

2014-2020 21st Interreg Europe Monitoring Committee meeting

12 December 2023

Chaired by: Spain (ES)
Participants: See participants' List (annex 01).
Decision notes: Interreg Europe JS

01. Welcome, opening and approval of the agenda

The **Chair** welcomed the participants and introduced the agenda (annex 02).

Decision: The agenda was approved unanimously.

02. Update on programme developments

New MC participants from **IT**, **ES** and **DE** introduced themselves.

JS gave an update on the programme HR situation and on meetings participated in (annex 03).

03. Project experience from a Spanish partner

Ms. Joaquín Villar from the Andalusian Energy Agency (ES), lead partner of the **POWERTY** project, presented the main achievements (annex 04).

Discussion:

EC asked if the results achieved through the pilot actions were incorporated into the policy instruments of the concerned regions. Mr. Villar explained that, in the case of Andalusia (ES), the results had been integrated in the Andalusian Energy Strategy 2030 and consequently, these would be reflected in the ERDF 2021-2027 programme. With regard to the other two pilot actions implemented in Bulgaria and France, Mr. Villar explained that the results achieved led to the uptake of these technologies in other Bulgarian regions and to upgrade the technologies used in the case of France. The **EC** took the opportunity to mention DG ENER work in the domain of energy communities as well as the importance of establishing synergies with other initiatives working on the similar field. **CoR** also confirmed the importance of this topic in the current context. **LU** asked about the role of the other partner regions in the Andalusian pilot action. Mr. Villar answered that the cooperation among regions with different levels of knowledge was crucial for the preparation and implementation of the pilot actions. **FI** asked if the actions presented would have an actual pay back for the involved regions. Mr. Villar explained that the

results of these pilot actions reduced significantly the cost of the electricity bill of the concerned groups, for whom the main benefit was the possibility to share their energy savings.

04. Policy Learning Platform (PLP): state of play and closure

JS presented the updates on the Policy Learning Platform (annex 05).

Discussion:

LU congratulated the PLP on its results and recognised it as an important part of the programme, making the knowledge available to everyone and putting the programme in the broader context of EU initiatives.

DE asked further information about the remaining funds of MEUR 1,2 MEUR. **JS** clarified that these leftover funds will be decommitted. The 2014-2020 funds could not be used to finance preparation of the new period as PLP is a project and not technical assistance. With the start of the new contract also the 2021-2027 funds had to be used. However, the loss of 2014-2020 funds is low, and the overall spending rate of the programme is at 97%.

DK asked when there would be more information on the upcoming PLP webinars. **JS** explained where this information can be found on the Interreg Europe website.

05. Update on projects' achievements and projects' closure

JS gave an update on the project's achievements, closure, and final spending rate (annexes 06 and 07).

Discussion:

DE suggested to launch a survey among the project partners to gather more qualitative information on the results achieved, even after the project ended. **JS** clarified that this was part of the ex-post evaluation.

Following a question from **NL** on the funds "*influenced*" or "*mobilised*" by the programme, the **JS** clarified that these two words have the same meaning. The estimation of this amount can be more or less easy depending on the policy improvement achieved. It is for example straightforward when a new project is financed thanks to the cooperation. **JS** reminded the MC that all results including the funds influenced were checked very carefully and strictly. In most cases, the justification provided is not sufficient and the amount has to be removed from the progress reports.

In the 2014-2020 period, projects had to estimate this amount at the application stage. During the programming of the 2021-2027 programme, DG REGIO evaluation unit confirmed this amount should not be regarded as a result indicator. Therefore, it is now called an impact indicator and projects have to report on this indicator only during implementation.

LU stressed the importance of communicating the programme's results also to people who are not Interreg experts, choosing the most accurate and straightforward language.

06. Risk Matrix Update

JS gave an update on the Risk Matrix (annex 08).

Discussion:

There were no questions or comments on this point.

07. Update on finances and audit

The **JS** presented the proposal on the ERDF surplus from 2007-2013 period (annexes 09 and 10). The **JS** also gave a short update on the TA actual expenditure for 2023 (annex 11) and on the 2023 audit campaign (annex 12).

Discussion:

DE expressed their support to the transfer of the ERDF surplus to the 2021-2027 period. In line with the request from **DE**, **JS** confirmed that it would update the MC about the calculation of this surplus regularly and by December 2024 in any case so that MS can better estimate this surplus.

FI asked whether transferring the ERDF surplus would be in line with the EU Regulations. The **EC** confirmed that this situation is common and that many mainstream programmes generated this surplus due to the way the ECe reimbursements during the 2007-2013 period. The **EC** also explained it was a good decision to transfer the surplus generated from the 2007-2013 programme to the 2014-2020 programme as it was used as a safety net when interim payments could not be wired swiftly by **EC** due to temporary treasury shortages. Without this safety net, **EC** underlined that the programme could have been at risk during these temporary treasury shortages. Similarly, **EC** added that they might be under treasury pressure next year and that payments to programmes could happen late. Hence the **EC** strongly encouraged the **MC** to transfer the surplus towards the new programme and maintain its use as a safety net to avoid any disruption when paying the projects.

Decision:

The MC approved the proposal to keep the ERDF surplus on programme level and to transfer it to the 2021-2027 period and MC for further decisions on its use after the 2014-2020 programme closure.