

**Communication from the Commission to the Member States****of 7 May 2001****'INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION'****Strand C of the Interreg III Community initiative****Commission communication C(2001) 1188 final**

(2001/C 141/02)

**I. Introduction**

1. This communication sets out the method of implementing cooperation activities under the interregional strand of the Interreg III Community initiative for the period 2000-2006 (Interreg III C).
2. The Commission considers that interregional cooperation offers an additional dimension to the field of cooperation activity over and above that provided by cross-border and transnational programmes. It allows non-contiguous regions to enter into contact and to build up relationships, leading to exchanges of experience and networking which will assist the balanced, harmonious and sustainable development of the European Union and of third countries.
3. Over recent years, the regions have played an increasingly important role within Europe, in particular in bringing the activities of the European Union closer to the citizen. It is therefore natural that they should also do so in the context of Interreg III C. While interregional cooperation will continue to be based on concrete projects and networks, the Commission believes that regional authorities should become more involved in defining the framework for such cooperation and playing a more active part in it.
4. The Commission welcomes the support of the other European institutions for continuing interregional cooperation. In their opinions on the new Community initiatives, both the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions have welcomed the inclusion of the interregional strand under Interreg III and have stressed the importance that they attach to this type of cooperation.

**II. Aims, general principles and added value of inter-regional cooperation**

5. The objective of interregional cooperation, as set out in point 17 of the guidelines for Interreg III <sup>(1)</sup> (hereafter referred to as 'the guidelines') is to 'improve the effectiveness of policies and instruments for regional development and cohesion'.
6. In order to fulfil this objective, the Commission proposes that Interreg III C should operate as a general framework for interregional cooperation activity with a view to linking and promoting exchanges of experience and best practice from the types of activity supported under

Objective 1 and 2 programmes, the Interreg Community initiative, the URBAN Community initiative and urban development, and the future regional innovative actions programmes.

7. Interreg III C should encourage regional and other public authorities, whether eligible for structural funds support or not, to view interregional cooperation as a means of enhancing their development through access to the experiences of others. In this way, the added value of the individual structural fund interventions in the different regions can be expanded throughout Europe.
8. Therefore, the regions should be given the possibility to introduce a more strategic approach to interregional cooperation, exploring how exchanges of experience can be used to address weaknesses, integrate lessons learnt in regional programmes and also improve the quality of the assistance provided under the structural funds, especially Objective 1 and 2 programmes. The participation of regional and other public authorities in Interreg III C should, in this way, create a more stable structure for cooperation, leading to more and higher quality joint projects in the future and creating synergy between best practice and exchange of experience actions and the mainstream structural funds programmes.
9. The guidelines already propose a programme-based approach for the management of Interreg III C within larger programme areas. However, it is important that the strategic approach described above leads to a degree of programming being implemented within programmes at the regional level. The Commission wishes to favour structured, coherent interregional cooperation, rather than a series of one-off projects. This communication explains how this two-stage programming will work and sets out the topics which can be covered.

**III. The legislative framework**

10. Article 20 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999 (hereafter referred to as 'the General Regulation'), laying down general provisions on the structural funds <sup>(2)</sup>, states that one of the fields of the Community initiatives shall be 'cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation intended to encourage the harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of the whole of the Community area'.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ C 143, 23.5.2000.

<sup>(2)</sup> OJ L 161, 26.6.1999.

11. The guidelines state that there will be a specific strand of Interreg III aimed at improving regional development and cohesion policies and techniques through interregional cooperation.
12. This communication develops the information provided in the guidelines and sets out the Commission's proposals for implementing this strand.

#### IV. Past experience

13. Over recent years, interregional cooperation has become an increasingly important part of the Union's structural policy. At present, a large number of interregional cooperation projects <sup>(1)</sup> are being implemented. Most of these projects will only be completed in 2002 and it is therefore too early to draw definitive conclusions about the results. However, it is clear that they have attracted great interest and it is generally accepted that they are of high political importance. European regions all face socioeconomic problems, in particular the impact of the globalisation of the economy. Interregional cooperation projects have helped them to address these new challenges by drawing on the experience of other regions facing the same problems and finding common solutions.
14. Building on the positive results obtained by interregional cooperation, the Commission wishes to encourage a more strategic approach as described in section II of this communication. Consequently, the Commission believes that introducing a more programmed approach would produce a greater degree of coherence, not only within interregional cooperation but also within the Interreg III Community initiative as a whole. Furthermore, a programmed approach would help to improve monitoring and evaluation processes and simplify the administrative procedures involved in project implementation.

#### V. Eligible areas

15. All of the territory of the European Union is eligible for co-financing by the ERDF under Interreg III C.

#### VI. Participation of third countries

16. The Commission would like to see as wide a participation as possible from third countries, especially the candidate countries. Consequently, the involvement of third country partners in an Interreg III C operation should be given appropriate attention in the selection process.
17. Financing for third country partners may be provided from their own resources or, where appropriate, through the relevant European Union funding source (e.g. Phare, Tacis, CARDS, MEDA, EDF) in line with the funding rules for each source.

<sup>(1)</sup> Including innovative actions of the structural funds (RIS/RITTS; RISI; TERRA; Recite; ECOS-Ouverture, Urban Development) as well as projects under the 'Promotion of innovation and encouragement of SMEs participation programme' (1998-2002) of the fifth RTD framework programme.

18. In particular, Article 20 of the General Regulation states that due attention should be given to improved cooperation with the Phare, Tacis and MEDA programmes. Although coordination has proved difficult in the past, due to the effects of differences in the various administrative practices and financial regulations, the Commission has decided to take steps to improve coherence. The Phare review represents a first example of this work where the moves towards the decentralisation of the administration should lead to a more pro-active role for the regions in the future, thus assisting their involvement with Interreg <sup>(2)</sup>.

19. With regard to the travel and subsistence expenses of partners from outside the European Union, these can be eligible costs for an operation when the meeting or seminar takes place in the European Union and is part of an approved operation.

#### VII. Involvement of insular and outermost regions

20. Due attention should be given to the involvement of both the insular and the outermost regions in interregional cooperation actions, as indicated in point 19 of the Interreg III guidelines. Consequently, such involvement should be given priority in the selection process.

#### VIII. Topics for cooperation

21. As noted above, the Commission believes that interregional cooperation actions can contribute to the efforts of the mainstream and Community initiative programmes to promote cohesion and strengthen regional competitiveness. Accordingly, Interreg III C should be seen as a vehicle for promoting European interregional cooperation in the types of activities supported under the new regional and cohesion policies <sup>(3)</sup>, in structural funds Objective 1 and 2 and Interreg programmes, as well as the URBAN Community initiative and urban development activities and the regional innovative actions programmes, thus contributing to their overall improvement and adding value to the European Union's regional policy as a whole.
22. Based on this position, the five topics for interregional cooperation for 2000-2006 are as follows:

(a) *Activities supported under Objective 1 and 2 of the structural funds*

94 % of structural fund expenditure is targeted through the mainstream objective programmes. However, this

<sup>(2)</sup> Commission communication C(2000) 3103.

<sup>(3)</sup> See the Commission communication 'The structural funds and their coordination with the cohesion fund — guidelines for programmes', COM(1999) 344 final.

expenditure tends to be focused on the regional level and there are currently limited opportunities to exchange information and experience with other regions in Europe. This topic is intended to address this issue by promoting direct cooperation between public authorities or equivalent bodies across Europe on the types of projects supported in Objective 1 and 2 programmes.

Partners would not need to be located in Objective 1 or 2 regions, but would have to be involved, or be interested in becoming involved, in the types of activities supported under Objective 1 and 2 programmes. Operations could be based on exchanges of experience in general or on the dissemination of results from successful projects.

(b) *Interregional cooperation linking public authorities or equivalent bodies involved in other Interreg programmes*

The aim of this topic is to enable exchanges of experience and networking among border areas and among transnational areas. Actions can cover cooperation on cross-border and transnational activities, where a wider degree of cooperation would be beneficial. Actions could also focus on the implementation dimension of Interreg programmes (for example networking among several secretariats to examine procedures and operational structures).

This topic is limited to public authorities or equivalent bodies involved in current or previous Interreg programmes.

(c) *Interregional cooperation in the field of urban development*

Urban development is currently one of the key regional policy issues in Europe. In addition to the targeted actions supported under the URBAN Community initiative and the mainstream objective programmes, the Commission considers that wider cooperation actions related to urban development issues should be encouraged. As a result, this topic will encourage the dissemination of urban development practices through concrete exchange of experience actions, including best practice ideas concerning implementation, and the diffusion of project ideas and results.

This topic is open to all cities and urban areas, including small and medium-sized towns. Nevertheless, priority should be given to those proposals which contain at least one city or urban area receiving funding from structural funds programmes.

(d) *Interregional cooperation linking regions involved under one or several of the three themes of the regional innovative actions for 2000-2006<sup>(1)</sup>*

The three priorities of the innovative actions for 2000-2006 are:

- regional economy based on knowledge and technological innovation,
- e-EuropeRegio: the information society and regional development,
- regional identity and sustainable development.

Each regional innovative actions programme will contain a strategy agreed between the different regional players for defining innovative measures. This strategy will constitute the framework for the implementation of individual projects, the transfer of results to programmes under Objectives 1 or 2 co-financed by the ERDF in the regions concerned and the exchange of experiences between regions. The strategy may be based on one of the three priorities, or on a combination of these priorities, in order to meet the needs of each region as fully as possible.

Building on the contents of their individual innovative action programmes, regions may propose cooperation actions in order to transfer and implement successful project ideas to other regions.

As networking actions can be supported through the regional innovative action programmes and through the programme 'Promotion of innovation and encouragement of SME participation'<sup>(2)</sup>, Interreg III C cannot support networking as described in point 26(c) below under this topic.

(e) *Other subjects appropriate to interregional cooperation*

The Commission underlines the importance of a number of other subjects which could be addressed under Interreg III C. These include maritime and coastal cooperation, spatial planning issues, coop-

<sup>(1)</sup> As defined in the Commission communication 'The regions and the new economy' — guidelines for innovative actions under the ERDF 2000-2006 (COM(2001) 60).

<sup>(2)</sup> The 'Promotion of innovation and encouragement of SME participation' programme supports networking of regions which are developing regional innovation strategies. These activities are carried out in complementarity to Interreg III C and the 'Regional innovative actions for 2000-2006' programme.

eration on insular and ultra-peripheral issues, on solutions to natural or man-made catastrophes as well as on alleviating the economic effects of handicaps such as very low population density or mountainous conditions.

In addition, other subjects which are appropriate for interregional cooperation could be addressed, including the subjects set out in point 19 of the guidelines, namely research, technological development and SMEs; the information society; tourism; culture and employment; entrepreneurship and the environment.

### IX. Submission and content of programmes

23. The programme areas for Interreg III C are set out in Annex A.
24. Interreg III C programmes will be prepared as a Community initiative operational programme and their content will be, as far as possible, similar to that of the single programming documents described in Article 19(3) of the General Regulation, adjusted to meet the needs and circumstances peculiar to interregional cooperation. Proposals concerning interregional cooperation under Interreg III C must be submitted to the Commission by the Member States concerned in the form of a programme. The Member States participating in a programme must designate the Managing Authority, the Paying Authority and the (Joint) Technical Secretariat and establish a clear repartition of tasks and responsibilities (as described in point 25 of the guidelines.)

Given the expertise that secretariats for Interreg transnational (strand B) programmes have already built up, it would appear logical that such secretariats could also act as the secretariats for Interreg interregional programmes. Secretariats should be located, as far as is possible, in close geographical proximity to the relevant managing authority.

The Commission will ensure that, as far as possible, the secretariats will implement a homogeneous approach to programme procedures and to the treatment of applications. The Commission will assist with coordination in this regard.

A monitoring and steering committee should be constituted for each programme in line with the requirements of the General Regulation and the Interreg III guidelines. The monitoring committee may undertake the tasks of the steering committee. The monitoring committee should normally comprise of representatives of all of the Member States of the programme area.

Each Member State will allocate a proportion of its Interreg III C financial allocation to each III C programme in which it is participating. Where a Member State participates in more than one Interreg III C programme, the Commission recommends that that

Member State's allocation to each programme should be made on the basis of the proportion of its population in each programme area.

When the Commission approves each programme, it will grant a single contribution from the ERDF without financial breakdown by Member State.

The content that each Interreg III C programme will need to contain is set out in Annex B.

Programmes and priorities covering Interreg III C will have to include all the topics set out in section VIII of this communication in order to offer a full range of interregional cooperation possibilities to all interested parties.

25. Interreg III C should be consistent with the other Community policies such as research, the information society, enterprise, transport, energy, the environment, rural development (common agricultural policy), equal opportunities and competition. These are described in the Commission guidelines for programmes in 2000-2006<sup>(1)</sup>. The funding of operations may not be duplicated by other internal Community financial instruments.

### X. Types of operation

26. Three kinds of operations, as set out below, may be financed under Interreg III C programmes. The Member States may decide to use the same or different aid rates for the partners in an operation. However, the maximum aid rates, as laid down in Article 29(3) of the General Regulation must be respected.

- (a) *Regional framework operation:* A regional framework operation is aimed at exchanging experience on methodology and project-based activities among a group of regions. The goal is to produce a clear strategic approach to interregional cooperation for the partners, which will allow them to develop a process of exchange and learning, which can grow over the long-term. Each regional framework operation should address a limited range of subjects relevant to the regions participating, thus ensuring that interregional cooperation activity is better integrated into the economic, social and territorial development of the participating areas.

A regional framework operation should cover a limited number of smaller projects. Each regional framework operation should be prepared by a group of regional authorities or equivalent regional bodies in a number of regions from a minimum of three countries of which at least two must be Member States. The regional framework operation should be submitted by a lead partner on behalf of the group to the managing authority of the programme in which the lead partner is located.

<sup>(1)</sup> Commission communication 'The structural funds and their coordination with the cohesion fund — guidelines for programmes', COM(1999) 344 final.

Each partner should be supported by a regional partnership. The regional partnership would consist of the authorities and organisations in each region with a role to play in the regional framework operation.

A regional framework operation should include:

- an interregional cooperation strategy covering the participating regions,
- the objectives and expected results of the operation,
- a focus on a limited number of subjects where cooperation is particularly justified,
- a description of the types of projects that the regional framework operation would support,
- the number of partners and other participants,
- the division of funding between the partners (not more than 40 % for the lead partner),
- the intervention rates,
- assessment criteria for internal project approval.

A more detailed list of requirements for a regional framework operation is set out in Annex C.

Since the regional framework operation is a new type of action, the Commission recommends that no region should participate in more than two such operations under Interreg III C until the mid term reviews of the programmes have been completed.

The total ERDF contribution for a regional framework operation may normally be between EUR 500 000 and EUR 5 million. Indicative assessment criteria for regional framework operations are set out in Annex D.

On an indicative basis, 50 % to 80 % of the funding under each Interreg III C programme should be allocated to regional framework operations.

Regional framework operations can cover all the topics described in point 22.

- (b) Individual interregional cooperation project: aimed at exchanging experience on methodology and

project-based activities. The goal is not merely a transfer of knowledge, but genuine cooperation on the realisation of various parts of the project, with a significant added value to the project partners and other participants. The implantation of project results from one region into another with a clear impact in the recipient region would be one concrete effect of such a project.

Projects should involve partners from a minimum of three countries of which at least two must be Member States. Not more than 40 % can go to the lead partner and the total ERDF contribution may normally be between EUR 200 000 and EUR 1 000 000.

On an indicative basis, 10 % to 30 % of the funding under each Interreg III C programme should be allocated to individual interregional cooperation projects.

Individual interregional cooperation projects can cover all the topics described in point 22.

- (c) Networks: which aim to link the various regions inside and outside the European Union on project implementation methods and development.

Only costs related to actions such as seminars, conferences, websites, databases, study trips and exchange of staff, all in order to exchange experience and pass on expertise, might be considered. Networking should lead to concrete results, which can be evaluated and disseminated. All networking actions should have detailed work programmes, indicating the tasks to be carried out and the expected outcomes.

On an indicative basis, 10 % to 20 % of the funding under each Interreg III C programme should be allocated to networks.

A network must have partners from at least five countries of which at least three must be Member States. The ERDF contribution may normally be between EUR 200 000 and EUR 1 million. All the aid will be paid to and managed by the lead partner of the network.

Networking can cover all the topics described in point 22 with the exception of those related to point 22(d) which, as indicated, can be covered elsewhere.

27. For regional framework operations, the partners must be regional authorities or equivalent regional bodies.

For individual cooperation projects, networks and projects funded within a regional framework operation, the partners must be public authorities or equivalent bodies with the requisite capacity for administration and financial management of public funds. Examples include regional authorities, city authorities, (particularly for the urban development topic) or regional development agencies competent to manage public funds. Private partners can also participate in projects funded within a regional framework operation where the public authority concerned provides the necessary guarantees to ensure the proper management of public funds.

28. Within each programme, at least 75 % of the ERDF allocation must support operations with at least one partner from outside the area covered by the programme <sup>(1)</sup>.

Regional framework operations, individual interregional cooperation projects and networks can only be financed under one Interreg III programme. To avoid similar operations being submitted simultaneously by the same group of partners under different programmes with a different lead partner, a common database will be established.

#### XI. Financial and administrative management of programmes

29. Interreg III C programmes will have to operate under the same rules and conditions as for strand A and B programmes of Interreg III, with due account taken of the particularities of strand C. In particular, a clear division of responsibilities for management, payment, control and selection of projects will need to be set out, addressing administrative and financial duties.
30. Each programme must include a description of a system of financial management permitting a transfer from the ERDF (and preferably also from the respective national co-financing sources) to a single account for each programme and the rapid and transparent forwarding of this finance to the final beneficiaries. The joint arrangements may, for this purpose, include an agreement between the various authorities of the countries participating in the programme.
31. Each Member State shall nominate a body which will be responsible for the financial control of partners located in their country who are participating in an Interreg III C operation. Each of these bodies shall receive from the managing authority of each programme details of those

partners located in their Member State who are participating in an Interreg III C operation.

32. A description of the specific arrangements and procedures for the management and control of the programme, setting out the various responsibilities for financial management, payment and control, in accordance with Articles 38 and 39 of the General Regulation, must also be included in each programme.

#### XII. Financial and administrative management of operations

33. Operations will be submitted by the lead partner (who will be chosen by the partners themselves) to the programme in whose territory he is located. The location of the other partners therefore has no bearing on the choice of programme managing authority to whom to submit the proposal. Selected operations will be co-financed entirely from the programme which received the proposal.
34. The relationships between the Commission, the Member States and the managing and paying authorities of Interreg III C programmes are the same as for other structural funds programmes (see, *inter alia*, Articles 9, 34, 38 and 39 of the General Regulation). Further details are also provided in the draft regulation laying down detailed rules for the application of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/99 regarding the management and control systems for assistance granted under the structural funds.
35. The partners of regional framework operations will be regional authorities or equivalent regional bodies with one of them acting as lead partner. The lead partner would be responsible for collating payment requests from the other partners and submitting a single payment request to the paying authority of the programme. Payments could be made from the paying authority directly to the partners in the regional framework operation, on the request of the lead partner. The partners would then be responsible for paying the project participants in their region. Each partner would take responsibility for financial management, payment and control in their own region.
36. The partners in an individual interregional cooperation project will be public authorities or equivalent public bodies with one of them acting as lead partner. Funding for individual interregional cooperation projects should be allocated to the lead partner and payments would be made only to the lead partner. The lead partner would be responsible for distributing payments among the other partners in the project.

<sup>(1)</sup> This gives islands and outermost regions the opportunity to cooperate amongst each other within the same programme area.

37. For networks, funding should be allocated to the responsible organisation of the network and payments from the programme would be made only to the responsible organisation. This organisation, a regional or other public authority or equivalent body, would take full responsibility for the financial management of the networking operation. It would pay the network costs for seminars, conferences, websites, databases, study trips, exchange of staff and (travel) expenses related to exchange of experiences, etc, to participants directly.

Partners in an operation funded under Interreg III C should consider the benefit of concluding an agreement concerning their mutual financial and legal responsibilities, including the functions and responsibilities of the lead partner.

### XIII. Technical assistance in Interreg III C programmes

38. Provision for technical assistance within Interreg III C programmes must follow the rules and conditions for eligibility of technical assistance costs, as set out in rule 11 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1685/2000 concerning eligibility of expenditure of operations co-financed by the structural funds <sup>(1)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup> OJ L 193, 29.7.2000.

### XIV. Monitoring and evaluation

39. Each programme must include a description of the systems for joint monitoring and evaluation, including the role of the Monitoring Committee (see point 28 of the guidelines); as foreseen in Article 36(1) of the General Regulation, the competent authorities will define monitoring indicators for the collection of monitoring data and for the preparation of evaluations.
40. Mid-term evaluations of all programmes will be conducted in accordance with Article 42 of the General Regulation. In the light of the results of these evaluations, the Commission may propose amendments to the eligible topics for interregional cooperation.

### XV. Other matters

41. Any correspondence about this notice, including draft programmes, should be sent to:

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Director General  
Directorate-General for Regional Policy  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 200  
B-1049 Brussels.

## ANNEX A

### PROGRAMMING AREAS

| Programme  | Member State   | Eligible areas  |
|------------|----------------|---|
| SOUTH ZONE | Italy          | Piemonte, Lombardia, Liguria, Toscana, Umbria, Lazio, Campania, Sardegna, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicilia, Valle d'Aosta                                  |
|            | Greece         | Dytiki Ellada, Peloponnisos, Voreio Aigaio, Notio Aigaio, Kriti, Ionia Nisia, Sterea Ellada, Attiki   |
|            | Portugal       | Whole country   |
|            | Spain          | Whole country   |
|            | France         | Midi-Pyrénées, Limousin, Auvergne, Aquitaine, Languedoc-Roussillon, Poitou-Charentes, PACA, Rhône-Alpes, Corse, Guyane, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Réunion |
|            | United Kingdom | Gibraltar   |

| Programme       | Member State   | Eligible areas   |
|-----------------|----------------|--|
| NORTH-WEST ZONE | France         | Nord-Pas de Calais, Picardie, Haute-Normandie, Île de France, Basse-Normandie, Centre, Champagne-Ardenne, Lorraine, Bourgogne, Alsace, Franche-Comté, Bretagne, Pays de la Loire |
|                 | Belgium        | Whole country  |
|                 | Netherlands    | Whole country  |
|                 | Luxembourg     | Whole country  |
|                 | Germany        | Nordrhein-Westfalen, Hessen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Saarland, Baden-Württemberg  |
|                 | United Kingdom | Whole country (except Gibraltar)   |
|                 | Ireland        | Whole country  |
| NORTH-EAST ZONE | Denmark        | Whole country  |
|                 | Germany        | Niedersachsen, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Bremen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern   |
|                 | Sweden         | Whole country  |
|                 | Finland        | Whole country  |
| EAST ZONE       | Austria        | Whole country  |
|                 | Germany        | Bayern, Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Berlin, Brandenburg, Thüringen  |
|                 | Italy          | Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige, Emilia-Romagna, Puglia, Molise, Abruzzo, Marche  |
|                 | Greece         | Anatoliki Makedonia, Thraki, Kentriki Makedonia, Dytiki Makedonia, Thessalia, Ipeiros  |

## ANNEX B

**Information to be provided in an Interreg III C programme**

Interreg III C programmes will be prepared as a Community initiative operational programme and their content will be, as far as possible, similar to that of a single programming document (as described in Art. 19(3) of the General Regulation), adjusted to meet the needs and circumstances peculiar to interregional cooperation. The programmes drawn up in this way will be submitted to the Commission by the national authorities of the Member States concerned by each programme.

— **Programme objectives**

The general objectives will be common to all programmes (see point 6). The operations under strand C programmes cover the whole EU and are not specific to an individual programming area.

— **Eligible area**

Cooperation is not limited to partners within the same programme area. However, a project can only be submitted under a programme when its 'lead partner' is located in that area, even though partners can come from other regions outside the programme area (see Annex A).

— **Content of the programme**

Contrary to the case for Interreg III A and III B, Interreg III C programmes will not include priorities or measures. There will be only two types of item, 'operations' and 'technical assistance', with operations broken down as shown below.

— The three **types of operations** will be common to all programmes (point 26):

- (a) regional framework operations;
- (b) individual interregional cooperation projects;
- (c) networks.

— All the **topics for cooperation** will be included in all programmes (see point 22):

- (a) interregional cooperation on activities supported under Objective 1 and 2 of the structural funds;
- (b) interregional cooperation linking public authorities or equivalent bodies involved in other Interreg programmes;
- (c) interregional cooperation in the field of urban development;
- (d) interregional cooperation linking regions involved under the three themes of the regional innovative actions for 2000-2006;
- (e) other subjects appropriate for interregional cooperation.

They can apply to each type of operation defined above with the exception that networks cannot be funded under topic (d). Operations presented through these topics can focus on a range of subjects which are appropriate for interregional cooperation.

— **Main target groups**

— **Compliance with Community legislation**

— **Information and publicity measures**

— **Indicative financial plan**, without breakdown by Member State, but broken down by year. It will only include two items, 'operations' (divided in accordance with the percentages indicated for each type of operation in point 26) and 'technical assistance'. Technical assistance will be divided into two categories, in accordance with eligibility rule No 11 <sup>(1)</sup>.

— **Provisions for implementing the programme** (see points 29-31, 33, 38):

- (a) a managing authority;
- (b) a paying authority;
- (c) a joint technical secretariat;
- (d) a monitoring committee (and a steering committee, if necessary);
- (e) a description of the arrangements for managing the programme, including a description of the responsibilities and systems for joint monitoring and evaluation;
- (f) the description of a system of financial management, payment and control. The system will permit a transfer from the ERDF (and preferably also from the respective national co-financing arrangements) to a single account for each programme and the rapid and transparent forwarding of this finance to the final beneficiaries;
- (g) information on the resources required for technical assistance divided in accordance with eligibility rule No 11.

A draft programme complement, which is subject to the approval of the monitoring committee, should be sent for information to the Commission, if possible in parallel with the submitted programme. The programme complement should contain the normal information required for a programme complement, where such information is relevant to interregional cooperation. This includes a description of the mechanisms and procedures for the joint selection of operations and also indicative assessment criteria for operations, which should normally be common to all programmes (see Annex D). At this stage, it will not be required to present quantified monitoring indicators. These will, however, have to be developed when a sufficient number of applications have been approved and in any case will have to be provided in the annual report.

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<sup>(1)</sup> Commission Regulation No 1685/2000 concerning eligibility of expenditure of operations co-financed by the structural funds (OJ L 193, 29.7.2000).

## ANNEX C

**Information to be provided in proposals for a regional framework operation**

Regional framework operation proposals should contain the following information to help the Programme Steering Committee decide on a contribution from the ERDF budget for a regional framework operation. Proposals should not exceed 20-25 pages as a rule.

**Introduction**

A brief description of the regions, identifying their particular strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats to development.

**Content**

A description of the proposed operation, its scope including geographic coverage, its specific aims, its duration and the composition of the partnership involved in preparing the regional framework operation proposal.

- Objectives and expected results (quantified if possible),
- a description of the interregional strategy to promote cooperation targeting a limited number of subjects,
- the subjects for cooperation,
- a description of the types of projects to be funded (studies, pilot projects, strategic planning, participation in networks, etc.),
- the number of partners and other participants,
- the division of financing among regions (not more than 40 % for the lead partner) and the justification for the division and the total budget,
- a detailed workplan and timetable for the implementation of the operation,
- a description of the potential influence of the regional framework operation on other structural funds programmes co-financed by the ERDF,
- compatibility and synergy with other Community policies,
- indicative project selection criteria,
- procedures and conditions for applications by potential beneficiaries,
- main target groups.

**Management and implementation**

This section should include arrangements for cooperation between the regional authorities responsible for the preparation and implementation of the proposal and the managing authorities for other structural funds programmes co-financed by the ERDF.

- Lead partner to be designated by the partners as the managing body for the operation,
- the composition of the Steering Committee which oversees the implementation and monitoring of the operation, including the selection of projects,
- a description of the implementation system,
- a description of the financial system,
- a description of the control system,
- practical arrangements for exchange of information and cooperation between the partners,
- monitoring and evaluation provisions.

**Financing plan**

- Total cost: the ERDF contribution and public and private contributions broken down by the subjects to be covered by the operation,
- rate(s) of assistance envisaged for actions (broken down by Objective 1, Objective 2 and non-objective areas where different rates of assistance are used.)

**Partnership**

- Description of the consultation procedure at the operation drafting stage.

**Information and promotion**

- A description of publicity and information activities to promote the operation.

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**ANNEX D****Indicative assessment criteria for operations**

- Expected concrete outputs and results: effects on the modernisation and diversification of the regional economies, enhanced performance, etc.,
- feasibility of the proposal and consistency between the goals set and the resources allocated,
- number of partners and other participants,
- division of financing among regions and the justification for the division,
- involvement of regions outside the lead partners Interreg III C programming area,
- involvement of islands and outermost regions,
- involvement of third countries,
- private sector contribution to the financing of the proposal,
- potential influence on other structural funds programmes co-financed by the ERDF,
- expected sustainability of the measures when the operation has finished,
- synergy and compatibility with other Community policies.

**Indicative assessment criteria specifically for regional framework operations**

- Quality of the proposal, including:
    - the clarity of the strategic approach,
    - the necessary targeting on a limited number of subjects,
    - the objectives of the work programme having regard to the specific requirements of the partners.
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