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European Union  
Regional Policy

# A guide to bringing INTERREG and Tacis funding together



European Commission



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It can be accessed through the Europa server (<http://europa.eu.int>) and on the Info regio web site (<http://info regio.cec.eu.int>).

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## Foreword

Promoting regional co-operation across its external borders is a priority for the European Union. The development of common projects is a key expression of this co-operation, helping both to create new opportunities for the areas concerned and to overcome some of the economic, social and political obstacles arising because of the existence of an international border.

This guide has been prepared to explain the financial and other assistance that is available in this field from the European Union. It is aimed at the partners on the ground, especially practitioners, to help them in their work in preparing projects eligible for financial support from the European Union – from Tacis on the Russian side and INTERREG within the Union – and to set out the steps for their successful realisation. This should be seen as a first step towards increased co-ordination between all the EU instruments in the region.

For Tacis, in particular, encouraging cross-border and regional co-operation is a relatively new priority in addition to its classical role as an instrument in support of the process of transition in the Commonwealth of Independent States. For INTERREG, promoting co-operation across external borders of the European Union, rather than across its internal borders, also presents particular challenges.

Making INTERREG and Tacis work better together will also further the development of the Northern Dimension. This guide reflects our joint determination to ensure that cross-border co-operation with Russia is a success today and to prepare for the future enlargement of the European Union that will create a new set of external borders, new challenges and new opportunities for co-operation.



Michel Barnier  
Member of the European Commission



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# 1. Introduction

The purpose of this Guide is to explain how the European Union's INTERREG and Tacis programmes can be used more effectively in the future in support of co-operation across the external borders of the European Union. The European Commission has already taken steps to improve co-ordination between the two programmes, but it is acknowledged that more needs to be done in order to be able to respond better to growing needs and changing political priorities in this field.

The European Parliament, in its opinion on the INTERREG III Guidelines of April 2000, has called on the Commission "to co-ordinate better with INTERREG the various instruments used for co-operation projects in third countries" and stressed "that this co-ordination of instruments is a *sine qua non* for genuine co-operation."

Meanwhile, the new Council regulation on Tacis states:

*"...In the implementation of cross-border co-operation programmes involving Member States, PHARE countries and partner States, the*

*Commission shall seek effective co-ordination and consistency with programmes financed through the Structural Funds, Community external assistance programmes and bilateral assistance initiatives."*

This Guide is organised as follows. Sections 2 and 3 set out the general policy framework of policy in this field. In section 3, the current and planned activities in relation to the Northern Dimension is described, a context where INTERREG and Tacis have a valuable contribution to make.

Sections 4 and 5 set out the technical details covering the different programmes concerned and the project application process. Section 6 explains the concrete steps the Commission is currently undertaking to improve co-ordination and offers suggestions to the Member State and Russian authorities about the steps that they can take to assist with this process. Annex 1 provides practical information on how to prepare and submit a project application, and Annex 2 provides a series of contact points for advice and assistance.

## 2. The general framework

Co-operation between the regions of the European Union, and those on the other side of the Union's external borders, has become increasingly important over recent years.

In the framework of EU/Commonwealth of Independent States relations, the European Commission has two main ways to promote co-operation across the relevant external borders, which are the focus of this document:

- **INTERREG**, a Community Initiative aimed at promoting interregional co-operation which operates only within the European Union, financed by the Structural Funds

- **Tacis**, a programme which in its current form is designed to offer support to partner states undergoing transition in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

At the cross border level between the EU and CIS countries, the ultimate aim is to create new opportunities for the population living in border areas, to promote the spirit of co-operation and to foster trust between the authorities on each side of the border.

At the wider regional level (i.e. the Baltic region), there is a need to promote interstate and interregional co-operation with a view to assisting the development of the Northern Dimension and moving towards enlargement.

## The current situation and outlook

To organise a project covering activities in both Finland and Russia for instance, one must submit separate applications for INTERREG and Tacis respectively. This is not ideal from the applicant's point of view, but is explained by the fact that INTERREG and Tacis are two different instruments which have different aims and criteria, different procedures for decision-making and implementation and different governing legislation. Furthermore, there are differences between the internal and external financial instruments of the European Union. For example, the budget for Tacis, like all external European Union programmes, is annual, while INTERREG as one of the programmes to promote economic development under the Structural Funds, has a multi-annual budget in order to provide the basis for longer-term planning. For Tacis, prior project approval by the European Commission is required, and the European Commission and the recipient country remain jointly responsible for project implementation; for INTERREG, on the other hand, responsibility for project selection and implementation lies with the European Union Member State(s) concerned.

For these reasons the double application process will continue to be necessary. However, the objective of these guidelines is to link the two procedures to the greatest possible extent and to increase transparency in order to facilitate the implementation of cross-border projects.

## Recent progress

In order to ensure that these technical aspects do not stand in the way of the development of common projects across the borders, the European Commission has already introduced a number of internal co-ordination measures between INTERREG and Tacis. For example, one of the criteria for the selection of Tacis CBC projects is the existence of a complementary INTERREG project on the other side of the border.

Already, there is evidence that this is working. Examples of successful Tacis CBC projects featuring close co-operation with INTERREG include:

- Two international border crossing projects: Vartius-Lyttä and Niirala-Värtsilä;
- The Karelian parks;
- Development of monitoring, protection and sustainable use of Lake Ladoga;
- North-West Road Management project;
- Development of Jänisjoki for tourism purposes.

Such projects demonstrate that, even with separate application processes, co-ordinating and linking INTERREG and Tacis project applications can be effective and can produce positive results.

At the same time, the European Commission is aware that further improvements are required in this co-ordination. The INTERREG Guidelines of April 2000, setting out the rules for 2000-2006, commit the Commission to making progress on this issue. This Guide represents a contribution to help interested organisations, whether or not they have been involved in INTERREG and Tacis in the past, to launch projects across the EU-Russian land and maritime border.

## 3. The Northern Dimension

### INTERREG, Tacis and the Northern Dimension

Co-ordination between INTERREG and Tacis has an important contribution to make in the framework of the Northern Dimension.

A Northern Dimension Action Plan, proposed by the European Commission, was approved at the European Council meeting at Feira in June 2000. The Northern Dimension aims to provide added value through reinforced co-ordination and complementarity in European Union and Member States' programmes and enhanced collaboration between countries in Northern Europe. The cross-border aspects together with regional and transnational aspects of such a process are obviously key elements to its success, as they will bring together actors from within and outside the European Union to share experiences and to learn from each other.

### Kaliningrad

The focus of INTERREG and Tacis co-ordination is not only on the EU-Russian land border. It is equally important to emphasise co-operation within the wider Baltic Sea region, and in particular with Kaliningrad. This Russian enclave on the Baltic Sea does not have a land border with the European Union at present, but it does have a coastline on the Baltic Sea, and the Tacis cross-border co-operation programme extends to co-operation with other countries in the Baltic Sea Region.

The Commission wishes to encourage the participation of Kaliningrad in co-operation actions in the Baltic Sea region. Kaliningrad lies within the zone identified in the context of the INTERREG transnational programme for the Baltic Sea region. As described below, transnational co-operation has a wider scope than cross-border co-operation and is more suited to the maritime dimension of the Baltic Sea area.

In January 2001, the Commission issued a communication on Kaliningrad and its future relationship with the European Union. The document is a discussion paper intended to encourage thinking on how to assist the development of the region in the framework of enhanced co-operation between Russia and the European Union.

## 4. INTERREG: an overview

### INTERREG

The INTERREG Community Initiative is part of the European Union's regional policy. The funding for INTERREG III (the latest phase of INTERREG) comes from the European Regional Development Fund, one of the Structural Funds. A total of 4.875 billion € is available for the period 2000-2006. INTERREG III is split into three strands, namely cross-border (A), transnational (B) and inter-regional co-operation (C).

**Cross-border** co-operation mostly concerns those regions which are located on the land borders of the European Union. A limited number of maritime borders in close proximity are also included.

**Transnational** co-operation seeks to promote wider scale co-operation across national frontiers and as such it is not limited to contiguous border areas. The aim is to overcome the fragmentation of space caused by national borders, supporting a broadly-based strategic approach to the development of areas with common characteristics, such as the Baltic Sea region.



**Interregional** co-operation promotes common projects between regions that are not necessarily geographically contiguous. Any region within the Union can potentially co-operate with any other on a range of subjects.

## INTERREG programmes

Member States are responsible for the submission of proposals for INTERREG cross-border programmes including the aims (the “priorities”) for the particular area concerned and the types of action which will be supported (the “measures”). The role of the European Commission is to ensure that programme proposals comply with relevant Community legislation, that the local and regional partners in the programme area have been involved in the drafting of the programme, and that the priorities and measures selected are adapted to the needs of the area concerned.

Following negotiation between the European Commission and the Member States and the partnership, the programmes are approved by the Commission. After approval, the programme management authority is responsible for the procedure for selecting project selection which must be capable of giving results that are consistent with the aims of the programme.

By virtue of its wider geographical scope, INTERREG strand B, tends to have a more tightly focused approach on a limited number of strategic priorities that respond to the needs of a large transnational area. Strand B therefore focuses on matters such as transport, environmental issues and spatial planning. Under strand A, the choice is wider in order to be able to address the specificities of smaller areas.

## INTERREG 2000-2006

Under **strand A of INTERREG**, there are three cross-border programmes in operation on the EU side of the EU-Russian border: **South-East Finland, Karelia** (both Finnish-Russian programmes) and **North Calotte/Kolarctic** (which includes Northern Sweden, Northern Finland and Northern Norway.)

Under **INTERREG IIIB**, actions are supported on the EU side of the border in the context of the **Baltic Sea Region** which covers all of the Nordic countries and North-East Germany as well as North-West Russia and Kaliningrad.

It is not possible, however, at this stage to provide the definitive overview of the relevant INTERREG programmes. The following programmes are under negotiation and none has yet been approved by the European Commission. The details set out below are therefore subject to change.

The **Karelian INTERREG IIIA Programme** (€ 28 million in EU funds) has identified three main priorities for action over the next six years. These are:

- Business Activity;
- Expertise and Regional co-operation;
- Transport and Communication.

The **South-East Finland INTERREG IIIA Programme** (€ 22 million) focuses on:

- the development of transport links and the state of the environment;
- the development of business and the business environment;
- expertise and improving conditions for co-operation.

In the **North Calotte/Kolarctic INTERREG IIIA programme** (€ 47 million), the Kolarctic part of the programme focuses on co-operation with Russia (the Nordkalotten part dealing with intra-Scandinavian co-operation.) Again, there are three priorities proposed within the Kolarctic part of the programme:

- Business co-operation;
- Competences and welfare;
- Infrastructure.

The **Baltic Sea INTERREG IIIB Programme** (€ 97 million) contains the following priorities:

- Promotion of spatial development approaches and actions for specific territories and sectors;
- Promotion of territorial structures supporting sustainable Baltic Sea region development;
- Promotion of institution building, strengthening transnational spatial development.

Programmes are expected to be approved formally by June 2001 with the first Committee meetings for these programmes expected in summer 2001.

## 5. Tacis: an overview

### Tacis

The Tacis programme links the EU to thirteen partner States in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Within the Tacis programme there has been a redeployment of financial resources in favour of the Western CIS, those closest to what will be the new external boundary of an enlarged EU. The new Tacis regulation provides for the selection of a smaller number of larger projects. The amount envisaged for the implementation of the Tacis programme over the 2000 to 2006 period is € 3.138 billion.

### The Tacis CBC Programme

Tacis comprises both national and multi-country programmes. Cross-border co-operation is one of the multi-country programmes. It covers four partner States: Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova. The allocation for the year 2001 was € 23 million. The Tacis regulation defines the purpose of cross-border co-operation as:

- assisting border regions in overcoming their specific developmental problems;
- encouraging the linking of networks on both sides of the border, e.g. border-crossing facilities;

- accelerating the transformation process in the partner States through their co-operation with border regions in the European Union or Central and Eastern Europe;
- reducing transboundary environmental risks and pollution.

The Tacis CBC Indicative Programme for 2000-2003 provides funding for three main areas of co-operation and for a small project facility as follows:

- 40–50% for development of infrastructure networks (border crossings)<sup>1</sup>;
- 15–25% for promotion of environmental protection and the management of natural resources;
- 15–25% for support to the private sector and assistance for economic development;
- 10–25% for small projects.

The Indicative Programme proposes to provide around € 30 million per annum. Within the framework of the Indicative Programme, an annual action programme is prepared which identifies the projects which are to be supported that year.

<sup>1</sup> A study of border crossings in the Tacis area was made to identify projects for European Union funding. This 1995/96 study is currently being updated. An analysis will be made to reconsider the ranking of border crossings for which available support can be most appropriately used to improve traffic flows.

## Types of project under Tacis

The Tacis projects are classified into two different types, based on the cost of the project.

Firstly, there are **large-scale projects**. These are mostly border crossings, environment and energy projects, the budget of which is usually more than € 2 million. Project proposals are submitted to the National Co-ordinating Unit, which is part of the Russian Ministry of the Economy. In the case of cross-border co-operation the projects may be proposed through the Tacis Local Support Offices. There is one in St. Petersburg with branches in Petrozavodsk and in Kaliningrad. The European Commission Delegation is associated with the programming. Overall responsibility for programming lies with the Commission Directorate-General for External Relations in Brussels, and responsibility for final identification of projects lies with the EuropeAid service of the European Commission.

The second type of project relates to the **small projects** facility. The small project facility offers scope for regional and local authorities to participate directly in cross-border co-operation. The projects are usually worth between € 50,000 and € 200,000 and they are organised on a call for proposals basis. Local and regional authorities are the main groups concerned. Project proposals are submitted directly to the EuropeAid service of the European Commission, which then selects the best projects once a year.

Small projects offer especially good opportunities for linking with INTERREG projects. They can be organised at regional or local level, the funding size ensures that they are manageable, and the range of subjects which can be supported is wider than for cross-border large-scale projects. In general, the Small Project Facility, which supports small cross-border projects, assists projects that address a common problem or help to develop the partners' competencies in the areas of administrative reforms, local economic development, social affairs, environment and energy efficiency.

## Other Relevant Tacis Programmes

Although the Tacis CBC programme is the Tacis programme which can most obviously benefit from improved co-ordination with INTERREG, it is not the only one. Local authorities should take into account the possibilities of co-ordination through other programmes described below bearing in mind that all these programmes have their own application procedures.

The Tacis national programme for Russia supports projects across Russia, some of which can be located in border areas.

In addition, there is a Baltic Special Facility which has a separate budget line. It is jointly managed by PHARE and Tacis according to CBC rules. The Tacis component will focus on border crossings and on health care.

Another relevant Tacis programme is the Institution Building Partnership Programme (IBPP), which is part of each Tacis national programme. In the field of assistance for institution building based on partnerships, Tacis has supported government services co-operation (e.g. with the Customs programme) as well as local and regional initiatives and grass-roots organisations (such as LIEN which encourages non-governmental organisations to work together, and City Twinning). The close involvement of the actors in the definition of the project objectives, which enhances their sense of ownership, has been a key success factor.



## 6. Taking forward effective co-ordination

This section identifies the actions that the Commission is taking or intends to take and which it recommends that the relevant national, regional and local authorities in the Member States and Russia take to improve the current co-ordination of INTERREG and Tacis. It is divided into actions dealing with INTERREG issues, actions on Tacis issues, and publicity actions relevant to both instruments. It also briefly refers to PHARE-Tacis-INTERREG-co-operation.

### INTERREG aspects

- In the negotiations on the INTERREG programmes during the first half of 2001, the European Commission will require that the priorities chosen closely relate to those already identified for Tacis CBC over the next three years.
- The selection criteria for INTERREG projects in the relevant programmes must include a reference to Tacis.
- INTERREG application forms should include a section to be completed on the co-ordination with a Tacis project, either a link to a large-scale project or a parallel application for a small project.
- Project submission dates for INTERREG programmes and Steering Committee meeting dates should be set as far ahead as possible, in order to offer a coherent timeline with Tacis.
- The Commission will ensure that it will be represented at relevant INTERREG Committee meetings by both INTERREG and Tacis desk officers.
- INTERREG Steering Committees could meet in advance of Tacis small project submission deadlines and award conditional approvals to projects which are submitting under the Tacis call. Input from relevant directorates will be given in the inter-service consultations and during the evaluation committee meetings. This will allow priority to be given to various projects during the Tacis selection process.

### Tacis aspects

- During the selection process for Tacis large-scale projects, whether under the cross-border programme, or under other Tacis programmes, the Commission shall take into account the INTERREG dimension (i.e. favourable consideration for projects which have or could have links to INTERREG projects).
- Under the Tacis CBC Small Project Facility, the European Commission will fix a cut-off date for the submission of projects for springtime of each year.
- Priority will be given to Tacis small projects which have a parallel INTERREG project. A section in the Tacis application form and the call for proposals should address this issue.
- Local partners in the INTERREG programmes may offer their expertise in project preparation to Russian organisations. Co-operation on the preparation of project applications can often have a beneficial effect on the overall quality of proposals.

### Information aspects

- The Commission will set up an INTERREG-Tacis e-mail list, which will be circulated to interested parties at regular intervals and will provide updates on meeting dates, selected projects and other relevant issues. Registration requests should be addressed to: <Regio-Interreg3@cec.eu.int>
- The Commission will include details of selected INTERREG and Tacis projects on its websites – both the Inforegio site: <<http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int>> and the EuropeAid website: <[http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/index_en.htm)>.

- Member States, the Commission and authorities of the partner States should also ensure a high degree of publicity for selected projects. This will encourage the development of parallel or linked projects in relation to existing projects either within the Union or in the partner States.
- The expert being appointed at the INTERREG Baltic Sea programme's Secretariat in Karlskrona (Sweden) to advise partners in arranging PHARE/Tacis funding will be kept fully informed of preparations for Tacis projects.

### PHARE aspects

In the case of PHARE, very close co-operation currently exists with INTERREG since "Joint Programming Documents" have been produced in accordance with the PHARE CBC Regulation, so as to ensure the smooth transition from INTERREG/PHARE CBC to future internal INTERREG programmes after enlargement. On current PHARE-Tacis borders, complementary interventions are being assured by close collaboration between the Commission services.

## 7. Conclusion

The Commission believes that this is an important further step in the improved co-ordination of INTERREG and Tacis. Further work, enlarging the scope of the exercise, will continue. In this regard, it is intended that this paper will be updated from time to time to take account of new developments. Updates will be available on the web sites of the Directorates-General for Regional Policy <<http://www.inforegio.cec.eu.int/Interreg3>> and the EuropeAid Co-operation Office <[http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/index_en.htm)>.

The Commission underlines that, although the improvements it is putting in place will improve the possibilities of co-ordination between INTERREG and Tacis, the actual co-ordination itself must come from project applicants. They must take steps to link up projects and to ensure the quality of the proposals that they present. The Commission can set up a framework and encourage co-operation – only the authorities and organisations on the ground can actually ensure that the co-ordination leads to concrete results.

## Annex 1

### Preparing INTERREG and Tacis projects

#### *How to prepare and submit an INTERREG project*

The first step in preparing an INTERREG project is to **contact the INTERREG secretariat** for the programme which covers the location of the project. The secretariat is the contact point for the programme. It deals with the practical arrangements of the programme, such as receiving and assessing projects. They can also provide useful advice to people preparing projects. The contact details for the INTERREG secretariats are given in annex 2.

A project proposal is made by **completing a project application form**, which is available for each programme. In the application, the project proposers have to justify their project, identify all the organisations taking part in the project, identify how it meets the objectives of the programme, and give targets that the project will achieve. In the case of INTERREG-Tacis co-ordination, project proposals will have to describe the links they have with a parallel Tacis project.

The most suitable project proposals will be **selected by a Steering Committee**, which consists of representatives of the national, regional and local authorities and other organisations. The European Commission sits as an observer on the Committee. Projects can normally be selected for approval, given conditional approval (because some information was missing, for example), recommended for revision or rejected. Conditional approval could also be used where a project's parallel application under Tacis had not yet been approved.

A selected project will normally receive a **grant letter**, which will set out the terms and conditions for the use of the grant. These will include providing regular reports about progress, monitoring results and keeping well-organised files and accurate accounts.

#### *How to prepare and submit a project under the Tacis Small Project Facility*

The Commission organises a call for proposals every year for the small project facility. This will set out the subjects to be covered by projects, who can submit projects, and, particularly important, the closing date for project submission.

Applicants must complete the project application form and submit it directly to the Commission. The Tacis application should be completed in parallel with the INTERREG application described in the previous section. In this way, there should be coherence between the two forms. The Tacis application will have to provide details of the parallel INTERREG application to ensure priority consideration in the selection process. The application should specify the status of the INTERREG application – e.g. approved, conditionally approved or submitted. The Tacis Local Support Offices (see annex 2) can provide assistance to applicants.

The Commission will then organise an internal evaluation committee to select the best projects for funding. Projects can normally be selected for approval, given conditional approval (because some information was missing, for example), recommended for revision or rejected. Conditional approval could also be used where a project's parallel application under INTERREG had not yet been approved.

After approval of the (revised) application, the applicant will sign a contract with the Commission for the use of the grant. The contract fulfils the same role as the grant letter for an INTERREG project.

The Commission will expect to see a significant degree of co-ordination between linked INTERREG and Tacis CBC projects. Co-ordination should include frequent contacts between all project partners, regular meetings, and the preparation of reports which both fulfil the contract/grant letter requirements for the respective instrument and identify the added value provided by the linking of the projects.



## Annex 2: Contact points

### INTERREG Contact Points

#### Karelia:

Regional Council of Northern Ostrobothnia  
Kauppurienväy, 8 A  
FIN-90100 Oulu  
Tel: +358 8 321 4000  
<http://www.pohjois-pohjanmaa.fi>

#### South-East Finland:

Regional Council of South Karelia  
Raatimiehenkatu 18  
FIN-53100 Lappeenranta  
Tel: +358 5 613 001  
<http://www.ekarjala.fi/ekliitto>

#### Nordkalotten/Kolarctic:

Regional Council of Lapland  
PB 8056  
FIN-96101 Rovaniemi  
Tel: +358 16 330 1000  
<http://www.lapinliitto.fi>

#### Baltic Sea Region:

(a) Joint Secretariat Rostock  
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Grubenstrasse 20  
D-18055 Rostock  
Tel: +49 381 45 484 5281  
E-mail: [bsda@spatial.baltic.net](mailto:bsda@spatial.baltic.net)  
Internet: <http://www.spatial.baltic.net>

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### Tacis Contact Points

#### St Petersburg:

Tacis Local Support Office  
Izmailovskiy pr, 14, room 328,  
RU-198 005 St. Petersburg  
Tel: +7-812 325 08 19  
E-mail: [tacis@online.ru](mailto:tacis@online.ru)

#### Petrozavodsk:

Tacis Local Support Office  
Prospect Lenina 37A  
RU-185035 Petrozavodsk  
Tel: +7-8142 77 16 89  
E-mail: [berdino@karelia.ru](mailto:berdino@karelia.ru)

#### Kaliningrad:

Tacis Local Support Office  
Pl. Pobedy 4  
Kaliningrad Business Centre –  
Entrance 1 of 22  
RU-236040 Kaliningrad  
Tel: +7-0112 716798  
E-mail: [tacis.kaliningrad@ray.ru](mailto:tacis.kaliningrad@ray.ru)

#### Small Project Management Unit:

Phare/Tacis CBC Small Project Facility Office  
County of West Zealand  
Alleen 15  
DK-4180 Soro  
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E-mail: [Vec@vestamt.dk](mailto:Vec@vestamt.dk)

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