



INTERact

Sharing Expertise

INTERACT Programme Joint Annual Work Plan 2012



Introduction

The INTERACT Joint Annual Work Plan 2012 is the fourth joint plan presented by the INTERACT 2007-2013 Programme to the Monitoring Committee for a single decision.

As it was in the previous years, the Work Plan is based on a comprehensive Needs Assessment of the programmes' stakeholders and target groups, which was completed in September 2011. The Needs Assessment took into consideration the results of an online Survey as well as the needs as identified during the implementation of services (such as workshops, seminars, network meetings) and as communicated to INTERACT by the European Commission.

A strong focus for the work plan 2012 is maintained on joint activities and on the continuation and follow-up of activities started during 2011. In addition, also the regional aspect is respected by planning specific services for Programmes of a specific area (that is on a specific IP zone level).

As in the previous years, and even if the planning was carefully undertaken, some flexibility will have to be permitted in order to adapt to changes required by ad-hoc needs arising throughout the year 2012.

The Work Plan covers mainly three points:

- It provides information on the main results of the needs assessment analysis
- It highlights the specific objectives of INTERACT for 2012 which is a crucial year in terms of programmes' status in view of ongoing implementation of 2007-13 funding period and parallel start of preparation of 2014-20 funding period
- It clusters the main themes that will be addressed and the main services that will be delivered by INTERACT across Europe

Wishing you a pleasant reading!

The INTERACT Team

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1. Stakeholder Needs Analysis

The Joint Annual Work Plan is the result of a thorough analysis of needs and requests of the relevant stakeholders and target groups. The needs analysis is composed of at least six types of information sources:

- Immediate requests from Programmes
- Anticipated needs
- EC requests
- Follow-up activities from 2011
- Regular network events
- Needs assessment online survey 2012

The afore-mentioned information sources helped INTERACT to identify pertinent services and products for the next year and to set up the Joint Annual Work Plan 2012.

Throughout the year INTERACT has been in close contact with its stakeholders and target groups and has been collecting comments and suggestions and needs where they arise. This has enabled INTERACT to propose solutions and contextualised offers adapted to the expressed immediate needs. INTERACT also proposes services of anticipated needs based on an analysis of the wider context in which ETC operates. This analysis is based on the experience of INTERACT staff accumulated over the years and is result of a comparative analysis within the bigger ETC picture. Partly, INTERACT responds to EC requests. Other proposed services are based on activities, which have been started in 2011 and which request a follow-up.

Out of all 47 INTERACT joint and EU-wide services and products which will be provided by all IPs and the IS, 26 satisfy anticipated emerging needs (55%), 18 are follow-up activities of 2011 (38%), 14 activities have been inspired by the online needs assessment survey (30%) and 12 (26%) have been directly initiated by the Programmes (multiple sources possible).

As regards zone specific services and products IPs weight the various needs as follows (internal activities and needs not counted): Out of 21 IP Turku envisaged activities, 12 satisfy anticipated emerging needs (57%), 11 follow EC requests (52%), 9 have been directly initiated by the Programmes (43%) (multiple sources possible). Out of 16 IP Viborg zone specific services and products, 7 have been inspired by the online needs assessment survey (44%), and 6 respond to regional network needs (38%) (multiple sources possible). IP Vienna's envisaged activities (in total 14 zone specific services and products) satisfy to a majority (9 activities - 64%) to anticipated emerging needs (multiple sources possible). 7 activities follow EC requests (7 - 50%), the same quantity of activities

respond to direct Programme requests (7 - 50%). IP Valencia responds the majority, 9 out of 17 envisaged activities (53%) to direct requests from the Programmes, and 7 activities (41%) satisfy anticipated emerging needs (multiple sources possible).

The INTERACT services and products envisaged for 2012 cover to a large extent the requests which have been identified through this years' online needs assessment survey.

In the survey which had been launched by the INTERACT Secretariat and the INTERACT Points in June 2011, respondents were asked to indicate their interest on a number of topics divided mainly into 2 sections:

- Part A focused on regular INTERACT services (subsections: Programme Management, Financial Programme Management and Communication aimed at identifying what needs to meet and which areas to emphasize.
- Part B focused on the strategic activities launched by INTERACT as well as how ETC programs and INTERACT together could better position themselves in the preparation for the 2014-2020 programming period.

The above-mentioned sections included different topics and also indicated the type of support required in relation to the INTERACT services (conference, training, workshop, advisory service, written information). The respondents expressed their needs on a scale from 1 to 5 (1= very low interest, 5 = very high interest).

As regards the needs expressed by the respondents of the survey, 48% of all requested services are covered by the envisaged INTERACT services, 56 % of all requested products are covered by the envisaged INTERACT products for 2012. This coverage rate takes into account those topics and types of services for which the majority of respondents to the survey have expressed a very high or high interest.

The contents and the specific outcomes of the online needs assessment survey are presented in Annex 1.

2. INTERACT Objectives for the Year 2012

In line with the above-described needs analysis, and with the overall INTERACT framework as laid down in its Operational Programme (OP) and Multi-Annual Work Programme (MAWP), the overall objectives are broken down to following specific objectives for 2012:

- Fostering European scale of knowhow exchange by providing **EU-wide services** for supporting all Programmes in the current funding period. In this respect, seminars and networks focusing on Finance management (First Level Control, Audit functions, Irregularities and Recoveries), Programme management (Project support of Programmes, Evaluation), Communication (How to communicate projects results) will be implemented.
- Providing a network platform by offering **regional services** for Programmes located in a specific geographic area. Such services are addressed to set-up or maintain regional networks established for e.g. First-Level-Controllers, Audit Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariats and Managing Authorities.
- **Introducing new topics** that are in line with the progress of period 2007-13 and with related needs for support. This specifically covers e.g. workshops addressing Programme closure (under condition that EC Guidelines are published) and Intellectual Property rights (topic of specific interest for projects dealing with Innovation, but not limited to those).
- **Establishing and maintaining a common learning base by addressing Capitalisation** in various activities due to its importance with regard to different over-arching objectives (such as making ETC and its achievements more visible) for better capturing programmes' results, tailor-made advisory services will be implemented and fact sheets produced. Thematic capitalisation will be addressed by targeted seminars, networks and online material on Sustainable Growth, (Intelligent) Energy, Innovation, Natural risks or Maritime issues. KEEP will not be limited to basic project and partner data, but is supposed to be further developed in view of becoming a real knowledge management tool.
- **Looking beyond ETC-boundaries** is an objective with increasing importance. This extension of scope actually started already especially with the support of INTERACT to the Macro-regional strategies and with services regarding Article 37.6.b on interregional cooperation within Objectives 1 and 2. The year 2012 will see a continuation of those activities and some more concrete activities on Financial engineering will be extended. Also the above-mentioned activities on Capitalisation will take into account stakeholders and experiences outside ETC.
- **Supporting the preparation of ETC post 2013.** Activities in this field started already in late 2010, were an issue for the entire 2011 and will become a major field of activities for 2012. The core of those activities will address the different phases of programme preparation, such as Programming (covering Strategic programming, Programming process, Programme structure), Legal documents (such as Memorandum of Understanding, Operational Programme, Evaluation Plan, Communication Plan), Simplification (such as harmonisation of budget lines and First-Level-Procedures) and Implementation tools (such as application, assessment, reporting and monitoring).
- Intensifying the cooperation with ETC programmes and the **IPA CBC programmes** among Member States and Candidate and Potential Candidate Countries by supporting the programmes with standard and ad-hoc services.
- **Communicating project results and making ETC more visible** will be addressed by a major joint communication activity, the provisionally so-called "ETC day" scheduled to take place in June 2012. This activity started already in 2011 involving Programmes and several relevant EC units in the planning of the implementation phase.

3. INTERACT Services for the Year 2012

The services are presented according to the scale of activities, namely

- Activities on an EU-level
- Activities on a zone level
- Horizontal activities

3.1 EU wide activities

Programme/project management activities

The handbook on programme evaluation will be updated with practice examples, that programmes might share and, if requested by programmes, an evaluation seminar can be organised.

INTERACT will continue its pilot work of the so called "capture exercise" ("Capturing the Outcomes of ETC"). This advanced evaluation activity has been carried out with several volunteer programmes and will be further developed in 2012. Not only specific meetings, but also some advisory services and discussions in other related events will be held. The idea is to get a system that will allow to seize the impact and change of the ETC programmes in the territories.

In order to promote a strategic approach to programme implementation, where projects play the key role in the success or failure of the programme, a workshop on project support during implementation will be organised. The objective is to raise awareness of the importance of the project support in the implementation of programme strategy, identify current and good practice. This is against the background that the finance and control issues seem to steal most of the attention of such services.

Based on preparatory work started already in 2011, INTERACT will further fine-tune training material on Programme/Project management and will explore the possibilities for online provision of it. Finally, there should be an E-learning tool allowing access to all interested parties in real time. Such E-learning tool would be considered to complement the "regular" off-line services, but due to its limited nature will not and cannot substitute the effective exchange of experience gained during seminars, workshops and network meetings.

In addition, a draft publication on "ETC for beginners" will be developed. This publication will aim at the target group of potential new project partners that are to be involved in ETC in order to bring new knowledge that is relevant for the more targeted objectives of EU 2020.

Financial management activities

Territorial Cooperation specific financial issues for programme managers are still highly requested by the INTERACT target groups. At the same time, there is a need to follow up on activities carried out during 2010-11, such as the work on simplification, harmonisation for the current and next programming period.

In 2012 a work on programme closure will be started to support programme managers in the first steps to prepare for programme closure, especially because the majority of projects are expected to be closing in 2012. If EC guidance on closure will be issued in 2012, this will be addressed from the point of view of ETC programmes. In relation to closure, the support provided to programmes for facing de-commitment will be also continued. EU-wide activities and zone activities will assure a wide coverage of programmes needs.

Moreover, in 2012 a number of audits of operations should also take place and therefore some irregularities might have to be followed up by programmes authorities. Specific support is foreseen within the existing financial networks, such as the CA and the AA networks and meetings as well as a specific workshop.

In view of harmonised approaches and increased administrative simplification for the next programming period, but not only, INTERACT will continue its first level controllers network on joint control approaches, templates and methods, as well as the work on eligibility of expenditures started within the Future of ETC financial network (i.e. joint approaches on cost categories, simplified cost option, etc.). The important theme of intellectual property rights for innovation-oriented projects will be addressed with interested ETC programmes, as well as the private partners' involvement.

INTERACT support to macro-regions and strategic initiatives

INTERACT Points of Turku and Vienna have been contributing in the implementation of the recently adopted two EU macro-regional strategies. This

support will continue in 2012, focusing also on the emerging needs beyond the strategy areas in other parts of Europe. The macro-regional strategy implementation calls for new ways of using existing financing sources, resulting in initiatives that pool together financial means via International Financing Institutions together with programme funding. In order to share the understanding of the ways of combining different financing sources INTERACT will develop further the concept of Aligning of Funding, and specific advisory and training events will take place to share this knowledge and build capacity in programmes to handle large complex projects consisting of several parts with different sources of financing. This type of service need, even though strongly associated with macro-regional strategies, is emerging in other areas too, and all INTERACT Points need to develop their capacity to satisfy this demand. At the same time INTERACT will enhance the awareness raising of such concepts and the need of pooling together programmes by linking them into other networks (e.g. AEBR, CPMR) and by linking ETC programmes with regional programmes financed by both EU structural funds and possibly also by national regional development funds.

INTERACT is supporting the networking of the multilevel governance structures of the macro-regional strategies by supporting the capacity building of the Priority Area Coordinators, the National Contact Persons, the Horizontal Action Leaders and the Operative Programmes by creating opportunities for network exchange and by collecting information that is necessary for these groups in performing their tasks. The information is disseminated in form of guidance and advisory support to these groups by means of both written documents and network meetings.

Art. 37-6-b, thematic focuses, capitalisation

2012 will be a crucial year for programmes to pave the way for the future programming period. It will be the time to promote the outcomes and results of the programmes and to establish a clear link to the activities in the future. INTERACT will be there to help programmes and this will be done through several means.

Various thematic activities will be carried out within the IPs. The idea is to analyse the state of the art in ETC for every theme and connect it to the sectorial programmes, to objectives 1 and 2 and to other initiatives in order to establish relevant links, as required by the new draft legislative package. Energy, but also natural risks, maritime issues and transport will be some of them. In some cases, EU-wide

approaches will be kept, but in the majority of themes, a zone-based work will be necessary.

The possibility of cooperation within the regional programmes will be further developed. The new draft Regulation contains this possibility and some regions have expressed the need for INTERACT support in the programming phase in order to properly include the possibility of cooperation in the regional OPs. And INTERACT will respond to this requirement.

Future of ETC

The major work on the future of ETC, which started in 2011, will continue into 2012. Due to the process of consultation on the Multi-Annual Financial Framework and the legal package for the period 2014-2020, the outputs delivered in 2011 can only be considered as drafts, which will need to be tailored to the outcomes of the negotiations on the European level. In practical terms, it means that INTERACT will need to manage processes simultaneously: further develop and promote INTERACT harmonisation efforts and monitor the outcomes of the negotiations. In more detail, the following areas will be covered:

Strategic Programming

Meetings under a working name of 'community of practice' will be continued, where the following issues will be tackled: programming process, Operational Programme content, ex-ante evaluation, macro-regions and links to other programmes, programme structures and legal documents.

Based on the survey and consultations carried out in 2011, a practical paper on the strategic programming will be finalised. The paper will cover the main issues in the programming process: data collection, ex-ante evaluation, policy coordination, governance models, analysis of the programme area, objective and priority setting at the programme level, and indicators. The paper will identify challenges and opportunities for each step. Good practice will be identified as well. It should be noted that as of 2011 Strategic Programming encompasses 3 sub-projects strategic programming process, capture exercise and Typology.

Programme Structures

Preparing for 2014-20 programmes, INTERACT will provide further support on the use of EGTC for programmes and projects as indicated as an INTERACT task in the ETC draft Regulation.

In order to promote the use of EGTC as an implementing structure for the programmes, a fact sheet explaining the concept and its advantages will

be developed. At the same time, in order to provide the interested stakeholder with a practical and up-to-date manual for EGTC implementation, also preparing for the revised EGTC provisions, the EGTC handbook will be updated. A seminar will be organised as well.

Legal documents

The following legal documents will be finalised or started: Template for Rules of Procedure, Memorandum of Understanding, Operational Programme, Subsidy Contracts and Partnership Agreement, depending on the timetable of the new regulations. Other templates, such as a standard evaluation plan or communication plan, will be developed according to needs. INTERACT will work closely with the European Commission in order to fine-tune these documents with the delegated and implementing acts, which the Commission is charged to issue, based on the new legislative package.

Implementation tools

It is necessary to continue the work with the programmes on the assessment criteria and the application forms. The drafts will be finalised in 2011. Only analysis of the reporting and monitoring forms will start in 2011. The templates will be developed in 2012 in close collaboration with programmes. Guidelines on budget lines, cost categories, eligibility, first level control and related templates will be completed in 2012.

Monitoring Systems

The challenge of collecting information for KEEP has proved the need to bring the people working on the Monitoring Systems together. In 2012 INTERACT will continue to organise network meetings of programme staff working in this area with special focus on the future. Harmonisation of the systems is rather not possible but technical solutions for these systems to be able to exchange data should be looked at. Joint transparency requirements would help in harmonising the data collected, of course INTERACT can only promote joint approaches.

It should be acknowledged that more and more Member States', and not only programmes' representatives are showing interest in the future oriented work of INTERACT. This development is very welcome as it increases the chances of harmonising the requirements for programme implementation. The above mentioned outputs will be promoted in 2012 as integrated programme management package through seminars and conferences.

3.2 Zone specific activities

INTERACT Point Turku

IP Turku has established a strong network meeting culture in the CBC programme community in the north of Europe. These meetings will continue as well as some basic training events will take place for the needs of financial managers and project managers of the programmes. The focus of events will begin to shift towards the next phases of the programme cycle, the closing of projects, reporting of achievements, capitalising on results and the closure of programmes.

A new activity for the IP, that has already started in 2011 but will demand quite some work, is the development of the concept for Alignment of Funding. The concept is new and involves not only ETC programmes but includes also other sources of financing for project activities.

IP Turku is also facing a strong demand of support services for the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. These needs are being met by organising the large conference types of working meetings for the governance structures of the strategy. Parallel to this large meeting, the preparation process includes a series of group specific working meetings and the supporting expert work done by the Laboratory Group established already in 2009. The additional challenge in connection to the implementation of the EU strategy is the inclusion of the strategy into the programming processes of territorial cooperation programmes in the next financing period of 2014-2020. This need will be addressed in both network meetings, the ones for the strategy implementation and the ones for the operative programmes and national decision makers in charge of programmes. In general, the strategic approach to programming is a thematic focus that will characterise the activities of IP Turku in 2012. A lot of work has been done and will be done further by the expert staff of IP Turku. In order not to lose this work in separate documents only and the possibility of disseminating the results of the work, IP Turku is in need of including a Communication Officer in the expert team. Being the smallest and the only IP without such expert, it has proven necessary that the team is reinforced by such expert capacity. This additional resource would satisfy the need of information dissemination and awareness raising of the EU strategy too.

INTERACT Point Valencia

IP Valencia activities will again focus on basic trainings on one hand and on strategic activities for the Mediterranean programmes on the other. Trainings mostly refer to financial issues, such as first level control, basic financial trainings and the preparation for the closure of the programmes.

The strategic activities affect three main fields of work: the preparation for the future programming period, the capitalisation of outcomes and results in programmes in the IP Valencia area and the eventual application of macro-regional or sea-basin strategies to these programmes. The preparation for the future will contain not only programme management elements, but also finance and the idea is to expand the messages sent EU-wide to the programmes in the area.

As far as capitalisation activities are concerned, the Mediterranean Lab group is becoming a reference among the programmes and authorities in the area and INTERACT wishes to continue these tasks. Three thematic poles are already under way and there is a wish to implement new capitalisation activities also with the ENPI programmes in the Mediterranean. The new draft Regulations mention the need for ETC programmes to consider the macro-regional and the sea-basin strategies. IP Valencia would need an extra staff member to cover this specific field of work.

Besides these highlights, specific advisory services will be implemented on demand and zone-based communication activities will be organised.

INTERACT Point Viborg

The major part of IP Viborg work in 2012 will be implemented jointly with other IPs, covering all ETC programmes as the target group. Still, a considerable part of IP Viborg's work will be dedicated to the zone specific activities. The network meetings for finance, content and communication programme staff will be the main knowledge exchange tool within the zone. Considering the number of other INTERACT events, the subjects of these meetings are very much needs driven and allow programmes to discuss their current issues with colleagues from other programmes.

It is expected that a considerable number of advisory services focusing on the strategic programming will be delivered. These advisories are considered as a very good promotional tool of the INTERACT work, where practical application of the Programme's outputs can be tested on the spot. The feedback received so far in

2011 indicates that programmes very much appreciate this tailor made service.

Due to the strong strategic focus in the new programming period, a workshop on strategic implementation tools (clustering, strategic projects, etc.) currently used by programmes will be organised.

In the area of Typology, it is expected to see some of the first results, as the first big wave of project closures will mark this year. IP Viborg will be monitoring the data reported throughout the year and make a summary towards the end of the year. It should be noted though that strictly speaking only by the end of this programming period it will be possible to draw conclusions on the Objective level. At the same time, it was offered to programmes to make advisories on Typology system, where INTERACT would work directly with programmes and their projects in order to identify their main achievements. This service should again help programmes understand the new programming logic with focus on results. Depending on the resources available at the Secretariat for KEEP, IP Viborg will assist in integrating Typology in KEEP.

In the area of finance, there are three main areas of focus in the zone activities. Firstly, public procurement still seems to be an issue. Based on the experience from 2011, together with external legal experts, IP Viborg will deliver workshops focusing on practical cases and existing case law. Secondly, it seems that there is a need to support the exchange between the Central First Level Control bodies. Workshops focusing on First Level Control and eligibility will be organised. Bodies responsible for First Level Control in decentralised systems will be invited as well. Thirdly, in response to the strong interest indicated in the Needs Analysis, workshops on closure will be delivered, after the European Commission issued their guidance.

When and where necessary IP Viborg will promote the work of INTERACT by active participation in external events. Resources will be used as well for daily coordination of work, reporting and potential audit.

The above mentioned activities are marked as zone activities. Still, IP Viborg will cooperate closely with colleagues from other INTERACT Points, ensuring knowledge exchange and learning for the benefit of the Programme's stakeholders.

INTERACT Point Vienna

Also in 2012 INTERACT Point Vienna is highly committed to respond to its target groups requests,

as well as to pro-actively contribute to new and joint solutions to common issues they might face. As usual, the 2012 activities will be carried out in close cooperation with programme managers of the Central and South-Eastern European zone, in particular through the networks created (Regional, IPA CBC and FLC).

Programmes will be further involved in key strategic exercises connected with the future of ETC, such as the whole-European programme management and financial management networks and harmonisation exercises. Also needs for support on specific issues (first level control, programme closure, irregularities, intellectual property right, programme evaluation and 2014-20 programming, etc.) will be addressed together with other INTERACT Points, in order to assure a cross-European exchange on good practices. The EGTC support and promotion will be continued, taking the latest developments of 2011 into account. Communication efforts towards ETC programmes and promotion of ETC will be carried out through the support to the INTERACT Secretariat in the organisation of the provisionally called “ETC day” and other activities.

Specific issues concern more specifically the zone covered by INTERACT Point Vienna:

- a) IPA CBC programmes with Member States participation: To follow up on the proposal for 2014-20 IPA regulation, expected for early 2012, as well as to draw main lessons from the current programming period, a meeting with IPA CBC programme managers and concerned DGs will be organised. The support to IPA CBC first level controllers will be continued, as well as to IPA CBC Audit Authorities.
- b) Support to the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR): The communication and information support to programmes and Priority Area Coordinators (PACS) has to be continued and strengthened, in particular through the EUSDR web platform, the online networking tools, the newsletter and other communication tools. At the same time, the EUSDR key stakeholders, PACs and national contact points will be invited to exchange views and join approaches in specific meetings, in which also good practices of ETC programmes might be promoted. ETC programmes will be also directly involved, in particular in a structural funds programmes meeting, where information on the EUSDR state of play, next steps for programmes and implication for 2014-20 period may be discussed. The EUSDR Labgroup will meet according to emerging needs to support the development of EUSDR guidance.

3.3 Horizontal Activities

The INTERACT Secretariat will continue ensuring the overall management and coordination tasks for the programme bodies, focusing on relevant horizontal programme activities. This comprises internal and external communication, external relations with the other networking programmes and beyond, quality assurance and knowledge management.

Communication and Dissemination

For 2012 INTERACT Communication activities will focus on overcoming the limits and weak points highlighted by the Mid-term Evaluation and dedicated Communication Assessment. A roll-out plan has been presented to and approved by the Monitoring Committee during its 7th meeting in Brussels. According to this plan, a bundle of activities were going to be started in 2011 and to be continued in 2012.

An overarching objective would be to target a larger audience by reviewing the communication tools and the delivered information in order to widen the beneficiaries of the Programme activities.

The INTERACT website

By the first quarter 2012, the INTERACT Secretariat will establish a new section in the existing INTERACT website dedicated to non-experts/new audiences for European Territorial Cooperation.

External communication

- MC Updates. The IS will produce two MC Updates, one in February-March and the other one in September, in order to provide the Monitoring Committee with the main highlights of the activities of INTERACT.
- Newsflashes. Newsflashes will be approached in a different way in order to guarantee the best use of the tool. Their sending will be planned and executed on a “needs” basis instead of on a “scheduled” one. A better integration of newsflashes with other mailings (e.g. newsletters) will be ensured in order to minimise the amount of total mailings that, according with several inputs received, should be reduced.
- Newsletters. Newsletters will be guaranteed in electronic format to ensure the widest possible

dissemination. Efforts to improve the quality of the contents and of the delivery modes of the newsletters have already been agreed within the ComG and began to be implemented in 2011. They will be pursued in 2012. Need for printed editions will be defined in accordance with the requirements of INTERACT events and activities.

- Event registration tool and contact database. The INTERACT Secretariat began the work to setup a detailed set of specifications to adjust the event registration tool (ERT) and to adapt the contact data base (CDB) in June 2011, with the support of the INTERACT Points. Most of the deliverables will be ready in 2011, with only some automatic feeding of statistical tools forecasted for delivery in early 2012. The new tool overcomes the limits of the present one by allowing WYSIWYG interface and an enhanced flexibility.

The release of the new CDB is forecasted by the end of 2011, with the deletion of the inactive contacts. In accordance with the recommendations of the communications assessment performed in the first half of 2011, the CDB will be cleaned and all inactive contacts will be removed. The new tool will allow aggregating and disaggregating characteristics of the contacts allowing creating “ad hoc” mailings and lists of contacts. The new CDB will be embedded in the new ERT together with a new mailing system instead of the CMS of the INTERACT website. The new mailing tool will allow a tracking of the sendings and the collection of useful information on the outcomes.

A major review of the Programme tools will be started to better integrate the work of the INTERACT Programme and of the INTERACT ENPI CBC Project that are using common communication tools and need a more logical approach to ensure visibility and avoid confusion between the two entities.

- Social media. The IS will implement any features stemming from the developments of social media (e.g. Facebook), as it did with the automatic feeding of INTERACT’s Facebook page with the updates of events and news to the website, thus making better use of the internal resources and guaranteeing a better Facebook presence.

Also foreseen for the first half of 2012 is the creation or improvement (depending on the developments at the moment) of an ETC Wikipedia page, to be made in connection with the establishment of a homepage for European Territorial Cooperation.

Internal communication

The Confluence INTERACT intranet and collaborative work tool will undergo major review since a plan for its re-organisation has been approved by the Coordinators Group. The new system mainly aims at bringing a higher level of reliability of the collected information.

Networking activities

- ETC Joint Communication Activity. Further to INTERACT’s original proposal by IP Vienna, concerning the development of an ETC joint communication product for the ETC programmes, the concept of an “ETC Day” was developed. Two preparatory meetings were already held in May and October 2011 with Programmes and European Commission participating. The basic concept foresees to implement events in all Member States to which as many Programmes as possible should contribute.

This activity will be delivered in June 2012. The IS will ensure INTERACT’s overall coordination of this activity, its branding, as well as any other activities to be agreed still in 2011 within this scope.

Given the goal and scope of this activity, to develop a framework for media notoriety of success stories, the two different activities firstly proposed to the Monitoring Committee in May 2011 as part of the communication rollout plan for 2011 and beyond (the ETC Joint Communication Product and the development of a framework for media notoriety of success stories), were merged into this single activity.

- Involvement of universities in ETC and in the development of local ETC content. The IS will develop the concept of a competition to be set up among European universities for the production of local content in local languages. This competition is to be launched in late 2012.

INTERACT Promotional activities

INTERACT will also implement some targeted promotional activities in view of making its own contributions more visible. This should also cover some PR activities related to KEEP.

KEEP (Knowledge and Expertise in European Programmes)

The KEEP system will be further developed, both in its technical and in its content side. Depending on the timing of tendering and contracting of an outsourced technical company (service provider), all the activities as planned in the Terms of Reference will be implemented. This would mainly cover further website updates as well as integration of upgrade features (such as a statistic section) or new features (such as social tools).

As for the content, it is planned to integrate all project and partner data of the funding periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013 made available by the Programmes until end of June 2012. Further development of the database in terms of collection of relevant achievements and deliverables is subject to discussion with the Advisory task force in 2012.

Further ad-hoc needs may arise, as happened already in 2011 where need was formulated to integrate also ESPON maps into KEEP in order to even better visualise thematic coverage or to integrate data on EUSBSR into KEEP. Such ad-hoc needs require in almost all cases an adaptation of the existing system since the structure of information (e.g. ESPON maps or EUSBSR data) is not totally in line with the existing set of structure that so far only reflects ETC-programme and project context. Both activities will be further developed throughout 2012.

Quality assurance

In 2011, the INTERACT Quality Assurance (QA) system has been re-launched. A new Quality Assurance Manager has been employed and an internal Quality Group has been set up.

On the basis of the "INTERACT Standards and Guidelines" (adopted by the Coordinators Group in 2011), a Quality Management Plan will be set up by the end of 2011 to define next year's quality assurance activities.

So far the following preliminary priorities have been identified:

As regards internal quality management, quality assurance activities should aim at simplifying, improving and harmonising the reporting structures and communication flows between the INTERACT units. The outcomes of this exercise should be an ongoing reporting which better satisfies the needs of the stakeholders (e.g. format, time needed to provide information) on the basis of a less time consuming and harmonised internal procedure.

As regards external quality management, there is a need to give priority to the assessment of stakeholders and target group needs as well as to tackle INTERACT's pro-active role in anticipating the stakeholders and target group needs and in mobilising for future developments. Procedures linked to both standards should be revised, improved and harmonised, most possibly they need to be combined.

The evaluations of INTERACT events as well as related procedures should be revised in view of harmonisation and effectiveness.

The implementation of any quality assurance activity remains subject to agreement within the Quality Group. Analysis, results and outcomes of the quality assurance activities will be presented in form of quality assurance reports.

Networking and ENPI

Following the agreed principles anchored in the Concept paper and good practices from the current period, INTERACT will continue cooperation with INTERREG IV, ESPON and URBACT within a frame of communication activities: publications of relevant information on each other website and regular update on each other events and activities. INTERACT will keep the practice to include concrete examples of activities from Networking programmes in all issues of Newsletter where thematic topics are relevant for them, applying the same principles to the specific thematic publications. When organising events in which the relevant experience from Networking programmes can significantly contribute to the selected topic/theme, INTERACT will always invite their representatives to present their approach or to take part in discussions.

Other concrete activities and aspects of cooperation with the Networking programmes will be discussed at a common meeting, organised most probably at the beginning of 2012 by ESPON. The Action plan and the main thematic areas for 2012 will be agreed.

Bearing in mind that Innovation is still considered by INTERACT as a very relevant theme but with a somehow limited impact within the ETC frame only, INTERACT will continue to further develop the already established contacts with the 7th Framework Programme and DG Research, trying to integrate INTERACT in a wider strategic context. In this respect, INTERACT will also explore possibilities of closer collaboration with other relevant institutions such as AEBR, CPMR, CoR trying to open up to other target groups in order to create needed synergies.

One concrete cornerstone for cooperation is KEEP (see also respective paragraph above on integrating ESPON databases and maps into the system).

When the process of the ESPON integration will be finalised, INTERACT and ESPON intend to organise a joint event to present the potential opportunities offered by the successful merging to the public and to analyse at the same time possible options for further developments.

During the first quarter of 2012 also the ENPI database will be integrated into KEEP; a technical solution allowing the projects' presentation and partners' localisation on the maps by adapting the NUTS coding in Partner countries, will be interlinked to the merged version.

Cooperation with the INTERACT ENPI project will continue by supporting the project in communication tools area, following the agreements developed during 2011. In addition to that, further attention will be given to the exchange of content-related information. This will be based on the results of the first joint meeting organised in autumn 2011. The process has already started.

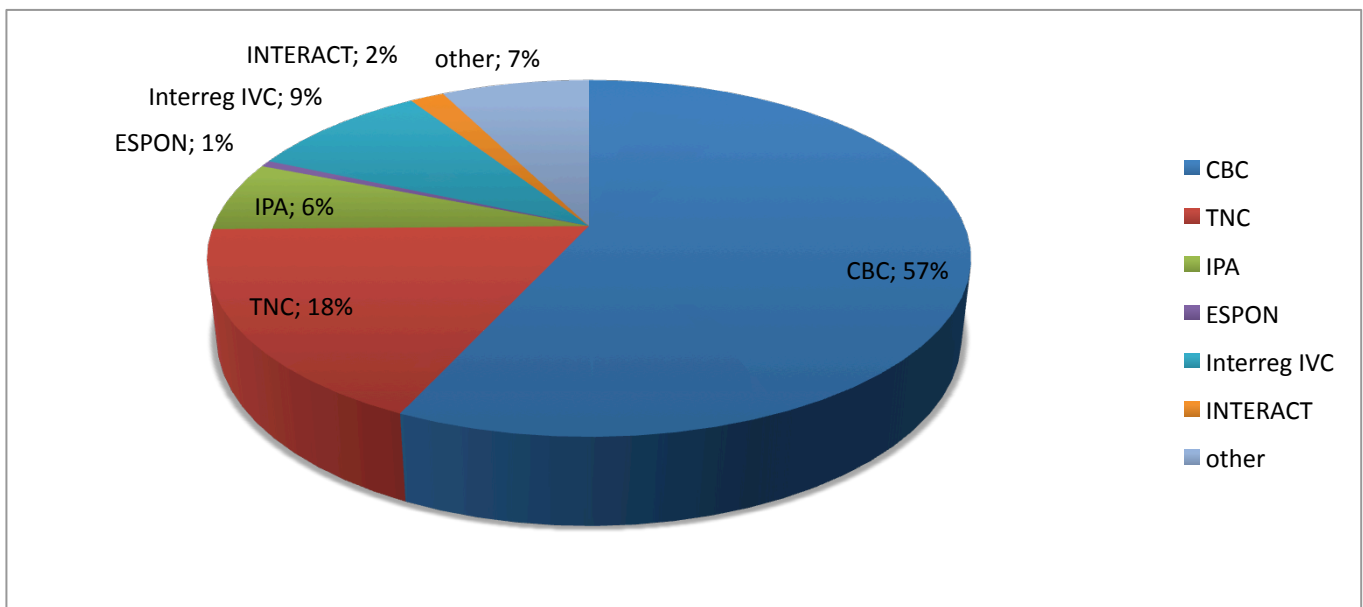
ANNEX

RESULTS OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR INTERACT 2012 ACTIVITIES

I. General statistics on participation

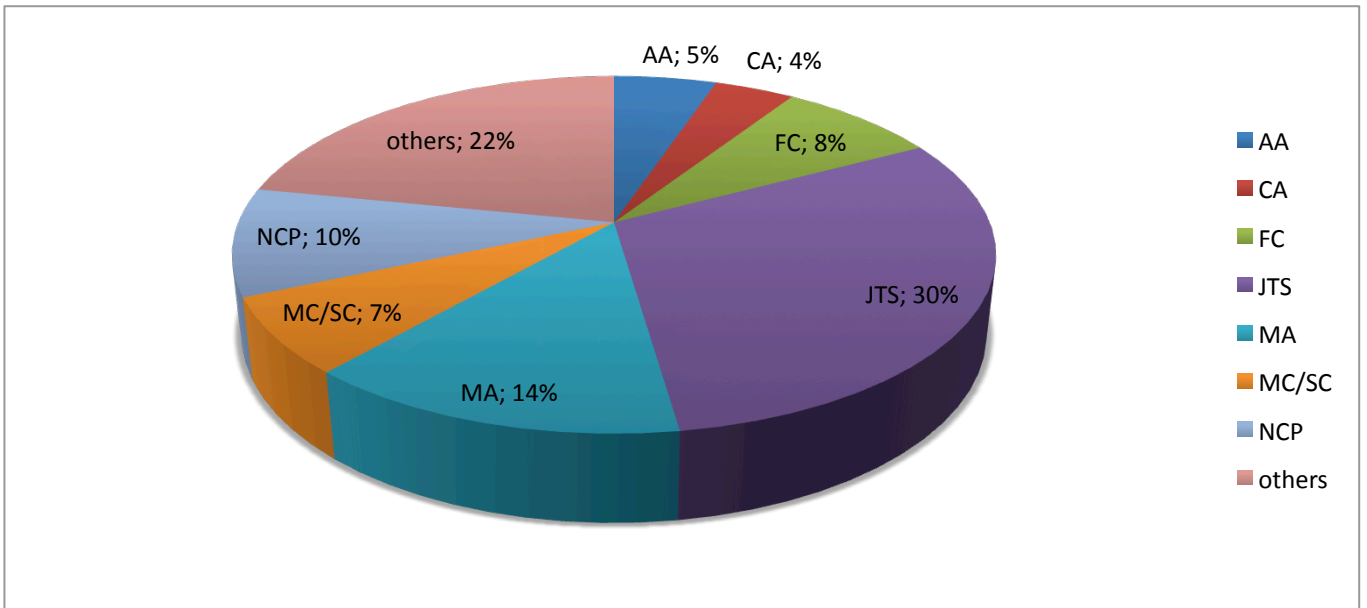
1. Participation per programme strand

The highest number of valid responses has been received from CBC programmes (57%). A significant high number of responses has been received from participants involved in the INTERREG IVC programme (9%). Responses received from ESPON count for 1%. Participants involved in more than one programme have classified them in the category „others“.



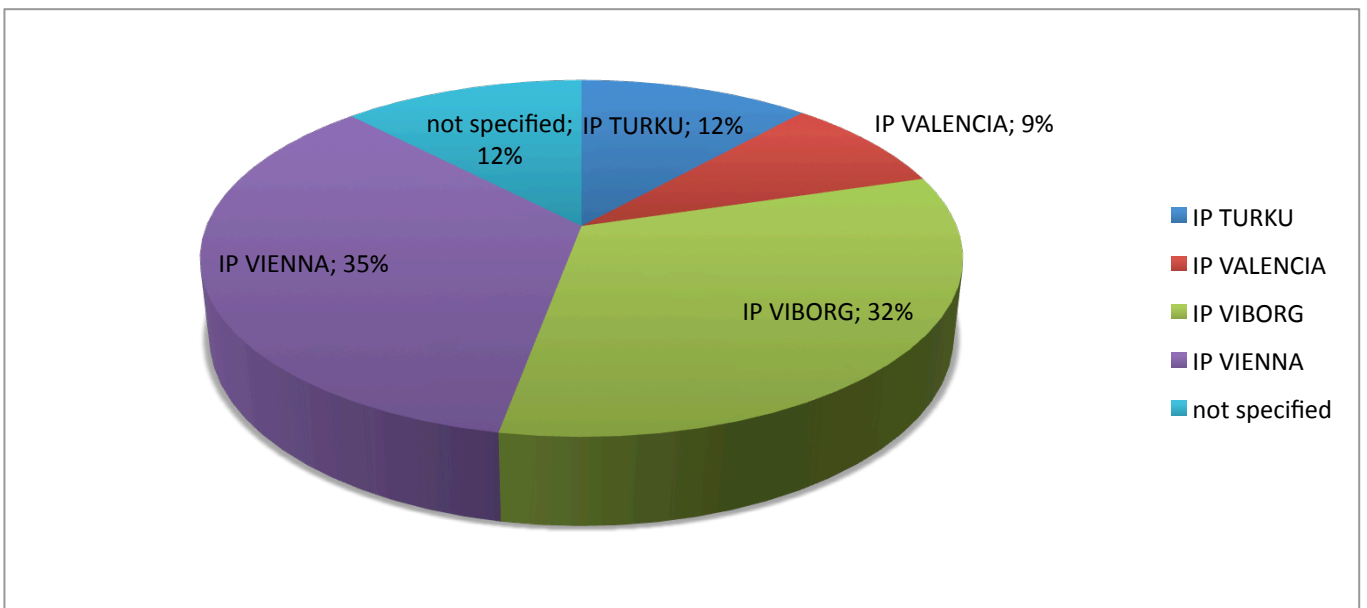
2. Participation per programme body or role

The highest number of valid responses have been received from JTS staff (30%), followed by MA staff (14%) and National Contact points (10%). All responses received from the Audit authorities, Certifying authorities and Financial controllers count together for 17%. Responses received within the category „others“ have been filled inter alia by one consultant, one advisor, one evaluator, one expert and eight project or lead partners.



3. Participation per IP-Zone

The distribution of responses allows to draw conclusions for all IPs. Responses received from people involved in INTERACT, ESPON or INTERREG IVC have been classified as not specified.



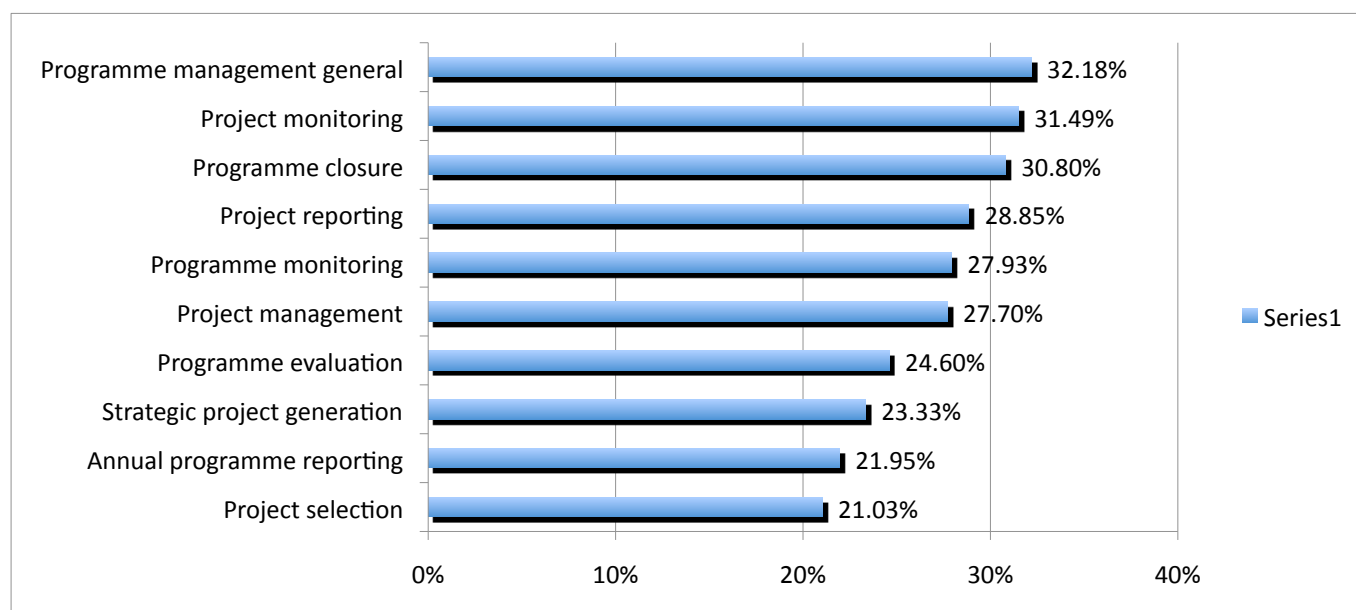
II. Statistics on expressed needs - SECTION A - current programming period

The figures given here below show the percentage of participants in relation to the overall number of valid responses who have expressed a very high or high interest in a given topic. Whereas the first chart of each sub-section (PM, FM, Com, Future) indicates a percentage of very high or high interest for a given topic calculated as an average for all kinds of services and products. The second chart indicates a percentage of very high or high interest for a given topic calculated for each service and product (conference, training, workshop, advisory service, written information).

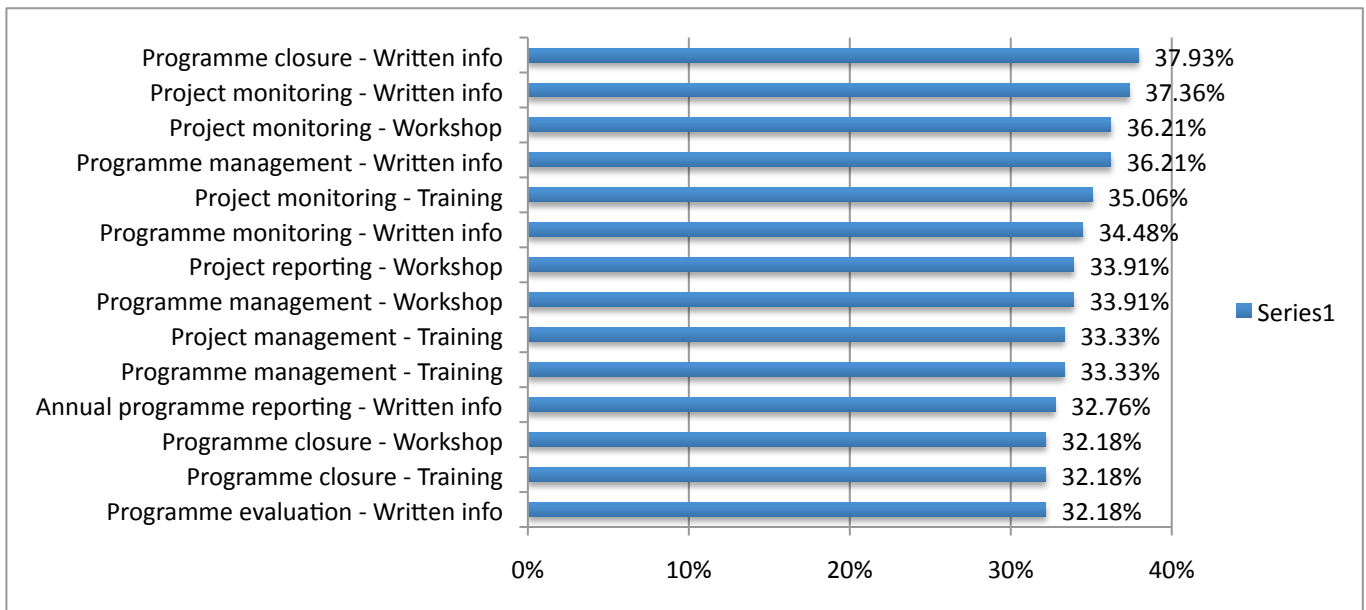
For all topics the participants expressed a very high need for written material. Workshops and trainings are more required by participants in the survey than conferences. If conferences are requested they cover communication and dissemination of outcomes and results. The overall scores received for programme management were higher than those for financial management and communication.

1. Programme Management

In a ranking of programme management topics for which participants expressed a very high or high interest, „general programme management“ (32.18%), „project monitoring“ (31.49%) and „programme closure“ (30.80%) take the top 3 positions. The participants showed the lowest interest in any kind of service or product in relation to „project selection“ (21.03%).

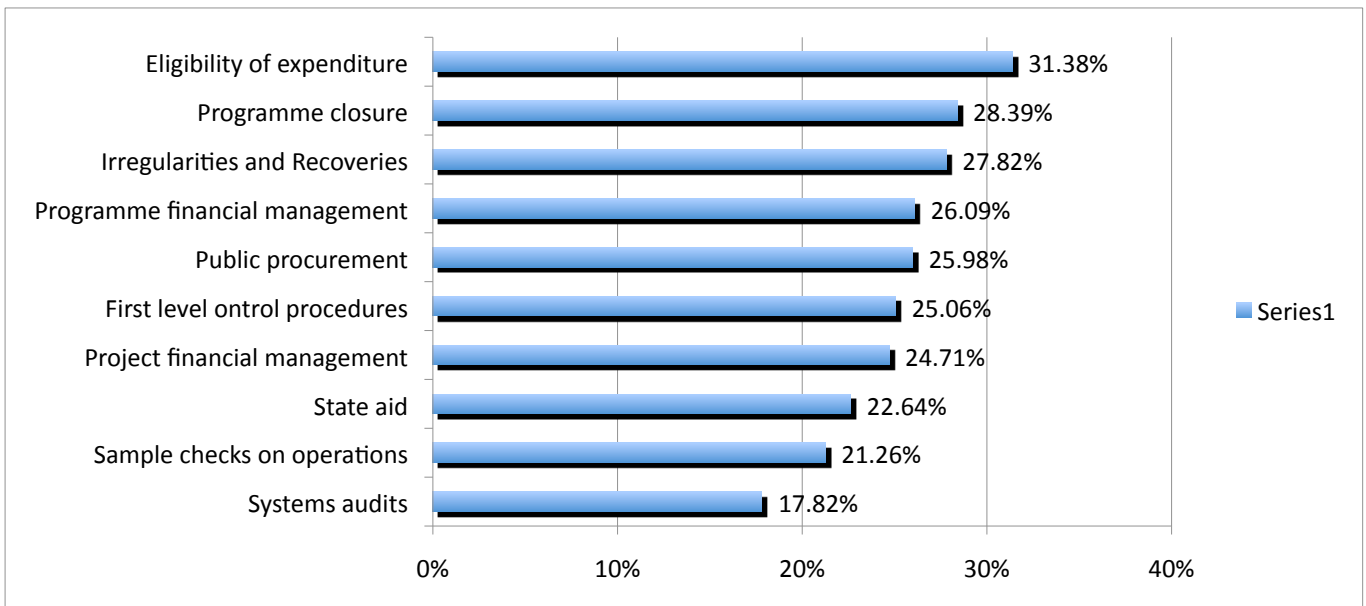


Among the programme management services to be delivered in 2012, a workshop and a training on „project monitoring“, a workshop on „general programme management“, and trainings on „programme and project management“ are the most required ones. Whereas the average need for any kind of service or product on „annual programme reporting“ was relatively low (21.95%), the need for written information in the same category was significantly high (32.76%), cf. next chart.

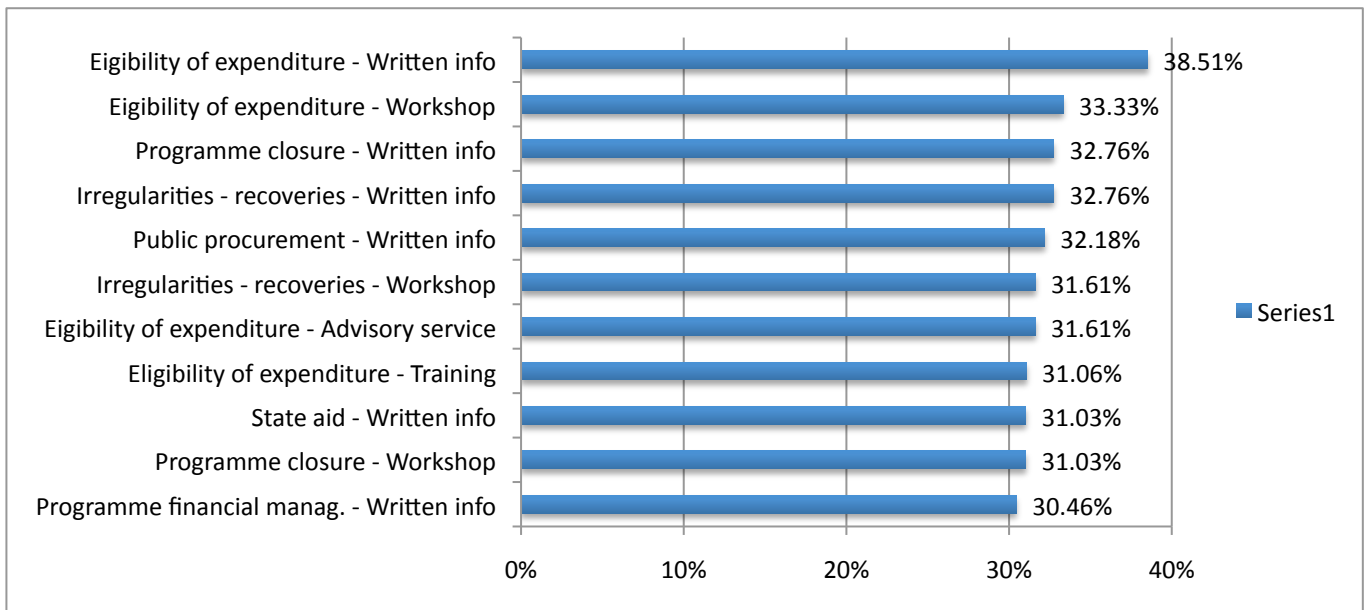


2. Financial Management

In a ranking of financial management topics for which participants expressed a very high or high interest, „eligibility of expenditure“ (31.38%), „programme closure“ (28.39%) and „irregularities and recoveries“ take the top 3 positions.

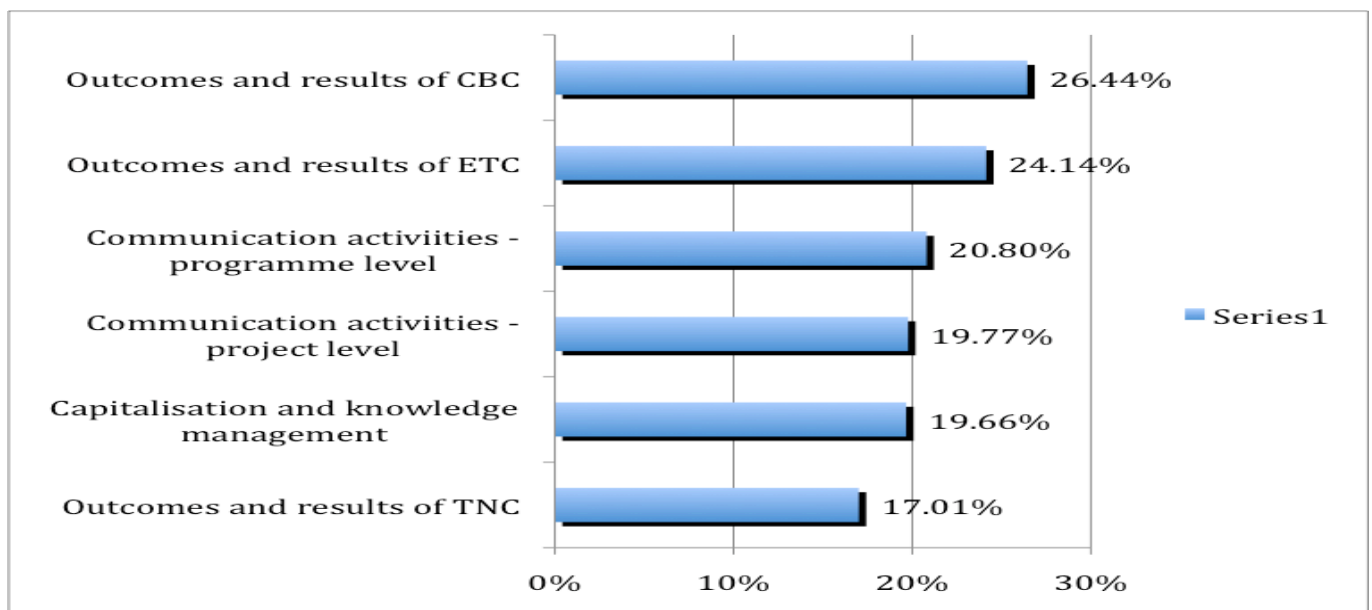


Participants to the survey expressed a very high interest for written information, advisory service and training in respect to „eligibility of expenditure“. Significant is that the need for written information in relation to „eligibility of expenditure“ scores 5% above any other kind of requested services or products. A high interest has also been expressed for written information on „public procurement“, „irregularities and recoveries“ and „programme closure“. As regards „programme closure“ and „irregularities and recoveries“, participants expressed that they deem furthermore a workshop a very suitable form of knowledge transfer. A very low number of participants expressed a significant interest in „systems audits“ (for all services and products on average 17.82 %).

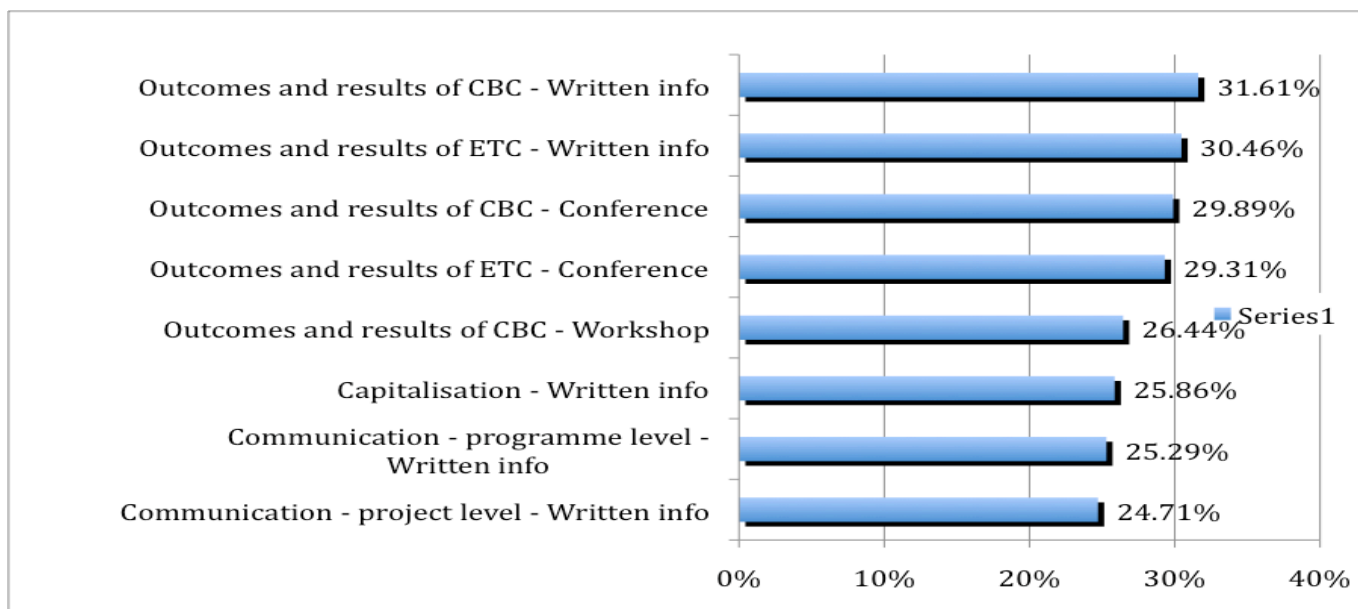


3. Communication

In a ranking of communication topics for which participants expressed a very high or high interest, „outcomes and results of cross-border cooperation“ (26.44%) and „outcomes and results of ETC“ (24.14%) and „communication activities on programme level“ (20.80%) take the top 3 positions. „Information and communication about the outcomes and results of transnational cooperation“ takes the last position.

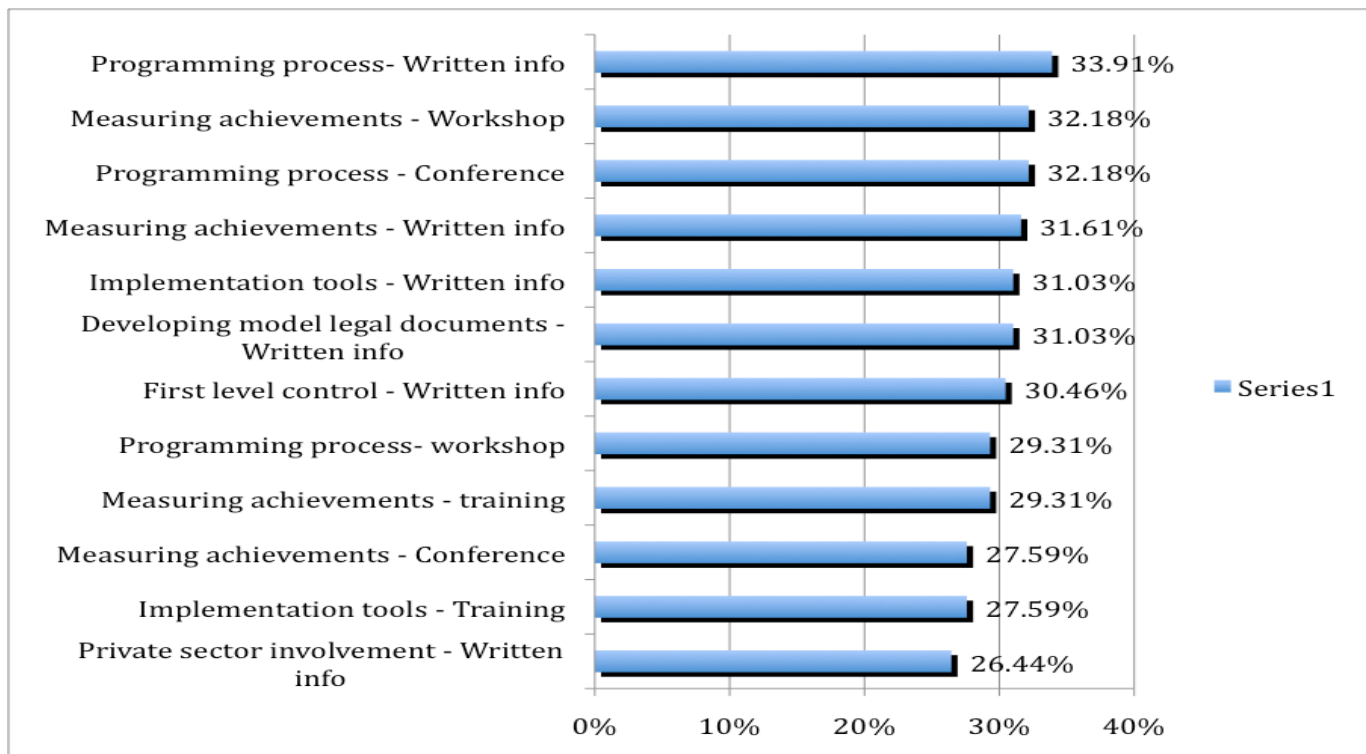
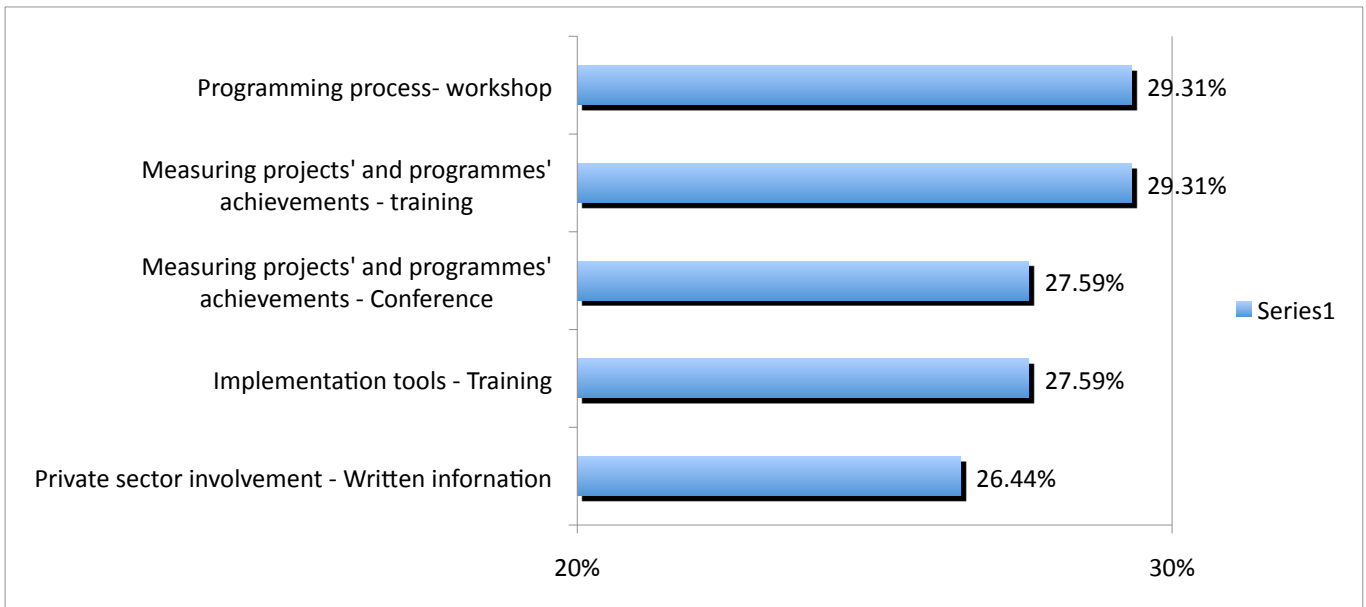


Whereas participants expressed very little need for conferences in relation to programme and financial management issues for the current programming period, responses in relation to communication show a need for conferences on „outcomes and results of cross-border cooperation and ETC in general“ (29.89% and 29.31%). In relation to both topics written information is needed, too.



III. Statistics on expressed needs SECTION B - future programming period

As regards the future of ETC, participants expressed a need for services and products covering „programming process“ (28.62%) and „measuring projects’ and programmes’ achievements“ (28.05%).



IV. Needs expressed per IP zone

In this section only significant deviations and particular interests expressed by the programmes per IP are listed. Percentage is given for participants who have expressed a very high or high interest for a given topic and type of service or product. Please note that figures are not exactly comparable from one IP to the other since the data set per IP (number of participants) varies.

IP VALENCIA

Programmes, which fall under the responsibility of IP Valencia, show a particular high interest for written information in the areas „state aid“, „programme monitoring“ and „project reporting“ (all 46.67%). Furthermore, participants to the survey of those programmes expressed a high interest for a workshop on „project management“, a conference on „strategic project generation“ (40%), a training on „project management“ (40%), and a workshop on „project reporting“ (all 40%).

IP TURKU

Significant for programmes of the IP Turku zone is that there is less need for written information. Trainings, workshops and conferences are the most requested forms of knowledge transfer. The most requested services are: a training on „programme closure - programme management“ (55%), for this topic an advisory service and/or conference is also deemed necessary (both 45%). The participants have furthermore expressed a need for a conference on „programming process“ (45%) and a training on „decommitment“ (45%).

IP VIBORG

Programmes which fall under the responsibility of IP Viborg have expressed a high need for written information in the following areas: „Programme closure - programme management“ (41.07%), „programme closure - financial management“ (37.50%), „state aid“. „programming process“ (37.50%), „capitalisation outcomes and results of ETC“ (35.71%) and „implementation tools - future“ (35.71%). A need for training has been expressed for „programme closure - financial and programme management (35.71% and 33.93%). The participants furthermore see a need for workshops in the area of „eligibility of expenditure“ (32.14%) and „programme closure - financial management“ (33.93%).

IP VIENNA

Programmes of IP Vienna zone show the highest interest for a conference on “programming process” (51.67%). This interest is closely followed by written information on “project monitoring” (50%). There is also a need for training or workshop in the same subject (both 46.67%) and a workshop on “irregularities and recoveries” (46.67%). Written material is requested on “eligibility of expenditure” (45%) and “measuring programme’ and projects’ achievements” (43.32%). Furthermore, a workshop on “programming process” (43.32%) could be envisaged in 2012.