

Programme Summary of the INTERREG IIB Western Mediterranean (MEDOCC) PROGRAMME



FOREWORD

This document is an output of the INTERACT Point Tool Box (TB) activities,
and is structured as follows:

- A. The **Facts and figures** section presents a brief overview of the programme's features, intended to provide an initial set of basic information for understanding it properly.
- B. **Part I** presents a compilation of the **main findings** from the analysis of the INTERREG III programme. This part contains analytical information, distinguishing between the specific aspects and **good practices** developed by the programme, and the main **recommendations** for aspects to be improved.
- C. Finally, in **Part II** the user will find a comprehensive description of **the programme in further detail**, comprising detailed information on the organisation running the programme, as well as on project management and programme performance.

The drafting of the present summary has been made possible by the valued collaboration of the INTERREG IIIB Western Mediterranean programme management, who provided their programme documents and feedback, and especially by the inputs and feedback from its Joint Technical Secretariat. In addition, a series of documents provided by the INTERACT Programme Secretariat have been used as internal sources of information, among them *A Study on the Mid-Term Evaluations of the INTERREG Programmes for the Programming Period 2000-06* prepared by the University of Strathclyde.

We wish to thank everybody for their cooperation.

September 2005

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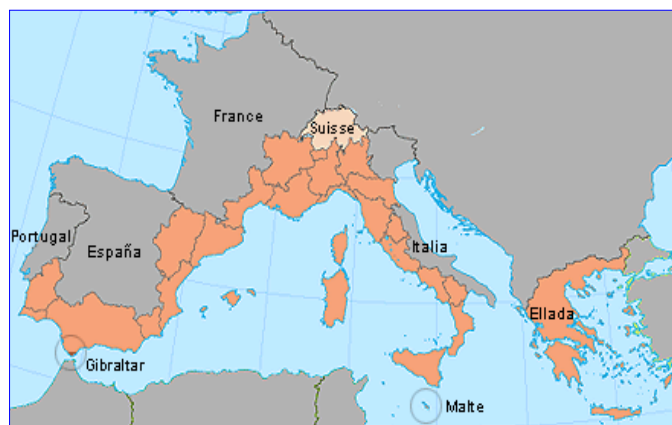
FACTS AND FIGURES: INTERREG IIB WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (MEDOCC)

SOURCES USED FOR THIS PAPER

✓: document used



Community Initiative Programme (CIP)	✓
Programme Complement	✓
Mid-term Evaluation	✓
Annual Report 2004	✓
Rules of Procedure Monitoring Committee	
Rules of Procedure Steering Committee	
Subsidy Contract	✓
Partnership Agreement	✓
Agreement between Member States	
Agreement between Managing Structures	
Notification/Grant Letter	
Letter of Intent/Commitment	
Art. 5 EC Regulation 438/2001 description	
Audit Guidelines	
Project Application Form	✓
Application Form Guidelines	
Programme Manual	✓
Activity report template	✓
Financial report template	
Website	✓
University of Strathclyde's Study on the Mid Term Evaluations of INTERREG programmes for the Programming Period 2000-06	✓



Date of Approval of the programme:	27 December 2001
European Commission decision n°:	C (2001) 4069
Programme language(s):	French
Programme area:	SPAIN: Andalucía, Aragón, Cataluña, Islas Baleares, Murcia, Valencia, Ceuta and Melilla; FRANCE: Corse, Languedoc-Roussillon, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Rhône-Alpes; ITALY: Basilicate, Calabre, Campanie, Emilie-Romagne, Latium, Ligurie, Lombardie, Ombrie, Piémont, Sardaigne, Sicile, Toscane, Val d'Aoste ; PORTUGAL: Algarve, Alentejo; UNITED KINGDOM: Gibraltar ; GREECE, MALTA, SWITZERLAND as associated country.
Programme structures:	Managing Authority: Italian Ministry of infrastructure and transport Paying Authority: Italian Ministry of infrastructure and transport JOINT TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT: Italian Ministry of infrastructure and transport
Background (previous INTERREG experience):	INTERREG II C "Méditerranée occidentale Alpes latines"
Mid-term Evaluation done by:	ECOTEC
Update of the MTE undertaken by:	ECOSFERA

PROGRAMME FINANCES

ERDF amount:	EUR 103 823 864
TOTAL FUNDING:	EUR 194 340 135
Programme website:	www.interreg-medocc.org

PART I

MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEDOCC PROGRAMME

I.A. PRINCIPAL GOOD PRACTICES FOUND IN THE INTERREG IIB WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (MEDOCC) PROGRAMME

I.A.1. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

1. The Partnership Transnational Conference

As a **specific structure** for this programme, MEDOCC includes the Partnership Transnational Conference (PTC) (*Conférence transnationale du partenariat*), which gathers representatives from Lead Partners in the **European Union countries and in third countries** and features as its main tasks:

- Promoting the programme at a transnational level.
- Providing a forum for the expression of new ideas and the exchange of experiences.
- Assessing the programme's performance and formulating its own approach to reaching the programme's main milestones.

ADDED VALUE:

This forum allows programme structures to keep in touch with the **project Lead Partners**. Its meetings facilitate the necessary exchange of information and finding solutions to any doubts or problems that have arisen.

Although it had been announced that this conference was to be held at least once a year, the **first** Partnership Transnational Conference actually took place in **Thessalonica** in **June 2005**.

2. The Transnational Secretariat

Another **specific structure** of this programme is the "**Transnational Secretariat**" (TS) established for the **programme's operational management**. It is composed of the Joint Technical Secretariat (**JTS**) and the **National coordinators** appointed by each of the programme EU Member States.

The TS holds as main responsibilities: The overall promotion and animation of the programme, the implementation of the project submission and instruction procedures, and helps partner search and project promoters' advice. In close collaboration with the Managing Authority (MA), the TS also prepares the programme annual reports and assist the Monitoring (MC) and Steering (SC) Committees, the Transnational technical groups and the Partnership Transnational Conference.

ADDED VALUE:

This type of structure has a key role in fostering the **transnational feature** of the programme. Assuring the presence of **transnationality** in the day-to-day **operational management of the programme**, the TS help the integration of the different national mentalities on a wider scope.

3. Presence of social and economic representatives on the Monitoring Committee

ADDED VALUE:

The voice of the social and economic representatives, with an advisory role, in the Monitoring Committee (MC) enables their interests to be considered, and in addition enriches input to the Committee's decisions with a more realistic point of view.

Nevertheless, the **attendance** of such representatives at MC meetings has in fact been poor.

I.A.2. PROCEDURES

1. Postponed projects, an additional category in the Steering Committee's decisions on projects submitted

Projects submitted to the SC for decision are assigned to one of the following categories:

- a. Approved
- b. Not approved
- c. Approved under conditions
- d. **Postponed**

The last is a category of projects that have not been approved for minor technical reasons or because slight modifications or further financial adjustments are required for their final approval. Projects in this category obtain a sort of 'pre-commitment' from the SC, which guarantees their automatic approval in a round of calls for proposals once the requirements have been met. For this purpose, the SC reserves an amount corresponding to the funding applied for by the project.

ADDED VALUE:

This category is deemed as a **positive** element by both the MEDOCC Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS) and the Mid-term Evaluation (MTE), which emphasise as its advantages its potential regarding **project generation**, the improvement in terms of **project quality** and the added **flexibility** it gives to the SC's decisions. It should be encouraged for implementation in other INTERREG programmes.

On the other hand, programme officials point out as its main **disadvantage** the reduction in terms of efficiency if the 'postponed' project does not eventually comply with the conditions set by the SC.

2. Main strengths highlighted by programme officials

The following are assessed by programme officials as **main strengths** in the field of procedures.

- The programme has caught up and **recovered from its initial delay**.
- Projects have widened their **transnational dimension** by increasing the number of project partners during the successive calls for proposals (reaching an average of three to four project partners).
- The current **application form** has been greatly improved.
- The present **procedures for project modification**.
- The tools for **project monitoring** in liaison with the Lead Partners.

I.A.3. COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

1. Programme Website

The **MTE** found that MEDOCC suffered from a certain lack of corporate identity, since information about the programme was only available at the Italian Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport website.

However, the JTS has created an attractive **programme logo** that forms part of the **programme's own website** recently established. The site features some complete information in an attractive format. The JTS considers that the MEDOCC website is today one of the programme's **main strengths**.

2. Tools for partner search

The **MEDOCC website** offers components to facilitate the search for partners:

- A specific **contact database** of operations approved.
- A **form** to be filled up for the submitting of an operational idea.
- A number of virtual **forums** corresponding to the different **programme priorities**.

3. Publications

Since 2004, the JTS has published a half-yearly **Newsletter**. A **Guide** gathering information about 44 MEDOCC-approved projects has been also published.

I.A.4. DOCUMENTS

1. Joint Convention model for project partners

The MC has issued a **model convention** for use by project partners.

2. Internal rules for project Steering Committees

Lead Partners have at their disposal a helpful and innovative tool, a **draft set of rules** to be employed for running their project SCs.

I.B. MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASPECTS TO BE IMPROVED

I.B.1. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

1. High number of bodies involved in programme management

The **MTE** points out that the **large number of bodies** involved in programme management, and the great **complexity of the different stages** to be gone through, constitute real burdens to its performance and hamper project implementation. As a result, the **certification of expenditure** has run into difficulties.

In particular, the MTE has identified **overlapping in the role of National Coordinators** (NCs) as the cause of certain **ambiguities and duplication** in apportioning the respective bodies' responsibilities. The decision-making process has not always respected the division of tasks whether between managing and technical bodies (MA/JTS) or between the decisional committees (MC/ SC).

2. Co-presence within the Italian *Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti* (Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport) of both the Managing and the National authorities

Some participants consider it problematic that the MEDOCC Managing Authority (MA) and the Italian National Authority are both housed within the *Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti*. They deem the existing separation between them to be insufficient, and that it puts **Italian project partners** in a privileged position.

The **European Commission** has recommended the transfer of the MA to one of the Italian regions, but some Member States disagree.

I.B.2. PROCEDURES

1. Delay in project selection and implementation

The **late approval of the programme** has entailed corresponding delays in the JTS recruitment process, as well as in launching calls for proposals and in project selection and implementation. This has led to several additional problems within the management of projects.

Consequently, the **MTE** emphasises, most of the projects approved only began to be implemented during 2003, thus jeopardising observance of the n+2 rule. The funds de-committed amounted to EUR 5 million in 2003 but the programme had no de-commitment in 2004.

2. Lack of coordination with the MEDA programme

Participation of partners from the **MEDA** third countries programme in MEDOCC-approved projects has only been **symbolic** (excepting Priority 1, where projects are required to include MEDA partners). The MEDOCC programme foresaw coordination with the MEDA programme according to the financial and technical guidelines laid down by the MC, but this coordination was not implemented until the European Commission and the MEDOCC MA organised a **MEDA Conference** in Rome on **19 and 20 July 2005**. The conference made it clear that **further coordination between these two EU programmes remains necessary**.

With the aim of extending the strategic and financial framework of the EU third countries policy, this conference was addressed to the **MEDOCC Member States and the MEDA National Authorities**, with representatives coming from both shores of the Mediterranean.

3. Lack of a common manual for certification of expenditures

MTE criticised the lack of a **common manual** to be followed by Lead Partners in the procedure for certification of expenditures.

I.B.3. COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

1. Lack of National Coordinators-JTS Coordination

National Coordinators (NCs) offer Lead Partners a **helpdesk** to provide them with updated information related to the programme, but a definite **lack of communication between the NCs and the JTS** has been detected. The programme should consider the desirability of implementing an **NC network model** featuring the close NC-JTS coordination that has already proven highly efficient in other programmes.

I.B.4. DOCUMENTS

1. Project application form

The current application form, although improved, leaves applicants **little room for unforeseen circumstances**, especially in its financial section.

2. Financial reporting Manual

The MA had envisaged issuing a **common manual** covering all **financial reporting procedures** in force in each of the programme Member States and to be followed by all project partners.

However, the MA **finally discarded** the idea and the manual has not been produced, although Italian partners do have at their disposal the manual produced by their NC.

PART II

THE MEDOCC PROGRAMME IN FURTHER DETAIL

II.A. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

II.A.1. Legal structure

MA	Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti, Direzione Generale del Coordinamento Territoriale (DI.CO.TER.), Division IV, Rome, Italy
Paying Authority (PA)	Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti, Direzione Generale del Coordinamento Territoriale (DI.CO.TER.), Division IV, Rome, Italy
Transnational Secretariat (TS)	No specific legal status. Composed of a JTS, which acts under the direction of the MA, and the National Coordinators (NC) appointed by each Member State.
SC	No specific legal status
MC	No specific legal status
Intermediate bodies	None of them has a specific legal constitution, but they are placed under the aegis of government or regional administrations.

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II.A.2. Internal organisation and functioning

▪ MANAGING AUTHORITY

The responsibilities of the MA are laid down in Article 34 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999.

▪ PAYING AUTHORITY

Its role is defined pursuant to Article 32 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999.

▪ TRANSNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

A **Transnational Secretariat** (TS) **has been** set up for the **operational management** of the programme. It consists of the following:

- The coordination unit, or **Joint Technical Secretariat**, under the aegis of the MA, pursuant to art 30 of the Communication on INTERREG III.
- The **National Coordinators** are appointed by each Member State and work closely with the JTS at national level.

▪ Missions

- To promote and run the programme.
- To establish and carry out the procedure for receiving and examining project proposals, to be done in close cooperation with the MA.
- To provide information and advice for project promoters, including the search for partners and co-financing.
- To fine tune projects that are especially strategic for the programme and promote them among the partners.
- To do the groundwork – with the help of the MA – for decisions of the Monitoring and SCs, and help prepare their operational reports.
- To provide assistance, in close cooperation with the MA, for the Monitoring and SCs, the thematic transnational technical groups and the Partnership Transnational Conference.
- To act as an interface between the transnational and national management and promotion teams.

▪ STEERING COMMITTEE

This is the final decision-making body in the programme partnership (pursuant to Communication on INTERREG III, para 29) for everything to do with **selecting the operations to be funded** and the **overall programme management**.

▪ Members

- Five national delegations composed of one to three representatives from each Member State.
- The chairperson of the MC, if he or she is not the same person as the chairperson of the SC.
- A representative of the MA (advisory status).
- A representative of the PA (advisory status).
- Possibly a representative of the European Commission, and if so then a second representative from the Commission in charge of the other funds involved (advisory status).
- A representative of the European Investment Bank, if appropriate (advisory status).
- A representative of Switzerland and of each of the other Third Countries involved in the programme sits as associates, but with no right to take part in decisions affecting ERDF funding.

▪ Chairperson

The Chairperson of each committee is appointed by the national delegations to the committee. The office rotates annually. The Chairperson is seconded by a Vice-Chairperson of **different nationality**, whose offices annually change location. **The Chairpersons of the SC and the MC are of the same nationality.**

▪ Frequency of MC meetings

Meetings are held whenever necessary, but **at least once a year**.

▪ Internal rules

Decisions are taken **by consensus** between all the national delegations. If necessary, decisions may be reached by consulting members **in writing**, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the By-laws.

▪ MONITORING COMMITTEE

This body is responsible for the **quality and effectiveness of the programme implementation**, pursuant to Article 35 (3) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999.

▪ Members

- Five **national delegations** composed of one to four representatives from each Member State.
- The chairperson of the SC, if he or she is not the same person as the chairperson of the MC (advisory status).
- One representative each from the MA and the PA (advisory status).
- A maximum of two **economic and social partners** from each Member State, chosen by the latter with an eye to the different interests and priorities of the programme (advisory status).
- A possible representative of the **European Commission** (advisory status).

- A possible representative from each of the **work groups** set up by the MC, and especially the 'environment' technical group (advisory status).
- One representative of **Switzerland** and of each of the other **third countries involved** in the programme sits as associates, but with no right to take part in decisions affecting ERDF funding.

▪ **Chairperson**

Same provisions as for the SC.

▪ **Frequency of meetings**

The mandate of the MC lasts for the life of the programme. It meets **at least once a year**.

▪ **Internal rules**

Decisions are taken by consensus between all the national delegations. If necessary, decisions may be reached by consulting members in writing, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the By-laws.

▪ **JOINT TECHNICAL SECRETARIAT**

The SC and the MC are assisted by the MA via the JTS, which prepares their meetings. They come to their decisions in consultation with the MA and with the Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of the two Committees.

▪ **OTHER STRUCTURES**

1. The Partnership Transnational Conference
2. National Coordinators
3. The national programme management

1. The partnership Transnational Conference (PTC)

The PTC brings together institutions at the European level and in the third countries that are involved in implementing the programme.

Each institution is represented by at most one person. The PTC is presided over by the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson of the MC, which is in charge of calling the conference and organising its meetings.

The rules of procedure for the PTC are determined by the MC. The MC must take care to ensure that the composition of the meeting observes the equal opportunity principle that it includes sufficient representation from the business and environmental communities.

The PTC is convened **at least once a year**.

Specifically, the **tasks of the PTC** are the following:

- To facilitate and invigorate the programme's transnational activities by a closer commitment from the organisations involved.
- To create a forum for the expression of new ideas and an exchange of the experience partners have had with good practices.
- To take stock of how the programme is faring, and especially to give an opinion about.
 - Whether the programme's strategic priorities are being respected.
 - Proposals for modifying the programme.
 - Annual and final operational reports.
 - Results that have come from the programme's implementation.
 - Programme assessments.
 - Steps taken to ensure information, publicity and promotion.
 - Coordination with other programmes of interest to the regions involved in the programme.

The PTC receives assistance from the MA via the JTS.

2. The National Coordinators (NC)

NCs undertake the **promotion and running of the programme in their countries** in such a way as to ensure that there is a transnational and unifying dimension to the activities scheduled. They operate in collaboration with the JTS, which in turn takes direction from the MA.

In particular their **tasks** cover the following:

- Financial coordination and the application of national co-financing.
- Preparing and monitoring the project case files in their countries.
- Examining projects with a view to drawing up a technical briefing to be sent to the MA when it is preparing to meet with the SC.
- Attesting to services rendered and certifying expenses as provided for in Article 9 of Commission Regulation 438/2001, which must be done by way of a confirmation provided by the Lead Partner in the project for payment of the parts of a project that take place in an NC's territory.
- Forwarding to the MA all the input needed for implementing and managing the programme.
- Providing assistance to the other joint structures.

3. Programme management at national level

The division of INTERREG and regional development responsibilities varies from one country to another. It is up to each Member State to organise a **management team** that will take account of both its own country's institutions and practices and the demands imposed by the international nature of the programme. In other words, programme management at the national level must balance the laws and regulations of the country with the undertakings assumed as member of the transnational partnership.

Each Member State is responsible for working through its NC to promote the good running of the programme and its projects on its territory, subject to the priorities established by the Commission.

In particular, **each Member State must ensure** the following:

- Opening up a broad partnership that includes institutions at national, regional and local level as well as social and economic partners and other qualified organisations (NGOs, academic bodies, etc.).
- Making sure that the MEDOCC programme is coordinated with the other INTERREG III initiative programmes (strands A, B and C) that are being carried out on their national territory.
- Fostering the coordination of MEDOCC projects with the other EU programmes that are regional or local in scope, and more generally with its own national programmes.
- Assuming overall responsibility, in liaison with the MA and the PA, for control of the use of the funds that are put to work in its territory, including the auditing function exercised by the independent person or organisation specified in Article 15 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001.

II.A.3. Working procedures

The **MA** and the **PA** are housed within the same institution (the Italian Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport) but all the procedures provided for under Article 9 Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001, are carried out by departments that are administratively separate from one another.

II.A.4. EU Member States involvement

Malta joined the programme in May 2004.

II.B. COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS

II.B.1. Between different bodies of the same management structure

▪ Language

The **official language** of MEDOCC is **French**, by consensus among all the countries involved.

▪ Internal communication

The computer system implemented for managing and monitoring the INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC programme assumes the use of computerised tools and a procedure that enables computer processing of both quantitative and qualitative data. Use of the tool makes it possible to arrive at a system with the following characteristics:

- Integrates the activities of the various participants.
- Avoids unnecessary data coding.
- Speeds up transmission of information.
- Ensures that the data about the current operational and financial state of the programme will be reliable, transparent and secure.
- Manages the different phases in processing the project case files.
- Automates certain steps in project activities (activity reports, validations of financial data, etc.).
- Ensures that all necessary information is transmitted to the European Commission and that it is done in the prescribed formats (development status reports, financial charts, monitoring indicators, etc.).
- Allows regular updating of the information monitored.
- Facilitates transparency in the case files and hence use of them by the evaluators.

When data is being transmitted by computer in this way, all the authorities and organisations involved must make sure that their subsidiaries and subordinates forward to them the information that they need for reconciling their own accounts and justifying the figures that they send to their own superiors. The intent is to ensure an unbroken audit trail between the totals notified to the European Commission down to the various expenditure subdivisions and their accompanying documents at final beneficiary and operational level.

II.B.2. Between MEDOCC structures and the European Commission

In accordance with Article 18 (3e) Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999, the Commission and the MA of the INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC programme have agreed on the modes that are to be used for **computerised data exchange** and that will meet the needs of management, monitoring and programme evaluation specified in the Regulation.

Thus, the MA and the PA send their information to the Commission electronically. The computerised management system is an extended version of Italian package Monit 2000 adapted to the specific requirements of INTERREG.

The MA acts in accordance with Article 18 of Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001, which stipulates as follows:

1. The accounting information concerning the operations covered by Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001 under the heading of "An indicative description of the information requirements for a sufficient audit trail" is computer stored. It should be emphasised that the accounting archives are made available to the Commission on specific request in order to let it make checks both through the documents and on the spot, without it affecting the obligation to communicate any updating of financial plans (see Article 18 (3c) Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999) or the financial information covered by Article 32 of the same Regulation.
2. The extent of the information that may be required and the preferred specifications for transmitting it are given in Annex IV on "Extent of the information concerning operations that must be made available to the Commission on request for purpose of controls with documents and on site", and in Annex V on "Preferred specifications for the transmission of computer files to the Commission".

3. Upon written request from the Commission, the information indicated in paragraph 1 above must be transmitted to it within ten working days from receipt of the request.

II.C. OTHER PARTICIPANTS OR COMMITTED PARTIES

II.C.1. Third and neighbouring countries

A connection is foreseen in this programme with the **MEDA** programme to allow participation by non member countries of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

Hence, projects should include, when possible, associated countries and the MEDA countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Palestinian Occupied Territories, Tunisia and Turkey). The **objective** is to **extend regional development to the whole Mediterranean basin**.

Mediterranean third countries are only able to take part in MEDOCC if they commit funds of their own. Nevertheless, **certain expenses may be covered by MEDOCC**, such as travel and accommodation expenses of partners from countries outside the EU when they come to a meeting or conference taking place in the EU and the disbursements are made in Europe.

II.C.2. Associated countries

Switzerland is associated with the programme, and so are other **third countries** that are admissible to this area in cooperation with the **ARCHIMED** and **CADSES** programmes.

A representative of Switzerland and the other associated third countries may take part in the Committees, but with no right to participate in decisions concerning ERDF funding.

II.D. LEGAL STRUCTURE

Agreements and decisions have been made in consultation with the NCs to deal with the technical and financial conditions for carrying out operations. These are:

- For **ERDF**, one or more joint agreements concluded between the MA, the transnational Lead Partner of the project and the other partners.
 - For the **national co-financing**, agreements or decisions made between the national authorities that are contributing and the lead contractor of the project.

These agreements are communicated to the MA.

The JTS sees to it that agreements implicating ERDF and providers of national co-financing are coordinated and are compatible with the provisions of the General Rules and Regulations.

▪ Contracts between partners and/or between partners and the management structures

Agreement between MA and Lead Partner	√
Joint agreement between partners	√
SC's rules of procedure	√
Certification of national co-financing	√

▪ Joint agreements between partners

The purpose of the **Joint Partnership Agreement**, which is appended to the subvention file, is to prevent any misunderstandings that might hinder carrying out the project. Thus, it defines the conditions of work among all the partners and appoints a Lead Partner. Each project participant (sponsor) must sign. The signer must be the person authorised to make legal and financial commitments on behalf of the signatory body.

Third countries taking part in a project must sign the Joint Agreement in order to fix their working and financial conditions with the other partners. However, those countries are not to be mentioned in the financial section of the agreement if they are going to have their own funding.

The MC has approved a model agreement for partners to fill in and send to the MA by registered post and by email as an appendix to the project profile. However, the model should not prevent partners from applying other provisions in certain cases that will be indicated.

The agreement must be consistent with the project profile to which it is appended. If it was drafted in another language than French, a certified original copy in French must be attached, duly signed and dated, because only the French version is legally binding.

▪ SC's rules of procedure

The JTS has drafted SC rules of procedure, which include a list of standard practices that it is advisable to follow. This has been done in order to provide new sponsors with a useful tool for coordinating and managing their projects. It has been done in the light of experience with existing projects. These rules are purely for guidance, and neither the MA nor the JTS is obliged to follow them.

Lead Partners are free to take cognisance of the guidelines proposed and adapt them to draft a text themselves for their partnerships. All and any changes are allowed where justified by the specific priorities of the project.

II.E. COMMUNICATION PLAN

II.E.1. Addressing potential beneficiaries

In accordance with EU standards, actions under the MEDOCC communication aim to:

- Inform potential beneficiaries of the opportunities the programme offers and the likely ERDF contribution.
- Foster participatory actions on the ground.
- Ensure operational transparency throughout the life of the programme.
- Spread the information needed for correct use of the financial instruments available.
- Foster dialogue with the countries on the south side of the Mediterranean basin.
- Make public opinion aware of the part played by the EU and its Member States in supporting the activities concerned.
- Publicise the results from these activities.
- Encourage public awareness of topics connected with the balanced and sustainable development of European lands.
- Demonstrate the value added of transnational cooperation.

The communication action plan is a response to the need to keep public opinion – first and foremost potential final beneficiaries – informed of the possibilities the programme offers for spatial development. The plan also envisages highlighting the work of the MA and the Member States, promoting cooperation between partners in the area covered by MEDOCC, fostering the spread of best practices in the implementation of programme activities, and last but not least transparency.

▪ Targets of information and publicity activities

The aim of the communication plan is to spread information about MEDOCC to the following:

- National, regional and local authorities and the relevant EU authorities.
- Project sponsors.
- Professional organisations.
- Social and economic partners.
- NGOs active in the priority areas of the programme, and in particular organisations working towards gender equality and for environmental improvement.
- Information media people (TV, press, etc.).
- The lay public.
- Third countries that might be interested in developing cooperation activities.

▪ Organisations responsible for implementing the plan

The Managing Authority ensures compliance with the requirements imposed by the EU regulations for information and publicity activities. It reports annually to the European Commission on its activities in this field and ensures that the measures provided for in the plan are duly carried out.

The **JTS**, under the supervision of the MA, is in charge of implementing the plan in accordance with the regulations.

The **MC**, as part of its responsibilities regarding the plan, examines and approves the measures taken by the JTS under the aegis of the MA. The MC also has to approve the annual progress reports and the final reports. Article 37 (2)(IV) Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/99, requires that these reports make specific mention of the activities undertaken to ensure publicity for the programme's undertakings.

The programme **NCs** take part in implementation activities under the plan at the national level.

All the organisations involved in executing the plan, including the final beneficiaries, have an obligation to observe Community provisions governing publicity and information as they implement the plan at their level.

▪ Implementing the plan activities

Implementing the provisions of the plan gives rise to a whole set of initiatives that are more or less closely related to one another. In view of the large number of such activities and of the clientele they are addressed to, it has been decided that the JTS should have in it a specific person **in charge of implementing the plan** and coordinating its activities. That person is responsible for ensuring that the following are carried out.

- A **helpdesk** has been set up at the JTS to give regional and local administrators – that is to say, project sponsors, Lead Partners and partners – information in real time about
 - Upcoming programme activities (committee meetings, seminars, conferences, etc.).
 - Important deadlines (notices, transmission of monitoring data, payment claims, etc.).
 - Reference documentation about the standards and practices for presenting and executing projects (EU regulations, European Commission working documents, studies commissioned from private consultants, etc.).
 - Any other information that may be useful.
- **Bulletins** about progress, events, etc. are despatched every six months to bodies involved in managing the programme and to final beneficiaries.
- A **PTC** is convened annually and brings together representatives of the European institutions involved in the programme and those of Third Countries, the purpose being to foster dialogue between the two shores of the Mediterranean and maintain the 'bottom up' mindset that was uppermost when the programme was drafted.
- **Actions addressed to MEDA countries**, for example spreading an understanding of what is at stake in the programme, its results so far, exchanging experiences, reimbursing travel expenses for participation in seminars, etc.
- **Transnational forums**. When calls for proposals are issued, transnational meetings are organised to start discussion of the priorities that are listed in the calls, to foster the exchange of ideas and proposals, and to stimulate dialogue between project sponsors.
- **Transnational workshops**. Seminars for making known the results achieved and assessing the impact of the activities set in motion.
- **Publications**, i.e. all the different kinds of publications produced during the programme (brochures, folders, bulletins, electronic and audiovisual materials) including research, enquiries, assessments, in-depth studies of certain topics, etc.

■ Communication plan budget

The total budget for the plan is **EUR 758 000** with the following **breakdown**:

Activity	Number	Unit cost	Total
Transnational website			70,000
Publications (books)	2		40,000
Semi-annual information bulletin	14	2,000	28,000
Actions directed to MEDA countries			150,000
Promotional materials (brochures, posters, media, CDs)			150,000
Partnership conferences	7	10,000	70,000
Seminars and other transnational events	5	50,000	250,000

Expenses incurred by bodies that host conferences or workshops are funded under Measure 5.2 up to a maximum of EUR 50,000. Only **translation**, **catering** and **room rental** costs are reimbursed. Information days are funded by the national Technical Assistance (TA). Additionally the plan draws on national co-financing (under Measure 5.2) for all activities taking place at national level.

■ Ex ante Information (prior to submission of an application)

1. Participation in outside events	✓
2. Individual consulting	✓

■ Ex post Information (during implementation of projects)

1. Information days in new partner countries (Greece and Malta)	✓
2. Lead Partner seminars	✓
3. Individual consulting	✓

II.E.2. Addressing the general public

■ Block mark:



Internet site: www.INTERREG-medocc.org



Although the website was designed for fast interactive communication between programme beneficiaries, it also serves to keep the public informed.

▪ Brochure



▪ Newsletter and other publications

Since 2004, the JTS has published a half-yearly **Newsletter**. A **Guide to 44 MEDOCC-approved projects** has been also published.



II.F. AIDS FOR SETTING UP AND IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS

▪ Assistance in setting up projects

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ JTS ▪ NCs (Technical Assistance)
What (for support at all phases from first contact to submission of the application form)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme Manual/Vade Mecum ▪ Helpdesk

The **Programme Manual/Vade Mecum** is a basic tool for informing project sponsors about the procedures and helping them through them. Therefore, it is both a source of information and a practical guide to ways of doing things. It aims to do the following:

- Explain the INTERREG IIIB MEDOCC programme in general terms as an EU initiative.
- Enable project sponsors to find their way through the different areas and actions while bearing in mind the sense and objectives of the programme.
- Define who can be a project sponsor and what kinds of project are eligible under the MEDOCC programme.
- Specify the kinds of activities that can be applied for and give an indication of their average cost.
- Give sponsors tips on how to prepare their application pack.
- Orient sponsors in drawing up their financial plans.
- Give transparency to the procedures for evaluating applications.

The **Helpdesk** at the JTS provides sponsors with references to the regulatory and procedural requirements for presenting their projects.

▪ **Assistance during project implementation**

Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ JTS ▪ NC (Technical Assistance)
What (for support at different phases from project approval to closure)	See below

▪ **Current system description: Use of the Technical Assistance at Member State level**

- **Spain:** General assistance activities: The activities undertaken by the Spanish NC are intended to support development and monitoring of the MEDOCC programme at **two main levels**:

1. Information: Development of activities to inform and support MEDOCC project sponsors all the time they are drawing up and presenting their projects and during the ensuing examination and selection process. They can access a complete information service that deals both with the purely technical aspects of the call for proposals and with aspects to do with the content and structure of projects.
2. Administration: Support to sponsors and partners in managing and administering their activities. As National Coordinator, the Ministry of Economy and Finance validates the expenses incurred by sponsors and runs the whole financial certification system in Spain.

▪ **France**

Support to project sponsors:

Encouragement for local partnerships (seeking partners, helping to put together project case files) by holding numerous technical meetings to bring together project sponsors and the competent public authorities.

Communication activities:

An information seminar was given on 11 February 2004 to the four French regions eligible for the programme.

▪ **Greece**

Publicity:

The third call for project proposals was the first at which Greece was eligible, due to the MEDOCC area having been extended to include this country. As it was a new opportunity for transnational participation, the Greek National Authority made a great effort to give the call maximum publicity. Advertisements and other types of information were addressed to all the qualified national bodies for them to communicate with potential partners (municipalities, other similar public bodies, etc.).

Support to project sponsors:

Greece joined the programme when it had already begun. The Greek national TA therefore needed to provide systematic support to bodies that might be interested and help them through the procedure of submitting their case files (putting Greek and foreign partners in contact, putting case files together, networking between potential partners and the relevant public authorities).

▪ Portugal

Support to project sponsors:

The Portuguese INTERREG III National Coordination Unit (NCU) systematically supports actual and potential project sponsors. The NCU functions as a one-stop office for all the institutions involved or interested in MEDOCC projects. It fosters partnerships, gives support in putting application packs together, and gives out information for filling up the project profiles and the forms for endorsing expenses.

Communication activities:

All MEDOCC events (calls for project proposals, calls for membership nominations for the JTS, meetings, seminars, etc.) are published online, relayed through various networks and publicised on both national websites and the sites of the Portuguese regions involved in MEDOCC. The NCU also addresses publicity for MEDOCC events directly to Portuguese sponsors and potential sponsors.

II.G. PRESENTING PROJECT PROPOSALS – EXAMINATION PROCEDURES

II.G.1. Calls for proposals

Call	Date	Submitted	Approved	Percentage approved	ERDF funding
1 st call	2002	160	44	27.5%	EUR 40.46 million
2 nd call	2003	114	33	28.9%	EUR 31.70 million
3 rd call	2004	124	26	20.9%	EUR 22.5 million
4 th call	2005				EUR 21.5 million

▪ Types of actions

In order to attain its objectives, each project can include several types of action if they are mutually sustaining.

The following are **eligible** under MEDOCC:

- Preliminary studies
- Pilot projects
- Exchanges of experience
- Networking
- Information and training

Projects that generate several types of activities will be favoured; conversely, those that are limited to preliminary studies will be refused.

The permitted maximum amounts are given in the following table.

Type	A Preliminary studies	B Pilot projects	C Exchanges of experience	D Networking	E Information and training
Maximum amounts allowable	EUR 400 000	EUR 1 500 000	EUR 400 000	EUR 500 000	EUR 400 000

Project proposals must indicate the types of activities envisaged and their cost (not to exceed the maximum amounts allowable).

II.G.2. Procedure for submission of projects

- The **procedure for selecting projects** can be **broken down** as follows:

1. The MA publishes the call for proposals.
2. The subsidy application pack is made available to the public.
3. Proposals are sent to the MA by post or email.
4. The MA receives the proposals.
5. The applications are examined by the MA in collaboration with the TS (joint unit and NC).
6. Proposals are evaluated according to a scale that takes into account the eligibility and selection criteria set forth in the operational programme and in the Programme Complement (PC) approved by the MC.
7. The proposals sent to the MA may be amended to take account of recommendations from the TS, that is in charge of examining the applications. This may be done up to the deadline for submitting projects.
8. The list of eligible projects is drawn up and those not eligible are filed away.
9. The results of the examination process are submitted to the SC.
10. The SC takes the final decision on which projects are eligible and approves the list of ineligible ones. For the eligible projects, there are four categories of decision: Approved, rejected, approved subject to conditions, and postponed (reasons must be stated for the postponement and they can be submitted again later to the SC). See B.4.3 for further details.

The official version of the project is to be drafted according to whichever model Management Committee has decided on. The completed application pack and all its accompanying documents must be in French.

- **Documents**

- Application pack
- Programme Manual/Vade Mecum

The **Application Pack** has three **components**:

1. Project profile (formatted partly in Word and partly in Excel)
2. Joint partner agreement
3. A document certifying the national co-financing

A project proposal will only be considered if the project profile is filled up properly, the partnership agreement signed and the national co-financing certified.

1. **Project profile:** The purpose of this component is to introduce the project and request a subsidy from ERDF funding. It has to be filled up by the Lead Partner in consultation with its partners and it is then sent to the MA.
2. **Joint partnership agreement:** See point II.D.
3. **Certification of national co-financing:** It is essential that the national co-financing certification be included in the application pack, failing which the application cannot move beyond the eligibility stage. Certifications take different forms according to the nature of the organisation that is providing the financial assistance; the documents required may therefore be of several kinds. The complete pack must contain a statement of the decision to allocate funds signed by somebody authorised make commitments of public sector co-financing. In most cases, it will convey the decision recorded by national or regional communities, with a clear indication of the amount involved and of its being allocated to the INTERREG-MEDOC project.

As for any complementary funding, it is also essential that the application pack include the documents attesting that this funding will really be available.

Originals of the documents vouching for national co-financing must also be provided from all the other partners (except Italian ones). These documents vary from one country to another.

When a recorded decision refers to several INTERREG projects, the Lead Partner in charge of putting the pack together must include this document in **each** application.

II.G.3. Project selection

■ Examination phase

At the examination stage, projects are submitted to the MA by the deadline announced in the call for proposals. The MA sends copies of the projects to the NCs. The MA checks to see that the projects meet all of the programme's eligibility and selection criteria; it does this through the JTS, in close consultation with the NCs, and using a scale approved by the MC. A project must first be found eligible before it can be passed forward to the decision phase. This first stage is therefore eliminatory.

The NCs verify that the co-financing has been mobilised and that it is compatible with national policies.

This first stage, where eligibility is checked, is to ensure that all the documentation needed for participating in the call for proposals is present and that the rules have been followed. On the other hand, it is during the technical assessment at the decision stage that proposals can be 'scored' and compared against the programming needs.

■ Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria that, if they are not all met, disqualify a project for selection, are set forth in the Community Initiative Programme (CIP) and in the PC. The conditions are that the project must:

- Observe all the conditions specified in the call for proposals.
- Have duly filled up the subsidy application pack decided on by the MC.
- Conform to the zoning that is eligible for MEDOCC funding.
- Be transnational in character and involve partners from at least two countries.
- Conform to the strategy and objectives of the programme.
- Agree with the sectoral and transversal (intersectoral) policies of the EU – especially in environmental matters, equal opportunity in society and in the labour market – and fit in with the other programmes that are eligible to draw on the Structural Funds.
- Contribute to implementing the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and other policies of the EU.
- Contribute to a vision of spatial development, to spatial integration and to strengthening the identity of MEDOCC's area of action.
- Show how the programme helps employment and the environment and promotes equal opportunity.
- Demonstrate compatibility with national policies.
- Conform to national and EU legislation.
- Meet regulatory requirements governing aid plans and specific to each country's subsidy regime.
- Demonstrate that the national co-financing is a reality.
- Not be funded by any other EU programme (except for co-financing from partners in third countries through MEDA, TACIS, etc.).
- Not duplicate work already done (studies, data collection, networking, etc.).
- Have clearly defined objectives and state concretely the results to be expected.
- Follow the Lead Partner principle.
- Not have a duration of longer than three years (activities must be completed by 30.06.2008).
- Not have been completely carried out already before the application is submitted.

■ Decision phase

The JTS has an evaluation grid divided into sections. It serves to check agreement between the criteria advertised and the information given in the project profile. Each section has predetermined weighting in the final calculation. The overall score, together with the reasons and recommendations of the evaluator, becomes the starting point for the final approval decision. That decision is taken jointly by the members of the SC, which is composed of the JTS and the NC of each Member State.

The SC renders its decision in one of the following **forms**:

1. **Definitive approval**, which the MA then communicates to the Lead Partner.
2. **Approval subject to certain conditions**. This type of approval gives the project sponsors a brief period of opportunity to make modifications in the light of the Committee's observations. If the Committee entrusts the MA with checking that these

observations have been taken into account and finds that they have in fact been applied, the project can be given definitive approval without it having to go back to the SC.

3. **Rejection**, meaning that the project will not be funded.

4. **Postponement**, Reasons must be stated. The project may then be resubmitted later in the programme.

The MA communicates the SC's decisions to the Lead Partners and NCs concerned. The list of projects approved is also made available on the programme website.

▪ **Selection criteria**

The selection criteria make it possible to give some projects priority over others. The criteria require that the project should:

- Take a truly transnational approach, meaning that it involves partners from at least two MEDOCC area countries who are interested in the problem field chosen and who are prepared to share the work of finding solution or who would exchange experiences in order to get a better grasp of specific situations.
- Show a true partnership approach by sharing a common methodology and not merely a collection of individual approaches, and a balanced division of finances and labour. (If the project involves more than two partners, none of them should take up more than 40% of the total budget).
- Make a significant advance in the implementation of ESDP.
- Take account of the project's impact, especially its environmental impact and its effect on equal opportunity in the workplace and in the workforce.
- Help build relations between the authorities, the institutions and the other organisations caring for spatial planning.
- Provide input to transnational activities beyond the lifetime of the project.
- Adopt a trans-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach.
- Help to make the programme more consistent and produce real synergies with, or complement, other ERDF-funded activities.
- Play a complementary role to the activities funded by MEDA.
- Be innovative (new topics to be studied, new ways of managing information, communication, promotion, etc.) and contribute value added in replicable form over what has been done in the past or is currently under way.
- Make allowance for information and publicity activities intended to increase appreciation of MEDOCC programming and consistent with the programme's communication plan.
- Take account of the special circumstances of islanders.
- Foresee third country participation.
- Take account of the work and results of the projects funded by INTERREG II-C.
- Take advantage of private co-financing, subject to the Community rules concerning competition and public subsidies.
- Stay within the average prices quoted as indications for the different categories of activities and the total of between EUR 300 000 and 3 000 000 (Exceptionally, the SC can raise these limits if a project is of a special nature or presents a special interest).
- Contribute supplementary unrecognised funding as part of the national public co-financing.

In addition, some criteria specific to each activity have been introduced.

▪ **Execution phase**

Once the Lead Partner has been informed of the MC's decision and contacted the other sponsors, the execution phase can begin.

This phase comprises the following steps:

- Signing the Joint Agreement between the MA and the Lead Partner, which puts in motion the funding of the project and determines the modes of financing and monitoring. (It must be borne in mind that the agreement has to be ready for signing within two months from the time the project approval is notified.).
- Setting up of the SC by the Lead Partner and the other partners to ensure that the project is monitored. The SC reaches its decisions by consensus and has to follow a set of internal rules approved by all the partners at their first meeting.
- If necessary, setting up other bodies, whose rules of procedure are determined by the partners among themselves.
- Start-up of project activities.

- Putting in place the financial, technical and procedural monitoring to ensure correct running and management of the project in accordance with Council Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999. (For further information about this monitoring, refer to the Regulation on Implementation, which is available on the Internet.).
- Claiming refunds from ERDF funding. Each partner sends the Lead Partner its individual claim covering the expenses validated by the NCs. The Lead Partner groups the requisitions and sends them to the MA in order to collect the total refund.
- Applying for disbursement of the national co-financing according to the rules applicable in the case of each of the partners.

II.H. PROJECT MONITORING SYSTEM

II.H.1. Project monitoring system

▪ Documents

▪ Progress reports

1. Semi-annual
2. Annual

▪ Refund claim forms

▪ Project modifications

1. Guidelines
2. Application to modify a project
3. Model calculation of a budgetary amendment

II.H.2. Financial procedures

▪ Present financial procedures

Partners must send the Lead Partner a claim for refund of expenditure incurred, accompanied by the required certification. The general practice is for claims to be backed up by the invoices settled or by accounting documents of equal validity. Every invoice or equivalent must be identified in the partner's books of account.

The Lead Partner then assembles the claims and sends the MA a single claim for the whole project, which includes the validations of expenditures transmitted by the NCs. The Lead Partner must keep the validations and the supporting documents on file for three years from the date of settlement of the claim.

The combined claim must be supported by copies of the expenditure certifications issued by each Member State for the parts of the project that take place on its territory, and by a progress report on the project. Once the claims have been received, the central Managing Authority forwards them to the Paying Authority. The latter checks them and transfers the corresponding ERDF amount to the bank account of the Lead Partner, who then distributes the funds among the partners according to their respective claims. This procedure applies both to interim payments and to the final settlement.

The PA undertakes to ensure that the Lead Partners receive their refunds quickly. However, refund of the expenditures incurred by the project partners depends on sufficient funds being available in the programme's central account. If there is a deficit, the PA has to wait for the European Commission to pay further instalments.

The national co-financing has to be activated according to the terms laid down in the interpartner agreement and the project profile. In the case of Italy, the co-financing is provided entirely by the national government; the refund therefore coincides with the ERDF refund in response to a claim that each Italian partner makes to the Ministero delle Infrastrutture e dei Trasporti.

Projects involving other EU funding sources (MEDA, TACIS) are dependent on the technical and financial coordination provisions specified by the MC.

▪ **Procedure for project payment claims**

The Community's contribution is granted strictly on the basis of expenditures actually incurred, justified in the context of the project and in agreement with the financial plan as presented. The earliest admissible date for expenditures was 27 December 2001, the date the programme was approved.

A refund claim form can only be accepted and assessed if the following conditions are met.

1. Claims may be submitted either in electronic format or in hard copy.
2. An original of the claim must be sent by post together with a copy of the certifications of the expenditures claimed.
3. The claim must be forwarded intact (with all its pages and all the appended documents), completed and signed, to the place provided for the purpose.
4. Schedules of expenses must be made out for each expenditure category.
5. For each item of expenditure, the total cost must be indicated as well as its division among the various funding sources.

The percentage division of costs among the different funding sources -ERDF and national co-financing- must accord with what was stated in the project profile.

To justify refund claims, the Lead Partner must provide adequate proof of the extent to which the project has advanced. Refund claims must therefore be accompanied by progress reports in support of the expenditures certified. In all cases, the Commission, the MA and the NCs may at any time call for additional information, which must be supplied within 30 days.

Claims may be submitted to the MA a maximum of four times during the life of the project, and only when expenditures reach the following proportions:

- Expenditure incurred = 10% of total budget
- Expenditure incurred = 30% of total budget
- Expenditure incurred = 50% of total budget
- Expenditure incurred = 80% of total budget
- Expenditure incurred = 100% of total budget

Total budget = ERDF + national co-financing contributions.

▪ **Schedule of claim submissions**

Refund claims must be submitted to the MA by the following dates each year:

- 28 February
- 31 May
- 30 September
- 30 November

▪ **Procedure for payments to projects**

To obtain the ERDF payments, the Lead Partners must furnish the information needed for paying them into the special account opened for the project. On request from the MA, the PA will disburse the ERDF funds according to the finance plan approved by the SC.

▪ **Disbursement of funds**

Payment will be made within three months of reception of a claim. However, payment is subject to the Commission's actually providing the funds. The Lead Partner has no claim against the MA in the event that the Commission is late with its remittances.

▪ **Co-financing payments**

The arrangements for the national co-financing will be made according to the **specific modes of payment of each Member State**.

■ Programme reporting system

Technical and financial reporting comes under the duties of the **MC**, which liaises with the MA. It is based on financial, material, procedural and (when appropriate) impact indicators, which are reported by the Lead Partner at intervals prescribed by the MC.

It is up to the MA (pursuant to Regulation 1260/99, art 34) to ensure the smooth running of the monitoring system: This includes operational data entry, and collection of the financial, procedural and material data needed for monitoring.

Annex IV of Commission Regulation (EC) No 438/2001, details how operations level information is to be collected, compiled and made available to the Commission. This annex has provided the model for building and networking the databases. With the Commission's agreement, the practical method of transmitting the information has as its platform the Italian MONIT 2000 monitoring package. It is a **management information system** (MIS).

Progress has been made during 2004 in making the MIS operational, thanks especially to the work of JTS, which is in charge of monitoring the programme, its projects and the overall system management. Concretely the JTS has entered the identity data of the projects and their partners into the system; Lead Partners are not allowed to access the system without this data. Data entry was completed in the first half of the year.

However, the MIS is not yet being used as the monitoring system, because of several problems with it. The MA and the JTS have therefore put in place an alternative monitoring system to deal especially with the project and programme financial data.

In particular, the financial monitoring has been done at the stage of reviewing the refund claims submitted by the Lead Partners, because the procedures call for submission of detailed progress charts.

While awaiting implementation of the MIS, the JTS has prepared in advance material and procedural progress tables to be filled up by the Lead Partners of all the projects approved. This information has been collected and structured with an eye to writing the annual progress reports.

The MIS will eventually be used by partners, Lead Partners, NCs, the MA and the PA for the procedure of certifying expenditures.

The annual and final progress reports are prepared by the MA and approved by the MC prior to being forwarded to the Commission.

II.I. AUDIT AND CHECKING SYSTEMS

■ Checks at project level

First verification level

The first check on whether expenditures are valid is made by the national authorities. Here follow details about the institutions in charge of making this check in the various Member States.

Spain: Ministry of Economy and Finance, Dirección General de Fondos Comunitarios (European Community Funds Division), INTERREG Unit

Every payment claim must be accompanied by a certificate signed by both the **head of the project** and the **official in charge of the organisation's finances**.

- In the case of public bodies that are subject to checks by the Intervención General de la Administración del Estado (State Public Accounts Department) at the local, regional or central level, the expenditures are verified by the Intervención's representative and given final validation by the NC.
- In the case of public bodies that are not subject to checks by the Intervención General de la Administración del Estado, the expenditure attestations must be accompanied by an outside auditor's report or by certified true copies of each voucher for that

expenditure and submitted for checking at the INTERREG unit of the Dirección General de Fondos Comunitarios (European Community Funds Branch).

The Dirección General de Fondos Comunitarios carries out the verification, signs the attestation and sends it back to the partner.

France: These checks are carried out by the Government decentralised technical services in each of the four regions eligible for the programme, depending on the partners' locations and the technical nature of the projects.

These services are designated by the regional Prefectures on the recommendation of the NC and in consultation with the Comité National (National Committee), which is formed of representatives of regional prefectures and regional councils.

The following are the regional government departments that are usually called on to perform the verifications in each of the four regions.

- Directions régionales de l'Équipement (town and country development)
- Directions régionales de l'Agriculture et de la forêt (agriculture and forests)
- Directions régionales de l'Environnement (environment)
- Directions régionales de l'Industrie et de la recherche (research and development)
- Directions régionales de la Culture (cultural affairs)
- Délégation régionale au Tourisme (tourism)
- Délégations régionales à la Recherche et à la technologie (research and technology)
- Secrétariats généraux pour les Affaires Régionales (regional affairs)

These departments carry out the first-level checks and issue a voucher certifying the amount of allowable expenditure accepted and the corresponding ERDF about to be refunded.

This certificate, together with the contractor's refund claim, is submitted to the NC for endorsement. The latter then issues an attestation for signature by the Secretary General for Regional Affairs on behalf of the Regional Prefect for Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, who is coordinating Prefect for the French participants.

Portugal: The checks are carried out by the Ministry of Finance, and the surveillance body is the INTERREG III Unidade de Coordenação Nacional (National Coordination Unit) (UCN).

The UCN takes responsibility for coordinating the first level verifications in Portugal and running the certification routine for the Portuguese partners. It deals with all the information needed to determine whether expenditures are admissible and whether the certification forms have been properly completed. The UCN has put together a MEDOCC kit for Portuguese partners; it contains valuable information about how to fill up the forms correctly.

Italy: Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, Department for the Coordination of Spatial Development, European Programmes Division.

United Kingdom: The checks are performed by the Senior Executive Officer of the EU Programmes Unit at the Department of Trade, Industry and Telecommunications in Gibraltar.

Greece: Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Malta: Planning and Priorities Co-ordination Division, Office of the Prime Minister.

▪ Checks at programme level

Second verification level

This level includes the use of the national resources. The checks at second level are exercised by the Member States in the programme, which are obliged to designate a competent authority and state the procedures they will follow. Second-level checks must be performed systematically during the programming period and in any case not later than the termination of the project. They must be done on a sufficiently representative sample of the operations being funded and representing at least 5% of the total expenditures.

Member States must make sure that there is adequate separation of functions between these checks and the procedures for effecting payment for operations. Hence, they have decided to set up a **Financial Control Group (FCG)** at transnational level and with advisory and coordinating functions, its principal task being to organise the controls based on an adequate sampling.

The FCG is made up of representatives from the national authorities responsible for sample-based checking and auditing statements. This body ensures that the Member States have a say at all stages; it also offers the advantage that its less pronounced coordination between organisations in the Member States leads to uniform auditing in all the countries and all the projects.

Controls exercised by the European Commission

The Commission has responsibility for administering the general budget of the European Union. As part of that responsibility, it must make certain that there are financial management and control systems in place in all the Member States and that they are working properly to ensure that Community funds are used correctly and efficiently.

For that purpose, and without infringing on the controls exercised by Member States under their national legislation, regulations and administrative provisions, officials or agents of the Commission may also make field inspections, and especially spot checks, of the operations funded by the EU and of the management and control systems. The inspectors must be given at least one working day in advance. The Commission informs the relevant Member State to obtain any necessary assistance. Officials or representatives of the Member State can also take part in these inspections.

The Commission can request a Member State to carry out a spot check to test whether one or more operations conform to legislation and regulations. Officials or representatives of the Member State can also take part in these inspections.

Financial control at termination of the project and final declaration

The declaration at the termination of an activity must be prepared by an organisation that functions independently both of the MA and the PA. The declaration must be accompanied by a report of the work accomplished and summarise the conclusions of the checks carried out in previous years.

II.J. BUDGET ANALYSIS

II.J.1. Description

The programme's financial plan was approved when Decision C (2001) 4069 was passed on 27 December 2001, under the EU initiative INTERREG IIB "Eastern Mediterranean".

The plan was amended later, by Decision C (2003) 5326 of 23 December 2003, to include Greece in MEDOCC's ambit.

On 5 February 2004, in Letter 538/UE, the MA started a written procedure with NCs to amend the MEDOCC CIP to incorporate Malta, and by letter dated 24 March 2004 the Maltese authorities signalled their agreement. However, the European Commission (by Letter RGIO.B1/CC/D(2004) 2025 dated 28 April 2004) announced that it would approve the modification provided it was brought together with other urgent changes concerning automatic deallocation of funds, indexing allotment, and, if necessary, changes resulting from the MTE.

The definitive financial tables and CIP were approved in Decision C (2004) 4911 of 8 December 2004.

Here below is the **financial table** as modified by the new Decision.

Period 2000-2006	Total cost	Total public expenditure	ERDF	EU contribution (% of total cost)	National co-financing totals	Government (1)	Local communities (1)	Other public sources (1)	National public co-financing (% of total cost)
Priority 1	26 180 387	26 180 387	14 730 319	56%	11 450 068	6 831 998	4 108 706	509 364	44%
Priority 1 %	12%	12%	12%		12%	11%	14%	13%	
Priority 2	35 377 093	35 377 093	19 849 796	56%	15 527 297	10 091 204	4 662 102	773 991	44%
Priority 2 %	16%	16%	16%		16%	16%	15%	20%	
Priority 3	45 041 169	45 041 169	24 171 836	54%	20 869 333	13 373 988	6 435 290	1 060 055	46%
Priority 3 %	21%	21%	20%		22%	22%	21%	27%	
Priority 4	94 147 538	94 147 538	52 688 902	56%	41 458 636	26 718 505	13 207 138	1 532 993	44%
Priority 4 %	44%	44%	44%		43%	43%	43%	40%	
Technical Assistance	14 193 408	14 193 408	7 905 604	56%	6 287 804	4 345 781	1 942 023	0,000	44%
Technical Assistance %	7%	7%	7%		7%	7%	6%	0%	
Total	214 939 595	214 939 595	119 346 457	56%	95 593 138	61 361 477	30 355 258	3 876 403	44%

II.J.2. Budget amendments at project level

▪ Changes within the budget without altering the project total

Three **subcategories** are possible:

- Changes affecting the division of project funds by expenditure heading but not altering the allocation of resources between partners.
- Changes affecting both the allocation of resources between partners and the division of project funds by expenditure headings.
- Changes affecting the allocation of resources between partners without altering the division of funds by expenditure headings.

In the first case, **if the amount reallocated does not exceed 10% of the total project budget (ERDF + national co-financing), the change can merely be notified to the MA by message.** Above that threshold, **the change must be confirmed by the MA after consulting with the Member States.** It may also be necessary to follow this second procedure if the Lead Partner has already submitted one or more requests for amendment; indeed the 10% limit means 10% over the total life of the project. In other words, **approval by the Member States is required if the total of several successive modifications exceeds 10% of the total budget.**

The second and third cases are only applicable if the transfer of resources from one partner to another **does not entail any change in the ERDF subsidy to the project.** It follows that the partner that whose budget is increased (ERDF + national co-financing) must have a proportion of ERDF funding equal to that of the partner whose budget (ERDF + national co-financing) is reduced. Furthermore, the one whose budget is increased must provide a new letter of undertaking for the national co-financing.

In the case of changes between partners, it is enough to **apprise the MA of them before they are put into effect**, provided that:

- The change does not exceed 10% of the total budget.
- The transfer of resources involves partners in the same Member State and with the same proportion of ERDF contribution.

In all other cases, the changes must be approved by the Member States, who must also be consulted when the change, although it is within the 10% limit, involves eliminating the participation of a partner.

▪ **Procedures for submitting the request.**

Changes not requiring consultation with Member States can simply be submitted for information to the MA before they are put into effect. All other changes must be sent for approval at least 30 days before they would come into effect. In all cases, the Lead Partner has to append the following documentation to the application:

- Project profile with all the relevant portions updated.
- Model calculation for budget amendments (model CMB).
- Updated general action plan.
- Decision of the SC that rules on the change.
- Newly signed interpartner agreement.
- New letters of undertaking for the national co-financing.

▪ **Changes in the total amount of the project**

The above changes can only be allowed if they do not entail any increase in the ERDF. This means that the ERDF amount allocated to the project by the SC must be taken as the maximum level of EU subsidy for the project. Whatever the reasons for requesting a reduction of ERDF (transfer of resources from one partner to another with a lower proportion of ERDF contribution, failure by one or more partners to execute tasks, withdrawal of one or more partners, impossibility of carrying out certain activities foreseen in the action plan, etc.), the project will have to be approved over again by consulting the Programming Committee.

Procedure for submitting the request. Budget changes must be notified to the JTS at least 60 days before they would come into effect. Notification must be by sending the application model duly completed and with the following attachments:

- Project profile with all the relevant portions updated.
- Updated general action plan.
- Decision of the SC that rules on the change.
- Newly signed interpartner agreement.
- New letters of undertaking for the national co-financing (if appropriate).

▪ **Partnership changes**

In most cases, partnership changes translate into budget changes in the form of either a reduction in the project's ERDF subsidy or a transfer of resources between the partners (subject to the rules stated on page 6 ff). Nevertheless, there is also the possibility of replacing a partner that drops out of the project with another that has comparable technical and professional qualifications, if that can ensure that the task undertaken will be carried out. The new partner must be of the same nationality and preferably, from the same region; in any event, its proportion of ERDF contribution cannot exceed that of the first partner. Approval by the SC is essential for partnership changes. Furthermore, the project sponsors must take into account the possibility that if one or more partners withdraw, it could throw doubt on whether the project results can be achieved. Consequently, the MA, with the agreement of the Member States, reserves the right to terminate the Joint Agreement if it finds there is no possibility of finding a substitute or an alternative solution.

▪ **Procedure for submitting the request**

Partnership changes must be notified to the JTS at least 60 days before they would come into effect. Notification must be by sending the application model duly completed and with the following attachments:

- Project profile with all the relevant portions updated.
- Updated general action plan.
- Decision of the SC that rules on the change.
- Newly signed interpartner agreement.
- New letters of undertaking for the national co-financing.

▪ **Changes to activities or outcomes**

Most of the changes to activities or results involve budget amendments. In this case, the Lead Partner has to apply the relevant rules (see the following pages). However, if the modification requested does not affect the budget, the JTS evaluates it in collaboration with the MA on a case-by-case basis. If the JTS finds that the modification might affect the nature and purposes of the project, then the case will be decided through written consultation with the SC.

▪ **Procedure for submitting the request**

The change must be notified to the JTS at least 60 days before it would come into effect. The request, even if it is duly filled up and signed, will only be processed if the following documents are appended:

- Project profile with all the relevant portions updated.
- Updated general action plan.
- Decision of the SC that rules on the change.

▪ **Deadline changes**

Small changes concerning 'interim' deadlines on the time chart can be communicated to the JTS simply by way of the successive half-yearly updating of action plans. On the other hand, when the change entails postponing one or more activities from one programme year to the next, it can affect the time distribution of the project's financial resources; and it may have consequences in the form of automatic deallocation of funds. In that case, the Lead Partner submits a request to the JTS, which in turn consults the SC in writing. The same procedure is followed for dealing with requests to postpone the termination date of a project; in no case is postponement possible beyond 30 June 2006 (for projects approved in 2004).

▪ **Procedure for submitting the request.**

The change must be notified to the JTS at least 60 days before it would come into effect. The request, even if it is duly filled up and signed, will only be processed if the following documents are appended:

- Project profile with all the relevant portions updated.
- Updated general action plan.
- Decision of the SC that rules on the change.
- Newly signed interpartner agreement if it is a request to postpone the project's terminating date.

▪ **Other changes**

This is a category for all the changes that do not fall into the categories described above. They include, for example,

- Changes to a partner's official name (because of corporate restructuring, etc.).
- Changes to the person or entity that has assumed legal responsibility for the project (because of corporate restructuring, elections, retirements, etc.).
- Corrections of errors of substance in the project profile or the interpartner agreement.

▪ **Procedure for submitting a request**

These changes must be notified to the JTS prior to their coming into effect. Notification is by sending the application model duly completed and with the following attachments:

- Project profile with all the relevant portions updated.
- Updated general action plan (if appropriate).
- An official letter of explanation from the partner affected by the changes.

II.J.3. The n+2 principle

The European Commission looked at the expenditure level already reached and informed the MA (by letter dated 23 March 2004) that since an interim amount of EUR 7 267 670 00 has already been disbursed, there is an amount of EUR 445 299,43 to be deallocated for the year 2001.

A meeting of the Steering Group in Rome on 20 May 2004 discussed the automatic deallocation in order to decide which Area to charge it to. The decision was that

- The MA would undertake to check with the European Commission to see from which programme years the amount should be deallocated.
- The MA would combine the two existing deallocation proposals with the third proposal, presented by France, to deallocate from the TA.

The automatic deallocation for the programme was decided on for several reasons connected with the delays that MEDOCC suffered in its early stage of operations. What happened was that because of the complexity of a transnational programme, the MA had to equip itself immediately with TA support both for transnational and strictly national activities, to solve the problems caused by shortage of staff.

Numerous measures were undertaken not only by the MA but also by the JTS and Member States. Satisfactory performance therefore required close cooperation and solidarity among the different protagonists in the programme.

The financial procedure in 2004 achieved its objectives to a quite outstanding degree, thanks to the MA's paying close attention to how the partnerships could monitor their various projects. In the light of this experience, the MA has decided to propose reinforcing this procedure by means of a new monitoring device that will take the form of visits of inspection by a team of JTS members composed of a project officer and a financial officer. The intent is that these on-site visits to partners should occur at least once during the implementation of each project.

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