

# Simplifying administrative complexities:

Unlocking participation in European cooperation projects.



## Case Study



**REGIONE  
PUGLIA**

Managing Authority

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# BOOSTING SIMPLIFICATION IN INTERREG

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## The Complexity of Interreg projects

Interreg projects have always been known for their intricate managerial and administrative nature, sparking countless discussions. With a diverse range of partners involved, from local municipalities to national ministries, associations, public entities, universities, and social partners, these projects have often been criticised for being inward-looking, primarily attracting Interreg specialists while inadvertently neglecting newcomers.

## The Participation Gap: Newcomers Left Behind

A similar scenario unfolded in the Interreg IPA CBC Italy-Albania-Montenegro 2014-2020 programme when its first call for proposals encountered a significant participation gap. While experienced Interreg organizations showed great interest, associations, NGOs,



and small municipalities, which thrive within the programme area, were noticeably absent.

## Navigating Administrative Hurdles in Interreg

This begs the question: why? The answer lies in the complex administrative procedures that these projects entail. The convoluted bureaucratic processes often discourage associations, which mainly consist of volunteers and members with limited financial and administrative expertise.

Moreover, the financial burdens associated with project management further discourage potential partners from participating.

## **Simplifying the Path: The Innovation of Small-Scale Projects**

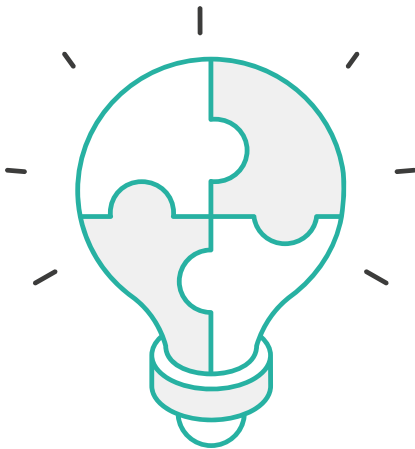
Recognizing the dire need for administrative simplification, the programme authorities took proactive measures to address this issue. Taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the Regulations, they devised a solution: Small-Scale projects!

This bold approach aims to alleviate financial burdens and instils confidence in potential partners.

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## **THE SOLUTION: SMALL-SCALE PROJECTS!**

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These projects focus on smaller activities with predetermined simplified costs and easily verifiable outcomes, benefiting both the authorities and the beneficiaries.

## **Simplified Costs Methodology: Streamlining Finances**

Consequently, the programme introduced a series of simplified costs based on a statistically defined methodology that aligns with the guidelines provided by the EGESIF.

These simplified cost structures, based on Lump Sum calculation methodologies, are specifically applied to small-scale projects with lower budgets and fewer partners. However, despite their smaller scale, these projects have successfully fostered cross-border cooperation, which is crucial for the success of Interreg initiatives.

## **Small-Scale Success: Attracting New Partners to Interreg**

The results have been promising. The participation rate in the 2014-20 Small-Scale projects during the 2014-2020 targeted call has been commendable, with 34 projects submitted and 17 approved.

More significantly, these approved projects have attracted an impressive 81.3% of beneficiaries who were not previously involved in Interreg programming.

This success exemplifies the ability of small-scale calls to engage new partners and foster cooperation in the region.

## **Beyond Participation: Tangible Impact of Small-Scale Projects**

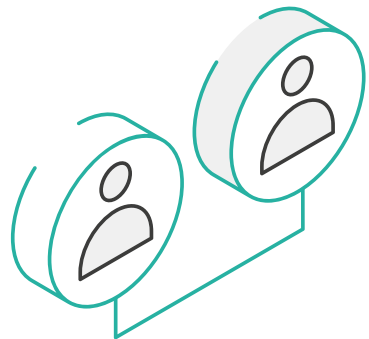
Beyond the positive response during the participation phase, the implementation of these projects has yielded tangible benefits for the territories involved. The projects have led to a deeper understanding of the specific challenges faced in the area, heightened awareness among local actors, and enhanced social partners' involvement.

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## **DELIVERING TANGIBLE BENEFITS**

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Beneficiaries have expressed their satisfaction with the streamlined implementation, verification, and reimbursement processes, which have minimized delays and bureaucracy.



## **Diverse Interventions: The Versatility of the 2021-2027 Programme**

This approach, coupled with a streamlined procedure, has amplified the positive outcomes even further. Initially introduced with four

Simplified Cost Options during the 2014-2020 period, the 2021-2027 South Adriatic programme has now expanded to a total of nine, offering a broader range of intervention options.

This expansion includes not only preparation and closure costs, workshops, seminars, and incoming missions, but also training programmes, business support actions, strategic planning, and even cost coverage for monitoring activities. The introduction of Lump Sum, Standard Scale of Unit Cost, and Flat Rate options has brought flexibility and eased financial planning for both standard and strategic projects, effectively complementing the ongoing efforts towards administrative simplification.

may have smaller budgets but are more complex due to the involvement of multiple partners. If real cost reporting is used, partners often need to allocate a significant portion of their budget to manage the project's financial aspects, ensuring that all costs are well-documented.

On the contrary, with simplified cost structures, the focus of management verification shifts from documentation to tangible products and outputs.

This shift allows both programme and project managers to invest more in the quality of results rather than being burdened with checking invoices and procedures.

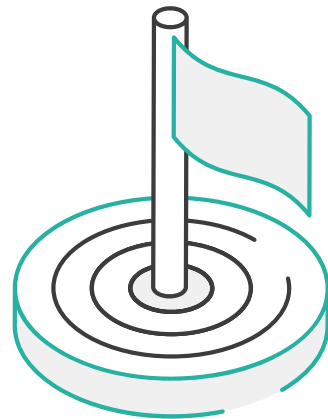
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## **FOCUSING ON CONCRETE RESULTS**

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### **Simplified Costs: Shifting Focus from Paperwork to Results**

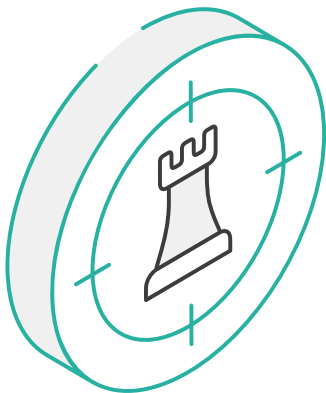
Compared to other programmes, Interreg projects



## The first South Adriatic Call: Pioneering Participation

The recent success of the Small Scale Projects call of the 2021-27 South Adriatic programme, stands as a testament to the effectiveness of these simplified cost structures. The call, which closed in April 2023, attracted an impressive 128 project submissions and witnessed the active participation of approximately 500 beneficiaries.

Associations, NGOs, and small municipalities accounted for a remarkable 50% of the total participation, showcasing the programme's ability to engage a wider range of contributors and foster diversity.



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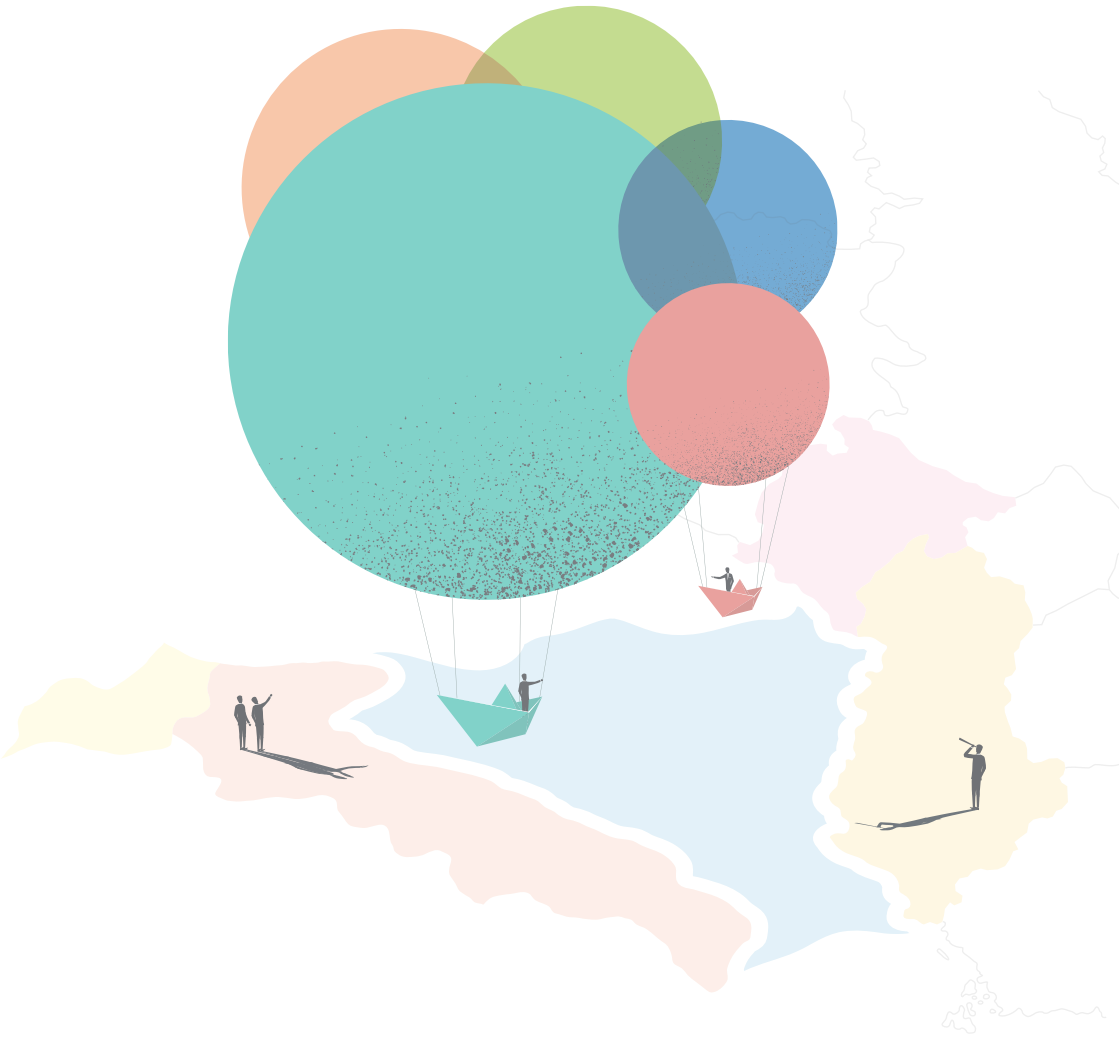
## A PATH TO SIMPLICITY AND INCLUSION

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### Inclusive Transformation: The South Adriatic Model

In conclusion, the Interreg projects in the South Adriatic area have undergone a transformative journey aimed at simplifying their administrative processes and welcoming new contributors. With the continued implementation of streamlined procedures and simplified costs, the South Adriatic programme is poised to achieve even greater success in the future, leaving a lasting impact on the region and its communities.

For once, it seems that these areas of the European Union are paving the way to a simplified and bright future for all Interreg projects in the 2027+ period, or at the very least, providing an excellent case study for the Interreg community.



**Interreg**



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