

Interreg Euro-MED

2021/27

Programme – Draft Version

6

Interreg
Mediterranean



INTERREG Programme Template INDEX

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CCI	[15 characters]
Title	Interreg Euro-Mediterranean
Version	1
First year	2021
Last year	2027
Eligible from	
Eligible until	
Commission decision number	
Commission decision date	
Programme amending decision number	[20]
Programme amending decision entry into force date	
NUTS regions covered by the programme	<p>BG31 Северозападен BG32 Северен централен BG33 Североизточен BG34 Югоизточен България BG41 Югозападен BG42 Южен централен EL30 Αττική EL41 Βόρειο Αιγαίο EL42 Νότιο Αιγαίο EL43 Κρήτη EL51 Ανατολική Μακεδονία, Θράκη Ελλάδα EL52 Κεντρική Μακεδονία EL53 Δυτική Μακεδονία EL54 Ηπειρος EL61 Θεσσαλία EL62 Ιόνια Νησιά EL63 Δυτική Ελλάδα EL64 Στερεά Ελλάδα EL65 Πελοπόννησος ES24 Aragón ES30 Comunidad de Madrid ES42 Castilla-La Mancha ES43 Extremadura ES51 Cataluña ES52 Comunitat Valenciana ES53 Illes Balears ES61 Andalucía ES62 Región de Murcia ES63 Ciudad de Ceuta ES64 Ciudad de Melilla FRJ1 Languedoc-Roussillon FRJ2 Midi-Pyrénées FRK2 Rhône-Alpes FRL0 Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur FRMO Corse HR02 Panonska Hrvatska HR03 Jadranska Hrvatska HR05 Grad Zagreb HR06 Sjeverna Hrvatska ITC1 Piemonte ITC2 Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste ITC3 Liguria ITC4 Lombardia ITF1 Abruzzo</p>

	ITF2 Molise ITF3 Campania ITF4 Puglia ITF5 Basilicata ITF6 Calabria ITG1 Sicilia ITG2 Sardegna ITH3 Veneto ITH4 Friuli-Venezia Giulia ITH5 Emilia-Romagna ITI1 Toscana ITI2 Umbria ITI3 Marche ITI4 Lazio CY Κύπρος MT Malta PT15 Algarve PT17 Área Metropolitana de Lisboa PT18 Alentejo SI03 Vzhodna Slovenija SI04 Zahodna Slovenija AL Albania BA Bosnia and Herzegovina ME Montenegro MK North Macedonia
Strand	B

1. Programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1. Programme area

On the north shore of the Mediterranean Sea, the INTERREG Euro-MED programme covers a vast territory stretching from the Portuguese regions on the Atlantic coast, to Cyprus at the eastern edge of the Mediterranean passing through the Balkans. Moreover, for the 1st time after two previous programming periods, it reaches as well the Bulgarian Black Sea coastal area.

Indeed, after a non-substantial enlargement of the programme in 2014 including only 3 new regions belonging to partner countries of the programme, in this programming period a more substantial enlargement was approved: two new countries, Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia plus three new Spanish regions (Castilla la Mancha, Extremadura and Madrid) are now added to the eligible area.

Due to Brexit, Gibraltar (UK), that participated in the 2 previous programming periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020), is no longer part of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme area.

The Interreg Euro-MED programme now covers 63 regions (NUTS 2) of 10 EU countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain) plus 4 IPA candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Macedonia). The eligible geographic area extends around 25% of the area of the European Union and represents more than 140 million people (all partner countries included).

The territory has extremely diverse natural, physical, and geographic characteristics. It enjoys a maritime coastline of more than 15 000 kilometres and fertile arable plains, which were the cradle of Mediterranean agriculture, with its vine growing and olive and citrus fruit plantations. It also has high mountain ranges such as the Alps, the Balkans, the Pindos and the Pyrenees. Another characteristic of the MED area is the important presence of islands, including two member states (Cyprus and Malta) and river basins like the Ebro (Spain), Rhône (France), Po (Italy) and Danube (Bulgaria).

All countries around the Mediterranean Sea are part of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, managed by UN FAO.

The Mediterranean region is also rich in terms of terrestrial biodiversity with 25,000 species of plants, 290 species of trees and shrubs of which nearly 70% are endemic, and 220 species of mammals. As for the Mediterranean Sea, it harbours a tremendous diversity of marine organisms, many of which are endemic to the region. It is estimated that the Mediterranean contains 8–9% of all the world's marine creatures.

- 1.2.** Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complementarities and synergies with other funding programmes and instruments, lessons-learned from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme is a European territorial cooperation programme at transnational level. Its general objective is contained both in the word "cooperation" and in the three adjectives that define it by regulation: territorial, European, transnational. Its mission is to find, transfer and apply solutions to the problems identified as priorities in the fields of innovation, economy, environment (described below) through multicultural and multi-stakeholder (public and private) partnerships within projects whose main target will be the needs of the territories and populations of the Mediterranean. This will constitute the general objective of Interreg Euro-MED: to promote joint reflection in order to implement shared solutions and thus strengthen the cohesion of our European area. However, such an objective can only be achieved if the challenges to be addressed are narrowed, identified and accepted by all stakeholders.

Numerous reports and studies have been published in recent years with the idea of setting priorities for the Mediterranean by 2020, 2030 ... 2050. It gives the impression that these said priorities remain the same although the horizon is moving away. On the one hand this means that the priorities for the third generation of Interreg MED have been reaffirmed, on the other hand it also means that the endeavour to face them requires a strong focus of concentration of resources.

The capitalisation of all our Interreg MED heritage remains a priority as well as a challenge in itself, also for the new 2021/27 programming.

Today, the Mediterranean is an interfacing zone at the heart of major challenges for the entire planet: its centrality makes it a laboratory for the study of the phenomena of complexity, crisis and resilience¹.

Challenges

What are these challenges and where do they come from?

1 Dossier « La Méditerranée » La lettre Aix-Marseille Université, December 2019.

The 2008 crisis was significant in many parts of the EU and reversed the long-term trend of reducing regional disparities. Between 2009 and 2015, it led to a reduction in GDP per capita in around 40% of regions, mainly in Ireland, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece. During this period, regional disparities widened, but in 2015 disparities started to narrow again until 2020...

Indeed, in spring 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak struck the European economy with great force².

Economic activity fell abruptly: in the first half of the year, the European economy saw a dramatic, sudden reduction in economic activity between March and May. After falling by 3.7% in the first quarter, euro area GDP declined by 11.8% in the second.

As a reference, the latter decline is nearly four times larger than the biggest single-quarter contraction during the Great Recession in 2008-2009. Over the first half of the year, economic activity shrank by around 15% in the euro area, bringing output back close to levels last seen in early 2005.

The COVID-19 crisis took a particularly severe toll on the EU and euro area's external trade as a sudden and synchronised drop in global demand interacted with supply-side constraints due to lockdowns, border closures, travel bans and internal restrictions to mobility.

The shock on Member States was further amplified by their high integration in global value chains.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put EU labour markets under severe strain. Job losses during the first half of the year were unprecedented though the decline was much more contained than the drop-in economic activity, as was the rise in the unemployment rate.

A sector where the impact of the pandemic is leaving deep scars is tourism. This implies that countries with a large reliance on tourism are more severely hit and may need longer to achieve a full recovery³.

Among the six largest Member States of the EU, Spain (about 22%), France (18.75%), and Italy (17.75%) saw larger declines (of their GDP) than Germany (11.50%), the Netherlands (9.75%), and Poland (9.25%). All in all, the fall in consumer spending in the largest euro area countries ranged from 25.25% in Spain, around 17.50% in Italy, 17% in France and 13.25% in Germany in the first half of the year. Overall investment recorded a cumulative fall of 8.3% in Germany and 10.7% in the Netherlands, while losing about 25% in France, Italy and Spain. These differences mostly reflect investment in construction, which recorded an increase of 0.7% in Germany and a fall of 2.4% in the Netherlands, but saw declines between 26-29% in France, Italy and Spain...

In general, the "poorer" regions can be divided into two distinct groups: sparsely populated rural areas characterised by population ageing and net emigration; and post-industrial regions that have lost their traditional industrial base, partly due to the consequences of globalisation. The poorest regions in the EU are mainly located in a band stretching from Latvia in the north, through the eastern parts of the EU, to Greece and southern Italy, before spreading to the southern regions of Spain and most of Portugal while wealth creation is often located in capital cities and metropolitan regions.

² "European Economic Forecast" – Institutional paper 135, November 2020 (EC)

³ In 2018, tourism made up 13.0% of GDP (14.7% of employment) in Italy, 11.8% (13.5%) in Spain, 8.0% (9.8%) in Portugal, 7.4% (7.5%) in France and 6.8% (10.0%) in Greece (source: OECD (2020) Tourism trends and policies)

According to the ESPON reports on "Territorial Cooperation for the Future of Europe (2017)" and "State of the European Territory (2019)":

- 1) *In **lagging and peripheral rural regions**, there is a need for improved infrastructures and services of general interest, trans-regional and transnational cooperation, as well as public-private cooperation to ensure inclusive growth and improved quality of life. For lagging regions in particular, promoting and exploiting local knowledge and assets (e.g. cultural and natural heritage) have the potential to become areas for economic diversification, laying the foundation for knowledge economy development.*
- 2) *In **less developed, peripheral regions**, policies should aim to support the upgrading of existing innovations, since these regions have more possibilities for experimentation and radical changes, as they are less path dependent (i.e. their innovative ecosystems that would need to adapt to changes are less developed and so more easily adaptable). This option is less risky and costly than attempting to create new knowledge and is more likely to succeed when innovative and highly performing economic actors are not very concentrated in a region.*
- 3) *In **imitative innovation regions**, a strong entrepreneurial activity can foster the acquisition of knowledge from outside the region and its translation into local innovative activities. Scouting and sourcing external knowledge should be supported through incentives for local firms (existing or new) to develop complementary projects with multinational corporations or to develop specialised subcontracting relationships with them.*

The development of the capacity for innovation and research in our Mediterranean territories is therefore the very first necessity for the strengthening and consolidation of a knowledge society in our region, for the benefit of administrations, universities, companies, citizens...

However, there are many other issues that need to be addressed by our Programme, particularly in relation to the consequences of climate change.

Also in the ESPON reports mentioned above, we find that:

***Climate change** has different impacts on different European biogeographical regions, as shown in the latest report of the EEA (2017). Observed impacts include environmental changes such as droughts, heat waves, flash floods and coastal floods, a variety of ecosystem changes (e.g. northward species migration) and changes in the food system (e.g. changes in crop yields) and energy system (e.g. increases in energy demand for cooling). These different territorial impacts depend on the geographical position and territorial characteristics of European regions, region-specific opportunities to embed adaptation and mitigation, and different capacities to respond to changing climate conditions.*

Climate change will have the highest environmental impact in the north and south of Europe. Areas with drought risks are concentrated along the Mediterranean.

The capacity to respond to changing climatic conditions through mitigation, adaptation and resilience strategies differs widely across Europe. The difference is visible in the contrast between the great adaptive capacity of northern Europe and the high vulnerability of regions in southern and south-eastern Europe, as well as in northern Scandinavia and Finland. Vulnerable territories in south and south-eastern Europe that may need guidance in drafting **climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience strategies should be**

supported through the transfer of good practices [...] supported [itself] by a shared database of successful adaptation, mitigation and resilience strategies and by comparative studies aimed at identifying differences (e.g. geographical specificities) and similarities (e.g. transferable measures) between territories.

The consequences of climate change in the Mediterranean affect all the territories bordering the basin and far beyond, making this subject the most unifying and priority element for any decision-maker. No European territorial cooperation programme, nor any regional programme, nor any thematic programme for research, transport, culture, etc. and nor any strategy will ignore this issue.

The imposed but necessary challenge of the Green deal will also be accompanied by an effort of supervision, coordination, technical and political cooperation totally transversal to each area and country intervening in the Mediterranean basin.

As stressed by Neighbourhood Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi during a speech at the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Forum on Trade and Investment on 12 November 2020, it would be desirable for the two shores of the Mediterranean to remain united and show "*creativity to strengthen our resilience and build our prosperity, particularly with regard to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic*".

The same has been repeated by Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy on March the 3rd 2021: "*The economic, social, ecological and security challenges facing the region have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Tackling these together is a key challenge for our external policy*".

To quote ESPON one last time: "*Structured political frameworks such as macro-regional and sea basin strategies can create coordinated transnational, interregional and cross-border synergies. This can mobilise existing networks or generate new specialised ones, promoting smart specialisation partnerships based on the expertise of each region/country. This can produce a multiplier effect, mobilise economies of scale and create sustainable spillover activities.*"

Deeply convinced of this need for wider cooperation, the partner States of the Interreg MED Programme had already decided to opt for "better governance" in 2014-20 by financing a dedicated axis.

The two pillars reserved for territorial projects of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, "**innovation and environment**", will undoubtedly require, in their implementation, a framework that can provide support to any operation for the most effective exchange in order to target any actor of interest.

Therefore, the third pillar "**governance**" (ISO1) finds its rightful role in the 21-27 programming and thus completes the scheme.

Territorial themes are associated to the need of conformity of the general objective of the Programme with the necessity of its greater impact in the area ("endogenous") and in the Mediterranean basin ("exogenous"), thus underlining the duty of cooperation with other programmes, initiatives, strategies, institutions.

The whole architecture of Interreg Euro-MED is designed to maximise its impact: different typologies of projects (modular and strategic for experimentation and transfer in the territories at different levels and for different actors; thematic and institutional

communities for network capitalisation and for European and national *mainstream*) will be possible in order to cover the entirety of the planned missions.

The choices and orientations of the Programme do not only wish to respond to a socio-economic context of crisis that has been persisting since 2008 and worsened following the COVID-19 pandemic, but rather to respond favourably also to the principles of solidarity and sharing of the European Union's cohesion policy. The decisions of the partner States are based on the rules of concentration, targeting, simplification and flexibility dictated by the Regulations.

Moreover, the Interreg Euro-MED Programme will have to address both its "maritime" characteristics (eg marine environment, maritime protected areas, harbours, etc) and its "land" components (hinterland, i.e. rural, mountain, coastal and urban areas) all of which are important for the MED area in terms of specificities and interested population.

This complexity of the area is well combined, however, with the choice of policy objectives PO1, PO2 and ISO1 which can be adapted quite easily to the territories, allowing us to focus on ad hoc themes in particularly strategic areas such as islands, urban-port, rural and/or mountain sectors.

Reflections regarding our capacity to better coordinate, since the design of the Programme, with key actors in the Mediterranean, have always been a priority to be particularly valorised through the capitalisation and liaising processes planned under ISO1. This is specifically the case with:

- the WestMed Initiative,
- the macro regional strategies EUSALP and EUSAIR and their support programmes Interreg Alpine Space and ADRION and any new MRS, that maybe established, that concerns Mediterranean
- the Mediterranean Neighbourhood Policy supported by the Interreg Next-MED Programme
- the Union for the Mediterranean multilateral partnership and specifically its Water, Environment and Blue Economy (Ministerial Declaration 2/2/2021) and its Energy and Climate actions.
- The BLUEMED Initiative

To this effort, the added value of a stronger collaboration with cross-border Interreg programmes shall not be forgotten.

This was all the easier to imagine and conceive as we have already accumulated a solid experience in the 14/20 programming period. Indeed, via its governance platform Panoramed and its Associated Partners or even through direct participation (this is the case for example for WestMED or the Union for the Mediterranean), Interreg Mediterranean 14/20 has already established partnership links with most of the strategies, actors or programmes mentioned and this will develop further in 2021/27.

As an example, at Programme level actions have already been taken within 2014-2020 period to establish collaboration with EUSAIR Authorities. Contribution of the Programme to the implementation of the EUSAIR priorities is envisaged via synergies and coordination with the Adrion Programme.

Similarly, coordination of activities with WestMED Initiative has started since the period 2014-2020 through the Blue Growth thematic community of projects with the engagement

of stakeholders of the blue economy, especially blue cluster managers and research organisations with equal participation in the Programme and the Initiative's working groups. On the other hand, the Programme is also participating in these working groups with observers' status which could be upscaled by contributing in terms of feeding the policy discussion and the action plan of the initiative with evidence-based elements provided by the Euro-Med projects.

Already, also following the indications provided for in the EC orientation paper, the Euro-MED Programme has started technical negotiations with the managing authorities of ADRION and NEXT MED on the one hand and Italy-France Marittimo, Greece-Cyprus and Italy-Malta Programmes on the other hand in order to cover both transnational and cross-border strands. The overall goal is to establish a structured and continuous coordination among ETC programmes operating on the same cooperation area; as a preliminary phase, a common/shared cooperation minimum common standard shall be based on identified content topics/themes which shall benefit from common actions.

The modalities will be defined according to the implementation schedule of the different Programmes. As far as the level of coordination is concerned (multilateral or bilateral), this could be defined according to:

- a) The themes of potential cooperation (specific objectives);
- b) Potential shared activities (e.g. joint restitution events by targeted theme or based on the possible degree of integration, calls for proposals capitalizing from other projects financed by the different programmes etc....);
- c) Timetables and deadlines for the implementation of the objectives of each Programme;
- d) The set of common management rules within each Programme in order to facilitate, as much as possible, a simplified communication to users (often the same bodies) and to the States;
- e) Other modalities that could arise within the implementation of the programmes, through any integration processes not yet envisaged or debated, including among others the coordination on contribution to MRS and SBS.

During the implementation phase of the Programme, monitoring of produced outputs and results will ensure identification of outcomes linked to the macro-regional and sea-basin strategies and relevant initiatives active in the Programme area, sustaining the established cooperation. The communication and the leverage strategies as well as the Governance Priority of the Programme are additional tools that will be exploited for the needs of the coordination process.

Obviously, the objective of this cooperation is not to be restricted to a limited number of Programmes, but rather to test and consolidate processes which can then be extended to any other Programme wishing to integrate such a dynamic. This could be the case in particular for the South West Transnational Programme with which Interreg Euro-MED will share 15 regions or land-based cross-border programmes in the area.

To be more concrete, the Programme intends to experiment a bottom up and ex-ante approach of coordination between programmes in the Mediterranean, which at the same

time would serve as a contribution to/embedding of relevant WestMED priorities, based on the Initiative identity as a sea-basin strategy.

The approach is meant to design at least one multi-programme pilot mechanism with the involvement of two or more (ideally all) Interreg Programmes in the Mediterranean.

Sustainable tourism - besides being in line with the Euro-MED approach to tourism - could be considered as a particularly transversal theme and therefore suited to the development of such a flagship pilot, encompassing elements of economic development and social inclusion as well as of environmental sustainability (sustainable transport, green ports, circular economy, governance), all of high significance in the post-pandemic context.

Additional multi-programme mechanisms might be conceived during the implementation phase.

Besides complying with the Interreg regulation provisions (article 17(3)(b)(4)) and article 17(3)(e)(i) regarding macro-regional (EUSAIR and EUSALP) and sea-basin (WestMed) strategies, the Programme intends to contribute to or to take into account, through its missions, a large number of European strategies and policies, as well as Mediterranean policies, strategies and initiatives, and in particular (non-exhaustive list):

- The UN SDGs: From the 17 SDGs, those most likely to be tackled by the programme are: (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, (14) Life Below Water, (15) Life On Land.
- EU Green Deal
- European Climate Law
- EU Adaptation Strategy
- Blue Growth Strategy
- Mid-term strategy (2017-2020) towards the sustainability of Mediterranean and Black Sea Fisheries (GFCM-UN FAO)
- European Climate Pact
- EU Biodiversity Strategy
- EU Maritime Spatial Planning Strategy
- Zero Pollution Action Plan
- Circular Economy Action Plan,
- EU Rural Action Plan, as introduced in the EU's long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas (June 2021)
- European Habitats Directive
- Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC in particular regulations on "Transitional waters" and "Coastal water";
- RescEU
- EU Forest Strategy
- European Industrial Strategy
- Textiles Strategy
- Renovation wave
- EU Offshore Renewable Energy Strategy
- EU Energy System Integration Strategy
- Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy
- BlueMed initiative -Research and innovation for blue jobs and growth at the Mediterranean

- EU Communication on Sustainable Blue Economy
- Switchmed initiative on a circular economy in the Mediterranean
- European Parliament resolution of 4 February 2016 on the special situation of islands (2015/3014(RSP))
- The Union for the Mediterranean ministerial declarations on blue economy and on the environment
- The Renewed partnership with the southern Neighbourhood – A new agenda for the Mediterranean
- the Priority Action Programmes (PAP) of the UNEP-MAP and especially: The Plan Bleu Regional Activity Centre (PB/RAC), the Priority Actions Programme Regional Activity Centre (PAP/RAC), the Specially Protected Areas Regional Activity Centre (SPA/RAC), the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) based in Barcelona, Spain
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive adopted on 17 June 2008
- EU strategy for Sustainable Tourism (P9 TA(2021)0109)

Furthermore, international conventions like:

- Barcelona Convention and its protocols, e.g. the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
- Ramsar Convention
- Convention on Biological Diversity
- Alpine Convention and its protocols

EU and ETC Programmes like :

- Horizon 2020
- Life
- The Digital Europe programme
- Interreg Transnational programmes in the area: Adrion, Alpine Space, SouthWest Europe, Next MED
- Interreg Cross-border programmes in the area
- Interreg Interregional programmes : Interreg Europe, Espon, Interact

Finally, the Programme, through its actions, will also contribute to the Territorial Agenda 2030, for both components, A just Europe and A Green Europe, by funding projects with a place-based approach and especially:

- Projects that aim at strengthening territorial cohesion across borders
- Projects that aim at strengthening the territorial dimension of sector policies
- Projects that aim at promoting an integrated and multi-level approach

Now that the common challenges and the overall architecture of the Programme have been presented, it is essential to take a small step backwards in order to study and understand further in depth the legacy of the 14/20 programming (already designed on the basis of the 2007/13 programming) and the justifications that led to certain choices.

Lessons learned

The programming period 2014-2020 was the beginning of a shift towards result-oriented projects and thematic concentration, committed to support the EU 2020 Strategy. The Interreg MED Programme has included both elements in its guiding principles and in its Programme intervention logic. Terms of References have also, to the extent possible, narrowed the focus from one call for proposals to another.

It is through the strengthening of innovation clusters that Axis 1 wanted to promote Mediterranean innovation capacities to develop smart and sustainable growth in the sectors of blue growth, green growth, social innovation and cultural industries. A wide objective in terms of topics tackled, but a focus on the clustering approach. Approved projects have successfully empowered the actors of the quadruple helix through the provision of tools and supporting services and a stronger transnational cooperation among them. However, conditions for the direct involvement of SMEs in transnational cooperation projects have not been met yet in this first period of direct participation of SMEs in projects. For the future, suitable conditions, such as administrative harmonisation of rules between different EU Programmes, state aid rules, thematic interest for participation, would ease the involvement of SMEs.

The choice has been made to have an Axis 2 on low carbon economy (energy and low carbon mobility) that would build upon 2007-13 extended experience. The very focused specific objectives have given the possibility to maximise resources towards the enhancement of a low carbon economy in the MED area. Undoubtedly, in S.O.2.1., projects have successfully contributed to increase capacities for more efficient energy practices in public buildings. In complementarity, S.O.2.2. has contributed to increase the share of local renewable energy sources in sensitive MED areas, namely islands and rural areas. And finally, S.O.2.3. has supported the development of soft actions towards low carbon urban mobility, but their transnational added value and transferability potential has remained limited. Results have been achieved through the development of tools and supporting services, common methodologies and plans. It is now time to build on the existing knowledge and know-how and further replicate experience and results in the rest of the area.

Most emphasis has been given in Axis 3, for the protection of natural resources of the MED area, through two complementary perspectives. S.O.3.1., with a wide variety of projects, have worked towards integrated policy and tourism management, to ensure that this key economic sector for the Mediterranean contributes to the preservation of its environment in a sustainable way. Besides, key stakeholders working in the field of biodiversity protection (S.O. 3.2) have joined forces to reach the objective of a sustainable biodiversity and natural ecosystems in the Mediterranean through improving the management of protected areas and creating a change in behaviour and practices. But the way protected areas are governed in various countries greatly differs, which makes difficult the development of joint governance plans.

Finally, the innovative governance process put in place in Axis 4 took time to start but has proved that efforts are paying off and governance processes are emerging, including coordination mechanisms within the MED architecture and beyond, in order to gather all relevant stakeholders to work towards converging directions.

In short, hereinafter the main weaknesses identified per each axis.

Axis 1:

- a) The implementation of public policies or action plans in innovation has not been reached as expected, probably due to the different nature of the developed actions or the relatively low involvement of decision makers in the partnership schemes, or to the lack of capitalisation activities;
- b) Capacity building and empowering activities for public authorities and social actors were rather low, although they have been a success for the private sector;
- c) The opening of the innovation objective to three themes, and the existence of multiple subthemes tackled for each thematic, lead to a wide range of topics and actions implemented by few projects, most probably limiting the global response and impact at the Programme area;
- d) The limited participation of thematic SMEs as project partners reveals the need to ensure that enabling conditions for this participation are in place when this type of partner is specifically called to participate in projects.

Axis 2:

- a) Actual transfer of produced result was lower than expected in the first call for proposals, probably because transferring activities are quite demanding in terms of time. Dedicated transferring and mainstreaming projects have been launched at the end of the programming period, restricted to identified outputs of finalised projects with high transferability potential, to counterbalance this finding and insist on the transferring capacity of results;
- b) Approved projects were more focused on developing and testing tools than on policy change, whereas, since the Programme is focused on transnational cooperation and capitalisation of results, modular projects should ensure their impact on policies, and beyond this also into mechanisms for societal challenges facing their energy transition and adaptation to climate change;
- c) Pilots need a long time to be prepared and implemented, to be running a sufficient time to collect data and be assessed;
- d) The involvement of population was limited

Axis 3:

- a) Difficulty in integrating SMEs and service providers into the projects addressing environmental protection. Mechanisms seeking balance between human/economic activities and environmental protection are not developed enough;
- b) Despite the achievement of joint governance plans, the improvement of the coordination of policies on natural resources conservation in the Mediterranean area remains a challenge;
- c) The management of protected areas is governed on different political levels, in this sense, the process of adoption of management plans, in each Mediterranean country, differs in legislative and temporal terms.
- d) The goal to involve as project partners, protected areas management bodies and authorities responsible of the management of protected areas has not been fully successful, because most part of these bodies have not suitable structures and human resources to carry the administrative and financial burden of EU projects. Projects that have involved protected areas not directly as partners but as beneficiaries, to implement action plans, seem to have been the most effective.

Axis 4:

- a) There was a lack of thematic correspondence between axis 4 topics and thematic communities that impeded the complete implementation of the strategy of the 2014-2020 architecture in terms of increasing impact of the thematic axis by improving the governance issues;
- b) There has been also a lack of synchronisation between the first formalized results of the thematic communities and the beginning of the analysis work of PANORAMED (governance platform) limiting the cooperation between the thematic axis and governance axis.

Nevertheless, synergies within and between the 8 thematic communities and the Governance Axis have put emphasis on their contribution to climate change, which is and remains the bigger challenge to focus on in the future. Lessons learnt from 14-20 has shown that, in order to maximise the Programme impact on the MED area, thematic concentration should go further in the 21-27 Programming period, with objectives that all converge towards climate and environment goals and concentration on the added value of transnational cooperation.

Moreover, the operational and impact evaluations show that, assuming a continuation of a thematic community approach, clear and effective coordination measures between the Joint Secretariat and the projects should be set up since the start of the Programme. The thematic specialisation, ownership and proximity of stakeholders that derive from this approach should be maintained, but with a clearer project architecture.

The Programme should provide for annual plans with revisions to allow for necessary adaptations to procedures or content. This would allow for the improvement of weaknesses and adaptation to strategic priorities that may emerge during the programming period. The role of National Contact Points (NCPs) in supporting the mainstreaming of projects should also be strengthened.

Thematic communities as an intermediate step between the governance of the programme and the territories maximise the tools provided by Interreg MED⁴.

Building on the experience of the 14-20 programming period, Interreg Euro-MED can begin to capitalise from the start of the Programme. This should start with a clear and shared understanding of what capitalisation means globally and for each actor in the Programme. This should also define the role of each actor and the interaction between them. An element of compulsory capitalisation must be present in all project typologies. Practical changes can be applied to the Programme tools to help produce concrete and measurable steps towards capitalisation.

This will be even more important and necessary as the impact assessment shows that a broad consensus was also found on the need for the Interreg MED Programme to improve its visibility and the outcomes and results of the projects at a transnational level, at EU level but also with regards to the policy-makers. It is suggested to have a greater focus on topics that can bring more effective change. The topics evoked as relevant concern governance and the green deal (circular economy, comprehensive approaches, transferable innovative pilot solutions, ...). More appropriate indicators and penalties for poor performances are also rated as strengthening the Interreg MED Programme's impact.

4 Operational evaluation, final report, 2020.

The architecture, as it is in place in 14/20, is described as a unique experiment that must be further developed and from which lessons are to be drawn for the following programming period. Despite the overall positive opinion on the experience derived from the set-up of this architecture, several points have been raised concerning the complexity and related need for simplification.⁵

Stakes

Overall, the Mediterranean region performs below the EU average in terms of GDP per capita, employment or innovation. The potential for innovation and development is significant with the existence of business clusters and research laboratories focused on green and blue growth (environmental services, biotechnologies, sustainable tourism, management of natural resources, clean energy, marine sciences, fisheries...). However, these clusters are mainly national and progress can be made by promoting interactions at transnational level.

Despite significant territorial disparities in its research and innovation potential, the Mediterranean region has several areas of specialisation which present interesting perspectives for the development of transnational cooperation approaches. The analysis of smart specialisation strategies in the countries concerned reveals that the priorities of innovation actors are particularly focused on:

- a) Sustainable innovation;
- b) Enabling technologies;
- c) Cultural and creative industries;
- d) Public health and safety;
- e) Information and communication technologies.

Compared to road accessibility, rural areas are about 80% below the EU average. Mountainous regions as well as islands are at 70% and 80% of this average with a level that is expected to remain low by 2030 for islands and less populated regions.

A number of island regions depend on imports of essential products such as food and energy and most other consumer goods. Sea freight is the main means of transport for these imports. Costs tend to be higher in islands than in mainland regions because of these constraints.

Air transport also plays a major role in linking Mediterranean regions and is particularly important for isolated areas and islands.

In addition, it should be noted that the major Mediterranean ports have relatively good land connections and can serve within a four-hour radius (road journey) a population of between five and twenty million people each.

In terms of urban mobility, on the other hand, density offers a favourable context for the development of sustainable transport systems with potentially high numbers of users. Living in cities provides access to many services using less energy-intensive modes of transport. In the Mediterranean region, these initiatives may be particularly relevant in cities also concerned by maritime traffic pollution or tourist frequentation (seasonality). In

⁵ Impact evaluation, intermediate report, 2020.

addition, in line with the goals and objectives of the European Green Deal, seaports should be seen as a key priority in pursuing resilience to climate change. On shore power supply (OPS) is already seen as a significant part of the transition to the new “zero emission” era, as well as digitisation of the supply chain in order to improve and facilitate data collection in ports.

On the other hand, it is more difficult to develop sustainable transport systems in most remote areas where the level of car dependency is much higher. In this case, the challenge is to maintain a good level of accessibility to services while encouraging the use of more sustainable types of transport.

In industrial production, SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) are predominant in the economy. At 9.2%, the business creation rate is slightly below the European average of 10.3%. The rate also varies considerably from one country to another, with, for example, in 2017 a rate of 3% in Cyprus, 7.2% in Spain and Italy, 11.3% in Portugal and Slovenia and 15.4% in France. They are present in sectors of low and medium technological intensity (agro-food, machine tools, office supplies, optics, metallurgy, etc.) and hire a large number of relatively low-skilled personnel⁶.

The Mediterranean region is also widely recognised as one of the most environmentally, politically, socio-economically and culturally sensitive areas in the world.

Unique but fragile natural ecosystems are severely, and sometimes irreversibly, damaged by human activity. Precious resources are under threat as water scarcity has been exacerbated by global warming, urban sprawl, mass tourism and pollution from human activities.

The potential for renewable energy production is significant in the Mediterranean regions, although it has not yet been fully exploited and the level of energy dependency remains relatively high.

Countries such as Croatia, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Slovenia are well above the European average: the average share of renewable energies in gross final energy consumption (biomass, hydropower, wind and solar) is around 18% in the EU-27, ranging from almost 30% in Portugal and Croatia, to around 22% in Slovenia, between 15 and 20% in Greece, Italy, Spain and France, 14% in Cyprus and 8% in Malta (in this field, islands are a specific target and are directly concerned by the recent "Clean Energy for EU Islands" initiative launched by the European Commission)⁷.

Moreover, in the Mediterranean region:

- Water is one of the most important economic and environmental resources threatened by climate change (drought) and human activities (pollution);
- Wetlands, which represent an important link in the water cycle, are also strongly affected by human activities;
- Waste is one of the main pressures on the environment (sea pollution comes mainly from land): in this case, the circular economy, which is particularly important for islands faced with scarce or more expensive resources and higher constraints for waste management, can be an innovative solution to this problem;

⁶ Territorial diagnosis and SWOT analysis 2021/27 final report, March 2020

⁷ Territorial diagnosis and SWOT analysis 2021/27 final report, March 2020

- Climate change is expected to increase the appearance of natural hazards in the coming decades (more extreme heat, less rain and river flows or heavy storms, higher risks of drought and desertification, increased risks of biodiversity loss, higher risks of forest fires, floods);
- The increase in population will require an increase in irrigation of cultivated land from 4% to 22% (this development will be in conflict with other uses: drinking water, tourism, industry);
- The coastal area is densely urbanised, maritime traffic is very important and increasing : as a consequence, the Mediterranean Sea is facing problems of over-occupation, pollution, over-exploitation, erosion and there is a constant threat of forest fires and chronic water shortages.

In view of all the above, it would be relevant, at transnational level, to strengthen existing frameworks and EU networking focusing on specific Mediterranean issues such as the blue economy, environmental protection and climate change, taking into account the territorial specificities of maritime, coastal, rural and mountain areas.

Transnational activities could be developed in coordination with existing cooperation schemes such as: the BLUEMED initiative promoting R&I cooperation in the field of the blue economy or the WestMED initiative to promote the blue economy in the Mediterranean region or the EUSALP and EUSAIR macro-regional strategies, or the Union for the Mediterranean multilateral partnership.

The challenge for the future INTERREG Euro-MED Programme is therefore focused on **fostering stakeholder coordination, testing or piloting new ideas for which the transnational scale is essential and also on exchanging good practices with all relevant actors with the aim of integrating them into existing policies (transfer and mainstreaming processes).**

PROGRAMME OVERALL OBJECTIVE AND MISSIONS

The Commission proposal for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework sets a more ambitious goal for climate mainstreaming across all EU programmes, with an overall target of 25% of EU expenditure contributing to climate objectives, reflecting the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The EU aims to be climate-neutral by 2050 (European Council endorsement dated Dec. 2019) – an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, the European Parliament and the European Council endorsed on 21 April 2021 the Commission's proposed target of a net reduction of at least 55% in the EU's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. This objective is at the heart of the European Green Deal and the 2030 climate and energy framework is regularly revising upward its 2030 emission reduction targets. The transition to a climate-neutral society is both an urgent challenge and an opportunity to build a better future for all. All relevant EU legislation and policies need to be consistent with, and contribute to, the fulfilment of the climate neutrality objective, and in parallel, the transition will require significant public and private investments. Interreg Euro-MED projects would be an excellent opportunity to support territories as well as national and regional policies to achieve the targets set in the EU Green Deal, contributing to an integrated approach.

In line with the EU focus on environment and climate objectives, Environment is the main theme for the Interreg Euro-MED Programme, ensuring a continuity with the 14/20 period Interreg MED programme Axis 2 (Low Carbon economy) and 3 (Environment protection), but also considering topics developed under Axis 1 (Innovation), thus linking the current PO 1 (Smarter MED) to PO2 (Greener MED).

Even if it is soon to draw some conclusions from the health (and economic and social) crisis we are going through with COVID-19 pandemic to anticipate the needs that will emerge in the coming years from this situation, two initial reflections may already be taken into consideration:

1. The global lockdown had undoubtedly positive impact on the state of the environment (pollution reduction, improved state of natural habitats, but also traffic in urban areas, reduction in consumption, ...). If this is the proof we did not need to be convinced that human activities are mostly affecting our environment, we should take advantage of it to change towards a more resilient society.
2. The consequences of the lockdown have created an unprecedented economic crisis, which is not structural, but which will need intensive support for rapid economic recovery, and specifically for the most vulnerable sectors, heavily impacted, among which tourism and cultural and creative industries (CCI).

If we were already convinced that environment is a first priority for our area, this is even more true now. It is now more than obvious that we need to change for a more resilient system, and the Programme can contribute to it, through innovative solutions to shared Mediterranean environmental challenges. For those reasons, **the main goal of the Programme consists in contributing to the transition towards a climate-neutral and resilient society: fighting against global changes impact on Mediterranean resources, while ensuring a sustainable growth and the well-being of its citizens.** By pursuing this goal, the Programme intends to reinforce the role of the environment as a catalyst for the improvement of the quality of human life and sustainable growth.

The Programme has opted for a strategic approach around 4 operational missions that contribute to reach the overall goal defined here above. This strategic thematic approach will be the guiding thread for the Programme communication and leverage strategies within the Governance priority.

MISSION 1: STRENGTHENING AN INNOVATIVE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

Research and innovation, developing strategies and implementing systemic changes that cut across different sectors (for instance agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, food, manufacturing, tourism), is essential for managing natural resources but as well technological solutions sustainably, especially in the current context of increased environmental pressure and biodiversity loss. The practices and policies need to be connected and work in synergy to ensure sustainable products and services. The collaboration of stakeholders throughout the value chains should be reinforced to better respond to the conditions of the business environment and drive to development of industrial symbiosis for mitigation of climate change impacts on the environment.

To combat post Covid economic crisis, there is need for innovative solutions that will reshape linear economies and provide pathways to circular models and sustainable society. Enabling experimentation on wider scale - with technologies, business ideas, policies and governance, will make the transition to inclusive and circular growth possible.

This mission's scope goes beyond its extent and is intended to be auxiliary to the other missions of the Programme. It is therefore cross-cutting, as it intends to support actions that could assist in the transition to a greener economy, mitigation of climate change impacts, provision for shared economy and better living areas.

The actions in this mission should allow for transnational cooperation on all types of innovation activities (pilots, value-chain networking, technology adoption, product diversification, research and innovation capacities in advanced technologies) but as well on service and non-technology driven innovation (design, creative work) and organisational patterns (innovative tools like e.g. innovative public procurement) in multiple sectors of priority for the Mediterranean region – e.g. green and blue growth, tourism, culture and creative industries, renewable resources, biodiversity.

Continuation of the work done in the previous programming period on circular economy and innovation will be sought with a clear focus on improvement of the environmental dimension of all economic activities and accompanying services and products.

MISSION 2: PROTECTING, RESTORING AND VALORISING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Preservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity is essential for human life. Nature contributes to a more healthy and resilient society. The preservation of ecosystems allows to mitigate natural disaster, diseases, boost resilience and regulate climate, thus reducing risks to human societies.

The main direct driver of biodiversity loss is the change in land and sea use that impacts terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems. Other main two drivers that contribute to the degradation of natural ecosystems are the over-exploitation of natural resources and climate change.

This mission has as a main aim to meet the environmental objectives planned by EU and included in the EU Green Deal but also well detailed in the EU Communication on Sustainable Blue Economy and in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, the Barcelona Convention and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Along with the other two missions, it intends to further contribute to the promotion of an environmentally healthier and economically more viable model for society by means of the protection, restoration and valorisation of both the natural and cultural heritage.

In this perspective, the purpose of the Programme, is to continue to fight against the loss of biodiversity while boosting actions of adaption to/ mitigation of climate change impacts.

In the frame of this mission, the Programme intends to give continuity to the work done during the previous programming period, supporting transnational actions addressed to develop effective governance frameworks and ensure the sustainability in the management of natural resources but also sustainable financing mechanisms. The connection among natural ecosystems and among managers of protected areas, will continue to be the key for healthy natural habitats but also for the widening of the ranges of protected areas. Regarding the concept of "connectivity" the novelty will be the inclusion of inland areas and consequently the important issue to encourage will become the adoption of integrated approaches. In this sense, preservation of marine biodiversity and restoration of degraded marine environments will be interlinked and accompanied by the restoration of freshwaters, wetlands and degraded land.

In parallel, to maintain a good environmental status addressing actions able to prevent and mitigate risks caused by natural events and humans activities effects will be a priority as well. There is the need to persist in the enforcement of existing tools for the integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), nature-based solutions, marine spatial planning (MSP) and, in parallel, to support the inclusion of climate change challenge and sustainable management of natural resources into local strategic plans.

At length, coordination across policy areas and economic sectors, and between local, regional, national and Mediterranean levels, as attested by results obtained so far, is crucial for the Mediterranean region. Environmental protection and restoration must become the overarching priority in all types of investments and policy measures. Economic activities cannot ignore their impact on the environment and a “transformative change” in the way users / sectors implement their activities is needed.

Finally, under this mission, the Programme plans to support actions and processes that allow individuals and public institutions to develop a deeper understanding of environmental issues and become more responsible in their decision making.

MISSION 3: PROMOTING GREEN LIVING AREAS

Sustainable development and management of living areas are crucial to the quality of life of the Mediterranean people.

In line with the EU Green Deal and the growing awakening on climate emergency, an integrated vision of the territories’ energy transition needs to be encouraged.

Due to the complexity of this transition, public authorities, private stakeholders and communities need to work together to renew plans (and raise awareness) on how territories have been managed so far, so as to foster community cohesion and healthier environment and to stimulate innovation and employment in our different territories around the Mediterranean.

In particular, there is an urgent need to act on the negative impacts of urban activities that are hazardous for human health and the environment, in terms of air pollution, energy consumption, mobility, (dis)connectivity, etc. Conversely, as evidenced in recent years, our living areas are highly vulnerable to the effect of climate change, facing more and more extreme events. This calls for an integrated approach combining all levels and sectors of our society, to operate a decisive and ambitious shift in the way we manage the territories we live in, in all their diversity.

The clean energy transition can only be tackled considering the impact of territories on the environment and the economy. Through the environmentally sound planning and financing of energy, particularly in green infrastructures and integrated renovation of buildings, the efficient use of renewable resources, changing the way we consider tourism and mobility, we will work to minimise the impact of living areas on the Mediterranean and the global climate system, on their path to become truly carbon neutral.

Indeed, the environmental responsibility of public authorities is paramount, and as more and more local authorities take on the sustainability challenge, a need for new green policies and strategies not only emerges, but adapting the regulatory framework becomes

essential in order to make them a reality. In fact, this cannot only be tackled from a top-down perspective – citizens, communities, are stepping up to act as transformative power in creating socio-ecological local alliances. The involvement of the private sector is also crucial to connect and activate clear resilience plans for our living areas.

Supporting energy transition and greener living areas will answer the Mission’s challenge, which is complementary to Missions 1 and 2 as it tackles in an integrated way the energy transition challenge and the development of green living areas.

MISSION 4: ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

The tourism sector was already a priority for the Interreg MED Programme in 14/20 regarding its sustainability, through ensuring the protection and valorisation of the natural and cultural resources of the area, and the heavy impacts of the pandemic on this sector for the Mediterranean keep creating a more urgent need to sustain its recovery. Considering the overall environment and climate focus and the transnational nature of the Programme, **the recovery of sustainable tourism is addressed transversally in all Programme priorities**, in order to allow “MED regions to practice a tourism governance that enables continuous improvements of environmental, social and economic sustainability, increases competitiveness through quality and innovations and ensures implementation and monitoring of strategies and policies”⁸. Indeed, it is more than ever the opportunity to support a permanent and sustainable change in tourism practices.

Specific types of actions addressing tourism are foreseen in each specific objective and will be further specified in the Terms of References of each call.

- 1.3.** Justification for the selection of policy objectives and the Interreg specific objectives, corresponding priorities, specific objectives and the forms of support, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection
PO1	<i>(i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies</i>	Smarter MED	Mediterranean regions lack behind the EU average in terms of innovation performance, despite the existence of better performant regions in Spain, France, Italy and Slovenia. The innovation potential of the area is highlighted in the regional smart specialization strategies for which development and implementation, the

			<p>quadruple helix stakeholders’ cooperation is considered as crucial.</p> <p>Innovation and development potentials are significant with the existence of clusters acting in key intervention fields related to blue and green economy (environmental services, biotechnologies, sustainable tourism, management of natural resources, clean energy, marine science, fisheries...)</p> <p>Great achievements were made on thematic community level, linking national clusters, hubs, transnational networks especially in the maritime sector. Indicatively about 22 transnational networks and clusters have been supported in their activities.</p> <p>By selecting this SO the Programme will answer to the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve innovation capacities, competitiveness and internationalisation / extroversion of SMEs confronted to international competition in primary, secondary and tertiary economy sectors e.g. agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, food production, smart manufacturing, tourism, towards their green transition - strengthen Smart Specialization Strategies, promote advanced technology (digitalization is now more than ever an enabler of a sustainable economy) and non-technological innovations - strengthen cooperation between stakeholders of the quadruple helix, considering the environmental dimension in their activities - reinforce growth sectors supporting environmental and climate change initiatives and representing important jobs potential (e.g. blue and green growth sectors, tourism) - support new business models oriented to the generation of shared value and cultural and creative industries in a post-Covid context - foster environmental improvements through innovative and more efficient industrial processes <p>Form of support: grants</p>
<p>PO 2</p>	<p>(iv) Promoting climate change adaptation</p>	<p>Greener MED</p>	<p>Climate change is expected to increase the number of natural hazards in the coming decades. These risks include rising sea levels, coastal erosion, extreme climatic events, droughts and</p>

	<p><i>and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco system-based approaches</i></p>		<p>forest fires, desertification, degradation of biotopes, loss of agricultural resources, health effects, etc.</p> <p>Various studies show that most places where the effects are likely to be particularly severe are in the South of Europe.</p> <p>In terms of public policies and project engineering, innovative solutions will have to be developed for these different types of risk. “Nature based solutions” are important alternatives to provide long-term answers.</p> <p>From an environmental, economic, social and cultural point of view, the promotion of a sustainable tourism model, to balance the effects of mass tourism, is a central issue to ensure a more respectful development of environment and resources.</p> <p>Beyond preventing risks and developing the resilience of our ecosystems, we can also prepare adapting to climate change by adapting our living spaces. Thus, sustainable urban development and the management of green living areas will contribute to this adaptation, in particular by supporting the energy transition and soft mobility, as well as by actively involving citizens.</p> <p>By selecting this SO <i>the Programme will answer to the following needs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Answer the central issue of climate change for the future of Mediterranean regions (accelerated warming); - Urge the environmental protection in view of both the pressure of human activities and/ or climate change; - enhance eco-system-based approaches in order to prevent disasters and improve resilience; - Improve the prevention and mitigation of risks; - Promote the importance of energy transition in the context of climate change - Tackle the climate change effects on health - Involve citizens in the greener transition of living areas
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Foster sustainable tourism models which ensure the protection of the environment, including natural resources and cultural heritage. <p>Form of support: grants</p>
Policy Objective 2	<i>(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</i>	Greener MED	<p>There is room for improvement regarding circular economy innovation capacities and consumer behaviour. Innovative solutions can be developed at territorial and local level especially in areas confronted with lack of resources and/or waste management challenges.</p> <p>Moving towards a circular economy offers also new business development opportunities linked to eco-innovation in agricultural, aquaculture & fisheries, energy, manufacturing and forestry sectors and in the reuse, remanufacturing, recycling of products/materials.</p> <p>Some specialisation trends can be observed (biomass supply, processing and conversion, waste reduction practices in the production and food supply, rise of the circular design).</p> <p>The work on implementing circular economy action plan and ensuring sustainable production and consumption models and tools started in the 2014-2020 period by the Green Growth thematic community of projects. It is expected to be further consolidated and continued with activities within this specific objective. The UfM labelling of this thematic community opens up equally the perspective of implication of stakeholders from the southern Mediterranean shore and joint work on combating common environmental challenges and establishing sustainable practices.</p> <p>Success has been marked in the green manufacturing sector with synergies with the working group of the Vanguard initiative and tools for the application of circular economy patterns have been promoted.</p> <p>By selecting this SO <i>the Programme will answer to the following needs:</i></p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the huge environmental impact of the current linear production system; - the scarcity of natural resources and current overexploitation; - the need to reduce waste production and its externalities, turning waste into a resource; - the need to encourage the adoption of more sustainable economic model based on circular bioeconomy whilst fostering sustainable tourism; - new economic opportunities offered by the circular economy model; - cultivation of the ‘reuse’ philosophy in the living areas <p>Form of support: grants</p>
<p>Policy Objective 2</p>	<p><i>(vii) enhancing protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</i></p>	<p>Greener MED</p>	<p>The management of biodiversity and natural resources require the effective and efficient implementation of established conservation measures including management plans as well as a better understanding of the role they play in our daily life, now recognised as “ecosystem services”⁹. Science, participatory solutions and the involvement of local authorities, managers of protected areas and NGOs, constitute key issues to understand these ecosystems and provide well accepted and efficient solutions. Public-private collaboration and connection between governmental and non- governmental actors at different levels as well as multi-sectoral, constitute another milestone for biodiversity management. Several policy aspects and solutions have been addressed under the Biodiversity Protection thematic community in 14/20, covering sustainable use of natural resources, ecosystem-based management approaches and governance mechanisms.</p> <p>In parallel, enhancing green infrastructures and acting for the reduction of pollution especially in urban/living areas is of paramount importance to minimise the impact of living areas on the Mediterranean and global climate system as they</p>

⁹ Ecosystem services are the many different benefits that ecosystems provide to people. For example, a stand of trees can reduce air pollution, purify the water supply, reduce the likelihood of floods and help regulate the climate by capturing and storing carbon. It might also provide timber for buildings, a space for recreation and improve the aesthetic qualities of the landscape.

			<p>can support the restoration and improve the connectivity between the fragmented areas of high value for biodiversity. By implementing the green infrastructure concept the Programme can gradually improve the availability of ecosystem services.</p> <p>By selecting this SO <i>the Programme will answer to the following needs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consolidate the connection of natural ecosystems at transnational level, - ensure ecological corridors to boost and preserve biodiversity - reinforce sustainable, efficient management and strong protection of protected areas - work beyond protected areas to address pollution, overfishing and climate change - improve restoration of degraded ecosystems at land and sea - promote adequate conservation of coastal and marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean region - support the vision of the biodiversity conservation as an economic and social value for MED regions - encourage sustainable tourism <p>Form of support: grants</p>
ISO1	<i>(vi) other actions to support better cooperation governance</i>	MED Governance	<p>The notion of governance highlights the growing complexity in the economic, social and political environment, the empowerment of new actors and the interaction of local and national levels with the transnational one to address new challenges, coordinate collective actions and reach a consensus on common strategic goals.</p> <p>In this framework, national, regional and local authorities along with international networks intervening in the Mediterranean area are relevant implementers for European and national policies. An enhanced cooperation of the stakeholders is of particular importance for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</p> <p>To capture, synthesize, transfer and apply best results from territories towards</p>

			<p>strategies/initiatives and citizens through a fluent and well coordinate decision-making process is the rationale of the choice of ISO1.</p> <p>During 2014/20 the Programme already supported an improved and stronger dialogue between national and decentralized processes through its governance axis, co-financing a platform project and strategic projects in key priorities. Based on this pilot experience of supporting multilevel governance, the programme intends to pursue its efforts to improve coordination and governance in the area.</p> <p>The ISO1, integrated to the overall Interreg Euro-MED 2021-2027 architecture, should strengthen thematic communities' processes of capitalisation, mainstreaming and liaising while targeting capacity building activities improving governance related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination with relevant strategies and EU programmes - Civil society participation - Single territorial Mediterranean awareness for common solutions facing transnational matters. <p>Consequently, a better cooperation governance system cannot be the issue of only one single Programme, but a single Programme can promote initiatives in the field: this is why ISO1 is fully integrated to the Interreg MED strategy and constitutes its backbone for the future. Form of support: grants</p>
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2. Priorities

2.1. Priority 1: Smarter MED

Priority 1 aims to reinforce societal commitment and increase innovation capacity of public authorities and private entities to implement solutions for a sustainable and greener economy in the Mediterranean by consolidating a competitive innovation ecosystem.

2.1.1. Specific objective Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies (PO1 SO(i))

Under this SO the competitive innovation ecosystem will be consolidated at Mediterranean level, thus contributing among others to 2030 climate targets, 2050 climate neutrality (European Climate Law), delivering the Territorial Agenda 2030's

missions, taking up actions of the Blue Growth Strategy, coordinating regional innovation processes.

2.1.1.1. Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Description

CONSOLIDATING A COMPETITIVE INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM WITH THE ENGAGEMENT OF 4HELIX STAKEHOLDERS

Research and innovation are an important domain for the cooperation at transnational level, having a cross- sector and cross-actor approach. Recognition is also reflected in the Regional Smart Specialization strategies that identify the priorities for business development and the ways to improve territorial competitiveness and achievement of wider environmental and social goals.

This Priority will contribute mainly to the operational mission 1 of the Programme, for an innovative and competitive sustainable economy, as well as to mission 4 on sustainable tourism and is also closely linked to the other two. Consequently, the innovation process is to be exploited here as a driver for the transition to sustainable, circular, greener and resilient economy and society.

Cooperation of stakeholders from the quadruple helix (research organisations, businesses, institutions and civil society) is important for the coordination and implementation of the regional innovation priorities. Cooperation on transnational level for the development of the value chains and the reinforcement of skills of the institutional partners is essential for strengthening the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process and completion of the policy mix.

There is need to promote the continuous dialogue among stakeholders to better calibrate the innovation process, develop and consequently monitor the innovation strategies, engage SMEs and professionals in the ecosystem and understand their needs and actions that will help out in the transformation of the economy to a competitive regional economy and at the same time will make the transition to a sustainable circular model. Especially in the context of Covid pandemic, SMEs activities need to be reinforced with adapted tools, methods and possible services coordinated transnationally, which will help them resist the crisis and keep them operational. This is the moment for green transition to take place.

Capacity building initiatives on the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process for all quadruple helix actors is central for promoting greater stakeholders' engagement in all the phases of RIS3 implementation. Special attention should be given to skilling of institutional stakeholders of the public administrations, as their role is crucial for all stakeholders' engagement. Their analytical, networking and communicational skills and capacity will reinforce informed decision-making processes for the territorial development and ensure coherent governance and integrated policies.

Objectives

- Effectively harness the innovation potential to support and accelerate the transition towards circular and sustainable economy and society
- Support knowledge sharing and uptake of new technologies in diverse sectors related to Smart Specialisation
- Enhance transnational cooperation between the quadruple helix stakeholders, including engaging the civil society
- Reinforce the role of the SMEs and clusters for the coordination and implementation of Regional Smart Specialization Strategies and S3 projects
- Increase capacity of public authorities in the implementation of Regional Smart Specialization Strategies and S3 projects

Expected results

- Sustainable economy sectors reinforced with aligned tools and practices on transnational level
- Reinforced societal commitment and increased capacity of public authorities and private stakeholders to implement a sustainable and greener economy in the Mediterranean
- Shared agendas towards competitive and transformative innovation ecosystems with vertical (e.g. at EU/national/regional levels) and horizontal (e.g. among territories) coherence.

Indicative types of actions

- Value chain development and cooperation within transnational clusters and promotion of transnational coalitions (public – private collaborations), internationalisation and extroversion of SMEs
- Application of innovative sustainable business development practices, change management tools and solutions for SMEs
- Accelerating innovation and technology transfer (including blue and green economy, agriculture, food production, fisheries and aquaculture, climate change, renewable resources, smart manufacturing, transport, biodiversity, cultural and creative industries, health and future digital technologies)
- Promoting climate friendly innovations, efficient industrial transition processes, new business models oriented to the generation of shared value, entrepreneurship in new sectors and those in transition
- Promoting access to finance, innovation capacity and cross-sectoral cooperation for SMEs
- Changing tourism practices by promoting both existing and new solutions in a new innovative way: smart tourism, tourist flow management
- Cooperation and coordination of institutional bodies, research organizations, businesses and civil society for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Smart Specialization Strategies for sustainable development (e.g. blue and green economy, manufacturing, renewable resources, transport, tourism,

cultural and creative industries, biodiversity), skills development for smart specialization (e.g. health, future digital technologies)

- Reinforcing transformative innovation policies

This priority explores cooperation and direct and indirect contribution of project results to EUSAIR, specifically in reference to pillar 1 Blue Growth and pillar 4 Sustainable Tourism and WestMed Initiative, mainly to its goal 2 “Smart and Resilient Blue Economy”. Innovation in blue economy sectors, ensuring sustainable and resilient practices in blue technologies as well as fisheries and aquaculture, are among the expected results of the activities within this priority. Work for diversification of the touristic product and innovative practices for sustainability of tourism is expected to be delivered within the Priorities’ projects.

The results could be directly transferrable and enriched from activities within Programmes that share the priorities of the EUSAIR Blue Growth pillar and the WestMed Initiative goal 2, especially when being at the project conception phase part of the projects’ objectives.

Research and innovation ecosystems are equally a shared thematic for EUSALP, AG 1 R&I. This thematic contribution could be explored through coordination with Alpine Space Programme, through Priority 3 “innovation and digitalisation” SO R&I”.

The actions in this priority link to the thematic and cross-cutting BlueMed priority goals as stated in the BlueMed Initiative’s implementation plan and specifically with the ones tackling the potential of blue-biotech, marine renewable energies, tourism, open innovation, blue skills, strengthening synergies among science, industry, policy-makers and society.

The increase of the innovation potential and capacities of SMEs sought by this priority and the reinforcement of the innovation potential of the involved Euro-Med Programme regions, can build up synergies with the S3 platform of the JRC and the action of European Digital Innovation Hubs of the Digital Europe Programme.

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
1 <i>Smart Europe</i>	<i>i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies</i>	<i>RCO116</i>	Jointly developed solutions	Solution	0	24
		<i>RCO87</i>	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation	133	333

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
1 <i>Smart Europe</i>	<i>i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies</i>	<i>RCR104</i>	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied	0	2021	22	<i>Programme monitoring system</i>	
		<i>PSI1</i>	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation	0	2021	233	<i>Programme monitoring system</i>	

2.1.1.3. The main target groups

The core target group of the Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 consists of national, regional and local public authorities engaged in policy - making. Together with other relevant bodies responsible for definition and implementation of policies, this core group is the main target group of the programme. Depending on the field of intervention and the administrative structure of each country the type of public institution involved may vary. Main actions are addressed to reinforce skills of public administrators for the improvement of decision-making processes in view of more coherent and integrated policies.

Beyond the core target group, other relevant organisations are also targeted for their role and relevance in the support to the green transition.

Private sector bodies as SMEs and business support organisation (e.g. innovation agencies, chambers of commerce, clusters...) are key target groups to help transformation to innovative and sustainable economy.

In support of innovation and environmental sustainability transition, universities and research centres are another target player important throughout all priorities of the programme, providing knowledge and expertise and being a bridge between practice and policy.

As learned during 14-20 programming period, having networks and thematic - oriented organisations as target group may ensure influence towards targeted policy makers and multiply effects in mobilising other key players.

Citizens, local communities and associations, are another target of the programme that can adopt and benefit by the innovative solutions carried out, but also by awareness raising and communication actions able to change socio-economic behaviours.

Indicatively, among the target groups for interventions in Priority 1 and specific objective (i) Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies are:

- Local, regional and national authorities
- SMEs and economic operators
- Clusters
- Business support organisations
- Universities, high education institutions and research centres
- Civil society, local communities and associations, NGOs

Besides target groups, the above-mentioned authorities and organisations could be directly involved in operations as active (project partners) or associated beneficiaries.

Further details on the eligible project beneficiaries and the nature of the involvement of these target groups in projects will be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme's calls for proposals.

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

There is no particular distinction that should be considered in regard to the territories that could be covered by interventions within the Priority 1 and specific objective (i) "Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies":

- Coastal/ maritime areas
- Islands
- Rural and Mountain areas
- Urban areas

This concerns all the areas, and depending on the specific types of the activities, focus could be given to coastal and maritime zones, islands, hinterland areas, mountainous, urban and rural areas.

Facing strong human pressures and being densely urbanized, coastal areas continue to represent a main challenge for the programme. The mitigation of climate change effects (sea level rise, coastal erosion...) together with the innovative integrated approach considering sustainable production and consumption patterns could ensure better future for the Mediterranean area. Balance among economic activities and protection of environment is key for these territories.

Climate change is also a common challenge for rural, mountains and/or remote areas. Mountain areas are confronted to an increase of natural risks endangering local people and

infrastructure. These types of territories are also significant for their environmental value, thanks to forests, sources of water and the role in carbon storage.

Finally, another important territory targeted by the programme is the urban area that can act as an accelerator for innovation.

Sustainable interactions between coastal or urban areas on one side and rural and mountain areas on the other side are a key for a balanced territorial development.

This specific objective as cross-cutting priority covers the whole Programme area and all types of territories represented. In case of activities focusing on targeted territorial types, further identification of the territories might be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme's calls for proposals.

2.1.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments [*not to be used for Interreg Euro-MED*]

2.1.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4 : Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1		1.1	019 Support for innovation clusters including between businesses, research organisations and public authorities and business networks primarily benefiting SMEs	
			022 Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and universities focusing on the low carbon economy, resilience and adaptation to climate change	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1		1.1	01 Grant	

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
1		1.1	48 No territorial targeting	

2.2 Priority 2: Greener MED

Priority 2 aims to provide a greener environment for the MED area, supporting a transition to a circular economy and an energy transition, promoting greener living areas, improving the management of natural resources and preventing and mitigating risks.

2.2.1 Specific objective *Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy (PO2 SO(vi))*

Active contribution towards implementing the EU Circular Economy Action Plan and promoting sustainable production and consumption models and tools was brought by the Green Growth thematic community in 14-20. In this dedicated SO, this work will be consolidated to support territories to effectively and sustainably embed circular economy transition.

2.2.1.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Description

SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

The current production system follows the linear pattern “take-make-use-dispose”, in which the highest share of the products’ environmental impact is determined already at the design phase. This pattern, not only implies a growing consumption of natural resources, leading to overexploitation and negative externalities from their extraction and processing, but also contributes to the constant increase in waste generation, having an enormous impact on our planet.

To reverse this trend and fulfil EU climate ambitions, it is necessary to accelerate the transition towards circular production systems. Circular economy is a regenerative model of growth that reconsiders the use of resources, insofar as it aims to eliminate waste and keep products, equipment and infrastructure in use for a longer time. This creates new opportunities for business development, production of goods and services and finds innovative solutions to redesign the way our economy works.

Waste management plays a crucial role in the circular economy model, as it is strictly interconnected with production and consumption patterns and needs to become an integral part of the model. Two key challenges for the future, mentioned by the Scientific Foresight Unit of the EU Parliament, are: i) to reduce levels of waste generation and ii) to align waste management objectives with those of the circular economy. To achieve these objectives, the waste management sector must become a key partner in developing innovative business models with the objectives of both waste prevention and turning waste into a resource.

The concept of circular economy connects many different factors that are interlinked with waste management, such as by-products (not necessarily waste), use and transformation of waste in productive cycles (e.g. as supply materials), reuse of water, industrial symbiosis,

co-generation, etc – these aspects are worth considering in order to align circular economy solutions.

Awareness raising, information and engagement of citizens and local authorities are essential to ensure waste recycling and foster the choice of sustainable and circular options in terms of products and services. In order to ensure the success of the transition, practices and policies for the circular economy need to be connected and work in synergy, and stakeholders must strengthen their collaboration throughout the value chain so as to ensure this circularity of products and services. This approach would particularly benefit from the contribution of cultural and creative industries and shall be adapted to the tourism sector.

This could particularly be enhanced through the contribution of projects to EUSAIR, namely as this topic can be linked to pillar 1 Blue Growth and pillar 4 Sustainable Tourism. The practices introduced through the implementation of circular economy models can support innovation for a more sustainable tourism management or a more dynamic maritime production sector. Equally, this objective could contribute to the WestMed Initiative and more specifically recalling its priority referred to Sustainable Consumption and Production (including maritime transport, ports, maritime and coastal tourism and marine aquaculture).

The actions in this priority link to the thematic and cross-cutting BlueMed priority goals as stated in the BlueMed Initiative's implementation plan and specifically with the ones supporting solutions for sustainable production and consumption of food from the sea and assisting in the transition from traditional maritime economy to blue growth activities.

Since circular economy is a cross-cutting theme so crucially linked to the fruition of the EU Green Deal and initiatives at Mediterranean level, it is expected to be firmly included within the priorities chosen to be tackled by forthcoming strategies and programmes, to which the results of MED 2021-2027 projects will effectively contribute. This can be the case for example with EUSALP AG 2, through the Alpine Space Priority 2 S.O. Promoting the transition to a circular economy.

This contribution has already started to take effect in the 2014-2020 programming period, through the participation in the Environment Working Group of the Union for the Mediterranean, and in the core group of the EU Circular Economy platform, paving the way for a concrete integration into future strategies and action plans.

Creating a shift towards circular economy in the Mediterranean will result in less negative impacts of economic activities on our environment and more sustainable production systems, with a dedicated attention on the agro-food and fisheries sectors that predominate the territory. The ultimate objective is to build long-term resilience and provide new economic opportunities, benefitting our society at large, in terms of business opportunities and consumers' awareness.

This objective will contribute in particular to the operational Missions 1 and 4 of the Programme.

Objectives

- Reduce the environmental impact of the current linear production system in key sectors, such as agriculture, food and fisheries, and in the tourism sector. Promote prevention, reduction and economic recovery of waste, including awareness raising and consumers engagement.
- Increase cooperation and capacities of stakeholders for closing the loops and support the transition to a circular model.

Expected results

- Improved sustainability of products and increased resilience of economic sectors.
- Circular and sustainable practices adopted for enabling effective prevention, reduction and economic recovery of waste.
- Increased cooperation between stakeholders throughout the waste management value chain including citizens/consumers engagement.
- Circular economy strategies developed and adopted, including integration of circularity into existing policies.

Indicative types of actions

- Supporting and promoting circularity and sustainability of products and production systems, including eco-innovative business models for closing loops, in sectors e.g. agriculture, food and fisheries, health, as well as manufacturing.
- Supporting sustainable practices for waste reduction and prevention, tackling waste generation and over-packaging – with a focus on plastic
- Promoting economic value recovery of waste and transformation into a resource
- Supporting and promoting circular and sustainable practices in the tourism and the cultural and creative industries sectors
- Promoting consumers engagement and awareness raising – including in the tourism sector
- Supporting initiatives dealing with the water-energy-food nexus.
- Supporting public authorities in the development and adoption of strategies for the transition to circular economy.

2.2.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2 <i>Greener Europe</i>	<i>(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular</i>	<i>RCO83</i>	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan	0	29

	<i>and resource efficient economy</i>	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solution	0	17
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation	133	333

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2 Greener Europe	<i>(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy</i>	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied	<i>0</i>	2021	15	<i>Programme monitoring system</i>	
		RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Strategy/ action plan	<i>0</i>	2021	23	<i>Programme monitoring system</i>	
		PSI1	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation	<i>0</i>	2021	233	<i>Programme monitoring system</i>	

2.2.1.3 The main target groups

The core target group of the Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 consists of national, regional and local public authorities engaged in policy – making. Together with other relevant bodies responsible for definition and implementation of policies, this core group is the main target group of the Programme. Depending on the field of intervention and the administrative structure of each country, the type of public institution involved may vary. Main actions are addressed to reinforce skills of public administrators for the improvement of decision-making processes in view of more coherent and integrated policies.

In the context of circular economy, public authorities will have a crucial role to play in the conception and deployment of strategies and action plans– as the responsible bodies for implementing sustainable development strategies at their level (local/regional/national), they will have at heart to integrate circular economy practices into their own policies. They will be encouraged to do so through action plans developed by projects, achieved in

cooperation with all relevant stakeholders of the circular economy, supporting the green transition at large.

Primarily, private sector bodies and in particular SMEs and business support organisations (e.g. innovation/sectoral agencies, chambers of commerce, clusters...) are key target groups – economic operators will have a crucial role to play in the contribution to these solutions, particularly in sectors e.g. tourism and agro-food (including fisheries and aquaculture), to support the transformation towards innovative and sustainable economy.

In support of innovation and environmental sustainability transition, universities and research centres are another important target player throughout all priorities of the Programme, providing knowledge and expertise and being a bridge between practice and policy.

As learned during the 2014-2020 programming period, having networks and thematic-oriented organisations as target group may ensure influence towards targeted policy makers and multiply effects in mobilising other key players.

Citizens, local communities and associations are another essential target of the Programme that can adopt and benefit from the innovative solutions carried out, and in this case, they are also essential in raising awareness and as vectors of communication to push a change in socio-economic behaviours and adopting circular economy models in our society.

Indicatively, among the target groups for interventions in specific objective (vi) *Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy* are:

- Local, regional and national authorities, in particular their sectoral agencies
- SMEs and economic operators
- Business support organisations
- Universities, higher education institutions and research centres
- Civil society / NGOs / Local communities and associations

Besides target groups, the above-mentioned authorities and organisations could be directly involved in operations as active (project partners) or associated beneficiaries.

Further details on the eligible project beneficiaries and the nature of the involvement of these target groups in projects will be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme's calls for proposals.

2.2.1.4 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

There is no particular distinction that should be considered in regard to the territories that could be covered by interventions within the Priority 2 and the Specific Objective (vi) "Promoting the transition towards a circular and resource efficient economy" all types of territories are concerned:

- Coastal/ maritime areas
- Islands
- Rural and Mountain areas
- Urban areas

This specific objective as cross-cutting priority covers the whole Programme area and all types of territories represented – indeed the concept of circular economy could be highly beneficial to any territory, favouring local development and territorial resilience.

Islands are a prominent example of how circular economy models can be successful in achieving green transition, by responding to their specific territorial challenges. The management of natural resources, the economic and social ecosystems and local constraints and opportunities linked to the insular dimension make islands the prime location to test and implement new circular approaches. Therefore, they naturally are one of the most important target territories of the tools and practices developed by projects.

A similar case can be made for territories considered as “remote”, that are faced with comparable territorial challenges depending on their reliance on main economic centres – as such, rural and mountainous areas can boast a strong attractivity potential, that can be supported in implementing circular economy approaches optimising local and natural resources.

Conversely in urban areas, public authorities in particular will have a crucial role to play in the development of circular economy, as cities are heavily dependent on external resources to meet the demands of their citizens, and at the same time responsible for the largest amount of generated waste. The impact of circular economy therefore has an enormous potential in supporting transition to a greener economy, in addressing these factors in a more sustainable and resilient approach.

Specifically, in coastal territories, the circular economy approach will help to improve the balance between economic dynamism and valorisation of resources in key sectors such as tourism and blue economy where the engagement of local businesses (including SMEs) are particularly at stake.

In case of activities focussing on targeted territorial types, further identification of the territories might be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme’s calls for proposals.

2.2.1.5 Planned use of financial instruments [not to be used for Interreg Euro-MED]

2.2.1.6 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4 : Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		2 (vi)	045 Promoting the use of recycled materials as raw materials	

			047 Support to environmentally-friendly production processes and resource efficiency in SMEs	
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Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		2 (vi)	01 Grant	

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		2 (vi)	48 No territorial targeting	

2.2.2 Specific objective *Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system-based approaches (PO2 SO (iv))*

Under this SO increased capacity in the matters of prevention and management of risks and in the effective planning for energy transition and climate change adaptation and resilience will be achieved with the aim of securing environmental and living quality in the Mediterranean, contributing to the EU Green Deal and the EU Adaptation strategy.

2.2.2.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

PREVENTING AND MITIGATING RISKS, SUPPORTING ENERGY TRANSITION AND GREENER LIVING AREAS

Description

Considering the high vulnerability of the Mediterranean area to climate change, there is the necessity to increase capacity in the prevention and mitigation of natural risks and risks induced by human activity, as well as to improve coordination and cooperation of stakeholders across borders to tackle these risks. The adoption of a preventive approach is suitable. Indeed, prevention means better risk management in the future and ensuring a good health and quality of life of human beings.

At the same time, in line with the growing awareness on climate emergency, we need to encourage an integrated vision of the territories' adaptation to climate change and therefore support the transition towards a greener environment.

Sustainable urban development and management are crucial to the quality of life of the Mediterranean people. With a constantly growing share of the population living in cities, there is an urgent need to act on the negative impacts of urban activities that are hazardous for human health and the environment – in terms of emissions, energy consumption, mobility, (dis)connectivity, etc. – and to effectively plan and finance for adaptation and

resilience to climate change, while for peripheral rural and mountainous areas concepts for sustainable infrastructure and services are necessary.

In particular, the clean energy transition must be tackled considering the impact on the environment and the economy of territories, whilst taking into account territorial specificities such as islands, particularly emblematic of the Mediterranean challenges. I) Through the Environmentally sound and integrated planning; ii) financing the energy transition; iii) the deployment of renewable resources; iv) changing the way we consider tourism and mobility are crucial in our work.

Thus, climate change will be tackled here by three distinct focuses: the prevention and mitigation of natural and human risks, energy efficiency and the transition to greener living areas, contributing in particular to operational Missions 2, 3 and 4 of the Programme.

Objectives

- Improve prevention and management of natural disaster risks and risks linked to human activities
- Support public authorities in their efforts to reach 2030 and 2050 energy goals and carbon neutrality, achieving effective planning and financing for climate change adaptation and energy transition
- Foster adaptation and resilience to climate change for more sustainable living areas increasing citizens engagement

Expected results

- Increased capacity in the prevention and management of natural risks with aligned tools and practices on transnational level
- Increased coordination and cooperation of stakeholders for joint management and prevention of disaster risks (natural and human related)
- Facilitated development and implementation of plans and strategies for energy transition and climate change adaptation and resilience, to secure and improve environmental and living quality
- Increased capacity of public authorities in effective planning and financing for climate change adaptation and energy transition
- Reinforced citizens engagement for more sustainable living areas in the Mediterranean

Indicative types of actions

- Prevention and mitigation of natural and environmental risks
 - tackling coastal erosion and sea level rise fostering better integration of coastal zone management with other management approaches of natural resources: implementation of nature-based solutions, Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
 - forest protection to reduce the incidence and extent of forest fires and increase the absorption of CO₂ and enhance the capacity of the forest to restore ecosystem services and to better manage expected climate change impacts.

- developing and pilot implementing drought management plans, developing observatory, early warning systems on droughts / Improving knowledge: data, information sharing
- developing management and pilot implementing plans pertaining to other risks including rising sea levels, coastal erosion, floods, extreme climatic events, forest fires, desertification, degradation of biotopes (land and sea), earthquakes, loss of agricultural resources, health effects (including heat waves, respiratory and other diseases), etc.
- Prevention and mitigation of risks linked to human activities
 - Improving monitoring systems and governance: information sharing, exchange and access best available data (including Big Data), knowledge, assessments and tools on adaptation to climate change
 - Encouraging platforms that use emerging technologies to monitor and predict risks
 - Supporting climate-resilient, sustainable use and management of water across sectors and borders. Help reduce water use by encouraging water efficiency, reuse and savings, and by promoting the wider use of drought management plans as well as sustainable soil management and land-use
 - Developing and adopting strategies and practices to reduce the impact of tourism and implementing a sustainable tourism model, with a more respectful use of environment, including natural and cultural resources.
 - Integrating climate change adaptation and resilience into local plans for the protection and management of areas of special interest (natural and cultural heritage)
 - Supporting integrated planning and financing schemes for climate change adaptation, resilience and energy transition, as well as concepts for just transition.
 - Supporting and leverage funds for implementing nature-based solutions in urban areas
 - Supporting deployment of renewable energy, in particular in remote/island/rural areas boasting insufficiently exploited local potential.
 - Promoting energy upgrade/energy efficiency of the building stock, supporting the integration of climate resilience considerations into the criteria applicable to renovation of buildings, including preserved buildings
 - Supporting and promoting low carbon mobility to reduce congestion and air pollution, to meet energy goals and carbon neutrality.
 - Improving the connection of and services for urban and inland/remote areas, including islands, paying particular attention to the tourism sector.
- Awareness raising and promotion of environmental culture
 - strengthening capacity building and awareness raising as well as taking into consideration the added value of culture to address environmental issues in order to change behavior in the use of resources, including in tourism practices.
 - fostering the creation of a water-saving culture among the population (including protecting drinking water supplies)

These possible actions could contribute to the EUSAIR macro-regional strategy, particularly through pillars 2 "Connecting the Region", 3 "Environmental quality" and 4 "Sustainable tourism". Projects addressing risk management and transition to green living areas could

be complementary on the following themes: Maritime and marine governance and services, Maritime transport, Intermodal connections to the hinterland, Energy networks, Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity, Sustainable and responsible tourism management.

Complementarity and synergies can be found with the EUSALP macro-regional strategy on the 3rd Thematic Policy Area "Environment and Energy". This thematic contribution could be explored through coordination with Alpine Space Programme Priority 2 Climate Resilient and green region.

Further synergies can be established with Horizon Europe's Mission on "Adaptation to Climate Change, including Societal Transformation". Under this mission integrated solutions to achieve the vision of climate-resilience by 2050 will be tested, with particular emphasis on citizen engagement. Projects focused on prevention and mitigation of risks *through maritime safety and response to marine pollution rescue* could also contribute to the WESTMED initiative especially through its *first goal "A safer and more secure maritime space"*.

2.2.2.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2 Greener Europe	<i>(iv) promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches</i>	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan	0	36
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solution	0	21
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation	173	426

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2 Greener Europe	<i>(iv) promoting climate change adaptation and disaster, risk prevention, resilience, taking into</i>	RCR079	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/action plan	0	2021	29	Programme monitoring system	
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied	0	2021	19	Programme monitoring system	

	<i>account eco-system based approaches</i>	PSI1	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation	0	2021	298	<i>Programme monitoring system</i>	
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2.2.2.3 The main target groups

The core target group of the Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 consists of national, regional and local public authorities engaged in policy - making. Together with other relevant bodies responsible for definition and implementation of policies, this core group is the main target group of the programme. Depending on the field of intervention and the administrative structure of each country the type of public institution involved may vary. Main actions are addressed to reinforce skills of public administrators for the improvement of decision-making processes in view of more coherent and integrated policies.

Beyond the core target group, other relevant organisations are also targeted for their role and relevance in the support to the green transition.

The involvement of bodies working at the territorial level such as environmental agencies, energy agencies, associations for environmental protections, bodies working on the management of natural areas, tourism departments of local, regional and national authorities, tourism agencies and tourism organisations, LEADER Local Action Groups is crucial for delivering expected results under this specific objective.

Private sector bodies as SMEs and business support organisation (e.g. innovation agencies, chambers of commerce, clusters...) are key target groups to help transformation to innovative and sustainable economy.

In support of innovation and environmental sustainability transition, universities and research centres are another target player important throughout all priorities of the Programme, providing knowledge and expertise and being a bridge between practice and policy.

As learned during 14-20 programming period, having networks and thematic - oriented organisations as target group, may ensure influence towards targeted policy makers and multiply effects in mobilising other key players.

Citizens, local communities and associations, are another target of the programme that can adopt and benefit by the innovative solutions carried out, but also by awareness raising and communication actions able to change socio-economic behaviours.

Beyond this global overview of the main bodies targeted by the programme, each specific objective and type of projects may focus on a more limited set of these target groups.

Indicatively, among the target groups for interventions in Priority 2 and the Specific Objective “Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system-based approaches” are:

- Regional and local and national authorities (environment department, energy department, economic development departments, planning and prospective department, transport department...)
- Environmental management organization/agencies, tourism management agencies
- Energy management organisations/bodies
- Universities, higher education institutions and research centres
- SMEs & Economic operators (fisherman, hotels...)
- Citizens / NGOs/ local communities and associations
- LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs)

Besides target groups, the above-mentioned authorities and organisations could be directly involved in operations as active (project partners) or associated beneficiaries.

Further details on the eligible project beneficiaries and the nature of the involvement of these target groups in projects will be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme’s calls for proposals.

2.2.2.4 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

The specific territories targeted by the programme are in line with the geography of the Euro-MED 21-27 and, in details, with the extension of the programme to a set of new regions not necessarily having access to the sea. The new territorial context implies taking into account not only coastal areas but also terrestrial / inland areas. The attention paid both to sea and land and the adoption of an integrated and eco systemic approach may have an important role in achieving the green transition in Mediterranean area, even more acting in different type of territories, taking into account the connections existing among these habitats.

Globally, coastal and maritime areas remain one of the core types of intervention areas. Facing strong human pressures and being densely urbanised, coastal areas continue to represent a main challenge for the programme. The mitigation of climate change effects (sea level rise, coastal erosion...) together with the sustainable development represent main goals for this area. A balance among economic activities and protection of environment is key for these territories. Climate change is a common challenge for rural, mountains and/or sparsely populated areas. Mountains areas are confronted to an increase of natural risks endangering local people and infrastructures. These types of territories are also significant for their environmental value, thanks to forests, sources of water and the role in carbon storage.

The programme intends to reinforce actions addressed to islands, vulnerable areas further affected by natural disasters and sensitive to issues as energy supply and water and waste management.

Finally, another important territory targeted by the programme is the urban area, the future hub for implementation of transnational green policies, beyond the connection with peripheral and rural areas.

Based on the type of project and specific objective, the targeted territories may change. For Specific objectives having a cross-cutting thematic approach most of territories are concerned.

Indicatively, among the target groups for interventions in Priority 2 and Specific Objective “Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system-based approaches the targeted territories are:

- Coastal/ maritime areas
- Islands
- Rural and Mountain areas
- Urban areas

This specific objective covers the whole Programme area and all types of territories represented. In case of activities focusing on targeted territorial types, further identification of the territories might be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme’s calls for proposals.

2.2.2.5 Planned use of financial instruments [not to be used for Interreg Euro-MED]

2.2.2.6 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		2 (iv)	037 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks: others, e.g. storms and	
			drought (including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures)	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		(iv)	01 Grant	

3.

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		2 (iv)	48 No territorial targeting	

2.2.3 Specific objective Enhancing protection and conservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure including in urban areas and reducing all forms of pollution (PO2 SO (vii))

Under this SO the protection and restoration of natural ecosystems will be consolidated at Mediterranean level, thus contributing among others to EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, Zero Pollution Action Plan, taking up actions promoted by the Biodiversity Protection thematic community in 2014-2020.

2.2.3.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Description

IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES: ENHANCING THE RESILIENCE OF NATURAL HABITATS

Several policy aspects and solutions have been addressed under the umbrella of Biodiversity Protection thematic community, during the 2014-2020 period, covering sustainable use of natural resources, ecosystem-based approaches, as well as governance mechanisms. Recommendations on how to reduce human footprint of economic activities in maritime environment (as fisheries, maritime traffic and ports...) have demonstrated the importance to adopt integrated approaches for the management of natural habitats. Notably, a common Mediterranean Declaration for an Ecosystem based approach to biodiversity protection and management has been promoted by the thematic community.

Effective monitoring, management and geo-spatial tools have been identified and tested on different topics. Joint governance models have been developed to manage beaches having Posidonia banquettes, to reduce pressures on the fragile ecosystems as wetlands (wetlands contract), to mitigate the impact of marine litter in marine wildlife and MED coasts. Joint actions have been promoted to engage local communities, small scale fisherman and citizens scientists in monitoring climate change and human pressures impacts in MPAs.

A direct dialogue with key networks, strategies and stakeholders at different scale has facilitated the transfer of results, capacity-building and supported networking of MED protected areas.

Further consolidation and continuity in the activities on biodiversity protection is ensured also within this specific objective, taking a step forward.

Indeed, the focus of this specific objective is the improvement of the “resilience” of natural habitats through better protection, preservation and restoration. In continuity with what has been done in the 2014-2020 programming period, a dedicated attention is brought to the consolidation of connection between natural ecosystems and the reinforcement of their management.

The connection of natural ecosystems at transnational level allows harmonisation in the monitoring and management approaches as well as the support of ecological corridors, essential to boost biodiversity and reach global and regional targets by 2030 (EU Biodiversity Strategy). The interaction between marine and terrestrial areas is pivotal in order to secure biodiversity and ensure ecological continuity and proper functioning of the ecosystems.

In this perspective, the connectivity remains an implicit value for conservation of natural resources. Besides the upgrade of networking/connection, the application of the existing science-based and nature-based solutions in supporting the conservation of biodiversity represents another important challenge.

Indeed, the promotion of available and effective methods and tools as ecosystem-based approaches and co-management schemes to support the sustainable use of natural resource is an asset of this priority.

The restoration of polluted and degraded natural habitats represents another priority under this specific objective reinforcing adoption of solutions able to guarantee a healthy environment.

In addition, as learned so far, the setup of governance models and the establishment of long-lasting relationships with relevant stakeholders allow to strengthen management processes and to support the adoption of environmental strategies as a key driver for a sustainable economic development.

The cultural aspect is considered in close association with conservation of natural resources. The aim is to facilitate the link between cultural and natural heritage and the way to improve an integrated management of both assets, tangible and intangible areas (in the continuity of both previous Interreg MED programmes implemented since 2007).

This specific objective will contribute in particular to the operational mission 2 of the Programme.

Objectives

- Improve the sustainable management of natural resources
- Consolidate the connection of natural ecosystems at transnational level, ensuring ecological corridors to boost and preserve biodiversity
- Enhance the sustainability and resilience of natural habitats, ensuring restoration of natural functions
- Improve implementation and enforcement of environmental policies/legislations, ensuring the links between environmental protection, sustainable development and citizens health

Expected Results

- Reinforced adoption of nature-based solutions and co-management approaches for the sustainable management of natural resources
- Improved connection and enlargement of protected areas in land and sea
- Reinforced adoption of solutions to restore degraded ecosystems at land and sea, guaranteeing a healthy environment
- Integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services into territorial strategies, supporting capacity building and coordination among different stakeholders (public/private)

Indicative types of actions

- Consolidating the connection of functional ecosystems:
 - reinforcing transnational links to protect and restore more effectively the areas covered by the Natura 2000 network and marine protected areas
 - enhancing “blue and green infrastructures” as network of natural and semi-natural areas with different environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services
 - enhancing green infrastructures and acting for the reduction of pollution especially in urban / living areas
 - strengthening land-sea interaction – supporting ecological corridors in different types of landscape
- Improving the management of natural ecosystems:
 - facilitating ecosystem-based and co-management approaches of natural resources (ex. small scale fisheries, wetlands...)
 - building up multi-stakeholders’ governance to ensure sustainable use of natural resources (local governance models)
 - strengthening the monitoring and management of existing protected areas and supporting the process of designation of new ones and their financial sustainability (in land and sea)
 - supporting public authorities in enforcement of environmental strategies in connection with other key-stakeholders involved

- exploring and promoting the connection / articulation between cultural and natural heritage, in particular with nature conservation areas under the European network Natura 2000, thus promoting sustainable tourism
- Restoration of degraded ecosystems:
 - restoring natural functions of ground and surface water: restoring freshwater ecosystems and the natural functions of rivers (lake, rivers, wetlands, dams)
 - protecting and restoring water polluted resources (including plastic polluted environment)

This priority has the potential of direct and indirect contribution of project results to EUSAIR, specifically in reference to pillar 3 “Environmental Quality”.

This Specific Objective is aligned with the goal 3 of the WESTMED Initiative, “a better governance of the sea” and more specifically through its priority linked to biodiversity and marine habitat conservation and restoration.

The protection and enhancement of sea and land natural habitats, ensured by innovative solutions and improvement of ecosystem-based and co-management approaches, are main results expected from this specific objective. Actions that support ecological connectivity of blue and green infrastructures are expected to be delivered by projects within this priority, together with the support to connection between protected areas, including Natura 2000 sites.

Under this perspective, coordination with LIFE programme and in particular with the environment sub-programme could be consolidated, supporting the Trans-European Nature Network, as expected by the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

Sustainable land use and soil protection, as well as green infrastructure solutions for an integrated management of habitats are equally a shared thematic for EUSALP. This thematic contribution could be explored through coordination with Alpine Space Programme, Priority 1 Climate resilient and green region.

Same coordination is envisaged with the Western Balkans Strategy and in specific with the pillar 3 “*biodiversity, aiming to protect and restore the natural wealth of the region*” of the Green Agenda of Western Balkans.

Synergies can also be established with Horizon Europe’s Mission ‘Ocean, seas and waters’ which is one of the five candidate research and innovation missions under Horizon Europe, intended to mobilise EU citizens and resources to solve the biggest societal challenges such as the health of our marine and aquatic ecosystems. The core objective of the ocean mission is to scale-up solutions for reaching the EU objectives and 2030 targets for Restoring biodiversity, significantly reduce (micro) plastic, nutrient and pesticides pollution, Blue Economy instrumental in reaching 55% CO2 emission reduction. It would be particularly important to contribute to one of the potential area-based lighthouses focusing micro plastics in the Mediterranean.

Contribution of the Programme to further key initiatives is expected, providing continuity to the existing collaborations set up within 2014-2020 period. With this end, coordination with the Union for Mediterranean and the Agenda 2030 for a Greener Med is considered relevant to identify common challenges and possible synergies on environmental protection with the south shore of the Mediterranean.

2.2.3.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
2 Greener Europe	<i>(vii) enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</i>	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan	0	29
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solution	0	17
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation	133	333

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
2 Greener Europe	<i>(vii) enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution</i>	RCR079	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/action plan	0	2021	23	Programme monitoring system	
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied	0	2021	15	Programme monitoring system	
		PSI1	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation	0	2021	233	Programme monitoring system	

2.2.3.3 The main target groups

The core target group of the Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 consists of national, regional and local public authorities engaged in policy - making. Together with other relevant bodies responsible for definition and implementation of policies, this core group is the main target group of the programme. Depending on the field of intervention and the administrative structure of each country the type of public institution involved may vary. Main actions are addressed to reinforce skills of public administrators for the improvement of decision-making processes in view of more coherent and integrated policies.

Beyond the core target group, other relevant organisations are also targeted for their role and relevance in the support to the green transition.

The involvement of bodies working at the territorial level such as environmental agencies, energy agencies, associations for environmental protection, bodies working on the management of natural areas, tourism departments of local, regional and national authorities, tourism agencies and tourism organisations, LEADER Local Action Groups is crucial for delivering expected results under this specific objective.

Private sector bodies as SMEs and business support organisation (e.g. innovation agencies, chambers of commerce, clusters...) are key target groups to help transformation to innovative and sustainable economy.

In support of innovation and environmental sustainability transition, universities and research centres are another target player important throughout all priorities of the programme, providing knowledge and expertise and being a bridge between practice and policy.

As learned during 14-20 programming period, having networks and thematic - oriented organisations as target group, may ensure influence towards targeted policy makers and multiply effects in mobilising other key players.

Citizens, local communities and associations are another target of the programme that can adopt and benefit by the innovative solutions carried out, but also by awareness raising and communication actions able to change socio-economic behaviours.

Beyond this global overview of the main bodies targeted by the programme, each specific objective and type of projects may focus on a more limited set of these target groups.

Indicatively, among the target groups for interventions in Priority 2 and Specific Objective (vii) *Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution*, are:

- regional and local and national authorities (environmental departments, economic development departments...)
- Environmental management organization/agencies

- Protected areas management organisations/bodies
- Universities, higher education institutions and research centres
- SMEs & Economic operators (fisherman, tourism agencies...)
- Citizens / NGOs/ local communities and associations
- authorities, managers of protected areas or experts from the southern shore of the Mediterranean, networks of managers of protected areas
- LEADER Local Action Groups (LAGs)

Further details on the eligible project beneficiaries and the nature of the involvement of these target groups in projects will be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme's calls for proposals.

2.2.3.4 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

The specific territories targeted by the programme are in line with the geography of the Euro-MED 21-27 and, in details, with the extension of the programme to a set of new regions not necessarily having access to the sea. The new territorial context implies taking into account not only coastal areas but also terrestrial / inland areas. The attention paid both to sea and land and the adoption of an integrated and eco systemic approach may have an important role in achieving the green transition in Mediterranean area, even more acting in different type of territories, taking into account the connections existing among these habitats.

Globally, coastal and maritime areas remain one of the core types of intervention areas. Facing strong human pressures and being densely urbanised, coastal areas continue to represent a main challenge for the programme. The mitigation of climate change effects (sea level rise, coastal erosion...) together with the sustainable development represent main goals for this area. A balance among economic activities and protection of environment is key for these territories. Climate change is a common challenge for rural, mountains and/or sparsely populated areas. Mountains areas are confronted to an increase of natural risks endangering local people and infrastructures. These types of territories are also significant for their environmental value, thanks to forests, sources of water and the role in carbon storage.

The Programme intends to reinforce actions addressed to islands, vulnerable areas further affected by natural disasters and sensitive to issues as energy supply and water and waste management.

Finally, another important territory targeted by the programme is the urban area, the future hub for implementation of transnational green policies, beyond the connection with peripheral and rural areas.

Based on the type of project and specific objective, the targeted territories may change. For Specific objectives having a cross-cutting thematic approach most of territories are concerned.

For the Specific Objective (vii) *Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution*, the targeted territories are:

- Coastal and maritime areas (marine protected areas, wetlands, ...)
- Islands
- Rural areas and mountains areas
- Urban areas (green infrastructure)
- Inland (wetlands in inland, freshwater, rivers, lakes, dams, ...)

In case of activities focusing on targeted territorial types, further identification of the territories might be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme's calls for proposals.

2.2.3.5 Planned use of financial instruments [not to be used for Interreg Euro-MED]

2.2.3.6 Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		2 (vii)	050 Nature and biodiversity protection, natural heritage and resources, green and blue infrastructure.	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		2 (vii)	01 Grant	

4.

Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
2		2 (vii)	18 No territorial targeting	

2.3. Priority 3: MED GOVERNANCE

Better governance processes provide the backbone for the capitalisation of the INTERREG Euro-MED results into policy actions, in cooperation and coordination with all other

programmes and strategies intervening in the area. A Mediterranean vision and shared solutions need a strong governance to be built.

2.3.1 Specific objective *Other actions to support better cooperation governance (ISO1 SO(vi))*

Under this SO the approach to thematic issues with different levels of policies will be better coordinated and the institutional capacity of Mediterranean authorities in transformative public policy, governance and cooperation will be increased. Coordination between multi-level bodies, programmes, strategies and initiatives will be enhanced

2.3.1.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where appropriate

Description

This specific objective aims to support the capitalisation of thematic results by establishing conditions for synergy and coordination between thematic projects of Priorities 1 and 2 and by implementing mainstreaming strategies in local, regional, national and European policies. It also aims to support transnational coordination between regional, national and European authorities/networks and between ETC managing authorities, initiatives and strategies to improve specific policies of the Mediterranean area. To meet this objective, the projects under this priority will maximise the valorisation of projects results and their complementarity impact in the Mediterranean area within each mission. This priority will foster liaising activities, strengthen coordinated working approach at transnational level and implement mainstreaming processes. Eventually, it will favour the conditions for policy changes to improve the Mediterranean territorial cohesion.

Objectives

- Facilitate the exploitation and re-use of knowledge, experiences and project results towards other stakeholders to contribute through synergies to the same mission
- Facilitate the transfer of results to other stakeholders, programmes and territories and their mainstreaming into local, regional, national and European policies
- Increase coordination between stakeholders covering the Mediterranean (multi-level, transnational) based on shared knowledge, experiences and results

Expected results

- A more coordinated approach to thematic issues with local, regional, national and European policies due to collectively empowered results of Interreg Euro-MED projects
- Increased institutional capacity of Mediterranean public authorities in transformative public policy, governance and transnational cooperation
- Increased coordination and cooperation between regional, national and supranational institutions/bodies and programmes acting in the area as well as strategies and initiatives.

Indicative types of actions

Elaboration, implementation and adoption of mechanisms to facilitate the exploitation and re-use of knowledge, experiences and project results towards other stakeholders to contribute through synergies to the same mission:

- Organising and disseminating the information among the communities to facilitate the reuse of the existing results generated by the Interreg (Euro-)MED projects
- Setting up peer review processes to consolidate the knowledge generated by the projects
- Conducting analysis and inspire connections between projects to identify relevant knowledge created by projects that can be exploited and/or integrated and inspire synergies between projects
- Animating Communities of Interest around the programme's missions to favor the conditions to develop synergies between projects and facilitate the production and update of relevant knowledge.
- Combining the results to increase their visibility and enable stronger joint dissemination and valorization

Elaboration, implementation and adoption of processes to facilitate the transfer of results to other stakeholders, programmes and territories and their mainstreaming into local, regional, national and European policies:

- Conducting analysis to identify relevant replicable and adaptable knowledge and results for transferring and mainstreaming
- Identifying local, regional, national and European target stakeholders for the transfer and mainstreaming of results in policies and animating networks to increase the results' outreach
- Organising trainings and share of experiences to increase the capacity of partners to valorize their results, transfer and integrate results.
- Implementing conditions for transfer and mainstream of results into policies between stakeholders and giver and receiver institutions
- Create and animate networks of receiver institutions and increase their capacity to mainstream results into policies

Elaboration, implementation and adoption of protocols to increase coordination between stakeholders covering the Mediterranean (multi-level, transnational) based on shared knowledge, experiences and results:

- Engaging actively stakeholders in specific networks to stimulate the coordination between local and regional actors from multi-sectors and from multi-level within Euro-MED
- Setting up mechanisms to identify and analyse coordination opportunities within Euro-MED and non Euro-MED national policies (including East and South non EU-partners)
- Promote a MED vision
- Developing and implementing joint transnational action plans

2.3.1.2. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
ISO 1	Other actions to support better cooperation governance	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solution	0	53
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation	61	91

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
ISO 1	Other actions to support better cooperation governance	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied	0	2021	27	Programme monitoring system	
		PSI1	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation	0	2021	64	Programme monitoring system	

2.3.1.3. The main target groups

The core target group of the Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 consists of national, regional and local public authorities engaged in policy – making. Together with other relevant bodies responsible for definition and implementation of policies, this core group is the main target group of the programme. Depending on the field of intervention and the administrative structure of each country, the type of public institution involved may vary. Main actions are addressed to reinforce skills of public administrators for the improvement of decision-making and coordination processes in view of more coherent and integrated policies at national and transnational levels.

Beyond the core target group, other relevant organisations are also targeted for their role and relevance in the coordination of actions between actors of different areas and levels. Given the role of projects in the analysis of thematic results, research centres and universities have their role to play. The same is true for networks of actors that can be targets for the integration of results into policies. These networks of actors can be both political and civil society actors who act as advisors or have direct influence on regional and national authorities.

As learned during 14-20 programming period, having networks and thematic - oriented organisations as target group, may ensure influence towards targeted policy makers and multiply effects in mobilising other key players.

Indicatively, the target groups for ISO1 *Governance* are:

- regional and national authorities (thematic departments)
- networks of decision makers
- Environmental agencies, structures in charge of protected areas, energy agencies, business support organisations and their networks
- Universities, higher education institutions and research centres
- NGOs/ local communities and associations

Further details on the eligible project beneficiaries and the nature of the involvement of these target groups in projects will be specified in the respective Terms of References of the Programme's calls for proposals.

2.3.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools

There is no particular distinction that should be considered in regard to the territories that could be covered by interventions within ISO1 "Governance" all types of territories are concerned:

- Coastal/ maritime areas
- Islands
- Rural and Mountain areas
- Urban areas

This specific objective as cross-cutting priority covers the whole Programme area and all types of territories represented.

2.3.1.5. Planned use of financial instruments (not to be used for Interreg Euro-MED)

2.3.1.6. Indicative breakdown of the EU programme resources by type of intervention

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
ISO 1		SO (vi)	172 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement territorial cooperation projects and initiatives in a cross-border, transnational, maritime and inter-regional context	

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
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ISO 1		SO (vi)	01 Grant	
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Table 6: Dimension 3 – territorial delivery mechanism and territorial focus

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)
ISO 1		ISO (vi)	48 No territorial targeting	

3. Financing plan

Reference: Article 17(4)(g)

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

Reference: Article 17(4)(g)(i), Article 17(5)(a)

Table 7

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
<i>ERDF (territorial cooperation goal)</i>								
<i>ERDF programmed under Article 17(3) (Investments for Jobs and Growth goal)</i>								
<i>IPA III CBC¹⁰</i>								
<i>Neighbourhood CBC¹¹</i>								
<i>IPA III¹²</i>								
<i>NDICI¹³</i>								
<i>OCTP¹⁴</i>								
<i>OCTP¹⁵</i>								
<i>Interreg Funds¹⁶</i>								
Total								

¹⁰ *Interreg A*, external cross-border cooperation

¹¹ *A*, external cross-border cooperation

¹² *Interreg B and C*

¹³ *Interreg B and C*

¹⁴ *Interreg B and C*

¹⁵ *Interreg C and D*

¹⁶ ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under *Interreg B and C*

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Reference: Article 17(4)(g)(ii), Article 17(5)(a)

Table 8* **Budget unknown for now**

PO No or TA	Priority	Fund		Basis for calculati on EU support (total or public)	EU contribution	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total	Co- financing rate	Contributions from the third countries
					(a)=(a1)+(a2)			(b)=(c)+(d)				(f)=(a)/(e)	(for information)
						without TA pursuant to Article 30(5) CPR	for TA pursuant to Article 30(5) CPR		National public	National private	(e)=(a)+(b)		
						(a1)	(a2)		(c)	(d)			
PO1	Smarter MED	Interreg funds		Total								80%	
PO2	Greener MED	Interreg funds		Total								80%	
ISO1	MED Governance	Interreg funds		Total								80%	
	Total	Interreg funds		Total								80%	

4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation

What actions have been undertaken by the Programme to allow the participation and contribution of third-party partner organisations in its drafting, in order to meet the regulatory requirements, set out in Article 6 of the CPR? And what will be the future actions to facilitate their contribution to its implementation, monitoring and evaluation?

Above all, it is important to recall that the Interreg Mediterranean Programme, since its creation in 2007, has always favoured the participation of all categories of partner organisations (public or private) among its potential beneficiaries.

All information and communication actions carried out by the Programme since its first programming period, about its objectives and results, have always been addressed to the widest possible public.

Thus, among the hundreds of beneficiaries of Interreg MED are all types of organisations such as national authorities, local authorities, universities, research centres, associations, non-governmental organisations, international bodies, small and medium-sized enterprises, networks of networks and any other body representing civil society.

Throughout the calls for proposals and the construction and definition of new partnerships and challenges, the opinions of all these structures on the implementation of the Programme and its content have always been collected and analysed through ad hoc surveys, public opinion polls, evaluations and stakeholder meetings.

In two programming periods, Interreg MED has never stopped evolving and adapting to internal and external requirements, constantly "listening" to the voice of its beneficiaries.

The architecture, content and objectives of the Programme are also the result of a constant dialogue between the Programme authorities and the field actors, with a massive participation of the States, the MA and the JS in the steering committees and institutional meetings of the projects and their partners.

This considerable effort of exchange within the Programme facilitates a continuous awareness of the expectations and criticisms of the third-party partners, allowing to anticipate experimentations from one period to another.

Nevertheless, in a more specific way for the preparation of the 2021/27 programming period, several activities have been carried out in this context.

During spring 2020, a survey published on the Programme's website for two months collected about 400 answers. The results are available on the Programme's website. The survey gave the floor both to any citizen interested in general policy issues as well as to experts in territorial cooperation, in particular Interreg Euro-MED, through open and/or specific questions related to the themes and objectives set by the regulations.

This survey allowed to confirm the first proposals of the MA/JS (June 2020) to the attention of the Task Force (TF), in particular concerning the strategic objectives to be promoted: innovation (PO1), climate change (PO2) and governance (ISO1).

A first draft version of the complete thematic proposal was circulated in the different partner states of the Programme, as an informal consultation document, in summer 2020

(August/September): the national partnerships, consulted according to the modalities of each country, sent their observations to integrate them in a final text submitted to a written procedure of validation by the TF in October 2020.

At the same time, the same informal document has been the subject, also in the summer of 2020, of a consultation with the representatives of the thematic communities of the 2014-20 programme and of the "Governance" axis bringing together, within the Programme, the direct beneficiaries of the projects as well as their associated partners.

This double consultation carried out in Summer 2020, after the spring "general public" survey, gave the floor to a large number of actors representing all types of organisations from the Mediterranean before the finalisation of the very first draft on the "architecture and priorities" of the Programme.

Moreover, this preparatory work was also enriched by the direct and indirect contributions of the exchanges that the Programme was able to maintain with networks and organisations such as the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), MedCities or with representatives of the *WestMed* Sea Basin Initiative and the European Commission.

Finally, webinars open to third party partners were organised on the occasion of the annual event "Past, Present, Future" of the Interreg MED 2014/20 Programme which took place in November 2020 but also punctually in February/March 2021.

The latter had as main goal the collection of new opinions, no longer in a global way but targeted on the template of the Programme 2021/27, then in the process of being drafted.

The representatives of public and private organisations from all the countries belonging to Interreg Euro-MED 2021/27 (including Bulgaria and North Macedonia after enlargement of the cooperation area) expressed themselves on the priorities to be implemented by the Programme just before the final validation by the partner States in June 2021.

The final document also integrates a certain number of recommendations resulting both from the specific analysis of all the final reports of 2014/20 projects submitted to the Programme before the end of 2020 (about 50) as well as from the operational (final report March 2020) and impact (interim report October 2020) evaluations.

With regard to the role envisaged for third partners in the framework of the implementation, monitoring and evaluation activities of the Programme, several tasks/missions are foreseen.

It is nevertheless important to recall the transnational nature of the Programme and its extension through the countries of the northern shore of the Mediterranean and the Balkans, representing 14 States in total: it is impossible to guarantee the voice, in the decision-making bodies, to any regional, local, urban, economic or social body, be it public or private.

For this reason, intermediate consultation bodies and consultation times are provided for at national and transnational level.

In the continuation of the work and consultation methodologies experimented since the 2007/13 programming until today, a fundamental place is given to national partnerships. These are organised under the responsibility of the States participating in the Programme, according to different modalities from one country to another, according to criteria linked to the administrative structure (centralisation, decentralisation, regionalisation of competences), to the number of actors present on the territory interested in the ETC.

These types of partnerships are the main source of transmission of requests from the territories to the Programme authorities.

The main information channels are represented by the National Coordinators, essential intermediaries between potential beneficiaries and/or national, local, public and private socio-economic decision-makers on the one hand and essentially the Monitoring Committee and Managing Authority on the other hand.

Workshops, surveys, meetings and bilateral exchanges are the most common means for the identification of the said information and the feedback of opinions. The composition and management of these partnerships are the exclusive competence and responsibility of the States.

Finally, the representatives of the National Coordinators are the spokespersons of the third-party partners before the Monitoring Committee and the Managing Authority.

At the transnational level of the Programme, several actions will be implemented, always taking advantage of the experience of previous programming. However, new initiatives will also find their place with the aim of strengthening the link between the Programme and potential beneficiaries.

Thus, already existing schemes or new conceptions such as the following are proposed for 2021/27:

- 1) Integration of a specific analysis of the application of Art. 6 CPR in the framework of the operational and impact evaluations;
- 2) Promotion of thematic territorial dialogues through the networks of partner organisations associated to the projects co-financed under ISO1 (information activities, mobilisation, capitalisation of external actors);
- 3) Constitution of a Permanent Contact Group ISO1 (inter-project coordination activities aimed at aggregating results and creating synergies for external target audiences);
- 4) Development of an inter-programme cooperation, or even coordination mechanism (exchange activities, study, transfer, communication and valorisation of results) and with key transnational actors in the Mediterranean in order to promote the mainstream and liaising in the Mediterranean basin.

The direct and/or indirect objective of all these measures will therefore be to improve and consolidate the involvement of third-party partners in the implementation of the Programme, through bodies present in the projects and the Interreg Euro-MED authorities.

Finally, in order to concretise this in a tangible way, it is also proposed that transnational "Consultation Days" could be organised one or twice a year by the MA/JS, thus reinforcing the decision making of the Programme Monitoring Committee through the provision of external "ad hoc" information and recommendations gathered from representatives of the civil society with experience/competencies/skills on specific thematic topics (for instance, to prepare calls for proposals, transferring processes...).

These "Days" could be organised in the form of webinars and target different audiences and organisations according to the subjects dealing with the Monitoring Committee agenda(s).

The variety of the type of actions described allows the multi-level mobilisation of the Programme partnership at each key stage of its life (preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), whether at transnational level or at the level of the participating States.

5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation)

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme 2021-2027 is committed to building a communication strategy that supports Mediterranean Governance and policy-change.

Taking stock of past programming periods, the current strategy presents a roadmap for 7 years. The communication chapter summarises a more detailed document to be approved by the Programme Authorities at the same time as the Cooperation Programme. The communication strategy will be complemented by annual communication plans.

Our communication approach is based on 6 drivers:

- **Targeted** in a thematic and territorial sense
- **Green**, embedding greening practices across all Programme and project communication strategies;
- **Interactive**, focused on a fully interactive communication between the Programme and its target audiences;
- **Community-based**: allowing for synergies among projects and a strong engagement of partners.
- **Integrated and coordinated**: efficient communication flow between all levels of the Programme architecture **and beyond**, towards **including other programmes, strategies or initiatives, where relevant**.
- **Change-oriented**: The Programme strategy defends a strong symbiosis between the communication and capitalisation actions aiming at policy-change.

OBJECTIVES

The Programme operational objectives are broken down into 3 communication strategic objectives, and these are split into 12 specific objectives (a single example below), converted into annual SMART objectives.

- 1 – Raise awareness about the Programme in partner States and regions
 - 1.1 Raise awareness of potential beneficiaries about the Programme and its funding opportunities in all eligible regions
- 2 – Foster high quality projects' communication & capitalisation
- 3 – Contribute to promote policy change in the Programme area

CHANNELS

We consider “channels” as the programme and projects' highways to effectively convey content to the target audiences.

From this perspective, we take 3 categories of channels: events, advocacy, web & social media, press media and nearly-zero printed materials.

In terms of social media & press, we intend to promote organic and paid content.

We use Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube mostly to promote programme & project activities & results, programme calls and relevant initiatives from the European Union / Commission or other institutions. Facebook allows to continue growing our community by bonding with actual & potential project beneficiaries but also with the general public thanks to simple and interactive content. Twitter is a mean to disseminate information in a fast, continuous and direct way. LinkedIn also serves dissemination purposes and allow us to reach a wider and more professional audience.

CONTENT STRATEGY

The content strategy has 3 main drivers for development: focus on capitalisation success stories especially those of effective impacts on policies, end-user oriented, and campaign driven.

TARGET AUDIENCES

The target audiences are divided into 5 categories, which are further detailed in the communication strategy. These categories include: **potential applicants and project partners** within the Programme eligible area; **multipliers and/or strategic stakeholders** such as NGOs, associations, SMEs, Intergovernmental Organisations working on or interested in Programme topics; **political end-users/policy-makers** working on or interested in Programme topics; **Technical end-users; General Public.**

BUDGET

Programme Authorities are committed to keeping the previous communication budget of €900,000, which, depending on the total amount, can result to slightly over 0,3% of the total Programme budget.

Following the previous Programme's main lines of expense and the current strategy, aiming at increasing the social media outreach and greening support, the budget is distributed as follows: 40% on events, 28% on IT tools, 12% on branding, 10% on content strategy (social media campaigns, podcasts, videos), 5% press relations, 5% on project trainings.

Rough distribution per year depending on the launch of the first calls

YEARS	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
%	0	26	20	16	12	10	8	5	3

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Indicators consist of number of participants, applications received and partner search forum users, satisfaction rates, approved project proposal rates, social media outreach, web traffic indicators,

number of trainings and projects using the provided tools, number of pupils sensitized to European cooperation, among others.

Example of baseline:

kick-off event: at least 400 participants on and offline

1st call rate: at least 29% project proposals approved

6. Indication of support to small-scale projects, including small projects within small project funds

The Interreg Euro-MED programme does not offer the possibility to co-finance small-scale projects.

This is mainly due to the following reasons:

- a) The transnational dimension of the programme. Indeed, this mechanism does not seem adapted to the objectives and logic of a programme as extensive as Interreg Euro-MED: contrary to the approach of the programme, which tries to open up as much as possible to the experiences and competences in the cooperation area, the small-scale projects should focus on an extremely reduced territorial and partnership dimension;
- b) The architecture of the programme (which must meet the requirements of coordination, cooperation and thematic concentration) is designed to favour the capitalisation of results in the area in a homogeneous way: the introduction of small-scale projects is an element of rupture in this architecture, which is based on a process of upscaling of the transferable achievements, due to its limited and overlapping action;
- c) The typology of the programme's projects already integrated in the architecture which, through its "territorial" simple modular projects (studies or testing or transferring) or strategic projects (three joint modules per type of priority territory) and its "governance" projects of thematic communities (clustering and transfer) or institutional projects (liaising and mainstreaming), can co-finance all the actors likely to be interested in the programme's priorities and specific objectives;
- d) The choice of the programme to adopt and structure the ISO1 priority to respond to the need for better governance in the cooperation area through the most effective and broadest possible communication, transferability and impact of the results, objectives for which the action of small-scale projects would not have any real added value but would rather be contradictory;
- e) The extremely modest financial size of small-scale projects, which should be a maximum of €100,000 to apply the SCOs in a spirit of simplification and minimisation of the risks of indirect management (external beneficiary to manage small project funds) and which greatly reduces the impact capacity of these same projects on a Mediterranean scale;
- f) Finally, the absence of global actors in the programme area adapted to the spirit of the letter of Articles 24 and 25 of the Interreg Regulation (cross border legal body, EGTC or a body with legal personality involving representatives from at least two participating countries, of which at least one is a Member State...) able to manage final recipients respecting the audit trail of the programme in a transnational framework.

7. Implementing provisions

7.1. Programme authorities

Table 10

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority	Région Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur 27, Place Jules Guesde 13481 Marseille Cedex 20 France	Tarja RICHARD Head of the Managing Authority	trichard@maregionsud.fr
National authority (for programmes with participating third countries, if appropriate)	Albania: Bosnia and Herzegovina: Montenegro: North Macedonia:	Nada Bojanić, Assistant Director, Division for Territorial Cooperation Programmes	nada.bojanic@dei.gov.ba
Audit authority	Commission Interministérielle de Coordination des Contrôles et Actions cofinancées par les Fonds Européens (CICC) 5 Place des Vins de France 75012 Paris France		
Group of auditors representatives	Albania:		
	Bosnia and Herzegovina:	Dana Šarčević Expert Advisor for financial control, National Fund Department (member) Katarina Puljić Senior Associate for financial control, National Fund Department (substitute)	dsarcevic@mft.gov.ba kpuljic@mft.gov.ba
	Bulgaria:		
	Croatia: Agency for the audit of European Union programmes	Neven Šprlje Director of Agency Zvonko Širić	neven.sprlje@arpa.hr zvonko.siric@arpa.hr

	implementation system	Head of Service for Audit of European Territorial Cooperation Programmes	
	Cyprus: Internal Audit Service	Anna Zavou Christoforou Commissioner of Internal Audit Stelios Ioannides Internal Audit Senior Officer Yianna Ioannou Xenophontos Internal Audit Officer A'	achristoforou@internalaudit.gov.cy sioannides@internalaudit.gov.cy yxenophontos@internalaudit.gov.cy
	France:		
	Greece:		
	Italy:		
	Malta:		
	Montenegro:		
	North Macedonia:		
	Portugal:		
	Slovenia: Ministry of Finance - Budget Supervision Office of the Republic of Slovenia (Urad Republike Slovenije za nadzor proračuna)	Mr. Dušan Sterle Director	dusan.sterle@gov.si
	Spain:		
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission	Ministry of Finance and Public Administration Directorate General of European Funds Deputy Directorate General of Certifying and Payments Paseo de la Castellana 162 28071 Madrid	Jeronimo RIOS BOETA Deputy Director General of Certifying and Payments	JRiosB@sepg.hacienda.gob.es

	Spain		
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7.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat

The Joint Secretariat assists the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions. The joint secretariat also provides information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under the Programme and assists beneficiaries and partners in the implementation of operations.

The Joint Secretariat is established in continuity with the 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 programming periods. It is hosted by the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Region.

Participating States are consulted by the Managing Authority for the setting up of the Joint Secretariat and for the recruitment of each additional staff. The States are involved in the recruitment process.

The staff takes into account the Programme partnership while respecting the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal opportunity of the recruitment procedures. The staff members of the joint secretariat are administratively integrated in the workforce of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur Region.

The Joint Secretariat is composed of different units in charge of project monitoring, financial monitoring, communication and capitalisation activities and administrative issues. Each unit has a referent person, and the whole team is led by a coordinator.

7.3 Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

Recovery of payments from beneficiaries

The recommendations and corrective measures might result from any type of control implemented (checks by the Managing Authority, by the Participating States, by the body in charge of the accounting function, system and operations audits, audits by the European Commission and by the European Court of Accounts).

According to article 52 of Regulation (EC) No XXX (ETC), the Managing Authority shall ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the project.

If the Managing Authority does not succeed in securing repayment from the beneficiary, the participating State on whose territory the beneficiary concerned is located or, in the case of an EGTC, is registered, shall reimburse the Managing Authority the amount unduly paid to that beneficiary.

Details on the recovery procedure will be included in the description of the management and control system to be established in accordance with Article 63 of Regulation (EC) No XXXXXX (CPR).

In parallel to / after reimbursement of the irrecoverable amount by the Participating State to the Managing Authority, the participating State holds the right to secure repayment from beneficiary located on its territory, if necessary, through legal action. For this purpose, the Managing Authority and the lead partner shall assign their rights arising from the subsidy contract and the partnership agreement to the participating State concerned.

The Managing Authority shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union in accordance with the apportionment of liabilities among the participating States as laid down in the cooperation programme and in Article 52 of Regulation (EU) No XXXX [ETC].

In the case of irregularities discovered by the Managing Authority or by the European Commission, which result in certain expenditures being considered ineligible and in a financial corrections being the subject of a EC decision, on the basis of Articles 97 or 98 of Regulation (EU) No XXXX [CPR], the financial consequences for the participating States are laid down in the section “Apportionment of liabilities among the participating States” below. Any related exchange of correspondence between the EC and the Member and Partner States will be copied to the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat. The latter will inform the body in charge of the accounting function, the Audit Authority and the Group of Auditors.

Apportionment of liabilities among the participating States

The participating State will bear liability in connection with the use of the Interreg funds as follows:

- for expenditure related to project partners located on its territory, liability will be born individually by each Participating State;
- in case of a systemic irregularity or financial correction, the participating States will bear the financial consequences in proportion to the relevant irregularity detected on the respective participating State territory. Where the systemic irregularity or financial correction cannot be linked to a specific participating State territory, the Participating States shall be responsible in proportion to the Interreg (OR ERDF/IPA) contribution paid to the respective national project partners involved;

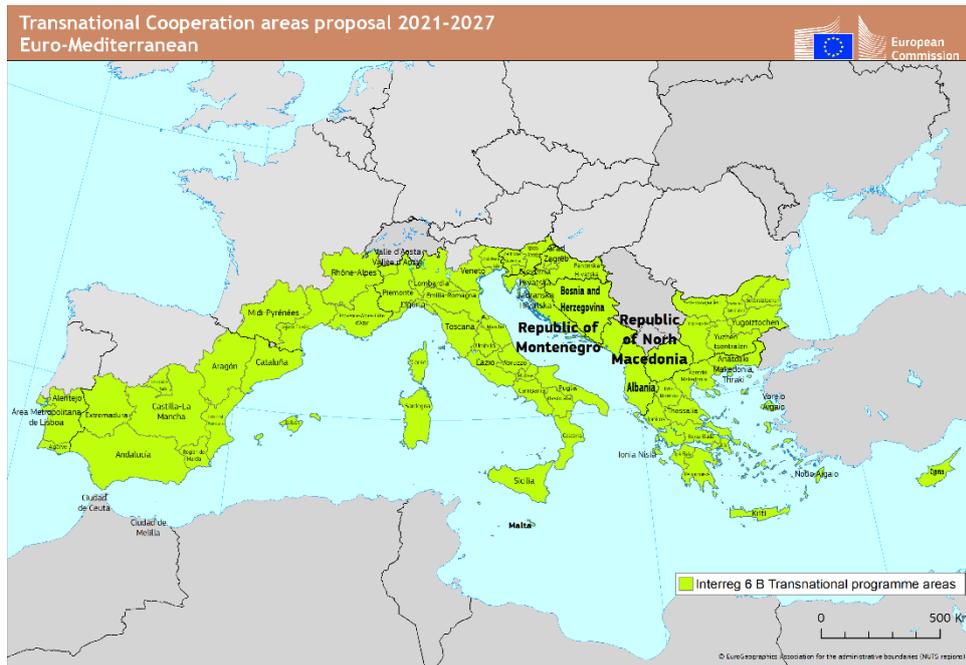
For expenditure related to technical assistance (calculated as a flat rate in accordance with Article 26 of the Regulation (EU) No XXXX [ETC]), the above liability principles applicable for project-related expenditure and systemic irregularities / financial corrections may also be applied to TA corrections, the latter being direct consequences of project expenditure related corrections.

8. Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Table 11: Use of unit costs, lump sums, flat rates and financing not linked to costs

Intended use of Articles 88 and 89	YES	NO
From the adoption programme will make use of reimbursement of eligible expenditure based on unit costs, lump sums and flat rates under priority according to Article 88 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
From the adoption programme will make use of financing not linked to costs according to Article 89 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

APPENDICE 1 MAP OF THE COOPERATION AREA



Map provided by the DG Regio

APPENDICE 2: METHODOLOGY FOR PROGRAMME INDICATORS (IN A SEPARATE DOCUMENT)

APPENDICE 3: TYPOLOGIES OF PROJECTS

TYPOLOGIES OF PROJECTS FOR PRIORITIES 1 AND 2

Projects for the implementation of Priority 1 and 2 shall have a strong territorial and thematic cooperation approach. Depending on the objectives to be achieved, they can be:

➤ **Single module projects (studies, testing, transfer)**

Study projects, aiming at exploring **innovative topics** from a thematic and/or geographical point of view (new challenges, new policies or trends) or **generating knowledge** in the MED area on issues which are relevant for the participating regions where there is **insufficient** experience and knowledge of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme and need of analysis and diagnostic for new methodologies. **Study projects shall have the potential for future experimentation and/or transfer activities and must always pave the way for the future implementation of their results through respective follow-up activities.**

Indicative types of activities for Study projects:

- Analysing and establishing the state of the art in a field of intervention, produce complementary data and references.
- Designing common approaches and developing common strategies
- Consolidating, adjusting existing networks or creating new networks in order to strengthen the presence of the MED area at transnational and European level.
- Participating actively in the thematic community of reference, and benefitting from the experience and support of network projects

Indicative types of outputs for Study projects:

SWOT analyses, state of the art, comparative analyses, definition of approaches, joint action plans, common strategies, establishment of networks.

Testing projects, aiming at **testing** the common instruments, policies, strategies and action plans already identified by previously implemented projects through pilot activities, in order to produce concrete solutions transferable to a larger number of beneficiaries and territories.

Indicative types of activities for testing projects:

- Preliminary or feasibility studies (if necessary and not available by other projects)
- Pilot activities (as well as the implementation methodology, testing and evaluation phases)
- Plans for transferability of results
- Participating actively in the thematic community of reference, and benefitting from the experience and support of network projects

Indicative types of outputs for testing projects:

Preliminary studies (feasibility), common demonstration methodology, experimentation (incl. small scale investments when needed) and assessment, plan for transferability of results, transfer tools and protocols.

Transfer projects, aiming at **transferring and disseminating** existing project results, replicability and up-scaling of project results in the MED area and its adjacent areas, local, regional and national policies, European policies, international initiatives.

Indicative types of activities for Transfer projects:

- Preliminary or feasibility studies (if necessary)
- Identification/consolidation of relevant project results
- Developing an initial stakeholder mapping to define target roles and objectives
- Developing and implementing of a targeted public relations strategy
- Raising awareness among targeted stakeholders through outreach strategies, including training activities.
- Capitalising on existing results from transferability activities to enhance the effective transfer of results
- Design, customize and deploy modules for transfer of results in a step-by-step approach.
- Actively participating in the thematic community of reference, and benefitting from the experience and support of network projects

Indicative types of outputs for Transfer projects:

Policy implementing measures and recommendations, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) agreements, procedures, regulatory proposals, transferring plans, transferring reports, transfer assessments, policy implementing measures.

➤ **Strategic territorial projects:**

Strategic territorial projects should respond to the needs and joint challenges of a specific, identified typology of territory, in a strategic topic for this territory. Therefore, they are of strategic importance for the territory selected and they will work with other projects in the field selected, as they will develop tailored strategical solutions.

Strategic territorial projects take into account the very specific and diverse territorial features characterizing the Mediterranean. They will directly address relevant transnational topics identified for MED key territories, develop strategies, priorities and measures for the specific territorial context (see Annex for the methodology to identify key territories and relevant themes) in order to tackle regional and local difficulties and reduce disparities. While single modular projects are mainly designed for a bottom-up approach and primarily respond to the interest of the partnership, strategic territorial projects should respond to the needs and joint challenges of the identified typology of territory they cover. Thus, they primarily produce a territorial impact, based on involving all required actors/stakeholders to trigger solutions for identified territories.

They aim at:

- Developing and implementing common methodologies/solutions in an integrated way (multi-actors) for a problem common to a restricted but MED-relevant type of area identified according to the specificities of a strategic thematic for this area.
- Generating a direct impact on national, regional or local policies addressing the identified area and dealing with a specific thematic issue e.g. by development, test and transfer of appropriate management tools, initiatives and models for cooperation.

Framework conditions/prerequisite for strategic territorial projects:

- Integrating all relevant partners for the integrated territorial approach.
- Promoting interfaces with other transnational as well as with cross-border and/or thematic programme projects (uptake of results of previous projects, design of complementary activities for ongoing projects, value chain synergies for future projects - LIFE, HORIZON Europe, Creative Europe, LEADER, CIVITAS, Digital Europe, etc).
- Developing new area-tailored strategic solutions for specific topics.
- Ensuring a feedback of requests/suggestions from civil society on the targeted theme, involving the decision-makers, in order to find shared global territorial solutions.
- Participating actively in the thematic community of reference, and benefitting from the experience and support of network projects
- They will combine activities from all 3 typologies of modules

Indicative types of activities are those of all types of modular projects addressing the identified key territories

Indicative types of outputs for strategic territorial projects: those of all types of modular projects with relevance for the identified key territories. **Joint action plans, common strategies, experimentation and evaluation, plan for transferability of results (that may include areas others than the involved territory where applicable) as compulsory results for all such projects.** Furthermore, pilot projects (including small scale investments), SWOT analyses, state of the art, comparative analyses, definition of approaches, implementation of networks, preliminary studies (feasibility), common demonstration methodology, transfer tools and protocols, transfer reports and assessment, policy recommendations, Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) agreements, procedures, proposals for regulations...

The Programme will primarily focus on the following types of territories:

- Islands
- Ports
- Rural and mountain areas

Examples for possible focus:

- for islands: Common strategies on Clean Energy/ Waste/ Water management
- for ports: Innovative climate friendly ecosystems in ports
- for rural and mountain areas: digitalisation and fight to climate change

TYPLOGIES OF PROJECTS FOR PRIORITY 3

➤ **Thematic Community projects**

This type of project will specifically aim at establishing conditions for synergy and coordination between thematic projects of Priorities 1 and 2 and at implementing mainstreaming strategies in local, regional, national and European policies in partnership with relevant institutions. Taking stock of the 2014/20 Horizontal projects experience, Thematic Community projects will maximise the valorisation of individual projects results and their complementary impact in the Mediterranean area per each of the programme's mission.

Indicative types of activities:

- Creating and animating thematic communities
- Creating an e-tank of Interreg Euro-Med projects
- Supporting modular projects in communication and capitalisation activities and ensuring the transnational transferability of joint results
- Developing synergies, producing summaries and qualitative analyses, as well as coordinating and managing (under the supervision of the JS) the communication of a thematically linked group of projects and generating added value in transnational cooperation, both at thematic and territorial level, ensuring the widest possible geographical coverage
- Supporting modular projects in transferring activities (methodological support, putting individual results together, leveraging the transferability potential and the preparedness to effective transfer, ...) and strengthening the capitalisation of jointly developed tools/measures and results that explicitly target territorial appropriation.
- Creating and animating or enriching existing multi-level and multi-sectoral target networks for transfer at local level
- Working with relevant policy makers and advocating for effective leverage and policy integration at local and regional levels
- Participating in the governance of the Programme vis-à-vis external structures related to the theme tackled by each community, as for example thematic European or Mediterranean networks or international structures, thematic EU programmes for capitalisation purposes.

- Contributing to ensure a transition between programming periods (results, communities), capitalizing on results 2014-2020, in particular through participation during the drafting of terms of references for modular projects calls about themes, objectives and expected results.

Indicative types of outputs:

Policy Papers with implementing measures, suggestions and recommendations, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) agreements, procedures, regulatory proposals, transferring and mainstreaming plans, transferring and mainstreaming reports, transferring and mainstreaming assessments,.

➤ **Institutional projects**

Institutional projects will aim at supporting institutional coordination between regional, national and European authorities/networks and between ETC managing authorities, initiatives and strategies in the Mediterranean. They will also aim at setting up long-lasting conditions and methods for a permanent institutional dialogue. They will implement specific action plans in partnership with Thematic Community projects on one hand, and similar type of projects co financed by other programmes on the other hand. The final and concrete aim is to support the coordination between otherwise isolated initiatives (horizontal dimension) and to bridge transnational scale with the territorial scale of action, in both ways (vertical dimension and horizontal) in order to contribute to territorial cohesion at the transnational Mediterranean level in regard to each thematic mission.

Complementarity of actions will be sought with the Thematic Community Projects. Institutional projects should therefore give priority to fostering liaising activities and strengthening coordinated working approach as well as facilitating mainstreaming processes and policy changes to improve the territorial cohesion in a global way at the transnational level.

The partnership of these projects shall include networks with a strong territorial component, partners with previous experience linked to thematic communities' activities, institutional partners at different levels to assure multidimensional governance approaches, linkage to existing Euroregions and other active cooperation schemes, strong interaction with the JS, academia and civil society organisations.

Indicative types of activities:

- Actively promoting the replication of successful activities to national and transnational authorities
- Supporting capacity building of the public institutions/policy makers to define and implement policies oriented to support the Programme's missions
- Supporting the capacity building of public institutions in the region to design, implement and evaluate the transformative policies necessary to achieve the thematic missions' goals.
- Creating and animating or enriching existing multi-level and multi-sectoral target networks for transfer at regional and national level

- Analysing and drawing up the state of the art of cooperation and capitalisation processes related to the programme's missions in the MED area beyond the Programme
- Designing approaches and developing common strategies for institutional cooperation and policy update
- Facilitating cooperation and complementarity between national/regional authorities and local authorities
- Liaising with administrative/political structures outside the Programme and other Territorial Programmes to contribute to shared objectives (with thematic and territorial programmes in the MED area and with strategies, notably the macro-regional strategies EUSAIR and EUSALP and the WESTMED initiative, and other initiatives in the Mediterranean)
- Facilitating exchanges with EU authorities
- Establishing a communication and mainstreaming strategy according to the international and European agendas related to the programme's mission and thematic priorities
- Facilitating mainstreaming process between givers and takers at national and transnational level
- Encouraging the participation and collecting contributions from civil society on issues of importance for the Mediterranean (organisation of seminars, symposia, debates throughout the MED area)
- Consolidating or creating networks in order to strengthen the presence of the MED area at transnational and European level as well as the cooperation within the participating States and beyond the Programme, such as with non-EU countries of the Eastern and Southern shores.

Indicative types of outputs:

Effective and permanent networks of authorities and stakeholders, participative and coordinated mechanisms for better governance at the transnational level, increasing agreement and readiness for authorities to welcome the evolution of joint policy frameworks.

The different types of projects and foreseen indicative actions will enable to contribute to an experimental multi-programme mechanism for coordination between programmes, with a first application on sustainable tourism.

Finally, they will also contribute to the implementation of a Euro-MED academy aiming at supporting the transferring and capitalising actions by creating a "community of interest" of Mediterranean stakeholders around the topics addressed by the Programme.