

Small actions, big values: Mapping external cooperation's contribution to European values

EU Neighbours in action: Knowledge across borders | 19-20 May 2026

Overview

This session presented Interact's analytical work on mapping external cooperation project portfolios to the six foundational EU Treaty values (Article 2 TEU): Human Dignity, Freedom, Democracy, Equality, the Rule of Law, and Human Rights. The analysis covered 340+ projects across three IPA/CBC programmes - Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia (123 projects, 2007-2027), Interreg VI-B NEXT Black Sea Basin (184 projects, 2007-2027), and IPA CBC Serbia-Montenegro (33 projects, 2007-2020).

The session aimed to demonstrate how AI tools can be used to transform standard programme data into a values-based narrative accessible to a wide range of audiences, including citizens, politicians, evaluators, and auditors.

Methodology

The session was structured as an interactive presentation with embedded polling questions to gauge participants' baseline familiarity with AI tools and their use in programme management. The speaker - Stoyan Kanatov, Interact, walked participants through the full analytical workflow: sourcing project data from Keep.eu, uploading it to Claude.ai, and running three structured prompts to generate (1) a values mapping table per programming period, (2) visualisations including bar and donut charts, and (3) a structural evolution analysis.

The methodology was designed to be immediately replicable by any programme manager without coding or data science skills. Discussion was facilitated through five polling questions that bookended the presentation, tracking participants' attitudes toward AI before and after the session. Participants were invited to reflect on the applicability of the approach to their own programmes.

Key discussion points

The session opened with a fundamental question about programme contribution: despite funding thousands of projects, IPA/CBC programmes lack a common framework for explaining their societal impact to wider audiences. Programme indicators are precise but too technical; national and EU strategic goals are more relatable but either geographically limited or inaccessible to non-EU partner countries. The EU Treaty values (Article 2 TEU) were presented as the optimal solution - universal in scope, legally operative, and applicable to EU members, candidate countries, and neighbourhood countries alike.

The AI-assisted analytical workflow was introduced and demonstrated live. Participants learned that Keep.eu project exports can be uploaded directly to Claude.ai without any data transformation, and that three structured prompts are sufficient to generate a full values analysis, including visualisations and a narrative synthesis. The time investment drops from approximately 3 hours for a first analysis to under 30 minutes with experience. Findings from the three case programme analyses were presented.

A polling question at the start of the session confirmed that 50% of participants are already using AI-supported tools in their daily programme management activities. Participants discussed both the

potential of AI for communication and capitalisation and the importance of developing well-structured, output-focused prompts to ensure reliable and policy-relevant results.

The session also explored how values-based programme narratives translate directly into EU accession chapter language, enabling IPA programme managing authorities to frame their cooperation results as grassroots evidence of accession readiness.

Main takeaways

AI tools can meaningfully strengthen the communication and capitalisation activities of Interreg and IPA/CBC programmes, enabling rapid development of clear, targeted, and values-grounded programme narratives. Half of the participants already use AI in their daily programme management work, and the session reinforced the confidence of those who were more hesitant. The EU Treaty values framework (Article 2 TEU) is a robust and politically meaningful reference for assessing and communicating programme contribution. It is universal (applicable across member states, candidates, and neighbourhood countries), verifiable (derivable from stated project outputs), and comparable (applicable across all programming periods and regions simultaneously).

The quality of AI-generated analysis depends critically on the quality and specificity of the prompts used. Prompts should be output-focused rather than intention-based, and should request structured, quantified results with explicit uncertainty flagging. Prompt refinement is an iterative process. Cross-border cooperation is fundamentally a Human Rights enterprise: environmental protection, cultural heritage, healthcare access, and community inclusion are the dominant thematic drivers across all three programmes examined. At the same time, Democracy remains structurally absent - a named gap rather than a failure, but one that deserves explicit attention in future programme design, particularly for IPA programmes with EU accession obligations.

Project portfolios are becoming more complex in their societal purpose over successive programming periods. The shift from single-value to multi-value projects reflects a structural maturation in how cooperation projects are designed and implemented.

Follow-up actions / next steps

All session materials - including the presentation, the three AI prompts (original and improved versions), and the Keep.eu data export instructions - will be made available on the Interact library at interact.eu/Library.

Participants were encouraged to download their own programme data from Keep.eu, run the three prompts on their programme portfolio, and share the results with their Managing Authority as a first step.

As a medium-term action, the values analysis can be presented at Monitoring Committees and used as a framing tool for future calls for proposals.

A longer-term pathway includes building a values-based reporting layer into programme monitoring systems and commissioning comparative analyses across thematic programme clusters.

Session team

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