



Innovative  
sustainable economy

Interreg  
Euro-MED

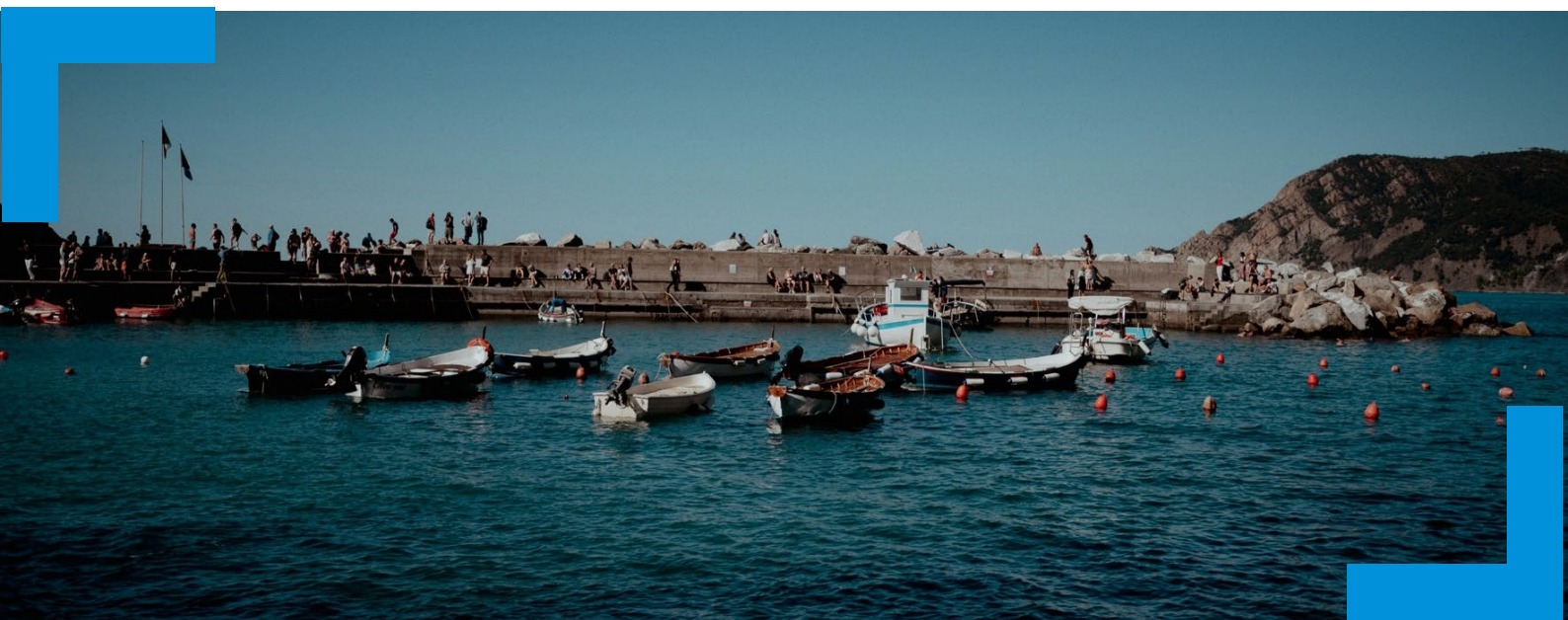


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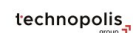
Union for the Mediterranean  
Union pour la Méditerranée  
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SYNERGIES

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## Abbreviations

<b>DGs</b>	Directorates-General
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ISE</b>	Innovative Sustainable Economy
<b>IDP</b>	Institutional Dialogue Project
<b>MSSD</b>	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development
<b>RAS</b>	Results Amplification Strategy
<b>TCP</b>	Thematic Community Project



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## Abstract

The **Interreg Euro-MED Innovative Sustainable Economy (ISE) Mission** aims to enhance cooperation and knowledge exchange by fostering **synergies** among multi-actor initiatives in the **Mediterranean region**. This study systematically defines, categorizes, and visualizes these synergies to assess their contribution to territorial cooperation and sustainable economic transformation.

The **methodology** involves actor and initiative clustering, interaction mapping, and impact monitoring to evaluate effectiveness. Results indicate that synergistic collaborations **enhance impact** across four objectives: resource mapping, community engagement, capacity building, and policy influence.

**Notable outcomes** include participation in the MED Cluster Circular Economy, contributions to the Union for the Mediterranean's Sustainable Blue Economy strategy, training initiatives during EU Green Week, and expert involvement in updating the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD).

The findings highlight the **importance of structured collaboration** in advancing **regional sustainability objectives**. Future work will focus on maintaining and expanding synergies while refining monitoring mechanisms to ensure continued impact assessment and adaptive governance.



# Introduction

**Transnational cooperation** in the **Mediterranean** is crucial to bring together experts, stakeholders, and organisations from multiple countries and sectors, forming dynamic partnerships that accelerate innovation and create resilient solutions. By pooling knowledge, resources, and expertise, Interreg Euro-MED projects are good examples of territorial cooperation projects that maximise impact and drive positive change in regions that share common goals and challenges<sup>1</sup>. In this context, **synergistic collaborations** (i.e., synergies) refers to a situation where two or more initiatives, composed by actors, interact in a way that enhances the overall benefit, producing results greater than the sum of the individual contributions. **Synergies** occur when **actors** and **initiatives** reinforce each other, leading to **increased impact**.

Therefore, the Thematic Community Project (TCP) of the Innovative Sustainable Economy (ISE) Mission aims to increase synergistic collaborations to drive a fair transition to a **sustainable economy** through **transformative innovation**, specifically under the *Marine Resources, Agri-food Systems, Industrial Transition, and Resource Valorisation* focus areas<sup>2</sup>.

To this end, synergies from previous initiatives among the ISE Mission governance projects consortia will be maintained and new ones will be explored, in line with the respective Institutional Dialogue Project (IDP) **Liaising4Advocacy strategy**.

Being a very transversal project activity, enriched by all project partners' initiatives, this document intends to publicly **define, cluster, visualise, and describe** the current synergies and enhanced impact. First, it is important to define the pieces to create a synergy (Figure 1).

<sup>1</sup> [https://interreg.eu/media/azjnk14f/transnational\\_cooperation.pdf](https://interreg.eu/media/azjnk14f/transnational_cooperation.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/our-projects/>

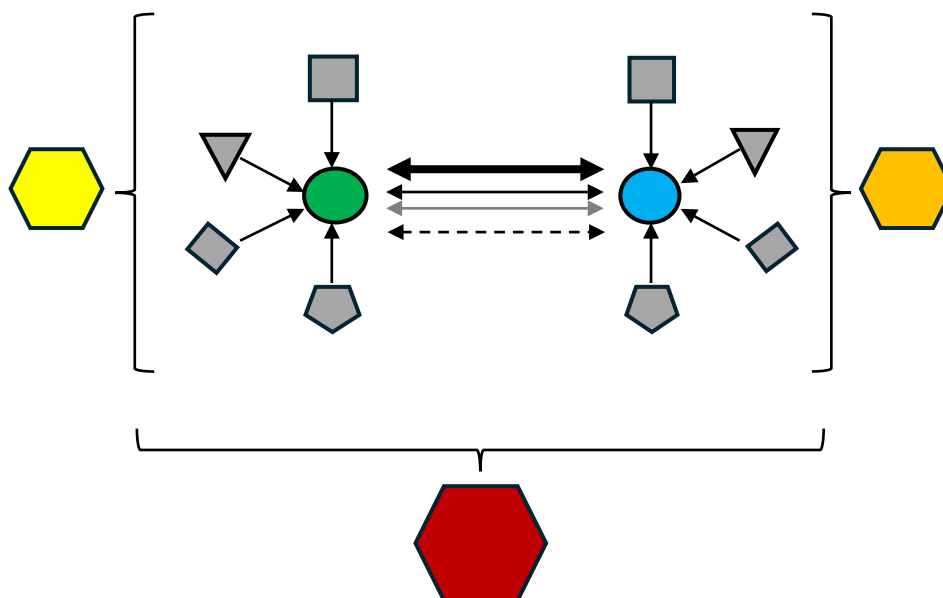


Figure 1. Diagram of the pieces requested to create synergies. The squares, triangles, diamonds, and pentagons represent the 4-ple helix types of ACTORS (i.e., private sector, academia, public authorities, and civil society / NGOs, respectively). The different coloured circles represent types of INITIATIVES, composed by actors. Different colours, densities, and styles of arrows represent types of INTERACTIONS. Hexagons represent the different types of impacts, individually or through synergistic collaborations.

## Actors

**Actors** comprise the relevant stakeholders, at organisation level, that are working and/or have interest in the Interreg Euro-MED ISE Mission scope. They are affected by and/or can contribute to activities implementation and, in turn, achieving higher impact. Actors have impact at different levels, from local, regional, national, and international levels (i.e., **multi-level approach**), and represent different 4-ple helix types (i.e., **multi-actor approach**: private sector, academia, public authorities, and civil society / NGOs).

## Initiatives

**Initiatives** is the general term used to represent and classify the multi-level and multi-actor collaborations and **actions as pathways** and tools to **achieve a desired impact**. Therefore, initiatives are related to specific thematic. Following the ISE Mission scope, targeted initiatives' thematic will comprise innovative and sustainable green and blue economies, and cross-cutting themes such as improving skills, digitalisation, finance, governance, among others (i.e., ISEC Hub





themes)<sup>3</sup>. For this specific case, initiatives are differentiated in 4 types: Programmes, Projects, Processes, and Events. In addition, initiatives have different roles: Promotive or Influential.

## Interactions

**Interactions** are built between actors and initiatives or between initiatives. Interactions between single actors will not be considered as synergies must be carried out between multi-level and multi-actor collaborations, forming an initiative (Figure 1). In turn, interactions can be classified by the **role of actors** or the **type of joint activity**.

## Objectives

The aim of increasing synergistic collaborations is to achieve exponential impact. In addition, there is the need to keep exploring new synergistic opportunities as they evolve in time.

The overall desired impact is to drive a fair transition to a sustainable economy through transformative innovation in the Mediterranean. To do so synergies arise from the different ISE Mission **thematic scope** and contribution to the Interreg Euro-MED **Results Amplification Strategy** (RAS) by implementing a series of integrated and mutually reinforcing activities classified among different steps of the RAS: mapping resources, community engagement, capacity building, and policy impact (Figure 2).

This document gives an overview of the current synergies and increased impact between the ISE Mission governance projects (specially from the TCP perspective and work plan), and other initiatives in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/hub/>

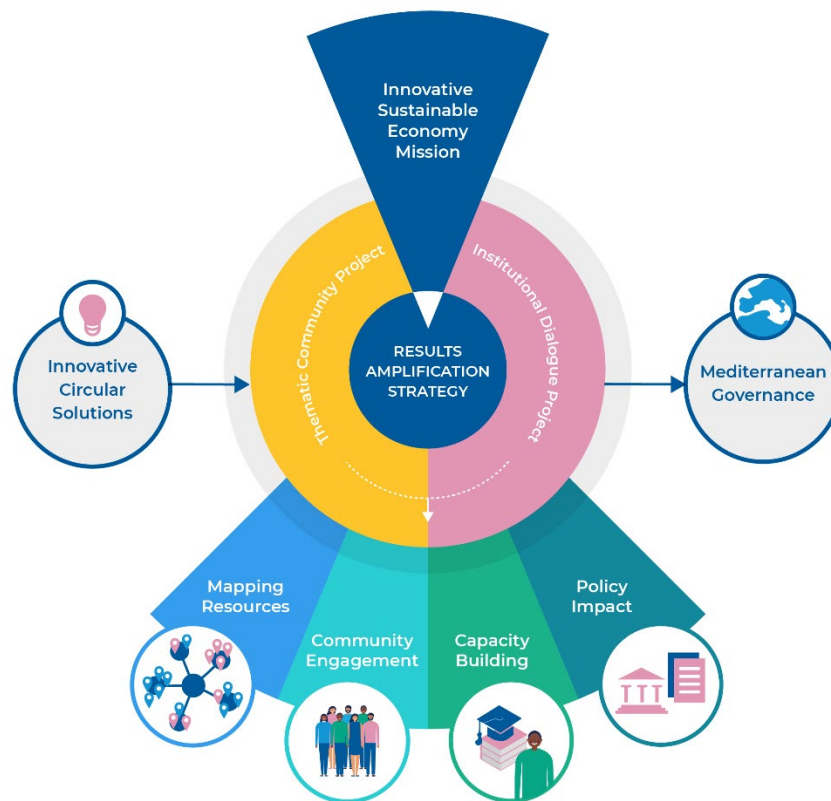


Figure 2. . Diagram of the ISE Mission governance projects work to achieve an innovative sustainable economy in the Mediterranean



# Methodology

To **define, cluster, visualise, and describe** the current synergies and enhanced impact a methodology has been developed. This methodology comprises the following steps:

1. Clear definitions and reasoning behind the **pre-defined clusters**.
2. **Mapping** the current synergies among the ISE Mission governance projects' consortia based on the agreed definitions and typologies.
3. **Visualise** the mapped synergies.
4. Regularly **monitoring** of the ongoing and new synergies.

## Clustering

### Types of actors

Table 1 gives examples of the multi-level and multi-actor approaches requested to create synergies between initiatives. This classification is also the basis for good governance models structures.

The multi-level approach comprises organisations that have competences or impact at the following levels:

- **International:** beyond EU member states and country borders. Setting international agreements, establishing trade rules, global standards and policies, funding and coordinating large-scale programmes, and enhancing cross-border institutional cooperation.
- **National:** impact at country level. Implementing international efforts into national regulations and managing instruments. Coordination between regional (below) and international (above) levels.
- **Regional:** adapting national policies to territorial strategies, managing national and international funds, overseeing and expertise in specific
- **Local:** impact and competences at municipality level.

The multi-actor approach comprises organisations that represent the:

- **Private sector:** entities, excluding PA, that are involved in developing finance and driven by the need to earn economic benefits. Run by individuals and companies for profit and not state controlled.
- **Academia:** bringing innovative solutions and technical expertise from a neutral perspective, independently of their legal status.
- **Public authorities:** with the competences and responsibilities to make decisions and implement binding and non-binding policies and action plans to ensure the well-being of society. Including elected or appointed government bodies, regulatory agencies, and administrative bodies.
- **Civil society / NGOs:** general public and aggregate of NGOs and institutions that advance the interests and will of citizens. Referring to individuals and organisations in a society that are independent of the government and business sectors.

Table 1. Matrix with examples of types of actors, at organisation/institution level, being the essential building block to create initiatives.

Multi-level approach	<b>International</b>	<a href="#">IrRADIARE</a> (ProcuraMED partner)	<a href="#">University of Bergamo</a> (GREENSMARTMED partner)	<a href="#">MedWaves</a> (ISE Mission partner)	<a href="#">MIO-ECSDE</a> (ISE Mission partner)
	<b>National</b>	<a href="#">PMM</a> (ISE Mission partner)	<a href="#">CNR</a> (2B-BLUE partner)	<a href="#">National Agency of Natural Resources</a> Albania (SPOWIND partner)	<a href="#">Bulgarian Association of Recycling</a> (CircleMED partner)
	<b>Regional</b>	<a href="#">Aqua-Valley</a> (Clepsydra partner)	<a href="#">University of Patras</a> (AZA4ICE & ProcuraMED partner)	<a href="#">GenCat</a> (ISE Mission partner)	<a href="#">CENER21</a> (ISE Mission partner)
	<b>Local</b>	<a href="#">Preveza Chamber</a> (OliveOilMedNet partner)	<a href="#">BETA TC (UVIC-UCC)</a> (ISE Mission partner)	<a href="#">Metropolitan City of Bologna</a> (REPPER partner)	<a href="#">Environmental Research Institute</a> Slovenia (eWAsTER partner)
		<b>Private sector</b>	<b>Academia</b>	<b>Public authorities</b>	<b>Civil Society NGOs</b>
Multi-actor approach (4-ple helix)					



## Types of initiatives

Table 2 gives examples of the types and roles of initiatives to further build synergies. This classification is specific for the ISE Mission and is in line with the internal Liaising4Advocacy strategy (led by the IDP).

Useful different types of initiatives for the ISE Mission of the Interreg Euro-MED Programme are as follows:

- **Programmes:** EU-international funding instruments to support projects across various sectors.
- **Projects:** EU-international funded through different Programmes, by thematic.
- **Events:** particularly referring to physical or virtual, formal or informal planned occurrences with the aim to gather actors for a specific purpose. Events could be for networking, awareness, education...
- **Processes:** other initiatives different from programmes, projects and events. Examples include working groups, advisory boards, platforms, networks, alliances...

In this context, initiatives can have a promotive or influential role. By nature, projects and events tend to have a promotive role while programmes and processes an influential role:

- **Promotive:** initiatives that contribute to improving innovative sustainable economy in the Mediterranean by providing evidence-based information.
- **Influential:** initiatives with broad territorial capacity for political, financial, and/or strategic decision-making.

Table 2. Matrix with examples of types of initiatives, being the crucial level to build synergies

Types	Programmes	NA	European Commission (EC) Directorates-General (DGs) Interreg's; PRIMA...
	Projects	ISE Mission; BlueMissionMed; Hubs4Circularity...	NA
	Events	MED Innovation Camps...	EU Week of Regions and Cities; EU Green Week...
	Processes	NA	UfM Working Groups...
		Promotive	Influential
Roles			

## Types of interactions between actors and initiatives

To better define synergies, it is important to define types of interactions between actors and initiatives. For this typology, interactions are classified by the role of the actors in the corresponding initiative as follows:

- **Partners:** eligible entities/actors that are funded by different initiatives. Partners sign a partnership agreement and directly contribute to the specific initiative activities implementation.

For example: MIO-ECSDE is a PARTNER of Interreg Euro-MED ISE Mission Thematic Community Project<sup>4</sup>.

- **Associates:** eligible entities/actors involved and interested in initiatives but without direct funds. Associates sign a letter of commitment or a declaration form.

For example: BUSINESSMED is an ASSOCIATE of Interreg Euro-MED ISE Mission Governance Projects<sup>5</sup>.

- **Members:** entities/actors/initiatives formally joining another initiative that is working toward a specific goal or cause. Membership usually involved commitments such as participation in activities, volunteering contributions...

<sup>4</sup> <https://mio-ecsde.org/project/innovative-sustainable-economy-mission/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://interreg-euro-med.eu/en/events/med-talks-dialogue-mediterranean/>



For example: Mercè Boy Roura, representing ISE Mission and BETA TC (UVIC-UCC) is a MEMBER of European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform<sup>6</sup>.

- **Organisers:** entities/actors/initiatives taking the leadership role in coordinating other initiatives. Organisers are responsible for setting the goals, managing resources, engaging members, and ensuring that activities implementation align with the corresponding initiative's mission.

For example: ACR+ is an ORGANISER of the European Week of Waste Reduction<sup>7</sup>.

- **Experts:** entities/actors contributing to an initiative with specialised knowledge, skills, or experience. Experts provide guidance, insights, good practices...

For example: Rosa Strube, head of sustainable lifestyle in the collaborating centre on sustainable consumption and production (CSCP), has been invited as external EXPERT to the 3<sup>rd</sup> ISE CoP gathering in Sarajevo<sup>8</sup>.

## Types of interactions between initiatives

To better define synergies, it is important to define types of interactions between initiatives. For this typology interactions are classified by the type of joint activity:

- **Informative:** gatherings, events, meetings, working groups...
- **Communicative:** webpages, social media, journalistic articles, videos, podcasts...
- **Technical:** scientific papers, action plans, trainings...
- **Advocate:** joint positions, policy papers...

## Mapping

Mapping synergies is carried out in an internal Excel database with the corresponding information to better visualise the information (section 2.3):

- **Elements** (Figure 3a): individual nodes (rows) with information and characteristics (columns) of actors as organisations and initiatives. These elements form the building blocks to further show interactions (i.e., connections).
- **Connections** (Figure 3b): information indicating the type of interactions between elements.

<sup>6</sup> <https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/en/dialogue/cg-names-contacts/merce-boy-roura>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.acrplus.org/en/groupe/european-week-for-waste-reduction-150>

<sup>8</sup> <https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/events/3-ise-cop-gathering/>

This information is being updated every 3 months (i.e., during technical committee meetings with the ISE Mission governance projects consortia). It complements the Liaising4Advocacy strategy internal Excel planner of past, ongoing, and future potential activities.

**a)**

Label	Type	Description	Tags	Country
EWA	PP	www.energywateragency.gov.mt	NA	Malta
Clepsydra	TP	https://clepsydra.interreg-euro-med.eu/	Agri-Food Systems	NA

**b)**

From	To	Type	Strength
EWA	Clepsydra	Partners	NA
GREENSMARTMED	ISE CoP	Members	NA

Figure 3. Diagram of a) Elements dataset structure; and b) connections dataset structure using kumu visualisation tool.

## Visualisation

[Kumu](#) tool is used to visualise synergies. In this case, the corresponding visualisation legend used is indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Legend of the synergies' visualisation.

Type of input data	Icon	Style	Description
Elements			Private Sector
			Academia
			Public Authority
			Civil Society / NGOs
			Programmes
			Projects
			Events
			Processes
			Promotive
Connections			Partners
			Associates





	————→		Members
	————→		Organisers
	————→		Experts
	-----→		Informative
	-----→		Communicative
	--- --→		Technical
	--- --→		Advocate

## Monitoring

Impact of the synergies will be monitored with indicators and complementing the Liaising4Advocacy strategy internal Excel planner. These indicators will allow us to keep improving and build trust, aiming to maintain in time recurrent and new synergistic opportunities. Examples of the potential monitoring indicators could include interactions' numbers, density, quality, participants engaged...

# Results

Synergistic opportunities will be visualised, and impact will be monitored. So far, one example of each type of current ISE Mission governance projects' synergies are explained under section 3.2. Impact.

## Synergies

Synergies will be visualised as presented in Figure 4. The same visualisation tool has been used for the ISE CoP<sup>9</sup> and the ISEC Hub networking directory<sup>10</sup>.

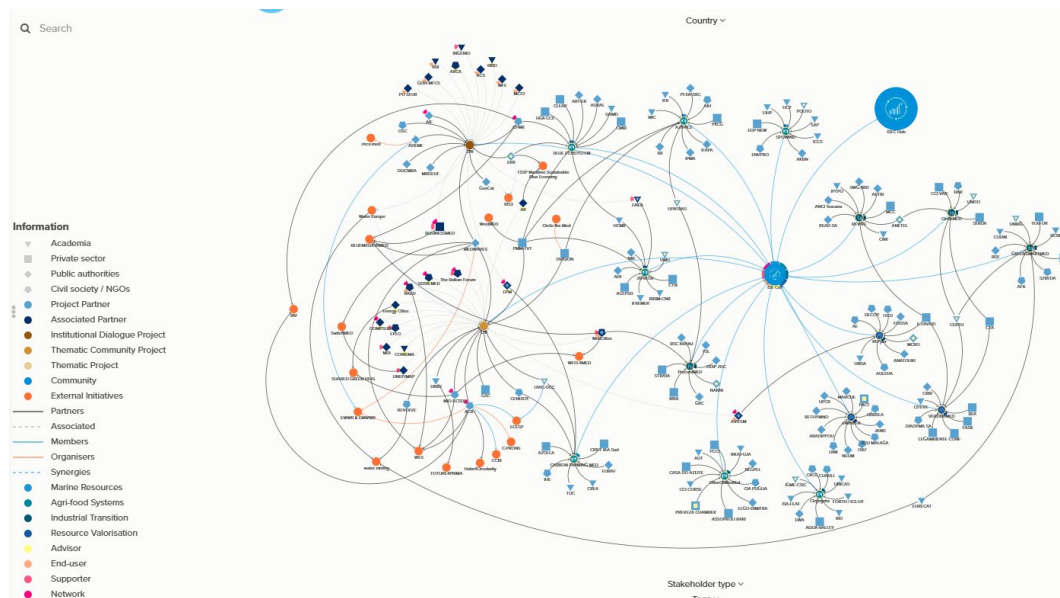


Figure 4. Example with the interactive map of the ISE CoP. Identified synergistic opportunities and synergistic collaborations will be displayed as explained in section 2.3. Work in progress.

## Impact

Current synergies enhanced impact details are explained below organised within the ISE Mission governance projects general objectives. Some of them have been promoted in a News style in the

<sup>9</sup> <https://kumu.io/mcaldero/ise-mission-community>

<sup>10</sup> <https://kumu.io/FrancescoCamonita/isec-hub#isec-hub-dynamic-hub-directory>



project website<sup>11</sup>.

## Mapping resources



	Name	Type
<b>Actor/s</b>	UVIC-UCC, representing the ISE Mission MedWaves, representing the ISE Mission	Academia Public Authority
<b>Initiative</b>	Sustainable Tourism Interreg Euro-MED Mission MED Cluster Circular Economy	Promotive Project
<b>Interaction</b>	UVIC-UCC and MedWaves, as ISE Mission partners, are members of MED Cluster Circular Economy initiative of Sustainable Tourism Interreg Euro-MED Mission.	Between actor/s and initiative Members
<b>Impact</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> meeting and contribution to the Orientation Paper and sustainable tourism mission work plan.	
<b>Reference</b>	<a href="https://sustainable-tourism.interreg-euro-med.eu/2024/06/17/the-sustainable-tourism-mission-just-released-three-orientation-papers/">https://sustainable-tourism.interreg-euro-med.eu/2024/06/17/the-sustainable-tourism-mission-just-released-three-orientation-papers/</a>	

## Community engagement



	Name	Type
<b>Initiative A</b>	ISE Mission	Promotive Project
<b>Initiative B</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> UfM Stakeholder Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy	Influential Event
<b>Interaction</b>	ISE Mission active participation at the 2 <sup>nd</sup> UfM Stakeholder Conference on Sustainable Blue Economy	Between initiatives Informative
<b>Impact</b>	Contribution to the 2021 UfM Ministerial Declaration on Sustainable Blue Economy. Tack stock of progress achieved, discuss joint challenges and transformative tools, and	

<sup>11</sup> <https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/news-events/news/>



	engage the whole Mediterranean Sustainable Blue Economy Community in setting the patch towards further deliberations at political level.
<b>Reference</b>	<a href="https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/2024/02/19/2nd-ufm-stakeholder-conference-on-sustainable-blue-economy-individually-we-are-one-drop-but-together-we-are-an-ocean/">https://innovative-sustainable-economy.interreg-euro-med.eu/2024/02/19/2nd-ufm-stakeholder-conference-on-sustainable-blue-economy-individually-we-are-one-drop-but-together-we-are-an-ocean/</a>

## Capacity building



	Name	Type
<b>Initiative A</b>	ISE Mission	Promotive Project
<b>Initiative B</b>	EU Green Week	Influential Event
<b>Interaction</b>	ISE Mission submitted a capacity building webinar to be part as an EU Green Week partner event.	Between initiatives Technical
<b>Impact</b>	Build capacity among local authorities, businesses, and civil society organizations to design more effective behavioural interventions for circular economy transitions.	
<b>Reference</b>	<a href="https://green-week.event.europa.eu/index_en">https://green-week.event.europa.eu/index_en</a>	



## Policy impact



	Name	Type
Actor/s	Mercè Boy Roura, expert from UVIC-UCC, representing the ISE Mission	Academia
	Anastasia Roniotes, expert from MIO-ECSDE, representing the ISE Mission	Civil Society NGO
Initiative	Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development policy framework	Influential Process
Interaction	ISE Mission specific experts' representatives are participating in Working Meetings of the Working Group on Circular Economy for reviewing, updating, and discussing new proposals for Strategic Directions, Actions, and Indicators within the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD) – Objective 5, which aims to support the "Transition towards a green and blue economy."	Between actor/s and initiative Experts
Impact	Direct contribution to the updates of the MSSD. The new MSSD will be officially approved during the 24th Meeting of the Contracting Parties (COP 24), scheduled for December 2–5, 2025, in Cairo, Egypt.	
Reference	<a href="https://www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/mediterranean-strategy-sustainable-development-mssd">https://www.unep.org/unepmap/what-we-do/mediterranean-strategy-sustainable-development-mssd</a> <a href="#">LinkedIn post</a>	



## Discussion

The evolving nature of synergies within the ISE Mission underscores the importance of **temporal data** and the ability to capitalize on **momentum-driven opportunities**. Synergies are not static; they develop dynamically in response to shifts in policy, funding cycles, stakeholder engagement, and regional socio-economic trends. Therefore, effective monitoring must go beyond snapshot assessments and instead adopt a **continuous, adaptive approach** that captures real-time developments and emerging collaborations.

A key challenge in **tracking synergies over time** lies in the variability of actor involvement, the fluid nature of thematic priorities, and the external influences shaping economic and governance landscapes. For instance, the interactions mapped through this project demonstrate that some collaborations are **opportunistic and event-driven**, while others are **structurally embedded in long-term strategies**. Understanding these distinctions is critical for designing a **monitoring framework** that differentiates between short-term engagements and sustained synergies.

Moreover, taking advantage of momentums requires an anticipatory approach. By identifying policy windows, emerging funding calls, and shifts in governance priorities, the ISE Mission can position itself to proactively initiate synergies rather than merely responding to existing ones. This highlights the need for a **flexible governance model** where adaptive planning and rapid decision-making enable stakeholders to leverage emerging opportunities efficiently.

As monitoring efforts progress, refining data collection methods, strengthening stakeholder feedback loops, and integrating real-time visualization tools will be essential. By doing so, the ISE Mission can ensure that **synergies remain impactful**, evolving in alignment with the **broader Mediterranean sustainability agenda**.



## Conclusions

The findings of this study underscore the **critical role of synergies** in advancing towards a sustainable and innovative economy in the Mediterranean region. By fostering structured collaboration among multi-level and multi-actor diverse stakeholders, the Interreg Euro-MED ISE Mission has successfully amplified the impact of existing initiatives while creating pathways for new synergistic opportunities.

To sustain and expand these synergies, a **continuous and adaptive approach** is essential. This includes **regular monitoring and evaluation**, leveraging digital tools for **data-driven mapping**, and fostering engagement through **multi-level governance frameworks**. Future efforts should focus on **broadening stakeholder networks**, integrating cross-sectoral knowledge, and aligning initiatives with evolving policy landscapes. Additionally, strengthening linkages with **Mediterranean frameworks** can enhance resource mobilization and policy coherence.

Ultimately, sustaining and **expanding synergistic opportunities** requires a **proactive strategy**—one that embraces **innovation, inclusivity, and long-term collaboration**. By continually adapting to emerging challenges and fostering new partnerships, the ISE Mission can drive **transformative change**, ensuring a resilient and sustainable economic future for the Mediterranean region.



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