



Special EU Programmes Body
Comhlacht na gClár Speisialta AE
Special EU Skemes Boadie

Citizens' Summary: Annual Implementation Report 2022

**Programme
Value
€283m**

What is the INTERREG VA Programme?

The INTERREG VA Programme has been designed to help create a more prosperous and sustainable cross-border region. It is one of many other INTERREG programmes which exist across Europe and help to address the problems that are caused as a result of borders.

Borders can reduce economic development, hamper the efficient management of the environment, obstruct travel and hinder the delivery of essential health and social care services.

INTERREG VA is tackling these issues in order to promote greater levels of economic, social and territorial cohesion across Northern Ireland, the border counties of Ireland and Western Scotland.

The programme has four key priority areas where it wants to make significant and lasting change: Research & Innovation; the Environment; Sustainable Transport and Health & Social Care.

 **32** projects supported in total

 **€294m** committed to date

Research & Innovation

What work has been done?

-  **153** enterprises working with research institutions
-  **667** full-time equivalent researchers funded
-  **463** enterprises receiving 1-on-1 innovation advice

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Environment

How has the environment been protected?

-  **7,551** hectares of threatened habitat protected
-  **9** marine management plans for designated protected areas
-  **1** bathing water quality prediction system created

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Health & Social Care

What support has been provided?

-  **8,602** citizens supported in recovery of mental illness
-  **5,549** patients availing of e-health interventions to support independent living in caring communities
-  **15,824** citizens supported for health & well-being

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Sustainable Transport

How has this been achieved?

-  **1** cross-border multi-modal transport hub
-  **2** cross-border greenways under construction
-  **73** cross-border electric vehicle charging points funded

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*The above figures, under each theme, are self-reported by funded projects and subject to final verification.

What is being funded?

North West Greenway Network

This project will result in the construction of over 46 kilometres of greenway along key border crossings in the Northwest of Ireland. Once complete, these routes will offer safe and segregated infrastructure to encourage cross-border cycling and walking, while delivering modal shift and sustainable travel to reduce the carbon footprint of the Northwest Region.

Sustainable transport solutions, such as the North West Greenway Network, are a priority under the Interreg VA Programme. They provide greater connectivity across the regions, encouraging an increase in cross-border walking or cycling journeys by up to 10%. The aim of this greenway project is to encourage 500 more people each day to walk or cycle on their commute.

The greenway project is led by Derry City & Strabane District Council, together with project partners Donegal County Council, the Department for Infrastructure and Sustrans NI. It will include routes linking Strabane and Lifford, and Derry and Muff with small routes feeding in. These routes were selected following a consultation process in 2019.



ONSIDE Outreach & Navigation for Social Inclusion and Digital Engagement Project

The Outreach & Navigation for Social Inclusion and Digital Engagement – or ONSIDE was led by the charity, Disability Action, its aim was to improve the lives and social connections of disabled people in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. Using peer research, ONSIDE identified and addressed both the social and physical barriers that create social isolation for people with disabilities.

The project strove to create connections for disabled people, both digitally and within their own communities. Participants were offered devices with training and one-to-one support enabling them to become socially connected online.

It was launched in March 2020, just before the first Covid-19 lockdown. At that point no-one could have foreseen the scale of the global pandemic. But ONSIDE might have been specifically tailored to enable some of those most affected by lockdowns.

Although the project faced challenges where equipment was delayed and face-to-face training hindered, it trained and enabled more than 2,400 disabled people to get online and connect with others - all the while ensuring participants retained their own identities.

Nigel Flynn, a project participant and peer volunteer said: "It's about having a bit of meaning and purpose to your life. That becomes really important when you're disabled – you're isolated and you're stuck in the house and you're lonely, for want of a better word. As a wheelchair user I don't go out much – I wanted to do something, and I wanted to try and overcome this idea of disability. Once you have a bit of meaning, it helps your self-esteem."



Cooperation Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB)

CABB was a six-partner conservation project focusing on the habitats of birds, butterflies and plants across Northern Ireland, Ireland and the west coast of Scotland. Over the course of five years, the project created Conservation Action Plans for eight Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. Work was carried out on the restoration of more than 3,000 hectares of blanket bog which had the added impact of safeguarding almost 900 pairs of birds.

Thanks to the sustainable land management of these blanket bogs, CABB sites now safely store 4.5 million tonnes of carbon and avoid around 54,000 tonnes of emissions per year and so help to mitigate against climate change. The blanket bog restoration works have also helped filter raw water that will be treated to become suitable for drinking. In turn, this will reduce the cost of water treatment and cost to the consumer. The benefits for biodiversity are the results of a real and practical ecosystem services approach.

As a typical INTERREG VA project, CABB featured collaboration with many partners. The RSPB Northern Ireland, BirdWatch Ireland, RSPB Scotland, Northern Ireland Water, Butterfly Conservation and Moors for the Future Partnership all worked together to ensure this project met its targets. Each partner was able to share experiences, best practice and data so they could all work together more effectively in the future.



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