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Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

POLICY BRIEF

Entrepreneurial development niches for Interreg programmes

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30 years together

The paper introduces potential niches for Interreg and NEXT programmes in relation to entrepreneurial development in cross-border and transnational functional areas. The ideas presented here have been inspired by an exchange between ESPON, Interreg stakeholders and representatives of the Directorates General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) within the framework of the seminar 'Change the perspective! From cross-border to interaction area' that took place in June 2019 in Dresden, Germany.

The observed synergies between Interreg, the framework programme for research and innovation (Horizon 2020) and Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) have been clustered in two main domains (Fig. 1).

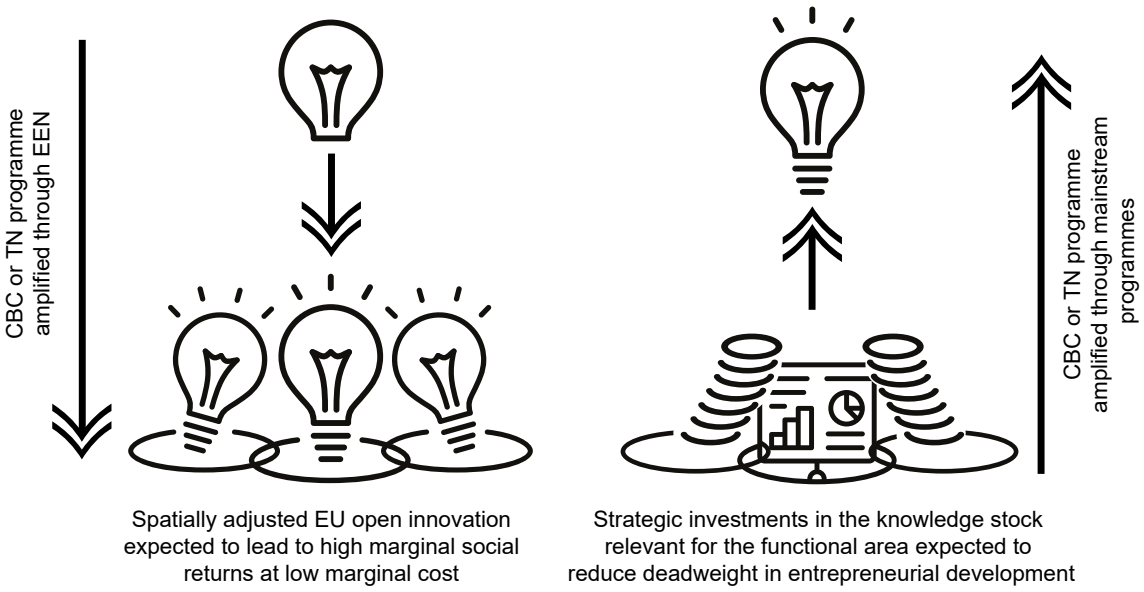

Figure 1. Interreg niches in value chains of public support schemes (source: own elaboration)

Both domains are considered to be niches for Interreg and NEXT programmes as they delineate areas of intervention that account for place-variant needs of a cross-border or transnational functional area (spatial heterogeneity) and control for possible deadweight risks, i.e. overlaps with activities carried out within the framework of place-invariant innovation and entrepreneurial support schemes. The role of both niche domains for regional entrepreneurship in cross-border and transnational functional areas can be empirically tested. Results can be helpful for Interreg and NEXT programme implementation authorities beyond the multiannual strategies and cooperation programmes. The design of specific calls for proposals can benefit from empirical findings and pave the way for synergetic interventions taking into account developments and activities planned or carried out within Horizon Europe and / or Enterprise Europe Network. Such value chains are expected to increase marginal social impact at a low marginal cost.

This paper is not the result of empirical analysis but is presenting the conceptual framework only. The empirical model that can be tested in certain cross-border or transnational areas, or across these functional areas, builds largely on the model applied by the knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship (Acs et al., 2009). Using the same set of variables, the Interreg niche model adds the notion of knowledge spillovers through knowledge imports (e.g. appropriation of open research results, open data or other knowledge residuals from abroad) as well as recognition of high-impact industrial sectors, which are considered as particularly competitive and fertile for the economy of the cross-border or transnational functional area (FA). The latter can be a result of cross-border or transnational regional smart specialization and entrepreneurial discovery processes (Foray, 2015).

$$FARENT = KSTOCK\alpha + KIMPORT\beta + FA*KSTOCK\gamma + EEN*KIMPORT\delta + BARR\zeta + INC\eta + CONTROL\lambda + u$$

Entrepreneurship in a cross-border or transnational functional area (FARENT) is a function of the knowledge stock (KSTOCK = R&D investments and research capital investments), knowledge import (KIMPORT), entrepreneurial barriers (BARR = corporate tax, individual tax, public expenditure in relation to GDP as a proxy of substitution effects), level of knowledge appropriation from incumbent firms (INC = patents, gap between actual and potential GDP) and other observable influences (CONTROL = share of population in the age segment 30-44; share of population living in urbanized areas). The model is also designed to investigate the marginal effects of knowledge imports if they are associated with the Enterprise Europe Network as well as the marginal effects of the knowledge stock accumulation if this is done in the FA priority sectors.

The sections below introduce the observations already documented by the European Commission, the Interreg Central Europe programme and Interact that gave rise to the empirical model.

Upstreaming: from cross-border knowledge facility to pan European Scientific Evidence

Alongside CERN and EMBL, the International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL) is the third research organization worldwide having an international status approved by the United Nations. INL was co-financed (among others) by the Interreg cross-border cooperation programme Spain-Portugal (European Commission, 2016). Nanotechnology was identified as investment priority during the Portuguese-Spanish Summit in Évora, Portugal, due to its applications in medicine and healthcare, food and environmental monitoring, ICT and renewable energy. The current activities of INL are distributed across these domains and match with smart specialization priorities (RIS3) of the Portuguese and Spanish border regions (Table 1).

Table 1. Matches between RIS3 priorities in the ES-PT border regions ordered by INL activity domains (source: own elaboration based on records available at: s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu and inl.int)

RIS 3 priorities of the ES-PT border regions	INL activity domains			
	Food and environmental monitoring	ICT	Renewable energy	Health
Galicia (ES)	Diversification of food sector; innovation and nutrition for a healthy lifestyle, etc.	ICT in tourism.	Biomass and marine energy.	E-health and big data exploitation; biotechnology, regenerative medicine, healthy leaving and ageing, etc.
Castile and Leon (ES)	Bioindustry; food quality and technology, etc.	Cybersecurity, mobility applications, M2M communications, big data, cloud computing, Internet of the future, etc.	Energy technologies, advanced materials, etc.	Biomedical research and applications
Extremadura (ES)	Agricultural production; S&T of food and agro-tourism or gastronomy, etc.	Big Data, sensor networks, remote sensing, linked data and open data; cloud computing; high performance computing, networks and mobile systems, etc.	Thermo-solar and photovoltaic technologies testing in production facilities; smart energy management, etc.	Tele-medicine, biomedical applications, biosensors and nano-sensors, etc.
Andalusia (ES)	Innovation in agri-food; improved competitiveness of agriculture and cattle industry; CO2 capture by natural and cultivated ecosystems; water cycle management, etc.	ICT infrastructure, IoT, Big Data, could computing, etc.	Smart grids; high capacity energy storage systems; efficient energy management in production, etc.	E-health and big data exploitation; biotechnology, regenerative medicine, healthy leaving and ageing, etc.
North (PT)	Link local agricultural products with scientific and commercial competencies to develop related products and services such as functional food and local gastronomy.	ICT in tourism.		Links between research and business, particularly in the areas of tissues, cancer, neurosciences and surgical procedures, etc.
Algarve (PT)	Automation and ICT in the agro-food sector.	ICT.	Renewable energies technologies.	Healthcare for elderly and rehabilitation, etc.
Centre (PT)	Self-sufficiency in agriculture	E-mobility, e-health, e-learning, cloud computing and near-shoring.	Marine energy	Healthcare Enterprise Information Systems and ageing, etc.
Alentejo (PT)	Links between the agricultural and food processing industries.	ICT in production, energy and smart mobility.	Energy and resource sustainability.	Steering scientific and entrepreneurial competencies to create new technological solutions in response to societal challenges, etc.

INL commenced its activities in 2008. In 2017, it kicked off the Interreg Spain-Portugal project NanoGateway with the goal to establish a cross-border smart specialisation strategy in nanotechnology, aka, nanoRIS3. NanoGateway sought to cluster the cross-border innovation system around the common denominator of nanotechnology and assimilate nanoscience excellence into the cross-border entrepreneurial network, thus establishing a common scientific, technological and entrepreneurial functional space. NanoRIS3 is assembling the entrepreneurial discovery (Foray, 2015) actors for the period from 2019 to 2023.

INL has currently a portfolio of nearly 170 research projects funded by national and regional sources in various scientific areas such as nanochemistry, water quality, food processing, microfabrication, exploratory nanotechnology, nanodevices, nanomedicine, energy storage and conversion, spintronics or theory of quantum nanostructures. INL is, furthermore, involved in research projects funded under Horizon 2020, worth nearly 14 M EUR.

The first entrepreneurial spin-off as a result of scientific research conducted at INL is RUBYnanomed. By using applied nanotechnology, a team of INL researchers developed a single-use device able to capture circulating tumour cells (CTC's) in the bloodstream using as little as 7.5 ml of blood from a patient. CTC's are biological particles responsible for secondary tumours by flowing freely in the bloodstream and being able to attach to other organs. RUBYnanomed seeks to help oncologists to define the nest treatment options for their patients by continuously monitoring their condition without having to wait until tumours are detectable in scans and x-ray exams.

Other entrepreneurial discoveries include a product able to deliver real-time predictive maintenance information based on a high-sensitivity sensor and the replacement of titanium dioxide as a food additive by a considerably safer and healthier alternative.

Downstreaming: Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE capitalization call

At the end of 2018, Member States of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE (CE) Programme gave a mandate to the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat to design an experimental call for "capitalisation through coordination".

The call should encourage beneficiaries to increase the impact of existing transnational cooperation results in central European regions, in coordination with other EU-funded projects. In their applications, newly created partnerships had to demonstrate how they would exploit specific transnational outputs and results by following at least one of the following approaches:

- Downstreaming: existing outputs and results should be tailored in a way that they can be further rolled-out at the national, regional or local level. Such roll-out could happen geographically to utilise adapted outputs and results in other regions; or thematically to utilise these in other sectors than initially addressed. The main aim of downstreaming should be to give regions in central Europe easier access to transnational outputs and results.
- Upstreaming: existing outputs and results should be applied and tailored in a way that they can be integrated into relevant territorial or thematic policies and strategies. This should happen at the most appropriate level, i.e. European, national, regional or local.

Both approaches were considered complementary and a combination in one project proposal was possible.

However, the experimental character of the call went beyond a basic exploitation of outputs and results. It aimed also at better coordination of capitalisation beyond the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE community. Existing outputs and results can be better exploited when joining forces with projects from directly managed EU programmes, with a focus on research and innovation (R&I) framework programmes as Horizon 2020 and its predecessors.

The design of the call was driven by the needs of central European stakeholders. Surveys carried out during the preparation of the call showed a clear potential for reaping synergies between R&I and Interreg project results. R&I and Interreg stakeholders expressed their high interest in working together and combining results for a stronger take-up at the policy level as well as a broader roll-out to new target groups and

territories. However, the surveys also revealed an obvious shortcoming: despite the expected benefits, stakeholders remained passive rather than pro-actively seeking coordination. They seemed to need a deliberate "nudge" like this call to make better use of synergies across funds.

The preparation of the call was directly supported by the Directorate General for Research and Innovation at the European Commission - Unit RTD.B6 "Common data and knowledge management services" and the call was opened in March 2019. Due to the experimental character of the call and a limited budget, the thematic focus was on seven topics of high relevance for central European regions, including social entrepreneurship.

In December 2019, Interreg CE selected nine projects for funding. In the proposals, both Interreg and R&I stakeholders convincingly described how existing project outputs and results will be combined and further tailored to territorial needs. An increased impact of existing project results is therefore expected as a result of these projects.

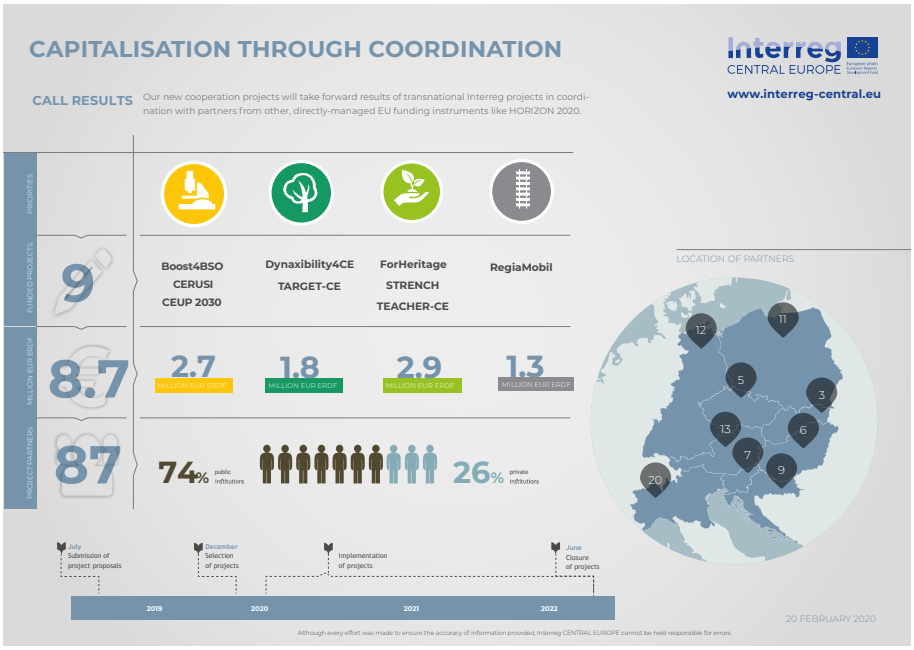

Figure 2. Infographic Interreg Central Europe call 'Capitalisation through coordination' (source: Interreg Central Europe)

A concrete example of a successful project that brings together partners from Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE and Horizon 2020 communities is "CERUSI"[1] . Following a down-streaming approach, the project wants to help social entrepreneurs realise their innovative ideas in their regions without having to move away into bigger cities with probably better support structures. Concretely, CERUSI will implement a brand new concept called "Rural Social Innovation (RSI) Lab Caravan". It builds on the Regional Circular Living Lab business model concept (RAIN) developed in the H2020 project LIVERUR, which combines principles of circular economy and social inclusion with state-of-the-art business development models. It was co-developed and tested in 15 pilot regions in the EU and beyond feeding into a conceptual framework, which allows the adaptation to the specific context of the different CE regions. The new lab caravan will become a temporary support framework for social innovation in rural regions. It will address different sectors such as diversified agriculture, food and beverages industry, rural SMEs and craft business, rural tourism etc. The transnational exchange of knowledge and experience will help rural regions to capitalise on their potentials and create socially inclusive regional development. It should ultimately transform itself into a permanent partnership between local actors interested in bringing their region forward and their like-minded peers across central Europe.

Overall, it can be concluded that the new "capitalisation through coordination" approach developed in the Interreg CE experimental call shows promising potential to effectively strengthen coordination between Interreg programmes and R&I and other EU directly managed programmes for increasing territorial impacts following both an upstreaming but especially a down-streaming approach (Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE and European Commission - Directorate General for Research and Innovation, 2020).

[1] www.interreg-central.eu/CERUSI

Amplifying Interreg projects with the Enterprise Europe Network

The Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is the world's largest support network for small and medium sized enterprises. The EEN has over 600 partner organisations that are well-known regional or national actors of the business and innovation ecosystems (e.g. chambers of industry and commerce, regional development agencies, innovation agencies, research organisations, universities, regional or national promotional banks). With being active in over 60 countries, the EEN has a global outreach. The EEN partners organise themselves bottom-up in consortia covering at least one NUTS-2 region and they are selected in a competitive call for proposals. The EU consortia receive co-funding from the EU budget (up to 60%) and the non-EU consortia finance their participation in the network in a self-financing mode.

The entire EEN service range is available for the SMEs free of charge and can be grouped in 3 categories; business advisory services including access-to-funding consultation, internationalisation/partnership services and innovation services. The majority of these services is co-funded through the COSME programme that will form part of the Single Market Programme under the new multiannual financial framework (MFF) as of 2021. At the same time, some innovation services of the EEN such as the innovation management capacity building and the Key Account Management services for SME-Instrument/ European Innovation Council (EIC) pilot beneficiaries are co-funded through Horizon 2020.

Some 13 per cent of the EEN host organisations are Managing Authorities of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) programmes while some 25 per cent are active as Intermediate Bodies and 40 per cent of them are represented in different Monitoring Committees.

The examples below are from the Interreg cross-border and transnational domains and illustrate how EEN facilitates RIS3 entrepreneurial discovery processes beyond national borders on the one hand and how it connects Interreg business support with market participants on the other hand (Enterprise Europe Network, 2020).

The Interreg Alpine Space project S3-4AlpClusters introduced a transnational entrepreneurial discovery process in the Alpine region. Four project partners (Business Upper Austria, Innovation and Technology Transfer Salzburg, Bavarian Research Alliance, Veneto Innovazione) and two observers (Area Science Park and Finlombarda) host EEN teams. The project took advantage of business links established within the EEN activities of Veneto Innovazione and Business Upper Austria in an action development workshop dedicated to 'Smart Food Ecosystem'.

The Interreg France-Switzerland project Innovarc[3] was coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Bourgogne Franche-Comté and united 250 enterprises and research organisations in the French-Swiss Jura mountain area with the goal to increase cross-border business cooperation on strategic innovation projects. The Chamber's EEN team provided a series of consultation services on access to finance, innovation management and internationalisation to entrepreneurs during the project's annual events, seeking to increase business activity in cross-border innovation projects.

[2] https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/s3-4alpclusters/en/home

[3] http://www.innovarc.eu/innovarc/presentation-du-projet

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Győr-Moson-Sopron County is the lead partner of the Interreg Austria-Hungary project Smart-up aiming to increase the cross-border business and innovation collaboration among start-ups[4] in the border regions. Start-ups benefit from services provided by the EEN team hosted by the Chamber, in particular in relation to B2B matchmaking and access to funding.

The projects AMiCE[5] and KETGATE[6] are both co-financed under the Interreg Central Europe priority on innovation and knowledge development. AMiCE sought to support SMEs in mastering know-how and investment barriers related to additive manufacturing. Five of the eleven project partners host specialized EEN teams, i.e. the Chemnitz University of Technology, the Czech Regional Development Agency of Usti Region, the Wroclaw University of Technology, the Business Innovation Center Bratislava and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Genova. EEN services provided to SMEs include support in business internationalisation, cooperation and technology transfer. KETGATE connects business support organisations from eight Central European countries, five of which are EEN members. The project supports SMEs by facilitating cross-border access to high-level technologies for advanced materials, photonics and micro and nano-electronics in the areas of transport, health and food. EEN business matching services have been provided via participating EEN members.

The Interreg North-West Europe project Boost4Health[7] designs financial and non-financial support services for SME internationalisation. The consortium signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the EEN in an effort to intensify the project's collaboration with SMEs operating in life sciences and medical technologies.

Veneto Innovazione is member of the Italian EEN consortium Friend Europe that covers the regions Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Trentino Alto Adige. Veneto Innovazione was the lead partner of the Interreg Alpine Space project C-TEMAlp[8]. The business transfer project involved three other EEN teams: Unioncamere Veneto; the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Craft and Agriculture of Bolzano and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Munich and Upper-Bavaria. The project matching between buyers and sellers at transnational level has been facilitated with EEN tools.

Knowledge stock and transnational entrepreneurial discoveries: observations from Interact

Territorial frameworks like EU macro-regional and sea basin strategies set orientation for programmes and make investments more efficient. They also help to frame and structure cross-programme cooperation in the territory. Territorial frameworks help programmes to multiply the effects of individual projects and capitalise for common good. They also help to link and amplify Interreg programme results by linking them to mainstream programmes (project chain concept). This can be done through, e.g., ESIF Programme MA Networks[9] established to support macro-regions.

Regulatory proposals for post-2020 EU funding period encourage building synergies and complementarities of investments by different funds. Moreover, it is underlined that joint actions and investments with higher EU added value should be promoted. Interact has been promoting cooperation and coordination not only among Interreg programmes but also among Interreg other funds, addressing both capacity and competence matters and operational questions (Interact, 2017).

While cooperation and coordination among programmes and respectively projects happen in various fields, this section refers to few examples related to transnational entrepreneurial discoveries.

The Interreg Baltic Sea Region (BSR) project platforms support cooperation with other funding programmes, e.g. in the context of smart specialisation. The main aim of project platforms is to increase impacts of Interreg Baltic Sea Region and other EU-funded projects in the area. Platforms should ensure more

[4] https://www.interreg-athu.eu/en/smartup

[5] https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/AMiCE.html

[6] https://www.interreg-central.eu/Content.Node/KETGATE.html

[7] https://www.boost4health.eu

[8] https://www.alpine-space.eu/projects/c-temalp/en/home

[9] https://capacitycooperation.danube-region.eu/esf-network-danube-region

intensive use, better durability and transferability of projects' outcomes as well as better links between projects and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The **BSR S3 Ecosystem platform**[10] aligns smart specialisation initiatives to steer investments across the Baltic Sea region in a more efficient way. The platform builds on the experiences of Interreg Baltic Sea Region's projects Smart-up BSR and GoSmart BSR, as well as BIOREGIO ClusterFy and TraCS3, co-founded by Interreg Europe. It works in close cooperation with the coordinators of Policy Area Innovation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Among others, the platform maps smart specialisation strategies in the region, aiming to better define BSR industrial strengths (existing and emerging), accelerate innovation ambitions, develop a BSR-wide value chain orientation and enhance the profile of the BSR as an innovation partner of choice within and beyond the EU. The results feed into discussions on post- 2020 programme architecture in the region.

Trans-national Commercial Activities in Research & Innovation, Clusters and in SME-Networks (StarDust)[11] was a strategic project financed by Interreg BSR Programme 2007-2013. The project looked into questions such as how to link strong research nodes, clusters and SME networks in the Baltic Sea region and how to use the high innovation potential of the region to address common societal challenges. Among other achievements, the project kicked off the establishment of a transnational funding instrument – **InnovationExpress** [12]. The funding instrument aimed at facilitating internationalisation, smart specialisation, cross-border learning and competence development by developing transnational linkages between SME networks, clusters and other specialised research and innovation nodes for the benefit of their members. Innovation Express was a joint call for proposals implemented within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The call was funded by national and regional funding agencies to initiate or develop transnational cooperation activities, leveraging cluster organisations (or similar) to develop proposals for their SME members. The funding programme was operational between 2013 and 2018.

The development of **cross-border supply chains for Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)** within the South Baltic 2007-2013 funded MarTech LNG[13] project aided the shipping and shipbuilding sectors in Germany, Sweden, Lithuania, Denmark and Poland. The project came hand in hand with the EU sulphur directive that requires ships in the Baltic and the North sea as well as in the English Channel to use fuels with a sulphur content of max 0,1 per cent. These changes coincided with large-scale strategic investments in LNG terminals in Poland and Lithuania. The project partners recognized a cross-border market niche and acted rapidly. As part of the transition, the project trained around 200 stakeholders and secured the involvement of multinational and local firms, transmitting LNG knowhow among firms, national and regional authorities. The initial investment of the Interreg programme (~1 M€) has unlocked follow-up investments of ca. 46 M€ in the region. The follow-up project GoLNG[14] funded by Interreg Baltic Sea region 2014-2020 (~3 M€) lifted the cross-border LNG supply chains to a transnational cluster. It has been further enhancing LNG use in ports and inland waterways. The transnational specialization continues with the seed funding project Liquid Energy (~2 M€) of Interreg South Baltic 2014-2020. The project focuses on liquefied (bio-)gas, using pilot investments in four application fields: (1) conversion of a small boat from diesel into LNG-powered engine, (2) design and construction of a (bio-)LNG solution for a decentralised energy supply system for buildings based on a combined heat and power plant, (3) design and construction of a filling station for an LNG powered locomotive and (4) design and construction of a mobile (bio-)LNG filling station on a micro-scale, i.e. about 5 m^3 of LNG. These Interreg investments have endowed the Baltic Sea Region with supply chains and knowhow so as to become one of the world leaders in LNG technologies, products and services.

Analogous to the BSR S3 Ecosystem platform, thematic pole 1 – **Innovative Ecosystem for SMEs**[15] financed by Interreg Danube Transitional Programme links innovation projects in a macro-regional setting. The **Danube Funding Coordination Network (DFCN)**[16] is embedded in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR). It is a result of the Working Group on the coordination of funding mechanisms in the Danube

[10] http://www.pa-innovation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BSR-S3-Ecosystem-One-Pager.pdf

[11] http://eu.baltic.net/Project_Database.5308.html?contentid=52&contentaction=single

[12] https://www.bsr-stars.eu/innovation-express

[13] https://mdc.center/martech-lng

[14] http://www.golng.eu

[15] http://www.interreg-danube.eu/relevant-documents/dtp-capitalisation-strategy/thematic-pole-1-innovative-ecosystem-for-smes

[16] https://knowledgesociety.danube-region.eu/working-groups/wg-3-newly-established-danube-funding-coordination-network-dfcn

Region, the feasibility study on Danube Region Research and Innovation Fund and the FP7 Dan-ube-INCO. NET project. The mission of the DFCN is to coordinate and synchronise national, bilateral and regional research and innovation investments in the Danube Region.

The Heating and Cooling Strategy from Commission indicated that emissions related to energy used for heating and cooling of buildings can be significantly reduced with technologies, which use renewable energy sources and have high efficiency. Taking this into consideration the SEADRION[17] project aimed to support the development of a **transnational seawater heat pump network in the Adriatic-Ionian area** with the installation of 3 renewable energy facilities in public buildings located in Greece as well as in western and southern Croatia. Seawater heat pumps tested in Croatia and Greece as well as six pre-feasibility studies in Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece and Albania create a good potential for future investments.

Action Group 1 (Research and innovation) in the EUSALP implemented a **common R&I platform for the Alpine region (EUSALP)**[18] that provides R&I governance information and data[19]. The Action Group has analysed the main patterns and characteristics in RIS3 priorities[20] in the EUSALP area (excluded non-EU Countries) and identified common strategic areas on which to promote the development of the EUSALP R&I ecosystem: bio economy, blue economy and energy, sustainability and logistics as well as manufacturing. This all gives an orientation for cross-regional collaboration and synchronized calls for R&I projects addressing the major EUSALP challenges but also guides Interreg programmes in selecting thematic priorities.

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[17] https://seadrion.adrioninterreg.eu

[18] https://www.alpine-region.eu/p/dashboard

[19] https://www.alpine-region.eu/p/view-know-plan/3d-map

[20] http://bit.do/RImapping

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