

Annual Report 2015

Citizens' summary

The Interreg MED Programme is a transnational programme co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). It provides funds for cooperation projects developed and managed by public bodies – and in some cases by private entities – in the Northern regions of the Mediterranean. Its eligible territory includes Mediterranean States candidates to the EU or potential candidates participating with the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance funds (IPA Funds).

For the 2014-2020 programming period, the total budget of the programme is € 275.905.320 (€ 224.322.525 of ERDF, € 9.355.783 of IPA Funds, € 42.227.012 of national counterpart).

The Cooperation Programme which is the legal document that sets the programme's strategic framework and objectives and provides a general overview of the programme's context and territory was submitted to the Commission in September 2014. It was eventually validated at the beginning of June 2015. The Cooperation Programme was drafted on the basis of the findings of the Ex-Ante evaluation carried out during 2013-14.

As a result of this Ex-Ante evaluation, four thematic investment priority axes – themselves divided into specific objectives – have been chosen for the new programme:

- ➔ Priority Axis 1: "Promoting Mediterranean innovation capacities to develop smart and sustainable growth" (32% of the total budget)
- ➔ Priority Axis 2: "Fostering low-carbon strategies and energy efficiency in specific MED territories:

cities, islands and rural areas" (34% of the total budget)

- ➔ Priority Axis 3 "Protecting and promoting Mediterranean natural and cultural resources" (20% of the budget)
- ➔ Priority Axis 4 "Enhancing Mediterranean Governance" (8% of the budget).
- ➔ The rest of the budget (6%) has been allocated to Priority Axis 5: "Technical Assistance".

After the validation of the Cooperation Programme by the European Commission, a kick-off event was organized in Marseille, at the end of June 2015. Over 700 interested stakeholders participated in this event, where the new architecture of the programme was highlighted. For this new programming period, a new approach has indeed been adopted. There are now two types of projects: modular and horizontal projects. 'Modular' projects concentrate on the following types of action: studying, testing, or capitalising. Horizontal projects accompany a thematically oriented group of Modular projects and help them summarize joint results and messages.

Along with the new approach also comes some communication novelties: a public tender was launched for a web portal that will host the websites of all programmed projects, and that of the programme, making capitalisation and data production efforts more efficient. It will be operational in September 2016. In the meantime, a temporary website was implemented to make all information regarding the new programming period available to potential beneficiaries. In May 2015, the Programme's new logo was adopted by the Members States. This new logo is in line with the Interreg branding

ANNUAL REPORT 2015 : CITIZENS' SUMMARY

developed by Interact and followed by most cooperation programmes. Last but not least, the Programme communication strategy was adopted in December 2015.

The first call for modular project proposals was launched in September 2015 and closed in November 2016. It was opened to the first 3 priority axes only, the programme States having decided to carry out a 'top-down' framework project under the Governance priority (axis 4). The call for horizontal project proposals was open from November 2015 to January 2016.

Applicant information seminars were organised and specific reference documents such as thematic Terms of Reference and an Applicants' Manual, were developed by the Joint Secretariat in order to help applicants and highlight the thematic focus of the Specific Objectives. Project proposals were submitted online via the programme Monitoring tool called Synergie.

As a result of the first call, 375 Modular project proposals and 14 Horizontal project applications were received. The quantity of Modular project proposals per Axis and objective is proportional to the budget allocation per axis.

After submission, each Interreg MED proposal is subject to a three-step assessment procedure safeguarding the principles of transparency and equal treatment as described below:

- ➔ Administrative and eligibility check of the Application Form and the compulsory annexes
- ➔ First quality assessment step of the Application Form
- ➔ Second quality assessment step of the Application Form

By the end of 2015, the eligibility check was on-going, and no projects had yet been selected.

The projects selected under the final evaluation phase will only launch their activities in late 2016. Due to some unexpected events it has, unfortunately, not been possible to speed up the whole process so the projects could start sooner. Namely but not exclusively, while implementing the new period, the Joint Secretariat has been working on the closing of the previous one.