Mission

Innovative Sustainable Economy

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THEMATIC PROJECTS: Framework and Initial Activities

December 2024

PROGRAMME	Interreg Euro-MED
PRIORITIES	3 Better Mediterranean Governance
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	6.6 Actions to support better cooperation governance
MISSION	Strengthening an innovative sustainable economy
PROJECT ACRONYM	Community4Innovation (C4I)
PROJECT WEBSITE URL	https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/
WORK PACKAGE ID	WP1 REUSE
ACTIVITY ID	A1.5 Capacity building for TP partners (C4I)
DELIVERABLE ID	D1.5.1 Set of capacity building material (C4I)
PARTNER IN CHARGE (AUTHORS)	C4I: ACR+
PARTNERS INVOLVED (CO-AUTHORS)	C4I: UVIC-UCC, MIO-ECSDE, DVISION, MEDWAVES, GSC, REVOLVE, UNISI
STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED	NA
TYPE OF LINK	Complementary
DOCUMENT HISTORY	N°1
DELIVERY DATE	December 2024
TARGET GROUPS	Thematic Projects
DISTRIBUTION	Public
STATUS OF THE DELIVERABLE	Uploaded on JEMS
FURTHER STEPS	Updates every 2 years. Next update expected in December 2026. Implementation of the planned trainings.
CITATION	Capacity Building for Thematic Projects. Innovative Sustainable Economy Mission. Interreg Euro-MED governance projects. 2024.

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Abbreviations

Innovative Sustainable Economy
(ISE), 5

Thematic projects
(TP), 5

Community4Innovation
(C4I), 7

Dialogue4Innovation
(D4I), 7

Community of Practice
(CoP), 15

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Executive summary

This document presents the framework for the implementation of *Capacity Building activities for* **Thematic Projects (TPs)** under the Interreg Euro-MED **Innovative Sustainable Economy (ISE) Mission**. These trainings focus on strengthening the capacities of TP partners by providing tailored knowledge and tools to address regional challenges, enhance collaboration, and foster the adoption of innovative practices that contribute to a sustainable Mediterranean innovation ecosystem.

The design and execution of capacity-building activities are closely tied to the outcomes of complementary activities, such as the mapping of partner competences and resources, as well as the analysis of training needs, ensuring alignment with the overarching goals of the project.

This report outlines the rationale and objectives of these capacity building activities (Section 1: Introduction), details the methodology used to map resources, identify training needs, and prioritize activities (Section 2: Methodology), and provides insights into the key capacity-building efforts already undertaken (Section 3: Given Trainings).
In 2024, two trainings were successfully organized:

- **Lessons Learnt from Green Deal Implementation**, focused on strategies for integrating circular economy practices.
- **Results Amplification Typologies and Examples**, highlighting best practices and tools for scaling and replicating innovations.

Additionally, the report presents the timeline and planned topics for 2025 training sessions (Section 4: Timeline of Prioritized Trainings).

The report provides an overview of the methodologies employed, including resource mapping, training needs assessments, and tailored capacity-building programs. Key findings highlight the importance of stakeholder engagement, innovation transfer, policy alignment, and communication strategies, reflecting the thematic priorities identified through surveys and consultations. The activity will continue to evolve, with subsequent reports reflecting progress, lessons learned, and refined plans for achieving the ISE Mission's objectives.

1 Introduction

1.1 Contextualizing *Capacity building activities for Thematic Projects' partners*

The Interreg Euro-MED ISE Mission is a comprehensive initiative aiming to strengthen the Mediterranean's transition towards a circular economy by fostering innovation, collaboration, and sustainable practices among quadruple-helix stakeholders. Through transnational cooperation, the ISE Mission seeks to establish a robust ecosystem that promotes the adoption of innovative solutions and supports their integration into policies and strategies across the region.

Capacity Building activities for Thematic Projects play a pivotal role in achieving these goals. Such activities focus on enhancing the capacities of Thematic Projects within the ISE Mission by equipping them with the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively implement innovative practices, contributing to the project's overarching mission of creating a sustainable and competitive Mediterranean innovation community.

1.2 Objectives of the trainings

The main objectives of these trainings are to reinforce the technical and operational capacities of TPs' partners to address challenges in adopting innovative and sustainable solutions; to foster knowledge exchange and mutual learning among stakeholders, enabling a deeper understanding of circular economy practices; and to develop tailored training programs and resources that empower partners to act as catalysts for innovation within their respective territories.

These efforts are designed to ensure the effective dissemination and application of innovative practices, amplifying the project's impact across the Interreg Euro-MED program area.

2 Methodology

2.1 Mapping resources and competences

A comprehensive survey was shared among project partners to identify and catalogue their potential contribution to the capacity-building activities in terms of experts/trainers, technical and institutional resources and competences. The aim was to gather a detailed overview of the expertise and assets available within the consortium to inform the development of tailored training activities, ensuring alignment with the diverse needs of stakeholders across the Mediterranean region.

The survey focused on a range of categories relevant to the ISE Mission's objectives, emphasizing key sectors and thematic areas critical for advancing circular economy principles. These categories included:

1. SMEs Innovation Capacity & Manufacturing Sector
2. Agri-Food Sector
3. Textiles
4. Sustainable Waste and Natural Resources Management
5. Consumers and Circular Economy Policies
6. Blue Economy

Following figures provide an overview of the mapping exercise. A total number of 26 experts from 11 partner organisations (8 partners representing Community4Innovation [C4I], and 3 partners representing Dialogue4Innovation [D4I]) contributed to map the ISE Mission consortia expertise.

Among partners, 70% reported expertise in SMEs Innovation Capacity and the Manufacturing Sector, 60% in the Blue Economy, 50% in the Agri-food sector, 50% in Sustainable Waste and Natural Resources Management, 40% in Textiles, and 10% in Consumers Circular Economy policies (Figure 1).
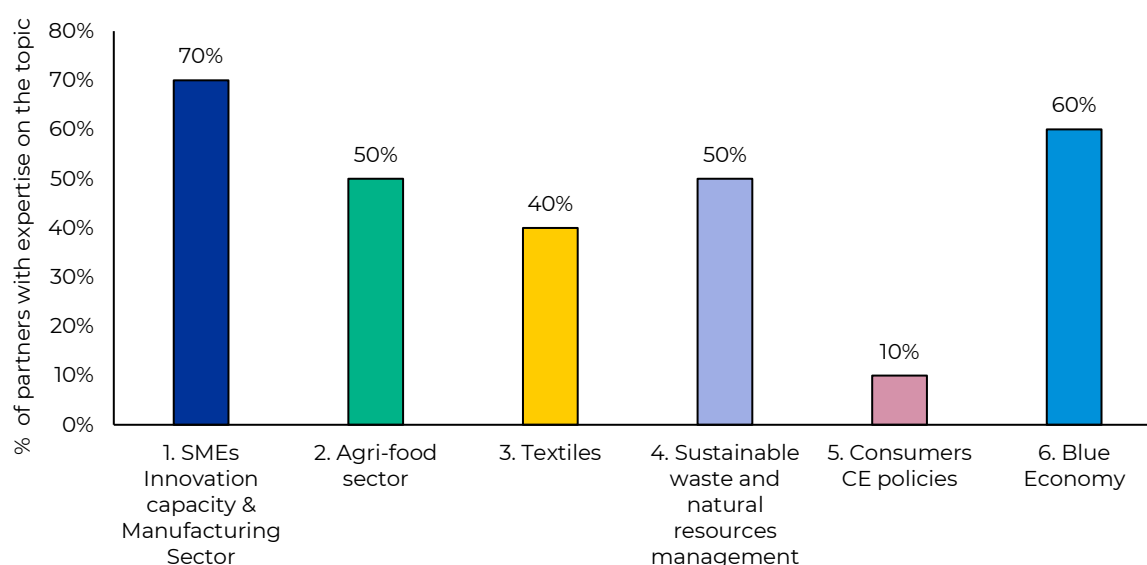

Figure 1. Sector expertise mapping overview.

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Regarding expertise subtopics, within the **SMEs Innovation Capacity and Manufacturing Sector**, 40% of partners reported experience in areas such as *Industrial symbiosis industrial clusters collaboration and development*; and *Skills for the green transition, including training policies*. In the **Agri-Food Sector**, 40% of partners indicated expertise in key areas such *as Food loss and waste reduction*; *Organic waste sorting, treatment and use*; as well as *Soil health, soil management, and nutrient recovery*. (Figure 2)

For the **Textile Sector**, expertise was evenly distributed (10%) across the various subtopics, reflecting diverse but limited specialization in this area. In the **Sustainable Waste and Natural Resources Management** sector, most partners (30%) focused on *Water reuse and water efficiency* as their primary area of expertise. (Figure 3)

In contrast, only 10% of partners expressed expertise in any subtopics within the **Consumer Circular Economy** sector. Finally, within the **Blue Economy** sector, 40% of partners demonstrated expertise in *Tourism; Offshore renewable energy;* and *Aquaculture*, highlighting these as key focus areas. (Figure 4).
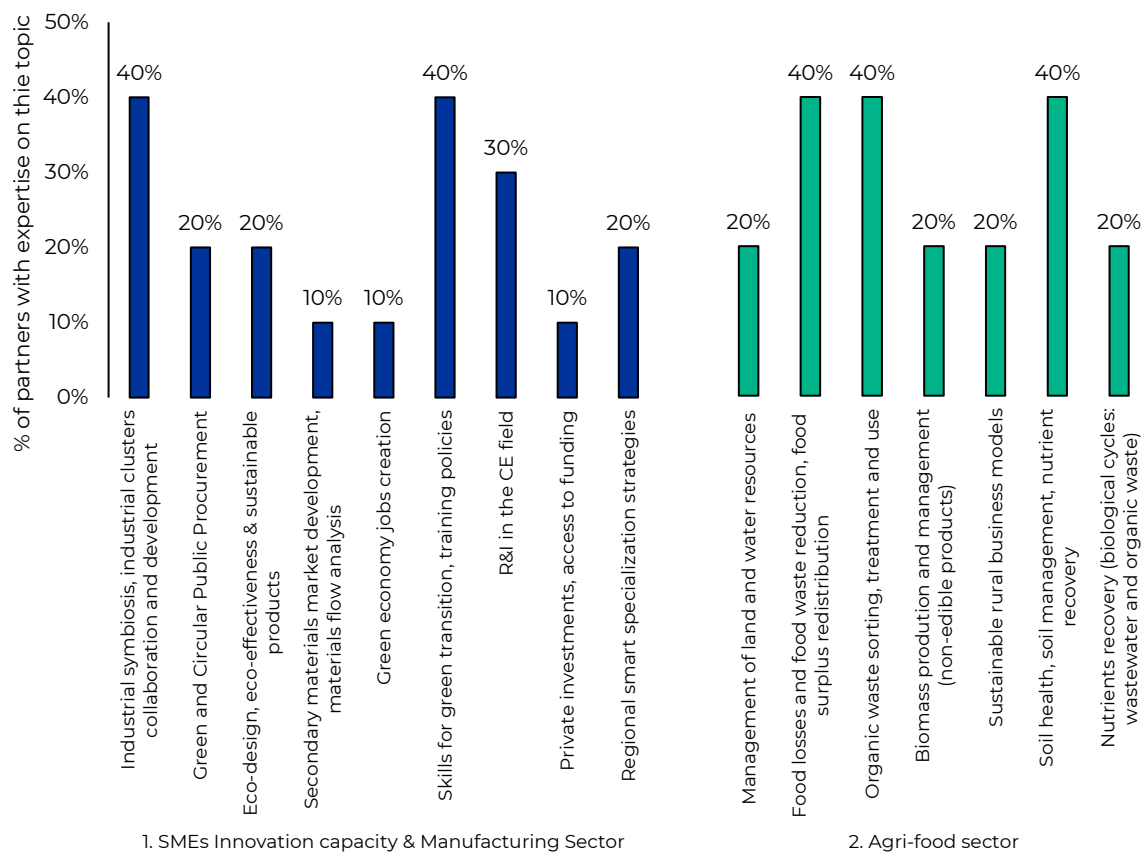

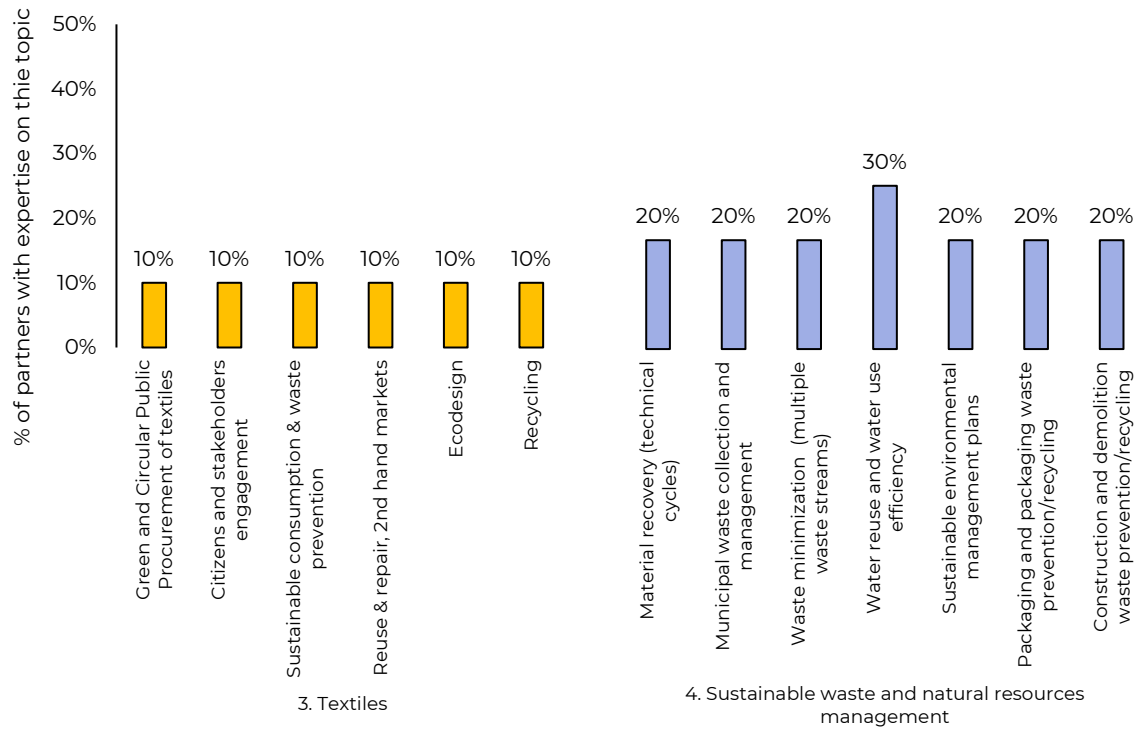Figure 2. Sector expertise mapping: subtopics 1-2.

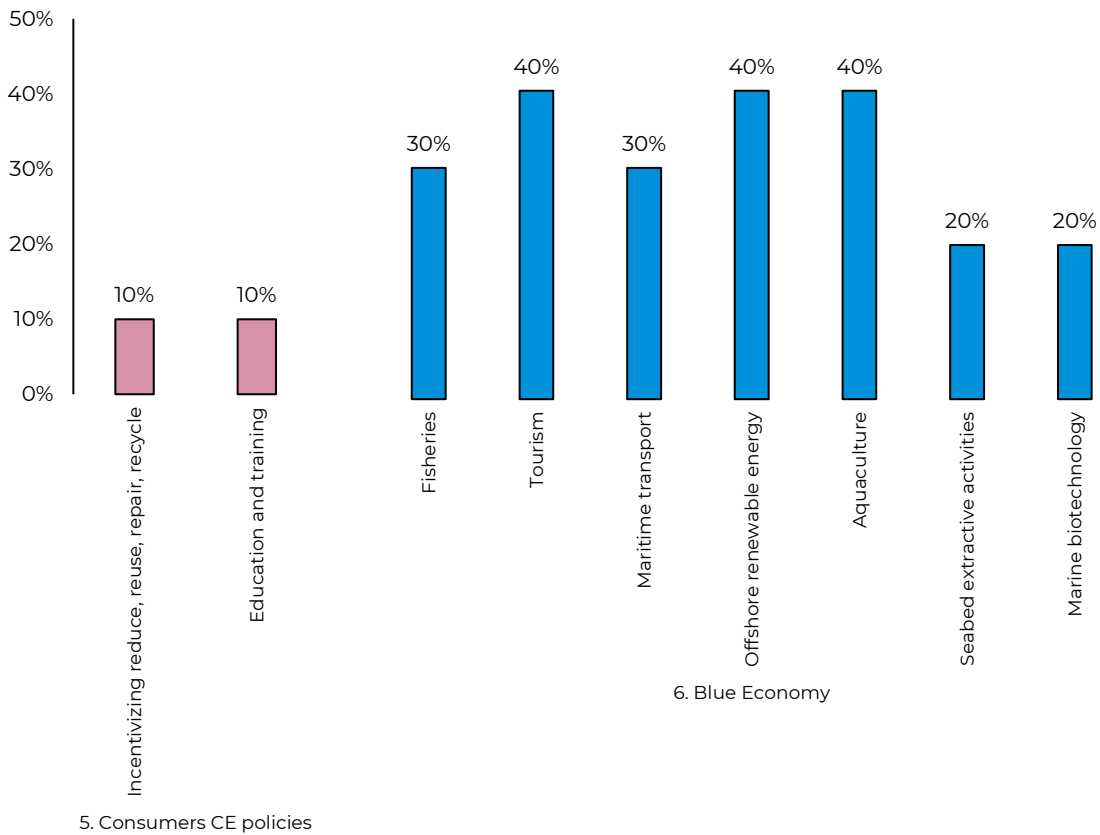Figure 3. Sector expertise mapping overview: subtopics 3-4.

Figure 4. Sector expertise mapping overview: subtopics 5-6.

The mapping exercise helped to identify sector-specific expertise that could be leveraged to create impactful and targeted capacity-building activities.

In addition to sector-specific expertise, which was exclusively collected from the C4I consortium, the survey also gathered insights into the technical and professional capacities of both C4I and D4I partners, including:

- **Stakeholder Engagement**: Mapping and mobilizing regional and urban stakeholders to ensure inclusive collaboration (Figure 5).

- **Advisory Expertise**: Designing and implementing projects at local or regional scales, with specialization in legal, regulatory, and financial aspects (Figure 5).

- **Thematic Expertise:** Areas such as urban and regional policies, cohesion policy, biodiversity, circular bioeconomy, climate neutrality, industrial symbiosis, and green public procurement (Figure 6).

- **Methodological Skills:** Development of self-assessment tools, data collection and analysis, database creation, and the application of advanced communication techniques, including AI tools (Figure 7).

- **Language Coverage** (Figure 8).

By compiling this data, the consortia are equipped to design and implement training programs that harness the collective knowledge and resources of its members. This mapping exercise also lays the foundation for leveraging synergies across partner institutions and aligning training initiatives with regional and sectoral priorities.

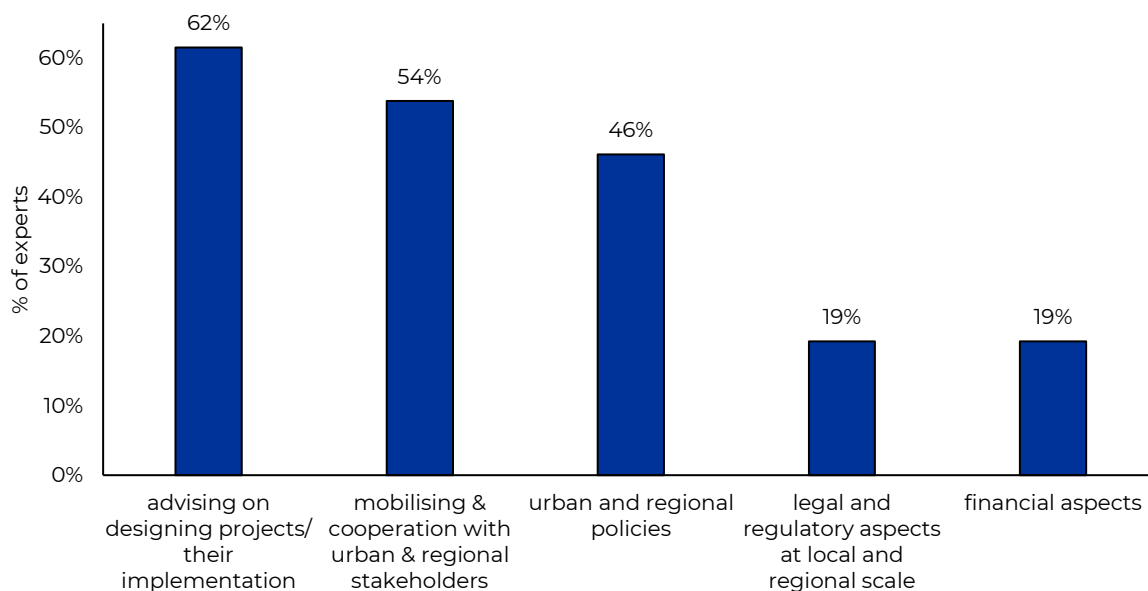Figure 5. Technical and Professional Capacity.
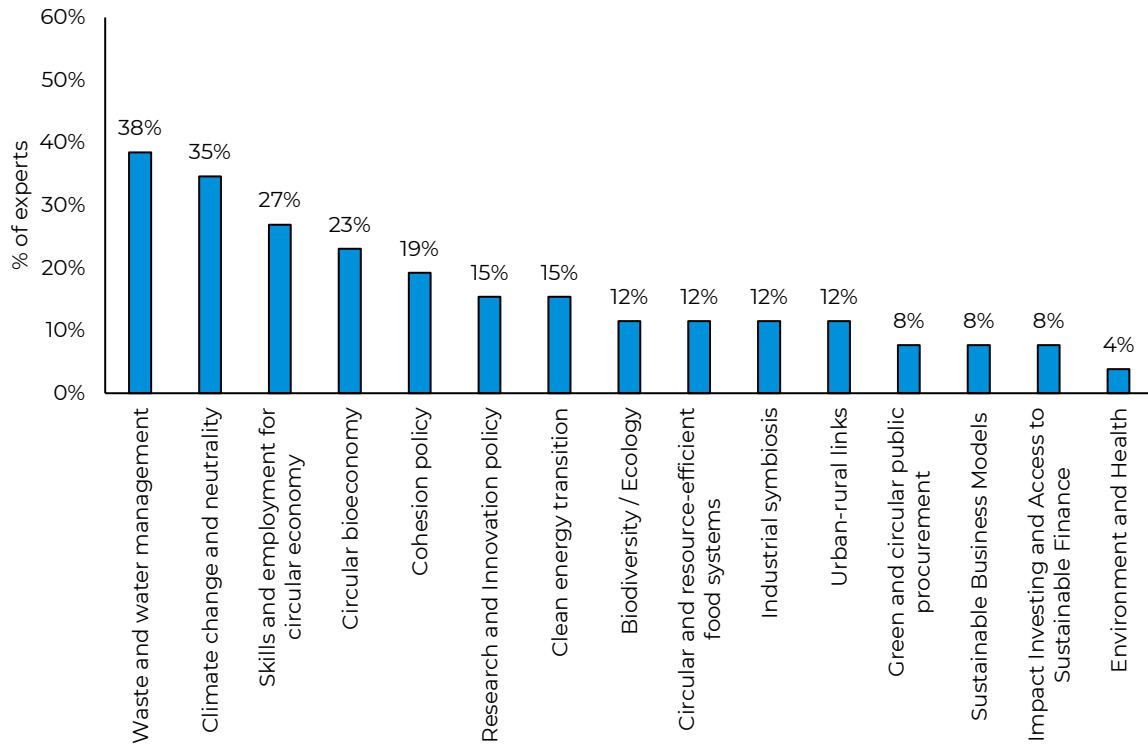
Figure 6. Thematic Expertise.
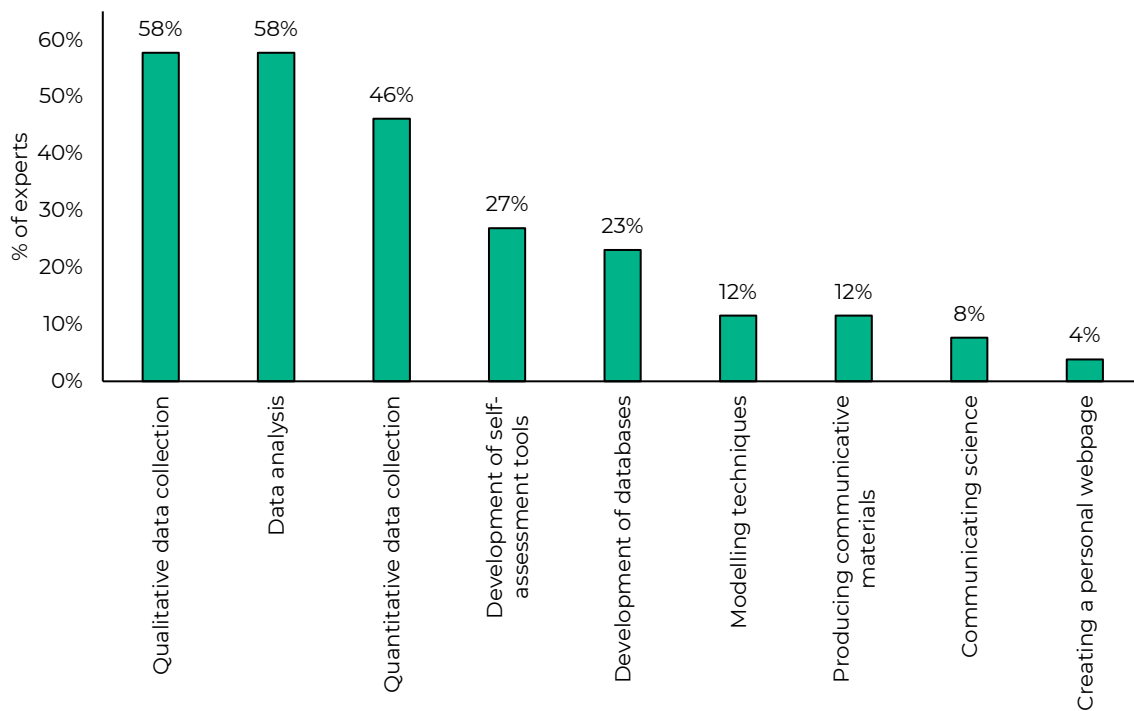
Figure 7. Methodological Skills.

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Figure 8. Language coverage.

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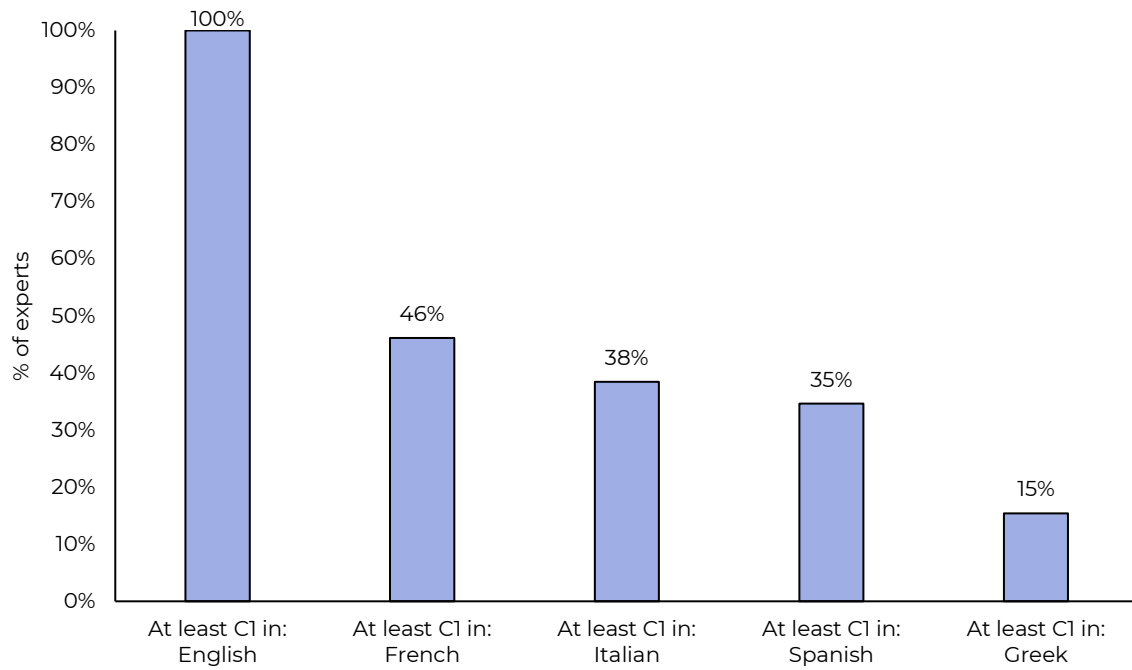
2.2 Understanding TPs partners' training needs

To tailor capacity-building activities to the TPs partners' specific requirements, a survey was conducted, preceded by live polling during the launch of the ISE Community of Practice (CoP) gathering in Marseille, in June 2024. The survey gathered responses from 30 participants representing the 14 TPs, and one response from the Natural Heritage Mission, despite being targeted for the ISE Mission TPs' partners.

Key findings highlighted:

- **Preferred Training Formats** (Figure 9): There was a strong preference for expert-led sessions (4.5/5) and access to freely available resources (4.4/5). In-person training (4.1/5) was preferred over online training sessions (3.3/5).

- **Priority Topics** (Figure 10):

  o **Innovation Transfer and Replicability**: Emphasis on scaling and replicating successful innovations, including business modelling and making projects investment ready.

  o **Stakeholders' and Citizens' Engagement**: Demand for practical approaches, including participatory methods, behavioural insights, and nudging techniques.

  o **Policy Mainstreaming and Alignment**: Strong interest in using local and regional policy tools, aligning with Smart Specialization Strategies (S3/S4), and leveraging European funding programs.

  o **Communication**: Interest in learning from best practices and award-winning projects, as well as advanced tools like AI and social media management.

Additional suggestions included training on financial and project management, entrepreneurship, and soft skills like behavioural change and elevator pitches.

This training needs assessment was conducted to guide the planning of targeted, impactful training programs ensuring they are designed to address these preferences and enhance the TPs' capacities
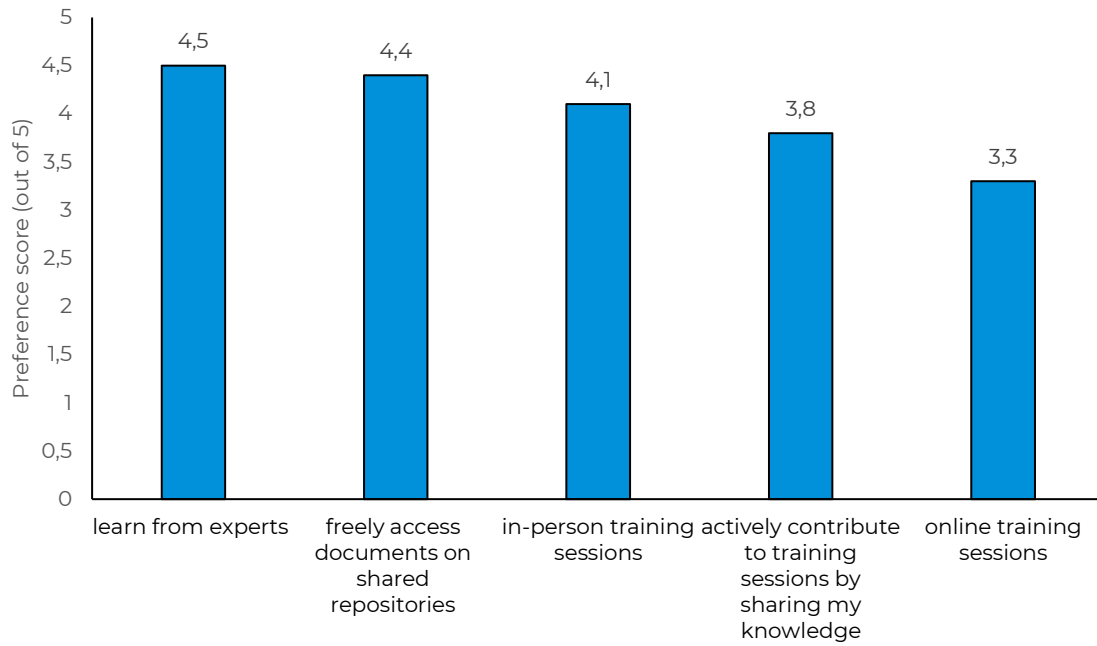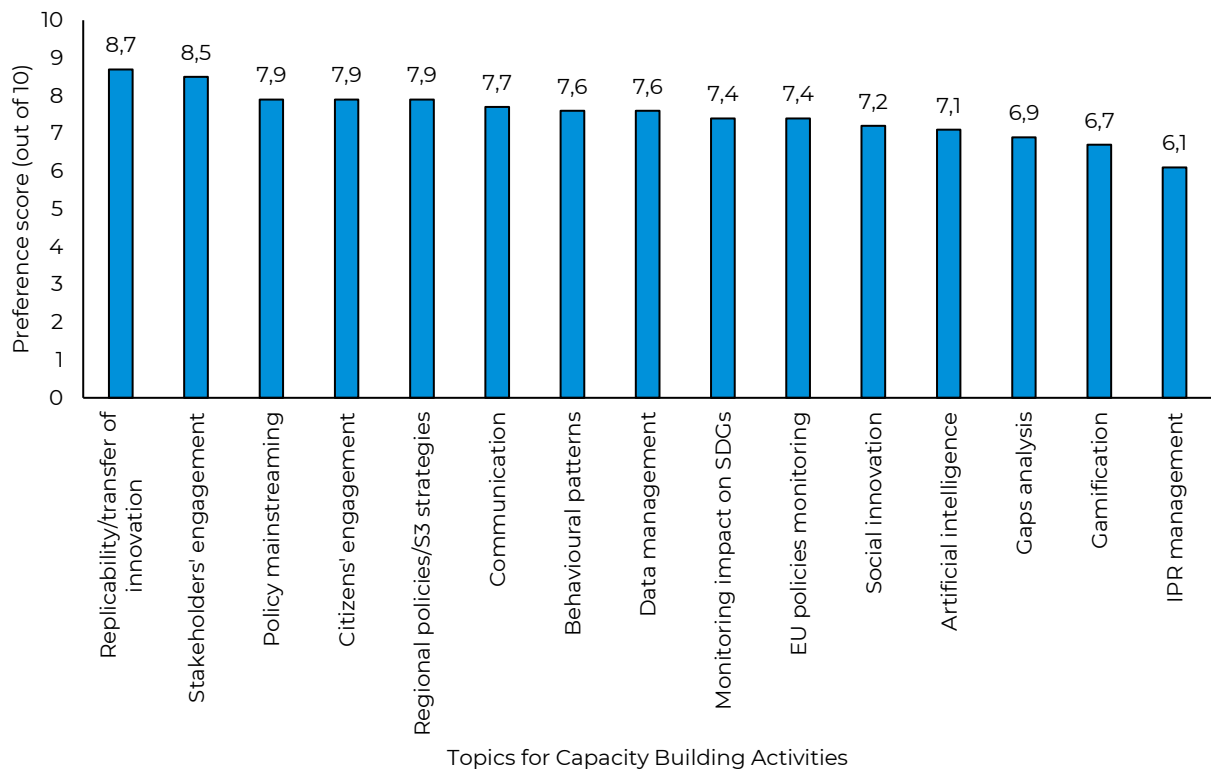
Figure 9. Preferred Training Formats.

Figure 10. Relevance of Topics for Capacity Building Activities.

2.3 Timeline of prioritised trainings

Based on the expressed training needs a series of capacity-building activities for TPs' partners is planned for 2025, with up to 4 training sessions foreseen in 2025. The schedule of the trainings will be defined together with the ISE Mission project partners, in order to guarantee coordination and complementarity with other major project activities, such as ISE CoP gatherings.

Table 1 includes the four priority topics chosen by TPs' representative through the above-mentioned survey. The 2025 planning could thus foresee one training session scheduled per quarter as described.

In Q3 2025, a follow up survey will be shared with TPs' representatives to refine planning of the upcoming 2026 year and taking advantages of the satisfaction surveys.

Table 1. Planned Trainings.

Potential date	Training Title & Description	Content	Training Format & Methodology	Learning Outcomes
3rd April 2025 (Sarajevo)	***Practical Approaches to Influencing Citizen Behaviour*** This training session focuses on effective methods for nudging citizen behaviours in sustainable initiatives. Drawing from successful case studies across the Mediterranean region, participants will explore proven interventions that promote sustainable behaviours in their communities. The session builds on proven approaches from projects like REthinkWASTE (Know-As-You-Throw applied to waste prevention), CISUTAC (incentivizing clothing sustainable consumption patterns), REPper (promoting learning spaces to scale	*Understanding Behaviour Change*: 1. Impact levels: individual, community, and systemic change 2. Barriers and motivators in environmental behaviours 3. Role of habits and social norms *Applying Behavioural Insights to Sustainability*: 1. Waste prevention and separate collection · Household waste sorting behaviours · Food waste reduction · Reuse practices	Session Structure: - Interactive webinar format - Expert lectures and presentations - Guided group discussions - Q&A sessions with lecturers Interactive Elements: - Real-time participant engagement through Wooclap - Collaborative exercises using Miro boards - Live polling and feedback	Participants will have the opportunity to learn about: - How to apply behavioural insights to sustainability challenges - How to design effective interventions on a local and regional scale - How to test and measure impact of such interventions

	up repair), MINEV and ACCESS (planning sustainable events), examining practical tools for community engagement and behaviour change. Working with real-world examples, participants will explore intervention design principles and receive practical tools they can apply in their local contexts.	2. Consumer Habits · Food purchasing and consumption · Textile consumption and disposal · Electronics use and end-of-life · Sharing economy participation *Intervention Design and Impact*: 1. Designing effective interventions · Setting measurable objectives · Selecting appropriate tools · Defining target behaviours 2. Testing and Implementation · Pilot testing approaches · Scaling successful interventions 3. Measuring Results · Key performance indicators · Impact evaluation methods · Data collection tools	- Breakout discussions Supporting Tools: - Video conferencing platform - Presentation materials - Digital collaboration tools - Resource sharing platform	- How to scale successful approaches
Q2 (2nd half of June)	***Business Modelling and Investment-Readiness for Circular Economy Projects*** This training session focuses on developing financially viable circular economy projects at local level and preparing them for investment. It addresses key challenges in	- Circular economy projects risks & return profiles - Funding & Investment Landscape (Grants & subsidies; Equity; Guarantees; Debt; Alternative funding) - Blended funding strategies (viability gap funding; phased funding; technical	Session Structure: - Real-time participant engagement through Wooclap - Collaborative exercises using Miro boards - Live polling and feedback	Participants will have the opportunity to learn about: - How to assess funding needs based on project maturity - Which funding instruments suit

	structuring and funding innovative sustainability initiatives. The session draws from successful cases across the Mediterranean region, including projects funded through the Circular Cities and Regions Initiative (CCRI), RIV Regional Innovation Valleys, and EIB Circular City Centre. Special attention is given to public-private partnerships, consortium building, and blended finance approaches that combine EU funding with other resources. Case examples will feature circular pilots from cities and regions that have successfully blended different funding sources, with emphasis on navigating critical early stages where private investors often hesitate to engage.	assistance; funded & unfunded risk participation) - PDA Project Development Assistance (methodologies, governances, implementation)	- Breakout discussions in sectoral groups (waste, water, bioeconomy etc.) Interactive Elements: - Real-time participant engagement through Wooclap - Collaborative exercises using Miro boards - Live polling and feedback - Breakout discussions Supporting Tools: - Video conferencing platform - Presentation materials - Digital collaboration tools - Resource sharing platform	different development stages - How to structure bankable circular economy projects - How to combine different funding sources effectively - How to build compelling investment cases for public and private funders
Q3	**_Making Policy Work for Your Project: A Guide for Sustainable Innovators_** Project developers working on circular economy initiatives face a complex landscape of regulations, policies, and strategic frameworks at local, regional, national, and EU levels. Successfully implementing circular solutions	Policy Framework Navigation - Mapping relevant regulations and policies affecting ISE projects (e.g. Waste management regulations, S3 and S4 strategies, Extended producer responsibility,	Session Structure: - Real-time participant engagement through Wooclap - Collaborative exercises using Miro boards	Participants will have the opportunity to learn about: - Map relevant policies affecting their projects

requires not only technical and business innovation but also careful navigation of this policy environment. Regulations around waste management, end-of-waste criteria, extended producer responsibility, and environmental protection can significantly impact project feasibility and implementation. At the same time, regional development strategies, smart specialization priorities, and circular economy action plans create opportunities for alignment and support.

This training session helps project developers systematically analyse and align their initiatives with relevant policy frameworks. Using real cases from the ECIV project as examples, participants will learn practical approaches for mapping applicable regulations, ensuring compliance, and identifying potential barriers. The session also emphasizes the importance of establishing constructive feedback loops with policymakers - helping authorities understand how existing frameworks might need to evolve to better support circular innovation. Project developers will gain tools for documenting regulatory challenges and opportunities, structuring policy

Regional circular economy strategies, Relevant sectoral policies);
- Understanding hierarchies of different policy levels, & Identifying key policy requirements and compliance needs; Identifying potential regulatory barriers or conflicts;
- Project Alignment Workshop (Practical tools for analysing project-policy fit, and case studies exercises using ECIV - European Circular Economy Valley project examples);
- Methods for documenting policy barriers and opportunities; Frameworks for providing structured feedback to policymakers; Channels for policy dialogue and advocacy; Templates for policy recommendations

- Live polling and feedback
- Breakout discussions in sectoral groups (waste, water, bioeconomy etc.)

Interactive Elements:
- Real-time participant engagement through Wooclap
- Collaborative exercises using Miro boards
- Live polling and feedback
- Breakout discussions

Supporting Tools:
- Video conferencing platform
- Presentation materials
- Digital collaboration tools
- Resource sharing platform

- Assess project compliance with regulations
- Identify potential regulatory barriers
- Structure constructive policy feedback
- Engage effectively with policymakers

	recommendations, and engaging in productive dialogue with policymaking bodies. While focused primarily on circular economy initiatives, the approaches and frameworks taught in this session can be valuable for any innovation project that needs to navigate complex regulatory environments while contributing to policy evolution. The training combines theoretical understanding with hands-on exercises using real policy documents and project examples, allowing participants to immediately apply learnings to their specific contexts.			
Q4	**Communication Strategies for Sustainable Innovation** This training session focuses on developing effective communication and storytelling approaches for sustainability and circular economy initiatives. Drawing from successful communication practices in environmental projects, participants will learn how to craft compelling narratives that engage stakeholders and drive behavior change. The session emphasizes practical storytelling techniques and strategic communication planning, helping project leaders transform complex technical concepts into clear,	Factual storytelling - Storytelling fundamentals for sustainability projects - Digital communication channels and tools - Visual storytelling techniques - Crafting compelling project narratives	Session Structure: - Interactive webinar format - Expert lectures and presentations, Q&A sessions	Participants will have the opportunity to learn how to: - develop effective communication strategies for sustainability projects - craft compelling stories that drive engagement - adapt messages for different stakeholder groups - How to leverage digital tools for maximum reach

engaging messages that resonate with different audiences. Special attention is given to digital communication channels and visual storytelling methods that can amplify project impact and stakeholder engagement.

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3 Delivered trainings

In 2024, two capacity-building activities were successfully organized (see Table 2).

Table 2. Delivered Trainings.

EVENT	DATE	TYPE	NAME
Launch of the ISE Community of Practice	18th June 2024, Marseille	Presentation	***Lessons learnt from Green Deal implementation***
2nd ISE Community of Practice gathering	14th November 2024, online	Presentations	***Results Amplification Typologies and Examples***

3.1   Lessons learnt from Green Deal Implementation

The training session delivered by Francesco Lembo during the ISE CoP 1 covered three main areas: an overview of EU Green Deal legislation and policy processes affecting cities and regions, practical implementation challenges at the local level including policy barriers and governance issues, and the role of ISE CoP in helping overcome these obstacles.

Table 3. Lessons learnt from Green Deal Implementation.

TITLE OF THE TRAINING	SUBJECT DESCRIPTION	TRAINER	FORMAT	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Lessons learnt from Green Deal Implementation	1. Overview of Green Deal related EU legislative and policy processes with a direct impact on cities, regions and local ecosystems. 2. Lessons learnt from Green Deal implementation at a local level: policy and operational barriers, governance issues. 3. How the ISE CoP can facilitate overcoming of those barriers.	Francesco Lembo	Presentation (in person), followed by interactive discussion with participants	60

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3.2 Results Amplification Typologies and Examples

The 2nd ISE CoP gathering focused on Results Amplification, covering definitions, strategies, and practical examples. The session provided participants with a clear understanding of various strategies for amplifying project results, backed by real-world examples, and equipped them with practical insights to maximize their own project impacts.

The key messages emerging from the training emphasized the importance of strategic approaches to results amplification across different scales and contexts. The amplification framework – Amplifying Within, Out, and Beyond – provided participants with a structured approach to maximize project impact. The examples highlighted particularly effective strategies such as toolkit adoption, participatory processes, network building, policy alignment, and cross-regional partnerships, showcasing how different amplification methods can be tailored to specific project needs and contexts.

Table 4. Results Amplification Typologies and Examples.

TITLE OF THE TRAINING	SUBJECT DESCRIPTION	TRAINERS	FORMAT	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Results Amplification Typologies and Examples	**Lessons learnt** from analysis of thematic projects training needs **Definitions** of Results Amplification, Capitalisation, Mainstreaming, and Transfer. **Interreg Euro-MED Results Amplification** Strategy focusing on facilitating knowledge sharing, encouraging transfer, and enhancing coordination. **Amplification Processes Framework**: Amplifying Within, Amplifying Out, Amplifying Beyond. Case studies illustrating these processes. **Case Studies of Successful Amplification:** Six practical examples were presented to illustrate these processes: • EMBRACE: Focus on successful dissemination of the Circular Business	**Alessandro DARAIO** **Zuzana BOHACOVA** **Mercè BOY** **Noé VIEDMA** **Serena LISAI** **Yorgos STEPHANEDES** **A. Tiziana De Nittis**	Recorded presentations (online)	99

Model Toolkit which was adopted in the Aragón region.

- **Med4Waste**: Experiences were shared on participatory processes, zero waste policy guidelines, community compost plant, Reuse Circuits & Infrastructures
- **HOOP**: Insights were shared on building a robust network to support urban bioeconomy initiatives across multiple regions.
- **Green Growth Community**: Focus was on integrating project results into the UfM 2030 GreenerMed Agenda, emphasizing regional policy alignment.
- **GRASPINNO**: Experiences centred on embedding a green procurement methodology into Greece's national strategy, ensuring policy-level adoption.
- **MISTRAL/B-BLUE/Blye BioMED**: Focus on establishing a partnership network to advance a sustainable blue bioeconomy across the Mediterranean.

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4 Conclusions

Capacity building activities for TPs mark an important step toward equipping TPs' partners with the tools and knowledge needed to foster innovation and sustainability across the Mediterranean. This document reflects the early stages of these trainings, highlighting the framework, methodologies, and initial outputs while setting the stage for future developments.

During 2024 a strong foundation has been established: mapping resources and competences, analysing training needs, and launching initial capacity-building events. These efforts are already contributing to the project's overarching goal of supporting regional collaboration and scaling innovative solutions.

As this activity evolves, subsequent phases will prioritize refining and expanding training programs based on lessons learned and feedback from stakeholders. The planned 2025 training sessions aim to address priority areas such as innovation transfer, stakeholder engagement, policy alignment, and advanced communication strategies, ensuring alignment with emerging needs and thematic priorities.

A key challenge moving forward will be maintaining the relevance and adaptability of capacity-building efforts in the face of shifting priorities and the evolving landscape of sustainable innovation.

The dynamic nature of the ISE Mission anticipates the gradual integration of new Thematic Projects throughout its duration with each new project bringing unique perspectives, needs, and priorities that will need to be accommodated within the capacity-building framework. This continuous expansion of the Mission's scope requires a flexible and scalable approach to training delivery, ensuring that both established and new partners receive appropriate support while fostering cross-project learning opportunities. Addressing these challenges will require continuous assessment, iterative improvements, and proactive engagement with stakeholders.

In addition, the training activities will be integrated into the Interreg Euro-MED Academy, once established, to expand their reach and benefit a broader range of stakeholders. By building on the initial achievements detailed in this report, these capacity building activities will play a pivotal role in amplifying the impact of Thematic Projects, enhancing governance structures, and advancing the Mediterranean's transition toward a sustainable and competitive innovation ecosystem.

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