

Position statement with regards to EC proposals for specific provisions for the *European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) goal (Interreg)*

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Key points

- The **value of transnational cooperation** between sub-national actors should be explicitly recognised and referenced when considered as part of the overarching debate about the future EU budget and the programmes in which that budget might make investments
- The value of such cooperation across national borders in tackling shared challenges has been **repeatedly demonstrated within past and present Interreg programmes**. Its rich contribution to tackling a wide range of issues needs to be a) acknowledged, b) consolidated, and, c) built upon
- PURPLE therefore emphasises the value and importance of European Territorial Cooperation (Interreg), calls for its **budget and scope to be increased** in the next programming period, and for its focus to be overtly **redirected to territorial matters**. In common with other programmes to be supported from within the MFF, a **place-based approach** should be applied
- The **Territorial Agenda 2020** has a role to play here and its updated provisions – with its refreshed focus on the place-based – together with any planned future **Territorial Agenda post 2020** should be interwoven into the design of new programmes
- PURPLE calls for **explicit recognition of the contribution and potential of - and challenges faced by - peri-urban areas** (places where what we archetypically think of as urban and rural characteristics coincide), to be included in ETC documentation for the next programming period
- The current proposal to focus on a limited number of policy objectives is not, in itself, problematic. However, the **primacy of having a clear central focus on the territorial dimension** in any future ETC needs to be brought out more strongly in the finalised programme documentation. The current CPR proposals with regard to thematic concentration across five priority objectives do not contextualise the fifth objective regarding “... sustainable and integrated development” as anything more than an item in a list – it should more accurately be regarded as the starting point for future ETC programmes from which the selection of more focused priority topics might then flow
- The importance of using MFF resource to support “the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas” is clear, and the explicit reference to territories of particular types is welcome. However, the list as written could serve to exclude territories judged not to fall into these three categories. PURPLE’s particular concern is peri-urban parts of Europe. It is **wholly unacceptable if the effect of the text as written is to exclude areas deemed to be neither wholly urban nor wholly rural** – as is exactly the case with peri-urban where the two co-exist and blend

- Similarly, caution must be exercised the moment that territorial labels such as “urban” and “rural” are used (especially when this is done without offering definitions). The complex web of **interdependencies across urban/rural lines** – however tightly or loosely defined – is becoming increasingly recognised across Europe. Future ETC programmes offer a particular opportunity to better develop, experiment with, and capitalise upon, **rural-urban linkages** of many different kinds
- The references in the text of the proposals regarding both ETC and the CPR to “**local initiatives**” should be kept close sight of and be made to act as a guiding principle given that local is a key dimension of “place”. By that we mean that the true nature and interests of particular places are best understood by those close to them and with a direct interest in them. That has clear inferences in terms, for example, of programme management arrangements and funding decisions
- ETC should support joint work carried out by international partnerships made up of local actors – those actions should have **clear local impact and clear broader relevance and potential** at the same time
- The call within the current proposals to **incorporate “ESF Type activities”** within future operations is welcomed as it reflects the need for international cooperation to take place in whichever way is most likely to bring about the identified purposes of such cooperation
- PURPLE agrees with the suggestion within the proposal for an ETC regulation that CPR provisions be specifically adapted for the purposes of the new programmes – that specificity should reflect the particular territorial dimension of ETC. We agree, for example, with the insistence upon genuinely joint international project partnerships, but at the same time insist upon programmes being based upon thorough and **accurate place-based and territorially focused analysis**
- The **role of regional and local actors in the development of programmes** should be greater than has been the case to date. The subsidiarity principle is key here and programmes should be “done by” regional and local actors, not “done to” them
- PURPLE is dismayed to see proposals which suggest that interregional cooperation post 2020 should be **limited to the Interact and ESPON programmes**. This flies in the face of the well-established principle that Europe-wide cooperation projects bring clear local benefit arrived at via the exchange of knowledge and experience
- PURPLE calls for a reconsideration of a situation where there would be no provision for European actors to cooperate at the broadest European geographic level as per the **proposed Component 4**. To remove the opportunity for public authorities to cooperate at this level on issues of shared interest is to seriously detract from the potential value of ETC. Given that the principle of ALL EU regions being eligible to participate is now accepted, it is retrogressive to then not allow them the opportunity to all directly co-operate should there be (and only if there should be), a compelling reason for them to do so.
- **A cross-European programme** for individual projects under Component 4 would also be a corrective to a foreseeable situation where some regions of Europe are disadvantaged in the number of cross-border and transnational programmes for which they are otherwise eligible
- The nature of such a **successor programme to Interreg Europe** is a legitimate matter for discussion. Here PURPLE sees an opportunity for a revitalised programme designed to support locally-driven joint initiatives between European areas faced similar territorial challenges – with the focus very much on “territorial”