Effective approaches to assessing project quality

Besiana Ninka, Daniela Minichberger, Rosa Escamilla, Lamprini Tsoli, Monika Balode | Interact | 12.03.2025

Interact

Objectives

- **Sharing experiences** with various project assessment approaches, discussing practices, challenges and how have you addressed them;

- **Mutual learning,** benefiting from each other's experiences and ideas.

- **Get engaged**, ask questions, share your thoughts, and express any concerns.

Agenda

01

Setting the scene: reflection on project quality assessment

02

Experience sharing in strategic assessment

03

Experience sharing in strategic assessment and in operational assessment

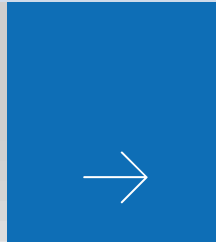**04**

The potential role of AI in project assessment

05

Effective promotion: Reaching the right applicants

Setting the scene
Reflection on quality assessment

The quality assessment of project applications is one of the key pillars in project selection!

Quality assessment

Variety of approaches across Interreg programmes

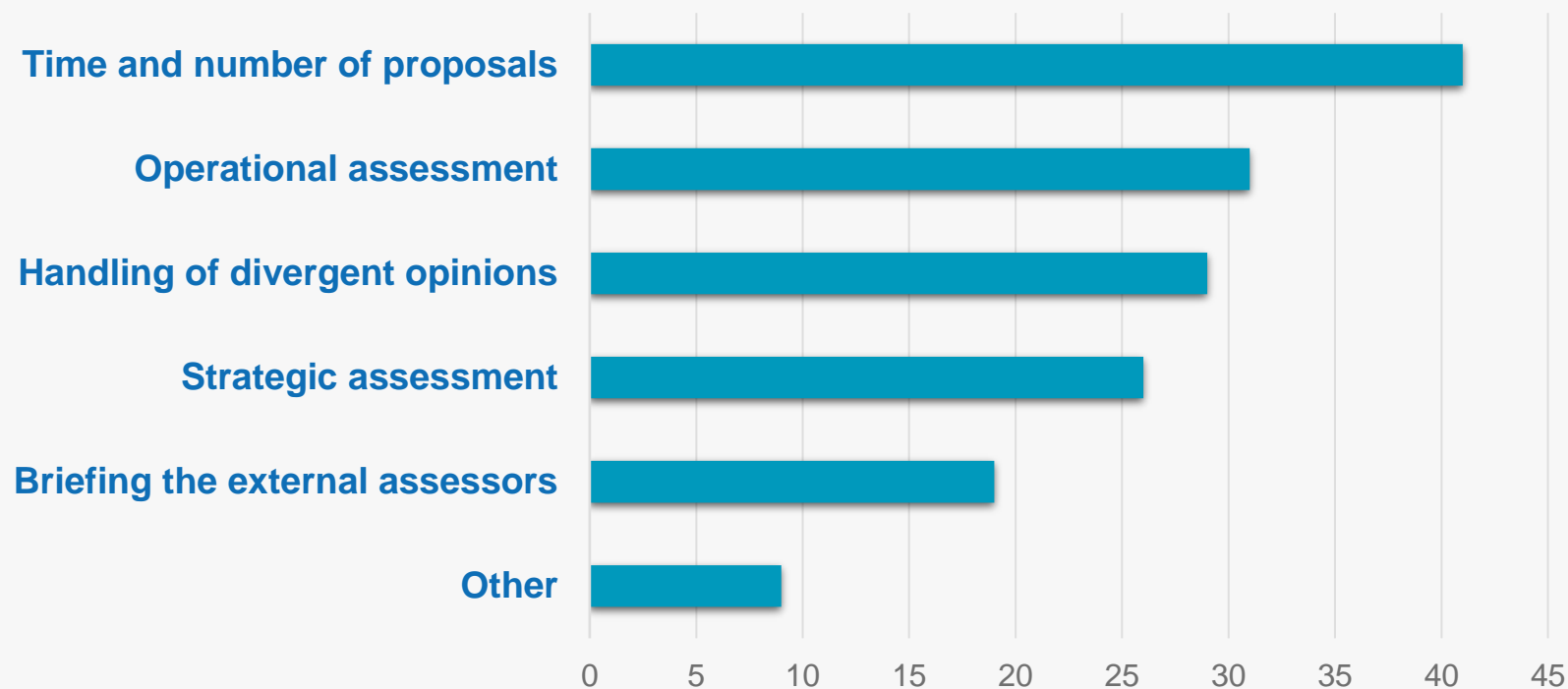|	
Strategic and operational criteria – weight of those	Per criterion – heading plus sub-questions
Scoring or scoring plus written justification	Use of KO criteria or use of minimum thresholds
One approach for all SOs or different sub-questions according to SO	Presentation of total scores or assessment profiles along criteria

Practical issues

Internal and/or external assessors

Your feedback from the registration

What are your main challenges during the assessment?

| Challenge	Value
Time and number of proposals	41
Operational assessment	31
Handling of divergent opinions	29
Strategic assessment	26
Briefing the external assessors	19
Other	9

Your feedback from the registration

- Achieving complete balance between the requirements of AF and the selection criteria, including assessment of the strategic character of the long term results.
- Investment documentation when it comes to assessing investment projects.
- External assessor not acting professionally.
- Financial assessment.
- Assessing sustainability.
- To develop the most appropriate quality assessment grid.
- Measuring indicators - result and paired indicators.
- How to objectify the evaluation of criteria that are necessarily subjective depending on the analysis of the evaluator; "four eyes" principle.
- Finding a fair and balanced way to rank proposals that serve different sectoral priorities, programme objectives, and territorial development needs while ensuring strategic coherence. The geographical aspect is a crucial additional dimension, especially in the cross-border context.

What are your main challenges during the assessment?
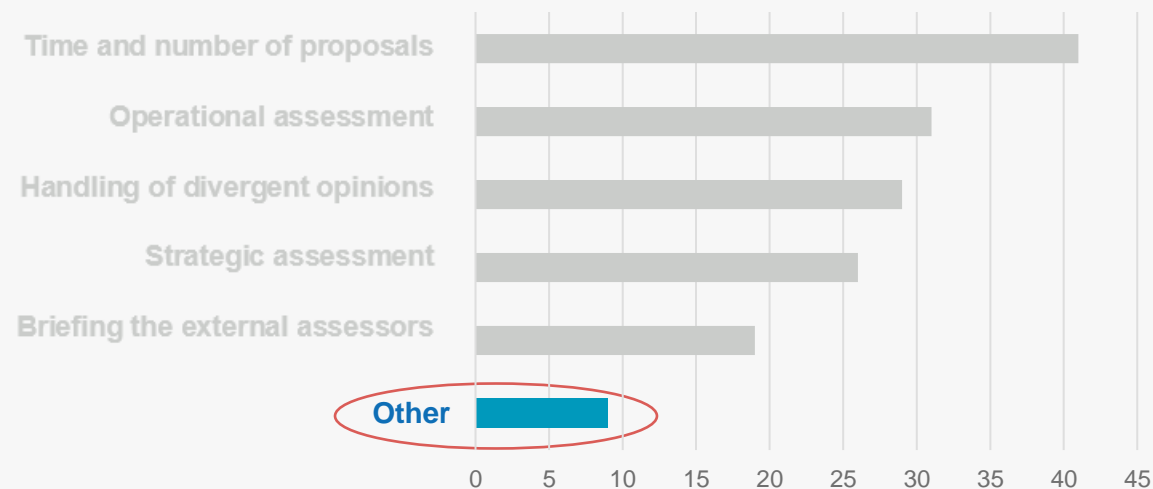
Your feedback from the registration

Will you/have you assessed the project proposals using internal assessors, external assessors, or mixed approach?

Mix approach
55%

Internal assessors
39%

External assessors
6%
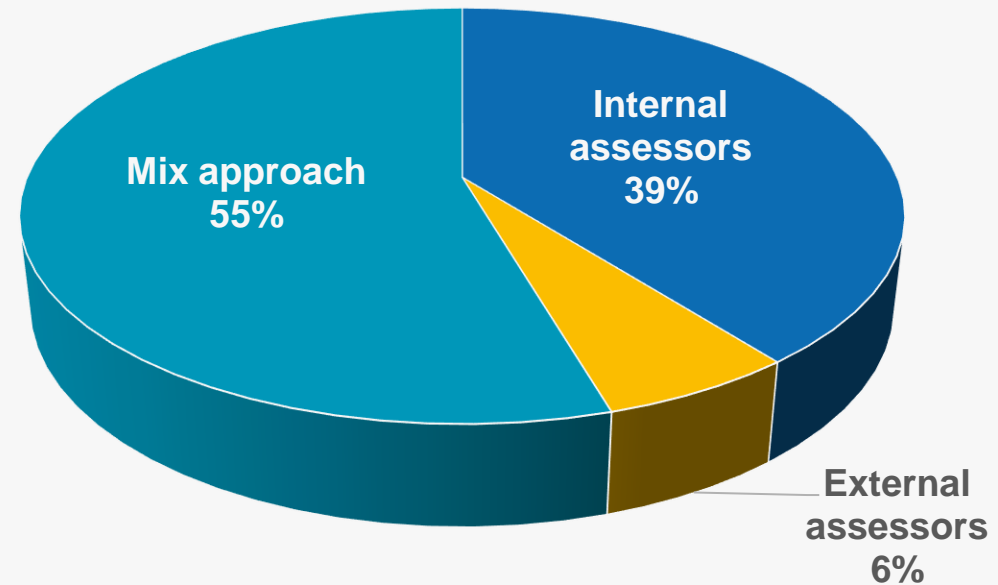
Common difficulties

The assessment process in Interreg programmes faces several key challenges, including:

Bias

Biased view of internal/external assessor(s)

Weight

Weight of the assessment in the for decision-making

Coherence, consistency

Ensuring a coherent and consistent approach across all the assessments

Time

Large numbers of applications lead to a considerable time pressure

Budget constraints

Balancing cost and complexity

Commitment ownership

Assessment focus more on compliance than on providing qualitative insights

Mitigation measures

To address these challenges, Interreg programmes can implement several mitigation measures, for example:

Bias	Weight	Coherence, consistency	Time	Budget
Procedures should allow for several perspectives if needed	An informed decision based on transparent procedures & documents	Quality management	Sufficient time; use of options to make procedures efficient	No complete assessments in case of K.O

… some other challenging criteria & aspects…

Tricky points
Some assessment criteria are rather a routine whereas other criteria pose challenges

Value for money

The overarching verdict on project quality! A comprehensive view based on outputs and results.

Infrastructure

Assessing technical quality, maturity and climate resilience might pose challenges since it requires engineering expertise

Partner capacity

Preference for safe partners often leads to preferential treatment of public institutions and/or those with previous experience

Some considerations...

JS assessment **Value added**	It may help **levelling out inconsistencies** in the use of arguments and scoring. It is the **only way to spot synergies between projects** – looking at project clusters from a more comprehensive perspective could also be an important point in project assessment, e.g. when it comes to integrated place-based development.
On justifications	The justification should highlight the most **relevant strengths and weaknesses** with a view to the overaching criterion and the concrete subquestion(s) (guiding principles).
On conditions	Clear rules on conditions to ensure fair and equal treatment.

Your feedback from the registration form: Fine-tuning the assessment process for future calls

Revised assessment criteria:

- Adjust based on lessons learned from past assessments.

- Focus on clearer, more coherent scoring aligned with programme objectives.

Simplification of Process:

- Streamline grids, questions, and criteria.

- Shorten lists of questions for efficiency.

Increased involvement of sectoral and territorial experts:

- Strengthen participation in call development and assessment.

Enhanced consensus-building:

- Improve mechanisms to ensure balanced final rankings and consistency within the process.

… and some key takeaways…

Interreg programmes are cooperation programmes!

Cooperation character & and partnership relevance are their key pillars!

Interreg programmes are meant to trigger longer-term cooperation: the results of cooperation should be sustainable and durable!

The point of reference during assessment is what is stated in written in the application form.

The potential role of AI in project assessment

Your feedback from the registration

Are you using any AI tools to support the assessment process?

Yes
2%

Maybe/planing it
27%

No
71%
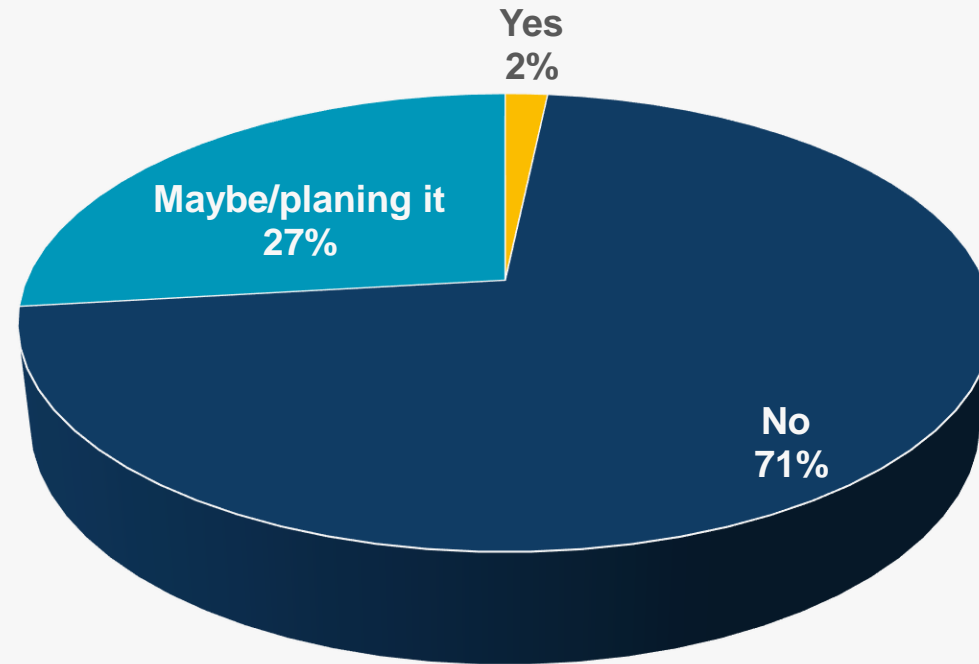
Floor is open
for discussion

- **In which stage of the assessment process can AI support the programmes?**

- **What are the risks of relying entirely or partially on AI during the assessment process?**

- **What are the key ethical considerations to keep in mind?**

Effective promotion: Experience sharing

Dana Kaščáková, Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE

programme
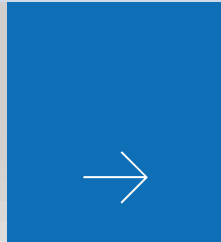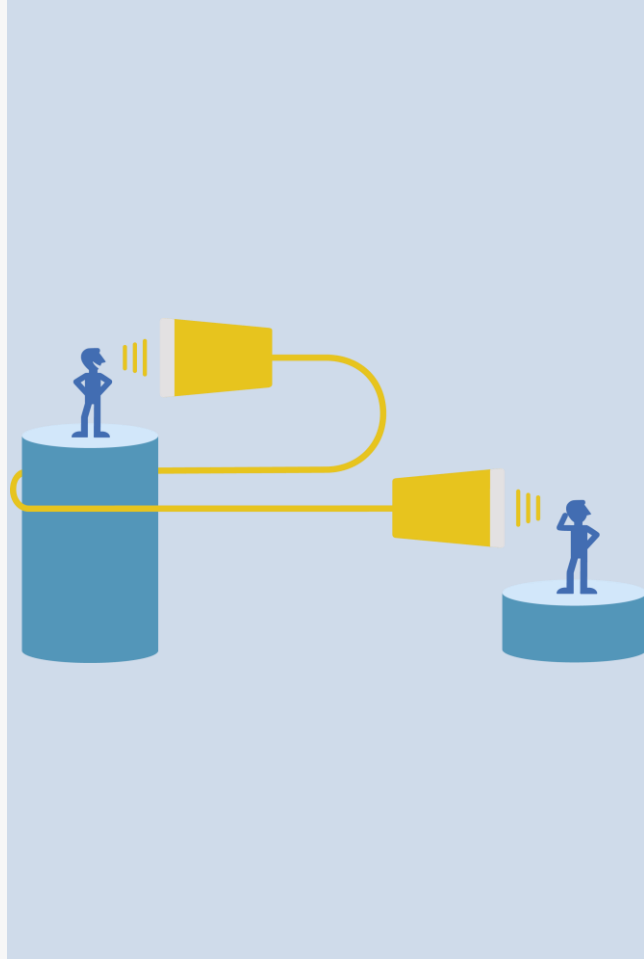
Your feedback
from the
registration

Have you used or will you use any innovative approaches in promotion activities?

- ✓ Maybe/Not yet.
- ✓ It is unclear which promotion the question refers to
- ✓ We haven't yet but I strongly hope we will start soon / We are planning to use innovative approaches
- ✓ No, but I am interested to get an overview of possible innovative approaches / is excited to hear from others innovative approaches used
- ✓ Yes, and we will
- ✓ We do a lot proactive activities.
- ✓ Not innovative as such, however we gradually tweak the programme communication and outreach activities
- ✓ We are using website, social media, national contact points
- ✓ Promotion activities of the call for proposals? We have used Facebook promotion, but a lot of promotion has
- ✓ happen with a help of word of mouth. We have also attended events organised by the stakeholders,
- ✓ as well as have organised events for specific priorities. Don't know how innovative is that.
- ✓ Yes, we aim to place more weight on social media promotion and leverage AI tools to enhance outreach, engagement, and effectiveness.
- ✓ We are always trying to improve our processes with different kind of initiatives short movies with the results of the projects
- ✓ Performing informative workshops (emphasis was made on the mistakes made in previous Calls) and published video of the workshop at the program`s website, performing meetings with rejected projects in previous deadlines and explaining the assessment score, promoting the open deadline at different events

Be part of it!

Leveraging digital platforms for wider reach

Rosa Escamilla | Interact | 12.03.2025

Interact

Co-funded by
the European Union

Interreg

The new Interreg.eu website!

Interreg | Co-funded by the European Union | News & Stories | Programmes | Calls for projects | Podcasts | Jobs | Contact | About | Search

We cooperate
beyond borders to
help Europe thrive

EXPLORE INTERREG

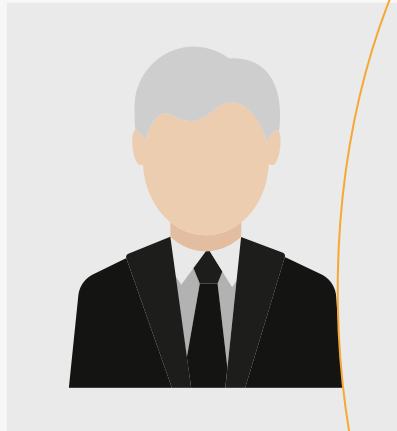# Interreg needs to speak with one, strong voice

Target Audience
Archetypes

The Policy maker

Represents (examples)

- Local, regional & national policy makers
- Committee of the Regions
- EU Parliament members

The Decision maker

Represents (examples)

- Ministries, national agencies, civil servants etc.
- Regional & national authorities

The Potential applicant

Represents (examples)

- Regions
- Business support organisations
- Trade/industry associations
- Universities / Knowledge institutions
- Municipalities (Local authorities)
- NGOs

The Beneficiary
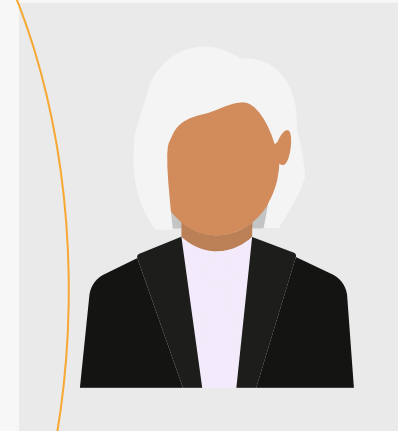
Represents (examples)

- Regions
- Business support organisations
- Trade/industry associations
- Universities / Knowledge institutions
- Municipalities (Local authorities)
- NGOs

Staff working in Programme Joint Secretariats
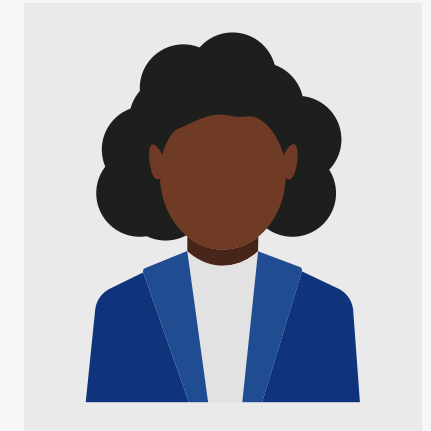
Represents (examples)

Joint Technical Secretariat

- Communication Managers
- Communication Officers
- Head of Joint Secretariat

Archetype | The Potential Applicant

Represents: Regions, Business support organisations, Associations, Universities / Knowledge institutions, Local authorities, NGOs, etc.
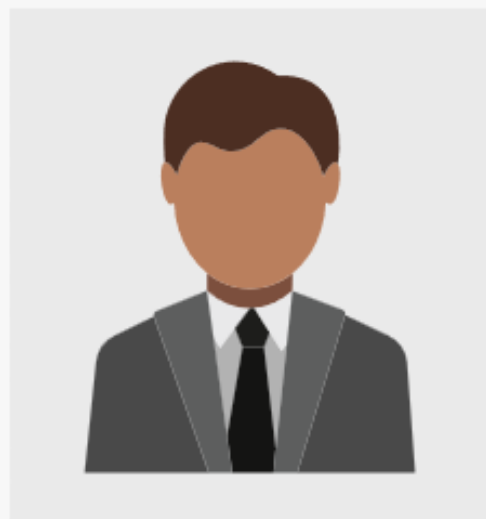
⭐ Key needs

- Understand what Interreg is, what programmes exist and how to apply

- Easily understand the application process, how to find potential partners, who to contact and how to monitor upcoming calls

- Know programme priorities, what issues are solved in his area and what have projects achieved to be inspired to apply

⊂ Pull factors

- Easy-to-understand information to quickly gain overview of Interreg and the programmes

- Clear guidelines and visuals explaining the application process

- Access to a joint and up-to-date database of relevant open calls

- Enough information to understand the basics of Interreg

⚡ Push factors

- Information that is conveyed in a too technical language and is difficult to access

- Too detailed and complex information about the application process and funding

Interreg.eu website

Managed by Interact and fueled by the **collaborative work of all Interreg programmes**, our channels serve as:

- The voice of the entire Interreg community
- The window to our communication campaigns
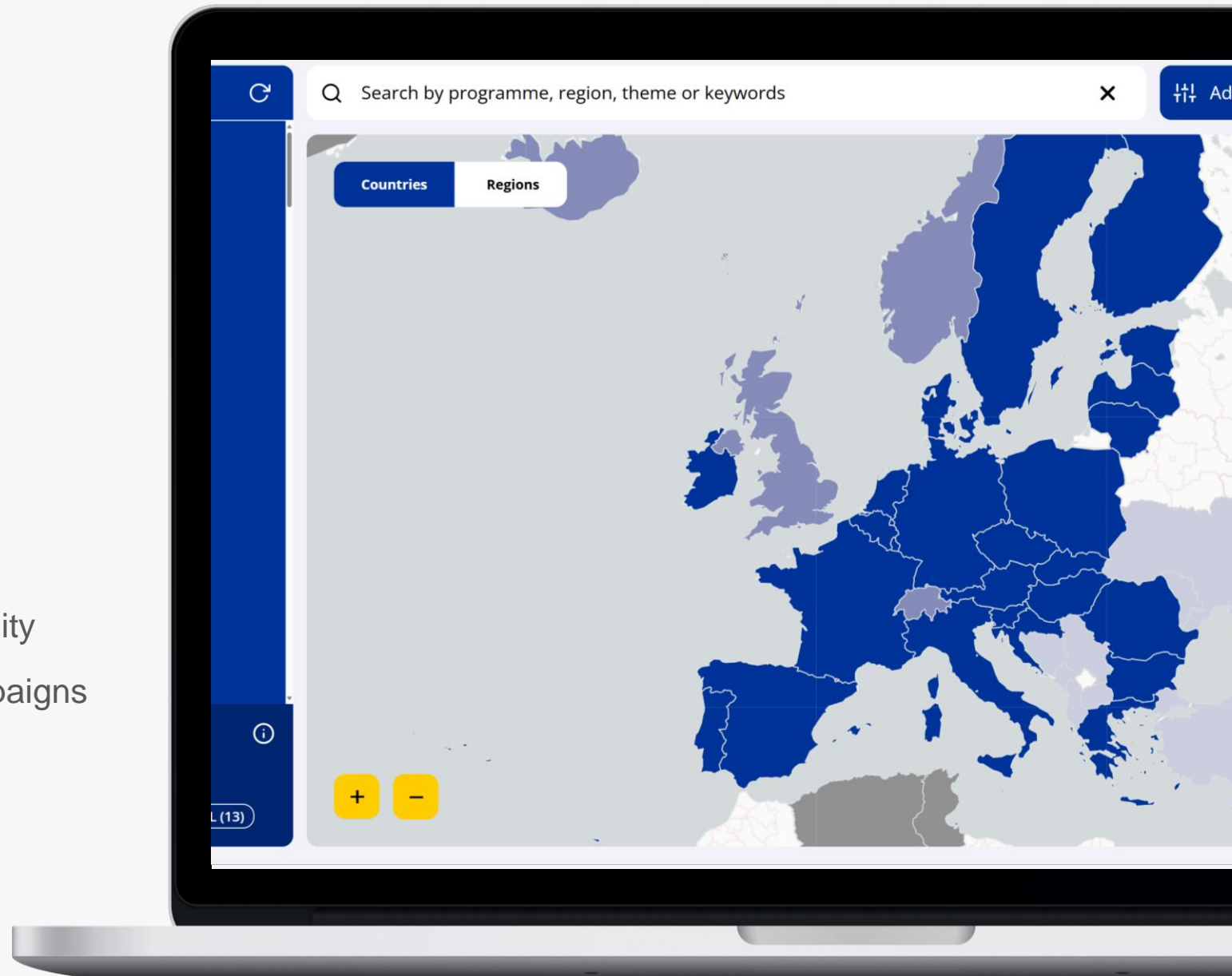
And on social media, where are we represented?

@Interreg   @Interreg   @Interreg_eu   @Interreg_eu   @Interreg_eu

We are looking for your:

- Success stories
- News
- Jobs
- Calls for projects

We publish your calls! We share your posts about calls

Send
us your calls:

interregonline@interact.eu

Webinar – 3 April

# Beyond the headlines: Shaping Interreg's stories together

Register here:

Posts shared by employees get on average 8 times more engagement than those shared by the company.

LinkedIn's Global Talent Trends Report

- Social media channels: LINKEDIN!
- Interreg.eu social media channels
- Websites: Programme site, interreg.eu, NCPs
- Newsletter
- Online and offline events
- Online Forums and Communities
- Paid advertising
- Much more!
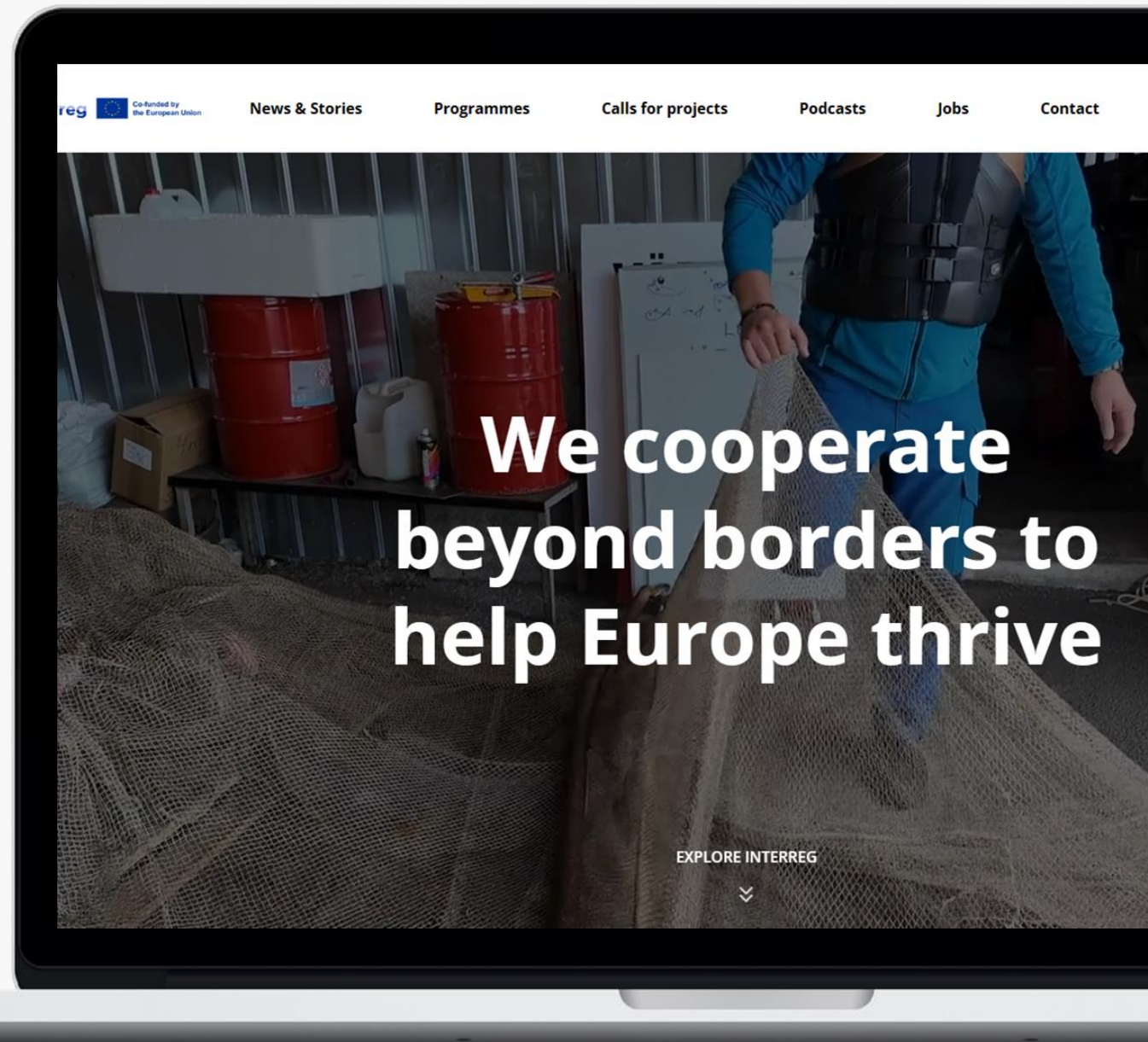
Forthcoming
events

- **Navigating Project Monitoring: practices, challenges, and new perspectives, 20 – 21 May, Helsinki**

- **Efficiency of the assessment scoring systems, September in-person (tbd)**

- **Workshop on the use of AI in programme management, online (tbc)**

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

Cooperation works

All materials will be available on:

Interact library / Effective approaches to assessing project quality