

ANNEX 3: Do no significant harm screening

According to Art. 9 (4) CPR, the objectives of the programme shall take into account the horizontal "do no significant harm" (DNSH) principle. This documents screens the types of actions defined in the Interreg programme with a view to their potential to do significant harm according to any of the six environmental objectives set out in the Taxonomy Regulation.

1. Introduction

To respect the provisions of Art. 9 (4) CPR that the objectives of the Funds shall be pursued in line with the DNSH principle, Member States are responsible for the implementation of this principle throughout the programming period.

In accordance with the EU Taxonomy Regulation (EU) 2020/852, a dedicated screening shall be carried out during the programming phase and before the Commission adopts the programme in order to prevent the inclusion of activities or types of actions in the programmes that could do significant harm.

Art. 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation defines what constitutes significant harm according to any of the six environmental objectives set out in the Regulation:

1. An activity is considered to do significant harm to *climate change mitigation* if it leads to significant greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions;
2. An activity is considered to do significant harm to *climate change adaptation* if it leads to an increased adverse impact of the current climate and the expected future climate, on the activity itself or on people, nature or assets;
3. An activity is considered to do significant harm to the *sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources* if it is detrimental to the good status or the good ecological potential of bodies of water, including surface water and groundwater, or to the good environmental status of marine waters;
4. An activity is considered to do significant harm to the *circular economy*, including waste prevention and recycling, if it leads to significant inefficiencies in the use of materials or in the direct or indirect use of natural resources, or if it significantly increases the generation, incineration or disposal of waste, or if the long-term disposal of waste may cause significant and long-term environmental harm;
5. An activity is considered to do significant harm to *pollution prevention and control* if it leads to a significant increase in emissions of pollutants into air, water or land;
6. An activity is considered to do significant harm to the *protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems* if it is significantly detrimental to the good condition and resilience of ecosystems, or detrimental to the conservation status of habitats and species, including those of Union interest.

2. Methodology

The ex-ante compatibility with the DNSH principle under cohesion policy is to be ensured at the level of the definition of the types of actions in the programmes, which means that the

compliance with the DNSH principle is to be screened during the process of defining the types of actions in the programme.

For the 2021-2027 North Sea programme, the following specific objectives have been identified by the Commission to potentially constitute a risk to the DNSH principle:

- SO 1.1: Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies
- SO 2.2: Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein
- SO 2.3: Developing smart energy systems, grids and storage outside the Trans-European Energy Network (TEN-E)
- SO 3.1: Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

For these specific objectives, the compatibility with the DNSH principle is assessed and described in the table below. The actions funded under the remaining specific objectives are not expected to constitute a risk to the DNSH principle as they are not expected to have any significant negative environmental impact due to their nature. This means that in these instances an assessment is not necessary.

The European Commission sets out a clear approach to assessing the national Recovery and Resilience Plans (RRPs) under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) as to their compliance with the DNSH principle (2021/C 58/01). It is recommended to follow this approach, taking into account the legal framework for programming under the CPR (EGESIF_21-0025-00).

The methodology in the RRF DNSH technical guidance is a two-step approach: (1) screening, (2) substantive assessment. The screening filters the six environmental objectives to identify those that require a substantive assessment. If the latter is required, step 2 then provides a substantive DNSH assessment.

Besides this ex-ante screening, no obligation is laid down in the Cohesion Policy Regulations requiring a case-by-case assessment of compliance of each operation with the DNSH principle per se. As such, this screening is deemed sufficient as it complies with the requirements set out in the regulations.

The list of actions for each of the specific objectives in the table below is a summarised list of the suggested actions laid out in the Interreg Programme. The summarised list of actions supported for each objective can be found in the methodology paper that accompanies the Interreg Programme and describes and explains the methods for selecting and measuring indicators for programme achievement throughout the programme period. It should also be acknowledged that the lists of actions supported for the specific objectives described in the Interreg Programme are non-exhaustive and indicative, which further explains the use of a summarised list for screening purposes.

3. Screening

SO 1.1: Developing and enhancing	Under this specific objective, the following types of actions are supported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing and strengthening effective regional innovation ecosystems and fostering innovation capacity
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research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supporting the delivery of innovation by facilitating joint initiatives between innovation actors and by stimulating the development of new technologies/innovative solutions • supporting the exploitation of research outcomes, bringing research to the market and supporting the uptake of new technologies and solutions 			
	Please indicate which of the environmental objectives below require a substantive DNSH assessment	YES	NO	Justification if « NO » has been selected
	Climate change mitigation		x	<p>Under this SO, the programme will fund transnational cooperation actions to develop and enhance research and innovation capacity, support the uptake of advanced technologies and the creation of innovative products and services.</p> <p>The programme has limited financial resources and does not support large infrastructure projects. Instead, under SO 1.1 it will mainly support projects aimed at knowledge and technology sharing as well as capacity building and the facilitation of joint initiatives between innovation actors. The programme does not intend to carry out any type of large non-environmentally friendly infrastructure.</p> <p>Particular focus under this SO is on the challenges identified under the priority "Green transition". As such, it is expected that actions rather seek to reinforce sustainability and encourage the development and the uptake of new sustainable technologies and solutions. Encouraging regional research and innovation frameworks towards the green transition is expected to have positive impacts on the six environmental objectives covered by the Taxonomy Regulation.</p> <p>Overall, it can be concluded that the types of action under SO 1.1 are compatible with the DNSH principle, as they are not expected to have significant negative impacts on any of the six environmental objectives set out in the Taxonomy Regulation. As such, a further assessment is considered unnecessary.</p>
	Climate change adaptation		x	
	The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources		x	
	The circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling		x	
	Pollution prevention and control to air, water and land		x	
	The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems		x	

SO2.2: Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein	Under this specific objective, the following types of actions are supported:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing and piloting dual use concepts for offshore wind farms • implementing digital and cost-efficient smart maintenance solutions in the field of renewable energy • encouraging use of renewable energy by consumers 			
	Please indicate which of the environmental objectives below require a substantive DNSH assessment	YES	NO	Justification if « NO » has been selected
	Climate change mitigation		x	<p>Under this SO, the programme will fund transnational cooperation actions to develop and enhance renewable energy technologies that will contribute the reduction of carbon emissions.</p> <p>The programme has limited financial resources and does not support large infrastructure projects. Projects under SO 2.2 mainly support technology sharing, exchange of knowledge, and digital solutions within the field of renewable energy, including capacity building and the facilitation of joint initiatives between key stakeholders. The programme does not intend to carry out any type of large non-environmentally friendly infrastructure.</p> <p>This SO focuses on further advancing the green transition in the region in order to support sustainable development while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. As such, it is expected that actions rather seek to reinforce sustainability and the uptake of new sustainable technologies and solutions. Encouraging pilots and demonstrations will pave the way towards the green transition. This is expected to have positive impacts on the six environmental objectives covered by the Taxonomy Regulation.</p> <p>Overall, it can be concluded that the types of action under SO 2.2 are compatible with the DNSH principle, as they are not expected to have significant negative impacts on any of the six environmental objectives set out in the Taxonomy</p>
	Climate change adaptation		x	
	The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources		x	
	The circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling		x	
	Pollution prevention and control to air, water and land		x	
The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems		x		

				Regulation. As such, a further assessment is considered unnecessary.
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SO2.3: Developing smart energy systems, grids and storage outside the Trans-European Energy Network (TEN-E)	Under this specific objective, the following types of actions are supported:			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributing to the acceleration of the transition towards a more integrated energy system across the North Sea region • supporting testing of new methods to increase flexibility of power supply and distribution networks • facilitating energy system integration • supporting development of smart charging and vehicle-to-grid (V2G) services • helping develop new manufacturing techniques and applicability to battery technology 			
	Please indicate which of the environmental objectives below require a substantive DNSH assessment	YES	NO	Justification if « NO » has been selected
	Climate change mitigation		x	Under this SO, the programme will fund transnational cooperation actions to develop and increase storage capacity for various energy related carriers to be able to capture the full benefit of the energy being produced. The programme has limited financial resources and does not support large infrastructure projects. Projects under SO 2.3 mainly support management of electricity generation, technology sharing, and digital solutions within the field of smart energy and grids, including capacity building and the facilitation of joint initiatives between key stakeholders. The programme does not intend to carry out any type of large non-environmentally friendly infrastructure. This SO focuses on further advancing the green transition in the region in order to support sustainable development while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. As such, it is expected that actions rather seek to reinforce sustainability and the uptake of smart energy systems and technologies; smart grids and better use and management of batteries. Encouraging pilots and demonstrations will pave the way towards the green transition. This is expected to have positive impacts on the
	Climate change adaptation		x	
	The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources		x	
	The circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling		x	
	Pollution prevention and control to air, water and land		x	
The protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems		x		

				<p>six environmental objectives covered by the Taxonomy Regulation.</p> <p>Overall, it can be concluded that the types of action under SO 2.3 are compatible with the DNSH principle, as they are not expected to have significant negative impacts on any of the six environmental objectives set out in the Taxonomy Regulation. As such, a further assessment is considered unnecessary.</p>
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SO 3.1: Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	Under this specific objective, the following types of actions are supported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving protection of coasts, estuaries, rivers against erosion and storm surges by implementing Nature Based Solutions • flood resilience, including risk management • catchment management of groundwater and surface waters • ecosystem services in aquatic freshwaters • specific thematic fields monitoring, managing and preventing natural phenomenon triggered by climate change (such as forest-fires, land-slides in mountain areas, urban heat islands, increased nutrient leaching and invasive species etc.) 			
	Please indicate which of the environmental objectives below require a substantive DNSH assessment	YES	NO	Justification if « NO » has been selected
	Climate change mitigation		x	Under this SO, the programme will fund transnational cooperation actions to develop a long-term perspective to preserving the natural environment of the North Sea region and to protect societies from the adverse impact of climate change. The programme has limited financial resources and does not support large infrastructure projects. Projects under SO 3.1 mainly support the development of multifunctional, adaptable and nature based solutions that deliver sustainable solutions across the North Sea region, including capacity building and the facilitation of joint initiatives between key stakeholders. The programme does not intend to carry out any type of large non-environmentally friendly infrastructure. This SO addresses the North Sea region's need to develop measures to adapt to the effects of climate change while supporting
	Climate change adaptation		x	
	The sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources		x	
	The circular economy, including waste prevention and recycling		x	
	Pollution prevention and control to air, water and land		x	
The protection and restoration		x		

	of biodiversity and ecosystems		<p>the sustainable development of the region and taking into account environmental risks.</p> <p>As such, it is expected that actions rather seek to reinforce sustainability and the uptake of sustainable climate adaptation solutions and technologies. Encouraging pilots and demonstrations will pave the way towards a more resilient North Sea region. This is expected to have positive impacts on the six environmental objectives covered by the Taxonomy Regulation.</p> <p>Overall, it can be concluded that the types of action under SO 3.1 are compatible with the DNSH principle, as they are not expected to have significant negative impacts on any of the six environmental objectives set out in the Taxonomy Regulation. As such, a further assessment is considered unnecessary.</p>
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4. Conclusion

The programme has screened the types of actions proposed in the 2021-2027 North Sea Interreg Programme for specific objectives SO 1.1, SO 2.2, SO 2.3 and SO 3.1 as to their compliance with the DNSH principle. The conclusion is that they are not expected to have significant negative impacts on any of the six environmental objectives set out in the Taxonomy Regulation. As they are not expected to constitute a risk to the DNSH principle, a further assessment of their compatibility with the principle is considered unnecessary. The programme will support only activities that will do no significant harm according to environmental objectives within the meaning of Article 17 of the Taxonomy Regulation.