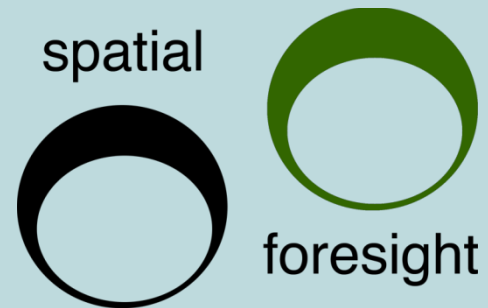


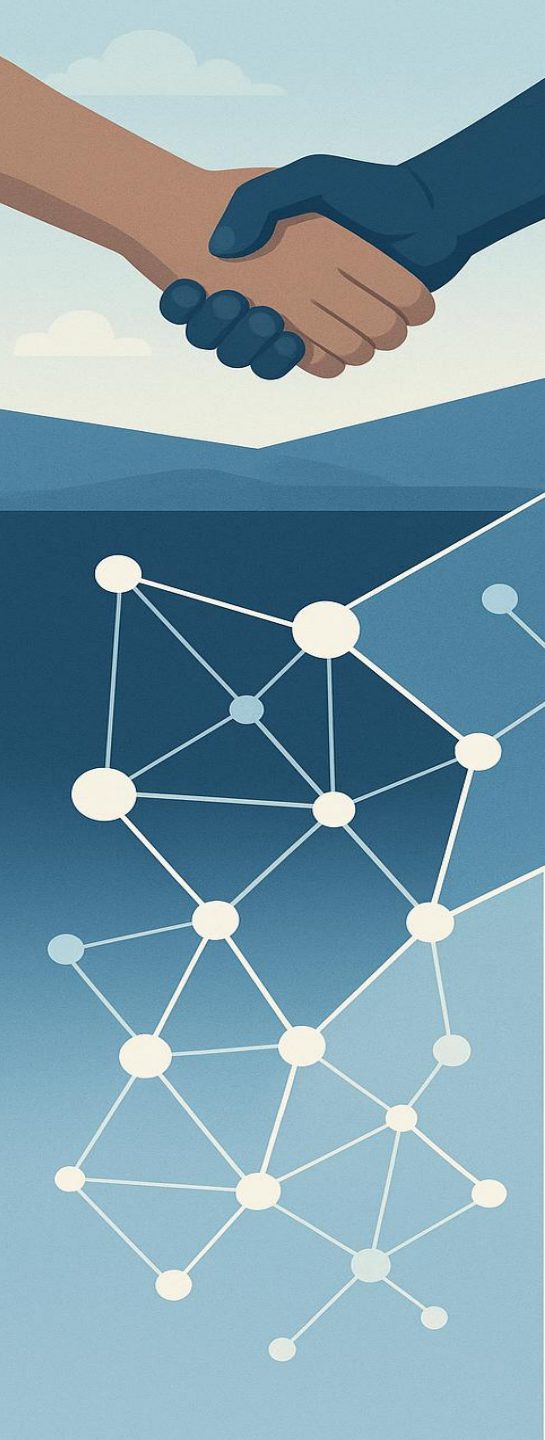
Small Projects in Interreg

Kai Böhme & Erik Gløersen

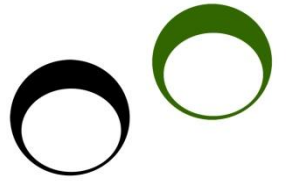
03 October 2025



territorial policy support and [research](#)



What we mean by



Small project = project financed via SSP or SPF

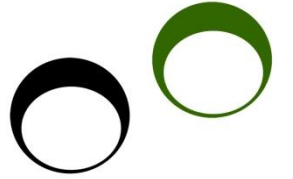
- **SSP = Small Scale Projects**
managed by MA / JTS
(as all other projects)
- **SPF = Small Project Fund**
implemented by a designated body
(fund manager)

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Why small projects?

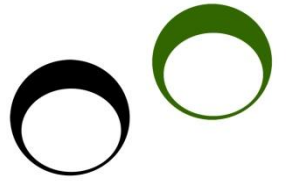


Rationale



- Building trust through people-to-people action
- Filling structural gaps in participation
- Mobilising civil society (e.g. youth) and newcomers
- Responding to regional needs with flexibility
- Implementing projects fully financed using SCOs
- Capitalise on results from previous 'regular projects'
- Bring new players on board
 - Smaller players require a specific type of projects
 - Stepping stones to introduce small players to Interreg

SSP and SPF



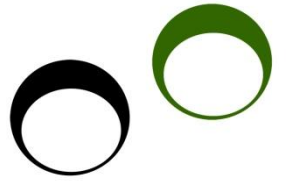
Small scale projects (SSPs)	Small project funds (SPFs)
Rationales	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater control and programme steering• Consistency with Interreg project logic• Simpler implementation• Flexibility in addressing programme objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced administrative burden for programme authorities• Better outreach to small organisations• More flexible in funding allocation• Mitigate decommitment risks
Added value (top 5)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small project partners capacity building• People to people actions• Strengthening cooperation networks• Addressing specific local needs• Citizen engagement in cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting Small organisation and newcomers• Small project partners capacity building• Strengthening cooperation networks• Citizen engagement in cooperation• Testing and piloting new ideas

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Lessons learnt & recommendations



Clarify understanding, aim & strategic purpose of small projects



- Both SSPs and SPFs widely used
- Usually, more applications than funding available
- However, unclear definition and purpose

➤ **EU:** Clarify understanding of the purpose and target audience of small project approaches

➤ **OP:** Finetune the concept and purpose of small project approaches

Smaller financial size

- Micro projects (EUR 1 to 4 999),
- Mini projects (EUR 5 000 to 99 999)
- Small projects (EUR 100 000 to 249 999)
- Medium projects (EUR 250 000 to 899 999)
- No longer small (above EUR 900 000)

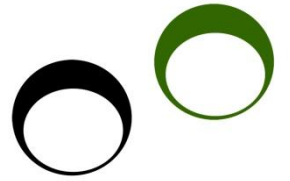
Shorter duration

Less partners

Types of partners focus on

- civil society, NGOs, local & regional authorities, education institutions, cultural organisations, local communities

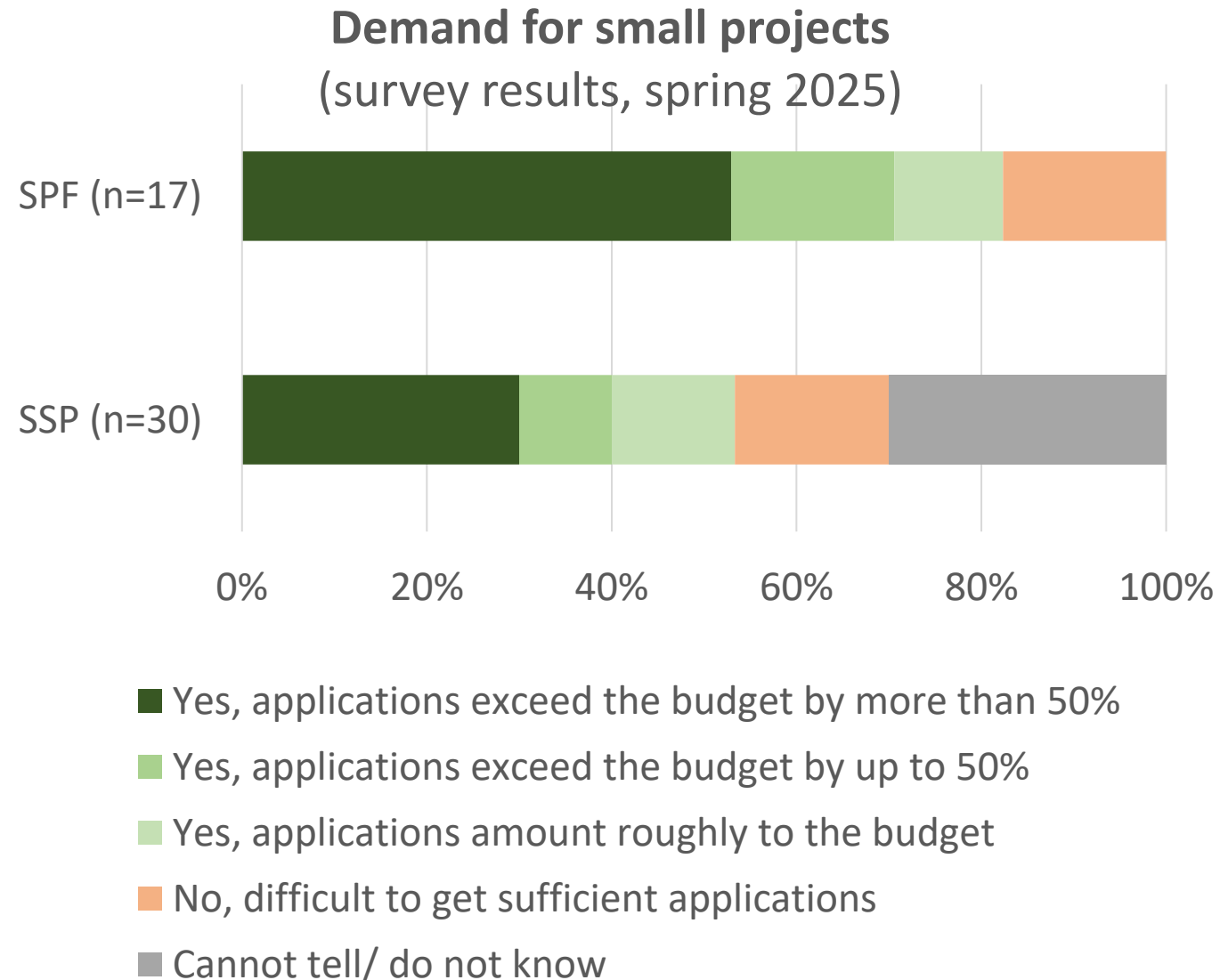
Express support for small projects – Incentivise rather than mandate



Both SSPs and SPFs widely embraced as innovative, place-based programme management strategy

But some programmes cautious due to administrative complexity or thematic rigidity

- **EU:** Incentivise small project approaches
- **INTERACT:** Provide guidance to programme authorities
- **OP:** Approach small projects with a clear objective and focus



Acknowledge the strategic role of intermediates



Better local networks and knowledge of SPF managers and SSP sub-programme intermediates

Facilitate the outreach and support of smaller players and newcomers

- **EU:** Support small project approaches in territorial tools
- **INTERACT:** Provide guidance on and for intermediates (incl. SPF managers)
- **OP:** Consider involving sub-programme level intermediaries

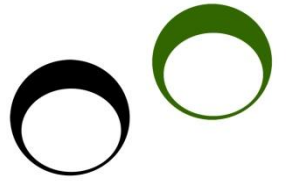
PROs SPF managers & intermediates

- Familiarity with local conditions & players
- Outreach & information in the area
- Support of application processes
- Capacity building for project partners
- Often act as 'one-stop shops'
- Reduced admin. for Joint Secretariat

CONs SPF managers & intermediates

- Administrative costs
- Potential conflicts of interest
- Potentially reduced transparency and control by programme players

Link to functional area approaches



Small projects bring cross-border functional areas come to life

SPFs & SSPs as tools to implement cross-border functional area strategies

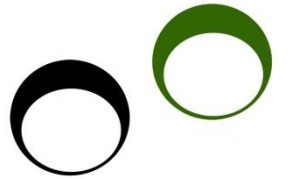
- **EU:** Advocate functional area approaches in cooperation with JRC & ESPON
- **INTERACT:** Provide guidance on functional area approaches in cross-border cooperation
- **OP:** Involve sub-programme level intermediates with functional area focus

SPFs & SSP (and others)

when tailored to sub-programme areas

- Closer to citizens and local context
- Can combine thematic focus and territorial logic
- Better aligned with emerging or existing functional territories
- Allow for more context-sensitive project selection
- Facilitate coordination among actors facing shared challenges
- Can address specific socio-cultural and geographical realities

Improve support structures



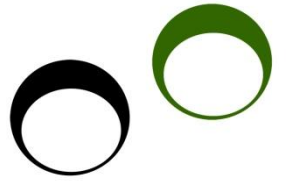
Players working with small projects (both in SSPs & SPFs) point at needs and potential to increase admin. capacities and reduce admin. burden / uncertainties

- **INTERACT:** Knowledge sharing on use of SCOs for small-scale Interreg projects
- **OP:** Facilitate exchange among intermediates active in the programme or across thematically or geographically related programmes

Actions to strengthen the implementation of small projects

- Knowledge/experience sharing for SPF managers and/or other intermediaries,
- More 'off-the-shelf' templates for small project-specific SCOs in cross-border contexts
- More experience sharing on state aid and VAT treatment for SPFs
- Simplified reporting requirements for small-scale projects (e.g. JEMS)
- Increased administrative budget ceilings, particularly where SPF managers undertake extensive outreach and support activities

Recognising administrative costs and political value



Small projects do not entail small workloads

Small projects are about political will to bring Europe and territorial cooperation closer to people

- **EU:** Emphasise reduction of admin. workload for programme secretariats and intermediates
- **INTERACT:** Provide guidance on measuring impact and added value in relation to admin. costs
- **OP:** Develop indicators that can easily be collected to illustrate the impact of small projects

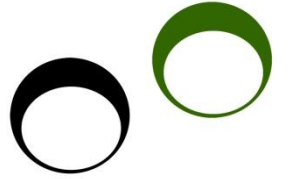
Little quantitative evidence on the added value of small projects (e.g. youth)

Mostly qualitative impacts, incl. bringing new and small players into cooperation

Impact Assessment of CrossRoads SPF

- SPF of Interreg Vlaanderen-Nederland targeting SMEs
- Every EUR 1 of ERDF co-financing is estimated to generate EUR 5 in private investment, job creation and export growth
- Added value extends well beyond SPF duration: 75% of participating firms intend to continue cross-border collaboration after the project formally ends

Capitalisation and future outlook



To maximise the impact of SSPs and SPFs, capitalisation at the EU level must be strengthened

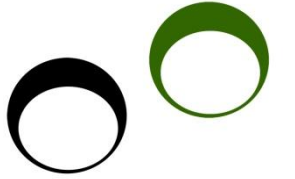
- **EU:** Enhance communication on the impact of small projects incl. long-term value of small-scale cooperation, trust-building, small players involvement, and civic engagement in cross-border regions
- **INTERACT:** Support programmes on how to engage final recipients and project partners in capitalisation actions

Small territorial cooperation
bring Europe closer to citizens

Communication of results
mainly at programme or sub-programme level

Hardly any EU-wide communication on the aims, achievements and amount of people involved

Lessons learnt



- Clarify the understanding, aim and strategic purpose of small projects
- Express support for small projects – incentivise rather than mandate
- Acknowledge the strategic role of intermediates and/or SPF management
- Link to functional area approaches
- Improve support structures
- Recognising administrative costs and political value
- Capitalisation and future outlook



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