

# Connecting project results to wider policy priorities and cooperation frameworks

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## Overview

Cooperation programmes operate within the EU enlargement and neighbourhood context. They are asked to contribute to shared policy priorities, finance lasting solutions and complement what others do. Achieving this in practice is not always straightforward nor easy. This parallel session, held on the morning of 19 May 2026, focused on how cooperation programmes can help project results generate value beyond project closure.

The session built on recurring challenges identified in earlier programme community discussions: institutional ownership, visibility, uptake and policy connection, financial sustainability, partnership continuity, and replication, transfer and capitalisation. Participants were invited to reflect on which of these challenges was most relevant to their own programme work and to identify practical approaches, gaps and messages for the next programming period. The session also illustrated practical work carried out by the Priority Area 7 (Knowledge society) of the [EU Strategy for the Danube Region](#) coordinators, including their work with projects and organisation of a coordinated call for science mobility. Furthermore, the Interreg IPA South Adriatic programme presented its capitalisation framework and work with project results, built around three goals: reuse, transfer and follow-up of results. The programme has developed a holistic approach, including, dedicated assessment criteria, capitalisation calls building on previous period results, monitoring and evaluation, mid-term reviews and on-site visits with explicit durability criteria; and capitalisation and communication actions, as well as shared work with other programmes within the framework of the [Mediterranean Multiprogramme Mechanism](#).

## Methodology

The session combined a short framing input, table discussions, peer exchange and two practice based contributions. The first part invited participants to reflect individually on the five challenges, then discuss at their tables and select one challenge for deeper discussion. Each table used a harvest sheet to record the selected challenge, existing solutions, what worked or could work, what failed or was still missing, one programme level action, one action beyond the programme level, and one message for the next programming period.

The discussion was followed by inputs on the links between project results and wider policy uptake, including the work of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region Priority Area 7 (Knowledge society), and an example from Interreg South Adriatic on capitalisation, impact and durability planning. The Interreg South Adriatic programme's contribution showed how durability can be planned through capitalisation frameworks, evaluation criteria, clustering, communication, synergies with other programmes and post closure follow up.

## Key discussion points

Participants identified recurring gaps in how programmes and projects handle results after project closure.

Financial sustainability was one of the highlighted concerns. Existing approaches include sustainability (result durability) obligations stressed in contracts, institutional budgets and plans, stronger control mechanisms and ex post monitoring. The key gap identified was insufficient sense of ownership after project closure. In the next programming period this could be addressed by developing clear sustainability targets and obligations, together with dedicated resources for capitalisation and follow-up.

Visibility, uptake and policy connection were also raised. Participants mentioned capitalisation activities, support from programme bodies and coordination around mandatory events as existing approaches that help make results more visible. The gap identified was that visibility needs to be linked directly to policy processes. Results may be known but not used unless they actively reach, e.g., national or regional authorities and macro-regional actors.

Replication, transfer and capitalisation came up as another central issue. Tables referred to application forms, learning platforms, databases, calls for good practices, transfer to other actors and promotion of programme results. These approaches were seen as useful where they help identify transferable outputs and make them easier to access. At the same time, participants noted that transfer is still often fragmented. The discussions also highlighted the lack of cooperation between projects, the weak connection between project level results and wider programme or policy level use, and the difficulty of adapting results to different contexts.

Several contributions pointed to shared responsibility beyond programmes, including the role of regional authorities, EU macro-regional strategies, stronger control, ex post monitoring methodology and sustainability as key points. Programmes alone cannot carry the full responsibility for durability. The use of results after closure depends on the willingness and capacity of actors beyond the programme to take them into investment plans, strategies, services or policy work.

## Main takeaways

- Results durability cannot be addressed at the project closure stage. It requires consideration across the full programme cycle, from call design and selection criteria to monitoring, communication and post-closure follow-up.
- Effective transfer of results depends on three enablers that are currently underused: dedicated programme resources for capitalisation, active engagement of regional authorities, and macro-regional strategies as structured uptake routes.
- Stronger control mechanisms and systematic ex post monitoring are important steps to ensure financial sustainability.
- A coordination mechanism between cooperation programmes and national investment planning is currently missing.
- National contact points can play an active role connecting project results and relevant policy processes and actors.
- Policy connection should be operational, not declaratory. Identifying who can use a result, in which process and through which route is more effective than referencing strategic frameworks in project documentation.
- For the next programming period, participants stressed the need to introduce a dedicated budget line for capitalisation, and establishing clear sustainability/durability targets and obligations as programme requirements.

**Follow-up actions / next steps**

The discussion points will feed into future work on capitalisation, durability and programme design for the next programming period and supporting the work on building closer synergies between Interreg IPA and IPA IPA CBC programmes. The discussion also feeds into the work of building closer links between the EU macro-regions and cooperation programmes.

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