



8th Interreg Europe Monitoring Committee Meeting 13 and 14 March 2018

Sofia Hotel Balkan

5 Sveta Nedelya Square - Sofia, 1000, Bulgaria

Chaired by: Denitsa Nikolova (items 1 & 2), Maria Duzova (items 3 to 13), BG

Decision notes: Interreg Europe JS

1. Welcome, Opening and approval of the agenda

The **chair** welcomed the MC members with a short movie about Bulgaria. An updated agenda was proposed (see annex 02): item on JS human resources was removed from agenda item 3 and item on selection of the programme evaluator was added to agenda item 13. The agenda was approved without objections. **JS** confirmed that the quorum is reached and that only **LT** was missing.

2. Presentation of the new MC members

The new participants of the monitoring committee from IE, AT, BE and EL introduced themselves.

3. Update on general programme developments

The **JS** informed about strategic meetings participated in since the last MC meeting (see annex 03). The minutes of the meeting organised with the CoR on 16 March 2018 are now added as well (see annex 04).

Moreover, the **JS** reminded about the requirement of updating the programme result indicators in 2018 through a survey dedicated to Structural Funds Managing Authorities and Intermediate Bodies (see annex 05). **DE** requested to contact the Länder representatives responsible for Interreg Europe regarding the survey. Upon a request from **LU**, it was clarified that the indicator is population related and therefore cannot take into account other policy instruments than Structural Funds programmes.



4. Policy Learning Platform update

The **JS** reported on the policy learning platform budget, the actual spending for 2016 – 2017 and the activities organised (see annex 06). The **JS** reminded that the reported expenditure is related to the financial year, which does not coincide with the timing of the annual subsequent contracts with the external provider and related payments. The annual implementation report for the 1st Subsequent contract covering 22/09/2016 – 05/01/2018 was submitted on 16/01/2018 and a revised version is due on 19/03/2018.

The **JS** also informed that the management and implementation teams for the second year are both complete. The policy officers started to discuss by phone with their experts on the different activities to carry out (e.g. policy briefs, good practices analysis, projects factsheet, thematic workshops etc.). The 1st physical meeting will take place in Lille on 20/03/2018 to set a detailed time plan, decide on the activities to be carried out and agree on the quality standard for the second year.

Conclusion

No questions were raised on this point.

5. Projects monitoring

The **JS** provided an update on the first and second call project's monitoring (see annex 07).

▪ iOLF & iDB development

The **JS** presented the latest developments on iOLF and iDB. No remarks from the Partner States in this regard.

▪ Changes in running projects

The **JS** presented an overview on the changes in running projects since the programme start.

▪ Feedback from first mid-term review

The **JS** presented the outcomes from 1st mid-term review meetings. The majority of the 19 projects are on time with their implementation and only a few have requested pilot actions.

▪ Procedure for pilot actions

The **JS** presented the proposed procedure for the approval of pilot actions and the pilot action from CISMOB (see annex 08).

Decision

▪ On the procedure for partnership change

The **MC** agreed that, in addition to the **NPC**, the **MC** members are also in copy of the **JS** e-mails informing about a possible change of partners

▪ On the procedure for pilot actions:



The MC approved the procedure as described in the manual. Pilot actions not recommended for approval by the **JS** will be presented to the MC if requested by the project. The **JS** will check if information on pilot action request can be shared with MC on iDB documents centre¹.

- The MC approved the pilot action from CISMOB.

6. Overview of third call results

The JS provided an overview of the third call results (see annex 09).

7. Reminder of quality assessment methodology

The **JS** presented an overview on the way the quality assessment is carried out internally (see annex 11). The **JS** reminded that it is a two-step procedure (strategic and operational). For each step of the assessment, a 'four-eye principle' is applied. For the first time, Partner States were invited to the quality assessment briefing to increase the understanding on the quality assessment procedure. EL, FR, IT, NL, PL and RO participated in this session.

8. Approval of projects

Decision:

- The MC approved all recommended projects under the conditions as proposed by the JS.
- The MC agreed to the rejection of all non-recommended projects. **DE** abstained.

9. Presentation of project (Bulgarian partner)

Daniela Tchonkova (DT), Programme Manager of Applied Research Communications Fund (ARC) presented their experience in the InnoBridge and ESSPO projects (see annex 12).

10. Fourth call application pack

The **JS** presented the updated application pack for the fourth call, highlighting the changes proposed compared towards the previous call (see annex 13).

¹ A dedicated folder is created in iDB under Tools/Document Center/UsedDocuments/Pilot Actions. The latest version of the request for pilot action is saved under each project folder.



Decision:

The MC approved the application pack apart from the parts related to lump sum and state aid. **AT**, **CZ** and **HR** abstained for the revision made on staff costs.

a) Lump sum:

The **JS** then presented the proposal for a lump sum in phase 2 for 4th call projects in order to further simplify the programme rules and to reduce the administrative burden for beneficiaries. The lump sum will be defined in relation to the number of policy instruments to be monitored (i.e. for which an action plan will be produced) and will be allocated to the lead partner (see annex 14).

Decision

- The MC approved the lump sum for phase 2 for 4th call projects. FR abstained from the decision.
- The MC agreed that the MA/JS will carry out first level control on the lump sum in phase 2 for the 4th call projects.

b) State aid:

Following some comments received by few Partner States (e.g. **PL**, **LV**) prior to the meeting, the programme approach on de minimis, i.e. which Partner State would grant de minimis aid in Interreg Europe, was also presented by the **JS** (see annex 15), based on the discussion on this topic which took place already in Malta in 2017 (MC 06 - annex 18). The **JS** reminded that no formal decision was taken.

11. Communication: update on events & other activities

The **JS** presented an overview of the implementation of the programme's communication strategy (see annex 16).

Upon a request from **PL** and **LU**, it was agreed that only job adverts directly linked to the Interreg Europe programme will be published on the programme website 'Jobs and tenders' section. Vacancies of the other programmes/institutions will be presented as short news with further link to interreg.eu or other relevant websites.

The **EC** reminded about the importance of using common tools, such as keep.eu. The **JS** confirmed that Interreg Europe is committed and will soon contribute to the KEEP database.



12. Finance

a) IVC closure: remaining TA contributions/interest

The **JS** presented the calculation of the remaining INTERREG IVC TA contributions/interest (see annex 17b). Each Partner State should individually communicate by 16 April 2018 to the MA/JS on the reimbursement method they want to use:

- 1- payment to a national account or
- 2- compensation with national contribution to the Interreg Europe TA budget.

Decision

The **MC** approved:

- The calculation of the remaining interest as presented in Annex 17a) Ax.1 - calculation corrected, especially to share the interest amount among the Partner States according to the number of inhabitants
- To communicate by 15 April 2018 to the **MA/JS** whether the interest are to be paid back on a national account or transferred as a national contribution to the Interreg Europe TA budget (individual choice of each Partner State).

b) Use of the ERDF surplus

In the previous meeting, the MC had agreed that for the time being, the ERDF surplus is kept as a contingency reserve in case of ERDF treasury shortages. This surplus would be used on a case-by-case basis. The **JS** now presented the request to use the ERDF surplus from INTERREG IVC to overcome potential temporary ERDF shortages (until an interim payment claim is actually reimbursed by the EC). The actual ERDF surplus amount would not decrease (see annex 17c).

Decision

The **MC** decides to allow the **CA** to make temporary use of the ERDF surplus in case of ERDF treasury shortages.

c) TA budget 2018 and TA actual expenditure 2017

The **JS** proposed to approve the TA actual expenditure for 2017 and the TA budget for 2018 (for more information, see annex 17d). The **JS** also requested a EUR 185,000 shift to be used on the programme monitoring system iOLF/iDB.

Decision

The **MC** approved:

- The TA actual expenditure for 2017 for a total of EUR 3,420,409.94



- The TA budget for 2018 for a total of EUR 4,216,695.62
- The budget shift of EUR 185,000 to the budget line programme monitoring system.

d) National contributions/contact point (see item 12f below)

e) Report from the CA (see item 12f below)

f) Decommitment/payment forecast

The **CA** gave an overview of its activity and in this context covered agenda items 12d), e) and f) (see presentation in annex 17f). In particular the **CA** informed the **MC** that:

- The spending target for 2018 has been reached so there is no decommitment risk for 2018. Based on the cumulated ERDF expenditure already certified by the **EC** (by 31/12/2017) and based on our payment forecast for 2019, no decommitment risk is expected for 2019.
- For 2018, almost all national contributions to technical assistance budget have been received (see annexes 17e). 3 PS have not contributed so far. They are invited to do so as soon as possible.

g) Update on audit matters

The **JS** provided some information on second level audit matters (see annex 17g). A provisional calendar for the system audit, the first round of audit of operations and audit of accounts was given to the **MC**.

h) Whistleblowing procedure: follow-up of complaints

The **JS** presented the whistleblowing procedure and reported on the two cases faced so far (see annex 17h).

13. Any other business

The **MC** approved the procedure for the MC approval of the Annual Implementation Report as proposed by the **JS** (see annex 18).



A short overview about the offers received for the programme evaluation was given by the **JS** (see annex 19). The MC approved the selection of Technopolis (offer 3) and thus the written procedure launched on 07/03/2018 is cancelled.

The **JS** presented the timeline for the implementation of Interreg Europe for the upcoming months (see annex 20).

The **JS** then informed the MC about the JS' participation in diverse events (see annex 21). In line with its mandate to take part in the discussion about post 2020, the JS participated in two informal working groups: Transnational programmes and Pan-European programmes.

JS confirmed that minutes/reports of relevant meetings were attached to the supporting documents and will be shared with the MC also in the future (see annex 22).

Eventually, the **JS** thanked the EC desk officer Jean-Marc Venineaux for his support to the programme as it was his last MC meeting. The **EC** also thanked the MC and the JS for the professional work undertaken in the last year and encouraged to further promote interregional cooperation and the idea of the European Cohesion policy in general.

Conclusion

End of meeting.

NOTE: To ensure transparency of the Monitoring Committee meetings, the decision notes are published on the Interreg Europe's website. Annexes as mentioned in the notes can be requested by email: info@interregeurope.eu