

Interreg
CENTRAL EUROPE



Co-funded by
the European Union

YEAR IN REVIEW

TAKING COOPERATION FORWARD

2025

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Foreword

In this report, we reflect on a decisive year for the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme. 2025 not only brought important milestones for our projects and beneficiaries but also marked the successful closure of the 2014-2020 programming period, while helping shape the future of our programme and transnational cooperation in Europe. The highlight of the year was undoubtedly our programme conference *“From Results to Impact Cooperation Takes Synergies Forward”*. Bringing together more than 250 participants in Vienna plus the same amount online, the event offered a unique opportunity for networking and knowledge exchange. It also marked the launch of our strategic capitalisation call, designed to reduce border effects by allowing our funded projects to capitalise on their outputs and results in close synergy with cross-border initiatives, ensuring stronger impact.

2025 was also a busy and productive year for the joint secretariat. While first and second call projects delivered tangible results across central Europe, the assessment of 140 applications submitted under the third call was successfully completed, leading to the contracting of 25 new, small-scale projects ready to pioneer solutions for peripheral and lagging areas. At the same time, preparations advanced for our strategic capitalisation call, with applications now under assessment and promising to further strengthen the impact of our programme.

Finally, it was a year of strong visibility for transnational cooperation. With the debate on the EU’s next long-term budget and regulations underway, the whole network of 13 transnational programmes came together to showcase the achievements of our cooperation strand. From the publication of a joint brochure in March to the joint exhibition driven by Interreg Volunteers Youth in the European Parliament and our presence at the European Week of Regions and Cities: We showcased how Interreg programmes are essential in addressing Europe’s challenges and shaping its future.

Looking back, 2025 has once again demonstrated the strength of our community and the importance of working together across borders. I would like to thank all our partners and stakeholders for their continued commitment and collaboration. Together, we will carry this momentum forward as we prepare for the next chapter of European cooperation.



Martin Hutter

Deputy Head of Managing Authority
December 2025

Highlights 2025



01/2025	Start of assessment of 140 small-scale project proposals addressing peripheral and lagging areas
02/2025	Submission of the closure package for Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-20 to the EC
03/2025	Publication of a joint advocacy brochure of transnational Interreg cooperation programmes
04/2025	Publication of a preview of the strategic call for capitalisation - the final call of the programme
05/2025	Programme conference “From results to impact” attended by 500 people in Vienna and online
06/2025	Joint exhibition of transnational Interreg cooperation programmes at the European Parliament
07/2025	Publication of the ESPON CleanEnergy4CE study, initiated and supported by our programme
07/2025	Official closure of Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-20 after EC acceptance of closure package
09/2025	Selection of 25 small-scale projects addressing peripheral and lagging areas, resulting in an allocation of 91% of our ERDF funds to projects
10/2025	Various programme sessions organised at the European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels
11/2025	Closure of the strategic capitalisation call attracting 73 project proposals
12/2025	40% of available ERDF funds paid out by the programme to projects by the end of 2025

Application and Contracting

Call for Peripheral and Lagging Areas

In November 2025, we entered the contracting process for **25 new, small-scale projects**, which had been selected by the monitoring committee (MC) in Split in September. Before the selection, a total of **140 proposals** were thoroughly assessed, including, for the first time, **online hearings** with shortlisted applicants. The third call projects are expected to kick off their activities **targeting in particular peripheral and lagging areas** in January to March 2026.

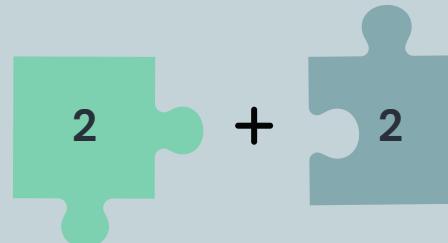


Strategic Call for Capitalisation

In 2025, we also launched our **fourth and final call for proposals** of the current programming period, dedicated to **strategic capitalisation projects**. With this call, we aim to **reduce the effects of borders on flows and functional linkages** through projects that capitalise on existing results. Applicants were invited to capitalise on existing outputs and results from both transnational and cross-border Interreg projects, fostering the **upstreaming** of proven solutions into policies and their **downstreaming** into new territorial contexts, thereby extending their impact beyond border regions and **breaking the silos** across Interreg cooperation strands.

Call 4 Basic Requirement

Project proposals have to take up outputs and results:



From at least two Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE projects

From at least two Interreg cross-border cooperation projects addressing internal central European borders

The call was presented in a preview at our **programme conference in May** and was open for applications from 29 September to 27 November. As with previous calls, the application process was accompanied by comprehensive support measures, including guidance documents, webinars, and individual consultations, complemented by the activity of our National Contact Points (NCPs) that continued to provide targeted assistance through tailored events and advice.

With an indicative **budget of EUR 23 million**, the call attracted 73 project proposals that involve **496 organisations** from across central Europe. The response to the **synergy requirement** was particularly strong: applications build on **165 projects** funded by Interreg cross-border programmes, covering **21 of the 22 CBC programmes** in the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE programme area. Altogether, applicants plan to capitalise on **350 existing outputs and results**, with the assessment process already underway.

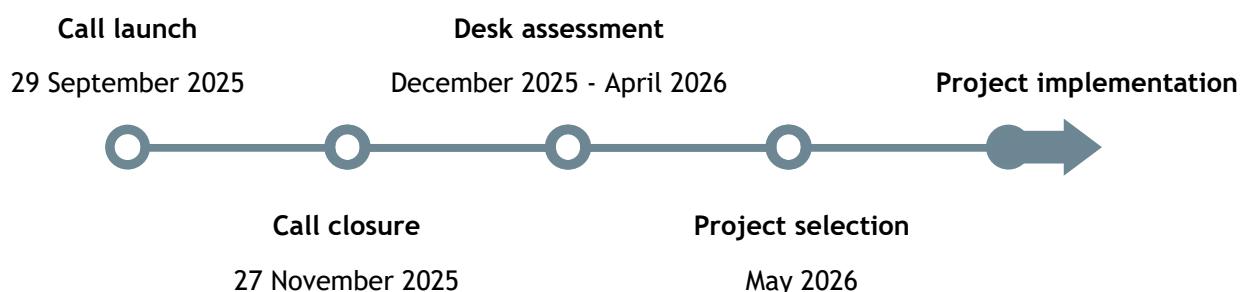
Key Support Measures in Numbers:



Our Matchmaking Platform in Numbers:



Applications in Numbers:

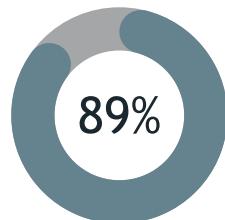


Implementation and Monitoring

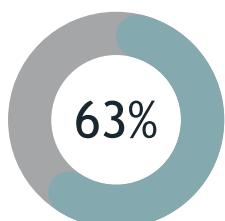
Project Progress

With 25 projects newly funded under the third call, we are now **financing 125 projects**. The new projects will begin their activities in the new year, while some of the 53 projects funded under the first call have already held their final events and are approaching closure.

Second call projects are also progressing fast: Most of them are implementing their **pilot actions**, and have already achieved their first milestones including tangible outputs.

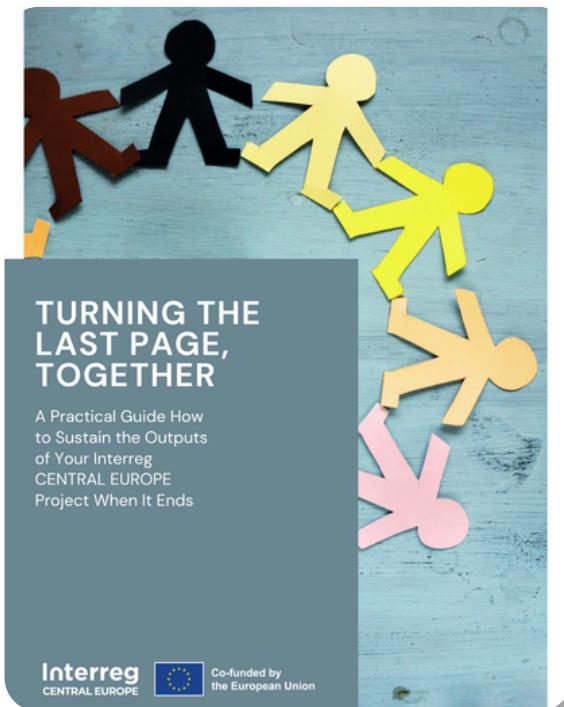


Implementation progress of first call projects



Implementation progress of second call projects

Support & Monitoring



Continuous monitoring, which is a cornerstone of our work with projects, ensured a steady flow of information from the projects to the programme throughout 2025. It has allowed the JS to **closely follow** projects progress and to provide timely feedback to beneficiaries.

Periodic reporting and project reviews further supported this process. As of summer, **review meetings** took place with each of the **47 ongoing call 2 projects**, offering an opportunity to discuss progress of projects towards their objectives, challenges faced by them and upcoming activities. This all was complemented by targeted support for beneficiaries. In November, an **implementation webinar** helped third call projects prepare for their start-up phase, while a new "**Guide on how to communicate project results**" inspires first call projects that enter their final phase.



Transforming elderly care through digital innovation



PROCAREFUL

Europe's population is aging rapidly, especially in rural and smaller urban areas where access to reliable home care can be limited. The PROCAREFUL project is responding with a new hybrid model that combines in-person care with smart digital tools. By integrating artificial intelligence into daily routines, care professionals can now detect early signs of cognitive or physical decline, ensuring that seniors receive support before problems escalate.



Pilot Action

In Silea (Treviso, Italy), the project is testing an innovative approach to home care for people aged 55 and above. Local caregivers use a digital platform that helps them create personalised care plans and monitor wellbeing remotely. This proactive model allows timely interventions and strengthens social connections, helping older adults live independently for longer.

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

Turning e-waste into opportunity

CIRCOTRONIC



The CIRCOTRONIC project supports small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the electrical and electronics industry in adopting more sustainable and circular practices. This fast-growing sector faces major environmental challenges, from high resource consumption to increasing e-waste and emissions.

By uniting policymakers, researchers, and businesses from six countries, CIRCOTRONIC develops and tests practical solutions that help over 180 SMEs redesign products, recover essential rare earths materials, and adopt circular business models.



Local Impact

Companies like Elpro Križnič in Slovenia are already experiencing how circular strategies can cut environmental impacts while unlocking new business opportunities. Through its network of regional circular labs, the project shows how cooperation can accelerate the shift toward a greener, more resource-efficient electronics industry in central Europe.

"A sustainable strategy is a gateway to new business opportunities."

- Elpro Križnič Representative

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



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

Improving mobility in border regions



ACCESSMILE

For many rural and peripheral regions in central Europe, limited transport infrastructure and complex logistics often stand in the way of growth. The ACCESSMILE project is addressing this by developing smart logistics tools that make last-mile transport more efficient, sustainable, and connected to Europe's Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). Through cooperation between public and private partners, the project demonstrates how smart innovation can strengthen regional accessibility and competitiveness across central Europe.



Pilot Action

At the Port of Gdynia in Poland, the project is testing a digital system that integrates cargo monitoring with automated weight and licence-plate checks. The solution improves safety and streamlines port operations by detecting overloads and optimising vehicle flow. Once refined, this technology will be shared and replicated across other pilot regions.

Creating inclusive spaces across central Europe

CESpaces4All



Travelling without barriers is still a challenge in many parts of central Europe. Information about accessible destinations is often incomplete, making it difficult for people with disabilities, families, or seniors to plan their trips. The CESpaces4All project connects tourism organisations, local authorities, and experts from six countries to improve accessibility in public spaces and tourism services. Partners develop tools such as a Web Accessibility Viewer, business guidelines, and training programmes that help regions make inclusive tourism a reality. By sharing methods and data across borders, CESpaces4All promotes equal opportunities and strengthens social inclusion through cooperation.



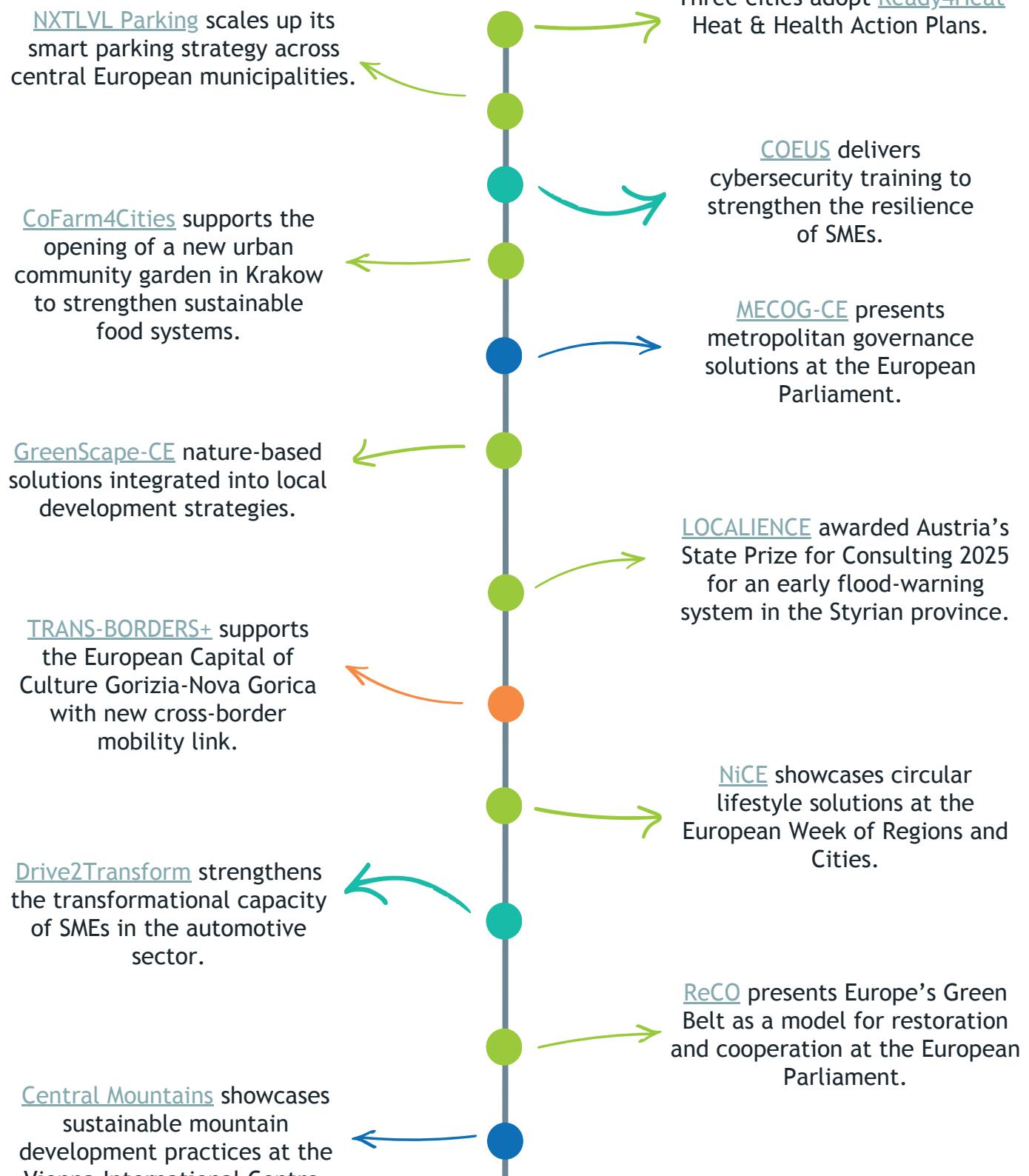
Achievement

In 2025, Weinviertel Tourismus GmbH earned the Accessibility Award from BhW Niederösterreich for its outstanding work on inclusive tourism. The recognition highlights CESpaces4All's impact in making accessibility visible, practical, and central to sustainable tourism across central Europe.



<https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/ce-spaces4all/>

Projects Highlights



[Discover many more news and achievements on our website.](#)

Programme Finances

With the selection of third call projects, **91% of our available European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has now been allocated**. In 2025, the programme ensured steady financial progress, disbursing around EUR 46.5 million in ERDF to ongoing projects, based on 175 joint financial reports monitored during the year. The programme is therefore on track to successfully **meet and exceed the N+3 target**, reflecting sound financial management and efficient fund absorption.

To this end, the managing authority (MA) has in total submitted **7 payment requests** to the European Commission, amounting to **EUR 88.3 million ERDF**.

ERDF Disbursed (End of 2025)

Compared to programme budget allocation

P1: Smarter



36%

22.6m of
62.4m€

P2: Greener



44%

46.4m of
104m€

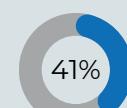
P3: Better connected



25%

5.7m of
20.8m€

P4: Better governance



41%

8.6m of
20.8m€

Total: 40%

Programme Audits



In February 2025, the audit authority submitted the audit package of the first audits carried out under the new common sample framework. Our programme had a near **0% error rate**, confirming the programme's high standards of compliance and sound financial management.

The system audit of the MA and JS was initiated in 2024 and continued in 2025. In addition, system audits on the national control systems were also launched in 2025. These audits are now further assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of programme management.

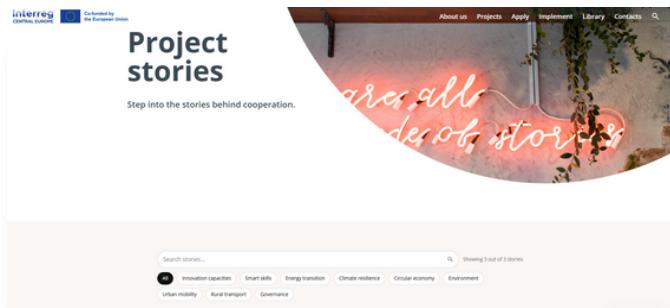
Public Awareness and Policy Dialogue

In 2025, communication efforts by the JS and the NCP network continued to reach audiences well beyond applicants and beneficiaries. Through a strong online presence, engaging events, and close cooperation with other transnational Interreg programmes, the programme effectively showcased its results and the added value of European cooperation.

Website and Social Media

In 2025, the website introduced a new tool to showcase the tangible impact of our projects across central Europe: the *Project story blog*.

In terms of traffic, the website's 100 active project pages attracted the highest number of visitors, with activities peaking during the launch of the strategic call for capitalisation. Looking ahead, the website will further expand with the addition of 25 new project pages from the third call.



	Facebook >104K people reached
	LinkedIn >156K post impressions
	YouTube >6K views Total watch time of over 400 h
	Newsletter 37.2% average open rate 9.3% average click-through rate

The programme also maintained a strong presence across social media platforms, using a diverse mix of visuals, videos, and interactive content to engage audiences and expand reach. Cooperation with other transnational Interreg programmes in **joint communication campaigns** further increased visibility and coherence across the community. The weekly "*Project Thursday*" format changed focus during the year from presenting new projects towards **showcasing outputs**, bringing the true impact of cooperation even closer to the audience.

Moreover, we sent 10 newsletters to update to 18 400 of our stakeholders with news from our programme and Cohesion policy in general. These were complemented by a number of more targeted mailings to specific audiences.

Programme Conference

On 27 May 2025, the programme brought together policymakers, experts, and project partners in Vienna to discuss how cooperation can move *from results to impact*. The conference focused on the importance of capitalisation and synergies, emphasising how projects can build on each other's achievements and break existing silos between cross-border and transnational cooperation *to create stronger, lasting effects across regions*. While in the morning participants engaged in a high-level debate and were challenged by the keynote address by Prof. Furio Honsell exploring the true meaning of cooperation, the afternoon enabled participants to foster synergies through thematic workshops and sketch collaboration paths between transnational and cross-border projects.

The event also marked the *official preview of the programme's strategic call for capitalisation*, inviting projects to scale up tested outputs and connect results with other Interreg initiatives.



Around
500
attendees
online and in
Vienna

Public Events

Beyond our programme conference, members of the JS also represented the programme at several key public events across Europe. In June, we contributed to the Mediterranean "*Paths That Last*" conference, highlighting the importance of long-term results and the power of synergies among programmes. As was underlined during the discussion, "*Synergy is not a name, it is a question of being efficient.*"



Later in the year, the programme contributed to the **European Week of Regions and Cities** in Brussels. Europe's largest event on regional policy took place from 13-15 October and was the perfect opportunity to showcase what we do.

In the session “*Interreg Solutions for Local Challenges*”, we presented the scope of our third and fourth calls for applications, highlighting how cooperation supports peripheral and border regions through innovation and shared resources. The team was also active at a **joint stand of transnational programmes**, sharing insights on project achievements. Last but not least, we contributed to a debate on the new **BRIDGEforEU** Regulation, emphasising how our strategic call for capitalisation helps strengthening border areas.



National Highlights

In 2025, our NCPs played a vital role in supporting applicants and promoting the programme across all nine participating countries. Beyond their continuous support to applicants during calls, they helped showcase programme achievements while strengthening synergies across programmes and cooperation at the national level.

Their activities covered a wide range of formats, including:

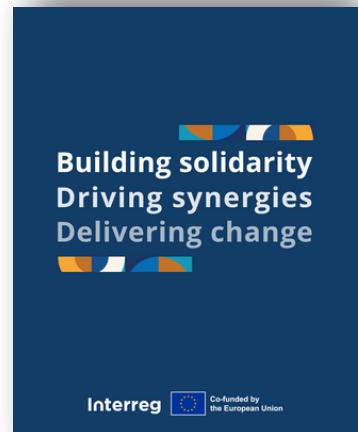
- **National info days and cooperation events**, such as the joint session in Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg promoting new Interreg opportunities.
- **Thematic and macro-regional events**, including contributions to innovation and circular-economy discussions at the *vernETZt im Donauraum* event in Linz.
- **Cross-programme exchanges**, such as the water-management event in Warsaw, which gathered projects from seven Interreg programmes.
- **National networking activities**, for example the *Cooperation Across Borders* event in Bratislava, connecting funding communities and fostering synergies.

Policy Dialogue

In 2025, with the debate on the future of cohesion policy intensifying and the proposal for the new EU long-term budget still underway, we joined forces with 12 other programmes to showcase the true **added value of Interreg transnational cooperation**. The resulting advocacy brochure sets out three core messages:

-  **Building Solidarity:** Connecting regions and people to address shared challenges.
-  **Achieving synergies:** Enabling regions and cities to pool resources and knowledge for solutions with broader impact.
-  **Delivering change:** Testing innovative solutions in real-life settings to drive sustainable growth and support the twin transitions.

Since their publication, these messages have shaped a broader joint campaign for reaffirming policymakers of the strategic role of transnational cooperation for Europe's future.



<https://www.interreg-central.eu/publications/#joint-brochure>

Exhibition at the European Parliament

A key moment of the joint campaign was the exhibition “**Through the Youth Lens: Stories of Transnational Cooperation**” at the European Parliament in June. The event, which was initiated by **Interreg Volunteer Youth** and hosted by MEP Sandro Gozi, celebrated the contribution of young people to Europe's future and the impact of cooperation beyond borders. The exhibition showcased project stories linked to the three key messages of the advocacy brochure, illustrating how cooperation delivers tangible benefits to people across Europe. Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE was represented by **BorderlabsCE**, a project tackling shared challenges in border regions through innovative governance and community-driven solutions.



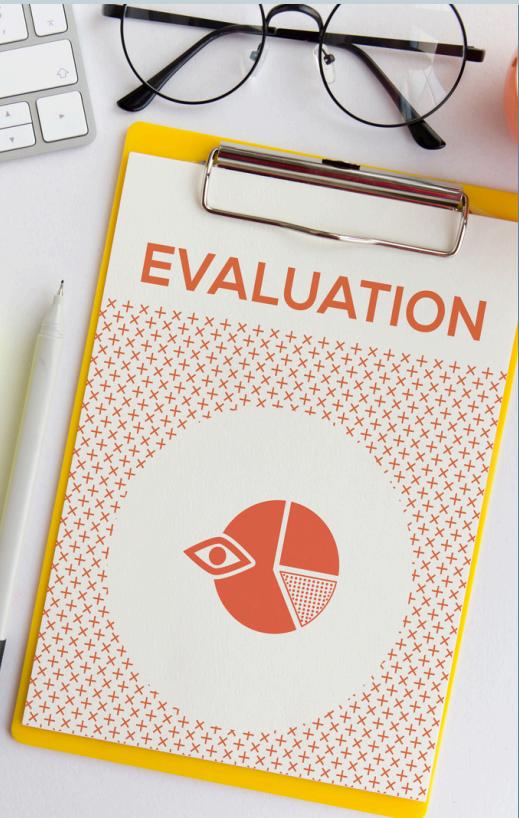
“Interreg is more than a funding tool; it is a political initiative that delivers European solutions to European challenges.”

MEP Sandro Gozi at the opening ceremony of the exhibition in Brussels in June 2025

Evaluation and Studies

2025 was a milestone year for evaluation and our evidence-based approach. The operational evaluation entered its final stage, with draft findings confirming that programme management and implementation are both effective and efficient. In parallel, the ESPON CleanEnergy4CE study was finalised and published in July, adding valuable insights to our knowledge base on regional energy transitions.

Operational Evaluation

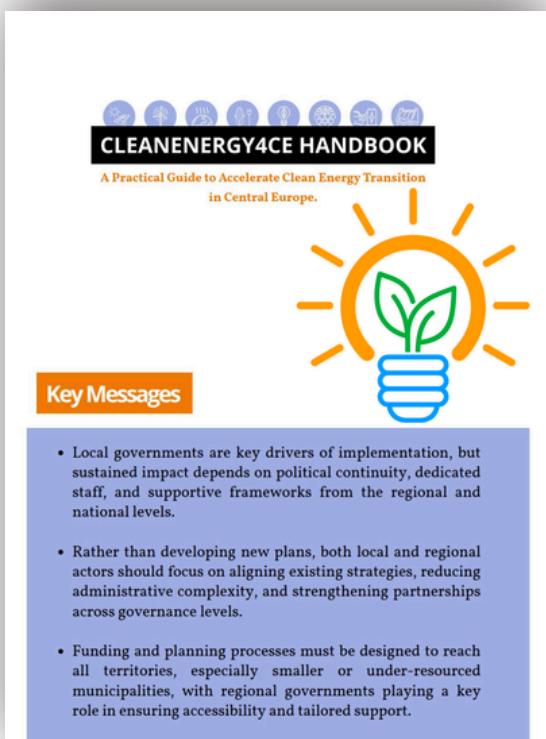


With the draft final report presented to the Evaluation Task Force online on 19 November, the operational evaluation of the programme has nearly reached completion and will be published in early 2026. Launched in 2024, the evaluation positively assessed programme management and implementation against two core criteria: effectiveness and efficiency.

It combined desk research, data analysis, surveys with applicants and beneficiaries, as well as interviews with beneficiaries, programme bodies, external experts and the European Commission. This mixed-method approach provided robust evidence on how effectively the programme achieves its objectives, manages resources, and ensures transparent and participatory governance.

Key Findings

- Effective management** - Clear roles, stable structures, and strong MA-JS coordination ensure smooth programme delivery.
- Clear and timely decisions** - Well-defined procedures and digital tools make decision-making transparent, efficient, and accountable.
- Efficient processes** - Simplified cost options cut administrative workload and reduce reimbursement time. While the application and selection processes are well designed and transparent.
- Digital innovation** - Jems and workflow tools streamline coordination, improve accuracy, and accelerate information flow.
- Strong engagement and reach** - Over 90 % of funds committed, high demand across calls (630 proposals over 3 calls), and 58 % newcomers confirm wide and balanced participation.



Finalised in July 2025, the ESPON [CleanEnergy4CE](#) study concluded two years of targeted research coordinated with our programme and the City of Vienna as the lead stakeholder. Led by Charles University in Prague, the study explored [how to translate clean energy transition policies into action across Central Europe](#).

The results, presented through a comprehensive ESPON handbook, provide practical guidance for policymakers on how to plan, finance, and implement clean energy measures in diverse territorial contexts. The analysis highlights the importance of integrated governance, multi-level coordination, and transnational cooperation in accelerating progress towards climate neutrality.

Building on case studies from the nine programme countries, the handbook identifies key drivers and barriers to the clean energy transition, from regulatory complexity to local capacity gaps, and showcases successful approaches tested within Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE and other EU-funded projects.

Programme Future

In July, the European Commission published the long-term budget proposal for 2028-34, which foresees EUR 10 billion for Interreg programmes. This step also marked the start of preparations for [Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2028-2034](#). A roadmap was presented to the MC in September, and a new [Working Group CE28+](#) was established to steer the upcoming programming process, while the programme continued to contribute to the wider debate on the legislative framework.



Roadmap for Interreg CE 2028-34

The roadmap for the future programme was presented and agreed at the 11th monitoring committee meeting in September, where the establishment of a [Working Group CE28+](#) was also approved. The group, representing the nine countries participating in the current programme, will be tasked with steering the programming process and ensuring a coordinated approach among participating countries and the European Commission.

As part of this work, the group will draw on the [ESPON TNOOP study](#), set for completion in April 2026. This study, commissioned by the European Commission, examines the role and potentials of transnational cooperation in the cohesion policy landscape and provides evidence on territorial needs, cooperation dynamics, and opportunities for added value across Europe. Its findings will support the programme's territorial analysis to identify regional needs and thematic priorities for the 2028-2034 programme period. These insights will inform the drafting of the new programme document, which is scheduled to begin towards the end of 2026.

Debate on the Future of Interreg

Throughout 2025, the programme played an active role within the wider Interreg community, [contributing to Interact working groups](#) on performance-based approaches (PBA), evaluation, indicators, and communication. We also took part in key European events shaping the future of Interreg, including conferences such as ArtCo, Interreg GO!, and the Interreg Knowledge Fair. Through these exchanges, we helped advance common reflections on how Interreg can improve in the next programming period.

A major achievement was the preparation of the paper [“Practitioners’ Input on the Interreg Plan 2028-34 Implementing Act”](#), jointly developed by 13 transnational Interreg programmes and Interreg Europe, with the support of Interact. The paper provides [technical inputs](#) to the European Commission [for the drafting of the implementing act](#) that will guide Interreg in the next programming period, reflecting practical experience and proposing solutions for a simpler, more coherent, and more effective framework.



Thank you for being part of our year 2025!



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



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