



## Swedish position on European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg) after 2027

### *General remarks*

*It is important that the EU's future public financial commitment is compatible with a consolidation of Member States' public finances and the preservation of national fiscal space. Sweden therefore believes that the EU budget for regular expenditure should continue to be around 1 percent of GNI. Investments in existing or new areas need to be matched by cuts in other areas. Key principles for EU funding such as national co-financing and strict decommitment rules should be uphold and strengthened. In line with Sweden's general position on the future multiannual financial framework and future cohesion policy, the link between the Rule of law and EU-funding should be strengthened and broadened for both for Member States and future Member States.*

### **Sweden and European territorial cooperation (Interreg)**

Sweden is a country of long distances, low population density, with mainly EU sea borders and one land border to a non-EU country. Sweden has a long-term history and good experiences in territorial cooperation: with our Nordic neighbours, in the Baltic Sea Region, the North Sea Region and European Arctic. The Interreg programmes have proven to be useful tools in the formation of a more balanced territorial development in Europe, contributing to reduced negative effects of borders and making the integration in Europe more visible to citizens. In this way, Interreg has created clear European added value.

Without preceding the discussions on the size of the next multiannual financial framework Sweden would like to emphasize the following for a desired direction for Interreg after 2027:

### **Interreg must contribute to EU objectives and be part of cohesion policy**

- ✓ Territorial cooperation (Interreg) should continue to be part of cohesion policy post-2027. It contributes to EU integration, balanced territorial development and adds value by enabling joint development projects across national borders.
- ✓ Improved synergies between Interreg and mainstream programmes should be fostered to facilitate a more focused and efficient use of community funding.
- ✓ The added value of territorial cooperation lays in offering communities and regions an opportunity to jointly address shared challenges identified in border regions. Interreg makes it possible to include different kind of territories, including rural and economically weaker ones, in the development of a larger territory which makes Interreg more inclusive than other EU instruments. This uniqueness needs to be strengthened in the next programming period.

### **Cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation important for territorial development**

- ✓ All three existing cooperation strands of Interreg: cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation should be maintained.
- ✓ A stronger focus on spatial development and planning in transnational programmes, as when they were introduced, may be an advantage, and could clarify the orientation of the different strands.
- ✓ EU macro-regional strategies (MRS) and Interreg programmes complement each other. To leverage their impact, a strategic collaboration of MRS and relevant Interreg programmes is key. The already existing collaboration should be continued and enhanced.

### **Keep geographical eligibility rules**

- ✓ Stability in eligibility rules, including the 150 km-rule for maritime borders, ensure long-term cooperation, which is a prerequisite for efficient implementation, although all programmes need to demonstrate their impact.

Certain adjustments in geography might become relevant where programme areas overlap, especially among cross-border programmes.

### **Interreg contributes to enlargement**

- ✓ Interreg has a significant role in building harmonious economic, social, and territorial development of the EU as a whole and its neighbourhood. In the next programming period Interreg can continue to play a crucial role in the enlargement process. Ukraine, and other candidate countries possibility to participate in Interreg programmes should be strengthened where applicable.

### **Competitiveness, resilience and preparedness prioritized thematic scopes for territorial cooperation**

- ✓ The Interreg programmes are important tools to strengthen growth in border-regions. The focus should continue to be on competitiveness, innovation, cross-border labour markets and the green and digital transitions. A place-based approach such as smart specialization can contribute to more focused actions and build critical mass both in Interreg and national programmes.
- ✓ Interreg should further develop its support to actions that make territories more resilient and prepared by strengthening capacity building and by leveraging resources efficiently. The geopolitical risks due to the serious security situation in Europe, together with challenges such as climate change, other environmental threats, economic shocks and health emergencies do not stop at borders but are challenges requiring joint place-based solutions. Interreg programmes should therefore support capacity building for crisis management and support practical solutions for risk reduction measures, preparedness, and resilience.

### **Focus on results with performance-based implementation model**

- ✓ To better sustain results and long-term outcomes of Interreg, the possibility of a more performance-based implementation model could be explored. Such a model must however be adapted to the specifics of Interreg programmes. Thematic concentration, adapted to different territorial needs and challenges, as well as monitoring and evaluation, are also important components to ensure a result-oriented implementation of Interreg.

### **Simplifications to remain attractive, ensure stability and continuity**

- ✓ To remain attractive for different actor's, further harmonisation and simplification in the implementation of Interreg programmes is necessary, for example by
  - continuing and developing the use of simplified cost options and the exploration of financing models not linked to cost
  - safeguarding the stability and continuity of the implementation framework
  - defining fewer and broader priorities as current division into narrow specific objectives has not supported an integrated, cross sectorial approach.