

Webinar: “Post-2027 consultations: which role for Interreg Volunteers (IVYs)?”

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Speakers: Slawomir Tokarski (DG REGIO), Cinzia Dellagiacomma (Association of European Border Regions), Maria Rosaria Valentini (Interreg France-Italy ALCOTRA) Frank Schneider (Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE), Maria-Parthena Moula (Managing Authority Greece Interreg 2021-2027), Jean-Pierre Halkin (DG REGIO).
Moderator: Simona Pohlova (DG REGIO).

Participants: Interreg programme authorities, macro-regional strategies.

Key insights of the IVY initiative

- The main goal of the IVY programme is to **enhance promotion and communication around existing Interreg programmes** and to **foster youth involvement**, generating new ideas and giving fresh perspectives for cooperation and cohesion policy in general.
- Since its launch in 2017, **more than 850 young volunteers** have supported Interreg programmes, mainly through assisting in event organisation and in taking up communication activities. A small survey during today’s webinar has shown that:
 - o Over 50% of the Interreg programmes which participated during today’s webinar already hosted at least one IVY.
 - o Those Interreg programmes which have not hosted an IVY so far, stated that it is due to a lack of knowledge or administrative obstacles.
- Volunteering as an IVY is possible for a duration of **2-6 months**, for a maximum of **35 working hours per week**.
- Every Interreg programme can have two IVYs per year and application is possible on a rolling basis. For the purpose of post-27 consultations, programme authorities are allowed to host a third volunteer in 2024.
- Interested Interreg programmes must **submit a programme’s note to AEBR**, specifying **their needs** and the **competencies** a volunteer should bring along. AEBR then proposes a pool of suitable candidates to the respective Interreg programme which will eventually select the volunteer.
- The financial and administrative burden for Interreg programmes is **reduced to a minimum** as AEBR provides for the volunteer’s financial support (around 1000 EUR per month, depending on location of assignment), including travel and insurance costs, and takes care of all the legal paperwork which comes with the volunteer’s recruitment.

Testimonials and experiences

Testimonies underscored the mutually beneficial nature of the IVY experience, emphasizing the valuable contributions of young volunteers in enhancing communication and engaging with various stakeholders. Maria Rosalia Valentini highlighted the win-win aspect, showcasing IVYs' impact on communication, especially with the youth, and their proficiency in new technologies. Frank Schneider acknowledged challenges faced by the Central Europe transnational programme, emphasizing the need for hands-on guidance in managing IVYs. He also stated that the benefits brought by the inclusion of youth in programme management outbalance the challenges encountered. Maria-Parthena Moula, currently deployed as IVY reporter in Greece, shared practical examples of enriching experiences, including citizen engagement activities.

Programmes stressed that IVYs should complement, not replace, existing staff, enabling the implementation of additional activities previously constrained by human resources. Although AEBR provides for all the financial support and most of the administrative work, hosting an IVY requires guidance and mentoring. Overall, the testimonies concluded that hosting an IVY adds value by contributing to existing activities, introducing fresh perspectives, and fostering innovation within the programme.

The testimonials were followed by a Q&A session. Its content is reported below.

Q&A session

1. What do you mean by "additional support" for IVY volunteers beside the costs that are taken by AEBR?

There are various extra costs that we cover, including:

- for volunteers needing a visa to relocate to the host organisations's country, we cover all costs related to the visa, including travel costs if any arise;
- for volunteers relocating to a country of which they don't speak the language, we reimburse them 150 euros for language classes of level A1 and A2 to help them integrate in the new country;
- extra medical expenses if not covered by the insurance offered by AEBR;
- exceptional costs, such as equipment, arising from remote volunteering if this is justified by local measures taken during the pandemic of COVID-19;
- extra medical costs if requested by volunteers with special needs.

The objective of this additional support is to offer inclusion and support to all participants, making some extra resources available where needed.

To receive this support, volunteers or the host organisation should get in touch with the IVY team to discuss the details.

2. If an event is organised in a city different from that of deployment, can the costs linked to the participation of volunteers be considered additional support?

Additional costs are meant to support the inclusion of volunteers, especially in case of special needs.

We very much encourage volunteers to be involved in events of the host organisations. Normally, we'd expect costs to be covered by the host organisation, as for regular staff.

With the newly signed amendment between the European Commission and AEBR, we have included an additional small support for volunteers travelling abroad for missions of the host organisations or if invited by AEBR. In these cases, volunteers receive an additional pocket money for the days in which they travel. The amount will depend on the country to which the volunteer travels, and ranges from 4 to 7 euros per day. This will only be applicable when the volunteer travels to a different country than the one where he/she is deployed.

3. We may have a challenge in relation to the salary of the volunteers as the pay offered is way below the minimum pay in Denmark, where we are located. Can we supplement it?

It is important to keep in mind that volunteers don't receive a salary, but a financial support. This is a stipend for them to cover their costs of living allowing them to volunteer, but it's not a compensation of their work, and as such it's not a salary. In this sense, national regulations on minimum salary do not apply to the financial support – as well as the financial support is not subject to taxes.

However, host organisations can top up the financial support - it is very welcome. However, it's important that the extra resources given to the volunteer do not arise from ERDF funding, otherwise there might be an incident of double founding, as volunteers are financed with Interreg's Technical Assistance.

Also, please note that from 1 December 2023, new rates apply, with 5 euros per day more on average. The new rates can be found here: <https://www.interregyouth.com/volunteers/faq/>

4. How does the travel allowance work in practice? Is there a limit for it?

The contribution to travel costs is based on the distance from the volunteer's home address to the host organisation's address. It is not a reimbursement of actual costs, but rather a lump sum calculated indicating the linear distance of a one-way travel using the distance [calculator tool](#) of the European Commission.

The amount granted to participants based on this distance will support the round trip.

The amount is provided together with the financial support in two or three instalments, the first one being transferred about one week before deployment, and the rest throughout the experience.

Below you can find the detail of the amounts for each distance:

DISTANCE (in KM for one way travel linear distance):	AMOUNT (lump sum round trip):
Between 0 and 99 KM	23 EUR
Between 100 and 499 KM	180 EUR
Between 500 and 1999 KM	275 EUR
Between 2000 and 2999 KM	360 EUR
Between 3000 and 3999 KM	530 EUR
Between 4000 and 7999 KM	820 EUR
For 8000 KM or more	1500 EUR

5. How can language barriers be tackled in cross-border cooperation programmes? If volunteers help with post-27 consultations, they should speak two particular languages to address citizens in the cross-border territories. Is it correct that the volunteers communicate mainly in English?

Volunteers respond as much as possible to the needs of the host organisation: it is AEBR mission to find volunteers that correspond to the profile the programmes look for, including speaking the languages you need them to be able to communicate in.

To ensure this, we contact local stakeholders in your regions (and beyond) to find as many candidates as possible.

Sometimes this is easier, and other times finding a person able to speak three languages with proficiency may require more time.

We are happy to support you in finding the best solutions based on your needs, with a little bit of adaptation if necessary.

6. Can a young person apply to become IVY at any point of time without an open call from a particular Programme for IVY?

Young people interested in volunteering can apply at any time, our open placement offers can be viewed on our website: <https://aebr.teamtailor.com/jobs>.

Programmes too can apply any time to host volunteers by filling in the application form, so called “Programme Note” for programmes (the application form will be updated in the coming weeks, but this will not affect those having applied with this version), which can be found here: <https://www.interregyouth.com/host-organizations/how-to-apply/>

So, for young people to be able to apply to IVY placements, we need to have programmes and projects to apply and create volunteering experiences, as they are the starting point and the primary actors of IVY.

7. Could you confirm the following: the contract would be between AEBR and the volunteer?

The volunteering contract is prepared by AEBR, but it will be signed by all participants in the activity: the volunteer, a representative of AEBR and a representative of the host organisation.

This is important to make sure all parties are fully aware of their responsibilities and of the whole framework.

If the host organisation needs a framework contract with AEBR in order to be able to host, we can prepare and sign an ad hoc memorandum of cooperation or a similar contract.

Also, if needed we can translate the contract in your local languages.

8. Where can a programme post interest for IVY (can you provide a link) and how is a volunteer then selected?

To host an IVY volunteer, please send us the application form, so-called “Programme note”, to ivy@aebr.eu. You can download the file here: <https://www.interregyouth.com/host-organizations/how-to-apply/>

We encourage host organisations to read the guidelines, where we illustrate all important aspects of IVY – this too can be found on the same page and is linked [here](#).

Based on the information you provide in the programme note, we look for candidates and promote your offer, which you are also encouraged to share in your local network (we share the post for social media with you).

After a few weeks, we share with you a pre-selection of about 6 candidates for you to get to know through a call. It will be you then to decide whom of these candidates you would like to host as an IVY volunteer – or if you would like to receive more profiles in case you do not think the first pre-selection was in line with your needs.

It is also possible to involve directly people from your network: in this case it is still necessary to fill in the programme note. After this is approved from our side, you would put us in touch with the person you would like to host, and if the profile matches, we prepare the documents for you to start with this person.

9. How long will the program go on? We are planning to host IVY volunteers during 2024, but our new projects mostly would be able to start hosting during 2025.

The current grant agreement between the European Commission and AEBR to manage IVY runs until December 2024, but we are all committed to continue.

In this sense, we will start planning a next phase of IVY as early as January 2024, so we are confident that IVY will continue seamlessly in the future.

10. Can non-member states host IVY?

Yes, IVY covers all Interreg countries: EU, EEA, IPA, ENI plus Switzerland and the UK. From January 2024, also partner countries under Interreg D, as well as partner countries in Europe (Andorra, Faroes Islands, Greenland and San Marino).

11. Do you also cover travel costs necessary for the completion of their tasks?

Costs related to the tasks of the volunteers should be covered by the host organisation, as volunteers' tasks are part of the programme's/project's work.

Volunteers are entitled to receive own funding to:

- 1) communicate about Cohesion Policy or
- 2) organise their own consultation under the Citizens' Engagement Activities, for which they can receive up to 3 000 Euros from DG REGIO to organise their own event.

12. How feasible is it to get a volunteer in a small, remote city?

Volunteers are young people eager to support territorial cooperation and the region they are involved in, so their interest for the mission and the degree of impact they can have will influence their availability to be deployed in a specific place.

Access to opportunities and services are important: if this can be granted, and the offer is interesting, we are confident that we will find the right person for the specific offer, also in small, remote cities.

13. Is it possible for the National Contact Points to host a volunteer? If so, will the contract be between their ministry or an Interreg programme?

Yes, National Contact Points can also host, as long as the activity is exclusively aimed at promoting Interreg.

The volunteering agreement/contract will need to be with the actual host organisation. However, it is important to inform the related programme to make sure there is good coordination among actors involved. To this end, an information via email is sufficient.

14. What are the requirements to apply as an IVY? e.g. age limits, not-employed, etc.

IVY volunteers are young people aged 18 to 30 (they can start until they turn 31), who are citizens or legal residents of any of the participating countries (all countries involved in Interreg).

These are the only two requirements to participate.

Based on the specific needs of the host organisations, we then look for profiles with the competences required, but there are no generic