

SCOPING DOCUMENT

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT INTERREG AURORA PROGRAMME 2021 - 2027

2021-03-02

VERSION ENGLISH 210302



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Strategic Environmental Assessment Interreg AURORA programme
2021 - 2027

KUND

Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens län

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 REVISED VERSION

This English Language version of the scoping document has been revised as compared to the Swedish version distributed in advance of the consultation-seminar on February the 18th 2021.

Revisions made are either of typo character or concern the proposed specific objectives selected in the programme. Thus, e.g. the table on pages 15-16 has been slightly revised.

Possible revisions following other comments made in the consultation process will be integrated in the final process of the SEA. They will also be described in the specific consultation-report included in the final SEA-report.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The European programmes for territorial cooperation (Interreg) is an instrument within the cohesion policy designed to meet cross national-boundary challenges. The programmes are partly financed under the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Interreg has been part of EU cohesion policies since 1990. The overall objectives are minimizing the negative impact of national boundaries and to achieve harmonized economic, social and cultural development within the EU as a whole. During 2021 a new programming period will commence, it involves the period of 2021 – 2027 and corresponds with the EU budget periods.

For the forthcoming Interreg programmes the EU Commission presented a proposed new directive in 2018 (COM(2018) 374 final, 2018/0199(COD)). The cross border programmes shall, according to this proposal, focus more than earlier on institutional cooperation, on removing border-obstacles, and on the development of common cross-border services.

Interreg Aurora (Sweden-Finland-Norway) is one of the cross border programmes covering the Nordics. The geography of the Aurora programme is presented below.

1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

According to the Swedish Environmental Code, Sect. 6, 3 §, anyone setting up a plan or programme required by law or other directives, shall perform a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to establish whether the execution of the plan or programme may cause considerable environmental impact.

In accordance with the SEA directive (Directive 2001/42/EC) and the proposed new Interreg directive (COM(2018) 374 final, 2018/0199(COD)) such an assessment shall also be carried out for the Interreg programmes, with the options of through a screening process decide whether a full a SEA shall be carried out, or not. The Managing Authority (MA) for the programme (Länsstyrelsen i Norrbottens län) has decided that a full SEA shall be carried out for the SEA Interreg Aurora programme. The objective of the SEA is to better integrate aspects of the environment and sustainability in the programme. In accordance with the Swedish Environmental Code a counselling regarding the scope and detail of the SEA shall take place.

This PM is the basis for such counselling on the scope of the SEA.

1.4 THE PROGRAMME AREA

The area included in the proposed Interreg Aurora Programme is very vast. It covers the area included in the previous period covered both by the Nord and the Botnia Atlantica programmes.

In Sweden the area covers the following län

- Norrbotten
- Västerbotten
- Västernorrland

In Finland the area covers the following landskap:

- Lappi/ Lappland
- Pohjois-Pohjanmaa/Norra Österbotten
- Keski-Pohjanmaa /Mellersta Österbotten
- Pohjanmaa/ Österbotten
- Etelä-Pohjanmaa/Södra Österbotten

In Norway the area covers the following fylken:

- Troms og Finnmark
- Nordland

The programme also comprises Sapmi as a specific sub-area, which in Sweden means:

- The three above mentioned län, in full.

The following areas, that are part of Sapmi but not in the programme area in general:

- Jämtlands län
- Idre Same village in Dalarnas län

In Finland three of the above mentioned landskap are also part of the Sapmi programme area:

- Lappi/ Lappland
- Pohjois-Pohjanmaa/Norra Österbotten
- Keski-Pohjanmaa /Mellersta Österbotten

While Pohjanmaa/ Österbotten and Etelä-Pohjanmaa/Södra Österbotten are not part of Sapmi programme area.

In Norway the Sapmi programme area covers

- The two above mentioned fylken, in full.
- Trøndelags fylke
- Elgå Reindeer herding district in Innlandets fylke

The blue line in the map below marks the boundary between areas that are only part of the Sapmi programme area but not of the general programme area.



The programme area thus corresponds to approx. 570 000 km², which makes it as large as the nations of Spain and Portugal combined. The area's population amounts to circa 2.3 million inhabitants. We can thus conclude that the programme area overall is sparsely populated, although the population within the area is highly concentrated to a few regional cities.

1.5 THE INTERREG AURORA PROGRAMME, 2021 - 2027

Region Norrbotten, Troms og Finnmarks fylkeskommune and Lapin Liitto have been commissioned to coordinate the process of developing the proposed programme. A work organized in the so-called Joint Programming Committee (JPC) where all concerned regions in the three countries as well as the Sametingen are represented.

The objective of the programme is to stimulate cross border cooperation through funding different types of cross border development projects. As in every ERDF-funded programme interventions are structured under different thematic objectives. Such thematic objectives are in the forthcoming programme called policy objectives. Under every such policy objective one or more specific objectives shall also be selected. It is the JPC that selects and proposes policy objectives and specific objectives, from a given list of possible objectives.

The proposed programme is not yet completed and hence only a preliminary selection of policy objectives and specific objectives is at hand. Compared to the previous programme generation the

forthcoming programme is designed to be better in line with the overall objectives of the interreg programmes, by e.g. having several possible specific objectives focusing explicitly on the cross border added value.

The preliminary programme content is (Policy Objectives and Specific Objectives):

PO1 - A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation

- *Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies*
- *Enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs*

PO 2 A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management

- *Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches*
- *Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution*
- *Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility, as part of transition to a net zero carbon economy*

PO 4. A more social Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

- *Improving cross border access to education and training. Improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognized across borders;*
- *Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation*

INTERREG MÅLET ISO 1 Better Interreg governance

- Other actions to support better cooperation governance.

1.6 THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE PROGRAMME AREA

The SEA shall also cover a description of the environmental conditions in the programme area that might be affected by the plan or programme. It shall, furthermore, describe relevant existing environmental conditions related certain natural areas or other areas of specific environmental importance. Below are presented conditions that have been the most relevant for the programme. The description draws heavily on background descriptions from the proposed programme.

Since the programme area is so wide a detailed description of environmental issues or problems are neither relevant nor possible. What is given here is instead an overview of the multiplicity of natural habitats and values within the programme area and that may be affected by the measures funded under the programme. Examples of protected areas of various kinds within the programme area is also provided. Furthermore, part of this description concerns the area's sensitivity to different forms of environmental impacts.

Nature in programme area

The programme covers large areas of high natural value. The programme area in all three countries consists of forest land, mountains, coast-line, fjords and archipelagos, all of which are sensitive natural

area types with high degrees of biological diversity and species-richness. The low density of the population is in this case an important asset. Large areas are relatively unpopulated and make up what is often described as Europe's largest wilderness. The natural areas in the programme area stands out as an arctic region, meaning a cold climate, polar nights and vast sparsely populated areas. The programme area is also divided by the cultivation-limit, which means that large areas are characterized by limited plant-life.

The eco systems of the programme area are in many instances unique, with many species being confined to the biotopes of the area. Arctic eco systems are unique, and play a vital part for the physical, chemical and biological balance of the planet. Despite an arctic climate there is a wide variety of biotopes and eco systems within the area.

In the area's western and northern parts, especially in the two Norwegian fylken of Nordland and Troms og Finnmark as well as in the Swedish mountain ridge, a mountainous landscape is dominating and meets with the Atlantic Ocean, often in deeply cut fjords. The climate along the coast of the Atlantic and the Barents Sea is often strikingly mild providing a much richer flora and nature than further inland.

Away from the coast lines a high level plateau is spread from the interior of Swedish Lapland, over Treriksroset, over Norwegian Finnmark and into the northern parts of Finnish Lappi region. To the south and the east of this plateau a far reaching forest landscape begins, covering mainly the Finnish and Swedish parts of the programme area. The forest consists mainly of conifer, mixed with elements of deciduous trees both in the mountain areas and along the coasts. In both Finland and Sweden the forest land is cut across by large river valleys, often holding landscapes formed by cultivation, such as along the Torne älv. Also other parts of the coasts along the Bothnian Sea and Gulf holds flat cultivated land.

The areas around the Bothnian Sea and Gulf are also affected by rapid land-uplift from the last glacial period. These areas are known for vast but shallow archipelagos with a species-richness both in the sea and ashore. The programme area's natural areas are also formed by Sapmi cultural heritage, e.g. large areas under active reindeer herding.

Endangered natural areas and habitats

Many of the natural areas in the programme area are significantly affected by climate change and by other human activities. Many habitat types are under threat, e.g. pasture lands and forests. Moor lands and snow patches in the mountains are under threat by global warming. The forestry affects habitats by trench digging and clearings. The mountain areas are sensitive and at the same time popular areas for recreation and for the tourist industry. Land and plants may be damaged by visitors and by off-road vehicles and bikes, but also when exploited for natural resources, wind or water power or through mining and quarrying. In Norway climate change are expected to lead to a significant raise in sea levels. Allover is expected higher average temperatures, increased precipitation during winters and periods of drought. Seasons with a stable snow cover are becoming shorter, growing seasons longer and weather more extreme.

Cultural environment and cultural heritage

Even though the area is sparsely populated, the traces of human settlements go far back in history, and there is an abundance of areas with rich cultural environments and cultural heritage. The population has always been concentrated to the shores of the sea and Gulf of Bothnia, and the Norwegian coastline. Here we find the majority of the area's towns, including historic town centers. Also, the larger river-valleys were places of early settlements. The rock carvings in Alta (Troms og Finnmark fylke), as part of UNESCO world heritage, is one good example of the region's importance over long periods of time.

In the inland settlements, Sami populations have a long tradition, including several important centers, both in northern and southern parts of programme area. Sami cultural heritage are traces of Sami peoples use of the landscape throughout centuries. They include Sami industries and crafts such as fishery, hunting and reindeer herding. But the Sami cultural landscape also include built environments such as chappels, housing and "churchtowns". Inland areas also has a cultural history of forestry and mining including villages, towns and other settlements.

The programme area also provides examples of how people has moved across the landscape in historic times, sometimes independently of today's national borders. Cultural and language communities often stretch across national borders, as the Sami community is one example of. Other examples are the meänkieli community in Tornedalen or the Swedish language community across Kvarken.

Environmental goals and protected areas

Throughout the programme area measures are taken to protect important natural and cultural areas and to counter the impacts of climate change. Parks, reserves and other forms of protected areas mean that biotopes of great value may receive protected status. Many of these protected areas in the three countries are also within the programme area. In Sweden, e.g., near 85 pc. of the entire area of natural reserves are within the three län of Jämtland, Västerbotten and Norrbotten, where the majority of protected areas are in the mountain regions. The Natura 2000 Network has a strong focus on protecting areas of high natural value, and encompasses many habitats in Sweden and Finland. Many of these areas are also under the protection from the bird directive (Dir. 2009/147) and the habitat directive (Dir. 92/43). Norway is not a member of the EU, and thus not in the Natura 2000 or bound by the EU directives mentioned since these directives are not included in the EES-cooperation, but is at the same time the country (of the three in the programme area) with the largest land area under protection (17 pc).

Several areas in the programme area are listed on UNESCOs World Heritage List. Among those listed for high natural value are Laponia and The High Coast (Sweden), Kvarken Archipelago (between Sweden and Finland) and Vega Island (Norway). Below are examples of further key data for protected areas of high natural values in the three countries.

Sweden

Approx. 14 procent of total land area has some status as protected area.

National parks

The national parks enjoy the strongest protection. In total there are 30 parks in Sweden, of which 8 are in the mountain regions.

Natural reserves

In total there are approximately 5 000 natural reserves in Sweden. They enjoy lower levels of protection, compared with the national parks, but aim at long term preserving natural environment and species within its boundaries. The majority of the protected area are within the mountain regions. Of the total reserve area 85 pc are in the counties of Norrbotten, Västerbotten and Jämtland.

Natura 2000

The Natura 2000 areas aim at improving biological diversity and constitute a network of ecologically sustained areas in Europe. In Sweden there are close to 4000 Natura 2000 areas. Most of them are located in the mountain world, and are also protected by the Bird Directive and the Habitats Directive and involves Animal and plant protection areas, biotope protection areas, national parks and natural reserves.

World Heritage Sites

In Sweden there are 15 so-called World Heritage Sites affiliated on UNESCO:s list. Two of them are natural heritage and are located within the programme area, these are Lapponia and The High Coast. These ones are also considered to have high cultural values with regards to reindeer herding.

Finland

Approx. 10 pc. of the country's land area has some form of area protection.

National parks

Finland has 40 national parks in total. The number of national parks in the north is smaller, but they are instead often large surface sized. Examples of national parks in the programme area are Gulf of Bothnia National Park, Kauhaneva–Pohjankangas National Park.

Natural reserves

There are also 19 natural reserves in Finland. The natural reserves enjoys strong protection and have primarily been set up for scientific purposes and are mainly closed to the public.

Specific Nature Protected Areas and Natura 2000

There are also other nature protected areas in the form of mire reserves of Finland, protected herb-rich forest areas, the seal protection area among others. Altogether, the Nature Protected Areas cover around 12 500 areas¹.

Natural Protected Areas, Wilderness Areas and National Recreational Areas are part of the global network of protected areas. Almost all protected areas are included in the Natura 2000-network.

World Heritage sites

Finland holds 7 UNESCO World Heritage sites, 6 are of cultural value and 1 is of natural value. Kvarken Archipelago between Finland and the High Coast in Sweden is one example of a world heritage site of natural value in the programme area and also a cross border one.

Another cross border world heritage site that involves all three countries is Struve Geodetic Arc which consists of a large number of station points (of which several are located in the three countries of the programme area) which the astronomer Friedrich Georg Wilhelm von Struve used for measuring the Earth's meridian and shape in the early 19th century.

Norway

Approx. 17 pc of the country's land surface holds some form of area protection.

¹ https://www.stat.fi/tup/suoluk/suoluk_alue_sv.html

National parks

In total there are 47 national parks in Norway, of which one fifth are located in the programme area, e.g. the Varanger Peninsula and Stabbursdalen in the northernmost parts of the area or Lomsdal-Visten in Nordlands fylke.

Landscape protection areas

In total there are 195 Landscape Protection Areas in Norway. Their protection are based on high cultural, ecological or experience grounded values.

Natural reserves

In total there are over 2 400 natural reserves in Norway. The reserves enjoy the strongest level of protection.

World Heritage sites

Norway hosts a total of 8 UNESCO world heritage sites. The Vega island with its archipelago is one example in the programme area.

Norway is not part of the Nautra 2000 network.

2 GENERAL BASIS FOR THE SEA

The environmental impact of the programme shall be assessed against a back ground of global and national environmental goals. Programmets miljökonsekvenser ska bedömas mot bakgrund av globala och

2.1 AGENDA 2030 & THE GLOBAL GOALS (SDG)

The UN has adopted 17 global goals for a sustainable development. Some of these are of great importance for the assessment of the programme's environmental impact.

The global goals under the Agenda 2030 have also been integrated in the individual countries' national environmental goals.

2.2 SWEDEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OBJECTIVES

The Swedish riksdag has adopted 16 environmental quality objectives. They are:

- 1. Reduced climate impact**
2. Clean air
3. Natural acidification only
4. A non-toxic environment
5. A protective ozone layer
6. A safe radiation environment
7. Zero Eutrophication
- 8. Flourishing lakes and streams**
9. Good-quality groundwater
- 10. A balanced marine environment, flourishing coastal areas and archipelagos**

11. Thriving wetlands
- 12. Sustainable forests**
13. A varied agricultural landscape
- 14. A magnificent mountain landscape**
15. A good built environment
- 16. A rich diversity of plant and animal life**

Several of these goals are of specific relevance for the assessment of the programme. They are goals where the environment in the programme area of a special importance for the national possibility of reaching these goals. They have been marked in bold style above.

2.3 FINLAND'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Already in 2015 Finland developed a strategy for sustainable development, formulating eight SDG:s. They have subsequently been integrated into Agenda 2030. The eight goals are:

1. Equal prospects for well-being
2. A participatory society for all
3. Work in a sustainable way
4. Sustainable society and local communities
5. A carbon-neutral society
6. A resource-wise economy
7. Lifestyles respectful of the carrying capacity of nature
8. Decision-making respectful of nature

They all hold important aspects for the assessment of the programme and for the programme area.

2.4 NORWAY'S ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OBJECTIVES

The Norwegian Storting have adopted 23 environmental goals, sorted under six broader headings, as presented below.

1. Biodiversity

- 1.1 Ecosystems must be in good condition and provide ecosystem services
- 1.2. No species and habitats should be eradicated, and the development of endangered and near endangered species and habitats should be improved.
- 1.3 A representative selection of Norwegian nature will be taken care of for future generations

2. Cultural monuments and cultural environment

- 2.1. The loss of cultural monuments worthy of protection must be minimized
- 2.2. A priority selection of automatically protected and other cultural monuments will have an ordinary level of maintenance by 2020
- 2.3 A representative sample of cultural monuments and the cultural environment must be protected by decision by 2020

2.4 Protected buildings, facilities and vessels must have an ordinary level of maintenance by 2020

3. Outdoor life

3.1 The position of outdoor life shall be taken care of and further developed through safeguarding the right of public access, preservation and facilitation of important outdoor life areas, and stimulation of increased outdoor life activity for all.

3.2 Nature will to a greater extent be used as a learning arena and activity area for children and young people.

4. Contamination

4.1 Pollution must not harm health and the environment

4.2 Emissions of substances that are hazardous to health and the environment must be stopped

4.3 The growth in the amount of waste must be significantly lower than the economic growth, and the resources in the waste are utilized in the best possible way through material recycling and energy utilization.'

4.4 To ensure safe air. Based on the current state of knowledge, the following level is considered safe air: Annual average PM10: 20 µg / m³ Annual average PM2.5: 8 µg / m³ Annual average NO₂: 40 µg / m³

4.5 Noise nuisance will be reduced by 10 per cent by 2020, compared with 1999. The number of people exposed to more than 38dB indoor noise level will be reduced by 30 per cent by 2020, compared with 2005.

5. Climate

5.1 Until 2020, Norway will cut global emissions of greenhouse gases corresponding to 30 per cent of Norway's emissions in 1990

5.2 Under the Paris Agreement, Norway has undertaken an obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent and up to 55 per cent in 2030 compared with the level in 1990

5.3 Norway will be climate neutral in 2030

5.4 Norway has legislated a goal of becoming a low-emission society by 2050

5.5 Reduced greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, in accordance with sustainable development

5.6 Political goal that society should be prepared for and adapted to climate change.

6. The polar regions

6.1 The extent of wilderness areas on Svalbard shall be kept at bay, and the biodiversity will be preserved virtually unaffected by local activity.

6.2 The 100 most important cultural monuments and cultural environments on Svalbard will be secured through predictable and long-term management

6.3 Negative human impact and the risk of impact on the environment in the polar regions must be reduced

Several of the goals have significant meaning for the programme are and for the programme. This is in particularly true for the goals under the headlines of biodiversity where most of the natural habitats of the programme area are significantly different to those in central or southern Norway.

3 SCOPING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The SEA report shall identify, describe and assess considerable environmental impact. As environmental impact shall be considered: direct or indirect; temporary or permanent; cumulative or non-cumulative; long, medium or short term; impact on:

1. The population and public health
2. Animals or plants listed under national or EU legislation, and biodiversity in general
3. Land, soil, water, air quality, climate, landscape, built environment and cultural environment
4. Land-use, water-management and the physical environment in general
5. Other management of raw-materials, natural resources or energy
6. Other parts of the environment

The scoping consultation and hearing is about the scope of the SEA and its level of detail.

3.1 EXTENT AND LEVEL OF DETAIL

The SEA shall contain all information reasonable with regards to:

- Current knowledge and methods of assessment
- The programme content and level of detail
- Public interest
- The fact that certain issues are better assessed when subsequent plans or programmes are made or in the examination of certain subsequent permits

The scope and level of detail of the SEA shall be reasonable in respect of the points above. This means that the SEA shall have the same level of detail as the programme it concerns. This will mean that the SEA will be confined to a general level.

The SEA report is therefore suggested to follow the following outline:

- Summary
- Introduction
- Description of the programme area
- The scoping and methods of the assessment
- Description of the programme
- Description of the current environmental status,
- Assessment of possible programme impact on environmental aspects
- Description of actions taken to reduce negative environmental impact, in e.g. the programming stage and through systems of monitoring
- Description of a counterfactual situation and assessment of alternatives to proposed programme
- Conclusive assessment

3.2 GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE OF SEA

The SEA will for most cases cover the programme area. Where relevant it will be recognised that some actions may have an impact beyond the programme area, e.g. regarding impact on the climate. This will be dealt with in relation to the nature of every such impact.

3.3 SEA AND TIMING

No general time-limit for assessing environmental impacts can be identified, New projects can be funded only up until 2027, allowing for 2-3 years of funding beyond that date. Impacts from projects may in some cases be seen much later than that.

3.4 SCOPING OF PROGRAMME CONTENT

The table below shows our proposed assessment for whether we can expect an impact from the programme on the various environmental aspects to be considered. The table also presents our assessment as to what degree such an impact may be.

Our assessment is that measures resulting from the programme both contribute to positive and negative impacts on the different environmental aspects. In the table we have uses + signs to indicate a possible positive impact and – signs for a possible negative impact. Several signs (++ or +++) indicate that the impact may be more important. The zero (0) means that we do not expect a significant impact from the measure (either positive or negative) on the environmental aspect, or that there are other levels where potential impact are better assessed (e.g. at a local plan or permits).

For example, the sign – means that we expect some negative impact on the environmental aspect in question from the programme measure, while --- means that we can expect considerable negative impact. The signs + and +++ means that we expect some or considerable positive impact respectively from the measure studied.

The color keys used in the table thus indicate which parts of the programme where we foresee the most important need for a strategic environmental assessment and which environmental aspects to covered in that assessment. The dark red fields in the table, thus, are those where we expect the most important impact from the programme. In lighter red fields we expect some impact. For areas marked with grey color, there is not expected to be significant environmental impact, alternatively any possible impact is expected to be handled in other plans or programmes.

<i>Programme content</i>		<i>Environmental aspects</i>							
<i>Policy Objectives</i>	<i>Specific Objectives</i>	<i>Natural Environment</i>	<i>Aquatic Environment</i>	<i>Cultural Environment/heritage</i>	<i>Climate</i>	<i>Risk & Security</i>	<i>Soil Pollution</i>	<i>Air Quality</i>	<i>Noise</i>
PO1 -A smarter Europe	Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	++/-	+/-	+/-	++/-	+/0	+/0	+/0	0
	Enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs	--	-	-	--	0	0	0	0
	Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	++	++	+++	+	+++	0	0	0

PO2 A greener, low-carbon Europe	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	+++	+++	++	+	0	++	++	++
	Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility, as part of transition to a net zero carbon economy	+/-	+/-	+/--	++	+/-	+/-	++	++/--
PO 4. A more social Europe	Improving cross border access to education and training. Improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognised across borders;	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	-	-	++/-	-	0	0	0	0
ISO 1 better Interreg governance	Other actions to support better cooperation governance.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Below is given a short-hand comment to our scoping-assessment and the need for a strategic environmental assessment for each of the specific objectives proposed in the programme.

PO1 - A smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation

- Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

Under this specific objective we expect projects aiming at developing the cooperation between research (universities and other research institutes) and industry, in order to stimulate processes of innovation. The programme is expected to focus on cooperation which spans across national borders.

The direct impact from the project work is considered to be of very limited impact. However, indirectly, the programme aims at innovations that ultimately should affect production of goods and services in the programme area or introduce new production. Hence both products and services per se and the production processes may have significant environmental impact. It is of course important that such innovations are directed towards sustainable products and services, and that appropriate mechanisms in order to ensure this are at place.

From previous programme periods we conclude that a considerable part of such products explicitly addressed issues of sustainability and thus had a potential for possible impacts on numerous environmental aspects.

Our assessment is that there is a potential for both positive and negative impact on a number of environmental aspects and that this specific objective therefore shall be addressed in more detail in the SEA-process. The most important impact we foresee is on climate and on natural environment.

- Enhancing growth and competitiveness of SMEs

Within this specific objective we expect a somewhat wider spectrum of measures relating to business development. The most likely objectives for the projects to funded under this specific objective are to stimulate cooperation and networking operations between SME:s, or other measures attempting to develop the cross border markets. Sustainability should be an integrated part in all business development under this specific objective. It is important to assess in particular possible negative aspects of this specific objective, in particular regarding climate and natural environment. An example where potential impact may be important is regarding investments in the tourism industry.

PO 2 A greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management

- Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

The measures within this specific objective are focused on achieving positive impact on the environment. An important part of the SEA process is to discuss the role of this objective in the overall programme, The measures under this objective has a potential to promote the situation concerning risk and security aspects, and the cultural heritage industries adversely affected by climate change (e.g. reindeer industries and fishery). The measures may also promote natural and aquatic environments in general, e.g. through working on resilience.

- Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

Under this specific objective we see measures aiming at preserving and protecting natural environments. Such measures may benefit natural and aquatic environments as well as cultural heritages adversely affected by climate change. Projects may also have positive impact in a more local perspective, e.g. in towns and other settlements. Aspects such as soil pollution, air quality and noise are also likely to benefit positively.

- *Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility, as part of transition to a net zero carbon economy*

The measures under this specific objective are designed to promote new sustainable multi modal transportation, especially within the urban areas of the programme area. The objective is to achieve positive impact on primarily the climate, but also on other area specific local environmental aspects. New systems of mobility might also have negative impact on both cultural and natural environment, not least when designed for urban areas. Such risk should be considered in the assessment.

PO 4. A more social Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

- Improving cross border access to education and training. Improving access to and the quality of education, training and lifelong learning across borders with a view to increasing the educational attainment and skills levels thereof as to be recognized across borders; Improving access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing infrastructure.

This specific objective will focus on education, training and lifelong learning across borders. Our assessment is that there will be very limited impact on environmental aspects from projects funded here. They should therefore be excluded from the further SEA process.

- Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

This specific objective may have some impact on the environmental aspects, mainly because of its potential for stimulating the tourism industry. The focus is on promoting a socially sustainable and inclusive tourism. Our assessment is that this objective may have a positive impact on the cultural environment and heritage. However, there is a risk also for negative impact, both in terms increasing numbers of visitors in sensitive environments but also on climate and natural environment.

INTERREG MÅLET ISO A better Interreg governance

- Other actions to support better cooperation governance.

This specific objective is directed to the overall objective of the interreg programmes, to achieve better coordinated governance the cross border regions. The environmental impact of such measures are likely limited. Our assessment is that this specific objective not need to be included in the full SEA process.

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