



Oslo, 17 December 2018

Regarding the future of Europe and European Territorial Cooperation INTERREG

In times of growing EU-scepticism and nationalism the feeling of togetherness of Europeans needs to be supported urgently. One of the major instruments of European policies to make a contribution to this are the INTERREG programmes for cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. They are of particular importance for cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, which faces several challenges and includes both EU member and non-EU Member States.

BSSSC regrets that whereas the European Commission recognises the significant European value added of INTERREG programmes, it simultaneously, however, intends to reduce its overall funds as well as its portion of funds relative to the Cohesion Policy envelope.

The INTERREG programmes make a significant contribution to European integration and to fostering good neighbourly coexistence in Europe. Therefore, the financial allocation for INTERREG should be envisaged for the upcoming MFF that corresponds at least to that of the current funding period. Preferably, the funding for component 1-4 should amount to 3 per cent of the total cohesion policy envelope.

BSSSC appreciates the proposal to fully incorporate former ENI programmes into INTERREG rules and to treat member states, third countries and partner countries on equally footing in the new INTERREG programmes. However, existing pre-financing facilities should be maintained.

BSSSC supports the proposal to allocate funding to people-to-people actions and enhancing sustainable democracy in transnational cooperation programmes. BSSSC stresses that funding of small-scale projects in the fields of culture, intercultural exchange and the promotion of democracy and tolerance should be part of all INTERREG programmes.

Limiting the co-financing rates for individual INTERREG programmes to 70% is unacceptable especially for non-governmental and civil society organisations. BSSSC asks, therefore, to maintain the maximum co-financing rate for INTERREG as laid down in the current Common Provision Regulation.

BSSSC is very concerned about the European Commission's proposal, to integrate maritime cross-border programmes into transnational programmes (INTERREG component 2). Maritime cross-border programmes are run by regional authorities and have strongly increased local and regional actors' participation in EU-funded cooperation. The disappearance of the maritime cross-border programmes in their current form would result in the loss of regional decision making capacity and would jeopardize the vital participation of local, regional and non-governmental actors.

While supporting the opening of mainstream ERDF programmes for transnational cooperation, BSSSC regrets that the European Commission proposes to discontinue the INTERREG Europe programme in the new funding period. BSSSC stresses that INTERREG Europe is the only programme enabling regions to cooperate with other regions all over Europe. The programme is very important for supporting capacity building and policy learning – and thus improving the performance of Cohesion Policy.

BSSSC supports the suggestions made by the European Commission on simplification in the context of funding from ERDF, CF, ESF and EAFRD. However, the European Commission should further substantiate this and actually find more forms of relief for administrative authorities as well as for the beneficiaries of the funding. In particular, BSSSC reiterates the need to exempt all INTERREG funding from state aid rules.

Yours sincerely,



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Chairman of BSSSC

The Baltic Sea States Subregional Co-operation (BSSSC) is a political network organisation for decentralised authorities in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). BSSSC acts as an open, non-party political platform, which represents the interests of all sub-regions around the Baltic Sea—promoting common political ideas with a joint regional approach.