

# Interreg GO! Workshop

## Report

### Health | Enhancing Cross-Border Health through Interreg: Bridging Gaps for Resilient Communities

28 March 2025, 13:30-14:45. Followed by two project visits: PARCO BASAGLIA and ŠEMPETER HOSPITAL.

#### A. Purpose of this session. *Insights by Mercedes Acitores*

- Showcase solutions to significant barriers.
- Highlight EU-level health competencies.
- Emphasize Interreg's role in improving project quality, collaboration, and policy alignment.

#### B. Setting the Health scene in Interreg. *Insights by Valeria Cenacchi*

##### 1. Cross-Border Healthcare – The Dual Reality

- Obstacles remain significant, especially in emergency services (DE-FR-CH example):
  - Complex legal and administrative barriers.
  - Differences in cultural, legal, and healthcare systems.
  - Lack of data sharing, intercultural competencies, and stakeholder coordination.
- Yet, there's major added value:
  - Cooperation can improve access, efficiency, and outcomes.
  - Interreg creates platforms for shared solutions and mutual learning.

##### 2. Smart Solutions: The Mobile X-Ray (NO–SE) – VätTeL

- A standout example of practical innovation in cross-border healthcare:
  - Saves costs and hospital resources.
  - Reduces travel burden on patients.
  - Increases access to diagnostics in remote areas.
  - Improves system efficiency and reduces admissions.

##### 3. Investment & Policy Commitment

- Approx. EUR 673 million invested in health and care under Interreg (2021–2027).
- 31 programmes targeting health goals (SO 4.5), including:
  - 25 cross-border cooperation (CBC) projects.
  - 16 involving external EU borders.
- Focuses on a mix of “soft” (collaborative) and “hard” (infrastructure/tech) investments.

#### C. TED TALK Highlights\_ The impact of EU health competencies and Ensuring High-Quality Cross-Border Healthcare Through Interreg. *Insights by Caitriona Mullan.*

- Integrated Care and Co-design must guide all cross-border health initiatives to meet evolving population needs.
- Border regions (30% of EU population) are key testing grounds for future European healthcare: Interreg is a gravitational lever to align other structural funds for housing, labour, infrastructure, and health.

- Interreg supports the European Health Union, recovery efforts, and future preparedness, including through tools like:
  - Cross-border agreements
  - Patient rights directives
  - Social Security and data regulations
  - B-Solutions for legal and interoperability barriers
- Border regions are living labs for place-based, smart, and shared healthcare ecosystems. Key principles include:
  - Institutional cooperation and co-planning
  - Collaborative population health data
  - Shared services and cross-border clinical education
  - Local governments as democratic enablers
  - Establishing cross-border task forces for fund alignment
- Health is not just for health funds—it requires systemic integration across all policy fields to strengthen Europe’s unity, resilience, and fairness.

**D. Fireside chat: Interreg’s value for Health. Better quality projects. Main challenges and solutions** *Insights from Interreg AT-CZ, Interreg PL-UA, and Interreg North-West Europe (NWE)*

**1. Interreg’s Value in Health**

- Interreg addresses territorial gaps in access to care, particularly in rural and border areas.
- Acts as a catalyst for innovation across diverse health systems.
- Supports:
  - Cross-border rescue, patient care and infrastructure (AT-CZ, PL-UA)
  - Digital care, home-based services, and ageing population needs (NWE)
- Health has evolved into a dedicated priority in many programmes.

**2. Complementarity with National Policies**

- Projects align with national strategies through evaluation and monitoring.
- Needs are identified bottom-up, based on local data and territorial challenges.
- Successful synergies include EAFRD and national funds (e.g. Healthacross MED Gmünd).
- Barriers: fragmented systems, legal and funding disparities, limited policy uptake.

**3. From Mirroring to Genuine Cooperation**

- Many projects remain mirrored due to national regulatory constraints.
- NWE shows true collaboration through co-created solutions and digital tools.
- Key enablers: right mix of partners, clear target audience, focus on transferability.

**4. Impact, Sustainability & Synergies**

- Programmes promote capitalisation and long-term uptake from day one.
- Risks include service discontinuity, no follow-up funding, and staff turnover.
- Strategies include clustering, shared learning, and outreach beyond partnerships.

**E. Participants engagement through slide**

- **To the question, what is the most essential contribution of integrated to Health?**

The most agreed-upon reply was helping patients access services across border, followed by pooling resources and expertise (shared hospitals, equipment and medical staff) and improving emergency responses.

- **To the question, what is the most significant barrier to effective healthcare cooperation in Interreg?**

The most agreed barrier was Regulatory and legal, followed by administrative burden and coordination issues.

### **Speakers and Moderation Team**

- Valeria Cenacchi. DG Regio
- Caitriona Mullan, external expert .
- Tomasz Jedrzejewski .Deputy Head of JS from Interreg Next Poland Ukraine.
- Kathrin Huber. Head of Managing Authority from Interreg CBC Austria Czechia.
- Alexander Colombani. Head of Unit on Development and Communication from Interreg TN North-West Europe
- Francesca Sibilla. Italy-Slovenia officer.
- Nastia Faraus. Italy-Slovenia Communication officer.
- Mercedes Acitores. Interact Programme Manager. Moderation