

Summary of the workshop

Interreg and EU enlargement, during the ***Art of Cooperation 2024 Conference***

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Moderator: Edmunds SNIKERIS – Senior Expert, Tesim

Speakers:

Sanda ŠIMIĆ STAMBOLIĆ – Assistant Minister of European Integration, Government of the Republic of Serbia, Ministry of European Integration, National Authority

Marko PERIĆ – Head of MA (Interreg Hungary-Croatia, Interreg IPA Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Montenegro Programmes)

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Christian Gsodam – advisor, European Union External Action Service (EEAS)

Territorial cooperation and contribution EU enlargement

Cross-border and transnational cooperation is an inherent feature of any region in the borderlands and a region as such. Economic collaboration, people-to-people exchanges, and the transport of goods and services—all rely on territorial cooperation elements.

Therefore, territorial cooperation programmes, such as CBC and transnational programmes not only deliver the results of their projects but also contribute to developing capacities that are ultimately essential for EU enlargement. This is evident in institutions enhancing their ability to implement more complex projects and policies, local communities building social resilience, and stakeholders benefiting from equal opportunities, regardless of whether they represent EU member states or partner countries.

Room for improvement in the territorial cooperation

There is broad consensus that territorial cooperation has brought tangible change to non-EU countries. In order to continue on this path, both the programmes and the national authorities expressed the need and support for further simplification of the regulatory framework. On the other hand, the national-level authorities highlighted the need to continue strengthening the capacities to implement these programmes effectively.

Advise to the decision makers of Interreg

Good cross-border and transnational relations are vital for the EU accession of candidate countries. Achieving mutual understanding, resilience, prosperity, and solidarity in Europe requires a robust legal framework and a continuous effort to simplify processes at the EU, programme and project implementation levels.

Strengthening territorial cooperation between EU and non EU countries, as well as among non EU countries themselves, is one of the most valuable investments we can make in Europe's future!