

Interreg Europe

Policy Learning Platform



**Interreg
Europe**



European Union | European Regional Development Fund

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April 2021

Interreg Europe is an interregional cooperation programme co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund with 359 million euros for 2014-2020.

It helps policymakers inspire each other and improve their policies, either within interregional cooperation projects or via the Policy Learning Platform. Policy learning is available on Research and innovation, SME competitiveness, Low-carbon economy, and Environment and resource efficiency.

www.interregeurope.eu



Dear reader,

Interreg Europe is a unique cooperation programme. We help regional development policymakers like you to exchange experiences, identify good practices and find solutions to their regional challenges. We extend our cooperation opportunities across all EU Member States, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Our programme funds nearly 260 cooperation projects. Thanks to them, we have a database full of good practices and regional policy solutions. Over 2,000 are already available to you, and their number is still growing.

To build on the knowledge of our projects, we launched the second

core action of the programme in 2015: the **Policy Learning Platform**. It has been gaining importance ever since.

The Platform ensures that all the knowledge and inspiration generated by our projects is widely shared and, more importantly, exploited. The Platform makes the benefits of interregional cooperation available to all policymakers around Europe, not only to those involved in the Interreg Europe projects.

The Platform is already a reference portal in Europe. The one place that can provide you with targeted advice, relevant connections, events, and various online learning opportunities.

Easy to access and always available, the Platform is designed **to better respond to your needs**. It provides flexible exchange and learning opportunities whenever you might need them. An online click, phone call, or an email to our team of experts is sufficient to get started.

Policy learning and exchange with like-minded colleagues and peers from organisations all around Europe is a powerful tool that can help you achieve your regional development goals. So, get ready to start your policy learning journey!

Erwin Siweris
Interreg Europe
Programme Director



Enabling the digital transformation of business support

Argon Peer Review Policy Recommendation 2023-95-208

@INTERREGEUROPE

interreg Europe

Solutions for regional policy

COOPERATION

DELL

POLICY LEARNING

Policy Learning Platform
Take the shortcut to smart regional solutions
Expert advice and peer reviews
Thematic and networking events
Publications and news
Good practice showcase

COMMUNITY

Why the Policy Learning Platform?

Regions around Europe have an important role to play in reaching a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The well-being of people tomorrow depends on the decisions and policies of today. Designing and implementing regional policies is a challenging task. Ensuring the people behind them are supported in making educated choices is an important endeavour.

Great ideas and innovative solutions for smart policy-making exist throughout Europe. The problem is, it's hard to know what others are doing and harder still to identify examples which could be easily transferred into a different context.

What if there was a way of using our collective intelligence and coming together to find the right solutions?

The **Policy Learning Platform** brings access to knowledge and continuous learning possibilities. It's a space where individuals can meet, online and offline, exchange, learn from each other, and jointly strive for better solutions.

Our mission is to generate smarter regional policies. We help policymakers bring new solutions to the table. Which ultimately means a better future for all. **Take a look at our proposed services and start exploring today the policy learning possibilities.**

'Learning shouldn't end with graduation. We live in a fast-changing world and it is vital for policy analysts to focus on continuous learning. And this is what the Policy Learning Platform offers: an incredible opportunity to stay up to speed with what happens around Europe.'

*Nicolle Lambrechts, Policy Advisor for CleanTech & Innovation,
Region of North-Brabant, The Netherlands*

Policy learning for success

Policy design. Monitoring and evaluation. Governance. Stakeholder involvement. Grants. Digitalisation. Operational programme. And many more can be added to one's professional dictionary when working on regional policies.

Our proposal is simple: don't struggle on your own, instead seek support. Find out what solutions to sustainable development challenges already exist in other parts of Europe. A problem shared, is a problem solved!

Still hesitant?

Here are **3 reasons** why you should care:

- Because we offer **personalised advice** depending on your regional context; not just generic policy solutions.
- Because **knowledge is power**; and learning about the successes and challenges that others have had around Europe can help you in persuading sceptical stakeholders.
- Because it's **easy and free of charge**.

4

is the magic number

The Policy Learning Platform is an Interreg Europe initiative. We designed it for people like you that work on regional policies. Its creation didn't emerge out of nowhere: it has a strong foundation in the knowledge gathered around the Interreg Europe programme.

Over 2,000 institutions work in interregional projects funded by Interreg Europe. They all focus on policies related to **Research and innovation, SME competitiveness, Low-carbon economy, or Environment and resource efficiency**. Because of their intense work, good practices were identified, transferred and have inspired policy changes around Europe.

We created the Platform out of the simple thought that all this knowledge should be accessible to anyone interested at any time. And because we know that we all have different learning styles and rhythms, we propose

4 types of services:



1.



Expert support

Get personalised advice on your regional challenge and explore the power of peer learning.

2.



Community

Be part of a European network of over 20,000 policymakers that meet and exchange regularly in events, webinars and more.

3.



Knowledge hub

Read, watch and explore information at your own pace.

4.



Good practice database

Access policy solutions from your own country or from the topic that is of great interest to you.

Meet Our Thematic Experts



Marc Pattinson
Research and innovation



Arnault Morisson
Research and innovation



Rene Tönnisson
SME competitiveness



Luc Schmerber
SME competitiveness



Mart Veliste
SME competitiveness



Katharina Krell
Low-carbon economy



Simon Hunkin
Low-carbon economy



Astrid Severin
*Environment and
resource efficiency*



Marco Citelli
*Environment and
resource efficiency*

EXPERT SUPPORT

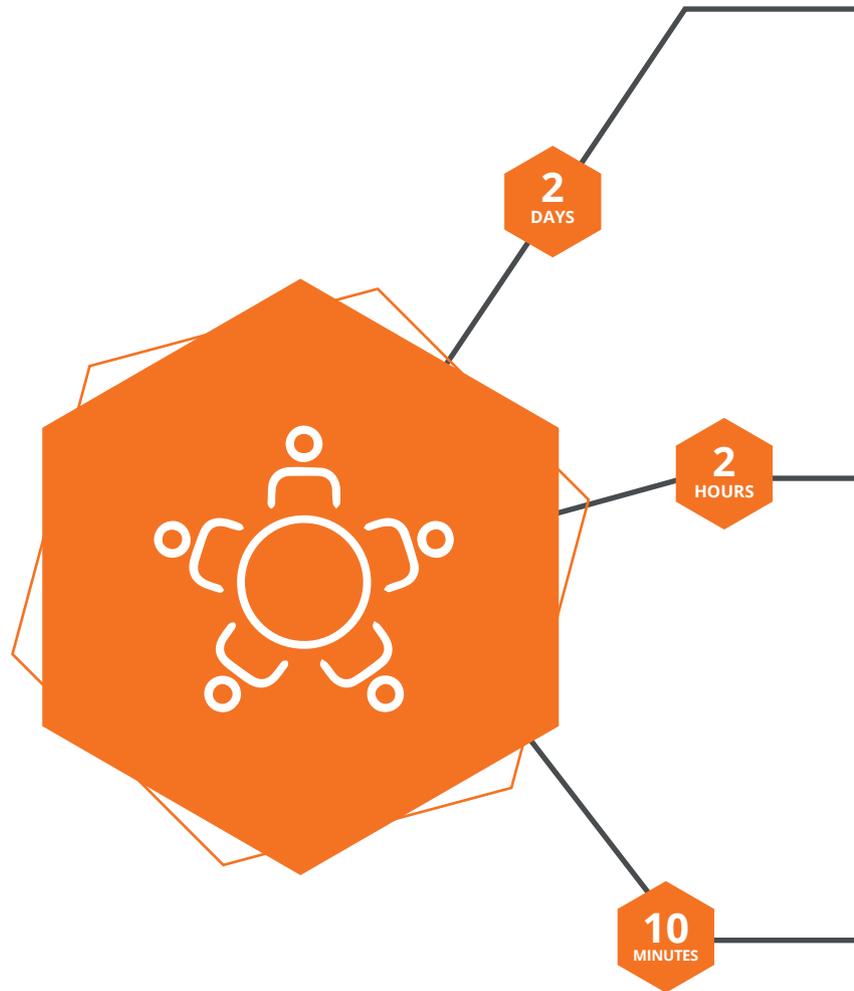
'Finding the right policy solution for a specific regional context is not an easy task. Even though the ideas are out there and the knowledge might be available online, where to start? Our team can help you find the answers you need.'

Thorsten Kohlisch
Project Manager



Try out our expert support! This service brings to you policy solutions based on the experience of others, under the supervision of a thematic expert. Via this system, we bring the most relevant examples directly to you.

From written guidance to meetings with peers from all over Europe, we adapt our formats to what suits you best. Our services are available in person and online.



www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/expert-support/



Peer reviews

In short: two-day meetings online or face-to-face, involving an international team of experts and peers. Based on your specific needs and challenges, the peers are carefully selected by our experts following targeted calls among the community members. They have faced similar challenges and are ready to share their expertise for your benefit. After a thorough analysis of your policy context, they provide targeted feedback and offer concrete solutions to you and your stakeholders. Our experts support and facilitate the process throughout.

What you will get out of it:

Answers to your policy challenge in the form of a concrete to-do list of actions to take; and, valuable European-wide contacts.

When to use this:

If you need **practical, comprehensive advice on policy** or you need strategic reflection during the implementation phase (e.g. design or revision of a specific policy instrument).

How:

Submit a simple online application any time (two pages only: no supporting documents needed).



Matchmaking sessions

In short: two-hour meetings online or face-to-face. Our experts bring together a group of policymakers having the expertise and competence to discuss your particular question. For two hours, they are at your disposal to discuss your challenge and offer solutions.

What you will get out of it:

Ideas, relevant tested practices and recommendations on the best approaches to your policy challenge; and, valuable European-wide contacts.

When to use this:

If you are aiming to **dive deeper into one particular aspect of policy**, then this format allows you to acquaint yourself with practices across Europe. You can easily identify those ideas that could be transferred into your context.

How:

Submit a brief description of your need using the online form.



Policy helpdesk

In short: policy guidance in a written form. Following the submission of your online request, our experts will provide you with a comprehensive reply. This will include: references to EU policy documents, national and local legislation, policy briefs and good practices from Interreg Europe projects and beyond. In addition, we can provide relevant contacts to networks, persons and organisations.

What you will get out of it:

Tailored advice and a set of relevant valuable resources (reading materials, webinars, contacts etc.)

When to use this:

In your **daily work**; you might need some help to access the relevant knowledge, resources and good ideas in order to succeed with your tasks.

How:

Submit a brief description of your need using the policy helpdesk online form.

Focus on:



A peer review

Hannes works in Vienna for Austria Wirtschaftsservice (aws), Austria's federal business development agency. **His job is to support the foundation of deep tech start-up companies through grants and the development of new funding programmes.**

When Hannes heard about the European Union's initiative on trustworthy artificial intelligence (AI), he wondered how that could be brought into practice within companies.

Even though the European Union provides some guidelines on this, it was still in its early days. Hannes and the aws business development team were wondering how trustworthy AI will work in different sectors. And would the provided guidelines help or hinder its use? So, they designed the new aws programme 'Trustworthy AI' and successfully applied for funding at the National Foundation of Research.

Luckily, in one of his exchanges with his colleague, Christina, an EU project manager for the same institution, **he learned about the 'peer reviews', that is, the opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with experts around Europe** that have already been through a similar policy-making process.

When he learned that **the application was a simple online form**, Hannes decided to give it a try and submitted a request to host a peer review in Vienna.

His application was successful and, in line with his internal programming schedule, the meetings took place in January 2020. Peers from Finland, Spain, Poland and Switzerland attended. The group came up with concrete feedback and targeted policy recommendations, thus allowing Hannes and his colleagues to fine-tune the design of their AI support programme.

What does Hannes think about the peer review?

'The peer review helped us in three aspects:

1. We got a really strong check of the ideas we had, not only at a national level, but also at an international level.
2. We got feedback from very different peers: scientists, policymakers, from the start-up side, from the investors' side.
3. And something that is very important for us: we got practical feedback that we can directly implement in the development of our programme.'

(Hannes A. Schwetz, Austria Wirtschaftsservice Gesellschaft mbH)

What about the added value for an invited peer?

Tiina works for the Council of Tampere Region in Finland. She was one of the peers invited to Vienna. At the end of the working meetings, she declared: 'I don't know many people in the world to whom I can talk and get reflections about my work like we did these days. It was a very nice learning experience.'

(Tiina Ramstedt-Sen, Council of Tampere Region)

What about long-term impact and effects?

Ten months later, in October 2020, Austria Wirtschaftsservice announced: 'Austria puts the EU trustworthy AI guidelines into practice and **launches the first call for trustworthy artificial intelligence**. The call provides grants up to 200,000 EUR per

project.' This first call was a big success: with 81 applications, it was more than ten times oversubscribed. aws is already looking forward to the opening of the second call in the second quarter of 2021.

Hannes and his colleagues are convinced that the peer review supported the approval of the programme at the national level and led to a significant improvement of the scheme's overall quality.

In particular, the peer review helped them to better understand the challenges in advance and to revise accordingly their criteria for evaluating projects. Moreover, due to the stakeholder involvement and the international aspect of this exercise, the institution itself is now recognised among the reference organisations for AI in Austria.

Of course, the story of our Austrian colleagues is just one example of the impact and change which interregional peer learning can trigger on the

ground. In Belgium's German-speaking community (East Belgium), the peer review helped the local ministry develop practical solutions for the challenging task of stakeholder governance. This was an important precondition for the successful implementation of the region's Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP).

In Sweden (Region Gävleborg), innovation management for low-carbon logistics was on the agenda. Two days of open and highly-constructive discussions gave new dynamism to an innovation policy driven by cooperative leadership and the active management of innovation windows. This included concrete impact on the design of regional business development projects funded by the EU.

COMMUNITY

'The outbreak of COVID-19 showed us how fragile we actually are. At an individual level, but even more at a societal level. During this type of major crisis, acting in collaboration and combining forces gives us strength and power.'

Raluca Toma

Communication Manager



We believe that **working together** brings more ideas to the table and ultimately makes us more resilient. Because of this, we have created an online community of people that work hard on developing better regional policies. It all started in 2015 and since then 20,000 people have joined us.

Apart from privileged services, such as the expert support, we engage our community members in discussions and exchanges. This means that, at any given moment, **we can face unforeseen situations benefiting from collective intelligence.**

In May 2020 we asked our community about their main challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the problems were: safe public transport, artificial intelligence in health, tourism and creative industries in times of pandemics etc. We were able to address these concerns and propose solutions because the community members had good examples to share. Throughout online discussions, people were able to meet and learn from an international group in spite of the physical restrictions.

Who are the community members?

- **20,000 people** interested in regional policies related to: Research and innovation, SME competitiveness, Low-carbon economy, and Environment and resource efficiency.
- People working on regional development policies at local, regional, national, and European levels.

What's in it for you, at a glance:

- **Exclusive and free access to expert support.**
- Participate in **online and in-person policy learning events** - webinars, online discussions, thematic workshops, and networking events.
- Co-design activities and **put forward the topics that are of interest to you**, your organisation and your region.
- **Build an international profile** and be visible in the European sphere of policy-making.
- **Expand your network** – meet new like-minded partners, stakeholders and business friends across Europe.

How you can join:

1. Go to **www.interregeurope.eu/account/registration/**
2. Fill-in the registration form (it will only take two minutes).
3. Your profile is created and you can start exploring.

For a full overview of members and upcoming community events check:

www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/community/



A community member and the use of the Platform

Rose Power lives in Ireland and is an EU Projects Officer working with The Managing Authority for the Southern Regional Assembly. Rose manages several Interreg Europe projects and this is how she learned about the Policy Learning Platform.

As an active Interreg Europe community member, she has been contributing to various activities for a while now:

- Participated in **thematic workshops** in Manchester and Brussels.
- Played an active role in the **online discussion** on 'Traffic Calming Solutions'.
- Co-moderated the **webinar** – 'Cycling Cities III – Getting More People to Cycle'.
- Navigates and uploads online **good practices** regularly.
- Regularly uses key words to search the good practice database for ideas to improve regional policies.

'The added value of belonging to the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform community is the ability to reach out to other projects and good practices, to gain support, knowledge and assistance for our policy improvements particularly now when we are isolated due to COVID-19. We have found the experience of the Policy Learning Platform invaluable to us in undertaking our Regional Action Plans and would encourage all project partners to actively support and interact with the Platform which will enhance their continuous learning and enrich their policy improvements.'

(Rose Power, EU Projects Officer, Southern Regional Assembly)

Focus on:



Webinar as a result of community request

Olly is involved in an Interreg Europe project, and after participating in the Platform webinar on e-mobility, **he was particularly interested in going deeper into the topic of electricity grids.** The electrification of transport has a large impact on the electricity grid as one electric car can triple the electricity demand of a household. Olly wanted to look deeper into the policies addressing this challenge.

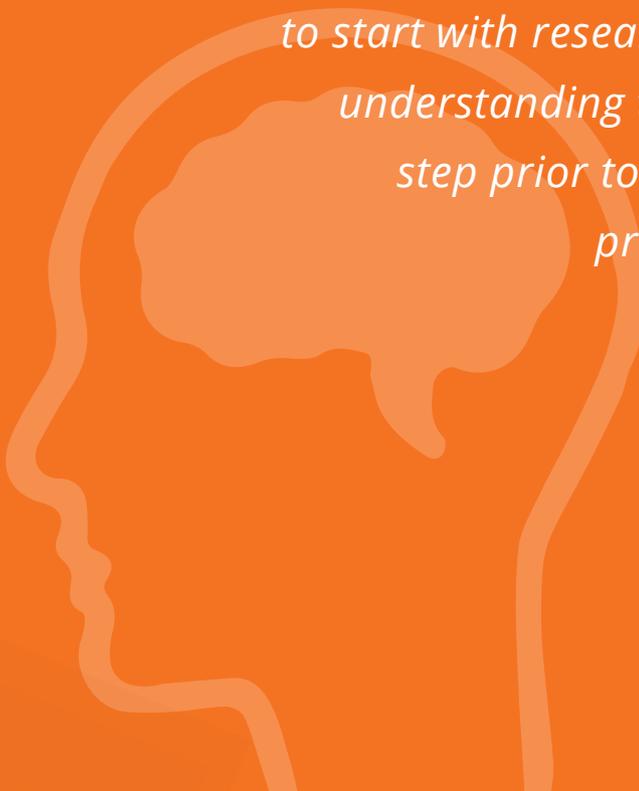
He got in contact with Katharina and Simon, the Platform experts in Low-carbon economy, **and they jointly designed a follow-up webinar** on that topic, open to all community members. This webinar was possible because several people have shown interest in the subject and had good practices to showcase. Possible solutions were put forward for everyone's inspiration.

More than 50 people registered for this webinar that lasted 1.5 hours. It was a great opportunity to share and learn about successful initiatives and interact live with the speakers.

KNOWLEDGE HUB

'In your daily work, you may need to write a report on, let's say, mission-oriented innovation. You are likely to start with research, getting to know the subject and understanding the latest trends. This is a beneficial step prior to engaging in further exchanges with professionals and experts in the field.'

Elena Ferrario
Thematic Manager



Even though we know you can learn a lot from direct interaction with peers, we equally give importance to information which you can access through written form or on-demand videos. **This is why we have put together the knowledge hub, a webpage that regroups all our publications, webinars and other useful resources from our past activities.**

The knowledge hub works as a repository of all the lessons learnt from the Interreg Europe projects, enriched by the latest news and trends in the field. Our thematic experts analyse and gather the information to make it easily accessible. The result is an array of learning possibilities, only one click away!

www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/knowledge-hub/

35 webinars **available on replay**, from circular economy to smart specialisation strategies, e-mobility and social enterprises, to give some examples. They put forward key speakers and good practices around a specific policy, while engaging with the audience.



What's new in the EU.

Online articles outlining the most relevant EU policy news (directives, calls, awards etc.)

70 policy briefs. Our experts regularly publish **concise summaries** of policy trends tackled by practitioners working in local and regional authorities across Europe. They all feature successful Interreg Europe projects and how they achieved policy changes. You will have insights into key factors for success and impact.

18 peer review reports. Peer reviews are meetings that allow policy practitioners to discuss their challenges with like-minded people from all over Europe. Hands-on advice and concrete recommendations are offered on the spot. But their follow-up reports that summarise all key aspects can offer inspiration to anyone active in the tackled policy areas.

'I believe this [creative hub] webinar is a really good asset for my training and I will continue to participate in the Policy Learning Platform activities / training.'

(Mariona Miret, Policy Officer, Barcelona Provincial Council)

Focus on:



Policy brief

How the policy brief on Industry 4.0 helped the DIGITAL REGIONS project to improve their action plans

Jose Manuel San Emeterio works for ERNACT (Ireland) and is responsible for helping regions to create innovative services to sustain public services, social solidarity and jobs. International networking is part of his expertise and this is why he is involved in several Interreg Europe projects. Here is Jose Manuel's testimonial about the added value of having common references for succeeding in collaborating with others at European level:

'We are leading the **DIGITAL REGIONS project** focused on the application of Industry 4.0 into the manufacturing sector.'

The release of the Industry 4.0 policy brief was very useful for us because:

- It provided a common understanding about Industry 4.0 to all project partners. This is a concept that varies depending on who you are talking to and the policy brief was a good input to agree on it.
- The 'Sources of further information' section was very helpful when identifying info to compare the performance of the participating regions at EU level.
- We foresee that the recommendations might be another useful input later in the project, in particular when we prepare the action plans.'

GOOD PRACTICE DATABASE



The good practice database is an **online repository of successful policy initiatives**. And they all have the potential to be transferred to a different country / region / city.

All around Europe, local and regional policymakers are working on developing better policies for the future. For the benefit of our citizens, territories and economies, many innovative solutions have been successfully tested. **More than 2,000 good practices are available online** and this number is continuously growing.

Our good practice database features well-evidenced policy solutions. Plus, they are all validated by our team of thematic experts.

Let's take some **concrete examples:**

Ekosmart is a good practice from Slovenia: it is a nationwide research project implementing telecare and telehealth services for elderly and physically less mobile people. Within the HoCare project, this good practice inspired the Cypriot health providers to set up similar services in their hospitals. The Ministry of Health mobilised EUR 400,000 of Structural Funds for innovative telemedicine services.

The CRAFT good practice from Brittany, France, inspired the Lower Austrian Government to invest EUR 351,000 in a project called House of Digitalization. The aim is to develop a virtual one-stop shop supporting the digitalization of SMEs.

Whether you are in the process of:

- **designing a regional policy,**
- **improving an existing one, or**
- **searching for new ideas...**



You will be able to filter down the results by topic and keywords, country and region. If certain good practices are particularly interesting for you, you will equally get the possibility to get in contact with their owners. **Simply subscribe to the Interreg Europe community.**

Explore the **good practice database!**

www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/

Start your policy learning journey today!

Individual time

Explore the good practice database
and submit your own examples

15 minutes

Discover the online community
members and get in touch

15 minutes

Read a policy brief and
learn from tested solutions

30 minutes

Check the policy helpdesk
and write to an expert
to seek guidance on your
current challenge

30 minutes

Social moments

1.5 hours

Grab a coffee and join our
interactive online events

2 hours

Bring forward your experience
in a **matchmaking session**

1 Day

Participate in a
thematic workshop

2 Days

Host a peer review or
contribute as an expert



They say it better...

Peer review

'It is nice that we can use quick and efficient instruments because, very often, the big programmes are impressive and important. But sometimes they can't provide quick or practical solutions to what one is looking for. [...]

I was very impressed that the selected peers were interested and provided advice relevant to the Bulgarian environment. And this is, of course, very important because we can't accept any solutions, they have to be adapted to our regional/national context.'

Karina Angelieva
Deputy Minister of
Education and Science,
Bulgaria

Peer review

'Special thanks to the peers for their professionalism and expertly provided knowledge. We received an answer to every question. The time devoted to peer review turned out to be usefully spent, which allowed us to organise and expand the information on circular economy. Specific examples presented by the partners inspired us to take action in the region and prepare the EU funds distribution plan for 2021-2027.'

Dorota Kopeć
Deputy Director of the Regional
Policy Department, Marshal
Office of the Warmińsko-
Mazurskie Voivodship,
Poland

Peer review

'The peer review has proved to be a strong convincing argument towards policymakers who have the responsibility to trigger change and innovation. In fact, the peer review allows you to show that new ideas and approaches work elsewhere, a powerful tool.'

Jan Nylander
Project Manager,
Region Gävleborg,
Sweden

Community event

'I was impressed by the quality of your trilogy of webinars on cycling. I was really very inspired by the knowledge and good practices you have been able to share.

However, this comprehensive and tailor-made answer that you provided to answer our particular questions is definitely conquering me, as this is so aligned with our way of working!

Thousands of thanks for all the very useful insights, links and practical cases...'

Tomaso Comazzi

Communication and Membership

Manager NECSTouR

Community event

'For me it was a perfect combination of listening, learning, exchanging and networking.'

Luc Hulsman

Northern Netherlands Alliance,

about the workshop

on better monitoring,

evaluating and designing RIS3

Topics and area covered



Information prepared by:

Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform

45 rue de Tournai, Entrée D

59000 Lille – France

Tel: +33 3 61 76 59 56

info@policylearning.eu

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