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## **DISCUSSION PAPER**

### **DECENTRALISATION OF FUTURE INTERREG PROGRAMMES: OPERATIONAL PROGRAMMES WITH SUB-PROGRAMMES**

Association of European Border Regions  
(AEBR)

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## 1. General

Aim of this paper is to discuss some ideas regarding improving decentralisation for future INTERREG A programmes. If these meet general approval, details like e.g. concrete distribution of tasks, can be further elaborated.

Our proposals are based on best-practice in Europe in the field of cross-border cooperation, which are to a large extent in line with the evaluations by the DG REGIO of programme A.

Both have shown that region-specific, decentralised managed INTERREG A programmes achieve the best cross-border results. With regard to the eligible number of programmes, in INTERREG A the European Commission tends to approve one programme per border or trilateral programmes.

This causes that since 1990 the programme areas became larger. With at the same time increasing EU-funds for cross-border cooperation, especially in the last 10 years, this caused a decrease of the aimed decentralisation decreasingly takes place. The national governments more and more accroach INTERREG A programmes and take decisions often from a national perspective and not from a cross-border point of view.

## 2. Proposal for solution

The principle “one programme per border” (respectively trilateral programmes) will be retained. But in the case of a big programme per border, sub-programmes are going to be introduced, especially if this is requested by functional cross-border structures. Also, the sub-programmes receive own funds on the basis of an allocation system defined after programme approval.

One **Managing- and Paying Authority** per programme and border will remain; there should be also only one **Monitoring Committee**. But for each sub-programme independent Steering Committees are going to operate together with a joint secretariat. One of these secretariats will also carry out the work for the Monitoring Committee.

The sub-programmes with Steering Committees have a high degree of independence in the implementation of the sub-programmes up to project selection and approval.

## 3. Model for a programme with sub-programmes

### 3.1 programme development and INTERREG agreement

The elaboration of an INTERREG A programme is done by a cross-border partnership, consisting of representatives of the respective national governments and the regional/local level (e.g. Euroregions, etc.). This allows a place-based approach. For the areas covered by the sub-programmes, cross-border programmatic issues with priority measures are going to be developed, which are summarised in the main programme per border. The sub-programmes are oriented on the NUTS III level according to the future guidelines for INTERREG A programmes.

The cross-border partnership acting in the preparatory phase has to elaborate also a strategic framework for the management of the programme with sub-programmes and the finances.

Best practice would be an INTERREG agreement previously signed by all partners regulating all relevant details in order to avoid problems in the programme implementation as it is often the case today.

Main issues of such an agreement are for instance:

- Modalities of an INTERREG A programme also applying to the sub-programmes.
- Specification of common monitoring, selection and control procedures.
- Provision of the co-financing.
- Commitment on a common bank account, to which preferably also the national co-financing has to be transferred, even for the sub-programmes.
- Definition of the liability.
- Right to control the other partners.
- Common eligible measures.
- Obligatory definition and interpretation of a cross-border project.

### 3.1 Programme structure

- The **Monitoring Committee** is responsible for (to be defined in the INTERREG agreement):
  - the strategic orientation , monitoring and evaluation of the programme,
  - the composition of the programme,
  - the proceedings and frequency of the meetings (proposal: bi-annual meetings),
  - all aspects concerning the procedures in the Monitoring Committee.
- A **Steering-Committee** and a **joint secretariat** carry out the **operational management** for each **sub-programme**. The Steering-Committee is responsible for:
  - management and implementation of the sub-programme,
  - the final decision on project selection and approval,
  - decisions based on the principle of equality of the partners from mutual side of the border (unanimity),
  - the frequency of the meetings (circa every 3 month), depending on the number of ongoing submitted projects (no call for proposals!).
- The common secretariat has to fulfil the following tasks:
  - Administrative support of the Steering Committee and other important infrastructure of the sub-programme.
  - Permanent information and concrete support for potential applicants.
  - Receipt of the projects application and eligibility check.
  - Execution of all administrative tasks connected with submission, selection and approval of the projects.
  - Public relation and publication.

In each sub-programme several working groups are established with representatives of the NGO's, social partners, etc.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT MODELS	
TYPE 1	TYPE 2
<b>Interreg Partnership for the development and management of programme</b> (regional/local cross-border partnership) comprising regional/local authorities and other authorities/bodies co-financing the programme (eg national-level Member State authorities)	
<b>Interreg Agreement</b> between the partnership members (to be presented to the European Commission)	
<b>Programme(s)</b>	
<i>for each national border or part of a long border</i> <b>One programme</b> With autonomous (in management terms), sub-programmes, each covering a cross-border region	<i>With autonomous (in management terms)</i> <b>sub-programmes,</b> each covering a cross-border region
<b>Operational Management</b>	
<i>for the Programme:</i> a <b>Managing Authority</b> and a <b>joint Secretariat</b> ('secretariat-général')  <i>for each sub-programme:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <b>Steering Committee</b></li> <li>• a <b>joint Secretariat</b></li> <li>• sectoral working groups, etc, as appropriate</li> </ul>	<i>for each programme:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a <b>Steering Committee</b></li> <li>• a <b>Managing Authority</b></li> <li>• a <b>joint Secretariat</b></li> <li>• sectoral working groups, etc., as appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Management</b>	
A <b>Monitoring Committee</b> for the programme	A <b>Monitoring Committee</b> for each programme
<b>Contact points for the European Commission</b>	
<i>for each programme</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one authority/body designated as 'Managing Authority' and acting as general/coordinating secretariat for all sub-programmes (could be combined with the 'Paying Authority' and the 'joint secretariat')</li> <li>• one body designated as 'Paying Authority' for the programme</li> <li>• an EU contribution (with distinctive amounts for each sub-programme) payable to a single bank account of the 'Paying Authority' (which is then transferred to separate accounts for each sub-programme)</li> </ul>	<i>for each programme</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one authority/body designated as 'Managing Authority' (could be combined with the 'Paying Authority' and the 'joint secretariat')</li> <li>• one body designated as 'Paying Authority' for the programme</li> <li>• an EU contribution payable to a single bank account of the 'Paying Authority'</li> </ul>

**PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT SCHEME FOR A PROGRAMME WITH AUTONOMOUS SUB-PROGRAMMES**

