

## Informations for citizens with reference to the year 2022

**Summary of the activities of the Interreg Italy-Austria programme: important elements and some highlights with regard to the year 2022.**

### What is Interreg Italy-Austria?



Strengthening its economic, social and territorial cohesion is one of the main objectives of the European Union, which through its Cohesion Policy aims to intervene in order to increasingly align differences in development, growth, quality of life, strengthen territorial cooperation and competitiveness between individual regions. The Interreg V-A Italy-Austria cooperation programme, a funding programme of the European Territorial Cooperation Objective, contributes directly to this: it promotes balanced and sustainable development and harmonious integration in the border area between Italy and Austria! The financial resources come mainly from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and national public contributions for a total of approximately EUR 98 million. The area covers an area of more than 50,000 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of more than 5.5 million and includes a variety of areas and landscapes with a distinct mountain character.

### What do we do?

With European and national funds as well as those of the project partners themselves, we support Austrian-Italian cooperation projects in the fields of research and innovation, nature and culture, institutional capacity building and regional development at local level (CLLD Community-led Local Development). The above-mentioned objectives are achieved by promoting measures to identify the common challenges of the border regions and to exploit their growth potential by building new cross-border synergies, increasing the attractiveness of the regions and sustainable regional growth through the creation of new jobs and support for productivity, social cohesion, etc. The regions involved work closely with the partner Länder on the other side of the border for common results in cross-border cooperation. Here are the 4 priority areas in which the projects are implemented:



## FOCUS 2022

2022 was a year of recovery from the previous ones marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, as a result of which projects were delayed and had to adapt part of their activities, e.g. by using modern communication media and consolidating the implementation of virtual working environments. Compared to the previous year, events and meetings largely took place in presence or in hybrid format, proving the importance and effectiveness of cross-border exchange also through new methods and innovative solutions.

The impact of the pandemic emergency meant implementation delays for about two-thirds of the Programme projects. Many projects coped with the emergency phase by promoting smart working/home office and thus succeeded in contributing to and supporting economic recovery in the fields of research, tourism, and culture by promoting an "online" cooperation and information exchange model. This situation led to negative effects by making it more difficult to coordinate and carry out collaborations, but it also had some benefits: for more than half of the projects, it saved resources and made activities more efficient, and it made it possible to experiment with a working model that will be valid for the future. In addition, as far as the involvement of cross-border communities is concerned, it has also made it possible to reach more stakeholders thanks to the various modes of online interaction.

The programme contributes to improving cross-border cooperation by building a stronger trust and helps to overcome language, administrative and legal barriers of various kinds. From a sectoral point of view, the programme helps to reduce cross-border barriers for education, training and research, e.g. in the fields of health, social services, the labour market, mobility and logistics, and climate and the environment. The majority of the projects included initiatives to ensure the long-term sustainability of the results.

## Events

In 2022, more in-person events could be held than in the previous year, and others were organised in hybrid mode.

The CLLD (Community-led Local Development) approach to local development implemented by the Interreg IT-AT programme met with great success in the programme's area and aroused considerable interest at the European level. On this occasion, invitations were received for presentations at European seminars (EU Week of Regions and Cities), delegations and experts were welcomed who were interested in studying the topic in detail (an in-depth study was drawn up by the researcher Jean-Pierre Vercruysse, commissioned by the European Commission), and on-site study visits to the projects were organised.

The coronation of the CLLD work was the signing of the strategies for the 4 areas involved.

Other important events took place to promote the programme with meetings and contributions to the local and European press, numerous newspaper inserts, dedicated articles, updating work on the [interreg.net](#) internet page and social media activities ([Interreg V-A Italia – Austria | Provincia autonoma di Bolzano - Alto Adige](#)).

A recurring occasion for discussion and debate on the evolution of European programmes is, as every year, Europe Day on 9 May: for more than 70 years the European Union has represented a project of peace and unity, fundamental values that have taken on a new centrality in the current times of crisis, and the ERDF, ESF+, PNRR and Interreg programmes among others contribute to the achievement of these objectives.

This confirms the fulfilment of the goals as well as the contribution of the financed operations to an overall positive change in line with the general strategic objectives for a smarter; greener; more connected; more social and inclusive EU, closer to citizens. The projects are aimed at promoting sustainable management of cultural and natural heritage and increasing the flow of tourists, and at strengthening cross-border institutional cooperation.

Most of the projects have entered the final phase of activity implementation, accounting and final reporting, and the focus has shifted to the drafting of the next programming period 2021-2027.

The highlight of the year was the Kick-off presentation of the new programming, held in November 2022 at the Lumen in Plan de Corones.



## For a green, fair and non-discriminatory Europe

The Interreg Italy-Austria programme is part of a broad framework of actions and strategies that at EU, macro-regional, national, and local level are aimed at pursuing sustainable development. It has proven through its projects to have a positive influence on sustainable development strategies and on raising the awareness of the population and professionals on environmental issues. When assessing and approving projects, attention was also paid to ensuring that the projects contributed positively to the horizontal principles of gender equality and non-discrimination.

The positive impact recorded by some projects is evident, particularly regarding the protection of transboundary ecosystems and habitats, with the full achievement of the main objectives as well as the contribution of the financed operations to a positive change in the enhancement of natural and cultural heritage.



Italy-Austria contributes to the EU's climate objectives with over 18 million investments, representing 25% of the EU contribution to the programme.

The projects implemented in the reporting year that contribute directly to the principle of non-discrimination achieve this goal, for example, through the development of peripheral areas in the CLLD approach (Priority 4) and in projects such as SAR (Priority 3), the inclusion of persons with disabilities through the removal of barriers and the development of technological solutions such as augmented reality (GATE project, further developed through SMART, (Priority 2) or the promotion of innovative technologies for the independent living of persons with disabilities through the design of SEnSHome smart homes (Priority 1). An example in the field of tourism and sustainability is the OnTour project (Priority 2), successfully completed in 2021, which aims to promote small and medium-sized enterprises in the field of sustainable tourism by identifying an online tool for sustainability labels or the most appropriate certification for them. The NO WASTE project (Priority 2) aims to encourage people to reduce waste and to promote a sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle - among other things, through a thematic trail, flax, hemp and nettles are established as traditional regional crops and a perfect example of a 'waste-free' life cycle. Also in Priority 3, two projects RiKoSt and Albina contribute to the principle of sustainable development by providing models for risk prevention and increasingly accurate weather forecasting. Within the framework of the "Slowfood" CLLD small project fund of the Heuopen region, with the aim of strengthening cross-border cooperation and building a better network of food producers, the series of events "Mercati del Buon Gusto" raised awareness of natural, genuine and regional food in the Gemona region (Carnia) and beyond. An example of a sustainable road transport project is the small CLLD ATMan project with the aim of developing the Wipptal model region to improve air quality along the Brenner motorway.

CLLD projects often have non-discrimination and equality as central objectives, simply because they implement projects in peripheral areas. An example could be the medium-sized project "BKompetenz", which aims to address people with a migration background, in particular women and children, and people with disabilities and to create specific, free, low-threshold, demand-oriented offers and services in a cross-border context.

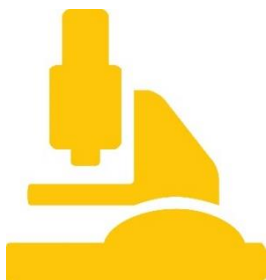
## Results of Programme Implementation 2022

Until 31.12.2022, the Interreg Italy-Austria cooperation programme has funded a total of 96 cross-border projects. The projects are assigned to the axes 'Research and Innovation', 'Nature and Culture' and 'Institutions'. For the strengthening of territorial cooperation and the maintenance of the quality of life and competitiveness in the border area between Italy and Austria, 68,703,656.39 euro of ERDF funds have been allocated so far, of which 37.18% in Axis 1, 35.79% in Axis 2 and 27.03% in Axis 3. By using additional funds, it was possible to exceed the financial plan.

Under Axis 4, new small and medium-sized projects are constantly being approved. The great interest and success of this regional development approach at local level is evidenced by the high number (140) of small projects approved. In total, CLLD was able to count on more than 15 million ERDF funds in this axis until the end of the programming period.

### **Priority Axis 1 - "Research and Development"**

Axis 1 projects cover a wide range of topics and are very well aligned with the objectives of the regions' joint strategies (S3 strategies). The focus is on topics such as medical research, concrete business support measures, sustainable building materials, building technology, the creation of a start-up ecosystem, digitization and Industry 4.0. The total number of projects approved in Axis 1 amounts to 37 and commits an amount of EUR 25,540,747.43 of ERDF funds. Particularly noteworthy is the balanced partnership structure due to the continuous collaboration between research and business (private/public) that promotes sustainable research and innovation.



### **Priority Axis 2 - "Nature and Culture"**

A particular feature of the projects presented in Axis 2 is the focus on the measure "Conservation, protection, promotion and development of natural and cultural heritage". Of the approved projects, 85% mainly promote soft and sustainable tourism in the programme area, research and the close and direct link with biodiversity. Under the three notices, 33 projects were approved for an amount of EUR 24,879,920 of ERDF funds.

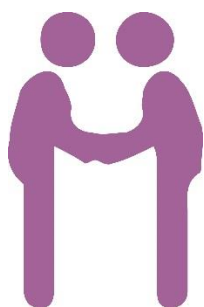


### **Priority Axis 3 - "Institutions"**



The programme area's cooperation potential for Axis 3 is particularly evident in the fields of civil protection and risk prevention, public safety and rescue, local public transport, education, health and social services. In this area, 26 projects amounting to EUR 22,150,892 of ERDF funds were approved

### **Priority Axis 4 - "CLLD – Community-Led Local Development"**



The objective of the axis is to promote regional development in the border area through locally integrated cross-border strategies. Within Axis 4, 24 small and 10 medium-sized projects have been approved under the specific CLLD approach with the aim of promoting integration and local self-responsibility in the narrow border area through integrated cross-border strategies. The medium-sized projects were mainly concentrated under Measure 15.1 Smart Growth (promotion of projects for diversification of the local economy in border regions) and under Measure 15.3 Supplementary Growth (implementation of projects for diversification of the local economy in border regions). Many projects have already completed their activities

and are approaching project completion; good progress has been made in implementation and the success of CLLD strategies derives from the evolution of existing regional structures (such as LEADER LAGs and Interreg Councils) which, through the Interreg programme, have had the opportunity to increase their financial base, thematic and territorial coverage. The cross-border added value of CLLD projects is mainly in terms of networking between private actors and companies and the promotion of innovations in the local context.

### **Focus: CLLD (Community-led Local Development)**

Regional development begins at the local level: when citizens take charge and contribute "from the bottom up", autonomously and on their own initiative, to the development of the local territory (so-called empowerment of local communities). The CLLD approach of the Interreg Italy-Austria programme is an effective instrument of cross-border cooperation, based on an integrated participative approach for the elaboration of local development strategies and the planning of territorial development in decentralised border areas. Direct stakeholders and main actors are the local communities, which become living labs promoting local commitment and strengthening participatory democracy in peripheral regions. This is what CLLD (Community-Led Local Development) is all about, involving civil society and local governments in the design of interventions to address social, economic and environmental challenges in the area through participation and cross-border cooperation. Local actors engage and collaborate closely with their counterparts across the border for common results in regional development. As the initiative is bottom-up, the creation of interactive meeting platforms and collaborative networks based on mutual trust are the foundation for successful local partnerships. Valuing the partnership principle is the basis for effective regional development and, in the Interreg Italy-Austria Programme, this also means the constant involvement of the programme authorities (Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Regional Coordination Units in the partner regions) and the European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) in the programme area (Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino, Euregio "Without Borders", Euregio Connect).

The Interreg Italy-Austria Cooperation Programme is at the forefront in adopting the integrated and multi-sectoral approach of CLLD and supports strategic action plans concentrated in the following four CLLD areas

- "Dolomiti Live": Osttirol, Val Pusteria, Alto Bellunese
- "HEurOpen": Hermagor, Gemonese, Canal del Ferro e Val Canale, Carnia
- "Terra Raetica": Landeck, Imst, Val Venosta, Engadina Bassa
- "Wipptal": Wipptal Tirolo, Wipptal Alto Adige

## Europa noch näher

Community-Led Local  
Development (CLLD)



## Un'Europa più vicina

Community-Led Local Development  
Transfrontaliero (CLLD)



CLLD steht für "Community-led local development".  
Es handelt sich um einen Bottom-up Ansatz zur Förderung der von der örtlichen Bevölkerung betriebenen lokalen Entwicklung, der die Bürger mit einem partizipativen Konzept auf lokaler Ebene in die Entwicklung notwendiger Maßnahmen zur Bewältigung der sozialen, wirtschaftlichen und ökologischen Herausforderungen einbindet.



4 grenzübergreifende Gebiete



- Intelligentes Wachstum**  
Entwicklung einer auf Wissen und Innovation gestützten Wirtschaft
- Nachhaltiges Wachstum**  
Förderung einer ressourcenschonenden, ökologischeren und wettbewerbsfähigeren Wirtschaft
- Inklusives Wachstum**  
Förderung einer Wirtschaft mit hoher Beschäftigung und ausgeprägtem sozialen und territorialen Zusammenhalt





## Perspectives of the future cooperation programme

The Managing Authority concluded the preparatory work with the Task Force, composed of members from the different participating regions, and drew up the new 2021-27 cooperation programme with its annexes, which was approved by the European Commission by Implementing Decision C(2022) 4260 of 16.06.2022 and presented at the Kick-off event on 25.11.2022. This was followed by the presentation on 24 and 25 January 2023 and the opening of the first call for projects until 19 April 2023; the subsequent second and third calls are scheduled for 2024 and 2025, respectively.

The programme promotes synergies in the area of cooperation in the valorisation and protection of heritage and in the area of research and innovation. From a strategic point of view, the programme contributes to addressing some of the development challenges of the Alpine area with a territorial cooperation approach, including: climate change, energy challenges, the fact of being a transit region, the territorial complexity and differentiation typical of a cross-border territory. It contributes effectively to governance in the cross-border area by involving the EGTCs, strengthening institutional cooperation, promoting the bottom-up approach through the CLLD and the implementation of the European macro-strategy for the Alpine arc EUSALP. The programme aims at supporting cooperation and promoting coordination also with other programmes, in particular with the Alpine Space Programme, and structures its objectives by developing synergies and complementarities in coherence with the EUSALP pillars.

### Programme priorities 2021-2027:

**A more competitive and smarter Europe** through the promotion of innovative and smart economic transformation and regional connectivity;

***Specific objective 1.1** - Enhancing research and innovation capacities, uptake of advanced technologies.*

**A greener, climate-neutral and resilient Europe** low carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy;

***Specific objective 2.4** - Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention, resilience, considering ecosystem approaches*

***Specific objective 2.7** - Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, and reducing pollution*

**A more social and inclusive Europe** through the implementation of the European pillar of social rights;

***Specific objective 4.6** - Supporting culture and sustainable tourism for economic development, social inclusion, and social innovation.*

**A Europe closer to citizens** by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories;

***Specific objective 5.2** - Fostering sustainable integrated and inclusive local social, economic and environmental development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism, and security in areas other than urban.*

**In addition, the programme selected the Interreg specific objective “a better cooperation governance”:** “enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular with a view to resolving legal and administrative obstacles in border regions”.

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES COMPARED BY PRIORITY and programming periods

<u>Priority</u>	2014-2020	2021-2027
1. INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP	22.150.892,00 €	19.258.176,00 €
2. CLIMATE CHANGE AND BIODIVERSITY	24.879.920,00 €	19.258.176,00 €
3. SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND CULTURE		9.014.472,00 €
4. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT - CLLD	13.126.919,00 €	14.477.773,00 €
5. REDUCING CROSS-BORDER OBSTACLES	17.146.804,00 €	6.282.812,00 €
ERDF TOTAL	77.304.535,00 €	68.291.409,00 €
Additional resources from national funds Co-financing rate 20 %	92.575.256,00 €	91.339.757,00 €