

#Interreg

Interreg GO!

27>28 March 2025

Gorizia / Nova Gorica



Financing Research and Innovation | Interreg's added value

Welcome!

Kulturni Dom Gorizia – Italy

28th March 2025

Welcome address

Blagovestka Riiser | EU Commission

Kulturni Dom Gorizia – Italy

28th March 2025

Cooperation is a driver for innovation.

Interreg is about cooperation and mutual learning.

Sharing experience helps avoid common pitfalls, spark fresh ideas, and speed up the transfer of innovation.

In a world of rapid geopolitical, technological and social changes, Europe must stay ahead by building and investing in resilient regional innovation ecosystems.

We need a green transition that is both economically and socially sustainable.

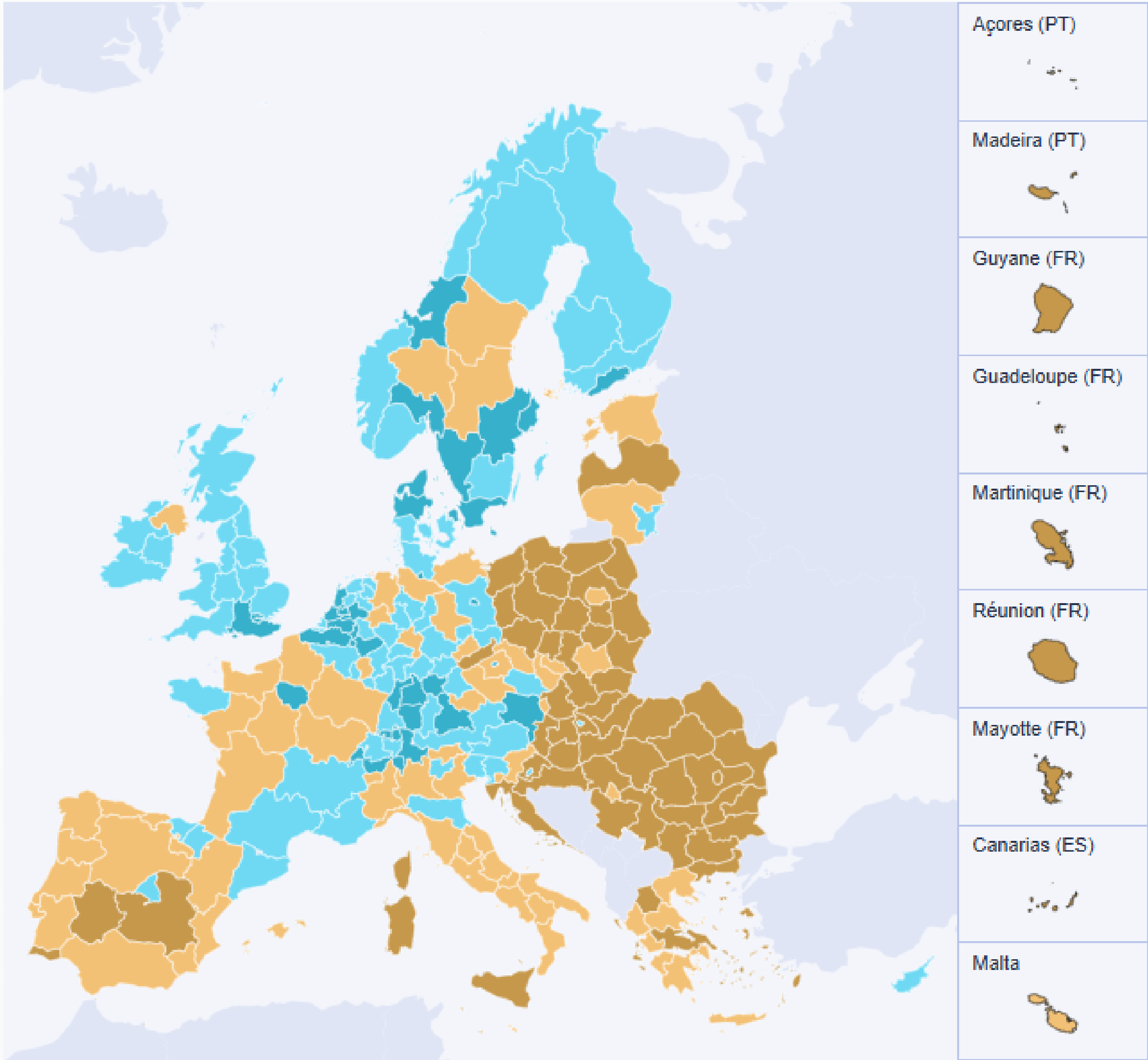
Through Interreg, we support applied research, strengthen regional innovation ecosystems, and deliver place-based solutions with long-term impact.

Setting the scene on Interreg's contribution to research and innovation

Valeria Cibrario | Interact



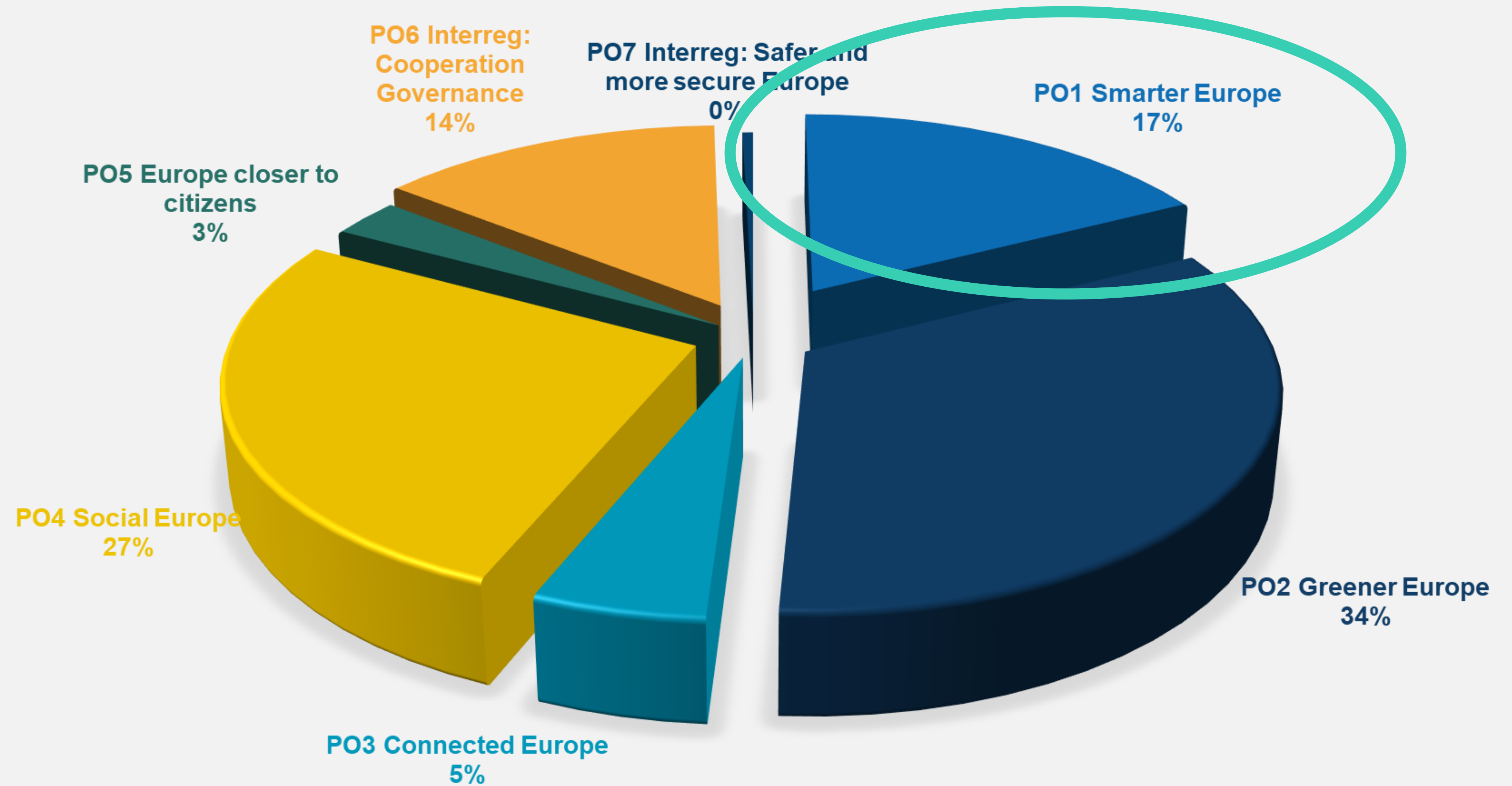
Regional Innovation Scoreboard (2023)



Innovation Leaders	
	Hovedstaden
	Etelä-Suomi
	Oberbayern
	Stockholm
	Berlin
	Zürich
	Karlsruhe
	Midtjylland
	Ticino
	Västsverige
	Nordwestschweiz
	Noord-Holland
	Hamburg
	Sydsverige
	Utrecht
	London
	Zuid-Holland
	Ostschweiz
Strong Innovators	
Moderate Innovators	
Emerging Innovators	

Administrative boundaries: © EuroGeographics © UN-FAO © Turkstat
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the European Union.

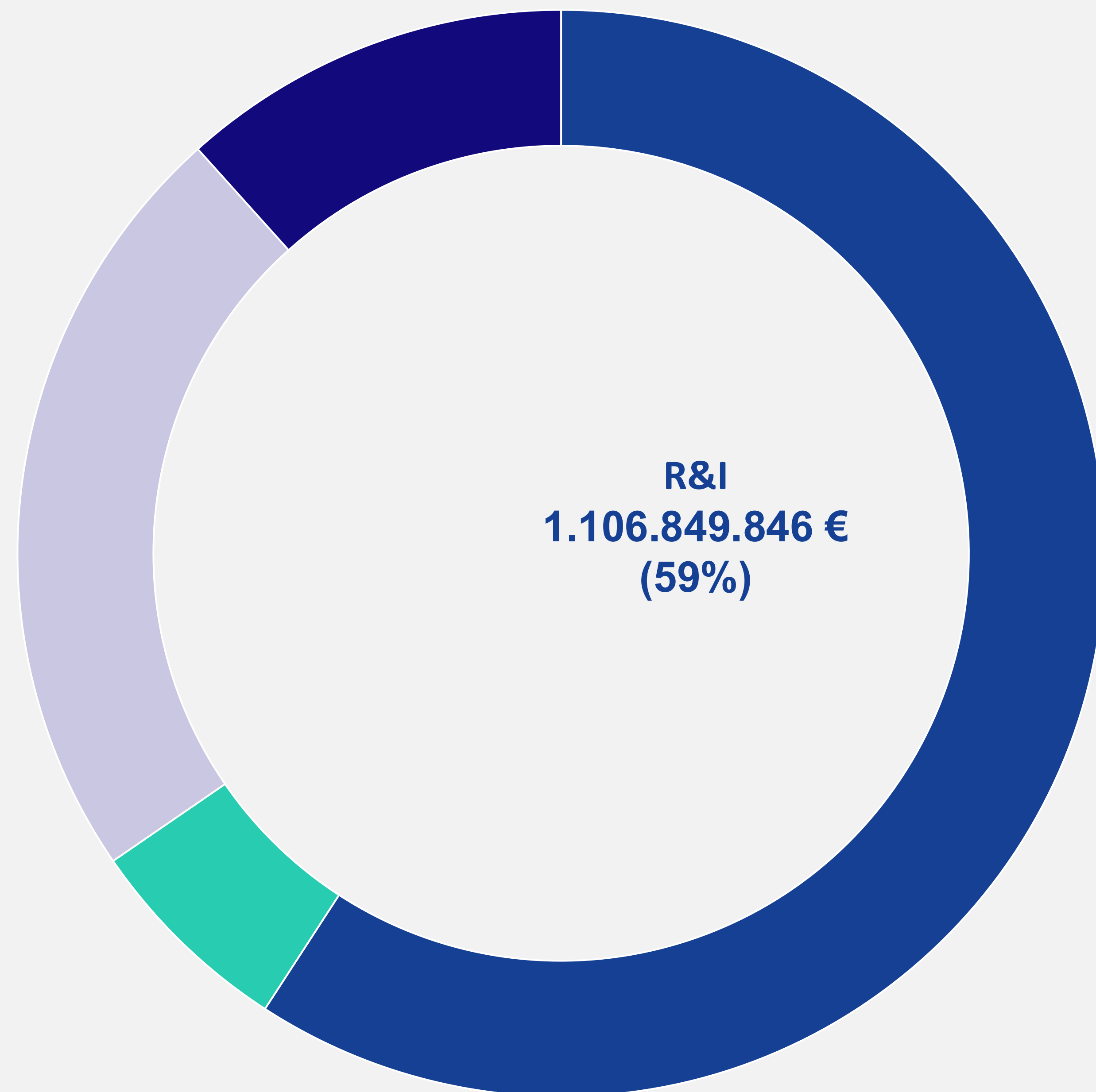
EU Budget allocation



Support to research and innovation in Interreg – EU Budget

A Smarter Europe Policy Objective

“a more **competitive** and **smarter** Europe by promoting **innovative** and smart economic **transformation** and regional **ICT** connectivity”



State of the art 2021-27 period

934 selected projects
(579 in R&I)

56 Interreg programmes
(46 in R&I)

52%
of available funds
(59% in R&I)

1,938 beneficiaries (Keep.eu)
(1,269 in R&I)



Want to stay up-to-date on this topic?

- ✓ Join our Smarter Europe Thematic community! More info here: <https://www.interact-eu.net/synergies-and-cooperation/policy-networks/a-smarter-europe-po1>
- ✓ Follow Interact and Interreg on social media
- ✓ Look up interreg.eu ([Interreg GO!: Shaping the future of cooperation - Interreg EU](#))

Discussion

- **Moderator: Ilze Ciganzka** | Interact
- **Laura Bobarnac** | Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin
- **Elena Borghetti** | Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen
- **Marta Śleżak-Warszycka** | Interreg Baltic Sea Region

**This is how we do it transnationally.
Evolving for impact.**

Marta Śleżak-Warszycka | Interreg Baltic Sea Region



Interreg Baltic Sea Region's Journey Evolving for impact.

Until 2006
Spatial
Perspectives

2007-2013
Support to
business
structures

2014-2020
Smart
specialisation
& Innovation
infrastructure

2021-2027
Resilient
Economies &
Communities

Post 2027
Resilience,
Security &
Democracy?

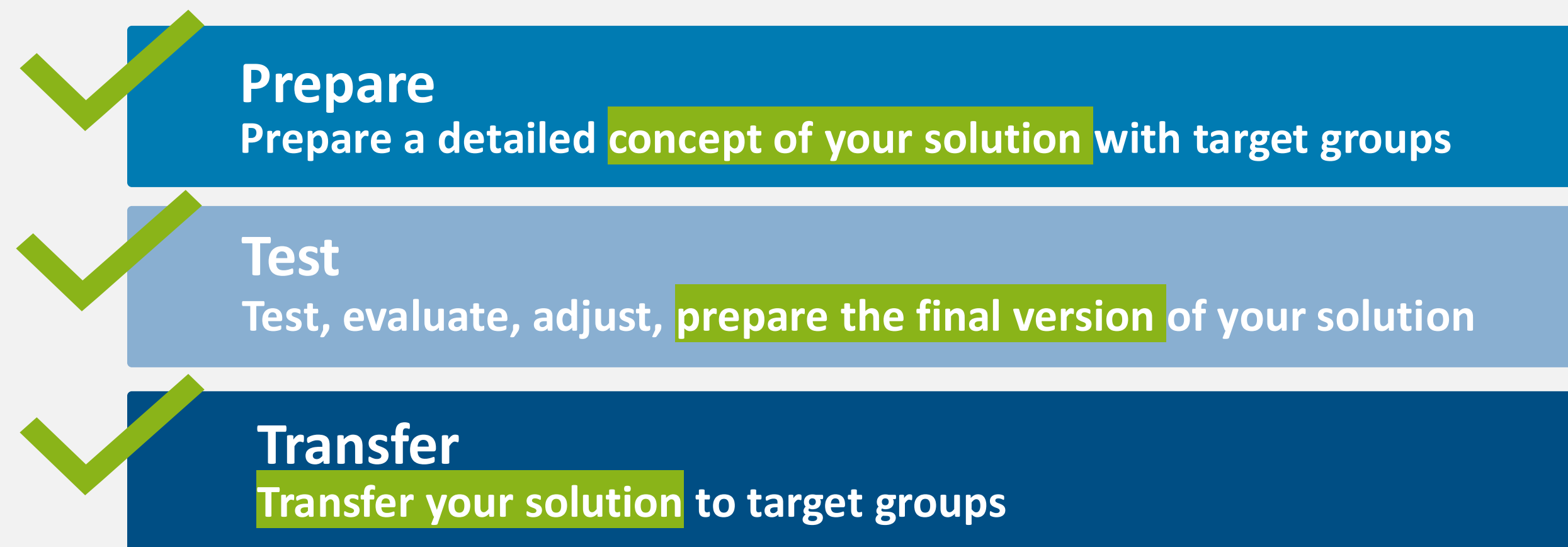


**This is how we do it transnationally.
Delivery mechanism matters.**



Interreg Baltic Sea Region's Journey

Delivery mechanism matters.



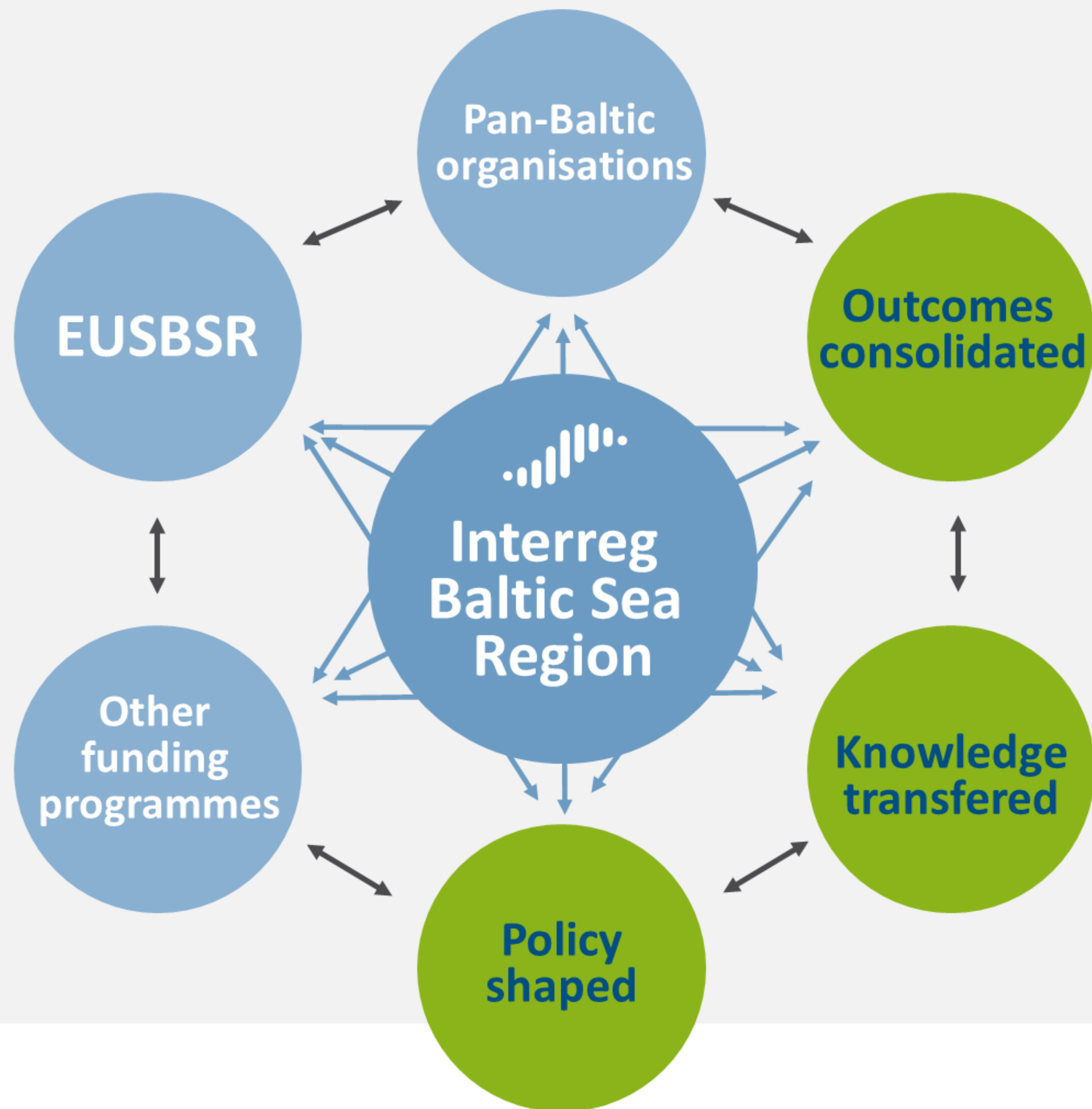
* The transfer phase has to be sufficiently long. Transfer should begin immediately, with proper engagement of target groups from the outset rather than only once the solution is ready. This approach increases the likelihood of long-term use.



Platforms of solutions.

Creating thematic synergies
across EU funds for practitioners and
policy-makers.





Connect your project idea to the macro-region!

Find contacts at
interreg-baltic.eu/gateway

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by
the European Union

Talk to the coordinators
of the EU Strategy for
the Baltic Sea Region.



**This is how we do it transnationally.
What we say is what we do.**





Some build
bridges.

**We bridge
the gaps in
knowledge,
technologies
& governance.**

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by
the European Union

**Interreg. This is how
we do it transnationally.**



We're not
construction
workers.

But we build
networks so
people can work
together as if there
were no borders.

Interreg
Baltic Sea Region



Co-funded by
the European Union

Interreg. This is how
we do it transnationally.

Elena Borghetti | Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen

Combining top-down and bottom-up approach for the support of innovation.

Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen programme is the 2nd largest cross-border programme in terms of ERDF funding for this period.

Its thematic focus was defined through a combination of top-down analysis of regional smart specialisation strategies and bottom-up stakeholder engagement. This led to the selection of five topics with strong cross-border potential: materials, energy, health, mobility, and nutrition, all framed by the green and digital transitions.

The programme supports innovation projects that go beyond basic research, targeting those with a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) between 3 and 8, helping to turn experimental concepts into market-ready products and services.

It also strengthens the innovation ecosystem through diverse forms of support, including a strategic operation: [*Crossroads*](#).

This initiative supports SME cooperation in the areas of circular economy, sustainability, digitalisation, and health, offering tailored advice, matchmaking, and funding.

Projects must be at an advanced stage of development (TRL 5–8) and focus on product, process, or service innovation.

To further encourage SME participation, the programme offers the option to apply for pre-financing.

Laura Bobarnac | Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin

Building innovation networks and engaging region's talent to drive innovation.

The Black Sea Programme is supporting innovation for the first time in 2021 – 2027 funding period.

The key strength of the Black Sea region is its rich and talented human capital – in universities, research institutes, and private companies.

The programme focuses on enhancing cooperation among these actors to strengthen or build cross-border networks.

Networks that could drive innovation and knowledge sharing and can facilitate the uptake of the new technologies and in this way enhancing the competitiveness of local industries and contributing to economic growth.

Support to innovation is also a learning and capacity building element for the programme itself.

Discussion



Added value of Interreg financing in innovation.

One of the discussed points addressed the role of financing innovation projects in Interreg, recognising that all projects work on innovative solutions in some way.

Priority 1 places a strong focus on fostering innovation networks among small and medium-sized enterprises and strengthening their capacity to take up innovation processes. It is about working with and building on the existing SME ecosystem.

In the context of the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme, Priority 1 has also been seen to build the framework for innovation, providing the structures and connections that enable innovation to happen across borders.

Innovation projects require a much closer cooperation with the private sector compared to other thematic areas. While all projects may involve innovative elements, this priority stands out by emphasising the need for active collaboration between academia and businesses. Without this connection, there is a risk that project outcomes remain unused.

The Commission encouraged a broad understanding of innovation in Interreg. Stressing that innovation is not limited to research or product development – it includes process innovation, innovative actions, and the adaptation of existing solutions. This broader definition is particularly relevant for less developed and cross-border regions, where implementing or learning from pilots in other regions is itself a form of innovation. This flexible view allows regions to tailor innovation to their realities, with creativity in both project development and implementation.

Moreover, Interreg has a significant role in building capacity for enlargement.

The discussion also recognised that the thematic framework, as defined in the Regulation, has always allowed to implement the programmes in line with stakeholders' needs. The framework has evolved and remains flexible enough to serve the stakeholder needs in the best way.

Complementarity of Interreg financing in innovation.

When drafting the Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen Programme's strategy, complementarities with other EU instruments – ERDF, ESF+, and the Agricultural Fund – alongside other Interreg programmes involving programme partner regions were analysed. While programmes share objectives with mainstream programmes, overlaps were minimal due to differences in geographical scope and project type.

Interreg brings a clear cross-border and international dimension, focusing on collaboration and smaller-scale actions, while mainstream funds operate more locally and support larger infrastructure. This creates complementarity, where Interreg can feed into and be scaled by national programmes, at the same time giving an opportunity for internationalisation for local partners.

Interreg Baltic Sea Region introduced the instrument of platforms as part of programme's commitment to fostering synergies with other funding programmes in the area. This has been achieved with strong support and engagement from other cross-border and transnational programmes in the

region, as well as other instruments. Index co-developed by Interact supports this effort by offering a consolidated information on project applications and approved projects in one place, presenting synergies in a highly visual way. However, the expectations to cover all ERDF programmes in synergy exercises is too demanding, given programmes scale – especially when mainstream programmes show little commitment to the process.

The Black Sea Programme operates within a broader ecosystem of funding and initiatives in the Black Sea Basin. To ensure complementarity and avoid overlaps, the programme was aligned with the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, a strategic framework focused on regional cooperation.

Guided by this agenda and its Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda, the programme targets areas where its funding can have the greatest impact – particularly in support of a competitive and innovative blue economy. This focus allows the Programme to support technological development in line with shared regional priorities.

Closing words

Egle Spudulyte | EU Commission

Interreg programmes add unique value to innovation support by focusing on territorial and cross-border dimensions. Unlike larger programmes such as Horizon Europe, Interreg enables the transfer of research outcomes and innovative solutions to local SMEs, tapping into regional and cross-border innovation ecosystems.

This localised and partnership-driven approach supports territorially rooted innovation, fosters upscaling of pilot actions, and encourages governance models suited to place-based needs. By using a broad definition of innovation and promoting the exchange of good practices, Interreg plays a key role in making innovation more accessible, applied, and embedded in local realities.

Study visit

Primorski tehnološki park

- Presentation of NANOregion
- Presentation of DIVA
- Presentation of the EUSAIR POPRI project at CreaPOINT
- Discussion with Ledluks representatives



Impressions



Cooperation works!

