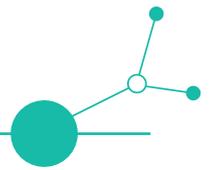




D4.2.2 Focus Group Methodology



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A. Purpose and scope

This Focus Group Methodology defines the methodological steps and instruments used for collecting and analysing qualitative data and stakeholder feedback at regional level in support of the preparation of Regional Action Plans (RAPs).

The methodology ensures that RAPs are:

- fully aligned with the Transnational Strategy,
- based on structured stakeholder input,
- comparable across partner regions,
- feasible and realistic in terms of implementation.

The approach follows the policy learning logic of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, combining transnational strategic guidance with region-specific co-creation.

B. Link to the Transnational strategy

The focus group methodology is developed based on the **main directions established in the Transnational Strategy** and serves as a core instrument for translating transnational objectives into regional implementation measures.

Focus groups:

- validate the relevance of transnational strategic pillars/objectives at regional level,
- identify region-specific priorities, barriers and opportunities,
- support the selection of concrete activities to be included in each RAP.

The methodology ensures traceability between:

- stakeholder needs,
- transnational strategic objectives,
- and regional actions.

The Regional Action Plans will specify how each region connects to the ecosystem (which local test facility, which local tech provider, which local SMEs). Each Regional Action Plan (RAP) has to:

- Identify regional **platforms** with which B2GreenHub could connect
- Describe which **tools** or services have the strongest **synergy** potential
- Outline actions ensuring that regional users **integrate** B2GreenHub into their existing workflows



By aligning synergies at both transnational and regional levels, the platform becomes an interconnected hub that enhances cohesion across partner regions.

Regional Action Plans (RAPs) have to reflect the transnational cooperation potential by:

- Identifying regional **actors ready** for cross-border collaboration
- Designing **actions** that align with shared cooperation areas
- Addressing **local barriers** that hinder internationalisation
- **Leveraging B2GreenHub tools** to expand regional value chains

This ensures that transnational cooperation is not only a strategic ambition but an actionable component of regional implementation.

C.Roles and responsibilities

Methodology development and validation

- PP4, PP5, PP6, PP8 and PP9 jointly prepare the focus group methodology for the design of Regional Action Plans.
- The methodology is reviewed by the External Advisory Board (EAB).
- Based on EAB feedback, the above-mentioned Project Partners refine and finalise the methodology, if needed.

Organisation of regional seminars

- LP, PP2, PP3, PP6, PP7, PP8 and PP9 organise one regional seminar in each participating region, applying the focus group methodology.
- Regional seminars involve main regional stakeholders, as well as all Project Partners (PPs) and Associated Strategic Partners (ASPs).
- The focus group methodology is applied consistently across regions to collect and analyse qualitative stakeholder feedback.

Analysis and RAP preparation

- LP, PP4 (Slovenia), PP2 (Germany), PP3 (Austria), PP5 and PP6 (Czech Republic), PP7 (Italy), PP8 (Poland) and PP9 (Hungary) jointly analyse the collected feedback.
- Based on this analysis, partners elaborate the Regional Action Plans.
- Regional Action Plans are reviewed by the External Advisory Board (EAB).
- PP4 and PP5 refine the RAPs, if required, following EAB recommendations.



D. Role of Regional Action Plans and RAP Framework

Regional Action Plans (RAPs) are the core implementation instruments through which the Transnational Strategy is translated into concrete, region-specific actions. Each RAP defines **how a region connects its local ecosystem to the GREENE 4.0 / B2GreenHub transnational innovation ecosystem** and **how regional stakeholders actively participate in cross-border cooperation**. RAPs are designed as connection-oriented implementation documents. They do not operate in isolation, but systematically link regional capacities, actors and initiatives to transnational services, tools and value chains.

Connecting Regions to the Transnational Ecosystem

Each Regional Action Plan specifies how the region contributes to and benefits from the shared ecosystem by identifying:

- local testing and demonstration facilities that can be connected to the transnational testing network,
- regional technology providers whose solutions can be showcased and deployed across borders,
- manufacturing SMEs and other end users that can benefit from platform-based services and cooperation.

To ensure operational integration, each RAP explicitly:

- identifies existing regional platforms, programmes and support structures with which B2GreenHub can connect,
- describes which B2GreenHub tools and services (e.g. training, matchmaking, testing, funding guidance) have the strongest regional synergy potential,
- defines concrete actions that enable regional stakeholders to integrate B2GreenHub into their existing workflows, business processes and innovation pathways.

By aligning these connections at both regional and transnational levels, the platform functions as an interconnected operational hub, strengthening cohesion and reducing fragmentation across partner regions.

Embedding Transnational Cooperation in RAPs

Regional Action Plans explicitly operationalise the transnational cooperation potential identified in the strategy. Each RAP therefore includes actions that:

- identify regional actors ready for cross-border cooperation, including SMEs, technology providers, research organisations and intermediaries,
- design actions aligned with shared transnational cooperation areas (e.g. joint piloting, project consortia building, testing, skills development),



- address region-specific barriers to internationalisation, such as lack of contacts, limited visibility, regulatory complexity or capacity constraints,
- leverage B2GreenHub tools and services to support the creation and expansion of cross-border value chains.

This ensures that transnational cooperation becomes a practical and actionable element of regional implementation, rather than a general strategic objective.

RAP Framework and Structure

To reflect this connection-oriented and cooperation-driven logic, each Regional Action Plan follows a common structure that explicitly links regional actions with the transnational ecosystem:

1. Regional Context and Ecosystem Overview

Description of main industrial sectors, key innovation actors, regional priorities and existing platforms, with a focus on how the regional ecosystem can connect to the B2GreenHub ecosystem.

2. Key Regional Needs and Barriers

Identification of regional challenges and bottlenecks based on surveys, focus groups and stakeholder consultations, including barriers to platform uptake and cross-border cooperation.

3. Priority Intervention Areas

Selection of thematic areas (e.g. training, technology adoption, testing, matchmaking, policy support) where transnational tools and services can generate the highest added value for the region.

4. Regional Actions Linked to the Transnational Ecosystem

Definition of concrete actions specifying:

- how regional actors will use or contribute to B2GreenHub services,
- responsibilities of regional and transnational actors,
- implementation timeline and expected outcomes.

5. Transnational Cooperation Measures

Dedicated section describing actions that enable cross-border cooperation, including matchmaking, joint pilots, shared testing, project consortia building and value-chain development.

6. Monitoring and KPI Framework

Definition of regional indicators aligned with the transnational KPIs, enabling consistent monitoring of ecosystem integration, platform uptake and cooperation outcomes.



Monitoring and Key Performance Indicators

The implementation of RAPs is monitored using a shared performance framework aligned with the Transnational Strategy. Core KPIs include:

- Number of SMEs actively using the B2GreenHub platform
- Number of cross-border cooperation links established
- Number of technologies adopted by SMEs
- Number of testing and piloting engagements facilitated
- Number of users trained through the Green Path Academy

While KPI definitions are common across regions, target values are adapted to regional context and baseline capacity, ensuring both comparability and realism.

E. Focus Group Methodology for Regional Seminars

Each partner region organises one regional seminar applying the focus group methodology to collect qualitative stakeholder input for the preparation of the Regional Action Plan (RAP). The regional seminar serves as a structured co-creation event, ensuring that regional stakeholders actively contribute to shaping actions that are aligned with the Transnational Strategy and embedded in the B2GreenHub ecosystem.

Objectives of the regional seminar

The regional seminar aims to:

- validate the relevance of the Transnational Strategy pillars/objectives at regional level,
- collect qualitative feedback on regional needs, barriers and priorities,
- co-design **concrete and feasible measures** for inclusion in the RAP,
- identify regional actors ready for transnational cooperation,
- support integration of B2GreenHub tools and services into regional workflows.

Each seminar must result in **action-oriented outputs**, not general discussions.

Participant selection

Participants should represent a **balanced mix of stakeholders** relevant to the project's thematic area and according to the Quadruple Helix model:

- Industry: manufacturing SMEs, mid-caps, technology providers
- Research and education: universities, R&D centres, training providers



- Public authorities: ministries, regional agencies, business support organisations
- Civil society / media: clusters, associations, innovation networks.

Recommended size: **8–12 persons per focus group**, ideally face-to-face; online option possible if needed.

Preparation Phase (Before the Seminar)

Partners should complete the following steps 2–4 weeks before the event:

- Define focus areas: Select 2–3 strategic pillars/objectives of the Transnational Strategy most relevant for the region.
- Map regional ecosystem assets: Identify key regional platforms, test facilities, clusters and support instruments relevant to B2GreenHub integration.
- Prepare short presentation (max. 10–15 minutes) covering: project and strategy overview, selected strategic pillars/objectives, expected seminar outputs.
- Invite participants, sending them seminar objectives, agenda, explanation of expected contribution and the methodology.

Structure and Agenda of the Regional Seminar

Recommended duration: 90–120 minutes

Welcome and Strategic Context (15–20 minutes)

- Welcome by host partner,
- Introduction to project and Transnational Strategy,
- Explanation of RAP purpose and expected seminar outputs.

Focus Group Discussion (60–75 minutes)

Discussion organised around selected strategic pillars/objectives. For each pillar/objective, the moderator guides participants through:

- identification of key regional challenges,
- target groups and beneficiaries,
- proposal of concrete measures and actions,
- links to B2GreenHub tools and transnational cooperation.

Aim: at least one concrete measure per pillar/objective.



Consolidation and Validation (10–15 minutes)

- Summary of proposed measures,
- Validation with participants,
- Agreement on priorities and feasibility.

Facilitation and Data Collection

- Each focus group is led by a **trained moderator** (ideally from the partner organisation).
- A **note-taker** or assistant records main discussion points using the provided template.
- Optionally, audio recording can be used (with participant consent).
- Keep discussion **solution-oriented and implementation-focused**.
- Avoid general policy debates.
- Ensure each proposed measure includes:
 - problem addressed,
 - target group,
 - proposed action,
 - responsible actors,
 - indicative timeline,
 - potential indicators.

Reporting Template (Project event report template)

After the seminar, each partner completes the project event report template, including:

- participant list,
- key discussion points,
- proposed measures,
- identified transnational cooperation opportunities.

Reports form the direct evidence base for RAP drafting.

Ethical Considerations

- Participation is voluntary and confidential.
- Participants should be informed about the purpose of data collection.
- Personal data (names, photos) handled according to GDPR rules.



Annex 1: Template for Suggested Measures from Regional Seminars

This template is used to document proposed measures identified during regional seminars applying the focus group methodology. Each proposed measure will serve as direct input for the preparation of the Regional Action Plan (RAP).

Partners are requested to complete at least one measure per selected strategic pillar/objective discussed during the seminar.

- Basic Information
- Region / Country:
- Partner responsible:
- Date of regional seminar:
- Location / Format (physical / online / hybrid):
- Strategic Pillar/Objective addressed:
 - Knowledge & Competence Uplift
 - Transnational Ecosystem Connectivity
 - Platform Synergies & Reach
 - Education–Industry–Research Linkages

Suggested Measure – Structured Description

1. Title of the Measure

(Short, action-oriented title)

2. Strategic Objective and Priority Area

Strategic Objective (SO):

Priority Area:

- Training / Skills
- Technology adoption
- Testing & piloting
- Matchmaking & networking
- Policy support / governance



3. Problem or Need Addressed

(Brief description of the main regional challenge or gap this measure responds to)

4. Target Groups

(Select and describe main beneficiaries)

- Manufacturing SMEs
- Technology providers
- Research / education organisations
- Public authorities
- Intermediaries / clusters
- Other (specify):

5. Description of the Measure

(What will be done, how, and for whom – focus on practical implementation)

6. Connection to the Transnational Ecosystem

Describe how this measure connects to the GREENE 4.0 / B2GreenHub ecosystem, for example:

- use of B2GreenHub tools or services,
- link to transnational platforms or networks,
- involvement in cross-border cooperation or value chains.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Lead organisation(s):

Supporting actors (regional / transnational):

8. Expected Outputs and Results

(What will be delivered as a direct result of this measure?)

9. Indicative Timeline

- Short-term (within 12 months)
- Medium-term (12–36 months)
- Long-term (beyond 36 months)



10. Resource Level (Indicative)

- Low
- Medium
- High

(No detailed budgeting required)

11. Monitoring Indicators (KPIs)

(Select or define 1–3 simple, output-level indicators)

Examples:

- number of SMEs supported,
- number of users onboarded to platform,
- number of cooperation links established,
- number of pilot or testing engagements.

Validation

Was the measure validated by seminar participants?

- Yes No

Additional remarks or conditions for implementation:

Follow-up

Is further clarification needed after the seminar?

- Yes No

If yes, specify actions and responsible partner(s):

Instructions for Partners

Use one template per proposed measure.

Avoid general statements; focus on implementable actions.

The level of detail should allow direct integration into the Regional Action Plan.

Quantitative targets are indicative and may be refined during RAP drafting.