

## Summary of the workshop

### ***Thematic focus or territoriality***, during the ***Art of Cooperation 2024 Conference***

Bálna Budapest, 14 November 2024

**Moderator:** Marko RUOKANGAS – Senior Expert, Interact

**Speakers:**

Silvester HOLOP – Deputy Head of JS, Interreg Hungary-Slovakia Programme  
Ivan CURZOLO – Senior Expert, NA, Presidency of the Council of Ministers Italy  
Simona ENE – Head of JS, Interreg Danube Region  
Roland ARBTER – National Coordinator, Danube Regional Strategy (Austria)

This workshop explored whether focusing on thematic objectives under the ERDF framework is justified or if a territorial approach would better support the impacts of Interreg programmes post-2027. Panelists shared their experiences with both the thematic framework and territorial principles.

The key takeaway from the discussion was that thematic objectives and territorial approaches are complementary rather than contradictory. The current thematic framework is flexible and broad enough to address regional and territorial needs. Territorial analysis plays a crucial role in the programming process, ensuring that programmes ultimately meet local requirements. The discussions highlighted that programme development is a dynamic negotiation, balancing both bottom-up and top-down approaches.

A specific example, the Danube region, illustrated how collaboration between macro-regional strategy and the Danube Transnational Programme ensured alignment on key priorities, even if not all objectives perfectly overlap. This coordination begins in the programming phase and focuses on meaningful, shared goals.

The workshop also reviewed Policy Objective 5 (PO5), introduced to address grassroots and community-level needs through flexible, thematic approach. While PO5 offers opportunities, it has proven time-intensive and challenging and particularly difficult for transnational programmes. An alternative approach from the Hungary-Slovakia programme was highlighted, using territorial action plans to address grassroots needs efficiently. Tested since 2014-2020 and further refined, this method ensures that regional priorities are met in a simpler, more time-effective manner while staying grounded in actual territorial needs.