

**DEAR READER,**

The current corona pandemic is an impressive demonstration of the importance of EU member states pulling together, working together and strengthening each other. One of the most symbolic programmes of the European cohesion policy is undoubtedly the 'European Territorial Cooperation' (Interreg) launched in 1990, which has been supporting numerous pioneering projects for 30 years now. Many Interreg projects already help to cope with the various effects of the pandemic in various sectors of society.

In order to celebrate the 30th anniversary of this unique instrument and its achievements to date, we briefly illuminate the history of Interreg on pages 2 and 3. Jens Kurnol (BBSR) reports in the context of an interview on the significance of the German EU Council Presidency for spatial and urban development and gives an insight into the programming process of the transnational programmes.

On pages 6 and 7 we look at the renewal of the Territorial Agenda. The new version is to be adopted during the German EU Council Presidency at the beginning of December. The corona pandemic also poses special challenges for transnational cooperation which so much depends on personal exchange and cooperation across borders. In response to the crisis, the rules for the deployment of the Structural Funds have been made more flexible at EU level. On page 8 we report on how the Interreg B programmes react to the corona crisis.

Furthermore, in the current issue, we will of course present a new project that helps to promote the territorial development of Europe: The 'Dynaxibility4CE' project is about developing strategies for more flexible mobility solutions (page 5).

Enjoy reading! And please stay healthy!  
The Interreg Team of the BBSR



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## Interreg celebrates its 30th anniversary



*This year, the Interreg programme is celebrating its 30th anniversary! Interreg is an EU funding programme with a true European spirit as it encourages regions and countries to tackle common challenges which can only be solved through cooperation. Throughout the year, the Interreg community will celebrate this anniversary – as far as the corona pandemic permits.*

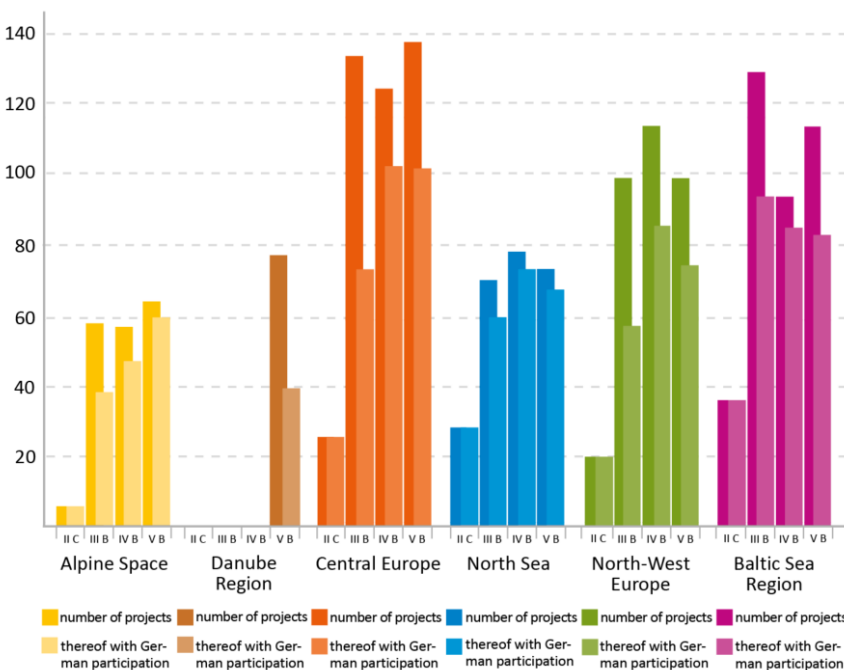
For 30 years now, the European Union has been promoting territorial cooperation. Launched in 1990, the main objective of the first Interreg programme (Interreg I) was to mitigate possible undesired effects on border regions caused by the creation of the European Single Market and to promote economic integration.

Since 1997, transnational cooperation (Interreg B) has also been supported. As the third pillar in addition to cross-border (Interreg A) and interregional cooperation (Interreg C) of what is now the fifth generation of Interreg programmes, it is firmly anchored in Europe's cohesion policy. While the programmes of the first two generations were still Community initiatives which tried and tested territorial cooperation, the Interreg programmes have already been firmly established as part of the regulations on Structural Funds in Europe's cohesion policy since the third generation. Since the current 2014-2020 period, they even have a dedicated Interreg regulation and the budget has been significantly increased. Over the course of the last 30 years, European integration has been widened and deepened. While there were just eleven member states that benefitted from Interreg in 1990, this figure has increased to 28 in the current period (including the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

### ► EVOLUTION OF INTERREG 1990-2020

	► INTERREG I 1990-1993	► INTERREG II 1994-1999	► INTERREG III 2000-2006	► INTERREG IV 2007-2013	► INTERREG IV 2014-2020
LEGAL STATUS	COMMUNITY INITIATIVE		INTEGRATED INTO STRUCTURAL FUNDS REGULATION		OWN REGULATION
BENEFITING MEMBER STATES (INTERNAL BORDERS)	11	11 — then — 15	15 — then — 25	27 — then — 28	28
COMMITMENT BUDGET (IN CURRENT PRICES)	ECU 1.1 BN	ECU 3.8 BN	EUR 5.8 BN	EUR 8.7 BN	EUR 10.1 BN

Evolution of Interreg 1990 to 2020 © Interact



Number of projects by funding period © BBSR

The work on preparing the programmes for the coming 2021-2027 period is presently underway. The current corona pandemic poses very special challenges for all stakeholders, but it also highlights the importance of European cooperation for sustainable development.

### Interreg B – transnational cooperation for sustainable regional development in Europe

Overcoming economic and financial crises, the transition to a climate-neutral Europe, demographic change and most recently the consequences of the corona pandemic are topics that affect everyone in Europe. These and other challenges do not stop at administrative or national borders and they show us that cross-border solutions are needed.

That's why Interreg supports transnational project consortiums who cooperate across borders to develop solutions to overcome shared challenges. In the six programme areas with German participation – the Alpine Space and the Danube Region, Central Europe, the North Sea Region, North-West Europe as well as the Baltic Sea Re-

# 30 years of Interreg

gion – more than 550 transnational projects have already been approved in the current period. German partners are involved in around three quarters of these projects (see diagram at the bottom on the left).

## Interreg helps Europe grow together

A total of more than 6,000 partners from national, regional or local public authorities, from universities, associations, private business and non-governmental organisations are participating in the projects. Local and regional authorities are important stakeholders for integrated approaches in urban and regional development. Cross-sectoral, integrated strategies are needed to achieve sustainable urban and regional development. The Climate Active Neighbourhoods (CAN) project, for instance, helps municipalities to implement their climate protection strategies more effectively with neighbourhood-based, participatory approaches. Since 2016, this project has been enabling residents in underprivileged neighbourhoods in North-West Europe to tackle climate change on site with the help of their communities.

## Interreg is effective

The range of results achieved through transnational cooperation is impressive. This does not only include studies, but, even more importantly, new strategies, services, pilot investments or the establishment of joint institutions. In addition to topic-specific results, the Interreg projects are having many different impacts: through increased knowledge and competence, key stakeholders are able to act more effectively, political decision-making processes are facilitated through joint action, interests can be communicated in a more targeted manner and work processes become more effective and efficient. Interreg projects frequently also lead to greater use of social and technical innovations and often help to improve the ecological, social and economic living environment. However, added value is not always easy to communicate, as Interreg is not an investment programme, but instead invests in people and in their ability to cooperate across borders.

## Interreg 30 Years' Annual Event

Throughout the year, many events are dedicated to this anniversary. Due to the corona pandemic, however, many of them al-



Interreg B programme areas with German participation © BBSR

ready had to be cancelled or have been put on hold. The main celebrations, which were planned to take place within the framework of the Interreg 30 Years' Annual Event on 15 and 16 October 2020, have been postponed to next year.

### Latest information on 30 years of Interreg:

To coincide with this anniversary, INTERACT has created a website dedicated to 30 years of Interreg where you will find videos, podcasts, events, news, documents and presentations, a media centre and much more:

<https://interreg.eu/interreg-30-years-together/>

For more information about transnational cooperation in Germany, go to: [www.interreg.de](http://www.interreg.de)





## ‘Interreg is quite likely the cohesion policy instrument with the most obvious European added value.’

**Interview with Jens Kurnol, Head of Division I 3 ‘European Spatial and Urban Development’ at the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR)**

*While the corona pandemic continues and the draft regulations for the future cohesion policy from 2021 are currently being negotiated, Germany took over the six-monthly EU Council Presidency on 1 July. Jens Kurnol from the German Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development provides an insight into the upcoming programming process and challenges involved.*

***On 1 July 2020, Germany took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) for six months. What significance does this have for European spatial and urban development?***

As the biggest country in the EU and located right in the geographical centre, Germany has a keen interest in matters and policies influencing territorial development in the EU. Naturally, the Presidency programme focusses on coping with the corona crisis. Nevertheless, the future of rural regions, a just transition to a climate-proof economy in all regions and further reduction of barriers at internal borders are all part of the programme, too. More explicitly, the Presidency intends to drive forward sustainable and balanced spatial and urban development by adopting the Territorial Agenda 2030 and updating the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities.

***In 2020, a new version of the Territorial Agenda of the EU will be adopted. What are the main challenges you see in this context?***

The opening of the Iron Curtain and the creation of the internal market in the early nineties gave an enormous push to worldwide and European economic development. The globalisation offered great opportunities for countries, regions and cities to specialise and to find niches in global value chains. Spatial policy-makers have from the very beginning pointed out potential pitfalls of this development – not all regions were (and are) equally well prepared for increased competition. These communities, however, focused a lot of their attention on the role of international metropolises, growth poles and successful regions, too. It took the great recession ten years ago and a surge of populism in the last years to take note again of a developing ‘geography of discontent’) that concentrates in regions left behind by the economic development of the last decades.

The new Territorial Agenda 2030, to be agreed during an informal ministerial meeting on 1 December in Leipzig, builds on this experience and calls for a ‘future for all places’, expressively calling for a (geographically) ‘just Europe’. The TA 2030 as such is not a programme – it is a reference framework for actors on European, transnational and cross-border, national and subnational levels and it now depends on those players to implement the priorities laid down in the Agenda. Germany has nine neighbouring countries and is part of six transnational functional areas and three

macro regions – Interreg therefore naturally plays an important role for us in this respect, e.g. by supporting the implementation of future pilot projects of the TA 2030.

***Draft regulations for the future cohesion policy from 2021 are currently being negotiated. What do you wish for the future of Interreg?***

Interreg is quite likely the cohesion policy instrument with the most obvious European added value. It is no wonder that the ‘legal machinery’ in Brussels (Parliament, Council, and Commission) relatively quickly agreed on the draft regulation. The content of the new regulation gives the necessary room to all programmes to address their respective topics. We had wished for a broader interpretation of the policy objective ‘a Europe closer to citizens.’ As it stands now, its application is rather narrowly restricted to certain predefined instruments in the European toolbox and doesn’t give room for other innovative or explorative activities of cross-border or transnational character.

It is now up to member state delegates and people drafting the new programmes to integrate the territorial aspects into the remaining policy objectives – which should not be that difficult as territorial cooperation is the DNA of Interreg. What needs to be kept in mind is that Interreg is not simply an extension beyond borders of regional ERDF programmes. If that is a political priority, the regional programmes themselves offer ample room to do so. Interreg has other clear tasks, i.e. cooperation and capacity building, with different outputs and results.

***This year, Interreg celebrates its 30th anniversary. What was your best experience with Interreg?***

Well, there were so many... But seriously, what I am most impressed about is how normal it has become to team up with your peers from neighbouring countries. This is obvious to people who have experience in doing this, but for quite a number of newcomers the mental barriers that existed in earlier programmes have from my observation decreased quite significantly, too. It might be a generational thing or related to language proficiency, but I am sure it will survive the national reflexes we have experienced at the beginning of the corona pandemic.



## Dynaxibility4CE: creating dynamic mobility solutions

Car sharing, shuttle services, shared taxis, private transport services, bicycle and scooter rental systems, automated driving – new mobility trends, ownership structures and technologies increasingly determine the traffic situation in Central European cities. However, despite the innovative transport turnaround that has come with it, the entire sector is under scrutiny. Motorised private transport, which is still very strong, produces high levels of pollutant emissions while some rural regions with a low population density are insufficiently connected to the local public transport network.

This is where the Interreg ‘Dynaxibility4CE’ project comes into play. It aims to develop strategies for more flexible mobility solutions and will focus on cleverly combining the new trends mentioned above with classic public transport services with their fixed routes and timetables. In future, public transport authorities and service providers must be enabled to plan their services in a more dynamic and flexible manner and to develop a transport design strategy aimed at reducing carbon emissions and improving access to the periphery.

### Dyna-xi-bility

Dynaxibility is made up of syllables from the words ‘dynamics’, ‘complexity’ and ‘ability’ and perfectly describes the project goal: to enable relevant stakeholders to make complex processes dynamic. In this project, Leipziger Verkehrsbetriebe, Verband Region Stuttgart and Rupprecht Consult-Forschung & Beratung GmbH have joined forces with ten other partners from seven European countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Poland, Croatia). The participants, who come from public authorities, NGOs, research and consultancy organisations, etc., are currently developing suitable strategies, action plans, tools and training measures. In future, they should help urban public transport authorities and companies to see new mobility trends as a welcome addition to a holistic mobility concept and to plan ac-



New mobility solutions in Leipzig © Leipziger Verkehrsbetriebe (LVB) GmbH

cordingly. After all, the blurring of the classic boundaries between mobility services does in fact offer a great opportunity to create a coordinated network of demand-orientated, flexible and sustainable means of transport – and with it a sustainable public transport system in urban and rural areas.

The seven participating functional urban areas around Leipzig, Stuttgart, Graz, Budapest, Parma, Koprivnica and Krakow act as pioneers or ‘pilot regions’ by integrating the new trends into their regional mobility systems. This means that the strategies and action plans developed over the course of the project until December 2021 will first be tested here together with their effectiveness. The experience and results gained in this process are then to serve as a basis for sustainable mobility planning. In the greater Leipzig area, for instance, new public transport services based on automated and connected driving are to be tested and autonomous driving integrated into the mobility strategy.

### Start and project progress to date

Due to the corona pandemic, the kick-off event originally planned in the twin city of Graz in April 2020 had to be virtually held via video chat. Nevertheless, the project partners were able to exchange information online in a lively and productive session, so that a solid foundation was laid for the further course of the project. Following this successful kick-off meeting, a so-called ‘diagnosis workshop’ is now being organised in all the participating cities to analyse the existing mobility planning practice. Since not every city in Europe can be a pioneer in innovation, a transnational exchange of experience is enormously important especially for new forms of mobility and so-called disruptive innovations, where considerable uncertainty exists regarding their impact on mobility systems.



**Ronald Juhrs**  
Managing Director Engineering/Operations at  
Leipziger Verkehrsbetriebe (LVB) GmbH

*‘New technologies and digitalisation also change the mobility market. Sharing and pooling services as well as future automated driving pose challenges for public transport companies. The development of strategic plans to use these new forms of mobility and thus strengthen local transport is a central objective of the Dynaxibility project.’*

[www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/Dynaxibility4CE.html](http://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/Dynaxibility4CE.html)

## Territorial Agenda of the EU – a future for all places

*The Territorial Agenda of the EU 2020 aims to strengthen territorial cohesion in the EU. In addition to economic and social cohesion, territorial cohesion has been explicitly anchored in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union since 2009. The Agenda agreed in 2011 is part of a process that began with the European Spatial Development Perspective in 1999. The Agenda is currently being revised in light of new challenges and the EU's new multiannual financial framework. The new version is to be adopted during Germany's EU Council Presidency at an informal ministerial meeting in early December 2020.*

The transnational Interreg programmes 2014-2020 have different references to the Agenda. The programmes for Central Europe and the Danube Region, for example, address functional relationships in urban regions and the need for polycentric development, i.e. not only in metropolitan areas. The Alpine Space programme identifies the Territorial Agenda as of paramount importance for Interreg and fleshes out the integrated approach in several so-called specific objectives, such as activities for services of general interest, mobility, cultural and natural heritage and multi-level governance. At strategic level, the other three programmes (Baltic Sea, North Sea, North-West Europe) also refer to the integrated approach of the Territorial Agenda, although this is less clearly reflected in the projects themselves or the number of projects.

### New awareness of spatial cohesion

Why is the Agenda being revised now? The way in which communities and regions where people live are seen has been changing throughout Europe. The consequences of the financial and economic crises beginning in 2007 reminded us that the intensive globalisation of recent decades does not only affect individuals but also cities and entire regions in very different ways. While discussions on economic policy and often on planning over the past two decades focused primarily on metropolitan areas and larger cities, these discussions have extended to other places and have broadened to include a more holistic view of space. One catchword for this is the 'geography of dissatisfaction'. Based on the result of the UK's vote on withdrawal from the EU and the results

of the US presidential election in 2016, this term describes the link between long-term economic decline and support for positions described as populist. This was also demonstrated in national elections held between 2013 and 2018 in regions of the EU (cf. Dijkstra, L. Poelmann, H. and Rodrigues-Pose, A., 2018).

The economic aftermath of both the major recession and the euro crisis ten years ago also clearly shows the varying degrees to which regions were affected. Economic output in Spain fell to 85% by 2013 and in Greece to 75% of the pre-crisis level. In 2017, Greece and Italy, among others, had not yet reached the level of 2008. Spain as a whole was just above this, but apart from Madrid and three other regions, most of the regions there were also still below the level of 2008. In other countries such as Italy, France and Portugal, too, the very different economic recovery consolidated regional differences within the country (more on this in the BBSR atlas 'Die Unterschiede bestimmen die Vielfalt in Europa', 2019).

These developments have increased awareness of territorial cohesion in Europe inducing the responsible ministers to strive for a renewal of the EU's Territorial Agenda for the period until 2030. It is currently not possible to predict how the corona epidemic will impact this process. The territorial impacts are also impossible to be predicted, but it is already clear that the crisis affects member states as well as regions and even cities in very different ways and that disparities are likely to increase further.

### Challenges and priorities

The draft of the revised version takes up the contents and specifications of the previous version and adapts them when necessary to the new challenges. They can be divided into two major groups: on the one hand, both individual and territorial imbalances have been increasing for some time – a topic that is being discussed in Germany under the motto of equal living conditions. On the other hand, the climate crisis calls for a bold and coordinated approach to reducing carbon emissions, which in turn might impact these imbalances – the key words here being coal regions or energy poverty. Both topics are clearly linked to the current priorities of the European Commission and its strategy for sustainable growth, i.e. the European Green Deal. The draft of the revised Territorial Agenda lists six priorities under the headings 'Just Europe' and 'Green Europe':



Six priorities in the draft revised Territorial Agenda © BBSR





Holistic consideration of space within the framework of the new Territorial Agenda © BBSR

- balanced Europe – better balanced territorial development utilising Europe’s diversity
- functional regions – local and regional development and less equalities between places
- integration beyond borders – living and working across national borders
- healthy environment – better ecological livelihoods and climate-neutral towns, cities and regions
- circular economy – strong and sustainable local economies in a globalised world
- sustainable connections – sustainable digital and physical connectivity of places.

**Implementation**

At the beginning of December, the ministers will decide on the updated objectives and courses of action of the Territorial Agenda. After that is when the real work begins. Territorial development is not a policy area of the EU in its own right nor has it been the focus of attention in the member states for a long time. This has now somewhat changed, as described above, and it is to be hoped that there will be more options for action in the coming years. The Agenda is a predominantly member state document prepared in cooperation with the European Commission and supported by the Committee of the Regions. The following actors have been listed as the key players for implementation: the member states, their regions and local authorities and the European Commission are called upon to consider the Agenda’s priorities – on an informal basis – across all levels. At national level, the involvement of sector policies, civil society and subnational institutions is particularly important. Especially the latter may contribute to implementing the Agenda, for instance, by stepping up cooperation with their neighbouring regions and municipalities.

Pilot actions to be launched by the ministries in autumn are one concrete element of implementation. In contrast to the Urban Agenda for the EU, where a separate category of projects has been created with the so-called ‘urban partnerships’, these pilot actions are flexible and are intended to use existing structures (and budgets).

In the medium term, Interreg programmes may also play an important role in the implementation of the Territorial Agenda as long as they manage not to focus too strongly on sectors, but also create opportunities for projects that take a cross-sectoral but place-based approach, for example, with regard to urban-rural relations or the various services of general interest in disadvantaged regions.

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**Latest information on the revised Territorial Agenda:**  
[www.territorialagenda.eu](http://www.territorialagenda.eu)  
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## Reflections on transnational cooperation in the light of the corona pandemic

### New normality in project and programme implementation

The contact and travel restrictions of the corona crisis also pose special challenges to transnational cooperation which depends so much on personal exchange and cooperation across borders. Following a phase of uncertainty, especially in the early days of the crisis, a new normality has now been established in the project and programme implementation. In response to the crisis, the rules for the deployment of Structural Funds were made more flexible at EU level. The managing authorities of all Interreg B programmes with German participation responded promptly, for example, by approaching the project partners to enquire about specific problems and needs for support and to identify possible solutions. This has led to a more administrative and financial flexibility of projects, for instance, regarding project term extensions and changes, the eligibility of the costs of cancelled events and travels or faster processing of requests for funds. Willingness on both sides to embark on new and flexible approaches means that the projects can be continued successfully.

The programmes are also requested to find new forms of management, especially when it comes to developing new programmes. Planned events had to be cancelled and replaced by online formats and surveys. Discussions in the programming committees will continue through written procedures and in online meetings. The programming process is largely running according to plan, last but not least thanks to the trust built up during years of cooperation between the many stakeholders.

### How transnational cooperation contributes to mitigate the effects of the crisis

The current programming process provides an opportunity to address the possible impact of the crisis and the related challenges when defining the future thematic priorities of the transnational programmes. In Germany, a discussion process has been initiated

in the 'Interreg Working Group' on the question of whether and how future cooperation programmes can address the effects of the crisis more effectively and help to build more resilient regions.

The crisis, in particular, impressively demonstrates the need to find cross-border, transnational or European solutions because the current challenges do not stop at national borders. Through its multi-level and cross-sectoral approach, transnational cooperation has the potential to develop innovative and integrated cross-sectoral solutions that may help to strengthen the resilience of European regions. The transition to a digital and greener Europe as the overarching theme of European cohesion policy should be anchored as a cross-cutting theme in the programme objectives. From the point of view of federal spatial planning, it is particularly important to support the participation of local and regional stakeholders in order to strengthen the territorial impacts of the projects. The reduced financial scope of these stakeholders, which results from the expected loss of tax revenues as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis, should not be forgotten in this context.

The programmes should also allow for greater flexibility in terms of content making it easier to better respond to the as yet unforeseeable ramifications of the crisis and other trends. The more flexible administrative rules of project implementation (such as project prolongations and changes) introduced in the wake of the corona crisis should also be maintained.

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**More information:**

**Interact Paper 'Impact of COVID-19 on Interreg programmes and operations':** <http://www.interact-eu.net/#o=news/impact-covid-19-interreg-programmes-and-operations>

**'keep.eu' project database:** <https://interreg.eu/news/easy-access-to-projects-tackling-covid-19-in-keep-eu/>  
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im Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung



In the context of the European structural policy objective „European territorial cooperation“ - familiarly known as Interreg B - the European Union supports transnational cooperation in cross-national cooperation areas in order to realise an integrated spatial development. The Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) informs the public and supports the transfer of results, it organises exchange across Germany, represents the Federal Government in programming or steering committees and supports projects of special interest to the Federal Government in the context of the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community.

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