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SYNERGIES BETWEEN GREEN GROWTH COMMUNITY AND THE SMART SPECIALISATION STRATEGY

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1. Introduction

The transition towards sustainability involves actions at multiple scales of governance. On the one hand, national governments and supranational institutions such as the EU have unique powers to drive forward the transition towards sustainability, since they have the capacity to define visions, missions and targets for entire socio-technical systems, and they also have powers to promote innovation and institutional and system's reconfiguration. On the other hand, much of the innovation and learning that is essential for transitions occur at regional and local scales, which implies a crucial role for regional, local and city administrations, as well as distributed networks of stakeholders and projects such as those embodied in the Green Growth Community.

Governing the transition towards sustainability, therefore, requires engaging with policy processes and initiatives at different levels and designing policy actions that can act across such multiple levels and reinforce each other.

Within this framework, this report explores the synergies between **the Green Growth Community (GGC) within the Interreg MED programme**, and the **Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) within Cohesion Policy**, as key EU policy tools at different territorial level). As such, this report aims at taking stock of the results of the GGC and conceptualise the synergies between the latter and the S3 processes and community of stakeholders, thereby opening a dialogue between practitioners from the two areas. In particular, throughout this report, we spell out the goals that S3 and the GGC share and identify the mechanisms through which the GGC activities can support S3. This reflection is as timely and it is important. The S3 and the GGC have so far pursued similar goals in parallel tracks, as the role of **sustainability** and **internationalisation** in S3 becomes more relevant, it is necessary to explore where the two can converge (**FIGURE 1**).

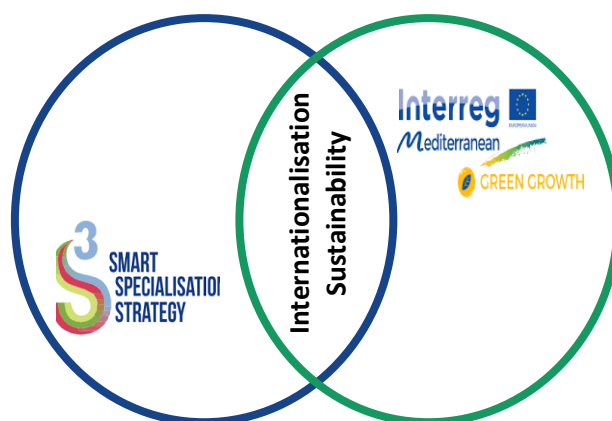


FIGURE 1 – AIM OF THIS REPORT.

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2. What is S3?

The European Commission introduced Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3, and previously referred as RIS3) in the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 as a requirement for obtaining funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). With Smart Specialisation, research and innovation are mainstreamed -for the first time- as tools for regional development.

Smart Specialisation represented a significant novelty in regional policy, not only because of its focus of knowledge-based development, but also because it revolved around three pillars that required a new way of working, namely: **Localisation**, **Prioritisation** and **Participation**, emphasising the importance of focussing public investment on selected areas of high potential (the so called S3 priorities) to be identified with local stakeholders in light of the local specificities and assets of a territory, in the so called **THE ENTREPRENEURIAL DISCOVERY PROCESS**, the participatory process whereby stakeholders support the choice and reflection on S3 priorities.

Smart specialisation has made a real difference in the way European regions are designing their innovation strategies, reinforcing cooperation at all levels. In the past ten years the concept has taken hold strongly in EU regional policy. Participation, prioritisation and localisation have been fully absorbed in regional development practice. Moreover, S3 has evolved in light of new elements and emerging policy concerns. Two dimensions are particularly worth stressing:

The three pillars of S3

1- Localization: Smart specialisation is a place-based approach, it builds on the assets and resources available on the territory.

2- Prioritisation: S3s have to identify and concentrate resources on a limited set of areas, the so called S3 investment priorities.

3- Participation: S3s require stakeholders' engagement, who are directly involved in the strategy design and implementation and in particular in the definition, revision and review of S3 investment priorities.



- 1) The increased focus on **Sustainability**
- 2) The increased attention to **Internationalisation**

The importance of Sustainability and Internationalisation in S3 is formally acknowledged in the ERDF regulations: the “**Actions to manage industrial transitions**” and the “**Measures for international collaboration**” represent respectively criterion 6 and 7 of the enabling condition “Good governance of national or regional smart specialisation strategy” (**TABLE 1**). In other words, when developing and implementing S3 strategies, regions and member states will need devote resources to initiatives and instruments fostering sustainability and international collaboration.

TABLE 1 - CRITERIA FOR THE ENABLING CONDITION OF POLICY OBJECTIVE 1: A SMARTER EUROPE.

Good governance of national or regional smart specialisation strategy
Smart specialisation strategy(ies) shall be supported by:
1. Up-to-date analysis of bottlenecks for innovation diffusion, including digitalisation
2. Existence of competent regional / national institution or body, responsible for the management of the smart specialisation strategy
3. Monitoring and evaluation tools to measure performance towards the objectives of the strategy
4. Effective functioning of entrepreneurial discovery process
5. Actions necessary to improve national or regional research and innovation systems
6. Actions to manage industrial transition
7. Measures for international collaboration

2.1 SUSTAINABILITY

With the [Green Deal](#) and the [New Industrial Strategy](#), the European Commission (EC) has positioned itself as a leading actor in the transition to a healthy planet, the digital economy and a sustainable development guided by the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). As EC attention has been increasingly placed to environmental challenges, policy documents have stressed the importance of *[mobilising Cohesion Policy for a new growth strategy-based on sustainability](#)*. Much attention has been paid to Smart Specialisation as a tool to address societal challenges, combining the directionality of new EU initiatives with the search and co-creation path of the entrepreneurial discovery. [Specific guidelines](#) have been developed to orient this process. The new S3 strategies pay attention to the so-called *[industrial transitions](#)*. Within this context, regions are asked to reflect on what actions they are taking to embrace the shift towards sustainability, from a broad angle. In that sense, it is important not to see innovation as centred around technological development, rather it becomes important to understand the social dynamics that can embrace the paramount shift in societal organisation that is required for the challenge at stake. Renewed interest is placed on the role of stakeholders from the 4-helix (public sector, private sector, research and higher education, and citizenship/civil society) to help shape the transition by articulating its needs. A strong consensus has emerged on [the need for S3 to evolve](#), complementing the initiatives and instruments that have been developed in the past few years, with more experimental ones, in line with the literature on industrial transitions. This implies supporting experimentation and learning in protected niches, to allow new practices to emerge and ultimately be scaled-up.

2.2 INTERNATIONALISATION

As highlighted above, in the current programming period (2021-2027) Smart Specialisation Strategies need to reflect on the role of their region in an international setting, identifying ways to foster interaction with external actors and networks. Such international dimension of S3 is a much-debated topic, which has undergone significant evolution in recent years. The internationalisation of S3 was addressed during the previous programming period (2014-2020), through the so-called *[S3 Thematic Partnerships](#)*. The Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms are initiatives involving several Directorate Generals of the European Commission that encourage regions and their innovation actors to build strategic partnerships, promoting



complementarity of regional funding for innovation in specific *smart specialisation areas (Agri-Food, Energy, and Industrial Modernisation)*. The platforms have promoted identification of key common domains, the alignment of priorities and policy learning networks. Despite the strong appetite for interregional collaboration, it has been difficult, in the past, to translate ideas in concrete projects, partly for the complexity of cross-national funding¹. Within this context, it is crucial to conceptualise the potential synergies between S3 and the GGC, identifying the mechanisms and the opportunities for interaction across the two.

3. What is the GGC?

The European Union promotes cooperation between regions and countries to help their economic and social development and tackle the obstacle of borders. Within the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), the Interreg MED Programme gathers 13 European countries from the Northern shore of the Mediterranean, which work together for a sustainable growth in the region. The Programme supports projects developing innovative concepts and practices and promoting a sustainable use of resources. As part of it, the Green Growth Community promotes sustainable development and the circular economy in the Euro-Mediterranean region by enhancing cross-sectoral innovation through a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach.

The GGC has brought together, since 2016, more than 140 interconnected partners from 13 Euro-Mediterranean countries (Green Growth horizontal project partners and 17 modular projects partners, without counting associated partners). In other words, the *GGC is a network of networks, with a local, EU and Southern Mediterranean dimensions*. In order to





¹ Such gap has been recently addressed and the support to S3 internationalisation has benefitted from a new instrument, I3 – Inter-regional Innovation Investment, that builds on the experience of the Thematic Partnerships and aims at bringing them forward. The I3 is a new programme, under the ERDF, which has the objective to support the commercialisation and scaling up of interregional innovation projects in shared smart specialisation priority areas.

pursue its policy objectives, the GGC has created bridges with initiatives, organisations and programmes, both within the whole Mediterranean macro-region and beyond.

The [Union for the Mediterranean \(UfM\)](#)⁶⁹ officially acknowledged the GGC potential to support the transition to a green and circular economy. Moreover, the Green Growth community is represented in the [European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform \(ECESP\)](#) [since 2020](#)⁷⁰, a joint initiative by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee that brings together stakeholders active in the broad field of the circular economy in Europe.

The Green Growth Community (2019-2022), and its predecessor SYNGGI (2016-2019), were structured in line with the [EU Circular Economy Action Plan \(CEAP\)](#)⁷¹ priorities, with the aim of maximising the contribution to the EU circular economy policy agenda. In particular, the GGC clustered the modular projects in four focus areas to be able to organise working groups to align outputs to policy priorities (TABLE 2). As circular economy and the transitions to sustainability became more central in EU policy, culminating in the European Green Deal, the GGC strategic alignment to EU policy became a key step to have higher impact.

TABLE 2 – GGC FOCUS GROUPS AND RESPECTIVE MAIN TARGETS AND MODULAR PROJECTS INVOLVED.

Focus Area Icon	Focus Area Name	Main Targets	Modular projects
	Food systems	Agri-food, sustainable production and consumption, zero-km products market uptake, greener supply chains and food safety	ARISTOIL/PLUS PEFMED/PLUS CAMARG EMBRACE MADRE MED GREENHOUSES
	Smart Cities	Capacity building of public authorities and SMEs*, energy efficiency, urban mobility, and communications technologies	ESMARTCITY GREENMIND
	Waste Management	Bio, organic, and inorganic waste, key enabling and best available technologies	REINWASTE RE-LIVE WASTE
	Eco-innovation	Technological and methodological innovation, green jobs, patents, and industrial symbiosis	GRASPINNO/PLUS CREAINNOVATION GREENOMED FINMED

*Small Medium Enterprises



The GGC implements the capitalisation process which consists of:

- Creating an engaged community to find solutions for common challenges.
- Mapping relevant projects and stakeholders with high evidence-based impact results.
- Promoting the transfer of novel practices based on the sector needs and common priorities.
- Identifying synergies and policies tackling specific sectors.
- Integrating the knowledge at different technical and policy levels to facilitate and speed-up the implementation at local ground.

Key actions of this process and relevant outputs can be classified as follows:

- The collection and review of innovative solutions.
- The creation of capacity building material for stakeholder events, trainings, webinars, workshops, online courses...
- The collaboration with relevant institutions and mapping synergies with target groups by organising recurrent encountering opportunities to tackle both top-down and bottom-up needs.
- The facilitation and dynamize capacity strengthening through mentoring and twinning sessions between givers and takers.
- The creation of advocacy materials through policy papers, recommendations, hubs...

4. The intersection between GGC and S3: systematising synergies

As the international and sustainability dimension of S3 becomes more relevant, it is important to explore more closely what benefits lie at the intersection between S3 and the GGC. To this end, it is useful to start by stressing that S3 and the GGC share **common policy objectives**, in particular:

- both are focussed on **knowledge-based territorial development**: the GGC pursues its aims through an international set of nodes, rooted in different Mediterranean territories and S3s are currently the main policy documents to set the directions for development across EU regions.
- both pay **attention to sustainability**: the GGC is centred around sustainability and circular economy which have become an increasingly relevant dimension for S3 strategies as well.
- both are **projected internationally**: the GGC is, by definition, an international consortium of actors committed to sustainability. As such, it offers a platform for S3 to reach out beyond its regional borders. At the same time, S3s now need to develop an international outlook.

As a next step we identify the following four **mechanisms** through which the GGC can support S3:

- providing a **repertoire of tools, results and good practices**, relevant for stakeholders and policy makers;
- providing **access to international and local networks of stakeholders**;
- supporting **policy capacity and skills development** among stakeholders;
- supporting **innovation diffusion** among actors in the circular economy.



Specific examples for each of the above mechanisms are reported in **FIGURE 2** and will be explored further in the remaining of the document.

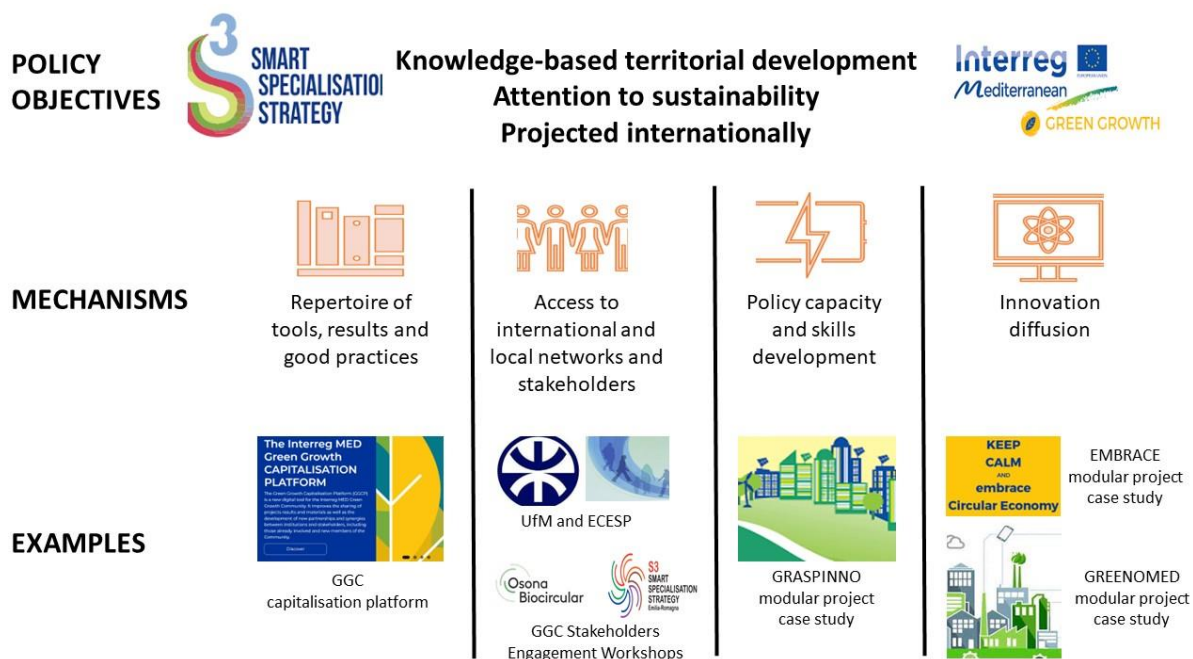


FIGURE 1 - MECHANISMS AND EXAMPLES OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN S3 AND GGC.

4.1 REPERTOIRE OF TOOLS, RESULTS AND GOOD PRACTICES

The very first type of synergy to exploit for S3 practitioners lays precisely in accessing the tools and resources available in the capitalisation platform of the GGC. Regions whose areas of specialisation include agri-food or circular economy can easily identify projects, tools, initiatives, training material and policy recommendations and contacts of interest, looking for best practices (**TABLE 2**).

TABLE 2 - EXAMPLE OF OUTPUTS IN THE GGC CAPITALISATION PLATFORM OF RELEVANCE TO S3 PRACTITIONERS.

The Interreg MED Green Growth Policy Paper	The paper presents EU policies relevant to the 4 focus areas of the Green Growth Community (TABLE 1) and showcases how the projects have contributed to the implementation of the objectives of these policy frameworks, by highlighting key project results and activities.
Circular Economy White Papers	The GGC developed a series of White Papers presenting its contributions towards the development of circular economy. The White Papers covered: 1) Resource Efficiency; 2) Green and Smart Public Services; 3) Waste Prevention and Management; and 4) Competitiveness and Innovation.
The Green Growth Euro-Mediterranean Policy Hub	The Green Growth Euro-Mediterranean Policy Hub gathers policy instruments on green growth and related topics that exist, or that are being developed, on EU, Mediterranean, national, and regional levels. The documents can be filtered across multiple criteria and keywords.

Moving forward it is essential for the GGC partners and working groups to be aware and map which outputs can be of interest to the S3 community and reach out to S3 to shape output activities in a synergetic way.

4.2 ACCESS TO INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL NETWORKS AND STAKEHOLDERS

As mentioned above, the GGC is built upon multilevel networks that go from the local (through Stakeholders Engagement Workshops) to the international (through the collaboration with the UfM and the ECESP). Accessing such networks can benefit Smart Specialisation, not only in its efforts related to Entrepreneurial Discovery Process, but also in building policy capacity for sustainability, as the two examples of Osona and Emilia Romagna presented case studies.

4.2.1 ENGAGING S3 STAKEHOLDERS IN THE GGC: THE CASE OF OSONA BIOCIRCULAR

Climate change, legislative evolution and market pressure are affecting both the demand of meat products and the ability to produce. This puts incredible pressure on the economic model of Osona, an area in central Catalonia, whose sustainability is significantly threatened.

Osona's agri-food economic fabric consists of a few large firms and many SMEs. The latter lack the culture, facility and resources to plan and act about the long-term: they are actors that need guidance and support across the whole process of transformation of the sector. The former are critical economic actors in the territory yet are often anchored to the old paradigm and may struggle to embrace the change required by the current challenges.

The area of Osona has been particularly active in relation to finding new pathways to sustainability. A plethora of initiatives covering sustainability in the agri-food sector have emerged in the past few years, which have been grouped under the umbrella term of "**Osona Biocircular**". The latter is now considered the reference framework for such initiatives in the area.

The aims of Osona Biocircular fully overlap with those of the GGC and the strong synergies between the two have been exploited in the GGC Stakeholders Engagement Workshops.

Osona Biocircular vision:

Maintain/increase the competitiveness and sustainability of the Osona agri-food sector and transition from producing the food of the present to producing the food of the future.

The GGC workshops added to this process by **furthering the interaction among stakeholders**, engaging new actors in the dialogue, and starting the reflection on the actions to be taken from a strategic perspective with the objective to develop a so-called **Shared Agenda** for the territory, preparing to engage with local S3.

Shared agendas for sustainability and social change are initiatives launched by various stakeholders in a territory to address systemic challenges (often linked to the SDGs) and the problems and opportunities that arise from them in a coordinated way. The ultimate goal of shared agendas is to promote sustainable, inclusive, resilient and fair development. They are



at the centre of the Catalan S3, and they require that territories develop significant strategic and policy capacities, to identify local manifestations of global challenge and address them together with a view to long-term sustainable development.

4.2.2 ENGAGING S3 STAKEHOLDERS IN THE GGC: THE CASE OF EMILIA ROMAGNA

The [Emilia Romagna S3 2021-2027](#)⁶⁸ was approved on the 31st of June 2021 and includes, among its ten areas of specialisation, that of agri-food. As such, the GGC organised a workshop revolving around ARISTOIL PLUS and PEFMED PLUS modular projects to find opportunities for collaboration with local stakeholders.

- **PEFMED and PEFMED PLUS** have experimented with the application of the PEF (Product Environmental Footprint) methodology in different production contexts of the Mediterranean area to measure and verify its environmental footprint. The projects have supported a pool of companies from nine Mediterranean Countries (Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, Greece, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Croatia) in their greening efforts.
- **ARISTOIL and ARISTOIL PLUS** aim at leveraging the sustainability of the extra virgin olive oil production system, providing companies with guidelines and tools to guarantee the oil's valuable organoleptic properties. The projects have generated capitalisation activities involving over 120 actors from Greece, Italy, Spain, Montenegro, Cyprus and Croatia in capacity building activities.

The projects have developed not only innovative processes, but also an international community of practice, including firms, researchers and public authorities. It was highlighted that the GGC approach to innovation, which is not so much concerned with the technological global frontier, but rather with identification and experimentation of practical solutions, is an interesting complement to S3, especially at a time in which, the agri-food value chains are stressed by issues such as logistic disruption for raw material, inflationary pressures and energy uncertainty.

The two workshops led to the identification of several avenues for collaboration for stakeholders in the agri-food sectors, to be pursued in the forthcoming years:

- Training support to companies for the effective use of the tools developed within the GGC.
- Develop feasibility studies with local partners.
- Co-design of projects.
- Thematic working groups for in-depth analysis and sharing of good practices.

Moving forward it is essential for the GGC partners to engage closely and regularly with regional authorities, to develop roadmaps for common activities. Stakeholders' workshops are a very valuable tool to exploit synergies between S3 and the GGC. They offer a space for in-depth and targeted interaction with regional stakeholders and policy makers, allowing to define very clear policy objectives.

4.3 POLICY CAPACITY AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Building policy capacities for sustainable innovation is extremely challenging. Demand side instruments such as green or innovative public procurement are considered important interventions, providing incentives to develop sustainable and/or innovative products and services. As innovative and green public procurement (GPP) are complex instruments, implementing them provides an opportunity to build capacity. Indeed, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has found that policy makers who implement GPP are also be better equipped to meet evolving environmental challenges, for example to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or move towards a more circular economy (see [here](#)). Implementing GPP, in other words, serves, among other things, to prepare the public administration to the challenges of sustainability transitions.

Within this context the **GRASPINNO** modular project has developed a set of electronic tools to support public authorities in the implementation of GPP, focusing on choosing green products and services for energy refurbishment and the installation of renewable energy sources in public buildings.



Further, the tools support SMEs and enterprises working on green growth initiatives by promoting their green products and services to a wide range of public procurers, highlighting their sustainable practices and certifications.

The following tools are currently available online in the so-called [UNIFIED PLATFORM^{Geo}](#):

- 1) [The GRASPINNO database](#): this is a database architecture that strengthens the capacity of local/regional authorities to set quality green energy requirements and of SMEs to propose solutions that implement these requirements.
- 2) [E-GPP Support Tool](#): this tool offers Public Authorities an easy way to collect green specifications that be used during tender preparation.
- 3) [LCC Calculating Cost](#): Life Cycle Costing calculating tool.

The project helped build systemic capacities for GPP which are relevant for the current wave of S3s increasingly involved in sustainability transitions. On the one hand it built skills among the supply side (firms), on the other, it built policy capacity on the demand side, by enhancing regions' ability to deploy GPP.

Moving forward, the tools developed can be adapted to address green-innovative public procurement. To do so, it is essential to engage with regional authorities implementing (or attempting to implement) the instrument, as well as with other EU-funded initiatives on the topic.

4.4 INNOVATION DIFFUSION

4.4.1 EMBRACE: DEVELOPING NEW BUSINESS MODELS

EMBRACE has developed a Toolkit, available [on Moodle^{Geo}](#), targeted to SMEs, intermediary organisations, clusters, and policymakers in the agricultural sectors and wine production, that are interested in transforming their businesses or 'ecosystem' towards a circular economy approach. The toolkit includes a guide for facilitators, a template to be printed for on-site sessions, an editable online template, video tutorials, and more. Key elements include: an



assessment and management tool to re-design business models and value chains in the wine and agrofood sectors as well as a set of proposals for financial instruments compatible with ERDF, investment plans for eco-innovation projects, related services and business models for selected SMEs.

The outputs of EMBRACE are relevant to S3 on several grounds.

- 1) The assessment and management tool can be incorporated by regional stakeholders in regions specialised in wine and agri-food.
- 2) The policy analysis conducted, identifying instruments to finance eco-innovation projects, can be examined by those regions seeking similar solutions.

Moving forward, the experience of EMBRACE should be capitalised by amplifying its outreach across other regions with an interest in wine and agri-food systems.

4.4.2 GREENOMED: LEVERAGING THE ROLE OF CLUSTERS

GREENOMED is centred on developing a trans-regional cooperation framework for promoting green manufacturing among SMEs. The latter do not normally have the instruments nor the institutional framework to establish strategic partnerships with potential extra-regional partners for innovation activities. The [trans-national cooperation methodology](#) that has been tested in the project allows companies and organizations of one region to identify and cooperate with international partners, leveraging on the territorial governance role of [clusters](#) and creating the institutional framework that could support this process.

GREENOMED tested and transferred a methodology based on the [‘Vanguard Initiative’](#) for the setup of trans-national pilot plants in the MED region. The methodology formalises the steps through which clusters can mobilise and coordinate innovative actors from their region to build infrastructure and create innovation projects to support the industrial uptake of green technologies. The methodology is made up of detailed steps, complemented by a list of support services and tools that clusters (or other intermediaries governing the process) can



exploit during each phase of implementation. In turn, the process supported the establishment of regional stakeholder working groups and facilitated the creation of interregional connections between groups working on synergic projects.

The methodology was tested by clusters in the regions to assess its sustainability, usability and effectiveness and later shared with the respective regional authorities. Therefore, the development is aligned with S3 in its principles and has received the buy in of several regions, which have tested within their S3 framework. Focusing on the role of clusters as subjects for innovation diffusion, through the support of interregional cooperation, are at core of Smart Specialisation.

Moving forward, the experience of GREENOMED should be capitalised by amplifying its outreach across other S3 Thematic Platforms and Partnerships. As the new programming period advances, initiative like GREENOMED should reach out to the other support services that the EC is putting in place to advance interregional cooperation.

5. The way forward: capitalising on the GGC lessons for S3

The transition towards sustainability involves actions at multiple scales of governance. On the one hand, national governments and supranational institutions have the capacity to define visions, missions, and targets for entire socio-technical systems and to promote innovation and institutional and system's reconfiguration. On the other hand, much of the innovation and learning that is essential for transitions occur at regional and local scales and can easily go undetected by those operating at the vertices of governance. Regional, local and city administrations, as well as distributed networks of stakeholders, such as those embodied in the GGC, can offer significant opportunities for sustainability transitions, as they are fertile grounds for ingenuity and experimentation, often occurring below the radar of larger policy actors.

Engaging with policy processes and initiatives at different levels and designing policy actions that can act across such multiple levels and reinforce each other is an essential challenge of our time. As such, the interaction between regional policy makers, in charge of S3, and participants in the GGC is likely to be fruitful and should be pro-actively pursued in the current programming period.

This report has spelled out very specific examples, through which the GGC and S3 policy makers can find common ground with a view to build synergies and joint initiatives throughout the [Interreg Euro-MED programming period 2021-2027](#)⁶⁹. There is significant value in the interaction between the former governance projects such as the continuation of GGC and local stakeholders operating under the S3 umbrella (TABLE 3). The governance projects aim to offer tools and repositories of knowledge that may be of interest to S3 practitioners or policy makers. Most importantly, however, through the so-called modular

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projects (and newly called thematic projects), regional policy makers and stakeholders can take part to the design or testing of projects' tools and methodologies.

TABLE 3 - BENEFITS OF GGC AND S3 INTERACTION.

Benefits for the new Interreg Thematic Communities	Benefits for regional policy makers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy impact for innovative solutions• Transferability at local ground• Receive bottom-up feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to international networks• Access to knowledge to support innovation• Opportunity to replicate tools related to circular economy with local stakeholders

To extract such value, however, project partners need to pursue a targeted approach for each territory, investing time and resources into understanding its needs and finding a specific value-proposition. Such efforts should start during the early definition of the projects, which should embed synergies with smart specialisation in their design.

Such early efforts should be geared towards:

- **identifying the right S3 interlocutors at the regional level; and**
- **understanding local stakeholders' needs.**

This requires building a common language and a stable communication and exchange channels between the regional administration, local stakeholders, and such transnational initiatives in order to find practical avenues for collaboration.

In the period 2014-2020, the EC set the so-called Smart Specialisation Platform, which supported dialogue and interaction among S3 practitioners and stakeholders. It is to be expected that similar initiatives will be put in place for the current programming period. The new governance project Community4Innovation building up on the GGC experience should bridge towards such initiatives to identify channels for interaction. At the same time, the new community should exploit its internal network of partners and stakeholders to directly reach-out to regional administrations and set the basis for a synergetic relationship between Smart Specialisation and European Territorial Cooperation.