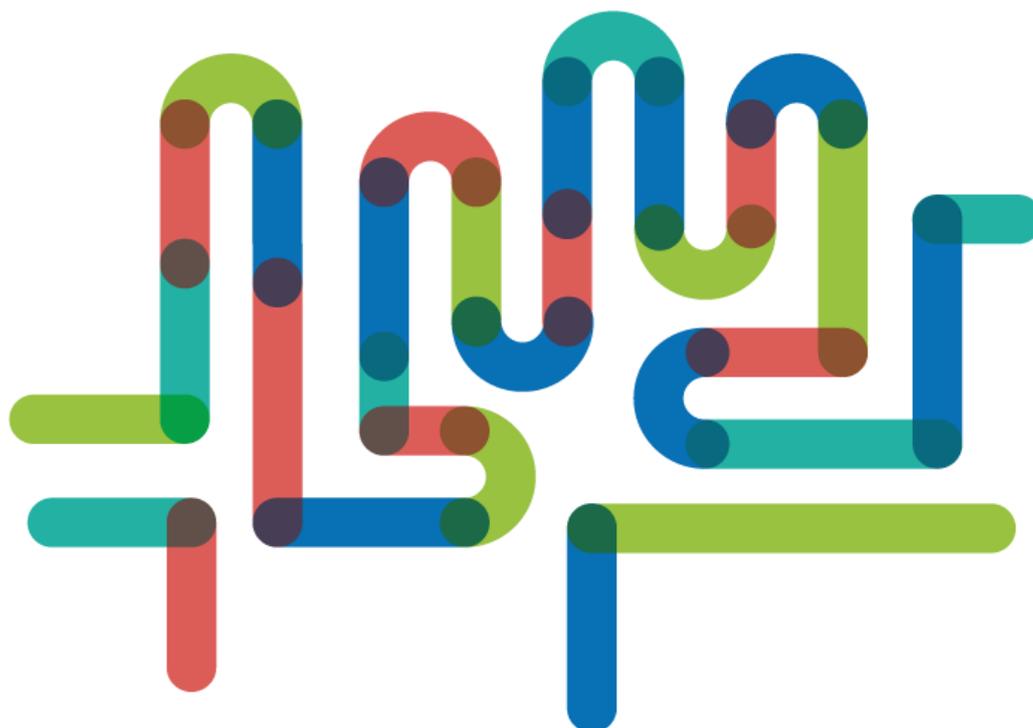


INTERREG VI-A ITALY-SLOVENIA 2021-2027

CONSULTATION POST 2027 PROGRAMME STAKEHOLDERS, CITIZENS AND SCHOOLS





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FOREWORD



The consultation focused on the potential topics of cross-border cooperation between Italy and Slovenia, for the next period 2028-2034.



The consultation process is being implemented through 2024 by all European INTERREG Programmes. The outcomes of the consultation will be transmitted to the European Commission, responsible for defining the legislative framework for the seven-year period after the year 2027.

This Report regards the outcomes of consultation on the future of Interreg Italy-Slovenia post-2027 for: Programme stakeholders, citizens and – inserted as an Annex and as a pilot-initiative - school children aged 9 to 11.

Respondents were **75 stakeholders** (48 from Italy and 27 from Slovenia), **36 citizens** (18 from Italy and 18 from Slovenia) and **297 pupils** (from Italy, Italian and Slovene nationalities).

REPORT ON STAKEHOLDERS

1. MAIN STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED



Beneficiaries from periods 2007-2013, 2014-2020 and 2021-2027 were consulted, covering many sectors of activities (national, regional, local authorities, agriculture, environment, cooperation, culture, energy, research, education and training, health, social and economic parties, transports, tourism, etc.).

2. METHODS OF CONSULTATION AND DATA DISPLAY



The questionnaire was initially prepared in English and then translated and published on **EU Survey in Italian and Slovenian**.

The questionnaire was available online between March 19th and May 8th. A re-launch was made between July 11th until September 8th.

Respondents were 75, 48 from Italy and 27 from Slovenia for the stakeholders and 36 participants for the Questionnaire for citizens, 18 from Italy and 18 from Slovenia.

In terms of quality, information deriving from the free comments is reported below.

The questionnaire for Programme stakeholders was made up of **12 questions** based on the template proposed in the European Commission Toolkit, adding the multiple choices into 11 questions (except that on the dream project) in order to facilitate the processing of outcomes while leaving space for open comments. The Options inserted in questions regarding topics derive directly from objectives (POs/SOs) as listed in the EC Regulations. Please, see details on the technical approach adopted under each question.

Compared to the Toolkit, some questions were added because they were deemed useful for Programme internal evaluation and/or management. Some of them were divided into two parts (questions 2 and 3, 7 and 8) to let the analysis first at level of POs and then at level of SOs.

For easier reading, for each question, the question, its options and an explanation of technical approach adopted are reported before displaying the answers. Answers consist of short descriptions and/or tables and/or useful graphic representation of data and summary of quotation/comments.

3. ANALYSIS OF STAKEHOLDERS' RESPONSES

QUESTION 1 - LIVING NEXT TO A BORDER

Is living next to a border an opportunity or a disadvantage?
Options (choose one option).

1. More an opportunity than a disadvantage
2. More a disadvantage than an opportunity
3. None of the two options
4. it is both, an opportunity and a disadvantage (depending on circumstances)

SPACE FOR EXPLANATION

Italian Stakeholders		
n. respondent	% respondent	Response
38	78.72%	An advantage
0	0%	A disadvantage
2	4.26%	None
8	17.02%	Both
48	100	total
Slovene Stakeholders		
21	76.93%	An advantage
0	0%	A disadvantage
0	0%	None
6	23.07%	Both
27	100	total
Altogether		
59	78.66%	An advantage
0	0%	A disadvantage
2	2.66%	None
14	18.66%	Both
75	100	total



Most stakeholders, both Italian and Slovenian, believe that living near the border is an opportunity (>75%). No one considers it a disadvantage. For 2.66% it is a neutral element, representing neither an opportunity nor a disadvantage. More than 18% believe that the border can be an opportunity or a disadvantage depending on the circumstances.

Comments highlighted:

ADVANTAGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complementarity of solutions to common problems. - Tolerance, acceptance, a better life. - Multiculturalism. - Facility of learning bordering languages. - Access to foreign television and radio broadcasts. - Professional opportunities in neighboring country. - Possibility to choose economic, social and cultural advantages of each area along the border.
DISADVANTAGES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pro forma superficial cooperation. - Marginalization of the communities on the border.

QUESTION 2 - TOPICS



Where is the biggest potential for territorial cooperation in your area?

Choice of max 2 POs.

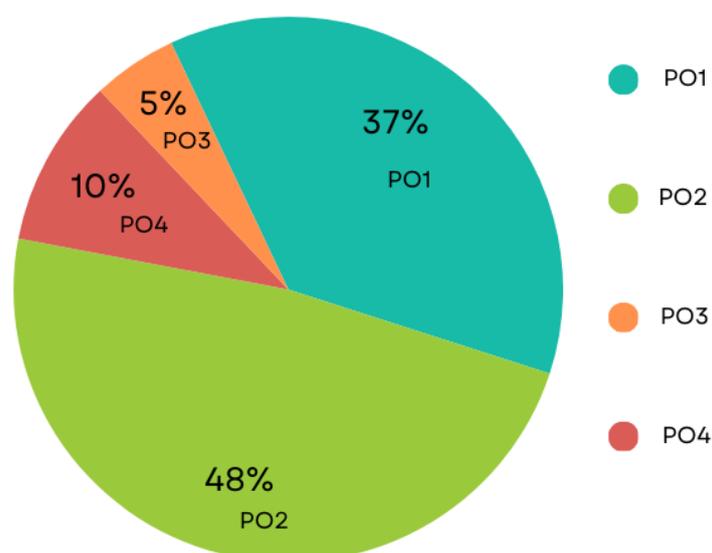
- **PO 1** - A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity
- **PO 2** - A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and risk prevention and management
- **PO 3** - A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility
- **PO 4** - A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights
- **ISO 1** - A better cooperation governance

Technical approach:

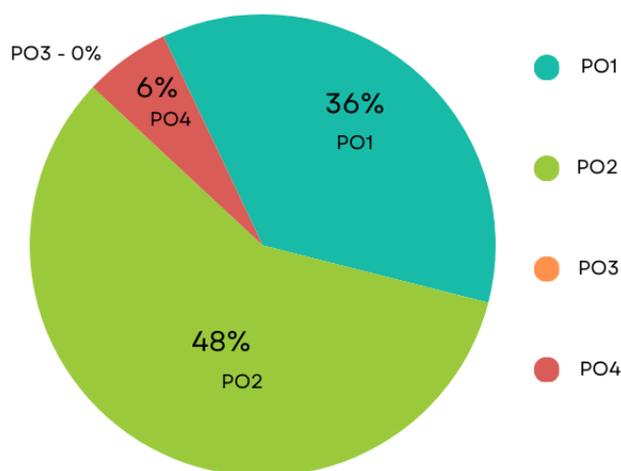
Choice of max 2 POs.

The multiple choices are the PO as defined in the Regulation 1060/2021

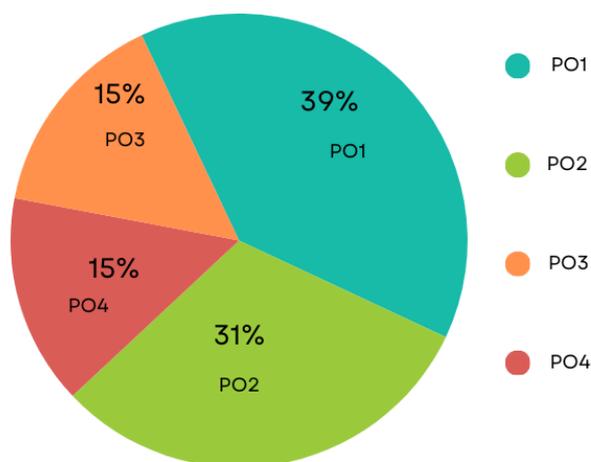
QUESTION 2 - ITALY and SLOVENIA



QUESTION 2 - ITALY



QUESTION 2 - SLOVENIA



There is a preference for **PO1**, **PO2** and **PO4** by all, with some differences among Italian and Slovene stakeholders; **PO3** is not as important for the Italian participants as it is for the Slovenian participants as evidenced in the graphs.

QUESTION 3 – PO1 - TOPICS



With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

PO 1 - A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity

- SO 1 - Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies
- SO 2 - Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities
- SO 3 - Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments
- SO 4 - Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship
- SO 5 - Enhancing digital connectivity

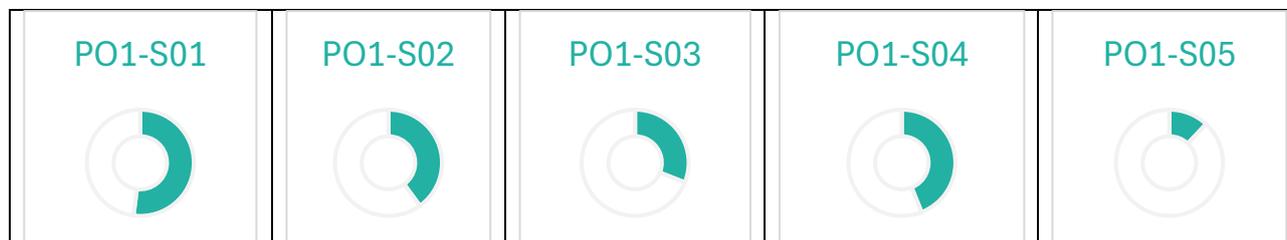
Technical approach:

This question is tightly connected with the previous one: for each PO chosen under Question 2 it is asked to prioritize Specific Objectives (SO) from 1 – most important to 5 – less important. Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 2 will not be considered.

The listed SO are those defined in the Regulation 1058/2021

The answers are analyzed separately for each PO.

Under PO1, the most important Specific Objective is SO1, followed by SO4, then SO2 and finally SO3. SO5 is considered of minor importance. A strong need to develop and strengthen research and innovation capacities and the introduction of advanced technologies (SO1) is evidenced. ¹



Question 2 for PO1

¹ Percentages have not been indicated because the share in the graph depicts the level of prioritization and not a share that sums to 100%. The same approach is valid also for the next graphs.

QUESTION 3 - PO2 - TOPICS



With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

PO 2 - A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and risk prevention and management

- SO 1 - Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- SO 2 - Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein
- SO 3 - Developing smart energy systems, grids and storage outside the Trans-European Energy Network (TEN-E)
- SO 4 - Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches
- SO 5 - Promoting access to water and sustainable water management
- SO 6 - Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy
- SO 7 - Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution
- SO 8 - Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility, as part of transition to a net zero carbon economy

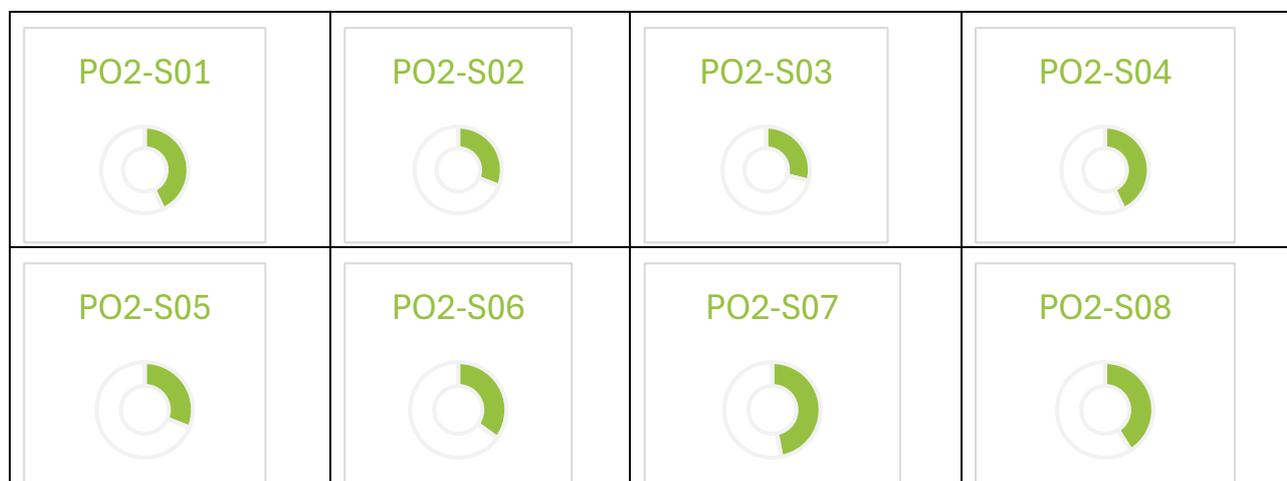
Technical approach:

This question is tightly connected with the previous one: for each PO chosen under Question 2 it is asked to prioritize Specific Objectives (SO) from 1 – most important to 8 – less important.

Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 2 will not be considered.

The listed SO are those defined in the Regulation 1058/2021.

The answers are analyzed separately for each PO.



Question 3 for PO2

Under PO2, the most important specific objectives are SO7 and SO4, followed by SO8. SO1 and SO6 are considered of less importance. This means that the most important sub-topics are “Strengthen the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure (...)” and “Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and resilience”.

Comments highlighted:

- Necessary to promote participation and communication to intercept specific needs.
- Need of technical-technological solutions to alleviate the negative impacts of economic development on the local environment, improve the efficiency of limited energy resources, reduce energy waste, reduce the effects of increased noise and light pollution.

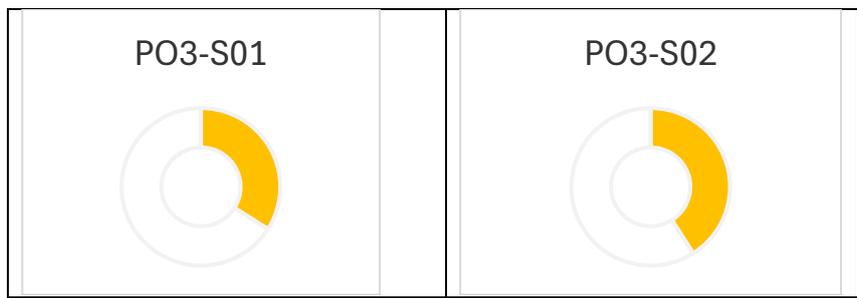
QUESTION 3 – PO3 - TOPICS

With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

PO 3 - A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility by:

- SO 1 - Developing a climate resilient, intelligent, secure, sustainable and intermodal TEN-T
- SO 2 - Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility

Technical approach:
 This question is tightly connected with the previous one: for each PO chosen under Question 2 it is asked to prioritize Specific Objectives (SO) from 1 – most important to 2 – less important.
 Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 2 will not be considered.
 The listed SO are those defined in the Regulation 1058/2021.
 The answers are analyzed separately for each PO.



Question 3 for PO3

There are numerous answers with a value ranging from 5 to 7. Under PO3, the most important specific objective is SO2, probably for the highlight on cross-border mobility in SO2 as enforced in the comments.

Comments highlighted:

- Need to strengthen local, regional and national, smart mobility and cross-border mobility.

QUESTION 3 –PO4 - TOPICS



With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

PO 4 - A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

- SO 1 – Enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social infrastructure and promoting social economy
- SO 2 – Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training
- SO 3 – Promoting the socioeconomic inclusion of marginalised communities, low income households and disadvantaged groups, including people with special needs, through integrated actions, including housing and social services
- SO 4 – Promoting the socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants through integrated actions, including housing and social services
- SO 5 - Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care
- SO 6 - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

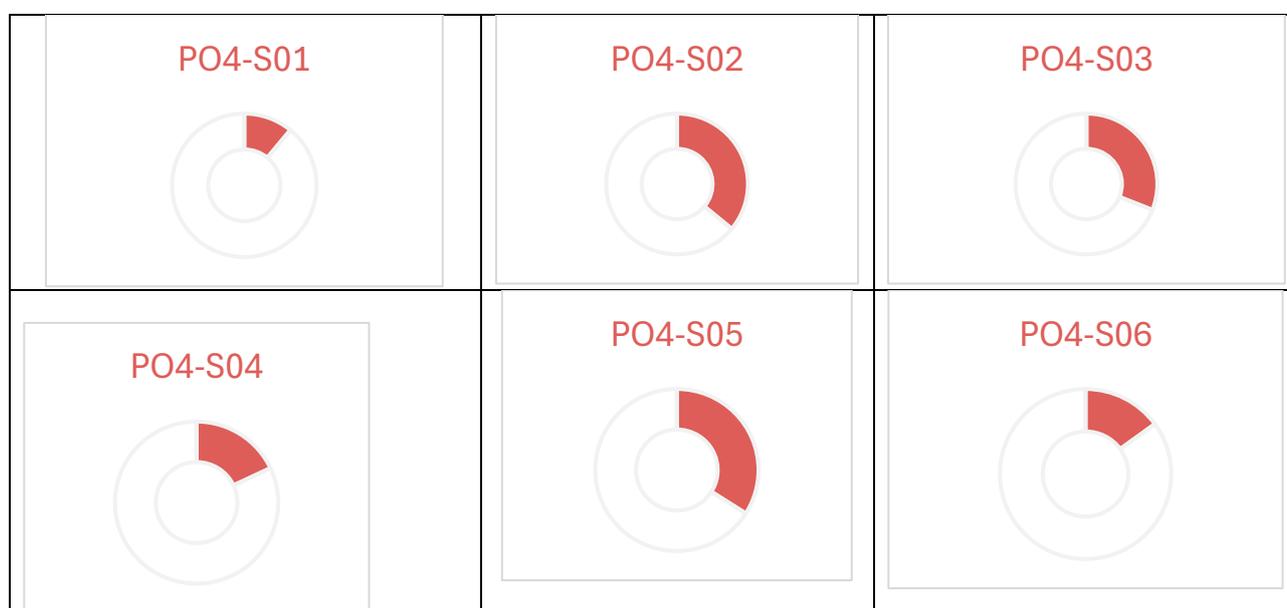
Technical approach:

This question is tightly connected with the previous one: for each PO chosen under Question 2 it is asked to prioritize from 1 – most important to 6 – less important the Specific Objectives (SO).

Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 2 will not be considered.

The listed SO are those defined in the Regulation 1058/2021.

The answers are analyzed separately for each PO.



Question 3 for PO4

Generally, under PO4, specific objectives had a very low rating (there are no answers scoring 1 to 3). The most important specific objective is SO5, i.e. “Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community”. SO3 and SO4 have been chosen often too. The least important sub-topic seems to be



SO1, i.e. "Enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social infrastructure and promoting social economy".

Comments highlighted:

- Need to strengthen effectiveness and inclusiveness of labor markets and access to quality employment, through development of social infrastructure and promotion of the competitive economy.

QUESTION 3 – ISO1 (INTERREG OBJECTIVES) - TOPICS



With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

ISO 1 - A better cooperation governance

- ISO 1. (b) - Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions
- ISO 1. (c) - Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

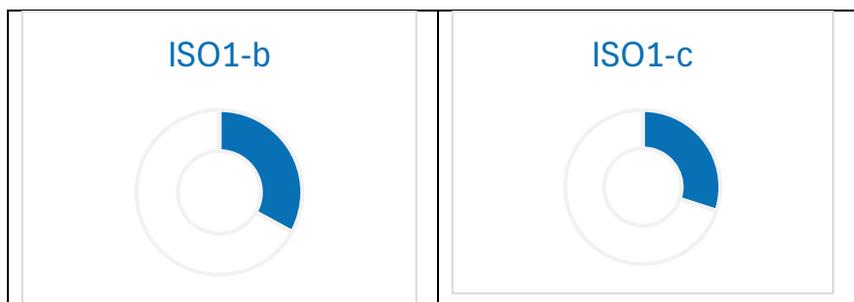
Technical approach:

This question is tightly connected with the previous one: for each PO chosen under Question 2 it is asked to prioritize Specific Objectives from 1 – most important to 2 – less important.

Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 2 will not be considered.

The listed SO are those defined in the Regulation.

The answers are analyzed separately for each PO.



Question 3 for ISO1

Both high and low prioritization are numerous. However, ISO1b – “Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors and institutions, in particular, with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions” - seems to be more important than ISO1-c “Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions”.

Comments highlighted:

Need of:

- an efficient public administration, administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors (removing administrative obstacles typical of border regions);
- progressive integration between States.

QUESTION 4 – STRENGTH OF COOPERATION

What currently works well in the cross-border cooperation and should be either preserved or reinforced?

1. Strengthen cross-border partnerships
2. Synergies between projects in Interreg Italy-Slovenia
3. Synergies with macro-regional strategies (MRS)
4. Capitalization
5. Strategic Projects (i.e. Operations of Strategic Importance - OSI)
6. Small Projects Funds (SPF)
7. Thematic cooperation (under the same specific objective/under the same topic)
8. Horizontal cooperation (on more Specific Objectives)
9. Joint Programme Online JEMS system
10. Simplified cost options
11. Reporting of costs
12. OTHER



Technical approach:

Choice of max 3 options, with eventual explanation.

For better statistics, it was chosen to carry out an analysis by country.

For Italian stakeholders, the first choice is the strengthening of cross-border partnerships, followed by synergies between Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects and Strategic Projects. Synergies between projects under Interreg Italy-Slovenia and simplified cost options collected 9.375%. The other options collected lower percentages (all less than 9%).

For Slovene stakeholders, the first choice is the strengthening of cross-border partnerships, followed by SCO and SPF.

From both States, the strengthening of cross-border partnerships appears to be the aspect which worked best even though with a clearer preference in Italy. Synergies between macro-regional strategies was chosen by none.

Italian stakeholders 	1. Strengthening of cross-border partnerships	72.08%
	2. Synergies between Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects	18.75%
	3. Strategic Projects	14.58%
	4. Synergies between projects under Interreg Italy-Slovenia and simplified cost options	9.375%
Slovene stakeholders 	1. Strengthening of cross-border partnerships	26,66%
	2. Simplified cost options	17.33%
	3. Small projects fund	13.33%
	4. Strategic projects	10,66%
	5. Capitalization	9,33%

Comments highlighted:

Universities and research centres do not need Interreg to collaborate (ad hoc funding).

QUESTION 5 – WEAKNESSES OF COOPERATION

<p>What currently does not work well in the cross-border cooperation and should be improved?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partner cooperation within the projects 2. Synergies between projects in Interreg Italy-Slovenia 3. Synergies with other EU Programmes/projects 4. Improving overcome of linguistic obstacles 5. Size of project partnership 6. OTHER <p>Technical approach: Choice of max 2 options, with possible explanation For better statistics, it was chosen to carry out an analysis by country.</p>
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For Italian stakeholders, the main weakness to be improved is language barriers and synergies with other European programmes/projects.

For Slovene stakeholders, the main weakness to be improved is synergies with other European programmes /projects.

See the table for details on all options.

As a whole, synergies with European projects are considered very important and to be improved.

<p>Italian Stakeholders</p>	1. Improvement of language barriers	31.25%
	2. Synergies with other European programs	30.25%
	3. Dimension of partnerships in projects	15.00%
	4. Synergies between projects within Interreg Italy-Slovenia	13.75%
<p>Slovene Stakeholders</p>	1. Synergies with other European programs	38.09%
	2. Improvement of language barriers	21.42%
	3. Synergies between projects within Interreg Italy-Slovenia	16.66%
	4. dimension of partnerships in projects	14.28%

Comments highlighted:

COSTS
- Need to focus on cost reporting.
PARTNERSHIPS
- Useful for FVG to have projects with 3-state partnerships Italy-Austria-Slovenia.
PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
- Management and control functions on projects need to be improved.
- Sustainability of project's results after the end of financing needs to be addressed.
- JEMS system is excellent and could be proposed also for Programmes other than Interreg.
LINGUISTIC ASPECTS
- The main obstacle remains the language, which needs to be addressed.
- Switch into English (no bilingual).

QUESTION 6 – OBSTACLES TO COOPERATION

What are the major obstacles for a good cross-border cooperation between Italy and Slovenia?

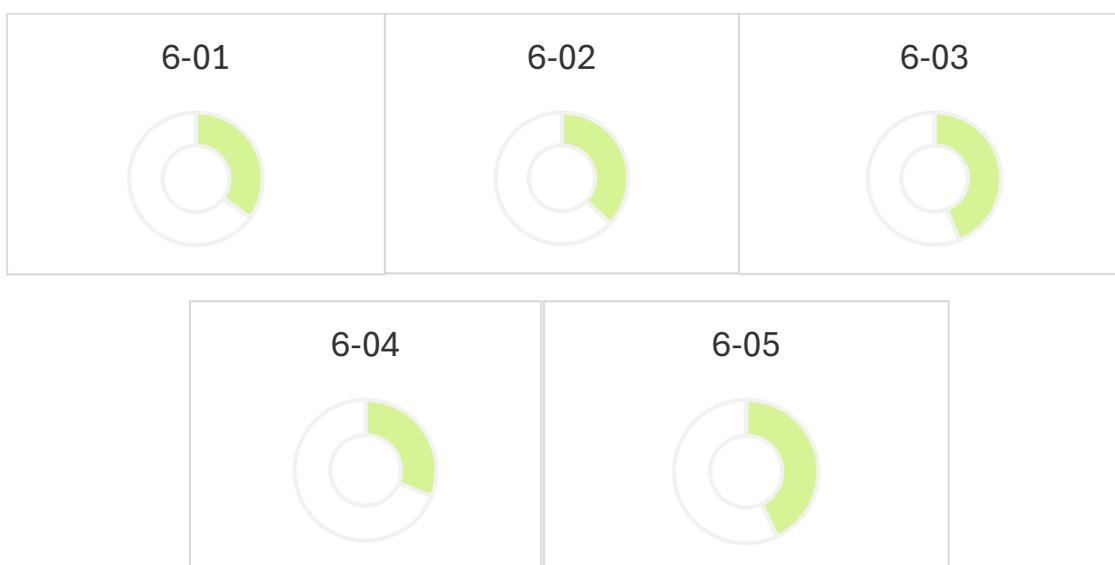
Please, take into account a lot of changes have been made in the Programme with the new programming period 2021-2027 (use of JEMS, Simplified Cost Options, more availability of calls and funds at the very beginning of the programming period, etc.)

1. Lack of knowledge of advanced IT and AI solutions (e.g. to overcome language barriers)
2. Lack of involvement of new partners in the projects
3. Administrative obstacles
4. Differences in legislation
5. OTHER

Technical approach:

Give priority from 1 – most important to 5 – less important with eventual explanation.

Question 6



All options received a very high rating, as relevant for cross-border participants. Most answers refer to administrative obstacles as the major obstacle for a good cross-border cooperation. The answers given under OTHER are listed in groups under the comments below.

Comments highlighted

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT ASPECTS

- The bilingual Secretariat is very important.
- Well-strengthened Technical Secretariat is welcome.
- A national contact point in Slovenia throughout the period is very important.

LINGUISTIC ASPECTS

- The language barrier continues to be the main only real obstacle.

DESIGN ASPECTS

- Need for small cross-border projects carried out by smaller entities.
- Joint selection of an external contractor by Slovenian and Italian project partners to manage joint cross-border activities (possibility for Italian partner to choose a Slovenian supplier and vice versa).
- Number of applications per organization is often limited (an institution with 3000 employees may present as many projects as a small institution with 5 employees).

GOVERNANCE AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

- Different structure of local authorities, due to lack of regional level in Slovenia.

- Different needs between Italy and Slovenia.
- Different working methods and times.
- Mistrust between citizens, stakeholders and institutions.
- Lack of knowledge of the respective cultures.

QUESTIONS 7 – FURTHER TOPICS OF COOPERATION

Are there things you would like to do under Interreg Italy-Slovenia but cannot?

Would you choose any of these topics, presently not foreseen in the 2021-2027 IT-SI Programme?

Choice of max 2 options

- **PO 1** - A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity
- **PO 2** - A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and risk prevention and management
- **PO 3** - a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility
- **PO 4** - A more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

Technical approach:

This question is linked to the next one (question 8). For technical reasons of management of multiple-choice-answers within the structure of EU-Survey they were divided into two different questions (7 and 8). The answers to questions 7 and 8 are analysed at once under question 8 per each PO.

See below for answers per each PO and related graphs.

QUESTION 8 – PO1 – FURTHER TOPICS OF COOPERATION

With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

PO 1 - A more competitive and smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity

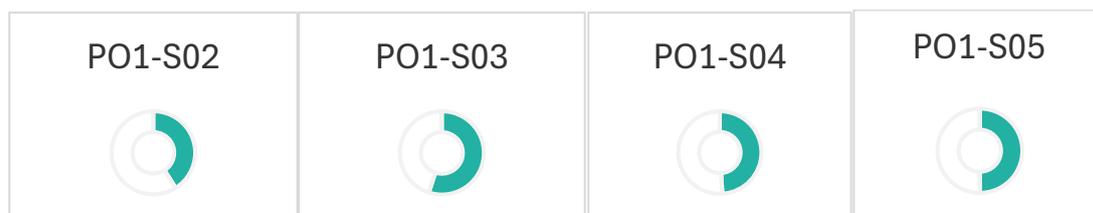
- SO 2 - Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities
- SO 3 - Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments
- SO 4 - Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship
- SO 5 - Enhancing digital connectivity
- Other (please, explain)

Technical approach:

Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 7 will not be considered.

Under PO1, SOs are prioritized from 1 – most important to 4 – less important.

IMPORTANT: Under Question 8 the listed SOs come from Regulation 1958/2021 and include only those SOs which Interreg IT-SI 2021-2027 has not foreseen.



For PO1, all options received a very high rating, so all options were very relevant to cross-border participants, being SO3 the most chosen and SO2 the least.

Comments highlighted

- It would be useful to promote professional exchanges by enhancing mutual skills and experience through structured and normatively aligned interventions.
- The problem is not bottom-up initiatives, but top-down efficiency (cross-border projects likely to be ineffective on items falling under competence of National State).

QUESTION 8 - PO2 – FURTHER TOPICS OF COOPERATION

With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

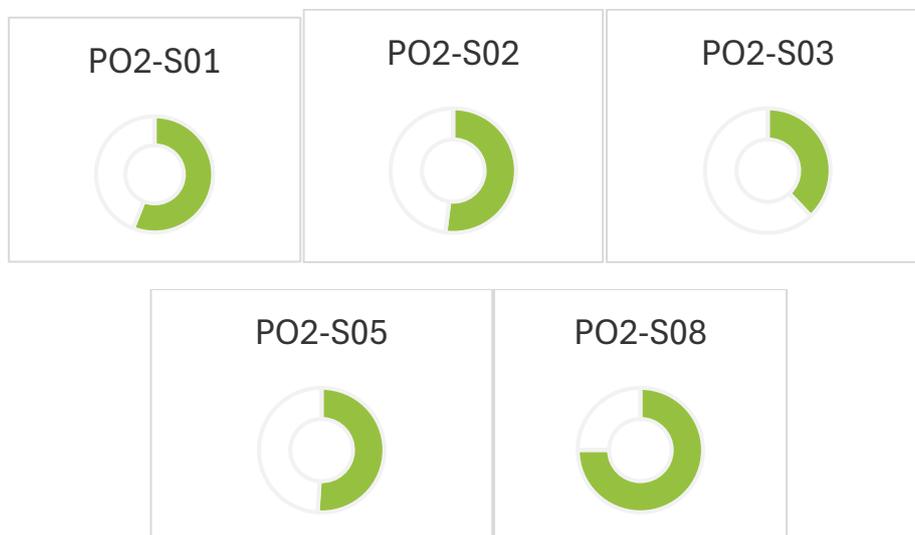
PO2 - A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and risk prevention and management

- SO 1 – Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- SO 2 – Promoting renewable energy in accordance with Directive (EU) 2018/2001, including the sustainability criteria set out therein
- SO 3 - Developing smart energy systems, grids and storage outside the Trans-European Energy Network (TEN-E)
- SO 5 - Promoting access to water and sustainable water management
- SO 8 - Promoting sustainable multimodal urban mobility, as part of transition to a net zero carbon economy
- Other (please, explain)

Technical approach:

Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 7 will not be considered.
Under PO2, SOs are prioritized from 1 – most important to 5 – less important.

IMPORTANT: Under Question 8 listed SOs come from Regulation 1958/2021 and include only those SOs which Interreg IT-SI 2021-2027 has not foreseen.



For PO2, the specific objective SO8 was chosen the most, SO3 the least.

Comments highlighted

- It would be helpful promoting sustainable agriculture and 0 km economies.

QUESTION 8 – PO3 – FURTHER TOPICS OF COOPERATION

With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

PO3 - A more connected Europe by enhancing mobility by:

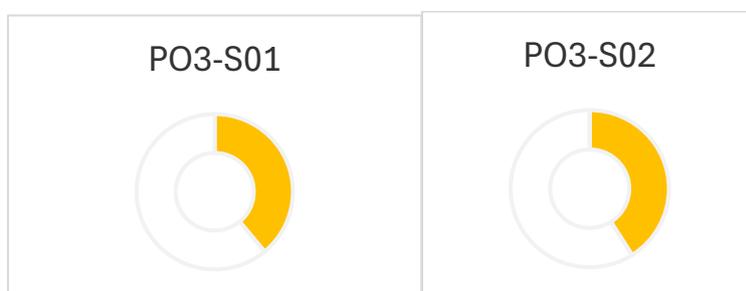
- SO 1 - Developing a climate resilient, intelligent, secure sustainable and intermodal TEN-T
- SO 2 - Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility
- Other (please, explain).

Technical approach:

Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 7 will not be considered.

Under PO3, SOs are prioritized from 1 – most important to 2 – less important.

IMPORTANT: Under Question 8 listed SOs come from Regulation 1958/2021 and include only those SOs which Interreg IT-SI 2021-2027 has not foreseen.



Under PO3, both specific objectives seem to be of great importance but SO2 is preferred over SO1.

QUESTION 8 - PO4 – FURTHER TOPICS OF COOPERATION

With reference to the Policy Objectives (PO) chosen in the previous question, indicate the preferred Specific Objectives (SO) and prioritize them.

PO 4 - A more social and inclusive Europe through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights

- SO 1 – Enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social infrastructure and promoting social economy
- SO 2 – Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training
- SO 3 – Promoting the socioeconomic inclusion of marginalised communities, low income households and disadvantaged groups, including people with special needs, through integrated actions, including housing and social services
- SO 4 – Promoting the socio-economic integration of third country nationals, including migrants through integrated actions, including housing and social services
- SO 5 - Ensuring equal access to health care and fostering resilience of health systems, including primary care, and promoting the transition from institutional to family-based and community-based care
- Other (please, explain).

Technical approach:

Specific Objectives (SO) chosen from PO not selected in Question 7 will not be considered.

Under PO4, SOs are prioritized from 1 – most important to 5 – less important.

IMPORTANT: Under Question 8 listed SOs come from Regulation 1958/2021 and include only those SOs which Interreg IT-SI 2021-2027 has not foreseen.



Question 7 and 8 for PO3 and PO4

All the Specific Objectives seem to be of great importance to the participants.

Under PO4: SO2, followed by SO5 are slightly more important than the other specific objectives. SO1 is the least chosen.

Comments highlighted

HEALTHCARE (SO5)
- It would be useful to promote access to health services by sharing care models and aligning regulations.
RULES ON PARTNERSHIPS
- In the projects, establish an alignment of the rules of involvement of the chosen operators, also in terms of time commitment, and recognition for innovative interventions.

QUESTION 9 – FUTURE INTERREG

What is the most important novelty that you would like to see in the future Interreg? (The question is referring to the period 2028-2034).

Options (multiple choice possible)

1. More strategic projects
2. More strategic communication
3. Better sustainability of cross-border projects over time
4. Projects "Performance-based financing" (focus on performance and on result-oriented approach instead of costs-reporting approach)
5. Other

SPACE FOR EXPLANATION

The majority of participants would like to see "More strategic projects" in the future Interreg, with 50% of the preferences. Improving the sustainability of cross-border projects results seems to be the second most important point (29.94% of respondents). 11.84% chose "Performance-based financing", ranked third. Other was answered by 2 people only.

Comments highlighted:

- Comment under option "Other" focus on remote and rural areas.
- The key challenge of bordering rural areas is to find a solution to preserve population and prevent emigration, especially of young and working population. The risk is a success in green transition despite smaller border villages are empty.

Please note that answers to this Question are partly reflected in questions 11 and 12, too.

QUESTION 10 - INFRASTRUCTURE

Is there need for some infrastructure projects?

1. Cycling paths and connections to EU cycling networks
2. Any infrastructure to valorise cultural and/or natural heritage
3. Green Infrastructures, building-up from the experience with Interreg Italy-Slovenia strategic projects (and considering adaptation measures to climate change)
4. Any infrastructures that are connected to risk prevention and mitigation measures
5. Multi-modality infrastructure
6. Rail connectivity (missing links, speed, frequency of connections, rail services)
7. Tramway connectivity as part of better urban connectivity and/or electrical vehicles infrastructure (last mile)
8. Road connectivity
9. Energy and green energy related infrastructure
10. Water-supply related infrastructure
11. Electricity and green electricity related infrastructure
12. OTHER



SPACE FOR EXPLANATION

Technical approach:

Options (multiple choice possible) with prioritisation (giving priority from 1 – most important to 12 – less important).

Options 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10 are the most important for the participants, i.e. green infrastructure, infrastructures related to risk prevention and mitigation measures, railway connectivity, energy and green energy related infrastructure and water supply.

Comments highlighted:

- The obstacles of daily life **for the citizens of the border area should be reduced (use of health facilities, study, etc.).**

- The main challenge of **rural areas along the border** is to find a solution to prevent emigration, especially of young people and workers. Local development agencies and bottom up approach in determining development priorities shall be preserved.

QUESTION 11 - GOVERNANCE

What should be done to facilitate the work with your counterparts (governance)?

Options (multiple choice possible, with prioritisation, giving priority from 1 - most important to 12 - less important.

1. Reduce the cross-border obstacles (e.g. by funding meetings, experts, pilot projects, dedicated technical assistance, etc.)
2. Organize capitalization events
3. Gather project partners and policy makers
4. Create synergies with other EU funded projects
5. Organize events on new topics => *Please, make a proposal.*
6. Work more with youth, involve young people (18-30 years old, Youth NGOs). => *Please, make a proposal*
7. Promote the mutual knowledge of Italian and Slovene language in a structured manner, both targeting labour market needs and primary and secondary education
8. Facilitate cross-border mobility and access to public services in sectors close to citizens' needs (like labour market, education, patient mobility for care)
9. Harmonize business legislation
10. Bring the relevant actors together (e.g. authorities at national/ regional/ local levels, enterprises, users, etc.)
11. Targeted Communication campaigns
12. Other => *Please, explain.*

Technical approach:

Options (multiple choice possible, with prioritisation giving priority from 1 - most important to 12 - less important.

Options 3, 4 and 6 are the most important for participants, i.e. gather together projects partners and policy makers, create synergies and involve young people. Also options 10 and 11 were relevant, i.e. bringing different stakeholders together in cross-border cooperation (national, regional, local authorities, businesses, utilities and targeted communication campaigns. There was strong interest in the policy cycle, the need for synergies between the projects of the Interreg Italy-Slovenia programme and other EU projects, a greater involvement of young people and youth organizations, the harmonization of legislation, the involvement of a wide network of stakeholders were also relevant selections.

Comments highlight

- Capitalisation on previous projects could contribute to a stronger and more complete integration.
- New technologies could improve sharing (e.g. health) and favor ability to intervene in homologous contexts.
- Public presentations of Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects should follow a user-friendly approach understandable to the public with focus on benefits for local communities.
- Organisation of events to test the level of understanding of new topics.
- Necessity to know the culture and not just the language of the neighboring country.
- Propose competitions and creative initiatives (music, singing, sports) as well as basic language courses to increase communication between young people located in neighboring areas.
- Encourage sustainability and durability of project results by financing of Start-Ups or spin-offs from financed projects.
- Involvement of young people in projects and cooperation with European organizations involving youth from different European countries.

QUESTION 12 – DREAM PROJECT

What would be the Interreg Italy-Slovenia cross-border cooperation project of your dreams?

Technical approach:

For this question an open space for answers was given and the responses are reported under comments below.

Comment highlight.

TOPICS OF FUTURE PROJECTS

- Innovative research
- Natural hazards of border areas
- Ethics, equity and sustainability in new technologies (Artificial Intelligence)
- Targeted personalized oncology therapies
- Responsible social integration
- Administrative and bureaucratic obstacles to free movement of people and businesses
- Projects of European interest in the field of construction entrepreneurship
- Eco-sustainability measures against environmental pollution
- Energy renewable sources, information campaign and support in the installation of renewable energy systems (photovoltaic, solar thermal, windmills, ...) on residential and industrial scale
- Environmental and landscape conservation (natural habitats, national parks and nature reserves) and environmental education
- Cross-border tourism
- Open-air cultural and historical heritage and museums
- Biotechnological solutions in agriculture to mitigate climate change and management of degraded areas



DESIGN METHODS

- Simplification of administrative procedures with focus on results rather than on reporting
- Effective management system facilitating coordination of all Interreg Italy-Slovenia initiatives
- Focus on concrete cross-border problems through pilot actions
- Concise and realistic objectives
- There is no ideal project. All projects solve problems. The best are capitalization projects
- Partners should receive equal co-financing
- Intermediate monitoring is useful for intermediate feedback on what can be improved
- Peer partners, mutual transfer of good practices of international project cooperation, possibility of pre-financing and easy reporting

ACTORS OF THE TERRITORY

- Involvement of youth
- Start-ups, spin-offs within the territory
- Creation of EGTC

PROJECTS FOR GEOGRAPHICALLY CONTIGUOUS AREAS

- Promote cohesion with disadvantaged territories such as mountains, Natisone Valleys
- Duplicate the practice of twin cities of Gorizia and Nova Gorica to other areas of the border: services to citizens (basic health care and separate waste collection) provided at a lower cost and more efficiently (no waiting lists) through economies of scale

4. INTERESTING QUOTES

On issues to be kept and improved into new Programme there are some good quotes.

Trilateral cross-border projects in partnerships Italy-Austria-Slovenia are proposed.

A management suggestion regards the idea of extending the use of JEMS system to Programmes other than Interreg as well as the switch into English for all Programmes to overcome the linguistic barrier, still perceived to be an important issue.

Still territories are perceived as active in bottom-up initiatives, the constraint remains in the top-down efficiency (cross-border projects likely to be ineffective on items falling under the competence of National State).

Stakeholders ask to focus on concrete cross-border problems through pilot actions responding to concise and realistic objectives.

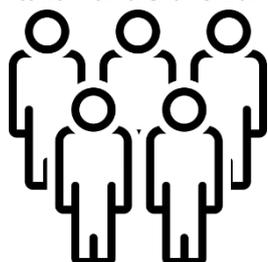
Less active areas should be more involved (mountains, Natisone Valleys) as well as a greater involvement of youth is also recommended.



REPORT ON CITIZENS

1. FOREWORD AND METHODS OF CONSULTATION

The questionnaire was initially prepared in English and then translated and published on EU Survey in Italian and Slovenian.



The questionnaire was available online between May 9th and July 10th. A re-launch was made between July 11th until September 8th.

Respondents were **36** of which **18 Italians and 18 Slovenians**.

The questionnaire for citizens, was made up of 8 questions based on the template proposed in the European Commission Toolkit adding a specific question on youth.

Like in the stakeholders' questionnaire, some questions were divided into two (questions 3 and 4) to let the analysis first at level of POs and then at level of SOs.

Questions and options for citizens are also drafted in a way to be comparable with those to stakeholders, i.e. while in the first case the POs and SOs from Regulations are mentioned, in the case of citizens the main "topics" referring to those POs and "items" referred to SOs are displayed without technicalities. In any case, topics coincide.

Multiple choice was inserted into questions 1 to 6 in order to facilitate the processing of outcomes while leaving space for comments.

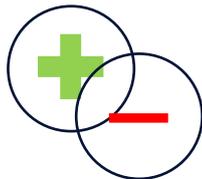
For easier reading, for each question, the question itself and its options are reported before the answer.

Answers are displayed with short descriptions and/or tables and/or useful graphic representation of data and summary of quotations/comments.

2. ANALYSIS OF CITIZENS RESPONSES

QUESTION 1 - LIVING NEXT TO A BORDER

Is living next to a border an opportunity or a disadvantage?
 Examples: an opportunity because there are more possibilities to get a job; a disadvantage because there is not enough public transport; an opportunity because of the education and training possibilities (...)
 Options (choose one option).
 1. More an opportunity than a disadvantage
 2. More a disadvantage than an opportunity
 3. None of the two options
 4. It is both, an opportunity and a disadvantage (depending on circumstances)
 SPACE FOR EXPLANATION



Technical approach:
 Options (multiple choice possible, with prioritisation giving priority from 1 – most important to 12 – less important).

In Italy 83% of respondents declared living near a border is “more an opportunity than a disadvantage”; for 17% it is “both an advantage, as a disadvantage”.

In Slovenia 78% declared it is “more an opportunity than a disadvantage”, while for 22% it is “both, an opportunity and a disadvantage”.

Generally, it seems that living next to a border is an advantage thanks to huge opportunity for exchange and in the field of culture, events, recreation, trade. No disadvantages have been reported even though more challenges for people near the borders are highlighted in comments (e.g. administrative, everyday obstacles making business and life more difficult, such as border crossing and transit and illegal migrations). Generally, comments are similar to those expressed by stakeholders.

QUESTION 2 - TOPICS



Taking into account the cooperation with other areas, with other Interreg Programmes, which topics would be of interest for you?

- 1) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (To increase the economic potential of strategic sectors),
- 2) LABOUR MARKET, EDUCATION AND TRAINING (To improve the adequacy of labour market, education and training in strategic sectors),
- 3) MOBILITY (To promote inter-modality and interoperability in passenger and freight traffic)
- 4) ACCESSIBILITY (Connecting people electronically and promoting accessibility of public services)
- 5) NATURAL RESOURCES (Preserving and valorizing natural resources, terrestrial, costal, maritime, including water),
- 6) GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE (Developing ecological connectivity),
- 7) RISK GOVERNANCE (Improving risk management and better managing climate change, including major natural risk prevention),
- 8) ENERGY (Energy efficiency and renewable energy).
- 9) SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, CULTURE AND CREATIVE INDUSTRY (e.g. Architecture, Visual & Performing Arts, Arts & Crafts, Design, Publishing, Film, Video & Photography, Art & Antiques, Fashion, Music, Advertising, Interactive Video Games, Television & Radio)

Technical approach:
 Options (multiple choice possible, with prioritisation from 1 – most important to 9- less important).

Preferred topics in Italy (in order of priority)	Preferred topics in Slovenia (in order of priority)
LABOR MARKET, EDUCATION	SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
NATURAL RESOURCES	NATURAL RESOURCES
MOBILITY	ACCESSIBILITY
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, RISK MANAGEMENT	LABOR MARKET, EDUCATION
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	ENERGY
ENERGY	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT and GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE
TOURISM	MOBILITY and RISK MANAGEMENT
ACCESSIBILITY	

In both countries, it seems that the protection of natural resources is very important. For the rest, preferences are rather scattered and it is difficult to draw conclusions, due to the number of respondents.

QUESTIONS 3-4 – TOPICS FOR COOPERATION

In the place where you live, what are the main topics where cooperation is needed?

Examples: reducing pollution in a river; attracting tourists; networking research and enterprises to innovate; establishing energy communities (...)

1. Competitiveness, promoting innovative and economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity
2. Green topics, transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investments, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and risk prevention and management
3. Better connected Europe by enhancing mobility
4. Social and inclusiveness topics, implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights
5. Improving cooperation between the two Countries, via public administration cooperation and building up trust and cooperation between people and NGOs
6. OTHER

This question is linked to the next one (question 4). For technical reasons of management of multiple-choice-answers within the structure of EU-Survey they were divided into two different questions (3 and 4).

Under Questions 3, options foresee the topics corresponding to POs and under question 4, options foresee the items corresponding to the SOs from EU Regulations, phrased in a more user-friendly wording.

In this way, the same questions for stakeholders (written in terms of PO, SO) and citizens (written in a more user-friendly wording) result comparable.

Cooperation potentials for Italian respondents		Cooperation potentials for Slovenian respondents	
61%	Green topics transition to an economy with zero net carbon emissions and promotion of the transition to clean and fair energy, green and blue investments, circular economy, adaptation to climate change and mitigation of its consequences, prevention and management of risks	50%	Green topics transition to an economy with zero net carbon emissions and promotion of the transition to clean and fair energy, green and blue investments, circular economy, adaptation to climate change and mitigation of its consequences, prevention and management of risks
17%	Better connected Europe by improving mobility	28%	Competitiveness, promotion of innovative and economic transformation and regional connectivity in the field of ICT (information and communication technology)
17%	Competitiveness, promotion of innovative and economic transformation and regional connectivity in the field of ICT (information and communication technology)	17%	Better connected Europe by improving mobility
5%	Greater emphasis on social and inclusion topics in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights	5%	Greater emphasis on social and inclusion topics in the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights

Green topics are the top priority in both countries while social - inclusion the least.

QUESTION 4a - Topic 1 - competitiveness, promoting innovative and economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity

For Italian respondents (in order of priority)	For Slovenian respondents (in order of priority)
Research and innovation	Support for companies (SMEs), sustainable growth and competitiveness
Smart specialization, industrial transition to more advanced technologies	Research and innovation
Digitization	Digitization
Support for companies (SMEs), sustainable growth and competitiveness	Smart specialization, industrial transition to more advanced technologies
Better digital connectivity	Better digital connectivity

There are no strong preferences. In both countries, "Research and innovation is very important and "Digitization" seems to be equally important. "Better digital connectivity" comes last in both countries.

QUESTION 4b - Topic 2 - green topics, transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investments, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation and risk prevention and management

For Italian respondents (in order of priority)	For Slovenian respondents (in order of priority)
Promotion of renewable energy sources	Access to water and sustainable management of water resources
Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions	Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
Protection and preservation of nature and biodiversity	Protection and preservation of nature and biodiversity
Adaptation to climate change, disaster risk prevention and resilience to natural disasters	Promotion of renewable energy sources
Construction of large energy infrastructure, such as pan-European energy network	Construction of large energy infrastructure, such as pan-European energy network
Circular and resource-efficient economy	Adaptation to climate change, disaster risk prevention and resilience to natural disasters
Access to water and sustainable management of water resources	Circular and resource-efficient economy
Sustainable multimodal urban mobility	Sustainable multimodal urban mobility

Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and protection and preservation of nature and biodiversity are considered very important in both countries. Other topics are differently prioritized in Italy and Slovenia. In both countries "Sustainable multimodal urban mobility" comes last.

QUESTION 4c - Topic 3 - Better connected Europe by enhancing mobility

For Italian and Slovenian respondents (in order of priority)
Intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including better cross-border mobility
Construction of a large transport infrastructure such as e.g. the TEN-T intermodal network

There is almost equality (almost 50% versus 50%) in the preferences of the two topics, still "Intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including better cross-border mobility" is slightly preferred in both countries.

QUESTION 4d - Topic 4 - Social and inclusiveness topics, implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights

For Italian respondents (in order of priority)	For Slovenian respondents (in order of priority)
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Education, training and lifelong learning as well as distance and online education and training	Equal access to healthcare, family and community care
Equal access to healthcare, family and community care	Socio-economic inclusion of marginalized communities and disadvantaged groups, including people with special needs
Labor markets, quality employment	Labor markets, quality employment
Socio-economic inclusion of marginalized communities and disadvantaged groups, including people with special needs	Education, training and lifelong learning as well as distance and online education and training
Promoting the socio-economic integration of citizens of third countries (housing and social services)	Promotion of culture and sustainable tourism
Promotion of culture and sustainable tourism	Promoting the socio-economic integration of citizens of third countries (housing and social services)

“Equal access to healthcare, family and community care” and “Labor markets, quality employment” are very important in both countries, other topics do not necessarily match.

QUESTION 4e - Topic 5 - Improving cooperation between the two countries, via public administration cooperation and building up trust and cooperation between people and NGOs

For Italian respondents (in order of priority)	For Slovenian respondents (in order of priority)
Elimination of legal obstacles in border regions	Mutual trust, people-to-people projects
Mutual trust, people-to-people projects	Elimination of legal obstacles in border regions

There is almost equality in the preferences of the two topics, “Elimination of legal obstacles in border regions” is slightly preferred in Italy whereas “Mutual trust, people-to-people projects” is slightly preferred in Slovenia.

QUESTION 5 - PROBLEMS WITH COOPERATION

In your daily life, what are the biggest difficulties for cross-border cooperation?
Examples: not the same language; a mountain range preventing easy exchanges; negative stereotypes; little potential for cooperation because of demographic decline (...)

1. Linguistic barriers and lack of knowledge on advanced IT and AI solutions (e.g. to overcome language barriers ensuring immediate/live translations);
2. Administrative obstacles;
3. Differences in legislation;
4. Lack of cooperation on new topics (AI, big data, IT solutions, etc.);
5. Lack of accessible cross-border services (like labour market solutions, education, patient mobility for care) => **please, make a proposal, which are missing?**
6. Temporary Closures of border-crossings;
7. After the recent use of online meetings and online exchanges, it would be good to continue gathering interested individuals and/or thematic groups online (to widen participation and avoid costs).

Technical approach:
 Prioritisation from 1 – most important to 7- less important.

For Italian respondents (in order of priority)	For Slovenian respondents (in order of priority)
Administrative obstacles	Administrative obstacles
Language barriers and lack of knowledge about advanced IT (information technology) and artificial intelligence solutions (e.g. to overcome language barriers with the help of instant/live translations)	Differences in legislation

Differences in legislation	Language barriers and lack of knowledge about advanced IT (information technology) and artificial intelligence solutions (e.g. to overcome language barriers with the help of instant/live translations)
Lack of accessible cross-border services (such as labor market solutions, education, patient mobility for care)	Lack of cooperation in new areas (artificial intelligence, big data, solutions offered by information technology, etc.)
Lack of cooperation in new areas (artificial intelligence, big data, solutions offered by information technology, etc.)	Continued use of recently used information platforms for online meetings, exchanges and connections between interested individuals and/or thematic groups (to increase participation and reduce costs)
Continued use of recently used information platforms for online meetings, exchanges and connections between interested individuals and/or thematic groups (to increase participation and reduce costs)	Temporary closure of border crossings
Temporary closure of border crossings	Lack of accessible cross-border services (such as labor market solutions, education, patient mobility for care)

The main difficulties for cooperation are identified in Administrative obstacles, Language barriers and “Differences in legislation”.

Highlighted comments: main difficulties are connected with different culture, missing free education of both languages; different approaches to work and conflict resolution based on cultural differences. Communication problems are due to different expectations based on cultural differences.

QUESTION 6 - INTERREG ITALY-SLOVENIA PROJECTS

Can you name an existing Interreg Italy-Slovenia project that you find useful in the place where you live?

Examples: a project about tourism valorisation; a cycle path; a job fair; a bus line (...)

1. No
2. Yes

If yes, please, indicate the name of the project or at least the activities on local level you can remember. You are invited, if possible, to specify why you found the project important.

PROJECTS/OUTPUTS MENTIONED

- The cycle/pedestrian footbridge over the Isonzo Soča river and the EGTC cycle/pedestrian paths, which, in certain segments, already require maintenance
- INterbike II and Merlin CV
- Alpe Adria cycle path
- HEALTH-ZDRAVSTVO: activation of the cross-border CUP
- SPF GO! 2025
- Walk of Peace - culture and protection of historical finds characterizing the territory
- Solkan Bridge has allowed the development of a cross-border cycle network widely used by both the local population and tourists
- KRAS/CARSO II
- Geo karst, preserving and connecting territory and people.
- WALKofPEACE, CrossCare, Ecosmart, INTER BIKE.
- Projects in the field of improving medical care (ARTE, IMBI, Immuno-Cluster, MEMORI-net, NEX AID).
- POSEIDONE.
- WalkOfPeace and DANTE Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects.
- COHERENCE
- CrossMoby
- MUSE

78% of respondents knew about Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects. Respondents mentioned mainly ITI and big strategic projects. There seems to be the potential to invest in projects dealing with tourism, mobility, competitiveness.

QUESTION 7 - YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Can you mention a topic that you find important for the cooperation among young people?

Some interesting suggestions are resumed below.

TOPICS MENTIONED

- Greater links between border universities
- Culture, education, entertainment
- Mandatory European Voluntary Service (ex EVS) for all young people
- Mixing classes between Italian and Slovenian students
- Compulsory teaching of two languages in schools (at least in primary school)
- Cross-border exchanges, camps, workshops, clean-up campaigns
- Care for the elderly
- Education and exchange of cross-border experiences
- Entrepreneurship and employment initiatives, Practical training of young people for jobs where there is missing workforce and mandatory employment at the end of the training
- Urban garden project where young people would grow plants together and learn about urban gardening
- Integrate sustainability topics into schools and Universities' curricula
- Housing policy (favoring young people independence)
- Rural development, strengthening short supply chains, research and development
- Science, applied science, creative industries projects



The possibilities include language courses (free or mandatory), environment and cultural projects, organizing joint events, employment and entrepreneurship initiatives.

QUESTION 8 – DREAM PROJECT

What would be the Interreg Italy-Slovenia cross-border cooperation project of your dreams?

Apart from topics highlighted in the table below, the public/private partnerships seems to be welcome as well as less bureaucracy.

INTERESTING QUOTATIONS

- Student transport card for under 30s in cross-border areas
- Meetings and courses among young people
- Cross-border cycling network
- Valorization of talents of the two cross-border areas (e.g. Cross-border University)
- Innovative solutions to make territories resilient to climate change
- Cultural cooperation - literary festivals
- Cooperation among START-UPS - micro-enterprises, from both sides and together with larger consortium partners
- Focus on a smaller Programme area along the borders
- Improve public cross-border public transport connections and infrastructure
- Sustainable tourism (Geoparks, hiking and cycling routes)
- Removal of administrative obstacles for the exchange of patients between hospitals in the field of healthcare and long-term care



OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Not many stakeholders nor citizens displayed detailed answers/open comments.

Responses to questions with many options were quite fragmented.

Most stakeholders and citizens, both in Italy as in Slovenia, agree that living near the border is an advantage. None of the participants considered it a disadvantage though citizens reflected some challenges for residents into the comments (cross-border transit, greater sensitiveness towards illegal immigration).

By both stakeholders and citizens, cross-border cooperation allows exchanges and comparisons, multiculturalism, professional opportunities, complementarity of solutions to common problems, tolerance and acceptance/flexibility.

As for objectives of cooperation, there is a preference for PO1, PO2 and PO4 by all, with some differences among Italian and Slovene stakeholders. It is interesting that this is true also for citizens but for them also items under PO3 are important (in both countries).

Under PO1, a strong focus on research and innovation capacities and advanced technologies (SO 1.1) was brought forward by the stakeholders, whereas citizens confirmed this only in Italy, in Slovenia it seems more important to support companies (SMEs) and enable sustainable growth and competitiveness.

Under PO2, the stakeholders focused mainly on strengthening the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure and the promotion of climate change mitigation (SO 2.4. and 2.7), whereas Italian citizens pointed on renewable energy sources and in Slovenia to access to water and sustainable management of water resources. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and preservation of biodiversity were very important in both countries.

Under PO3, rather poorly quoted in general for stakeholders, the most important specific objective for them was SO2, i.e. a stronger focus on local mobility rather than on bigger networks. This choice towards local and regional action was confirmed for the citizens.

Under PO4, the most important specific objective for the stakeholders was SO5, i.e. equal access to health care and resilience of health systems. Similarly, for the citizens adding also "Labor markets, quality employment" in both countries.

Under ISO1, the most important specific objective for stakeholders and citizens is ISO1b promoting an efficient public administration, rather than increasing mutual trust, even though citizens' comments highlighted obstacles and difficulties connected with different culture and different approaches to work and conflict resolution based on cultural differences.

Stakeholders are interested in stronger networking and capitalization of projects, greater involvement of young people and youth NGOs, more policy-making for cross-border collaboration. Synergies with other European Programmes/projects are considered very important and to be improved. Also, citizens are interested in the involvement of youth and in durability of projects results.

The strengthening of cross-border partnerships appears to be the aspect which worked best for stakeholders. Synergies with macro-regional strategies is not a popular item.

Both for stakeholders and citizens, language barriers need to be addressed, as well as other administrative obstacles and differences in legislation.

As for stakeholders, there seems to be the need for some infrastructure projects, mainly green infrastructure, infrastructures related to risk prevention, railway infrastructures, those for water supply and electricity, including green energy.

Citizens mentioned a lot of different ideas for better youth engagement, the possibilities include language courses (free or mandatory), the possibility to work on environment and cultural projects, organizing joint events, creating employment and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Citizens seem well aware of the existence of Interreg Italy-Slovenia projects: ITI, big and strategic projects were mentioned but there seems to be potential to invest in tourism, mobility, competitiveness.

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSION

PO1

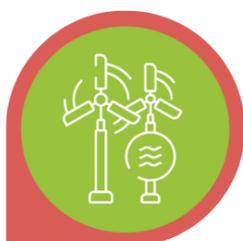
A smarter Europe

Stakeholders

Research and innovation capacities and advanced technologies (SO 1.1.).

Citizens

Support to companies (SMEs) and enabling sustainable growth and competitiveness.
Research and innovation.



PO2

A greener Europe

Stakeholders

Strengthening the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure and the promotion of climate change mitigation (SO 2.4. and 2.7).

Citizens

In Italy renewable energy sources and in Slovenia access to water and sustainable management of water resources. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and preservation of biodiversity were very important in both countries.

PO3

Stakeholders and Citizens

Rather poorly quoted in general for stakeholders, the most important specific objective for them was SO2, i.e. a stronger focus on local mobility rather than on bigger networks. This choice towards local and regional action was confirmed for the citizens.

PO4

A more social Europe

Stakeholders

SO5, i.e. equal access to health care and resilience of health systems.

Citizens

Similarly adding also labor markets and quality employment, in both countries.



ISO1



Better governance

Stakeholders and Citizens

Promoting an efficient public administration, rather than just increasing mutual trust.

ANNEX - CONSULTATIONS IN PRIMARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOLS

Introduction

Upon a first experimental request by a primary school of Udine, the Managing Authority of the Interreg Programme Italy-Slovenia decided to include the **youngest in the consultation process post-2027**, namely pupils from primary schools and students from middle schools (in all, aged 9 to 11).

The **objective was to make children familiar with the European Union, its direct impact on their daily lives and to raise awareness on the European values and policies, especially the importance of dialogue between neighbours, the benefits of an approach based on collaboration and encouraging their future participation in public life.**

The Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat **organised presentations and classes in the participating schools about the European Union, its Cohesion Policy**, particularly, the Interreg programmes and the projects financed in their living area.

After classes, a simplified questionnaire, tailored specifically for pupils from the mentioned age, was delivered to the attendees.

The questionnaire follows the same logic and trace of questionnaires for citizens, adequately simplified. Outcomes are presented in this Annex.

A total of **13 schools** participated and they were located in the following provinces of the Italian part of the Programme area: Trieste, Gorizia, Udine, Pordenone (Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia) and Venezia (Regione Veneto):

School	NUTS 3	Date	N. of pupils/students	N. of answered questionnaires	Language
Scuola primaria "Egidio Feruglio" dell'IC di Tavagnacco Feletto Umberto (Tavagnacco); classe V	UD	05/02/2024	21	21	Italian
Scuola primaria/Osnovna šola "Avgust Černigoj" dell'Istituto comprensivo/Večstopenjska šola Opčine-Opicina, Prosecco; classi IV e V	TS	09/05/2024	18	17	Slovenian
Scuola secondaria di primo grado "Centro Storico" dell'IC Pordenone Centro, Pordenone; classe I	PN	13/05/2024	25	14	Italian
Scuola primaria "A. Pecorini" Straccis dell'IC Gorizia 2, Gorizia; classi Va e Vb	GO	15/05/2024	40	34	Italian

Scuola paritaria "Santa Maria degli Angeli", Gemona del Friuli; classi IV and V	UD	17/05/2024	40	33	Italian
Scuola secondaria di primo grado/Srednja šola "Fran Levstik" dell'IC/Večstopenjska šola Opčine-Opicina, Prosecco; classe I	TS	23/05/2024	14	13	Slovenian
Scuola primaria "Collodi" dell'IC Pordenone Centro, Pordenone; classi IVa e IVb	PN	24/05/2024	40	30	Italian
Scuola primaria XIII Martiri dell'IC "Ippolito Nievo", San Donà di Piave; classi IV e V	VE	22/05/2024	22	22	Italian
Nižja srednja šola/ Scuola secondaria di primo grado "Simon Gregorčič" (Dolina) dell'IC/Večstopenjska šola "Josip Pangerc", Dolina; classi Ia e Ib	TS	19/09/2024	42	42	Slovenian
Scuola primaria/Osnovna šola "Albin Bubnič" (Milje/Muggia) dell'IC/Večstopenjska šola "Josip Pangerc", Dolina; classi IV e V	TS	19/09/2024	16	13	Slovenian
Scuola primaria/Osnovna šola "Prežihov Voranc" (Dolina) dell'IC/Večstopenjska šola "Josip Pangerc", Dolina; classi IV e V	TS	27/09/2024	16	8	Slovenian
Scuola primaria/Osnovna šola "Fran Venturini" (Bagnoli/Boljunec), dell'IC/Večstopenjska šola "Josip Pangerc", Dolina; classi IV e V	TS	27/09/2024	26	26	Slovenian
Scuola primaria/Osnovna šola "Ivan Trinko - Zamejski" (Domio/Domjo) dell'IC/Večstopenjska šola "Josip Pangerc", Dolina; classi IV e V	TS	27/09/2024	21	24	Slovenian
TOTAL			341	297	

The questions the pupils and students were asked to answer were the following:

	EN	SLO	IT
1	Do you know what a border is?	Kaj je meja? Razloži ta pojem.	Sai cos'è un confine? Provi a spiegarmelo?
2	Do you live near a border?	Živiš ob meji?	Tu vivi vicino a un confine?
3	Which are the bordering states that you know? (Write max 5 examples)	Katere države, ki mejijo med sabo, poznaš (Navedi največ 5 primerov.)	Quali sono gli Stati confinanti che conosci? (Indica al massimo 5 coppie di stati confinanti)
4	Have you ever crossed a border? Why? (Tourism, wellness centres, skydiving, shopping...)	Si že kdaj prečkal/a mejo? Kje? Zakaj? (Turizem, terme, smučanje, nakupi.)	Sei stato oltre confine? Dove? Cosa hai fatto? Turismo, terme, sci, acquisti...
5	Is living next to a border an opportunity or a disadvantage? Why? Can you give an example? (Public transport, languages, tourism).	Živeti ob meji je po tvojem mnenju prednost ali slabost? Zakaj? Razloži zakaj. (Avtobus in prevozi, jeziki, turizem.)	Vivere vicino a un confine è un vantaggio o uno svantaggio? Perché? Ti viene in mente un esempio? (bus e trasporti, lingue, turismo...)
6	Do you think that people who live next to a border can cooperate? How? For ex. through tourist itineraries, reducing pollution, scientific research, cooperation between schools...	Meniš, da ljudje, ki živijo ob meji, lahko sodelujejo in kako? Npr. turistična ponudba, zmanjševanje onesnaženosti, znanstveno raziskovanje, sodelovanje med šolami...	Ti sembra che le persone che stanno vicino al confine possano collaborare? In che modo? Es. offrire dei percorsi turistici, ridurre l'inquinamento, ricerca scientifica, collaborazione tra scuole...
7	Describe and draw the European flag!	Opiši in nariši evropsko zastavo	Mi descrivi la bandiera europea? Disegnala!
8	Have you ever seen the EU flag on a board or panel Do you know why it was there? For ex. On a bike path, for a bus route/ cross-border rail connection, a theatre performance...	Si kdaj videl/a tablo ali pano z evropsko zastavo? Veš, zakaj so bili tam postavljeni? Npr. kolesarska proga, odsek proge avtobusa ali čezmejnega vlaka, gledališka predstava.	Hai mai visto un cartellone o una targa con la bandiera europea? Di cosa si trattava e perché erano messi lì? Es. pista ciclabile, un tratto di autobus o treno transfrontaliero, uno spettacolo teatrale...
9	In your opinion, why people who live next to a border, not always collaborate? For ex. because of the language, prejudices, the border itself...	Zakaj po tvojem mnenju osebe, ki živijo ob meji, ne sodelujejo? Npr. zaradi jezika, predsodkov, meje same...	Perché secondo te le persone che vivono tra due confini non sempre cooperano? Es. lingua, pregiudizi, la presenza del confine...
10	How would you make two people who live in two different States but near a border cooperate? What would you make them do together? (Describe the activities)	Kako bi spodbudil/a sodelovanje med osebami, ki živijo v različnih državah vzdolž iste meje? Kaj bi lahko počele skupaj? Opiši dejavnosti	Come faresti cooperare/collaborare delle persone che vivono in due Stati diversi ma vicino a un confine? Cosa gli faresti fare assieme? (descrivi delle attività).

Questions' analysis

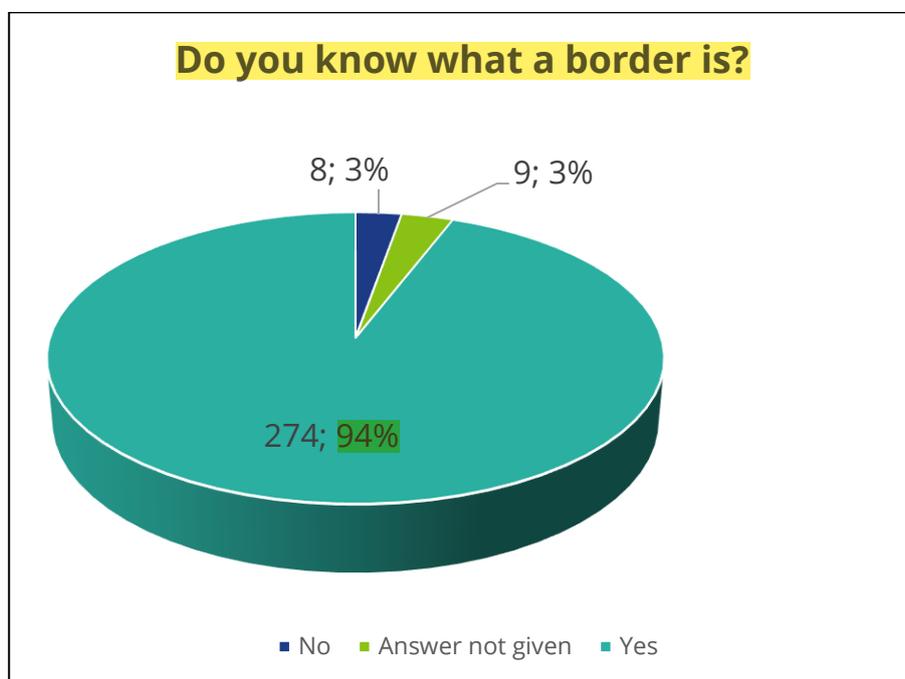
Total questionnaires collected: 297

LIVING NEXT TO A BORDER

Question 1) Do you know what a border is?

This question wants to know how many children know what a border is. Political and geographical/physical borders have been considered by the children in their answers.

Number of valid answers: 282

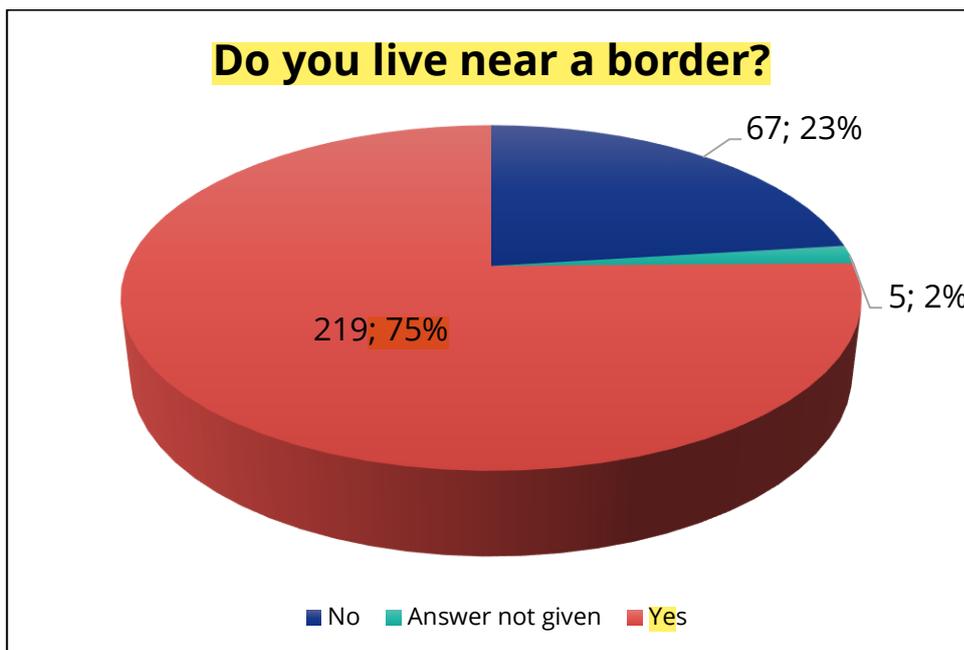


COMMENT: The results show that the majority of pupils and students interviewed are familiar with the notion of "border".

Question 2) Do you live near a border?

Following the previous question, this question wanted to verify if the respondents are actually aware what in reality a border is and if they perceive the border next to which they live as one.

Number of valid answers: 286

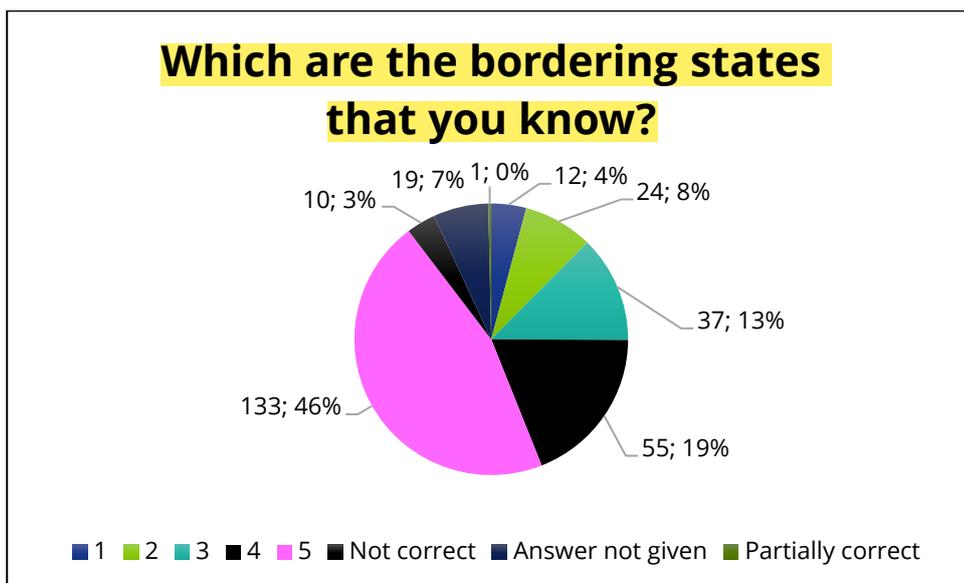


COMMENT: The graphic shows that the majority of the interviewed children lives, or believes to live, near a border (for ex. some children think to live near a border when in fact they do not; or have mistakenly stated that Italy borders with Croatia).

Question 3) Which are the bordering states that you know?

This question was aimed at verifying how many bordering States the children knew. Both borders between States present in the EU and "extra-EU" have been taken into account as a valid answer.

Number of valid answers: 272



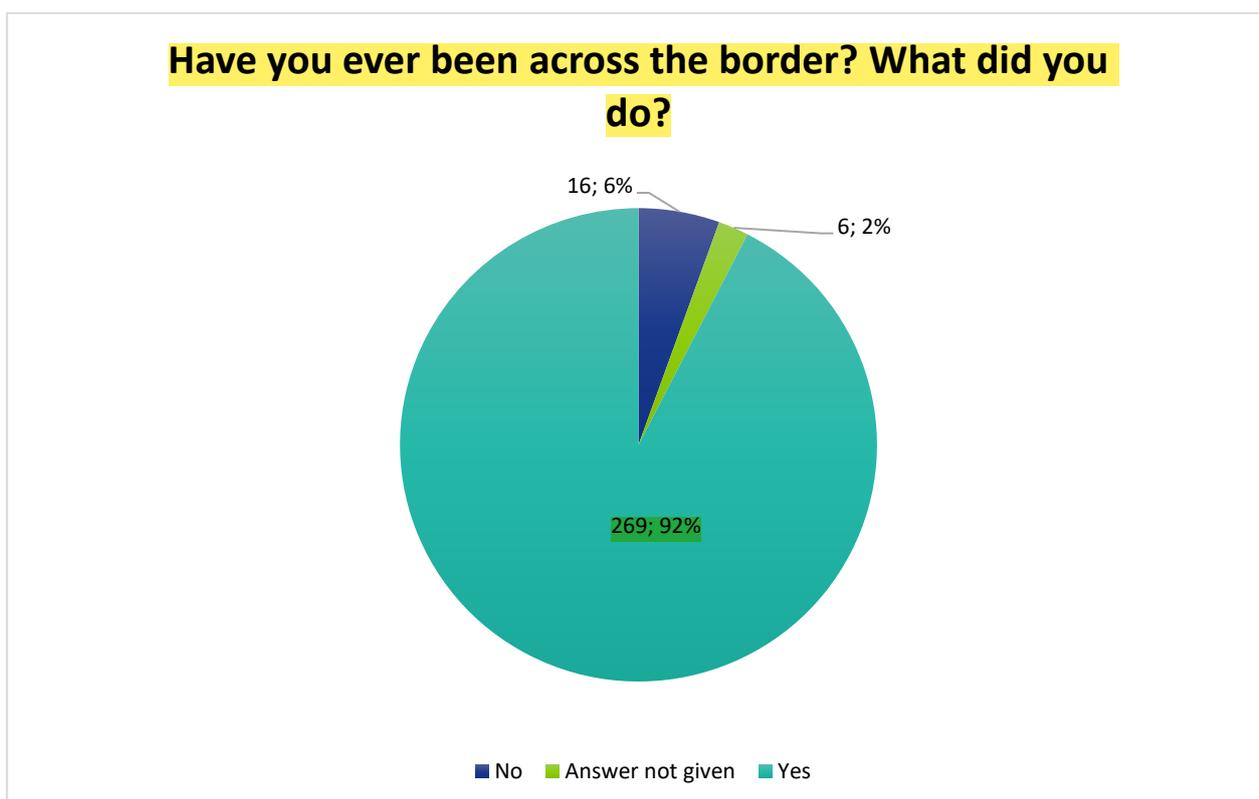
COMMENT: Most of the children interviewed know **at least 4 bordering States**, be they inside the European Union or outside (even bordering States from other continents were mentioned, meaning that

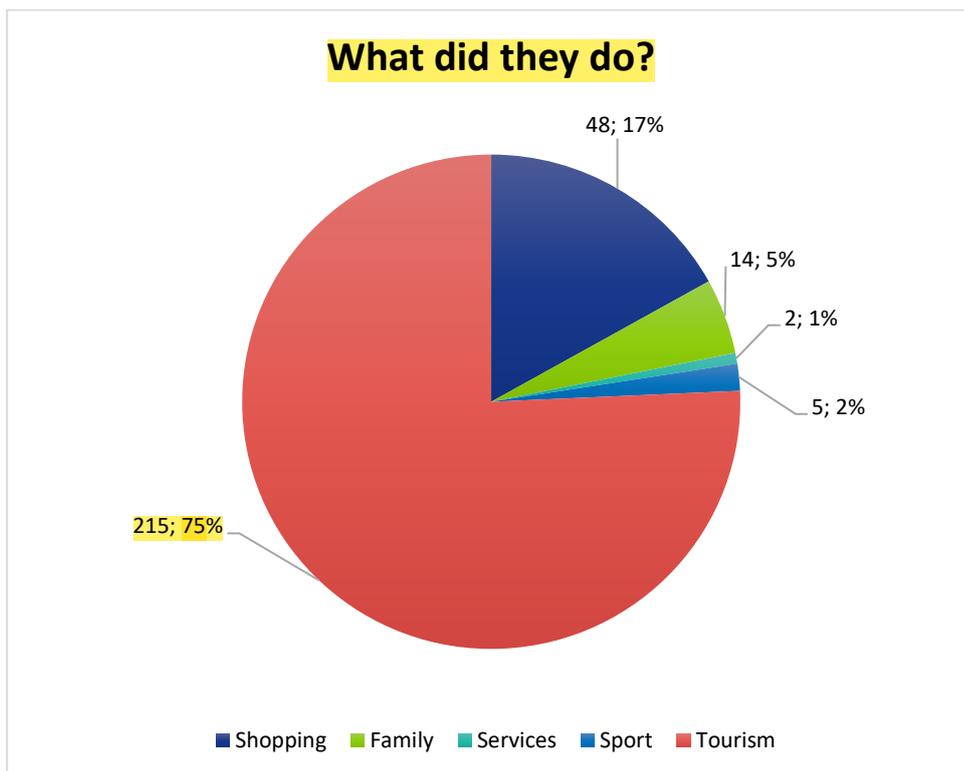
the kids have a good knowledge of the international geography, not only of the national and European one).

Question 4) Have you ever crossed a border? Why? What did you do? (Tourism, wellness centres, skying, shopping...)

This question wanted to know if children had ever crossed borders and, if they did, with which purpose.

Number of valid answers: 285



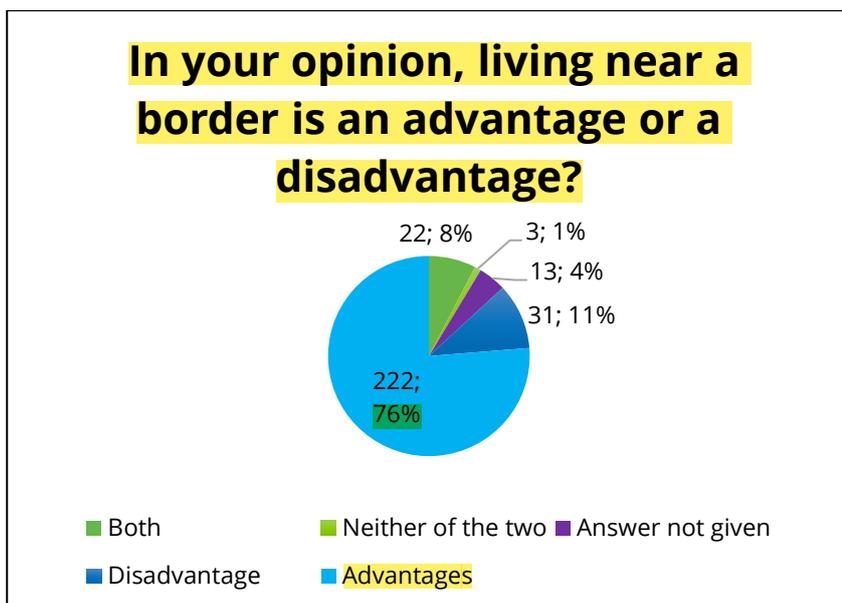


COMMENT: It turns out that almost 90% of the children interviewed have crossed a border and exited the national territory. The main reason is for "Tourism", followed by "Shopping".

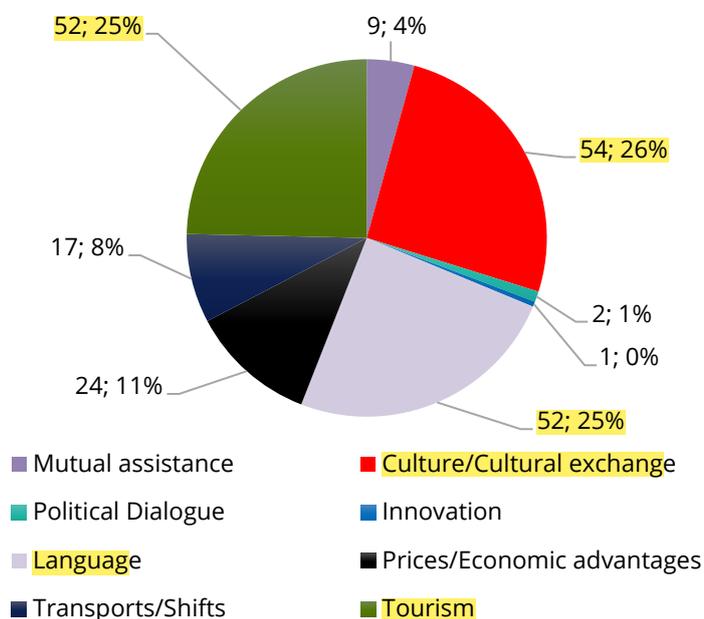
Question 5) Is living next to a border an opportunity or a disadvantage? Why? (Public transport, languages, tourism)

Through this question, the personal opinions of children about living next to a border were investigated.

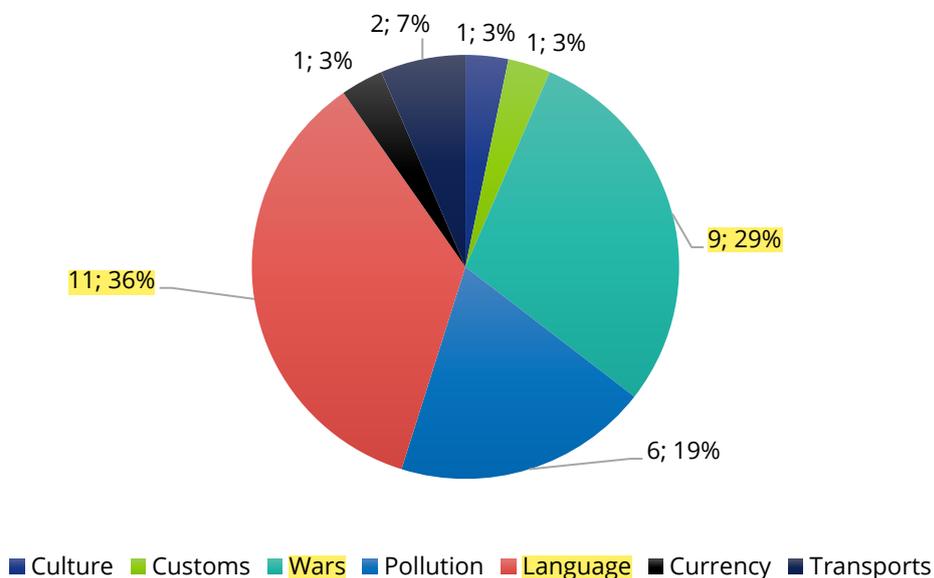
Number of valid answers: 278



Why "Advantage"?



Why "Disadvantage"?



COMMENT: Most of the interviewed children think that living next to a border is an advantage because of the possibility of learning a new language ("Language") and for "Tourism". However, the main reason why children think that living near a border is an advantage is because of "culture and Cultural exchanges".

On the other hand, the children that think that living close to a border is a disadvantage because they don't know the language of the neighbours or because they have to learn a new language in order to

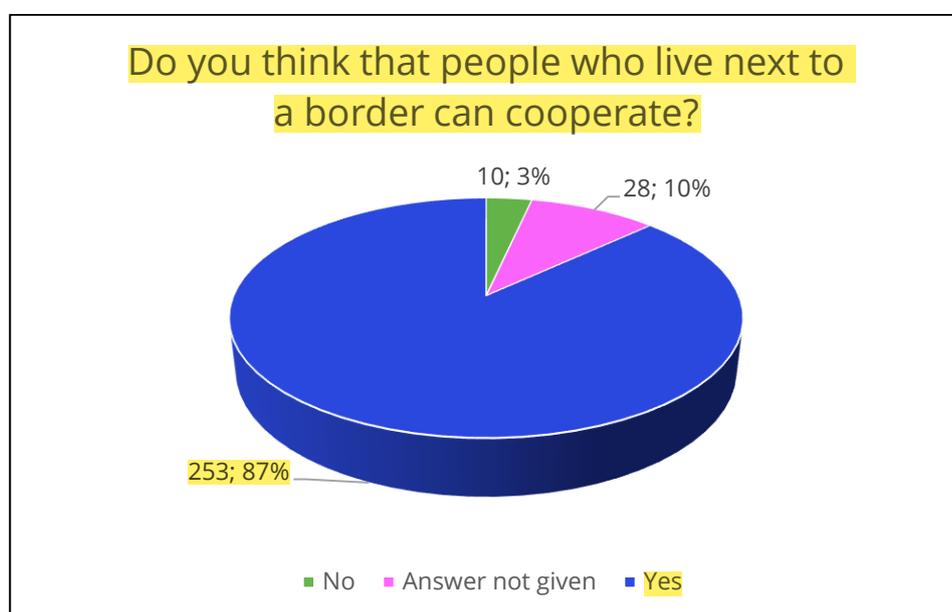
communicate ("Language"); the 29% of the respondents said that it is a disadvantage because of the risk of wars ("Wars").

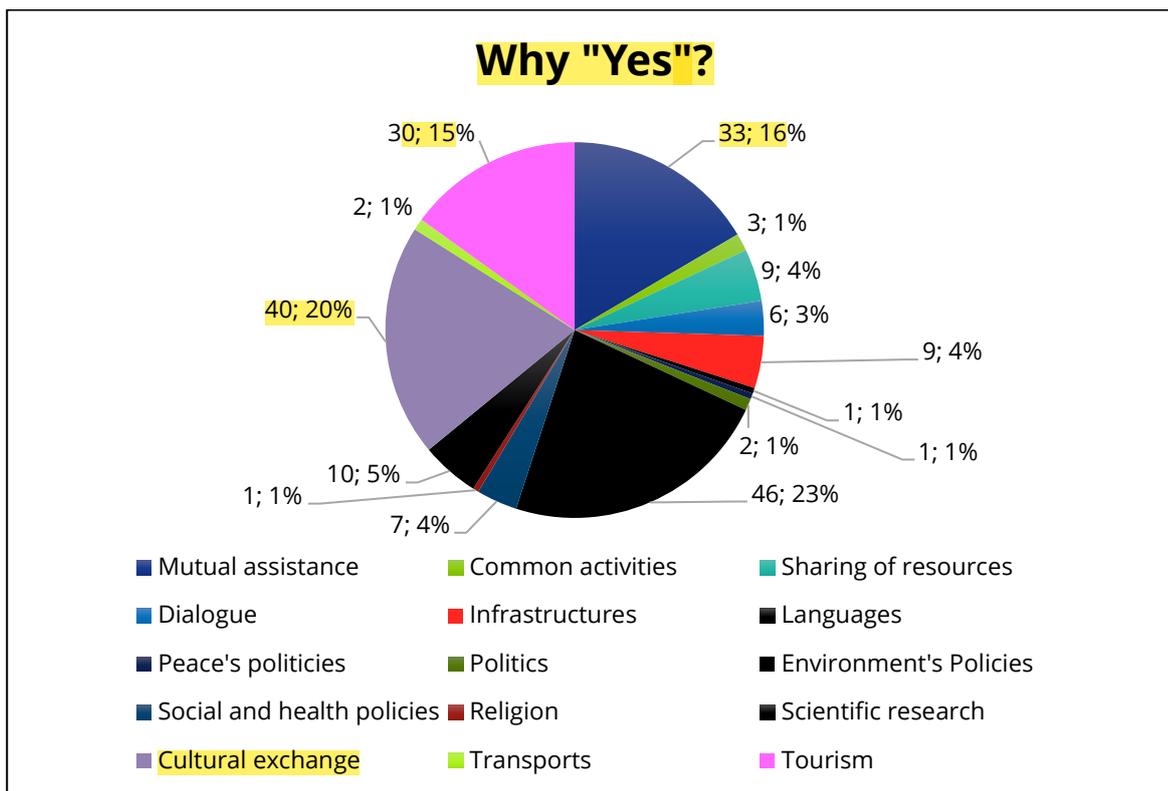
TOPICS OF COOPERATION

***Question 6)* Do you think that people who live next to a border can cooperate? How? For ex. through tourist itineraries, reducing pollution, scientific research, cooperation between schools...?**

This question aims at finding out if the interviewed children think that people living next to and across borders could cooperate and in which way.

Number of valid answers: 263





COMMENT: It is evident that the children think that people living next to a border can collaborate, mostly through "Environment's policies" (23%), "Cultural exchange" (20%), "Mutual assistance" (16%) and "Tourism" (15%). The schools from the province of Trieste mostly emphasised the importance of mutual help and dialogue in order to cooperate. On the other hand, schools from Gorizia, Udine, Pordenone and Venezia emphasised the importance of cultural exchanges and tourism. Those who think that people living next to a border cannot cooperate, think so because of "Wars".

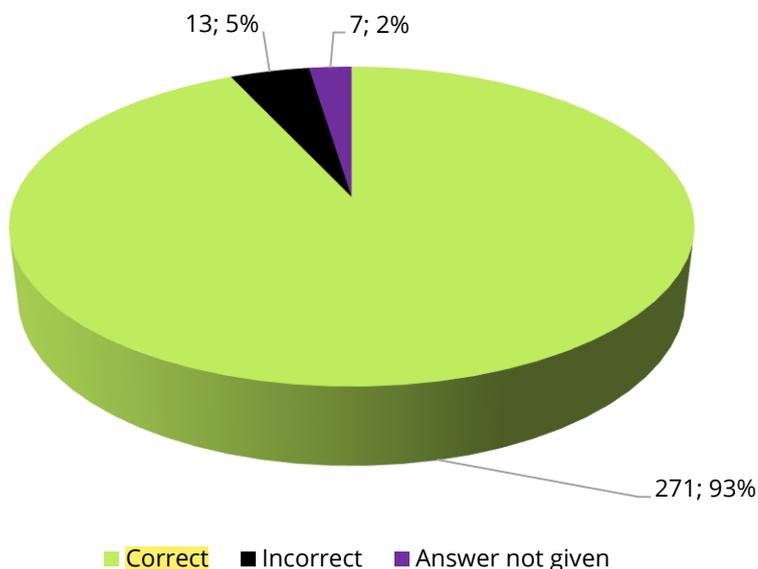
EUROPEAN UNION

Question 7) Describe and draw the European flag!

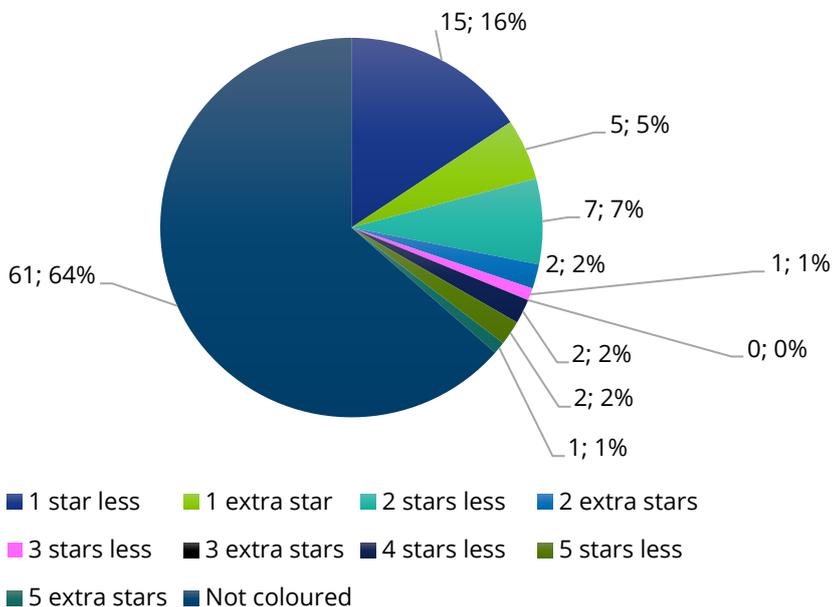
This question wants to know if the children know the European flag and are capable of reproducing it.

Number of valid answers: 284

Describe and draw the European flag!



Correct flags considered

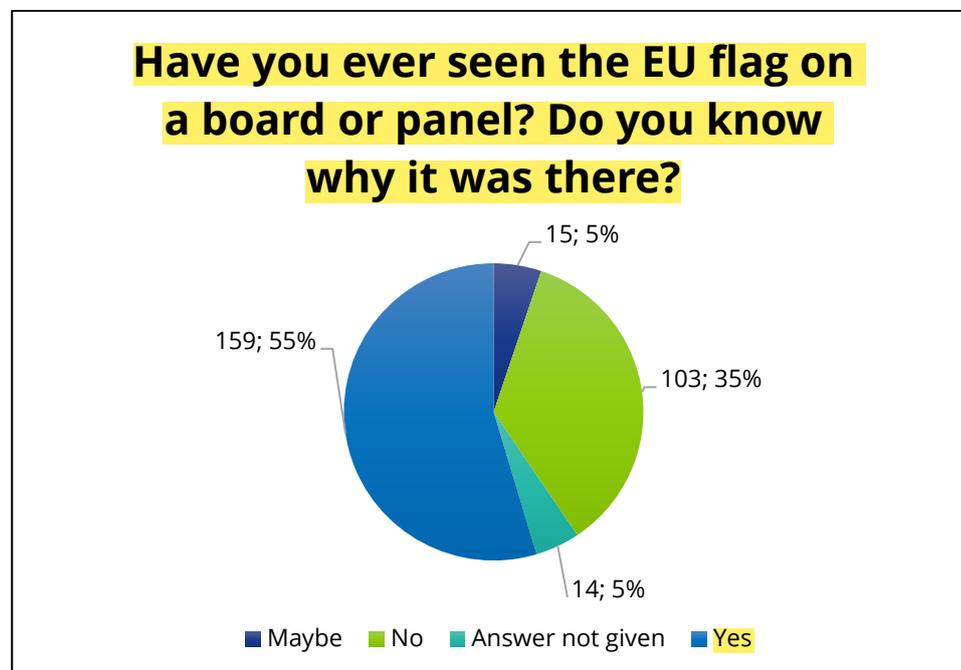


COMMENT: It is clear that the majority of children knows the EU's flag and is able to reproduce it, although with some mistakes here and there and often without colouring it.

Question 8) Have you ever seen the EU flag on a board or panel? Do you know why it was there? For ex. On a bike path, for a bus route/ cross-border rail connection, a theatre performance...

This question wants to find out if the children have ever seen the European flag around them/in their everyday life and where.

Number of valid answers: 277



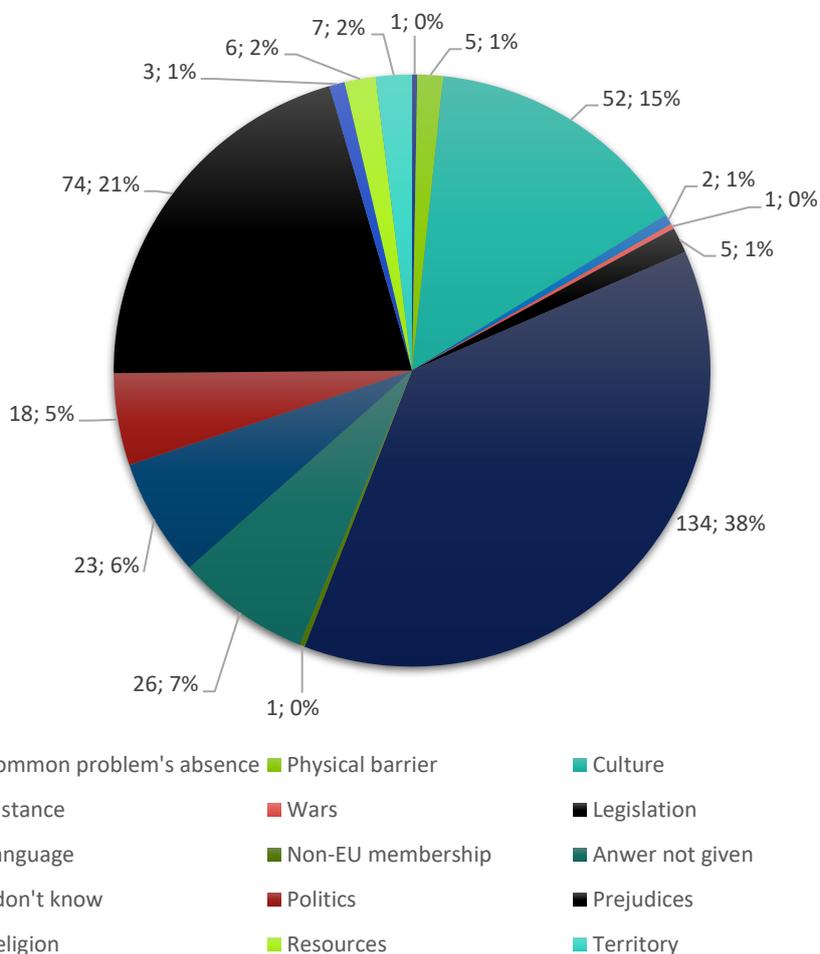
COMMENT: It results that more than half of the respondents have seen the European Union's flag before, be it printed on a board, a panel or on a waving flag.

POSSIBLE CROSSBORDER COOPERATION

Question 9) In your opinion, why people who live next to a border, not always collaborate? For ex. because of the language, prejudices, the border itself...

This question wants to find out if the children perceive that there is a lack of cooperation and are asked to give their personal opinion on this matter.

In your opinion, why people who live next to a border, not always collaborate?



COMMENT: The majority of children think that the lack of/limited cooperation between people living next to a border is due to "Language" (38%), because language barriers make it difficult to understand each other. Furthermore, children think that the lack of cooperation is also due to "Prejudice" (21%) and to different cultures existing in different countries ("Culture", 15%).

Question 10) How would you make two people who live in two different States but near a border cooperate? What would you make them do together? (Describe the activities.)

This question aims at gathering ideas and opinions of children, that could help building connections and a more participative and cooperative European environment.

Conclusions and final comments for pupils aged 9 to 11

These questionnaires allowed the collection of interesting data and opinions.

The **knowledge of actual EU policies** and matters is **limited** among the target group because of the young age and because school programs do not cover these subjects in such an early stage of education. On the other hand, the respondents demonstrated to **have a clear understanding of the notions of "borders" and "cooperation"**, which comes mainly from their personal experience.

From the answers that were given, it is clear that a positive view on the topic is prevalent among the majority of participants, who clearly perceive the border as an opportunity and an advantage. The answers demonstrate that the youngest share the European ideals and values and are willing to collaborate to shape the European future.