

**Priority question for written answer P-001669/2022
to the Commission**
Rule 138
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Subject: ERDF funding allocated to the Interreg NEXT programmes for 2021-2027

Approximately EUR 112.1 million in EU funding was allocated to three Interreg NEXT programmes in Finland, consisting of around EU 55.5 million in ERDF funding and around EUR 56.6 million in NDICI funding. A similar amount of national funds would also have been allocated to them.

Russia's acts of war in Ukraine have halted the preparation of the new external border programmes. The European Commission has stated that, in accordance with the Interreg Regulation, the ERDF funding authorised in the first year of the external border programmes, amounting to around EUR 9.5 million, is to be transferred to the Interreg programmes implemented at the EU's internal borders.

The transfer to the Aurora and Central Baltic programmes of earmarked funding is problematic for the regions covered by the external border programmes, because some of them are not included in either programme region. The decision means a loss of millions of euros for external border areas, whose regional economy is suffering in particular from this new situation.

In order to avoid a situation where funding for the next period (2023-2027) earmarked for external border programmes is transferred to Interreg programmes, efforts are now needed to make the general Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 more flexible. An amendment must allow ERDF funding earmarked for the external border programmes (Interreg NEXT programmes) to be transferred to the national regional and structural policy programmes. There is also an urgent need to look into whether Interreg Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 should be amended in addition to the general Regulation.

With the amendments to the Regulations, ERDF and Finnish national funding transferred from the Interreg NEXT programmes could be channelled via the AURA programme to reach those regions where Interreg NEXT programme funding is being cut because of the move to freeze cooperation with Russia. The AURA programme could be supplemented with a component supporting the internationalisation of the external border regions. This could be achieved through a separate integrated territorial investment strategy within the programme.

What steps does the Commission intend to take to amend the Regulations concerned?