

INTEGRA

Integrated Territorial Strategies
for a Sustainable Transition

Regional Diagnosis Report

Île-de-France Region



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Europe



Co-funded by
the European Union

INTEGRA

Interreg Europe Programme | 2021–2027 Programming Period

April 2026

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	3
1.1 General Regional Context	3
1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Assessment	4
1.3 Sources and Stakeholders Consulted	5
2. Key Contributions from Stakeholders.....	6
2.1 Background	6
2.2 Summary of Contributions	7
2.3 Overall Summary.....	9
2.4 SWOT Analysis.....	10
3. Conclusions	12
3.1 Implications for INTEGRA Future Activities	12
3.2 Lessons Learnt and Preliminary Recommendations.....	14
4. Good Practices	16
4.1 Territorial European Advisors Units	16
4.2 Territorial Governance Mechanism	18
5. Policy Improvement Pathways.....	20
5.1 Improving the Monitoring of Local Strategies	20
5.2 Better Addressing the Diverse Needs of Vulnerable Territories.....	21
5.3 Fostering Innovation and Improving Project Design through Networking	22
5.4 Better Involving Citizens in ITI Governance	23
6. References.....	25

Executive Summary

This regional diagnosis constitutes the Île-de-France Region's contribution to the INTEGRA project Integrated Territorial Strategies for a Sustainable Transition co-funded by the Interreg Europe Programme. It provides a critical, evolutionary, and improvement-oriented assessment of the regional model through which integrated territorial strategies are designed, governed, and delivered in the Île-de-France, with a particular focus on the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) instrument as the central mechanism for implementing the territorial approach to European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding.

The analysis is structured around the six building blocks of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) methodological framework: strategic dimension, territorial focus, governance, cross-sectoral integration, funding and implementation, and monitoring complemented by an additional module on transformative capacity introduced by the INTEGRA project. The evidence base combines the systematic review of strategic and operational documents, the institutional experience of the Île-de-France Region as Managing Authority for the ERDF programme, and structured stakeholder consultation.

The regional assessment of the territorial approach to European funding in Île-de-France reveals a multiscale governance model that aligns local actions with regional and European strategic frameworks. This approach is based on twelve intermunicipal territories that have developed integrated and multisectoral strategies, supported by funding for projects in four priority areas: digital transformation, energy efficiency in social housing, circular economy, and biodiversity. These strategies are implemented through decentralised governance, in which intermunicipalities play a central operational role in supporting project leaders, in partnership with the Managing Authority for ERDF funding, which ensures overall oversight and cross-level coordination at national and European levels.

The total ERDF envelope allocated to the ITI territories amounts to 54 million euros, representing approximately 29.5% of the regional ERDF budget. This funding is distributed across twelve territories, with an average allocation of 4.5 million euros per territory and an intervention rate of 30–40% ERDF, requiring significant co-funding from multiple sources including national funds (Green Fund, DSIL, ADEME), regional budgets, and local contributions.

The assessment has identified both strengths and areas for improving the effectiveness of the framework. Key strengths include a strong territorial governance structure, robust regional strategies aligned with EU frameworks, an integrated multi-sectoral approach, innovative and structuring projects, and the implementation of simplification and flexibility measures. Key challenges relate to the limited citizen participation in ITI governance, insufficient resources

relative to the scale of needs, sectoral inequalities in funding distribution, and capped intervention rates that create competition with national funding schemes.

Four policy improvement pathways have been identified: (1) improving the monitoring of local strategies through the introduction of mid-programming assessments; (2) better addressing the diverse needs of the most vulnerable territories by expanding eligible ERDF thematic areas; (3) fostering innovation and improving project design through networking among Île-de-France project leaders; and (4) better involving citizens in ITI governance by identifying barriers and drawing inspiration from models implemented by other INTEGRA partners.

Two good practices have been documented for sharing within the INTEGRA partnership: the implementation of territorial European advisors units, which provide operational and continuous support to project holders from application through to grant disbursement; and the territorial governance mechanism, which translates the European N+3 constraint into locally managed selection targets that ensure efficient fund absorption. Both practices have demonstrated concrete evidence of success at local and regional levels.

This executive summary should be understood as a starting point: an initial knowledge base that will be further developed through interregional learning, the continuous involvement of stakeholders, and the joint construction of transformative agendas for territorial cohesion and sustainable transition in the post-2027 period.

1. Introduction

The preparation of this regional assessment is part of the INTEGRA project Integrated Territorial Strategies for a Sustainable Transition co-funded by the Interreg Europe Programme. It represents the first step in a broader process of mutual learning and improvement of regional public policies among the partner regions of the INTEGRA partnership: Emilia-Romagna Region – Italy, North West Development Agency – Romania, Ile-de-France Region – France, Commission for Regional Development and Coordination of Alentejo – Portugal, University of Latvia – Latvia, Zlatibor Regional Development Agency – Serbia, Wielkopolska Region – Poland, Podgorica – Montenegro.

The assessment aims to analyse the regional model for the design, governance, and implementation of integrated territorial strategies in the Île-de-France Region, using the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) instrument as its primary policy reference. The analysis does not focus on an isolated strategy, but rather on the systemic model through which territorial strategies are designed, approved, and implemented, as well as on its capacity to address the challenges of territorial cohesion and sustainable transition.

The perspective adopted is deliberately critical, evolutionary, and improvement-oriented, recognising that the diagnosis is not a static description of the current state, but rather an analytical basis to support debate, interregional learning, and preparation for the post-2027 programming period.

1.1 General Regional Context

The Île-de-France Region is the most populous and economically powerful region in France, encompassing the city of Paris and seven surrounding departments. With over 12 million inhabitants spread across more than 1,200 communes and several intercommunal structures (Public Establishments for Intermunicipal Cooperation EPCI), the region accounts for approximately 31% of the national GDP and serves as the economic engine of the French economy.

The region is characterised by a stark contrast between dense urban centers including Paris and its inner suburbs and rural communities in the outer ring. This diversity creates significant territorial inequalities, with some of the wealthiest and poorest areas in France coexisting within the same regional territory. The Priority Neighbourhoods for City Policy (QPV) concentrate the most acute social and economic challenges, and the ITI instrument is specifically designed to address these disparities.

From a governance perspective, the Île-de-France Region exercises broad competences in areas including high schools, transport and mobility, economic development and innovation, vocational training and apprenticeship, environmental and energy transition, culture, sport, and European and international strategies. The Region also serves as Managing Authority for the ERDF programme, giving it a central role in the design and implementation of cohesion policy instruments at the regional level.

In the context of European cohesion policy, the Île-de-France Region has been designated as a 'more developed region' under the 2021–2027 programming period. This classification entails both a relatively modest ERDF allocation in light of regional needs and a lower ERDF co-financing rate (capped at 40%), creating specific challenges in securing sufficient co-financing and competing with national funding schemes that offer higher intervention rates.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Assessment

The regional diagnosis has a twofold purpose. First, it provides a structured analytical basis for the Île-de-France Region to critically reflect on its current model of integrated territorial strategy-making, identifying strengths to be consolidated and weaknesses to be addressed. Second, it contributes to the mutual learning process within the INTEGRA partnership, enabling the exchange of experiences and good practices among European regions facing similar challenges.

The scope of the assessment covers the full cycle of territorial strategy-making: from the design and strategic alignment phase, through the governance and implementation arrangements, to the monitoring and evaluation of results. The analysis pays particular attention to the role of the ITI instrument as a mechanism for translating European strategic frameworks into concrete, place-based interventions that address local needs.

The assessment follows the methodological structure proposed by the INTEGRA project, articulated into seven analytical modules: Strategic Dimension, Territorial Focus, Governance, Cross-Sectoral Integration, Funding and Finance, Monitoring, and Transformative Capacity. This structure ensures internal consistency and comparability with the diagnoses produced by other INTEGRA partner regions.

1.3 Sources and Stakeholders Consulted

At this stage, the assessment is based primarily on a review of documents and institutional experience, drawing on the following main sources:

- The ERDF Operational Programme for the Île-de-France Region 2021–2027
- The regional strategic frameworks: SDRIF-E (Master Plan), SRDEII (Regional Plan for Economic Development, Innovation and Internationalisation), and the regional climate-energy plan
- Delegation agreements between the Region and the twelve intermunicipal territories benefiting from ITI funding
- Available implementation, monitoring, and evaluation reports from the 2014–2020 programming period
- Methodological guidelines from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC)
- Documentation and methodological framework of the INTEGRA project
- Independent evaluation reports, including the Territéo consulting study (2019) and the French Senate report on the use of European funds (2019)

In addition, the assessment incorporates accumulated knowledge derived from the direct experience of the Managing Authority and the regional entities involved in the design and implementation of territorial strategies. The Region's Directorate for European Funds plays a central role in this process, coordinating the ITI unit network and managing the ITI scheme through thematic and technical workshops, a shared documentation space, and active participation in national and European networks.

Stakeholder perspectives have been gathered through the institutional experience of the intermunicipal territories participating in the ITI scheme, as well as through exchanges during the interregional learning events organised within the INTEGRA project, including the interregional meeting held in Cluj-Napoca (29 September–02 October 2025).

2. Key Contributions from Stakeholders

2.1 Background

As part of the development of the regional assessment, a structured stakeholder consultation process was conducted, involving a diverse range of regional and local entities. The objective was to validate, expand upon, and supplement the analysis carried out by the managing authority, as well as to identify challenges and opportunities in the implementation of territorial instruments.

The contributions were organised according to the six building blocks defined by the Joint Research Centre (JRC), ensuring methodological consistency with the INTEGRA project framework. The stakeholder consultation process was supplemented by additional written contributions and by the institutional experience accumulated by the Managing Authority throughout the implementation of the ITI instrument.

The stakeholder consultation brought together representatives from the 12 ITI intermunicipalities. The diverse perspectives gathered reflect the complexity of the multiscale governance model that characterises the Île-de-France territorial approach to European funding.

2.2 Summary of Contributions

2.2.1 Strategic Dimension

Stakeholders confirmed the relevance of the INTEGRA project and its evaluation framework. The territorial strategies developed by intermunicipal coalitions were recognized as well-defined and ambitious, grounded in a 2030 vision based on comprehensive social, economic, and environmental diagnostics. These coalitions, formed by groups of municipalities (intercommunalités), were selected through a call for applications that required them to produce a territorial diagnostic, a 2030 territorial project, and a strategic vision for each of the four mandated themes: digital transformation, energy efficiency of social housing, circular economy, and biodiversity.

Each strategy focuses on these four priorities and is aligned with regional and European strategic frameworks. This alignment was rigorously examined during the selection process. Each thematic area was assessed and scored based on the quality of its articulation with higher-level strategies, with this criterion accounting for 10 out of the total 50 evaluation points.

For instance, the 2022 territorial strategy of the Public Territorial Establishment Plaine Commune (Seine-Saint-Denis) on the digital theme explicitly detailed its connections with European and regional strategies:

"Through the projects presented in its application, Plaine Commune aims, among other things, to enable citizen access to local authority data (OS1.2_P3) and facilitate access to rights through simplified procedures (OS1.2_P1). This aligns directly with the Digital Strategy for Europe 2020–2030, which sets the objective of making all public services accessible online. Furthermore, it seeks to foster the emergence of higher education third places, in line with Axis 5 of the SRDEII, Challenge 3 of the SCORAN (which calls for a network of third places across the territory), and the objective of the SRESRI to improve access to higher education, training, guidance, and lifelong integration (OS1.2_P2, OS1.2_P4, and OS1.2_P5)."

Similarly, the territory of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (SQY), where agricultural land covers 21% of the area fulfilling economic, social, food, leisure, landscape, and biodiversity functions, responded to growing local demand for quality, proximity-based agricultural products. On June 27, 2019, SQY adopted a "Local Agriculture and Short Supply Chains" Action Plan for 2019–2025. This plan defines the strategy for local agriculture and food systems, aiming to preserve agricultural spaces, support local farming, encourage environmentally friendly practices, bolster associative dynamics, and develop short food supply chains. This plan aligns simultaneously with:

- EU Biodiversity Priorities: Which consider it essential to "work with farmers to support and encourage the transition to fully sustainable practices."
- SREC Objectives: Specifically Lever 7, which aims to "combat food waste, amplify short supply chains, and return organic matter to the soil."

Summary: Local strategies are well-defined and aligned with EU frameworks.

2.2.2 Territorial Focus

The ITI instrument is built on intermunicipalities (Public Establishments for Intercommunal Cooperation: EPCI), which act as the operational engines of the programme. Project boundaries match exactly the administrative borders of each intermunicipality, ensuring clear and consistent governance.

The ITI model offers significant flexibility by decentralizing management to a scale closer to the ground than the regional level. As EPCIs are best positioned to understand local challenges and mobilize relevant networks, the instrument leverages their proximity to beneficiaries. Key features of this model include:

- Integrated Strategy: The requirement to develop an integrated strategy forces a alignment between local ambitions and European objectives.

- **Action Plan Monitoring:** The action plan, selected by the ITI, serves as a key tool for tracking progress and ensuring accountability.
- **Thematic Adaptability:** Flexibility in thematic focus allows project owners to propose initiatives specifically tailored to local unique characteristics.

Eligibility criteria require that at least 5% of the intermunicipality's population resides in Priority Neighbourhoods for City Policy (QPV). This criterion serves as a strong lever to reduce territorial inequalities. Examples of qualifying territories include Plaine Commune (66% QPV population), Grand Paris Sud (25%), and Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (16%).

Stakeholders highlighted the diversity of the Île-de-France territory, which mixes dense urban areas with rural communities. This diversity requires a balanced territorial network to guarantee fair access to essential services, including digital infrastructure, mobility, and local food systems.

Although the Île-de-France is not a border region, it participates in interregional cooperation frameworks that extend beyond its administrative boundaries. These collaborations enable the exchange of experiences and the development of joint projects that address shared territorial challenges across regional and national borders.

2.2.3 Governance

The governance of the ITI instrument in Île-de-France is structured around a multi-level coordination model that brings together the Region, the State, and the intermunicipalities. The Île-de-France Region, as Managing Authority for the ERDF programme, is in charge of setting the overall strategy, launching calls for projects, selecting territories, and validating operations.

Multi-level coordination is ensured through two key committees:

- The Regional Inter-Fund Monitoring Committee (CRSI), which provides joint regional and national steering and ensures consistency between the different European funds
- The Selection and Monitoring Committees (CSS), co-chaired by the Region and the State, which operate at the local level and are responsible for selecting and monitoring individual projects

At the local level, each EPCI leads a CSS, chaired by an elected representative. The CSS brings together intermunicipality services, State services, departments, and specialised agencies, ensuring a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach to project selection and monitoring. Each ITI territory receives 3.5% of its certified ERDF expenditure as technical assistance funding, which is used to support dedicated ITI reference positions within the intermunicipalities.



This technical assistance funding is not merely administrative support, it helps build real capacity to manage European-funded projects. It enables the intermunicipalities to develop the technical expertise needed to support project holders throughout the entire project cycle, from application to grant disbursement.

Selection and Monitoring Committee in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines (2025)

The practical application of this model is illustrated by Cœur d'Essonne Agglomération (CDEA), which leverages a hybrid governance approach:

- Institutional Foundation: The local authorities first relied on an existing consolidated framework, with the Community Council validating CDEA's ITI candidacy, thereby anchoring the action within established institutional borders.
- Dedicated Operational Body: Complementing this, an ad hoc body—the Selection and Monitoring Committee (CSS)—was created to oversee operational implementation. This committee brings together:
 - The President of CDEA;
 - The Director General of Services (DGS);
 - Vice-Presidents responsible for relevant thematic areas;
 - Deputy Directors General (DGA) and involved Directors;
 - Representatives from the Region.

This combination of existing structures and dedicated governance ensures institutional continuity, strengthened strategic piloting, and close coordination with the Region.

However, a significant governance challenge remains: citizen participation is limited. At the start of the programming period, the Managing Authority proposed including citizens in local governance, but no territory volunteered to implement this. This is clearly an area where improvement is needed, and the INTEGRA project provides an opportunity to identify barriers and draw inspiration from models implemented by other partner regions.

There is a recognized need to shift towards more collaborative governance models that ensure continuous stakeholder and citizen participation throughout the entire policy cycle.

Summary: While a robust multi-level governance structure is in place—exemplified by territories like CDEA that blend institutional validation with dedicated operational committees—implementation challenges persist. These primarily concern the need to deepen citizen participation and maintain continuous stakeholder engagement beyond the initial design phase.

2.2.4 Cross-Sectoral Integration

Integration is built into the ITI model from the very beginning. The 2022 Call for Proposals mandated a multi-sectoral strategy that combines economic, social, and environmental goals through two foundational pillars: a comprehensive Territorial Diagnostic and a forward-looking Territorial Project.

This initial phase provides a holistic analysis of the project territory, covering its social, geographic, economic, historical, cultural, and environmental components. Key features include:

- **Policy Alignment:** The diagnostic explicitly accounts for major European policy orientations related to the four core themes.
- **Focus on QPV:** Issues concerning Priority Urban Areas (Quartiers Prioritaires de la Ville or QPV) are addressed in a dedicated section, analyzing both their specific challenges and territorial potential.
- **SWOT Analysis:** A synthesis is produced in the form of a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), helping to combine different perspectives and build a shared vision aligned with regional and European frameworks.

Building on the diagnostic, this component outlines a strategic vision for the territory up to 2030. It highlights priority challenges and ambitions across the four specific objectives:

- Digitalisation (€21 million ERDF)
- Energy Renovation (€17 million ERDF)
- Circular Economy (€6 million ERDF)
- Biodiversity (€10 million ERDF)

Operational synergies are actively promoted. For example, responsible digital projects are encouraged to integrate circular economy principles, creating links between the digital and circular economy priority themes.

Summary: Integration is embedded at both strategic and operational levels, with circular economy serving as a prime example of its practical application.

2.2.5 Funding and Finance

The ITI system is funded with a total ERDF envelope of 54 million euros, representing approximately 29.5% of the regional ERDF budget for the 2021–2027 programming period. This funding is distributed across twelve territories, with an average allocation of 4.5 million euros per territory. The ERDF intervention rate ranges from 30% to 40%, reflecting the classification of Île-de-France as a 'more developed region' under EU cohesion policy regulations.

ERDF funding is never the sole source of financing for ITI projects. A diverse co-funding architecture has been established, drawing on multiple sources:

The ERDF acts as a project accelerator, improving project credibility and facilitating the mobilisation of other financing. The leverage effect of ERDF funding is significant, as it signals to other funders that the project has been evaluated and selected through a rigorous process aligned with European strategic priorities.

Administrative simplification approaches have been implemented to reduce the administrative burden on project leaders. These include standard unit cost schedules for personnel expenses and energy renovation projects, as well as grouped purchasing centres that enable economies of scale. These measures aim to make European funding more accessible and to reduce the perception of ERDF as overly bureaucratic.

However, significant funding challenges persist. The total ERDF envelope of 54 million euros, while substantial, is insufficient to address the full scale of needs across twelve territories, particularly in the most fragile areas. Sectoral imbalances exist, with social housing renovation being particularly underfunded relative to needs. The capped intervention rate of 40% creates direct competition with national funds such as the Green Fund, which offers up to 80% aid, leading some project holders to abandon ERDF-funded approaches in favour of simpler, better-funded national schemes. Budget constraints at the regional level, including the freezing of regional funding for housing in 2025–2026, further complicate the funding landscape.

Summary: The ITI system is funded by a €54 million ERDF envelope (29.5% of the regional budget) distributed across twelve territories, acting as a catalyst to leverage diverse co-funding sources.

Administrative simplifications like standard unit costs and grouped purchasing have been introduced to reduce bureaucracy, yet significant challenges persist due to insufficient funds for fragile areas and sectoral imbalances.

The capped 40% intervention rate creates competition with more generous national schemes, while regional budget constraints further complicate the financing landscape for critical projects like social housing renovation.

2.2.6 Monitoring

The monitoring framework for the ITI instrument is based on a multi-level system with centralised regional coordination. Territorial management relies on dedicated ITI units (cells) and Selection and Monitoring Committees (CSS), which are responsible for validating and guiding projects throughout their implementation cycle.

This structure is exemplified by Cœur d'Essonne Agglomération (CDEA), where territorial strategies undergo rigorous evaluation as part of both the ITI scheme and the Agglomeration's broader public policy monitoring. CDEA's evaluation relies on:

- **Internal Monitoring Systems:** Managed by CDEA services and steered by governance bodies, including the CSS.
- **Performance Indicators:** Specific output and result indicators defined project-by-project to measure progress, performance, and impact.
- **Regular Reporting:** Systematic reporting to the Île-de-France Region, which ensures control and validation regarding compliance, efficiency, and alignment with regional and European objectives.
- **Periodic Reviews:** Strategic assessments presented to political bodies to adjust strategies and reorient actions as necessary.

Performance indicators have been established for each project type, enabling the assessment of results across different action areas. These indicators include measures of digital inclusion, biodiversity gains, renovated housing units, and sorted waste quantities. Data collection is carried out by EPCI services in coordination with local observatories, providing a territorialised view of project implementation.

The monitoring system is based on a principle of flexibility, allowing project reorientation and a degree of fungibility between specific objectives. This flexibility enables territories to adapt their project portfolios to evolving needs and circumstances, but it can also complicate the monitoring of the overall strategy, as shifts between thematic areas may lead to a loss of focus on the initial strategic vision.

A key weakness identified in the monitoring system is the absence of a mid-programming assessment. Currently, the evaluation of each territory's strategy takes place only at the

beginning of the application process and at the end of the programming period. This gap was identified during the first interregional meeting of the INTEGRA project in Cluj, where the work on the evaluative questions of the regional diagnosis revealed that without an intermediate assessment step, the thematic flexibility allowed to territories may lead to a loss of focus on the initial strategy without corrective action being taken.

The introduction of an additional assessment step at mid-programming is recommended as a policy improvement. This would enable better tracking of strategy implementation, allow corrective decisions to be made if necessary, and ensure that the initial strategic vision remains a guiding reference throughout the programming period.

Summary: The ITI monitoring framework uses a multi-level system with dedicated units and committees to validate projects and track performance through indicators like digital inclusion and biodiversity. Monitoring is functional. However, its flexibility risks diluting strategic focus, compounded by the absence of a mid-programming assessment to correct deviations. Introducing a mid-term evaluation is recommended to ensure alignment with the initial vision and enable timely corrective actions.

2.2.7 Transformative Capacity

The transformative capacity of the framework relies on a dual objective: driving in-depth change in both ecological transition and digital advancement. This is achieved through gradual progress, with operational projects delivering visible impacts on the territories. The framework builds on experimental approaches, treating pilot projects as innovation laboratories—such as initiatives on organic waste sorting, digital third places, or material reuse. These initiatives combine social and technological innovation, particularly in digital inclusion and the circular economy, and are designed from the outset to be replicable for broader dissemination.

A prime example of this transformative potential is "Le Grand Chemin circulaire", a structuring innovative project under the ITI EST ENSEMBLE initiative. Situated at the intersection of biodiversity, urban mobility, and the circular economy, this ambitious project aims to radically transform public spaces to adapt to climate and social challenges. Key features include:

- **Scale and Scope:** By 2030, the project will form a 55 km loop, with 36 km spanning across 9 municipalities covering a total area of 220 hectares.
- **Circular Economy in Action:** Est Ensemble applies core circular economy principles to the development of the Grand Chemin through reuse and valorization of construction materials from the building and public works sector. This includes repurposing paving stones, curb stones, and lighting poles, as well as transforming excavated earth into eco-materials (technosols) to restore degraded soils.

- Environmental & Social Benefits: It creates vital "breathing spaces" and summer cooling zones by significantly increasing vegetation, while facilitating soft mobility (cycling, walking) and enhancing landscape viewpoints.
- Multi-Use Hubs: The pathway will host new leisure spaces for diverse uses, including sports, cultural activities, recreation, and ecological or agricultural initiatives.

Summary: The framework possesses high transformative potential, vividly illustrated by projects like "Le Grand Chemin circulaire," which reimagines 220 hectares of urban space through the practical application of circular economy principles (material reuse and technosols). However, this potential remains largely unexplored in a systematic manner, as mechanisms for scaling up successful pilot projects are still underdeveloped.

2.3 Overall Summary of Contributions

Across the board, the contributions gathered confirm the main conclusions of the preliminary assessment, reinforcing the existence of challenges in terms of governance, policy integration, institutional capacity, and the suitability of funding instruments. Stakeholders also expressed a very positive view of both the ITI device, recognized for its relevance and timeliness, and the assessment carried out, which is considered broadly aligned with the dynamics and needs of the region.

Clear opportunities for improvement were identified, particularly in terms of administrative simplification, strengthening coordination, promoting integrated approaches, and creating mechanisms that enhance the continuity and scalability of interventions. These opportunities form the basis for the policy improvement pathways detailed in Chapter 4 of this report.

2.4 SWOT Analysis

The following SWOT analysis synthesises the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified through the regional assessment of the Île-de-France territorial model.

Category	Key Elements
STRENGTHS	• Strong territorial governance through intermunicipalities • Robust regional strategies aligned with EU frameworks • Integrated, multi-sectoral approach built into the ITI model • Innovative and structuring projects with visible territorial impact • Implementation of simplification and flexibility measures • Technical assistance funding (3.5%) enabling local capacity building
WEAKNESSES	• Limited formal citizen participation in ITI governance • Insufficient resources relative to scale of needs • Sectoral inequalities in funding distribution • Capped intervention rate (40%) creating competition with national funds • Absence of mid-programming strategy assessment • Limited platforms for sharing best practices among project leaders
OPPORTUNITIES	• Strengthening collaborative governance through INTEGRA mutual learning • Expanding eligible ERDF thematic areas to address diverse local needs • Developing networking platforms for Île-de-France project leaders • Drawing inspiration from citizen engagement models of INTEGRA partners • Introducing mid-programming assessment for better strategy tracking • Better urban-rural articulation and interregional cooperation
THREATS	• Persistence of funding competition with national schemes • Budget constraints at regional level (e.g., housing funding freeze) • Concentration of institutional capacity in a limited number of territories • Time misalignments between European and national programming cycles • Risk of loss of strategic focus through excessive thematic flexibility

3. Conclusions

3.1 Implications for INTEGRA Future Activities

The assessment shows that the Île-de-France Region has a territorial model with solid foundations, characterised by strong territorial governance, robust regional strategies aligned with European frameworks, and an integrated multi-sectoral approach. However, the model also faces structural challenges common to many European regions, particularly in the areas of citizen participation, funding adequacy, and monitoring effectiveness.

In this context, the INTEGRA project emerges as a strategic opportunity to critically reflect on this model, learn from other regions, and contribute to improving integrated territorial strategies in the post-2027 period. The Île-de-France experience offers a significant contribution to mutual learning within the INTEGRA partnership, particularly with regard to:

- The implementation of territorial European advisors units as a mechanism for building local capacity for European fund management
- The territorial governance mechanism based on delegation agreements and selection targets, which translates the European N+3 constraint into locally managed objectives
- The coordination between a strong regional programme and differentiated territorial strategies in territories characterised by stark socio-economic contrasts
- The progressive integration of digital transition and ecological transition objectives into territorial development strategies

At the same time, the assessment identifies areas where the region could benefit from exchanges with other European regions:

- Advanced models of citizen participation and civic engagement in territorial governance
- Innovative tools for co-design, strategic forecasting, and scenario building
- Data visualization tools for European projects designed for the general public
- Experimentation mechanisms and pilot projects with potential for scalability

These areas provide a solid foundation for guiding the Île-de-France Region's active participation in the INTEGRA project's mutual learning activities, study visits, and workshops.

3.2 Lessons Learnt and Preliminary Recommendations

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Regional Model

The assessment has identified a clear set of strengths and weaknesses that characterise the Île-de-France regional model for integrated territorial strategy-making.

Key strengths include:

- Existence of a robust regional policy instrument (the ITI scheme) that structures territorial intervention
- Consistent alignment with EU strategic frameworks, including the European Green Deal and the EU Digital Strategy
- Accumulated experience in implementing integrated strategies funded by European funds across two programming periods
- Consolidated institutional relations between the Region as Managing Authority and territorial actors
- Strong territorial governance through intermunicipalities with clear administrative perimeters
- Implementation of simplification measures including flat rates for staff costs and social housing projects, and fungibility of credits across thematic areas

Key weaknesses include:

- Limited formal citizen participation, mainly confined to design-phase consultation
- Insufficient resources relative to the scale of territorial needs, especially in the most fragile areas
- Absence of a mid-programming strategy assessment mechanism
- Monitoring still focused on outputs and implementation, with limited impact assessment at the territorial level
- Capped ERDF intervention rate (40%) creating competition with better-funded national schemes
- Limited platforms for sharing best practices among project leaders across the Île-de-France region

Preliminary Recommendations

Based on the analysis carried out, the following preliminary recommendations have been identified, to be further developed and validated throughout the INTEGRA project:

1. Strengthen the monitoring of local strategies

Introduce an additional assessment step at mid-programming to enable better tracking of strategy implementation and allow corrective decisions to be made if necessary. This addresses the current gap where strategy evaluation occurs only at the beginning and end of the programming period.

2. Better address the diverse needs of the most vulnerable territories

Expand the range of eligible ERDF themes — while remaining within areas under the responsibility of cities and intermunicipal authorities — to include areas such as tourism, urban policy, and health. This would help address the current limitation where Île-de-France has mobilised the fewest thematic areas among French managing authorities.

3. Foster innovation and improve project design through networking

Develop meeting formats that encourage cross-fertilisation among project promoters, building on the success of the 'Île-de-France, my European Region' initiative where unexpected interactions among project leaders emerged. Create platforms for sharing best practices and methodologies.

4. Better involve citizens in ITI governance

Identify barriers to citizen participation and draw inspiration from models and initiatives implemented by other INTEGRA partners. Develop structured approaches to citizen engagement that go beyond the design-phase consultation currently practised.

5. Strengthen the strategic and transformative dimension of territorial strategies

Promote long-term visions aligned with the dual green and digital transition, moving beyond strategies that are overly influenced by available funding mechanisms.

6. Invest systematically in institutional and technical capacity-building

Continue and expand the territorial European advisors units model, ensuring that all territories — particularly the most vulnerable — have access to the technical expertise needed to develop and implement European-funded projects.

7. Move towards integrated strategic monitoring systems

Develop monitoring frameworks that focus on territorial results and impacts rather than purely financial execution, incorporating qualitative and territorial indicators.

8. Promote approaches to experimentation and pilot projects

Create spaces for territorial experimentation and develop mechanisms for the replication and scaling up of successful innovations, ensuring that pilot projects can serve as models for wider deployment.

These recommendations provide an initial roadmap for improving regional policies, which will be progressively refined through inter-regional benchmarking, mutual learning activities, and an update of the regional assessment at the end of the project, thereby contributing to a more robust preparation of the Île-de-France regional model for the post-2027 period.

4. Good Practices

The Île-de-France Region has identified two good practices that have demonstrated concrete evidence of success and that are particularly relevant for sharing within the INTEGRA partnership. These practices address common challenges faced by European regions in the implementation of territorial strategies and the management of European funds.

4.1 Territorial European Advisors Units

Short Summary of the Practice

In response to the identified lack of technical capacity for European funds in the territories that need them most, and to the perception of European funding as overly bureaucratic, the Île-de-France Region has financed the establishment of local ITI support units — known as Territorial European Advisors Units. These units serve three core functions:

- Supporting project holders from project design through to the disbursement of European grants, providing continuous and operational assistance throughout the entire project cycle
- Ensuring the proper functioning of local governance by structuring selection and monitoring committees, and verifying that each funded project aligns with the territory's urban development strategy
- Collaborating and sharing challenges and best practices among network coordinators, creating a community of practice across the twelve ITI territories

Resources Needed

The Île-de-France Region allocates to each territory technical assistance funds amounting to 3.5% of the paid and certified expenditures per project. This mechanism acts as a highly effective incentive for ensuring proper project implementation in compliance with the rules and timetable of the 2021–2027 European programming period.

Within its Directorate for European Funds, the Île-de-France Region also dedicates, from its technical assistance budget, the equivalent of 2.5 full-time project manager positions to coordinate the ITI unit network and manage the ITI scheme. Their responsibilities include:

- Organising thematic and technical workshops for ITI coordinators
- Creating and maintaining a shared documentation space
- Relaying European initiatives and good practices

- Integrating into national networks (Europe and Territories) and European networks (INTEGRA)
- Participating in selection and monitoring committees
- Conducting preliminary project analysis

Evidence of Success

The practice has demonstrated concrete evidence of success at multiple levels:

At the local level:

- In the Grand-Orly-Seine-Bièvre territory, the added value of a single-person ITI unit funded by technical assistance during the 2014–2020 period was so evident that the territory made the political decision to transform it into a full-fledged Europe department comprising three dedicated staff members, specifically tasked with securing funding for the local strategy during the 2021–2027 programming period

At the regional level:

- An independent evaluation commissioned by the Île-de-France Region (Territéo consulting firm, 2019) highlighted the positive impacts of ITI units and recommended 'ensuring the long-term continuity of support for coordinators within territories and capitalizing on the expertise acquired in project engineering, resulting in greater responsiveness and efficiency'

At the national level:

- A French Senate report on 'the chronic underuse of European funds in France' (25 September 2019) identified the funding of ITI units in territories as a best practice to be expanded in order to improve the absorption of European funds, citing the ITI of Melun Val de Seine as an example — even though in Île-de-France, European funds were fully absorbed

At the European level:

- The 'Cité du numérique éducatif' (Digital Education City) project, supported by the ITI unit of Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, was selected by the European Commission for inclusion in a promotional campaign showcasing successful European initiatives

Potential for Learning or Transfer

Several key lessons can be drawn from this practice for regions considering similar approaches:

- Delegating responsibilities to the appropriate territorial level is essential. Île-de-France has chosen to rely on the intermunicipal level due to the diversity of administrative competences exercised, the strong proximity link with local stakeholders (elected officials, citizens, project promoters), and the structuring nature of local urban development strategies

- Sharing technical assistance funds with territories to make them genuine European partners has proven to be a successful approach. This transforms the relationship from a top-down model into a true partnership, building trust and aligning objectives
- Clear frameworks should be established from the outset. The modalities for transferring technical assistance funds are specified in a partnership agreement, based on a letter of commitment from the territory and expenditure certificates
- Investing in local engineering, even on a small scale initially, delivers tangible and recognised results at all levels — local, regional, national, and European

For regions wishing to move in this direction, the recommendation is straightforward: choose the right territorial level, establish a shared financial responsibility model, and secure the framework from the beginning through formal partnership agreements.

4.2 Territorial Governance Mechanism

Short Summary of the Practice

Under European regulations, committed funds not used within a three-year period are automatically cancelled — a rule known as 'automatic decommitment' or the 'N+3' rule. This rule aims to ensure rapid and regular use of European funds and represents a significant constraint for Managing Authorities.

To pass on this constraint to the funds delegated to territories, the Île-de-France Region has established a monitoring mechanism based on a clearly defined sharing of responsibilities. Each year, by 31 December, each ITI territory must have reached a selection rate set in its delegation agreement. If this target is not met, after a dialogue phase, the shortfall is withdrawn and reallocated to other, more dynamic territories.

These obligations are set out in a delegation agreement to ensure maximum effectiveness at each level, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. The mechanism creates a multi-level system in which the regional level sets the framework and ensures compliance, while the territories manage operational selection close to local realities, with each level acting with clear, measurable objectives.

Resources Needed

The territorial governance mechanism relies on the following resources and institutional arrangements:

- Delegation agreements between the Region and each ITI territory, specifying selection targets and responsibilities
- Monitoring of objective achievement at all levels of governance: local selection and monitoring committees, technical workshops organised by the coordinators of the European Funding Directorate, and programming committees
- A dialogue phase before any withdrawal of funds, enabling territories to explain difficulties and jointly develop solutions
- A reallocation mechanism that redirects unused funds to more dynamic territories

Evidence of Success

Thanks to this monitoring mechanism, almost all ITI territories in Île-de-France reached or exceeded their 2025 pre-selection target, which was set at 60%. On average, the pre-selection rate achieved by 31 December was 71%.

This selection pace has enabled the Île-de-France Region to select 67 projects since the start of the programming period. This mobilisation of territories helps the Region avoid any automatic cancellation of its funds — a result that is particularly significant given that other French regions have experienced challenges with fund absorption, as documented in the 2019 French Senate report.

Potential for Learning or Transfer

The following lessons can be transferred to other regions seeking to improve fund absorption through territorial governance:

- Set ambitious but realistic objectives for territories. The monitoring system fails if targets are either too low to be meaningful or too high to be achievable
- Clearly explain the rules to territories and local elected officials at the start of the programming period. Withdrawing funding can create political tensions if the conditions are not understood from the outset
- During the year, schedule regular dialogue sessions with each territory to identify risks and difficulties and jointly develop solutions. This continuous engagement is what ensures sustained performance over time
- Establish a reallocation mechanism that is transparent and fair, ensuring that funds are redirected to territories that can use them effectively

5. Policy Improvement Pathways

As announced in the introduction, four policy improvement pathways have been identified through the regional assessment process. These pathways represent the concrete actions that the Île-de-France Region intends to pursue within the framework of the INTEGRA project, drawing on mutual learning with partner regions and the exchange of good practices.

5.1 Improving the Monitoring of Local Strategies

Observation: During the first interregional meeting of the INTEGRA project in Cluj, the work on the evaluative questions of the regional diagnosis revealed a weakness in the monitoring of local strategies.

Weakness: The evaluation of each territory's strategy currently takes place only at the beginning of the application process and at the end of the programming period. While allowing thematic flexibility to ensure optimal use of the funding envelopes allocated to each territory is a positive feature, it may lead to a loss of focus on the initial strategy without any corrective mechanism.

Suggestion: Introducing an additional assessment step at mid-programming would enable better tracking of strategy implementation and allow corrective decisions to be made if necessary. This intermediate assessment would provide a structured opportunity to review progress against strategic objectives, identify emerging challenges, and adjust course where needed — without waiting until the end of the programming period when corrective action may be too late.

5.2 Better Addressing the Diverse Needs of Vulnerable Territories

Observation: The central objective of the EU through the ITI instrument is to reduce development inequalities between territories. This challenge is particularly significant in Île-de-France, where the wealthiest and poorest areas in France coexist within the same regional territory.

Weakness: The current thematic areas available under ITI are too restrictive given the diversity of needs in Île-de-France. From one European programming period to the next, the number of open strategic objectives has been reduced — from 11 (6 ERDF and 5 ESF) in 2014–2020 to just 4 ERDF objectives in 2021–2027 — in the name of simplification. While simplification is a legitimate objective, it has had the unintended consequence of limiting the ability of territories to address the full range of local needs through European funding.

Suggestion: The National synthesis of the territorial component of cohesion policy, developed within the framework of the national network 'Europe and Territories', highlights that Île-de-France is the French managing authority that has mobilised the fewest thematic areas. Expanding the range of eligible ERDF themes — while remaining within areas under the responsibility of cities and intermunicipal authorities — such as tourism, urban policy, and health, would help better meet local needs and ensure that European funding addresses the specific challenges of each territory.

5.3 Fostering Innovation and Improving Project Design through Networking

Observation: Some ITI projects are insufficiently innovative or poorly designed in light of European rules, increasing the risk of expenditure rejection during assessment or certification. This represents both a financial risk and a missed opportunity for territorial impact.

Weakness: There is a lack of platforms for sharing best practices and methodologies among project leaders across the Île-de-France region. Project leaders operate largely in isolation, without structured opportunities to learn from each other's experiences, share methodological approaches, or identify opportunities for collaboration.

Suggestion: During the 'Île-de-France, my European Region' initiative, project leaders had exhibition booths to showcase EU-co-funded projects. On this occasion, unexpected interactions emerged among project leaders, demonstrating the latent demand for peer-to-peer exchange. It would be valuable to develop meeting formats that encourage cross-fertilisation among project promoters — such as thematic workshops, project visits, and digital platforms for knowledge sharing. The INTEGRA project provides a framework for identifying effective networking models from partner regions and adapting them to the Île-de-France context.

5.4 Better Involving Citizens in ITI Governance

Observation: The EU's objective is to bring governance closer to citizens through a territorial approach aligned with local needs. Citizen participation is a core principle of integrated territorial development and a growing requirement under EU cohesion policy.

Weakness: At the start of the programming period, the Managing Authority proposed including citizens in local governance, but no territory volunteered to implement this. This suggests that the barriers to citizen participation are significant — they may include lack of awareness, insufficient resources, legal or procedural constraints, or simply the absence of tested models that territories feel confident in adopting.

Suggestion: Identify barriers to citizen participation and draw inspiration from models and initiatives implemented by other INTEGRA partners. The INTEGRA partnership includes regions with diverse experiences in citizen engagement — from the Social Committee model in Gniezno (Wielkopolska) that uses motivation letters to involve authentic community leaders, to the participatory governance processes observed in other partner regions. By learning from these experiences, the Île-de-France Region can develop structured approaches to citizen engagement that are adapted to the specific context of each ITI territory.

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