



2000 - 2025

25 years of cooperation

...CONNECTING THE DOTS

*A journey of cooperation across
the Northern Periphery and Arctic*

Discover stories of collaboration,
creativity, and shared achievements
that have made the NPA community
what it is today.

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2000

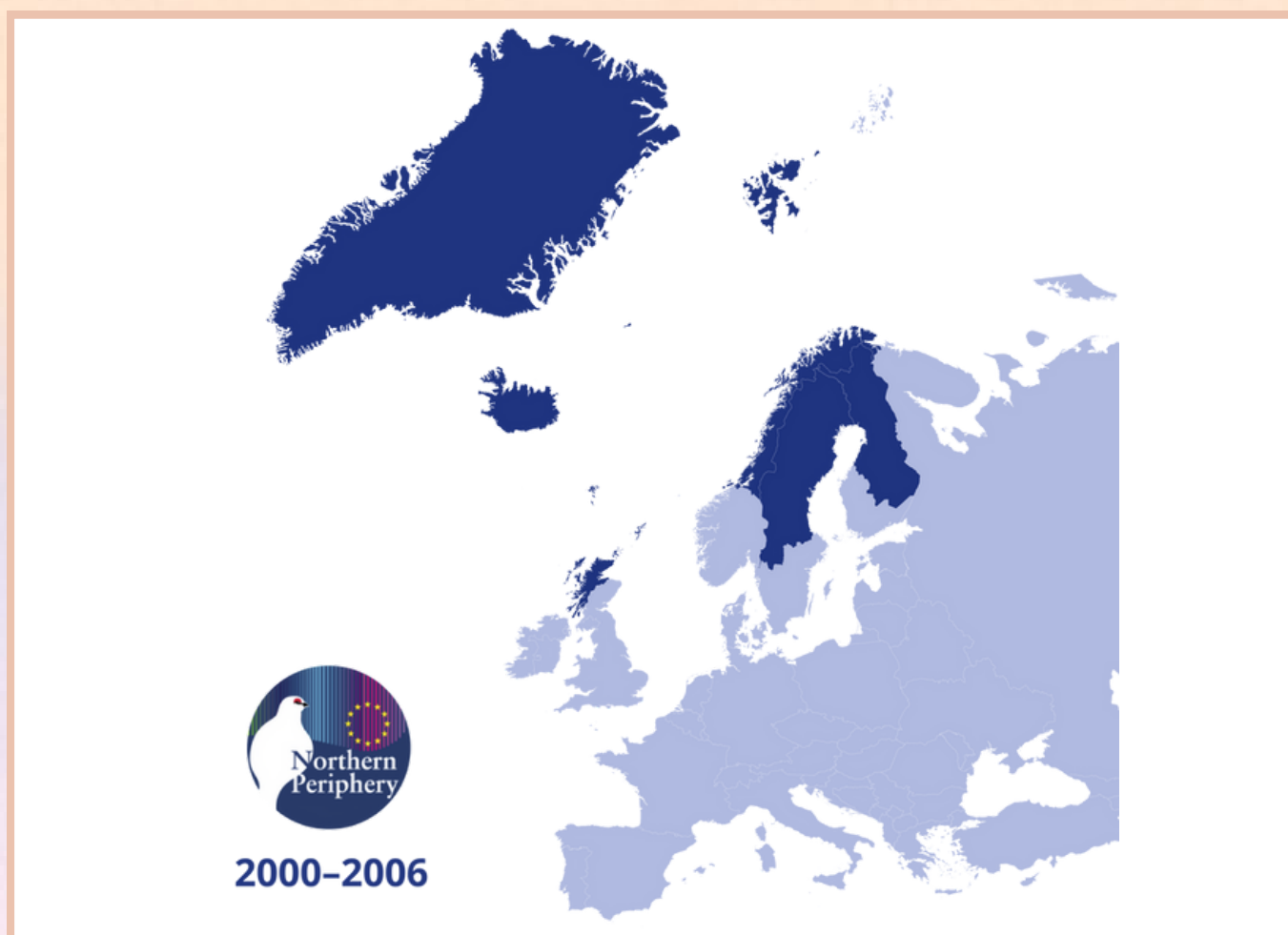


Launched as a pilot under ERDF Article 10 in the mid-1990s, the Interreg IIIB Northern Periphery Programme (NPP) began in 2000, linking regions in Scotland, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

From 2000–2006, the NPP backed 47 main and 62 preparatory projects with 400+ partners, improving transport, services, business, nature use, and information access.

Despite distances, sparse populations, harsh climates, and limited services, NPP projects turned shared challenges into opportunities.

The Interreg Northern Periphery Programme Started



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01

2001



The rationale of the NPP was to improve services in isolated communities facing high costs, sparse populations, and difficult terrain. Early projects began tackling these challenges through solutions such as telemedicine, integrated care, and workforce training.

The Sustainable rural healthcare network project focused on community involvement, and initiatives like REMEDY introduced IT-based tools to enhance healthcare access. Today's Interreg NPA continues this work, developing digital solutions and strengthening community collaboration.

Improving services in remote communities



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02

2002



The ROADEX project, launched under the Interreg Northern Periphery Programme, addresses the challenge of maintaining roads in remote regions with harsh climates and limited resources. It has developed innovative solutions for road design, drainage, and maintenance. Evolving into the self-sustaining ROADEX Network, the project continues to provide expertise and resources for rural road management and is still ongoing.

The ROADEX network significantly increased the partners' understanding of their common problems, needs, opportunities and knowledge base. This sharing has produced tangible benefits in the form of cost efficiency, best practices and money saving projects on the local road networks in other parts of the world beyond the NPP area.

Developing transport and infrastructure solutions



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03

2003

From 2000–2006, wood was a key theme in NPP projects, exploring species, processes, and forest use. Initiatives like Bitwon developed innovative timber products, Northern Wood Heat advanced small-scale wood fuel supply chains, and ELAV promoted community-led forest planning.

Other projects focused on ecological wooden houses, durable timber cladding, and sustainable use of Siberian larch, combining innovation, local engagement, and economic value across the Northern Periphery.

While wood-related projects were prominent in 2000–2006, later the NPA focus shifted towards innovation, digitalisation, sustainable growth, and community resilience.

Wood at the heart of the Northern Periphery Programme



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2004

From 2000–2006, cultural heritage and tourism were key themes in NPP projects, exploring destination branding, heritage trails, and sustainable tourism models. Projects like BRANDR, SMART, and Nature Based Tourism promoted branding, community-led management, and sustainable practices.

Initiatives such as Destination Viking, NEST, and Snow Magic highlighted Arctic culture, sagas, coastal heritage, and snow-based tourism, combining local engagement with economic, social, and environmental benefits.

From Sagas to Snow: Northern Tourism and Heritage



©InterregNPP SNOW MAGIC

2005

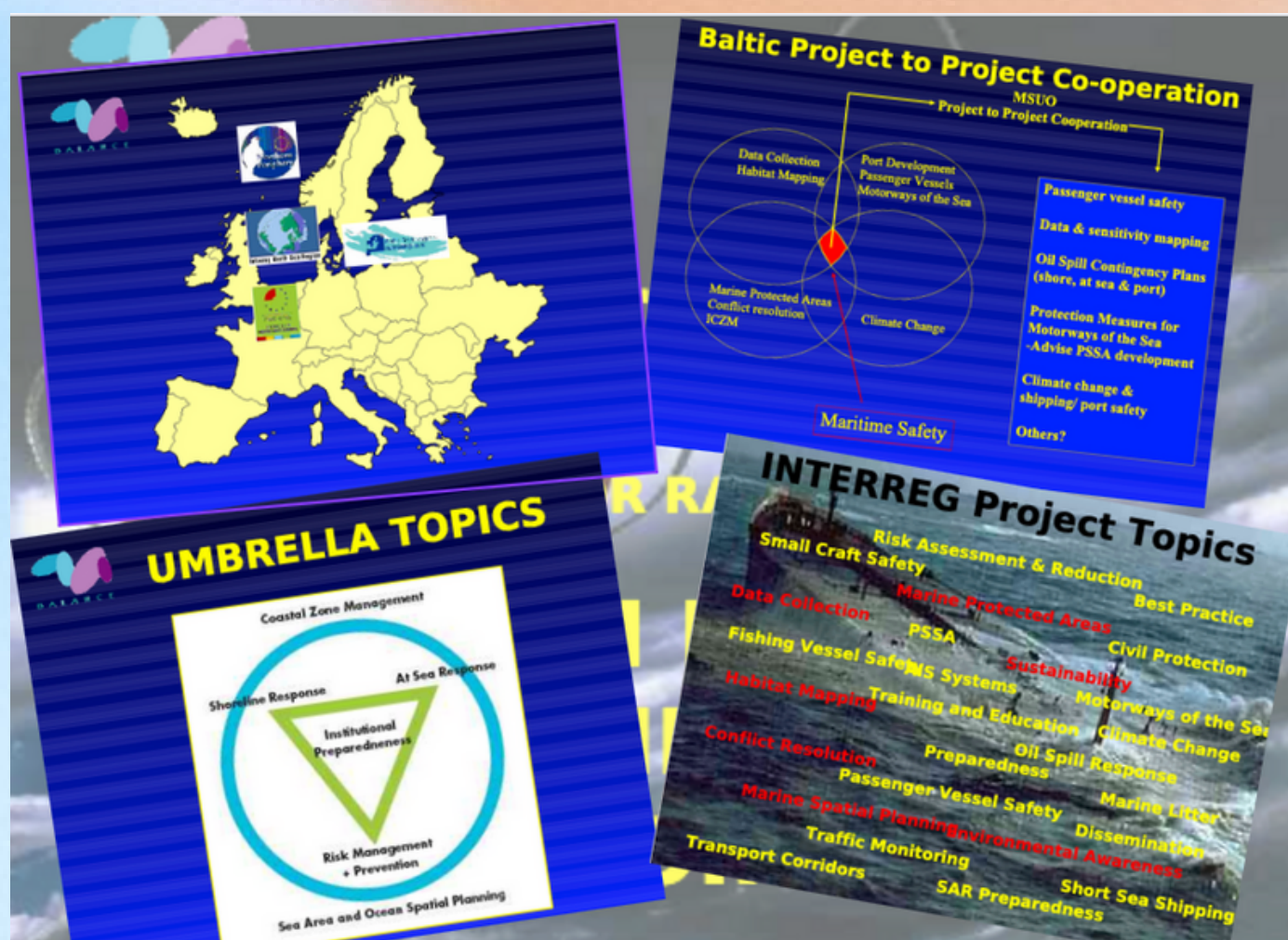


The MSUO was initiated in 2005 as a cross-programme collaboration between the transnational Interreg programmes North Sea, Northern Periphery, Baltic Sea Region, and North West Europe. It reflects the NPP's long tradition of cooperation across Interreg programmes.

The MSUO aimed to promote synergies, coordinate projects, share good practices, and position maritime safety ahead of the 2007–2013 programming period.

Projects addressed oil spill response, passenger vessel safety, search and rescue, coastal management, habitat mapping, and transport corridors, coordinated by a small team at the North Sea Programme Secretariat.

The Maritime Safety Umbrella Operation (MSUO)



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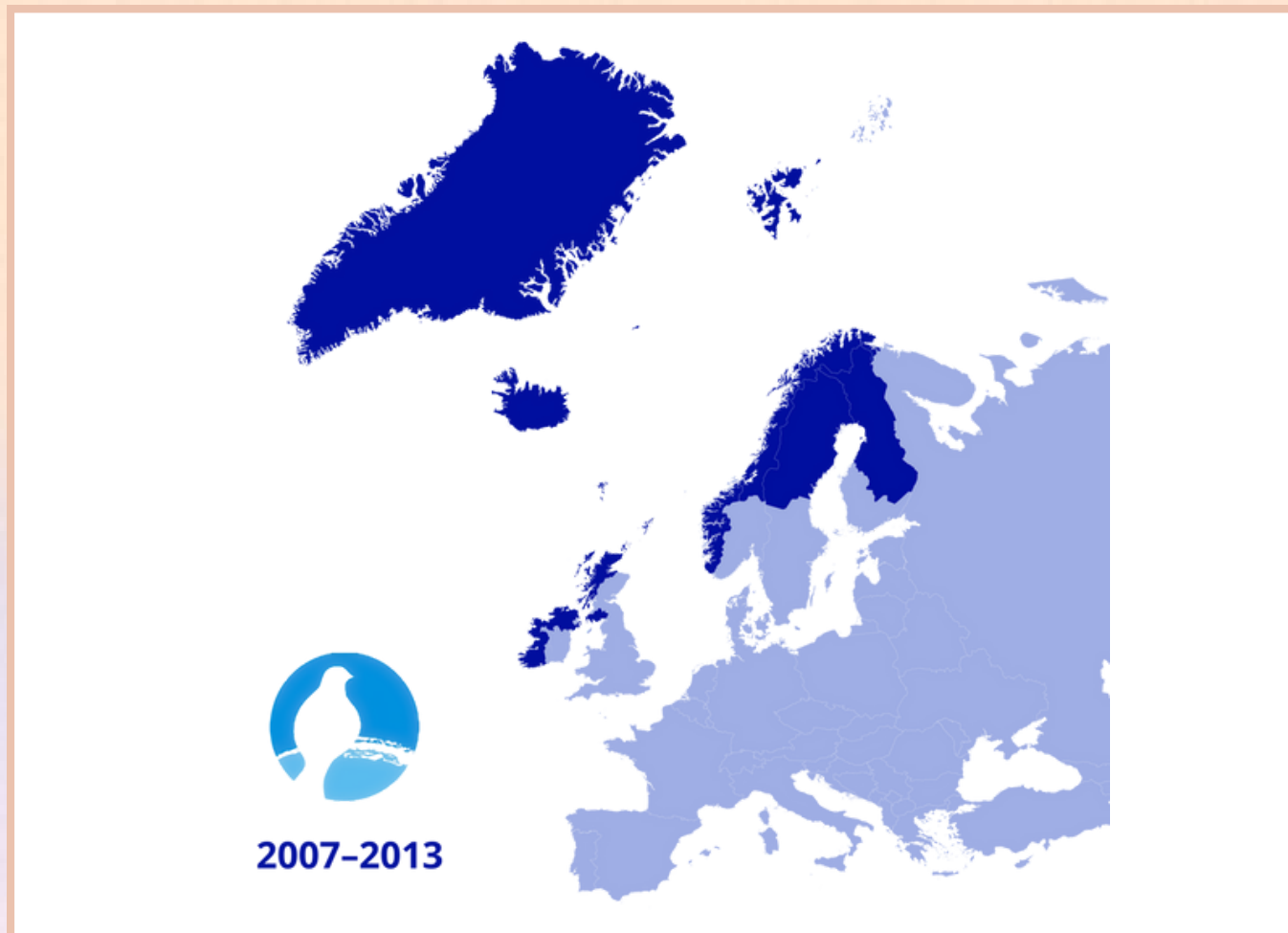
2007



The Interreg Northern Periphery Programme 2007–2013 expanded its area to include Northern Ireland, parts of western Ireland, more regions in Scotland and Norway, while some areas in Sweden dropped-out.

The programme funded 47 main projects to support innovation, local businesses, and the sustainable use of natural and community resources. By working together across borders, the projects helped remote northern areas strengthen their economy, improve connections, and care for nature and cultural heritage.

New Regions Join the Northern Periphery Programme



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07

2010

Youth have been involved in NPA projects since 2000, taking roles from participants to co-creators. Early projects supported entrepreneurship, digital skills, and rural learning, such as the Young Entrepreneur Factory and PICYBU.

Later, initiatives like RYE and creative clusters encouraged young people to design businesses, pilot services, and shape cultural and sustainable projects. Across the years, youth engagement has combined training, mentoring, networking, and decision-making, giving young people a real say in their region's future.

Youth Entrepreneurship and Creative Collaboration



©InterregNPP NoCry

2011



Accessibility was a key programme priority, supporting rural transport schemes. The Rural Transport Solutions (RTS) project developed new rural and coastal transport solutions to reduce social exclusion in sparsely populated areas and support the vitality of sparsely populated communities.

Its Village Bus (Byabussen) pilot in Kölsillre (SE) allowed residents to organise flexible, free public transport, carrying over 4,100 passengers in 2011. The concept won a national award and was featured by the European Commission as a model project.

Rural Transport Solutions on the way



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2012



During 2007–2013, NPP projects improved healthcare access in remote areas, especially for elderly people. Examples include tele-dialysis, remote speech therapy, volunteer-run community care centres, and integrated services for people with dementia.

eHealth services saved travel time, costs, and reduced CO₂ emissions. These projects also built networks and experience that laid the foundation for future healthcare and elderly care initiatives in the region.

Caring for the Remote North: Healthcare and Elderly Support



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2013



Seafood and aquaculture are key assets of the Northern Periphery. Projects like North Cod developed scalable cod farming, URCHIN advanced sea urchin harvesting and markets, and Sustainable Arctic Char trialled land-based systems to protect wild stocks.

Smartfish improved supply chain tracking, ECOfish reduced salmon farming impacts, and WATER monitored algal toxins for safer shellfish. Together, these initiatives promoted responsible aquaculture and food security across the region.

Sustainable Seafood and Aquaculture



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2014



In 2014, *Arctic* was added to the programme name, integrating the Arctic region's strategic, environmental, and socio-economic priorities into the existing Northern Periphery concept. Discussions on strengthening the programme's Arctic dimension were already underway.

A small-scale project looked at synergies with other programmes and policy initiatives in the region, reflecting the growing strategic and geopolitical interest in the Arctic, and its recommendations were incorporated into the new programme. In the meantime, another small-scale project explored an Arctic coordination mechanism, which later matured into the Arctic Cooperation.

The Arctic dimension is added to the Northern Periphery



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2014



Between 2014–2020, the Interreg NPA area did not change. The programme funded 58 main projects with nearly 400 partners from 17 regions in 8 countries.

Projects focused on innovation, business, clean energy, and heritage. Many reported important results: 76% supported small business growth, 90% raised public awareness, and 88% influenced policy. The projects offered smart, practical ideas to meet local needs and reflect shared goals across the northern regions.

Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic 2014–2020



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2016



Since 2016, the Arctic Cooperation has united Interreg NPA, Interreg Botnia-Atlantica, Interreg Nord, Kolarctic CBC, and Karelia CBC to strengthen collaboration across EU Arctic regions. Encouraged by the EU Arctic Policy, this collaboration led to clustering projects, events, as well new initiatives like the Arctic Awards highlighting best practices and raising projects' visibility.

The pragmatic, "soft" approach of this collaboration has improved coordination and knowledge sharing thus creating lasting synergies between the programmes. Today, the collaboration still exists between the two Interreg programmes in the Arctic, NPA and Aurora.

The Arctic Cooperation kicks off



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2017



The Arctic Awards were an annual competition to highlight exceptional projects on topics of particular relevance to the Arctic. Part of the Arctic Cooperation, the awards were launched in 2017 and recognised innovative and delivering real benefits to communities.

Interreg NPA projects won the award twice: in 2018, RYE Connect was honoured for helping young people in remote areas turn their creative ideas into businesses, and in 2019, BuSK was recognised for combining Indigenous and local knowledge into land use planning.

Celebrating excellence with the Arctic Awards



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2019



In northern and Arctic regions, giving underrepresented groups a voice is important. For Interreg NPA, equality and inclusion are key principles, and all projects are asked to reflect them.

Between 2018 and 2021, two projects had at their core underrepresented groups: ARCTISEN involved Saami communities to explore culturally sensitive tourism, creating tools to help tourism businesses respect local cultures and traditions. W-Power focused on rural women entrepreneurs, offering support, mentoring, and networks to help them overcome barriers and feel more confident in the business world.

Bridging the gap: NPA increases participation of underrepresented groups



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2020



The NPA COVID-19 Response Group united rural health experts from past NPP/NPA e-health projects, enabling an immediate analysis of the pandemic effects in northern Europe's remote areas.

Seven projects covering clinical issues, wellbeing, technology, community responses, economic impacts, and emerging themes run over a short period, some also involved partners from the US. The outcomes highlighted how the periphery adapted, revealing new advantages of rural living and a redefinition of peripherality, while coordinated research informed future public health planning

The NPA COVID-19 Response Group



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2020



The RegioStars are the EU's awards for projects that show new and inspiring ways to support regional development. Interreg NPA projects have achieved strong recognition in this. In 2011, OLE II – Our Life as the Elderly II - won the RegioStars Award in the category Promotional photo of a co-funded project with their picture "Age makes no difference".

In 2012, O4O - Older People for Older People won in the category of Inclusive Growth for helping older people support each other in remote areas. In 2016, Circular Ocean received the Public Choice Award for their efforts in finding solutions to re-use marine litter waste and create new business opportunities. Other NPA projects, like Blue Circular Economy (2020), CoSafe (2013), and NoCry (2011), were also selected as finalists.

A successful presence at the Regiostars Awards



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2021



In 2021, the first hybrid Interreg NPA conference took place in Sligo and online, highlighting how views of the periphery changed after the pandemic. Once seen as a disadvantage, remoteness gained new appeal as NPA regions became attractive re-migration destinations. A quieter life, closer to nature and in smaller, connected communities, improved quality of life.

At the same time, leadership in sustainability, digital innovation, and the circular economy together with the rise of remote work, made these regions hot destinations.

Redefining Peripherality



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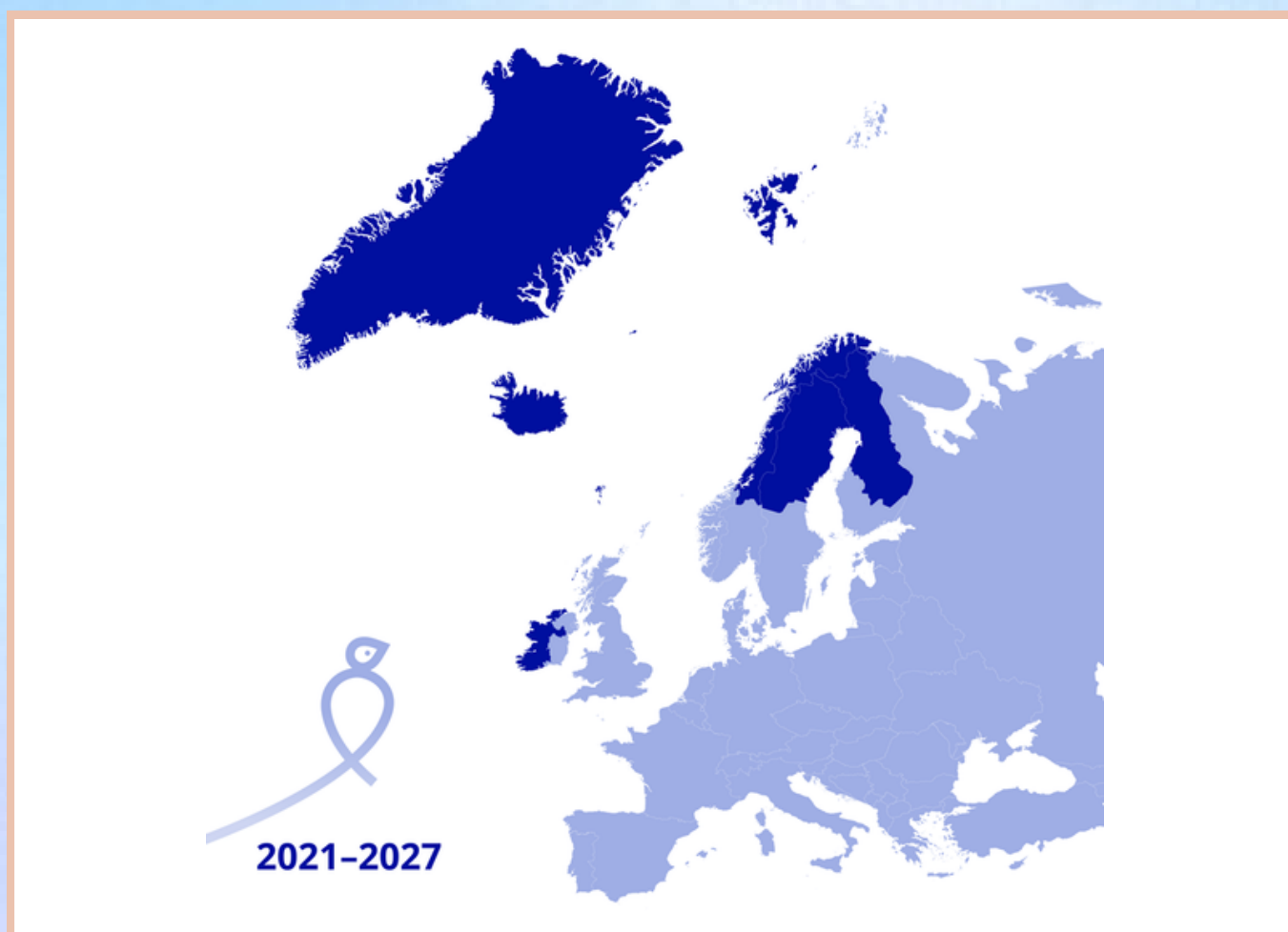


2021

The current Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme 2021–2027 covers a smaller area, as Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the west of Norway are no longer included. The UK's withdrawal from the EU meant a loss of valuable knowledge, capacity, and long-standing partnerships dating back to 2000.

However, many of these ties have endured through associated partners. Norway also reduced its participation to its central and northernmost regions, while new regions in central Ireland have joined, with stronger support from Irish and Swedish partners.

Welcome: Interreg NPA 2021-2027



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2022



Since 2022, Interreg NPA has welcomed project ideas under a new theme: Priority 3 – Cooperation Opportunities. This priority helps people and organisations across the NPA area work better together - sharing knowledge, joining forces, and strengthening local voices.

So far, 5 projects have been funded. They focus on building skills for the 21st century, attracting talent to remote areas, connecting science, policymakers and communities, improving Arctic mass rescue plans, and supporting regenerative tourism.

A new type of projects: Cooperation opportunities



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2023



Since 2023, young people have had a seat at the table in Interreg NPA. Two youth groups - Arctic Youth Network and Nordic Youth Council - take turns joining the programme's Monitoring Committee meetings as advisors.

This follows the EU's call to involve youth in shaping policies. Their voices help guide decisions, making sure the future of the region includes their ideas. Since then, more young people have joined NPA events, project activities and partnerships.

Youth representatives join the Interreg NPA decision table



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2024



As part of a wider consultation by Interreg programmes across Europe to inform post-2027 regulations, NPA stakeholders confirmed the importance of themes like community sustainability, climate change, biodiversity, cultural heritage, youth, resilience, security, and wellbeing.

The Cooperation Opportunities priority was praised for testing emerging topics and such a flexible priority should continue. Respondents valued the NPA's place-based focus but called for more flexibility with third countries, easier match funding, and varied project formats. Strong support was noted for preparatory projects, simple processes, and cross-project learning.

*The consultation process begins for shaping
the future Interreg NPA*



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2025



2025 marks 25 years of the Interreg Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme. We are gathered here in Bodø, Norway to celebrate how the NPA has grown and how working together across borders has supported development, resilience, and sustainability in northern and Arctic regions.

If you are here with us today, you are part of this journey - and we're truly grateful to mark this milestone together with you!

Celebrating 25 years of cooperation



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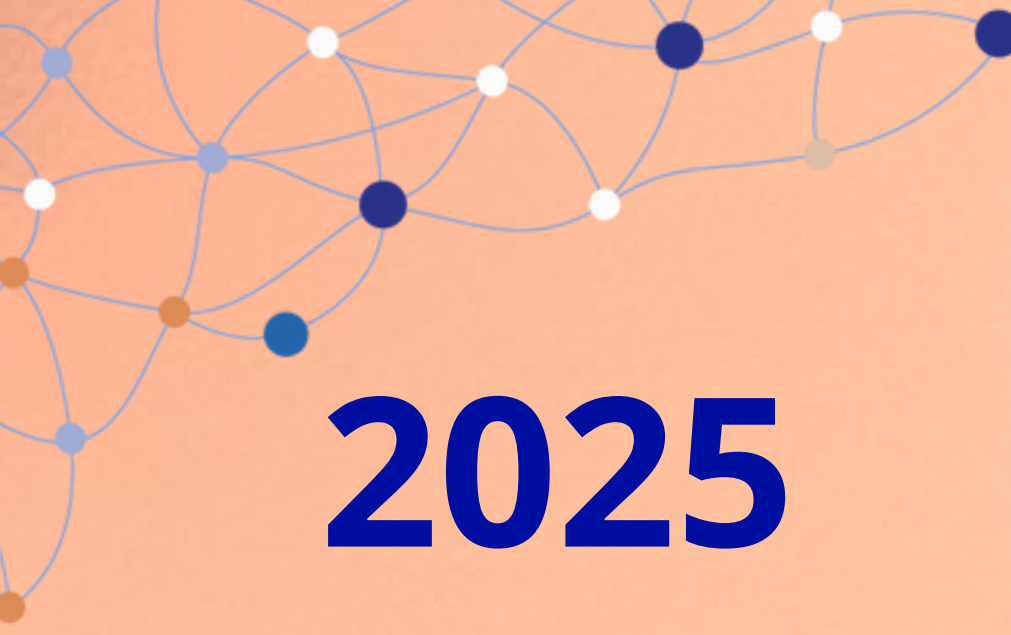


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2025



The future begins today, and everyone can leave a mark - a dot - that connects with others to form a shared vision for the Northern Periphery and Arctic.

Add your wish or idea and help shape the image of tomorrow's cooperation.

...Connecting the dots

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