

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT FOR THE EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION GOAL

PART A

IDENTIFICATION OF THE ANNUAL/FINAL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

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2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(3)(A) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

Key information on the implementation of the cooperation programme for the year concerned, including on financial instruments, with relation to the financial and indicator data.

2.1. Programme start

Following a smooth transition from the INTERACT II 2007-2013 programme (INTERACT II) implementation of Interact III 2014-2020 ('Interact') started at the beginning of 2016.

This was in line with earlier approval of the INTERACT II Monitoring Committee (MC) and Interact III Programming Committee (PC) of the principles of splitting activities and expenditures of the two programmes that called for a clear separation while maximising the use of INTERACT II funding available, and a decision of starting activities of the new programme from the beginning of 2016.

Implementation of the programme could start on the basis of several key programme-level documents approved by the Interact III MC at its first meeting (November 2015, Riga), including the programme's long-term strategy, the Multi Annual Work Programme (MAWP), eligibility rules, MC rules of procedure, communication strategy and model subsidy contract. The MC approved the 2016 Joint Annual Work Plan (JAWP) in January 2016.

The hosting institutions of IO Turku, Viborg and Vienna concluded the subsidy contracts with the MA still in 2015, thus these three offices were ready to continue service delivery activities from the beginning of 2016. IO Valencia, however only became operational from October 2016; please see *section 5. Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken* for detailed information.

2.2. Staffing situation

Interact's main resource and its key to success is the Interact team, therefore the staffing situation of the IOs and MA/IS is crucial to ensure successful and efficient programme delivery. The most important development in staffing concerns IO Valencia: the new housing institution of the office had to hire all staff members as it was legally not possible to take over the staff of the former INTERACT Point (IP) Valencia. Please see the staffing situation at the end of 2016 in *annexe 1*.

2.3. Reflection on indicators and the performance framework

2.3.1. Priority axis 1 service delivery

The cooperation programme document defines four output indicators for priority axis 1 Service delivery:

1. Number of events. The achievement in 2016 is **68**, thus in the first year of programme delivery the indicator value is slightly higher than the time-proportional figure (66) of the 2018 milestone (197).
2. Number of participants to interact events. Interact events attracted in total **1662**

participants in 2016. This figure is significantly higher than the time-proportional figure (979).

3. Number of tools. The achievement in 2016 is **29**, again higher than the time-proportional figure for the first year (19).
4. Financial indicator: this indicator is defined as '*amount of certified expenditure of the priority axis allocation*', thus in lack of expenditure certified in 2016, the achievement for 2016 is **EUR 0**.

It shall be noted that the above indicators were achieved while one of the four IOs (IO Valencia) was not active in the first three quarters (but at the same time other offices provided help to deliver work packages and outputs that should have been lead by Valencia).

Based on the above, Interact is confident that it can reach its milestones set for 2018.

Regarding event satisfaction rates, please see *section 9.1 Information in Part A and achieving objectives of the programme / Priority Axis: 1 - Service Delivery*.

2.3.2. Priority axis 2 Technical Assistance

The cooperation programme document identifies the below output indicators for priority axis 2 Technical assistance:

1. Number of Monitoring Committee Meetings. Achievement in 2016: 2 (as usual, two MC meetings took place).
2. Joint Annual Work Plan approved. Achievement in 2016: 2. The MC approved the 2016 JAWP in January 2016 and the 2017 work plan in November 2016.
3. External interim programme evaluation carried out. Achievement: 0. No evaluations were carried out in the first year of implementation.
4. Progress/activity reports of the INTERACT Offices. Achievement: 0. The IOs submitted their first reports only in 2017.
5. Annual Implementation Report. Achievement in 2016: 1. The MC approved the combined 2014-15 annual report on 18 May and the MA submitted the report to the Commission on 30 May 2016.

2.4. Programme finances

Until 31 December 2016 no payment claims were approved and paid by the CA to beneficiaries. At the end of 2016 (23 December) the MA submitted three requests for payment for priority axis 2 (two for the MA and one for the IS) in total amount of EUR 72,421.63 (ERDF 61,558.38 EUR; national contributions 10,863.25 EUR) to the CA. All of them were approved and paid in January 2017.

In terms of above mentioned the disbursement was at the end of the year at 0% of the total allocation of the Programme.

2.4.1. Payments received from the European Commission

In the period from 1 January 2016 till 31 December 2016 pre-financing in the total amount of EUR 1,181,777.82 was paid by the European Commission. Thereof EUR 393,925.94 represents initial pre-financing (1% of total allocation) of the Programme and EUR 787,851.88 represents 1st annual pre-financing (2% of the total allocation). Due to lack of expenditure declaration to the EC within the 2nd accounting

year this annual pre-financing should be paid back to EC in 2017.

Cumulatively, for this programming period, EC paid for the smooth start of the programme implementation pre-financing in total amount of EUR 1,969,629.70.

2.4.2. National contributions received

In the period from 1 January 2016 till 31 December 2016 amount of EUR 1,759,060.90 was paid by the Member States (MSs) as national contributions. The cumulative amount received in this programming period was EUR 3,666,826.05 from national contributors (52.75% share of total allocation). Please see *annexe 2* for details.

2.4.3. Interests

In the period from 1 January 2016 till 31 December 2016 interests in amount of EUR 36.99 accrued on bank account for Programme INTERACT III. Cumulatively, for this programming period, the total amount was EUR 61.35, which will be used for the Programme financing.

2.4.4. Certification

Since the beginning of the programming period until 31 December 2016 no certifying verifications were performed because no expenditure was approved by the Certifying Authority in 2016.

2.4.5. Irregularities and financial corrections

Until 31 December 2016 no irregularities were reported to the Certifying Authority.

2.4.6. Designation audit

The designation audit was launched on 23 May 2016 and was still ongoing by the end of the year. For more details, please see section 5.2. *Designation*.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRIORITY AXIS

3.1 Overview of the implementation

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
1	Service Delivery	<p>Implementation of the 2016 JAWP and 2017 work planning</p> <p>Interact managed to ensure uninterrupted service delivery to its target groups following the transition from INTERACT II. Based on the 2016 JAWP work towards all 15 mid-term strategies of the MAWP started right at the beginning of the year, under the framework of 24 service delivery work packages. In this framework, Interact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivered 72 events;• provided support to external events (i.e. events organised by other stakeholders) in 43 instances;• delivered 46 tools; and• operated 12 online discussion platforms <p>for the ETC community.</p> <p>Please note that the above ‘natural’ numbers (i.e. plain number of outputs delivered) do not necessarily correspond to the ‘weighed’ output indicator figures presented in the previous section, as the latter figures are established taking into account the resources used to deliver the output concerned (thus the weighed indicator value of an output can be lower or higher than 1, based on the resources used).</p>

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
		<p>Please see annexe 3 for a list of 2016 Interact outputs in chronological order and annexe 4 for a cluster map of events and instances of support to external events. For a summary of implementation of each service delivery work package, please see annexe 5/1. Annexe 5/2 lists all European Cooperation Day events organised in 2016.</p> <p>The 2017 work planning exercise was also a major service delivery activity: Based on the MAWP, results of the needs assessment carried out in the summer of 2015 and an additional needs assessment with the MC members of Interact, the Interact team elaborated the 2017 work plan that was discussed and approved by the MC on 10 November 2016.</p>
2	Technical Assistance	<p>The following is an outline of the work carried out under the TA priority in 2016, per main areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up the management and control system of the programme, work on different programme-level regulatory documents: the MA elaborated the Methodological Guideline on National control, Irregularities, Archiving and Bank Accounts (version 1). The MA submitted the communication strategy of the programme, approved at the first MC meeting on 19 October 2015 in the beginning of 2016. The evaluation plan of the programme was elaborated in the beginning of the year and approved by the MC on 19 May, then eventually sent to the Commission on 20 July. • Contracting of the IOs finished in February 2016, when the MA signed the last subsidy contract with the hosting institution of IO Valencia (for more information on IO Valencia, please see section 5. Issues affecting the performance of the programme). The other 3 offices were contracted back in 2015. • Setting up the programme monitoring system: Interact uses the eMS monitoring system, testing and setting up of which took place in 2016, followed by trainings for the users. • Designation audit: Based on the description of the management and control system elaborated

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
		<p>by the MA, the designation audit started in May 2016. At the end of the year, the audit was still ongoing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reporting: The combined 2014-2015 annual report was approved by the MC on 19 May and the MA submitted the report to the Commission on 30 May 2016. The Commission accepted the report on 28 June. • Verifying requests for payment: Processing of requests for payment started at the end of the year, when the MA and IS submitted their first three requests for payment to the MA.

3.2 Common and programme specific indicators (Article 50(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Priority axes other than technical assistance

Priority axis	1 - Service Delivery
Investment priority	11e - Promoting the exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions as well as the use of EGTCs pursuant to point (3)(c) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)

Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2016	Observations
F	1	Number of events	Number	890.00		No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015.
S	1	Number of events	Number	890.00	68.00	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015.
F	2	Number of tools	Number	250.00		No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015.
S	2	Number of tools	Number	250.00	29.00	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015.
F	3	Participants to INTERACT events	Number	13,240.00		No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015.
S	3	Participants to INTERACT events	Number	13,240.00	1,662.00	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015.
F	4	Financial	EURO	43,100,133.00		No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015.
S	4	Financial	EURO	43,100,133.00		No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015.

(1)	ID	Indicator	2015	2014
F	1	Number of events		0.00
S	1	Number of events	0.00	0.00
F	2	Number of tools	0.00	0.00
S	2	Number of tools	0.00	0.00
F	3	Participants to INTERACT events	0.00	0.00
S	3	Participants to INTERACT events	0.00	0.00
F	4	Financial	0.00	0.00
S	4	Financial	0.00	0.00

Priority axis	1 - Service Delivery
Investment priority	11e - Promoting the exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions as well as the use of EGTCs pursuant to point (3)(c) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)
Specific objective	1.1 - To improve management and control capacity of ETC programmes. 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.

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
1.1/1	Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the management and control capacity of ETC programmes	Number	4,19/5,00	2013	increase		Not applicable	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015 (comment from the previous report). According to section 2.A.5. of the cooperation programme document, result indicators are to be reported every two years, thus next in the report covering 2017.
1.1/2	% of ETC programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the management and control capacity of ETC programmes	% of programmes	80%	2013	increase		Not applicable	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015 (comment from the previous report). According to section 2.A.5. of the cooperation programme document, result indicators are to be reported every two years, thus next in the report covering 2017.

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
1.1/1	Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with INTERACT		Not applicable		Not applicable

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
	products and services aimed at improving the management and control capacity of ETC programmes				
1.1/2	% of ETC programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the management and control capacity of ETC programmes		Not applicable		Not applicable

Priority axis	1 - Service Delivery
Investment priority	11e - Promoting the exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions as well as the use of EGTCs pursuant to point (3)(c) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)
Specific objective	1.2 - To improve the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating the programme results. Smooth implementation of ETC programmes in regards to the thematic concentration and the focus on results. In addition, the effects of ETC on Cohesion Policy should be more clearly identified. Increased visibility of ETC as a whole, on the basis of the results achieved. Increased networking, also at a strategic level.

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
1.2/1	Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results	Number	4,19/5,00	2013	Increase		Not applicable	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015 (comment from the previous report). According to section 2.A.5. of the cooperation programme document, result indicators are to be reported every two years, thus next in the report covering 2017.
1.2/2	% of ETC programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results	% of programmes	80%	2013	Increase		Not applicable	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015 (comment from the previous report). According to section 2.A.5. of the cooperation programme document, result indicators are to be reported every two years, thus next in the report covering 2017.

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
1.2/1	Satisfaction level of ETC programmes with INTERACT products and		Not applicable		Not applicable

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
	services aimed at improving the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results				
1.2/2	% of ETC programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the ETC capacity in capturing and communicating programme results		Not applicable		Not applicable

Priority axis	1 - Service Delivery
Investment priority	11e - Promoting the exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions as well as the use of EGTCs pursuant to point (3)(c) of Article 2 (ETC-IR)
Specific objective	1.3 - To improve the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches (EGTC, Revolving Funds, MRSSs, 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.

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
1.3/1	Satisfaction level of programmes with INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches	Number	4,19/5,00	2013	Increase		Not applicable	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015 (comment from the previous report). According to section 2.A.5. of the cooperation programme document, result indicators are to be reported every two years, thus next in the report covering 2017.
1.3/2	% of programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches	% of programmes	80%	2013	Increase		Not applicable	No service delivery activities took place in 2014-2015 (comment from the previous report). According to section 2.A.5. of the cooperation programme document, result indicators are to be reported every two years, thus next in the report covering 2017.

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
1.3/1	Satisfaction level of programmes with INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches		Not applicable		Not applicable
1.3/2	% of programmes using INTERACT products and services aimed at improving the cooperation management capacity to implement innovative approaches		Not applicable		Not applicable

Priority axes for technical assistance

Priority axis	2 - Technical Assistance
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Table 2: Common and programme specific output indicators

(1)	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target value	2016	Observations
F	2.1/1	Number of Monitoring Committee Meetings	Number	14.00	2.00	
S	2.1/1	Number of Monitoring Committee Meetings	Number	14.00		
F	2.1/2	Joint Annual Work Plan approved	Number	7.00	2.00	The first Joint Annual Work Plan of the programme for the year 2016 was only approved in January 2016. The 2017 Joint Annual Work Plan was approved in December 2016.
S	2.1/2	Joint Annual Work Plan approved	Number	7.00		
F	2.1/3	External interim programme evaluation carried out	Number	1.00	0.00	Programme evaluation activities did not start in 2016, please see sections 4 Synthesis of evaluations and 10.1 Evaluation plan.
S	2.1/3	External interim programme evaluation carried out	Number	1.00		
F	2.1/4	Progress/activity reports of the INTERACT Offices	Number	70.00	0.00	Interact Offices submitted their first progress reports in 2017.
S	2.1/4	Progress/activity reports of the INTERACT Offices	Number	70.00		
F	2.1/5	Annual Implementation Report	Number	9.00	1.00	The annual implementation report covering 2014 and 2015 was submitted to the European Commission on 30 May 2016.
S	2.1/5	Annual Implementation Report	Number	9.00		

(1)	ID	Indicator	2015	2014
F	2.1/1	Number of Monitoring Committee Meetings	1.00	0.00
S	2.1/1	Number of Monitoring Committee Meetings		
F	2.1/2	Joint Annual Work Plan approved	0.00	0.00
S	2.1/2	Joint Annual Work Plan approved	0.00	0.00
F	2.1/3	External interim programme evaluation carried out	0.00	0.00
S	2.1/3	External interim programme evaluation carried out	0.00	0.00

(1)	ID	Indicator	2015	2014
F	2.1/4	Progress/activity reports of the INTERACT Offices	0.00	0.00
S	2.1/4	Progress/activity reports of the INTERACT Offices	0.00	0.00
F	2.1/5	Annual Implementation Report	0.00	0.00
S	2.1/5	Annual Implementation Report	0.00	0.00

Priority axis	2 - Technical Assistance
Specific objective	2.1 - Effective implementation of the cooperation programme

Table 1: Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023) Total	2016 Total	2016 Qualitative	Observations
0	not applicable	no	0.00	0	0.00			

ID	Indicator	2015 Total	2015 Qualitative	2014 Total	2014 Qualitative
0	not applicable				

3.3 Table 3: Information on the milestones and targets defined in the performance framework

Priority axis	Ind type	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018 total	2016 Final target (2023) total	2016	Observations
1	O	1	Number of events	Number	197	890.00	68.00	
1	O	2	Number of tools	Number	55	250.00	29.00	
1	O	3	Participants to INTERACT events	Number	2935	13,240.00	1,662.00	
1	O	4	Financial	EURO	9,555,161.00	43,100,133.00	0.00	

Priority axis	Ind type	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	2015	2014
1	O	1	Number of events	Number		
1	O	2	Number of tools	Number		
1	O	3	Participants to INTERACT events	Number		
1	O	4	Financial	EURO		

3.4. Financial data

Table 4: Financial information at priority axis and programme level

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Priority axis	Fund	Calculation basis	Total funding	Co-financing rate	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support	Proportion of the total allocation covered with selected operations	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support	Total eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries to the managing authority	Proportion of the total allocation covered by eligible expenditure declared by beneficiaries	Number of operations selected
1	ERDF	Public	43,100,133.00	85.00	43,100,133.00	100.00%	36,635,113.00	198,708.00	0.46%	5
2	ERDF	Public	3,244,096.00	85.00	3,244,096.00	100.00%	2,757,481.00	196,049.00	6.04%	4
Total	ERDF		46,344,229.00	85.00	46,344,229.00	100.00%	39,392,594.00	394,757.00	0.85%	9
Grand total			46,344,229.00	85.00	46,344,229.00	100.00%	39,392,594.00	394,757.00	0.85%	9

Where applicable, the use of any contribution from third countries participating in the cooperation programme should be provided (for example IPA and ENI, Norway, Switzerland)

Interact makes use of contribution from third countries in the form of national co-financing provided by Norway and Switzerland, the two non-EU Member States participating in the programme. Their total national contribution amounts to EUR 79,500.00 (1.14% of total national contributions) and EUR 66,030.00 (0.95%), respectively and is handled together with the contribution of the 28 EU Member States.

The Managing Authority in each year requests the participating countries of the programme to transfer their national contribution amount for the year concerned based on the annual tranches set out in the Article 8 agreements.

Based on these requests

- Norway paid its contribution in full (EUR 79,500.00) in 2015; while
- Switzerland so far transferred EUR 37,732.00 (four annual tranches of EUR 9,433.00 for the years 2014-2017).

National contributions transferred by the participating countries are administered by the CA and used to reimburse the national part (15.00%) of certified expenditures of PA1 and PA2 beneficiaries based on their requests for payment.

For more information on national contributions, please see *annexe 2 National contributions received until 31 December 2016*.

Table 5: Breakdown of the cumulative financial data by category of intervention

As set out in Table 2 of Annex II to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 1011/2014 (Model for transmission of financial data) and tables 6-9 of Model for cooperation programmes

Priority axis	Fund	Intervention field	Form of finance	Territorial dimension	Territorial delivery mechanism	Thematic objective dimension	ESF secondary theme	Economic dimension	Location dimension	Total eligible cost of operations selected for support	Public eligible cost of operations selected for support	The total eligible expenditure declared by eneficiaries to the managing authority	Number of operations selected
1	ERDF	096	01	07	07	11				43,100,133.00	36,635,113.00	198,708.00	5
2	ERDF	121	01	07	07	11				3,244,096.00	2,757,481.00	196,049.00	4

Table 6: Cumulative cost of all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area

1. Operation (2)	2. The amount of ERDF support(1) envisaged to be used for all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area based on selected operations	3. Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 2/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)	4. Eligible expenditure of ERDF support incurred in all or part of an operation implemented outside the Union part of the programme area declared by the beneficiary to the managing authority	5. Share of the total financial allocation to all or part of an operation located outside the Union part of the programme area (%) (column 4/total amount allocated to the support from the ERDF at programme level *100)
Events organised outside the EU part of the programme area in 2016	0.00		4,878.06	0.01%

(1) ERDF support is the Commission decision on the respective cooperation programme.

(2) In accordance with and subject to ceilings set out Article 20 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

4. SYNTHESIS OF THE EVALUATIONS

4.1. Development of the evaluation plan

Interact developed its evaluation plan between January and May 2016. The development process was lead by the MA and Interact's Quality and Evaluation Manager (based in IO Viborg), but Interact MC representatives (of Luxembourg and Latvia), the Evaluation unit of DG REGIO and Interact staff members, especially members of the internal Interact Quality Group also took part in the process.

The MC discussed the evaluation plan at its second meeting (18-19 May 2016, Luxembourg) and approved it with a minor comment. The final evaluation plan was sent to the European Commission on 20 July 2016.

4.2. State of play of evaluations

In line with the approved evaluation plan, *no evaluation was carried out in 2016*, which was the first year of implementation for the programme. *Therefore no evaluation findings can be reported.*

The first evaluation is planned for the second semester of 2018, focusing on progress towards indicator targets, evaluation of the communication strategy and on the effect of selected Interact activities.

5. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN

(a) Issues which affect the performance of the programme and the measures taken

Programme implementation and performance in 2016 was mainly affected by two factors: the late start of IO Valencia and the longer-than-expected designation process.

5.1. Late start of IO Valencia

As mentioned earlier, the programme started implementing its 2016 work plan with having only three of the four IOs on board. While no organisational changes took place in case of IO Turku, Viborg and Vienna, the hosting institution of IO Valencia (Generalitat Valenciana) decided to involve a housing institution (the University of Valencia) to create a more flexible framework for operating the office. Besides the different administrative arrangements –among others signing an agreement between the two bodies – this necessitated recruiting the entire staff of the office. (Since the University of Valencia was legally not able to take over the former staff of Interact Point (IP) Valencia, at the end of 2015 the whole staff had to be laid off.)

In order to facilitate a smooth implementation of the 2016 work plan and to ensure continuity of services, certain work packages and outputs that should have been lead by IO Valencia were taken over by the other offices. This also involved hiring several previous IP Valencia team members on a short-term basis (external contract) as follows:

IO Turku contracted

- Àngels Orduña (former Coordinator of IP Valencia) for one month to work on the communication toolkit (work package E-ER 1.1.2 Annual Interreg Communication Network meeting – Focus on evaluation);
- Fabrizio Rossi (former IP Valencia Project Development Officer) to work on the Med Lab Group issues (work package I-ER 1.2.1 Capitalisation & thematic knowledge development and communication);
- Laura Belenguer (former IP Valencia Communication and Programme Officer) for one month to work on the communication issues related to promotion and awareness raising on cooperation advantages (work package O-ER 1.3.4 Promotion and awareness raising on (macro-regional) cooperation advantages);
- Marta Roca (former IP Valencia Finance Officer) for two months to work on the audit authority network meeting and Arachne events (work packages G- ER 1.1.2 Audit and Anti-fraud measures)

IO Viborg contracted Marlies Gevaert (former IP Valencia Finance Officer) to work on analysis on Interreg management practices in the Mediterranean area (work package A-ER 1.1.1 Simplifying approaches in programme management); while

IO Vienna temporarily employed Ivano Magazzú (former IP Valencia Project Development and Knowledge Management Officer) to work on the capitalisation work package including migration (work package I-ER 1.2.1 Capitalisation & thematic knowledge development and communication).

Following a series of negotiations between the hosting and housing institutions of

IO Valencia and the MA, most of the details regarding setting up and operating the office as well as the recruitment procedure were clarified and on 20 April the vacancy announcements were published for the following ten positions:

- Coordinator;
- Administration officer;
- Three Interreg finance experts;
- Three Interreg programme management experts; and
- Two Interreg communication experts.

Following the selection process, all the above positions except for two finance experts were filled and eventually IO Valencia became operational in the beginning of October (Tomasz Petrykowski, the former coordinator of IO Viborg was selected as coordinator of the office). In the last quarter of the year, the office mainly focused on supporting the other three offices in implementing the 2016 work plan, which provided a great opportunity for the new team members to learn how the programme works. The office opened the two vacant finance manager and one programme manager positions before the end of the year.

5.2. Designation

The designation audit of Interact III started in May 2016 and at the end of the year it was still ongoing.

Besides other elements of the management and control system, the audit body paid particular attention to new requirements including monitoring system/e-cohesion, risk management, anti-fraud measures, etc.

Especially the audit of the eMS monitoring system used by Interact took considerable time, as the auditor did not deem the audit report of the system commissioned by Interact in 2015 sufficient. There were attempts to rely on an audit report of another programme concerning eMS but eventually no programme was able to make their report available. Thus the auditor was forced to carry out a comprehensive audit of the system from the second half of October until December 2016. Clarifying certain findings regarding the system also required additional effort in January-February 2017.

Eventually the programme was designated in May 2017.

(b) OPTIONAL FOR LIGHT REPORTS, otherwise it will be included in point 9.1. An assessment of whether progress made towards targets is sufficient to ensure their fulfilment, indicating any remedial actions taken or planned, where appropriate.

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6. CITIZEN'S SUMMARY (ARTICLE 50(9) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)

A citizen's summary of the contents of the annual and the final implementation reports shall be made public and uploaded as a separate file in the form of annex to the annual and the final implementation report

You can upload/find the Citizen's summary under General > Documents

**7. REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS
(ARTICLE 46 OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013)**

8. PROGRESS IN PREPARATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MAJOR PROJECTS AND JOINT ACTION PLANS (ARTICLE 101(H) AND ARTICLE 111(3) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(3)(B) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

8.1. Major projects

Table 7: Major projects

Project	CCI	Status of MP	Total investments	Total eligible costs	Planned notification/submission date	Date of tacit agreement/approval by Commission	Planned start of implementation	Planned completion date	Priority Axis/Investment priorities	Current state of realisation — financial progress (% of expenditure certified to Commission compared to total eligible cost)	Current state of realisation — physical progress Main implementation stage of the project	Ma
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(1) In the case of operations implemented under PPP structures the signing of the PPP contract between the public body and the private sector body (Article 102(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

Significant problems encountered in implementing major projects and measures taken to overcome them

Not applicable for Interact (in lack of major projects under the cooperation programme).

Any change planned in the list of major projects in the cooperation programme

Not applicable for Interact.

8.2. Joint action plans

Progress in the implementation of different stages of joint action plans

Not applicable for Interact.

Table 8: Joint action plans (JAP)

Title of the JAP	CCI	Stage of implementation of JAP	Total eligible costs	Total public support	OP contribution to JAP	Priority axis	Type of JAP	[Planned] submission to the Commission	[Planned] start of implementation	[Planned] completion	Main outputs and results	Total eligible expenditure certified to the Commission	Observations
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Significant problems encountered and measures taken to overcome them

Not applicable for interact.

9. ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 50(4) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1303/2013 AND ARTICLE 14(4) OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

9.1 Information in Part A and achieving the objectives of the programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Priority axis	1 - Service Delivery
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Interact objectives

The objectives of Interact III are set out in the cooperation programme document in the form of specific objectives and expected results. These two levels are complemented in the MAWP by another level: medium term strategies (MTSs). The MTSs laid down in the MAWP define success criteria as well as the ways that should lead to those successes for the period until 2018 when the MAWP and thus the medium term strategies are to be reviewed and revised if necessary.

Another layer of objectives is defined in the JAWPs on the level of individual work packages (WPs).

The linkages between the above levels are visualised in the Interact III MAWP-JAWP map 2016 (*annexe 7*).

Programme achievements so far

Since at the time of drafting this report only one full year of implementation took place, and no programme evaluation was carried out, it is too early to draw far-reaching conclusions on programme achievements or fulfilment of objectives.

However, Interact started an internal reflection process on progress towards achievements of the MTSs of the MAWP and some first preliminary results are available. For the 2016 WPs that contributed to the different MTSs, please see *annexe 7*. Outputs (events and tools) delivered by WPs are not listed below, the full list is available in *annexe 8*.

- *A-ER 1.1.1 - Simplifying approaches for programme and communication management.* Interact concentrated its efforts under this MTS – based on target group needs – on targeted support (events) on programme cycle management, project management (these events are always in high demand), and to a lesser extent on identifying simplified and innovative practises.
- *B-ER 1.1.1 - Eligibility and simplified cost options.* The work carried out so far focused on providing guidance regarding eligibility (including providing *common* answers for eligibility-related questions), streamlining understanding among programmes (matrix of costs), identifying good practises as well as developing a uniform understanding on the application of simplified cost options. This was done mainly through events, sessions during events, written guidance and the Basecamp online community on eligibility and simplified cost options, which has nearly 300 members. 2016 saw a great deal of work towards auditors – their involvement is crucial to achieve real simplification through the

simplified cost options.

- *C-ER 1.1.1 - Monitoring systems, including eMS.* Work under this MTS mainly concentrated on further developing the eMS monitoring system based on programme needs and providing support to the programmes using the system (through user group meetings and the Basecamp online community). So far 34 programmes signed the license agreement for eMS, among them 4 Interreg-IPA CBC and 2 ENI CBC, on overall nearly one third of all territorial cooperation programmes.
- *D-ER 1.1.1 - Specialised legal issues.* The work in 2016 focused the issue of State Aid in Interreg. Programme needs in this area – that are definitely there, especially in terms of operational support – are mainly addressed through a working group and a basecamp online forum.
- *E-ER 1.1.2 - Evaluation as a learning process for programme management and programme communication.* Interact provided opportunities for training and exchange of experience as well as guidance (evaluation plan, evaluation methods, developing ToRs). Outputs were developed after consulting programmes, therefore they were well received by the Interreg community, and participation in events was usually very high. This way Interact could contribute to a change of perception regarding evaluation: programmes no longer see evaluation merely as a regulatory requirement but an exercise that brings useful results.
- *F-ER 1.1.2 - Programmes' Financial Management, including closure.* Under this MTS, Interact was most effective in guiding and informing programmes on novelties in programme finances, especially regarding annual accounts. Programme closure was also tackled and the finance management camps started in 2016 proved very successful and popular among programmes.
- *G-ER 1.1.2 - Management and control systems, control and audit.* Activities under this MTS addressed the following issues (in decreasing order of intensity): CAs, Arachne, AAs and management verifications (FLC) by means of CA and AA network meetings, events on Arachne and FLC workshops. Through these, the programme contributed to developing harmonised understanding of CA roles, thanks to the integrated 'support package' including the use of the network. This network, in which most of the CAs are represented is very much alive and works in a structured way as a self-support community; this is considered an important success.
- *H-ER 1.1.3 - Roles, responsibilities and decision making processes.* The work focused on discussion of roles and responsibilities (including tasks and work flows between programme bodies) and translating the regulatory requirements to operational office work.
- *I-ER 1.2.1 – Capitalisation & Thematic Knowledge development and communication.* Development of the capitalisation plan – providing an integrated strategy for Interact work on capitalisation and methodology to work with capitalisation networks – was not only a major step towards aligning Interact activities under this MTS but also in communicating Interact's intentions to programmes. It shall also help facilitating the work on making capitalisation a management process for programmes. The capitalisation networks are expected to contribute to narrowing the expertise gap in programmes, as already shown by the migration network that has helped to clarify administrative doubts on Interreg involvement in this field.
- *J-ER 1.2.2 - Capturing and giving visibility to Interreg results: KEEP and Communication.* Work on KEEP focused on major technical developments, enhancing quality of data and promotion to facilitate a more widespread use of

KEEP.

The work on the future of Interreg also took place under this MTS; following a series of meetings, involving experts from TN programmes and MSs, an input paper regarding TN programmes was drafted and sent to the Commission. Furthermore the initial steps were made in a similar process for CBC programmes.

- *K-ER 1.2.3 - Strengthening the visibility of Interreg results.* From the point of view of strategy successes, steps were made to harmonise the messages concerning Interreg and in organising joint actions to specific target groups. The participation in the physical and online networks seems to confirm that Interact is the focal point for Interreg communication managers. These networks are instrumental in achieving the successes of the MTS; not only they provide training but also sensitize communication managers to the importance of *communicating results as one Interreg (in one voice)*.
- *L-ER 1.3.1 - Building and communicating knowledge management base for new and existing tools.* This strategy will be activated from 2017 onwards.
- *M-ER 1.3.2 - Innovative tools and workable models.* The pilot action to describe existing cooperation modes and develop new models for cooperation was started. The discussion took place with the support and expertise of the Task Force, which actively contributed to the developments.
Interact also supported and worked with the TN programmes supporting macro-regional strategies. The TN programmes had a forum for the exchange and have been able to discuss the ownership of and management capacity in supporting macro-regional strategies.
- *N-ER 1.3.3 - Scaling up inter-programme capacity & competence.* Interact has addressed the topic of the capacity building in Interreg, especially focusing on the discussions regarding the inter-programme capacities and competences. In addition to the advisories and workshops organized around this thematic, also the discussions to support the staff exchange practices within Interreg has been tackled. Interact has contributed to the knowledge and capacity building of programmes, and here especially the staff in the MAs and JSs on how to get the necessary competences and capacities to work beyond their own programme, within and beyond Interreg; and how to create synergies between different funding sources, within and beyond Interreg.
- *O-ER 1.3.4 - Awareness raising on cooperation approaches across funding sources and actors.* Interact has supported the implementation of the EU macro-regional strategies with a horizontal approach whereas the experiences and good practices of individual strategies have been collected and shared with the other strategies. Support functions have been various: facilitation and other expert support for stakeholder events within the macro-regional context, or follow-up of the processes to be exchanged and shared later.
Interact has worked in close cooperation with its target groups and external partners for the achievements and successes. As some of the achievements can be mentioned e.g. continuous and active support for the discussions on embedding macro-regional strategies into ESIF programmes as well as contributing to capacity building of Interreg staff regarding the macro-regional knowledge. In addition, the knowledge of the advantages (and practices/results) of cooperation as an implementation tool has been supported through various discussions with mainstream programmes.

Event satisfaction

Furthermore we may use other indicators to assess if what the programme delivered so far – especially events – was on the right track and met target group needs.

Interact is continuously evaluating the satisfaction of its event participants by means of evaluation forms to be returned at the end of the events (not all events are evaluated this way) and the 2016 results are available. (The satisfaction of Interreg programmes with Interact outputs is one of Interact’s 2 result indicators that will be reported first in the report covering 2017.)

In 2016 Interact evaluated 42 events and based on the 962 evaluation sheets returned (76,53% feedback rate) the overall satisfaction rate – on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means very low and 5 means very high satisfaction) – was 4,34 (or 86,80%). This figure is remarkably higher than the baseline satisfaction rate of 4,19, calculated based on 2013 INTERACT II events.

Please see *annexe 9* for details on 2016 event satisfaction results.

Considering that Interact’s target is to increase the satisfaction of its users, based on this comparison, the programme seems to be going in the right direction.

Priority axis	2 - Technical Assistance
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The main result of the Technical Assistance priority axis is to achieve maximal effectiveness and efficiency of programme management, coordination and control in order to assure sound and smooth implementation of the programme.

The actual implementation of the Interact III Programme started as of 1 January 2016. The programme was approved by the Commission on 13 August 2015, but in order to maximise the resources available in the previous 2007-2013 programming period to the extent possible, INTERACT II and Interact III Monitoring and Programming Committees decided, that the Interact III Programme would launch its activities as of 1 January 2016. This provided clear cut-off date between the two programmes.

The Managing Authority elaborated several implementation documents necessary for the smooth implementation of the programme, such as Internal Manual of procedures of the Managing Authority, Programme-level Rules on Eligibility of Expenditure and Methodological Guideline on National control, Irregularities, Archiving and Bank Accounts. In addition, several factsheets have been developed and approved by the Monitoring Committee, such as factsheet on joint HR-policy, factsheet on coordination, factsheet on budget principles for priority axis 1 – Service delivery and factsheet on performance monitoring.

The Managing Authority prepared and the Interact III Programming Committee approved subsidy contract templates for all four Interact Offices in order to have them signed before 1 January 2016. Three out of four offices followed the timeline and started their implementation on time. In case of Interact Office Valencia, they started their activities only in October 2016, Managing Authority together with the Member State Spain and the Monitoring Committee made big joint effort to solve the situation with the hosting institution of Interact Office Valencia in order to re-launch the office as soon as possible. This issue was discussed during both Monitoring Committee meetings

in 2016 and the Managing Authority has been actively involved also in the recruitment process of the respective Office. For in depth explanation please look at section 5. *“Issues affecting the performance of the programme and measures taken“.*

Two important documents were elaborated and submitted to European Commission in line with the regulations in 2016. Communication strategy and Evaluation Plan were elaborated by the programme, approved by the Monitoring Committee and subsequently submitted to the European Commission. You can find more information on both documents in Section 10.

The designation audit started in May 2016 and was still ongoing at the end of the year. The main areas auditors were interested in were risk assessment, anti fraud risk measures, sensitive positions and electronic monitoring system. (The audit was finished in February 2017 and the programme was designated in May 2017). Although the designation audit was still ongoing, the programme could start and carry on with its activities as planned due to the pre-financing of all Interact Offices.

Some beneficiaries started to submit request for payments already in 2016 (Managing Authority, Interact Secretariat) and Managing Authority processed three requests for payment at the end of 2016.

The programme-specific result indicator is not applicable for Interact Programme. The output indicators were reported as foreseen, except of the indicator „Progress/Activity reports of the Interact Offices“. All four Interact Offices received advance payment in 2016 and after finishing the full year of implementation (except for Interact Office Valencia for the reasons explained in Section 5), the intention was to start the reporting in early 2017. Therefore the respective indicator shows zero value for 2016.

Taking into account that the programme implementation started at the beginning of 2016 and no evaluations have been carried out yet, the progress towards achieving the objectives of the programme and the contribution of the ERDF to changes in the value of result indicators are difficult to assess.

Nevertheless, it can be said, that Interact III builds on the expertise on the previous programme with almost the same setting as 2007-2013; the only change is the institution employing Interact Office Valencia staff. The transition between the two programming periods was smooth, all implementation documents and necessary agreements were timely elaborated by the programme bodies, discussed and agreed within the Monitoring Committee. The strength of the Interact Programme is in the internal expertise and the stable staff situation within the Managing Authority, Interact Secretariat and Interact Offices contributed to the smooth and timely implementation. Although one of the Offices started their functioning only in October 2016, Managing Authority has negotiated with the remaining three Offices the temporary uptake of several activities, where Interact Office Valencia was supposed to be the leading Office. The experienced staff in all programme bodies (MA/IS, Interact Offices, CA and AA) was a warranty, that the programme could launch its activities and head towards the expected results.

9.2. Specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, in particular accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (d) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of specific actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 7 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on promotion of equality between men and women and non-discrimination, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of specific actions taken to promote equality between men and women and to promote non-discrimination, including accessibility for persons with disabilities, and the arrangements implemented to ensure the integration of the gender perspective in the cooperation programme and operations

The thematic and the specific objectives of Interact and the nature of its activities do not really allow considering the gender perspective as its focus. However, one area where gender equality and non-discrimination can be observed is recruitment of staff members. The public bodies hosting/housing IOs and the MA/IS are all equal opportunity employers. This is well exemplified by the fact that out of the 48 interact team members at the end of 2016 (including leave replacement staff), 30 were women (62.5%).

9.3.Sustainable development (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 2, (e) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

An assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the principles set out in Article 8 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 on sustainable development, including, where relevant, depending on the content and objectives of the cooperation programme, an overview of the actions taken to promote sustainable development in accordance with that Article

Considering the nature of the programme and its activities foreseen (and carried out), Interact cannot be expected to highly contribute to fostering sustainable development. However, it has and will contribute to this goal in its own limited means, for example:

- Interact decided to ‘go paperless’ for the 2014-2020 programming period, i.e. will only distribute absolutely necessary printed material at events, including monitoring committee meetings (e.g. agenda and list of participants). Further printed material will only be made available when absolutely necessary (e.g. when discussing a new regulation or training material that can also be used after the event). Interact publications (studies, handbooks, etc) are mainly made available in electronic format on the website (and in online discussion groups) thus minimising the need for printing. These measures not only reduce the use of paper but also mean less shipping.
- Interact is making more use of teleconferences both for internal and external discussions instead of meetings in presence, significantly lowering the need for (air) travel and thus its carbon footprint.
- Interact is in the process of developing an e-learning solution and courses/material. When operational, e-learning courses are expected to reduce (air) travel needs both for Interact staff and for representatives of Interreg programmes and other target groups.

Interact will also *indirectly* contribute to the goal of sustainable development through thematic capitalisation activities under thematic objectives 5 (climate change, risk prevention and management) and 7 (sustainable transport).

9.4. Reporting on support used for climate change objectives (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013)

Calculated amount of support to be used for climate change objectives based on the cumulative financial data by category of intervention in Table 7

Priority axis	Amount of support to be used for climate change objectives (EUR)	Proportion of total allocation to the operational programme (%)
Total	0.00	0.00%

Not applicable for Interact.

9.5 Role of partners in the implementation of the cooperation programme (Article 50(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Article 14(4), subparagraph 1, (c) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Assessment of the implementation of actions to take into account the role of partners referred to in Article 5 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, including involvement of the partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the cooperation programme

Interact covers 30 countries and the partnership principle is ingrained in the nature of the programme. Several governance levels are represented in the Monitoring Committee. Members come from the national level (ministries) and regional level (regions) depending on the nomination of their country. The Monitoring Committee meets every six months and discusses in detail activities implemented by the programme, and is also very deeply involved in the preparation of the planned activities, events and tools.

Apart from the multinational Monitoring Committee set up, Interact programme very closely cooperates with other stakeholders as well. There are regular meetings and joint activities taking place with programmes URBACT, ESPON and Interreg Europe. The four interregional programmes have produced a policy brief outlining pathways to a circular economy in cities and regions. The policy brief was presented at the workshop 'Pathways to a circular economy in cities and regions' during the European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC) on 12 October in Brussels, Belgium. There were also other three workshops organised by Interact during the EWRC, e.g. on the role of Interreg in addressing current territorial challenges: the use of ESI funds tackling labour market inclusion, migration and refugee crisis.

Another important partner for Interact is the European Commission. Interact involves European Commission in its workshops and seminars, e.g. involvement of the Evaluation Unit in the Evaluation Plan Workshop for Cross-border Programmes in February 2016, but also as a partner in elaborating factsheets, Q&As and other Interact documents, e.g. Q&A on Arachne.

In 2016, the cooperation with the European Committee of the Regions continued within the European Cooperation Day initiative, where European Committee of the Regions was one of the supporters. Interact was also present at the 7th European Summit of Regions and Cities. The KEEP database was presented during one of the sessions and participants could visit KEEP stand and search in the database during the summit.

Interact involves other partners in its activities as well, e.g. in online networks. For example, the online discussion forum on results and evaluation has 187 contributors from many different types of national and regional institutions.

10. OBLIGATORY INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT ACCORDING TO ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 1 (A) AND (B), OF REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013

10.1 Progress in implementation of the evaluation plan and the follow-up given to the findings of evaluations

10.1.1. Development of the evaluation plan

Interact developed its evaluation plan between January and May 2016. The development process was lead by the MA and Interact's Quality and Evaluation Manager (based in IO Viborg), but Interact MC representatives (of Luxembourg and Latvia) the Evaluation unit of DG REGIO and Interact staff members, especially members of the Quality Group also took part in the process.

The MC discussed the evaluation plan at its second meeting (18-19 May 2016, Luxembourg) and approved it with a minor comment. The final evaluation plan was sent to the European Commission on 20 July 2016.

10.1.2. Progress in implementing the evaluation plan

In line with the approved evaluation plan, *no evaluation was carried out in 2016*, which was the first year of implementation for the programme. Therefore no evaluation findings and follow-up can be reported.

The first evaluation is planned for the second semester of 2018, focusing on progress towards indicator targets, evaluation of the communication strategy and on the effect of selected Interact activities, where the impact can already be established. Development of the terms of reference will start in the second half of 2017.

10.2 The results of the information and publicity measures of the Funds carried out under the communication strategy

10.2. The results of the information and publicity measures of the Funds carried out under the communication strategy

10.2.1. Overview of the implementation of the communication work package in 2016

Visual identity

The Interact visual identity for the 2014-2020 programming period started to be in use in June 2016. Unlike in previous years, it aims to provide a harmonised look for Interact products as well as modernise the image of the programme. At the same time, it goes in line with the Interreg visual identity.

The Interact visual identity is based on the same logo, colours, typography and illustration style throughout Interact products.

After being labelled several times as an old-fashioned organisation in terms of visuals and communication, Interact has resorted to modern graphic design trends in order to modernise its image towards the stakeholder community. The standards Interact will stick to during the 2014-2020 programming period revolve around the following principles:

- Clean, simple and well-organised as opposed to complex and cluttered
- Attractive, sophisticated and professional instead of old-fashioned and amateur

With the new visual identity, Interact expects to make a communication impact by having more original, illustrative and consistent approaches towards its products. The visual identity is integrated throughout Interact online tools, publications and promotional materials as well as documents like agendas, PowerPoint presentations etc.

Website

The Interact website (www.interact-eu.net), launched in June 2016 is the one-stop-shop for promotion of Interact services and storage of information and materials for the stakeholder community. It aims to better serve Interreg programmes with a totally revamped look and feel. The main objective of the restructuring was two-fold:

- to highlight the main Interact activities of the years to come.
- to allow users easy access to information and materials.

New functionalities have been implemented in line with modern web trends in order to make the user experience more pleasant:

- Responsive design: the content adapts automatically to the screen regardless of the point of access; i.e. tablet, mobile phone etc.
- More logic on the front-end: all sections are visible on the homepage and the three click principle applies to avoid excessive clicking and page loading like in the past (no need to load more than three webpages to access any content).
- Rich interfaces: carousels and interactive graphics have been created to better display the large number of Interact's services and products and ease the access to content e.g. Slideshow with highlights, smart-art graphic for the programme life-cycle, interactive library. Tweet and video embedding is also possible

(integration of tweets and videos directly on the website posts).

In addition, users can find the relevant Interact staff leading networks or fields of expertise by selecting the topic from two different dropdowns in the contact section. That option is also available from the homepage sections.

10.2.2. Results of the information and publicity measures carried out under the communication strategy

The communication activities contributed to supporting programmes to raise awareness about the role of Interreg in the EU in general and Regional policy in particular. Interact organised a total of 72 events in 2016 with 1662 participants. A number of 46 tools were also put at programmes' disposal.

These activities ensured the fulfilment of the Interact Programme communication objectives:

1. Promote the existence and use of harmonised tools and services;
2. Ensure an adequate knowledge sharing in effective communication approaches;
3. Streamline the dissemination of thematic content and key messages;
4. Raise awareness about other cooperation instruments to maximise synergies.

At the same time, Interact online tools contributed to disseminate information about Interact support to Interreg programmes including website, social media and newsflash.

Please see *annexe 10* for communication indicators including website statistics.

The number of website page views has decreased with the new website due to the fact that it contains many fewer pages than its predecessor. The simplification of the website structure has probably paid off in terms of a lower effort for users to access the content. The Jobs section, for instance, had a myriad of child pages in the previous website while in the new one it displays all content in one page. This obviously has an impact in terms of page views.

The number of website sessions and uniques has also decreased and the reason likely has to do with the organic searches (from over 46,000 to nearly 25,000). The large amount of pages from the old website was probably part of many online searches that redirected users to the Interact website. The bounce rate of organic searches in the former website was 50 per cent which may mean that many of those visitors were not Interreg-related.

The number of YouTube views substantially increased in 2016 due to the impact of the video 'Le Dessous des Cartes – Interreg' created by Interact in 2015 in three different languages to commemorate the 25 years of Interreg. Only in 2016, the video received nearly 60,000 views combining the three versions. It is highly likely that the video also had an impact in the number of subscribers to the Interact YouTube channel and the number of videos placed in playlists.

11. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WHICH MAY BE ADDED DEPENDING ON THE CONTENT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME (ARTICLE 14(4), SUBPARAGRAPH 2 (A), (B), (C) AND (F), OF REGULATION (EU) NO 1299/2013)

11.1 Progress in implementation of the integrated approach to territorial development, including sustainable urban development, and community-led local development under the cooperation programme

Not applicable for Interact.

11.2 Progress in implementation of actions to reinforce the capacity of authorities and beneficiaries to administer and to use the ERDF

Most Interact activities aim at reinforcing the capacity of authorities (managing authorities, joint secretariats, certifying authorities, audit authorities, national controllers, etc., the primary target groups of Interact) to administer and to use ERDF under the ETC goal. Please see section 9.1. *Information in Part A and achieving objectives of the programme / Priority Axis: 1 - Service Delivery.*

(The selected thematic objective of Interact is ‘11 - Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration’ while its investment priority is ‘11e - Promoting the exchange of experience in order to reinforce the effectiveness of territorial cooperation programmes and actions as well as the use of EGTCs’ pursuant to point (3)(c) of Article 2 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (ETC Regulation).

11.3 Contribution to macro-regional and sea basin strategies (where appropriate)

As stipulated by the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, recital 19, article 8(3)(d) on the "Content, adoption and amendment of cooperation programmes" and article 14(4) 2nd subparagraph (c) "Implementation reports", this programme contributes to MRS(s) and/or SBS:

With the development and adoption of more EU macro-regional strategies and parallel development of other cooperation frameworks, Interact started moving away from the support to a specific strategy to exchanges across macro-regions, providing horizontal support to the EU-macro-regional strategies (EUSBSR, EUSDR, EUSAIR, EUSALP).

Continuous support to and networking across transnational cooperation programmes as regards to implementation of the macro-regional strategies was provided. At the same time, Interact built up and strengthened co-operation with macro-regional actors (e.g. by participation to their meetings, providing expert support to the Annual Forums of macro-regional strategies. Macro-regional practices and achievements of macro-regional strategies were shared through contributions to the events organised by various actors, especially ETC programmes.

During 2016, Interact focused in its service delivery for exchanging practices and approaches as well as contributing to development of workable models to support macro-regional cooperation. (Further information to be found in *annexe 8*.) This service delivery led to further development of services to support implementation of Interreg programmes and macro-regional strategies, identifying the most effective workable methods and models benefiting the Strategies and the Programmes, and searching for the ways to interlink them. The conclusions from the events and discussions served basis for further planning of the Interact services for 2017.

It should be also highlighted that 2016 implementation was addressing all macro-regional strategies and supporting exchanges or practices and experiences in its wider sense.

The other main focus during the 2016 implementation regarding the macro-regional strategies was in the context of Promotion and awareness raising on macro-regional cooperation advantages where the Interact activities were contributing to awareness raising of mainstream programmes (and other funding instruments) on (macro-regional) cooperation and its advantages. The activities were also to ensure further capitalisation activities, promotion of cooperation at macro-regional scale and awareness raising. (Further information to be found in *annexe 8*.)

- EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)
- EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)
- EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR)
- EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)
- Atlantic Sea Basin Strategy (ATLSBS)

11.4 Progress in the implementation of actions in the field of social innovation

Not applicable for Interact.

13. SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

Information and assessment of the programme contribution to achieving the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Not applicable for the year 2016.

14. ISSUES AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PROGRAMME AND MEASURES TAKEN — PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK (ARTICLE 50(2) OF REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013)

Where the assessment of progress made with regard to the milestones and targets set out in the performance framework demonstrates that certain milestones and targets have not been achieved, Member States should outline the underlying reasons for failure to achieve these milestones in the report of 2019 (for milestones) and in the final implementation report (for targets).

Not applicable for the year 2016.

Documents

Document title	Document type	Document date	Local reference	Commission reference	Files	Sent date	Sent By
Annexe 5/2: EC Day events organised in 2016	Citizens' summary	29-Jun-2017			Annexe 5/2: EC Day events organised in 2016	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 7: Interact III MAWP-JAWP map 2016	Citizens' summary	14-Jun-2017			Annexe 7: Interact III MAWP-JAWP map 2016	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 10: Communication indicators 2016	Citizens' summary	29-Jun-2017			Annexe 10: Communication indicators 2016	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 4: Cluster map of events and instances of support to external events	Citizens' summary	14-Jun-2017			Annexe 4: Cluster map of events and instances of support to external events	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 1: The Interact staff (IOs and MA/IS) on 31 December 2016	Citizens' summary	14-Jun-2017			Annexe 1: The Interact staff (IOs and MA/IS) on 31 December 2016	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 2: National contributions received until 31 December 2016	Citizens' summary	14-Jun-2017			Annexe 2: National contributions received until 31 December 2016	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 3: Interact events and tools January-December 2016 in chronological order	Citizens' summary	14-Jun-2017			Annexe 3: Interact events and tools January-December 2016 in chronological order	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 5/1: Summary of 2016 work package implementation	Citizens' summary	29-Jun-2017			Annexe 5/1: Summary of 2016 work package implementation	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 6: Citizen's summary	Citizens' summary	14-Jun-2017			Annexe 6: Citizen's summary	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 8: Interact III events and tools 2016 per work package	Citizens' summary	14-Jun-2017			Annexe 8: Interact III events and tools 2016 per work package	30-Jun-2017	njelemja
Annexe 9: Event satisfaction rates 2016	Citizens' summary	14-Jun-2017			Annexe 9: Event satisfaction rates 2016	30-Jun-2017	njelemja