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Description of the deliverable	The present report identifies the main enabling factors and barriers to the establishment of the Mediterranean Cooperation Governance System (MCGS); the main achievements towards this direction in the framework of PANORAMED and beyond; the views of different stakeholders active in the cooperation in the area and the capacities of actors to strengthen the cooperation in the area further. The analysis focuses on the cooperation among actors as a prerequisite for an effective governance system and thus, it furtherly explores the potential role of the Interreg MED programme as an enabler of the improvement of the governance system. Finally, the present report provides recommendations for the consolidation and monitoring of the new governance system so as to track the progress made with regards to cooperation governance in the region.
Key words	Mediterranean, Cooperation, Governance System

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ACRONYMS

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CH2F	Community Hydrogen Forum
CLLD	Community Led-Local Development
CPMR	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund For Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EGTCs	European Groupings Of Territorial Cooperation
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESIF	European Structural And Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
EUSAIR	EU Strategy For The Adriatic-Ionian Region
EUSALP	EU Strategy For The Alpine Region
EUSBSR	EU Strategy For The Baltic Sea Region
EUSDR	EU Strategy For The Danube Region
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
ICZM	Integrated Coastal Zone Management
IPA	Instrument For Pre Accession Countries
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
IUCN	International Union For Conservation Of Nature
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MC	Monitoring Committee
MCGS	Mediterranean Cooperation Governance System
MPP	Med Positioning Paper
MSP	Maritime Spatial Planning
MSSD	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development
NGEU	Next Generation EU
PRIMA	Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean area
R&I	Research And Innovation
RIS3	Research And Innovation Strategies For Smart Specialisation
RRF	Recovery And Resilience Facility
S3	Smart Specialization Strategy
SCO	Simplified Cost Options
SUD	Sustainable Urban Development
T-ETC	Transnational European Territorial Cooperation
UfM	Union For The Mediterranean
UNEP/MAP	Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme
WP	Working Package

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1. Introduction

During these turbulent times, effective cooperation among actors and coordination of their activities could play a significant role in promoting sustainable development of the Mediterranean. In the northern part of the Mediterranean, countries with their own administrative structures progressively engage in collective actions towards the confrontation of common challenges. Through this cooperation, remarkable steps were taken towards the consolidation of a solid Mediterranean Governance System that will better harmonise and finetune the activities of the Mediterranean countries. European Territorial Cooperation programmes play a significant role in the setup of this governance system by bringing together partners from all over the Mediterranean region; and ensuring funding for the development of joint activities and outputs; as well as solutions to identified common problems. By the time that this report is prepared, a pilot governance project – PANORAMED - is still implemented by the INTERREG-MED programme in order to enhance the multi-level collaboration of partners of different Mediterranean countries on three different thematic priorities. Therefore, even though the region still lacks a joint strategic framework to steer the individual actions of the countries, the continuous cooperation between countries enhances the idea of collective action and therefore sets the scene for a more formal governance structure to be consolidated over the Mediterranean.

It could be argued that any progress made in the area of cooperation among actors and any steps taken towards the enhancement of the feeling of community, brings the vision to a more unified region even closer. This signals that actors from different countries of the region should first seek to discuss and learn from each other in order for any formal type of governance system to evolve in an organic and endogenous context. Therefore, the successful establishment of a formal Mediterranean Governance System requires that cooperation in the area is consolidated. Hence, a Mediterranean Cooperation Governance System (MCGS) should be firstly conceptualized in order to make cooperation more operational and enhance its ability to set the scene for a more integrated framework with tangible and measurable results.

The conceptualisation of MCGS in the present analysis departs from the definition of *Cooperation Governance* provided in the report "Stocktacking of Panoramed and the way Forward" (Panoramed, 2020[1]). According to this report, Cooperation Governance has the following two dimensions:

- **Policy Governance,** which refers to the capacity of stakeholders to implement Cohesion Policy.
- **Territorial governance,** which considers the capacity of stakeholders to provide solutions to common challenges.

Having these dimensions of governance as a starting point, the MCGS is conceptualised as a dynamic and multilayered process with feedback loops among its various layers (*See Figure 1*). As the report focuses on Cooperation Governance, the conceptualisation of the MCGS is inspired by the objectives and processes of the ETC programmes and it seeks to adapt their

[1] https://governance.interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Governance/horizontal_project/News_events/Participation_in_MED_Annual_Event_2020/PANORAMED_Stocktaking_Paper_Towards_MPP_-_final.pdf

operational logic to a wider context so as to establish a system that is still supported by ETCs but its lifespan is not subject to the funding of these programmes.

The main layers of MCGS are:

1) EU Policies – Mediterranean Challenges: This layer could be regarded as the driving force that mobilizes the MCGS by shaping its vision and formulating its priorities. This layer is composed of the challenges faced by the Mediterranean and the targets set by the EU and the respective policies implemented. This may also include other megatrends and policies (including UN SDGs), but as it is advocated here the actors' response is primarily shaped by the guidelines of the EU.

2) Policy and Territorial Governance: The governance layer (i.e. policy implementation - outputs and capacity to implement Cohesion Policy and provide solutions to common challenges) is shaped as best incorporating the guidelines of the EU and the confrontation of regional challenges.

3) Knowledge Generation – Capitalisation: Every process and result emanating from the various layers produces knowledge for capitalisation if the governance system is to be improved through time.

4) Cooperation-Coordination: This layer includes all the processes among actors in the region in order to harmonise their activities towards the improvement of governance; the generation and capitalisation of knowledge; and the better adaptation to the challenges in the Mediterranean.

Figure 1 Conceptualisation of the MED Governance System
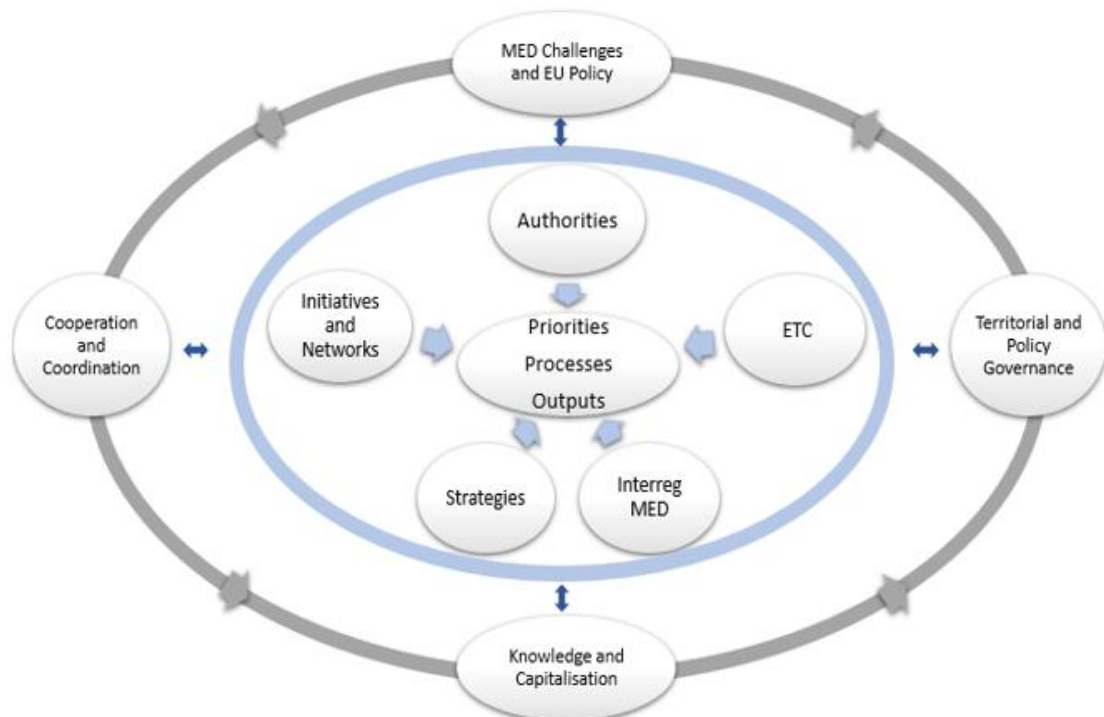
The Mediterranean actors contribute to the governance system layers in multiple ways and with various capacities:

- • **Priorities:** Actors come with different responses to the area's challenges and therefore may set different priorities. This is a crucial element for setting the policy agenda in the area.

- • **Outputs:** The various actors produce a series of outputs as a response to the challenges faced.

- • **Processes:** Actors select their organisation structure in order to best respond to the challenges.

This concept facilitates the analysis and formulation of recommendations for the improvement of the overall cooperation governance in the Mediterranean, as it renders the rather abstract and general concept of governance tangible and open to operationalisation. To this end, the present report identifies the main enabling factors and barriers to the establishment of the MCGS; the main achievements towards this direction; the views of different stakeholders active in the cooperation in the area and the capacities of actors to strengthen the cooperation in the area further. The analysis focuses on the cooperation among actors as a prerequisite for an effective governance system and thus, it furtherly explores the potential role of the Interreg MED programme as an enabler of the improvement of the governance system. Finally, the present report provides recommendations for the consolidation and monitoring of the new governance system so as to track the progress made in regards to cooperation governance in the region.

The report is structured as follows:

- ▪ **Section 2** presents the methodological steps followed for the preparation of the report.

- ▪ **Section 3** focuses on the concept of Territorial Governance. More precisely, the definition of territorial governance and its role in fostering cohesion in the EU are presented and discussed. The analysis focuses on the evolution of Cohesion Policy (place-based approach and smart specialization) and the analysis of its territorial dimension. Finally, a brief discussion about the integrated approach to development (Integrated Territorial Investment-ITI, Community Led - Local Development-CLLD, Sustainable Urban Development -SUD) is conducted.

- ▪ **Section 4** assesses the relationship between the Interreg initiative and territorial governance in a timely context. Attention is paid to the co-evolution of Interreg and territorial governance to allow the comparative analysis of how the various Interreg programmes contribute to improving the governance in the areas in which they are being implemented. At the core of the section is the assessment of how different Interreg programmes harmonise and capitalise on the results of the approved projects in order to facilitate territorial cooperation in their areas. Moreover, the integration of programme outputs with the investment priorities of Cohesion Policy is also assessed. Research in this section draws on all policy and strategic documents accompanying the implementation of the various Interreg programmes, in which guidelines for harmonising the program activities with other actors and programs in the areas are provided. Moreover, the relevant academic literature, as well as relevant publications (such as those of INTERACT)

were also reviewed. The main focus here is on transnational Interreg programmes, while some examples of cross-border programmes are also being assessed.

- **Section 5** focuses on the cooperation governance in the Mediterranean area and seeks to capture its current state and dynamics. Initially, the main challenges of governance in the Mediterranean are recorded and then the status of territorial governance in the Mediterranean, focusing on challenges, practices and institutional arrangements is presented. Next, the role of the Interreg MED in promoting cooperation governance in the area is discussed.

- **Section 6** builds on the outcomes of the preceding analysis to discuss the future of the Mediterranean cooperation governance and the role of the Interreg MED programme. A PEST-SWOT analysis has been conducted to present the strengths and weaknesses of the programme on par with the opportunities and threats stemming from the economic, environmental, social and policy environment. Relevant scenarios about the positioning of the programme as a facilitator of cooperation governance are presented and discussed.

- **Section 7** presents a monitoring scheme proposed for the MCGS.

- The report ends with **Section 8**, in which a series of policy recommendations for the improvement of territorial governance in the Mediterranean is presented. The recommendations formulated target policymakers and practitioners with an active role in territorial cooperation in the area.
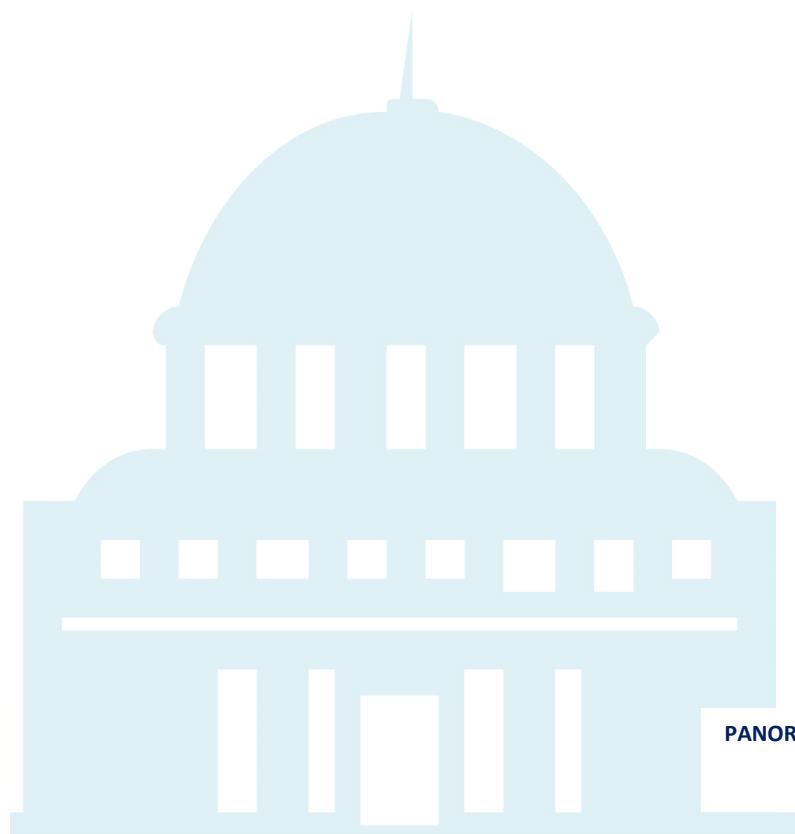
2. Methodology

The methodological framework and the sequential steps followed for the preparation of the present report are depicted in *Figure 2*. Specifically, Section 3 builds on tasks foreseen in the Baseline Analysis. The analysis here foresees the presentation of the wider developments of the policy environment and the main challenges arising for the Mediterranean, under which the cooperation governance has to be developed in the area. To do so, a review of scientific papers and strategic and policy documents on territorial cooperation and governance as well as cohesion policy has been conducted. Moreover, the outputs of the PANORAMED Governance Platform (PANORAMED), as a facilitator of cooperation governance in the area, as well as of other actors, relating to the challenges of cooperation and better governance in the area are assessed and reviewed in order to set the basis for the evaluation analysis described in the subsequent sections.

Figure 2 The methodological framework of the Med Positioning Paper report.
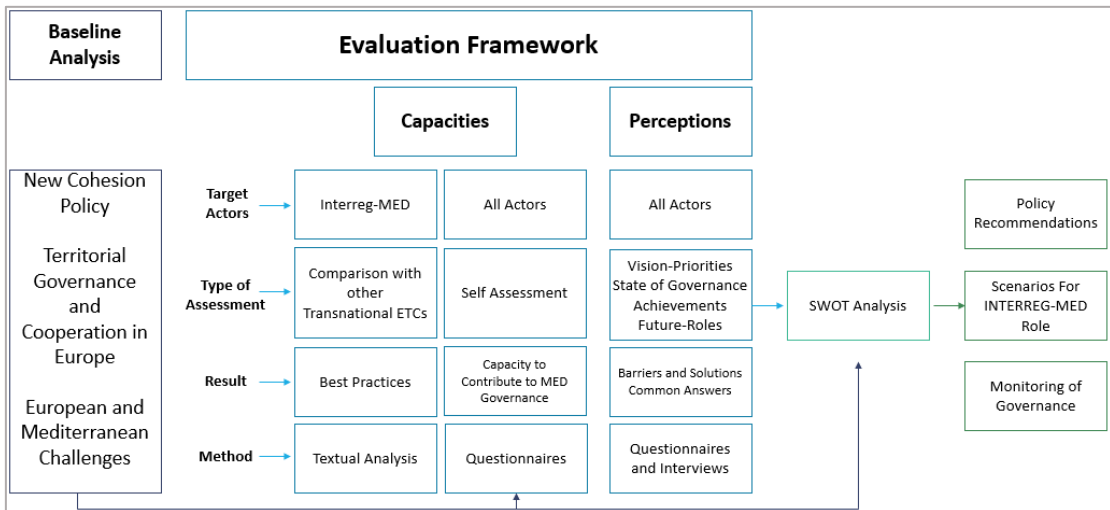
Section 4 is prepared based on the first pillar of the Capacities Evaluation Framework. Desk and textual analyses are used in order to understand and assess how different Transnational Territorial Cooperation Programmes contribute to the strengthening of governance in the areas of their operation. The analysis focuses on twelve (12) transnational programmes which operate in the European area; and the elements of comparison are classified according to the four-layered governance system conceptualized in the present report. This approach has been adopted in order to enable the identification of both the strengths and weaknesses of the Interreg MED programme in promoting the functionality of those layers on par with the other programmes and to extract best practices that could be transferred and adapted to the Mediterranean context so as to improve the cooperation governance in the area. The main elements of the analysis are presented in Tables 1-4.

Table 1 Selected Questions to assess the promotion of the four layers of the Cooperation Governance system by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

No	Question	No	Question
Cooperation-Coordination		**Knowledge Generation - Capitalisation**	
A.1	Does the Programme recognise other ETC in the area in the Programme Description?	B.1	Does the Programme have a Capitalisation Plan?
A.2	Does the Programme provide a description of other institutions of the area?	B.2	Are projects obliged to define how they will build on the available knowledge?
A.3	Does the Programme assess the projects on their stated intention to promote collaboration and cooperation in the area through synergies with other projects?	B.3	Do projects have to develop a Capitalisation Working Package in their Application Form?
		B.4	Does the Programme assess the projects on their stated intention to build and extent available knowledge?
A.4	Is the implementation evaluation of the programme available on its website?	B.5	Does the Programme publish a mid-term evaluation of its operations and impacts?
A.5	Does the Programme promote cooperation through events of wider interest for the area?		
A.6	Are all types of stakeholders equally represented in the Programme consultation and projects' partnerships?		
A.7	How wide was the stakeholders' participation in the drafting of the Programme?		
Territorial Governance – Policy Governance		**Mediterranean Challenges – EU Policies**	
C.1	Does the programme recognise other ESI Funds Programmes in the area in the Programme Description in order to contribute to them?	D.1	Does the Programme priorities align with the regional needs?
C.2	Does the Programme assess the projects on their stated intention to promote and contribute to various strategies and initiatives?	D.2	Does the Programme contribute to wider strategies except those in the area of implementation?
C.3	Are pre-defined strategies given to project applicants in order to target their activities at?	D.3	Does the Programme produce adequate outputs to promote regional needs and EU policy guidelines?
C.4	Does the Programme assess the projects on the potential of their outputs to contribute to the reduction of disparities in the considered area?	D.4	Has the Programme adequate resources to promote regional needs and EU policy guidelines?
C.5	Does the Programme foresee a Governance axis in its structure?	D.5	Do the projects have to justify their effect on the results of their activities on the considered regions?
		D.6	Does the Programme incorporate Integrated approaches to territorial development?

A key step for the evaluation was the review and analysis of the following documents and sources:

- Published Work Programmes as approved by the European Commission (EC)
- Programme manuals
- Calls for proposals
- Project proposals' evaluation criteria
- Application form templates
- Communication strategies
- Capitalisation strategies
- Newsletters
- Operational evaluation reports
- Impact evaluation reports
- Citizen summaries.

It should be noted that some indicators have not been estimated for all the programmes, since not all programmes publish data for the required for the present evaluation indicators.

Furthermore, Sections 5 and 6, are based on the results of the Capacities and Perceptions dimensions of the Evaluation Framework. The evaluation has been conducted on the basis of a dedicated survey sent to the most relevant actors in the area. The content of the survey has been drafted based on the baseline analysis and focused on the main issues around the improvement of the MCGS. Two (2) versions of the survey were sent according to a prior categorization of the targeted stakeholders. The first group of stakeholders, identified in the policy documents of the PANORAMED project as the actors with the higher influence in the area, was prompted to fill in the extended version of the questionnaire. In this group belong institutions whose activities cover the whole Mediterranean region, Interreg programmes, and National and Sub-National Authorities active in the promotion of the cooperation among Mediterranean actors. The second group of stakeholders were prompted to respond only to the part of the questionnaire which referred to the perceptions dimension of the Evaluation Framework. This group included actors that are active in the Mediterranean but with partial coverage of the region. The results of the survey feed the SWOT analysis (*See Section 6*), which further provides the necessary inputs for formulating the policy recommendations for the improvement of the MCGS and the building of scenarios for the future of the Mediterranean Governance and the role of Interreg MED.

Finally, the monitoring framework, presented in Section 7, seeks to operationalise the concept of the Mediterranean Governance and enable the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of its operation. The methodology for the development of the monitoring mechanism applied the following information collection methods:

- **Desk – based study:** literature review of key institutional and design features of current M&E systems of governance models/ structures; and analysis of quantitative data from the current Interreg programme monitoring systems (e.g. SYNERGIE CTE); as well as data from available reports on different programme and project activities and recent programme evaluations.

- **Analysis of results from the survey and SWOT** carried out related to the current progress and performance of programmes, initiatives, strategies, and interventions on

better governance, extracting information also on current needs, opportunities and challenges, which led to key findings and the development of recommendations for a functional, effective and simplified monitoring mechanism.

- **Preliminary feedback from stakeholders received** during relevant workshops and online events (such as PANORAMED Dialogues and EU Regions Week) and informal consultations.

3. Territorial Governance: The State of the Art

3.1 The evolution of territorial cohesion in the European Union

The Territorial Cohesion - both as a term and as a development approach - was first introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon (2007)[2]. According to Article 174 of the consolidated text[3] of the new Treaty, *"In order to promote its overall harmonious development, the Union shall develop and pursue its actions leading to the strengthening of its economic, social and territorial cohesion".* The concept of "territorial cohesion" served as a basis for spatial initiatives, such as Integrated Territorial Investments. As part of the hitherto regional policy, territorial cohesion has introduced changes in the way spatial development policies are pursued. Its key element was and remains the strengthening of the independent role of the regions and other territorial units in the development of the European area and in the process of European territorial integration.

The territorial dimension of the cohesion policy has incorporated the element of interregional cooperation from the outset. Article 10 of Regulation 4254/88 - European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)[4] (the first introduction of the territorial / spatial intervention in official texts of the EU) provides, inter alia, the strengthening of actions that "*encourage the pooling of experience and development cooperation between different Community regions, and innovative*". Nevertheless, the territorial cooperation was first implemented in practice through the Community initiative Interreg (1990)[5], which aimed at developing cross-border cooperation in the internal and external border areas of Europe-12. It is worth noting that this has been the most long-lasting community initiative to this day together with the initiative "Leader".

The Interreg initiative was continued and strengthened during the 2000-2006 programming period[6], adding the interregional and the transnational cooperation along with the

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[2] *Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon*, Official Journal of the EU C 306,17 December 2007

[3] *Consolidated version of the Treaty of the functioning of the European Union*, Official Journal of the European Union C 326, 26 October 2012

[4] *Council Regulation (EEC) No 4254 / 88 of 19 December 1988 laying down provisions for implementing Regulation (EEC) No 2052 / 88 as regards the European Regional Development Fund,* Official Journal of the European Communities *L 374 ,31.12.1988*

[5] *Notice C(90) 1562/3 to the Member States, laying down guidelines for operational programmes which Member States are invited to establish in the framework of a Community initiative concerning border areas (Interreg)*, Official Journal of the European Communities, C 215, 30 August 1990

[6] *Communication from the Commission to the Member States of 28 April 2000 laying down guidelines for a Community initiative concerning trans-European cooperation intended to encourage harmonious and balanced*

aforementioned objective of the cross-border cooperation. These two new objectives were even more interesting due to the then imminent enlargement of the EU to the countries of the former Eastern bloc, a development that on one hand increased the number of internal borders and on the other hand shifted the external borders of the Union further east. The new initiative had three parts: Part A concerned traditional cross-border cooperation, i.e. the promotion of joint regional development programmes between border regions. The (new) part B was dedicated to transnational cooperation and in particular to the promotion of the spatial integration of the European Union, while the (also new) part C aimed at strengthening the cooperation between regions and developing best practices. It is worth noting, however, that most of the other Community initiatives (ENVIREG, RECHAR, KONVER, RETEX, REGEN, etc.) also had a clear geographical / territorial dimension.

During the 2007-2013 programming period, territorial cooperation has been upgraded to a distinct third objective of the Structural Funds[7]. The European Territorial Cooperation Objective, the successor to the Interreg III Community Initiative, aimed to strengthen the cooperation between the various regions of the Union. Supported by the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund)[8], this objective consisted of three (3) parts:

- Strengthening cross-border cooperation through joint local and regional initiatives;
- Strengthening transnational cooperation by means of actions conducive to integrated territorial development linked to the Community priorities; and
- Enhancing interregional cooperation and exchange of experience at the appropriate territorial level. Interregional cooperation mainly concerned research, development, information society, environment, risk prevention, integrated water management. In this respect, all EU territory was eligible.

The European Territorial Cooperation Objective resources accounted for 2.5% of the total cohesion resources.

During the 2014-2020 programming period, the second major objective, which was promoted by the structural funds, was the "European Territorial Cooperation"[9] (while the first objective was Investment in Development and Employment"). The same applies to the new programming period 2021-2027[10].

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development of the European territory — Interreg III, Official Journal of the European Communities, C 143, 23 May 2000

[7] *Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1260/1999*, Official Journal of the European Union, L 210, 31 July *2006*

[8] *Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 Jyly 2006 on the European Regional Development Fund, Official Journal of the European Union L 210, 31 July 2006.*

[9]*REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 ,* Official Journal of the European Union L 347/382 , 20.12.2013

[10] *Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy*, Official Journal L 231, 30.6.2021

A milestone in the development of cohesion policy - but also of its territorial dimension - was the adoption of the "Lisbon Strategy", approved by the Lisbon European Council[11] in March 2000. According to this strategy, the European Union economy should become before 2010 the "*most competitive and dynamic knowledge economy in the world, capable of achieving sustainable growth accompanied by quantitative and qualitative improvement of employment and greater social cohesion*". To this end, the Union's action should focus on measures to enhance knowledge and innovation, review state aid policy, remove obstacles to the completion of the single market in services, address the social consequences of economic restructuring, liberalise the electricity and gas market, postal services and transport.

The Lisbon Strategy has had a significant impact on the economic and social cohesion policy of the EU. It has partially reoriented cohesion policy from its original core objective of reducing inter-regional disparities by prioritizing actions which promote the Lisbon Strategy. Traditional concern for underdeveloped regions is being replaced, at least in part, by enhanced competitiveness and innovation; these goals are of course necessary growth drivers, but this prioritisation may have the effect of strengthening the most developed regions, which can better meet these challenges.

The Lisbon Strategy was succeeded in 2010 by "Europe 2020"[12], a new ten-year European Union strategy aiming at changing the Union's growth model to make its economy more competitive and provide more employment opportunities. This strategy had three (3) primary priorities:

- Smart growth, i.e. the development of an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- Sustainable development, i.e. an economy with efficient use of resources, greener and more competitive; and
- Inclusive growth, aiming at a high-employment economy that ensures economic, social and territorial cohesion.

The key element introduced by the "Lisbon Strategy" and "Europe 2020" in regard to the cohesion policy was the concept of "Smart Specialisation". According to this new approach, national and regional authorities across Europe shall design smart specialization strategies in entrepreneurial discovery process, so that the European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF) can be used more efficiently and synergies between different EU, national and regional policies, as well as public and private investments can be increased and innovation become a priority for all regions. "Europe 2020" requires policy makers to consider how the different aspects of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth are interrelated. Integrated smart specialisation strategies respond to complex development challenges by adapting the policy to the regional context.

In this framework, a new agenda under the name Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3)[13] was introduced for the programming period 2014-2020. RIS3 is a

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[11] Conseil *Européen de Lisbonne (2000)* Conclusions de la *Présidence, 23 et 24 mars 2000*

[12] *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union,* SEC(2010) 1161, COM/2010/0546 final

[13] European Commission, NATIONAL/REGIONAL INNOVATION STRATEGIES FOR SMART SPECIALISATION (RIS3), March 2014, Available at:

comprehensive economic transformation agenda adapted to the specific characteristics of each region. RIS3 involves making sure that the policy mix, i.e. the combination of policy instruments available in a given regional environment - grants, loans and other forms of support- is effective in reaching the overall policy goals, helps businesses, and leverages private investment. The RIS3 process must be interactive, regionally-driven and consensus-based. While the precise mix of organisations involved will depend on the regional context, it is important that all partners are fully involved in developing, implementing and monitoring smart specialization strategies. RIS3 requires an integrated and place-based approach to policy design and delivery. Policies must be tailored to the local context, acknowledging that there are different pathways for regional innovation and development. These include: a) rejuvenating traditional sectors through higher value-added activities and new market niches; b) modernizing by adopting and disseminating new technologies; c) diversifying technologically from existing specialisations into related fields; d) developing new economic activities through radical technological change and breakthrough innovations; and e) exploiting new forms of innovation such as open and user-led innovation, social innovation and service innovation.

However, regions also need to be outward looking, to position themselves in European and global value chains, and to improve their connections and cooperation with other regions, clusters and innovation players. This is important for the internationalisation of their companies in order to achieve a critical potential of cluster activities and to generate inflows of knowledge relevant to the region's existing knowledge base.

The Europe 2020 strategy has had a significant impact on the design and implementation of cohesion policy, which has already taken a different direction due to the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. The reform of the Structural Funds for the period 2014-2020 was in line with the Europe 2000 strategy and the forecasts of the new economic governance. According to the Commission, cohesion policy after 2013 should have become the main tool for achieving the goals of the Europe 2000 strategy. In line with this strategy, the research-technology-innovation sector has been upgraded to a top development priority of the Structural Funds. "*Enhancing research, technological development and innovation*" emerged as the first of the eleven (11) thematic objectives[14]. The conditions for funding actions in this area were meeting the criteria of "smart specialisation", the adoption of a specific national framework for available resources for research and innovation and the adoption of a multiannual national plan for the promotion of large European research infrastructures.

3.2 Recent developments regarding the EU Cohesion Policy

The need to address the pandemic crisis has resulted in historic decisions on the evolution of European integration. In this context, developments in cohesion policy have also been

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https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/informat/2014/smart_specialisation_en.pdf

[14] *REGULATION (EU) No 1303/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 ,* Official Journal of the European Union L 347/382 , 20.12.2013

impressive. The decision to establish the Next Generation EU (NGEU)[15] amounting to EUR 750 billion resulted in an increase of the EU budget from 1.1% of the GNI of the EU to 2%. The decision to draw this amount from mutual debt, which the EU as a whole will undertake for the first time, is a big step towards fiscal union. At the same time, this decision resulted in the tripling of the amount of the heading "Cohesion" of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027[16], which now exceeds EUR 1 trillion. EUR 672.5 billion out of the NGEU EUR 750 billion relates to the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), which covers all Member States. The RRF will finance: a) green transition (min. 37% of the total resources); b) digital transformation (min. 20%); c) smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, including economic cohesion, jobs, productivity, competitiveness, research, development and innovation, and a well-functioning internal market with strong SMEs; d) social and territorial cohesion; e) health, and economic, social and institutional resilience, with the aim of, inter alia, increasing crisis preparedness and crisis response capacity; and f) policies for the next generation, children and youth, such as education and skills.

It should be noted, however, that the RRF, provides horizontal interventions without focusing on specific territorial categories or regions, in contrast to the traditional cohesion policy which focused on reducing disparities between regions. This means that more developed regions may benefit to a greater extent than the underdeveloped regions because they have the material and human resources enabling them to make better use of RRF interventions. For this reason, the geographically focused interventions of the structural funds (including Interreg) are becoming more important and are called upon to contribute to the better utilisation of the RRF by the less developed regions and, on the other hand, mitigate any aggravation of regional disparities. Coincidentally, the new Structural Funds regulations focus more on the territorial dimension of structural interventions than in the past, adding a relevant policy objective (but also a specific territorial objective - Just Transition), as presented right below.

The main element introduced by the EU Structural Funds regulations of the period 2021-2027[17] is the reduction of policy objectives from eleven (11) to the following five (5): a) a more competitive and smarter Europe; b) a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe; c) a more connected Europe by enhancing mobility and regional ICT connectivity; d) a more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights; and e) a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives. The new regulations also introduce the specific objective of enabling regions and people to address the social, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union's 2030 target for a climate-neutral economy by 2050, through the Just Transition Fund.

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[15] *Council Regulation (EU) 2020/2094 of 14 December 2020 establishing a European Union Recovery Instrument to support the recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis*, Official Journal of the European Union L 4331, 22 December 2020

[16] *Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093 of 17 December 2020 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027*, Official Journal of the European Union L 4331, 22 December 2020

[17] *Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy*, Official Journal L 231, 30.6.2021

While in the previous programming period all the policy objectives were thematic, in the current programming period 2021-2027 the first four (4) policy objectives are also thematic, but the fifth objective is territorial. On top of these five (5) objectives, there is a specific objective regarding Just Transition which is also territorial.

Regional development investments will strongly focus on objectives (a) and (b). 65% to 85% of the ERDF and Cohesion Fund resources will be allocated to these objectives depending on Member States' relative wealth.

The regions are classified into the three (3) following categories based on the GDP per capita: less developed regions, transition regions, more developed regions.

The new legislative framework provides greater empowerment of local, urban & territorial authorities in the management of the funds: dedicated policy objectives implemented only through territorial and local development strategies.

Simplification is also one of the goals of the new legislative framework. The new cohesion policy introduces one single set of rules for the eight (8) Funds and a significant reduction in the amount of secondary legislation. Furthermore, 80 simplification measures have been proposed and adopted, entailing notably:

- Lighter and more frequent reporting;
- Lighter controls for programmes: sharp reduction of management verifications, "single audit principle", proportionate arrangements for audits;
- Faster delivery: extended possibility to use simplified cost options (SCOs) and financing not linked to costs schemes;
- End of Commission approval for major projects;
- No more designation of management and control bodies.

Smart specialisation[18] remains the key element of the intervention of the Structural Funds in the new period 2021-2027. The programming period of EU Cohesion Policy 2021–2027 dedicates an important part of its budget to promoting a Smarter Europe through the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3). European regions have to update their S3 and to respond to the following "7 enabling conditions":

- Up-to-date analysis of bottlenecks for diffusion innovation, including digitalization;
- Existence of competent regional / national institution or body, responsible for the management of the smart specialization strategy;
- M&E tools to measure performance towards the objectives of the strategy;
- Effective functioning of entrepreneurial discovery process;
- Actions necessary to improve national or regional research and innovation systems;
- Actions to manage industrial transition;
- Measures for international collaboration.

The Smart Specialization Strategies (S3) that European countries and regions are currently elaborating for 2021-2027, will need to respond to the new challenges presented by the

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[18] *Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)*, Interreg Europe, July 2020,. Available at https://www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/plp_uploads/policy_briefs/Smart_Specialisation _Strategy__S3__-_Policy_Brief.pdf

COVID-19 pandemic. Research & Innovation (R&I) will be critical to increasing the competitiveness of regional economic systems, developing new competencies and promoting sustainable production models. In particular, the new EU Cohesion Policy recognizes the crucial role of international and interregional cooperation in R&I. Accordingly, the new approach to S3 pushes for a strong orientation towards internationalisation as an enabling condition for the next strategies, which are currently being reformulated in the framework of the 2021-2027 strategic programming cycle. The interregional exchange approach to find the most effective policy solutions for S3 makes Interreg projects the ideal space for policy learning. Some 18 Interreg Europe projects were dedicated to developing and delivering better regional policies regarding the design and implementation of smart specialization strategies (S3). Following the structure of Interreg Europe, projects have shared good practices and delivered concrete and transformative policy changes on regional policy.

Another key element of the new regulations is the greater importance they add to territorial development. Indeed, the first of the two goals that the structural funds will pursue is "Investment for jobs and growth in Member States and regions" while the second is the "European territorial cooperation (Interreg)." Also, as mentioned above, one of the five (5) policy objectives is territorial development. The new regulations also devote a special chapter to integrated territorial development, territorial strategies and integrated territorial investments in both the Common Provisions Regulation and the ERDF regulation[19].

It is also worth noting that the Cohesion Policy, though firmly structured along thematic priorities, calls for the adoption of a place-based approach to ensure an effective delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy by means of a greater awareness of the territory. While dedicated instruments (in particular Integrated Territorial Investments and Community Led Local Development) provide a specific framework for implementing some of the place-based principles, notably integration of sectors and territorial dialogue, its implementation remains a challenge, in particular in some policy areas traditionally place-blind (such as energy, R&I, education). Out of an inner circle, there is little awareness and perhaps even poor understanding of what the place-based approach is about, especially when it comes to putting those principles into practice. The new approach, fertilized also from the 'smart specialisation' literature, lays emphasis on the development of knowledge and innovation opportunities that will build upon a region's existing advantages and capabilities. The focal point of this new approach is the local and regional networks of actors working together to create and capture value through innovation and the successful generation of new knowledge within local technological and policy domains. There is not a unique way to implement the place-based approach. Nevertheless, although the impression is that the initiatives reviewed emerge from unique conditions driven by specific local opportunities and are hardly transferable, there are a number of common keys that can be detected and pointed to as a footprint for decision makers. There are several aspects that, to some extent and with different degrees, can be part of a place-based approach. Interreg MED can make a significant contribution to informing the Mediterranean regions about the importance of the place-based approach and how to implement it.

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[19] *Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund*, Official Journal of the European Union, L 231, 30.6.2021

The role assigned to the ERDF in promoting territorial cohesion is important. According to its new regulation:

- At least 8% of the ERDF resources shall be allocated to sustainable urban development at national level under the Investment for jobs and growth goal.
- Under its specific objectives, ERDF will support a Europe closer to citizens by fostering the sustainable and integrated development of all types of territories and local initiatives (PO 5) by fostering: a) integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security in urban areas; and (b) integrated and inclusive social, economic and environmental local development, culture, natural heritage, sustainable tourism and security in areas other than urban areas.
- ERDF shall pay special attention to addressing the challenges of disadvantaged regions and areas, in particular rural areas and areas which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps.
- ERDF will support integrated territorial development.
- To address economic, environmental, climate, demographic and social challenges, the ERDF shall support integrated territorial development based on territorial or community-led local development that are focused on urban areas.
- ERDF shall support the European Urban Initiative, implemented by the Commission in direct and indirect management. This initiative shall cover all urban areas, including functional urban areas, and shall support the Urban Agenda for the EU, including support for the participation of local authorities in the thematic partnerships developed under the Urban Agenda for the EU. The European Urban Initiative shall support innovative actions and capacity and knowledge building, territorial impact assessments, policy development and communication. Upon the request of one or more Member States, the European Urban Initiative may also support inter-governmental cooperation on urban matters.
- ERDF shall support the Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument. The Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument shall support the commercialization and scaling up of interregional innovation projects having the potential to encourage the development of European value chains. The Interregional Innovation Investments Instrument shall cover the entire territory of the Union. Third countries can participate in this instrument.

3.3 The new era of European Territorial Cooperation

As far as European Territorial Cooperation is concerned, its new regulation[20] gives to the Interreg programme, as expected, a key role in developing interregional cooperation and exchange of experience between regions. According to this regulation: *"…Under Interreg, the ERDF and, where applicable, external financing instruments of the Union, shall support the following strand […] interregional cooperation to reinforce the effectiveness of cohesion policy ('Interreg C') by promoting: (a) exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and capacity building […] and the Interreg-specific objective 'a better cooperation governance'… (b) exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and capacity building in relation to the*

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[20] *Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments, Official Journal of thw European Union L 231, 30.6.2021*

identification, transfer and capitalisation of good practices on integrated and sustainable urban development…; (c) exchange of experiences, innovative approaches and capacity building with a view to (the 'INTERACT program'): (i) harmonizing and simplifying the implementation of Interreg programs as well as contributing to the capitalisation of their results…; (ii) harmonizing and simplifying the possible cooperation actions referred to in point (d) (vii) of paragraph 3 of Article 22 of Regulation (EU) 2021 /…; (iii) supporting the setting-up, functioning and use of European groupings of territorial cooperation (EGTCs); (d) analysis of development trends in relation to the aims of territorial cohesion (the 'ESPON program')";

Finally, it is worth noting that the rural development policy had and will continue to play a role in territorial development. The Regulation 2020/2220[21] provides that the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) may support the costs of capacity building and preparatory actions supporting the design and future implementation of community-led local development strategy under the new legal framework. Under the Commission's proposals for the future of common agricultural policy (CAP), rural development actions will be included under the framework of national CAP strategic plans from 2023 onwards.

Hence, it becomes evident that the role of Interreg in the new programming period is even more essential than in the past and its governance is equally important so that European regions and especially the Mediterranean be able to participate more effectively in the EU development process and maximize their benefits from it. The new result-oriented approach may constitute ETC and especially the transnational programmes more able to bring significant changes in their implementation areas and foster the consolidation of more cohesive types of governance for countries sharing common challenges. This is because, ETCs become more mature as their operational and strategic orientation evolves through time. In the early years of their implementation ETCs managed to create a culture of cooperation among partners from different countries thus promoting the Europeanization process[22]. The cultivation of this cooperation culture slowly encompassed the ability to learn from each other to the actors participating in them and their territories. The new era of ETCs seeks to capitalise on this cooperation culture in order to create more concrete results for the regions of Europe[23]. Therefore, the cooperative structure of ETCs, although project oriented, could be regarded as a starting point to develop more comprehensive structures of cooperation governance. The analysis that follows seeks to evaluate the potential of the Mediterranean to take this step towards the consolidation of an MCGS.

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[21] *Regulation (EU) 2020/2220 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 December 2020 laying down certain transitional provisions for support from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) in the years 2021 and 2022 and amending Regulations (EU) No 1305/2013, (EU) No 1306/2013 and (EU) No 1307/2013 as regards resources and application in the years 2021 and 2022 and Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 as regards resources and the distribution of such support in respect of the years 2021 and 2022*, Official Journal of the European Union L 437, 28.12.2020

[22] *Dühr, S., & Nadin, V. (2007). Europeanization through transnational territorial cooperation? The case of INTERREG IIIB North-West Europe. Planning, Practice & Research, 22(3), 373-394.*

[23] *Haarich, S. N., Salvatori, G., & Toptsidou, M. (2019) Evaluating Interreg Programmes. The challenge of demonstrating results and value of European Territorial Cooperation, Spatial Foresight Brief 2019:10, Available at: https://www.spatialforesight.eu/files/spatial_theme/spatial/publications/Brief-2019-10_190722.pdf*

4. Interreg and Territorial Governance

4.1 Introduction

European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), known as the Interreg programme, lies at the core of Cohesion Policy. The importance of Interreg is testified by its long duration, as currently the EU is implementing the sixth of a series of such programmes whose starting point dates back in 1990 and by the fact that the overall budget from the first to the current period has risen by almost tenfold. Interreg is based on the development of joint actions by actors of different countries. Although consisting of mainly soft actions, rather than promoting large investments on infrastructures, the programme has an exceptional role in fostering the cooperation among the different areas of Europe and hence enhancing the transferring of best practices and solutions on common problems and challenges[24].

One of the main types of Interreg programmes are the Transnational ETCs. The programmes cover large areas and have larger budgets compared to the more narrow-focused cross-border programmes. The T-ETCs work to narrow regional disparities and build trust among partners by bringing together actors often situated in distant places[25]. The wide implementation area of the T-ETCs comes with strengths and weaknesses. The main strength of such programmes is their ability to fund large scale projects, when compared to cross-border projects, and bring significant changes to their implementation areas. Nevertheless, since funding is limited, the managing authorities of the programmes are always faced with the tradeoff of funding a limited number of large projects versus spreading the funds to more but smaller projects. Moreover, the large implementation area comes up with the challenge of high diversity and conflicting interests and difficulties to reach end-beneficiaries[26].

The present comparative analysis of the Transnational Interreg Programmes took into consideration the following Programmes (*See Figure 3*):

- ADRION
- Alpine Space
- Atlantic Area
- BalkanMed
- Baltic Region
- Central Europe
- Danube
- Mediterranean
- North Sea Region
- Northern Periphery and Arctic
- North-West Europe
- South-West Europe

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[24] *Niavis, S., Papatheochari, T., Koutsopoulou, T., Coccossis, H., & Psycharis, Y. (2021). Considering regional challenges when prioritizing tourism policy interventions: evidence from a Mediterranean community of projects. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 1-22.*

[25] *INTERREG (2018). 10 things to know about territorial cooperation, Available at: https://interreg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/10-things-to-know-about-Interreg.pdf*

[26] *Adrion (2015) Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian cooperation programme 2014-2020, Available at: https://www.adrioninterreg.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ADRION-Programme-_CP-Approved-2015_10_20.pdf*

Figure 3 The Transnational Programmes under evaluation[27]

The analysis is conducted on a quantitative basis with the use of relevant indicators. Although able to provide a ranking of programmes according to their ability to promote the four (4) layers of cooperation governance, the analysis mostly targets at identifying the different strategies of the various programmes and the importance placed by each one of them into the different layers. Therefore, the analysis does not seek to rank these programmes based on how well they promote the four layers but rather it focuses on the differences among them. The measurement of each question-indicator for each layer and the respective results are provided below on a layer-per-layer basis.

4.2 Cooperation - Coordination Layer

The analysis of this layer collects information from seven (7) questions measured by eight (8) indicators in total (*See*

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[27] *Source: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/trans-national/*

Table 2). This is because Question A.3 is quantified through two (2) different indicators. It should be noted that very little data was available to construct the indicator for Question A.6, as only few programmes publish data about the participation of different types of actors in the consultation phase of the programmes and the application and implementation phases of the projects. Therefore, no safe conclusions could be drawn for the stakeholders' participation in each programme.
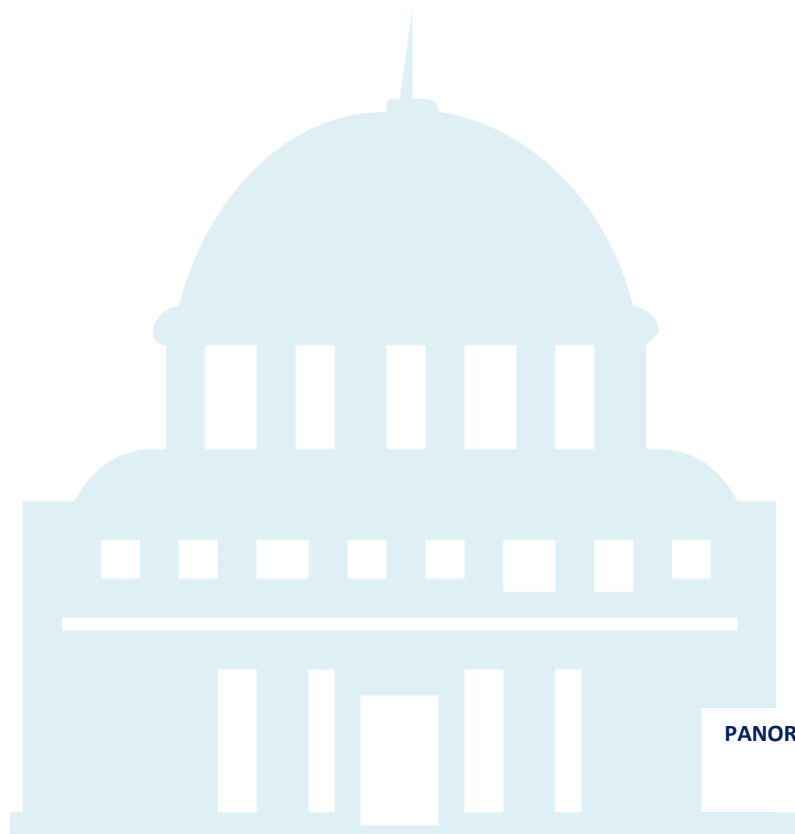
Table 2 Selected indicators to assess the promotion of the Cooperation-Coordination layer by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

No	Question	Measurement	Validation
A.1	Does the Programme recognise other ETC in the area in the Programme Description?	0-No 1- Yes but it doesn't provide a detailed description 2- Yes and provides a clear description on the possible grounds of collaboration	OK
A.2	Does the Programme provide a description of other institutions of the area?	0-No 1- Yes but it doesn't provide a detailed description 2- Yes and provides a clear description on the possible grounds of collaboration	OK
A.3	Does the Programme assess the projects on their stated intention to promote collaboration and cooperation in the area through synergies with other projects?	A. Various Levels according to the relative weight (%) of the criterion in the evaluation of the Programme	OK
		B. 0-No 1- Yes there is a dedicated field in the Application Form to state synergies with existing projects	OK
A.4	Is the implementation evaluation of the programme available on its website?	0 - No, 1 - Yes	OK
A.5	Does the Programme promote cooperation through events of wider interest for the area?	0 - No, 1 - Yes	OK
A.6	Are all types of stakeholders equally represented in the Programme consultation and projects' partnerships?	Statistical method (Theil index) for estimating the uniformity of stakeholders' distribution	Partially available data
A.7	How wide was the stakeholders' participation in the drafting of the Programme?	Quantitative measure: Number of persons engaged in the consultation per capita (population of the programme's area)	OK

The results of the analysis for the Cooperation-Coordination layer are presented in *Table 3*. For the 1st question, the official programme documents as published on the programmes websites were reviewed. Nearly all programmes follow the same structure for presenting the approved programme, with the exemption of the Northern Periphery and Arctic programme which follows a unique approach. In the majority of the programmes, some other ETC programmes with activities in their application area are mentioned. Nevertheless, this is not the case for the Adrion, Baltic Region and Danube ETCs, in which some mentions about the need for cooperating with other ETCs are made with no specific mention on these programmes. For instance, in the North-West programme the need for cooperation with other ETC is acknowledged. Nevertheless, the programme states that it is up to Interact to coordinate this activity, promoting in this way a top-down rather than a horizontal type of cooperation.

It is evident that the harmonization of the ETCs' activities in a specific area should be pursued by the very beginning of the programmes implementation. So far, a common practice, as it is stated also in the Central Europe approved programme, is to hold informal exchanges with other ETC programmes to avoid overlaps and double funding, thus leaving any formal agreements to the discretion of the programme authorities. From the programmes that name relevant ETCs, only two, namely the Central Europe and the Northern Periphery and Arctic programmes, provide a rather detailed description on which grounds this cooperation should be established and achieved. Therefore, these two programmes acquire the highest score as they really set the basis for a close cooperation among ETCs in their application areas. Regarding Question A.2, the programmes hardly present indications of which are the key institutional players in their implementation areas and consequently how the multilevel governance in their areas would be enhanced with the implementation of these programmes.

Table 3 The comparative analysis results of the promotion of the Cooperation-Coordination layer by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

Programmes	Indicators							
	A.1*	A.2*	A.3a	A.3b	A.4	A.5	A.6	A.7
Adrion	0	0	0	1	0	1	Data not availabe for many programmes	37.3
Alpine	1	0	0	1	0	1		3.2
Atlantic	1	0	0	0	1	1		1.5
BalkanMed	1	0	0	1	1	1		6.9
Baltic Region	0	0	0	N/A	1	1		7.9
Central Europe	2	0	0	1	1	1		4.0
Danube	0	0	0	1	0	1		2.3
Interreg MED	1	0	0	1	1	1		2.3
North Sea Region	1	0	0	1	1	1		4.7
Northern Periphery and Arctic	2	0	6	1	0	1		N/A
North West	1	0	N/A	1	1	1		1.5
SUDOE	1	0	N/A	N/A	0	1		0.5
According to the Published Description of the Approved Programme								

The indicators of Question A.3 seek to evaluate the importance placed by each programme in the promotion of the target of coordination-cooperation through their projects. To build relevant measurements, the application forms and the evaluation criteria of the regular projects were reviewed. The first indicator is based on the question whether the promotion of cooperation with other projects should be documented by the project applicants with a relevant field of the application form. All programmes for which the application forms were available online, except for the Atlantic area, include such a field in the application form. The second indicator is constructed by considering if the promotion of cooperation is clearly denoted as an evaluation dimension of the application form. In this case, the establishment of synergies and cooperation channels with other projects is only evaluated in the Northern Periphery and Arctic programme, acquiring a weight of 6%.

Next, the indicator of Question A.4 refers to the availability of the evaluation of the programmes on their websites. It is apparent that the greater visibility of the progress and

achievements as well as of the weaknesses of the programmes facilitates the cooperation in the area as it demonstrates the specific issues of cooperation that should be improved in the areas of the programmes. To construct the indicator, the websites of the programmes were browsed and scrutinized. It is noteworthy that the evaluations of the programmes were uploaded in a visible section on only 7 out of 12 programmes websites.

Considering Question A.5, all programmes organise events for promoting cooperation in their implementation areas. Nevertheless, the number as well as the types of events vary heavily among the programmes. Most programmes organise events to showcase the results of their projects. In addition, many programmes act as co-organisers in events with other actors of their areas, especially in regions where the ETCs are implemented together with a macro-regional strategy (e.g Adrion, Danube etc).

As for Question A.6, there is very little data on the types of stakeholders that participated in the formulation of the programmes and in the selected projects. Therefore, due to the lack of data this indicator is not constructed, as it cannot provide any useful insights in a comparative study such the one performed in the present report. An indicative level of representation of different types of stakeholders is provided for the Baltic Region Programme (See *Figure 4*). As it can be seen the programme incorporates the views of a large range of actors. Nevertheless, there are some imbalances with the research intuitions being overrepresented and with the actors from the private sector (SMEs and Large companies) being underrepresented.

*Figure 4 The proportion of actor categories in the Baltic Region programme*
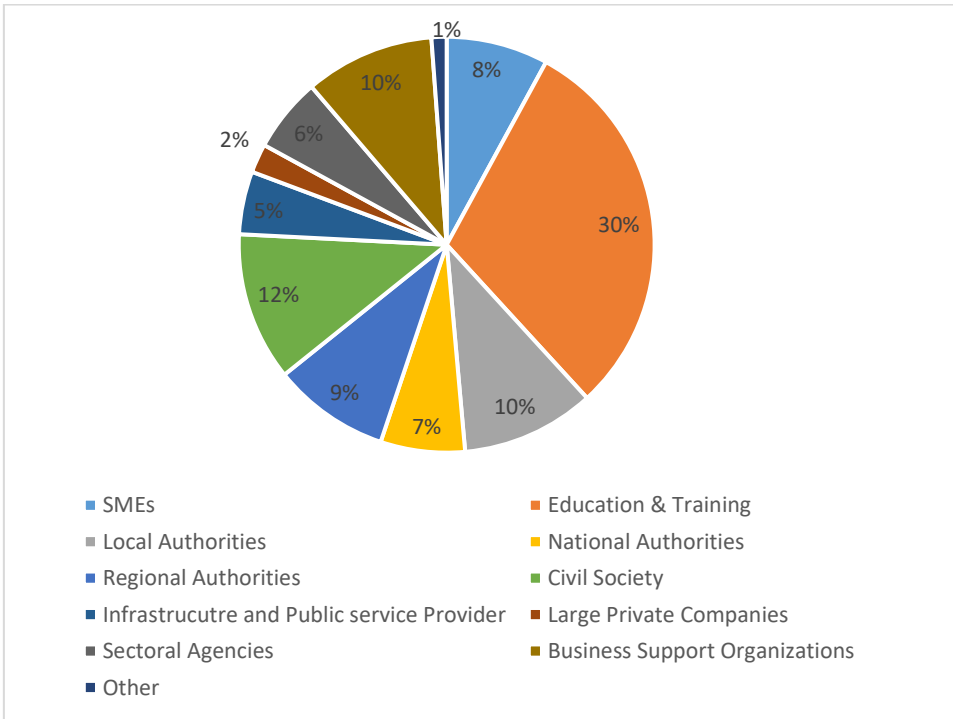
The lack of data for the indicator A.6 makes the results of the analysis under Question A.7 more important as it can provide hints on the level of social acceptance of the programmes. The indicator is constructed by dividing the number of stakeholders that filled in the surveys for drafting the programmes to the population covered by each programme (per million

people). The number of stakeholders is extracted by the approved programme documents. As it can be seen, the participation rate varies heavily across the different programmes. In raw numbers, each programme consulted about 430 stakeholders during its preparation phase. This number could be skewed due to the extremely high participation levels of the Adrion programme. More precisely the programme claims that more than 2600 stakeholders were involved in the drafting of the programme, when the second higher number is only 577. In per capita terms, the greatest level of participation is found in the Adrion programme (37.3 stakeholders per mil. capita) whilst the lowest in SUDOE (0.5 stakeholders per mil. capita).

GOOD PRACTICES

o Although not mentioned in the official programme document, the main stakeholders of the **Alpine area** are presented in a highly visible sub-section of the Alpine programme website. In this page visitors can see the main actors of the area, some basic information about their activities and the links for their websites.

o The **Atlantic Area** programme explicitly states that projects demonstrating clear synergies with other projects implemented in the area will be given up to 6% bonus during the evaluation stage. By this way, the programme indicates that cooperation outside the programme activities is a highly desirable goal. The promotion of cooperation is further documented by the fact that the programme describes in detail the targets of those programmes in the approved document so as to ensure the capitalisation of complementarities and the avoidance of duplicating activities.

o The **Adrion programme** has organized a special event within the 6th EUSAIR Forum thus promoting its role as a key policy partner at the region.

o The **North Sea Region Programme** supported the organization of the North Sea Conference 2021 in Bruges which was organized by the CPMR North Sea Commission. By so doing, the programme shows that it has an active role in the cooperation i nthe area.

o The **Northern Periphery and Arctic** is in close collaboration with the European Arctic Stakeholder Forum and the Arctic network, and together they managed make the European Commission to fund and facilitate an annual Arctic stakeholder conference in the area.

o In the **Central Europe Programme** projects are encouraged to take part in the thematic Project Platforms promoted by the Interreg Baltic Sea Programme. This underscores the willingnes of the programme to strengthen its cooperation with other ETCs at the project level.

o The **North West, Atlantic, and Northern Periphery and Arctic programmes** developed the Community Hydrogen Forum (CH2F) capitalizing on the work of three projects on hydrogen. This development demonstrates the potential of ETCs to cooperate on common topics and challenges. *More info*.

o In the **France (Channel) England Cross-Border Interreg Programme**, it is demonstrated from the approved official document how it is going to cooperate with the adjacent 2Seas Interreg programme. Moreover, the coordination with other programmes and initiatives is a criterion for the project assessment process.

o The **South-Baltic Cross-Border Interreg Programme** describes the topics on which cooperation with other ETCs in the area could be established. The ETCs are described in the official document of the programme.
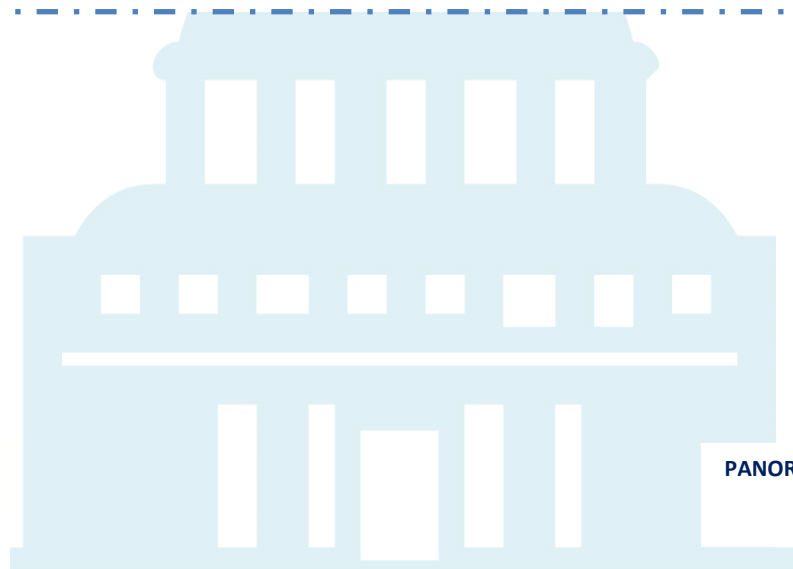
4.3 Knowledge Generation – Capitalisation Layer

The questions and the measurement of the indicators for the evaluation of the Knowledge Generation – Capitalisation layer are presented in

Table 4, while the results of the evaluation in *Table 5*. As far as Question B.1 is concerned, 6 out of 11 programmes with available data promote the targets of this layer with a concrete capitalisation plan. It should be noted that all programmes engage in capitalisation activities through different means. Nevertheless, the existence of a capitalisation plan conveys the message that capitalisation is at the core of the programmes' orientation, thus helping approved projects to finetune their respective activities. Moreover, Questions B.2-B.4 seek to highlight how much weight is placed by the programmes in capitalisation activities. According to Question B.2 and its respective indicator, the majority of programmes incorporate into the application form a specific field in order for the applicants to demonstrate the way their projects capitalise on existing knowledge. Nonetheless, no such field is provided in the application forms of the 33% of the programmes.

Table 4 Selected indicators to assess the promotion of the Knowledge Generation – Capitalisation layer by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

| No	Question	Measurement	Validation
B.1	Does the Programme have a Capitalisation Plan?	0 - No 1 - Yes	OK
B.2	Are projects obliged to define how they will build on the available knowledge?	0 - No 1 - Yes	OK
B.3	Do projects have to develop a Capitalisation Working Package in their Application Form?	0 - No 1 - Yes	OK
B.4	Does the Programme assess the projects on their stated intention to build and extent available knowledge?	Various Levels according to the relative weight (%) of the criterion in the evaluation of the Programme	OK
B.5	Does the Programme publish a mid-term evaluation of its operations and impacts?	0 - No 1 - Yes	OK

Moreover, regarding Question B.3, only 2 programmes, namely Atlantic and Interreg MED, foresee a dedicated Working Package (WP) for capitalisation activities, in most of the regular projects. In the majority of the programmes, the structure of the regular projects foresees two (2) basic WPs (management and implementation), and in some other a third communication related WP is added. Therefore, for the projects of programmes without an obligatory capitalisation WP, it is up to the applicants to build a relevant WP or to incorporate such activities in the communication WP. It should be noted that many programmes promote capitalisation through dedicated projects and activities (*See Good Practices*). These activities undoubtedly promote knowledge transfer. It is apparent though, that the a priori adoption of a capitalisation WP even in projects that do not exclusively focus on capitalisation, as in the case for the two (2) programmes mentioned above, promotes the targets of this layer in a more comprehensive context.

Table 5 The comparative analysis results of the promotion of the Knowledge Generation - Capitalisation layer by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

Programmes	Indicators				
	B.1	B.2	B.3	B.4	B.5
Adrion	0	1	0	3.1	0
Alpine	0	1	0	4.3	1
Atlantic	0	0	1	N/A*	0
BalkanMed	1	1	0	4.0	0
Baltic Region	1	0	0	7.1	1
Central Europe	1	1	0	4.1	1
Danube	1	1	0	2.5	1
Interreg MED	1	1	1	2.5	1
North Sea Region	0	1	0	4.0	1
Northern Periphery and Arctic	0	1	0	5.9	1
North West	1	0	0	0.0	1
SUDOE	N/A	0	0	N/A	0
Cannot be extracted by the provided info					

Question B.4 quantifies the importance placed by each programme in knowledge generation and capitalisation activities. To do so, all the scores of the criteria related to the ability of projects to build and promote existing knowledge were collected and then their weight to the overall score for project selection was estimated. For two (2) of the programmes, the exact weight of the relevant criterion could not be extracted. For the programmes with available data, all programmes, with the exception of the North-West programme, place a score in this criterion. The Baltic Region programme seems to have the greatest capitalisation orientation, as it assigns a weight of 7.1% to the relevant criterion. The lowest weight is placed by Danube and Interreg MED programmes (2.5%).

Finally, Question B.5 addresses the issue of dissemination of the main achievements of the programmes in the areas of their intervention. This specific indicator is constructed by reviewing the websites of the programmes to check if they publish their mid-term evaluations of their impact and results and thus any new knowledge generated for the challenges of their implementation areas. It is evident that 2/3 of the programmes publish such documents, whereas four (4) programmes still do not publish any mid-term evaluations.
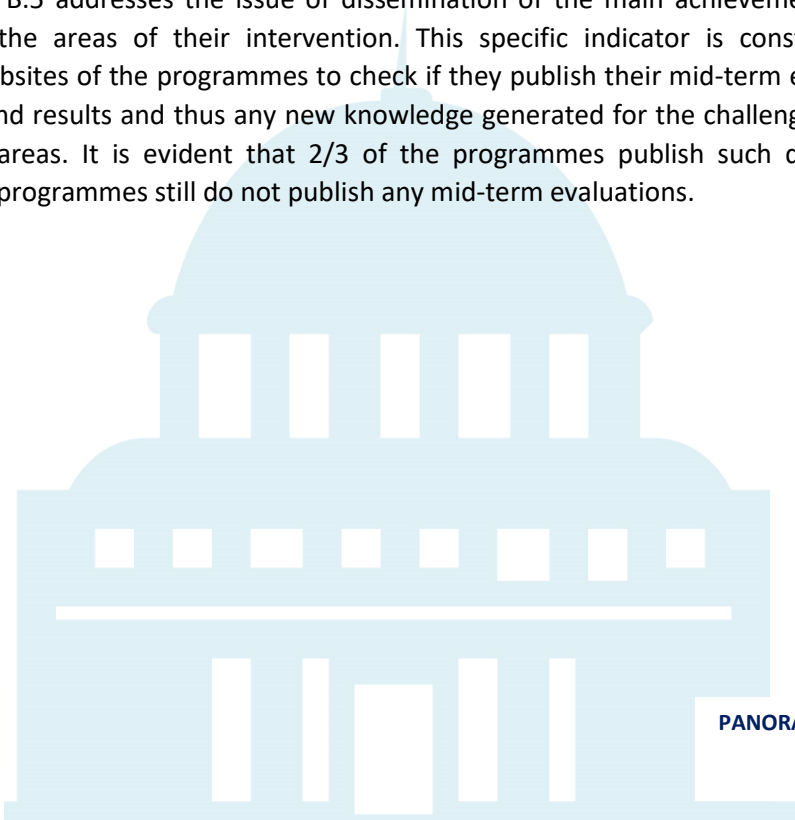
GOOD PRACTICES

o The **BalkanMed and the North-West Europe Programmes** have worked together to prepare an article dedicated to Green Deal, and more specifically, to "Farm to Fork Strategy". The article capitalizes on the work done under the two programs on sustainable agricultural value chains and it showcases how capitalization can be enhanced through cross-ETCs cooperation. The joint paper is a result of the Transnational Communication Network supported by the INTERACT. *More info.*

o The **Central Europe Programme** implemented an experimental call for proposals in the frame of promoting Capitalisation. The call aimed to bring together stakeholders that participated in the programme with new actors coming from projects funded under directly-managed EU programmes, such as the Horizon 2020 and LIFE. The call sought to enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of the already produced results of the programme. This example shows how the layers of cooperation-coordination and knowledge generation- capitalisation can be targeted together with relevant actions. *More info.*

o **Danube programme** promoted capitalisation activities by introducing the Thematic poles concept. According to this strategy several poles of projects working on similar topics joined forces to capitalise on their results. Each pole was coordinated by a leader by an existing project. The most common result of this capitalisation approach was the organization of common workshops and the drafting of policy recommendations. It should be noted that capitalisation was furtherly strengthened by the joint work of three different poles thus providing a good example of cross-thematic capitalisation of a Transnational Interreg Programme. *More Info.*

o **The North-West Programme** launched 2 calls for projects with a direct capitalisation orientation. The call was named "Maximising project impact" and targeted existing project partnerships which should select the types of results to build the capitalisation process. Projects were able to select both foreseen results but also unforeseen results that emerged during the initial implementation of their projects. *More Info.*

o **ADRION** has decided to boost the transfer and re-use of project results by building thematic networks, which allow to exchange practices and create synergies among projects dealing with complementary thematics. Those networks are called "ADRION Thematic Clusters" and are part of the Programme capitalisation strategy. One project representative is appointed cluster coordinator.
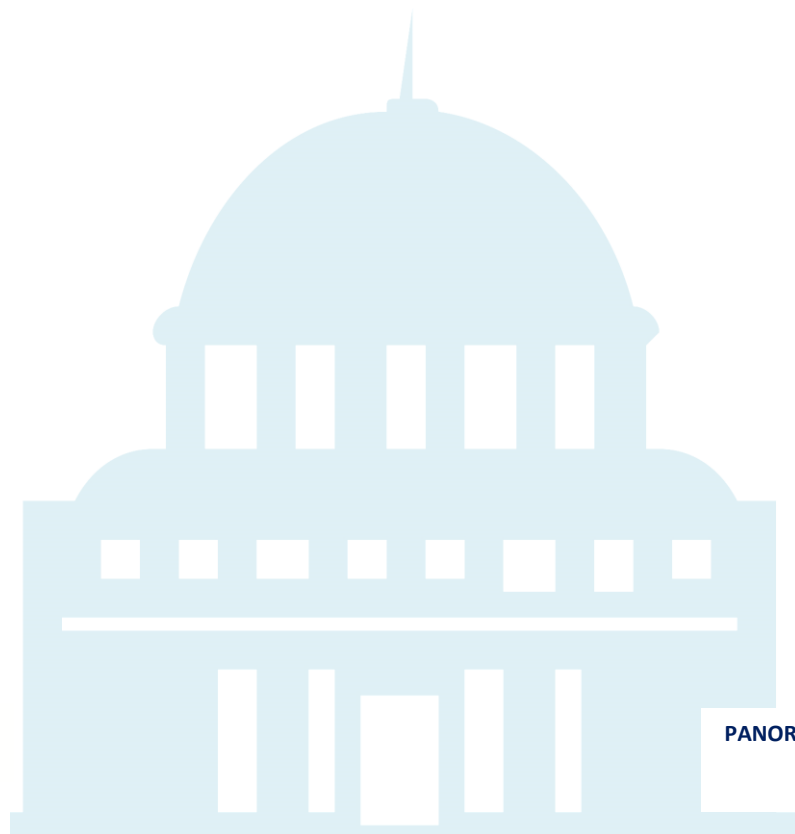
4.4 Territorial Governance – Policy Governance

The analysis of the Territorial Governance – Policy Governance layer incorporates five (5) questions and their respective indicators *(See Table 6 and Table 7)*.

Table 6 Selected indicators to assess the promotion of the Territorial Governance – Policy Governance layer by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

No	Question	Measurement	Validation
C.1	Does the programme recognise other ESI Funds Programmes in the area in the Programme Description in order to contribute to them?	0-No 1- Yes but it doesn't provide a detailed description 2- Yes and provides a clear description on the possible grounds of collaboration	OK
C.2	Does the Programme assess the projects on their stated intention to promote and contribute to various strategies and initiatives?	Various Levels according to the relative weight of the criterion in the evaluation of the Programme	OK
C.3	Are pre-defined strategies given to project applicants in order to target their activities at?	0 - No, 1 - Yes	OK
C.4	Does the Programme assess the projects on the potential of their outputs to contribute to the reduction of disparities in the considered area?	Various Levels according to the relative weight of the criterion in the evaluation of the Programme	OK
C.5	Does the Programme foresee a Governance axis in its structure?	0 - No, 1 - Yes	OK

For Question C.1, the approved programme documents were reviewed. Within these documents, all ETCs provide a description of other EU programmes and initiatives that have an effect on the application area. Nevertheless, not all programmes specify the exact fields and mechanisms for establishing the cooperation channels among the ETCs and other programmes. A clear connection among the axes of the ETCs and those of other programmes in order to highlight the grounds for the development of common activities are only present in 6 out of 12 programmes (those with a score 2). For instance, the North Sea programme provides a detailed description of complementarities with other EU programmes and initiatives, such as Horizon 2020, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the LIFE programme in order to focus its actions to the thematic fields and topics with the highest transnational territorial cooperation potential.

Table 7 The comparative analysis results of the promotion of the Territorial Governance – Policy Governance layer by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

Programmes	Indicators				
	C.1	C.2	C.3	C.4	C.5
Adrion	1	3.1	1	0	1
Alpine	1	4.3	1	0	1
Atlantic	2	N/A*	1	0	0
BalkanMed	2	4.0	0	0	0
Baltic Region	2	7.1	N/A*	0	0
Central Europe	1	3.1	0	0	0
Danube	1	10.0	1	0	1
Interreg MED	1	2.5	1	0	1
North Sea Region	2	4.0	0	0	0
Northern Periphery and Arctic	1	11.8	1	0	0
North West	2	0.0	0	3.75	0
SUDOE	2	N/A	0	0	0
*Cannot be extracted by the provided info					

Questions C.2 and C.3 assess the potential of the programmes to improve the implemented policies in their application areas. The first question considers the weight assigned to the evaluation of the project's stated intention to contribute to wider strategies. Therefore, it is assumed that a well-defined area of contribution could make the impact of programmes to policies clearer and more measurable. Thus, Question C.3 seeks to highlight the existence of clear policy targets when the projects are being set. Considering the weight assigned to the criterion of projects' contribution to various strategies, the highest scores are assigned by the Northern Periphery and Arctic, and Danube programmes. These two (2) programmes assign weights of more than 10% on the ability of projects to make clear contributions to policies. On the other side, the North-West programme does not foresee any score directly for policy contributions.

As for Question C.3, it should be noted that many of the programmes provide predefined strategies on which applicants should state how their project would contribute. This is especially the case for programmes whose implementation area coincides with a Macro-Regional Strategy (Adrion - EUSAIR, Baltic Sea – EUSBSR, Alpine – EUSALP, Danube – EUSDR). Therefore, it is well grounded that those programmes provide guidance for which kind of strategies the applicants should be aware of when drafting their proposals. Nevertheless, one can note two (2) different pathways in driving applicants' attention with regards to targeted strategies when the programmes are applied to areas not tackled by any Macro-Regional strategy or to areas where their different parts are affected by different Macro-Regional Strategies. More precisely, Interreg MED and the EUSAIR partially overlap. Hence, applicants had to demonstrate how they would contribute to this strategy. On the other hand, BalkanMed target areas are covered by the EUSDR and EUSAIR and North-Sea programme targets areas covered by EUSBSR. But in contrast to Interreg MED, in the application forms of these two (2) programmes these strategies were not explicitly mentioned and therefore applicants were free to choose the strategies to which their projects would contribute. Taking

into consideration the above, all programmes in which strategies are explicitly mentioned in the application forms acquire a score of 1 and all other programmes a score of 0.

Question C.4 tackles a very important issue that is the ability of ETCs to reduce regional disparities, a target lying at the core of Cohesion Policy. Programmes can contribute to the reduction of regional disparities by allocating more funds to the less developed areas, as this is the case of the ESI funds, or by promoting projects that demonstrate their willingness to move to this direction in terms of partnership composition. Since data for the allocation of funds to different regions are not available for most of the programmes, the analysis addresses this question by employing a text analysis method. More precisely, all programme manuals were reviewed in order to indicate if any conditions related to the level of development of the various regions would have to be met and if any criterion related to the ability of projects applying for funding to tackle regional disparities was set during the project evaluation phase. The results of the analysis were quite surprising as it seems that there is only one Programme, the North West, considering the ability of project proposals to reduce regional disparities as a criterion in the selection phase. More precisely, the North West programme assigns a weight of 3.75% to projects that demonstrate potential gains in closing the gaps between the regions of its application area.

Finally, Question C.5 seeks to reveal how the structure of the programmes can promote governance improvements in their application areas. To do so, it analyses the axes of the programmes and checks if this incorporates any axis dedicated to governance issues. Indeed, there are four (4) programmes (i.e. Adrion, Alpine, Danube, and Interreg MED), which funnel funds to projects promoting the target of governance improvements in their implementation areas.
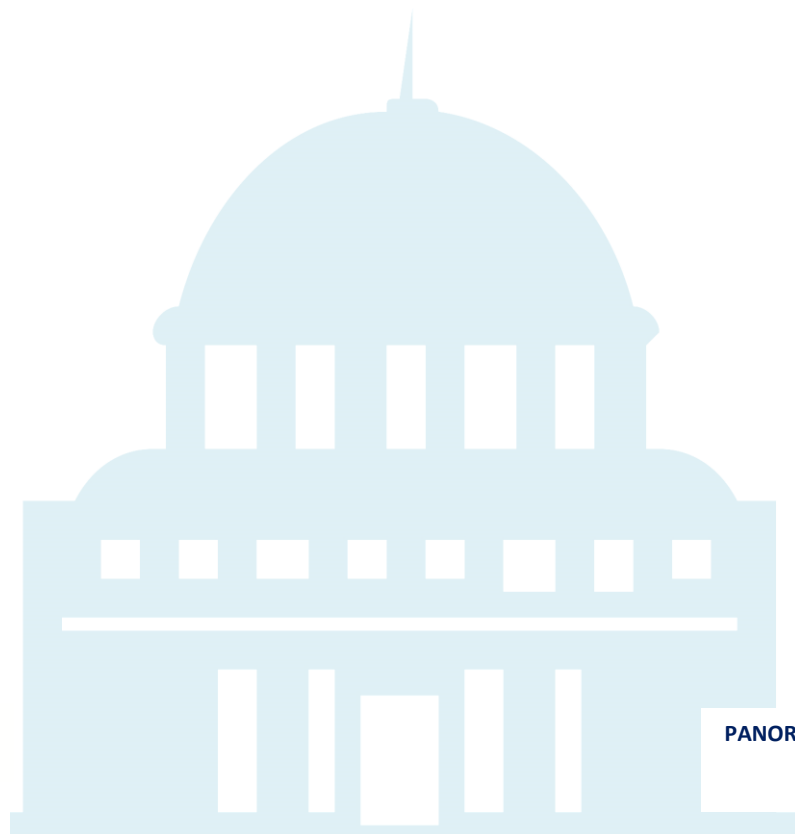
GOOD PRACTICES

o **The Arctic programme** had a Clustering Call that included the merging of successful projects, which could include partners of other Interreg programmes of the Area. The cooperation in these projects funded by different cooperation programmes and the objective is to ensure better implementation of the cooperating projects, more efficient use of the funding, better results and wider dissemination of the results.

The clustering activities shall contribute to the implementation of EU's Macro Regional and Sea Basin strategies, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the Action Plan for a Maritime Strategy for the Atlantic, or to the EU Arctic Communication, An integrated European Union policy for the Arctic. *More info*.

o During the evaluation of the projects, the **Adrion programme** added a 5% bonus points to projects that demonstrated their activities connection to EUSAIR targets.

o Multi-level governance is one of the horizontal issues tackled by the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The **Baltic Region programme** asks from the applicants to incorporate the issue of multilevel governance in their project proposals

o The **Alpine Programme** adopts the logic of the Policy Cycle Framework. According to this, there are three different phases of the policy cycles: Strategic policy development, Explorative and piloting activities, and Policy implementation. Projects must define in which stage of the policy cycle they contribute.

o Baltic Sea Region Industrial Symbiosis Council enhances capacity building of various stakeholders on Industrial Symbiosis. The council meets two times annually and was developed by the collaboration of two projects of the **Interreg South and the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programmes**. This initiative demonstrates the potential of cooperation between different types of Interreg programmes in promoting the capacity of stakeholders to address common challenges. *More info.*

4.5 Regional Challenges – EU Policies

The Questions and Indicators of the Regional Challenges – EU Policies layer are presented in *Table 8* and the results of the comparative analysis in Table 9. Question D.1 is a very important one, as it would provide a good evaluation of the capacity of programmes to match funding allocation with regional needs. Nevertheless, such type of data is not provided by the programmes. This might become feasible when all the activities of the programming period 2014-2020 are concluded. As for Question D.2, all programmes consider wider strategies, additional to the Macro-Regional strategies of their application areas. Questions D.3 and D.4 quantify the potential of each programme to bring a change in its implementation area by considering the relevant intervention size. In Question D.3, the number of projects are taken as a proxy of intervention size while in Question D.4 the allocated funds are used in order to provide an estimation of the relevant importance of the programmes activities for their implementation areas. All indicators are weighted by relevant factors in order for any comparisons among the programmes to be meaningful and feasible[28].

Indicator D.3A measures the size of intervention by considering the number of projects per mil. capita in each programme area. The mean value is estimated at 1.78, thus revealing that programmes implemented about two (2) projects per million capita. The largest intervention size could be found in the Northern Periphery and Arctic area as there correspond eight (8) projects per mil. people. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the large number should be mainly attributed to the small population of the area and by the fact that the Programme

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[28] *The data for estimating the indicators D.2-D.e were retrieved from keep.eu.*

funded many preparatory projects of very limited budget that are not found in other programmes. The lower number of projects in relative terms is found for the North West programme, as there less than one (1) project is implemented for every 1 million residents. The same picture is also extracted when the number of projects per NUTS-II regions are considered as a proxy for programmes intervention size. For every programme at least one (1) project corresponds to a NUTS-II region with the Northern Periphery and Arctic presenting the highest and the North West the lowest records. Among the other programmes, the size of intervention of the Baltic Region and SUDOE programmes could be regarded as very high, while Adrion, Alpine and Central Europe are the programmes with the lowest intervention significance, after the North West programme.

Table 8 Selected indicators to assess the promotion of the Regional Challenges – EU Policies layer by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

	Question	Measurement	Validation
D.1	Does the Programme priorities align with the regional needs?	Matching allocation of funds among axes with the records of the region in these priorities.	No available data to compute this indicator.
D.2	Does the Programme contribute to wider strategies except those in the area of implementation?	0 - No 1 - Yes	OK
D.3	Does the Programme produce adequate outputs to promote regional needs and EU policy guidelines?	Computing number of projects per capita (D.3a) and per NUTS II region (D.3b).	OK
D.4	Has the Programme adequate resources to promote regional needs and EU policy guidelines?	Computing invested resources per project (D.4a), per capita (D.4b) and per NUTS II region (D.4c).	OK
D.5	Do the projects have to justify their effect on the results of their activities on the considered regions?	0-No 1-General Description in the application form 2-Quantitative/detailed description in the application form	OK
D.6	Does the Programme incorporate Integrated approaches to territorial development?	0.33- For every approach among A. Community-led local development B. Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) C. Integrated actions for sustainable urban development	OK

For Question D.4, the D.4a indicator measures the relative size of projects in terms of the average budget per project. The mean budget per project is estimated at EUR 2.2 million. The highest budget is found in the North West programme whilst the lowest in the Northern Periphery and Arctic. As for the indicator D.4b, the programmes allocate about EUR 2.64 million per million capita in the implementation areas. The highest per capita funding is found for the North Sea (5.23) and the lowest for the BalkanMed (1.54). Finally, the mean budget per

NUTS II region (Indicator D.4c) is estimated at EUR 4.38 million. The highest record is found for the Baltic Region (6.75) and the lowest again for the BalkanMed (1.68). The aforementioned tallies indicate that there are two (2) main directions followed by the programmes. The first one corresponds to programmes like North East and North West which prioritise rather few interventions but of great size in terms of budget. The second direction includes programmes, like Northern Periphery and Arctic and BalkanMed, which seek to fund the highest possible number of projects but with a rather limited budget. Among those two ends of the spectrum lie programmes with more balanced approaches.

Table 9 The comparative analysis results of the promotion of the Challenges – EU Policies layer by the Transnational Interreg Programmes

Programmes	Indicators							
	D.2	D.3a	D.3b	D.4a	D.4b	D.4c	D.5	D.6
Adrion	1	0.89	1.88	1.76	1.56	3.30	1	0
Alpine	1	0.91	1.94	2.02	1.84	3.91	1	0
Atlantic	1	1.20	1.92	2.46	2.97	4.73	0	0
BalkanMed	1	1.78	1.95	0.86	1.54	1.68	0	0.166*
Baltic Region	1	1.97	4.33	1.57	3.09	6.78	N/A	0
Central Europe	1	0.95	1.82	2.02	1.91	3.67	1	0
Danube	1	1.35	2.23	1.66	2.24	3.70	2	0
Interreg MED	1	1.17	2.51	1.80	2.11	4.53	1	0
North Sea Region	1	1.22	1.49	4.30	5.23	6.41	1	0
Northern Periphery and Arctic	1	7.75	6.53	0.45	3.50	2.95	0	N/A
North West	1	0.57	1.10	6.08	3.44	6.67	2	0
SUDOE	1	1.62	3.06	1.40	2.27	4.29	1	0
* Integrated actions for sustainable urban development could be developed under conditions								

Question D.5 measures the level of the results orientation of the programmes. It considers if in the selection process of the programmes, the project proposals have to justify how they will contribute to the results indicators of the programmes. The indicators take three (3) values: 0 if the projects are not obliged to declare their contribution to the Application form; 1 if the projects need to describe how they are going to promote the realisation of the results; and 2 if the projects must demonstrate their contribution in quantitative terms. As it seems most of the projects for which data are available (8/11) are asked to provide an explanation of how their projects will contribute to the change of their territories. From these, five (5) should do this in a qualitative basis while in three (3) programmes this should be accompanied by a rough quantitative estimation.

Finally, Question D.6 seeks to assess the programmes' intention to capitalise on the most recent tools of territorial development, also promoted by the EU Cohesion Policy. From the review of the approved programmes, it is concluded that the transnational ETCs do not embrace these territorial development options. Only one (1) programme, BalkanMed, provides the opportunity to applicants to build on one of these tools, namely the "Integrated actions for sustainable urban development", but only under strict conditions. That is why the programme acquires a score of 0.166.

GOOD PRACTICES

o **Northern Periphery and Arctic** implements an initial call for small scale projects called "Preparatory Projects". These projects bring different partners together to work an idea before submitting in the regular calls of the programme. The preparatory projects could be seen as a useful tool for driving activities to concrete targets and better confronting the regional challenges. *More info.*

o The **Central Europe Programme** capitalised on the guidance of DG REGIO to implement a call for projects. More precisely representatives of the programme participated actively in RIS3 events of DG Regio in order to promote the call and achieve a better matching of partners.

o **Alpine Space Programme** has supported the establishment of the alpine Think Tank on services of general interest. *More info*.

4.6 Final Evaluation of Programmes and Implications for the Interreg MED Programme

The final score of the programmes at each layer are presented in

Table 10. There are sizeable differences among the scores of the programmes in each layer. There are programmes with a more balanced approach, whose records at each layer present a range of maximum to minimum that does not exceed the 25%. Among them, the northern programmes, namely, North Sea Region, Northern Periphery and Arctic and North West, seem to perform better as they manage to have very balanced records at each layer and with scores that are lying within the 40%-65% range. On the other hand, there are programmes which show large fluctuations on their scores thus showing a more concentrated approach to one or two layers of the governance system. For instance, the maximum/minimum range of Central Europe exceeds 50% while SUDOE programme acquires a 0% in the layer of Knowledge Generation - Capitalisation.

A wider look on the records of the programmes at each layer shows that a cluster of programmes which pays vast attention to capitalisation activities is formed, as 5 out of 12 programmes seem to acquire their best scores in this layer. The second denser layer is this of the Territorial Governance – Policy Governance with four (4) programmes. For the other two layers, these are better supported by the northern programmes as two (2) of them acquire their best cores in the Mediterranean Challenges - EU Policies layer while only one (1) seems to prioritise the Cooperation-Coordination layer. The diffusion of the lowest scores of programmes among the layers is more balanced. Moreover, regarding the best performers at each layer, the Northern Periphery and Arctic acquires the best score in the Cooperation-Coordination layer, the Interreg MED the best score in the Knowledge Generation-Capitalisation layer, the Danube in the Territorial Governance – Policy Governance layer and the North West in the Mediterranean Challenges - EU Policies layer. Finally, the average records per layer show that the programmes pay more attention to the promotion of the Knowledge Generation-Capitalisation and Territorial Governance – Policy Governance layers with average scores of 49% and 48%, respectively. A boost for the other two (2) layers would be very beneficial in the programming period 2021-2027.

Table 10 The scores of the Programmes in each Governance Layer[29]

Programme	Layers			
	A	B	C	D
Adrion	33%	29%	54%	30%
Alpine	34%	52%	56%	33%
Atlantic	34%	25%	60%	29%
BalkanMed	47%	51%	39%	17%
Baltic Region	28%	60%	52%	49%
Central Europe	57%	72%	21%	33%
Danube	23%	67%	64%	46%
Interreg MED	45%	87%	54%	37%
North Sea Region	46%	51%	39%	53%
Northern Periphery and Arctic	63%	56%	50%	47%
North West	51%	40%	50%	61%
SUDOE	29%	0%	40%	38%
Average	41%	49%	48%	39%
Text marked as green denotes the layer in which each programme acquired its higher score.				
Text marked as red denotes the layer in which each programme acquired its higher score.				
Cells marked as green denote the programme with the highest score at each layer.				
Cells marked as red denote the programme with the lowest score at each layer.				

The final scores of the programmes considering all their records in the individual layers are presented in *Figure 5*. According to the evaluation method applied, the maximum score for each programme could be a 4/4 (100%). The mean value of governance promotion index score is estimated at 44%. 7 out of 12 programmes present scores that exceed the mean score while 5 fail to reach the average records of the programmes. The highest score is found for the Interreg MED programme, which presents an index value of 56%. The Northern Periphery and Arctic follows the records of the Interreg MED with a score of 54%. In addition, North West and Danube programmes present scores of 50%. The lowest score is found for the SUDOE programme, as this does not exceed 27%. Rather low values are also recorded for the Adrion and Atlantic programmes (37%).

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[29] *All indicators with continuous values were normalized to get values in the interval [0,1] with the following formula* $x_i - x_{min}/x_{max} - x_{min}$. *The scores of the programmes in each layer are extracted by adding the scores of each indicator and dividing them with maximum possible score. This is done because not all indicators are available for each programme. The final score is the sum of the programmes' scores in individual indicators.*

Figure 5 The Governance promotion scores of the programmes considering all four governance layers
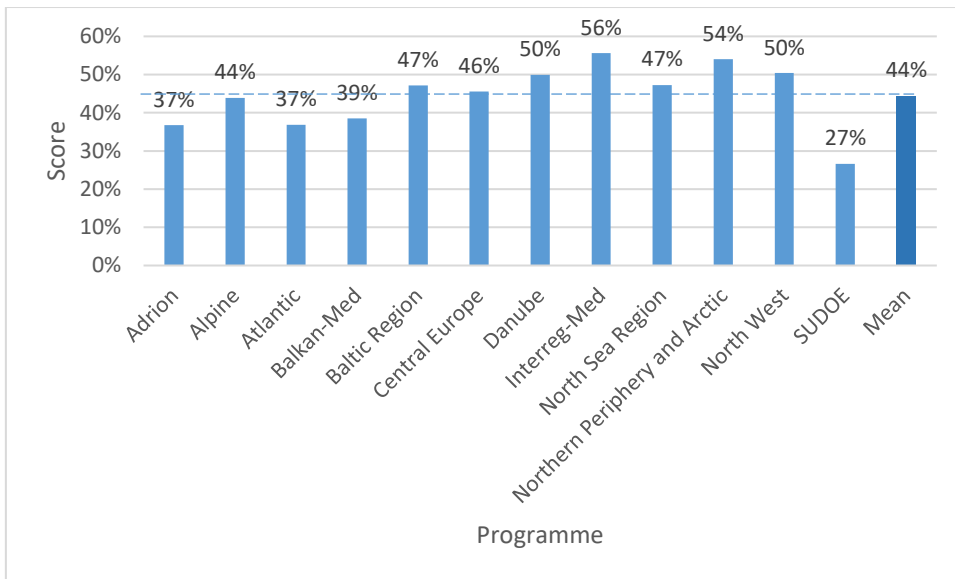
Based on the results, Interreg MED demonstrates high potential for promoting the targets of the governance system when compared to the other transnational programmes of the European territory. This is supported by the fact that the programme acquires the highest score among all programmes studied. Nevertheless, there is great potential for improvements when considering the individual scores at each layer, as well as the good practices arising from the preceding analysis. More precisely, the rank of the programme is mostly supported by its exceptional records in the Knowledge Generation – Capitalisation layer where it acquires a score of 87%, the highest individual records of any programme and in any of the four (4) layers. Therefore, it could be argued that the programme is strongly focused on the promotion of the capitalisation of results.

On the other hand, Interreg MED presents a very low score in the Mediterranean Challenges – EU Policies layer. This is mostly due to the rather small magnitude of the programme's intervention when considering the number of projects and the allocated funds with respect to the population of the area. Moreover, a more result-oriented approach could be followed from the very beginning of the projects by asking applicants to provide quantitative estimations of their contributions to the result indicators of the programme. Here, it should be noted that the Interreg MED is the only programme that provided targets for results indicators in quantitative terms. Nevertheless, by not asking from applicants to justify how these numbers would be changed by their approaches, it did not fully capitalise on the benefits that a quantitative result-oriented approach could bring to the effectiveness of the programme interventions.

Moreover, as concerns the Cooperation-Coordination layer, the programme acquires a score above the average but still not exceeding 50%. The programme should intensify its effort to identify and promote the cooperation with other institutions of the area which for the period 2014-2020 were not identified and named in the official document of the programme. Moreover, the programme should give "bonus" points to projects that justify their intention and ability to cooperate with other institutions and initiatives of the area. The strengthening of cooperation with other institutions could be achieved by promoting the higher participation of

stakeholders in the drafting of the programme which for the period 2014-2020 was under average.

Finally, the programme receives a score of 54% in the Territorial Governance – Policy Governance layer. The most striking weaknesses of the programme in this layer comes from the absence of any type of project evaluation criteria on their intention to contribute to the reduction of spatial disparities and the rather low weight assigned to the criterion of projects intention to contribute to wider policies. The aforementioned points could be seen as part of the challenges that this will be faced with in the new programming period. Undoubtedly, the good practices identified per each layer could be very helpful for the programme authorities towards their confrontation.

5. Territorial Governance in the MED Area and the role of Interreg MED

5.1 Introduction – Questionnaire and Sample description

In the present Section the responses of actors to the survey implemented by the research team are analysed. The Questionnaire consisted of 64 questions and was divided in the following sections according to the Methodological Framework (*See Figure 2*):

1) General Information
2) Evaluation of Actors' Capacity
3) Evaluation of Actors' Perceptions

The questions and the respective types of answers are presented in Table 11. It should be noted, that in the presentation of the results the questions and their respective answers are not presented in the order presented in the table. Moreover, to keep coherence in the presentation of the results, all Likert Scale items were rescaled to the 1-5 scale, regardless the initial scale provided to the surveyed actors.

Table 11 The questions of the survey for the MED Positioning Paper report

No	Question	Type of Answer Measurement scale
	General Information	
1	I hereby declare that I have read the privacy terms of the survey and that I consent to the processing of my personal data for the purposes of this survey, pursuant to the European Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016/679	Yes/No
2	Please provide your contact email	Open
3	Please indicate the name of your organisation.	Open
4	Please indicate the type of your organisation (11 items). 1. International Organisation 2. National Authority 3. Regional Authority 4. Local Authority 5. Research/Education Organisation 6. Other Public 7. Non-Governmental Organisation 8. ETC Programme	Multiple Choice

	9. EGTC 10. Private Organisation 11. Other (please specify)	
5	Please indicate the level of your organisation's interest/expertise in the following fields (16 items). 1. Governance 2. Cooperation 3. Cohesion 4. Policy Sustainability Innovation Environment 5. Climate 6. Change 7. Social 8. Cohesion 9. Inequalities 10. Economic Development and Resilience 11. Blue Growth 12. Green Growth 13. Digital 14. Transformation 15. Culture 16. Other	Likert Scale 1 No interest/expertise - 5 Great interest/expertise
6	Please indicate the level of your organisation's interest/expertise in the following activities (11 items). 1. Agriculture 2. Fisheries 3. Industry 4. Tourism 5. Transport 6. Technology 7. Biodiversity 8. Protection 9. Maritime 10. Surveillance 11. Planning (Spatial / Urban) 12. Research/Education/ Culture 13. Blue Biotechnology	Likert Scale 1 No interest/expertise - 5 Great interest/expertise
	Evaluation of Actors' Capacity	
7	Which of the following options mostly apply to your organisation when setting its priorities (4 Options)? 1. Public Consultation 2. Internal Consulation 3. Consulting Strategic Documents 4. Other (please specify)	Multiple Choice (1 answer)
8	Please rate the following factors according to the importance that you put on them when setting your priorities (4 Items). 1. European Policies, Mediterranean 2. Challenges / Needs, 3. Regional-Local Challenges 4. Organisation's Targets	Rate Scale 1 Least Important - 4 Most Important
9	Using the following scale please indicate how much do you consider the priorities of other Mediterranean organisations when setting your priorities	Liker Scale 1 No Consideration - 5 Full Consideration
10	How does your organisation incorporate cooperation-coordination	Multiple Choice

	activities within its processes (5 Options)? 1. With a dedicated department 2. With dedicated staff 3. With dedicated projects 4. No dedicated structure 5. Other (please specify)	(2 answers)
11	How does your organisation circulate the latest developments, and the activities and achievements of other actors of the Mediterranean to its members (5 Options)? 1. By an online platform 2. By a newsletter 3. By email 4. No dedicated circulation mean 5. Other (please specify)	Multiple Choice (2 answers)
12	How does your organisation obtain information on the latest EU developments and new policies (6 Items)? 1. Official Website of the European Union 2. Newsletter subscriptions 3. Media 4. Networks and Partners 5. Social Media Platforms 6. Other (please specify)	Multiple Choice (2 answers)
13	Does your organisation have a permanent structure / department / staff for liaising activities?	Yes/No
14	What proportion of your budget is dedicated to liaising/cooperation activities (6 Options)? 1. <=5% 2. 5.1%-10% 3. 10.1%-20% 4. 20.1%-30% 5. >30% 6. No budget	Multiple Choice (1 Answer)
15	Does your organisation produce outputs with recommendations on how to improve cooperation-coordination in the Mediterranean?	Yes/No
16	How many joint activities has your organisation developed together with other Mediterranean actors in the past 5 years (5 Options)? 1. 1-2 2. 3-5 3. 6-10 4. >10 5. No joint activities	Multiple Choice (1 Answer)
17	Please rank the type of joint activities according to the frequency of your organisation's engagement (4 Items). 1. Joint projects 2. Joint reports 3. Joint events 4. Staff exchange	Rate Scale (1 Least Important - 4 Most Important)
18	Is capitalisation of knowledge embedded in the vision/mission/core values/strategic targets of your organisation?	Yes/No
19	Does the operational structure of your organisation foresee processes for knowledge in-house circulation?	Yes/No
20	How does your organisation capitalise and disseminate the new knowledge to other actors (4 Items)? 1. Funding/implementing activities/projects that build on	Rank Scale

		available knowledge 2. Ensuring that projects/activities produce recommendations 3. Ensuring that projects/activities produce replicable outputs 4. Funding /implementing activities/projects on the condition that outputs are presented to other actors through events/meetings	
21		Is capacity building embedded in the vision/mission/core values/strategic targets of your organisation?	Yes/No
22		If yes, this is mostly targeted at (3 Options): 1. Improving actors' capacity in responding to regional challenges 2. Improving actors' capacity in implementing the cohesion policy 3. Both	Multiple Choice (1 Answer)
23		Please indicate the level of your agreement with the following statement "The priorities of the organisation are immediately aligned with any new priorities set by the EU Cohesion Policy"	Likert Scale (1 Fully Disagree - 5 Fully Agree)
24		24. In how many networks of actors does your organisation participate in (6 options)? 1. 1 2. 2 3. 3 4. 4 5. 5 6. >5	Multiple Choice (1 Answer)
25		Please indicate the level of your agreement with the following statement "Any actions/projects of my organisation are firstly targeted to the weakest regions/places of our area of responsibility"	Likert Scale (1 Fully Disagree - 5 Fully Agree)
26		26. How much your organisation has capitalised on instruments of territorial development such as the "Integrated Teritorial Investment (ITI)" and "Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)"	Likert Scale (1 No Capitalisation - 5 Full Capitalisation)
27		Does your organisation have a research department conducting research on Mediterranean challenges and European Policies?	No/Yes
28		Using a scale between 0% and 100%, please provide an estimation on how much your priorities and actions are driven by the results of public and citizens' consultation	0-100 Scale (0 No agreement – 100 Fully Agreement)
29		How easy is it for your organisation to respond to geopolitical developments and emerging challenges in the Mediterranean (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic)?	Likert Scale (1 Extremely Difficult - 5 Extremely Easy)
30		Please provide the number of your organisation's personnel. In case this is not available please provide a rough estimation	Open Answer
31		Please indicate how important the following budget sources are for covering the financial needs of your organisation (7 Items). 1. Own funding 2. International Funding 3. EU funding 4. National Funding 5. Participating in project proposals 6. Donations	Likert Scale (1 Source not applicable to your case - 5 Most important source).

	7. Commercial 8. Activity	
	Evaluation of Actors' Perceptions	
32	Please rank the following options according to the alignment with your vision of Mediterranean after 10 years? Please rank the following options by order of importance (7 Items). 1. Connected 2. Inclusive 3. Open and Transparent 4. Competitive 5. Environmentally Friendly 6. Innovative 7. Digitalised	Rank Scale
33	Please rank the following challenges according to their importance for the Mediterranean in the next 10 years (8 Items). 1. Confronting Climate Change 2. Reducing Regional Disparities 3. Boosting Innovation 4. Confronting Emerging Challenges (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic) 5. Adapting to Industry 4.0 6. Preserving the Natural Environment 7. Valorising the Cultural Environment 8. Simplifying Procedures	Rank Scale
34	Which of the following options could be considered as the main strengths of the Mediterranean (8 Items). 1. Long History 2. Mild Climate 3. Natural Resources 4. Cultural Diversity 5. Creativity 6. Geographical Position 7. Cultural Heritage 8. Work Intensity	Rank Scale
35	How would you rate the level of cooperation of actors in the Mediterranean?	Likert Scale (1 Disappointing - 5 Excellent)
36	How would you rate the level of knowledge-generation and capitalisation in the Mediterranean?	Likert Scale (1 Disappointing - 5 Excellent)
37	How well do you know the priorities and work of the following actors (22 Items)? 1. Interreg MED 2. Interreg ADRION 3. Interreg BALKANMED 4. ENI CBC-MED Interreg 5. SOUTH WEST EUROPE 6. Union For the Mediterranean 7. BLUEMED Initiative 8. Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP) 9. Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions 10. Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean area – PRIMA 11. Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance	Likert Scale (1 No Knowledge - 5 Perfect Knowledge)

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45	12. INTERREG CBC ITALY- FRANCE 13. INTERREG CBC ITALY- MALTA 14. INTERREG CBC ITALY- CROATIA 15. INTERREG CBC ITALY- SLOVENIA 16. INTERREG CBC ITALY- GREECE 17. INTERREG CBC SPAIN- FRANCE- ANDORRA 18. INTERREG CBC GREECE- CYPRUS 19. INTERREG IPA CBC CROATIA- BOSNIA- MONTENEGRO 20. INTERREG IPA CBC GREECE- ALBANIA 21. INTERREG IPA CBC ITALY- ALBANIA- 22. ENI CBC ITALY- TUNISIA	
38	How much aware are you of the contents of the following strategies and policies (12 Items)? 1. Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) 2016-2025 2. EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) 3. WestMED Initiative 4. EU Integrated Maritime Policy 5. Maritime Spatial Planning (Directive 2014/89/EU) 6. Protocol on Integrated Coastal Zone Management – ICZM (Barcelona Convention) 7. European Green Deal 8. Dossier of UFM on Blue Economy 9. UN Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals 10. Territorial Agenda 2030 11. 6 Priorities of European Commission 12. Mainstream Programmes Partners' agreements (structural funds)	Likert Scale (1 No Knowledge - 5 Perfect Knowledge)
39	How much aware are you of the implementation and the results of the following events (17 Items)? 1. Made in MED Event (2018) 2. 4th EUSAIR Forum (2019) 3. Mediterranean Sustainable Tourism Convention (2019) 4. MedCoopAlliance Webinar "Towards a renovated Regional Strategy for the Mediterranean +25" (2020) 5. 1st Capitalisation Event on Marine Renewable Energies (MRE) (2020) 6. CPMR A Macroregional Strategy in the Mediterranean (2021) 7. Mediterranean Forum of Creativity and Social Innovation (2019) 8. Efficient Buildings Digital Days (2021) 9. MED for You (2019) 10. SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN 11. Introducing the "Handbook on Sustainable Mobility Solutions" (2021) 12. Capacity building workshop By the Mediterranean 13. Biodiversity Protection Community, Climate Change and Marine Protected Area (2020) 14. UFM Digitalization skills in the aquaculture and tourism sectors in the Mediterranean (2021) 15. The WestMED Stakeholder Conference: Towards concrete 'blue' actions in the western Mediterranean (2018) 16. IUCN World Conservation Congress (2021)	Likert Scale (1 No Knowledge - 5 Perfect Knowledge)

40	How much aware are you of the implementation and the results of the following projects? 1. Mobilitas 2. DestiMed 3. AMAre 4. B-Blue 5. BleuTourMed_C3 6. CAMARG 7. CESBA MED 8. COMPOSE 9. CreaInnovation 10. GO SUMP 11. LOCATIONS	Likert Scale (1 No Knowledge - 5 Perfect Knowledge)
41	How would you describe the type of cooperation framework in the Mediterranean (4 Options)? 1. Top-Down 2. Bottom-Up 3. Multi-Level 4. Polycentric	Multiple Choice (1 Answer)
42	How well the following characteristics can describe the policy framework of the Mediterranean region (6 Items)? 1. Place-Based 2. Endogenous 3. Bottom-Up 4. Polycentric 5. Decentralized 6. Considering Territoriality	Likert Scale (1 No Relevance - 5 High Relevance)
43	Please evaluate the likelihood of achieving a real progress in the fulfillment of the following PANORAMED Recommendations for maritime surveillance until 2030. The implementation of a voluntary and decentralised framework for multilevel maritime surveillance should (4 Items): 1. Be ready to integrate new technologies and services to develop the Blue Economy 2. Move from information sharing to data sharing as a raw material allowing the emergence of different levels 3. Develop clusters from citizens up to EU/Multinational institutions to build trust between different levels 4. Overcome sectorial, transnational and multinational barriers to access to data	Likert Scale (1 no to very little progress – 5 Great Progress)
44	Please evaluate the likelihood of achieving a real progress in the fulfillment of the following PANORAMED Recommendations for sustainable tourism until 2030. Sustainable tourism development in the Mediterranean will be achieved by (5 Items): 1. Improving data sharing and harmonization as basis for knowledge based decision making 2. Achieving integrated and informed tourism governance for smart and more resilient destinations 3. Realising enhanced and innovative tourism (business) solutions 4. Greening tourism (reducing pressures) and improving historic, traditional and natural heritage 5. Informing, educating and engaging stakeholders for	Likert Scale (1 no to very little progress – 5 Great Progress)

		changing behaviour	
45		Please evaluate the likelihood of achieving a real progress in the fulfillment of the following PANORAMED Recommendations for innovation until 2030. Better governance of innovation policies in the Mediterranean needs to (4 Items): 1. Advance towards a MED common approach to identify and address together MED most pressing challenges 2. Orient R&I competitive calls and projects towards these MED challenges, promoting complementarities among programmes and funds, and promoting multi- stakeholder (quadruple-helix) challenge-driven missions and alliances and transnational clusters 3. Optimize the use of existing MED R&I infrastructures 4. Underline the social value of R&I, by focusing on social needs and by recognizing and enhancing them	Likert Scale (1 no to very little progress – 5 Great Progress)
46		Has your organisation provided any policy recommendations in the following issues (6 Items)? 1. Better cooperation in the Mediterranean 2. Better governance in the Mediterranean 3. Better confrontation of Mediterranean challenges 4. Better alignment with EU Policies 5. Better implementation of Cohesion Policy 6. Better capitalisation of existing knowledge	Likert Scale (1 No Recommendations – 5 Constant Recommendations)
47		Have your recommendations been incorporated into official policy documents?	Yes/No
48		Has your organisation adopted any recommendations/outputs from other actors?	Yes/No
49		Has any of your outputs been incorporated into mainstream programmes? (Question not for entities drafting and implementing mainstream programmes)?	Yes/No
50		Have you incorporated any outputs/recommendations of other actors into your operational programme (Question only for entities drafting and implementing mainstream programmes)?	Yes/No
51		Have you realised any of the following activities facilitating cooperation in the area in the past 5 years (6 options)? 1. Event 2. Forum 3. Think Tank 4. Network 5. Joint Project 6. Other (please specify)	Multiple Choice (Multiple Answers)
52		If yes, please list the 3 most important activities	Open Response
53		By how much your capacity in confronting regional challenges was improved in the period 2014-2020?	Likert Scale (1 No improvement - 10 Absolute improvement)
54		By how much your capacity in implementing cohesion policy was improved in the period 2014-2020?	Likert Scale (1 No improvement - 10 Absolute improvement)
55		How would you rate the level of your cooperation with the following	Likert Scale

	actors (22 Items provided also in Question 37)?	(1 No Cooperation - 5 Perfect Cooperation)
56	How possible do you think is for the Mediterranean to acquire a common EU strategic framework for cooperation in the region?	Likert Scale (1 Not possible at all - 5 Extremely possible)
57	Mark up to five actors/initiatives/processes that are expected to play the most important role in shaping the future of the Mediterranean governance system (17 Options). 1. Interreg MED 2. Interreg ADRION 3. Interreg BALKANMED 4. ENI CBC MED 5. INTERREG SOUTH WEST EUROPE 6. One of the INTERREG CBC Programmes 7. Union For the Mediterranean 8. BLUEMED Initiative 9. Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP/MAP) 10. Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions 11. Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean area – PRIMA 12. Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance 13. EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) 14. WestMED Initiative 15. A National Authority 16. A Regional Authority 17. A structure like PANORAMED	Multiple Choice (Up to 5 Answers)
58	To what extent does your institution have ownership of the decisions?	Likert Scale (1 No Ownership – 10 Full Ownership)
59	How well are your results taken into account by the other actors in the Mediterranean?	Likert Scale (1 Not at all – 10 Full Consideration)
60	How easy do you consider the access to information about results achieved by other actors in the Mediterranean?	Likert Scale (1 Difficult – 10 Most Easy)
61	How do you foresee the role of the Interreg MED in the governance system of the Mediterranean?	Likert Scale (1 Minor / Not Important – 10 Leader)
62	Which of the following factors may impede the further consolidation of the Mediterranean Governance Framework (7 Items)? 1. Increasing nationalism and competition among EU areas 2. Citizens' discontent 3. Changing priorities in the EU policy (i.e. confronting pandemics) 4. Lack of funding 5. Political Uncertainty 6. Lack of capacity 7. Other (please specify below	Likert Scale (1 No likelihood - 5 Extremely High likelihood)
63	What would you change in the current state of Governance (6	Likert Scale

	Items)? 1. The cooperation mechanism 2. The limited openess of actors 3. The fragmented policy framework 4. The lack of a clear strategic framework 5. The level of transparency and simplification of procedures 6. Other (please specify below)	(1 No need for change - 5 Urgent need for change)
64	Which of the following actions towards improving the circulation of knowledge do you think that should be prioritized (6 Items)? 1. A MED platform presenting all forthcoming events of the registered actors 2. A MED platform presenting all results/minutes of meetings by registered actors 3. A MED platform presenting the outputs/activities of registered actors 4. A MED platform presenting calls for funding 5. A MED platform presenting registered actors for developing partnerships 6. A MED platform providing capacity building activities	Likert Scale (1 No Priority - 5 Urgent Priority)

The survey was opened to receive responses at 17/9/2021 with a foreseen deadline for 15/10/2021. Finally, an extension was provided until 29/10/2021. The invitations were sent to 181 stakeholders representing 152 actors of the Mediterranean. In order to extract the final list of stakeholders the following sources were consulted:

1) A list of stakeholders provided by the Region of Crete (PANORAMED project partner). The contact details were cross-checked and elaborated by the consortium and validated by the contracting authority.

2) The excel file with all projects and beneficiaries, provided by the Interreg MED[30]. Only basic information was extracted by the file because the file was not fully updated.

3) A list of partners incorporated by ELIAMEP and UTH. The list includes actors with strong activity in the Mediterranean Cooperation Governance with whom ELIAMEP and UTH had cooperated in the past.

The final list of stakeholders invited to take part in the survey is presented in Appendix 1.

The response rate is considered to be satisfactory for the extended version invitations but very low for the short-version ones (*See*

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[30] *https://interreg-med.eu/projects-results/our-projects/*
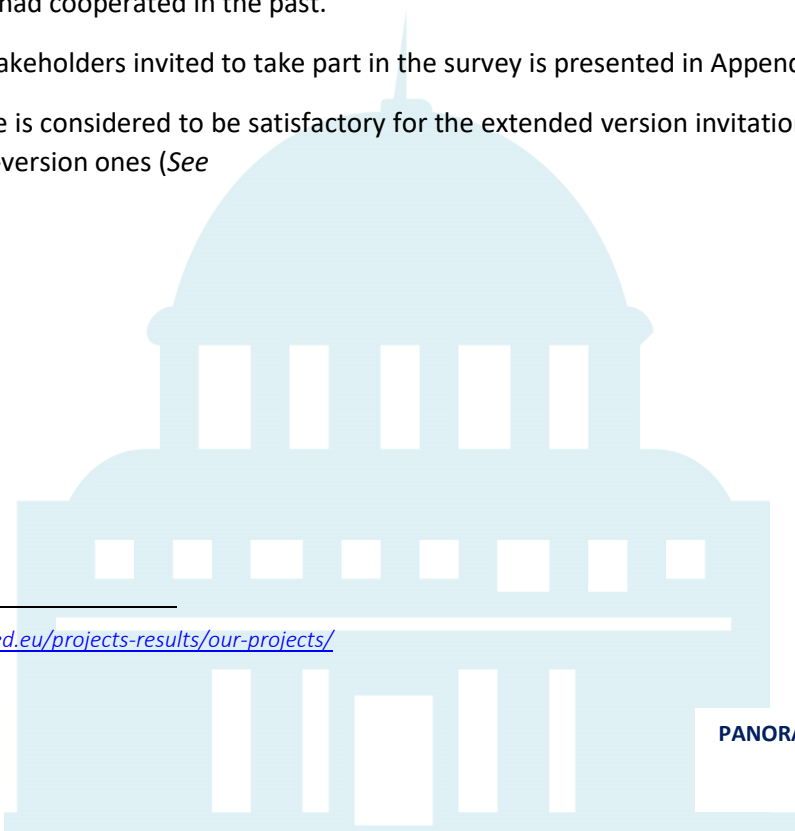
Table 12). Overall, one in three actors that received an invitation finally replied to the survey. It should be noted that no question of the survey was mandatory. Therefore, not all respondents have replied to all the questions.
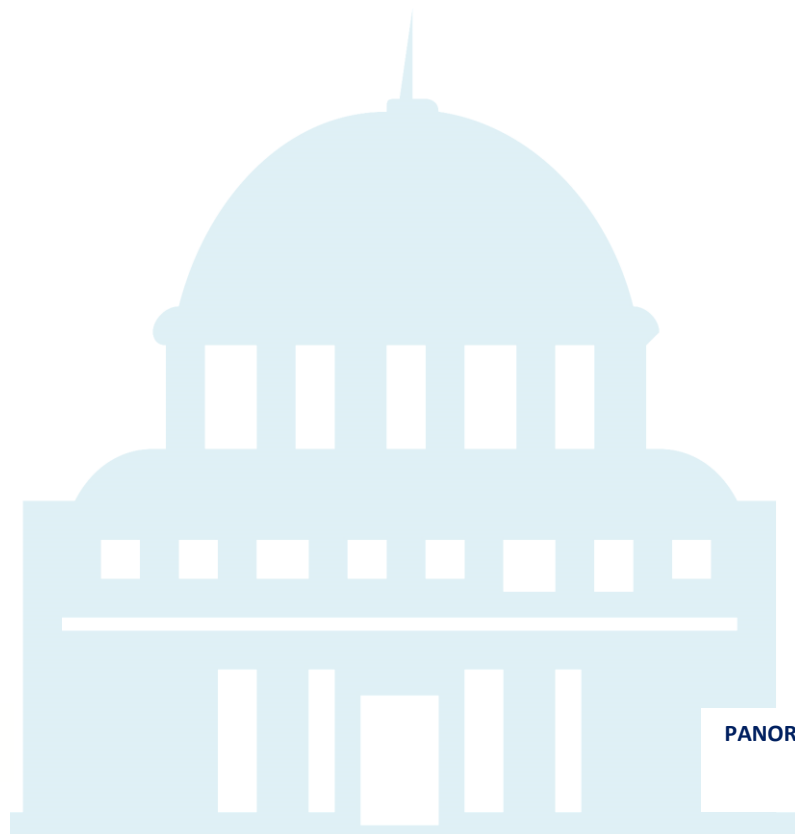
Table 12 The responses received in the context of the Med Positioning Paper report survey

Metrics	Survey for the PANORAMED MED Positioning Paper (Full Version)	Survey on the Perceptions of the Cooperation Governance for the PANORAMED MED Positioning Paper (Short Version)	Total
Number of email invitations sent	70	82	152
Number of replies until 12/10/2021	41	11	52
Response Rate	59%	13%	34%
>60% Responses Criterion Final Sample	**37**	**11**	**48**

The different types of stakeholders that took part in the survey are presented in Figure 6. 33% of the respondents represented National Authorities, 25% represented Regional and/or Local Authorities, and 23% represented international entities (i.e. Managing Authorities, international organisations, multinational networks and international NGOs). Other types of stakeholders (19%) include research & education organisations, NGOs, other public organisations, and unspecified.

Figure 6 Responses to the Med Positioning Paper per type of organisations
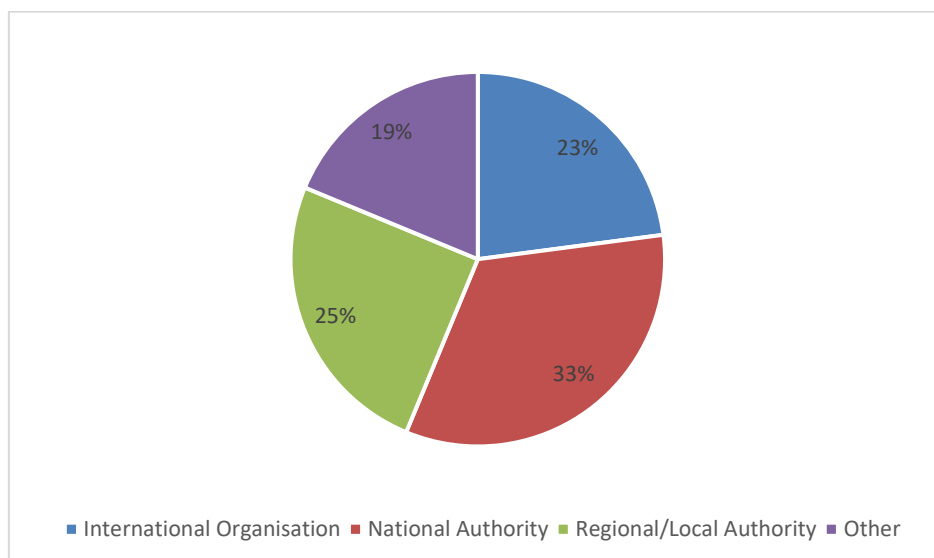
The responses per country are presented in Figure 7. Out of the 48 respondents, 11 were representing multi-country entities. As illustrated in the figure, a wide country coverage of the survey was achieved, as stakeholders from 13 countries in the region participated. Namely, respondents came from Albania (4), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Croatia (3), Cyprus (2), Egypt (1), France (3), Greece (6), Italy (1), Jordan (1), Malta (1), Portugal (3), Slovenia (4) and Spain (8).

Figure 7 Responses to the Med Positioning Paper per country
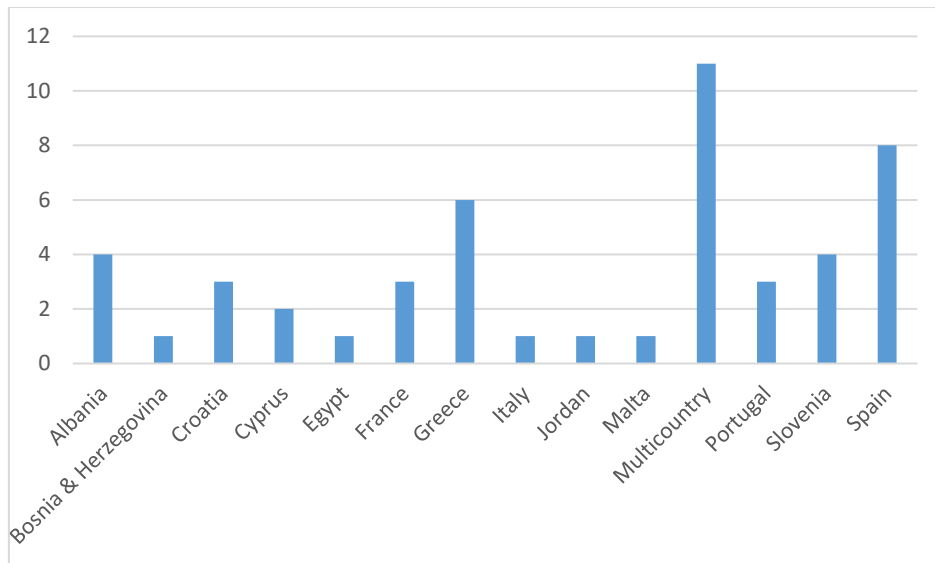
In Figure 8 the average score of the different fields according to the importance placed on them by the respondents is presented. According to the evaluation method applied, the maximum score for each thematic field was 5/5. Based on the average score, almost all thematic fields included in the survey were of significant interest for the stakeholders. Cooperation was ranked first (4.61) and then with minor differences the thematic fields of Sustainability (4.44), Cohesion policy (4.43), Governance (4.41), Environment (4.30), Innovation and Climate Change (both 4.22), Economic Development and Resilience (4.15), Blue Growth (4.11), Green Growth (4.07) and Digital Transformation (4.04) follow. Social Cohesion (3.82), Inequalities (3.57) and Culture (3.55) were considered of medium to high interest.

Figure 8 Stakeholders' stated interest per thematic field (0-5)
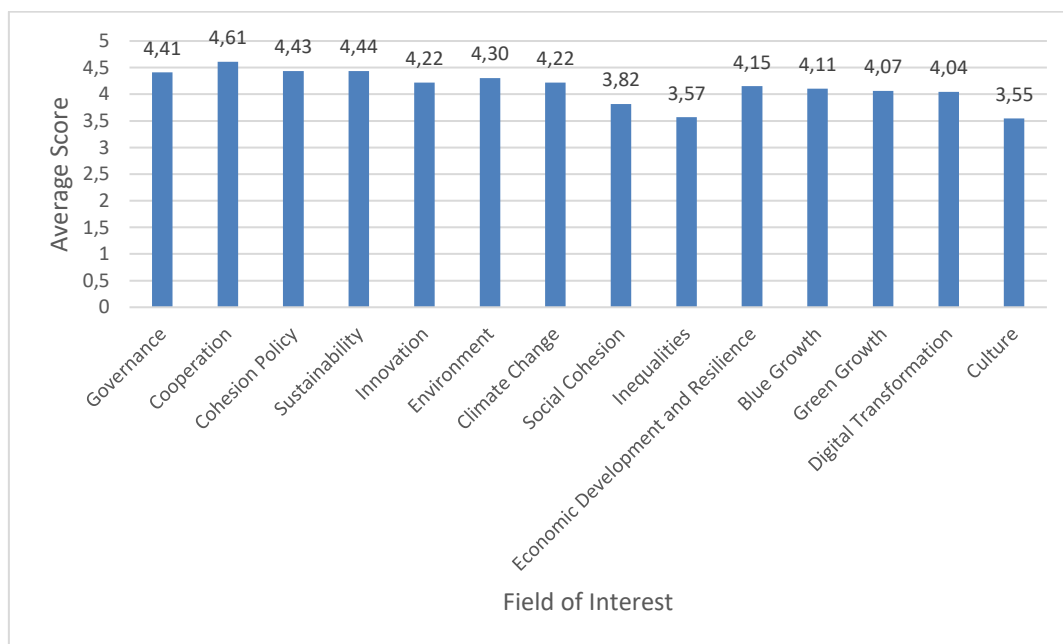
In Figure 9 the expressed interest for the different thematic fields per type of stakeholder is presented. International organisations show particular interest for cooperation, national authorities for governance, regional/local authorities for digital transformation and the actors of the "other" category for digital transformation and economic development.

Figure 9 Stakeholders' stated interest per thematic field and type of institution (0-5)
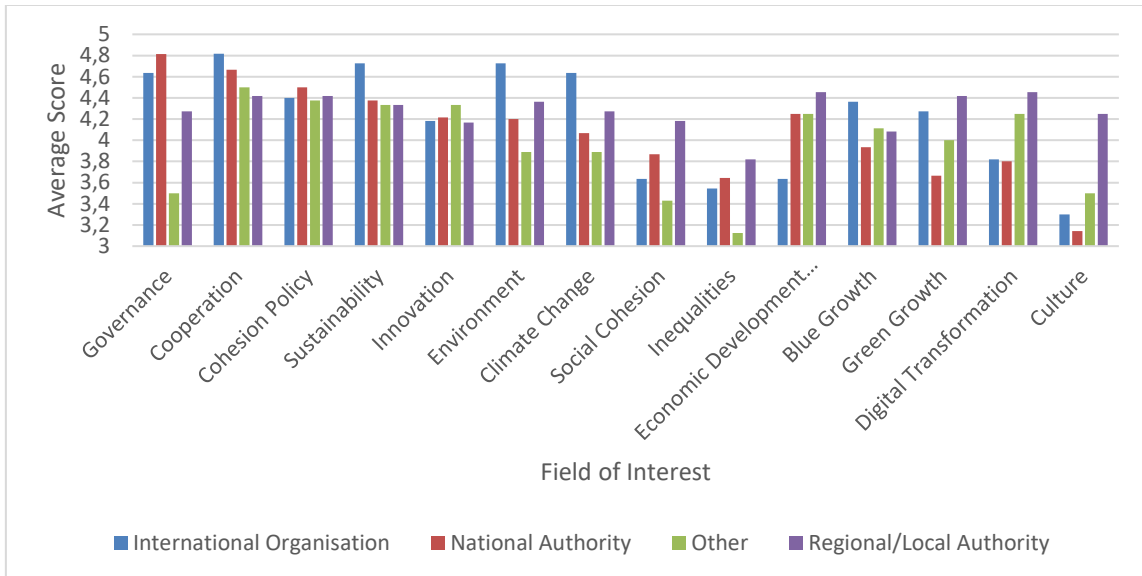
In Figure 10 the average score of the different activities according to the importance placed on them by the respondents is presented. The maximum score for each activity was 5/5 with all selected activities gathering responses with a stated interest of 3.29 on average. Based on the average score for each activity, Tourism (3.82) comes first in terms of stated interest, whereas Blue biotechnology is considered of medium interest (2.93).

Figure 10 Stakeholders' stated interest per activity (0-5)
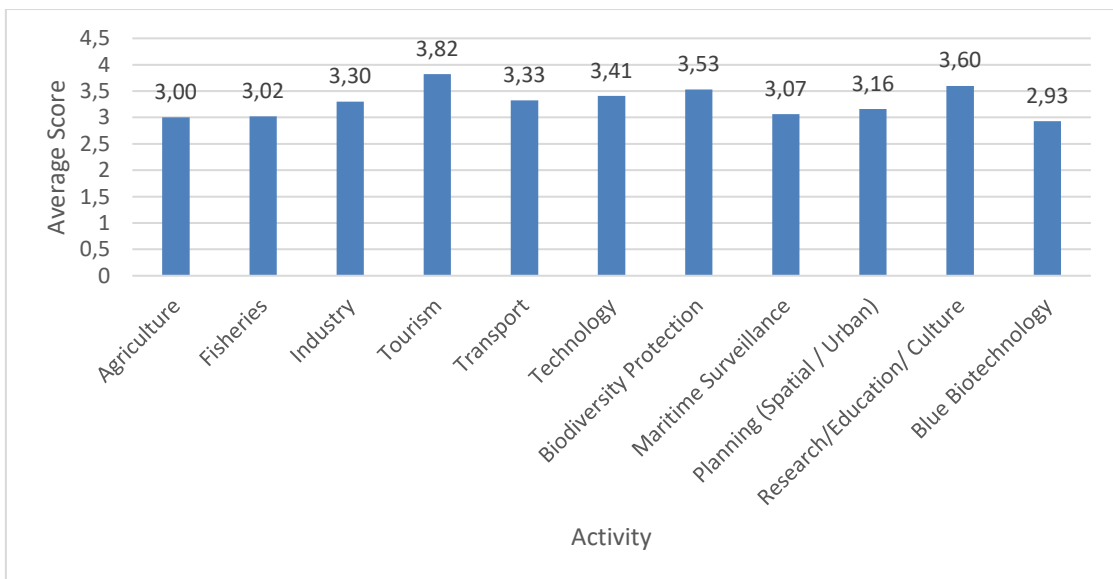
In Figure 11 the expressed interest for the different thematic fields per type of stakeholder is presented. As it can be seen in the figure, international organisations have stated a strong

interest in Tourism and Biodiversity Protection, with all other thematic fields following with small differences in the level of interest. National authorities demonstrate the same level of interest for all thematic fields with Maritime Surveillance receiving a slightly higher score, while Agriculture, Fisheries and Blue Biotechnology receive a lower score. Regional and Local Authorities have stated a relatively stronger interest in the majority of the thematic fields, with the highest scores being in Tourism, Research/Education/ Culture, Agriculture and Biodiversity Protection. Finally, other types of stakeholders again showcase a similar level of interest across all fields of interest, with Research/Education/Culture, Industry and Technology receiving the highest score.

Figure 11 Stakeholders' stated interest per activity and type of institution (0-5)
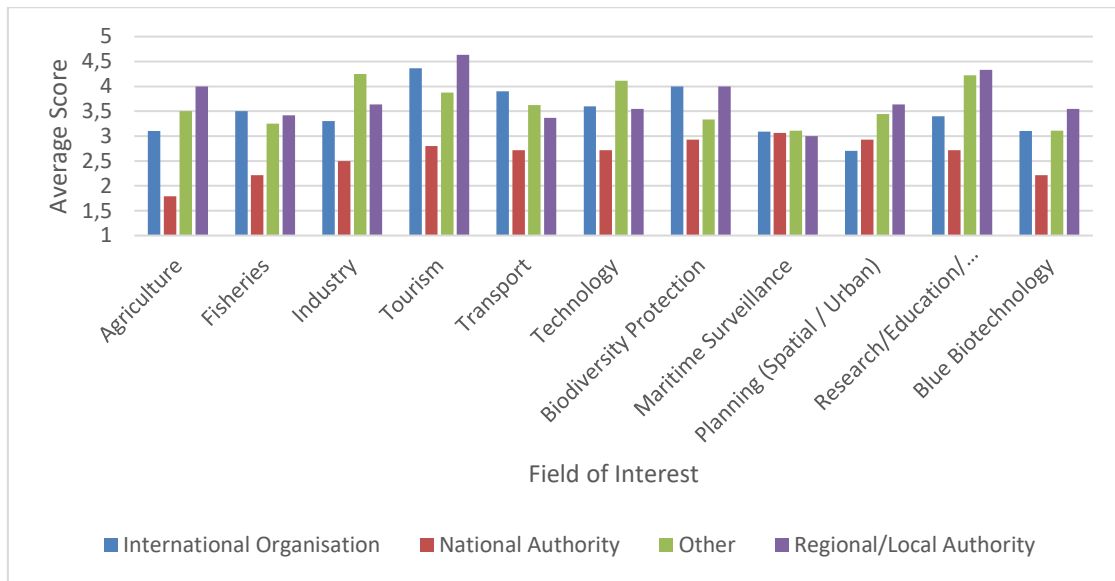
5.2 Actors' Capacity Evaluation

5.2.1 General Capacity

The capacity of actors to promote the targets of the MCGS layers is firstly assessed in size terms. In
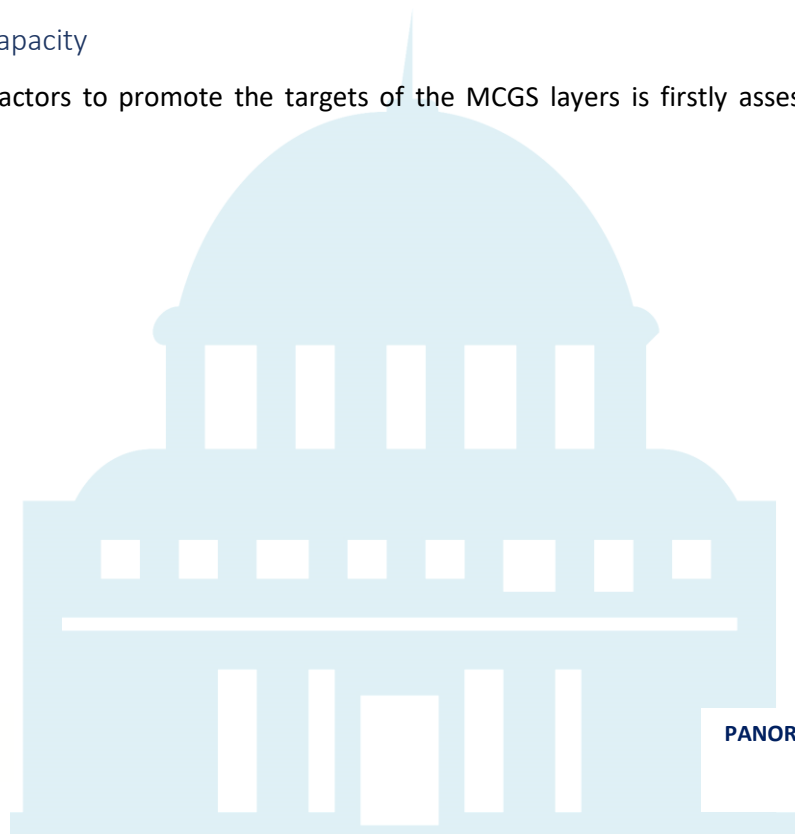
Figure *12* the average size of the actors as this is expressed by the number of staff employed by each one of them is presented. The surveyed actors have on average 245 staff members. The largest average size is found for the regional and local authorities (446), while the lowest for the International Organisations (25).

Figure 12 Please provide the number of your organisation's personnel. In case this is not available please provide a rough estimation.
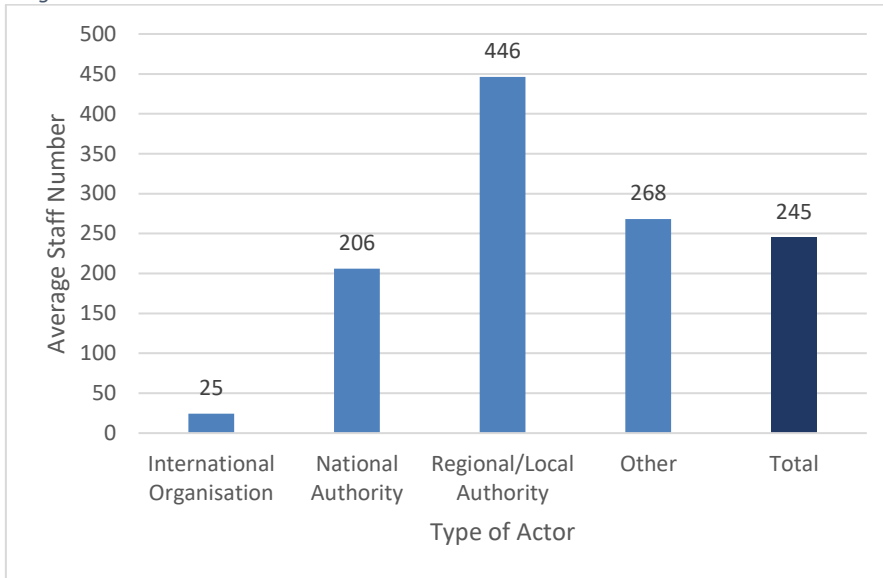
In addition, a critical aspect of the actors' capacity to promote the objectives of the MCGS is the existence of constant funding sources. Figure 13 shows that the actors rely on different types of sources to fund their activities. The most common source of funding comes from national authorities' resources, followed by EU funding. The third most common funding source is the participation of actors in projects. These three (3) types of funding are followed by own funding and international funding options. The least common sources are the donations and the commercial activity. As for the different types of actors, EU funds are the dominant financial sources for international organisations, national funding is the dominant source for national and regional/local authorities, while participation in projects is the most commonly used means by other institutions in order to attract funding.
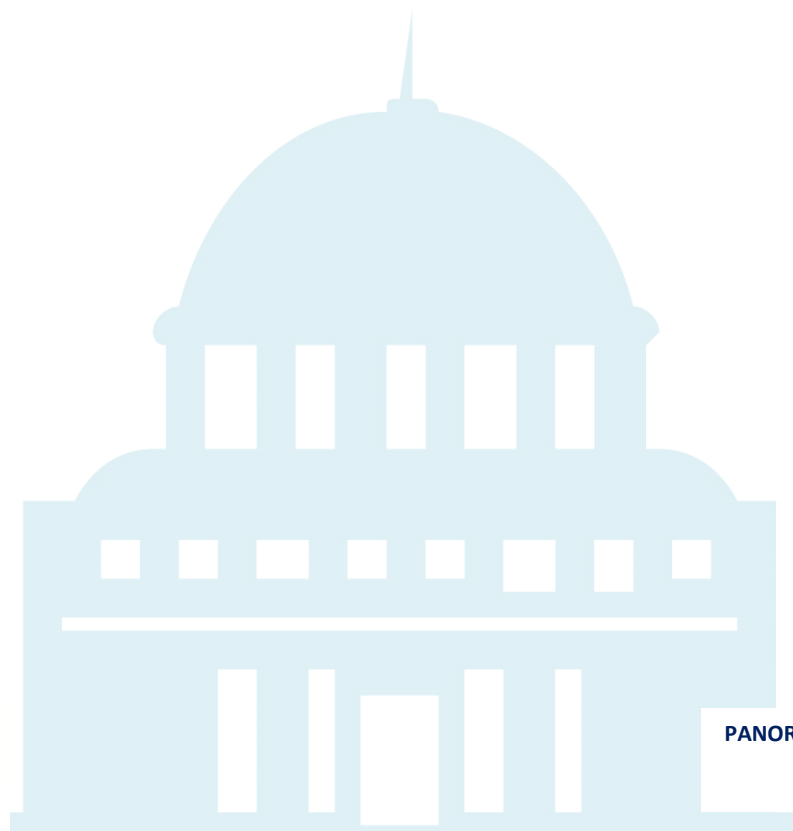
Figure 13 Please indicate how important the following budget sources are for covering the financial needs of your organisation. (1 Source not applicable to your case - 5 Most important source)
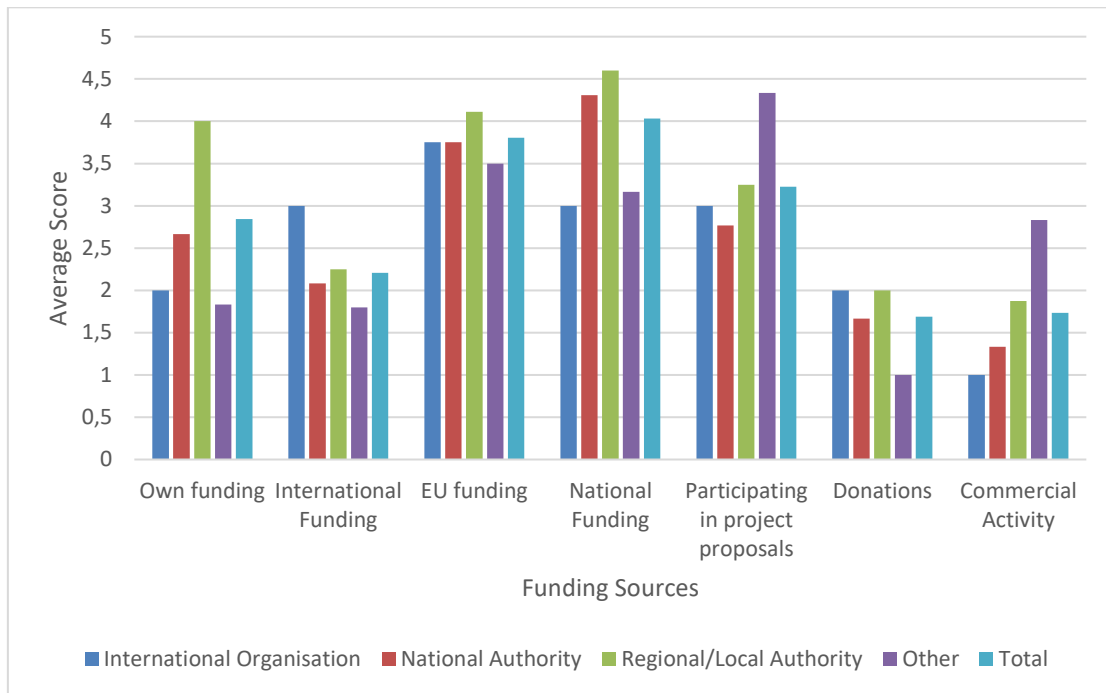
5.2.2 Cooperation-Coordination Layer Capacity

The questions in this section evaluate the capacity of MED actors to promote the Cooperation-Coordination Layer by considering how the targets of this layer are encompassed in the priorities, processes and outputs of the surveyed institutions. A critical element of cooperation is to take into consideration the view and objectives of other partners and citizens in the region. Therefore, it is very interesting to see how the priorities of the actors are being set (*See Figure 14*). A significant proportion of actors rely on internal consultation (28%) for setting their priorities while many other actors (26%) set the priorities by only considering the strategic policy documents relevant to their activities. What is noteworthy, is that only 17% of the actors rely on public consultation, of any type, to set their priorities. Therefore, further enhancement of the consultation processes should be a target for the future. Finally, it should be noted that 29% of the actors use some other paths for drafting their priorities, while a small number puts an equal weight on the available options. Among the most common strategies of priorities setting are the consultation of actors with governmental organisations and regional authorities, and the close collaboration with other actors mostly for surveyed actors which constitute or are part of a formal network of institutions.
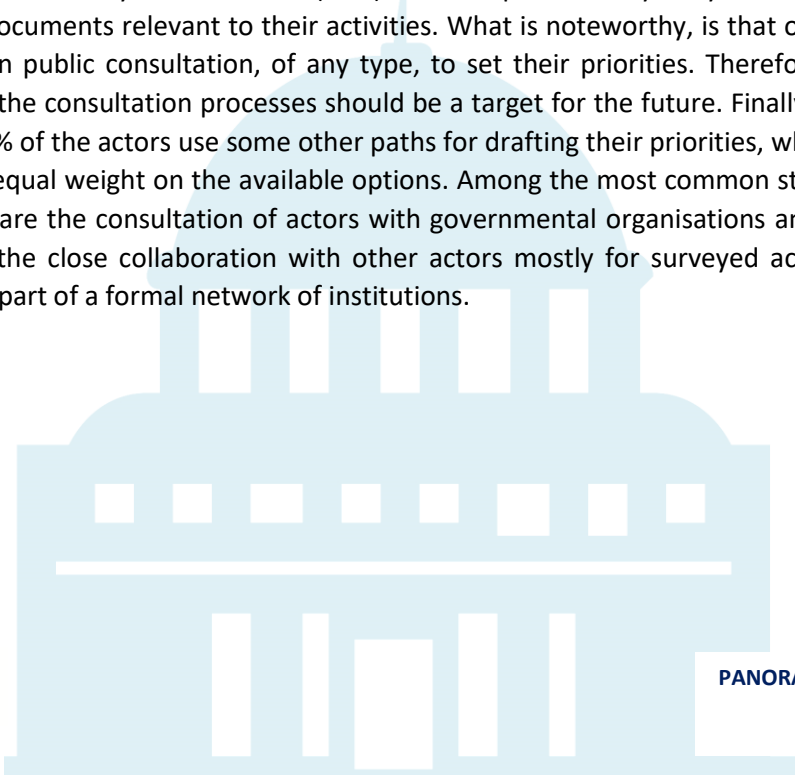
Figure 14 Which of the following options mostly apply to your organisation when setting its priorities?
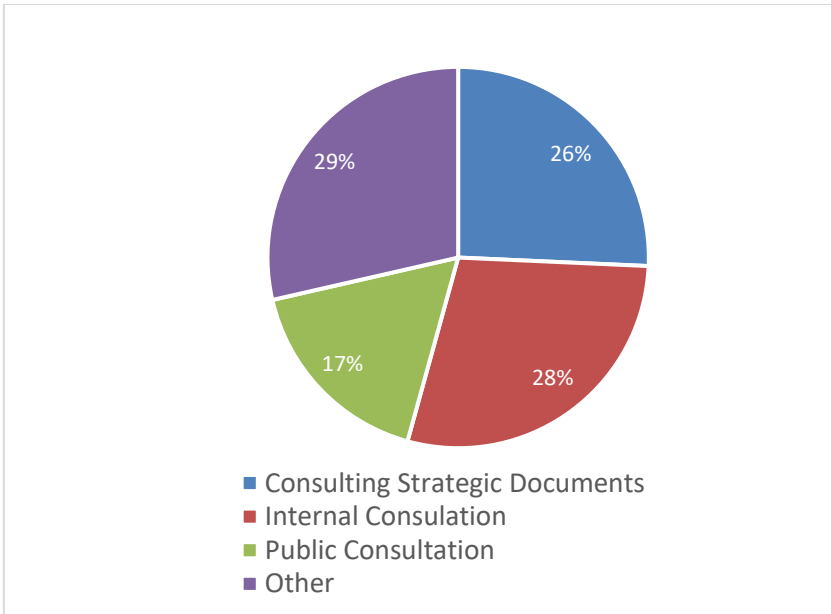
Under a multi-level governance structure, it is very important that all actors have knowledge and take into consideration the priorities and challenges of other levels, too. As Figure 15 shows, the consideration put on the challenges of the European and the regional/local levels is almost equal with the importance placed on own institutional targets (about 3.5/5). Nevertheless, actors seem to place lower importance to the challenges of the Mediterranean when setting their priorities, as this level acquires an average score of (3.27/5). This result denotes that the Mediterranean may not be perceived as a policy level that should be incorporated to actors' priorities, maybe due to the lack of a common strategic framework that would render Mediterranean an area of administrative status similar to EU or national and regional administrative units.

Figure 15 Please rate the following factors according to the importance that you put on them when setting your priorities. (1 Least Important - 4 Highly Important)
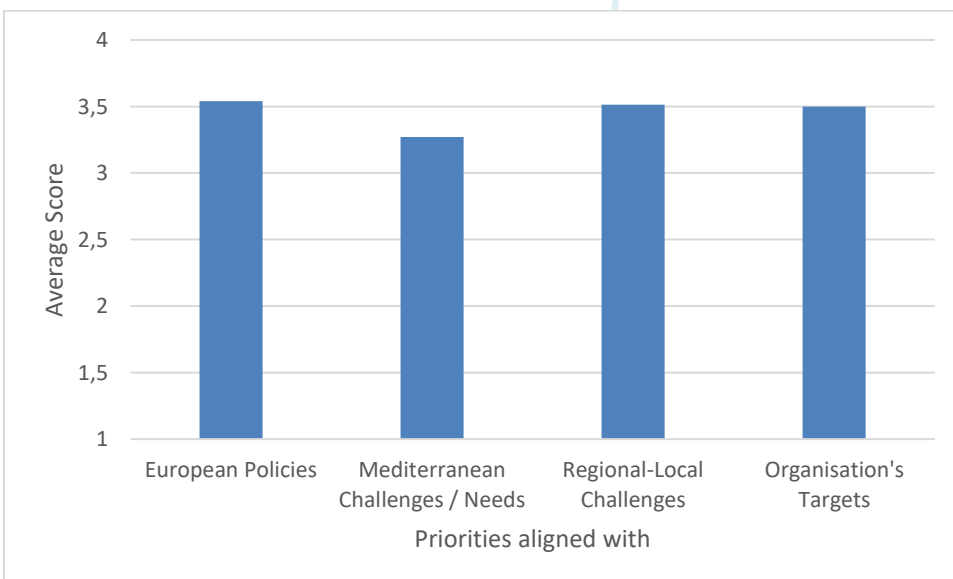
Analysing further the above, Figure 16 presents the average scores of the 4 types of surveyed actors regarding the importance that they lay on regional/local and Mediterranean challenges when setting their priorities. It is demonstrated that the main gap is found between regional/local authorities and international organisations, as they prioritise challenges of different levels. Therefore, in order for the governance system to become more integrated, the actors of different levels should take into further consideration also additional levels when setting their priorities.

Figure 16 The importance placed by different type of actors on regional-Local challenges and Mediterranean Challenges/Needs (1 Least Important -5 Highly Important)
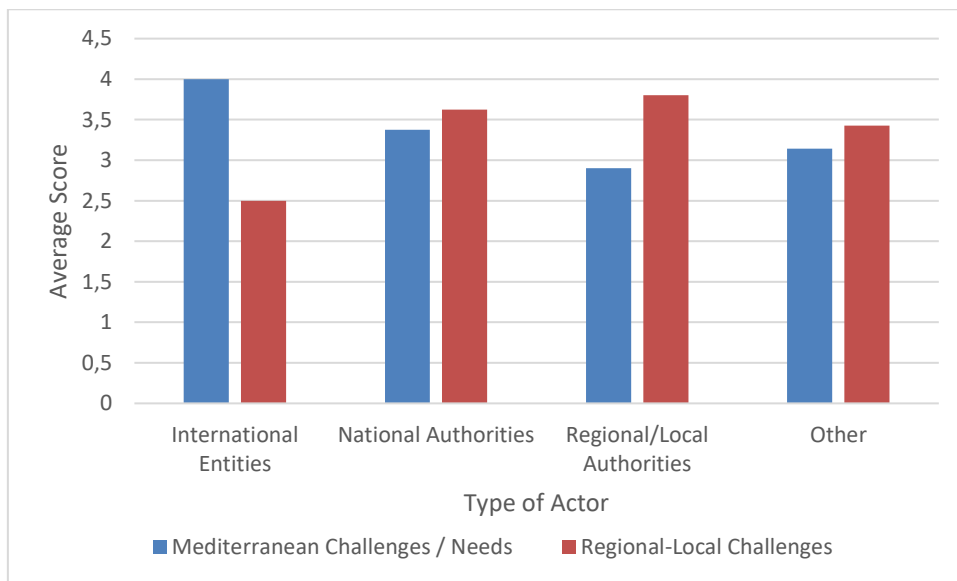
Apart from the different geographical levels that should be taken into account, it is also crucial for the actors to acknowledge and elaborate on the objectives of other actors when setting their priorities, regardless of the spatial level. In Figure 17, it can be seen that the consideration of other actors' priorities remains moderate across the surveyed actors, as the importance placed on other actors' priorities acquires a score of about 3/5. The lowest consideration scores are found for the national authorities and other institutions (both below <3/5). These scores may unveil some missing links among the actors of different spatial levels which should be reinforced in order for the governance system to become more connected.
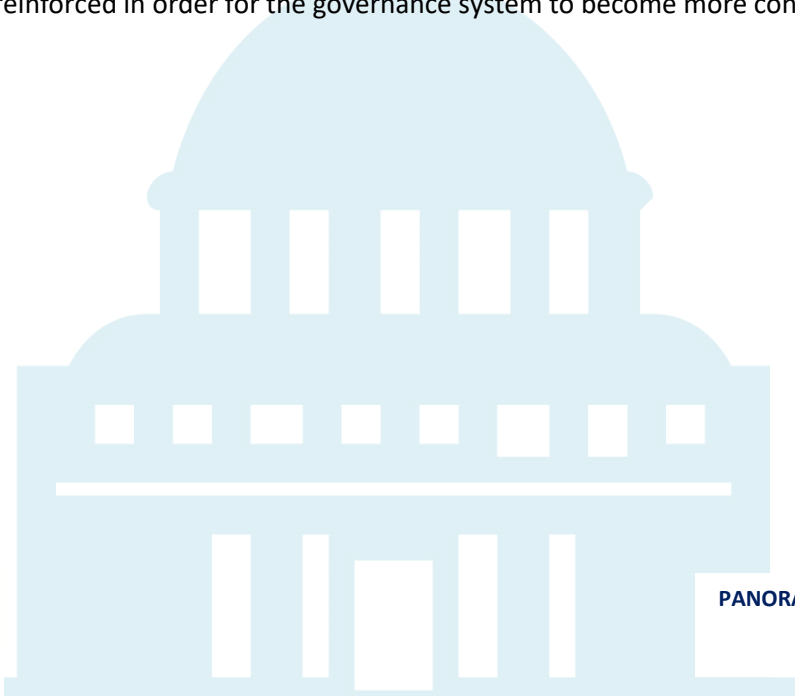
Figure 17 Using the following scale please indicate how much do you consider the priorities of other Mediterranean organisations when setting your priorities (1 No Consideration - 5 Full Consideration)
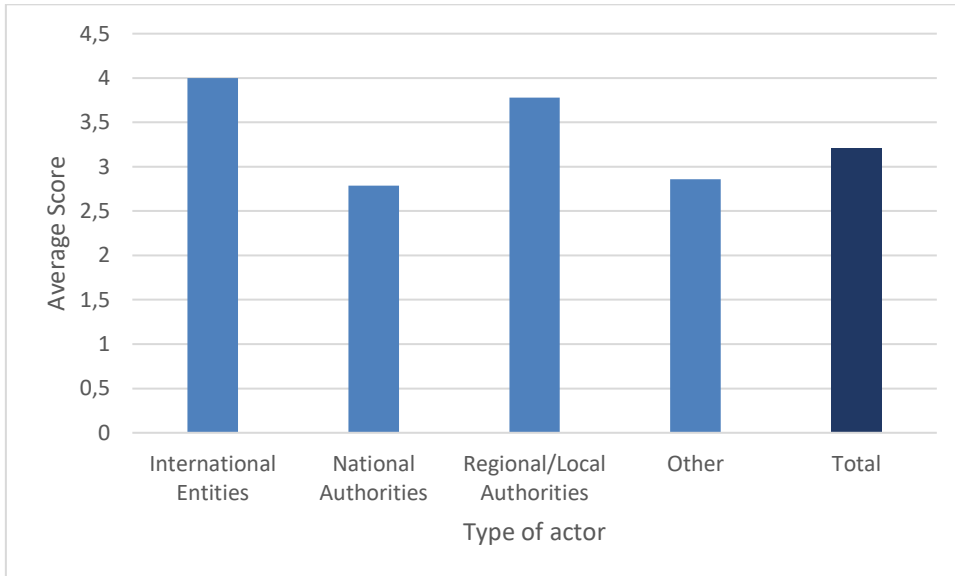
Moreover, cooperation is pivotal for the strengthening of the links among actors of both the same but also from different spatial levels. Therefore, the capacity of actors to promote cooperation activities is of great importance. In Figure 18 the most used means for promoting cooperation activities at the institutional level are presented. Specifically, more than 60% of the surveyed actors promote cooperation with dedicated staff and about 54% engage in cooperation-coordination activities through projects. It should be noted that only 30% of the actors have a dedicated department for cooperation activities and about 3% do not have any of the following means for engaging in cooperation.

Figure 18 How does your organisation incorporate cooperation-coordination activities within its processes?
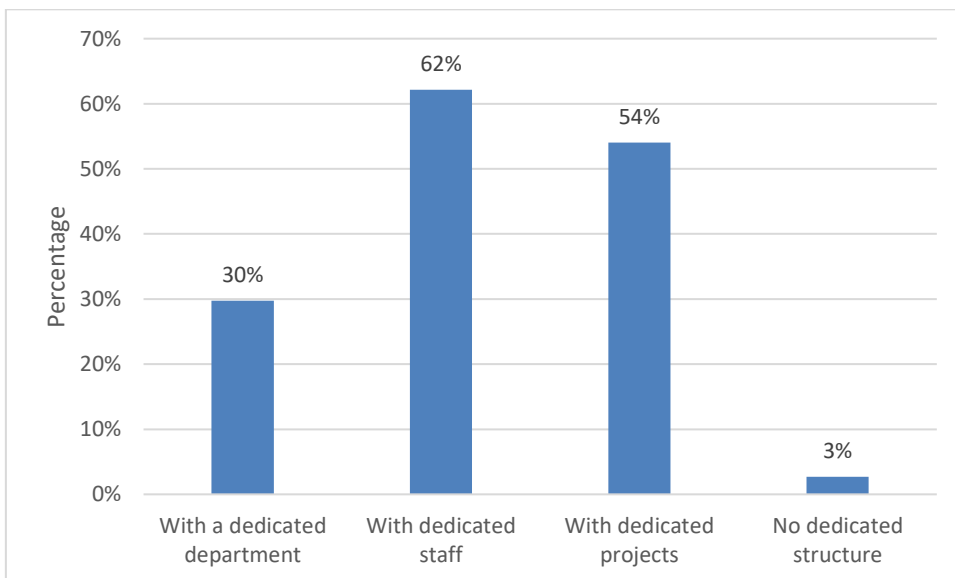
Equally important for the promotion of cooperation and coordination objectives of the layer, are the liaising activities undertaken by the actors in the Mediterranean. As it can be seen in

Figure 19, the 56.8% of surveyed actors have structures within their organization for implementing liaising activities. The rate is rather high in international organisations and regional/local authorities, but extremely low for the national authorities.

Figure 19 Proportion of actors with permanent structure / department / staff for liaising activities
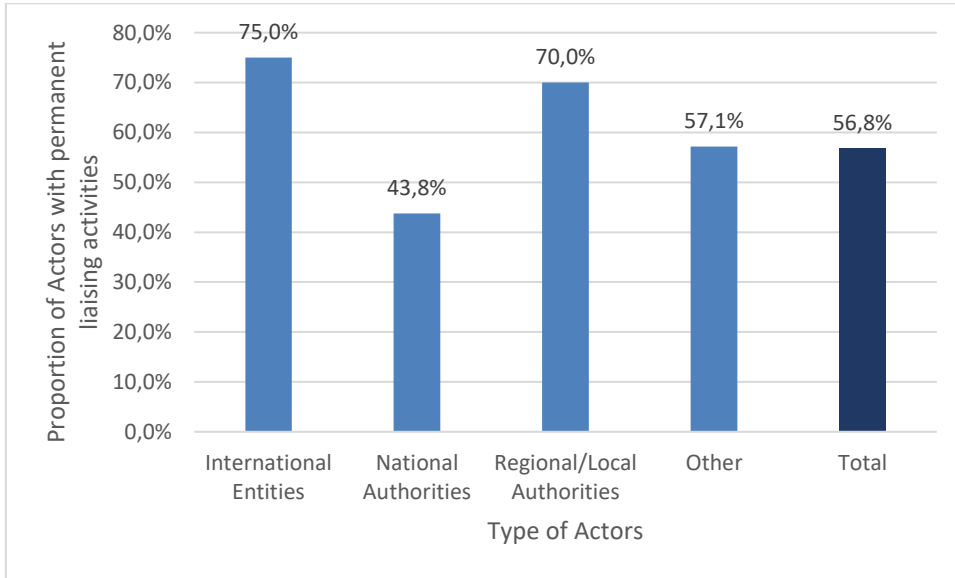
In addition, in Figure 20, a categorisation of actors to six (6) budget intervals based on the proportion of their budget allocated to liaising activities with respect to the total budget of each organization is presented. As depicted in the figures, more than 20% of actors do not have any budget lines for liaising activities, while over 30% of actors use less than 5% of their budget to promote liaising activities. These figures show that over 50% of the surveyed actors put a very low importance on liaising in financial terms.

Figure 20 Proportion of actors per category of budget dedicated to liaising activities
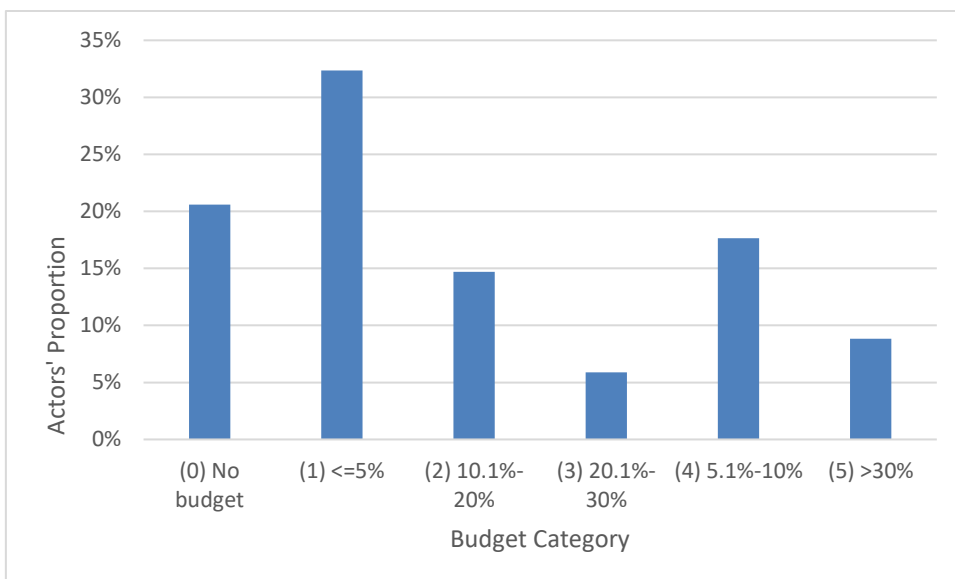
It is also worth analysing the relationship between the allocated budget and the size of the institutions, so that any connection between the capacity of actors in terms of size and the

importance placed on the promotion of cooperation objectives to stand out (*See Figure 21*). As it can be seen from the scatterplot, the relationship between the budget allocated for liaising and the size of institutions is not a linear one and considering the low R^2 [31], which was the highest among various specifications, it is rather weak. More precisely, the size of the actors allocating the most budget to liaising activities (budget intervals 4 and 5) is rather small (under 50 employees) but there are also very small institutions which are found in the lower categories of budget allocation and especially in the budget interval 0 (no budget). Moreover, there are large institutions (with over 300 employees) that are included in the lower budget categories. Therefore, there is an inverse weak U-shaped relationship between budget and staff. This finding shows that as the size of actors increases the budget for liaising does not follow suit and thus the scale factor for promoting cooperation in the area is not fully capitalised. That is, the largest actors do not seem to engage in liaising on such a scale that would boost cooperation in the area.

Figure 21 The relationship between the size of institutions and the allocated budget on liaising activities

The chart displays the equation: $y = -31{,}786x^2 + 99{,}998x + 256{,}85$ and $R^2 = 0{,}1809$
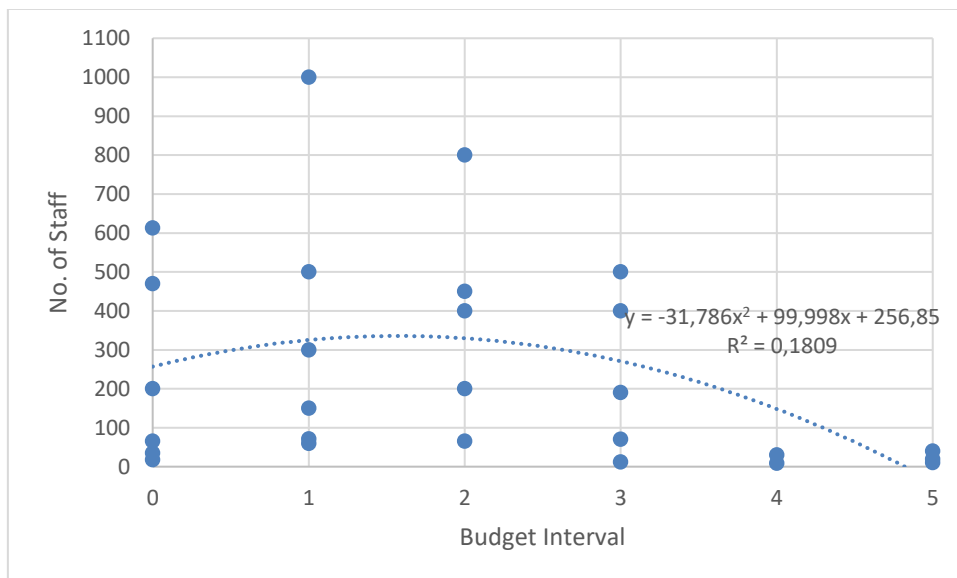
Notes: There are 5 intervals used for quantifying the proportion of budget allocated to liasing activities (0) No budget, (1) <=5%, (2) 10.1%-20%, (3) 20.1%-30%, (4) 5.1%-10% (5) >30%. Two institutions with staff exceeding the 3000 were excluded from the analysis as outliers.

Moreover, the capacity of actors to promote cooperation in the area is verified by the number of joint actions (such as events, projects, networks, etc.) implemented in recent times. As shown in Figure 22, the majority of actors have implemented 6-10 joint activities in the past 5 years. It should be stressed that 20% of the actors have implemented only up to 2 joint actions in the past 5 years. Therefore, there is still room for further improvement in cooperation by motivating the least active actors to engage in joint activities.

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[31] R^2 *coefficient measures the strength of a relationship between two variables. Values of R^2 close to 1 indicate a strong relationship while values close to 0 indicate the absence of any relationship between the considered variables.*

Figure 22 Proportion of actors according to the number of joint actions implemented in the past 5 years
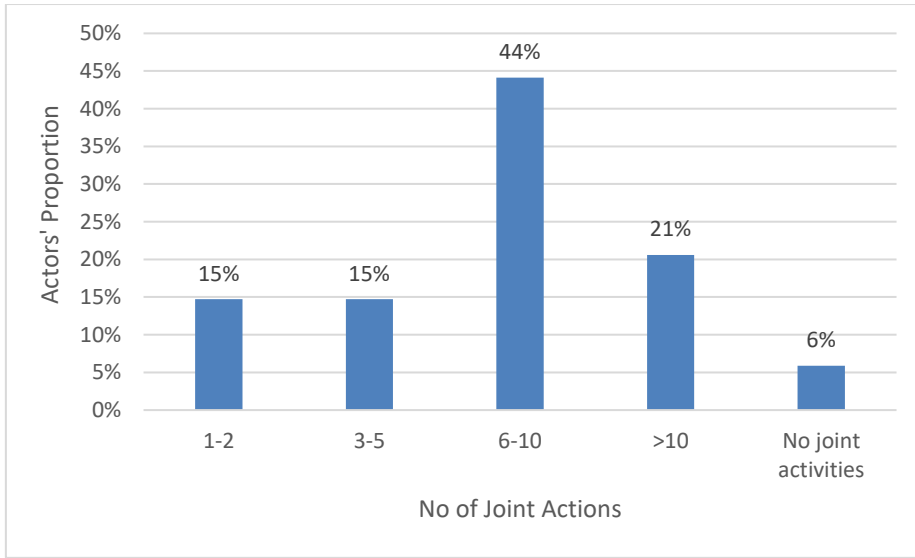
In Figure 23 the proportion of each joint activity interval to the total activities of each actor type is presented. The >10 joint activities interval is the most frequent in the "Other" category of actors, as close to 50% of the surveyed actors of this category stated that they had implemented over 10 joint activities in the past 5 years. The category of >6-10 activities show a large frequency in the "International Organisation" and "Regional/Local Authority" category of actors with rates of 75% and 60%, respectively. The most balanced category of actors is the "National Authority" as in the type of actors all intervals of joint actions are present with none of them exceeding the 30%. Therefore, it could be said that the most active type of actors is "Other", composed by institutions like chambers of commerce, research centers, followed by international organisations.

Figure 23 Proportion of joint activities intervals per actor type
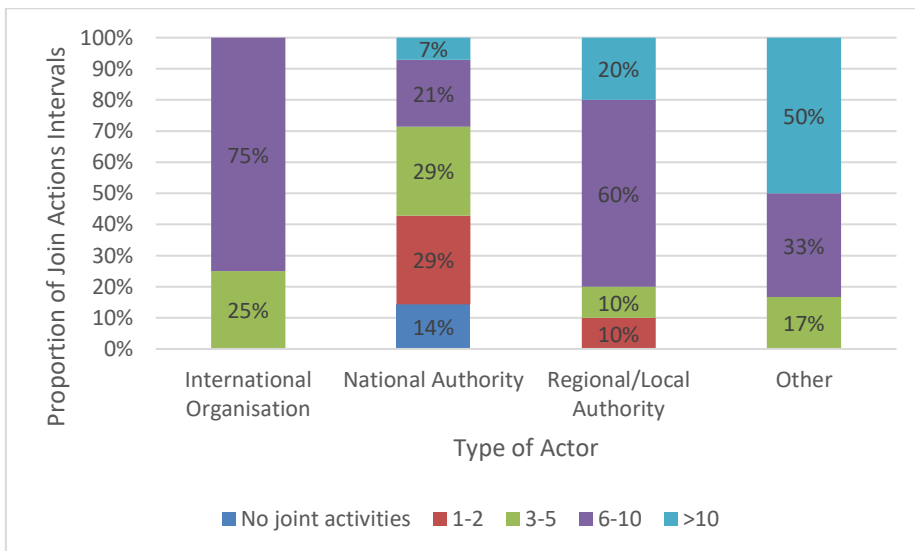
As far as the types of joint activities mostly implemented by the surveyed actors are concerned, Figure 24 presents the mean ranks of 4 different types of actions according to the

importance placed on them by the surveyed actors. The lowest mean rank and thus the highest importance is placed on joint projects, followed by joint events. The lowest frequency is found for the staff exchange option.

Figure 24 Please rank the type of joint activities according to the frequency of your organisation's engagement (Please rank the following options by order of frequency)
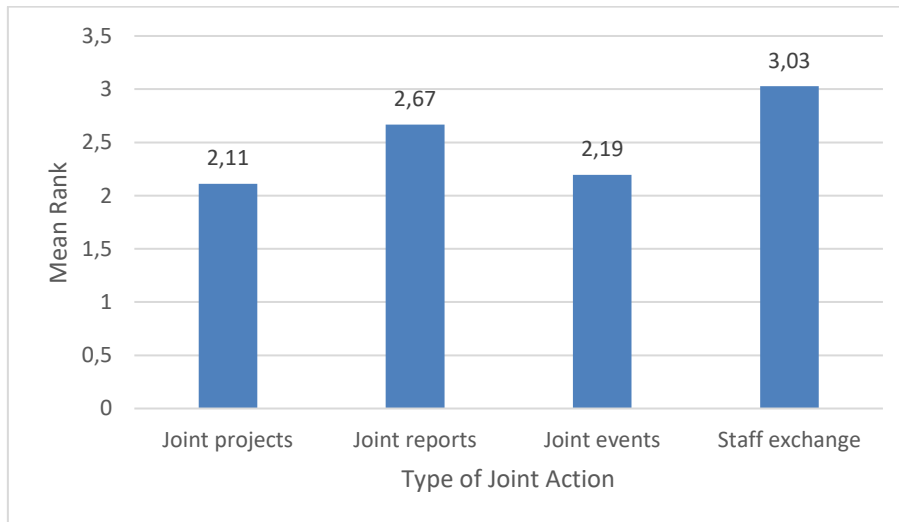
Finally, an extremely important feature of the capacity of actors to strengthen the cooperation-coordination layer of the governance system is their ability to understand the weaknesses of the system and the drafting of recommendations for its improvement. As it is demonstrated by the tallies of Figure 25, only 40% of the surveyed actors stated that they work on recommendations for the improvement of cooperation in the Mediterranean. By looking at the individual records of each actor type, it is apparent that most of the work in this domain stems from the international organizations of the region as all of them stated that they provide some proposals for improvement. A good proportion of actors drafting recommendations may also be found in the "Regional/Local Authority" and "Other" categories. Finally, the amount of work on improving the system is rather discouraging for the "National Authorities" as only 14% of them draft recommendations for the improvements of the system.
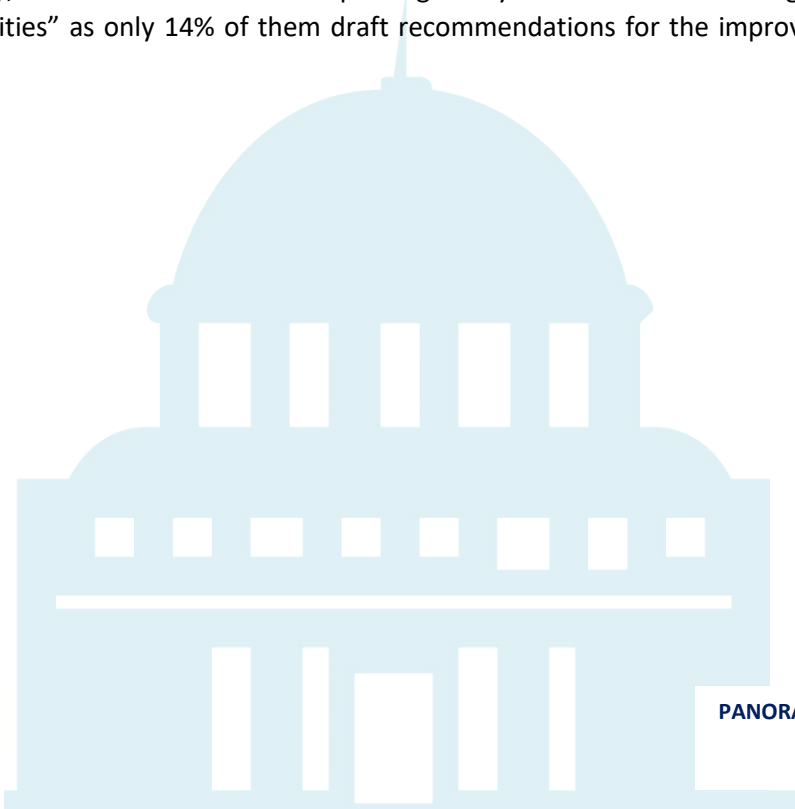
Figure 25 Percentage of institutions producing recommendations for improving the cooperation-coordination in Mediterranean per actor category
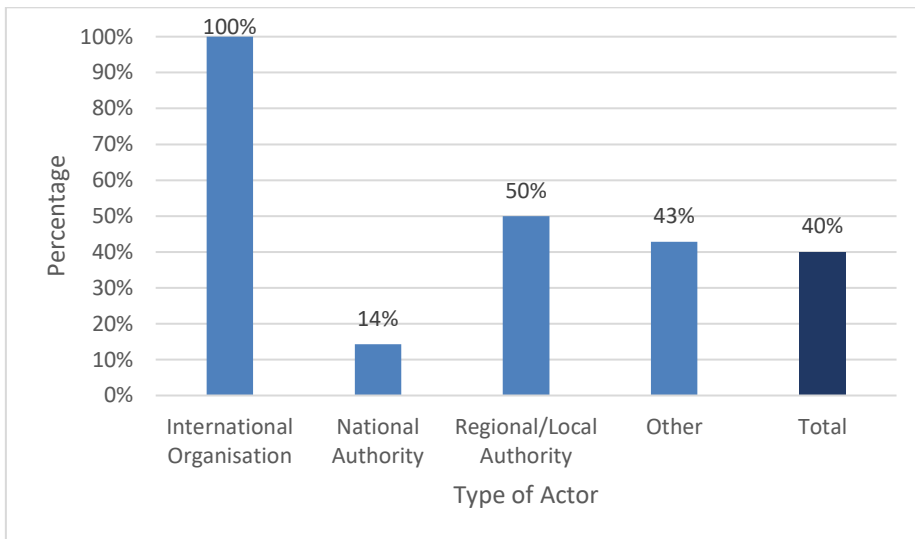
5.2.3 Knowledge Generation – Capitalisation Layer Capacity

The capacity of actors in promoting the Knowledge Generation – Capitalisation layer is firstly assessed by the stated and expressed willingness of actors to engage in capitalisation activities.

In Figure 26, the responses of actors on two (2) questions are presented in a comparative context. More precisely, the blue bars show the proportion of actors with a positive answer on the question "*Is capitalisation of knowledge embedded in the vision/mission/core values/strategic targets of your organisation?*" while the red bars show the same proportion is presented for the question "*Does the operational structure of your organisation foresee processes for knowledge in-house circulation?*". Moreover, as the figures show, 76% of actors incorporate capitalisation targets in their priorities while 68% incorporate such activities in their own structure. This gap indicates that capitalisation cannot be fully promoted by the surveyed actors since the knowledge gained remains unexplored if it is not being circulated among the departments and staff of the Mediterranean actors. The gap is very large in the "Other" type of organisation, while it is not observed at all in "International Organisations" and "Regional and Local Authorities". In absolute terms, capitalisation is very low in the national authorities of the Mediterranean while it is fully embraced by the international organisations. Therefore, there is still room for improvement, both for intensifying capitalisation activities, but also for improving the structure of the actors so as to promote relevant targets.

Figure 26 Proportion of actors which incorporate capitalisation in the targets of their organisation VS proportion of actors which foresee processes for knowledge in-house circulation
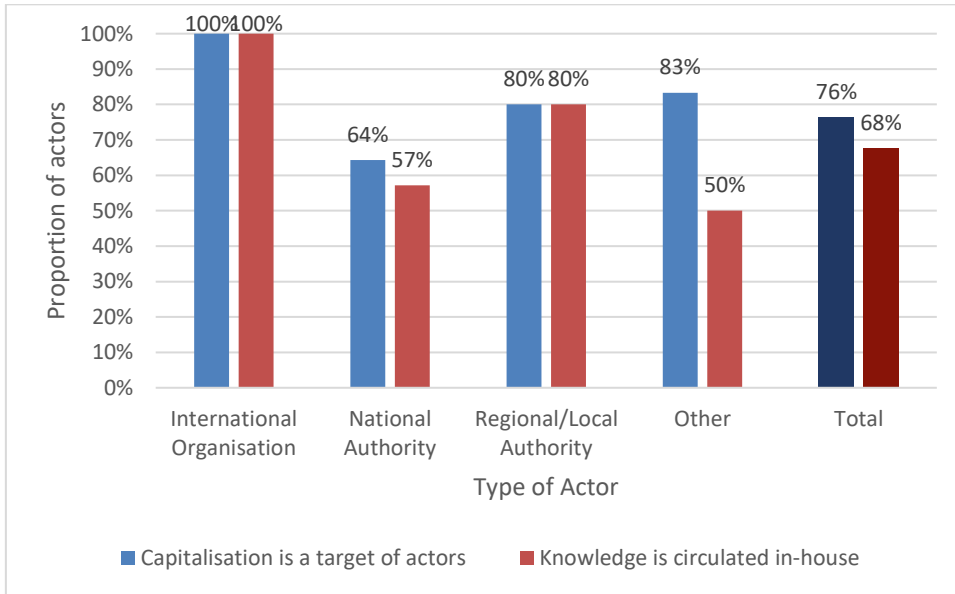
It is also important to look at the means used by the surveyed actors for circulating the available knowledge within their organisations. As shown in Figure 27, the most used medium for circulating knowledge is by Email. More sophisticated tools such as online platforms and newsletters are used by a smaller number of actors. It should be stressed that over 25% of the respondents declared that their organisation does not use any means for circulating knowledge. Finally, 5% of actors noted that they use other tools such as websites, forums, annual events and consultation processes to inform their staff.

Figure 27 How does your organisation circulate the latest developments, and the activities and achievements of other actors of the Mediterranean to its members? (Please choose maximum up to 2 most relevant options)
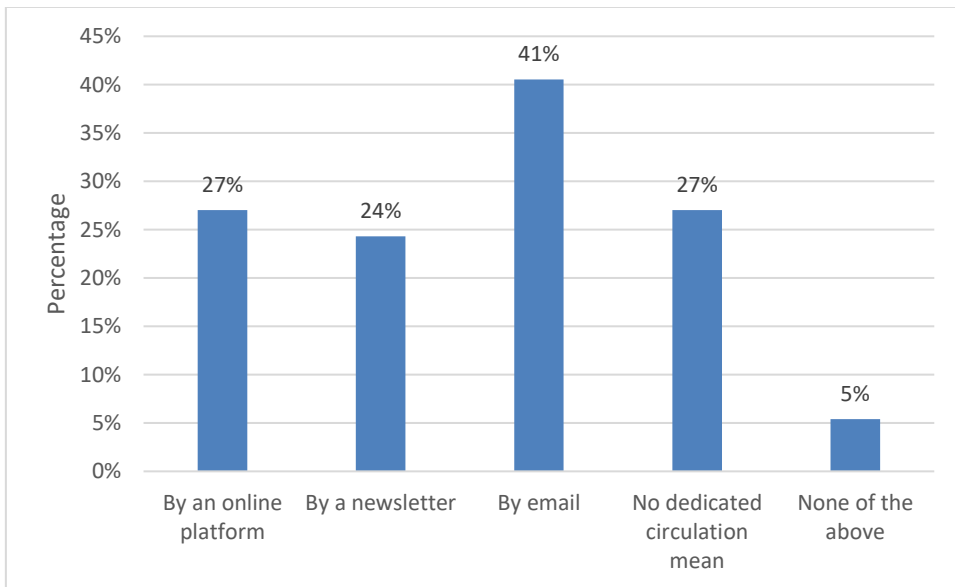
It is also important to take a look at the kind of means that are used for obtaining the information to be circulated. According to the responses depicted in Figure 28, the largest pool

of information is the networks and partners of the surveyed actors, a finding that highlights the importance for cooperation in strengthening capitalisation. In addition, about 60% of respondents use the official website of the EU and 46% newsletter subscriptions to acquire new information. Media and social media acquire less importance as they are both used by 24% of the surveyed actors as sources of new knowledge.

Figure 28 How does your organisation obtain information on the latest EU developments and new policies?
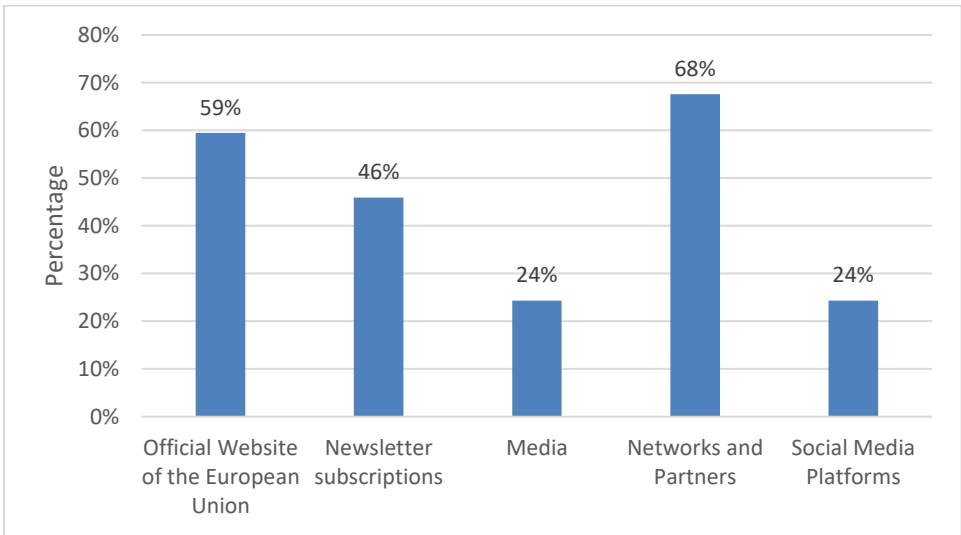
Finally, beyond the in-house circulation, cross-actor circulation of knowledge is also very important. According to the responses depicted in Figure 29, there is a variety of methods followed by the surveyed actors to transfer knowledge to other actors. The dominant strategy, although with a rather low difference from the second, is to engage in activities only when their results are presented to other actors. This is in line with the finding that events are among the most used means for collaboration among Mediterranean partners. Actors also support capitalisation by ensuring that projects and activities produce outputs that can be replicated by other actors or territories. Finally, the demand for any project to build on past available knowledge or to produce policy recommendations acquire a lower score. Therefore, there is plenty of room for improvements if the knowledge generation capitalisation layer is to be strengthened.
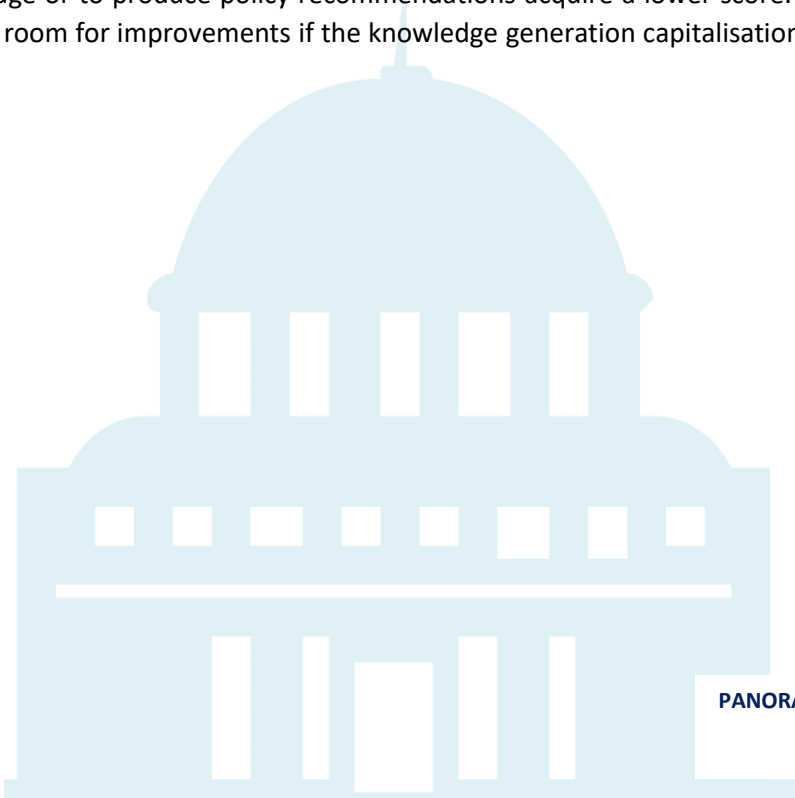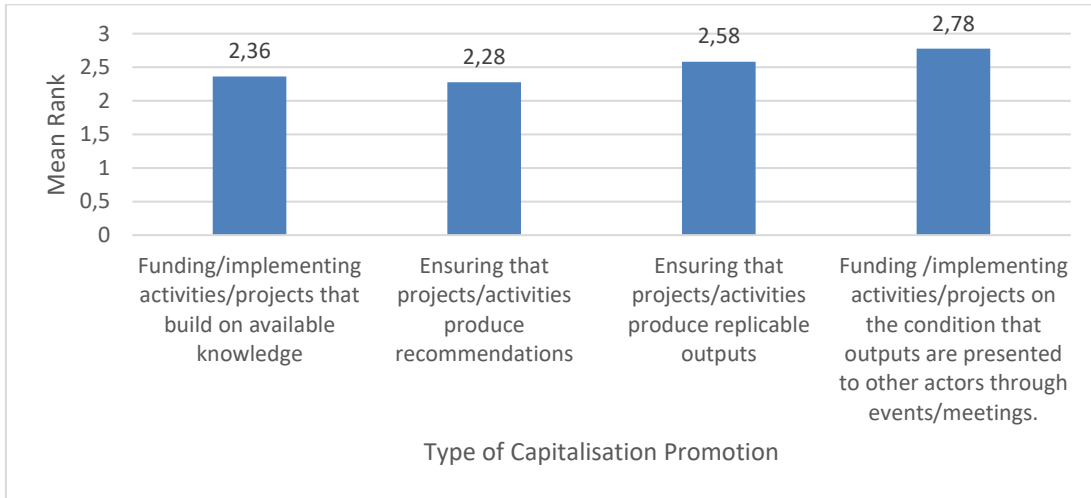
Figure 29 How does your organisation capitalise and disseminate the new knowledge to other actors? (Please rank the following options by order of importance)

### 5.2.4 Territorial - Policy Governance Layer Capacity

A central objective for the Territorial - Policy Governance layer is to constantly increase the capacity of actors to deal with challenges and implement strategies and policies. Therefore, capacity building activities are very important for the realization of this objective. In Figure 30, the orientation of actors' capacity building activities is quantified. According to the figures, less than 45% of the actors steer their capacity building activities to both pillars of the layer. 40% of the actors use a mono-pillar approach that is focusing on the increasing of capacity either in the policy governance or the territorial governance pillar. Finally, it is noteworthy that 15% of the actors do not engage in any type of capacity building activities relating to cooperation governance.

Figure 30 Proportion of actors according to the targets of capacity building activities
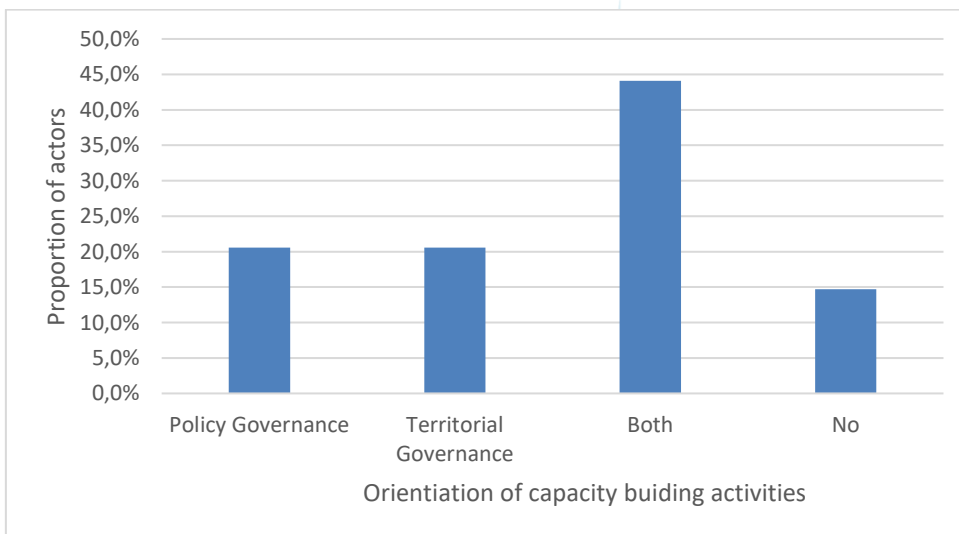
Moreover, a key objective of the layer is to improve the economic, social and territorial cohesion in the area and thus ensure that no region or area is left behind in terms of development. In Figure 31 the level of priority placed by the surveyed actors to the promotion of economic, social and territorial cohesion targets is depicted. It is apparent that the actors do not place a great importance on the issue, as the score of agreement on the relevant statement is only about 3/5. The prioritisation is the lowest in the actors of the "Other" category (2/5), while it is slightly higher for the national and subnational authorities.

Figure 31 Please indicate the level of your agreement with the following statement "Any actions/projects of my organisation are firstly targeted to the weakest regions/places of our area of responsibility" (1 Fully Disagree - 5 Fully Agree)
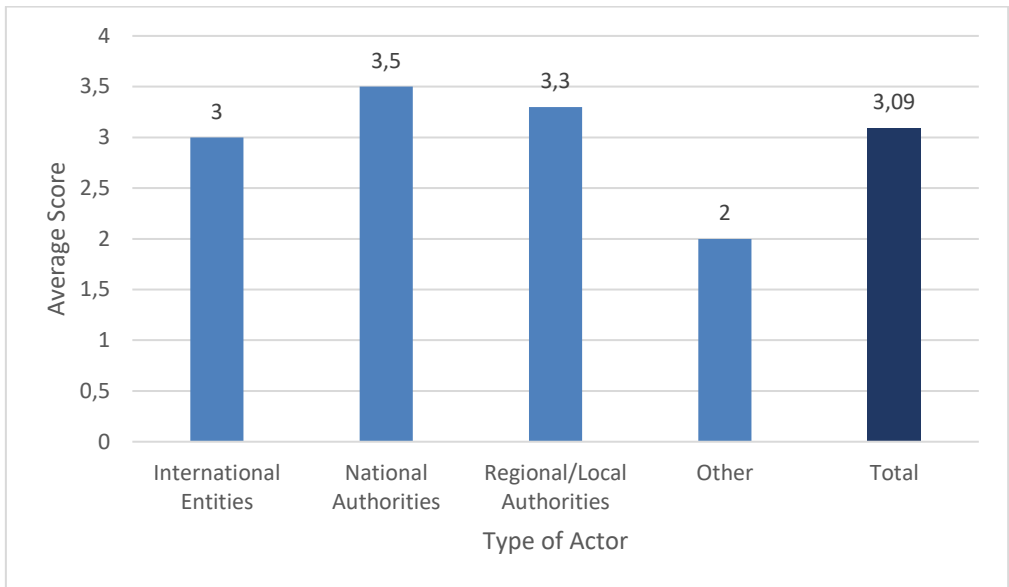

Furthermore, promotion of territorial cohesion can also be strengthened by various instruments provided by the EU, such as "Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)" and "Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)". These tools can be considered as useful means for the empowerment of bottom-up development approaches[32] and may also assist Macroregional strategies to acquire a more constant flow of funding[33]. In Figure 32, the level of surveyed actors' capitalisation of these instruments is presented, which shows that the use of those instruments is rather low and varies heavily across actors. Regional and local authorities seem to make the most use of these options while the incorporation of such elements in the activities of international organisations is very low.

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[32] *Presentation in the Workshop 2 Territorial approach in the new Interreg programmes held during the Interreg Annual Meeting 2019. Available at:*
https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/conferences/etc2019/ws2_presentation.pdf

[33] *Böhme, K., & Toptsidou, M. (2019). MACRO-REGIONAL INTEGRATED TERRITORIAL INVESTMENTS: HOW TO BREAK OUT OF INTERREG. Spatial Foresight Brief, (12), 14. Available at:*
https://www.spatialforesight.eu/files/spatial_theme/spatial/publications/Brief-2019-12_191211.pdf
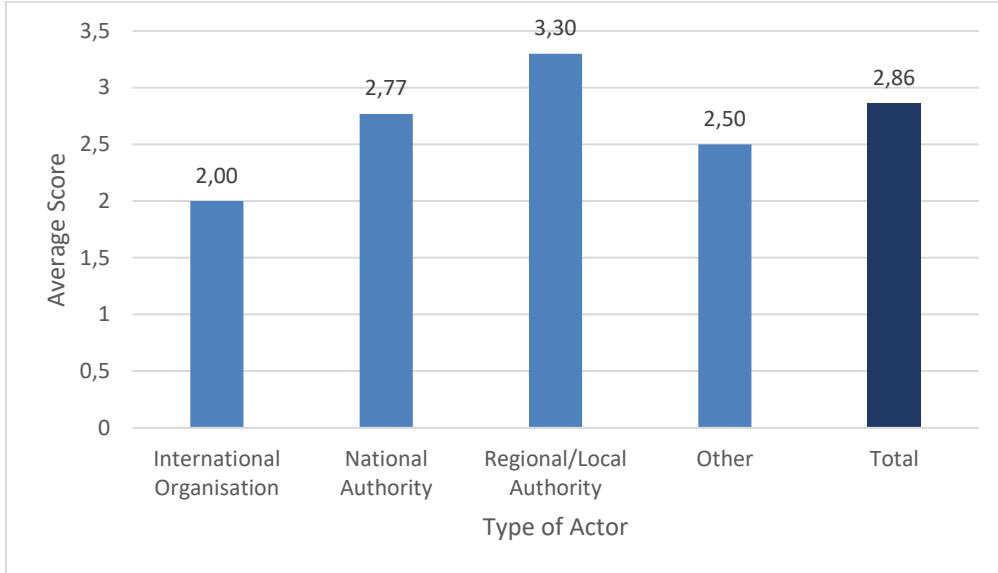
5.2.5 Mediterranean Challenges – EU Policies Layer Capacity

A critical pillar of the actors' capacity to respond to regional challenges is the level of their understanding of the evolving conditions in the area. The data presented in Figure 33 show the proportion of respondents per actor type that have a structure within their organisation conducting research on Mediterranean challenges and European policies. From the responses collected, it is concluded that in-house gathering of information is very low in the Mediterranean, as only 12% of the actors can acquire the essential information for steering their strategies and operations on their own. Dedicated research departments could be mostly found in international organisations and other institutions. This finding portrays the importance of the existence of a mechanism circulating knowledge among actors which cannot extract on their own.
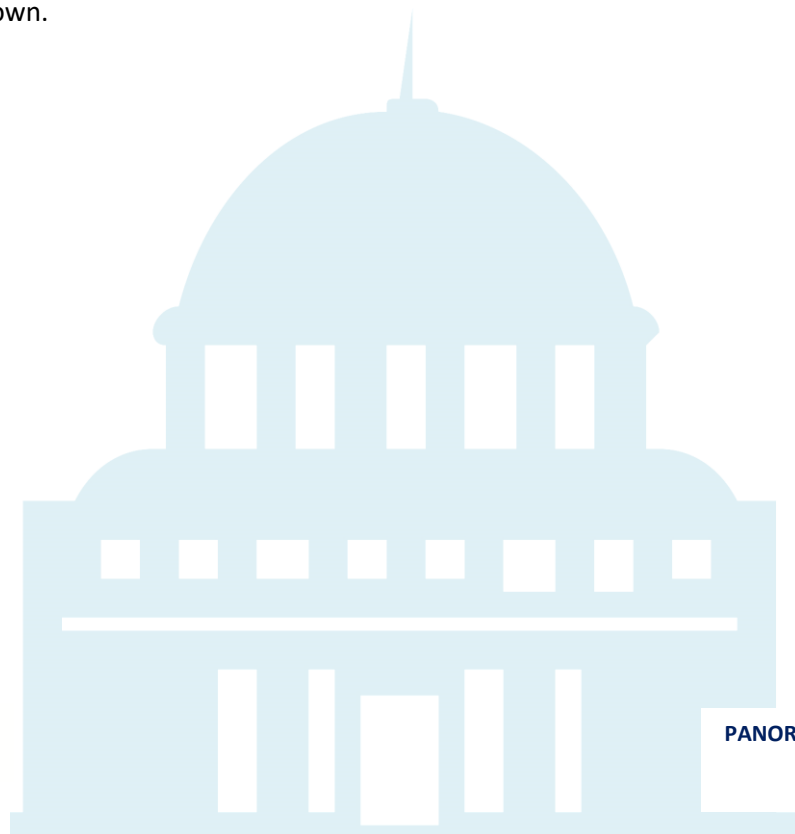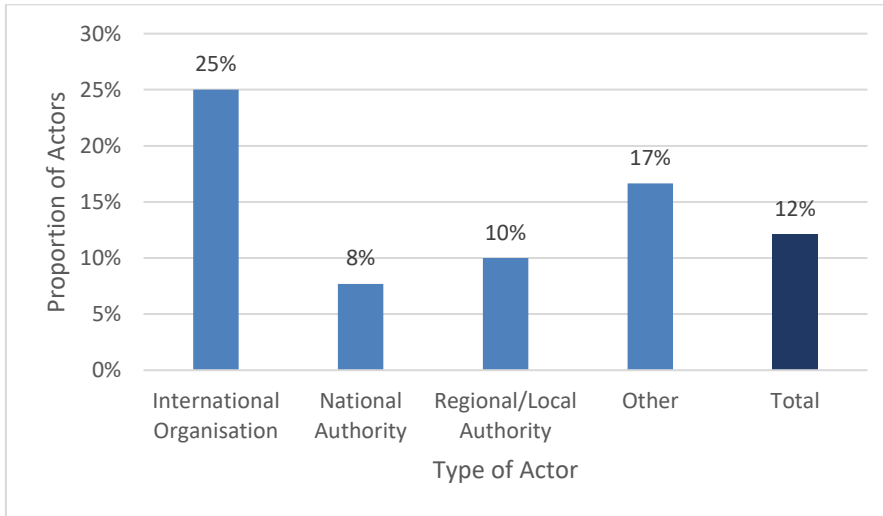
Figure 33 Does your organisation have a research department conducting research on Mediterranean challenges and European Policies?

While research is critical for understanding the key challenges in the area, the integration of citizens' views and pursuits on the strategic and operational goals of the Mediterranean actors is equally important. Mediterranean actors' operations must be aligned with the needs of the regional population. In order to achieve this, actors should employ mechanisms that gather citizens' opinions so as to raise their own awareness. In Figure 34, the level of importance placed by each surveyed actor on the instrument of public consultation is depicted. According to the figures, the agreement with the statement that priorities are shaped by public citizens is only moderate (2.63/5). The figure is higher for National Authorities (3.02/5), while the actors of the category "Other" show a very low integration of public opinions to their priorities (1.68/5). Therefore, there is a risk that actors' priorities and activities do not align with the real regional needs.

Figure 34 Using a scale between 0-5, please provide an estimation on how much your priorities and actions are driven by the results of public and citizens' consultation
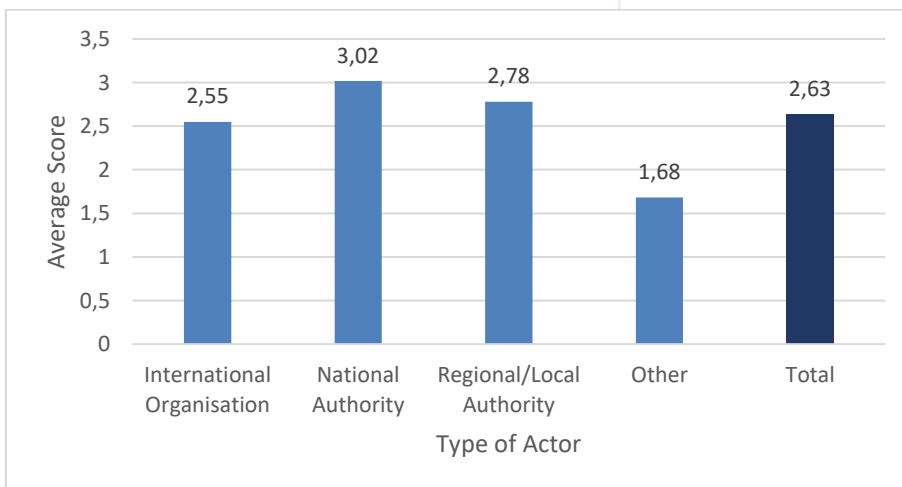
Cooperation and good knowledge of developments is important for enabling the actors to respond effectively and timely to changes and emerging challenges. In Figure 35 the level of responsiveness of the actors to emerging challenges is presented. The overall responsiveness

could be considered as mediocre, as the average responsiveness score is estimated at 3.13/5. The highest responsiveness rate is found for international organisations while the lowest for regional and local authorities.

Figure 35 How easy is it for your organisation to respond to geopolitical developments and emerging challenges in the Mediterranean (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic)? (1 Extremely Difficult - 5 Extremely Easy)
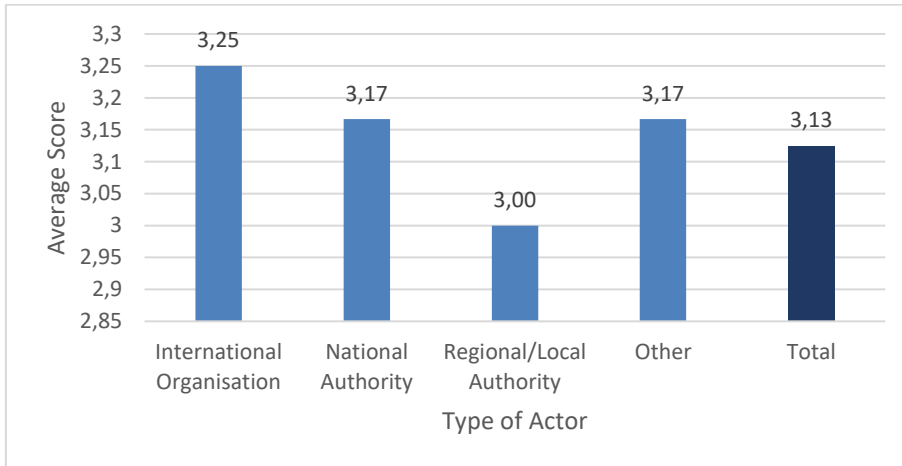
Finally, an also important issue for promoting the functionality of the layer is the responsiveness of actors to the new policy developments and more precisely to any new provisions for the cohesion policy. As shown in

Figure *36*, the surveyed actors present a satisfactory level of responsiveness to EU cohesion policy changes, as the overall score of agreement with the given statement exceeds 4/5. The responsiveness level for EU cohesion policy changes is greater than this for the changing Mediterranean challenges (*See Figure 35*). Responsiveness is higher for national authorities and international organisations, while the other two types of actors lag a little behind. The results show that actors are well aligned with the guidelines of EU policy, nonetheless, improvements are still feasible especially for the sub-national authorities and other institutions.

Figure 36 Please indicate the level of your agreement with the following statement "The priorities of the organisation are immediately aligned with any new priorities set by the EU Cohesion Policy" (1 Fully Disagree - 5 Fully Agree)
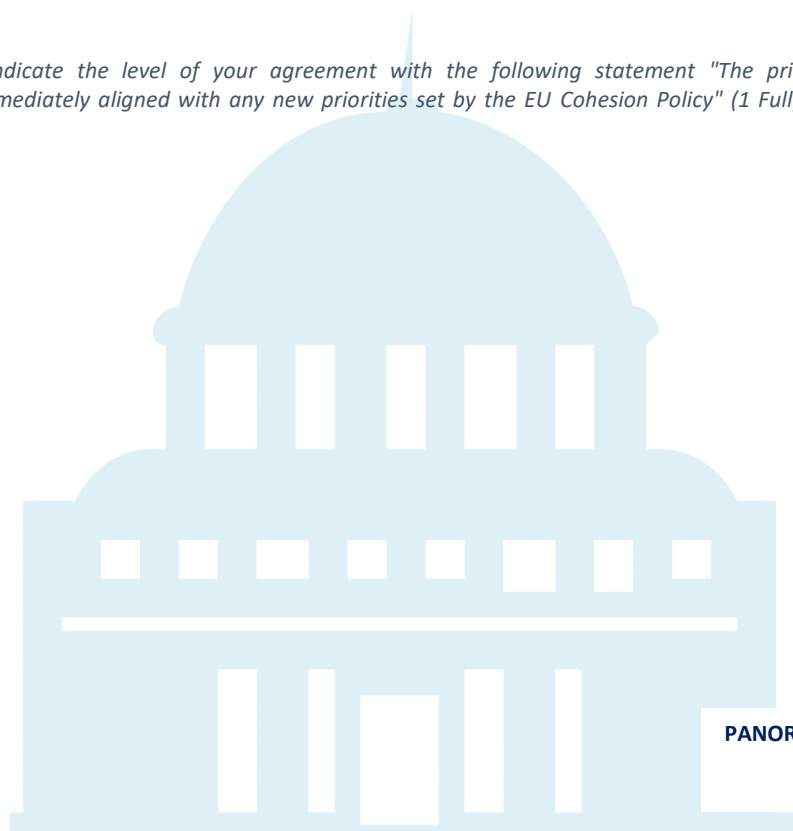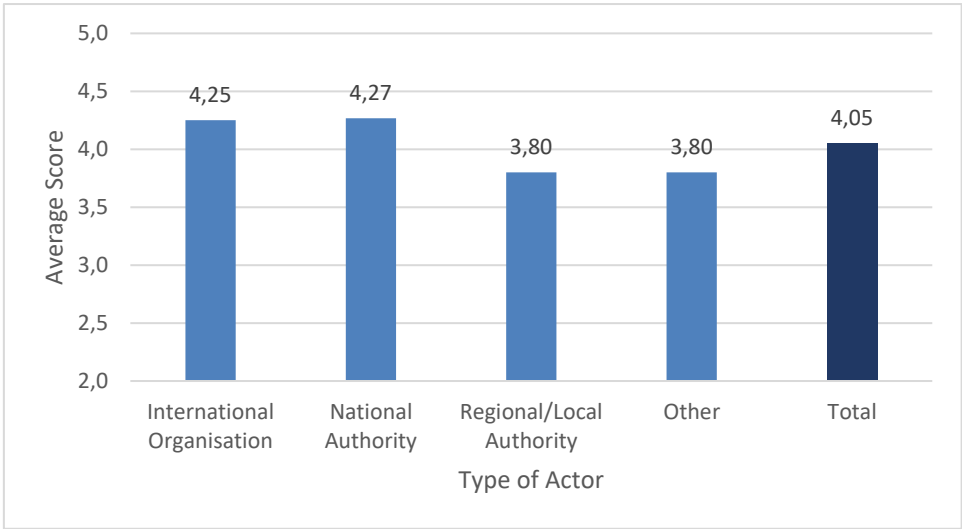
5.3 Actors' Perceptions Evaluation

5.3.1 Vision-Priorities-Strengths

The first section of actors' perceptions analysis targets the alignment between the vision and priorities of the actors as well as among the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the region. In Figure 37 the mean rank selected by the actors for various predefined visions of the Mediterranean with a 10-years horizon is presented. As shown by the figures, the vision with the lowest mean rank score, i.e. the highest importance placed by the actors, is an "Environmentally Friendly Mediterranean". This type of vision is aligned with the one of all the types of actors except those in the "Other" category which find that the vision of an "Inclusive Mediterranean" is better aligned with their vision for the region's future. A strong alignment with the actors' vision is found for the option of the "Innovative Mediterranean" while the weakest alignment is found for the visions of "Open and Transparent" and "Digitalised Mediterranean".
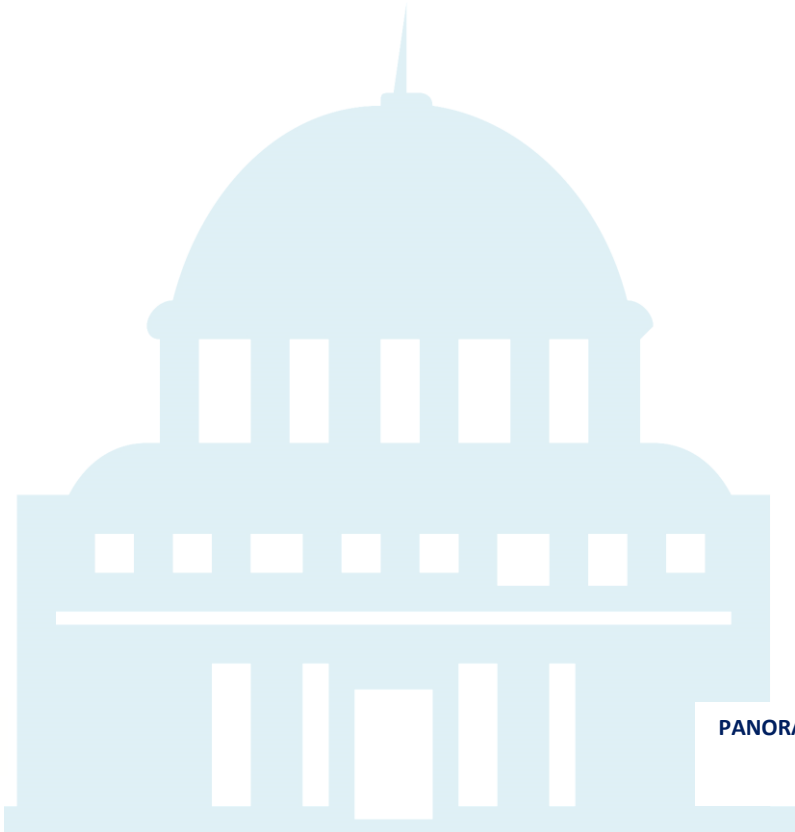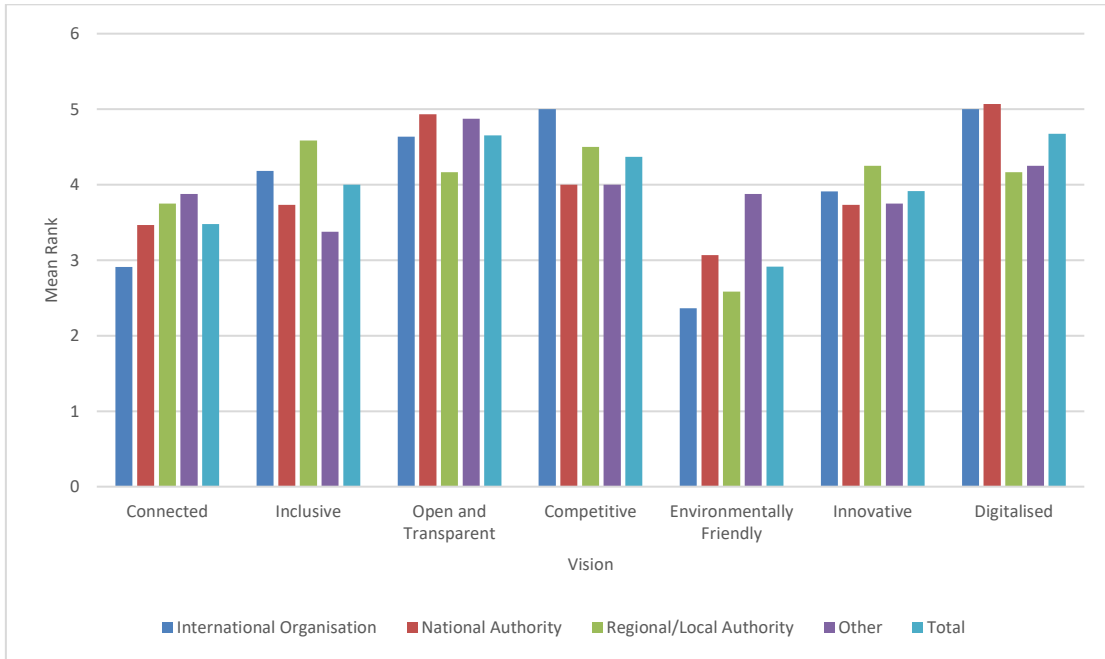
Figure 37 Please rank the following options according to the alignment with your vision of Mediterranean after 10 years?

Further, it is important to see what major challenges for the Mediterranean in the next 10 years were identified by the surveyed actors (*See Figure 38*). The majority of actors identified the confrontation of climate change as the major challenge for the region, as this option presents the lowest rank score. The second most important challenge, as the total mean rank score reveals, is the preservation of the natural environment followed by the confrontation of regional disparities. The least important challenge is directly linked to the MCGS and related to the improvement of governance by simplifying procedures.
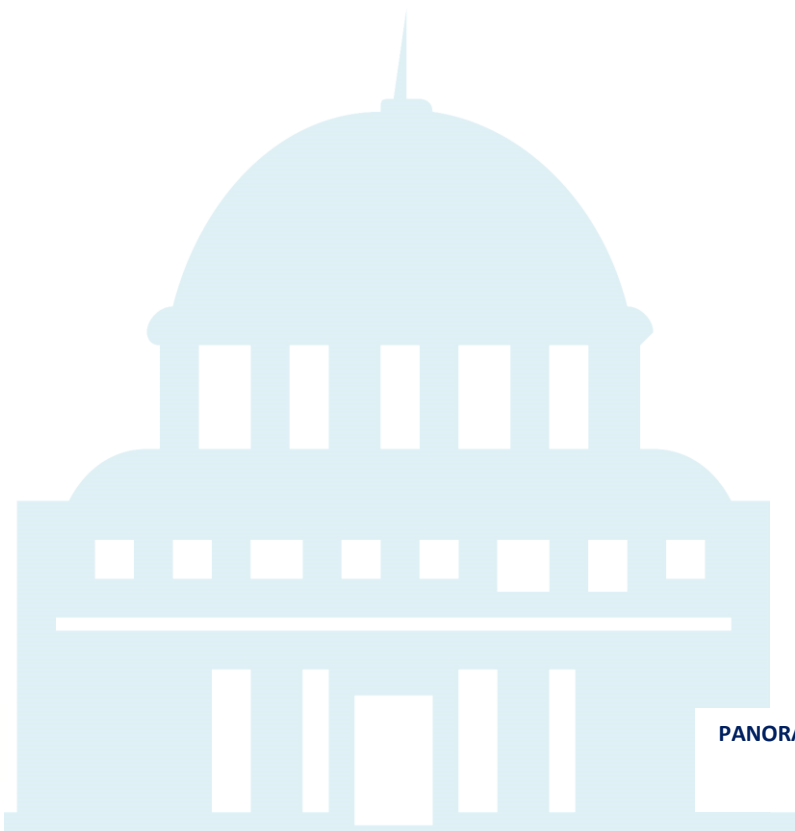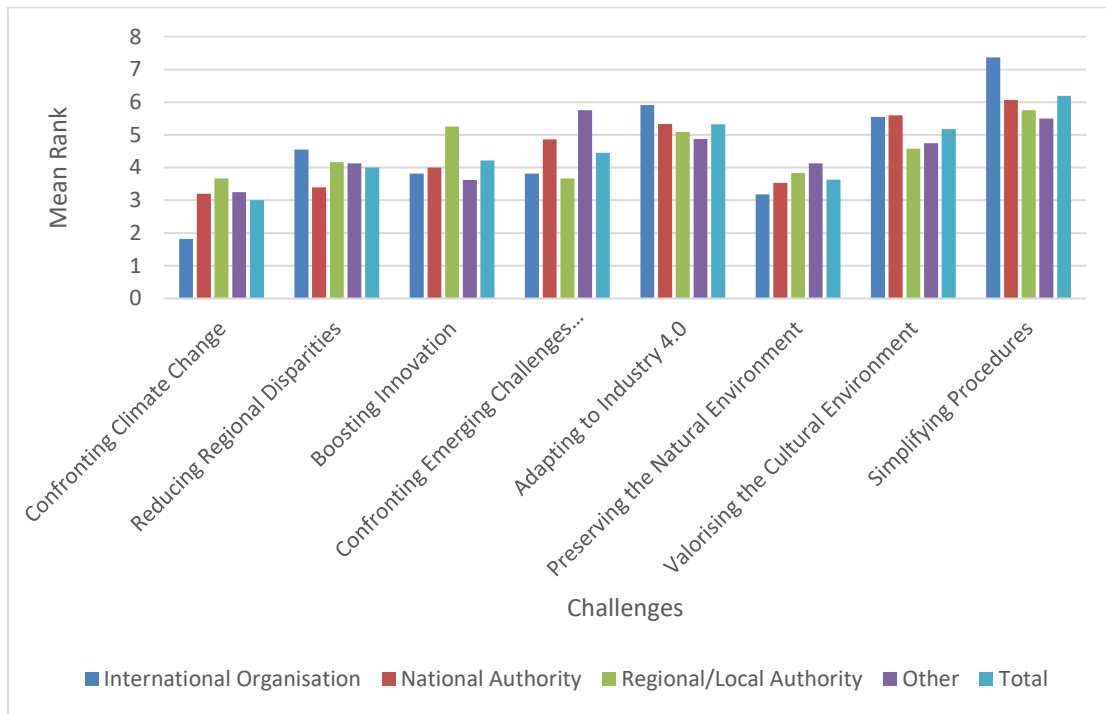
Figure 38 Please rank the following challenges according to their importance for the Mediterranean in the next 10 years

As shown in Figure 38, surveyed actors have put an emphasis on environmental challenges, as the confrontation of climate change and the preservation of the natural environment acquired the highest rankings among all other available options. Nevertheless, this result may be due to the composition of the sample and the individual interests and objectives of the surveyed actors which might not reflect the wider perceptions of the Mediterranean actors. In order to check how much the specialization of the actors in particular topics affects their prioritisation of challenges, a weighting on the ranks of each actor was performed. The weighting method incorporates the scores assigned by each actor on the fields of interest/expertise shown in Figure 8[34]. As shown by the figures, the mean ranks remain almost unchanged and the same stands for the prioritization of challenges. The only challenge that shows the highest mean rank is the "Valorisation of Cultural Assets". This finding shows that the importance of challenges remains the same regardless the interest of actors in different fields.

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[34] *The final ranking for each actor is computed by the formula Challenge Rank (See Figure 38) *Expertise/Interest Score (See Figure 8). Therefore, the weighted challenge rank takes into account the expertise of actors in the thematic fields by placing better rank positions for challenges identified by stakeholders with less interest /expertise on them. The options of expertise/interest used for weighting all challenges are the following:*

1) Confronting Climate Change – Interest in Climate Change
2) Reducing Regional Disparities – Interest in Cohesion Policy, Social Cohesion and Inequalities (Weighted Average)
3) Boosting Innovation – Interest in Innovation and Digital Transformation (Weighted Average)
4) Confronting Emerging Challenges (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic) – Interest in Climate Change and Economic Development and Resilience (Weighted Average)
5) Adapting to Industry 4.0 - Interest in Innovation and Digital Transformation (Weighted Average)
6) Preserving the Natural Environment – Interest in Environment
7) Valorising the Cultural Environment – Interest in Culture
8) Simplifying Procedures – Interest in Cooperation

Figure 39 Initial and Weighted Mean Ranks of the priorities identified by the surveyed actors
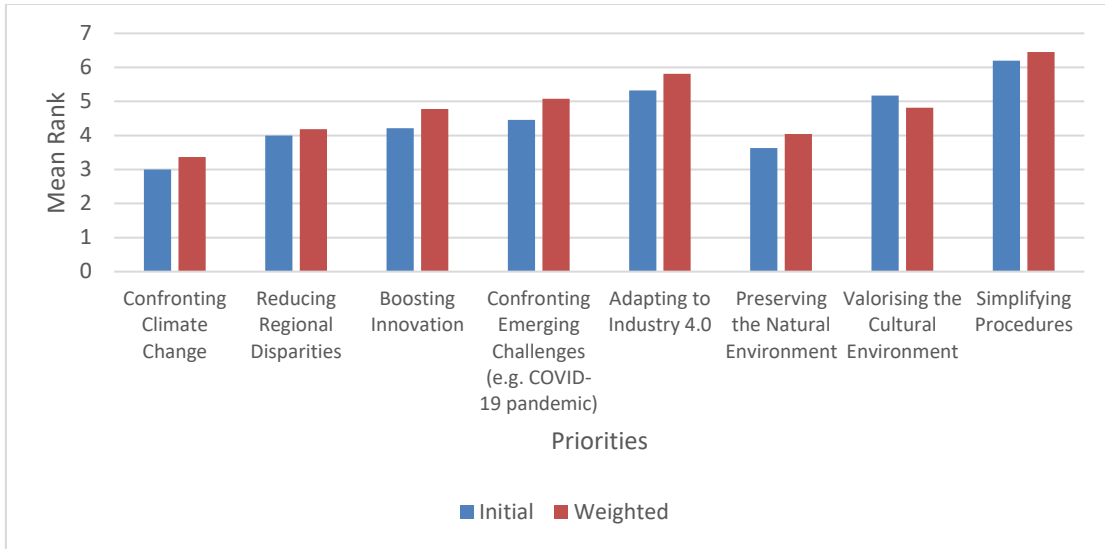
As for the strengths of the Mediterranean, the most important advantage of the region, according to the mean ranks, seems to be its natural resources and geographical position. The surveyed actors also identify "Cultural Heritage" as an important asset of the region while considering that the work intensity of the people of the region is the least favoring factor. As for the actor types, international organisations and regional/local authorities both put a premium on the natural resources of the region, while the other two types of stakeholders prioritise its geographical position as the main strength of the region.

Figure 40 Which of the following options could be considered as the main strengths of the Mediterranean (Please rank the following options by order of importance)
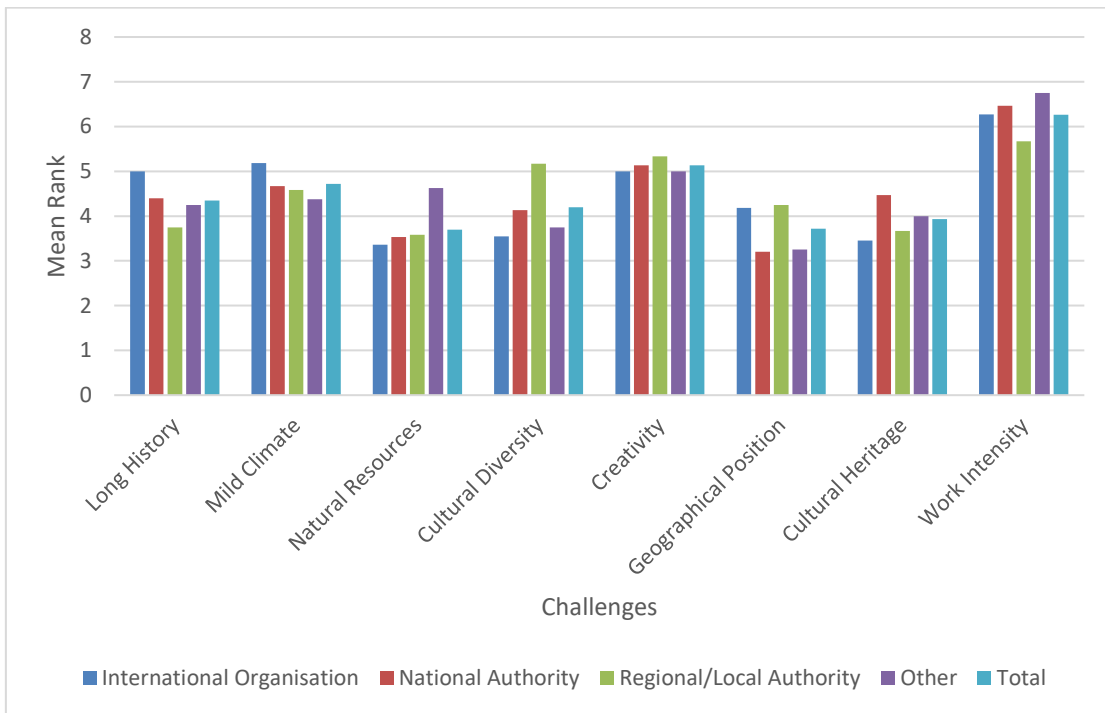
## 5.3.2 State of Governance

The evaluation of the state of governance builds on the perceptions of actors regarding some of its key characteristics as well as by their stated level of knowledge regarding some of its operations and achievements. In Figure 41, the responses of the actors in two (2) questions regarding the level of cooperation and capitalisation at the current setting of the MCGS are comparatively presented. The average of all actors for the two (2) questions shows that the actors assign a rather mediocre score to both layers functions of the MCGS as the average score of each function just exceeds 3/5. The rates are higher for the state of cooperation as the average score for this function exceeds the respective one of the capitalisation in all types of stakeholders, except the regional/local authorities. The highest score for the state of cooperation is provided by the international organisations and the highest for the capitalisation by the regional/local authorities.

Figure 41 How would you rate the level of cooperation of actors in the Mediterranean VS How would you rate the level of knowledge-generation and capitalisation in the Mediterranean? (1 Disappointing - 5 Excellent)
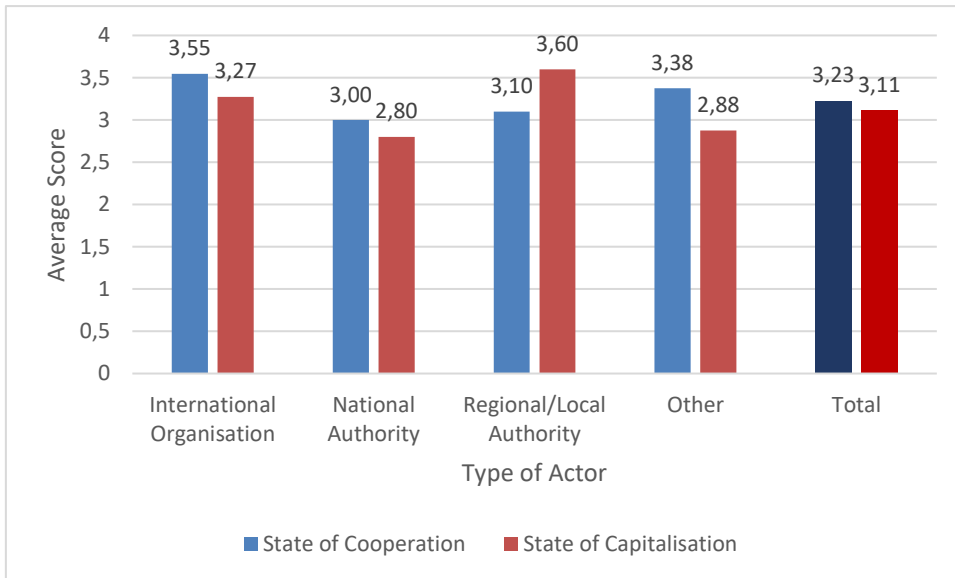
Concerning actors' knowledge about the state of the MCGS, Figure 42 presents the stated knowledge of actors regarding the priorities and achievements of some key actors of the system. As it can be seen, the highest level of knowledge concerns the Interreg MED programme with a great distance from the second actor in terms of assigned scores. The level of knowledge of the first actor is followed by 3 actors, namely the BlueMed Initiative, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and the ENI CBC MED programme, which acquire the same knowledge score. The Mediterranean Action Plan of the United Nations and the Adrion Interreg Programme follow in terms of average knowledge score. The aforementioned actors received a score that is above the average (denoted by the orange line). The other actors receive a rather low knowledge score.

Figure 42 How well do you know the priorities and work of the following actors? (Please evaluate your knowledge based on the scale: 1 - No Knowledge to 5 - Perfect Knowledge).
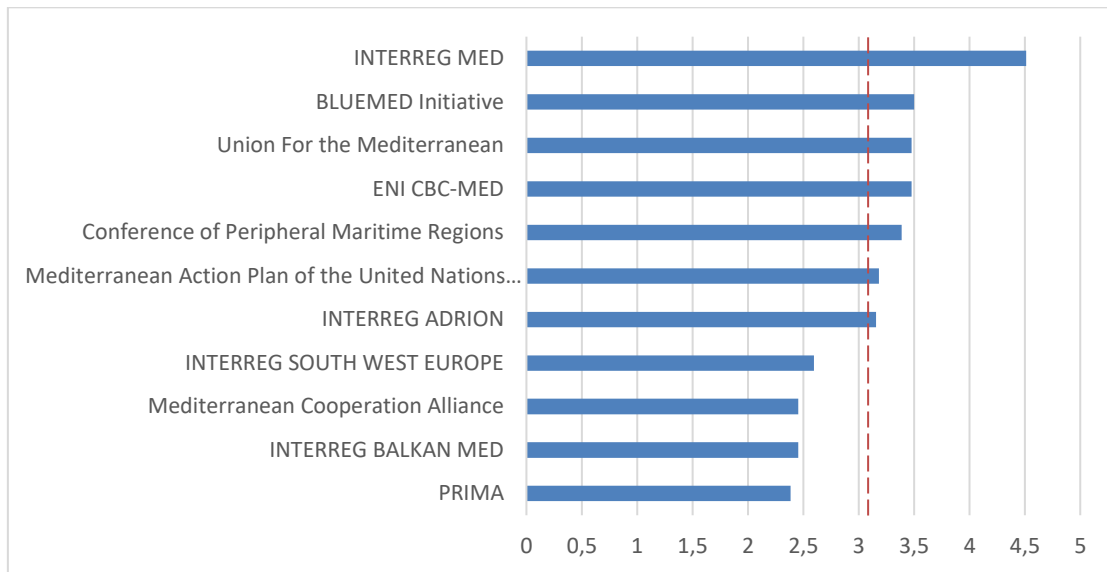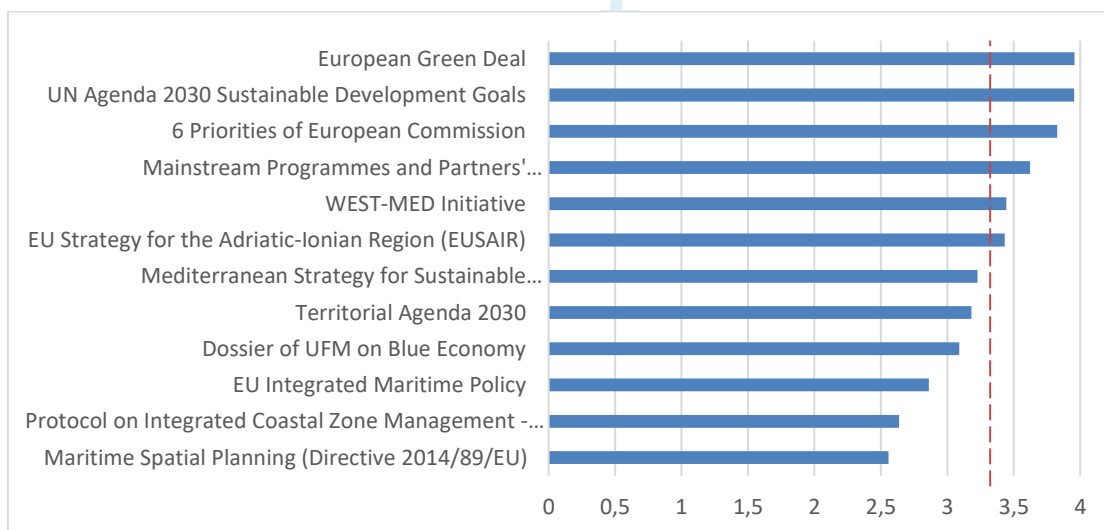

Figure 43 presents the stated knowledge of surveyed actors regarding the activities of selected, transnational and cross-border Interreg programmes of the area. The selected programmes cover different parts of the Mediterranean. To extract a fair evaluation of knowledge two different scores are evaluated. The first concerns the knowledge of all surveyed actors and the second the scores of the actors that are situated in countries that are covered by each programme together with the scores of the actors representing international organisations. As shown by the figures, the overall knowledge scores are mediocre, as the average score does not exceed 2.5/5 when all actors' responses are taken into account. When only the responses of the relevant actors for each programme are used, knowledge scores are increasing but still they don't exceed a 3/5 score. The two (2) most acknowledged programmes are the ENI CBC MED and Adrion followed by BalkanMed and South-West. It should be mentioned that these are all programmes covering large parts of the Mediterranean and thus their expected impact is higher. Among the cross-border programmes, Greece-Cyprus and Italy-Croatia programmes acquire the highest score. These two (2) programmes also present the highest differential between the two types (2) of scores. These findings denote that the level of knowledge about ETC programmes is still limited.

Figure 43 Average levels of knowledge about the activities of various Interreg programmes between all actors and actors from participating countries
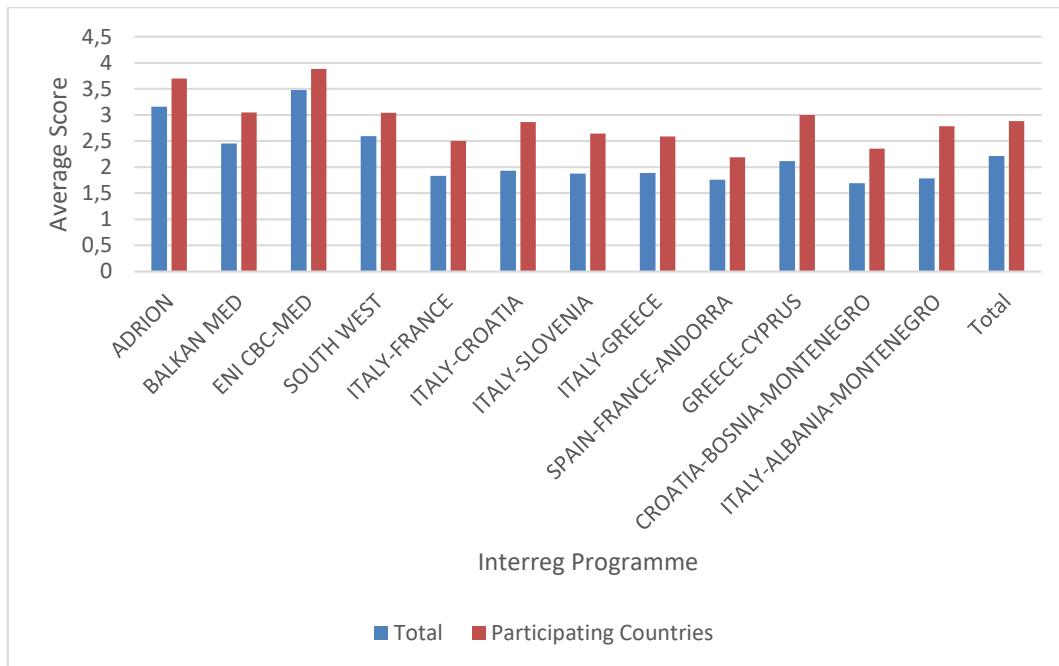
The level of actors' knowledge is also assessed for a series of policy papers and strategies of particular interest for the region. The most acknowledged policies are the Green Deal and the UN Agenda 2030 with its Sustainable Development Goals. It is rather surprising that the three (3) most acknowledged strategies and policies do not have a direct spatial reference to the Mediterranean, as they have a broader spatial focus. The most acknowledged Mediterranean policies are the two (2) regional strategies, namely WestMED initiative and EUSAIR. It is also important to stress that the two (2) policies concerning Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) acquire the lowest score of knowledge, lagging a great deal from the average score.

Figure 44 How much aware are you of the contents of the following strategies and policies? (Please evaluate your knowledge based on the scale: 1 – No Knowledge to 5 - Perfect Knowledge).

In addition, in Figure 45 the actors' stated knowledge about one other important element of the MCGS - the events organised in the region - is presented. As it can be seen from the scores, the average knowledge about the events is rather mediocre, as the average score is estimated at 2.3/5. The most acknowledgeable events are those held by the Interreg MED programme, namely the "Made in MED" and the "MED for You". The records of these events are followed by the event held by the CPMR in 2021 regarding the Macro-Regional strategy in the Mediterranean, the 4th EUSAIR forum and the Mediterranean Sustainable Tourism Convention organized by the Sustainable Tourism Community of the Interreg MED programme in 2019. It is worth noting that the IUCN World Conservation Congress that recently took place in Marseille acquired a knowledge score that is below the average.

Figure 45 How much aware are you of the implementation and the results of the following events? (Please evaluate your knowledge based on the scale: 1 – No Knowledge to 5 - Perfect Knowledge.
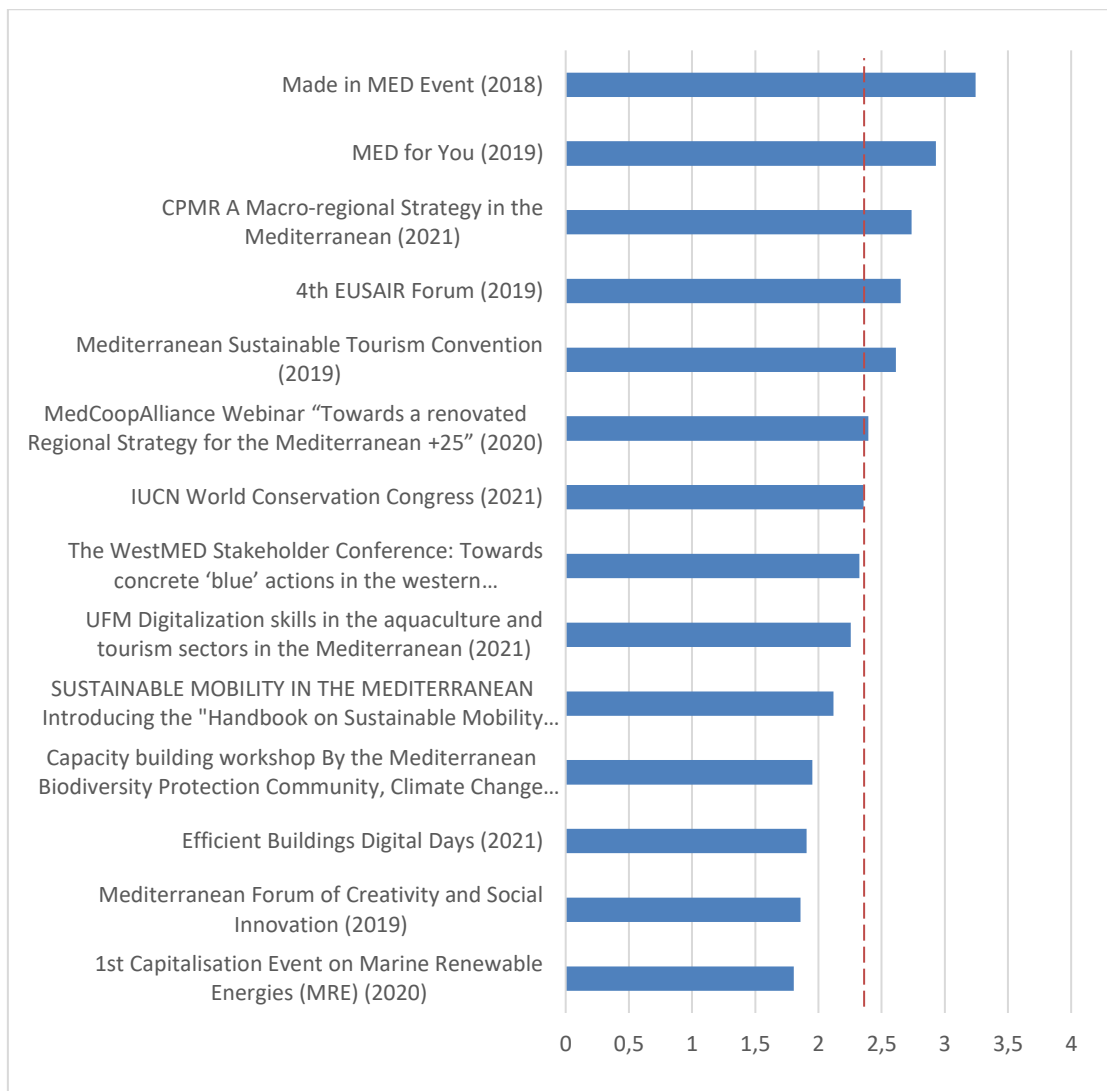
It is also important to search for any knowledge imbalances among the different types of the actors for the four (4) elements of the MCGS. In Figure 46, the average level of knowledge for every type of actor and element is presented. As it can be seen from the figures, there are some gaps in the knowledge levels among the actors, especially for the events. International

organisations present the higher level of knowledge for all elements. In general, national authorities and the other institutions come up with the lowest level of awareness about the implementation and results of the MCGS.

Figure 46 Average level of knowledge about elements of the governance system per type of actor (1 - No Knowledge to 5 - Perfect Knowledge)
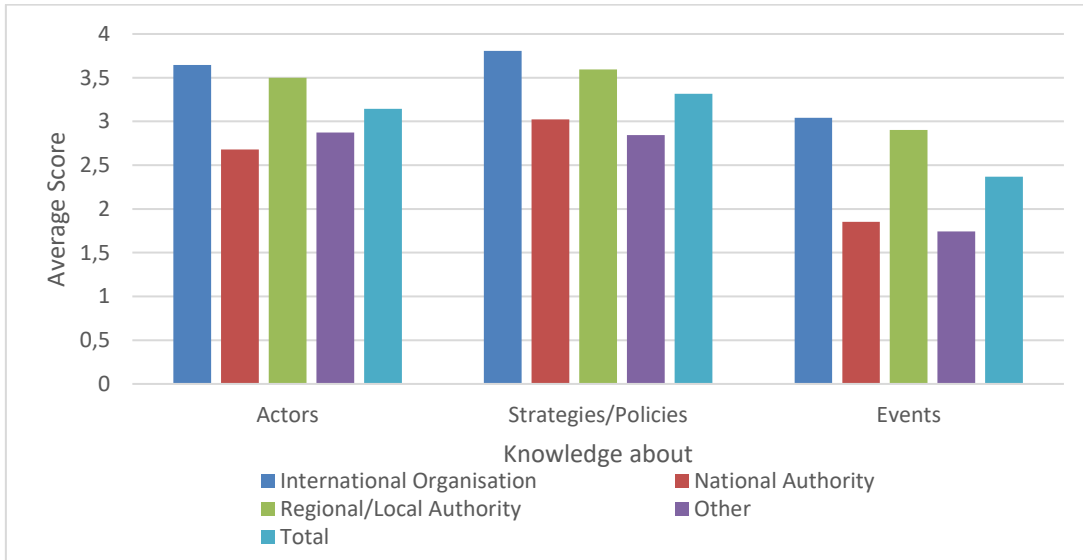
Considering the previously analysed hypothesis of a possible relationship between actors' interests and prioritization of challenges, actors' thematic interests may well drive the actors' levels of knowledge about the elements of the MCGS. To test if this hypothesis is true, in Figure 47, the interest of actors in particular fields and their knowledge about some of the elements more relevant to those fields are compared for three randomly selected fields. As figures show, the score of the interest exceeds that of knowledge about the elements of the MCGS. In some cases, the differences are striking, as in the case of the "Cooperation" field of interest where the score of interest is about double the score of knowledge regarding a very important actor of the MCGS, namely the Mediterranean Cooperation Alliance. Therefore, it becomes apparent that a high interest does not necessarily lead to a high knowledge about the activities around it in the MCGS.
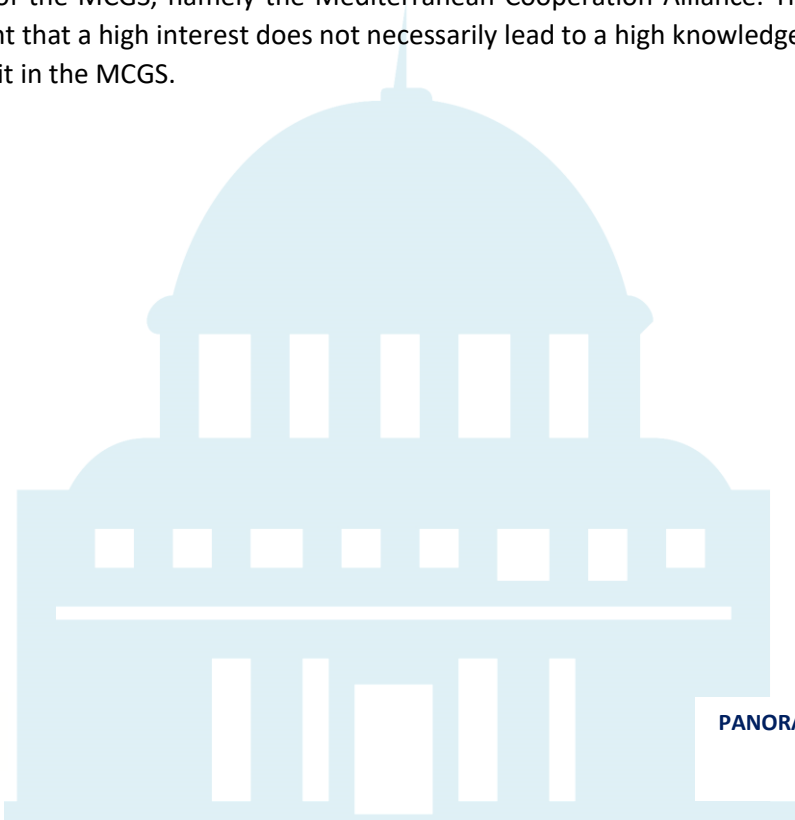
Figure 47 Comparison between Interest on a topic and knowledge about relevant elements of the governance system (Cooperation, Climate change, Biodiversity)
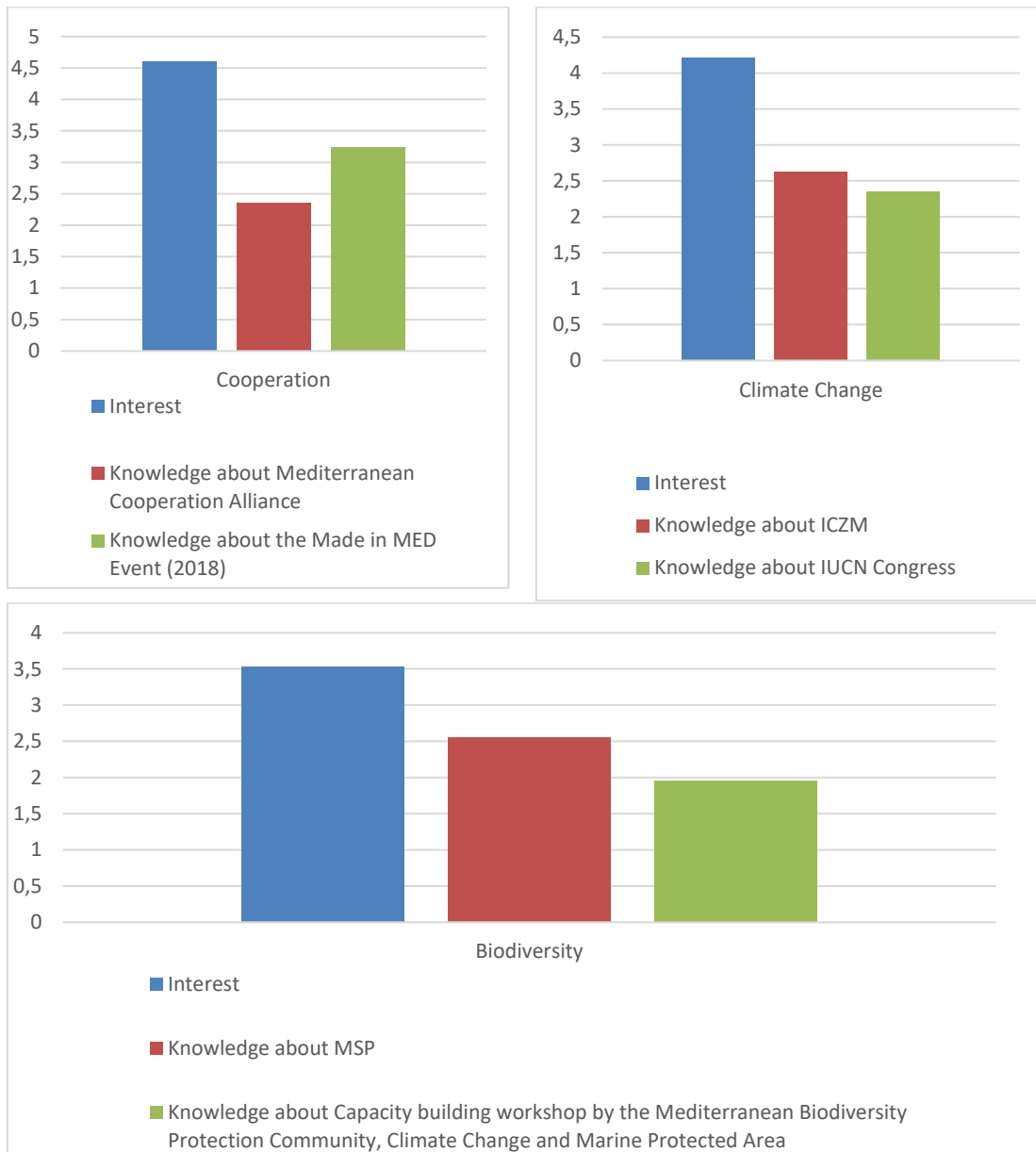
Finally, extremely important about the state of governance in the Mediterranean is the perception of actors regarding its structure. The data in Figure 48 indicate that two thirds of the surveyed actors perceive the MCGS as being a multilevel one. 15% of actors think that the MCGS has a polycentric character, while 9% think that the system is better described by the term "bottom-up" and the same proportion by the term" top-down". These tallies indicate that although a consensus about the state of the system is found among the actors, there are still some other views that need to be taken into account when examining the system and drafting relevant strategic and operational plans.

Figure 48 How would you describe the type of cooperation framework in the Mediterranean basin?
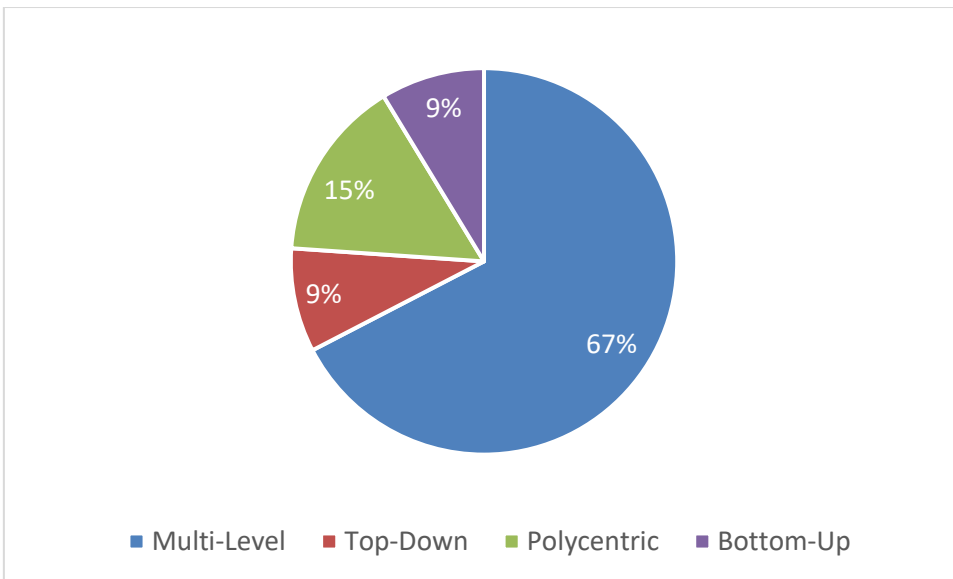
Moreover, in Figure 49 the perceptions of actors regarding some of the characteristics of the policy environment of the Mediterranean are recorded. The most relevant characteristic is this of a policy framework that considers the concept of territoriality and the second the functioning of a framework which adopts a place-based approach. These two characteristics portray that the actors believe that the policy framework takes into consideration the particular needs of the different places of the Mediterranean region.

Figure 49 How well the following characteristics can describe the policy framework of the Mediterranean region? (Please evaluate the relevance of the characteristics using the scale: 1 - No Relevance to 5 - High Relevance)
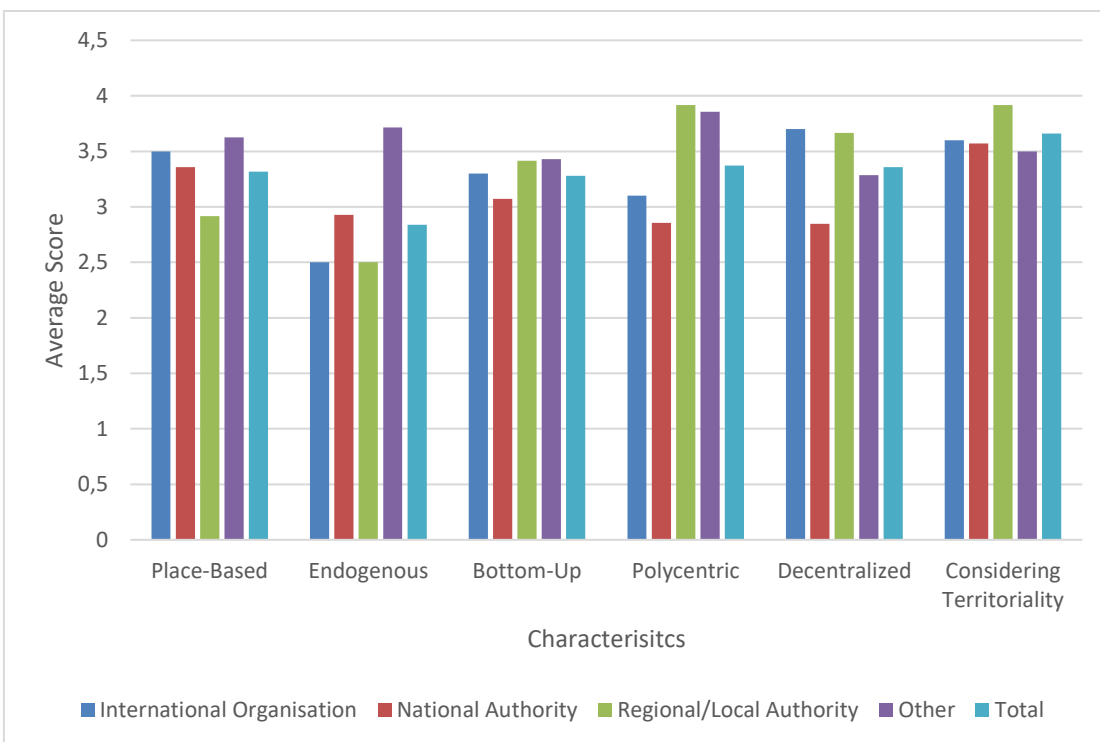
5.3.3 Achievements of Governance

Considering the achievements of the MCGS, the first question quantifies the records of the actors regarding the drafting of policy recommendations in a series of issues (*See Figure 50*). Most recommendations stemming from the surveyed actors are related to better alignment with EU policies, followed by the better capitalisation on the existing knowledge and the improvement of the cooperation framework in the Mediterranean. International organisations and regional/local authorities can be considered as the actors putting a more continuous effort to propose improvements for the MCGS as they present the highest scores in most of the issues considered. The only issue for which national authorities provide more frequently recommendations is the better alignment of the MCGS with the cohesion policy.

Figure 50 Has your organisation provided any policy recommendations in the following issues? Please use the scale from 1 to 5 (1 No Recommendations – 5 Constant Recommendations) to indicate the intensity placed on each issue
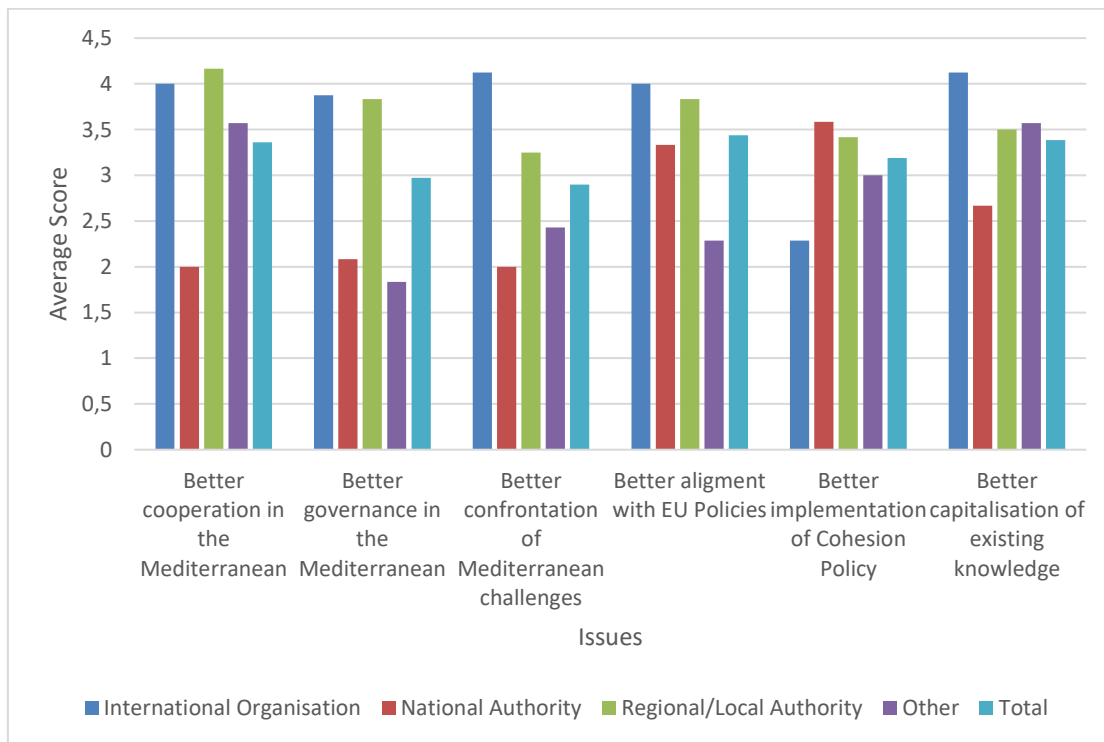
In addition, in Figure 51 some metrics about the achievements of the actors in activities of capitalisation of knowledge and transferring of results are presented. Regarding the first question of the figure, only 34% of actors have managed to draft recommendations that have been adopted by policy makers. There is a huge gap among the records of different actor types in this field, as the proportion of international organisations which succeeded in this field exceeds 60%, while no actor from the "Other" category has managed to draft any fully adopted recommendation. From the actors' responses it is extracted that recommendations can be on sectoral issues but also on more general issues of governance. Some notable examples of the present survey are the following:

- Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur managed to incorporate some of its recommendations to the IMC-CPMR general assembly final declarations

- MedPan has provided inputs to the Roadmap for MPAs (Barcelona convention) and Agenda 2030 (Union for the Mediterranean)
- EUROREGION PYENEES MEDITERRANEAN EGTC has provided inputs to MED Coop Alliance
- NECSTour took part in the consultation on the transition pathway for tourism, EU Tourism Convention
- WWF Mediterranean contributed to the inclusion of the Sustainable Blue Economy Finance Principles, in the UfM Blue Economy Ministerial Declaration
- The Greek Special Service for Strategy, Planning and Evaluation has provided a series of notes towards the Operational Programmes (ERDF and ESF+)

Regarding the second question, 42% of actors denote that they have adopted some recommendations from other actors. This category is dominated by the "Other" category as it seems that the actors of this category act better as receivers than givers. Some examples provided by the surveyed actors are the following:

- Jozef Stefan Institute, a Slovenian scientific research institute, has taken in consideration the Gap and Growth Analysis of the Panoramed project
- Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur and IUCN signed joint commitment "For a plastic-free Mediterranean" to multiply actions to reduce plastic pollution
- Andalucian Public Foundation has collected different outputs that are going to be adopted like a cooperation protocol through the Best Med Project

Regarding the third question, just over 40% of actors state that some of their outputs have been incorporated by some mainstream EU programmes. From this category the national and subnational authorities are excluded as these are the authorities that typically draft and implement mainstream programmes acting mostly as receivers. On the other hand, the fourth question evaluated the achievements of the actors that draft mainstream programmes in succeeding to incorporate the outputs and results of other actors. As it seems, only 36% of the actors seem to build on existing results to enrich their programmes. On this, a notable example stems from Slovenian Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy which has incorporated the Flagship projects of the EUSAIR in its programmes. The results signify that there is an urgent need for strengthening the transfer of recommendations and outputs among the actors of the MCGS.
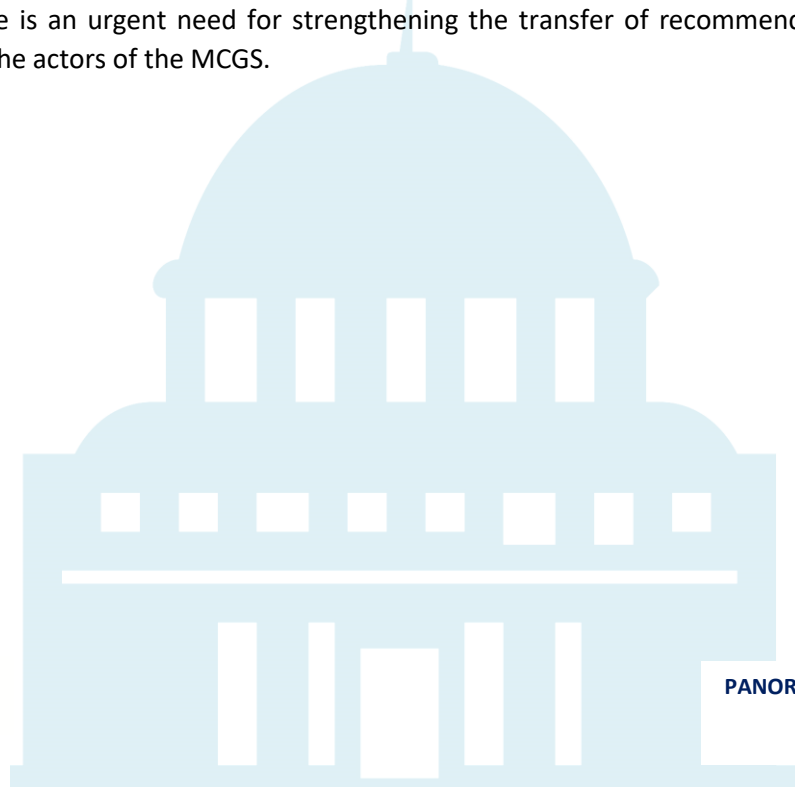
Figure 51 Proportion of actors who have successfully implemented Capitalisation and Transferring Activities
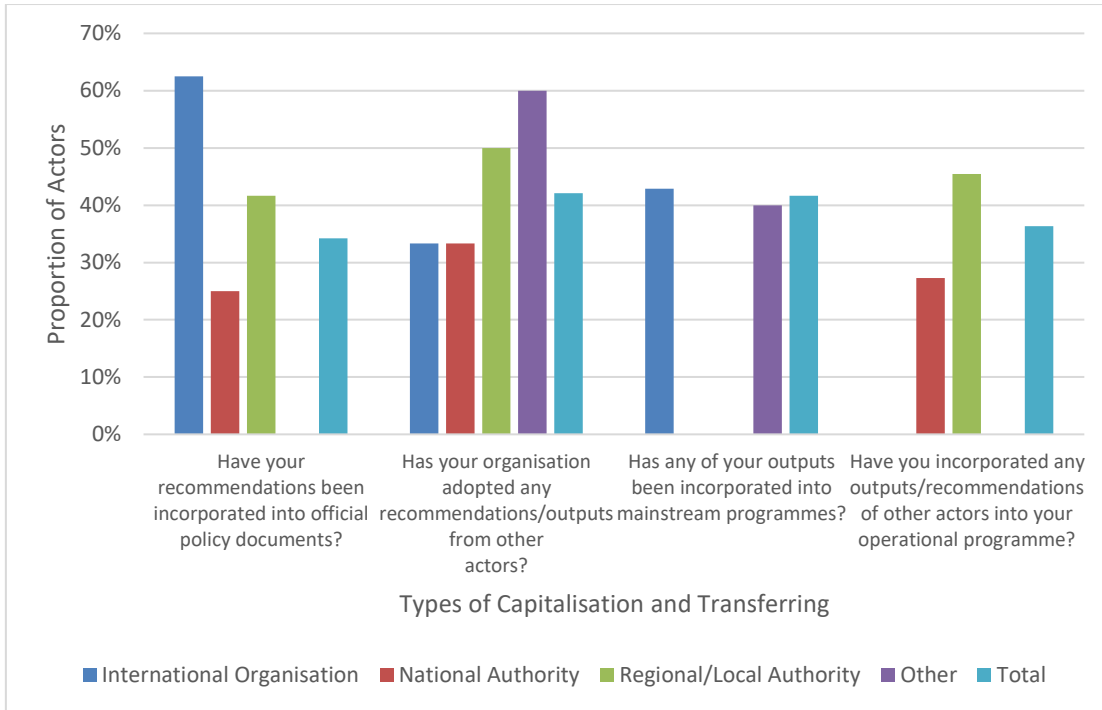
The strengthening of the exchange of outputs and best practices could be very beneficial for the further engagement of the actors to the MCGS. As it can be seen from Figure 52, the overall sense of the decisions ownership among the surveyed actors is rather mediocre. It is demonstrated that the sense of ownership is extremely low for the institutions of the "Other" category. This could be cross-examined with the results presented in Figure 51, where no actor of this category has seen its recommendations incorporated into official policy documents. Therefore, the largest consideration of the work of other actors may enhance the sense of ownership for the MCGS.

Figure 52 To what extent does your institution have the ownership of the decisions taken? (1 No Ownership – 5 Full Ownership)
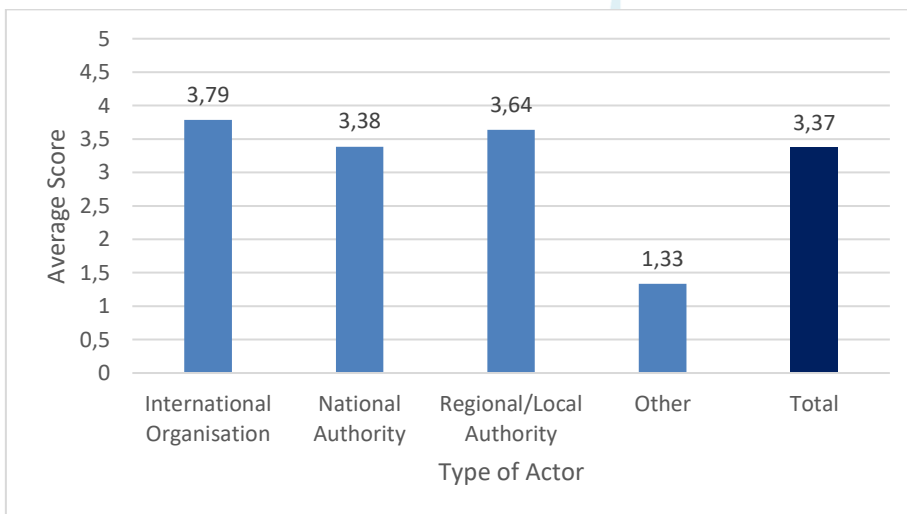
The same conclusion can be drawn by looking at the scores presented in Figure 53. This score corresponds to the stated perception of actors about how well their results are taken into account by other actors. The overall score is even lower than the respective of the sense of ownership. Again, the stakeholders of the "Other" category feel less embraced by the MCGS.

Figure 53 How well are your results taken into account by the other actors in the Mediterranean? (1 Not at All – 5 Full Consideration)
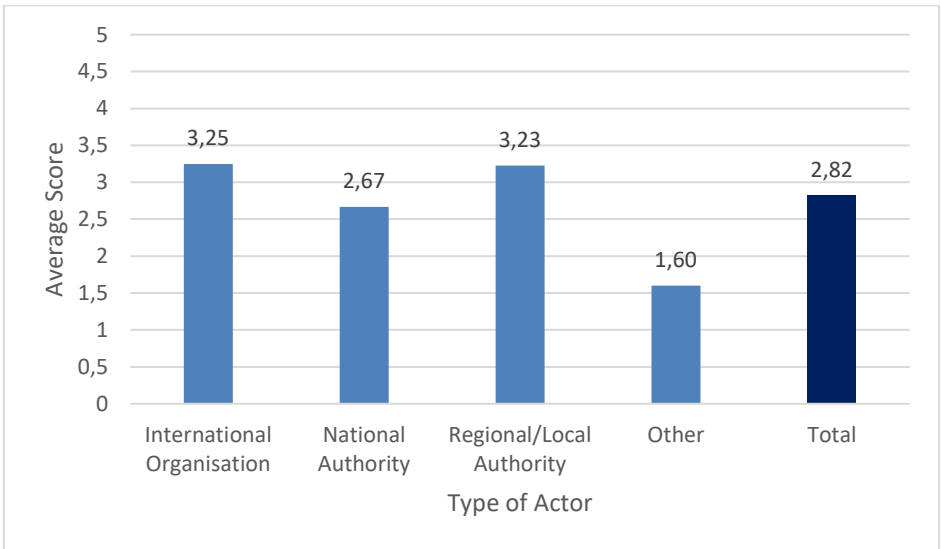
In addition, a critical parameter of the system's potential to improve is to make knowledge and achievements of the system more easily accessible for all actors. As can be seen from the scores in Figure 54, the access to information about the achievements of other actors is not considered as an easy task, as the level of easiness acquires a general average score of 2.74/5. This applies particularly to the actors of the "other" category as their average score lags behind the 50% of the perfect 5.

Figure 54 How easy do you consider the access to information about results achieved by other actors in the Mediterranean? (1 Difficult – 5 Most Easy)
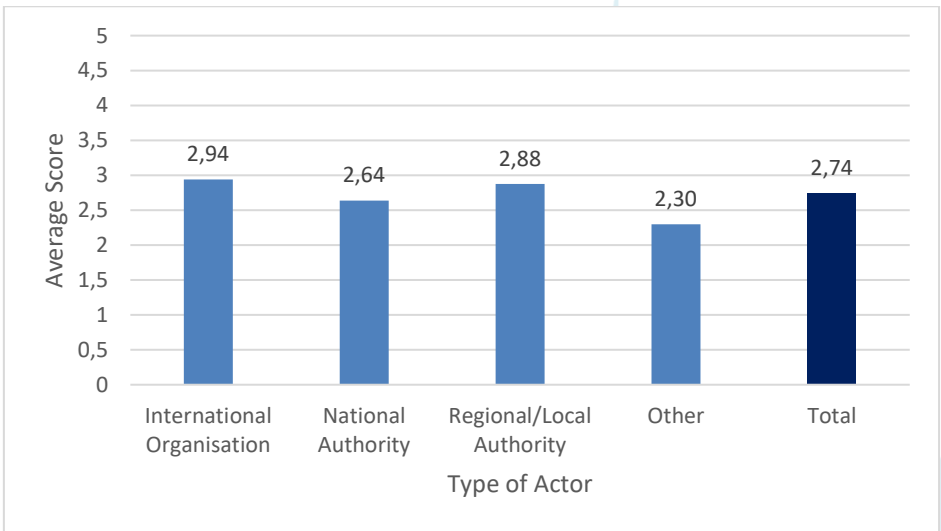
The achievements of the MCGS are also manifested by the joint activities developed in the past five years by the actors of the system. The data in Figure 55 show that the majority of actors implemented either a common event or a joint project. The least common activities are those of think tanks, forums and networks. Despite their limited implementation, surveyed actors presented some interesting examples which show that there is a strong potential for further developing such types of activities (See

Table 13).

Figure 55 Have you realised any of the following activities facilitating cooperation in the area in the past 5 years (event, forum, think tank, etc.)?
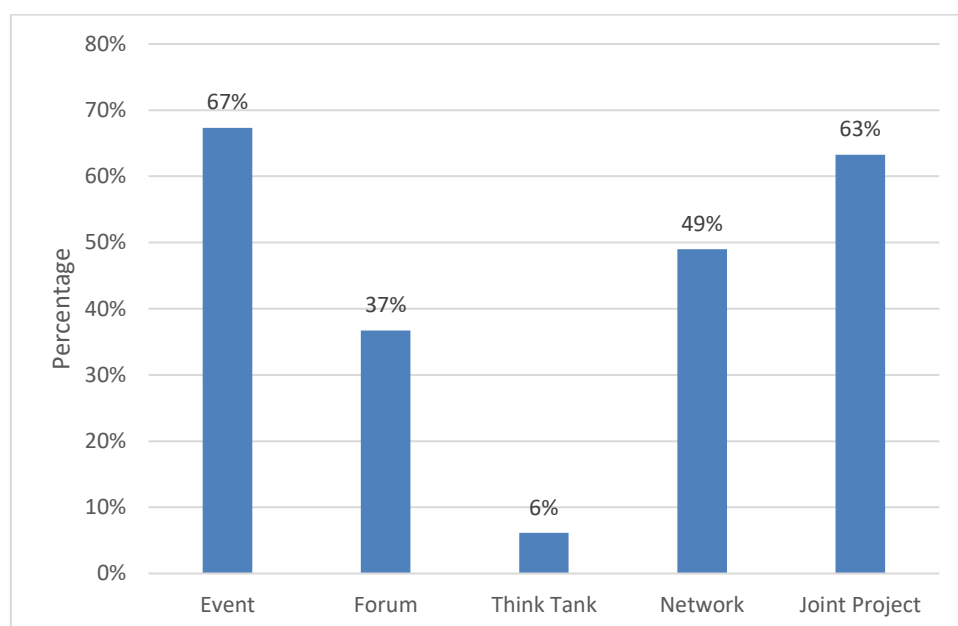
Table 13 Examples of established Networks, Forums and Think Tanks provided by the surveyed actors

Network	Forum	Think Tank
EUSAIR facility point	**The Mediterranean MPA Forum and Roadmap process**	**Destimed Think Tank on the promotion of ecotourism in MPAs**
Govermental office for development and cohesion policy	MedPAN - Mediterranean Protected Areas Network	WWF Mediterranean
Interreg national network on permanent basis	**1st Green Growth Business Forum at Circle the Med Hybrid Forum 2020**	
Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires (ANCT)	Green Growth Community - Interreg MED Programme	
MedCoopAlliance	**Organisation of the 2nd Forum of the EUSAIR (2017)**	
EUROREGION PYRENEES MEDITERRANEAN EGTC	Greek Special Service for Strategy, Planning and Evaluation	

In addition, a great achievement of the MCGS would be the improvement of the capacity of its actors to promote the objectives of the two pillars of the cooperation governance: confrontation of regional challenges and implementation of EU Cohesion Policy. Both elements acquire a score of 3/5, meaning that there is still plenty room for improvement in the considered issues. The largest capacity improvements were achieved by the international organisations and the greatest improvement for the implementation of EU policies for the national authorities.

Figure 56 By how much has your capacity been improved in the following topics during the period 2014-2020 (1 No improvement - 5 Absolute improvement)?
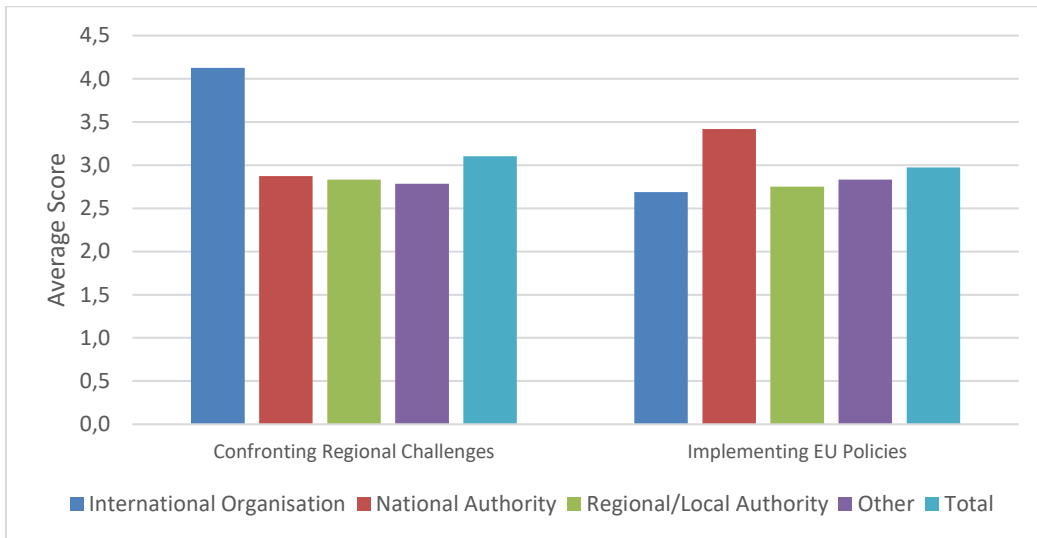
Improvements in capacity to promote cooperation governance are realized when actors actively engage with the system. This is portrayed by the data on Figure 57, where the improvements of actors in confronting regional challenges and implementing the EU Cohesion Policy are comparatively plotted. As the figures show, there is a positive relationship between knowledge and capacity, thus indicating that the further engagement to the MCGS can actually help actors to improve their own capacities.
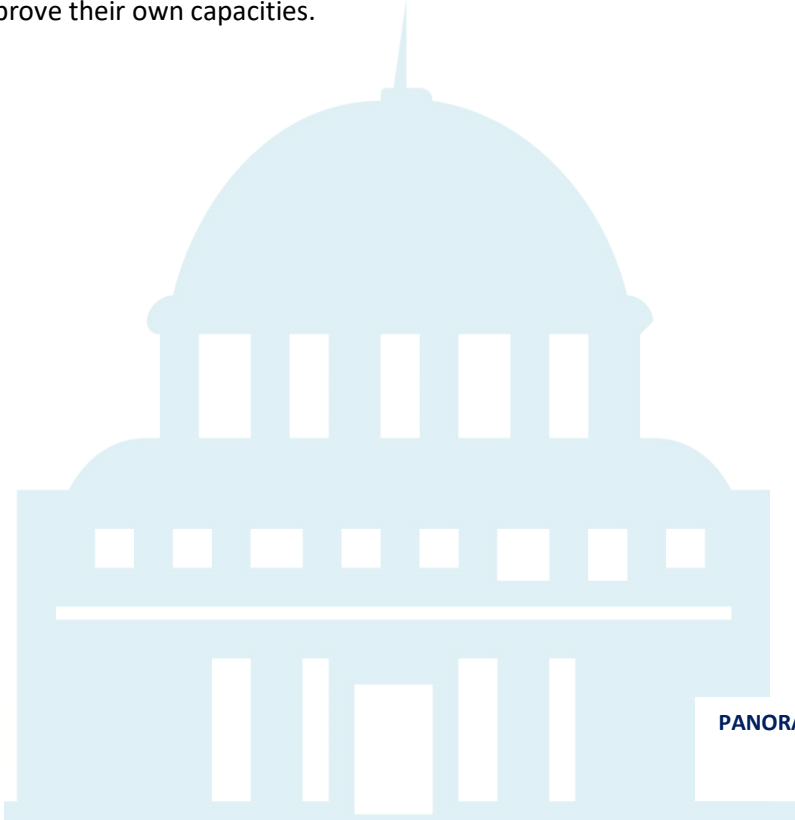
Figure 57 Correlation between Average Knowledge about MED actors' activities and average improvements in capacity to confront regional challenges and implement EU policies
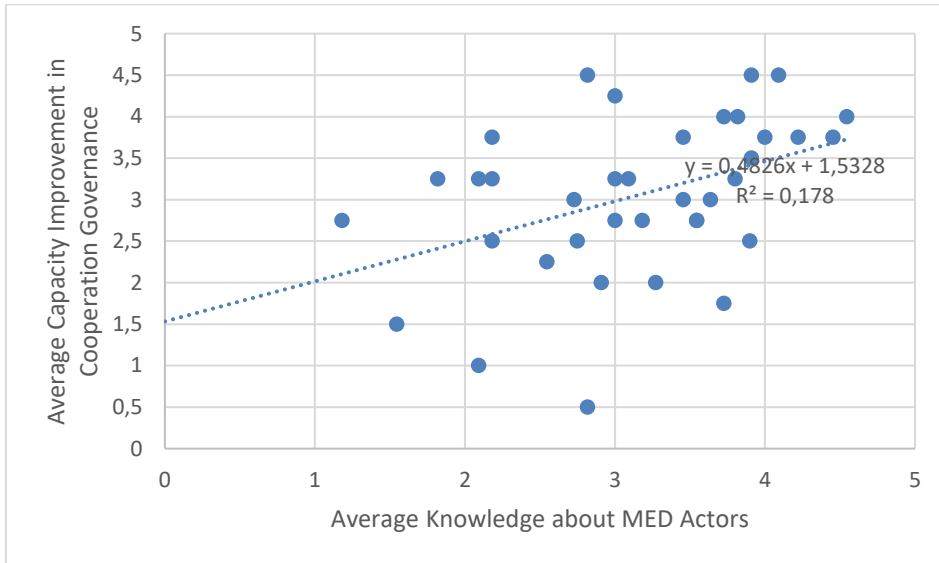
5.3.4 The Future of the Mediterranean Governance System

The central question for the future of the MCGS is whether the region will acquire a common EU strategic framework to steer all efforts towards a common direction (*See Figure 58*). The responses of the actors vary, and the average score reveals a semi-optimistic view, as it is estimated at 3.33/5. The most optimist actors are international organisations with 3.88/5, while the actors of the category "Other" present a very mediocre view for the potential of the region to acquire a common strategic framework (2.67/5).

Figure 58 How possible do you think is for the Mediterranean to acquire a common EU strategic framework for cooperation in the region? (1 Not possible at all – 5 Extremely Possible)
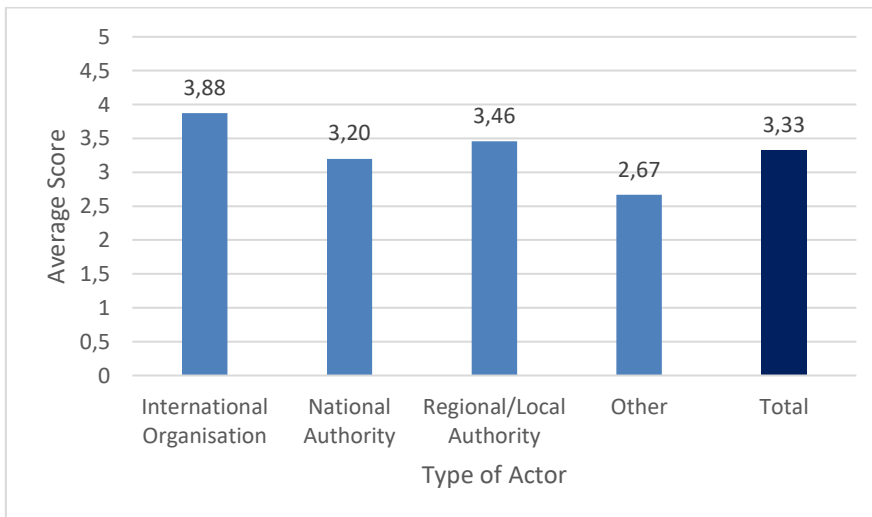
The views about the further consolidation of the system relate to the engagement of the actors to the MCGS. As the data in Figure 59 show, there is a positive relationship between the knowledge about the developments and elements of the system and the stated belief of the actors about the potential of the establishment of a common framework for the

Mediterranean. That is, cooperation can assist the regional actors to cultivate further the idea of a common framework which may inherently and gradually be achieved.

Figure 59 Scatterplot of Average Knowledge about MED actors' activities and stated belief for the development of a Common EU Strategic Framework
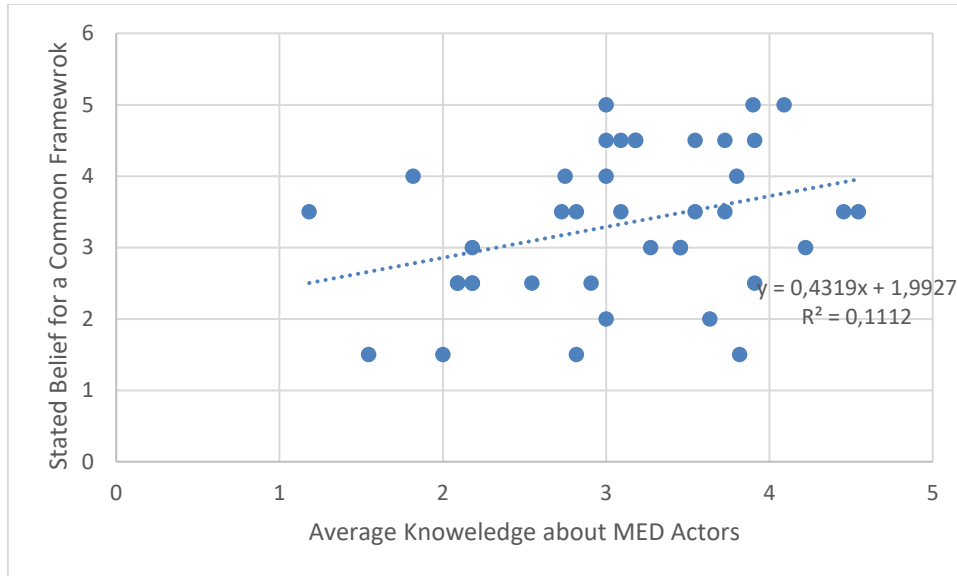
A critical parameter of the MCGS future operation regards the actors that will undertake the leading role in harmonizing and fine-tuning the operations and activities of MCGS (*See Figure 60*). As expected, the five (5) most important actors for shaping the future of the MCGS are almost the ones whose activities were the most acknowledged by the surveyed actors (*See Figure 42*). The only difference between the ranking of actors under the two (2) questions, is that in the latter UfM and ENI CBC MED get a higher rank and the BlueMed initiative is replaced by the WestMED. Thus, it could be said that the actors with the highest influence in the area are Interreg MED, UfM, the ENI CBC MED and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions.
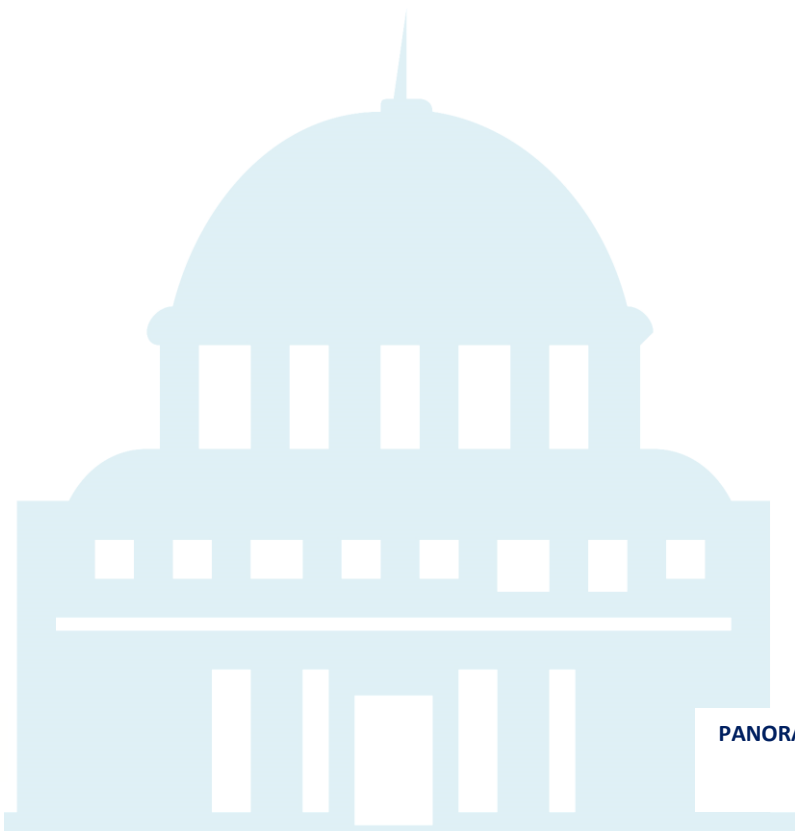
Figure 60 Mark up to five actors/initiatives/processes that are expected to play the most important role in shaping the future of the Mediterranean governance system
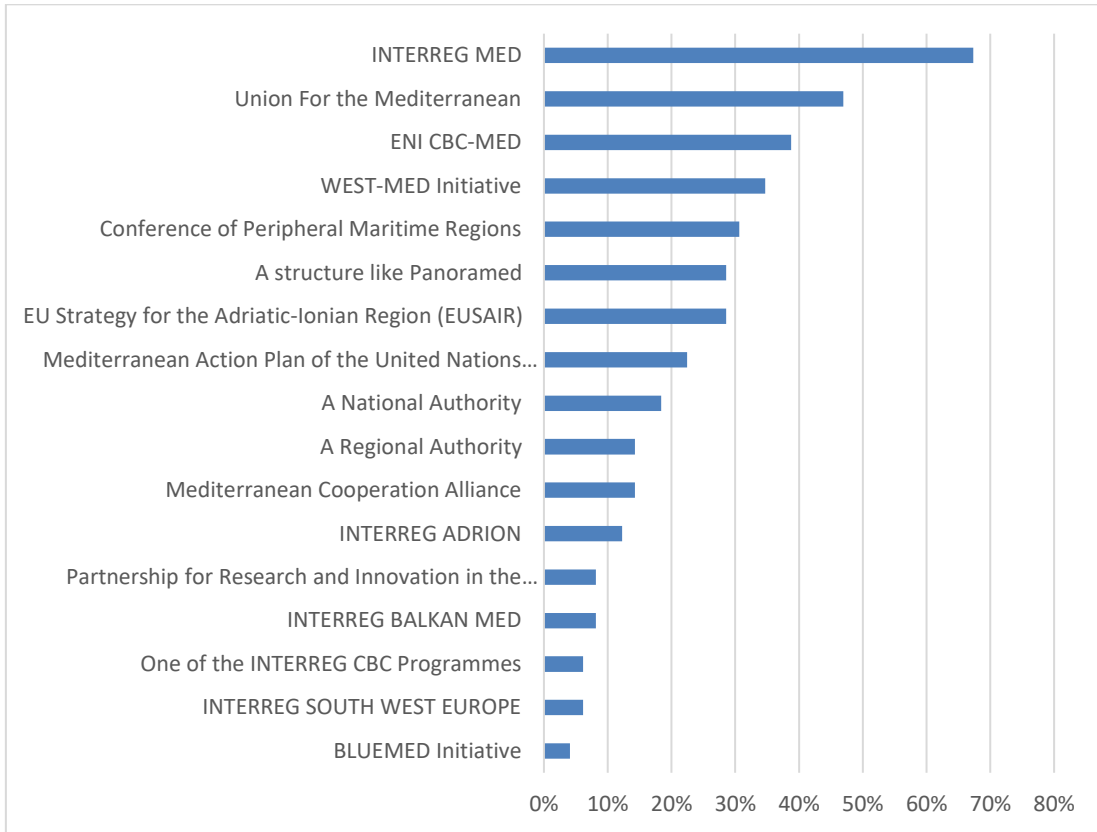
In addition, the further consolidation of the MCGS is not free of risks of political and socio-economic nature (*See Figure 61*). The barrier with the highest score is the political uncertainty in the area which may undermine the further cooperation of actors operating in different countries. The second most acknowledged barrier is an economic one and has to do with the possible lack of funding to support the development of the MCGS. Another political factor that may impede the consolidation of the MCGS is the increasing nationalism and competition among the Mediterranean countries. The next barrier has to do with the capacity of the MCGS actors to support its development and with almost equal score follows the citizens' discontent and lack of trust to the political institutions of the area. The least acknowledged risk has to do with the changes in policy orientation of the EU. As for the different types of actors, international organisations recognize the lack of funding as the greatest barrier for the development of the MCGS, national and subnational authorities the political uncertainty, while the actors of the "Other" category place an almost equal score on both barriers.

Figure 61 Which of the following factors may impede the further consolidation of the Mediterranean Governance Framework. Please evaluate the likelihood of each factor to impede governance using the scale 1-5 (1 No likelihood – 5 Extremely High likelihood)
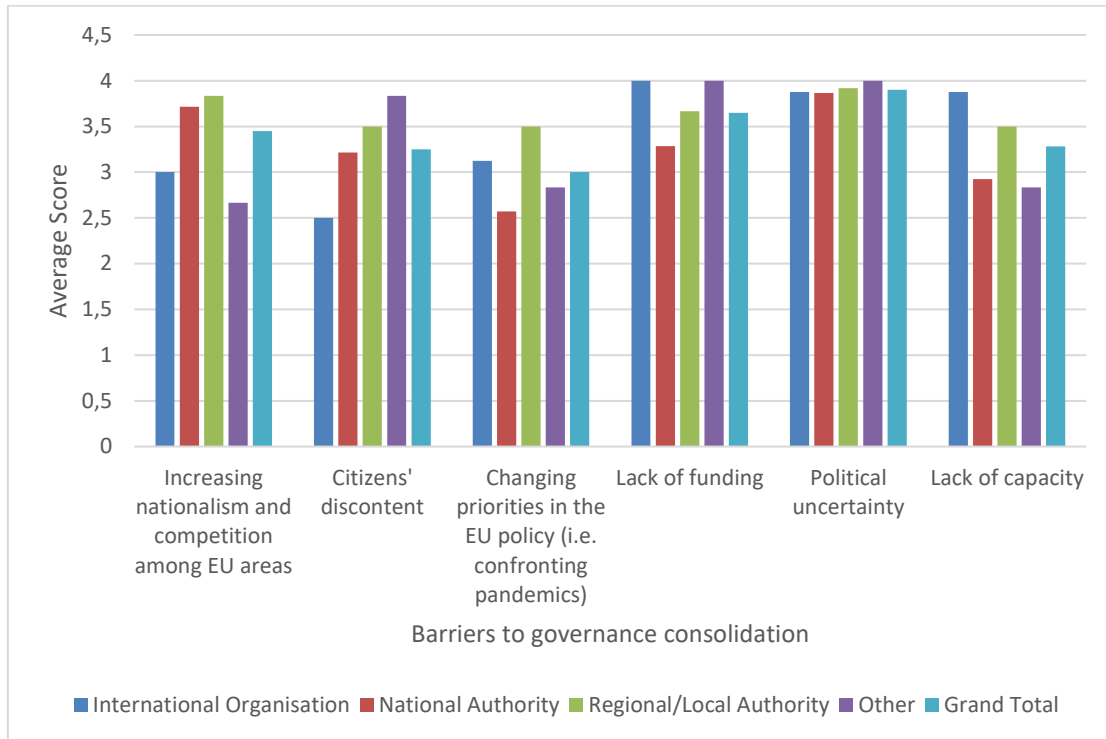
Moreover, possible improvements of the MCGS are presented in Figure 62. Actors place particular importance on the improvement of transparency and the simplification of procedures, as this was the option that acquired the highest score among all possible improvements to the current state of the MCGS. The reduction of the fragmentation of policy in the area together with the need for acquiring a common strategic framework were also evaluated as important directions of change. The next option is the improvement of the cooperation mechanism and the last the enhancement of actors' openness. International organisations indicate that the most urgent need for change concerns the fragmented policy framework, national authorities prioritise the development of a common strategic framework, while the other two (2) categories of actors promote the enhancement of transparency and the simplification of procedures.
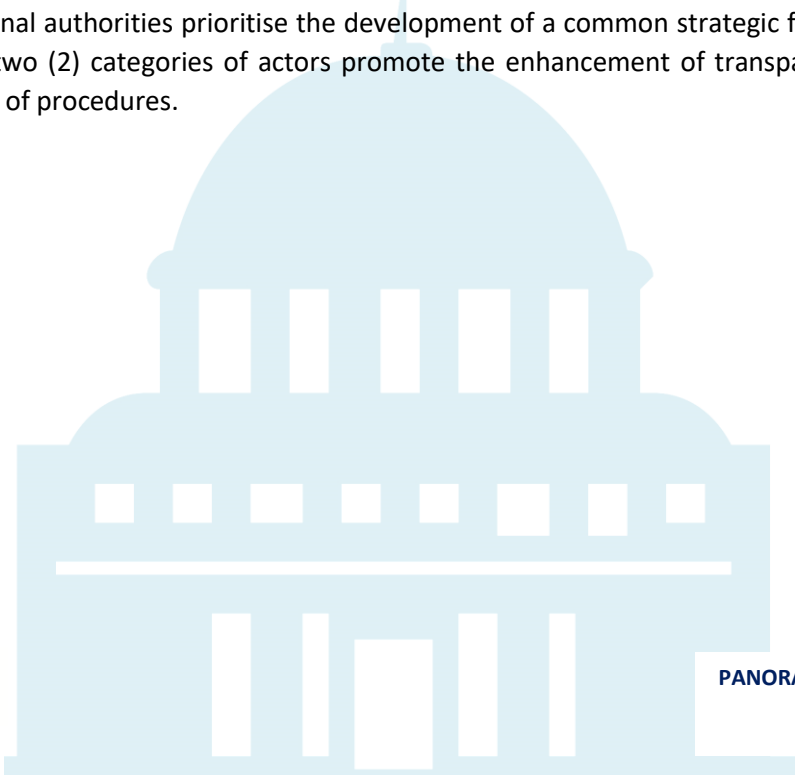
Figure 62 What would you change in the current state of Governance? Please evaluate the need for change using the scale 1-5 (1 No need for change – 5 Urgent need for change)
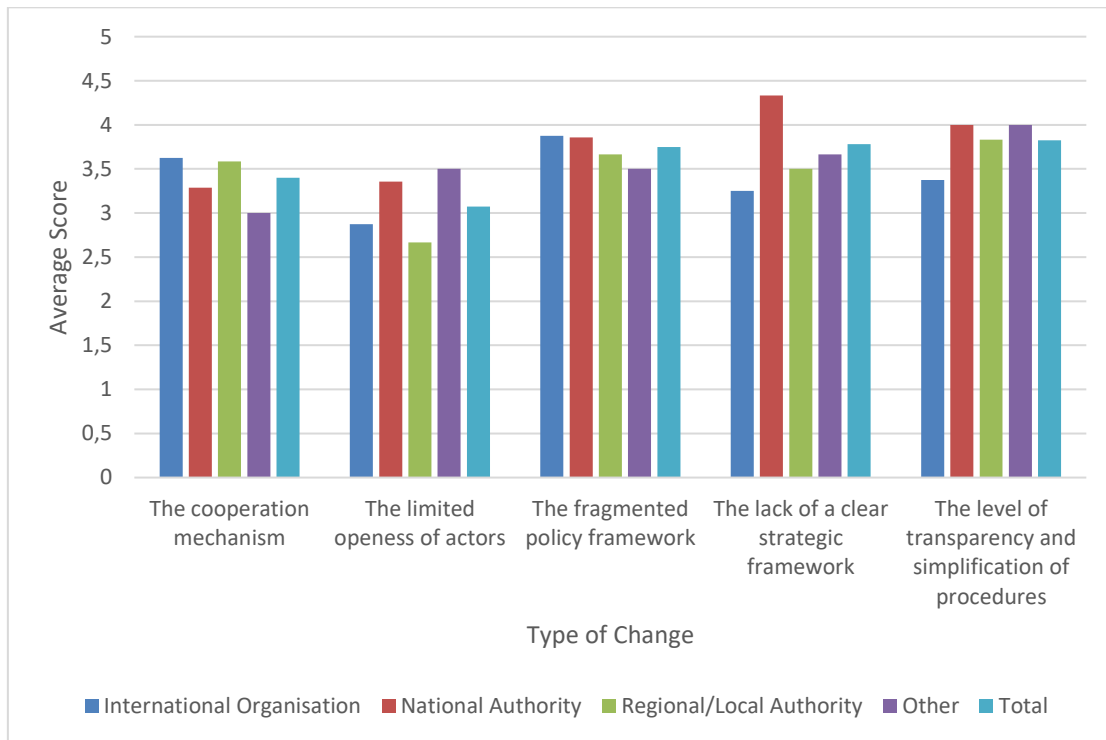
Finally, in Figure 63 the preferences of surveyed actors regarding the different features of a future platform that could support the consolidation of the MCGS by circulating the generated knowledge among all actors are recorded[35]. Considering the average score per feature, actors seem to prioritise the feature of capacity building activities followed by the features of presenting the outputs and the events of any registered actor. The least supported feature is this of the presentation of meetings minutes, as this is the only feature with a score of less than 3.5/5. All types of actors put a premium on the capacity building feature except those in the "other" category which prioritise the feature of outputs and activities presentation.

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[35] *The need for such an e-tool has been raised on the ToRs but also consistently by different stakeholders on many occasions during different meetings/workshops (such as the PANORAMED DIALOGUES meeting on 23.11.21, EURegionsWeek, https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/news/watch-euregionsweek-again_en Interreg Euro-MED Kick-off event on 2.12.21 https://interreg-euro-med.eu/en/)*

Figure 63 Which of the following actions towards improving the circulation of knowledge do you think that should be prioritized? Please evaluate the need for prioritisation using the scale 1-5 (1 No Priority - 5 Urgent Priority)
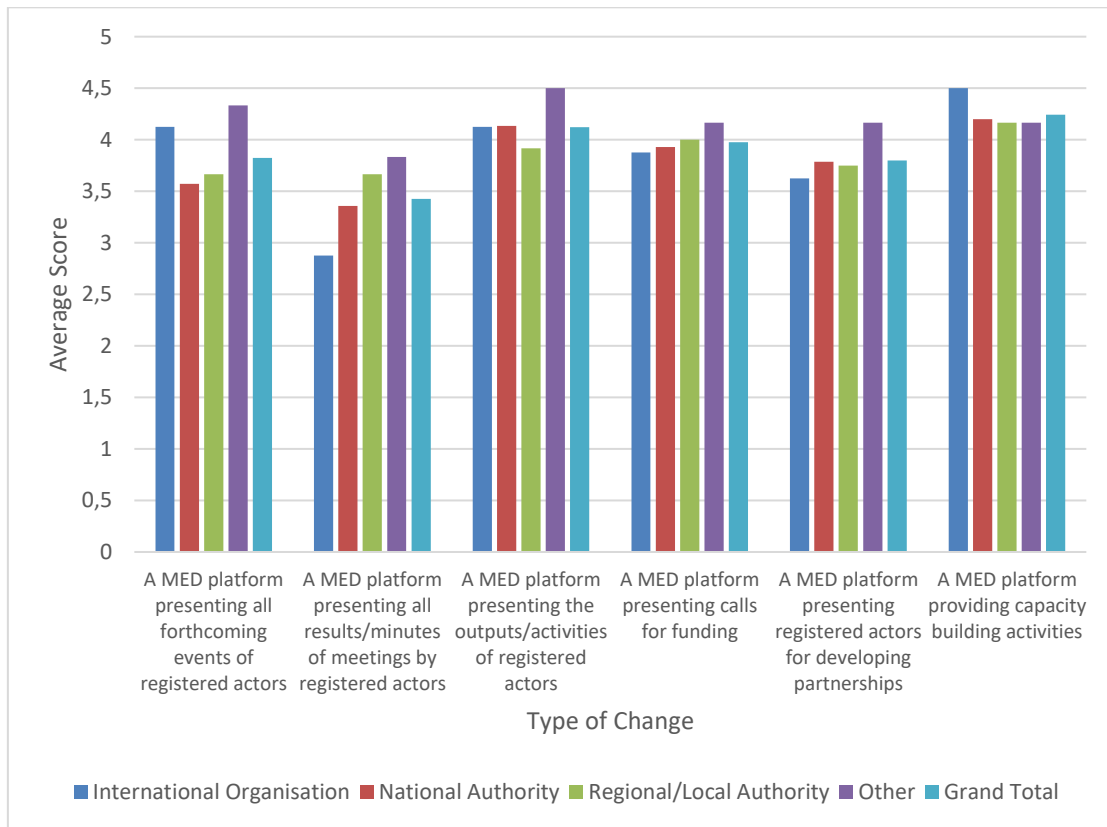
5.4 Implications for the role of the Interreg MED

Undoubtedly, a central role in this new MCGS should be played by the ETC programmes and therefore by the Interreg MED programme as the one covering a large part of the area. In this section the surveyed actors' responses to some key questions about the Interreg MED programme are presented so as to examine the potential contribution of the Interreg MED to the MCGS. These findings should be viewed on par with the analysis of the capacity of the programme which was presented in Section 4. In Figure 64, the responses of the surveyed actors to the question of how they foresee the role of the programme for the governance system in the Mediterranean are recorded. The average score of the actors is estimated at 3.83/5, that is the actors of the area foresee an important role for the programme which is way closer to the option of "leading" than this of "following" the developments. The international authorities put the highest level of faith in the capabilities for the programme to lead the MCGS (3.94/5). These responses validate the findings presented in Figure 42 where the programme was the most acknowledged actor of the MCGS in the area.
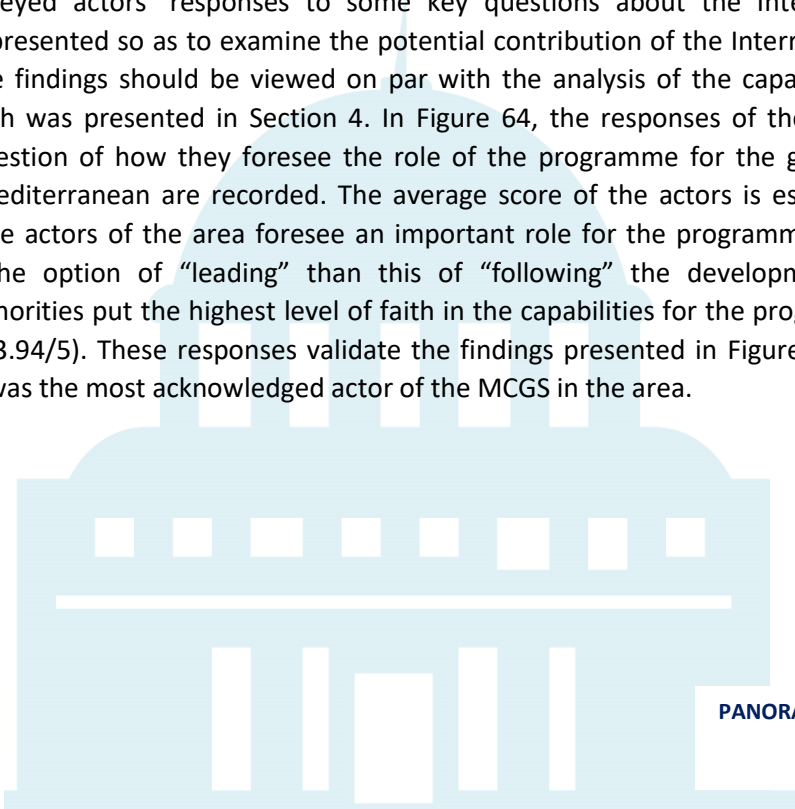
Figure 64 How do you foresee the role of the Interreg MED in the governance system of the Mediterranean? (1 Minor role – 5 Leader)
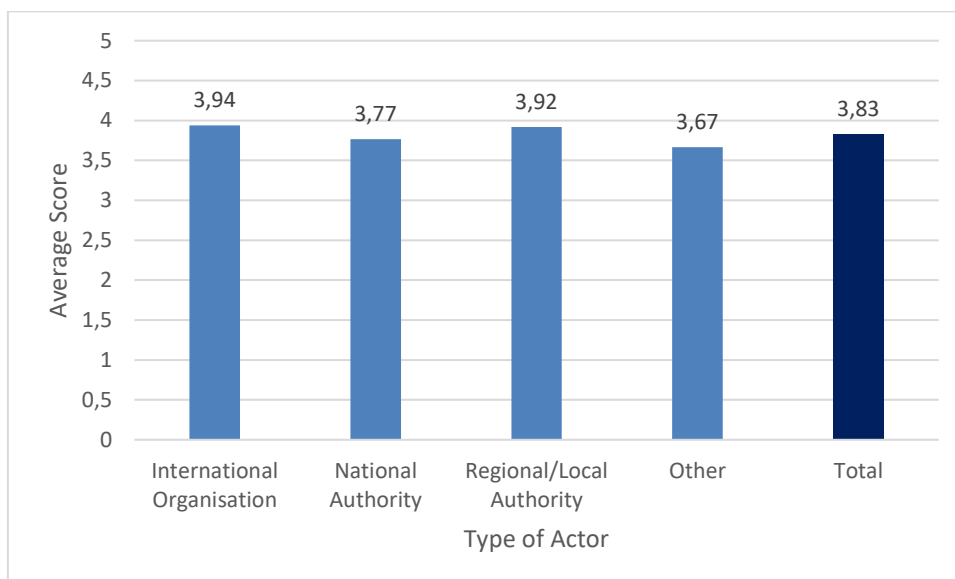
Moreover, it is important to note that the programme manifests itself by its funded projects. Therefore, it is critical for the promotion of the MCGS targets that the projects' results achieve the widest diffusion to the area and acknowledgement by the actors of the system. Further, in Figure 65 the stated knowledge of the actors regarding the work and results of some Interreg MED projects implemented in the period 2014-2020 is presented. The average scores are extracted once by considering all actors and second by considering only the actors whose stated interest in the fields tackled by the projects exceeded the 3/5 (*See Figure 10*). The knowledge of the actors for the implemented projects is very low for both types of measurements. The average knowledge score is estimated at 1.93/5 for all actors and it only gets to 2.13/5 when only the most relevant actors are considered for each project. It is noteworthy that only one project, DESTIMED (tourism related), acquires a score of over 2.5/5 at moth metrics and the same happens for two other projects, namely the B-BLUE (Blue Biotechnology related) and Bleutourmed_C3 (Tourism related) when only actors with a particular interest on the issues tackled by the projects are considered.
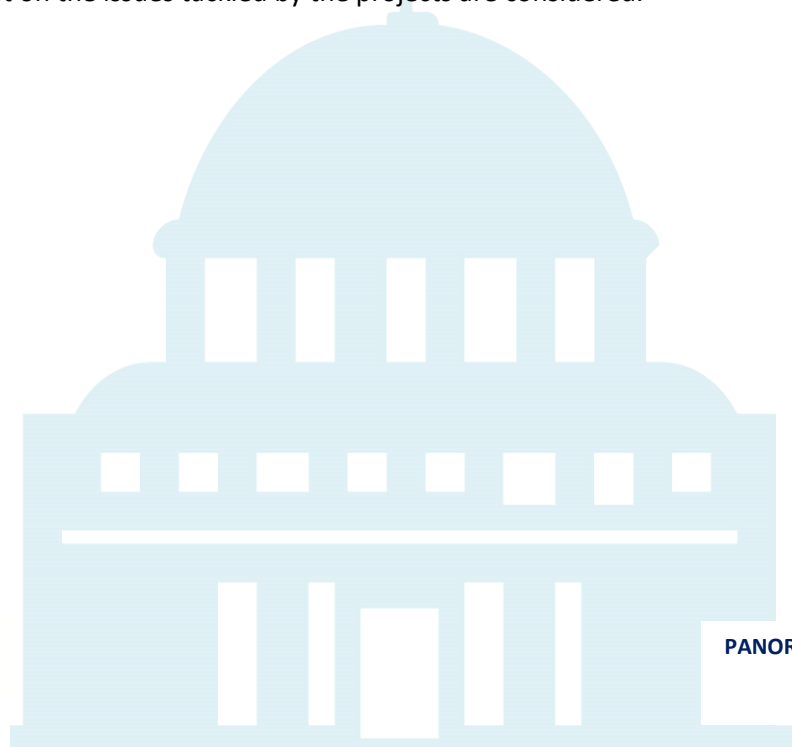
Figure 65 How much aware are you of the implementation and the results of the following projects? (Please evaluate your knowledge based on the scale: 1 - No Knowledge to 5 - Perfect Knowledge.
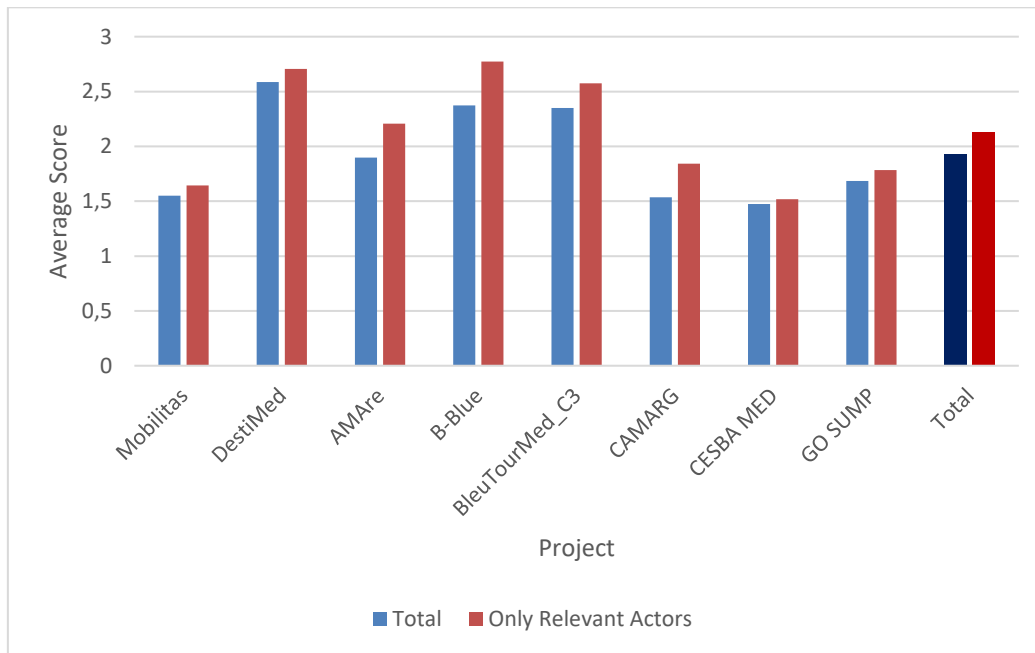
The knowledge about Interreg MED projects heavily varies across the different categories of actors (*See Figure 66*), as the actors representing national authorities and those of the "Other" category lag far behind the average knowledge score. The highest score is observed for the "regional/local authority" category. It should be noted that these metrics are extracted by considering only the actors with a good level of interest on projects' topics. Therefore, the lack of knowledge is not driven by an interest gap but mainly due to the untapped potential of projects to reach a large number of target audiences.

Figure 66 Average levels of knowledge about Interreg MED projects per type of actor (1 - No Knowledge to 5 - Perfect Knowledge)
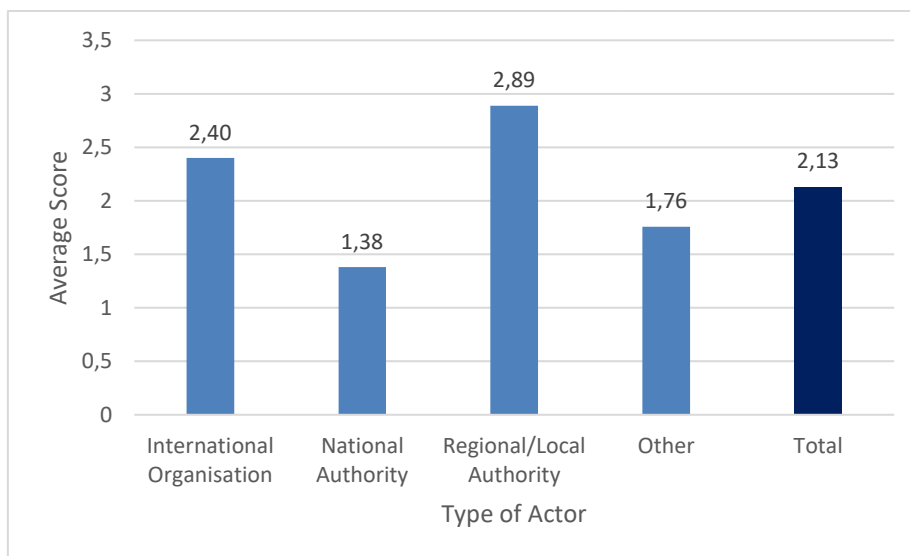
An increased knowledge about the programme is not only essential for its further development but also important for the strengthening of the MCGS as a whole. As it can be seen from the scatterplot in Figure 67 there is a positive relationship between the actors' level of cooperation with the Interreg MED programme and their stated improvements in their capacity to deal with regional challenges and implement the guidelines of the EU cohesion policy. Therefore, further engagement with the programme could be seen as a means for enhancing the overall capacity of actors to promote the targets of the MCGS and especially those of the Territorial and Policy Governance layer.

Figure 67 Scatterplot of actors' cooperation with the Interreg MED and Average Capacity improvement in Cooperation Governance
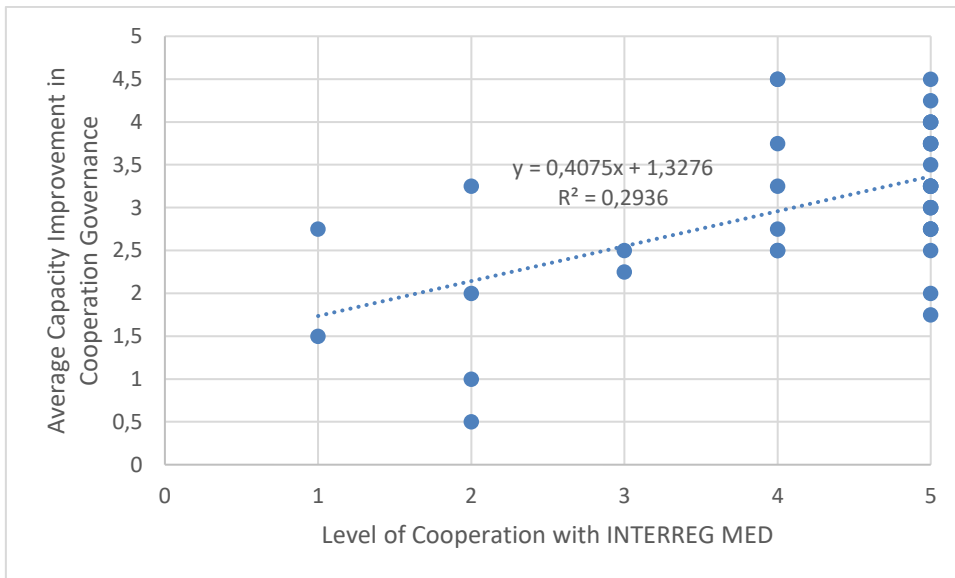
Moreover, analysis seeks to evaluate a crucial domain of the Interreg MED that is its work on governance. Thus, the recommendation of its three (3) thematic fields were incorporated into the present survey. More precisely, the main recommendations of the PANORAMED Policy Papers on Maritime Surveillance[36], Coastal and Maritime Tourism[37], and Innovation[38] were provided to the surveyed actors and then they were asked to evaluate the likelihood of achieving real progress in their fulfillment until 2030 using a scale of 1-5. They were prompted to use 1 when they saw no to very little progress and 5 when they foresaw a great progress in each recommendation.

In Figure 68 the evaluation scores of the recommendations of PANORAMED on Maritime Surveillance are presented. Actors placed an average feasibility score of just under 4/5. The

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[36] *https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Governance/horizontal_project/Library/Deliverables/WP6-Maritime_surveillance/6-2-2_PANORAMED_-_KPP_Maritime_Surveillance.pdf*

[37] *https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Governance/horizontal_project/Library/Deliverables/WP5-Costal_and_maritime_tourism/Key_Policy_Paper__KPP__on_Coastal_and_Maritime_Tourism__WP5_.pdf*

[38] *https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Governance/horizontal_project/Innovation-key-policy-paper_PANORAMED-def.pdf*

most feasible recommendation is the one that calls for higher readiness to integrate new technologies and develop Blue Economy while the least feasible is the one that foresees the development of multilevel clusters.

Figure 68 Please rate the likelihood of realising the recommendations following the statement "The implementation of a voluntary and decentralised framework for multilevel maritime surveillance should…"
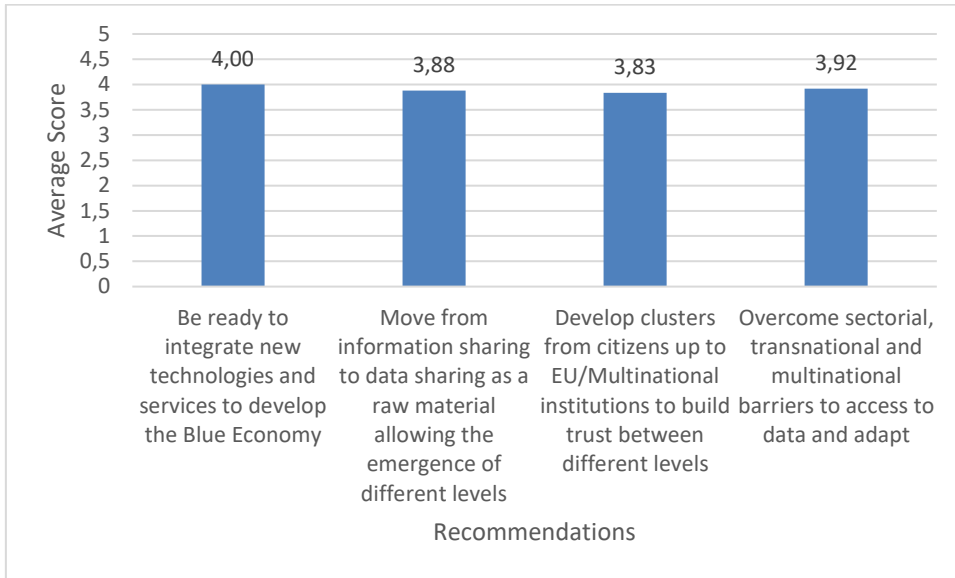
In Figure 69 the stated likelihood of realisation of the recommendations provided by the Sustainable Tourism thematic group is presented. The overall feasibility score is much higher than the previous recommendations, as it exceeds 4.35/5. The recommendation with the highest likelihood concerns the greening of tourism and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage, while two (2) recommendations acquire the lowest score: the better sharing of data and the enhancement of innovation in the tourism sector.

Figure 69 Please rate the likelihood of realising the recommendations following the statement "Sustainable tourism development in the Mediterranean will be achieved by…"
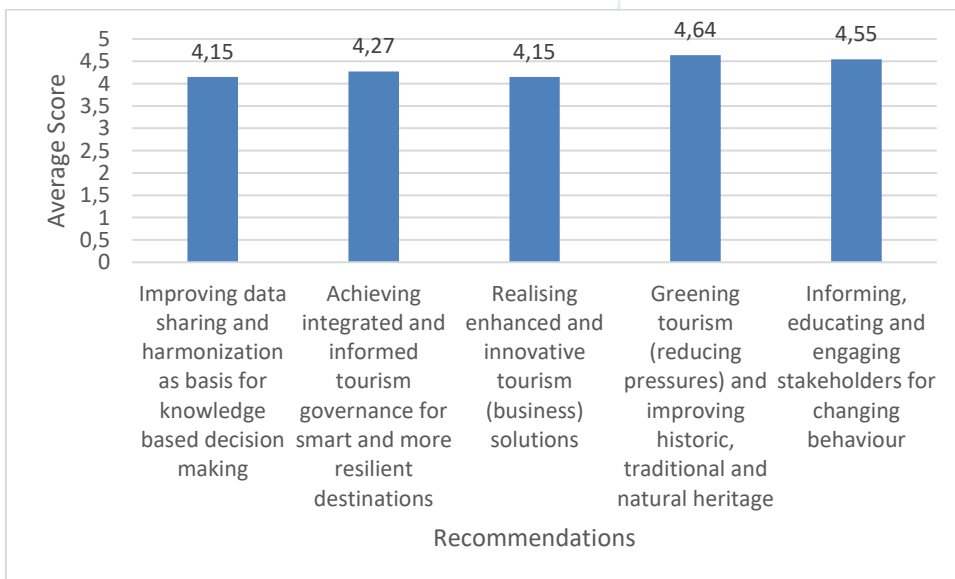
Finally, the assessment results of the Innovation recommendations are presented in Figure 70. The recommendations acquire a very high feasibility score, similar to those of the tourism group. The proposal with the highest score is the one that calls for the realisation of competitive calls and projects towards innovation and the one with the lower score the one that stresses the need to estimate and highlight the social value of R&I activities. Overall, the recommendations of PANORAMED are perceived as feasible from the surveyed actors and this is a very promising sign for the contribution of such structures in the MCGS.

Figure 70 Please rate the likelihood of realising the recommendations following the statement "Better governance of innovation policies in the Mediterranean needs to…"
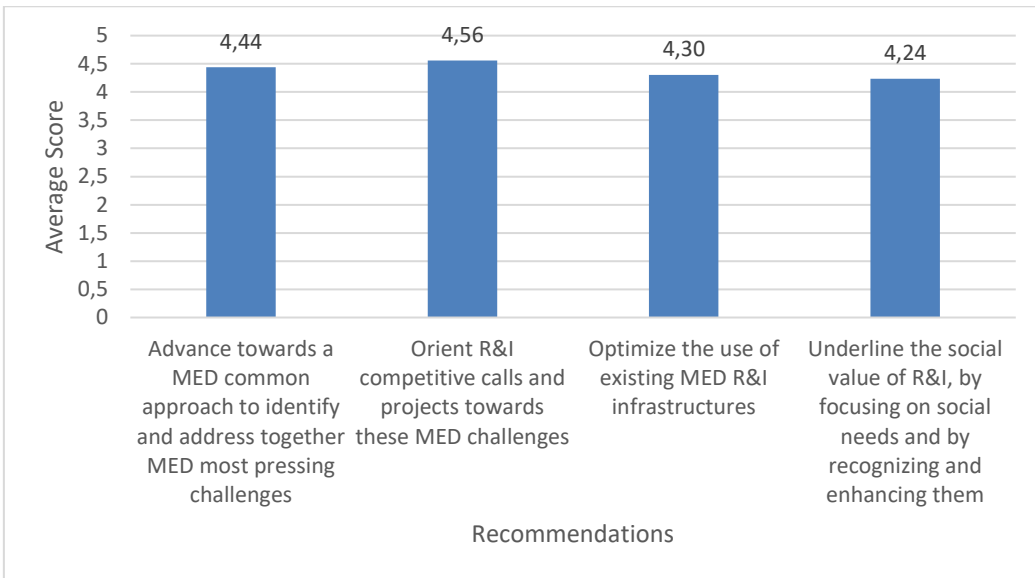
6. SWOT Analysis and Proposals for Improvement of Territorial Governance and Cooperation

The findings of the preceding analysis provide rich information about the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and threats of the MCGS and its further consolidation. In Table 14 the key points of the SWOT analysis for the MCGS are presented.

Table 14 The key points of the SWOT analysis for the MCGS

Strengths	Weaknesses
- Common vision of actors about the future of the Mediterranean - Consensus of actors on the competitive advantages of the Mediterranean - Existence of many international actors - Existence of different funding sources - Adequate capacity of INTERREG-MED to promote the targets of MCGS (both in terms of operational structure and funded projects) - Strong liaising activities by international organisations - Agreement for the leading actors - Strong focus by the actors on the capitalisation of the outputs of the projects - Reliance on networks for acquiring knowledge	- Limited dissemination of projects' results among actors - Excessive reliance of actors on co-financed EU funds and lack of other sources of funding - Low levels of public consultation and alignment with citizens' needs - Limited consideration of the Mediterranean Regional Challenges when drafting priorities - Limited consideration of other actors' challenges - Budget for liaising decreases as the size of institutions increases - Knowledge circulation within institutions is not well embedded - Capacity building is not well embraced, while improvements were not sufficient - Territorial cohesion is not a top priority of actors - Modest responsiveness to change - Recommendations are not incorporated by the actors - Lack of a clear consensus about the type of the Mediterranean cooperation framework
Opportunities	**Threats**
- Development of a common EU strategic framework for the Mediterranean region - Funding Opportunities for actors by the Recovery and Resilience Facility to promote their agendas - Simplification of procedures of Cohesion Funds - Strong focus of Interreg programmes on the governance issue - Challenges that demand common actions (COVID-19, Climate Change) - Better opportunities for cooperation arising from the progress of Western Balkans in their accession in the EU. - Opportunities for further cooperation by the inclusion of new member states, regions, and EU candidate countries in the	- Limited funding for territorial cooperation - Geopolitical uncertainty and conflict - Rising nationalism and national competition - Inability to engage more partners

6.1 Strengths

The analysis has highlighted a few issues that can be regarded as the main characteristics of the MCGS in its current form. The first one is a common vision on the future of the Mediterranean. It is evident from the survey that the majority of the surveyed actors share a common perception about the future of the region. This is coupled with the acknowledgement of the particular characteristics of the Mediterranean, which makes it unique. At the same time there is strong consensus regarding the common challenges the region is facing and particularly the need for a stronger focus on environmental issues and climate change, which are considered the main priorities for the majority of actors. Moreover, there was also strong consensus on the advantages of the Mediterranean, that is its rich natural resources and strategic geographical/geopolitical position, which provides a common ground on the issues that should be first tapped in order to achieve sustainable development in the area.

The existence of many actors of international sphere of influence, such as the Interreg MED, the UfM and the CPMR, can help boost cooperation in the area. As it was shown in the survey analysis, these organisations are articulated with structures perfectly matched with the objectives of the MCGS layers. Therefore, their operations inherently promote further consolidation of the system. Moreover, as the EUSAIR Macroregional Strategy and the WestMED initiative become more mature, the actors of the region become more experienced in operating under common strategies, thus further promoting the idea of a more unified governance system in the Mediterranean. As it was shown, higher engagement with the actors improves the capacity of actors to deal with regional challenges and implement the provisions of cohesion policy. It is also noteworthy that international organisations perform the most liaising activities, despite not being the largest institution of the sample, in terms of staff size. Therefore, by securing the funding to these organisations, liaising and dissemination of activities will also keep expanding.

Another strong point emanating from the analysis is the strong focus of actors on capitalising the generated knowledge. A good proportion of the actors include such targets in their priorities and support the dissemination of knowledge, mostly through their participation in networks of actors. In addition, the analysis showed that projects, a core product of cooperation programmes, act as a funding source for many of the surveyed actors. The plethora of programmes operating in the area, renders possible the operation of many actors, whose further engagement in the MCGS is important for its future development. It has to be stressed that funding should also be effective and targeted at domains that enhance the foundation of the MCGS. On this, Interreg MED, the leading ETC programme in the area, was found to be very effective in promoting the MCGS layers with its funding projects but also by its structure. This is testified by the comparative analysis among 12 transnational ETCs where Interreg MED was found as having a structure being the best aligned with the demands of the four (4) layers of the system.

6.2 Weaknesses

The analysis also highlighted some weak issues that should be confronted in order for the MCGS to be further improved. The analysis of results has shown that cooperation improves the

capacity of actors to promote the MCGS as the actors which showed higher involvement in cooperation declared higher levels of capacity improvements in confronting regional challenges. Nevertheless, the knowledge of actors regarding the priorities and results of other actors remains limited. Knowledge could also be expanded for specific elements of the system, such as the strategic and policy documents for the Mediterranean and the events organized in the area. The lack of knowledge is more evident in national authorities and other institutions with no administrative role. Therefore, it is apparent that a new mechanism of knowledge circulation should be established and promoted so that knowledge is better and more efficiently disseminated in the area.

Moreover, knowledge is limited also for the activities of the Interreg MED projects. This is not a result of a possible mismatching of interests between actors and projects' orientation, as lack of knowledge about the results of the Interreg projects is also found for actors with a direct interest on the topics of the projects. This lack of knowledge should be added to the very weak knowledge about the activities of other Interreg programmes of the area. Therefore, cooperation and dissemination of results should be strengthened, and Interreg MED, as the most acknowledged actor of the area, may have a leading role on that. The comparison of the ETCs showed that, as with the other programmes, Interreg had not a clear explanation of how it would coordinate its joint efforts with other Interreg programmes, did not present clearly who were the key actors of the area and did not promote enough the projects which demonstrated the stronger potential for development of synergies in its application evaluation framework. On this, the ongoing task for enhancing cooperation among Interreg programmes in the area led by the INTERACT could be very beneficial[39].

In addition, the lack of knowledge is further amplified by the limited in-house circulation of knowledge among the actors. Although actors show a great commitment to knowledge capitalisation, many of them do not have adequate mechanisms for circulating knowledge among their members. This limited circulation of knowledge has as a result many of the actors' recommendations not to be employed by other actors in the area. This undermines the notion of community and therefore the potential of the consolidation of the MCGS. The same stands for the effort that actors put on the improvement of their capacity to promote the layer of Territorial and Policy Governance. Many actors do not engage in capacity building activities, while others tackle only one of the two pillars of the layer. This may be the reason why the actors' stated improvement of capacity building in these two (2) pillars were not so satisfactory for the past programming period. The lower than optimal level of knowledge circulation has also clear effects on actors' capacity to promote the objectives of the Regional Challenges – EU policies layer. Although actors, in general, revealed a good capacity to adjust their operations to any new priorities set by the EU cohesion policy, there were readiness gaps especially for the local and regional authorities and other non-administrative actors. Moreover, the adaptability of actors to any new challenges faced by the Mediterranean region could be considered as modest.

As for the strategic orientation of actors and their priorities setting, it is acknowledged by most actors the need to define their operation in a multi-level type of cooperation environment.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that not all actors perceive the cooperation framework of the region as a multi-level one. Also, it became evident that although actors perceived the cooperation framework as of a multi-level structure, when drafting their priorities, they seem not to put the same weight on the Mediterranean level as they do with the other policy levels. This is mostly driven by the gap existing between international organisations and regional/local authorities, which have rather different spatial considerations when setting their priorities. Therefore, despite the actors' perception of what the main priorities for the region are, is not affected by their particular interests, when it comes to policy implementation their priorities might vary due to the limited consideration of other actors' priorities. And it is evident on some occasions that the planned/implemented actions/interventions/projects are based on their specific (territorial/sectoral) needs and challenges they face rather than on the commonly perceived priorities. In this way, the potential of establishing a formal Mediterranean governance level is left untapped.

Furthermore, a significant weakness lies in the way that actors set their priorities and specifically in the rather low level of public consultation. Likewise, actors do not put much weight on the "territorial cohesion" factor when setting their priorities; and valuable territorial development tools of the cohesion policy (such as the Integrated Territorial Investment) are not capitalised adequately. These remarks also concern the Interreg MED programme as it was found that the public consultation was among the lowest of the ETCs examined and no use of the Territorial Development Tools was promoted by the programme either. The programme did not promote as well any projects and activities that contribute to the reduction of spatial disparities. Under these conditions, it could be argued that social and spatial cohesion is not well supported by the system.

Finally, considering the financing of actors' operations, there is a strong reliance of actors on co-financed EU funds. Own funding and funds from commercial activities are limited and not to the least comparable to state funding. Considering that EU funds are disbursed to final beneficiaries through programmes and projects, this may reduce the degree of freedom from actors to design and implement the activities that they have set as their own priorities. Therefore, actors should widen their funding sources. On the other hand, and when cooperation is considered, the constant flow of EU funds remains crucial as the actors that perform the most liaising activities are those with limited budgets and mostly relying on EU funding.

6.3 Opportunities

There are some potential trends and developments that can help the MCGS to develop faster and become more solid. Starting from the emerging challenges for the region, i.e. climate change and COVID-19, these could really be an opportunity for further cooperation and strengthening of ties among countries and actors. This is because these challenges bring people and governments together and therefore provide a tacit experience of cooperation which could be extended to other more competitive sectors and fields. There is also a great opportunity brought by the Recovery and Resilience Facility which as it was shown comes with great funding opportunities which could be driven to support the promotion of development agendas of the Mediterranean actors. In addition, the new simplified procedures of the

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Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 are expected to reduce bureaucratic barriers and help actors to acquire the necessary funding for undertaking projects and initiatives.

Moreover, EU enlargement to include also the IPA countries with a shoreline at the Mediterranean could lift many barriers for cooperation and strengthen further the relationships and joint activities among countries. The recent enlargement of the implementation area of the Interreg-Med programme, which now also considers North Macedonia, Bulgaria and some additional regions of Spain as eligible for funding, is a decisive step towards the wider representation of citizens in shaping the future of the Mediterranean. Similar steps should be taken for engaging the southern areas, as a more constant cooperation with southern countries can increase the overall capacity of the region to deal with new challenges. It is very encouraging for the wider consolidation of the MCGS the fact that the ENI CBC MED Programme, which covers the southern part of the Mediterranean, was acknowledged as one of the most influential actors of the region by the surveyed actors. Therefore, this momentum should not be lost. Finally, the development of a common EU framework for the region could boost cooperation in the area and further consolidate the common activities towards the confrontation of common challenges. Therefore, the continuation of the governance focused activities of the Interreg MED (PANORAMED), as well as of the other programmes of the area could play a pivotal role in paving the way for a more formal policy level to be developed.

6.4 Threats

The future development of MCGS is also faced with potential risks. The limited participation of stakeholders on the consultations for setting of actors' priorities may create a gap between actors' priorities and regional needs. Actors also recognize political uncertainty as a potential barrier for the consolidation of MCGS. It is true that political stability enhances cooperation and this results to more stable relationships among countries. Political instability and increasing nationalism and competition, may lead to divergence on the priorities of the regional actors, which currently seem to be well aligned towards the protection of the environment.

Besides, a risk emanates from possible inability of the system to engage more actors in its structure. In order for the system to be representative of the regional needs and citizens' priorities, it should strongly focus on strengthening actors' participation, engagement, consultation and ownership of decisions and results. The limited adoption of public consultations processes coupled with the limited knowledge about many of the system's achievements, even from partners that responded to the invitation to participate in the present survey and showed to be more active, may manifest some signs of a development path resulting in a rather narrow MCGS. This risk will be amplified by any reduction in EU and national funding dedicated at promoting cooperation activities in the area. On this, the reduction of the budget of the Interreg programmes for the programming period 2021-2027 may impede the consolidation of the system.

7. Monitoring Scheme: Opening up the dialogue & setting the stepping stones for the development of a relevant and meaningful EU-MED governance monitoring mechanism.

This Section will set the basis for a constructive dialogue on the development of a comprehensive, evidence and results-based monitoring framework to provide real time information on the progress and performance of the new MCGS in achieving its set objectives.

A monitor mechanism is the backbone of any good governance approach. Given the specificities of the Mediterranean region and the complex nature of the governance processes involved, for the MCGS to be effective, bottom-up, inclusive, accountable and efficient, it is essential to systematically track progress and manage performance on set objectives. At the same time, it is important to support the learning process and enable actors to share and learn from one another by reflecting on their own and others' visions, as well as actions, perceptions and experiences. Knowledge sharing will also help them to jointly identify risks and challenges, and take timely mitigation measures to overcome them, while planning the next steps and programme activities and policies more efficiently, effectively and inclusively. Moreover, raising awareness and visibility of interventions and increasing engagement of the multi-level actors to ensure ownership of results is a very important step towards this direction.

7.1 Current Situation

The undertaken desk based research showcases that currently the various functions of the Mediterranean governance, at any given level, are carried out by a wide array of individual actors with limited or sporadic coordination, low involvement in public consultations, lack of clear roles and ownership of a common vision/strategy for the Mediterranean, leading on some occasions to different perceptions of the challenges the region is facing and/or divergent views about their relative importance, limited capacity to plan and participate in joint efforts, lack of knowledge on best practices and similar efforts of other actors in the region, etc. As a result, despite aspirations for a common Mediterranean vision and a great commitment to knowledge capitalization by most actors, fragmentation and lack of cooperation is the rule, while many regional challenges are poorly identified and inefficiently addressed, as they are mostly dealt at local, regional or national level only. Lack of comparable data and adequate in-house mechanisms for circulating the knowledge among actors is also widely showcased.[40] Conflicts among actors are solved with great difficulty, if at all. The quest for an effective, power-sharing model to reduce inherent fragmentation and provide joint solutions on common challenges that so far has eluded the existing model of governance in the Mediterranean is paramount. Focus on progress, performance, collaboration, intense multi-level consultation, joint knowledge creation and information sharing can help the new MCGS become more effective and results-oriented. Taking into consideration the above, the setting up of a monitoring system that delivers growth and provides an adequate structure to engage

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[40] *Lack of comparable data has been widely demonstrated during presentations of regional stakeholders in numerous occasions including among others: Proceedings of the meeting PANORAMED DIALOGUES, A. Blum,"Food for thought/Recommendations", WP6 Leader (Maritime Surveillance) Secretariat General de la Mer, 23.11.21, PANORAMED Stocktaking Paper MPP (2021), "Improving Multilevel Governance in the Mediterranean in Support of Sustainable Development (2021).*

all actors from both shores of the Mediterranean in enhanced cooperation for securing the future of the Mediterranean and its 'diversified wealth' through further engagement, communication, openness, empowerment, commitment, knowledge brokerage and dissemination, and ownership of results.

7.2 Setting the scene – Rationale of the Monitoring Mechanism

In the backdrop of the above context, the proposed monitoring mechanism aims to support the new MCGS to receive continuous feedback from all actors; identify successes and shortcomings in the process; and take corrective measures along the way. It will track how the governance system evolves; its progress towards achieving the set goals; and measure change over time. The proposed results-based monitoring mechanism will focus on day to day operations and the capacities of the main actors involved, offering a continuous, transparent and accountable snapshot in real time of where the MCGS is at a given time in terms of outputs and outcomes related to its set goals. It will also provide explanations on what the progress is per activity; what the main challenges hindering progress are; and serve as an informant tool to enable the main actors (policy-makers and relevant stakeholders alike) to regularly engage and take mitigation measures timely in order to plan the next steps and programme activities more efficiently, effectively and inclusively.[41]

The monitoring mechanism will also facilitate the exchange of relevant information, experience and synergies developed across sectors at national, regional, sub-regional/local level among all relevant stakeholders in real time. This exchange together with capacity building efforts along the way will empower all levels of governance involved to take shared responsibilities and coordinate their actions more effectively fostering cooperation, dialogue, streamlining, knowledge transfer and capitalisation. Knowledge brokering coupled with targeted dissemination and communication of results and lessons learned among all stakeholders and the wider public will further inform and improve future policy planning and implementation; and hence enhance the effectiveness, accountability and bottom up legitimacy of the new multilevel cooperation governance system.

The monitoring goals of the new MCGS are described in detail further below in this section.

7.3 Steps forward

To develop an effective monitoring mechanism we need to harness its goals on the four (4) layers and the related objectives of the new MCGS. Hence, the proposed monitoring objectives are set against the four (4) governance layers' objectives (*See Section 1)* and focus on:

- Involvement of all actors in shaping a common vision and joint strategy for the Mediterranean governance, including the integration of priorities set by common challenges and other EU/High level Policies Including SDG goals.

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[41] *PANORAMED Stocktaking Paper MPP (2021), "Improving Multilevel Governance in the Mediterranean in Support of Sustainable Development (2021), Better Governance for a Mediterranean Green Deal, (PANORAMED)(2020), Interreg Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020 Operational Evaluation Final Report (2020), Impact Evaluation of the Interreg Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020 Final Report (April 2021) & The Interreg Euro-MED Programme Results Amplification Strategy, (October 2021), ICAR Short Course 'Tools on Monitoring, Evaluation and Impact assessment of Rainfeed Technologies and Development Programmes' (2017) also the "Results Amplification Strategy of the Euro-MED programme" that has been validated by the TF (October 2021)* https://interreg-med.eu/about-us/futureinterregmedprogramme/

- Levels of cooperation among main partners and stakeholders and coordination of their actions to ensure efficient interventions, especially through successful coordination of public bodies and existing initiatives/networks.

- Support Actions for Territorial and Policy Governance Capacity Building.

- Communication, Knowledge Brokering and Sustainable Learning, including knowledge creation – knowledge capitalisation – transfer of best practices, success stories, lessons learned, particularly through transfer of successful outcomes in advanced regions directly or indirectly to other regions and integrating them in ongoing public policies.

7.4 Methodology

Our work built upon the comprehensive review of materials provided by the contracting authority; the study of other governance monitoring mechanisms of Interreg programmes between 2014-2021, as well as the survey results. In addition to the above, the participation in the proceedings of relevant workshops and online events such as PANORAMED Dialogues, EU Regions Week etc. and some informal consultations with stakeholders have also taken place with the view to start engaging the stakeholders into the process and to understand their views and gather their feedback directly.[42] Such efforts, despite not being exhaustive constitute a significant first step towards opening up the dialogue for setting the framework for a relevant and meaningful Mediterranean governance monitoring system. Yet, in order to develop and endorse a clear and sustainable system further systematic consultation and engagement with the shareholders (including academics and policy makers) is required. Some of this work has been undertaken for the preparation of this report. However, setting a comprehensive monitoring system for the MCGS goes beyond the limited time and resources of the current study and should be the focus of a new specific project. The present report, however, provides the road map and a solid basis to build upon, identifying the following steps for designing and setting up a monitoring mechanism for the new MCGS.

7.5 Setting the foundations for the structure of the Monitoring Mechanism

In order to set the foundations of the monitoring mechanism some preliminary steps need to be taken: a) clearly define the environmental, political, economic context within which the MCGS operates; b) map the current state of play, focusing on identifying the actors and key stakeholders and their engagement at every stage of the policy cycle; and finally c) operationalise the monitoring mechanism by specifying the monitoring objectives, structure and processes as well as the relevant resources required, including specific data, relevant indicators and related knowledge.

7.5.1 Define Context - Framing[43]

Understanding the wider context (environmental, political, economic, etc.) is critical to define and validate the vision, mission and goals of the new Mediterranean governance system, the

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[42] *Our rational was shared with some of the main stakeholders and their feedback was integrated in the drafting of some preliminary indicators. We have done that during a Survey conducted between September and November 2021 but also got feedback from stakeholders individually and during our presentations in PANORAMED Dialogues (held on 23.11.2021) & SG meeting for PANORAMED (held on 14.10.21).*

[43] *Framing is understood here as ''the interpretation process through which people construct and express how they make sense of the world around them''. Gray B (2003) Framing of environmental disputes, p.12. In: Lewicki RJ, Gray B, Elliott M (ed) Making sense of intractable environmental conflicts. Island Press, Washington DC, pp 11–34*

extent to which they are based on the EU and SDG policy priorities, as well as the key common challenges the Mediterranean region is currently facing. To this end, the design of the monitoring mechanism should take into consideration the frame in which it operates, and specifically the needs, opportunities, objectives and processes (i.e. the ways actors construct and express how they make sense of the world around them and in turn how they are organised and take action) of the area.

Similarly, region-wide concerns on tracking the progress of good governance identified in this report and their reformulation to joint interventions and policy outcomes (i.e. responses to the challenges including priorities-agenda setting) are relevant and should also be taken into consideration in the design phase of the monitoring mechanism. To this end, a brief readiness assessment, that needs to be further validated by the stakeholders, was undertaken based on the survey conducted, the meticulous study of a wide range of reports and the views of the stakeholders during several meetings.[44] This showcased a number of common challenges and key issues/questions in terms of monitoring needs & capacity, which are summarised in *Table 15*.

Table 15 Key issues / Questions for Monitoring Needs and Capacity

1. Co-operation - Co-ordination - Communication of actions
○ *Is collaboration & communication among stakeholders efficient?*
○ *Are they actively building/using cooperation channels?*
○ *How well are they working with each other in relation to e.g. building partnerships, synergies, alliances, coalitions, and to what extent they are aware of each other's work and are proactive in disseminating lessons learnt effectively?*
○ *Do they comply with the co-ordination requirements of the EC and do they take any further action to ensure harmonised work and efficient distribution of resources and complementarities in the set-up of activities on the territories?*
○ *To what extent coordination tools such as shared calendar, workspaces on the website, mapping and stakeholder list, are used effectively?*
○ *Is the contribution of local communities, academia & businesses to MED challenges acknowledged and enhanced?*
○ *How possible is it for the MED actors to adapt to and support the MCGS?*
2. Organisational capacity/operational structure/group processes
○ *What is the monitoring capacity of the relevant stakeholders?*
○ *Are there processes set up for data collection, analysis, sharing, knowledge circulation, liaising etc.?*
○ *What kind of capacity building exercises on participatory governance practices/monitoring are needed if any?*
○ *Are all relevant territorial and policy governance the targets of capacity building?*
3. Input - Resources - Data, tools, human resources
○ *Are there enough available comparable data?*
○ *Is Data Collection, Sharing and Storage effective?*
○ *How well are the stakeholders working together in relation to e.g. needed resources, leadership, management, cost effectiveness, sustainability?*
○ *Are there enough qualitative data on the possible involvement of the stakeholders in the*

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[44] *Proceedings of the Live Poll held in PANORAMED DIALOGUES, 23.11.21*

Q: Is there a common vision of the Mediterranean regions' future? In what way it could be achieved and further developed?

A: Reinforce synergies and higher co-operation between Interreg programmes in the Mediterranean, from the programming process to their implementation. Higher impact in the territory. More efficiency while using public funds. 36%

	policy planning and implementation of territorial policy?
4.	**Knowledge - Knowledge generation/sharing**
	o *Is informing, educating and engaging stakeholders effective?*
	o *Is it part of their vision/value/strategy?*
	o *How could knowledge generation, awareness raising, knowledge transfer and capitalisation of new knowledge be improved? Is there a role for knowledge brokers?*
	o *How feasible is it to open up the dialogue to society by enhancing the feeling of ownership and widening the network of stakeholders (engage them regularly in public consultations and get feedback from private and public sectors including citizens)?*
	o *Can actors promote their work effectively but also capitalise on the work of others. Are effective capitalisation activities ensured and planned well in advance?*
	o *Are there user-friendly and open access common tools, such as multi-user web platforms, (such as an e-platform for data collection sharing and monitoring), 'multi-domain' groups (that include actors and stakeholders from science, business sectors, policy makers and societal actors from both shores), newsletters and smart project mapping to share information and knowledge?*
5.	**Relevance**
	o *Is there a common vision? Is there effective/adequate funding to support this vision?*
	o *How relevant are the planned projects to the needs of different sections of beneficiaries/stakeholders?*
	o *Are differences between the stated interests of actors acknowledged by each other and toned down/smoothed?*
6.	**Effectiveness**
	o *Are set objectives achieved?*
	o *What is the progress on providing effective responses to common challenges the regions face?*
	o *What is the performance of the processes & outputs (i.e. organisation and planning of projects/programmes/financial instruments) used to best respond to these challenges?*
7.	**Sustainability - Impact**
	o *What is the policy impact on people's lives and/or the environment?*
	o *To what extent the parties involved are able to identify weaknesses and take action to correct them?*
	o *To what extent perceptions and attitudes towards engagement and co-operation can change due to MCGS focused interventions within sector programmes?*
	o *Monitoring efforts here focus on tracking outreach, engagement in public consultation and policy making and implementation including monitoring per se.*
8.	**Contribution**
	o *What is the contribution of outcomes & impacts compared to other policies/actions?*
	o *Is there integration of results into the design and implementation of policy-making (including extract commitment from policymakers)?*

Issues related to the impact and contributions have to do with the evaluation rather than the monitoring of the MCGS, however, they are included here as their consideration is also an essential part of result-based monitoring.

7.5.2 Mapping the current state of play

The identification of the actors and key stakeholders and their engagement at every stage of the policy cycle including monitoring is a very important part of the process. The main challenges of the area, as pointed out above, provide a clearer picture of what the stakes are. Based on these, we identified the following relevant actors, who share common priorities for the Mediterranean and whose engagement in the monitoring process is considered essential.

We have divided them at seven (7) different levels; four (4) vertical (geographic) and 3 horizontal, as illustrated in *Figure 71*.

- European Level/International level (i.e. European Commission DG Regio, Joint Secretariat, Managing Authority, Monitoring Committee, Steering Committee, Task Force, Associated Partners)
- National Level (i.e. Ministries, ERDF Managing Authorities, National Contact Points)
- Regional Level (i.e. Regional Authorities, Regional Managing Authorities, Project Managers)
- Local Level (i.e. Local Authorities, Local Managing Authorities, Project Managers)[45]
- Business/interest groups (i.e. Regional-Local Organisations, UNEP/MAP)
- Citizen communities/Civil Society[46] (i.e. NGOs, Grassroot organisations)
- Think tanks - Research Centres - Higher Education Institutions[47]

Figure 71 Levels of Actor

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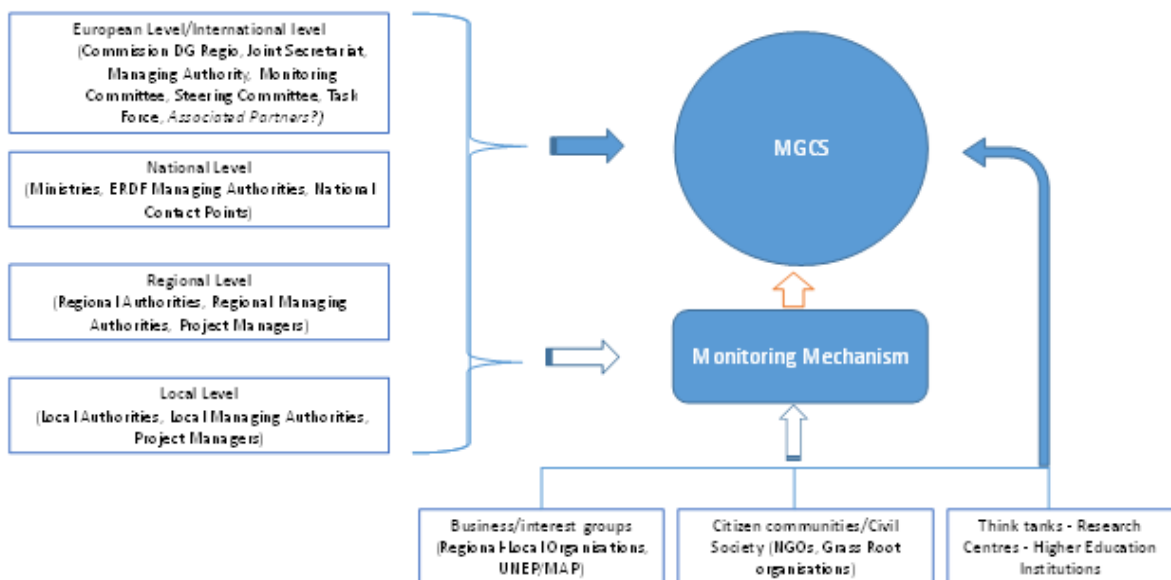
[45] *The increasing engagement and commitment of the Local level is considered critical*

[46] *On the evolving importance of the role of civil society see*
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/7700/-
Mediterranean_strategy_for_sustainable_development_2016-
2025_Investing_in_environmental_sustainability_to_achieve_social_and_economic_development-20.pdf?sequence=3
"…its role becomes more pronounced: besides being a catalyst for supporting and monitoring the implementation process at the regional and national level, civil society can take up important tasks related to awareness and sensitization, as well as acting as the third pillar of democracy, along with decision-makers and judicial entities, to ensure transparency and secure the participation of the people."

[47] *https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/event/science-policymaking-greece-29th-september-2021_en* *"Science for policy/science advice eco-systems refer to those institutions and processes that are involved in producing, synthesising, translating, integrating and using scientific knowledge in policymaking."*
On the acknowledgement of the prominent role research/science has to play in connecting evidence to policy see among others;
https://www.oecd.org/gov/governing-better-through-evidence-informed-policy-making-proceedings.pdf *(2017)p.10, but also the proceedings of the current workshops in Panoramed Dialogues (2021), EURegionsWeek (2021), etc.*

7.5.3 Operationalising the Monitoring Mechanism

To set up a results-based monitoring mechanism, the monitoring objectives, structure and processes as well as the resources required need to be defined in advance. Focus is turned primarily on tracking progress on cooperation among main actors in shaping a common vision for the Mediterranean and engaging in joint initiatives to implement it and address common challenges. Closely related to this is an effort to identify the capacity of different actors to cooperate and monitor the progress and performance of joint coordinated actions to create a common vision and produce results to address common challenges. An integral part of the process is to assess the extent to which joint actions generate knowledge and forge knowledge capitalisation and accountability and how these are disseminated among relevant actors and stakeholders.

Our desk study and field survey demonstrated that given its multiple-users character while shaping the new Mediterranean governance model and the related monitoring mechanism, it is important to keep in mind, at least in the beginning, that perceptions of challenges and views about their relative importance may differ among stakeholders. It is argued here that perceptions about the importance of objectives or hierarchy of challenges will most probably change as more information is obtained.

The monitoring objectives, structure and processes are analysed below.

7.5.3.1. Monitoring Objectives

The monitoring objectives are interwoven and directly related to the new MCGS objectives and are the following:

1) To track the progress of MCGS vis-a-vis the achievement of the goals of its four (4) operational layers and in particular on:

- Incorporating the guidelines of the EU and of other high-level targets in policy outcomes to address commonly perceived regional challenges per sector, with the view to shape and implement a common vision/strategy for the Mediterranean region.

- Strengthening cooperation among main partners and stakeholders and enhancing coordination and communication of their interventions.

- Promoting capacity building of main partners and stakeholders involved in the region from all levels of (territorial and policy) governance and engaging actors from both shores (including IPA and ENP countries)[48] building trust and openness so that they are all united and have ownership of a common future.

- Fostering sustainable learning – knowledge creation through extensive knowledge brokering – knowledge capitalisation – transfer of best practices / success stories / lessons learned (integrating them in ongoing public policies); harnessing technology to this end and the use of digital means, such as an e-platform for data collection sharing and monitoring.

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[48] *Proceedings of the workshops during the meeting PANORAMED DIALOGUES, A. Blum,"Food for thought/Recommendations", WP6 Leader (Maritime Surveillance) Secretariat General de la Mer, 23.11.21*

2) To assess the performance (successes & flaws/lessons learnt) of all cooperation relevant actions/ interventions/ programmes, enabling the actors to contribute to the governance system in multiple ways and various capacities. Assess the level of coordination of existing initiatives/ programmes/ networks to ensure efficient interventions to address common challenges. More specifically, assess the performance of all relevant multi-level actors to produce joint strategies and implement joint initiatives (actions/interventions/programmes) avoiding duplications and building on lessons learnt to contribute meaningfully to the MCGS governance system's efforts in achieving its goals.[49]

3) To share information and knowledge about actors, projects, results; provide knowledge brokerage and capitalise on generated knowledge; transfer successful outcomes in advanced regions directly/indirectly to other regions, and integrate knowledge and lessons learned in policy outputs. An inseparable element in all the above is to raise awareness and visibility of interventions; and facilitate engagement and ownership of results. Sustainability of results and capitalisation could only be possible through extended and targeted information sharing and knowledge transfer.[50]

7.5.3.2 Monitoring structure & processes

This includes the following key steps:

a) Operational Framework set up: Define the operation, clear roles and function of a monitoring structure entrusted with the development of an action plan to assess how to use inputs to achieve outputs and outcomes, i.e. to report progress and alert stakeholders and policy-makers alike for any arising challenges and risks, are all very important steps along the way. Related to this is the need to create an Analysis Plan and suitable user-friendly reporting templates.

b) Establishment and operation of a Monitoring Committee (MC):
The first step is to set up a Monitoring Committee (MC) and an advisory board or a steering committee vested with clear roles and responsibilities. Their main role will be to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and expertise and will serve as a platform for promoting structured dialogue and for preventing and resolving disputes[51]. The MC will be responsible for assessing the performance (i.e. efficient and qualitative implementation) of the MCGS and to track the progress made towards achieving its objectives. It will coordinate the sharing of information per sector, among all relevant stakeholders from different levels of governance and promote cooperation, communication and knowledge exchange, and transfer of good practices. Likewise with the monitoring committees of ENI CBC MED and Interreg MED, and unless otherwise suggested after the consultation with stakeholders, "*decisions are to be taken on a consensus basis expressed by each national delegation with one vote allocated per*

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[49] *"Results Amplification Strategy of the Euro-MED programme" that has been validated by the TF (October 2021)* https://interreg-med.eu/about-us/futureinterregmedprogramme/ *& Interreg MED Operational Evaluation* https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/operational_evaluation/InterregMedOE-Final_report_2020_En.pdf

[50] *Interreg MED Operational Evaluation* https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/operational_evaluation/InterregMedOE-Final_report_2020_En.pdf

[51] https://cdn-contenu.quebec.ca/cdn-contenu/adm/min/energie-ressources-naturelles/publications-adm/acceptabilite-sociale/GM-Guide-ComiteSuivi-en.pdf?1568213059 *retrived 1/12/2021 p.vii Overview*

participating country. If necessary, decisions can be made following a written procedure (also on a consensus basis) within the participating States".[52]

Some indications from the current survey and our study of similar monitoring structures lead to propose with some degree of legitimacy that a MC could be composed of representatives of the Member and Partner states as well as social and economic partners (from ministries, regional and local authorities including municipalities and representatives from the business sector, research institutions and organised citizens' interest groups). Representatives from DG Regio could be part of it with observer status (like it is the case with ENI CBC MED) but without any formal decision-making authority. The proposed MC could be chaired jointly by the General Secretariat and Managing Authority(ies) of Interreg MED Programme and UfM (the two prevalent actors, as showcased in our survey). In performing its role more inclusively, it should hold regular consultations (at least once per month) with the Managing Authorities and the Steering Committees of all MED programmes, the Joint Secretariats of different MED programmes, the various Programme Monitoring Committees & National Contact Points as well as with representatives of social and economic sectors including cooperation platforms and other relevant initiatives etc.

The composition and role of the MC will be finalised after a systematic consultation among the relevant stakeholders. The format, means (use of on-line newsletters, project smart mapping, or other means) and tools (e-platform) for information sharing could be harmonised but at the same time information could vary based on the priorities, challenges and stated interests per sector.

Indicatively and not exhaustively we mention here the following:

- Related Actors/ Players per sector;
- Projects/Interventions per sector;
- Results per sector (enhance knowledge generation including best practices, success stories, unsuccessful projects, useful methodologies etc. that show the contribution from local communities to address common challenges and enhance knowledge generation and capitalisation, cooperation, coordination, transfer of project results to policy making at all levels, transfer of knowledge from research to business, capacity building and shared management);
- Contribution to the EU Cohesion policy and sustainable development goals including economic, environmental and social impact.

The MC will be facilitated in its role by an Advisory Board/Steering Committee, whose composition, rules of procedures are to be approved by the MC. It could be composed of representatives from the five (5) most eminent stakeholders identified by the survey in order to get representation from all sectors involved. It could include UfM, Interreg MED Programme, ENI CBC Med Programme, WestMED, PRIMA, the regional and bilateral components of the European Neighbourhood Policy, etc. to provide advice in each single step of the assessment procedure. It is important that the size of both the MC and Advisory Board/Steering Committee are manageable so as to effectively resume and take action and

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[52]https://research.upatras.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/1.-Interreg-MED-strategic-framework.pdf;
https://www.enicbcmed.eu/about-us/governance

that all those involved share a solid commitment and willingness to engage systematically and constructively in the process.

Furthermore, the use of different tools (such as project smart mapping) and particularly a new multi-user and user-friendly monitoring e-tool will be developed to complement the MC to effectively implement its role. This could take the form of an e-platform, which will be accessible to all stakeholders and will be fed with information stemming from all actors involved in interventions and results per sector "*to foster the transfer, exploitation and mainstreaming of knowledge and results developed under different Euro-Mediterranean initiatives*".[53] Sharing information in real time across sectors through an e-platform will fill the gaps between "data providers and consumers" and create knowledge per sector that can be transferred to improve planning and capacity in the region.

The proposed monitoring mechanism should take stock of M&E efforts undertaken or underway and build on new reliable and relevant data fed by relevant stakeholders per sector.[54] This requires capacity building to enable the stakeholders to provide accurate and timely comparable data. Also as it is evident in the next step, the sourcing of new relevant and timely data is an essential part of the process.

7.5.3.3 Monitoring resources and inputs (Data - Indicators - Knowledge)

To achieve its set goals, one of the main tasks of the proposed monitoring mechanism is to collect data and report to the MC and Advisory Board/Steering Committee on the basis of suitable indicators. Access to relevant information and data as well as capacity to use data are critical factors hindering the current monitoring process and have been pronounced by the stakeholders as some of the main challenges to be tackled if Mediterranean governance is to improve[55]. The present section provides the basis to set up a consultation process for agreeing the set of: a) comparable data; b) relevant indicators; and c) knowledge transfer to be used to

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[53] *The clear need for knowledge transfer and capitalisation is not only evident in the discussions under way but has started taking the shape of practical - specific projects; see the new projects approved on 26.3.2021 by ENI CBC MED Programme to enhance transfer and reuse of good practices across the Mediterranean region* *https://www.enicbcmed.eu/eni-cbc-med-programme-approves-11-new-projects-enhance-transfer-and-replication-good-practices*

[54] *One of the main issues identified/explored during the assessment of the Operational Evaluation is whether the use of the different online monitoring tools the MCGS has to work with (belonging to the various Programmes or to other Authorities, e.g. the Certifying Authority or the European Commission) are well-coordinated and complementary.*

[55] *Proceedings of the online meeting PANORAMED DIALOGUES, held on 23.11.21 and particularly the presentations of: S. Corak "WP5 Coastal and Maritime Tourism; Smarter tourism for better governance" ".. one of the main challenges identified on improving Med governance is to improve data collecting and sharing, enhance knowledge transfer and networks as well as participatory and integrated multilevel planning. This together with tackling sustainability can be achieved by improving ST monitoring tools and mechanisms to monitor strategies and policies."*
Interreg Euro-MED 2021/27 Programme - Draft Version 6, (September 2021) https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Explore/What_is_Interreg_Med/Future_programme/Programme_Document_approved_version6_EN.pdf retrieved 4/12/21 and also "Results Amplification Strategy of the Euro-MED programme" that has been validated by the TF (October 2021) https://interreg-med.eu/about-us/futureinterregmedprogramme/
EURegionsWeek, 11-14.10.21, 19th European Week of Regions and Cities; https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/news/watch-euregionsweek-again_en
the "Impact Evaluation of the Interreg Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020" https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/impact_evaluation/MED_Eval_Final_Report_EN.pdf, and the Operational Evaluation https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/operational_evaluation/InterregMedOE-Final_report_2020_En.pdf

measure against the main objectives and outputs and show progress in reaching the intended objectives. It advocates improving data collection and sharing as well as designing relevant indicators using lessons-learnt through effective coordination of interventions and information sharing, and stresses the importance of the development of an effective dissemination and communication plan. All these aim to enhance the sustainability of the whole effort.

a. Data

Suitable data collection methods ensuring data quality should be clearly described in advance together with the type of data required. Data on carefully developed indicators should be routinely collected, meticulously analysed using qualitative and quantitative analysis and stored adequately in a dedicated e-platform. All the above should be decided based on a needs/readiness assessment after consultation with the main stakeholders. Some related information can be already drawn from the draft MPPs of the Interreg MED/ PANORAMED programmes and proceedings of the various consultations, and other related initiatives that took place in the framework of PANORAMED and Interreg MED.[56]

More specifically, the following aspects related to data were drawn from the study of all these documents which are very important to take into consideration while designing the MCGS monitoring mechanism:

- **Gather and Review existing data.** Identify suitable comparable data types for analyses. Ensure that the design of the new Mediterranean Governance monitoring system will take into account the existing and planned data-sharing and information systems of Interreg MED (including those of Interreg Europe, ENI CBC MED, Interact, EUSAIR and other Interreg and EU cohesion policy programmes). Go beyond the limits of available data and focus on the Data Quality Triangle i.e. Reliability, Validity, Timeliness by sourcing data from different sources. Identify and prioritise data gaps and then fill in the gaps using quantitative data including "*employing new complementary qualitative, people-driven data and information and feedback methodologies, in which the evidence is generated directly by the people being left behind.*"

- **Develop an action plan on data collection methods.** It is very important to aggregate, analyse and report on the performance against the indicators set to assess whether the targets are being met. Data acquisition and verification should focus on when, how and who will be collecting and analysing the data. Routinely collect data on set indicators and compare actual results with targets. Data collection methods and analysis could involve, among others: surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, consultations and other participatory methods but also use of digital platforms, crowdsourcing, and even cloud-based technologies all of which can provide low-cost ways to collect data.[57] For example, the use of complementary data found through European and Regional databases is key to this end. Meaningful participation of all stakeholders must be ensured in the data collection and analysis processes. The regular and timely provision of regular data by different levels of government, regional organisations and other

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stakeholders per sector is key to support the monitoring process. Such stakeholders include representatives of national, regional and local governments from both sides of the Mediterranean and other stakeholders, such as Managing and Contracting Authorities of other Interreg programmes as well as Beneficiaries, Project Managers, National Contact points and other social and economic actors per sector. Closely related to this is to conduct a capacity gaps analysis to identify (and when relevant to enhance) the capacity of stakeholders to provide accurate, timely and reliable data and to coordinate efforts to avoid duplication. Last but not least, develop easy to use visualisation methods/tools to share data among all actors. To this end, the development of standardised tools[58] including an e-tool/platform to facilitate data collection, analysis, reporting and storage is a very important step along the way.

- **Ensure a continuous flow of data and feedback throughout the project cycle and also that results-based monitoring is being conducted against well-defined indicators.** In Appendix 2, some evidenced-based feedback is provided on how to translate objectives into performance indicators and set targets & data. A result-oriented approach introducing SMART[59] indicators for governance and territorial projects is followed aiming at improving multilevel cooperation governance in the Mediterranean.

b. Indicators

As previously argued in order to measure performance, the new MCGS should be characterised by clear goals accompanied by quantifiable objectives followed by clearly identified and contextualised indicators that reflect the situation realistically and track progress and performance effectively.[60]

"*Result indicators are variables that provide information on some specific aspects of results that lend themselves to be measured*".[61] They facilitate understanding of the challenges and the policy/interventions needed and define how such policies/interventions will be measured by translating objectives into performance progress. Doing so they set dates and targets along the way. Indicators are set in context and measured against set goals. They enable measuring progress towards goals, specify the level of achievement and inform the need for corrective measures against potential challenges. Qualitative structural, process and results/outcome indicators also measure changes in commitments, efforts and results towards achieving set goals.[62] They pre-determine how effectiveness will be evaluated in a precise and clear manner.

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[58] The type of monitoring tools include: (Action Plan, Gantt Chart, logframe matrix/intervention logic, KPIs; develop and populate a dashboard of indicators, Standardised templates for reporting content and progress, e-monitoring tool, i.e. monitoring excel platform/other, minutes of meetings, monitoring sessions, reports (annual usually quantitative & biannual more qualitative)

[59] https://neerman.org/what-are-smart-indicators-in-monitoring-and-evaluation/

[60] The importance of clearly defined indicators is acknowledged also in the past programming period see https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf

[61] Ibid, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/wd_2014_en.pdf

[62] *https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-develop-indicators*

Types of Indicators: Indicators to measure governance performance in the new MED governance system can be divided into four main types. Input, Process and Outcome /Output indicators. i) Input indicators refer to the resources used in the new governance system cycle; ii) Process indicators: are those indicators that are used to measure project processes or activities and express the dynamics of the policy cycle; iii) Output indicators indicate the products and services that were delivered from the new governance system initiative; and iv) Outcome Indicators: Are indicators that measure project outcomes and indicate the on-the-ground results achieved. Outcomes are medium impacts of a project, e.g. The output indicators measure the number of participants in training, while the result/outcome indicator refers to completions of trainings.

The drafting of a suitable set of indicators per layer of governance will help the MCGS to measure against the main objective and outputs to be delivered, assess progress in reaching the intended objective and highlight areas for possible improvement. This is a very demanding process that needs to take into account the specificities of the region and the views/needs of all actors. As it is the case with all monitoring systems, indicators for monitoring the new governance system should satisfy some basic conditions (based on the acronym 'SMART")[63] being simple, quantifiable and communicable.

The next step is to populate a dashboard of suitable indicators and fix pertinent benchmarks. Such benchmarks can be different across regions, sectors and/or actions for the same indicator to reflect different conditions.[64] For the purposes of this study a result-oriented approach should be followed introducing measurable and smart indicators aiming at improving multi-level cooperation governance in the Mediterranean.

An indicative list of the main characteristics of the indicators that make them suitable, include:

- Being **relevant** to the MED governance objectives and scientifically valid.
- Being multilevel; i.e. developed with **all those involved** in MED governance (propose a bottom-up approach as it is unlikely to work if imposed from top-down).
- Being **credible**, easy to understand, and unambiguous.
- Being **part of the MED governance process** and not an end to themselves.
- Focusing on the use of information not on gaining it.
- Having a clear **link to solutions to challenges** - i.e. to the outcome - being monitored.
- Being continuously **reviewed** and refined when necessary.
- Providing **early warning of emerging issues** or problems.
- Being capable of being **monitored easily** to show trends over time.
- Using accepted and **clearly documented methods and units**.
- Being as **simple** as possible (while achieving the desired results).
- Being **adaptable f**or use at a range of scales/levels of government, wherever possible.

In order to ensure that the indicators to be used for the proposed monitoring system serve their purpose and allow to identify strengths and weaknesses, some preparatory work has been conducted and conclusions were drawn from the survey on the Mediterranean governance system and some brief and preliminary consultations with some of the partners. Based on those, an inductive set of indicators set against the MCGS' objectives per layer are presented in Appendix 2. They could serve as a basis of an extended and more specific and focused work on the design, development and population of an effective and suitable dashboard of participatory multilevel governance results indicators for monitoring the MCGS. This as mentioned previously is an intense and time consuming process which goes beyond the time frame and resources of the present study.

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[63] https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-develop-indicators retrieved 20.10.2021
  - *Specific: The indicator should accurately describe what is intended to be measured, and should not include multiple measurements in one indicator.*
  - *Measurable: Regardless of who uses the indicator, consistent results should be obtained and tracked under the same conditions.*
  - *Achievable: Collecting data for the indicator should be simple, straightforward, and cost-effective.*
  - *Relevant: The indicator should be closely connected with each respective input, output or outcome.*
  - *Targeted/time-bound: The indicator should be targeted and include a specific time frame.*

[64] https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-develop-indicators

7.5.4. Sustainability, Knowledge generation - transfer - capitalisation

Monitoring knowledge generation and knowledge transfer together with the identification and use of lessons-learnt by promoting knowledge capitalisation is an important by-product of an effective monitoring mechanism. As mentioned earlier, it is essential to generate, create and transfer information and knowledge (including data) and ensure capitalisation of such knowledge among all relevant stakeholders at all governance levels, empowering at the same time regional and local actors through capacity building. To this end, being able to identify and share best practices, success stories and lessons learned from other interventions is key. It is thus very important to create effective channels of communication for knowledge transfer and foster greater involvement of actors to enhance ownership and engagement.[65]

In order to improve information sharing, dissemination and communication the following two aspects need to be considered while planning communication:

- identify the key audiences to communicate the findings; and
- identify the suitable means to be used to disseminate the findings.

Such means could include among others an e-platform, capacity building actions, communication plan, streamlining meetings, joint conferences, consultations, joint actions, liaising actions, etc. Special attention should be on identifying suitable means tailored to different target audiences (such as sectoral on-line newsletters and project smart mapping) and the use of graphs, pie charts etc., where possible to simplify the data, including data visualisation methods for easily digestible information.

In this way, the proposed monitoring framework will create a close link between timely and relevant information sharing, transfer of knowledge, capitalisation of results (stemming from Interreg MED governance programmes), change of perceptions and increased participation in governance and policy outcomes.

In brief, in order to develop a sustainable results-based monitoring system it is essential to encourage innovative ways of tracking, visualising and sharing information. It is important to start by identifying clear roles and responsibilities for the participants; setting it up in such a way to provide trustworthy and credible information; enhancing accountability, strengthening capacity and incentives; adding an awareness raising aspect and vesting it with a credible plan for dissemination.

Although during the 2014-2021 programming period certain interventions focused on strengthening the monitoring and knowledge transfer capacities of managing authorities and other relevant actors and stakeholders, there is still a lack of adequate data, effective mechanisms and capacities to systematically monitor the relative progress on co-operation, knowledge transfer and capitalisation.[66]

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[65] *Proceedings of the meeting PANORAMED DIALOGUES, E. Kastanide "How can the actions needed to secure a sustainable future for the Mediterranean region be prioritised", 23.11.21; Interreg MED Operational Evaluation* https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/operational_evaluation/InterregMedOE-Final_report_2020_En.pdf

[66] *"Impact Evaluation of the Interreg Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020"* https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/impact_evaluation/MED_Eval_Final

While gaps in monitoring capacity and data availability are widely acknowledged[67], the willingness of stakeholders to focus specifically on disaggregated data and engage systematically on routinely collecting and sharing information is not always there. Hence, there is a role for the new MCGS to advocate and focus its action plan on greater disaggregation of data, including harmonised and standardised disaggregated data-sharing protocols.

Along these lines, besides strengthening the capacity of "official data producers", the MCGS, adhering to the "people-centred" approach of the 2030 Agenda, can also contribute to the capacity building of regional and local authorities as well as business partners and civil society organisations and communities per se to gather, analyse and use disaggregated data and information per sector for advocacy and policy influence.[68] To this end, the development of an easy to use and widely fed e-tool/platform to facilitate knowledge streamlining and capitalisation through effective and relevant data collection, analysis, reporting and storage is a complementary supportive step along the way.

_Report_EN.pdf_, and the Operational Evaluation _https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/operational_evaluation/InterregMedOE-Final_report_2020_En.pdf_

[67] _They are two of the most frequently cited challenges as demonstrated in different documents including: the "Impact Evaluation of the Interreg Mediterranean Programme 2014-2020" https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/impact_evaluation/MED_Eval_Final Report_EN.pdf, and the Operational Evaluation https://interreg-med.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Sites/Programme/Toolbox/Reference_documents/operational_evaluation/InterregMedOE-Final_report_2020_En.pdf_

[68] _https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/Interim-Draft-Operational-Guide-on-LNOB-for-UNCTs.pdf "Recognizing that the 2030 Agenda emphasizes the "people-centred" approach to achieving progress, sector-monitoring information systems (e.g., health, education) also need to be more "people-centred."_

7.6 Conclusions

The undertaken research so far (based on desk study and some preliminary actors' feedback) leads to the following preliminary conclusions. First, an affirmation that the only way for a monitoring mechanism and relevant indicators of the new MCGS to be appropriate for the task at hand, is to be developed through a consultation process involving all major stakeholders including (not exclusively) the current Interreg MED, Interreg Europe, ENI CBC and UfM Monitoring Committees/Joint Secretariats, and any other appropriate actors to be identified during consultations with stakeholders, that can play an advisory role in the process. It is important to engage in the process representatives from all levels of governance, including the private sector, civil society organisations, NGOs, and research institutions leaving no one behind.[69] Only if all relevant stakeholders per sector are committed and participate in unison in the planning and selection process can appropriate input per sector be provided.

Wider engagement will not only enhance common understanding of the cause-effect relationships shedding light on common challenges, but also it will build trust and openness and create ownership of the planning and selection process among stakeholders, stimulating in turn stronger willingness and commitment to actively participate in and shape the process. Such wider engagement of all actors will also lead to streamlining and knowledge capitalisation and will raise awareness of the links of the undertaken efforts of the new MCGS to the EU territorial policy goals and UN SDGs, which are the cornerstone of any significant common future for the MED region. This is a very demanding effort; it requires continuous research, openness, extensive consultations, adequate resources (time, expertise, funds) and a commitment and capacity to collect new data, which goes beyond the present study.

Furthermore, efforts to design appropriate indicators should take stock of the various European and regional monitoring and assessment efforts underway (such as the Interreg MED, Interreg Europe indicators), and should include the identification of benchmarks as well as credible information on data storage and reporting, and data quality and accessibility.

Last but not least, to reduce any risks in the process the following drawbacks in the development of the monitoring mechanism and related indicators are to be avoided: collecting data outside the relevant governance context, a lack of commitment from participants/ stakeholders per sector, absence of or limited development of capacity, a focus on "punishment" instead of improvement/motivation, not enough feedback from stakeholders, excessive bureaucratic inertia and limited link between performance measures and resource allocation. To do so, a brief risk assessment, which should form part of a dedicated project on the setting up of a monitoring mechanism for the new MCGS should be undertaken to identify drawbacks and provide mitigation measures to overcome them in advance.

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[69] *Leaving no one Behind; A UNSDG Operational Guide for UN Country Teams, interim draft 18 March 2019, https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/Interim-Draft-Operational-Guide-on-LNOB-for-UNCTs.pdf retrieved 15.11.2021*

8. Policy Recommendations – Action Plan

The analysis unveiled some weak and strong features of the MCGS that should be taken into account when planning the future of Mediterranean governance. The present section includes the basic recommendations emanating from the findings of the study as well as a tool for actions targeting the improvement of the functionality of the MCGS.

8.1 General Recommendations for Setting, Developing and Monitoring the Mediterranean Cooperation Governance System

8.1.1 Reach to a consensus for the final form of the Mediterranean Cooperation Governance System (MCGS).

Although the conceptualisation of the system was very useful for steering the present research, its final form should be validated from the actors in order to set the basis for a closer collaboration among actors. The formulation of the system should be the result of a comprehensive dialogue among actors and should encompass the views and expectations of all actors that are active in cooperation in the area. Furthermore, the MCGS should be built in a way that secures the participation of all interested actors but also promotes the engagement of actors that are still less active. The following actions are proposed to steer the whole process.

Actions
A Dialogue should be established for the definition of the system. The main actions to be implemented are described below.

- o **Selection of Actors to set the scene**

  According to the present paper, *the dialogue could be initiated by the INTERREG-MED*, as its activities are the most acknowledged in the region and it is recognised as the most important actor to shape the future of the MED. *UfM, CPMR, ENI-CBC MED and West-MED should also have a leading role in the dialogue*, as they are also perceived as leading actors. The dialogue should be open to all stakeholders that could contribute to the formation of the MCGS*. The actors identified by the present survey should also take part in the process*. Moreover, *actors of a more local/reginal influence sphere should also be involved* so that the system acquires the highest possible acceptance.

- o **Agreement on key issues of the dialogue.**

  - o **The agreement on the layers of the system.** This is a critical task, as all achievements and the accompanying framework system will be adjusted to these layers. *The present report envisages a four-layer system*. These layers are selected as best describing the driving forces and the objectives of the actors participating in it. Moreover, it captures the relationships developed among the actors of the system. Apparently, *the system is open to modifications and additions*. For instance, the Mediterranean Challenges-EU Policies layer could be extended to incorporate also other high-level policies such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This modification is essential in case that the system is decided to incorporate countries from the south shore of the Mediterranean.

  - o **The agreement on roles and responsibilities.** The dialogue should make *actors to reach an agreement regarding the actual role that each one of them could play in the development of the MCGS*. The processes under which the consensus on the priorities of the system will be achieved should be defined. The individual strengths and weaknesses of each actor in relation to each layer and each thematic field should be considered.

  - o **The agreement on the levels of the system.** The report identified four main types of

actors, namely International Organisations, National Authorities, Regional/Local Authorities and Others. ***Therefore, there is a need to articulate the MCGS on different levels, identify the horizontal and modular connections among them and assign all actors on those levels***. Moreover, the type of governance for each sector considered should be recognised for each country and for the Mediterranean in general. PANORAMED's work on sustainable tourism where the different policy levels involved in shaping tourism development were recognised could be used as a good practice for other sectors, too. As it became evident from the analysis, each type of actor comes with different strengths and weaknesses with respect to its ability to promote the objectives of each layer. Therefore, the strengths should be expanded, and the weaknesses should be improved in order to improve the functionality of the system.

o **The agreement on the activities of actors to be considered as actual contributions to the MCGS.** The report identified three main types of actors' contributions to the MCGS, namely priorities, processes and outputs. ***This a very crucial task as it can steer actors' operation to be in line with the system and can provide the necessary framework to conceptualise and measure the contribution of each actor to the system***. Therefore, there is a need to validate this framework and make all the necessary amendments so as to be accepted by all interested actors.

o **The agreement on the sectors and fields to be included in the MCGS.** As the report has shown, the different actors come with various interests and expertise. Thus, ***the sectors/fields on which actors should work together should be defined***. The PANORAMED project paved the way for this to happen by defining three thematic fields of intervention. Moreover, the Regional Dialogue Platforms of the UfM and the platforms of BlueMed provide a good starting point for defining common fields of interventions. ***The fields could be classified on those where collaboration is already strong and on those where more work should be done in order to be fully incorporated in the MCGS***.

o **Funding of the dialogue**

To start the dialogue process, a project could by funded by the Interreg MED. The project could be implemented in a context similar to PANORAMED. In addition, the UfM regional platforms could also be used to involve a large number of actors in the process.

o **Dissemination**

After all details have been agreed, there is a need to plan an effective dissemination and communication strategy by clearly identifying a) the key audiences to communicate the findings; and b) the suitable means to be used to disseminate them. Such means could include an e-platform, streamlining meetings, joint conferences, consultations, joint actions, liaising actions, etc. While identifying suitable means special attention should be put on tailor them to different target audiences. These can include sectoral on-line newsletters, project smart mapping, and the use of graphs, pie charts etc., and where possible efforts should be made to simplify the data including data visualisation methods for easily digestible information.

8.1.2 Common agreement on the monitoring system.

The development of the MCGS should be backed by a monitoring system. This is an essential step for making MCGS tangible and measurable, allowing for any progress to be evaluated and any changes to the path be made if so required. The proposed monitoring system should work in parallel with the main dialogue activity in order to set the monitoring framework and define its specifications. The necessary actions to complete this task are described below.

Actions

- Allocate adequate funds. *Funding should be secured to develop a project to design a suitable monitoring system for the MCGS* based on the current study and a dedicated needs assessment validated by all relevant stakeholders.

- Define/Validate the monitoring objectives. This should be achieved through *consultation* among a wide range of policy-makers and other stakeholders including scientists and representatives from the relevant social and business sectors, cooperation platforms and other relevant initiatives, NGOs and civil society actors from both shores of the Med, who could contribute to the debate advocating their specific needs and perception of challenges. Efforts should take stock of the various European and regional monitoring and evaluation efforts underway.

- Set up the monitoring structure & processes*. Design the operational framework & establish a Monitoring Committee (MC) and an advisory board or a steering committee vested with clear roles and responsibilities*. Their main role will be to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge and expertise and to serve as a platform for promoting structured dialogue and for preventing and resolving disputes. *The MC will be assessing the performance (i.e. efficient and qualitative implementation) of the MCGS and will track the progress made towards achieving its objectives*. It will *coordinate the sharing of information* per sector, among all relevant stakeholders from different levels of governance and promote cooperation, communication and knowledge exchange, and transfer of good practices. The composition and role of the MC will be finalised after a systematic consultation among the relevant stakeholders. The format, means (use of on-line newsletters, project smart mapping, or other means) and tools (e-platform) for information sharing could be harmonised but at the same time information could vary based on the priorities, challenges and stated interests per sector. *The use of different tools (such as project smart mapping) and particularly a new multi-user and user-friendly monitoring e-tool will be developed to complement the MC to effectively implement its role*.

- Develop clearly identified and contextualised, SMART indicators that reflect the situation realistically and track progress and performance effectively. They need to take into account the specificities of the region and the views/needs of all actors. To do so they should be jointly developed through a *rigorous needs assessment and a comprehensive consultation process involving all major stakeholders* active in the region that can play an advisory role in the process including (not exclusively) the *ETCs such as Interreg MED, Interreg Europe, ENI CBC and UfM Monitoring Committees/Joint Secretariats*, and any other appropriate actors from both shores of the Mediterranean. Further to populate a dashboard of stable indicators it is important to *fix pertinent benchmarks* to measure performance. Such benchmarks can be different across regions, sectors and/or actions for the same indicator to reflect different conditions.

- Develop an action plan on data collection & storage methods. The following need to be adhered to: a) *Gather and Review existing data*; b) *Ensure a continuous flow of data and feedback throughout the project cycle*; c) *Develop the necessary tools for credible data storage and reporting*; and d) *Ensure data quality and accessibility*.

- Support further funding streamlining and knowledge capitalisation among all relevant stakeholders at all governance levels, empowering at the same time regional and local actors through capacity building. Develop and/or improve their skills to identify and share best practices, success stories and lessons learned from each others' interventions.

- Brief risk assessment. The risk assessment should form part of a dedicated project on the setting up of a monitoring mechanism for the new MCGS should be undertaken to identify drawbacks and provide mitigation measures to overcome them in advance.

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8.1.3 Build a platform with all necessary information for all actors.

The report has highlighted a lot of knowledge gaps and leakages due to the structure of the system and its actors. Easy access to information can be very beneficial for the promotion of the MCGS targets and the embracement of new actors. MCGS should encourage innovative ways of tracking, visualising and sharing information. The platform should enhance capacity of users/ actors/ stakeholders to use new tools to better monitor cooperation/ coordination efforts and increase awareness raising of the undertaken efforts of all actors and the respective links of the new MCGS to the EU territorial policy goals and UN SDGs. The development of an easy to use and widely fed e-tool/platform is recommended to facilitate knowledge streamlining and capitalisation through effective and relevant data collection, analysis, reporting and storage as a complementary supportive step along the way. The examination of the options for the development of the platform should complement the dialogue on the formulation of the MCGS and the monitoring system. The following tasks are necessary for setting the scene for developing the platform.

Actions
o **Link platform with the layers of the MCGS.** The platform should be structured in a way that promotes the targets of the MCGS and its layers. Currently, there are many different platforms promoting cooperation governance in the area. For instance, all ETC programmes have websites where their results are available. UfM provides some rigorous tools for capacity building and the same stands for BlueMed with the E-Training option. But these tools are scattered, and their results are not harmonised so as to promote a common objective. Therefore, there is a need to *match the features of the platform with the particular objectives of each layer* so as to keep the knowledge visible and available to everyone.
o **Decide on the elements to be incorporated in it.** The critical task here is *to develop some typologies of the elements of the platform* so as to allow the collection of the up to now scattered outputs of the Mediterranean actors. According to the results of the present survey, the *priority should be given to features of capacity building, collection of outputs of the actors and information for call for funding and projects*. The features should be related to one or more layers and sectors of the MCGS.
o **Link the platform to the monitoring system.** The platform should provide tangible results for feeding the monitoring scheme. The level of engagement and the amount of content uploaded in it could be *useful data for estimating the selected indicators of monitoring*. Moreover, a dissemination and communication plan for the wider utilization of the platform should be also drafted and implemented.
o **Secure funding.** The platform could be *jointly funded by the different actors*. *A major role for ensuring the viability of the platform could be attributed to the Interreg-MED* programme, but contributions could be made also by the other ETC programmes of the area. The specification of the platform could be discussed under the more general discussion for promoting cooperation in the area among ETC programmes promoted by the INTERACT programme.

8.2 Proposed actions for the improvement of the four layers of the MCGS

The proposed actions of Section 8.1 have a long-term perspective. As long as the dialogue for consolidating the system is ongoing, there are also many aspects for improvements in the current setting of the layers. The proposed actions that follow seek to make the layers more able to foster the cooperation governance in the area so as to enable the long-term consolidation of the MCGS. All actions provide solutions to the key issues identified by the present report, and they could be developed in a very short time frame as they don't require wide institutional changes but rather some operational improvements of the key actors in the area.

8.2.1 Cooperation-Coordination

The following actions aim at the improvement of the cooperation-coordination layer.

Actions

o **Priorities**
  o **Define and make known the methods for setting priorities.** The analysis has shown that different actors use a range of options to set their priorities. It is critical that ***each actor exclusively states how its priorities are being set*** and on what kind of documents and methods this is based on. This could be done with an Annex, like the one accompanying the official programme documents of each Interreg. It is very important that ***these documents are publicly available*** so as to overcome another caveat revealed by the present analysis which is the limited consideration of other actors' priorities when setting own institutional priorities especially for National Authorities and Other types of actors.
o **Processes**
  o **Increase public consultation processes.** The use of the public consultation option for setting priorities has been found as extremely limited. Actors should promote this type of process. For the actors already engaging in this type of processes, ***the focus should be on the further engagement of other actors and citizens in their priorities setting***. The analysis has shown that most actors rely on newsletters, emails, and their networks to exchange knowledge about the developments in the region. Social media is of limited use. Therefore, actors should, from the one side, make sure that they use the most widely used means, as those emerged from the analysis, to inform other actors that a public consultation is ongoing and also, should ***enhance the use of the social media*** to lure the attention of citizens that make the most use of this type of communication. Moreover, public consultation could be enhanced if actors, especially those that make use of public funds and manage ETC or mainstream programmes, ***set minimum thresholds of participation in order for a consultation to be valid***.
  o **Increase liaising activities**. Actors need to embrace liaising in their processes. This could be achieved by ***hiring liaison officers or assigning relevant tasks to existing employees***. The liaising could be ***enhanced by the ETC programmes of the region by incorporating such working packages in the articulation of projects***. Such a WP is currently missing or is incorporated in the wider communication activities in the current setting of the transnational programmes of the area. Moreover, ***clear liaising targets could be a criterion of evaluation when projects are submitted for funding***. By doing so, the partners of the projects could be trained in such types of activities.
  o **Enhance the collaboration of the ETCs of the Mediterranean.** The coordination of actions among the various ETCs of the Mediterranean could be substantially improved by incorporating cooperation objectives in the processes of the actors. ***Programmes should set from the very beginning clear targets of cooperation with other programmes***. This was not evident in the period 2014-2020. On this, the examples of the France (Channel) England and South-Baltic Cross-Border Interreg Programmes should be reviewed. Moreover,

programme authorities should promote the development of joint activities among projects of different programmes. By doing so the culture of cooperation will be cultivated in the participating actors. This type of cooperation could be promoted by *providing extra points to projects documenting their intention to cooperate with other programmes when the projects are being evaluated*. As this type of justification could be challenging to achieve in the first calls of the programmes, attention for promoting such types of joint actions should be put in the later calls of the programmes. The example of the Central Europe Programme which promotes the collaboration of project partners with other ETC programmes is indicative.

- o **Make clear which are the key actors in the area in each ETC programme**. *The actors of the region with the greatest influence on each field should be a priori indicated by each ETC Programme*. This will drive the activities of projects to comply with the wider objectives of the area. This information was provided in the Alpine Area programme. It should also be mentioned that in all three gap and opportunities thematic reports of the Panoramed the information about the key actors on each thematic field was very well presented. Therefore, this practice should be employed by all ETC programmes of the area.

- o **Outputs**
  - o **Require recommendations for improvements in cooperation - coordination.** The report has shown that there is still a long improvement potential in the adoption of recommendations by the actors of the system in order to improve the cooperation-coordination layer. Therefore, the capacity of actors to promote cooperation in the area can be further improved if the lessons learnt by past cooperation activities are disseminated to all actors. As the dialogues for the future MCGS and its supporting platform will be ongoing, the actors can work in parallel in order to improve this aspect. *For this, all joint activities, such as projects and events, and mostly those funded by the EU, can include an additional deliverable describing the strengths and weaknesses of the cooperation among partners* with the aim to improve the relevant policies and any cooperation activity that is undertaken in order to support them. This deliverable should be seen as an addition to the main deliverables of the joint activities as it could be considered *as a report for any partial or unforeseen result of cooperation directly related to the cooperation-coordination layer*. The unforeseen results were successfully capitalised by the INTERREG North-West programme and thus some lessons could be drawn from this case.

  - o **Enhance more types of cooperation.** The analysis has shown that 30% of the actors undertook less than 5 joint activities in the past five years. Moreover, the majority of the actions concerned projects and events with less effort being put in other forms of cooperation like staff exchange. Therefore, there is a need for increasing the participation of actors in joint activities but also enriching the types of cooperation achieved. To do that, *ETC programmes could promote some modes of staff exchange* between project partnerships or establish joint activities with the Erasmus project. On the other hand, in order to engage more actors in the MCGS, ETC projects could follow the example of the Northern Periphery and Arctic programme and *fund low budget preparatory projects with the aim to build the notion of the community in the Mediterranean*. These low budget projects could be developed with the cooperation of other ETC or actors in order to further strengthen the cooperation and coordination among ETC programmes.
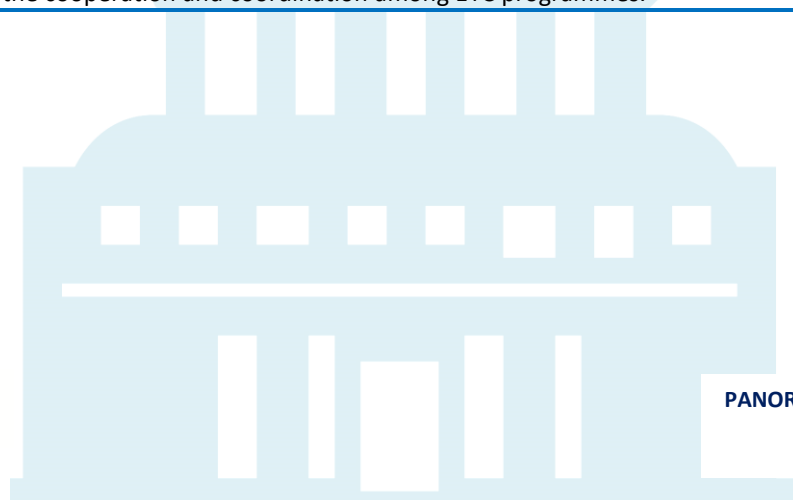
8.2.2 Knowledge Generation - Capitalisation

The following actions aim at the improvement of the knowledge generation – capitalisation layer.

Actions
Priorities   Add capitalisation targets to the priorities of actors. The capitalisation and circulation of knowledge is critical for the sustainability of the MCGS. While many actors embrace capitalisation there are still actors, especially some national authorities, which do not incorporate capitalisation in their priorities. Therefore, all actors need to incorporate capitalisation in their priorities. To do so, a report with the highest achievements in terms of capitalisation but also creation of knowledge could be drafted by each actor that wants to participate in the MCGS. This will mobilise the actors to start revising their activities in order to see how much they support the MCGS but also how much they have benefited from them. Moreover, ETC could give some score bonuses on actors that evidently support capitalisation in the evaluation of project applications.   Processes   Develop in-house knowledge circulation. In order for the preceding proposed action to be implemented, actors should develop an effective mechanism for circulating the knowledge among their employees and departments. On this, the report has shown that in-house circulation of knowledge remains limited. In order to push actors to embrace capitalisation, ETCs or other EU funded initiatives could have as a prerequisite that in-house circulation of knowledge is ensured by any partner applying for funding. Moreover, part of the funding could be allocated to the development of effective tools and platforms for in-house circulation of knowledge which are not used so frequently by the actors, as the report has shown.   Outputs   Ensure that outputs support capitalisation. The report has shown that there are a great deal of options to promote capitalisation through actors' activities. For ensuring that any activity does not start from scratch actors should mostly fund projects and activities that demonstrate their capitalisation on past knowledge. Moreover, for all projects and activities that concern the MCGS, recommendations should be drafted for policy improvements and further use of the outputs produced by other actors and areas. To ensure that, projects should also justify from the very beginning their replicability conditions so that the outputs acquire the highest possible level of dissemination and transferability. On this, the role of ETCs is critical as they must provide adequate fields for partners to explain how their activities are going to build on available knowledge, how they will ensure that long term viability of their outputs and most of all how they are going to ensure the replicability at least of their key outputs. The importance placed on these aspects should be also reflected on the scores assigned to the relevant criteria in the evaluation phase. It is important that all ETCs but also other actors in the area follow the same approach. As the analysis has shown, Interreg-MED does great in the capitalisation layer but ADRION lags. Since the target is to enhance capitalisation through cooperation, any gaps among ETCs in the capitalisation achievements should be narrowed down for the knowledge to circulate more easily and effectively.   Enhance the visibility of joint activities. The results of the joint activities should be disseminated and communicated more effectively. The report has shown that actors pay much attention to events as means to acquire knowledge. Nevertheless, their knowledge about a series of events that took place in the Mediterranean, even of those lying inside the thematic interests of partners, is very limited. The proposed platform will help to achieve a wider audience, but until then, actors should try to achieve a higher dissemination of their results. A first step for this is to build a common newsletter for all actors of the MCGS. This action should be undertaken and maintained by one of the leading actors according to the

results of this report. To build the newsletter all interested actors could send their key news for their joint activities like workshops, events, and others and then a collective newsletter could be sent to everyone. The newsletter was found as one of the most used tools for acquiring knowledge. Therefore, using this type of communication a wider audience should be reached. To support this action all actors should promote this newsletter through their communication channels and especially their social media in order to also reach a wide part of citizens of the Mediterranean.

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8.2.3 Territorial and Policy Governance

The following actions aim at the improvement of the territorial-policy governance layer.

Actions

o **Priorities**
  o **Add territorial cohesion targets in the priorities of the actors.** The target territorial cohesion is not well represented in the priorities of the actors, as the present survey has shown. *It is apparent that all actors embrace more the concept of spatial cohesion*. The role of ETCs is crucial on this, as they can promote such targets by assigning extra points to projects that successfully justify their contribution to territorial cohesion. This kind of projects prioritization could be found in The North-West ETC Programme. Moreover, *ETCs could better adjust to the rationale of the Cohesion Policy by promoting the participation of the weakest areas in the projects*. This could be achieved by *assigning greater scores on projects that demonstrate the coverage of the weakest regions in the partnerships*. Moreover, all actors should embrace territorial cohesion by *prioritizing actions to the left behind places*. To achieve *that, some thresholds of lagging regions participation could be set by all actors when implementing activities* such as training workshops, capacity building events, pilot cases and others.
  o **Foster greater involvement of actors to enhance ownership and engagement**. Wider engagement will not only enhance common understanding of the cause-effect relationships by attracting feedback from all strata of stakeholders and shedding light on common challenges, but it will also *build trust and openness and create ownership of the planning and selection process among them*. In turn, this will stimulate their willingness and distill a stronger commitment to actively participate in and shape the process, defying fear of change and dislodging excessive bureaucratic or other inertia.
o **Processes**
  o **Embed capacity building in the processes of actors.** The analysis has shown a lack of a holistic capacity improvement culture in the actors of the Mediterranean. This is reflected on the fact that the perceived improvements on the two pillars of cooperation governance remains low. To increase the ability of actors to confront regional challenges and implement EU policies, the *constant capacity building of staff and stakeholders should be incorporated into the everyday processes of the actors*. For this to happen all actors with an interest in MCGS should commit to implement such activities in a regular basis.
o **Outputs**
  o **Link capacity building providers with interested actors.** Capacity of actors should be enhanced by developing training courses and opportunities to build and further improve the capacity of all relevant stakeholders (both "official data producers", regional and local authorities as well as business partners, civil society organisations and public communities per se from both shores) to actively participate in the process by acquiring the necessary skills and providing incentives to reinforce their willingness to get involved and systematically engage on routinely collecting and sharing information. The report revealed that there was a lack of knowledge for capacity building events. To overcome this weakness, there is a need for the actors to provide such services, such as the ETCs or other institutions, to directly *link their activities with actors showing an interest in capacity*

building. By this way, the recommendation concerning the processes of actors in the present layer could be further capitalised towards the improvement of capacity of actors to implement territorial and policy governance. In conclusion, a *more formal cycle of capacity building, taking the form of a platform or a Mediterranean academy should be founded*.

- o **Increase the utilization of territorial development instruments.** The territorial development for the area could be enhanced by *embracing tools such as the "Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)" and & "Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)*, whose use is very limited up to now. *Regional and local authorities should establish links with the ETCs or other actors in order to promote the implementation of such activities*. These activities could be co-funded by the regional/local authorities and the other EU actors. Since their use is still limited, *capacity building activities should be foreseen for actors which state an interest in the use of these tools*.

8.2.4 Mediterranean Challenges and EU Policies

The following actions aim at the improvement of the Mediterranean Challenges and EU Policies layer.

Actions
o **Priorities**
o **Incorporate the Mediterranean level in priorities setting.** Actors should make clear to what extent they consider the Mediterranean challenges when setting their priorities. The analysis has shown that this level is underrepresented in actors' considerations. Since there is no strategic framework for the Mediterranean yet, actors are encouraged to review the horizontal and sectoral policy texts that are presented in the most acknowledged actors, as this arose by the present report. *The justification should be clearly demonstrated in the strategic or the operational plans of the actors that want to take part in the MCGS*.
o **Promote the wider integration of the Southern shore Mediterranean countries in the MCGS.** As "united" and "connected" emerged among the most appreciated future characteristics of the Mediterranean, it is apparent that *further steps should be taken in order for the southern countries to be integrated into the MCGS*. The surveyed actors assigned a high importance on the potential of the ENI-CBC MED programme as a facilitator of the cooperation governance in the region. Therefore, *the ETCs should work together in order to bring closer partners from the two shores of the Mediterranean*. The labelling process of the UfM and the capitalisation projects undertaken by the ENI-CBC MED as transferring experiences from the Northern programme to its implementation area should be intensified. Moreover, ETCs should seek *to develop more joint activities with the ENI-CBC MED*. On this, the cooperation of three different transnational programmes to develop the Community Hydrogen Forum (CH2F) is a very good example on how different programmes could be engaged in common activities. Moreover*, any capacity building or training activity should also target the southern stakeholders*. To foster participation, *relevant thresholds for the participation of southern actors could be established*. Finally, actors when drafting their priorities should also incorporate the challenges for integrating the southern countries into the MCGS. This could be achieved either directly, by *widening the public consultation process to the southern actors*, or indirectly, by *considering the challenges recognised by key institutions and initiatives working with the southern area*, such as ENI CBC MED, UfM, UNEP-MAP, Plan Bleu and others.
o **Processes**
o **Standardise the collection of information about the Mediterranean Challenges and EU Policies.** The report revealed that only a few actors have the necessary size to accommodate research departments or staff that will update their staff on any new developments about the Mediterranean and EU in general. Therefore, it is apparent that *actors should establish mechanisms for acquiring all the necessary information to steer*

their planning and activities. On this, the actors should start immediately engaging in joint activities and establish links with actors that conduct research on these topics. Actors will benefit from research institutions as they will stay informed but also the research institutions will gain knowledge and useful insights from the actors that they will cooperate with. This is going to improve the general quality and the usefulness of the created knowledge and support the notion of co-creation among actors. It will also make actors more responsive to changes. ***ETCs could have a role on this by encouraging the drafting of reports on various sectors and thematic fields from academic and research partners taking part in any governance-related project***.

- o **Outputs**
  - o **Capitalise on the emerging challenges.** Unprecedented events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and threats like climate change may pose severe risks for the region. Nevertheless, as far as the MCGS is concerned, these challenges, together with the recently increased Geopolitical importance of the Mediterranean region, could be a great opportunity for forging stronger relationships among the actors of the region. Therefore, actors should be ready to work together to confront emerging challenges. On this, ***ETCs should be ready to adapt to any new developments and implement specific calls for their confrontation***. Some transnational programmes such as the Northern Periphery and Arctic implemented COVID-19 related calls. To secure the funds for any unprecedented development, ***ETCs may foresee a small amount of budget to be provided only under special circumstances***. In case that no such development arises, these funds could be released in the final calls. Instead, ETCs could incorporate in their plans some degrees of flexibility so as to let existing projects enrich their activities with some directly linked to the confrontation of unprecedented effects with respective budget modifications.
  - o **Pave the way for a Strategic Framework of the Mediterranean.** All recommendations and actions proposed in the present report seek to enhance the notion of community in the Mediterranean. This is a necessary step before any formal strategic framework is applied in the area. To support this development, careful steps with evidence-based decisions should be made. It is apparent that research institutions have a role on this as providing all the necessary support to policy makers. The foundation of collaboration among different partners of the area ***in order to work towards the direction of a common framework could be supported by institutions like think tanks which can make the transition smoother***. This type of joint activities is underutilized in the Mediterranean as the present survey has shown. The actors could use the example of the Alpine Think Tank which was developed with the support of the relevant Transnational ETC in order to examine the potential of developing such types of supportive activities in the Mediterranean, too.