Narrative Final Policy Integration Report

D.2.3.3 — Activity 2.3, WP2 — Delivered M30

Region	TASK4ISI partnership — five pilot regions: Split-Dalmatia County (HR), Emilia-Romagna (IT), Małopolska (PL), Central Hungary (HU), Thuringia (DE)
ISIHUBs covered	ISIHUB Split (PI RERA S.D. / CEDRA); ISIHUB Romagna (OPEN / Municipality of San Mauro Pascoli); ISIHUB Małopolska (Municipality of Kraków / Krakow University of Economics); ISIHUB Hungary (MGFÜ / Impact Hub Budapest); ISIHUB Thuringia (Plattform e.V. / CGE Erfurt e.V.)
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What this report is

The Narrative Final Policy Integration Report is the partnership-wide synthesis of the five regional Policy Integration Reports (PIRs). It records how the Joint Strategy Agenda (JSA) and the five Local Action Plan Packages (LAPPs) were connected to the policy instruments in force in each pilot region, compares the approaches taken, draws out good practices that can travel between regions, and assesses the contribution of the project to the shift from S3 to S4+.

Three deliverables, three roles:

- The JSA sets out the regional analysis, the strategic vision and the policy mix logic.
- The LAPP translates that into the operational roadmap: action lines, actors, continuation pathways.
- The PIR keeps trace of the integration process — the dialogue with authorities, the policy instruments touched, the openings created, the conditions still to be met.

This report is a narrative record, written at the end of the project, of what integration was actually achieved across the partnership, what the five experiences have in common, where they differ, and what should follow in the 2028–2034 programming cycle.

1 Introduction: purpose, sources and how to read this report

TASK4ISI (Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021–2027) set out to improve the entrepreneurial mindsets and skills of "missing entrepreneurs" — women, young people, migrants, older people, people with disabilities and others under-represented in entrepreneurship — and to endorse Inclusive Entrepreneurship (IE) as a scalable opportunity for the transition from Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) towards Sustainable and Inclusive Smart Specialisation (S4+). Work Package 2 translated this ambition into three linked deliverables: the Joint Strategy Agenda (JSA), five Local Action Plan Packages (LAPPs) and, at the end of the project, five regional Policy Integration Reports documenting how the JSA and LAPPs were connected to the existing policy mix.

This Narrative Final Policy Integration Report (D.2.3.3) consolidates those five regional reports into one account. In line with the project task, it covers four things: a synthesis of results across the regions (Section 2), a comparison of approaches and of the challenges encountered (Section 3), a set of good practices with transfer potential (Section 4), and an assessment of the project's effect on policy together with recommendations for the further integration of IE into S4+ frameworks (Section 5).

Sources and limits. The report is based on the regional PIRs for Split-Dalmatia County (Croatia), Emilia-Romagna (Italy), Małopolska (Poland), Central Hungary and Thuringia (Germany), all covering the period M17–M30 (October 2024 – September 2026), and on the project Application Form. The regional reports are self-assessments written by the ISIHUB leads; this synthesis does not re-verify them, but it does apply one common yardstick to all five so that the reader can see what was achieved in comparable terms.

2 Synthesis of results across the five regions

All five regions completed the same basic sequence: an ISIHUB was set up as the regional platform; the two pilots — the Business Skills Programme (BSP) for aspiring entrepreneurs and the Business Matchmaking Programme (BMP) for early-stage entrepreneurs — were delivered and evaluated; the lessons were written into a LAPP; and the LAPP was taken into dialogue with public authorities. Beyond this common core, the regions differed considerably in the target groups they chose, the policy level they addressed and how far the dialogue had progressed by M30. Table 1 summarises the position at the end of the project.

Table 1 — Policy integration at M30: overview of the five pilot regions

Region / ISIHUB	Target groups piloted	Main policy entry point	Most concrete opening obtained	ISIHUB after M30
Split-Dalmatia County (HR) PI RERA S.D. / CEDRA	Women and young people (18–30); first-time founders; access from hinterland and islands	County Development Plan revision 2027–2028; county-city budget framework; ESF+ (MROSP	Preferred host (RaST) identified; County agreed to receive recommendations for the Development Plan; route to decision-makers agreed. No budget decision yet.	Transitional Lead PI RERA S.D.; handover to RaST proposed for H1 2027, conditional on financing

Region / ISIHUB	Target groups piloted	Main policy entry point	Most concrete opening obtained	ISIHUB after M30
Emilia-Romagna (IT) OPEN / Municipality of San Mauro Pascoli	Under-represented groups broadly (young people, women, older people, migrants). For some specific groups (people on the autism spectrum and people with a criminal record), needs were assessed and access conditions were designed.	Regional S3 2021-2027 dialogue; PR FESR (SO 1.3, Actions 1.3.3 and 1.3.6) and PR FSE+	Memorandum of Sustainable Cooperation signed; Region recognised value of multi-institutional approach; link to the regional PulseR incubation programme	Network of ~20 stakeholders continues; host and funding not yet formally established
Małopolska (PL) Municipality of Kraków / Krakow University of Economics	Migrants and older people (55+)	National and regional social economy policy (Annual Action Plan to 2027), labour policy and lifelong learning policy, future revision of the Regional Innovation Strategy	Memorandum of Cooperation signed by 20 stakeholders; declarations from the Social Economy Support Centre; follow-up project YOUTH4AGRI funded	Continuation declared within Krakow University of Economics
Central Hungary (HU) MGFÜ / Impact Hub Budapest	Women entrepreneurs (Katapult pilot); neurodivergent entrepreneurs; young and aspiring entrepreneurs	National entrepreneurship development framework (Ministry for National Economy); GINOP Plusz / TOP Plusz	Deputy State Secretary attended the results conference; Ministry department followed ISIHUB; recommendations being prepared for the Ministry; MoU signed	MGFÜ to seek follow-up programmes in the next period; participant-led neurodivergent community continues independently
Thuringia (DE) Plattform e.V. / CGE Erfurt e.V.	Migrants, international students, women and young people	Municipal economic development (City of Erfurt); UP KOMPASS; ESF+/ERDF longer term	City of Erfurt allocating a new budget line for start-up support and invited Plattform e.V. to help shape it; funding secured for further Startup Preschools	Plattform e.V. remains contact point; intermediary role not yet anchored beyond projects

What the pilots delivered. The regional reports confirm that the two programme formats work across very different contexts. In all five regions, the Business Skills Programme reached aspiring entrepreneurs from the targeted groups — women, young people, migrants, international students, older people and neurodivergent entrepreneurs — while the Business Matchmaking Programme connected early-stage entrepreneurs with established businesses, investors and support organisations. The reports describe the same pattern throughout: strong demand, visible gains in confidence and business skills, and concrete connections between participants and the wider ecosystem, with completion rates and matchmaking contacts documented in each LAPP. Several regions also note that the pilots generated effects beyond the participants themselves — most strikingly in Hungary, where the

neurodivergent pilot group continued as an independent peer community after the project's involvement ended

What the ISIHUBs became. In every region the ISIHUB turned into the main vehicle for policy integration. Each hub assembled a cross-sectoral network of roughly 20–30 organisations — public administration, employment services, universities, business support organisations, financial institutions and civil society — and used it to bring the needs of missing entrepreneurs into discussions where they had not previously been present. Three regions (Emilia-Romagna, Małopolska and Hungary) formalised this through memoranda of cooperation; Małopolska and Hungary also secured declarations to carry the work into standing policy forums or future programmes.

Where integration stands. None of the regions reports that inclusive entrepreneurship has yet been formally written into its S3 or operational programme. This is largely a matter of timing rather than of effort: the 2021–2027 frameworks were already fixed when TASK4ISI started, the S3 strategies in force run to 2027–2029, and the 2028–2034 frameworks are still being negotiated, so the project period did not coincide with a moment at which such documents were open for amendment. Within that constraint, the regions obtained openings of three kinds — a concrete municipal or county decision in preparation (Erfurt, Split-Dalmatia), a seat in existing policy processes (Małopolska, Emilia-Romagna) and direct attention from a national ministry (Hungary). Taken together, these are the foundations on which the next programming cycle can build.

3 Comparison of approaches and challenges

3.1 Four routes to the same destination

Although the five regions started from a common JSA and a common LAPP template, each chose the entry point that its own institutional landscape made realistic. Four routes can be distinguished.

- **The municipal and budget route** (Thuringia, Split-Dalmatia). Both regions concluded that the fastest way to durable change was a specific decision by a local authority rather than a strategic revision: a new start-up support budget line in Erfurt, and a co-financed one-stop-shop function hosted by the City of Split's development agency. This route produces the most tangible result but also exposes the work to budget negotiations between levels of government, as the unresolved county–city question in Croatia shows.
- **The sectoral-policy route** (Małopolska). Rather than targeting innovation policy directly, ISIHUB Małopolska embedded the IE perspective in the policies that already serve its target groups — social economy, the labour market and lifelong learning — and secured representation in their standing committees. This route builds on receptive institutions but risks confining IE within social policy, which the report itself identifies as the main conceptual constraint in Poland.
- **The national-ministry route** (Hungary). With regional policy competences limited, MGFÜ aimed at the Ministry for National Economy, securing high-level participation at the results conference and continuous involvement of the responsible department in the ISIHUB. This route gives access to the body that designs future calls, but concrete policy changes depend on the ministry's own programming timetable.
- **The regional S3 dialogue route** (Emilia-Romagna). In the only region with a mature regional S3 and operational programmes of its own, the ISIHUB engaged the Region and ART-ER directly, positioned IE as complementary to the Region's strong social-economy

agenda, and connected participants to a newly funded regional incubation programme. This route offers the most direct link to S3/S4+ governance, though the report flags that the more centralised 2028–2034 cohesion model may narrow regional room for manoeuvre.

Two features cut across all routes. First, every region framed IE as a horizontal contribution to existing priorities — innovation, SME development, skills, talent retention, cohesion — rather than as a new policy area. Second, every region relied on the ISIHUB as a trusted intermediary between target groups, support organisations and authorities. The choice of route was therefore less a strategic preference than a reading of where, in each system, a decision could actually be obtained within the project period.

3.2 Challenges encountered in all five regions

The regional reports describe different situations but, read together, they point to five challenges that recurred everywhere.

- **The concept is not yet recognised.** In Poland, Italy, Germany and Hungary alike, "inclusive entrepreneurship" was unfamiliar to public institutions and absent from strategic documents, and was easily read as a social-policy or social-economy topic. All regions had to translate it into the language of economic development before any dialogue could begin.
- **Responsibility is fragmented.** IE cuts across entrepreneurship, labour market, social inclusion, education and innovation policy. In every region the relevant competences sat with several institutions and programmes, making it hard to find a single interlocutor and to coordinate the many actors who already serve the target groups.
- **Financing after the project is unresolved.** This is the most important open issue in four of the five reports. None of the regions had, at M30, a confirmed budget for the ISIHUB function beyond project funding. Croatia and Poland highlight the importance of securing stable funding and of ensuring that institutions and their stakeholders perceive tangible benefits from the collaboration, so that cooperation structures continue beyond the project period.
- **The programming calendar worked against institutionalisation.** The 2021–2027 frameworks were already set when the project began, and the 2028–2034 calls are not expected before 2029. Croatia names this "programming gap" directly; Hungary and Emilia-Romagna describe the same constraint. Continuity in 2027–2028 therefore has to come from regular regional or local resources, not from the next EU call.
- **Decision-makers and target groups were both hard to reach — and to keep.** Croatia notes that decision-makers were reached late because pilots ran through operational partners; Hungary and Thuringia report that sustaining participation of vulnerable groups required flexible, community-based formats and that one-off outreach was not enough. Policy integration proved to be a process of repeated interaction, not a single event.

3.3 The six integration dimensions, partnership-wide

The Application Form defined six dimensions through which the JSA and LAPPs were to act on the foundations of S3. Table 2 assesses how far each dimension was activated across the partnership.

Table 2 — Activation of the six S3 → S4+ integration dimensions

Dimension	Partnership-wide assessment
1. Inclusive Entrepreneurial Discovery Process	Achieved at small scale in all regions: pilots and ISIHUB workshops functioned as an EDP for groups that are normally absent from it.
2. Inclusive governance and ISIHUB leadership	Achieved as a project structure everywhere; durable anchoring secured only in Małopolska (university) and still conditional elsewhere.
3. Shared vision of the region as a pioneer of inclusive and sustainable growth	Adopted in LAPPs and stakeholder dialogue; not yet reflected in official regional strategies.
4. Horizontal priority for social and organisational innovation / IE	Argued consistently by all regions; formal inclusion as a horizontal priority remains a task for the S3/S4+ revisions.
5. Suitable policy mix combining JSA, LAPP and pilots	Every LAPP now sets out a policy mix with named instruments; the mixes are realistic but largely unfunded beyond the base layer.
6. Monitoring and evaluation	Participation and satisfaction are measured everywhere; longer-term outcome tracking (businesses registered, funding obtained) is proposed but not yet in place.

4 Good practices with transfer potential

The following practices are selected from the regional reports because they produced a result that other regions do not yet have, and because the mechanism behind them does not depend on one region's particular institutions.

Erfurt: turning a pilot into a municipal budget line (Thuringia)

Plattform e.V. opened a direct dialogue with the City of Erfurt's Department of Economic Development on the value of entrepreneurship support and on what the city could realistically contribute. The outcome is a new municipal budget line for start-up support, with the ISIHUB lead invited to help shape it so that migrant founders, international students, low-threshold and bilingual formats are considered from the start.

Why it travels: it targets the smallest unit of government with its own budget and a short decision chain, and offers the authority a ready-made delivery partner rather than a request for a new strategy.

Małopolska: converting the network into seats in standing policy forums

Beyond the partnership-wide Memorandum for Sustainable Cooperation (D.1.2.3), which all ISIHUBs contributed to, ISIHUB Małopolska secured declarations from the Social Economy Support Centre to use the pilot tools, and a commitment by its members to carry the project results into the regional and national Committees for Social Economy Development and the Małopolska Partnership for Lifelong Learning. The hub itself continues within Krakow University of Economics.

Why it travels: *it does not depend on new money: it turns a signed commitment into a presence in bodies that already meet, already advise on programmes, and will be consulted in the next strategy revisions.*

Capitalisation into a funded follow-up project (Małopolska)

The Business Skills and Business Matchmaking tools are being carried into YOUTH4AGRI, an Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE capitalisation project approved for funding and starting in September 2026, with Krakow University of Economics leading its WP2 and rural youth as the target group.

Why it travels: *capitalisation calls are open to all partners; packaging the two tested formats for a new missing-entrepreneur group is a repeatable move, not a one-off.*

Hungary: a specific group, a high-level witness and a self-sustaining community

MGFÜ concentrated on neurodivergent entrepreneurs, a group with no existing recognition in support schemes. It brought the Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry for National Economy to the results conference, kept the responsible ministry department inside the ISIHUB throughout, published a knowledge-sharing volume on entrepreneurship and neurodiversity, and saw the pilot participants continue as an independent peer group after the project.

Why it travels: *a sharply defined target group gives decision-makers something concrete to respond to, and a community that keeps meeting without project money is the kind of evidence that outlasts any report.*

Emilia-Romagna: plugging participants into a regional programme that already exists

In Emilia-Romagna, the possibility of funding a new project is currently under discussion with the Region for the next programming year. In the meantime, ISIHUB Romagna has connected its participants with PulseR, a new regional pre-incubation, incubation and acceleration programme funded under the ERDF Regional Programme (PR FESR) 2021–2027, in which three ISIHUB members are directly involved.

By promoting the signing of the Memorandum of Sustainable Cooperation, ISIHUB Romagna has also laid the foundations for developing this new initiative, as discussed with the Region and stakeholders at the closing and relaunch event held on 15 September 2026.

Why it travels: *every region has at least one mainstream instrument that could absorb inclusive-entrepreneurship participants if someone makes the referral. The practice rests on brokerage rather than new policy, yet it can also bridge the gap until dedicated funding is secured, as the ongoing discussion with the Region shows.*

Split-Dalmatia: separating the base layer from the expansion layer

The Croatian LAPP distinguishes a stable institutional base — one desk, one named host, one budget line, an annual one-page results brief timed to the budget cycle — from additional activities that expand only when ESF+/ERDF calls open. The County has agreed to receive a recommendations summary for the 2027–2028 revision of its Development Plan.

Why it travels: it answers the programming-gap problem directly: the base layer is designed to survive 2027–2028 without EU calls, and the annual brief keeps evidence flowing to decision-makers at the moment budgets are set.

5 Assessment of policy impact and recommendations for S4+

5.1 What the project changed

Judged against a simple ladder — awareness, dialogue, commitment, instrument — the five regions have all reached the second rung and most have reached the third. Awareness of inclusive entrepreneurship as a policy topic now exists in every region among the institutions that matter; structured dialogue with authorities has taken place everywhere; and in four regions that dialogue has produced written or declared commitments (memoranda, declarations, agreed next steps, an invitation to shape a budget line). The fourth rung — IE written into an operational programme, an S3/S4+ document or a budget — remains the task of the next cycle in all five regions.

This outcome should be read in context. The ambition set at application stage — to contribute to the innovation of S3 and its transition to S4+ within a 30-month project — was a demanding one, and it was formulated before the timetable of the current S3 cycle was fully visible. In practice the project ran in the middle of a programming period, when the instruments it sought to influence were already fixed, and it ended before the 2028–2034 documents and the post-2027 S3 revisions had been opened. Formal integration within the project period should therefore not be the main measure of what was achieved; the more relevant measure is how well the regions are now positioned for that drafting: each now has a LAPP with named instruments, an evidence base from two tested programme formats, a cross-sectoral network with signatures on paper, and at least one authority that has agreed to keep listening. The Application Form asked the project to endorse IE as a scalable opportunity for sustainable and inclusive growth; the regional reports do that, but consistently as an opportunity whose scale-up depends on decisions still pending.

The contribution to the shift from S3 to S4+ lies in three shifts of framing that all five regions now share. Inclusion is treated as a source of innovation, diversification and resilience rather than only as a social objective. Innovation is understood broadly — including non-R&D, social and organisational innovation in ordinary businesses — so that regional strategies can accommodate the kinds of firms missing entrepreneurs actually start. And the ISIHUB model offers a practical way of making the entrepreneurial discovery process more inclusive without building a parallel support system. These are the ingredients of an S4+ approach; the regions have supplied them, and the next strategy cycle will decide whether they are used.

5.2 Recommendations for the next cycle

The recommendations below draw together those made in the five regional reports and add the partnership-level view. They are addressed to the actors who can act on them.

For regional and local authorities

- **Decide the ISIHUB's institutional home and base funding before 2028.** The single most important condition for continuity, named in every report, is a stable host with a mandate and a minimal budget that does not depend on EU calls. Where a county–city or regional–municipal division of responsibility is unresolved, settle it explicitly, on the basis of an overlap check and a net-additional-cost calculation.
- **Use the planning documents that open in 2027–2028.** County and regional development plans, regional innovation strategies and social-economy programmes are all due for revision before the new EU period. Each ISIHUB should deliver to the responsible authority a short, specific note with recommendations on how inclusive entrepreneurship should be integrated into the revised document, and follow it through the consultation process, as Split-Dalmatia and Małopolska have arranged.
- **Treat IE as a horizontal priority, not a separate scheme.** Add accessibility, low-threshold and outreach criteria to existing start-up, incubation and skills instruments, and ensure these instruments are open to non-innovative and traditional business projects, which is where many missing entrepreneurs start.

For national authorities and managing authorities preparing 2028–2034

- **Recognise in S3/S4+ revisions that widening who participates in entrepreneurship is a legitimate smart-specialisation objective**, and give it a place under horizontal objectives on SME innovation performance, social innovation or skills — with instruments that first-time founders in conventional sectors can actually access.
- **Design ERDF and ESF+ instruments jointly for this target group.** In every region the entrepreneurship instruments sit with one ministry or programme and the inclusion instruments with another. A coordinated call structure, or at least cross-referencing between programmes, would remove the fragmentation that all five reports identify.
- **Bridge the programming gap.** Where the next calls will not open before 2029, consider transitional measures — technical assistance, capitalisation calls, or continuity funding within existing programmes — so that networks built in 2024–2026 are not lost in 2027–2028.

For ISIHUBs and project partners

- **Make advocacy routine.** Institute an annual results brief to the relevant authorities, timed to their budget cycle, with a named owner in each hub. Evidence delivered at the right moment, repeatedly, is what moved the dialogue in every region.
- **Keep the two programme formats in use and track outcomes.** Continue Business Skills and Business Matchmaking through existing structures, follow-up projects or partner organisations, and add longer-term follow-up — businesses registered, funding obtained, continued ecosystem participation — because this is the evidence authorities will ask for before scaling up.
- **Maintain the transnational network.** TNISIHUB exchanges gave regions arguments and models they did not have at home; peer exchange on hosting and financing models, the question every region now faces, is the most useful form of continued cooperation.

For the programme and EU level

- **Support capitalisation of tested formats and intermediary models**, as the YOUTH4AGRI approval already does, and recognise ISIHUB-type intermediaries as an eligible governance element in future S4+-oriented calls, so that inclusive entrepreneurial discovery does not remain a project-bound activity.

6 Conclusion

TASK4ISI was not in a position to change a strategy during its lifetime but it has changed the conditions under which the next strategies will be written in five regions. The partnership tested two programme formats that work for missing entrepreneurs across very different systems, built five cross-sectoral networks that now hold signed commitments, and opened a dialogue with the authorities who will draft the 2028–2034 instruments. The remaining task is the one that every regional report identifies: securing an institutional home and base funding for the ISIHUB function so that the openings obtained between M17 and M30 are converted into provisions, budget lines and calls. The recommendations in this report describe how that conversion can be made, by whom, and in which planning cycle.