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INTERREG ITALY-CROATIA PROGRAMME 2021 – 2027

Annex 1 to the Call announcement “Thematic Descriptive Sheets”

2nd Call for Proposals

(Version 1.0 – 17th of September 2024)

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a. INTRODUCTION

This document provides a framework for the 6 Operations of Strategic Importance (OSI) themes outlined in the Call announcement identified through an institutional top-down approach. For each OSI theme, the document identifies the type of activities, the contribution to the output indicators and the expected results related to the OSIs. The document also describes how the cross-border dimension should be taken into account, the synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies and the contribution to horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 CPR (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, sustainable development).

This document then describes in detail the technical requirements that the OSI shall fulfil in order to be funded by the Programme under this Call. For each OSI theme, the following contents have been defined, which constitute a guiding reference point for the preparation of the proposals:

a. OSI theme description

Framework description of the OSI theme.

b. Objectives

Overall goal related to the selected theme within the Specific Objective of the Cooperation Programme.

c. Type of activities

List of type of activities that the beneficiary has to carry out within the project.

d. Contribution to output indicators

Outputs indicators to be fed by the project.

e. Expected results

Results to be produced by the activities of the project.

f. Cross-border dimension

Describes how the cross-border approach has to be translated into project activities.

g. Synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies

Describes the adherence with EUSAIR's relevant pillars and other European policies that are relevant for the topic.

h. Contribution to horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 CPR (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, sustainable development)

Describes the expected positive results in terms of contribution to Article 9 CPR.



b. OSI THEMES DESCRIPTION

The work carried out by a dedicated Working Group (WG), set up by the Monitoring Committee of the Programme, during the preparatory phase in 2022-2023 led to the identification of the following OSI themes:

| Priority | Specific Objective | OSI themes |
|--|---|---|
| Priority 1 - Sustainable growth in the blue economy | 1.1 Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies | 1.1 SMEs-Research Cooperation for innovation, supporting SMEs in bringing new products & services to the market |
| | 1.2 Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship | 1.2 SMEs cooperation & capacity-building for innovative processes & solutions |
| Priority 2 - Green and resilient shared environment | 2.1 Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system-based approaches | 2.1.1 Mitigation of climate change risks, through monitoring & planning |
| | 2.2 Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution | 2.2.1 Biodiversity protection, through innovative monitoring & management solutions |
| Priority 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 | 3.1.1 Cross-Border Green & Smart port concept |
| Priority 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 | 4.1.1 Tourism diversification & delocalisation, valorising cultural & natural heritage |

These themes represent the main challenges identified during the implementation of the Programme. The OSI themes are in line with the Programme intervention logic and EUSAIR compliance; moreover, in order to define the OSI themes, the results of both strategic and standard projects from the 2014-2020 programming period, as well as indicators and targets set for the Programme, were considered.

In accordance with the institutional top-down approach that characterizes the OSI Calls for proposals, starting from the recognition of the strategic value for the cross-border area of the concerned themes, they were subsequently deepened in contents in collaboration with the OSI WG; this was done taking into account both the results of the previous programming period, previous calls and the governance of EUSAIR pillars.



c. CROSS CUTTING ELEMENTS

In coherence with what illustrated in the IP, the OSIs are expected to adhere to a set of cross-cutting elements that underpin the Programme's objectives. These elements are designed to ensure that funded actions align with the EU's core values and priorities.

This multifaceted approach is aimed at not only achieving short-term goals but also making a meaningful and lasting difference in various sectors while promoting transparency and public awareness.

- **Measures to mitigate the impact on the environment**

Sustainable development is a cornerstone of the projects to be funded under this Programme. Each OSI should incorporate a robust set of measures to minimize its impact on the environment at both the local and cross-border level, with the strict implementation of the DNSH principle. Projects should aim to reduce carbon and pollutant emissions, promote energy and resource efficiency, and minimize waste production. The use of eco-friendly technologies and sustainable materials should be prioritized. Additionally, projects should develop and adhere to clear environmental management plans, ensuring responsible and sustainable resource management and the preservation of local ecosystems.

- **Complementarities and synergies with other Programmes**

The OSI are expected to be in line with the Interreg Italy-Croatia 2021-2027 Programme's provisions foreseen within the paragraph "Complementarities and synergies with other programmes and macro-regional strategies".

Furthermore, to enhance the efficiency of funding mechanisms and to maximise the impact of the actions funded under this Call, the OSI should strive for strategic coordination with other funding sources (ERDF, ESF+, EMFAFM, CF as well as direct management programmes etc.), with specific regards to Interreg Programmes. OSI are invited to explore networking and collaboration with existing regional and national initiatives, aiming for a unified approach that aligns objectives and avoid overlapping of actions.

The complementarities with relevant programmes as well as the synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies are further defined in each SO's descriptive sheet.

- **Capitalisation**

While being consistent with the Programme Capitalisation Plan¹, OSI funded under this call should not only yield short-term results but also create lasting impacts in view of strengthening the re-use of results by enhancing accessibility and promoting the wider dissemination of generated knowledge. Capitalization strategies should be well-defined and executed, focusing on the sustainability and scalability of project outcomes, as well as the uptake of results into policies. Projects should also consider how they can continue to thrive after the initial funding period. Collaboration with cross-border, central and local institutions, such as universities and research centres, can be

¹ https://www.italy-croatia.eu/documents/555109/576296/Capitalisation_plan_Version_1.pdf/e78ee42b-7628-220c-69d6-36c78cdd88eb?t=1690202738145



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valuable in ensuring that project results endure and can serve as an opportunity to widen the actions' impact throughout the Programme area.

Furthermore, OSI should build on the results achieved in the previous 2014-2020 Italy-Croatia Programme or in projects financed by other EU instruments and initiatives. As a reference, the information contained in the platforms **www.keep.eu** and **smartcte.agenziacoesione.gov.it** may be used.

- **Digitalisation**

Digitalisation stands out as a significant overarching challenge that impacts on a multitude of fields and sectors. As such, it holds a position of utmost importance for the EU, in alignment with the EU's digital strategy spanning over the years 2019 to 2024. This importance is especially pronounced for Italy and Croatia, whose digital performance levels lag behind the EU average. Thus, actions that encourage digitalisation can bring an added value in relation to the challenges identified for each SO.

Furthermore, incorporating digitalisation into the activities is essential for improving efficiency and enhancing actions' outcomes. OSI should include clear plans for leveraging digital technologies to streamline processes, enhance data collection, analysis and sharing, and foster communication and collaboration among stakeholders while not leaving anyone behind. OSI should also address the digital literacy and skills development, ensuring that the benefits of digitalisation reach all stakeholders.

- **Communication**

An effective communication system is vital to ensure that OSI's accomplishments are widely disseminated and the project's reach is maximized.

Such system should be supported by a sound communication approach: OSI should develop comprehensive communication plans that include strategies for outreach to local and international communities, stakeholders, and the broader public. Communication activities should be appropriate to reach the relevant target groups, stakeholders and wider audience.

The use of various communication channels, including social media and website, is essential to raise awareness about activities and results. Clear and accessible reporting mechanisms should be established to share progress and outcomes with the Programme and the public.

In line with the toolbox² for communicating OSI in 2021-2027, to ensure higher visibility and in compliance with art. 36 of Interreg Reg. (EU) 2021/1059, the OSIs are required to organise a communication event involving the EU Commission and the Managing Authority.

² https://strukturnifondovi.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022_Toolbox-for-communicating-Operations-of-Strategic-Importance-OSI.pdf



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Priority 1. Sustainable growth in the blue economy

Specific Objective 1.1 Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

a. Theme description

Blue economy encompasses industries and sectors based directly on the marine environment (e.g. shipping, seafood, energy generation) or on land (e.g. ports, shipyards, coastal infrastructures). Innovation activities and technology advancement address a wide set of aspects related to processes, products and services. As reaffirmed in various recent EU documents, **cross-cutting challenges of the vast Blue economy area are energy and green transition and climate impact on sea and coastal activities**, as well as the need to maintain high attention on environmental conservation. The European vision for the Blue economy is sustainable, green, resilient and circular, and contributes to the mitigation of climate change consequences, while stressing the importance of investing in research, skills enhancement and innovation. The main claim revolves around the necessity for all sectors of the Blue economy, such as including fisheries, aquaculture, coastal tourism, maritime transport, port activities and shipbuilding, to significantly reduce their environmental and climate impact. Some of the ambitious goals highlighted are: Switch to a circular economy and pollution reduction, Preservation of biodiversity and investment in nature, Support to climate adaptation and coastal resilience, Ensuring sustainable food production, Improvement of management of space at sea (*EU Blue economy report, 2023, European Green Deal: Developing a sustainable blue economy in the European Union, 2021, European Green Deal and the European Recovery Strategy - Next Generation EU 2021, Repower EU Plan, 2022*).

With the increasing importance of cross-cutting challenges, particularly sustainability in all its facets, the research and innovation (R&I) effort goes beyond the goal of enhancing competitiveness, while the cooperation (particularly the cross-border cooperation) addresses environmentally responsible and energy-efficient growth for the knowledge and economic systems and the communities addressed by the Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme.

Within the broad thematic scope of sustainable growth in the Blue economy, several research and technology domains, as well as innovation processes, can be activated through cross-border cooperation, with the aim to facilitate the access to research results and the adoption of innovative solutions for those economic actors who are still in need for progress and adaptation to new challenges. Small- and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) active in the Blue economy domains still have potential for improving their ability to adapt to the current economic and environmental challenges. Research-business cooperation and cross-border cooperation processes have been identified as pivotal means for enhancing research capacities and access to research results, promoting technology transfer processes, increasing the number of young researchers involved in economic activities, assisting companies to introduce product and service innovation as well as innovation in processes (for instance process, organisational, marketing, co-creation, user and demand driven innovation).

In order to reach a larger number of SMEs in the Programme area and support them in addressing the current and expected common challenges of the Blue economy, the cornerstone of the OSI for SO 1.1 and SO 1.2 shall be the implementation of an **SMEs aid scheme**, by following a model that foresees calls for proposals addressed to SMEs and start-ups. As affirmed by The Territorial and Socio-Economic Analysis (TSEA), SMEs face significant challenges



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in accessing public financial resources for participating in R&I activities and increasing collaborative practices. A twofold challenge can be recognized: a. selecting knowledge and innovation sources, and collecting all elements to make an informed decision to fully embrace an innovation process; and b. managing the administrative and bureaucratic burden associated with participating in research and innovation processes. The proposed scheme allocates large part of the burden to key actors which will customize innovation service provision to be delivered to SMEs within cross-border cooperation processes.

Through schemes such as grants and vouchers, under the framework conditions defined in the **Annex 2 to the Call announcement – Guidance on Aid Schemes for Priority 1**, the **aid scheme** is expected to fund SMEs projects that promote cross-border cooperation and that foresee the support innovation in Blue economy domains, with specific regards to the ones aimed at increasing sustainability, generating growth in terms of job creation, production of value, with the adoption of an environmentally sustainable approach. The scheme shall be implemented by key actors (LP and PPs) who are entrusted with the management of the financial scheme, of which SMEs are the final indirect beneficiaries.

The selected OSI shall support SMEs in cross-border cooperation in blue economy for growth through research and innovation, technology transfer, development of new ideas for projects and services both with SMEs and micro enterprises, and in start-ups (both/all located in the Programme area, see below), development of skills for innovation and internationalisation management as well as skills for developing circular economy and digitalisation, integration of researchers in the economic activities. The aid scheme calls shall focus on actions supporting innovation in Blue economy activities, especially the ones increasing sustainability, respect of the environment, that exploit the potential in terms of growth (job creation, start-ups, production of value added in new products and services), providing support to business cooperation (including small and micro firms and medium ones) and minimising the bureaucratic burden for the identification of feasible and promising innovation paths and access to knowledge, technology, services via easy-to-use tools (e.g. vouchers). The OSI partnership should assist and take care of both selection of the financing tool and the recording of expenditures.

As detailed in the next section, the two SOs under Priority 1 have some objectives in common. Some of the objectives can be addressed with similar type of activities, while others are SO-specific both in terms of type and intensity.

The following chapters are divided in two parts, each referring explicitly to one of the two SOs, SO 1.1 or SO 1.2. one OSI is foreseen for SO 1.1, and one OSI for SO 1.2.

b. Objectives

SO 1.1 - Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

The aim of this SO is to facilitate SMEs involvement in cross-border innovation activities, to generate **growth, new jobs, support to sustainability and green transition, supporting SMEs in bringing new products and services to the market**, taking up mature research and innovation, technology transfer and young researchers' practical involvement in business in the Blue economy areas.



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The foreseen SME aid scheme, to be implemented under the two selected OSI is expected to reach enterprises through the provision of innovation services targeted to the identified challenges and opportunities, while also fostering the participation of SMEs in cross-border innovation cooperation projects.

The OSI 1.1 project proposal shall contribute to the achievement of all following specific objectives:

1. Strengthen innovation capacities and improve access to mature research results, while promoting technology transfer processes, and **supporting SMEs in bringing** new products and services to the market, reducing the administrative burden for SMEs participating in research and innovation processes.
2. Facilitate the engagement of **young researchers** in direct involvement with business activities, including both existing enterprises and start-ups.

The spectrum of activities that project applicants can propose is intentionally not limited. However, specific attention will be given to activities oriented to increasing sustainability of activities in terms of energy efficiency, environmental impact, waste management, and those activities generating job creation, researcher employment, generation of start-ups. Funded SMEs projects are expected to guide synergy of innovation efforts to respond to the current top challenges of the Programme area and its economic system.

The OSI 1.1. shall include a grant scheme, as specified in the aid scheme guidance.

c. Type of activities

Type of activities and examples of activities for the benefit of SMEs, outside the grant scheme

To better understand the type of activities expected by OSI partners for the benefit of SMEs, these illustrative and indicative examples of activities are proposed:

1. Partnership building: Activities to build up SMEs partnership such as e.g. B2B events, fairs, specialised meetings, online tools, etc.
2. Awareness raising: Activities to increase SMEs awareness on specific topics, such as e.g. conferences, promotional campaigns, specialised meetings, targeted advice, etc.
3. Coaching: Activities to increase SMEs capacity, such as e.g. targeted trainings, advice, workshops, etc.

Grants to SMEs partnerships aimed at developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

To better understand the type of projects expected by SMEs partnerships, these illustrative and not exhaustive examples of activities are proposed, financed with grants to SMEs:

1. Joint Product Innovation Project: E.g. An SME specialized in sustainable packaging materials partners with an SME from the other country, which markets fishery products, to develop and use innovative eco-friendly



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packaging solutions, with the support of young researchers. Together, they want to bring to the market new packaging designs and materials.

2. Shared Research and Development Initiative: E.g. three SMEs, two from one country and one from the other, join forces to conduct a collaborative research and development project in the renewable tidal energy. Building on the results of the applied research, SMEs design and prototype innovative tidal energy solutions tailored to the needs of both markets.
3. Cross-border data analytics platform: E.g. two SMEs, one from one country specializing in data analytics software and another from the other country with expertise in marine species monitoring, collaborate on the basis of applied research results, to develop a cross-border data analytics platform, which may be marketed in both countries fishery sectors.
4. SMEs cooperation with universities: Joint project between two SMEs specializing in marine renewable energy building up on research results in marine biology. Young researchers could participate through internships or project-based work.
5. Risk mitigation: SMEs check the applicability of recently developed methods for facing higher temperature in sea-related activity, and related increase of side effects, e.g. algae, blue crab, migration of some fish, lower reproduction of some other fish.
6. Sea monitoring: SMEs apply sensors and measurement of production conditions, for increasing sustainability of current activities in the blue sphere.
7. Technology assessment: SMEs explore the availability of technology solutions developed by strategic and standard projects and identified as relevant for the blue economy by Clusters and innovation agencies.
8. Wastewater management: SMEs test technologies for the revalorisation of waste and reuse of wastewater.
9. Innovation networking: SMEs network with Clusters and innovation agencies to increase application of sustainable solutions in the Blue sector.
10. Innovative risk management: SMEs elaborate methods for facing higher temperature in sea and sea-related activity, and increase of side effects, e.g. algae, blue crab, migration of some fish, lower reproduction of some other fish.
11. Litter management applied research transfer: SMEs develop the applicability of research results such as: “Fostering knowledge transfer to tackle marine litter in the Med by integrating EbA into ICZM” (Plastic Busters CAP).
12. Energy saving measures: SMEs applies systematic application of energy saving sensors and systems in the relevant blue economy activities in the sea and at the coast.
13. Energy saving in boats and marinas: SMEs upgrade to electric propulsion of boats and energy supply of marinas.
14. Sea monitoring in ports: SMEs use monitoring services for temperature checking, and consequent related changes in the sea docks and ship, including risk assessment and users involvement.
15. Regulatory framework analysis: SMEs cooperates to analyse regulatory constraints or standards regimes in the Blue economy.
16. Blue biotechnology: SMEs apply innovative blue technology for the valorisation of by-products with the extraction of bioactive substances.
17. Litter recycling measures: SMEs apply innovative techniques for recycling and reuse of marine litter, new materials for manufacture from marine litter.
18. Coastal activities innovation: SMEs apply sustainable solutions in ship& yacht and coastal activities.
19. Technology demonstration: SMEs test and apply prototype demonstration in operational environment in relevant environment and systems, developed by research centres.
20. Biotech Testing, Biotech SMEs test eco- and blue technology pilot developments.



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21. Bio-power: SMEs apply pilot application of bio-power for generating both energy, materials and biochar to be used as high value added improver in crops and CO2 capturer.
22. H2 and shipping: SMEs test pilot applications of H2 in shipping.
23. Knowledge transfer: SMEs share and increase their competences, with demonstration and adoption of new digital, energy and environmental solutions in Blue sectors.

d. Contribution to output and result indicators

These tables provide the **expected target values**, the project proposal should strive for, which is calculated on the basis of the assumptions and methodology for indicators, set up during programming:

| Output RCO no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 01 Enterprises supported (no.) | 20 |
| 02 Enterprises supported by grants (no.) | 20 |
| 07 Research organisations participating in joint research projects (no.) | 2 |
| 81 Participations in joint actions (no.) | 30 |

| Result RCR no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 03 Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) introducing product or process innovation (no.) | 8 |
| 85 Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion (no.) | 9 |

Example of project intervention logic

This is an indicative and illustrative example of project intervention logic, which shall be entered into **section C.4.1** of the Application Form, aiming at clarifying the logical links between the project and the programme indicators:

| Work package | 1 Green packaging | 2 Research in blue technologies |
|--|---|---|
| Project specific objective examples | To bring to the market sustainable packaging materials for fishery products | To implement joint pilot activities in marine renewable energy building up on research results in marine biology, with the involvement of young researchers |
| Activity description examples | <p>2 B2Bs to raise awareness, inform and build-up SMEs partnerships, in which 100 SMEs participate</p> <p>1 call for SMEs projects</p> <p>20 Grant-projects to SMEs, including SMEs activities to design, test and use innovative eco-friendly packaging in fishery products, involvement of your researchers, innovative</p> | <p>2 SMEs fairs to raise awareness, inform and build-up SMEs partnerships, in which 300 SMEs participate</p> <p>1 call for SMEs projects</p> <p>20 Grants for SMEs for testing new green technological products and services to be brought to the marine bio-technologies market, including design of green products through laboratory activities, testing and production protocols development,</p> |



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| | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| | devices in the SMEs’ production lines for applying the sustainable packaging 1 joint project promotional campaign | | application of these products and laboratory activities for SMEs staff, involving 40 employees of the SMEs each and researchers from 3 universities 2 Joint project conferences | |
| Deliverables description examples | 1 set of B2Bs documentation 2 signature lists for B2Bs 1 call for SMEs projects 20 reports describing the grant-projects results 2 press releases | | 1 set of SMEs fair documentation 2 signature lists for the fairs 1 call for SMEs projects 20 reports describing the grant-projects results 2 conferences material packages | |
| Outputs (example of project & programme indicators) | - SMEs participating in SMEs support and grant activities no. 20* - SMEs receiving grants no. 20* | - RCO 01 no. 20 - RCO 02 no. 20 | - Universities and research centres involved in the tests and laboratory activities no.2* - SMEs employees involved in the joint laboratory activities no. 30* | - RCO 07 no. 2 - RCO 81 no. 30 |
| Results (example of project & programme indicators) | SMEs introducing innovation processes after the project end no. 8 | RCR 03 no. 8 | Employees who are involved in joint SMEs laboratory activities after project completion no. 9 | RCR 85 no. 9 |
| Management activities description | | | | |
| Set-up of grant management team, SMEs call and selection, monitoring /controlling of SMEs | | | | |

* Please note: Not necessarily the no. of project outputs exactly matches with the no. of project activities, which may be higher, as not all activities may effectively achieve a project output.

e. Expected results

1. Improved performances related to applied research and technological transfer, through innovation practices and cooperation among quadruple helix actors, in Blue Economy domains
2. Improved performances related to applied research and technological transfer, through new partnerships and sustainable practices developed between research institutions, SMEs and among quadruple helix actors
3. Improved performances related to applied research and technological transfer, through innovative services in Blue Economy domain, geared towards enhancing environmental responsibility and economic viability
4. Increased number of researchers employed in the private sector and STEM PhD students
5. Improved performances related to applied research and technological transfer also through a stronger collaboration among quadruple helix actors, through the SMEs facility



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f. Cross-border dimension

Cross-border dimension for SO 1.1

The cross-border approach of the OSI projects is of extreme importance and it is therefore to be taken into account during the project construction. Since the Programme is addressing common challenges of the cross-border area, all project proposals should be jointly developed and implemented by the partners. With particular reference to the SO considered here, cross-border cooperation operates at three distinct levels, each contributing to the overarching goal of enhancing innovation, sustainability, and economic growth in the cross-border region. The cross-border effect arises from the partnership structure, contributing to the programme area development and strengthening collaboration between companies, service providers, and local businesses.

1. **Partnership Level:** The cross-border dimension is embedded at the partnership level through the active participation of partners from both Italy and Croatia within each project consortium. This collaborative approach ensures that the OSI benefit from a wealth of knowledge and expertise from both Countries, promoting a more comprehensive and holistic perspective on innovation and sustainability challenges.
2. **SMEs project Level:** The cross-border dimension extends to the SMEs project level, where SMEs from both Italy and Croatia join forces to submit joint SMEs project proposals. This approach fosters complementarity and cooperation among businesses from different sides of the border, allowing them to leverage their unique strengths and resources to address common challenges effectively. Such collaboration, from the selection to the implementation of shared activities under the guidance of the key actors, enhances the programme area overall innovation landscape and competitiveness.
3. **Service Level:** Another crucial aspect of the cross-border dimension is the grant scheme and services provided by selected international providers. These services are tailored to meet the specific needs of SMEs in the Italy-Croatia programme area, ensuring that cross-border cooperation extends to the practical support and resources available to businesses.

This comprehensive approach, involving various innovation actors, creates synergy among stakeholders on both sides of the border and enhances the cross-border dimension of the initiatives. It builds on a rich history of cross-border research collaboration to bridge the gap between research knowledge, technology solutions, and those who benefit from them, i.e. the innovation system actors.

g. Synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies

As the synergies with EUSAIR are concerned, the Programme's SOs 1.1 and 1.2 should contribute to Pillar 1 (Blue growth) of EUSAIR.

In particular, the two EUSAIR flagship with which to coordinate most within the Blue growth priority are:

- Fostering quadruple helix ties in the fields of marine technologies and blue bio-technologies for advancing innovation, business development and business adaptation in blue bio-economy, with the overall goal of strengthening quadruple helix ties in the field of blue technologies.
- Bolstering capacity building and efficient coordination of planning and local development activities for improving marine and maritime governance and blue growth services (with specific regard to actions concerning maritime professional skills) with the overall goal of enabling the growth of activities for improving marine and maritime governance and blue growth services, in order to make better use of the skills that are available and to equip people with new skills (including soft skills) that are needed.



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In addition, the projects shall also contribute to other European policies, such as the **European policy framework for Blue economy** set in place to achieve the **European Green Deal**. The agenda of the EU's new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU identifies the following goals:

- ✓ Achieve the objectives of climate neutrality and zero pollution,
- ✓ Switch to a circular economy and prevent waste,
- ✓ Preserve biodiversity and invest in nature,
- ✓ Support climate adaptation and coastal resilience,
- ✓ Ensure sustainable food production.

h. Contribution to horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, sustainable developments)

The activities carried out by the project must absolutely respect the horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR. The impacts must be at least at the level of neutrality if it is not possible to ensure positive impacts.

Therefore, the OSI should ensure the adoption of a “*no one left behind*” approach, prioritizing equity at all stages of the design of strategies and action plans, by ensuring a meaningful engagement of vulnerable groups at territorial scale. The operations should promote gender equality by ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men in all aspects of the project. This includes equal participation in project leadership, employment opportunities, and access to benefits and resources. It should also consider the specific needs and challenges faced by women in the sectors related to Blue economy.

Further, the objectives relate directly to SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production). The different activities are envisioned to strive for innovation and SMEs practices and on the long term contribute to all 17 goals.



Priority 1. Sustainable growth in the blue economy

Specific objective 1.2 Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship

a. Theme description

See theme description for the specific objective 1.1.

b. Objectives**SO 1.2 - Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship.**

The aim of this SO is to facilitate SME involvement in cross-border cooperation with the aim to enhance the adoption of innovative processes, solutions, technology and applied research in the SME operations as well as of internationalisation, for generating **growth, new jobs, support to sustainability and green transition**.

The foreseen SME aid scheme, to be implemented by the selected OSI is expected to reach enterprises, fostering the ability of SMEs to participate in cross-border innovation cooperation activities aimed at reinforcing the transformation and digitalisation skills of SMEs and their networks and enhancing their capability to reach new countries and serve a wider range of markets.

The project proposals shall contribute to the achievement of all following specific objectives:

1. Enhance **SMEs collaboration practices**, supporting their innovation efforts in competitive domains, including internationalization.
2. Strengthen **SMEs capabilities** to adapt to transformative changes, while fostering the adoption of innovative processes, solutions, technology and applied research in the SME operations

The spectrum of activities that project applicants can propose is intentionally not limited. However, specific attention will be given to activities oriented to increasing the capabilities of SMEs in actively participating in cross-border cooperation actions aimed at facing the critical challenges in the Blue economy domain and at increasing the attractiveness of Italy-Croatia business and its internationalisation. Funded SMEs projects are expected to guide synergy in experiencing innovation efforts to respond to the current top challenges of the Programme area and its economic system.

The OSI 1.2. shall include voucher schemes, as specified in the aid scheme guidance.



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c. Type of activities

Type of activities and examples of activities for the benefit of SMEs, outside the voucher scheme

To better understand the type of activities expected by OSI partners for the benefit of SMEs, these illustrative and indicative examples of activities are proposed:

1. Partnership building: Activities to build up SMEs partnership such as e.g. B2B events, fairs, specialised meetings, online tools, etc.
2. Awareness raising: Activities to increase SMEs awareness on specific topics, such as e.g. conferences, promotional campaigns, specialised meetings, targeted advice, etc.
3. Coaching: Activities to increase SMEs capacity, such as e.g. targeted trainings, advice, workshops, etc.

Vouchers to SMEs to develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship

To better understand the type of services requested by SME partnerships, these illustrative and not exhaustive examples of activities are proposed, to be financed through vouchers to SMEs:

1. Strategic partnerships and internationalization capacity in blue economy sectors: Two aquaculture SMEs in Italy and Croatia establish a strategic partnership to improve their knowledge and capacity to take new market opportunities through networking and trade missions. Innovation providers facilitate international trade missions, fairs and networking events, and vouchers are provided to cover expenses associated with participating in these events. Both aquaculture SMEs receive services from provider “A” to participate in organised trade missions to key international fishery markets, engaging in B2B meetings and networking sessions. Both SMEs receive services from the provider “B” to attend international fishery fairs and exhibitions. One SMEs receives services from provider “C” to identify and establish strategic partnerships with international fishery firms, fostering long-term business relationships.
2. E-commerce platforms in blue economy sectors: A group of maritime freight transport SMEs in Italy and Croatia seek to expand their sales channels through an increased knowledge and use of e-commerce opportunities and through the set-up of cross-border e-commerce platforms for maritime freight transports. SMEs receive services from provider “A” for establishing an e-commerce platforms capable of handling and optimising vessels loads and the sales of transport services and to train the SMEs staff to develop, maintain and use these. SMEs receive services from provider “B” to integrate secure and efficient payment gateways for international transactions and to train SMEs staff. SMEs receive services from provider “C” to streamline their logistics and supply chain processes and to train the SMEs staff, ensuring timely service delivery and customer satisfaction.
3. Digital upgrading in blue economy sectors: A group of SMEs tour operators specialized in green and blue tourism in Italy and Croatia seek to enhance their digital capabilities to improve operational efficiency and online customer engagement. To this end, vouchers are provided to cover the costs of digital transformation services from a catalogue of innovation providers. E.g. SMEs receive services from a provider “A” to migrate their customers’ and suppliers’ data to cloud platforms, enhancing scalability and access to advanced computing resources, and to train the SMEs staff to use the platforms. SMEs receive services from Provider “B” to develop e-commerce websites and implement digital marketing strategies to reach a broader audience and train SMEs staff to use and maintain these. SMEs receive services from Provider “C” to establish cybersecurity measures, ensuring data protection and compliance with regulations and to train SMEs staff on cyber-security.



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4. **Innovative manufacturing processes in blue economy sectors:** Two SMEs specialized in manufacturing innovative products deriving from processing sea algae in Italy and Croatia seek to modernize their manufacturing processes through the adoption of advanced manufacturing technologies. Vouchers are provided to SMEs to cover the cost of upgrading to advanced manufacturing solutions from selected innovation providers. One SME receives services from Provider “A” to integrate robotic systems into their production lines both in the collection and processing of algae, enhancing efficiency and precision and to train the SME staff to use it. One SMEs receive services from Provider “B” to implement IoT solutions through targeted Staff trainings, enabling real-time monitoring and optimization of manufacturing processes.
5. **Health & safety in blue economy sectors:** A group of Italian and Croatian SMEs delivering services in marinas of the area aim to improve workplace health and safety by adopting innovative health and safety technologies and procedures. Vouchers are provided to SMEs to cover the costs for adopting new health and safety technology solutions. SMEs receive services from Provider “A” to equip employees with devices that increase their health and safety, as well as necessary training. SMEs receive services from Provider “B” to install advanced water and energy supply systems in the concerned marinas, ensuring a safe work environment, while training staff in charge of the maintenance of these systems. SMEs receive services from Provider “C” to redesign workspaces and introduce safer equipment, reducing the risk of workplace injuries, while SMEs staff is trained on health and security at the workplace.
6. **Management skills in blue economy sectors:** Startups in Italy and Croatia specialized in biotechnologies used in the extraction of marine bioactive substances, intend to build their internal capabilities and skills through specialized training programs. Vouchers are provided to cover costs associated with training and capacity-building activities. Skill development: Training programs in areas such as leadership, management, and technical skills related to bio-technologies. Workshops and Seminars: Attending bio-technology workshops and seminars to stay updated on the latest trends and bio-technologies. Engaging in mentorship programs with experienced bio-technology professionals.

d. Contribution to output and result indicators

These tables provide the **expected target values**, the project proposal should strive for, which is calculated on the basis of the assumptions and methodology for indicators, set up during programming:

| Output RCO no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 01 Enterprises supported (no.) | 40 |
| 04 Enterprises with non- financial support (no.) | 40 |
| 07 Research organisations participating in joint research projects (no.) | 4 |
| 81 Participations in joint actions (no.) | 60 |
| 87 Organisations cooperating across borders (no.) | 18 |

| Result RCR no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 85 Participations in joint actions across borders after project completion (no.) | 18 |
| 84 Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion (no.) | 8 |



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Example of project intervention logic

This is an indicative and illustrative example of project intervention logic, which shall be entered into **section C.4.1** of the Application Form, aiming at clarifying the logical links between the project and the programme indicators:

| Work package | 1 Health and safety in the blue economy | | 2 Management skills in blue biotechnologies | |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Project specific objective examples | To improve workplace health and safety by adopting innovative health and safety technologies for employees of SMEs specialised in services in marinas | | To build start-ups' internal management capabilities and biotechnology skills through specialized training programs | |
| Activity description examples | 2 SMEs workshops to raise awareness, inform and build-up SMEs partnerships, in which 100 SMEs participate 1 call for SMEs partnerships receiving voucher services 40 Vouchers to SMEs, including services to adopt new health and safety technology solutions (equipment, devices, training etc.) 2 press releases to promote vouchers results | | 2 events for start-ups to raise awareness, inform and build-up start-ups partnerships, in which 80 SMEs participate 1 call for start-ups partnerships receiving voucher services 40 Vouchers to start-ups to train 100 employees in leadership, management and bio-technology skills incl. mentorships, conferences attendances, involving young researchers from 4 universities 2 project conferences to promote the training results | |
| Deliverables description examples | 2 registration lists for SMEs workshops 1 SMEs workshop set of documents 1 call for SMEs partnership 40 reports describing the results of the vouchers 2 press releases | | 2 registration lists for SMEs events 1 SMEs event set of documents 1 call for SMEs partnership 40 reports describing the results of the vouchers 1 sets of materials for the conferences | |
| Outputs (example of project & programme indicators) | - SMEs receiving vouchers no. 40* - Joint actions participations by SMEs employees no. 30* - Project partners in OSI 1.2 no. 18* | - RCO 01 no. 40 - RCO 81 no. 30 - RCO 87 no. 18 | - SMEs receiving vouchers no. 40* - Universities and research centres involving their young researchers in the vouchers no. 4* - Joint actions participations by SMEs employees no. 30* | - RCO 04 no. 40 -RCO 07 no. 4 - RCO 81 no. 30 |
| Results (example of project & programme indicators) | -Joint actions in which SMEs employees participate after project completion | - RCR 85 no. 9 - RCR 84 no. 8 | Joint actions in which SMEs employees participate after project completion | RCR 85 no. 9 |



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| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| | -Project partners cooperating after project completion | | | |
| Management activities description | | | | |
| Set-up of grant management team, SMEs call and selection, monitoring /controlling of SMEs | | | | |

** Please note: Not necessarily the no. of project outputs exactly matches with the no. of project activities, which may be higher, as not all activities may effectively achieve a project output.*

e. Expected results

1. to strengthened innovation capacities of SMEs, especially in Blue economy domains, through improved processes and products innovation
2. Increased internationalisation capacities of SMEs, especially in Blue economy domains, through new partnerships and sustainable practices developed with research institutions
3. Higher consistency of smart specialisation strategies, with a major focus on the maritime dimension and Blue Economy of the Programme area through innovative services, geared towards enhancing environmental responsibility and economic viability.
4. Higher preparedness of businesses for smart specialisation in terms of qualified human capital and appropriate entrepreneurial skills mainly in the Blue economy domains, thanks to the SMEs facility

f. Cross-border dimension

The cross-border approach of the OSI projects is of extreme importance and it is therefore to be taken into account during the project construction. Since the Programme is addressing common challenges of the cross-border area, all project proposals should be jointly developed and implemented by the partners. With particular reference to the SO considered here, cross-border cooperation operates at three distinct levels, each contributing to the overarching goal of enhancing innovation, sustainability, economic growth and internationalisation capabilities and potential in the cross-border region. The cross-border effect arises from our partnership structure and service catalogue, contributing to the programme area development and strengthening collaboration between companies, service providers, and local businesses.

1. **Partnership Level:** The cross-border dimension is embedded at the partnership level through the active participation of partners from both Italy and Croatia within each project consortium. This collaborative approach ensures that the OSI benefits from a wealth of knowledge and expertise from both Countries, promoting a more comprehensive and holistic perspective on innovation, internationalisation and sustainability challenges.
2. **SMEs project Level:** The cross-border dimension extends to the SMEs project level, where SMEs from both Italy and Croatia join forces to submit SMEs joint requests of vouchers from the service catalogue. This approach fosters complementarity and cooperation among businesses from different sides of the border, allowing them to leverage their unique strengths and resources to address common challenges effectively. Such collaboration, from the selection to the implementation of shared activities under the guidance of the key actors, enhances the region’s overall innovation landscape and competitiveness.



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3. **Service Level:** Another critical aspect of the cross-border dimension is the catalogue of innovative services provided by selected international providers. These services are tailored to meet the specific needs of SMEs in the Italy-Croatia Programme area, ensuring that cross-border cooperation extends to the practical support and resources available to businesses.

This comprehensive approach, involving various innovation actors, creates synergy among stakeholders on both sides of the border and enhances the cross-border dimension of the initiatives. It builds on a rich history of cross-border research collaboration to bridge the gap between research knowledge, technology solutions, and those who benefit from them, i.e. the innovation system actors.

g. Synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies

See synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies for the specific objective 1.1.

h. Contribution to horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, sustainable developments)

See contribution to horizontal principles for the specific objective 1.1.



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Priority 2. Green and resilient shared environment

Specific Objective 2.1. Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account ecosystem-based approaches

a. Theme description

SO 2.1 represents a cross-cutting issue, with a strong territorial dimension that implies the design of transversal adaptation and the improvement of risk prevention policies. According to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (DRR) as well as to the IPCC³ definition, the term “*risk*” is used when a hazardous event applies to humans or to ecosystems, articulating “*risk management strategies*” in terms of:

- ✓ Prevention;
- ✓ Protection for risk reduction;
- ✓ Preparedness, i.e. prediction, early warning, emergency planning;
- ✓ Response, i.e. physical reconstruction, social and individual recovery.

Referring to the Italy-Croatia Programme, according to the Territorial Analysis as well as e.g. to the ESPON reports “Territorial Cooperation for the future of Europe” (2017) and “State of the European Territory” (2019), the Mediterranean is becoming a “climate change hot spot” (MIT, 2020), with territorial impacts hitting different European biogeographical regions with droughts, salt wedge intrusion, floods, landslides and coastal erosion, changes in the ecosystems and in the food production chain, impacts on human settlements, e.g. lethal heat waves. Showing an increasing frequency and intensity, these risks are to be considered as a structural crisis factor, weakening economic development, social equity, ecosystems integrity.

The Italy-Croatia Programme area is experiencing a growing trend of negative climate change-related impacts, both in vulnerable marine and coastal areas and inland, where strategic urban, industrial and agri-food production systems are settled. At the same time, adaptation is still limited by insufficient knowledge of the potential impacts – strongly influenced by the dis-homogenous geographic conditions – and by policies, territorial planning capacities and Civil Protection still not being up to the scale of the challenge.

In particular, notwithstanding its strategic relevance for sustainability of human settlements and economic activities and although yet addressed by several projects during 2014-2020 programming period, scenarios about sustainable management of climate-related risks hitting inland surface/ground waters and coastal systems are still lacking full cross-border integration of data and information. This also determines negative effects on Civil Protection’s DRR actions. Knowledge improvement would thus facilitate territorial vulnerability assessment and the design of common adaptation strategies and targeted local action plans.

This calls for a Programme area-tailored implementation of the EU 2021 Climate Adaptation Strategy, pursuing knowledge improvement and uncertainty management (smarter adaptation) and topic-targeted sectoral policy development (systemic adaptation) to upgrade DRR capacity, from cross-border to local scale.

This is the concept framework for the ecosystem-based approach, i.e. the pursuit of a territorial management considering both the limits of the ecosystem, determining actual “sustainability” conditions, and the functionality of the “ecosystem services” provided (water, food, climate regulation, etc.), whose “resilience” vs. anthropogenic

³ The UN International Panel on Climate Change.



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stresses requires improvements according to social and inter-generational equity. This approach can rely upon the adoption of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)⁴, mainstreaming climate resilience in relevant policy fields (industry, agriculture, spatial planning, etc.).

b. Objectives

The goal of the OSI to be funded under the SO 2.1 is to improve knowledge on the management of territorial climate change-related impacts – including floods and droughts, salt wedge intrusion, inland and coastal storm-induced erosion risks, heat waves – through the collection of data and information upon a cross-border basis, in view to assess territorial vulnerabilities on strategic inland, coastal and marine assets, functional to modelling and implementing common adaptation strategies and locally tailored action plans, and to promote the growth of high-competence skills for a sustainable management of climate change-related impacts in coastal areas and rural and urban spaces, by scaling up ecosystem-based adaptation approaches and Nature-Based Solutions. To maximize impact at Italy-Croatia Programme scale, awareness-raising and targeted training activities as well as small scale investments of proved strategic relevance vs. the mentioned climate-related impact drivers⁵, are also needed to allow real improvement in all phases of the civil protection process, in the framework of the ecological transition of the cooperation area.

The project proposals shall contribute to the achievement of all following **specific objectives**:

1. To generate new knowledge about territorial impacts of climate change, also by sharing methods and approaches, that can support the development of integrated climate change-related multi-risk scenarios;
2. To assess economic, social and ecological vulnerabilities of Programme territories, also exchanging adaptation strategies and practices and tailored action plans able to cope with the risks addressed;
3. To improve institutional and social awareness as well as scientific and technical capacities in managing climate change impacts at Italy-Croatia scale;
4. To identify specific shared approaches and/or guidelines to mainstream integrated climate-adaptation solutions at sectoral and territorial policy scale.

c. Type of activities

To better understand the type of activities expected, these illustrative examples of activities are proposed:

1. Knowledge upgrade and integration about territorial climate-related impact scenarios in Italy and Croatia by increased cooperation among scientific research/technology innovation institutions and policy makers, with a special focus on flood/drought risks, salt wedge intrusion, coastal and inland erosion processes

⁴ The definition refers to techniques and/or technologies meeting output **standards** for a particular process such, as for the case, sustainable management of sediments fluxes. when considering those techniques/technologies, the assumptions is that they refer to the so-called *Nature-Based Solutions* at the best state of the art **technology** available. See also:

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/climate-change-adaptation-and-disaster>

<https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/nature-based-solutions-in-europe>

<https://www.undrr.org/words-action-nature-based-solutions-disaster-risk-reduction>

⁵ To be considered of “strategic relevance”, small scale investments will need to respect criteria of cross-border relevance, i.e. the capacity to address climate impact drivers of Italy-Croatia strategic relevance, replicable/transferable at territorial programme scale, avoiding initiatives of limited, local interest.



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(coastline erosion, landslides, rockfalls, etc.) towards the development of shared climate change management solutions for coastal, urban and rural spaces of the cooperation area.

2. Design of jointly developed cross-border strategies and of local action plans, including small-scale investments of proved strategic relevance for the Programme area, in view to address climate change-related risks threatening Italy-Croatia territorial systems, involving relevant stakeholders and the key national, regional and local policy actors.
3. Joint promotion of citizens’ awareness raising as well as of advanced training schemes targeting territorial planning and Civil Protection, PA professionals and practitioners, to create advanced culture and skills for responsible and wise management of climate change-related risks, in view of the need for new organizational, technological, management solutions implemented at Italy-Croatia scale.
4. Identification of territorial and sectoral policies and tools of common interest, sensitive to be improved in terms of capacity to support the actual implementation of a joint adaptation strategy and of locally tailored action plans;
5. Implementation of small-scale investments and pilot activities that, by addressing climate change adaptation at local level, provide replicable/transferable solutions, useful to substantiate adaptation strategies and plans at Italy-Croatia Programme area scale⁶.

d. Contribution to output and results indicators

These tables provide the **expected target values**, the project proposal should strive for, which is calculated on the basis of the assumptions and methodology for indicators, set up during programming:

| Output RCO no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed | 4 |
| 84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | 5 |
| 85 Participations in joint training scheme | 20 |
| 115 Public events across borders jointly organized | 1 |
| 116 Jointly developed solutions | 1 |

| Result RCR no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 79 Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations | 2 |
| 104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | 1 |
| 81 Completion of joint training schemes | 14 |

Example of project intervention logic

This is an indicative and illustrative example of project intervention logic, which shall be entered into **section C.4.1** of the Application Form, aiming at clarifying the logical links between the project and the programme indicators:

⁶ The purchase of any type of equipment shall be of demonstrated relevance for the design and implementation of the proposed small-scale investment / pilot activities.



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| Work package | 1 Climate change risks | | 2 Climate-adaptations policies | |
|--|---|---|---|---------------------------------|
| Project specific objective examples | To generate new knowledge about territorial impacts of climate change, also by sharing methods and approaches, that can support the development of integrated climate change-related multi-risk scenarios | | To identify specific shared approaches and/or guidelines to mainstream integrated climate-adaptation solutions at sectoral and territorial policy scale. | |
| Activity description examples | 6 joint mapping and gaps analyses* 2 joint trainings for 15 civil protection staff 2 joint promotional events 2 development of joint multi-risk scenarios | | 5 joint study visits in risk-prone areas* 8 meetings with mayors 1 joint sectoral conference 4 development of joint policy protocols | |
| Deliverables description examples | 6 joint mapping and gap analysis reports 1 report on joint training and registration lists 2 event documentation sets 1 joint paper on multi-risk scenarios | | 1 joint study visits report 8 press releases for the meetings with mayors 1 press releases for sectoral conference 4 joint policy protocol documents | |
| Outputs (example of project & programme indicators) | - Joint pilot mapping, gaps analysis no. 5 - Civil protection staff participating in joint training no. 20 - Joint multi-risk scenario paper no. 1 | - RCO 84 no.5 - RCO 85 no. 20 - RCO 116 no. 1 | -Joint policy strategies no. 4 - Joint conference no. 1 | -RCO 83 no. 4 -RCO 115 no. 1 |
| Results (example of project & programme indicators) | - Multi-risk scenario up-scaled by civil protections no. 1 - Completion of joint training for civil protection staff no. 14 | - RCR 104 no. 1 - RCR 81 no. 14 | - Joint policy strategies MoU signed by partners no. 2 | - RCR 79 no. 2 |
| Management activities description | | | | |
| Set-up of project management team, organization of project committee meetings, monitoring of activities and reporting, control | | | | |

* Please note: Not necessarily the no. of project outputs exactly matches with the no. of project activities, which may be higher, as not all activities may effectively achieve a project output.

e. Expected results

1. Promoting cooperation between public authorities, research institutions and private companies in order to take advantage of new scientific results and multidisciplinary research to improve observation of climate change effects and plan and define the related adaptation strategies in line with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with the **European Green Deal**, in particular through the development of regionally/locally-based scenarios on climate change-related risks, focusing on exposure and vulnerability of specific classes of citizens/social groups/economic sectors



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2. Studying and testing integrated climate-adaptation solutions for different domains/target groups of population and enhancing the definition of common datasets on atmospheric parameters for climate analysis and impact assessment or improving the usability of existing ones, in particular through systematized territorially-based, multi-scale approaches/governance solutions for DRR, e.g. methodological guidelines, protocols, management models, systems/tools for climate drivers monitoring/ interpretation
3. Exchanging good practices to monitor, manage, mitigate and support the adaptation to climate change effects on the most relevant economic sectors, through the identification of indicators addressing improved knowledge of water cycle characteristics and the ecological, economic and social impacts of extreme meteorological events
4. Reinforcing cooperation between local authorities and non-governmental organizations to define and apply integrated emergency/rescue plans and to develop mechanisms to report identified needs for equipment supplies to relevant authorities, while designing a common cross-border strategy and locally tailored action plans, including replicable/transferable small-scale investments, designed and implemented for climate change adaptation, according to the reference Nature-Based Solutions (NBS)
5. Promoting networking activities and exchanges in order to define common indicators and increase the usability of the existing database, especially among PA professionals and practitioners in territorial planning to exchange on updated knowledge about climate-change-related risks and to upgrade technical skills for managing the related impacts and implementing adaptation solutions
6. Developing training courses for policy makers and general service providers on relevant topics linked to climate change and its consequences in order to better design new policies and promoting workshops/seminars dealing with new sustainable and adaptive climate smart models, especially through the identification of territorial and sectoral policies sensitive to support the implementation of the joint strategy and the local action plans addressing critical social and economic sectors and the threatened ecosystems
7. Integrated cross-border community-based initiatives aiming at fostering active awareness about anthropogenic changes on local ecosystems and related adaptation measures, especially through the involvement of National/regional/local policy-makers to upgrade institutional awareness about needs and solutions for climate change adaptation policies and practices
8. Students and teachers' exchanges aimed at developing common projects on climate change adaptation, in order to increase awareness of communities on climate change-related risks, adaptation and DRR policies and strategies.

f. Cross-border dimension

The cross-border approach of the OSI projects is of extreme importance and it is therefore to be taken into account during the project construction. Since the Programme is addressing common challenges of the cross-border area, all project proposals should be jointly developed and implemented by the partners. With particular reference to the SO considered here, the cross-border cooperation dimension relies on the fact that both Croatia and Italy – belonging to three common biogeographical regions⁷ showing similar types of risks – share the common interest of reducing the negative impacts of climate-change related risks on both sides of the Adriatic Sea. Such cross-border dimension should be demonstrated through the development of common methodologies, protocols, tools and management structures, relevant for the risks addressed and consistent with the EU Climate Adaptation Strategy.

⁷ Continental, Mediterranean and Alpine.



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In particular, all main outputs shall be set up as a cooperation between Italian and Croatian partners. Data exchange shall be implemented and consolidated to ensure the cross-border and international availability.

In this framework a core strategic field of cooperation concerns strengthened coordination of Civil Protection strategies and tools throughout all the phases and in particular on the phases of prevention, preparedness and post-disaster management, according to the Sendai Framework for DRR.

Proposals for small scale investments and pilot activities shall strictly respect criteria of cross-border relevance, intended as clear and demonstrated relevance for tackling adaptation to climate-related drivers and impacts of common strategic interest. These should also be replicable and transferable at Italy-Croatia Programme scale, avoiding initiatives of mere local interest.

g. Synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies

As the synergies with EUSAIR are concerned, the OSI project shall contribute to EUSAIR Pillar 3 “Environmental Quality”, addressing a “good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment” and the support to every action contributes to minimizing climate change’s effects on marine and terrestrial ecosystems and to make the region more resilient.

In addition, the projects shall also contribute to other European policies, such as:

1. **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)⁸**, because of their key role in supporting adaptation and improvement of resilience of coastal and marine zones to climate change impacts. At this regard, particular attention should be dedicated to coastal zones dynamics, because of the risks of erosion and intrusion of the salty wedge within inland groundwaters. This phenomenon is caused also by subsidence, whether natural and/or linked to over-extraction of fluids.
 2. The OSI shall be in line with the **European Green Deal** and in particular with the mentioned **EU 2021 Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change and the EU Climate Pact**, ensuring coherence, support to policy development at different levels and sectors, and giving systemic response to climate change challenges in terms of community and policy makers awareness raising, improvement in technical capacities of territorial planners and policy designers, engagement and connection of the organisations working in the environmental field through mutual learning and exchange of experiences.
 3. The OSI should ensure coherency with the **Territorial Agenda 2030** and its general objective for a “Green Europe”, with its priority #4 “Healthy Environment” which underlines the importance of risk assessment and DRR, from prevention to post-disaster measures, in accordance with the different geographical characteristic upon which resilient communities should be built.
- i. **Contribution to horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, sustainable development)**

The OSI that will be funded under SO 2.1 is expected to generate positive results in terms of contribution on territorial sustainability conditions. The impacts must be at least at the level of neutrality if it is not possible to ensure positive impacts.

⁸ According to *Directive 2014/89/EU*.



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Therefore, the OSI should ensure the adoption of a “*no one left behind*” approach, prioritizing equity at all stages of the design of strategies and action plans, by ensuring a meaningful engagement of vulnerable groups at territorial scale.

To ensure gender equality in the design and implementation of SO 2.1 OSI, equal opportunities should be upheld throughout all project activities and at the project management level. The project partnership must monitor and maintain gender balance within the project team and promote equal opportunities across all project components.

Further, the objectives relate directly to SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 14 and 15 (Life under water and Life on land). The different activities are envisioned to strive for environmental conservation and on the long term contribute to all 17 goals.



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Priority 2. Green and resilient shared environment

Specific Objective 2.2. Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution

a. Theme description

The Specific Objective (SO) 2.2 is focused on conservation and sustainable use of the natural capital of the Programme area, which is rich in natural resources and biodiversity, with extensive Protected Areas, Natura 2000 sites, UNESCO natural heritage sites and Fishery Restricted Areas. The central characteristic of the Programme area is the Adriatic Sea which is enclosed and relatively shallow and thus particularly vulnerable to pollution and overexploitation. The coast is highly urbanised and there are numerous pollution sources, such as agriculture, aquaculture, industry, mass tourism, port activities and emissions from households; in addition, overfishing poses considerable threat to biodiversity. Continuous urban development, including tourism facilities and industrial zones is increasing the vulnerability and degradation risks of the coastal areas, and affects transport needs and patterns. The Programme area is characterised by high levels of tourism, which put a strain on spatial planning, public utilities, traffic (marine and on land) and disturbance of the coastal and marine habitats, despite sustainable tourism being increasingly popular. Waste is a considerable problem due to littering, particularly for the marine environment. Climate change effects can be observed in the Programme area, in particularly with increased number of drought and flood events, but also in increased resource use (water consumption, electricity consumption for cooling and air conditioning) and changes in biodiversity (e.g. invasive species, habitat loss). Traditional activities relying on natural resources, such as fisheries and aquaculture, are suffering from the climate change effects, requiring new approaches to the concept of sustainability and necessary protection of species and habitats.

Monitoring of the environmental parameters in the Programme area is conducted in the framework of national and regional monitoring according to the National and Regional policies, as well as requirements of EU Directives (e.g. Water Framework Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Birds Directive, Habitats Directive) and Barcelona Convention, however, it is quite localised, not regular enough and, in addition, uses methodologies that result in data that are sometimes difficult to compare. Similarly, research on environmental issues is extensive, but not always easy compare. On the other hand, there is a tradition of cooperation of research institutions across the border and exchange of data on marine environment.

As a result, this theme aims to improve knowledge of environmental issues in the Programme area, particularly in the Adriatic by improving environmental and biodiversity monitoring, modelling and developing tools to use the resulting data. Community based initiatives and citizen science initiatives can be of support. Secondly, this theme aims to improve the quality of environment and nature and implement their long-term sustainable management by supporting development of innovative tools, pilot projects, strategies and action plans, as well as specific trainings and broader awareness raising activities.

The theme is based on EU Directives and Strategies, in particular Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR, particularly Pillar 3), the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and Barcelona Convention and has considered the megatrends identified by EU Commission's platform for evidence-based policymaking (e.g. resource scarcity,



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climate change and environmental degradation, continuing urbanisation, accelerating technological change and hyperconnectivity).

b. Objectives

The aim is to enhance protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure (including urban areas) and reducing all forms of pollution. This could be achieved in several ways, but the focus is on joint actions and sharing of the knowledge and experience.

The project proposals shall contribute to the achievement of all following specific objectives:

1. to improve knowledge of natural marine habitats and species as well as of impact of human activities on environment and biodiversity;
2. to improve environmental management and management of natural resources, enhance awareness of environmental pollution and threats and pressures to biodiversity.

Sharing of the data, methodology and findings, followed up by joint actions can improve not only the level of knowledge, implementation of research and monitoring of the natural environment and anthropogenic impact on it, but also lead to improved policymaking and planning of the actions that will yield more sustainable development patterns and reduce environmental impact. Areas with critical levels of pollution are at significant disadvantage in terms of public health and development, thus actions to reduce pollution are welcome, both due to their immediate effect and as cases of good practice. Improved awareness of environmental pollution and protection of biodiversity and environment in general could lead to better environmental management, biodiversity conservation and reduced pollution on the long run.

c. Type of activities

To better understand the type of activities expected, these illustrative examples of activities are proposed:

1. Monitoring and its use: development of joint/shared systems/programmes/protocols, data platforms and data evaluation. This type of activities can include activities such as: harmonisation of monitoring methodologies; testing and evaluation of existing and new monitoring methodologies and practices, standardization of data management and harmonization of database structures; improving data sharing based on Open Data concept definition and monitoring of joint indicators; identification and monitoring of threats and pressures; forming a Bilateral/Transnational organisation or platform (or upgrading the existing ones) for shared integrated data collection; devising digital solutions for monitoring and similar. The activities may include several environmental topics, for example on species monitoring and habitat monitoring and assessment on national and regional level (including research and assessment of habitat condition), monitoring of sites (especially Natura 2000 sites), monitoring, prevention and reduction of pollution (including marine litter); monitoring of coastal land use and its impacts on environment and biodiversity.
2. Development and testing of models and simulations. This type of activities can focus on issues such as impacts of anthropogenic activities, for example fisheries, aquaculture or port activities; effects of anti-pollution measures; effects of threats and pressures on species/habitats and ecosystem services; effects of biodiversity restoration and similar. For example, the models and simulations can analyse impacts on



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seabed habitats, species population dynamics, dynamics and pollution of water resources, marine litter dispersion, environmental impacts of coastal development and tourism, etc.

3. Development and testing of innovative solutions (including use of ICT and pilot actions). This type of activities includes solutions for issues such as resource depletion (reducing resource use); environmental impacts; improved environmental management; improved biodiversity/ecosystem conservation (particularly area-based conservation measures, including protected areas). The type of activities includes preparation of feasibility studies and recommendation for policies and the proposed solutions. The following are examples of topics: improved management of Protected Areas and Natura 2000 sites (including proposal for establishing of new Protected Areas, conservation and restoration actions), combatting spread of invasive species, interaction of traditional activities with biodiversity, coastal landscapes conservation, activities to address threats and pressures, anthropogenic pollution reduction, management of wastewater in the marinas and small leisure ports, marine litter, tools (including ICT) for implementation of joint strategies and action plans.
4. Joint strategies and action plans for improved environmental management. This type of activities focuses on preparation of joint strategies and action plans for: Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), Marine Spatial Planning (MSP), environmental management, and improved general spatial planning (beyond ICZM and MSP)

The proposed OSI should include a combination of type of activities that will enable it to contribute to all two objectives and the relevant expected results, achieving the expected value of the relevant output indicators. Where possible, projects should also have strong transferability potential providing replicable/transferable solutions. All type of activities can include training activities and activities for broad involvement of stakeholders, such as citizens' science.

d. Contribution to output and results indicators

These tables provide the **expected target values**, the project proposal should strive for, which is calculated on the basis of the assumptions and methodology for indicators, set up during programming:

| Output RCO no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed | 1 |
| 84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | 6 |
| 85 Participations in joint training scheme | 20 |
| 115 Public events across borders jointly organized | 1 |
| 116 Jointly developed solutions | 1 |

| Result RCR no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 79 Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations | 1 |
| 104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | 1 |
| 81 Completion of joint training schemes | 14 |



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Example of project intervention logic

This is an indicative and illustrative example of project intervention logic, which shall be entered into **section C.4.1** of the Application Form, aiming at clarifying the logical links between the project and the programme indicators:

| Work package | 1 Joint management of marine environment | | 2 Adriatic species and protection | |
|--|---|--|---|-----------------------------------|
| Project specific objective examples | to improve environmental management and management of natural resources, enhance awareness of environmental pollution and threats and pressures to biodiversity | | to improve knowledge of natural marine habitats and species and the protection of environment and biodiversity from impacts of human activities | |
| Activity description examples | 4 joint management models for 4 areas 4 joint study visits 2 joint public conferences 1 joint monitoring tool developed and tested | | 2 joint research on Adriatic marine species populations 3 pilot actions A with fishers 3 pilot actions B for monitoring marine species 4 joint training for 25 employees of marine areas | |
| Deliverables description examples | 1 joint model and action plan document 4 study visit reports 2 press releases from conference 1 report on joint monitoring activity | | 1 joint study on Adriatic marine species population 1 report on pilot action A 1 report on pilot action B 1 participant list and report for 4 trainings | |
| Outputs (example of project & programme indicators) | -Join action plans no. 1 - Joint Public events across borders no. 1* - Joint monitoring tool no. 1 | -RCO 83 no. 1 -RCO 115 no. 1 - RCO 116 no. 1 | - Pilot actions A and B no. 6 - Participations in joint training no. 20* | - RCO 84 no. 6 - RCO 85 no. 20 |
| Results (example of project & programme indicators) | - Joint action plans taken up by partners no. 1 - Joint Solutions taken up by partners no. 1 | - RCR 79 no. 1 - RCR 104 no. 1 | - Completion of joint training no. 14 | - RCR 81 no. 14 |
| Management activities description | | | | |
| Set-up of project management team, organization of project committee meetings, monitoring of activities and reporting, control | | | | |

* Please note: Not necessarily the no. of project outputs exactly matches with the no. of project activities, which may be higher, as not all activities may effectively achieve a project output.

e. Expected results

1. To improve the knowledge base, while sharing and jointly processing data, and the monitoring systems for defining policies of protection of biodiversity



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2. Higher efficiency of monitoring and research on natural/marine habitats and human activities impact, through examples of improved data use for assessment and evaluation of environmental data
3. To improve the knowledge base and the monitoring system for defining policies of protection of biodiversity through established and tested models and simulations of environmental phenomena, threats and pressures, as well as of the effects of proposed solutions
4. To improve the knowledge base and the monitoring system for defining policies of protection of biodiversity through jointly developed innovative solutions for reducing resource use, environmental impact, and/or for improving environmental management and biodiversity conservation
5. To increase awareness in relation to protection of biodiversity through joint strategies for improved environmental management
6. To increase awareness in relation to protection of biodiversity through joint action plans for improved environmental management

f. Cross-border dimension

The cross-border approach of the OSI projects is of extreme importance and it is therefore to be taken into account during the project construction. Since the Programme is addressing common challenges of the cross-border area, all project proposals should be jointly developed and implemented by the partners. With particular reference to the SO considered here, the actions should have a tangible cross-border effect and impact, achieved by joint actions and synergies between the project partners. It is expected that the activities are implemented in an integrated way, thus the proposed actions should be implemented jointly by sharing of the tasks and joint/complementary activities that would build on synergies in terms of knowledge, experience, technology and similar.

As a result, all main outputs should be achieved in cooperation between Italian and Croatian partners. Activities that include data exchange and sharing should resolve in advance all issues regarding availability, access, and long-term maintenance of the databases. Investments in small scale infrastructure, pilot projects and innovative solutions need to have strategic relevance for environmental and biodiversity issues in the entire Programme area. Moreover, the pilot projects and innovative solutions should address and solve challenges that are common and relevant on both sides of the Adriatic and should have a clear cross-border impact.

Decisions regarding implementation process and its results should be taken jointly by both Italian and Croatian partners. It should be clear from the proposal how the project partners' activities build on synergies and add value to the results.

g. Synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies

As the synergies with EUSAIR are concerned, the SO 2.2 OSI shall contribute to two flagships of the EUSAIR's third Pillar "Environmental Quality":

- Protection and enhancement of natural terrestrial habitats and ecosystems (focused on activities primarily related to establishment of green corridors)
- Promotion of sustainable growth of the Adriatic-Ionian region by implementing ICZM and MSP as well as to contribute CRF on ICZM of Barcelona convention and the appropriate monitoring and management of marine protected areas. These activities are focused on spatial efficiency and control of temporal



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distribution of human activities and include issues such as harmonisation of approaches, development of common data collection and datasets and contributions to achieve Good Environmental Status.

In addition, the projects shall also contribute to other European policies, such as:

1. **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)**⁹, based on the so-called ICZM Protocol of Barcelona Convention and Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, but most of all on their importance for the coastal areas and the entire Adriatic.
2. **European Green Deal** as the EU umbrella environmental policy that aims, among other, to preserve and protect Europe's seas, oceans, with the following priorities in the field of environment and oceans: protecting our biodiversity and ecosystems; reducing air, water and soil pollution; moving towards a circular economy; improving waste management; ensuring the sustainability of our blue economy and fisheries sectors.
 - **EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030** that aims to put Europe's biodiversity on the path to recovery by 2030 for the benefit of people, climate and the planet in the view of the impacts of climate change, forest fires, food insecurity and disease outbreaks (incl. by protecting wildlife and fighting illegal wildlife trade). The commitments by 2030 include enlarging existing Natura 2000 areas as well as protected areas and strictly protected areas designated under national protection schemes, both at land and sea, with strict protection for areas of very high biodiversity and climate value.
 - **Circular economy action plan (CEAP)** that aims to reduce pressure on natural resources and to create sustainable growth and jobs; SO 2.2 can particularly contribute to reduction of waste.
 - **Zero pollution action plan** aims to reduce air, water and soil pollution to levels no longer considered harmful to health and natural ecosystems by 2050. The key 2030 targets particularly relevant for SO 2.2 include improving water quality by reducing waste, plastic litter at sea (by 50%) and microplastics released into the environment (by 30%); improving soil quality by reducing nutrient losses and chemical pesticides' use by 50%; and significantly reducing waste generation and by 50% residual municipal waste.
 - **EU Mission Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030** aims to protect and restore the health of our ocean and waters through research and innovation, citizen engagement and blue investments.
- h. **Contribution to horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, sustainable development)**

The activities carried out by the project must absolutely respect the horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR. The impacts must be at least at the level of neutrality if it is not possible to ensure positive impacts.

Therefore, the OSI should ensure the adoption of a “*no one left behind*” approach, prioritizing equity at all stages of the design of strategies and action plans, by ensuring a meaningful engagement of vulnerable groups at territorial scale. The operations should promote gender equality by ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men in all aspects of the project.

Further, the objectives relate directly to SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 13 (Climate action), SDG 14 and 15 (Life under water and Life on land). The different activities are envisioned to strive for environmental protection practices and on the long term contribute to all 17 goals.

⁹ According to Directive 2014/89/EU



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Priority 3. Sustainable maritime and multimodal transport*Specific Objective 3.1. Sustainable maritime and multimodal Transport***a. Theme description**

The mobility of passengers and goods plays a crucial role in the development and prosperity of the Adriatic region. The maritime transport system in Croatia and Italy is a vital component of the transportation network, connecting various ports and facilitating the movement of people and cargo. In the context of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), it is noteworthy that both countries have a significant presence in the core and comprehensive network.

The maritime transport systems of Italy and Croatia are integral components of their respective economies, serving as vital links for trade, tourism, and regional connectivity. Italy's maritime transport infrastructure is well-established and extensive, with major ports such as Trieste, Venice, and Bari playing key roles in facilitating international trade and passenger traffic. These ports serve as important gateways, connecting Italy to global markets and enabling the smooth flow of goods and people. Regional cruise industry is also highly developed, attracting millions of tourists each year who embark on memorable journeys along the picturesque Adriatic region. Croatia's coastal geography, comprising numerous inhabited islands, emphasizes the importance of maritime transport for ensuring the connectivity and well-being of island communities. The country has more than 90 ports (several of them as a part of TEN-T network) with public service obligation (PSO) lines, which are crucial for connecting the islands with the mainland and sustaining their living conditions. These ports provide essential services for the transportation of passengers and goods, supporting the economic activities and tourism industry of the Adriatic region.

The Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy (SWD(2020) 331 final) emphasizes the importance of achieving zero-emission mobility and promoting sustainable transportation options (Green and Smart Ports concept). This objective aims to ensure the availability of sustainable transport modes while encouraging users to make environmentally friendly choices. In line with this objective, the part of Strategy related to port infrastructure aims to create zero-emission ports, emphasizing the need to reduce the carbon footprint of maritime transport and improve the environmental performance of port facilities. Additionally, the Strategy's objective focuses on leveraging digitalization and automation to enhance connectivity, safety, and efficiency in the transport sector. It aims to make connected and automated multimodal mobility a reality, paving the way for seamless and intelligent transportation systems that cater to the evolving needs of passengers and freight.

b. Objectives

The project proposals shall contribute to the achievement of all following **specific objectives**:

1. To reduce the negative impact on the environment and to increase the resistance to climate changes of the cross-border transport system including improvements in alternative energy production and energy savings capacities;
2. To develop the cross-border transport by improving or introducing ICT systems including also systems that are strengthening the physical and/or cyber security in ports;
3. To transfer experiences and knowledge to the wider port community in the entire cross-border region (TEN-T and non-TEN-T ports).



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c. Type of activities

To better understand the type of activities expected, these illustrative examples of activities are proposed:

1. improvement of the energy efficiency and reduction of emission of vessels (including introducing electric, LNG/LPG, hydrogen etc.), fostering alternative energy production or reducing the use of traditional energy in ports (wind, sun, power of sea currents and waves), creation of a comprehensive network of recharging and refueling infrastructure for alternative fuels including cold ironing, deployment of public charging stations for e-vehicles (including bikes, scooters, etc.);
2. deployment of more efficient lighting systems in ports, deployment of sustainable waste and waste water management concepts, improvement of infrastructure resilience and deployment of measures to contain the impact of extreme weather events, development of tools and activities to reduce the impact of climate change on the infrastructure and functioning of the port;
3. deployment of solutions for enabling multimodal travel planning toward inland or hinterland (including cycling), standardization of services and information for passengers, deployment of solutions for improvement of last mile accessibility of ports, development of digital twin technologies in ports, deployment solutions for enhancing interoperability of maritime and road/railway systems;
4. deployment of solutions for protection of ports from threats (physical and cyber), improving cooperation in the exchange of data and/or protocols to increase security in ports;
5. transfer experiences and successful practices to the wider port system of the cross-border area (including ports that are not part of the TEN-T network), enable a system of information and education of the wider port system about innovative solutions, ensure institutional support so that the latest solutions are systematically transferred to all participants of the cross-border port system.

It is highly recommended to apply project activities that will be implemented in cooperation of TEN-T (core and comprehensive network) ports and non-TEN-T ports.

d. Contribution to output and results indicators

These tables provide the **expected target values**, the project proposal should strive for, which is calculated on the basis of the assumptions and methodology for indicators, set up during programming:

| Output RCO no. | Expected target values per OSI* |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 54 New or modernised intermodal connections | 1 |
| 83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed | 1 |
| 84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | 5 |
| 85 Participations in joint training scheme | 12 |

| Result RCR no. | Expected target values (max.) per OSI* |
|--|--|
| 79 Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations | 1 |
| 104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | 1 |



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Example of project intervention logic

This is an indicative and illustrative example of project intervention logic, which shall be entered into **section C.4.1** of the Application Form, aiming at clarifying the logical links between the project and the programme indicators:

| Work package | 1 Green ports solutions | | 2 Sharing green experiences | |
|--|---|---|---|-----------------|
| Project specific objective examples | To reduce the negative impact on the environment and to increase the resistance to climate changes of the cross-border transport system including improvements in alternative energy production and energy savings capacities | | To transfer experiences and knowledge to the wider port community in the entire cross-border region (TEN-T and non-TEN-T ports) | |
| Activity description examples | 4 green monitoring equipment for ferry lines 6 action plans development for 5 green ports 8 joint pilot actions for greener waste management for ferry boats 2 joint public events | | 1 joint training involving 20 participants from 5 port authorities 5 joint dissemination events on green practices 2 joint public conferences on energy efficiency in ports | |
| Deliverables description examples | 1 study on green monitoring for ferry line 1 joint action plan MoU for green ports 1 report on the 8 joint pilot actions 2 press releases from public events | | 1 joint training documents package and registration list 1 dissemination document package 2 press releases from public conference | |
| Outputs (example of project & programme indicators) | - Modernised intermodal ferry line with new equipment no. 1 - Joint action plan green ports no. 1 - Joint pilot actions waste management no. 5* | -RCO 54 no. 1 -RCO 83 no. 1 -RCO 84 no. 5 | - Staff participating joint training no. 12* | - RCO 85 no. 12 |
| Results (example of project & programme indicators) | - MoU signed to adopt joint action plan no. 1 - Agreement between partners to up-scale developed solution for green monitoring no. 1 | - RCR 79 no. 1 - RCR 104 no. 1 | | |
| Management activities description | | | | |
| Set-up of project management team, organization of project committee meetings, monitoring of activities and reporting, control | | | | |

* Please note: Not necessarily the no. of project outputs exactly matches with the no. of project activities, which may be higher, as not all activities may effectively achieve a project output.



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e. Expected results

1. To realise integrated and sustainable transport connections related to ports, through common strategies and associated action plans for the introduction of the Green and Smart Ports concept
2. To realise integrated and sustainable transport connections related to ports, through pilot activities for testing parts of the Green and Smart Ports concept
3. To realise integrated and sustainable transport connections related to ports, through increased knowledge and awareness on the introduction and advantages of the green and smart port concepts
4. To realise integrated and sustainable transport connections related to ports, through transferable practices of Green and Smart Ports concepts
5. To increase the efficiency and quality of maritime transport through new or modernized intermodal connections (nodes) that facilitate the use of different means of transport for freight transport or passenger trips

f. Cross-border dimension

The cross-border approach of the OSI projects is of extreme importance and it is therefore to be taken into account during the project construction. Since the Programme is addressing common challenges of the cross-border area, all project proposals should be jointly developed and implemented by the partners. With particular reference to the SO considered here, proposals are encouraged to implement relevant small scale and pilot actions investments of proved strategic relevance for improving the SO at the Italy-Croatia programme scale. Cross-border dimension shall be clearly demonstrated and common methodologies, protocols, tools and management structures shall be delivered. Given that the ports and the entire maritime system on both sides of the Adriatic have equal challenges in terms of reducing the environmental impact and raising the level of modernization, it is necessary that projects look at development from a strategic level and that all activities and pilot testing have common applicable solution. The activities to be tested must be aimed at solving challenges common to both sides of the Adriatic and they must have a clear cross-border impact.

g. Synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies

As the synergies with EUSAIR are concerned, the OSI project shall contribute to the Flagships of Pillar 2 which focuses on maritime transport. The Flagships address various aspects related to the maritime sector, including the development of cycling routes and the enhancement of port infrastructure.

In addition, the project shall also contribute to the other European policies, such as:

1. The objectives set forth in the “**Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy**” documents released by the EU and the Transport Community in 2021.
2. The **European Green Deal**: this comprehensive package of policy initiatives aims to transition the EU towards a greener future, ultimately achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The **European Green Deal** recognizes the crucial role of the transport sector in achieving sustainable objectives, emphasizing the need to decarbonize and promote environmentally friendly practices.



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i. Contribution to horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, sustainable developments)

The activities carried out by the project must absolutely respect the horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR. The impacts must be at least at the level of neutrality if for some objective reason they cannot be positive.

Therefore, the OSI should ensure the adoption of a “*no one left behind*” approach, prioritizing equity at all stages of the design of strategies and action plans, by ensuring a meaningful engagement of vulnerable groups at territorial scale. The operations should promote gender equality by ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men in all aspects of the project.

Further, the objectives relate directly to SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation), SDG 7 (Affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 13 (Climate action), and SDG 14 (Life under water). The different activities are envisioned to strive for enhanced transport connectivity practices and on the long term contribute to all 17 goals.



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Priority 4. Culture and tourism for sustainable development

Specific Objective 4.1. Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

a. Theme description

Italy and Croatia share an enormous and still insufficiently valorised common resource – the Adriatic Sea. Thus, the Programme’s great potential and core driver of development lies in the Blue economy¹⁰.

The Blue economy represents a crucial sector for the Programme area. It employs more than 500.000 workers in Italy and more than 150.000 in Croatia, according to the 2020 “EU Blue Economy Report”. In particular, the highest share of employment is registered in the coastal and island tourism sector, which employs 307.284 persons in Italy and 123.962 in Croatia¹¹. Thus, the importance of tourism within the Programme area is unquestionable. In connection, culture as a sector reflecting the diversity of local, destination lifestyles and attractions on the one hand contributes substantially to a diversified tourism offer, on the other hand tourism provides incentives for a more active and sustainable preservation / safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage.

In view of the Sustainable Development Goals, the integration of culture and tourism within a joint specific objective reflects a bi-directional benefit. Culture provides a sense of belonging and identity for the host communities, making them more resilient to dynamic socio-political, economic and environmental changes. It is a crucial resource for the diversification of tourism offer helping in mitigating seasonal and geographic pressures. Furthermore, it contributes to the increment of job opportunities and what is even more relevant in this context is that it creates an environment that supports decent work (SDG 8). When it comes to benefits for visitors, along with a diversified offer, culture provides more meaningful tourism experiences with the result of raising awareness of the values of the tourism destination contributing to the preservation of its local authenticity for future generations (of hosts and visitors alike).

Due to strong seasonality of tourism, affecting a wide variety of workforces, the main challenges and needs for the area are the diversification of touristic offer aimed at ensuring quality and equal access to tourist destinations and cultural heritage, as well as delocalisation of touristic flows (including inland and fluvial destinations) aiming at promoting environmental sustainability and positive socio-economic impact on local communities.

In order to meet these needs, actions for stronger capacity-building, strategic planning, sound management and networking through, or inspired by the concept of Cultural Routes, should be prioritised.

b. Objectives

The project proposals shall contribute to the achievement of all following **specific objectives**:

¹⁰ Interreg Programme 2021-2027, p. 26

¹¹ Ibid, p.8



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1. To delocalise and diversify traditional tourist flows aiming at environmental sustainability and positive socio-economic impact on local communities through valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage with a special focus on accessibility for diverse visitors (elders, people with disabilities, children and youth).
2. To improve and modernize policies for valorisation of the natural and cultural heritage and development of sustainable cultural tourism focusing on participation and multi-stakeholdership.
3. To promote new and innovative integrated offers based on the valorisation, preservation and capitalisation of natural and cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage with the aim to deseasonalise tourism and maintain the competitiveness of the sector.
4. To promote inclusive education and training focused on a smarter strategic management of sustainable cultural tourism destinations as well as on enhancing the quality of hospitality services, in order to boost the competitiveness of the sector.

c. Type of activities

To better understand the type of activities expected, these illustrative examples of activities are proposed:

1. Establishing or creating the basis for new Cultural Routes capitalising on research and investments done (e.g. established interpretation and visitor centres, restored heritage sites...) through previous Calls and Programmes.
Based on joint topics (diverse expressions of maritime and fluvial heritage such as traditional practices or underwater heritage, archaeological, industrial, food heritage etc.) and activities (hiking, biking, sailing... e.g. Hiking trail, bike route, sailing destinations...), the project should put in network different stakeholders such as cultural institutions, hospitality and recreation services (heritage hotels/ accommodation, local gastronomy experiences, sport clubs such as scuba diving or sailing clubs etc.) to develop joint activities and promote them (also digitally) as a cross-border Cultural Route in order to delocalise tourism flows (also on a cross-border level) and deseasonalise tourism.
2. Strengthening and promoting existing Cultural Routes present within the Programme territory:
 - by establishing and putting in network visitor centres emphasizing the need for cross-border promotion and activities, including educational trips for schools
 - by developing joint strategies, management and sustainable use plan for the route(s)
 - through digitisation of natural and cultural heritage as means of preservation and promotion targeting young travellers and entrepreneurs
 - organizing trainings to build and strengthen professional capacities for the effective design, implementation and sustainable management of Cultural Routes, including hospitality and accessibility.
3. Establishing cross-border cultural tourism hub(s) envisioned as (digital) network(s) of professionals based on multistakeholdership and intersectoral collaborations (public bodies, business support institutions, DMOs, education and research institutions, cultural institutions, NGOs, SMEs in tourism and culture and creativity...) with the view to develop a joint strategy for the development of cultural tourism destinations, with specific regards to Cultural Routes as cross-border cultural tourism destination as well as participative governance models (e.g. good practices of public-civic partnerships in developing cultural-tourism projects, public debates involving citizens in decision-making related to culture and tourism etc.) and policies (toolkit



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for heritage sites/ professionals fostering accessibility and/or managing crowds, agreements between public, private and civil sector on joint actions etc.) addressing the impacts of mass tourism on cultural and natural heritage and hosting communities, including the institutional support and knowledge required for development, testing and promoting new joint concepts and products in cultural tourism and share them between interested stakeholders.

4. Developing and testing training materials and methodologies for vocational schools and SMEs within existing or newly established Cultural Routes, in order to improve their capacities and better promote the Programme area as a sustainable cultural tourist destination. The training should increase their knowledge on cultural and natural heritage (e.g. training in heritage interpretation), the concept of sustainable tourism, as well as knowledge of hospitality services, focusing on the concept of *services for all*, cultural tourism management and marketing. The training is targeting, among others, the creative, cultural, food, lodging, recreation and travel industry.
5. Developing and testing interdisciplinary (heritage and tourism sector) training materials and methods addressing cross-border cultural destinations, with particular attention towards Cultural Routes, for their strategic planning and management with a view to improve the relationship between education and job market as well as to tackle the possibilities in reducing the impact of mass tourism through planning and site management and contribute to sustainable tourism development (e.g. following the UNWTO guide for sustainable tourism, introducing the European Tourism Indicators System etc.). The materials are intended for students (humanistic, tourism, cultural tourism) and professionals and involve practical fieldwork in collaboration with public organisations, SMEs and/or heritage sites.

d. Contribution to output and results indicators

These tables provide the **expected target values**, the project proposal should strive for, which is calculated on the basis of the assumptions and methodology for indicators, set up during programming:

| Output RCO no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 81 Participations in joint actions across borders | 30 |
| 83 Strategies and action plans jointly developed | 1 |
| 84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects | 7 |
| 116 Jointly developed solutions | 1 |

| Result RCR no. | Expected target values per OSI |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 79 Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations | 1 |
| 104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations | 1 |

Example of project intervention logic

This is an indicative and illustrative example of project intervention logic, which shall be entered into **section C.4.1** of the Application Form, aiming at clarifying the logical links between the project and the programme indicators:



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| Work package | 1 Green tourism routes | | 2 Community tourism | |
|--|---|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Project specific objective examples | To delocalise and diversify traditional tourist flows aiming at environmental sustainability and positive socio-economic impact on local communities through valorisation and preservation of natural and cultural (tangible and intangible) heritage with a special focus on accessibility for diverse visitors (elders, people with disabilities, children and youth) | | To improve and modernize policies for valorisation of the natural and cultural heritage and development of sustainable cultural tourism focusing on participation and multi-stakeholdership | |
| Activity description examples | 8 joint valorisation and promotion of unknown destinations 9 joint pilot investments on accessibility tools 1 development of joint model for green tourism route 1 signature of MoU by mayors to adopt joint model 2 joint promotional conferences | | 8 members of committee of selected coastal towns – nomination and involvement 8 study visits involving 10 participants each 3 development of sectoral policy papers for community tourism 2 promotion of press releases 8 development of TV broadcasting | |
| Deliverables description examples | 1 tourism press set on unknown destinations 2 documentation package for accessibility 1 signed MoU with green tourism route 2 conferences press releases | | 1 RoP for committee of coastal towns 1 report for 8 study visits 3 policy papers 8 videos and 2 press releases | |
| Outputs (example of project & programme indicators) | -Joint green tourism route no. 1 -Joint pilot investments for accessibility no. 7* | RCO 83 no. 1 RCO 84 no. 7 | -Participants in joint committee study visits no. 30* -Policy paper community tourism no. 1 | RCO 81 no. 30 RCO 116 no. 1 |
| Results (example of project & programme indicators) | -Joint MoU for green tourism route signed no. 1 | RCR 79 no. 1 | - MoU of 8 coastal towns to adopt community tourism policy no. 1 | RCR 104 no. 1 |
| Management activities description | | | | |
| Set-up of project management team, organization of project committee meetings, monitoring of activities and reporting, control | | | | |

* Please note: Not necessarily the no. of project outputs exactly matches with the no. of project activities, which may be higher, as not all activities may effectively achieve a project output.

e. Expected results

1. Enhance the places of culture as multidisciplinary hubs by reinforcing their spill-over effects in the economic and tourism sector, also involving private investors to ensure financial self-sustainability of the sites and implement revenue-generating activities through a strategy for the sustainable development of Cultural



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Routes as cross-border cultural tourism destinations, including pilot activities for the establishment/set up of new Cultural Routes.

2. Planning cross-border information campaigns and training activities for administrators and operators on sustainable tourism concepts and the creation of attractive career paths based on a skilled workforce, fair wages and good working conditions in the framework of integrated management plans for cultural tourism destinations, such as Cultural Routes, including site management plans and pilot actions for capacity building to strengthen professional capacities.
3. Drafting and implementing sustainable development and promotion strategies of tourist destinations and territorial marketing campaigns engaging local stakeholders to diversify tourism offer also to enhance the potential of the peripheral areas and ensure the wellbeing of the residents as a long-term sustainability factor of tourism, through policies enabling participative cultural tourism planning and management.
4. Promoting cross-border education activities and inclusive training, also through knowledge exchange, for raising skills in the tourism sector, with a special focus on landscapes and cultural heritage preservation, sustainable tourism, digitalisation, destination management and heritage interpretation, involving primarily students and youth, through pilot activities developing and testing training materials and methods in order to increase the knowledge on cultural and natural heritage within Cultural Routes and strengthen capacities related to hospitality services for SMEs and vocational schools.
5. Designing and creating interpretation centres (e.g., visitors centers, ecomuseum etc.) for joint promotion of cross-border environmental-friendly routes and products through pilot activities for the establishment or enhancing of the cultural tourism hubs.
6. Designing and testing innovative digital solutions and new technological equipment to interpret and promote coastal and inner areas touristic resources also through the involvement of cultural and creative industries through pilot activities for the digital preservation/safeguarding and promotion of natural and cultural heritage along cultural tourism destinations, such as Cultural Routes, as leverage for sustainable tourism.

f. Cross-border dimension

The cross-border approach of the OSI projects is of extreme importance and it is therefore to be taken into account during the project construction. Since the Programme is addressing common challenges of the cross-border area, all project proposals should be jointly developed and implemented by the partners. With particular reference to the SO considered here, coastal tourism and cultural tourism in both Italy and Croatia are facing same challenges. These are related to tourist flows creating pressure on specific destinations (coastal cities, UNESCO heritage sites) as well as high seasonality. Sharing the same challenges as well as similar assets (joint Cultural Routes, joint Intangible Cultural Heritage such as Mediterranean diet or dry stone walling, joint Worlds Heritage Sites such as the Venetian Fortification system or common Roman legacy) gives excellent ground to explore joint solutions. These solutions will be taking into consideration micro specificities but with the view of mutual benefits reflected in joint approaches based on shared knowledge. Further to developing joint strategies, trainings and management plans, the cross-border dimension of the Call enables stakeholders to promote the joint destination and, in this way, efficiently channel tourist flows.



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The project will thus have to demonstrate a strong cross-border participation reflected in common analysis, pilot development and testing with the view to contribute to cross-border environmental, social and economic sustainability.

g. Synergies with EUSAIR and other European policies

As the synergies with EUSAIR are concerned, the OSI project shall contribute to Pillar 4- Sustainable Tourism. The focus of the pillar is on two topics:

- ✓ Diversified tourism offers (products and services) – full use of unexploited potential of the Region, combating seasonality, improvement and diversification of the tourism offer quality.
- ✓ Sustainable and responsible tourism management (innovation and quality) – reduction of the impact of mass tourism, involvement of all potentially interested stakeholders and establishment of common standards and rules.

Specifically, the flagship AIR Cultural Routes addresses the need for harmonized distribution of tourism flows through macro-regional territories using Cultural Routes as tool for the creation of innovative diversified tourism products; The challenge is to address regional connectivity of locally micro-managed routes. The overall goal is the diversification of products supporting the development of creative and cultural industry and SMEs, synergies between creative and cultural industries and the hospitality sector and sustainable tourism valorisation of coastal and underwater cultural heritage.

In addition, the projects shall contribute to other European policies, such as:

1. **Transition Pathway for Tourism**, a highly influential European policy framework which indicates the need for meeting the demands of sustainable tourism by developing cultural destinations, offers and products related to authentic local culture.
 2. The **Multi-programme coordination mechanism** where the Interreg EuroMED, Italy-France Maritime and NEXT MED Programmes have been working together to enhance sustainable tourism in the Mediterranean. The Sustainable tourism toolkit produced in the framework of the Multi-programme coordination mechanism addresses some of the mentioned challenges such as:
 - Increasing all year-round tourism and geographical outreach
 - Strengthening SMEs and local communities' capacities in sustainable tourism development
 - Developing innovative touristic products.
- i. **Contribution to horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR (EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility, sustainable developments)**

The activities carried out by the project must absolutely respect the horizontal principles set forth in Article 9 of the CPR. The impacts must be at least at the level of neutrality if it is not possible to ensure positive impacts. Therefore, the OSI should ensure the adoption of a “*no one left behind*” approach, prioritizing equity at all stages of the design of strategies and action plans, by ensuring a meaningful engagement of vulnerable groups at territorial scale. The



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operations should promote gender equality by ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men in all aspects of the project.

Further, the objectives relate directly to SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth) and SDG 12 (Sustainable cities and communities) and indirectly to SDG 3 (Good health and wellbeing), SDG 14 and 15 (Life under water and Life on land) as well as to SDG 17 (Partnerships for goals). The different activities are envisioned to strive for sustainable tourism practices and on the long term contribute to all 17 goals.

