



Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme profile:

New Programme – New Profile – Lasting Impact

Interreg: a Continuum

A wealth of experience and knowledge has been built up since the launch of Interreg. Today it has become an objective in its own right to support territorial cohesion, complementing economic and social cohesion.

- Interreg II C promoted studies and the creation of networks to generate common transnational understanding;
- Interreg III B supports the implementation of pilot investments and infrastructure to build a bank of good practice;
- Interreg IV B will encourage integration and coordination of policy objectives, development priorities and strategies and corresponding funding instruments; it will support, for example long-term strategies, implementation of plans and political agreements that lead to concrete transnational results, public-private partnerships and the involvement of SMEs.

A New Agenda for Transnational Co-Operation

The Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies are the new fundament for EU cohesion policy and regional development in Europe (see also Project Development Note no. 3). Guidance for their implementation is given through the Community Strategic Guidelines and the corresponding National Strategic Reference Frameworks (NSRF; for a summary see Operational Programme Appendix 3.1).

The Territorial Agenda of the EU was adopted in May 2007 by the EU Member States to strive for territorial cohesion in support of the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives.

The **Lisbon Agenda** promotes policy measures in three main areas of economic development:

- Knowledge and innovation for growth
- Making Europe a more attractive place to invest and work
- Create more and better jobs

The **Gothenburg Agenda** promotes sustainable development as a catalyst for policy-making and awareness raising. The purpose is to ensure that:

- Economic growth supports social progress and respects the environment,
- Social policy underpins economic performance,
- Environmental policy is cost-effective.
- Businesses encounter favourable conditions to invest and create jobs, and citizens to act responsibly.

The **Territorial Agenda** of the EU aims to enhance the influence on EU sector policy and to promote regional identities. The Territorial agenda promotes a holistic and place-based approach, through which it should help achieving the objectives of the Lisbon-Gothenburg Strategy. It should:

- Promote cities and urban areas as motors of Europe's development (innovation, business, decision-making, culture, physical access points).
- Strengthen urban-rural partnerships for balanced development.
- Promote transnational research, business and regional development.
- Strengthen trans-European networks (TEN – transport, energy, ICT).
- Promote trans-European technological and natural risk management (maritime, coastal zones, civic security).
- Strengthening trans-European ecosystems and cultural resources and heritage.

A New Programme Profile

The strategic focus and direction is laid down in the Joint Transnational Strategy of the Operational Programme, giving the programme a distinct profile for actions in regional development in the North Sea Region.

The **Programme Aim** is to make the North Sea Region a better place to live, work and invest in.

The **Strategic Objectives** of the programme are to:

- Increase the overall level of innovation taking place across the North Sea Region,
- Enhance the quality of the environment in the North Sea Region,
- Improve the accessibility of places in the North Sea Region,
- Deliver sustainable and competitive communities across the North Sea Region.

4 Priorities are defined in correspondence to these objectives:

1. Building on our capacity for innovation.
2. The sustainable management of our environment.
3. Improving the accessibility of places in the NSR.
4. Promoting sustainable and competitive communities.

Programme Principles

- **Transnational Co-operation and Partnership:** Working between different levels of government, embracing different sectors of policy, across national boundaries in a large territory (transnational macro-region), developing, preparing and implementing joint solutions, is essential to exploit what transnational co-operation is uniquely equipped to achieve.
- **Innovation:** Actions are supported to promote innovation and assist the transition to a knowledge-based economy in the North Sea Region. Developing a positive innovation-orientated culture towards e.g. standard-setting approaches will encourage innovative responses in a transnational regional development context.
- **Sustainable Development:** Endorsing the principles of sustainable development as a catalyst for policy-making and raising public awareness is a fundamental precondition for programme actions. Defining clear, stable, long-term objectives for transnational partnerships will shape expectations and create the conditions in which businesses have the confidence to invest in innovative solutions, and to create new, high-quality jobs.
- **Territorial cohesion:** Valuing the diversity of the European territory and supporting the European social model will enable people to continue to live in their home regions. The purpose is to better use territorial potentials, to strengthen the regional profiles and to promote the coherence of policies with a territorial impact.

- **Equal opportunities:** By considering the wider economic benefits that emerge from ensured gender equality and non-discrimination, e.g. in terms of tackling skills shortages, increasing employment levels, higher income levels and increasing levels of entrepreneurship within the economy, activities under the programme promote to making full use of the productive potential of the North Sea Region's work force.
- **Additionality:** Projects are reaching beyond what will be implemented by the partners anyway.

A New Direction for Programme and Project Development towards high quality transnational projects

Based on this profile, the programme advocates a new direction for transnational territorial co-operation actions with the aim to raise the quality of transnational projects:

Ambitious Approaches

- Strengthening Transnational Co-operation: organisational and institutional learning and integration;
- Regional initiatives are anchored in Community and national policy objectives to achieve clear transnational impact;
- Mobilising strong partnerships: Strong national involvement (mix of bottom-up and top-down initiative/approaches), strong private involvement and public-private partnerships (PPP); new partners and target groups (businesses, business incubators, technology transfer centres, chambers of commerce, NGOs, SMEs, etc.), more diverse and complete composition of regional partnerships in the national contexts.
- Enhancing co-ordination: building links to other policy instruments, across policies, programmes, territories, institutions and organisations. Actions are linked to other funds and initiatives and consider experiences and outcomes from former ERDF-funded activities.
- Improving dissemination, publicity and communication strategies and actions.

Focused Actions

- Identifying institutional, policy, economic added value;
- Targeted at fewer issues but with greater strategic impact;
- More sector-oriented actions in a transnational context (e.g. sustainable energy and transport) that are conducive to and underpinning integrated sustainable territorial development.
- Effective implementation mechanisms: at project level, effective project management structures tailor-made to the needs of the partnerships (e.g. common use of tools and databases); at programme level, flexible and focused project generation actions for maintaining the strategic focus of the programme and its operations.

Concrete Results

- Ensuring lasting impact: delivering structural change, managing transition processes, preparing major follow-on projects.
- Tangible and measurable results preparing major projects (e.g. investments, business clusters, master plans, business plans);
- Action-oriented results, e.g. towards future financing of identified investment needs, follow-up actions in other (larger) programmes, lasting support structures and institutions.

Related links

- Community Strategic Guidelines for Cohesion 2007-2013:
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2007/osc/050706osc_en.pdf
- The Territorial Agenda of the EU:
http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original_995374/Territorial-Agenda-of-the-EU-Final-Draft.pdf