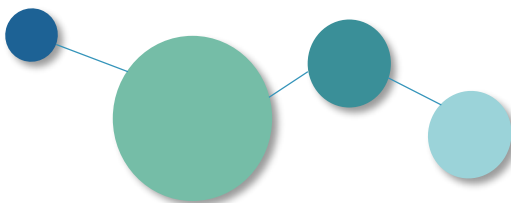


# CITIZEN'S SUMMARY

INTERREG PROGRAMME  
SLOVENIA-AUSTRIA 2021-2027



# **INTERREG PROGRAMME**

## **SLOVENIA-AUSTRIA 2021-2027**

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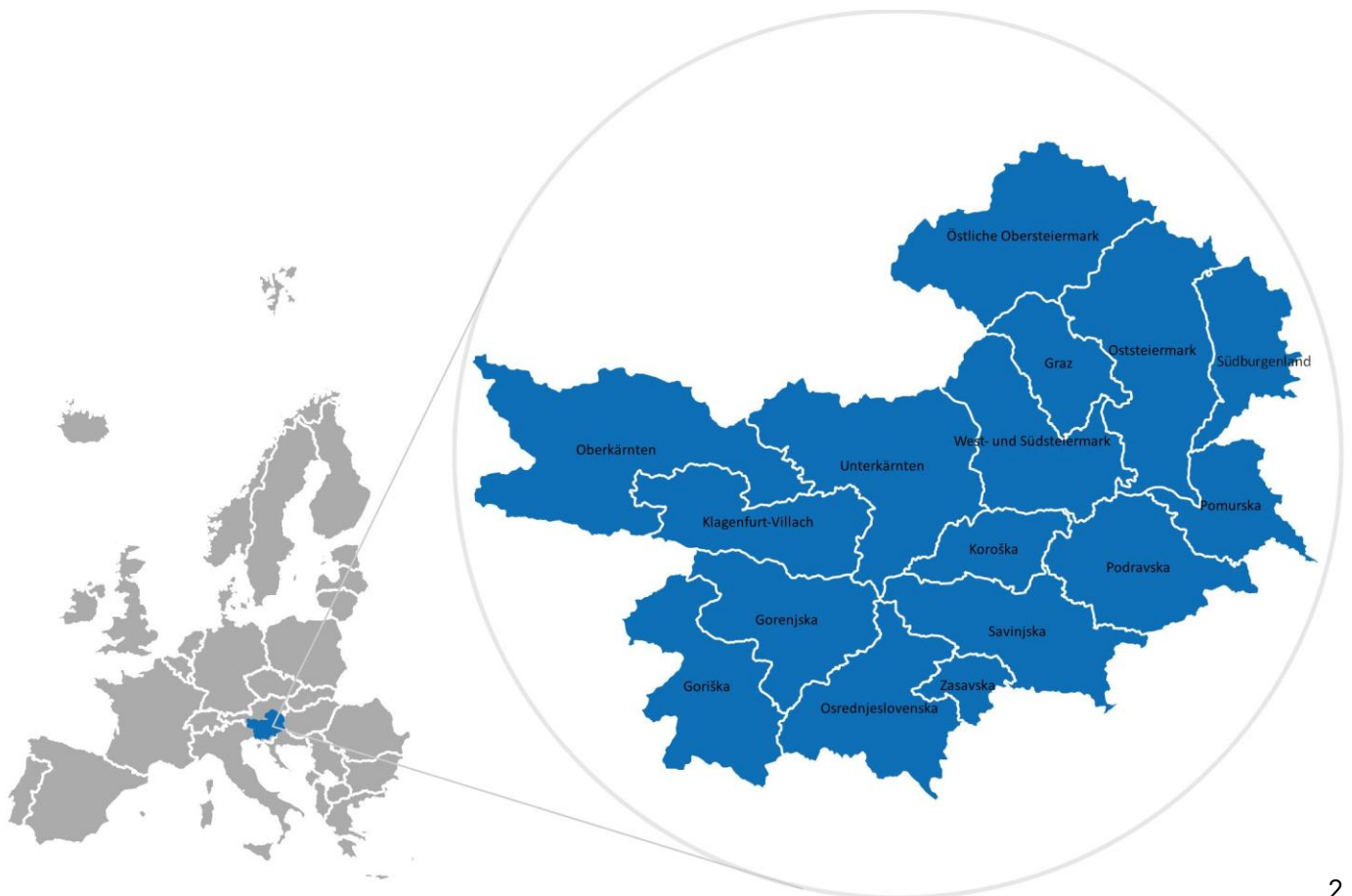
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## PROGRAMME AREA

The SI-AT programme area of the Slovenia-Austria border region covers 8 Slovenian NUTS 3 regions (Gorenjska, Koroška, Savinjska, Podravska, Pomurska, Osrednjeslovenska, Goriška and Zasavska) and 8 Austrian NUTS 3 regions (Oststeiermark, West- und Südsteiermark, Graz, Östliche Obersteiermark, Unterkärnten, Klagenfurt-Villach, Oberkärnten and Südburgenland). This territory covers an area of 35,156 km<sup>2</sup> (SI: 14,130 km<sup>2</sup>, AT: 21,026 km<sup>2</sup>) and a population of 3.4 million inhabitants (SI: 1,69 million., AT: 1,72 million.). 10 of these regions (5 regions on each side) are directly bordering regions, the other regions are included due to their functional linkages and importance for the cross-border region. In the region there are 5 important urban agglomerations: Ljubljana, Maribor, Graz, Klagenfurt and Villach.

The border between Slovenia and Austria stretches over 310 km and separates the countries from east to west. The western part of the border crosses sparsely inhabited high mountainous Alpine territory that further towards the east changes into more hilly landscapes, following the river Mura/Mur for about 30 km and ending at the tripoint marker of the Austrian, Hungarian and Slovenian borders.



# PROGRAMME VISION AND MISSION

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The programme area between Slovenia and Austria has identified several potentials, needs and challenges expressed by the actors in the programme area that clearly show that the territory is ahead of important transitions that can be jointly addressed. The programme is focusing on a limited number of thematic areas and will pool resources to drive the change and take opportunity for increased level of cooperation capacity, new development and common solutions to challenges identified.

The overall aims of the programme are to reduce territorial disparities in the cross-border region, to drive change and take opportunity of new development trends by pooling resources across national borders in order to be better prepared for the future and to alleviate border obstacles to better cooperate across national borders in specific areas.

“

IMPROVING COORDINATION  
AND COOPERATION IN THE  
SI-AT BORDER AREA TO  
REDUCE BORDER  
OBSTACLES AND UNLEASH  
THE POTENTIALS FOR A  
RESILIENT AND  
COMPETITIVE REGION.”

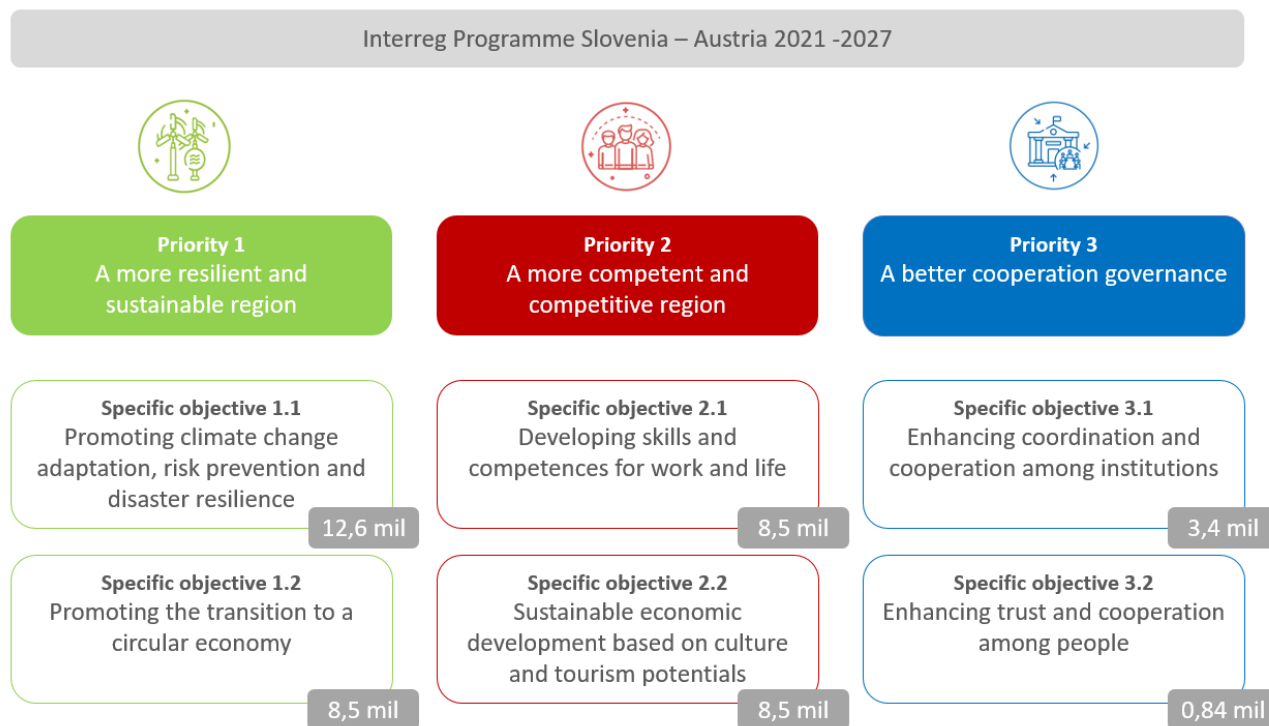


*Together we are  
safeguarding and  
developing our common  
region for the future.*

# PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

In the preparation phase of the Interreg Programme (IP) Slovenia-Austria 2021-2027 a territorial and socio-economic analysis has been carried out to create a solid basis of information on the thematic fields where cross-border cooperation may contribute most to overcome border obstacles and regional disparities. The analysis identified the main joint challenges, needs and potentials of the area, as well as strategically relevant fields of actions for cross-border cooperation with the potential to overcome border obstacles and territorial disparities, taking into account economic, social, environmental and other relevant aspects. In addition to the territorial and socio-economic analysis, the main results of the evaluation of the 2014-2020 programme, directions of development provided by the relevant strategies and stakeholders (interviews and online survey) have been considered in the discussions of the Programming Task Force when preparing the strategic thematic orientations.

The following intervention logic has been defined:



## PROGRAMME PRIORITIES

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A more resilient  
and sustainable  
region



A more  
competent and  
competitive  
region

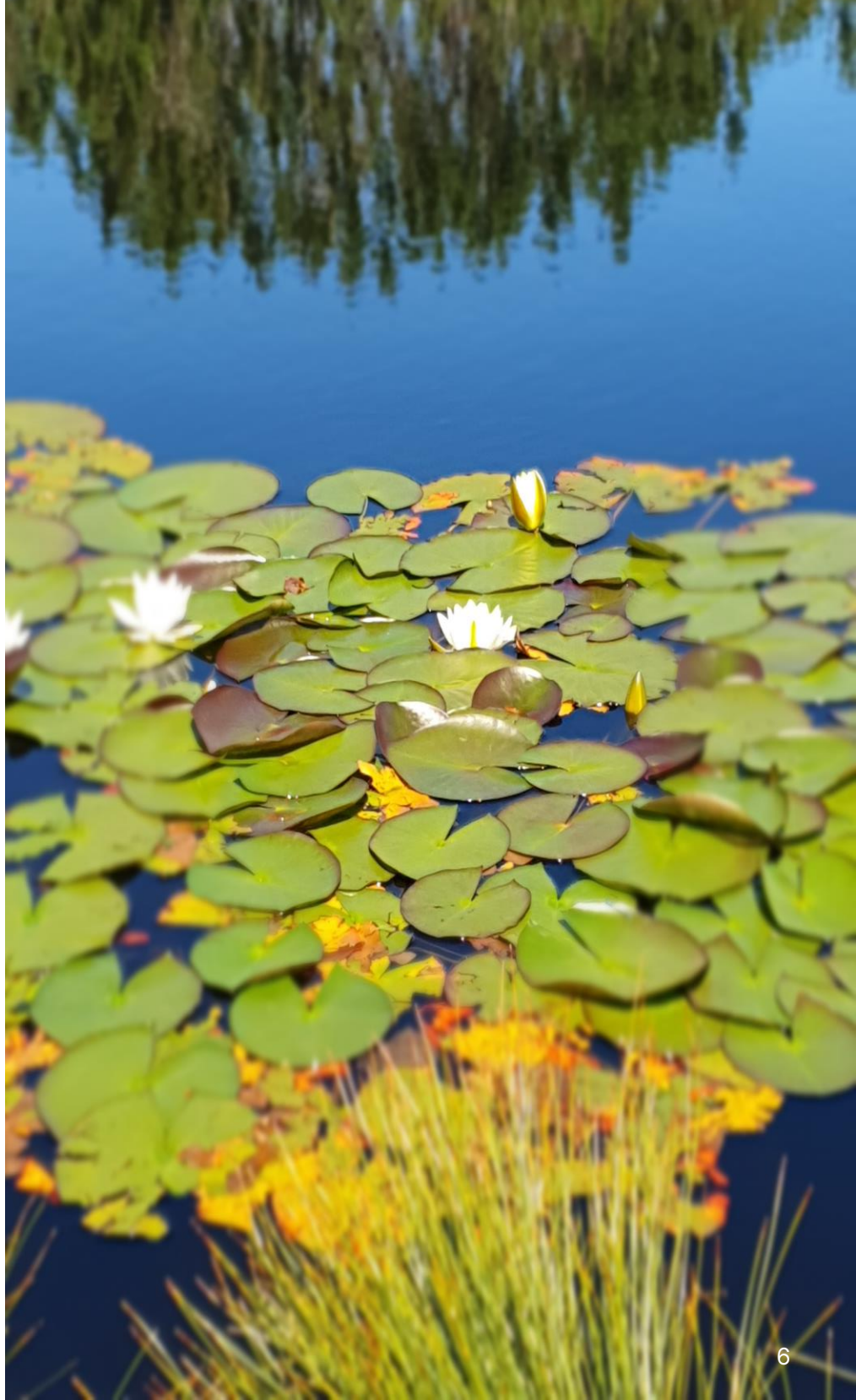


A better  
cooperation  
governance



# A more resilient and sustainable region

## Priority 1



# Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience



***The aim of the specific objective is to improve resilience of ecosystems, businesses and communities to the effects of climate change and enhance cross-border risk prevention and response mechanisms.***



# Types of action, and their expected contribution to the specific objective

## Types of activities (indicative):

Development and implementation of strategies, action plans and pilot actions

Know-how exchange and capacity building

Strengthening of research and innovation capacities

Awareness raising

Digital solutions

Actions should originate from the challenges of the area and strengthen the resilience of the environment (nature as well as socio-economic factors) to the effects of climate change.



## Thematic fields to be addressed:

### **Climate change: climate protection, resilience, adaptation and mitigation measures**

Joint development, implementation and scaling up of solutions that improve capacities of relevant stakeholders and resilience of communities and businesses to climate change.

### **Management of water bodies**

To ensure long-term sustainable cross-border water management for preservation of freshwater-dependent ecosystems and management of flood risks.

### **Biodiversity and nature protection**

Protect biodiversity and nature by developing, implementing and enhancing joint nature-based solutions and management measures in order to restore, improve and preserve the ecosystem services of the natural environment with regard to climate change (including NATURA 2000 sites and other categories of conservation).

### **Disaster prevention, mitigation and response**

To develop and put into practice cross-border response and rescue protocols and mechanisms for disaster mitigation and response.

## Expected results

The actions of cross-border cooperation that are implemented will enhance the capacity and readiness of local, regional and national actors for coping with the challenges of climate change and improve the resilience of the cross-border region to the effects of climate change.



**PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED MUST BE A RESULT OF JOINT COOPERATION AND INTERACTION BETWEEN RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS, PROVIDE TANGIBLE AND APPLICABLE SOLUTIONS AND ENHANCE CAPACITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED.**

**Types of actions (non-exhaustive list):**

Coordinated joint research and innovation actions, development of strategies, models and pilot actions to reduce man made CO<sub>2</sub>-emissions and to improve adaptive capacities in the programme area to cope with the impacts of climate change;

Initiatives for joint monitoring actions of climate change effects related to landscape, nature, ecosystems and citizens in the border region;

Capacity development for climate change mitigation and adoption services (e.g. enhancing climate research, setting-up of preventive planning measures and risk management related to natural hazards brought on by climate change, joint development of innovative actions and tools, interoperable databases, disaster monitoring, warning- and response systems at different territorial levels);

Joint management of water bodies (e.g. shared drainage and groundwater basin management, coordinated flood prevention measures, monitoring of quality and quantity of surface and groundwater bodies, measures for improving the ecological and chemical status and quantity of water bodies) stimulating use of innovative approaches and digitalization;

Development of cross-border strategies, measures and implementation of pilot projects to prevent biodiversity and landscape diversity loss and enhancement of nature management, sustainable land use management, climate-friendly settlement development and soil protection, preservation of ecosystem services and cross-border ecological connectivity;

Innovative and digital solutions and practices addressing biodiversity loss, air pollution, water management, increased number of disaster risks, etc.;

Development and implementation of cross-border rescue protocols and mechanisms to do with natural hazards related to climate change (harmonized response protocols, coordination of responsible institutions related to risk governance, joint trainings of rescue teams, capacity building, etc.).





# Promoting the transition to a circular economy



*The aim of this specific objective is to stimulate the potentials of the cross-border region in implementing solutions related to the circular economy and resource efficiency.*



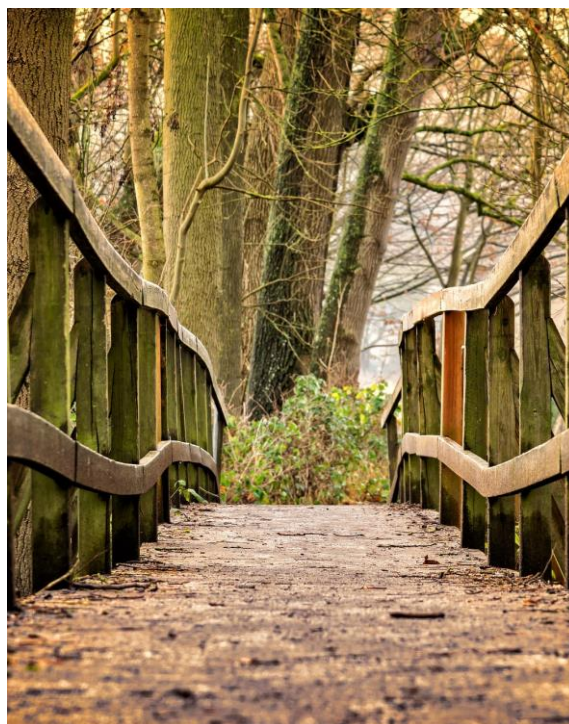
# Types of action, and their expected contribution to the specific objective

## Types of activities (indicative):

- Development and implementation of strategies and action plans and pilot actions
- Building/establishing cross-sectoral cross-border networks
- Innovative and applicable solutions on resource efficiency that would stimulate the transition to a circular economy and effective use of natural resources
- Strengthening of research and innovation capacities
- Identifying legal barriers and proposing their removal
- Digital solutions
- Awareness-raising and exchange of know-how

## Thematic fields to be addressed:

- Circular and climate-friendly business models
- Processes, technologies and services that enhance and support a circular economy and climate-friendly concepts
- Functional and sustainable materials
- Greening of the economy



## Expected results

Cross-border actions implemented will provide solutions and starting points that serve as best practice and have the potential to transfer successful cooperation between different stakeholders (R&D institutions, SME's, communities, etc.) and give impulses to the circular economy and resource efficiency.

“

THE PROJECTS SUPPORTED SHOULD AIM TO ESTABLISH NEW VALUE CHAINS ACCORDING TO THE ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES OF CLOSED MATERIAL FLOWS (DESIGN, PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING, DISTRIBUTION, USE, REUSE AND REPAIR, COLLECTION AND RECYCLING, RESPONSIBLE HANDLING OF WASTE REMAINS), AND OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO CIRCULAR ECONOMY.

**Types of actions** (non-exhaustive list):

- Joint development and implementation of innovative circular business models, processes and technologies;
- Actions to support (short) loops in circular economy and cross-border material flow models (reuse, repair, recycle, return);
- Actions related to the research and development of sustainable materials, resource efficiency (e.g. water reuse and energy efficiency), processes, technologies, services, business models and products that lead the way towards the transition to a low carbon economy;
- Quadruple/triple helix cooperations of institutions within the border regions on the concepts of circular economy;
- Applied research models and demonstrative projects on resource efficiency in order to streamline the roadmap to a resource-efficient border region;
- Initiatives that support actions that contribute to industrial symbiosis, waste reduction, improved waste management and promote resource efficiency (reform, reduce, recycle);
- Enhancing the capacities of SMEs for transition to a circular economy and the use of ICT tools;
- Initiatives to raise awareness among the general public regarding resource efficiency.





# A more competent and competitive region

## Priority 2



# Developing skills and competencies for work and life



***The aim of this specific objective*** is to support local and regional actors in providing competences needed for strengthening the competitiveness of the programme area and its transition to a green and digital economy. Furthermore, the specific objective aims to improve intercultural and language competences to advance cross-border cooperation.

# Types of action, and their expected contribution to the specific objective

## Types of activities (indicative):

Development and implementation of concepts, models and tools at all levels of education and training

Pilot actions

Development of curricula and training contents and tools

Education and training activities, knowledge exchange

Mentoring, internships

Teacher/student/worker mobility and exchanges

Establishing of cross-border networks and cross-border and cross-sectoral partnerships and exchanges

Awareness-raising and skills promotion

Activities should aim at introducing solutions into sustainable practices and therefore one-off events or single courses are not supported.

## Thematic fields to be addressed:

Actions should primarily facilitate the development and pilot testing of innovative system solutions for promoting skills and competences in the following fields:

Competitiveness of regional economies

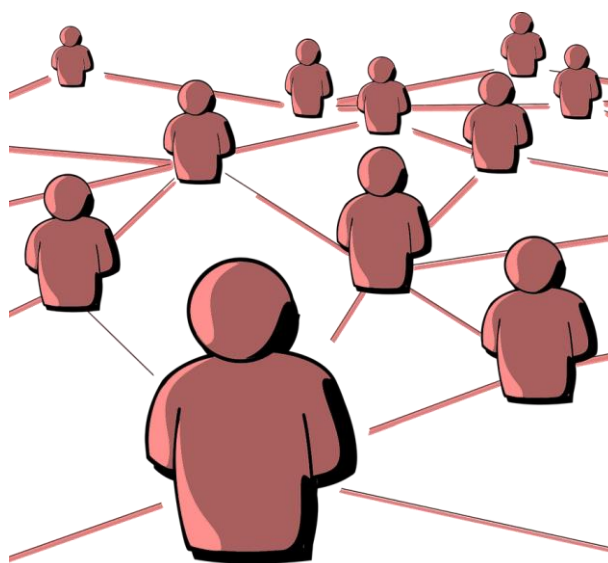
Greening of regional economies

Digitalisation for work and life

Entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation

Social innovation and social economy

Cross-cultural and language learning.



## Expected results

The capacity of local and regional actors to equip businesses and the general population with skills for green and digital transition will increase. SMEs will strengthen their capacity for innovation and intensify cooperation with research and innovation institutions. The capacity of business support organisation for supporting (cross-border) entrepreneurial initiatives will improve. Local and regional actors will be offered new models and solutions to build cross-cultural and language competences.





**THE PROJECTS SUPPORTED SHOULD SUPPORT COMPETENCES NEEDED FOR STRENGTHENING THE COMPETITIVENESS OF THE PROGRAMME AREA AND ITS TRANSITION TO A GREEN AND DIGITAL ECONOMY.**

**Types of actions (non-exhaustive list):**

- Identification of existing and future regional market skills and development and testing of related forecasting models and tools;
- Development and piloting of innovative approaches for the promotion of skills sets and vocations needed by local/regional economies, especially concerning vocational education and lifelong learning;
- Development and pilot implementation of new programmes and tools focusing on upskilling and reskilling of workers and unemployed; focusing on competitiveness and greening of the economy;
- Supporting the development of competences and skills promoting the revitalization of heritage (protection, preservation, management, presentation) and CCI, also by stimulating inter/multi-generational cooperation across the border;
- Development of competences for implementation of innovative digital solutions into products and services (Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, Internet of Things, interoperability of data, cyber security, etc.);
- Supporting competence development of SMEs for their digital transformation with the overall goal of greening of the economy and improving regional competitiveness;
- Supporting the development of digital skills of people facing exclusion due to the digital divide (e.g. improving digital skills to work with new technologies, skills development for the elderly and other groups to use and benefit from digitalisation);
- Improving competences of local and regional business support systems to foster entrepreneurship and start-up initiatives, especially in rural areas, in particular in the green economy;
- Cooperation of R&D, education and training organisations and businesses to develop and test support services, which enable access to and application of research findings into local/regional SMEs, especially regarding greening concepts, digitalisation, recovery and resilience building (e.g., through knowledge exchange platforms, networks or hubs);
- Actions supporting the development of competences of local and regional actors to promote social innovation and social economy/entrepreneurship;
- Development of innovative and system solutions to increase cross-cultural and language competences of different target groups.



# Sustainable economic development based on culture and tourism potentials



*The aim of this specific objective is to increase sustainability, competitiveness and resilience of tourism based on sustainable use of local, natural and cultural assets.*



# Types of action, and their expected contribution to the specific objective

## Types of activities (indicative):

Development and implementation of longer-term cooperation strategies, concepts, action plans

Development and implementation of new cooperation models and tools

Development and implementation of pilot actions

Development of curricula, training contents and tools

Education, training, mentoring, counselling, exchanges of students/staff/workers

Joint promotion activities

Awareness-raising activities

## Thematic fields to be addressed:

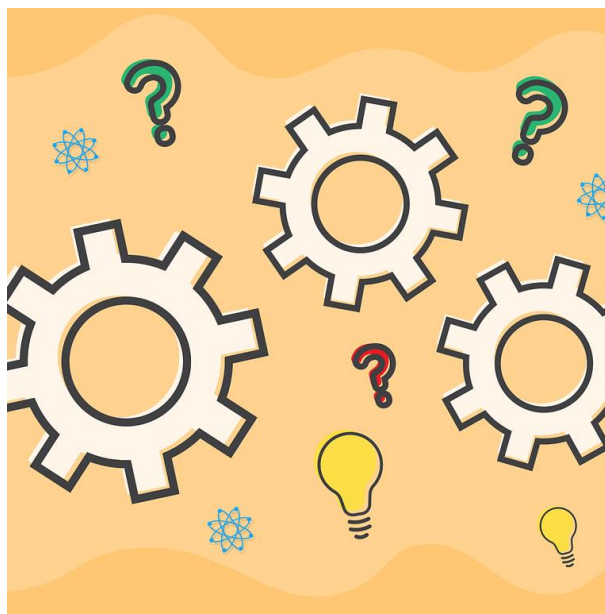
Development of innovative and sustainable cross-border tourism products and services

Competence for tourism and culture and creative industries (CCI)

Sustainable cross-border mobility solutions in tourism

Adaptation of tourism systems to climate change and greening of tourism products and services

Cooperation in product and service development in culture and creative sectors



## Expected results

Increased capacity of local and regional actors to develop competitive and more resilient products and services based on sustainable use of natural and cultural assets. Capacity of actors in culture and creative industries for creation of CB products and services will be increased. The access to cross-border cultural offers in the programme area will be increased, creating a positive impact on local communities and its inhabitants as well strengthened identity of the programme area.



## PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED SHOULD ACTIVATE POTENTIALS OF THE CULTURE, CULTURAL HERITAGE AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF THE IDENTITY OF THE PROGRAMME AREA.

### Types of actions (non-exhaustive list):

- Establishment of cross-border (CB) cooperation networks and pilot actions promoting local development striving for innovative, sustainable and inclusive use of culture, cultural heritage and tourist potentials also through CCI of the border regions;
- Elaboration and implementation of common CB concepts, strategies and action plans based on specific territories (e.g., Alpine, regional/rural, Karavanke-Karawanken area, Mura/Mur), including territories specifically vulnerable to climate risks, or along specific themes or products in the field of natural and cultural heritage and landscape diversity;
- Integration and capitalisation of existing tourist products into sustainable CB thematic routes, products or destinations (e.g., biking, hiking, cultural routes, food, nature values...) and their further advancement (quality, diversity, visibility, accessibility...);
- Capacity building for innovation in tourism and cultural heritage, focusing on sustainable development of new or upgrading of existing CB tourism products (e.g., improved contents, processes, technologies and digital services, quality management, interpretation, authenticity, eco innovation, environmentally friendly technologies in tourism), product diversification (e.g., for new target groups), piloting of new cooperation models among actors in tourism systems;
- Skills development for tourism and/or culture workers to support the recovery and resilience of the sectors and adapt to new trends and needs (upskilling, reskilling, digital skills development, skills regarding health requirements and safety of visitors, understanding market trends, communication, etc.) and building up mutual trust and common knowledge about trends, services and sustainable offers across the border;
- Qualification measures and professional training to improve skills and competences in CB tourism services and cultural offers (e.g., leisure travel and tourism knowledge, management and language skills, handicraft, culture-specific knowledge, etc.);
- Actions supporting CB management of tourist/visitors flows by defining appropriate preservation actions based on the identified carrying capacity of nature areas;
- Development and testing of innovative cross-border off-season tourism offers (e.g. specific environmentally friendly offers that contribute to extending the tourism seasons and promote lesser-known destinations);
- Provision of sustainable intermodal mobility solutions within and to nature or cultural protected areas, provision of last mile solutions;
- Building capacities of local and regional tourist product providers to adopt green concepts and standards in cross-border tourist products and services, considering the vulnerabilities and potentials of cultural heritage, nature and landscape protected areas;
- Activation of cultural potentials of the border area for new bilateral CB product development and implementation with the aim of opening up opportunities for job creation in CCI, e.g., support to start-ups in CCI, opening possibilities for CB exchanges and co-creation in culture, expanding cultural markets across the border and creating impact on local communities;
- Development and testing innovative solutions for presentation and promotion of cultural activities and cultural heritage across the border, primarily focusing on digital solutions and use of ICT tools.





# A better cooperation governance

## Priority 3



# Enhancing coordination and cooperation among institutions



***The aim of these cooperation and coordination activities*** is to address and reduce border obstacles, to enhance and intensify the cooperation and coordination among administrations, economic and civil society institutions for developing joint and harmonized policies, frameworks and measures in areas of shared interest and interdependencies, to create favourable framework conditions for releasing economic potentials and reducing regional socio-economic disparities in the border area.

# Types of action, and their expected contribution to the specific objective

## Types of activities (indicative):

- Organisation of joint meetings, workshops and events
  - Exchange of experience (to share solutions and increase their impact)
  - Transfer of good practices
  - Trainings, peer reviews and staff exchanges (to enhance institutional capacity)
  - Data collection and studies (e.g. to better understand border obstacles and processes)
  - Identification of legal barriers and proposals for eliminating them
  - Development and implementation of strategies and action plans in the thematic areas addressed
  - Drawing up cooperation agreements, administrative and legal provisions
  - Elaboration of publications and campaigns
- All activities should have the aim of producing tangible and sustainable results that have real relevance for the thematic area addressed.

## Thematic fields to be addressed:

- a) Establishing cross-border (CB) coordination structures and supporting networking and exchange among local and regional administrations and institutions for addressing common challenges and finding harmonized approaches in cross-border relevant thematic areas
- b) Harmonizing administrative, organisational and legal frameworks for overcoming obstacles resulting from the existence of state borders and different legal and regulatory systems in all sectors of socio-economic development
- c) Cross-border economic development, applied R&D and business support initiatives



## Expected results

This priority seeks to create joint formal structures, procedures and strategies for addressing obstacles, creating favourable framework conditions and implementing solutions for a common socio-economic space across the border.





THE INTERVENTIONS OF THIS SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE SHOULD SEEK TO SUPPORT AND DEVELOP STRATEGIC AND MORE FORMALISED CROSS-BORDER STRUCTURES, COOPERATION, COORDINATION AND POLICIES OF COMPETENT STAKEHOLDERS IN THE PROGRAMME AREA.

**Types of actions** (non-exhaustive list):

a) Labour market (e.g. exchange between labour market (LM) institutions, businesses and educational institutions on LM situation, promotion of vocations for which shortages exist on both sides ...);

Health and social services (collaboration of health system institutions, local authorities and public health institutes; capacity building of relevant actors to address common challenge, such as health promotion and capacity building, exploring potentials for cross-border provision of social and health services; ...);

Sustainable mobility (e.g. development of joint cross border mobility concepts, research on market demand on CB mobility services, establishing of CB structures to promote and develop CB public transport solutions, development of CB / regional mobility plans ...);

Spatial planning (e.g. development of CB concepts and strategies for potential functional or geographical areas sharing common needs, challenges and potentials; preparation of and digitalisation for overcoming spatial separation and enhancement of the cooperation of different sectors (nature protection, cultural heritage protection, tourism, water management, forestry, agriculture, etc.);

Administration (e.g. creating or further development of cooperative administrative and/or coordinating structures of local administration units, ...);

b) Labour market (e.g. labour mobility issues, mutual recognition of competences ...);

Health and social services (e.g. exploring potentials for cross-border provision of social and health services, ...);

Mobility (e.g. coordination and harmonization of public transport services, enhancement / introduction of cross-border public transport on short distances (daily mobility of workers, students and tourists, sustainable 'last mile' solutions), promotion of CB mobility and harmonization of timetables and tickets, elaboration of coordinated pricing policies, ...);

c) Creation and further development of (existing) business networks, platforms and value chains within the regions and across the border (both for existing SMEs and start-ups); collaboration among business support agencies and institutions for providing support to start-ups (especially in less dynamic, rural areas) and to SMEs in internationalisation, cross-border business activities (entering / extending business activities to the Slovenian or Austrian market) and innovation. The activities should seek to enhance the ecosystem for CB cooperation in the different thematic fields.



# Enhancing trust and cooperation among people



***The aim of these cooperation activities is to create awareness about corresponding institutions and initiatives in the border area and to enhance and intensify the cooperation and linkages among people and civil society institutions for developing trust and the basis for more frequent joint actions across the border.***

# Types of action, and their expected contribution to the specific objective

## Types of activities (indicative):

- Organisation of joint meetings, workshops and events, etc.
- Exchange of information, know-how and staff
- Creation of common structures and interventions in the thematic fields addressed.

## Actions addressing the following fields will be supported:

People-to-people projects for information exchange, network development, joint initiatives, innovative pilot activities, awareness-raising, trust building, etc. in areas such as education, cultural heritage, culture, social initiatives, social economy, local development, nature and environment protection.

Support for infrastructure investments is not envisaged under this specific objective.



## Expected results

This specific objective seeks to create multi-layered linkages and joint actions of people and civil society institutions across the border.

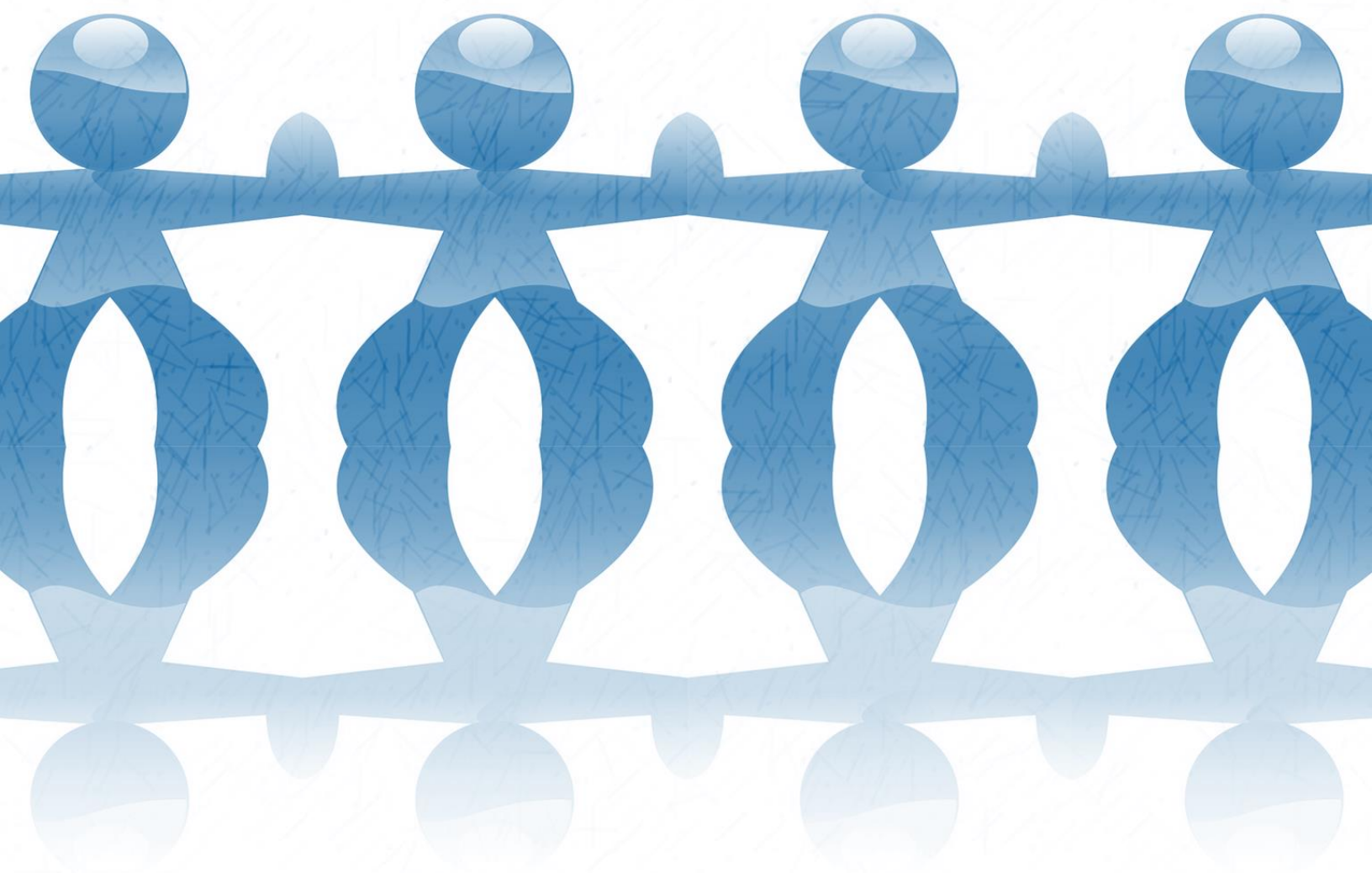
## Notes

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