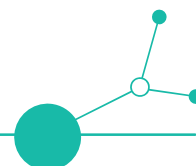


x-Inno Pilot Concept 4

Improving skill capacities in industrial regions through territorial cooperation



8 2025



Pilot activity A.2.4

Senior lead: Creative Industry Košice, n.o. (PP5)

Junior lead: CREARE Linz and Upper Austria (PP2)



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A. About x-Inno Radar and its Pilots

x-Inno Radar is an Interreg Central Europe project that aims to explore, promote, and integrate soft skills in industrial environments. A consortium of eight non-metropolitan regions, a think tank and a scientific institute (2024-2027) runs it.

x-Inno Radar builds on a joint structured approach consisting of three main phases:

1. screenings of the regional soft skill landscapes
2. jointly developed pilot activities
3. regional strategies and policy recommendations.

In the 2nd phase “pilot activities”, partner teams test new approaches in four thematically different pilots. These pilots take up the needs discovered in the screening phase. As well, their outcomes feed into the strategic considerations of partners. Each pilot consists of two test zones.

- (1) **Cross-Innovation:** “Strengthening transversal soft skills and cross-sectoral inspiration in industrial regions” (focus: transversal skills)
- (2) **Level Integration:** “Integrating maker skills in innovation ecosystem of industrial regions” (focus: maker skills)
- (3) **Pioneer Spirit:** “Reviving industrial society’s pioneer skills as basis for transformation” (focus: entrepreneurial skills)
- (4) **Territorial Cooperation:** “Improving skill capacities in industrial regions through territorial cooperation” (focus: networking amongst soft skill stakeholders)

This document here presents the concept for one of the pilots as the respective partner team jointly elaborated it. All four pilot concepts can be found on the project homepage www.x-inno-radar.eu.



Brainstorming of pilot teams at Partner meeting in Fratiškovy Lázně, April 2025



B. Pilot Theme: Improving skill capacities in industrial regions through territorial cooperation

An additional challenge addressed by x-Inno Radar relates to the fact that non-metropolitan industrial regions - being characterised by small and medium-sized cities and rural areas - have by nature limited own capacities for skill development. For compensating this short-coming, territorial cooperation beyond administrative borders would help. However, experience shows that - despite of the need - city-hinterland cooperation stays usually far below its potential, aggravating the difficult situation.

Within its Strand 4 "Cities and hinterlands: Improving skill availability through territorial cooperation" x-Inno Radar proposes and tests novel approaches that increase hinterland skill capacities by scouting 'provincial expats', i.e. people who left for the metropolises, utilising their networks, e.g. setting up a database supporting mentor- or ambassadorship. Secondly, the project works on improving skill networks in functional areas by reviving and nursing territorial cooperation formats, e.g. cross-wise/joint promotion of soft skills and providers through web campaigns, networking events, etc..

This pilot is targeted to general public (ex-pats), soft skill providers (SMEs, NGOs, ...), business support organisations, research institutions and administrations.

C. Pilot Test Zone 4A: Regional skill networks

C.1 Focus

"Regional skill networks": cooperation formats for improving skill networks in functional areas, e.g. cross-wise and joint promotion of soft skills and providers through web campaigns, networking events, etc.

Pilot team:

- Creative Region Linz & Upper | CREARE – Austria (PP2 | Test zone leader)
- Padova Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Crafts and Agriculture | CCIAA Padova – Italy (PP4)
- Stebo Competence Centre Community Development | STEBO - Belgium (PP8)
- Association of Cultural & Creative Industries Chemnitz & Region (Creative Chemnitz) | KC - Germany (PP10)

Target Groups:

- Regional soft skill providers: These include educational institutions, training organizations, creative and maker hubs, SMEs, NGOs, HR consultants, and informal networks.
- Multipliers and promoters: administrations, business support organisations and research institutions

Reference practices:

The KSIGUNE Regional Skills Partnership (Basque Country, Spain)

The KSIGUNE is a flagship initiative recognized by the European Commission's Pact for Skills. It fosters strategic collaboration between higher education institutions, public authorities, and industry to better align education with regional innovation and economic priorities. KSIGUNE aims to bridge the gap between higher education and the labour market by enhancing cooperation within the regional innovation ecosystem, supporting the digital and green



transitions, and promoting innovation, employability, and lifelong learning in line with the Basque Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3).

Coordinated by the Basque Government's Department of Education, the partnership includes universities (such as UPV/EHU, Mondragon, and Deusto), vocational education and training centers, public administrations, business associations, and innovation entities in key sectors like advanced manufacturing, biosciences, and energy. Through activities like skills intelligence, thematic working groups, university-business collaborations, co-designed curricula, and participation in EU projects, KSIGUNE creates responsive, flexible learning opportunities and strengthens both the regional education system and economy. Its impact includes improved coordination between education and industry, better alignment with strategic skills needs, enhanced employability, and increased visibility of the Basque higher education system in Europe, making it a valuable model for other regions implementing the European Skills Agenda.

DISKKO (Belgium)

DISKKO is a comprehensive workforce development program organized by Bewel, a Belgian company with 4,400 skilled workers, operating through their specialized training center called "DISKKOtheek." The program name represents six core competencies: Discipline, Integrity, Cooperation (Samenwerken), Customer focus (Klantgerichtheid), Quality (Kwaliteit), and Development (Ontwikkeling). DISKKO guides workers through an intensive four-phase training journey in a realistic industrial environment, including talent assessment, job matching, combined theory and practical experience, and modern technology training using tablets, smart cameras, and VR simulation equipment. This personalized approach prepares skilled workers for contemporary industrial jobs while ensuring quality control and minimizing production errors, creating a win-win outcome for both workers and businesses seeking efficient, well-trained personnel.

C.2 Conceptual Approach

Approach:

Across sectors and regions, soft skills are gaining recognition as key enablers of transformation, collaboration, and innovation. Yet, those who nurture and deliver these competencies—facilitators, artists, educators, coaches, and cultural practitioners—often remain under the radar. Their contributions are scattered across domains like education, community engagement, creative industries, and civil society, but they rarely appear on the strategic maps of innovation ecosystems.

The pilot team developed a coordinated methodology **CONNECT** that identifies and connects dispersed competency developers across pilot regions. Building on established ecosystem-building practices (KSIGUNE and similar initiatives), the consortium systematically maps both formal and informal capability builders (including trainers, creatives, mentors, facilitators, and community practitioners) who operate separately across educational, cultural, and civic domains.

From this mapping, each partner implements regional capability connections, that bring providers together through site visits, knowledge exchanges, and joint activities in neutral venues. These interventions establish direct partnerships between competency developers and organizations, enabling institutions to observe how these capabilities affect workflows, team performance, and creative capacity.

The pilot team designs specific initiatives that remove sector barriers between providers while accommodating territorial characteristics. In Saxony, this means connecting creative communities with educational institutions; in Upper Austria, coordinating separate actors to increase visibility and collaboration; and in Veneto, linking cultural resources with contemporary economic sectors through enhanced relational capabilities.

Framework:



The **CONNECT** the Soft Skills dots framework is designed to **identify, visualize, and activate the ecosystem** of soft skill providers in the pilot regions. It builds bridges between disconnected actors, highlights the value of soft skills, and promotes cooperation over competition aiming to deliver a connected, resilient, and recognized network of soft skill providers that collaboratively supports regional development, institutional change, and social innovation.

Pilot partners choose specific tools and activities of the **CONNECT** model fitting to their regional needs.

C - Capture

- Map and identify both visible and hidden providers of soft skills.
- Include formal, informal, hidden and obvious actors: educators, artists, facilitators, coaches, creative professionals, NGOs, cultural institutions, etc.
- Use interviews, network mapping tools, and participatory research to reveal actors across domains.

O - Observe

- Understand the context, needs, and barriers that limit collaboration.
- Analyze current collaboration models and institutional perceptions of soft skills.
- Identify where soft skills are undervalued or underutilized.
- Understand institutional blind spots and resistance points.

N - Normalize

- Position soft skills as critical to innovation, transformation, and teamwork.
- Co-create shared language and narratives that emphasize the role of soft skills.
- Develop use cases and showcase stories to demonstrate impact.
- Visualise and Raise awareness

N - Network

- Facilitate trust-building activities between soft skill providers.
- Create safe, low-barrier formats for dialogue and co-learning.
- Address competitive dynamics by fostering shared goals.
- Strengthen peer networks and communities of practice.

E - Enable

- Design cooperative formats for cross-sectoral collaboration.
- Match soft skill providers with institutions, SMEs, and public sector actors.
- Pilot joint projects that demonstrate the value of soft skills in innovation.
- Develop shared infrastructure for visibility and access (e.g., directories, digital platforms).

C - Consolidate

- Build long-term structures for knowledge exchange and visibility.
- Establish regional hubs or intermediaries that coordinate soft skill actors.
- Advocate for soft skills in regional strategies, education, and R&D policies towards SO3

T – Transform (link to SO3)

- Use the connected ecosystem to drive systemic change.
- Promote soft skill inclusion in innovation, green transition, education, and employment.
- Equip policymakers with evidence and examples.
- Turn fragmented individual efforts into a cohesive, visible force for transformation.

Through documentation and evaluation processes, the pilot team will capture insights both regionally and transnationally, how to transform fragmented competency development into connected, strategic systems. This methodology will produce a replicable model for connecting and joint promoting of regional skills providers.



C.3 Expected Outcomes and Desired Effects

Goals:

- Strengthen the network of soft skill providers by identifying, mapping, and connecting both obvious and hidden providers.
- Increase visibility and recognition of soft skills providers to industries, education stakeholders through multipliers and promoters such as administrations / policymakers, BSOs
- Promote collaboration and cooperation among soft skill providers and multipliers
- Create a shared framework for identifying and valuing soft skills in non-formal learning environments

Expected Outcomes:

- A comprehensive and accessible map/directory of soft skill providers
- Increased visibility and recognition of soft skills providers
- Strengthened networks between creative practitioners and formal education institutions
- Improved awareness of the value of soft skills among stakeholders
- rolling out in action plans of Veneto, Chemnitz, Limburg, Upper Austria
- reference for regional soft skill strategy development and transnational recommendations,
- transfer to other regions via pilot blueprints

Expected Impact:

- Stronger regional ecosystem for soft skills development
- Increased awareness, confidence, and vocabulary around soft skills
- Improved collaboration and leadership

C.4 Key activities

Test Zone Chemnitz

The maker scene in the Chemnitz region has come to grow substantially in the recent years. By now, its 16 hubs form a highly relevant territorial network of non-formal skill providers covering the entire region.

The hubs play a vital role in connecting people from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), industry, and research & development. Through active associations, makerspace boards, and grassroots innovation networks, it brings together diverse stakeholders around shared goals of experimentation, prototyping, and collaboration – thus fostering regional innovation culture and informal skill development. In Chemnitz region, makerspaces are not primarily hobbyist or youth-centered initiatives; rather, they are often founded and facilitated by individuals from industry, SMEs, and R&D. As such, they function as practice-based learning hubs that address a broad target group.

In their self-understanding as well as in their external perception, maker spaces are today considered as hard-skill focused, making them so apt for industrial regions. However, along the hard skill operation of shared machines, makers spaces boost – usually unrecognized - numerous soft skills, such as communication, leadership, and problem-solving within a cross-sectoral context.

In this test zone, the Chemnitz partner intends to **uncover, promote and utilize the soft skill development potential of the regional maker hub network**. For that purpose, they link up the network with designated soft skill providers, including trainers, educators, artists, and representatives of NGOs. These actors are explicitly profiled as soft skill providers, and their inclusion supports mutual learning and broader connectivity across the regional ecosystem.



1. Mapping and connecting Maker ecosystem
 - a) Utilize existing mapping from makers-united.de of independent makerspaces as a basis for identifying maker hubs and soft skill providers.
 - b) Highlight the role of makerspaces as hidden soft skill providers, particularly in regions where they are closely linked to industry and applied R&D.
 - c) Strengthen connections between makerspaces and formal education/training institutions to create more visible learning pathways.
 - d) Actively engage formal soft skill providers (e.g., trainers, educators, NGOs, creatives) to foster exchange and collaboration.
 - e) Involve experienced soft skill academies as co-facilitators and supervisors in the pilot format.
2. Participatory training format development
 - a) Conduct an intensive workshop weekend with 10–15 curated participants (regional maker network and guests from soft skill-focused fields).
 - b) Co-develop and test a participatory network format focused on communication, leadership, group dynamics, and awareness – tailored to soft skill development in non-formal contexts.
 - c) Foster peer learning and cross-sectoral dialogue through reflective methods and collegial case discussions, enabling participants from different backgrounds to develop shared understanding and language.
3. Documentation and scaling
 - a) Create a tested, documented, and replicable model for soft skills development in non-formal learning environments, using makerspaces as inclusive, practice-oriented venues.
 - b) Conceptualise a follow-up format and regional scaling strategy that targets a wider soft skill ecosystem, including education, civil society, and the creative sector.
 - c) Embed pilot outcomes in a regional policy and R&D framework to promote long-term cooperation and enhance the visibility of both formal and informal soft skill providers.

Test Zone Upper Austria activities:

1. Mapping and analysis:
 - a) Identify and map both obvious and hidden soft skill providers
 - b) Categorize actors and conduct network analysis
 - c) Analyze institutional blind spots and competition dynamics
2. Visualization and networking:
 - a) Develop visualization format for the skills provider ecosystem
 - b) Implement regional exchange formats (co-creation labs, networking sessions, dialogue workshops)
 - c) Facilitate discussions on collaboration potentials

Test Zone Veneto Region activities are structured around Talent Week milestones:

2. Initial mapping and preparation (Talent Week 2025):
 - a) Create database of skill providers in Veneto region
 - b) Conduct clustering and analysis of providers
 - c) Compare offerings with company needs and identify gaps
3. Strategy development and focus groups:
 - a) Organize thematic focus group with soft skills development actors
 - b) Conceptualize regional exchange format
 - c) Draft Memorandum of Understanding for Regional Skills Alliance
4. Formalization and showcase (Talent Week 2026):



- a) Sign Memorandum of Understanding
- b) Organize public showcase event
- c) Establish sustainable framework for regional skills innovation

Test Zone Limburg activities:

1. Networking event organization:
 - a) Bring together soft skill providers, and multiplying organizations
 - b) Present DISKKO programme (a simulated production space) as model for inclusive workplace and soft skills development
2. Visibility enhancement:
 - a) Map hidden and obvious soft skill providers
 - b) Create dedicated space for dialogue and connection
 - c) Showcase good practices and transformative impact examples
 - d) Recommendations for further improvement of soft skill provider network

C.5 Roadmap

C- Capture: identify and map soft skill providers		
Pilot Zone	Key Activities	Timeframe
Upper Austria	Develop mapping methods, Data Collection; categorize actors and network analysis	Q3 2025
Veneto Region	Creation of database of skill providers in Veneto region, clustering and analysis	Q3 2025
Chemnitz	Mapping Makerspaces as hidden soft skill providers	Q3 2025
Limburg	Build database of soft skill providers in Limburg, and plan for networking event in collaboration with BEWEL – one of the largest employers in Limburg	Q3 2025
O- Observe: Identify gaps, needs, and barriers to cooperation		
Pilot Zone	Key Activities	Timeframe
Upper Austria	Analysis of interview data to reveal institutional blind spots and competition dynamics	Q3 2025
Veneto Region	Comparison between soft skills offers and reasons why they are not willing to cooperating in regional soft skill provider network	Q3 2025
Chemnitz	Identify participants and needs - Create input and exchange format for Pilot event	Q3 2025
Limburg	Mapping the needs of soft skill providers for needs on cooperation and joint promotion, for example through the collaboration with BEWEL and the implementation of the DISKKO programme	Q3 2025
N-Normalize make soft skill value visible and recognized		
Pilot Zone	Key Activities	Timeframe
Upper Austria	Develop a visualisation format; Visualization of the skills provider ecosystem	Q3 2025



Veneto Region	Development of a visualization tool to increase the visibility and accessibility of soft skills providers and development,	Q4 2025
Chemnitz	Structure Pilot Event	Q3 2025
Limburg	Increase the visibility and accessibility of soft skill development by mapping hidden and obvious soft skill providers, helping to make soft skills a more natural and standard part of workforce development.	Q4 2025
N-Network Create trust-based spaces for exchange and collaboration		
Pilot Zone	Key Activities	Timeframe
Upper Austria	Conceptualization and implementation of regional exchange formats for getting to know each other e.g. Co-creation lab, Networking sessions, Dialogue-based workshops	Q3 2025
Veneto Region	Organization of a thematic focus group with the soft skills development actors, conceptualization of a regional exchange format, also considering the experiences in the other participating EU regions	Q4 2025
Chemnitz	Participant Selection	Q4 2025
Limburg	Organising a networking event where providers, and multiplying organisations can meet in person, connect, and inspire one another. This facilitates cooperation and knowledge exchange.	Q4 2025
E-Enable- Facilitate joint exploration of collaboration formats		
Pilot Zone	Key Activities	Timeframe
Upper Austria	Facilitated discussions on collaboration potentials	Q3 2025
Veneto Region	Initiating discussion on collaboration formats	Q4 2025
Chemnitz	Intensive Workshop Weekend: Conduct a hands-on, reflective, and peer-based workshop focused on communication, leadership, group dynamics, and self-awareness.	Q1 2026
Limburg	Creating opportunities for collaboration and promotion between soft skill providers and multipliers.	Q4 2025
C- Consolidate: Establish durable structures for exchange & visibility		
Pilot Zone	Key Activities	Timeframe
Upper Austria	Gathering of collaboration between soft skill providers and multipliers good practices and raising awareness through communication channels of CREARE	Q4 2025
Veneto Region	Drafting a Memorandum of Understanding for the creation of a regional soft skills network	Q1 2026
Chemnitz	Documentation & Reflection: Summarize insights and methods to inform future iterations.	Q1 2026
Limburg	To build on the momentum of the networking event, good practices in collaboration can be collected and	Q1 2026



	shared through Stebo's communication channels to raise broader awareness and inspire others.	
T-Transform: Scale outcomes and embed ecosystem thinking in policy and R&I		
Pilot Zone	Key Activities	Timeframe
Upper Austria Veneto Region Chemnitz Limburg	Transfer the learnings into the pilot Blueprint and into the regional action plans	Q2 /Q3 2026



D.Pilot Test Zone 4B: Expats for home

D.1 Zone Focus

“Expats for home”: formats that reach out to `province expats` for increasing regional skill capacity, e.g. by scouting / contacting expats leading to a living database for mentor- and ambassadorship

Pilot team:

- Creative Industry Košice, n. o. | CIKE – Slovakia (PP5 | Test zone leader)
- BSC, Business support centre, ltd., Kranj | BSC Kranj – Slovenia (PP6)

Target group:

Expats - members of the society who have left their home regions and now live either in larger cities or abroad. These include professionals such as sports players, researchers, professors and other skilled individuals with relevant experience.

Additional target groups:

Creatives and entrepreneurs from the Košice and Kranj region and surrounding industrial areas, as key local actors positioned to benefit from the knowledge and soft skills shared by expats.

Reference practices:

Chemnitz attracts | CHEMNITZ ZIEHT AN (Chemnitz, Germany)

CHEMNITZ ZIEHT AN is a hybrid regional initiative demonstrating effective employer cooperation for talent attraction. Launched in 2008 and transferred to KOLLEKTIV Chemnitz GmbH in 2025, it combines job placement, employer branding, and HR networking to attract skilled professionals, returnees, and graduates.

The initiative coordinates 160+ partner employers through a collective premium partnership model, enabling shared visibility and resources while reducing costs. Regular HR networking events facilitate knowledge exchange on recruitment challenges, while the platform integrates online job portals with innovative formats like branded ICE-train recruitment events.

Through quality of life promotion (leveraging European Capital of Culture 2025 status), comprehensive relocation support, and strategic SEO/SEA optimization, the initiative positions Chemnitz as a desirable living destination beyond employment. Its impact includes doubling search visibility, rivaling national job portals in regional reach, and planned AI-enabled expansion toward Leipzig and Dresden.

The initiative serves as a model for collective regional talent strategies, demonstrating how coordinated employer cooperation, innovative engagement methods, and comprehensive candidate support can strengthen regional attractiveness and create sustainable talent ecosystems supporting broader economic development goals.

BOLD Community (Austria)

BOLD Community helps Austria “import” global ideas, connect innovators, and co-create solutions aimed at shaping the economy of tomorrow.

The BOLD Community is an innovation initiative of Austria’s Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKÖ) that connects pioneers, visionaries, and changemakers across business, research, policy, and the creative industries to bring new ideas into Austria and strengthen the country as a global innovation hub.



It operates as a global network—thousands strong (with around 2,000 active members)—designed to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange, and cross-border matchmaking that sparks new projects and partnerships. BOLD programs include curated networking, digital matchmaking, content sharing, and flagship events such as the BOLD UnConference and the upcoming BOLD Experience scheduled for November 5, 2025 in Vienna.

D.2 Conceptual Approach

The pilot team jointly defined a structured approach to leverage regional expat networks for territorial soft skills development. Building on best practices in diaspora engagement and knowledge transfer initiatives, CIKE (Slovakia) and BSC Kranj (Slovenia) developed a collaborative methodology that maps globally experienced individuals and connect them with local stakeholders to address soft skills gaps in post-industrial regions.

The approach centers on systematic expat identification and engagement through a six-step process:

1. mapping 20 successful regional expats (domestic and international) per partner
2. continuous database development,
3. willingness assessment surveys,
4. format preference identification,
5. priority soft skills determination,
6. piloting selected engagement formats eg. TEDx-style talks, networking events, and online mentoring for local entrepreneurs.

Expert focus groups organized by both partners provided essential input for pilot design, bringing together regional stakeholders to identify required soft skills, assess current gaps, and validate proposed formats. These sessions ensured alignment with real needs in the Košice and Gorenjska industrial regions, informing the development of experiential, community-oriented formats that connect local audiences—including youth, employers, and professionals—with globally experienced mentors.

Individual partner activities focus on regional expat mapping and format implementation, while collaborative transnational work involves joint concept development, methodology refinement, and shared learning documentation. This combined approach creates a replicable model for flexible, transdisciplinary cooperation that strengthens regional capacity for soft skills development through innovative diaspora engagement, addressing the specific challenges of talent retention and knowledge transfer in non-metropolitan industrial areas.

D.3 Expected Outcomes and Desired Effects

Expected outcomes

- A functioning list of regional “expats” willing to actively participate in pilot formats, including individuals residing domestically (in metropolitan centres) and internationally, who are prepared to act as mentors, speakers, or ambassadors.
- The successful implementation of pilot formats (eg TED-style talks, networking events, mentoring programmes and hands-on soft skills workshops).
- A validated and replicable methodology for mapping, surveying and engaging regional expats, including tools for outreach and format selection (x-Inno “blueprint” contribution).
- Rolling out in regional action plans: Based on the success and lessons learned from pilot activities (such as expat brunches, soft skill events and joint public engagement formats), regional stakeholders, especially BSC Kranj and its network will incorporate proven formats into strategic planning documents. These formats will be made available for integration into regional development programs, youth employment strategies and adult learning initiatives.
- Sustainable engagement with expats: The pilot creates a tested model for sustained engagement with Slovene and Slovak expats across Europe, not only as one-time speakers but as long-term ambassadors, mentors, and



innovation catalysts. This approach helps regions reconnect with their diaspora and leverage their global knowledge to build local resilience.

Anticipated long-term effects

- Improved awareness among local stakeholders of the relevance of soft skills for innovation, and a broader appreciation of contributions of expats to regional development.
- Strengthened cross-territorial networks linking regional institutions with their expat communities, creating a basis for future collaborative initiatives.
- Enhanced competencies among regional actors in designing and facilitating soft skill learning environments and managing cross-sector cooperation.
- Increased engagement of expats in regional innovation, contributing to counteracting brain drain by fostering knowledge return and inclusive participation.
- Transfer to other regions via pilot blueprints: A comprehensive pilot blueprint will be elaborated in the roll-out phase, outlining step-by-step methodologies, success factors, and practical tools that can be replicated or adapted by other territories. This transferability will ensure the pilot has lasting impact beyond the project's immediate scope.
- Enhanced regional capacity and ecosystem building: Through the pilot, regional actors will gain new competencies in engaging external talent, managing cross-sector partnerships, and designing inclusive learning processes. This enhanced capacity is critical for long-term regional competitiveness and will feed into future projects and strategic alliances.

D.4 Key activities

CIKE's Pilot

As a non-metropolitan industrial region, the Košice region faces the challenge of uneven accessibility to education and development activities. While the city of Košice concentrates the main capacities, adjacent areas often lack equal access to skill-building opportunities. The territorial cooperation program focuses on addressing this problem through activating human potential that has left the region – so-called expats.

Program phases:

1. **"Expat" mapping** – Identification of successful individuals who moved from the regions to larger cities or abroad. These expats will be approached to determine what soft skills they use in their work and what format of cooperation would suit them – e.g., mentoring, training, or networking events.
2. **Testing 1 or 2 formats** – Pilot verification of 1–2 educational formats based on output from the previous phase (networking events, TED style talks, mentoring programmes, ..)
3. **Creating a functional list of active expats and organisations that are already running database and programs for expats** – it will also serve as resource for further skills development in the region and simultaneously as an analytical foundation when seeking long-term solutions to brain drain.

The program aims to activate so-called reverse brain drain – motivating successful emigrants to engage in regional development through sharing their knowledge and experience. At the same time, a functional network of expats will be created that will connect the region with global knowledge and opportunities. The activity will support territorial cooperation by involving various types of organizations in the Košice region in joint promotion of informal education formats, know-how sharing, and organizing networking events.

Selected formats will focus on developing skills such as: ownership, ability to recognize opportunities, collaboration, communication, and sustainable thinking.



BSC Kranj's Pilot

BSC Kranj plans to implement a set of practical, creative and dialogue-based learning experiences to strengthen soft skills development and regional identity. These will include a selection of at least three different formats, such as:

- moderated conversations or interviews with expatriates,
- thematic workshops that link intercultural insights to communication skills,
- informal networking formats like brunches or peer-to-peer meetups,
- skill-based micro-sessions using culinary or creative tasks,
- and interactive discussions on global labour market trends.

The final selection and timing of activities will depend on the availability and location of participating expats. This flexible set-up allows BSC to adapt the pilot to local needs and stakeholder capacities, while ensuring meaningful engagement and visibility for expat contributions.

D.5 Roadmap

Timing	Pilot team / single PP	Joint / local key activities
Preparation phase (Mar - Jun 2025)		
Mar 25	Pilot team	Joint concept development in 2 nd partner meeting Czechia
April – June 25	Pilot team	Local mapping of 20 expats and conducting a short online survey (10 domestic / 10 international)
May 25	BSC Kranj	Meeting resulting in agreement on cooperation between Association VTIS and BSC Kranj for autumn events
June 25 – August 25	Pilot team	Review mapping results; finalize database structure and survey analysis
Implementation phase (Jun 2025 - Apr 2026)		
Jun – Sep 25	Pilot team	Exchange on engagement formats (workshops); select 1–2 formats to pilot
Sep 25	CIKE	Finalise event formats and prepare materials (TED-style talk, podcast, networking, mentoring)
Sep 25	BSC Kranj	Radio broadcast with one of the expats from our database living abroad
Oct 25	BSC Kranj	Online Event for boosting soft skills in the region: How to publicly speak like Americans (A soft skills workshop focused on enhancing public speaking confidence and clarity, modeled on American communication styles).
Oct 25	BSC Kranj	Event for boosting soft skills in the region: The Sweet Skill Set (participants will engage in hands-on pastry decorating activities that are thoughtfully designed to foster and highlight key soft skills).
Nov 2025 – April 2026	CIKE	Deliver pilot activities: conduct TED-style talk, host two networking sessions
Nov 25	Pilot team	Jointly monitoring of ongoing pilot implementation in 3 rd partner meeting Slovenia



Nov 25	BSC Kranj	Event for boosting soft skills in the region: Expat Brunch - Unusual Career(s) & Global Insights (A relaxed, inspiring brunch event where participants meet an international expert with an unconventional career path and gain insights into global opportunities, soft skills, and life beyond borders.)
Nov 25	BSC Kranj	Event for boosting soft skills in the region: HR Challenges (Participants will gain valuable insights into current workforce trends, innovative HR practices, and real-world strategies for attracting, developing, and retaining talent in a rapidly changing work environment.)
Assessment and reporting phase (Apr – May 2026)		
Mar / Apr 26	Pilot team	Jointly assessing pilot implementation in 4 th partner meeting Germany
Until May 26	Pilot team	Jointly elaborating pilot implementation report
Roll-out phase (Jun – Nov 2026)		
Until Sep 2026	Pilot team	Locally defining future action planning based on pilot results
Until Oct 2026	Pilot team	Jointly elaborating pilot blueprint
Nov 2026	Pilot team	Disseminate blueprint and pilot findings to regional organisations and policymakers

Disclaimer

This publication has been developed within the x-Inno Radar project, supported by the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme with co-financing from the European Union. Its content is the sole responsibility of the authors and the project partnership and does not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, its programme bodies or the European Union. Neither the programme authorities nor the European Union can be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.