



## Joint Electronic Monitoring System

Interact provides Interreg programmes the opportunity to use a community developed monitoring system – Jems, the Joint Electronic Monitoring System. By working together like this, with many programmes using one software, programmes can save time and resources in developing their own software. Jems also plays a key role in ensuring the implementation of harmonised best practices as created and established in HIT, the Harmonised Implementation Tools.

From a pioneering project in Interact III, the delivery of a bespoke Interreg monitoring system has become a significant investment for Interact, and the provision of a significant service for the Interreg Community.

### Where did this work start?

The original discussions around e-cohesion and e-reporting started at the end of the 2007-2013 period. Interact was supporting programmes to exchange on their monitoring systems and to share knowledge and experience about meeting the new requirements for e-cohesion and e-reporting. It posed an obvious, but fairly challenging question, could we develop one monitoring system in Interact that could be available to Interreg programmes and save them the time, money and risk involved in managing their own tenders.

Jems (Joint Electronic Monitoring System), and the predecessor eMS (Electronic Monitoring System), both required a harmonisation of programme management and practice. With the development of HIT (Harmonised Implementation Tools) for the launch of the 2014-2020 period, the fundamentals of the programme and project life-cycle were sufficiently harmonised that it would be feasible to provide a software for all Interreg programmes.

This would also require programmes to adapt though. From HIT, it is possible (albeit not recommended) to easily modify the individual elements and to create add-ons to respond to programme specific needs or desires. In a monitoring system, while add-ons would be possible, changes to the fundamental logic would not be.

More fundamentally, for the project to succeed, Interact had to be trusted to be able to deliver a complex financial software. This was a high risk project for Interact, with no

institutional experience of developing and maintaining a monitoring system, and no history of working with Interreg in this context – almost as a software supplier.

As a concept, it started with an idea, that it could be done. The idea led to discussions and five programmes bravely committed to the idea. With Interact pledging to use it, alongside four Interreg programmes, the financial logic of developing one system was assured. The pilot programmes were the Central Baltic, Central Europe, North West Europe, and Austria-Hungary. Once the system was developed, it was available to all Interreg on a free-license basis and more than 35 programmes came forward and signed license agreements.

This success also created a new challenge, the eMS software was not designed to work at such scale and the resourcing for it was stretched throughout the period. These challenges were set out in the Case-Based Impact Evaluation and addressed before Jems was commissioned. One example of such a challenge is the lack of automatic testing in eMS that made it extremely challenging to confidently develop and deploy amendments to the system.

### **What are the benefits/advantages this offers cooperation stakeholders?**

The particular benefit to Jems, is that it is a software designed for the unique characteristics of Interreg and implements the harmonised best practice established in HIT. Many programmes that use nationally developed systems have to fight the underlying logic to meet the cooperation aspects that are fundamental to Interreg programmes. Furthermore, they do not benefit from the shared automation of the harmonised legal interpretations that protect Interreg programmes.

As Jems is available on a free-license basis, it dramatically reduces the cost, both in time and money, which programmes need to invest in order to comply with e-cohesion reporting requirements. Furthermore, as Jems is designed to work on the larger scale the use of agile techniques and feedback loops enabled thousands of pieces of feedback to shape and improve the system, making it more user-centric. The volume of feedback from the variety of User profiles Jems works with cannot be matched by a single programme.

An additional gain from more programmes using Jems is for audit and other financial authorities who work across multiple programmes. In having many, or all, programmes using the same system, the authorities do not need to invest time and resources to learn to use a new system every time they work with a different programme.

Similarly, for potential project partners who work with multiple Interreg programmes, not needing to learn a new system reduces the administrative burden of applying to multiple Interreg programmes. Of course, without the underlying harmonisation of programme practice, the project partners not only need to learn to work with multiple reporting systems, but structures, report content, frequency and more. This is where a more harmonised approach, through HIT, through Jems, and through wider harmonisation and simplification efforts reduces the entry barrier for new partners.

### **How does this impact citizens, people living in the areas affected?**

The use of Jems or an alternative software provides little direct benefit to citizens. The main advantage of the software is actually for project partners programmes. The software enables them be more efficient and effective. In reducing the burden from developing a monitoring system to hosting and configuring it, programme authorities have more time to dedicate to direct challenges.

In this way, it is hoped that as programme administration is less burdensome, the impact the programmes can have and the ways they can cooperate with each other become more pronounced.

### **Looking ahead, when Interact is 25 years old (2027) where could this work take Interreg?**

One of the long-term objectives for Jems is to be renewable into the 2028-2035 period. The pace of technological advancement will always make this a challenging deliverable, but the development concept of Jems is designed to be deliverable for the two programming periods, depending of course on the scope and scale of changes in the Interreg 2028-2035 period.

If this is successful, it will mean that Jems not only saved Interreg significant funds against the current period, but potentially in the next as well. In a challenging financial context, for Interreg Programmes, as well as for Member States and citizens, the long term financial saving offered by an Interreg community monitoring system could prove significant.