

## ABOUT THE EVENT

Over 400 cross-border cooperation experts and professionals of the 2 Seas area gathered on 25th and 26th April 2019 in Ghent to participate in the 2 Seas Mid-Term Review event. Visitors had the chance to find out the first achievements of the projects that receive ERDF funding through the Interreg 2 Seas Programme 2014-2020.

The opening session included a global overview of what the first six calls for proposals have generated: 282 concept notes, 145 application forms and 69 approved projects. The 2 Seas community now counts 699 project partners and 876 observer partners. From the initial 241 million euro of ERDF available, 28 million is still left to be committed to new projects. A new state of play can be expected in the second half of 2019, when the Monitoring Committee will have decided on the Call 7 project proposals.

After the event opening, participants joined for six thematic workshops in which they were presented with more specific project stories. Project representatives took part in the panel and introduced the lively thematic discussions with their concrete first achievements.

The coffee breaks offered the opportunity to explore the exhibition in which 65 of the approved projects occupied a stand presenting their partnerships, activities and first achievements. Further networking was promoted through a much-appreciated dinner at the end of the first event day.

On the second day, participants took part in technical workshops on complex partnership management, target group involvement and project and financial management. These sessions enabled project staff to meet and exchange ideas with peers in order to improve the implementation of their projects.



The event closed with an inspiring presentation on the future of maritime cooperation, promising words by the Programme Managing Authority and National Authorities representatives and the Project Video Award celebration, where 17 projects were awarded by the European Commission representative.

The main ideas and conclusions coming out of the thematic and technical workshops are presented in the following section.



## KEY MESSAGES FROM THE WORKSHOPS

### Thematic workshops

#### 1 | Innovating in market niches

Panel: Eline Brutyn ([PROFIT](#)), Karima Mouheb ([ICAReS](#)), Jesus Mediavilla Varas ([QUALIFY](#)), Peter Scheijgrond ([MET-CERTIFIED](#))

Moderator: David Grzegorzewski, FL/BE National Authority



*The projects represented in this workshop's panel promote innovation in market niches. PROFIT supports tourism entrepreneurs in the 2 Seas coastal economies by developing a strategy for innovation. ICAReS creates the necessary conditions for innovation in the field of remote sensing and advanced data communication & processing. QUALIFY enables qualification of hybrid structures for lightweight and safe maritime transport. Finally, MET-CERTIFIED aims to increase the adoption of insurable and therefore bankable marine energy projects through the development of internationally recognised standards and certification schemes.*

In order to successfully innovate in 2 Seas markets, it is essential to listen to the **target groups**. Understanding their needs is the key to successfully innovate service design. In addition, projects should make sure to stay close to their target group(s) and establish an ongoing relationship. It will allow them to improve their daily practices and those of their partners.

In case the project deals with regulation and certification, it should make sure to act on the appropriate level. In most cases, it needs to seek for **international solutions** to ensure a significant impact. The cross-border project can then be used as an opportunity to raise the issue at international scale.

Projects should aim to combine different expertise from the 2 Seas area and use this area as a **testing lab**. If the innovative ideas work within the 2 Seas, they will be able to survive in a wider area as well.



## 2 | Rethinking care through social innovation

Panel: Nicole La lacona ([PACE](#)), Alice Chapman-Hatchett ([DWELL](#)), Margot Tempelman ([SAIL](#))

Moderator: Liesbet Lefevere, Province of West Flanders



*The panel for this workshop consisted of projects that search for social innovation solutions to improve classic care services. PACE promotes access to childcare, with special attention to employment of vulnerable families. DWELL applies empowerment methods enabling patients with type 2 diabetes to access tailored support giving them mechanisms to control their condition & improve their wellbeing. Finally, SAIL stimulates active ageing and longer independent living by identifying new ways of helping people remain independent for longer, more self-reliant and less dependent on traditional health care and social care services.*

The key to a good social innovation project is to put the people at the centre of the idea. They are directly affected by a societal challenge and it is for them that projects are designing or rethinking a social innovation solution. These people will therefore hold the answer to a lot of questions a partnership will be asking themselves. Furthermore, **involving** the final **beneficiaries** at an early stage, promotes the sustainable ownership that a project needs to continue without ERDF funding.



The 2 Seas area is wide and there are many different approaches that have locally been tested so far. Despite the challenges related to these cultural differences, creating **unusual cross-border partnerships** allows projects to think outside the box and find more innovative solutions for local problems.

### 3 | Adopting low-carbon technologies in housing infrastructure

Panel: Dominiek Vandewiele ([BISEPS](#)), René Timmerman ([PECS](#)), Paul Vanhoof ([SHINE](#))

Moderator: Sam Lucas, UK National Authority



*The main focus of the three projects of this workshop's panel is the adoption of low-carbon technologies in housing infrastructure. BISEPS encourages business clusters to adopt mid-scale sustainable energy technologies. SHINE aims to reduce carbon emissions in residential dwellings. PECS develops, tests and validates various methods for carbon reduction in small and medium sized ports.*



Cross-border cooperation is important to have organisations experimenting with different solutions to a specific problem. Improving project activities by discussing, developing and testing without any inspiration from outside your organisation will be very difficult if not unrealistic.

**Exchange of best practise** with 2 Seas partners could enable organisations to **spend less resources** (in time and money) to find the right low-carbon solutions to their own problems. Furthermore, potential carbon reduction beyond partnership can be quite substantial if **roll-out and dissemination** are successful: dissemination is not just an add-on!

Businesses need to be convinced of the importance of energy and the **financial benefits** of energy savings through low-carbon technologies.

#### 4 | Developing technologies for a better health

Panel: Iain Allan ([DERMA](#)), Annemarie Kokosy ([EDUCAT](#)), Rochdi Merzouki ([CoBra](#))

Moderator: Muriel Dericquebourg, FR National Authority



*The session included best practice examples from three projects that are each working to deliver innovative technologies in the health sector. DERMA focuses on the development of new interventions for the management of ulcers and related skin diseases, while EDUCAT aims to test new assistive technologies for disabled people having motor impairment or/and neurological disorders. CoBra aims to improve therapy of localised cancers with a new medical robot prototype for brachytherapy and biopsy under guidance of MRI.*

An **innovative and relevant partnership** should also include direct links with the appropriate stakeholders, which is necessary to **link R&D with the market**. A newly developed product can only be successful if it takes into account the specificities and needs of the final beneficiaries so effective reach out at the start of the project is key. Several best practices should be collected at the very start and feed into the discussion on how to improve technology that takes into account concrete needs and builds on previous experience from the whole area.



One of the main **challenges** in technology development can be **IPR** as projects need to find a good balance between confidentiality and wide communication and dissemination which is mandatory in an Interreg project.

## 5 | Improving climate change resilience of coastal, rural and urban areas

Panel: Karel Vanackere ([SCAPE](#)), Yill Vogelesang-Havers ([SPONGE2020](#)), Stephen Dury ([TRIPLE-C](#))

Moderator: Kees Blom, NL National Authority

*The fifth thematic workshop gathered representatives from the projects SCAPE, SPONGE2020 and TRIPLE-C, all working on different angles of climate change resilience. SCAPE aims to develop Landscape-led Design solutions for water management and focuses on coastal areas while SPONGE2020 focuses on risks of flooding in cities and densely built areas. While flooding is also the challenge to tackle in TRIPLE-C, the latter will work with farmers to create water retention and erosion control measures.*



A good climate change resilience project should propose an **innovative** and **unusual partnership** that will allow to approach the topic of climate change resilience in a different way.

Project partners need to be **flexible** in their **approach** and be prepared to adapt the project to the unpredictable effects of climate change or learning from other initiatives.

Partnerships need to involve land-owners and end-users in climate change resilience in order to allow for more **durable measures**. You need them to ensure **ownership** and even act as an ambassador for a wider outreach.

A point for of advice is to **reach out** to **intermediary bodies** in order to increase uptake and offer support.



## 6 | Adopting more sustainable solutions for a better use of resources

Panel: Erik Meers ([GRASSIFICATION](#)), Bart Vandecasteele ([HORTI-BLUEC](#)), Jarinda Viane ([BIO4SAFE](#))

Moderator: Hanne Witters, Province of Antwerp



*The projects presented in this thematic workshop aim to adopt solutions for a better use of resources. GRASSIFICATION stimulates a new, land circular economy based on roadside grass. Horti-BlueC proposes to substitute non-renewable feedstock materials such as white peat or stone wool with locally-produced, renewable feedstock materials. Finally, Bio4Safe aims to reduce water and fertilizer use in horticulture by using bio-stimulants and innovative tools.*

**Many different actors** need to be on board in order to ensure a good circular economy project. Projects should identify them at an early stage, contact them and allow for sufficient time to get their interest in their activities. Once the **concrete benefit** of a project to their working is clear, they will be convinced to participate.



Projects should develop a partnership that contains a wide variety of actors. Circular economy projects require **partnerships covering the whole value chain** to close the loop. The role of **policy makers** as catalyst in the adoption of more sustainable solutions is pivotal, both in terms of legislation and incentive. These people should be involved in the project as partners, observers or active target groups already from the start.

## Technical workshops

### 1 | Complex partnership management

Panel: Lizzie Sagoo ([INNOVEG](#)), Jos Knockaert ([INCASE](#)), Nathalie Van de Zande ([SAIL](#)), Christine Wissinck ([Star2Cs](#))

Moderators: Gianluca Ferreri & Julie Lefebvre, Joint Secretariat

*This session was organised on demand of the Lead Partners to share best practices and tips for dealing with complex partnership management. The session was therefore very interactive and led to the following conclusions:*

1. Make sure roles and **responsibilities** are **clear** from the start and come back to these at each management committee to check whether these are still up to date and followed. Moreover, a Lead Partner does not have to be in charge of everything, he should **delegate** tasks and make other partners responsible for sub-activities.
2. **Foster trust** and sharing between partners namely through **side activities**. Organise site visits, share a meal or set up a staff exchange in order to get to know each other better.
3. Ensure **intensive communication** during meetings and in-between. Find the best suitable way to communicate with each of your partners and adapt on case by case basis.
4. In case of bigger partnerships, limit the amount of people around the table during project steering committees and separate project management from the technical aspect if necessary.
5. Create your **own project culture** based on the individuals behind the partner organisations and the common goal. Take into account different cultures and language barriers and come up with a joint understanding of certain concepts that you are aiming to deliver.
6. Be open for comments and **feedback**. These can greatly improve the quality of your project and allow you to take some distance from current practice and improve your project management skills. A Lead Partner needs to maintain control but should not act top-down and instead empower other partners to do their share.



## 2 | Target Group Involvement

Panel: Eveline Huyghe ([BISEPS](#)), Alice Chapman-Hatchett ([DWELL](#)), Veerle Willaert ([MET-CERTIFIED](#))

Moderators: Lien Mensaert & Wannes Haemers, Joint Secretariat

*The session on target group involvement benefited from a strong panel of project management professionals that shared a great deal of best practice on how to develop project communication and concrete examples of what worked well for their Interreg projects. The conclusions were:*

1. It is crucial to clearly **define your target groups** and communication objectives at **start of project**. Go back to the target group section in the Application Form and study the **target values** per output. Make sure this exercise has been undertaken for all partners and that each of them knows who they have to reach per output. Break down the total target value into specific types of organisations so that the monitoring of target group involvement becomes easier and the Lead Partner is able to propose a clear **methodology** to the Programme.
2. **Tailor made local communication** actions are often necessary **next to global** project communication. A project newsletter in English only might for example not be suitable to reach local communities.
3. Ensure **uniform communication** through logo, project colours, visual identity. Even if the message is slightly different per partner, give visibility to the project visual identity and make sure every communication product is part of the whole project communication.
4. **Adapt channels/products to audience**. An advertisement in the local newspaper can work best for one audience while a twitter message might have more impact for another.
5. Make use of **existing** events, free tools, social media to reach a maximum of people. Do not invest huge means and human resources in planning big project events or building a project website if you can reach the same type of people through existing events/partner websites. Focus your events to a specific target group and propose a programme that answers to what they would like to know specifically.



### 3 | Keys to success in project and financial management

Panel: H el ene Evrard ([AGE'IN](#)) St ephanie De Man ([NEREUS](#)), Geert de Lepeleer ([CBCI](#))

Moderators: Alexander Detremmerie & Marianne Denoeu, Joint Secretariat

This session covered a very broad range of topics linked to overall project and financial management of Interreg projects. The main tips that came out of this session were:

1. Keeping the focus on what the **Application Form** envisaged is difficult but essential. Analyse carefully the information in the Application Form and make sure all partners use this document as a reference. All deviations should be highlighted to the Lead Partners and change if they have a blocking effect.
2. **Involve the full partnership in reporting** on project delivery and progress. Although the Lead Partner has the responsibility to complete the Annual Progress Report, all partner should provide sufficient information on their contribution, on the problems they encountered and on the interest they were able to raise in their part of the territory.
3. A realistic **spending forecast** is important in respect of the 'performance review'. Many projects realised they were too ambitious regarding their spending at the start of the project and quickly accumulate delays in spending. Integrate partner spending at the start of each project steering committee and make sure that there is an explanation behind underspending for each of the partners.
4. Prepare well for the **kick-off meeting** with your **FLC** as this is crucial to define a good working relationship, deadlines and clarify potential eligibility issues. Do not hesitate to contact your FLC for any questions on the documents you need to show in order to justify expenditure.



**PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK**



According to a satisfactory survey, the Mid-Term Review event was highly appreciated by most participants. The primary reasons for delegates to attend the event was to promote their approved project and showcase their first achievements. They were therefore mainly looking for good opportunities to **network**, meet other similar projects/initiatives and **disseminate** their **project achievements** to a very wide range of stakeholders from the 2 Seas area. In that view, the exhibition space with project stands and the networking dinner were evaluated very positively.

The **thematic sessions** on the first day of the event covered a whole range of interesting project achievements. The panel for each of the sessions provided some very good insights for each of the chosen themes and invited the audience to react. Due to the very large number of participants for the event, the **level of interaction** was rather low in some of the sessions and participants would have liked the audience to be a bit less shy on the first day.



As most of the organisations that took part in the event represented directly one of the 2 Seas projects, the **technical sessions** for project partners on the second day of the event were considered very useful. Some organisations regretted that these three sessions took place in **parallel** and that they could only attend one of them. The sessions were very interactive and focused on **peer to peer exchanges** which was greatly appreciated.



The Programme received many encouraging feedbacks on the practical organisation of the event in the evaluation survey and wants to thank each of the participants for having contributed enthusiastically and attended so numerously the event. The success of a Mid-term Review Event lays in the quality of the approved projects that each made an effort to showcase their cross-border partnership and first achievements that can be seen on the ground.



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