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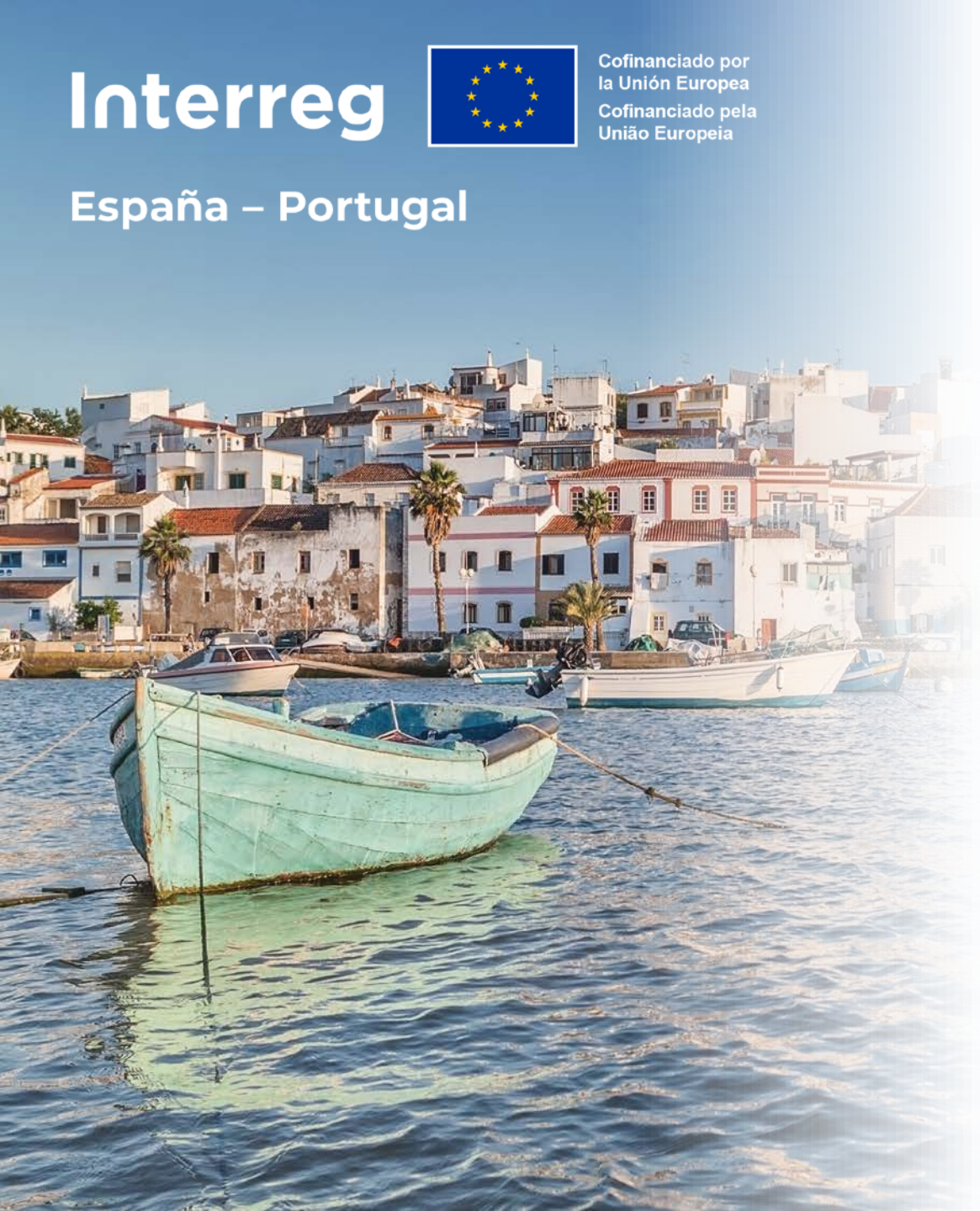

Knowledge and Experience Exchange Event – Tourism4SDG Project, Interreg Europe

Laguna de Duero, 21 January 2026

Interreg Spain-Portugal (POCTEP) Cross-Border Programme

Enhancing Sustainable Tourism through Cooperation

Elena de Miguel Gago

Director, POCTEP Joint Secretariat

The POCTEP Area

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The Largest Cross-Border Programme

6 Cooperation Areas
Diverse Needs
Over 16 Million people
79% Rural Area
658 km of River Border
1.6 Million ha Protected Areas

POCTEP 2021-2027

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Approved Financial Plan*

475 M€ (TOTAL)

356 M€ (ERDF)

* Implementation Decision 16/12/2024 (Programme Revision)
Execution Decision 22/08/2022

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PO, priorities, SO

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Political Objectives (PO)	Priorities	Specific Objectives (SO)
PO1. *A Smarter Europe*	**P1. Businesses, SME, Digitalization – R&D&I**	SO 1.1. R&D&IOE 1.2. Digitalization OE 1.3. SMEs (growth–competitiveness)
	P2. Endogenous Resources, Smart Specialization	SO 1.4. Capacity building: RIS / Entrepreneurship / Industrial transition
PO2. *A Greener, Low-Carbon Europe*	**P3. Ecological Transition Climate Change**	SO 2.1. Energy efficiency SO 2.2. Renewable energy SO 2.4. Climate change – risks – resilience
	P4. Biodiversity	SO 2.7. Biodiversity – pollution – ecological infrastructures
PO4. *A more social and inclusive Europe*	**P5. Demographic Challenge Access to Services**	SO 4.1. Employment: inclusive, social economy SO 4.2. Education, lifelong learning SO 4.5. Health: care, proximity SO 4.6. Culture and sustainable tourism
PO5. *Europe Closer to Citizens*	**P6. Integrated and sustainable development**	SO 5.2. Integrated development – rural areas
ISO1. *A better Governance*	**P7. Governance**	SO 6.1 Institutional capacity SO 6.2 Legal and administrative cooperation SO 6.3 P2P actions SO 6.6 Other actions

POCTEP 2021-2027 5 closed calls

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8
Launched calls

639
Applications received

5 Calls concluded

144	209	157
Projects selected	M€ (TOTAL)	M€ (ERDF)

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5 Calls concluded

144 projects selected*

PO1. *A Smarter Europe*

P1: 37 projects
P2: 9 projects

PO2. *A Greener, Low-Carbon Europe*

P3: 25 projects
P4: 9 projects

PO4. *A more social and inclusive Europe*

P5: 45 projects

ISO1. *A better Governance*

P7. Governance: 19 projects

Calls 6, 7, and 8 are currently under evaluation, with a decision expected in the first quarter of 2026

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Project evaluation process: strategic criteria

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Project's contribution to the Programme's objectives, results, and outputs: clear and coherent justification

Evaluation questions: To what extent does the project align...

...with the Programme's cooperation strategy?

...with the priority and specific objective?

...with the Programme's horizontal principles?
(Equality between women and men; Equal opportunities and non-discrimination; Accessibility for persons with disabilities; Sustainable development and the New European Bauhaus)

...with the environmental objectives?

...with the Common Cross-border Development Strategy and its SDGs?

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Project evaluation process: strategic criteria

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Included in the Common Cross-Border Development Strategy (ECDT) and in the agreements arising from the Luso-Spanish Summit

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POCTEP indicators OE 4.6 – Culture & sustainable tourism

RCO77. Number of cultural and tourist sites supported

RCO83. Jointly developed strategies and action plans

RCR79. Joint strategies and action plans adopted by organisations

POCTEP 2021-2027 Sustainable tourism

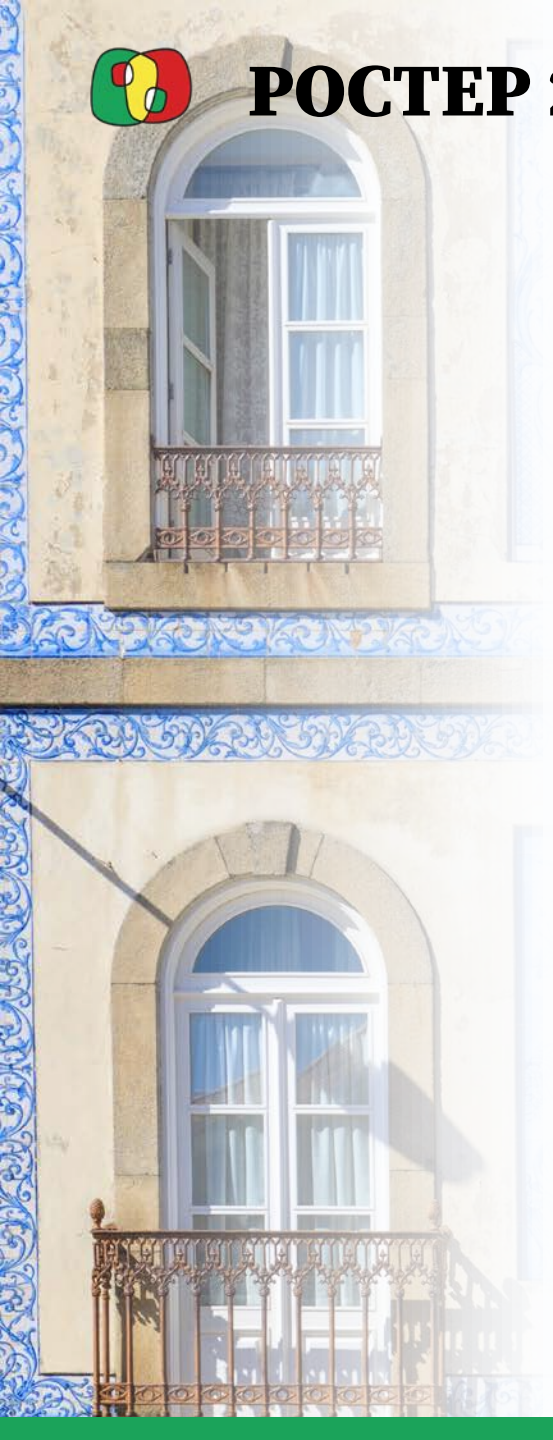
Policy Objective 4
A more social Europe

Specific Objective 4.6
Culture and sustainable tourism

The Iberian border has high potential for development, linked to its rich natural and cultural heritage.

POCTEP has promoted cross-border cooperation through a wide range of initiatives, including those related to sustainable tourism.

Themes: green routes, river tourism, rural tourism, historical tourism, fortifications, gastronomy, thermal resources, SME support, sports tourism, "star tourism", Eurocities...



POCTEP 2021-2027: sustainable tourism

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OP. 4 Social

SO 4.6
Culture & sustainable tourism

21
Approved projects 2021-2027

149
Partners

26 M€
Eligible expenditure

19,5 M€
ERDF

POCTEP 2021-2027: Sustainable Tourism

0287_FAR_PAX_6_P *European Peace through the Bastioned Fortresses of the Raia*

Operation of Strategic Importance POCTEP 2021-27

FAR PAX leverages the former military heritage to drive innovation, preservation, and **thematic tourism**

Work with **local communities**: training of professionals, raising public awareness.

Modernization of heritage spaces and resources.

Restoring fortresses: protecting and improving them

Cultural activities to bring heritage to life.

5 Partners
Lead: *Municipio de Valença* (PT)

De 01/01/2024 - 31/12/2026

1,2 M€ TOTAL | 894 K€ ERDF

POCTEP 2021-2027: Sustainable Tourism

✓ **0311_CAMINO_VERTICAL_6_E** - ***Protecting and promoting tourist sites and cultural heritage along the western Iberian Camino de Santiago routes***

Operation of Strategic Importance POCTEP 2021-27

Improving historical and cultural **knowledge** of the Routes to create cross-border synergies

Turning the Camino into a **bike-friendly** route

Increasing actual and perceived **safety** for users

Accessibility: making sure everyone can access the Caminos, regardless of their abilities.

De 01/01/2024 a 31/12/2026

1,2 M€ TOTAL | 894 K€ FEDER

12 partners
Lead: *Diputación provincial de Badajoz* (ES)

POCTEP 2021-2027: Sustainable Tourism

0274_HEPRESTONE_4_E - *Preventive management of built heritage to protect it from climate change by promoting sustainable and inclusive tourism*

Historic buildings and sites are increasingly damaged by natural and human risks. Climate change, misuse, and mass tourism affects **both monuments and communities** and their **culture**.

The project identifies and shares good practices, analyzes threats and risks in the EUROACE territory, and **develops early-warning indicators** for **preventive** monitoring.

Developing **IT tools**: algorithm, databases, digital twins and models, pilot monuments, sensors, monitoring, etc.

01/11/2022 - 31/12/2026	1 M€ TOTAL | 752 K€ ERDF

8 partners | Lead: INTROMAC, *Instituto Tecnológico de Rocas Ornamentales y Materiales de Construcción*

POCTEP 2021-2027: Sustainable Tourism

0293_GERES_XURES_MAIS_SUSTENTAVEL_1_P *Cooperation to strengthen the sustainability of tourism activity in the Gerês-Xurés Cross-Border Biosphere Reserve*

Natural area shared by Portugal and Spain, with an economy based on agriculture and tourism: environmental protection is a priority.

Sustainability includes **social aspects**: balancing tourism whith preserving the environment, but also culture and traditional lifestyle

The project brings **together public administrations** to:

- **Recover and enhance** natural and cultural **heritage**.
- Improve **tourism services**.
- **Train** residents, businesses, and visitors in responsible tourism, circular economy, and entrepreneurship.

11 partners: Lead: Comunidade Intermunicipal do Alto Minho (CIM Alto Minho)

01/01/2023 - 31/12/2026

1.3 M€ TOTAL | 1M€ ERDF

POCTEP 2021-2027: Sustainable Tourism

6 Partners
BP: *Universidad de Santiago de Compostela*

0267_PEGADAS_1_E - *Footprints on the Border — Cross-border experiential learning for youth* SO 4.2 – Skills & Training

- Participants: **young people** aged 18–29 who struggle to find their first job.
- They take part in local **cultural and work experiences** and create a promotional short film.
- Five-day **expeditions** on the Camino de Santiago**. Mixed groups** from Spain and Portugal.
- **Training programme** in entrepreneurship, digitalization, and sustainability.
- **Tourism promotion** of the Camino, encouraging sustainable tourism, strengthening cultural heritage.

01/11/2022 | 31/12/2026	998 K€ TOTAL | 748 K€ FEDER

POCTEP 2014-2020 Sustainable Tourism

Axis 3: Natural risks and resources

Risk prevention, efficient use of natural resources, and protecting and enhancing cross-border natural heritage have always been key priorities for POCTEP.

In fact, in 2014–2020 it received the largest financial allocation.

This sustainable approach applies to tourism projects, most of which fall under this thematic objective

POCTEP 2014 -2020 Sustainable Tourism

7 partners | Lead: *Fundación Patrimonio Natural Castilla y León* (ES)

0075_MOVELETUR_6_E - Sustainable tourism and electric mobility in natural areas

UNESCO good practice: example for Biosphere Reserves

Clean and 'silent' tourism in cross-border natural areas

A network of "green" tourist routes connected by **electric vehicles** (cars, bikes, carts)

Cross-border cooperation to **connect** strategic charging points

Training for **entrepreneurs and business owners** in tourism with electric mobility

De 01/01/2024 - 31/12/2026

908 K€ TOTAL | 681 K€ ERDF

11 Partners | Lead: *Associação Transfronteiriça Lago Alqueva* (ATLA)

0394_RDC_LA2020_4_P

Routes and Cultural Development of Lake Alqueva

The project has turned lack of industry and population into an opportunity for "Stars Tourism". So that, thanks to its skies, its people do not have to leave their land. Also, the lake´s blue flag beaches attract visitors in search for sunbathing and nautical activities.

- **Star tourism** and ***nautical activities*** as an economic resource to fight unemployment and depopulation.
- Promoting "**Destination Alqueva**" by developing tourism products based on its natural and cultural heritage.
- Results: ***Dark Sky Alqueva*** (award-winning astronomy tourism initiative) and water adventures.

01/07/2015 - 30/06/2019	3,1 M€ TOTAL | 2,3 M€ ERDF

POCTEP 2014 -2020 Turismo sostenible

6 partners
Lead: Extremadura Avante

0433_EUROACE_SPORT_4_E

Deporte y naturaleza en la EUROACE

- The project uses **sport as an economic resource**, supporting SMEs (hospitality, leisure, and recreation) and people seeking employment who need training.
- By involving **participants from the other side** of the border, the project strengthens relations between neighboring communities and reinforces social cohesion.
- The project creates a unique EUROACE **sports circuit** and tourism packages for athletes and their companions.
- It trains companies and workers by offering **modules for unemployed people** and officially recognizing workers' professional experience.

01/10/2016 - 31/03/2022	2 M€ TOTAL | 1,5 M€ ERDF

POCTEP 2014 -2020 Sustainable Tourism

0592_EUROGUADIANA_2020_5_E
European Laboratory of Cross-Border Governance: Eurocity of the Guadiana 2020

- Strengthening institutional cooperation and the **permeability of the border** to improve the quality of life of residents.
- Touristic **joint promotion** (a key sector in Algarve–Andalusia), support for **SMEs**.
- Development of **tourism niches** such as accessible tourism, thematic tourism (“Smuggling Route”), joint cultural agenda, and the “Territory Museum” programme.

3 partners | Lead: Ayto. Ayamonte (ES)

+ Vila Real Sto Antonio and Castro Marim (PT)

01/01/2018 - 31/12/2022

1,7 M€ TOTAL | 1,3 M€ ERDF

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Thank you!

Interreg Spain-Portugal (POCTEP) Cross-Border Programme

Elena de Miguel Gago
Director, POCTEP Joint Secretariat