

Interreg
CENTRAL EUROPE



Co-funded by
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OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

TAKING
COOPERATION
FORWARD

2024

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Foreword

In this report, we reflect on an eventful year for the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. 2024 brought significant advancements in transnational cooperation, with impactful developments.

The highlight of 2024 have undoubtedly been the successful contracting and kick-off of 47 projects after the second call, as well as the launch of our third call, which saw a remarkable response. Following a carefully structured applicant support process, with individual consultations in addition to transnational and national events, we received 140 proposals for small-scale projects. We look forward to the selection process, confident that the chosen projects will bring forward transformative ideas to benefit peripheral and lagging areas in central Europe.

Building on previous efforts, 2024 also marked the year when our new approach to reporting and monitoring began to demonstrate its potential. This refined methodology, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement, has strengthened our project oversight and enabled us to respond more proactively to the needs of our beneficiaries, ensuring a more efficient and timely disbursement of funds.

Throughout the year, we also focused on capitalisation and synergies. Our preparations for the upcoming fourth call for “capitalisation through coordination”, supported by a detailed study and a collaborative workshop in Brussels, represent key steps towards fostering long-term impact among cross-border and transnational Interreg Programmes. Meanwhile, the project synergy roundtables and other capitalisation activities have advanced collaboration among our projects, laying the ground for strengthened cooperation in the years to come.

Finally, as we look toward the future, our post-2027 consultation has yielded rich feedback from stakeholders across our programme area. Their inputs were collected in a harvesting report and will be essential for shaping the future of Interreg.

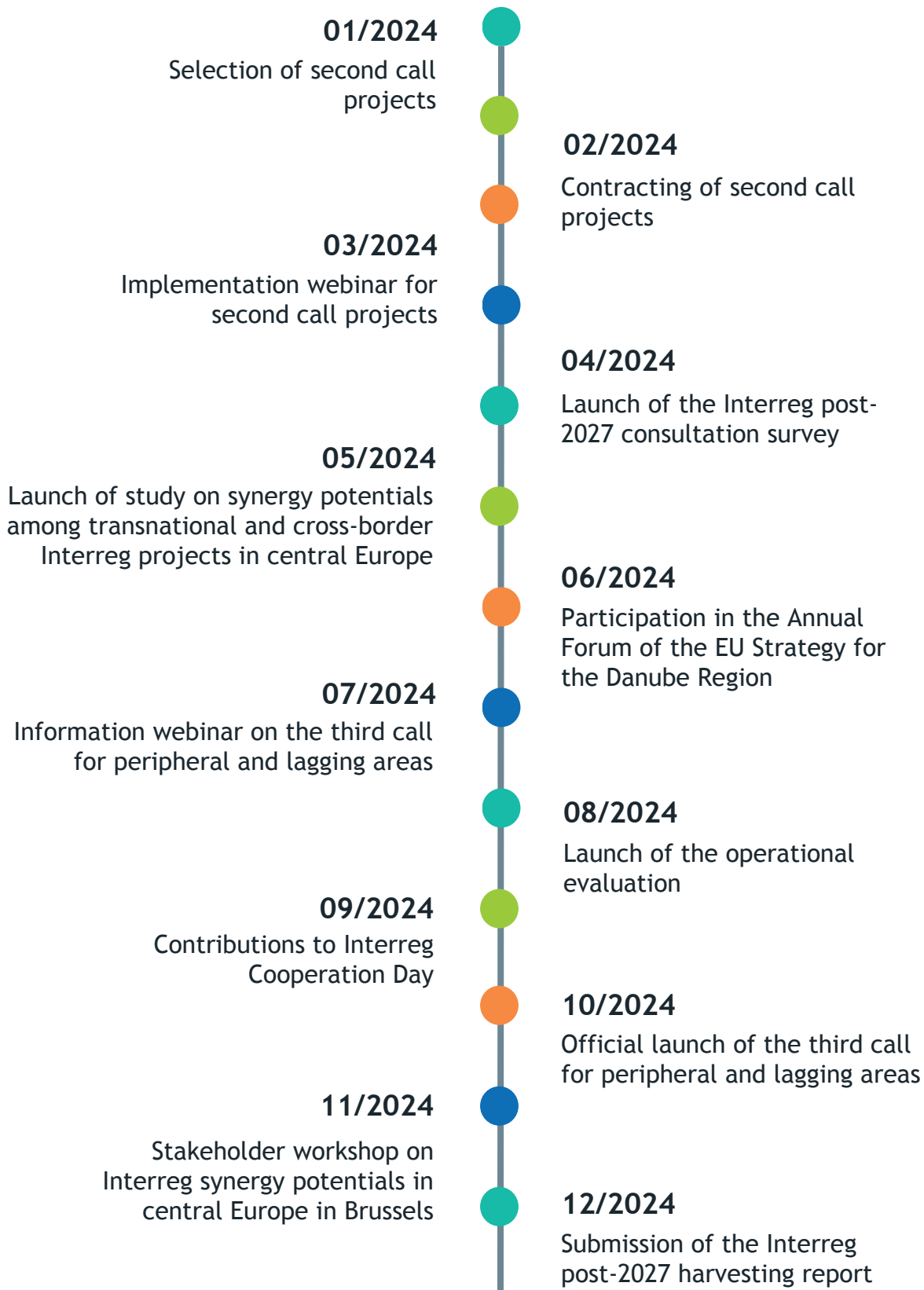
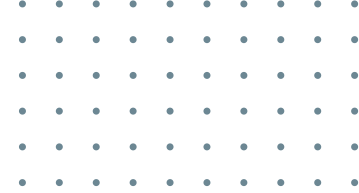
As we close another productive year, I would like to extend my gratitude to everyone involved in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. Your commitment and collaborative spirit continue to make a difference in the lives of citizens throughout the region. Let us carry forward this momentum into the future, building on the successes of 2024.



Christiane Breznik

Head of Managing Authority
January 2025

Highlights 2024



Application and Contracting

Call 2

In March 2024, we contracted **47 second call projects**, which the monitoring committee had selected in late January. The awarded projects passed a selection process where **280 proposals** were thoroughly checked and assessed. After contracting, the projects successfully kicked off their activities between April and June 2024.



Call 3

In 2024, we also opened our experimental third call for proposals, which focused on small-scale projects. The call was launched in **October** and closed in **December**. With this call, we invited organisations from across central Europe to develop transnational cooperation ideas that “pioneer solutions for peripheral and lagging areas, making them more attractive to live and work in”.

In the application phase, we actively supported applicants through **targeted support measures**. These included detailed guidance on the website, individual consultations, webinars and applicant community platform. Our **national contact points** also organised tailored national applicant events and provided guidance.

Our Support Measures:

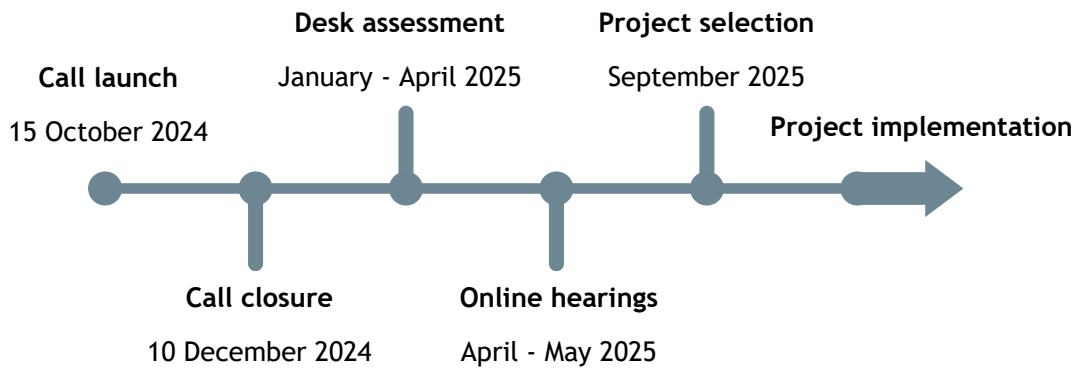


Our Applicant Community:



The response to the call was remarkable, with **140 proposals submitted**. Looking ahead, the next steps in the selection process are already underway. A notable new feature will be the introduction of **project hearings**, where shortlisted applicants will have the opportunity to present their proposals directly to the selection panel.

Applications in numbers:



Call 4



2024 has also been an intense year for designing the fourth and final call which will be launched in 2025. A study on **potentials for a joint capitalisation of cross-border and transnational Interreg results in central Europe** has been kicked off. Preliminary findings of this study were discussed with relevant programme authorities and the European Commission in Brussels in late November.

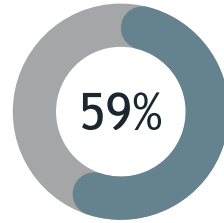
More information is available in the dedicated chapter on **"Capitalisation and Synergies"**.

Implementation and Monitoring

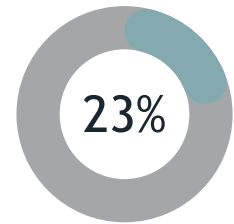
Project Progress

Building on the 53 projects from the first call, the second call has brought the total to **100 projects under implementation**.

While the first call projects already completed their project reviews, reached first milestones and delivered first outputs, second call projects started their cooperation only recently. They successfully defined their monitoring plans and are swiftly progressing with the implementation of their planned activities.



Implementation progress of first call projects



Implementation progress of second call projects

Support & Monitoring



In 2024, we continued our efforts to support the implementation of our projects. Through the **continuous monitoring** of milestones, deliverables and outputs, performing project reviews and attending project meetings, we stayed in regular contact with them.

We also introduced a new approach that disentangles activity and finance monitoring. This change greatly improves efficiency. It helped reduce the reimbursement time to under 30 days on average, which is well below the regulatory limit of 80 days.

Monitoring was complemented by dedicated support events: In March, an **implementation webinar** provided second call projects with tools and guidance for their kick-offs. In October, thematic **synergy roundtables** fostered cooperation among projects. In December, three **communication webinars** inspired projects to improve their outreach.

Programme Finances

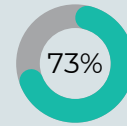
With 84% of the available European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding already allocated with call 1 and call 2, in 2024, the programme **disbursed almost 33 million EUR** from the ERDF to projects. This amount includes lump sum reimbursements for preparation and contracting costs under the second call, as well as payments related to joint financial reports (JFRs) submitted by first call projects.

To this end, the managing authority has submitted **two payment requests** to the European Commission, **amounting to 26.7 million EUR ERDF**.

ERDF Allocation in 2024

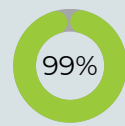
Compared to programme target for 2027

P1: Smarter



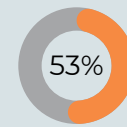
45.5m of
62.4m€

P2: Greener



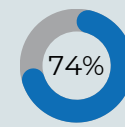
103.5m of
104m€

P3: Better connected



11.1m of
20.8m€

P4: More integrated



15.4 m of
20.8m€

Total: 84%

Programme Audits



In 2024, the audit process was initiated, marking a key step in ensuring transparency and compliance within the programme. The audit activities carried out during the year included **three audits on operations**, as well as a **system audit** of the managing authority and joint secretariat. These audits aim to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme's implementation and management systems. Once all final audit reports are received and reviewed, any necessary follow-up actions will be promptly undertaken.



Paving the way for a more resilient and sustainable food system



Food4CE

Alternative food networks in central Europe face the challenge of developing and scaling up ethical food systems that connect producers and consumers. Despite their potential to transform the food supply, these networks often lack systemic support and innovation capacity. The FOOD4CE project addresses these issues by establishing local and transnational hubs where food and logistics actors can share practices, adopt cutting-edge technologies and build stronger connections.



Pilot Action

In addition to 5 local innovation hubs in Slovenia, Austria, Italy, Hungary and Poland that strengthen regional food systems and supply chains, the project established a transnational hub. As a collaborative platform, the hub will enable the exchange of experiences, best practices and needs across national borders, thus enhancing collective knowledge while promoting the adoption of innovative solutions on a transnational scale.

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/food4ce>

Involving citizens in the management of natural disasters

LOCALIENCE



The LOCALIENCE project addresses a key challenge in disaster management: the traditional, one-way approach where disaster managers provide information without involving local communities. It brings these groups together in Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia to co-design solutions such as community-led flood defence strategies and digital risk mapping tools. By piloting approaches that involve citizens, the project creates practical ways for municipalities to adapt and scale. It also develops a training toolkit to help local authorities and practitioners engage residents during disaster response planning. Through transnational cooperation, LOCALIENCE enables regions to share successful practices and build stronger, greener, and more connected communities. These efforts align with the EU's Green Deal goals to enhance climate resilience and transition to a sustainable future.

"The consequences of climate change have caught us. Adaptation to them will only become effective through cooperation."

- Slovenian Environment Agency

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/localience>



Improving mobility in border regions



TRANS-BORDERS+

Leaving the car at home remains difficult for people in peripheral border regions. Limited public transport options and scattered travel information often make cross-border journeys complex. The TRANS-BORDERS+ project connects a transnational network of transport stakeholders to tackle these barriers and improve mobility in border areas. Partners develop open journey planners that combine travel information from providers across borders, making trip planning easier. Moreover, they digitalise rural transport stops to transform them into modern mobility hubs, making public transport more accessible and attractive in these underserved areas.



Achievement

TRANS-BORDERS+ is contributing to European Capital of Culture Nova Gorica - Gorizia by enhancing regional connections with sustainable mobility solutions. Preparatory work was underway in 2024 and will become reality as 2025 kicks off.

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/trans-bordersplus>

Enabling participatory cross-border governance

BorderLabs CE



The BorderLabs CE project transforms border regions into places of cooperation to address shared challenges together. It creates synergies and enhances resilience by integrating diverse cross-border initiatives into a cohesive transnational framework. By piloting innovative governance models across central Europe, it unites public authorities, researchers, and citizens to develop long-term solutions that anticipate future risks. For instance, in the border area of Germany, Poland, and Czechia, it creates a joint framework for transitioning regional economies to sustainable, low-carbon sectors. In the Italian-Slovenian border region, it fosters cross-border cooperation to promote sustainable tourism, while in the Hungarian-Slovak border area, it strengthens local supply chains through cooperative networks.

<https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/borderlabs-ce>



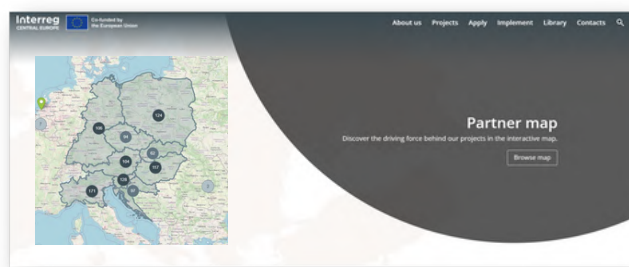
Programme Outreach

In 2024, communication efforts by the joint secretariat and the national contact point network effectively reached applicants and beneficiaries as well as other key stakeholders. By leveraging our numerous digital channels and actively organising and participating in events, we further ensured that people stayed informed on key developments and successes. Selected transnational communication highlights are presented in this chapter.

Website and Social Media

In 2024, the programme added 47 second call project pages to the website. We also introduced a brand new tool, the **project partner map**. This map highlights the 1011 organisations that are working together in our funded projects and allows to search for project partners in specific regions of central Europe.

In terms of traffic, visitors were equally interested in contents provided by the programme and by the projects.



126k visits



3 min 30s average visit time



Facebook

532+K people reached

(508k from ads)



LinkedIn

218K+ impressions of posts

(80k from ads)



YouTube

12.8K views

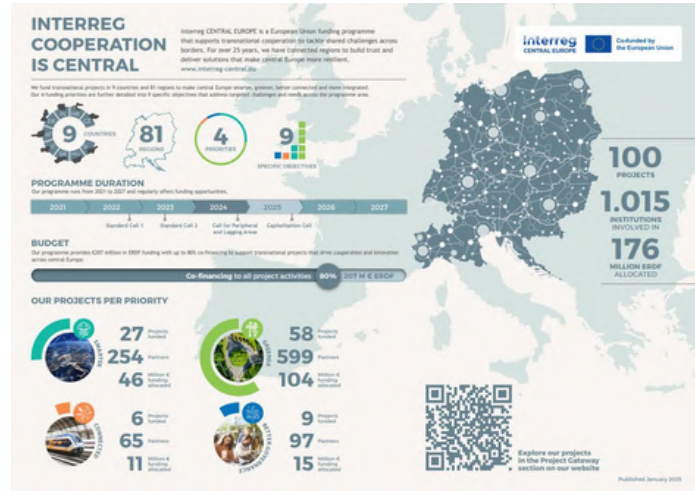
Total watch time of over 900 h

The programme also performed strongly on social media. A mix of visuals, videos, and interactive quizzes effectively engaged audiences, expanded reach and boosted followership. This was especially successful when done in the frame of paid campaigns. Organic content performed best when showcasing project milestones and programme achievements, such as new funding opportunities and call results. Collaborations with project partners with strong follower bases further amplified project visibility.

Publications and Mailings

In 2024, we published our first **Year in Review** and the **consultation harvesting report** on the future of Interreg. We also created **47 factsheets** for new projects and a **programme infographic**.

Furthermore, the programme updated 18.450 stakeholders about programme developments in five **newsletters** that were complemented by a number of more targeted mailings to specific audiences.



Public Events

In June 2024, the programme participated in the **13th Annual Forum of the EU Macroregional Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)** in Vienna. The event offered a cooperation platform for stakeholders from the region and beyond to address upcoming challenges, collaborate on shared solutions and develop aspirations for a prosperous future. We contributed with a stand that encouraged networking with participants and held a workshop on our funding opportunities and how we help central European regions and cities to become more attractive places to live in.



In November 2024, we carried this message to Budapest at the **ARTCO conference**, where nearly 400 policymakers, practitioners, and experts gathered to discuss the future of Interreg. The conference showcased a shared vision for **enhancing European cooperation**, underlining its essential role in addressing common challenges. We presented how Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects directly benefit EU citizens, reaffirming the value of transnational collaboration in delivering sustainable, impactful results for communities across Europe.

Capitalisation and Synergies



In 2024, we addressed capitalisation and synergies on multiple levels to strengthen the impact of Interreg as a whole, for the benefit of the central European regions. We actively fostered and explored capitalisation and synergy potentials within CENTRAL EUROPE projects, ensuring they build on each other's results and generate long-term impact. At the same time, we worked in close coordination with other Interreg programmes and financial instruments, to create synergies across initiatives.

Synergies among Projects

Synergies are crucial for maximising the impact of transnational projects. In October 2024, we brought together our projects in **online synergy roundtables** for focused discussions. These roundtables complement our continuous support during project lifetime to create synergies between projects and strengthening project results. They provided an opportunity for second call projects to connect with more advanced first call projects. Participants presented their projects focus and concrete outputs and explored opportunities for joint actions, including shared events, knowledge exchange and stakeholder outreach, while maximising the overall impact of their initiatives by avoiding the duplication.



9
Roundtables



200+
Participants

Synergies across Programmes

Our dedication to a more integrated and coordinated approach to funding has also led us to further intensify relations with our programme peers in the Interreg community. In May, we attended a coordination meeting organised by the **Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme** in Rostock to exchange best practices, enhance synergies and collaboratively generate ideas; and in October, together with Interact we co-hosted a **meeting of transnational programme directors** in Vienna.





We also deepened our ties with the [Interreg Danube Region Programme](#), which actively contributed to our synergy roundtables.

Last but not least, we worked together with the [Clean Energy Transition Partnership \(CETP\)](#). We contributed to the design of their call on energy technologies and systems in order to encourage and facilitate cooperation with our energy-related projects.

Capitalisation

In 2024, we also took forward [preparations for our next call](#) on “Capitalisation through Coordination”. A study was launched to explore opportunities for the joint valorisation of results from transnational and cross-border Interreg projects, providing valuable insights for shaping the upcoming capitalisation call.

The possible benefits of such a call were further validated on 27 November in a workshop in Brussels. This event brought together nearly 100 transnational and cross-border stakeholders, as well as national and regional experts and Commission officials. The participants highly valued the call idea and approach for advancing cooperation and strengthening the impact of existing Interreg results for the benefit of central European regions.



20 Interreg cross-border programmes analysed



460 cross-border projects analysed



21 interviews with cross-border authorities



122 beneficiaries surveyed



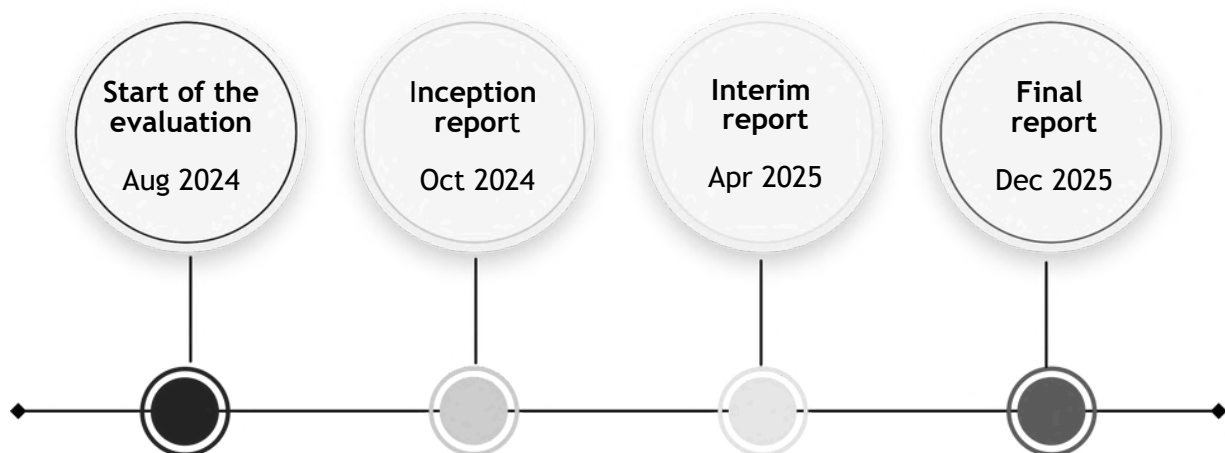
Evaluation and Studies

Alongside the launch of an operational evaluation, the programme has commissioned studies in 2024 to enhance its decision-making process and maximise its impact by identifying areas for improvement and informed action.

Evaluation

In 2024, we launched the operational evaluation of our current programme to assess its effectiveness and efficiency. The evaluation is carried out by external experts, who already outlined their methodological approach in the inception report, setting the stage for a thorough and insightful evaluation process.

Running until December 2025, the evaluation will adopt a mixed-methods approach, including desk research, data analysis, stakeholder interviews, surveys targeting applicants and beneficiaries. The final report is expected in 2025 and will provide valuable recommendations for enhancing programme delivery and achieving its strategic objectives.





In April, ESPON launched its targeted analysis “CleanEnergy4CE” in close coordination with our programme as a key stakeholder. The study is carried out by consortium of experts led by Charles University in Prague and aims to deliver research on implementing clean energy transition policies in central Europe, with a focus on governance strategies, opportunities, challenges, and the role of transnational cooperation in achieving climate neutrality. In the frame of the study, ESPON invited the programme to participate in the ESPON week in Budapest in November where we moderated a panel discussion on energy transition.

Earlier in February, we contributed to the Interact study on “Civic and Civil Society Engagement in Interreg”. The study highlights the essential role of civic and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Interreg, showcasing how programmes and projects actively involve CSOs to enhance impact, foster innovation, and promote participatory regional development. It also explores ways to make funding more accessible, encouraging broader and more inclusive engagement.

All publicly available studies and documents are available for download in the library section of our programme website.



Civic and civil society engagement in Interreg

January 2024

Explore the dynamics of civic and civil society engagement in Interreg programmes. The study report offers reflections about the potential of Interreg in fostering community engagement and strengthening Interreg for impactful cooperation with citizens and civil society organizations.



Interreg Future

Discussions on the future shape of Interreg and Cohesion policy as a whole intensified in 2024. To better understand future needs and challenges in the Interreg community, and to showcase the importance of Interreg for EU regions, the European Commission launched a consultation process. This process followed two distinct tracks: one focused on broader stakeholder and citizen consultations, engaging a wide range of voices from across the EU, while the other specifically targeted Interreg programme practitioners.

Stakeholder Consultation

Our programme launched its stakeholder consultation in April 2024 with a joint online survey conducted alongside five other transnational Interreg programmes.

Drawing on contributions from 216 stakeholders and insights from a programme-specific focus group held in September 2024, the resulting [harvesting report](#) synthesises feedback on the strengths of transnational cooperation and areas for improvement. These insights have directly shaped the programme’s policy recommendations that are aimed at further strengthening transnational cooperation in the future. The report is available for download in the library section of our programme website.



Policy Recommendations

- Keep Focus on Capacity Building and Piloting Innovative Ideas
- Improve Governance for a More Integrated Territorial Development
- Improve Coordination to Foster Sustainable Impacts
- Enhance Climate Action and Sustainability Efforts
- Pilot Innovation and Digitalisation Efforts
- Address the Need for Flexibility
- Simplify Administrative and Financial Procedures
- Retain Programme Area with Flexibility for Wider Cooperation

Consultation of Programmes



Throughout 2024, our programme actively collaborated with fellow Interreg programme professionals to shape the future of transnational cooperation. We participated to seven working groups managed by Interact:



Performance-Based Approach and Future Simplified Cost Options (SCOs)



Synergies and Cooperation



External Cooperation



Future of ISO1 « Better cooperation governance »



Territorial Instruments



Flexibility and Adaptability of Programmes



Greener Europe

The **draft papers** were reviewed during a “Harvesting Event” in Brussels on 25-26 November. The event brought together representatives from nearly all Interreg programmes who reviewed, refined, and exchanged ideas on the papers, ensuring that these reflect the collective insights and experiences of programme practitioners. In the event, our programme was also invited by the European Commission to present our consultation experiences from a transnational perspective, where our Head of Communication and Public Policy Unit got to share his insights.



“Stakeholders value transnational Interreg cooperation first and foremost as a modern financing instrument for building capacities and piloting solutions across borders and sectors.”

Frank Schneider, Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE, at the Harvesting Event of the European Commission in Brussels, November 2024

Thank you for being part of our year 2024!



For more information visit our website and social media channels or contact us directly!



<https://www.interreg-central.eu>



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