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Interreg

Transnational Programmes: needs and opportunities for the future cooperation

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// TNCOOP

Interreg Transnational Programmes: needs and opportunities for the future cooperation

Project commissioned by ESPON EGTC, with the support of the European Commission and the Member States



Context of the project

The project covers **all 13 transnational programme areas as defined for 2021-2027 period.**

It aims to **deliver evidence-based analyses** that will contribute to the discussion on the definition and the future orientation of the **next generation of Interreg programmes post-2027.**

The results of these analyses will serve as a **common knowledge base** for Member States to **complement their own territorial analyses for policymaking**, and for the European Commission for the next programming exercise.



- ✓ Programme areas analysed correspond to Interreg VI-B programme areas at **NUTS2 level**
- ✓ Perimeters based on **official EC documents**

Objectives and outcomes of the project

- provide an integrated overview at the European level (and beyond) for all transnational programmes, by creating **a comprehensive, common, up-to-date database on territorial development and regional disparities** (at NUTS 2 level or lower, where relevant and where possible)
- deliver a better understanding, via the analyses, on how to **improve functional linkages and cooperation patterns**, covering the emerging needs and opportunities of the territories concerned, for **increasing the programmes' territorial relevance and synergies with other relevant initiatives** (like the Macro-regional Strategies and Cross Border programmes) in the post-27 period.

Project timeframe:

April 2025 – May 2026 (1-year long, as results were released in time for the negotiations/papers preparations debut)

Main outputs:

1 common TN database (accessible via the [ESPON TNCOOP Portal](#))

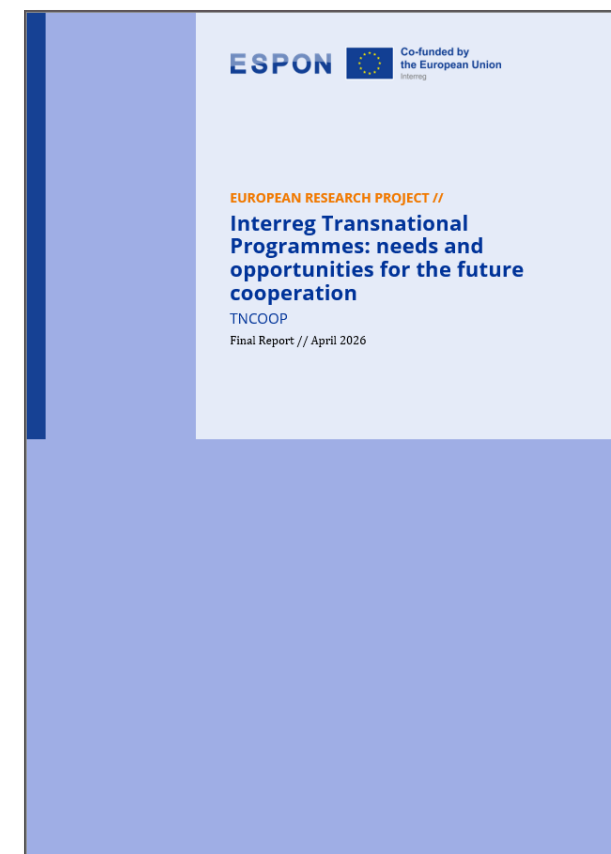
13 transnational programme fiches + 1 fiche at the strand level.



13 programme fiches



1 strand fiche



1 overarching report
detailing the processes and methods

Access to all documents: [HERE](#)

Programme fiches



EUROPEAN RESEARCH PROJECT // Interreg Transnational Programmes: needs and opportunities for the future cooperation

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Territorial evidence & the ESPON TNCOOP Portal

Dimension	Core indicators (NUTS 2 level)	Additional indicators (national level)
Demography and geography	population density, median population age, population change	
Innovation, research & SMEs	Regional Competitiveness Index, Regional Innovation Scoreboard ranking	Global Competitiveness Index 4.0
Environment & climate change	Share of renewable energy final consumption, Air quality, Flood risk, drought impact on ecosystems, Waste intensity	Renewable Energy Consumption
Digital connectivity & transport	Households with access to broadband, Access to major road networks	Share of households with Internet access at home
Sustainable regional development (Education, Labour market & Cooperation)	Employment by economic sectors, Educational attainment level, Young people neither in employment nor in education and training, Unemployment rate (by gender), GDP per capita (in PPS),	Share of employment by economic sectors (primary, secondary, tertiary), Tertiary education enrolment, Share of youth not in employment, education or training
Cultural heritage & tourism	Tourism intensity, Cultural asset density	Guests in hotels and similar establishments
Housing	Average sales price per square meter for houses/apartments, Average renting price per square meter for houses/apartments	
People to people action and engagement	Spatial accessibility – social infrastructure, share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, quality of government index	Poverty rate

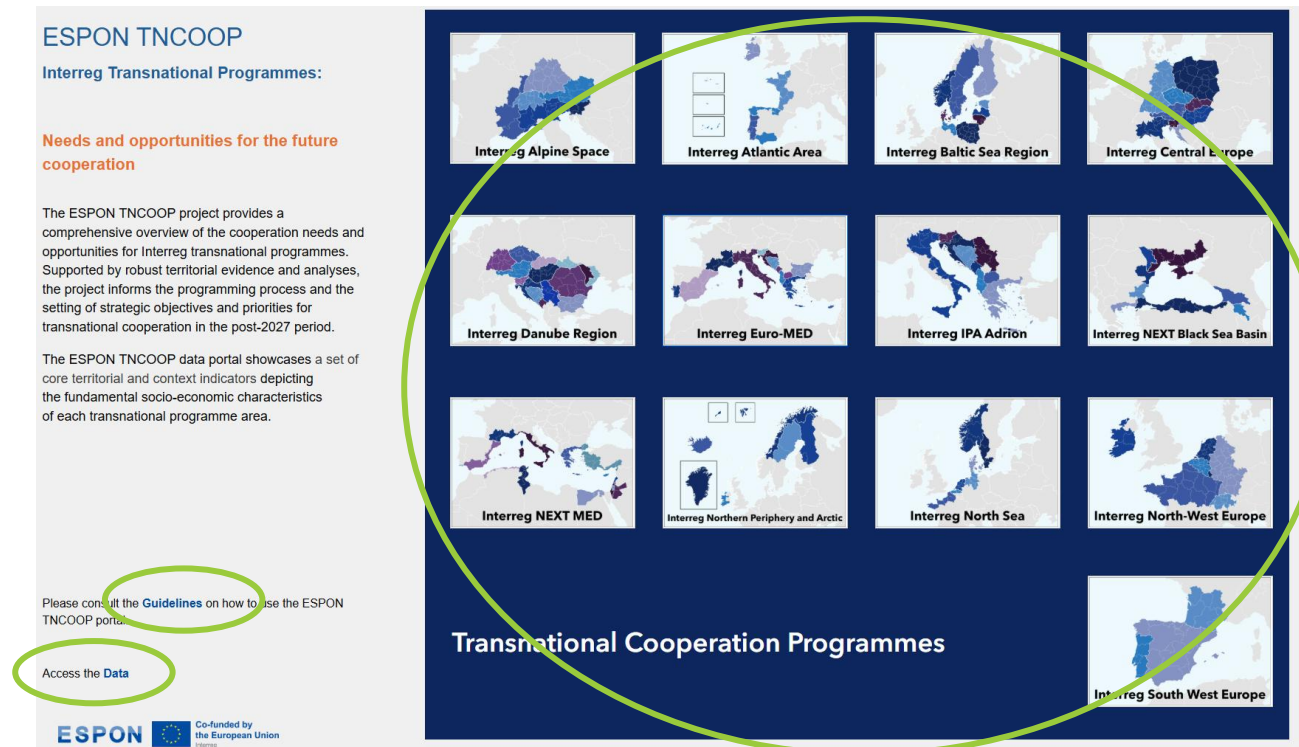
Access to the **ESPON TNCOOP Portal**:
[HERE](#)



**Knowledge
database**

The ESPON TNCOOP portal

- Central access point to data and visualisations
- Designed to facilitate map production and analyses
 - Builds on the knowledge database
 - Visualisation only for territorial indicators
 - Visualisation of EU-sources and non-EU-sources side by side



Interreg Baltic Sea Region

A glimpse into the Programme fiche

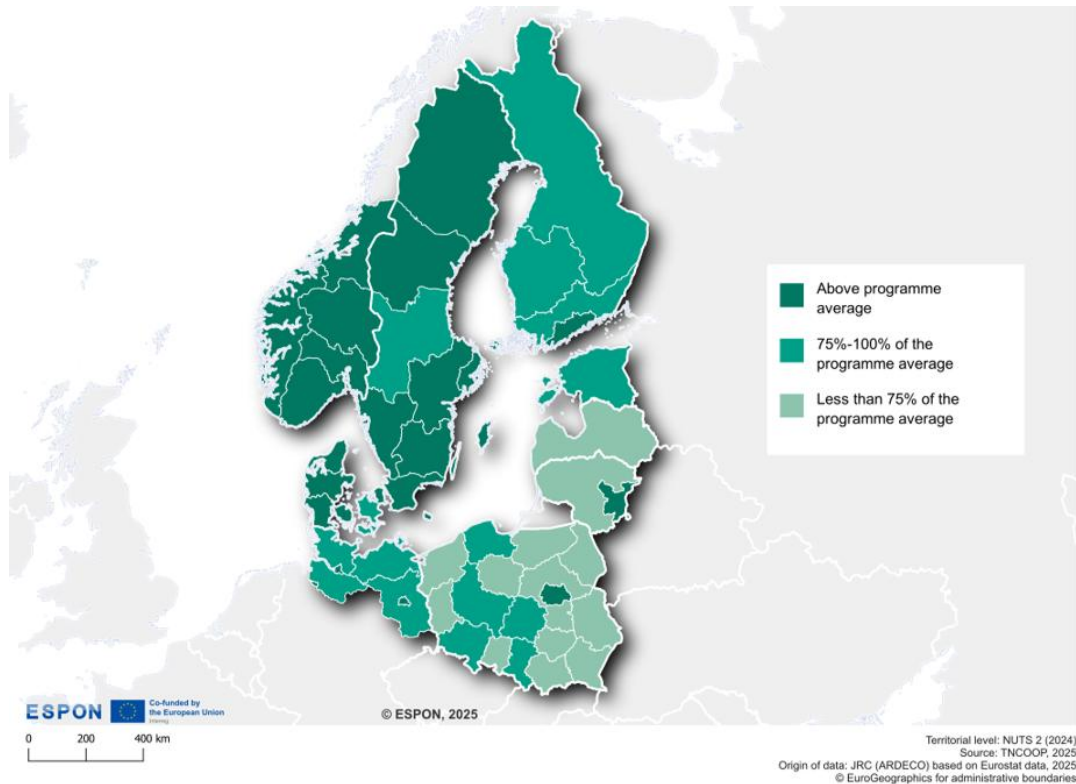
Interreg Baltic Sea Region

Programme main functional linkages

- **Baltic Sea as a common resource:** a transport corridor and a shared ecological resource
- **Shared security challenges:** proximity to the Russian border and heightened exposure to demographic and economic pressures
- **Shared urban-rural challenges:** major metropolitan areas are innovation drivers and demographic magnets, whereas vast rural areas face ageing populations, outmigration, and limited access to services
- **Digital connectivity and integration:** strong ICT infrastructure, widespread internet access, and a “digital-first” approach to public services
- **Culture and tourism:** growth in regional tourism reflects an increasing integration into the wider regional tourism economy, supported by shared branding
- **Innovation and research:** increased cross-border research, innovation partnerships, and knowledge exchange throughout the area

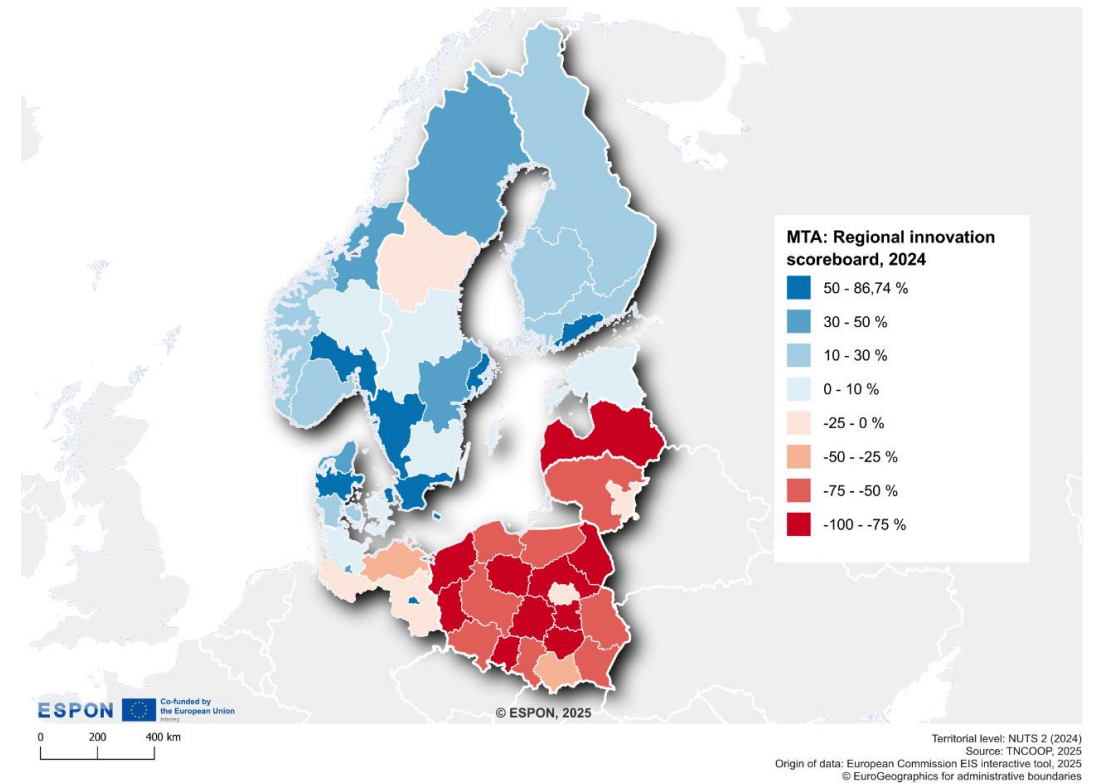
Examples of disparities and challenges in the programme area

Regional development status



GDP/capita in relation to the programme average

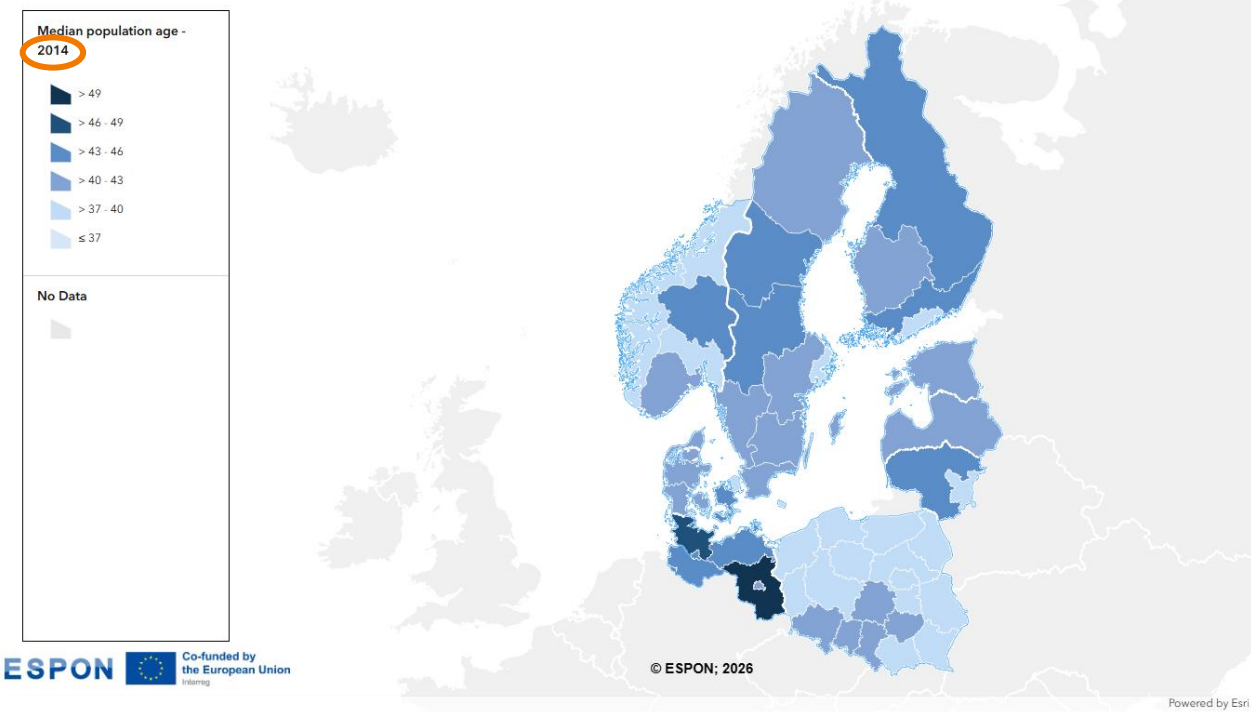
Multi-scalar territorial analysis: Regional innovation scoreboard



The analysis highlights the distance of each region from the median value of the whole programme

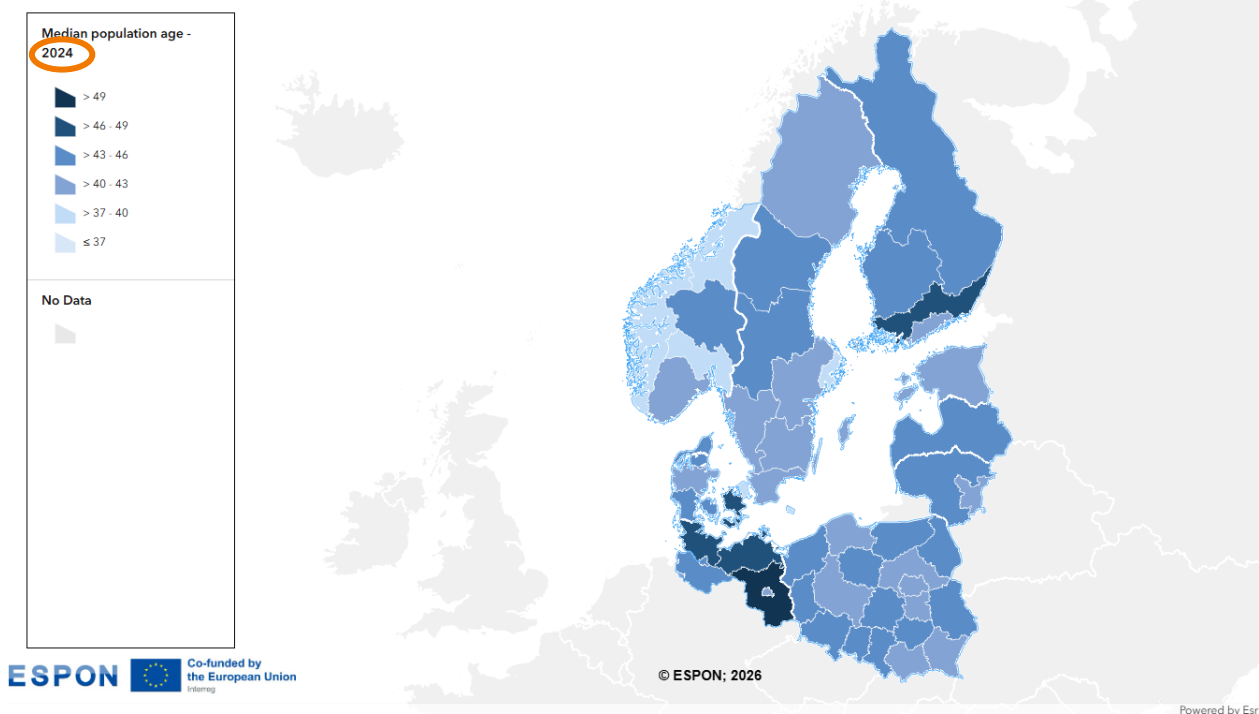
Median population age

Median Population Age



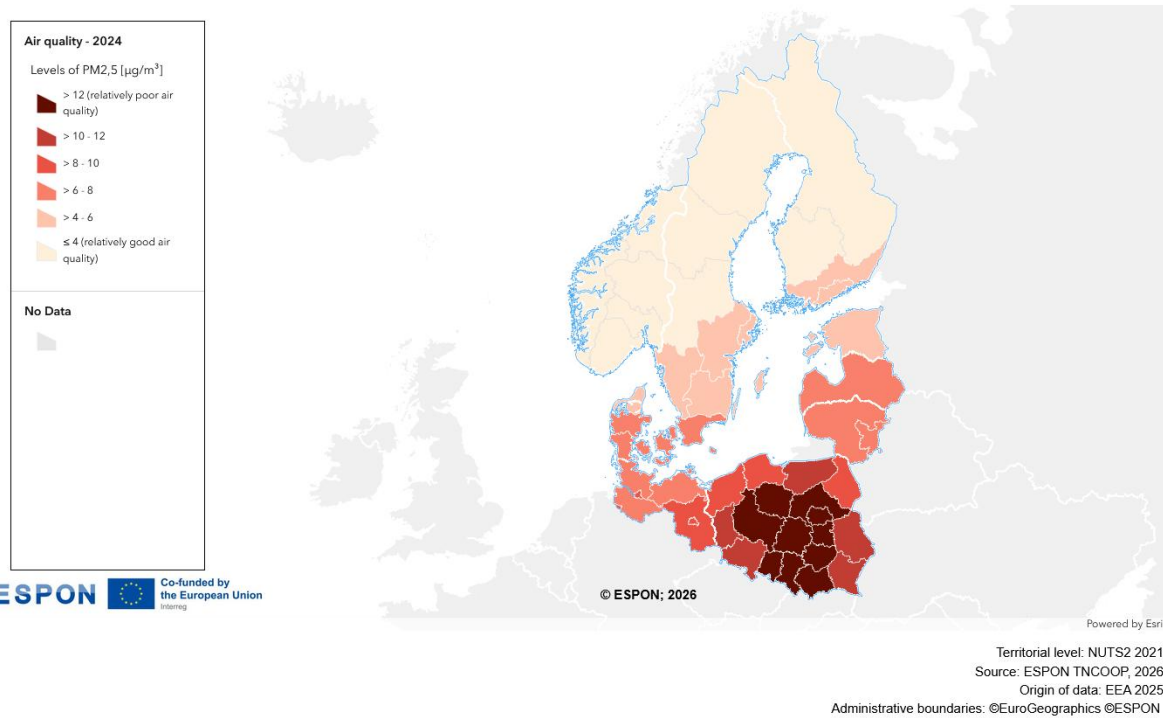
Territorial level: NUTS2 2021
Source: ESPON TNCOOP, 2026
Origin of data: EUROSTAT, 2025, various NSI with multiple years
Administrative boundaries: ©EuroGeographics ©ESPON

Median Population Age

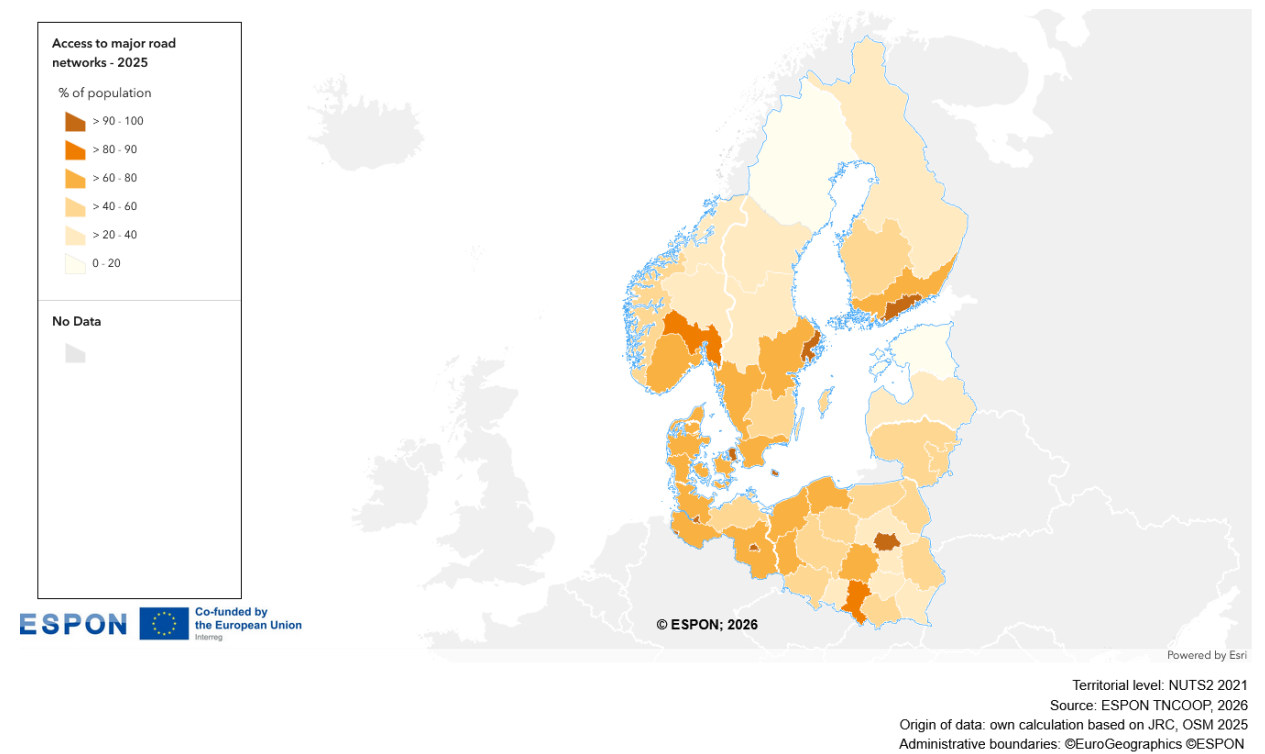


Territorial level: NUTS2 2021
Source: ESPON TNCOOP, 2026
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Air quality

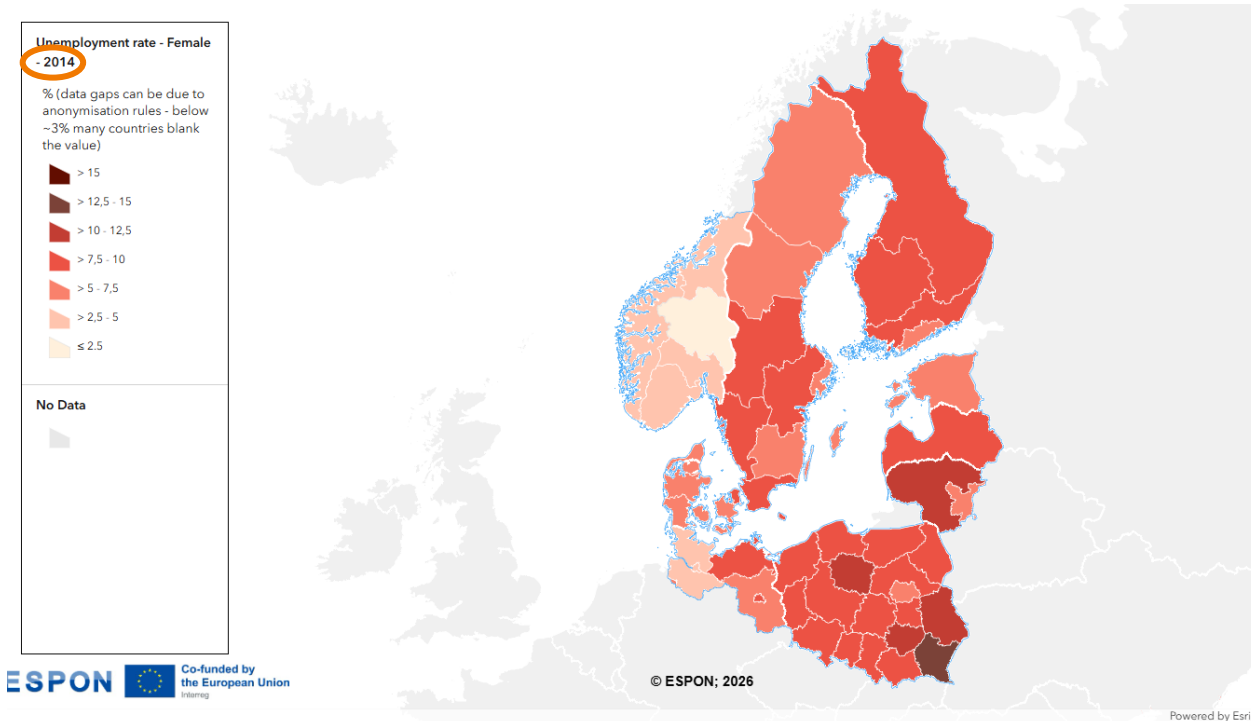


Access to major road networks



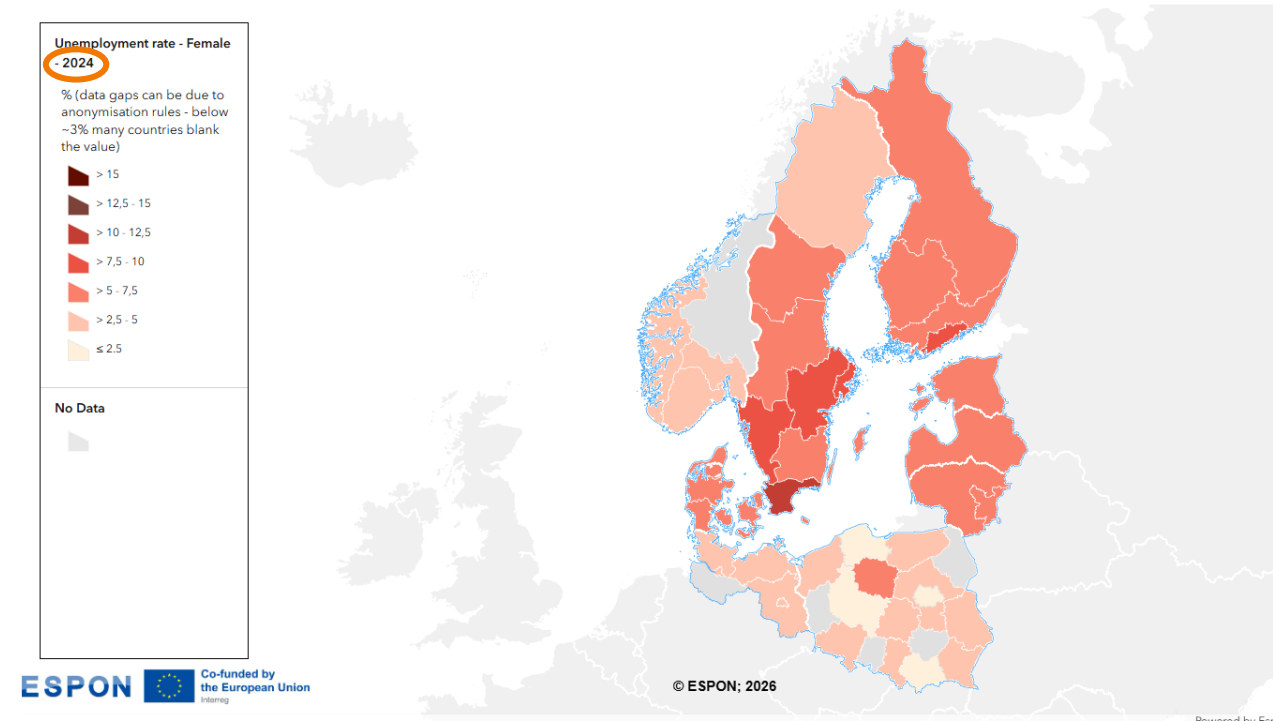
Unemployment rate – Female

Unemployment rate - Female



Territorial level: NUTS2 2021
Source: ESPON TNCOOP, 2026
Origin of data: EUROSTAT 2025; World Bank 2025
Administrative boundaries: ©EuroGeographics ©ESPON

Unemployment rate - Female



Territorial level: NUTS2 2021
Source: ESPON TNCOOP, 2026
Origin of data: EUROSTAT 2025; World Bank 2025
Administrative boundaries: ©EuroGeographics ©ESPON

Emerging new policy and thematic trends: cooperation opportunities



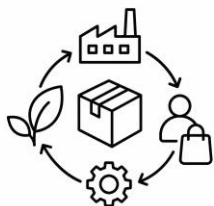
Protection of the Baltic Sea

A coordinated water and wastewater management is required as well as nutrient recycling, preservation of biodiversity, and land-use planning that prevents excessive soil sealing



Climate neutrality and green transition

Scaling up renewable energy production and cross-border energy integration; promoting green and smart mobility systems; accelerating the development of a circular economy and bioeconomy



Responsible consumption and production

Focus on scaling circular economy approaches and best practices, strengthening sustainable supply chains, and promoting demand-side measures



Digital inclusion

Greater integration of underrepresented rural communities and vulnerable groups in shaping digital policies and services, strengthening of monitoring frameworks that capture the broader social and economic impacts of digital exclusion, enhanced collaboration with stakeholders



Hybrid threats

Threats, e.g. cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns to disruptions of critical infrastructure and energy systems, transcend national borders and require coordinated responses, enhancing media literacy, public awareness, and trust in institutions

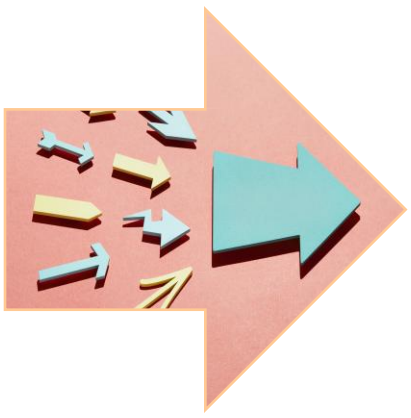
Strand fiche findings

Summary of the recommendations for the Interreg strand B



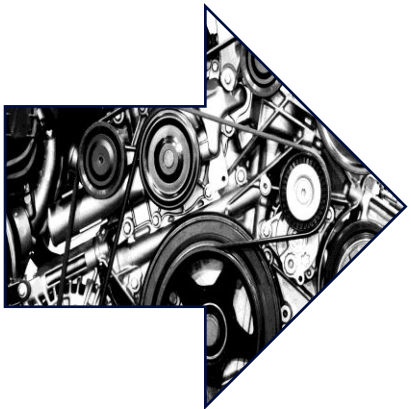
Where: Functional rationales for programme geographies and scale

- Geographic/territorial features provide lenses, giving territorial relevance, focus and purpose.
 - Shared and common opportunities and challenges
 - Shared geographies and networks enable connections between areas experiencing differing development opportunities and challenges,
 - Programme areas evolve over time and have stable bases for the cooperation
- Current geopolitical and economic context reinforces the rationale for transnational cooperation between trusted partners
- **The programmes' identities stem from functional narratives**, could be reinforced through explicit selection criteria.
- **Retain current programme geographies**, with scope to include new programme areas if requested.
- **Apply geographic flexibility** to the benefit of the programme areas, e.g. targeting calls for emerging territorial needs, such as extreme weather events



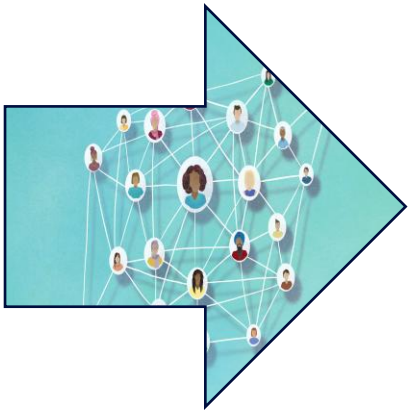
What: Transnational Development Issues

- Scale well suited to tackling large-scale and long-term transitions and newer themes, including security, resilience, and preparedness,
- Programmes work on similar/related broad themes, within these fields territorial analyses highlight distinct needs, strengths and experiences.
- Flexibility required to tailor and focus strategies to specific territorial needs.
- Transnational cooperation offers potential to work with experimental and innovative projects to test and trial new ideas and work in new ways.
- **Connect strengths on “well-established” areas of work to new and emerging themes/development challenges.**
- **Integrated and Cross-Sectoral Approaches**
 - Introduce integration accelerators: require projects to demonstrate “dual or triple impact” (e.g. climate + mobility + economic diversification).
 - Mission oriented transnational packages combining several themes (e.g. “Climate Resilient Atlantic Arc”, “Danube Circular Economy Transition”).
- **Work with projects and communicate on the territorial specifics** of projects, as well as highlighting shared and wider applications.



How: Transnational cooperation in practice

- Notable progress on simplification has been made and can continue
- Synergies and links are a significant area of strength, but important to recognise the resources implications
- **Widen and deepen partner engagement** – dedicated capacity building calls
- **Advanced networks of engaged and experienced partners**, could help to boost cooperation capacity
- **Potential for mutual benefit and policy coherence underlines the value of the transnational programmes' work on synergies** (and the importance of resourcing these activities adequately)
- **Delivering results and impact**
 - “Uptake pathways into project architecture”, e.g. by requiring “policy up take plans”.
 - Better archive and preserve’ outputs and results
 - Better understand territorial impact, e.g. particular activity location tagging
 - Transnational data flows and sharing across programmes



Why: Territorial Added Value

- Expectations of the programmes must take into account the financial and administrative resources
- Strategic, multi-level framework for cooperation and enhancing policy visibility and impact.
 - Continue to strengthen mechanisms that enhance visibility, learning, and participation.
- Well suited to addressing territorial development challenges
- Support innovation, forward planning and foresight
- Each programme distinct added value. Also, cumulative value across the programmes and the transnational scale.

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Thank you for your attention!