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## EU Funding: European Territorial Cooperation / Interreg IV

There are several funds available to help site managers to finance their projects. One of these funds is the European Fund for Regional Development. This is one of the financial instruments of the cohesion policy of the EU. The goal of the cohesion policy is to reduce the gap between different regions' levels of development, in order to strengthen economic and social cohesion<sup>1</sup>. This fund has three objectives:

- **Convergence;**
- **Regional competitiveness and employment;**
- **European Territorial Cooperation.**

This factsheet will focus on the third objective: European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), also called Interreg IV.

### The ETC objective

The ETC objective aims to reinforce cooperation at cross border, transnational and interregional level to promote common solutions to a range of shared economic, social and environmental problems. ETC has integrated the Interreg III Community initiative<sup>2</sup>. The total budget for ETC is 8.7 billion Euro, this is a relatively small part, 2.52%, of the 2007 - 2013 budget for cohesion policy<sup>3</sup>. Only a part of this 8,7 billion Euro can be used for nature and environment projects (approximately 30%), which accounts for 2.6 billion Euro. This amount is comparable to the LIFE+ budget (2.143 billion Euro) for the same period<sup>4</sup>.

ETC is divided into three different strands of cooperation, which have been named Interreg IVa, IVb, and IVc. The types of (environmental) projects that may be supported, and the funding conditions, differ between each strand. This factsheet provides an overview of Interreg IVa, IVb and IVc. Each strand will be described in more detail in a separate factsheet, available through the Eurosité website, [www.eurosité.org](http://www.eurosité.org).

### ETC/ Interreg IV - Three Cooperation Strands

1. **Interreg IVa: cross-border cooperation:** This strand focuses on the development of cross-border economic, social and environmental activities through joint strategies for sustainable territorial development, see Map 1 for eligible areas. This involves, for example, encouraging entrepreneurship, protection and management of natural and cultural resources, and the development of collaboration, capacities and the joint use of infrastructures. The biggest share of the ETC objective budget, 6.44 billion, is devoted to this strand<sup>2, 3</sup>.

2. **Interreg IVb: transnational cooperation:** This strand supports joint projects between groups of neighbouring Member States and/or regions which share a number of geographical characteristics, such as common sea borders, or a mountainous topography. In consultation with the Member States, the European Commission has identified thirteen such regions, which are indicated in Map 2. The priorities are innovation, the environment, better accessibility and sustainable urban development. Each group of states and regions has established a joint secretariat to administer joint projects. IVb receives 1.82 billion euro of the budget<sup>2, 3, 5</sup>.
3. **Interreg IVc: inter-regional cooperation:** This strand enables regional or local authorities and other stakeholders to collaborate with regions anywhere else in the EU in order to set up networks, exchange of experience and to undertake joint studies. All the EU's regions are eligible. Budget for IVc is about 445 million euro<sup>2, 3, 5</sup>.

## Operational Programmes

The three strands are divided in 66 Operational Programmes (OP), 52 for IVa, 13 for IVb and one for IVc<sup>9</sup>. Each OP has its own programme secretariat<sup>6</sup>. The secretariat is the contact point and is responsible for:

- Content, objectives and priorities of the programme;
- Implementation of the programme;
- Examination and approval of project applications;
- Programme budget.

Priorities for funding and important considerations when developing a project include:

- Each OP has a focus on two or three priorities and the programme budget is divided between them. The following themes can be distinguished<sup>2, 4</sup>:
  - An economic theme focusing on e.g. employment, education, encouraging entrepreneurship, SME's, competitiveness, innovation, research and technological development, knowledge transfer and the information society;
  - An environmental theme focusing on e.g. the joint protection and management of natural and cultural resources, energy efficiency, sustainable tourism, socio-economic development and risk prevention;
  - An 'infrastructure' theme focusing on e.g. improving the accessibility and quality of transport, information and (tele)communication networks and services (incl. IT).
- Besides the above themes, each OP focuses on 'regional' development, through for example cooperation and exchange of experience between regions, towns, and relevant social, economic and environmental actors, supporting links between urban and rural areas, strengthening development at transnational, national and regional level and reducing disparities between regions<sup>2</sup>.
- Furthermore, the OP's put emphasis on the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies, continuity of projects, and communication to the public<sup>2, 4</sup>.
- Each project has to include a partnership of at least two Member States, in some OP's three. Cooperation should take place in the fields of development, implementation, staffing and financing. One of the partners takes the role of 'Lead partner' and is responsible for the project (financially), the planning and is the contact point for the OP secretariat<sup>2, 4</sup>.
- Interreg is based on co-financing. Depending on the GDP per head of the participating Member State, the ERDF funding varies between 50 - 85%<sup>2</sup>.
- For the latest info and project applications details, visit the website of the different programmes.

## Funding possibilities for site managers

Examples of relevant themes for projects eligible for funding include<sup>5</sup>:

### Cross-border cooperation

- The development of eco-tourism;
- The protection and management of natural and cultural resources;
- The development of marine spatial plans;
- Strengthening links between urban and rural areas.

**Transnational cooperation**

- The protection and management of river basins, coastal zones, marine resources, and wetlands;
- Fire, drought and flood prevention and protection;
- The protection and enhancement of natural heritage.

**Inter-regional cooperation**

- Exchanges of experience;
- Data collection and analysis;
- And the identification and transfer of best practice in relation to environmental protection and risk prevention.

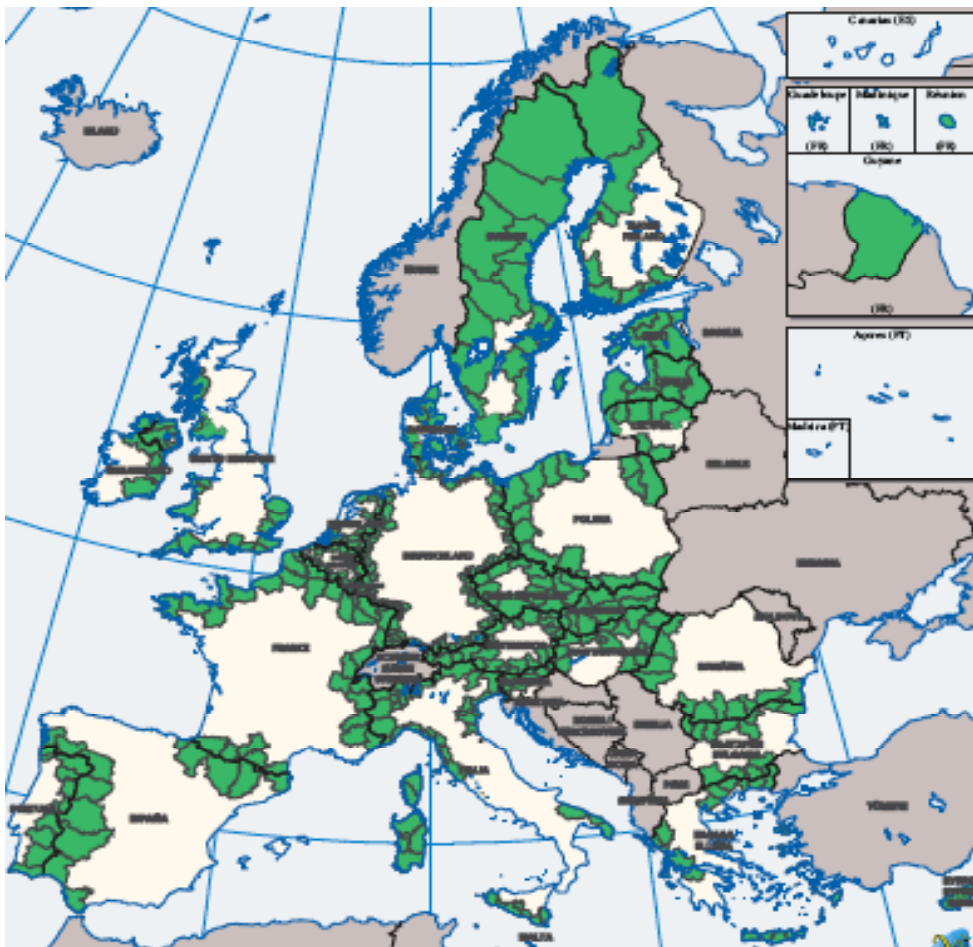
The ERDF Regulation (EC No 1080/2006)<sup>6</sup> describes in general terms the categories of projects that are eligible for support under each strand. For a more detailed overview it is best to check the website and programme documents of the Operational Programme or get in contact with the programme's (national) contact point.

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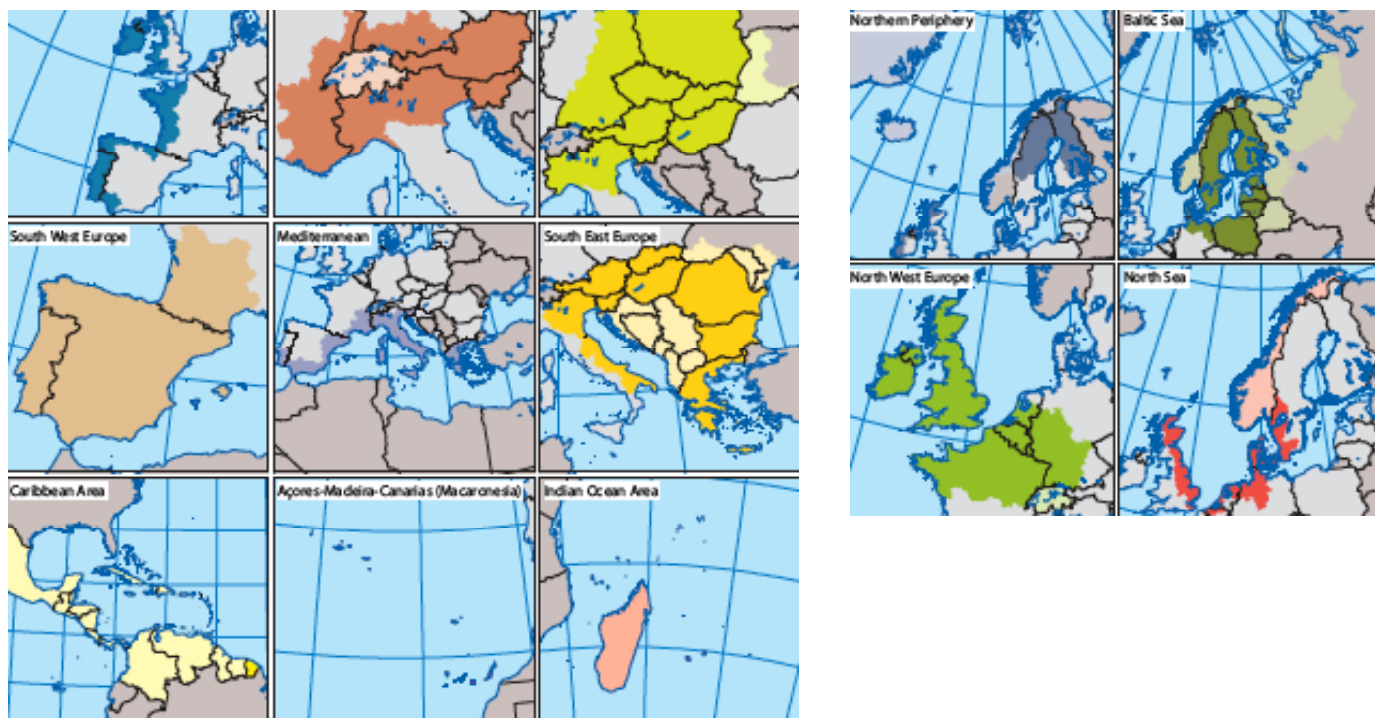
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**Maps**

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Map 1 - Interreg IVa: cross-border cooperation (coloured areas are eligible)<sup>7</sup>



Map 2 - Interreg IVb: transnational cooperation (coloured areas are eligible)<sup>8</sup>

## References

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