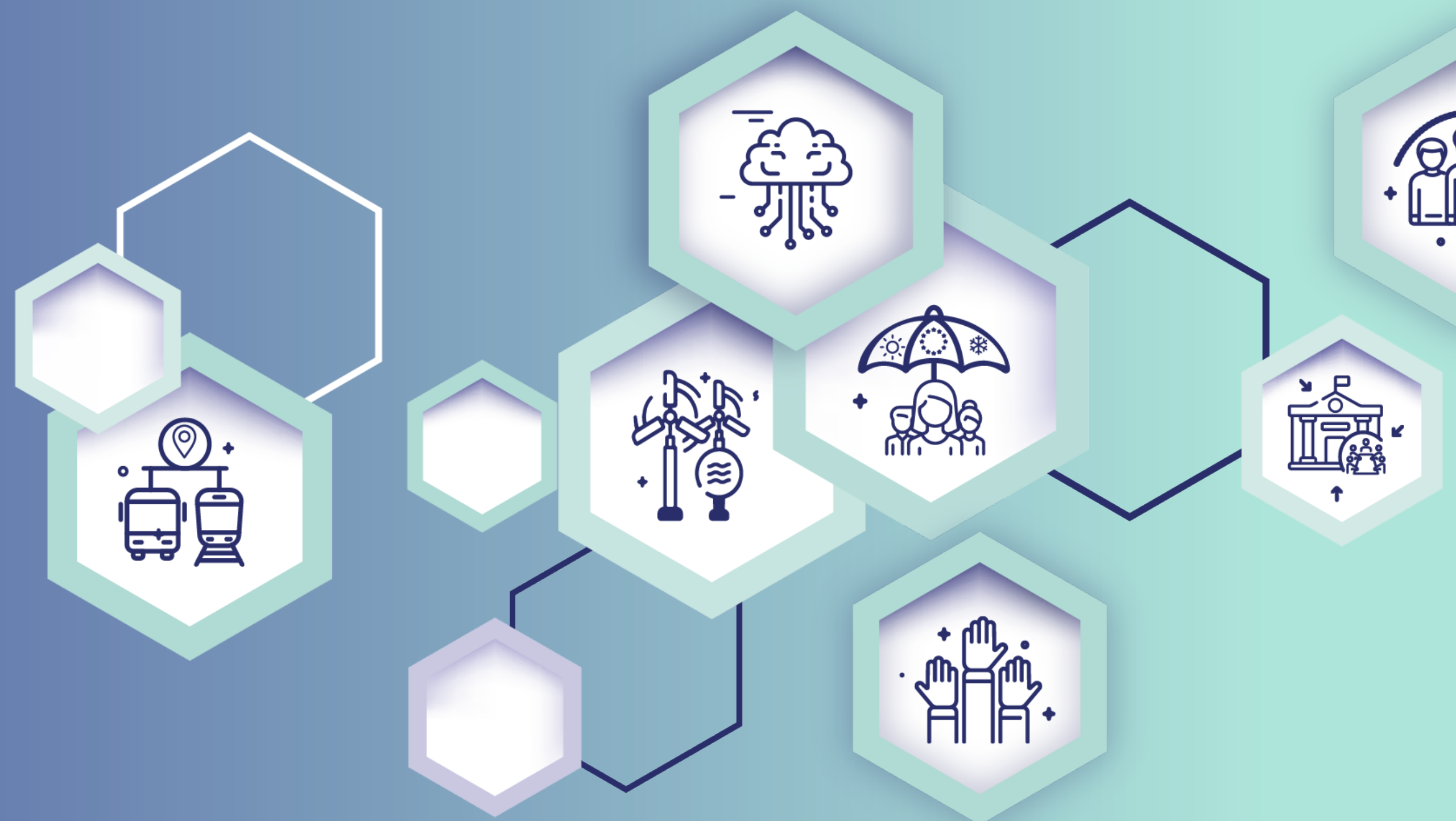


#Interreg

Interreg GO!

27>28 March 2025

Gorizia / Nova Gorica



Interreg GO! People to People impacts



Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Skemes Boadie

Gina McIntyre, Chief Executive
The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)

An introduction to our home

Northern Ireland and border counties of Ireland



Our programme area

Northern Ireland and border counties of Ireland



Key Facts

- Northern Ireland population is **1.9m**
- Population in border counties of Ireland is **559,000**
- Most recent census showed the proportion of the resident population which is either Catholic or brought up Catholic is **45.7%** compared to **43.48%** Protestant.
- The proportion of the population born outside Northern Ireland was **11%** in 2011. In the latest census, it rose to **13.5%**.
- **3.4%** of Northern Ireland's population, which is 65,600 people, now belong to ethnic minority groups. This is around double the 2011 figure (32,400 people) and four times the figures of 2001 (14,300 people).



The Special EU Programmes Body

What we do



Key Facts

- One of six cross-border Bodies set up under the Good Friday Agreement
- Manage EU funding programmes in Northern Ireland and border counties of Ireland
- 30 years of practical peacebuilding experience via the PEACE programmes, setup in 1995 to maintain momentum after the ceasefires in Northern Ireland

PEACE I

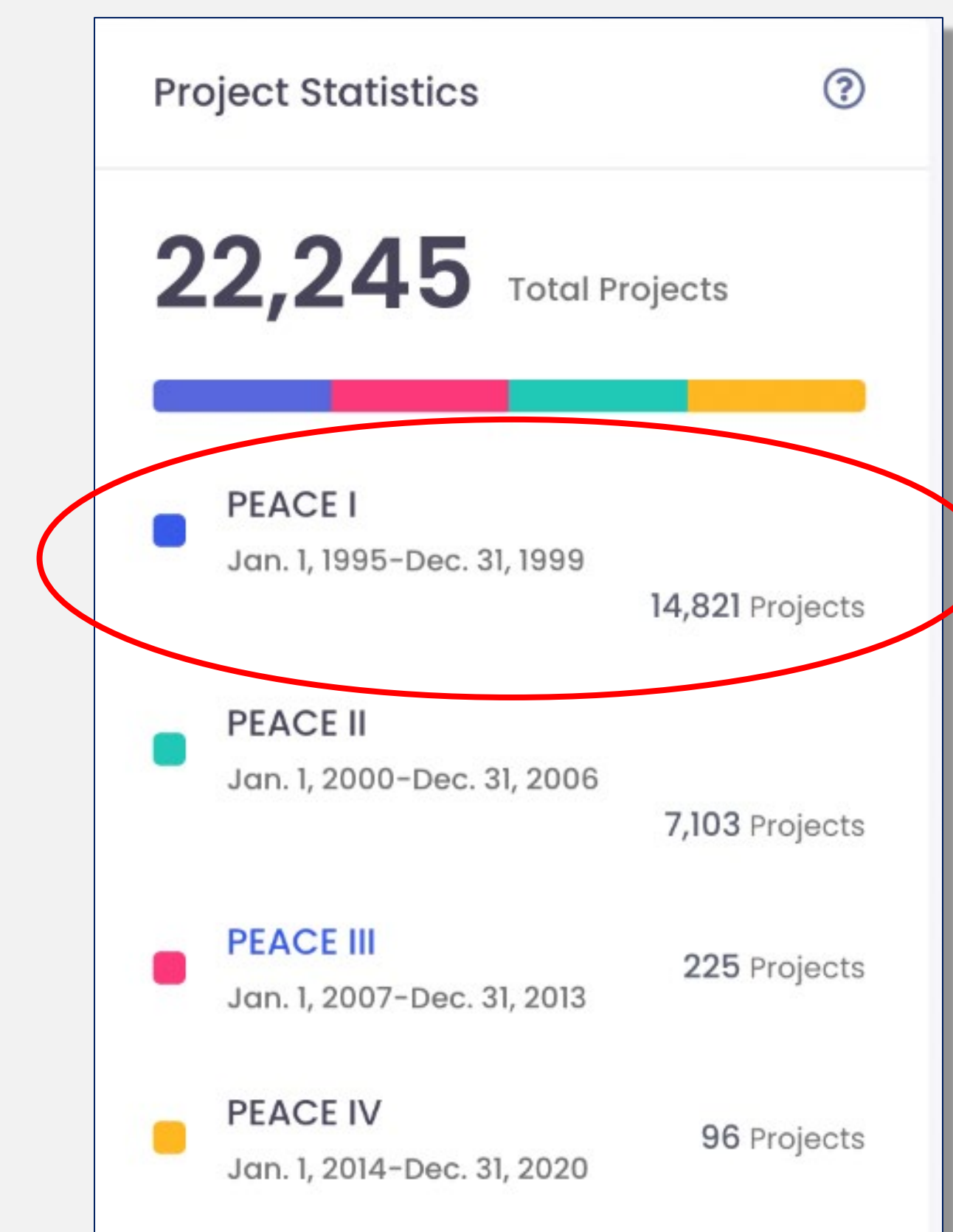
Addressing the immediate legacy of the conflict



1995-1999

- Created from a desire by the EU to respond positively to the announcement of the ceasefires in 1994
- Acted as a rapid response initiative that generated a high level of pioneering peacebuilding, especially for most adversely affected by the violence and acute deprivation
- Large number and diversity of projects contributed to quick and evident benefits of the cessation of violence

“One of the most significant things [PEACE I] did was enable us to distribute small grants. It allowed more people to be involved in peacebuilding efforts and to feel a sense of ownership of the process.”



PEACE II

Strategically addressing the legacy of the conflict and promoting reconciliation



2000-2006

- PEACE II continued support for the peace process, under new institutional arrangements
- The SEUPB was created with specific responsibility of managing PEACE II, making it an integral part of the peace architecture



The Good Friday Agreement necessitated an evolution in peacebuilding

- PEACE II built on the success and lessons of PEACE I, focusing on **sustaining** peace. It responded to social and economic difficulties in addition to trust-building and community empowerment.

Definition – five strands

- Reconciliation must be seen as a process that involves five interwoven and related strands (Hamber & Kelly 2004).

There are:

1. **Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society**
2. **Acknowledging and dealing with the past**
3. **Building positive relationships**
4. **Significant cultural and attitudinal change**
5. **Substantial social, economic and political change**

PEACE III

Dealing with the past whilst looking to a shared future



2007-2013

- PEACE III continued and renewed emphasis on reconciliation. Its strategic aim was to ***“reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region”***
- To do so, PEACE III responded to social difficulties, including high levels of division and segregation, lack of shared spaces, and significant numbers of victims and survivors.
- It also sought to address economic challenges, including the impact of conflict on cross-border social and economic linkages leading to isolation and exclusion in some areas, as well as marginalisation and social exclusion.



PEACE IV

Creating significant and lasting changes



2014-2020

- PEACE IV aimed to deepen reconciliation, enhance cross border co-operation, and address the legacy of the past. It emphasised sustained and meaningful contact on a cross-community basis.
- Northern Ireland still faced unacceptable levels of sectarianism, segregation and a high number of victims and survivors. PEACE IV promoted social and economic stability, and cohesion between communities.
- The UK's decision to leave the EU raised concerns for the peace process and cross-border cooperation beyond 2020.



PEACEPLUS

Supporting the journey to a more peaceful and prosperous society

2021-2027



- Designed to support peace and prosperity by building upon the work of the previous programmes. PEACEPLUS has two core objectives:
- *The first involves taking opportunities to address the needs arising from the peace process to boost economic growth and stimulate social and economic regeneration. The second focuses on promoting social inclusion, particularly for those at the margins of economic and social life.*
- *The design of the programme reflects the importance of peacebuilding activity, but also the importance of actions that will contribute positively to the economy, building prosperity and adjusting to the new environment and challenges we face.*



How our society shaped PEACEPLUS



2021-2027

The Programme was informed by:

- The EU Framework and objectives for all Programmes across Europe and the EU Border Orientation Paper
- Priorities and objectives set out in New Decade, New Approach, Project Ireland 2040 and the Programme for Government
- A socio-economic profile of the Programme area that was commissioned in 2019. An addendum to the report has been added to include Covid-19 impacts
- A Stakeholder Engagement process initiated in November 2019 through to February 2020. Public events across the Programme area and over 300 surveys provided important information and views from the citizens
- Bilateral engagement with government departments in Northern Ireland and Ireland resulting in Joint North-South Draft Position Papers on core elements of the Programme
- Meetings with stakeholders from a wide range of sectors at all levels, including statutory agencies, local government, business representatives, social enterprises, and community and voluntary organisations
- The public consultation, which took place from the 10 March to 12 May 2021, received 415 consultation response surveys



Insights from our experience

2021-2027

- Peacebuilding begins before peace
- Include youth early
- Learn insights from elsewhere
- Beware of kicking issues ‘down the road’
- The importance of telling a story
- The need for champions
- Grassroots action provides continuity during political setbacks
- Shared spaces to encourage contact – and co-creation



Professor Duncan Morrow
Director of Community Engagement
at Ulster University

The PEACE Programme has been the continuity when the political process fell apart. There's been a level of continuity and development for 25 years when other people went away. Just look at victims and survivor groups that were supported predominantly through PEACE when others went away.



Reaching the deep issues takes years: 'Peeling an Onion'



PEACE I

Immediate positive impact

PEACE II

Focus on specific areas and sectors

PEACE III

Reconciliation

PEACE IV

Issues of segregation

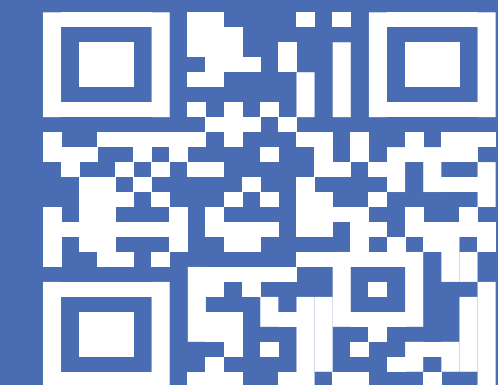
***“While each peacebuilding context is unique,
many elements required for success and future
prosperity are consistent.
Most importantly: Patience.”***

Thank you



Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Schemes Board

Scan here for more information:



Panel discussion

- P2P in Italy-Slovenia: Aljosa Sosol
- SSP in IPA-South Adriatic: Mauro Novello
- CLLD HeurOpen best practice example Italy-Austria: Friedrich Veider



**PEOPLE TO PEOPLE
PROJECTS IN INTERREG
PROGRAMME
ITALY-SLOVENIA**

Summary:

- Historical background
- Before the Interreg
- 4 programming periods
- Two different approaches
- Considerations from the Programme's point of view



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The **two world wars** have left **very deep wounds** on our cross-border territory.

The First World War had a very physical impact on our territory, especially in the area around Gorizia and on the entire northern part of our border near the Isonzo/Soča River.

The Second World War, in addition to the mere infrastructural damage, hit people in their souls. They were divided not only into two states and not only because they were Italian or Slovenian, but also within their own families.



People are curious, people like to know what is happening in the neighborhood (in our case across the border), people like peace and have the desire to make new friends. For this reason people have started to cooperate on a

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE - BEFORE THE INTERREG

The consequences of the two wars are still visible today. **Reconciliation** is a **long process** but sometimes **people find way to go over** and surprisingly they are faster than institutions and politics.

People are curious, people like knowing what happened in the neighborhood (across the border), people like peace and have desire to make new friends.

For this reason people started on the voluntary basis to collaborate in particular in the fields of sport, culture (music) and other type of activities such as march of friendship.



PEOPLE TO PEOPLE 2000-2006 FINALLY INTERREG!

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROJECTS:

- Are a **natural upgrade and continuation** of the collaboration **born between citizens** in our cross-border territory.
- Are in fact **the basis** of the cooperation **in the early stage** of our Programme in the period 2000-2006

Until 2004 the Programme was funded by PHARE CBC AND ERDF, so we had different programme actors which selected people to people projects in different way:

- Trough **specific SPF** financed by PHARE CBC
- Trough **specific calls** (especially after 2004) targeted to selected topics. In particular:
 - I. collaboration between the two minorities
 - II. projects in the field of sport, culture and environment



PEOPLE TO PEOPLE 2000-2006 FINALLY INTERREG!

As regards the calls for proposals designed for small projects, the Programme has decided to adopt **standard calls but adapted to specificities of the beneficiaries:**

- Partners **with low financial** capacities,
- Organizations **without internal staff** or **with low number of employees**: cultural association, sport associations, Ngo-s, small municipalities.

The Programme foresaw three project typologies: mirror, joint, cooperative projects with one, two or more partners with limited budget.



PEOPLE TO PEOPLE 2007-2013/2014-2020 STRENGTHENING COOPERATION

On the basis of the previous Programming period the Programmers decided to use **the legacy of small projects** to:

- make cooperation **more impactful**;
- **upgrade cooperation**, especially results
- make the cooperation in some sectors **more strong** and **more useful for the citizens**
- **enlarge** the number of **partners** and the **territory**

In this way we had two Programming periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020) **without specific people to people calls** and **without a SPF**

This was an important decision, suffered but **necessary to experiment stronger cooperation at Programme level**



Project summary

Objectives

Partner

Project documents

News&Events

Gallery

Contacts

The project in numbers

Duration:
42 months

Start date: 01.11.18

End date: 30.04.22

N. Partner: 10

100%

Progress



WALKofPEACE

The sustainable development of first world war heritage between the Alps and the Adriatic

Priority Axis 3: Protecting and promoting natural and cultural resources

Specific Objective: OS 3.1.

Investment Priority: PI 6c

Typology: Strategic

Overall Objective of the Project:

To maintain, explore and promote the material and immaterial heritage of extraordinary historical significance of WW1 as a shared heritage of the programme area within the main brand of the special destination of the Peace Trail between the Alps and the Adriatic. To encourage the integration, updating and development of a new sustainable and culturally oriented tourist offer, based on engaging presentations of the WW1 heritage and thematic routes.

Project summary:

The peculiarity of the programme area is the presence of WW1 heritage, of extraordinary historical significance, sometimes poorly preserved, with untapped potential for tourism development. The project will contribute to transforming the current situation through shared cross-border activities aimed at the long-term conservation of WW1 heritage and increasing its use in view of the development of sustainable cultural tourism. Studies, exhibitions, cultural and commemorative events will be carried out to strengthen the general knowledge and awareness of WW1 heritage. Targeted training and networking activities for tour operators, organisations and other stakeholders will be carried out to encourage the development of the new tourism offer. To strengthen the joint promotion and marketing of WW1 heritage, a main Peace Trail brand with marketing guidelines, a website and other dissemination material will be introduced. New thematic routes, info-points and centres with interactive and innovative heritage presentations will be updated and organised. Small scale investments will be aimed at preserving WW1's extraordinarily valuable heritage.

2021-2027 PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROJECTS ARE BACK

In the current programming period, as usual in our Programme, we are experimenting a new approach through the SPF managed by GECT GO as sole beneficiary.

A decision was therefore taken:

- based on the belief that somehow **people-to-people** projects **must be present in an Interreg Programme** as a **sort of vaccine booster** to attract bottom-up cooperation from the civil society;
- to give the territory the **opportunity to improve and enrich the European Capital of Culture** with people to people projects.



WHAT ABOUT THE TWO EXPERIENCES? CALLS MANAGED BY PROGRAMME / SPF FUND MANAGED BY SOLE BENEFICIARY

Calls for people to people projects managed directly by the Programme

- Direct calls for People to people projects managed by the Programme = big effort for the Programme structures especially if we take in mind that the Programme has to managed different types of projects: **Standard and strategic**.
- The Programme **has a complete view** to what **happens inside the programme territory**
- A wider view about **projects and beneficiaries**: what is **good**, the results and what is **wrong**
- It is **easier to apply Rules from the regulations**, especially those related to the projects expenses
- It is easier to understand which project **have to be capitalized**



WHAT ABOUT THE TWO EXPERIENCES? CALLS MANAGED BY PROGRAMME / SPF FUND MANAGED BY SOLE BENEFICIARY

SPF managed indirectly through EGTC as sole beneficiary

- SPF managed indirectly through EGTC as sole beneficiary = less effort for the Programme structures. There is no need to support small projects beneficiaries. But...
- The Programme hasn't a complete view of what happens inside the Programme territory
- The Programme has a lower view about small projects and beneficiaries: what is good, the results and what is wrong
- It is more complicated to apply Rules from the regulations, especially those related to the projects expenses and to their verification
- The Programme must ensure a higher quality support to the sole beneficiary: Monitoring system, verification of compliance with the Programme rules in the SPF calls, financial support in terms of advance payments, registration for state aid.



Thank you for your attention!

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Simplifying Administrative Complexities: Unlocking Participation in European Cooperation Projects

Mauro Novello

Interreg IPA South Adriatic





INTERREG COMPLEXITY & PARTICIPATION GAPS

- Interreg has been **criticised** for its intricate administrative processes
- Even though involving diverse partners (regional-local authorities, national ministries, NGOs, sectoral agencies, etc.)
- It is sometimes too "**inward-looking**", not reaching out to newcomers
- Experienced partners are strongly engaged, but small associations, NGOs, and small municipalities are absent
- Interreg being **only for specialists** and experts? Too far away from citizens?



ADMINISTRATIVE HURDLES

- Administrative complexity & complex financial and administrative requirements **discouraged newcomers**
- Volunteer-based organizations **lack human resources** to navigate these procedures
- Financial burdens and **pre-financing** of expenditures exacerbate the challenge

THE SOLUTION IN SOUTH ADRIATIC

- **Small-scale projects** were introduced to reduce administrative and financial complexity in 2014-2020 and confirmed
- Based on **simplified cost options** (e.g., lump sums and flat rates)
- **Smaller budget projects** and with fewer partners were targeted





SUCSESSES IN 2014-2020

- The 2014-2020 17 SSPs approved, involved **81.3%** of beneficiaries **new** to Interreg
- Increased participation from NGOs and small municipalities i.e. **local engagement and civil society organisations**
- Streamlined implementation and faster reimbursements
- Enhanced focus **shift from documentation to tangible outputs** (also in control)
- Reduced bureaucratic delays



EXPANDING THE APPROACH (2021-2027)

- From four to nine simplified cost options introduced (e.g., training, business support, joint action plans/models)
- First call focus on SSPs, April 2023 call: **128** project submissions, **~500 beneficiaries**, of **which 50%** participation from NGOs, associations, and small municipalities
- This demonstrates increased inclusivity and diversity
- A model for **a simpler, more inclusive and accessible cooperation framework** also for future **Interreg post-2027?**

KEY LESSONS FOR POST-2027

- A **new mind-set** is essential!
- For beneficiaries, delivering **concrete outputs** & “evidence”: How targeted users / citizens are concretely benefiting from these?
- For programme controllers / auditors: Not verifying papers, but **reality** of the outputs
- For the EU Commission: Either increasing **“off-the-shelf” options**, based on typical activities of Interreg, or supporting programmes, when they develop their own SCOs



HEurOpen

Cross-border cooperation between the LEADER regions of Hermagor, Euroleader and Open Leader

CLLD - 'Bottom-up' method of local development

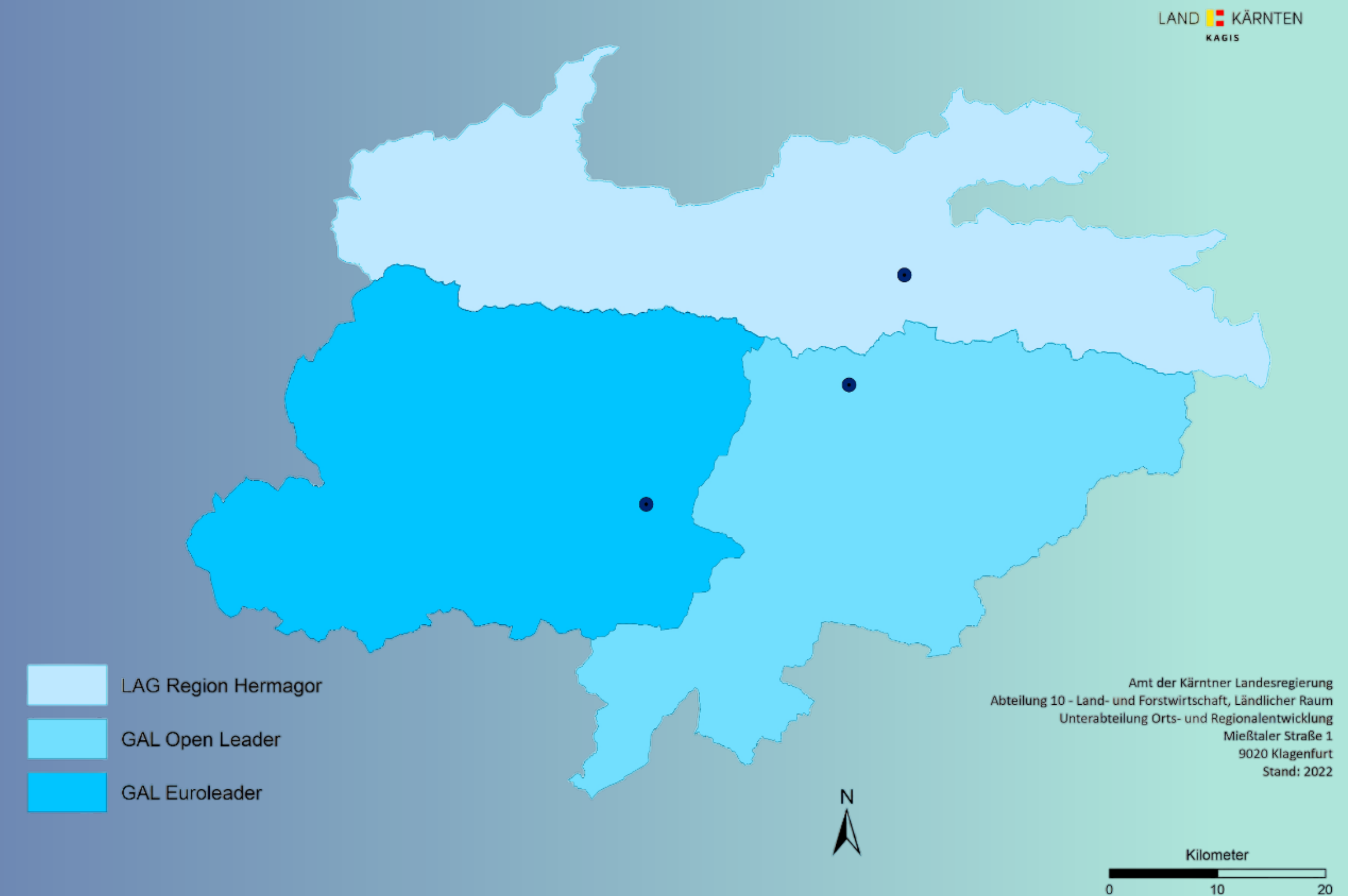


Interreg VI – A Italy-Austria 2021-2027 Cooperation Programme

Programme priorities		Objectives
1	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	
2	Climate Change and Biodiversity	
3	Sustainable Tourism and Culture	
4	Local Development (CLLD)	Strengthening local integration and promoting social, economic and environmental development at local level
5	Reducing Cross-Border Obstacles	

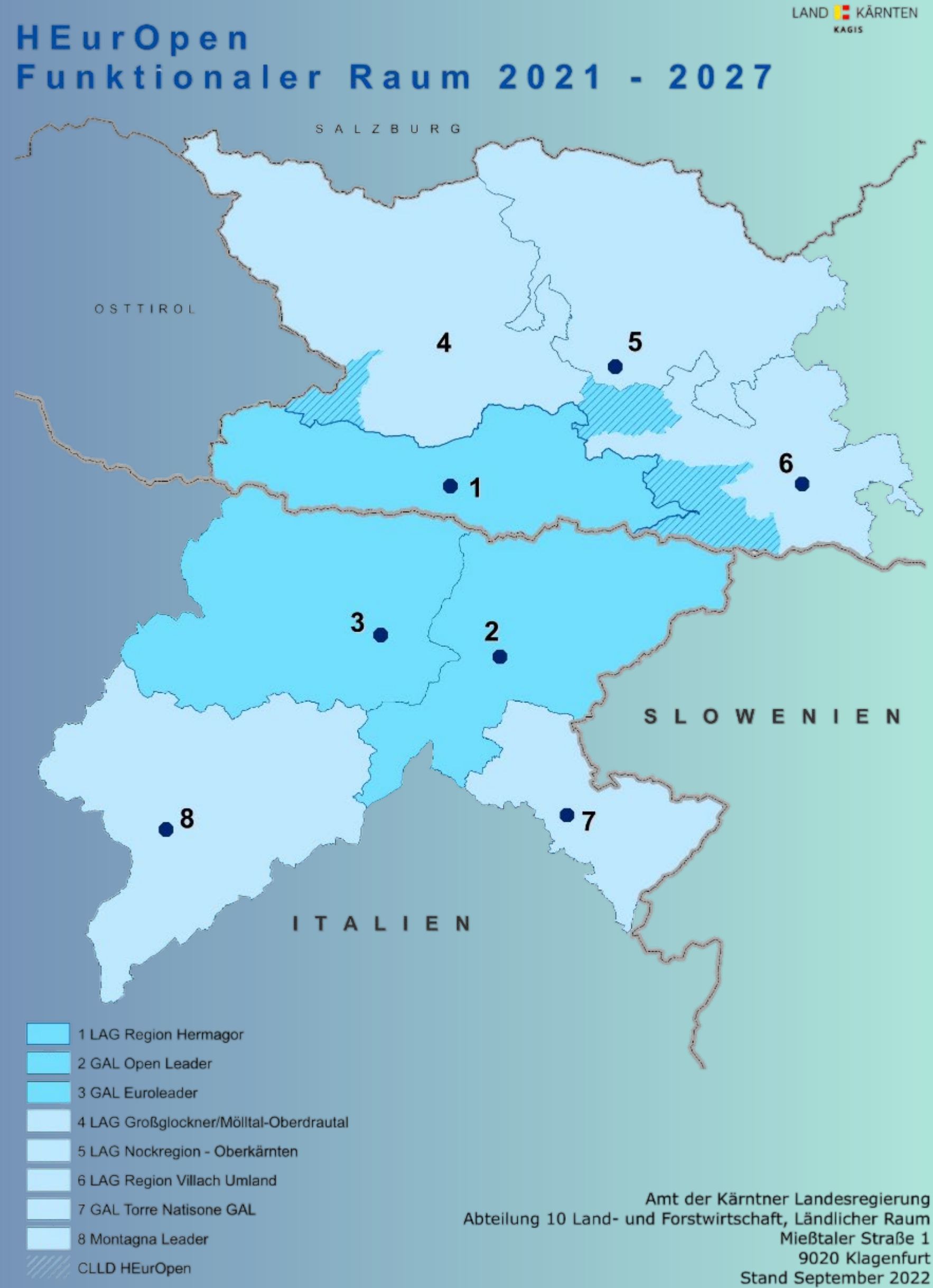
Strategic targets

- 1 - Vibrant, innovative communities
- 2 - Communities in harmony with the environment and resources
- 3 - Communities, with attractive nature and culture
- 4 - Integrated cross-border communities that benefit from cooperation



Our region

region	municipalities	total area (km²)	population (2021)
Hermagor	15	1.257,5	34.605
Open Leader	15	1.149,0	30.450
Euroleader	28	1.285,9	36.545
HEurOpen	58	3.692,4	101.600



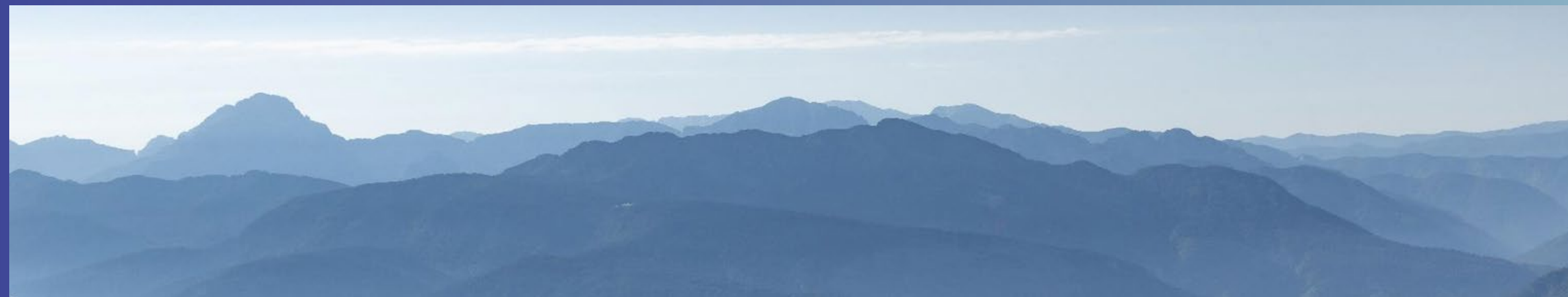
Implementation of

- **small projects (SP)** (€ 3.000 - € 50.000)
- **medium-scale projects (MP)** (€ 50.001 - € 200.000)
- SP and MP in the functional area

Regional actors

Municipalities, associations (culture, nature, ...), schools/educational institutions, small businesses, working groups, tourism organisations, ...

! Knock in criterion >> cross-border added value !



Our projects

culture

sports

education

youth

nature

security

tourism

...



Challenges / Difficulties

language / different cultures

co-ordination of
regional and state systems

informing, finding and
bring them together

other LEADER-regions in our
cooperation (functional area)

> Solutions

> providing interpreters / communication, communication, ...

> knowing and learning from each other, making compromises

> public relations, organisation of thematic focus groups

> information - new communities, new stakeholders, new players

Learning experiences Searching for Solutions

- Actively approaching potential stakeholders
- Ongoing information - adapted to the respective target group
- Thematic focus groups
- Broad support, guidance from A to Z from CLLD-Management - new actors/players

Our cooperation is becoming more and more **successful!**



Thank
you
for
your
attention!

Friedrich Veider
CLLD-Management



Let's discuss

Questions to the speakers?