

Public consultation of

The Interregional Cooperation Programme (INTERREG IVC)

and the accompanying Environmental Report

In accordance with Directive 2001/42/EC
of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001

The Interregional Cooperation Programme (INTERREG IVC) aims to enable cooperation between authorities and actors at the regional and local level from different countries in the EU27 plus Norway and Switzerland in projects to exchange and transfer their experiences and jointly develop approaches and instruments that improve the effectiveness of regional development policies and contribute to economic modernisation.

In line with the Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, it aims to contribute to the Union's strategy for growth and jobs. As such the programme is an important instrument for the implementation of the EU initiative Regions for Economic Change (RfEC) supporting regional and urban networks discovering and testing best practice in economic modernisation in relation to projects clearly contributing to the Union's growth and jobs agenda and spreading this to all regions in order to help stimulate their sustainable growth and reducing economic disparities.

The programme is structured around two thematic priorities, grouping action fields that are keys in helping to achieve a contribution from the regions of Europe to the Union's strategy for growth, jobs and sustainable development.

Priority 1 addresses *innovation and the knowledge economy*, focussing mainly on the sub-themes innovation, research and technology development, entrepreneurship and SMEs, the information society, employment and qualification.

Priority 2 targets *environment and risk prevention*, most notably the sub-themes natural and technological risks, water management, waste management, biodiversity and preservation of natural heritage, energy and sustainable transport, cultural heritage and landscape.

INTERREG IVC supports two different types of interventions that are complementary and together help achieve the objectives of the programme.

The first type are the **Regional Initiatives**, projects initiated by actors at the regional and local level aiming at exchange of experience in a specific policy field with the aim to identify best practice and develop new tools and approaches for implementation.

The second type of intervention is called the **Fast Track Option**. This will take the shape of networks bringing together regions with strong experience in a specific policy field and regions wishing to improve in that field. The aim is to ensure that best practices identified will find their way into the Convergence and Competitiveness programmes.

The Interregional Cooperation Programme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It has a total available ERDF budget of € 321 million for the period 2007 - 2013. The programme area covers the whole territory of the European Union plus Norway and Switzerland and co-finances the participation of to public authorities and public equivalent bodies from these countries. Participation of actors from outside this area is possible under certain conditions.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) has been carried out on the Interregional Cooperation Programme (revised 3rd draft) in accordance with the European Directive 2001/42/EC on the evaluation of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

According to Article 6 of Directive 2001/42/EC and with Article 11 of the Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 the programme and its accompanying environmental report shall be made available for public consultation to designated environmental authorities and to the general public.

A number of consultation questions are set out below. These questions are designed to help structure the responses to the draft Interregional Cooperation Programme, taking into account the findings of the accompanying Environmental report :

The Strategic Environmental Assessment of the draft interregional cooperation programme (INTERREG IVC) and the accompanying Environmental Report

1. Do you agree that, for each of the environmental areas covered, the key strengths and weaknesses have been captured in the SWOT analysis (chapter 3 of the Programme)? If not, what else should be included?
2. Do you consider that the operational objectives for thematic axis 2 ‘environment and risk prevention’ are the most appropriate for interregional cooperation?: if not what alternatives do you suggest and what evidence supports your suggestion
3. Do you consider that the operational objectives for thematic axis 2: ‘environment and risk prevention’ are in line with EU Environmental policy priorities, if not what do you consider is missing and why?
4. Do you agree that the operational objectives under thematic axis 1 are not incompatible with EU Environmental policy priorities, if not, what incompatibilities do you see and what evidence supports this
5. Do you agree that there are not likely to be any significantly negative environmental effects of the Interregional Cooperation Programme? if not which effects do you consider there will be and what evidence supports your suggestion
6. Do you consider that additional environmental safeguards are required later on in the implementation of the Operational Programme, for instance at the project selection stage or do you consider they are sufficiently addressed already? If not, which safeguards do you consider should be introduced?
7. Do you agree that the operational objectives as defined in the revised 3rd Draft of the Interregional Cooperation Programme are more positive for the environment than the areas originally identified for interregional cooperation in the European Regional Development Fund¹ under Article 5: environment and risk prevention.
8. Do you agree with the findings of the Environmental Report’, do you have any comments regarding these findings?

¹ Regulation (EC) N°1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Funding and repealing Regulation (EC) N°1783/1999 OJ L 210/1 31.7.2006

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The public consultation starts on 20 December 2006. Comments should be submitted by **14 February 2007** to the

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However, for those Member States that allow for more than 8 weeks public consultation (Greece, Netherlands, Slovenia and UK), the final deadline will be **14 March 2007**.

For any question as regards the national consultation process, please refer to the following contact persons in your country:

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