

INTERACT III 2014-2020 Operational Programme, version 2.3, April 2014

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SECTION 1 STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNION STRATEGY FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

1.1 Strategy for the cooperation programme's contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion

1.1.1. Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The strategic orientation of the INTERACT III 2014-2020 programme (furthermore referred to as INTERACT III) builds on the Regulation 1303/2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 (furthermore referred to as CPR), which defines the thematic objectives that are in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy.

INTERACT III is an operational programme of the European Territorial Cooperation goal, part of the interregional cooperation component (as per point (c) of Article 2(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal, furthermore referred to as ETC Regulation) and it is set up to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy by promoting exchange of experience concerning the identification, transfer and dissemination of good practices and innovative approaches in relation to implementation of territorial cooperation programmes and actions concerning territorial cooperation and to the use of EGTCs. INTERACT III is a programme co-financed by the ERDF and it shall cover the entire territory of the Union, Norway and Switzerland. The selection of thematic objectives is limited to one in case of INTERACT III, in order to maximise the impact of cohesion policy across the Union. This reflects the aim of the operation, to get the most out of interregional cooperation for the reinforcement of the effectiveness of cohesion policy under the Investment for growth and jobs and the European territorial cooperation goals.

The selected thematic objective is thematic objective 11: „Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration“.

INTERACT III operation is set up for Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration. It is to:

- address the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of Europe 2020 Strategy by supporting Territorial Cooperation Programmes in implementing their activities in the most effective way by giving guidance and area specific expert input in solving implementation bottlenecks;
- use networking methods that support cooperation as means to contribute to the innovative integrated approach.

INTERACT III Ex Ante evaluation and additional assessments of needs do set the baseline for the strategic choice made in INTERACT III programme. The following intervention fields/specific objectives have been defined for this programme on the basis of the

ETC Regulation, as well as on the inputs received from the representatives of the Member States, the National Contact Persons and Monitoring Committee members of INTERACT II.

The INTERACT III operational programme, while enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration focuses on 3 specific objectives:

- a) to improve management and control capacity of ETC programmes,
- b) to improve the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating the programme results,
- c) to improve the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches (EGTC, Revolving Funds, macro-regional strategies (MRSs), Article 96, ITI etc.)

a) To improve management and control capacity of ETC programmes

The scope of this specific objective is to contribute to an efficient and effective implementation of Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes, addressing the shift towards simplified and standardised programme management.

Under this objective, INTERACT III will identify and support transfer of good practices, through research, training and networking activities related to the management of ETC programmes of all components. Management is to be understood in a broad sense and covers all aspects of the life cycle of ETC programmes: from the programming phase to the closure, including all programme and project management issues as well as finance, control and communication. It covers the strategic shift to results orientation as well.

INTERACT III activities do not only address the EU regulatory requirements, but also guidelines issued by the European Commission. Special attention is being paid to the exchange of good practices among the programmes on how to implement these requirements and recommendations. If national legislations are relevant on certain issues, INTERACT III will collaborate with the Member States to ensure that these requirements are properly addressed. A close cooperation with the European Commission, Member States and also other external stakeholders having relevant expertise on ETC and programme management is essential to maintaining good networks around the EU.

The capturing exercise in evaluation and the strategic changes in programmes is an important example of programme management activity, to be followed up by INTERACT III, as its scope is substantially included in the Commission guidelines.

Specific services are to be provided to the macro-regional strategies (already addressed by INTERACT II). The macro-regional strategies were launched in the 2007-2013 period in an experimental approach, as a strategic attempt to align policies and programmes actions. A variety of programmes, not only territorial cooperation, but also other objectives and sectors, in the concerned areas had to adapt to them in the middle of programme implementation. In the 2014-2020 legislative package, the macro-regional strategies are specifically mentioned and they make part of the official delivery structure, thus they do necessarily impact on programme management. In this respect, INTERACT's support will only be horizontal for all macro-regional strategies and provide for exchange of experience and dissemination of best practises. Facilitating a dialogue and knowledge sharing between ETC programmes and macro-regional stakeholders is beneficial for ETC programme managers, in order for them to understand how they could concretely contribute to macro-regional strategies, but also how they can benefit from these. INTERACT III activities for macro-regions will enhance cooperation between ETC programmes and programmes implementing activities for the

Investment for Growth and Jobs Goal (objective 1), other sectoral programmes, stakeholders and coordinators of macro-regional strategies. The support to macro-regions, e.g. with networking, exchange of experience and communication activities across existing strategies, will necessarily complement the work of transnational programmes. Please also see section 4.4 for more details.

b) To improve ETC capacity in capturing and communicating the programme results

INTERACT has been increasingly requested to support the ETC programmes in the relevant thematic fields. With the legislative package for 2014-2020 this support is even more needed, as the thematic concentration and the focus on results does imply additional efforts for programme authorities. These authorities have experience with the implementation requirements, but are not always experts in the thematic objectives set out by the Regulations. Moreover, in the period 2014-2020, the thematic work is relevant throughout the whole implementation cycle.

INTERACT III provides for thematic support to ETC programmes, in line with the CPR and the ETC Regulation and the thematic objectives selected by the programmes. The aim is to support the ETC programmes in the various phases of the programme cycle, where a thematic input is needed: from the programming phase to the generation of projects or their monitoring and evaluation, and especially in capitalisation and communication of the results. The focus is to highlight the role of ETC in the relevant thematic objectives and therefore, a strong territorial approach will be kept. The thematic work started under INTERACT II is the basis for these activities. Each thematic objective (or a relevant selection) in the regulation will be addressed, and INTERACT III support is adapted both to the specificities of the strand of programmes and their geographical location – including the macro-regional and sea-basin approaches. The priority areas of macro-regions as such have been developed as thematic networks focusing on projects and actions financed by different programmes, including ETC.

A specific linkage is established with the INTERREG-Europe programme, as their thematic platforms may include ETC programmes as well. The coordination between INTERACT III and INTERREG-Europe will make sure that ETC programmes can benefit from the wider context offered by the four thematic platforms established by the programme, and also that the cooperation aspects are properly identified and treated. INTERACT III will support ETC programmes in thematic objectives not covered by INTERREG-Europe to the extent possible. Both programmes have established ways of working to benefit from each other and avoid double work.

ETC programmes will benefit from this knowledge and wider political support. Links are established with the relevant organisations, programmes and policies, including relevant EU policies, programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs Goal, ESPON, URBACT and Interregional Cooperation, the focus being the role of and the benefit for ETC. Strong collaboration with the European Commission and the Member States is needed in developing these activities further. Synergies with relevant organisations and networks working on specific territorial themes are being exploited, e.g. associations of regions and other competence centres.

The knowledge management initiative called KEEP, started during INTERACT II and providing a Europe-wide territorial cooperation project database, has a key role to play in the thematic work, therefore it is further developed. In order to enhance capturing the results of the ETC programmes and their projects the way of collecting ETC project results is to be

structured and consolidated, with the support of ETC programmes.

Activities under this objective consist of research, networking and promotion. Networking is essential and INTERACT III builds the networks starting from the contacts already created under the 2007-2013 period. The analysis of project achievements in certain thematic fields leads to publications and other thematic promotional activities implemented by INTERACT III. INTERACT III provides territorial and place-based thematic support at an early stage.

For the promotion of achievements in cooperation INTERACT III builds upon its strong network of programme managers and its expertise in communication, reinforced in INTERACT II through the website, publications (newsletters etc), PR work and European Cooperation Day. INTERACT III gives support to programmes for more efficient communication of their results. INTERACT III coordinates joint EU-wide communication efforts, in order to increase overall visibility of territorial cooperation.

Through all these interventions the INTERACT III contribution to the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of the Europe 2020 Strategy is given by supporting Territorial Cooperation Programmes in implementing their activities in the most effective way by giving guidance and area specific expert input in solving implementation bottlenecks. For identification of the bottlenecks INTERACT capitalises on the extensive knowledge and information gained during INTERACT I and II. This knowledge and information will be further enhanced in connection to assessing the programme implementation results from ETC.

c) To improve cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches (EGTC, Revolving Funds, MRSs, Article 96, ITI etc.)

ETC/INTERREG was created as an innovative pilot more than 20 years ago and is constantly finding new ways for regions – and other stakeholders – to cooperate. INTERACT II already started to explore new ways for cooperation and the ETC Regulation recognises the need to follow that path. The aim is to support ETC programmes, regions and stakeholders with innovative cooperation methodologies and to promote them in the relevant EU fora. Under this objective, INTERACT III will work closely with the relevant stakeholders in those innovative fields which are needed, but where neither regulation nor official guidance has yet been issued.

INTERACT III will focus its attention on the research, networking and dissemination activities on the innovative tools that can be used for cooperation purposes. Topics such as EGTCs, revolving funds, the alignment of funding, Integrated Territorial Investments will be the main issues to be addressed. Joint Action Plans and the Community-Led Local development possibilities will be tackled if relevant for cooperation purposes. In addition, links will be established with other programmes and the constant contact with the European Commission will ensure consistency in the messages sent to the ETC community.

Besides these tools, the CPR mentions the cooperation possibilities in the Investment for Growth and Jobs Goal. INTERACT II has already been supporting the regions – and Member States - that were interested in implementing this kind of cooperation. INTERACT III does explore this possibility of cooperation and focuses on the methodological and innovative aspects. Close links are established with the INTERREG Europe Programme. This implies close coordination in order to ensure full complementarities of action by the two programmes and synergies already established with the networking programmes in INTERACT II.

Macro-regional innovative approaches enhanced new linkages and innovative approaches, such as e.g. the creation of an innovation fund in the Baltic Sea Region called “Bonus programme” financed by many different programmes. These kind of innovative approaches are analysed and promoted for the benefit of ETC stakeholders, even where no macro-region exists.

The above-mentioned innovative activities within INTERACT III are not exhaustive as other innovative approaches for cooperation may arise during the implementation period and be requested by the INTERACT target groups, the European Commission and the Member States.

INTERACT III contribution to economic, social and territorial cohesion is given in the same manner supporting all ETC programmes in implementation of their activities. Furthermore this support is open for all European funded cooperation programmes to draw from, including the programmes that operate across and beyond the European external border, as the ETC experience can offer valuable lessons to learn in those environments too, thus enhancing the economic, social and territorial cohesion at the borders. All in all the impact is indirect and can only be viewed within the overall context of cooperation in Europe.

- 1.1.2. Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework, based on an analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure, taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation

Table 1: Justification for the selection of thematic objectives and investment priorities

Selected thematic objective	Selected investment priority	Justification for selection
11. Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration by strengthening of institutional capacity and the efficiency of public administrations and public services related to implementation of the ERDF, and in support of actions in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administration supported by the ESF.		<p>The selection of thematic objectives is limited to one in case of INTERACT III, to maximise the impact of cohesion policy across the Union and the reinforcement of the effectiveness of cohesion policy in particular in the European Territorial Cooperation Goal.</p> <p>This kind of increased effectiveness is reached by identifying and facilitating the transfer of good practices, providing guidance and expertise in solving implementation bottlenecks, as well as promoting the use of innovative instruments and strengthening the visibility of ETC.</p>

1.2 Justification for the financial allocation

The only selected thematic objective is thematic objective 11: „Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration“. The planned financial allocation for the thematic objective is 36.635.490 EUR, corresponding to 93% of the ERDF allocation.

This financial allocation reflects the size of actions in order to address the smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of Europe 2020 Strategy by supporting Territorial Cooperation Programmes in implementing their activities in the most effective and efficient way by giving guidance and area specific expert input in solving implementation bottlenecks and using networking methods that support cooperation as means to contribute to the innovative integrated approach.

Table 2: Overview of the investment strategy of the cooperation programme – *generated automatically by SFC 2014*

Priority axis	ERDF support (in EUR)	Proportion (%) of the total Union support for the cooperation programme (by Fund)			Thematic objective	Investment priorities	Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priorities	Result indicators corresponding to the specific objective
		ERDF	ENI (where applicable)	IPA (where applicable)				

SECTION 2. PRIORITY AXES

Section 2.A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance

2.A.1 Priority axis (repeated for each priority axis)

<i>ID of the priority axis</i>	
<i>Title of the priority axis</i>	The only priority of INTERACT III is the enhancement of institutional capacity, primarily for ETC programme authorities, as well as to the increase of efficiency and effectiveness of public administration in cooperation activities. In particular, this shall be reached through the identification and transfer of good practices in cooperation; new cooperation mechanisms reducing administrative burdens; as well as through an evidence-based cooperation in its wider strategic context.

<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	<i>Not applicable</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	<i>Not applicable</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	<i>Not applicable</i>

2.A.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective (where applicable)

Not applicable

2.A.3 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

<i>Fund</i>	European Regional Development Fund
<i>Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)</i>	Eligible public expenditure

2.A.4 Investment priority (repeated for each investment priority under the priority axis)

<i>Investment priority</i>	Promoting the exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions as well as the use of EGTCS.
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2.A.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

<i>Specific objective 1.1.</i>	<p>To improve management and control capacity of ETC programmes</p> <p>The aim is to contribute to an efficient and effective implementation of ETC programmes, addressing also the shift towards more simplified and standardised programme management. Management is to be understood in a broad sense and covers all aspects of the life cycle of ETC programmes: from the programming phase to the closure, including all programme and project management issues as well as finance, control and communication.</p>
<i>The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more wide-spread application of simplified and harmonised approaches with the aim of reducing the administrative burden, attracting new types of beneficiaries (e.g. private) and mitigating the risk of errors. This will require for example development of simplified and harmonised tools, guidance and direct work with the programmes and their decision makers in order to ensure the actual change in the programmes; • A more widespread use of identified good practice and quality standards, which could serve as a benchmark for evaluating performance of the programmes across ETC. This covers all aspects of programme management in line with the policy and regulatory requirements (e.g. results orientation, focus, sound financial management, First Level Control Quality Assurance). This will require extensive analysis, stakeholder involvement and constant reinforcement at the programme level in order to ensure the take up of the existing good practice and development of new one; • Improved communication between the ETC programme management bodies and the Member States representatives. On strategic level there is a need for improved communication in the decision processes with special attention to stakeholder involvement and buy-in. On operational level, there is a need for better information flows, especially in areas of MS responsibility.

<p>Specific objective 1.2.</p>	<p>To improve the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating the programme results.</p> <p>Smooth implementation of ETC programmes as regards the thematic concentration and the focus on results. In addition, the effects of ETC on Cohesion Policy should be more clearly identified.</p> <p>Increased visibility of ETC as a whole, on the basis of the results achieved. Increased networking, also at a strategic level.</p>
<p><i>The results, which the Member States seek to achieve with EU support</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased thematic expertise / competence within the ETC programmes thanks to the INTERACT support. Territorial aspects and specificities will be addressed as well. This will require building thematic networks with experts, thematically specialised programmes and the ETC community. Knowledge management procedures within thematic fields will be established and operated (in close cooperation with other network programmes, especially INTERREG-Europe); • A repository of ETC results is established, which can be used by the ETC community and the relevant decision makers at any time. This will require continuation, improvement and further development of the KEEP initiative but strongly linked to the thematic networks; • Leadership of integrated ETC communication strategy established. This will require establishing a strong communication network with acceptance of INTERACT role in it.

<p>Specific objective 1.3.</p>	<p>To improve the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches (EGTC, Revolving Funds, MRSs, Article 96, ITI etc). New mechanisms have emerged over time to simplify cooperation, make it more sustainable, effective and appealing for new partners. INTERACT III shall enhance this, in identifying and sharing innovative practices. Cooperation in objective 1, Integrated Territorial Investment, Community-led Local Development, Revolving Funds, and EGTCs are only some of the tools. Synergies with other programmes/funds shall be enhanced, through thematic work with macro-regions and interregional programmes.</p>
<p><i>The results, which the Member States seek to achieve with EU support</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased knowledge about the new and existing tools. This will require mapping the relevant target groups and monitoring of the implementation of these tools, appropriate knowledge management, and promoting this to the ETC stakeholders; • Workable models developed, adjusted to ETC context. Building on the body of knowledge gathered, this will require an active work with relevant experts and ETC programmes in order to develop and test such models. Considering ETC resistance to higher risk initiatives active support of the Commission and the MSs will be required; • Increased awareness in the ETC programmes about other EU funding schemes and their complementarities with their strategies. This will require establishment of a relationship with non-ETC programmes and creating sustainable networks around similar programme objectives; • Increased awareness of the mainstream programmes about the advantages of cooperation as an implementation tool. This will require monitoring of use of Article 96, promotion of its positive results and flagging the risks/challenges experienced. Macro-regional approaches might play an important role, if appropriately supported.

Table 3: Programme specific result indicators (by specific objective)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
1.1/1	<i>Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the management and control capacity of ETC programmes</i>	<i>Satisfaction level</i>	<i>4,19 / 5,00</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Surveys + evaluation tools</i>	<i>Every 2nd year</i>
1.1/2	<i>% of ETC programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the management and control capacity of ETC programmes</i>	<i>% programmes</i>	<i>Ex-ante</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Surveys + evaluation tools</i>	<i>Every 2nd year</i>
1.2/1	<i>Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results</i>	<i>Satisfaction level</i>	<i>4,19 / 5,00</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Surveys + evaluation tools</i>	<i>Every 2nd year</i>
1.2/2	<i>% of ETC programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results</i>	<i>% programmes</i>	<i>Ex-ante</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Surveys + evaluation tools</i>	<i>Every 2nd year</i>
1.3/1	<i>Satisfaction level of programmes with INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches</i>	<i>Satisfaction level</i>	<i>4,19 / 5,00</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Surveys + evaluation tools</i>	<i>Every 2nd year</i>
1.3/2	<i>% of programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches</i>	<i>% programmes</i>	<i>Ex-ante</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Surveys + evaluation tools</i>	<i>Every 2nd year</i>

2.A.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority

2.A.6.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

Investment Priority Promoting the exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions as well as the use of EGTCs.

Beneficiaries: The extensive knowledge and expertise gained since 2003 by INTERACT is its foremost asset and key of success. To keep this knowledge, INTERACT beneficiaries shall be kept and enhanced. No additional operations and beneficiaries shall be selected, in the meaning of the Regulation i.e. recipients of grants. Exclusively the four decentralised beneficiaries identified for the previous INTERACT II programme will implement the programme, involving all target groups. All activities and work packages (INTERACT III will not select and implement projects in its usual ETC meaning) shall be run by these, according to an annual work plan based on the needs of the target groups, approved and monitored by the INTERACT Monitoring Committee. Therefore, INTERACT beneficiaries may be defined as those public institutions, which are entrusted by Member States to implement the whole programme, through activities carried out by their four regional offices, in respect of the management functions of the INTERACT Managing Authority. Joint human resources policy among INTERACT offices shall also be focused on keeping and developing knowledge and skills, as its foremost asset.

Territories: INTERACT supports cooperation in the whole territory of the European Union, Switzerland and Norway, including at the EU external borders. To assure proximity to the target groups and knowledge of their administrative settings, the four existing regional offices will facilitate regional and national networks of ETC stakeholders in their areas. Regional proximity to the target groups shall assure that regional administrative specificities and needs are taken into account in planning and implementing activities, especially where necessary e.g. for the support to macro-regions, on specific themes of cooperation, as well as for cooperation at external borders of the EU. The regional approach shall not be an obstacle to cross-area exchange and transfer of knowledge. This shall be assured e.g. with a joint service portfolio (see Annex 5 INTERACT III Joint service portfolio chart).

Type of actions: In order to reach its three specific objectives, INTERACT shall effectively facilitate the identification and transfer of good cooperation practices. This will be done mainly through 1) events and 2) tools, tailor-made to the needs of the identified target groups (see below). Target groups may be involved on a long-term basis, through the work of 1a) networks. With the network, INTERACT will regularly bring together a specific target group, in order to develop joint products, approaches, templates, to test new and simplified approaches or to exchange on good practices. Typical INTERACT networks involve ETC programme managers (MAs, CA, AAs, FLCs, JSs staff, financial, communication managers), but also national ETC networks, which INTERACT addresses for specific national needs, such as for information or to address specific national laws and approaches. INTERACT events can be 1b) on a short term basis, in case of ad hoc and one-off meetings, seminars, trainings, workshops, conferences on specific themes and promotional events. These may be connected with a specific phase of the programme life cycle, such as closure or training new joint secretariats staff, or with regulatory changes. INTERACT products can – besides the default electronic format – 2a) be made available also in hardcopy (like studies and joint

working papers, factsheets, survey outcomes, newsletters, promotional flyers, etc) or, more and more, 2b) existing only in electronic format (online tools, including databases, online papers, IT applications for programme management and monitoring, e-Learning tools, promotional tools like videos etc).

Specific actions addressing the cross-cutting needs of various target groups and strategic goals are the following: Initiating and guiding cooperation and networking processes by contributing with working methods and tools for networking and alignment of policies, by coordinating, organising and supporting networks, by building thematic expertise, networking between ETC, other programmes and macro-strategies and actors and by organising the exchange of practices across existing and new macro-strategies stakeholders; Capitalising on working methods and approaches by contributing with tools for cooperation process development and overview on macro-cooperation and by contributing to simplified management examples; and Enhancing communication flows by Contributing to overall communication strategy together with EC and NCPs and by leading together with EC and NCPs (MSs), on macro-regions/sea-basin communication and visibility, especially in relation to ETC programmes.

Each action shall be tailor made to the needs of the specific target groups, both at EU-wide or regional level (see below), which have to be clearly identified and may evolve over time.

The actions shall directly contribute to the achievement of the specific objectives, such as e.g.: For seminars and trainings, target groups needs will be assessed in the planning phase, and target groups will be involved during the development, in order to assure that the knowledge provided during the events can be effectively used and contribute to a more efficient management of cooperation (i.e. first and third objectives of INTERACT). Experts working groups, composed of experienced programme managers, will be gathered in order to enable knowledge sharing and transfer on management issues, innovative tools or thematic issues (first, second and third objectives of INTERACT). For an effective knowledge management, it is important that concrete outcomes of these networks are recorded and disseminated, e.g. in joint working papers or studies available online (first, second and third objectives of INTERACT). Moreover the results of cooperation shall be captured, be made accessible and analysed (second objective of INTERACT). Databases or online tools are essential tools for this, as well as promotional activities, which shall increase the visibility of cooperation results, but also enable knowledge sharing on successful management practices and innovative tools (first, second and third objectives of INTERACT).

Target groups: INTERACT II activities targeted mostly ETC programme managers to achieve the over-reaching objective of an efficient and effective programme management. By the end of the 2007-2013 programming period, the need for a more thematic and strategic involvement of INTERACT has emerged, in relation to a more strategic embedding of ETC, to new cooperation opportunities in national and regional programmes, as well as in relation to the new concept of macro-regional strategies and to the thematic concentration requirements for the 2014-2020 period. These facts are also confirmed by the stakeholders consultation carried out in February 2013. Therefore new target groups have been addressed by INTERACT already in 2007-2013. The changed legal context for 2014-2020, which is more focused on strategic coordination of the structural funds objectives, also implies wider target groups for INTERACT III as it is visualised in the charts in Annex 6 INTERACT III Target groups). Main target groups will be therefore:

a) Programme managers (ETC, IPA CBC, ENI CBC, all components);

- b) National / Regional cooperation stakeholders;
 - c) EU-wide stakeholders, who will be addressed only as far as appropriate for the benefit of cooperation.
- a) This target group covers the programme bodies involved in programme and project management, control/audit and communication, including the new intermediate bodies or beneficiaries of new territorial development instruments, which might be put in place by programmes. It will still remain the most important target group of INTERACT III. As programmes will still be managed with different approaches (e.g. centralised–decentralised), according to different regional or national realities, the way to approach these target groups might differ substantially. The decentralised structure of INTERACT III assures that its services take regional and national specificities into account.
 - b) This target group covers territorial cooperation and in general cooperation stakeholders (beyond ETC). The resources devoted to these target groups might be still limited to the requests and according to the evolving context. Even though these target groups have been addressed more and more at the end of the 2007-2013 period, especially on the themes of cooperation and strategic embedding of cooperation, a systematic involvement of these groups is new for INTERACT. This also includes a specific support to the national networks of ETC stakeholders, which shall be provided to all countries, according to INTERACT resources, their specific needs and national circumstances.
 - c) This target group covers an important part of the INTERACT community: INTERACT has always built strategic links between programme managers, working on the ground, and EU strategic players and decision-makers, such as the Commission, the Parliament etc. This target group has always been addressed also in INTERACT I and II, but it has never been explicitly defined as target group of INTERACT activities. Nevertheless, as it will strongly influence programmes implementation, it is an essential part of the INTERACT community and need to be involved in many INTERACT activities. The resources devoted to this target group, shall be still limited to the requests and needs to involve them for the primary benefit of the Cooperation programmes managers.

2.A.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

In the overall programme specific nature (no projects; please see section 2.A.6.1) and in accordance with the preamble of the ETC Regulation, stating that due to the horizontal character of interregional cooperation programmes, the content of such cooperation programmes should be adapted, especially as regards the definition of the beneficiary or beneficiaries, the INTERACT programme will continue to deliver its services through four permanent INTERACT offices with their seats in Turku, Valencia, Viborg and Vienna.

2.A.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments

Not applicable

2.A.6.4. Planned use of major projects

Not applicable

2.A.6.5. Output indicators

Table 4: Common and programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (<i>name of indicator</i>)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
	Number of events		890	Annual Implementation Report	yearly
	Number of tools		250	Annual Implementation Report	yearly

2.A.7. Performance framework

Table 5: Performance framework of the priority axis

Priority axis	Indicator type (Key implementation step, financial, output or, where appropriate, result indicator)	ID	<i>Indicator or key implementation step</i>	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Explanation of relevance of indicator, where appropriate
1	Output indicator	1	event	number	390	890	Annual Implementation Report	Specific events will be organised in order to bring target groups together and achieve INTERACT specific objectives
1	Output indicator	2	tool	number	100	250	Annual Implementation Report	Specific tools will be provided to target groups, to achieve INTERACT specific objectives

Additional qualitative information on the establishment the performance framework (optional)

Key principles to identify the output indicators for INTERACT III are:

- 1) SMART indicators, as set in Method for establishing the performance framework - Annex II CPR (Relevant, capturing essential information on the progress of priority, Achievable, with the given resources, Realistic, consistent with the nature of the specific objective, Transparent, i.e. easy to understand by any external observer - self-explanatory -, with objectively verifiable targets and the source data identified, verifiable, without disproportionate administrative burden, as well as sufficiently flexible to accommodate emerging needs of the ETC context);
- 2) Based on the document discussed by the programming committee “INTERACT III Activities and outputs”;
- 3) The targets have to take into account:
 - ETC stakeholders’ limited capacity to actively participate in INTERACT activities;
 - the available budget (same budget as for 2007-2013, the actual increase is lowered by the average inflation);
 - INTERACT capacity at the end of the 2007-2013 period;
 - an on-going shift towards online services to ETC programme managers, instead of physical meetings (also due to travel restrictions);
 - a clear request by target groups to focus on quality, instead of quantity.

Background

- The work flow of INTERACT has always been demand driven. Concrete needs of the target groups have widely determined the nature and the scope of INTERACT activities.
- INTERACT II offered activities, which were not foreseen at the beginning of the programming period and could have not been fully programmed. INTERACT has anticipated ETC programmes’ needs. INTERACT also adapted to strategic needs, emerging during the programming period.
- INTERACT’s flexibility has also been widely recognised by its target groups as one of the key assets and success factors for INTERACT.
- The wide flexibility of the demand-driven approach has allowed INTERACT to adapt year-after-year to the changing ETC environment and shall be substantially kept in INTERACT III.
- As described in the output paper, approved by the programming committee, it is not advisable to fix for the next 7 years precise numbers for long term network meetings and one-off events, or publications and online tools, because of the above mentioned needs-orientation of all INTERACT services and extremely changing environment (new strategic needs, new IT tools, etc.);

- For all these reasons, INTERACT III outputs indicators will be only events and tools.
- For calculating realistic targets, the events and publications list of the years 2011–2013 was considered:
 - Each own event (organised by INTERACT) was counted always as one event as an average value, even though the resources used vary (from a small one-off workshop, requiring few days preparation, to a long-term working group on new tools or wide conference, requiring several staff and weeks of preparation);
 - Each external event (not organised by INTERACT) was counted always as 0,5 event as an average value, even though the resources used vary (from a 15 minutes presentation, requiring few hours preparation, to the overall lead and draft concept and facilitation of workshops, requiring weeks or several staff members);
 - Current average No. of events per year is 128, based on the total amount for the period 2011–2013. Total for 2014-2020 is 890 ($\approx 128 \cdot 7$);
 - Each tool (guidance, paper, publication, online tool produced by INTERACT) was counted always as one tool as an average value, even though resources used vary (from a short fact sheet, requiring few days of preparation, to a wide study, requiring many months);
 - Each newsflash (regular info mail on activities by INTERACT) was counted always as 0,3 tool as an average value, because of the limited resources used;
 - Current average No. of tool per year is 36, based on the total amount for the period 2011–2013. Total for 2014-2020 is 250 ($\approx 36 \cdot 7$);
 - For the milestone 2018, 3,5 years of activities have been counted, because 2015 activities will run under INTERACT II until 30.06.2015. At the same time, according to the CPR, the 7 years total target, has to be achieved until 2023, i.e. 1 year longer.

2.A.8. Categories of intervention

Tables 6-9: Categories of intervention

Table 6: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	096 Institutional capacity of public administrations and public services related to implementation of the ERDF or actions supporting ESF institutional capacity initiatives	

Table 7: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	01 (Non-repayable grant)	

Table 8: Dimension 3 Territory type		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	07 (Not applicable)	

Table 9: Dimension 6 Territorial delivery mechanisms		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	07 (Not Applicable)	

2.A.9. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance including, where necessary, actions to reinforce the administrative capacity of authorities involved in the management and control of the programmes and beneficiaries and, where necessary, actions for to enhance the administrative capacity of relevant partners to participate in the implementation of programmes

Not applicable

2.B. Description of the priority axes for technical assistance

2.B.1 Priority axis

ID:	2
Title:	Technical Assistance

2.B.2 Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund:	European Regional Development Fund
Calculation Basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure):	Eligible public expenditure

2.B.3. Specific objectives and expected results

Specific objective

<i>ID</i>	
<i>Specific objective</i>	Effective implementation of the operational programme
<i>Results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>

The main result of the Technical Assistance priority axis will be the maximised effectiveness and efficiency of programme management, coordination and control, contributing to the effective and efficient delivery of INTERACT III services. All management and control systems shall be adequately and timely set up and all procedures executed in timely fashion in order to assure sound and smooth management of the programme.

2.B.4. Result indicators

Table 10: Programme-specific result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
<i>Not applicable for INTERACT</i>							

2.B.5. Actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives

2.B.5.1. Description of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives

The technical assistance will cover a range of activities and tools of the different bodies of the management and control system in order to achieve maximised effectiveness and efficiency of programme management, coordination, control and audit; one of them being setting up and operating a small INTERACT Secretariat supporting the Managing Authority in the implementation and day-to-day management and coordination of the programme. The Managing Authority supported by INTERACT Secretariat will perform amongst others the management, financial and communication tasks related to the implementation of the INTERACT III Programme. For this purpose, there is a need of professionals with skills and competences to fulfil the following activities:

- Monitoring, control and reporting
 - setting up, operating and maintenance of an electronic monitoring system covering all monitoring requirements and workflows of the programme (programme management, monitoring, audit and control);
 - Providing guidance and support to ensure adequate control of the programme actions at all levels (institution hosting INTERACT Offices, bodies responsible for first level controls) through guidance documents and advice;
 - Setting-up and supervising the implementation of procedures for the quality assessment, monitoring and control of the activities implemented under the INTERACT Programme;
 - Collecting data concerning the progress of the programme in achieving its objectives, as well as financial data and data relating to indicators and milestones, and regular reporting to the Monitoring Committee and the European Commission;
- Support to the INTERACT Offices and other actors involved in implementation of the programme
 - providing tools and guidance documentation (manuals, supporting implementation of the programme).
- Communication

- setting up and operating all internal communication systems with regards to the INTERACT staff in all INTERACT Offices and MA/INTERACT Secretariat), ensuring adequate coordination of activities
- Responsible for drafting and supervising the implementation of the programme communication strategy
- Programme management
 - Organisation, preparation and facilitation of meetings of the programme bodies, in particular the Monitoring Committee;
 - Drafting and implementing the programme evaluation plan and follow-up of findings of independent programme evaluations in order to support the improvement of the management and implementation.

Furthermore the TA priority axis will cover the INTERACT III-related activities of the Certifying and Audit Authority, as detailed under section 5.3.

2.B.5.2 Output indicators expected to contribute to results

Table 11: Output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value (2023) (optional)	Source of data
2/1	No of Monitoring Committee meetings	Number	14	Programme monitoring
2/2	Joint Annual Work Plan approved	Number	8	Programme monitoring
2/3	External interim programme evaluation carried out	Number	1	Programme monitoring
2/4	Progress reports by the INTERACT Offices	Number	70	Programme monitoring
2/5	Annual Implementation report	Number	8	Programme monitoring

2.B.6. Categories of intervention

Tables 12-14: Categories of intervention

Table 12: Dimension 1 Intervention field		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	121 Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection	

Table 13: Dimension 2 Form of finance		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	01 (Non-repayable grant)	

Table 14: Dimension 3 Territory type		
Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	07 (Not applicable)	

SECTION 3 FINANCING PLAN**3.1 Financial appropriation from the ERDF (in EUR)****Table 15**

Fund	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
<i>ERDF</i>								
<i>ERDF/Total</i>	1.954.000	2.853.000	4.074.000	7.403.000	7.551.000	7.702.000	7.856.000	39.393.000
<i>IPA amounts (where applicable)</i>	n/a							
<i>ENI amounts (where applicable)</i>	n/a							
<i>Total</i>	1.954.000	2.853.000	4.074.000	7.403.000	7.551.000	7.702.000	7.856.000	39.393.000

3.2.A Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in EUR)

Table 16: Financing plan

Priority axis	Fund	Basis for calculation of Union support (Total eligible cost or public eligible cost)	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b) = (c) + (d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e) = (a) + (b)	Co-financing rate (f) = (a)/(e) (2)	For information	
					National Public funding (c)	National private funding (d) (1)			Contributions from third countries	EIB contributions
<i>Priority axis 1 – Service development and delivery</i>	ERDF (possibly incl. amounts transferred from IPA and ENI)		36.635.490	6.465.086	6.465.086	n/a	43.100.576			
	IPA		n/a							
	ENI		n/a							
<i>Priority axis 2– Technical Assistance</i>	ERDF (possibly incl. amounts transferred from IPA and ENI)		2.757.510	486.620	486.620	n/a	3.244.130			
	IPA		n/a							
	ENI		n/a							
Total	ERDF		39.393.000	6.951.706	6.951.706		46.344.706			
	IPA		n/a							
	ENI		n/a							
Total	Total all Funds		39.393.000	6.951.706	6.951.706		46.344.706			

3.2.B. Breakdown by priority axis and thematic objective

Table 17

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
Priority axis 1 – Service development and delivery	Thematic objective 11 - enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration	€ 36.635.490	6.465.086 €	43.100.576 €
Priority Axis 2 – Technical Assistance		€ 2.757.510	486.620 €	3.244.130 €
TOTAL		€ 39.393.000	6.951.706 €	46.344.706

Table 18: Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives

Priority axis	Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (€)	Proportion of the total allocation to the programme (%)
<i>Not applicable</i>		
Total		

SECTION 4. INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

The main focus of INTERACT III is on increased effectiveness of territorial cooperation, as well as cooperation in its widest sense. The integrated approach relates to all three specific objectives of INTERACT, because cooperation as such is one of the main tools for an integrated territorial development of all regions of the European Union. Through a more effective cooperation they may more effectively reach common goals, address common challenges and exploit joint potentialities.

Main needs and challenges identified by territorial target groups identified in section 2, as well as included in the CSF, are addressed by all three objectives of INTERACT III, like this:

- 1) To improve management and control capacity of ETC programmes: ETC needs to become more strategically focused and results-oriented; ETC shall be better embedded in the new logical framework; ETC needs to increase the effectiveness and skills of public administration in cooperation activities, especially by encouraging the exchange of experiences; ETC needs an improved governance and quality, e.g. through greater standardisation of rules and procedures across MSs; ETC needs simplified approaches and clear rules, to reduce administrative burdens, increase transparency, accountability and to reduce errors;
- 2) To improve the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating the programme results: There is a need to strengthen links with Investment for Growth and Jobs and ETC programmes; ETC needs to be recognised by a wider audience as a key contributor to the EU 2020 strategy; good practices in cooperation, also outside ETC shall be disseminated and used; results of cooperation, including macro-regional approaches, shall be more widely recognised;
- 3) To improve the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches (EGTC, Revolving Funds, MRSs, Article 96, ITI etc): ETC, as the second objective of Cohesion Policy and a key policy tool, is a natural innovative tool, subject to the Regulations, but with some room for innovation; ETC should be able to use innovative tools and approaches; cooperation should be enhanced in all sectoral policies and programmes, with a clear territorial approach, i.e. the use of cooperation tools in other programmes shall be enhanced.

4.1. Community-led local development (where appropriate)

Not applicable

4.2. Integrated actions for sustainable urban development (where appropriate)

Principles for identifying the urban areas where integrated actions for sustainable urban development are to be implemented and the indicative allocation of the ERDF support for these actions

Not applicable

Table 19: Integrated actions for sustainable urban development – indicative amounts of ERDF support

Fund	Indicative amount of ERDF support (EUR)
ERDF	<i>Not applicable</i>

4.3. Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)

Not applicable

Table 20: Indicative financial allocation to ITI other than those mentioned under point 4.2 (aggregate amount)

Priority axis	Indicative financial allocation (Union support) (EUR)
<i>Not applicable</i>	

4.4 Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the relevant Member States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate)

(Where Member States and regions participate in macro-regional and sea basin strategies)

The EUROPE 2020 growth strategy sets, among others, that the full range of EU policies and instruments (including the European Regional Development Fund) should be used more effectively to reach its goals, i.e. that synergies should be explored better. Two Commission communications were released in 2010 and 2011 outlining the contribution of regional policy to Europe 2020 – and making reference to ETC programmes as instruments that support the delivery of the Union’s objectives. The same is stated in the Territorial Agenda 2020 (TA 2020) and in the 5th Cohesion Report.

Both in the legislative package and the Common Strategic Framework, the macro-regional strategies make part of the official delivery structure, thus they will necessarily impact on ETC (cross-border, transnational and interregional). This concept has been launched back in 2009 with the endorsement of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and in 2010 with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. In 2014-2020 territorial cooperation and macro-regions are integral part of the EU and national strategic frameworks, therefore included in the national Partnership Agreements. On the other hand, it is clear that ETC is not the sole instrument expected to implement territorial cooperation, but also national and regional programmes of the Growth and Jobs objective are going to contribute to territorial cooperation and thus to macro-regions.

INTERACT National Contact Persons, representing the Member States views, have expressed their support for INTERACT III to continue to act as a networking and learning platform for the promotion, development and support of the cooperation process and as the bridge between the different institutions and organisations involved, as well as to promote more partnership, communication and exchange between ETC and the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal and other programmes with a clear cooperation dimension. Accordingly, INTERACT III support to macro-regional approaches is focused on the strategic benefits resulting from cooperation activities implemented with the support of different financing sources and contributing to cooperation in the wider strategic context. The means to achieve this target is the networking and communication support INTERACT III is offering to partners of multi-level governance structures in macro-regional strategies and across strategies, complementing the work of transnational programmes.

Based on the above INTERACT III is to build on the achievements of the period 2007-2013 in all these areas, developing further its role of catalyst for effective cooperation. Then aim being better development and implementation of macro-regional and sea-basin strategies and better exploitation of further enforced coordination of EU financial instruments. Based on these elements the INTERACT III structure will strengthen further the cooperation dimension overall of Cohesion Policy, addressing gaps to overcome borders and other barriers, and to give a wider EU perspective to regional development approaches. For achieving this, in complement to the work of the Commission in this respect, INTERACT III will deliver support to ETC programmes, macro-regional and sea basin strategies and for operations using the potentials of Articles 70 and 96 in their cooperation in country specific programmes.

INTERACT III contribution is given in form of various activities that promote exchange between strategies:

- support placing the strategies in the overall EU policy approach, e.g. by ensuring their links to other EU policies and programmes (Horizon 2020, Connecting Europe etc.);
- facilitate links to all relevant ESIF programmes by facilitating embedding of the perspective in the strategic design of all relevant ESIF programmes and by facilitating use of all outward-looking provisions (Articles 70 and 96 etc. of the CPR);
- provide KEEP databases and facilitate the information on the possible financing sources;
- promoting the exchange of good practice among the various existing strategies.

SECTION 5. IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

5.1 Relevant authorities and bodies

In accordance with legal requirements, the main entities and bodies responsible for the programme management are the

- Monitoring Committee
- Managing Authority/INTERACT Secretariat
- Certifying Authority
- Audit Authority.

The Managing Authority will be assisted by a small joint secretariat (INTERACT Secretariat) and will contract the decentralised implementing bodies, henceforth called the INTERACT Offices, actually delivering the programme to the target groups.

There will be strong organisational ties between the Managing Authority, the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Offices concerning the joint elaboration and the implementation of a Multi-annual Work Programme and the Annual Work Plans.

The Monitoring Committee members will be involved in the strategic design of the INTERACT activities.

Table 21: Programme authorities

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Managing authority	Bratislava Self Governing Region INTERACT Department Sabinovská 16 P.O. BOX 106 820 05 Bratislava Slovakia	Pavol Frešo, president of the Bratislava Self Governing Region; Petra Masáčová, head of INTERACT department
Certifying authority, where applicable	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Section of European Funds Štefanovičova 5 P. O. BOX 82 817 82 Bratislava Slovakia	Mgr. Marcela Zubriczká Director General of the Section of European Funds
Audit authority	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Section of Audit and Control Štefanovičova 5 P. O. BOX 82 817 82 Bratislava Slovakia	Mr. Ing. Marek Vanko, PhD., MBA Director General of the Section of Audit and Control

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
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The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> the certifying authority	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Section of European Funds Štefanovičova 5 P. O. BOX 82 817 82 Bratislava Slovakia
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Table 22: Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of authority/body (position or post)
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks	Each EU MS hosting either MA/IS or INTERACT Office designates the body responsible for carrying out the control tasks defined in the Article 125(4)(a) of the CPR, in line with Article 23(4) of the ETC Regulation.	To be specified.
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks	<p>The Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, Section of Audit and Control as the Audit Authority as well as its cooperating bodies will ensure the performance of government audits in accordance with the Act No 502/2001 Coll. on financial control and internal audit and amending certain acts, as amended.</p> <p>The Audit Authority will be assisted by a Group of auditors. Each EU MS hosting either MA/IS or IPs designates the body responsible for carrying out the audit tasks within its own territory i.e. of the Member State involved in INTERACT III, in compliance with Article 25(2) of the ETC Regulation.</p>	<p>Mr. Ing. Marek Vanko, PhD., MBA</p> <p>Director General of the Section of Audit and Control, Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic</p>

5.2 Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

The implementation arrangements will be only slightly modified in comparison to the INTERACT II programme, with the aim of continuing the successful service delivery by decentralised INTERACT offices (known as INTERACT Offices).

According to the nature of the programme (INTERACT III will not implement projects within the usual ETC sense; please see section 2.A.6.1), there is no need of providing information to beneficiaries and thus the small secretariat unit, set up within the MA, in the organisational structure of the Bratislava Self Governing Region (INTERACT Secretariat, IS), shall mainly assist the managing authority and the monitoring committee in carrying out their respective functions, fulfilling both coordination (under Priority 1) and technical management (under Priority 2) functions and primarily being responsible for the below tasks:

- setting up the framework of service delivery: elaborating and further developing programme-level procedures and related templates (e.g. annual work planning) and key documents (e.g. the Multi Annual Work Plan and rules of procedures of internal working groups);
- coordinating the actual implementation of programme-level processes, including facilitating the annual work planning exercise, compiling on the basis of INTERACT Offices' inputs the joint annual work plans, as well as organising and following up coordination meetings, etc;
- collecting and compiling inputs of INTERACT Offices into programme-level documents;
- contributing to the financial and activity monitoring tasks under the responsibility of the Managing Authority;
- contributing to and fulfilling programme-level reporting obligations;
- providing (setting up, maintaining and further developing) the joint IT infrastructure for INTERACT Offices including the programme monitoring system, online collaborative work platform, etc.

IS tasks, responsibilities and working arrangements will be detailed in the Multi Annual Work Plan.

5.3 Summary description of the management and control arrangements

The following section provides a description of the implementation structure of the INTERACT III Programme.

Role and tasks of the monitoring committee

According to the Article 47 of CPR, the monitoring committee (MC) is to be set up within three months of the date of the notification of the decision adopting a programme, to monitor implementation of the programme.

The monitoring committee will consist of representatives of each Member State and the associated non-member countries Norway and Switzerland. They shall be nominated by each Member State and the associated non-member country according to its constitutional and organisational requirements.

The monitoring committee is composed of the following members and representatives:

- a) Members: 1-3 representatives per country (EU Member States; Norway and Switzerland);
- b) Participants in an advisory capacity:
 - representatives of the European Commission;
 - representatives of the Managing Authority/INTERACT Secretariat;
 - representatives of the INTERACT Offices;
 - representatives of the acting Certifying Authority and representatives of the acting Audit Authority as an independent observer;
 - representatives of the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic.

Decisions by the monitoring committee shall be taken by consensus whereby each Member State and the associated non-member countries Norway and Switzerland shall have one vote. Voting principles will be laid out in the rules of procedure. The working language of the INTERACT III Programme is English.

According to Article 49 of the CPR the monitoring committee bears responsibility in the following tasks:

- review implementation of the programme and progress made towards achieving its objectives and more specifically the functions listed in Article 110 of the CPR;
- examine, discuss and approve key documents including the Multi Annual Work Plan, providing the detailed framework for service delivery for the whole programming period and the Joint Annual Work Plans, the concrete annual work plans of the INTERACT Offices and the MA/IS, based on work packages (set of interconnected activities addressing the same need);
- validate the management and control system description based on the designation of

authorities in line with Article 124(2) of the CPR;

- ensure in line with Article 5(2) of the CPR that all relevant partners on national level are involved in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme.

The MC can decide to set up other advisory groups or decide on other organisational arrangement in order to support an efficient implementation of the programme.

Role and tasks of the managing authority/INTERACT secretariat

The Managing Authority, assisted by the INTERACT Secretariat, supporting the Managing Authority in the implementation and day-to-day management and coordination of the programme, will be responsible for managing the cooperation programme in accordance with sound financial management in line with Article 25 of the CPR and Article 23 of the ETC Regulation, especially:

- to organise the Monitoring Committee meetings and to prepare, implement and follow-up decisions of the Monitoring Committee;
- to communicate with the implementing authorities and European Commission;
- to monitor progress of the programme by collecting and checking progress reports, monitoring outputs, results and financial implementation;
- to provide the joint IT infrastructure for INTERACT Offices for the purpose of coordination, reporting and planning;
- to coordinate the contributions and compiling INTERACT Offices inputs into the programme level documents;
- to organise external evaluation process related to the delivery of the programme.
- to contract and supervise INTERACT Secretariat staff;
- to contract and supervise INTERACT Offices.

Roles and tasks of the certifying authority

The Certifying Authority will assure its role according to Article 126 of the CPR including:

- drawing up and submitting payment applications to the Commission, and certifying that they result from reliable accounting systems, are based on verifiable supporting documents and have been subject to verifications by the managing authority;
- drawing up the accounts referred to in point (a) of Article 59(5) of the Financial Regulation;
- certifying the completeness, accuracy and veracity of the accounts and that the expenditure entered in the accounts complies with applicable law and has been incurred in respect of operations selected for funding in accordance with the criteria applicable to the operational programme and complying with applicable law;
- ensuring that there is a system which records and stores, in computerised form, accounting records for each operation, and which supports all the data required for

drawing up payment applications and accounts, including records of amounts recoverable, amounts recovered and amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation or operational programme;

- ensuring, for the purposes of drawing up and submitting payment applications, that it has received adequate information from the managing authority on the procedures and verifications carried out in relation to expenditure;
- taking account when drawing up and submitting payment applications of the results of all audits carried out by, or under the responsibility of, the audit authority;
- maintaining, in a computerised form, accounting records of expenditure declared to the Commission and of the corresponding public contribution paid to beneficiaries;
- keeping an account of amounts recoverable and of amounts withdrawn following cancellation of all or part of the contribution for an operation. Amounts recovered shall be repaid to the budget of the Union prior to the closure of the operational programme by deducting them from the subsequent statement of expenditure.

Role and tasks of the audit authority

Audit authority will assure its role according to Article 127 of the CPR including:

- ensure that audits are carried out on the proper functioning of the management and control system of the INTERACT III and on an appropriate sample of operations on the basis of the declared expenditure taking into account of internationally accepted audit standards;
- within eight months of adoption of INTERACT III, prepare an audit strategy for performance of audits. The audit strategy will set out the audit methodology, the sampling method for audits on operations and the planning of audits in relation to the current accounting year and the two subsequent accounting years. The audit strategy shall be updated annually from 2016 until and including 2024;
- to draw up:
 - an audit opinion in accordance with Article 59(5)(b) of the Financial Regulation No. 966/2012.
 - a control report setting out the main findings of the audits carried out in accordance with Article 127(1), including findings with regard to deficiencies found in the management and control systems, and the proposed and implemented corrective actions.

INTERACT offices

The four INTERACT offices in Turku (FI), Valencia (ES), Viborg (DK) and Vienna (AT) will be maintained and actually developing and delivering the INTERACT III services. The efficient service delivery is based on the expertise of INTERACT Offices, very closely and regionally connected to the target groups. Joint working groups of staff members from all INTERACT Offices with clear leadership/responsibility (via specific split of tasks among the INTERACT Offices) would assure the same level of service in all zones. INTERACT Offices shall be the first contact for the stakeholders located in its geographical area. Each service provided by INTERACT III is meant to be for the benefit

of all immediate addressees and all Member States, Norway and Switzerland.

The definite attribution of responsibilities to the INTERACT offices will be laid down in the Multi Annual Work Plan.

The INTERACT Offices will continue to be embedded in the same public institutions as this is the case of INTERACT II. The INTERACT III Managing Authority will conclude new contractual agreements with the legal body of the hosting institution, which acts as beneficiary in the meaning of Article 2(10) of the CPR. The INTERACT Offices will be endowed with their own annual budgets and be consistently staffed both in terms of number of employees and professional/academic profiles required. They will contribute to the development of the Multi Annual Work Plan and be drafting their parts of the Joint Annual Work Plans.

Implementing provisions:

a) Article 8 agreement

The Member States, Switzerland and Norway signed the Article 8 agreement, concerning the content of this operational programme and the national co-financing shares, in annex to this operational programme.

By signing the agreement, participating countries explicitly agree on

- all provisions contained in section 5.3;
- in particular the liabilities in case of systemic irregularities in the programme management system as specified below under point g);
- as well as on the timetable for paying their national co-financing.

b) Subsidy contracts

Subsidy contracts shall be signed by the Managing Authority and each individual beneficiary responsible for the INTERACT Offices, within 3 months from the approval of the OP.

The contracts shall regulate:

- The subject of the agreement, i.e. the delivery of the OP INTERACT III, as well as procedures for developing and approving the activities to be implemented, through multi-annual and joint annual work plans;
- Reporting obligations and procedures, including a reporting timetable;
- The overall budgetary allocation, including rules on the annual work plan allocations, flexibility rule for budget shifts, de-commitment arrangements;
- Procedures for the advance and the interim payments
- Procedures for final payments, as well as the accounts to be used;
- Obligation to comply with the applicable eligibility rules at EU, programme and

national levels;

- First level control provisions, specifying the rights and obligations of the beneficiaries and Managing Authority;
- Provisions on audit of operations, including rights and obligations of the beneficiaries and Audit Authority/Member of the Group of Auditors, including deadlines for submission of documents to the Auditors, in order for them to be able to conclude their audit work timely;
- Liabilities in case of irregularities (including systemic irregularities), procedures for reporting irregularities to the Certifying, national and EU authorities, as well as procedures for withdrawal and recovery of unduly paid amounts. It shall also specify liabilities for flat rate cuts, due to systemic errors, which cannot be traced back to the beneficiary, as well as arrangements in case of suspension of payments by the European Commission;
- The use of an electronic monitoring system and provisions on the audit trail, such as the deadlines for keeping proves of expenditure;
- Obligations and rights related to information and publicity, durability, as well as regulation of the copyright for INTERACT products;
- Closure arrangements, in particular financing for reporting activities after the eligibility period;
- Applicable law, assignment, legal succession and litigation.

In addition, the subsidy contracts will include details on the four partnership principles that will guide the performance of INTERACT Offices:

- Joint development of the annual work plans and activities;
- Joint implementation of the activities, following common quality standards;
- Joint staffing principle, including a joint human resources policy among INTERACT Offices focused on keeping and developing knowledge and skills as INTERACT's foremost asset, in compliance with national labour law and without prejudice to beneficiaries individual responsibilities to fulfil their contractual obligations;
- Joint financing, in the sense that joint activities to which each individual INTERACT Office contributes are jointly planned, budgeted and implemented. This principle allows the individual offices to take over specific tasks and related costs of other offices, whenever necessary and within the limits that will be established by the Monitoring Committee.

c) **Monitoring system**

As stipulated in Articles 74 and 112 of the CPR, data exchange between the programme and the European Commission will be carried out electronically (by means of the SFC 2014 system).

On the side of the programme, the monitoring system (according to Article 72 of the CPR) shall provide data and information needed to fulfil the management, monitoring

and evaluation requirements.

In accordance with Article 122(3) of the CPR, INTERACT III will ensure that no later than 31 December 2015, all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and the Managing Authority/Certifying Authority and Audit Authority can be carried out by means of an electronic data exchange system.

The monitoring system – among others - will provide for the fulfilment of the below key functions:

- recording of work packages (as the basic unit of work planning) based on the Joint Annual Work Plan as approved by the Monitoring Committee;
- online submission of expenditures to the first level controller and online validation of expenditure;
- online progress and financial reporting;
- online progress and financial monitoring of INTERACT Offices;
- online certification and payments;
- reporting and administration of irregularities and implementation of recoveries;
- online provision of information for audit purposes;
- online exchange of data with the Commission.

Furthermore it will comply with the following requirements:

- Data integrity and confidentiality;
- Authentication of the sender within the meaning of Directive 1999/93/EC4;
- Storage in compliance with retention rules defined in accordance with Article 140 of the CPR;
- Secure transfer of data;
- Availability during and outside standard office hours (almost 24/7, except for technical maintenance activities);
- Accessibility by the Member States and the beneficiaries either directly or via an interface for automatic synchronisation and recording of data with national, regional and local computer management systems;
- Protection of privacy of personal data for individuals and commercial confidentiality for legal entities with respect to the information processed (according to Directive 2002/58/EC concerning the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy in the electronic communications sector and Directive 1995/46/EC on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data).

In order to transfer data to the European Commission, the administration system of the e-MS shall facilitate interoperability with the Union frameworks as required by

Article 112(3) of the CPR.

The computer system used shall meet accepted security and reliability standards. Accepted procedures that ensure reliability of the accounting, monitoring and financial reporting information in computerised form will be implemented.

The Managing Authority, assisted by the Secretariat, shall be responsible for setting up and running the electronic monitoring system. In particular, the electronic monitoring system developed by INTERACT II (called e-MS) shall be adapted and configured according to the needs of INTERACT III.

d) Annual and final implementation reports

In accordance with Article 14 of the ETC Regulation, the Managing Authority shall compile annual implementation reports, by 31 May 2016 and by the same date of each subsequent year until and including 2023 (except for the years 2017 and 2019, for which the deadline is set as 30 June). All reports shall be approved by the Monitoring Committee of the programme and sent via the SFC 2014 system to the European Commission. To this purpose, the data collected in the monitoring system is compiled as described above.

e) Evaluation plan

In compliance with the CPR, INTERACT III will develop an evaluation plan, which shall include:

- 1) Arrangements and timeline for an external evaluation. The Managing Authority, in charge of the evaluation, will involve relevant actors, especially the Monitoring Committee in all phases of the external evaluation. The external evaluation will deliver facts and recommendations about the achievement of the intended results (results indicators set in this OP), as well as deviations and follow-ups. As a management tool, evaluation will be used for steering INTERACT, in particular for strategic discussions of the programme decision makers, such as the Monitoring Committee.
- 2) Internal on-going evaluation and quality assurance. Processes for constant quality check will be set-up and agreed on by all programme implementers, under the responsibility of the Managing Authority, assisted by one INTERACT Office. This includes, among other, a systematic collection of information on the users satisfaction, as well as on the final use of INTERACT products. The information collected will also form the basis for the external evaluation.

f) Communication strategy

INTERACT III shall develop its own communication strategy, in compliance with Article 116 of the CPR, within 6 months from the approval of the OP and based on the INTERACT II experience and evaluation. The communication strategy will be approved by the Monitoring Committee and will be implemented jointly by all programme implementers.

The Communication Strategy shall ensure transparency towards and information to relevant partners and stakeholders, taking account of the extended target groups of INTERACT III (see section 2.A.6.1. of the OP), identifying for each target group specific

communication tools.

The strategy will define specific communication objectives, target audiences, messages as well as tactics and tools to support the achievement of wider programme goals. It will take into account detailed rules concerning information and communication measures laid down in Article 115 and Annex XII of the CPR. The strategy will be valid for the whole programming period, complemented by annual work plans. The programme shall have a unique visual identity, which will enable an easy ownership of the programmes for each product and service. The Communication Strategy shall cover both the communication to INTERACT target groups on INTERACT products and services, as well as a strategy for improving ETC communication to all non-ETC target groups.

Being overall responsible, the Managing Authority shall satisfy itself that all programme implementers are complying with the communication strategy and take corrective measures if necessary. In doing this, it shall be assisted by the INTERACT Secretariat and two INTERACT Offices.

g) Financial control (First level control; FLC)

In compliance with Article 23(4) of the ETC Regulation, each Member State hosting the Managing Authority or the beneficiaries shall designate the body responsible for carrying out verifications under point (a) of Article 125(4) of the CPR in relation to the beneficiary/beneficiaries on its territory, according to its own institutional setting.

Each Member State hosting the Managing Authority or the beneficiaries shall bear the legal responsibility for its own FLC system. Nonetheless, the Managing Authority shall satisfy itself, that the systems are set up and functioning. To this purpose it will collect information, which will be included in the Monitoring and Control System Description in compliance with Article 72 of the CPR. System audit and audit of operations, as provided in the programme audit strategy to be endorsed by the Audit Authority and the Group of Auditors, shall also provide for this assurance. Each Member State shall ensure that the MA/IS is regularly informed on the control system set up by each Member State and of any changes thereto.

In order to ensure coherence among controllers from all Member States hosting a beneficiary, the Managing Authority shall develop a methodological guidance, including a programme FLC report/checklist and certificate. These standard documents will be used as minimum requirements.

All expenditures of the programme will be subject to FLC. First level controllers shall verify and certify that all expenditures comply with EU and programme rules and in areas not covered by these, with national legislations. The FLC report shall specify the expenditures found ineligible, the kind of controls carried out and any follow-up.

Each Member State shall ensure that the expenditure of a beneficiary can be verified within a period of three months of the submission of the documents by the beneficiary concerned.

h) Group of Auditors

In carrying out its functions, in compliance with Article 25 of ETC Regulation, the Audit Authority is assisted by a group of auditors composed of a representative from each of the Member States hosting a beneficiary. Each Member State is responsible for audits

carried out on its territory. Each member of the Group of Auditors is responsible for providing the factual elements relating to expenditures on its territory, which is required by the audit authority in order to perform its assessment. The Group of Auditors will be set up within three months of approval of operational programme. It will draw up its own rules of procedure, under the lead of the chair, the Audit Authority. The rules of procedure will include a detailed description of the functions and responsibilities of each of the audit actors. It will also include the procedure and time frame for the decision on individual financial corrections.

These auditors shall be functionally independent from first level controllers.

The Group of Auditors will assist the Audit Authority in setting up and implementing the audit strategy. The audit strategy will include a description on how each member of the group of auditors will communicate the results of the audits on the beneficiary located in its own country, for the audit authority to be in a position to perform its assessment. The audit strategy will also indicate which measures have been put in place by the audit authority and the group of auditors, in order to ensure that the same audit methodology, in accordance with internationally accepted audit standards, has been applied by all members of the group of auditors.

i) Arrangements on liability in case of irregularities

The Managing, Certifying, Audit Authority, the Secretariat and the four beneficiaries are liable for any irregularity they may have caused. The Managing Authority is responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union. Any unduly paid amounts are recovered from the specific beneficiary by the Managing Authority.

If the recovery procedure by the Managing Authority is repeatedly unsuccessful, the Managing Authority recovers the amount from the Member State hosting the specific beneficiary, signing the Article 8 agreement. Each participating Country, by signing the Article 8 agreement explicitly agrees to have this subsidiary liability and to timely pay back any unduly paid amount to the account of the programme. Any such occurrences and measures will be timely discussed and agreed upon in the first subsequent meeting of the Monitoring Committee.

Upon detection of the irregularity, the Certifying Authority will report it to the European Commission in the first subsequent claim, as amount to be withdrawn, deducted or recovered. The Certifying Authority will supervise the recovery of the amount and report it in the claim to the European Commission.

Even though Member States not hosting an INTERACT body will not be beneficiary of programme funding, they will share the benefit from programme services. Therefore, all Member States explicitly agree, by signing the Article 8 agreement, that they share liability in proportion to their share of co-financing, in case of flat rates cuts or financial corrections, occurred for systemic errors or irregularities, related to specific arrangements of the programme management system, which were agreed by the representatives of the Member States in the programme Monitoring Committee. Programme bodies and beneficiaries are liable for irregularities, including the ones having a systemic nature, they caused.

When a member of the Group of Auditors, or any other body of the specific Member State, detect an irregularity, it will timely inform the Managing Authority and the Audit

Authority. The Electronic Monitoring System will include a specific form and procedure, to report on irregularity, which will also be part of the description of the management and control system.

In case of suspension of payments by the European Commission, due to errors, irregularities or even external factors, such as cash flow gaps at European level, the Managing Authority shall inform the beneficiaries and the MC about the suspension and the reasons for it immediately after being notified.

With this information the Managing Authority shall also convene all bodies directly affected by the suspension, in particular the beneficiaries, in order to develop an action plan to address the causes of the suspension, in line with the indications provided by the European Commission. The Monitoring Committee shall be informed in all steps, in particular on the measures agreed with the European Commission, on the progresses and on the consequences of the suspension in the service delivery by INTERACT.

j) Arrangements for programme closure

All bodies implementing the INTERACT III programme, the Managing Authority, the Certifying and Audit Authority commit to assure appropriate resources for closing the Programme.

In case INTERACT will not be continued after 2023, the institutions hosting INTERACT authorities shall make sure that the reporting and closing activities can be performed within the eligibility period. For residual audit activities after the final date of eligibility, they will make sure that the knowledge of the existing INTERACT staff will be timely transferred to own staff. To this purpose, they shall explicitly identify to the European Commission their office in charge.

Beneficiaries hosting the four offices shall close their activities at least six months before the end of the eligibility period, in order to be able to timely submit the final report and final request for payment. For any residual reporting or audit activity, they shall make sure that the knowledge of the existing INTERACT staff will be timely transferred to their own staff. To this purpose, they shall explicitly identify to the Managing Authority their office in charge.

k) Resolution of complaints

- Complaints related to the national control system

Beneficiary that have any complaints related to the national control system can file a complaint to the relevant Member State body following national procedures set in place. In accordance with the hierarchy of the rules, for complaints regarding national control procedures on the programme rules, the complaint should be filed with the Managing Authority, which should then contact the national control body.

- Complaints related to Audit Authority findings

Following the contradictory procedure and the issuing of the final audit report referring to an audit carried out by the Audit Authority, the concerned beneficiaries that disagree with the final decision of the Audit Authority can file a complaint to the relevant Member of the Group of Auditors following national procedures set in place. In accordance with the hierarchy of the rules, for complaints regarding national

control procedures on the programme rules, the complaint should be filed with the Managing Authority, which should then contact the Audit Authority.

- Complaints related to the monitoring carried out by the Managing Authority

Any complaints in relation to the monitoring of beneficiary's progress carried out by the Managing Authority shall be submitted by the beneficiary to the Managing Authority that will examine and provide an answer. Where required, remaining complaints can be put forward by the beneficiary to the institution representing its country in the Monitoring Committee.

- Other complaints

For any other complaints not falling within the categories listed above, the concerned beneficiary can file complaints to the Chair of the Monitoring Committee. According to the type of complaint the beneficiary will be guided as to the relevant procedure to be followed.

5.4 Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

The managing authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the beneficiary. For INTERACT III, under beneficiaries are understood the hosting institutions of the member states hosting Managing Authority/INTERACT Secretariat, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority and INTERACT Offices.

If the managing authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the beneficiary, the Member State shall reimburse the managing authority any amounts unduly paid to that beneficiary. The managing authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union.

Even though Member States not hosting an INTERACT body will not be beneficiary of programme funding, they will share the benefit from programme services. Therefore, all Member States explicitly agree, by signing the Article 8 agreement, that they share liability in proportion to their share of co-financing, in case of flat rates cuts or financial corrections, occurred for systemic errors or irregularities, related to specific arrangements of the programme management system, which were agreed by the representatives of the Member States in the programme Monitoring Committee. Programme bodies and beneficiaries are liable for irregularities, including the ones having a systemic nature, they caused.

5.5 Use of the Euro

By way of derogation from Article 133 of the CPR, and in accordance with Article 28 of the ETC Regulation, expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro shall be converted into euro by the beneficiaries using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which that expenditure was incurred.

The conversion shall be verified by the managing authority or by the controller in the

Member State in which the beneficiary is located.

5.6 Involvement of partners

The identification of the relevant stakeholders is a task of the Member State (MA of the ETC programme, in consultation with the countries participating in the programme), which will build the partnership according to the policy priorities and on territorial circumstances. The organisations should be able to influence or to be affected by the preparation and implementation of the programme, as the Preamble of the CPR states.

As a result of these elements, INTERACT has established the partners' identification criteria on the following 4 principles: linkage to the policy priorities, the territorial circumstances, the principle of proportionality and the ability to influence or be affected by the programme.

In a programme like INTERACT III, where no projects in the usual ETC sense are financed and services are offered to the Cooperation community, the majority of the members of our partnership are the target groups of our services (see section 2.A.6.1).

a) The linkage to the policy priorities.

INTERACT III only tackles the thematic objective 11 and therefore, the type of partners will be rather institutional and related to public authorities and public administration.

3 specific objectives have been identified by INTERACT III: to improve the management and control capacity of ETC programmes, to improve the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating the programme results, and to improve the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches.

Bearing in mind the above, the members of the partnership should be the authorities in charge of the management, implementation and control of ETC programmes (Managing Authorities, Technical Secretariats, Certifying Authorities, first level controllers, Audit Authorities and members of the Groups of Auditors, national representatives, project owners) as well as specific cooperation stakeholders (coordinators of the macro-regional and sea-basin strategies, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, EGTCs authorities).

In addition, to cover the training part of the programme, INTERACT creates linkages with similar bodies established at national level (Europ'ACT in France) and at EU-levels (EIPA, for instance).

b) As for the territory, INTERACT III covers the whole of the EU plus Norway and Switzerland.

The partners will cover the whole of the EU, plus Norway and Switzerland.

c) The principle of proportionality.

The application of this principle to our programme will keep the number of partners adapted to its size. The funding available for the programme is of around 45M€, which means that the programme is of reduced size.

In the preparation and implementation phases, the programme will be able to keep quite a number of partners involved. However, the participation to the monitoring committees will be reduced to a representation of the umbrella organisations, as included in Delegated Act No... In fact in article 10.2 of the Delegated Act, it is very clearly stated that interregional and transnational programmes may limit the participation in monitoring committees to the “umbrella organisations” at EU level, and that the partnership principle is respected through the prior involvement of partners in the preparations of the committees.

d) Ability to influence or be affected by the programme

The influence or level of impact can vary from partner to partner. The main partners identified are

- Group 1: partners with which the Programme has connecting activities (ESPO, INTERREG-Europe, URBACT);
- Group 2: partners affected by INTERACT, as they are recipients of the activities (programme managers, cooperation stakeholders, including EU institutions).
- Group 3: partners indirectly affected by INTERACT (organisations dealing with cooperation such as CPMR, AEBR, MOT, etc)

In the specific case of group 1 and in support of regional and urban development and investments, a continued cooperation on harvesting complementarities between the pan-European Cooperation Programmes INTERREG-Europe, URBACT III and INTERACT III shall take place during 2014-2020. The cooperation shall build on the good experience gained in the programme implementation 2007-2013 and include joint activities harvesting synergies between territorial evidence, regional and urban experience and efficient implementation procedures leading to results.

Actions taken to facilitate a wide involvement and active participation of the partners in the preparation of the programme

The objective is to support the programming process, and the partners have been asked to give precise input for the drafting of the operational programme.

Group 1 has been involved in the preparation of the programme from an early stage. Since the publication of the draft proposals of the 2014-2020 Regulations, INTERACT has had specific meetings with INTERREG-Europe in order to clarify the complementary activities that each programme will be implementing. In addition, joint meetings with Member States representatives and/or programme drafters of Interreg-Europe, ESPON and URBACT have taken place in the programming process to discuss the outlines of the respective interregional programmes.

As regards Group 2, a stakeholder consultation (online survey) was carried out in February 2013 to gather preliminary input from them as recipients of our services. The outcomes served as a basis to start drafting the specific objectives of the programme.

A second online stakeholder consultation will be launched once the Operational Programme draft has been approved by the Programming Committee. In this consultation, the 3 groups of stakeholders will be addressed for their final input to the

drafting process.

All the input received from the stakeholders was summarized and presented to the programming task force and programming committee together with the official requirements by the draft regulations. The outcomes of these discussions combine all sources of input.

Description of how the relevant partners will be involved in the implementation of the programme

INTERACT aims to take on board the partners' opinion in the implementation and evaluation of INTERACT III. Therefore, their feedback will be included in the various proposals to be discussed when planning and assessing INTERACT activities, and also when the programme will be evaluated.

As for the involvement at the Monitoring Committees and in view of the proportionality principle, the partner programmes (group 1) will receive both the draft agendas of the MC meetings and a summary of the minutes (only relevant issues for them to be included). This will allow them to send any specific input and to be updated on the latest developments of INTERACT. In several cases, the same institution, unit or office (sometimes even the same person) represents a specific Member State in all or more than one programme of group 1.

In case the ETC community (groups 2 and 3) would be interested in sending input to the MC discussions, the stakeholder should contact the national contact person, who will centralise the inputs from the respective territory. ETC community's needs are constantly assessed. The members of the INTERACT MC are often staff of institutions, unit or offices in charge of the coordination of the ETC community in their respective country, therefore they are aware of specific needs and practices.

The MA will publish a summary of the relevant decisions of the Monitoring Committee meetings.

As for the involvement in the programme implementation, all partners (3 groups) will be given the opportunity to participate at the needs assessment carried out every year for the development of targeted services, which are part of the annual work plan approved and monitored by the MC. Besides, they will be able to assess of the specific activities in which they have participated. Finally, they will be considered for the participation in the evaluation process (via targeted surveys).

SECTION 6. COORDINATION

ERDF-EAFRD-EMFF coordination: The specific objectives 2 and 3 of INTERACT directly contribute to the coordination between funds. A more effective and enhanced cooperation, even beyond ETC, will increase coordination among countries in specific policies, funds and programmes. Coordination may be also increased through the use of innovative approaches, e.g. ITIs, CLLD, Revolving Funds, as well as through increased thematic links between ETC, other funds and policies, to be exploited in the framework of the macro-regions and other thematic platforms.

Support services to EU macro-regional strategies include activities that address cooperation aspects within the concept of alignment of funding. This approach to cross-programme cooperation brings all the ESI funding sources closer together and places new coordination demands on the programmes. The conceptual setup is new to cooperation programmes as well as to the regional programmes. INTERACT III brings the possibilities and methods of coordination to the awareness of the programme management bodies, enabling them to make necessary strategic choices that provide for more effective programme implementation.

ERDF-IPA coordination: There are specific lessons to be learnt from the coordination of cooperation programmes along external borders of the EU with accession and pre-accession countries (IPA CBC between Member States and Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries). Compared to the 2000-2006 period, the 2007-2013 Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) lead to a major step towards assimilation of CBC programmes between Member States and IPA beneficiary countries with the ERDF European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes. One of the explicit objectives of the IPA is to help IPA countries to adopt and implement the *acquis*, as well as to prepare for EU funds upon accession. In this framework, 8 out of 10 IPA CBC programmes with Member States opted for the shared management and thus applied rules, which mirror to a great extent those of ERDF ETC programmes and have Structural Funds approach. This assimilation has been supported with shared responsibilities inside the European Commission, i.e. DG Enlargement with DG Regional Policy. This approach is included also in the 2014-2020 regulatory framework.

Within this framework, the INTERACT support to IPA CBC programmes has been translated into: - helping IPA CBC programmes in learning from ETC programmes, in particular from the transition recently occurred in the new Member States, through an increased integration in the ETC community; - still tackling some specificities applicable to the IPA-context; - but also in adopting a new mind set, i.e. an increased responsibility on the correct use of funds by the concerned IPA countries. The IPA CBC programmes run by Member States in shared management have been therefore fully integrated into the INTERACT II target groups and services, especially through the Vienna office. Member States approved the creation of an IPA-specific full time position, as well as the development of specific knowledge and tools on some specificities of IPA CBC, such as public procurement. These INTERACT activities are for the benefit of the Member States, which can count on a smoother programme management. In 2007-2013, INTERACT has been able to meet the needs and requests of IPA CBC programmes at a fully satisfactory level. The services are being seen as necessary by all relevant actors.

Accordingly, for INTERACT III, activities in support to IPA CBC programmes between Member States and IPA countries shall be still implemented in an integrated way with all

other INTERACT services, with project managers dedicated to IPA programmes and using management rules of ERDF. Especially this shall take new needs into account, e.g. of the new Member State Croatia and emergence of new IPA CBC programmes. The support to IPA CBC will be in addition important in areas where macro-regional strategies are being implemented across the programme areas and IPA CBC programmes. In these macro-regions, IPA CBC will be an important asset to implementation of the Strategies.

A number of major developments have taken place since the European Neighbourhood Policy was launched and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument was set up in 2006. These include a deepening of the relationship with the partners, the launch of regional initiatives and democratic transition processes in the region. This triggered a new European Neighbourhood Policy vision set out in 2011 as a result of a comprehensive Strategic Review of the Policy. It outlines key objectives for Union cooperation with Neighbourhood countries and provides for greater support to partners committed to building democratic societies and undertaking reforms, in line with the 'more for more' and 'mutual accountability' principles.

Support under European Neighbourhood Instrument and the European Regional Development Fund should be provided for the Cross-Border Cooperation programmes along the external borders of the European Union between partner countries and Member States to promote integrated and sustainable regional development between neighbouring border regions and harmonious territorial integration across the Union and with neighbouring countries. Furthermore, it is important to foster and facilitate cooperation for the common benefit of Union and its partners, notably through pooling of contributions from internal and external instruments of the Union budget, in particular for Cross-Border Cooperation.

Based on this principle mentioned in the draft Regulation for establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument (2011/045 (COD) INTERACT III programme is opening its services for ENI CBC programmes integrated into INTERACT III services under the three specific objectives of: a) Improving management and control capacities; b) Improving capacities in capturing and communicating programme results; c) Improving cooperation management capacities to implement innovative approaches.

The target groups for the interventions in this case are the 17 ENI CBC programmes referred to in Article 6(c) of the ENI Regulation proposal 2011/0405 (COD) and listed in the draft CBC Programming Concept Note from November 2013 to be included in the ENI CBC Programming Document. The Main service provision consists of horizontal activities covering all programmes while direct advisory and support services to individual programmes are provided by a complementary project implemented by DG DEVCO.

Integrated service provision on the level of horizontal activities as part of INTERACT III is based on the experience and knowledge gained during INTERACT ENPI Project in INTERACT II. The programme management bodies have expressed their wish to receive similar networking and information services as the ETC programmes have received in INTERACT II. In particular this refers to joint capitalisation activities, joint conferences addressing programme management issues, joint communication and joint programme and project database in KEEP.

A further justification for the integrated service portfolio for ETC and ENI CBC is emerging in context to the macro-regional strategy implementation. An extensive information exchange is necessary to put in place between all programmes, different funding initiatives and their stakeholders, this including also the cooperation programmes with Partner Countries and the Russian Federation.

SECTION 7. Reduction of administrative burden for beneficiaries

Not applicable.

SECTION 8. HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

8.1. Sustainable development

The INTERACT III programme has pre-selected operations and beneficiaries, as laid down in the programme document itself, therefore the nature of the programme and its thematic scope doesn't primarily allow to consider sustainable development as the focus of the programme. Nevertheless, the programme will contribute to the goal of sustainable development by offering e-learning opportunities to its target groups in order to reduce the need for long-distance travel. As far as internal coordination is concerned, video and teleconferencing will be used on a wider basis.

8.2. Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

The principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination is primarily applicable in case of events organised by INTERACT, during which the principle is ensured to the maximum extent. As for the programme bodies, all are embedded in public institutions of EU Member States, therefore the above principles are naturally applied during the staff selection procedures.

8.3. Equality between men and women

The nature of the INTERACT programme and its thematic scope doesn't primarily allow to consider the equality between men and women as the focus of the programme. The thematic objective and specific objectives chosen have no direct link to the gender equality. This principle can be followed on internal level, by using staffing procedures that will ensure gender equality.

SECTION 9. SEPARATE ELEMENTS

9.1. Major projects to be implemented during the programming period

Table 23: List of major projects

Project	Planned notification/submission date (year, quarter)	Planned start of implementation (year, quarter)	Planned completion date (year quarter)	Priority axes/investment priorities
<i>Not applicable.</i>				

9.2. Performance framework of the cooperation programme

Table 24: Performance framework (summary table)

Priority axis	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)
To be filled in the final draft OP.				

9.3 Relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme

To be filled in the final draft OP.

9.4 Applicable programme implementation conditions governing the financial management, programming, monitoring, evaluation and control of the participation of third countries in transnational and interregional programmes through a contribution of ENI and IPA resources

Not applicable.

List of acronyms

AA	Audit Authority
AERB	Association of European Border Regions
CA	Certifying Authority
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CLLD	Community-led Local Development
CPMR	Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions
CPR	Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
DG	Directorate General
DG DEVCO	Directorate General Development and Cooperation
DG REGIO	Directorate General Regional and Urban Policy
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Communities
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European territorial cooperation
ETC Regulation	Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal
EU	European Union
FLC	First Level Control
IO	INTERACT Office
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IT	Information Technology
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
JS	Joint Secretariat
KEEP	Knowledge and Expertise in European Programmes (tool)
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MRS	Macro-regional strategy
MS	Member State
NCP	National Contract Point
OP	Operational Programme
PR	Public Relations
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

ANNEXES (uploaded to electronic data exchange systems as separate files):

- Annex 1: Draft report of the ex-ante evaluation, with an executive summary (mandatory) (Reference: Article 55(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)
- Annex 2: Confirmation of agreement in writing to the contents of the cooperation programme (mandatory) (Reference: Article 8(9) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)
- Annex 3: A map of the area covered by the cooperation programme (as appropriate)
- Annex 4: A citizens' summary of the cooperation programme (as appropriate)
- Annex 5: INTERACT III Joint service portfolio
- Annex 6: INTERACT III target groups