

**Interact**



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**Cooperation in Investment  
for Jobs and Growth  
goal programmes**

# **Brochure**

# **2025**



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The programming period 2021 – 2027 has introduced new challenges and opportunities for regions to extend beyond borders, emphasizing the need for better synergy and cooperation between regions and funding programmes. This is reflected in the Investments for Jobs and Growth goal, which allows Member states to include cooperation actions in each specific objective, thus expanding the range of required collaboration (Reg. EU No. 2021/1060 Art. 22 3 d) vi).

The cooperation actions support was taken by Interact, anchored in a service-oriented framework that includes a plethora of activities, such as analysis of IJG goal programmes, thematic mapping, data structuring, and web-based dissemination tools. The main target group of the project are managing authorities of national or regional programmes, with special emphasis given to those of them building-up active cooperation action partnerships in 2025/2026.

# Introduction



# Cooperation matters



The world is rapidly changing, and cooperation across Europe must evolve to meet these new challenges. As Executive Vice-President Raffaele Fitto emphasized during the Interreg GO! High-level event co-hosted by the cities of Gorizia and Nova Gorica (March 2025), cooperation remains a cornerstone of Europe's resilience and competitiveness.

Regional and EU Member States are now updating their programmes through the mid-term review process while also looking ahead to post-2027. This creates a perfect time to reflect on how regions work together and implement cooperation actions within the current programmes and consider them approaching future priorities.

The reports by Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi underline how vital cooperation is for making the Single Market work better for everyone. The Letta report highlights that “only 3 % of cohesion funds are allocated to Interreg,” urging more support for cross-border projects to keep the Single Market balanced. The Draghi report complements this by pointing to cross-border energy and digital infrastructures as prerequisites for competitiveness. The Council of the EU echoes this view, calling for “increased synergies between mainstream programmes and Interreg programmes” in its draft conclusions on post-2027 cohesion policy.

When regions cooperate, they become more competitive and resilient, particularly during energy and digital transitions. Working together helps regions better manage economic shifts and make smarter investments in key sectors like research, innovation, and infrastructure.

# Perspective

## 2027+

# View the review



The mid-term review of the Cohesion Policy emphasized the need for flexibility, streamlined processes, and alignment, as outlined in the Political Guidelines 2024-2029. These priorities include Europe's sustainable prosperity and the Clean Industrial Deal, enhanced defence and security, stronger social models, improved food security and water management, and better crisis preparedness.

As stated in the Commission's communication, "Cohesion policy has the inherent flexibility to contribute significantly to the above new and vital priorities, while delivering on the core objective of reducing disparities that is central to the European project."

No region can tackle these challenges alone. The 2021-2027 regional programmes already include provisions for cooperation under Article 22.3.d.vi, planning interregional, cross-border, and transnational initiatives across specific objectives. The mid-term review process now offers a chance to reflect on priorities and boost cooperation that contributes to regional competitiveness. It also introduces two new ERDF specific objectives – for defence/dual-use capacity and for water resilience – giving regions entirely new fields where cooperative projects can add value.

The mid-term review is the perfect time to consider how cooperation can help address new focus areas, including closing innovation gaps, enhancing competitiveness, supporting decarbonisation, and fostering prosperity so people can stay in their home regions.

Interact and Interreg programmes can support these efforts by providing ways and methods on how cooperation can be implemented in practical terms. There is also a possibility to build stronger links between Interreg and regional programmes for better solution and result uptake.

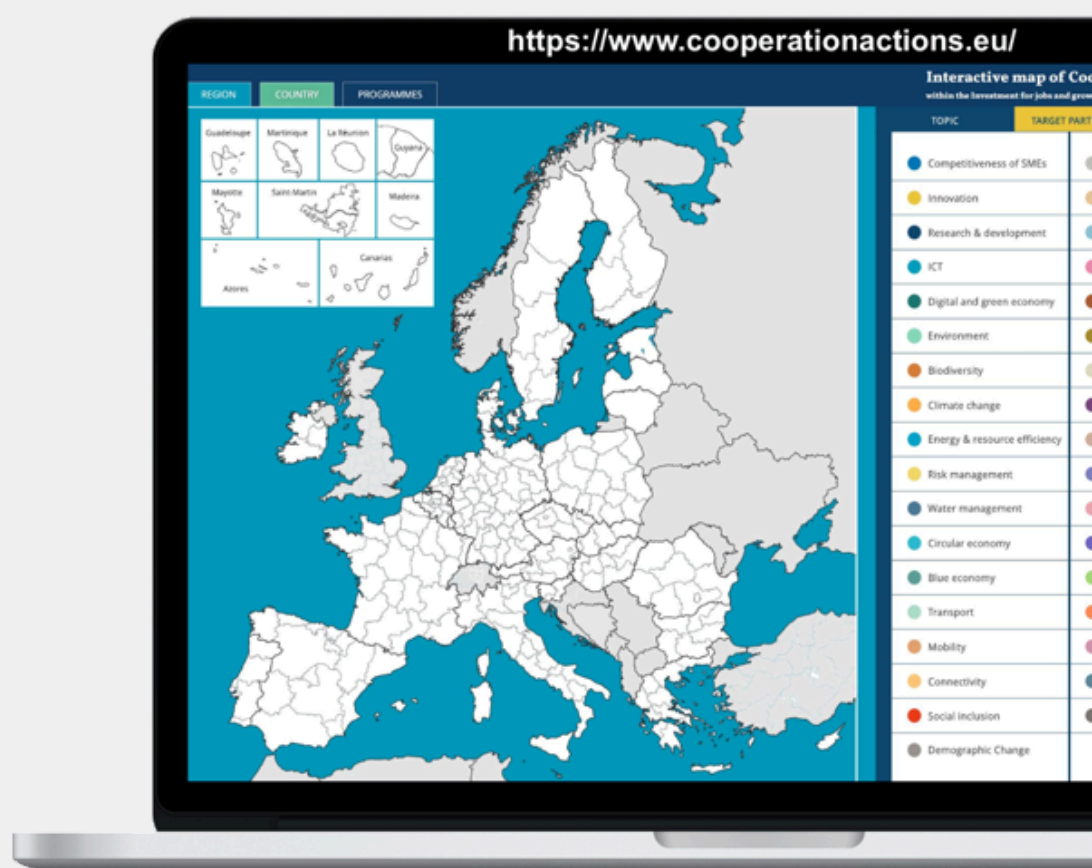
As managing authorities engage with the mid-term review and begin preparations for post-2027, cooperation mechanisms deserve careful consideration. Strengthening these approaches will help build a more resilient, competitive, and cohesive Europe. This publication offers several examples that can serve as an inspiration.

# Map tool 2021–2027

Interact created an [online map tool](https://www.cooperationactions.eu/) supporting the search of funding opportunities for cooperation actions. The interactive map tool allows for searching of potential IJG programmes funding international projects, based on different criteria, such as region or country (location), thematic focus, type of potential partners and IJG programme.

## Main features of the tool:

- Simplistic map;
- Highlighted key categories of cooperation with automatized search option;
- Manual search option for NUTS III regions.



# Interact's support

## 2025 Highlights

At the beginning of 2025 Interact updated the interface of the map tool for cooperation actions and implemented minor fixes. This activity was anchored in a service-oriented framework that includes analysis, thematic mapping, data structuring, and web-based dissemination.

We strengthened our cooperation with the European Commission by participating in the Cooperation Matrix event, where we coordinated future activities.

We plan to have our next event: ["Cooperation actions: Shared knowledge towards greater impact"](#) to be held in Arnhem, Netherlands, on 5-6 June. During this two-day workshop, participants will gain insights into practical aspects, tools and techniques. The focus will be on setting up mechanisms for cooperation action support, addressing practical challenges related to cooperation action planning, implementation, and partner identification. For a first time we will showcase the analytical power of AI in support of cooperation actions. The event is organised by Interact in close cooperation with the provinces Gelderland and Overijssel.

Interact will continue its support to managing authorities of mainstream programmes, helping them to set up their structures for cooperation actions projects and consulting them on the choice of most suitable type of actions, SCOs, forms of controls, etc. If you are interested, you can contact us for more details.



# Consultancy

## by Interact

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Interact works alongside mainstream managing authorities to help them design and implement cooperation actions within their programmes. We provide practical guidance and bring in relevant experience to make cooperation a concrete and manageable part of programme delivery. Beyond offering technical input, Interact also contributes to the wider visibility of cooperation—sharing examples, connecting practitioners, and encouraging broader engagement.

### Support tools

- Introduction and guidance through the variety of cooperation possibilities, helping authorities identify approaches tailored to their specific contexts.
- Sharing relevant examples, best practices, and contacts to facilitate knowledge exchange and learning from ongoing cooperation actions.
- Assisting in establishing management systems and administrative arrangements for cooperation calls, including advice on selecting the most suitable form and degree of cooperation.
- Providing partner search and matchmaking support to help form strong, complementary cooperation consortia.
- Supporting the promotion of cooperation calls and initiatives among stakeholders to raise awareness and encourage participation.
- Advising on communication and outreach strategies that highlight the value of cooperation, enhancing programme visibility and stakeholder engagement.

Through this comprehensive approach, Interact acts as a reliable resource, advisor and promoter, helping managing authorities to deliver structured, feasible, and impactful cooperation actions aligned with programme objectives and regulatory frameworks.





## Supporting Croatia's Cooperation Actions Call

The Interact team started delivering services in support to programme bodies. We successfully teamed up with the ESF+ Managing Authority of Croatia in setting up the provisions for their first cooperation actions call, scheduled for launch in 2025.



**ESF+**  
**Učinkoviti ljudski  
potencijali**

Our collaboration focused on detailing the eligibility of actions related to VET Regional Competence Centres, where we jointly reviewed activity lists and assessed their practical implications. We supported the authority in understanding what is feasible within their regulatory and financial environment, offering tailored guidance for structured implementation.

Exchange of Best Practices and Knowledge	Student and Teacher Mobility Programs	Professional Training and Teacher Development
Joint Curriculum Development for Lifelong learning	Development of Online Learning Platforms	Simulations and Virtual Classrooms
Organization of Fairs and Skills Competitions	Joint Research Projects	Green Projects and Sustainable Development

# Coaching & Support



## Vision

Through hands-on technical assistance and peer-based exchange, Interact helped build a solid basis for a transparent, efficient and effective cooperation actions call.

## Main tasks

- Advise on suitable Simplified Cost Options (SCOs), ensuring alignment with strategic goals and financial efficiency,
- Mapping EU-level practices, enabling informed decision-making,
- Reviewed management and control system (MCS) compatibility, supporting compliance and risk mitigation.

# **Synergies Between EU Funds:**

## **A Pilot Path Towards a Strategic Framework for Integration**

Designed and coordinated by the Italian Department for cohesion policies and Southern Italy (Presidency of the Council of Ministers), the “Synergies” pilot project aims to build a practical and replicable methodology for integrating different EU funding instruments. In particular, the initiative explores the connection between the two Goals of the EU Cohesion Policy (Investment for Jobs and Growth and Interreg) and their additional, potential synergy with centrally managed programmes, notably Horizon Europe.

The pilot is rooted in the awareness that achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires a coherent, multi-level and multi-fund approach: this should be ideally used, amongst others, by national and regional as well as by Interreg Managing Authorities, taking into account their S4/S3 strategies. Moreover, this coherence approach would also mean aligning investments with EU macro-regional and sea basin strategies, using their priorities as strategic frameworks to guide and coordinate programming choices at regional, national, and supranational level.

Through this lens, EU funds—whether managed directly by the EU Commission or indirectly through shared management—can become tools for feeding and implementing shared strategic visions, rather than fragmented funding lines. The Synergies methodology proposes a way to bring and harmonise these visions into the programming, implementation and monitoring of the cohesion policy, envisaging a backing up role of the National Authority.

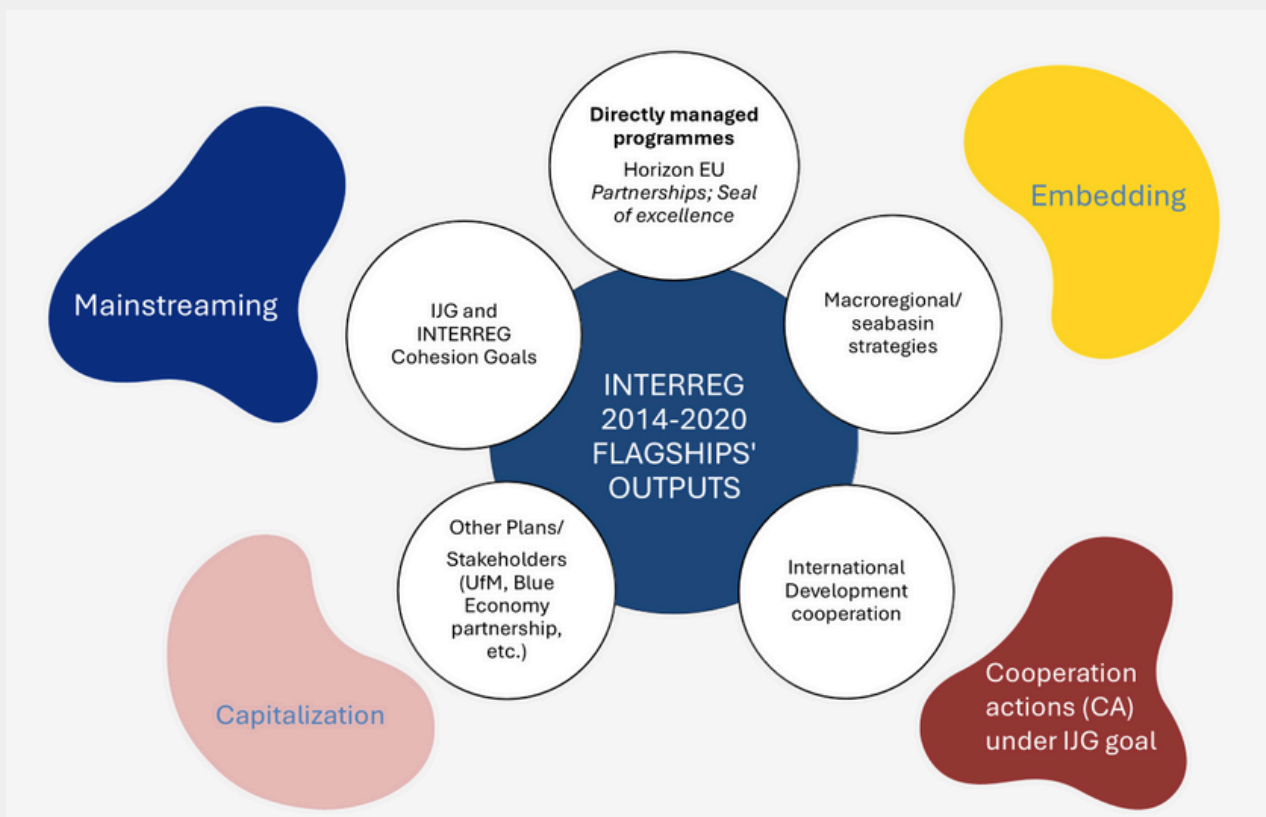


# Capitalising Interreg for Better Cohesion Programming and Implementation

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A central feature of Synergies is the valorisation of sustainable and transferable Interreg outputs: decades of European Territorial Cooperation projects represent a repository of knowledge, networks and tested solutions, among others in the field of research and innovation, and thus a facilitated bridging towards Horizon Europe. The pilot demonstrates how Interreg outputs and expertise can and should be capitalised upon to enhance the quality and coherence of mainstream programmes, both at regional and national level.

This also responds to the call made by Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, which encourages Member States to develop cooperation actions and synergies between programmes. Synergies address this call with concrete proposals for cooperative programming, project development, and shared governance models that draw from the long-standing Interreg experience.



## Methodology and Key Drivers: Governance, Evaluation, Communication

Under the coordination of the Department for cohesion policies and Southern Italy, the Synergies pilot involved five Italian regions in a collaborative exercise with both managing authorities and regional representatives for mainstream and Interreg programmes. Together, they worked to identify practical mechanisms and institutional arrangements that facilitate integration.

Three dimensions emerged as key drivers for effective fund synergy:

- Governance: Setting up platforms for dialogue and coordination between authorities managing different funds;
- Evaluation: Defining shared indicators and assessment frameworks to monitor synergistic actions;
- Communication: Promoting mutual visibility and joint messaging, to foster a culture of integrated planning and cooperation.

## A Scalable Model for the Future of Cohesion Policy

Synergies offers a forward-thinking, scalable approach to EU funds' integration. It is not a theoretical exercise, but a tested pilot methodology that supports the capitalisation of successful and sustainable Interreg projects in mainstream programmes, the design of cooperation actions and their potential in the implementation of EU macro-regional and sea-basin strategies, and the strategic use of territorial knowledge within the framework of the 2021–2027 programming period and beyond.

The outcomes of this pilot, which will also result in Guidelines to be shortly published, may pave the way for further experimentation, contributing to the evolution of cohesion policy towards more integrated, participative, and sustainable development strategies and an increased and better-quality impact of EU funds.





# Villages for the Future



## Introduction

This initiative aims to revitalise rural communities by applying New European Bauhaus principles and supporting cross-border cooperation. Focusing on rural depopulation and integrated, participatory development, it seeks to transform Extremadura, Spain, and the Portuguese regions of Alentejo and Centro from places to visit into places to live. It specifically targets rural depopulation and abandonment through approaches rooted in inclusive, sustainable, and locally driven development.

## Partners

- Euroregion EUROACE (Alentejo (PT), Centro (PT), Extremadura (ES) regions)
- Local municipalities (Reguengos de Monsaraz, Arronches, Pampilhosa da Serra, Sabugal, Moraleja and Llerena)
- Regional Development Agencies and Associations

## From engagement to investment: key development steps

The initiative began with the launch of the Bauhaus Village Network, supported by the citizens' movement "Swing Bauhaus" and Campus Bauhaus activities. Selected through a 2022 EU call for small municipalities, it focused on six villages in the EUROACE region of Portugal and Spain, fostering active community engagement, co-designed local strategies, and piloting new cross-border governance models for rural regeneration.

The partnership later secured Interreg POCTEP 2021–2027 funding to develop the network as a cross-border pilot area. This was complemented by investments from the Alentejo 2030 regional programme.

With a total budget of eight million euros, Alentejo 2030 supports local plans, innovation villages, and the animation of local networks. Key actions include public space requalification, training, support for social entrepreneurship, new governance models, and impact assessment.

## Complementarities between Interreg and regional funding

The Villages for the Future initiative showcase how Interreg POCTEP funding (Priority 6) and regional development funds under Portugal 2030 work together: POCTEP will support cross-border, multi-sectoral cooperation actions applying NEB values, while regional funds reinforce local capacity, participatory governance, and small-scale investments. The complementary nature of funding assures a more holistic, sustainable, and community-driven approach to rural development in border regions.

## For further details:

[Final report](#) from the consultation process.



# Linking the dry port of Athus to the French network



## Introduction

This cross-border railway infrastructure project connects the dry port of Athus in Belgium with the French rail network, forming a vital link within the broader North Sea–Mediterranean Corridor of the Trans-European Transport Network. Initiated as a strategic priority by the Walloon Government under its 2013–2025 Multiannual Investment Plan, the project focused on upgrading and optimising the Athus–Meuse railway axis to boost cross-border freight transport and reinforce Athus as a vital logistics hub.

The political commitment from Wallonia laid the foundation for effective collaboration between Belgian and French rail operators. Through a series of joint technical meetings and coordinated efforts, the project was successfully delivered, marking a step forward in European transport integration.

## Partners

- IDELUX Development and INFRABEL, Belgium
- SNCF Réseau, France

# Joint funding efforts

The project's main objective was to connect the dry port of Athus in Belgium directly to the French rail system through essential infrastructure upgrades. These upgrades addressed key physical and technical barriers to cross-border freight transport and were crucial for integrating Athus into the broader European transport network.

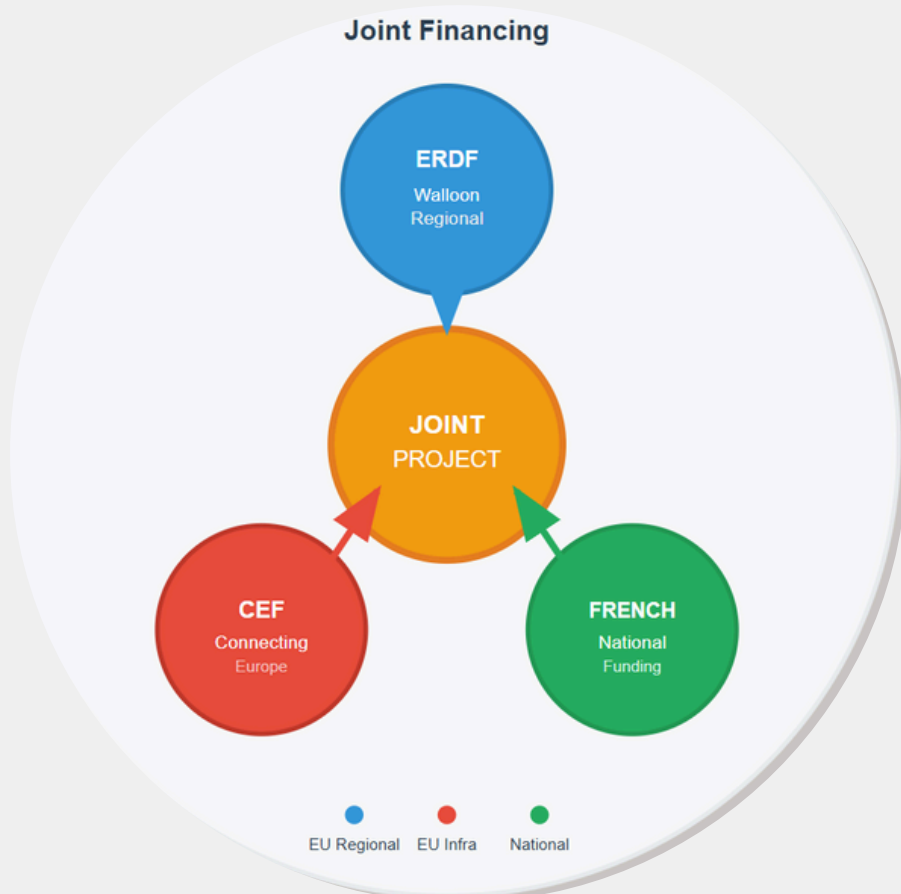
The financing was a joint effort combining ERDF funding from the Walloon regional ERDF programme, The main works included:

- Construction of a new rail line (line 165\_3) to create a direct and efficient link towards France

- Relocation of existing tracks to optimise routing and improve capacity
- Electrification of the railway section to meet environmental and operational standards
- Adjustment of signalling systems to ensure safe and coordinated operations across the border.

The financing model was based on a joint investment approach combining contributions from multiple sources. Funding came from the Walloon regional ERDF programme, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF), and national resources on the French side.

## Level 3 cooperation



# Borderless Square



## Introduction

Piazza Transalpina/Trg Evrope stands as a powerful symbol of European unity and cooperation. Redeveloped through a unique partnership between Italy and Slovenia, the square connects Gorizia and Nova Gorica as one shared space. This joint effort, led by the EGTC GO, reflects a long-term vision of integration, sustainability, and cultural exchange. The transformation is part of the broader ECOC District for GO! 2025 and marks the first ever cross-border Integrated Territorial Investment within EU Cohesion Policy.

## Partners

The project was led by EGTC GO with strong collaboration between:

- Municipality of Gorizia (Italy)
- Municipality of Nova Gorica (Slovenia)
- Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region (Italy)
- Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development of the Republic of Slovenia
- Ministry of Natural Resources of the Republic of Slovenia



## From vision to investment

The project began as part of a broader territorial vision for GO! 2025. Recognising its symbolic and functional potential, the square became a strategic priority in both the Friuli Venezia Giulia ERDF programme and Slovenia's Cohesion Policy Programme 2021–2027. It became the first EU-funded project to be implemented through a cross-border Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) mechanism—linking two national programmes, two municipalities, and one joint structure.

The total budget of €4.2 million was covered by ERDF contributions from both countries, national co-financing, and municipal funding. EGTC GO took on the role of contracting authority, managing tenders and reimbursement across jurisdictions.

## A new model of governance

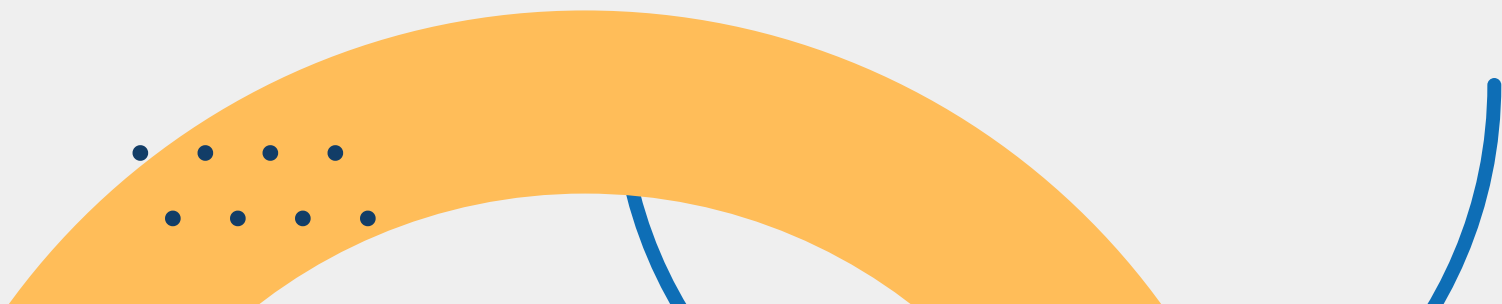
EGTC GO, established in 2011 under EU law, brings together Gorizia, Nova Gorica, and Šempeter-Vrtojba to address shared challenges. In this project, it provided a unique governance model that enabled unified management, procurement, and financial reporting across borders. This was essential to delivering the complex project smoothly, and on time.

## The square today: accessible, sustainable, symbolic

The new Piazza Transalpina/Trg Evrope features:

- Green areas and shaded seating
- Spaces for local businesses and public gatherings
- Accessible paths for pedestrians and cyclists
- Sustainable materials, such as locally sourced Repen karst stone
- An urban layout inspired by the “15-minute city” concept

The square is designed to host GO! 2025 events and everyday community life – bringing together residents, artists, and visitors in a space that reflects openness and integration.



# What makes this project stand out

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## Truly joint implementation

The square was co-developed, co-funded, and co-managed across two national systems. The square was co-developed, co-funded, and co-managed across two national systems. It had a Strong political and community backing: From early visioning to long-term sustainability.



## Symbolic value

A former border zone becomes a place of connection and pride.

## Innovative use of funding

First cross-border ITI in practice.

## Looking ahead

Following the success of the square, EGTC GO is preparing to redevelop the surrounding green belt area in 2025. This €964,310 investment will further enhance public space and transform former dividing lines into walkable, inviting areas. The vision of a shared city is no longer abstract—it is taking shape, one step at a time.

More info: [euro-go.eu](https://euro-go.eu)

# Level 5 Cooperation

# Multilateral call

## For Science support in the Danube Region



### Introduction

The Multilateral Danube Call is a joint funding initiative supporting scientific and technological cooperation in the Danube Region. It brings together national ministries, funding agencies, and the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) to promote cross-border research, researcher mobility, and capacity building. Building on bilateral cooperation agreements, it applies a multilateral framework to reduce fragmentation, simplify processes, and enhance the international competitiveness of Danube Region researchers.

### Partners

- The Multilateral Danube Call is jointly coordinated by:
- EUSDR Priority Area 7 (PA7) – Knowledge Society
- Ministries of Education, Science and Research
- National Funding Agencies from: Austria, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Serbia, France, Montenegro and Bulgaria

## How it works

The Multilateral Danube Research Call is a joint funding instrument designed to strengthen scientific cooperation across the Danube Region. It supports collaborative research projects involving institutions from at least three participating countries, with a particular focus on researcher mobility, capacity building, and the involvement of young and female researchers.

Built on the existing bilateral agreements, the initiative introduces a multilateral framework. Participating ministries and funding agencies jointly define the call topics, eligibility, and evaluation criteria. Calls are typically published on national platforms and follow a coordinated timeline.

Each national agency manages applications and funding for its own partners. The process uses already established application and assessment systems, which helps minimise administrative burdens for both applicants and agencies. Calls are typically published on national platforms, and the implementation is coordinated through informal exchanges among agencies.

The initiative is ongoing, with calls launched in cycles depending on national agency timelines.

## Results and further information

Since its launch, the Multilateral Danube Research Call has successfully strengthened scientific collaboration across the region. The first two calls funded 19 and 20 projects respectively, enabling researcher mobility, supporting early-career scientists, and enhancing regional research capacities.

By aligning national efforts within a shared multilateral framework, the initiative fosters lasting partnerships and contributes to the goals of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region and the European Research Area.

Learn more by consulting the EU Strategy for the Danube Region Priority Area 7 (Knowledge Society) website.



# EUSDR

## Embedding

## Week



## Introduction

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) is one of four EU macro-regional strategies. It aims to strengthen cooperation and development among 14 countries that share the Danube River basin. Covering a wide range of themes – from innovation and mobility to environmental protection and governance – the EUSDR provides a framework for coordinated action without having its own funding instrument.

To ensure its priorities are translated into real projects and investments, the EUSDR relies on strategic alignment with available funding – particularly from EU and national programmes. This process is known as embedding. The EUSDR Embedding Week was created as a tool to support this.

## Partners

The Embedding Week is a joint effort, involving:

- Danube Strategy Point (DSP)
- European Commission
- INTERACT
- TESIM
- EUSDR National and Priority Area Coordinators
- Managing and Programming Authorities from Interreg and other EU/national funding programmes



## How it works

The EUSDR Embedding Week is delivered fully online, over five consecutive days. Each day focuses on selected thematic Actions from the EUSDR and the funding sources most relevant to those topics. Discussions are shaped around:

- How specific EUSDR priorities can be embedded into operational programmes
- Which funding instruments or calls can support implementation
- Opportunities for joint planning and cooperation across borders and sectors

Workshops are interactive and bring together both strategic and technical-level participants to foster real cooperation, not just exchange.

## Results

The EUSDR Embedding Week has already proven to be an effective tool to increase strategic coherence in the region. Key outcomes include:

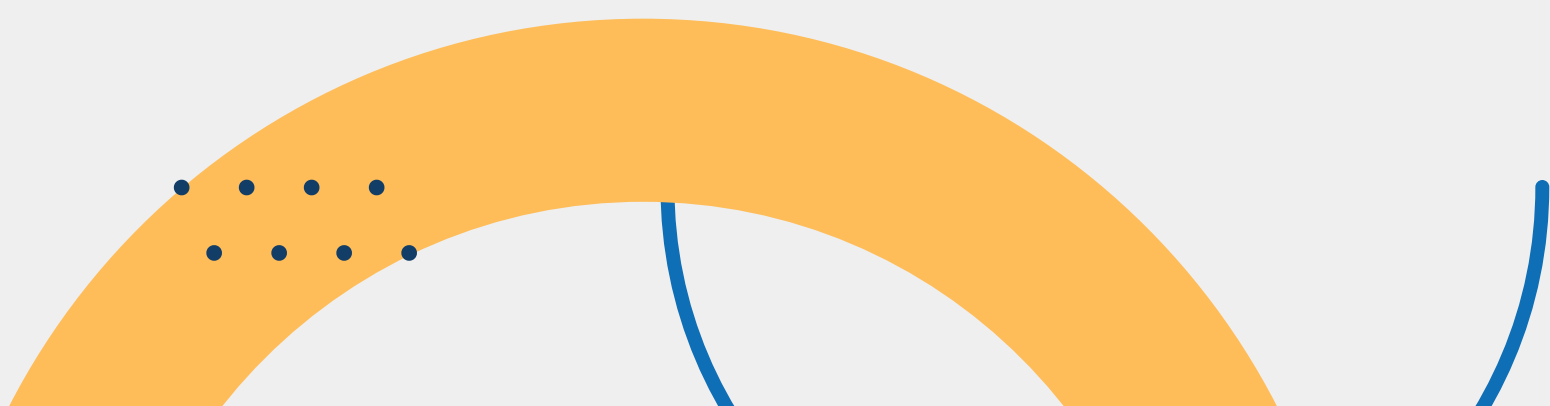
- Regular exchange and matchmaking between programme authorities and EUSDR stakeholders
- Improved alignment of funding programmes with EUSDR priorities
- Increased use of embedding tools across participating programmes
- Enhanced visibility and coordination of EUSDR implementation

The initiative is ongoing and continues to evolve with each edition, reflecting the growing maturity of macro-regional cooperation.

## Further information

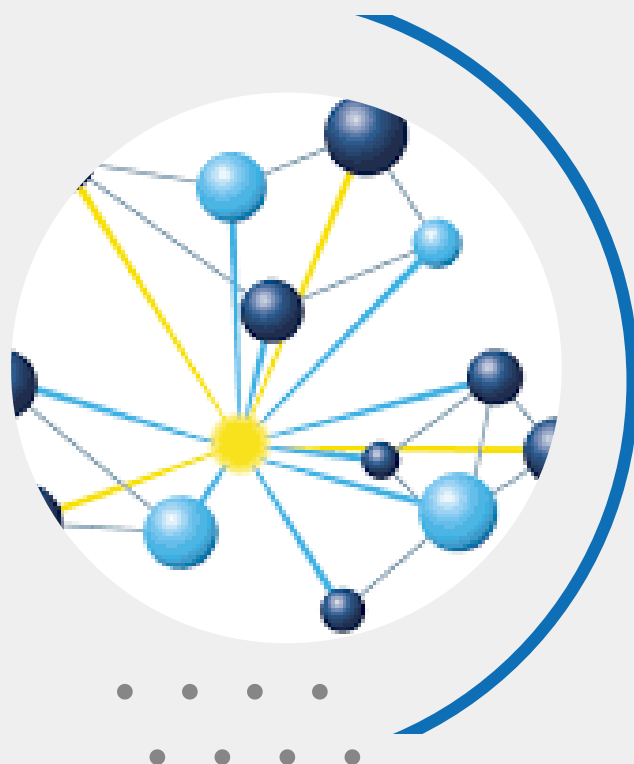
[danube-region.eu](https://danube-region.eu)

Contact: [office@eusdr.eu](mailto:office@eusdr.eu)



# Vanguard Initiative

**Interregional innovation  
for industrial  
transformation**



## Introduction

Accelerating industrial innovation through interregional collaboration  
The Vanguard Initiative is a network of 33 European regions from 14 countries, stretching from East-North Finland to Norte in Portugal, and from Scotland and Wales to Malopolska and Northeast Romania. Launched in 2013, the initiative brings together regions with a strong political commitment to industrial transformation. Its goal is to strengthen economic development and employment through interregional cooperation and joint investment in innovation.

The initiative focuses on connecting regional clusters, businesses, universities, and innovation infrastructures to develop shared innovation platforms and scale up emerging technologies. Vanguard members aim to turn regional strengths into world-class clusters, and to jointly address the industrial and societal challenges shaping Europe's future – from climate and demographic change to technological disruption.

## Pilots

To turn this ambition into action, the Vanguard Initiative has launched eight interregional innovation pilots. These platforms focus on key enabling technologies, including: advanced manufacturing, bioeconomy, smart health, hydrogen and artificial intelligence.

## Vinnovate – The Interregional Innovation Funding Tool

Since 2024 Vanguard is offering its own interregional innovation funding tool called Vinnovate. It is the Vanguard Initiative's dedicated funding mechanism, designed to turn pilot activities into industry-led, interregional innovation projects. Developed jointly with participating regions, Vinnovate provides strategic, timely funding to scale up collaborative innovations rooted in regional Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3).

Implemented through annual open calls, Vinnovate offers a holistic support model that connects innovation ecosystems across borders – linking regional programming with shared industrial priorities. The mechanism is unique in its ability to integrate joint programming, ecosystem internationalisation, and demonstration project funding into one interregional tool.

The 2025 call applies the Virtual [Common Pot model](#), where applicants are funded by their respective regional or national programmes. Following the successful 2024 pilot call, Vinnovate continues to address real needs of regional innovation actors.

### Common pot model

In the Virtual Common Pot model, each participating country or region funds its own national applicants within a jointly agreed framework. While project proposals undergo a unified evaluation process, funding decisions and disbursements are made by individual national or regional funding agencies, adhering to their respective rules and procedures. This approach facilitates coordinated transnational collaboration without necessitating the pooling of funds across borders.

### Further information

Visit. [www.s3vanguardinitiative.eu](http://www.s3vanguardinitiative.eu)

Contact: [klaus.niederlander@s3vanguardinitiative.eu](mailto:klaus.niederlander@s3vanguardinitiative.eu)



# Supporting the Basque Country

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## in financing interregional innovation cooperation

The Basque Country is an innovation leader ready to experiment with new policy approaches. Between 2001 and 2022, the annual investments of the Basque Government in science, technology and innovation nearly tripled, turning the Basque Country into one of Spain's leading innovation regions. Thanks to its diverse innovation ecosystem, supported by strong clusters and a dynamic regional development agency, the Basque Country is an important partner in EU programmes, the Interregional Innovation Investment Instrument (I3), the S3 Thematic Specialisation Platforms, the Vanguard Initiative, and Euroclusters.

In fact, the experimentation with concrete interregional innovation initiatives exposed the need to find solutions for practical implementation challenges and to create additional incentives for SMEs and other innovation stakeholders to sign up. To address this need, the Basque Country was looking for inspiration on how to finance interregional innovation through cooperation and realise cross-programme synergies in practice.

Consequently, the Basque Government reached out to Interreg Europe for targeted policy support. The Policy Learning Platform organised a [peer review](#) with the Regional Government of the Basque Country in Bilbao on 5-6 November 2024.

During two days of the peer review, six peers coming from Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden, three experts from the European Commission (DG Regio and DG RTD) and the Interact Programme, as well as various regional stakeholders, shared their experiences with the Basque Government.

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Jointly, the host region and their European peers elaborated targeted policy recommendations, offering concrete suggestions for the way forward in the short- and long-run. As the final step of the peer review, the results of the co-creational work were presented and discussed with the Minister of Finance of the Basque Country.

As one key recommendation, the use of macro-regional frameworks can support the coordination of funding across programmes, notably to launch joint or complementary calls.

Another hands-on recommendation addressed the risk of setting too short cut-off deadlines in interregional calls. Instead, open funding models allow for thorough project preparation. Equally, the peer review host was encouraged to earmark resources explicitly for cooperation and synergies, as successfully applied in the peer regions of Galicia and Emilia-Romagna.

Furthermore, the peers recommended the mobilisation of stakeholders, including clusters, SMEs, and RTOs, as key to benefitting from cascade funding calls and engaging in European instruments such as Horizon Europe. Strategically, building bridges between Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) and European funding instruments beyond the ERDF can enhance the effectiveness of delivering regional missions addressing common societal challenges.





Since the peer review, the Regional Government of the Basque Country has been working on the implementation of the peers' recommendations. The results serve as an inspiration for the envisaged new Atlantic macro-region.

The Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform team of experts is ready to help regions resolve their regional policy challenges. Interreg Europe thematic experts provide resources, contacts, or in-depth analyses tailored to help regions implement cooperation actions in their thematic policies.

***“Interregional cooperation is a priority for the Basque Government. Thanks to the peer review exercise we have been able to deepen our knowledge about solutions from other regions’ mechanisms to finance European interregional projects.”***

- Ainhoa Azarloza Berrioategortua - Delegation of the Basque Country to the EU

### Additional resources:

- [Report](#) about the peer review on “Supporting the Basque Country in financing interregional innovation cooperation”
- [Peer review](#) service by the Interreg Europe’s Policy Learning Platform



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