

Agenda | Interreg & the Union of Skills: Empowering People, Connecting Policies

22 September 2025

Online event. From 9.30 to 12.30

A More Social Europe. Interact

Agenda





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Connecting Policies**
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Outline

“The Union of Skills is our strategy to help people stay ahead in a rapidly changing world and keep Europe competitive and fair. We, in Europe, put people first because the success of every person in learning, at work and in life is essential for competitiveness and for a stable and resilient Union.”

— Roxana Minzatu, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness. European Commission.

In today’s rapidly evolving landscape, equipping people with the right skills is fundamental for Europe’s social cohesion, territorial resilience, and long-term competitiveness. Skills are no longer a matter of individual advancement alone — they are a collective investment and a strategic imperative.

Interreg, the EU’s tool for territorial cooperation, plays a growing role in developing skills across Europe. From 2014 to 2020, it supported over 1,100 skills-related projects, investing €1.46 billion in areas like education, employment, and inclusion. This focus continues in 2021–2027, with 57 programmes running nearly 600 skills projects — 450 of them in core social policy areas — backed by over €611 million in EU funding. The goal: to boost employability and ensure all regions, especially border and rural ones, have the talent to thrive.

Interreg builds bridges across sectors and borders, helping tackle skills gaps, support lifelong learning, and promote fair, green and digital transitions.

In 2023, [Interact’s More Social Europe network](#) conducted an [analysis of Interreg’s contribution to skills](#) development, as part of the European Year of Skills. Since then, over 450 new projects have been launched, reaffirming Interreg’s commitment to empowering people and regions through learning and cooperation. Also, in 2023, DG Regio published its communication on [Harnessing Talent in Europe’s Regions & Talent Booster Mechanism](#), which outlines the causes and effects of regional disparities triggered by demographic challenges, including brain drain regions and sharp workforce decline.

Meanwhile, 2025 marks the launch of the [Union of Skills](#), a new EU-level framework that gives fresh momentum to the social dimension of European integration. Anchored in the Draghi Report the Union of Skills aims to enhance policy alignment, mobility, and the recognition of qualifications across borders.

This online event will explore how Interreg’s practical, place-based approaches to skills can contribute to the broader Union of Skills agenda — and how cooperation with other Union policies and funds can unlock synergies for greater visibility, coherence, and impact.

Objectives

- Introduce the Union of Skills as the EU’s strategic framework for competitiveness, inclusion, and talent development.
- Highlight Interreg’s role in supporting upskilling, reskilling, lifelong learning, and mobility — especially in cross-border and rural regions.
- Enhance alignment between Interreg projects and the wider Union of Skills policy agenda.
- Strengthen the complementarities with EU-level actors and instruments such as DG EMPL, Erasmus+.



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9.30 – 9.35

Welcome & Introduction by Mercedes Acitores. Interact.
Overview of the event objectives and expected outcomes

9.35 – 9.45

Keynote: The Union of Skills_ A new strategic vision

Speaker: Maya Ivanova. DG EMPL.

- How the Union of Skills supports competitiveness and fairness in Europe

9.50 – 10.05

Interreg contribution to Improving Skills – Where Do We Stand?

Speaker: Jean Pierre Halkin. DG REGIO.

Key Interreg data and trends (2014–20 and 2021–27) by Mercedes Acitores.
Interact

10.05 – 11:00

Panel Discussion: Building Talent Across Borders

How is Interreg contributing to the right to stay by building skills, learning new skills, circulating skills and attracting new talent to their territory? What lessons can we draw from existing projects?

INTERREG ROMANIA HUNGARY. Csengeri Zsolt. President, AGES Association.

- **HEY! [ROHU 385]:** “Helping the Employment of Youth in Satu Mare and Szabolcs – Szatmár – Bereg Counties”
- **UNITY:** “Fostering sustainable cross-border cooperation for a more effective support of youth career guidance”

INTERREG POCTEF. Julieta Barrenechea. Ocean i3 Project Leader..Euskampus Fundazioa.

- **Ocean i3** Ocean i3 Project (Research + Learning + Sustainability) Blue skills and economy on the Basque-Aquitaine coast

INTERREG BALTIC SEA REGION. Anna Maria Czarny. Communication Manager of Prosper BSR from Hanse Parlament e.V.

- **Prosper BSR** Promoting Perspectives for promising potential workforce in the Baltic Sea Region.

11:05-11:55

Panel Discussion: Boosting Synergies _ From Strategy to Practice

Which tools, platforms, or coordination mechanisms could support stronger cooperation?. How can Interreg’s work on skills gain more visibility and policy influence?

Panellists:

ERASMUS+(Centre of Vocational Excellence): Dag Willmann. **BRIDGES** Project Coordinator and Adrijana Hodak. **Talentjourney** Project Manager

ESF+: Michel Berrevoets. DG EMPL

Talent Booster Mechanism: Edyta Karlowicz. DG REGIO

11.55-12.00

Closing & Key Takeaways