

# NEWSLETTER

Interreg  
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REWARD

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GET TO KNOW THE PROJECT, UPDATES, UPCOMING EVENTS

In response to global trends, technological development and the emergence of new forms of work and lifestyles, policymakers need to develop a better understanding of the brain-drain brain-gain phenomenon and take action for the benefit of communities by adapting their policies for developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.

Against this background, REWARD brings together 9 partners from 2 transition regions (FI, IE) and 6 less developed regions (HR, PT, IT, SK, PL, CZ) to find solutions to these challenges.

# ABOUT PROJECT

REWARD aims to improve regional policies and programmes for retaining and attracting knowledge workers for regional development. It will identify, analyse, disseminate and transfer good practices among regional policy actors in 4 complementary areas. The specific objectives are thus to:

- Improve the effectiveness of **university-industry collaboration** as a means of retaining graduates in existing jobs
- Support entrepreneurship and increase **business support** to create new jobs in the economy
- Improve interventions that enhance the **quality of life** and foster regional attractiveness
- Adapt to **new forms of work** (digital nomads, remote work, second homeowners).

## A FEW NUMBERS



### Common theme

In regions with innovation potential, the problem of qualified workers is frequent. This is particularly important for regions undergoing industrial transformation, those on the edge of the EU, or close to large cities.

The REWARD project is an active contribution to EU cohesion policy that supports economic growth, jobs and sustainable development, while at the same time reducing disparities in regional development.

# Médio Tejo Returns to MIPIM 2026 to Drive Strategic Investment in the Region

On 27 August 2025, the fourth meeting of local stakeholders involved in the Interreg Europe REWARD project took place at the facilities of CIM Médio Tejo in Tomar. The meeting brought together representatives from CCDR Centro, the Polytechnic Institute of Tomar (IPT), Nersant, and Tagusvalley, highlighting the strong regional engagement in the project.

The agenda focused on reviewing the progress achieved so far and discussing the experiences shared during the partners' meeting held in Warsaw in June. Particular attention was given to preparing the next steps of the project, which will concentrate on a detailed analysis of experiences and best practices related to the upcoming thematic focus: quality of life and regional attractiveness.



During the discussion, stakeholders emphasized the relevance of the best practices observed in Warsaw, especially those linked to services for businesses and entrepreneurship. These practices were considered highly interesting and closely aligned with initiatives already being developed in the Médio Tejo region. It was also noted that the success of such initiatives depends largely on the active involvement and commitment of the people responsible for their implementation.

The importance of the next partners' meeting, scheduled to take place in Pardubice, Czechia, was also underlined. This topic is particularly relevant for CIM Médio Tejo, as it will be further developed within a dedicated working group during the sixth semester of the project in 2027.

The meeting was attended by representatives of five organizations, with a total of 13 participants, reinforcing collaboration and shared commitment to the goals of the REWARD project.

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**REWARD**

**PP4 CIM Médio Tejo**  
4.ª Reunião de stakeholders

**Agenda**

1. O projeto num minuto!
2. Porque é que aqui estamos
3. Fluxo da execução
4. Os stakeholders locais
5. Varsóvia, serviços às empresas e ao empreendedorismo, junho 2025
6. Pardubice, qualidade de vida e atratividade regional, outubro 2025

REWARD aims to improve implementation of regional development policies to retain and attract knowledge workers and skills.

27 de agosto 2025 | Tomar

SLIDE 2

## Third Meeting of the Irish REWARD Stakeholder Group

On 7 October 2025, the third meeting of the Irish regional stakeholder group of the REWARD project took place at the Castlecourt Hotel in Westport, bringing together a broad range of enterprise, education and public-sector stakeholders from Ireland's Western Region.

The meeting focused on reviewing progress under the REWARD project and its alignment with the Northern and Western Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020–2032 (RSES).

Participants also received feedback from the 2nd Interregional Learning Event, held in June 2025 in Warsaw, which explored entrepreneurship and business support for non-traditional entrepreneurial groups and showcased several good practice examples, including Ireland's Back for Business initiative, CzechInvest's Academy for Social Enterprises, and Finland's South Savo Food Cluster.

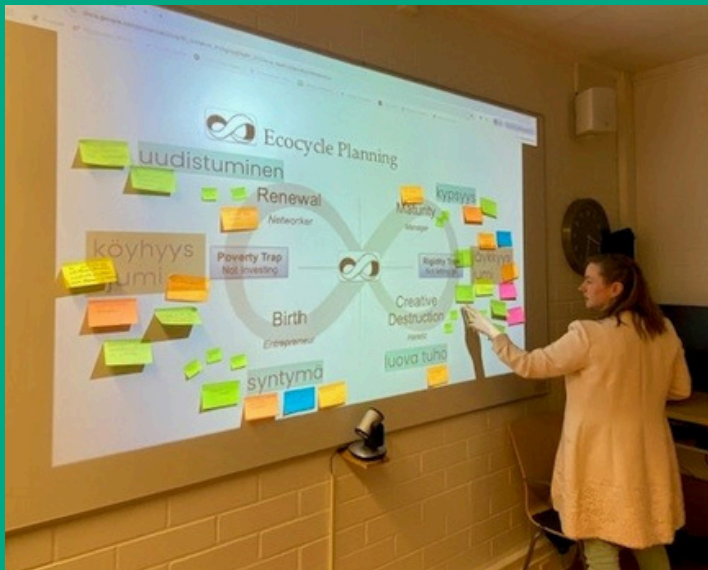


A dedicated case study presented by PortWest highlighted current challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers, particularly in areas such as IT, data analysis, sustainability and innovation. While remote working is increasingly used to access talent beyond the local labour market, additional support is needed to strengthen remote training delivery and the management of distributed teams.

The meeting concluded with an overview of the upcoming 3rd Interregional Policy Learning Event, which took place in October 2025 in the Pardubice Region, Czech Republic, and reaffirmed the value of collaboration and international knowledge exchange in supporting skills development and long-term regional growth.



# REWARD Project Workshop Launched the Development of HUB South Savo



On 20th of November 2025, the REWARD project brought together regional stakeholders in Mikkeli, Finland, for a workshop aimed at co-creating HUB South Savo, a new collaborative network designed to strengthen the region's attractiveness and talent retention.

The workshop gathered regional experts and development partners around a shared vision: to create opportunities for international innovation and development professionals, multidisciplinary talents, and digital nomads to work remotely and engage in entrepreneurship in South Savo. At the same time, the initiative seeks to strengthen connections between start-ups, educational institutions, and public-sector actors, supporting the region's smart specialisation strategy through concrete follow-up actions.

Building on preparatory work launched in September, participants continued to develop common guidelines and operating models.

As a result, an initial operating framework for HUB South Savo was outlined, based on a needs-driven and iterative approach. Rather than a fixed structure, the model emphasises bottom-up development, flexibility and continuous learning through agile experimentation.

The proposed model also includes the creation of a Mentor Network, connecting former residents, local actors, young people and newcomers, with the aim of fostering entrepreneurship and knowledge exchange. In addition, a Renewers Network of so-called "Innovation Agents" or "Energists" is planned to support companies by identifying development bottlenecks and encouraging organisational change.

The initiative relies on broad cooperation among universities, research institutions, regional development organisations, business associations, partner cities, local communities and residents. The next step will focus on assembling the mentor network and further refining the operating model of HUB South Savo.



# Meeting of the Regional Stakeholder Group in Mazovia

On February 5, 2026, the Regional Stakeholder Group of the REWARD project held its fifth meeting online in Warsaw. This session brought together a diverse group of participants, including representatives from the City of Warsaw, universities, the Voivodeship Labor Office, the Marshal's Office of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, and various research institutes. The gathering served as a vital platform to review the project's progress, implementation status, and the most significant conclusions reached during previous work stages.

## Enhancing Regional Attractiveness

A central theme of the meeting was the quality of life and territorial attractiveness within the region. Grzegorz Rzeźnik PhD, from the Warsaw School of Social Psychology, outlined the primary factors that influence the decisions of residents, employees, and investors:

- Availability of public services.
- Labor market conditions.
- Access to education.
- Levels of social capital.

Complementing this analysis, Paweł Trojanowski of the Voivodeship Labor Office presented successful "good practices" from other REWARD partner regions. These examples included initiatives to support local labor markets, strategies to retain talent, and projects designed to improve access to social services.

## Data-Driven Cooperation

The meeting featured an intense substantive discussion where stakeholders shared research findings and explored how to adapt international successes to the specific needs of the Masovian Voivodeship. This exchange underscored two critical pillars of effective regional policy:

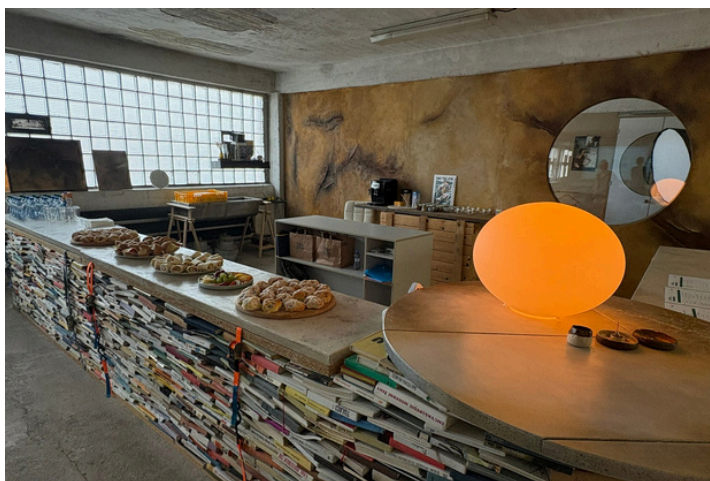
- Interinstitutional cooperation.
- A data-driven approach.

As the project enters its fifth semester, these preliminary directions for further action mark the next stage in strengthening the development and competitiveness of Masovia. The continued exchange of experiences with international partners remains a cornerstone of the project's ongoing success



# How Can We Shape a More Attractive Region Together?

The future of the Pardubice Region is not defined solely by infrastructure, but above all by people, innovation, and quality of life. These themes formed the backbone of the 4th Stakeholder Meeting of the REWARD project, held on 24th of February 2026 at the industrial-style Shared Atelier Pardubice and organised by the Regional Development Agency of the Pardubice Region.



Projects such as REWARD aim to strengthen quality of life and territorial attractiveness so that the region becomes a place where people choose to live, work, and grow.

Participants agreed that the region must offer more than employment opportunities. A successful strategy combines:

- economic stability,
- affordable housing,
- high-quality leisure opportunities,
- accessible public services,
- strong environmental conditions,
- a vibrant regional identity built on both heritage and innovation.

Reducing regional disparities and ensuring equal access to opportunities remain key priorities.

A central pillar of the debate was talent activation and retention.

Jan Fuka from the University of Pardubice highlighted the university's role as a driver of innovation and a strategic partner in regional development. Collaboration between academia, public administration, and businesses enables students to engage in solving real-life regional challenges.

Concrete support mechanisms were also presented:

- The HOMERUN Fund of the Pardubice region offers scholarships to university students under the condition that they return to the region after graduation. In its 2025 pilot call, 10 talented students received financial support totalling CZK 500,000.
- P-PINK develops entrepreneurial skills through programmes such as PINKaka and a specialised AI Talent Programme, connecting students with regional companies active in artificial intelligence.

These initiatives illustrate that investing in human capital is not a theoretical ambition, but a tangible and measurable commitment.

Regional success depends on cooperation. The meeting emphasised the importance of strong partnerships among public authorities, universities, businesses, and the non-profit sector.

Through initiatives such as TWINUP4CE, the Pardubice Region leads the development of Regional Alliances for Skills Management (RUMA), addressing labour market mismatches and supporting both digital and green transitions.

The shared conclusion was clear: sustainable development requires systemic collaboration and long-term strategic thinking.



The region is also responding proactively to societal and technological change.

A notable example is the regional online payment portal [zaplatsi.cz](http://zaplatsi.cz), which enables citizens to pay fees to municipalities, schools, or sports clubs conveniently and remotely. Digitalisation improves not only efficiency, but also the overall user experience of public services.

In parallel, a regional network of coworking spaces – including TO-PINK in Česká Třebová, Kanclárna in Moravská Třebová, and Kočárovna in Litomyšl – strengthens the region's image as a modern and flexible place to work and collaborate.

The 4th REWARD Stakeholder Meeting reaffirmed a shared commitment: to shape the Pardubice Region into a place where infrastructure supports not only mobility, but also community, opportunity, and personal development.

Creating an attractive region is not a one-time project – it is an ongoing process of dialogue, cooperation, and innovation.

# Other Project Activities

## Sardinia Unlocked 2025: Turning Distance into Collective Strength

At the end of November 2025, Sardinia became a shared laboratory of ideas. Sardinia Unlocked, a two-day civic design initiative, connected physical and digital hubs across the Island with Sardinian communities abroad, including Spain, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States. Together, participants explored concrete responses to some of Sardinia's most pressing challenges, from education and services to employment, innovation and depopulation.

Conceived and organised by the NODI collective, the initiative is built on a clear and ambitious vision: transforming distance into connection, diaspora into a resource, and memory into civic energy. Around 400 people took part, many of whom met for the first time during the event, working collaboratively on policy-oriented proposals rather than traditional business ideas.

This focus on public policy was a deliberate choice. Designing policies requires engaging with complexity – institutions, rules and processes that shape everyday life – and Sardinia Unlocked demonstrated the potential of collective intelligence when citizens are invited to contribute at this level.

The projects developed over the two days were presented to a jury representing institutional, academic, entrepreneurial and civic sectors. The Regional Department for Industry, while not among the organisers, supported and closely followed the initiative, recognising its value in mobilising human capital and strengthening a collaborative and innovative regional ecosystem.

At a time when attracting and retaining talent is a strategic priority for Sardinia, initiatives like Sardinia Unlocked play a crucial role in generating ideas, building networks and imagining new futures for the Island.

Learn more: <https://nodi-itaca.com/index.php/sardinia-unlocked>



# Other Project Activities

## Trnava Region on the Move

### Joint Interreg Danube Project Preparation with the Pardubice Region

Status: Ongoing (2025–2026)

Building on the successful cooperation established within the REWARD project, the Trnava Self-Governing Region is working together with the Pardubice Region on the preparation of a joint project proposal under the Interreg Danube Programme.

The planned project focuses on supporting the development and application of artificial intelligence within regional ecosystems, with particular emphasis on innovation, skills development, and interregional cooperation.

This activity represents a concrete follow-up to the REWARD partnership and contributes to strengthening long-term interregional collaboration.

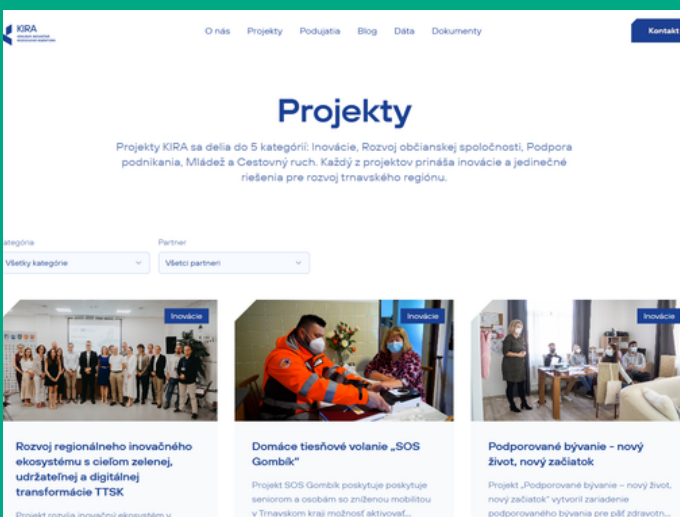
### Strategic Cooperation with Irish Partners on Digital Nomadism and Remote Work

Status: Ongoing (2025–2026)

Within the framework of the REWARD project, the Trnava Self-Governing Region is cooperating with Irish partners on the revision of regional strategic approaches related to digital nomadism and remote work.

Irish partners provide methodological support and good practice insights based on their experience with remote work ecosystems, digital hubs, and talent attraction policies.

The cooperation aims to help adapt regional strategies to new labour market trends and to strengthen the region's attractiveness within the digital economy.



# Other Project Activities

## Médio Tejo Returns to MIPIM 2026 to Drive Strategic Investment in the Region

For the second consecutive year, the Médio Tejo region will present its economic potential with a dedicated pavilion at MIPIM (Le Marché International des Professionnels de l'Immobilier), one of the world's leading real estate exhibitions, taking place in Cannes from 9 to 13 March 2026.

Building on the success of the 2025 edition—made possible through strong regional stakeholder cooperation and the support of the REWARD project—Médio Tejo returns to the international stage with the aim of strengthening its market position and attracting new strategic investments.

The mission will feature a comprehensive programme of high-level meetings with international investors. Key investment opportunities will focus on business and industrial facilities, tourism infrastructure, and a wide range of real estate development projects.

Through its participation at MIPIM 2026, the Médio Tejo region reaffirms its commitment to fostering economic growth and job creation, positioning itself as a competitive and attractive destination within the global investment landscape.



## PAST EVENTS

### Inspiration in Action: The 3rd International REWARD Meeting in the Pardubice Region



The Regional and Development Agency of the Pardubice Region hosted the 3rd Interregional Policy Learning Event (PLE) of the REWARD project, bringing together partners and stakeholders from seven European regions. The core mission was to share strategies on how to attract and retain knowledge workers by enhancing the quality of life and regional attractiveness.

The official program kicked off at the Automatic Mills, a transformed brownfield that now serves as a vibrant cultural hub. Presentations were held at Sféra, an interactive center for science and Innovation.

The host region showcased several successful models. The Pardubice Region's RIS3 Strategy, implemented via the SMART AKCELERATOR+ I project, focuses on building a robust innovation ecosystem. By specializing in domains such as chemistry and transport, the region actively identifies and supports talent from childhood through to professional levels.





Partners across Europe shared diverse strategies for regional development:

Finland (Savonlinna): The Noheva Technology Park focuses on the forest bioeconomy with massive investments in wood and fiber laboratories. Additionally, they introduced a "Habitability Analysis," using citizen science to solve rural challenges like fragmented transport.

Sardinia (Italy): The "Decalogue of Sardinian Talents Abroad" aims to transform "brain drain" into "knowledge circulation" by creating mentoring links with the diaspora. Meanwhile, the SARDAPAN project in the Ogliastra "Blue Zone" proves that globally-oriented agri-food businesses can thrive in remote areas, retaining young talent.

Portugal & Ireland: Both regions focused on sustainable mobility. The CIM Médio Tejo in Portugal offers highly subsidized fares (€1.50) and "Transport on Demand". Similarly, Ireland's Western Development Commission created a Sustainable Mobility Index for 40 rural towns to help secure funding for better transport infrastructure.

A standout example of private-sector engagement is Contipro, a company based in the small town of Dolní Dobrouč specializing in hyaluronan research. To overcome the challenge of its rural location, Contipro developed an "educational pyramid" a comprehensive system ranging from school collaborations and specialized high school programs (like FYBICH) to PhD support. They also invest heavily in employee well-being through a dedicated nursery, an elementary school, and local environmental projects like solar power plants.

Further innovation was presented in Chrudim by CityZen, a textile company that revolutionized the industry with unique apparel technology. Their commitment to "local clever production" entirely within Czechia serves as a successful counter-model to mass-produced fast fashion.



Poland (Warsaw): The "Warsaw Talent" platform involves 13 partners working together to promote the city as an ideal place for foreign experts to grow and live. The event also highlighted that attractiveness is not just about jobs, but about the sense of place. Participants visited on the second day of visit Litomyšl, the "Capital of Contemporary Czech Architecture". As a walkable "15-minute city," Litomyšl combines UNESCO heritage with modern public spaces, high civic engagement, and world-class culture like the Smetana's Litomyšl Festival, making it an ideal model for modern urban living.

Participants gained valuable insights into how to attract and retain knowledge workers by prioritizing regional attractiveness and a high quality of life through integrated innovation strategies. They explored diverse "Good Practices," ranging from educational support systems and sustainable mobility solutions to the creative repurposing of cultural and historical heritage into vibrant public spaces. Finally, the event served as a crucial platform for international networking, allowing partners to share experiences and better understand the specific qualification needs of modern innovative companies.



# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

## 4th Interregional Policy Learning Event on Adaptation to New Forms of Work in Ireland, Sligo



As part of the international REWARD project, which focuses on retaining and attracting knowledge workers and talent for regional development, a key partner meeting will take place in Sligo, Ireland, on June 10 and 11, 2026.

This 4th Interregional Learning Event is titled "Adapting to New Forms of Work."

### Objectives and Thematic Focus

The primary goal of the event is to provide a platform for discussing and sharing European best practices in response to global trends, technological advancement, and the emergence of new forms of work and lifestyles.

Policymakers and regional stakeholders will address the phenomena of brain drain and brain gain, seeking strategies to adapt regional policies for skills development in smart specialization, industrial transition, and entrepreneurship.

### Program and Activity Overview

The meeting agenda is divided into two intensive days focused on practical demonstrations of innovative approaches in Western Ireland:

Wednesday, June 10: Digitalization and National Remote Work Strategy.

The first day will be held at the AIM Centre in Sligo, which specializes in implementing advanced manufacturing technologies and digitalizing supply chains. The program includes:

- a presentation of the Irish National Strategy for supporting and promoting remote work.
- An introduction to the "Grow Remote" initiative, addressing hybrid work challenges to strengthen local communities.
- An overview of the "Connected Hubs" network, a government initiative building interconnected workspaces across Ireland.
- A visit to the National Surf Centre in Strandhill, serving as a modern community hub and center for the outdoor economy.
- A presentation of the "Moving West" television project, which promotes quality of life and career opportunities in the West of Ireland.

# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

## 4rd interregional policy learning event on Adaptation to New Forms of Work in Ireland, Sligo



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Thursday, June 11: Industrial Innovation and Experience Sharing.

The second day moves to the Future Cast center in Manorhamilton, an innovation and education hub for construction, the stone industry, and Industry 4.0 technologies. Key activities include:

- a tour of the Future Cast center and practical demonstrations of modern technology.
- Best practice presentations from all participating partner regions, showcasing specific experiences and approaches to the theme.
- An interactive workshop focused on the practical application of acquired knowledge into the regional policies of individual partners.

### Participants and International Cooperation

The event will be attended by representatives of all REWARD project partner organizations from Finland, Croatia, Portugal, Italy, Slovakia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and the host nation, Ireland.

This meeting represents a significant step toward strengthening cooperation between universities, business networks, and public authorities to ensure that European regions remain attractive destinations for talented workers in the digital age.



# THE PARTNERSHIP



Savonlinna Development Services (FI)



South Savo Regional Council (FI)



Institute for Tourism (HR)



Inter-Municipal Community of Médio Tejo (PT)



Autonomous Region of Sardinia (IT)



Western Development Commission (IE)



Self-Governing Trnava Region (SK)



Marshal's Office of the Mazovian Voivodeship (PL)



The Regional Development Agency of the Pardubice Region (CZ)



# EVENTS

- **Peer review follow-up: Regional digital innovation ecosystem governance**

On 30th of April, a study visit will take place in Barcelona, bringing together representatives of the Trnava Region and Catalunya.

The visit will be facilitated by the Policy Learning Platform, ensuring continuity with the peer review process and focused knowledge transfer. Participants will gain first-hand insight into Catalunya's innovation ecosystem and explore opportunities for future cooperation.

More information [here](#).

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