

# Post 2027 | Consultation Report

## 6. Greener Europe

14 January 2025

### Interreg for a Greener Europe

This report is part of Interact's [Post 2027 Consultation reports](#)

#### Overview

In 2021-2027 period, Interreg programmes were specifically tasked to focus on Policy Objective 2 (PO2) which was mandatory for programmes. They also were asked to focus financially on this topic. This decision became obvious, considering growing climate related challenges, but most importantly the capacity of Interreg of providing appropriate solutions through territorial cooperation, since its very beginning.

Building upon this mandate, it is now essential to explore how Interreg can effectively enhance its support for climate action and position itself as a vital tool within the EU for achieving its objectives in the upcoming programming period.

It is generally recognised that maintaining a strong emphasis on green challenges is a key priority. The perception of mandatory PO2 has generally been well received, as it helps sustain focus on climate related issues within Interreg. However, greater flexibility while ensuring consistency with territorial needs should be highlighted and enabled.

In this document we are considering all topics currently covered as specific objectives under PO2 - such as climate change adaptation, energy, water management, circular economy, biodiversity and nature protection, and sustainable urban mobility - this 'thematic menu' allows for addressing these challenges. Yet, there is a growing need for a more integrated approach at territorial and sectoral levels, and within POs. Additionally, there is a call for simplification and adaptability to avoid limiting the approach within constrained frameworks.

It is crucial to continue supporting climate related actions in regions where awareness is already high, even amidst security and economic concerns. Achieving green transition must go hand in hand with social fairness and a competitive economy, highlighting the need for a just transition and a place-based approach. Interreg provides solutions that positively impact citizens' daily lives. Engaging local communities, stakeholders, and the wider public is essential for them to embrace these solutions.

This paper aims to explore further the various options that would enhance support for Interreg programmes in delivering green solutions tailored to their respective territories and addressing the interconnected challenges they face.

## Methodology

The information serving as basis for this document has been collected through various events and activities:

- Interreg survey gathering reflections on current and future perspectives of Greener Europe (August-September 2024)<sup>1</sup>
- Interreg Knowledge Fair 2024 surveys and sessions (March 2024)
- Interact facilitated networks and events, such as the Greener Europe Thematic Community, providing support, visibility, exchange and keeping track of Interreg programmes' development in the field. Interact webinars (October 2024, December 2024), workshops organised by national authorities (e.g. France May 2024)
- Harvesting event, 25 November 2024, Brussels (including Slido annexes<sup>2</sup>)

## What is working well for Interreg programmes in addressing climate related challenges in their area?

Interreg programmes have **extensive experience** in addressing climate-related challenges, having supported climate solutions for several programming periods. Climate change is **directly connected to specific territorial needs**, and as such, it is considered one of the most prominent Interreg topics. Making it a mandatory PO and tackling it as a topic itself has helped to sustain this focus.

Strong stakeholder involvement has been integral to ensuring that the solutions developed are adapted and well-suited to local needs, with dedicated efforts in **stakeholder engagement and capacity building** within programme teams, including expert groups and thematic communities.

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<sup>1</sup> See Annex 1 – Survey - Interreg for a Greener Europe Post-27

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 2 – Guiding questions (Slido) Greener Europe session, Harvesting Event November 2024

Climate action has also been embedded as a priority in programme strategies, contributing to a long-term vision for sustainable impact and legacy in the programme area.

**Partnerships** are essential to deliver green solutions, ensuring relevant stakeholders are on board, and **strengthening the role of public authorities**. This involvement is key to the awareness and effective uptake of the developed solutions.

In operational terms, project results such as action plans serve as roadmaps for tackling climate issues at local and regional levels, while pilot actions provide tested solutions ready for adoption beyond the initial partnerships. A **result-oriented approach** guides these efforts, with territorial impact as key criteria, responding to clear indicators to measure change. In certain areas, programmes have adapted their delivery models to local needs, with both small-scale and strategic large infrastructure projects making significant contributions.

In this sense, the future Interreg framework **should retain the current options available for programmes** to deliver practical, locally adapted solutions. Smaller projects should be funded to deliver **local level experimentation of climate/green actions**, with partners capable of supporting innovation, while strategic, larger scale projects should be supported to deliver **regulatory/governance related projects**, with organisations capable of making strategic policy decisions on mitigation and adaptation.

Building on experience from seasoned Interreg partners, as well as expanding to new stakeholders and beneficiaries will equally ensure Interreg funding increases its local reach and expected impact. It also helps ensure **continuity of the impact** of the delivered solutions, especially in organisations where political shifts and personnel changes are frequent. Interreg's power remains first and foremost in territoriality.

Programmes are generally satisfied with the current level of quality of green projects:

- PO2 does not pose any specific challenge in terms of absorption, **evidencing interest** from stakeholders, and the **need for substantial investment in green solutions** achieved through cooperation<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Although it supports climate action as a whole, requirements for financial focus, as outlined in the Interreg regulation (Article 15.1 mandates at least 60% allocation to PO2 for A, B, D and combined with PO4 for internal land borders), cannot always be easily transposed in all Interreg contexts, as meeting such broad requirements is challenging to implement in certain areas (e.g. external).

- **Thematic platforms**/communities/clusters and **capitalisation pathways** enhance transfer of results to a broader audience and increase policy uptake.
- It is important to clarify programme expectations, especially in terms of indicators, to better **guide beneficiaries and increase relevance**.
- Better selection criteria to be developed to help identify **truly sustainable projects**.

It is important to maintain a geographical approach - as many funding opportunities exist for cities, they should be developed further within Interreg, highlighting the added-value of solutions achieved through cooperation. In the meantime, Interreg has a potential and responsibility to **support all territories in their diversity and specificity**. This is to be considered both from the perspective of living areas e.g. islands, sea and coastal areas across borders, rural areas, small municipalities, particularly from places considered as “left behind”, and regarding natural environment, sea and river basins, and biodiversity.

### Interreg’s contribution to the wider EU green policy framework

Projects clearly align with thematic targets and the wider EU green policy framework – within this “top-down” approach, Interreg serves as a tool through which the EU implements its policies. This is also reflected by Interreg embracing UN Sustainable Development Goals. This aspect can be reinforced, based on current practices by some programmes, to **highlight tangible contributions**.

Alignment also means being realistic about what can be achieved. It may be difficult to balance regional priorities and contexts which do not always align. Therefore this “bottom-up” approach is also crucial to highlight Interreg’s unique approach and added-value across European territories in all their diversity. Projects bring **place-based solutions as evidence to solve bigger challenges** ensuring a just transition, especially in regions with social-economic disparities.

This is a credit to Interreg’s true impact and added-value – with modest funding, it achieves big impact increasing capacity of (small) public authorities to operate in a greener way.

### What is important to keep focus on when addressing green related challenges in Interreg?

- Boost the capacity of public authorities, as holders of the solutions, to solve the challenges they face.
- Keep Interreg close to the people, connected to the ground – help motivate citizens, when they see local action and impact of EU programmes.
- Make the most of the governance approach provided by ISO and consider applying it more to Green, aimed more at impact of solutions fostering compliance and contribution to EU Directives in the field of green agenda. This could prove particularly interesting when targeting specific

strategic issues at regional/national level, requiring commitment from the relevant policy levels to address regulatory misalignment across borders.

### What needs to be improved to better respond to climate related challenges?

Topics covered as part of current PO2 naturally call for **integrated and cross-sectoral approaches allowing comprehensive climate-related actions**, to be addressed in the new regulation.

This is apparent when looking at the current allocation per Specific Objective (SO), the majority of programmes having selected SO2.4 (70) and SO2.7 (65) allowing more comprehensive action and focus shift in implementation (conversely becoming a “catch-all”, within which many different topics are addressed, including those covered by other narrower SOs). As such, there is a need to increase the capacity of adaptation to new climate reality and prominent challenges (e.g. water management, disaster risk management) - as such, **flexibility and adaptability** are key factors to **better respond to increasing recurrence of climate risks, natural disasters, and changing conditions**, such as heatwaves, wildfires, flooding (ability to re-prioritise).

Reviewing the current thematic menu within PO2, there is a need to simplify SOs – no artificial division (i.e. energy) and broaden to climate-related challenges (i.e. adaptation measures, disaster risk prevention and management, resilience, nature-based solutions) as well as supporting circular economy approaches.

Regarding **partnerships**, the participation and **capacity of key enablers/implementers of local solutions**, e.g. municipalities and regions, should be sustained and strengthened, as well as providers of green technologies solutions (in particular SMEs). Thematic experts (universities, sectoral agencies) also play a crucial role in developing and promoting these solutions. Finally, civil society and NGOs act as the catalyst/ultimate beneficiaries of the Interreg results.

Attracting private investment should help partnerships complement and improve the jointly developed solutions and capitalisation of results, including innovative climate finance mechanisms. Therefore, the **participation of the private sector** in Interreg projects should be facilitated. Interreg projects may also be regarded as effective tools to support climate related SME development particularly from less developed areas.

Several programmes have been able to boost their capacity to **transfer relevant results**, and implement capitalisation mechanisms to support reach into territories, in particular aiming at local policies - this should be supported and reinforced. It is important to recognise specific approaches corresponding to Interreg strand levels for better adapted solutions, considering **cross-border and transnational challenges and opportunities**, essential to ensure engagement at the local/regional level in experimentation and strategic approaches to climate action.

Ultimately, climate actions are often **defined at national level** – as such, Interreg should focus on the response it provides, through its role acting at local/regional level on shared natural resources,

across borders in a **more systemic approach**. For example, water management (river/sea basins) is a key area where regulatory frameworks and the range of actors at different levels should be aligned. Cooperation projects are essential to help understand the framework, different **competencies, roles and stakeholders across borders**, data sharing in the field of climate action, and thus, to act efficiently. Such common understanding and recommendations for proactive cooperation can feed into better implementation of the regulatory framework. **Governance approaches through ISO** can provide a dedicated structure to achieve this, as well as further initiatives to bring cross-border results to the transnational level.

Regarding the **impact of green projects**, it is currently difficult to closely and continuously monitor the environmental impact throughout the project life cycle. Programmes should be supported to monitor and assess the effectiveness/impact of funded solutions in the area in the longer term.

The current indicators measure what Interreg projects are achieving but not their environmental impact, which could be worth considering or help specifying. For example, they could target identified local needs which require coordinated approaches (e.g. water quality or flooding risk of a border river/sea), or a global environmental issue with a locally specific character or solution (e.g. biodiversity in the area). This would also help beneficiaries understand the connection of their action towards indicators in a more tangible way.

Taking stock of the current framework, governance and capitalisation of results (through ISO1), as well as Operations of Strategic Importance could focus on climate resilience, while addressing also other POs.

### **Climate action as transversal policy, element of the horizontal principle on sustainability**

Climate resilience and climate change adaptation must be considered as transversal policy or even as elements of the horizontal principle on sustainability: a call for useful, **tangible links between climate resilience and other POs** supporting awareness-raising and better integration into projects. Policy objectives should be sufficiently broad for programmes to take into account climate resilience and adaptation in a comprehensive and integrated way in all topics. Precisely, a more horizontal approach across all POs, and as **horizontal activity in all projects**, should be considered e.g. specific assessment criteria on how sustainability is addressed by the project; through dedicated activities defined at programme/Interreg level in all POs.

The Do No Significant Harm (DNSH) principle is considered as mere (minimum) formality and/or additional layer (“tick the box”) without highlighting or encouraging positive contribution, especially in the context of Interreg - such principle should be reflected to further incentivise positive environmental impact. Several programmes have taken great steps towards achieving more **sustainability and environment protection, to be integrated “by design”** in all project activities. These programmes have developed mechanisms and guidance to support projects in being more

sustainable in practice, e.g. carbon footprint monitoring, green procurement solutions, travel guidelines, green events...<sup>4</sup>

Such initiatives should be taken up as model, to **provide a necessary framework and guidance on the integration of sustainability in the way Interreg programmes operate**. This was confirmed during the consultation phase (Harvesting event) where 90% of participants called for a systematic approach to sustainability with practical guidelines, along with a strengthening of the regulations (keeping in mind the principle of simplification, not implying additional reporting, but bringing meaningful improvements in operation processes).

### **Interreg building synergies with other EU funds for climate action and resilience**

Considering the vast offer for funding on climate action at EU level, it is crucial to promote **complementarity** in selecting thematics and actions, instead of overlapping. In this context, Interreg's knowledge and experience should be duly recognised and valued as a springboard for new collaborations across programme areas and funds. As decisions on financing frameworks will soon start, it is now time to consider **working together on the drafting of the next programmes**, in particular HORIZON and LIFE.

The Commission DGs and units play a central role in this context. More awareness and coordination are strongly needed. Ideally, the synergies at fund level are mirrored at Commission level and similarly at national level. Strong efforts are needed to align mainstream and Interreg objectives and ensure cooperation is recognised and valued.

At programme level, initiatives around **capitalisation activities** should serve **as inspiration** for this coordination in practice – joint calls within Interreg and with other EU funds, shared assessment criteria, collaborative efforts at programme and project level, e.g. supported by thematic communities/platforms.

Focus may also be on synergies **across Interreg programmes and strands**, as a starting point. **Macro-regional strategies**, in particular, should be better exploited, and in line with territorial needs, implementing cross-cutting projects.

Also worth considering, exploring partnerships with organisations and initiatives at EU level that are supporting local authorities in achieving climate goals such as Horizon's Climate-neutral and Smart

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<sup>4</sup> For more details, please refer to the Consultation Report dedicated to Sustainability in Interreg programmes.

Cities Mission (e.g. Netzero Cities), or Covenant of Mayors, whose local action plans are aimed as outputs in Interreg projects.

### What would be your vision for the future? Key messages

1. All topics currently covered by PO2 are central to Interreg's mission: Tackling climate related challenges through territorial cooperation should **remain a top priority for Interreg**, with a focus on **practical, locally-adapted solutions** that address mitigation and particularly adaptation challenges.
2. **Flexibility, simplification, and integration needed:** Interreg programmes must be able to develop **more integrated approaches**, reducing fragmentation in objectives and allowing for more cross-sectoral solutions to climate related challenges.
3. Collaboration is key: Effective **stakeholder engagement and collaboration** across borders are essential for delivering solutions that are **impactful, sustainable, and replicable**. Interreg should be seen as the main tool for the delivery of these solutions **across borders**.
4. **Stronger synergies with other funds:** Future Interreg initiatives should be better aligned with broader green policies, and as such ensure that territorial cooperation complements and enhances the EU's overall environmental objectives.



## Annex 1

### Survey - Interreg for a Greener Europe Post-27

During summer 2024, a survey invited programmes to reflect on the current framework of delivering green solutions and possible steps for Interreg to efficiently support efforts against climate change and be regarded as a key instrument within the EU to achieve this goal in the future programming period.

We are considering here all topics currently covered as specific objectives under PO2 (climate change adaptation, energy, water, circular economy, nature protection, mobility...)

The responses are used here to explore further the different options that would better support Interreg programmes in delivering climate resilience solutions for their territory and citizens.

Respondents: 21 Interreg programmes (MA/JS)

- of which 14 CBC (strand A), 5 TN (strand B), 1 IR (strand C), 1 OMR (strand D)

**1. What has worked well for your programme in addressing climate related challenges for your area? Please provide a brief description of key achievements (from successful projects over to fostering, strategic considerations, the view on impact at programme level etc.)**

- Cooperation on risk management with a lot of excellent projects.
- It has been relatively easy to get projects working on energy (renewable, efficiency etc etc), i.e. fighting/reducing climate change. It has been somewhat harder to get projects related to climate adaptation.
- Interreg Europe started covering **climate change (as a topic in itself)** only during the current programming period 2021/2027. The first projects addressing this topic started in March 2023, which means that no policy improvements (or very few, if any) have been reported yet. Therefore, at this stage we can't provide much data about the actual impact of our projects on the territory. However, we can confirm this is **the most popular topic among our beneficiaries**, representing the 22% of the total number of projects (44) approved under the PO 'Greener Europe' between the 1st and 2nd call **of the current programming period**. It is the preferred specific objective only followed by 'Circular Economy'. Within this specific objective, the **3 more relevant sub-topics tackled are adaptation, nature based solutions and resilience and depopulation**. All the above also confirms that **integrating this one** within the topics directly tackled by the programme was **positive for the programme strategy in the medium/long term**.
- The programme objectives and project selection criteria have worked well to address the challenges in the Aurora programme area. **The environmental impact is closely and continuously monitored throughout the projects. This is done through the project reporting system and in combination with an ongoing programme evaluation.**  
The Aurora programme generally has a good mix of projects within PO2 - A greener Europe, however, **we would like to see more applications that aim for the specific objective Sustainable mobility.**  
Some intervention areas are more popular than others. However, the programme has approved projects in all selected Specific Objectives within PO2. Since the Managing Authority continues to follow up on the programme's implementation, we can **make minor changes or reprioritizations** to highlight areas where we see that we need applications.
- One of the best projects for the prevention of the environment in the last programme time was Ofidia, led by the Euro-Mediterranean Centre on Climate Change in Lecce. Has created a platform for the prevention and monitoring of forest fires in the Apulia Region and the Epirus Region in Greece. The use of sensors, the Tree Talker Fire installed on trees, and the use of cameras, drones

and weather stations help the Civil Protection and the Fire Corps to monitor the risk of forest fires, control the state of fire expansion and efficiently organise the Fire Corps' interventions.

- CENTRAL EUROPE addresses the climate related challenges from different angles, notably in the following programme specific objectives: Supporting the energy transition to a climate-neutral central Europe (SO 2.1), Increasing the resilience to climate change risks in central Europe (SO 2.2) climate adaption, Greening urban mobility in central Europe (SO 2.5) and Improving transport connections of rural and peripheral regions in central Europe (SO 3.1). Among the successful initiatives, **pilot actions work well** where projects develop and test new solutions, processes and methods that are **ready for adoption by other institutions beyond the original partnerships**. Additionally, **developing and implementing new strategies drives progress at the policy level, while action plans serve as roadmaps for addressing climate challenges at local and regional levels. Strong stakeholder involvement ensures tailored climate change mitigation and adaptation solutions, fosters collaboration, and enhances commitment to climate initiatives, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes.**
- The more flexible the programme is, the better the possibility for realising/implementing projects with regard to climate related challenges.
- The area covered by the MAC programme is heavily exposed to climate change. The three outermost European regions (Acores, Madeira and Canary Islands) had some experience in addressing climate change challenges, and this experience has been shared, adapted and tested in the African partner countries. This knowledge sharing has proven to be enriching for all partners. One good example is the project ClimaRisk, aimed to improve resilience to climate change through technological, integrated, mobile and easy-to-implement solutions for the supply of water, energy and refrigeration.
- The Programme so far as regards the 21-27 Programme period implemented 1st call for small-scale projects and standard projects. Climate related challenges are tackled through priority 2: Green and resilient shared environment (SO1 Climate change adaptation; SO2 **protection of Nature and Biodiversity**). The priority 2 showed the largest participation and has the largest number of financed Projects of the Call, **showing a significant interest of the stakeholders** from the Programme area for participating in green and resilient projects. The Programme managed to reach the key beneficiaries for addressing the climate change challenges in the programme area.
- Starting with mapping the needs in the region, then applying the following criteria to the needs: what can and should we do in cross-border cooperation? Where can our funds bring **an impact**? What do other funds do vs **what is our niche**? What measurable results can we achieve in this time, with this amount of money. We identified clear output **indicators** and result indicators which allow us to measure this change. The programme wants to make a change and create an impact beyond research, joint strategies and plans = **result orientation**
- We have seen a relatively good uptake of funds in the themes related to climate related challenges. It is, however, too early to comment on the achievements of projects.
- **Numerous policy guidelines** were developed throughout the projects, such as Recommendations for strengthening environmental sustainability in the ecosystem for innovation in healthy food & lifestyles in the Atlantic Area. The **design of action plans** such as the Atlantic Arc Ocean Energy 5–10-year roadmap for the Marine Renewable Energy (MRE) sector.
- **it took quite some time for the stakeholders to come with the first project applications in our green priority as it took for us to become more familiar with the topic; that was essential for good advice to stakeholders and for management roles; now there are good utilizations of fund resources in this priority;**
- Within the priority ENVIRONMENT, 44 regular projects are in the stage of contracting. In this priority Grant Contracts signed for 2 **strategic large infrastructure projects** with total budget of 12,5 MEUR on the following topics: - Creation of firefighting network in Carpathian region; - Sustainable water management on PL/UA borderland.

- The Programme has had **successful projects** addressing climate-related challenges **already in several programme periods**. The climate change **effects have been more and more the focus** of the successful projects working for better status of Baltic Sea waters. Climate effects are centrally considered for instance in projects working on the reduction of nutrients in the Baltic Sea. Projects have also managed to **build capacities of authorities on local and regional level** in climate-resilient wastewater and groundwater management, reuse of water, and taking into account storms and the sea level rise in city and coastal planning. Nature-based solutions are a new approach to adaptation measures in projects in parallel taking care of the well being of citizens. Projects have advanced approaches to circular economy working on cross-sectoral processes in the cities, using procurement as a tool and on industrial symbiosis and creating conditions for circular product design. In the current programme, a **circular approach** to food supply chains in different contexts is a focus of many projects. In order to reduce CO2 emissions the capacity of local and regional authorities, NGOs, and companies have increased in developing greener urban mobility, efficient energy solutions and the use of renewable energies.
- According to the accompanying evaluation carried out for 14-20, in terms of climate change cross-border cooperation in the programme is already well advanced and can therefore effectively address issues arising from climate change, such as disaster risk assessment and management, or flood protection. The programme **contributes to the stability of regional ecosystems**. The projects contribute to improved knowledge of the ecosystems themselves, their challenges and potential solutions. **Coordinated approaches across the border are developed and measures to preserve the ecosystems are implemented. Awareness-raising measures are part of the projects.**
- In the process of selecting the intervention logic for the programme (relevant RSO), we found it useful the **establishment of expert focus groups** for Greener Europe. Based on absorption capacity analysis and **potential risk/barriers we have identified supported activities**. As a result, two specific objectives under PO2 were selected: RSO2.4 Climate change adaptation and RSO2.7 Nature protection and biodiversity. Supported activities are aimed at **a more coordinated approach** to environmental protection in the Czech-Polish border area. In the RSO Climate change adaptation, we have announced 2 calls of proposals. So far, we have 7 projects approved which starting to be implemented. The first call for RSO Nature protection and biodiversity was launched in November 2023. As of today, 12 projects have been submitted and are currently in the evaluation process. For this reason there is no concrete feedback yet.
- **small** (up to 50.000 EUR) and medium sized projects (up to 200.000 EUR) address climate related challenges best, standard projects are weaker

## 2. What needs to be improved to better respond to climate challenges in your programme area?

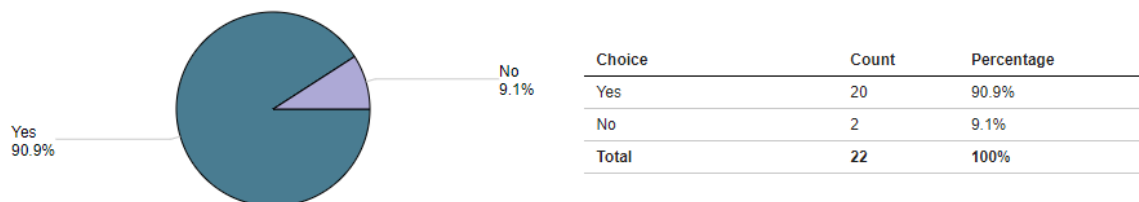
- More systematic approach with joint agreements and risk management plans across national borders.
- When writing a new programme (for period 2028-2035), **reduce the number of specific targets** related to climate change and **energy. The artificial division** between renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy systems should be taken away. One energy-related specific target is enough! Very important!
- Based on the topics addressed by the projects in this field (and as indicated above) the **main climate-related challenges are mostly related to** adaptation measures and risk prevention, nature based solutions to compensate greenhouse emissions, preservation and restoration of natural sites and improving environmental and socioeconomic resilience.
- The climate challenges are **highly prioritised** in the programme area, and actors who operate here need to **find ways to adapt to the new reality**. There is a need to **increase the knowledge of the actors who are active in the field** in various ways. Although many different types of actors are active in various projects within the programme, we see that **increased representation from, for example, municipalities** would have been good for increasing the effects of the investments

made within the programme. One reason why it looks like this may be due to the fact that we are a sparsely populated geographical area with smaller players and municipalities that have limited resources to participate actively in projects.

- More attention on water (saving, recycle, etc)
- From our perspective, climate change challenges within the programme area still remain relevant, and the current IP effectively addresses them. Among others, we would highlight **enhancing climate governance, better coordinating financing instruments to address limited resources and improving policies and their practical implementation on the ground**
- **Interreg programmes have a limited budget to tackle all climate issues** in our programme area. That is why **soft cooperation projects** can be implemented mainly. Only the **operational ERDF programmes** have the power/budget to support large investments in infrastructure in this field. Therefore, Interreg should get **more EU budget to support larger cooperation projects** to respond to climate challenges in a better way.
- Although the Programme reached a consistent number of applications and financed the most valuable Projects tackling challenges emerging in the Programme area due to climate change the **effectiveness of proposed actions needs a thorough valuation in order to assess the increase in resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters** in the Programme area.
- The horizontal understanding and approach. **Different strategy goals must be aligned so that all support net-zero and/or climate risk mitigation.** Strategies (such as Macro-regional strategies) must be refined into action plans from which the potential projects can draw content
- In our programme area, climate change happens much faster than in the rest of Europe, affecting indigenous peoples' livelihoods. Green solutions such as rare earth minerals for electric car batteries, or wind parks are, for example exploiting traditional herding lands. What would need to be improved is **more acknowledgement of indigenous knowledge and indigenous rights in the European scientific and policy-making community to find climate solutions that are truly sustainable.**
- Tight focus on more specific challenges **better adapted to the different strands**
- As **climate actions are defined at the national level**, Interreg can only intervene on a local level for example in the management of rivers, natural parks...
- **Reinforce the capacity to transfer the relevant results** obtained by several Interreg Projects to the territories. **Increase visibility near policymakers** and stakeholders.
- By now, it's still necessary that the actors on both sides of the border get to **know each other and their needs.** Therefore, nothing else is needed right now.
- Currently, the **regulation is limiting integrated and cross-sectoral approaches allowing comprehensive climate related actions.** The objectives are defined too narrow and focus on one aspect only, and the required thematic concentration limits the combining of topics. **More commitment and capacities in the countries and regions are needed to take over and implement creative solutions developed in the projects.**
- Needs & further actions as identified during programming:
  - cooperation on practical climate policy;
  - qualitatively developing and deepening cooperation on cross-border risk management such as fire protection, rescue services and civil protection;
  - continuation of cooperation particularly to promote and broaden pilot implementation strategies for improving water quality in the border area;
  - protection of the green infrastructure in the border region;
  - improving the accessibility of green infrastructure and natural heritage for recreational purposes;
  - transfer of knowledge gained from individual activities;
  - **longer-term monitoring of the success of the area protection measures;**
  - further supporting the conservation of biological diversity in the border area with both physical and non-physical protection measures.

- focus on small scale projects

### 3. Are you satisfied with the current level of quality/relevance/impact of green projects?

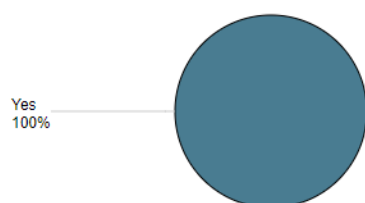


#### How could it be improved?

- At the moment, we can see that we have good projects that focus on the issues that exist within the programme area. But if we break down the applications and approved projects into intervention areas, we see a clear picture that **some areas are more popular than others. The reason for this may be that some of the intervention areas are too specific and narrow, and that the applications are not focused specifically on these intervention areas.**
- Some improvements can be made in areas such as **leveraging additional funds, increasing policy uptake, and enhancing the transfer of results to a broader audience.** These adjustments would further strengthen the impact of green projects.
- All partners share an interest in this priority, which receives the highest allocation of funds. Capitalising on the results not only at every programme level but also at the EU and even international levels would be essential for more visibility and impact.
- There is always a need for **more concrete actions for increased impact.** Keeping the focus on results on the project level, and **having pathways (platform and capitalisation etc) to propose policy changes on a bigger scale -> impact**
- During the quality assessment, it was evident that many projects were of lower quality in terms of project design. It is necessary to **properly guide the beneficiaries in order to better articulate their project and to focus on reaching project partners who have the necessary knowledge and experience for designing higher quality projects.** Also, within the framework of implementing the first call for small-scale projects, the program recognized relevant partners with knowledge and capacity. These partners will be specially approached in order to encourage them to apply in the second call and thus ensure a higher quality of the projects.
- What could be useful is **better selection criteria to identify truly sustainable projects across all POs,** rather than just projects in the green priority, some of which have little impact.
- The transference of good results to the territories. The visibility. **The promotion of chains of investment with other policy pools, more oriented to infrastructures.**
- **Additional work with project beneficiaries/applicants on clarification of the measurement methodology of the indicators.**
- **Stronger engagement of local and regional authorities** always increases the impact of the projects. We need to **more carefully look for the Interreg niche in the energy topics, considering that it is high on the political agenda** of the countries and there are several funding sources for that.
- **Increase cooperation across programmes** and policy circles.

- Unfortunately, we do not yet have concrete project implementation experience here. However, it can be assumed that compared to the 2014-2020 programme there will be a relatively significant shift in the contribution of the project to environmental improvement or sustainability. In the RSO Nature protection and biodiversity, projects have been submitted that are directly aimed at nature conservation, care of natural resources and pollution reduction. For these projects, the project evaluation will take place shortly. However, it can be expected that these projects will show a high level of support for environmental protection and also have a significant positive impact on promoting environmental sustainability. At the stage of project implementation/approval, it is necessary to focus, in particular, on compliance with the established conditions relating to the environment and the sustainability of the environment during the implementation phase. At the same time, it is advisable to take into account any comments/issues/examples of good practice from the implementation into the next calls or the Programme in the period 2027+.

#### 4. Are you satisfied with the partnerships delivering green Interreg projects? Are you attracting the right organisations to deliver solutions for your programme area?



Choice	Count	Percentage
Yes	21	100%
No	0	0%
Total	21	100%

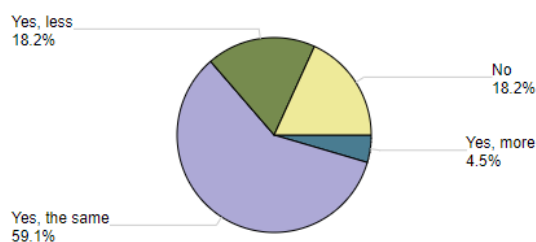
#### How could it be improved?

- Thanks to already huge effort and commitment from programme teams
- We are extremely satisfied. The vast majority of our partners are policy responsible organisations in charge of the policies to be improved or changed. This is the ideal beneficiary for Interreg Europe and **the type of organisation the programme needs on board for the projects.**
- Many of the actors and stakeholders who are relevant and active in the programme area are represented in projects. So, no direct improvement is needed.
- Stronger, further and continued involvement of local, regional, and national authorities** in cooperative projects would further enhance the effectiveness of delivering solutions in our programme area.
- Many universities and research institutes of the three outermost regions and of the African countries have been involved. However, there is a **need for private investment that cannot be achieved in the framework of Interreg.** That lack is hampering the capitalisation of the results. Attracting private investment at the EU and international level would definitely help the partnerships to improve the jointly developed solutions.
- SMEs are less represented in partnerships** of projects related to green topics. In the future, attention could be focused on reaching and engaging these types of organizations.
- The programme could set **more specific eligibility rules for different priorities.** Currently we see that **research organisations are overrepresented** compared to their ability to bring results. This is, however, something that **each programme should analyse** and tackle through their own rules.



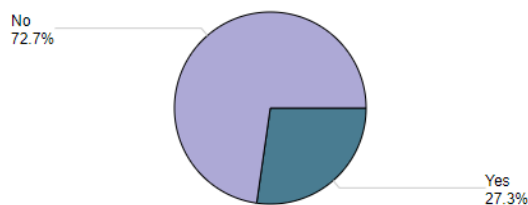
- To better understand and apply transnational methodologies for a better transferring of results into territories to **go further than local objectives and partnerships. Better coordination between ETC, EC thematic programmes and regional programmes**
- Commitment of municipalities and protected areas, schools
- With joint efforts with the Programme countries, we **strengthened the role of local and regional authorities in the projects**. By this the **share of research organisations was reduced in the projects in comparison to the partners with a mandate to implement the actions**. We will further work on this successful approach.

**5. Should “green” be linked to a minimum allocation of funds in programmes (currently as per Article 15.1, at least 60% to PO2 for A, B, D, and combined with PO4 for A internal land borders)?**



Choice	Count	Percentage
Yes, more	1	4.5%
Yes, the same	13	59.1%
Yes, less	4	18.2%
No	4	18.2%
Total	22	100%

**6. Does PO2 in comparison to other POs pose any specific challenge in terms of absorption? If so which one?**



Choice	Count	Percentage
Yes	6	27.3%
No	16	72.7%
Total	22	100%

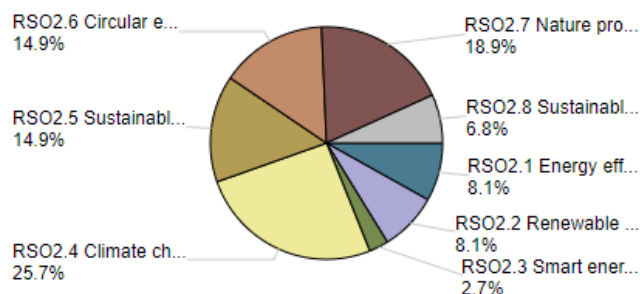
#### Please comment

- The **interventions** connected to the specific objectives are often **too specific**, so it's hard to fit projects within them. Some of the topics that the interventions focus on is too narrow and does not always fit the issues that exist in the northern parts of Sweden, Norway and Finland.
- **There are no issues with fund absorption**. There is strong interest from stakeholders and applicants, with high-quality projects to select from that deliver tangible results on the ground.
- All priorities present the same issues related to the absorption of funds
- The positive challenge that it is a **very popular PO**, with lots of applications.

**7. Out of the current Specific Objectives, which one(s) do you consider the most relevant? (Please select at least one)**

## 7. Out of the current Specific Objectives, which one(s) do you consider the most relevant? (Please select at least one)

View as [Pie Chart](#) | [Bar Chart](#)



From 22 submission(s) there were 22 response(s)

Choice	Count	Percentage
RSO2.1 Energy efficiency	6	8.1%
RSO2.2 Renewable energy	6	8.1%
RSO2.3 Smart energy systems	2	2.7%
RSO2.4 Climate change adaptation	19	25.7%
RSO2.5 Sustainable water	11	14.9%
RSO2.6 Circular economy	11	14.9%
RSO2.7 Nature protection and biodiversity	14	18.9%
RSO2.8 Sustainable urban mobility	5	6.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100%</b>

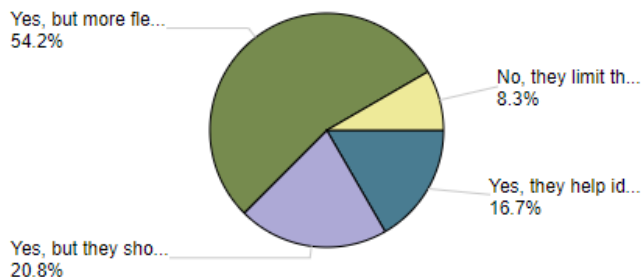
### Please comment

- The selected ones are the most relevant in the programme area, considering the territorial challenges, target groups and stakeholders
- The three SO on energy should be merged into one
- RSO2.1: The relevance relates to the challenge of many regions in central Europe which remain dependent on fossil fuels with GHG emissions above the EU average, facing disparities in energy efficiency and renewable energy use, making it difficult to meet EU 2030 energy targets and climate objectives, necessitating a transformation of their energy systems to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.
- Since there are several participating regions, each of which has their own development strategies, the focus can differ between the regions. This means that the focus can change over time depending on how well the specific goals fit into the development strategies of the programme area's various regions.
- Discrepancy between MA/JS and member states opinion
- Flexibility to be ensured, as all are needed

## 8. Does the current breakdown by specific objectives make sense? Do they help you tackle green related challenges? (Please select at least one)



View as [Pie Chart](#) | [Bar Chart](#)



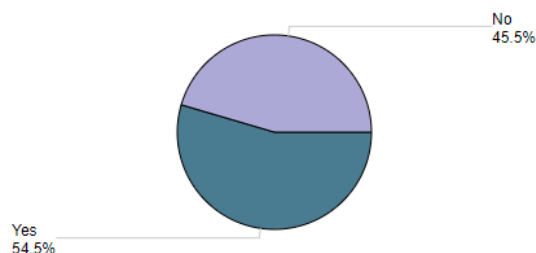
From 22 submission(s) there were 22 response(s)

Choice	Count	Percentage
Yes, they help identify/categorise/narrow the target action of projects	4	16.7%
Yes, but they should be fewer/broader	5	20.8%
Yes, but more flexibility is required to allow focus shift in implementation	13	54.2%
No, they limit the action of projects too much	2	8.3%
No, they are artificially selected/irrelevant/arbitrary	0	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### Please comment

- RSO2.8 Sustainable urban mobility, for example, is **not really adapted to the conditions** that exist in a sparsely populated area in which the Aurora programme operates.
- The current breakdown of specific energy objectives (RSO2.1, RSO2.2, RSO2.3) could be streamlined by **merging them into a single, broader energy SO**. This would enhance coherence and focus, making it easier to address interconnected energy challenges comprehensively.
- Each programme must **build on its regional needs and strategies**
- Some SOs are very narrow, and climate change adaptation is very wide. **This ends up being the catch-all for most projects, even if they address very different topics.**
- **Many specific objectives are, in reality cross cutting objectives, and should be tackled as such**
- Currently, the regulation is **limiting integrated and cross-sectoral approaches allowing comprehensive climate related actions**. The objectives are defined too narrow and focusing on one aspect only and **the required thematic concentration limits the combining of topics**.
- Sometimes, it is not so clear whether R&D-Projects are better classified under PO1 or PO2.

#### 9. Do the common Interreg indicators sufficiently reflect the reality of green projects funded by Interreg?



Choice	Count	Percentage
Yes	12	54.5%
No	10	45.5%
Total	22	100%

From 22 submission(s) there were 22 response(s)

### Please comment

- Yes, the common indicators sufficiently reflect the reality of green projects, as they **cover various types of outputs like pilots/solutions/strategies**. While not exclusively related to green topics, these **indicators can be aggregated at the SO level to reveal the thematic orientation** of the projects.
- As **common Interreg indicators do not specify outputs or results in Green projects** but only 'pilot actions/joint solutions'; for example, without going into thematic areas, **it is not possible to differentiate what has been achieved in this area**.
- The **existing Interreg indicators are not thematic**, so they **do not capture green achievements, such as energy saved, CO2 reductions**, etc.
- Not really, because **we used general Interreg indicators**, e.g. no. of organisations, which work together; only one indicator was defined by programme: areas on which joint activities for the conservation and restoration of biodiversity are implemented.
- **In our understanding, the indicators should measure the aspects that the Interreg is good at i.e. capacity building and cooperation, rather than specific thematic aspects**. Therefore we are satisfied with the indicators.

### 10. What types of intervention would you add to reflect the reality of green projects funded by Interreg?

- **More joint strategies - more joint policy making**
- We are looking forward to putting into practice is more consolidated follow-up system to monitor the policy learning platform peer-review's outcomes. The idea is to **follow-up on their results to ensure policy improvement and regional impact**.
- Maybe not add but **broaden the interventions since projects can be connected to several interventions**. How to tackle needs and problems also **differs within the EU**. One should bear in mind that there is a difference between urban areas in Europe and sparsely populated arctic areas.
- Making research linked with territories before the projects developments
- Interreg projects, including those focused on green topics, could benefit from including a common result indicator for **"increased capacities."** **This dedicated indicator would allow to capture the enhancement of skills, competencies and capabilities achieved through the projects**.
- **possibility of larger investments in joint infrastructure**

- Interventions that allow and promote the **transfer of solutions and the effective utilisation by decision-makers** of the studies, tools and results achieved by projects and researchers.
- Improve Capacity building and knowledge transfer so that the relevant results produced by Interreg projects are not lost. Educational programmes, Public-awareness, more coordinated policies.
- Existing types of interventions are sufficiently detailed, and they reflect well the reality of green projects funded by Interreg
- The question is very interesting and relevant! We would think a **regional analysis could identify local, border related needs** such as water quality of a border river or border sea, flooding risk areas across borders or similar, which would need coordinated approaches in Strand A. Also, strand A/**cross-border could identify global environmental issues with a locally specific character or solution** (maybe in relation to biodiversity in an area, finding solutions for improving the wellbeing of certain species...) **Strand B and C can do policy, or focus larger amounts of money on a wider problem.**
- Currently, the intervention types are split into different types of climate change effects (drought, floods, fires, etc). These **categories are too narrow for our projects dealing with making communities more resilient to a changing Arctic climate** (more moist, permafrost thaw), e.g. improving buildings or wastewater treatment systems.

#### **11. Climate resilience and climate change mitigation must be considered as transversal policy or even as elements of the horizontal principle on sustainability: What could be useful, tangible links between climate resilience and other POs supporting awareness-raising and better integration into projects?**

- Supporting more "awareness raising" on concrete measures for citizens
- We should avoid overcomplicating things.
- From a political level, these links are already embedded in other POs since climate resilience has an important 'capillary effect' on pretty much everything nowadays. However, when it comes to promoting or supporting awareness-raising and better integration into projects, a pragmatic approach can be particularly useful. Like for example, **very practical measures linked to the eligibility of related costs**, such as CO2 compensation expenses for travel tickets linked to the projects' trips/activities or rewarding measures linked to the promotion of active mobility among the project staff...
- It is important, regardless of the PO, that this is integrated into the programs. It must be clearly stated that **project applications must be sustainable and not have a negative climate impact**. This could be an element of the horizontal principles of sustainability. Regardless, there must be clarity that these elements are **taken into account in the assessment of applications and are not specific to environmental projects**, but also to applications in areas such as research and entrepreneurship.
- A **communication activity** in each project should be developed specifically about the POs and the climate resilience and **climate change mitigation of project action, which should be communicated about.**
- In CENTRAL EUROPE, climate resilience and climate change are addressed under the **horizontal principle of "Sustainable development and environment protection"**. **All actions financed by the programme should follow an "environmental sustainability by design" approach**. This implies that environmental or broader sustainability considerations are integrated from the beginning into all project activities.
- **Governance and capitalisation of results (ISO1) could focus on Climate resilience.**

- The connection of Green and resilient environment with other POs can be realized as a horizontal component in all projects regardless of Priority. **Emphasis should be placed on investments, which (besides just meeting DNSH) should contribute to climate resilience and sustainable development**
- Transforming society and ways of doing things towards net-zero must happen during the next programming period. This is needed in all POs. Businesses must find new business models, labour market needs and just transition are relevant in the social sphere... **Based on these, an evaluation of projects with specific criteria on how they connect to climate change mitigation or improving resilience.**
- Possibly, **Operations of Strategic Importance focused on climate resilience** and climate change mitigation, but **addressing also other POs.**
- To **improve circular economy visibility/outcomes as an operational bridge** between both transversal policies
- Climate resilience can be closely linked to PO1 for smart innovation and digital technologies. Tangible projects could include:- Digital tools for climate data;- Support of climate-tech.
- We advocate for **broader objectives for the programmes to take into account climate resilience and mitigation in a comprehensive and integrated way in different topics. Additional layers like horizontal principles** and specific climate-related intervention codes only add bureaucracy to the programmes.
- It is reasonable to consider climate resilience and climate change as horizontal issues. However, technical /formalistic approaches should be avoided (e.g. DNSH) – particularly against the background of the typical project types in Interreg, which are more of a soft nature and of limited magnitude.
- I agree that climate resilience and mitigation should be taken into account wherever relevant. However, this should not be at the expense of monitoring and achieving the objectives of the thematic area. This is what we encountered in the programming of the 2021-2027 period, where during the negotiation of the programme, some themes required the inclusion of additional measures to declare the contribution of interventions to tackling climate change, even though this did not make much sense.
- all Interreg programmes should be mandatory green, and the long process of environmental checks with national environmental authorities should therefore be absolutely avoided during the programming process

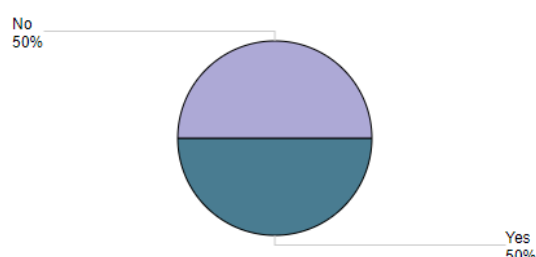
## 12. How could green related challenges in Interreg be tackled differently?

- support more joint policy-making across national borders
- We, as a programme, don't tackle these challenges directly. It's through our projects, whose partners are mostly **regional authorities**, that these challenges are tackled. In this regard, it's the regions facing these challenges that know how to better tackle them. We offer them the framework to do it, but it's mostly up to them to decide how to do it or if this should be done differently. In our case, being a **capacity building** programme, we've taken a more flexible approach towards implementation oriented activities. This allows projects to apply for pilot actions already at the application stage (what was not possible in the previous programming period), as long as they're in line with the programme requirements.
- Starting from the **reality and not only from greatest systems**
- Cooperation is central to green topics, and the current approach is meaningful and effective which has been confirmed by the programme impact evaluation. However, certain elements could be

**further strengthened, such as improving coordination between financial instruments and enhancing the transfer of results to other territories/ETC programmes.**

- Interreg is already doing its best, maybe **more guidance and sharing from National Authorities** would help (coordinated by Interact)
- Green related challenges could be approached, not only through Priority, but, on a smaller scale, as **horizontal activities in all projects**, which would give greater value to the project results.
- Increase the horizontal, overarching understanding. **Keeping Interreg A close to the people/organisations**, not extend the geographical coverage of single programmes. This will also **help motivate the citizens, when they see local action and impact of EU programmes.**
- **A more horizontal approach across all POs makes sense.**
- Associating stakeholders as takers since the beginning?
- The challenges related to green issues need to be followed up closely, and this is linked to the technologies and innovation changes. So programmes should be able to benefit from a more flexible approach to adapt the Programme but without a heavy administrative burden.
- Take advantage of the **unique nature of Interreg by bringing together the experience of distinct territories in a true cooperation effort**, Since green related challenges do not know borders, Interreg is able to bring fundamental added value in terms of sharing knowledge and experiences.
- Interreg should adopt a holistic and innovative approach that includes nature-based solutions, smart technologies, circular economy practices, and stronger community engagement.
- A reasonable, differentiated approach is needed. Currently, Interreg is facing an overload regarding targets (which partially are already tackled at a higher level or should be tackled only if relevant in the specific project's context)
- Education - Put more importance on green education, e.g. separate RSO for green education.
- by earmarking projects - this would better evidence small and medium-sized projects with a strong green impact

**13. Would you consider an Interreg Specific Objective for Green, aimed more at governance and impact of solutions fostering compliance and contribution to EU Directives in the field of green agenda – could that be an interesting alternative to the current set-up with SOs?**



Choice	Count	Percentage
Yes	11	50%
No	11	50%
Total	22	100%

**Please comment**

- Maybe. The programme area **works on regional levels** with this, since the responsible authorities are often involved in some way in projects within PO2, either as, partners, associated partners and/or stakeholders. As stated earlier in this survey, we need to bear in mind that there is a difference between urban areas in Europe and sparsely populated areas in the arctic. Therefore, it **depends on how this type of Specific Objective is formulated.**

- yes, governance is very important and strategic in a complex scenario
- The current CENTRAL EUROPE projects under green SOs already incorporate governance dimensions and solutions that contribute to EU Directives. Nevertheless, **future efforts would benefit from maintaining thematic differentiation under a joint umbrella of governance. In addition to a possible focus on governance, projects that develop and test solutions and deliver tangible results should continue to be supported and implemented.**
- Could be an **interesting objective for identified specific strategic issues between MSs. Requires commitment from the relevant policy levels**; how to achieve this?
- In Interreg Europe this specific approach can be addressed through the **PO 'Governance'**
- Interreg is more about joint policies across countries in general
- To us, this sounds artificial and not necessary.
- Yes, if not only referring to EU directives
- the more flexible a programme, the better

**14. How could Interreg contribute practically and realistically to the wider EU green policy framework? Are the objectives of these policies sufficiently matching actual Interreg action?**

- By doing more or less of what we are already doing – promoting and talking to stakeholders to get good applications coming...
- In the framework of Interreg Europe, the contribution is already quite wide, considering that this happens not only via the projects but also the many activities organised by the policy learning platform. Also, to be taken into account **our projects address policies and pursue the improvement of these policies**. It goes without saying that these policies are in line with the EU green policy framework, so the objectives are fully aligned on both sides.
- Difficult to answer as the programme area's **regions have their own unique challenges**.
- Yes, projects clearly align with thematic targets and the wider EU green policy framework, and we find Interreg actions to be well-suited to these policies. In Central Europe, our project results significantly contribute to implementing various directives and legislative frameworks, including among others the EU Green Deal, Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, Energy Efficiency Directive, Waste Framework Directive, and Water Framework Directive.
- They partly match the policy framework.
- It is already contributing, raising awareness, sharing knowledge and promoting solutions. More visibility could be gained through Interact events with the participation of projects from different Interreg strands.
- The **EU policies towards Interreg programs should have a "top-down" approach**. Interreg thus serves as a **tool through which the EU implements its policies, including Greener Europe Policies**. Interreg should aim to obtain feedback from the vast audience of stakeholders in order to provide positive support to the implementation and revision of the wider EU green policy framework. In this sense, we consider this feedback as an added value to EU green policy framework, and the Interreg actions are sufficiently matching objectives of these policies. The objectives of Interreg and EU green policy framework is generally matching, however the alignment of regional priorities in the focus of a specific Interreg project with EU green policy objectives is not always perfectly matched, also innovation and integration of new technological solutions in Interreg funded initiatives could be increased.
- A) **setting priorities so that they support the EU green policy framework and don't contradict**  
- B) Interreg could and should also become more focused on tangible, practical work and results,

where **cooperation is the tool for reaching these results and not a result in itself**, only. - C) The current **ERDF objectives and Interreg can be made to match**, but they are not ideal for Interreg. Several Interreg topics or characteristics either don't match very well or are even missing

- **Interreg has to be realistic about what can be achieved with the relatively modest funding amounts compared to other instruments. We have to find the right leverage points. These may be more limited approaches but potentially with a big impact, such as increasing the capacity of (small) public authorities to operate in a greener way.**
- **Interreg raises awareness and builds capacity of local and regional authorities for implementing EU green policies including a more integrated and cross-sectoral approach to these matters.** The actual broader implementation of green approaches and solutions in the countries and regions depends a lot on policy priorities on EU and national level.
- **By finding place-based solutions in the sense of modules contributing to solving bigger challenges embedded in the framework** (levering, piloting (e.g. Green Infrastructure, Heat Islands, small-scale modelling etc.), scaling up/down). In the context of the AT-CZ programme, the reference to EU/national/regional strategies is always of crucial importance.

#### 15. Which policies/directives should be considered a priority?

- Energy, energy and energy... climate adaptation and circular economy.
- Actions tackling specificities of the border (e.g. maritime = the sea, mountain = the mountain environment, cities = urban challenges, etc.)
- Those related to climate change, energy production and consumption and just transition
- green urban mobility
- Prioritising particular green policies or directives can be challenging because their relevance depends on the specific focus of the project. For instance, the Water Framework Directive is crucial for projects addressing water quality and management, while the Biodiversity Strategy is key for initiatives related to habitat conservation and species protection. Each directive plays a critical role in its respective area and their importance can vary based on the project's objectives, environmental focus and specific territories the project is focused on. Therefore, a balanced approach is preferred.
- Renewable energies and waste treatment.
- Priorities are the EU Green deal connected policies (i.e. Biodiversity strategy, Marine strategy framework Directive, Blue economy strategy, ...)
- EU Arctic Policy – or geographically oriented
- European Green Deal, European Blue Growth Strategy, Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Policies that address reservation protection of the natural resources.
- From my point of view, the potential lies mainly in what we are promoting, i.e. crisis management and linking it across borders, and then biodiversity, because, like risks and disasters, it knows no borders.

#### 16. How should Interreg build synergies with other EU funds for climate action and resilience?

- By promoting complementarity instead of overlapping. By bringing positions closing together about the main priorities. By aligning (when possible) in terms of processes and mechanisms



- **Interreg can act as a springboard for new collaborations across programme areas and funds.** Knowledge and experience exchange between actors can lead to new projects and initiatives.
- working together on the drafting of the next programmes
- Interreg can build synergies with other EU instruments for climate action and resilience **through capitalisation activities, such as joint calls, synergy actions and collaborative efforts at both the project and programme levels.** This can include exchanging knowledge and best practices between programme bodies and projects, as seen in our recent initiatives like the previous 2014-2020 CENTRAL EUROPE 4th call (capitalisation through coordination), including the cooperation and exchanges with CETP, Horizon, ESPON, and EIT Mobility. These collaborations will enhance the use of synergies, amplify impacts and strengthen alignment with broader EU climate goals.
- We **reject mandatory synergies** and hope it will become easier and less entangled in the forthcoming funding period.
- EU funds for climate action and resilience should make better use of Interreg outcomes and achievements. Capitalisation of Interreg outcomes with the support of EU funds is a need.
- ...by **implementing cross cutting projects in line with macroregional and national strategies** coherently with the Green deal actions and initiatives, especially with the parts related to biodiversity protection, climate action and resilience. Capitalization initiatives synergistically encompassing successful projects and initiatives funded under different EU funds could be established.
- **Interreg should always focus on the cross-border or international scope, unlike the national funds.** It would also be beneficial to have discussions between the programming teams. The MS hosting an Interreg programme could invite the Interreg MA to a meeting to get an overview of what the programmes plan. Interreg programmers are and should be aware of other EU funds for climate action and resilience and **not choose thematics and actions that these funds directly cover.** In some cases, the cross-border character **can justify the inclusion of a similar topic, but the actual work is different.** The existing **Macro-Regional Strategies should be better exploited** (they should have identified regional up-to-date needs).
- What would be very helpful for Interreg to build synergies with other EU funds for climate action and resilience is if there is **good coordination between the different parts of the Commission that support these different funds.** Ideally, the synergies at the fund level are **mirrored** at the Commission level. And similarly at national level.
- Our Programmes is focused on the creation of **cross borders synergies** rather than with other EU Funds. Priority cross Interreg synergies
- Interreg projects with relevant results should have a '**green pass**' in Calls promoted by other EU funds to allow the scale-up of these results.
- A **combination of Interreg cooperation of regional/local administrations** with ERDF investments in active implementation of the plans would be effective
- Align objectives and priorities across funds and facilitate data and resource sharing.
- The different DGs of the Commission should be aware of each others' activities and programmes in these matters and foster synergies. Similarly, the responsible authorities in the countries should communicate better with each other to create more synergies of EU funding in their country.
- Project partners may be encouraged and rewarded if they align their projects with other funds / strategies,
- Avoid making it too complicated. Let Interreg be Interreg, and other EU Funds be other EU Funds...



**17. Any specific idea what other levers could be used to increase awareness about the needs of territories related to climate change action in the next programming period?**

- Community engagement
- More events showcasing solutions towards the public – Use Interreg to bring results to the territories
- This should be encouraged at project level, i.e. partners being rewarded if they do that
- **Involving stakeholders and partners in programme development and implementation** remains a key success factor for increasing climate change awareness in territories (as successfully implemented in the shaping of the 2021-27 programme and should be continued). Additionally, the outcomes of the **ongoing review of the Territorial Agenda should be considered in future programming to ensure alignment with evolving regional priorities and territorial challenges.**
- The focus should be on children and **young people**. Due to their specificity and direct access to the general public, Interreg programs, with their projects, have the opportunity to reach children and young people who are **the basis of positive changes** towards a greener Europe.
- Perhaps the **Strategic Environmental Assessment can become a better tool** to channel territorial climate change needs into the next generation of Interreg programmes.
- **Keep focus on clear and simple objectives**
- Identify and prioritise more precisely at the programming stage the actions which are most relevant for the cooperation zone (by associating more the regional environmental authorities) and that can be implemented at Interreg level.
- **Lobbying in European Parliament / Council, supported by concrete data proving the need for action**
- In general, the awareness is high in our region. However, the current geopolitical situation and the rising concern of border regions being in a development trap change the priorities in the countries and regions. **The security and economic concerns of these regions** need to be taken seriously also in Interreg. Otherwise, **we might lose the support for climate change related actions.**
- **Solid evidence generated** by the EC/ ESPON/ ..., which could be used during programming
- **focus on CLLD and small projects**, they are more effective in addressing efficiently realistic climate change actions

## Annex 2

### Guiding questions (Slido)

### Greener Europe session, Harvesting Event November 2024

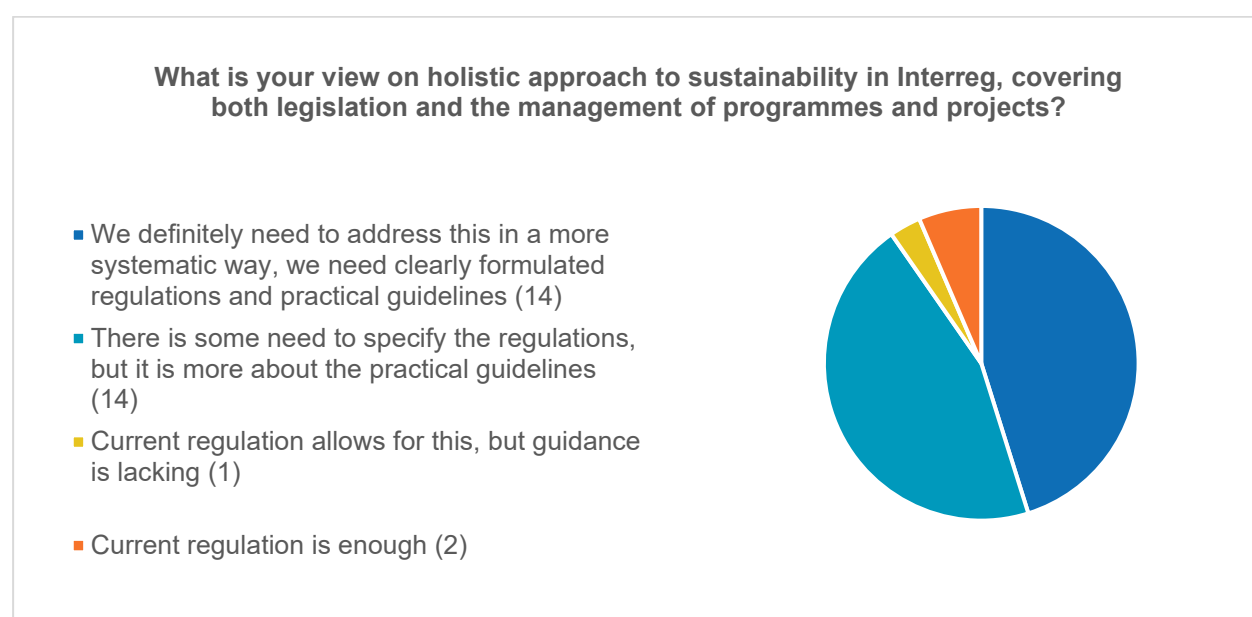
**Word cloud | How could the future Interreg framework better support you to deliver locally-adapted solutions? (17 responses, 9 respondents)**

1. Strategic, larger scale projects should be supported to deliver regulatory / governance related projects, with the organisations capable of making strategic policy decisions on mitigation and adaptation (HOWEVER: this is easier in some topics than others - if a framework / cooperation initiative already exists it is easier - otherwise, a foundation need to be created); Smaller projects should be funded to deliver local level experimentation of climate actions, with partners capable of supporting innovation, practical testing.
2. Propose effective solutions to a wider audience of local authorities in specific meetings
3. Our beneficiaries have a hard time understanding the indicators - clearer explanations?
4. Complementing EU funding with private sector investments
5. Specific objectives are not always easy to adapt to our local reality
6. Better engagement of SMEs
7. "STABILITY WITH CURRENT PERIOD: Post 27 it is essential to maintain current interregional, transnational, cross-border (maritime & land) framework. Cross-border programmes are suitable to ensure engagement at local/county level in experimentation and strategic approaches to climate action."
8. Involving strongly local stakeholder groups in project implementation to raise awareness and increase the acceptance of developed solutions
9. Intensive publicity and good practices across Interreg programmes.
10. Simplification to support the engagement of smaller local actors, e.g. municipalities, NGOs
11. Simplification of rules
12. Clear and easy to follow regulations
13. Same conditions for all types of programs (interreg, ipa...)
14. ISO only to improve flexibility
15. Intervention codes more adapted for a central European perspective
16. Support to scale up efficient and effective climate solutions.
17. Enhanced communication and information sharing, best practice sharing strengthening platforms for knowledge exchange

**Word cloud | How could regulatory alignment across borders be better addressed in the future Interreg? (9 responses, 7 respondents)**

1. Include necessarily policy makers in the projects
2. Interreg Europe is financing such regulatory alignments across EU regions - it is a best practice in this regard
3. Exchange of experience and knowledge on best practices
4. It is difficult for an interreg project to change the regulatory/legislative framework (which is dictated from above in climate action). However, there are differences between countries in terms of governance structures. Interreg cooperation projects are essential to help understand the framework, different competencies, roles and actors across borders, data sharing in the field of climate action (e.g. marine litter) / environmental disasters and emergencies (e.g. accidents and oil spills in sea) and, thus, to act efficiently. Such common understanding and recommendations for proactive cooperation can feed into better IMPLEMENTATION of the regulatory framework. For our discussion, water management (river basin / sea basins) emerges as one of the key areas where there is a regulatory framework, but a range of actors at different levels that should be aligned (thanks to cooperation).
5. Higher standardization rates on the level of EU, reporting on the occurred legislative problems
6. By focusing in long term sustainability
7. Programmes can select indicators that aim at changing policy instruments/regulations and thus create the need for such projects.
8. Competent administration to be involved in the project or backing the project as observer, calling for the development of such solutions that will help develop the regulatory framework / policy
9. Create conditions which support the participation of public institutions

**Single select poll | What is your view on a holistic approach to sustainability in Interreg, covering both legislation and the management of programmes and projects? (31 votes)**



**Word cloud | What do you think are potential pathways for achieving a holistic approach to sustainability in Post-2027 Interreg?** (8 responses, 6 respondents)

1. Sustainability as a horizontal principle
2. Embed sustainability heavily into project calls. Organise specific training to programme players and to beneficiaries. Set indicators and tools.
3. Regarding programme / project management and sustainability, we can't leave it up to programmes / partners to choose. It is time to make certain actions mandatory (with necessary guidance). For example:
  - a. Greater attention to digital sustainability e.g. obligation for programmes and projects to use cloud instead of large attachments / to host web portals (jems, programme website with project mini sites) on green servers
  - b. Insert obligatory green procurement criteria for programme and project expenditure;
  - c. For beneficiaries: not an open text in the application phase to describe how projects intend to contribute to the horizontal principle of sustainable development (leads to risk of greenwashing), but rather a list of obligatory actions defined at Programme level that projects must commit to respecting (and can propose additional elements) and that will be checked during technical reporting.
4. More involvement of thematic experts to help evaluate sustainability measures / actual climate impact
5. Harmonized approach to sustainability. Interact developing tools to be used by programmes, e.g. Selection criteria applicable to all projects
6. Useful to go beyond the PRIORITY / S.O. view and towards a more integrated environmental approach across all objectives / avoiding overlap between topics.
7. We just need PO2
8. Capacity building

**Disclaimer:** Cooperation can be complex, and while Interact's job is to make it easier, Interact cannot offer assurances on the accuracy of our pan-European information in any specific context.

Furthermore, understanding and knowledge evolves throughout the programming period. If you spot something out of date or inconsistent, please contact us at [communication@interact.eu](mailto:communication@interact.eu)

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