

# “Interregional and international collaboration in R&I: insights from lagging regions ”

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## The scope of the 'Lagging Regions' project

### Low growth regions

- Greece (Central Macedonia, Western Macedonia and the national level)
- Italy (Puglia and Campania)
- Portugal (Algarve, Alentejo, Centro, Norte)
- Spain (Extremadura)

### Low income regions

- Bulgaria (national level)
- Hungary (national level)
- Poland (Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lubuskie, Podlaskie)
- Romania (national level plus all the regions)
- Croatia (national level)

## Some facts

### - Participation of EU13 in H2020

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- Represents 8.5% of total participations and receive 4.4% of total funding although EU13 FTE researchers make for 12.45% of EU28 FTE.
- A lower success rate of applications: 11.1% vs. 14.4% for the EU-15.
- A much smaller share of project coordinators : 5.1% vs. 87.6% (EU-15).
- Participate more in larger projects (i.e. > EUR 5 million), but coordinate more often small projects (<EUR 200 000).

# Participation of widening countries in ERA-NETs, Art 185, JPIs

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- On average 25 network participations for EU13 countries vs. 47 network participations for EU15 countries
- EU13 agencies take part mostly as task leaders rather than work-package leaders, let alone coordinators networks
- P2P-supported projects with EU13 organisations: 66 on average against 342 with EU15 participations

## The study on interregional collaboration

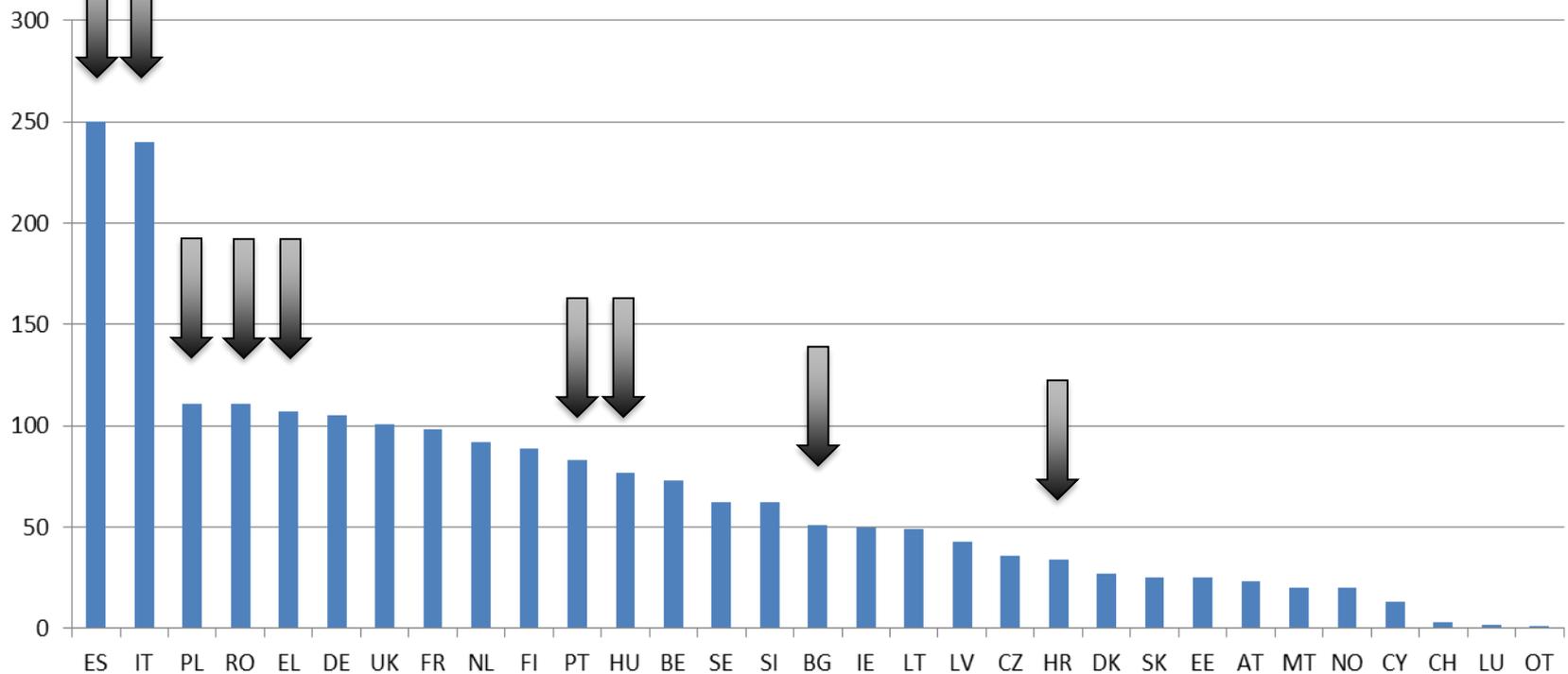
Case studies include:

1. Puglia Region in Italy
2. Centro Region in Portugal
3. Western Hungary in Hungary
4. Croatia (national level)
5. Extremadura Region in Spain
6. Region of Western Macedonia in Greece
7. Nord-East Region and Centru Region in Romania
8. Kainuu Finland (with the BRIDGES Coordinator)

Kainuu (FI) a 'strong +' innovator, Centro (PT) a 'strong –' innovator, all the rest 'moderate' or 'modest' innovators (RIS 2017)

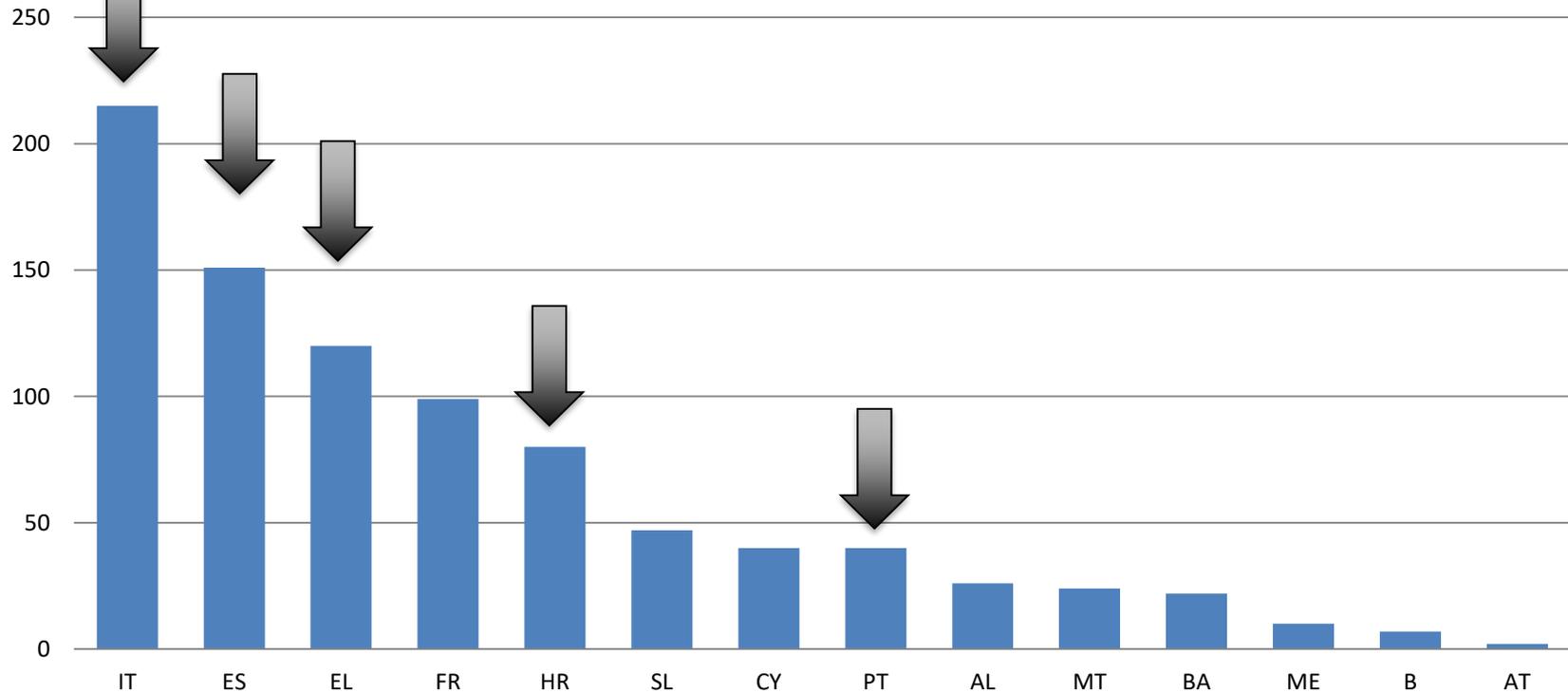
# Some facts from certain Interreg programmes

Interreg-Europe: Number of beneficiaries

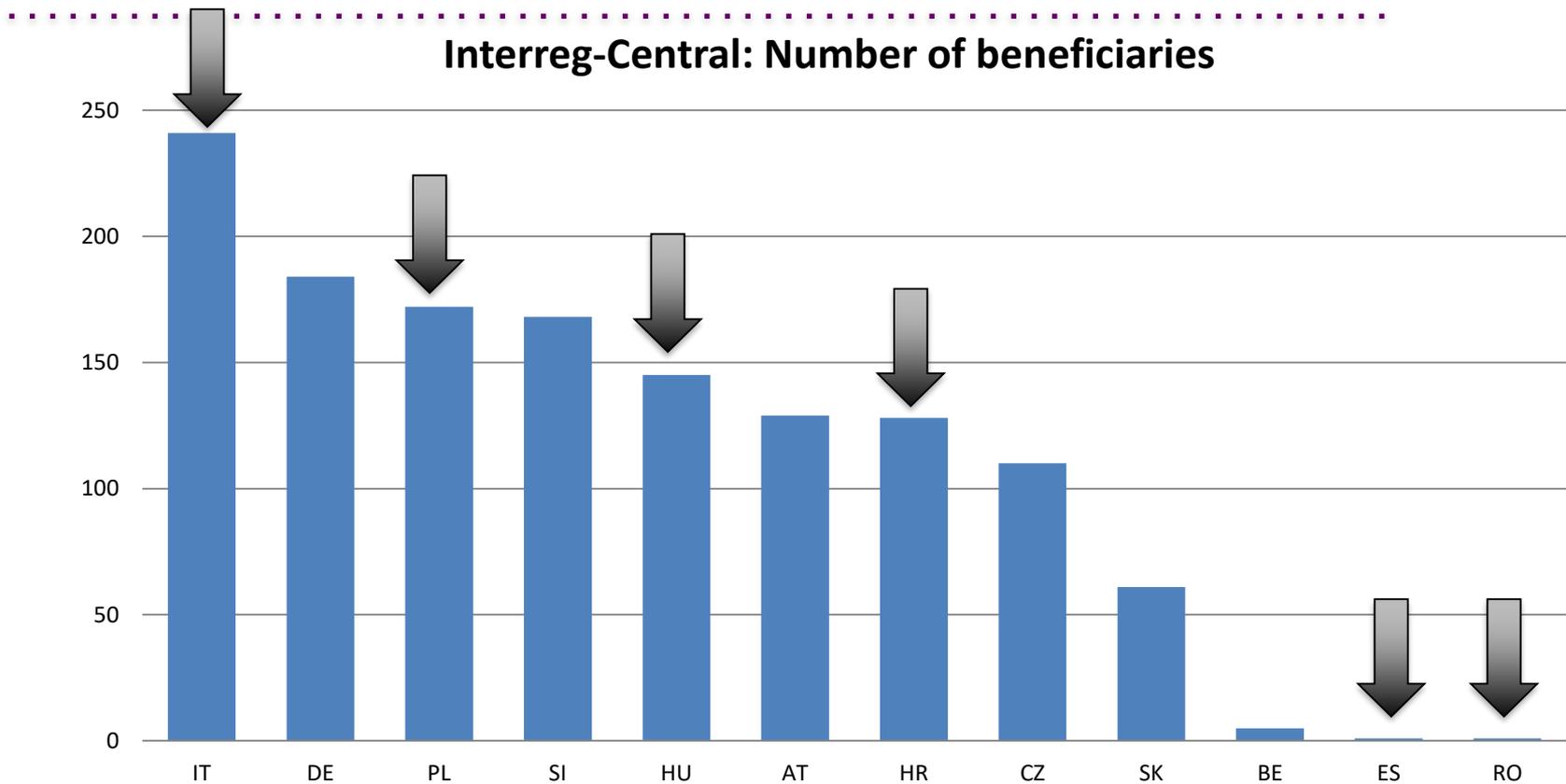


# Some facts

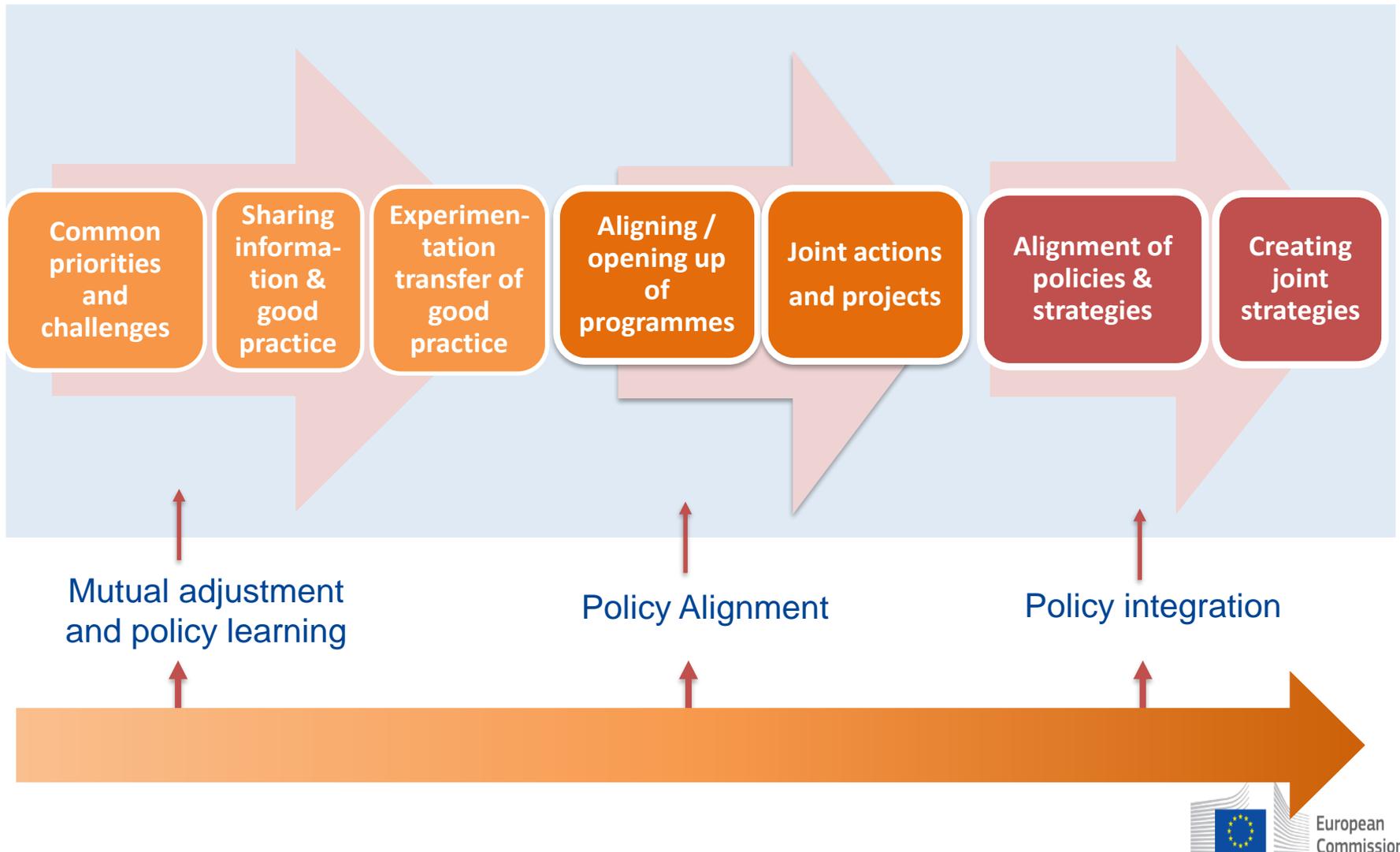
Interreg – Mediterranean: Number of beneficiaries



# Some facts



# A shift towards a more selective and strategic approach to interregional collaboration



## Rationale for collaboration based on case studies

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- **Technology and knowhow transfer:** e.g. BRIDGES – Interreg Europe, Western Macedonia - Greece, Kainuu and Helsinki – Uusimaa in Finland
  - **Industrial transition:** e.g. LED/Greece – Albania 2014-2020, FOUADATION – Interreg Europe involving Western Hungary (among others), BRIDGES
  - **Modernisation and digitalisation** of SMEs: DigitaliseSME incl. Centru (RO) and Extremadura (ES), Upgrade SME – Interreg Europe and 3D Central – Interreg Central inv. Western Hungary, ODEON – Interreg-Med inv. Croatia and Region of Crete - EL
  - **Improved RIS3 implementation:** e.g. Beyond EDP and MONITORIS3 – Interreg Europe, IMPROVE – Interreg-NPA – led by Extremadura (ES)
  - **Cross-border S3** e.g. Extremadura (ES), Centro and Alentejo (PT) (“EUROACE”); Norte (PT) and Galicia (ES)
  - **Joint cooperation strategy:** e.g.; POCTEP Spanish-Portuguese cross-border challenges; Albania and Puglia (IT)

## Rationale for collaboration based on case studies

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- **Thematically oriented collaborative** projects: e.g. RegioTex co led by NordEst Romania and the successor TEX4IM project
  - **Framework conditions:** e.g. Smart Factory Hub - Interreg Danube – inv. Croatia or PPI2Innovate – Interreg Central – inv. Croatia, Hungary, among others, but also regions such as Piemonte (Italy).
  - **Joint value chains:** e.g. the collaboration between NordEst Romania and SNN
  - **Research Infrastructures:** e.g. partnership between Croatia and Spain to host the DONES (DEMO Oriented Neutron Source) facility in Europe.
  - Many other collaborative projects under programmes including INTERREG, COSME, EUREKA/EUROSTARS, H2020, ERASMUS+ or European partnerships in R&I.

*“We not only cooperate for exchanges of good practices – learning is a must but only learning is not enough, we need to have concrete results, returns to scale.”  
Kainuu Region (Finland)*

## Drivers and motivations for interregional collaboration

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- Create critical mass and access complementary assets
- Address competence lock-ins and/or institutional or relational inertia
- Prevent government and institutional failures
- Improve conditions for entrepreneurial self-discovery
- Share costs and risks and overcome fragmentation
- Develop public goods and services
- motivations and drivers are different across different actors, e.g.:
  - For policy, it is policy and organisational learning a major motivation apart from meeting the needs of the region
  - For project beneficiaries, it is mainly the need to sustain / improve their businesses
- Overall, an underlying belief that innovation cannot be done behind closed doors and that certain challenges cannot be dealt with by a single country/region alone.

## Enabling factors for interregional collaboration

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- Similar / complementary interests / challenges
- Complementary capacities / expertise
- Similar / compatible institutional and territorial contexts
- Proximity (functional, relational, cognitive, geographical)
- The importance of geographical proximity depends on the topic addressed, i.e. it is not of major importance in areas not 'bounded' in geographical terms

## Barriers and challenges for interregional collaboration

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- Lack of trust between potential partners and/or mismatch of objectives
- Asymmetric levels of policy competence and/or research capabilities
- Differences in levels of regional autonomy and regional R&I system governance
- Socio-cultural mismatch (e.g. language barriers)
- Legal or administrative barriers
  
- Institutional / relational inertia
- Limited commitment of national stakeholders and/or insufficient engagement of regional stakeholders
- Limited resources ( financial, human) or lack of synergies across funding sources
- Lack of collaborative links between local actors (research and businesses) or with foreign actors (MNC)
- Mind-set implying inferiority of actors in lagging regions and/or lack of level playing field in collaboration across lagging and non-lagging regions

## Perceived benefits of interregional collaboration

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- Shared policy experiences and good practices
- Increased regional visibility
- Improved access to research expertise
- Improved critical mass in research
- Shared costs and risks associated with R&I
- Supported industry in exploiting new markets
- Better and more integrated services for SMEs
- Supported industry in exploiting technological opportunities
- Improved linkages between research & industry
- Contribution to solving common socio-economic problems

## The interplay between S3 and interregional collaboration

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S3 and interregional cooperation are mutually reinforcing to the benefit of the regional R&I system:

- S3 push regions to clearly **identify and assess their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities**, and thus to their position vis-à-vis other regions.
- S3 provides **guidelines and insights** about market and business needs, exchange **platforms** as well as **opportunities for valorisation** of innovation.
- By linking S3 priorities with interregional cooperation local R&I actors are ‘exposed’ to new knowledge flows that can trigger **new insights for S3 priorities**.
- The **value chain approach** might help better identify the actual strengths of lagging regions.

## Perceived benefits as reported by some regions

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*“S3 focused on the needs of the region, to set the minimum needs (attract more talents, improve businesses, raise awareness of R&D, support R&D infrastructure). But until now we were more focused inwards. Now we **need to rethink considering also international collaboration** as an important S3 feature.” (Extremadura, Spain)*

*“**Interregional cooperation may help unlock the innovation potential of S3 priorities.** S3 helps the alignment of priority areas favouring the identification of potential partners for international cooperation.” (Centro Region, Portugal)*

*“S3 is important especially in regions with a **small economic base**. If you want to have a strong localised economy, you **need to have exchanges with international peers and collaborators** to create the **critical mass** required for the local economy.” (Kainuu Region, Finland)*

*“We have to consider that a **parochial approach** (i.e. concentrating solely on our own back yard in terms of knowledge generation and knowledge acquisition) will drastically limit the capacity of growth for the regional economy but also will wipe out almost all the incentives for the R&I system.” (Centru Region, Romania)*

## Some reflections

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- Lagging regions are **increasingly getting engaged in international cooperation** beyond exchange of good practices and policy learning.
- R&I system **similarities**, geographical **proximity** or S3 common priority areas are key enablers but a **level playing field**, a win-win situation for all involved should be the underlying approach. For this to happen other conditions are important: **trust, common understanding** of challenges and opportunities, willingness to contribute to **interregional convergence**.
- **Building** the various types of **capacities and skills** needed is important.
- **Opening up** programmes and **funding foreign organisations** is not impossible.
- Lagging regions are interested in **integrating the interregional cooperation dimension** in their development strategies – useful tools exist that should be spread.



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**Thank you for your attention!**

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