

INTERREG IPA BULGARIA-TÜRKIYE

POST-2027 SURVEY Report

December 2024

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| SUMMARY | 3 |
| 1. Consultation of stakeholders | 4 |
| <i>1.1 Main stakeholders consulted</i> | <i>4</i> |
| <i>1.2 Methods of consultation</i> | <i>4</i> |
| <i>1.3 Summary of the input on the key questions</i> | <i>5</i> |
| 2 Consultation of citizens | 11 |
| <i>2.1 Main citizens consulted</i> | <i>11</i> |
| <i>2.2 Methods of consultation</i> | <i>11</i> |
| <i>2.3 Summary of the input on the key questions</i> | <i>12</i> |
| 3. Recommendations for post-2027 | 14 |
| Annex 1 – Questionnaire for Stakeholders | 15 |
| Annex 2 – Questionnaire for Citizens | 21 |

SUMMARY

This report responds to DG Regio’s call for Interreg programs to engage the wider public on post-2027 priorities and gather new perspectives on how to (re)structure Interreg more effectively to strengthen European territorial cooperation. It follows the approach and template developed by DG Regio, with minor contextual and functional adaptations. These adjustments were made primarily to the survey question format; while initially designed as open-ended, we opted for closed-ended and multiple-choice questions to enhance responsiveness and streamline alignment within the EU policy framework.

Since 2007 Interreg projects between cross-border Bulgarian and Turkish communities have yielded a diverse range of experiences and outcomes, addressing unmet territorial needs while also responding to emerging challenges. This dynamic evolution in people’s perceptions and needs is central to this public consultation. Its primary objective is to encourage an open debate on the developments and changes that Bulgarian and Turkish cross-border institutions envision for their shared cooperation area. More specifically, the consultations are expected to contribute to opinions and ideas, aiding the decision-making process and validating Interreg-supported priorities. The ultimate objective is to improve programme visibility, acceptance, and recognition, leading to improved project quality and more impactful results.

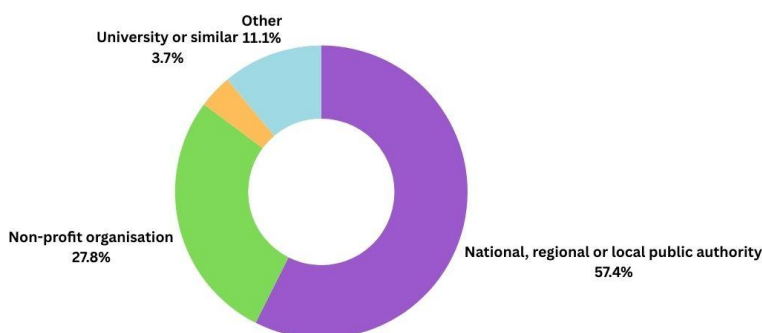
The stakeholder and citizen consultations indicate a strong interest in and high expectations for the future of Interreg. A total of 100 surveys were collected between April and September 2024, with 54 stakeholder and 46 citizen surveys completed online. Tourism emerged as a top priority for cooperation, followed by environmental protection, climate resilience, as well as business cooperation with a focus on cleantech and greentech solutions. Respondents identified limited citizen engagement in policy-making, weak institutional cooperation, and inadequate shared public services as key areas needing improvement. Additionally, challenges like differing sectoral legislations, limited understanding of cross-border impact, insufficient funding, and excessive controls were highlighted as main barriers to more active engagement in the Interreg programme Bulgaria-Türkiye. Recommended actions to enhance Interreg cooperation and foster stronger cross-border relationships include increasing the frequency of experience-sharing across various topics, organizing cross-border networking events, and creating joint working groups.

1. Consultation of stakeholders

1.1 Main stakeholders consulted

The online stakeholder survey collected 54 responses. The first question, a single-choice question, asked respondents to identify their type of organization.

Type of respondents



As expected, the majority of respondents were public authorities and NGOs, as these groups have historically been the primary stakeholders in the programme. The fields of work indicated by the NGOs can be summarized into key areas such as nature, youth, climate, conservation, advocacy, healthcare, education, culture, sport, lifelong learning.

1

1.2 Methods of consultation

Our survey methodology was developed based on the Toolkit provided by DG Regio. The stakeholders and citizens' survey were conducted online via the EUSurvey platform from April to September 2024. The templates of the two surveys are attached to this report.

The survey questions largely followed the content suggested in the Toolkit, though minor revisions to the wording were made to improve clarity and relevance to the cross-border cooperation context. Additionally, we adjusted the survey methodology by favoring closed-ended questions over open-ended ones to enhance responsiveness and streamline alignment with the EU policy framework. It's important to note that this approach does not aim for statistical representativeness of responses. All questions included an 'Other' option to allow respondents to propose additional topics. Given the high volume of similar surveys conducted during this period, our approach prioritized the ease of response to maximize the response rate. As a result, we received 54 stakeholders' and 46 citizens' surveys, 100 in total. We consider this response rate very satisfactory given the size of the programme area.

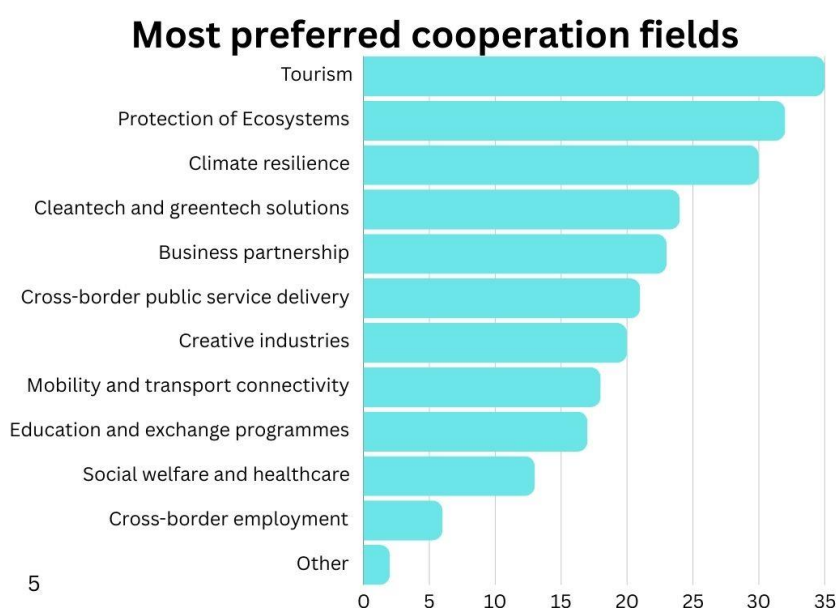
1.3 Summary of the input on the key questions

The stakeholder survey consisted of 16 questions, most of which were close-ended, with either single or multiple-choice options. Only one question, "*What would be the ideal Interreg project for your area that you would like to be part of?*" was open-ended. Later in this report, we present some of the stakeholders' suggestions for ideal Interreg projects.

Overall, the survey explored current and future dimensions of territorial cooperation from a stakeholder perspective. It covered topics such as fields with the highest potential for cross-border cooperation, strengths and weaknesses of current cooperation initiatives under the programme, and ways Interreg can better support partnerships in the cross-border area.

A significant proportion of respondents (28 out of 54) both **live and work in the programme area**, and an even larger number (34 out of 54) **have prior experience with the programme**. This level of programme representativeness provides sufficient evidence of the credibility and relevance of the collected responses.

Living near a border is viewed as an opportunity rather than a disadvantage by 80% of respondents. Only a small percentage (4%) perceives the cross-border context as a disadvantage for economic development. Additionally, two other response options were provided: "It doesn't make any difference," selected by 9% of respondents, and "I don't know," chosen by 6%. The positive outcome of this question highlights cross-border areas as specific territories, reinforcing the need for a stronger focus on territoriality in EU-supported cooperation activities.

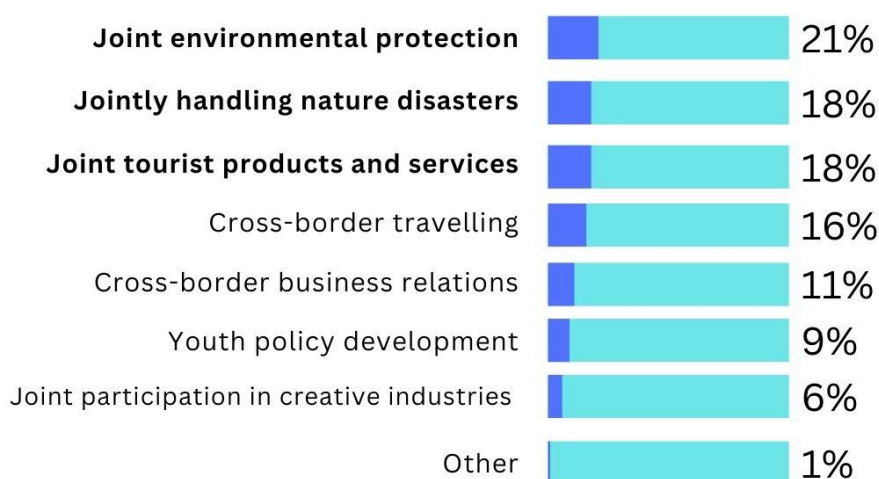


The views of surveyed stakeholders on various aspects of Interreg were gathered primarily through multiple-choice questions. This approach supports strategic planning by allowing respondents to select multiple answers, enabling the prioritization of policy domains and clusters of actions for future consideration. Thus, the results of the question on the **biggest**

potential for territorial cooperation in the Bulgarian-Turkish cross-border area can guide future Interreg programme priorities with a focus on economic vitality combined with environmental care while also addressing stakeholders’ interest in tourism and green industrialization.

Responses to the question “**What currently works well in the field of cooperation in our cross-border area and should be reinforced**” validate the stakeholders’ preferences for cooperation highlighted above. Respondents highlighted environmental protection, disaster management, joint tourism development, and improved travel opportunities as key areas of successful cross-border cooperation that should be reinforced, evident from the graph below.

Current Areas of Cooperation with Potential for Improvement



6

In response to the question “**What currently does not work well in this cooperation and should be improved**”, respondents identified challenges that can be grouped into two main categories. The first group includes obstacles from a policy perspective, such as a *Low citizen engagement in decisions* (27 responses), *weak cross-border institutional cooperation* (24 responses). The second group relates to practical aspects of territorial cooperation, including *differing sectoral legislations* (27 responses), *unsatisfactory understanding of the cross-border effect and impact* (22 responses) and *resource-intensive application* (22 responses). Notably, nearly half of the respondents highlighted the lack of new project ideas as a significant obstacle to cross-border cooperation emphasizing the need for greater awareness of projects and activities that take place in other similar Interreg programmes.

The next question was slightly revised from “Are there things you would like to do under Interreg but cannot? Why?” to “Are there targets/objectives that Interreg could aim at, but currently it does not?”. This adjustment was made to better align with the survey's objectives by focusing on stakeholder input at the programme level, enabling us to gather ideas for the post-2027 period from various perspectives. Most respondents selected answers that highlight unmet needs for enhancing economic cooperation. These include prioritizing *new tech solutions across various sectors* (25 responses), *promoting joint investments to improve the mobility of people, goods, and services* (23 responses), *scaling up projects and capitalizing on existing Interreg solutions: more active exchange with other Interreg programmes* (21 responses) and *entrepreneurship and SMEs cooperation* (20 responses). These insights suggest a need for future programme priorities to focus on fostering innovation, supporting SMEs, and improving infrastructure for seamless economic interaction.

While the previous question focused on strategic programme aspects, the subsequent question, “What prevents you from doing what you would like to do under our Interreg programme?”

shifted attention to practical challenges at the project level. The top three responses highlighted obstacles across three distinct domains: indicated by administrative ('too complex rules', indicated by 28 response(s),

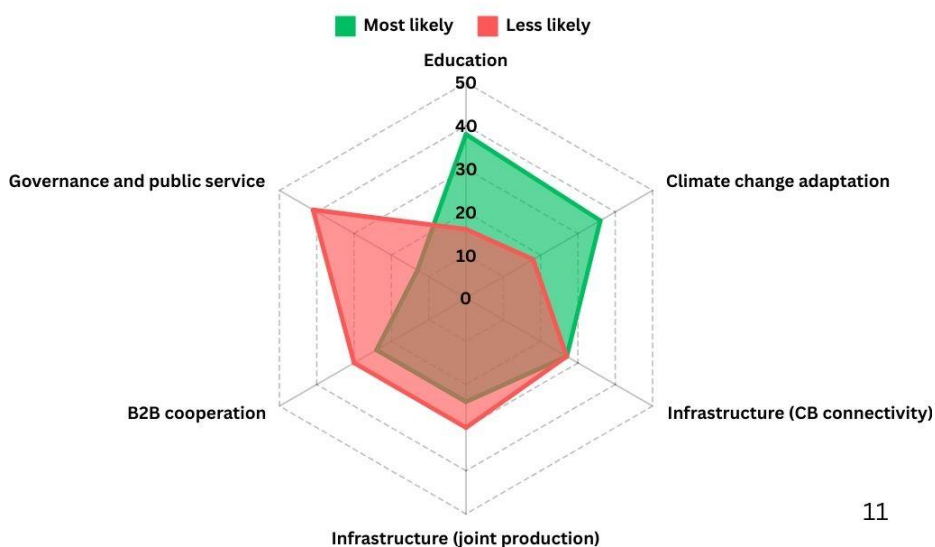
What prevents you from acting under Interreg?



financial ('Not enough budget, incl. high competitiveness for limited amount of funds', indicated by 27 responses), and strategic ('difficulties in finding proper partners', indicated by 24 responses). In the post-2027 period, Interreg could focus on further simplifying implementation frameworks and exploring new approaches to fostering partnerships across different programmes and sectors.

The question “**In which areas do you think positive transformations may occur in the Bulgaria-Türkiye cross-border region as a result of cooperation under Interreg?**” prioritizes

Areas of Future Transformation due to Interreg



11

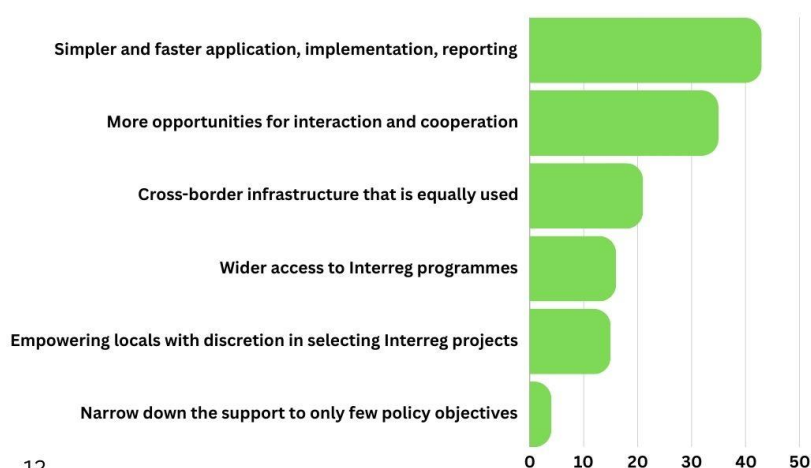
the answers of stakeholders starting with the ‘most likely to occur’ and ending with ‘less likely to occur’. According to the provided prioritization, **skills development and climate change adaptation, incl. development and employment of cleantech and**

greentech solutions are identified as key drivers for positive transformations in the Bulgaria-Türkiye cross-border region. Conversely, public service delivery and B2B cooperation are viewed as less likely to achieve immediate or transformative changes. This is largely due to differences in legal and administrative systems when it comes to public services. The transformative potential of B2B cooperation is likely underappreciated by stakeholders, given its absence from the traditional policy focus of the CBC programme in this region.

The answers to the next question, ‘**What is the most important new feature or features that you would like to see in future Interreg programs?**’

revealed that stakeholders are particularly interested in enhancing their participation. They expressed a desire for greater simplification, and increased opportunities for interaction and cooperation. This feedback indicates a strong inclination towards fostering a

Future INTERREG Features



12

more inclusive and engaging environment in future initiatives, which could potentially extend across different programmes. Additionally, respondents expressed a clear demand for cross-border infrastructure that can be equally utilized by people and institutions from both sides of the border. This underscores the essential role of infrastructure in the cross-border region.

The potential of Interreg to support the development of tangible and long-lasting cross-border territorial assets is also highly acknowledged by the respondents. When asked the question, **'Do you believe that the Interreg programme is suitable for supporting infrastructure projects?'** 81% of stakeholders responded 'Yes.' As part of their responses, stakeholders were required to specify their infrastructural needs, which predominantly pertain to the tourism sector, environmental protection, disaster monitoring systems and decarbonisation. Special attention was also given to educational infrastructure, alongside a call for the reconsideration of existing educational programmes to better align them with the needs and aspirations of current younger generations. However, one particularly detailed response, submitted by the Turkish Association of Back to Nature (Doğaya Dönüş Derneği), merits special attention in this report. Their input highlights a comprehensive vision for infrastructure development that aligns with both cross-border cooperation objectives and the broader goals of sustainable development, with a focus on youth cooperation:

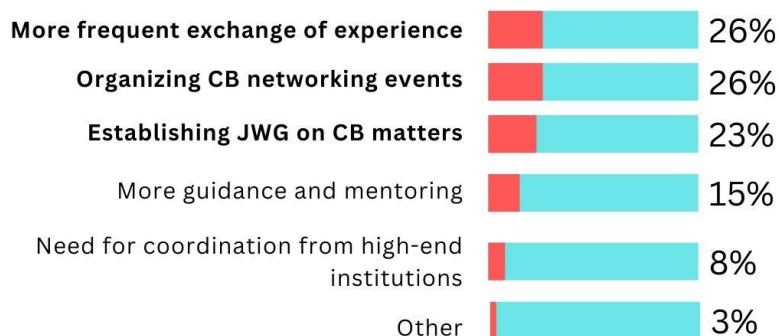
“Spaces where young people can come together for free to generate ideas, art, and science should be created. These spaces should be equipped with the necessary equipment. Cross-border networks should be established for communication between these spaces and young people. Young people should be directly supported with small grants. Public institutions should be required to collaborate with young people and civil society, and civil initiatives for applications. Infrastructure projects should not be the sole focus of project objectives; there must be a goal of developing joint policies. Infrastructure projects should be supported in a way that increases cross-border cooperation and communication. Network-building and partner-search meetings should be organized in the initial calls. Successful example projects from different regions should be presented. Environmental and climate change themes should be mandatory in infrastructure projects. Topics such as increasing green spaces, creative sustainable solutions, and climate resilience must be included. These should be mandatory in project rules to ensure inclusive and participatory projects. Mentorship and information meetings should be increased for project development processes. Infrastructure projects should be phased. An implementation project should be required for the second phase, and the preparation budgets for projects should be included in eligible expenses. Past infrastructure projects should be evaluated, and projects

designed according to the needs analysis of required themes should be incentivized with extra points. In addition, youth mobility should be ensured. Inclusivity should be achieved in every field by issuing calls in different areas with various options.”

Additionally, it was also underlined the needs for ‘*adaptation processes of public institutions to artificial intelligence*’, ‘*projects to be carried out mutually in the fields of transportation, tourism, education and environment, both sharing of experience and being able to act together will show its power*’, ‘*any Interreg programme is about enhancing cooperation between specific regions, which a common/shared infrastructure can deliver*’.

When asked the question, **‘What should be done to facilitate collaboration with your partners from the neighboring country?’** 75% stakeholders expressed a significant interest in enhancing networking and knowledge exchange. They emphasized the need for more frequent joint meetings to strengthen these partnerships. This feedback underscores the recognition of Interreg as a vital instrument for fostering cooperation, highlighting that there is a pressing need to expand and improve the opportunities for exchange and collaboration among stakeholders. It was also suggested that Interreg programmes should financially support preparatory visits, similar to the approach taken by the Erasmus+ programme.

What Should Be Done Next?



13

Last, but not least, stakeholders were given the opportunity to **suggest ideal Interreg project that they would like to be part of**. Here are some of the shared ideas:

- “*Strengthening the National Capacity of Climate Finance*”;
- “*I find it valuable to provide appropriate funding opportunities to civil society organizations working in the environmental field, supporting experience sharing, enabling small-scale infrastructure projects, and facilitating network building and policy-making projects. Therefore, I want to be part of projects that support civil participation, mandate partnerships with civil*

society organizations, and include youth and disadvantaged groups. More expert personnel support during the writing and implementation phases of projects could enable the development of higher-quality projects. I also believe that small-scale, high-quality projects would be more beneficial for the program. The duration of a call period is very long. Faster and more frequent calls, with different themes and flexible rules, should be designed to appeal to every organization.”

- “Solutions to youth unemployment”

- “Definitely projects on education. The topics of education and level of education does not matter. Any support to education by the programme will help to shape the future of the CBC region. Educational initiatives are essential for all priorities and objectives such as environment protection, business development, tourism or health. All could possibly be addressed through educational policy making and better training opportunities for all.”

- “Transboundary socio-ecological landscape development”

- “Visit to rural areas and exchange with local - local with local, not administrative staff with local people”

2 Consultation of citizens

The citizen consultation was conducted online between April and September 2024, with 46 respondents completing the survey.

2.1 Main citizens consulted

We did not collect data on citizens’ age or other characteristics, as we prioritized achieving a high response rate (by avoiding open-ended questions and such requesting personal data or characteristics) over profiling the respondents.

2.2 Methods of consultation

The methods used for citizens’ consultation mirrored those applied in the stakeholders’ consultation. However, a key difference lies in the question, **“What would be the cross-border cooperation project of your dreams?”** In the citizens’ survey, this question was closed-ended, as it was assumed that citizens might not be highly familiar with Interreg. The closed-ended format was designed to guide respondents by providing context and helping them consider Interreg in relevant terms. We believe the provided answer options comprehensively cover the policy scope of Interreg.

2.3 Summary of the input on the key questions

Similar to the stakeholders' consultation, the majority of respondents (72%) view **living next to a border** as an opportunity rather than a disadvantage. However, a notably large proportion of citizens (17%) holds the opposite view, while an additional 14% believe that living near a border makes no difference.

The answers to question “**In the place where you live, what are the main topics where cooperation with the neighboring country of Bulgaria/Türkiye is needed?**” reveal differences compared to the visions expressed by stakeholders. This divergence highlights the importance of incorporating both citizen insights and stakeholder perspectives to ensure a

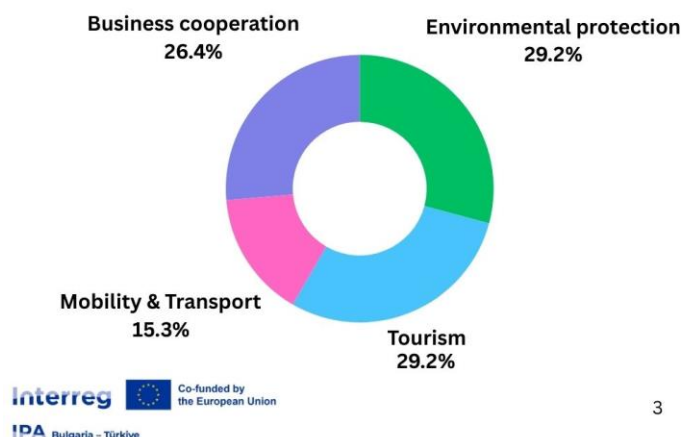
Main Cooperation Needs



comprehensive understanding of the actual territorial needs and development potential of the cross-border region.

The next question reveals a shared understanding between citizens and stakeholders regarding the challenges of territorial cooperation. Like the stakeholders, the majority of citizens identified “*Different sectoral legislations and various administrative burdens*” as the **biggest obstacle to cross-border cooperation with Bulgaria/Türkiye**. This was followed by *demographic decline* in second place and *uneven economic development* in third. In overall, however, the results indicate a more strategic perspective from citizens compared to the stakeholders, who tended to focus on practical challenges directly related to programme participation.

Recognized Areas of INTERREG Projects



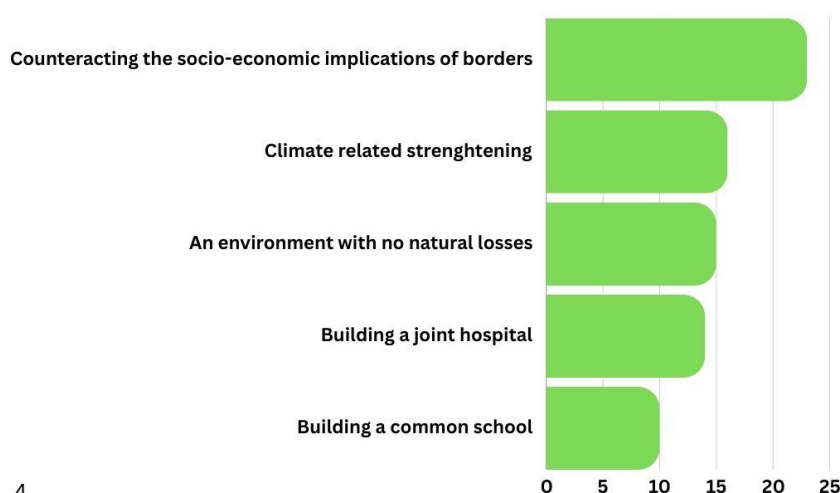
The responses to the question "Do you know an Interreg project that you consider useful for the cross-border area between Bulgaria and Türkiye?" validate the areas where Interreg has been most successful and visible. The focus on **environmental concerns** highlights the increasing awareness of climate change and sustainability, reflecting the region's

potential for environmental protection initiatives. The prominence of **tourism** also stands out, suggesting that citizens recognize it as a key factor for fostering economic growth and promoting cultural exchange between Bulgaria and Türkiye. Interestingly, **SMEs cooperation**, while still a relatively new focus in the current Interreg period, emerged as a key interest area in the survey responses. This suggests that citizens perceive a strong territorial demand for enhanced business cooperation, even though there are no existing projects in this area yet.

When asked, "What would be the cross-border cooperation project of your dreams?", the majority of citizens expressed a preference for projects that address the socio-economic implications of borders.

By prioritizing this intervention area, citizens are signaling a desire for initiatives that could bridge these divides, enhance cross-border interactions, and stimulate shared economic growth. The second most popular choice—projects focused on **environmental protection**—highlights the growing recognition of the environmental challenges facing both countries, such as climate change, nature disaster, and biodiversity loss. Citizens' preference for such projects indicates an awareness of the

Dream Interreg Project



need to safeguard shared natural resources and to address environmental risks that affect both sides of the border. Respondents appear to view cross-border cooperation not just as a tool for economic growth, but also as a means to create a more cohesive, environmentally responsible, and prosperous region.

3. Recommendations for post-2027

Here are some recommendations for post-2027 based on the collected feedback from stakeholders and citizens on the cross-border cooperation between Bulgaria and Türkiye. These recommendations aim to create a more inclusive, strategic, and impactful approach for post-2027 cross-border cooperation between the two neighboring countries:

- **Thematic orientation of the next Interreg programme:** tourism and people-to-people actions, business opportunities, climate resilience and environmental protection, collaboration in youth and education.
- **Capacity building for stakeholders:** Strengthen the capabilities of local and regional stakeholders to better align their priorities with the needs of citizens. This can involve training on participatory methods, strategic planning, and integrating public feedback into project development to ensure that initiatives reflect community priorities.
- **Promote socio-economic projects:** Given that citizens prioritize projects aimed at counteracting socio-economic challenges, future initiatives should focus on reducing barriers to economic opportunities and fostering job creation. This can include supporting SMEs, promoting skills development, and creating sustainable value chains that benefit the cross-border region.
- **Environmentally focused initiatives:** Support projects that protect the environment, as this was also a major area of interest among stakeholders and citizens. Investments in sustainable practices, climate-change adaptation, and environment-related infrastructure could strengthen cross-border collaboration and address shared ecological concerns.
- **Simplification of application and reporting processes:** Facilitate faster project application, assessment and implementation;
- **Diversified partnerships:** Encourage partnerships that include a diverse range of stakeholders and foster cross-programme cooperation.

Annex 1 – Questionnaire for Stakeholders

‘Life does not get better by chance. It gets better by change’

INTERREGIZE THE FUTURE OF INTERREG

Interreg is to cultivate cooperation among bordering regions, nurturing a more unified social and economic landscape. Be part of the its ongoing evolution. Reflect on its past and present and build the next state of collaboration across borders.

With the aim to improve our lives.

1. Name of your organization:

2. Type of your organization *Single choice question*

- ☐ National, regional or local public authority
- ☐ University/higher education or research institution
- ☐ School/secondary education
- ☐ Vocational education or training center
- ☐ NGO, please specify the sector/field of your work
- ☐ Enterprise
- ☐ Other type of organization

3. In which geographical area does your organization operate/provide services?

- ☐ Entire programme area (Regions of Burgas, Yambol, Haskovo, Edirne, Kırklareli)
- ☐ Partial programme area
- ☐ Outside the programme area
- ☐ Multiple areas including areas outside the programme
- ☐ Bulgaria - nationwide
- ☐ Türkiye– nationwide
- ☐ Other (please, specify)

4. Has your organization participated in project/s financed by Interreg Bulgaria- Türkiye?

Single choice question

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know

5. Is living next to a border an opportunity or a disadvantage? *Single choice question*

- **An opportunity** - e.g. more choices to get a job, better chances for tourism and entertainment options, joint tackling of challenges (e.g. fires, floods), better business opportunities, easier access to new markets, more income
- **A disadvantage** - the border is in fact a burden, not an opportunity: transport issues, hindered equal access to public services, etc.
- **It doesn't make any difference** when living next to a border
- **I don't know**
- **Other**

6. In what field is the biggest potential to cooperate with partners from your neighboring country? *Multiple choice question*

- Establishing business partnerships, incl. joint start-up initiatives
- Joining forces for protection of ecosystems and building healthy environment;
- Developing/employing cleantech and greentech solutions (*solutions that reduce environmental damage from existing technologies or improve the environmental quality of polluted natural resources*);
- Strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related and natural disasters;
- Enhancing mobility and transport connectivity;
- Being easily employed in the neighboring country;
- Joining forces for tourism;
- Joint participation in creative industries (music, performance arts, acting, crafts), incl. cultural exchange;
- Education and academic exchange programmes
- Social welfare and healthcare
- Cross-border public service delivery, incl. community development
- Other (*The stage is yours, be bold and release your mind*)

7. What currently works well in the field of cooperation in our cross-border area and should be reinforced? *Multiple choice question*

- Joining forces for environmental protection;
- Joining forces for handling nature disasters, incl. risk prevention measures;
- Creating joint tourist products and services;
- Improving cross-border opportunities for travelling;
- Strengthening business relations between enterprises from both sides of the border;
- Jointly participating in creative industries (music, performance arts, acting, crafts);

- Supporting development and implementation of youth policies;
- Other:.....(*The stage is yours, be bold and release your mind*)

8. What currently does not work well in the field of cooperation in our cross-border area and should be improved? *Multiple choice question*

- Cross-border institutional cooperation, incl. lack of joint policy visions for development of our area;
- Predominance of “mirror” projects (projects implemented in neighboring without effectively addressing cross-border issues or fostering collaboration across borders);
- Lack of shared public services;
- Poor enterprises cooperation and lack of labor mobility;
- Underdeveloped cross-border mobility/travelling networks;
- Low level of citizen engagement in policy formulation and decision-making;
- Low or lack of projects sustainability
- Insufficient Interreg programme visibility;
- Other (*The stage is yours, be bold and release your mind*)

9. What are the major obstacles for a good cooperation in our cross-border area? *Multiple choice question*

- Low and uneven level of economic development, incl. levels of salary;
- Limited willingness to cooperate;
- Unsatisfactory understanding of the cross-border effect and impact;
- Little knowledge of what Interreg programme can bring in;
- Different scope of institutional competences and cooperation skills from both sides of the border;
- Different languages;
- Different sectoral legislations and various administrative burdens;
- Underdeveloped cross-border mobility networks
- Too much time and a large amount of resources are needed when applying for funding through the programme;
- Exhaustion of new and fresh project ideas; more knowledge on what other similar Interreg programmes do is needed
- Other (*The stage is yours, be bold and release your mind*)

10. Are there targets/objectives that Interreg could aim at, but currently it does not?

Multiple choice question

- Encourage personal fulfillment;
- Advance entrepreneurship and SMEs cooperation;
- Support SMEs to access external markets and global value chains;
- Focus on joint investments benefiting both sides of the border (*e.g., more border checkpoints, bridges, roads, railways, hospitals, cross-border public service providers*);
- Prioritize support for the development and implementation of new tech solutions in various sectors;
- Scaling up projects and capitalizing on existing Interreg solutions: more active exchange with other Interrer programmes;
- Other (*The stage is yours, be bold and release your mind*)

10.1 What prevents you from doing what you would like to do under our Interreg programme? *Multiple choice question*

- Funding opportunities do not meet my needs;
- Funding opportunities do not meet territorial needs;
- Too complex rules;
- Not enough budget, incl. high competitiveness for limited amount of funds
- Excessive controls;
- Lack of sufficient guidance from programme bodies;
- Overlaps with other EU programmes;
- Difficulties in finding proper partners;
- Insufficient command of English language;
- Other (*The stage is yours, be bold and release your mind*)

11. In which areas do you think positive transformations may occur in the Bulgaria-Türkiye cross-border region as a result of cooperation under Interreg? *Please, prioritize your answers starting with the 'most likely to occur' and ending with 'less likely to occur'.*

- Governance and public service delivery, incl. extended, improved and equal access to services;
- Education and skills development;
- Business-to-business cooperation and job creation, incl. building of more sustainable value chains;
- Infrastructure development related to joint production of goods and services;

- Infrastructure development facilitating cross-border connectivity;
- Environmental protection and climate-change adaptation, incl. development and employment of cleantech and greentech solutions;
- Other (*The stage is yours, be bold and release your mind*)

12. What is the most important new feature/s that you would like to see in the future

Interreg? *More than one answer*

- Simpler and faster project application, implementation and financial reporting procedures;
- Wider access to Interreg programmes;
- More opportunities for interaction and cooperation between people, institutions and enterprises;
- Narrow down the support to only few policy objectives/targets; (*please, suggest those you consider most essential for your territory*)
- Empowering locals with discretion in selecting Interreg projects on their territory;
- Support to building cross-border infrastructure that is equally used by people/institutions from both sides of the border;
- Other (*The stage is yours, be bold and release your mind*)

13. Do you believe that the Interreg programme is suitable for supporting infrastructure projects?

- Yes (*please name exemplary infrastructure projects you think that are needed for the benefit of the cross-border area, perhaps in the field of tourism, transport, environment, climate change, health, social services, education, art and entertainment*)
- No (Why:)

14. What should be done to facilitate the work with your partners from the neighboring country?

- More frequent exchange of experience in various topics;
- Establishing joint working groups on cross-border matters to enhance mutual understanding;
- Organizing cross-border networking events to foster stronger relationships;
- More guidance and mentoring from Interreg programme bodies;
- There is a need for increased coordination and participation from higher-level institutions;

- Other

15. What would be the ideal Interreg project for your area that you would like to be part of?

Examples: nature protection, a joint hospital to have less transport to get to the nearest one; a network of cities that suffer from excessive tourism; a bridge over the river, a common school, etc.

16. I would like to receive information about the outcome of the survey

- Yes;
- No;

Annex 2 – Questionnaire for Citizens

LIVING WITHOUT BORDERS: THE FUTURE OF INTERREG

Interreg is to cultivate cooperation among bordering regions, nurturing a more unified social and economic landscape. Be part of the its ongoing evolution and build the next state of collaboration across borders.
With the aim to improve our lives.

1. Is living next to a border an opportunity or a disadvantage?

- **An opportunity** - e.g. more choices to get a job, better chances for tourism and entertainment options, joint tackling of challenges (e.g. fires, floods), better business opportunities, easier access to new markets, more income
- **A disadvantage** - the border is in fact a burden, not an opportunity: transport issues, hindered equal access to public services, etc.
- **It doesn't make any difference** when living next to a border
- **I don't know**
- **Other**

2. In the place where you live, what are the main topics where cooperation with the neighboring country of Bulgaria/Türkiye is needed?

- Enhancing business opportunities;
- Strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related and natural disasters;
- Improving mobility and transport connectivity;
- Attracting more tourists;
- Boosting Cultural exchange in music, performance arts, acting, crafts;
- Developing social welfare and healthcare services;
- Refining cross-border public service delivery, including community development
- Other, please specify

3. Speaking from your experience, what might be the biggest difficulties in cross-border cooperation with the neighboring country of Bulgaria/Türkiye?

- Underdeveloped cross-border mobility/travelling networks;
- Different sectoral legislations and various administrative burdens
- Low level of citizen engagement in policy formulation and decision-making;
- Uneven level of economic development
- Little potential for sustainable cooperation due to demographic decline;

- Different languages;
- Negative stereotypes;
- Other

4. Do you know an Interreg project that you consider useful for the cross-border area between Bulgaria and Türkiye?

- Project/s related to the protection of environment;
- Tourism-related project/s;
- Project/s facilitating mobility and transport;
- Project/s Improving business cooperation;
- Other

5. What would be the cross-border cooperation project of your dreams?

- Counteracting the socio-economic implications of borders;
- Building a joint hospital;
- Building a common school;
- An environment with no natural losses;
- Strengthened resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related and natural disasters;