# EU external cooperation under Global Europe umbrella

**Interreg Knowledge Fair session report | November 2025**

## Overview

This session worked to explore how the proposed Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and Global Europe policy context impact Interreg external cooperation. Objective was to map programmes concerns, proposal's policy implications as well as to clarify the programmes needs in order to go forward on the preparations for the period 2028-2034.

## Methodology

The session began with a policy and financial overview from the European Commission (Oana Dordain, DG Regio unit D1), followed by reflections of Interreg NEXT, IPA and OMR practitioners not representing the official opinions of their programmes, but rather expressing their views based on their personal experiences. Session was concluded with a "talking walls" interactive exercise focused on regulations, policy implications and programme needs.

## Key discussion points

The EC provided an overview of the Global Europe framework and its implications for Interreg cooperation. In financial terms €200 billion is proposed for Global Europe, with €100 billion Ukraine reserve meaning the overall budget is almost doubled compared to current.

Interreg cooperation to cover Ukraine, Armenia, Moldova, Georgia, Türkiye, and seven MENA countries will ensure engagement that might not otherwise occur. [The Pact for the Mediterranean](#) adopted in October reinforces collaboration with southern neighbours. Ongoing collaboration with Western Balkans will emphasize in particular on reforms and diplomacy.

In regulatory terms Global Europe fund is available from the outset under Article 7(2) ERDF/Interreg, applicable to all strands and Article 11 covers provisions for non-member states.  Further work is needed to align fund transfers from Global Europe, being a particular case for Outermost Regions (OMRs). A consultation for OMRs is planned for 2026 and it will define future cooperation priorities.

*Reflections shared*

Participants expressed their concerns about decommitment risks and challenges in applying the proposed N+10 months rule instead of N+3, particularly due to Ukraine's wartime context. They also emphasised the need to maintain the current pre-financing mechanism to ensure proper cash flows.

Concerns were also raised on programming challenges due to unclear timelines for the Border Orientation Papers and lengthy consultation processes. It was highlighted that programming typically takes around three years, due to the multiple steps involved, especially for cooperation at external borders. This time, however, the process will need to be accelerated in order to have programme documents ready and submitted for approval within the required timeframe. In this regard, obtaining clarity on the regulatory framework, both Interreg/ERDF and Global Europe, and on how these two will complement each other is essential for ensuring a smooth and timely programming process.

Concerns and difficulties with performance-based approach compared to current systems were also highlighted - noting especially the lower level of payments (from programme to beneficiaries).

Interreg MAC (Outermost Regions) welcomed continuation of Strand D in the next period. Managing cooperation with seven African countries presents major coordination and financial challenges and major objective should be to integrate ERDF and GE funding and management mechanisms from the start (to utilize the experience of current IPA and NEXT programmes even if slightly different + ongoing pilot of ERDF-NDICI combination managed by MAC and Indian Ocean MAs). Pre-financing needs for African partners are high, but risk of fund loss is also significant.

Other programmes, such as the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, raised the need for additional clarification and guidance on how to make use of the Global Europe Instrument. This further underlines the importance of having clear instructions and aligned interpretations to support all programmes facing similar conditions.

*Regulation and policy concerns*

Participants called for clarity on timelines, interpretation of regulations, and roles of National Authorities as well as alignment of rules between Global Europe and Interreg. Discussion also brought up concerns about cross-funding provisions, pre-financing, and co-financing rates and called for clarification on fund allocations.

Participants called for greater awareness within GE of Interreg's diversity and territorial scope. Also recognition that cross-border dynamics differ between internal and external EU borders was called for.

Participants expressed the need for support for programming and enhancing synergies in the shared / same geographical areas and suggested a platform for exchange to facilitate programming, cooperation and mutual learning. Guidance for the Financing agreements and the public procurement rules were also called for.

Participants also discussed of the availability of border profiles and orientation papers for Interreg external cooperation programmes similarly as for the programmes on EU internal borders. The European Commission clarified that, unlike for internal border programmes, such documents are not planned for external cooperation programmes, except the transnational programmes that are part of the ESPON exercise for internal border, as the context differs significantly and a single model may not provide added value. Programmes are instead encouraged to carry out their own territorial analyses, with the Commission ready to offer support on request. DG REGIO will continue its internal work on this matter and will issue further clarification on the practical arrangements for the Commission's contribution to external cooperation programmes in this matter.

**Regulations and articles of particular significance**

ERDF/Interreg: Articles 7.1. - 7.2. and 11

**Conclusions, plans for follow up**

Participants collectively underlined the need for regulatory alignment across current funding instruments (Interreg, Global Europe, IPA, NEXT) and clearer, earlier guidance and streamlined financial procedures.

Participants called for enhanced cooperation mechanisms to support programming, capacity-building, and cross-border engagement as well as policy coherence to ensure Interreg's external cooperation role complements broader EU diplomatic and development goals.

The Commission encouraged programmes to provide clear, practical input on what is most needed to make the cooperation framework work effectively.

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