Welsh European Funding Office
European Territorial Co-operation Action Plan

Maximising Engagement in the European Territorial Co-operation Programmes 2014–2020
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Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) Action Plan for maximising engagement in European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) programmes. It complements the Welsh Government’s EU strategy – ‘Wales and the European Union’.

1.2 Our aim is to maximise the benefits to Wales by making best use of the opportunities for co-operation and collaboration provided within the framework of ETC programmes.

1.3 Almost £2.5 billion of support is available to Wales through European Structural and Investment Funds over the 2014-2020 programme period. These funds support the West Wales and the Valleys and East Wales Structural Fund programmes (ERDF and ESF), the all Wales Rural Development Plan (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries programme (EMFF). ERDF and ESF funding will support sustainable economic growth and jobs through research and innovation, business finance, ICT and Transport connectivity, energy, tackling climate change, and helping people into work and training. EAFRD funding will focus on competitiveness, the environment and access to services; and the EMFF will focus on sustainable fishing and economic growth and jobs through diversification within coastal communities.

1.4 The ETC programmes (also known as INTERREG) provide opportunities to support sustainable economic growth and development. They also provide the added value of a wider benefit derived from greater collaboration and co-operation with partner regions beyond Wales by providing opportunities to both learn from and influence policy development in response to shared challenges.

Wales will be involved in the following ETC programmes 2014-2020:

- Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme;
- Atlantic Area Programme;
- North-West Europe Programme;
- INTERREG Europe;
- URBACT;
- ESPON; and
- INTERACT

1.5 This document represents an Action Plan for strengthening Wales’ engagement in ETC. It will be subject to regular review and updating in the light of socio-economic trends, emerging priorities and development in ETC policy and programmes in which partners in Wales are able to engage.

1 http://gov.wales/topics/international/publications/eustrategy2012/?skip=1&lang=en
1.6 **Annex D** to this Action Plan provides headline details of these programmes along with links to the respective Managing Authority websites for further detailed information.

1.7 This Action Plan takes into account observations and recommendations on ETC from the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee and the findings of an ETC Scoping Study commissioned by WEFO to analyse the benefits and barriers to engagement in ETC programmes, the results of which were published in autumn 2014. It also reflects advice received from partners involved in the ETC Work Stream which was established to support Wales’ input into the development of the new ETC programmes.
2.1 The **Aim** of this Action Plan is to maximise the benefits to Wales from engagement in ETC programmes in ways which will allow us to learn from, share knowledge and experiences with and also influence other EU regions over the 2014-2020 programme period.

2.2 The **Outcomes** we aim to achieve are:

- An increase in the number of organisations in Wales engaging and benefiting from collaboration and co-operation across the EU of at least 20%;
- An increase of 40% in the value of ERDF coming to Wales when compared with the 2007–2013 ETC programmes;
- A stronger focus on ETC investments which address common cross-border, transnational, regional and pan-European challenges and opportunities in the thematic areas of:
  - Research and Innovation
  - Competitiveness of SMEs
  - Low Carbon Economy
  - Combating Climate Change
  - Environment and resource efficiency (including cultural and natural resources)
  - Urban development

2.3 Our **Objectives** are to:

Achieve closer co-operation and strengthen partnerships between organisations in Wales and across the EU by:

- Increasing integration and knowledge of ETC and its potential to add value to policy implementation within the Welsh Government and amongst others, thereby encouraging international engagement;
- Raising awareness and visibility of ETC programmes and encouraging Welsh partners to make best use of the opportunities available;
- Influencing ETC policy and programme development through pro-active engagement with the UK Government, the UK’s Devolved Administrations and other EU Members States and regions in transnational and inter-regional programming to raise the profile of Wales;
- Strengthening support for Welsh organisations in accessing ETC programmes, including helping with partnership search;
Leading the implementation of the 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Cross-border Co-operation Programme working closely with our Irish partners to ensure effective programme delivery, maximum take up of funds, and achievement of agreed programme outcomes.
3.1 **European Territorial Cooperation** (ETC), also known as INTERREG, is one of two goals of Cohesion Policy and provides a framework for the implementation of joint actions and policy exchanges between national, regional and local actors from across the EU Member States. The overarching objective of ETC is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the European Union (EU) as a whole. ETC seeks to achieve this through close co-operation between partners across the EU to find shared solutions to common challenges.

3.2 Since its inception 25 years ago, ETC has progressed significantly from a Community Initiative worth some ECU (European Currency Unit) 1 billion\(^2\) across a limited number of Member States, to a key instrument of the EU to promote and support co-operation across borders. A fifth round of programmes (commonly referred to as INTERREG V), worth over €10bn over the 2014-2020 period, is now underway and covers the whole EU territory of 28 Member States and is supported by a specific EU Regulation.

3.3 Achievements from “25 years of INTERREG” were recognised at an event which took place in Luxembourg on 15-16 September 2015 and jointly organised by the Luxembourg Council Presidency together with the European Commission and the INTERACT programme\(^3\).

3.4 ETC is built around three strands of cooperation:

**Cross-border programmes** *(strand A)*

Cross-border co-operation helps transform regions located on either side of internal or external land or maritime borders of the European Union, for example the sea border between Ireland and Wales. Cross-border co-operation is aimed at tackling common challenges identified jointly in the border regions, engineering co-operation between adjacent regions and to exploit untapped growth potential.

Overall, there are 60 cross-border programmes along 38 internal EU borders. The cross-border programme which will operate in Wales in 2014-2020 is the **Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme**.

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\(^2\) approximately €1 billion in 1990

**Transnational programmes (strand B)**

Transnational co-operation promotes co-operation among greater European regions, including the ones surrounding sea basins or mountain ranges and facilitates coordinated strategic responses to joint challenges and aimed at a higher degree of territorial integration. Involving regions from several countries of the EU, the programmes are aimed at promoting more effective cooperation and regional development within the Union by utilising a joint strategic response to tackle common issues across the respective territories.

Overall, there are 15 transnational programmes covering larger areas of co-operation. The transnational programmes covering all of Wales in 2014-2020 are:

- **North-West Europe Programme** and
- **Atlantic Area Programme**.

![MAREN](image-url)
Interregional programmes (strand C)

Interregional co-operation provides a framework for the exchange of experiences between local and regional actors from across Europe in order to contribute to the EU’s strategies on growth, jobs and sustainable development. In addition, it aims at reducing disparities by matching less experienced regions with more advanced regions in the various policy fields and supports policy exchange and developing networks to instigate good practice and facilitate the transfer of experience across regions of the EU.

There are four interregional programmes operating at a pan-European level, covering all EU28 Member States. The inter-regional programmes covering all of Wales in 2014-2020 are:

- INTERREG Europe Programme,
- URBACT III Programme,
- ESPON 2020 Co-operation Programme and
- INTERACT Programme.

A set of 12 IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) and 16 ENI (European Neighbourhood Instrument) programmes complete the overall picture.

3.5 ETC has been reshaped in line with the new design of the 2014-2020 European Cohesion Policy to ensure an effective contribution from the programmes to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and the targets set out in Europe 2020. ETC Programmes are expected to evolve to ensure an effective use of investments and a stronger focus on impact on the respective territories. Key elements in the design and implementation of the 2014-2020 ETC Programmes include concentration of resources, simplification and a clear focus on results orientation.

3.6 The fifth round of ETC programmes (INTERREG V) has been developed on the basis of the 11 Investment Priorities laid down in the ERDF Regulation contributing to the delivery of the Europe 2020 Strategy. At least 80% of the budget for each co-operation programme has had to concentrate on a maximum of four thematic objectives among the eleven EU priorities:

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*The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) is based on partnerships with the EU candidate countries - the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Croatia, and Turkey - and potential candidate countries - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia. The European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) promotes co-operation and economic integration between the EU and partner countries - Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, the Russian Federation, Syria, Tunisia, and Ukraine. Further information can be found on the DG Regio website: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/outside-the-eu](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/outside-the-eu)*
Why is ETC important to Wales?

3.7 Wales is a small country on the periphery of mainland Europe. It continues to face economic, environmental and social challenges which it cannot face in isolation. The world is a smaller place, a global economy where competition is fierce and Wales is part of a European Union which together faces common issues and pressures.

3.8 The European Structural and Investment Funds offer a route through which Wales can stimulate smart, sustainable and inclusive growth aligned to EU2020 priorities within its own territory.

3.9 ETC programmes provide broader opportunities for advancing Wales’ interests in ways which are consistent with Wales in the European Union - the Welsh Government’s EU Strategy and its International Agenda – Wales in the World. ETC programme activity in Wales can also contribute to The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

3.10 ETC programmes provide a framework for partners in Wales to look outwards from its natural boundaries, to work together with other regions to address challenges of common interest, exploit untapped potential, share experiences and best practice and to develop shared solutions.

3.11 The whole framework of ETC therefore has demonstrable added value to Wales, not just in the context of accessing additional funding opportunities from ETC programmes beyond those operating regionally and nationally, but in releasing potential to stimulate thinking beyond national borders and create, co-ordinate and sustain international partnerships.
3.12 The programmes can address issues which are of a nature that they cannot be tackled satisfactorily within one Member State, stimulating co-operation on challenges on which a collective position can have more influence on regional, national and EU agendas. The co-operative activity itself can improve the quality of results which in turn may be of relevance to wider co-operation areas and beyond, in that they could have transferability value to benefit other regions and Member States.

3.13 ETC programmes have restrictions in scale and scope and are not going to make a marked impact on major labour market and economic issues such as eradicating unemployment or delivering a carbon-neutral EU; neither can they intervene in major scale infrastructure investment. They can, however, act as an enabler, through the stimulation of ideas to test and promote best practice from Wales and to learn from and access international expertise from other EU regions. This is particularly important in an economic environment where internationalisation is increasingly vital.

3.14 ETC programmes can stimulate innovation through the capacity to pilot and work on ideas, delivering activities including the development and testing of services, products, processes and policy, bringing additional benefits to our organisations, people, businesses, communities and the Welsh economy. In this way ETC activities can more effectively complement the activities and outcomes of the mainstream regional programmes.

3.15 We want to raise the bar higher in terms of Welsh engagement, help nurture further evolution of ETC and build on current progress through playing a key part in the successor programmes.
4.1 The Welsh Government recognises that ETC Programmes are an essential component of our efforts to build relationships, share best practice and learn from other regions.

4.2 On 9 May 2012, the First Minister of Wales launched the Government’s EU Strategy – Wales and the European Union. This strategy emphasises the need to continue to work to raise greater awareness of Wales within the EU through promoting the best of what Wales has to offer. Building upon engagement levels by Welsh partners in the successor ETC programmes for 2014-2020 will contribute to this objective.

4.3 In July 2015, the Welsh Government published its International Agenda – Wales in the World. Wales in the World recognises the contribution that ETC Programmes have made in strengthening links with regions of the EU during the 2007-2013 programme period.

4.4 Overall, the ETC Programmes 2007-2013 invested around €1.4 billion including €885m ERDF across the EU. In Wales, partners were engaged in five main ETC Programmes and this included a wide range of organisations across the public, private and third sectors actively participating in 94 cooperation projects. The total value of these projects was some €154m in ERDF, of which €43m of ERDF investment has been brought into Wales.

4.5 Wales performed well. In the Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme, Welsh partners worked closely with those in Ireland in sharing the available funding. In the transnational programmes, ERDF in Wales (as a percentage against population) is currently the highest in the UK for the Atlantic Area programme and it compares very favourably with all of the participating areas of the EU in the North-West Europe programme.

Annex A to this Action Plan provides a breakdown of projects and financial uptake by programme as at 31 August 2015.

Annex B to this Action Plan provides information on some successful 2007-2013 projects in Wales.

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5 Link to the Welsh Government’s International Agenda: [http://gov.wales/topics/international/publications/international-agenda/?lang=en](http://gov.wales/topics/international/publications/international-agenda/?lang=en)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>No. Projects</th>
<th>Total ERDF to Wales (€)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland Wales (cross-border)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>27,171,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Area (transnational)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5,107,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWE (transnational)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8,712,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreg IVC (interregional)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2,080,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBACT (interregional)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>43,082,372</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Further details of those Welsh organisations participating in the 2007-2013 programmes together with information about international partners, project activity and costs are available on WEFO’s web pages⁶.

4.7 The chart at Annex C provides a summary of ETC project thematic activity in Wales during the 2007-2013 Programmes.

**Lessons learned during 2007-2013**

4.8 In its 2011 report on Welsh participation in EU research, innovation and life-long learning programmes, the National Assembly for Wales European and External Affairs Committee recommended that the Welsh Government review its strategy for “Strengthening co-operation with other EU nations and regions through exploiting the potential of the ERDF and ESF regional Convergence and regional Competitiveness programmes in Wales for 2007-2003” and explore the scope for partnerships on funded projects, especially with those cities and regions for which there are existing working arrangements, including through Memoranda of Understanding and Twinning.

4.9 The National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee published its report on EU funding opportunities 2014-2020 (July 2014)⁷. The Committee made a number of key observations about ETC Programmes:

- There are strategic opportunities for the Welsh Government in participating in ETC programmes to inform policy and to capitalise on good practice from ETC projects;

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⁶ http://wefo.gov.wales/programmes/20072013/europeancooperation/?lang=en
• There should be closer exposure of the links between European policy, ETC (and other) programmes and policy in Wales;

• Inter-regional co-operation programmes can provide a framework for learning lessons and mainstreaming these into organisational functions, for example, within local authorities;

• Recognising that Wales is maintaining a good level of participation, there are opportunities for more effective joining up, for example with the Wales Office in Brussels;

• Opportunities should be taken to shape and influence the content of successor 2014-2020 ETC programmes;

• More could be done to harness expertise and experience of working with the ETC programmes, showcase good project examples and share lessons leaned;

• Strategic links between ETC programmes and mainstream ESIF programmes should be better developed to maximise investment in Wales;

• An identifiable Welsh contact presence should be developed to assist with partner search;

• Greater support should be provided for partners in the third sector.
4.10 This report also made the following recommendations which cover broader areas but are important for maximising ETC engagement into 2014-2020.

- Cultivate partnerships between stakeholders across the higher and further education sectors, business and the third sector to share expertise, resources and good practice.

- Work with local government to bring together people who have the relevant expertise to develop an action plan for strengthening and promoting the participation of local authorities directly in the broader development and initiation of European policy and funding streams and for integrating the different funds to maximise the outcomes for the people of Wales.

**ETC Scoping Study and ETC Work Stream**

4.11 The ETC Scoping Study commissioned by WEFO was published in September 2014. The Study examined the experiences of organisations in Wales and the benefits and barriers to participation in ETC programmes.

4.12 The Study gives us a sound basis on which to reflect upon the experiences of partners involved in ETC programmes and some ideas about the support needed to ensure that Welsh stakeholders maximise the opportunities within the programmes.

4.13 The Study’s recommendations were made under three overarching themes:

**Maximise the opportunities for strategic engagement across policy areas and Programmes and enhancing the ‘fit’ with organisations’ objectives and activities**

- The Welsh Government and WEFO should, together, clarify the extent to which Welsh participation in ETC projects should be strategically integrated with Welsh Government policy drivers;

- Instigate a 'challenge fund' that will provide an element of match funding for projects going forward to ETC Programmes meeting specific and transparent Welsh Government policy priorities;

- Information about ETC projects and outcomes for Welsh participants should be more widely shared with Welsh Government departments and government agencies.
Support the development of organisational capacity and maturity to engage in ETC Programmes and other international links and relationships

- Assist Welsh organisations to develop their capacity to undertake ETC and other EU collaboration activities by facilitating the partnering of more experienced ETC participant organisations with organisations that are less experienced with ETC;
- Enhance the ‘brokerage’ of project development opportunities across organisations, sectors and Programmes;
- Create a ‘showcase’ of successful ETC projects and partnerships.

Support participation in ETC and other Programmes for Welsh participants

- WEFO should continue to leverage its role in helping to shape ETC Programmes to achieve greater uniformity between Programmes;
- Develop single contacts and advice across all EU Programmes within WEFO and nurture sub-regional networks to share knowledge and experience;
- Transnational opportunities require more positive support and encouragement from across WEFO with greater flexibility in appraising mainstream projects with a transnational element.

4.14 Details of the operational methodology, case studies and specific findings are set out on WEFO’s web pages8.

4.15 The ETC Work stream in Wales, commissioned to help plan and prepare for Wales’ participation in 2014-2020 programmes also provided ideas and insight for future engagement and negotiating priorities with other EU regions into developing engagement. Key messages were:

- ETC programmes needed to focus more on collective return by focusing on specific themes with the most potential to find solutions to challenges and develop best practice;
- A suggested ETC focus in Wales on Thematic Objectives targeting research and innovation and competitiveness of SMEs with potential activity within Thematic Objectives covering the low carbon economy and environment and resource efficiency. Whilst combating climate change was not specifically identified by the Work stream as a key ETC priority overall, it was recognised that this theme could feature strongly in the new Ireland Wales programme. Social inclusion should

also be integrated into future programmes, potentially as a horizontal priority;

- The perception of ETC needed to change and the international dimension within many organisations needed to be integral rather than added on;

- Ways of communicating success and disseminating results through ETC programmes needed to be reviewed and escalated, therefore increasing the visibility of ETC programmes in Wales;

- Clustering and improving contact between the range of ETC programmes should be encouraged;

- The fragmented approach to ETC across the range of sectors needed to be addressed by bringing practitioners together;

- The Welsh Government should provide specific Welsh advice to stakeholders in Wales, specifically with regard to transnational and interregional programmes:

- Attention should be given to the transferring of good practice to and from ETC and regional programmes.
5.1 Overall, the ETC Programmes in which Wales will engage in 2014-2020 are worth €1.552 billion, with €1.128b available from the ERDF to participating regions.

5.2 Total ERDF programme values were calculated by adding those allocations agreed by each of the participating Member States. These values have now been confirmed for each of the programmes in which Wales will participate.

5.3 The ETC regulation allows for an ERDF intervention rate of up to 85% of total eligible expenditure to be applied to ETC projects. For the programmes in which Wales is engaged, both the Welsh Government and UK Government have looked – where possible – to maximise ERDF intervention rates. This has the potential to reduce the match funding burden on beneficiaries. However, as these are co-operation programmes, intervention rates have had to be negotiated and agreed by all participating Member States.

5.4 ERDF intervention rates for each programme have been decided by the respective 2014-2020 Planning Groups for each programme. Details are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Total programme value (€m)</th>
<th>Total ERDF (€m)</th>
<th>Maximum ERDF rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland Wales (cross-border)</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Area (transnational)</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Europe (transnational)</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERREG EUROPE (interregional)</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBACT (interregional)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESPON (interregional)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERACT (interregional)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1552</strong></td>
<td><strong>1128</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Development of the 2014-2020 ETC Programmes

Concentration and Focus

5.5 This Action Plan has already referred to greater concentration and targeting within ETC programmes in 2014-2020. All programmes have identified the socio-economic situation and needs and challenges facing the respective territories. Programme Planning Groups, comprising Member State representatives, including Welsh Government, have developed programme Priority Axes and Specific Objectives to address those areas where collectively the programmes can add the most value through co-operation.

5.6 There is wide recognition that ETC programmes need greater concentration and focus to more effectively demonstrate results and impact of investments.

5.7 Whilst there were good examples of co-operation projects working in interesting areas, generically, it could be argued that the 2007-2013 programmes were too broad and unfocused with projects lacking tangible outcomes.

5.8 The Welsh Government has worked with UK colleagues to negotiate some key principles for future development and together we have pressed other participating Member States to target key areas of future development:

- To define the key objectives of the programmes and what we want them to achieve;
- The targeting of investments;
- Adoption of the right rules and processes;
- Achieving stronger governance and decision making.

5.9 This has resulted in the creation of programme frameworks which are aligned to Welsh and UK policies, interests and priorities, taking account of the need to negotiate programmes across the Member States and achieve satisfactory compromise. The content of the new programmes is also broadly in line with those priorities identified by the ETC Work stream in Wales and all ETC programmes have been subject to formal consultation processes.

5.10 The Welsh Government therefore expects all ETC programmes to be effectively concentrated on activities where the most value can be gained to maximise outcomes and results. ETC Programmes can build upon and complement other EU funding mechanisms, and draw on the benefits of co-operation via shared priorities with other EU regions for the overall benefit of Wales.

Alignment with Welsh Government Strategies

5.11 The Welsh Government supports the underlying principles that the 2014-2020 ETC programmes should focus on sustainable economic development
and jobs and growth, should strive for clear results orientation, tangible results and maximum impact, and should focus on shared priorities which provide the most added value. ETC activities will be expected to improve mainstream programme practice where this is appropriate. Whilst impact is important, due attention will be given to scale of operation and what the ETC programmes can realistically achieve.

5.12 Projects being developed in Wales will have to align to these principles and demonstrate that the challenge in question and their response to that challenge via proposed activities are genuinely cross-border, transnational or inter-regional – we should continue to ask the question of partners – why ETC?

5.13 We will maximise engagement in all the ETC programmes which Wales is eligible to participate in with the priority focus on those programmes which have the potential to result in the greatest economic benefit to Wales.

Transnational Activity in other EU Funded Programmes

5.14 In addition to engagement within the geographically targeted ETC Programmes, there continue to be opportunities in regional Structural Fund programmes and other centrally managed funds such as Horizon 2020 for EU regions to work bi-laterally and beyond.

5.15 Efforts to stimulate engagement through co-operative actions through mainstream 2007-2013 ERDF and ESF programmes proved to be slower than anticipated. Participation was limited not least because of prioritisation within the Welsh partnership on developing projects under the Regional Convergence and Regional Competitiveness programmes and uncertainty within the partnership in Wales on how to engage as this option within the regional programmes was new and untested. The ETC Scoping Study covers this in more detail.

5.16 Looking forward, both the Welsh Chapter of the UK Partnership agreement, as well as the regional programmes for West Wales and the Valleys and East Wales, set out potential and identify specific themes which could lever in co-operation activities within the ESF and ERDF Regional Programmes to work with other EU regions and test bed collaborative working on subjects of common interest, where the most benefit can be derived. The respective WEFO Programme Management teams will work directly with potential partners interested in co-operation activity to discuss opportunities within these programmes.

5.17 Partnerships are developing, for example, with Brittany to explore potential for future co-operation around marine energy and there is further scope for the development of ideas with those cities and regions for which there are existing working arrangements, including through Memoranda of Understanding and Twinning.
6.1 We have developed a series of actions to respond to lessons learned, observations of the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee, the findings of the ETC Scoping Study, and deliberations of the ETC Work Stream. These actions underpin each of the five strategic objectives set out in Section 2. These form the basis of the Action Plan for maximising engagement and success in the 2014-2020 Programme period.

**Increasing integration and knowledge of ETC and its potential to add value to policy implementation within the Welsh Government and amongst others, thereby encouraging international engagement**

6.2 ETC needs to fit into and be planned into an overall strategic vision for the development of Wales to ensure the benefits of international co-operation and collaboration are recognised and embraced in developing business plans and policies.

- We will increase the integration and knowledge of the potential of ETC amongst policy makers in Welsh Government and the wider partnership.

- We will ensure opportunities for the integration of ETC activities with other funding sources and wider operations in Wales, for example mainstream regional programmes and other EU programmes are fully utilised.

- We will signpost the potential of ETC programmes for adding value to developing emerging strategies in Wales, for example feeding into the work of the Wales Marine Strategic Policy and Governance Board and the City Regions development teams.

6.3 There is considerable potential in enhancing cross-border links and strengthening collaboration with English regions and the UK’s other devolved administrations.

- We will work with our partners in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland to consider common needs and challenges and develop partnerships and cross-UK project potential through the vehicle of ETC programmes and consider wider opportunities through our respective regional programmes.

6.4 Welsh Government departments have been integrally involved in the development of the Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme, in conjunction with partners in the Irish Government.
• We will continue to build and enhance engagement between both Governments through the work of the Programme Monitoring Committee and the opportunities the programme provides to forge partnerships, stimulate ideas and identify shared policy priorities.

6.5 Knowledge of ETC developments and opportunities, as well as the flow and dissemination of information to partners, needs to be improved and cascaded more widely within Wales.

• We will develop more effective links with Welsh Government policy departments which have interests aligned to the priorities of the 2014-2020 ETC programmes and improve the system for securing policy advice on emerging ETC operations and for providing feedback on progress with development and delivery.

• We will develop a network of ETC contacts in Wales and utilise ETC online and social media tools which can be used to share information and updates with partners in Wales who are interested or engaged in co-operation through these programmes.

• We will continue to engage with the work of the EU Funding Ambassadors to share information and explore links and pursue opportunities for alignment between ETC and the directly managed EU programmes, including Horizon 2020.

• We will look to develop more strategic links and alignment between ETC programmes and mainstream programmes. For example Interregional programmes can provide a framework for learning lessons and mainstreaming.
6.6 By completing these actions, WEFO will seek to address the Scoping Study’s first headline recommendation to maximise opportunities for strategic engagement and link potential ETC operations more closely with policy development within the Welsh Government. WEFO will also secure a more effective interface for promoting internationalisation and disseminating ETC information more effectively. These actions will also respond to the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee’s observations surrounding strategic ETC opportunities within Welsh Government for capitalising on ETC best practice and for giving closer exposure to between EU/ETC policy and policy in Wales.

Raising awareness and visibility of ETC programmes and encouraging partners to make best use of the opportunities available

6.7 It is important to raise the profile of Wales’ engagement in ETC and highlight our ambition to increase our participation in the programmes. Key stakeholders in Wales all have a role to play in achieving this objective. The framework and content of future actions will be driven by progress with the respective programmes and needs and gaps in provision.

- We will continue to promote ETC programmes through a range of events, such as the joint event with the WLGA and Wales Higher Education in Brussels in October 2015.

- We will hold a transnational/interregional event in Wales to showcase opportunities under these programmes.

- We will continue to work closely with the UK Government, Devolved Administrations and UK Contact Points to support transnational and interregional awareness-raising and programme-specific seminars and/or workshops as the 2014-2020 programmes gather pace.

6.8 There is a need to improve the visibility of ETC, develop more strategic partnership links, and more effectively communicate and disseminate success stories in Wales.

- We will strengthen awareness and visibility of transnational and interregional programmes with stakeholders across the HE/FE, local government, third and private sectors. We are keen to cultivate private sector engagement in ETC, particularly through programme Innovation priorities.

- We will facilitate more effective links between the UK Contact Points and the Regional Engagement Teams and pool resources across the sectors to discuss strategic priorities and to stimulate development of project ideas.

- We will promote opportunities to facilitate peer learning and provide beneficiaries with ample opportunity to showcase success and
experience of working within ETC programmes, including overcoming barriers to engagement.

- We will increase the use of social media and web channels, particularly Twitter, to communicate development with the ETC 2014-2020 programmes.

6.9 WEFO will introduce and develop a dedicated programme-specific website for the 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme, which is being developed in line with the Ireland Wales Communications Strategy.

- We will establish this website and build links with those websites operated by Managing Authorities responsible for the other ETC Programmes in which Wales will engage.

- We will actively monitor the progress of the Ireland Wales Communications Strategy which seeks to communicate the opportunities and achievements of cross-border funding in Wales and Ireland, increase the understanding of the programme’s impact on growth and jobs, and develop a positive culture among beneficiaries to promote the benefits of cross-border co-operation.

6.10 These actions will address the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee’s wider recommendation to cultivate partnerships between stakeholders across the higher and further education sectors, business and the third sector to share expertise, resources and good practice and their ETC specific observation that more could be done to harness expertise and share lessons learned. By completing these actions, we will address the second theme of the ETC Scoping Study’s recommendations concerned with enhancing brokerage of opportunities and showcasing success and the ETC Work Stream’s comments about increased visibility.

**Influencing ETC policy and programme development through pro-active engagement with the UK Government, the UK’s Devolved Administrations and other EU Members States and regions in transnational and inter-regional programming to raise the profile of Wales**

6.11 Effective partnership is the cornerstone of successful ETC programmes and is also important in the context of working relationships with other departments in the UK and overseas.

- We will continue to play an active part on the UK ETC Board, established to provide a more cohesive approach to ETC policy and programmes in the UK and to develop an improved structure for the network of UK Contact Points in 2014-2020.

- We will aim to secure the role of the UK National Correspondent function in the UK for the Atlantic Area Programme to play a leading role for the UK in its relationship with the programme’s management
team in Portugal, to maximise opportunities for Welsh partners, and help raise the profile of Wales.

- We will ensure strong representation from the Welsh Government on Programme Monitoring Committees. We are finalising the continuation of our membership of the North-West Europe, Atlantic Area and INTERREG Europe PMCs.

- We will continue to consult with key sectors in Wales to ensure participation on the UK Sub Committees covering the three strands of ETC and created to oversee UK participation across the programmes. We will also consult on membership of the UK ETC engagement forum which will focus on higher-level issues such as communication and engagement activity.

- We will work with the Welsh Government Office in Brussels to help build links, publicise ETC opportunities and widen networks across the EU. For example, there is potential to build upon links with the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) and Conference of Atlantic Arc Cities (CAAC) to further explore themes of common interest and developments through the ETC Programmes, particularly the Atlantic Area Programme.

- We will ensure that we, together with Welsh Government colleagues and partners in Wales, will take advantage of opportunities arising from the European Commission’s Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic Area and subsequent Action Plan. This will include engagement with other regions of the UK, Ireland, France, Spain and Portugal via co-operation within the 2014-2020 Atlantic Area Programme

- We will follow progress of The Vanguard Initiative – a grouping of 21 regions\(^9\) which includes advanced manufacturing in their smart specialisation strategies and provides a sound basis for co-operative project development – disseminating any results and information to the wider partnership.

- As Managing Authority for the Ireland Wales Programme, we will continue to work closely and jointly with its national and regional partners in Ireland and will build upon its links within the UK and our programme partners across the EU.

6.12 We have already addressed the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee and Scoping Study findings that opportunities are taken to shape and influence the 2014-2020 ETC Programmes. WEFO has played an integral part in developments which has resulted in programmes which offer considerable opportunities for Welsh partners. The thematic priorities and need to focus on activity with the most potential identified by the

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\(^9\) Basque Country, Flanders, Baden Wurttemberg, Catalonia, Nord Pas de Calais, Silesia, Scotland, Skane, Tampere Region and a number of Danish regions
ETC Work Stream have also been taken into full account in negotiating programme content.

6.13 Participation of stakeholders on the UK Sub-Committee structures responds to a broader Enterprise and Business Committee recommendation which includes working with local government to bring together people who have the relevant expertise and strengthening and promoting the participation of local authorities directly in the development and initiation of European policy and funding streams.

**Strengthening support for Welsh organisations in accessing ETC programmes, including helping with partnership search**

6.14 The operation of a dedicated ETC Unit in WEFO will continue to offer advice and guidance on all three strands of ETC programmes for Government Policy Departments and Welsh partners alongside its programme specific and policy functions.

- We will ensure we are linked into the UK Contact Point model being developed at the UK level to interface with UK Contact Points covering other ETC programmes. This will enable effective information sharing, strengthening the knowledge base across the ETC programmes in Wales and increase the potential for pan-UK project development.

- We have secured favourable ERDF intervention rates for each of the ETC programmes. Opportunities also exist for operations to access the Targeted Match Funding scheme where ETC has been recognised as a priority.

- We will continue to engage with the INTERACT Programme on the Maritime Network of cross-border programmes and its KEEP database\(^\text{10}\) which provides a wealth of information on ETC partnerships and projects, and thematic engagement across the EU in ETC programmes.

6.15 A more robust, sustainable structure and delivery model through the role of UK Contact Points is being developed to provide effective support to stakeholders throughout the UK. The exact structure will be informed by further development of the UK governance model for 2014-2020 which is expected to be finalised by early 2016.

- We are pressing for a UK Contact Point to be housed in Wales to provide stakeholders with direct advice, including partner search assistance for transnational and interregional programmes. This may also include a remit to cover the south-west of England.

\(^{10}\) [http://www.keep.eu/keep/](http://www.keep.eu/keep/)
6.16 By completing these actions, we will respond to the ETC Scoping Study’s third headline recommendation of de-risking ETC participation by striving to strengthen transnational contact and support for partners. An improved structure within Wales and the UK would also provide a lever for assisting capacity development as recommended within the second headline recommendation. These actions also respond to comments by the National Assembly for Wales Enterprise and Business Committee and the ETC Work Stream about an identifiable Welsh contact presence to assist with partner search and provide direct advice to stakeholders in Wales. The housing of a Contact Point would also address the ETC Work stream’s call for improved links between programmes, something which we, along with UK colleagues are keen to enhance.

Leading the implementation of the 2014-2020 Ireland Wales cross-border Co-operation Programme working closely with our Irish partners to ensure effective programme delivery, maximum take up of funds and achievement of agreed programme outcomes

6.17 Partnership interest in the Ireland Wales programme is very high and as Managing Authority for 2014-2020, we are intent on implementing a high quality cross-border programme which will provide applicants with effective advice, guidance and support throughout the development and delivery cycle.

- We will build on effective partnership with our colleagues in Ireland which is central to our aim of ensuring quality programme delivery and capitalise on success to date.

- The four Ireland Wales Operation Officers (Development Officers) will continue to provide dedicated coverage to partners in Wales and Ireland. They will provide direct assistance to applicants, promoting opportunities within the Programme, potential partner search and hands-on support through the development, approval, post-approval and closure stages.

- We are delivering against e-cohesion requirements in the EU Regulations by moving the Ireland Wales Programme onto the same ICT framework as our regional programmes through utilisation of PPIMS and by providing an on-line system for applications.

- We will organise at least one major information focused event for each year of the programming period to highlight key messages, funding opportunities, delivery arrangements, best practice, and achievements of the Ireland Wales Programme. This could take the form of a stakeholder event held at a particular venue in Wales or Ireland or a publicity / Twitter campaign.
# Annex A

Projects and financial uptake by programme as at 31 August 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Total Programme Value / €</th>
<th>Total Programme ERDF Value / €</th>
<th>No. Approved Projects with Welsh partners</th>
<th>Total project costs / €</th>
<th>Total ERDF Grant / €</th>
<th>Total Welsh Costs / €</th>
<th>Total Welsh ERDF / €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ireland Wales</td>
<td>70,260,394</td>
<td>52,695,295</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>70,483,113</td>
<td>50,630,291</td>
<td>38,338,152</td>
<td>27,243,904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atlantic Area</td>
<td>158,798,190</td>
<td>104,051,233</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>43,080,815</td>
<td>28,002,477</td>
<td>7,969,828</td>
<td>5,107,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West Europe</td>
<td>696,668,854</td>
<td>355,443,293</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>113,702,735</td>
<td>56,529,395</td>
<td>17,424,259</td>
<td>8,712,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IVC</td>
<td>405,094,936</td>
<td>321,321,762</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23,357,799</td>
<td>18,364,756</td>
<td>2,774,582</td>
<td>2,080,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBACT</td>
<td>68,890,739</td>
<td>53,319,170</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>651,410</td>
<td>482,797</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total | 1,399,713,113 | 886,830,753 | 94 | 251,275,872 | 154,009,717 | 66,519,321 | 43,154,536 |
Examples of successful 2007-2013 ETC projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ireland Wales Programme</th>
<th>€1.2m (€0.9m ERDF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Celtic Alliance for NanoHealth (CAN)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners: Swansea University (lead), Dublin City University, Trinity College Dublin &amp; University College Dublin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This business-academia interaction was initiated through CAN venture forums, an annual event held alternately in Wales and Ireland, bringing together businesses, CAN partners, fund managers and other interested parties to explore the latest opportunities open to businesses in the field, with a specific aim of targeting SME growth. Follow-on interactions between forum stakeholders occurred on a case-by-case basis after each event. CAN also delivered technical activity centred on the Informatics and Modelling of data obtained from the analysis of nanomaterial interactions with biological systems using high-content screening systems. This is an emerging requirement for the development and evaluation of nanotechnology-enabled products in the life-sciences and advanced manufacturing sectors. To date the project has assisted 30 SMES and created 2 new SMEs and 10 (gross) direct new jobs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hydro-BPT</th>
<th>€0.9m (€0.6m ERDF)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partners: Dublin University (lead) &amp; Bangor University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Hydro-BPT has been carrying out research into the amount of energy required to provide a modern water supply and treatment service since 2011 with a view to improving the sustainability of the water industry in Ireland and Wales. The Hydro-BPT project provides:  
  • technical engineering solutions;  
  • assessments of the environmental and energy impacts of the proposed technology in the region;  
  • a GIS database of existing water infrastructure where energy may be recovered; and  
  • a business/collaboration model through which the industry may implement the technology widely.  
| To date the project has implemented 7 measures which react to the challenge of climate change, established cross-border links and has disseminated 9 results/reports to stakeholders and/or communities.  
Looking ahead to 2014-2020, Hydro-BPT is in the business planning stage of a new Ireland Wales Programme operation and is also looking at developing a project under the Horizon 2020 programme. During a presentation at a recent 2014-2020 Ireland Wales Programme Monitoring Committee meeting, they underlined the importance to the project of the co-operation, knowledge and links which have been built between colleagues from the two nations. |
### Smart Coasts

€5m (€3.7m ERDF)

**Partners:** Aberystwyth University (lead) & University College Dublin

Smart Coasts is designed to deliver sustainable coastal communities through maintaining compliance of bathing waters with EU standards, thus keeping key sites open and attracting visitors who make a major contribution to the rural economies of Wales and Ireland.

New legislation, suggested by the WHO and implemented by the EU, suggests that real-time modelling and prediction of bathing water quality should be used with intelligent signage to give bathers ‘informed choice’. With real-time prediction the UK will keep its ‘Blue Flag’ beach awards. Without it, half of the present Blue Flags will be lost. Smart Coasts has delivered the first such model in England and Wales used operationally since 2013.

This has the best predictive power of any model applied to this management challenge world-wide. In Swansea Bay, it makes the difference between the very real likelihood of beach closure and a sustainable future for the recreational economy of the city.

Smart Coasts has developed a predictive model for Irish bathing water quality, which has already been implemented in over half of Irish local authorities, thus allowing discounting of water samples that would have a negative impact on bathing water classification.

In addition to the central modelling success the project has developed new means of tracking the source of beach pollution and quantifying all the complex inputs for sewage and agriculture. We are now engaged in detailed comparison of other modelling approaches to maximise predictive power and ensure a robust management tool is delivered to the policy community stakeholders we are working with.

To date it has implemented 19 measures which react to the challenge of climate change, established 6 cross-border links and disseminating results/reports to 12 stakeholders and/or communities.

### WIN-IPT

€1.7m (€1.2m ERDF)

**Partners:** Waterford Institute of Technology (lead), Bangor University & Swansea University

WIN-IPT promotes the development of innovations and enhanced business opportunities for SMEs who are working in the area of PV technologies. In addition, the network aims to identify the barriers to the advancement of the Solar Industry. It has created a hub of expertise through knowledge transfer (i.e., Business & Innovation forums and workshops) between HEIs, SMEs and Local Authorities. The hub acts as a cross-border repository of knowledge and R&D activity that directly supports SMEs working in the development of energy-efficient solutions.

The network has delivered direct R & D assistance and consultancy services to SMEs operating in the solar energy generation and built environment sectors. Key outputs include: A market-ready demonstration of a solar-powered Wireless Sensor Network for building management and control functions, a market-ready demonstration of solar-powered display technologies, solar-powered street lighting, low-cost Photovoltaic Device printing process, and next generation solar-cell technologies (Organic Photovoltaic (OPV))

To date, the project has assisted 36 SMEs, developed 4 products/processes and created 8 (gross) direct new jobs.
Atlantic Area Programme

ARCOPOL €3m (€2m ERDF)

Partners: led by CETMAR (Spain) & includes Pembrokeshire County Council. Other member states include France, Ireland and Portugal.

The project's objectives are:
1) To incorporate outputs from EROCIPS (past project) into strategic national, regional and local response levels and to encourage development of transferable transnational techniques that strengthen statutory and non statutory emergency response;
2) Improve response capabilities in the event of HNS and inert spills and to include them in emergency action plans. This will be achieved by compiling and assessing current knowledge, practices and experiences and by developing tools, models, systems and procedures;
3) Improve the level of awareness and training of the potential responders and increase the degree of stakeholder involvement;
4) Further encourage cross border collaboration between neighbouring countries to improve response strategies and enhance mutual aid capabilities, facilitating joint cross border training and exercises in the partner regions;
5) Improve mitigation capabilities by assessing current claim and compensation mechanisms as well as ecological damage compensation procedures and by developing guidelines, tools and standard methodologies.

MAREN €1.5m (€1m ERDF)

Partners: Cardiff University (lead), includes partners from Spain, Portugal, France & Ireland

The positioning of marine renewable energy devices in estuarine and coastal waters will undoubtedly have an impact on water levels and, in particular, tidal currents, which will in turn also have a significant impact on the environmental and economic aspects of the site. So-called ‘clean’ energies also sometimes have negative environmental impacts; therefore there is some pressure to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to analysing all factors to assist decision makers in choosing which form of energy to develop, and where to locate the generation sites. The mix and balance of different energy sources will be as important in the future to the sustainable spatial development of Europe as the development and exploitation of each type of energy itself, and this project concentrates on getting that balance right.

The main aims of the MAREN project are therefore to:
(i) Optimise the energy extraction potential; and
(ii) Minimise the hydro-environmental impact of a wide range of the most promising marine renewable energy devices.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North West Europe Programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENERGETIC ALGAE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners: Swansea University (lead), includes partners from UK, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands &amp; France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic Algae aims to reduce CO2 emissions and dependency on unsustainable energy sources in NWE, by accelerating the development of sustainable technologies for algal biomass production, bioenergy and greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation from pilot phase to application and marketable products, processes and services. When considering suitable bioenergy crops for NWE, territorial challenges are imposed by the generally intensive use of land and the presence of diverse physical environments. Algal biotechnologies provide an opportunity to address this, as algae do not compete for food crop resources, are capable of GHG mitigation and are adaptable to diverse environments. A new integrated network of pilot scale algal facilities serves to develop and exchange best practices for algal biomass and bioenergy, tailored to prevailing operating conditions in NWE. Inputs are obtained from policy makers, regulators, operators, NGOs and the public to develop a sectoral technology roadmap. An ICT decision support tool is implemented to guide the sustainable expansion of the algal bioenergy sector in NWE.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERREG IVC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SEE – Sharing Experience Europe</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partners: Cardiff Metropolitan University (lead), other Member States include Belgium, France, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Slovenia &amp; Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The SEE project is a partnership of 11 organisations wishing to establish how the shortfall in exploiting innovation as a tool for economic growth can be reduced to best effect by sharing experience, developing new thinking and influencing regional policy. The group has shared information on policies that have been successful in using design to boost innovation, entrepreneurship, sustainability or economic development. All the partners were already active in establishing design programmes or strategies at regional or national levels which target SMEs and their lack of resources for implementing design practice and innovation into their business. This group developed an interregional cooperation to exchange information and experiences in order to identify, analyse and disseminate good practices on innovation and design policy and other related areas (e.g. sustainability, R&amp;D).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of ETC project thematic activity in Wales during the 2007-2013 Programmes

This chart provides a snapshot of thematic ETC activity in Wales in the 2007-2013 Programme period, defined on the basis of alignment with those Thematic Objectives and Investment Priorities set out by the European Commission in the 2014-2020 EU Regulations.

NB –

- The majority of 2014-2020 ETC Programmes in which Wales will engage have combined activities aligned to TO1 (Research & Innovation) and TO3 (SMEs) within one Priority Axis focused on Innovation
- TO6 (Environment & Efficiency) reflects a range of activity in 2007-2013 – renewables (7 projects), culture and heritage (7), environmental protection and bio-diversity (6) and urban development (2)
- The comparatively high level of education and training activity reflects the presence of a specific Priority within the Ireland Wales Programme
Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme 2014-2020

The €100m Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme 2014-2020, worth €79m in ERDF grant, is a cross-border programme which links the West coast of Wales with the South-East of Ireland. The UK and Irish Governments' increased allocation to the programme has resulted in a total programme value of some €100 million. This is a significant increase on the 2007-2013 programme value (€70 million), which reflects the high importance placed on this programme by both the Welsh and Irish Governments.

The Programme vision is to provide the framework for organisations in the cross-border area to actively cooperate to address challenges and shared priorities of common interest on both sides of the Irish Sea – thereby contributing and adding value to the economic and sustainable development priorities of Wales and Ireland.

The Programme focuses on three operational Priority Axes and three Specific Objectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Axis</th>
<th>Specific Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cross-border Innovation</td>
<td>To increase the intensity of knowledge transfer collaborations involving research organisations and SMEs in line with the shared priorities of the smart specialisation strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Adaptation of the Irish Sea and Coastal Communities to Climate Change</td>
<td>To increase capacity and knowledge of climate change adaptation for the Irish Sea and coastal communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cultural and Natural Resources and Heritage (with a focus on tourism)</td>
<td>To sustainably realise the potential of natural and cultural assets in increasing visitor numbers to coastal communities in the Programme area.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WEFO is the Managing Authority for the Ireland Wales Programme for 2014-2020 and will build on tri-lateral design and development of the Programme with our operational partners, the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) in Waterford, and government partners the Department for Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) in Dublin to deliver the Programme.

The Programme was formally approved by the European Commission on 12 February 2015.

The 2014-2020 Programme is currently served by the Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) website (http://wefo.gov.wales/programmes/irelandwales?lang=en) however a Programme-specific website is currently in development.

There are strong synergies between Irish aspirations and those of the Welsh Government in relation to economic growth and jobs.

The Ireland Wales Co-operation Programme therefore provides a valuable basis for furthering co-operation and partnership across the Irish Sea.

The Programme was designed on the basis of identifying those common challenges where intervention can provide the greatest added value.

The programme has a clear focus on the Sea between us with further opportunities for harnessing the talents of our internationally renowned scientific expertise to increase capacity and knowledge of climate change. Opportunities to link our FE/institutions and SMEs through co-operation targeting our shared smart specialisation strategies will stimulate joint innovation activity in food and drink, life sciences and marine and environmental sciences (including renewable energy). We will also utilise our shared culture, resources and heritage to increase visitor numbers to the cross-border region.
The €648m 2014-2020 North-West Europe Programme is a transnational programme worth €396m in ERDF grant. The Programme links the UK (including all of Wales) with Ireland, Belgium, Luxembourg and areas of France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland.

The Programme’s mission for 2014-2020 is to produce measurable positive change in the North-West of Europe on three themes: Innovation, Low carbon and Resource and materials efficiency.

The Programme focuses on three operational Priority Axes and five Specific Objectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Axis</th>
<th>Specific Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Innovation</td>
<td>To enhance innovation performance of enterprises throughout North-West Europe regions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Low Carbon</td>
<td>To facilitate the implementation of low-carbon, energy and climate protection strategies in order to reduce GHG-emissions in North-West Europe;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To facilitate the uptake of low carbon technologies, products, processes and services in sectors with high energy saving potential in order to reduce GHG-emissions in North-West Europe;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To facilitate the implementation of transnational low-carbon solutions in transport systems in order to reduce GHG-emissions in North-West Europe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Resource Materials Efficiency</td>
<td>To optimise (re)use of material and natural resources in NWE.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Programme has a standalone website: [http://www.nweurope.eu/](http://www.nweurope.eu/)

The Managing Authority is located in the Nord-Pas de Calais Region in Lille, France.

The Programme was formally approved by the European Commission on 18 June 2015.

The 2014-2020 Programme includes a number of Member States and regions where economic performance is relatively strong compared to other areas of the EU and where the urban dimension is a factor. The programme is now more concentrated and focused on a smaller number of priorities addressing measurable change in innovation, low carbon and resource efficiency. There are real opportunities for Welsh partners to stimulate economic growth by engaging with and learning from prosperous regions and to capitalise on one of the programme goals of pursuing a more harmonious and balanced development of the territory by promoting project partnerships from peripheral and less urbanised areas.
The €185m 2014-2020 Atlantic Area Programme is a transnational programme worth €140m in ERDF grant. This is a maritime focused programme, linking EU regions on the Atlantic coast including Ireland, areas of France, Spain and Portugal and areas of the UK (including all of Wales).

The Programme is served by a standalone website: http://atlanticarea.ccdrn.pt/

The Programme will focus on four operational Priority Axes and seven Specific Objectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Axis</th>
<th>Specific Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Stimulating innovation and competitiveness</td>
<td>Enhancing innovation capacity through cooperation to foster competitiveness;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening the transfer of innovation results to facilitate the emergence of new products, services and processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Fostering resource efficiency</td>
<td>Fostering renewable energies and energy efficiency;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fostering green growth, eco-innovation and environmental efficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Strengthening the territory’s resilience to risks of natural, climate and human origin</td>
<td>Strengthening risks management systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Enhancing biodiversity and natural and culture assets</td>
<td>Improving the protection of biodiversity and enhancing ecosystem services;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancing natural and cultural assets to stimulate economic development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Managing Authority is the North Regional Co-ordination and Development Commission (CCDR) in Porto, Portugal.

The Programme was submitted to the European Commission in May 2015 and is subject to ongoing negotiations with the Commission, with formal approval anticipated later in 2015. The Programme is therefore potentially subject to some change, although this is not expected to be significant.

There are many opportunities for Welsh partners to engage with an emphasis on maritime links and co-operation on green growth, eco-innovation and the use of natural and cultural assets to deliver economic growth. Welsh partners have the opportunity to build upon thematic activity in some of these areas during 2007-2013.
The €426m INTERREG Europe Programme is an inter-regional policy exchange programme worth €359m in ERDF, and covers all of the EU28 together with Switzerland and Norway.

The overall objective of the Programme is to improve the implementation of policies and programmes for regional development, principally of programmes under the Investment for Growth and Jobs goal and where relevant, of programmes under the ETC goal, by promoting exchange of experience and policy learning amongst regional actors.

By co-financing projects and four thematic platforms it allows regional and local public authorities and other regional players to exchange practices and ideas on the way public policies work, and thereby find solutions to improve their strategies for the benefit of citizens and communities.

The Programme will focus on four operational Priority Axes and six Specific Objectives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Axis</th>
<th>Specific Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</td>
<td>Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes in the field of research and innovation infrastructure and capacities; Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes that support the delivery of innovation by actors in regional innovation chains in areas of “smart specialisation” and innovation opportunity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Competitiveness of SMEs</td>
<td>Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes supporting SMEs in all stages of their life cycle to develop, achieve growth and engage in innovation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Low carbon economy</td>
<td>Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes addressing the transition to a low-carbon economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Environment and resource efficiency</td>
<td>Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage; Improve the implementation of regional development policies and programmes aimed at increasing resource-efficiency, green growth and eco-innovation and environmental performance management.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Managing Authority of the Programme is located in the Nord-Pas de Calais Region in Lille, France.

The Programme was formally approved by the European Commission in June 2015.
URBACT III 2014-2020

The €96m URBACT III interregional programme, worth €74m in ERDF grant, covers the EU28 and will promote sustainable urban development and enable European cities to work together to develop solutions to urban challenges.

URBACT’s mission is to enable cities to work together and develop integrated solutions to common urban challenges, by networking, learning from one another’s experiences, drawing lessons and identifying good practices to improve urban policies.

The Programme will focus on capacity for policy delivery, policy design, policy implementation and building and sharing knowledge.

URBACT has one operational Priority Axis and four operational Specific Objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Axis</th>
<th>Specific Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoting Integrated Sustainable Urban Development</td>
<td>To improve the capacity of cities to manage sustainable urban policies and practices in an integrated and participative way;</td>
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<td>To improve the design of sustainable urban strategies and action plans in cities;</td>
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<td>To improve the implementation of integrated plans for sustainable urban development;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>To ensure that practitioners and decision makers at all levels have increased access to URBACT thematic knowledge and share knowledge on all aspects of sustainable urban development in order to improve urban policies.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

To reach these objectives, URBACT III will develop three types of interventions:

- transnational exchange,
- capacity-building,
- capitalisation & dissemination.

The Managing Authority is the Commissariat Général à l’Égalité des
Territoires (CGET) in France.

The 2014-2020 Programme was formally approved on 12th December 2014.

The URBACT Programme has not seen much active engagement from Wales. WEFO’s ETC unit has prioritised direct engagement with the larger transnational and INTERREG EUROPE programmes, alongside its primary objective in its role of Managing Authority of the Ireland Wales Programme, to ensure timely submission and approval of the Ireland Wales Programme and to mobilise implementation arrangements.

That said, WEFO is alert to URBACT opportunities and as well as working with UK Government to publicise developments with the programme, will look to step up efforts to publicise opportunities and increase engagement.

ESPON

The €52m ESPON 2020 interregional programme, worth €41m in ERDF grant, will continue the consolidation of a European Territorial Observatory Network and grow the provision and policy use of pan-European, comparable, systematic and reliable territorial evidence.

The Programme will focus on enhancing institutional capacity and efficient public administration by strengthening institutional capacity, efficiency of public administrations and public services related to implementation of the ERDF. The Programme will also support actions in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administration supported by the ESF.

Closer links between ESPON and other ETC Programmes will be promoted during the 2014-2020 Programme period.

There is one operational Priority Axis in this programme and five Specific Objectives.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Priority Axis</th>
<th>Specific Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Territorial Evidence, Transfer, Observation, Tools and Outreach</td>
<td>Enhanced production of territorial evidence through applied research and analyse;</td>
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<td>Upgraded knowledge transfer and use of analytical user support;</td>
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<td>Improved territorial observation and tools for territorial analyses;</td>
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<td>Wider outreach and uptake of territorial evidence;</td>
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<td>Leaner, more effective and efficient implementation provisions and more proficient programme assistance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Managing Authority is the Ministry of Sustainable and Infrastructure Department for Spatial Planning and Development (DATER), Division for European Affairs, based in Luxembourg.

The programme was formally approved in February 2015.

WEFO has been tracking developments with the ESPON Programme and has researched and made use of a number of publications in making preparations for the new programmes.

ETC programmes are underpinned by the **INTERACT** programme, covering the EU28 plus Norway and Switzerland, and worth €39m in ERDF funding. INTERACT is the hub for exchanging information and best practice amongst ETC programmes.

Each of the programmes has a specific application process as they are administered by separate Managing Authorities.
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