

Interreg & the Union of Skills

Empowering People, Connecting Policies.

22.09.2025

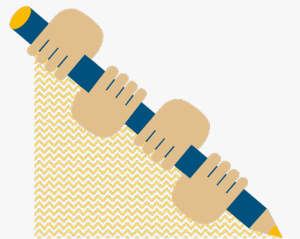
Interact



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the European Union**
Interreg

What is for today?

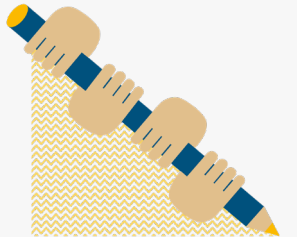
- The **Union of Skills** as the EU's strategic framework for competitiveness and fairness
- **Interreg's role** in supporting upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning.
- Claiming people's **Right to Stay** in their territory.
- Strengthen the **complementarities** with ESF+, ERDF and Erasmus+.



The Union of Skills_ A new strategic vision

Maya Ivanova

DG EMPL. European Commission





Union of Skills

Maya Ivanova | Policy Officer | Union of Skills Unit
Director-General “Employment, Social Affairs and
Inclusion”



European
Commission

22 September 2025 | #UnionOfSkills



Skills are a horizontal enabler of

Competitive, innovative
and resilient economy

Fair and just
social model



Skill shortages and gaps in Europe
Transformation speed gap
Fragmented governance and skills intelligence



Union of Skills



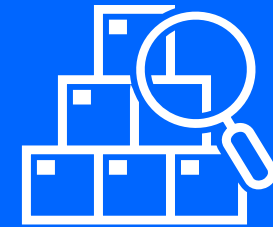
Working together on common solutions to respond to skills needs



Working together is
key to develop
comprehensive
solutions



Leveraging the
potential of common
solutions can speed
up the process



Understanding and
anticipating skills
needs is essential

Thank you!



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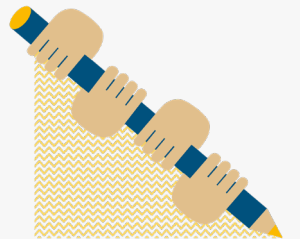
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Interreg contribution to improving skills. Where do we stand?

Jean Pierre Halkin

DG REGIO. European Commission



Keynotes

Skills = cohesion & choice → not only jobs, but enabling people to stay, live, and work in their regions.

Interreg's track record → 1,100+ projects (2014–20, €1.46bn) and nearly 600 in 2021–27 (€611m) on education, employment, inclusion.

Unique value:

- Territorial perspective in rural, peripheral & border areas
- Cross-border mobility & recognition of qualifications
- Empowering people/regions through cooperation
- Laboratory of social innovation (IVY, Youth Councils)

Next steps:

- **Align** with ESF+, Erasmus+, Horizon Europe
- **Scale up** successful pilots
- **Network** MAs across funds for stronger complementarity

Supporting tools: B-Solutions to remove legal obstacles; BridgeforEU Regulation for coordinated cross-border solutions.

Bottom line: Interreg connects **territories, people, and policies**, turning skills into a driver of cohesion and a real **Union of Skills**.

Building Talent Across Borders

Zsolt Csengeri
AGES Association

HEY! And UNITY projects
Interreg Romania Hungary

Julieta Barrenechea
Euskampus Fundazioa

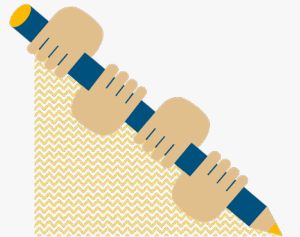
Oceain i3 project Interreg
POCTEFA (Spain, France
and Andorra)

Anna Maria Czarny
Hanse Parlament e.V

ProsperBSR Interreg
Baltic Sea Region

Zsolt Csengeri AGES Association

HEY! And UNITY projects financed by
Interreg Romania Hungary



HEY! & UNITY – Interreg ROHU Projects

- Cross-border cooperation supporting youth employment and career guidance
- HEY! (2019–2022) – Helping the Employment of Youth in Satu Mare and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties
- UNITY (2025) – Fostering sustainable cross-border cooperation for a more effective support of youth career guidance
- Implemented by AGES Association with Ötlet a Vidékért Egyesület from Hungary.

Lessons from Cross-Border Youth Employment Projects

HEY! and UNITY show that cross-border cooperation is effective in drawing the path for young people to enter and remain in the local labour market.

Key lessons:

- Training must match real labour market needs (HEY!)
- Career guidance should start early, in schools (UNITY)
- Combining research with practice generates relevant results (HEY!)
- Cooperation between education and business ensures sustainability (UNITY)
- Building soft skills and entrepreneurial mindsets is as important as formal qualifications (HEY!)
- Digital platforms like **laboro.ro** are essential for outreach and continuity (HEY! & UNITY)

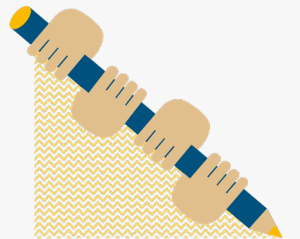
Both projects highlight that integrated, cross-border solutions strengthen the right to stay.

Conclusion – Interreg's Added Value

- HEY! laid the foundation by creating tools, networks, and platforms to support youth employment.
- UNITY builds on this, ensuring continuity and adapting to new challenges such as early school leaving and youth inactivity.
- Together, they demonstrate how Interreg helps young people acquire skills, access opportunities, and choose to stay in their communities while strengthening cross-border cooperation.

Julieta Barrenechea Euskampus Fundazioa

Oceain i3 project financed by Interreg
POCTEFA (Spain, France and Andorra)



Contact us and follow us on our **new**
Interreg POCTEFA Project
2024-2026



empacti3@euskampus.eu



<https://www.euskampus.eus/en/campus/empact-i3>

<https://youtu.be/QOTiKL5O26k>

**Interreg
POCTEFA**



Cofinanciado por
la UNIÓN EUROPEA
Cofinancé par
l'UNION EUROPÉENNE

EmPACT i³

Employability with Impact



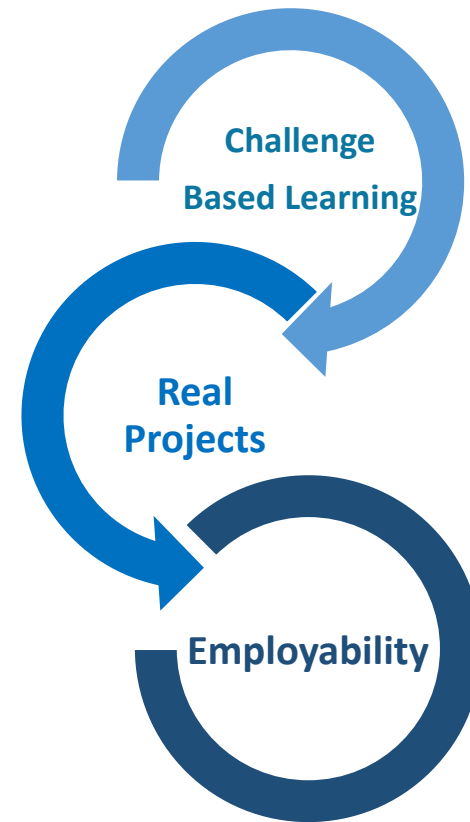
Employability and cross-border challenges on the blue economy on Basque Aquitaine Coastline

TARGET: Higher education Students (Multidisciplinary)

MAIN CHALLENGE : Plastic Pollution

RIGHT TO STAY by:

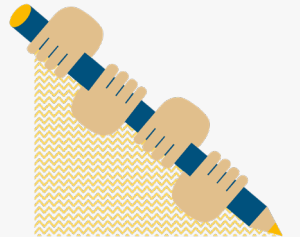
- ★ Students training and upskilling through real projects between University-social partners and companies
- ★ Matching skills with territory needs and SDG education.
- ★ Matching students aspirations and skills with opportunities in crossborder area
- ★ Strengthening intercultural and multilingual identity (2 countries- 4 languages)



2 Years 2020-2021
266.000 €

Anna Maria Czarny Hanse Parlament e.V

ProsperBSR project financed by Interreg
Baltic Sea Region





Prosper BSR

PROMOTING PERSPECTIVES FOR PROMISING POTENTIAL WORKFORCE
IN THE BALTIC SEA REGION

Build Bridges/Networks



Shared mission:
Refugee integration in the
labour market - right to belong



UAB Transekspedicija - LT



- 138 foreigners work for the transport company UAB Transekspedicija
- 1/3 are Ukrainians
- Although the Deputy General Director of the company, admits that the **multi-ethnic team poses many challenges, he says that the quality of work makes up for them.**



©Transekspedicija

Kekava Foods Company - LV



©Kekava Foods

- 26 Ukrainian refugees employed since the beginning of the war
- employed as meat processing equipment operators, poultry farming employees, food production operators
- such integration partially solves the shortages of labour and helps refugees **to adapt quicker and become active members of society and economy.**

AWE Academy For Women Entrepreneurs - PL

- launched to support Ukrainian Women – empowering them **to move forward with their entrepreneurial initiatives in their new reality.**



©Polish Chamber of Commerce

Build Bridges/Networks



Shared mission:
Refugee integration in the
labour market – together

- **Raised awareness in 49 institutions in 9 countries**
- **Signed 24 Memorandums of Understanding**





interreg
Baltic Sea Region



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VILNIUS
PREKYBOS, PRAMONĖS
IR AMATŲ RŪMAI



RESILIENT ECONOMIES AND COMMUNITIES

Prosper BSR

Internationals' employment in Lithuania: challenges and opportunities

Deimantė Vilčińskaite
Export Development Manager

IE EXPERTS FORUM | IBIS Vilnius Centre
2024 June 5



VILNIUS IS MY CITY

International
Community Festival

August 24

15:30
Bernardine
Garden

Go Vilnius

Co-funded by
the European Union



Vilnius prekybos, pramonės ir amatų rūmai updated the event cover photo in
Karjeros mugė "Land a job in Vilnius 3.0".
March 29, 2023

Career Fair for international talents
**LAND a job
in Vilnius 3.0**

International
HouseVilnius

April 18,
09:30 - 14:00

Radisson Blue Hotel Lietuva,
Konstitucijos pr. 20

International
HouseVilnius



VILNIUS
PREKYBOS, PRAMONĖS
IR AMATŲ RŪMAI

interreg
Baltic Sea Region



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GO! 2025
NOVA GORICA-GORIZIA

Photo credits: © The Vilnius Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts, Lithuania

© The Latvian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Latvia

Interreg



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the European Union

- We developed a training programme for Business Support Organisation Representatives
- Prosper BSR APP – free to download

Google Store



Apple Store



Prosper

Promoting Perspectives for promising
potential workforce in the Baltic Sea Region



Join us in bridging opportunities

Chapter 3

The Grand Finale of Prosper BSR

It's not only about employment—it's about **dignity, belonging, and the opportunity to thrive**.

This is how the Baltic Sea Region and Europe grows stronger transnationally, by providing these opportunities; together, city by city, nation by nation.



© Ingrida Butkevičiūtė

Keynotes from Cristina Igoa.

Interreg POCTEFA

- **Bottom-up programme:** skills strategy built on **territory needs**.
- **Three pillars:**
 1. **Cross-border education & training.** Cooperation between universities and vocational institutions; aligning education with long-term labour market demand.
 2. **Languages** → multilingualism as a key competitiveness factor; low levels of French/Spanish limit mobility and cooperation.
 3. **Digitalisation** → innovation and accessibility to strengthen labour market integration.
- **Concrete actions:** projects to overcome administrative obstacles (e.g. recognition of qualifications, curricula, CVs); support for mobility.
- **Overall vision:** build an integrated, dynamic cross-border labour market where young people have opportunities to stay; cultural and linguistic diversity seen as a strength, not a barrier.
- **Bottom line:** promoting skills means not only training professionals but also creating cross-border citizens.

Keynotes from Ruxandra Tuțuianu_Interreg ROHU

Achievements (2014–2020): 37,000+ people trained; focus on green/circular economy, agri-food, health, tourism, R&D; employment rate exceeded target.

Current focus: Building an integrated cross-border skills ecosystem (universities, labour agencies, employment platforms).

Priorities: Youth & women, tackling labour market mismatches, future-oriented skills.

3 lessons learned:

1. *Start early* → career guidance in schools.
2. *Train to demand* → align with local sector needs.
3. *Cooperate to accelerate* → cross-border exchange strengthens impact.

Bottom line: Helping people **stay in the region** by turning local potential into real careers.

Keynotes from Caitriona Mullan

- **Goal:** skills for a **thriving cross-border labour market**.
- **Mobility essential:** social security, taxation, incentives, and employer agility.
- **Obstacles real:** become visible only when cooperating → use **B-Solutions & EU frameworks**.
- **No perfect model:** all regions face barriers, but tools exist.
- **Competitiveness:** 30% of EU citizens live in border regions → mobility is key.
- **Call to action:** build on regional strengths, tackle obstacles, and move toward a **single market for skills**.

Boosting Synergies _ From Strategy to Practice

Dag Willmann

BRIDGES Project
**Erasmus+ (Centre of
Vocational Excellence)**

Adrijana Hodak

TalentJourney Project
**Erasmus+ (Centre of
Vocational Excellence)**

Michiel Berrevoets

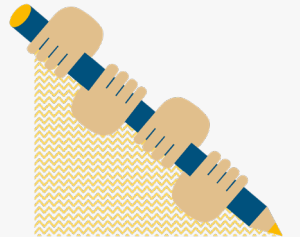
ESF+ DG EMPL
European Commission

Edyta Karłowicz

**Talent Booster
Mechanism**
DG REGIO
European Commission

Dag Willmann

BRIDGES Project. Erasmus+ (CoVE)





bridges

CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL
EXCELLENCE

Dag Willmann,
Centre manager at:



Trøndelag
County Authority

Key results



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European Union

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The project idea:

VET providers as
HUB's for:

VET School /
Industry
collaboration

More responsive
and high-quality
VET delivery

Regional
development,
innovation and
entrepreneurship

Key deliverables:

- Work-based integration of learning innovation
- Framework of shared learning outcomes
- Aquaculture work-based learning resources
- VET responsiveness towards industry needs models
- VET enhanced regional development, innovation and entrepreneurship



- 12 partners
- 11 WPs
- 40 deliverables

Continuous communication and feedback (stakeholders):

- Aquaculture Skills Foresight Forum(s)
- Company micro-forums
- Industry and Education Partnerships
- Workshops and Conferences
- Education Exhibition Trade Fair
- Innovation Camps (organized by VET schools)

The overall project result:

- Regional delivery of high-quality VET
 - Innovation/entrepreneurship guidance.
- Transferable to European VET*

bridges
AN AQUACULTURE
INITIATIVE

Piloting:
Testing/validation
of the key
deliverables.

Quality assurance:
Driven by industry needs.

Evaluation:
Descriptions and
evaluation of the key
deliverables.



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County Authority



bridges
LEARNING OUTCOMES



**Shared / Harmonized Aquaculture VET
learning outcomes.**

**Shared Aquaculture VET training
materials.**



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bridges
ENTREPRENEURSHIP



bridges
INNOVATION

Toolbox for SME Innovation Ecosystems.

Innovation Camps

Industry Micro Forums

Aquaculture Week / Research Days

• The «Bridgehead» Conference



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European Union



Aquaculture Skills Foresight Forums (ASFF).

- Iceland, Norway and Sweden/Finland

Industry / VET School collaboration

Industry Letter of Intent



Funded by the
European Union

The partnership:



Fisktækniskóli Íslands
Icelandic College of Fisheries



HÁSKÓLINN
Á HÓLUM



Easy Learning Solutions



SALMAR



Passion for Salmon



Trøndelag
County Authority



ammattiopisto
Livia



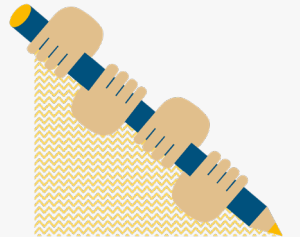
GULLMARSGYMNASIET
CAMPUS VÄST-LYSEKIL



Funded by
the European Union

Adrijana Hodak

TalentJourney Project. Erasmus+ (CoVE)



School centre Nova Gorica

The Centre of Vocational Excellence

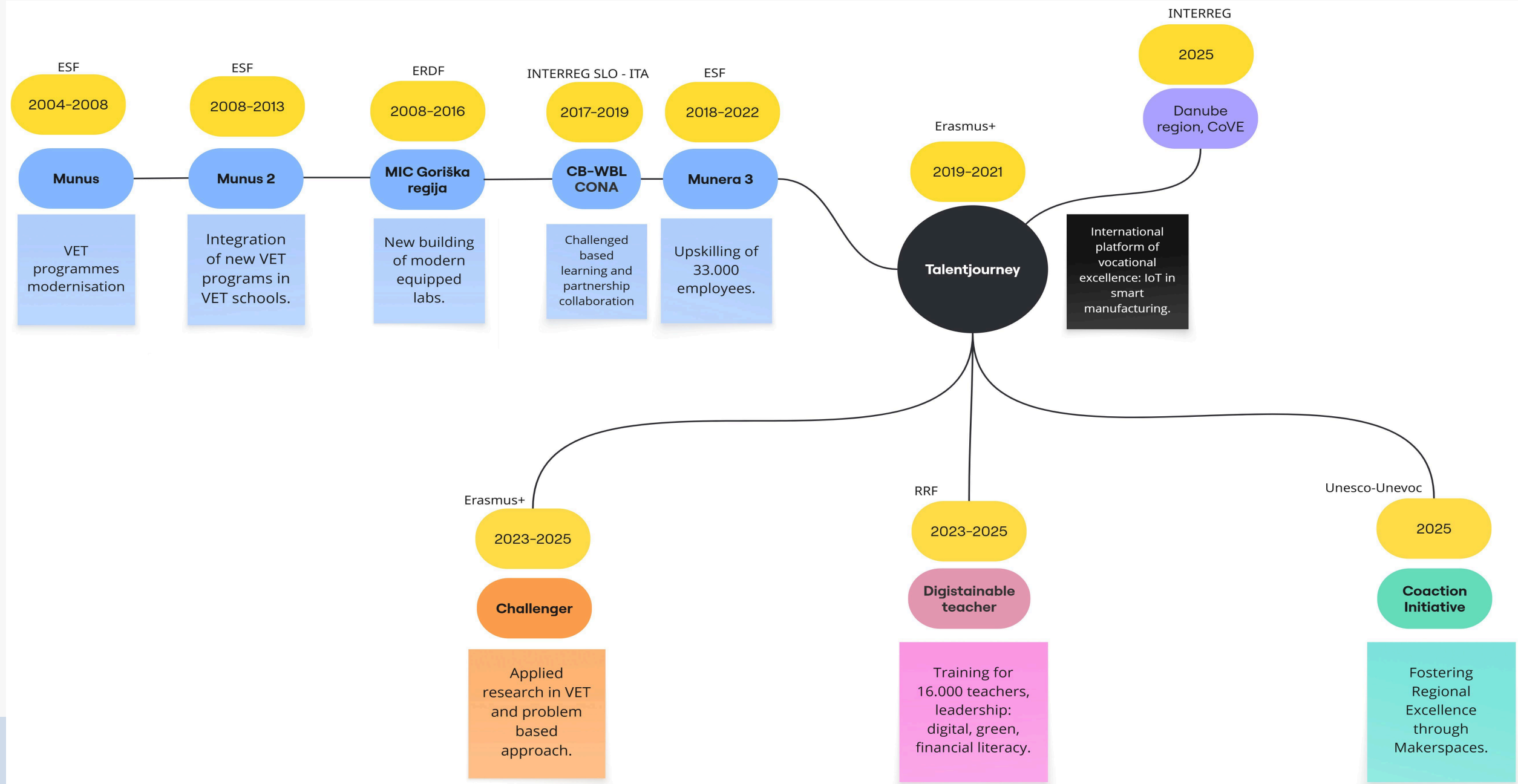


- **3rd** biggest TVET centre in Slovenia
- **3250** VET students, higher VET students, adult learners
- **310** employees (220 teachers)

SCNG Networks:

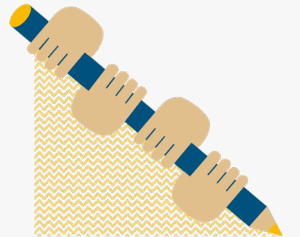
- Consortium of Slovenian biggest TVET centers
- Member of EUproVET
- CoP CoVE
- ETF ENE network of excellence
- ETF GRETA network of excellence
- Unesco-Unevoc Center
- Network of 650 employers

School centre Nova Gorica road to vocational excellence



Louise Reid

DG EMPL. ESF+ and Cohesion Policy



Keynotes

ESF+: €62.2bn fund for **employment, education, inclusion**; key link to the **Union of Skills** (STEM, VET, reskilling, recognition, integration of non-EU professionals).

Synergies with Interreg:

- Align programming & invite MAs to monitoring committees.
- Combine funding → ESF+ for training/reforms, Interreg for cross-border cooperation.
- Joint calls & complementary projects.

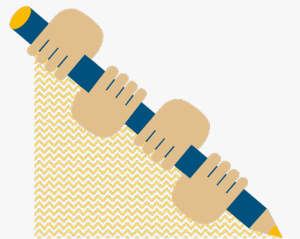
Upscaling (post-2027):

- Interreg pilots can be scaled via ESF+ calls, monitoring committees, ESF+ Committee.
- Communities of Practice (open to projects & stakeholders) as a bridge for sharing and expansion.

Bottom line: ESF+ provides **scale & reforms**; Interreg provides **territorial cooperation** → together, stronger impact on skills.

Edyta Karłowicz

DG REGIO. Talent Booster Mechanism



Useful Links 1

INTERREG UNITY PROJECT https://interreg-rohu.eu/en/project_library/unity-fostering-sustainable-cross-border-cooperation-fo...

INTERREG PROSPER PROJECT <https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/prosper-bsr/>

INTERREG BRIDGES PROJECT <https://www.bridges.eu/index.php/>

CoVE PROJECTS:

- TALENTJOURNEY - HUB VET4EU2 <https://hub.vet4eu2.eu/blog/2021/04/27/talentjourney/> Talentjourney is the Platform for vocational excellence in the field of IOT in smart manufacturing. It consists of partners from Slovenia, Italy, Germany, Finland, Estonia...
- Munus 1,2 <https://munus2.scng.si/>
- Mic <https://mic.scng.si/>
- CB-WBL https://2014-2020.ita-slo.eu/sl/CB_WBL
- Cona <https://2014-2020.ita-slo.eu/en/all-news/cona-final-event-project-15122020>
- Munera 3 <https://www.munera3.si/> **NE DELA!!!**
- <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/UNEVOC+Publications/lang=en/akt=detail/qs=6653>
- Talentjourney <https://talentjourney.scv.si/>
- Challenger <https://challengerproject.eu/>
- Digitrajni učitelj <https://digitrajni.si/>
- UNEVOC Coaction Initiative <https://coaction-initiative.splet.arnes.si/>
- Cop COVEs <https://www.copcoves.eu/>

<https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/UNEVOC+Publications/lang=en/akt=detail/qs=6653> UNEVOC Publications

Useful Links 2

The Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) organises an info session on Thursday 2 October (11:00-12:00, CET) More information on the call for new b-solutions' cases: [Call 'New Cases' | b-solutionsproject](#) as well as about the other cases selected, including on skills (see the labour market and education section): [Selected cases b-solutions 3.0](#)
<https://www.aebr.eu/strategic-b-solutions-conference-cross-border-labour-mobility-and-european-integration-in-the-western-balkans/>

Check out the ESF+ TN platform shown in the video!
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/communities-and-networks/harnessing-talent-platform_en

You can find some results of the TBM through [Testimonials - Talent Booster Mechanism Beneficiaries](#)

ESF Communities of Practice

- Link to homepage [Home - SI+](#)
- ESF+ EES CoP [Employment, Education, and Skills - SI+](#)
- Link to sign up [Knowledge sharing - SI+](#)

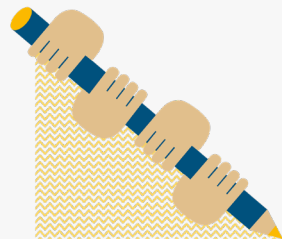


No region left behind.
No person left behind.
Improving Skills is Europe's investment
in people

More information about the More Social Europe
Network

**Thank you for
your attention!**

www.interact.eu



Please share your opinion with us

