

TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS

Joining forces for the Greater North Sea



Interreg
North Sea



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the European Union

Interreg



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North-West Europe



Interreg: Leveraging visions for the Greater North Sea into action

On the importance of the Greater North Sea

The Greater North Sea plays a pivotal role in Europe's green energy outlook. However, it is also the world's busiest sea, teeming with cargo ships, fishing fleets, and touristic vessels. Surrounded by densely populated, highly industrialised countries, its coastal zones and marine ecosystems are heavily affected by human activities.

The establishment of a Greater North Sea Basin Initiative (GNSBI) in November 2023 reflects a strong commitment of the countries around the Greater North Sea to reconcile their interests.

The Interreg North-West Europe and North Sea Programmes have been following developments around GNSBI with particular interest, as the Initiative addresses a number of similar long-term concerns and opportunities related to the area of the Greater North Sea.

In addition to that, many Member States involved in discussing the GNSBI are also major stakeholders and financiers of our programmes.

Interreg programmes: A proven model for transnational cooperation & governance

In the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy and over nearly 3 decades, our Member States have used the Interreg North-West Europe and North Sea Programmes as powerful tools to govern and implement transnational projects bringing together a wide range of public and private stakeholders from the Greater North Sea area.

These past and current projects have significantly contributed to establishing and rolling out durable partnerships, joint governance initiatives, and innovative solutions on strategic issues for the Greater North Sea area.

Similar to the GNSBI we take a broader view that goes beyond the North Sea as such, extending our reach to other maritime areas such as the Atlantic, the Celtic Sea, the Baltic or Arctic...

At the same time our programmes and projects are not only defined by maritime challenges but also integrate an important land-based component.

Our projects: Delivering tangible results

With this joint paper, we want to offer GNSBI stakeholders a flavour of the themes and topics addressed by our projects as well as the approaches developed and the results achieved by our projects.

Our projects bring people together across borders to foster knowledge sharing and joint innovation, strategy and action. In addition to producing key insights, they often develop and test novel solutions on the ground.

Within a rich EU funding ecosystem these projects are also deeply interconnected with other EU, national, regional, local funding sources and initiatives.

They aim to make the North Sea and North-West Europe regions more resilient and capable to respond to existing and future challenges in the framework of green, smart and just transitions.

An opportunity to connect

In the following pages, we present examples of how our Interreg projects contribute to the sustainable management of the Greater North Sea area. These projects reflect our vision of a shared space where diverse interests can coexist and thrive. They represent but a small sample of the wide variety of projects supported by our Programmes.

For GNSBI stakeholders new to the work of Interreg, they are a combined invitation to discover more about our projects and programmes and to also get in touch with the people and institutions representing their regional or Member State interests in our programmes.

The Greater North Sea holds a wealth of experiences and legacies to capitalise upon. Let's connect and explore potential synergies and opportunities that could emerge from the GNSBI.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Byrith'.

Christian Byrith
Head of Secretariat
Interreg North Sea Programme



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Grzegorzewski'.

David Grzegorzewski
Programme Director
Interreg North West Programme

EXAMPLES



14 Interreg projects supporting a joint sustainable governance of the Greater North Sea

NorthSEE

Coordinating Maritime Spatial Planning

For the first time, NorthSEE brought together national Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) authorities in the North Sea Region. The project focused on shipping routes, environmental protection, and energy infrastructure.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Multi-use of space

NorthSEE developed innovative tools such as the MSP Challenge Simulation game to foster dialogue and coherent planning. Using these tools, planners and key stakeholders jointly identified possible synergies and discovered solutions for several sites.

The partnership included ministries and authorities from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, and the Netherlands, in addition to national agencies and research institutes. Thanks to NorthSEE, MSP authorities and scientists now work more closely together in the North Sea Basin.



2016-2022



BE, DE, DK, NL,
NO, SE, UK



€4.05M



12 PARTNERS

Image: Dominic Plug_BSH



FORESEA

Fostering ocean renewable energy by providing access to a network of marine energy test sites

FORESEA accelerated commercialisation and investment in marine energy, strengthening Europe's leadership in sustainable energy innovation.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Business support and development

The FORESEA project supported the development of ocean energy technologies by offering financial aid to developers for testing in real-sea environments. With €10.7 million in funding, it enabled tidal, wave, and offshore wind energy innovations to be tested through a network of leading European marine energy centres. This support resulted in 46 enterprises cooperating with research institutions and 65 enterprises introducing new to the market products.

By bridging the gap between research and market readiness, FORESEA accelerated the commercialisation of ocean renewables, ensuring Europe's leadership in sustainable energy innovation.



2016-2019



BE, FR, IE,
NL, UK



10.7M



31 PARTNERS

Norsaic

Building MSP governance together

Norsaic brings transnational Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) in the North Sea to the next level. The project uses transnational cooperation as a key approach to governing a sustainable transition of the marine space.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Multi-use of space • Cumulative impacts

There is a need to cope with emerging uses and challenges in the North Sea, such as climate change and threats to biodiversity. Norsaic brings ministries and other key stakeholders together to jointly develop adaptation strategies and build capacity for Maritime Spatial Planning governance.

The project advances land-sea-interactions, cumulative impacts and multi-use of space, builds innovation capacity for MSP next-level planning, and delivers joint actions towards long-lasting governance.

National, local, and regional authorities as well as research institutions in the North Sea Region will implement the project's actions plans.



2023-2026



BE, DE, FR, NL,
SE, DK



€2.67M



11 PARTNERS



NWE Marine Energy Alliance

Advancing marine energy innovations through targeted SME support

NWE MEA helped 41 SMEs accelerate technology and commercialisation in marine energy.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Multi-use of space

The Marine Energy Alliance project provided comprehensive technical and commercial support to 41 small and medium-sized enterprises working on wave, tidal, floating solar, and wind energy solutions.

Through strategic collaboration with industry experts, MEA propelled the development of innovative marine energy technologies, boosting their commercialisation potential and enhancing their visibility at key industry events. To sustain activities after project closure, a Marine Energy Hub was realised in the harbour of Scheveningen (NL). With this strategic approach, the project significantly contributed to a greener, more resilient offshore energy sector.



Image: Centrale Nantes



2018-2022



FR, IE, NL, UK



6M



9 PARTNERS



The Partnership

Managing fish stocks in the North Sea

The legacy of this Interreg North Sea project, which took place 20 years ago, is still very much alive. The Partnership resulted in the North Sea Regional Advisory Council (RAC), the first of its kind.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Long-term perspective fisheries

Initiated and backed up by the North Sea Commission, the Partnership project worked to reach consensus on managing shared fish and shellfish stocks in the North Sea. It brought a wide range of stakeholders together from across the North Sea Region.

The project made a strong case to the European Commission and European Parliament for establishing Regional Advisory Councils (RACs). It also set up an Interim Executive Committee to take forward the North Sea Regional Advisory Council. Today, the North Sea RAC remains in full swing and the initiative has given rise to 10 additional RACs.



2002-2005



BE, DE, DK, NL,
NO, SE, UK



€0.9M



17 PARTNERS

Image: Heiko Behn/Pixabay

Interreg
North Sea



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Ocean Power Innovation Network

Building a strong network of collaboration for ocean energy solutions

OPIN supported small and medium sized enterprises in collaborating for innovative ocean energy solutions.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Networks

The Ocean Power Innovation Network (OPIN) encouraged cross-sectoral and cross-regional collaboration between SMEs, research entities, and large companies in the ocean energy sector.

It facilitated cooperation through workshops, masterclasses, and Collaborative Innovation Groups (CIGs). These groups worked to solve technical challenges, like reducing corrosion in offshore structures and integrating marine and space technology. OPIN also helped SMEs assess and advance their technology, with many increasing their readiness for market deployment

By the end of the project, the network consisted of more than 500 members from 34 different countries.



2018-2022



BE, DE, FR,
IE, NL, UK



2.5M



7 PARTNERS

Ocean Power Innovation Network



DIOL

Future-proofing offshore logistics

Land-sea logistics are the backbone of any offshore activities. The project DIOL addresses a pressing need to upgrade logistics hubs in order to match future needs in the North Sea.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Multi-use of space

DIOL helps marine logistics hubs adapt so that they can support the offshore vessels and structures that will prevail in a greener future. The project defines technical, legal, and business requisites for upgrading ports and airports.

DIOL also raises the security of renewable energy supply and infrastructure in the North Sea. This is done via smart drones, fences, robots, and other AI solutions.

The project will equip around 195 organisations to cater efficiently to the future green energy production in the North Sea.



2023-2027

BE, DE, DK, FR, NL

€7.3M

13 PARTNERS

Image: DIOL

Co-funded by the European Union
DIOL

ITEG

Integrating tidal energy into the European grid

The project used tidal power to generate clean energy and produce hydrogen for energy storage.

Knowledge sharing • Multi-use of space • Cumulative impact

ITEG aimed at integrating tidal energy into the European grid to provide a reliable, low-carbon energy source. The project developed an energy management system that converts excess electricity generated by the tide into hydrogen, which can be stored and used later, helping balance supply and demand in the energy grid.

By partnering with organisations across the UK, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, ITEG successfully demonstrated how tidal energy can reduce carbon emissions and support clean energy goals.

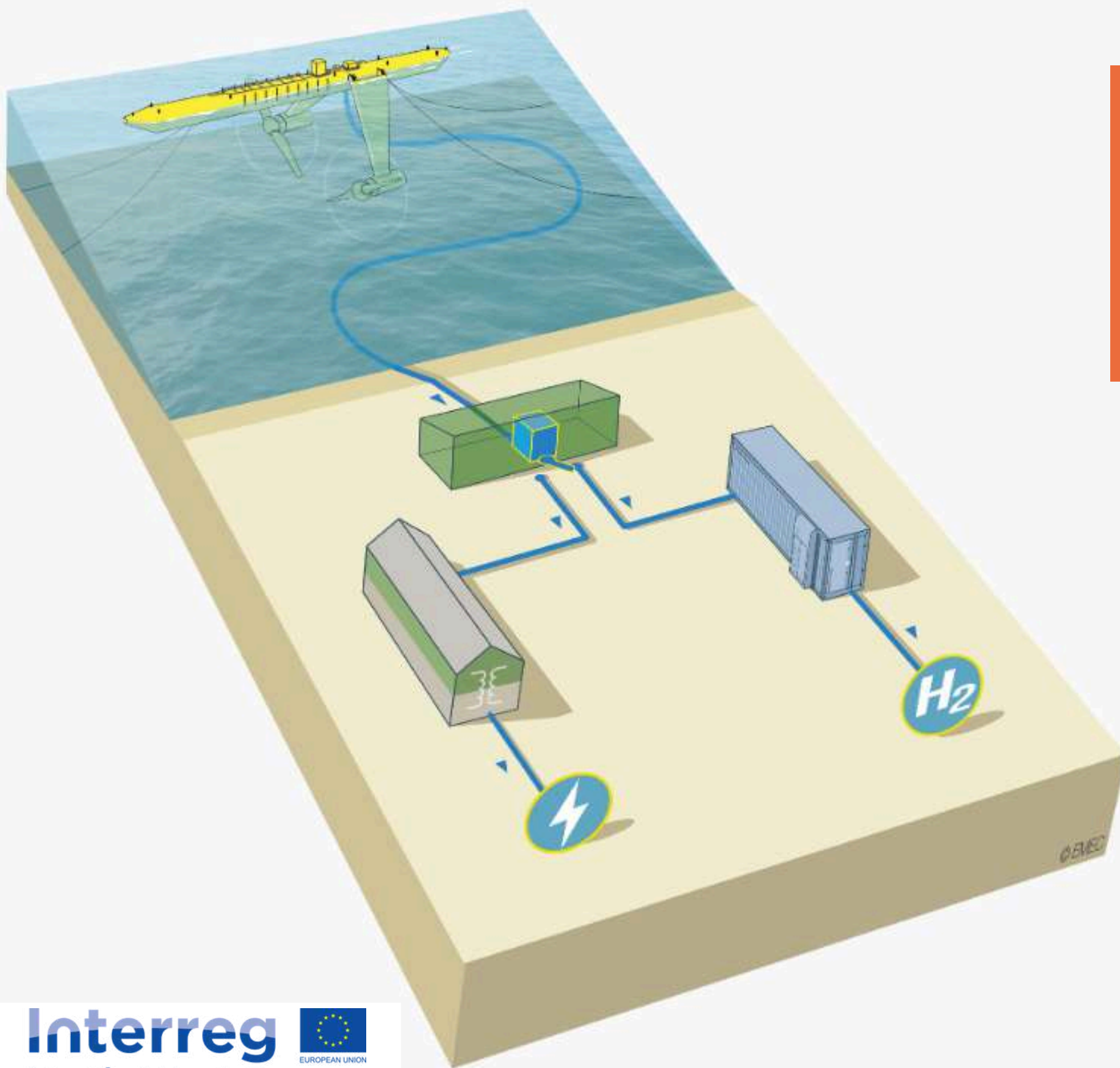


Image: ITEG





North Sea Wrecks

Getting to grips with the toxic legacy of war

North Sea Wrecks mapped and assessed the risks and dangers of wrecks and their remains, left behind on the sea floor by two world wars.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Nature conservation • Multi-use of space

North Sea Wrecks (NSW) produced new knowledge about the thousands of wartime wrecks found in the North Sea, focusing on the risks they pose for human safety and the marine ecosystems.

The project built the NSW Risk Assessment tool and database - new core assets for managing these risks. NSW put wartime wrecks on the OSPAR agenda and was widely publicised in the international press. The project also gave rise to a professional network focused on wartime wrecks in the North Sea.

The project REMARCO now builds further on the ground-breaking results of North Sea Wrecks, working with a high-level Advisory Board.



2019-2023



BE, DE, DK, NL



€4.2M



9 PARTNERS

Image: Ute Research Expedition



SURICATES

Using sediments as resource in circular and regional economies

SURICATES increased the reuse of dredged sediments from ports and waterways to combat erosion and flooding.

Knowledge sharing • Cumulative impact

More than 99% of EU marine sediment dredged is dumped at sea/managed as waste, with only 1% (800 000 t/year) reused.

The SURICATES project addressed this environmental challenge by developing innovative techniques to reapply dredged sediments in civil engineering, erosion control, and flood management in NWE, thereby, helping to reduce waste and strengthen coastal resilience.

Pilot projects in the Port of Rotterdam, Scottish Canals, and La Rance estuary demonstrated the potential for sediment to play a crucial role in climate adaptation in the North Sea and beyond.



2017-2023



FR, IE, NL, UK



8M



14 PARTNERS



Anemoi

Addressing chemical emissions from offshore wind farms

Wind farms are spreading in the North Sea, yet little is known about the impact of chemicals leaking from them. Anemoi fills this knowledge gap.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Nature conservation • Multi-use of space

Offshore wind farms (OWFs) may emit chemicals into the sea, for example from corrosion protection systems and applied coatings.

Anemoi identifies chemical emissions from OWFs, assesses the potential risk to the marine ecosystem, proposes a framework to reduce emissions, promotes harmonisation of OWF regulations across borders, and evaluates the effects on the quality of seafood cultivated at OWFs. It also sets up a participatory framework for the marine industries, policymakers and public authorities to exchange knowledge.

Image:Shaun Daukin/Unsplash



2023-2027



BE, DE, DK,
FR, NL, NO,



5.5M



11 PARTNERS



MegaAWE

Developing airborne wind energy for the future

MegaAWE advanced airborne wind energy systems (AWES) to unlock new locations for renewable energy generation.

Knowledge sharing • Multi-use of space • Cumulative impact

MegaAWE brought large-scale airborne wind energy systems (AWES) closer to commercialisation. The project tested a kite-like system that captures strong, high-altitude winds. This compact technology, featuring a ground-based winch generator, offers a cost-effective and environmentally friendly way to generate energy.

Particularly relevant to marine and coastal regions, AWES systems can be deployed offshore or in remote coastal areas where traditional wind turbines may be impractical due to deep waters or harsh environments. By supporting enterprises in the field, MegaAWE prepared the European market for larger-scale applications. The project further achieved the establishment of a Task force on Airborne Wind Energy within the International Energy Agency Wind Technology Collaboration Programme.



2020-2023



BE, DE, FR,
IE, NL, UK



12.3M



17 PARTNERS



JOMOPANS

Tracking underwater noise to safeguard marine wildlife

JOMOPANS developed a transnational system for monitoring underwater noise in the North Sea. The project also developed the first soundscape map revealing how noise is distributed across the North Sea basin.

Governance • Knowledge sharing • Nature conservation • Cumulative impacts

Underwater sound is vital for marine animals to survive. Noise from economic activities such as offshore wind parks and shipping has a major impact on dolphins, whales and smaller marine life.

JOMOPANS produced sound monitoring tools for and the first soundscape map for the North Sea. The outcomes influence regional policy on seas across the EU and incentivise industry to take measures against noise pollution.

JOMOPANS fed into the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2023 and the EU Technical Group on Noise. The project DEMASK is now building on the work of Jomopans, producing joint planning tools to mitigate noise in the North Sea.



2018-2022



BE, DE, DK,
NL, NO, SE, UK



4.1M



11 PARTNERS

Image: JOMOPANS



H2SHIPS

Promoting hydrogen-powered shipping for a greener future

H2SHIPS proved the feasibility of hydrogen-powered vessels, paving the way for cleaner water transport across Europe.

Knowledge sharing • Cumulative impact

The H2SHIPS project advanced hydrogen as a sustainable fuel for waterborne transport in North-West Europe. By developing hydrogen-powered vessels and creating a hydrogen bunkering system in Amsterdam and Oostende respectively, it demonstrated the technical and economic viability of hydrogen as a fuel, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from maritime and inland navigation.

Alongside inland waterway transport, the project is particularly relevant for coastal regions where water transport plays a significant role, offering a zero-emission solution to replace conventional diesel engines.



2019-2022



BE, DE, FR,
NL, UK



6.3M



13 PARTNERS

Cooperation is key

Interreg transnational projects are making their mark based on multi-level governance cooperation across borders.

Our projects span several countries as well as many sectors. Public authorities at all levels, universities, companies, and civil society organisations all work together across borders.

Interreg transnational projects are like pressure cookers. Their cooperation set-up speeds up innovation and leads to higher-quality and more durable results. Also, Interreg projects focusing on the same overall topic often cooperate to build synergies.



Find out more

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As stakeholders of sustainable governance in the Greater North Sea area, we are proud to support similar goals as the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative.

Please contact us if you would like to learn more about our programmes or are interested in more project examples.

You will also find a wealth of information on our programme websites.