

Ifølge liste

Deres ref

Vår ref

Dato

24/2179-2

14. juni 2024

Konsultasjon om det fremtidige Interreg-samarbeidet post 2027

Kommisjonen (Dg Regio) lanserte høsten 2023 en bred konsultasjon om det fremtidige Interreg-samarbeidet som vil være fram til en avslutningskonferanse våren 2025. Dg Regio grunngir denne tilnærmingen med at det vil være et stort press på EUs budsjett i neste programperiode som følge av blant annet låneopptak under helsekrisen, men og konkurranse fra andre og nye formål. Vi forventer at forslaget til langtidsbudsjett for perioden 2028 – 2034 inkludert samhørighetspolitikken og Interreg blir lagt fram en gang neste år.

1.0 Nærmere om innspillet til konsertasjonen om det fremtidige Interreg-samarbeidet

Siden Dg Regio har åpnet for en bred konsultasjon om det fremtidige Interreg-samarbeidet og Norge lenge har vært en aktiv deltaker i Interreg-programmene, mener vi at det er riktig å komme med et innspill fra vår side. Vi ønsker å vise oppslutning om ordningen, samtidig som uttalelsen kan danne grunnlag for vårt arbeid med den nye programperioden.

Internasjonalt engasjement er en naturlig del av oppdraget til fylkeskommunen som regional samfunnsutvikler. Alle fylkeskommunene deltar i Interreg-samarbeidet og det har blitt en integrert del av fylkeskommunenes regionalpolitiske arbeid. Vi ønsker derfor å konsultere fylkeskommunene før vi sender inn vårt innspill til Dg Regio.

Utkastet til innspill er blant annet basert på den siste distrikts- og regionalmeldingen og evalueringssrapporter. I innspillet fremhever vi blant annet:

- At deltakelsen er en del av norsk regionalpolitikk og vårt samarbeid med naboland/nærområde samarbeid.
- Behovet for å styrke vårt samarbeid med nabolandene i nord som Finland og Sverige i lys den russiske invasjonen av Ukraina.

- Suspensjonen av samarbeidet med Russland har hatt store konsekvenser for Øst- Finnmark. Dette er en utfordring Øst-Finnmark deler med regioner i Finland, de baltiske statene og Polen.
- Videreutvikle muligheten for at lokalsamfunn og regioner kan samarbeide om felles utfordringer, forvalte fellesressurser og samarbeide på tvers av forvaltningsnivåer og sektorer.
- Et ønske om en fortsatt innsats for å dele og promotere prosjektresultater.
- Vurdere en sterkere tilknytning til lokale og regionale utviklingsstrategier.
- At programmer med fokus på erfaringsutveksling, kunnskapsutvikling og nettverksbygging styrkes.
- I det alt vesentlige beholde geografien til programmene med norsk deltagelse.
- Beholde muligheten for at norske prosjektdeltakere kan være «*leadpartner*».

2.0 Frist for tilbakemelding

Vi ber om tilbakemelding til det vedlagte utkastet til innspill innen **16.09.24**.

Vi ønsker å sende vårt innspill til Dg Regio innen utgangen av september måned i forkant av en større konferanse om det fremtidige Interreg-samarbeidet i november.

Med hilsen

Gerd Slinning (e.f.)
avdelingsdirektør

Odd Godal
seniorrådgiver

Dokumentet er elektronisk signert og har derfor ikke håndskrevne signaturen

Vedlegg: 1

Vedlegg

Norwegian input to the consultation on the future of Interreg

1.0 Introduction

Our participation in Interreg is part of our regional development policy. It is also part of our policy towards neighbouring areas with the ambition to promoting a balanced and harmonious territorial development across borders and within countries and regions. Furthermore, the participation is also meant to put the regional development in Norway into a larger European context.

Norway has participated in Interreg since 1996. Currently we participate in three cross border programmes; Interreg VI Aurora, Interreg VI Sweden – Norway and Interreg VI Øresund – Kattegat – Skagerrak, three transnational programmes; Interreg North Sea, Interreg Baltic Sea and Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic and four interregional programmes; Interreg Europe, ESPON, URBACT and Interact. We also participated in the Kolarctic CBC programme which now has been suspended.

In our Interreg-project bank there are more than 1500 projects with Norwegian participation. This is one way of illustrating the extent of our participation in Interreg: [Gode eksempler - Interreg.no](http://Gode%20eksempler%20-%20Interreg.no)

2.0 White paper on regional development – A good life throughout Norway

Small differences and a high level of trust between people are success factors for Norway. Equal opportunities regardless of where people live is a prerequisite for maintaining trust, safety and cohesion in our country.

The Government's goals for rural and regional policy are that the people should be able to live a good life throughout Norway, that all local communities should have room for development and creation of value and that the population should increase in rural municipalities.

Important trends for our regional development, which present challenges but also opportunities, are:

- Demographic challenges which have consequences for the whole country.
- The digital transition will be important for how and where we work, how services are provided and how goods are produced.
- The green transition may offer new opportunities for rural and urban areas, but it is important for the green transition that people live throughout the country.
- The changes geopolitical situation has had major consequences, particularly for Finnmark and Northern Norway.

The Norwegian Parliament approved the white paper on rural and regional policy in Norway in June 2023.¹

These trends are not unique to Norway. At the 9th Cohesion Forum Commissioner Ferreira emphasised the triple transition of climate, digital and demography. Some of these trends are cross-border by nature like climate change. They often require a place-based solutions. Cooperating across borders is one way of addressing these questions.

Northern Norway is part of the Arctic. In an area with long distances, a small population and high strategic value, international cooperation across national borders is particularly important for development. Local and regional authorities in Northern Norway have over a long time developed political dialogue and cooperation with Finnish, Swedish and Russians regions. As cross-border cooperation with Russia to a large extent is suspended, the need for cooperation with Finland and Sweden is of great importance.

3.0 Input to the consultation on the future of Interreg

3.1. Building on the strengths and addressing the challenges of territorial cooperation

3.1.1 Offering an opportunity to address shared challenges.

A report from European Policies Research Centre² (EPRC) emphasize that the added value of territorial cooperation often lays in offering communities or regions, facing similar or related development concerns, an opportunity to cooperate to address shared challenges. These challenges range from remote and sparsely populated areas, depopulation, service provision, common environmental issues, solutions for reducing GHG emissions. It also opens the opportunity to work across multiple levels and sectors, and through different forms of partnerships (triple and quadruple helix etc).

Through territorial cooperation regions and communities can build a critical mass to act or gain a profile at national level or international level, or test actions and solutions in ways that would not have been possible by working alone. This possibility to bring together different actors from different levels, joining different expertise enabling communities to identify needs, strengths, and solutions, and should be kept/preserved and developed further within Interreg. The Interreg-programmes should continue as programmes under shared management as this offers the opportunity to work across multiple levels.

3.1.2 Sharing and promoting project results.

Sharing and promoting project results and the transferability of project results represent an important task for all who are involved in Interreg. Transferability of project results are issues

¹ A good life throughout Norway – regional and rural policy for the future – Meld. St 27 (2022 – 2023) Report to the Storting (white paper)

² Territorial Cooperation: Widely pursued, widely questioned. EoRPA Report 23/4 European Regional Policy Research Consortium

which have been raised by evaluation reports³. There have been different attempts to address these questions. within the Interreg-community. The Interact programme has a focus on capitalisation, and the Interreg Baltic Sea region has launched project platforms, while the Interreg Arctic cooperation led by the NPA programme have encouraged clustering of projects working in the same thematic fields. The project platforms are framework for project partners working in the same thematic field making it possible to consolidate solutions and other project results. Making it easier to use this collective knowledge. These and similar efforts should be continued.

3.1.3 Developing the role of the monitoring and steering committees.

The monitoring and steering committees are interesting examples of multilevel governance with representatives from European, national, regional and local level and civil society. They have important roles in developing and implementing the programmes, but practice vary. By sharing good practice regarding how to implement and develop the programmes, the committees have potential for further development. On such example is the use of Thematic Action Plans (TAPs)⁴ in the ESPON programme. TAPs are strategic documents on a specific theme to implemented by the programme.

The Interreg-programmes are mostly implemented by projects selected after an open call for proposals. In the next programme period one could consider supplementing this “open” approach with more targeted approaches. They should be based on discussions in the monitoring/steering committees.

3.1.4 Linking to local and regional development strategies.

By developing common visions and objectives for cross-border areas it can be possible to identify strategic cooperation areas⁵. This can be done in connection with the development of the programmes. These common visions and objectives can then be used to guide the implementation of the programmes. The tradition for cross border cooperation in the area in question should be taken into account.

An evaluation report on results and effects of Interreg in Norway suggested that project should have stronger links to regional and national development strategies⁶ to increase their impact. There is maybe a need to consider the balance between pursuing European level priorities and local and regional needs.

The experiences with the Arctic Cooperation network should also be considered, to build on and develop valuable experiences into the next period.

3.2 Strengthening interregional cooperation.

³ Ibid

⁴ For further information on TAPs see link [here](#).

⁵ Forging a sustainable future together: Cohesion for a competitive and inclusive Europe – Report of the high-level group on the future of Cohesion policy, 3.2.4 A policy without borders, page 31.

⁶ COWI Evaluering av Interreg i Norge: Rapport, April 2019 Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartement, April 2019.

The interregional cooperation programmes should be strengthened. They offer a cost-efficient way for local, regional, and national actors to cooperate with peers across Europe. They are also closely connected to and deliver concrete inputs and results to relevant policy process like the Territorial Agenda.

3.4 Geography

We believe that the present strands of the European territorial cooperation programmes should be kept. The cross-border programmes and transnational programmes have different geographies, but similar priorities or content. A clearer differentiation between the priorities of the cross-border and transnational programmes could be an advantage. This was the case when the transnational programmes were introduced. One such differentiation could be for the transnational programmes to focus on the development of macro-regions with a common identity like the North Sea Region or the Baltic Sea Region and/or themes related to the larger geographical area they cover, for instance the European Arctic area.

We do not see the need for major changes in the geography of the programmes in which Norway participates. We would like to see the continuation cross-border programmes with sea borders.

3.5 Management, audit

We consider that simplified costs options have been successful. Introducing other forms of “*finance not linked to costs*” could be considered to make it easier to run the programmes.

There have been and there will most probably be a need to reallocate funds between programme priorities in the future. The present procedure is cumbersome, and we would like to see that this is made easier in the next programme period.

The possibility for partners from third countries like Norway to be lead partners should be kept cf. § 26.3 Regulation (EU) 2021/1059.

3.6 External border – regional cooperation in the Arctic⁷ and the Baltic.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has had important consequences for the cooperation in the Arctic and the Baltic Sea Region. The cooperation with Russia has been suspended including territorial cooperation and regions bordering Russia have been negatively affected. The focus of cooperation has also changed. Today there is greater focus on resilience, (emergency) preparedness and east-west connections. Finland and Sweden joining NATO has also contributed to the change in focus.

Northern Norway is part of the Arctic. In an area with long distances, a small population and high strategic value, international cooperation across borders are important for development. As mentioned earlier, Norway has over a long-time developed cooperation with Finland,

⁷ ⁷ A good life throughout Norway – regional and rural policy for the future – Meld. St 27 (2022 – 2023) Report to the Storting (white paper)

Sweden, and Russia in the region. Most of the cross-border cooperation with Russia is suspended. This has important consequences for the region and particularly for East-Finnmark which borders Russia. One consequence is greater importance of cooperation with Finland and Sweden. Relevant topics include green transition, access to expertise (and relevant knowledge), increased interaction between local business and universities and resilience.

Through the Norwegian Barents Secretariat, Norway has launched a new instrument for local and regional cooperation in the Nordic Barents geography. The geography is also including Greenland, Iceland and the Faeroe Islands, and potentially also Arctic parts of Canada and the US. This new instrument encourages more regional and local cooperation in the High North and will be adding on to the Interreg Aurora and NPA programmes covering this geography.

The consequences of the suspension of the cooperation with Russia is a challenge which border regions in Norway shares with border regions in member states like Finland, the Baltic states and Poland. One important question in this connection is how regions can leverage pre-existing assets in novel ways to enhance their resilience in the face of challenges or disruptions.⁸

3.7 Border obstacles

The original purpose of Interreg when it was introduced was to reduce border obstacles to improve the functioning of the internal market. The Commission has published reports on the issue and launched initiatives like B-solutions or legislative initiatives.

Border obstacles are however often of administrative or legal nature. The solutions to these problems lay outside competence of the Interreg-programmes. It can however be pursued on other arenas. Border obstacles are an important part of the Nordic cooperation. We have taken note of the report on the future of the internal market⁹ remarks with regard to Nordic Cooperation and cross border obstacles.

3.8 Other questions

Interreg C-programmes (Interreg Europa, ESPON and URBACT) have a wealth of information available in the form of analysis, data and policy recommendations which can be useful for the development of the next-generation of Interreg-programmes.

These programmes could be asked to prepare relevant analysis, studies, and datasets ahead of the next programme period. It should be done in cooperation with the cross-border and transnational programmes. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) could be asked to do the same. But with regard to a possible contribution from JRC it is important to keep in mind that the Interreg-programmes cover non-EU members too.

⁸ Terms of reference ESPON TERRA RES (Territorial Exaptive Resilience along Eastern Borders). The project is being implemented at the request of the upcoming Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU.

⁹ Much more than a market – Speed, Security, Solidarity. Enrico Letta

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