

Interreg MED 2021/27

Programme – Draft 2

Version of February 2021

Interreg
Mediterranean



EUROPEAN UNION

INTERREG Programme Template INDEX

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Note to Task Force members:

The format used is the template for INTERREG Programmes of the draft Interreg Regulation (last version revised of the ETC/Interreg Regulation – Annex, as outcome of the technical meeting of 23 January 2020 including the Council amendments, proposed alignment with the CPR by the Commission and the European Parliament suggestions).

A first version of the template has been issued for the 17th December Task Force. This is a second version, where we added the following new sections:

- Section 1.2.: complete
- Section 4: Action taken to involve the relevant Programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg Programme and the role of those Programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- Section 5: Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg Programme
- Annex on Indicators: 1st draft of the methodology + a sample of indicators fiches (in a separate excel). This part will be further completed in V3.

In sections already covered in V1, additions, from the JS or coming from feedbacks received from Participating States, have been inserted in blue.

1. Programme strategy: main development challenges and policy responses

1.1. Programme area [2 000 characters]

1.2. Summary of main joint challenges, taking into account economic, social and territorial disparities as well as inequalities, joint investment needs and complimentary and synergies with other forms of support, lessons-learnt from past experience and macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies where the programme area as a whole or partially is covered by one or more strategies [50 000 characters]

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

Numerous reports and studies have been published in recent years with the idea of setting priorities for the Mediterranean by 2020, 2030 ... 2050. It gives the impression that these said priorities remain the same although the horizon is moving away (only the names change...): that is why the third generation of Interreg MED proposes to continue working in the continuity of these challenges identified since 2007.

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

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

Challenges

What are these challenges and where do they come from?²

During the 2008 financial crisis, unemployment rates in EU countries have risen, peaking at 13% in 2013. In the following years, this trend declined steadily to 6.3% in October 2019. However, wide disparities remain, with unemployment still above 14% in southern Spain, southern Italy, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina,

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

². Obviously, the following data do not take into account the real situation at the time of writing of the Programme following the health crisis caused by the COVID19 pandemic of 2020: the economic and social gap can only be greater during the years of its implementation, especially in the Mediterranean, an area most affected by the consequences of the virus. It will be essential to provide for monitoring and to adapt priorities, as well as their resources if necessary, to the reality of the economic framework resulting from the crisis, once it is known and stabilised.

Montenegro and North Macedonia. In 2018, among the 280 EU regions for which data are available, 30 regions have a rate of at least 13.8%, twice that of the EU: 12 regions in Greece, 8 in Spain and 5 each in France and Italy.

The rate of youngsters that are unemployed, uneducated and untrained (NEET) has been declining continuously since 2013 and has returned to its 2008 level in 2018 (16.5%). However, there are significant differences between Member States: ten countries have recorded rates above the EU average. Of these, the highest rates were recorded in Italy and Greece, where more than a quarter of young people aged between 20 and 34 are concerned (28.9% and 26.8% respectively). There are also high NEET rates in North Macedonia (36.3%) and Montenegro (27.5%).

Many of the regions with a tertiary education level (% of 30-34 year olds) that remains below 40% of the European Strategic Framework for Education and Training "ET2020" in 2018 are rural or sparsely populated regions with a relatively large agricultural sector and, consequently, a low level of high-skilled job opportunities. Many of these regions are located in the Mediterranean region, in particular in southern Spain, Italy, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Malta and southern Greece.

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

Wealth creation is often located in capital cities and metropolitan regions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The capacity to respond to changing climatic conditions through mitigation, adaptation and resilience strategies differs widely across Europe. The difference is visible in the contrast between the great adaptive capacity of northern Europe and the high vulnerability of regions in southern and south-eastern Europe, as well as in northern Scandinavia and Finland. Vulnerable territories in south and south-eastern Europe that may need guidance in drafting climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience strategies should be supported through the transfer of good practices from front-runner regions (northern and north-western Europe) and cities. In addition, front-runner regions could learn from local unplanned adaptations and bottom-up initiatives in less developed regions. The transfer of good practices should be supported by a shared database of successful adaptation, mitigation and resilience strategies and by comparative studies aimed at identifying differences (e.g. geographical specificities) and similarities (e.g. transferable measures) between territories.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The whole architecture of Interreg Euro-MED is designed to maximise its impact: different typologies of projects (modular and strategic for experimentation and transfer in the territories at different levels and for different actors; thematic and institutional communities for network capitalisation and for European and national *mainstream*) will be possible in order to cover the entirety of the planned missions.

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

Moreover, the Interreg Euro-MED Programme will have to juggle between its main "maritime" connotation and its "land" components (hinterland and urban agglomerations) which in a vast area like ours assume their full importance in terms of specificities and interested population.

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

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

- the WestMed sea basin strategy,
- the macro regional strategies EUSALP and EUSAIR and their support programmes Interreg Alpine Space and ADRION,
- the Mediterranean Neighbourhood Policy supported by Interreg Next-MED
- the Union for the Mediterranean

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lessons learnt

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

It's through the strengthening of innovation clusters that Axis 1 wanted to promote Mediterranean innovation capacities to develop smart and sustainable growth in the sectors of blue growth, green growth,

social innovation and cultural industries. A wide objective in terms of topics tackled, but a focus on the clustering approach. Approved projects have successfully empowered the actors of the quadruple helix through the provision of tools and supporting services and a stronger transnational cooperation among them. However, conditions for the direct involvement of SMEs in transnational cooperation projects have not been met yet in this first period of direct participation of SMEs in projects. For the future, suitable conditions, such as administrative harmonisation of rules between different EU Programmes, state aid rules, thematic interest for participation, would ease the involvement of SMEs.

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

Most emphasis has been given in Axis 3, for the protection of natural resources of the MED area, through 2 complementary perspectives. S.O.3.1., with a wide variety of projects, have worked towards integrated policy and tourism management, to ensure that this key economic sector for the Mediterranean contributes to the preservation of its environment in a sustainable way. Besides, key stakeholders working in the field of biodiversity protection (S.O. 3.2) have joined forces to reach the objective of a sustainable biodiversity and natural ecosystems in the Mediterranean through improving the management of protected areas and creating a change of behaviour and practices. But the way protected areas are governed in various countries greatly differs, which makes difficult the development of joint governance plans.

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

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

Axis 1:

- a) The implementation of public policies or action plans in innovation has not been reached as expected, probably due to the different nature of the developed actions or the relatively low involvement of decision makers in the partnership schemes, or to the lack of capitalisation activities;
- b) Capacity building and empowering activities for public authorities and social actors were rather low, although they have been a success for the private sector;
- c) The opening of the innovation objective to 3 themes, and the existence of multiple subthemes tackled for each thematic, lead to a wide range of topics and actions implemented by few projects, most probably limiting the global response and impact at the Programme area;
- d) The limited participation of thematic SMEs as project partners reveals the need to ensure that enabling conditions for this participation are in place when this type of partner is specifically called to participate in projects.

Axis 2:

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

Axis 3:

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

Axis 4:

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

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

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

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

Thematic communities as an intermediate step between the governance of the programme and the territories maximise the tools provided by Interreg MED³.

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

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

The architecture, as it is in place in 14/20, is described as a unique experiment that must be further developed and from which lessons are to be drawn for the following programming period. Despite the overall positive opinion on the experience derived from the set-up of this architecture, several points have been raised concerning the complexity and related need for simplification.⁴

Stakes

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

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

- a) Sustainable innovation ;
- b) Enabling technologies ;
- c) Cultural and creative industries;

³ Operational evaluation, final report, 2020.

⁴ Impact evaluation, intermediate report, 2020.

- d) Public health and safety ;
- e) Information and communication technologies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moreover, in the Mediterranean region :

- Water is one of the most important economic and environmental resources threatened by climate change (drought) and human activities (pollution);
- Wetlands, which represent an important link in the water cycle, are also strongly affected by human activities;
- Waste is one of the main pressures on the environment (sea pollution comes mainly from land): in this case, the circular economy, which is particularly important for islands faced with scarce or more expensive resources and higher constraints for waste management, can be an innovative solution to this problem;
- Climate change is expected to increase the appearance of natural hazards in the coming decades (more extreme heat, less rain and river flows, higher risks of drought and desertification, increased risks of biodiversity loss, higher risks of forest fires);
- The increase in population will require an increase in irrigation of cultivated land from 4% to 22% (this development will be in conflict with other uses: drinking water, tourism, industry);
- The coastal area is densely urbanised, maritime traffic is very important and increasing: as a consequence, the Mediterranean Sea is facing problems of over-occupation, pollution, over-exploitation, erosion and there is a constant threat of forest fires and chronic water shortages.

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

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

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

PROGRAMME OVERALL OBJECTIVE AND MISSIONS

The Commission proposal for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework sets a more ambitious goal for climate mainstreaming across all EU programmes, with an overall target of 25% of EU expenditure contributing to climate objectives, reflecting the importance of tackling climate change in line with the Union's commitments to implement the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. From the 17 SDGs, those most likely to be tackled by the programme are: (7) Affordable and Clean Energy, (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth, (9) Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, (12) Responsible Consumption and Production, (13) Climate Action, (14) Life Below Water, (15) Life On Land.

The EU aims to be climate-neutral by 2050 (European Council endorsement dated Dec. 2019) – an economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. This objective is at the heart of the European Green Deal and the 2030 climate and energy framework is regularly revising upward its 2030 emission reduction targets. The

transition to a climate-neutral society is both an urgent challenge and an opportunity to build a better future for all. All relevant EU legislation and policies need to be consistent with, and contribute to, the fulfilment of the climate neutrality objective, and in parallel, the transition will require significant public and private investments. Interreg MED projects would be an excellent opportunity to support territories as well as national and regional policies to achieve the targets set in the EU Green Deal, contributing to an integrated approach.

In line with the EU focus on environment and climate objectives, the Orientation Paper for the Interreg MED Programme 2021/27 clearly pushes towards a Programme focused on environment, and Task Force members agreed that Environment should be the main theme for the next programming period, ensuring a continuity with the current programme Axis 2 and 3, but also considering topics in PO 1 linked to PO2.

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

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

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

The Programme has opted for a strategic approach around 3 operational missions that contribute to reach the overall goal defined here above. This strategic thematic approach will be the guiding thread for the Programme communication and capitalisation strategies within the Governance priority.

MISSION 1: INNOVATIVE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

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

To combat post Covid economic crisis, there is need for innovative solutions that will re-shape linear economies and provide pathways to circular models and sustainable society. Enabling experimentation on

wider scale - with technologies, business ideas, policies and governance, will make the transition to inclusive and circular growth possible.

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

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

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

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

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

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

This mission has as a main aim to meet the environmental objectives planned by EU and included in the EU Green Deal but also well detailed in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

Along with the other two missions, it intends to further contribute to the promotion of an environmentally healthier and economically more viable model for society.

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

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

In parallel, to maintain a good environmental status addressing actions able to prevent and mitigate risks caused by natural events and humans activities effects will be a priority as well. There is the need to persist

in the enforcement of existing tools for the integrated coastal zone management (ICZM), nature-based solutions, marine spatial planning (MSP) and, in parallel, to support the inclusion of climate change challenge into local strategic plans.

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

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

MISSION 3: PROMOTING GREEN LIVING AREAS

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

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

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

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

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

Indeed, the environmental responsibility of public authorities is paramount, and as more and more local authorities take on the sustainability challenge, a need for new green policies and strategies not only emerges, but adapting the regulatory framework becomes essential in order to make them a reality. In fact, this cannot only be tackled from a top-down perspective – citizens, communities, are stepping up to act as transformative power in creating socio-ecological local alliances. The involvement of the private sector is also crucial to connect and activate clear resilience plans for our living areas.

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

TOURISM ADDRESSED TRANSVERSALLY

If the tourism sector was already a priority for the Interreg MED Programme in 14/20 regarding its sustainability, to ensure the protection and valorisation of the natural and cultural resources of the area, the heavy impacts of the pandemic on this sector for the Mediterranean create an urgent need to sustain its recovery. Considering the overall environment and climate focus and the transnational nature of the Programme, the recovery of sustainable tourism is addressed transversally in all Programme missions, in order to allow “MED regions to practice a tourism governance that enables continuous improvements of environmental, social and economic sustainability, increases competitiveness through quality and innovations and ensures implementation and monitoring of strategies and policies”⁵. Indeed, it is more than ever the opportunity to support a permanent and sustainable change in tourism practices.

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

Selected policy objective or selected Interreg-specific objective	Selected specific objective	Priority	Justification for selection <i>[2 000 characters per objective]</i>
PO1	<i>(i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies</i>	Smarter MED	<p>Mediterranean regions lack behind the EU average in terms of innovation performance, despite the existence of better performing regions in Spain, France, Italy and Slovenia.</p> <p>The innovation potential of the area is highlighted in the regional smart specialization strategies for which development and implementation, the quadruple helix stakeholders’ cooperation is considered as crucial.</p> <p>Innovation and development potentials are significant with the existence of clusters acting in key intervention fields related to blue and green economy (environmental services, biotechnologies, sustainable tourism, management of natural resources, clean energy, marine science, fisheries...) Great achievements were made on thematic community level, linking national clusters, hubs, transnational networks especially in the maritime sector. Indicatively about 22 transnational networks and clusters have been supported in their activities.</p>

⁵ Panoramized Key Policy Paper on tourism, June 2020

			<p>By selecting the SO “<i>Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies</i>”, the Programme will answer to the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improve innovation capacities, competitiveness and internationalisation / extroversion of SMEs confronted to international competition in primary, secondary and tertiary economy sectors e.g. agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, food production, smart manufacturing, tourism, towards their green transition - strengthen Smart Specialization Strategies, promote advanced technology (digitalization is now more than ever an enabler of a sustainable economy) and non-technological innovations - strengthen cooperation between stakeholders of the quadruple helix, considering the environmental dimension in their activities - reinforce growth sectors supporting environmental and climate change initiatives and representing important jobs potential (e.g. blue and green growth sectors, tourism) - support social entrepreneurship and cultural and creative industries in a post-Covid context <p>Form of support: grants</p>
<p>PO 2</p>	<p><i>(iv) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;</i></p>	<p>Greener MED</p>	<p>Climate change is expected to increase the number of natural hazards in the coming decades. These risks include rising sea levels, coastal erosion, extreme climatic events, droughts and forest fires, desertification, degradation of biotopes, loss of agricultural resources, health effects, etc.</p> <p>Various studies show that most places where the effects are likely to be particularly severe are in the South of Europe.</p> <p>In terms of public policies and project engineering, innovative solutions will have to be developed for these different types of risk. “Nature based solutions” are important alternatives to provide long-term answers.</p> <p>From an environmental, economic, social and cultural point of view, the promotion of a sustainable tourism model, to balance the effects of mass tourism, is a central issue to ensure a more respectful development of environment and natural resources. Beyond preventing risks and developing the resilience of our ecosystems, we can also prepare adapting to climate change by adapting our living spaces. Thus, sustainable urban development and the management of green living areas will contribute to this adaptation, in particular by supporting the energy transition and soft mobility, as well as by actively involving citizens.</p>

			<p>By selecting the SO “<i>promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience</i>”, the Programme will answer to the following needs :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Answer the central issue of climate change for the future of Mediterranean regions (accelerated warming); - Urge the environmental protection in view of both the pressure of human activities and/ or climate change; - Increase the restoration of natural habitats in order to prevent disasters and improve resilience; - Improve the prevention and mitigation of risks; - Promote the importance of energy transition in the context of climate change - Tackle the climate change effects on health - Involve citizens in the greener transition of living areas <p>Form of support: grants</p>
<p>Policy Objective 2</p>	<p><i>(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy</i></p>	<p>Greener MED</p>	<p>There is room for improvement regarding circular economy innovation capacities and consumer behaviour. Innovative solutions can be developed at territorial and local level especially in areas confronted with lack of resources and/or waste management challenges.</p> <p>Moving towards a circular economy offers also new business development opportunities linked to eco-innovation in agricultural, aquaculture & fisheries, manufacturing and forestry sectors and in the reuse, remanufacturing, recycling of products/materials.</p> <p>Some specialisation trends can be observed (biomass supply, processing and conversion, waste reduction practices in the production and food supply, rise of the circular design).</p> <p>The work on implementing circular economy action plan and ensuring sustainable production and consumption models and tools started in the 2014-2020 period by the Green Growth thematic community of projects. It is expected to be further consolidated and continued with activities within this specific objective. The UfM labelling of this thematic community opens up equally the perspective of implication of stakeholders from the southern Mediterranean shore and joint work on combating common environmental challenges and establishing sustainable practices.</p> <p>Success has been marked in the green manufacturing sector with synergies with the working group of the Vanguard initiative and tools for the application of circular economy patterns have been promoted.</p> <p>By selecting the SO “<i>Promoting the transition to a circular economy</i>”, the Programme will answer to the following needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the huge environmental impact of the current linear production system; - the scarcity of natural resources and current overexploitation;

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the need to reduce waste production and its externalities, turning waste into a resource; - the need to encourage the adoption of a more sustainable economic model based on circular bioeconomy - new economic opportunities offered by the circular economy model; <p>Form of support: grants</p>
<p>Policy Objective 2</p>	<p><i>(vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution</i></p>	<p>Greener MED</p>	<p>The management of biodiversity and natural resources require the effective implementation of management plans as well as a better understanding of the role they play in our daily life, now recognised as “ecosystem services”⁶. Science, participatory solutions and the involvement of local authorities constitute key issues to understand these ecosystems and provide well accepted and efficient solutions. Public-private collaboration constitutes another milestone for biodiversity management.</p> <p>Several policy aspects and solutions have been addressed under the Biodiversity Protection thematic community in 14/20, covering sustainable use of natural resources, ecosystem-based management approaches and governance mechanisms.</p> <p>In parallel, enhancing green infrastructures and acting for the reduction of pollution especially in urban areas is of paramount importance to minimise the impact of living areas on the Mediterranean and global climate system as they can support the restoration and improve the connectivity between the fragmented areas of high value for biodiversity. By implementing the green infrastructure concept the Programme can gradually improve the availability of ecosystem services.</p> <p>By selecting this SO <i>the Programme will answer to the following needs:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consolidate the connection of natural ecosystems at transnational level ensure ecological corridors to boost and preserve biodiversity - reinforce sustainable management of protected areas - work beyond protected areas to address pollution, overfishing and climate change - promote adequate maintenance of coastal and marine biodiversity in the Mediterranean region - support the vision of the biodiversity conservation as an economic value for MED regions <p>Form of support: grants</p>
<p>ISO1</p>	<p><i>(vi) other actions to support better</i></p>	<p>MED Governance</p>	<p>The notion of governance highlights the growing complexity in the economic, social and political environment, the</p>

⁶ Ecosystem services are the many different benefits that ecosystems provide to people. For example, a stand of trees can reduce air pollution, purify the water supply, reduce the likelihood of floods and help regulate the climate by capturing and storing carbon. It might also provide timber for buildings, a space for recreation and improve the aesthetic qualities of the landscape.

	<p><i>cooperation governance</i></p>	<p>empowerment of new actors and the interaction of local and national levels with the transnational one to address new challenges, coordinate collective actions and reach a consensus on common strategic goals.</p> <p>In this framework, national, regional and local authorities along with international networks intervening in the Mediterranean area are relevant implementers for European and national policies. An enhanced cooperation of the stakeholders is of particular importance for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</p> <p>To capture, synthesize, transfer and apply best results from territories towards strategies/initiatives and citizens through a fluent and well coordinate decision-making process is the rationale of the choice of ISO1.</p> <p>During 2014/20 the Programme already supported an improved and stronger dialogue between national and decentralized processes through its governance axis, co-financing a platform project and strategic projects in key priorities. Based on this pilot experience of supporting multilevel governance, the programme intends to pursue its efforts to improve coordination and governance in the area.</p> <p>The ISO1, integrated to the overall Interreg MED 2021-2027 architecture, should strengthen thematic communities' processes of capitalisation, mainstreaming and liaising while targeting capacity building activities improving governance related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordination with relevant strategies and EU programmes - Civil society participation - Single territorial Mediterranean awareness for common solutions facing transnational matters. <p>Consequently, a better cooperation governance system cannot be the issue of only one single Programme but a single Programme can promote initiatives in the field: this is why ISO1 is fully integrated to the Interreg MED strategy and constitutes its backbone for the future.</p> <p>Form of support: grants</p>
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2. Priorities

2.1. Priority 1: Smarter MED

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

[300 characters]

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

2.1.1.1. Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate [7.000 characters]

Description

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

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

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

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

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

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

Objectives

- Effectively harness the innovation potential to support and accelerate the transition towards circular and sustainable economy and society
- Boost the competitive innovation ecosystem in multiple economy sectors [for sustainable consumption and production activities](#)
- Support knowledge sharing, creative industries and uptake of new technologies in diverse sectors related to Smart Specialisation
- Enhance transnational cooperation between the quadruple helix stakeholders, considering the environmental dimension
- Reinforce the role of the SMEs and clusters for the coordination and implementation of Regional Smart Specialization Strategies and S3 projects

Expected results

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

Indicative types of actions

- Value chain development and cooperation within transnational clusters, internationalisation and extroversion of SMEs
- Application of innovative sustainable business development practices, tools and solutions for SMEs
- Accelerating innovation and technology transfer (including blue and green economy, agriculture, food production, fisheries and aquaculture, climate change, renewable resources, smart manufacturing, transport, biodiversity, health and future digital technologies)
- Promotion of climate friendly innovations, social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship in new sectors and those in transition
- Changing tourism practices by promoting both existing and new solutions in a new innovative way: smart tourism
- Cooperation and coordination of institutional bodies, research organizations, businesses and civil society for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Smart Specialization Strategies for sustainable development (e.g. blue and green economy, manufacturing, renewable resources, transport, tourism, cultural and creative industries, biodiversity), skills development for smart specialization (e.g. health, future digital technologies)

This priority explores cooperation and direct and indirect contribution of project results to EUSAIR, specifically in reference to pillar 1 Blue Growth and pillar 4 Sustainable Tourism. Innovation in blue economy sectors, ensuring sustainable and resilient practices in blue technologies as well as fisheries and aquaculture,

are among the expected results of the activities within this priority. Work for diversification of the touristic product and innovative practices for sustainability of tourism is expected to be delivered within the Priority's projects.

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

Apart from the geographic and thematic contribution, at Programme level actions are already being taken within 2014-2020 period to establish collaboration with EUSAIR Authorities. Contribution of the Programme to the implementation of the EUSAIR priorities is envisaged via synergies and coordination with the Adrion Programme.

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

Coordination of activities with WestMED Initiative have started since the period 2014-2020 through the Blue Growth thematic community of projects with the engagement of stakeholders of the blue economy, especially blue cluster managers and research organisations with equal participation in the Programme and the Initiative's working groups. On the other hand, the Programme is also participating in these working groups with observers' status.

2.1.1.2. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
<i>Smart Europe</i>	<i>i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies</i>	<i>RCO01</i>	Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	Enterprise		
		<i>RCO83</i>	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
		<i>RCO116</i>	Jointly developed solutions	Solution		
		<i>RCO87</i>	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
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<i>Smart Europe</i>	<i>i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies</i>	<i>RCR104</i>	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied					
		<i>RCR79</i>	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Strategy/action plan					
		<i>PSRI</i>	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation					

2.1.1.3. The main target groups [7.000 characters]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- Local, regional and national authorities
- SMEs and economic operators
- Business support organisations
- Universities and research centres
- Civil society

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

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

2.1.1.4. Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools [7.000 characters]

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

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

Globally all the area is concerned and depending on the specific types of the activities, focus could be given to coastal and maritime zones, hinterland areas, mountainous, urban, rural areas or islands.

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

Climate change is a common challenge also for rural, mountains and/or remote areas. Mountain areas are confronted to an increase of natural risks endangering local people and infrastructures. This type of territories is also significant for their environmental value, thanks to forests, sources of water and the role in carbon storage.

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

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

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

3.

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.2 Priority 2: Greener MED

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

[300 characters]

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

2.2.1.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate *[7.000 characters]*

Description

SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

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

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

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

The concept of circular economy connects many different factors that are interlinked with waste management, such as by-products (not necessarily waste), use and transformation of waste in productive cycles (e.g. as supply materials), reuse of water, industrial symbiosis, co-generation, etc – these aspects are worth considering in order to align circular economy solutions.

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

This could particularly be enhanced through the contribution of projects to EUSAIR, namely as this topic can be linked to pillar 1 Blue Growth and pillar 4 Sustainable Tourism. The practices introduced through the implementation of circular economy models can support innovation for a more sustainable tourism management or a more dynamic maritime production sector.

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

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

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

Objectives

- Support the development and implementation of circular practices in production, manufacturing and production systems of agriculture, food and fisheries, in the tourism sector [as well as in the field of](#)

cultural heritage, promoting innovative business models and “circular” creative design processes and eco-innovation.

- Promote prevention, reduction and economic recovery of waste, increasing cooperation of stakeholders and consumers engagement.

Expected results

- Innovative practices adopted for reinforcing the resilience and sustainability of production systems in key primary sectors
- Circular and sustainable practices adopted for enabling the effective reduction and recovery of waste
- Increased cooperation between stakeholders throughout the waste management value chain including consumers engagement

Indicative types of actions

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

2.2.1.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Greener Europe	<i>(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy</i>	RCO01	Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	Enterprise		
		RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solution		
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Greener Europe	(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied					
		RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Strategy/ action plan					
		PSRI	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation					

2.2.1.3 The main target groups [7.000 characters]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2.1.4 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools [7.000 characters]

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

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

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

Islands are a prominent example of how circular economy models can be successful in achieving green transition, by responding to their specific territorial challenges. The management of natural resources, the economic and social ecosystems and local constraints and opportunities linked to the insular dimension make

islands the prime location to test and implement new circular approaches. Therefore, they naturally are one of the most important target territories of the tools and practices developed by projects.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

4.

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.2.2 Specific objective *Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience (PO2 SO (iv))*

2.2.2.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate [7.000 characters]

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

Description

In the prevention and mitigation of possible risks, and in the way they are addressed, a distinction is made between environmental risks affecting nature, and risks induced by human activity. Accordingly, there is therefore the necessity to anticipate potential human and natural risks ensuring effective adaptation measures as well as working on restoration of polluted environment. The adoption of a preventive approach is suitable. Indeed, prevention means better risk management in the future and ensuring a good health and quality of life of human beings.

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

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

In particular, the clean energy transition must be tackled considering the impact on the environment and the economy of territories. i) Through the Environmentally sound and integrated planning; ii) financing the energy transition; iii) the deployment of renewable resources; iv) changing the way we consider tourism and mobility are crucial in our work.

Thus, climate change will be tackled here by two distinct focuses: the prevention and mitigation of natural and human risks, and the transition to greener living areas.

Objectives

- Prevent from disasters and preserve the environmental status - protection and restoration of natural functions
- Restore polluted / overused environment due to human activities, taking into account economic and social impacts
- Support public authorities in their efforts to reach 2030 and 2050 energy goals and carbon neutrality, achieving effective planning and financing for climate change adaptation and energy transition
- Secure and improve environmental and living quality in a changing climate, including the extensive involvement of citizens

Expected results

- Increased capacity in the prevention and management of natural risks
- Ensure the "transformative change": strengthened governance framework able to ensure sustainable investments and decision - making processes
- Facilitated development and implementation of plans for energy transition and climate change adaptation and resilience
- Increased capacity of public authorities in planning and financing for climate change adaptation, resilience and energy transition

- Reinforced citizens engagement for more sustainable living areas in the Mediterranean

Indicative types of actions

- Prevention and mitigation of environmental risks
 - tackling coastal erosion and sea level rise fostering better integration of coastal zone management with other management approaches of natural resources : implementation of nature-based solutions, Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)
 - forest protection to reduce the incidence and extent of forest fires and increase the absorption of CO2 and enhance the capacity of the forest to restore ecosystem services and to better manage expected climate change impacts .
 - developing drought management plans, developing observatory, early warning systems on droughts / Improving knowledge: data, information sharing
 - developing management plans pertaining to other risks including rising sea levels, coastal erosion, extreme climatic events, forest fires, desertification, degradation of biotopes (land and sea), loss of agricultural resources, health effects (including heat waves, respiratory and other diseases), etc.
- Prevention and mitigation of risks linked to human activities
 - tackling the negative impact of main economic sectors (as manufacturing, agriculture, fisheries, boating, tourism,...), improving monitoring systems and governance: information sharing, exchange and access best available data (including Big Data), knowledge, assessments and tools on adaptation to climate change
 - Encourage platforms that use emerging technologies to monitor and predict risksimplementing strategies and action plans for a sustainable recovery in the tourism sector;
 - integrating climate change adaptation and resilience into local plans for the protection and management of areas of special interest (natural and cultural heritage)
 - Supporting integrated planning and financing schemes for climate change adaptation and resilience and energy transition,
 - Supporting deployment of renewable energy
 - Promoting energy renovation/energy efficiency of the building stock
 - Supporting and promoting low carbon mobility to reduce congestion and air pollution, to meet energy goals and carbon neutrality
- Improving connection of urban and inland/remote areas, including islands, paying particular attention to the tourism sector
- Restoration of water polluted environment
 - Restoring natural functions of ground and surface water: restore freshwater ecosystems and the natural functions of rivers (lake, rivers, wetlands)
 - Protecting and restoring water polluted resources (including plastic polluted environment)
- Awareness raising and promotion of environmental culture
 - strengthening capacity building and awareness raising to address environmental issues in order to change behavior in the use of natural resources (including in tourism practices)
 - fostering the creation of a water-saving culture among the population (including protecting drinking water supplies)
- Valorising in a sustainable way the natural and cultural heritage of the Mediterranean to reduce landscape and biotope fragmentation and to support the connectivity of ecosystems

These possible actions could contribute to the EUSAIR macro-regional strategy, particularly through pillars 2 "Connecting the Region", 3 "Environmental quality" and 4 "Sustainable tourism". Projects addressing risk management and transition to green living areas could be complementary on the following themes: Maritime and marine governance and services, Maritime transport, Intermodal connections to the hinterland, Energy networks, Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity, Sustainable and responsible tourism management.

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

Projects focused on prevention and mitigation of risks could also contribute to the WESTMED initiative especially through its 3rd goal "A better governance of the sea".

2.2.2.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Greener Europe	<i>(iv) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;</i>	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solution		
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
Greener Europe	<i>(iv) promoting climate change</i>	RCR079	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/action plan					

	<i>adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;</i>	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied					
		PSRI	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation					

2.2.2.3 The main target groups [7.000 characters]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indicatively, among the target groups for interventions in Priority 2 and the Specific Objective “Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience” are :

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

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

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

2.2.2.4 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools [7.000 characters]

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

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

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

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

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

Indicatively, among the target groups for interventions in Priority 2 and Specific Objective “Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience” the targeted territories are :

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

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

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

5.

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.2.3 Specific objective Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution (PO2 SO (vii))

2.2.3.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate [7.000 characters]

Description

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In addition, as learned so far, the setup of governance models and the establishment of long-lasting relationships with relevant stakeholders allow to strengthen management processes.

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

Objective

- Improved management of natural resources by ensuring the connectivity of natural ecosystems and enhancing the sustainability and resilience of natural habitats

Expected Results

- Reinforced adoption of ecosystem-based approaches for the sustainable management of natural resources
- Improved connection and enlargement of protected areas in land and sea

Indicative types of actions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.2.3.2 Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID [5]	Indicator	Measurement unit [255]	Milestone (2024) [200]	Final target (2029) [200]
Greener Europe	<i>(vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution</i>	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	Strategy/action plan		
		RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	Solution		
		RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	Organisation		

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
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Greener Europe	(vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	RCR079	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	Joint strategy/action plan					
		RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	Solution applied					
		PSRI	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation					

2.2.3.3 The main target groups [7.000 characters]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Indicatively, among the target groups for interventions in Priority 2 and Specific Objective (vii) *Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution*, are:

- regional and local and national authorities (environmental departments, economic development departments..)
- Environmental management organization/agencies
- Protected areas management organisations/bodies
- Universities/research centres
- SMEs & Economic operators (fisherman, tourism agencies...)
- Citizens / NGOs/ local communities and associations
- authorities, managers of protected areas or experts from the southern shore of the Mediterranean

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

2.2.3.4 Indication of the specific territories targeted, including the planned use of ITI, CLLD or other territorial tools [7.000 characters]

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

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

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

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

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

For the Specific Objective (vii) *Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution*, the targeted territories are:

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

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

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

6.

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

2.3. Priority 3: MED GOVERNANCE

Better governance processes provide the backbone for the capitalisation of the INTERREG MED results into policy actions, in cooperation and coordination with all other programmes and strategies intervening in the area. A Mediterranean vision and shared solutions need a strong governance to be built.

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

2.3.1.1 Related types of action and their expected contribution to those specific objectives and to macro-regional strategies and sea-basis strategies, where appropriate [7.000 characters]

Description

This specific objective aims to support the capitalisation of thematic results by establishing conditions for synergy and coordination between thematic projects of Priorities 1 and 2 and by implementing mainstreaming strategies in local, regional, national and European policies in partnership with institutional coordination projects with the aim of contributing to improved coordination of specific policies at transnational level. It also aims to support institutional coordination between regional, national and European authorities/networks and between ETC managing authorities, initiatives and strategies in the Mediterranean. To meet this objective, this priority will maximise the valorisation of projects results and their complementarity impact in the Mediterranean area per each single mission, will give priority to fostering liaising activities and strengthening coordinated working approach at transnational level, and implement mainstreaming processes as well as favour conditions for policy changes to improve the Mediterranean territorial cohesion.

Objectives

- Consolidate strong MED thematic communities pooling knowledge and intelligence out of previous experiences and actively promote synergies between projects dealing with different topics but contributing together to a dedicated mission
- Identify thematic results, relevant for capitalisation, produced by modular projects
- Set up Networks of thematic experts and provide a platform for peer-to-peer exchanges within and between thematic community projects and their community of projects.
- Facilitate, support and promote the mainstreaming of thematic results by their deployment to local, regional, national and European policies and stakeholders, as well as to international organisations, conventions and commissions in the Med area
- Increase the visibility of the thematic projects and the Programme outside the MED community, thus increasing the added value of transnational cooperation perception enabling a performant process of advocacy.
- Support the institutional coordination of initiatives for transnational and multilevel governance among local, regional, national, European and international authorities, organisations and conventions in the MED area and beyond.
- Set up and deploy specific actions in order to contribute to a smart transnational coordination on key policy sectors in relation to those tackled within the thematic projects.

Expected results

- A more coordinated approach to thematic issues with local, regional, national and European policies taking into account the results of Interreg MED projects

- Increased institutional capacity of Mediterranean public authorities in transformative public policy, governance and transnational cooperation
- Increased coordination and cooperation between regional, national and supranational institutions/bodies and programmes acting in the area as well as strategies and initiatives.

Indicative types of actions

- Creating and animating thematic communities
- Creating a result/output: an e-tank of Interreg Med projects
- Supporting modular projects in communication and capitalisation activities and ensuring the transnational transferability of joint results
- Developing synergies, producing summaries and qualitative analyses, as well as coordinating and managing (under the supervision of the JS) the communication of a thematically linked group of projects and generating added value in transnational cooperation, both at thematic and territorial level, ensuring the widest possible geographical coverage
- Supporting modular projects in transferring activities (methodological support, putting individual results together, leveraging the transferability potential and the preparedness to effective transfer, ...) and strengthening the capitalisation of jointly developed tools/measures and results that explicitly target territorial appropriation.
- Working with relevant policy makers and advocating for effective leverage and policy integration
- Contributing to the creation, between thematic community and institutional projects, of an own governance mechanism, with the JS support
- Participating in the governance of the Programme vis-à-vis external structures related to the theme tackled by each community, as for example thematic European or Mediterranean networks or international structures, thematic EU programmes for capitalisation purposes.
- Contributing to ensure a transition between programming periods (results, communities), capitalizing on results 2014-2020, in particular through participation during the drafting of terms of references for modular projects calls about themes, objectives and expected results.
- Analysing and drawing up the state of the art of cooperation and capitalisation processes related to the programme's missions in the MED area beyond the Programme
- Designing approaches and developing common strategies for institutional cooperation and capitalisation
- Consolidating or creating networks in order to strengthen the presence of the MED area at transnational and European level as well as the cooperation within the participating States and beyond the Programme, such as with countries of the Eastern and Southern shores.
- Participating and animating a network of Managing Authorities to raise awareness on coordination and tackle common challenges in the MED area, in particular with ADRION, NEXTMED and SOUTH WEST transnational programmes but also with cross-border Interreg programmes.
- Implementing liaising strategies to support institutional cooperation and foster policy update
- Liaising with administrative/political structures outside the Programme and other Territorial Programmes to contribute to shared objectives (with thematic and territorial programmes in the

MED area and with strategies, notably the macro-regional strategies EUSAIR and EUSALP and the WESTMED initiative, and other initiatives in the Mediterranean)

- Facilitating mainstreaming process between givers and takers at national and transnational level
- Supporting the capacity building of public institutions in the region to design, implement and evaluate the transformative policies necessary to achieve the thematic missions’ goals.
- Supporting capacity building of the public institutions to define and implement policies oriented to support the Programme’s missions
- Encouraging the participation and collecting contributions from civil society on issues of importance for the Mediterranean (organisation of seminars, symposia, debates throughout the MED area).

2.3.1.2. Indicators

Table 2: Output indicators

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

Table 3: Result indicators

Priority	Specific objective	ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline	Reference year	Final target (2029)	Source of data	Comments
ISO 1	Other actions to support better cooperation governance	PSRI	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	Organisation					

2.3.1.3. The main target groups

The core target group of the Interreg Med 21-27 consists of national, regional and local public authorities engaged in policy - making on territorial development. Together with other relevant bodies responsible for definition and implementation of development policies, this core group is the main target group of the programme. Depending on the field of intervention and the administrative structure of each country the type of public institution involved may vary. Main actions are addressed

to reinforce skills of public administrators for the improvement of decision-making and coordination processes in view of more coherent and integrated policies at national and transnational levels.

Beyond the core target group, other relevant organisations are also targeted for their role and relevance in the coordination of actions between actors of different areas and levels.

Given the role of projects in the analysis of thematic results, research centres and universities have their role to play. The same is true for networks of actors that can be targets for the integration of results into policies. These networks of actors can be both political and civil society actors who act as advisors or have direct influence on regional and national authorities.

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

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

- regional and national authorities (thematic departments)
- networks of decision makers
- Environmental, protected areas, energy, business management organization/agencies
- Universities/research centres
- NGOs/ local communities and associations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 4: Dimension 1 – intervention field

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

Table 5: Dimension 2 – form of financing

Priority no	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

7.

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

Priority No	Fund	Specific objective	Code	Amount (EUR)

3. Financing plan

Reference: Article 17(4)(g)

3.1 Financial appropriations by year

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

Table 7

Fund	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total
<i>ERDF (territorial cooperation goal)</i>								
<i>ERDF programmed under Article 17(3) (Investments for Jobs and Growth goal)</i>								
<i>IPA III CBC⁷</i>								
<i>Neighbourhood CBC⁸</i>								
<i>IPA III⁹</i>								
<i>NDICI¹⁰</i>								
<i>OCTP¹¹</i>								
<i>OCTP¹²</i>								
<i>Interreg Funds¹³</i>								
Total								

3.2 Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

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

⁷ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

⁸ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

⁹ Interreg B and C

¹⁰ Interreg B and C

¹¹ Interreg B and C

¹² Interreg C and D

¹³ ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C

Table 8*

PO No or TA	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total or public)	EU contribution (a)	National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
						National public (c)	National private (d)			
	Priority 1	ERDF ⁷								
		IPA III CBC ¹⁴								
		Neighbourhood CBC ¹⁵								
		IPA III ¹⁶								
		NDICI ¹⁷								
		OCTP Greenland ¹⁸								
		OCTP ¹⁹								
		Interreg Funds ²⁰								
	Priority 2	(funds as above)								
	Total	All funds								
		ERDF								
		IPA III CBC								
		Neighbourhood CBC								
		IPA III								
		NDICI								
		OCTP Greenland								
		OCTP								
		Interreg Funds								
	Total	All funds								

⁷ When ERDF resources correspond to amounts programmed in accordance with Article 17(3), it shall be specified.

¹⁴ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

¹⁵ Interreg A, external cross-border cooperation

¹⁶ Interreg B and C

¹⁷ Interreg B and C

¹⁸ Interreg B and C

¹⁹ Interreg C and D

²⁰ ERDF, IPA III, NDICI or OCTP, where as single amount under Interreg B and C

First attempt for a budget scenario:

The scenario is based on an assumption of a 20% overall budget reduction compared to the 2014/2020 period.

2021/2027			
	In	In Million €	Types of projects
TOTAL	100%	220 M	
Technical Assistance	8%	17.6 M	
Total available for projects	92%	202.4 M	
Priority 1			Modular projects (single module and strategic territorial projects)
SO 1.1 Innovation	20%	40.5 M	
Priority 2	65-70%	131.6 - 141.7 M	
<i>S.O.2.1 Circular Economy</i>	20%	40.5 M	
<i>S.O.2.2. Climate change</i>	25-30%	50.6 - 60.7 M	
<i>S.O.2.3. Biodiversity</i>	20%	40.5 M	
Priority 3			Thematic and institutional governance projects
S.O. 3.1. Governance	10-15%	20.2 - 30.3 M	

4. Action taken to involve the relevant programme partners in the preparation of the Interreg programme and the role of those programme partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation [10 000 characters]

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

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

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

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

of networks and any other body representing civil society, some of them based in the Mediterranean and beyond.

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

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

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

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

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

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

This survey allowed to confirm the first proposals of the MA/JS (June 2020) to the attention of the Task Force, in particular concerning the strategic objectives to be promoted: innovation (OP1), climate change (OP2) and governance (ISO1).

A first draft version of the complete thematic proposal was circulated in the different partner states of the Programme, as an informal consultation document, in summer 2020 (August/September): the national partnerships, consulted according to the modalities of each country, sent their observations so that the MA/JS could integrate them in a final text submitted to a written procedure of validation by the TF in October 2020.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- 1) Integration of a specific analysis of the application of Art. 6 CPR in the framework of the operational and impact evaluations;

2) Promotion of thematic territorial dialogues through the networks of partner organisations associated to the projects co-financed under ISO1 (information activities, mobilisation, capitalisation of external actors);

3) Constitution of a Permanent Contact Group ISO1 (inter-project coordination activities aimed at aggregating results and creating synergies for external target audiences);

4) Development of an inter-programme cooperation, or even coordination mechanism (exchange activities, study, transfer, communication and valorisation of results) and with key transnational actors in the Mediterranean in order to promote the mainstream and liaising in the Mediterranean basin.

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

Finally, in order to concretise this in a tangible way, it is also proposed that "Consultation Days" could be organised twice a year, thus favouring the decision making of the Programme Monitoring Committee through the provision of external "ad hoc" information and recommendations.

These "Days" could be organised in the form of webinars and target different audiences and organisations according to the subjects dealt with.

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

5. Approach to communication and visibility for the Interreg programme (objectives, target audiences, communication channels, including social media outreach, where appropriate, planned budget and relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation) [4 500 characters]

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme 2021-2027 is committed to build a communication strategy that supports the process of Mediterranean Governance and policy-change impacts.

Taking stock of past periods, the current strategy presents a roadmap for seven years. The communication chapter summarises a larger document, which will be complemented by an annual communication plan.

Thus, our approach is based on six drivers:

- **Targeted** in a thematic and territorial sense
- **Green**, we will embed greening practices across all activities for the Programme and project communication strategies;
- **Interactive**, focused on a 360° Interactive communication between the Programme and its target audiences, by creating better and simplified mechanisms and tools for interaction;
- **Community-based**: it allows for common synergies among projects and a closer engagement of partners.
- **Integrated and coordinated**: It means a flowing ecosystem acting as one unified, consequent and coherent whole in terms of the planification of actions, articulated messages, share of practices, targets and goals between all levels of the Programme architecture.
- **Change-oriented**: The Programme strategy defends a straight symbiosis between the communication and capitalisation actions aiming at policy-change on its different types. This focus will be further detailed in the capitalisation strategy.

OBJECTIVES

The Programme mission and operational objectives are broken down into only three communication strategic objectives for seven years, and these are split down on 12 specific objectives (a single example below), which will be converted into annual SMART objectives.

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

Indicators and SMART quantified objectives will be satisfaction rates, levels of social media outreach, web traffic indicators, among others.

CHANNELS

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

From this perspective, we take five categories of channels: events, public relations (advocacy), web& social media, press media and nearly-zero printed materials, due to our green policy.

In terms of social media & press, we intend to promote organic (free) and paid content to increase the snowball effect of campaigning.

CONTENT STRATEGY

The content strategy will have three main drivers for development: focus on capitalisation success stories, end-user oriented, and campaign-driven.

We will be focusing on capitalisation and quality results as the main angle, by giving a prominent role to the Governance axis. In the beginning, we will prioritise content on how-to enhance methods, processes, tools, promotion techniques of scientific and policy materials, templates, common indicators that lead to successful capitalisation.

In the closing phase, we will be harvesting quality results, promote and share experiences, capitalisation success stories, especially those of effective impacts on policies.

Moreover, the other two main drivers of the content strategy focus on end-user-driven content rather than promoting processes and partners; and campaign-driven, instead of isolated actions. On this note, we will be promoting a joint annual campaign for young Mediterraneans.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Based on past Programme experience and the management objectives for the new Programme we divided the target audiences into five group categories, which are further detailed in a complete strategy document, down to types of targets and at the public level, to social profiling personas. These

public groups include: **potential applicants and project partners; multiplier and/or strategic stakeholder; political end-users/decision-makers/policy-makers; Technical end-users; Public.**

BUDGET

Programme authorities are committed to keep the previous Programme's level of budget of 900,000 Euros, which depending on the total amount can be slightly over 0,3% of the total Programme budget, as required by the regulation.

According to the previous Programme's main lines of expense, events and IT tools take the larger shares. Following the new strategy, aiming at increasing the social media outreach and the increase in greening support, it is foreseen some allocation changes in the future budget.

6. Implementing provisions

6.1. Programme authorities

Table 10

Programme authorities	Name of the institution [255]	Contact name [200]	E-mail [200]
Managing authority			
National authority (for programmes with participating third countries, if appropriate)			
Audit authority			
Group of auditors representatives			
Body to which the payments are to be made by the Commission			

6.2. Procedure for setting up the joint secretariat [3 500 characters]

6.3. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States and where applicable, the third countries and OCTs, in the event of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission [10 500 characters]

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

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

Intended use of Articles 88 and 89	YES	NO
From the adoption programme will make use of reimbursement of eligible expenditure based on unit costs,	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

lump sums and flat rates under priority according to Article 88 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 1)		
From the adoption programme will make use of financing not linked to costs according to Article 89 CPR (if yes, fill in Appendix 2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANNEX 1: PROGRAMME INDICATORS

METHODOLOGY DOCUMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION TO THE INTERVENTION LOGIC

The territorial diagnosis and SWOT analysis of the programme area represent the starting point for developing the programme strategy. The territorial analysis provides a wide picture of the socioeconomic and environmental situation of the Mediterranean area, highlights the main trends for the coming years and identifies possibilities, opportunities and needs with regard to transnational cooperation.

Another cornerstone of the programme strategy are EC strategies and frameworks, in particular:

- The Commission proposal for the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework,
- The European Green Deal and the 2030 climate and energy framework
- The Orientation Paper for the Interreg Euro-MED Programme 2021/27.

Lessons learnt from the 2014-2020 programming period were also a fundamental element for defining the programme strategy, intervention logic and indicators framework.

It is worth to mention that key concepts reflected in the EU 2021-2027 legislation are different compared to those of 2014-2020²¹. These differences are the result of lessons learnt in the last period and of the need to simplify and streamline programming, monitoring and evaluation.

The key changes linked to performance, monitoring and evaluation are described as follows in the DRAFT Staff Working Document – Version 04/12/2020 “2021-2027 Performance monitoring and evaluation under the ERDF/CF and JTF”:

- Streamlining and reducing the number of policy objectives, specific objectives and the contents of the programmes involving a simplification of the intervention logic;
- A change in programming and monitoring from a focus on result indicators reflecting impacts to a focus on result indicators measuring outcomes (the change for direct beneficiaries);
- A more complete list of common output and a new list of common result indicators with the intention to improve the investment coverage of common indicators for transparency, accountability, monitoring, evaluation and communication purposes at regional, national and EU level;
- A reformed performance framework will encompass all output and result indicators. It will be one of several factors taken into account in the mid-term review in deciding on the allocation of the flexibility amounts;
- The use of specific objectives for the definition of the intervention logic, combined with aligned structured data on result indicators, output indicators and financial inputs (categorisation data) and more frequent reporting;
- A simplification of certain evaluation requirements.

These points have been taken into account for the definition of the programme intervention logic and indicator framework.

Based on the above-mentioned inputs, the main goal of the Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 programme has been defined as follows: *To contribute to the transition towards a climate-neutral society: fighting against climate change impact on Mediterranean resources, while ensuring a sustainable growth and the well-being of its citizens.*

The Programme strategic approach has been articulated in 3 operational missions, each of them contributing to the achievement of the main goal:

- INNOVATIVE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY

²¹ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/guidance_monitoring_eval_en.pdf

- PROTECTING, RESTORING AND VALORISING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE
- PROMOTING GREEN LIVING AREAS

Having defined the Programme main objective and the 3 missions, a selection of policy objectives and specific objectives has been made on the basis of i) the relevance and correspondence to cooperation opportunities and needs of the programme area, ii) the potential contribution to the identified EC strategies and frameworks iii) outputs, results and type of actions delivered by 2014-2020 projects.

The following PO and SO have been selected:

PO1	<i>(i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies</i>
PO2	<i>(iv) Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience;</i>
	<i>(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy</i>
	<i>(vii) Enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution</i>
ISO1	<i>(vi) Other actions to support better cooperation governance</i>

For each Specific Objective selected: Objectives, Expected Results and indicative Type of Actions have been defined, representing the main input for the choice of output and result indicators.

2. INTERREG EURO-MED INDICATORS FRAMEWORK

2.1 JUSTIFICATION OF SELECTION OF INDICATORS

The choice of indicators took into consideration the objectives, expected results and indicative types of actions plus available resources as input, to define projects and programme's outputs and results for each specific objective. Consequently, indicators were selected as to cover the highest share of possible actions: the purpose was to ensure a broad coverage of the indicators system in terms of actions and budget allocated, but at the same time to keep the indicator framework clear, and simple. A pragmatic approach and a clear and lean indicator framework allow to avoid putting a disproportionate burden on beneficiaries.

Overall a total of 8 indicators have been selected:

- 5 Output indicators: 1 ERDF common indicator RCO01, 3 Interreg common indicators RCO116, RCO83, RCO87 and 1 specific programme indicator
- 3 Result indicators: 2 Interreg common indicators RCR79, RCR104 and 1 specific programme indicator.

For the selection of programme indicators priority was given to common indicators provided by the Commission²². The choice of common indicators was strongly recommended by the Commission, following the intention to improve the investment coverage of common indicators for transparency, accountability, monitoring, evaluation and communication purposes at regional, national and EU level. In addition, the choice of common indicators allows to aggregate data and demonstrate and communicate programme's achievements and impact beyond the programme's territory. Consequently, an in-depth analysis of common output and result indicators provided by the EC has been performed.

²² Annex "Common output and result indicators for ERDF and the Cohesion Fund"

With regard to ERDF common indicators, only one output indicator has been selected: *RCO01 - Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)*, in continuity with the 14-20 programming period. RCO01 has been selected for the specific objectives in which the involvement of enterprises is key for the achievement of programme goals (PO1-SO i and PO2-SO vi).

The remaining ERDF common indicators under PO1 and PO2 were not consistent with Programme's objectives and actions. In addition, some categories of outputs such as "Green infrastructure built or upgraded for adaptation to climate change" and "Rehabilitated land used for green areas, social housing, economic or other uses" are not directly funded by Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 and therefore, the corresponding indicator cannot be selected.

With regard to Interreg specific indicators, 3 output and 2 result indicators were selected, based on the consistency with the intervention logic, policy and specific objectives selected and on the relevance of the type of outputs and results. Interreg common indicators have been developed to measure and show the impact of territorial cooperation and therefore were considered appropriate to measure the results and impact of a large transnational Programme as Interreg MED.

Interreg output and result indicators referring to *Solutions* and *Strategies/Action plans* have been linked to all the specific objectives under PO1 and PO2 as they prove relevant with regard to foreseen type of actions and expected results.

Output indicator *RCO87 - Organisations cooperating across borders* has been selected for all policy and specific objectives of the programme, as cooperation between organisations across borders is essential to implement the programme and achieve its goal.

In addition to ERDF and Interreg common indicators, two programme specific indicators have been developed in order to capture outputs and results that are distinctive of the Interreg Euro-MED programme:

- *Output indicator - Joint developed actions*. It refers to actions implemented with the contribution of two/more projects or of projects and external initiatives, with the aim of supporting better cooperation governance in the programme area. This indicator was developed to capture the peculiar outputs of projects funded under ISO1 policy objective. The type of output was identified after analysing outputs produced by Governance, Strategic and Horizontal projects funded during 14-20, taking inspiration from the common Interreg indicator RCO 81 – Participations in joint actions across borders.
- *Result indicator - Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders*. This indicator was proposed by Interact following consultation and joint work among different transnational programmes. Increasing institutional capacity being one of the main objectives of the Interreg Euro-MED programme and at the core of transnational cooperation itself, it was considered a relevant indicator to measure and demonstrate the achievement and impact of the programme for all selected policy and specific objectives.

The output indicator *Organisations cooperating across borders* and the result indicator *Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders* apply to all specific objectives as they represent the core of transnational cooperation and are key to achieve the main aim of the Interreg Euro-MED programme.

In addition, a homogeneous set of Interreg output and result indicators have been selected for policy objectives 1 and 2 - except for the ERDF indicator *RCO01 - Enterprises supported*, which is considered

relevant only for 2 specific objectives- in order to support harmonisation, clarity and relevance of the indicators framework.

Even if the indicators are the same for the different specific objectives, milestones and targets are set per specific objective and the reporting will be done by specific objective. This will give a detailed picture of the Programme's concrete contribution to each of the topics tackled.

The selection of indicators in general and in relation to the policy and specific objectives, was done with the intent of providing a harmonised perspective on the Programme performance and of applying a simplified and transparent framework, while focusing on measuring and showcasing the impact of territorial cooperation and the missions and actions foreseen by the programme at the thematic and governance level.

The Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 set of indicators allows to strike a compromise between descriptive value, achieving critical mass and manageable number of indicators. Selected indicators support the perception of the programme as transformative force in terms of cooperation and governance.

Furthermore, the selected set of indicators reflect the character of key contributions that Interreg can provide towards territorial cohesion mentioned by Interact²³ and in particular:

- Improved coordination, more effective and enhanced cooperation between stakeholders
- Enhanced governance capacity based on enhanced institutional capacity (on key thematic, on dealing with EU-funding, etc.)
- Development and testing in the frame of common pilot actions heading for scale-up and leverage effects (also in financial terms)
- Stronger involvement of rural – intermediate – urban territories based on functional cooperation approaches, involvement of more and less developed regions
- Considering a mid and long-term timescale.

Selected indicators comply with RACER criteria: Relevant, Acceptable, Credible, Easy and Robust

²³ Spotlight on “How to measure territorial cohesion and cooperation” Reflection points on indicators for Interreg in the post-2020 - Interact period March 2018

2.2 OVERVIEW OF THE INDICATORS FRAMEWORK

Here below the list of the programme indicators, including the link to the relevant policy and specific objectives and the relevance of selected output and result.

Type of indicator	Indicator code	Indicator name	PO	SO	Relevance
Output	RCO01	Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	1	(i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	The indicator Enterprises supported was one of the programme indicators of priority axis Innovation of the 14-20 programming period. More than 4000 enterprises were involved and supported by funded projects, resulting in increased capacity and cooperation in the fields of green, blue and social and creative innovation. The involvement and support provided to enterprises through project financing and implementation is crucial for the achievement of programme objectives, as they play a key role in the contribution to i) the transition toward a circular, sustainable and innovative economy and ii) the coordination and implementation of Regional Smart Specialization Strategies and S3 projects.
			2	(vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy	
Output	RCO116	Jointly developed solutions	1	(i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	Concrete solutions are needed to tackle the numerous challenges related to the specific objectives of PO1 and PO2 selected by the programme. Projects funded in the 2014-2020 programming period have produced outputs that can be considered as solutions relevant to challenges such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, urban transport, sustainable tourism and biodiversity protection. Examples of already developed solutions refer to planning tools to manage and monitor energy consumption in public buildings and instruments available to enhance the development of sustainable and responsible tourism. Solutions targeted by Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 will have to be tested in at least 3 programme countries and should be easily transferable to further territories of the programme. The thematic addressed and the type of solution developed should be relevant to each of the specific objectives selected.
			2	(iv) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience; (vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy (vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	

Type of indicator	Indicator code	Indicator name	PO	SO	Relevance
Output	RCO83	Strategies and action plans jointly developed	1	(i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	Strategies and action plans are needed to achieve long-term goals for enabling the transition towards a climate-neutral society, fighting against climate change impact on Mediterranean resources while ensuring a sustainable growth and the well-being of its citizens. Projects funded during the 2014-2020 programming period have produced outputs that can be considered as strategies in the fields of energy efficiency, renewable energy, urban transport, sustainable tourism and biodiversity protection. Examples of already developed strategies refer to models to develop action plans including local RES in energy mix, strategies applying sustainable tourism management criteria and joint governance plans. Strategies and action plans targeted by Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 should contribute to EU strategies identified for each specific objective and should be easily transferable to further territories of the programme.
			2	(C) (vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy (vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	
Output	RCO87	Organisations cooperating across borders	all	all	Cooperation between organisations across borders is essential to implement the Interreg Euro-MED programme and achieve its main objective. Furthermore, cooperation is crucial to provide a common response to current challenges identified for the selected specific objectives. During 14-20, cooperation was not limited to organisations within projects, it was extended to cooperation within and across thematic communities of projects, leading to relevant results and demonstrating the added value of this kind of transnational cooperation. Output indicator RCO87 will show the concrete joint commitment of organisations to fight against climate change impact on Mediterranean resources while ensuring a sustainable growth and the well-being of its citizens.
Output	Programme specific Output indicator (PSOI)	Joint developed actions	ISO1	(vi) other actions to support better cooperation governance	This programme specific indicator has been developed in order to capture outputs that are distinctive of projects funded under ISO1. It refers to actions developed with the contribution of two/more projects or of projects and external initiatives/networks with the aim of supporting better cooperation governance in the programme area. During 14-20, horizontal and Axis 4 projects have implemented such actions to a great extent and with significant results in terms of increased cooperation and better governance. This programme

Type of indicator	Indicator code	Indicator name	PO	SO	Relevance
					specific indicator will reflect concrete actions supporting better cooperation governance in the programme area.
Result	RCR104	Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	1	(i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	The concrete take up or upscale of developed solution by relevant organisations is crucial to have an impact on the territory. Several projects funded during the 2014-2020 programming period aimed at engaging local and regional authorities through a written commitment for the adoption of developed methodologies/tools/services. RCR104 will reflect the concrete uptake of solutions contributing to achieve Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 programme objectives in terms of supporting the transition towards a climate-neutral society.
			2	(iv) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience; (vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy (vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	
Result	RCR79	Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	1	(i) Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	The concrete take up or upscale of developed strategies/action plans by relevant organisations is crucial to have an impact on the territory. Several projects funded during the 2014-2020 programming period aimed at engaging local and regional authorities through a written commitment for the adoption of developed strategies and action plans. RCR79 will reflect the concrete uptake of strategies contributing to achieve Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 programme objectives in terms of supporting the transition towards a climate-neutral society.
			2	(iv) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience; (vi) Promoting the transition to a circular economy (vii) enhancing biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution	
Result	Programme specific result indicator (PSRI)	Organisations with increased institutional capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders	all	all	Increasing institutional capacity is one of the main objectives of the Interreg Euro-MED programme and at the core of transnational cooperation. This programme specific indicator is relevant to measure and showcase the achievement and impact of the programme for all selected specific objectives. Projects funded during the 2014-2020 programming period largely contributed to increase capacity of organisations within project partnerships and beyond, e.g. through joint development and adoption of strategies and solution. This result indicator will concretely reflect the change sought and achieved for final beneficiaries of the Interreg Euro-MED programme.

2.3 LINK BETWEEN OUTPUT AND RESULT INDICATORS

The link between output and result indicators can be described as follows:

RCO116 Joint developed solutions directly contribute to *RCR104 Solutions taken up or up scaled by organisations*, both are selected from the list of the EC common indicators. The uptake or upscale of delivered solutions is crucial for having an impact at territorial level and on the final beneficiaries of Interreg Euro-MED 21-27.

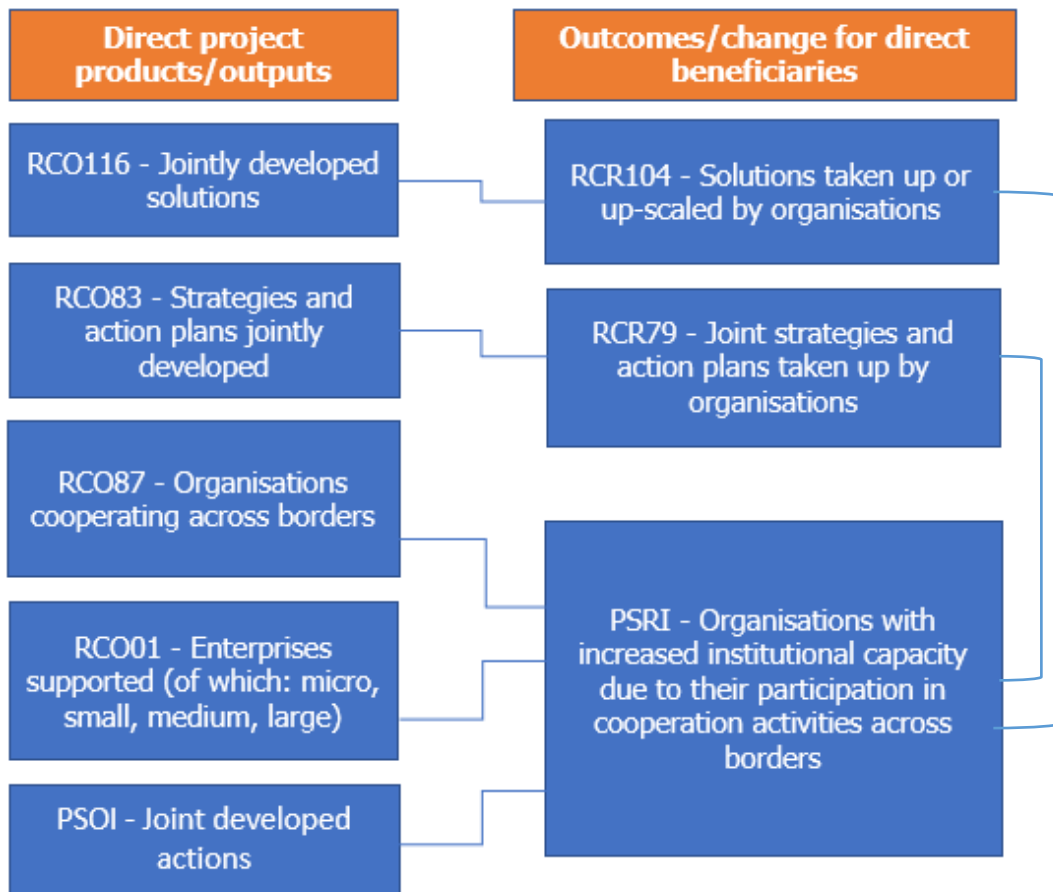
RCO83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed directly contributes to *RCR79 Joint strategies and action plan taken up by organisations*, both are selected from the list of the EC common indicators. The uptake or upscale of delivered strategies/action plans is crucial for having an impact at territorial level and on the final beneficiaries of Interreg Euro-MED 21-27.

RCO87 Organisations cooperating across borders, *RCO01 Enterprises supported* and *PSOI Joint developed actions* directly contribute to the *PSRI Organisations with increased capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders*: increased capacity of organisations in the programme area is achieved through:

- the cooperation of organisations within funded projects - resulting in increased capacity in project implementation and in the thematic field of the relevant specific objective
- the active involvement of enterprises within funded projects and the support provided to enterprises through project activities - resulting in i) increased capacity of enterprises both in project implementation and in the thematic field of the relevant specific objective, and in ii) increased capacity of organisations other than enterprises to cooperate and engage the private sector in projects
- the implementation of joint actions via the cooperation of several projects and/or with external stakeholders, resulting in increased capacity for cooperation governance in the programme area.

Furthermore, *RCR104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations* and *RCR79 Joint strategies and action plan taken up by organisations* also contribute to *PSRI Organisations with increased capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders*, as organisations taking up or upscaling developed solutions and strategies demonstrate to have increased their capacities through the uptake process itself.

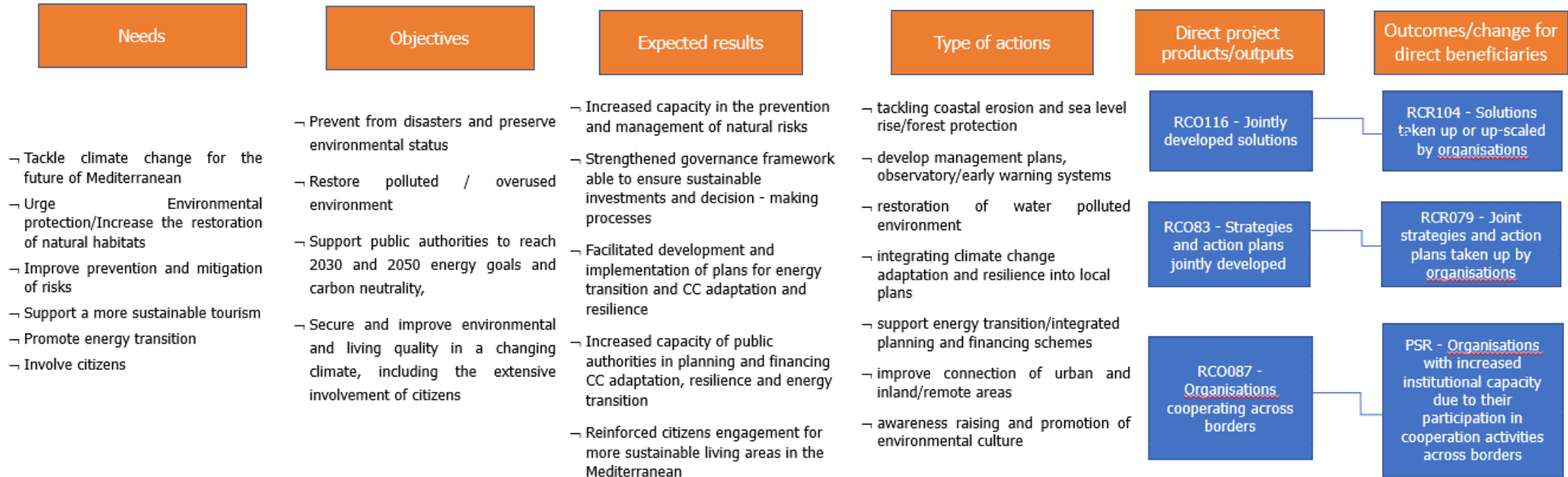
The contribution - direct or indirect - of all selected indicators to the result indicator *Organisations with increased capacity due to their participation in cooperation activities across borders* demonstrates the relevance of increasing institutional capacity within the Interreg Euro-MED 21-27 programme, consistent with the core goals of transnational cooperation.



3. FOCUS ON SELECTED SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Justify the choice of indicators by type of intervention (PO and SO)
- Show milestones and targets set
- Durability of results
- Use of resources/link to budget

3.1 SO IV) PROMOTING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION, RISK PREVENTION AND DISASTER RESILIENCE



4. TARGET SETTING

- Methodology for the calculation of milestones and targets
- Information sources
- Description of the reasoning behind the calculations the adjustments made to calculate the intermediate (2024) and target (2029) value/show evidence supporting the assumptions for the calculation of the 2024 milestones and 2029 targets
- Strengths/weaknesses identified during the 2014-2020 programming period
- Use of resources/link to budget
- Risks related to sensitivity of assumptions, data reliability, data collection, evidence, quality assurance, factors that may influence achievement of milestones and targets, how they have been taken into account

5. DATA COLLECTION

Ensure Quality and reliability of indicators data:

- Establish reliable monitoring of indicators (monitoring system, checklists, feedback, clarifications, corrections), e.g. no manual aggregation at MA/JS level
- Understanding of indicators by projects partners (programme manual, application stage, trainings) e.g. when to count an indicator when not, feedback during reporting
- Indicators “only” aggregated at programme level: define responsibilities, collection, reporting, e.g. document approach in management control system, ensure understanding at MA/JS level
- Eliminating risks when reporting indicators to EC (documentation, checks, responsibilities) > how to avoid mistakes
- Time measurement
- Aggregation issues
- Reporting
- Modalités de traçabilité et de fiabilisation

6. INDICATORS FICHES (SEE EXCEL FILE)

ANNEX 2: TYPOLOGIES OF PROJECTS

TYPOLOGIES OF PROJECTS FOR PRIORITIES 1 AND 2

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

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

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

Indicative types of activities for Study projects:

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

Indicative types of outputs for Study projects:

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

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

Indicative types of activities for testing projects:

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

Indicative types of outputs for testing projects:

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

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

Indicative types of activities for Transfer projects:

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

Indicative types of outputs for Transfer projects:

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

➤ **Strategic territorial projects:**

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

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

cover. Thus, they produce in the first place a territorial impact, based on involving all required actors/stakeholders to trigger solutions for identified territories.

They aim at:

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

Typologies of territories and matching topics are predefined in the Cooperation Programme, for each Specific Objective in the “Specific territories targeted “section (see annex 3).

Framework conditions/prerequisite for key territorial projects:

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

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

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

TYPOLOGIES OF PROJECTS FOR PRIORITY 3

➤ **Thematic Community projects**

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

Indicative types of activities:

- Creating and animating thematic communities
- Creating an e-tank of Interreg Med projects
- Supporting modular projects in communication and capitalisation activities and ensuring the transnational transferability of joint results
- Developing synergies, producing summaries and qualitative analyses, as well as coordinating and managing (under the supervision of the JS) the communication of a thematically linked group of projects and generating added value in transnational cooperation, both at thematic and territorial level, ensuring the widest possible geographical coverage
- Supporting modular projects in transferring activities (methodological support, putting individual results together, leveraging the transferability potential and the preparedness to effective transfer, ...) and strengthening the capitalisation of jointly developed tools/measures and results that explicitly target territorial appropriation.
- Working with relevant policy makers and advocating for effective leverage and policy integration
- Participating in the governance of the Programme vis-à-vis external structures related to the theme tackled by each community, as for example thematic European or Mediterranean networks or international structures, thematic EU programmes for capitalisation purposes.
- Contributing to ensure a transition between programming periods (results, communities), capitalizing on results 2014-2020, in particular through participation during the drafting of terms of references for modular projects calls about themes, objectives and expected results.

Indicative types of outputs:

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

➤ **Institutional projects**

Institutional projects will aim at supporting institutional coordination between regional, national and European authorities/networks and between ETC managing authorities, initiatives and strategies in

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

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

Indicative types of activities:

- Analysing and drawing up the state of the art of cooperation and capitalisation processes related to the programme's missions in the MED area beyond the Programme
- Designing approaches and developing common strategies for institutional cooperation and capitalisation
- Consolidating or creating networks in order to strengthen the presence of the MED area at transnational and European level as well as the cooperation within the participating States and beyond the Programme, such as with countries of the Eastern and Southern shores.
- Participating and animating a network of Managing Authorities to raise awareness on coordination and tackle common challenges in the MED area, in particular with ADRION, NEXTMED and SOUTH WEST transnational programmes but also with cross-border Interreg programmes.
- Implementing liaising strategies to support institutional cooperation and foster policy update
- Liaising with administrative/political structures outside the Programme and other Territorial Programmes to contribute to shared objectives (with thematic and territorial programmes in the MED area and with strategies, notably the macro-regional strategies EUSAIR and EUSALP and the WESTMED initiative, and other initiatives in the Mediterranean)
- Facilitating mainstreaming process between givers and takers at national and transnational level
- Supporting the capacity building of public institutions in the region to design, implement and evaluate the transformative policies necessary to achieve the thematic missions' goals.
- Supporting capacity building of the public institutions to define and implement policies oriented to support the Programme's missions
- Encouraging the participation and collecting contributions from civil society on issues of importance for the Mediterranean (organisation of seminars, symposia, debates throughout the MED area).

Indicative types of outputs:

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

ANNEX 3: METHODOLOGY TO SELECT TERRITORIES THAT CAN BE ADDRESSED BY KEY-TERRITORIAL PROJECTS

Key territorial projects are further developing the approach of 2014-2020 integrated projects:

- By identifying MED **key territories** thus implementing, as well the principle of “functional areas”, mentioned in the MED –orientation paper, as the “SWOT analysis of strong transnational territorial issues” of the MED territorial diagnosis and SWOT analysis report 2021-27.
- By identifying a set of MED relevant **topics** for those territories, thus providing a tool to tackle in an efficient way their common challenges.
- By providing an operational **partnership**, ready to implement all relevant project modules - from the focused territorial and thematic analysis to the capitalisation of developed and tested project results.

The necessary identification of key territories requires a territorial and a thematic selection.

THE TERRITORIAL SELECTION

The territorial selection is based on the analysis of EU constitutional regulations identifying specific types of territories, EU-regulations, international conventions, the MED 2021-2027 diagnosis and the analysis of the relevance of territorial typologies for the MED area based on statistics and the expertise of the MED programme bodies, taking as well into account that certain territories are already targeted by specific objectives.

Identified relevant documents are e.g. the **Lisbon Treaty**, in particular Art. 174, International Conventions focussing on the Mediterranean as the **Barcelona Convention** and its protocols, e.g. the Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), the **European regulations** defining or referring to specific types of territories as the ERDF regulations as Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013, European Parliament resolutions focussing on specific types of territories as the European Parliament resolution of 4 February 2016 on the special situation of islands ([2015/3014\(RSP\)](#) and [Eurostat and ESPON statistics](#)²⁴).

THE THEMATIC SELECTION FOR MED SPECIFIC TERRITORIES

The thematic selection is based on the analysis of EU regulations specifying policy approaches for certain types of territories, international conventions focussing on specific themes for identified types

²⁴ ESPON, Territorial Coordination for the future of Europe, Luxembourg, 2017; Eurostat, Methodology manual on territorial typologies, edition 2018, Luxembourg, 2019

of territories, Recommendations, Initiatives policy document launched or backed up by the European Union or MED-relevant international bodies and the expertise of the MED programme bodies.

Identified relevant documents are e.g. the **Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC** in particular regulations on "Transitional waters" and "Coastal water"; the **EU Maritime Spatial Planning Strategy**; **the European Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC**; the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2002 concerning the implementation of **Integrated Coastal Zone Management** in Europe; the **Clean Energy for EU islands initiative**.

In order to ensure a harmonised application of the typologies and allow cross-referencing from other acts and programmes, whenever possible, the identification of territories is based on a legislative initiative called "Tercet", launched by Eurostat. This initiative is aiming at integrating the typologies into the NUTS Regulation. Tercet can be found on EUR-Lex.

Table: Key territory identification

Key territory	EU-regulation or institutional document	MED Diagnosis	Thematics	Internat. Treaty and Conv.	Int. and EU-Initiatives	Med relevance	MED Key-territorial approach (proposal)
Rural areas	Lisbon Treaty Art. 174 ERDF regulations as Regulation (EU) No 1301/2013 European agricultural fund for rural development	(see hinterland/remote areas)	Climate change (desertification / droughts) - Degradation of forest, forest fires, forests damaged by storms, diseases and pests, impact of still increasing human infrastructures (roads), loss of biodiversity - Management of water resources (including wetlands) - Agriculture - Accessibility / services - Demography; risk of geographic, social, economic isolation and devitalisation, migration - Pollution - Digital divide	Alpine Convention, spatial planning and sustainable development protocol	Connecting Europe Facility Digital Programme	Eurostat “rural-urban grid”	MED strategy to bridging the digital divide between rural and urban areas

Islands	Lisbon Treaty Art. 174 European Parliament 2015/3014(RSP) on the special situation of islands	<i>Included</i>	Climate change: sea level rise - Accessibility - Energy dependency / small scale local production - Waste management / circular economy - Water management - Tourism / seasonality - Dependency on consumer goods and foodstuff - Demography	<i>To be assessed</i>	Clean Energy for EU islands initiative	Islands	Common strategies on Clean Energy/ Waste/ Water management for MED islands
Mountain regions	Lisbon Treaty Art. 174	“represent an important part of Mediterranean regions and close hinterland”	Climate change and Biodiversity; adaptation to climate change - Natural risks: landslides - Accessibility/services - Many endemic species and risks of extinction - Renewable energy - Demography - Digital divide - water storage for urban and coastal areas	Alpine Convention, Mountain farming protocol Mountain forest protocol	<i>To be assessed</i>	Eurostat mountain areas	Sustainable Water management

Ports	DIRECTIVE 2005/65/EC on enhancing port security TEN-T Mediterranean Corridor	-	ocean-going shipping; port operations; logistic chains; alternative energy; environmental auditing/CO2 inventories	Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations	World Port Climate Initiative (WPCI)	Eurostat, Maritime Transport	innovative climate friendly ecosystems in ports