

INTERREG III

2004–2006

Being a member of the European Union, Estonia may participate in the EU funded programmes, including Community Initiative INTERREG III programmes. INTERREG is one of the four Community initiatives in the framework of which the Member States can elaborate various programmes. The present INTERREG programme period (2000–2006) is the third – thus its name INTERREG III.

INTERREG III programmes are regional development programmes with a wider goal to reduce the negative impact of national borders as obstacles to regional development, and to strengthen the economic and social cohesion of the regions. INTERREG III programmes enable the Member States to co-operate and exchange experience both with their closest neighbours, as well as with the regions from the other side of Europe. INTERREG III programmes are funded from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). INTERREG was initiated in 1988–1989 when the EU started to support cross-border co-operation by launching pilot schemes on its internal and external borders. The name INTERREG has been in use since 1990. INTERREG III programmes support regional development through cross-border co-operation, therefore, as a rule, institutions participating in the projects must originate from more than one country. During 2004–2006, 79 INTERREG programmes are implemented in the Member States, the total support of ERDF to these programmes reaching 2.2% (5,6 billion euros) of the total budget of the EU Structural Funds.

The Community Initiative INTERREG III is divided into three strands:

- **INTERREG III A – cross-border co-operation**, i.e. bilateral co-operation between border areas of two neighbouring countries. In Estonia, III A co-operation is possible with border areas of Finland, Latvia, and Russia. Strand A supports cross-border co-operation projects that aim at the promotion of economic development, employment, transport, tourism and environmental protection, and at creating bilateral relations in some other fields. Applicants may include, as a rule, state, regional and local public authorities (e.g. ministries, county governments, municipalities), universities and research institutions, various NGOs and other socio-economic organisations. In Estonia, III A co-operation can be carried out with border regions of Finland, Latvia, and Russia in the framework of the Estonia-Latvia-Russia INTERREG III A co-operation priority and the Southern-Finland - Estonia INTERREG III A programme.

- **INTERREG III B – transnational co-operation**, i.e. co-operation between at least three countries within the EU macro-regions. In Estonia, III B co-operation is possible with countries of the Baltic Sea Region. Strand B supports projects of a transnational character which promote transnational co-operation mainly in the fields of spatial planning and regional development, and lay a foundation for long-term transnational co-operation networks. The general strategy of Strand B is targeted at the development of spatial balance in the European Union, which is to be achieved through integrated management

of different sectors by the co-operation of several countries. The aim of the strand is to enhance economic, social and spatial integration inside the EU macro-regions as well as to raise their economic competitiveness. In Estonia, III B co-operation can be carried out with the countries of the Baltic Sea Region (Denmark, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Belarus and Russia) in the framework of the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B programme.

- **INTERREG III C – interregional co-operation**, i.e. co-operation between at least three countries across the entire EU. In Estonia, III C co-operation is possible with all EU countries. Strand C supports co-operation between regional and other public authorities across the entire European Union, involving also insular and outermost regions. The strand aims at transfer and exchange of information, knowledge, and best practices which are supported under Objective 1 and 2, Community Initiative INTERREG, Community Initiative URBAN and Community Innovative Actions programmes. In addition, support can be applied for coastal co-operation, spatial planning issues, and eliminating disasters of natural origin or caused by human activities. Moreover, funding can be applied to alleviate unfavourable conditions, for example, the economic impact of very low population density. In Estonia, III C co-operation can be carried out with all EU countries in the framework of INTERREG III C North, South, East and West Zone programmes



Please refer to **more information** about the Community Initiative INTERREG at the internet homepage of the European Commission about INTERREG:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/interreg3/index_en.htm

Southern Finland and Estonia INTERREG III A programme



Co-operation area

Estonia - Harju, Hiiu, Ida-Viru, Järva, Lääne, Lääne-Viru, Pärnu, Rapla, and Saare counties

Finland - Varsinais-Suomi, Uusimaa, Itä-Uusimaa, and Kymenlaakso regions

In addition, **adjoining areas** participate in the programme:

Estonia - Jõgeva, Põlva, Tartu, Valga, Viljandi, and Võru counties

Finland - Kanta-Häme and Päijät-Häme regions

Applicants of the **adjoining areas** may participate in the programme on the same conditions as the applicants of the co-operation area, however, **no more than 20% of the total programme funds** may be allocated to the partners of the adjoining areas altogether.

The overall objective of the programme is to support balanced regional development through regional cross-border co-operation in various sectors, in order to create preconditions for enhanced employment opportunities and competitiveness, as well as to protect and preserve the common environment. Cross-border co-operation is directed towards advancement of the economic, social, cultural, and ecological sustainability of the co-operation area.

Priorities and measures

The programme consists of three priorities, which are divided into measures. While preparing projects, the most suitable measure for each project must be found, according to which the ERDF support is applied for to finance project activities.

Priority 1. Interaction and networks

Measure 1.1. Networks of local and regional administration

The aim is to widen the local and regional administration's cross-border networks across the Gulf of Finland, and thus, develop linkages and co-operation structures that assist cross-border integration.

Measure 1.2. Social interaction and contacts within local and regional level

The aim is to deepen the linkages between the Southern Finland and Estonia, and to increase the third sector's involvement in cross-border co-operation. Co-operation is supported in the following fields: social work, healthcare, children and youth, culture and arts, and partnership between public sector and NGOs.

Priority 2. Employment and competitiveness

Measure 2.1. Expertise and know-how

The aim is to increase the know-how and expertise in the co-operation area, to find new common strength areas and fields of expertise, as well as to support the balanced development of the labour market.

Measure 2.2. Operative environment of enterprises

The aim is to promote co-operation between enterprises in the Southern Finland and Estonia and to encourage the establishment of firms in the programme area, as well as to improve the possibilities of firms to expand their markets and activities to a wider area. The business environment boosts entrepreneurship and engenders new cross-border enterprises and joint ventures.

Measure 2.3. Tourism development

The aim is to develop an array of high-quality, versatile, and multilingual tourism services on both sides of the Gulf of Finland. The development of strength fields in the rural, coastal and archipelago areas is especially supported, taking account of the ecological capacity of the areas.

Measure 2.4. Transport, communication and development of interlinked services

The aim is the interdisciplinary development of transport and communication links between Southern Finland and Estonia. Co-operation is supported in the following fields: risk management related to marine traffic, marine safety, prevention of environmental damages and accidents, and application of information technology solutions in cross-border co-operation.

Priority 3. Common environment

Measure 3.1. Co-operation in environment protection and monitoring

The aim is to improve the state of the common environment in the Gulf of Finland in co-operation between local and regional levels in Estonia and Finland. Co-operation is supported in the following fields: environmental monitoring, risk management and prevention of damages, environmental education, and advancement of environmentally friendly technology, production, and services.

Measure 3.2. Co-operation in improving environment

The aim is to raise environmental awareness in the co-operation area. Co-operation is supported in the following fields: implementation of methods of waste handling, water management, air and soil protection, as well as the preparation of environment protection and improvement guidelines, and exchange of knowledge and know-how in the field of environment protection.

Projects

The programme supports **bilateral** co-operation projects between Estonian and Southern Finnish regions.

All project activities must be completed by 30 June 2008.

Project examples

Finnish and Estonian co-operation in the field of labour market

Measure 1.2. Social interaction and contacts within local and regional level

The project aims to prepare Estonian and Finnish labour markets for the situation when there is an EU internal border between the two countries. Project activities include establishing an information centre in Tallinn and information distribution throughout Estonia about the situation of the Finnish labour market, the related legislation, rules and practices. Target groups of the project are employees, education and labour market authorities, NGOs, and vocational students in Finland and Estonia. Estonian project partner is the Association of Estonian Trade Unions. The duration of the project is three years. Total project budget is 407,300 euros, wherein the amount of ERDF support is 174,700 euros.

Improving the marine safety between Helsinki and Tallinn

Measure 2.4. Transport, communication and development of interlinked services

The project aims to improve the marine safety in the route between Helsinki and Tallinn, and to minimise the environmental risks of accidents on the Gulf of Finland. Project activities included the elaboration of a general plan for the sea route in order to meet the modern safety standards, and strengthening of the contacts between marine administrations as well as the port authorities from both countries. Estonian project partner was Maritime Administration. The duration of the project was nine months. Total project budget was 112,686 euros, wherein the amount of ERDF support was 56,343 euros.

ECOSENSE - Agri-Environment and organic farming

Measure 3.1. Co-operation in environmental protection and monitoring

The project aims to provide environmental training for farmers and rural advisers in order to advance environmentally friendly and sustainable agriculture with special focus on environmentally and culturally sensitive areas. The project focused on the elaboration of agri-environment action plans, advancement of organic farming, and exchange of practical experience. Estonian project partner is the Centre for Ecological Engineering. The duration of the project is three years. Total project budget is 288,000 euros, wherein the amount of ERDF support is 129,000 euros. Estonian project partner finances its activities from the PHARE CBC programme funds.

Programme administration

The day-to-day implementation of the programme as well as counselling of project preparation and implementation is carried out by the programme technical secretariat, with its Finnish office in the Regional Council of Southwest Finland in Turku, and Estonian office in Tallinn.

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Please refer to **more information** about the programme at the internet homepage:
<http://www.interreg-finest.net/>

Estonia-Latvia-Russia INTERREG III A co-operation priority



Co-operation area

Estonia – Hiiu, Ida-Viru, Jõgeva, Lääne, Põlva, Pärnu, Tartu, Saare, Valga, Viljandi and Võru counties

Latvia – Kurzeme, Latgale, Riga, Vidzeme and Zemgale regions

Russia – Leningrad and Pskov oblasts, city of St.-Petersburg

The overall objective of the priority is to achieve harmonious development of the co-operation area – increased welfare and economic competitiveness – through cross-border co-operation and sustainable use of common resources.

Estonia-Latvia-Russia INTERREG III A co-operation priority forms a part of the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B programme, i.e. it is formally not an independent INTERREG programme. However, the priority is implemented separately from the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B priorities and it supports bilateral cross-border co-operation projects.

Measures of the priority

The priority is divided into two measures:

Measure 5.1. Development of the Estonian-Latvian border regions

- **Promotion of tourism development** – improvement of related cross-border infrastructure (incl. hiking routes, signs, small harbours along the coast of the Gulf of Riga); development and joint marketing of tourism products and services with a special focus on environmental friendly products and respect of sustainable development principles.

- **Environmental management and protection** – common management regimes of protected areas; strategies and plans for development of environmental infrastructure (incl. water purifying plants, landfills); environmental monitoring; common management of fishing stock in the Gulf of Riga.

- **Support of municipal co-operation** – development of joint municipal public services and facilities; exchange of best practices of governance; common planning and development activities; development of cross-border transport links.

- **Widening and deepening of local co-operation contacts** – promotion of *people-to-people* and *institution-to-institution* co-operation (incl. NGOs) in the areas of education, culture, social work, business development, and local media; establishment of networks (incl. cross-border co-operation structures); information activities and joint events.

- **Staff training** programmes and training projects in the above listed fields; training of young and unemployed.

Measure 5.2. Development of the EU external border regions

- **Development of new business opportunities** – promotion of business contacts and related information exchanges; development of joint business support services (incl. innovation related research and development activities).

- **Development of transport** – improvement of transport connections (incl. border crossing points) and logistics services; development of small harbours and inland waterways.

- **Tourism development** – improvement of tourism related infrastructure; development and joint marketing of cross-border tourism products and services.

- **Environmental management and protection** – joint environmental management and monitoring; common management regimes for protected areas; strategies and plans for development of environmental infrastructure (incl. water purification plants, landfills); coastal development; integrated management of Lake Peipsi (studies, strategies, and activities resulting thereof); co-operation activities related to cross-border water bodies, EU water framework directive, and water supply and sewerage management.

- **Establishing new contacts between local and regional institutions** – small-scale *people-to-people* projects; identification of cross-border co-operation possibilities (incl. elaboration of common development strategies and joint preparation of major development projects).

- **Staff training** programmes and training projects in the above listed fields.

Projects

As a rule, the priority supports **bilateral** co-operation projects between Estonian-Latvian, Estonian-Russian, and Latvian-Russian border regions. In case of infrastructure investment projects, one-partner projects are also allowed if a project has a clear cross-border impact. Under Measure 5.2. trilateral projects can also be implemented between partners from Estonia, Latvia and Russia.

Projects with Member States' partners from the NUTS III regions which share a common border are encouraged.

The recommended amount of **ERDF support** for all partners altogether within a single project is **50,000 to 1 million euros**. All project activities must be completed by 31 December 2007.

It is also possible to implement **small projects** under the priority with recommended amount of ERDF support for all partners altogether within a single project being **5,000 to 50,000 euros**. A small project must be implemented within 18 months.

The priority will open to project applications in autumn 2004.

Priority administration

The day-to-day implementation of the priority as well as counselling of project preparation and implementation is carried out by the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B Joint Secretariat Riga.

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Please refer to **more information** about the priority at the internet homepage:

<http://www.bsrinterreg.net/3a>

Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B programme



Co-operation area

Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden – the entire territory

Germany – the Federal States (*Länder*) of Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Schleswig-Holstein and Niedersachsen (only NUTS II area Regierungsbezirk Lüneburg)

Belarus – Brest, Grodno, Minsk and Vitebsk oblasts

Russia – Kaliningrad, Leningrad, Murmansk, Novgorod and Pskov oblasts, city of St.-Petersburg, and the Republic of Karelia

The overall objective of the programme is to strengthen economic, social and spatial cohesion by focusing on disparities of different territories in order to reach an increased level of Baltic Sea Region integration and to form a sustainable part of Europe.

The overall aim of the programme has **four strategic directions**:

- **Promotion of economic development** of the Baltic Sea Region and **enhancement of its competitiveness** through development of spatial structure, mutual co-ordination of different activities, and strengthening of their positive spatial impact.
- **Promotion of spatial balance** in the Baltic Sea Region in the first place through decreasing the development disparities between East and West.
- **Promotion of more efficient use of limited resources** through cross-border inter-sectoral and administrative co-operation. The key issue in the Baltic Sea Region is above all a more sustainable use of the joint water resources and coastal areas. The aim of the programme is to support and thus promote the methods and means for using resources more efficiently.
- Developing the Baltic Sea Region into **a sustainable part of Europe** through spatial planning, which in turn will enable to achieve a balance between ecological, social and economic processes, at a time, when rapidly growing traffic flows, increasing air and water pollution, inadequate waste management, etc. pose serious challenges to sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region.

Priorities and measures

The programme consists of three priorities, which are divided into measures. While preparing projects, the most suitable measure for each project must be found, according to which the ERDF support is applied for to finance project activities.

Priority 1. Promotion of spatial development approaches and actions for specific territories and sectors

Measure 1.1. Supporting joint strategies and implementation actions for macro-regions

Projects, which involve several fields and focus on strengthening the harmonious and sustainable development within macro-regions, are supported.

Measure 1.2. Promoting sustainable spatial development of specific sectors

Projects, which focus on the development of a single specific field, are supported, e.g. sustainable energy production and use.

Measure 1.3. Strengthening integrated development of coastal zones, islands and other specific areas

Co-operation between the regions with similar conditions is supported, e.g. river basins, lake lands, mountainous regions.

Priority 2. Promotion of territorial structures supporting sustainable Baltic Sea Region development

Measure 2.1. Promoting balanced polycentric settlement structures

Projects, which focus on raising the competitiveness of various settlement structures, are supported, e.g. strengthening the development of rural areas or small and middle-sized cities, urban-rural partnership.

Measure 2.2. Creating sustainable communication links for improved spatial integration

The creation of transnational transport and communication networks is supported, in order to increase the number of transport connections within the Baltic Sea Region, and to strengthen ties with more distant regions and the entire Europe.

Measure 2.3. Enhancing good management of cultural and natural heritage, valuable landscapes and natural resources

Sustainable use, preservation, management, and enrichment of cultural and natural objects of transnational value are supported.

Priority 3. Transnational and bilateral institution and capacity building in the Baltic Sea Region

The objective is to strengthen local and regional capacity for advancement of spatial planning and regional development.

Measure 3.1. Promotion of transnational institution and capacity building

Transnational projects on institutional capacity building are supported.

Measure 3.2. Bilateral maritime co-operation across the Baltic Sea

Bilateral projects with Russian coastal regions on institutional capacity building are supported. The measure will open for project applications in 2005.

Projects

As a rule, the programme supports projects of a transnational character with **partners from at least three countries**, with at least two partners contributing financially into the project. The choice and number of partners in a project should result from the aims and needs of a specific project, and from the relevance of the partners in implementing the project activities.

The recommended amount of **ERDF support** for all partners altogether within a single project is **300,000 to 2 million euros**, however, the support may also be larger or smaller than the recommended sums. Under Measure 3.2., the recommended amount of **ERDF support** for all partners altogether within a single project is **150,000 to 200,000 euros**.

The duration of a project is, as a rule, 2–3 years. All project activities must be completed by the beginning of 2008.

Possible project outcomes:

- framework plans or sector concepts
- feasibility studies, incl. investment plans
- management and marketing concepts
- small-scale infrastructure investments into model and pilot sites of transnational value
- transnational networks and databases

Project examples

VBNDZ – Via Baltica Nordica Development Zone

Measure 1.1. Supporting joint strategies and implementation actions for macro-regions

VBNDZ is a mainland transport corridor reaching from Berlin to Mo i Rana in Norway. The idea is not to create and develop Via Baltica as a road connection, but to continue, widen, and deepen co-operation between the regions located in the Via Baltica Nordica area. Over 40 cities, rural municipalities, and development organisations from Germany, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland participate in the project; Kaliningrad oblast participates in the project as an observer. The project includes the following fields: environmentally friendly tourism, rail traffic, landscape planning and geographical information systems. BSR INTERREG III B co-finances the VBNDZ project with 2,1 million euros; total project budget is 4,1 million euros.

BALTCOAST – Integrated Coastal Zone Development in the Baltic Sea Region

Measure 1.3. Strengthening integrated development of coastal zones, islands and other specific areas

Growing intensity of the use of mainland, coastal and sea areas (tourism, growing cities, infrastructure development) requires a more elaborated and co-ordinated strategy to preserve nature and environment. The main aim of the project is to solve the conflict between nature protection and economic activities in an innovative way by using the principle of *fewer regulations - more understanding*. This is a pilot project which supports integral management and development of coastal areas in the Baltic Sea Region based on the concept of sustainable development. BALTCOAST shows how to simultaneously foster economic development, growth of cities, and nature protection, and introduces integral planning and development opportunities for open sea areas. One international, five national, seven regional, ten local and two research institutions and organisations from Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland participate in the project. BSR INTERREG III B co-finances BALTCOAST project with 2,1 million euros; total project budget is 3,3 million euros.

BALTIC GATEWAY – Integrating the Seaways of the Southern Baltic Sea into the PanEuropean Transport System

Measure 2.2. Creating sustainable communication links for improved spatial integration

The project aims to create preconditions and means for developing a high-quality and integral transport system in the southern part of the Baltic Sea Region. The project focuses above all on integrating sea and inland transport connections through the development of harbours, terminals, and logistics centres. Within the project, a new transport market concept will be elaborated, which balances the share of rail, road, and sea transport. Moreover, innovative solutions for passenger and cargo transportation, and investments into the most important transnational transport connections will be elaborated. A co-operation platform between public and private sectors and research institutions will be elaborated in order to promote strategic planning of investments in the transport sector. BSR INTERREG III B co-finances BALTIC GATEWAY project with 1,14 million euros; total project budget is 2,4 million euros.

Programme administration

The day-to-day implementation of the programme as well as counselling of project preparation and implementation is carried out by the programme joint secretariat, with its offices in Rostock (Germany), Karlskrona (Sweden), and Riga (Latvia).

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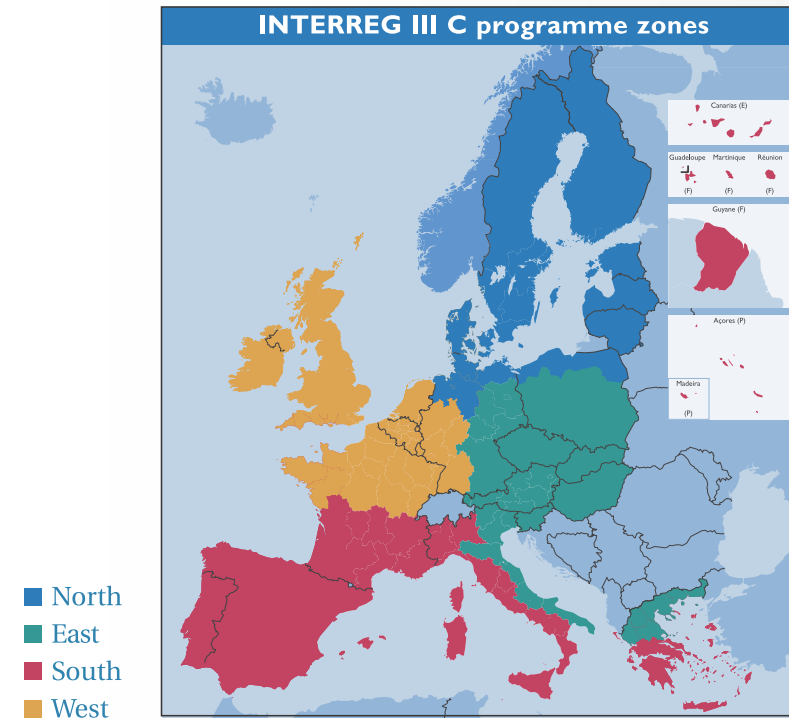
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Please refer to **more information** about the programme at the internet homepage:
<http://www.bsrinterreg.net/>

INTERREG III C programmes



Co-operation area

the entire territory of the European Union

The overall objective of INTERREG III C programmes is to improve the effectiveness of regional development policies and measures through distribution of information and know-how and exchange of experience.

Many problems and tasks related to regional development are similar for different regions not only within one country, but all over Europe (e.g. urban areas, outermost regions). Exchanging experience on possible solutions with other regions, which have encountered similar problems, can often facilitate overcoming such problems.

Topics of co-operation

INTERREG III C programmes support co-operation projects in the following fields:

- Activities related to **Objectives 1 and 2** of the EU structural policy, which are the raising of development levels of the regions lagging behind, above all through promoting infrastructure investments into business economic activities, and supporting regions facing structural difficulties by implementing economic and social conversion.
- Activities related to **INTERREG** programmes, which are the use of results and outcomes of projects funded under previous or current INTERREG programmes as a basis for co-operation, in order to further develop joint projects and policy approaches.
- Activities related to **URBAN** programmes, which are the implementation of innovative strategies and solutions in problematic urban areas in order to ensure economic and social reproduction and sustainable development, as well as wider urban development topics.
- Activities related to Community **innovative actions** programmes, which are the assistance of disadvantaged regions with know-how and introduction of technological innovations, linking of information society with regional development, and strengthening regional identity and sustainable development.
- Activities related to **other appropriate subjects**, which are the activities not covered by the above mentioned topics, e.g. co-operation in spatial planning, finding of solutions for disasters of natural origin or caused by human activities, and alleviation of economic burden in disadvantaged areas (e.g. sparsely populated areas).
- **Border regions** activities, which is the co-operation between the regions located on the EU external border in order to strengthen the development of these regions (applies to South and East Zone projects).

Types of operations

- **Regional Framework Operation** is a comprehensive individual regional co-operation network, consisting of several sub-projects, which focus on a limited range of the most relevant subjects of the participating regions. Each regional framework operation is prepared by a group of regional partners from at least three countries. The recommended amount of **ERDF support** for all partners altogether within a single regional framework operation is **500,000 to 5 million euros**. 50–80% of the total INTERREG III C budget will be allocated to this type of operation. Regional framework operation does not cover border regions activities.
- **Individual Project** is focused on the co-operation and exchange of experience in a single specific field as regards methodology and project-based activities. The aim is not merely the exchange of experience, but an actual co-operation in implementing the different components of a project. Project partners must originate from at least three countries. The recommended amount of **ERDF support** for all partners altogether within a single individual project is **200,000 to 1 million euros**. 10–30% of the total INTERREG III C budget will be allocated to this type of operation. Individual project covers all co-operation topics.

- **Network** is focused on linking the various regions inside and outside the European Union into a network for exchanging experience on project implementation methods and development activities in a specific co-operation topic. Partners of a network must originate from at least five countries. The recommended amount of **ERDF support** for all partners altogether within a single network is **200,000 to 1 million euros**. 10–20% of the total INTERREG III C budget will be allocated to this type of operation. Network does not cover co-operation on innovative activities.

While a network is primarily directed towards the exchange of experience, the individual project focuses also on the implementation of a specific project. Regional framework operation adds the integration of co-operation into an individual strategic network.

Projects

Estonia may participate as a project partner in all four III C programmes – in the INTERREG III C North, South, East, and West Zone programmes. Estonian institutions, as well as institutions from the other Baltic Sea countries may act as a lead partner of a project only within the INTERREG III C North Zone programme. Projects are funded from the budget of the programme zone, where the lead partner originates.

The duration of a project is, as a rule, 3 years. All project activities must be completed by the beginning of 2008.

Project examples

FINESSE – Incubating Networking for Small Enterprises

Topic of co-operation: activities related to other appropriate subjects

Type of operation: individual project

Within the project, networks of incubation centres and regional development institutions in partner regions will be created, which support small- and middle-sized enterprises in expanding their activities outside the country borders. Project activities include a business plan training for entrepreneurs, regional and interregional partner search, and finding financial support for expansion activities of the enterprises. The project will result in the strengthening of the regional level through establishing new companies and expanding activities of enterprises, which will increase regional employment. Spatial and regional development will be strengthened by the creation of a new interregional and sustainable business development environment, which can be transferred to other European regions. New employment opportunities and jobs related to vocational training will come into being. The duration of the project is 2,5 years. ERDF co-funding is 996,000 euros. Total project budget is 2,053 million euros, wherein the amount of ERDF support is 996,000 euros.

W.IN.NET – European Network of Women Resource Centres

Topic of co-operation: activities related to other appropriate subjects

Type of operation: network

The project aims to create in the partner states a local, regional, and national network of

women counselling centres, in order to strengthen the role of women in local and regional development. Within the project, the effectiveness of the activities of the existing centres will be improved, and the equal opportunities of men and women at the local, regional, and pan-European level will be increased. Moreover, joint seminars and trainings will be organised, as well as various working groups established. The duration of the project is 2,5 years. Total project budget is 1,346,950 euros, wherein the amount of ERDF support is 776,633 euros.

STIMENT – New solutions stimulating entrepreneurship

Topic of co-operation: activities related to other appropriate subjects

Type of operation: regional framework operation

The regions with significant degeneration in the situation of agriculture, forestry, and metal industry sectors participate in the project. Within the project, according to a jointly developed co-operation strategy, sub-projects are financed in the following fields – economic intelligence, e-learning, and logistics and locations. The sub-projects of STIMENT are selected by the partner regions of the regional framework operation. The duration of the project is 3,5 years. Total project budget is 3,4 million euros, wherein the amount of ERDF support is 2,05 million euros.

Administration of INTERREG III C programmes

The day-to-day implementation of the programmes as well as counselling of project preparation and implementation is carried out by the programme technical secretariats. Questions should be addressed to the technical secretariat of the programme zone, where the lead partner originates.

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Please refer to **more information** about INTERREG III C programmes at the internet homepage: <http://www.interreg3c.net/>

Preparation and implementation of projects

Project criteria

Within each INTERREG programme, the participating countries have agreed on the criteria for applicants and projects, and on the project application procedures. The criteria and procedures vary for different programmes, therefore, project preparation must always follow the programme document and the programme complement of the respective INTERREG programme.

General criteria for applicants and projects are, however, similar for all INTERREG programmes. Since INTERREG programmes are cross-border co-operation programmes which support regional development, every project must have **a clear positive impact on all participating regions**. INTERREG projects focus often on solving similar problems or developing a certain field according to the same principles in different countries. Moreover, projects may concentrate on the elaboration and marketing of joint plans, strategies, and development plans, services and products, exchange of experience at trainings and seminars, and many other activities, which contribute to a balanced and sustainable development of the participating regions.

Applicants within INTERREG programmes may be, as a general rule, **state, regional and local public authorities** (e.g. ministries, county governments, municipalities, boards), **universities and research institutions, NGOs and other socio-economic organisations**. Private sector organisations cannot usually participate in the projects as project partners, i.e. no ERDF co-financing is calculated on the basis of private contribution. Private sector is welcome to participate in the projects as an additional partner, financing its activities from its own means.

INTERREG projects follow the **Lead Partner principle**, i.e. each project must appoint a Lead Partner, who operates as a Lead Applicant in the application phase, and submits the project application to the Technical Secretariat. Later, in the project implementation phase, the Lead Partner will submit all payment requests to the Paying Authority. The other project participants are **project partners**; sometimes also **additional partners** are involved in the project.

INTERREG projects usually involve institutions from several different countries,

therefore, the **preparation of successful project applications may take considerable time**, for larger projects 1–1,5 years. In order to facilitate the finding of partners from other countries, several INTERREG programmes have partner search engines or databases at their internet homepages, wherein the institutions interested in co-operation can enter together with their contacts also different project ideas, as well as read the co-operation themes proposed by other institutions. Moreover, partner search forums are organized from time to time for several programmes, where, in addition to listening to programme introductory presentations, also contacts can be found and reinforced with potential co-operation partners.

Application procedures

The general management structure is similar for all INTERREG programmes.

Each INTERREG programme has:

- **Steering Committee**, which selects the projects for funding
- **Monitoring Committee**, which supervises the overall implementation of the programme
- **Technical Secretariat**, which is responsible for the day-to-day programme management
- **Managing Authority**, which is responsible for the overall management and implementation of the programme
- **Paying Authority**, which manages the ERDF funds and handles payments

Each INTERREG programme has its own project application procedures, which must be followed when applying for ERDF support. As a rule, each INTERREG programme has **several open application rounds per year** for project applications, during which the Lead Partner submits the project application, which has been elaborated jointly with project partners, to the Technical Secretariat. Thereafter, the project applications are assessed by relevant experts, who provide the applications with evaluations. Then gathers the Steering Committee and selects the projects, which will receive ERDF funding. For some INTERREG programmes, no open application rounds are organized, and applications can be submitted to the Technical Secretariat at any time. In such a case, the dates of the Steering Committee meetings, when the projects will be selected, are fixed. At least two countries participate in each INTERREG programme, thus not all Technical Secretariats, Managing and Paying Authorities of the INTERREG programmes, which are open for Estonia, are located in Estonia, but in a country agreed upon by the countries participating in the respective programme. Project applications must be submitted both via mail and e-mail to the Technical Secretariat of the respective programme, where the applications are received and registered.

Project funding

Estonia belongs to Objective 1 area in the EU, thus, the minimum **own financing rate of projects for the Estonian project partners is 25%** of the Estonian partners' eligible costs. **ERDF support may be applied for up to an amount of 75% of the Estonian partners' eligible costs.** The same subsidy rates do not apply for all partners within a single INTERREG project. The regions in the EU Objective 2 area may apply for ERDF support up to an amount of 50% of their eligible costs, also, separate subsidy rates apply to Norwegian, Belarussian, and Russian partners. When drawing up a project budget, each project partner must plan its activities according to own financing and subsidy rates applicable in its region.

The decision to award ERDF support to a project is made by the programme Steering Committee. Lead Partner of a project will be informed immediately about the funding decision, who in turn will then inform the project partners. The initial draft of the Structural Funds subsidy contract will be presented to the Lead Partner within two weeks after the funding decision. Project's Lead Partner and the programme's Managing Authority will sign the contract within three months of the funding decision. Implementation of the project will begin no later than three months since signing the contract.

ERDF support is paid to projects on the basis of submitted expenditure documents, i.e. **after the project partners have incurred actual expenses.** ERDF only supports the implementation of eligible activities, which comply with the EU financial regulations, and are more specifically defined within each INTERREG programme. The programme Paying Authority makes payments on the basis of the Structural Funds subsidy contract, which has been signed with the Lead Partner of the project. As a general rule, the Paying Authority makes **payments several times a year** to the Lead Partner's bank account. Lead Partner of a project divides this sum among the project partners according to their incurred expenses.

During the current programming period, Estonian partners may apply to **Ministry of the Interior for partial covering of the projects' own financing** – up to an amount of 40% of the minimum required own financing rate for receiving Structural Funds support. **Ministry of the Interior will, within its budgetary limits, support the projects which at most comply with the objectives of the respective INTERREG programme, and as an additional value, benefit the entire Estonia.**

The detailed application procedures for the Ministry of the Interior's support are established by Regulation no 208 of the Government of the Republic "Implementation procedures of the Community Initiative INTERREG programmes" from 31.05.2004.

In Estonia, INTERREG programmes are implemented by the Regional Development Department of the Ministry of the Interior:

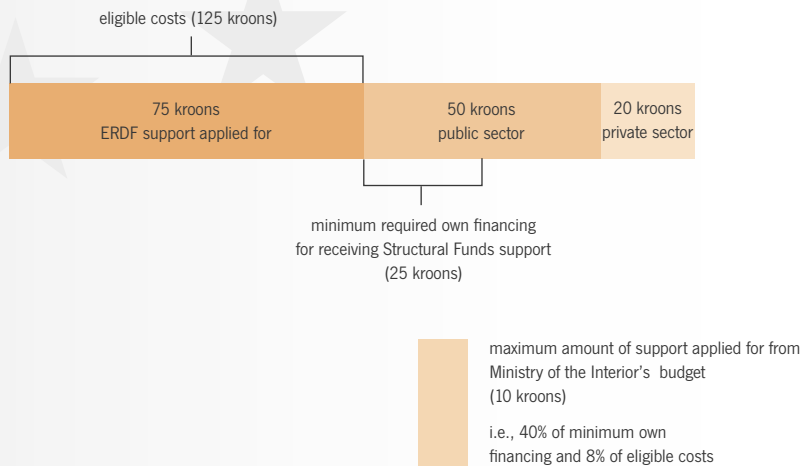
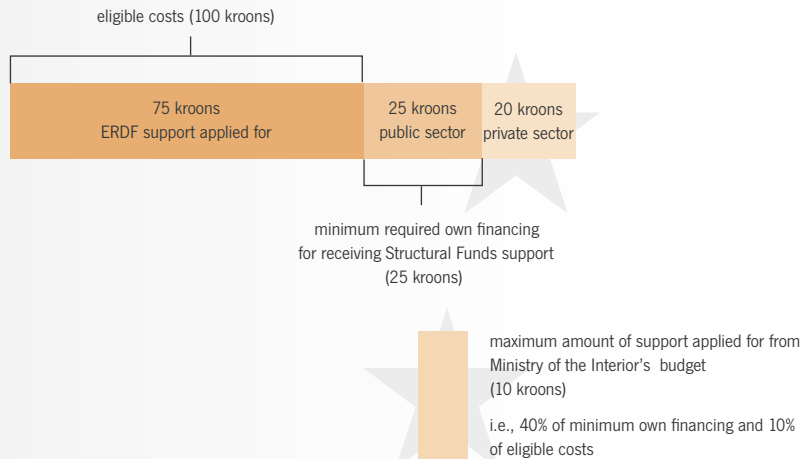
Pikk 61, 15065 Tallinn, Estonia

Tel: +372 612 5118 Fax: + 372 612 5101

e-mail: interreg@sisemin.gov.ee

homepage: <http://www.sisemin.gov.ee>

Example structure of project budgetary means



Implementation of projects


Lead Partner of a project is financially and legally responsible for the purposeful implementation of all project activities and for the correctness of financing and reporting of the entire project, including all EU partners and partners from Norway. Lead Partner co-ordinates the implementation of project activities and the continuous communication among project partners, and submits regularly on behalf of all project partners project activity and financial reports, as well as ERDF payment requests to the programme Technical Secretariat. Lead Partner of a project should be responsible for the division of tasks among the partners, and for ensuring timely and correct fulfilment of these tasks. Partnership conditions can be specified by a written contract between the Lead Partner and each project partner.

Funding of a project is organized through the bank account of the Lead Partner, who transfers the received ERDF support to the accounts of project partners. Lead Partner is responsible towards the Managing Authority for ensuring that all project partners fulfil their financial and other obligations, which are specified in the project application or in the subsidy contract. **Lead Partner is liable for the total amount of the ERDF support in full amount of the grant.** Moreover, the Lead Partner of a project is responsible for fulfilling the repayment claims on the ERDF support.

New Neighbourhood Programmes

New Neighbourhood programmes are the INTERREG programmes, which after the EU enlargement on the 1 May 2004 will support cross-border co-operation on a new, more than a 10,000 km long EU external border with Russia and the NIS (Newly Independent States), Eastern and Western Balkans, and Eastern and Southern Mediterranean countries. New Neighbourhood programmes (hereafter NNP) are judicially in most cases the existing or newly established INTERREG programmes, which have been amended or elaborated with an aim to facilitate the implementation of co-operation projects between the Member States and non-Member States on the EU external border.

Since 2005, the preparation and implementation of co-operation projects on the EU external border will be significantly easier, because the European Commission will transfer by then the financial means of the programmes, which support cross-border co-operation in the non-Member States – TACIS CBC, PHARE CBC, CARDS, and MEDA – into the existing or new INTERREG programmes, which operate on the respective border regions. Partners from both side of the border can now submit a joint project application into the respective NNP secretariat (Technical Secretariats of INTERREG programmes), the projects will be selected by a joint programme Steering Committee, and the funding decisions on the projects will be made simultaneously. The implementation of activities of the co-operation projects, which involve partners from EU Member States and non-Member States, will be simultaneous, thus contributing significantly to the achievement of project's objectives.



Among the INTERREG programmes operating in Estonia, the NNP principles will be followed within the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B programme, wherein the Estonia-Latvia-Russia INTERREG III A co-operation priority. Within the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG III B measures, Estonia, as well as other Baltic Sea countries can implement joint projects with Russian and Belarussian border regions, and within the Estonia-Latvia-Russia INTERREG III A co-operation priority's one measure, Estonian and Latvian border regions can implement joint projects with Russian border regions.