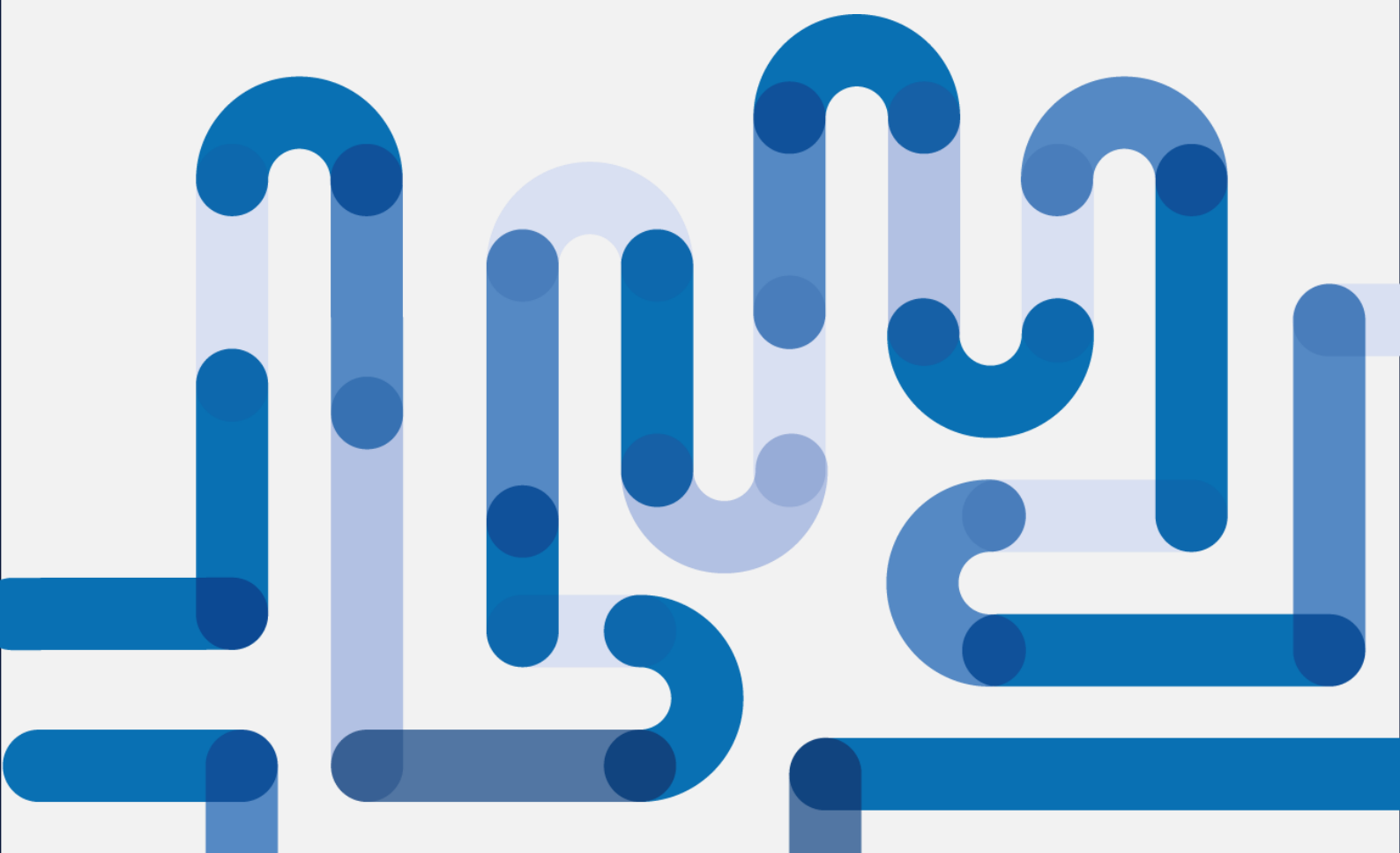




ANALYSIS OF THE CONSULTATION FOR BENEFICIARIES FOR THE INTERREG VII-A ITALY-SLOVENIA PROGRAMME 2028-2034

APRIL 2026



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INTRODUCTION

The consultation

This report collects the outcomes of the consultation of project stakeholders, i.e. beneficiaries of Interreg Italy-Slovenia for the 2007-2013, 2014-2020, and 2021-2027 programming periods, specifically Lead Partners and project partners and other ETC stakeholders indicated by Programme partners/Delegations throughout the programming periods.

Within the framework of the EU “Partnership principle”, this consultation is the first step of a public consultation process launched with the aim to support the ongoing strategic discussion on the thematic focus of the future Programme.

The consultation process is steered by the Interreg Italy-Slovenia 2028-2034 Task Force in preparation for the Interreg Italy-Slovenia 2028-2034 Programme.

A citizens’ consultation will follow.

The questionnaire was designed to gather evidence on stakeholders’ experiences, challenges, and expectations regarding cross-border cooperation.

This report provides a qualitative analysis of the feedback collected, illustrating beneficiaries’ perceptions of needs, priorities, and areas requiring further attention in the future programming period.

The survey

The survey is an online survey made on the EU Survey platform. The questionnaire is structured in four sections: *Introduction*, *Identification of respondents*, *Information on the management of the Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects* and *Cooperation issues of interest for 2028-2034*.

The questions of the survey are built on the consultation templates launched at the start of the 2021-2027 programming period, duly adapted to the new context on the basis of the EU draft Regulations for the period 2028-2034 with a focus on the stakeholders’ past experience and a look into their future expectations. The backbone of the survey prepared by the 2021-2027 Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat was then discussed, integrated and finalised by the Task Force, starting from the first meeting in Ljubljana in December 2025 through the second online meeting in January 2026 till the technical meeting held on 26 January 2026.

The questionnaire included a mix of different question types, namely multiple-choice questions, open-ended questions, single-answer questions, preference-based questions, and tables requiring the completion of specific information.

Opening time

The questionnaire was **published from 4th February 2026** and remained **open till the 31st March 2026**.

Dissemination

The consultation survey was disseminated primarily through e-mail communication to project beneficiaries of the Italy-Slovenia Programme from the 2007-2013, 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 programming periods; then to ETC stakeholders indicated at Programme level, reaching overall, approximately 4.000 e-mail addresses.

It is worth to highlight that a proportion around 15% of the recipients no longer had active mailboxes or were no longer employed by the former project partners, which therefore did not effectively receive or consider the communication. Furthermore, approximately 20% of the e-mail addresses were duplicated across different mailing lists. Taking both these factors into account, it can be reasonably estimated that around 2.500 individuals effectively received the link to the questionnaire.

The first communication to beneficiaries was sent on 4th February 2026, followed by four reminder e-mails at the beginning of March, in mid-March and the last shortly before the closure of the consultation on 27th March 2026. During the project closure events scheduled during this period, the MAJS attending those meetings reminded publicly about this consultation effort.

Information about the opening of the consultation was also published in the **news section** of the Programme's website, while the Programme's Instagram profile was used to publish a dedicated post promoting the consultation, as well as an Instagram story reminding followers of the survey's closure.

Total number of the responses received

Following the closure of the consultation, a total of **146 responses** were collected **from an estimated 2.500 recipients**. Respondents included both Italian and Slovenian beneficiaries who had been actively involved in Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects across the three programming periods 2007-2013, 2014-2020 and 2021-2027.

RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION

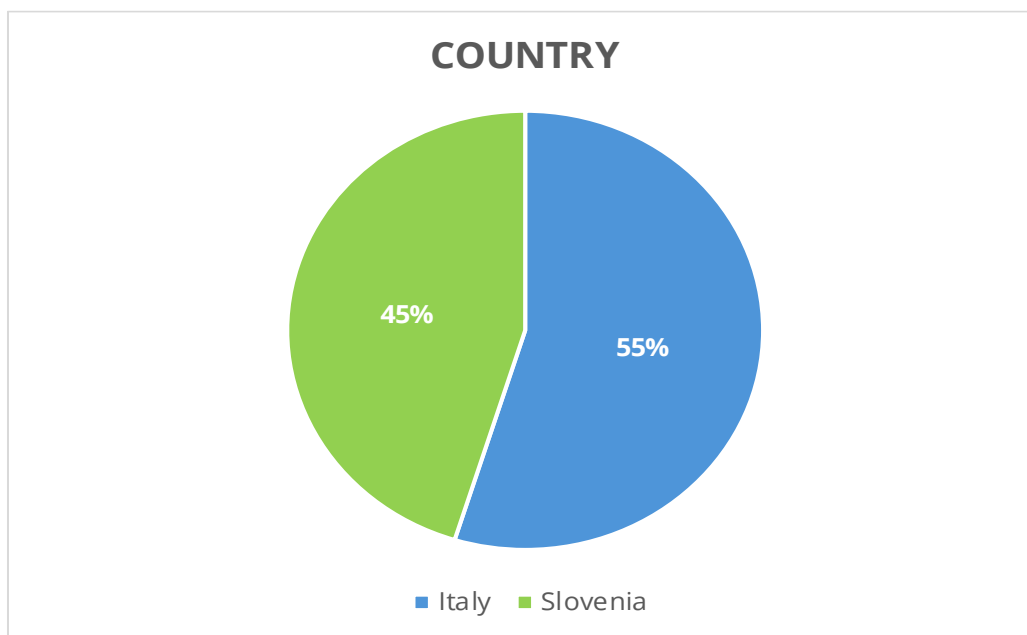
Data analysis of the responses received

Identification of respondents

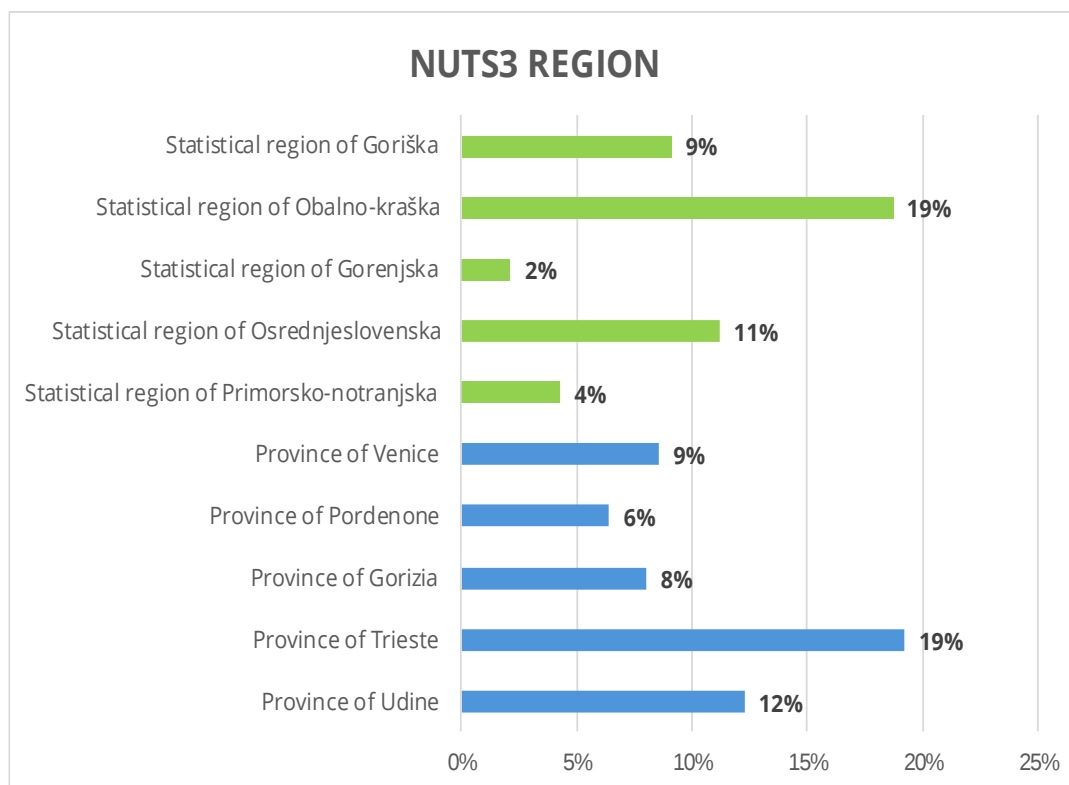
The consultation collected **146 answers**. Below is the classification of respondents based on the categories indicated in the questionnaire.

Country and NUTS3 region

The distribution of beneficiaries is balanced between Italians (55%) and Slovenes (45%).

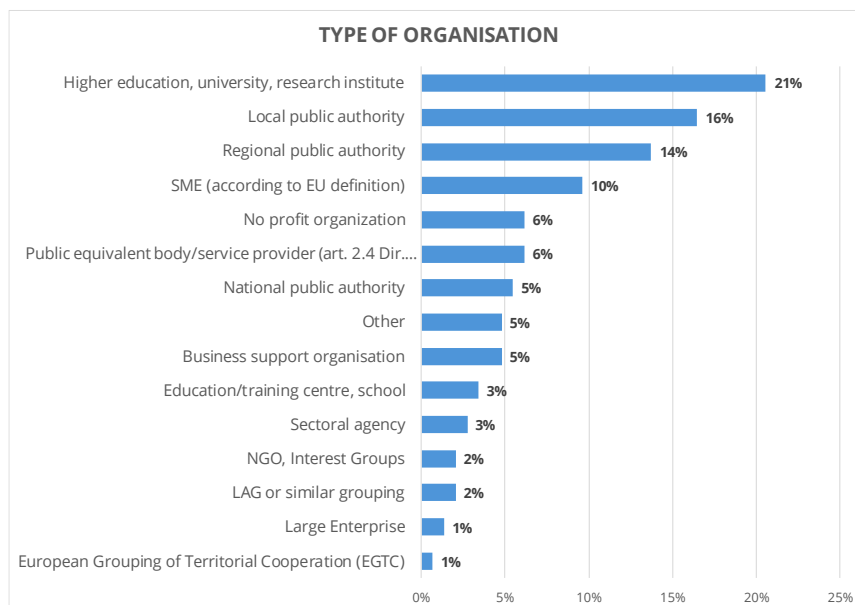


In detail, the NUTS3 origin is as follows:



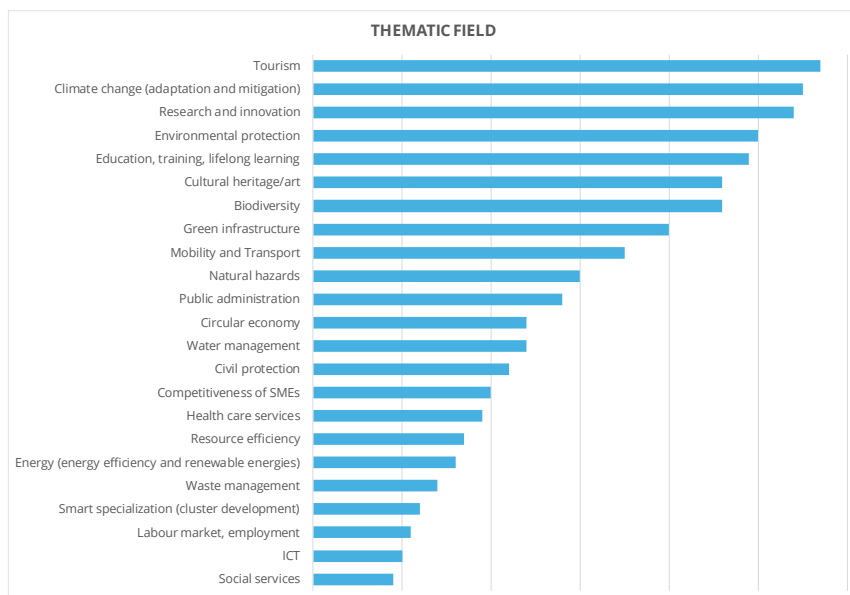
As shown in the bar chart above, the most represented NUTS3 statistical regions are the Obalno-Kraška region and the Province of Trieste, followed by the Province of Udine and the Osrednjeslovenska region. When interpreting the figure above, it is important to take into account that respondents had the possibility to select more than one NUTS3 statistical region, depending on the geographical scope of the activities of the institution/organisation they represent.

Type of organisation/institution



Among the respondents, the Higher education institutions, universities, and research Institutes are the most represented group, followed by local public authorities and regional public authorities. International organisations are not represented among the respondents and large enterprises are also under-represented. The **"Other"** category includes cultural associations, small and medium-sized State-owned enterprises, healthcare Institutions, operators in international rail freight transport, non-profit private entities under public law (such as theatres), and parks classified as protected areas.

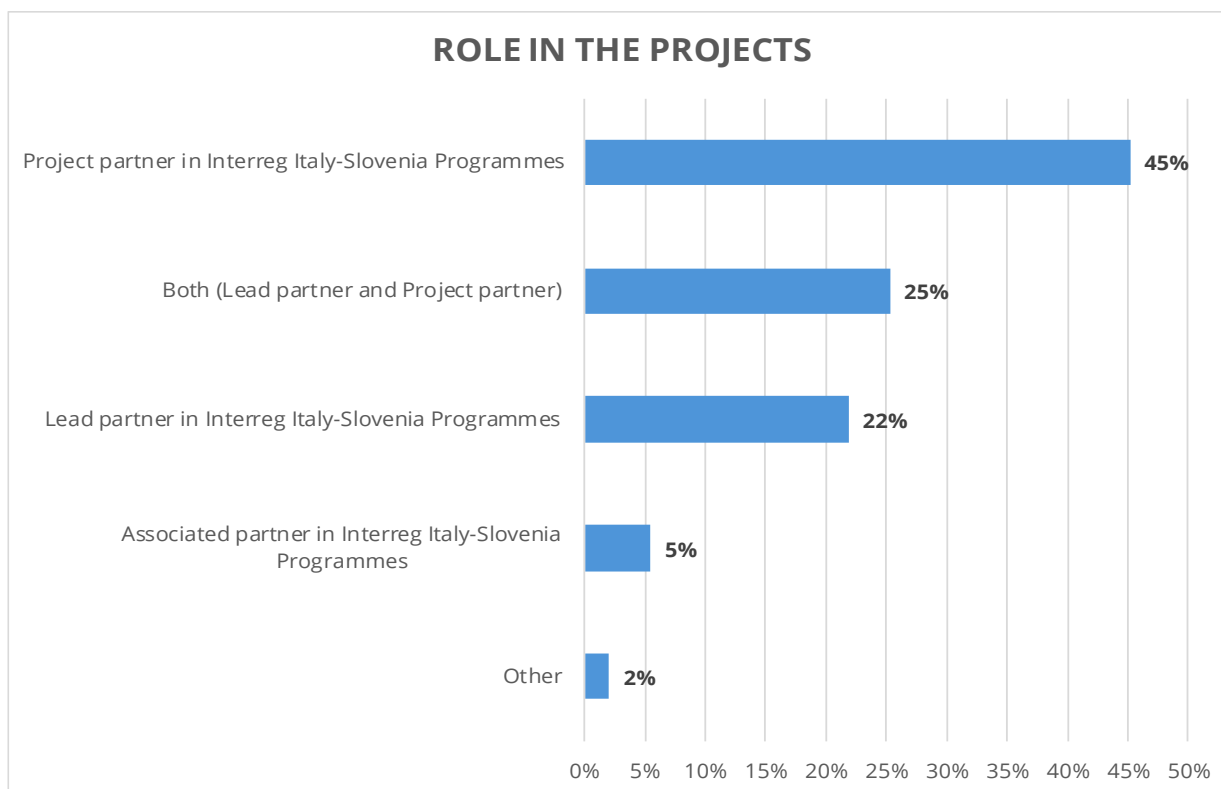
Respondent organizations / institutions operate mainly in the following thematic areas:



All the **23 thematic fields** listed in the questionnaire **are covered**, with a major number of beneficiaries operating in the tourism field, along with climate change adaptation and mitigation and research and innovation. It is worth highlighting that some respondents indicated all the listed thematic areas as their field of work.

Role in Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects and programming period

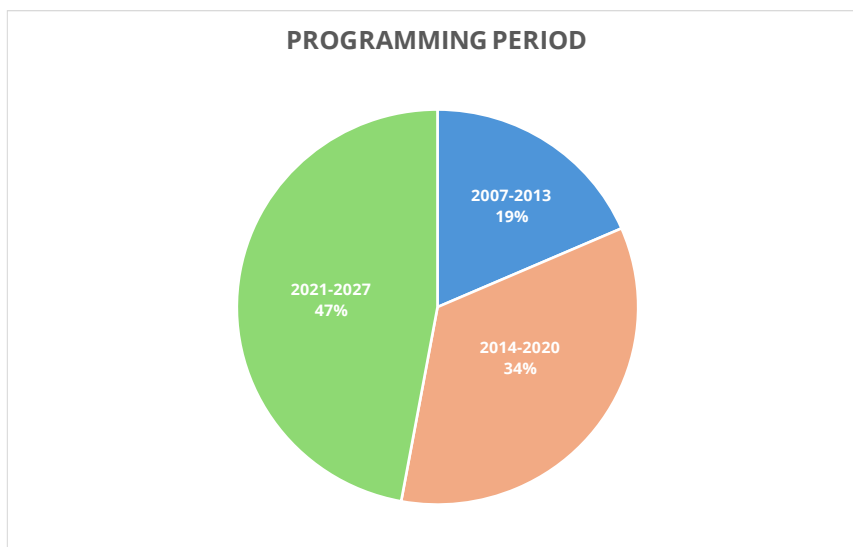
The respondents' roles are divided as follows between Lead Partner, Project Partner and Associated Partner:



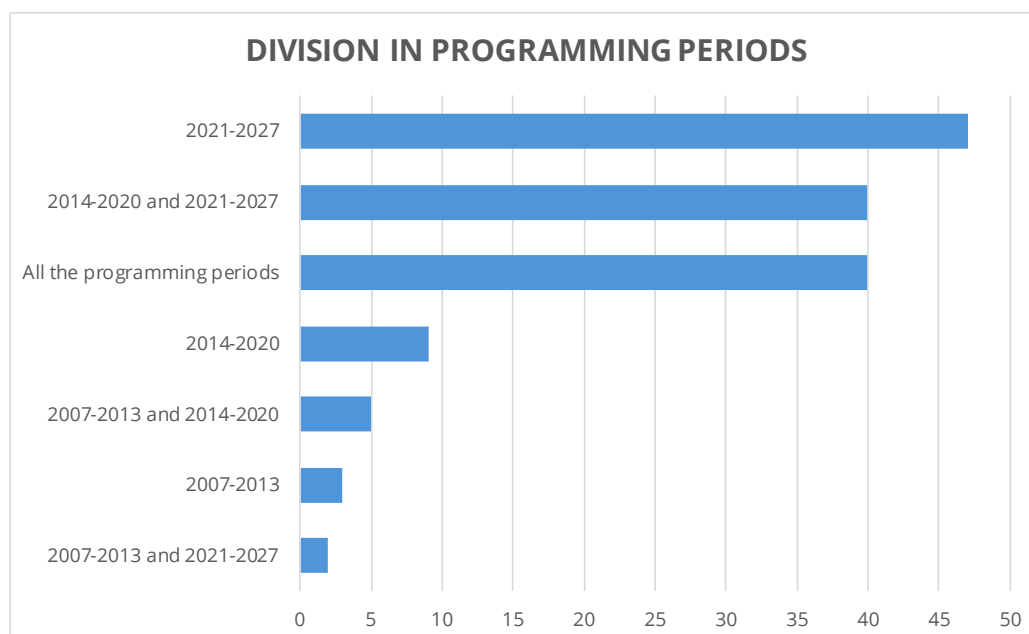
As could easily be expected given the high number of Project Partners involved in each project funded by the Programme, Project Partners account for as much as 45% of the respondents. Meanwhile, 25% of beneficiaries have taken on both roles – Lead Partner and Project Partner – over the course of the programming periods.

The **“Other”** category includes an implementing body working with the partner, subcontractors and a national programme co-financed by EU funds.

Distribution of respondents across programming periods



The distribution of respondents across programming periods reflects their level of participation in the Interreg Italy-Slovenia Programme over time. Respondents were allowed to select more than one programming period, in order to capture multiple and repeated involvements within the Programme.



The majority of respondents report being active in the current programming period (2021-2027). At the same time, a considerable number of partners indicate involvement in both the

previous period (2014-2020) and the current one, while a significant share of respondents has participated across all three programming periods.

Overall, this distribution highlights a strong continuity among beneficiaries, pointing to the presence of long-standing partnerships and repeated participation over time.

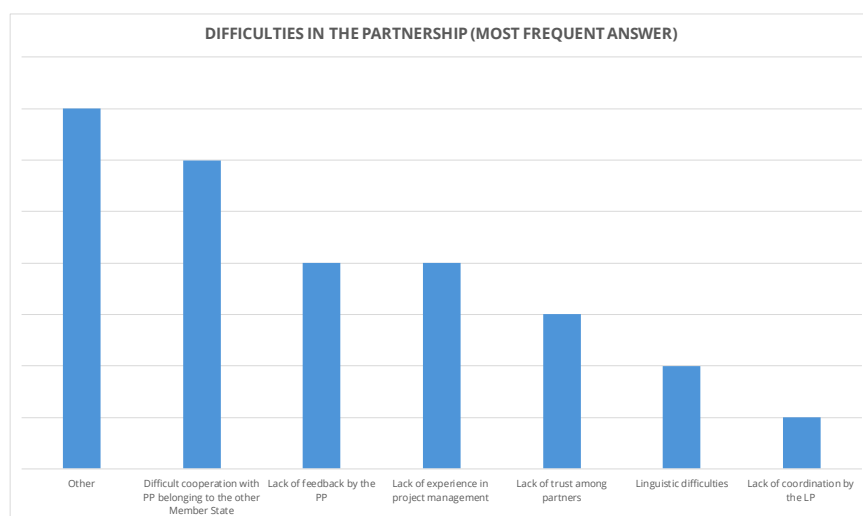
Feedback on the management of Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects

The section B of the survey focuses on selected aspects related to the management of past and ongoing Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects. Respondents were invited to share their practical experience in project implementation, highlighting the main difficulties encountered as well as the positive and negative aspects of project realisation and in the partnership.

Main difficulties

For the question addressing the main difficulties and shortcomings faced during project management, respondents were asked to rank the predefined options on a scale from 1 to 7, from the most to the least significant difficulty.

Based on the most frequent preferences expressed for each item, a ranking of the perceived difficulties was established. The results of this prioritisation are presented in the histogram below.

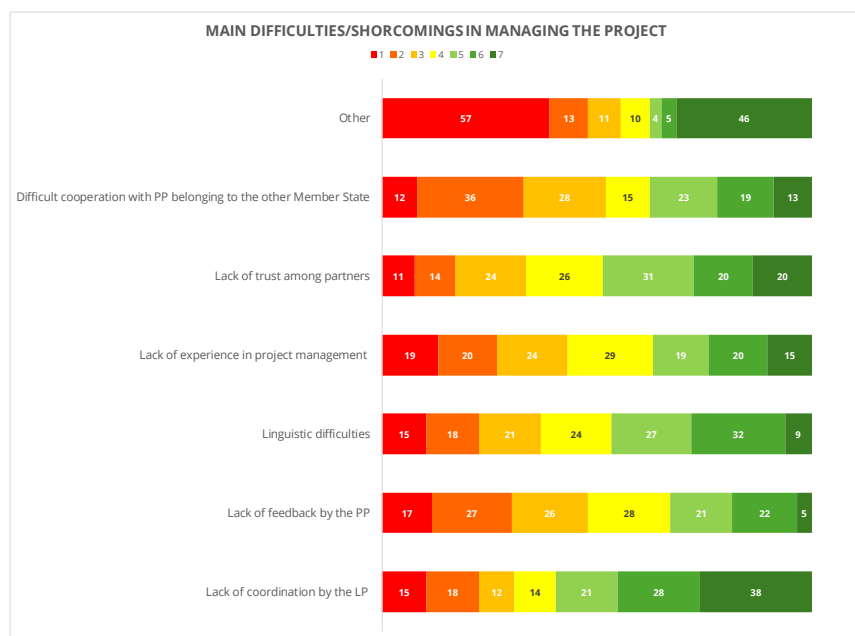


As shown, the predefined options included in the question were perceived as only partially representative of the respondents' experience, as the option "Other" emerged as the most relevant. The list of difficulties provided did not fully capture the range of challenges encountered during project management and additional shortcomings were considered more significant by the respondents.

Among the difficulties explicitly listed in the question, the most frequently reported issue relates to challenging **cooperation with project partners from the other Member State**. This was followed by **insufficient feedback from project partners (PP)** and by **lack of experience in project management**.

The ranking presented below illustrates the respondents' prioritisation of the identified difficulties, ordered from the most to the least significant. This distribution provides insight into

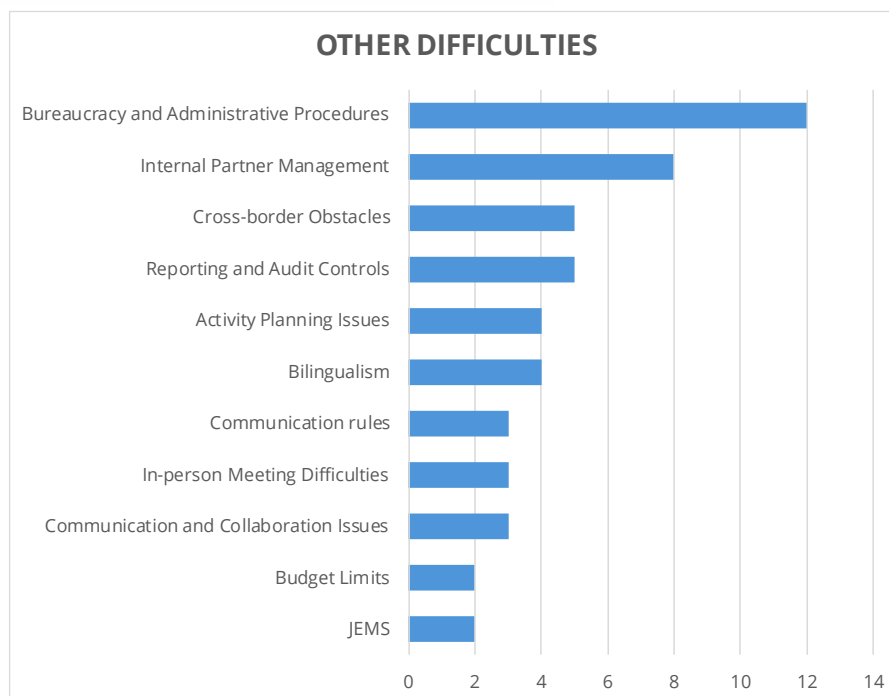
which management-related challenges are perceived as having the greatest impact on project implementation.



Considering the options most frequently ranked in first place, lack of experience in project management emerges as the most significant difficulty, followed by insufficient feedback from project partners. However, it is important to note that respondents perceived several challenges as similarly relevant.

What stands out most clearly is that lack of coordination by the Lead Partner was identified as the least significant difficulty by as many as 36 respondents. This finding suggests that, overall, Lead Partners involved in Programme-funded projects demonstrate solid coordination and management capacities and that this aspect is generally not perceived as an obstacle to project implementation.

As just mentioned, "Other" emerges as the most frequently selected first-choice option. Open-ended contributions were analysed to capture the meaning of "Other". Initially, responses were coded based on recurring keywords, after which they were grouped into broader thematic categories as presented in the chart below.



The qualitative analysis of the responses classified under “**Other**” difficulties offers a more nuanced understanding of the challenges encountered during project implementation beyond the predefined options.

The most prominent area of difficulty concerns **bureaucratic and administrative burdens**, which clearly emerge as the most frequently mentioned challenge. Respondents widely referred to complex administrative procedures, heavy and repetitive reporting requirements, rigid eligibility rules, and burdensome documentation for expenditure verification. Particular concern was expressed regarding first-level controls, including repeated requests for the same supporting documents, lengthy control processes, and late corrections of expenditures that had previously been approved, in some cases even after project closure. These issues were perceived as especially problematic for smaller organisations and SMEs.

A second major category relates to **internal partner management** and cooperation. Respondents reported uneven levels of engagement among partners, differences in operational capacity and experience with EU-funded projects, limited human resources and delays in the delivery of activities. New partnerships, while often recognised as a positive and innovative aspect of the Programme, required significant support from more experienced partners and Lead Partners, particularly in project preparation, coordination and reporting. Organisational challenges were further explained by the lack of qualified project managers, rigid staff allocation rules and a tendency to postpone activities to the final stages of project implementation.

Cross-border and regulatory differences represent another significant group of challenges. Respondents highlighted discrepancies between the Italian and Slovenian legal, administrative and regulatory frameworks, notably in areas such as public procurement, infrastructure works

and sector-specific rules. These differences often made it harder to develop truly integrated cross-border actions and increased the administrative burden for beneficiaries.

The **bilingual requirement** also emerged as a recurrent problem. Many respondents perceived the compulsory Italian-Slovenian bilingualism as rigid and time-consuming. The mandatory translation of all documents and materials was not always perceived as an added value and, in some cases, was seen as slowing down implementation and communication. Several respondents suggested to allow the use of English as a common working language as happens in other Interreg programmes, or complementing bilingual requirements with targeted language support rather than full document translation.

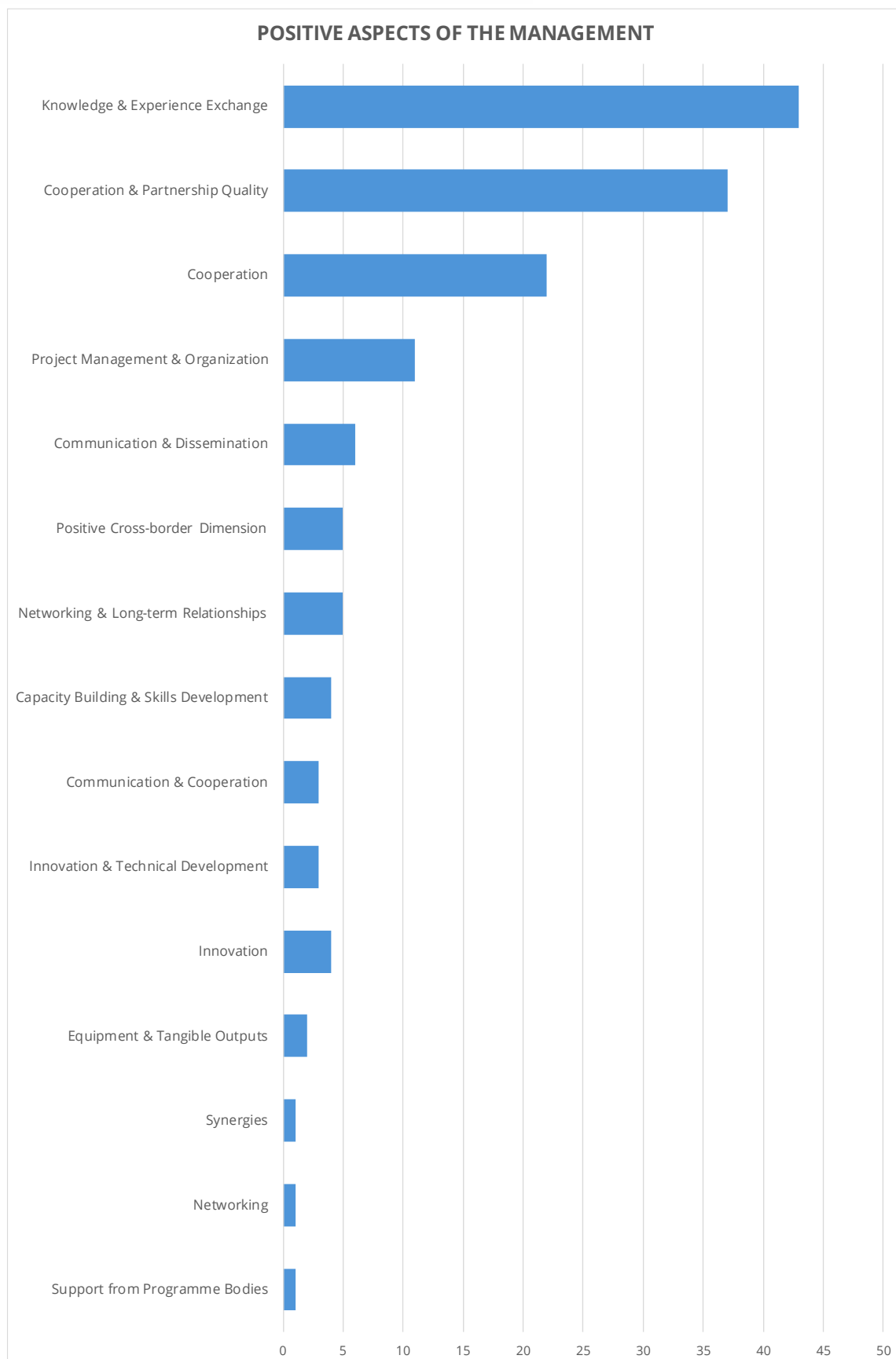
Further difficulties relate to **reporting tools and systems**, particularly the use of JEMS. Less experienced beneficiaries reported challenges linked to repetitive reporting fields, difficulties in correctly completing reports and lack of familiarity with the system. These problems were sometimes compounded by changes in rules and platforms across programming periods, increasing confusion and administrative burden for organisations active in multiple cycles.

Additional, but less frequently mentioned, are strict **communication rules** governing the promotion of activities and events as well as constraints related to budget flexibility and co-financing rates. Delays caused by **external factors**, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and reduced opportunities for in-person meetings also affected cooperation, trust-building and activity planning.

Finally, a small number of respondents reported **no significant difficulties**.

Positive aspects in managing the project

Question 3 of Section B was an open-ended question on what worked best in project management. As the question did not provide predefined response options, the answers were analysed using a qualitative content analysis approach. Responses were coded based on recurring keywords and subsequently grouped into the broader thematic categories shown in the chart below.



The most frequently mentioned positive aspect is **knowledge and experience exchange** which clearly emerges as the dominant success factor across Interreg projects. Respondents consistently emphasised the value of **mutual learning, exchange of know-how, best practices, data and methodologies** among partners with diverse institutional backgrounds, expertise and territorial contexts. This exchange was often described as going beyond technical knowledge, encompassing different working cultures, visions and problem-solving approaches. In many cases, it contributed to innovation, hybrid solutions and the development of models applicable in both national contexts.

Closely linked to this, **cooperation and partnership quality** represents the second most prominent category. Many respondents highlighted strong collaboration among partners, shared objectives, trust, motivation and a constructive team spirit. Well-functioning partnerships were often associated with prior cooperation experiences and a clear distribution of responsibilities. Several contributions underlined that cooperation strengthened over time, generating long-lasting relationships that extend beyond the duration of individual projects and facilitate future collaborations.

A further relevant aspect concerns **cooperation in practical project implementation**, including joint activities, co-creation of outputs, shared events and coordinated pilot actions. Respondents particularly valued tangible and visible results, such as pilot activities, equipment and infrastructure, which were perceived as more impactful and meaningful than purely analytical or study-based outputs.

Project management and organisation also emerge as positive elements. Structured and shared planning, effective coordination by the Lead Partner, clear workflows and responsiveness from Programme bodies (such as the Joint Secretariat) were mentioned as key enablers of smooth implementation and timely problem-solving.

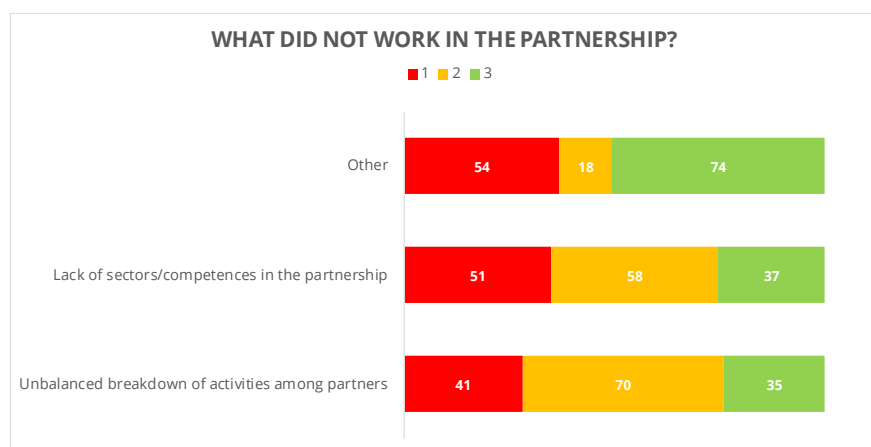
Communication and dissemination played an important supporting role. Constant and transparent communication, the use of shared digital tools, regular meetings (especially in-person meetings) and joint promotion activities were seen as factors contributing to effective coordination and trust-building among partners.

Other positive aspects less frequently mentioned include the **positive cross-border dimension, networking and long-term relationships** and **capacity building and skills development**, particularly through joint training activities, staff exchanges and exposure to different administrative and technical systems. These elements reinforced institutional learning and increased partners' ability to operate in a cross-border context.

Overall, the analysis indicates that the projects performed best when characterised by **strong cooperation, intensive knowledge exchange, shared objectives and effective coordination**. The predominance of relational and learning-oriented aspects among the positive factors highlights the added value of cross-border cooperation not only in delivering project outputs, but also in building durable partnerships, enhancing capacities and fostering innovation across the Italy-Slovenia border area.

Main difficulties in the partnership

Question 4a in section B asked the participants to rate the obstacles or difficulties met in the partnership. The options were prioritised from the most important (1) to the least important (3) as follows.

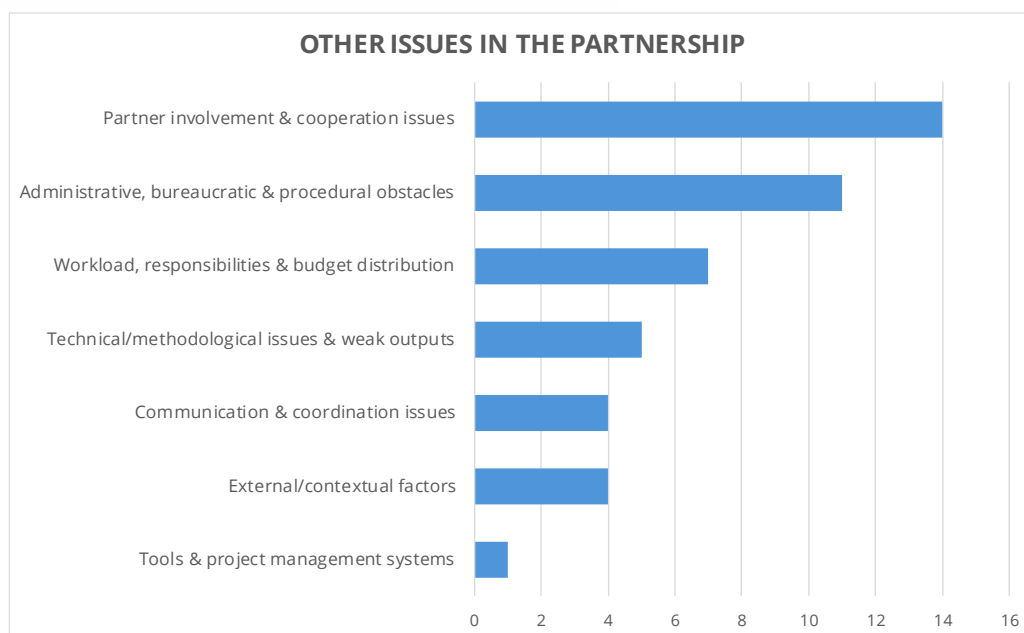


The **unbalanced distribution of activities among partners** records a high number of responses indicating that many participants perceived this issue as a recurring difficulty (41 selected this difficulty as the most critical and 70 as the second-ranked difficulty).

Also the **lack of relevant sectors or competences within the partnership** has a high representation.

The **“Other”** category accounts for a substantial number of responses, suggesting that issues were not fully captured by the predefined categories and reflecting the diversity and complexity of challenges experienced by participants, although these were generally perceived as less significant than the options provided.

The option **“Other”** was further explained by the majority of survey respondents. The answers were analysed using a qualitative content analysis approach based on recurring keywords and subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories as presented in the chart below.



The additional explanations provided by respondents offer a clearer and more detailed understanding of the challenges highlighted in the chart. Overall, the reported issues can be grouped into four closely related thematic areas.

The most frequently cited issue concerns **partner involvement and cooperation**, which emerges as one of the main weaknesses across projects. Respondents often described uneven levels of engagement among partners, with some contributing less actively, providing delayed feedback or showing limited initiative. In several cases, difficulties in maintaining a strong cross-border dimension were reported. Differences in partner typology (public versus private entities) sometimes led to imbalances in expectations, responsibilities and levels of commitment, occasionally resulting in unbalanced cooperation during key project activities.

Administrative, bureaucratic, and procedural obstacles represent the second major challenge. Respondents frequently referred to complex and lengthy procedures, rigid administrative requirements and differences in national legislation between Italy and Slovenia. Challenges linked to obtaining permits and authorisations – particularly on the Italian side – were commonly mentioned, along with delays caused by internal administrative processes and repeated requests for documentation. Excessive bureaucracy was perceived as limiting operational flexibility and making it difficult to adhere to project timelines, prompting calls for simplification and better coordination among administrative bodies.

Another group of difficulties relates to the **distribution of workload, responsibilities and budget**. Many respondents reported an unequal allocation of tasks, with certain partners facing a significantly higher administrative or operational burden. Disparities in budget distribution between partners were also highlighted, as well as situations where public bodies received similar funding for fewer activities. Additional contributing factors included partners' involvement in multiple EU-funded projects, high numbers of workshops and focus groups and relatively short project durations, all of which increased workload pressure.

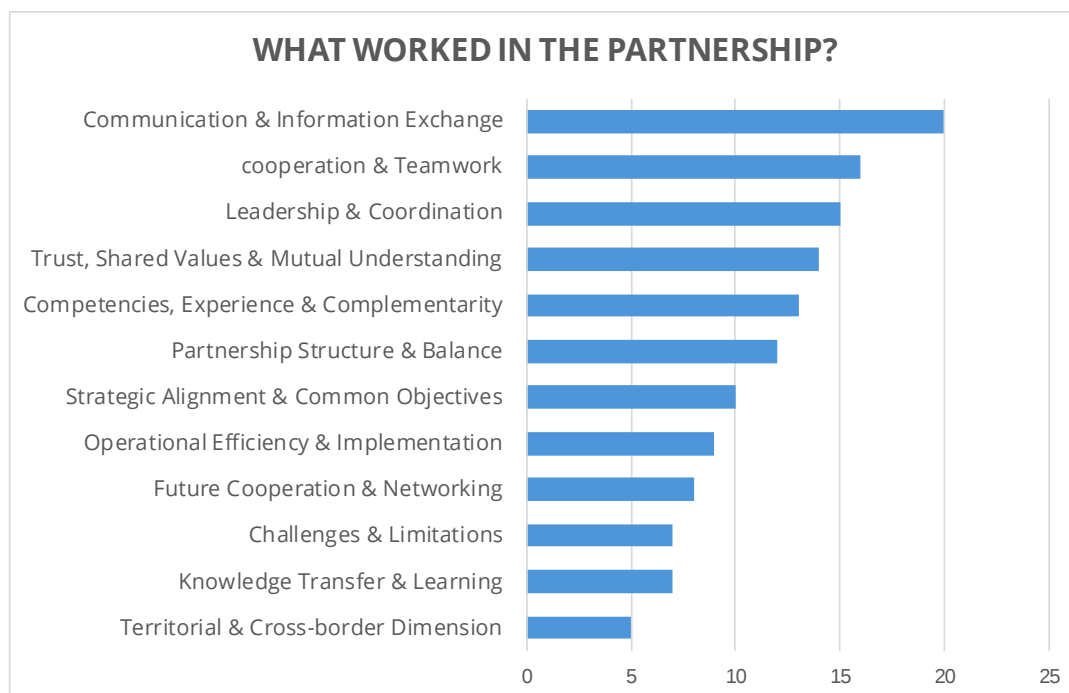
Technical and methodological challenges were also noted, such as difficulties in delivering concrete and transferable outputs, weaknesses in the cross-border dimension of certain activities and challenges during early experimentation phases or financial reporting.

Respondents highlighted **communication and coordination challenges**, both internally within partnerships and at project level. Issues included limited opportunities for in-person meetings, unclear or unevenly distributed communication responsibilities, insufficient coordination of communication activities and delays in receiving information or guidance. These weaknesses sometimes resulted in partners working in parallel rather than as part of a genuinely integrated cross-border team.

A smaller number of responses also referred to **external or contextual factors**, most notably the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on cooperation and opportunities for direct interaction, as well as language barriers that occasionally hindered communication. Some respondents also mentioned the heavy workload faced by public authorities, which affected participation and responsiveness. At the same time, a limited number of participants reported no significant difficulties, suggesting that the extent to which these challenges are experienced varies depending on project context, partner type and level of experience.

Positive aspects of the partnership

The same analysis process was used to identify which were the most positive aspects in the functioning of the partnership.



Communication and information exchange emerges as the most frequently mentioned positive aspect. Respondents repeatedly emphasised the importance of constant, transparent and well-structured communication among partners. Regular meetings (both online and in person), the use of shared digital tools and timely exchanges of information enabled partners to solve problems efficiently, maintain alignment and manage unexpected issues. Several responses underline that continuous dialogue was essential to keeping projects on track and ensuring smooth coordination, especially in transnational and multilingual contexts.

Closely linked to communication, **cooperation and teamwork** represent another core strength. Many respondents highlighted the partners' willingness to work together constructively, support one another and jointly overcome difficulties during project implementation. In several cases, collaboration went beyond formal obligations and resulted in the creation of new synergies and strengthened relationships that may extend beyond the project lifecycle.

Leadership and coordination, particularly the role of the Lead Partner, were frequently cited as decisive success factors. Effective lead partners were described as competent, experienced, proactive, and capable of ensuring clear guidance, coordination of activities, adherence to deadlines and smooth administrative and organisational management. Respondents noted that strong leadership helped clarify roles and align partners, while frequent coordination meetings supported shared understanding and effective task execution.

Another prominent theme concerns **trust, shared values and mutual understanding**. Many responses referred to the importance of common values, such as cooperation, respect and openness, as well as a shared commitment to project objectives. Previous cooperation experiences, familiarity among partners and transparency in interactions contributed to building trust.

The **complementarity of skills and expertise** is also highlighted as a major strength. Respondents appreciated partnerships that brought together diverse institutions, disciplines and territorial levels, including research bodies, public authorities, SMEs and local actors. The combination of technical, scientific and operational competencies enabled partners to address project challenges more effectively and to generate added value through knowledge exchange, interdisciplinary approaches and mutual learning.

Several responses point to the importance of **a well-balanced partnership structure**, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and workloads. Balanced participation across partners was associated with smoother implementation. Additionally, **strategic alignment and common objectives** played a crucial role: partnerships functioned best when project goals were shared from the outset and aligned with the long-term strategies and missions of participating organisations.

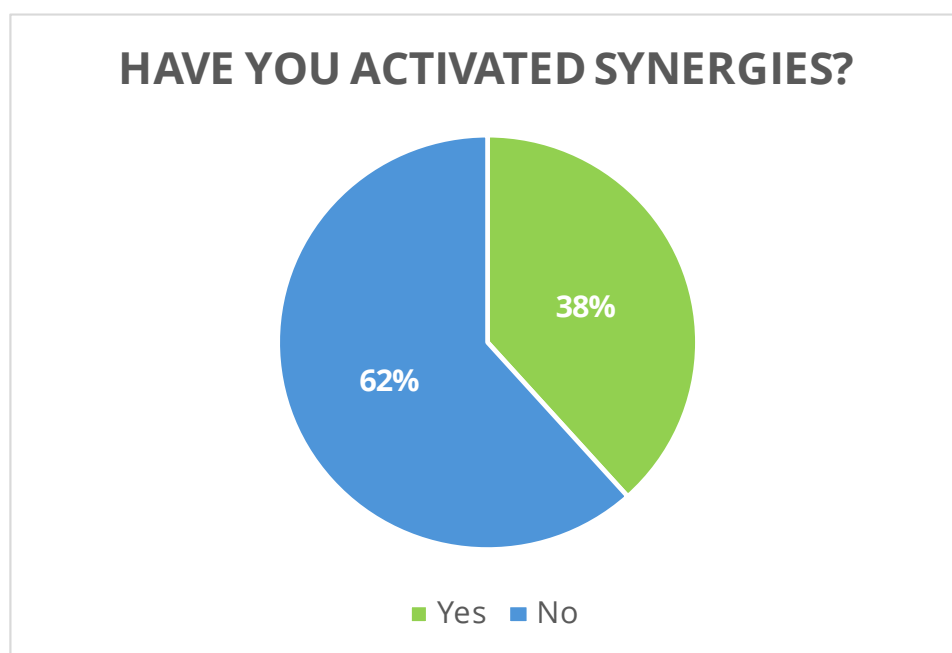
Less frequent but still relevant themes include operational efficiency, knowledge transfer and learning, territorial and cross-border added value and future cooperation and networking opportunities. Many respondents reported that collaboration within the partnership led to strengthened networks, increased trust and concrete perspectives for continued cooperation beyond the project duration.

Synergies

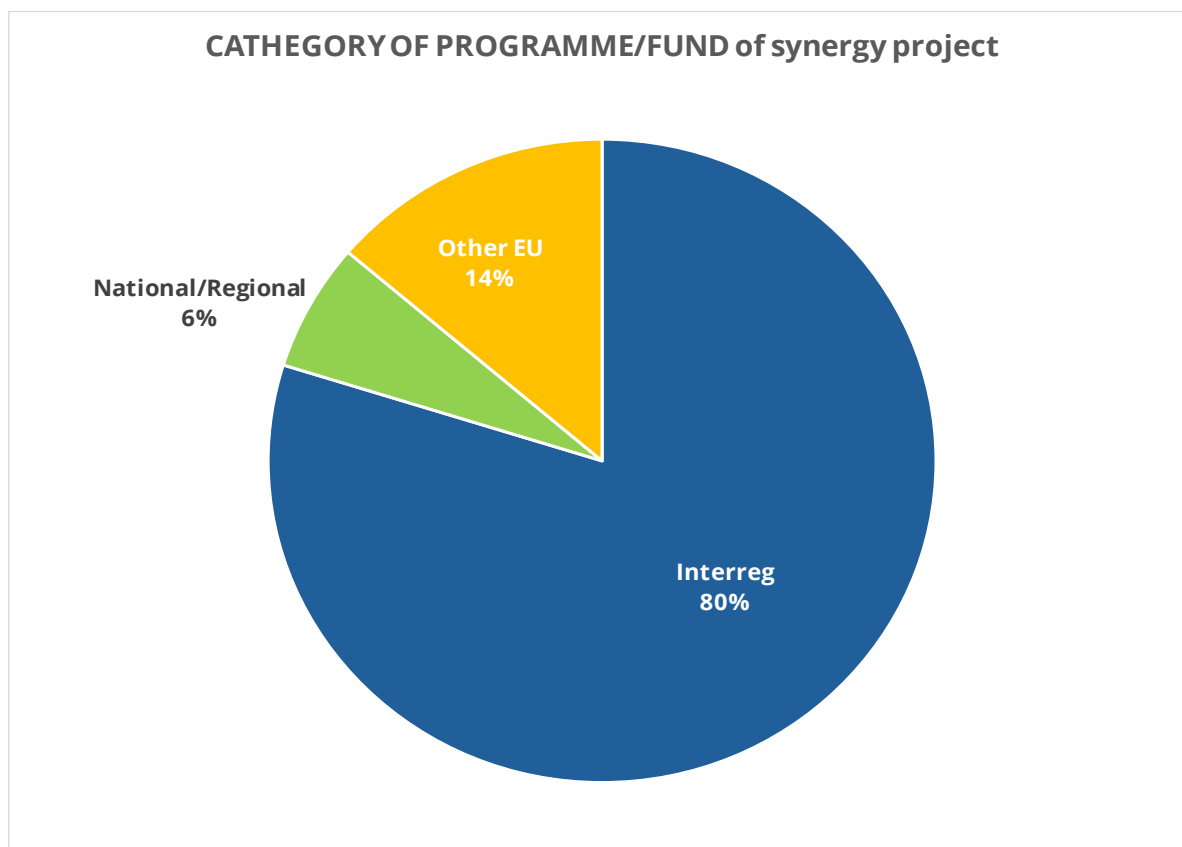
The following questions aimed to explore the synergies established by participants with other projects. Respondents were asked to list all the synergies they have activated, to indicate their interest in developing additional synergies in the future and to specify whether they already have concrete ideas in this regard.

Activated synergies

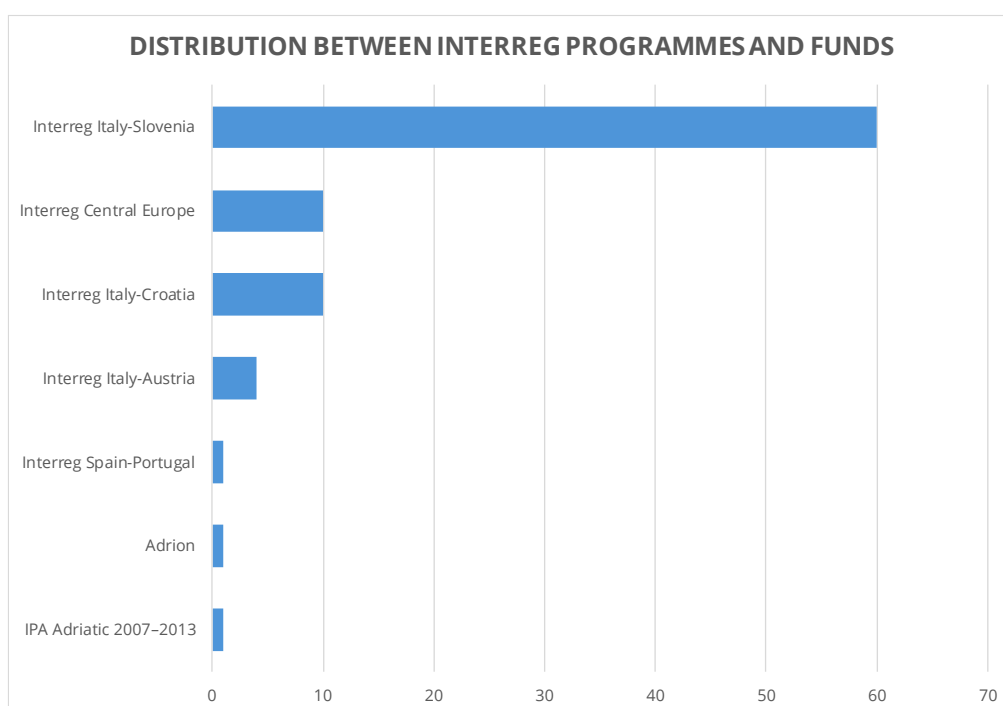
The following pie chart demonstrates that 35% of the respondents have activated synergies during their projects.



Synergies are most common among Interreg programmes as shown below:

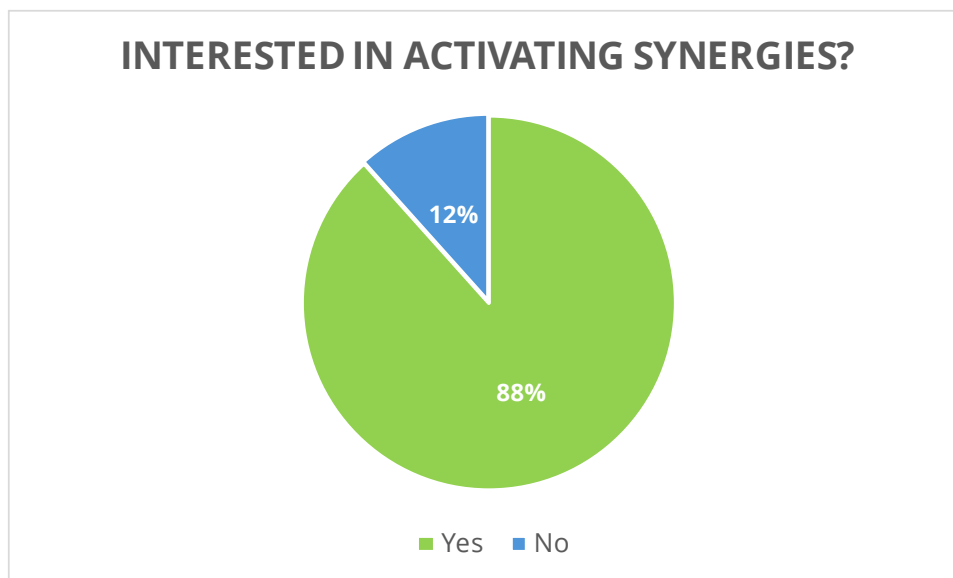


Among the Interreg programmes the distribution is the following:



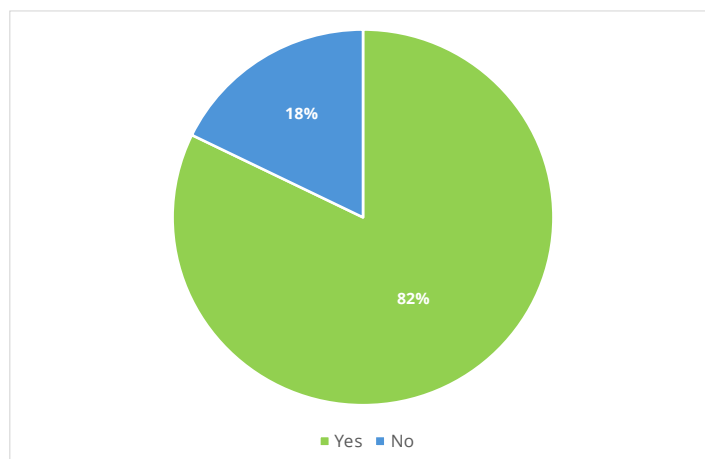
The chart demonstrates that the joint action of the Interreg Italy-Slovenia, Interreg Central Europe and Interreg Italy-Croatia programmes has been perceived as a successful development of synergies.

Interest in the creation of synergies



A clear majority of participants (**88%**) stated that they are interested in activating synergies in the future, indicating a strong willingness to engage in collaboration and cooperation with other projects or initiatives. Only **12%** of respondents reported no interest in activating synergies.

A majority of respondents are therefore interested in activating synergies. Particular attention was given to analysing the level of interest among those who have not yet activated any synergies. The results are presented below:



Among the 90 respondents that have not activated synergies in the previous programming periods, **82%** of them are interested in activating synergies in the next programming period, while **18%** of them are not interested.

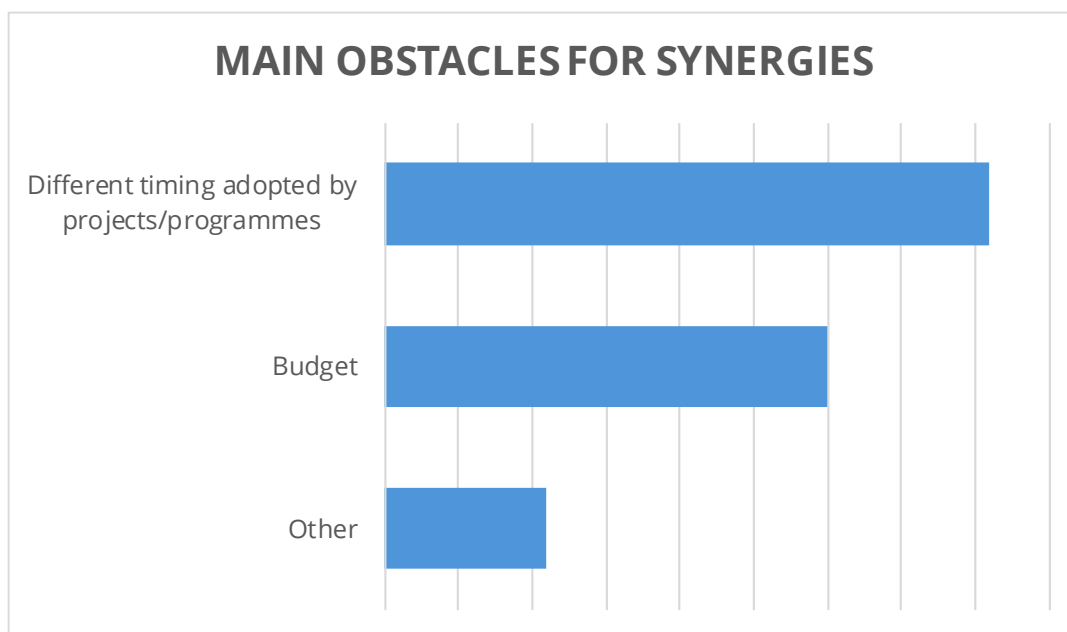
In addition, respondents who showed an interest in activating synergies in future programming periods were asked to elaborate on their ideas for future collaboration.



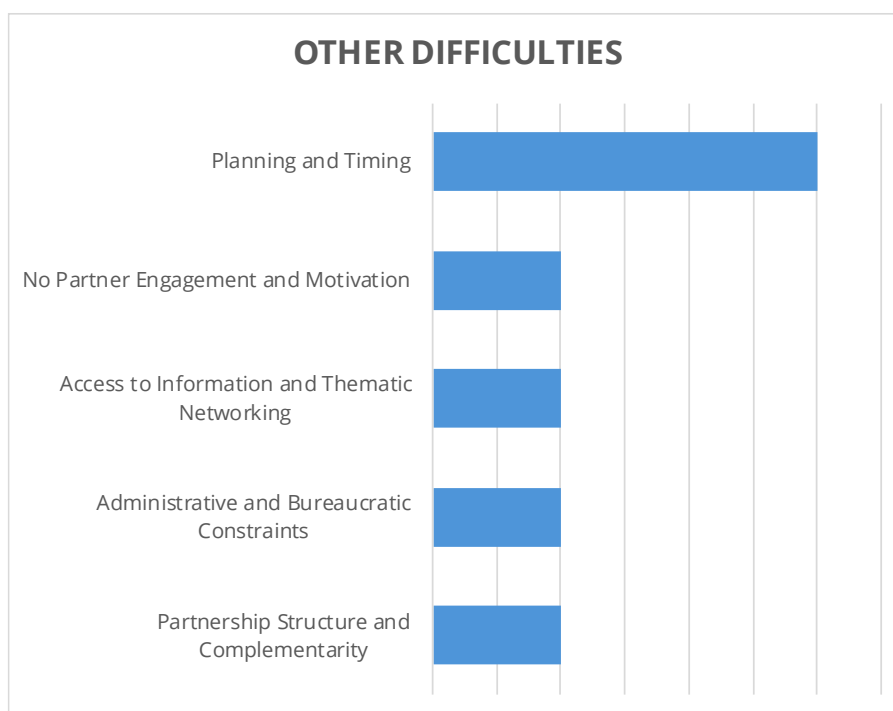
The chart shows that most respondents already have concrete ideas for future synergies, but no established contacts and clear ideas supported by existing contacts. A smaller yet notable share indicates ongoing or consolidated cooperation suggesting that some synergies are already being implemented.

At the same time, fewer respondents are still in an early or exploratory phase, with limited or no ideas or contacts identified so far, while a minority provided a negative response. Overall, the chart highlights a generally advanced level of preparedness for future synergy development.

Expected difficulties in activating synergies



The most significant difficulty identified is **different timing** adopted by projects and programmes, which clearly stands out as the primary obstacle. The second most frequent challenge is **budget constraints**. Finally, a smaller share of responses falls under “**Other**” obstacles, represented in the chart below.



The chart provides a structured overview of the “**Other**”.

The most frequently mentioned difficulty relates to **planning and timing**, confirming that beyond general programme misalignment, respondents also face challenges in allocating sufficient time to plan joint initiatives in advance. Several comments stress the need for early and realistic planning of shared activities and for limiting the number of partners involved in order to ensure manageable and effective collaboration. A lack of time to carry out additional activities alongside core project tasks further reinforces this issue.

A second set of obstacles concerns **partner engagement and motivation**. Some respondents reported limited interest from partners in other projects, with a tendency to focus exclusively on their own activities. In this context, the role of the lead partner emerges as crucial: respondents highlighted that synergies are more difficult to activate when lead partners do not actively encourage collaboration or raise awareness of these opportunities.

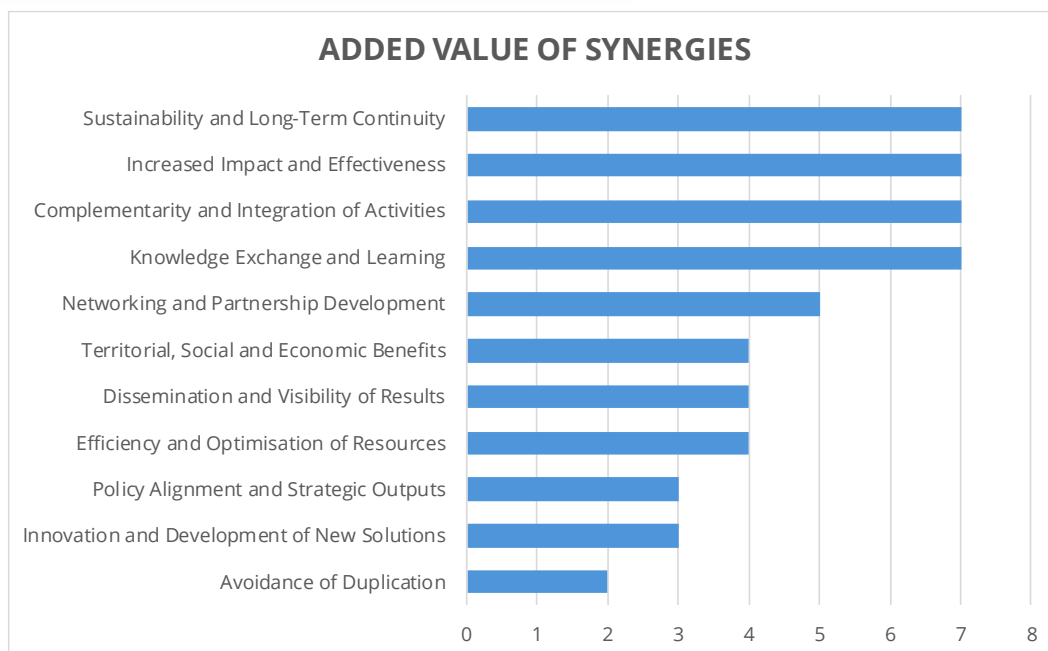
Access to information and thematic networking also appears as a relevant difficulty. Respondents noted that it is often hard to identify ongoing projects with similar or complementary themes. Several suggestions point to the need for better coordination mechanisms, such as thematic clustering of projects, targeted matchmaking or support from the Joint Secretariat to pre-group projects and facilitate direct contacts. While networking events already exist, respondents perceive them as too broad and time-consuming, limiting their effectiveness in generating concrete synergies.

Further obstacles relate to **administrative and bureaucratic constraints**, with some respondents referring explicitly to complex procedures that can discourage or slow down collaboration across projects.

Finally, issues linked to **partnership structure and complementarity** were mentioned, with respondents indicating that synergies are easier to develop when partners are already involved in multiple projects with complementary content, as this facilitates trust, coordination and knowledge exchange.

Added value expected from synergies

Beneficiaries were also asked to identify the added value, in their view, of activating synergies.



The most frequently mentioned added value is related to **sustainability and long-term continuity, increased impact and effectiveness, complementarity and integration of activities** and **knowledge exchange and learning**. Respondents consistently emphasized that synergies help amplify project results, extend their lifespan beyond the project duration and make outcomes more stable, replicable and useful for a wider range of beneficiaries.

Many answers point to the value of combining complementary expertise, outputs and methodologies.

Networking and partnership development also emerges strongly, with synergies seen as a way to strengthen existing partnerships, create new ones and foster cooperation across sectors and territories. This is closely linked to **dissemination and visibility of results**, as joint activities and shared communication efforts increase the reach and recognition of project outcomes. **Efficiency in the use of resources** is linked mainly to sharing costs and optimizing financial and human resources.

Finally, respondents associate synergies with **innovation and the development of new solutions**, as well as with better **policy alignment and strategic outputs**, enabling more coherent approaches and long-term systemic impacts.

Capitalization

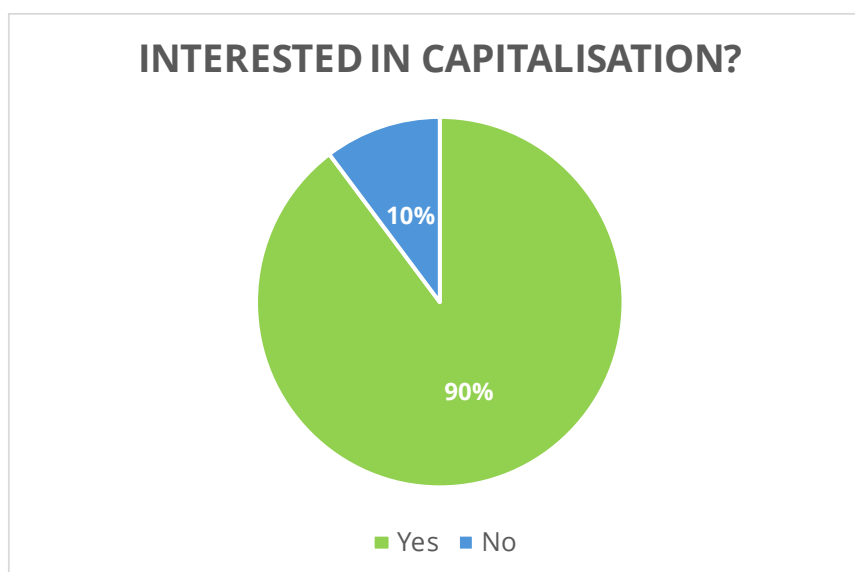
The final part of Section B regards the capitalization of project results. In particular, respondents were first asked to indicate whether they are already engaged in capitalization activities and whether they are interested in doing so.

Experiences with capitalization projects



The chart shows that **one-third of respondents (33%)** are already active in capitalization activities, while 67% are not yet engaged in such initiatives. This indicates that despite the high interest in capitalization expressed by beneficiaries, most of them have not yet translated this interest into concrete action, suggesting potential for further support and facilitation in this area.

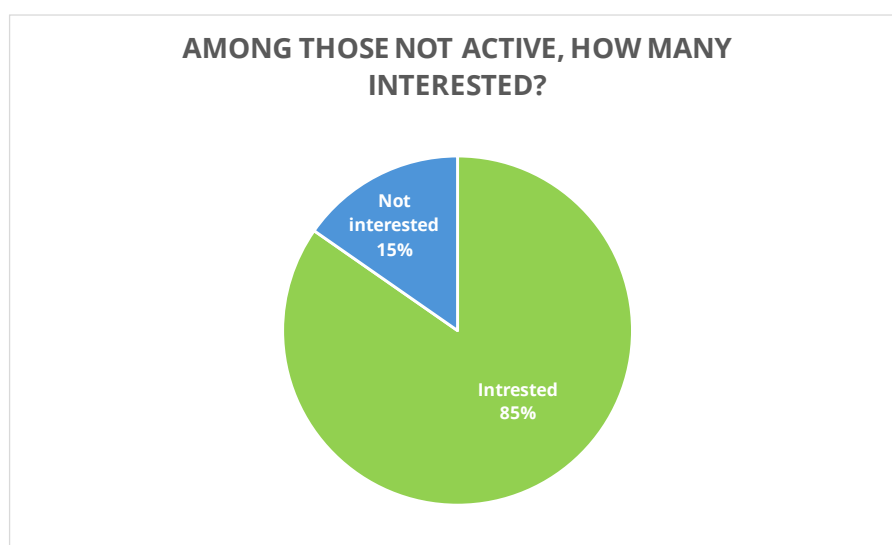
Interest in the capitalization of results



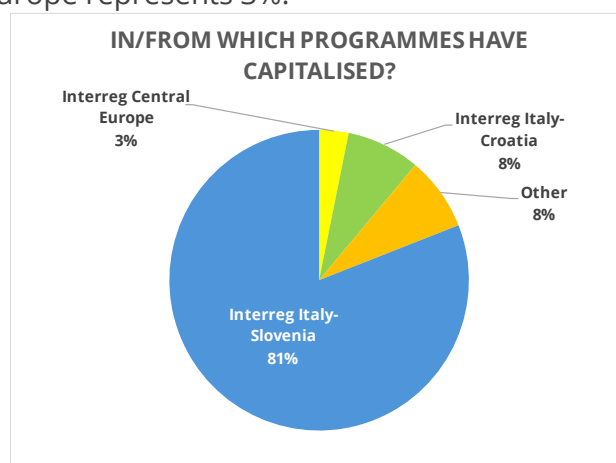
The chart shows a very high level of interest in capitalization activities among respondents.

Overall, **90%** of participants indicated that they are interested in capitalization, while only **10%** reported no interest. This highlights a strong willingness to build upon, transfer and further exploit project results beyond their original implementation.

It is interesting to examine the level of interest in capitalisation among those who were not previously engaged in capitalisation activities. In particular, the analysis focuses on their willingness to capitalise on project results in the future programming period. The findings show that a strong majority (85%) express an interest in capitalisation, while only 15% report no interest, as illustrated in the pie chart below.



As can be seen from the chart below, the capitalisation of projects activities is largely concentrated within the Interreg Italy-Slovenia Programme, which accounts for **81%** of the cases. Much smaller shares relate to Interreg Italy-Croatia and other programmes (both 8%), while Interreg Central Europe represents 3%.

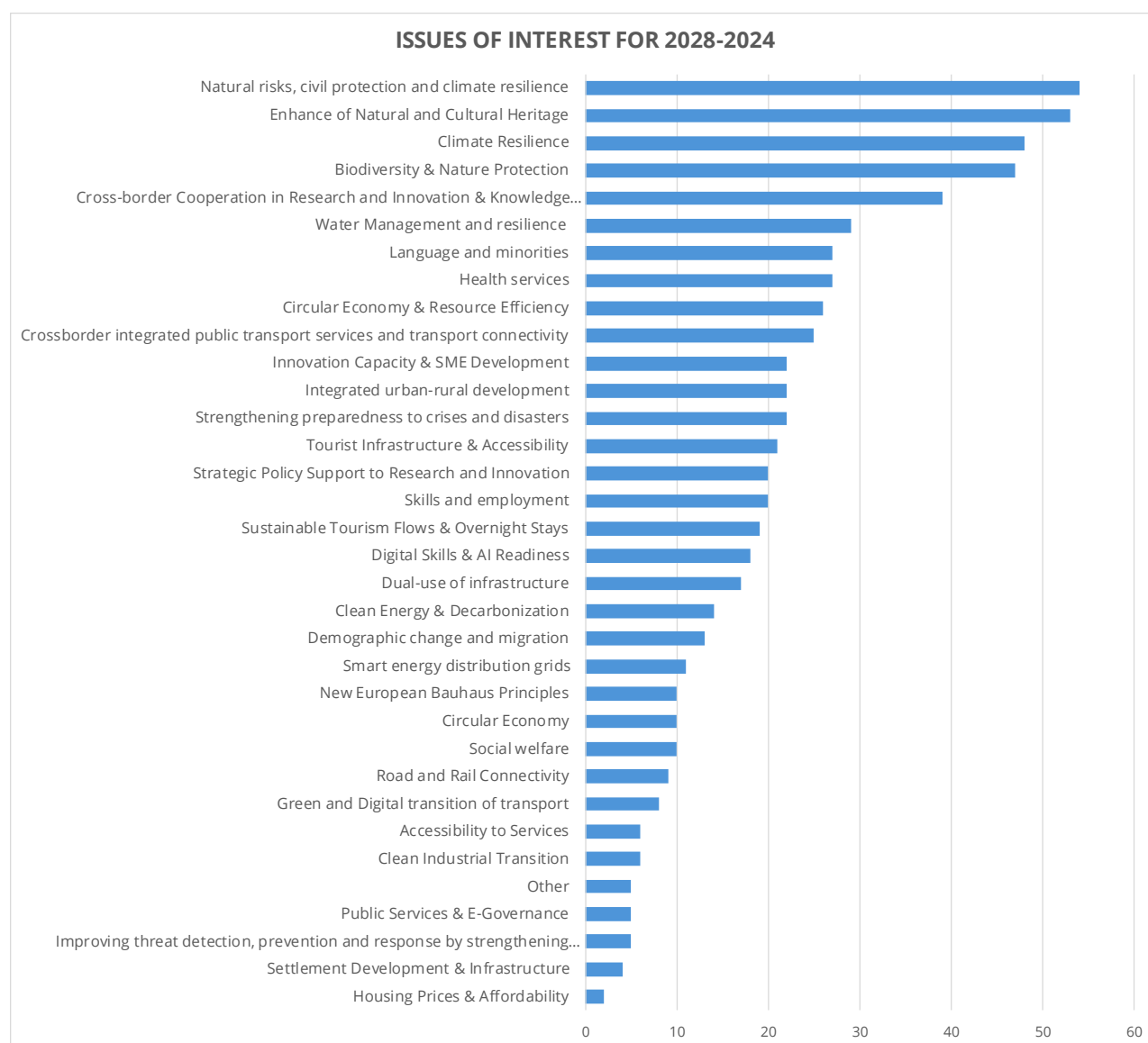


Cooperation issues of interest for 2028-2034 programming period

Section C of the consultation focused on future programming and asked beneficiaries to indicate their preferences regarding the issues and topics to be addressed.

Topics

In question 1, respondents were asked to select up to five topics they consider most relevant for the Italy-Slovenia cross-border area in the next programming period.



The highest levels of interest are clearly concentrated on environmental sustainability and climate-related themes, with **natural risks, civil protection and climate resilience**; the **enhancement of natural and cultural heritage, biodiversity and nature protection**.

A second group highly chosen regards **cross-border cooperation in research, innovation and knowledge, water management and resilience**, as well as **language, minorities and health services**, highlighting the importance of social cohesion and cross-border integration.

Topics related to **circular economy, transport, innovation capacity, SME development, rural development**, and **disaster preparedness** also receive significant attention, while issues such as digital skills, clean energy, circular economy, demographic change, and social welfare are perceived as important but comparatively less central.

Overall, the chart shows that respondents prioritize **environmental resilience, heritage and cross-border cooperation**, while economic, digital, and infrastructural topics play a complementary role in their future wishes.

The respondents also had the opportunity to explain their choice. Respondents' comments highlight a strong consensus around the **strategic importance of addressing cross-border challenges that transcend national boundaries**, particularly those related to **climate change, environmental protection and territorial resilience**. Climate change is widely perceived as a key driver affecting natural risks, biodiversity loss, water resources, agriculture and overall quality of life, requiring **joint planning, coordinated actions and long-term adaptive strategies** between Italy and Slovenia.

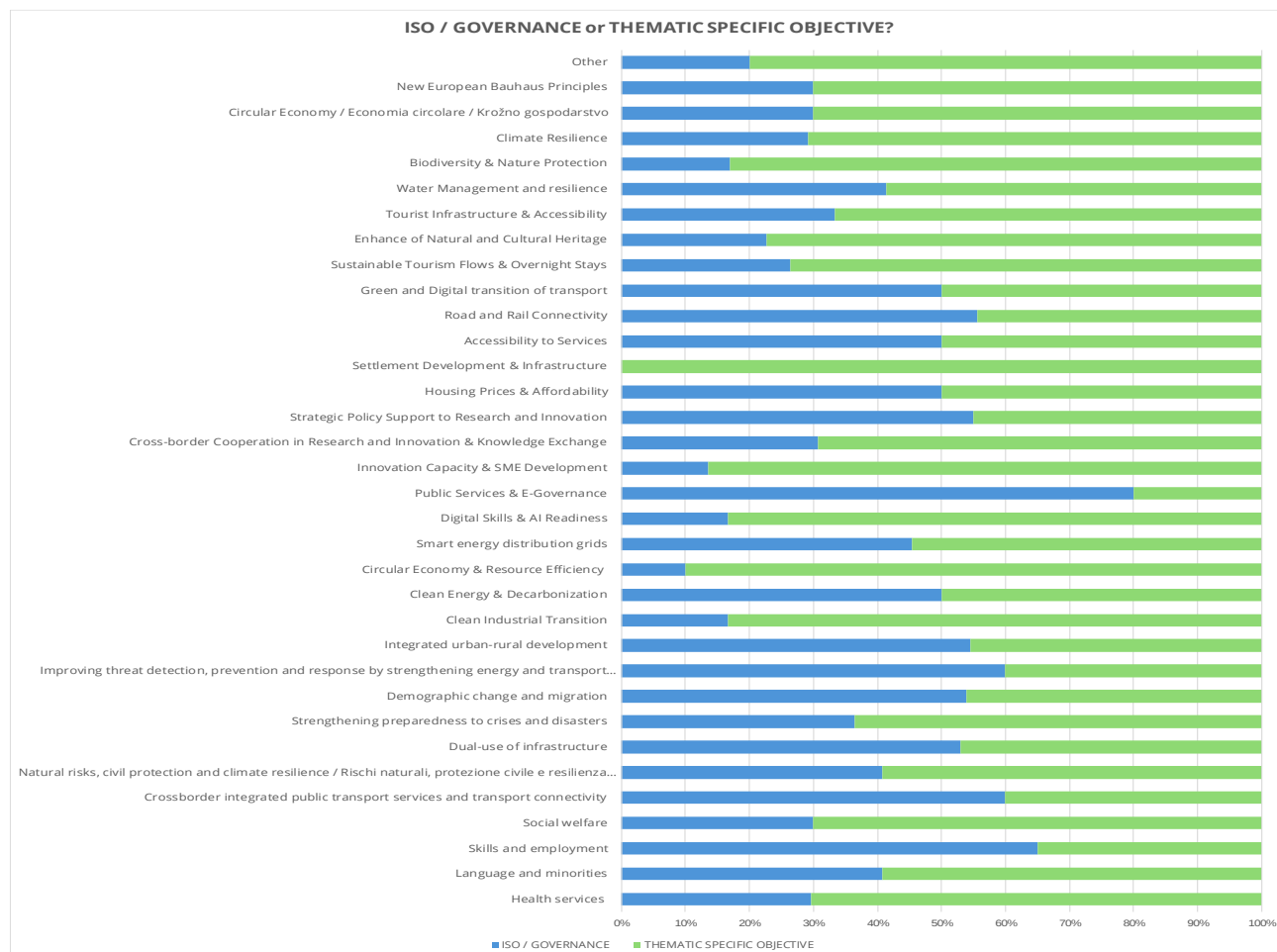
A recurring theme is the need to strengthen **nature protection, biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource management**, acknowledging that ecosystems, water basins and ecological corridors do not stop at borders.

Many contributions also stress the importance of **integrated and cross-sectoral approaches**, combining environment, tourism, mobility, rural development, and innovation. Sustainable tourism, in particular, is seen as a key facilitator with strong spillover effects, but respondents underline the need to move towards better governance models, reduce overtourism, enhance seasonality management and promote smaller centres and local identities.

Social and economic dimensions are equally prominent, highlighting the importance of **skills development, reskilling and upskilling**, especially for young people and adults, as well as support for **SMEs, startups and innovation ecosystems**, often rooted in research and academia. Cross-border cooperation is viewed as essential to reinforce public-private partnerships, transfer research results into the economy and foster advanced sectors such as personalized healthcare, biotechnology and innovative therapies.

Several respondents point out that **cross-border cooperation should focus on themes that genuinely require cross-border solutions**, such as healthcare access, civil protection, climate risk management, transport interoperability and public services. Improved governance, harmonized protocols, simplified administrative procedures and better coordination among institutions are seen as prerequisites for making cooperation effective and beneficial for citizens.

Thematic objective or governance approach (ISO1)?



Respondents underline the importance of **combining governance approaches with thematic, specific objectives** rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive. Many contributors emphasize that thematic objectives are essential to deliver concrete, measurable results, test innovative solutions, pilot interventions and directly address sector-specific challenges such as climate change adaptation, biodiversity protection, water management, health services, aquaculture and social innovation. In this regard, thematic projects are seen as effective tools to experiment with solutions on a smaller scale before upscaling them and integrating them into broader policy frameworks.

At the same time, respondents widely acknowledge the **crucial role of governance (ISO1)** in ensuring coordination, harmonisation of policies and institutional cooperation across borders. Governance approaches are considered particularly relevant for issues such as civil protection, natural risks, climate resilience, transport connectivity, health systems, demographic change and strategic innovation policies, where shared protocols, aligned regulations and long-term visions are required.

Several responses stress that effective cross-border cooperation depends on the nature of the issue addressed. Topics that inherently require operational collaboration benefit most from thematic objectives focused on implementation and practical actions. Conversely, challenges related to system-level coordination, service accessibility, infrastructure interoperability and large-scale resilience strategies are better addressed through governance-oriented frameworks.

Overall, respondents advocate for **a flexible and integrated approach**, in which governance and thematic objectives reinforce each other. Governance should provide the enabling framework – shared vision, coordination mechanisms and institutional alignment – while thematic objectives should ensure tangible impacts on the ground, responding to local needs and delivering visible benefits for cross-border communities. Many also stress the importance of maintaining the possibility to finance concrete activities and pilot actions, rather than limiting future programmes to purely strategic or administrative cooperation.