

# CITIZEN'S SUMMARY

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Annex D

June 2015

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The transnational Interreg programme CENTRAL EUROPE will support regional cooperation among central European countries in the upcoming programming period 2014-2020. Key variables of the programme were agreed by participating Member States following thorough consultation with relevant partners and stakeholders in 2013. This paper summarises the official Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE cooperation programme, adopted by the European Commission on 16 December 2014, to provide a brief overview on the strategic orientation of the new programme.

## 1. Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE: Background

Covering an area of over 1 million square km the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme is home to about 146 million people. Nine European Union (EU) Member States cooperate in the programme, including all regions from Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as eight Länder from Germany (Baden-Württemberg, Bayern, Berlin, Brandenburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Thüringen) and nine regions from Italy (Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Provincia Autonoma Bolzano, Provincia Autonoma Trento, Valle d'Aosta, and Veneto). In total, the programme area is made up of 76 statistical NUTS 2 regions.

Figure 1: Programme area of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE



Central Europe is highly heterogeneous in geographical terms (marked by coastal areas, mountain ranges, rural areas, large urban agglomerations etc.) as well as in economic and social terms (exposing the lingering east-west divide). The programme area has a large number of assets but also faces numerous challenges in various fields affecting regional development, which have all been thoroughly analysed before concentrating the programme on four strategic priorities. Results expected from the programme will directly contribute to reaching goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy.

## 2. Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE: Strategic priorities and specific objectives

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme's overall objective is "to cooperate beyond borders in central Europe to make our cities and regions better places to live and work". Put more precisely, transnational cooperation should become the catalyst for implementing smart solutions that answer to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low-carbon economy, environment, culture and transport. The programme will build regional capacities following an integrated bottom-up approach involving and coordinating relevant actors from all governance levels. In doing so, it will coordinate with other efforts in the regions including, amongst other, national and regional programmes supported by structural and investment funds, macro-regional strategies, the Horizon 2020 programme or the European Investment Bank.

Within four priority axes (further described below) specific actions will be supported and various outputs obtained. The focus will be on policy-learning and implementation-oriented approaches at the transnational level. More concretely, actions will include the development and implementation of strategies and action plans, the development, testing and implementation of tools, the preparation of larger investment, the implementation of pilot actions - including pilot investments - as well as capacity building measures including training.

### Priority axis 1 - "Cooperating on innovation to make CENTRAL EUROPE more competitive"

Under this priority, the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme addresses key socio-economic challenges and needs within central Europe that are related to smart growth as defined in the Europe 2020 strategy. It aims at more effective investment in research, innovation and education. The programme will help strengthening potentials of technology-oriented areas that are destinations of foreign investments and capital flows, notably through better linking actors of innovation systems. This will enhance the transfer of research and development (R&D) results and the set-up of cooperative initiatives and clusters. It will also address regional disparities in knowledge and education such as brain drain, and strengthen capacities and competences for entrepreneurship and social innovation, also responding to challenges related to demographic change.

The financial allocation to this priority is around EUR 69 million ERDF. Projects to be funded will have to tackle one of the two specific objectives (SO) formulated under this priority:

#### SO 1.1 To improve sustainable linkages among actors of the innovation systems for strengthening regional innovation capacity in central Europe

This will be achieved through transnational and internationalised regional networks and clusters fostering technology transfer and the development and implementation of new services supporting innovation in businesses. Increased cooperation between actors of the innovation systems, especially between business and research, will improve access to research results for enterprises, notably SMEs, thus stimulating further investment in innovation. Furthermore, the link between research and public administration will be strengthened (e.g. by setting up specific mechanisms and promoting public procurement of innovation) which could positively contribute to both economic and social innovation transfer.

## **SO 1.2 To improve skills and entrepreneurial competences for advancing economic and social innovation in central European regions**

By stimulating mutual exchange and learning, transnational cooperation will help to increase skills of employees and entrepreneurs for applying novel technologies and methods. This will enable enterprises (especially SMEs) to develop and implement innovative products, services and/or processes contributing to the respective regional smart specialisation strategies. Innovative learning systems, jointly developed at transnational level, can contribute to the targeted improvement of skills thus increasing regional competitiveness especially in regions facing social challenges. Joint approaches developed transnationally will further support entrepreneurship by building technological and managerial competences as well as promoting entrepreneurial mind sets and initiatives. Next to merely economically driven innovation the improvement of skills and the fostering of entrepreneurship should contribute to advancing social innovation. This will allow for meeting social needs and will further improve the capacities of regions to manage new challenges such as those deriving from demographic change, migration and brain drain.

## **Priority axis 2 - “Cooperating on low-carbon strategies in CENTRAL EUROPE”**

This priority aims at increasing the use of renewable energies and improving energy efficiency while exploiting the economic growth potential of the low-carbon sector. The programme will also contribute to enhancing knowledge and skills with regard to efficient energy management of public infrastructures. The development and implementation of territorially based low-carbon strategies and mobility in functional urban areas will be supported to tackle the challenges central Europe is facing in energy production and consumption. This will also contribute to mitigating climate change.

The financial allocation to this priority is around EUR 44 million ERDF. Projects to be funded will have to tackle one of the three specific objectives formulated under this priority:

### **SO 2.1 To develop and implement solutions for increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy usage in public infrastructures**

Transnational cooperation will help to reduce know-how disparities and increase capacities of the public sector and related entities for improving the energy efficiency of public infrastructures and ultimately reducing their energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This will be achieved through strengthening competences as well as developing and implementing strategies, management approaches and financing schemes, which will serve as seedbed for achieving higher energy efficiency. This will consequently leverage further investment such as the renovation of public buildings and the upgrading of the energy efficiency level of public infrastructure. Furthermore, the usage of renewable energy in public infrastructures will be fostered through identifying potentials, testing innovative solutions and preparing follow-up investments.

### **SO 2.2 To improve territorially based low-carbon energy planning strategies and policies supporting climate change mitigation**

Transnational cooperation will help building new knowledge as well as exchanging existing knowledge and experiences between and within regions concerning the planning, financing and implementing of concrete actions to deliver sustainable energy measures. It aims to improve the capacity of the public sector and related entities, as a key starting point for mobilising investment for low-carbon measures at territorial level. Transnational cooperation will thereby contribute to triggering activities especially in regions with a lower usage of their renewable energy potentials. Furthermore, it will support the linking of approaches between the demand and supply sides, taking into account the quality and capacity

of energy distribution grids. This will be achieved through strengthening the knowledge and planning capacity of the public sector and related entities that facilitate the transition towards ‘Sustainable Energy Regions’. The programme will support them in the development and implementation of innovative local and regional energy planning strategies leading to an enhanced use of endogenous renewable energy potentials in a balanced way and to a reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This will in many cases also imply positive effects on air quality.

### **SO 2.3 To improve capacities for mobility planning in functional urban areas to lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**

Transnational cooperation will help increasing planning capacities of the public sector and related entities for low-carbon mobility by bringing together fore-riders with territories lagging behind, thus enhancing low-carbon mobility in central European functional urban areas and reducing air pollution. This will allow for the development and implementation of integrated mobility concepts, the setting up of coordinated management structures and the deployment of innovative technologies. The promotion of innovative low-carbon mobility solutions at transnational level will support authorities in their efforts towards the goal of sustainable mobility.

### **Priority axis 3 - ‘Cooperating on natural and cultural resources for sustainable growth in CENTRAL EUROPE’**

This priority responds to the need for protecting and sustainably using natural and cultural heritage and resources, which are subject to increasing environmental and economic pressures as well as usage conflicts. Heritage and resources also constitute valuable assets of central European regions and represent important location factors benefitting regional development. Furthermore, the programme will focus on improving the quality of the environment in functional urban areas. To this aim, key challenges like land use conflicts, air, soil and water pollution or waste management will be addressed. Improvements will directly benefit the quality of life of urban residents.

The financial allocation to this priority is around EUR 89 million ERDF. Projects to be funded will have to tackle one of the three specific objectives formulated under this priority:

#### **SO 3.1 To improve integrated environmental management capacities for the protection and sustainable use of natural heritage and resources**

Transnational cooperation will allow for improving the capacities of the public sector and related entities dealing with the protection and sustainable use of natural resources by supporting the development and implementation of integrated environmental strategies and tools as well as the joint testing of pilot solutions. This will facilitate a larger uptake of the integrated environmental concept into the public and private sector such as the application of innovative technologies and introducing resource efficient solutions.

### **SO 3.2 To improve capacities for the sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources**

Transnational cooperation will help improving capacities of the public and private sector dealing with the protection and sustainable use of cultural heritage and resources by supporting integrated approaches. This will allow for coordinating the preservation and management of cultural heritage and resources with sustainable growth. The development and implementation of strategies and policies for valorising cultural heritage and exploiting potentials of cultural and creative industries will trigger economic opportunities and employment at regional level.

### **SO 3.3 To improve environmental management of functional urban areas to make them more liveable places**

Transnational cooperation will help to increase capacities of the public sector and related entities for integrated environmental management ensuring compliance with environmental policies by supporting the development and implementation of integrated environmental management to improve the environmental performance of functional urban areas. Enhanced governance will contribute to better planning, management and decision making thereby reducing usage conflicts and negative externalities on the environment. The development and implementation of strategies and tools as well as the joint testing of pilot applications (e.g. for site rehabilitation) will trigger investments for improving the quality of the urban environment.

## **Priority axis 4 - “Cooperating on transport to better connect CENTRAL EUROPE”**

Under this priority, answers are provided to the core-periphery dichotomy in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE area. The programme will do so by reducing the gap between peripheral and less accessible regions and the area’s well-connected centres. It will improve connections of regions and cities to the European transport networks and strengthen multi-modal environmentally friendly passenger and freight transport.

The financial allocation to this priority is around EUR 30 million ERDF. Projects to be funded will have to tackle one of the two specific objectives formulated under this priority:

### **SO 4.1 To improve planning and coordination of regional passenger transport systems for better connections to national and European transport networks**

Transnational cooperation will reduce existing disparities of know-how as well as increase the planning and implementation capacity in the field of integrated passenger transport systems where better regional and transnational coordination between stakeholders is considered a key factor. Transnational cooperation can strengthen connections to TEN-T corridors and to primary, secondary and tertiary transport nodes of the TEN-T network, in particular for peripheral regions. A specific focus will be put on public transport at regional level as the sustainability of those connections is considered to be an underlying principle. Strategies, tools and pilot applications will contribute to setting up improved connections to the TEN-T network and transport nodes. Furthermore, within the transnational context the development of coordinated concepts for smart regional mobility and services is foreseen, fostering improved service standards and interoperability. Particular attention will be put on mobility services in the public interest.

## SO 4.2 To improve coordination among freight transport stakeholders for increasing multimodal environmentally-friendly freight solutions

Transnational cooperation will improve coordination among existing services, provided by different modes of transport, creating intermodal systems of existing transport facilities, overcoming discontinuity across borders and the lack of infrastructure. Coordinated strategies, concepts and management tools will contribute to improving the multimodality of environmentally-friendly freight transport (e.g. rail, river or sea transport). Multi-modal platforms will be promoted and developed as a potential for consolidating and optimising freight flows. This will enhance the efficiency, reliability and quality of greener freight transport modes and services. Such a coordinated approach will pave the way for designing future infrastructure in a sustainable manner and a more effective transportation of goods to and across central European regions.

The total programme budget including technical assistance is around EUR 247 million ERDF. ERDF co-financing rates are up to 80 percent for partners from Austria, Germany and Italy as well as up to 85 percent for partners from Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

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