

PILOT MULTI-PROGRAMME COORDINATION MECHANISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA BASIN: proposal for a flagship on sustainable tourism

Introduction

In light of the shared goal, at Commission and Member States level, to improve complementarity and synergies between Interreg programmes in the Mediterranean, Italy and France have conceived a concrete proposal to make a step further on the coordination process and embedding, leveraging also on the increased flexibility offered by the 2021-2027 cohesion regulatory framework.

The idea consists in designing a pilot multi-program coordination mechanism and testing **a flagship on sustainable tourism as its first application**, involving - on a voluntary basis - all interested Interreg Programmes in the Mediterranean.

While **respecting the governance and operational prerogatives of each Programme**, the proposal encourages a reinforced coordination between Interreg Mediterranean programmes and their Managing Authorities/Joint Secretariats, in order to foster the articulation of various convergent projects, able to ensure a more effective contribution to a single shared strategic priority.

The pilot would also serve as contribution to the embedding of current and/or future strategies in the Mediterranean.

The proposal moves from the assumption that focusing the coordination exercise on a common shared thematic would reinforce the process and avoid dispersion, keeping the proposed pilot flagship realistic and operational.

In that perspective, sustainable tourism could be appropriate for a first testing of the multi-programme mechanism, being in fact a **topic transversal to all policy objectives**, encompassing elements of economic development, social inclusion and innovation, as well as elements of environmental sustainability (sustainable transport, green ports, circular economy, governance).

The pilot aims at achieving **two main strategic goals**. On the one hand, **reinforcing the policy contribution** of each single Program by improving the quality and sharing the richness of the existing knowledge related to a specific topic. On the other hand, **enhancing the impact of innovative solutions** tested at local level, by creating a value chain among projects, thus fostering processes of transferring, scaling up and mainstreaming. Which in fact means enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness and thus the impact of the invested resources in the territories.

Since July 2021, **Italy and France** have been facilitating an **informal dialogue** around this proposal, involving several stakeholders active in the Mediterranean Interreg landscape.

The objectives were **to build a common understanding about the mechanism** and its first pilot application on Sustainable Tourism, discuss first ideas about its operational architecture, create a consensus and define a joint road map.

The informal dialogue has helped reaching an initial agreement on the following key points:

- Italy and France have been playing a role of promoters and facilitators in the initial phase of reflection and design;

- Three Programs are presently acting as **frontrunners** (Euro-Med, Next-Med and Italy-France Maritime), but the **mechanism is naturally open** to other Mediterranean programs willing to join with their specificities. **The ownership and the responsibility** for its operational design belong to **the Programs interested** in joining the mechanism. Each Program's Task force (TF) will have to discuss and approve the concept and the basic features of the mechanism;
- **INTERACT Valencia and TESIM** will play an important role in providing support during the design of the operational phase and later on. In particular, INTERACT will put at common disposal different existing tools (KEEP, JEMS, dashboard, etc). Moreover, it/they will offer the Med Lab Group as a platform for further operational design and its/their support for the outreach among other Interreg Mediterranean Programs and possible inclusion in the mechanism;
- Considering that most programmes are in their final elaboration's phase, a **common text**¹ has been drafted and is proposed to all interested programmes to make explicit in the Programs' documents the intention to co-design/join a multi-program coordination mechanism in the Mediterranean;
- The knowledge and experiences generated so far by the Programs involved represent the starting point to be further valorised. In this perspective, it is essential to ensure proper **stocktaking activities** during the operational design of the mechanism;
- The mechanism should ensure the right level of intermediation and aggregation of knowledge and experiences generated by relevant projects in each Program, i.e. the **articulation of capitalisation mechanisms** consolidated by past programming periods and/or currently being defined in each program. This means that the mechanism does not request the creation of specific projects/tools for its implementation;
- When joining the mechanism, depending on their own intervention logic as agreed by the respective Task Forces, interested Programs could make use of use of **Technical Assistance, as well as ISO1 financial resources** related to better cooperation governance;
- The governance for the operational design and future implementation of the mechanism among Programs should be based on a **cooperative approach**, with shared responsibilities for each involved Program. The different aspects of the cooperative approach, with duties and responsibilities, could be agreed in a **Memorandum of Understanding** to be signed by all joining Programs based on a mandate of the respective TF/MC.
- The opportunity of links with the sustainable tourism pillar of the **EUSAIR** and of the involvement in the exercise of **regional and national programmes** through targeted cooperation actions and/or mainstreaming/scaling up activities represents an additional leverage for the development of the proposal.

In order to bring forward the design phase of the pilot mechanism, the frontrunner Programs have started working together to identify criteria, tools and methods for its overall implementation.

¹ **Suggested text to be integrated in the Interreg program template, Section 2.1. 2:**

The co-design of a multi-programme coordination mechanism (reinforced cooperation) with other Interreg programs in the Mediterranean and its testing through a possible pilot flagship on sustainable tourism and/or any other relevant sector/s for the program is being explored. The above experimentation would serve at the same time as a contribution to the embedding of relevant Mediterranean macro-regional and/or sea-basin strategies priorities.

The present document reflects the initial progresses reached by the three Programs regarding the operational design of the pilot mechanism.

BASIC FEATURES FOR A PILOT MULTI-PROGRAMME COORDINATION MECHANISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA BASIN

The main objective of the pilot multi-programme coordination mechanism is to enhance synergies among Mediterranean programmes for developing Interreg **reinforced policy recommendations** and actions based on tested/transferred good practices and **innovative solutions** in the Mediterranean area, thus increasing the overall impact and sustainability of the invested resources in the territories.

Considering the quite challenging process of a multi-programme coordination mechanism, **sustainable tourism in its wider understanding** has been identified as a first specific field of experimentation. According to the smooth development of the process, new fields of implementation could be embedded.

Based on their previous **capitalization experience**², Euro-MED, NEXT MED and Italy France Maritime (IFM) have adhered to the starting phase of the pilot and agreed on the possible basic features of the mechanism, which however remains open to any other Programme/initiative that would like to join it.

It should be noted that the above programmes are a good Interreg paradigm for the cross-border (IFM) and the transnational (Euro-MED and NEXT MED) strands of the Mediterranean: the latter ones also represent the EU candidate countries dimension (IPA), with NEXT MED encompassing the cooperative dimension with the Neighbourhood, too, and experiencing its first programming period in the Interreg family.

These programmes took into consideration one of the orientations of the concept note proposed by Italy and France, constituting now, in its shortened version, the introductory section of this document, stating the added value of building the inter-programme coordination mechanism on the capitalization processes existing in each programme.

Nevertheless, the diversity of those capitalization processes has to be considered, while avoiding letting aside programmes which are not yet, or too little involved in capitalization, however wanting to join the coordination mechanism.

PROPOSALS AIMING TO DEFINE STEPS TO CARRY OUT A MULTI-PROGRAMME COORDINATION MECHANISM

The concept note refers to the importance to define basic elements on which collective thinking could apply with the support and the input of Interact. Our first thinking leads to identify a mechanism relying on two pillars:

1. the governance / organization of a multi-programmes' coordination strategy;
2. a set of activities of which inter-programme coordination process could consist on.

² see the Annex for learning more on each of the three programmes' capitalization process

In order to implement this coordination, the following steps should be carried out:

1. **Drafting the multi-programme coordination mechanism and approval by each programme respective 2021-2027 Task force**
2. **Setting up the governance for a multi-programme coordination mechanism.**

To this end, representatives of the Managing Authorities and Joint Secretariats of the joining programmes should set up a **permanent working group** that should meet whenever needed and at least twice a year. The working group would set up the strategy and the annual working plan to be submitted for approval to the respective Monitoring Committees.

The working group would be in particular in charge of the implementing and monitoring of the multi-programmes coordination mechanism.

The main tasks of the working group should be:

- a. Identification of the common stakeholders (targets),
- b. setting up of the technical cooperation tools and criteria of assessment,
- c. definition of common project and programme actions (including a joint communication plan).

3. **Implementing the multi-programme coordination mechanism:**

The following activities should be carried out:

I Screening of the promising/best results achieved involving Interact/Tesim Med Lab Group and selection according to common criteria by each programme:

According to its own capitalization experience and a general framework on transferability of solutions provided by Interact/Tesim, each Programme will propose to the working group a selection of the 2014-2020 projects results and outputs that can impact at a Mediterranean basin level according to a set of common criteria (list not exhaustive) highlighting:

- new models of interventions/solutions;
- new support of policy development;
- high potential level of communication added value;
- advanced state of achievement, replicability, transferability and sustainability of the results.

Actors involved: JSs, MAs, working group; Thematic-Capitalization project/external experts.

Output: selection of best programmes results/outputs to be used jointly in the Mediterranean area.

II Coordinated communication and sharing of the best selected programmes results:

Each Programme will organize specific consultations with other Interreg or thematic Programmes and other initiatives and main stakeholders, with regard to the outcomes of the selected results and outputs.

The identified results will be presented to the stakeholders through different communication activities targeted to the different types of stakeholders such as thematic networks or on-line catalogues.

Interact/Tesim Med Lab Group, as a steady platform involving 17 programmes with MA/JS, countries and Commission, could offer:

- 1) a slot in all events
- 2) the presence of stakeholders in the following meetings: Mainstream programmes/Sea Basin/MRS; Commission (several DGs); others
- 3) to inform and attract other programmes about/towards the pilot mechanism
- 4) to define and manage collective reflections and provide useful training to Interreg programmes.

Actors involved: working group; other actors and initiatives (UFM; PRIMA; etc.); macro-regional and sea-basin strategies; MC and participating countries; project beneficiaries and potential new beneficiaries.

Output: common seminars, videos, catalogues on best programmes results/outputs to be used in the Mediterranean area.

The work proposed under this step is focused on coordinating activities based on the dissemination and transferring of the selected best results for the topic produced by each Programme separately: **coordination of the joint communication** (results having been achieved in the 2014/20 programming period).

III External transfer of identified best joint results towards shared stakeholders:

The identified and shared results 2014/20 will be standardized/labelled as common Mediterranean Interreg results in order to be adapted and transferred jointly by the different programmes.

Different tools, methodologies, types of projects already experimented by each programme can be improved to build a new common approach stimulating synergies to foster transferring results towards other EU and national/regional programmes, initiatives, strategies.

During the implementation phase of the strategy, different combined instruments of each programme capitalization experiences should be further assessed in order to reach, if possible, **a final new proposal for a pilot joint activity of a common cross cutting capitalization as its direct outcome**, thus not based on previous separate experiences, but as a common work in progress.

On the other hand, it would be possible to target and coordinate ongoing projects already facing the same challenges to promote and transfer solutions as a single virtual “Programme”, adopting a single strategy of dialogue/exchange including the same goals, priorities, deadlines.

Interact/Tesim Med Lab can support in developing methods for linking different initiatives for a larger impact, e.g., project chain methodology, project platform approach.

Other Interreg Mediterranean experiences could be added in the future, based on a voluntary agreement.

Actors involved: working group and MCs.

Output: a common Mediterranean coordinated strategic approach to be approved by the MCs to implement a joint transferring activity.

The work proposed under this step is focused on coordinating activities for building joint synergies for transferring former 2014-2020 results previously homogenized, adapted to the 21/27 topic priority:
coordination of the pilot joint transferring activity

IV Assessment and implementation of the coordination mechanism strategy

Follow up on the implementation of 2021/27 projects and boosting the cooperation among the projects financed by the three Programmes on the selected topic/issues.

This monitoring/assessment phase could be a concrete input by the Interreg Mediterranean programmes to the debate for existing or future Mediterranean strategies of cooperation across the whole area.

With the facilitation and cooperation of Interact/Tesim Med Lab, in order to foster the steady and smooth coordination of the participating programmes, it could be set up:

1. a tool for the systemic sharing of information concerning: a) the progress in achieving project indicators and programme indicators; b) the critical issues that shall emerge and c) the solutions adopted to deal with them to build Interreg Mediterranean data synergies.
2. “joint living labs”, namely events in which the beneficiaries involved in the pilot coordination mechanism could share their projects’ information, best practices, breakthroughs and issues. It could be foreseen the possibility for beneficiaries to meet-up and discuss within a bilateral or multilateral framework with the aim, for instance, of creating new partnerships for further cooperation.
3. Peer reviews among beneficiaries on the projects carried out within the thematic focus/pilot, as also surveys on the common approach implementation can represent useful tools for the assessment and the monitoring step.
4. Joint ToRs for call for proposals including different goals according to the different characteristics of each programme participating/contributing to the coordination mechanism could be drafted in order to collectively address under different angles the same topic (sustainable tourism as first experimentation)/issue/actor(s) in the Mediterranean-
5. Implementing the joint ToRs to be endorsed through the different capitalization experiences of each Programme.

Actors involved: JSs, MAs and working group, project partners, Thematic-Capitalization experts.

Output: report/assessment on the coordination strategy approach and new partners/stakeholder’s networks/forum reached. Innovative tools to cooperate jointly.

The work proposed under this step is focused on the coordination mechanism assessment activities in order to build new joint tools to implement afterwards, namely a joint ToRs for calls for proposals: **coordination of the joint pilot project drafting** (looking for new joint outcomes in the 2021/27 programming period).

V Dissemination of the joint outcomes of the carried-out approach as direct follow-up of the assessment/new tools step.

This pilot experience should include and develop contributions collected through the different capitalization experiences carried out by each Interreg Programme separately, but also inputs and objectives shared with Mediterranean initiatives and strategies preparing the “after 21/27” programming period. Ideally, this activity should start in 2025.

Since the start of the programming period, each Programme will propose coordinated actions to be included in the respective communication plans and to be carried out by the communications officers, in order to ensure the publicity of the implementation of the project activities and to promote cooperation among the different projects that will work together. The working group will consolidate the results achieved within each Programme that will be shared through different communication tools.

The possible communication and dissemination actions to be carried out by the working group will have a twofold objective:

- On the one hand, to highlight the value of the multi-programmes coordination mechanism as a relevant platform to foster dialogue and exchange of experience among a variety of stakeholders on issues of shared interest at Euro-Mediterranean level, also in view of enlarging the number of programmes/initiatives participating in the coordination mechanism;
- On the other hand, disseminate the knowledge produced by the coordination mechanism on topics of shared interest with the aim to identify efficient practices to be showcased with public authorities, notably at the local level, and cooperation stakeholders.

Interact/Tesim Med Lab Group could be a good platform to engage all the 17 Interreg Mediterranean programmes and EU Institutions, in some cases also Member States and third countries and support the advocacy campaign promoted by the coordination mechanism (programmes).

The following potential tools will be considered in order to achieve the above objectives:

- Design of joint studies and catalogues collecting good practices and efficient models of intervention developed on issues of common interest for the programmes involved;
- “Restitution” thematic workshops, especially dedicated to local actors and other cooperation programmes, to promote the knowledge generated by the coordination mechanism (involving 2014-20 projects lead partners and future 21-27 applicants);
- Organization of joint events on key occasions, including EU (like the European Week of Regions and Cities, etc.) or international celebrations (World Tourism Day);
- Short videos (max 3 minute) to showcase the success stories of our projects.

As a common requirement, each programme website will feature a space dedicated to the coordination mechanism to highlight, through a joint editorial plan, its objectives, activities, actors involved and outputs.

The main target groups to be addressed by the communication activities of the working group are:

- Monitoring Committees of each programme;
- National authorities responsible for the programme implementation in each participating country;
- Other Interreg programmes, especially those with a Mediterranean scope;
- Other Mediterranean cooperation initiatives, platforms and networks (Union for the Mediterranean, PRIMA, etc.), macro-regional and sea-basin strategies;
- DG REGIO (and other relevant European Commission' DGs);
- Local and regional authorities involved in the cooperation area as main "recipients" of the knowledge produced by the coordination mechanism.

The communication and dissemination activities will be carried out within each phase of the multi-programme mechanism. Moreover, a basic timeline of the process, actions, and the targets can be set up in order to increase the outreach of communication and dissemination activities.

Actors involved: working group; MCs, EC, other programmes and initiatives, final beneficiaries.

Output: reinforced policy recommendations and actions based on the tested innovative solutions (joint advocacy and transferring activities/tools).

The work proposed under this step is focused on the implementation of new tools suggested through the assessment analysis and the dissemination of the results achieved all along the process: **coordination of the joint pilot project implementation and mechanism process advocacy** (dissemination of joint results for the Mediterranean and consolidation of the mechanism)

INDICATIVE ROADMAP

2022

- February > Presentation of the coordination mechanism by the 3 programmes to Interact and identification of possible Interact tools to be used
- March > Coordination mechanism validation by TFs
- April > Presentation of the coordination mechanism to all other Interreg programmes (Interact)
- May > Setting up governance system fixing objectives, actions and timeline for the year as well as the exact scope/perimeter of the topic investigated
- June > Analysis and selection of **2014/20** best results/solutions by each programme following the fixed common criteria
- July / Dec. > Homogenization of results, building common tools to show/publish/spread out them
- Nov. / Dec. > assessment of operations, networking, enlargement of the partnership.

2023

- Jan. / June > Consolidation of the enlargement partnership, integration of 2014/20 results of new volunteer associated programmes (and former ones if needed), designing of common objectives and tools related to the 2021/27 programming period based on 2022 experience and assessment, planning of coordination activities for the second semester.

ANNEX

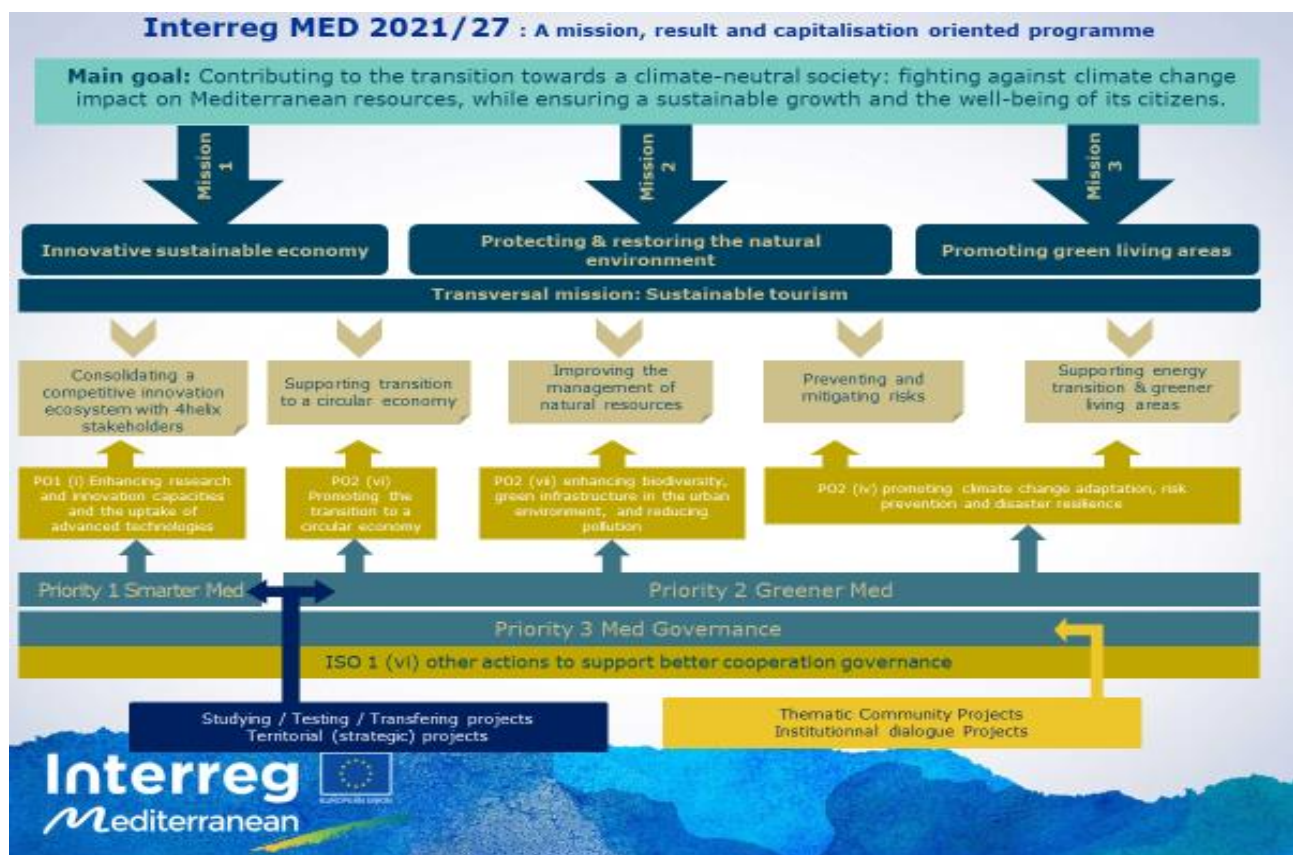
OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMMES PRESENTLY INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN OF THE MECHANISM, INCLUDING A REFERENCE TO THEIR OWN CAPITALIZATION PROCESSES

Interreg EURO-MED 2021-2027

The Interreg Euro-MED Programme is a European territorial cooperation programme at transnational level. Its general objective is contained both in the word "cooperation" and in the three adjectives that define it by regulation: territorial, European, transnational. Its mission is to find, transfer and apply solutions to the problems identified as priorities in the fields of innovation, economy, environment through multicultural and multi-stakeholder (public and private) partnerships within projects whose main target will be the needs of the territories and populations of the Mediterranean. This will constitute the general objective of Interreg

Euro-MED: to promote joint reflection in order to implement shared solutions and thus strengthen the cohesion of our European area.

Objectives and project typologies:



Main capitalization previous experience

During the programming period 2014-2020, Interreg MED has been experimenting and consolidating a new process of capitalization, relying on thematic communities (one per each Programme objective) led by so called horizontal projects (HP: community building projects).

The main goal of thematic communities consists in the possibility for all thematic/territorial projects to be part of a same group/cluster coordinated by a HP in order to exchange, promote, transfer and achieve new common shared outputs internally and externally. One of the main advantages of such process is its implementation along the projects duration without waiting for the end of them, avoiding the risk of quick depreciation of results while facilitating their potential valorization.

The definition of criteria and methodologies by the thematic communities themselves (under the umbrella of each HP) reinforced their self-responsibility and involvement as well as their better appropriation of capitalization mechanisms. In the same way, their management of the communication and the exchange information or results towards the national institutions and strategic projects involved in the “governance” axis of the programme was an attempt to hopefully reach a better impact to key stakeholders and decision makers.

ITALY-FRANCE MARITIME 2021-2027

In the on-going complex context, featured by the growing uncertainties regarding the impacts of the pandemic, the Program intends to support the economic and social cohesion of the cross-border area by strengthening its resilience and, therefore, its capacity to:

- address the impact of the industrial and ecological transition (and the pandemic as well) by focusing on innovation, growth and the competitiveness of the territories;
- protect (from natural and anthropogenic risks) and enhance the natural and cultural resources of the area -also from a circular economy perspective-, focusing on the territory and its environment;
- promote a better connection between the territories, emphasising the issue of accessibility, specially of remote zones of the cooperation area;
- reinforce efficacy of the cross-border labour market by focusing on the qualification of human capital;
- remove the obstacles that prevent the full achievement of the Program objective, placing cross-border cohesion at the centre of the interventions.

Five priorities have been identified to pursue the achievement of these objectives:

PRIORITY 1: An attractive cross-border area, characterised by intelligent and sustainable modernization

PRIORITY 2: A resilient and resource efficient cross-border area

PRIORITY 3: A cross-border area physically and digitally connected

PRIORITY 4: An efficient cross-border area able to share capital and capable of standing out for the quality of its human capital

PRIORITY 5: Better cross-border governance



Main capitalization previous experience

The capitalisation strategy adopted by the Interreg Italy – France Maritime 2014-2020 relied on firstly the creation of six “thematic clusters” and the inclusion of each financed project in one of these clusters and secondly on the organization of thematic “living labs” involving beneficiaries.

Living labs have been fundamental in the identification of integrated outputs and synergies among projects results supported by a continuous desk analysis of the projects outputs. The more valuable added value coming from such process was:

- A rising up of the cooperation between projects leading to new developments;
- An identification of the projects having a high potential of sustainability and replicability.

Consequently, for each thematic cluster, few projects results have been chosen as flagship achievements and constitute so far, the most relevant outcomes of the 14-20 Programme, gathered in a comprehensive “Catalogue of good practices” published and disseminated through a communication campaign.

INTERREG NEXT MED 2021-2027

Building on the positive cross-border cooperation experiences of the previous two programming periods, the Interreg NEXT MED Programme will keep supporting the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in a transnational dimension. For the programming period 2021-2027, the cooperation programme upholds the ambition of its predecessors to continue contributing to the development of the Mediterranean Sea basin by enhancing partnerships, promoting policy dialogue and collective responses to challenges of global concern, backing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals within the Agenda 2030 as well as the New European Agenda for the Mediterranean.

Following the principles of accountability, shared ownership and responsibility which have been key in the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation to date; the vision of the Interreg NEXT MED Programme is to contribute to the achievement of a smart, sustainable and fair development for all across the Mediterranean basin by supporting balanced, long-lasting, far-reaching cooperation and multilevel governance.

The common challenges of the cooperation area are identified in the following Policy and Specific Objectives.

PO1 - A more competitive and smarter Mediterranean	PO2 - A greener, low-carbon Mediterranean	PO4 - A more social and inclusive Mediterranean	ISO1 - A better cooperation governance for the Mediterranean
S.O 1.1 Research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	S.O 2.1 Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions S.O 2.4 Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	S.O 4.2 Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training	S.O 1.6 Other actions to support better cooperation governance
S.O 1.3 Sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs	S.O 2.5 Promoting access to water and sustainable water management S.O 2.6 - Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy	S.O 4.5 Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care	

Main capitalization previous experience

During the 2007-2013 period, a specific work package on capitalization activities was introduced in the application form for strategic projects and for standard projects. In addition, the setting up of thematic clusters involving also other Lead Beneficiaries coming from various programmes, revealed to be interesting for sharing the outcomes and results achieved at single project's level.

Building on this first experience, in the 2014-2020 programming period the participating countries decided to boost the capitalization process through a specific call for proposal for capitalization projects. The elaboration of this specific call has voluntarily taken the option of a preliminary results' analysis achieved by the previous ENPI CBC MED Projects and, more importantly, by projects financed by other initiatives / programmes. Doing so, this capitalisation call for proposal represents a first exercise of a concrete reuse of results for a potential future appropriation by other territories of the Mediterranean area, involving local authorities and stakeholders as final recipients and users.