



Effects of interregional cooperation

An evaluation study report on the long-term effects of policy changes brought about by INTERREG IVC projects.



Credits: Expert guidance and insight as well as the quality control provided by Tako Popma and Pascal Chazaud. Report written by Petra Polaskova with Benoît Dalbert.

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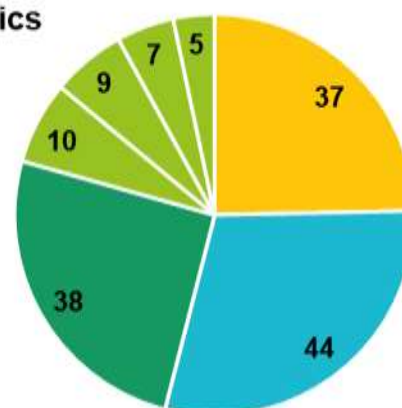
Executive Summary

Early in 2018, the Interreg Europe programme launched a study to look into the policy changes and effects of the projects funded by the programme's predecessor, INTERREG IVC. Projects running between 2008 and 2014 represent a great source of evidence about the policy changes and effects in the regions engaged in interregional cooperation. The aim of the projects was and continues to be the improvement of the implementation of regional policy instruments through exchange of good practice and mutual policy learning.

To collect the evidence, the Interreg Europe programme conducted a survey among partners of 150 INTERREG IVC projects. They were selected out of the total 204 projects based on their thematic correspondence with the topics of the present programme. (Chart 1: INTERREG IVC sub-objectives in four colours of Interreg Europe topics).

Projects classified according to Interreg Europe topics

- Innovation, research and technological development
- Entrepreneurship and SMEs
- Energy and sustainable transport
- Cultural heritage and landscape
- Water management
- Biodiversity, preservation of natural heritage; air quality
- Waste prevention and management



The survey reached 1207 project contacts and 426 of them responded. 200 completed responses represent 117 different projects with partners from 27 countries. Project lead partners submitted 18% of the responses. The seven sub-objectives had a proportionate representation among the responses.

The survey first collected information about policy changes in the partner regions. **Close to 80% of the respondents marked that a policy change took place in their region thanks to their interregional cooperation project.** Out of the three proposed types of policy changes (i.e. 1/ new project or initiative, 2/ improved management, 3/ change in the strategic focus of a policy), 71% of the respondents indicated that their project led to an implementation of a new project or initiative.

The key reason for the absence of policy change was the lack of support from decision makers in the regions. The survey therefore confirms the importance of ensuring the involvement of the policy responsible organisations in the cooperation projects, which has become a requirement under the Interreg Europe programme.

The second purpose of the survey was to collect information about the effects of the policy change(s) in the partner regions. **More than 70% of the respondents reported that the policy change had a long-term effect in their territory.** Project partners from 21 different countries reported effects, which indicates a broad geographical spread across the EU territory. The nature of these effects differs greatly. 30 responses were selected for an in-depth interview. 23 respondents were available to share their stories.



Key findings of the survey

Interregional cooperation works and brings long term impacts!

As mentioned above, more than 80% of the survey respondents confirmed that interregional cooperation led to changes in their regions and 70% have reported long term impact of the cooperation in their region or territory. The stories selected in the present report demonstrate that beyond the immediate and direct benefits gained by the partners during the lifetime of their cooperation projects, the projects often lead to long term impact several years after the project's closure.

Interregional cooperation has high leverage effect!

The return on investment in the interregional cooperation projects is usually high. With a reasonable initial investment of MEUR 1.6 (the average ERDF budget per project under INTERREG IVC), the projects can influence regional or even national strategies leading to structural changes in the participating regions and territories.

Finally, 20 stories were included in the report. They present how interregional cooperation projects made difference in the partner regions thanks to an inspiration and good practices shared by project partners from other corners of Europe. The stories represent a diversity of changes that took place and had effect on people living in the regions, as illustrated by the following examples from INTERREG IVC projects:

- Thanks to PROSESC, an incubation support centre from Norfolk County in the United Kingdom developed their vision on innovation in the county, transferred a good practice in supply chain innovation support from Germany, and gradually became the county's innovation hub and a driver of the local knowledge-based economy.
- Thanks to FIN-EN, the financial institution of the Lombardy Region in Italy developed a new set of financial instruments as well as a new IT system for application, reporting and monitoring of the implementation of financial instruments in the region worth EUR 300 million under the Regional Operational Programme in 2014-2020, all thanks to a good practice transfer from the United Kingdom.
- Thanks to MOG, the Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency in Hungary contributed to the reduction in rural depopulation and environmental pollution in the region with a mobility scheme connecting people, goods and services from rural areas to the cities around, a good practices transferred from Germany.
- Thanks to VITOUR LANDSCAPE good practices from Italy and Austria helped the World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley Association in Germany develop new activities and initiatives for better landscape heritage protection and preservation.

There are several aspects of the interregional cooperation projects which contribute to regional development and help in the improvement of policies in the participating regions. Among the projects covered by this study, the following is frequently found:



- Exchange of experience helps to collect inspiration and generate vision;
- Capacity building boosts staff and stakeholder knowledge in a given field;
- Stakeholder involvement is a conduit for mind-set change, demonstration of effects and policy change endorsement;
- Endorsement of a new or improved policy document by policymakers ensures sustainability of change and continuity on a set path;
- The projects help in better use of the EU Structural Funds;
- The people-to-people aspect of the interregional cooperation projects is very important for successful implementation of the Cohesion policy and for the European Union as a whole.

Examples of these features of interregional cooperation across the broad thematic scope of INTERREG IVC and Interreg Europe projects are highlighted in the stories presented in this report.

The projects presented in this study took place during a period of financial and economic crisis with strong pressures on local and regional policies. It is therefore even more remarkable that the programme could contribute to more people-to-people cooperation which – in the end – is the essence of interregional cooperation.



Chapter 1: Why study the effects of INTERREG IVC projects

The debate on the EU's long-term budget for 2021-2027 started in the period 2017- 2018. The discussions on the future of the Cohesion Policy post-2020 are now underway. In this context, Interreg Europe wanted to provide evidence that the exchange of experience and capacity building facilitated by interregional cooperation projects led to positive changes and effects in the regions and territories across Europe.

The results of interregional cooperation projects need time to materialise. Timing of public agendas and policy making cycles often push the most valuable effects of achieved policy changes beyond the projects' lifetime. Therefore, Interreg Europe turned to the projects co-funded by its predecessor, the INTERREG IVC programme, which finished in late 2014.

Interreg Europe evolved and added new features and greater policy focus to its projects with the ambition to make them even more effective. Yet, close parallels can be drawn between the two programmes, namely in their demand on project partners to cooperate all across Europe and focus their activities on capacity building and policy learning leading to better policy making.

The INTERREG IVC projects represent a great source of information and potential evidence about the benefits of interregional cooperation in the regions. Many projects reported policy changes at their end, so one could expect that they had subsequent effects in the participating regions.

Some evidence of the changes and their effects was available already before all INTERREG IVC projects ended. For instance, the programme was aware that in the PIMMS TRANSFER project, the 'Walk to School' good practice encouraging pupils and their parents to walk to school instead of using a car was transferred from Bromley (United Kingdom) to Frankfurt (Germany). 15 schools adopted the practice in Frankfurt and 3,000 pupils took part. The CO₂ emissions saved thanks to this initiative were estimated at 40 tonnes at the time the project reported on it.

However, the programme did not have any specific mechanism to monitor systematically the effects of all the changes the projects reported during their lifetime. The reason was that most of the effects occurred only after the programme's end. It was often by chance that the programme learnt about the projects' effects. For instance, at a conference in The Hague (Netherlands) in September 2017 a representative of Flevoland (Netherlands) informed the programme that the Summer Entrepreneur, a good practice transferred from Mid Sweden within the MINI EUROPE project in 2010, had become a regular initiative in 11 regions in the Netherlands with a thousand young people trained and coached in entrepreneurship and 20% of them registered with their local chamber of commerce as young entrepreneurs. At the same event, the SufalNet4EU project representative from Noord-Brabant (Netherlands) shared the news that the action plan developed in the project led to six transformed landfill sites in the region, serving now as a playground for children or a golf course, or being turned into industrial parks.

In order to make the collection of evidence on the long-term effects of interregional cooperation projects more systematic, Interreg Europe launched an evaluation study of the projects co-funded by its predecessor. This report presents the results of the study. It is an attempt at a more systematic collection of the available evidence of the policy changes attributable – partly or fully – to INTERREG IVC projects and their effects on the ground.



After this introduction, chapter 2 aggregates and analyses the results of a survey carried out among 150 projects addressed in the study. Chapter 3 then presents 15 selected stories about the effects of projects in the participating regions. Chapter 4 draws links among the stories in an attempt to identify the aspects of interregional cooperation bringing added value to the regional development. Chapter 5 offers an insight into the methodology used in the study. Annexes then present another five stories, the list of participants in the in-depth interviews and their interviewers, as well as a visual representation of the location of the stories together with the location of the good practices inspiring change and bringing about effects in the regions.



Chapter 2: INTERREG IVC projects screened

The interregional cooperation programme Interreg Europe, like its precursor INTERREG IVC, supports European cooperation projects with the aim to improve the implementation of regional policy instruments through exchange of experience, good practice and mutual policy learning.

Between 2007 and 2013, the INTERREG IVC programme funded over 200 cooperation projects on a broad range of policy themes. These projects have now been completed for several years. This means that it is possible to explore the long-term effects these projects created after the end of their EU funding support.

Survey overview

To capture information about these long-term project effects, the Interreg Europe programme conducted a survey among the partners of 150 INTERREG IVC projects. These projects were selected based on their coverage of policy themes that are in line with the thematic scope of the Interreg Europe programme:

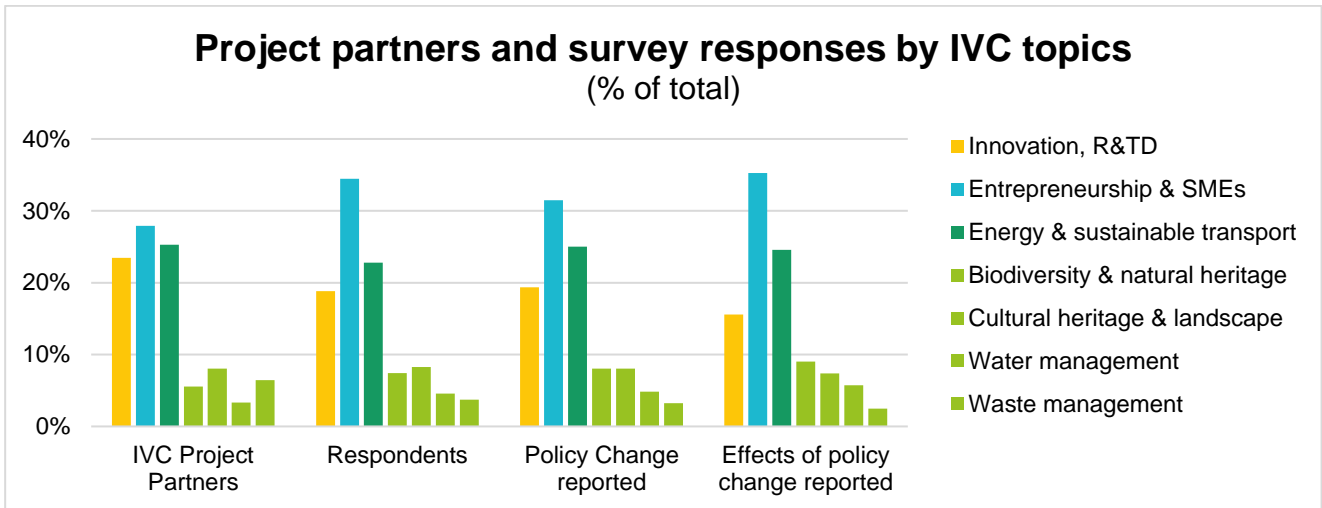
- Innovation, research and technological development (37 projects)
- Entrepreneurship and SMEs (44)
- Energy and sustainable transport (38)
- Cultural heritage and landscape (10)
- Biodiversity, preservation of natural heritage, air quality (7)
- Water management (9)
- Waste prevention and management (5)

Survey - Key figures	
Project partners approached	1566
Project partners reached (functioning e-mail address)	1207
Responses received	426
Response rate	35%
Surveys completed	200
Completion rate	47%

The respondents were asked to describe the changes they achieved in their regional policy instruments as a result of their participation in the corresponding INTERREG IVC project. They were also asked to what extent they considered that the change could be directly attributed to that project. They were also requested to explain what the effects in their region/ territory were, caused by the improvements in their regional policies.

The survey was filled in by 426 respondents, and 200 of them completed all survey questions. The respondents represent 117 different projects and come from 27 different countries. The respondents included lead partners (18%), partners (80%) and other involved actors (2%) of the projects.

All seven policy themes were represented in the survey responses in a proportionate way, compared to the number of project partners in each theme. The thematic coverage of the policy changes and their long-term effects reported in the survey follows a similar pattern (see chart below). The responses to the survey suggest that the potential for INTERREG IVC projects to influence the implementation of policy instruments does not significantly differ per policy theme.



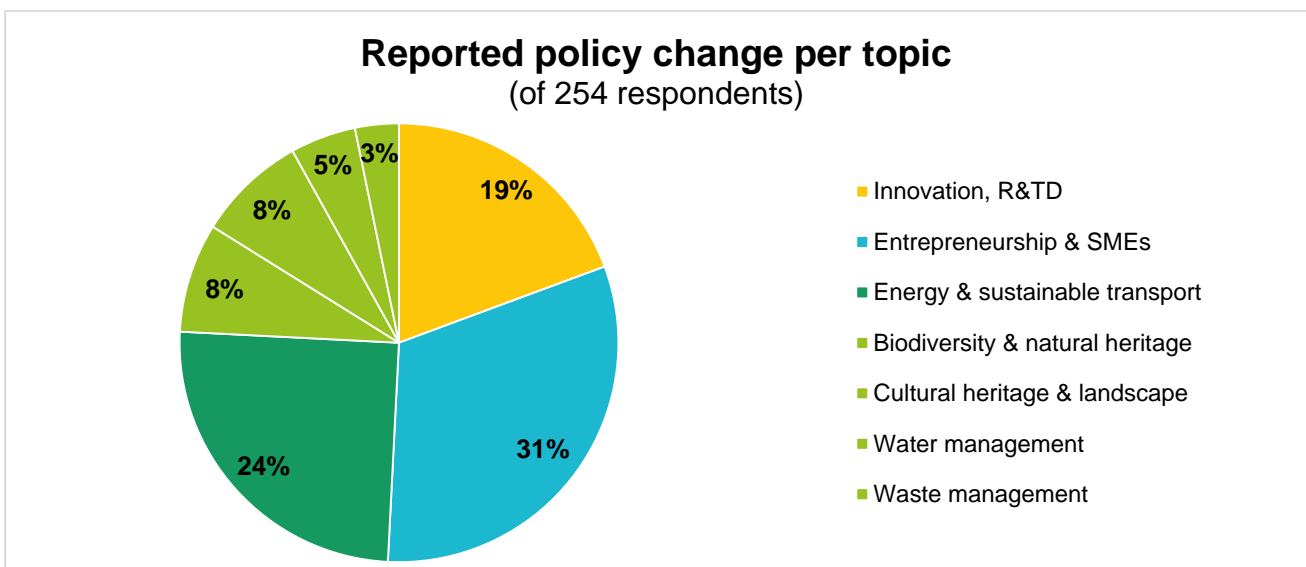
The policy changes and their long-term effects reported by the respondents are very diverse and rich. This makes it difficult to generalise the nature and quality of the survey responses. Rather, a selection of representative cases and stories is presented in the following sections of this report. However, some interesting general trends can be identified from the survey.

Policy Change

By **policy change** we mean the results that were directly achieved by the INTERREG IVC project thanks to the exchange of experience. In particular this refers to transfer of good practices and improvement of policies.

Of the 323 respondents who answered this question, about 80% indicated that a policy change had been achieved in their region/ territory thanks to INTERREG IVC project, which is clearly significant.

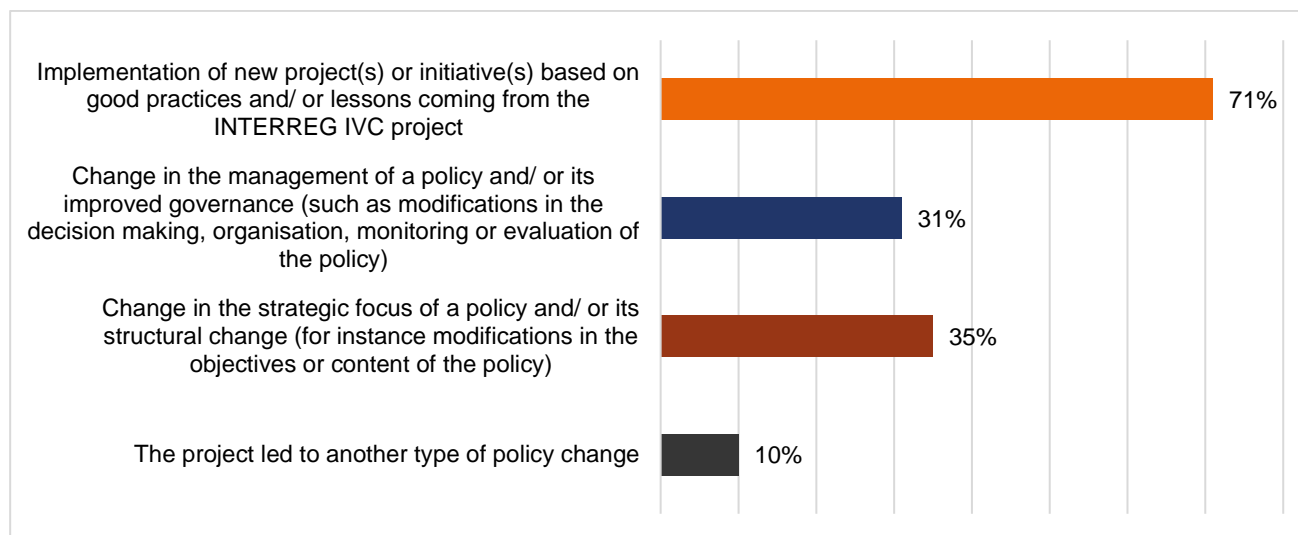
The coverage of the INTERREG IVC policy themes is generally in line with the number of projects for each theme.





Respondents were then invited to characterize the policy change in their region thanks to the INTERREG IVC project, by selecting one or several of the three categories of policy change as they are specified in the current programme Interreg Europe.

The below graph illustrates first that these three categories are perfectly valid having all a significant share of responses. **The implementation of new projects or initiatives comes first with 71% of respondents**, being reported twice more than the management of the policy or the change in the strategic focus of the policy.



Many of the answers under ‘the project led to another type of policy change’ could actually be classified under the three initial categories, by reporting for example the preparation of their 2014-2020 strategy, the development of a new approach or focus in their way of acting, etc. Among the few that cannot be included in that spectrum of answers, it is worth mentioning the earmarking of the remaining budget available in the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) to the topic addressed in the project or the influence that the INTERREG IVC project had on the content of the subsequent regional Smart Specialisation Strategy. A selection of the most illustrative stories of the exact policy change(s) achieved in the region or territory of the respondents is presented in the following sections of this report.

The 20% of respondents who declared that the INTERREG IVC project did not result in a policy change in their territory gave one or several reasons according to pre-established answers or could mention others. The main reason was the lack of support from decision-makers, followed by the lack of capacity to influence the policy due to the status of the respondent and the lack of funding to implement the policy change.

Reasons for absence of policy change (102 responses provided by 72 respondents, multiple answers possible)	
1 - Lack of support from decision makers to make the policy change	48%
2 - Our organisation was mainly involved as a contributor of good practice / supporting partner	24%
3 - Lack of funding to implement the policy change	23%
4 - None of the good practices identified were relevant for our context	4%
5 - Decrease of local stakeholders' involvement after the end of the project	2%



Respondents were then invited to express themselves on the attribution of the policy change to the INTERREG IVC project. It is a crucial subject which relates to the causality links that can be established between the process of exchange of experience/ learning and the subsequent modification in terms of change of the management/ governance of the policy or change in the strategic focus of the policy. Quantitative methods remain undisputedly the best way to approach the causality links by distinguishing the incidence of the INTERREG IVC project from external factors, but the qualitative approach used in this survey represents nevertheless a good insight into this subject.

Overall, about 1/3 of respondents did not report any or sufficiently justified explanation of the attribution of the policy change to the INTERREG IVC project. Among the remaining exploitable responses, a large majority explained that the attribution of the policy change to the INTERREG IVC project rests largely on the knowledge gained from the exchange of experience and the identification of good practices, which led for instance to the transfer of tools (for example, a software to measure the tourist sites accessibility, new indicators that led to the harmonisation of municipal waste data, on the introduction of a new database concept), improved capacities, renewed strategies (in particular concerning the Regional Innovation Strategy), increased awareness about the policy issue among decision makers and local stakeholders.

Many respondents described the process a step further by indicating that the achieved results from the INTERREG IVC projects had a clear incidence, for instance by speeding up the implementation of new standards or by playing an important role in the development of the regional ecosystem for creative industries.

Quotations by way of illustration

“Of course, some policy changes would have been implemented regardless of what the D-AIR project had delivered. However, by distributing the lessons learned and good practices in both the local administration and the transport organisations, these implementations have been accelerated and also new ideas have been implemented.”

Project D-AIR working on air quality [Lead partner, City of Eindhoven, Netherlands]

“As a result of taking different types of stakeholders to the study visits organized within the ENSPIRE EU project, the innovative ideas they became acquainted with could be adapted within the local business environment after returning home. Since all external stakeholders were involved either in activities of education, entrepreneurship or civil society, the impact of their actions has been much greater, having a direct influence on the activities these organizations undertake”.

Project ENSPIRE EU working on entrepreneurship [Project partner, North-West Regional Development Agency, Romania]

“The procurement legislation criteria adjustment would never have happened without the inspiration from the FRESH project. Awareness of the integrated construction standards would never have been accepted without the good practice from another country at the beginning and further on, the discussions with key experts and the construction association from a third country”.

Project FRESH working on environmental technologies [Lead partner, Kainuun Etu Oy, Finland]



However, several respondents acknowledge in a very clear and honest way that it is particularly complex to disentangle the exact role played by the INTERREG IVC project versus other causal factors. It can be explained by the intangible and multidimensional aspects of the change that took place thanks to the learning process.

Quotation by way of illustration

“We handed to key decision-makers at national level the action plan for policy implementation developed by the GEO.POWER project, which aims at market diffusion of geothermal heat pumps. There have been subsequent support initiatives at both national and local level supporting geothermal heat pumps, but we cannot estimate the degree of influence the project had to the formulation of these policies, i.e. we do not know whether the new initiatives launched were due to our intervention, or whether the Ministry would launch them anyway”.

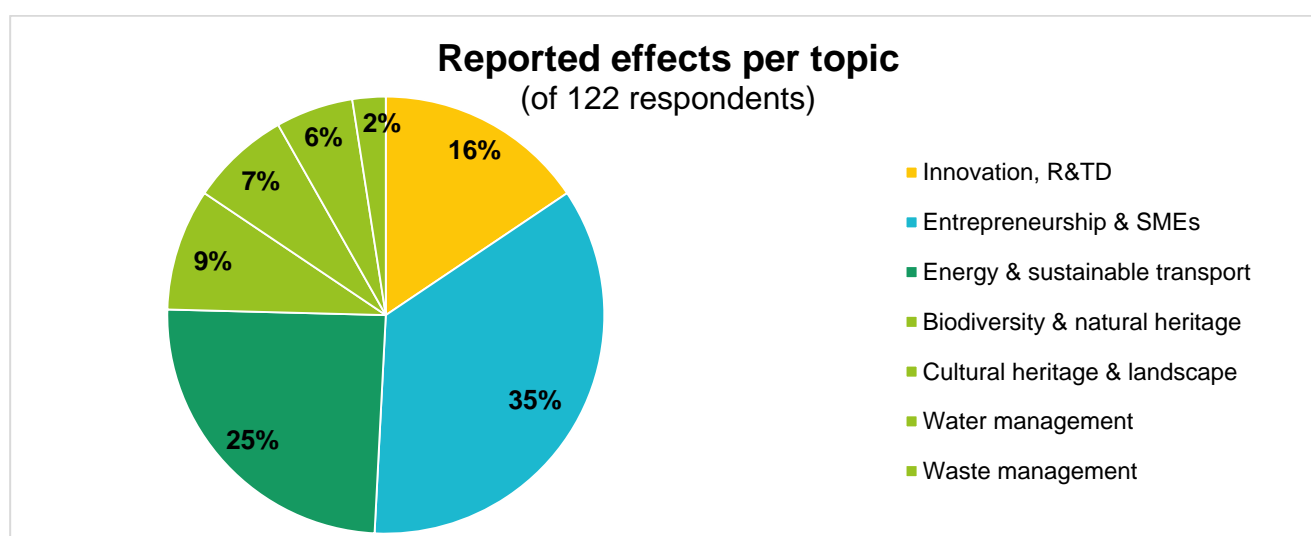
Project GEO.POWER working on geothermal energy in buildings [Project partner, CRES, Greece]

Effects of the policy change

The respondents who reported relevant policy changes in their area were asked to describe the long-term effects resulting from the implementation and use of these improved policy instruments. In particular these were to be effects that could be attributed at least to some extent to the INTERREG IVC project even though the programme did not fund the implementation of the policy change(s).

Of the 175 respondents who confirmed policy changes, 142 (80%) also reported that long-term effects could be identified in their region or territory. Most of those respondents provided further descriptions of the effects in their area (122 descriptions).

The reported effects related to all policy themes addressed in the survey (see graph below). The most common themes are entrepreneurship and SME support, energy and sustainable transport, and innovation. This distribution is generally in line with the share of projects implemented under each theme. Effects were reported from 21 different countries, indicating a broad geographical spread across Europe.



The nature of these effects differs greatly from case to case, as does the level of detail and the quality of provided evidence. Among the diverse reported effects, there are for example improved financial instruments



for SMEs, providing flexible funding opportunities to boost innovation and encourage cooperation with research institutions in Italy (project FIN-EN). Respondents also reported on the realisation of spatial and nature development projects based on practices derived from the INTERREG IVC project, for example a waterfront development in Smallerland, the Netherlands (project SIGMA for Water). Investments in renewable energy supply and energy efficiency were initiated in various regions, for instance a wind turbine developed by the local community in Durham in the UK (project RENERGY). New organisations were created as a result of several projects, for instance a public transport agency in Brasov in Romania (project EPTA).

Several projects in innovation and entrepreneurship report that they contributed to the content of their Regional Operational Programme (ROP) or their regional smart specialisation strategy. A large number of respondents reported a roll-out of the project results, practices and policies to other actors in their region and improved policy and planning approaches in their own organisations.

However, there were 33 respondents who stated that in the end no long-term effects could be identified in their area. They gave several reasons for this. The most commonly cited reason was a lack of financial resources to fund (continued) implementation (23%). Other causes included political or institutional changes, lack of stakeholder support for implementation, or incompatibility of the practices transferred. The table below presents an overview of these responses.

Reasons for absence of effect of policy change (47 responses provided by 33 respondents, multiple answers possible)	
1 - The policy change(s) was/were not (fully) implemented due to the lack of funding.	23%
2 - The policy change(s) was/were not (fully) implemented due to political and/ or internal organisational changes.	19%
3 - Lack of support from key stakeholders involved in the policy governance.	16%
4 - Cultural and/ or institutional differences between transferring regions, which made the practice incompatible.	16%
5 - It is too early to tell	9%
6 - The effect has not been / cannot be evaluated, analysed	7%
7 - The policy change(s) did not reach the intended target group.	2%
8 - Other reasons	7%



Chapter 3: Insight into the effects of interregional cooperation

23 project representatives from 15 countries were interviewed to provide more detailed information about the policy changes their project led to and the effects of the changes. This chapter presents the 20 most illustrative stories on how interregional cooperation made difference in regions all over Europe.

The stories come from all topics now covered by Interreg Europe. There are:

- Three stories on research and innovation
- Five stories on SME competitiveness
- Eight stories on low carbon economy (five on renewable energy sources and three on mobility)
- Four stories on the environment and resource efficiency (three on cultural and natural heritage and one on water management)

The description of each story starts with a brief summary presenting the institution's motivation to join the project and the resulting main policy changes and effects in the region. A more detailed elaboration of the whole story follows.

It also includes a table providing general information about the project:

- Basic information: project duration, thematic focus, geographic scope of the partnership
- A qualification of the effects of the project on three key dimensions of interregional cooperation: capacity building, good practice transfer and influence on a policy instrument. For each dimension, three levels were set, ranging from no achievement (0) to extensive level of achievement (++) in each category. If more than one policy change occurred in a project, the category represents the highest level achieved. More detailed description of the meaning of each level under each category is available in Chapter 5 on methodology.
- The type(s) of policy change(s) observed in the region or territory. The typology of these policy changes is derived from the typology currently used in the Interreg Europe programme, namely:
 - Implementation of new project(s) or initiative(s) based on good practices and/ or lessons coming from the INTERREG IVC project.
 - Change in the management of a policy and/ or its improved governance (such as modifications in the decision making, organisation, monitoring or evaluation of the policy).
 - Change in the strategic focus of a policy and/ or its structural change (for instance modifications in the objectives or content of the policy).



Research and innovation

Innovation vision with PROSESC

Hethel Innovation Ltd., an incubation specialist, got involved in the INTERREG IVC project PROSESC. Their goal was to address challenges faced by the region such as a lack of skills, insufficient technology transfer, and poor local automotive supply chains.

The project provided Hethel Innovation with a vision and a good practice in innovation support from visiting partners in

countries such as Germany. Since then, the centre has gradually become the innovation hub in the Norfolk County and a driver of the local knowledge-based economy, presently incubating a new engineering business every month.

Acronym	PROSESC
Duration	January 2010 - December 2012
Topic	Innovation, research and technology development
Project partners from	Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

The story of PROSESC in Norfolk (United Kingdom)

In 2010 the PROSESC project established a network of regional and local policymakers and practitioners from seven countries. They got together to improve their public support strategies and policies for greater environmental sustainability and competitiveness of the road transport. They wanted to get a better understanding of the innovation dynamics in the road transport sector and transfer the academic and expert know-how on cluster support to their policy making, with a special focus on knowledge-intensive producer services.

One of the partners was Norfolk County Council, looking for innovation support solutions for their local economy, which is closely linked to the niche car manufacturer Lotus. Hethel Innovation was added to the equation thanks to its proximity to the Lotus premises – only 200 meters away – and its focus on support and growth of engineering businesses. Hethel Innovation Ltd. operates a sector focused incubator in South Norfolk. With the objective to see Lotus grow and keep providing well-paid jobs in the region, the County Council decided to develop an incubator, capable of building the supply chains that larger automotive businesses, such as Lotus, need and a technology park next to it. Within the project they were looking for solutions suitable to their needs.

A vision for a solution formed during a 2011 study visit with the project partners to Ljubljana, Slovenia. A technical conference gathering local automotive suppliers, regional stakeholders and high-level politicians, with a keynote speech by the Slovenian Prime Minister Borut Pahor, illustrated to the Norfolk participants a tool which could help in shaping their supply chain support strategy for their local car manufacturer. They understood the need to bring all different parties, key stakeholders and suppliers of Lotus together and discuss with them possible solutions to the challenges in their automotive sector.



Shortly after the study visit to Slovenia, Hethel Innovation started organising similar technical conferences, inviting influential politicians, but mainly representatives of the local businesses, universities and other relevant stakeholders. The latest was held on 21 March 2018 and focused on electromobility and futuristic transport solutions. The conferences not only bring people together; they also make them work together on solutions for problems linked to the future of transport, for example how innovative technologies can revolutionise the supply of electricity and infrastructure needed to run electric vehicles. For automotive businesses and their supply chains, the challenges are based around solving technological transfer, which could be solved through the right collaborations, finding the right routes to market, and effectively bringing new solutions into local supply chains and markets. The gatherings helped the engineering community to look out and led to openness among key stakeholders and willingness to collaborate.

“11 years ago, people were coming to Hethel to meet Lotus. Now they are coming to Hethel Engineering Centre to commercialise their ideas. The PROSESC project played a key part.”

Simon Coward, Managing Director, Hethel Innovation Ltd.

Study visits organised by PROSESC brought the Norfolk partners to see other clusters around Europe and learn more about how to build a cluster, how to brand it, how to bring partners together with the large automotive businesses, what kind of offer to make to attract investors.

Knowing that many local businesses don't have the time, knowledge, or resources to build their supply chain, it became Hethel Innovation's role to run supply chain development through conferences, workshops, and special interest groups. The learning from PROSESC was to look beyond the large automotive sector and build their own supply chain, benefiting from the strengths of the businesses around the County. Hethel Innovation works on identifying the local strengths and its engineering centre offers help in overcoming the barriers to growth within the sector to ensure that the local supply chain is sustainable and of high quality.

A good practice on how to engage local businesses and bring them on board into the supply chain turned up during the study visit to Stuttgart region in Germany in 2012. The Norfolk participants took one SME representative with them to experience business environment in another country. The “red carpet treatment” of SMEs which lowered barriers to communication and trust was something Hethel Innovation saw worth introducing for local small suppliers, and the larger businesses looking to invest. The approach to SME engagement they saw in Stuttgart helped in shaping their own strategy.

Larger businesses need to embrace innovation, with a few setting up internal and external innovation programs, but not everyone knows where to source innovative solutions. SMEs are drivers of innovation which is why Hethel Innovation wanted to bring the less well-known SMEs into the supply chain. Hethel Innovation's facilitation of contact via a conference between big and small businesses provided an access point to the supply chain. Over 100 businesses participated in this first conference back in 2011.

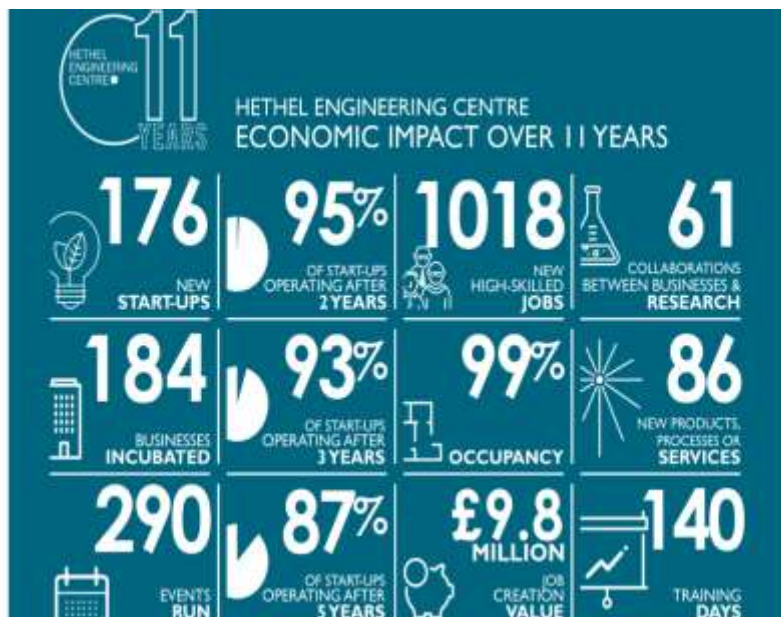
PROSESC came to Hethel to learn about the way the cluster works. It provided the Norfolk innovation arm with credibility among the local politicians and built a bridge between the political representation of the County and its



innovation centre representatives. It was thanks to the involvement of Hethel that the Norfolk Country innovation vision turned into a creative business focused strategy.

“We are now incubating and start an engineering business every month at Hethel Engineering Centre. 87% of them are still around after five years. [We are] also now running one of the biggest employment site in North Norfolk. Scottow Enterprise Park has 453 people in 110 businesses. Over 11 years, Hethel Innovation have created over 1000 high skilled jobs.”

Simon Coward, Managing Director, Hethel Innovation Ltd.





Bridge to excellence for clusters with CLUSTERIX

INMA¹ (Romania) joined the INTERREG IVC project CLUSTERIX to explore solutions for better cluster management.

Inspired by good practices from the Hungarian, French and Austrian project partners, INMA supported the Ministry of Research and Innovation in developing a ‘bridge’ cluster scheme dedicated to strengthening cluster management. This small cluster financing scheme is included as a project type within the Romanian

Research, Development and Innovation Plan 2015-2020. The first call with a budget of around EUR 1.8 million was launched in November 2017. 12 cluster projects were approved in May 2018 using a half of the available funds. This public financial support was designed to help the existing clusters in Romania on their way towards excellence.

Acronym	CLUSTERIX
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Innovation, research and technology development
Project partners from	Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Romania , Sweden
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	++
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative Change in the management/ improved governance of a policy

The story of CLUSTERIX in Romania

CLUSTERIX grouped partners from eight countries with the aim to identify, analyse and explore the potential of strategic future cluster development. In this partnership, INMA represented Romania. With only a few clusters in the country at the beginning of the project², representatives of the national institute were looking for good practices linked to cluster development such as their setup, management support, competence or evaluation.

INMA brought along two key country stakeholders to the project – the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Research and Innovation. Representatives of the two Ministries took part in some project activities, such as study visits and interregional meetings where they saw and discussed good practices in cluster development from other countries. They identified a number of inspiring ideas from across the project partnership and turned them into a so-called ‘bridge’ cluster scheme.

The scheme is dedicated to existing clusters which can apply for public financial support aiming at improving their management. In a two-year project, each cluster will implement a set of activities, some obligatory and some optional, which will help them on their way towards excellence both at the national and the European levels. Some eligibility conditions and predefined activities are directly inspired by the good practices shared in the CLUSTERIX partnership.

¹ The National Institute of Research and Development for Machines and Installations designed to Agriculture and Food Industry in Romania.

² There were only 20 clusters in Romania at the time the CLUSTERIX project ended. Now, there are 100 clusters in Romania.



An important eligibility condition is the excellence level certified at international level by the ESCA assessment of minimum bronze while for silver and gold bonus points are being foreseen in the evaluation. In addition to that, bonus is given in the evaluation for clusters having other relevant recognition such as the cluster certification given by the Romanian Cluster Association. This has been also inspired by the current Hungarian cluster financing scheme under the Structural Funds Competitiveness Programme.

Other good practices were reflected in the eligible activities for this 'bridge' cluster scheme. For example, the strategic roadmap planning tool from France was put in practice under the 'bridge' cluster scheme as one of the mandatory activities. During the two years period of a cluster project, each cluster has to develop a strategic research, development and innovation agenda, as well as an implementation plan of the agenda.

The same applied for good practices on internationalisation from France and other project partners. Each cluster project has to develop the own internationalization strategy within the two years.

Other activities described in the guide to the 'bridge' cluster scheme were optional. E.g. innovation and technological audits, an adaptation of the competence mapping tool developed by Lower Austria.

This 'bridge' cluster scheme was included as the 'Cluster organisation and development - Innovative cluster'³ project type under the Romanian Research, Development and Innovation Plan 2015-2020. The first call was launched on 29 November 2017. The budget of the call was set at around EUR 1.8 million, estimated for financing maximum 24 clusters, 3 per each development region of Romania. 16 clusters applied in this call and 12 were approved for financing in May 2018, using a half of the available funds.

“This first call is a very important first step to continue to have a public support for clusters. Having a continuous support for clusters is another lesson learnt from CLUSTERIX.”

Cornelia Muraru-Ionel, INMA Bucharest

Also, based on CLUSTERIX's best practices, the Romanian clusters gradually understood that the evaluation labels could be a very good passport to cross-border business, research-development-innovation projects or other kinds of collaboration. In October 2017, eight Romanian clusters were labelled with silver and 20 with bronze by ESCA.

Good practices on competence mapping from Austria, on strategic planning and internationalisation of clusters from France and on cluster evaluation methodology from Hungary played a key role in shaping the public financing scheme which INMA considers as a bridge preparing the Romanian clusters for projects linked to the Structural Funds.

³ The call's code was PN-III-CERC-CO-CLS-2017. <https://uefiscdi.ro/organizare-si-dezvoltare-cluster-cluster-inovativ-cls>



Incubating entrepreneurship with CLIQ

CEEI Bahía de Cádiz⁴ joined the INTERREG IVC project CLIQ to look for solutions in promoting innovation through incubators as a form of innovation support to SMEs.

During a study visit in Brighton in June 2010, they got inspired by InQbate⁵, a creative facility at the University of Sussex. The inspiration turned into their own creativity lab, a smaller-scale place set up in 2011 at the CEEI premises and

managed by the foundation. Since November 2011, over 8000 people benefited from the CEEI facilities and activities in the creativity lab. The lab became a good place to promote entrepreneurship and creativity, to make things differently, to think ‘out of the box’.

Acronym	CLIQ
Duration	November 2008 - January 2012
Topic	Innovation, research and technology development
Project partners from	Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain , Sweden, United Kingdom
Capacity building	+
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	0
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

Story of CLIQ in Cadiz, Spain

CLIQ built on research evidence highlighting the importance of bringing together universities, business, civil society and local authorities when promoting innovation for better competitiveness of businesses in medium-sized cities. The Foundation for economic development in Bay of Cadiz (CEEI) joined the partnership to learn more about promoting innovation and to influence building of their second incubator with the best practices from the CLIQ partners.

Study visits organised by the project offered the foundation representatives an insight into many ideas for innovation promotion in incubators. In 2010, they found the most inspiring concept in the United Kingdom, in Brighton. They visited InQbate, a large creative facility at the University of Sussex. This 1000 sqm hall was very well equipped for diverse kinds of creative activities applying open innovation methodologies.

The foundation brought the idea to Spain and created a creativity lab at their premises. They decided to use a 100 sqm warehouse and adapt it, in a smaller scale, to the concept of InQbate, investing around EUR 30,000 (compared to EUR 2 million invested in Brighton). The creativity lab was implemented in the premises of CEEI during the summer 2011. The first activities were organised in November 2011.

The lab is an open space, an empty room with white walls, black ceiling and floor. There is technology allowing for projection of images or colours on the walls, changing themes, sounds or colours to indicate change in

⁴ Centro europeo de Empresa e Innovacion, Bay of Cadiz Foundation for economic development <https://www.facebook.com/ceeibahiadecadiz/>

⁵ <http://www.inqbate.co.uk/>



activities. Participants can write and paint on the walls, sit differently because there is no furniture, only beanbags. The unusual setup involves people and encourages them to participate in the activities.

The lab has already proven to be a very innovative and useful tool for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in the region. Its unusual concept generates a lot of interest and has been used in many different ways by a large number of people. Since the start, more than 8000 people participated in activities organised in the lab (corresponding to around 1200 people per year).

The foundation uses the lab for various activities, such as creativity workshops with school students promoting entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity skills, or with entrepreneurs to develop or present new ideas and their products, or with companies running team building workshops or internal strategic planning meetings.

Even though most activities are organised by the foundation, private companies can also use it for their activities for a fee. For example, Google found the creativity lab attractive for their "Activate" Networking Workshop in 2017, with over 80 participants. The local university, which works with CEEI on various training programmes, adapted the creative facility concept to their own premises in a yet smaller scale.



The foundation sees the creativity lab as a very useful infrastructure to promote innovation and creativity in different sectors of population: entrepreneurs, school and university students. It is a good place to motivate entrepreneurship, creativity, to make things differently, to think 'out of the box'. It is not just about stimulating entrepreneurship skills or supporting SMEs and start-ups in their creative process, but it is very useful also for companies to show their end-products to their clients.

“It has been thanks to CLIQ. If we haven't been to Brighton, to Sweden and the places we have been to within this project, we could not have the chance to see all that and bring something similar here”.

Ana Suárez Lena, CEEI Bahía de Cádiz

Participation in CLIQ and transfer of the good practice from Brighton was a successful experience for CEEI. With the creativity lab, they were able to differentiate themselves from other institutions and people supporting entrepreneurship and innovation in the area and attract representatives of universities, business, civil society and local authorities to their creative activities.



Competitiveness of SMEs

Dynamic creativity with CREA.RE

The Regional Government Authority Upper Austria developed the INTERREG IVC project CREA.RE in a search for good practices in the field of creative economy as a means towards higher competitiveness of the region.

The people from Creative Region Linz & Upper Austria GmbH⁶ (Creative Region) went for a study visit to Jyväskylä in

Central Finland in 2012. “Crazy Town”, an

infrastructure with a wide range of business support services for knowledge-intensive SMEs, served as an inspiration for the development of a co-working space as an addition to the services provided by Creative Region at its headquarters, the former Tobacco Factory Linz. Now the Tobacco Factory hosts a total of 40 companies in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), as well as an advanced co-working space for circa 30 micro-companies working in CCIs.

CREA.RE also helped Creative Region and their local stakeholders to position the CCIs sector high on the political agenda in the region. CCIs became a strong component of the Strategic Programme Innovative Upper Austria 2020, particularly as an innovation driver at the crossroads between industry and creativity.

Participation in the project made Creative Region the driver of creative industries in the region linked to a broader European network. Thanks to its involvement, Linz became the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts in 2014. Linz also ranked among the top five cities in the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor, published by the European Commission in 2017.

Story of CREA.RE in Linz and Upper Austria

INTERREG IVC project CREA.RE gathered partners interested in sharing their know-how, good practice and policy experience in the field of creative economy. The sharing of their knowledge aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of each partner's EU regional programmes.

The Austrian lead partner was rather new in the creative economy field. The creative industries gained acknowledgement as an economic sector in Upper Austria with the setup of Creative Region in 2010. Representatives of Linz and the region looked for inspiration and good ideas to explore the potential of creative industries and develop the sector further. There were a lot of discussions at the regional and city levels with the stakeholders about taking that strategic direction.

⁶ <https://creativeregion.org/>



“The CREA.RE project made the final push to the region to do so.”

Anneliese Geyer, Upper Austria Department of Culture (Lead Partner CREA.RE)

Creative Region Linz & Upper Austria, an initiative dedicated to the support of cultural and creative industries in the region, became operative in 2011. In August 2012, CREA.RE lead partner took representatives of Creative Region on a study visit to Jyväskylä in Finland. There they visited the “Crazy Town” facility, a one-stop-shop for micro entrepreneurs and sole traders and a workshop provider with an advanced co-working space.

Seeing the facility in Finland served as an inspiration for the development of a co-working space as an addition to the services provided by Creative Region at its headquarters, the former Tobacco Factory Linz, a listed industrial building of considerable size. Now the Tobacco Factory⁷ hosts a total of 40 companies and runs a co-working space with around 30 companies at any given time using the space for a small fee. They are mainly very small companies from the cultural and creative sectors such as graphic designers, freelancers or consultants in creative industries. There is quite a turnover as companies often do not stay longer than 1 or 2 years as they usually move forward with their activities.

The Tobacco Factory Linz flourishes. Since 2017 it hosts a start-up campus, factory300⁸. It also includes the startup300⁹, a dedicated business angel network. This business activity, initiated and inspired by the good practice transfer during CREA.RE, contributed to the fact that the creative industries in Upper Austria today encompass around 4.600 companies and over 18,000 jobs, 700 of which at the companies located within the Tobacco Factory Linz.

Creative Region is not in charge of the Tobacco Factory Linz, but it played a key role in developing it. Thanks to the study visit, they could develop new and improve other services related to the strengthening and positioning of the cultural and creative industries in the city and the region. CCIs became a strong component of the Strategic Programme Innovative Upper Austria 2020, particularly as an innovation driver at the crossroads between industry and creativity.

“There were different factors involved but CREA.RE was the main one.”

Patrick Bartos, CEO Creative Region Linz & Upper Austria

Five years after the project, Creative Region has become the motor of the creative industries in the region, offering a broader and more complex portfolio of services, such as workshops on business development, marketing, or cooperation, individual advice on funding or how to set up a company, and organisation of networking events. It serves as a one-stop-shop for business support services for the cultural and creative industries. One can say that Creative Region strengthened the creative industrial sector in Austria.

Creative Region also facilitates the creative work for companies across Europe. It plays an important role in the development of the region and its international positioning and networking. Creative Region managed to bring

⁷ <https://tabakfabrik-linz.at/en/>

⁸ <http://factory300.at/>

⁹ <http://startup300.at/>



under a single umbrella important stakeholders such as Ars Electronica¹⁰, the Council of Culture of the City of Linz¹¹, the Upper Austrian Kulturquartier¹², the regional museum¹³ and the University of Arts Linz¹⁴. In 2014 Linz became the UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts also thanks to a successful bidding process led by Creative Region. Creative Region CEO Patrick Bartos is the official representative of Linz in the UNESCO Creative Cities network. In 2017, the city of Linz was listed among the top five cities in the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor published by the European Commission. Linz shared the list with Paris, Amsterdam, Eindhoven and Copenhagen.

Linz is now, arguably, the number one regarding creativity and knowledge in Austria. Creative Region helped the city achieve this position and become a model for others around the world. There is a huge marketing potential in CCIs in the region. Even though CREA.RE started during the recession, the development of Creative Region contributed to a very strong economy. And companies are looking for the kind of structure Creative Region provides.

¹⁰ <https://www.aec.at/news/en/>

¹¹ <https://www.linz.at/english/culture/3888.asp>

¹² <http://www.oekulturquartier.at/en/about/>

¹³ <http://www.landesmuseum.at/de/home.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.ufg.at/Startseite>



Real-life testing for healthcare with Health4Growth

Maribor Development Agency (Slovenia) joined the INTERREG IVC project Health4Growth in order to explore good practices improving the cooperation among local economic players in the health sector and unlocking their growth and innovation potential.

Inspired by LicaLab¹⁵, a good practice in real-life testing of new products shared by a partner from Belgium, they implemented

a similar concept in their Open Innovation Lab – ORbITaLA. Cooperation among the local university, public authorities and local SMEs in the new co-working lab resulted in a number of new products, one with a patent¹⁶, helping caretakers in a social work centre provide more professional and comfortable services to their clients. Moreover, the health and active ageing became part of the regional specialisation strategy of Slovenia's Podravje region.

Acronym	Health4Growth
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Entrepreneurship and SMEs
Project partners from	Belgium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	++
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

Story of Health4Growth in Podravje (Slovenia)

Health4Growth started from a premise that SMEs are the main origin of innovation in the health sector as well as the catalysts of growth and competitiveness. Partners from eight countries shared their experience in order to improve the ecosystem of their local or regional economic players in the health sector and promote their cooperation.

Maribor Development Agency represented Podravje region in the project, a region with a high share of elderly population and a number of weaknesses they strived to address with good ideas and know-how shared by the project partners. They looked for good practices in integrating the economy, universities and research institutions, involving SMEs more in educational and training programmes, improving transfer of knowledge between research and the economy, or encouraging entrepreneurial spirit and internationalisation.

Thanks to Health4Growth, the agency learned about the Living & Care Lab – LicaLab, set up in 2013 in Belgium. The lab provides a real-life environment for testing and validating new products, concepts and processes in living and healthcare. It is a co-creation space where a new product, process or service is developed from start to finish with involvement of the end-users. The Slovenian agency recognised the crucial role the lab played in the innovation chain by preparing the products, processes and services for a successful introduction in the market.

With this inspiration and aspiration to open a co-working space in Maribor since 2008, the agency worked with the local stakeholders and finally, in 2014, managed to introduce the open innovation lab (ORbITaLA) to

¹⁵ www.licalab.be

¹⁶ Patent number A45D 19/00



Podravje. It was in 2014 that Coworking Maribor¹⁷ was set-up and financed by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology with EUR 137,000. One of the three programmes run by the new structure was ORbITaLA with focus on health and design. The other two were Coworking space and services, focusing on mentoring, coaching, seminars, and workshops for SMEs, and the well-being network of 55 service providers in health and wellbeing, including alternative and complementary medicine.

ORbITaLA was set up also in cooperation with the University of Maribor, Social Care Centre in Pesnica and local SMEs. The home care division of the Social Care Centre in Pesnica served as the first test case in co-creating a product with real-life testing at ORbITaLA.

The process started with a brainstorming exercise among the nurses doing house calls to elderly or injured people that are forced to remain in bed. They identified problems they face in their work, such as those affecting their health. The biggest challenge causing many problems seemed almost banal – washing someone’s hair. The result of the discussion was then presented to inventors and designers who came up with a prototype easing this difficult task. After testing it and further improving it with real clients of the centre, the product received a patent (A45D 19/00). The lab helped in developing a household aid for personal hygiene of people unable to leave their bed for a definite or indefinite period of time.



“Finding a solution to the problem is the key part, however, without testing your solution, you cannot get feedback and you cannot really know if your idea is or isn’t practically applicable. This was the most important experience I’ve gained from my cooperation with ORbITaLA.”

Alija Keranović, inventor, prototype designer

The lab tested and developed several other products and ideas since. For example, the lab gave an opportunity to an inventor of a cooling colour for roofs to get proper testing for the new product and some contacts to other organisations to have the product launched in the market. The cooling colour can contribute to lower use of air-conditioning in homes for the elderly and contribute to their well-being. In another case, the lab contributed to testing of new packaging of medicaments.

The activities of ORbITaLA that connect local SMEs are nowadays part of the Coworking Maribor, operated by the Maribor Development Agency. In cooperation with the Botanical Garden of the University of Maribor, the agency organises each year a Festival of wellbeing that connects different companies as well as NGOs in the field of complementary medicine.

¹⁷ www.cwmb.si



Despite initial reluctance and hesitation of local policymakers, the Health4Growth project helped the Maribor Development Agency put healthcare and wellbeing high on the political agenda. Health and Active Ageing became part of the regional specialisation of Podravje and have been embedded in the Regional Development Programme (RDP) of Podravje region 2014-2020¹⁸. The RDP was one of the sources upon which the operational programme for the implementation of Cohesion Policy for the period 2014-2020 was prepared¹⁹. The Slovenia's Smart Specialisation Strategy (S4) includes the health and medicine as one of the priority areas as well.

¹⁸ They have been put under the priority no. II 'Inclusive Society and Knowledge', objective Health and Active Aging in the light of demographic trends and improving the welfare of the population by encouraging the wellbeing and access to social and public health services and improving the health of the regional inhabitants.

¹⁹ CCI2014Si16MAOP001



Financial instruments with FIN-EN

Finlombarda, the financial institution of the Lombardy Region (Italy), developed the INTERREG IVC project FIN-EN in order to contribute to an improvement and effectiveness of Structural Funds. A network of experts such as the fund managers, managing authorities, and financial intermediaries from several EU countries aimed at providing the European Commission with useful suggestions, remarks and proposals coming from direct experience to be used in the next generation of EU policies.

Acronym	FIN-EN
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Entrepreneurship and SMEs
Project partners from	Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy , Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	++
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

FIN-EN exchange of experience had real impact on many project partners. They deepened their knowledge on the most critical points faced in financial instruments implementation and share good practices for solving them. For example, a good practice from the United Kingdom, a system for application, reporting and monitoring of the implementation of financial instruments, helped the Italian lead partner develop their own information technology (IT) system for the new funding period 2014-2020. Now the new system SiAge (Sistema Agevolazioni) helps Finlombarda manage around EUR 300 million in the Regional Operational Programme earmarked for financial instruments.

At present, seven instruments for SME support have been implemented in ERDF Regional Operational Programme (ROP) in Lombardy. One of them is a combined financial instrument called 'Fund Research & Innovation for Aggregations'. It is for projects in which networks of small and big businesses and research institutions cooperate. The instrument is a result of know-how and expertise sharing among the FIN-EN partners. 57 projects focusing on innovation in production started their networks involving ca 230 stakeholders (SMEs, big companies and research institutions) in mid-2017.

Story of FIN-EN in Lombardy Region (Italy)

FIN-EN gathered regional and national authorities from across Europe interested in exchange on good methodologies and instruments for implementing financial engineering operations in the framework of EU Structural Funds. Financial engineering allows for the use of financial instruments as alternative to traditional grants. The aim is to maximise the use of EU funds by the leverage effect of private involvement.

Finlombarda, a financial institution owned by the Lombardy Region, prepared the project in order to create a platform for 13 European partners to exchange know-how and experience in the use of innovative financial instruments that could stimulate private co-investment and involvement, support a greater number of SMEs, speed up the disbursement process, and reinforce direct involvement of beneficiaries in projects.



“FIN-EN was a really important experience for Finlombarda. For the first time Lombardy Region could dialogue and exchange experience in Europe about innovative financial instruments.”

Paolo Zaggia, Finlombarda

There are several lessons learnt from the project related to the concept of flexibility, the relevance of combined instruments and the importance of an IT system for the monitoring and management of financial instruments. Regarding the latter, one of the big challenges faced by Finlombarda and FIN-EN partners was how to manage the complexity of innovative financial instruments with all the different stakeholders – applicants, beneficiaries, managing bodies, control bodies, and financial intermediaries. The customer relationship management software used for managing investment process for JEREMIE²⁰ (Joint European Resources for Micro to medium Enterprises) in North West England provided more than just an inspiration. A study visit in the UK and detailed interviews with people involved in the management of financial instruments proved very useful for setting up a new IT system in Lombardy, called SiAge.

The UK good practice helped Finlombarda develop the system with an IT company selected for the task by the region. The development started in 2014, near the end of FIN-EN. Now the system provides a working platform for all stakeholders involved in preparation of an application, reporting, monitoring, audit and other related tasks linked to financial instruments under the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) in Lombardy Region. The system is not simple, because the rules for EU funding are not simple. However it helps people at different levels of the process to communicate, receive and send relevant documents and simply work together, no matter whether from public or private spheres. The system respects the restrictions and regulations of both. Yet it is flexible enough to be adapted to each specific financial instrument available under the operational programme.

Having an IT system for managing EU funds is a requirement of the EU regulation now. But at the time of FIN-EN, Finlombarda had to work on changing the mind-set in the region. Experience shared by the project partners from abroad helped Finlombarda bring the key stakeholders on board and introduce changes in the region more quickly. Once the new IT system was set up, it was the region promoting it with many trainings for various stakeholders.

Another important learning from FIN-EN related to the design of the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) for the 2014-2020 funding period and of the financial instruments themselves. The project helped Lombardy Region create a system that was flexible enough to fit specific needs of the beneficiaries and to make it easier to adapt measures in case of changes in the context. The region recognised the strategic importance of the instruments and earmarked almost one third of the ROP budget for financial instruments – around EUR 300 million. The strategic focus is on projects supporting SMEs and the environmental sector.

For the moment, Finlombarda has seven financial instruments implemented: three focusing on the innovation sector, three on competitiveness of SMEs and one on environment. Good ideas from the German partner were

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/special-support-instruments/jeremie/



particularly helpful for Finlombarda when they were developing the instruments and the evaluation procedures for projects using them, including for example eligibility criteria such as the link to Horizon2020 and smart specialisation strategies (RIS3).

All seven instruments were influenced by the project, but especially one of the combined financial instruments called 'Aggregazioni'. It is a flexible instrument for projects supported by networks among SMEs, research centres and big companies working together on innovation. It combines grants and loans, each with EUR 60 million set aside for projects using this instrument. 57 had already been approved and started working in mid-2017. They work on innovation in production, either on production processes or on products themselves.

Other instruments are designed to build up the leverage effect of EU funds and encourage involvement of private resources. For example under the Innovation Fund, one of the seven financial instruments under the operational programme, there is EUR 10 million of European funds available matched by EUR 100 million committed by private financial intermediaries. Under AL VIA, an instrument supporting investment in existing enterprises, Finlombarda has EUR 38 million of grants, EUR 55 million of guarantee and EUR 220 million from the private sector.

“It is a good result for European funds when they can leverage private local and regional funds, when private sector decide to pay the money because they see it as a good investment.”

Paolo Zaggia, Finlombarda

Even before FIN-EN, Finlombarda and the Lombardy Region were interested in developing their financial instruments in a more innovative way. Without the project, they could have reached similar results, but with much more energy and time. The project provided the region with a lot of knowledge and helped them anticipate changes coming in the 2014-2020 funding period. Now they can share their experience at the fi-compass²¹ platform dedicated to the financial instruments and exchange of experience and learning, similar to FIN-EN. The platform was set up by the European Commission at the time FIN-EN ended.

²¹ <https://www.fi-compass.eu/>



Renewable energy sources

Energy under control with RENERGY

Durham County Council (UK) joined the INTERREG IVC project RENERGY to gain more insight into how small communities can make use of renewable energy sources.

The British County Council found a number of inspiring ideas among the project partners.

A study visit to Denmark helped the staff & stakeholders from the County clarify

their idea for a project supporting local SMEs in cutting their CO2 emissions. It gave rise to the Durham BEEP project, funded by ERDF under the Priority Axis 4 Low Carbon Economic Development programme. It started in October 2016 and has already conducted 90 energy audits among local SMEs, 40% of the project target.

The same study visit to Denmark also demonstrated to the County stakeholders what a small community can accomplish in terms of creating their own renewable energy source. The community of Oakenshaw observed the good practices in Denmark and then decided to build their own wind turbine. Now, the community receives an income of around 23,000 EUR per year, which is to be used for other renewable energy or energy efficiency projects.

Knowledge Exchange with the Hungarian partner from Szentes put the geothermal energy topic more firmly on the policy agenda in the County. Durham stakeholders learned more about its practical use and local discussion is now more about how to use its valuable natural resource, instead of whether or not to use it.

Story of RENERGY in Durham County (United Kingdom)

RENERGY focused on improving the effectiveness of local and regional sustainable energy policies and strategies. The partners looked for inspiration and good ideas increasing the capacity of public authorities to take well-informed decisions about renewable energy sources uptake and management while meeting the local community needs, demands, cultural and infrastructural characteristics and involving the energy business sector in the process.

For Durham County Council, the project offered an opportunity to go and see the use of renewable energy sources in practice and discuss the approaches to implementing energy projects in small communities. Active participation of the County in the project paid off with a number of good practices brought back to Great Britain and turned into new projects and initiatives.

Acronym	RENERGY
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Energy and sustainable transport
Project partners from	Austria, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	0
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative



Energy audits for SMEs

A study visit to the Municipality of Slagelse in Denmark presented to the project partners an initiative supporting energy efficiency and renewable energy sources installations in private homes and SMEs. The Danish stakeholders shared also their experience in engaging the local companies in their offer, using new tools such as social media. Detailed discussion among the British and Danish local stakeholders about the preparation and implementation of the initiative turned into a Business Energy Efficiency Project (BEEP)²², approved for funding under the regional ESIF Low Carbon Economic Growth programme with the budget of 1 MEUR of ERDF funds.

The project started in 2016 and offers energy saving measures to local companies and supports growth of the local economy in the energy-related market area. The project provides the local companies free-of-charge 12-hour energy audits followed with recommendations such as change to LED lights or improvement in insulation or cooling systems at their premises. Businesses, which decide to carry out some of the recommended CO₂ saving actions, receive an additional grant funding up to approximately 30% of the improvement costs.

“It is doing the simple things effectively, rather than turning to complex technology.”

Ian Bloomfield, Durham County Council

The project's target is to carry out 240 energy audits in three years. 90 have already been carried out. The list of companies interested in the project's offer is full, which shows that there is a clear need for such service in the community. The council is already discussing how to keep the service running also after the project's end in 2019 and continue generating financial savings to the companies and reducing CO₂ emissions in the region.

The support scheme in Durham has also attracted the attention of other local authorities and support organisations in the United Kingdom. In November 2017, there was a conference in Durham to discuss how to engage SMEs in developing innovative technologies in the energy field. The UK government department for energy was also interested in Durham's work and encouraged others to use Durham as an information hub. Other UK Counties are now working to implement similar projects to BEEP for their SMEs.

Wind turbine in Oakenshaw

REENERGY led even to a more tangible result in the region, namely a local wind turbine in the Oakenshaw community of Durham. A visit to the same Danish community, Slagelse, demonstrated to the local stakeholders from Durham how the deployment of alternative technologies can benefit small communities and the exchange was instrumental in developing the wind turbine project in Oakenshaw.

The diverse, but very active and well-integrated, community of Oakenshaw talked about various methods to achieve energy efficiency before the project took some of them to Denmark. Being present at the study visit stimulated their interest in doing something similar, and they observed other alternative technologies, not only wind turbines there.

²² www.beep.uk.net



“With the new sources of energy, until you see them working somewhere else and understand that they can work for you, you are quite sceptical. So the study visit showed to the stakeholders how the sources of energy actually work in practice.”

Ian Bloomfield, Durham County Council

The community invested themselves into the preparation of the whole project – wind testing, land ownership, impact assessment and construction and it took three years to put the wind turbine in place, finally beginning operation in 2016. In the end, it became a partnership project with the local land owner, who met the construction costs himself despite the preparatory work carried out and paid by the local community. The energy from the turbine goes to the grid and the profit directly to the land owner who agreed to graciously pay compensation annually to the community for the next 20 years. That yearly compensation generates a fund within the community, for other energy efficiency or renewable energy measures or other inspiring ideas, discovered thanks to the RENERGY project.

Geothermal energy back on the agenda

A recent study confirmed that Durham had one of the best natural resources of geothermal energy in the United Kingdom. RENERGY helped the County learn more about the practical use of this valuable natural resource of energy for various alternative energy purposes. The Hungarian partner from Szentes shared their experience with the geothermal energy for social housing heating, agriculture and also for energy production.

In Durham the resource is abundant and allows for energy production, if the community decides, for deep drilling, and although costly, there is a potential of steady income from the energy generation. A location for a potential geothermal installation is available at an old cement works site and transforming the site into a geothermal drilling place would also create much needed jobs in the County.

If Durham foregoes the costly deep drilling for energy generation, there is a cheaper possibility of shallower drills providing source of heating for buildings and greenhouses that can again potentially create new jobs in agriculture.

Thanks to the study visit in Hungary, the local stakeholders understood that they needed to think about the geothermal resource in a bigger scheme – including housing, employment, and electricity. RENERGY put the topic more solidly on the agenda and allowed the county to re-think its development much further.



Demonstrating low CO2 approaches with RETS

The Energy Agency Podravje in Slovenia joined the INTERREG IVC project RETS to increase their own capacity to serve as a competence centre to public authorities in the region on issues linked to the renewable energy sources and their use.

Good practices presented by RETS partners helped the agency develop very specific educational and awareness raising methods. The partner from Vecses in Hungary showed to the agency the

importance of sensual experience for better understanding and acceptance of renewable energy technologies. A demonstration project in a kindergarten in Maribor broke the scepticism of many policymakers and stakeholders regarding the use of biomass heating systems in public buildings. That led to the implementation of two similar projects in Maribor. The use of renewable energy sources is not questioned anymore. And the decision makers in Maribor are ready to focus on a wider implementation of renewable energy solutions.

Acronym	RETS
Duration	January 2010 - December 2012
Topic	Energy and sustainable transport
Project partners from	France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia , United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative Change in the management/ improved governance of a policy

Story of RETS in Podravje (Slovenia)

RETS tackled the challenges local and regional authorities face with the renewable energy use in small communities with less than 25,000 inhabitants. The project partners shared experience and good practices improving the knowledge and competencies of their local and regional decision makers and civil servants in renewable energy issues.

The Energy Agency Podravje took part in the RETS project to build capacity in the agency regarding the renewable energy sources in order to prepare analyses, plans, documentation, collect data and propose studies for public authorities in Podravje region. The project gave the agency the opportunity to learn about the experience and good practices of other partners in Europe and see what could be beneficial for Maribor and the communities around.

“We were looking at the ways how to build the knowledge and experience, how to deal with the problems with awareness raising, how to work with the users, how to educate them.”

Vlasta Krmelj, Energy Agency Podravje

At the time of the project, Maribor was looking for alternative heating solutions for public buildings outside the district heating network or the natural gas network. In 2009, the agency’s proposal to use biomass for the heating system faced great resistance from the side of potential users and the city planning department. The agency was missing strong arguments to defend their proposal. With the RETS project, the agency and some



local stakeholders discovered how the alternative solutions work in practice. The agency realised that in order to persuade stakeholders about a novel technology, demonstration projects worked the best.

RETS encouraged the agency to prepare a pilot project to demonstrate to all local stakeholders how the use of renewable energy sources works in practice. The agency prepared all the documents with support of the project partners. Their good practices in procurement and planning of demonstration projects as well as their experience in engaging politicians and future potential end users of the alternative energy systems were of great value to the agency.

“The demonstration case was a breakthrough. Now if someone comes with an idea to implement a new technology, the municipality is much more open to test it and try.”

Vlasta Krmelj, Energy Agency Podravje

In 2012 a wooden biomass boiler and heating system were implemented in a kindergarten at the outskirts of Maribor City Centre. Financed by the municipality, the automated biomass heating system still works as a demonstration project. The agency keeps monitoring the energy use of the system as well as the satisfaction rate of end users with the alternative energy source.

It is a success case with respect to the mind-set change as well as in financial terms and regarding its energy aspects. Since then, another kindergarten in Maribor implemented the renewable energy system and a school is in the planning stage to change to biomass their heating too. Seeing that such a project could work in Slovenia was more persuasive to local stakeholders than a study visit abroad, where country differences could be the source of scepticism.

Success with the demonstration case encouraged the staff in the agency to work further on the awareness raising about the renewable energy sources in the region. A very practical educational initiative presented by the Hungarian partner during a project meeting in Vecses inspired the Slovenian agency to adopt a similar approach. Since then the agency has developed educational activities and material which appeal to all senses of people and allowing them to test and use the technology in a simplified form. For example, children can test on their fingers the heating power of the sun collected on an aluminium foil.



RETS showed the agency the value of practical testing and demonstration in awareness raising. The agency received a national award for innovative ways of promotion and education on renewable energy sources after they installed at the Maribor square a passive house with a one cubic meter ice cube inside in the middle of hot summer for people to see the effects of passive house technology.

Education and awareness raising about renewable energy sources also contribute to better informed decision-making in Podravje. The energy topic is often very technical and complex. Learning about the technologies



helps the public authorities face their counterparts with more confidence and also understand better various regulations coming from the EU level.

“This practical concrete approach to educational material and promotion of ideas was something we took from RETS.”

Vlasta Krmelj, Energy Agency Podravje

RETS contributed also to Maribor’s involvement in the Covenant of Mayors in 2011 and to the development of the Sustainable Energy Action Plan, submitted in 2012. The plan focuses on five topics with 35 specific measures to be implemented, all connected to energy savings and CO2 reduction. The five topics are public buildings, street lighting, renewable energy sources, mobility, and information and education. Thanks to RETS and the agency’s work on educational and awareness raising material, the political support for the plan is still present and the stakeholders understand better the importance and technicalities of projects linked to energy in general and the renewable energy sources in particular.



Pumping heat with GEO.POWER

The Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving (Greece) joined the INTERREG IVC project GEO.POWER to introduce good practices in the implementation of geothermal energy solutions in buildings in Greece.

GEO.POWER contributed to the development of a number of support programmes in Greece aiming at market diffusion of the use of geothermal heat

pumps in public and private buildings as a means to reinforce energy efficiency and energy savings. The action plan prepared during the project influenced the focus of many support programmes, which finance installations of geothermal heat pumps in buildings.

Acronym	GEO.POWER
Duration	November 2010 - December 2012
Topic	Energy and sustainable transport
Project partners from	Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, Greece , Hungary, Italy, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	+
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

Story of GEO.POWER in Greece

GEO.POWER started with a pool of good practices on geothermal heat pumps application developed in urban, rural and industrial sectors. During the project, partners and their local stakeholders worked on evaluating the good practices regarding their technical, economic and environmental parameters, as well as their capacity to fit in the specific local context. Each partner prepared an action plan to include selected good practices into their Regional Operational Programme as a means to a substantial investment in that renewable energy source in their region.

The Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving (CRES) joined the project with an objective to extend the use of the geothermal heat pumps as a renewable energy solution. The centre shared the action plan developed in GEO.POWER with the key decision makers from the Greek Ministry of Energy, Environment and Climate Change. The good practices in the action plan were examples and case studies on geothermal heat functions and low enthalpy geothermal energy development projects. Subsequent initiatives of the ministry at both national and local level supporting geothermal energy suggest that the project influenced those initiatives.

More funds and more programmes were dedicated to the geothermal energy after the project's end. Before GEO.POWER, in the context of Structural Funds 2007-2013, only one programme out of 190 supported activities on energy savings in buildings (EUR 104 million budget). After the project, 9 additional programmes were released by the Ministry of Energy, each with an explicit reference to geothermal energy in support of energy savings (EUR 588 million budget). One programme was dedicated to low enthalpy geothermal energy development projects (EUR 5 million budget), one of the good practices described in the GEO.POWER action plan.

In the funding period 2014-2020, 8 programmes out of 39 focus on energy savings in buildings (EUR 105 million budget). EUR 21.5 million is dedicated to low enthalpy geothermal energy development projects and the



rest of the budget is for other geothermal heat pumps applications. There are additional geothermal heat pump projects in public buildings financed by the European Economic Area (EUR 11 million).

“We can observe a dramatic shift in policy towards energy saving that include geothermal heat pumps (GSHP), which are also explicitly mentioned in the programmes guides. We are sure there has been some influence of GEO.POWER.”

Dimitrios Mendrinou, Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving

A number of geothermal energy projects were financed with the Structural Funds, which was the aim of GEO.POWER. They funded sustainable innovation in buildings with the use of geothermal heat pumps. Thanks to the programme on near-zero energy buildings in museums and hospitals and energy saving in green schools as well as in local authorities' buildings, there are around 50 schools and 7 municipal buildings and hospitals heating through geothermal heat pumps now. A project on promotion of geothermal heat pumps and geothermal energy for East Macedonia and Thrace is also completed.

Pilot actions in energy in urban residential areas for future applications are almost finalised (75% done). There is an ongoing project on self-sufficient energy islands (50% done). A programme is underway on the intervention in 7 demonstration buildings (30% done). A programme called Energy sustainability at homes has just been launched.

GEO.POWER was a stimulus among the decision makers and other stakeholders, raising awareness and understanding of the geothermal energy technology. It affected the policy on energy savings before the two EU directives on energy performance and on energy efficiency went to force in Greece in February 2013 and in November 2015 respectively.





Mobility

Mobility in rural areas with MOG

The Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency (Hungary) joined the INTERREG IVC project MOG to see what good ideas and experience other regions in Europe have for making mobility in rural areas more sustainable.

In 2013, the project organised a study visit to Brandenburg, Germany. There people from the Hungarian agency learned about KombiBUS²³, a mobility

Acronym	MOG
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Energy and sustainable transport
Project partners from	Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom
Capacity building	+
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	++
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

scheme that integrates transport of people and small goods in rural areas. They decided to develop a similar transport scheme which connected old people to hospitals and doctors' offices, goods to local stores and students to local schools. 30 villages in three different counties in Transdanubia have adopted the scheme since 2016, serving around ten thousand people living in depopulated micro villages in the area. The scheme improved further when two thirds of the fleet switched to electric vehicles. The mobility scheme has since developed nation-wide and around 200 villages use a similar service which contributes to the reduction in rural depopulation and environmental pollution.

Story of MOG in Central Transdanubia, Hungary

MOG had as an objective to improve the design and effectiveness of regional policies on sustainable transport in rural areas. The project partners shared good practices and experience in making mobility sustainable from the environmental, social and economic point of view.

The Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency (CTRIA) represents a diverse hilly region with very small villages and low population. One of the problems in the region is depopulation and increasingly ageing inhabitants remaining in the villages. Solutions tackling the social aspect of mobility were thus of high interest to the partner from Central Transdanubia.

MOG helped the agency find an idea worth implementing in the region. They learned about an initiative called KombiBUS, run in Brandenburg in less developed rural areas. The mobility initiative connected old people to hospitals and doctors' offices, goods to local stores, and students to local schools. In 2013, representatives of CTRIA went on a few-day-long study visit to Brandenburg to get familiar with the background of the good practice and see how it worked. To engage relevant stakeholders from the region in testing it later, they took some of them along.

²³ <http://kombibus.de/>



“It was very important for us, it had to be seen and tested.”

Akos Szepvolgyi, Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency

The project helped the agency develop and test the new mobility scheme in five small villages. The agency brought the Protestant Church, managing the only service in Hungary connecting old people to hospitals, the five municipalities and the national post service together to develop the new village caretaker service in 2013.

The full service started in 2014. The main objective was to serve all the needs of the local communities when it comes to mobility connection of the depopulated area to larger cities around. Originally, it was just about bringing old people to the hospital and back. Now it is a mobility service for passenger transport and also a social service with experts such as doctors, mental disease experts, or social workers visiting the elderly in the remote villages. It supports the local economy as well. The village communities run small shops as non-profits with small quantities of goods often facing problems with suppliers. Thanks to the new mobility service, the link to city suppliers improved and also the goods produced by the village inhabitants made it to the city markets.

After having very good feedback from the five test communities, the agency successfully lobbied the Ministry of Economy and had the transport scheme integrated into the green mobility instruments under the ERDF-funded Territorial Operational Programme. Since 2016, small municipalities with less than 1,000 inhabitants can apply in the programming period 2014-2020 for projects in social care services, which are built on green mobility. They can run a two-year project financed 100% to develop the new services and get the necessary resources to run them. The funding can go for buying vehicles and equipment for the operations, and professional support to employ staff, doctors, and social workers.

“It was really hard to make the stakeholders understand why this initiative was good. This is the reason why it was important to make this pilot action and survey before and after the implementation to be able to demonstrate the success.”

Akos Szepvolgyi, Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency

Thanks to a successful application to the Territorial Operational Programme call for proposals, 30 municipalities in three different counties in Central Transdanubia run the services. They are free of charge for the inhabitants. More than 4,000 marginalised people have used the services since the start. It gets more cost effective over time. Some of the social services became more flexible in small municipalities while the connection of the inhabitants increased. Two thirds of the vehicles that run this service today are electric because the municipalities operating them are convinced green solutions bring added value to the service.

Based on first estimations, the environmental pollution decreased by 50% in three years in the region, mainly thanks to the change to electric vehicles and also due to better organisation of the services and decrease in the use of private cars.

There has been an indirect and positive effect of the good practice transferred in MOG in the region. Very few young people were living in the small villages before. Now they can produce their local products and have a good way of sending them to the cities. They do not see the need to move away anymore. Many people stay and develop their local economic activities and contribute to the local economy. The transport scheme developed national wide with around 200 villages adopting similar services.



New transport connection with INVOLVE

The Energy Agency Podravje (Slovenia) took part in the INTERREG IVC project INVOLVE in order to increase capacity among the key stakeholders in the region on mobility issues. They looked for good ideas to make their transport connection with business areas better and more sustainable.

Partners in INVOLVE had several good practices to share with the Slovenian

partner and their local stakeholders. A visit to Madrid inspired them to design their new transport information poles in a more attractive and user-friendlier way. Around 80 are installed in Maribor now. Experience from the Dutch and German partners on mobility management at industrial sites helped Maribor create a new bus line serving a remote business zone. Six new bus stops are available for passengers going to the zone now. The experience of Reggio Emilia in Italy with electric mobility proved useful to the agency when bringing four electric bikes to town in 2014 as a demonstration and awareness raising tool on electric mobility.

Acronym	INVOLVE
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Energy and sustainable transport
Project partners from	Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia , Spain, United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

Story of INVOLVE in Maribor (Slovenia)

INVOLVE brought together partners interested in improving their cooperation with the private sector leading towards more sustainable forms of travel to and in business areas in European regions.

The Energy Agency Podravje from Slovenia joined to learn more about mobility solutions from other corners of Europe in order to provide the best informed advice and services to public authorities in and around Maribor. The timing of the project was very opportune, because in 2012 the municipality changed the public transport provider from a private to a publically-owned company, which required a more active role of the public authority in transport issues. With the project, the agency took some of the key mobility stakeholders along to study visits and they could see directly some of the good practices in mobility worth transferring to Maribor.

“The director of the new bus service came with us, the head of the traffic department also joined. The director of the commercial zone joined us at one of the later study visits. They took back home many ideas, concrete for Maribor.”

Vlasta Krmelj, Energy Agency Podravje

One of the good ideas identified came from Madrid, Spain. Very nicely designed information poles for travellers with all needed information written in big letters, placed at the right height also considering disabled people, all in nice lively colours were inspirational for the project partner and stakeholders from Slovenia. A year after the study visit, Maribor city agreed to finance the production of stands similar to those seen in Madrid. Now, there are 37 of them installed all around Maribor and the feedback of people is generally positive.



Knowledge gained during the study visits to Roermond in the Netherlands and to Frankfurt in Germany helped the agency in developing plans for an extended transport service to a new shopping centre and through a large commercial zone at the outskirts of Maribor. In 2015, a special bus connection to the shopping centre was put in place, inspired by the case in Roermond. The Frankfurt example then served well in facilitating the cooperation among the private company operating the commercial zone, the public transport company and the municipality in designing how to best serve the 5 km-long zone, initially served by only one bus stop at the edge. Now there are six new bus stops serving the zone. The service is regularly monitored and the bus schedules are adjusted to best serve passengers' needs. Since 2015, over 60,000 people per year on average have used the line with the new stops.

Another direct contribution of INVOLVE to Maribor is in the promotion of electric mobility in the city. A good practice from Reggio Emilia in Italy on introducing people to electric mobility inspired the agency to use electric bikes as a means of transport for a few people from the public authority to demonstrate their usefulness and functionality. The agency brought four electric bikes to Maribor when electric mobility was virtually unknown in the region and opened two charging station in the commercial zone. People could see public employees on the bikes in the city centre and in the commercial zone, running their errands. It attracted desired attention at the time of their introduction.

The four bikes are still in use in Maribor and the public employees are satisfied with them. Since then, the first charging station at the commercial zone has been in greater use as more electric bikes appeared in the city as well as more electric cars. New charging stations are now a business for private companies.



A few additional inspiring ideas from INVOLVE had an effect on mobility planning in Maribor. The head of the department of mobility planning joined the

study visit to Frankfurt and learned more about the usefulness of a special bus lane on the city streets.

Maribor's sustainable urban mobility plan, developed in 2015 mainly by the University of Maribor, included having a separate lane only for buses as one of the crucial points. Now with each reconstruction of city streets, a separate bus lane is added whenever possible. They are now in many areas all around Maribor. The principle that bus has priority over cars is widely accepted.

INVOLVE also inspired the mobility stakeholders with an idea to introduce WiFi to the buses. The director of the local bus company saw it during the study visit in the Netherlands. At the moment, the WiFi serves only monitors for advertising on the buses. But the next step to provide WiFi connection also to the passengers is under implementation.



Integrated public transport with EPTA

The Brasov Metropolitan Agency for Sustainable Development (Romania) joined the INTERREG IVC project EPTA after a successful exchange on mobility issues in the MMOVE project, co-funded by the same programme. The challenge was to find good ideas on how to integrate the public transport in Brasov metropolitan area and develop their own public transport authority.

The agency implemented part of the public transport model from Bologna, a good

practice from the lead partner of EPTA. After contributing to the change in the national legal framework on urban mobility, the public transport authority was set up in Brasov metropolitan area in 2013. A year later it got the authority to issue transport licenses and contract transport providers. The first contract is expected to start in 2018 as the draft of the Public Service Contract is being currently analysed by relevant national bodies. In summer 2018, the public transport operator will receive a new fleet of buses for the new integrated public transport system. The new system is ready to start providing public transport services at around 50 municipal and 20 metropolitan routes to people in and around Brasov in early 2019.

Acronym	EPTA
Duration	January 2012 - June 2014
Topic	Energy and sustainable transport
Project partners from	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Romania , United Kingdom
Capacity building	+
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	++
Type of change	Change in the management/ improved governance of a policy

Story of EPTA in Brasov (Romania)

EPTA worked on identifying the best models of governance for integrated transport systems. The partners exchanged experience and good practices in developing a proper policy framework for policymakers and local governments to coordinate competences among different stakeholders in public transport.

The Brasov Metropolitan Agency for Sustainable Development was invited to join the project after their active participation in MMOVE, a project on mobility co-financed by INTERREG IVC as well. MMOVE brought the topic of urban mobility on the agenda in Brasov. EPTA then gave the agency a chance to follow the set path towards more sustainable integrated public transport and look for the most suitable model of public transport authority for the region.

The agency studied several different models of public transport authority among the project partners and also best practices outside of the project consortium, for example from Barcelona, Bologna and Toulouse. In the end, they selected the one implemented in Bologna. Legal and contextual similarities between the Italian and Romanian cases, as well as very good understanding and cooperation with the lead partner from Bologna were the deciding factors for the agency's selection.

Many changes on legal and administrative aspects had to take place before the transport could be integrated in the region around Brasov. First, there was no legislation in Romania allowing public transport administration at the metropolitan level. In Bologna, the situation was similar at the start of their process. The Brasov agency contributed to the overall discussion on urban mobility with national representatives and other Romanian cities



involved in similar projects based on the relevant Italian law. It shaped the new Romanian legal framework for urban mobility at the metropolitan level. It opened the way for setting up and operating public transport authorities at regional level.

The Brasov Metropolitan Association for the Sustainable Development of Public Transport was set up in 2013 to play the role of the public transport agency in Brasov and its 15 neighbouring communities. It is an NGO formed by the 16 participating public authorities. Thanks to the new legal framework, the public authorities could give a mandate to the association to run the public transport agenda for their communities.

In 2014, the National Authority for Public Services allowed the Brasov association to issue transport licenses and contract transport providers. However, there were still old transport licenses due to expire in early 2019. To avoid legal problems, the association decided to wait for the launch of the new transport system. Instead they worked on the first public service contract for the local public transport provider and new transport plans to serve around 50 municipal routes in the city of Brasov with 105 buses and around 20 routes with another 40-45 buses for linking Brasov with the other communities.

Following all legal requirements, the intent of the first public service contract was published in the Official Journal of the EU in July 2017, one year before attributing it to the local transport operator. The operator is owned by the Municipality of Brasov with minority shares among the other communities.

The local transport operator applied for an EBRD loan for the new bus fleet in 2017 and launched a tender in February 2018 for 105 buses. The first lot is expected to arrive in summer 2018 and the rest at the end of the year, right in time to begin providing transport services under the new integrated transport system to more than 100,000 passengers in Brasov and another 30,000 in the surrounding communities.

“The new buses foreseen will be bigger and more comfortable, with the focus on passenger safety and comfort. Especially in the smaller communities they are expecting us as ‘the warm bread’.”

**Catalin Frangulea-Pastor, Brasov Metropolitan Agency for Sustainable
Development**

EPTA played a crucial role in establishing the new public transport authority in Brasov metropolitan area. It also contributed to a smoother preparation of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) in Brasov in 2014. The issue was well known and stakeholders in Brasov were ready to work with an international consortium of consultants hired by the Ministry of Regional Development to develop the SUMPs in eight Romanian regions. It was also more relevant to deliver the SUMP to the new public transport authority rather than to the Brasov Municipality, as the association is the main administrator of the SUMP in the region.



Natural and cultural heritage

Cherry heritage preserved with VITOUR LANDSCAPE

The World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley Association (Germany) joined the INTERREG IVC project VITOUR LANDSCAPE to find inspiring ideas for their work on the UNESCO-protected cultural landscape preservation and sustainable development of their unique cherry growing region.

The association found several good practices which enriched their work in different ways. Good practices from Cinque Terre, Italy, and Wachau, Austria

turned into an annual summer work camp for 10-15 young enthusiasts from all around the world. During the camps, they learn about and help in the landscape preservation, for example by reconstructing the dry stone walls, a unique ecosystem for a number of species of small animals and plants.

Moreover, two good practices came from Neusiedler See in Austria. One helped the association in preserving and further strengthening the cherry cultivation in the valley. Through the development of 'Mittelrheinkirschen', a new brand for their local products, the association made efforts to stop the decline in cherry growing and promoted protecting and planting of cherry trees. 300 new trees were planted.

The other good practice from Neusiedler See contributed to the development of a study on the visual impact of wind turbines on the UNESCO protected landscape. The study helped the two German federal states responsible for the landscape better manage the construction licences for wind turbines near the valley. Thanks to the study, the cultural landscape in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley preserved its uniqueness and beauty.

Three stories of VITOUR LANDSCAPE in Upper Middle Rhine Valley, Germany

VITOUR LANDSCAPE gathered ten European UNESCO World Heritage wine growing areas. Their aim was to improve and innovate local and regional policies for cultural landscape preservation and enhancement.

The World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley Association had a good experience with interregional cooperation projects already in the INTERREG IIIC (2005-2007) project VITOUR. Facing still a number of challenges, they joined VITOUR LANDSCAPE to look for inspiration and good ideas on how to work further on their unique landscape preservation and sustainable development in the valley.

Landscape preservation work camps

VITOUR LANDSCAPE brought a number of good ideas and practices to the association. During a study visit in Cinque Terre in Italy and also in Wachau in Austria, the project partners shared their experience in organising

Acronym	VITOUR LANDSCAPE
Duration	January 2010 - March 2013
Topic	Cultural heritage and landscape
Project partners from	Austria, France, Germany , Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Switzerland
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative Change in the management/ improved governance of a policy Change in the strategic focus/ structural change of a policy



international work camps. The annually held camps promote better understanding of the landscape preservation and combine it with actual physical work on improving the cultural landscape.

The idea of an international work camp for a small group of people was new to the association and therefore very inspiring. When they decided to start a similar initiative in the valley in 2014, the evidence of success from the two partner regions helped in persuading the local stakeholders. The two project partners also shared information on how to organise the camps, how to select suitable work for the group, or what kind of local organisations to engage in the initiative, which was very useful.

The association held their own work camp every year four times already. Each year, 12 to 14 young people spent two weeks in summer in the valley working for four to six hours a day on tasks linked to biodiversity and landscape preservation. They worked for example on a historic castle, on an old historic wall removing waste and redundant soil. They painted window frames of a local museum and reconstructed some dry stone walls in the vineyards. The tasks differ each year. They



are designed together with the local stakeholders and NGOs, some of which host the volunteers. The work camps connect people from all around the world and introduce them to the work of UNESCO. The activities demonstrate what is needed to keep a world heritage site alive.

In 2018, the work camp is going to be organised together with the Wachau partner. The participants will spend one week in the Upper Middle Rhine valley and one week in Wachau to see how landscape protection and preservation look at two different sites. Participants from the valley are encouraged to take part in the camp this year too in order to engage locals from the valley in their own landscape protection.

Revival of cherry cultivation

When VITOUR LANDSCAPE started, the cherry cultivation in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley was in decline. Many orchards were neglected for years and only a few cherry growers were left. However, in 2008 a new land consolidation process discovered very unique tree species of cherries in the valley worth protecting. The interregional cooperation project then provided good practices and inspiration from other cherry-growing regions on how to protect and promote cherry cultivation.

The best proved to be from Neusiedler See in Austria. Their experience in developing the Leithaberger Edelkirsche brand was instrumental in developing the new culinary brand in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley, called Mittelrheinkirschen. A feasibility study checked whether something similar to Neusiedler See could be implemented in the Upper Middle Rhine Valley.

“The good practice was the initiator of the brand, a catalyst, showing that it was possible. People from Austria explained face to face how it can work. Without the exchange we would not be as far.”



Nico Melchior, World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley Association

The valley association collected input from various local stakeholders from cherry growers and gastronomes to tourism and landscape experts. The Austrian partner discussed with the association and the local stakeholders the development of their product range, cultivation methods, marketing, and different ideas for the promotion of the valley and its cherry tradition.

The association implemented many activities inspired by the Austrian project partner and got some EU funding from LEADER for the cherry project. An awareness raising campaign, run by the association, led to everybody in the valley talking about the new Mittelrheinkirschen brand. The association has since worked with local SMEs such as bakeries making cakes with cherries or a butcher making sausages with cherries and helped them in promoting their Mittelrheinkirschen products. New cherry-based products have been developed since. There are 12 now.

“They inspired us in brand development, promotion and marketing of it, but also in how to link the products to the festivals and tourism. They showed us that it works.”

Nico Melchior, World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley Association

Workshops and events have educated many stakeholders about cutting and cultivating cherry trees. In some orchards, older cherry tree species have been planted since. Many kindergartens and schools have joined in a tree planting initiative, organised by the association. 300 new cherry trees found their place in the kindergarten gardens or other public spaces. The association has also helped in organising a cherry blossom celebration early in April each year. And today there are guided tours for tourists explaining the history of cherries in the region.



Visual integrity preserved

VITOUR LANDSCAPE proved useful yet in another field linked to the UNESCO-protected landscape preservation. Two federal states, Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate, sharing responsibility for the Upper Middle Rhine Valley World Heritage site were looking for solutions on how to regulate the wind turbine construction around the valley. The Austrian partner from Neusiedler See turned out to have faced a similar problem with their UNESCO landscape heritage. They had a visual study done for their site which helped the authorities regulate the placement of new wind turbines, limiting their negative impact on the visual integrity of the Austrian landscape.

The valley association together with the Ministry of Culture of the Rhine-Palatinate had a similar visual study, a sight-line study, prepared thanks to the inspiration from Austria. The study was partly financed by the Ministry. The Upper Middle Rhine Valley is a landscape with very steep slopes and castles on top with an extensive view



of the surrounding countryside. The study outlined the visual effects of potential wind turbine construction on the valley. The study recommended zones around the valley, in which no wind turbines should be constructed.

Rhineland-Palatinate transferred the output of the study into a law (State Development Programme). It is not allowed to build wind power plants in the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site. In Hesse, they decided for a case by case approach to each investor, who has to prove that their wind turbine construction project will have no effect on the World Heritage site. They have to go to UNESCO for a proof on no visual effect on the valley, which is assessed against the sight-line study map and the buffer zones set thanks to VITOUR LANDSCAPE inspiration.

“Other German world heritage sites consult us on the sight-line study because they face similar problems.”

Nico Melchior, World Heritage Upper Middle Rhine Valley Association



Accessible heritage with CHARTS

Veneto Region (Italy) joined the INTERREG IVC project CHARTS looking for solutions to a number of tourism related issues such as the accessibility for tourists or the diversification of tourist flows in the region. They joined with a rich experience in cyclotourism.

Thanks to a good practice from Västra Götaland Region (Sweden), they introduced a monitoring system of accessibility at key transport points in

Veneto region in order to provide better information to tourists. CHARTS pilot action demonstrated that investment in accessibility brings economic profit as more tourists come back to a destination once its accessibility improves. Accessibility turned into an important political objective in the region and became part of the regional law on tourism.

The project also contributed to the tourist flow diversification in Veneto. Cittadella, a small town in the Province of Padua, won the CHARTS award for sustainable tourism destinations. Promotion about the award and the destination contributed to an increase in the number of visitors coming to Cittadella. The walkway around the town's historic walls has seen an increase in visits by 10% per year. 80,000 visitors took the walkway in 2017.

Veneto Region also worked further on their cyclotourism, another means to diversification. CHARTS enriched Veneto's experience in cyclotourism with further learning in the field of promotion and market analysis.

Acronym	CHARTS
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Cultural heritage and landscape
Project partners from	Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy , Latvia, Romania, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	++
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative Change in the strategic focus/ structural change of a policy

Story of CHARTS in Veneto Region (Italy)

CHARTS brought together partners interested in improving the management of their cultural tourism destinations. They looked for solutions contributing to the protection and enhancement of their cultural and natural heritage and sustainable regional development.

Veneto Region joined the project in search for solutions to a number of issues linked to tourism. They were looking for ideas and tools which could contribute to making tourism in the region as accessible as possible. Veneto also faces high concentration of tourists in two provinces out of seven. Indeed, 80% of the regional tourists are located only in the Provinces of Venice and Verona. CHARTS offered to the region many good ideas related to the management of Veneto's tourism destinations, on accessibility as well as on diversification of tourism flows.

Veneto accessible

Regarding accessibility, CHARTS provided Veneto Region with a solution shared by the Swedish partner from Västra Götaland Region. In order to measure accessibility, they developed a survey system called Tillgänglighetsdatabasen (TD). They measure accessibility in the broad sense from vision and hearing



impairment to limitations in movement or nutrition. Collected information is then available online to tourists for making better decisions about their stay in Västra Götaland.

Inspired by the good practice from Sweden, Veneto Region first decided to test the survey system at a popular beach resort Union Lido, on the Venetian coast (Town of Cavallino). The Swedish partner came to Venice to explain the system in detail and train two staff members in it. Given the demographic composition of tourists coming to Veneto, they decided to focus mainly on accessibility for tourists with limitations in mobility.

After testing the TD survey system in Union Lido in 2013, the Veneto Region staff engaged various stakeholders in the region, mainly the transport companies such as Venice and Treviso airports and the railway transport company, in the survey to assess their accessibility. The results were shared with them and also put online for tourists. Veneto tourism department still manages the survey tool and the website²⁴ presenting updated information for tourists with disabilities regarding accessibility. Information about museums, restaurants, airports, or railway stations is available today.

“At the beginning they asked why they should measure the accessibility, but we explained the project CHARTS with our colleagues from Sweden and they agreed with the objectives of the project. So they were very collaborative.”

Nicola Panarello, Veneto Region

In 2013, the policymakers in the Regional Council of Veneto Region had a positive attitude towards accessibility. They approved the regional tourism law with a specific article dedicated to accessibility added thanks to CHARTS. Article 9 of the law on ‘Intervention for accessible tourism’ stipulates that accessibility is a goal of the Veneto Region strategy and the region should fund activities enhancing accessibility in touristic facilities as well as in surrounding territory services.

Moreover, they realised that apart from its ethical added value, accessibility has an economic impact. Investments in accessibility attract a market segment in tourism with high spending power and there are higher economic returns on investment. As a result, tourism-related actions were integrated into the Veneto Regional Operational Programme for 2014-2020 under objective 3a. Action 3.3.4 focuses on pursuing the preservation and protection of cultural heritage especially by involving all stakeholders, including SMEs operating in



sustainable services, as a tool to protect and revitalise the natural environment of the Venetian lagoon islands and their cultural heritage. Companies investing in accessibility can apply for funding under this action.

²⁴ <http://www.veneto.eu> See ‘Easy Veneto’ for more details on accessibility. A private platform was developed for accessible tourist accommodation: <http://www.villageforall.net/en/cerca-struttura/>



Veneto diversified

CHARTS turned out to be useful for Veneto Region in their search for ways to spread the highly concentrated tourism flows to the region. They exchanged experience with the project partners on how to diversify the regional offer, involving minor destinations and improving cyclotourism.

The region learned more about tools and strategies to promote their minor destinations and make them more visible. Their test case was Cittadella, a small municipality in the Province of Padua, which made a big investment in the reconstruction of a historic wall surrounding the city centre.



The selection of Cittadella was a bit symbolic; the region was impressed by their effort and wanted to provide more visibility to their achievement. Veneto Region organised a big project meeting in Cittadella to show the place to other project partners. And once CHARTS opened the call for the award applications, they applied with information about Cittadella and also about the islands of the Venetian lagoon.

“We presented Cittadella for excellence in sustainable tourism, so we applied for the CHARTS awards 2014, and we were very proud when Cittadella won.”

Nicola Panarello, Veneto Region

When Cittadella received the award for sustainable tourism destination, the Veneto tourism department worked with it to promote the town and Padua as such. Since then, the number of overnights has increased by 15%. Moreover, the number of visitors registered for the walkway around the historic walls has increased more significantly, by at least 10% per year (80.000 in 2017). Participation in a European project put the minor destination on the map of cultural European routes.

Another strategy of Veneto Region for diversification of the tourist flows is cyclotourism. In CHARTS, the Region shared their rich experience in mapping the main regional cycling paths and turning them into specific itineraries and excursions, or in unifying the signposting. Exchanges with the CHARTS project partners provided the Region with ideas and inspiration on how to support their larger cyclotourism projects, especially in the field of promotion and market analysis. The University of Padua built on the outputs of CHARTS when running a survey and the market research for the Veneto Region. Based on the information, they produced a promotional material and video, useful also for the coming cyclotourism projects.



Welcoming waterfront with SIGMA for Water

Municipality of Smallerland (Netherlands) joined the INTERREG IVC project SIGMA for Water to find inspiration and good practices useful for the development of the lake and wetland area near Oudega village. They cooperated closely with the Province of Fryslân (Netherlands), the lead partner of the project.

Good practices from Germany and Scotland on unique selling point and biodiversity respectively helped the municipality and the province prepare a master plan for the area development near Oudega and even extend it to the waterfront on the town of Drachten²⁵. With the detailed plan approved in 2017 and EUR 21.5 million available to implement it, 70 hectares of land have already been secured. The environmental assessment should be finalised in 2019 and the physical works are foreseen to start in 2020. Without SIGMA for Water, the entire process would have stopped.

Acronym	SIGMA for Water
Duration	January 2010 - March 2013
Topic	Water management
Project partners from	Germany, Greece Hungary, Italy, Netherlands , Poland, Romania, United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	++
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

Story of SIGMA for Water in Smallerland (Netherlands)

SIGMA for Water gathered partners interested in developing integrated master plans for new lakes and wetlands in order to increase water quality in their water systems as well as the environmental quality of the whole areas. New lakes and wetland areas contribute significantly to increased capacity of the water system to clear water and make it more flexible in terms of quantity.

Province of Fryslân developed the project to exchange with partners from other parts of Europe on how to work more effectively on regional planning linked to water management, integrating environmental and political issues into debates with all stakeholders in the region. Smallerland, part of the province, saw the project as an opportunity to finally turn an idea of making a lake near Oudega village into a specific plan interesting for the decision makers and ready for implementation. The idea was originally on the table in 2005, but was dropped in 2008 due to the financial crisis.

SIGMA for Water helped the province and the municipality bring the idea of lake and wetland development back to the attention of local stakeholders. Two good practices shared by the project partners were of added value. When preparing the master plan for Oudega and engaging local stakeholders, the municipality prepared an attractive and visual report in which they highlighted the unique selling point of the area for tourism, an inspiration from the German partner. They also illustrated the environmental side of the plan, building on a good

²⁵ <http://www.oostelijkkepoortfriesemerren.nl/projecten/waterfront-drachten/>



practice from Scotland informing land use planners on the functional connection of habitats, their beneficial effects on biodiversity and on the health and life of citizens.

“A good-looking report caught the interest of local politicians and resulted in the uptake of the area vision in the cooperation agenda of the Municipality of Smallingerland and the Province of Fryslân.”

Wietze Jans, Municipality of Smallingerland

The master plan for Oudega was approved in 2013 and put on the cooperation agenda of the province and the municipality. In December 2015, the province, the municipality and the Water Authority Fryslân signed a letter of intent regarding the master plan. In June 2017, the Municipal Council adopted a memorandum as a precursor to the planning track and the environmental impact report, and signed a cooperation agreement with the province at the end of the year. They decided to be equal partners in the project due to its importance linked to the land acquisition and water storage. In the meantime, a number of information meetings took place in Oudega.

Awareness raising activities of SIGMA for Water in the province increased knowledge about the value of the countryside and rural development in general and also of Drachten’s residential area. A larger scale plan Waterfront Drachten was approved by the Municipal Council in January 2017.

“The entire process would have stopped without SIGMA for Water.”

Wietze Jans, Municipality of Smallingerland

EUR 21.5 million is now available to implement the plan Oudega on Water and Waterfront Drachten. The municipality and the province agreed to share the costs equally. The Water Authority Fryslân promised to contribute EUR 750,000, and at the moment they are considering increasing their contribution. The land acquisition is under way – 70 hectares have already been acquired. The environmental impact report is due by 2019. The works are expected to start in 2020.

Once redeveloped, the area nearby Oudega and Drachten will have 100 hectares extra water storage as well as a safer water space for recreational purposes, separated from the professional shipping routes. Local residents and tourists will profit from 2.5 km of foot and bike paths around the area and a bike-ferry connection near Drachten. Frisian Woods around Drachten will be better connected with Frisian Lakes, which will reduce the pressure of tourism on the vulnerable national park. More water and land will be available for recreational use.





Chapter 4: Added value of interregional cooperation projects

142 respondents to the survey, carried out at the beginning of this study, reported that their project had a long-term effect in their region or territory. In-depth interviews gathering more detailed accounts of the policy changes and their effects turned into 20 stories presented earlier. The stories provide evidence that policy changes do have positive effects in the regions participating in interregional cooperation.

The project representatives and stakeholders involved in the interviews highlighted several aspects of interregional cooperation which they deemed important for their success. One essential success factor was having the decision makers ready to carry out the desired policy change. Another driver for effective policy change was to put effort in keeping the momentum going in order to allow the change bring about positive effects. Although diverse changes and effects were described, several common features in the stories can be highlighted.

Exchange of experience

All stories in this report present a good illustration of the interregional cooperation and policy learning expected by the programme. In all of them, one project partner found an inspiration in activities or practices shared by another project partner. They all turned the inspiration into a new initiative or activity in their own region.

That is the main goal of interregional cooperation projects. Within their framework, institutions from all around Europe can exchange their experience and good practice with others and look for inspiration or even a new vision for their own challenges and regional problems. In several stories, the partners found an unexpected solution for their own challenge (for example in PROSESC in the United Kingdom or in VITOUR LANDSCAPE in Germany).

In several cases, the exchange of experience continued in the region itself. A good practice transferred from another country was picked up by others in the region or in the surrounding areas and adapted to the local needs (for example in MOG in Hungary or in Hybrid Parks in Sweden).

Interregional cooperation also puts in practice solidarity which is at the heart of the Cohesion policy. Cooperation among more and less developed regions contributes to closing the gap between the East and the West and The North and the South in Europe.

Capacity building

Many interviewees, often the project partner representatives, looked at their interregional cooperation project as a policy learning tool. Their institutions joined the projects with the idea to get a boost from abroad to their staff knowledge on a given issue and their capacity to improve how the issue was tackled in the region. This held true especially for the partners from the 'new' EU Member States²⁶ (for example in INVOLVE in Slovenia or in EPTA and CLUSTERIX in Romania). They appreciated the cooperation projects for their eye-opening effect. The report shows that capacity building contributes to improving the efficiency of regional development policies and more generally of the EU Cohesion policy.

²⁶ Countries that joined the European Union after 2004.



Involvement of stakeholder groups

Many interviewees highlighted the active role of stakeholders in the projects' success in having effects in the region. They found the possibility to take stakeholders on a study visit to another country very important in the project's work and consequently it's the success in changing things. For some, the project was a mind-set changer for the relevant decision-makers. Seeing that activities proposed on paper can work well in other countries and having the chance to discuss them in detail with those involved in their implementation helped in the endorsement of the policy changes at home (for example in RENERGY in the United Kingdom or in CREA.RE in Austria).

The interregional cooperation activities also had a similar demonstration effect on local stakeholders and decision makers after a project tested an inspiring idea from a partner country in their own region or territory. Scepticism sometimes expressed by many people was overcome by seeing that new ideas and technologies can work also in their own environment and bring about desired positive effects (for example in RETS in Slovenia or in CHARTS in Italy).

Focus on policies

The majority of selected stories presented in this report describe how the project helped to improve a policy instrument in their region or territory.

In some cases, an already existing policy was improved, for instance by adding an ethnic dimension to their entrepreneurship policy (in ENSPIRE EU in Denmark) or by improving the existing urban development master plan (in Hybrid Parks in Malta). Other stories describe how a completely new policy or strategy developed thanks to the participation in the interregional cooperation project (for example in CHARTS in Italy, in MORE4NRG in Romania, or in CREA.RE in Austria). Partners refer to the project's role in such changes as the accelerator or the catalyst for change in their region.

Focus on a specific policy and its development into a document endorsed by the policymakers seems to ensure sustainability of the change and continuation on a set path even after the political supporters of the change are gone (due to elections, for example).

The stories in the report illustrate that interregional cooperation should not focus only on innovation and economic development issues. There is a huge demand also for cooperation across Europe in other themes, such as cultural heritage, low carbon economy or protection of the environment.

Better use of Structural Funds

Mainstreaming of good practices, in other words, using Structural Funds for funding of the transfer of good practices from other corners of Europe, was not the core activity of INTERREG IVC projects. Only GEO.POWER



represents the so-called capitalisation project whose aim was to have the good practice transfer implemented with the use of Structural Funds. The story provides good evidence of that mechanism.²⁷

However, many other projects from among the 20 selected stories managed to make the link to the Structural Funds programmes in their countries or regions and had the results of their interregional cooperation funded by them (for example in CLUSTERIX in Romania, in MOG in Hungary, or in CHARTS in Italy). In the case of FIN-EN, the project resulted in an improved management of the regional Structural Funds in the new funding period 2014-2020.

Timing of policy making

When discussing the time dimension of policy changes and their effects, many respondents highlighted the role of annual planning of activities and related budgets in public institutions. If a new initiative gets approved by decision makers at an inopportune moment in the planning cycle, its implementation is often delayed or may even be jeopardised.

With a new policy, the engagement of decision makers for endorsement is a time-consuming process. Many respondents also talked about the need to build trust among the end users of their new initiatives, which required time (for example in DIFASS in Romania or in IMEA in Denmark). The expectation of fast results and tangible effects might be just too ambitious in case of interregional cooperation.

Interreg Europe projects considered

Present interregional cooperation projects do have even more the exchange of experience and capacity building at their core. Each partner is required to set up a local stakeholder group and its members can participate in the project activities. The programme requires the project partners to focus on specific policy instruments from the onset of their cooperation (already defined at the application stage). At least half of the instruments in each project must be closely connected to Structural Funds programmes. The programme supports the projects for two years after the exchange of experience phase in order for them to gather information about the progress in the policy change implementation.

The people-to-people value of the INTERREG IVC/ Interreg Europe programme

One aspect highlighted in the survey is the added value of the INTERREG IVC programme when it comes to interactions between citizens across Europe. The report presents evidence of remarkable engagement of local and regional institutions in interregional cooperation, in building trust among each other, and in developing a joint agenda for innovation and change. The projects covered in this study took place during a period of financial and economic crisis with strong pressures on local and regional policies. It is therefore even more remarkable that the programme could contribute to more people-to-people cooperation which – in the end – is the essence of

²⁷ An excerpt from the INTERREG IVC final report provides further details on the achievements. See at: https://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/IVC_achievements_-_from_final_report.pdf



interregional cooperation. The people-to-people aspect of the INTERREG IVC/ Interreg Europe programmes is very important for successful implementation of the Cohesion policy and for the European Union as a whole.



Chapter 5: Note on methodology

Scope and approach of the study

The aim of this evaluation study was to capture representative examples that illustrate the quality and diversity of results of INTERREG IVC projects in the participating regions or territories, and to collect evidence of the long-term effects of interregional cooperation beyond the lifetime of these projects.

In view of this objective, the study methodology was geared to the collection of representative, qualitative information and stories as concrete illustrations (case studies) demonstrating the nature, size, variety and extent of the results and long-term effects that can be attributed – partly or wholly – to interregional cooperation, good practice transfer and policy learning.

The evaluation study focused on all partners involved in INTERREG IVC projects in the following seven topics:

- Innovation, research and technological development
- Entrepreneurship and SMEs
- Water management
- Waste prevention and management
- Biodiversity and preservation of natural heritage; air quality
- Energy and sustainable transport
- Cultural heritage and landscape

The study was conducted on the basis of several complementary research tools. An on-line survey was conducted among partner institutions of the INTERREG IVC projects corresponding to the themes mentioned above. After analysis of the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with a selection of respondents, to dig deeper into their stories of policy change and long-term effects observed in their area.

Challenges

Several challenges were considered when preparing the collection and analysis of information about the policy changes and their effects:

- **Time:** more than three years have passed since the last projects ended. Memory of the participants in the study could be a challenge. Tools needed to take this into consideration with reminders to help the participants recall information which was not long used.
- **Institutional memory:** project teams from different institutions change over time and also staff in institutions changes. Finding people directly responsible for working on a project from more than three years ago or at least with the memory of activities linked to the project was another challenge. Initial online survey kept this in mind and included questions giving possibility to refer to someone with information about the project and what followed after its closure.
- **Motivation:** participants in the study needed to feel motivated to share the information. Well-argued usefulness of the study and benefit for the participants (indirect) was highlighted to make them willing to spend time on the online survey (complete it) and offer their story for the longer phone interviews.



Online survey

The survey addressed all project partners from the 150 selected projects. The main objective of the survey was to identify a pool of project stories from which a selected sample was to be taken for the phone interviews and more detailed account of the changes in the regions.

1566 unique email addresses of institutions were identified for the initial online survey. They represent all the partner institutions taking part in the 150 projects running between 2008 until 2014 in the seven topics selected. About 20% of emails were not functional anymore.

The questions the survey aimed to answer were:

- Is there an available evidence of policy change(s) in territories participating in INTERREG IVC projects?
- What categories of policy change(s) can be identified among the projects?
- Did the policy change(s) lead to tangible/ measurable effects in the participating territories?
- Is the policy change/ its effect attributable to INTERREG IVC projects?

In-depth phone interview

23 semi-structured phone interviews were carried out after the online survey analysis was concluded. The cases for the interviews were selected following these criteria:

- Nature of change/ effect (result of online survey)
- Availability of measurable evidence
- Nature of the change identified
- Type of project
- Country

A one-hour phone interview gathered information on the kind of policy change and its effect, which occurred in the selected region/ institution. A semi-structured interview topic guide was used by the nine interviewers. All data were recorded and notes drafted according to a methodology developed and agreed during an interview training run by the external experts.

The aim of the interviews was to collect stories of change/ effect with ample detail on the evidence of success and attribution to INTERREG IVC. The interviewers also looked for some information on the barriers and/ or facilitators of the policy change/ its effect.

The interviews helped to explore whether there were some topics/ themes emerging across the cases. However, no higher-level aggregation was planned. The cases were to help the programme describe the variation in policy changes and their effects as well as in the evidence on the role of INTERREG IVC projects in them.

The main questions to be answered by the interviews were:

- What kind of policy changes took place due to the INTERREG IVC projects and what were their effects?
- How were the policy changes and their effects attributable to INTERREG IVC projects?



- What measurable evidence was available about the policy changes and their effects?

Peer validation

The peer validation took the form of a small group of Interreg Europe programme stakeholders representing the programme governance and key influencers who were invited to provide feedback on the draft of the final report. A set of questions to consider was added on how to give feedback to the evaluators.

The point of the peer validation was to find out whether the cases contain the information to be expected from a story in interregional cooperation and whether the conclusions of the evaluation were understandable, considered as objective and unbiased. They were also asked to comment on the usefulness of the study for further development of the monitoring and assessment tools for the Interreg Europe projects and future impact evaluations.

Categorisation

In Chapter 3 of this report, each selected case is first briefly described with a summary of the institution's motivation to join the project and the resulting policy changes and effects of the interregional cooperation in the region. A more detailed elaboration of the story follows each brief summary.

Another descriptive element is a table at the start of each story providing basic information about the project, its duration, thematic focus, and the partnership scope. The table also presents one (or more) of the three types of change(s) present in the regions after the project's end:

- Implementation of new project(s) or initiative(s) based on good practices and/ or lessons coming from the INTERREG IVC project.
- Change in the management of a policy and/ or its improved governance (such as modifications in the decision making, organisation, monitoring or evaluation of the policy).
- Change in the strategic focus of a policy and/ or its structural change (for instance modifications in the objectives or content of the policy).

The table is completed with three categories evaluating the changes, which occurred in each project. In order to compare the selected cases on their achievements regarding the changes introduced in the regions, three categories were developed and followed across them. Each category tries to capture different aspect of the policy changes, deemed important for each interregional cooperation project.

The three aspects are capacity building, good practice transfer and influence on a policy instrument. For each, three levels were set, ranging from no achievement to extensive level of achievement in each category. If more than one policy change occurred in a project, the category represents the highest level achieved. More detailed description of the meaning of each level under each category is available below.



Categorisation of key dimensions of interregional cooperation

Capacity building

0 = No increase in capacity

+ = Increase of capacity among people in the partner organisation (limited role of stakeholders)

++ = Increase of capacity among both people inside the partner organisation and outside (prominent role of stakeholders)

Good practice(s) transfer

0 = no transfer of good practice

+ = the transfer of good practice helped to improve existing practices of the partner organisation

++ = the transfer of good practice led to the introduction of entirely new practices in the partner organisation

Influence on policy instrument(s)

0 = No influence on a policy instrument in the field addressed by the project

+ = Improvement of existing features (management/governance, strategic focus) of a policy

++ = Introduction of entirely new elements (management/governance, strategic focus) in an existing policy or creation of a new policy



Annexes

Additional project stories

Internationalising local skills with DIFASS

The Regional Development Agency Centru (Romania) joined the INTERREG IVC project DIFASS with the aim to unlock the potential for innovation, internationalisation and sustainable growth of their local SMEs.

Inspired by PIPE - Initiation Plan for Internationalisation, a good practice from Spain, the agency decided to adapt and implement it at a smaller scale in Centru Region. In 2016, a Regional Unit for Promoting the Business Environment and

Investments was set up to help local companies internationalise their business and attract foreign investments. Since 2017, the regional unit represented local companies at three international trade fairs in the fields of aeronautics, automotive & aerospace industry and mountain business. Over 100 foreign companies and 90 potential local investors used the unit's services in order to contact some of the promoted companies from the region.

Acronym	DIFASS
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Entrepreneurship and SMEs
Project partners from	Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania , Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom
Capacity building	+
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

Story of DIFASS in Centru (Romania)

DIFASS gathered a large number of partners eager to exchange experience and good practice in innovation and internationalisation support to SMEs. The Regional Development Agency (RDA) Centru looked for new ideas of public support for their companies, especially in fields of strategic importance to the region. They also searched for solutions complementary with other initiatives already implemented or running in the region, such as Enterprise Europe Network²⁸.

The agency studied carefully all the relevant good practices gathered by the DIFASS partnership and after a public consultation with the relevant stakeholder from the region, selected the one presented by the Chamber of Commerce in Seville, Spain. Their PIPE project (Initiation Plan for Internationalisation) was a national level programme offering expert advice and financial support to new exporters in Spain in order to increase and strengthen the number of exporters and solve the concentration of exports in a few companies.

The RDA Centru decided to replicate PIPE in Centru region, although at a smaller scale. With an implementation plan approved by the Regional Development Council of Centru Region in 2014, the agency

²⁸ <https://een.ec.europa.eu/>



started setting up a new unit within its organisational structure. Compared to the programme in Spain, the Romanian initiative was only regional in scale. Both initiatives were supported by public funds. Also the objectives and activities were similar, consisting in business support services for internationalisation.

The Regional Unit for Promoting the Business Environment and Investments was officially set up in 2016 with the objective to help local companies internationalise their business and attract foreign investment. The first task of the unit was to make a regional diagnosis of activities conducted by public authorities and institutions across the six counties of the region, similar to those foreseen for the new unit. The diagnosis helped the unit identify good practices in the Centru Region, formulate better the work concept, identify and document existing business support structures, identify potential partners, identify regional and national benefits, all in preparation of the promoting tools for the regional support to entrepreneurship. A map of investment locations resulted from the diagnosis too.

“I can say that DIFASS contributed at least by 50% to the setup of the Regional Unit for Promoting the Business Environment and Investments.”

Emil Toma, Regional Development Agency Centru

Since 2017, the Regional Unit, implemented at 80% of what is planned and with 3 full-time employees, started using the old instruments and testing new promotion instruments for SME internationalisation. The unit participated in several promotional events presenting information about local companies. They represented 16 local companies at the Aerospace & Defence Meetings Central Europe in Rzeszow, Poland, in May 2017, 58 companies at the Mountain Business Summit in Tarbes, France, in July 2017. In February 2018, they represented 15 companies at the Automotive & Aerospace Meetings in Bucharest, Romania. 40 foreign companies that came to Bucharest came also to the region to discuss business with the companies in Centru. They visited one company in the aeronautic domain and two in the automotive field. Moreover, the unit organised a networking event with other local companies to discuss opportunities to invest in the region.



Despite initial reluctance of local businesses to share data about their businesses, the unit managed to promote the local skills at several strategic international events and attract over 100 foreign companies which engaged with local companies in Centru to explore common business opportunities.



Resilience and ethnic entrepreneurs with ENSPIRE EU

In 2007, Eurobarometer Entrepreneurship Survey revealed that the desire of Europeans to be self-employed was decreasing. To reverse that trend, Esbjerg Municipality, represented by the South Denmark European Office, developed the INTERREG IVC project ENSPIRE EU, which focused on the promotion of entrepreneurial inspiration and mind-set especially among disadvantaged, disconnected or discouraged people.

Acronym	ENSPIRE EU
Duration	January 2010 - February 2013
Topic	Entrepreneurship and SMEs
Project partners from	Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark , France, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	+
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

The Danish lead partner invited representatives of Vejle Municipality, the first municipality in Denmark to become the Entrepreneurship City, to join the partnership and share their experience and successes in entrepreneurship with others. In return, the exchange of experience and learning shaped Vejle's new Business Strategy Plan leading to their acknowledgement as a Resilient City²⁹. Moreover, a partners' study visit drew more attention to their ethnic coaching initiative as one of the project's good practices worth sharing. Consequently, some other municipalities in Denmark adapted it to their context, encouraging business activity among ethnic minorities.

Story of ENSPIRE EU in Vejle (Denmark)

ENSPIRE EU looked for exchange of experience and good practices in developing an entrepreneurial mindset and promoting entrepreneurial inspiration among disadvantaged, disconnected or discouraged groups of people. The South Denmark European Office developed the project in order to discover inspiring ideas on entrepreneurship which could contribute to the economic modernisation and increased competitiveness of many regions in Europe, their own included.

The Danish lead partner brought Vejle Business Development Agency to the project, a representative of a municipality which became the Entrepreneurship City as the first municipality in Denmark. After the project in 2014, Vejle was chosen for the second time.

Participation in ENSPIRE EU made a difference for Vejle. Especially a study visit to a social school of entrepreneurship in Hampshire, United Kingdom, was very inspiring for the Danish partners. They learned how entrepreneurship could be developed around a social initiative. They transferred that social entrepreneurship dimension into the entrepreneurial policy of Vejle. And in 2013 that policy together with other recommendations from the project contributed to the new Business Strategy Plan of the municipality.

²⁹ The 100 Resilient Cities network is an international network created by the Rockefeller Foundation in 2013, gathering 100 resilient cities in the world, nomination-based. <http://www.100resilientcities.org/cities/vejle/>



“This updated strategy including the social dimension was a great outcome of the project.”

Jeanette Kristensen, Vejle Municipality

ENSPIRE EU activities contributed to a significant increase in general awareness about entrepreneurship in Vejle and the development of a resilience plan, a plan for engagement of all citizens in the city development taking a holistic view on business development with a new kind of entrepreneurs. They designed it around social resilience, co-creation and smart cities. Vejle needed to develop a comprehensive plan in order to be selected as a member of the 100 Resilient Cities network. ENSPIRE EU helped in being creative about entrepreneurship. Vejle was announced as a member in 2014.

ENSPIRE EU was running during the economic crisis when it was crucial to embrace new topics such as the social dimension of entrepreneurship and involvement of vulnerable populations. Especially the focus on migrant entrepreneurship was very successful in Denmark.

“The number of successful ethnic entrepreneurs increased to over 50% which is a lot!”

Jeanette Kristensen, Vejle Municipality

Ethnic coaching and guidance for ethnic entrepreneurs (Etniske Iværksættere), an initiative by private partners focusing on disadvantaged people, specifically the citizens with non-Danish ethnic background, received a recognition as a good practice after a study visit by partners from the Czech Republic, Spain and the United Kingdom. ENSPIRE EU pushed Vejle to take a better look at the initiative and strengthen the public-private cooperation in providing coaching to ethnic entrepreneurs and internships to refugees. Even though the good practice could not be transferred to other project countries, the ethnic coaches worked with other Danish towns which were eager to adopt the good practice for their minorities.



Low energy buildings with IMEA

The Danish Building Research Institute joined the INTERREG IVC project IMEA to support the City Council of Copenhagen and other partners with expert advice on energy efficiency measures in the built sector.

IMEA contributed to the change in the management and procedures applied in the City of Copenhagen in decision making on energy efficiency projects in buildings. The project in general served as a test-lab for the shift in mind-set towards more pro-

active measures on the city's administration side, engaging different stakeholders in the energy retrofitting of buildings in Copenhagen. A good practice from Assen in the Netherlands inspired the Danish partner to develop a map combining energy and social indicators, which has since helped in more strategic planning of energy efficiency promotion activities and citizen engagement. IMEA also helped to bridge a gap between two groups in the built environment in Copenhagen, the architects and the urban developers, and involve them in closer dialogue and cooperation.

Acronym	IMEA
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Energy and sustainable transport
Project partners from	Denmark, Hungary, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania
Capacity building	++
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Change in the management/ improved governance of a policy Change in the strategic focus/ structural change of a policy

Story of IMEA in Copenhagen (Denmark)

IMEA supported local and regional authorities in taking a pro-active role in improving the energy efficiency of their built environment. The project partners focused specifically on deprived urban areas where a high percentage of the housing stock had a very poor energy performance. Their goal was to enhance the effects of their strategic plans and policies to promote energy efficiency.

Two Danish partners, the City Council of Copenhagen supported by expertise of the Danish Building Research Institute, saw IMEA as a means to a more innovative and effective urban renewal in Copenhagen. Exchange with IMEA project partners and sharing of experience helped the institute and the City Council outline seven innovation tracks³⁰ towards better administrative handling of housing retrofitting in the city.

One of the tracks highlighted the need to change from a reactive, top-down approach with strict eligibility criteria, to a much more proactive role of the administration in urban renewal projects, encouraging demand on the side of building owners and the public. Thanks to good ideas shared by IMEA partners, Copenhagen encouraged their city architects to engage in dialogue with potential applicants for urban renewal funds before they submit an application and discuss with them potential energy improvements. This new approach was reflected in a higher number of applications submitted in general and a higher presence of energy improvement

³⁰ http://www.eukn.eu/fileadmin/Files/EUKN_Documents/IMEA_projects_Policy_Paper_.pdf technical report with more information about the innovation tracks.



measures in the applications. 105 applications were submitted in 2014 (compared to around 50 a year before), 135 in 2015 and 174 in 2016.

A good practice shared by the Municipality of Assen (Netherlands), a method for selecting areas for energy retrofitting, inspired the Danish partners to develop a similar map combining information about the types of homes and demographic characteristics of the inhabitants with energy and financial data. The new map became a strategic tool for urban developers when deciding on the areas to work in, on people to target with promotion activities to encourage their interest and participation in retrofitting projects.

“We use a similar method when we pick areas in Copenhagen for area-based renewal, but we have never combined it with energy.”

Lars A. Engberg, Danish Building Research Institute

IMEA also helped to bridge a gap between two groups involved in the urban renewal in Copenhagen. The architect group and the urban development department dealing with energy efficiency measures at a broader scale going beyond one specific building did not discuss together their projects. The IMEA project helped the professionals from both groups talk to each other and look for synergies between considerations for energy efficiency measures and the architectural norms and standards. They looked together for added value of energy efficiency measures, new materials and technologies to be tested while preserving the architectural heritage in Copenhagen.

By the end of 2014, they developed 14 demonstration projects showing how the synergies between energy efficiency and architecture could be put in place and promoting smart energy renovations. Now there are four large demonstration projects under way in Copenhagen, financed by the government or various innovation funds, and several smaller ones supported by standard urban renewal funds. Copenhagen has around 145 M EUR per year for urban renewal projects. Interest in testing new technological solutions is still high.

The Copenhagen urban developers used the map inspired by Assen to identify a specific urban renewal area to test the proactive approach involving local people. They selected Sydhavnen (South Harbour), an area with the second highest energy consumption in Copenhagen. The area-based approach was comprehensive. It involved local stakeholders together with the main energy provider. It included sustainable energy projects, information campaigns, mapping of CO2 reduction potentials, rainwater collection measures and demonstration projects, all in the selected area. The most important aspect in that work was the direct contact to each housing association or building owner. That communication generated trust between urban developers and individual building owners. And the trust-based dialogue led to energy savings both in water and heating.

“The most important strategic component of IMEA was to be part of an exchange network. Participation can help me see my case more clearly and see how to improve it or approach it from a new angle.”

Lars A. Engberg, Danish Building Research Institute

Thanks to the partnership between the urban developers and the main energy provider in Copenhagen, the City Council gets an energy report following the energy consumption at distance before and after the renovation



funded by the urban renewal funds. After a renewal the energy provider gives 'forsynometer', a digital platform, for free for one year to the property. The platform shows the owner and the energy provider whether the heating system is working optimally or needs adjustment. The urban developers calculate how much heat consumption they expect to save with each project when they apply for political approval of the yearly urban renewal budget.

IMEA contributed to the development of a more flexible, proactive and comprehensive approach to urban renewal in Copenhagen. That led to a more efficient use of the available funds in smarter energy efficiency projects in buildings, respecting their individual characteristics and architectural heritage.



Educating for low CO2 with MORE4NRG

Maramures County Council (Romania) joined the INTERREG IVC project MORE4NRG to build capacity in the region on all aspects related to sustainable energy, energy planning, and energy strategy. With Romania's entry to the European Union, the project was a great source of learning for the County.

The Energy Management Agency of Maramures (AMEMM)³¹ assisted in

managing the project and implementing its activities in the region. The agency focused a lot on the awareness raising about sustainable energy. Good practices from Italy and Greece inspired them to develop Energygames – Energy Takes Shape related to energy education for teachers and students. Later on they established the Sustainable Energy Educational Demonstration Center (SEED Center), a dedicated demonstration building for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies. However, the main result of MORE4NRG in Maramures was the development of the Energy Action Plan, which has now become a section of the regional development plan of the Maramures County.

Acronym	MORE4NRG
Duration	September 2008 - September 2011
Topic	Energy and sustainable transport
Project partners from	Bulgaria, France, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Romania , Spain, Sweden
Capacity building	+
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	++
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative

Story of MORE4NRG in Maramures (Romania)

The objective of MORE4NRG was to help all project partners to strengthen the delivery of their regional strategies for renewable energy sources and energy efficiency. The partners shared their experience on topics such as how to create incentives and methods to reach the energy targets set in the energy strategy, how to involve all stakeholders in the region, or how to support the implementation and evaluation of the strategy.

Maramures County Council decided to join MORE4NRG in 2009, after Romania became a member of the European Union, because all aspects related to sustainable energy, energy planning, and energy strategy were quite new for the country. Moreover, developing an energy strategy at the county level was very innovative in Romania, a centralised country, where legislation and regulations came from the national level.

In order to properly implement and monitor all project activities, the County Council contracted the Energy Management Agency of Maramures. The agency's role is to promote the sustainable energy concept and energy management principles among the local stakeholders, transpose the EU legislation on energy to local, regional and national levels, encourage the introduction on the local market of the renewable and energy efficiency technologies, and change the mentality and behavior of energy users.

The main result of MORE4NRG was the development of the Maramures Energy Action Plan. The initiative of preparing such a document is entirely the result of the activities carried out within MORE4NRG. It started from

³¹ The agency was set up by the County Council in 2009 under the Intelligent Energy for Europe Programme.



the state-of-the-art seminars where several partners presented the energy policy concept along with a description of the development and implementation process. During peer reviews, experts from among the MORE4NRG partners analysed the energy landscape of the host region and generated a set of recommendations compiled in a comprehensive peer review report. The one in Maramures focused on the topic of energy policy development. And it ended with the preparation of the energy action plan for the region of Maramures by AMEMM.

“The concept of energy planning has been introduced for the first time in the political agenda.”

Adina Dumitru, Energy Management Agency of Maramures

The Energy Action Plan served as a general framework for the Energy Master Plan of Maramures County Council, a more comprehensive and concrete document produced by the agency. The master plan is a distinct section of the Maramures Regional Sustainable Development Plan for the period 2013-2020. With the plan, Maramures can apply for energy efficiency projects for the Romanian Structural Funds, as it is an eligibility criterion. The Maramures County Council did apply for the funds with projects for buildings' rehabilitation. The plan also helped Baia Mare, the capital of Maramures County, to prepare its Sustainable Energy Action Plan under the Covenant of Mayors initiative.

MORE4NRG also shaped specific activities of the new Energy Management Agency of Maramures. Two specific good practices helped in promoting sustainable energy and changing behavior of energy users in the region. Exchange with partners from Abruzzo (Italy) and Patras (Greece) provided the agency with tools raising awareness about the renewable energy sources mainly among young population. Energiochi³² from Abruzzo was adapted into Energygames and Patras Science Park³³ from Western Greece turned into the SEED Center. The Maramures agency submitted a project proposal under the ENPI CBC programme which was approved in 2012 and funded implementation of the two ideas in the region in 2015.



The agency started organising Energygames in September 2014. They engaged a large number of children in educational sessions on energy efficiency and renewable energy. The games included contests among children from different schools, in which they presented their drawings, songs or other artistic creations illustrating energy efficiency. The lessons were very interactive, based on demonstrations and experiments using educational equipment purchased within the CBC project.

³² <https://www.fedarene.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/ARAEN-Energiochi-bp.pdf>

³³ <https://www.psp.org.gr/en/about-patras-science-park>



“The teachers were very impressed especially by the very innovative educational material.”

Adina Dumitru, Energy Management Agency of Maramures

The Energygames were initially run at the public library. However, the venue proved problematic in logistic terms and the agency started looking for an alternative location for their information and demonstration activities. The County Council had a building available which was abandoned and in a need of rehabilitation. The council made it available for the SEED Center inspired by the educational centre presented by the Greek partner in MORE4NRG project, the Patras Science Park.

The SEED Center opened in December 2015. It was an infrastructure project. The agency turned an old building into a highly energy efficient one. It is now equipped with many modern and innovative installations and educational material. It hosts the Energygames and serves other programmes for children and teachers raising awareness about the energy field. The agency, which manages the SEED Center, also organises capacity building activities and sustainable energy trainings for local authorities there.



Gardening with Hybrid Parks

The INTERREG IVC project Hybrid Parks gathered partners interested in good practices linked to the use of parks for sustainable local and regional development. They looked for inspiration on how to enhance parks' ability to serve economic, social and environmental purposes better, and thus help in mitigating climate change.

Municipality of Linköping (Sweden) found an inspiration in Ferrara (Italy) on how to

use green spaces for social inclusion. The Italian approach to urban gardening and outdoor learning, encouraging social cohesion, was well received in the Swedish city. Soon after, the residents of Skäggetorp could use small allotments of land for gardening and welcome school children for learning. Urban gardening spread to other parts of Linköping and the new city district of Vallastaden was designed with urban gardening as an integral part of shaping the community.

Paola Local Council (Malta) joined the project with a master plan for the redevelopment of the main town square. Hybrid Parks provided Paola with a number of inspiring ideas leading to further elaboration of the plan regarding the green areas in Paola. Consequently, three gardens were reconstructed to create a green link between three UNESCO World Heritage sites and a crossing at the main town square, turned into an attractive public space.

Story of Hybrid Parks in Linköping (Sweden)

The Municipality of Linköping joined Hybrid Parks looking for inspiring ideas and solutions for Skäggetorp, a social housing residential area with particular challenges linked to integration, employment, and exclusion. The city's plan was to create a safe, attractive meeting place in a green area at the heart of the area and encourage community building among citizens of the district. The green area was unmaintained and unattractive at the start of Hybrid Parks.

Hybrid Parks took Linköping representatives on a study visit to Ferrara (Italy) in November 2013, where they saw urban gardening, an inspiring way to deal with challenges faced by Skäggetorp. Ferrara city provided small allotments of municipal land to the residents for growing plants and crops. The lots are on public land. They are freely accessible to the public and outdoor activities for children's groups take place there. People keep the land well maintained and attractive, which contributes to the perception of safety and cohesion. People there meet and work together, which generates social interaction.

Linköping learnt from the specific good practice from Ferrara and ideas from other project partners on how to start with urban gardening and use the gardens also for outdoor learning. Around 20 urban gardening allotments were given out to residents in the central green area in Skäggetorp. The city placed public furniture

Acronym	Hybrid Parks
Duration	January 2012 - December 2014
Topic	Cultural heritage and landscape
Project partners from	Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta , Poland, Sweden , United Kingdom
Capacity building	+
Good practice(s) transfer	++
Influence on policy instrument	+
Type of change	Implementation of a new project/ initiative Change in the strategic focus/ structural change of a policy



and art there too in order to make the place more attractive. The urban gardens were also used for outdoor learning for school children from the neighbourhood.

The urban gardening continues in Skäggetorp. The original group of 20-25 people active in the garden will expand in 2018. The municipal office in the district manages the site and works with the urban garden association. They plan to hire a person, paid from a new project financed by national funds, to work further on mobilising and engaging the district residents. The urban garden will be used as a communal vegetable garden and the district residents who participate in the gardening will be 'rewarded' with a weekly vegetable bag with the produce from the garden.

Positive experience with urban gardening for social cohesion in Skäggetorp led to urban gardening projects in other green areas across the city. The city gardener now has a small budget (around EUR 15,000 per year) to provide material to people, and help them start an urban garden.



Moreover, the new city district of Vallastaden has been develop since 2012 with urban gardening as an integrated part of the district design and social model.

Part of the new district park is dedicated to urban farming. There are 80 lots, 20 to 30m² each, half of which are reserved for the residents of Vallastaden and the other half for other citizens. The users organise themselves in a growers' association and the municipality grants them the responsibility to manage the municipal land. The Swedish building expo³⁴ in 2017 showcased the newly created urban garden in the district as an example of its innovative design aspects.

Story of Hybrid Parks in Paola (Malta)

The Paola Local Council joined Hybrid Parks with a plan on how to redevelop the main town square, a congested, unattractive roundabout in the town centre. The Master plan for Paola was an outcome of the town's participation in the URBACT project REPAIR. The council was looking for inspiration on how to safeguard and embellish green spaces for citizens to redevelop the main square into a permeable green space, a task for Hybrid Parks.

Paola's ambition was to create a green link between three UNESCO World Heritage sites located in different parts of the centre, about 500 meters – 2 km away from each other. Hybrid Parks served as a source of inspiration on how to redevelop three gardens in Paola and turn them into a green axis between the UNESCO sites with the main town square as an attractive public space as a hub.

The three spaces for redevelopment were the Children's Garden, predominantly a playground area, the Moorish Garden (now Mediterranean Garden), an empty area partly walled off from public space, and the main

³⁴ <https://www.vallastaden2017.se/in-english>



square, a green space in the centre of the roundabout. All three were old-fashioned, not really green, with no coherent elements among them, and limited accessibility. Moreover, the hot climate in Malta presented another big challenge to the green spaces' management, which was water conservation.

Hybrid Parks provided Paola representatives with a lot of inspiration and a platform for fine-tuning the design of the three gardens as part of the Master plan for Paola. They took many ideas on board when working on the garden redevelopment. One example was including public consultation in the spatial design processes which was a rather new approach to the Maltese partner. Experience in water management, climate, and accessibility, important thematic aspects of planning and design of green spaces, was helpful in developing Paola's garden designs.

“Without Hybrid Parks there would not have been designs for these gardens. Designing green spaces was not normally done in Malta. Hybrid Parks was the push to get the expertise.”

Malcolm Borg, Heritage Enterprise

The Hybrid Parks partners assisted in developing the implementation plan and architectural design for the three parks in Paola. First, the Council shared design briefs with the project partner experts who helped to improve them. Then, the Council hosted the partners and showed them the sites. Further expert feedback was then introduced into the final design briefs. Participation of policymakers in the exchanges, built an understanding and support for the proposed solutions. The briefs operationalised the Master plan and reflected needs of the Council and the public. During the approval, some aspects of the briefs were modified.

Awareness raising among the policymakers and the public in the course of Hybrid Parks helped in securing funding from the national government for the redevelopment of the Children's Garden. The green space in the Children's Garden of half a hectare with playground facilities is nearly ready.

Regarding the Mediterranean Garden, the walls separating it from the main square have already been demolished. Now the area of approximately two football pitches is being redeveloped into a green space. The main town square is undergoing changes from a traffic hub with busy roundabout and a bus terminal into a space with greater focus on pedestrian access. The garden in the middle of the square will also help in that. Works on the two gardens are in progress. They are expected to be complete by the end of 2018.





List of projects interviewed

Acronym	Institution	Country	Interviewee(s)
CHARTS	Veneto Region	Italy	Nicola Panarello
CLIQ	CEEI Bahia de Cadiz	Spain	Ana Suárez Lena
CLUSTERIX	INMA - National Institute of Research	Romania	Cornelia Muraru-Ionel
CREA.RE	Office of the State Government of Upper Austria	Austria	Patrick Bartos, Anneliese Geyer, Lucia Seel
DIFASS	Regional Development Agency Centru	Romania	Emil Toma
ENSPIRE EU	Vejle Municipality/ South Denmark European Office	Denmark	Jeanette Kristensen, Allan Nordby Ottesen
EPTA	Municipality Brasov	Romania	Catalin Frangulea Pastor
FIN-EN	Finlombarda	Italy	Paolo Giovanni Zaggia, Antonella Pisano
GEO.POWER	Centre for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving	Greece	Dimitrios Mendrinou
Health4Growth	Maribor Development Agency	Slovenia	Amna Potočnik, Borut Jurišič
Hybrid Parks	Heritage Enterprise	Malta	Malcolm Borg
Hybrid Parks	Linköpings Kommun	Sweden	Liselott Johansson
ICER	Auvergne Rhone-Alpes Tourisme	France	Thomas Ducloutrier
IMEA	Aalborg University Copenhagen	Denmark	Lars A. Engberg
INVOLVE	Energy Agency of Podravje	Slovenia	Vlasta Krmelj
MOG	Central Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency	Hungary	Akos Szepvolgyi
MORE4NRG	Energy Management Agency of Maramures	Romania	Adina Dumitru
NOSTRA	Helsinki-Uusimaa Regional Council	Finland	Heli Halla-aho
PROSESC	Hethel Innovation	United Kingdom	Simon Coward
RENERGY	Durham County Council	United Kingdom	Ian Bloomfield
RETS	Energy Agency of Podravje	Slovenia	Vlasta Krmelj
SIGMA for Water	Municipality of Smallerland	Netherlands	Wietze Jans
VITOUR LANDSCAPE	Zweckverband Welterbe Oberes Mittelrheintal	Germany	Nico Melchior

Interviewers

External experts: Tako Popma (Link-EU), Pascal Chazaud (CPC Consultancy)

Interreg Europe staff: Petra Polaskova, Benoît Dalbert, Verena Priem, Mar Martin, Ilaria Ramaglioni

Note taking: Nina Maschio Esposito, Océane Elmajdoub



Map of all stories

