

OUTCOMES OF THE POST-2027 INTERREG CONSULTATION

19th May 2025

On Monday, 19th May 2025, INTERACT and DG REGIO held a webinar to present the [*Harvesting Report on Post-2027 Interreg: Results of stakeholder, citizen, and programme consultations*](#). The report conveys the results of a **consultation process** initiated by the European Commission on European Territorial Cooperation during the Interreg Annual Event in 2023, with the aim of supporting the reform of Cohesion Policy and post-2027 planning.

For the first time, the process involved not only policymakers and programme stakeholders but also citizens from Interreg areas, with a special focus on youth. Around 100 young Europeans gathered in Brussels in November 2024 to express their views, resulting in the ***Declaration by Young People on the Future of Territorial Cooperation***. In total, nearly **100 reports** were produced, collecting contributions from over 10.000 individuals and organizations.

The report's author, Irene McMaster from the **European Policies Research Centre**, presented the following **results**:

1. The majority of respondents living in border regions have a positive opinion of the area they reside in. They primarily view it as a region that offers great opportunities, such as cultural exchange, greater access to cultural and recreational facilities, more economic opportunities, a wider access to markets, high-quality environment and life, and better transportation, education, and services;
2. Negative aspects identified included cultural and linguistic barriers, bureaucratic and regulatory obstacles, and peripherality;
3. When asked about which areas of cooperation they consider as key, stakeholders and citizens' opinions from **Interreg A** areas varied, but the top priorities were similar:
 - Stakeholders' priorities included: the environment, climate, culture/tourism, and education;
 - Citizen's priorities included: the environment, culture/tourism, and economic development.
4. Variations in priorities were also identified among respondents from different Interreg programmes:
 - **External**: environment and climate, cultural heritage, infrastructure and transport;
 - **Interreg B**: innovation, society/community, governance, and blue growth;
 - **Interreg C**: capacity, engagement, shared/common challenges;



- **Interreg D:** climate, environmental protection, exchanges, and training.

The results of the Interreg citizen and stakeholder consultation process served as the foundation for the **Interreg GO! event**, which took place on 27th-28th March, 2025, in Gorizia-Nova Gorica and was organized by the European Commission. Building on the consultation outcomes, the event fostered broader political and stakeholder engagement, offering additional perspectives on Interreg. The following key messages from the conference complement the valuable feedback gathered from citizens and stakeholders in the programme harvesting reports:

- **Support for a stronger Interreg:** in light of new challenges and tensions, there is a clear consensus on the need to further strengthen Interreg. Recognized as a flexible and responsive tool capable of adapting to change and driving positive transformation, Interreg has garnered strong support for its vital role in enhancing the single market, boosting competitiveness, and supporting reform;
- **Future cooperation potential:** there is potential for increased cooperation, with a focus on reducing border obstacles and driving collaborative efforts in key areas such as health, energy, environment, emergency response, and security;
- **Territorial Cooperation as part of Europe's DNA:** territorial cross-border cooperation is considered central to EU's identity, serving as an essential tool to break down barriers and build strong bridges between communities;
- **Building trust and local engagement:** Interreg fosters trust and empowers local communities to scale up projects. The consultations during the event were seen as a sign of strong local engagement and involvement;
- **Adaptability:** Interreg adapts EU priorities to local circumstances, creating the right environment for economic, cultural, and other exchanges, fostering a "win-win" relationship and delivering real cohesion.

Overall, **Interreg is** seen as **a programme that adds value** because it acts as a bridge for connecting people, addressing common and regionally relevant challenges, providing a strategic framework, facilitating learning and capacity building, and being responsive to change and needs.



DG REGIO PERSPECTIVE: KEY TAKEAWAYS

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Representatives of DG REGIO illustrated what they have highlighted as key takeaways from the report:

1. **Cooperation as a fundamental value:** high-level representatives of the European Commission and the European Parliament have stated that cooperation is a founding value of the EU. It continues to serve as a bridge, delivering practical cooperation and enhancing competitiveness;
2. **Cross-border cooperation:** Interreg plays a crucial role in overcoming border obstacles, fostering local engagement, and delivering tangible benefits. While regional policy should undergo reform, Interreg must continue its work, with a stronger focus on performance and results. It remains a cornerstone of EU projects, helping to build personal connections and shared visions where local communities collaborate across borders to address common challenges and drive positive change;
3. **Future cooperation declaration:** there is a strong call for ensuring adequate funding for training, learning, and capacity building. It's essential to push for continued EU engagement so that it becomes a norm;
4. **Enlargement and Interreg's role:** Interreg is a strategic tool to support EU candidate countries. By providing first-hand experience with the EU's working processes, it fosters better understanding and cooperation, particularly for countries like Ukraine and Moldova. Interreg should continue supporting candidate countries, with a focus on better synergies and complementarities.
5. **External EU borders:** it is vital to address the challenges faced by people living in the EU's external borders due to political instability, economic difficulties, and disparities. Interreg's presence in these areas helps foster cooperation and solidarity, promoting partnerships and addressing strategic needs;
6. **Climate change:** climate change requires cross-border cooperation. EU cooperation offers a unique opportunity to work with Member States and non-EU countries as equal partners. Continuity in efforts is crucial.



Italy – Croatia

In essence, the future of Interreg lies in maintaining its core values while adapting to new challenges, ensuring that it continues to foster cooperation, solidarity, and mutual benefit for both EU members and external partners.

INTERACT AND THE ROAD TO POST 2027

Attention was brought to the upcoming [Interreg Knowledge Fair 2025](#), to be held on 4th-5th November for the first time outside of the EU, in Belgrade. It will focus mainly on Post-2027. It will last two full days (9:00-17:30), with parallel discussions.

Key themes:

- **Optimising Programme Management:** building on past practices, identifying opportunities and challenges in new regulations;
- **Advocacy:** Stronger expression of Interreg's achievements;
- **Interreg and the new geo-political reality.** Closer to citizens, defense and security, enlargement and neighbourhood, competitiveness, working together.

The plan is to mix current best practice and inspiration, alongside the future set-up. Each programme can send up to three people. They should include people who bring knowledge of how it is done now, and be able to get 'hands-on' with the draft regulations and framework. Two full days, 9.00 until 17.30, with parallel discussions and content.

Useful links:

- [Future points for discussion at the College of Commissioners;](#)
- [Interact Post-27 own consultations;](#)
- [19th May meeting webpage.](#)

