

Interreg 
EUROPEAN UNION

BRAND STRATEGY MANUAL

mila: and **INTERact** 
EUROPEAN UNION



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INTRODUCTION

The Interreg brand strategy that follows was defined based on the results of:

- online research
- 1 workshop conducted with an advisory core group of programme representatives in Brussels on Sept. 26 and 27, 2019
- 2 surveys to programme representatives which each gathered 102 responses
- 1 online survey to partners of Interreg projects which gathered 1688 responses

This document is meant for internal use by Interreg programmes to provide background explanations and context to the Brand Narrative. This manual is addressed to the programmes' communication teams and anyone who may need to explain what Interreg is and does - whether in a press release, conference or any other instance. PLEASE DO NOT share this document publicly.

The "Interreg Brand Narrative" - on the other hand - has been developed as a ready-to-use communication tool that can be shared with the entire Interreg community and distributed among internal and external audiences.



HOW TO USE

This manual is NOT a communication strategy. We understand that each programme responds to very specific communication needs based on local cultures, partnerships, technical requirements, etc. This is your guide, the basis for you to build your communication strategy on and make sure that the **visual and verbal messages that you develop are aligned with the concepts and definitions established here.**

As we are working to build a community, increase our visibility and build the reputation of the programme, this strategy will become the backbone of all communication, be it to projects, partners or citizens. Indeed, it intends to serve 3 main purposes:

- 1. Help you create coherence in messages and align with other Interreg programmes on content creation**
- 2. Inspire and motivate you by reminding you of the big picture and keeping your eyes on the prize**
- 3. Help you reshape the way you communicate to improve how audiences perceive Interreg**



For practical tips on how to use this in your communication, keep an eye out for the yellow boxes with stars throughout the document.



WHAT IS INTERREG?



INTERREG IS MUCH MORE
THAN A FUNDING
INSTRUMENT*,
IT IS NOT JUST A TOOL,
IT IS A **COMMUNITY**

***FUNDING PROJECTS IS ESSENTIAL, BUT THAT IS JUST ONE OF THE MANY THINGS INTERREG DOES (see page 21)**



DEFINITION

INTERREG IS A COMMUNITY

Interreg brings together professionals, public representatives, and Interreg employees, united by a common set of values and a shared identity. Members of the Interreg community support and empower each other, learning from each other in order to fulfil a common mission and vision, under the guidance of EU Cohesion Policy.

**A COMMON
MISSION & VISION**

+

**COMMON VALUES
& BRAND IDENTITY**

+

**GUIDANCE &
LEADERSHIP
OF THE EU**

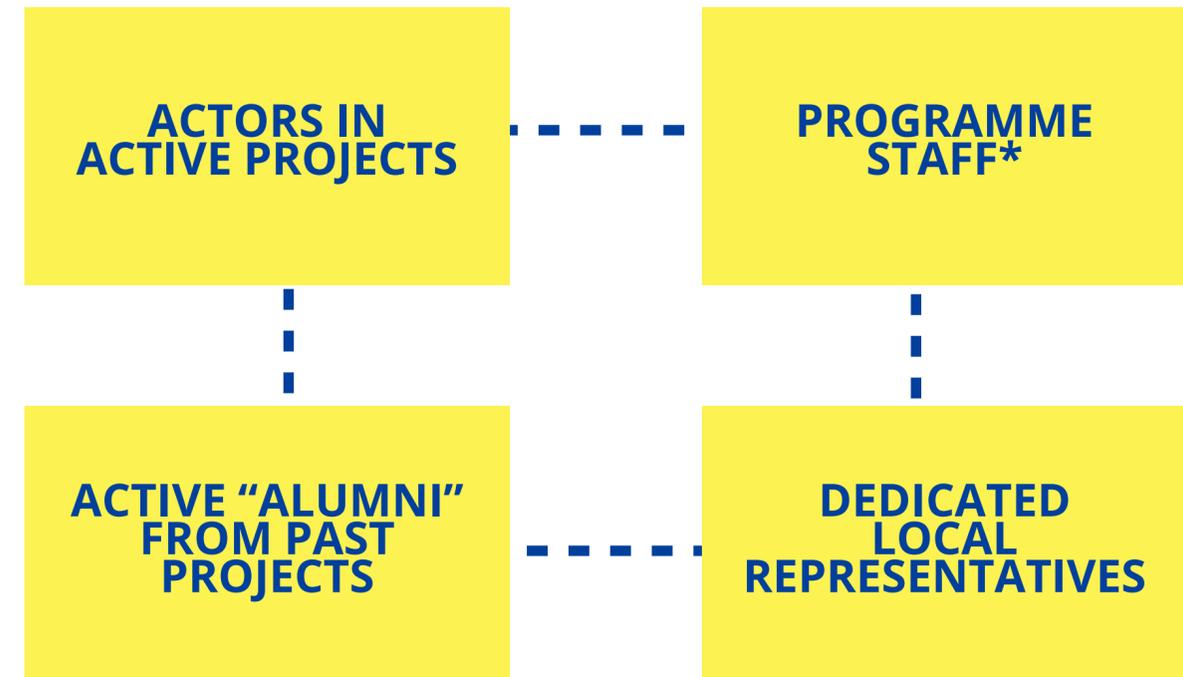
+

**REGULAR
ON+OFFLINE
INTERACTIONS**

WHO IS PART OF THE INTERREG COMMUNITY

While the number of Interreg's partners, providers and beneficiaries is vast, members of the Interreg community can be defined as:

**PROFESSIONALS WHO ACTIVELY
CONTRIBUTE TO INTERREG'S MISSION BY
WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS A COMMON
GOAL, BASED ON A SHARED SET OF VALUES,
UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE EU.**



*Namely:

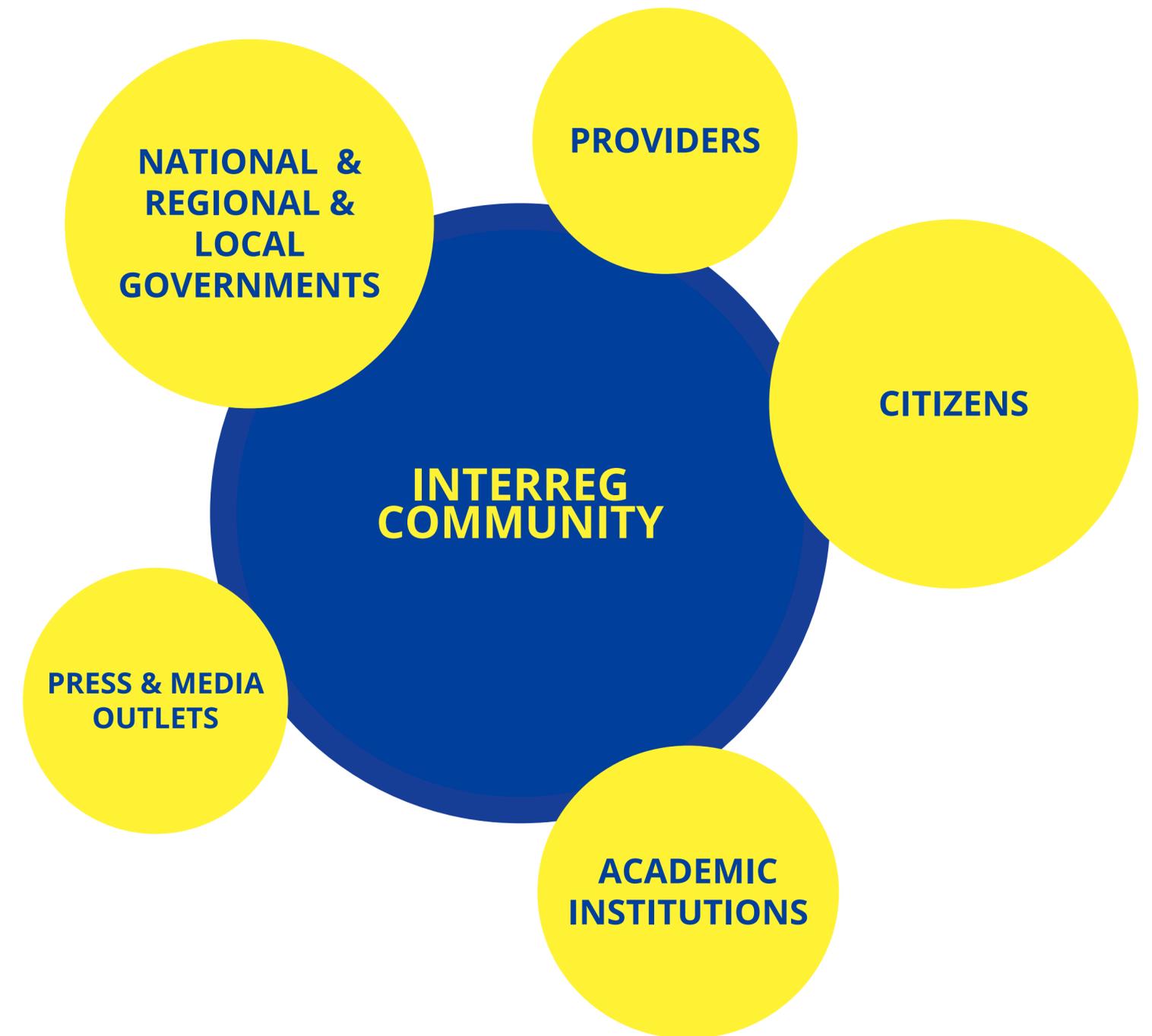
- Monitoring Committee staff working with the programme
- Managing Authority staff working with the programme
- Joint Secretariat staff working with the programme
- National Contact Point staff working with the programme

THE INTERREG UNIVERSE

The Interreg community co-exists with providers, institutions, media outlets and citizens who are not members but rather "friends" of the community.



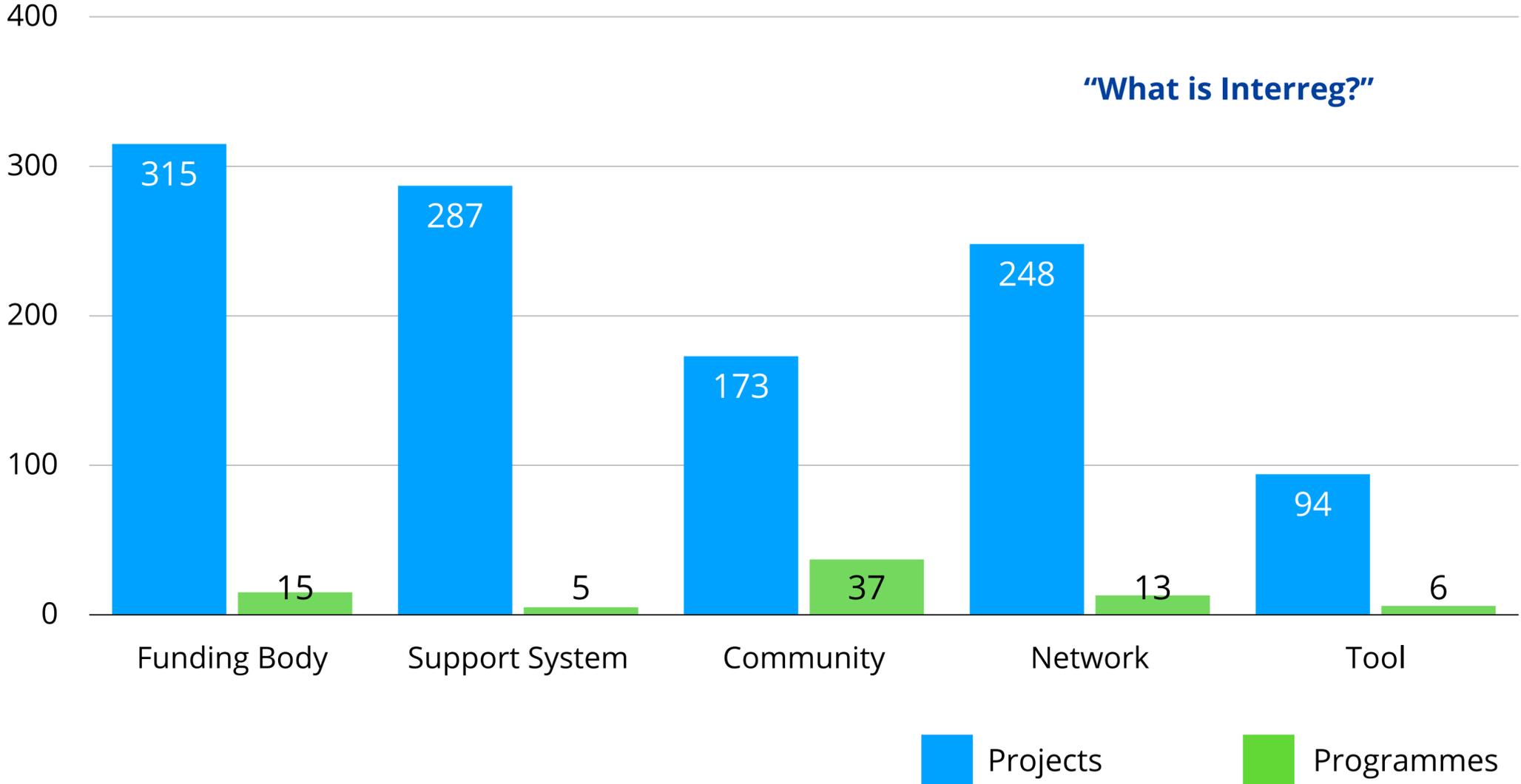
When possible, **try to organise communication campaigns or activities as a community** in order to strengthen the perception and understanding of Interreg among members of your universe.



HOW MEMBERS PERCEIVE INTERREG: PROGRAMMES VS PROJECTS

While most programme representatives already perceive Interreg as a community, project partners do not have a clear image yet. This shows that some aspects of what Interreg has to offer are not being properly communicated.

In the words of a representative from InnoHPC Danube: **“At first glance it seems like a funding body only, but once you get to know it, you see it is a network or community”**



When presenting a project, applicants need to understand that they are applying to join a community of like-minded professionals who join forces to serve a common purpose.

The success of a project is a result of team-work and the dedication of many within the community.

EXISTING COMMUNITY ASSETS TO BUILD ON



1. AMBASSADORSHIP

ABOUT HALF OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS LEARNED ABOUT INTERREG FROM ANOTHER PROJECT



A community grows through positive recommendations. **Facilitate word-of-mouth by providing easy ways for them to explain Interreg and introduce new potential applicants** (generic intro video, events, etc)



2. REPEATED ENGAGEMENT

MORE THAN HALF OF PROJECT PARTICIPANTS ARE RETURNING PARTICIPANTS



Communities are developed through repeated and continued engagement. **Encourage project actors to keep active, even after a project has ended.**



3. SOCIAL CONNECTION

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES IS RANKED AS THE #1 DESIRED SERVICE & EXPECTATION BY PROJECT BENEFICIARIES



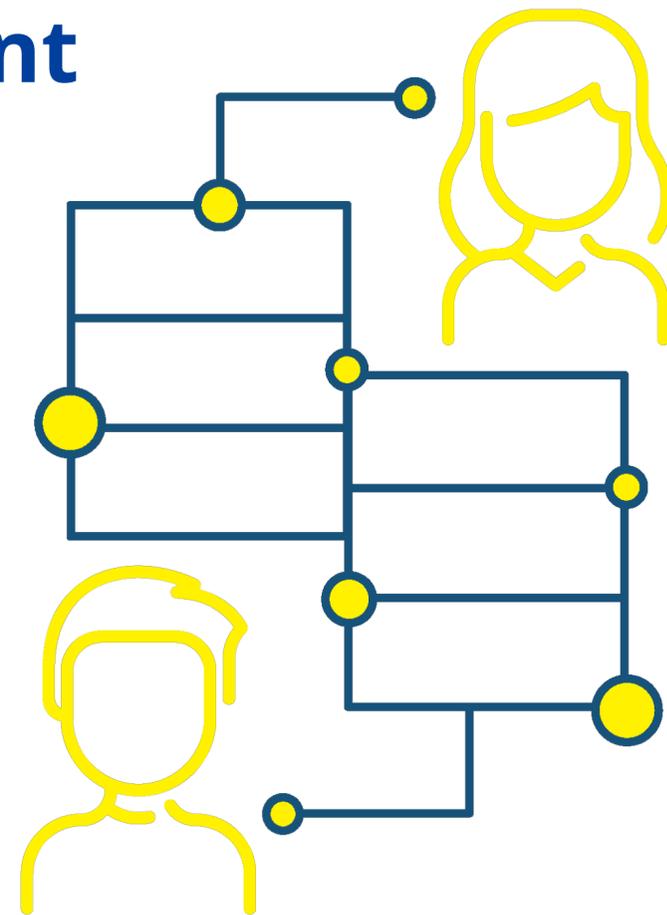
Communities are first of all social organisms where members interact in ways that can be both organized and spontaneous. **Try and provide opportunities for members to meet in informal ways** (social gatherings, meetups...).

THE IMPORTANCE OF NETWORKING

Only 20% of project representatives declare that they have received access to key partners or experts. Yet, networking opportunities are among the main benefits that applicants expect to gain from joining our community.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES are perceived as the **most important benefit**

provided by Interreg over the years



70%

of respondents expected to grow their network via Interreg

Projects rank **NETWORKING** as the **#1 service** that Interreg should provide



Make Interreg more "social" by creating opportunities for your project partners to connect, not only through formal events but through your community-building events on and offline.

Consider also how you can use social media to keep the conversation going beyond the work context.

WHY A COMMUNITY AND NOT A NETWORK?

While about 1 in 5 of both programme and project respondents defined Interreg as a network, our dynamic goes beyond social interactions. The concepts of shared interests and sustained learning are at the core of Interreg's philosophy. While a network is static and does not necessarily generate practical results, a community is a growing organism that feeds from the realisation of common goals. Beyond networking, we work together, learn from each other and dream common dreams.

NETWORK

A set of relationships, personal interactions and connections among participants, viewed as a set of nodes, with its possibilities for information flows and helpful links.

COMMUNITY

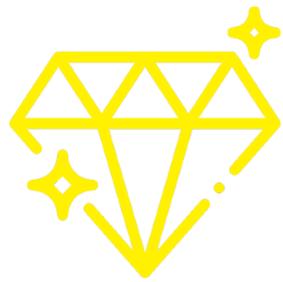
The development of a shared identity around a topic that represents a collective intention—however implicit and distributed—to manage a domain of knowledge and to sustain learning about it.

People who are considered a unit because of their common interests, social group, or identity.*

**Definition of community according to Cambridge Dictionary*



WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?



VALUES

COOPERATION

Cooperation is at the core of Interreg's existence. We value cooperation at every level and in every field. Between professionals and governments, private companies and public institutions. We see cooperation as the foundation of our community, and consider it the key to implementing the vision of the EU for peace and prosperity across the European Union.

PROBLEM-SOLVING

We value the smart, pro-active problem-solvers, those who do not reinvent the wheel but rather learn from others to create new innovative solutions. We believe that any challenge has a solution which can be achieved through cooperation.

INCLUSION

We work on the principles of inclusion rather than exclusion. Inclusion means making people feel welcome, respected and valued. It means appreciating differences as contributions rather than aggressions, seeing opportunities rather than challenges.

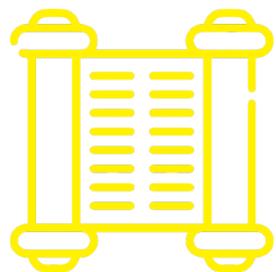
SOLIDARITY

There is no community without solidarity, no friendship without trust. We rely on each other, help each other and face any challenge together. Being part of a community means looking beyond our own interest, prioritizing the "we" before the "I", the many before the few.

SUSTAINABILITY

We value long-term solutions over short-term benefits. It is up to each of us to create a future of safety and prosperity for future generations, and it is up to us to ensure the long-lasting positive impact of our work.

Interreg's values rest on the values of the EU, where it is established that any member of the Interreg community acts in RESPECT of HUMAN DIGNITY, HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITY and INDIVIDUAL FREEDOMS, in accordance with the principles of DEMOCRACY and the RULE OF LAW.



BELIEF

COOPERATION IS THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE AND HARMONIOUS ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

We believe that the happiness, safety and prosperity of EU citizens and their neighbours rest in cooperation, working together across and beyond borders, to find common solutions to shared problems.

We believe that no border should ever prevent the exchange of resources, ideas and knowledge.

Finally, and most of all, we believe in learning from others, respecting cultural, religious and linguistic differences, in order to grow together as people, as regions and as the Interreg community.



WHAT DO WE DO?

WHAT WE DO VS HOW WE DO IT

It is important to distinguish between the little tasks that we perform every day and the big picture of what we are trying to achieve by doing them. Writing emails, organising meetings, attending events; these are just the operational necessities required to achieve the results desired - the ingredients for your recipe, if you wish.

Think of these daily activities as HOW programmes and projects together manage to lead a project to success. These are the features that each party brings to the table. In Interreg's case, the proper implementation of projects (our end deliverable, or "brand delivery") relies on the contribution of various parties coming together: the project representatives on one hand and the Interreg staff and local partners on the other.



The value that Interreg programmes offer to project actors goes far beyond funding projects. Through **resources, skills and connections**, project partners are being **empowered**, provided with the tools to one day implement cooperative projects on their own, without the support of Interreg.

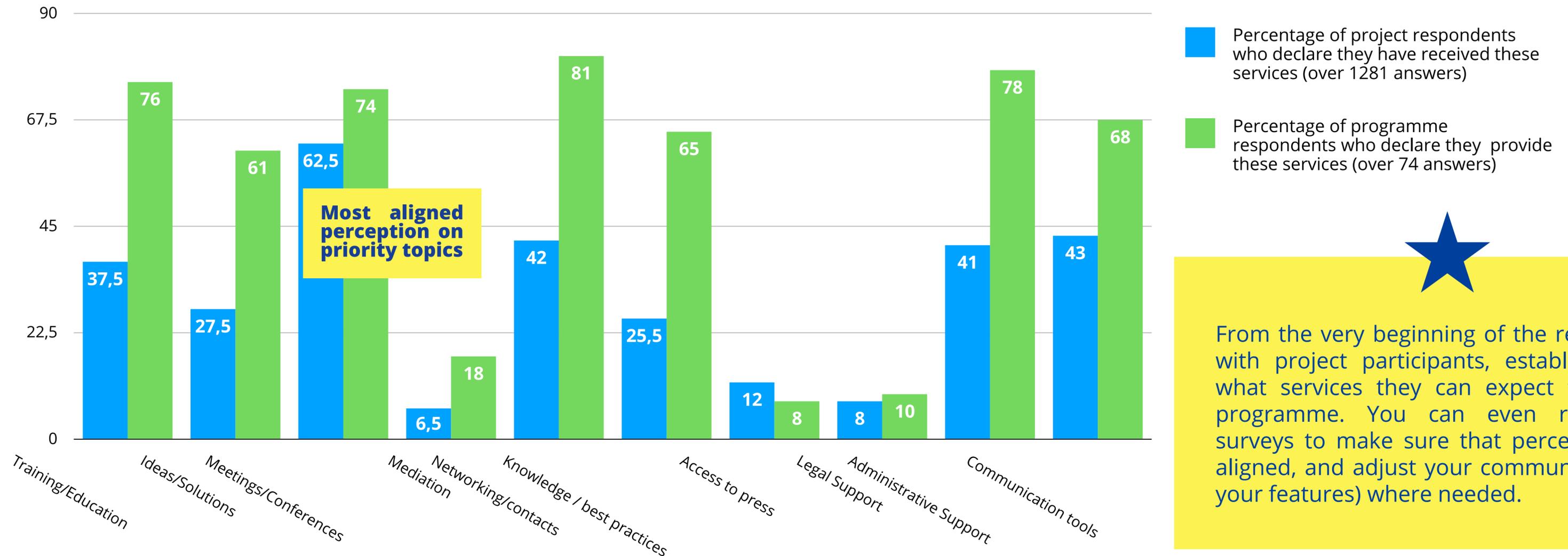
INTERREG
COMMUNITY
FULL VALUE
PROPOSITION
TO CITIZENS



PROGRAMMES' FEATURES PROVIDED TO PROJECTS: PERCEPTION GAP

When professionals apply to join the Interreg community with their project, they expect to receive certain services or “features” that will support them in their work.

While the services programmes provide to projects vary greatly from one programme to another, there is generally a gap between what programmes feel they are providing and what projects feel they are receiving. For example, based on a survey among all programmes and project partners, 81% of programmes respondents declared they provide networking services, while only 42% of project respondents stated they had received such services.

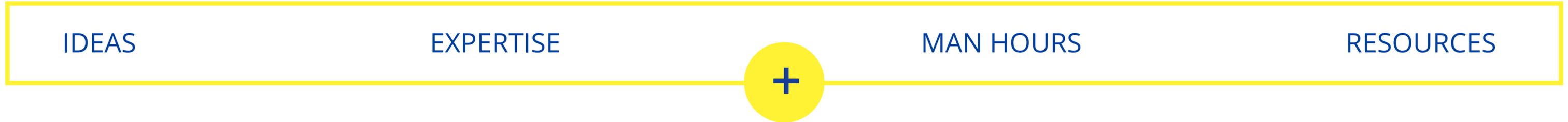


★

From the very beginning of the relationship with project participants, establish clearly what services they can expect from your programme. You can even run yearly surveys to make sure that perceptions are aligned, and adjust your communication (or your features) where needed.

FEATURES AND BRAND DELIVERY

PROJECTS' FEATURES



PROGRAMMES' FEATURES

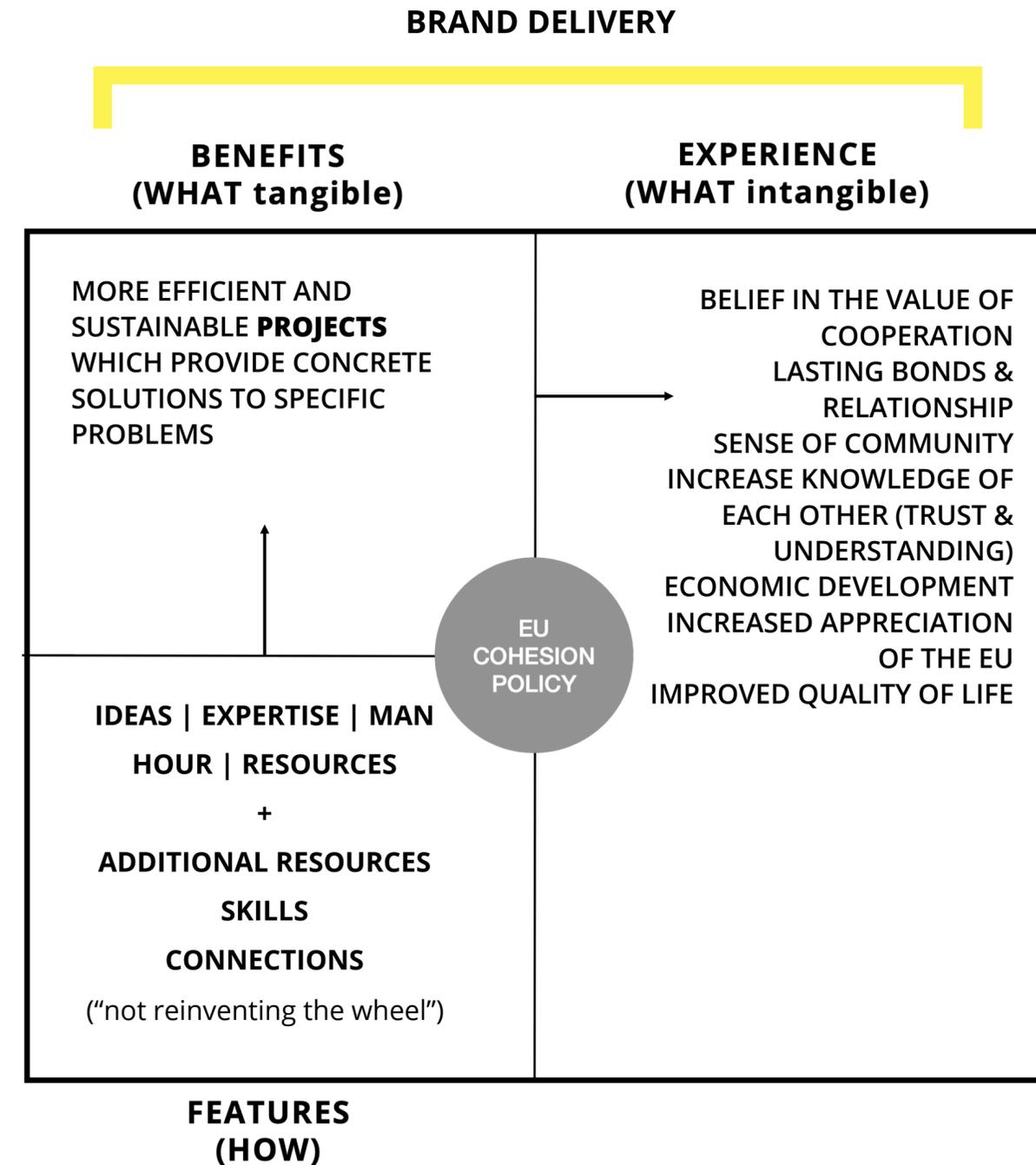


BRAND DELIVERY = PROJECT RESULTS (from idea to reality)

BRAND DELIVERY: TANGIBLE & INTANGIBLE

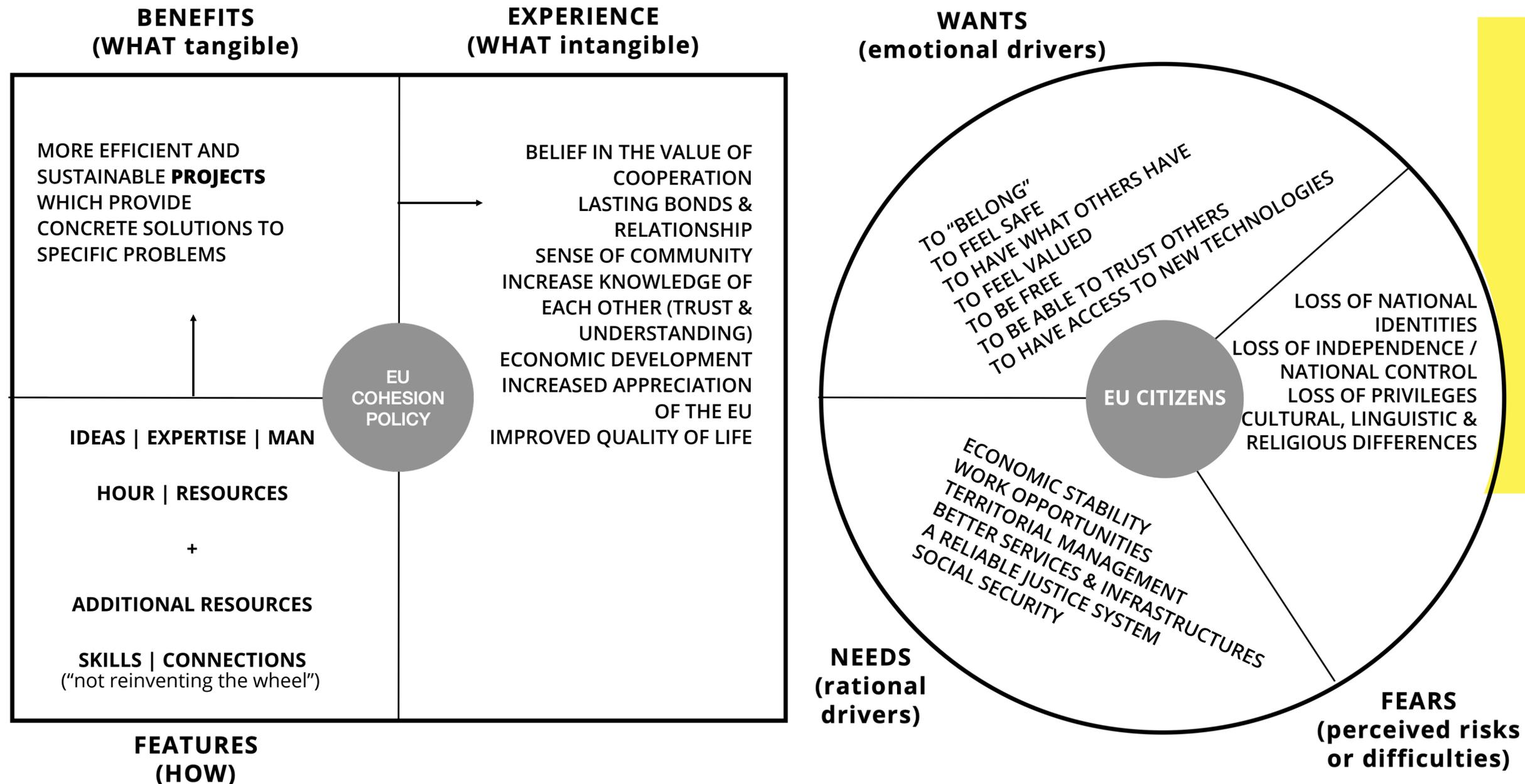
The **result** of all this hard work (what you deliver to your end beneficiaries) is your “brand delivery”. The “brand delivery” can be tangible or intangible, short- or medium-term, product-based or service-based. In short, it is the “**WHAT**” Interreg creates in order to eventually achieve its mission.

Ultimately, the combination of what Interreg provides, how and why forms the overall value proposition of Interreg as a community to citizens as its end beneficiaries.



THE INTERREG COMMUNITY VALUE PROPOSITION

The combination of efforts between programmes, projects and partners makes it possible to implement projects which help fulfill the wants and needs of our beneficiaries, slowly reducing their fears in the process. Always keep the wants, needs and fears of your end beneficiaries in mind (here on the right side of the square) to make sure that your **value proposition as the Interreg community as a whole** (synthetized on the left) truly bring - indeed - value.



This graph is a practical summary of everything included in this document. Go back to it when setting up your communication strategy and ask yourself "Am I communicating properly how our work helps answer the wants and needs of citizens?".





WHY DO WE DO IT?

WHAT VS WHY

When asked what Interreg's ultimate goal was, most programmes answered "to support cooperation". On the other hand, when asked "what does Interreg do", again the majority answered "Interreg supports cooperation".

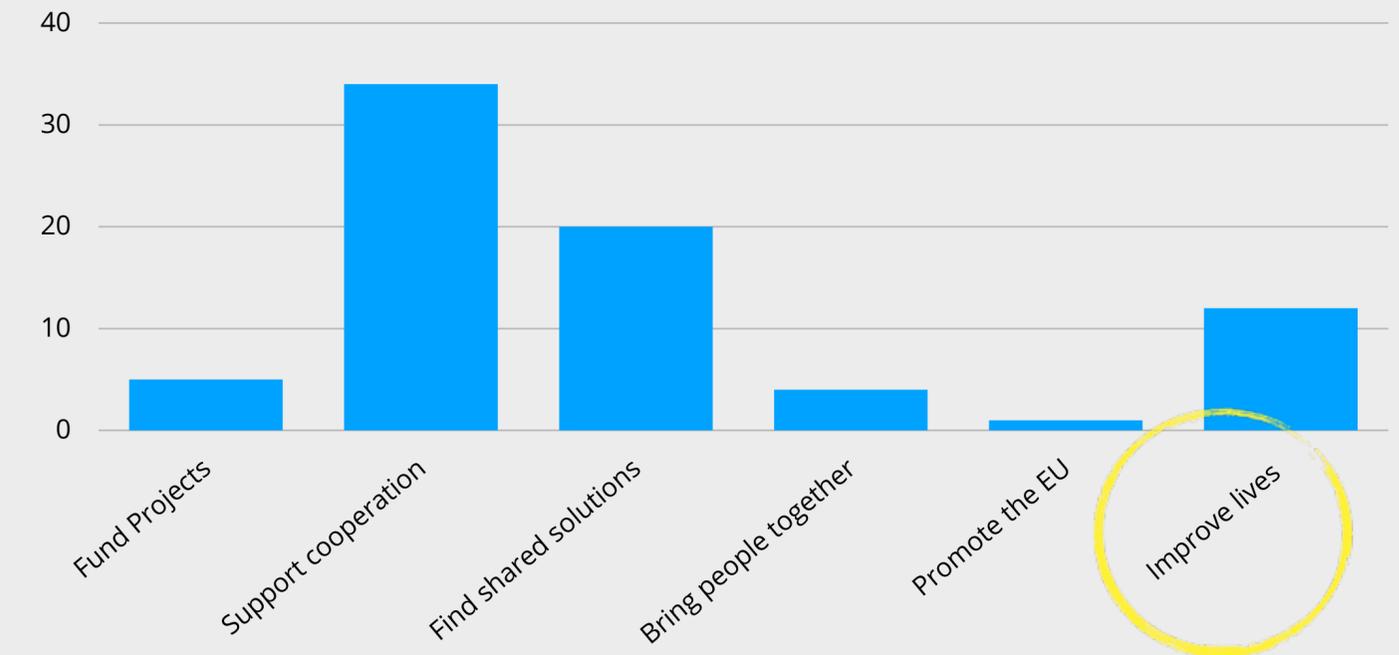
While supporting cooperation is an important part of our work, we have to remember that it is a means to an end. We do not support cooperation for the sake of cooperation. We do it **to bring to life successful projects (our WHAT)** which - in turn - have a mission **to improve the lives of EU citizens and their neighbours (our WHY)**, and - at the very core - to keep them **SAFE and PROSPEROUS**.

In the words of the EC:

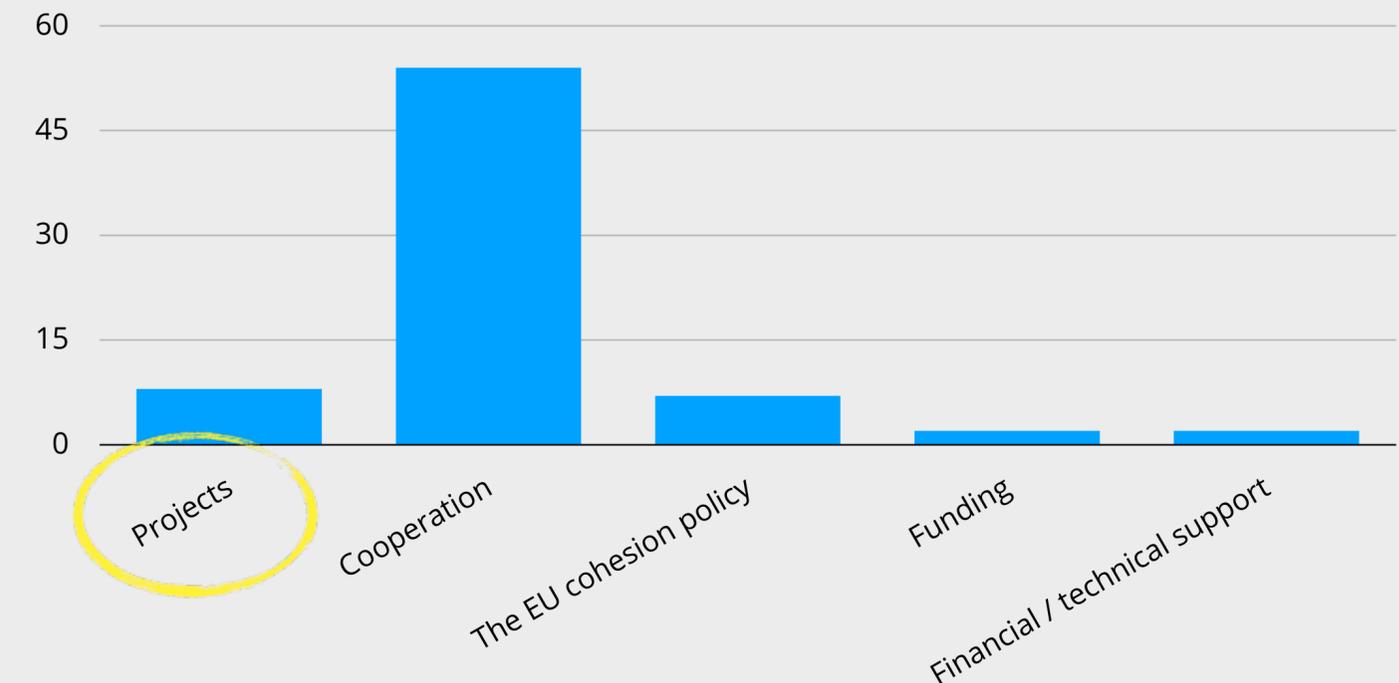
"the overarching objective of European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) is **TO PROMOTE A HARMONIOUS ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNION AS A WHOLE.**"

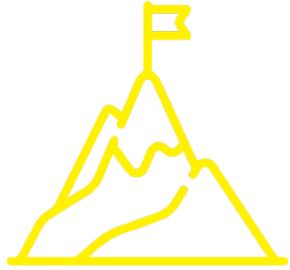
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/

WHAT IS INTERREG'S ULTIMATE GOAL?



WHAT DOES INTERREG DO?





MISSION

CREATING A CULTURE OF COOPERATION ACROSS AND BEYOND BORDERS

We are on a mission to bring to life the vision of the EU to ensure peace, safety and prosperity, in a healthy and sustainable environment, for all of its citizens, by creating a culture of cooperation across and beyond borders, in the EU and among its neighbours. Project after project, we lay the foundations for collaborative thinking, knowledge-sharing, and problem-solving to become the norm.

We strive to support and empower others to do, aspiring to establish a deeply-rooted culture of cooperation, thus creating the basis for a European Union, where - one day - we might no longer be needed.

NOTE:

A mission statement is an action-oriented statement, declaring the purpose an organisation serves to its audience. Your brand mission is meant to **inspire** your beneficiaries, your staff and your partners alike. It allows them to see the big picture, the **“WHY”** behind the “what”. It's the roadmap for the organisation's vision statement.

INTERREG'S MISSION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EU COHESION POLICY

While our mission transcends time, geography and scope, the EU COHESION POLICY allow us to channel our energies towards specific priorities for each funding period. In 2021-2027, we will focus on creating a culture of cooperation across and beyond borders with the following specific objectives in mind:



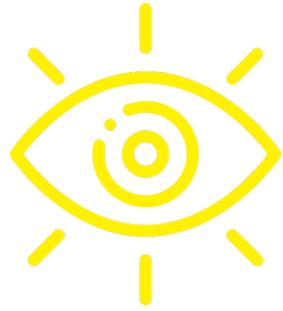
A **Smarter Europe** and its neighbourhood, through innovation, digitalisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses

A **Greener, carbon-neutral Europe** and its neighbourhood, implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change

A more **Connected Europe** and its neighbourhood, with strategic transport and digital networks

A more **Social Europe** and its neighbourhood, delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare

A **Europe closer to citizens**, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.



VISION

A EUROPEAN UNION WHERE PEOPLE NATURALLY COOPERATE - ACROSS AND BEYOND BORDERS

We envision a European Union where all people naturally work together, cooperating to find long-term solutions to any challenge arising from or across borders, whether physical, cultural or legal, helping each other to grow and prosper.

Although our responsibility is towards EU citizens, it is a dream for everyone within the Interreg community to inspire people around the world to cooperate and overcome their differences in order to find common solutions to shared problems. Ultimately, to build a better world together.

NOTE:

A **vision statement** describes where the Interreg community aspires to be upon achieving its mission. It reveals "**WHERE**" the organisation wants the *world* to be as a result of its work.



WHO DO WE DO IT FOR?

BRAND END BENEFICIARIES: PERCEPTION GAP

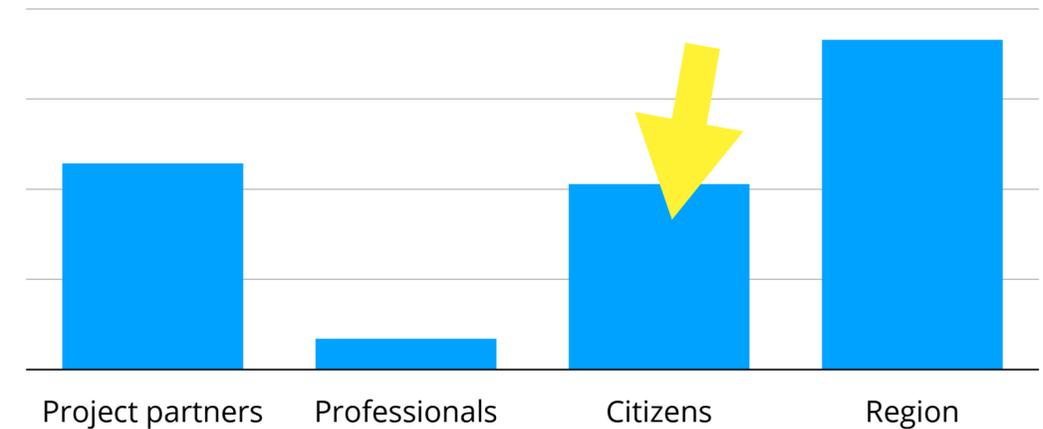
In our survey to programme representatives, almost half of respondents defined regions as our end beneficiaries, while 1 in 4 chose project partners. As we saw earlier, project partners and regional representatives are a part of the Interreg community and an essential ally towards the fulfillment of our mission. But they are not our end beneficiaries. They are not who we all do it for.



The very first goal of the European Union is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its citizens. In line with this, DG REGIO* envisions a European Union where **PEOPLE** IN ALL REGIONS AND CITIES CAN REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL.

It is important, therefore, to remember that there is a greater goal behind the paperwork, the meetings and the reports. Every single person within the Interreg community (programme staff, project partners and regional partners, is ultimately working for **CITIZENS**, to improve their lives and fulfill their needs (see page 23).

WHO DO WE DO IT FOR?



Source: 2019 survey to programmes

* https://ec.europa.eu/info/departments/regional-and-urban-policy/mission-statement-regional-and-urban-policy_en

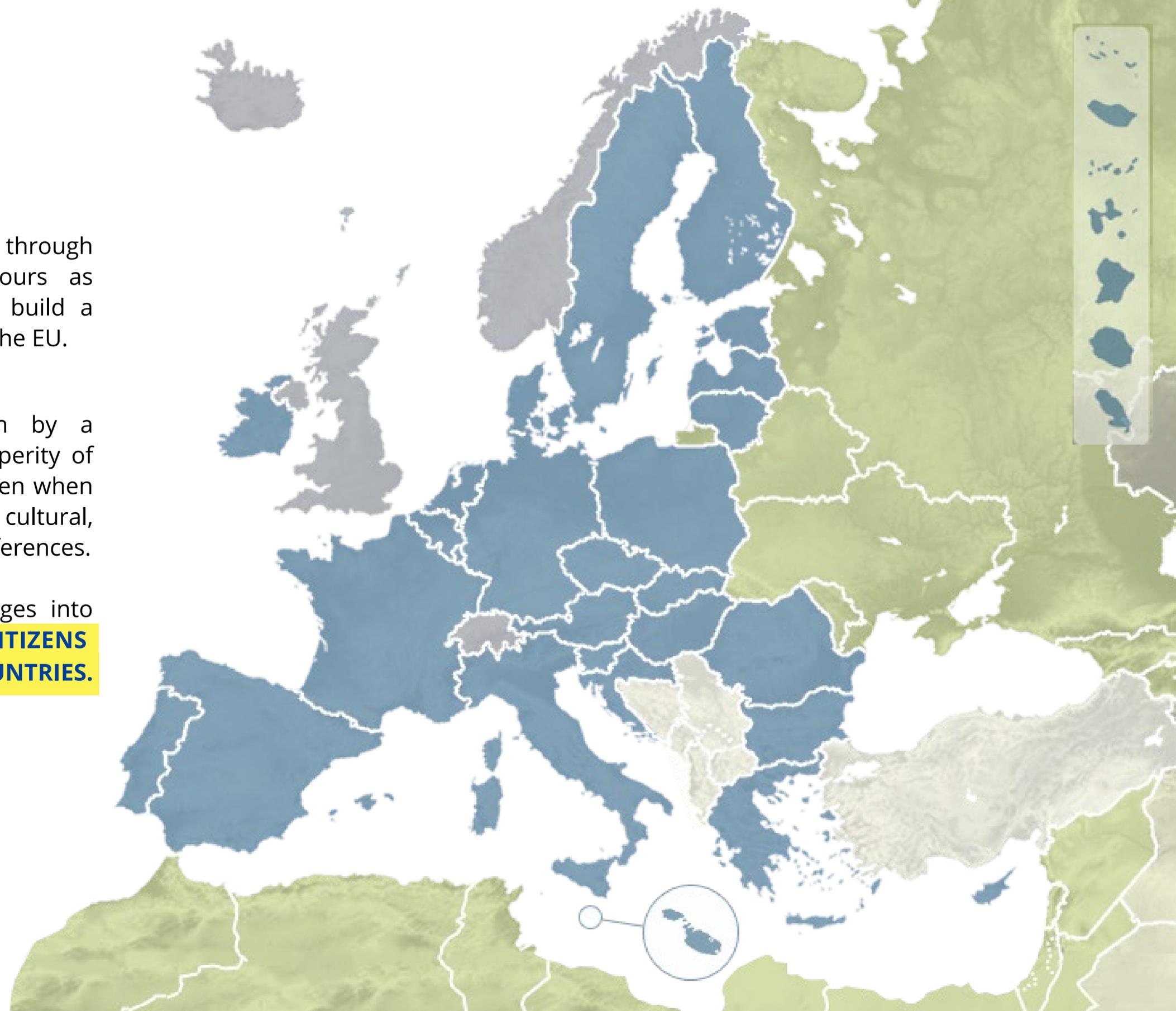
GEOGRAPHIC & DEMOGRAPHIC SCOPE

Professionals collaborate within the EU and beyond through partnerships on projects. We value our neighbours as fundamental partners who enrich us and help us build a culture of cooperation that transcends the borders of the EU.

Every project and every collaboration is driven by a preoccupation to ensure the peace, safety and prosperity of citizens, in a healthy and sustainable environment. Even when not physically visible, borders bring with them cultural, linguistic, religious, political challenges and/or legal differences.

Interreg is dedicated to transforming these challenges into opportunities and differences into resources, for all **CITIZENS THROUGHOUT THE EU AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES.**

Source: <https://www.keep.eu/>





INTERREG IN SHORT

FULL BRAND STATEMENT

IMPROVING LIFE IN THE EU AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES THROUGH COOPERATION ACROSS AND BEYOND BORDERS, ONE PROJECT AT A TIME

It is a dream for every one of us within the Interreg community to see people around the world cooperate, naturally overcoming their differences, to build a better, more cohesive world together. Yet, Interreg is born from the EU and our responsibility is towards EU citizens and their neighbours.

Project after project, guided by EU Cohesion Policy, we imagine and implement common solutions to shared problems, across and beyond borders, to ensure the safety, prosperity and freedom of EU citizens and their neighbours.

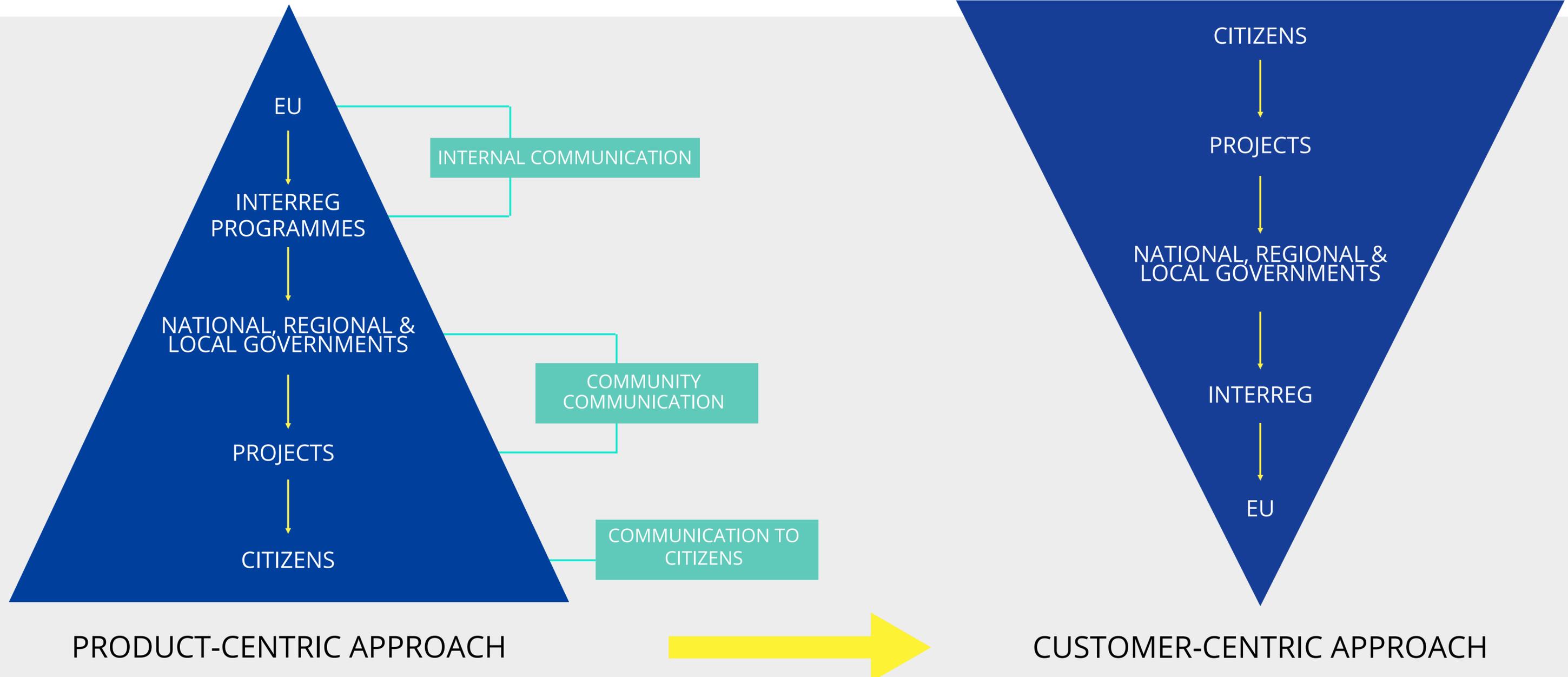
We are professionals, programme representatives and dedicated public officials. Together, through sustainable problem-solving and inclusive knowledge-sharing, we strive to establish a culture of cooperation, thus creating the basis for a European Union, where - one day - we might no longer be needed.

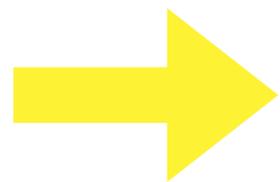


RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR COMMUNICATION

1. FROM TOP-DOWN TO BOTTOM-UP

As shown in the results of the second survey among programmes, most programme representatives (40 out of 74) have a product-centric understanding of the Interreg structure: a pyramid, headed by the EU and trickling down to citizens. Yet some programme representatives (17 out of 74) already have a bottom-up vision, with citizens at the top and the EU at the bottom.





CITIZEN-CENTRIC PROCESS FLOW CHART

THERE IS A PROBLEM AFFECTING CITIZENS IN SEVERAL REGIONS IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

PROFESSIONALS FROM DIFFERENT COUNTRIES IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM AND PROPOSE A JOINT SOLUTION

INTERREG PROVIDES THE NECESSARY RESOURCES, SKILLS AND CONNECTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE IDEA

THE IMPACT ON CITIZENS' LIVES IS EVALUATED AND DOCUMENTED

PROJECT IS COMPLETED

Avoid top-down communication.

You are not here to distribute the funds of the EU, **but to solve problems affecting citizens** by helping innovative thinkers create and implement practical solutions to said problems.



2. BUILD A COHERENT IMAGE

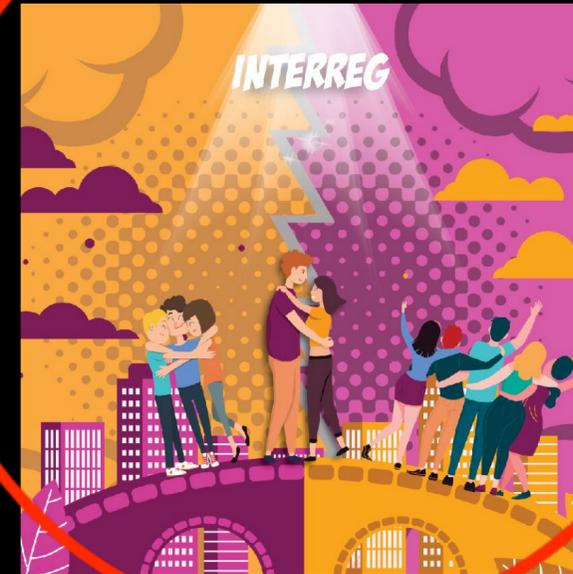
Using a famous MEME format, we asked the programmes in the Interreg branding advisory core group to draw how Interreg is perceived by different groups. From all the answers we received we created one single MEME.

In order to reverse the current disconnected and often mysterious perception of what Interreg does, we need to keep a cohesive communication aimed at creating a common image of all Interreg programmes for all audiences. Our ultimate goal is for everyone to perceive Interreg just as programmes do.

WHAT THE EC THINKS INTERREG DOES:



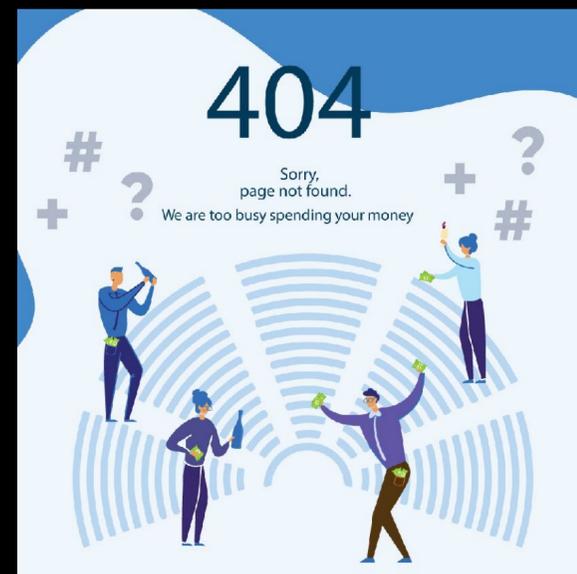
WHAT PROGRAMMES THINK INTERREG DOES:



WHAT PROJECTS THINK INTERREG DOES:



WHAT SOCIETY THINKS INTERREG DOES:



WHAT MY MUM THINKS INTERREG DOES:



WHAT INTERREG REALLY DOES:



3. FROM REGULATING TO INSPIRING

While an overwhelming majority of project respondents rated their experience with Interreg as 4 to 5 stars out of 5, only 1 in 3 estimated that their project had a positive impact on the life of citizens in their region or improved understanding of EU policies. Some actually stated that it **increased distrust in the EU institutions**.

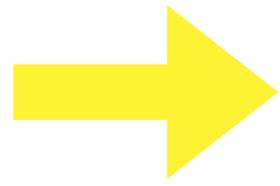
LESS THAN **40%** of programmes said they provided information/tools to EXPLAIN Interreg

Almost **75%** of programmes said that **explaining the EU is "NOT THEIR RESPONSIBILITY"**

Yet, **63,5%** of project partners said their main expectation at the time of applying was to "**make a difference in their community**"

**IF THE VERY MEMBERS OF OUR OWN COMMUNITY DON'T BELIEVE IN WHAT THEY DO,
IF THEY DON'T FEEL INSPIRED BY WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE...**

HOW CAN WE EXPECT PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF IT TO DO SO?



INCLUDE EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS IN YOUR COMMUNICATION

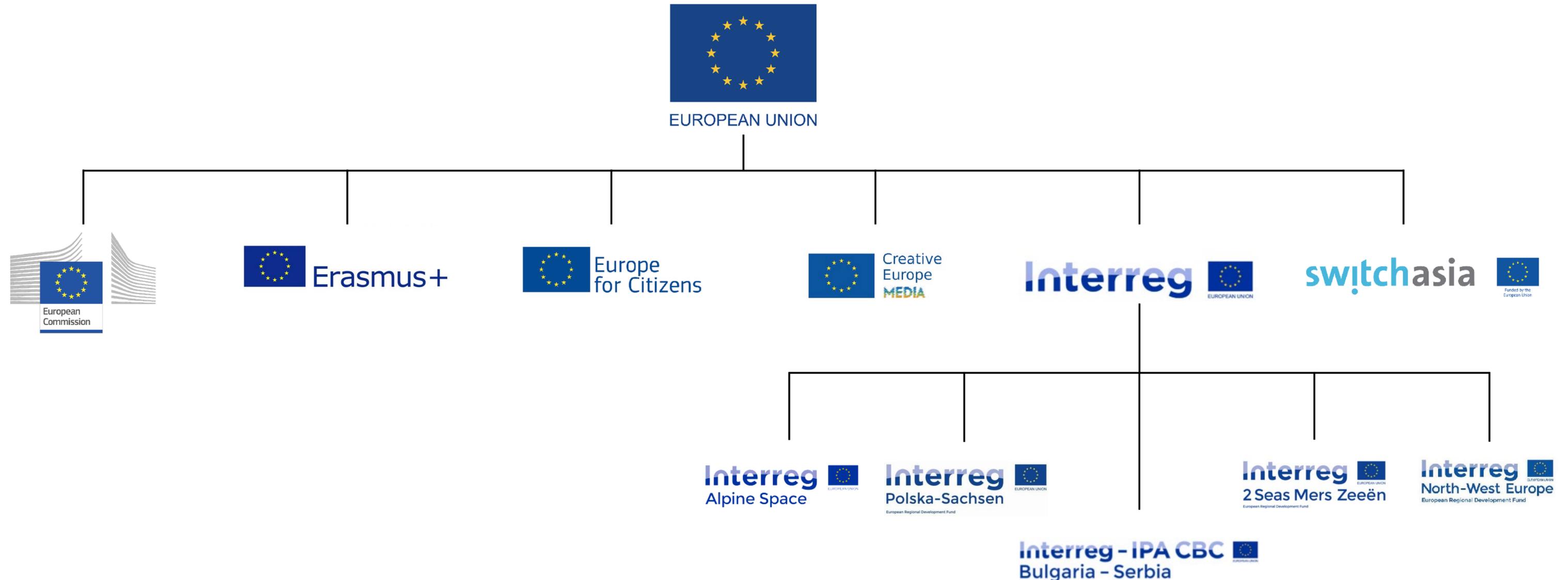
In communication, emotional messages are just as important as practical ones. Partners will be much more willing to follow the rules and regulations if they keep an eye on the **big picture**.

All new partners will be provided with printed and audiovisual materials defining Interreg's brand strategy with the goal of letting everyone see Interreg the way programmes see it: as a beacon of hope lighting the way towards a peaceful and prosperous society.



4. FROM OBLIGATION TO INSPIRATION

Interreg is part of a family of brands created under the umbrella of the European Union according to a brand architecture called “endorsed branded house”. Each programme of the EU is a different tree extending its branches, but rising from the same ground and feeding from the same water. Carrying the EU flag in our logo comes with many rules and conditions, but we must remember that this is much more than an obligation; it is an honour and an inspiration. It allows all of our programmes and projects to contribute to the visibility, recognition and reputation of the European Union.



5. FROM FUND TO COMMUNITY



COMMUNICATE AS A COMMUNITY

There is no need to separate, multiply and duplicate all communication. Remember, this is all a **TEAM EFFORT!** Every successful project is the result of the collective effort of the whole Interreg community. Specific channels dedicated to communication to citizens must present both the tangible and intangible benefits provided by Interreg as a whole.



6. WE ARE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER



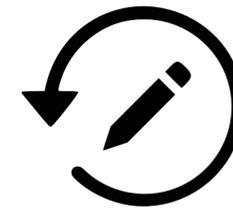
LET YOUR COMMUNICATION TRANSCEND

We are much more than paperwork and bureaucracy. We are part of a rich ecosystem where every organism is connected. It is up to us to be the bridge between the EU and its citizens, between projects and partners, between public and private.

Make sure your communication shows the role of each group: what part they play in how projects are born and how they ultimately benefit citizens.



7. IT'S ALL FOR A GOOD REASON



REMEMBER THE PAST, PAINT THE FUTURE

There is no Interreg without the EU, and there would be no EU without the will of the few to create a better world for the many. Don't assume that everyone knows the past, or that everyone will understand your vision. So **help them** remember, and help them dream... a picture is often worth a thousand words!

8. STAY TRUE TO THE VALUE PROPOSITION

Defining Interreg's role as "Supporting cooperation" is quite vague and can be confusing. Clearly explain the projects you develop (WHAT), your range of services (HOW), and the desired output (WHY) in all your communication (whether internal, to partners or to citizens).

You can adapt communication to the specific needs of your programme and cultural characteristics of your audience, yet still remain true to the Interreg brand identity.

Even if you communicate mostly with your project and local partners, do not lose sight of why and who you are doing it for. When in doubt, go back to Interreg's value proposition (pages 21 and 22) and check that your communication is truly aligned with each part of it.



INTERact

www.interact-eu.net



mila:

www.milabranders.com



European Regional Development Fund