



Dear Reader,

Closing the prosperity gap between regions has always been a key political aspiration of the European Union – and cohesion policy is the primary means to achieve that goal. Europe is currently undergoing a digital and green transition that is considerably changing the way its economy works. The Interreg B programmes and the national Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme are also addressing the digital and green transformation in the current funding period. On pages 2–3, we give you an insight into the current status of the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme and present new project examples for green and sustainable regional development. What contribution the transnational programmes make to finding sustainable solutions for the energy transition, you can read on pages 6–7.

Furthermore, we present you the Interreg B project ‘Arrival Regions’ on pages 4–5. The project promotes innovative approaches to the social and professional integration of non-EU citizens in rural regions of Central Europe.

And finally, you can read about the future of Interreg after 2027 on page 8. Discussions and preparations for the next funding period have already begun.

The Interreg Team of the BBSR
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2021–2027 programming period: How did the launch of the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme go?

The Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme is a funding programme by the Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building that provides national funding and support for Interreg B projects of special interest for the Federal Government. The precondition for funding is whether the projects contribute towards sustainable and integrated spatial development. To this end, the Federal Programme has identified six priorities with the EU's Territorial Agenda 2030 (TA 2030) serving as a guideline for these priorities. The overarching objectives of the TA 2030 are a 'Just Europe' and a 'Green Europe', both of which focus on reducing regional disparities and creating sustainable prospects for the future. The Federal Programme also implements the Concepts and Strategies for Spatial Development in Germany. When submitting a funding application, applicants must take into account both the funding goals of Interreg B and those of the Federal Programme while demonstrating a link to sustainable spatial development. Funding is available for German project stakeholders in the six transnational cooperation areas in the three familiar categories of seed money, co-financing and additional funding of follow-up projects.

Status of calls in the current programming period

In the 2021–2023 period, there were five project calls in the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme, all of which concerned seed money and co-financing projects (as of June 2023). The deadlines for calls are aligned as far as possible with the calls of the relevant Interreg programme areas. Since the 'Summer Call 2022', potential applicants and other interested parties had access to an upfront question and answer (Q&A) session in which representatives of the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) and the core-consult research assistance service answered questions about the Programme and the application process in the form of a video conference. The format was well received and will be continued for upcoming calls. The participants included both experienced Interreg stakeholders and generally interested parties who wanted to find out whether the Federal Programme was suitable for their project and their stakeholder group.

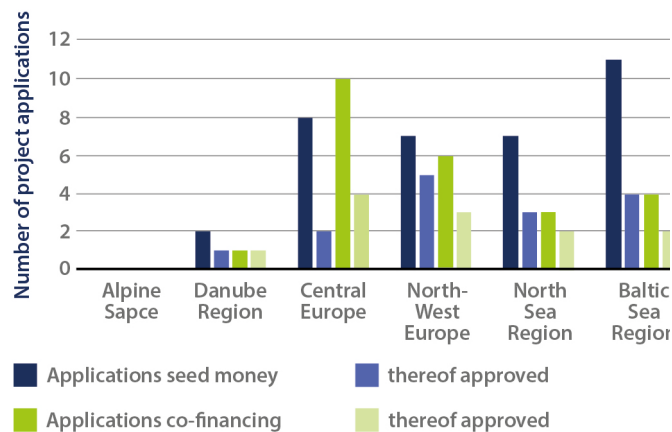
A total of 59 applications were submitted in the first five calls, 35 for seed money projects and 24 for co-financing projects. **Seed money funding** is used to finance the preparation of an Interreg B application. The aim of this funding is to submit a project application in one of the six Interreg B programmes with German participation. Seed money funding is independent of the success of the project application. **Co-financing** subsidises the national share that project partners have to contribute to Interreg projects. This means that the Federal Programme helps to raise its own budget. Both types of funding

are aimed at potential (seed) and actual (co-financing) German lead partners or at stakeholders managing a key work package of an Interreg project. Of the 24 co-financing project applications received, 50 per cent (12 out of 24) received a positive commitment for support from the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme. In the case of seed money projects, 15 of the 35 project applications received were approved.

Applications in the cooperation areas

Applications in both funding categories were received from five of the six Interreg B programme areas. Most applications (seed money and co-financing) came from the Central Europe and Baltic Sea Region Programmes (a total of 18 and 15 funding applications respectively). The BBSR received a total of ten applications from the North West Europe Region and 13 applications from the North Sea Region. In the Danube Region, three project consortiums submitted applications, two of which were successful.

Project applications in the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme



Number of project applications from 2021 by programme area © BBSR

Volume of financing

Between 2021 and 2023, the scope of funding for the projects approved by the Federal Programme so far amounted to about 1.38 million euros; a good 835,000 euros of them have been pledged for co-financing projects. The seed money projects received funding amounting to approximately 546,000 euros.

In the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme, another call for project proposals was opened with the deadline 9 July 2023. Decision-making about funding was still ongoing at the time of going to press.

Co-financing commitments for four new Interreg B projects for green and sustainable regional development

Each Interreg project is partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The rest has to be raised by the partners involved (national co-financing). In the context of co-financing projects, the Federal Transnational Cooperation Programme subsidises national co-financing. The following is an overview of four newly approved co-financing projects.

HealthyForestRegions (Central Europe)

The 'HealthyForestRegions' project aims to preserve climate resilient and healthy forest regions to ensure human well-being and strengthen the resilience of cities and regions to climate change. By improving the protection of intact beech forests from parts of the transnational UNESCO World Heritage Site "Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests", model areas for ecosystem-based and climate change resilient regional development will be created. The project will consider ecosystem services that have a particular impact on human health, such as regulating climate conditions, keeping the air clean, or cooling functions during heat events. In addition, the potential of ecosystem services for sustainable development of rural regions in terms of economic viability will be analysed and corresponding approaches will be developed, which will be tested in pilot activities.

Rail4Regions (Central Europe)

Shifting freight traffic to rail contributes to climate-friendly transport planning and is a central component of the Interreg project 'Rail4Regions'. The expansion of rail transport is intended to improve regional connections and achieve sustainable mobility. The focus here is on connecting rural and peripheral areas of Central Europe to freight corridors (TEN-T). The project identifies challenges, develops regional action plans and tests them in pilot actions. The knowledge gained will be used in spatial planning and development to exploit rail access as a location and competitiveness factor for business location and sustainable development of rural regions.

GreenIndustrialAreas (Baltic Sea Region)

The aim of the Interreg project 'GreenIndustrialAreas' is to establish a Baltic Sea region-wide standard for the certification of green industrial areas. The project accompanies the introduction and further development of digital planning aids to identify potentials of industrial symbioses and to illustrate them to decision-makers from business and administration. Digital planning aids developed result in certified action plans and are integrated into local planning. During project implementation, partners identify and analyse best practices in green technology (energy), energy management and efficiency, PtX technologies, land use, industrial collaboration and capacity



Industrial park in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern © Ministry of Economics, Infrastructure, Tourism and Labor in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

building, and digital planning tools. They are also developing a decarbonisation guide for industrial parks. The main outcome is a transnationally coordinated certification process for green industrial areas to promote the decarbonisation of industrial processes in business parks and thus implement climate adaptation measures in cities and regions in the Baltic Sea Region in a sustainable way.

IB-Green (North-West Europe)

The Interreg project 'IB-Green' addresses the question of how existing industrial and business parks (IBP) in North-West Europe can be adapted to the consequences of the climate crisis. The project aims to reduce heat stress in industrial and business parks by developing green and blue infrastructure (GBI). In North-West Europe, existing IBPs cover 15-20% of the settlement area. Largely sealed, they contribute to increasing heat stress in urbanised areas. Green-blue infrastructure is increasingly developed and implemented in residential and inner-city areas in North-West Europe, but hardly for industrial and commercial areas. IB-Green will transfer and further develop successful measures from these areas, e.g. multifunctional use of space, for the specific needs of industrial and commercial areas combined with innovative processes of triggering private business owners to act. The project partners will combine complementary experiences and ideas to jointly develop and deliver a transnational multi-level strategy and action plans for a multi-beneficiary GBI in existing IBPs with optimised public-private interplay.

More informationen

www.interreg.de > Funding > Additional national funding



Interreg
CENTRAL EUROPE
European Union
European Regional
Development Fund
Arrival Regions

Team building activities at the camp in Burgenlandkreis © Sonia Moreno

Arrival Regions

The Interreg B project 'Arrival Regions' addressed innovative approaches for the social and professional integration of non-EU nationals in rural regions of Central Europe. Nine pilot actions were set up with all relevant stakeholder groups to develop and test different concepts of social innovation and hence new approaches. The focus was on meeting the social needs of migrants and thus creating a basic prerequisite for successful integration and local welcoming cultures.



Central Europe



April 2019 until March 2022



Economy, work, life



Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography



<https://programme2014-20.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/Arrival-Regions.html>

Arrival and integration in rural areas

Rural areas in Central Europe are increasingly becoming destination regions for migrants from non-EU countries. While this provides an opportunity for previously shrinking and ageing regions to gain urgently needed skilled workers and secure social infrastructures, there is a lack of knowledge about how 'arriving' and 'integrating' can work in sparsely populated rural areas without a tradition of immigration. Small municipalities and cities are often not prepared for the additional administrative work, and difficulties also arise with regard to long-term accommodation. The aim and aspiration of the Interreg project 'Arrival Regions' was therefore to lay the foundations for international migration to rural areas to become a success story.

Between April 2019 and March 2022, a total of 13 partners from Germany, Italy, Croatia, Poland, Slovenia and the Czech Republic has worked together in this project under the leadership of the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography. The partners came from public administrations, educational institutions and non-governmental organisations.

Nine pilot actions tested approaches to social innovation

The core element of the project was nine pilot actions in which the project partners, involving all relevant stakeholders and

actors, developed and implemented innovative ideas on how to promote and support arrival and integration in rural areas. New approaches to widespread forms of integration support such as language courses, legal advice or support in setting up a business were developed and tested. In Poland, for instance, a mobile multilingual legal advice service was initiated for Ukrainian migrants living in Łódź Voivodeship. The pilot initiatives were tailored to local needs and contexts. Closely linked to the pilot actions was the establishment of networks – both at local and also at international level.

Other project activities included coaching for local stakeholders as well as a total of three events in all regions to raise public awareness of the issues of migration and integration.

Outcome: ‘Arrival Regions’ toolbox

The main outcome of the project is a toolbox containing proposals for measures and recommendations to improve the framework conditions of arrival and integration in rural areas. The toolbox is based on the ideas and experiences of the pilot actions. For this purpose, the pilot actions were peer reviewed by the project partners and stakeholders involved in order to promote transnational learning and exchange and to gain insights into the transferability of the pilot approaches.

The ‘tools’ of the toolbox can be transferred to other regional contexts and combined as needed. They do not only focus on the integration achievements of non-EU nationals, but also on the contributions made by the resident society. The toolbox contains tools for:

- language learning
- legal counselling
- contact points
- planning and organisation of arrival
- encouraging intergenerational multicultural learning
- navigating bureaucracy
- involving the local population in the integration process
- supporting personal development
- empowering local stakeholders and networks

The toolbox is available here: https://leibniz-ifl.de/fileadmin/download/Arrival-Regions_Toolbox_EN.pdf

Pilot project in Burgenlandkreis (Saxony-Anhalt)

This project has generated important momentum for the continuation of the work by the two German project partners, Burgenlandkreis in Saxony-Anhalt and the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography: The Leibniz Institute was able to



Weekend activity camp for German and foreign young people in Burgenlandkreis © Sonia Moreno

strengthen its scientific expertise in migration research and in the thematic field of regional development.

As part of the pilot action in the Burgenland district, weekend camps were held, for instance, which strengthened local ties among young migrants, providing opportunities for contact with locals of the same age. In a preceding analysis of local challenges, it became clear that migrants lack opportunities to establish contacts with local citizens. During the camps, participants were involved in various team building and sports activities that allowed them to socialise and discover their region. Burgenlandkreis will continue the camps after the end of the project.



Dr. Tim Leibert
Leibniz Institute for Regional
Geography, project manager

“Our aim in developing the toolbox was to initiate a broad exchange of experience and for all partners to learn from each other. We also networked with particularly interesting projects outside the programme area through study trips, for instance in Norway, Sweden and Spain. Thanks to Interreg, it was possible to develop creative ideas outside the constraints of national funding frameworks and to network across national borders. It turned out that the commonalities in the project clearly outweighed the differences.”

Energy transition – a challenge that calls for innovation and cooperation

Energy transition is on everyone's lips and more topical than ever. The search for renewable energy sources began with the challenges of climate change and the related goal of reducing CO₂ emissions. The issue took on a new urgency with recent events, such as the war in Ukraine and the related energy crisis.

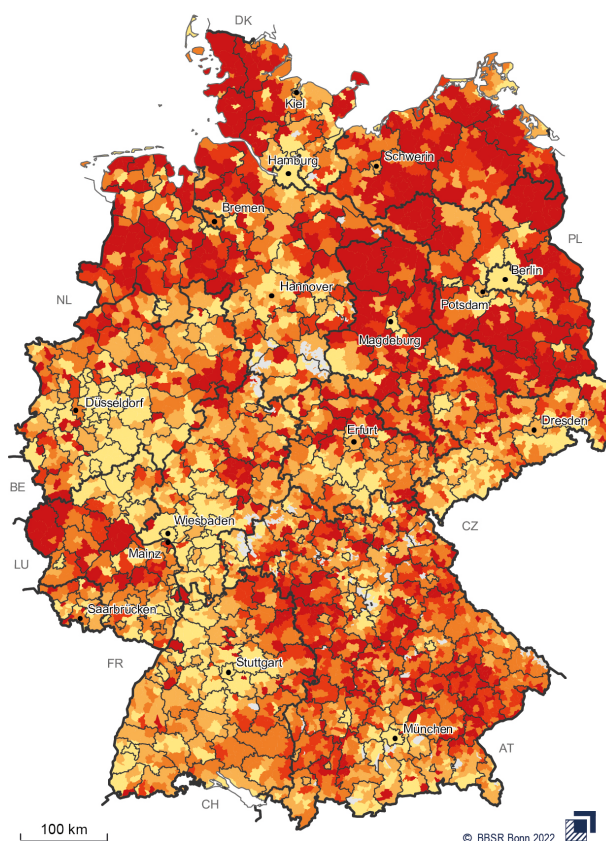
BBSR research on land requirements and electricity generation capacities

In Germany, efforts have been underway for years to accelerate the expansion of wind power and solar energy installations. However, implementation has been slow, not just due to technical problems, but also to public acceptance and the creation of legal framework conditions. Spatial planning also faces new challenges due to the new land required for the installations, which is why the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (BBSR) already conducted research on spatially differentiated land potentials for renewable energy in Germany. The land requirements for wind power and photovoltaic installations, which are the result of changed distance regulations, are currently being investigated.

In addition, the BBSR recently carried out a spatial analysis of electricity generation capacities in Germany and Europe (see chart on the right). The background is provided by the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the Territorial Agenda 2030. In Germany, according to data from the Bundesnetzagentur (Federal Network Agency), the net installed capacities for renewable energy vary greatly from region to region. Rural regions, and especially coastal regions, are pioneers in feeding electricity from renewable energy sources into the grid. One reason for this is topography, which benefits the efficiency of wind turbines. In urban regions, however, potentials such as the roof surfaces of old and new buildings, that are suitable for installing solar systems, have yet to be fully exploited.

With between 35 and 50 per cent, Germany, compared to Europe, ranks midfield in terms of the share of electricity from renewable energy sources in the total electricity generation. The pioneers here are first and foremost the Scandinavian countries Norway, Sweden and Denmark, where the share of renewable energy in electricity generation is already 65 per cent and more.

Installed capacity of electricity from renewable energy sources in Germany



Renewable electricity installed capacity (in MWh) per 1 million inhabitants, 2022



Data source: Spatial Monitoring System of the BBSR
Data origin: core energy market data register
Geometric basis: VG5000 (associations of municipalities), 31.12.2020 © GeoBasis-DE/BKG
Author: A. Milbert

Source: BBSR-Analysen KOMPAKT 02/2023, Editing: Antonia Milbert

Renewable energy in the EU context

At European level, renewable energy is an important component of the European Green Deal and of its goal of climate neutrality by 2050. It also has a central role to play in the Territorial Agenda 2030 against the background of the development of secure, affordable and sustainable energy supply. Innovation and cooperation are needed to find sustainable solutions for

More information

BBSR specialist article "Electricity derived from renewable energy"
<https://www.bbsr.bund.de/BBSR/EN/research/specialist-articles/spatial-development/electricity-from-renewable-energy/main.html>

Interreg B programmes 2021–2027

https://www.interreg.de/INTERREG2021/EN/Funding/SixProgrammeAreas/six-programme-areas_node.html

energy supply. This is where transnational cooperation can make a difference.

Thematic priorities in the Interreg programme areas

In the current 2021–2027 programming period, all Interreg B programmes address the use of renewable energy sources, although some of them focus on different topics.

The **Alpine Space Programme**, for instance, promotes projects on energy efficiency measures and solutions for switching to innovative, renewable energy resources. Cross-disciplinary pilot solutions to a ‘post-carbon way of life’ are being tested.

In the **Danube Region**, many regions are still heavily dependent on fossil energy sources. Conversion to renewable energies is therefore one of the funding priorities in the Danube Region Programme. In order to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, regional, renewable energy sources must be developed. The Danube Region is also to become more sustainable in the long term by exploiting energy saving potentials, such as reducing carbon intensity in heating and the transport sector and integrating renewable energy in the building sector.

The **Central Europe Programme** has set itself a funding priority with the specific objective of an ‘energy transition towards climate neutrality’. This involves the development of coherent, political framework conditions at local and regional level as

well as pilot measures to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy and support for decentralised approaches to energy supply in rural regions. In addition, the development of second and third generation biofuels is explicitly being addressed.

The **North Sea Region Programme** also promotes solutions and pilot projects to support renewable energy. Transnational cooperation aims to enable support for the implementation of new technologies, especially in rural regions. Another aspect is energy systems where grid capacities need to be increased and the energy system adapted to feed in electricity from renewable energy. Smart energy systems and grids are being tested and promoted for this purpose.

In North-West Europe, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy sources play an equally important role. Funding under the **North-West Europe Programme** therefore focuses on increasing the acceptance of integrated solutions and technologies as well as smart energy systems and energy storage solutions. Special consideration is given to involving local populations.

The **Baltic Sea Region Programme** contributes to the energy transition by updating local energy plans. In addition, the cross-border coordination of different energy systems from different sectors is being promoted in order to achieve a nationwide supply of renewable energy.

Example of a transnational cooperation project



Alpine Space © Pixabay

More information:

<https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/cervino/>

CERVINO – Exchange and visualisation of energy data in the Alpine Space

The Alpine Space benefits from energy flows between regions. In order to create a necessary basis for joint cross-border energy projects, the small-scale CERVINO project is developing a common energy data platform that facilitates the exchange and visualisation of energy data in the Alpine Space. The transnational database united in this project is designed to make reliable and always up-to-date data available to all relevant stakeholders. Therefore, special attention is being paid to user-friendliness during the development process. Another aim of the project is to achieve broad awareness and active use so that decision-making processes relating to energy issues in the Alpine Space are supported through the automated and cost-efficient exchange of energy data. The German partner in the project is the ‘Energiewende Oberland’ civic foundation from Upper Bavaria.

Discussion on the future of Interreg from 2028 has started



The European Commission has established a group of high-level specialists on the future of Cohesion Policy to make recommendations for the next funding period from 2028. At the fifth meeting in July 2023, the topic of “cooperation” and thus also Interreg was on the agenda. The public part of this meeting was streamed and can be followed on the website of the Directorate General for Regional Policy. With regard to the added value of transnational cooperation, three points are in focus from a German perspective:

1 Transnational cooperation is at the core of European integration

Cooperation between people and institutions in the Alpine Space, Baltic Sea or North Sea region is place-based, result-oriented and creates identity. While regional or Europe-wide programmes fund investments or research excellence, Interreg B is best at enabling Europeans cooperating professionally for the benefit of their transnational areas. In view of current challenges on European integration, we need more Europe “at its best”. We need more transnational cooperation in cohesion policy post 2027.

2 Transnational cooperation brings Europe closer to its citizens

Interreg B covers the whole of Europe, including peripheral and lagging areas, and enables highly inclusive partnerships.

Cooperating in mid-sized areas such as Central, North-West Europe or Danube Region, cooperation can involve regions and spots on the map that remain white in other programmes that are more metropolitan-based. Policy objective 5 “Europe closer to citizens” must play a strong role in future Interreg programmes. Its implementation however needs simplification for Interreg B programmes to fully use its potential for the development of cities and regions.

3 Transnational cooperation as crisis prevention beats crisis intervention

Medium- and long-term cohesion goals are at the core of transnational cooperation and should be prioritised over short-term crisis intervention. Interreg B decreases regional disparities, is approved for crisis prevention and resilience of regions and builds personal and institutional capacity to enable regional transformation processes. Focus on the tried-and-tested Interreg B funding instruments. Too many programmes impair the achievement of cohesion priorities.

The German actors responsible for the implementation of the transnational Interreg programmes are closely accompanying the process of discussing the future of cohesion policy. They will contribute the practitioners’ point of view with discussion papers at an early stage.

More informationen

https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/how/future-cohesion-policy_en



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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 for Housing, Urban Development and Building (BMWSB)

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