

# IS02 – A safer and more secure Europe

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## List of Abbreviations

CBC	Cross-border cooperation
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation
DG	Directorate General
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
IBM	Integrated Border Management
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
ISO	Interreg-specific Objective
MRS	Macro-regional Strategy
MS	Member State
NDICI	The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
OMR	Outermost regions
PO	Policy Objective
SO	Specific Objective
Strand A	Cross-border cooperation
Strand B	Transnational cooperation
Strand C	Interregional cooperation
Strand D	Outermost regions' cooperation

## **Introduction**

One of the main novelties under the proposed ETC Regulation include the definition of the Interreg-specific objective to address specific external cooperation issues such as safety, security, border crossing management and migration. This paper on the Interreg-specific Objective (ISO) “A safer and more secure Europe” is based on the online Q&A session from July 6<sup>th</sup> and the Interreg Annual event on October 16<sup>th</sup> 2020. The information herewith provided needs to be checked against the final versions of the relevant regulations. Based on questions from the Interreg community and answers provided by the European Commission, DG Regio (Unit D1), it elaborates on the key aspects of this Objective in the 2021-2027 Interreg programmes.

### **The ‘ISO 2 – A safer and more secure Europe’ paper aims at:**

- Providing a good understanding of the rationale behind ISO 2 and how it could be integrated into future programmes;
- Proposing priorities for ISO2 with a view to
- Strengthening the integrated and coordinated approach while considering complementarities and synergies with other EU funds.

## 1. Scope and extent of ISO 2

According to Articles 14(5), 15(2) and 17(2) of the draft ETC Regulation, ISO2 is a Policy Objective (in addition to the six others: PO1 to PO5 + ISO1). Unlike the POs, specific objectives for Interreg Specific Objectives are not explicitly mentioned in the draft Interreg regulation. ISO2 “A safer and more secure Europe” covers four indicative, non-binding/non exhaustive “specific objectives”:

- Border management infrastructure;
- Mobility and migration management;
- Protection and integration of migrants (including refugees);
- Other actions to contribute to a safer and more secure Europe. Under this last specific objective there is, purposely, room for manoeuvre.

ISO 2 primarily targets the external borders, and in that respect Interreg D programmes are covered.

### 1.1. Thematic scope

It is very important to distinguish actions under ISO2 from those under mainstream programmes and from other Interreg Policy Objectives, especially with regard to PO2 and PO4 in order to reinforce the integrated use of ISO2 with all relevant EU funds. For example, actions under “Civil security” are primarily funded through PO2 and other EU instruments (Emergency Support Instrument, EU Civil Protection Mechanism / rescEU package). Hence, ISO2 can only complement the actions already financed by other funds and the other Policy Objectives.

It is obvious that the budget for actions under ISO2 is limited, but nonetheless it can support actions that can complement main funds and instruments, primarily those of DG HOME. Therefore, any action under ISO2 should be coordinated primarily with DG HOME - the main funders and responsible for the EU policy on migration and home affairs.

ISO2 could be perceived in two ways. It could be seen as a way to improve the conditions at the borders, but it could also be perceived as a sign of hostility towards third country migrants and refugees, and as an instrument for building land border walls and fences around Europe. The **principle of solidarity** is the core principle of Cohesion Policy and should be at the heart of the actions and operations funded through ISO 2. Indeed, the funded actions and operations could for example improve controls and flows of extra-European migrants at the borders and ease their welcoming, in order to ensure security against many types of threats such as natural threats, but also human threats.

Peace, security and development are mutually dependent. In this regard, IS02 should be seen as an essential Policy Objective, enhancing the achievement of the other objectives under a given Interreg programme. At the same time, this Specific Objective requires a strong coordination mechanism built by the programme in order to reinforce the integrated use of all relevant EU funds (in particular DG HOME funds managed by Central Bodies). What is important is to identify how to complement and create synergies with the other Policy Objectives (in particular PO2 and PO4) in the programme and with mainstream programmes, always keeping in mind the European added value.

Budget wise, even though the budget for IS02 is limited, the actions funded by this Specific Objective can still have an impact. There are many activities in terms of digitalization, for instance, of the checks, of the surveillance at the border, and the upscaling of the existing systems that can be financed.

## **2. Possible areas of intervention**

For **Interreg A**, the main area of intervention should concern the funding of actions in the field of border crossing management:

- capability gaps relating to EU external borders identified by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and by EU customs (in particular through support to the Integrated Border Management (IBM) frameworks<sup>1</sup>),
- and the Green Lanes<sup>2</sup>, which actually are ways to facilitate the circulation of goods between member states when there are border restrictions (for instance due to a pandemic). They ensure a continuous flow of goods between member states and to avoid disruption of the production chains. Green Lanes are very important and this objective of IS02 could even help at the internal borders.

For **Interreg B** and **MRS**, the funding of actions in the field of border crossing management would be recommended as well. These could be “softer” actions and they could primarily aim at providing a holistic framework in close coordination with relevant regional/international organisations such as *Frontex*, *Europol*, *Interpol*, etc. and/or in synergy with existing initiatives like the *European Forum for Urban Security* (Efus), the

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<sup>1</sup> Upscaling and replication of border crossing points' infrastructures can also be usefully funded under IS02. However, considering the significant amounts generally necessary for such infrastructure investments, extensive and efficient cooperation mechanisms with other EU funds would be a prerequisite for such investments through IS02.

<sup>2</sup> To ensure that EU-wide supply chains continue to operate, Member States were requested to designate, without delay, all the relevant internal border-crossing points on the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) as 'green lane' border crossings. The green lane border crossings should be open to all freight vehicles, whatever goods they are carrying. Crossing the border, including any checks and health screening. Green Lanes exist not only on the internal borders, but they exist also on the external borders.



*Urban Innovative Actions*, etc. Interreg B could also very effectively support actions in the field of mobility and migration management, including the protection and economic and social integration of third country nationals including migrants.

Interreg B programmes can play an important role in the coordination with the mainstream programmes of different Member States. In this respect, the potential for these programmes is much higher. They may finance “soft” measures, such as: exchanges of good practices, trainings among partner countries, protection of migrants, also the risk management, the protection of critical infrastructure, the urban agenda, which are topics that could be shared among the partner countries of an Interreg B programme. For example, the support for the protection of public spaces is an action that normally should be funded by a mainstream programme, not by ISO2. What an Interreg B programme can do in order to complement the activities of a mainstream programme or other networks/initiatives could be, for example, the exchange of good practices, or training activities for citizens or different target groups on how to protect the public spaces.

These measures or actions can complement existing initiatives, as it is important to capitalize on existing projects and give continuity to the actions. Actually, there are many projects essentially financed by DG HOME, and they need to be continued or extended. In this regard, there is a potential for Interreg programmes to support this capitalization exercise and to territorialize themselves more effectively.

### **3. Identifying synergies and complementarities with other EU funded programmes and actions/operations**

It will require an effort to coordinate with other EU programmes, other instruments and other EU policies (for instance through a central EU funds’ coordination body, close cooperation between the respective monitoring committees, use of territorial instruments, etc.). This is a challenge that ISO2 might bring, but that might also be an opportunity. Programming task forces need to be very careful during the drafting of the new programmes. They can also liaise with the Strategy practitioners (National coordinators, Thematic group members, Pillar officers, Facility Points), in order to have a cross-pillar or a cross-area overview. In IPA countries, normally there are the National IPA Coordinators and their offices who are supposed to coordinate all the actions to be financed in those areas.

In order to ensure complementarity under ISO2 for IPA programmes, DG HOME and other relevant DGs have to be consulted. In this respect, DG REGIO has worked a lot with the other DGs, and indeed, will work with the EU delegations in the partner countries in case ISO2 will be chosen by the programmes.

For example, actions like disaster management in partner countries can be financed through IPA or NDICI but also through DG HOME. DG HOME can finance actions, especially in the post-2020 period, in third countries, since it will have a relatively significant percentage of its budget dedicated to external countries or partner countries. IS02 can nonetheless still usefully complement the major investments made under the mainstream funds. In addition, this is a way to bridge Member States with partner countries like IPA countries and NDICI countries, and integrate mainstream EU funds, Interreg, IPA and/or NDICI/NEXT funds.

#### **4. Implementing IS0 2**

##### **4.1. Eligibility of actions and potential beneficiaries**

For the definition of the beneficiaries, the Art.2(8) of the proposed new CPR shall apply. Infrastructure projects can be financed especially when considering border management. However, it should be emphasised that these infrastructures are highly capital-intensive investments, and accordingly, they will most likely be funded only through strong coordination mechanisms.

##### **4.2. Indicators**

Interreg common output and result indicators could well apply for IS0 2. For instance: **RC081, RC083, RC084, RC0 86, RC0 87 or RC0116.**

Similarly, for IS0 2, the programming authorities could also consider some common result indicators for the Interreg programmes, like for instance: **RCR 84, RCR 85 or RCR 104.**

Interreg Common indicators are strongly recommended to be used in order to show the added value of Interreg within the Cohesion Policy. If needed, programmes may develop their own indicators. Should this be the case, it is advisable to limit the number of indicator pairs (output & result) to a maximum of two or three per SO.

#### **5. COVID-19 pandemic**

Interventions focused for example on “Safe medication practices” are rather to be tackled by Interreg B programmes and also Macro-regional Strategies. The European added value remains as an essential principle, and especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, the solidarity and mutual dependency between peace, security and development are very important.