



**Interreg**  
Euro-MED



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# CONSULTATION OF STAKEHOLDERS AND CITIZENS

[Short version]

[Northern shore of the Mediterranean / Interreg Euro-MED Programme]

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## Introduction

This Harvesting Report was created in response to the European Commission's request to consult stakeholders and citizens for post-2027 legislation. The Interreg Euro-MED Programme conducted two comprehensive consultations to gather valuable insights from its area.

## Consultation of stakeholders

Interreg Euro-MED collaborated with five other transnational Interreg programmes to streamline the consultation process. The consultation received 711 responses from various stakeholders, with 248 responses specifically for Interreg Euro-MED. The stakeholders included business support organizations, education/training centers, enterprises, higher education and research organizations, infrastructure and service providers, interest groups including NGOs, international organizations, local and national public authorities, development agencies, and SMEs.

## Consultation of citizens

A separate consultation targeted young people living in the Mediterranean region. The questionnaire was designed to be concise and accessible, aiming at students and IVY volunteers involved in MED and Euro-MED projects. The consultation received 13 responses from young individuals aged 19 to 27, from various Mediterranean countries.

## Recommendations for Post-2027

### Topics to be covered by Interreg

- **Current Relevant Topics:** Sustainability, urban regeneration, social topics, and technology and innovation remain crucial. These include reforestation, energy efficiency, sustainable agricultural practices, water management, air quality, circular economy, marine resources protection, transport, and mobility.
- **New emerging topics:**
  - **Citizen engagement:** Encouraging deeper community participation and giving citizens a stronger voice in decision-making processes.
  - **Transversality:** Promoting research, innovation, and the use of advanced technologies (AI and Industry 4.0) for new approaches to environmental protection. Broadening funding focus to support comprehensive, multi-faceted projects that merge research, education, and practical application.
  - **Health and sport:** Addressing public health issues through targeted projects and promoting sports as a means of improving health and social inclusion.
  - **Integrated transport systems:** Developing integrated transport systems to improve connectivity and reduce environmental impact.
  - **Fostering entrepreneurship:** Supporting various initiatives and mechanisms to foster entrepreneurship.

## Geography of the Programme

- **Common structures in the Mediterranean:** Establishing observatories across the EU and MED area to collect critical data and support strategies for food production and policy decisions. Co-creating living labs for sustainable development in the region.
- **More cooperation with other Programmes:** Enhancing integration between programmes and projects focusing on macro themes within the Mediterranean Interreg programmes. Holding regular focus and study groups on common issues at the programme level.
- **Expanding the Programmes' area:** Expanding the territory of the programmes to foster higher levels of cooperation and networking among main transport nodes and countries. This would attract more investments and activities, strengthen transport infrastructures, create synergies between environmental protection and growth, and reduce reliance on traditional energy resources.
- **Advocating for a macro-regional strategy:** Organizing regular events within the EU Parliament and the European Committee of the Regions to advocate for a macro-regional strategy.

## Implementation of Programmes/Projects

- **Ensuring post-project continuity:** Implementing a feedback mechanism in EU transnational projects to inform legislative changes at the EU level. Ensuring successful projects receive post-financing to continue beyond initial funding periods. Funding networks or communities to maintain connections and activities of completed projects.
- **Entering partnership:** Establishing an EU-backed rotation fund to lend money to approved projects for the period from approval to repayment. Evaluating projects more favorably when they include partners who have never participated in an Interreg project.
- **Flexible financial rules:** Incorporating flexible funding mechanisms in future programmes to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities, including fast-track funding for pilot projects.
- **Platforms for partners:** Creating a dedicated platform for Civil Society Organizations to connect institutional partners with beneficiaries and target groups. Developing a comprehensive database of profiles and roles of potential beneficiaries for each Interreg programme.

## Conclusion

The consultations conducted for the Euro-MED Harvesting Report revealed a significant convergence on several key themes, particularly sustainable development and climate change. These topics are of paramount interest to a diverse range of stakeholders and citizens, reflecting a shared commitment to addressing pressing environmental and social challenges.

### Convergence of themes:

1. **Sustainable development and climate change:** Both stakeholders and citizens emphasized the importance of sustainability, including reforestation, energy efficiency, sustainable agricultural practices, water management, air quality, circular economy, and marine resources protection.

This convergence highlights a collective recognition of the need to adopt and promote practices that mitigate climate change and enhance environmental resilience.

2. **Social inclusion and economic development:** There was a strong focus on social topics such as social inclusion, employment awareness projects, and culture.

Stakeholders and citizens alike underscored the necessity of fostering inclusive growth, creating job opportunities, and supporting local entrepreneurship, particularly for SMEs.

3. **Innovation and technology:** The consultations revealed a consensus on the need to leverage technology and innovation to address environmental and social challenges.

This includes promoting research, innovation, and the use of advanced technologies for environmental protection and sustainable development.

### Rationale and novelties proposed:

1. **Citizen engagement and transversality:** One of the key novelties proposed is the emphasis on deeper community participation and giving citizens a stronger voice in decision-making processes.

This approach aims to foster a more inclusive and democratic process, ensuring that the voices of diverse stakeholders are heard and considered.

2. **Health and sport:** Addressing public health issues through targeted projects and promoting sports as a means of improving health and social inclusion is a new emerging topic.

This reflects a broader understanding of the interconnectedness of health, well-being, and sustainable development.

3. **Integrated transport systems:** Developing integrated transport systems to improve connectivity and reduce environmental impact is another innovative proposal.



This approach aims to create more efficient and sustainable transportation networks, contributing to overall environmental goals.

4. **Flexible financial mechanisms:** Incorporating flexible funding mechanisms in future programmes to adapt to emerging challenges and opportunities, including fast-track funding for pilot projects, is a significant novelty.

This flexibility is intended to enhance the responsiveness and effectiveness of programmes in addressing dynamic and evolving needs.

5. **Post-Project continuity:** Ensuring successful projects receive post-financing to continue beyond initial funding periods and implementing a feedback mechanism in EU transnational projects to inform legislative changes at the EU level are crucial innovations.

These measures aim to enhance the sustainability and long-term impact of projects, ensuring that valuable initiatives do not end prematurely.

**Comparing to the Past:** The novelties proposed in the post-2027 recommendations reflect a shift towards more holistic, inclusive, and flexible approaches compared to past practices. The emphasis on citizen engagement, health, and integrated transport systems represents a broader and more interconnected understanding of sustainable development. Additionally, the introduction of flexible financial mechanisms and post-project continuity measures addresses past challenges related to funding rigidity and project sustainability, ensuring that future programmes are better equipped to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Overall, the Euro-MED Harvesting Report's recommendations for post-2027 legislation demonstrate a forward-thinking and comprehensive approach to addressing the complex and interrelated challenges facing the Mediterranean region. By building on past successes and incorporating innovative and inclusive strategies, the Interreg Euro-MED Programme is well-positioned to drive meaningful and lasting change in the years to come.