

Interreg 2021-2027: Working together, across borders

Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine, 24 October 2019

Event summary

The 6th programme of Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine will run from 2021 until 2027. Our event on 24 October 2019 was the first occasion to look ahead to this period.

The event invited organisations from across the Euregio to identify future ambitions and challenges. It encouraged attendees to network with their counterparts from the other side of the border.

190 participants attended the event, representing local and regional authorities, universities, knowledge institutes, sectoral organisations, media, and NGOs. They came from across the Euregio, including Belgium (46,4%), Germany (14,3%) and The Netherlands (39,3%). Over 25% indicated that they were new to Interreg.

Reducing the border effect

Borders raise barriers that impede our region from reaching its full potential. Increased cooperation across borders reduces the border effect and contributes to our region's development.

Interreg provides funds for projects where partners collaborate across borders. Together, they develop shared solutions to common challenges. Successful projects establish long-lasting, cross-border networks and partnerships.

Interreg Euregio Meuse Rhine VI (2021-2027)

In the 6th programme period Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine, intends to:

- Subsidise large and small cross-border projects with a concrete impact on the Euregio;
- Increase cross-border activity;
- Reduce the border effect;

- Create new and long-lasting cross-border partnerships and networks;
- Reduce complexity;
- Help identify potential project partners ('mapping of stakeholders').

Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine wants to be an outward-looking and service-oriented organisation. A relief of the administrative burden should make way for a focus on content.

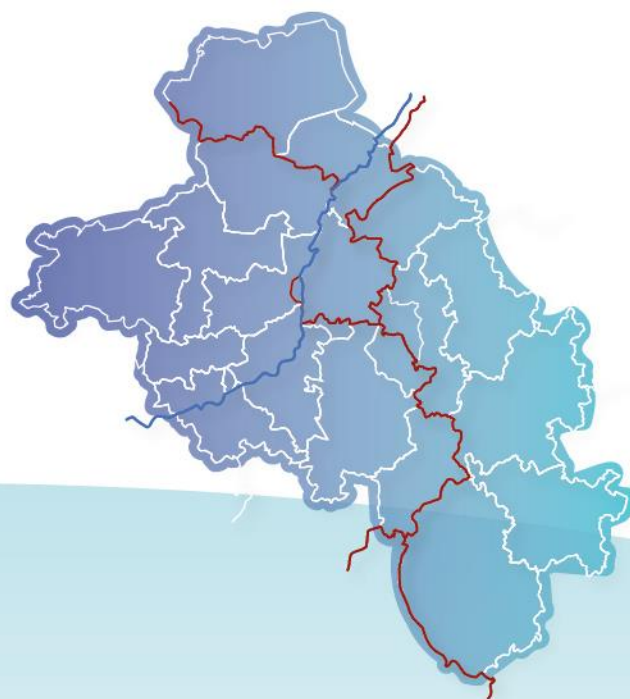
Project testimonials

Two of Interreg Euregio Meuse Rhine's current projects, EMRaDi and EMR Connect, shared their experiences with setting up and running a project.

EMRaDi

EMRaDi improves the situation for patients with rare diseases in the Euregio. They tend to look across borders for specific treatment. Yet, large differences in healthcare systems, social security and culture complicate their treatment.

EMRaDi emphasised the human element of project management. An open, constructive attitude and personal contacts add to a good atmosphere within a project consortium.



Clearly defined roles and a Letter of Intent can improve collaboration. Projects should start small, set realistic objectives and keep a clear focus.

EMRaDi welcomes a simplification of administrative procedures in the next programme period.

EMR Connect

EMR Connect invests in public transport in the Euregio, including ticketing, real-time data, training and bike-sharing.

Regular meetings and a common commitment to the project's objectives were some success factors of the project.

Two major challenges were the management of a 14-partner consortium and anticipating rapid developments in public transport.

EMR Connect emphasises Euregional funds as a main enabler for cross-border activities.

Input from breakout groups

Discussions followed the following themes:

1. Society, including health and lifelong learning;
2. Connectivity, including mobility and digitalisation;
3. Circular economy, including agro and bio-based chemistry;
4. Climate, including energy, nature and urban adaptation.

1. Society (including healthcare and lifelong learning)

Health

Delegates expressed the following ambitions:

- Sharing of knowledge, best practices and (regional) data;
- Have regional healthcare levels catch up with the national average;
- Focus on a citizen-centred approach, including access to healthcare, home treatment and equal standards across borders;
- Involvement of patient associations;
- Making the shift from cure to prevention and care.

Healthcare projects should find cross-overs with other sectors and societal issues, including:

- Education and life-long learning;
- Labour market;
- Biomaterials and technology;
- Food and nutrition;
- Physical activity and lifestyle;
- Environment.

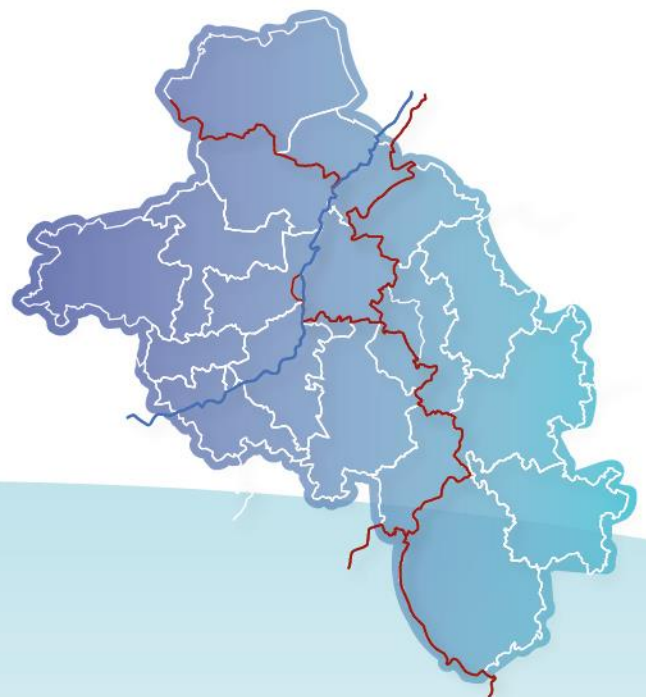
Furthermore, healthcare projects should:

- Involve SMEs;
- Establish public-private partnerships;
- Link professionals with cross-border labour market needs.

Lifelong learning

Participants expressed the following ambitions.

- Promotion of neighbouring languages and intercultural skills;
- Better alignment of education with companies' labour demands;
- Arrange cross-border traineeships and encourage on-the-job training;
- Creating cross-border curriculums at all levels of education;
- Enable cross-border education through the mutual recognition of diplomas and lifting barriers to cross-border teaching.



2. Connectivity (including mobility and digitalisation)

Mobility

Mobility is a means to improve competitiveness and social conditions in the Euregio. Delegates put forward the following ideas:

- Improving cross-border public transport connections;
- Developing regional mobility plans;
- Improved cross-border travel information;
- An Euregio-level approach to traffic flows, including modelling and data-sharing;
- Encouraging safe and sustainable travel to school;
- On-demand mobility for rural areas;
- Making tourism accessible to people with a disability;
- Connecting bike and car-sharing to international public transport networks;
- Encouraging multimodality and 'soft' mobility (i.e. walking and cycling);
- Promote digital applications such as e-ticketing;
- Harmonisation of prices for cross-border mobility.

Digitalisation

A typical cross-over topic, digitalisation should support other sectors such as healthcare, education, mobility, tourism, urban development, local economy and the public sector. Yet, awareness of 'who does what' remains low. A mapping of stakeholders should identify:

- New, regional partners;
- Trends and technologies in the Euregio;
- Best practices in local industries.

Discussions delivered the following concrete ideas:

- A digital networking platform for universities, research centres, students and SMEs;
- Digitalisation projects for rural areas, including on internet and network connectivity;
- Promotion of digitalisation in SMEs and manufacturing processes.

The remark was made that digitalisation does not only concern high-end technology, and that it should support all levels of SMEs.

Delegates also suggested cross-border collaboration between news media and more exposure for the Euregio Meuse-Rhine.

3. Circular economy (including agro and bio-based chemistry)

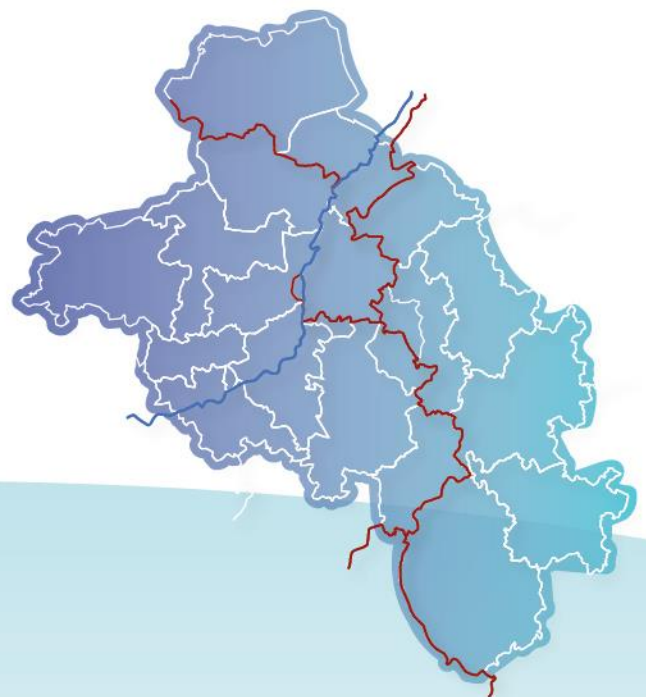
Discussions revealed a clear need for collaboration on circular economy, across the Euregio, across value chains, and between companies.

Accordingly, delegates suggested the setting up of a Euregional platform for companies, for the purpose of:

- Sharing of know-how;
- Support to businesses;
- The development of collaborative business models;
- Linking recyclers, product designers and product developers;
- Offering SMEs a platform for the registration of waste products, which could be a resource for other SMEs;
- Sharing of examples of cross-border circular economy in the Euregio;

Discussions also identified the need for:

- Increased knowledge of materials to improve products and the efficiency of recycling;
- Organising value chains and different stages of recycling;



- Making circularity part of business operations;
- Applying the circularity concept to the construction sector;
- The reduction of plastic waste and medical waste;
- Support to local food producers through networks and the exchange of best practices.

Other challenges in the sector include:

- Green chemistry;
- Mechanical recycling;
- High-value recycling;
- Biodegradable materials;
- Bio-based materials.

4. Climate (including energy, nature and urban adaptation)

Participants expressed the following ambitions:

- Raising the share of renewable energy as part of the total energy production in the Euregio;
- Climate adaptation projects in smaller cities;
- Sharing of best practices in energy from the Euregio (including on renewable energy, innovative solutions and business models);
- Cross-border electric distribution networks;
- Cross-border energy communities;
- Cross-border governance for renewable energy;
- Energy-neutral buildings;
- CO₂ reduction in industry;
- Hydrogen projects;
- Fuel cell projects.

General remarks

The discussions confirmed three ambitions that apply to all sectors and all Interreg projects:

1. A reduction of complexity and a relief of the administrative burden;
2. The involvement of SMEs and companies;
3. The need to connect partners across the Euregio ('mapping of stakeholders').

Next event

The next event on the 6th programme of Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine will take place in 2020. To receive the invitation, please leave your email at www.interregemr.eu/2021-2027.

Get in touch

In case you would like to give input into the 6th programme, do not hesitate to get in touch with Interreg Euregio Meuse-Rhine:

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