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INTERREG ITALY-CROATIA PROGRAMME 2021 – 2027

Call announcement

1st Call for Proposals

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Introduction

The INTERREG VI-A Italy–Croatia 2021-2027, a Cross-Border Cooperation Programme in the framework of the European Territorial Cooperation, is launching the 1st Call for proposals for two typologies of projects, Standard and Small-scale projects (see section 5 below), and it invites interested eligible applicants to submit their project proposals.

This document is part of the “[Application Package for the 1st Call for proposals](#)” available for applicants of Standard and Small-scale projects.

The application package consists of:

- Call announcement (*present document*)
- Guidelines for Applicants
- Off-line Application Form template for Standard projects (*for information purposes*)
- Off-line Application Form template for Small-scale projects (*for information purposes*)
- Project selection procedure (including selection criteria)
- Lead partner (LP) Declaration template
- Project partner (PP) Declaration template
- Associated partner (AP) Declaration template
- Subsidy Contract template

Further information and documents on the application process can be found in sections 10 and 12 of this document. The present Call is implemented through the Joint electronic monitoring system (Jems).

The Call for proposals is governed by EU Regulations, the Interreg Programme and the present document. Italian legal framework shall be applied wherever applicable. In terms of State aid, General Block Exemption Regulation - art. 20 and 20A EU regulation N. 651/2014 - and the de minimis Regulation - EU Regulation n. 1407/2016 apply to the present Call for proposals.

1. Programme overview

The Programme area’s greatest potential and core driver of development is represented by the Adriatic Sea: indeed, the strengths deriving from the maritime dimension are numerous, from the strategic position and good performance of ports in the area, to the impressive richness of biodiversity and the strong attractiveness of the region for coastal tourism flows. Thus, it seems essential to exploit these opportunities by focusing the cooperation efforts on blue economy domains, in consistency with the EU



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Blue Economy strategy. Moreover, synergies and complementarities with other funding instruments at EU, national, regional level including National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRP) will be encouraged. The Programme's vision of **"Focusing on innovation and sustainability in the blue economy, capitalising previous cooperation experiences, creating synergies with EUSAIR"** will be attained through the Programme's five Priorities and their seven Specific Objectives (SOs), as shown in the following table:

Priority	Priority's title	SO	Specific objective's title
1	Sustainable growth in the blue economy	1.1	Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies
		1.2	Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship
2	Green and resilient shared environment	2.1	Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches
		2.2	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution
3	Sustainable maritime and multimodal transport	3.1	Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility
4	Culture and tourism for sustainable development	4.1	Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation
5	Integrated governance for stronger cooperation	5.1	Other actions to support better cooperation governance



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2. Addressed area

The 1st Call for proposals is addressed to the whole Programme area (marked in blue on the map shown below), covering the following NUTS III regions:



Italy: Teramo, Pescara, Chieti (Abruzzo Region), Brindisi, Lecce, Foggia, Bari, Barletta-Andria-Trani (Apulia Region), Ferrara, Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena, Rimini (Emilia-Romagna Region), Pordenone, Udine, Gorizia, Trieste (Friuli Venezia Giulia Region), Pesaro e Urbino, Ancona, Macerata, Ascoli Piceno, Fermo (Marche Region), Campobasso (Molise Region), Venezia, Padova, Rovigo (Veneto Region);

Croatia: Primorsko-goranska, Ličko-senjska, Zadarska, Šibensko-kninska, Splitsko-dalmatinska, Istarska, Dubrovačko - neretvanska (Adriatic Croatia region), Karlovačka (Pannonian Croatia region).

3. Objectives of the Call

The INTERREG VI-A Italy–Croatia 2021-2027 intends to select high-quality cross-border projects in which organisations of different types, scope and size can cooperate to address specific thematic issues and very concrete needs in the area.

The **cross-border approach** of the project is of extreme importance and it is therefore highly considered in the project assessment. Since the Programme is addressing common challenges of the cross-border area, all project proposals should be jointly developed and implemented by the partners. The Programme also specifically encourages the **participation of newcomers** in the 1st Call for proposals. Newcomers to the Programme, just like any other partner, need to bring benefit to the projects with their competences, professional experience, and their clear role in the project.



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Within the 1st Call for proposals, Standard projects and Small-scale projects can address the Programme's **Specific Objectives** according to the following table:

Priority	Specific Objective (SO)	Standard projects	Small-scale projects
1	1.1	✓	
1	1.2	✓	
2	2.1	✓	
2	2.2	✓	✓
3	3.1	✓	
4	4.1	✓	✓
5	5.1		✓

The description of each specific objective, topics addressed, and the indicative actions are available in the [document Programme Intervention logic](#).

4. Call budget and co-financing

The Programme will allocate **80.000.000,00 EUR** from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to the 1st Call for proposals. The following table specifies the indicative ERDF allocation to the seven programme Specific Objectives per project typology:

Specific objective	Standard projects ERDF (EUR)	Small-scale projects ERDF (EUR)
1.1	7.000.000,00	
1.2	2.800.000,00	
2.1	20.500.000,00	
2.2	12.200.000,00	1.000.000,00
3.1	18.000.000,00	
4.1	15.500.000,00	1.000.000,00
5.1		2.000.000,00
TOTAL	76.000.000,00	4.000.000,00



The ERDF **co-financing rate** is equal to **80%** of total eligible costs of the project.

The share of expenditure not covered by ERDF funds (equal to 20% of total eligible costs of the project) shall be ensured by national co-financing sources. The Italian national co-financing is ensured by the State (Fondo di Rotazione).¹

State-aid assessment could entail the possible reduction of public contribution as described in the [Programme implementation manual](#).

5. Features of the types of projects

Types of projects supported by the Programme

All project proposals submitted to the 1st Call for proposals must fall within one of the following two types of projects:

Standard projects

These are more complex cooperation projects typically originating from the acknowledgement of a need or a potential and consequently testing a potential cross-border solution. They involve for example actions such as the implementation of new solutions, the testing of new services, the development of strategies, joint action plans and pilots, the sharing of expertise, joint training actions, and the setting up of new governance structures. They should be developed based on an innovative project concept, although the capitalisation of previous programming periods' projects and results is also strongly encouraged. To learn more about capitalisation in this Call for proposals, see [Guidelines for Applicants](#).

Each Standard project must contribute to **at least two (2) output indicators**. The descriptions of the types of actions and indicators are provided in the [Programme Intervention logic](#).

Small-scale projects

These are a new form of cooperation in the Programme area, resulting from the will of reaching new target groups and allowing newcomers to contribute to the improvement of the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the cross-border region. Compared to Standard projects, they are shorter, supporting smaller partnerships with limited-scope interventions, mainly implemented by smaller organisations, addressing specific thematic issues and very concrete needs in the area. They promote direct cooperation between citizens and institutions, foster contacts between people locally, and bring border regions and their citizens closer together. These projects shall aim at improving legal and administrative cross-border collaboration, strengthen the communication channels, and increase the

¹ Ex Law n. 183/1987 and CIPESS Decree n. 78/2021.

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main stakeholders' awareness (including public authorities), for example through the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns, implementation of training and educational activities, specific actions aiming at improving and facilitating the cooperation of the organisations on the other side of the maritime border.

Each Small-scale project must contribute to **at least one (1) of the following indicators** identified per specific objective but are free to choose additional indicators as specified in the [Programme Intervention logic](#).

Specific objective	Indicators
2.2	RCO 85 - Participations in joint training schemes RCO 115 - Public events across borders jointly organised
4.1	RCO 81 - Participations in joint actions across borders
5.1	RCO 86 - Joint administrative or legal agreements signed RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders

Duration

The duration of the projects must fall within the following ranges depending on the project type:

Type of project	Duration of project
Standard	From 24 to 30 months
Small-scale ²	From 12 to 18 months

Budget size of the projects

The financial size of the projects submitted in the framework of the 1st Call for proposals shall be in line with the minimum and maximum amounts specified in the following table:

Specific objective	Standard projects		Small-scale projects	
	Minimum ERDF (EUR)	Maximum ERDF (EUR)	Minimum ERDF (EUR)	Maximum ERDF (EUR)
1.1	500.000,00	1.500.000,00		
1.2				

² Implementation of Small-scale projects must in any case end on 31/12/2024.



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2.1	500.000,00	2.200.000,00		
2.2			165.000,00	200.000,00
3.1				
4.1			165.000,00	200.000,00
5.1			165.000,00	200.000,00

Available financing options

Use of **Simplified Cost Options** (hereinafter: SCOs) is encouraged by the Programme within the 1st Call for proposals. **Three financial options**, which include different possibilities of using real and flat rate costs, are equally available to both Standard and Small-scale projects. It should be noted that in some cases the use of SCOs is mandatory.

In addition, to the budgeting options and SCOs, the 1st Call for proposals also foresees the reimbursement, as Lump sums, of **preparation costs** and **closure costs** for both Standard and Small-scale projects.

The information on financing options and the use of SCOs is described in the [Programme Implementation Manual](#) and summarised in the [Guidelines for Applicants](#).

Advance payment

Granting of **advance payment** to the projects is **not foreseen** in the framework of the 1st Call for proposals.

6. Eligibility of applicants

General provisions

Institutions/entities willing to participate in the 1st Call for proposals must fulfil all the following criteria:

- Be **established under the national law** of Italy or Croatia (except for international organisations, see below);
- Have their **official seat** or **seat of operations in the Programme area**, as long as the seat of operation is active for at least six months before the date of publication of this Call announcement;
- Be endowed with **legal personality**³.

³ "Legal Personality" is interpreted here as the institution's/entity's ability to acquire rights and obligations (e.g., to conclude contracts, buy property), sue and be sued with no regard to the issue of registration. The bodies concerned are capable of entering into a contract and can be held liable in case of a breach of obligations.



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Specific provisions per project typology

Standard projects eligible applicants:		
Public Entities	Private bodies	International organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National, regional and local public bodies and their associations⁴ Bodies governed by public law, as defined in point (4) of article 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, and their associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit organisations Profit-making organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International organisations acting under the national law of an EU Member State International organisations acting under the international law⁵
<p>/!\ Point of attention: Minimum ERDF contribution requested by each project applicant (partner in the project) shall be EUR 50.000,00.</p>		

Small-scale projects eligible applicants:	
Public Entities	Private bodies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities: <u>only</u> bodies representing a population fewer than 50.000 inhabitants or an association of several of these bodies representing a population fewer than 50.000 inhabitants⁶ Bodies governed by public law <ul style="list-style-type: none"> financed, for the most part, by the local authorities representing a population fewer than 50.000 inhabitants; or that are subject to management supervision by those authorities; or that have an administrative, managerial or supervisory board, in which more than 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit organisations Profit-making organisations: <u>only</u> Micro or Small-sized enterprises⁷ Schools and educational institutions with the exclusion of universities

⁴ Including European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

⁵ These organisations must explicitly accept all requirements deriving from the EU Treaty and the regulations applicable in the framework of the Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme by providing an ad-hoc declaration signed by these institutions that can be requested by the Managing Authority prior to granting the funds.

⁶ Information will be assessed considering the latest census available for Italy and Croatia.

⁷ For their requirements, EC Recommendation (2003/361/EC) and the EC User guide to the SME Definition must be considered.



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<p>half of the members are appointed by those authorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and educational institutions with the exclusion of universities 	
<p>⚠ Point of attention: The Programme strongly encourages the participation in Small-scale projects of topic-relevant Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), both public and private educational institutions, and Vocational Educational Training (VET) providers.</p>	

Assimilated partners

Italian and Croatian public entities that are located outside the Programme area (both with its legal and operational sets) are eligible as Assimilated partners, only if they:

- are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the Programme area;
- carry out activities that are beneficial for the Programme area.

Assessment of the competence is performed by the relevant National Authority of the country in which the assimilated partner is located.

Assimilated partners have **equal rights and obligations** as do applicants located within the Programme area and their budgets should be developed following the same principles and constraints applicable to Lead partners and Project partners.

7. Provisions applying to the Lead Applicant

Lead Applicants

Each project partnership shall appoint one organisation acting as the Lead Applicant that is in charge of coordinating the generation and submission of the proposal.

In compliance with the 'lead partner principle', if the proposal is approved, the Lead Applicant assumes the role of Lead Partner (LP) and takes full financial and legal responsibility for the implementation of the entire project.

All eligible applicants listed in the previous paragraph ('Eligible Applicants') can act as Lead Applicant, with the exception of International organisations acting under international law. Private Lead Applicants must hold minimum financial capacity to implement the project.



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Financial Capacity of private Lead Applicants

Private lead applicants should demonstrate their **financial capacity**⁸ through the information included in the following documents:

Standard projects	Small-scale projects
Balance sheets and profit and loss accounts of the last two financial years and a bank reference letter ⁹	Balance sheet and profit and loss account for the last financial year

The private lead applicant must provide Balance sheets and profit and loss accounts only at the request of the Programme, while bank reference letter must be uploaded in Jems during application phase. Full assessment of the financial capacity will be done during the selection process. Additional information is available at [Project selection procedure](#).

Participation “per department”

The following public institutions can be considered as “per department”:

- Ministries
- Regions/Counties
- Universities/Research institutions

“Department” is understood as an organizational unit with financial and administrative autonomy and having technical and administrative staff to ensure its functioning. Thus, each single department within the above listed institution can be considered as a separate potential applicant.

Participation “per department” is envisaged **only for Standard projects** and it is particularly relevant for LPs in view of the rules for participation indicated below.

Rules for participation as LP

As a general rule each organisation can take part in a **maximum of two proposals as LP**. Therefore, only the first two proposals received, based on the chronological order of submission in Jems, will be considered. Should the organisation infringe on the above rule, rejection of the additional proposals will occur. This constraint is **applied separately** for Standard and Small-scale projects’ calls for proposals.

⁸ The Programme provides an explanatory document concerning the assessment of the financial capacity of private lead applicants which is based on financial accountability generally applied principles. However, the result of the assessment performed by the Programme, in compliance with the rules set for this 1st Call for Proposal, has to be considered the only valid for determining the financial capacity of private lead applicants.

⁹ The bank reference indicates the “Degree of trust” between the applicant and the banking system. This document shall declare the financial reliability of the organisation applying for the funds. Bank reference letter generally includes that the applicant has always met its bank commitments, has adequate solvency requirements, and can consequently be considered to have the financial capacity to carry on the project.



Considering that the Programme intends to finance quality project proposals, it is strongly suggested to interested organisations to limit their participation also as a partner in project proposals.

8. Partnerships

The Programme encourages applicants to ensure geographic balance for both Standard and Small-scale projects and establishes the following minimum requirement for the partnerships:

Standard projects	Small-scale projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least three eligible partners, out of which at least one Italian, and one Croatian • Maximum number of partners is eight (including the Lead Applicant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least two eligible partners, out of which at least one Italian, and one Croatian • Maximum number of partners is four (including the Lead Applicant)

Associated partners

The participation of the **Associated partners** in the 1st Call for Proposals is envisaged **only for the Standard projects**, even if it is **not compulsory**. These are partners, also from outside the programme area or from third countries, without a project budget that should however contribute to the achievement of the project's objectives. As the Programme considers **capitalisation**¹⁰ as a crucial objective that will characterise its 2021-2027 implementation to maximise the impact of the achieved results, the involvement of the Associated partner in this Call for proposals shall be strictly related, and well explained, to project activities addressed to the facilitation of the possible reuse of the produced outputs (e.g., as outputs quality validators, or as potential re-users of the produced outputs). The contribution of the Associated Partners to the capitalisation process is assessed during the project selection.

The maximum number of Associated partners recommended per each Standard project is four (maximum two per Country).

Additional information about their participation can be found in the [Programme Implementation Manual](#).

¹⁰ Interreg VI-A Italy-Croatia 2021-2027 [Capitalisation plan](#).



9. Call timeline

Deadline for submission

The 1st Call for proposals opens on 28/11/2022 and it is organised in a “single-step” procedure.

The lead applicant must submit project proposals by the following **deadlines**:

Standard projects	Small-scale projects
20/03/2023 at 2.00 PM CET	28/02/2023 at 2.00 PM CET

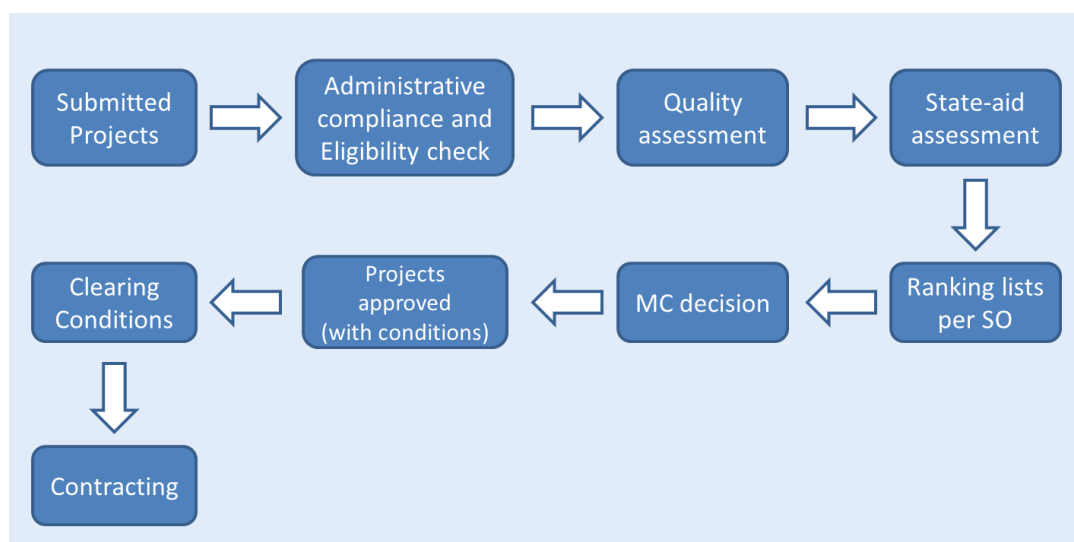
After the above deadlines, Jems will automatically disable any further submission of project proposals.

The Managing Authority (MA) reserves the right to postpone the 1st Call for proposal’s deadline(s) in case of duly justified circumstances.

Assessment procedure

The selection of project proposals is carried out by the Monitoring Committee, on the basis of the assessment performed by the Joint Secretariat. More information is available in [Project selection procedure](#).

The following image illustrates the project selection steps:



Upon completion of the assessment, the submitted applications, reaching minimum thresholds, will be **ranked separately per Specific objective**. The Monitoring Committee of the Programme reserves the right not to commit all available resources depending on the quality of submitted applications or to allocate additional ERDF resources to finance more proposals from any of the ranking lists. Results of the assessment process will be published on the [Programme website](#).



Contracting procedure

Considering the time necessary for the assessment process and the expected number of applications, contracting should take place in June 2023 for Small-scale projects and in December 2023 for Standard projects. Therefore, applicants of **Small-scale projects** should plan to **start the activities in July 2023**, and applicants of **Standard projects** in **January 2024**.

In any case, the actual starting date of projects will be the one included in the application form resulting from the Condition Clearing process. However, activities included in the project proposal cannot start before the submission of the application.

10. How to apply

Project proposals must be submitted in English language and only through [Jems](#).

No other method of submission will be accepted, and applications submitted in any other way will be automatically rejected.

The LP is in charge of the submission of the project proposal on behalf of the whole partnership and it needs to be registered on Jems in order to be able to create and submit valid proposals.

For more information on how to fill-in the Application form see [Guidelines for Applicants](#).

11. Complaints

According to Article 69 (7) of Regulation (EU) No 1060/2021, the Programme set up a complaint procedure in order to find an amicable and mutually acceptable solution to avoid any form of litigation between the MA and the LP.

Information for applicants regarding the complaint procedure during the selection process is available in [Project selection procedure](#).

12. Assistance and other resources

The Joint Secretariat (JS) is based in Venice, with an antenna in Zadar, and can be contacted, by LPs only, at any time for any queries related to project development and application at:

js.italy-croatia@regione.veneto.it

js.it-hr.antenna@mrrfeu.hr



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Other useful information

The Programme offers the following support and tools for the applicants available at [Programme website](#).

- FAQs
- Updates on the infodays (days and location)
- Optional consultations with the JS, especially for Small-scale projects (pay attention to the procedure for the request)
- Glossary
- Partner search tool

Useful documents for the development of the proposals

EU Policy Framework documents

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) - Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1059](#) - Interreg Regulation
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1058](#) - ERDF Regulation
- [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2018/1046](#) - Financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union

Interreg Italy-Croatia 2021-2027 documents available at the [Programme website](#)

- Interreg Programme (IP)
- SEA Environmental Report
- Programme Implementation Manual (PIM)
- Programme Intervention logic
- Contribution to EUSAIR Flagships
- Programme Capitalisation plan
- Explanatory document concerning the assessment of the financial capacity of private lead applicants



13. Summary: main features and requirements of the call

Feature	Standard project	Small-scale project
Max. n. of project proposals per applicant	2 as LP	2 as LP
Specific Objectives	SO 1.1, SO 1.2, SO 2.1, SO 2.2, SO 3.1 and SO 4.1	SO 2.2, SO 4.1 and SO 5.1
Min. n. of Partners	3 partners (at least 1 IT and 1 HR)	2 partners (at least 1 IT and 1 HR)
Max. n. of Partners	8 partners (at least 1 IT and 1 HR)	4 partners (at least 1 IT and 1 HR)
Min duration	24 months	12 months
Max duration	30 months	18 months
Indicative starting date	January 2024	July 2023
ERDF contribution	80%	80%
Min. financial size of each project (ERDF)	500.000,00 EUR	165.000,00 EUR
Max. financial size of each project (ERDF)	1.500.000,00 EUR for SO 1.1 and SO 1.2 2.200.000,00 EUR for all other SOs	200.000,00 EUR

