

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

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UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERREG VA PROGRAMME

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper outlines the progress made on implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme since the inaugural Monitoring Committee meeting on 29 July 2015.
- 1.2 The focus of the programme has been on ensuring the timely opening of calls for applications and the ongoing development of processes to enable effective and simplified implementation. This paper will provide an update on progress in each and include progress in implementation of the Communications Strategy.

2.0 INTERREG VA Programme

- 2.1 The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) contribution to the Programme is €240m (85%). In addition, €43m (15%) will come from match-funding, raising the total value of the programme to €283m.
- 2.2 The CP contains four priority areas for investment, and an additional 6% of the programme allocation is for Technical Assistance;

Thematic Objective	Value €m (ERDF)	Value €m (Total ERDF & match)
Research and Innovation	60.9	71.7
Environment	72	84.7
Sustainable Transport	40	47
Health	53	62.3
TOTAL	225.9	265.7

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

- 2.3 The eligible area for the programme includes Northern Ireland, the Border Counties of Ireland (Monaghan, Leitrim, Cavan, Louth, Sligo and Donegal); and Western Scotland (Dumfries & Galloway, East Ayrshire and North Ayrshire mainland; South Ayrshire; Lochaber, Skye & Lochalsh, Arran & Cumbrae and Argyll & Bute and Eilean Siar/Western Isles).
- 2.4 The match funding must come from non-EU sources which may include national, regional, local government, project own resources, or private. Contributions in kind may be used as match-funding. The arrangements for match-funding, which may vary between Programme priority areas, are detailed in the specific call for applications.
- 2.5 As issued to the PMC following the last meeting, the assessment process must not be any longer than 36 weeks in total, the reasons for any delays must be published on the SEUPB website. The Member States have agreed a process to meet the agreed 36 week requirement. To meet the result/output focus of the programme and financial targets, timely opening of the programme and the decisions regarding awards of funding is necessary to mitigate potential pressure in future years.

3.0 Calls for applications

- 3.1 The programme officially opened for business on 5 August 2015 when SEUPB issued the first two funding calls which were approved by the PMC. A third call, which was also approved by the PMC was released on 7 September 2015.
- 3.2 Following the inaugural programme monitoring committee meeting, the steering committee met on 30 September to approve a further four calls, two of which were released at the beginning of October and two planned for release in December 2015 and February 2016. The Steering Committee also received induction training at this meeting.

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

- 3.3 Applications into the programme are currently being received by email as the database is not operational yet. It is anticipated that the application module of the database will be operational in early January 2016.
- 3.4 The table below provides details on the first calls for application which were issued on 5 August 2015. To provide support to potential applicants, SEUPB facilitated advice meetings upon request.

Specific Objective	Call opened	Call Closed	Stage 1 Steering Committee meeting	Stage 2 Steering Committee meeting (no later than)
Environment Objective 2.3 – Improving Water Quality in Transitional Waters	5 August 2015	30 October 2015	25 November 2015	6 July 2016
Sustainable Transport Objective 3 – Cross-Border Sustainable Transport 3.1 Multi Model Public Transport Hub output	5 August 2015	30 September 2015	25 November 2015	8 June 2016

- 3.5 As a result of the initial calls, one application under each objective was received, however, the application received under the Sustainable Transport objective was subsequently withdrawn. The application received under the Environment objective is currently undergoing Stage 1 Assessment and will be presented to the Steering Committee on 25 November 2015.
- 3.6 Sector workshops were provided by SEUPB to support a further three calls which were opened during September and October as follows;

Specific Objective	Call opened	Call Closed/ closes	Stage 1 Steering Committee meeting (no later than)	Stage 2 Steering Committee meeting (no later than)
Research & Innovation Objective 1.2 – Enhance innovation capacity of SMEs	7 September 2015	21 October 2015	25 November 2015	29 June 2016

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

Health Objective 4 – Cross-border Health & Social Care	2 October 2015	16 November 2015	13 January 2016	22 July 2016
Environment Objective 2.1 /2.2 /2.4 - Recovery of protected habitats and species - Management of marine protected areas and species - Improve freshwater quality in river basins	7 October 2015	8 January 2016	3 March 2016	16 September 2016

3.7 Three applications were received in response to the Research & Innovation call and twenty one applications were received in response to the Health call. All are currently undergoing Stage 1 Assessment by SEUPB. The Research & Innovation applications will be presented to the Steering Committee on 25 November.

3.8 Two further calls for applications are due to open in December 2015 and February 2016 as follows;

Specific Objective	Call opening	Call closes	Stage 1 Steering Committee meeting (no later than)	Stage 2 Steering Committee meeting (no later than)
Sustainable Transport Objective 3 – Cross-border Sustainable Transport - Greenways - Electric cars - Multi modal public transport hub	4 December 2015	29 January 2016	23 March 2016	7 October 2016
Research & Innovation Objective 1.1 – Health & Life Sciences and Renewable Energy Research	22 February 2016	4 April 2016	31 May 2016	12 December 2016

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

- 3.9 SEUPB will be holding sector workshops to support potential applicants in early December for the Sustainable Transport call and mid-January for the Health and Life Sciences call under Research & Innovation.
- 3.10 In addition to the sector workshops, SEUPB will be holding a series of seminars to assist applicants to design their projects to meet the requirements of the horizontal principles of Equality and Sustainable Development. The seminars will concentrate on best practice in terms of putting equality and sustainable development at the heart of project design and implementation, with a particular focus on the EU regulatory requirements.
- 3.11 The first equality seminar, which is INTERREG VA focused, took place on 24 November in Belfast with 31 potential applicants attending. Subsequent seminars will take place in Derry/Londonderry, Dundalk and Glasgow during 2016. The first seminar on sustainable development is planned for January 2016 in Belfast with subsequent seminars to take place in Derry/Londonderry, Dundalk and Glasgow across 2016.

4.0 Challenges for Implementation

- 4.1 SEUPB continue to work with stakeholders to manage expectations. The result orientation of the programme continues to present challenges in relation to the expectations of potential applicants. SEUPB continue to provide support through advice meetings and sector workshops to assist in managing applicants' expectations.
- 4.2 SEUPB are at the final stages of producing procedures to enable formal designation of the Managing Authority and Certifying Authority. The Audit Authority will assess the Management and Control System and the procedures against the Commission's requirements. The procedures outline the processes for implementation which are underpinned by a drive for simplification and the reduction of administrative burden. The implementation of simplification poses challenges particularly in relation to the introduction of simplified cost options and SEUPB will provide support to approved projects to enable the use of this option where possible.

5.0 Update on Communications Activity

- 5.1 The SEUPB's Communications Team has coordinated a number of application workshops for funding calls under the new INTERREG VA Programme, on the following dates and locations:
- R&I (SME) call, Radisson Blu, (23rd September), attendance: approx. 70
 - Health & Social Care call, Ramada Hotel, Shaw's Bridge, Belfast, (17th December), attendance: approx. 100
 - Environment call, Crowne Plaza Hotel, (27th October), attendance: approx. 60
 - Sustainable Transport, NSMC office's Armagh, (7th December).
- 5.2 The health & social care and environment funding call workshops were filmed and footage uploaded onto the SEUPB's You Tube account (www.youtube.com/user/SEUPB) for people unable to attend the events. Details of all the workshops were also promoted through the SEUPB's other social media accounts. Public notifications of the opening of all calls were placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish Independent and Glasgow Herald.

Media Relations

- 5.3 A number of press releases were issued to help promote the calls. See sample of coverage generated below:

BBC NI Healthcare call coverage

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

The screenshot shows the top portion of a BBC News article. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the BBC logo, a 'Sign in' button, and links for News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, TV, and Radio. Below this is a red 'NEWS' header with a secondary navigation bar containing links for Home, UK, World, Business, Politics, Tech, Science, Health, Education, and Entertainment. The article's category is 'N. Ireland' and the sub-category is 'N. Ireland Politics'. The main headline is 'EU Interreg VA funding for cross-border health projects', dated '6 October 2015' and 'Northern Ireland'. Below the headline is a photograph of an elderly person's hands resting on a wheelchair. A small caption below the photo reads: 'Projects to be funded include support for people with disabilities and community care for older people'.

Cross-border health and social care programmes are to receive more than £45m in EU funding over seven years.

Projects to be funded include mental health provision, support for socially isolated disabled people and enhanced community care for older people.

Support will also be provided to assist 5,000 vulnerable families and fund new healthcare intervention trials.

The EU's Interreg VA Programme has **invited funding applications** for suitable projects until 16 November.

The funding will support projects based in Northern Ireland, border counties in the Republic of Ireland and western Scotland.

Gina McIntyre of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), which manages the funding, said it would invest in health and social care areas "where the greatest need has been demonstrated and where the value of cross-border co-operation can deliver the greatest results".

She said it would "support the development of a more joined-up and efficient cross-border healthcare system, which will benefit tens of thousands of people at a time of budgetary pressure and rising demand".

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News Letter – Healthcare call coverage

Implementation of the INTERREG VA Programme (2014-2020)

£46m for boosting health care

A roughly £46m cash package is to be provided to bolster health and social care on both sides of the border.

The money will be spread across seven years, and will be parcelled out to projects for helping the mentally unwell, disabled, and the elderly, as well as supporting "5,000 vulnerable families".

Most of the money (about £39.19m) is from the EU, with the remainder (about £6.91m) coming from the Northern Irish government, the Republic of Ireland, and the Scottish government.

Charities and other organisations are expected to carry out the work, and they are now being invited to bid for their share of the cash.

The bid window closes on Monday, November 16.

For more details, see www.seuph.eu

Irish News – Healthcare call coverage

European funding boost for north/south health projects

Seánin Graham
Health Correspondent
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ALMOST \$46 million has been earmarked in European funding to support cross-border health projects over the next seven years.

Services to help patients suffering from mental health problems as well as isolated disabled people and the elderly are among those planned.

It is estimated the programme will aid 50,000 vulnerable people.

Funding applications are now open for the EU's INTERREG VA Programme and will close on November 16.

The initiative aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. Match-funding has been provided by the Department of Health in Northern Ireland and the Republic as well as the Scottish Executive.

Those living in isolated rural areas will also benefit.

Welcoming the funding announcement, the Republic's health minister, Leo Varadkar said: "This offers a unique opportunity for citizens, health professionals, and others to be part of cross-border collaboration to improve the health and well-being of those living in our border regions."

"It will allow us to build on the excellent work that has gone before in previous programmes; excellent work made possible by the commitment of those facilitating, delivering and engaging with the projects."

The funding will support projects based in Northern Ireland and the border areas, as well as parts of western Scotland.



WELCOMED: Leo Varadkar has welcomed the initiative which sees almost £46m earmarked for cross-border health projects

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BBC NI – Environment call coverage

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£36m EU funding for environmental groups

By Conor Macauley
BBC News NI Environment Correspondent

7 October 2015 | Northern Ireland



Environment Minister Mark H Durkan said groups should grasp the opportunity provided by the funding

Thirty-six million pounds of EU money is being made available to support cross-border environmental projects.

The money is for groups working across borders to preserve species, habitats and marine environments.

In particular, it is aimed at improving cross-border river water quality, recovering protected habitats and monitoring protected marine species.

It is intended to help groups develop common approaches to conservation and share best practice.

It can be accessed by groups in the Irish border region and western Scotland over the next seven years.

Match funding is being provided by the authorities in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland.

Environment Minister Mark H Durkan said: "This funding is a major boost to help protect our environment.

"I encourage environmental groups to grasp the opportunity and engage in the programme.

"At a time when budgets are squeezed I urge relevant groups in the north to do everything possible to get a slice of this funding pot."

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Launch Event

- 5.4 A launch event is currently being planned for the new INTERREG VA Programme to take place in the first half of January 2016.

Recommendation.

The Monitoring Committee is requested to:

- **Note** the Progress in implementation of the programme;
- **Note** the progress in implementing the communications strategy for the programme.