

THE FUTURE OF THE MARITIME CROSS- BORDER COOPERATION 2020+

Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme
contribution to the debate
on the next programming period

September 2018

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1. INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this Paper is to provide useful inputs to all stakeholders concerned by the future of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC), in particular of the maritime cross-border cooperation component. This is a contribution by the Interreg V A Italy-Croatia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme to the on-going debate on the 2021–2027 programming period. This does not represent the official position of any specific institution or country, but it expresses the practice of Programme.

The resolution to draw up this Paper was discussed by the Members of the Monitoring Committee (MC) during the 5th meeting held in Venice on July 2018; the document has been consequently approved through written procedure by the Programme MC, which strongly supports its key messages.

The need for such Position Paper stems from the concern expressed by the MC representatives of both countries, Italy and Croatia, on the uncertain future of maritime cross-border cooperation programmes as the debate concerning the main features and components of the post 2020 territorial cooperation programmes, seems to put their very existence into question. Instead, Italy-Croatia Programme's MC representatives strongly advocate the importance of maintaining and strengthening the maritime dimension of the crossborder cooperation in the Adriatic Sea, highlighting its specificity compared with the terrestrial dimension and its complementarity with the transnational dimension.

In addition maritime cooperation programmes may widely contribute to the EUSAIR because of their full alignment with the goals of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR). Both the EUSAIR and the cross-border cooperation programme mutually benefit from each other, the one providing more strategic dimension in programming and in project development, the other gaining financing opportunities in a concrete and close-cooperation context between two neighboring Member States; this seems not reachable to the same extent with a more wide transnational sea-basin approach.

2. KEY INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME

The **Italy - Croatia CBC Programme 2014 - 2020** is a new European Union Programme that encourages cooperation among the coastal NUTS III regions of Italy and Croatia, with the aim of increasing the prosperity and the blue growth potential of the area by stimulating cross-border partnerships able to achieve tangible changes.

The Programme involves:

2 MEMBER STATES

25 ITALIAN PROVINCES

8 CROATIAN COUNTIES

12,4 M CITIZENS

1500 MUNICIPALITIES

Programme total budget

The Programme is co-funded:

- 85 % by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) with a budget of 201.357.220,00 EUR;
- for the remaining share (15%) by National co-financing.
- The Programme total budget is 236.890.849,00 EUR.

Cooperation Area

The geographical configuration of the cooperation area, with the Adriatic Sea located in the very centre of the territory, shows a distinct blue and green pattern, featuring the sea basin, coastal landscapes, green but also urban areas. Even if it might seem that these geographical features require more efforts to accomplish collaboration aims concerning the cross-border integration of economic, educational and labour markets, indeed they represent a unique joint economic and environmental asset; as a matter of fact the Adriatic sea is not only a natural platform for cooperation, built on long-dating trade and cultural exchange contacts reflected in some common traits of cultural heritage, but it is also a place where national regulatory choices get more easily into contact (e.g. in the case of fisheries and environmental protection).

Priority Axes

The Programme is composed of four Priority Axes and seven Specific Objectives responding to the identified key assets and challenges, as the following picture shows.



The challenge for the Programme is that maritime issues are not the subject of a specific Priority Axis, but rather should be seen as a cross-cutting issue integrated into the selected priorities.

3. WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED SO FAR

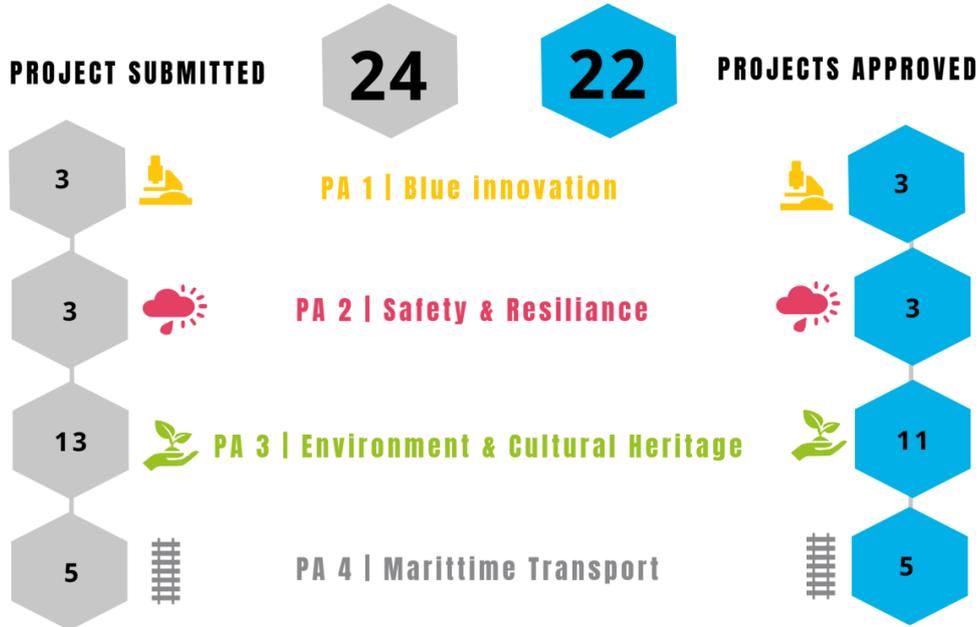
Call for Proposals and approved projects

The 1st Set of Calls for Proposals, launched in Spring 2017, was open to all Priority Axis and to two different project typologies, “Standard” and “Standard+”, both characterised by a bottom-up approach. However, while the “Standard” type of call was addressed to operations proposing innovative solutions to be developed in the cooperation area, the “Standard+” type of call was intended for operations stemming from already existing cooperation potentials of the area, capitalising the achievements of the previous programming period, by means of piloting, testing or implementing in the CB area solutions developed in the framework of a 2007 – 2013 ETC Programmes in which Italian and Croatian partners already worked together (Adriatic IPA CBC, SEE and MED).

STANDARD+ CALL FOR PROPOSALS

CALL OPEN

from 21/4/2017 >>> to 22/5/2017



67 | CROATIA



91 | ITALY



64 | CROATIA



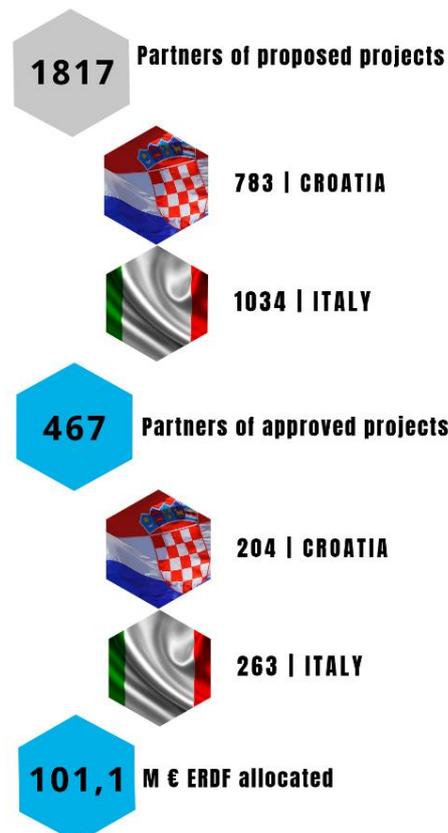
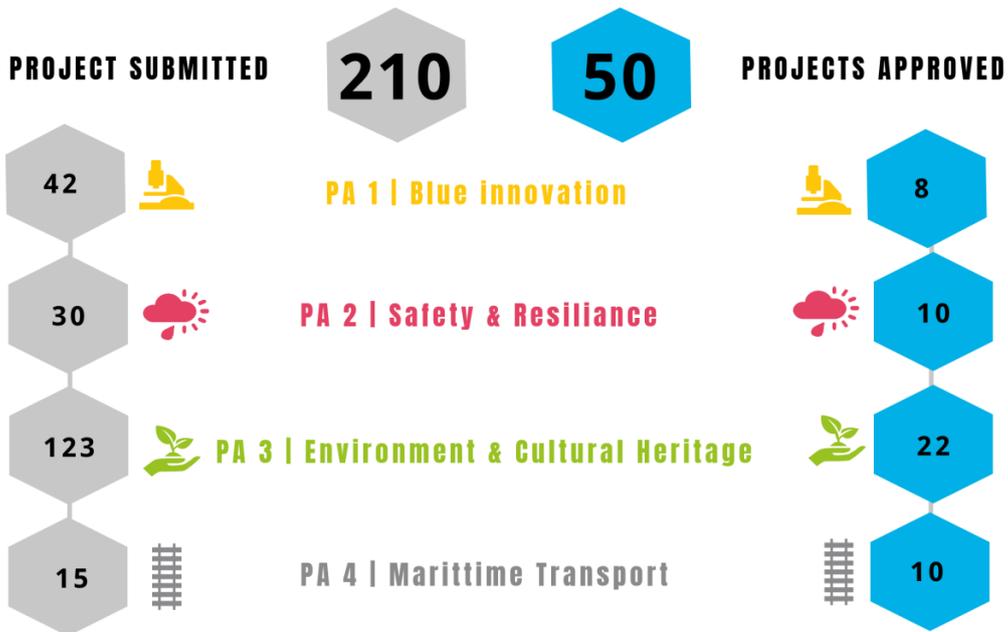
82 | ITALY



STANDARD CALL FOR PROPOSALS

CALL OPEN

from 21/4/2017 >>> to 4/7/2017



Considerations regarding the call for proposals

The results of the 1st Set of Calls for Proposals - that is to say the high number of proposals received, the wide participation of public and private organizations and the budget allocation - show the extent of the interest by the territory in the first CfPs and highlight the necessity to tackle common issues of the programme area through a cross-border approach that best meets the needs of the two maritime coasts; indeed the Italy-Croatia Programme brings together regions with common or similar challenges, which are not entirely eligible to participate in other transnational programmes. This helps to reduce significant regional disparities among areas which have the Adriatic Sea as their common denominator. A regional development focusing on territorial integration in topics such as business, tourism, blue innovation, safety and resilience, environment, cultural heritage and maritime transport allows for the advancement of the so-called maritime economy, a natural asset of the unique maritime environment of Italy's and Croatia's coastal regions. Cross-border cooperation programmes are, as a matter of fact, often the only platform for coastal regions to work together in these specific areas.

Furthermore, when it comes to macro-regional strategies, Italy-Croatia Programme is particularly aligned to the objectives of the EUSAIR Strategy, as it provides beneficiaries spanning an area of over 85.000 Km² inhabited by about 12,5 million people, with a chance to reinforce cooperation and trigger positive and concrete change.

Overview of the investment strategy and funded projects

Hereinafter an overview of the investment strategy of the Italy-Croatia CBC Programme and some examples of the projects funded under each Priority Axis, that meaningfully represent how maritime cross-border cooperation approach in these topics can be relevant for the development of the territory.



PA 1 - Blue innovation

The Programme aims at fostering more effective investments in research, innovation and education in order to enhance innovation in specific business niches (tourism, creative industries, fisheries and aquaculture) and consequently improve the SMEs competitiveness.

Investment in Blue Growth through integrated management and innovation in the fields of the blue economy is also promoted, as well as the need for skills development of human resources in innovative sectors (sustainable tourism, aquaculture, and shipbuilding, creative industries)

to meet SMEs' demand and contribute to strengthening the regional competitiveness.

SO 1.1 Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area. The main change envisaged under this S.O. is to increase the effectiveness of the innovation activities in these sectors by enhancing the transfer of knowledge between the enterprises, R&D centres, higher education and the public sector located in the cooperation area. A more profitable commercialization of the research results and a broader access to knowledge are also expected.

BLUTOURSYSTEM | Knowledge platform, skills and creative synergies for blue tourism ecosystem development. The project aims at identifying new tourism scenarios and to increase participants' skills and knowledge having multiplier effect on the tourism sector. By the means of BLUTOURSYSTEM platform setting up will be provided the advanced services and market intelligence to help decisional process, policies making and investments, while the living lab intends to act as a cross-border open space for networking, peers learning and training.

BEAT | Blue enhancement action for technology transfer

The project aims at creating the opportunities for knowledge transfer among enterprises and Universities for a formal establishment of the cross-border cluster. The project fosters the development of innovation solutions and cooperation among the innovation actors in the area by the means of developing cross-border cluster in blue technologies in shipbuilding sector.

BLUE KEP | Blue Knowledge Exchange Program and integration of education systems in the cross border area. The project aims at strengthening and harmonization of the technical educational system in the nautical and maritime sector and standardization of school curricula and methods for recognition of professional knowledge of students. The expected results are better prepared labour force and creation of new skills.



PA2 - Safety and resilience

Adriatic coastal area has vulnerable ecosystems that are very receptive to negative effects of the climate change (sea level rise, flooding, accelerated coastal erosion, subsidence, etc.). Therefore, joint measures are supported in order to raise awareness throughout the cross-border region, to promote protection and to implement adaptation measures. The Programme encourages the improvement of monitoring measures directed to the prevention of damages caused by natural disasters such as erosion, wild fires, droughts and floods and will address

the need for stronger efforts in preventing risks depending on the high concentration of human activities carried out in the Adriatic basin.

Specific Objective 2.1: Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area. This SO aims at improving the climate change monitoring and the planning of measures for strengthening the adaptation capacity of the region while increasing the resilience of the territory including its natural environment. A more integrated approach to climate change adaptation is promoted, particularly considering the added value given by cross-border cooperation.

iDEAL | DEcision support for Adaptation pLan. The project capitalizes one of the TERRE SEE project's results – Decision Supporting System for the climate adaptation plans in order to help the local authorities to manage the climate change-related problems. The project develops common and shared evaluation framework (indicators) from pilot areas that will see the actions implementation. New approaches and tools will be designed in order to foster long-term strategies and plans of adaptation to climate change.

Specific Objective 2.2: Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster

The SO 2.2 aims at improving the safety of the Programme area supporting the development of disaster management systems, furthering the capacity of recovery while minimizing damages (floods, fire, oil spill and other marine hazards). Focus is given to the untapped potentials in adopting CBC approach to stimulate the development of common tools and schemes for monitoring the risks and managing the emergencies.

READINESS | Resilience Enhancement of ADriatic basiN from firE and SeiSmic hazards. The project aims at mitigating the exposure of citizens to fire and seismic hazards, improving the joint emergency services response and implementation of innovative crisis management procedures. The raising awareness campaigns and the training pilot actions for the civil protection volunteers, citizens and school pupils will be put in place.

AdriaMORE | Adriatic DSS exploitation for MOnitoring and Risk management of coastal Extreme weather and flooding. The project aims to improve the existing platform integrated hydro-meteorological risk management of the cross-border coastal areas. The project fosters the exchange of best practices of institutional governances and provides support to maritime navigation, air traffic control and urban water management authorities, whereas its outputs will be available to all citizens through the improved Decision Support Systems platform.



PA3 - Environment and cultural heritage

Due to its long-lasting traditions and dynamic history, the Programme area is very rich in cultural and environmental resources that require proper conservation. It is at the same time important to protect and further develop those resources in order to preserve its values and promote it for tourism. Since an important part of the Adriatic Sea is beyond national jurisdiction limitations, cross-border cooperation is necessary in order to ensure an efficient protection of marine biodiversity and to make a sustainable use of marine and coastal ecosystems and resources. The Programme enhances coordinated innovative methods in order to tackle anthropic polluting activities of the marine environment. It also addresses need for stronger efforts in developing and using innovative methods and technologies with a direct impact to the reduction of inflows of hazardous substances to the Adriatic basin.

SO 3.1 Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development. This SO aims at reaching a higher level of sustainable economic and territorial development by exploiting the potentials of the natural assets and cultural heritage while preserving them and increasing their value. Cooperation will also stimulate innovative initiatives (ICT, creative industries, smart tools, services for target group carrying special needs, etc.) that are able to generate added value in the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources of the entire territory.

USEFALL | Unesco Site Experience For All. The project aims at increasing accessibility of the UNESCO sites of Programme area in order to make cultural heritage a leverage of balanced and sustainable territorial development. The project approach is focused on: a harmonized management strategy for accessibility of cultural sites and strong coordinated marketing activities; definition of ICT based touristic products; educational services addressed to people with special needs and employees in touristic sector.

SO 3.2 Contribute to protect and restore biodiversity. This SO aims at strengthening an integrated environmental management and protection of ecosystems and the cooperation between public actors/managers of the protected areas in order to increase environmental benefits and to provide economic and employment opportunities. Interventions contribute to implementing the EU Biodiversity Strategy and reaching the 2020 biodiversity targets.

DORY | Capitalization actions for aDriatic marine enviroNment pRotection and ecosYstem based management. The project capitalizes the results of the IPA Adriatic ECOSEA project and

intends to promote the adoption of common management models for supporting sustainable fisheries and development of alternative spatial management measures. The pilot activities tests the innovative solutions for reducing the negative aquaculture ecological impact of the economic activities and to, on the other hand, enhance the biodiversity of fish habitats.

SO 3.3 Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches. The SO 3.3 aims at improving the quality of the water of the sea by using innovative technologies in waste management and treatment, as well as new integrated approaches in facing several problems, including the emerging issue of marine litter. The Programme supports more intensive and effective cooperation among various local stakeholders and managers responsible for sites/ activities potentially generating pollution. Knowledge and information exchanges on the use of new technologies for the collection, treatment and recycling of several type of waste is also supported as the improvement of conditions on one side of the border brings immediate benefits to the other side.

ML-REPAIR | REducing and Preventing, an integrated Approach to Marine Litter Management in the Adriatic Sea. The project aims at strengthening joint governance on marine litter management and developing of solutions among different entities for reducing and preventing marine pollution. The main project activities are focused on testing new educational tools for raising awareness of tourists in the coastal areas and for supporting the strategies for monitoring the marine litter in participative approach of the fishermen community.



PA4 - Maritime transport

The Programme aims at improving the accessibility of the area by better data sharing and coordination, therefore it helps to reinforce the ICT application for making open and easier the access to transport info and implement all the intermodal opportunities for the passengers mobility, while investing on ICT management for all freight transport activities. It also addresses a strong need to reduce the environmental impact of transport activities by increasing multimodality and shift to most appropriate environmental friendly modes of transport.

SO 4.1 Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area. The SO 4.1 aims at improving the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services. In order to achieve this change, the programme supports actions developing new traffic modalities directed towards the use of vessels using compatible energy sources (such as methane), the adoption of ICT systems to perform embarking and disembarking of passengers in vessel traffic management and implementation of e-ticket (electronic ticketing) systems and electronic traffic management to ensure a more efficient development of traffic in the area. Efforts for enhancing the quality and the environmental sustainability of services and node will contribute to a reduction of the CO2 emissions for transport.

MOSES | Maritime and multimodal transport Services based on Ea Sea-way project. The project aim is to enhance the accessibility and mobility of passengers in the Adriatic area through the development of new cross-border sustainable and integrated transport services and the improvement of related infrastructures.

ECOMOBILITY | ECOlogical supporting for traffic Management in cOastal areas By using an InteLLigenT sYstem. The project fosters the innovative traffic management system in the coastal areas by collecting the environmental data from monitoring stations located around the cities and streaming the information to traffic management bodies in real time. The activities focuses on raising the knowledge about the shipping impact on the air quality and producing tools to be used in the cross-border area.

STEP-UP | Sustainable Transport E-Planner to Upgrade the IT-HR mobility. The project uses the information technologies and applications to foster the multimodal passenger mobility and identifies best practices to reduce common technical and organizational problems. The project foresees 6 pilot activities that will test the implementation of the new services promoted into the mobility platform for a benefit of both - citizens and tourists - in terms of easier travel planning concerning urban, interurban and cross-border level.

4. OUTSTANDING CHALLENGES

Notwithstanding the high participation of the territory in the 1st Call for Proposals, some additional considerations especially on the challenges still to be faced, must be included. As a matter of fact, there are still areas with potential of cooperation that have not been fully reached and opportunities that need to be further exploited in the future. This emerged also from a gap analysis carried out by the Programme bodies during an internal evaluation of its performance.

In particular the analysis highlighted that, on one hand, the interest of the territory clearly focused on some priority axis - such as PA1 and PA3 -, which was reflected in terms of a significant number of proposals submitted and participating organizations in the “Standard+” and “Standard” CfPs. Therefore some of the related performance indicators have already been achieved. On the other hand, however, there are some other priority axes – such as PA2 and PA4 - that have captured the interest of the actors to a lesser extent, and thus the milestones of the indicators related to these PAs will not be reached in 2019 only with the contribution of the funded projects. As a consequence, the Programme Monitoring Committee has decided to launch a call for strategic projects with a top-down approach, that will respond more appropriately to the needs of that priority axis.

The results of this internal evaluation and of the gap analysis should be useful also in order to identify possible areas or common challenges where cooperation should be developed in the future programming period.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a consequence of the above reflections, due consideration shall be given to the cross-border/bilateral maritime dimension within the debate concerning the post 2020 ETC programmes. In fact, the outcomes of the maritime CBC lead to the evidence that the cross-border dimension of territorial cooperation can contribute to better tackle some specific maritime issues and challenges. It comes out that, under certain conditions such as those occurring in the Adriatic sea, a 2- or few-countries cooperation approach can be far more effective than a transnational one, also in case of maritime borders.

As highlighted in the previous paragraphs, there are indeed specific obstacles and issues that can be tackled effectively only in a bilateral maritime dimension, such as:

- accessibility of the territories (e.g. in case of isles);
- improving the monitoring and management of the unique and shared marine environment;

- management of man-made and natural maritime risk affecting sea and coastal areas;
- overcome the obstacles of the maritime border for taking common advantage of the blue and green growth opportunities;
- strengthening of the common cultural roots of the cross-border maritime areas;
- facing serious dangers associated with climate change having a strong impact on maritime and coastal areas (i.e. coastal erosion, floods or fire);
- risks associated with port areas (water and air quality, noise emissions, use of nautical fuel with a serious impact on the environment);
- maritime safety of passengers and cargo within delimited areas which are vulnerable ecologically;
- joint management of water and marine environment and protected species;
- economic development of CBC territories through the enhancement of the bilateral economic interdependence, in favour of the SMEs' market, with particular reference to the blue economy.

Joint solutions may be only effectively developed if cooperation is promoted and specifically financed through cross-border maritime cooperation. Therefore, the added value of cross-border maritime cooperation needs to be acknowledged as a key aspect for European Territorial Cooperation 2021 – 2027, as well as continuity of the financial allocation needs to be ensured.

The effectiveness of the joint solutions to overcome obstacles for maritime cooperation may only be reached in the definition of geographic cooperation areas, which take also stock of current successful cooperation networks, as well as of social, economic, cultural and environmental interconnections of the cross-border functional areas. Therefore, the future geography of European Territorial Cooperation, and thus of the future Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme, shall be based on objective relevance of joint obstacles/challenges and cooperation opportunities of a cross-border area, rather than artificial criteria such as the distance of the coastlines.