Future of Interreg: How to evolve and improve structures?

Interreg Knowledge Fair session report | March 2024

Overview

The purpose of the session was to explore relations among programme institutions in order to consider future improvements and simplifications. The structures were discussed in relation to four main processes – a programme design, assessment and selection of projects, programme implementation and management verification. In particular, for programme implementation and management verification ideas for further simplifications of structures and functions (merging functions under one institution) were discussed.

Methodology

The session was design in a world café format. After a brief introduction, participants were asked to design an effective organisation structure for four processes - programme design, project assessment and selection, implementation, management verification.

Key discussion points

Programme design

- There is a central body (different names in different programmes e.g. programme committee, task force) responsible for a programme design;
- The work of the body is supported by various actors/ institutions grouped in three teams according to the roles and responsibilities;
- The teams are group in a concentric structure around the central body:
  - Team 1 – workers (inner circle) - (MA/JS/National authority, Member states/Regions/ euroregions/EGTCs (programme specific) representatives) is the central group where the main work is performed. Close cooperation among all the actors required; frequent, direct two directions interactions among all the actors;
  - Team 2 – consultants (medium circle) – (sectoral ministries, regions, euroregions/EGTCs (programme specific), representatives of civil society, local organisations, contact points, other programmes). Cooperation frequency varies depending on input and maturity of a programme development stage; interactions among consultants and the central body, sometimes inner circle. Most often one direction communication;

- o Team 3 – Citizens and applicants (outer circle) – main role in the consultation process;
- Participation of certain institutions was considered redundant in the design process – audit authorities, controllers, hosting institutions, hosting institutions);
- Monitoring committees, steering committees usually are set up in the later stage, hence they do not have a role in the design phase or the role is rather limited.

Assessment and selection

- The assessment and selection organisation structure has few common cornerstones:
  - o JS taking a leading/coordinating role in the assessment;
  - o MC responsible for selection;
- Around these the involvement of other bodies can vary strongly:
  - o There is an option to involve external experts in the assessment;
  - o Certain bodies (national contact points, sectoral ministries, national authorities) can either deliver expertise or are MC members with voting right (but never both for reasons of impartiality);
  - o Managing Authority's role is even more complex:
    - ▪ in cases delivering expertise to support JS assessment;
    - ▪ as supervisor of assessment delivered by JS;
    - ▪ as contracting party having final responsibility for the selected projects;
    - ▪ as chair of MC granting a proper selection process;
- The variation of assessment and selection structures amongst programmes was reflected during the animated group discussions, until in the end a common set union was found.

Programme implementation

- The structure of bodies involved in programme management at the current stage contributes to the optimal management;
- A certain level of the simplification could be achieved with deeper clarification and streamlining of the roles, responsibilities;
- The tasks and responsibilities of the Monitoring Committees should be more focused on strategic decisions rather than operational input to programme implementation;
- The composition of the Monitoring Committees should be reconsidered with better definition of the participation and the role of the civil society, EGTCs, Euroregions, etc. The concept of the potential conflict of interest should be even further defined;
- The relationship and connection between Managing Authorities and Joint Secretariats should be developed even closer. Possibility to create one joint body should be considered;
- The role and influence of the institutions hosting Managing Authorities should be further investigated. The procedures and structures of the hosting institutions have significant impact in the way programmes are implemented;
- Control bodies should be brough closer to the Managing Authorities;

- Depending on the models of the project implementation that might be used in the future period, the roles and tasks of the control bodies and Audit Authorities should be changed.

Management verification

- Two scenarios discussed: 1) Controllers are designated by Member states; 2) Controllers are designated by Managing authority;
- Some overlaps and unclear responsibilities among JS/MA/Controllers were spotted (e.g. who perform control in case of significant use of SCOs);
- In case of further increase of application of SCOs, introduction of advance payments and flexible financial reporting, roles and control functions should be combined under one institution in order to optimise the control effort.

Regulations and articles of particular significance

Common Provisions Regulation   7,8,
Interreg Regulation   16,22,28,29,30.45,46,47,48

Conclusions, plans for followed up

According to the group discussions there might be a potential for further simplifications, in case of programme implementation and management verification processes, with further popularisation of simplified cos options.

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