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Civic and civil society engagement in Interreg

January 2024

Explore the dynamics of civic and civil society engagement in Interreg programmes. The study report offers reflections about the potential of Interreg in fostering community engagement and strengthening Interreg for impactful cooperation with citizens and civil society organizations.

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Civic and civil society engagement is more than a 'nice extra'

The central role of civic and civil society engagement in shaping policies, programmes and institutions is widely recognised. Civic and civil society engagement is more than a 'nice extra'. The relationships between citizens, a civil society, and decision-makers are key to trust, inclusion, transparency, better decision-making, efficiency and effectiveness.

Pillars of engagement: Information, Consultation and Engagement

For the purposes of this study, the focus is on "active engagement of (organised and unorganised) civil society in decision-making that concerns issues of public interest". Three pillars of engagement are identified by the OECD:

1) information - providing information on an issue,

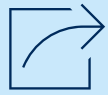
2) consultation - seeking feedback on a project/programme, and

3) engagement - building a community of citizens/stakeholders to engage with and participate in decision-making.

Interreg programmes and projects are leading to a wider and deeper engagement

Developing civic and civil society engagement in Interreg programmes and projects takes time, and effort and involves challenges. However, new approaches, resources, and ideas are available**.** The findings of this paper draw on desk-based research, a questionnaire survey, interviews and a workshop carried out by EPRC and Interact. Based on the work, **very notable trends across Interreg programmes are committed to 'get more' from civil society and citizen engagement in terms of participation, informing actions and delivering more for communities and citizens.**

Key findings are summarised in the following table.

	Programme management	• Programme development input from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in consultation exercises using an array of new approaches. • CSOs can have a role in programme management through, e.g., representation in MC and/or programme committees. • CSOs can have a role in programme implementation through involvement in advisory committees on project calls, selection, working groups etc. • TA activities, such as training, have a connection/relevance to building CSO capacity or programme capacity to work with CSOs/engage with citizens.
	Programme priorities	• Support can be provided by programme authorities to further maximise civic & civil society in projects implemented across POs 1, 2, 3 and 4. • Few Interreg programmes have prioritised PO5 in the 2021-27 period • ISO 1 particularly notes civil society & people to people projects to promote citizen cooperation. Used by many programmes. • New European Bauhaus provides useful guiding principles for encouraging/ building engagement with CSO/citizens.
	**Project - activities**	• Promotion of civic engagement is a core focus of specific projects. • Engagement is ‘easier’ on some themes than others. Specific project themes require wider engagement and are therefore more ’relatable’ for CSOs and citizens. • CSOs can be a valuable means of delivery, dissemination or capitalisation. • Efforts can involve showing how Interreg projects can be a way to ‘do something new’ and engage with CSOs in a way/to an extent they have not done in the past, how CSOs can help maximise results and develop better projects.
	Boosting CSO/civic role in projects	• Monitoring and mapping CSO participation. • Digital platforms to ease CSO participation/access. • Simplification to reduce administrative burden. • Support to small-scale projects, including small projects within Small Project Funds. • CSOs can be involved in projects as project observers. • CSOs have an important role in communication & take up of project/programme results, which can be emphasised and linked to capitalisation and dissemination. • Guidance & training to support CSO engagement at programme and project levels.

Looking to the future Interreg has much to offer

Programmes can continue their successes in engaging civic and civil society organisations. Here, it is important to distinguish between civil society and citizen engagement as different mechanisms and approaches can be used to engage them. For example, CSOs may participate as partners in projects, while both CSO and citizens can be effectively engaged in project activities driven by topics directly relevant to their local surroundings. Programme bodies have more leeway to influence the former by creating conditions which facilitate the participation of CSOs as beneficiaries, but less control over how projects involve citizens beyond providing them with guidance and good examples. Key points to bear in mind going forward are:

- ✓ **CSOs can play a valuable role in informing programme management and delivery.** However, challenges occur in ensuring an engagement/interest and ongoing commitment of the CSOs over the whole programme period.

- ✓ **The role of CSOs in project activities is key.** To facilitate this, the following points/steps could be considered, such as gathering data on CSO involvement, prioritising simplification (e.g., via digital platforms, SCOs and small-scale projects), emphasising the importance of CSOs and civic engagement in capitalisation, providing training and guidance for programmes, projects and CSO.

- ✓ **Place-based/tailored approaches and expectations remain important**, recognising the different traditions of CSO/civic engagement, capacities in place and the scope and scales of programmes.

- ✓ **Looking to the post 2027 period,** the following points are important to emphasise.

    - There is strong CSO engagement in projects and programmes, which is a valuable 'selling point' for Interreg and can be emphasised.

    - Simplification remains an ongoing challenge with particular relevance to CSO and civic engagement.

    - To advance CSO and civic engagement to an even greater extent more support would be required e.g., a strong policy commitment from the European Commission on the importance of civic and CSO engagement, e.g., ring-fencing resources.

Interreg programmes are already doing a lot, which is something to emphasise to highlight a strength in Interreg and its relevance to stakeholder communities, identifying lessons to share, and informing debates on future reforms and initiatives.

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1. Introduction

The pivotal role of citizens and civil society engagement in shaping policies, programmes and institutions is widely recognised.[1] The two-way relationship between citizens and civil society and decision-makers is key to building trust and inclusion, ensuring transparency and accountability, informing decision-making, improving effectiveness and efficiency, tailoring outputs and result and amplifying and embedding impacts.[2] The potential to maximise the value of civil society and citizen engagement is increasingly widely studied[3] and new resources and tools are emerging.

This paper focuses on civic and civil society engagement in Interreg. The results are based on collaborative research by a team at the European Policies Research Centre (EPRC) and Interact. The work involved desk research, a questionnaire survey of programmes with sixteen responses, a series of seven in-depth follow up interviews and a workshop with four programmes, DG Regio, Interact and EPRC. Desk research provides a robust overview of broad trends, opportunities, and challenges, which is complemented by programme-specific experiences and input. Questionnaire, interviews, and workshop inputs draw on a relatively limited sample of the almost one hundred Interreg programmes. However, the responses do cover a range of programme types, geographies, and duration, see Annex 1.

Drawing on this research, section two of the paper opens by establishing the focus and definitions adopted in the study, noting variations in the contexts, rationale, and approaches to civic and civil society engagement. Section three draws on a variety of evidence, including desk research, a questionnaire, interviews with a range of programme Managing Authorities and a focus group discussion, to examine engagement in Interreg programmes. Section four discusses options and opportunities for beneficial, wider, and deeper engagement. Section five summarises key findings and options to explore in the future.

[1] World Bank (accessed 2023) Citizen Engagement https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/citizen-engagement#:~:text=The%20Strategic%20Framework%20defines%20citizen,intermediate%20and%20final%20development%20outcomes.

[2] OECD (2022) Engaging Citizens in Cohesion Policy: DG Regio and OECD Plot Project Final Report, OECD Public Governance Working Paper No. 50. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/486e5a88-en.pdf?expires=1678804114&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=329F59F9F0E73F06582988CAF5525F17, p. 10-11

[3] OECD (accessed 2023) Innovative Citizen Participation https://www.oecd.org/governance/innovative-citizen-participation/

2. Focus and definitions

For the purposes of this study, the focus is on “active engagement of (organised and unorganised) civil society in decision-making that concerns issues of public interest”.

Why: role of citizens and civil society engagement in shaping policies, programmes and institutions

The pivotal role of citizens and civil society organisation (CSO) engagement in shaping policies, programmes and institutions is widely recognised[4] as a means to build trust, accountability, improve and inform decision making and delivery. In relation **to Interreg, citizen, civic and civil society engagement have value/relevance**.

- Interreg Programmes aim to jointly tackle common challenges and find shared solutions in fields such as health, environment, research, education, transport, sustainable energy.[5] These are all **areas of work which impact directly on citizens’ lives – where people matter.**

- The territorial basis of Interreg makes citizen engagement more relevant. As Mendez et al (2022) note in relation to regional policy, programme and projects operate through multilevel governance models that must directly engage public, private and societal actors at multiple territorial levels.[6] Thus in the context of programmes like Interreg, **citizen and civil society engagement is key to the ‘authorizing environment’ that provides interventions with support and legitimacy.[7]**

- Finally, at **a time of rapid and substantial change, the value of citizen and civil society engagement is amplified as a means to build responsiveness, adaptability and resilience.**

[4] World Bank (accessed 2023) Citizen Engagement https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/citizen-engagement#:~:text=The%20Strategic%20Framework%20defines%20citizen,intermediate%20and%20final%20development%20outcomes.

[5] Interreg.eu (accessed 2023) https://interreg.eu/about-interreg/

[6] Mendez, C. Pegan, A. and Triga, V. (2022): Creating Public Value in Regional Policy. Bringing Citizens Back In, Public Management Review, DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2022.2126880, Barca, F, McCann, P. and Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2012) “The Case for Regional Development Intervention: Place-Based versus Place-Neutral Approaches.” Journal of Regional Science 52 (1): 134–15

[7] Mendez C. Pegan, A. & Triga, V (2022): Creating public value in regional policy. Bringing citizens back in, Public Management Review, DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2022.2126880, p, 2

Who: Interreg programmes involve a vast range of different participants in different roles

- **Citizens:** individuals, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations in the larger sense 'an inhabitant of a particular place', which can be in reference to a village, town, city, region, state, or country depending on the context, and;

- **Stakeholders:** any interested and/or affected party, including institutions and organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, from civil society, academia, the media or the private sector.[8] Within this group, there are also 'target groups' – that the policy/intervention is 'directed at' and 'actors' that are involved in the delivery and implementation of the initiative.

Within the 'stakeholders' category, *civic and civil society* are widely used terms, but precise definitions, applications and interpretations can differ. In this paper the following broad definitions are applied.

- **Civil society** involves citizens taking voluntary action not under the direction of any authority with power from the state, examples include community groups, non-governmental organisations, indigenous groups, labour unions, business organisations, professional associations, foundations, schools, universities, cultural institutions and faith groups.[9]

- **Civic society** is associated with the local state and activities such as citizens joining school or health boards, community planning partnerships etc. to promote the interests of a local community.

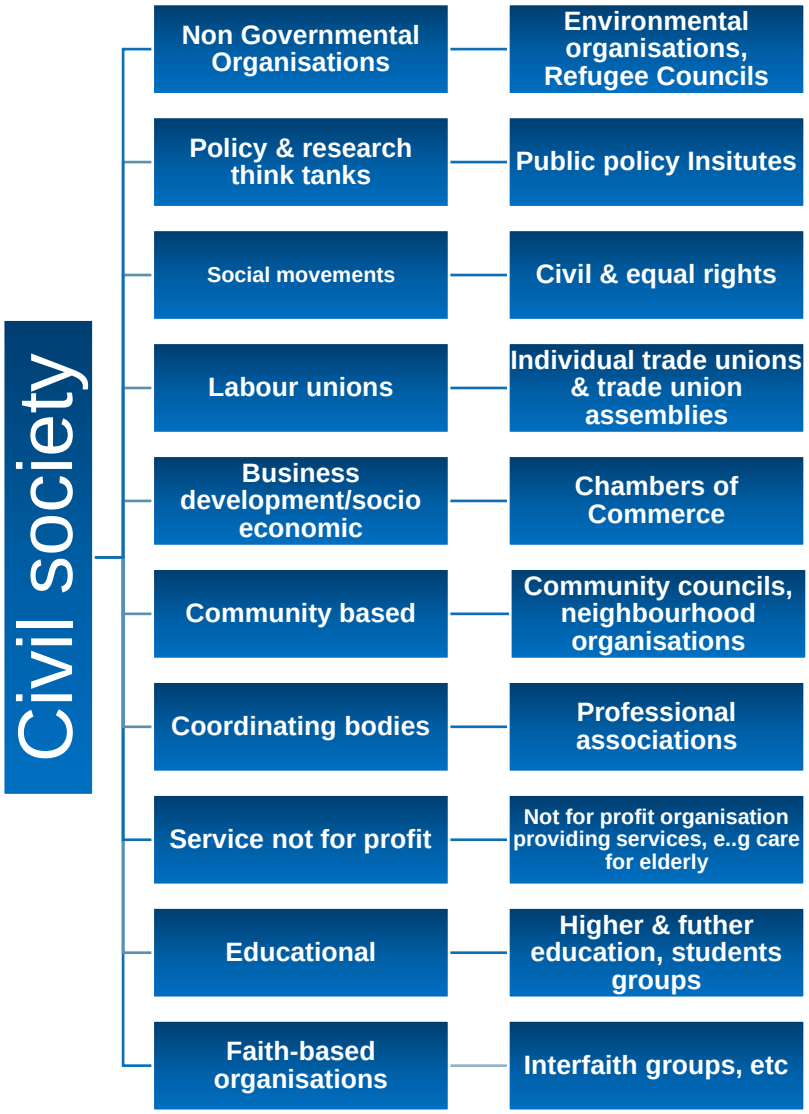
[8] OECD Citizen Participation Playbook, For Interreg V Flanders-The Netherlands programme beneficiaries https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/interreg-flanders-the-netherlands-citizen-participation-playbook.pdf

[9] VanDyck, C., K. (2017). Concept and definition of civil society sustainability. Washington DC: Centre for Strategic and International Studies. Retrieved from https://csisprod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fspublic/publication/170630_VanDyck_CivilSocietySustainability_Web.pdf?QfxMIeHr9U8aeV1kOjFo.FBTsLG76HPX, World Economic Forum (2013). The Future Role of Civil Society. World Economic Forum in collaboration with KPMG International. Retrieved from http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_FutureRoleCivilSociety_Report_2013.pdf

Together these groups cover a **huge range of interests, organisations and organisational types holding diverse views and expertise**. A fixed definition of a civil society organisation is not sought here[10], but a guide on how to categorise and understand civil society engagement is helpful. Based on an analysis of the keep.eu data base and wider literature review key CSO groups involved in programmes and projects include the following, see Figure 1.

[10] Definitions of civil society organisations are commonly extremely broad. For example, the EU states EU's own, classifying a CSO as 'Any legal entity that is nongovernmental, non-profit, not representing commercial interests and pursuing a common purpose in the public interest'.10 Such a broad definition is useful in that it reflects the diversity of forms, functions and scales of civil society organisation. However, it poses challenges when attempting to gauge, for example, the role and involvement of various stakeholder types across programmes. Questions are also raised about how/whether to include organisations such as social enterprises. Equally, between civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), charities, business advocacy organisations and other types of organisations, it is not immediately clear if and how they resolve into distinct and mutually exclusive groups which could be used to assess participation and engagement. There are also important specificities and variations in what types of organisations constitute civil society, for example Universities are state funded in Denmark, Norway and Sweden and are not, therefore, counted as civil society in these cases.

Figure 1: ***Civil Society Organisations (CSO)***



Source: keep.eu date base with categorisations based on https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Classification-of-Civil-Organizations-Mexico-City-and-Sao-Paulo_tbl1_258174649 and https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Main-categories-of-civil-society-organisations_tbl1_237284897

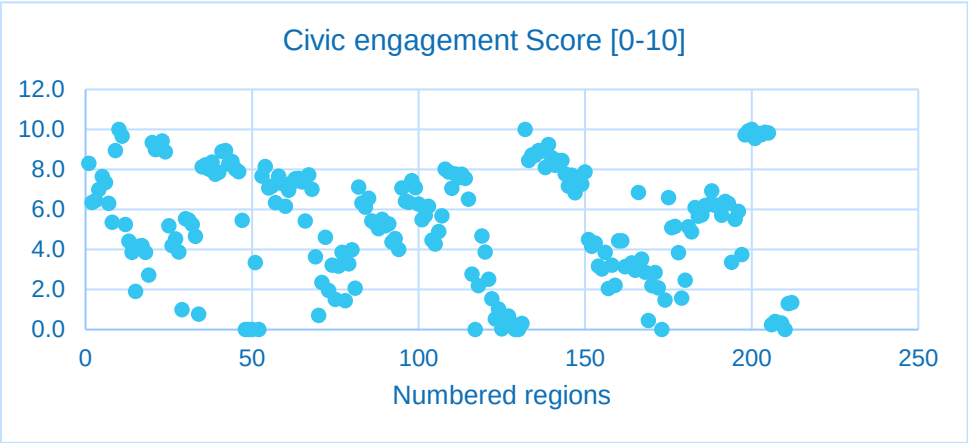
These groups form a key part of the programme context for Interreg programmes, alongside e.g. local, regional and national administrations, and programme authorities**. The extent to which various types of CSO are involved in programmes and project vary**. An indication of levels of participation lies in an analysis of project partner type and responses to programme consultation exercises. Universities and Higher Education organisations are clearly highly engaged and are increasingly viewed as 'pillars of civil

society[11]', linked to their 'third mission' contributing to communities and territories.[12] Less clear cut and universal is the involvement of wider interest groups.

Where: context informs and shapes inputs and outcomes from citizen and civic engagement

Civil society, civic and citizen engagement in Interreg programmes can be considered across all levels of governance EU, National, Regional, Programme, Local, Project, Beneficiary and Final Recipients, and can involve an increasingly wide range of processes and tools. The **extent and effect of engagement depends largely on the programme context**, in particular the capacities within administrations on the ground and willingness to engage on the part of citizens, specific social groups and/or institutions. Figure 2 illustrates measures of civic engagement in European regions (2014) covered by the OECD.[13]

Figure 2: ***OECD Measure of regional Civic Engagement in European Regions covered by the OECD***



Source: https://www.oecdregionalwellbeing.org/index.html

Without going into the detail of specific regions, the chart shows the diversity of experience across Europe, with some regions scoring as high as 9.9 in terms of civic engagement, while others rate much lower[14].

To ensure effective citizen and civic engagement key stakeholders and programme authorities also need to listen and respond to input. Well-functioning systems of

[11] Wolff, J. (2020) 'In the 2020s Universities need to step up as a central pillar of civil society', The Guardian 2 January 2020.

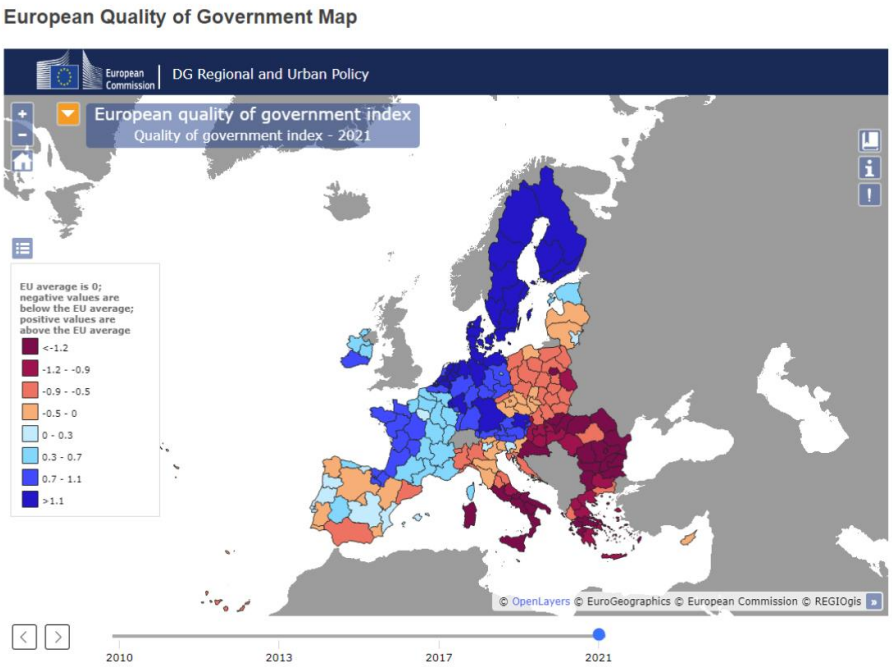
[12] Compagnuicci, L. and Spigarelli, F (2020) The Third Mission of the University: A systematic literature review on potentials and constraints. Technological Forecasting and Social Change, Vol 161, December 2020.

[13] Measures cover stakeholder engagement for developing regulations and voter turnout for civic engagement and quality of support network for community. It is acknowledged that neither is a precise measure but does indicate the different experiences of territories across the EU.

[14] Scores of zero indicate no data.

government and governance require people to engage and participate in the different aspects and activities of public life. Thus, quality of governance[15] is also a factor to consider, see Figure 3.

Figure 3: ***Quality of Government***



Source: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/maps/quality-of-government_en

What: Engagement and participation come in numerous forms and formats

For programmes, decisions must be made about the forms of engagement and associated expectations around participation. Types of engagement are commonly understood in terms of levels of intensity, see Figure 4.

- **Public engagement** a broad term covering the ways in which the public engages with government/organisations, examples include reading public announcements, lobbying, protests, collaborative decision-making.

[15] The European Quality of Government Index (EQI) captures average citizens' perceptions and experiences with corruption, quality and impartiality of three essential public services – health, education and policing - in their region of residence.

- Involves one-way communication and dissemination from the programme/project.

- **Citizen/civic participation** can come from citizens only,[16] bottom-up initiated by citizens, examples include citizens initiatives, petitions, public interest groups, voting.

  - Involves effort on the part of the initiating actors, but programme/project stakeholders can choose whether or not to react/respond.

- **Citizen/civic engagement** requires an active and intentional dialogue between citizens and public decision makers.

  - Involves more deliberate intention and action, often a top-down initiative, formal (with relevant authorities, e.g., programme authorities, providing citizens with the tools to get involved in decision making), examples include participatory budgeting, deliberative processes, online surveys, ideation sessions.

Figure 4: ***Levels of engagement***

Related, the OECD identify three pillars of stakeholder engagement, 1) information, 2) consultation, and 3) engagement, see Figure 5. Linked to the 'pillars' are different rationales/objectives (albeit these are not mutually exclusive):

1. Providing information on an issue;

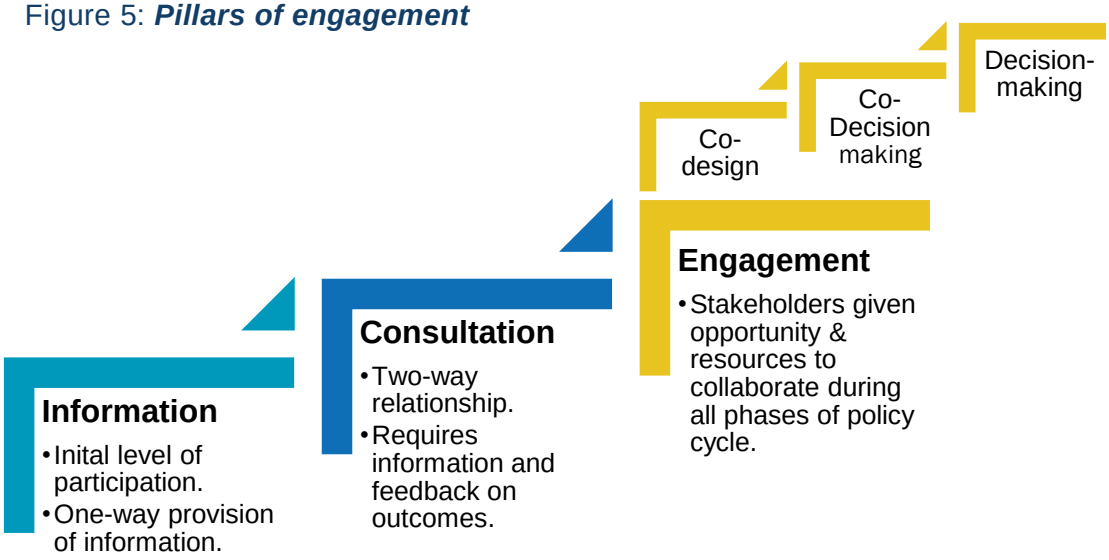
2. Seeking feedback on a project/programme; and

[16] Lodewijckx, I (2020) The Difference Between Citizen Engagement and Participation, Citizenlab, 9/10/2020 https://www.citizenlab.co/blog/civic-engagement/what-is-the-difference-between-citizen-engagement-and-participation/

3. Building a community of citizens/stakeholders to engage with and participate in decision-making.

Information dissemination, consultation exercises and the use of advisory groups are well established elements of Interreg programme development and delivery. However, work on more involved engagement exercises is intensifying.[17] New approaches to engagement, such as participatory budgeting and hackathons, aim at widening and deepening engagement with greater and more informed participation in policy-making and engagement with citizens/CSO previously disconnected from policy processes.[18] With these new developments in mind, this work aims to examine the steps and processes which can make up the 'engagement' pillar, notably co-design, co-decision making and direct decision making.

Figure 5: ***Pillars of engagement***



Source: Author illustration drawing on OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017) and Ruiz-Villaverde, A. & García-Rubio, M.A. (2016) Public Participation in European Water Management: from Theory to Practice, Water Resource Management (2017) 31:2479–2495

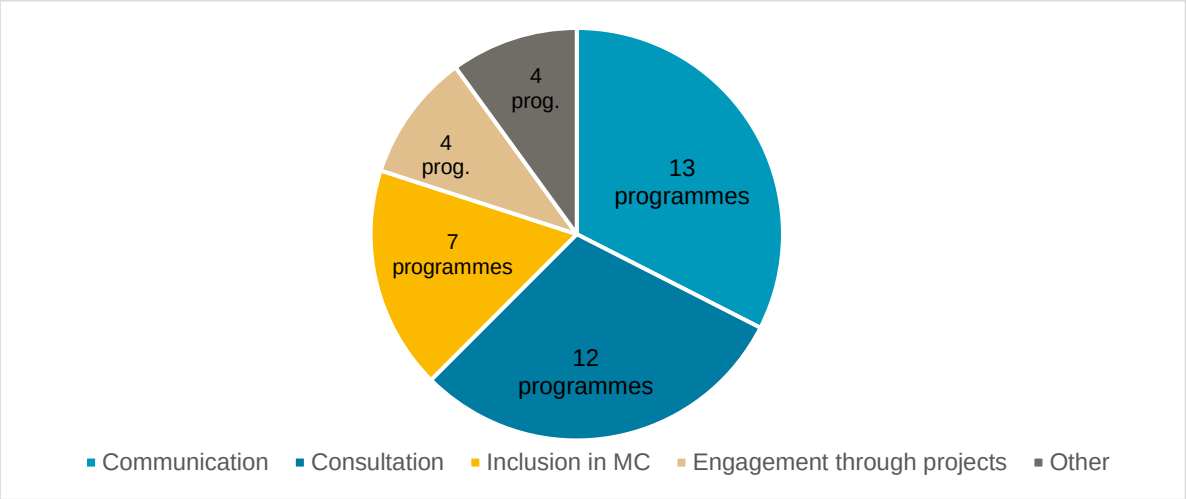
[17] Benington, J. (2011) "From Private Choice to Public Value." In Public Value: Theory and Practice, edited by John Benington and Mark Moore, 31–49. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Bozeman, B(2007). Public Values and Public Interest: Counterbalancing Economic Individualism. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press. Nabatchi, T. (2012). "Putting the 'Public' Back in Public Values Research: Designing Participation to Identify and Respond to Values." Public Administration Review 72 (5): 699–708.

[18] Mendez, C. Pegan, A. & I Triga, V. (2022) Creating public value in regional policy. Bringing citizens back in, Public Management Review, DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2022.2126880, DEMOTEC https://demotec-project.eu/overview/

3. Interreg programmes, civic and civil society engagement

Efforts to improve and intensify civic engagement in programmes, moves beyond purely information dissemination activities and 'elevating' CSO interactions from the basics required for the partnership consultations are notable trends revealed by the study's questionnaire and interviews. For example, the IPA Romania-Serbia programme points out that as more 'basic partnership needs' are met, wider participation and engagement by CSOs becomes more possible. Figure 6 shows ways in which programmes characterise their activities, ranging from communication activities to participation in monitoring committees (MC).

Figure 6: ***Characterisation of the participation of civil society in respondent Interreg programmes***

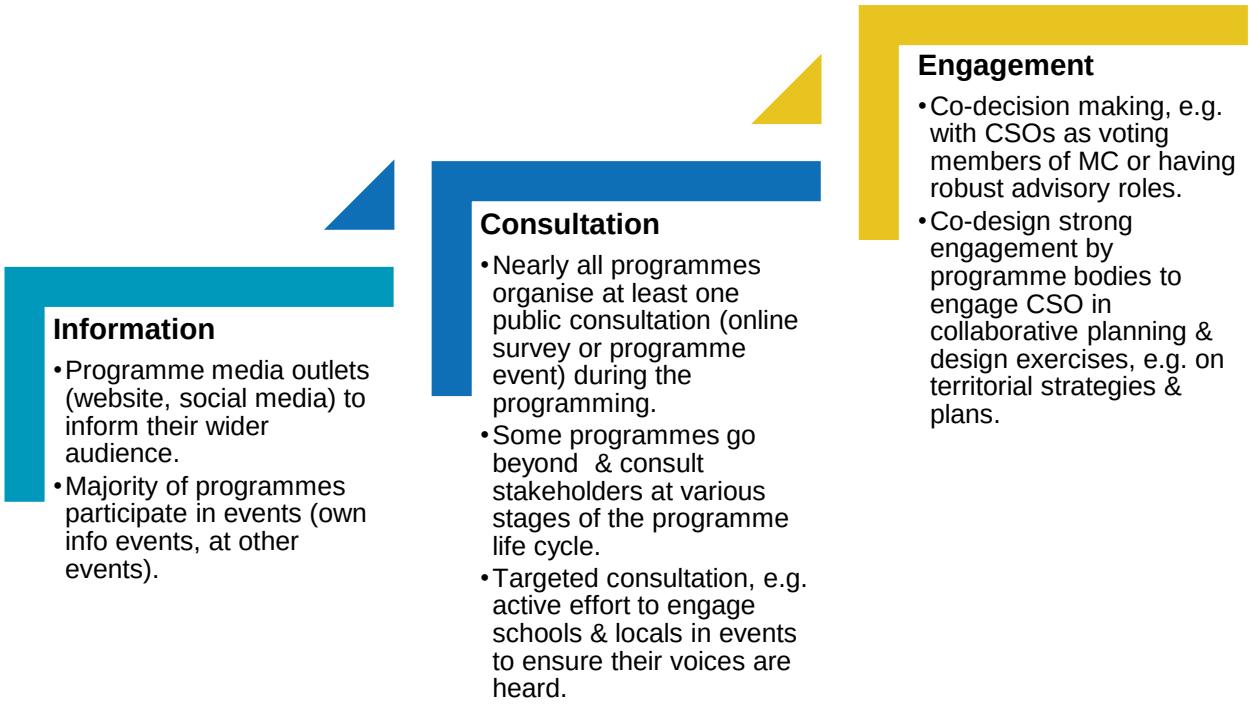


Source: Questionnaire results from 16 Programmes; multiple choice

3.1. Pillars of engagement

Activities can be broadly aligned with the pillars of engagement, see Figure 7.

Figure 7: ***Programme engagement pillars***



Source: OECD (accessed 2023) Innovative Citizen Participation https://www.oecd.org/governance/innovative-citizen-participation/

Information: All programmes use their media outlets (website, social media) to inform their wider audience about, for example, the development of the new programme, calls for proposals, or about decisions of the monitoring committee. Many programmes, if not the majority, also inform at events (own info events, at other events) about the programme or prepare printed materials.

Consultations: Nearly all programmes organise at least one (online survey or at programme event) public consultation during the programming stage (on programme priorities, the Strategic Environmental Assessment). A number of programmes go

beyond that and consult stakeholders at various stages of the programme life cycle, e.g., Romania-Bulgaria, Central Europe and Alpine Space:

- Alpine Space Programme uses the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) annual conferences to organise **workshops with participants,** also to reach out to a wide audience, including CSOs and citizens, **and has consulted** them on the future of the programme at the 2019 Annual Forum.

- The Flanders-the Netherlands programme makes and active effort to engage schools and locals in events to ensure their voices are heard through **targeted engagement.**

- The IPA Greece-North Macedonia programme makes a distinction between CSO engagement in 1) the programme preparation, and 2) programme implementation phases. Following involvement in the programme preparation, **CSOs continue their engagement in the implementation**, either as programme beneficiaries or as significant stakeholders, and some may even serve on the programme monitoring committee.

Engagement: Several programmes have taken additional steps to embed and engage with CSOs more actively.

- **Co-design:** A step beyond consultation, co-design can shape the programme, e.g., inform the selection of priorities, and involve commitment to working with and considering CSO and citizen views, although the final decision will still rest with the programme monitoring committee. Indications of **programmes taking this more active approach to working with CSO in programme design** and development include, e.g., involving citizens in a more workshop-type of setting, and/or creating specific committees or working groups to which they are invited.

    - The Romania-Bulgaria programme has set up a Strategy Board for PO5 that is a multi-level governance partnership structure comprising representatives of different stakeholders from the region, including NGOs. It is responsible for creating an integrated territorial strategy for the cross-border region.

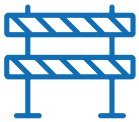
    - The NEXT Black Sea Basin ENI CBC programme organises national working groups, which are instructed to include representatives from umbrella organisations, environmental organisations, bodies representing civil society, etc.

- **Co-decision making: Some programmes involve CSOs as voting members in the MC/steering committee (SC).[19]**

    - In the Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak programme CSOs such as environmental organisations, business organisations and labour market organisations take part in the programme decision-making bodies. They are invited to the MC based on their relevant expertise of certain topics, and their expenses connected with the participation are reimbursed.

    - The Flanders-the Netherlands programme has a selection of civil society partners in the MC, after actively looking for representatives (as 'article 8 partners') from communities, and CSOs. Where applicable, the Joint Secretariat (JS) consults with these organisations to get expertise in the project selection process. These organisations were also consulted (and involved in co-deciding) in in programming.

3.2. Barriers to engagement



While civic and civil society engagement have valuable roles to play, there are challenges involved. For example, Interreg programmes can face issues around language barriers within the programme area, different administrative civic and civil society traditions, and capacity within the territory, and complex administrative arrangements. Specific concerns highlighted in the context of efforts to intensify civic and CSO engagement include the following.

Limited CSO/citizen capacity

Not all relevant CSOs have the capacity, experience, and awareness to participate, particularly in some countries involved in Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) cross-border programmes, and in the context of the current pressurised economic environment. Further, programmes acknowledge the fact that for many CSOs the primary focus must be on their core functions, as opposed to extending their reach to wider regions or cross-border initiatives. The result is that invitations to participate in programme committees are not necessarily accepted, or there is an imbalance in participation.[20] In particular, the challenge of sustaining interest beyond the programme design phase is acknowledged (as per Art.8 CPR Regulation 2021/1060). On a more positive note, it has been mentioned, e.g., by the Flanders-the Netherlands programme, that CSOs dwindling interest in engaging in the programme is down to the fact that they see that their concerns (e.g., regarding the environment or gender equality) are already

[19] Some programmes have also argued that there would be a conflict of interest if CSOs are part of the MC as they are potential beneficiaries of the programme. Further, a factor to consider is that not all programmes are in a position to have a wide representation of different CSOs in decision-making bodies (which allows a broader representation of citizens).

[20] e.g., the Greece-North Macedonia programme concerns the imbalanced engagement of CSOs from the EU Member State side (more active) in comparison to those from the IPA country (less active).

well taken care of, and, hence, allocate their resources to areas which they perceive as requiring greater advocacy.

Lack of trust /unfavourable perceptions

Related concerns are perceptions that programmes are bureaucratic and CSO/citizen participation 'would not change much' or 'have much impact'. A vicious circle results, with lack of understanding and unequal representation of citizens and civil society actors, limiting engagement and participation and further undermining trust.[21] Issues around trust in the institutions and processes involved are particularly important for IPA programmes and linked to calls for a stronger message on the value of/trust in the programmes from the Commission and EU institutions.

Awareness, relevance and 'relatability' of specific themes to CSOs

Awareness, relevance, and 'relatability' of specific themes to CSOs – CSO objectives do not necessarily align easily with all programme objectives, e.g., a strong focus on R&D, innovation, and green transition. Meanwhile, programme budgets allocated to areas of activity more directly linked to citizen and CSO engagement tend to be smaller in comparison, making them less attractive and visible to CSOs. For example, in the Meuse-Rhine (NL-BE-DE) programme interventions judged to be the more visible and successful in terms of outreach to citizens only received five percent of the programme budget[22]. Amplifying the engagement challenge, CSOs may be more actively involved in other sources of funding, which are better adapted to their needs and interests, e.g., LEADER, ESF or domestic policy funding, or simply not have the awareness of Interreg in the context of a wide range of other instruments.

Challenge of covering multiple countries

All Interreg programmes, but transnational programmes in particular, face challenges around the scale of their geographic and country coverage. Covering numerous administrative areas, languages and cultures poses challenges in terms of achieving balanced participation by CSOs, the perceived relevance of the cross-border/transnational dimension to locally-oriented CSOs, and the visibility and scale of resources in the programmes. As noted during interviews, the vision of Article 8 has clear limits. An important aspect is that in case of cross-border or transnational programmes the role of Art. 8 partners would be – in theory – to represent interests of all participating Member States/partner regions, but this is and can be a challenging proposition for a CSO.

[21] Euractive (2022) Whose democracy? The tumultuous road to effective civic participation, Special Report Mar-April 2022, https://en.euractiv.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/special-report/Whose-democracy_-The-tumultuous-road-to-effective-civic-participation.pdf

[22] Including the SPF and the Border Focal Point (an easily accessible information point for citizens to help them with questions from every-day-life such as taxation, child care etc.)

Programme capacity to continue to boost engagement

While there is potential to do more in terms of engaging with CSOs and citizens, there is only so much the programmes can do, given their limited resources. Therefore, despite the best efforts of programmes, participation can still remain clustered around a few 'usual suspects'.

Currently, the means and modes of citizen engagement are multiplying, and diversifying, particularly as more online resources and tools are available. As well as engagement at the start of the programme process, programmes face pressures to disseminate results and maximise impact, leading to more complex engagement through the life of the programme. On the one hand this enables engagement. On the other hand, it places authorities under pressure to keep up to date and undertake new/additional activities at already busy times when resources are limited. Even when commitments are made to engage to a greater extent there are pressures, such as limited time available for targeted activities such as training and challenges in finding the right 'experts' to deliver training.

Overall, the amount of time and resource spent on 'mobilising and engaging with CSOs' must be considered in relation to the value of spending time on other tasks and the value added. The efforts of a single programme working alone might not be enough to engage/spark the interest of CSOs, 'fairness' and transparency must also be considered, e.g., the potential risks of some stakeholders getting 'more/better' information than others.

4. Interreg programmes and getting the most from engagement

Despite the challenges, greater expectations on programme and project delivery and impact, emphasis on effective and efficient programme communications, and the need to ensure programme synergies and complementarity all **reinforce the value of high-quality CSO engagement.** Further, the extreme uncertainties and complexities of the current policy and economic environment, and rapid pace of change mean a direct flow of information and exchange between programmes and citizens is even more important to adapt and respond.

Reinforcing these points, questionnaire and interview responses indicate civic and civil society engagement are issues that programmes are continuing to work on, with three quarters of respondents planning to introduce new actions or make specific provisions to boost or intensify engagement through e.g.:

- Projects engaging with CSO and citizens;
- Programme support for project CSO & civic engagement;
- Programmes generating civic/CSO-oriented projects;
- Programmes embedding engagement in programme management and implementation.

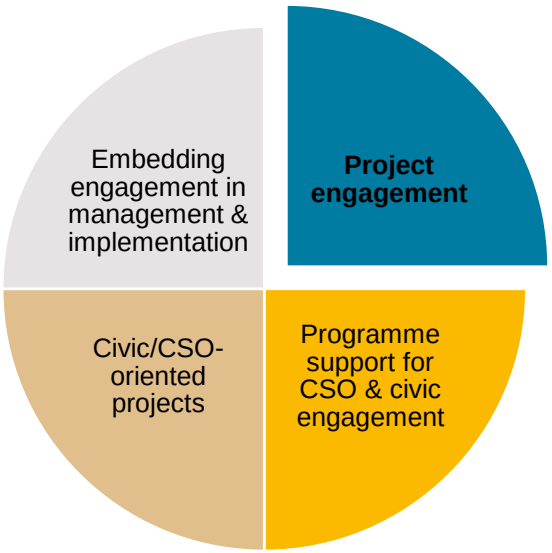
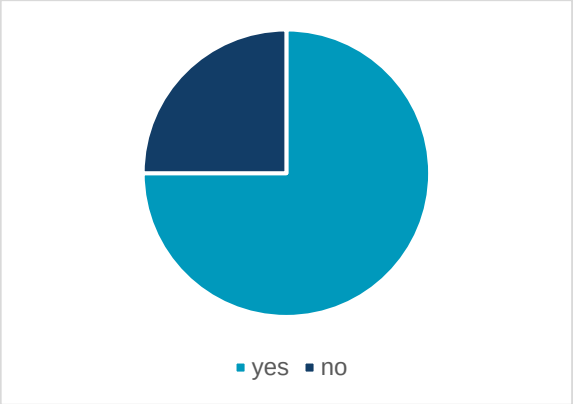


Figure 8:

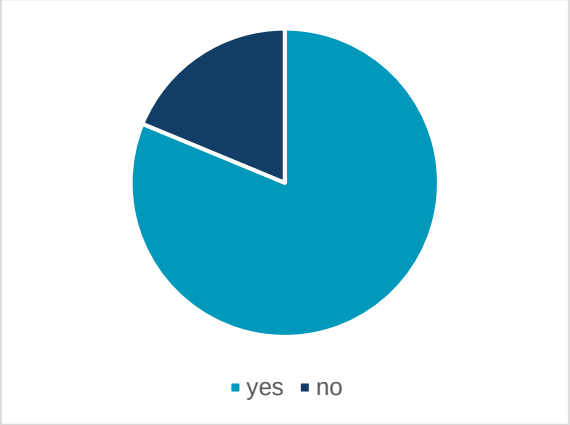
Have you used/do you plan to use in the 2021-27 period novel/innovative approaches to civil society engagement as compared to previous periods?



Source: Questionnaire responses from 16 Programmes

Figure 9:

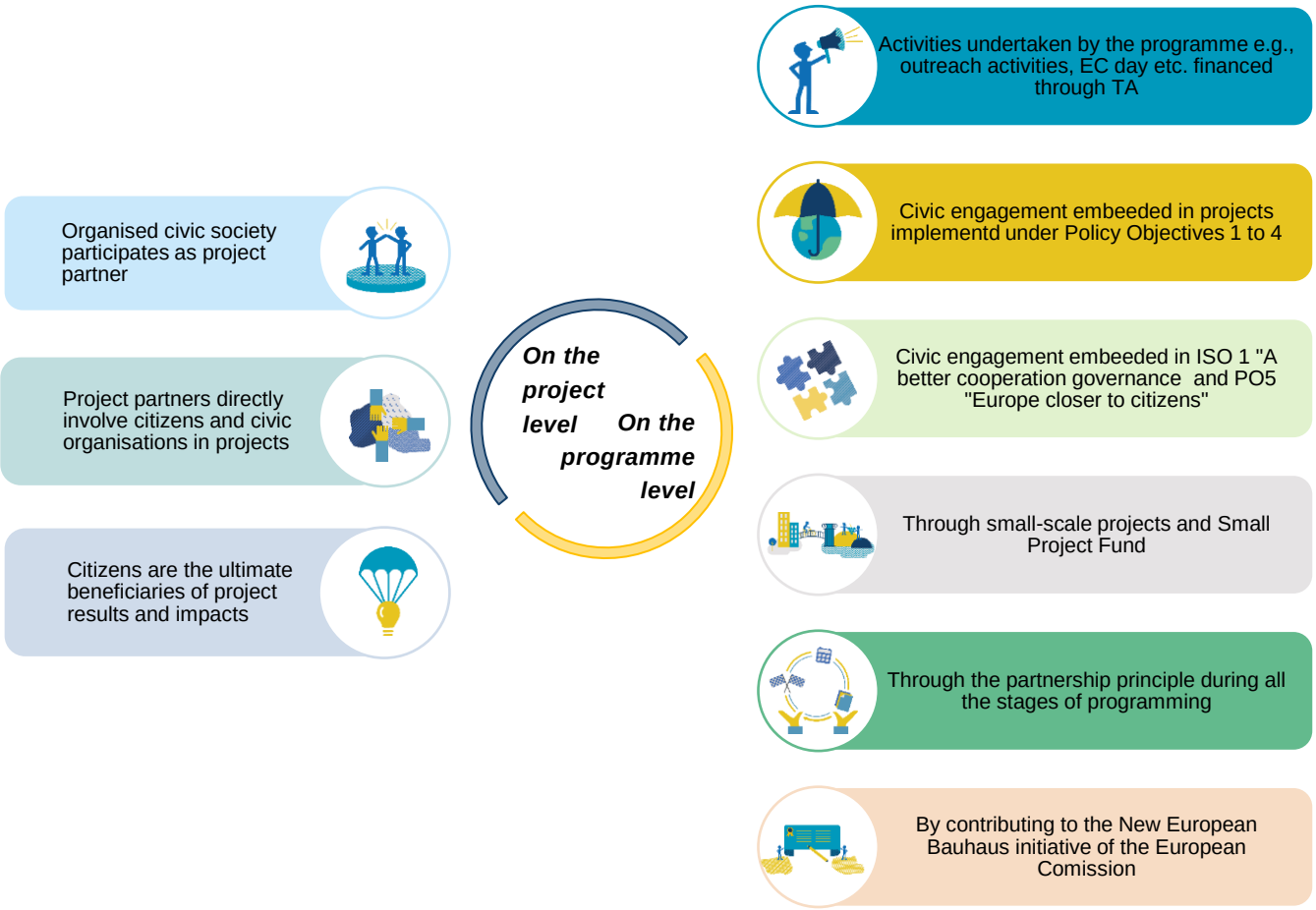
Are any measures taken to lower the entrance barrier for civil society to get actively engaged in the programme (e.g., enabling online participation, adjusting the language used, etc.)?



Source: Questionnaire responses from 16 Programmes

Key ‘points’ of engagement are identified as follows, see Figure 10, and will be discussed in the following sections.

Figure 10: ***Civic and civil engagement and Interreg***



Source: Author illustration drawing on N. Wergles in McMaster, I. Wergles, N. and Vironen, H. (2024) Civic Engagement in Interreg Inception Report to Interact, EPRC.

4.1. Programme management and implementation

At a strategic level, the partnership principle and overall rationale of the programme mean that they relate to civic and civil society and vice versa. As has been discussed, the extent and intensity to which programme partners and the **public are consulted and engaged (see Figure 5: Pillars of engagement**) can vary considerably between programmes. Nevertheless, programme partners must be involved in “the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and throughout the preparation, implementation and evaluation of programmes, including through participation in monitoring committee”. Art. 8 mandates programmes to engage with organised civil society throughout the programme cycle.

- The Alpine Space programme notes that CSOs are widely considered important in ensuring balanced partnerships, as key target groups and, contributing to capitalisation and maximising impact.

- The IPA Romania-Serbia programme underlines the role of CSOs in bridging the gap between policymakers, regulations, national legislation, and the programme's objectives at the local/community level.

- Germany (Saxony)-Czech Republic programme places high priority on close engagement with stakeholders and beneficiaries to draw in thematic and territorial expertise and ensure local ownership and commitment. The strong involvement of stakeholders in the programme monitoring committee, the role of Euroregion's (based on groupings of local and regional authorities) in the management of four Small Projects Funds and the recent introduction of thematic networks of project partners and regional thematic experts reflects this approach to capacity-building at the local level. For preparing the 2021-27 programme, thematic focus groups and organised experts' meetings with regional stakeholders were organised on different topics, first on the regional and then on the cross-border level.

4.1.1. Programme development

In terms of programme development, the involvement of CSO ranges from inputs to initial consultation exercise to greater involvement in programme management activities. At the very least, during the programming phase, many programmes organise community consultations which are open to the public.

- In the IPA Greece-North Macedonia programme, the engagement of CSOs was noted to be particularly active and their input regarded to play an important role in the consultation phase. Approaches to a consultation exercise have become more 'proactive' and multi-faceted over time.

- the Central Europe programme describes a comprehensive stakeholder consultation process during programming. It involves various levels of engagement, which included several rounds of consultations on territorial challenges and programme strategies, surveys to identify areas with the highest cooperation needs, and workshops.

- In the IPA Romania-Serbia programme, civil society engagement can play an important role in bridging the gap between policy makers, regulations, national legislation, and the programme's objectives at the local community level. The public consultation was open for a two-year period on the programme website, and the applicant guide for one month to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to provide comments. Moreover, there is an expectation that 'people will become more active if they know that they are being heard'. Engagement does not necessarily mean that this needs to lead to concrete changes but as noted by the representatives of the Romania-Serbia programme, 'it is a positive sign that they [CSOs] are reading and engaging with the content'.

Input can extend and inform programme management and development over time. The 'weight' and 'depth' attached to these roles vary from an observer/consultation function to a much more embedded role in key committees with voting rights.

- **Involvement while avoiding conflicts of interest**. In the IPA Romania-Serbia programme, the monitoring committee can include individuals representing CSOs and public authorities, many of whom later submit projects under the programme. Careful provisions are in place within the rules of procedure of the MC to prevent any conflict of interest. Those involved in decision-making cannot vote on their specific projects or discuss issues related to these specific projects.

- **Involvement in an advisory capacity**. The Alpine Space programme committee rules of procedure state that representatives of transnationally organised non-governmental bodies and Alpine organisations and networks can be members in an advisory capacity if the PC (Programme committee) decides to invite them to do so. Currently, a representative of the Alpine Convention is an observer on the committee and helps coordination of actions. Similarly, the Meuse-Rhine (NL-BE-DE) programme have six social partners that are MC members and Steering Committee members. They do not have voting rights but are encouraged to participate in discussions, unless there is a conflict of interest involved. Participants cover a range of interests, municipalities, employer association, trade union organisations, higher education institutions, environmental organisations and social agenda.

- **Involvement in working groups** is a way in which CSO partners are involved in the IPA Romania-Serbia programme. Similarly, the Northern Periphery and Arctic transnational programme has Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) which can involve CSO representatives. The RAGs can help inform programme development, project selection decision-making, and local communication and capitalisation efforts.

- **Voting rights of CSOs**. In the Italy-Greece programme, the MC comprises a significant number of representatives without voting rights, including socio-economic partners and third sector organisations.[23] This diverse representation serves as a symbol for other stakeholders and effectively represents their needs within the programme. The opposite approach is in place in the IPA Romania-Serbia programme, where CSOs have voting rights, although they primarily rely on consensus between the two national delegations rather than extensive use of the voting system. It is recognised that the votes of CSOs can have a different impact in certain situations compared to national or regional bodies. The IPA Greece-North Macedonia programme has a more mixed approach, with eight members who have voting rights, two of which represent NGOs (Economic Council and the National Confederation of Disabled People). Additionally, there are other civil organisations within the MC without voting rights but are reported to engage actively, taking strategic roles in decision-making including active involvement in the programme monitoring committee (IPA Greece-North Macedonia).

[23] Encompassing 26 different organizations from both the Greek and Italian parts. These representatives include not only institutional members but also socio-economic partners, as well as representatives from the third sector (non-profit organizations).

4.1.2. Activities financed through Technical Assistance (TA)

Under EU regulations, the objective of TA is to support capacity building actions for preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and communication, networking, complaint resolution, and control and audit.

Interreg programmes conduct a wide array of communication activities and capacity building activities, financed through TA, which target the wider public in the programme area. Examples are appearances in the mainstream media, the organisation of the EC Day, etc. Activities are mainly aimed at making the programme known and informing the public, thus are seen as being on the lowest levels of the pillar of public engagement (see Figure 5: Pillars of engagement). Nevertheless, these are critical 'foundational' activities. For example, as noted by the Italy-Greece programme, information and feedback to citizens and CSOs are crucial to strengthen their sense of value within the programme and its projects. In particular, the importance of direct, clear engagement and communication is emphasised to keep the programme connected with people and their needs and vice versa. Looking to the future, the concept of 'strategic use of TA' is something that the European Commission is increasingly interested in, even though the volume of funding is small. Where TA activities, such as training, do have a connection/relevance to building CSO capacity or building programme capacity to work with CSOs/ engage with citizens, it could be worth noting.

4.1.3. Through the New European Bauhaus initiative

The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is an initiative of the European Commission that aims to bring citizens, experts, businesses, and institutions together to reimagine sustainable, aesthetic, and inclusive living in Europe and beyond.

Concretely, the NEB focuses on three interconnected transformations: 1.) concrete transformations of the built environment on local level, 2.) innovation to integrate sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics in new solutions and products, 3.) new perspectives and ways of thinking of the values of aesthetics, sustainability and inclusion.

Action should be guided by the following principles:

1. reconnecting with nature;
2. regaining a sense of belonging;
3. prioritising the places and people that need it most; and
4. fostering long term, life cycle and integrated thinking in the industrial ecosystem.

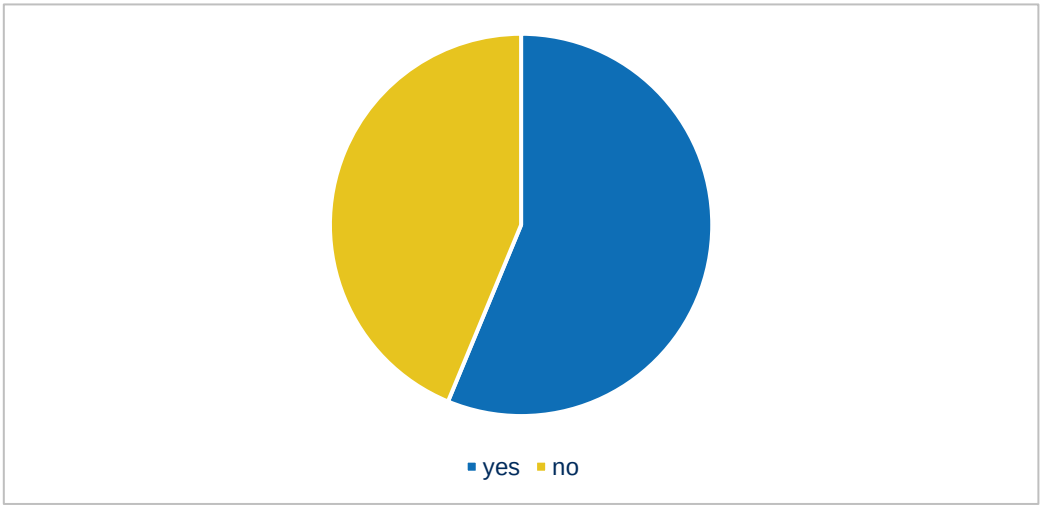
Themes and principles have been developed co-jointly by taking inspiration from the views and experiences of citizens, professionals and organisations across the EU.

Actions should mobilise transdisciplinary approaches, build on participatory and co-design processes involving relevant communities and demonstrate replicability in the sense of providing local solutions to global challenges.

Interreg programmes can deliver on the initiative and also benefit from working with NEB in a number of ways:

- By including it in the project selection processes. For example, programmes may give extra points to applications linked to the NEB, or organise dedicated NEB calls (e.g., such as the one organised by the Urban Innovation Action);
- By promoting the NEB to the Interreg community through information and guidance or by organising dedicated activities (e.g., Interreg Europe Policy learning platform organising dedicated activities);
- By supporting projects in areas relevant to the NEB.

Figure 11**:** ***By contributing to the New European Bauhaus initiative. The programme expects the instrument to target inter alia such engagement***



Source: Questionnaire responses form 16 programmes

Although it is a new initiative, the NEB is seen as incorporating 'useful principles' in relation to civic and civil society engagement. The New European Bauhaus has been identified as a potential route for extending and embedding participation. For example, the Alpine Space Programme notes that, while they do not have a dedicated monitoring system to track which projects specifically contribute to the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative, it is noteworthy that many projects align well with the NEB's goals and principles. Integration of participation by various organisations is key and is an aspect that Interreg can incorporate into its efforts. The Alpine Space programme describes it as:

"an important initiative which the Alpine Space programme 2021-2027 supports in different ways, e.g., approaches supporting cultural heritage, energy efficiency or circular

economy. The implementation of these principles and approaches is examined in the course of the assessment of project applications, then the project implementation reports and evaluations. Crucially, for projects focused on these issues, the programme intends to stimulate them to propose approaches and activities dedicated to involving citizens."

Project examples include CoolAlps (https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/coolalps/), focused on the construction sector, which makes specific reference to NEB and SmartCommUnity (https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/smartcommunity/) which build on work on smart villages, and FRACTAL (https://www.alpine-space.eu/project/fractal/), which focuses on implementation of Green Infrastructure solutions in municipalities.

In 2023[24], numerous Interreg programmes embraced the principles of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) in their calls. Key trends include explicit integration of NEB principles in calls, recognition of NEB as a horizontal principle, inclusion of NEB criteria in project assessments, and promotion through various programme documents. Programmes actively encourage project alignment with NEB values, promoting sustainability, aesthetics, and inclusivity.

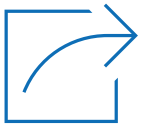
Some programmes already selected projects directly related to NEB, such as e.g., RurAll, Culinary Trail, EUSDR PA3, (Interreg Danube), BGN Bauhaus Goes North – Bauhaus Housing Principles for the Norther Periphery and Arctic Region (Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic), BSR Cultural Pearls: Baltic Sea Region Cultural Pearls for More Resilient Cities and Regions (Interreg Baltic Sea Region), PROADAPT - POGRANICZE PRZYJAZNE KLIMATOWI, or PROADAPT (Interreg Poland-Saxony), Adriatic PorTLand, ETHNIC, ASPEH, SOCRAT (Interreg Italy-Croatia).

Other programmes are still in the assessment process or haven't launched calls yet. While some emphasize NEB alignment in project selection, a few specifically fund NEB focused projects, each following its own timeline.

Looking into the future, Interreg programmes showcase a variety of plans for New European Bauhaus (NEB)-related activities. While some programmes do not anticipate specific NEB activities, others are committed to supporting projects aligned with NEB principles. A few are closely monitoring NEB developments, considering their potential incorporation into upcoming calls or assessment criteria. In addition, specific programmes have developed guides to assist applicants in aligning with NEB values. Overall, the approach to NEB in future activities varies among programmes, ranging from sustained support to potential integration into specific calls or criteria.

[24] These data refer to a compilation of feedback received from Interreg programmes during end of December 2023 to mid-January 2024. Interact, on behalf of DG Regio, reached out to all Interreg programmes requesting their input on the following aspects: i) How NEB has been reflected in your calls so far? ii) Have you selected any projects that align with NEB principles? iii) Do you have any NEB-specific plans for future activities?

4.2. Civic and civil society engagement in projects



Looking more widely and project level engagement, civic engagement can lie at the heart of Interreg projects. A review of the keep.eu database highlights the number of projects with a civic engagement element, see Table 1. A search of 2014-2020 projects using relevant keywords shows that around 400-500 projects included, at least, some elements of public participation. The review also reinforces the point that "civic participation and engagement" is understood very differently in projects. Sometimes, interaction with or involvement of the public in project activities, e.g., in urban agriculture or in energy cooperatives, is labelled as "participation or engagement". In other cases, civic engagement refers to the active involvement of citizens in public decisions, for example, regarding what the municipal budget is spent on.

Table 1: **Keep.eu overview of projects**

Keywords	Search results
"participatory"	252 projects
"public participation"	13 projects
"public engagement"	6 projects
"civic engagement"	15 projects
"civic participation"	8 projects
"Bürgerbeteiligung"	8 projects
"participación ciudadana"	7 projects
"participation citoyenne"	8 projects
"co-creation"	19 projects
"co-design"	99 projects
"citizen science"	30 projects
SUM	**~450 projects**

Source: Author calculations based on keep.eu data

Some projects have the **promotion of civic engagement as a core focus.** For example, the Atlantic Social Lab project,[25] funded by the Atlantic Area programme, has the promotion of civic engagement as its core focus. Similarly, the Baltic Sea Region programme project EmPaci allowed citizens across the Baltic Sea region to take part in participatory budgeting in nine pilot municipalities from six countries across the Baltic Sea and bring in ideas for more functional living areas.[26] Another example is the Central Europe (2021-27) project GetCoheSive which is focused on participatory approaches for marginalized groups in decision-making processes. Crucially, there is an interest in developing/learning from these projects. For example, during a recent Central Europe programme seminar, the experience of the GetCohesive project strongly integrating participatory processes was shared. This

[25] https://www.corkcity.ie/en/council-services/services/community/community-initiatives/promoting-civic-engagement.html

[26] https://interreg.eu/campaign/interregandme/a-unique-opportunity-to-co-create/

seminar, called a synergies roundtable, aimed to foster cooperation within and between projects, leading to collaborative action plans for future joint actions.

Some **specific project themes require wider engagement and are therefore more 'relatable' to CSOs/citizens**. It is also noted that in theory all projects should be attractive/engaging if they are communicated in the right way. However, some themes lend themselves to wider engagement. For example, urban planning for environmental management requires city involvement, often with civil society organisations promoting citizen engagement. For example, the Alpine Space programme underlines the "importance of active citizen involvement in community improvement, including social and policy activities and processes." Other examples include, cultural and natural heritage projects, local events, people-to-people activities, projects on cross-border labour market, SMEs, climate change and environment.

For many projects civic engagement is a **means of delivery, dissemination, or capitalisation**. For example, the North Sea Region programme lists citizen engagement as a key means to deliver on project objectives on its how to apply page.[27] It is beyond the scope of this paper to provide an exhaustive account of project activities. However, it is clear that projects are doing a lot. As the 'connection to the local level', programmes can learn a lot from the projects, with potential to share innovative approaches more widely. There may even be a potential role for Interact to collect and disseminate ideas and good practice.

4.2.1. Policy Objectives 1 to 4

A notable trend is **support from programme authorities to further maximise civic and civil society in projects implemented across Policy Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4**, see Figure 12. Policy Objectives (POs) 1 to 4 of the Common Provisions Regulation could be termed "sectoral" objectives as each refers to one or few specific policy sectors[28] (in contrast to policy objective 5, which focuses on multi-thematic interventions). Nevertheless, in principle, civic engagement can be an integral part of a project under any of the Policy Objectives. A review of 2014-20 projects, using the keep.eu data base, shows that elements of civic engagement appeared under all policy objectives. Programmes may consider and promote citizen engagement as a key means to deliver on project objectives under all specific objectives.

In terms of supporting/boosting CSO engagement in projects, some programmes are **cautious that specific project applicants/partners are not 'favoured over others',** while still making sure that information and support is openly available and visible. Commitments to inclusion, transparency and fairness are underlined.[29] However, survey

[27] North Sea programme, https://www.interregnorthsea.eu/find-partners

[28] 1) a more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity; 2)a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility; 3) a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility; 4) a more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

[29] For example, in the Romania-Serbia programme, the principle of inclusivity is central and the programme does not engage in what could be viewed as 'positive discrimination' (e.g., engaging with specific groups).

responses highlight broad programme commitments to encouraging civic engagement through POs 1-4, see Figure 12.

Figure 12: ***The programme encourages projects to embed civic engagement under Policy Objectives 1 to 4***

Source: Questionnaire responses form 16 programmes

4.2.2. Through Policy Objective 5 “A Europe closer to citizens”

Policy objective (PO) 5 refers to “a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives”. It is closely linked to the requirement in the 2021-27 period to add territoriality to cooperation programmes by taking a more strategic approach and achieving a higher programme impact by refocusing away from individual projects towards territorial approaches and solutions. PO5 addresses multi-thematic (rather than sectoral) challenges in a certain territory through an integrated approach to territorial development (Art. 4(1) of CPR). Initial concerns were that the selection of PO5 depended on a/several territorial or local development strategy/ies / being in place in the programme area (Art 23 of CPR) and the work involved in developing strategies. Art. 29 of CPR specifies the elements that the strategy must contain, which also includes a description of the involvement of partners in accordance with Art. 8 “Partnership and multi-level governance” in the preparation and in the implementation of the strategy. The strategy does not necessarily have to cover the entire territory but should focus on so-called functional areas. Thus, the requirement for the development of a territorial strategy contains an explicit demand to include representatives from civil society.

Few Interreg programmes, however, have prioritised PO5, see Figure 13. This is largely due to the above-described ex-ante conditionality, the novelty of having to identify and work in functional areas and the overall complexity of working on the issue across borders. The need for an effective use of PO5 was emphasized and a separate focus on civic and civil society engagement funding was suggested aiming at supporting

instruments fostering citizen engagement more effectively. Looking to the future, the initial intent of PO5, simplification and specific issues faced by Interreg programmes should be considered to enable programmes to work more fully with PO5 and engage with citizens.

4.2.3. Through ISO 1 "A better cooperation governance"

As well as wider thematic interventions, Interreg now includes a specific objective ISO 1 for 'A better Cooperation Governance', which particularly notes civil society and people to people projects to promote citizen cooperation. It is defined in Article 14(4) of the Interreg Regulation, which specifies six sub-objectives:

1. enhance the institutional capacity of public authorities, in particular those mandated to manage a specific territory, and of stakeholders (all strands);

2. enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions (strands A, C, D and, where appropriate, strand B);

3. build up mutual trust, by encouraging people-to-people actions (strands A, D and, where appropriate, strand B);

4. enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea- basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies (all strands);

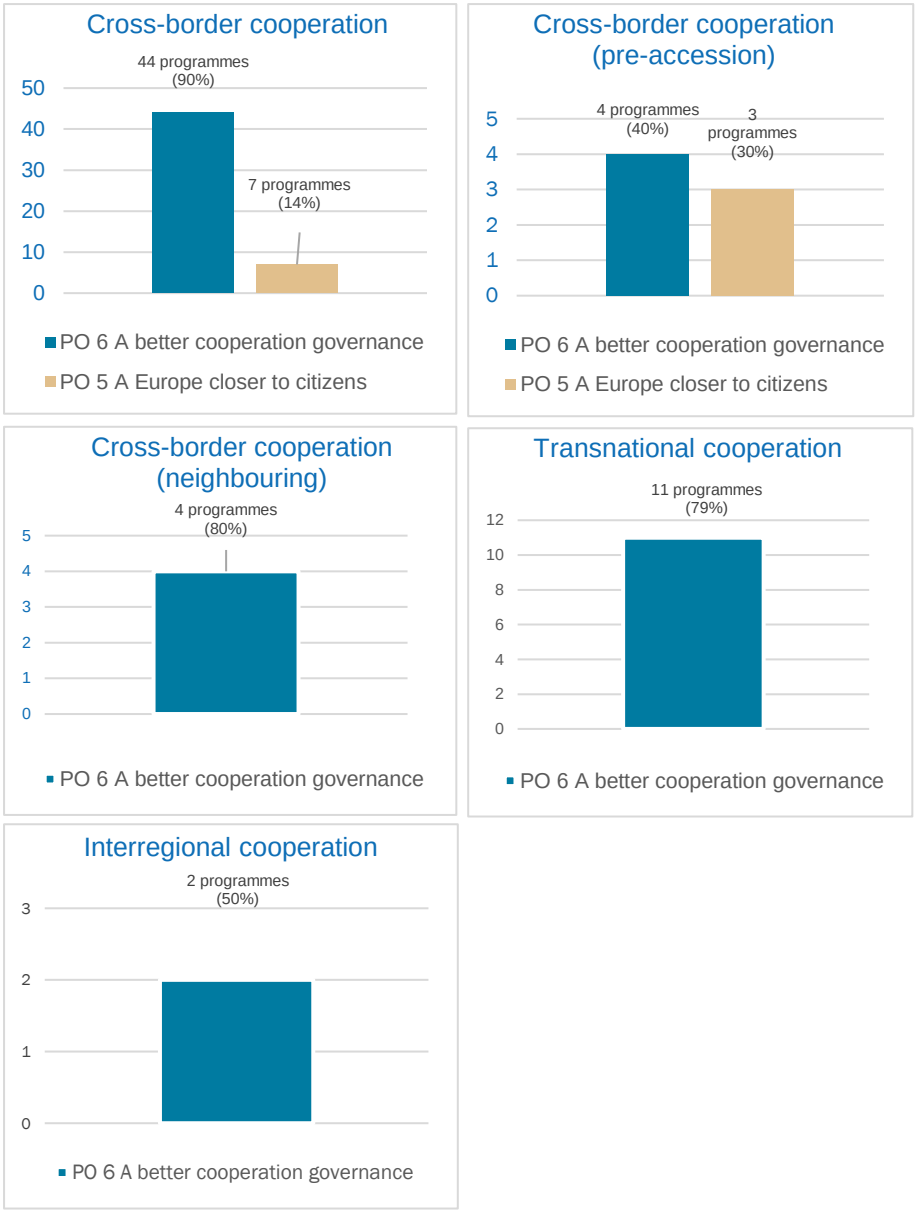
5. enhance sustainable democracy and support civil society actors and their role in reforming processes and democratic transitions (all strands with involvement of third countries, partner countries or OCTs); and

6. other actions to support better cooperation governance (all strands).

Articles 15(2) and (5) of the Interreg Regulation specify that *"Up to 20 % of the ERDF contribution and, where applicable, of the external financing instruments of the Union allocations to each Interreg A, B and D programme may be allocated to the Interreg-specific objective of 'a better cooperation governance"*.

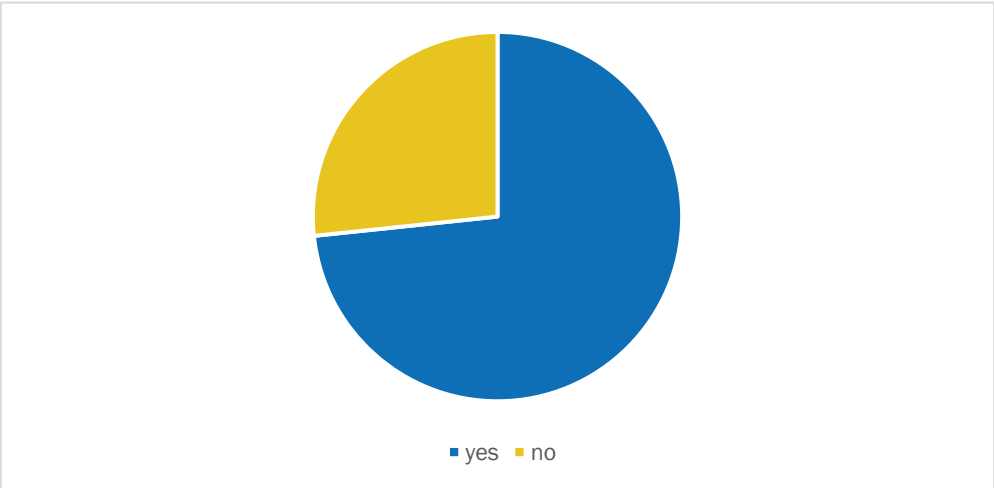
ISO 1 is more widely used than PO5, see Figure 13. Figure 14 shows that as well as the vast majority of Interreg programmes selecting to work with ISO 1 as one of their priorities (65 of 82 programmes – 79%), they also view it as means to encourage projects with strong civic engagement.

Figure 13: ***Number of programmes prioritising ISO 1 and PO5***



Source: author elaboration based on https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/

Figure 14: ***Encourages projects to embed civic engagement under the Interreg-specific objective "A better cooperation governance".***



Source: Questionnaire responses form 16 programmes

4.3. Programme actions to encourage civic/CSO engagement in projects

As the previous discussion highlights, CSO and civic engagement can run through various POs but are a core focus for PO5 and ISO 1. The following discussion goes on to look at how programmes have worked to intensify and expand this engagement.

4.3.1. Explicit 'encouragement' of CSO participation

Some programmes have adopted incentives to encourage participation of new CSOs, e.g., awarding of additional assessment points in the Romania-Serbia programme if a new partner is included. **Incentivising participation can also be applied more widely.** For civil society to become more actively engaged in projects and programmes, it is crucial to offer concrete benefits. These benefits can come in the form of project funding, knowledge exchange opportunities to build capacities, or involving them as a target group to address territorial needs effectively. For instance, the Central Europe programme funded the SALUTE4CE project where new 'green areas' were co-created with a school and residents. When participants witness tangible outcomes and realise their contributions lead to meaningful change, their engagement becomes not only active but also a source of pride. Therefore, keys to success lies in fostering real participation and co-design, which enhances the overall impact of the initiative.

4.3.2. Monitoring and mapping

Monitoring and mapping systems can be used to build a more solid and in-depth overview of CSO involvement in programmes. For example:

- The Central Europe programme, like many other Interreg programmes, is applying the 'Classification of type of partners and target groups', as agreed within HIT (Harmonised Implementation Tools). The programmes is collecting this information for all project partners in the application form and are also collecting the information on the target groups in the application forms and in future joint activity reports. Consequently, by filtering the collected data, the information on the involvement of civil society organisations can be analysed and monitored.

- The IPA Romania-Serbia programme uses a mapping approach (launched in 2007-13 period) to engage with all potential beneficiaries, and to disseminate all relevant information concerning the programme, including the calls for proposals. In the 2021-27 programme period, the programme adopted a more robust strategy for supporting the involvement of vulnerable groups in remote areas.

4.3.3. Digital platforms

The wider use of digital platforms, such as applicant community platforms, can be used to promote more inclusive and broader participation of CSOs.

- The Central Europe programme has established an online applicant community to facilitate organisations connecting with others. The free to use, publicly accessible system serves as a valuable means for all types of organisations, including civil society organisations, to identify suitable partners for their initiatives. The platform has proved easy to use, enabling partners and potential partners to showcase ideas and is an open, transparent, cost-effective way for the programme to facilitate wider engagement.

- In the IPA Romania-Serbia programme the use of digital platforms is expected to enable more active participation of CSOs. Given the large border area and recognising that many actors have limited means to travel to meetings in Bucharest or Belgrade, the online formats (e.g., online workshops and discussions) are expected to provide new options and opportunities for a CSO. At the same time, while online formats are helpful, it is also recognised that direct, face-to-face dialogues are needed to explain complex issues (e.g., rules for eligibility).

4.3.4. Simplification

Administrative simplification is a general and ongoing mission for programme administrations and one that has particular relevance CSOs. Project types or tools inviting CSO involvement (such as SPF or small-scale projects) should set up with lean, simple and client-friendly implementation approaches. (See also section on small-scale projects).

- The Central Europe programme has implemented various simplification measures, including flat rates (e.g., including among others a 40% flat rate for eligible direct costs other than direct staff costs) which are hoped to ease/facilitate CSO involvement. These options are particularly well-received by

many institutions, making it easier for smaller organisations, including civil society organisations, to participate in projects.

- The IPA South Adriatic (Italy, Albania and Montenegro) programme found that where project procedures have been streamlined obvious obstacles related to lack of CSO capacity and resources were reduced and their participation was incentivised to the point that new partners were attracted of which 83 percent represented CSOs. Actions included, allocating additional points in project assessment, simplifying procedures, using simplified cost options and simplifying CSO responsibilities in small-scale projects.

- In the France-Switzerland programme, a specific tool is being developed under ISO 1 to allow for local authorities to develop a local strategy and implement it. In effect this is a simplified version of the type of action envisage under PO5, but with considerably less constraints in order to encourage local authorities to 'try their luck' in a simplified environment yet still fully controlled by the MC. As part of this, it is expected that the strategy development process will involve public consultation involving citizens and local stakeholders.

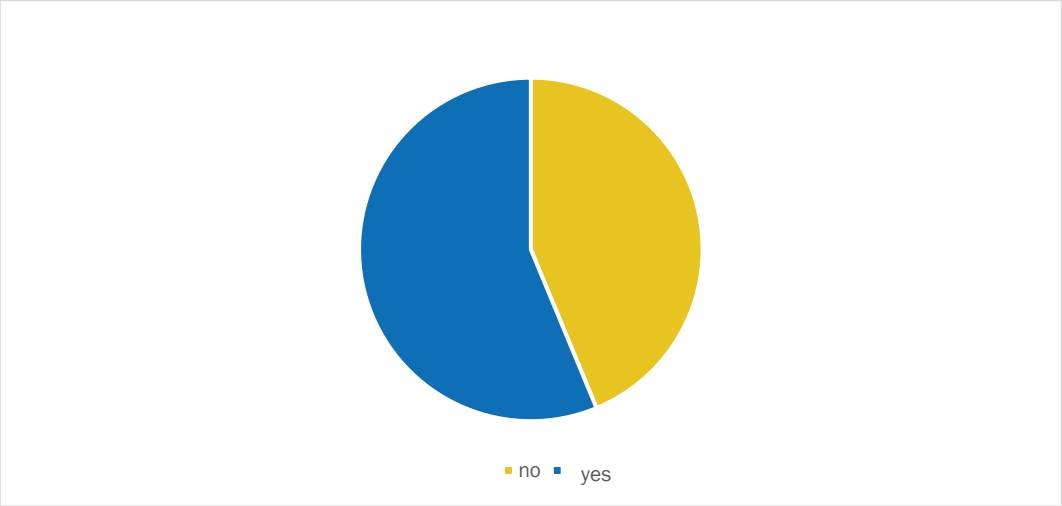
Beyond formal engagement in projects, the opportunities and benefits of being an associated partner/observer in projects can also be a means to 'include' CSO, without the administrative burden of formal participation.

4.3.5. Support to small-scale projects, including small projects within Small Project Funds

Even though they have existed for a long time, Small Project Funds (SPFs) have been strengthened in the 2021-27 period by including it in the Regulations (Article 2(10) of the CPR and Article 25 of Interreg Regulation).[30]

[30] Interact (2023). Fact sheet | The Small project fund according to Article 25 of the Interreg Regulation, online on https://www.interact-eu.net/library#4128-fact-sheet-small-project-fund-according-article-25-interreg-regulation

Figure 15: ***Funding of small-scale projects or through a specific Small Projects Fund. The programme expects the instrument to target inter alia such engagement***



Source: Questionnaire responses form 16 programmes

A SPF is 'an operation in an Interreg programme aimed at the selection and implementation of projects, including people-to-people actions, of limited financial volume'. The SPF is implemented by a selected beneficiary, which selects the final recipient(s) who implement(s) small project(s). Projects financed through the SPF have lower requirements on recipients in terms of project application and management. The lowering of entry barriers to Interreg funding may make them attractive to applicants from all parts of civil society who are new to Interreg. In some programmes, small-scale projects are funded through regular calls, others set up a Small Project Fund, managed by an intermediary, which has allowed for simpler procedures to be applied. Where Small Project Funds are in place attracting new partners (including CSOs) is a widely recognised function (e.g., IPA Greece-North Macedonia).

More generally small-scale projects are seen as a means of **achieving more direct involvement of citizens engage new and a wider cross section of civil society groups or people to people actions**. They are also a platform for stakeholders to build upon to intensify their engagement through a 'successor' main project application. The Northern Periphery and Arctic programme has used small-scale projects, e.g., preparatory projects and micro projects in the past.

- For small-scale projects, the Alpine Space programme require fewer criteria, shorter durations, smaller partnerships and budget and fewer countries involved. In addition, the use of simplified cost options, a 1-step application procedure, and a slimmer reporting schedule made the small-scale projects more attractive. The approach successfully attracted newcomers, including CSO, to the 2021-27 programme (47 percent of project partners; 16 in total in seven projects). Also being considered is a small-scale call dedicated to programme Priority 4, which focuses on Governance. The call potentially may refer to ideal partnership composition in the Terms of Reference and place particular emphasis on civic and civil society engagement.

- In the Euregio Meuse-Rhine 0rogramme one of the SPFs under ISO 1 will focus on people-to-people actions. The SPF is a continuation from the previous period but further simplification for recipients is envisaged, to lower the administrative burden for beneficiaries.

4.3.6. Communication and Capitalisation

Targeting new and wider CSO involvement can come at various stages and in a number of forms. These include programme outreach to civil society organisations with potential interests in project development, work with projects to ensure partnership and civil society involvement in project activities and outputs, e.g., such as emphasising the need for well-balanced partnerships (even in small projects), and engagement at national events and Q&A sessions.

For example:

- CSOs participation can be built up in the **early stages of a project idea and during the implementation phase**. In the Greece-Italy programme projects were invited to interact with CSOs at an early stage. The programme Joint Secretariat (JS) organised meetings that included representatives from CSOs, in two or three project meetings, focusing on evaluating activities, especially in terms of communication and dissemination efforts.

- **As projects progress opportunities to share knowhow and build in participatory approaches can be explored.** For example, as previously mentioned, in the Central Europe programme participatory approaches are a topic specifically highlighted under the programme's Specific Objective 4.1. dealing with the strengthening of governance for integrated territorial development, where there has also been an opportunity for projects to meet and share experience on participatory approaches during the synergies roundtable organized by the Central Europe programme.

- **Engagement with civil society and citizens is a valuable means to identify and pursue opportunities for communication and capitalisation** of outputs and results.

  For example:

  - In the Greece-Italy programme pilot actions in which CSOs collaborate with beneficiaries were launched. These have proved **valuable in the context of capitalisation activities and the sense of community** added value.

  - In the IPA Greece-North Macedonia programme engagement with CSOs at the programme level is focussed on disseminating information of events and involving CSOs in the various activities. At the project level, the role of CSOs is often to support the project partner (i.e., public authority) in activities like result dissemination and mobilising the local population.

  - **With a view to maximising take up and engagement with CSO programmes are trying to make results more visible and** understandable, e.g., ensuing project presentations and results are crisp

and easy-to-understand manner (Euregio Meuse-Rhine programme). The underlying rationale is making sound and easily digestible information available for those interested.

- **Building and retaining engagement throughout the project/programme cycle is also a focus for programmes.** For example, Greece-Italy programme note an evolution in its approach in the 2021-27 period. Within the ISO 1 activities, the programme has introduced 'soft forms 'of civil society engagement, such as consultations. The aim is to enhance the programme's impact and reduce barriers between the programme and the citizens. The programme initiated pilot actions during the 2014-20 period and intend to build upon their results during the 2021-27 period. The primary objective is to establish actions that facilitate continuous dialogue among citizens in both countries. This dialogue extends beyond the scope of programme-specific activities and encompasses various policy-related topics originating from the EU, particularly those concerning environmental issues.

- **Collaborative links beyond the programme can extend and open additional opportunities for engagement**. The Alpine Space programme state that the programme's connection with EUSALP and the Alpine Convention is crucial for integrating the programme into Alpine civil society. For example, EUSALP has nine action groups that incubate and amplify/further disseminate project results, promoting synergy between projects and action groups. This synergy occurs during project development and implementation, fostering collaboration and showcasing results at action group meetings or events. Likewise, the Alpine Convention has working groups and boards for different topics, and projects are encouraged to contribute to these groups, creating a multiplier effect. Stakeholder or citizen participation is not a strict requirement, it varies based on project ideas and topics, with more innovation-focused projects possibly having less citizen participation compared to others.

    - Beyond projects, links to initiatives like the EUSALP Youth Council are also important. The EUSALP Youth Council provides a platform for institutional involvement of young people in all EUSALP bodies, to make sure that their ideas and viewpoints are heard and considered. In the 2021-27 period, the Alpine Space programme launched the Youth Ambassadors Initiative to ensure youth participation in the Alpine area in the long term. Coordinated by the EUSALP Secretariat, the initiative encourages approved Interreg projects to cooperate with EUSALP and its Youth Council from the very beginning of the implementation and throughout the project lifetime. The initiative allows young people to raise their voice regarding the project implementation and take part in the Youth Council discussions. They act as ambassadors of the project during events and as multipliers on social media. The Alpine Space programme JS also encourages lead partners to involve young people in the project teams through the Interreg Volunteer Initiative.

4.3.7. Guidance and training

Looking to the future and to draw together lessons, **programmes can take on more targeted approaches, specifically to increase and/or intensify the role and**

participation of CSO groups. Efforts could involve showing how Interreg can be a way to 'do something new', engage with CSOs in a way/to an extent they have not done in the past, how CSOs can help maximise results and develop better projects.

For example:

- For the Alpine Space programme a long-term goal is aiming developing guidelines and strengthen the consideration of citizens and civic engagement in projects. The programmes aim is developing tools to support civil society engagement in the programme. The plan is to create guidelines within the programme manual, providing partners with insights on how to effectively involve citizens and stakeholders in discussions. These guidelines will be structured similarly to existing guidelines for sustainable practices.
    - In addition, with regard to Priority 4 of the programme (Cooperatively managed and developed Alpine region), the programme aims at further improvements in multi-level governance e.g., to foster cross-sectoral innovative projects and empowerment of the communities and a stronger involvement of the civil society. The expected partnerships should reflect these needs, involving the organisations (e.g., public, civil society etc.) to reach the envisaged targets. Related types of action include "Developing tailor-made strategies and solutions for the integration of and communication with stakeholders at different policy and governance-levels, as well as with civil society – also including "the next generation" (youth) – and non-institutional actors".
- The Flanders-the Netherlands programme, working with the OECD, developed a citizen participation playbook to identify opportunities and plan for citizen participation in designing, implementing, and evaluating programme projects.[31] The playbook is integrated, at a programme level, into the application process for beneficiaries. The playbook sets out what citizen participation is, what it means and sets out steps for planning and implementing citizen engagement. Based on this experience, the programme is now going on to explore the use of a programme 'participation advisor' to support projects in embedding engagement and participation in projects as they develop, citizen participation workshops and run a pilot of a citizen panel.
- Also linked to the OECD work, the Interreg Romania-Bulgaria programme developed a checklist for citizen engagement.[32]
- Pairing new CSO partners with experience partners in projects could also be a way to build expertise and ease participation.

[31] OECD Citizen Participation Playbook, For Interreg Flanders-The Netherlands programme beneficiaries https://www.oecd.org/gov/open-government/interreg-flanders-the-netherlands-citizen-participation-playbook.pdf

[32] Interreg Bulgaria-Romania programme, Citizens Participation Checklist https://www.interregrobg.eu/en/792-do-you-want-to-findmore-on-how-to-involve-citizens-in-your-initiatives.html

5. Overview and points to consider

The critical and diverse set of roles played by civil society representatives in territorial development is widely recognised. Civic and civil society engagement is more than a 'nice extra' for Interreg programmes and projects. Specifically, civil society and citizen engagement can lead to better and more representative programmes, support utilising collective intelligence and novel ideas, strengthen inclusion and diversity, legitimacy and transparency, and deliver better results. For the participants themselves, active participation can empower, boost skills and learning, support networks and resilience and result in more tailored outcomes.

Overall, a notable trend is a **commitment to embed and 'get more' from citizen engagement and in doing so delivering more for citizens.** In the 2014-20 period, interactions were commonly 'straightforward', based around the programme open to CSOs and programme and project consultations with CSO and the wider public. In the 2021-27 period more proactive approaches are taken and a commitment to expanding/maximising the benefits of these inputs is noted. However, survey and interviews also reveal the scope for more 'imagination'/ thinking outside the box in programmes as to how this could be achieved.

Very different processes and expectations can be attached to citizen and civil society engagement. For example, input from key civil society organisations can provide expert input from experienced partners, convey clear priorities and interests. In contrast, broader citizen engagement could bring a diversity of views and offer more representativeness. Related, in planning participation and engagement processes different factors are involved. For example, some civil society organisations are regularly involved in policy development and delivery, working closely with policy makers. In contrast, citizens are more likely to lack dedicated time, resources, and information available to civil society organisations. Therefore, planning must take into account the different approaches needed to engage, e.g., putting in place information, motivation, facilitation and tools to encourage citizen engagement and also ensuring political buy-in and support for an engagement exercise.

At present, managing authorities and intermediary bodies still have the most direct experience of the information and consultation pillars of engagement, but less on the process of engagement, which involves co-creation activities and activities oriented towards the engagement of the broader public and citizens, reaching beyond traditional stakeholders.[33] **Most widely used approaches to** engagement **included information events, stakeholder/citizen questionnaires, bilateral engagement and workshops**. There are well recognised and **widely experienced challenges** including pressures on programme budgets, concerns over levels of bureaucracy, need for simplification, and pressure on programmes to deliver tight, effective coordination and delivery. With these in mind, effort has to go into developing effective engagement, consultation, co-creation and

[33] OECD (2022) Engaging Citizens in Cohesion Policy: DG Regio and OECD Plot Project Final Report, OECD Public Governance Working Paper No. 50. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/486e5a88-en.pdf?expires=1678804114&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=329F59F9F0E73F06582988CAF5525F17, p. 17

co-decision-making tools. All of this is demanding in terms of resources, expertise and experience.[34]

However, experience shows that various approaches are applied to address, or at least work around, these issues and amplify civic and civil society engagement. Table 2 summarises key findings from this study and highlights the variety of measures and initiative in place, ranging from project level actions to strategic policy and programme-level change.

Table 2: Key findings

	Programme management	• Programme development input from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in consultation exercises using an array of new approaches. • CSOs can have a role in programme management through, e.g., representation in MC and/or programme committees. • CSOs can have a role in programme implementation through involvement in advisory committees on project calls, selection, working groups etc. • TA activities, such as training, have a connection/relevance to building CSO capacity or programme capacity to work with CSOs/engage with citizens.
	Programme priorities	• Support can be provided by programme authorities to further maximise civic & civil society in projects implemented across POs 1, 2, 3 and 4. • Few Interreg programmes have prioritised PO5 in the 2021-27 period • ISO 1 particularly notes civil society & people to people projects to promote citizen cooperation. Used by many programmes. • New European Bauhaus provides useful guiding principles for encouraging/ building engagement with CSO/citizens.
	Project - activities	• Promotion of civic engagement is a core focus of specific projects. • Engagement is ‘easier’ on some themes than others. Specific project themes require wider engagement and are therefore more ’relatable’ for CSOs and citizens. • CSOs can be a valuable means of delivery, dissemination or capitalisation. • Efforts can involve showing how Interreg projects can be a way to ‘do something new’ and engage with CSOs in a way/to an extent they have not done in the past, how CSOs can help maximise results and develop better projects.

[34] Euractive (2022) Whose democracy? The tumultuous road to effective civic participation, Special Report Mar-April 2022, https://en.euractiv.eu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/special-report/Whose-democracy_-The-tumultuous-road-to-effective-civic-participation.pdf

	Boosting CSO/civic role in projects	• Monitoring and mapping CSO participation. • Digital platforms to ease CSO participation/access. • Simplification to reduce administrative burden. • Support to small-scale projects, including small projects within Small Project Funds. • CSOs can be involved in projects as project observers. • CSOs have an important role in communication & take up of project/programme results, which can be emphasised and linked to capitalisation and dissemination. • Guidance & training to support CSO engagement at programme and project levels.

Looking to the future, programmes can continue their successes in engaging civic and civil society organisations. Here It is important to distinguish between civil society and citizen engagement as different mechanisms and approaches can be used to engage them. For example, CSOs may participate as partners in projects, while both CSOs and citizens can be effectively engaged in project activities driven by topics directly relevant to their local surroundings. Programme bodies have more leeway to influence the former by creating conditions which facilitate the participation of CSOs as beneficiaries, but less control over how projects involve citizens beyond providing them with guidance and good examples. Key points to bear in mind going forward are:

- ✓ An increasing number of programmes involve CSOs in aspects of programme development and management and an **array of new approaches to engage**, e.g., during consultation exercises. Some programmes even have CSO representation in the monitoring or steering committee, either as observers/advisors or as members with full voting rights. However, challenges occur in ensuring an engagement/interest and ongoing commitment of the CSOs over the whole programme period.

- ✓ **The role of CSOs in project activities is key**. To facilitate this the following actions could be considered.

    - Gather data on CSO involvement can be a useful means to assess programme reach, identify gaps and boost results.

    - Prioritise simplification (e.g., via digital platforms, SCOs and Small Projects Fund(s)). This makes project participation more accessible, especially for smaller organisations.

    - Underline the potential for capitalisation efforts to drive a shift in programme attitudes and engagement with CSOs and citizens, for example capitalisation activities could include citizens' involvement or put territories in the spotlight.

    - Provide training and guidance for programmes, projects and CSO are valuable, e.g., knowledge exchange across projects, tailored advice to CSOs and/or on CSO engagement in project application events and materials.

- Consider options to stimulate local CSOs to collaborate across borders and to think “transnationally”. When linkages between civil society organizations are established, they tend to be more topic-driven and regionally anchored. Where civil society participation does not occur organically through a bottom-up approach, a top-down approach with specific calls for citizen participatory projects could be implemented by the programmes.

- Gathering and disseminating good practice and experience gained through CSO/citizen engagement in Interreg projects and programmes would be extremely valuable, as this is an area of activity which is evolving fast, expectations are increasing, and levels of experience vary.

- Place-based/tailored approaches and expectations remain important, recognising the different traditions of CSO/civic engagement, capacities in place and the scope and scales of programmes.

Programmes can continue their successes in engaging civic and civil society organisations. Here, it is important to distinguish between civil society and citizen engagement as different mechanisms and approaches can be used to engage them. For example, CSOs may participate as partners in projects, while both CSO and citizens can be effectively engaged in project activities driven by topics directly relevant to their local surroundings. Programme bodies have more leeway to influence the former by creating conditions which facilitate the participation of CSOs as beneficiaries, but less control over how projects involve citizens beyond providing them with guidance and good examples. Key points to bear in mind going forward are:

- ✓ **CSOs can play a valuable role in informing programme management and delivery.** However, challenges occur in ensuring an engagement/interest and ongoing commitment of the CSOs over the whole programme period.

- ✓ **The role of CSOs in project activities is key.** To facilitate this, the following points/steps could be considered, such as gathering data on CSO involvement, prioritising simplification (e.g., via digital platforms, SCOs and Small-scale Projects), emphasising the importance of CSOs and civic engagement in capitalisation, providing training and guidance for programmes, projects and CSO.

- ✓ **Place-based/tailored approaches and expectations remain important**, recognising the different traditions of CSO/civic engagement, capacities in place and the scope and scales of programmes.

- ✓ **Looking to the to the post 2027 period,** the following points are important to emphasise.

    - There is strong CSO engagement in projects and programmes, which is a valuable ‘selling point’ for Interreg and can be emphasised further, e.g., in policy negotiations and in planning future frameworks and programmes.

    - Simplification remains an ongoing challenge with particular relevance to CSO and civic engagement. For example, during the consultation process on the

future of Interreg in post-2027, the point could be raised that, if simplified, PO5 could be used more widely and in line with its original intention thus enabling a well-defined focus on civic and civil society engagement funding.

- To advance CSO and civic engagement to an even greater extent more support is needed not least from the European Commission. There is not just a need to raise awareness, but also to convey the message to the CSOs that their voices are genuinely sought after and valued. This in turn requires a more direct involvement by the public authorities at different levels to establish a level of trust with the citizens. For example, in order to signal a strong policy commitment does there need to be a strong policy message on the importance of civic and CSO engagement, e.g., 'ring-fenced' funding for civic engagement activities/projects and actions in the future?

***Interreg programmes are already doing a lot, which is something to emphasise with a view to highlighting a strength in Interreg and its relevance to stakeholder communities, identifying lessons to share, and informing debates on future reforms and initiatives*.**

Annex 1: List of programmes

Particular thanks and gratitude go to the programmes that participated in this research.

Questionnaire	Interviews	Focus group
Interreg Greece-Italy	Interreg Alpine Space	Interreg Flanders-The Netherlands
Interreg Euregio Maas-Rhein	Interreg Greece-Italy	Interreg Central Europe
Interreg Central Baltic	Interreg Central Europe	Interreg Alpine Space
Interreg IPA South Adriatic	Interreg Euregio Maas-Rhein	
Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia	Interreg IPA Greece-North Macedonia	
Interreg Estonia-Latvia	Interreg IPA Romania-Serbia	
Interreg IPA Greece-North Macedonia	Interreg IPA South Adriatic	
Interreg Öresund-Kattegat-Skagerrak		
Interreg Flanders-The Netherlands		
Interreg Aurora		
Interreg Romania-Bulgaria		
Interreg Euro MED		
Interreg NEXT Black Sea Basin		
Interreg France-Switzerland		
Interreg Central Europe		
Interreg Alpine Space		

Annex 2: Online questionnaire

Definitions

Civic engagement in Interreg programmes can cover a wide range of activities and a range of participants. For the purposes of this research the following definitions have been adopted.

Civic engagement is widely understood as participating in activities aimed at improving the quality of life in a community or territory through the active participation in processes and decision-making concerning issues of public interest. For Interreg programmes, this can include engagement with citizens and civil society in programmes, and actions by the programmes/projects to target the development of civic engagement.

Civil society is understood as the "third sector" of society, distinct from government and business, and encompasses both private individuals as well *as citizens organised in civil society organisations*. Civil society organisations (CSO) involve citizens taking voluntary action not under the direction of any authority with power from the state, examples include community groups, non-governmental organisations, indigenous groups, labour unions, business organisations, professional associations, foundations, schools, universities, cultural institutions and faith groups."

The key **difference between participation and engagement** is that citizen engagement requires an active, intentional dialogue between citizens and (public) decision makers whereas citizen participation can come from citizens only.

Part of the research is to understand how civic engagement applies to Interreg, so please let us know if you have comments/feedback on the definitions used?

Text field

This short questionnaire is split into two parts: 1) focuses on civic engagement in the programme, 2) focuses on programme actions to support civic engagement.

First, we focus on actions taken to promote civic engagement in/with the programme.

1. **Broadly, how do you characterise the participation of civil society in the programme?**

Participation can take place on three levels:

- Information (provision of information),
- Consultation (Two-way relationship, requires information and feedback on outcomes),
- Engagement (stakeholders given opportunity and resources to collaborate during all phases of policy cycle and co-design and co-decide matters concerning the programme).

Can you give examples of how you inform, consult and engage civil society?
Text field

2. **How is civil society involved in programme management activities?**

    a. How are civil society representatives selected/invited to participate (involving them in designing, implementing, capitalising and disseminating, and evaluating programmes and projects) in your programme?

Text field

    b. Have you used/do you plan to use in the 2021-27 period novel/innovative approaches to civil society engagement as compared to previous periods? Please give examples.

Text field

    c. Are any measures taken to lower the entrance barrier for civil society to get actively engaged in the programme (e.g., enabling on line participation, adjusting the language used, etc.)?

Text field

    d. If any, what measures to you take to ensure a consistent commitment of/build a lasting partnership with civil society in the programme over time (e.g., over programming periods)?

Text field

e. To what extent is civic engagement used as a means for programme capitalisation and dissemination activities?

Text field

Second, we are focussing on actions taken to promote civic engagement activities in the programme area.

3. How is *civic engagement* embedded in the overall programme strategy? [More than one answer possible]

Multiple choice:

□ The programme encourages projects to embed civic engagement under Policy Objectives 1 to 4.

Please provide some more information

Text field

□ The programme encourages projects to embed civic engagement under PO5 “A Europe closer to citizens”.

Please provide some more information

Text field

□ The programme encourages projects to embed civic engagement under the Interreg-specific objective “A better cooperation governance”.

Please provide some more information

Text field

□ Through the funding of small-scale projects or through a specific Small Projects Fund. The programme expects the instrument to target inter alia such engagement.

Please provide some more information

Text field

□ By contributing to the New European Bauhaus initiative. The programme expects the instrument to target inter alia such engagement.

Please provide some more information

Text field

□ Other, please specify.

Text field

4. How does the programme support/encourage civil society engagement in projects? (More than one answer possible)

□ Identified as a target group.

□ Resources, guidance to civil society applicants.

□ Targeted calls, information, communications.

□ Civil society engagement included in project guidance and selection criteria? For all priorities, or specific actions (please specify).

Text field

□ Other, please specify.

Text field

5. In your experience, what type of projects/project topics attract citizens and civil society organisations the most/are most attractive to citizens and civil society?

Text field

6. In your view,

a. What key factors impede civil society to engage more actively in projects (e.g., language barrier, too technical nature of Interreg programmes, lack of resources or interest, etc.)?

Text field

b. What key factors encourage civil society to engage more actively in projects?

Text field

c. What factors hinder the more active engagement of civil society on the programme side (e.g., lack of resources, expertise or experience)?

Text field

7. Are there any additional examples of success stories in civic engagement in your programme? What factors and/or methods and tools were decisive for the success?

Text field

8. Are you interested in providing additional insights on the topic? We would be really happy to invite you (More than one answer possible):

□ for a short online interview and/or

□ to join our focus group on CS engagement.