

**Interreg**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Northern Periphery and Arctic

# THE INTERREG NORTHERN PERIPHERY AND ARCTIC

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION





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*Cultural heritage is affected by climate change and natural hazards. The Interreg NPA Adapt Northern Heritage project involved local communities in adaptation and conservation measures.*

*Photo: Marte Boro/  
Riksantikvaren*



***About the  
programme***



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic

The Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) programme is a funding initiative supported by the European Union and non-EU participating countries. The programme's main objective is to promote cooperation among communities in the northernmost parts of Europe and North Atlantic territories to address common challenges and opportunities. The regions included in the programme share characteristics like sparse population and long distances from the economic centres of Europe. The similarities between the participating regions as well as common challenges and shared opportunities offer a strong basis for cooperation. By providing financial assistance and facilitating collaboration, the programme aims to foster economic growth and improve the quality of life in the participating regions. Cooperation enables communities to work together and learn from each other to become more prosperous and resilient. The NPA encourages cooperation among these regions to address common issues, maximise development, and find innovative solutions.

## The Interreg NPA programme has three main priorities:



### 1. Innovation Capacity

Strengthening the innovation capacity for resilient and attractive NPA communities.



### 2. Climate Change and Resource Sufficiency

Strengthening the capacity for climate change adaptation, and resource sufficiency in NPA communities.

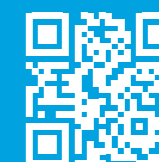


### 3. Cooperation Opportunities

Strengthening the organisational capacity among NPA communities to make use of cooperation opportunities.

*In all activities that are approved by the NPA programme, there should be an integration of the horizontal criteria. This implies promoting sustainable development, ensuring gender equality, non-discrimination, and inclusivity for underrepresented groups such as indigenous and linguistically distinct communities from the NPA region.*

*This document provides a brief introduction to the Interreg NPA programme. For more detailed information, please see the Cooperation Programme Document and the Programme Manual.*





# PROGRAMME AREA

## GEOGRAPHY

### List of regions included in the programme area

#### EU Member States

**Finland**  
Länsi-Suomi (Keski-Suomi)  
Pohjois- ja Itä-Suomi

**Ireland**  
Northern and Western  
Southern (only Mid-West  
and South-West)

**Sweden**  
Mellersta Norrland  
Övre Norrland

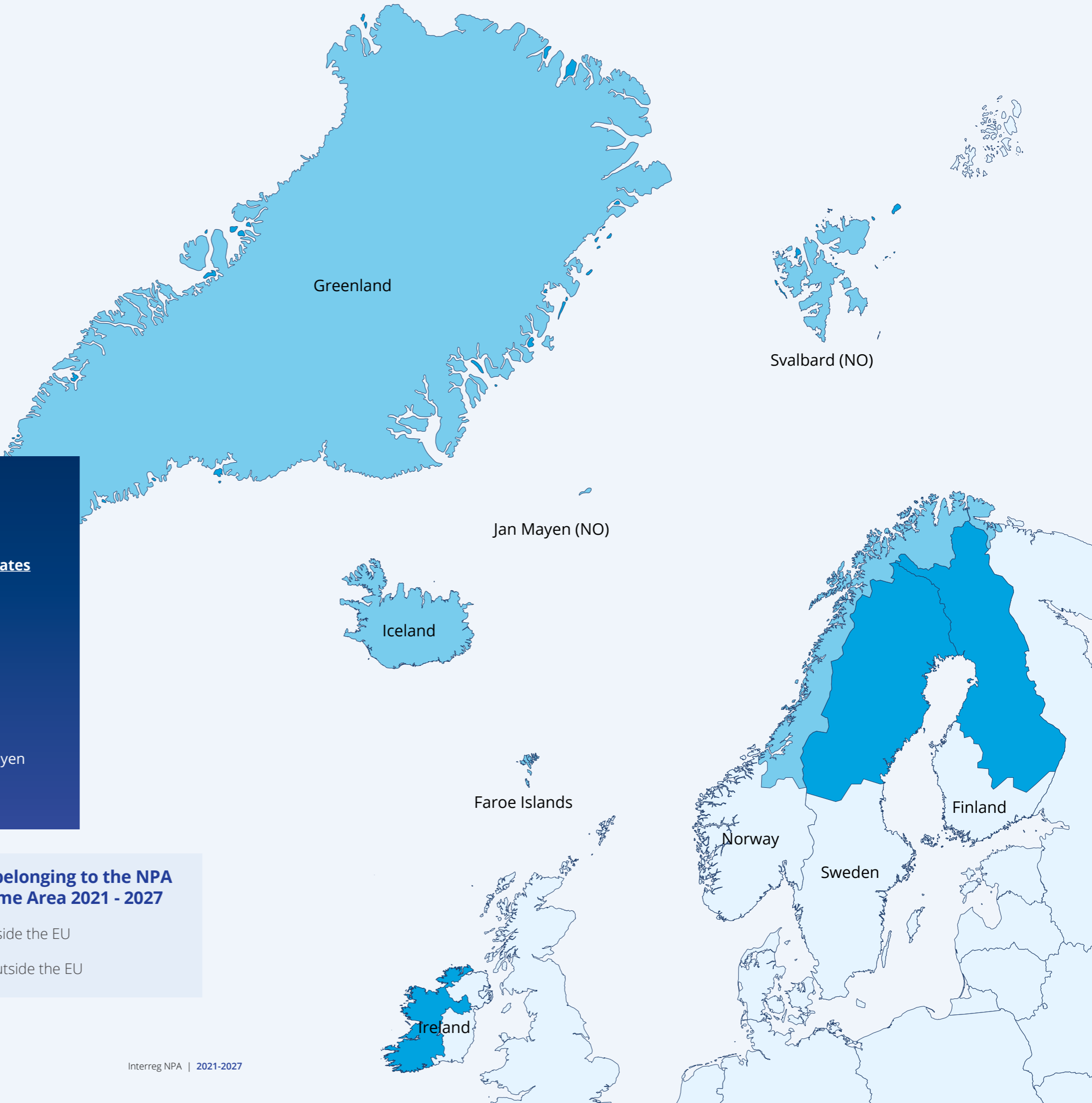
#### Non-EU Member States

**Faroe Islands**  
**Greenland**

**Iceland**  
**Norway**  
Trøndelag  
Nord-Norge  
Svalbard and Jan Mayen

### Regions belonging to the NPA Programme Area 2021 - 2027

- Inside the EU
- Outside the EU





# PRIORITIES

The development needs and potentials of the programme area, together with the EU policy goals and local context, have resulted in three priorities to achieve the programme vision.

*"Innovative solutions to support a sustainable and resilient development."*

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Each priority then has specific objectives that are in line with the overarching goals outlined by the European Commission for the European Union. Brief summaries of these objectives are provided. Every priority aims to guide project applicants towards producing concrete and lasting outputs, contributing to the programme's goal of effecting measurable, positive changes in the Programme area. For each objective, there are also examples of the Types of actions that can be funded, Main target groups and Indicators for evaluation. The indicator system is a useful tool as it gives an accurate picture

of project and programme progress. In addition, the indicator system can help support better communication of project and programme results by collecting useful data and information in practical formats for further processing and online sharing. However, it is important to be aware of their limitations. Indicators can only capture some aspects of the wide range of results that projects and programmes deliver. Applicants should carefully select the indicators that best match their project solutions and impacts and set a realistic target to be reached by the end of the project.

*Greenland is a country as vast as half of the European Union, but with only 1% of its population. Cooperation opportunities in the Interreg NPA allow Greenlandic partners to build strong connections with other sparsely populated communities.*







*Digital solutions and disruptive technologies can improve adaptation to climate change in traditional primary sectors such as farming.*



# Innovation Capacity

## PRIORITY 1

### Strengthening the innovation capacity for resilient and attractive NPA communities

The first priority handles strengthening innovation capacity in remote areas so that they can attract more businesses and act as a role model for sustainable living conditions in the northern periphery. This part of the programme builds adaptive capacities and resilience as we move towards a smarter Europe.

## OBJECTIVE 1.1

### Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

Enhancing research and innovation capacity is vital for SMEs in the NPA area. Innovation and higher value-added processes diversify and expand activities and this capacity is crucial for adaptation. This is also why SMEs should be involved in developing and applying innovations.



*Interreg NPA Robodemo partners are introduced to a welding robot at their visit in Kokkola (Finland).*

*Photo: Interreg NPA Robodemo/Centria*

#### Types of actions to be funded

- Facilitating technology transfer to, or across, the Programme area benefiting SMEs, including green technologies.
- Facilitating commonly identified opportunities based on strengths in the programme area supported by research and innovation, including smart specialisation strategies.

#### Main target groups

- Higher education and research
- Larger enterprises, e.g. as R&D providers
- SME
- Business support organization
- Regional public authority
- National public authority
- Local public authority
- Non-profit organisations/ Social enterprises

#### Indicators for evaluation

- Organisations cooperating across borders
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects
- Enterprises cooperating with research organisations
- Jointly developed solutions





## OBJECTIVE 1.2

### Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities

Digitalisation is crucial for addressing challenges in the programme area. It creates links between the public sector, SMEs, and education providers and helps mitigate issues like long distances and access to markets and key services. Digitisation especially benefits remote and peripheral communities, where, for example, it can offer opportunities for remote healthcare and smart mobility. Transnational collaboration can improve knowledge and experience in using digital solutions, broaden understanding, and contribute towards implementing new solutions.



#### Types of actions to be funded

- Transfer and development of accessible digital solutions to create better conditions for people to live and work in the area. This includes technology-driven solutions for public service provision, as well as marketing models and solutions facilitating the use of distance-spanning technology to overcome long distances to market.

#### Main target groups

- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- National public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- Education/training centre and school
- SME
- Larger enterprises, e.g. as R&D providers
- Business support organisation
- General public (including local communities)

#### Indicators for evaluation

- Organisations cooperating across borders
- Public institutions supported to develop digital services, products and processes
- Jointly developed solutions
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects



*PHIVE is a cluster of Interreg NPA projects using augmented and virtual reality to travel in time, and experience the common cultural heritage of the NPA regions.*

*Advanced technologies such as augmented reality can also help increasing awareness of the effects of climate change on natural and cultural heritage.*

*Photos: Interreg NPA CINE and NPA In Person! conference*



*"The programme encourages transnational cooperation to enhance the entrepreneurial climate in the NPA area."*



### OBJECTIVE 1.3

## Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments

The programme encourages transnational cooperation to enhance the entrepreneurial climate in the NPA area. Building networks and clusters helps tackle the issue of long distances to markets. Overcoming these challenges benefits nontraditional sectors and promotes a dynamic business sector. The programme area has unique cultural and natural resources like the Arctic, islands, and coastal areas. Economic diversification and resilience are necessary for traditional businesses in remote areas and innovation allows for expansion and diversification, particularly in the tourism sector. Engaging indigenous groups and local communities is also an important part of this objective.

#### Types of actions to be funded

- Transfer and development of models and solutions for support to SMEs faced with commonly identified challenges and opportunities in peripheral regions with a particular focus on entrepreneurial skills and sustainable business models.
- Transfer and development of concepts for creating networks and clusters of SMEs and connecting entrepreneurial capacities across regions as well as adapting marketing models for a greater market reach.

#### Main target groups

- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Higher education and research
- Education/training centre and school
- SME
- Business support organisation
- General public (including local communities)

#### Indicators for evaluation

- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects
- Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)
- Enterprises with non-financial support
- Jointly developed solutions
- New enterprises supported
- Organisations cooperating across borders

*The Interreg NPA CRAFT REACH project helped artisans rooted in their local communities to internationalise and innovate their marketing approach.*

*Photos: Interreg NPA CRAFT REACH/Oleana*







Photo: Interreg NPA/Zdenek Dvorak



Coastal communities are severely affected by more extreme weather conditions caused by climate change. Cooperation across NPA regions is an efficient way to find solutions to these challenges.

## Climate Change and Resource Sufficiency

### PRIORITY 2

#### Strengthening the capacity for climate change adaptation, and resource sufficiency in NPA communities

This priority centres on working towards a greener Europe. More specifically, it focuses on addressing climate change and resource efficiency as the region strives to bring leading ideas together to approach the issues around more sustainable communities with low-carbon solutions. There are vast opportunities in small communities for using local and indigenous knowledge that can be brought together in transnational cooperation.

### OBJECTIVE 2.1

#### Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

The cold and extreme climates of the programme area result in high energy needs. To meet these needs, smart energy solutions and storage, including community-based systems for remote areas, are crucial. The region holds significant potential for renewable energy resources. With existing expertise and a willingness to adopt new technologies, the aim is to achieve net energy savings while prioritising biodiversity and habitat preservation.



Preserving biodiversity and natural habitats is essential to a sustainable future. Interreg NPA Ascent partners tested new ways to conserve, protect and sustain wonderful sites in the NPA regions.

Photo: Interreg NPA ASCENT/ Landgræðslan

#### Types of actions to be funded

- Transfer and development of sustainable renewable energy generation and energy efficiency solutions suitable for cold climates and remote communities.
- Facilitating the use of place-based energy surpluses and development of smart energy management concepts in remote communities.

#### Main target groups

- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- SME
- General public (including local communities)

#### Indicators for evaluation

- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects
- Jointly developed solutions
- Organisations cooperating across borders







## OBJECTIVE 2.2

### Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account ecosystem-based approaches

The vulnerability of NPA regions, characterised by sparsely populated coastal, mountain, and island areas, presents significant challenges for climate change mitigation and resilience. To address these challenges, it is essential to involve specialists and local stakeholders with in-depth knowledge of the unique and fragile natural environments. The programme will facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences among regions, fostering the establishment of new transnational networks.

#### Types of actions to be funded

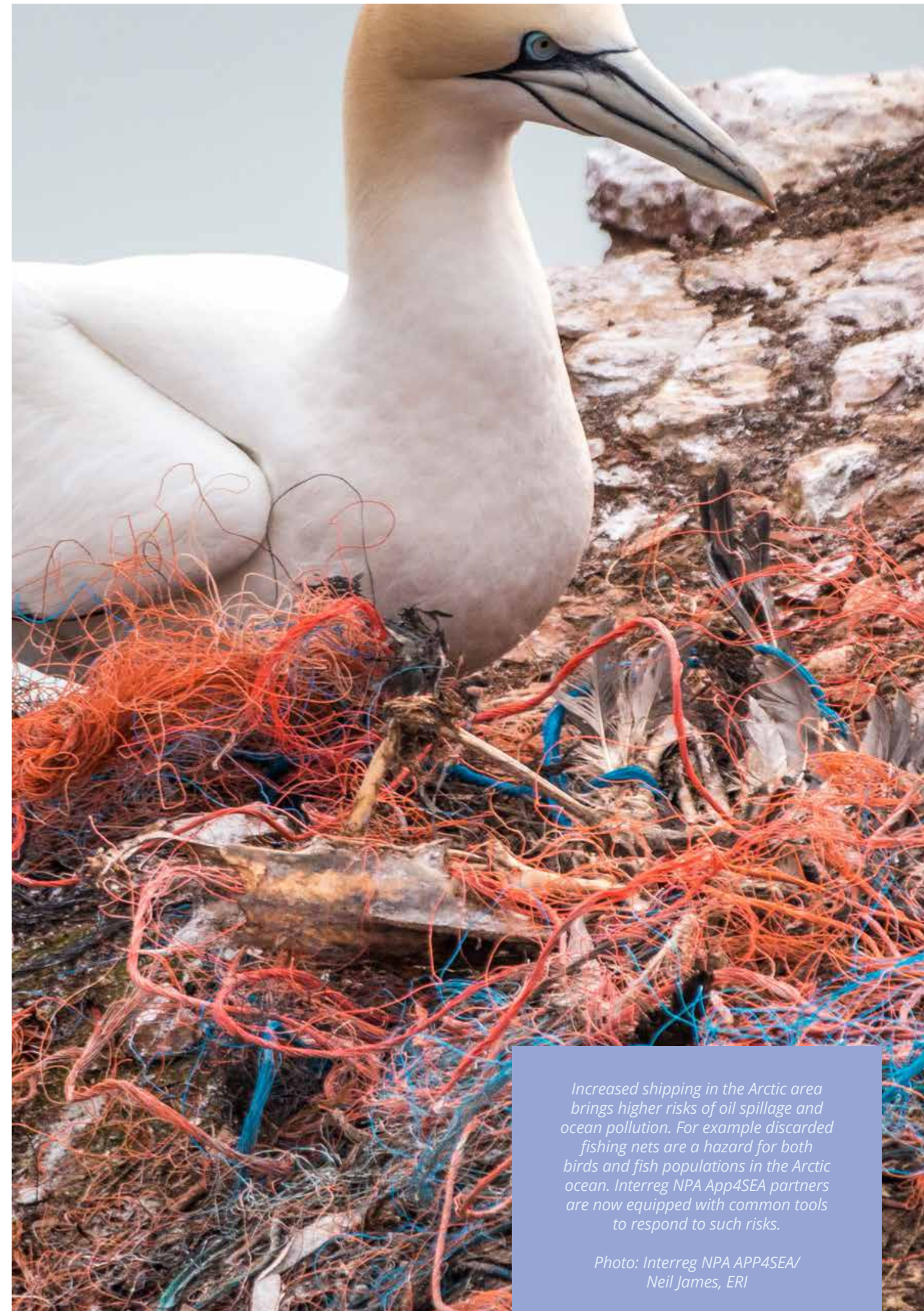
- Transfer and development of solutions that facilitate the use of community knowledge and build local capacity for climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience in sparsely populated communities.

#### Main target groups

- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- National public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- SME
- International organisation, EEIG
- General public (including local communities)

#### Indicators for evaluation

- Jointly developed solutions
- Organisations cooperating across borders
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects



Increased shipping in the Arctic area brings higher risks of oil spillage and ocean pollution. For example discarded fishing nets are a hazard for both birds and fish populations in the Arctic ocean. Interreg NPA App4SEA partners are now equipped with common tools to respond to such risks.

Photo: Interreg NPA APP4SEA/  
Neil James, ERI



"New solutions and innovations are needed to achieve a circular economy, transform production processes, and change consumer behaviour."



Photo: Interreg NPA Northern Cereals/NIBIO, Norsk Institutt for bioøkonomi

### OBJECTIVE 2.3

## Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

New solutions and innovations are needed to achieve a circular economy, transform production processes, and change consumer behaviour. This includes addressing territorial challenges in waste management and promoting resource efficiency in various sectors. Remote communities already excel in circular, green, and bio-economy due to their tradition of self-reliance and reusing. Further development in these sectors is crucial due to environmental sensitivity.

The Interreg NPA Circular Ocean project tested how plastic fibers from discarded fishing nets could replace virgin fibers to improve the performance of concrete in Arctic conditions. Recognising waste as a valuable resource is the first step towards a circular economy.

Photo: Interreg NPA Circular Ocean

#### Types of actions to be funded

- Facilitating the transfer and development of solutions that promote resource efficiency, end-of-waste, and a better use of by-products in remote, and sparsely populated communities
- Facilitating the transfer and development of solutions for community planning for the circular economy in remote, and sparsely populated communities.

#### Main target groups

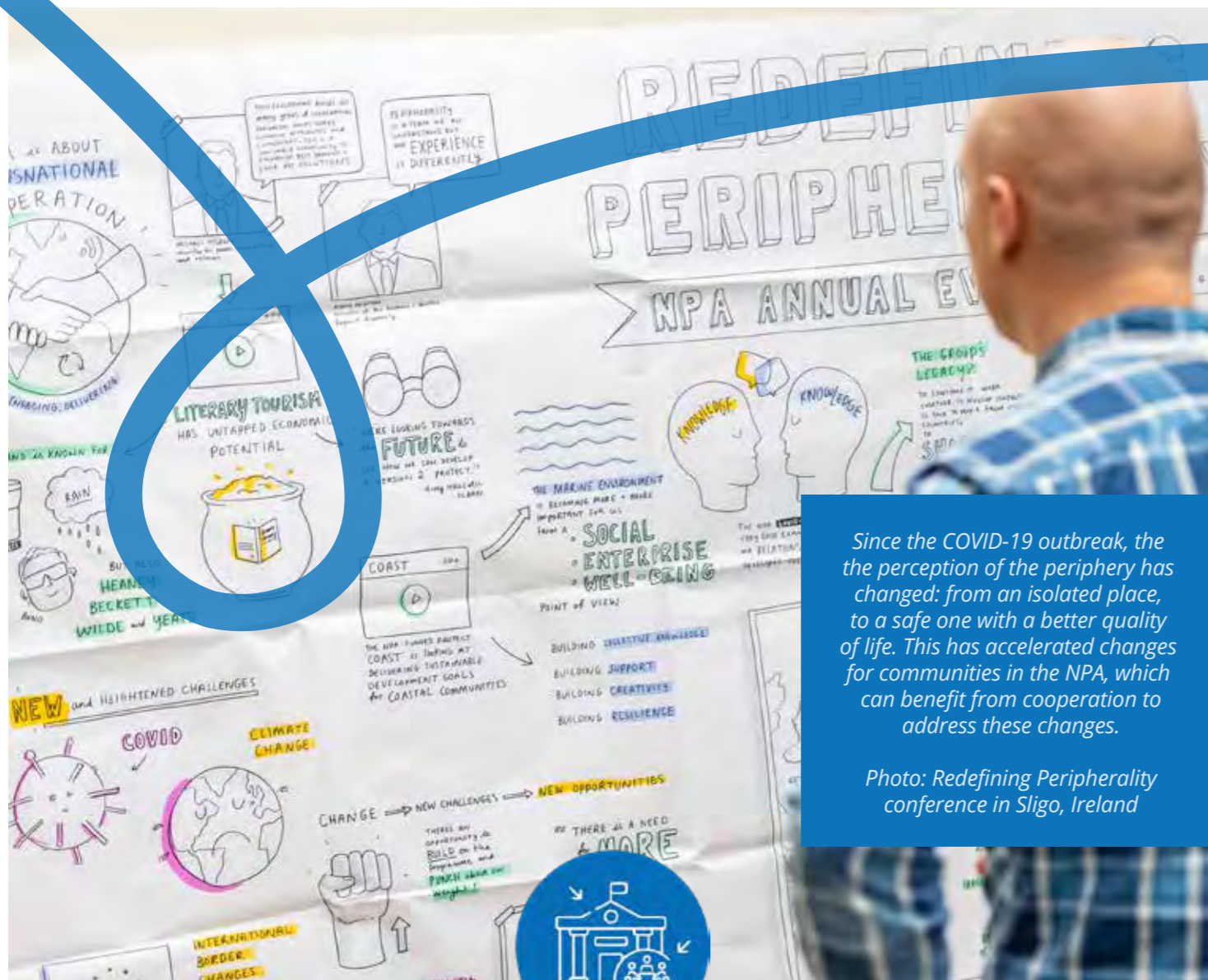
- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- Larger enterprises, e.g. as R&D providers
- SME
- Business support organisation
- International organisation, EEIG
- General public (including local communities)

#### Indicators for evaluation

- Jointly developed solutions
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects
- Organisations cooperating across borders







Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the perception of the periphery has changed: from an isolated place, to a safe one with a better quality of life. This has accelerated changes for communities in the NPA, which can benefit from cooperation to address these changes.

Photo: Redefining Periphery conference in Sligo, Ireland



Photo: YOUTH IN THE NPA conference, Bodø

### OBJECTIVE 3.1

## Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies

Communities in the NPA regions have similar challenges. These challenges are more easily overcome if people work together. The goal here is to make it easier for communities to cooperate. This can be achieved by supporting organisational capacity to cooperate within the NPA region, focusing on different themes, such as preparedness, the unique heritage of NPA regions, wellbeing, attracting talent and skills, and engaging young people. The NPA Programme plays an important role in the EU Arctic Policy through regional development and therefore encourages cooperation both between projects and across EU programmes. Another goal of this priority is to bring awareness to new stakeholder groups that are not familiar with transnational cooperation.

## Cooperation Opportunities

### PRIORITY 3

### Strengthening the organisational capacity among NPA communities to make use of cooperation opportunities

In this priority the focus lies on cooperation opportunities. It aims to strengthen cooperation skills in the NPA programme area and foster collaboration across communities, small organisations, projects and programmes, promoting shared knowledge, strategies, and local empowerment. Projects can be top-down or stakeholder-driven, including small projects.

#### Types of actions to be funded

- Development and transfer of capacity building concepts to engage stakeholders in cooperation based on local knowledge, supporting them to implement strategies for Northern Periphery and Arctic regions

#### Main target groups

- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- National public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- Education/training centre and school
- SME
- International organisation, EEIG
- General public (including local communities)

#### Indicators for evaluation

- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects
- Strategies and action plans jointly developed
- Organisations cooperating across borders
- Jointly developed solutions



# How to apply

The previous chapter summarised the objective and the different priorities of the Interreg NPA programme. In this chapter, you will learn how to maximize your project's potential within the programme, how to assess your project's alignment with the program's objectives, explore the requirements for partners and project types and examine the steps involved in the application process.



*Interreg NPA Creative Momentum connected emerging creative talents with existing businesses to encourage international collaboration. Working together expanded the creativity of young professionals and their market reach.*

*Photo: Kristina Jeppson from Sweden visiting Ruth Graham in Ireland.*



*"Through Interreg NPA projects communities from the Northern Periphery and Arctic work together on matters they have a shared interest in."*

## IS YOUR PROJECT A GOOD MATCH?

Interreg NPA spans a vast territory, and the programme seeks to take on transnational challenges. At the same time, the Programme seeks to support concrete and measurable results. The NPA might be the right programme for the activities and geography you want to address if:

- 1** You share a problem or see an opportunity that affects people specifically in the NPA region.
- 2** You have an idea how to address it.
- 3** You look for qualified partners who can bring different competences, experiences and are directly affected by the challenge/opportunity.
- 4** Consider if Interreg NPA is the right programme for your project. The Interreg NPA can provide knowledge, networks, skills, capacity, and funding. The Interreg NPA might not be the right programme for you if you focus on research or education.
- 5** Together you and your partners develop the idea into a project.

### Project partner requirements

- The Lead Partner must be a publicly funded organisation, such as a municipality council, regional authority, governmental organisation or publicly funded research institute based in one of the NPA regions.
- Minimum involvement of 3 programme partner countries, at least one of which should be an EU Member State.
- Every project should involve partners from at least 2 zones of the programme area.

### How to find ideas and partners

Applicants can contact the Secretariat or the Regional Contact Points and participate in events organised by the programme to find partners and ideas.



[www.interreg-npa.eu](http://www.interreg-npa.eu)





# FROM IDEA TO PRACTICE

## Types of projects

The Interreg NPA Programme supports several different project types with varying eligibility and selection criteria, along with additional expectations and requirements outlined in each call's Terms of Reference. Additionally, the Monitoring Committee can introduce specific small project types as needed.

## Preparatory projects to develop main projects

Preparatory projects are meant to facilitate strong partnerships in remote areas and help partners collaborate effectively. With budgets up to 100,000 EUR, lasting 6-12 months, they should address their chosen objective, leading to quality main project applications.

## Main projects

Main projects are expected to develop concrete project outputs, such as jointly developed solutions, which have a positive impact on the project's target groups. Approximate project size is 5-7 partners in a transnational team. 1.5 million EUR budget, and 3-year duration, focusing on tangible solutions for their target groups.

## Small-scale projects for capacity building in Priority 3

Small-scale projects should enhance NPA communities' capacity for cooperation, promote natural and cultural heritage, build underrepresented groups' experience, and prepare partners for future main projects. Budgets can be up to 200,000 EUR, and projects can last up to 18 months.

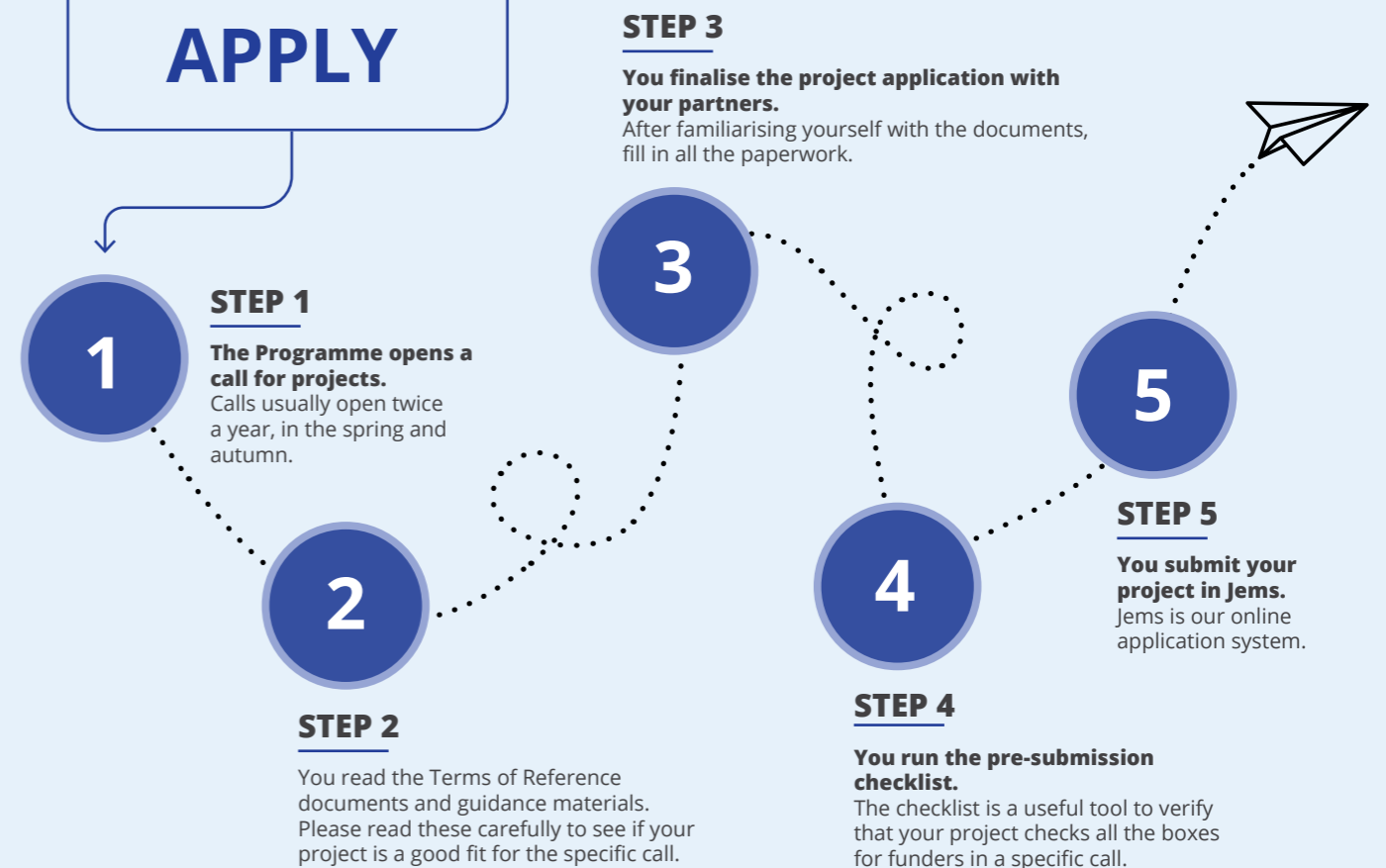
## Clustering projects

Clustering projects merge and share results from past projects, extending their impact to a wider audience. They facilitate collaboration across programs and have budgets up to 200,000 EUR, lasting up to 12 months.

## For all types of projects

The project funding is not paid out in advance but as a reimbursement. This means that your project must have financial abilities to function independently for approximately the first year.

## HOW TO APPLY



## IF YOUR PROJECT IS APPROVED



# *Organisation and funding*





# ORGANISATION

## PROGRAMME BODIES

### Joint secretariat

The Joint Secretariat in Copenhagen administers the programme, assesses project applications and assists with all project-related inquiries. The Secretariat staff assists you through the entire project life cycle.

### Regional Contact Points

Each participating country in the Interreg NPA programme has a Regional Contact Point (RCP) who provides local advice and information. RCPs work closely with the Joint Secretariat. It is recommended to consult your RCP during project planning and implementation.

### Managing Authority

The Managing Authority (MA) manages the programme on behalf of the partner countries. They issue the Grant Letter, oversee the financial claim process, and handle payment transfers to projects.

### Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee (MC) oversees the programme and selects project applications. It includes representatives from partner countries and receives advisory input from the European Commission. MC members and observers are listed on the Interreg NPA website.

### Regional Advisory Groups

Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs) in each partner country advise on main project applications. They consider applications from a regional perspective, make recommendations to the MC, and support project development.

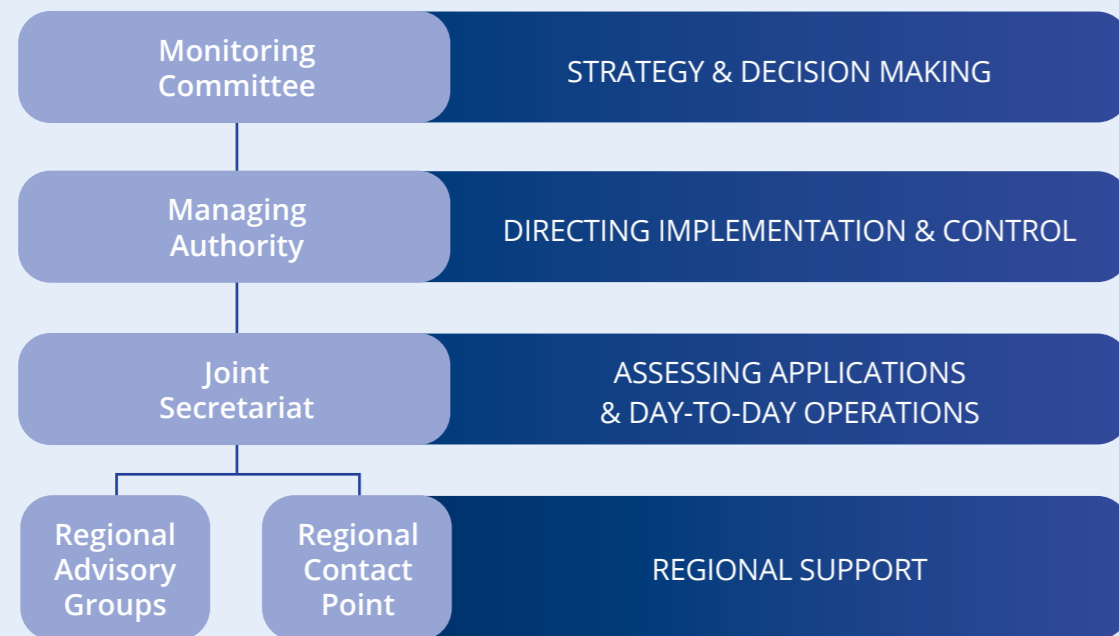
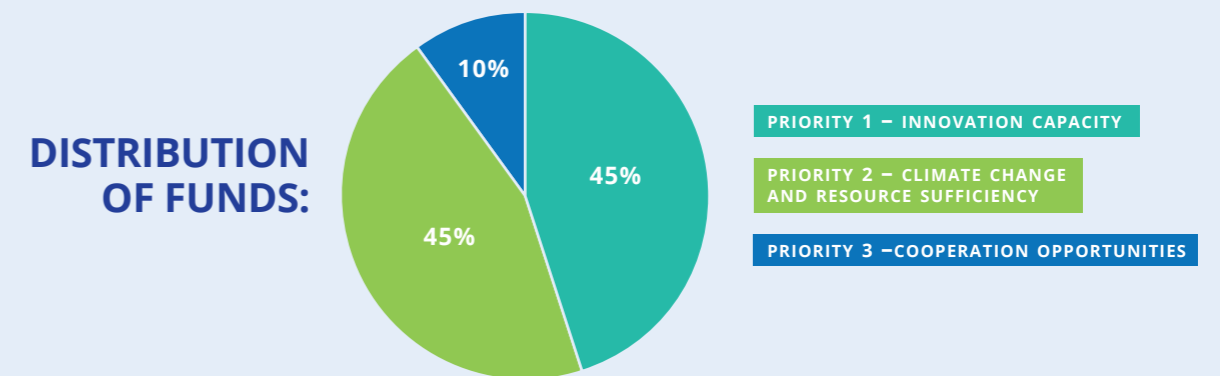


Figure 3 - Programme bodies and their role in the application process

# PROGRAMME FUNDING

Interreg NPA is part of the EU Cohesion Policy and is funded by contributions from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) provided by EU Member States and equivalent funding from non-EU partner countries. The program will allocate a total of €46,909,187 to projects between 2021-2027. €39,978,162 will be available to partners in Member States (Finland, Ireland, Sweden) as European funding (ERDF). Partners in non-EU countries (Norway, Iceland, Faroe Islands, Greenland) will have access to €6,931,025.

Projects seeking funding must also contribute their own funding, either from internal or external public or private sources.



| SOURCE                                   | TYPE            | FUNDING ALLOCATION FOR PROJECTS | GRANT RATE |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Member states (Finland, Ireland, Sweden) | ERDF            | 39 978 162 EUR                  | 65%        |
| Norway                                   | ERDF equivalent | 2 710 020 EUR                   | 50%        |
| Iceland                                  | ERDF equivalent | 2 622 600 EUR                   | 65%        |
| Faroe Islands                            | ERDF equivalent | 772 286 EUR                     | 65%        |
| Greenland                                | ERDF equivalent | 826 119 EUR                     | 65%        |

Table 2 - Funding Sources Interreg NPA





**Northern Periphery and Arctic  
Programme Secretariat**

Strandgade 91, 4th floor  
DK-1401 Copenhagen K, DENMARK  
secretariat@interreg-npa.eu  
Tel.: +45 32 83 37 84  
www.interreg-npa.eu

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