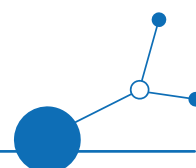


D.2.4.4. Conceptual Solution Documents

Part 3 - Advanced maturity territories
Institutional Alignment Solution





Executive summary

The **Institutional Alignment Solution** is designed for territories where First World War heritage is highly visible, institutional capacity is strong and cooperation experience is well established, but where existing institutions, routes, standards and public-facing systems remain insufficiently aligned. Their main challenge is to turn institutional density, accumulated knowledge and previous bilateral or project-based cooperation into a coherent and durable multilateral governance system.

The solution is directly derived from the Italy–Slovenia pilot and from the project’s reference to an institutional restructuring approach in mature territories. In the pilot, restructuring did not mean creating one new central institution or merging existing organisations. Instead, it was expressed through shared strategic and mission documents, Letters of Intent, framework agreements, identified governance nodes, common standards, recurring coordination and coordinated communication. These instruments respond to a context in which strong museums, routes, public authorities, destination organisations and research bodies already exist, but do not yet operate within one sufficiently integrated framework.

The transferable result is therefore an alignment layer built upon existing institutional strength. Its purpose is to reorganise relationships, clarify interdependence and establish shared strategic direction while preserving the mandates and identities of the participating actors. Already capable institutions agree common commitments, identify governance nodes, coordinate standards and decision-making and present the wider heritage system more coherently.

Implementation begins with a shared diagnosis of the existing governance landscape, including institutions, mandates, routes, agreements, standards and communication systems. The principal actors then identify the nodes that need to be aligned, establish a common mission and formalise their commitments. Operational integration requires recurring governance routines and the application of shared principles in areas such as route management, interpretation, digital communication and public representation.

The solution is most transferable where recognised institutions, stable mandates and a history of cooperation already exist, but where relationships remain fragmented, predominantly bilateral or insufficiently systematic. Its purpose is not centralisation but alignment without hierarchy. Success should be assessed by whether institutions make more coherent decisions, maintain common principles and sustain multilateral cooperation beyond individual project cycles.



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A. Introduction

A.1. Purpose and scope of this document

This document responds to Deliverable D.2.4.4 of the GOV4PeaCE project, which requires three conceptual solution documents resulting from the project pilots. Each document must describe a specific governance solution corresponding to a particular maturity stage of a territory, namely **advanced/mature**, **intermediate/developing** and **initial**, with the purpose of enabling further uptake in integrated territorial development. The project application and the pilot logic frame these solutions as practical governance approaches and tools derived from piloting rather than as descriptive pilot summaries. For the mature stage, the application links the expected solution to the Italy–Slovenia pilot, where a permanent cross-territorial and cross-sectoral governance structure is presented as a potential alignment framework for territories at an advanced level of governance maturity. This document uses the Italy–Slovenia pilot as its primary empirical basis. It also reads that pilot critically in relation to the initial Hungary pilot and the developing Poland–Slovakia pilot in order to distinguish what is specific to the Italy–Slovenia case, what may be transferable, and what would require adaptation in another context. The purpose is not to reproduce the mature pilot as a fixed template or to assume that established routes, strong institutions and prior cooperation automatically amount to a transferable governance model. Rather, the objective is to translate its lessons into a governance solution for territories where World War I heritage is already institutionally recognised, publicly visible and embedded in established cooperation frameworks, yet where governance still requires stronger alignment, common standards and more formalised multilateral coordination.

The intended users of this document are public authorities, museums, route managers, destination management organisations, research institutions, foundations, ministries, protected-area bodies, regional development actors and cross-border governance platforms working in territories where World War I heritage is already strongly present and institutionally supported, but where parallel systems, fragmented responsibilities or uneven standards still limit long-term strategic coherence.

A.2. Why mature territories require a distinct governance approach

Mature maturity territories should not be understood as territories that have already “solved” governance. They represent a distinct governance condition in which heritage visibility, institutional capacity and cooperation experience are already strong, but where multiple governance systems, territorial layers and sectoral actors must still be aligned in a more formal and durable way. Mature territories therefore do not primarily need first recognition or first coordination. They need a governance approach capable of organising already advanced systems into a more coherent multilateral framework.



The Italy–Slovenia pilot illustrates this particularly clearly. The functional territory spans western Slovenia and several Italian regions, notably Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto and Trentino. It also involves associated actors from Lombardy and, in the broader project framing, envisages wider connections towards Austrian partners. The mature pilot explicitly starts from the premise that the area already contains established legal frameworks, digital registers, strong institutions, national and regional museums, conservation and research centres, outdoor and indoor heritage sites, and heritage routes. Citizen awareness and expertise are also described as significant. Yet the same pilot emphasises that World War I heritage remains only partly integrated into wider development, tourism, education and public services, and that a lack of systematic cooperation, common approaches and standards still limits impact across the wider functional territory.

Mature territories can be defined by five main features.

First, they have **high institutional density** – recognised museums, foundations, ministries, regional authorities, route managers and associated governance bodies are already active in the field.

Second, they have **established heritage systems** – World War I heritage is already publicly legible through routes, museums, branded trails, registers, memorial sites and interpretive structures.

Third, they have **prior cooperation experience** – cross-border or interregional cooperation is not new, but already part of the territory's governance history.

Fourth, they experience **fragmentation within strength** – multiple capable actors coexist, but often operate through separate mandates, uneven standards, bilateral relations or regionally bounded logics.

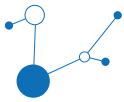
Fifth, they require **formalised alignment** – the central need is no longer first-stage mobilisation, but the creation of common rules, shared standards, multilateral agreements, coordinated nodes and coherent communication.

These features are derived from observations from the Italy–Slovenia pilot.

High institutional density – The mature pilot explicitly describes established legal frameworks, digital registers, strong institutions and specialised museums and research bodies as already present in the territory.

Established heritage systems – The area already includes the Walk of Peace, Sentiero della Pace, Alta Via della Grande Guerra, Alta Via dei Forti and related museum and route systems, showing that heritage is already structured and visible rather than latent or emerging.

Prior cooperation experience – Slovenian and Italian actors have worked together for years through projects, agreements and route development, including long-standing cooperation



between the Walk of Peace Foundation and PromoTurismoFVG, and multiple Interreg trajectories.

Fragmentation within strength – The pilot repeatedly notes fragmented institutional responsibilities, uneven legal and administrative frameworks, bilateral rather than multilateral arrangements, and the absence of systematic common standards despite overall maturity.

Need for formalised alignment – The mature pilot moves towards Letters of Intent, shared charts of intention and mission, common communication strategies, node identification and framework agreements precisely because basic capacity already exists and now needs stronger coordination.

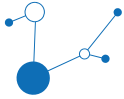
Mature maturity should therefore be understood as a condition of **advanced but not automatically aligned governance**. It is characterised not by the absence of institutions, but by the need to make existing institutions, routes, standards and territorial narratives work together more coherently across regions and borders. It requires a governance solution oriented towards institutional alignment rather than foundational coordination or first-stage territorial consolidation.

B. Analysis of the pilot information and what it reveals

The Italy–Slovenia pilot serves as a strong reference case for understanding mature maturity because it exposes the central contradiction that defines this stage: high institutional capacity and heritage visibility do not automatically produce strategic coherence. The territory already contains strong museums, route structures, legal and administrative tools, specialised actors and a long history of work on World War I heritage. Yet the pilot makes equally clear that these strengths remain insufficiently aligned across the wider trans-territorial space from western Slovenia across several Italian regions.

A first important insight is that mature territories are characterised less by scarcity than by plurality. The Italy–Slovenia functional area includes the Walk of Peace Foundation, Soča Valley Development Centre, ZRC SAZU, PromoTurismoFVG, MITAG, VeGAL, MEVE, regional and local authorities, ministries, museums, protected areas and associated route structures. This is not a weak governance field, but a dense one. Yet density does not in itself guarantee coordination. The pilot shows that mature governance problems often arise when many capable actors coexist without fully shared routines, standards or multilateral structures.

A second important insight concerns the relationship between route maturity and governance maturity. The Italy–Slovenia material makes clear that the territory is already rich in routes and route-based identity: the Walk of Peace has a long institutional history, the first Slovenian–Italian cross-border trail was established in 2015, and related thematic paths such as Sentiero della Pace, Alta Via della Grande Guerra and Alta Via dei Forti already exist. However, the pilot



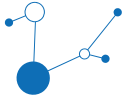
repeatedly stresses that these paths still lack global coordination and communicative unity. This is crucial. It shows that mature territories may have routes without yet having a sufficiently integrated governance framework for those routes. A mature solution must therefore govern the relationship between existing paths, not simply create new ones.

A third important insight concerns the limits of prior cooperation. The mature pilot is rooted in a long history of projects, bilateral relations and cross-border interaction. Slovenian actors have worked for years with Italian institutions and ministries, while Italian regions have also developed partial cooperation with one another and with Slovenia. Yet the pilot's analysis clearly states that cooperation remains fragmented, often bilateral, and not yet systematic enough to function as a truly multilateral governance structure. This means that mature territories do not simply need more cooperation; they need more coherent and formalised cooperation.

A fourth insight concerns the persistent fragmentation of institutional responsibilities. In Slovenia, World War I heritage is managed by a wide range of public institutions, local authorities, specialised organisations and agreements: war cemeteries fall under the Ministry of Defence, ossuaries are maintained through international arrangements, the Walk of Peace Foundation manages the trail through municipal agreements, and other sites are handled by museums, municipalities or DMOs. In Italy, governance is also differentiated by region, by level of autonomy and by sector, with valorisation and promotion largely regionalised and cooperation across regions remaining difficult. The mature pilot therefore reveals that advanced governance systems may still be institutionally fragmented in ways that require active alignment.

A fifth insight concerns the need for node-based and multi-layered governance. The pilot does not move towards one single institution governing the whole territory. Instead, it develops elements of a system built around nodes and agreements: MITAG as a reference point within Trentino, the Rete Trentino Grande Guerra as an existing institutional alliance, the Walk of Peace Foundation as a key Slovenian actor, PromoTurismoFVG as a route and promotion partner, and proposals for framework agreements between network nodes. This is a mature governance lesson: advanced territories need structured interdependence, not simple centralisation.

A sixth important insight concerns common communication and shared representation. The mature pilot explicitly develops a common communication strategy based on the Walk of Peace brand, integrated digital contents, common web communication and a shared conceptual journey linking paths across Italy and Slovenia. This is not merely a branding exercise. It reflects a governance need. Mature systems must align not only institutions, but also the way in which the territory presents itself publicly. The pilot therefore shows that communication coherence is part of governance coherence.



A seventh insight concerns the Slovenian governance question within the mature field. One of the pilot's specific outputs is the proposal for a new or reorganised governance concept for Slovenian World War I heritage. The analysis concluded that creating a wholly new institution is not currently feasible, but it still identified the need for a formalised cooperation agreement between the main organisations involved. This is highly significant. Even within a mature territory, institutional reform may need to proceed through formalised cooperation and governance agreements rather than through the immediate creation of a new body.

Taken together, the Italy–Slovenia pilot reveals mature maturity as a condition of **strong but insufficiently aligned governance**. The territory is not lacking heritage, institutions or cooperation history. Its challenge is that multiple advanced systems still need stronger common direction, shared standards, multilateral structures and coordinated representation. The strongest lesson is therefore that mature territories need a governance approach that aligns existing capacity into a more coherent institutional framework.

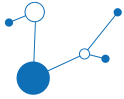
C. Transferability assessment: what to retain, adapt, avoid and borrow

C.1. Why direct copying is not appropriate

The Italy–Slovenia pilot provides an important basis for understanding mature maturity, but it should not be copied as a fixed template. Mature territories are highly developed, but their governance arrangements remain deeply shaped by specific legal frameworks, route histories, institutional traditions and regional administrative cultures. The value of the mature pilot therefore lies not in its exact configuration, but in the governance functions it makes visible.

Direct copying is also inappropriate because the pilot is territorially and institutionally exceptional in several respects. It builds on the historical and institutional trajectory of the Walk of Peace, the Trentino museum network, region-specific governance systems in Italy, and the Slovenian governance role of the Foundation and associated public institutions. It also works within a large and historically layered Alpine–Adriatic route geography extending from Stelvio to Trieste. Other mature territories may have strong institutions too, but very different heritage geographies, tourism logics, route traditions or public-sector arrangements.

Governance practices from initial or developing territories cannot simply be scaled up into mature settings either. Foundational coordination and territorial coordination remain relevant as layers of governance, but they are insufficient where the challenge is no longer to create first recognition or first cooperation, but to align already strong systems. Likewise, mature governance practices should not be copied downward in their exact form, because instruments such as Letters of Intent, framework agreements, shared branding and node-based structures depend on a level of institutional maturity that may not yet exist elsewhere. What can be



transferred is therefore not the exact architecture of the Italy–Slovenia pilot, but the governance logic of aligning established actors, standards and public-facing systems into a durable multilateral framework.

C.2. What should be retained from the Italy-Slovenia pilot case

Several elements from the Italy–Slovenia pilot should be retained because they express governance needs that are characteristic for mature territories and likely to recur in other advanced cross-border settings.

The most important of these is the need for formalised multilateral alignment across already capable actors. Mature territories often already possess bilateral relationships and project experience, but these do not automatically produce a common governance system. The pilot demonstrates that mature territories do not merely need more activity; they need stronger strategic coherence between institutions, route structures and territorial actors that already exist. What should therefore be retained is the principle that mature governance requires common frameworks, recurring coordination and explicit commitments rather than reliance on historical familiarity alone.

A second element to retain is the logic of node-based governance. The pilot repeatedly works through institutional reference points such as MITAG, the Walk of Peace Foundation, PromoTurismoFVG, Kobarid Museum, MEVE and other recognised actors. This suggests that mature territories are usually too complex to be governed effectively through one central actor. Instead, they benefit from identifying strategic nodes that represent territorial, institutional or sectoral subsystems. What should be retained is not one exact node map, but the principle that advanced territories are often governed best through structured interdependence rather than through either excessive centralisation or an entirely loose network.

A third element to retain is the importance of shared strategic documents and framework agreements. The mature pilot shows that formalisation becomes useful when it gives already active actors a shared reference point without imposing excessive bureaucracy. The emerging distinction between a wider shared charter and more specific framework agreements between nodes is particularly valuable, because it allows mature governance to combine inclusiveness with operational clarity.

A fourth element to retain is common communication as a governance tool. The pilot's work on the Walk of Peace brand, shared digital contents and coordinated communication strategy shows that representational coherence is not cosmetic. It helps make a fragmented trans-territorial area legible as one governance space. Mature territories should therefore retain the principle that common communication and shared public presentation can reinforce institutional alignment.



A fourth element to retain is the link between common communication and identity. The pilot's work on the Walk of Peace brand, shared digital contents and coordinated communication strategy shows that representational coherence is not cosmetic. It helps make a fragmented trans-territorial area legible as one governance space. Mature territories should therefore retain the principle that common communication and shared public presentation can reinforce institutional alignment, but also that communication only becomes durable when it is grounded in a shared mission and strategic direction.

A fifth element to retain is the effort to strengthen institutional durability from within the mature system. The Slovenian strand of the pilot is particularly useful here, since its examination of the Walk of Peace Foundation, Kobarid Museum and ZRC SAZU led not to the immediate creation of a new institution, but to the conclusion that stronger formalised cooperation was currently the more feasible path. This is a highly transferable lesson: mature governance may sometimes require consolidation through agreements rather than structural replacement. At the same time, the pilot also shows that operational continuity remains a key concern. Mature territories may still be vulnerable to project cycles, uneven staffing, fragmented mandates and coordination fatigue. Formal alignment must therefore be supported by routines, responsibilities and follow-up mechanisms.

C.3. What should not be copied from the Italy-Slovenia pilot case

The Italy–Slovenia pilot should not be copied as a fixed template. Its value lies in the governance functions it reveals, not in the exact legal, territorial or organisational form through which those functions are expressed.

The first element that should not be universalised is the exact historical and territorial reach of the Walk of Peace trajectory. The mature pilot operates within a specific Alpine–Adriatic route landscape, including the Walk of Peace, Sentiero della Pace and similar related initiatives. Other mature territories may not have such an extensive network of interconnected heritage routes or may even organise their heritage differently. The transferable lesson is the need to align established public-facing heritage systems, not the obligation to reproduce this exact route constellation.

The same applies to the specific Slovenian institutional configuration. The current role of the Walk of Peace Foundation, the Kobarid Museum, ZRC SAZU, municipalities, ministries and DMOs is highly informative, but it emerges from Slovenia's own governance history and legal landscape. Another mature territory may need other institutional combinations. What matters is the alignment function, not the exact organisational composition.

The same caution applies to the Trentino and Friuli Venezia Giulia arrangements. The Rete Trentino Grande Guerra, MITAG's coordinating role and the specific use of Letters of Intent are valuable models, but they are rooted in the administrative autonomy and cultural governance



traditions of those regions. Another territory may need different agreements, different node structures or different institutional leaders.

Nor should the mature solution be reduced to branding, route visibility or communication alone. The Italy–Slovenia pilot shows that common communication and public representation are important, but they are only meaningful when supported by agreements, standards, coordination routines and shared responsibilities. A shared brand without governance may increase visibility without improving alignment.

A further point that should not be copied is the assumption that mature governance requires a single dominant institution. Mature territories usually contain strong actors with legitimate mandates, and excessive centralisation may produce resistance rather than coherence. The transferable lesson is therefore alignment, not hierarchy.

Finally, the pilot's current fragmentation should not be reproduced as if it were an acceptable mature endpoint. The mature pilot is valuable precisely because it identifies unresolved fragmentation within an otherwise strong system: bilateralism instead of multilateralism, uneven regional cooperation, incomplete communicative unity and differing legal-administrative settings. The conceptual solution must therefore treat these as barriers to overcome, not as features to preserve.

C.4. What can be borrowed from the other pilots

Mature territories can borrow useful elements from the initial and developing pilots, but only in adapted and limited forms. This is because mature territories operate under a different governance condition: they already possess strong institutions, recognised assets and cooperation experience, and therefore do not primarily need the foundational or transitional instruments developed in the other pilots. What they can borrow from lower-maturity territories is not a ready-made governance structure, but rather certain corrective insights that help prevent mature governance from becoming overly institutional, overly centralised or insufficiently responsive to the wider heritage field.

From the Hungarian pilot, mature territories can borrow the reminder that governance still depends on legitimacy, public meaning and community anchoring. Even highly advanced systems can become overly administrative if they lose connection to schools, local memory, family history and civic remembrance. The initial pilot is therefore useful as a reminder that strong governance should still remain socially meaningful. It also underlines the importance of visible coordination and broad stakeholder inclusion. Mature systems may already be dense and institutionally sophisticated, but they should not become so complex that local actors, communities or smaller organisations can no longer understand how the governance field operates.



From the Poland–Slovakia pilot, mature territories can borrow the continuing relevance of territorial legibility and practical cooperation. The developing pilot shows how routes, territorial framing, field visits, workshops, trail testing and other concrete actions help connect dispersed heritage into a more governable whole. Mature territories can borrow this insight at a higher level: even where routes and visibility already exist, they still need to be strategically aligned and institutionally integrated. The developing pilot also offers a useful corrective reminder that smaller sites, war cemeteries, memorial landscapes and voluntary custodians remain essential to the integrity of the heritage field. Mature systems may otherwise become too focused on major museums, recognised route structures and flagship sites.

From the broader GOV4PeaCE framework, mature territories can also borrow the potential of digital governance support at a more advanced level. In mature settings, digital tools can go beyond basic mapping and help support common standards, shared documentation, stakeholder databases, coordinated communication and transnational knowledge exchange. However, even in mature territories, such tools remain useful only if they reinforce actual coordination rather than merely adding another technical layer to an already complex governance environment.

The main transferable insight is therefore not that mature territories should import governance instruments from lower-maturity settings, but that they should remain open to the corrective lessons those settings provide. Mature territories can borrow social legitimacy from initial approaches and territorial responsiveness from developing approaches, but they must integrate these into a more formalised and institutionally aligned governance structure.

C.5. Transfer conditions for the conceptual solution

For the conceptual solution to be transferable, it must first be understood as a governance logic rather than as a fixed institutional or territorial template. What is transferable is not the exact institutional architecture of the Italy–Slovenia pilot, but the underlying function: aligning already capable actors, public-facing heritage systems and existing cooperation structures within a more coherent multilateral framework. Transfer therefore depends on whether a receiving territory already possesses a sufficient degree of institutional maturity. A territory is not mature simply because it contains important heritage. It becomes mature when it already has recognised actors, relatively stable responsibilities, visible route or institutional structures, prior cooperation experience and enough organisational capacity to sustain formal alignment mechanisms. The conceptual solution is therefore only appropriate where governance is already advanced enough for institutional alignment to be meaningful.

Transferability also depends on whether there is a real integration problem to address. The conceptual solution is not needed simply because a territory has many institutions, routes or heritage assets. It becomes relevant when these already strong elements remain insufficiently aligned: when actors operate in parallel, when bilateral cooperation substitutes for wider



multilateral coordination, when common standards are lacking, or when public communication is more fragmented than the heritage system itself. Under such conditions, formalisation must remain proportionate. Agreements, branding systems, node structures and common standards are useful only when they improve real coordination, reduce fragmentation and clarify shared direction. Formalisation without operational depth risks producing symbolic alignment rather than actual governance.

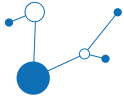
At the same time, transfer requires that alignment should strengthen coherence without undermining the plural structure of a mature territory. Existing mandates, institutional identities and territorial roles should not be dismantled simply in order to create a more centralised model. Mature territories typically require alignment without hierarchy: the conceptual solution should connect strong actors more coherently, not replace them with a single dominant structure. This also means that alignment must remain inclusive. Smaller museums, local communities, peripheral sites, volunteer organisations and non-professional custodians should not disappear from view in a governance system dominated only by major institutions and flagship structures. Ultimately, the conceptual solution is transferable only if strategic alignment remains tied to public value. Its purpose is not merely to improve institutional order, but to strengthen interpretation, education, heritage visibility, sustainable tourism, peace-oriented remembrance and integrated territorial development. The conceptual solution should therefore be understood as an alignment layer built upon existing strength, whose success depends on whether it can turn institutional density and cooperation history into durable multilateral governance.

C.6. Implications for governance design in mature territories

The analysis above shows that governance design in mature territories must begin from the tension between high institutional density and incomplete strategic alignment. In these territories, the heritage field is already established and publicly visible. The challenge is therefore neither to constitute it for the first time nor to create a first layer of territorial coordination, but to align existing institutions, routes, standards and public-facing systems within a framework that can operate more coherently across borders and sectors.

Governance design in mature territories must therefore be multilateral rather than merely additive. The challenge is not to add more actors, but to improve the quality of coordination between already existing ones. This requires common standards, shared documents, recurring decision-making routines, clearer node relations and governance instruments that can operate above purely bilateral arrangements.

At the same time, governance design must avoid both over-centralisation and loose parallelism. A single body is unlikely to govern the whole system effectively, yet an unstructured network risks leaving strong actors only partially connected. Mature governance therefore



benefits from node-based coordination, in which recognised institutions are linked through explicit agreements and shared frameworks rather than through one centralised hierarchy.

The design must also integrate representation and communication with governance. Routes, museums, websites, brands and public narratives should not communicate in isolation from one another. In mature territories, common representation is part of governance because it helps transform multiple visible systems into one legible territorial framework.

Finally, governance design must remain open to renewal. Mature systems may already be strong, but they can still learn from lower maturity stages by remaining attentive to local stakeholders, communities and public meaning. Institutional alignment should therefore strengthen coherence without eliminating diversity.

D. Recommended conceptual solution for mature maturity territories

The recommended conceptual solution for mature maturity territories is the **Institutional Alignment Solution**.

This solution is designed for territories where heritage visibility, institutional density and cooperation experience are already strong, but where governance still requires stronger alignment in order to sustain durable multilateral action. It aims to connect already established institutions, routes, standards and public-facing systems into a more coherent governance framework. It is especially suited to territories where the main challenge is not to create first cooperation, but to move from accumulated strength towards formalised institutional coherence.

The solution builds on the mature pilot's main lesson: advanced territories need explicit alignment mechanisms if they are to act as durable cross-border governance systems. It interprets shared charts of intention, Letters of Intent, framework agreements, node-based structures and common communication not as isolated outputs, but as mutually reinforcing governance instruments.

The Institutional Alignment Solution therefore combines two functions. The first is **institutional alignment**: creating shared commitments, standards and governance routines among already capable actors. The second is **multilateral integration**: ensuring that museums, route managers, destination structures, public bodies and other governance nodes operate within one coherent cross-territorial framework rather than in parallel.



D.1. Translation of the pilot-derived solution

The Institutional Alignment Solution translates the institutional restructuring approach developed through the Italy–Slovenia pilot into a governance framework that can be applied in other mature territories.

In the pilot, institutional restructuring did not primarily mean creating a new central institution or merging existing organisations. The territory already contains strong museums, route organisations, development bodies, public authorities, destination organisations and research institutions. The pilot instead demonstrated a need to reorganise and formalise the relationships between these existing actors through shared strategic direction, agreements, governance nodes, common standards and coordinated representation.

The relationship between the pilot-derived solution and the transferable conceptual solution can be summarised as follows

Pilot-derived element	Function within the pilot solution	Translation into the Institutional Alignment Solution
Shared mission documents and charts of intention	Establish common direction among organisations with different mandates and territorial roles	Shared strategic framework defining common mission, priorities and governance principles
Letters of Intent and framework agreements	Formalise willingness to cooperate and clarify longer-term relationships and responsibilities	Formal multilateral agreement structure supporting durable institutional cooperation
Identification of institutional and territorial nodes	Connect established actors representing different territories, sectors and governance functions	Node-based coordination architecture based on structured interdependence
Development of common standards	Improve coherence between existing routes, institutions and public-facing systems	Shared standards and coordinated responsibilities
Common communication strategy, integrated digital content and shared representation	Present existing routes and institutions as part of a more coherent cross-territorial system	Integrated communication and representation as part of governance
Proposed reorganisation of governance without establishing one new central institution	Strengthen cooperation between existing organisations while respecting their mandates and identities	Institutional alignment without hierarchy, based on formalised relationships rather than organisational consolidation

D.2. Core components of the solution

The Institutional Alignment Solution consists of six core components.

Shared strategic framework. The territory prepares a common strategic document that defines long-term direction, governance priorities, interpretive principles, communication goals and shared responsibilities. This framework should provide a common reference point



for cooperation between institutions with different mandates and territorial roles, without replacing their existing organisational strategies.

Formal multilateral agreement structure. Partners establish or update Letters of Intent, framework agreements or related documents that formalise commitments, clarify governance roles and create durable cross-border coordination routines. Formalisation should support practical cooperation and follow-up rather than remain limited to symbolic commitment.

Node-based coordination architecture. Strategic nodes are identified across the mature territory, such as museums, route organisations, destination bodies, foundations, regional authorities or research institutions. Their relationship to one another is made explicit within a shared governance structure. The purpose is not to centralise governance in one organisation, but to create structured interdependence between already capable actors.

Common standards and protocols. Partners define shared standards or protocols in areas where differences between institutions or territories reduce the coherence of the wider system. These may concern interpretation, communication, branding, digital presence, route coherence, visitor experience and, where relevant, heritage-related professional practice. Common standards should provide sufficient alignment while allowing legitimate institutional and legal differences to remain.

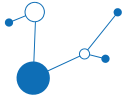
Integrated communication and representation. The territory develops a coordinated communication strategy, shared digital content and a common representational framework so that the mature heritage system is legible as one coherent whole. This does not require existing institutional or territorial identities to disappear; rather, it ensures that routes, museums and other public-facing systems communicate their relationship to the wider framework.

Continuity and review mechanism. The solution includes recurring meetings, governance review moments, procedures for updating standards and agreements, and mechanisms for ensuring that multilateral alignment continues beyond individual project cycles. The partners should periodically assess whether agreements are being implemented, whether shared standards remain relevant and whether the governance structure needs to be adapted or extended.

D.3. Governance arrangements and requirements for uptake

The Institutional Alignment Solution is intended for territories that already possess a substantial level of governance maturity. Its uptake requires more than the presence of significant heritage. The receiving territory should already have

- recognised institutions and governance actors
- relatively stable mandates and responsibilities
- established museums, routes or other public-facing heritage systems



- previous cooperation or project experience
- sufficient organisational capacity to sustain formal commitments
- a recognised need for stronger strategic or operational alignment

The solution is particularly relevant where existing institutional strength does not yet operate as a coherent multilateral system, for example where cooperation remains predominantly bilateral, responsibilities are insufficiently connected, common standards are lacking or coordination remains dependent on individual projects or personal relationships.

Governance functions should not be concentrated in one institution. Mature territories generally require a distributed, node-based arrangement in which established actors retain their mandates while participating in a shared framework. Where useful, one of the participating nodes or a light coordination function may support meetings, documentation, follow-up and communication without replacing the collective responsibility of the participating institutions.

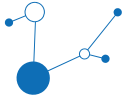
The core alignment partnership should normally include

- recognised museums, heritage institutions and interpretation bodies
- route-management or territorial heritage organisations
- relevant local, regional or national public authorities
- tourism, destination and communication structures
- research or expert organisations
- and, where relevant, protected-area bodies, educational actors, communities and voluntary custodians

The objective is not primarily to add new actors. The partnership should bring together the organisations whose mandates, decisions, standards and public-facing activities need to be aligned.

The governance arrangement should clarify

- the shared territorial and strategic scope
- the common mission and long-term objectives
- which organisations function as governance nodes
- the responsibilities retained by each node
- which matters require collective decision-making
- how coordination and information exchange are organised



- which standards and principles are shared
- how legal, administrative and institutional differences are managed
- how implementation and follow-up are organised
- how common communication and representation are coordinated
- how additional or smaller actors may participate

These arrangements may be formalised through a combination of shared strategic documents, Letters of Intent, framework or cooperation agreements and proportionate operational arrangements. The precise form should correspond to the institutional and administrative context. Formalisation should clarify responsibilities, support practical action and strengthen continuity rather than create additional structures without clear operational value.

At minimum, uptake should result in:

- a map of the relevant institutions, mandates, routes, agreements, standards and communication systems
- a jointly agreed diagnosis of the principal alignment gaps
- an identified set of governance nodes
- a jointly endorsed strategic framework or common mission
- formalised commitments between the principal actors
- agreed decision-making and coordination routines
- a first set of shared standards or principles
- an integrated approach to communication or representation
- at least one operational area in which alignment is put into practice

This first operational application may concern, for example, route coordination, historical interpretation, digital communication or coordinated public representation. Its purpose is to translate formal commitments into institutional practice and demonstrate how the participating nodes can operate more coherently within the shared framework.

Successful uptake is demonstrated when formal commitments result in recurring multilateral coordination and concrete institutional action while participating organisations retain their legitimate mandates and autonomy.



D.4. Implementation pathway

Implementation can proceed in four phases.

Phase 1 – Alignment diagnosis. The territory maps its existing governance landscape, including institutions, mandates, routes, agreements, standards, communication practices and areas of fragmentation or duplication. Existing bilateral and project-based cooperation should also be identified, together with gaps in coordination between territorial, institutional and sectoral actors.

The purpose of this phase is not to create a new governance structure immediately, but to develop a shared understanding of where alignment is already strong and where existing systems remain insufficiently connected.

Phase 2 – Strategic consolidation. The principal actors agree on a shared direction, identify the main governance nodes and clarify which responsibilities remain with individual institutions and which matters require stronger collective coordination.

This phase should result in a common mission or strategic framework and a clear understanding of the relationships between the principal nodes. Where appropriate, it should also identify a light coordination function to support meetings, documentation and follow-up without creating a new central authority.

Phase 3 – Formalisation and standard-setting. The partners translate the shared direction into practical governance arrangements. They prepare or revise Letters of Intent, framework agreements or other cooperation instruments and establish shared standards or protocols in areas where greater coherence is required.

These may concern interpretation, route coordination, digital communication, visitor information or common public representation. At least one operational area should be used to demonstrate how the agreed framework changes institutional practice and improves coordination between the participating nodes.

Phase 4 – Review and long-term integration. The mature governance system is periodically reviewed to assess whether agreements are being implemented, shared standards remain relevant and multilateral coordination is functioning in practice.

Where necessary, responsibilities, agreements or standards are adjusted and the framework may be extended to additional institutions, territories or areas of cooperation. The objective is to ensure that institutional alignment continues beyond individual projects and personal relationships and becomes embedded within the normal governance practices of the participating organisations.

The implementation pathway should remain proportionate to the institutional and administrative context. Mature governance does not require all organisations to operate



identically or to surrender their existing mandates. Progress should instead be measured by whether already capable actors become more coherent, more consistently connected and better able to sustain multilateral cooperation over time.

E. Risks, limitations and conditions for success

The main risk of the Institutional Alignment Solution is that mature territories may overestimate the degree of coherence they already possess. Strong institutions, recognised routes and long cooperation histories can create the impression that governance is already fully aligned, when in practice important differences in standards, communication or responsibilities remain unresolved.

A related risk is formalisation without operational depth. Agreements, node systems and common branding may appear impressive, but remain weak if they are not supported by recurring coordination, shared follow-up and real institutional commitment. Mature territories are therefore vulnerable not only to fragmentation, but also to symbolic alignment.

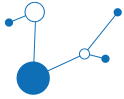
Another limitation is institutional inertia. Strong organisations may resist change, especially where they are accustomed to autonomy or bilateral relations. The success of the solution depends on whether institutions are willing to accept shared direction without interpreting alignment as the loss of their own identity or role.

The solution is most likely to succeed where there is already sufficient institutional density, a history of cooperation, a recognised need for stronger alignment, and willingness among key actors to formalise relationships. Its success should not be judged only by the number of agreements signed, but by whether the territory becomes more coherent, more legible and more durable as a cross-border governance system.

F. Conclusion

Mature maturity territories require an alignment-oriented governance response. Their challenge is not a lack of heritage, institutions or cooperation history, but the need to make existing strength work together more coherently and more durably.

The Institutional Alignment Solution responds to this condition. It helps territories align their institutions, nodes, standards, commitments and public representation within a shared multilateral framework. Its value lies in consolidating advanced heritage systems into more explicit and more durable governance. It is therefore a transferable solution for territories that have moved beyond foundational coordination and territorial structuring, but that still need stronger institutional alignment in order to sustain long-term cross-border governance.



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