

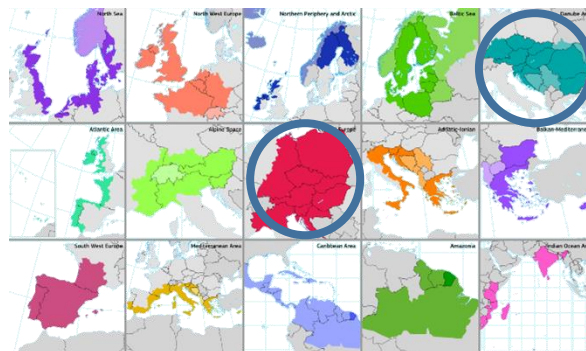


GENERAL STATEMENTS:

TERRITORIAL COOPERATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC



European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), better known as **INTERREG**, provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from different Member States. The Czech Republic acceded the EU during the first wave of enlargement to the east of Europe in 2004, in the half of the third Interreg's programming period (2000-2006). However, the very first experiences with CBC cooperation had been gained thanks to the CBC Phare pre-accession programme implemented since 1994 at the Czech-German borders. Today, in the fifth programming period (2014-2020), the Czech Republic takes part in 5 cross-border cooperation programmes with Poland, Saxony, Bavaria, Austria and Slovakia, in 2 transnational programmes – Central Europe and Danube and in all interregional programmes (Interreg Europe, ESPON, Urbact, Interact).



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Over the past 25 years the Czech Republic has successfully built capacity and trust, especially in the border areas which had been closed for more than 40 years, which helps to overcome the barriers existing in the minds of people and strengthens the common identity of the cross-border regions. Starting with simple forms of cooperation, it developed into fruitful and long-term territorial cooperation and relationship. However, there are still many prevailing barriers which still need to be removed. Language barriers are significant, unbalanced economic development on the both sides of the borders are a fact, there are differences in regulation and juridical systems, administrative approaches differ to an extent that they have to be addressed. Nevertheless, all Interreg programmes found many innovative ways how to overcome political and administrative bottlenecks and enabled partners from different regions and countries as well as from different institutions and organizations to jointly develop their wider regions through successful cooperation. Interreg has financed thousands of projects that have helped to improve European integration, territorial cohesion and increased the quality of life.



Preserving the three strands of INTERREG

Each of the three main types of the European Territorial Cooperation has its own added value and the Czech Republic supports preserving this structure. Cross-border cooperation mainly reduces the division of borders, tackles common problems and takes advantages of the potentials in the border areas. High participation of the local level brings a good understanding of the joint needs of the border areas and contributes to the overall harmonious development of the Union. Transnational cooperation is more focused on projects related to issues such as environment, accessibility, innovation, urban development, research links etc., and adds a European dimension to regional development. Interregional cooperation builds on the linkages important for stronger and more connected Europe, improves regional development and urban integrated policies and offers evidence and cooperation opportunities to improving policy-making.



Continuity

The Czech Republic also supports preserving continuity in drafting new legislative framework for the INTERREG programmes so that things that proved to be successful would be preserved and those which were questioned in the previous periods would be changed. Stability of the rules is a part of the efforts to simplify Cohesion Policy. The Czech Republic prefers preserving a single specific regulation for ETC which could better reflect on the specificities of the INTERREG programmes. Unambiguous and stable rules for ETC implementation is a must. The Czech Republic further encourages the Commission to preserve a continued exemption of INTERREG from ex-ante conditionalities, as they are based on multinational cooperation.



Complementarity and synergies

The Czech Republic promotes to enhance the level of complementarity and synergies. Active coordination across other ESIFs, EFSIs and other financial instruments will have to be taken into account at the programming phase to ensure optimal added value, especially more frequent use of outputs from transnational and interregional cooperation programmes. Those address common issues across multiple borders, and by taking the territorial specificities and challenges into account, make investments at regional and national level more effective.

For follow-ups do not hesitate to contact:

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