reactions to the ex-ante evaluation and how the findings have been incorporated into the implementation plan for the programme.

Finally, Chapter 13 contains a note on Codification of costs, which is necessary for the Commission in tracking costs across a number of headings.

Executive Summary

Introduction

INTERACT is part of the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) INTERREG. The programme seeks to build on the experience and lessons of INTERREG I and INTERREG II, and to increase the effectiveness of INTERREG III during the current programming period.

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The Programme Complement contains a description of the implementation framework for the INTERACT Programme.

Overview of priorities and measures

The work of the INTERACT Programme is divided into four priority areas.

➢ Priority 1 – INTERREG Management Support, aimed at providing technical support to Managing Authorities, Paying Authorities, Technical Secretariats and other relevant bodies involved in the management and implementation of the INTERREG Programme. This priority has been subdivided into two measures:

- M1 – Info Point and Animation

- M2 – Training and Qualification

➢ Priority 2 – INTERREG Development – Local and Regional Initiatives. Under this priority, projects will be developed to tackle specific issues related to the different strands of the INTERREG Initiative.

➢ Priority 3 – Cooperation and Management of Transition in Border Regions with Accession Countries, aimed specifically at assisting those countries who will soon become Member States to make the transition from pre-accession cross-

border initiatives to INTERREG. This priority has been subdivided into two measures:

- M1 – Joint cooperation tools

- M2 – Development of INTERREG Participation at the external border

➢ Priority 4 – Technical Assistance, aimed at providing technical assistance in the implementation of Priorities 1, 2 and 3.

Priority 1, M1 and M2, and Priority 3, M1, will be implemented through a series of Work Programmes by the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points, set up specifically for this purpose. Priority 2 and Priority 3 M2 will be implemented through open calls for projects, which will be identified based on the needs of the different strands of the INTERREG initiative. Technical Assistance and the overall coordination of the Programme will be the responsibility of the INTERACT Secretariat.

Development of the INTERACT Programme – The INTERACT Secretariat

The INTERACT Secretariat

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Aims

- To support the start-up and the co-ordination of the implementation of the INTERACT Programme

- To provide a backbone for INTERACT's implementation structure

Operational objectives

It is important to distinguish between the two distinct roles of the INTERACT Secretariat when defining operational objectives. The first role is the Technical Assistance role that is usually associated with a Joint Technical Secretariat. The second is the Developmental Role, which is unique to the INTERACT Secretariat and stems from the nature and structure of the INTERACT Programme.

The Objectives in the area of Technical Assistance can be summarised as follows –

- To assist the Managing Authority in the overall resource management of the INTERACT Programme

- To prepare information for the decision making process and the strategic guidance of the programme

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- To ensure horizontal information flows between the Managing Authority, the Monitoring Committee and the INTERACT Points

The Objectives in the area of Programme Development can be summarised as follows –

- To assist the development of outline work programmes for INTERACT Points

- To coordinate the work of INTERACT Points

- To guide the communications strategy

Outline Work Programmes – Priorities and Measures

Outline Work Programme – Information and Animation (P1/M1)

Aim

- To facilitate transfer of know-how between all three strands of INTERREG.

Operational Objectives

- To provide a coherent, web-based information framework for the stakeholders of all INTERREG strands, as a structure for the delivery of relevant content and information that matches their identified needs.

- To source and make available examples of good practice and to assess good experiences within INTERREG III areas capable of being adapted to the identified needs of Programme and Project Managers in other areas.

- To animate and pro-actively support the integration and use of such good practice examples in existing or planned INTERREG operations.

- To provide an integrated support system based on effective dissemination mechanisms and a virtual management tool-kit, with a view to assisting Programme and Project Managers to design their own solutions to their operational needs.

- To facilitate increased interaction (multilateral exchange of information) between all the players within the different INTERREG III strands (A, B,C) and to enhance the profile and reputation of trans-regional initiatives as integral components of European cohesion policies.

Outline Work Programme – Tool Box (P1/M1)

Aim

- To improve the know-how and to strengthen the management and operational capabilities of INTERREG III bodies.

Operational objectives

- To develop practical management tools that address the operational needs of transnational and inter-regional programmes.

- To raise awareness and to promote the use of common standards and transparent procedures across all strands of INTERREG.

- To benchmark successful approaches to the management of INTERREG Programmes and Projects and to improve the quality and relevance of documentation and analysis procedures in use. This will lead to an increased understanding of the policy, regulatory and administrative context within which the INTERREG Programme operates.

- To promote the widespread use of standardised tools and practices in transnational project development and programme management

- To provide an overview of the legal framework and the existing audit and financial control procedures in INTERREG programmes, including the identification of key bottlenecks and barriers.

Outline Work Programme – Qualification and Transfer (P1/M2)

Aim

- To improve know-how and strengthen the management and operational capabilities of INTERREG III bodies.

- To facilitate transfer of know-how between all three strands of INTERREG

Operational Objectives

- To develop training and qualification packages to make specific know-how available outside of individual programmes and strands of INTERREG

- To provide a coherent framework for exchange and transfer between the stakeholders of all INTERREG strands

- To make use of INTERACT's achievements for training, qualification, exchange and transfer

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Outline work Programme – Managing transition and external co-operation (P3/M1)

Aim

- To encourage and strengthen co-operation in regions along external borders

- To facilitate the start up of INTERREG in the new Member States after accession and safeguard a smooth transition from PHARE to INTERREG

Operational objectives

- To raise awareness of and to develop tools for all INTERREG programmes involving border regions according to COM 437

- To provide a coherent information framework with regard to the implementation of INTERREG at the EU's external borders

- To develop specific training and transfer packages for current and future stakeholders of INTERREG programmes in these regions

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INTERREG development: local and regional initiatives (P2)

Aims

- To improve the quality of INTERREG III programmes and projects

- To intensify and expand INTERACT activities for different groups of players

Operational objectives

- To enable the transfer of experience of good practice between institutions and players in different geographical areas, programmes and INTERREG III strands

- To support project development activities

INTERREG participation at the external border (P3/M2)

Aim

- To encourage and strengthen cooperation in regions along the external border

Operational Objectives

- To develop joint cooperation tools and mechanisms supporting cooperation between Member States and neighbouring countries

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Technical Assistance

Management, monitoring and implementation (P4/M1)

Objectives

- To contribute to the efficient implementation of the programme

- To contribute to the provision of efficient and transparent co-ordination at programme level

Information, publicity, evaluation (P4/M2)

Objectives

- Information for the general public about the role played by the Community in the Assistance concerned and its results

- Activation of potential final beneficiaries

Selection Procedures

Selection of INTERACT Points (P1 and P3/M1)

Public administration bodies in Member States or their equivalent, that fulfil the function of a Managing or Paying Authority or Joint Secretariat for an INTERREG Programme in strand A, B or C, will be invited to apply to manage a work programme, in whole or in part, to be implemented by an INTERACT Point.

The application process will involve two steps. The first step consists of a formal declaration of interest in response to the invitation to apply, using the format provided

for this purpose. The detailed documentation for this purpose will be made available to those interested by the INTERACT Secretariat. The second step consists of a submission of a detailed proposal. On the basis of the declaration of interest, the Managing Authority will invite the successful applicants to submit a detailed proposal as to how they would manage the INTERACT Point in question.

The main group from which INTERACT Points will be recruited are Technical Secretariats of INTERREG Programmes. In total it is envisaged that between 4 and 6 INTERACT Points will be established, with due consideration given to achieving a balanced geographic distribution throughout the EU territory.

In selecting INTERACT Points, a number of eligibility criteria and selection criteria will apply.

Eligibility criteria are minimum requirements, each of which has to be met for an operation to be declared eligible.

Selection criteria will be applied to assess the respective merits of eligible operations.

Project Selection: P2 and P3/M2

In priority 2 and priority 3 measure 2, projects will be developed that address specific issues that arise under the three INTERREG Strands. The Monitoring Committee will issue a call for proposals from eligible institutions. Applications must be submitted by the lead partner and be cofinanced by regional or national public authorities. The Monitoring Committee selects the projects to be carried out under these priorities. In compliance with the INTERREG III Guidelines a joint project assessment and selection procedure will be put in place.

In assessing applications for the development of projects, a number of eligibility and selection criteria will be applied.

Eligibility criteria are minimum requirements, each of which has to be met for an operation to be declared eligible.

Selection criteria will be applied to assess the respective merits of eligible operations.

Overview of Agreements between Member States

The agreements between Member States will reflect the state of the art in this matter. The agreements are currently being prepared and will be dealt with outside the scope of this Programme Complement.

Communications Plan

The Managing Authority of INTERACT is ultimately responsible for publicity – the INTERACT Secretariat will carry out this function on its behalf. Publicity shall be carried out in cooperation with the European Commission, which shall be informed of measures taken for this purpose.

The principal role of the INTERACT Secretariat in this regard will be to ensure that its own target groups are adequately reached and to further assist the INTERREG Project Managers in the implementation of the requirements EC Regulation 1159/2000.

This communications action plan shall include:

Aims and target groups,

Content and strategy of the communications and information measures

Principal communications platforms to be used

Indicative budget

Indication of the administrative bodies responsible for implementation,

Criteria to be used to evaluate the measures carried out.

Description of the Agreement on Data Exchange

The INTERACT programmes will develop a common database for the administration of operations, which facilitates the generation of data files that support the requirements of the file interface of the Structural Funds common (SFC) database. The financial data in the project administration database will be organised by taking into account the 'Vademecum for the Programming Period 2000-2006'. As far as the scope of information within the database is concerned, the requirements of EC Regulation 438/2000 will be met. For the development of the monitoring system all achievements of the

- INTERREG IIIC programme management as well as

- the specific requirements of the Paying Authority and the INTERACT Secretariat responsible for the monitoring system

are taken into account.

Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation

Because of the nature of the INTERACT Programme, it is not possible at this stage to give a precise definition to quantifiable indicators for every aspect of the programme. It is only after the detailed work programmes for the INTERACT Points have been elaborated and approved and the first projects have been selected that this will be possible. At that stage a comprehensive set of indicators will be developed and accepted as the basis for subsequent monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

In the meantime it is possible and necessary to define some broad output and impact indicators that can be developed and elaborated further at a later stage. The tables presented in section 9 of this document contain lists of indicators at various levels of the Programme. The first table (9.1) contains indicators that apply across the whole programme. Subsequent tables address each of the Priorities and measures.

1. Overview of priorities and measures

The work of the INTERACT Programme is divided into four priority areas. The implementation of the priorities and measures will be conducted on the basis of an initial assessment of the needs of the target groups in each of the three strands of the INTERREG Programme. The four priorities and their measures are as follows –

➢ Priority 1 – INTERREG Management Support, aimed at providing technical support to Managing Authorities, Paying Authorities, Technical Secretariats and other relevant bodies involved in the management and implementation of the INTERREG Programme. This priority has been subdivided into two measures:

- M1 – Info Point and Animation

- M2 – Training and Qualification

➢ Priority 2 – INTERREG Development – Local and Regional Initiatives. Under this priority, projects will be developed to tackle specific issues related to the different strands of the INTERREG Initiative.

➢ Priority 3 – Cooperation and Management of Transition in Border Regions with Accession Countries, aimed specifically at assisting those countries who will soon become Member States to make the transition from pre-accession cross-border initiatives to INTERREG. This priority has been subdivided into two measures:

- M1 – Joint cooperation tools

- M2 – Development of INTERREG Participation at the external border

➢ Priority 4 – Technical Assistance, aimed at providing technical assistance in the implementation of Priorities 1, 2 and 3.

The implementation of Priority 1, M1 and M2, and Priority 3, M1, will be done through the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points, set up specifically for this purpose. INTERACT Points will be created following a call for proposals. Existing Joint Technical Secretariats (JTS), Managing Authorities or Paying Authorities involved in the management of INTERREG Programmes are eligible to submit proposals for the management of one or more INTERACT Point. The Implementation of Priority 2 and Priority 3 M2 will be done through open calls for projects, which will be identified based on the needs of the different strands of the INTERREG initiative. Technical Assistance and the overall coordination of the Programme will be the responsibility of the INTERACT Secretariat.

2.   The programme framework

2.1   The Programme Complement as a basis for Work Programmes

In recognition of the need for a dynamic and flexible approach to the management and implementation of the INTERACT Programme as outlined in the Foreword, the Programme Complement does not attempt to provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the content of each of the Work Programmes. Instead, it provides an outline for each of the work programmes, leaving the detailed elaboration to the INTERACT Points and the INTERACT Secretariat, as appropriate. The Programme Complement is, in this sense, a strategic document that provides guidelines for the implementation of the programme. The Work Programmes are intended to be more comprehensive and detailed elaborations of the operational arrangements for implementation. The Programme Complement provides detailed guidelines on the rationale and role of the INTERACT Secretariat and of each of the INTERACT Points It will be the responsibility of those appointed to the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points to translate these guidelines into detailed Work Programmes. These Work Programmes will contain a comprehensive account of the tasks envisaged, the time schedules and milestones on a bi-annual basis.

2.2   Outline Work Programmes

The Outline Work Programme for the INTERACT Secretariat is provided in Chapter 3 of this Programme Complement. The Outline Work Programmes for the INTERACT Points are provided in chapter 4. They have been prepared with the following considerations in mind:

- These outline work programmes form the basis on which invitations will be issued to Joint Technical Secretariats and public administration bodies or their equivalent, that fulfil the function of a Managing or Paying Authority for an INTERREG programme, to apply for an INTERACT Point; the task descriptions contained in the outline work programmes, reflect a step by step implementation process.

- The initial timeframe for the programme is four years, with a review milestone set for the end of the second year. At the end of the second year, the Monitoring Committee will commission an in-depth mid-term evaluation of the work carried out.

- The interface between the horizontal tasks to be implemented by the INTERACT Secretariat and the Work Programmes to be implemented by

INTERACT Points will be developed in detail during the inception phase. The overall framework for coordination and internal division of tasks is described in section 2.3 below.

- The outline work programmes describe in a logical sequence the work to be done and the key milestones, i.e. the preparatory steps needed, key implementation steps etc.

- For most items discussed in the programme an initial basic survey or needs assessment will have to be conducted among various target groups. In some cases a more comprehensive approach may be required, such as for example a pre-feasibility study. The outline work programme indicates the need for such preparatory steps.

- Since communications and information activities form the key for all INTERACT activities, in addition to the outline of the work programmes of the INTERACT Points and INTERACT Secretariat, a detailed description of the division of tasks and the flow of information and communication within the programme is provided in section 2.3 below. The work programmes will need to reflect this.

- The ongoing design and implementation of information flows within the INTERACT Programme will be the responsibility of the INTERACT Secretariat.

- The work programmes have to be considered as evolving documents' focusing on a short-term perspective, i.e. for the years 2003/2004 and 2005/2006. The overall design of the Work Programmes is intended to cover a four year period. The Work Programmes leave ample room for adjustment and adaptation to a dynamic environment.

2.3   The coordination framework

The implementation of the INTERACT Programme is based on a decentralised approach. This presents significant challenges for overall coordination and organisation.

Internally, there is a need for efficient communication with and between the Managing Authority, the Monitoring Committee, the INTERACT Secretariat and the Commission, in particular DG Regio and DG Enlargement. Systems, structures and processes will need to be designed to ensure that the information and communication flows between these internal stakeholders are efficient and effective. These requirements can be represented by the following diagramme -

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │     Commission of EU     │
                    └─────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────┐              ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Managing Authority     │    ⬌⬍       │  Monitoring Committee    │
└─────────────────────────┘              └─────────────────────────┘

                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │   INTERACT Secretariat   │
                    └─────────────────────────┘
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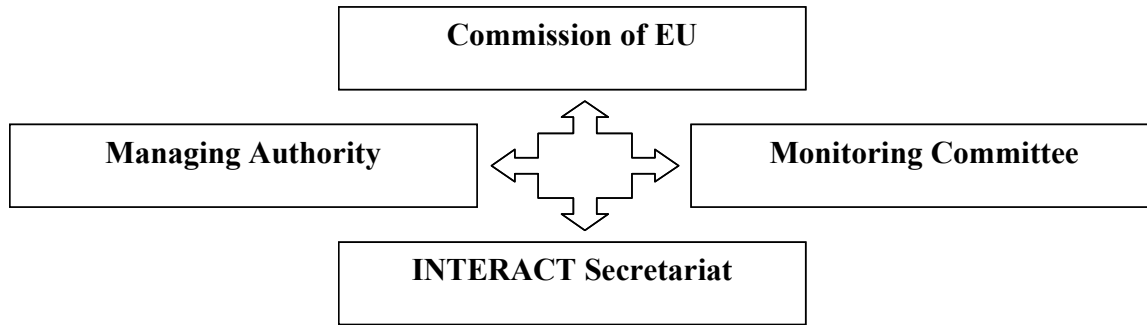
All INTERACT Points will generate content for distribution to INTERREG target groups. This distribution will be done by the INTERACT Point (IP) *Qualifications and Transfer* in a variety of formats and through a variety of media. The relationship between these IPs can be represented as follows –

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  ⬭ IP Tool    ⬭ IP Information      ⬭ IP             ⬭ IP External    ⬭
    Box           and         ➡      Qualification ⬅    Cooperation
                  Annimation          & Transfer
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Content and information will flow from each of the IPs through the INTERACT Secretariat to the Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee and the Commission. This can be represented as follows –
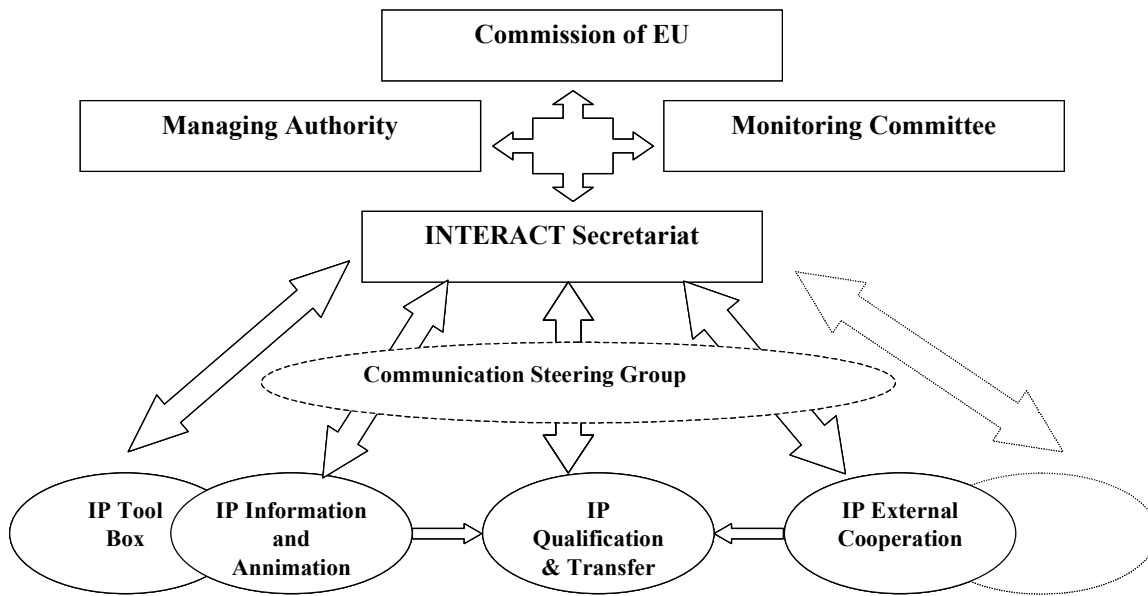
Each of the IPs will also have a need to communicate with individual INTERREG Target Groups – there are about 70 INTERREG Programmes in existence at the moment and this in itself presents a significant communications challenge. This can be represented as follows –
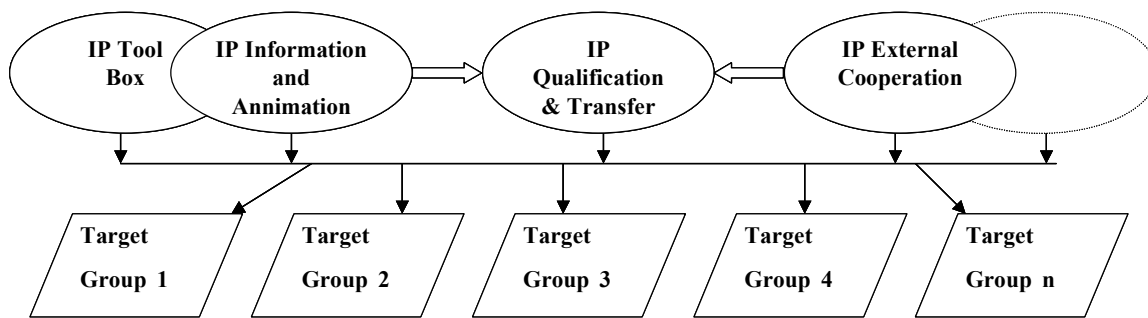
In order to ensure that this complex interweaving of communication and information flows is handled in a cohesive and controlled manner, it is proposed to create a Communications Group, consisting of representatives of the Managing Authority, the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points. This Group will be responsible for co-ordinating all of the information flows within the Programme. i.e. in particular a clear definition of horizontal information tasks to be fulfilled by the INTERACT Secretariat and specific, vertical tasks under the responsibility of the INTERACT

Points. The work of the group will be guided by the Managing Authority and the INTERACT Secretariat.

The overall dynamics of the relationships between the various players within the INTERACT Programme can be illustrated by the following diagram –
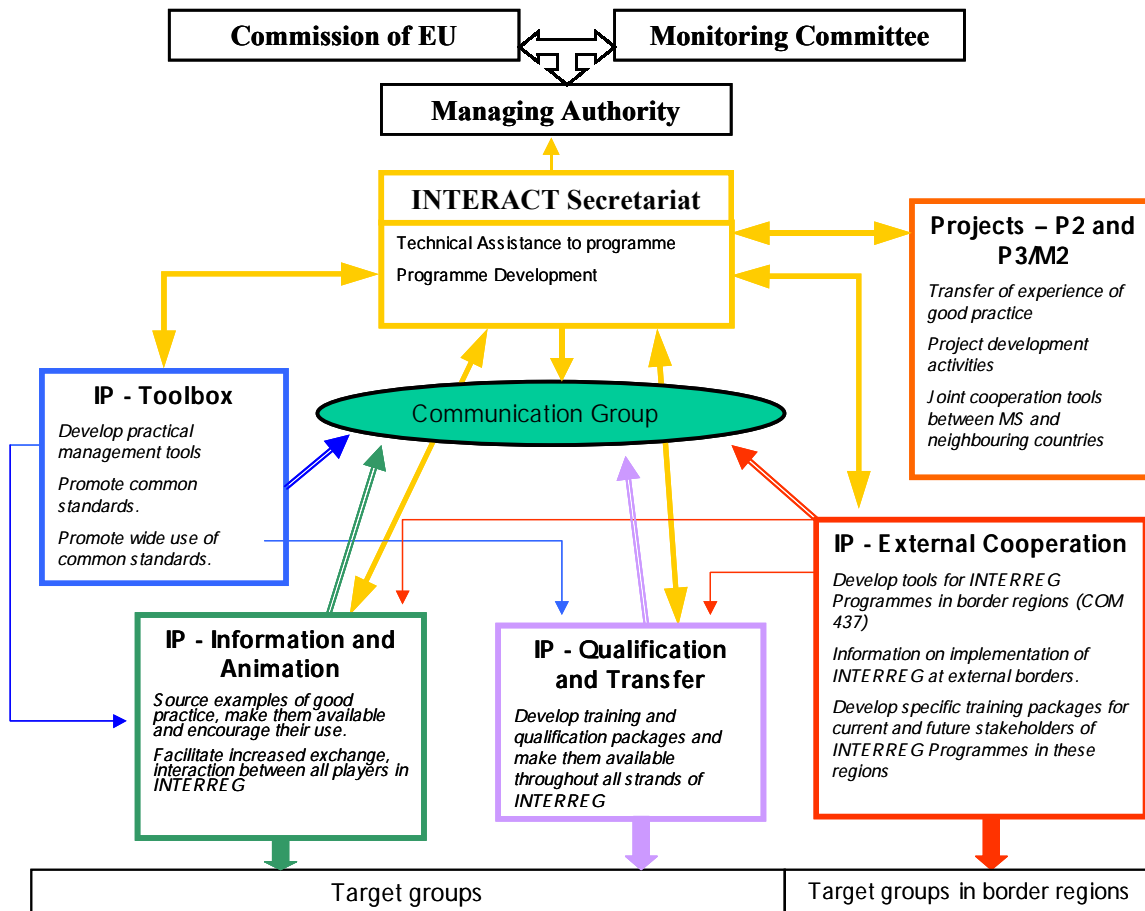
At operational level, regular and focused exchange between the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points is one of the key requirements for the programme's overall success.

2.4   INTERACT – Compliance with EU Environmental Policies

The INTERACT programme fulfils the requirements set out in Council Regulation (EC) N° 1260/1999 of 21/June/1999, provides the necessary information in accordance with the INTERREG III programme guidelines (especially point 25) and complies with the relevant Community programmes and policies.

INTERACT, which can be considered as a privileged tool for co-ordination, exchange of experiences and quality assurance in the management of the Community Initiative Programme INTERREG (which is the most important policy instrument of the European Commission for co-operation among regions and states across borders), can therefore also make an important value added contribution to Community environmental policies in the wider inter-regional context and in accordance with the specific objectives of the different strands of INTERREG III.

The INTERACT programme should a have positive impact on environmental / sustainable development issues by promoting and sharing under its three priorities, experiences and approaches to co-operation among environmental partners across borders (river basin management / flood prevention could be examples of recent relevance in this respect).

The INTERACT programme promotes the application of the social partnership principle at all possible levels. It is assumed that partners covering environmental integration and sustainable regional and local development are part of these "social" partners.

The INTERACT programme will encourage the development of further networks and promote partnership with local authorities and stakeholders. Thus, compliance (avoidance of overlap / duplication) with activities of DG ENV of the Commission, in support of urban sustainable development such as the "Community Framework for Co-operation to Promote Sustainable Urban Development" or the "European Campaign for Sustainable Cities", will be assured.

The activities and objectives of the INTERACT programme will be open to environmental themes and objectives (e.g. training, improved know-how, improved efficiency and quality, support to up-grade all aspects of INTERREG III programme management, seminars, tools, etc.). This integration of the environmental dimension should be visible in the programme reporting.

3. Development of the INTERACT Programme – The INTERACT Secretariat

In order to set the programme up and create the right conditions for success, a number of things need to happen. In the first instance the INTERACT Secretariat needs to be set up with a clear definition of its role and responsibilities. The Secretariat has a very important developmental role at the beginning of the programme and will continue to have a development function as the programme grows and progresses. Secondly, there are a number of key initial development tasks that need to be undertaken. Most of these will be initiated by the INTERACT Secretariat, with the INTERACT Points becoming involved as they come on stream. This chapter sets out to provide a description of the role of the INTERACT Secretariat and to describe these initial development tasks.

The INTERACT Secretariat

Aims

- To support the start-up and the co-ordination of the implementation of the INTERACT Programme

- To provide a backbone for INTERACT's implementation structure

Operational objectives

It is important to distinguish between the two distinct roles of the INTERACT Secretariat when defining operational objectives. The first role is the Technical Assistance role that is usually associated with a Joint Technical Secretariat. The second is the Developmental Role, which is unique to the INTERACT Secretariat and stems from the nature and structure of the INTERACT Programme.

The Objectives in the area of Technical Assistance can be summarised as follows –

- To assist the Managing Authority in the overall resource management of the INTERACT Programme

- To prepare information for the decision making process and the strategic guidance of the programme

- To ensure horizontal information flows between the Managing Authority, the Monitoring Committee and the INTERACT Points

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The Objectives in the area of Programme Development can be summarised as follows –

- To assist the development of outline work programmes for INTERACT Points

- To coordinate the work of INTERACT Points

- To guide the communications strategy

Rationale

The role of the INTERACT secretariat is quite different from the role of technical secretariats in INTERREG programmes. Given the explorative and innovative character of the operations of the INTERACT Programme, the INTERACT Secretariat, in addition to providing normal technical support functions, acts as implementing body. In this function it will undertake or participate in projects within priority 1 and priority 3, measure 1, that either have a horizontal character or serve the purpose of further development of INTERACT tasks. In this respect, the INTERACT Secretariat will act as facilitator, organiser and "mentor" for the programme. In effect, the INTERACT secretariat has to act as the driving force in the start-up process of the programme.

Role and Key Tasks

The INTERACT Secretariat could be described as the backbone of the Programme, particularly during the initial setting up phase. It has a major role to play in the development of the Programme, which is in addition to its Technical Assistance role. The INTERACT Secretariat will be expected to support the development of further operations for Priority 1 and Priority 3 Measure 1 (in form of feasibility studies, needs assessment etc). It will also be expected to act as an implementing body, especially for horizontal and cross-strand issues. This will include the following tasks, some of which could be described as initial development tasks and others which form part of the ongoing role of the Secretariat, (although the list is not intended to be comprehensive at this stage and does not include any of the Technical Assistance tasks which it will also be expected to fulfil). These tasks represent some of the core activities of the INTERACT Programme, in some of them the INTERACT Secretariat will have the principal implementing role, while in others the role of the Secretariat will be to coordinate the activities with the INTERACT Points and supported by the projects funded through Priority 2 and Priority 3 Measure 2.

Web Strategy

The Internet provides an opportunity to create a central communications platform that is accessible to all existing and potential users. It also affords the opportunity to guarantee transparency in the availability of resources and information to all. If a website is developed properly, it can be discerning in meeting user needs and addressing those needs in a proactive and user-friendly environment. The website is also a basis for achieving profile and publicity in a manner consistent with EC regulations.

The INTERACT Secretariat will carry out a detailed analysis of the requirements for the development of a multi-functional portal website for the Programme. This analysis will be carried out during the inception phase. The website will be hosted at the premises of the INTERACT Secretariat. Content for the website will be developed and added by the INTERACT Points. The website, in addition providing access to materials and content developed for the target groups of the programme, will also provide for a security-oriented intranet service for efficient on-line communication between the contracting institution, the INTERACT secretariat, other INTERACT Points and relevant managing bodies. In cooperation with the relevant INTERACT Points, the website will also be used as a platform for the animation of Internet based debates and dialogue, creating an effective interface between INTERREG managing bodies in order to disseminate new and advanced management tools

Database Development

Closely associated with the Web Strategy for the programme is the development of a comprehensive database facility. The development of this facility is an important part of the communications and management strategy for the Programme. This database will serve as a single repository of all information generated by INTERACT. The possibility of taking advantage of existing databases and of modifying them to meet the needs of INTERACT must be explored as part of the initial study of feasibility. This feasibility study, which will be initiated by the INTERACT Secretariat, should also analyse the most appropriate type of database, its functionality and management implications. The INTERACT Database will differ from that of INTERREG Databases already in place in that its function will be primarily networking. It will not seek to replicate all of the detailed information on projects that is already contained in INTERREG Databases. Its purpose is to act as a stimulant to additional contact and exchange to take place. In addition, INTERACT will require database facilities for the management of the resources developed by the INTERACT Points and by the INTERACT Secretariat. The latter will also require database facilities for the Monitoring System that is required as part of its technical assistance role for the programme.

The technical aspect of the development of both the website and the database is likely to require external technical support. The sourcing of this assistance will be the subject of a transparent tendering process. The INTERACT Secretariat will take a leading role in the development of the Database strategy and will coordinate the inputs of the INTERACT Points into both the development process and the eventual data collection and report generation.

Corporate Identity for INTERACT

The INTERACT Secretariat will be responsible for developing a corporate identity for the Programme in areas such as logos, publication templates, formats for reports, typeface to be used, incorporation of EU and INTERREG publicity material, communications criteria for press releases and public statements. The purpose of this corporate identity will be to ensure consistency in the public promotion of INTERACT across all regions and countries and to build a brand that incorporates the contribution of the EU. The development of this corporate identity should be done simultaneously with the development of the INTERACT website.

Communication

Communication and information processing is one of the most important functions in INTERACT. This function needs to be embedded in an internal communication structure backed up by a coherent information design strategy and corporate identity for the INTERACT programme. The INTERACT secretariat should guide the implementation of the Communication strategy. This includes –

- The establishment of the Communication Sub-Group as permanent internal task force and think-tank

- The drafting of a detailed Communications Action Plan and publication of an internal Communications manual

The INTERACT Secretariat will be responsible for the development of the overall information design strategy of the programme. It will launch and guide all the necessary preparatory steps and the timing of the implementation procedures to ensure that this happens.

Assessment of Needs

In order to ensure that the INTERACT Programme is developed and implemented in a manner that responds to the real needs of INTERREG, there is a need for an initial assessment of the needs of the final beneficiaries and users in the Member States and neighbouring countries. This will be done by means of meetings and questionnaires designed for the purpose. The INTERACT Secretariat will provide a

coordination service for the surveys, which will be conducted by the INTERACT Points, and collate the results. This information will be used as a basis for developing the Work Programmes.

Survey of Projects

There is a need for an initial survey of INTERREG III and Phare CBC projects throughout all countries concerned to determine the number and nature of projects currently in place, the themes / topics covered by these projects, the partnership arrangements in place, the management structures in place and the planned and actual outputs of each of these projects. In the case of INTERREG III A, it is proposed that a representative sample of flagship projects from each Member State should be surveyed. In the case of INTERREG III B and C, the majority of projects should be surveyed. The information for this survey will be collected by the INTERACT Points and coordinated by the INTERACT Secretariat

Coordination between INTERACT Points and Content transfer

Most of the initial steps undertaken by the INTERACT Points require close contact and co-ordination. For example needs assessments and surveys will address overlapping target groups thus initial clarification of the specific interests are important in order to avoid duplication of efforts. Specific INTERACT information tools such as Newsletters or information bulletins have to be produced in close co-operation between all INTERACT points. Content transfer and co-ordination is also required in order to design and implement the transfer and training activities. Several INTERACT points (Information and Animation, Tool Box and External Cooperation) will provide thematic inputs and proposals for transfer activities, whereas design and organisation of the activities will be in the hands of the INTERACT Point Qualification and Transfer. The INTERACT Secretariat will act as co-ordinator in this regard. For that reason, one of the most important initial steps required will be to set-up a detailed structure of information flows between the INTERACT Points and the Secretariat.

Help Desk

The INTERACT Secretariat is also responsible for the INTERREG help desk. In more detail this task comprises:

- Installation of a targeted help-desk with the capacity to handle in particular case-specific procedural and regulatory issues (particularly guidelines/ aspects of finance and cost coverage, eligibility criteria) raised by clients

- Acting as a gateway in the provision of individually-tailored advisory services, including finding the right person / institution to pursue a query with and assisting in establishing follow-up communication

- Provision of a fast-track access to in-house accumulated knowledge regarding the performance of INTERREG projects and programmes / examples of good practice and management

- Coverage of all EU languages in second-stage feed-back through the combination of help desk expertise and linguistic back-up

Transfer and Exchange with ESPON, URBACT

INTERREG Strand B aims to promote a higher degree of territorial integration across large groupings of European regions. Transnational cooperation in the field of spatial development policies should be linked to the efforts undertaken within the ESPON Programme. The INTERACT Secretariat will make provision for the creation the necessary linkages to facilitate the publication and targeted dissemination of know-how gained in ESPON projects. On the other hand actors in ESPON should profit from best practice and key projects in strand B. A similar 'open doors'-policy focused on transfer and exchange of achievements should be envisaged with URBACT.

Managing Transition

Many of the activities to be developed and implemented by the IP External Co-operation require coordination and close co-operation with other IPs. This is particularly true with regard to the CBC Help Desk, the CBC Tool Box and the CBC Database. It will be necessary to take full advantage of synergies and to ensure that the output of the IP External Cooperation is very focused if it is to be of interest to INTERREG stakeholders in the border regions. Any horizontal co-ordination required for this purpose should be done by the INTERACT Secretariat.

Pre- INTERACT measures – IIIC Coordination Activities

Within the INTERREG IIIC-Programmes a number of coordination activities have already been undertaken, aimed at harmonising the implementation of INTERREG IIIC in the four zones. The results of these activities will be transferred into the relevant INTERACT measures once the INTERACT points have been established. It will be important for the INTERACT Secretariat to determine early on in the life of the Programme which of these activities have been completed and which remain to be completed. Some of those that remain to be completed may be taken up by the technical assistance of the INTERREG IIIC Programmes themselves and what remains will be taken up by the INTERACT Programme. A table outlining the tasks

that were envisaged for this IIIC Coordination is presented in Annex 1 to this programme.

Localisation of Materials

Localisation of materials from one geographic region to another, from one institutional and legislative context to another frequently requires adaptation that goes far beyond a simple translation from one language to another.

It will be the responsibility of the Communications Sub-Group to take decisions regarding localisation of materials. In this they will be guided by the potential for materials to make a real difference to local needs. The need for localisation will be identified by the relevant INTERACT Point. As materials are localised and translated, they will be added to the materials available section of the website in the relevant language.

Languages

The working language of INTERACT will be English. All documents and reports will normally be made available only in English. The website will initially be in English and French. Translations of materials into other languages will be done based on local need and in line with the demands for localisation of materials. It will be the responsibility of the Communications Sub-Group to take decisions regarding translation of materials. In this they will be guided by the potential for materials to make a real difference to local needs.

Newsletter

An INTERACT Newsletter will be published. The newsletter will be predominantly web-based and will also be distributed through email to a pre-determined contact list. A limited number of hard copies will be produced for additional dissemination and publicity requirements. The content for the newsletter will be provided by the INTERACT Points and the INTERACT Secretariat, The editorial policy and function will be the responsibility of the Communications Group.

The following table contains a summary of the key tasks of the INTERACT Secretariat and sets it in the overall context of the INTERACT Points and the Projects, which will be described in detail in Chapter 4.

INTERACT SECRETARIAT	Development of INTERACT Work Programmes		
	Co-ordination between INTERACT Points and content transfer Communication and Corporate Identity		
	Help Desk Transfer and Exchange with ESPON, URBACT Web Strategy		Managing transition
Priority	**Priority 1** **INTERREG Management Support**		**Priority 3: Cooperation and management of transition in border regions to AC**
Measure	**M1: Info-Point and Animation**	**M2: Training and qualification**	**M1: Joint co-operation tools**
INTERACT Points WORK Programmes	Web Site content for external use Web Site for INTERREG Management Project data base Market place for cooperation	Framework and organisation of training, information materials Seminars, workshops and conferences	Joint cooperation tools at the external border ‚Best practice' procedures and manuals Information transfer and training curriculum development
INTERACT Points WORK Programmes	Tool Box Common Tools and Standards		
Priority/ **Measure**	**Priority 2** **INTERREG Development – Local and regional initiatives**		*Measure 3.2: Development of INTERREG participation at the external border*
Projects			
Projects			
Projects			
INTERACT Secretariat	**P4: Technical Assistance**		

4. Outline Work Programmes – Priorities and Measures

4.1 Outline Work Programme – Information and Animation (P1/M1)

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Aim

- To facilitate transfer of know-how between all three strands of INTERREG.

Operational Objectives

- To provide a coherent, web-based information framework for the stakeholders of all INTERREG strands, as a structure for the delivery of relevant content and information that matches their identified needs.

- To source and make available examples of good practice and to assess good experiences within INTERREG III areas capable of being adapted to the identified needs of Programme and Project Managers in other areas.

- To animate and pro-actively support the integration and use of such good practice examples in existing or planned INTERREG operations.

- To provide an integrated support system based on effective dissemination mechanisms and a virtual management tool-kit, with a view to assisting Programme and Project Managers to design their own solutions to their operational needs.

- To facilitate increased interaction (multilateral exchange of information) between all the players within the different INTERREG III strands (A, B,C) and to enhance the profile and reputation of trans-regional initiatives as integral components of European cohesion policies.

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Rationale

People engaged in trans-national, cross-border and interregional programmes and projects are hampered by serious time constraints in performing their tasks. This is due in no small measure to the increasing complexity of the regulatory framework and to the vast quantity of information and resources that need to be absorbed and managed. In order to enable personnel to concentrate more on the core business (launching and monitoring quality projects) and to release managers from routine and standard tasks, the INTERACT Point/s in charge of Information and Animation will serve as a pointer in the provision of filtered value-added information on best practice in other programmes and projects. This information will be presented and

disseminated in an easy to absorb manner, ready for adaptation and use in local situations.

Proposed Task Description

A precise description of tasks for this and other INTERACT Points will need to be preceded by an assessment of needs of the target groups in each of the three strands of the INTERREG initiative. In the first instance, at the beginning of the programme, this is most likely to be carried out by the INTERACT Secretariat in order to avoid unnecessary delays in setting up the INTERACT Points. Subsequent updates of this needs assessment however, will be the responsibility of each individual INTERACT Point. What follows here is an outline of proposed tasks, based on initial feedback and needs assessment.

In order to accomplish the challenging task of implementing a coherent information framework, which is useful for INTERREG stakeholders throughout the European Union and the neighbouring countries, a set of preparatory steps is necessary. These include –

- The collection and screening of all relevant information sources related to the performance of INTERREG programmes and projects: i.e. filtering of key information, selection of best practice samples and converting information into practical operational guidelines.

- The creation of a network of (INTERREG IIIA, IIIB and IIIC) correspondents in order to support the collection and screening of potentially relevant and useful information sources (documents/reports/web-pages) related to the performance of INTERREG programmes/projects.

- The establishment of a benchmark working group or cluster to animate comparisons of good practice and knowledge dissemination.

The precise definition of these actions as well as the distribution of tasks and responsibilities between the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points will be addressed in more detail during the inception phase of the INTERACT Programme, and will be laid down in the work programme. The following list of tasks therefore, is only indicative and subject to change and completion.

Web Site content for external use

- Development of public access options on web site to provide easy access to international experiences

- Making successful and creative approaches to the implementation of INTERREG freely available (open door policy) in order to share and adapt good practice and maximise the effectiveness of programme and project operations

- Publicising information about events concerned with INTERREG programme performance, in order to promote public understanding, awareness and visibility

- Publicising useful background information concerning general objectives of INTERREG for first-contact clients

Project Data Base

- Set-up of an electronic project database to provide an inventory of INTERREG projects that have been implemented.

- Design of templates and summary formats appropriate to codify information according to the needs of the end-users.

Market place for co-operation

- Usage of the Internet as virtual market place and animation facility for partner search and dealing with cooperation requests

- Support the development of an "agora" culture for feed-back and pro-active exchange of experiences

Marketing across programmes

- Best practice catalogues across programmes within individual INTERREG strands.

INTERACT newsletter

- Production and dissemination of an electronic newsletter.

Elaboration of relevant promotional materials

Key target groups

The target groups of the services of the IP Tool Box are INTERREG programme and project managers, National Contact Points / Permanent Committees, specific

networks and institutions and members of the academic community involved in the area of regional policy studies and projects and who are involved in a wider sense in INTERREG III A-B-C.

Expected Results

A detailed indication of the specific indicators that will be needed for the monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the IP Information and Animation will be provided in the Work Programme. In the meantime, an outline of the kinds of indicators and results that will be expected is provided in Chapter 9 of this Programme Complement.

4.2 Outline Work Programme – Tool Box (P1/M1)

Aim

- To improve the know-how and to strengthen the management and operational capabilities of INTERREG III bodies.

Operational objectives

- To develop practical management tools that address the operational needs of transnational and inter-regional programmes.

- To raise awareness and to promote the use of common standards and transparent procedures across all strands of INTERREG.

- To benchmark successful approaches to the management of INTERREG Programmes and Projects and to improve the quality and relevance of documentation and analysis procedures in use. This will lead to an increased understanding of the policy, regulatory and administrative context within which the INTERREG Programme operates.

- To promote the widespread use of standardised tools and practices in transnational project development and programme management

- To provide an overview of the legal framework and the existing audit and financial control procedures in INTERREG programmes, including the identification of key bottlenecks and barriers.

Rationale

There is an immediate and very urgent need for transnational co-ordination in INTERREG IIIC-programmes and projects, as all four programmes depend upon parallel implementation procedures and logistics. The development of an 'INTERREG tool-box' for INTERREG IIIC aims at adapting and, as far as possible, harmonising procedures for project selection, funding mechanisms, audit and financial control in the four co-operation zones (partly provided for already as "Pre-INTERACT" measures). These common tools will be made available to INTERREG III A and B programmes in order to facilitate the development of a standardised approach to the implementation of cross border and transnational programmes and projects. These tools will be tailored to the individual needs of INTERREG-Managing Authorities and bodies involved in audit and financial control procedures. Existing good practice and experience within INTERREG III A and B programmes in these areas will also be made accessible to other programmes. In addition, the IP Tool Box, will provide a 'best practice' catalogue highlighting important aspects of programme management that tend to be neglected in the day-to-day management of INTERREG programmes. This refers for example to publicity activities according to regulation 1159 or partnership building at regional level.

Proposed Task Description

A precise description of tasks for this and other INTERACT Points will need to be preceded by an assessment of needs of the target groups in each of the three strands of the INTERREG initiative. In the first instance, at the beginning of the programme, this is most likely to be carried out by the INTERACT Secretariat in order to avoid unnecessary delays in setting up the INTERACT Points. Subsequent updates of this needs assessment however, will be the responsibility of each individual INTERACT Point. In the case of the IP Tool Box, there will be a need to focus on the first instance on the specific needs of the transnational and interregional programmes (strands B & C) and subsequently addressing the needs of strand A. What follows here is an outline of proposed tasks, based on initial feedback and needs assessment.

Tool Box –

- Developing the use of advanced information technology and multimedia tools to ensure effective consultation mechanisms are in place as a basis for the management and dissemination of knowledge and management materials

- Elaboration of a virtual management tool-kit that will provide guidance on key issues related to procedures and operational strategies in the management of transnational and interregional projects

- Establishing the use of benchmarking as a common tool for the optimisation of performance by making use of a systematic comparison of practices with those of other performers

- Achieving knowledge multiplication through the set-up of a practice portfolio offering practical assistance to copy best practice solutions

Common tools and standards –

- Identification of ways of establishing a common ground for operational standards and basic regulations extracted from current and planned INTERREG Programme initiatives.

- Design of a basic standard proposal form for projects at the first-stage of applications in order to ensure a certain entry-quality.

- Drafting of an optional evaluation grid for the assessment of project applications, employing a transparent set of qualitative and quantitative evaluation criteria.

- Consensus-based definition of a robust set of performance indicators and initiation of comparative benchmark activities.

INTERREG Glossary –

In the management of INTERREG programmes, the common understanding and the correct use of terms is a key issue. Organisations responsible for the management and implementation of INTERREG are usually staffed by individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds and with a wide range of professional experience. In such a situation, the correct use of specific terms in several languages is a challenge that needs to be addressed. From a legal and financial perspective therefore, it is important that a multi-lingual glossary of widely used terms should be made available.

Participation in training activities –

Since the experts involved in this IP will have considerable knowledge of very specific questions related to the management and implementation of programmes and projects on a trans-national, cross-border and inter-regional basis, their expertise should be taken advantage of for high-level EU-wide seminars and for selected training activities for multipliers.

Key target groups

The target groups of the services of the IP Tool Box are INTERREG programme and project managers, National Contact Points / PErmanent Committees, specific networks and institutions and members of the academic community involved in the area of regional policy studies and projects and who are involved in a wider sense in INTERREG III A-B-C.

Expected Results

A detailed indication of the specific indicators that will be needed for the monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the IP Tool Box will be provided in the Work Programme. In the meantime, an outline of the kinds of indicators and results that will be expected is provided in Chapter 9 of this Programme Complement.

4.3   Outline Work Programme – Qualification and Transfer (P1/M2)

Aim

- To improve know-how and strengthen the management and operational capabilities of INTERREG III bodies.

- To facilitate transfer of know-how between all three strands of INTERREG

Operational Objectives

- To develop training and qualification packages to make specific know-how available outside of individual programmes and strands of INTERREG

- To provide a coherent framework for exchange and transfer between the stakeholders of all INTERREG strands

- To make use of INTERACT's achievements for training, qualification, exchange and transfer

Rationale

The Community Initiative INTERREG is distinguished by the fact that most of the services and activities carried out by managing bodies have to be responsive to specific regional structures and demands. In this sense it can be said that the management of individual INTERREG programmes is in itself a pilot action that poses challenging questions to the institutions that are involved in the front line. The main challenge arises from the need to define a common procedure across national borders (Strand A) or within a wider transnational area (Strand B and C), including, in some cases, neighbouring countries.

Many problems may have common solutions and in many cases these solutions can be duplicated, without having to be re-discovered by each of the managing bodies. Hence it is an important component of INTERACT activities therefore, to support and encourage the dissemination of know-how and to assist in the definition and implementation of common standards and practices.

The IP Training and Qualification fulfils a unique role within the INTERACT implementation system. The information and know-how compiled and processed by other INTERACT points provides the input for the IP Training and Qualification. Close co-operation and co-ordination between all INTERACT Points therefore, is extremely important in order to achieve the best return on investment and to ensure that the definition and organisation of training packages, regional seminars and workshops meet the real needs of the INTERREG Programme.

Proposed Task Description

Needs-assessment surveys will be an initial and ongoing requirement for the work of this IP. These surveys will include in-depth interviews with key decision-makers among the specific target groups and will include questions on possible and desired forms of training and transfer activities. The preparation and focus of the assessments will be delivered by different INTERACT Points, and the overall co-ordination of these activities will be in the hands of the INTERACT Secretariat. This coordinating role will ensure that duplication of effort is avoided due to the fact that in many cases target groups will overlap or topics to be covered will apply to many target groups.

The IP Training and Qualification will also develop an organisational framework within which future interventions can be performed as cost-effectively and efficiently as possible. It is important, for example that the design of training and transfer

activities is developed in line with the overall coordination framework for INTERACT, particularly with regard to the localisation of knowledge.

Although the final determination of inputs for training will come from the analysis of training needs and comments from other Interact Points, an initial survey conducted during the programming period has already highlighted a few common points of interest which must be dealt with by this IP. These include:

- Eligibility rules:

- Monitoring:

- Information:

- Project Cycle management:

- Strategic profile of INTERREG projects:

Special emphasis should be placed upon the pro-active involvement of less developed programmes, in order to ensure that the investments made by the Commission are seen to be productive.

The following outline of training and transfer activities is strictly indicative. The design and organisational framework for training and transfer activities will need to be based upon a detailed assessment of needs and priority rankings as part of a comprehensive work programme that will be agreed with the members of the Monitoring Committee.

Short seminars

Lack of time and the pressure of work commitments are the biggest obstacles to the provision of training for beneficiaries. It is likely therefore that the bulk of training will be delivered through the medium of short seminars. Given the extreme difficulty of establishing an effective and user-friendly distance-learning platform, which would also have to solve the problem of multilingual approach, this type of seminar allows for great flexibility, large participation at local level and a high degree of interaction and involvement by participants (a particular effort must be made to ensure a high degree of interaction).

Open-days

Open-days will be a key action for a direct transfer of good practices and personal experiences among the beneficiaries of INTERACT. JTS and MA are requested to communicate their interest in being visited by corresponding operators from other INTERREG programmes during "open-days" which will bring immediate opportunities

for exchange of experiences under working conditions. Similar open-days may be organised for visiting institutions which may be interested in sharing their experience in transnational interregional co-operation: Euregios / consolidated networks with technical common services etc. The IP Training and Qualification will provide the necessary services for the organisation of such open days, including sourcing potential locations, establishing contacts between interested parties. The costs of the visits however are likely to be funded from Priority 2 funding.

Exchange programmes

All participating bodies will be requested to indicate their willingness and ability to receive visitors from different bodies on an exchange basis. The aim of the programme is to give the possibility for a first-hand involvement in procedures and work practices that might lend themselves to be adjusted to the needs of other regions or to be adopted as common standards.

Trainer network

It will be necessary to develop a database of existing expertise that can be mobilised for training interventions during the period as required. This pool of trainers will include individuals, associations and public/private training institutions with a relevant track record in training at international, multicultural level. Particular emphasis should be placed on the language skills of potential trainers.

Management workshops

For the managers of large JTS regular, focused discussion and exchange on strategic issues is important. The topics of such seminars could range from technical questions to transnational policy issues. These workshops could also act as exchange platforms between the Commission and stakeholders of INTERREG.

Key target groups

The target group of this measure will be the managing bodies of the INTERREG programmes, including Managing Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariats, Paying Authorities, administrative officers within the JTS (where they exist), National Contact Points / Permanent Committees and other relevant stakeholders of INTERREG programmes.

Expected Results

A detailed indication of the specific indicators that will be needed for the monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the IP Qualification and Transfer will be provided in

the Work Programme. In the meantime, an outline of the kinds of indicators and results that will be expected is provided in Chapter 9 of this Programme Complement.

4.4 Outline work Programme – Managing transition and external co-operation (P3/M1)

Aim

- To encourage and strengthen co-operation in regions along external borders

- To facilitate the start up of INTERREG in the new Member States after accession and safeguard a smooth transition from PHARE to INTERREG

Operational objectives

- To raise awareness of and to develop tools for all INTERREG programmes involving border regions according to COM 437

- To provide a coherent information framework with regard to the implementation of INTERREG at the EU's external borders

- To develop specific training and transfer packages for current and future stakeholders of INTERREG programmes in these regions

Rationale

The encouragement of participation of neighbouring countries is a substantial target common to all strands of INTERREG. In terms of programme management, project development and networking, certain programmes are particularly challenged by the prospect of Enlargement i.e.:

- INTERREG IIIA programmes involving border regions according COM 437

- INTERREG IIIB programmes including Candidate Countries in their respective cooperation Spaces

- INTERREG IIIC in particular the North, East and South Zone since these programmes cover also the border regions (COM 437)

For these programmes Accession will bring about the need to reshape – at least partly – the programme management structures. In particular there is a need to facilitate a smooth transition from PHARE-based to INTERREG-based procedures, i.e. in particular from a project-driven to a programming approach. This has

significant repercussions on implementation structures, selection and monitoring procedures, and is most challenging for INTERREG IIIA.

The INTERACT Point/s External Cooperation should assist in the Management of Transition in border regions with Accession countries. The task force should support the ongoing process of institution building in order to:

- Ensure a smooth and efficient programme implementation

- Prepare pragmatic solutions for the period 2003/2004

- Strengthen the links between existing institutions

Additionally the Joint INTERREG IIIA / PHARE CBC Programmes at the external border as well as the specific instruments of Small Project Fund and Grant Schemes under PHARE CBC are important tools in terms of preparing Candidate Countries for the use of Structural Funds at regional level. Activities launched within this work programme should assist and strengthen the management of these instruments and their conversion into Structural Funds activities.

Proposed Task Description

Progress in the alignment of funding possibilities under PHARE CBC and INTERREG will pave the way for new project opportunities. Actions may take the form of:

- Development of joint co-operation tools and mechanism to support co-operation between Member States and neighbouring countries

- Elaboration and dissemination of "best-practice" procedures and manuals

- Information transfer and training for institutions involved in INTERREG and PHARE

The listing of proposed actions is strictly indicative. The first work step will be to set up networks of contact persons covering the relevant persons who are in charge of INTERREG IIIA, IIIB and IIIC programmes including border regions (COM 437) plus the relevant authorities in neighbouring countries. Among these networks strand-specific needs assessments with regard to joint co-operation tools, best practice, training etc. will have to be carried out in the short-term. Based on this needs assessment a priority ranking for the initial set of actions has to be developed. This will lead to a detailed action plan. It is important that the work programme covers the forthcoming two years of transition. Hence a detailed action plan for the two years immediately before Accession has to be developed.

All actions have to be defined in close co-operation with the relevant Commission services, i.e. in particular DG Regio and DG Enlargement.

Advisory services on border regions and transition

An advisory service should be created that will address the specific needs of programmes working under the specific condition of INTERREG and PHARE. The task comprises

- Installation of a targeted advisory service with the ability to handle in particular practical issues associated with the transition such as definition of new information and control procedures, installation of financial control mechanisms including requests for payments, certification and validation of expenditure, approval of expenditure and other technical and administrative procedural issues.

- Country surveys focusing on aspects of administrative decentralisation, competencies of different layers of administration and regional INTERREG stakeholders

- Coverage of several Candidate Countries' languages in second-stage feedback through the combination of help desk expertise and linguistic back-up

Transition Tool Box

The Tool Box should promote enhanced introduction of standardised tools and practices in the context of transition from PHARE to INTERREG. It should raise awareness of key issues in terms of transformation of existing arrangements and management structures after accession. Specific manuals and guidelines for the management of transition should be developed.

Transition Training and Transfer Packages

The exchange of experience between INTERREG managing bodies in the border regions should be guided and promoted in order to make the special know-how available outside of individual programmes. Furthermore specific training packages for stakeholders in border regions and neighbouring countries should be developed.

Key target groups

The following institutions and bodies form the key target groups for the actions of the INTERACT Point External Cooperation:

➢   In the context of strand A:

- National INTERREG coordinators of the countries involved according to COM 437

- Managing and Paying Authorities for INTERREG IIIA programmes which are located in the border regions (COM 437)

- Technical Secretariats of INTERREG IIIA programmes which are located in the border region (COM 437)

- Institutions which combine project development and administrative support for specific tasks under INTERREG IIIA such as Regional Managements, Regional Development Agencies and Euroregions in these regions

- The parallel structures in the neighbouring countries which are in charge of programme management and implementation for the current PHARE CBC programmes respectively the future INTERREG IIIA programmes

➢   Strand B and C

- Managing and Paying Authorities, Technical Secretariats as well as national support structures such as Contact Points which are in charge of programmes covering the border regions plus the adjacent territories in neighbouring countries

- The future national or regional authorities in the neighbouring countries who will be in charge of these programmes on national level

Expected Results

A detailed indication of the specific indicators that will be needed for the monitoring and evaluation of the activities of the IP Managing Transition and External Cooperation will be provided in the Work Programme. In the meantime, an outline of the kinds of indicators and results that will be expected is provided in Chapter 9 of this Programme Complement.

4.5 INTERREG development: local and regional initiatives (P2)

Aims

- To improve the quality of INTERREG III programmes and projects

- To intensify and expand INTERACT activities for different groups of players

Operational objectives

- To enable the transfer of experience of good practice between institutions and players in different geographical areas, programmes and INTERREG III strands

- To support project development activities

Rationale

Priority 2 is intended to complement and support the actions taken by the INTERACT Points and the INTERACT Secretariat, and to assist different groupings of regions and players to expand INTERACT activities for the benefit of their clients (e.g. mountainous regions, maritime regions, sparsely populated regions).

The priority is motivated by the experiences of INTERREG I and II, where past pilot projects on interregional co-operation have shown that genuine co-operation is difficult to organise. It is therefore important to identify the obstacles to the development of co-operation as well as the solutions that have been found, both at the level of common programme management, and of implementing joint projects. In previous INTERREG programmes and in other cross-border, transnational and interregional projects, different organisations have undertaken actions for the benefit of various groupings of project participants. Their activities have, in many cases, been an important factor for the success of these projects and the INTERACT Programme will allow their experience to be availed of where appropriate. Under this priority therefore, following an open call for proposals, projects will be developed which meet these objectives.

Examples of activities

As with other outline work programmes, any listing of activities provided here is strictly indicative. However, it is possible to envisage that there will be two broad areas of activity under this work programme. These are –

➢ Focus a): Complement and support the actions taken by INTERACT Points and the INTERACT Secretariat: It is evident many of the achievements of

INTERACT Points and the INTERACT Secretariat will be useful for a wider audience. Given the limited budget and the short time span for the implementation of relatively complex tasks the overall success of INTERACT will largely depend on the commitment of multipliers. Incentives for a broader engagement and participation will increase the added value of INTERACT for the INTERREG initiative. Various actors and institutions should contribute to the transfer and exchange of experiences as well as to the adjustment of tools, the inclusion of new aspects of development, the intensifying of cooperation etc. Complementary and supportive actions could take the following form:

- Comparative and benchmarking studies on certain development issues or further development perspectives of INTERREG

- INTERREG-platforms and seminars for exchange of experiences, know-how input for specific thematic issues

- Exchange on best practice in terms of management tools, projects

➢ Focus b): Assist different groupings of regions and players to expand INTERACT-activities: Much of the work of the INTERACT Programme is implemented through networks, formed around the INTERACT Points and the INTERACT Secretariat. The results of this work, such as harmonised management tools, information packages, training modules, strategic networks etc. are part of INTERACT's open approach, i.e. activities designed to transfer know-how to a wider audience, strategies for the localisation of knowledge for specific groups of regions and adaptation for specific purposes. It is envisaged that this open approach should be actively supported by this priority. The assistance for different groupings could take the following form:

- Participation of a wider audience in INTERACT training activities

- Adaptation of certain elements of training and qualification to the context of a specific group of regions,

- Workshops and conferences targeted at a wider group of persons and institutions involved in INTERREG programmes and projects

- Transfer of know-how and common tools to a specific group of regions

Open approach

All projects launched should follow an open approach: the diffusion of all relevant project results will be an explicit obligation for all final beneficiaries. The assessment of projects will take account of the proposed mechanisms, media and target groups for information, dissemination and transfer activities.

Transfer as a key objective

Following the approach of INTERREG IIIC – which highlights the intensity of cooperation as one of the key achievements of operations' – all activities should strive for transfer of know-how to clearly identified target groups. Operations might combine broader strategies of dissemination and exchange but parts of the operation should include transfer activities. Studies should include considerations on future transfer activities.

Expected Results

Following the approach of INTERREG IIIC, quantified indicators are not yet needed at this stage. Due to the innovative character of the initiative, the Monitoring Committee will develop quantification of objectives when a sufficient number of applications have been approved. The annual reports will provide information about the status of quantification of objectives. In the meantime, an initial identification of anticipated indicators of achievement is provided in Chapter 9 of this Programme Complement.

Final Beneficiaries

Priority 2 "INTERREG Development" is aimed at a wider target group, which covers institutions, entities and persons involved in INTERREG at a programme or an operational level. Thus, national and regional authorities or equivalent regional bodies as well as public equivalent bodies with the capacity to take the full responsibility for the administration and spending of public funds are eligible.

Eligible costs

The indicative costs applied for have to consider the Regulation (EC) No 1685/2000 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 as regards eligibility of expenditure of operations co-financed by the Structural Funds and the INTERACT Programme Complement.

With regard to the **eligibility of preparation costs** for operations approved by the Monitoring Committee the date from which programme's expenditure shall be eligible is July 16th, 2002, following the submission of the INTERACT programme to the European Commission

To avoid preparation costs becoming a substantial part of the operation's budget, the following criteria must be met:

- Total eligible costs for project preparation are subject to a common ceiling of 2% of total costs, subject to a maximum of €30,000.

- Only costs that show a direct connection to the development of the operation based on verified audited invoices are eligible.

4.6 INTERREG participation at the external border (P3/M2)

Aim

- To encourage and strengthen cooperation in regions along the external border

Operational Objectives

- To develop joint cooperation tools and mechanisms supporting cooperation between Member States and neighbouring countries

Rationale

This measure is part of the community actions for border regions according to the Commission Communication on the impact of enlargement on border regions with the candidate countries adopted on 25 July 2001 [COM(2001) 437 final]. Thus projects financed under this measure must be for the benefit of the 23 regions covered by COM 437. These are –

- Finland: Uusimaa, Etelä-Suomi.

- Germany: Niederbayern, Oberpfalz, Oberfranken, Brandenburg, Berlin, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Chemnitz, Dresden.

- Austria: Burgenland, Niederösterreich, Wien, Kärnten, Steiermark, Oberösterreich.

- Italy: Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

- Greece: Anatoliki Makedonia – Thraki, Kentriki Makedonia, Voreio Aigaio, Notio Aigaio, and Kriti.

It is the border regions on the EU's external border that have to overcome specific obstacles during the implementation of INTERREG. This is in part due to

- The regions' peripheral location and long separation from their neighbours

- Continuing major differences despite administrative changes and ongoing administrative reform processes in the neighbouring countries

- The fact that in Central and Eastern Europe the programmes aimed at supporting co-operation under cross-border projects began only in 1994 and with very different funding mechanisms.

In principle priority 3 measure 2 is compatible with priority 2. The measure is intended to (a) complement and support the actions taken by the INTERACT Point External Cooperation and the INTERACT Secretariat and (b) to assist different groupings of regions and players to expand INTERACT activities for the benefit of their clients. As with Priority 2, projects will be developed following an open call for proposals.

Complementary and supportive actions (a) could take the following form:

- Comparative and benchmarking studies on certain development issues or further development perspectives of INTERREG

- Networking for co-operation, in particular at the operative level, cross-fertilisation and interlinking of projects between Member States and Accession Countries, thematic inputs on specific cooperation issues

Assistance for different groupings (b) could take the following forms:

- Participation of a wider audience in training activities, in particular related to the management of transition in border regions with Accession Countries

- Adjustment of certain elements of training and qualification to the context of specific groups of border regions

- Workshops and conferences targeted at a wider group of persons and institutions involved in INTERREG programmes and projects

- Transfer of know-how and common tools to a specific group of regions

- Support to project development between partners of Accession Countries and Member States

For the successful management of transition in border regions with Accession Countries it will be very important to include the experience of INTERREG IIIA, B and C secretariats and available expertise in the Accession Countries

Geographical reference

The Lead Partner for projects under priority 3 measure 2 needs to be located in one of these border regions. However, co-operative actions with partners in all Member States and with neighbouring countries are possible.

Open approach

All projects launched should follow an open approach: the diffusion of all relevant project results will be an explicit obligation for all final beneficiaries. The assessment of projects will take account of the proposed mechanisms, media and target groups for information, dissemination and transfer activities.

Transfer as a key objective

Following the approach of INTERREG IIIC – which highlights the intensity of cooperation as one of the key achievements of operations' – all activities should strive for transfer of know-how to clearly identified target groups. Operations might combine broader strategies of dissemination and exchange but parts of the operation should include transfer activities. Studies should include considerations on future transfer activities.

Expected Results

Following the approach of INTERREG IIIC, quantified indicators are not yet needed at this stage. Due to the innovative character of the initiative, the Monitoring Committee will develop quantification of objectives when a sufficient number of applications have been approved. The annual reports will provide information about the status of quantification of objectives. In the meantime, an initial indication of anticipated indicators of achievement for this Priority is provided in Chapter 9 of this Programme Complement.

Final Beneficiaries

Activities are targeted at national and regional authorities or equivalent regional bodies as well as public equivalent bodies.

Eligible costs

The indicative costs applied for have to consider the Regulation (EC) No 1685/2000 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 as regards eligibility of expenditure of operations co-financed by the Structural Funds and the INTERACT Programme Complement.

With regard to the eligibility of preparation costs for operations approved by the Monitoring Committee the date from which programme's expenditure shall be eligible is July 16th, 2002, following the submission of the INTERACT programme the European Commission

To avoid **preparation costs** becoming a substantial part of the operation's budget, the following criteria must be met:

- Total eligible costs for project preparation are subject to a common ceiling of 2% of total costs, subject to a maximum of €30,000.

- Only costs that show a direct connection to the development of the operation based on verified audited invoices are eligible.

4.7   Technical Assistance

Given the nature of the INTERACT Programme, which is to some extent in itself a Technical Assistance Programme for INTERREG, the use of technical assistance funds for INTERACT will be limited and focused on the technical aspects of an operational implementation structure.

According to Rule 11 of the EC Regulation 1685/2000, technical assistance has the purpose of aiding the preparation, implementation, evaluation and control involved in the programme and is subdivided into two measures:

- TA-1: Administration, implementation, support and control activities (pursuant to Rule 11, par. 2), and

- TA-2: Other activities within the scope of technical assistance (pursuant to Rule 11, par. 3)

4.7.1 Management, monitoring and implementation (P4/M1)

Objectives

- To contribute to the efficient implementation of the programme

- To contribute to the provision of efficient and transparent co-ordination at programme level

- **Proposed Activities**

The following activities are to be carried out within the scope of TA-1 in order to ensure the efficient administration of the programme:

- Activities relating to the preparation, selection and appraisal of the assistance and of operations

- The operation of a computerised system for the monitoring, administration, support and evaluation of the programmes (ongoing systematic recording of the material implementation of the programme using financial and other implementation indicators for each of the projects receiving assistance)

- Activities involving meetings of the Monitoring Committee and Sub Committees in connection with interventions

- Audits and on the spot checks of operations.

4.7.2 Information, publicity, evaluation (P4/M2)

Objectives

- Information for the general public about the role played by the Community in the Assistance concerned and its results

- Activation of potential final beneficiaries

Proposed Activities

Within the scope of TA-2, the following activities are planned:

- The setting up of a computerised system for monitoring, administration, support and evaluation of the programmes,

- Preparation and carrying out of evaluations,

- Information activities pursuant to Art. 46 of the Regulation No. 1260/1999

- Disclosure activities

Eligible costs

- All activities undertaken have to consider the Rule 11 of the Regulation (EC)1685/2000 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999, Article 23 as regards eligibility of expenditure for Technical Assistance operations co-financed by the Structural Funds.

5. Selection Procedures

5.1 Selection criteria for INTERACT Points (P1 and P3/M1)

Public administration bodies in Member States or their equivalent, that fulfil the function of a Managing or Paying Authority or Joint Secretariat for an INTERREG Programme in strand A, B or C, will be invited to apply to manage a work programme, in whole or in part, to be implemented by an INTERACT Point.

The application process will involve two steps. The first step consists of a formal declaration of interest in response to the invitation to apply, using the format provided for this purpose. The detailed documentation for this purpose will be made available to those interested by the INTERACT Secretariat. The second step consists of a submission of a detailed proposal. On the basis of the declaration of interest, the Managing Authority will invite the successful applicants to submit a detailed proposal as to how they would manage the INTERACT Point in question.

The main group from which INTERACT Points will be recruited are Technical Secretariats of INTERREG Programmes. In total it is envisaged that between 4 and 6 INTERACT Points will be established, with due consideration given to achieving a balanced geographic distribution throughout the EU territory. .

With a view to ensuring a speedy implementation of the INTERACT Programme and to avoid any unnecessary delays in the initial stages, the selection of INTERACT Points for the first phase will include the following steps –

- Issue of invitation to submit an expression of interest to all eligible institutions.

- Provision of information by the INTERACT Secretariat on the requirements for the expression of interest, including the eligibility criteria and selection criteria that will be applied.

- Submission of declaration of interest by eligible bodies in accordance with the documentation provided for the purpose by the INTERACT Secretariat.

- Preparation of a short list of eligible institutions by the INTERACT Secretariat based on the eligibility criteria and selection criteria specified in detail below, for submission to the Managing Authority, who will in turn submit it for approval to the Monitoring Committee.

- Issue of invitation to successful institutions to submit detailed proposals for the management of an INTERACT Point.

- The Applications must be submitted within 6 weeks from the date of the invitation to apply.

In selecting INTERACT Points, a number of eligibility criteria and selection criteria will apply.

Eligibility criteria are minimum requirements, each of which has to be met for an operation to be declared eligible.

Selection criteria will be applied to assess the respective merits of eligible operations.

On behalf of the Managing Authority, the INTERACT Secretariat, will use the eligibility criteria to check the applications. Two lists will be drawn up: one listing the eligible applications, and another listing those assessed as being ineligible. The list of ineligible applications will include a short description of the reasons why the application was deemed ineligible. On the basis of the selection criteria, a ranked list of eligible applications will be submitted to the Managing Authority for each measure. The scores awarded to each application will contain a brief explanation of how they were arrived at. Having considered the proposed list of eligible applications and the accompanying explanations, the Managing Authority will forward the list to the Monitoring Committee for consideration and endorsement. A list of the non-eligible applications will also be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for information, giving the reasons for their ineligibility. Where it is considered appropriate and necessary, the Managing Authority may be assisted in the assessment of proposals by a working group of the Monitoring Committee.

The decision on the selection of INTERACT Points rests with the Monitoring Committee. Before making the final decision, the Monitoring Committee will check he list of all applications to be proposed for approval against the indicative annual financial budget

Eligibility criteria are the minimum requirements, each of which has to be met for a proposal to be declared eligible. The following is a list of the criteria that will be used to determine the eligibility of applications –

1. Applications are restricted to Joint Technical Secretariats of INTERREG and public administration bodies of Member States, or their equivalent. Only Joint Technical Secretariats and public administration bodies of Member States, that fulfil the function of a Managing or Paying Authority for an INTERREG Programme in strand A, B or C may apply .

2. The proposal has the backing of the Managing Authorities of an INTERREG Programme.

3. The proposal contains a clearly defined management and financial structure that describes the organisational structures and financial control procedures in a manner that is consistent with Structural Funds regulations.

4. The proposal demonstrates good project design techniques – the work programme outlines the work steps / milestones to be achieved in a logical order, i.e. the preparatory steps needed, key implementation steps etc.

5. The proposal demonstrates an ability to address the needs of several INTERREG Programmes – i.e. it addresses the needs of more than one strand of INTERREG or clearly covers the interests of several programmes under one strand of INTERREG. Programme specific "technical assistance" measures are definitely excluded.

6. The Proposal does not duplicate existing work – in particular it must be demonstrated it does not duplicate current information activities of the Commission and / or INTERREG managing bodies.

7. The proposal is not in receipt of any other Community support – the proposal should demonstrate that synergies with the existing work structures are effectively used but that activities included in the proposal are clearly separated in terms of operational expenses, financial management etc.

8. The proposal complies with EC Policies and Regulations, including regulations on Structural Funds and Community policies.

Selection criteria will be applied to assess the respective merits of eligible proposals. The following is a list of the criteria that will be used in assessing proposals –

1. Extended View on Services – the proposal should demonstrate broad professional, technical and economic capacity to provide services with transnational character, empowerment of INTERREG actors, dissemination of results and accessibility for key target groups.

2. Substantial experience – the applicant must demonstrate substantial experiences in the field of programme management, support information management and know-how transfer. The applicant is responsible for INTERREG programme management activities with interregional, transnational and/or a cross-border focus covering issues of wider European interest.

3. Added Value to the INTERREG Initiative – the proposal must demonstrate added value for the INTERREG initiative

4. Tangible and Measurable Results – the proposal demonstrates clear attainable objectives to allow for ex ante appraisal and ex post evaluation. Projects that have a clearly visible output will be prioritised.

5. Projects outline the communication functions to be fulfilled – since communication and information activities form the core of all INTERACT activities, the proposal duly reflect the most important communication functions to be fulfilled.

6. Contribution to horizontal policy objectives – the planning and implementation procedures described in the proposal take account of the need to contribute to horizontal policy objectives, including equal opportunities, the environment and any other relevant EU policy area.

7. Demonstration of Value for Money – the costs are appropriate and the budget for the project is proportionate to the results aimed for. In addition projects will have to demonstrate cost-effectiveness at unit level.

5.2   Project Selection: P2 and P3/M2

In priority 2 and priority 3 measure 2, projects will be developed that address specific issues that arise under the three INTERREG Strands. The Monitoring Committee will issue a call for proposals from eligible institutions. Applications must be submitted by the lead partner and be cofinanced by regional or national public authorities. The Monitoring Committee selects the projects to be carried out under these priorities. In compliance with the INTERREG III Guidelines a joint project assessment and selection procedure will be put in place.

In assessing applications for the development of projects, a number of eligibility and selection criteria will be applied.

Eligibility criteria are minimum requirements, each of which has to be met for an operation to be declared eligible.

Selection criteria will be applied to assess the respective merits of eligible operations.

On behalf of the Managing Authority, the INTERACT Secretariat, will use the eligibility criteria to check the project proposals. Two lists will be drawn up: one listing the eligible proposals, and another listing those assessed as being ineligible. The list of ineligible proposals will include a short description of the reasons why they were deemed ineligible. On the basis of the selection criteria, a ranked list of eligible

proposals will be submitted to the Managing Authority. The scores awarded to each proposal will contain a brief explanation of how they were arrived at. Having considered the proposed list of eligible proposals and the accompanying explanations, the Managing Authority will forward the list to the Monitoring Committee for consideration and endorsement. A list of the non-eligible proposals will also be submitted to the Monitoring Committee for information, giving the reasons for their ineligibility. Where it is considered appropriate and necessary, the Managing Authority may be assisted in the assessment of proposals by a working group of the Monitoring Committee.

The decision on the selection of project proposals rests with the Monitoring Committee. Before making the final decision, the Monitoring Committee will check he list of all proposals to be accepted for approval against the indicative annual financial budget

The **eligibility criteria** that will be used in assessing project proposals –

1. The proposed project must not be limited to the provision of traditional technical assistance. It must demonstrate the ability to contribute significant added value to the INTERREG Programme.

2. The application form must be submitted in due time in hard copy and electronic format and it must be completed in accordance with instructions.

3. The proposal must be accompanied by a statement of commitment to the co-financing requirements.

4. The general ERDF co-financing rate of 50% maximum must be observed

5. The indicative costs applied for must take account of regulation (EC) No 1685/2000 of 28 July 2000 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 as regards eligibility of expenditure of operations co-financed by the Structural Funds and must be in accordance with the general provisions of the INTERACT Programme Complement.

6. The duration of the project must be clearly indicated. Projects must be finalised before the end of 2008

7. The proposed project must be in line with relevant national and EU legislation and policies

8. The proposed project is not in receipt of funding from any other EU or national source

9. The proposed project must complement and support the actions taken by the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points and must be seen to assist

different groupings of regions and players in all strands of INTERREG to expand their activities.

10. The proposed project must address the needs of more than one strand of INTERREG or clearly covers the interest of several programmes under one strand of INTERREG.

11. The proposed project has to involve partners from at least two Member States.

In the case of Priority 3, Measure 2, the lead partner must be located in one of the eligible regions (COM 437, and as outlined in section 4.6 of this Programme Complement), and at least one partner has to be from an Accession Country (i.e. a minimum of three partners).

The **selection criteria** that will be used to rank eligible project proposals –

1. Relevance for the INTERACT programme

    1.1 Clear description of the problem to be addressed and its relevance to the Programme, the objectives and their relevance to the Programme objectives and a clear definition of the planned effects (outputs, results, impacts)

    1.2 Project clearly related to the implementation of INTERREG at either programme or project level

    1.3 Clear description of which group of INTERREG players are to be targeted and which aspects of cooperation are to be addressed

    1.4 Clear geographical and/or thematic focus which relates to the general objectives of the INTERREG initiative

2. Coherence / Consistency of Proposal

    2.1 Coherence between problem, objectives and planned effects

    2.2 Coherence between planned effects and financial resources

    2.3 Intensity of co-operation (exchange and dissemination of experience, transfer of instruments and projects, development of new approaches)

    2.4 Proposals should demonstrate consistency with national and regional policies

    2.5 The proposal should build on previous experience.

3. Quality of Approach and Management

    3.1 Coherence between the planned project effects and proposed approach and methodology

    3.2 Clear division of tasks and responsibilities, realistic and transparent work-plan and timetable

    3.3 Experience of the Lead Partner in project management and financial management

    3.4 Experience of partners in similar programmes and projects

4. Quality of Partnership/network

    4.1 Coherence between the project objectives and partnership/network

    4.2 Level of involvement of all partners/network partners in developing project idea, preparing application, implementing and co-financing the project

    4.3 One or more partners from neighbouring countries involved in developing idea, preparing application, implementing and co-financing the project.

5. Quality of Results

    5.1 Expected results are concrete (visible and measurable); publicity and dissemination to the relevant target groups is provided for

    5.2 Expected impact on INTERREG or specific strand of INTERREG

    5.3 Degree of innovation to be achieved (new methods and management tools, development of new networks)

    5.4 Expected impact on the performance of participating regions in INTERREG

    5.5 Either complementary to existing information activities of the Commission or INTERREG managing bodies or significantly improving existing information

    5.6 The results expected must contribute to the achievement of the goal of sustainable development

6. Durability of Project Results

    Provisions to ensure the durability of the project effects (e.g. strategy for further co-operation, actors responsible for continuation of activities, etc.)

6.   Overview of Agreements between Member States

The agreements between Member States will reflect the state of the art in this matter. The agreements are currently being prepared and will be dealt with outside the scope of this Programme Complement.

7. Communications Plan

Information and publicity about assistance from the Structural Funds is intended to increase public awareness and transparency regarding the activities of the European Union and create a coherent picture of the assistance concerned across all Member States. It is incumbent therefore on the INTERACT Programme to fulfil the requirements for information and publicity as laid out in EC Regulation 1159/2000. However, given the particular nature of the work of the INTERACT Programme as a support and development initiative for INTERREG, it is clear that the generation of awareness and information for the broader public will be limited in comparison with other Structural Funds programmes. INTERACT's web-based communication strategy will assist in raising awareness of the INTERREG initiative and of the role played by INTERACT. The bulk of the materials and outputs of the INTERACT Programme and all of its achievements will be published on the web. In general, the communication strategy for the INTERACT Programme and in particular the work of the INTERACT Points, will to a great extent be concentrated on the Management of INTERREG programmes and the national and regional authorities and equivalent regional bodies associated with that management.

The Managing Authority of INTERACT is ultimately responsible for publicity – the INTERACT Secretariat will carry out this function on its behalf. Publicity shall be carried out in cooperation with the European Commission, which shall be informed of measures taken for this purpose.

The principal role of the INTERACT Secretariat in this regard will be to ensure that its own target groups are adequately reached and to further assist the INTERREG Project Managers in the implementation of the requirements EC Regulation 1159/2000.

This communications action plan shall include:

Aims and target groups,

Content and strategy of the communications and information measures

Principal communications platforms to be used

Indicative budget

Indication of the administrative bodies responsible for implementation,

Criteria to be used to evaluate the measures carried out.

7.1   Aims and Target Groups

The aim of this communications plan will be to inform potential and final beneficiaries, as well as

- National, regional and local authorities and other competent public authorities,

- Equivalent regional bodies

- The economic and social partners,

- Non-governmental organisations, especially bodies to promote equality between men and women and bodies working to protect and improve the environment,

- Project operators and promoters,

about the opportunities offered by the INTERACT Programme in order to ensure total transparency in its implementation.

In addition, the Programme will work with INTERREG Programme Managers in informing the general public about the role played by the European Union in cooperation with the Member States in the assistance concerned and its results.

7.2   Content and Strategy of Information and Publicity Measures

The measures to be implemented shall be designed to achieve the aims referred to above. These are:

- Ensuring transparency for potential and final beneficiaries,

- Informing the public.

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7.2.1 Ensuring transparency for potential and final beneficiaries and other groups

The INTERACT Secretariat shall in particular ensure:

- Publication of the content of the programme and programme complement, including an indication of the involvement of the Structural Funds concerned, circulation of these documents and their availability to those who request them,

- The establishment of appropriate reporting on the progress of the assistance throughout the programming period,

- The implementation of information measures relating to the management, monitoring and evaluation of assistance.

The INTERACT Secretariat shall also ensure that information and publicity material is presented in a uniform fashion and in accordance with the rules on the means of information and publicity set out in point 6 of the annex to the regulation.

The INTERACT Secretariat shall also ensure the existence of appropriate channels for circulating information in order to ensure transparency for the various potential partners and beneficiaries, particularly institutions and organisations addressed by priority 2 and Priority 3 measure 2. This information will include a clear outline of the administrative procedures to be followed, a description of the system for managing applications, information on the criteria used in selection procedures and on the mechanisms for evaluation and names of persons or contact points who can explain how the programme operates and the criteria for eligibility are used.

7.2.2 Informing the public

In order to make the public more aware of the part played by the European Union in the INTERREG and INTERACT Programmes, the INTERACT Secretariat shall, in cooperation with the managers of INTEREG Programmes, inform the media in the most appropriate way about INTERACT's achievements. The key media to inform the broader public will be the INTERACT web site. Steps shall be taken, at the time of the original launch of assistance following approval by the Commission and of the main phases of implementation, to alert also selected media in the European context as appropriate; such steps may include press releases and the placing of articles in the most suitable electronic and printed media. Close co-ordination with the European Commission's communication and publicity related to INTERREG will be ensured.

7.3 Principal Media and Communications Platforms

7.3.1 Key media

The key media addressing broader groups of INTERREG stakeholders are:

- INTERACT Web Site
- INTERACT Newsletter

Both media will contain a clear indication of the European Union's participation.

7.3.2 Key information events

The key events addressing broader groups of INTERREG stakeholders are:

- INTERACT information days
- Spark-off events for selected groups of regions, IIIB cooperation spaces or INTERREG IIIC zones

The organisers of these events will make the European Commission's contribution explicit by displaying the European flag in meeting rooms and using the Community emblem on documents. The INTERACT Secretariat will cooperate with the Commission's offices in the Member States concerned, in the preparation and implementation of such events.

7.4 Indicative Budget

According to Rule 11 of the EC Regulation 1685/2000, all the measures envisaged under this communications plan are covered by Technical Assistance 2. The indicative budget for Technical Assistance 2 amounts to €0.44 million, of which 20% will be made available for information and publicity measures according to EC Regulation 1159/2000.

This budget will be used to part-finance certain activities for a broader group of INTERREG stakeholders. The INTERACT programme should be understood as a communication tool for the INTERRREG initiative. Substantial parts of the programme's funds will be used for various communication and PR activities and development of media. Hence it seems justified to use only a very limited share of the TA 2 budget for information and publicity measures according to EC Regulation 1159/2000.

Decisions regarding the use of the budget will be taken by the Monitoring Committee.

7.5   Bodies Responsible for Implementation

The INTERACT Secretariat is responsible for all communications activities aimed at the direct beneficiaries of the INTERACT Programme.

7.6   Evaluation of the effectiveness of the communications plan

The effectiveness of the information and publicity activities of the INTERACT Programme will be evaluated principally by the level of awareness and take-up of the programme among INTERREG Project Managers throughout all the Member States of the EU and the level of cooperation and involvement achieved with neighbouring countries and candidate countries.

The communications activities of the programme should also lead to an increased effectiveness in the information and publicity activities of individual INTERREG Projects in the Member States.

8.   Description of the Agreement on Data Exchange

The INTERACT programmes will develop a common database for the administration of operations, which facilitates the generation of data files that support the requirements of the file interface of the Structural Funds common (SFC) database. The financial data in the project administration database will be organised by taking into account the 'Vademecum for the Programming Period 2000-2006'. As far as the scope of information within the database is concerned, the requirements of EC Regulation 438/2000 will be met. For the development of the monitoring system all achievements of the

- INTERREG IIIC programme management as well as

- the specific requirements of the Paying Authority and the INTERACT Secretariat responsible for the monitoring system

are taken into account.

The following section describes the basic function of the common database/monitoring system for the application, reporting and payment phases as the key elements of the project management cycle.

During the **application phase** the indicative budgets of applications will be compiled in financial tables. In the course of the development of the monitoring system it will be decided if the system should be used for the administration of all applications (i.e. eligible and non-eligible ones) or, if only approved operations will be

During the **reporting phase** requests for payments from operations will be gathered for each reporting period.

The next step will be the **payment phase** when after checking the financial reports payments of EU funding will be carried out. All payments will be registered in the database. Also the initially agreed budgets of the operations will be kept in the database for comparison.

The database will allow a recording of all changes. Thus, it is possible to get information on the budgetary status for each single day.

The generation of interface files and the submission to the SFC-database will be recorded in the database.

For creating the file names of interface files the rules of file interface 1.2 will be taken into account. The character code ISO 8859 will be applied. Language will be English.

Files generated from the database will be submitted via email.

The development of the administration databases for operations will take place during Spring 2003. New requirements for the file interface can still be taken into account.

9. Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation

Because of the nature of the INTERACT Programme, it is not possible at this stage to give a precise definition to quantifiable indicators for every aspect of the programme. It is only after the detailed work programmes for the INTERACT Points have been elaborated and approved and the first projects have been selected that this will be possible. At that stage a comprehensive set of indicators will be developed and accepted as the basis for subsequent monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

In the meantime it is possible and necessary to define some broad output and impact indicators that can be developed and elaborated further at a later stage. The following tables contain lists of indicators at various levels of the Programme. The first table (9.1) contains indicators that apply across the whole programme. Subsequent tables address each of the Priorities and measures.

9.1 Programme level

The indicators at this level are related to the indicator framework developed for the Programme – i.e. to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the three strands of INTERREG (see INTERACT CIP, page 71.)

Core Activity	Output Indicator	Impact Indicator
Assessment of Needs	One detailed report on user needs exists	Users agree that programme activities reflect their needs
Survey of Projects	INTERREG III A – 30 Projects per Member State have been identified and reported on. INTERREG III B & C – 100% of Projects are identified and reported on.	INTERACT is now the most comprehensive source of information on INTERREG Projects available.
Database Development	A functional central repository of information is available IPs can update information in the Database and retrieve information. End users can access archived information and use it to achieve improved programming	The availability of quality information has contributed to improved programming, wider networking and more effective projects within the INTERREG Programme
Corporate Identity	An identity for INTERACT has been developed and is implemented consistently across all public manifestations of the Programme	INTERACT is widely known among its target groups (INTERREG Programmes)

Core Activity	Output Indicator	Impact Indicator
Web Strategy	A functioning website is available and the number of hits on the website reflect a satisfactory level of usage	The website is deemed to be the central platform for communication for INTERACT by end users
Language	INTERACT materials exist in English and French and the Communications Sub Group is functioning as the determinant of localisation requirements in other languages	Language is not a barrier in achieving the objectives of INTERACT
Newsletter	Regular newsletter are published and widely disseminated	The newsletter is seen as a valuable source of information and as a forum for discussion and analysis
Regular Reporting	Timely reports are produced in line with the stated requirements of the Commission, the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee	The reports demonstrate that the Strategic Objectives of the Programme are being achieved.

9.2   INTERACT Secretariat

The INTERACT Secretariat has a dual role of providing technical assistance in the management of the Programme and a development function in coordinating the work of the INTERACT Points, assisting in the development of the Work Programmes and providing overall coordination and management of information and communication flows. In this sense it contributes to the achievement of all of the indicators for the Programme.

Core Activity	Output Indicator	Impact Indicator
Programme Management	The Managing Authority receives all the necessary assistance in the overall resource management of the Programme	The Programme is seen to be managed efficiently and smoothly
Information Preparation	All the necessary information is prepared as required for the decision making process and for the strategic guidance of the programme	The decision making process and the strategic direction of the programme is seen to be well managed and based on comprehensive information.

Core Activity	Output Indicator	Impact Indicator
Information Flows	Horizontal information flows between the Managing Authority, the Monitoring and Steering Committee and the INTERACT Points occurs in an efficient manner.	The managing of the communication within the Programme is seen by all involved to be efficient and effective.
INTERACT Points Work Programmes	The INTERACT Points receive sufficient assistance in the development of the detailed work programmes	The INTERACT Secretariat is seen by the INTERACT Points as a key coordination and technical support mechanism for the Programme
Coordination of work of INTERACT Points	There is a clear definition of the role of each of the INTERACT Points and their outputs are coordinated in a manner that ensure complementarity and overall contribution to the results of the Programme	The INTERACT Secretariat is seen as the key coordination mechanism between the INTERACT Points.
Communications Strategy	Internal Communication Strategy within INTERACT is developed in line with the needs of the stakeholders involved External Communication Strategy for the Programme is developed in line with the requirements of Regulation 1159/2000	Stakeholders involved in the INTERACT Programme view the communications flows as efficient and meeting their needs. Information and publicity related to the programme is seen as appropriate, targeted and effective.

9.3   Priority 1

The INTERACT Points covered by this Priority will make major contributions to a number of programme-wide critical areas, in particular the website, the detailed survey of projects and the creation and management of the INTERACT Database. They will also provide an important strategic dimension in targeting specific groups and regions within the programme.

The indicators for this priority are intended to improve the know-how and strengthen the management and operational capabilities of INTERREG managing bodies and to facilitate transfer of know between all three strands of INTERREG, as indicated in the indicator framework for the Programme (see INTERACT CIP, page 71).

Core Activity	Output Indicator	Impact Indicator
Priority 1 – Measure 1		
Web Strategy	*See framework of indicators at programme level*	
Survey of Projects	*See framework of indicators at programme level*	
Database	*See framework of indicators at programme level*	
Help Desk	The number of requests for help and information received by telephone and email are representative of the target clients for this service. The requests for help demonstrate an understanding of the role of the INTERACT Points and the other elements of the Programme	The Help Desk is seen as a valuable source of case-specific information and problem solving by the target clients. The help desk contributes to the effectiveness of the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points.
Transfer and Exchange with ESPON and URBACT	Regular reports / contributions to the newsletter / website on important flagship projects and results from these programmes	There is evidence of increased cross-fertilisation between INTERREG and ESPON / URBACT.
Use of information and know-how generated	The information and know-how generated is regularly used by the qualification and training component of the Programme	The material produced for use by the qualification and training component of the Programme is seen by users as of a high standard and relevant to their needs
Priority 1 – Measure 2		
Pool of trainers	A pool of experts with solid INTERREG-related expertise is available and contributes to the functioning of the IP Qualification and Transfer and other INTERACT initiatives There is an increase in the range and quality of products and materials that are localised.	Training and Qualification is perceived by the target clients as a valuable contribution to their activities and to the achievement of the goals of INTERREG. Product localisation is seen as a key factor in the transfer of know-how and experience within the INTERACT Programme

Core Activity	Output Indicator	Impact Indicator
Training and Qualification packages	The number of participants in training and qualification packages is representative of the target clients for this service	Participants in the training and qualification activities acknowledge the value of the service to the expansion of their knowledge and expertise and to the development of intercultural competencies.
Coverage of different target groups and regions	The origin of participants in training and qualification packages is representative of diverse regions and programmes, in particular less developed regions and programmes and regions in transition	Less developed programmes and regions show improvements in the range and quality of INTERREG initiatives. Regions in transition are better prepared to take full advantage of INTERREG. Intercultural management practices within INTERREG have improved.
Open exchange fora	The number and level of participation by managers from large JTS is representative of the target clients for this service	Participants at these fora regard them as a valuable opportunity to exchange experiences and acknowledge the contribution they make to improving the quality of management within INTERREG
Use of information and know-how generated	The information and know-how generated is regularly used by the qualification and training component of the Programme	The material produced for use by the qualification and training component of the Programme is seen by users as of a high standard and relevant to their needs

9.4   Priority 2

All projects developed under this priority should contribute to the general framework of indicators at programme level. Quantification of more specific objectives will be developed by the INTERACT Secretariat and submitted for endorsement to the Monitoring Committee once a sufficient number of applications have been approved. The annual reports will provide information about the status of quantification of objectives

The indicators for this priority are intended to improve the quality of INTERREG III Programmes and Projects and to deepen INTERACT Activities for different groupings of players, as indicated in the indicator framework for the Programme (see INTERACT CIP, page 71).

9.5   Priority 3

The indicators for this priority are intended to encourage and strengthen cooperation in regions along external borders, as indicated in the indicator framework for the Programme (see INTERACT CIP, page 71.)

Core activity	Output Indicator	Impact Indicator
Priority 3 – Measure 1		
Advisory Service	A functioning advisory service exists and the number of clients using it is representative of the target clients for this service	Clients acknowledge the value of the service and cooperation at the external borders has improved
Transition Tool Box	Pragmatic solutions to management problems have been identified and pooled. There is easy access to good practice on technical issues Information is well structured and easily accessible.	Clients in transition regions acknowledge that they are now better prepared to manage the transition.
JTS network external border	A functioning network of IIIA-JTS along the current external borders exists. Regular information bulletins on progress in this area are produced. Joint initiatives between partners at the external borders have increased and address specific needs (e.g. identification of common training needs…)	The managers of the JTS along the external border acknowledge that the work of this IP has contributed to increased efficiency and effectiveness in their operations, and this progress is evident. The networks at the external border are viewed by participating clients as having improved and been made more effective.
Use of information and know-how generated	The information and know-how generated is regularly used by the qualification and training component of the Programme	The material produced for use by the qualification and training component of the Programme is seen by users as of a high standard and relevant to their needs
Priority 3 – Measure 2		
Indicators for this priority and measure will be the same as for Priority 2.		

9.6   Technical Assistance

Core activity	Output	Impact
Technical Assistance 1		
Meetings of MC/SC	At least 10 meetings until 2007	Besides the functional aspect the meetings are established as regular and
Monitoring system	Operational system	The system satisfies information needs of the INTERREG Community and meets all technical requirements of EC
Technical Assistance 2		
Website	A user-friendly portal taking first information needs of ‚external' visitors into account	Contribution to awareness-raising for the INTERREG Initiative
Newsletter	Carefully edited product and understandable language attracts and interests also persons who are not deeply involved in INTERREG	Contribution to awareness-raising for the INTERREG Initiative

10. Financing Plan

Interact - Financial allocation 2002-2006

by priorities (in Mio €)

Source / Priority	Total Costs	Public expenditure			Private	Share of Priority
		Total eligible expenditure	ERDF	National		
Priority 1: Interreg Management Support	**13,45**	**13,45**	**12,10**	**1,35**	**0**	**38,31**
Measure 1: Information and Animation	6,73	6,73	6,05	0,68	0	
Measure 2: Qualification and Transfer	6,73	6,73	6,05	0,68	0	
Priority 2: Interreg Development	**12,50**	**12,50**	**6,25**	**6,25**	**0**	**35,60**
Priority 3: Border Regions	**7,33**	**7,33**	**5,00**	**2,33**	**0**	**20,88**
Measure 1: Joint Co-operation Tools	3,33	3,33	3,00	0,33	0	
Measure 2: Development of INTERREG	4,00	4,00	2,00	2,00	0	
Priority 4: Technical Assistance	**1,83**	**1,83**	**1,65**	**0,18**	**0**	**5,21**
TA-1	1,39	1,39	1,25	0,14	0	
TA-2	0,44	0,44	0,40	0,04	0	
TOTAL Interact	**35,11**	**35,11**	**25,00**	**10,11**	**0**	**100,00**

by year (in Mio €)

Source / Year	Total Costs	Public expenditure			Private
		Total eligible expenditure	ERDF	National	
2002	**1,48**	1,48	1,06	0,43	0
2003	**5,82**	5,82	4,14	1,68	0
2004	**10,01**	10,01	7,13	2,88	0
2005	**8,96**	8,96	6,38	2,58	0
2006	**8,84**	8,84	6,29	2,54	0
TOTAL Interact	**35,11**	35,11	25,00	10,11	0

*rest profile of INTERREG III

11. Ex-ante Evaluation

11.1 The Ex-Ante Evaluation Process

The ex ante evaluation of the INTERACT programme complement has involved the same interactive process of desk-based assessment and discussion with the programme drafting team as was undertaken for the INTERACT CIP. A first evaluation was completed in August 2002 and discussed with the programme drafting team at a meeting on 3 September. Amendments to the complement text were made on the basis of this discussion and a revised version was presented to the INTERACT Working Group of 15 Member States on 26 September 2002. Further ex ante evaluation work was carried out on a revised version of the complement and discussed with the programme drafting team on 13 November 2002.   The complement was further revised on the basis of this discussion and feedback from the INTERACT Working Group.

This chapter represents the last stage of the ex ante evaluation based on the final draft of the programme complement, amended after the INTERACT Working Group meeting of 9 December 2002. It contains a summary assessment of the programme complement, the key findings of the evaluation together with an indication of areas of significant change and additional evaluation comments relevant to the final version of the document.

11.2 Coherence with the INTERACT programme

The INTERACT programme complement shows considerable coherence with the programme document. The INTERACT programme has a relatively simple structure in terms of priorities and measures, incorporating only three priorities and four measures.   The workpackages elaborated in the programme complement build directly on this structure.

11.3 Internal coherence

The INTERACT programme complement shows good internal coherence both within the individual sections and between different components of the document. The linkages between the INTERACT Secretariat, the workpackages and their implementing INTERACT Points are recognised throughout the complement – as well as the associated need for strong communication flows and coordination.

The final version of the programme complement has been restructured and expanded and now provides an accessible and clear presentation of the activities

and implementation arrangements of the INTERACT programme. A Foreword states the background rationale for INTERACT, giving a coherent introductory link to the programme CIP and a clear chapter outline of the programme complement document. An Executive Summary provides a useful overview of all the main elements of the complement while the brief overview of priorities and measures has taken fully into account earlier evaluation recommendations on its coverage. The section on the programme framework expands further on the interlinkages between the various organisations involved in implementation. These sections serve an important explanatory function and are a useful orientation point for potential applicants in particular.

The final version of the programme complement brings forward a dedicated section detailing the role and activities of the INTERACT Secretariat - previously included as one of the workpackages. This new structure is beneficial in emphasising the central role which will be played by the INTERACT Secretariat in the implementation of the programme. Its position in the complement ahead of the detailed description of the workpackages also reinforces the role of the Secretariat in the initial setting up stages of the INTERACT programme activities and structures.

Earlier versions of the programme complement contained a section entitled 'Key tasks and roles' which outlined the central activities anticipated under the INTERACT programme. These have now been integrated within the new Section 3 on the INTERACT Secretariat. While this is appropriate in the sense that the Secretariat will have at least a coordinating function in all the activities stated, some of the included headings go beyond the responsibilities of the Secretariat. In some cases, such as the localisation of materials and languages, the Secretariat is not actually mentioned at all – although it will clearly have a role in the Communications Sub-Group. This has implications both for understanding the exact role of the Secretariat and for the definition of monitoring indicators (see section 0). It could be helpful, therefore, to include an introductory statement which clarified that the list of tasks represents the core activities of the INTERACT programme in which the INTERACT Secretariat will have a key coordinating and sometimes implementing role. This will be in conjunction with the INTERACT Points and supported by the projects funded through Priority 2 and Priority 3, Measure 2. The division of responsibility between the Secretariat and the INTERACT Points should then be made clear for each task. This is already in place in a number of cases, but is less clear in others eg. database development, assessment of needs, survey of projects and the newsletter. In some of these tasks, the division is more explicitly laid out in the subsequent workpackage descriptions but could usefully be repeated at this stage.

The presentation of the key aims and objectives of the proposed workpackages is clear – in particular, the boxes at the start of each workpackage provide an immediate overview of the proposed content and differentiate the workpackages from each other. This addresses a number of the key evaluation recommendations from earlier. The text of the programme complement and specific workpackages is formulated (even more so in the final version) to ensure flexibility in the finalisation of the workplans with applicant INTERACT Points and is careful not to be overly prescriptive. The division between the complement, as the strategic guiding framework, and the detailed short-term workplans, reinforces this flexibility. While a flexible and responsive approach is in line with the context and aim of the INTERACT programme, it is also important that the complement establishes a clear structure of workpackages. This should act as a guiding framework for applicants and ensure a basis for fair competition. In addition, a clear framework structure should guide programme outputs, ensuring that they clearly target the stated aims and objectives of the INTERACT programme, and provide a basis for coordination between the INTERACT Points.

The duplication of tasks highlighted in the earlier version of the ex ante evaluation has largely been addressed. The nature of the activities, however, means that there is still inevitably some potential for overlap. This reinforces the key overview and coordination role of the INTERACT Secretariat. This is true both for the selection procedures and exact definition of workpackages and also on an on-going basis through the implementation process. In the process of finalising detailed workplans with INTERACT Point applicants, earlier evaluation comments about the ambitiousness of anticipated tasks over relatively short timescales should be borne in mind.

11.4 Indicator framework

The final version of the INTERACT programme complement includes a new section on Indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation, responding broadly to previous ex ante evaluation comments in this area. These indicator tables provide a useful framework for the more detailed definition of indicators (including those which will be quantified) to be undertaken as part of the workpackage finalisation and project selection procedure.

The explicit link in the indicator framework between the programme level and the INTERACT Secretariat is not wholly apt. This is linked to comments made in section 0 about the integration of the programme core activities with the tasks and functions of the Secretariat. The indicator structure should reflect the fact that the core activities of the INTERACT programme are wider than the work of the Secretariat.

One option would be to maintain Table 9.1 as programme level indicators and include a small number of additional, separate indicators relating to the specific work of the INTERACT Secretariat. These could relate to the activities of coordination on the one hand and the specific contributions of workpackages implemented by the Secretariat on the other. The latter would have to be defined once the relevant workpackages were finalised. At programme level, coherence with the INTERACT CIP would also be increased if a statement was made which linked the core activities and their indicators with the overall programme objective ("*to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the three strands of INTERREG*" (p71 of the CIP)).

Linkages between the programme level and priority level indicators are identified in the proposed indicators although there is potential for further linkage between priorities. In particular, it would be useful to include an indicator assessing the extent to which the information and know-how generated by a range of INTERACT Points has been used within the training and qualification component of the programme. Indicator(s) of this kind would help to evaluate not only whether useful output was reaching, and being utilised by, the target users but also whether the internal communication and coordination between INTERACT Points and the Secretariat was functioning.

The statement relating to quantified indicators under Priority 2 and Measure 3.2 is appropriate given the potentially broad range of project submissions, which may be received. This priority and measure are designed to complement and support the activities of the INTERACT Point and Secretariat and are differentiated more by the nature of the target group. It is now stated that all projects should contribute to the general framework of indicators at programme level. This reinforces the usefulness of linking programme level indicators to the overall objective of the INTERACT programme.

11.5 Implementing arrangements

The programme complement expands on the implementing arrangements outlined in the INTERACT CIP. The final version of the programme complement includes more detail on the implementing structures, and their selection procedures, and the presentation is now very clear.

The distinct role of the INTERACT Secretariat, and its involvement in both activities of technical assistance and programme development, is more clearly presented at several points in the final version of the programme complement. Further, and as noted above, the dedication of a section relatively early in the programme complement to the operation of the INTERACT Secretariat both improves clarity with

regard to the implementation structures and reinforces the central role of the Secretariat to the operation of the programme. Its coordination role will be particularly crucial, ensuring that one organisation has an overview of activities and can effectively coordinate the tasks and outputs of the individual INTERACT Points. This is important given the interdependence of various components of the programme (especially the use by the Qualification and Transfer workpackage of outputs from other INTERACT Points) and the potential for duplicated work. Comments made above about clarity in the division of responsibilities between the Secretariat and the INTERACT Points should be noted.

11.6 Communication plan

The issue of communications in the context of the INTERACT programme is less straightforward than in mainstream Structural Fund programmes. This is mainly because communication lies at the heart of the INTERACT programme activities, as reflected in the statement under section 2.1 on programme framework that "*the core of the INTERACT programme is to set-up information and communication networks, to define information frameworks and flows, to pro-actively disseminate information and to stimulate exchange of experiences*". Two types of communication can usefully be differentiated: (i) *internal* communication and interaction between INTERACT Points and the INTERACT Secretariat and (ii) *external* communication of programme activities to potential beneficiaries and the general public, as required by Regulation 1159/2000.

The revised version of the programme complement provides a clearer separation of these two areas of communication by including a section at the start on the coordination framework (section 2.1.2). This addresses the issues of internal communication and interaction between the various components of the INTERACT programme and introduces the proposed Communications Sub-Group which could play an important role in ensuring a consistent and effective approach to communication and coordination.

The second area of external communication, based more on the requirements of Regulation 1159/2000, is addressed in a specific section on the communications plan (section 5). Some of these required activities will be achieved by the planned tasks of the INTERACT Points and the wide dissemination of information to potential beneficiaries (in this context, the INTERREG programme management units) is a condition of funding in many cases.

The INTERACT Secretariat will have a key role in both types of communication activity. This is reflected in the complement in the inclusion of internal communication as a key part of the Secretariat's workpackage as well as its role in the specific communications plan (external communication).

12. Comments on the Ex-Ante Evaluation

The work of the evaluation team was very helpful for clarification and revision of the Programme Complement. The findings presented in several stages of the evaluation provided important inputs for the internal discussion process of the drafting team. To enrich the drafting process with broad expertise and a critical external viewpoint was particularly important due to the INTERACT programme's innovative character which is also reflected in this Programme Complement.

The comments of the evaluation team have been incorporated into the successive drafts of the Programme Complement.

With regard to the comments contained in this, the final ex-ante evaluation, the following observations should be made –

> ➢ Chapter 3 – on the development of the Programme and the role of the INTERACT Secretariat has been revised based on the comments received. There should now be a clear distinction between the role of the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points and a general statement of the tasks to be fulfilled has been added in line with the recommendation.

> ➢ Chapter 9 – on the indicator framework has been reworked in order to distinguish the indicators that pertain at Programme level and those that refer specifically to the work of the INTERACT Secretariat. A new table has been added which takes account of the specific role of the Secretariat. In addition, references have been made to the indicator framework contained in the CIP as recommended.

> ➢ An additional indicator has been introduced to cover the question of usage of information and know how generated within the INTERACT Points by the training and qualification component of the Programme.

13. Codification

In Annex IV of Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001 of 2 March 2001, the European Commission provides a classification of areas of intervention. This classification is intended to contribute "to clear communication on the various Community policies" and shall be mainly used for communication wirh the Commission. The list of 14 basic categories is drawn from the types of activity carried out in earlier Objective 1 programmes.

INTERACT does not fit directly into this classification. Operations under INTERACT aim

- To facilitate transfer of know-how between all three strands of INTERREG

- To improve know-how and strengthen the management and operational capabilities of INTERREG III bodies

- To encourage and strengthen co-operation in regions along external borders

- To facilitate the start up of INTERREG in the new Member States after Accession and safeguard a smooth transition from PHARE to INTERREG

- To improve the quality of INTERREG III projects

- To intensify and expand INTERACT activities for different groups of players

Several categories of activities may be subject of INTERACT operations, including in particular various aspects of programme management techniques. Operations of this kind can only fall under Category 4 "Miscellaneous" and code 414 "innovative actions" of Annex IV, Chapter 3, of the above-mentioned regulation. Additionally it has to be stated that aspects of location of projects as well as potential contributions to Community policies will not lend themselves to strict categorisation following the Annex IV of Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001.

Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance 1

100% of the funds allocated under Technical Assistance 1 fall under code 411.

Technical Assistance 2

80% of the funds allocated under Technical Assistance 2 fall under code 412, i.e. the ongoing evaluation of the INTERACT Programme. The remaining 20% will be used for activities as set out in the Communications Plan (code 415).

Annex 1

Pre-INTERACT Coordination Activities for INTERREG IIIC

INTERREG IIIC Work package	Tasks completed by end 2002	Proposed actions for 2003
WP 1: Application Pack and Assessment	Approved by all four INTERREG IIIC zones:	Training/coordination sessions and advice to new IIIC JTS/MA staff members on Applicants' pack
	Joint eligibility and selection criteria (Programme Complement)	Joint evaluation and review of application pack and assessment procedures after the first round
	Joint Application Pack (Programme Manual and Application Form)	
	Assessment procedures (joint expert pool) installed	
WP 2: Programme Marketing	Joint INTERREG IIIC website (E/F) (www.interreg3c.net)	Central website management
	Common INTERREG IIIC master design	Continuous update of joint print and digital media
	Information leaflets/publications (E/F)	
	Exhibition info stands (E/F)	
	Joint PowerPoint presentations/ other info material	
WP 3: Administrative Database	Database software ready for use in all zones	Test and trial period of the database/interfaces in all zones
	Email interfaces installed between the databases	Evaluation and fine tuning after first application round
		Training of IIIC JTS/MA/PA on database
WP 4: Legal Framework & Audit and Control	Information to Commission according Article 5 of Reg. 438/2001	Follow up of implementation, if necessary adjustments or other agreements
	Model for Subsidy Contract	Implementation of joint Audit & Control System based on Art. 5 Information (e.g. Financial Control Group)
	Model for other Agreements (RoP MC/SC, MA/PA – Member States agreements, RoP for JTS)	

WP 5: INTERREG IIIC mid-term evaluation	Joint Terms of Reference drafted and agreed by all four MCs (steering groups)	Selection procedure of evaluator Joint evaluation report presented to MCs
WP 6: Information Events (implemented by West JTS)	European Information events in Brussels and Valencia Support to coordination meetings (task force)	Follow up