



*FROM SHARED RESOURCES  
TO JOINT SOLUTIONS*

**INTERREG V A ITALY CROATIA CBC PROGRAMME 2014-2020  
EVALUATION SERVICE  
CIG 8411073D01 CUP H79B17000030007**

**Impact Evaluation Report 2023**

Rome, June 2023

## Contents

1.	The INTERREG Italy-Croatia Programme .....	3
1.1.	The structure of the Programme and its synergies	3
2.	Context and methodology .....	4
2.1.	Methodology	4
2.2.	Impact Evaluation 2022	5
2.3.	Impact Evaluation 2023	9
3.	Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation .....	11
3.1.	Blue economy	11
3.2.	Adaptation measures tackling specific effects in the cooperation area	16
3.3.	Natural and man-made disaster	22
3.4.	Natural and cultural heritage	27
3.5.	Protecting and restoring biodiversity	32
3.6.	Quality conditions of the sea and coastal area/bathing waters	37
3.7.	Marine and coastal transport services	42
4.	Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives .....	46
5.	Cross-border cooperation added value and networking .....	52
5.1.	Context	52
5.2.	Desk analysis	53
5.3.	Cross-border cooperation added value	1
5.4.	Beneficiaries' viewpoint	14
6.	Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy .....	21
6.1.	Programme's strategy	21
6.2.	Communication tools	22
6.3.	The implementation of the communication strategy	23
6.4.	Beneficiaries' viewpoint	27
7.	Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets .....	33
7.1.	Context and methodology	33
7.2.	Contribution to EUSAIR macroregional strategy	33
7.3.	Synergies with other INTERREG and mainstream Programmes	34
7.4.	Focus on Synergies with other INTERREG Programmes: Italy-Croatia call for clusters	35
7.5.	Beneficiaries' viewpoint	45
7.6.	Focus on target group	52
8.	Evaluation questions, answers and recommendations .....	57

## 1. The INTERREG Italy-Croatia Programme

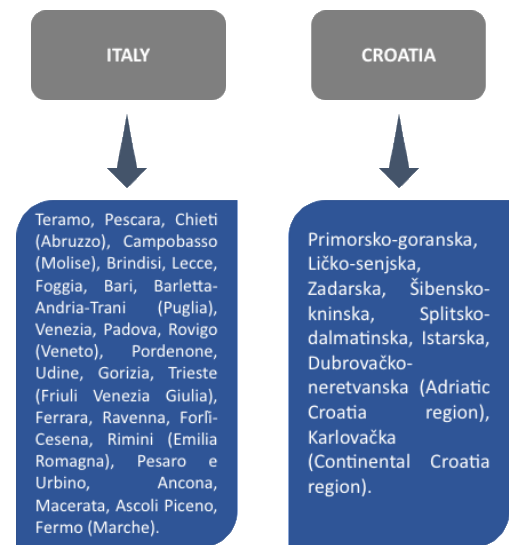
### 1.1. The structure of the Programme and its synergies

The cooperation between Italy and Croatia takes shape with the accession of the latter to the European Union and the resulting Programme of cross-border cooperation INTERREG V - A approved in January 2014, which aims at increasing prosperity, well-being and growth in the whole Adriatic Sea area.

INTERREG V A Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy – Croatia 2014-2020 has its foundations in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and in the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance IPA and is designed within the framework of the European strategy for smart, inclusive and sustainable growth and its Country and Regional Strategy Papers (Europe 2020 Strategy).

The **overall aim** of the Programme is to increase the prosperity and the blue growth potential of the area by stimulating cross-border partnerships able to achieve tangible changes. The Programme cooperation area covers the administrative units at the NUTS III level, as shown in the figure 1, of the two countries, Italy and Croatia, with an area of more than 85,500 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of more than 12.4 million inhabitants. Therefore, the cross-border cooperation area is presently composed by 33 statistical NUTS III territories (25 provinces in Italy and 8 counties in Croatia).

**Figure 1: Italy-Croatia cooperation area 14-20**



In order to enable regional and local stakeholders in both countries to exchange knowledge and experience, develop and implement pilot actions, test the feasibility of new policies, products and services and support investment, the Programme has presently funded **83 projects under three calls for proposals**:

- i) "Standard+" projects ► 22 projects;
- ii) "Standard" projects ► 50 projects;
- iii) "Strategic" projects ► 11 projects.

The projects are implemented by wide partnerships composed by different actors including regions and counties, municipalities and cities, universities, research centres and foundations, private institutions.

In addition to the above-mentioned funded projects, on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021, the Programme has launched a **Restricted Cluster Call for Proposals** dedicated to the funding of IT-HR cluster projects in 5 different thematic areas in order to maximize experiences and results achieved by the Programme through the implementation of Standard+ and Standard Projects. The call has been closed on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and the Programme financed 9 cluster projects:

- 2 under SO 1.1;
- 2 under SO 2.1;
- 2 under SO 3.1;

- 2 under SO 3.3; and
- 1 under SO 4.1.

## **2. Context and methodology**

---

In accordance with the Managing Authority (MA), the Impact Evaluation has been split into two steps with the delivery of two different Impact Evaluation Reports. One was delivered in 2022 and the second in 2023. This choice was taken considering the level of progress of the Programme. The 2022 impact evaluation tackled the SOs, namely 1.1, 2.1 and 3.2. The 2023 impact evaluation covered the rest of the SOs 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 and 4.1. In the following paragraph, the Independent Evaluator (IE) describes the overall approach while in paragraph 2.2 and 2.3 the IE distinguishes the different process followed in the two Evaluation Reports.

### **2.1. Methodology**

Within the impact evaluation's path, the IE adopted a **hybrid approach**, combining techniques for quantitative, qualitative, participatory and visual (tables and graphics) analysis based on direct (primary) and secondary data. This approach is able to offer a **rich explanatory potential** and a high degree of reliability in providing evaluative responses to complex issues, as:

- the need to support decision-making processes which are implemented in the context of the territorial cooperation (which involves a plurality of actors, institutional levels, different territories and network of cities) both for the ongoing and the next programming period;
- the peculiar nature of the actions to be evaluated (integrated and multidimensional policies).

In particular, the impact evaluation is carried out with reference to **participatory approach** (e.g. surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus group), which are particularly useful for the analysis of the partnership since they allow to enhance the different perspectives of the actors and the territories involved. They allow to interpret the cause-effect dynamics and the complex relationships which have been implemented in the frame of the Programme; at the same time, they trigger learning processes and develop visions and shared practices which may involve the management bodies, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The impact evaluation has benefited from the constant coordination with the MA staff which provided support to the Evaluator in order to identify the crucial information and contacts.

The methodological tools, involving a mix of different data gathering and analytical methods, include:

- **Desk analysis** of data extracted from the SIU, concerning the partnerships created with specific focus on type of bodies, legal seat country and implementing unit locations.
  - The desk analysis allows for the creation of graphs and tables to assess a) the geographical distribution of the partnerships, and of the lead partners in particular and b) the partnership composition. The information obtained thanks to the desk analysis have been used by the Evaluator to answer the evaluation questions.
- **Online Survey to Beneficiaries of the Programme**, both Lead Partners and Project Partners of all funded projects. The survey was conducted both in 2022 and 2023, the first year it was sent to the beneficiaries of SOs 1.1, 2.1 and 3.2 while in 2023 it was addressed to the project partners of SOs 2.2, 3.1, 3.3 and 4.1. The survey consisted of a mix of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The IE created different questionnaires for each SO. The survey

generated quantitative data about the perceptions of the beneficiaries and some qualitative data thanks to the answers to open-ended questions.

**Table 1 - Number of respondents for the survey**

SO	Respondents
1.1	18
2.1	27
2.2	11
3.1	34
3.2	7
3.3	11
4.1	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>131</b>

- **Semi-structured interviews with national and managing authorities and a sample of lead partners of projects.** The interviews were carried out during 2022 for the first impact evaluation report. In order to go more in-depth and further explore the results of the survey, semi-structured online interviews are conducted by the Evaluator. The interviews are preceded by the analysis of the application dossiers of the projects selected for the sample to deepen the levels of coherence and relevance of the project objectives with respect to the strategy of the Programme. The interviews generated qualitative information from the perspective of the selected beneficiaries that have been used by the Evaluator to answer to the Evaluation Questions. The interviews that will be conducted are 7, one with the MA, one with the JS, one with each National Authority involved and 3 with a sample of Lead Partners. This last category will be essential to double check the results emerged with the survey.

Semi structured interviews	n°
Managing Authority	1
Joint Secretariat	1
National Authorities	2
Lead Partners	3
<b>Totale</b>	<b>7</b>

## 2.2. Impact Evaluation 2022

This chapter describes the methodological approach approved by the Ma to proceed with the analysis of Evaluation Questions (EQs) that are oriented to investigate the impact of the CBC Programme. The EQs listed below are those that have been selected for the impact evaluation activities to be carried out in 2022. The chapter is divided into five paragraphs that each address one of the subgroups of EQs containing questions aimed at evaluating the impact of the Programme.

The EQs that have a direct reference to the analysis of the impact of the CBC Programme can also be distinguished into two further sub-categories that we define as:

- referring to the thematic and territorial sectoral dimensions of impact, and
- referring to the cross-sectoral dimension of impact (e.g. the added value of Italy-Croatia Programme, contribution to macro-regional strategies).

The first category concerns EQs that clearly refer to the specific objectives of the CBC Programme and the sectoral areas to which they relate (blue economy, climate change, natural and man-made disaster, cultural heritage, biodiversity, environmental quality, marine and coastal transport). The EQs which are related to the sectoral dimension of the implementation can also be analysed with reference to quantified output indicators. The level of achievement of the targets is one way of analysing the impact of the CBC Programme, but, in any case, these type of EQs should be analysed at a stage when most of the funded projects have completed their activities and, consequently, output and result indicators have reached almost definitive levels of progress - this condition will make it possible to perform analysis based also on quantitative data. In addition, it is important to stress the fact that impact evaluation should not be conducted too close to the end of projects. This is because potential results take time to manifest, and it would not be methodologically fair to measure the impact of projects that are just concluded. This is the rationale that guided the Evaluator through the construction of the methodological approach.

For these reasons and considering the impact evaluation methods that will be applied, we propose to implement a first quality-based step of thematic and territorial sectoral dimensions analysis during the first impact evaluation in 2022. This step will include a quality-based on-line survey directed to a first panel of standard+ and standard projects (i.e. S.O 1.1, S.O 2.1 and S.O 3.2).

The EQs have been classified by the MA into seven subgroups. For each of the questions, the MA has also specified the type of evaluation required in relation to two categories: operational and impact (see the following table<sup>1</sup>).

A - Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system	All Operational
B - Focus on the indicators system	All Operational
C - Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation	9 Impact
D - Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives	2 Impact
E - Cross-border cooperation added value and networking	1 Impact
F - Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy	4 Impact
G - Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets	All Impact

The EQs selected for the 2022 Impact Evaluation Report are the following:

### ***C - Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation***

The questions related to effectiveness and efficiency will be analyzed in both years. In the framework of the 2022 exercise, the analysis will provide still partial insights with respect to the Program's progress toward achieving three specific objectives (S.O.1.1, S.O. 2.1 and S.O 3.2). The approach will be focused on a quality-based tool, with on-line surveys addressed to the three specific objectives mentioned above,

<sup>1</sup> The number of the EQs refer in this table to the set listed in the Terms of Reference (ToR). In several cases one EQ listed in the ToR include more than one EQ. For tis reason the following table lists a larger number of EQs compared to this table.

that register a good percentage of projects closed. The initial analysis of the results achieved by the Programme will allow for a better orientation of the evaluation activities to be carried out during the 2023. During 2023, the other EQs's analysis will allow the integration of the assessments carried out as part of the first impact evaluation report.

Evaluation Questions	Techniques/Tools
To what extent has the Programme contributed to enhancing the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the <i>blue economy</i> within the cooperation area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
To what extent has the Programme contributed to improving the climate change monitoring and planning of <i>adaptation measures</i> tackling specific effects in the cooperation area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
To what extent has the Programme contributed to protecting and restoring the <i>biodiversity</i> in the cooperation area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>

### ***D - Relevance, consistency, and complementarity of the Programme objectives***

This theme explores the strategic complementarity of this programming period with the planning of the post 2020. This approach will include participative techniques as well as interviews and desk analysis.

Evaluation Questions	Techniques/Tools
Are there any stringent uncovered needs that could be tackled under this or future cross-border Programme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis (data and document analysis - primary and secondary sources)</li> <li>• Logical framework</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
Which are the main lessons learned relating the elaboration of Programme strategy during this programming period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis (data and document analysis - primary and secondary sources)</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
What can be improved to better address development needs in the next future?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>

### ***E - Cross-border cooperation added value and networking***

The two EQs in this subgroup are directed toward the assessment of the effects achieved through the implementation of the Programme in promoting the construction of an effective institutional and administrative framework, capable of achieving the expected results. This approach includes participatory techniques, interviews, and desk analysis. Impact and/or "performance-oriented" evaluation is concerned in this case with Programme and project management in relation to the ability to implement the CBC strategy.

Evaluation Questions	Techniques/Tools
To what extent has the Programme contributed to improve partners' administrative competences/ skills at Programme and project levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
Do involved partners efficiently contribute to achieving Programme/project expected results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis (data and document analysis - primary and secondary sources)</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>

### ***F - Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy***

The EQs were tackled both in the survey and in the semistructured interviews. This provides a detailed overview of the perceptions of PPs, LPs and institutional bodies such as MA, JS and National Authorities.

<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Techniques/Tools</b>
Has the Programme raised awareness about its activities and achievements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
To what extent the communication strategy has contributed to improve the knowledge on EU funds and the CBC Programme objectives and opportunities in the cooperation area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
Were communication tools effective in increasing awareness on Programme objectives and offered opportunities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
Which tools were most successful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
Has the Programme contributed to increase the capacity of projects to communicate their own achievements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>

### ***G - Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets***

In the 2014-2020 programming period the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) overall aim is to create synergies and fostering coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. The Interreg Italy-Croatia CBC Programme 2021-2027 will be focussing on the blue economy, capitalising previous cooperation experiences and creating stronger synergies with EUSAIR. Actually, the synergy and complementarities among territories/Programmes have been strengthened through the implementation of **ongoing inter-programme coordination among Interreg programmes**. At the same time, EUSAIR Facility Point launched an online public consultation at the EUSAIR Annual Forum (May 2022) for better involving EUSAIR stakeholders and the interested general public in the Action Plan revision process that will be opened until June 2022. The aim is to have the first draft of the Action Plan in autumn 2022. Based on a series of consolidated inputs by all EUSAIR actors, the European Commission will use the consolidated proposal to draft the future Action Plan.

In this framework the evaluation questions related to Italy-Croatia Programme contribution to both EUSAIR macroregional strategy and to other macroregional strategy as well as the complementarity activated with other Programmes insisting on the same cooperation area seems to be a very interesting and strategic theme to be included in the analysis covered by the 2022 Impact evaluation.

During the 2022, the on-line survey for the first panel of closed standard projects will include also a section related to “Contribution to macro-regional strategies” to collect qualitative information and data useful for EQs’ answering.

The following EQ is strictly connected to the Programme level. Desk analysis will be the main tool to answer to this first evaluation question, for example by collecting relevant issues stemming from Annual Implementation Reports. The synoptic framework of coherence between the Programme and EUSAIR will be implemented per each Pillar with a specific analysis of the actions envisaged by the Programme for ensuring the coherence with EUSAIR. The on-line survey will be also very useful in order to collect qualitative information and data.

<b>Evaluation Questions</b>	<b>Techniques/Tools</b>
To what extent has Italy-Croatia CBC Programme contributed to EUSAIR macroregional strategy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis and document analysis (e.g. AIRs; monitoring data, projects deliverables, etc.)</li> <li>• Quality-based on-line survey with closed standard projects</li> </ul>



The second EQ is very challenging and require an **in-depth desk analysis conducted at project level**. The on-line survey will be very useful in order to collect qualitative information and data. The evaluation exercise will allow highlighting the Programme support of EUSAIR through projects implementation.

Evaluation Questions	Techniques/Tools
The solutions adopted by the Programme in order to support the implementation of the EUSAIR through the projects have been effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis/Synoptic framework of coherence</li> <li>• Quality-based on-line survey with closed standard projects</li> </ul>

As known, the Italy-Croatia Programme area tackles three macro-regional strategies: EUSAIR, EUSALP (just Italian side), and EUSDR (just Croatian side). Consequently, the evaluation has to cover also the Programme contribution to other macro-regional strategies, i.e., EUSALP and EUSDR. In addition, in that case the web-based survey will be very useful to collect qualitative information and data.

Evaluation Questions	Techniques/Tools
Has the Italy-Croatia CBC Programme contributed also to other macroregional strategies (EUSALP, EUSDR) involving the cooperation area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Quality-based on-line survey with closed standard projects</li> </ul>

In the framework of the 2014-2020 programming period, the integration of funds (and activities) is considered a priority action and Article 96.3 (D) of Regulation 1303/2013 requires the use of part of the allocation allocated to the ROPs to finance interregional actions and transnational with partners from other Member States.

In this context, the impact evaluation 2022 will cover **desk analysis** of synergies and complementarities implemented by Italy-Croatia CBC Programme with other Interreg programmes in particular at project level with an in-depth analysis of Italy-Croatia cluster call.

Actually, the 2021-2027 programming period will be based on a strategic approach that shows a strong emphasis on synergies with other tools and policies development as well as an active networking among MAs.

The web-based survey will be very useful in order to collect qualitative information and data with particular reference to Italy-Croatia added value.

Evaluation Questions	Techniques/Tools
Which kind of synergies with other Interreg and mainstream programmes involving the cooperation area have been activated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Quality-based on-line survey with closed standard projects</li> </ul>
To what extent such synergies produce enhanced results in terms of integration and complementarities and what is the Italy- Croatia CBC Programme added value?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Quality-based on-line survey with closed standard projects</li> </ul>

### 2.3. Impact Evaluation 2023

As already mentioned, the IE will adopt a **hybrid approach**, combining techniques for quantitative, qualitative, participatory, and visual (tables and graphics) analysis based on direct (primary) and secondary data.

This will make it possible to define which territorial areas have had a greater concentration of public spending and funded projects and, consequently, which areas, on the contrary, have been the least involved in the Programme's implementation process.

In the table below the IE lists the EQs that will be answered in the impact evaluation 2023. It is important to state that even though block D (Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives), E (Cross-border cooperation added value and networking), F (Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy), and other cross-cutting EQs – see the list below - are not included in this impact evaluation the IE decided to tackle them to give more comprehensive answers, validating elements emerged in 2022 with what has come up in 2023.

- *To what extent has Italy-Croatia CBC Programme contributed to the EU 2020 Strategy for a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth?*
- *To what extent has Italy-Croatia CBC Programme contributed to EUSAIR macroregional strategy?*
- *The solutions adopted by the Programme in order to support the implementation of the EUSAIR through the projects have been effective?*
- *Has the Italy-Croatia CBC Programme contributed also to other macroregional strategies (EUSALP, EUSDR) involving the cooperation area?*
- *Which kind of synergies with other Interreg and mainstream programmes involving the cooperation area have been activated?*
- *To what extent such synergies produce enhanced results in terms of integration and complementarities and what is the Italy- Croatia CBC Programme added value?*

These cross-cutting themes need to be tackled keeping in mind the point of view of a vast audience. This can surely contribute to presenting more robust results. The results emerging from the survey and from the desk analysis that provide interesting insights will be taken into consideration when updating the answers to the EQs.

### C - Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation

Evaluation Questions	Techniques/Tools
What is the progress towards the overall Programme goal, specific objectives and expected results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> </ul>
How is the progress in relation to the means and resources mobilized?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> </ul>
To what extent has the Programme achieved its general and specific objectives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
Were there any internal or external factors hindering the achievement of the Italy Croatia CBC Programme goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
Have performances in the field of <i>blue innovation</i> improved?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
To what extent has the Programme contributed to increase the safety of the cooperation area from <i>natural and man-made disaster</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
To what extent has the Programme contributed to make <i>natural and cultural heritage</i> a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development in the cooperation area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
Has the Programme succeeded in strengthening the shared management and protection of <i>cross-border ecosystems</i> also for developing economic and employment opportunities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>

Evaluation Questions	Techniques/Tools
To what extent has the Programme contributed to improving the environmental <i>quality conditions of the sea and coastal area</i> by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
To what extent has the Programme succeeded in improving the <i>quality of the sea and bathing waters</i> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>
To what extent has the Programme contributed to improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of <i>marine and coastal transport services</i> and nodes by promoting multimodality in the cooperation area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Survey</li> </ul>

### G - Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets

Evaluation Questions	Techniques
What change can be observed in relation to the objectives of the Programme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
How they are distributed at a territorial level?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
To what extent can observed changes be directly attributed to the Programme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
Are there unintended impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
What mechanisms delivered the impact?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change (logical framework)</li> </ul>
What are key contextual features for these mechanisms?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change (logical framework)</li> </ul>
Does the impact vary by subgroup within the main target group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> </ul>
Did the Programme succeed in achieving the expected impacts on the different target groups?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> </ul>
Will short-run effects of the intervention differ from those in the long run?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> </ul>
What are the main lessons learnt during the 2014/2020 period concerning both the programming and implementation phases?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
What can be replied or improved in the next CBC Programme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>

### 3. Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation

#### 3.1. Blue economy

The projects financed under the specific objective 1.1 "Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area" are 12 in total; of these 8 projects were selected with the Call of the Standard projects, 3 with the Call of Standard + projects, and one with the Call of Strategic projects. As of July 31, 2021, the Standard and Standard + projects were concluded (at this date the operations of control of the spending documents were still in progress for three Standard projects), while the activities of the strategic project (InnovaMare) were still in progress and cluster projects were in startup phase. With the exception of a Standard project (CoastEnergy), whose Lead Partner is of Croatian nationality (Irena - Istarska Regionalna Energetska Agencija D.O.O.), and the Strategic project, whose lead partner is the Croatian Chamber of Economy (Hrvatska Gospodarska Komora), all the other

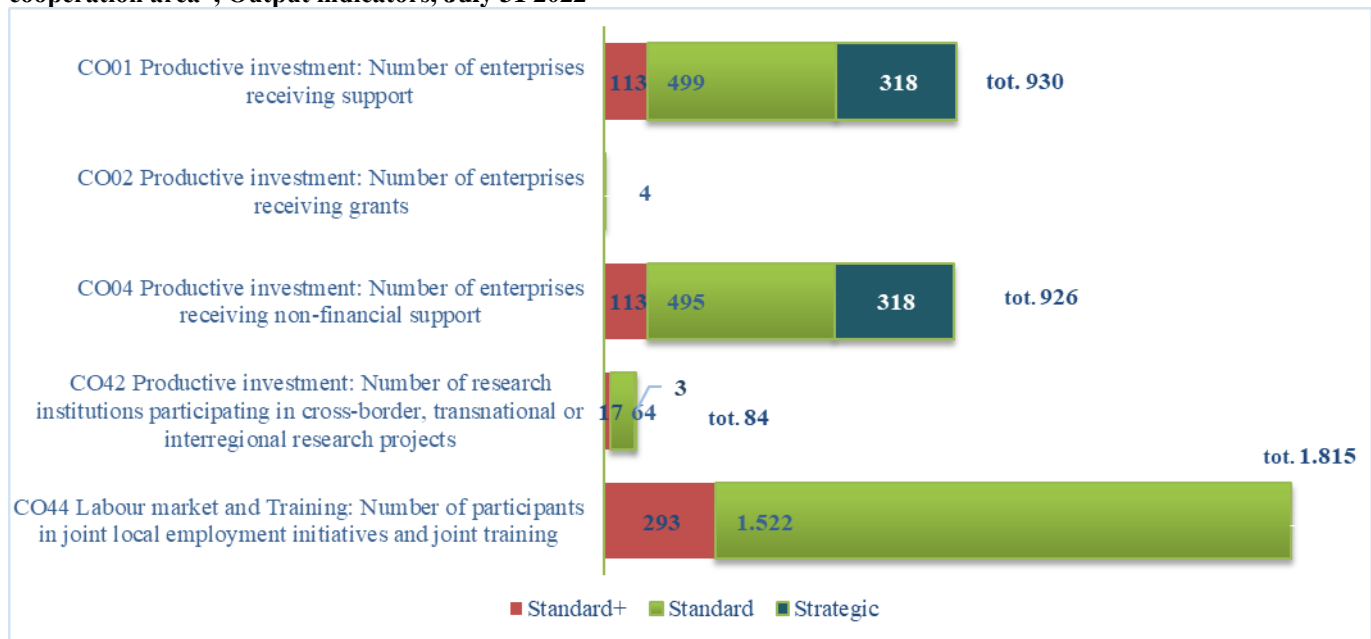
projects have an Italian lead partner. The lead partners are mainly attributable to two categories, the University and Center of Research (4), and the Chamber of Commerce and the Agencies for the SME innovation (4); the other categories are the Regional and Local Public Authorities (2), and the Regional Agencies for Innovation (2).

The graph below shows the values of the 5 output indicators linked to the Specific Objective 1.1. The first indicator (CO01) represents the number of the enterprises receiving ERDF support in all forms. The value of the indicator is the sum of the Common Output Indicators CO02 and CO04. The number of companies that have benefited from the activities of the projects is quite significant and amounts to 930 companies. The largely prevalent support received from the companies concerns a non-financial contribution (based on the data provided by the beneficiaries to the monitoring system) but rather benefits that concern the specific knowledge and relationships that have been created in the field of research and development and in market relations thanks to the participation in the project activities. The number of companies that obtained non-financial support was 926 out of a total of 930. Over half of the companies come from Standard projects (54%), while 34% from Strategic projects and 12% from Standard+ projects. With regard to the enterprises that received financial support, the monitoring system records the forecasts of the completed projects that show the overall difficulty of the Programme in involving this type of partner. Against an estimate of reaching 6 enterprises through financial contributions, the output indicator records 4 enterprises so far involved. Furthermore, as we have previously commented, the enterprises were involved by only one AdriAquaNet Standard project.

The CO42 indicator reports the number of research institutes participating in the projects funded in SO1. Again, the number of universities and research institutions involved in the projects is significant and amounts to 84, most of them involved in the partnerships of Standard projects (76%), followed by Standard + (20%) and finally the Strategic project with 3 universities and research institutions.

The CO44 indicator reports the number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training activities. The value of this indicator is particularly interesting. The number of participants reached by training activities or other actions aimed at deepening the knowledge of markets and of the innovations in manufacturing or service sectors linked to the blue economy is 1.815, the participants reached by the strategic project was not yet recorded by the monitoring system at the deadline considered. Most of the participants counted by the indicator are reached by Standard projects (84%).

**S.O. 1.1 “Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area”, Output indicators, July 31 2022**



The Standard project “Fairsea” is one of those which significantly increased the value of this indicator thanks mainly to the success of the technical meetings for policy makers and the involvement of a good number of students and professionals from the editions of the Advanced schools organised by the project. The main objective of the project is to improve the understanding of the 'Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries' (EAF), which is based on the recognition of the wide range of economic and social interests that exist in marine ecosystems. Seminars at secondary schools and universities allowed to introduce EAF concepts. Webinars underlining the principles of EAF, introducing different aspects related to the project and illustrating the integrated tool (theory and application) were held targeting the general public as well as students.

Other projects oriented their training activities towards other target groups, such as economic operators and professionals, e.g., veterinarians. In this context, the “AdriAquaNet” Standard project was able to significantly increase the number of stakeholders involved through the organisation of technical meetings, e.g., the seminar "Health management of fish farms and the improvement of sustainability in mariculture". The 'PrizeFish' standard project worked in this direction to consolidate the network between universities, training institutes, territorial development agencies and SMEs, and realised specific cross-border training events to disseminate professional skills in eco-innovative fishing to a wide audience ranging from fishermen to fish processing industry operators, including sector stakeholders and NGOs.

**Box – Excerpts from the interview with a Lead partner of a concluded Standard project**

During one of the semi-structured interviews with the Lead Partner of one of the S.O. 1.1 projects, some interesting considerations emerged on the importance of sharing the different perspectives of diverse types of partners – in particular research organisations and companies - in order to build tools that are useful to the different user communities. The lead partner lists a number of outputs and highlights their relevant characteristics that do not otherwise emerge from the mere reading of an indicator.

*“One of the aspects of the Programme that I saw from the beginning as a positive one is the orientation towards the sharing of information and knowledge base, as well as tools and objectives. This is more likely to happen in the area of research, but not in a business context, such as fisheries, where operators work in*

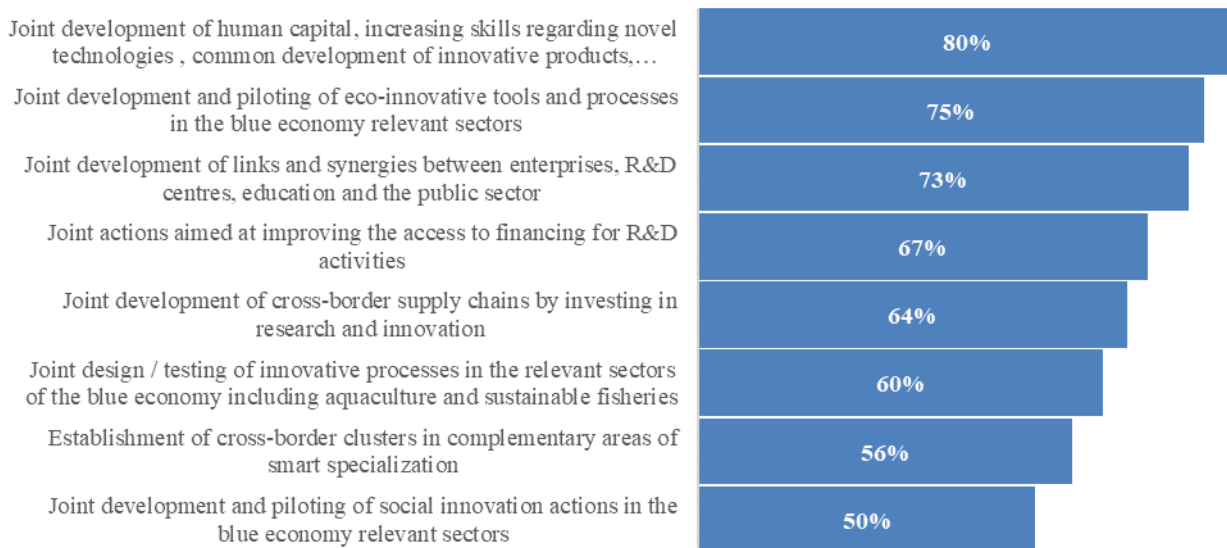
*a competitive environment with many regional specificities. However, having established a broad partnership and a strong link with the fishing companies has led us to build a basis of mutual trust and, above all, to orient the research work towards the needs of the companies. The integrated platform we created was developed by the partners and combines data and information concerning both countries. For the first time, sensitive data such as logbooks and individual vessel positioning data were shared between Italy and Croatia. These are data collected by each individual Member States but not normally shared. The presence of the national authorities and an active partnership made it possible, with some effort, to achieve this result, which is useful for those involved in economic activities as well as for those interested in environmental issues. This product continues to be used thanks to its inclusion in a Cluster project. Furthermore, there is another aspect of the Programme strategy that has had an impact on the way we work, and I refer to the emphasis placed on communication activities. We have interpreted this orientation not so much to build standard tools, but rather to create innovative tools to promote knowledge of the marine ecosystem in line with the objectives of our project.”*

### **Analysis of the results of the survey**

The first question addressed to the partners of the projects financed under O.S. 1.1 asked them to express their opinion on the degree of impact that the actions of the Programme have had in contributing to enhancing innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area. From the responses collected, it emerges that:

- the main enabling factor of the innovation processes according to the interviewed partners are the activities dedicated to the *development of human capital and in particular the specialised skills in the new technologies*: as many as 80% of the interviewees consider the contribution made by these types of actions to be “good” or “very good”;
- although to a slightly lesser extent, projects aimed at the *joint development and testing of eco-innovative tools and processes* (75%) and those *promoting links and synergies between companies, R&D centres, education and the public sector* (73%) also appear crucial for the consolidation of innovation processes;
- the areas that received the lowest shares of positive ratings concerned the *experimentation of social innovation actions* (50%) and *integration between cross-border clusters in a smart specialization framework* (56%).

**S.O. 1.1. – “Following your specific project’s experience, which of the following actions actually contributed to enhance innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area?” (The percentage highlight the sum of the responses “Very Good” and “Good”)**

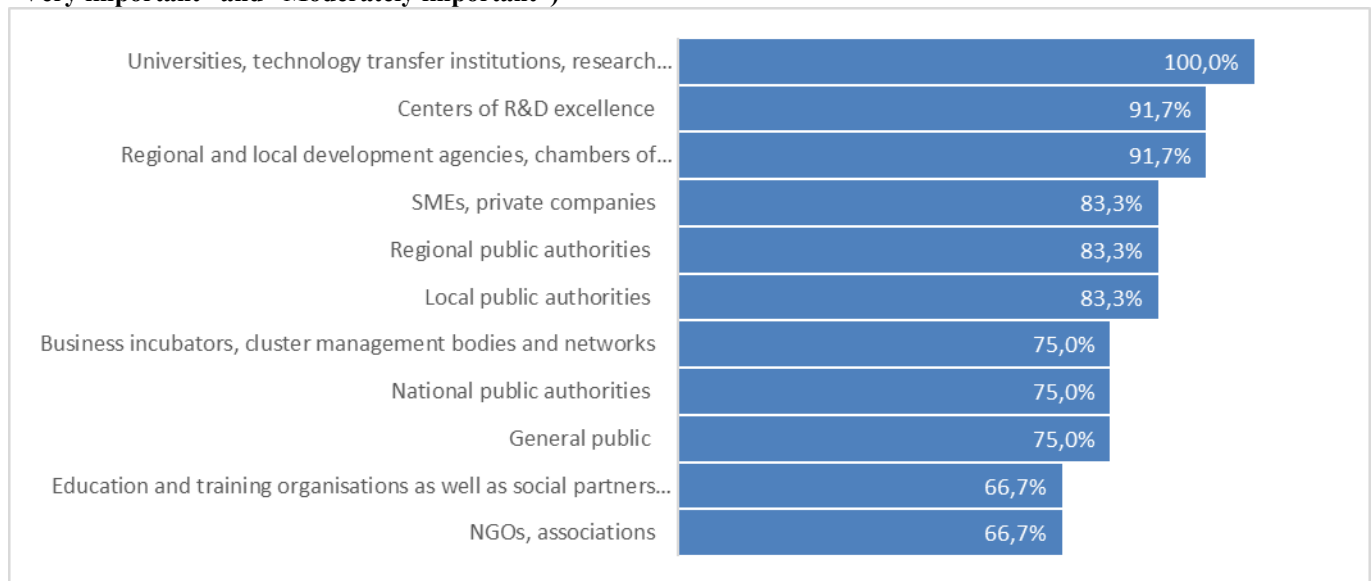


The next question, addressed exclusively to the lead partners (LPs) of the completed projects, sought to establish in which areas of the Blue Economy the Programme had made a significant contribution to strengthening the framework conditions for innovation. Only four LPs responded to this question - this dimension will have to be explored further in the next impact evaluation report of the Programme when the number of completed projects will be greater and, above all, the strategic projects will also be involved. However, the sector that benefited most from the Programme's intervention to promote innovation processes, according to the LPs that responded, was “maritime and coastal tourism” (three LPs out of four); for half of the LPs, the other sectors that benefited were: Monitoring and surveillance, Aquaculture and sustainable fisheries, Marine biotechnology, Coastal protection.

The questionnaire continues with a question open to all partners concerning their opinion on which actors - corresponding to the Programme's target groups - played an important role in promoting the innovation process in the cooperation area.

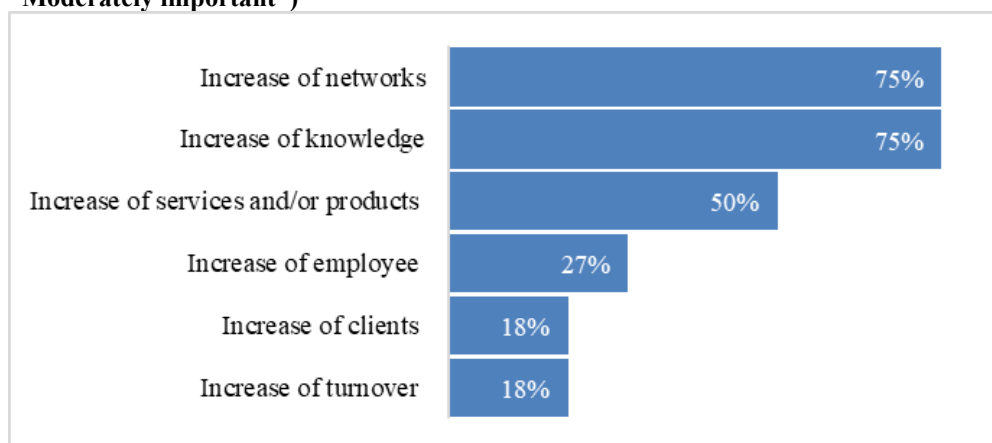
- The totality of the interviewed believe that the *University* together with *research and technology transfer organizations* played a decisive role in innovation processes in the cooperation area.
- Another substantial share (about 92 percent) indicated *Centers of R&D excellence* and an identical share the *Regional and local development agencies, chambers of commerce and other business support organizations*.
- *Businesses and Regional and Local public authorities* obtain the same percentage (83%).
- More marginal appears to be the role played by *NGOs and associations; education and training organizations and labor market institutions*, indicated “very important” or “moderately important” by 67% of the beneficiaries.

**S.O. 1.1. “Which of the following subjects - which correspond to the target groups of the Program - had an important role in promoting the innovation process in the cooperation area?” (The percentage highlight the sum of the responses “Very important” and “Moderately important”)**



Concerning the spill-over effects on the different dimensions of the partners’ organisations as a result of their project participation, 75% of the beneficiaries believe that the projects promoted within the S.O. 1.1 contributed to the expansion of their network of relations and a similar proportion of respondents believe that the participation to the project contributed to the development of technical and specialistic knowledge. Half of the respondents also claim to have improved the quality of the services and products offered by their organisations. Finally, for 27% of cases, the participation in the project also had an effect on increasing employment within their organisations.

**S.O. 1.1. “As a consequence of the participation to the project activities did your organization/company registered any of the following specific effects?” (The percentage highlight the sum of the responses “Very important” and “Moderately important”)**



### **3.2. Adaptation measures tackling specific effects in the cooperation area**

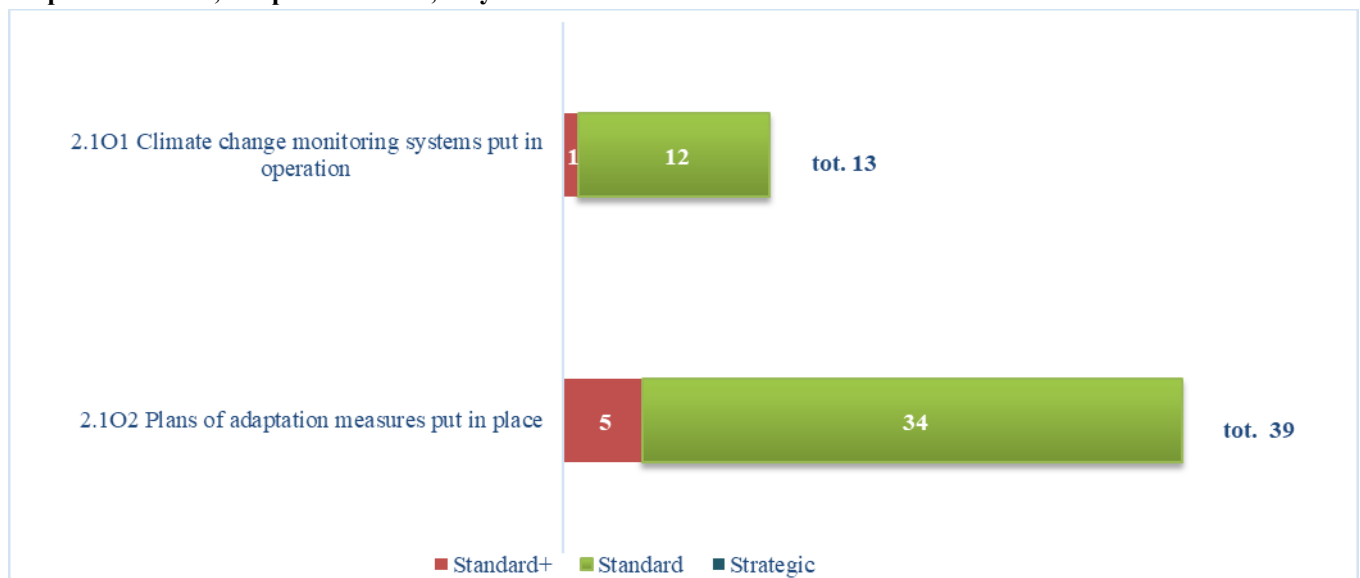
The projects financed under the specific objective 2.1 “Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area” are 9 in total; of these 7 projects were selected with the Call of the Standard projects, 1 with the Call of Standard + projects, and one with the Call of Strategic projects. As of July 31, 2022, the Standard and Standard + projects were



concluded (at this date the operations of control of the spending documents were still in progress for three Standard projects), while the activities of the strategic project (AdriaClim) were still in progress and cluster projects were in startup phase. With the exception of the Standard+ project (iDEAL), whose Lead Partner is of Croatian nationality (Irena - Istarska Regionalna Energetska Agencija D.O.O.), all the other projects have an Italian lead partner. The lead partners are mainly attributable to two categories, the University and Centers of Research (4), and the Regional or National Agencies (5) - one of those, the Regional Agency for Prevention, Environment and Energy of Emilia Romagna (“Agenzia Regionale per la prevenzione l'ambiente e l'energia dell'Emilia-Romagna), was acting as the lead partner of a Standard project and perform the same position in the Strategic project.

The following graph shows the values of the 2 output indicators linked to Specific Objective 2.1. The final target for the two indicators has been significantly increased from the initial value, which was set at 5 for both. The first indicator (2.101) represents the number of monitoring systems put in place in relation to processes of planning and implementation of interventions aimed at improving the capacity of the territories to adapt to climate change<sup>2</sup>. The value of the indicator corresponds to the realisations of the Standard and Standard+ projects, and is equal to 13 compared to the 21 foreseen by the projects, reaching about 62% of the target. The second indicator (2.102) "Plans of adaptation measures" refers to the action plans promoted by project activities at the local level aimed at preventing or minimizing the negative effects of climate change on, for example, water resources, urban environment, agriculture. The indicator shows that 39 adaptation plans have been implemented out of 46 planned by the projects - reaching approximately 85% of the revised target. Strategic project implementations are still missing, while the target of the Standard projects for the second indicator was not fully achieved.

**S.O 2.1 “Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area”, Output indicators, July 31 2022**



<sup>2</sup> The “Methodological document on Programme result indicators, output indicators and performance framework”, published in October 2018 by the Italy – Croatia CBC Programme 2014-2020 describe the operative definition of the indicator referring to a previous document of the European Environment Agency as follow: “Climate change monitoring refers to a continuous process of examining progress made in planning and implementing climate adaptation. This might also include examining the context and environment within which adaptation occurs or drivers which shape resilience and vulnerability. The objective of monitoring can be described as keeping track of progress made in implementing an adaptation intervention by using systematic collection of data on specified indicators and reviewing the measure in relation to its objectives and inputs, including financial resources (EEA, “National monitoring, reporting and evaluation of climate change adaptation in Europe”, EEA Report No 20/2015).

The achievements that are recorded by the two indicators of the S.O. 2.1 are closely related to each other. Monitoring systems are often linked to spatial Plans for adaptation to climate change. Each case of implementation of an adaptation Plan was accompanied by a report based on the data of the monitoring system using the values corresponding to the area covered by the planning exercise. In some cases, the number of the reports developed through the data-analysis of the monitoring systems has increased during the implementation of the projects, covering more areas and supporting more adaptation plans than those foreseen.

The monitoring systems implemented have been developed in relation to the specific needs of the partner territories, while representing widespread phenomena in the cooperation area. In the case of the Standard project “Asteris”, for example, the monitoring system has allowed to improve the available information on factors and mechanisms regulating coastal aquifer salinization over selected case studies. These results provided a tool for adaptation and mitigation strategies by territorial agencies. The vulnerability model has been tested in 3 pilot areas: Fano and Ravenna coastal areas in Italy and the Neretva Valley in Croatia. The Standard project “Response”, on the other hand, started its activity analyzing and comparing historical climate data over Adriatic regions, identifying significant rising changes in temperature variable and indices, including *sea surface temperature*, and *local specific precipitation changes*. Subsequently, the project collected in the "Climate Menu supporting system tool" a significant number of good practices in order to facilitate the access of the partner territories to information useful for planning measures to combat climate change at the local level. The project supported the implementation of sustainable action plans in 6 municipalities thanks to the development of a standardized methodology for the analysis of risks and vulnerabilities.

The Standard + “iDeal” project also started with the development of a *climate change vulnerability analysis* which aimed to increase awareness and knowledge of the impacts of climate change in the pilot areas. In both cases, the projects promoted a broad participation of stakeholders at the local level, also in order to define the priorities and objectives to be achieved and the specific areas of intervention of the Climate Adaptation Plans. The sharing of the design strategy made it possible to define a set of indicators to be used in order to support the decision-making processes at local level. iDeal's approach to climate change monitoring is particularly geared towards accompanying the implementation path of the adaptation Plans, as well as to support local public administrations to make appropriate decisions related to climate measures and to develop coherent actions. In this case, monitoring supports the evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Plans in relation to the needs of the contexts. Among the activities to support the decision-making processes of the local authorities the catalog of good practices also emerges<sup>3</sup>. The catalog was important in order to integrate the process of cooperation with local authorities with a benchmarking activity. The activities of the iDeal project clearly show how the output indicators of this S.O. are able to represent two of the main achievements that emerge from an accompanying process but there are other activities that are not clear from a simple reading of the indicators. We refer in particular to all the actions which support the public administrations in order to provide their decision-making processes with reliable information, with reference to good practices in the management and implementation of measures to counter the effects of climate change, and other data and techniques. All these activities do not end with the implementation of monitoring systems and, in the case of iDeal, are defined as DSS, or “Decision Support System”, which consists of many activities that are only partially attributable to the products to

---

<sup>3</sup> The Final Activity Report of the iDeal project describe the components of the Catalogue: “Catalogue consists from 32 best practices collected by iDEAL project partners. The BPs presented are attributable to the 3 to 4 types of previously selected impacts by each partner. The main impact areas are Energy (11), Hydrology and water resources (8) and Coasts (6) which are also cross-border. These sectors are considerate from the Italian (3) and Croatian (2) Partner as more important than others like Socio-economic (4), Agriculture (1) and Ecosystem and Environment (1).”

which the indicators refer, but which in some cases emerge as an output "per se". A further level of deepening of the contents characterising the project outputs concerns the analysis of the characteristics of the Climate Adaptation Plans elaborated by iDEAL partners. The plans are constructed with reference to a typology of actions that are commonly linked to climate change mitigation strategies

These actions have been grouped into different categories: “grey infrastructure”, “green infrastructure” and “local policies” (see the following table). Grey infrastructure refers to structures such as dams, sea walls, roads, pipelines or water treatment plants. They are characterised by an increasing need for maintenance, which entails a considerable economic cost.

**iDeal project – Actions included in the Climate Adaption Plans**

Partner	Actions
LP – IRENA – area of Rovinj, Poreč and Vrsar	9 actions: 7 grey actions, 2 green solutions
PP1 – area of Municipality of Pesaro	6 actions: 2 grey actions, 4 green solutions
PP3 – area of Municipality of Misano Adriatico	10 actions: 2 grey actions, 6 green solutions, 2 policies
PP4 – area of Dubrovnik	12 actions: 5 grey actions, 7 green solutions
PP5 – area of Dune Costiere Park	7 actions: 5 green solutions, 2 policies

Green infrastructures, which are becoming increasingly popular, are based on the exploitation of the organic dynamics of natural ecosystems; they refer to natural systems such as forests, floodplains, wetlands and soils that provide additional benefits for human well-being, such as flood protection and climate regulation. The maintenance they require is constant and some studies show a trend of decreasing costs over time. Finally, local policies consist of strategies to change the adaptive capacity of society by acting on the behavioural sphere. This may or may not be encouraged through various economic instruments, which facilitate the effectiveness of the measure and the achievement of its purpose.

The case of the Standard JointSecap project confirms the importance of the accompanying activities addressed to local administrations and stakeholders that contributed to the main project achievements, i.e., the "Joint actions for climate change adaptation plans". In fact, the project developed a set of actions that stand alongside the monitoring system (documented by the output indicator) and are collectively referred to as the “Joint\_SECAP support platform”. This complex tool is configured as a data set for comparing and monitoring data, information and practices and therefore can also be integrated after project closure in order to support the implementation of other planning activities. The Final Activity Report of the project contains a number of considerations on the *lessons learnt* during the implementation, among which we report some that we find particularly interesting:

- 1) “Stakeholder engagement is more effective when stakeholders have been involved since the beginning. Results show that the engagement of stakeholders and citizens, particularly at the local level, can significantly facilitate the acceptance of adaptation plans and be more remarkable in small municipalities because citizens and stakeholders have more opportunities to participate.”
- 2) “Municipalities need an internal transformation to fulfil their Climate Change goals, which implies a new horizontal cooperation among local stakeholders, including the public sector, private sector and citizen networks, and vertical cooperation among different levels: European, national, regional, and local”.
- 3) “In order to guarantee the successfulness of adaptation actions in the target areas, municipalities must cooperate in bundling together adaptation projects to make them bankable and combine different sources of funding”.

These issues highlight the importance of stakeholder and citizen involvement, but also the necessary change at the level of public administrations, both internally and in their ability to coordinate action on issues of transversal relevance in the cooperation territory. In the light of these considerations, it is clear that the effectiveness of climate change adaptation plans must be evaluated together with local authorities in order to check to what extent the elaboration of the Plans has been followed by a process of implementation of

the projects contained within them and what has been the impact of their implementation - as well as of the programming process that has been promoted by the Programme. Finally, an evaluation of this kind must also take place in a reasonable time after the end of the Programme.

**Box – Excerpts from the interview with a Lead partner of a concluded Standard project**

The interview with the Lead Partner of one of the S.O. 2.1 projects has shown how the main outputs (platform, monitoring system, training) were developed in a very different partnership context and how this made it possible to improve the characteristics of the outputs themselves, and in particular to broaden the application possibilities. The project introduced innovative measures to monitor and offset CO2 emissions through effective cross-border cooperation. The project has involved the agricultural sector, promoting the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices by connecting agricultural enterprises with industrial enterprises; another important activity has been the introduction of a number of services to ensure the start-up of a voluntary market for carbon credits, with both economic and environmental benefits.

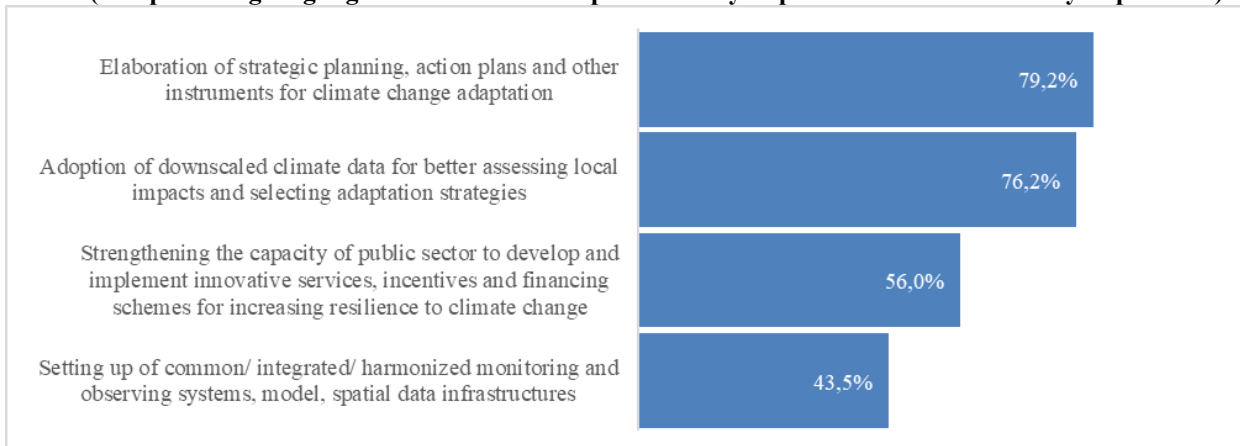
*"Developing the project in two national economic contexts that are very different in terms of the type of production and size of the farms allowed the model to be tested more thoroughly. In particular, the Croatian partners very seriously pushed for the adoption and dissemination of these practices, emphasising their economic as well as environmental benefits. At the end of the project, the Croatian partners interacted with the Ministry of Agriculture to try to better clarify how the use of carbon quotas can be related to fiscal policies. In this perspective the project promoted the growth of voluntary markets for the transfer of carbon quotas. [...] It would be very important to foster opportunities for exchange between the projects and national and European authorities, particularly so that many innovations emerging from experimental practices can come to the attention of the authorities that have the potential to bring about legislative changes."*

**Analysis of the results of beneficiary interviews**

The first question addressed to the partners of the completed projects financed by O.S. 2.1 aimed to explore their opinions on which actions actually contributed to improve the monitoring and planning of adaptation measures related to climate change in the cooperation area.

- For 79% of the beneficiaries, actions focusing on *strategic and local planning support tools* had the greatest impact in terms of strengthening the capacity to govern and manage policies aimed at coping with the effects of climate change in the cooperation area.
- For 76% of the beneficiaries, the adoption of *downscaled climate data* for the Italy-Croatia area was also of substantial importance.
- More than half also considered the contribution of actions aimed at *developing new services and intervention models* to be important.
- Less widespread was the perception of the usefulness of actions aimed at *sharing and integrating monitoring and observation systems* (43.5%).

**S.O. 2.1 – “Following your specific project’s experience, which of the following actions actually contributed to improve the monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling following effects of the climate change in the cooperation area?” (The percentage highlight the sum of the responses “Very important” and “Moderately important”)**



The next question concerns the judgment of the beneficiaries on the importance of the participation to the Programme of a range of actors in improving the planning and monitoring of actions to counter the effects of climate change in the cooperation area.

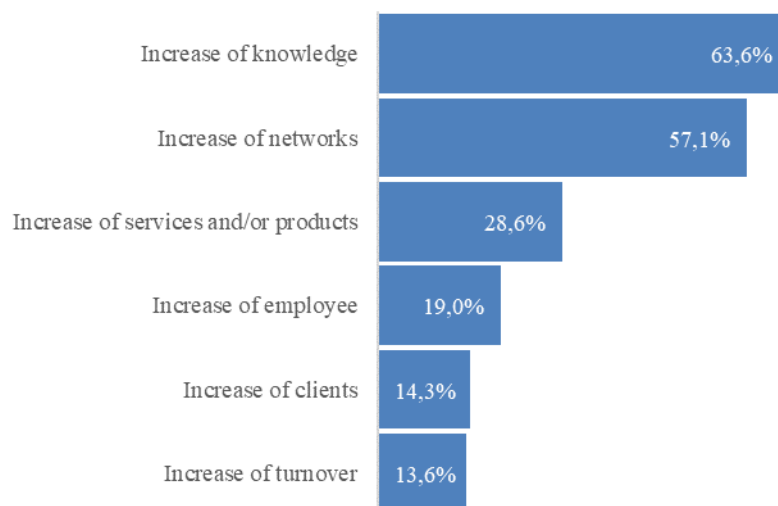
- The participation of regional public authorities is considered crucial in consolidating the governance and management framework for climate adaptation measures in the cooperation area: ninety-two percent of the beneficiaries agreed on the importance of the role played by these actors.
- Other substantial shares regard the contribution made by associations or nongovernmental organizations and national public bodies as important or very important (both categories concentrate 76 percent of positive ratings).
- Slightly lower is the weight assumed by training institutions (74 percent).
- The shares of those who indicated Universities and research institutions or Local public authorities are smaller (both categories with 48 percent); nevertheless, almost all of the lead partners interviewed believe that a greater involvement of these same actors (along with civil society organizations, NGOs and general public) in the future activities of the Program is a priority in order to improve the monitoring and planning of adaptation measures in the cooperation area.

**S.O. 2.1 – “Which of the following subjects had an important role in improving the monitoring and planning of adaptation measures in the cooperation area?” (The percentage highlight the sum of the responses “Very important” and “Moderately important”)**



Regarding the partners' opinion of the spillover effects on their organizations as a result of their participation to the project activities, it has emerged that for 63 percent of the beneficiaries, the effect of the participation resulted in an increase in the specific knowledge held by their organization, for 57 percent in an expansion of their networks. Rather less significant were the effects on the improvement of services or products (27 percent), employment (19 percent), increase in the number of clients and turnover (14 percent).

**S.O. 2.1 – “As a consequence of the participation to the project activities did your organization/company registered any of the following specific effects?” (Only for Private Partners)**



**3.3. Natural and man-made disaster**

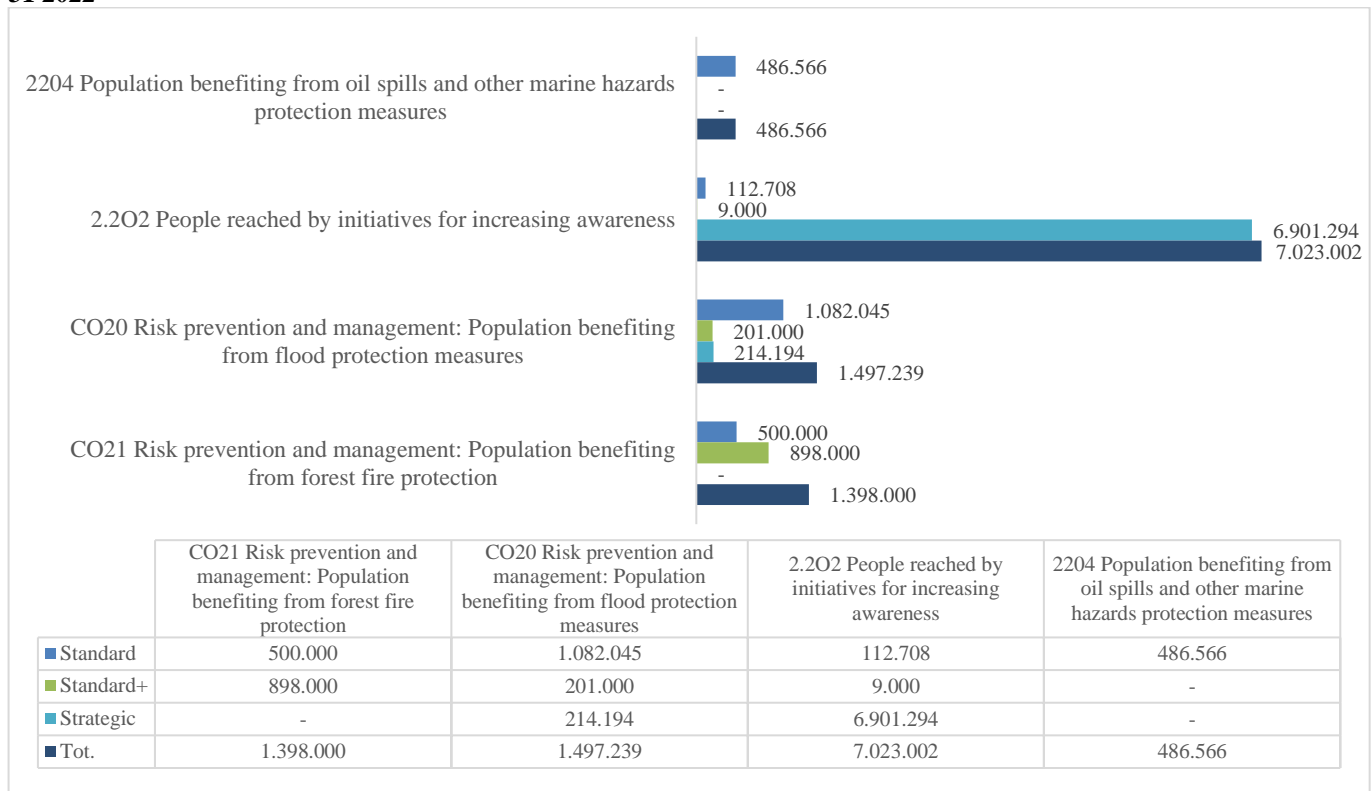
The projects financed under the specific objective 2.2 "Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster" are 7 in total; of these 3 projects were selected with the Call of the Standard projects, 2 with the Call of Standard + projects, and 2 with the Call of Strategic projects.

As of December 31, 2022, the Standard and Standard + projects were concluded, while the activities of the strategic project were still in progress.

Both the Strategic projects Stream and Firespill are led by a Croatian partner, respectively the Zadar County Development Agency Zadra Nova (which is also leading the Standard project Pepsea); the Public Institution Rera S.D. for Coordination and Development of Split Dalmatia County. The other 4 projects are led by an Italian partner: Regione Molise (the Standard project E-Citijens and the Standard+ project Readiness), Regione Abruzzo (the Standard+ project AdriaMORE), and Università di Ferrara (the Standard project PMO-Gate)

The graph, and the table, below shows the values of the 4 output indicators linked to the Specific Objective 2.2. The first indicator (2.204) represents the population which have benefited from protection measures on oil spills and marine hazards. The value reached by the indicator (486.566 citizens) correspond to the output of the concluded Standard project, while the update target (2.914.462,00 citizens) corresponds to the sum of the output expected by the implementation of the Standard projects and the Strategic projects – the latter did not register any progress so far – while the target defined by the Programme was much lower (1.200.000 citizens). The indicator registers an advancement of 17% compared to the updated target.

**S.O. 2.2 Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster. Output indicators, December 31 2022**



The second indicator (2.202) represents the number of citizens involved in initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the need to take measures to adequately respond to natural and man-made disasters. The updating of the target value of the indicator resulted in a significant change in scale from the 100,000 citizens targeted by the Programme to more than 7 million citizens as an outcome of the activities of the funded projects. The target was reached (99,7%) thanks to the contribution of all three project types, Standard, Standard+ and Strategic; the latter in particular, operating over a wide target area, brought a crucial contribution.

The indicator (CO20) "Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from flood protection measures" also saw a realignment of the target to the expected results from the funded projects. In fact, its value increased from 1.5 million people to about 2.4. Compared to the latter value, the progress recorded by the Program is 63 percent of the target. The achievements of Standard and Standard+ projects are in line with expectations and are now final. In contrast, progress recorded with reference to strategic projects is still far from expectations.

Still different is the situation regarding the last output indicator (CO21): "Risk prevention and management. Population benefiting from forest fire protection." Again, the Program target (1 million citizens) was aligned with the one that corresponds to the sum of the targets of the different project types (1.548.000 citizens), albeit with a smaller gap than in previous cases. The level of implementation of the indicator is now close to the target (90%), and corresponds to the achievements of Standard and Standard+ projects, while the value of the achievements of strategic projects are not yet recorded in the monitoring system.

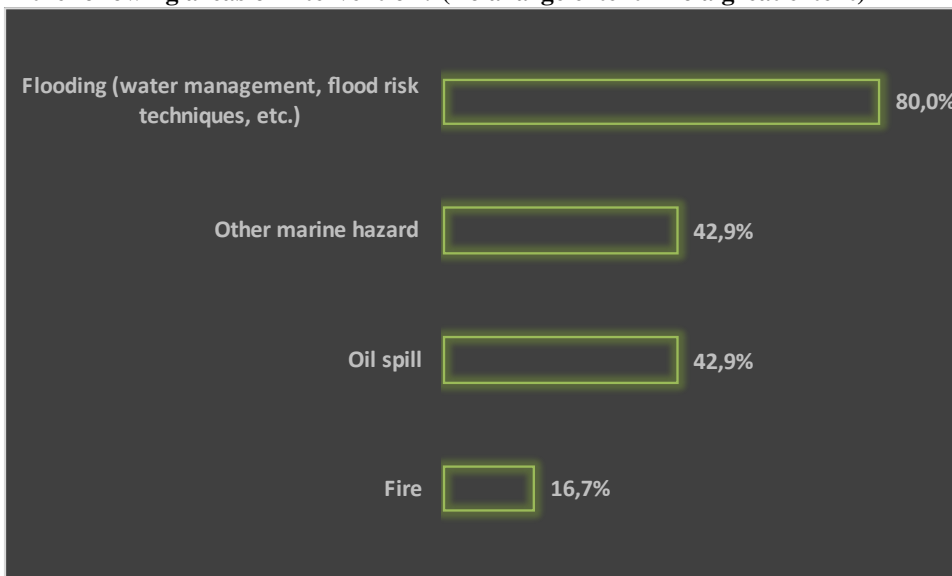
- The result indicator related to this S.O. is defined as the number of inhabitants benefiting from risk management coordinated measures. The indicator is defined on the basis of the administrative territories that have a hydraulic risk management plan, or Hydrogeological Risk Mitigation, calculating the population that consequently benefits from the planned actions. The baseline value was set at 8,366,317 at the year 2015. Thanks to the last two "flood risk area management plans", concerning the two Italian provinces of Ravenna and Forlì-Cesena, the whole population of the

Programme area is now covered by flood risk coordinated measures, thereby exceeding the target defined by the Programme and achieving the number of 12,101,109 inhabitants.

### Analysis of the results of the survey

The questionnaire used to explore and analyze the opinion of the partners of the concluded projects under the specific objective 2.2 "Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disasters" was oriented towards the main natural and man-made risks being tackled by the Programme: floods, fire, oil spill and other marine hazards.

**S.O. 2.2 In your opinion, to what extent has the Programme contributed to enhancing the framework conditions to increase the safety from natural and man-made disaster in the following areas of intervention? (To a large extent +To a great extent)**



The first question addressed to the partners of the completed projects financed by O.S. 2.1 aimed to explore their opinions on the extent to which the Programme has contributed to enhance the framework conditions to increase the safety from natural and man-made disaster in the areas of intervention. The graph shows the score received by summing up the answers "To a large extent" and "To a great extent".

The opinion of the respondents expresses different effectiveness of the interventions in relation to the types of risks targeted by the actions promoted by the Programme. Respondents believe that the greatest effectiveness was achieved in relation to the cooperation in the actions related to the analysis and testing of common risk management tools and models related to flood-related risks, water management, and prevention techniques concerning this type of risk (80 percent); an intermediate effectiveness (43 percent) is expressed in relation to other types of marine-related risks and those related to oil spills at sea. A lower level of effectiveness emerges in relation to fire risks (17%).

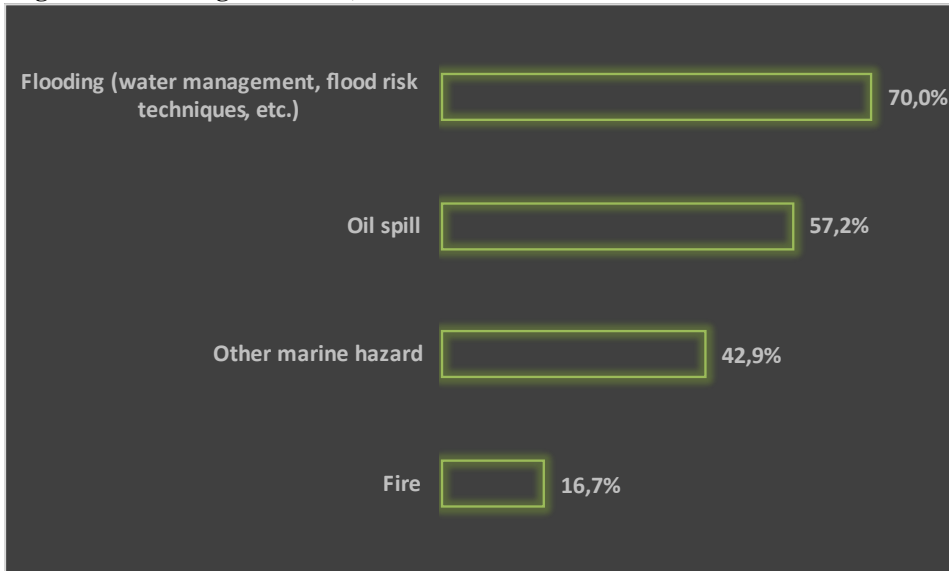
The next question aimed to explore their opinions on the extent to which the Programme has contributed to enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the monitoring and management of the main natural and man-made risks being tackled by the S.O. The graph shows the score received by summing up the answers "To a large extent" and "To a great extent".

The opinions of the interviewees again show that the effectiveness and degree of innovation of the activities implemented varies according to the type of risk involved in the cooperation projects between the partners. Again, the partners believe that the greatest effectiveness was achieved in promoting innovations related to hydraulic risk management (70%). In the field of oil spill risk, partners also felt that the projects contributed significantly to promoting innovative approaches (57%); an intermediate effectiveness (43 percent) is expressed in relation to the innovations experimented in relation to the other types of marine-related risks.



A lower level of effectiveness emerges in relation to the innovation that have been explored in the field of the management of fire risks (17%).

**S.O. 2.2 In your opinion, to what extent has the Programme contributed to enhancing the framework conditions for innovation in the following areas of intervention (To a large extent +To a great extent)?**

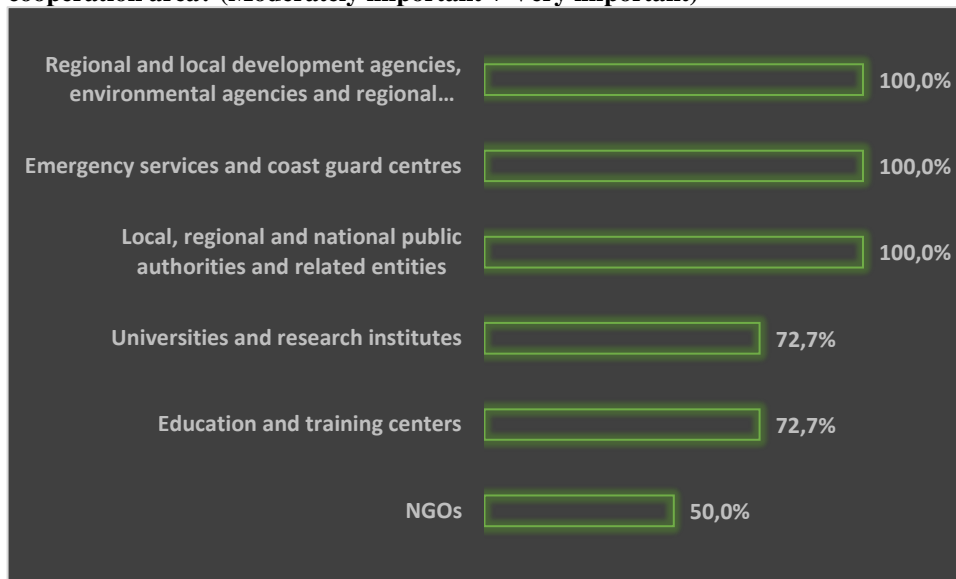


The field of innovation is also analysed with regard to which organisations have played a particularly relevant role in promoting innovative processes in the area of cooperation. The list of organisations corresponds to the list of target groups for this type of intervention. The graph shows the score received by summing up the answers “Moderately important” and “Very important”.

It is clear that all types of organizations involved in project implementation as target groups played an important role. In particular, all respondents felt that regional governments, including their agencies, local, regional, and national public authorities, coast guards, and other authorities involved in emergency support services, were moderately or very important in promoting the innovation process.

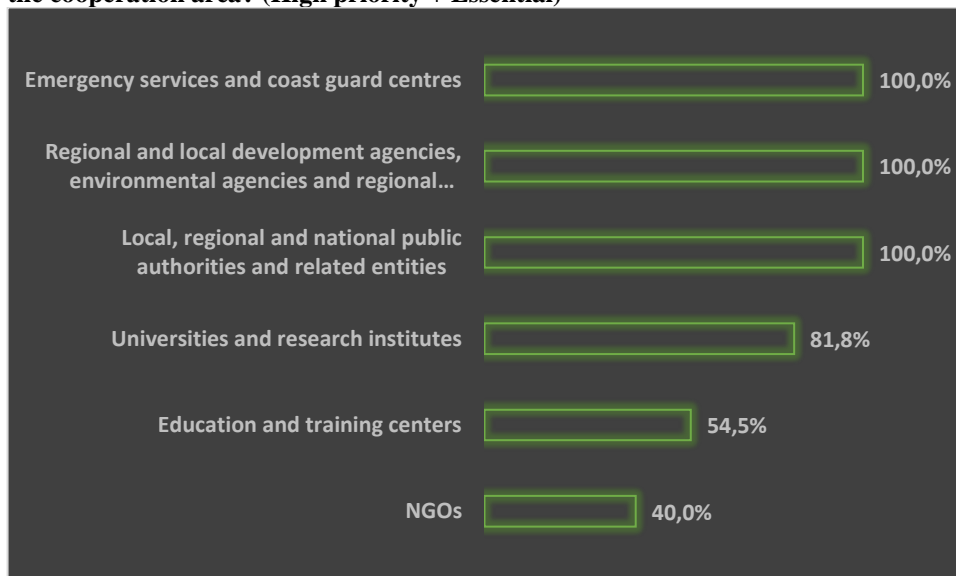
It is interesting to note that the role played by public actors in promoting innovation was perceived by the partners of the completed projects who were interviewed as more important than that played by universities, research organisations or educational institutions and training centers (73%). Finally, the role of NGOs in promoting innovation was seen as important by only half of the respondents, while for the remaining respondents NGOs played a neutral or unimportant role in this context.

**S.O. 2.2 Which of the following subjects - which correspond to the target groups of the Programme - had an important role in promoting the innovation process in the cooperation area? (Moderately important + Very important)**



The following question was intended to continue to explore partners' view about the importance of the same organizations with reference to their role in accelerating innovation processes in further Program activities. The graph shows the score received by summing up the answers “High priority” and “Essential”.

**S.O. 2.2 Which of the following subjects do you consider a priority to involve more in the future activities of the Program in order to accelerate the innovation process in the cooperation area? (High priority + Essential)**



Again, respondents believe that it is a high if not essential priority for the purpose of fostering innovation processes in the cooperation area to involve regional governments, including their agencies, local, regional and national public authorities, coast guards and other authorities involved in emergency support services. Universities and research organizations receive a higher score here (82%). It can be assumed that despite the good but not excellent rating of their role in promoting innovation processes in the completed projects, the partners still believe, and to a greater extent than in the previous question, that their role can be important in future program activities. The role of educational institutions and training centers in this context is perceived as less of a priority (54.5 percent), as is that of NGOs (40 percent).

### 3.4. Natural and cultural heritage

The projects financed under the Specific Objective 3.1 "Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development" are 24 in total; of these 12 projects were selected with the Call of the Standard projects, 9 with the Call of Standard + projects, 1 with the Call of Strategic projects, and 2 with the Call for Cluster projects.

As of December 31, 2022, the Standard and Standard + projects were concluded, while the activities of the Strategic and Cluster project were still in progress.

The Strategic project "Take it slow" and the Cluster project "AdriPromTour" are led by a Croatian partner, respectively the Dubrovnik Neretva Region and the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County – which is also leading one concluded Standard project, Arca Adriatica, and one Standard+ ArTVision+. The other Standard+ Croatia lead partners are the Development Agency of Lika-Senj County (Lira), the Zadar County, the Agency for rural development of Istria ltd (AZRRI) and the Town of Opatija.

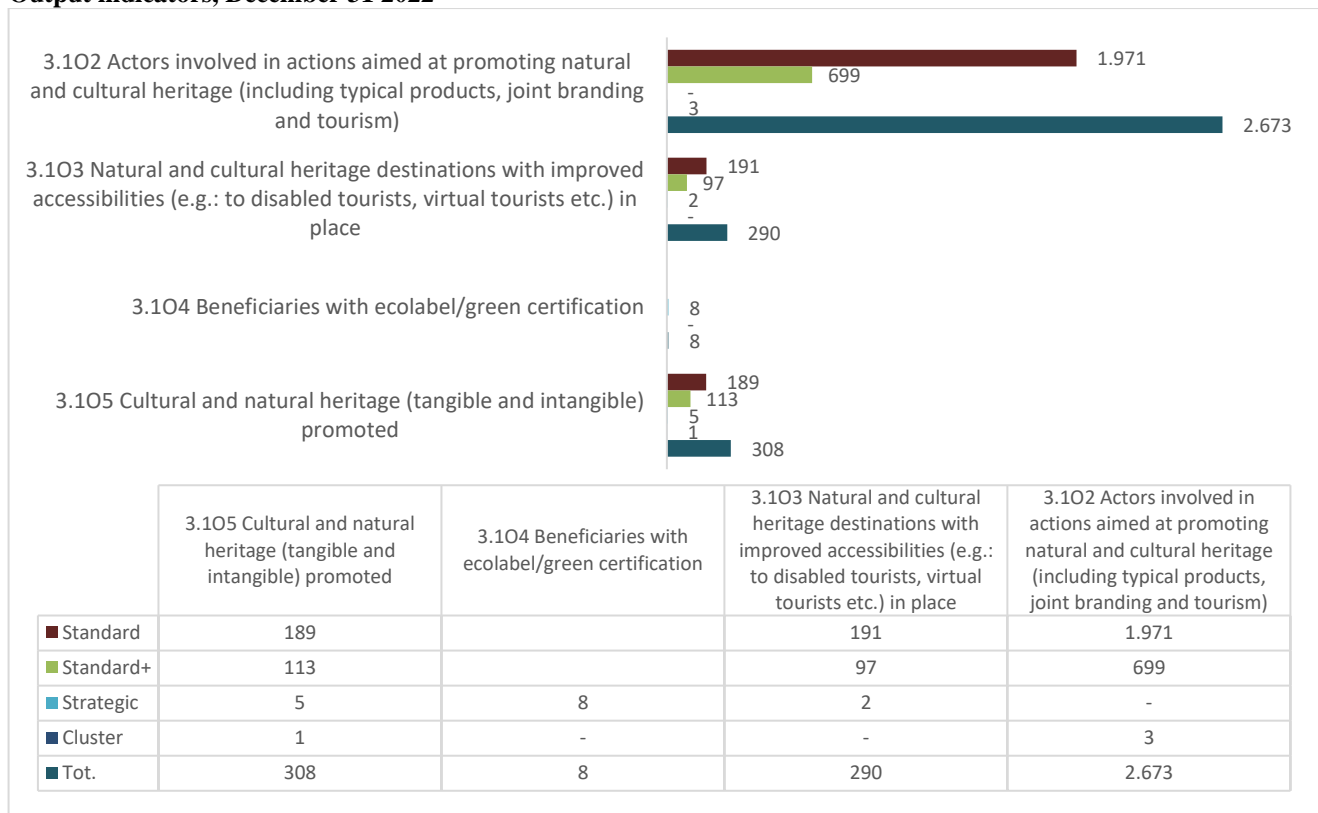
The Cluster project Boost5 is led by the Tecnopolis Science and Technology Park based in Puglia Region. The other projects with an Italian lead partner are 10 Standard and 5 Standard+ projects. In particular there are:

- three Cities of the Emilia Romagna Region leading four projects: Forlì (Standard+ Atrium+ and the Standard project Revival), Ravenna (Standard+ Usefall) and Comacchio (Standard Value);
- three Regions: Marche (Standard Made in Land), Molise (Standard Tourism4All) and Emilia Romagna (Standard Recolor);
- five projects are led by regional agencies or public companies, as Friuli Innovazione, Centro di Ricerca e Trasferimento Tecnologico (Standard+ Atlas), Ente Regionale per il patrimonio culturale della Regione autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia (Standard Underwater Muse), Teatro Pubblico Pugliese – Consorzio Regionale per le Arti e la Cultura (Standard+ I-Archeo.S.), the consortium Delta 2000 based in the Po River delta (Standard+ Innocultour), Infrastrutture Venete Srl (Historic);
- two projects are led by research organisations, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia (Standard Slides), Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (Standard Tempus);
- the Port Authority for central Adriatic based in Ancona (Standard Remember).

The graph, and the table below shows the values of the 4 output indicators linked to the Specific Objective 3.1 "Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development". The first indicator (3.102) represents the number of actors which have been involved in actions aimed at improving the natural and cultural heritage. The value reached by the indicator (2.673 actors) correspond to the sum of the output of the Standard and Standard+ concluded project and the partial realization of the Cluster projects, while the updated target (2.904 actors) corresponds to the sum of the output expected by the implementation of all the concluded project, included the Strategic - which did not register any progress so far. The indicator registers an advancement of 92% compared to the updated target. The indicator 3.103 "Natural and cultural heritage destinations with improved accessibility in place" also almost reached the target with 290 destinations with improved accessibility compared to the target of 296. Contributing to this result, which amount at the 98% of the target, are the realizations of the completed Standard and Standard+ projects and the partial figure of the realizations of the Strategic "Take it slow" project. The indicator 3.104 "Beneficiaries with ecolabel/green certification" is the only indicator whose target has not been changed and corresponds to 10 beneficiaries with green quality certification. The realizations recorded so far by the monitoring system correspond to 8 beneficiaries (80%), all of which can be traced back to the strategic project, while there were no targets foreseen for Standard, Standard+, as well as Cluster projects. The value achieved by the indicator 3.105 "Cultural and natural heritage (tangible and intangible) promoted" also corresponds to a very good level of implementation reaching 93% of the target (329 assets promoted). The cultural or natural heritage assets that have been promoted by the implementation of the projects financed in this programming area have been 308 to date, and correspond

to the realisations of the completed Standard and Standards+ projects, the partial realizations of the Strategic and Cluster projects under implementation.

**S.O. 3.1 Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development. Output indicators, December 31 2022**



- The result indicator related to the S.O. 3.1 is defined as “Seasonality in tourism in the Programme area”. As it is well known most tourist destinations are affected by the phenomenon of seasonality. Destinations with high fluctuations in seasonality often face various challenges, such as overcrowding, high prices, inadequate infrastructure in peak seasons, as well as a lack of services and job opportunities in low seasons. Seasonality is a measurable feature with significant economic and social impacts. Sources of data are the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as well as Eurostat which also publish the online publications “Tourism trips of Europeans”. The Result Indicator is calculated by the MA on data provided by Italian Regional Statistical Offices, the Croatian Ministry of Regional Development and Eurostat. The baseline was set at 0.62 (2014), the same value as the target value at 2023. The data reached at 2022 is in line with the target, 0.62, decreasing compared to the two past years. According to the MA this may suggest that the pandemic externalities have been subsided and the value is back in line with the target.

**Analysis of the results of the survey**

The questionnaire used to explore and analyze the opinion of the partners of the concluded projects under the specific objective 3.1 "Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development" was oriented to explore the opinions of the project partners towards the contribution of the Programme to improve the role of the natural and cultural heritage in the local and cooperation area strategies for development; in this frame also issue like innovation in practices and stakeholder role has been considered.

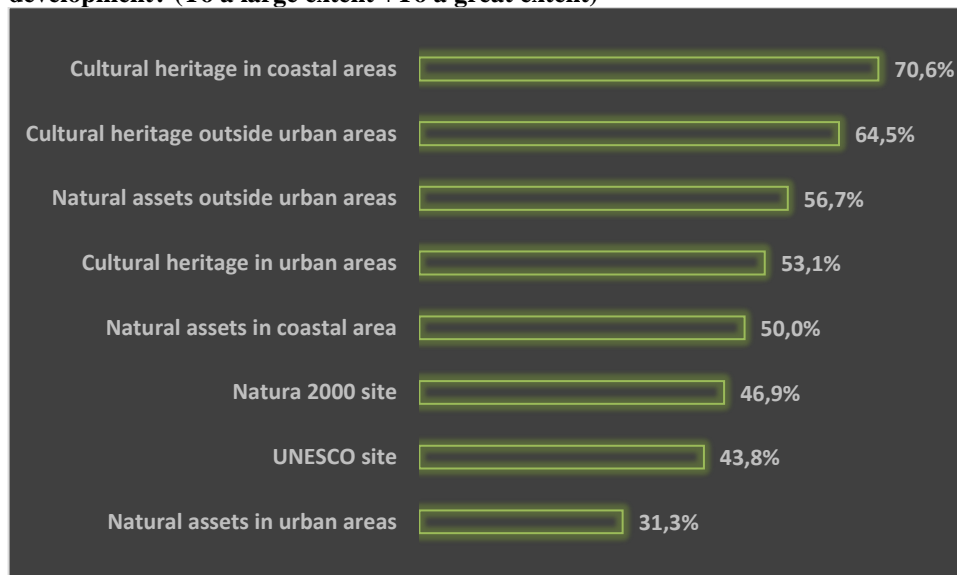
The first question addressed to the partners of the completed projects financed by O.S. 3.1 aimed to explore their opinions on the extent to which the Programme has contributed to make the natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development, according to the diverse

territorial contexts of the project’s implementation. The graph shows the score received by summing up the answers “To a large extent” and “To a great extent”.

The opinion of the respondents expresses different level of effectiveness of the interventions in relation to the types of heritage addressed by the funded projects. An interesting indication emerges from the respondents' answers about the Programme capacity to intervene effectively especially in non-urban areas, whether coastal, rural or intermediate. In this way, the Programme probably manages to integrate with the action of other types of measures that are more oriented towards urban areas or more specifically to rural areas.

Respondents believe that the greatest effectiveness was achieved in relation to cultural heritage in coastal area (71%), followed by the cultural assets outside the urban areas (64,5%), and natural assets outside urban areas (57%). The highest level of effectiveness of interventions in urban areas is achieved by projects that have intervened in support of the cultural heritage of cities (53%), while interventions in support of natural assets located in urban areas come at the bottom of the list with 31%. At an intermediate level are natural assets in coastal areas (50%), while even lower percentages are reached by Natura 2000 (44%) and Unesco (31%) sites.

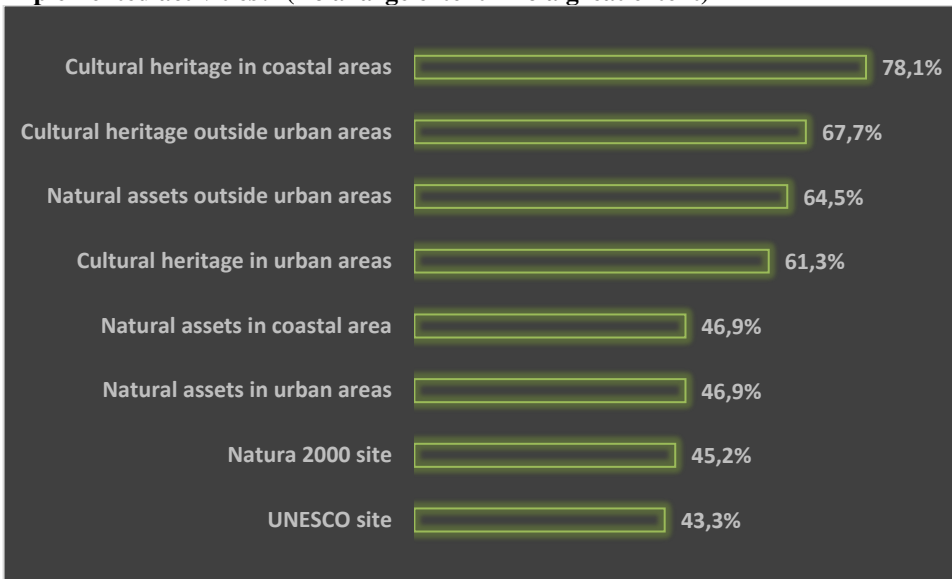
**S.O. 3.1 In your opinion, to what extent has the Programme contributed to make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development? (To a large extent +To a great extent)**



The next question addressed to the partners aimed to explore their opinions on the extent to which the Programme has promoted tourism in connection to the territorial contexts of the implemented activities. The graph shows the score received by summing up the answers “To a large extent” and “To a great extent”. The results basically confirm the same ranking that emerged in relation to the previous question, further highlighting how the Programme was effectively targeted in particular at coastal or otherwise non-urban areas.

Respondents believe that the greatest effectiveness was achieved in relation to cultural heritage in coastal area (78%), followed by the cultural assets outside the urban areas (67%), and natural assets outside urban areas (64,5%). All those three territorial contexts increase the score in comparison to the previous question, highlighting how sustainable tourism has been oriented in coherence with the local development strategies. Again, the highest level of effectiveness of the interventions in urban areas is achieved by projects that have intervened in support of the cultural tourism in the cities (61%). At an intermediate level we find the touristic activities oriented at the natural assets in coastal and urban areas (47%), and finally, the activities promoted in Natura 2000 (45%) and Unesco (43%) sites.

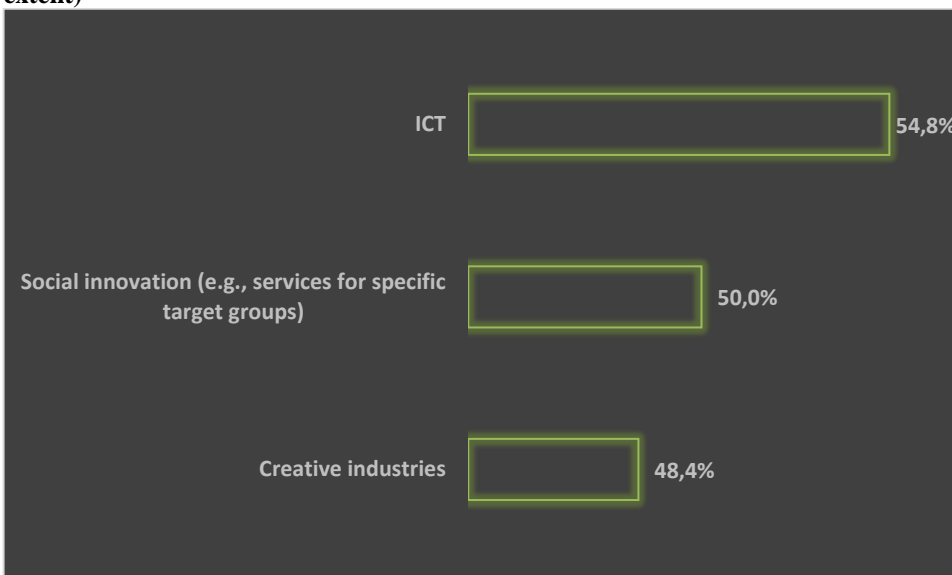
**S.O. 3.1 To what extent has the project promoted tourism in connection with the implemented activities? (To a large extent +To a great extent)**



The following question was aimed at exploring the respondents' perceptions of what actions have promoted innovative approaches, and in which areas, capable of generating greater effectiveness in the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources.

The areas that were chosen by the interviewees are essentially three; among these, the field that was judged to be the most effective in promoting innovative management solutions by the largest number of respondents is ICT (55%). This is followed, not far behind, by the field of social innovation (50%) and the creative industries (48%).

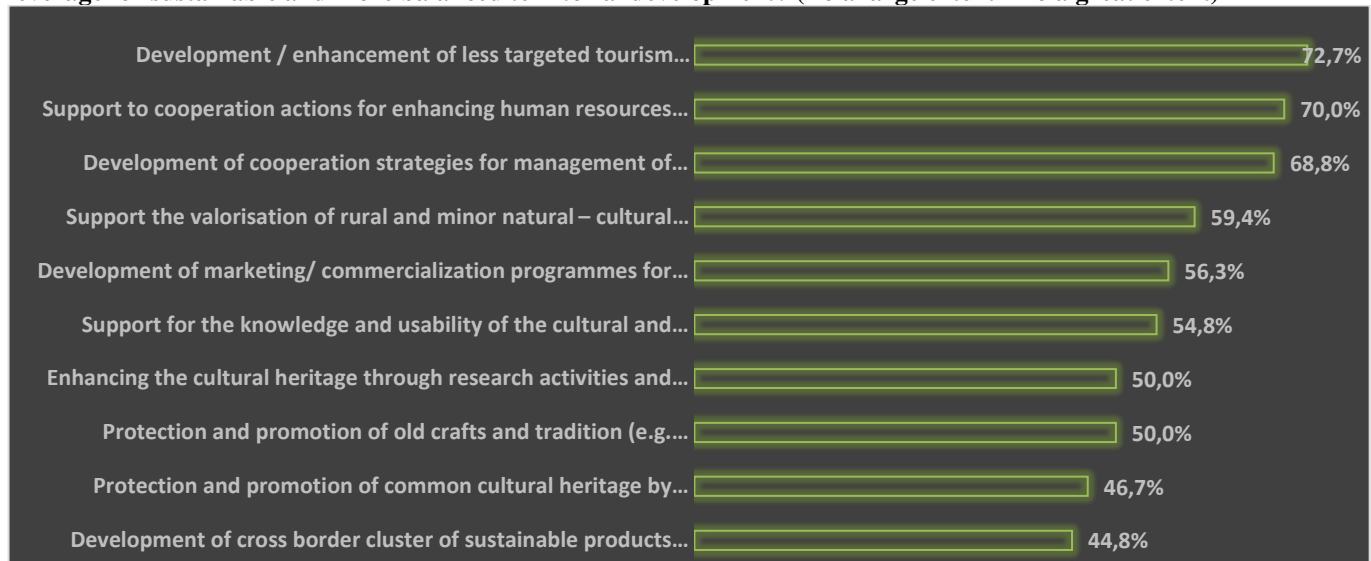
**S.O. 3.1 To what extent the project has promoted innovative approaches in the following fields that are able to generate added value in the sustainable management of natural and cultural resources of the territory? (To a large extent +To a great extent)**



The next question is aimed at investigating which areas of activity have contributed most to making natural and cultural heritage a lever for sustainable and more balanced territorial development. The first three areas chosen most strongly by the interviewees were: “Enhancement of less targeted tourism itineraries link to common thematic destinations also to reduce pressure on main sites”, which was considered the most effective field with a score of 73%; “Support to cooperative actions for enhancing human resources in the

field of sustainable tourism, natural and cultural heritage awareness and valorisation”, which scored 70%; “Development of cooperation strategies for management of preservation and valorisation of natural and cultural heritage”, which scored 69%. While the first activity concerns the design of alternative tourist routes to the main destinations, and emerges as a type of activity that can be carried out by each partner relatively independently, the second and third activities concern joint actions between the partners – for the training of skills necessary to promote the enhancement of sustainable tourism, and for the development of cooperation strategies for the management and preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

**S.O. 3.1 In which of the following fields has the Programme contributed to make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development? (To a large extent +To a great extent)**



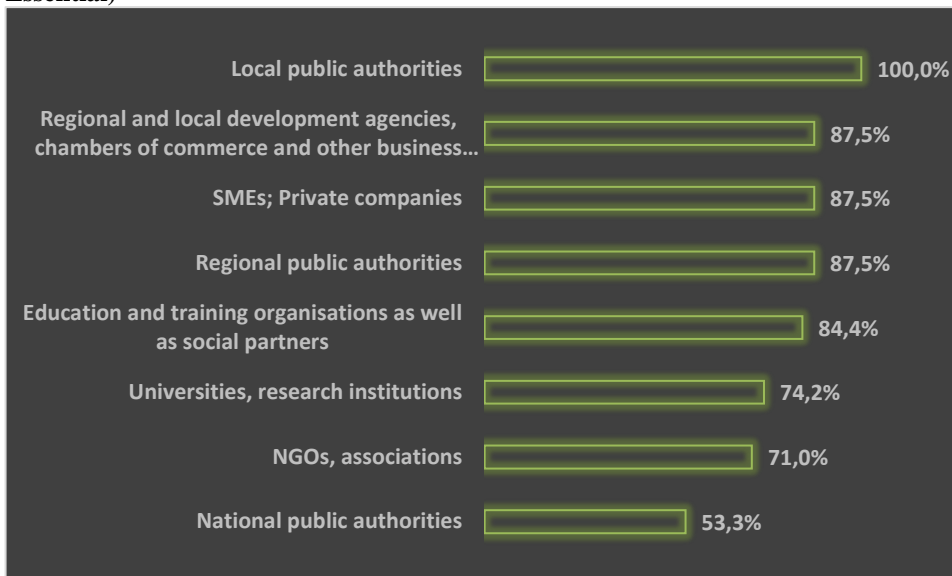
The activities that follow in the respondents' judgment enhance the dimension of cross-border cooperation. Supporting the enhancement of minor rural or cultural sites by strengthening nautical tourism scores 59% and expresses thematic coherence with the first activity. An intermediate position is taken by marketing activities for common and sustainable Adriatic products, integrating territorial services and piloting matchmaking actions-including common branding (56%), and by the activities aimed at improving the usability of the cultural and natural heritage destinations, including people with disabilities, improving accessibility, information, sustainability awareness, smart use of ICT (55%).

The following two activities score the same, 50 percent, and relate to research and site restoration activities on the one hand, and training for strengthening awareness of the value of ancient traditions and artifacts on the other. Finally, the last two activities regard the development of digitization of cultural heritage for both archiving and accessibility (47 percent), and the development of cross border cluster of sustainable typical products of the area (45%).

The last question concerns the role played by cross-border cooperation actors in supporting a more natural and cultural resource-centered approach to spatial development. The actor that is unanimously recognized as a priority in this area of activity is the Local Public Authorities (100 percent).

They are followed paired with the same score (87.5%) by local and regional development agencies and other intermediate structures, such as chambers of commerce, businesses, and Regional Public authorities. With a good score of about 84% we find educational institutions and training centers. Distant by 10 points we find universities and research organizations (74 percent), NGOs (71 percent), and finally national public authorities with 53 percent.

**S.O. 3.1 Which of the following subjects had an important role in supporting the realization of an approach to territorial development more centered on the natural and cultural resources of your territory? (High priority + Essential)**



**3.5. Protecting and restoring biodiversity**

The projects financed under the specific objective 3.2 “Protecting and restoring the biodiversity” are 8 in total; of these 5 projects were selected with the Call of the Standard projects, 1 were selected with the Call of the Standard+ projects, and 2 with the Call of Strategic projects. As of July 31, 2022, the Standard and Standard+ projects were concluded (at this date the operations of control of the expenses were still in progress for one Standard projects), while the activities of the Strategic projects were still in progress and cluster projects were in startup phase. Except for the Standard project “Soundscape”, whose Lead Partner is of Croatian nationality (Institut za Oceanografiju i Ribarstvo), all the other projects have an Italian lead partner. The lead partners are mainly attributable to two categories, the University and Centers of Research (4), and Regional or Local authority (4).

The following graph shows the values of the 4 output indicators linked to Specific Objective 3.2. The final target of the indicators was significantly increased from the initial value, and for all corresponds to the realisations recorded by the Standard and Standard+ projects and those estimated - and not yet realised - by the Strategic projects. The first indicator (3.201 “Natural ecosystems supported in order to attain a better conservation status) represents the number of operations aimed at reducing the variables which are influencing a natural habitat and its typical species and that may affect its long-term natural distribution. The value of the indicator corresponds to the realisations of the Standard and Standard+ projects and is equal to 45 compared to the 51 foreseen by the projects, reaching about 88% of the target.

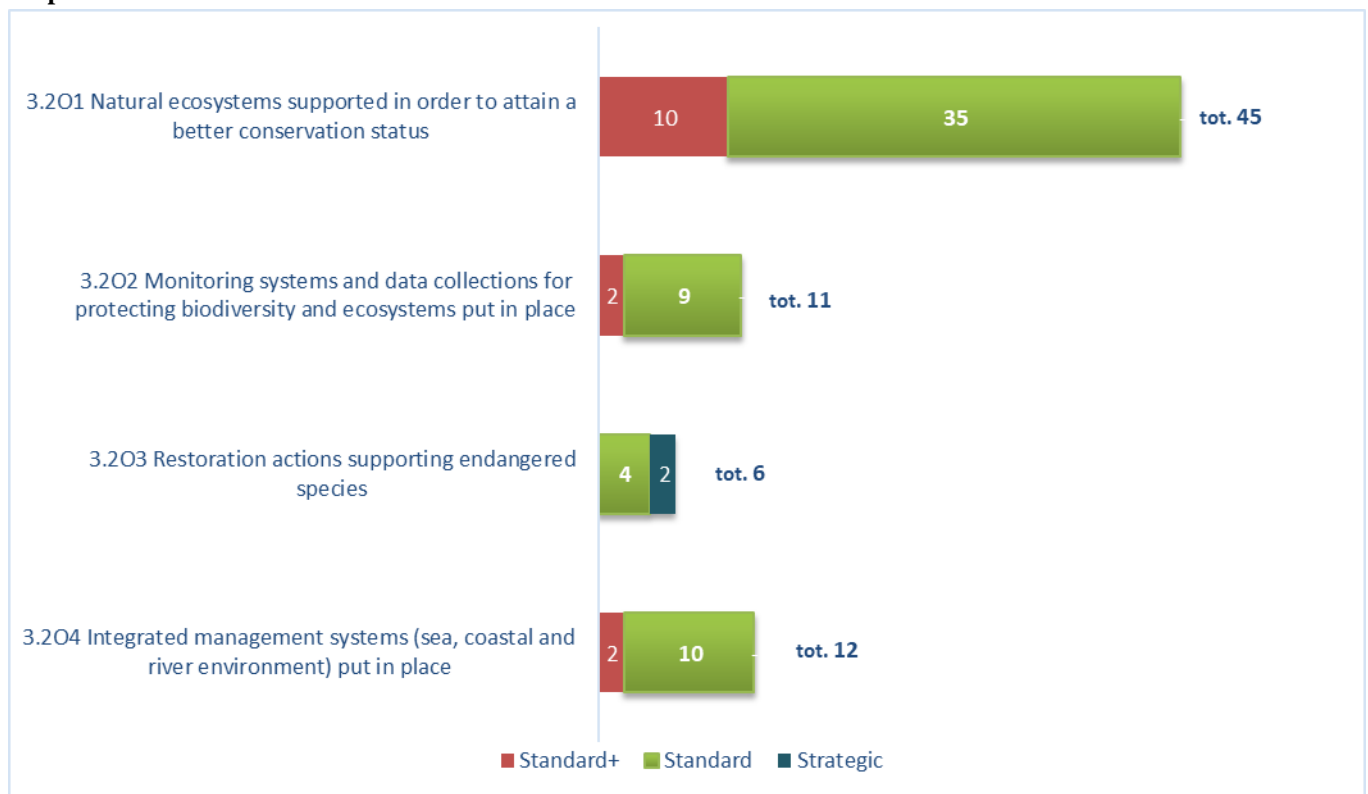
The second indicator (3.202) "Monitoring systems and data collections for protecting biodiversity and ecosystems put in place" refers to the realisation of monitoring systems related to the systematic observations on ecosystems and biodiversity data collections aimed to measure qualitative and quantitative changes of variety and variability among living organisms and consequently to support concrete measures for their conservation and/or protection. Again, the value of the indicator corresponds to the realisations of the Standard and Standard+ projects and is equal to 11 compared to the 21 foreseen by the projects, reaching about 52% of the target, lower than the previous indicator since the weight of the outputs to be produced by the Strategic projects in this case is greater than in the previous indicator.



The third indicator “Restoration actions supporting endangered species” records the achievements of the projects which are aimed at implementing the objectives of EU natural environment legislation, as the Birds and Habitats Directives, and in particular to improve the conservation of core breeding and resting sites for certain particularly rare and threatened species under the Natura 2000 Network. There are three projects contributing to this indicator, one Standard project (SASPAS) and the two Strategic projects. The realisations registered so far concern the Standard project and a Strategic project (Argos). With 6 out of 14 project outputs, the indicator stands at 43% of the target.

An example of how this specific area of intervention was pursued comes from the WP4 of the SASPAS Standard Project 'Protecting and restoring marine seagrasses'. The overall objective of SASPAS is to “improve seagrass preservation and restoration through laying safe anchorage innovative systems, performing pilot transplantations, carrying out monitoring activities and by defining an integrated management system for seagrasses in Adriatic area”. The lead partner activity report reconstructs the steps that were necessary in order to place an environmentally friendly anchoring system: “after the assignment of the procedure and several technical meetings with the wining company the buoys have been positioned at the beginning of July (2021). The 30 buoys remained positioned until the end of October. The buoys positioning has a great success and several boats used it.”

**S.O 3.2 Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area**



The fourth indicator “Integrated management systems (sea, coastal and river environment) put in place” reports the initiatives promoted in the cooperation area that are oriented towards a greater inter-institutional and cross-border collaboration in the management of coastal areas. This policy area can be traced back to the joint initiative on integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning launched by the

Commission on 12 March 2013<sup>4</sup>. The integrated coastal management covers the full cycle of information collection, planning, decision-making, management and monitoring of implementation and it is particularly effective when all stakeholders across the different sectors are involved in the process to ensure broad support for the implementation of management strategies.

The indicator shows that 12 “Integrated management systems” have been implemented out of 31 planned by the projects - reaching approximately 39% of the revised target. Strategic project implementations are still missing, while the target of the Standard and Standard+ projects correspond to the realisation of implemented. The implementation of integrated management systems for coastal areas and their natural resources is a particularly complex and time-consuming process, and in fact it is precisely the Strategic Projects that will make the greatest contribution to its implementation. For this reason, the indicator status is one of the lowest in the programme.

The project which contributed substantially to the indicator's achievements is the Standard project “Crew” which promoted the signing of 7 “Wetland Contracts” supporting the coordination between different levels of spatial planning and authorities in charge for wetlands management, whilst limiting conflicts between preservation issues and economic activities. The contracts defining the operation of integrated management systems also form the regulatory basis on which the durability of the project results is ensured: “After the project ends all the activities planned will be managed and stimulated by each Wetland Contract’s institutional structure (Coordinating Committee). The Agreement itself will foresee the financial resources needed for the activity’s implementation. [...] The action plan prepared during the carrying out of the activities, propaedeutic to the signature of Wetland Contracts, will be used by the proposing subjects to candidate for EU or national funding.” (From the Final report of the Standard project Crew).

**Box – Excerpts from the interview with a Lead partner of a concluded Standard project**

The interview with the lead partner of one of the Standard projects concluded within the framework of S.O. 3.2 revealed how effectively important is the link between the realisation of intangible activities, such as the initiation of governance processes, and the achievement of tangible results, such as those concerning the protection of coastal wetlands. The main objective of the project is to create the conditions for stakeholders to be actively involved in the pursuit of the objectives of conservation and restoration of biodiversity in coastal wetlands through the signing of a contract. The project has in fact led to the signing of 7 wetland contracts. The implementation of this form of agreement was possible thanks to the involvement of various local actors who formed a new network born out of a common interest in improving the conservation status and adaptation of coastal wetland ecological systems. These kinds of results, moreover, constitute a premise for the change of practices that have a strong chance of lasting over time, even after the end of the project activities.

*“The strengthening of some interventions, in particular the preservation of wetlands, the protection of sandbars, which are a very important ecological device for lagoons, was very important to restore and increase biodiversity, but also to limit the damage caused by rising sea levels and increased wave motion. Improving climate change monitoring and initiating adaptation actions together with governance practices through the involvement of local stakeholders is of great importance. Monitoring and adaptation practices are closely related to policies but they also have to do with everyday practices and if we can involve the community, we can achieve major results. If we can make fishermen aware of their role in the monitoring*

<sup>4</sup> COM(2013) 133 final, Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of The Council establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management. The proposal, which takes the form of a draft Directive, aims to establish a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management in EU Member States with a view to promote the sustainable growth of maritime and coastal activities and the sustainable use of coastal and marine resources. ([https://ec.europa.eu/environment/iczm/prop\\_iczm.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/iczm/prop_iczm.htm))

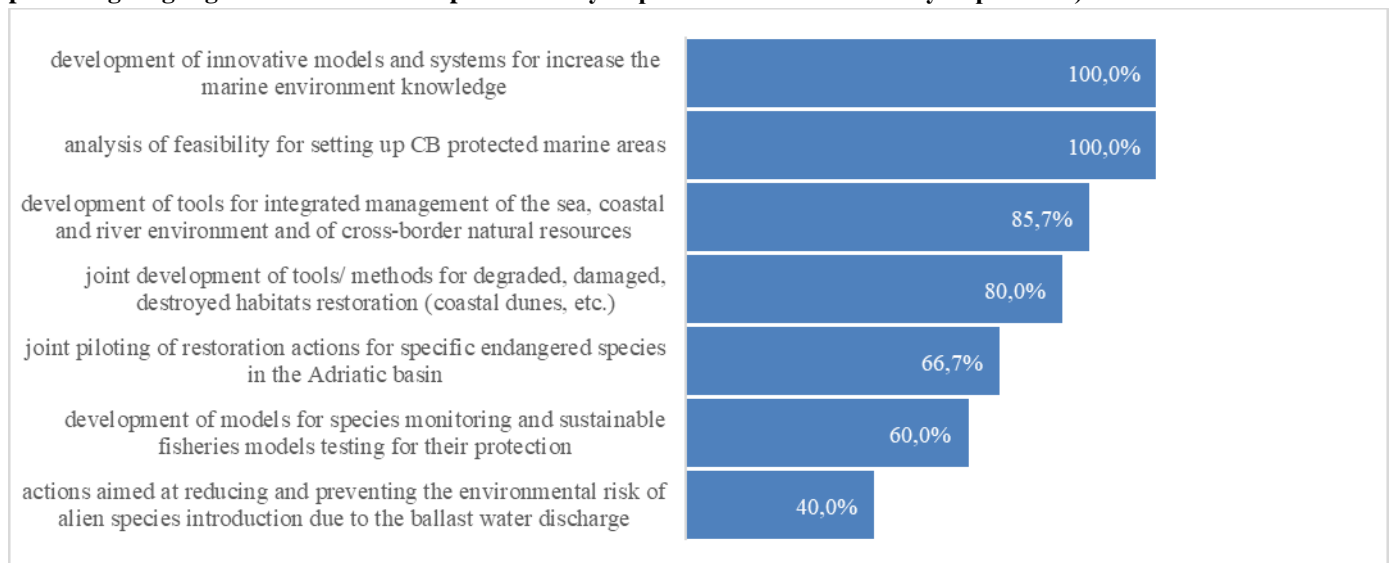
*the effect of the climate change then we have achieved a lasting result. This is a tangible result emerging from an intangible process such as the initiation of governance processes. In this way, we help to build or strengthen a community, or the foundations are laid for defining a 'contract community' that begins to take care of its territory, during the implementation of the project but also after its conclusion. [...] In addition, we can read three levels of cooperation that the project has developed, the first is that which is implemented within each individual target area, the second is implemented in the relations between the target areas involved in the project - which enhances the relations between Italy and Croatia by strengthening the transfer of good practices, both on the local and legislative levels - the third level concerns new networks that can be developed in other cooperation activities, as happened in our case when some partners promoted a MED project that further develops the objectives of our project.”*

### **Analysis of the results of beneficiary interviews**

The first question addressed to the partners of the completed projects funded by O.S. 3.2 aimed to explore their views on what actions had actually contributed to improving the capacity and the levels of cooperation among public actors involved in the management of protected areas within the cooperation area.

- All beneficiaries agreed that actions aimed at *developing innovative models for studying and monitoring the marine environment* were highly relevant, along with those focused on feasibility analysis for the establishment of CB marine protected areas.
- Another area of activity that was indicated by a large share of respondents (86%) is the *development of tools for integrated management of the sea, coastal and river environment* and of cross-border natural resources (i.e., coordinated Maritime Spatial Planning and Integrated Coastal Management).
- This is followed, with a slightly lower figure, by activities dedicated to the *joint development of tools/ methods for degraded, damaged, destroyed habitats restoration* (80%).
- The contribution made by the actions focused on *joint piloting of restoration actions for specific species at risk* in the Adriatic basin, was relevant for 66.7 percent of the beneficiaries.
- Actions aimed at *reducing and preventing the environmental risk of alien species introduction*, due to the ballast water discharge, seem to have played the least important role in management and cooperation in the policy area of SO 3.2, with a positive judgment rate of 40 percent.

**S.O. 3.2 – “Following your specific project’s experience, which of the following actions actually contributed to the management and the cooperation between public actors of the protected ecosystems of the cooperation area?” (The percentage highlight the sum of the responses “Very important” and “Moderately important”)**



The next question concerns the judgment of the beneficiaries on the importance of the participation to the Programme of a range of actors in strengthening the management and the cooperation between public actors of the protected ecosystems of the cooperation area.

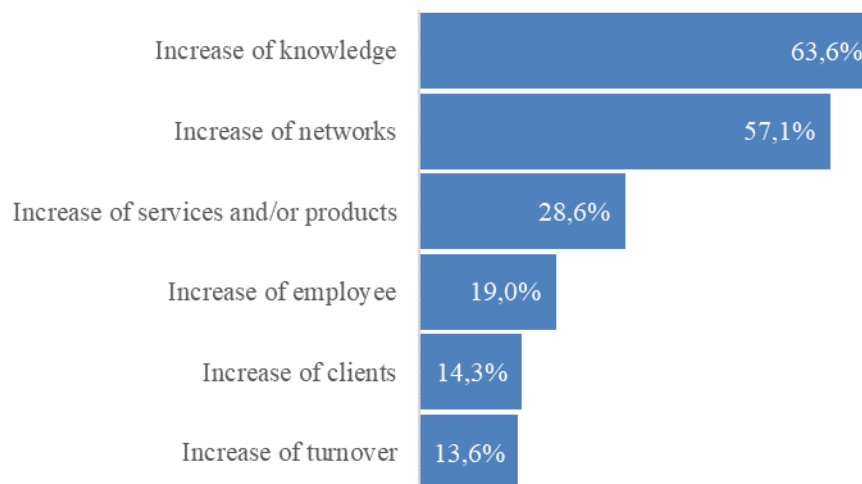
- The importance of the role played by universities/research institutions, along with that of local and regional public authorities was recognized by all the beneficiaries interviewed.
- In second position, collecting identical shares of positive ratings (86%), are three different categories of subjects: SMEs; Private companies; NGOs and associations; education and training organisations, social partners.
- Other substantial shares of beneficiaries (71.4 percent) indicated national or international organization and general public.

**S.O. 3.2 – “Which of the following subjects had an important role in strengthening the management and the cooperation between public actors of the protected ecosystems of the cooperation area?” (The percentage highlight the sum of the responses “Very important” and “Moderately important”)**



Regarding the partners' opinion of the spillover effects on their organizations as a result of their participation to the project activities, it has emerged that for 64 percent of the beneficiaries there were an increase in the knowledge capital; another important result was the increase of the consistency of the networks of their organizations (57 percent). About 29 percent reported an increase in the services and products offered. Less relevant has been the effect on the increase in the number of employees (19%), clients (14%), and turnover (14%).

**S.O. 3.2 – “As a consequence of the participation to the project activities did your organization/company registered any of the following specific effects?” (The percentage highlight the sum of the responses “Very important” and “Moderately important”)**



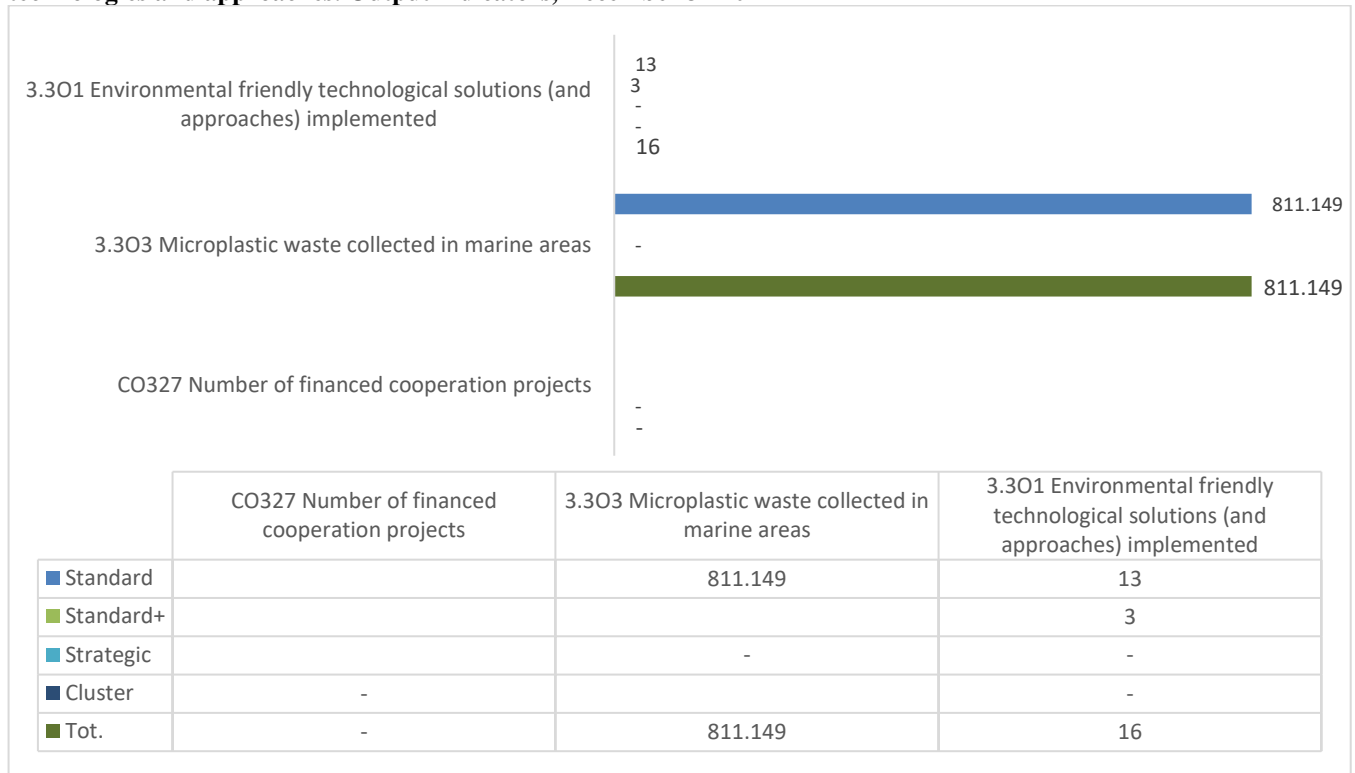
### 3.6. Quality conditions of the sea and coastal area/bathing waters

The projects financed under the Specific Objective 3.3 "Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches" are 9 in total; of these 5 projects were selected with the Call of the Standard projects, 1 with the Call of Standard + projects, 1 with the Call of Strategic projects, and 2 with the Call for Cluster projects. As of December 31, 2022, the Standard and Standard + projects were concluded, while the activities of the Strategic and Cluster project were still in progress.

The Strategic project “Marless” is led by the Regional Agency for environmental protection and prevention of the Region of Veneto (ARPAV), while the two Cluster projects are led by the University of Udine (“Hatch”) – which also lead a Standard project “AdSWiM”- and by the Municipality of Podstrana (“Resistance”) which also led a Standard project (“Ecomap”). The only Standard+ project funded in this programming area is led by the University Ca’ Foscari of Venice (“ML-Repair”). The remaining Standard projects was led by two research organizations, the Italian National Research Council (CNR), “Watercare”, and the University of Ferrara “NET4mPLASTIC”, and the last one by the Municipality of Zadar “Netwap”.

The graph, and the table, below shows the values of the three output indicators linked to the Specific Objective 3.3 "Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches".

**S.O. 3.3 Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches. Output indicators, December 31 2022**



The first indicator (3.301) represents the number of environmentally friendly technological solutions (and approaches) implemented. The value reached by the indicator (16 solutions or approaches implemented) correspond to the sum of the output of the Standard and Standard+ concluded project, while the updated target (29) corresponds to the sum of the output expected by the implementation of all the concluded project, included the Strategic and the Cluster projects - which did not register any progress so far. The indicator registers an advancement of 55% compared to the updated target.

The indicator 3.303 “Microplastic waste collected in marine areas” have reached so far the 76% of the target with 811.149 particles of microplastic waste collected compared to the target of 1.061.149. Contributing to this result are the realizations of the completed Standard projects while is still expected the contribution of the Strategic project "Marless". The common indicator CO327 “Number of financed cooperation projects” has no realizations recorded so far, while the contribution of the two Cluster projects is expected.

- The result indicator related to the S.O. 3.3 is defined as “Quality level of coastal bathing waters” (according to the dir. 2006/7/CE). The EU Bathing Waters Directive requires Member States to identify popular bathing places in fresh and coastal waters and monitor them for indicators of microbiological pollution (and other substances) throughout the bathing season which runs from May to September<sup>5</sup>. According to the European Agency the quality of Europe's bathing water has greatly improved over past decades due to systematic monitoring and management introduced under the EU’s Bathing Water Directive and other EU environmental laws including the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive. The baseline was set at 2.87 (2014), the same value as the target: 2.87. The last available value recorded in 2021 (on data which refer to the year 2021 which has been updated in April 2022) is 2.93. According to the MA the quality of coastal bathing waters continues

<sup>5</sup> The last report finds that, in 2021, the minimum water quality standards were met at 95.2% of sites. In Austria, Malta, Croatia, Greece, Cyprus, Denmark and Germany, 90% or more of bathing waters meet the ‘excellent’ quality standard (<https://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/zero-pollution-large-number-of>). Data are available at: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/bathing-water-directive-status-of-bathing-water-14>.

to perform at high level in the area of Program. The value is higher for the Croatian coasts (2,99) compared to the Italian coasts, which also have a good performance (2,89).

### **Analysis of the results of the survey**

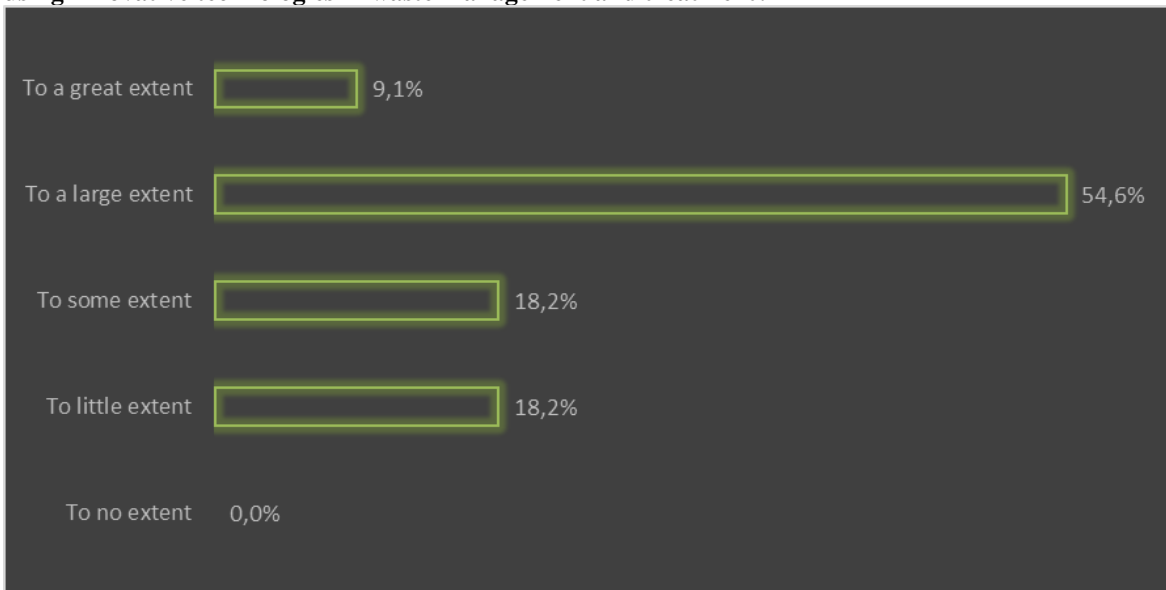
The questionnaire used to explore and analyze the opinion of the partners of the concluded projects under the specific objective 3.3 "Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches" was oriented to explore the opinions of the project partners towards the contribution of the innovative technologies to improving the quality of sea waters in general and in some specific fields of activity; moreover it was also explored the role of the partners and stakeholders in promoting the use of innovative technologies in this field and also the opinion of the partners on the importance of including them in the future activities of the Programme.

The first question addressed to the partners of the completed projects funded by O.S. 3.3 aimed to gauge their opinion on the extent to which the Program has contributed to improving seawater quality by using innovative technologies in waste management and treatment. More than half of the respondents (55 %) believe that the Program has contributed to a large extent to achieving this goal, while an additional 9% believe it has contributed to a great extent. The remaining 36% believe that the Program's contribution in this policy area has been minor.

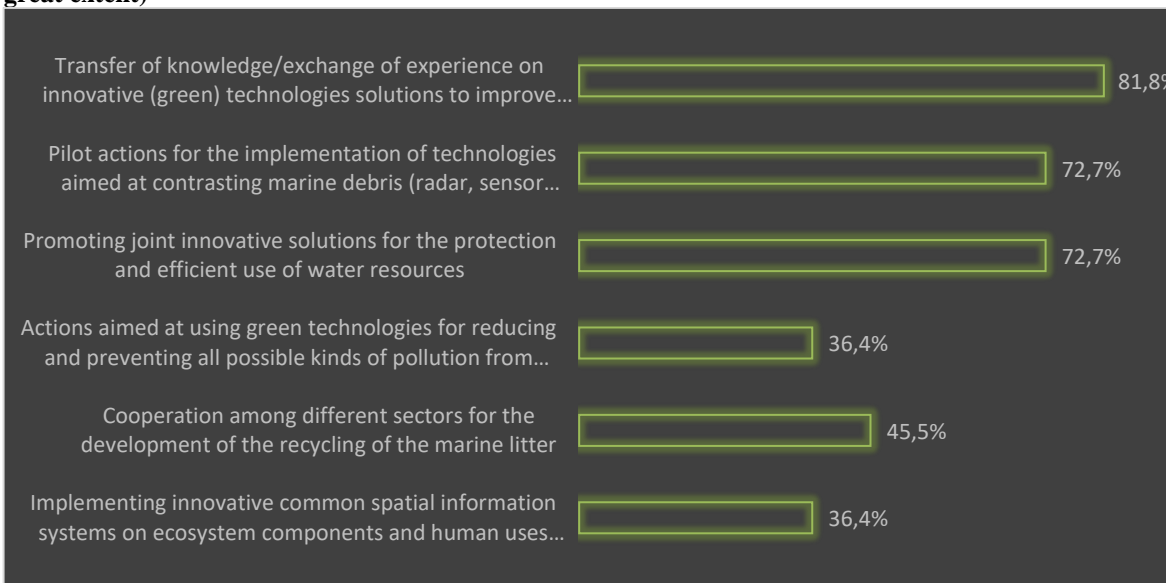
The second question explores the role of technological innovation in improving the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal zone by asking respondents to choose which areas of application of the knowledge and technologies that were tested during project implementation they felt was the most effective. The graph shows the score received by summing up the answers "To a large extent" and "To a great extent". The area of intervention that receives the most support from respondents concerns one of the main activities being promoted under European territorial cooperation programs, the exchange of experience on innovative technologies solutions to improve the protection of the water, air and soil (82%).

Immediately afterwards we find two other types of activities that receive high approval from respondents (73%) are the pilot actions for the implementation of technologies aimed at contrasting marine debris (radar, sensor platform, managing of multispectral data, other solutions), and the joint innovative solutions for the protection and efficient use of water resources. At some distance we finally find the cooperative actions for the development of the recycling of the marine litter (45,5%), the actions aimed at reducing and preventing all possible kinds of pollution from transport and port activities, and the implementation of innovative common spatial information systems, scoring 36%.

**S.O. 3.3 To what extent has the Programme contributed at improving the quality of the water of the sea by using innovative technologies in waste management and treatment?**



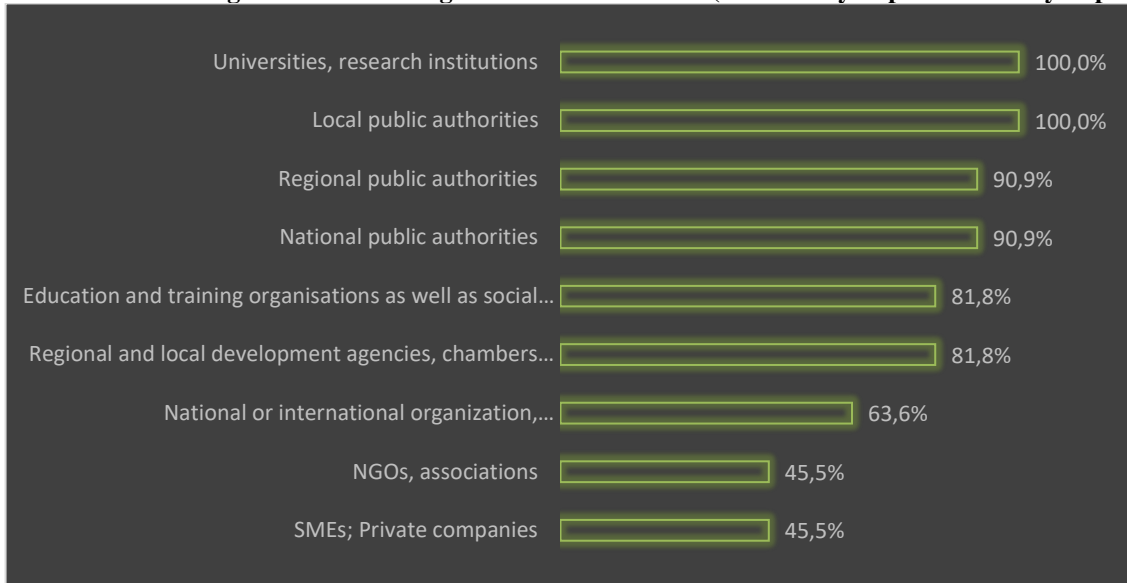
**S.O. 3.3 In which of the following fields has the Programme contributed at improving the quality of the water of the sea by using innovative technologies in waste management and treatment? (To a large extent + To a great extent)**



The following question concerns the role played by cross-border cooperation actors in supporting the use of innovative technologies to improve the quality of the sea water. The actors that unanimously are recognized as key players in this field are the Local Public Authorities and the Universities and research organization (both scoring 100 percent). Also very high was the score obtained by the regional and national public authorities (91%), and immediately afterwards by educational institutions and training centers as well as intermediate structures, such as chambers of commerce and other business support organizations (82%); a lower score is collected by the national or international organization like environmental agencies (64%), and finally the NGOs and the SMEs (45,5%).



**S.O. 3.3 Which of the following subjects had an important role in improving the quality of the water of the sea by using innovative technologies in waste management and treatment? (Moderately important + Very important)**



The last question does not substantially change the scenario just described. The actors that the interviewed partners believe should be involved as a matter of priority in future Programme activities in this field of intervention are, first and foremost, universities and research organisations, local and regional public authorities, with a score varying from 100% to 91%; immediately below are the regional development agencies and the national public authorities (82%).

**S.O. 3.3 Which of the following subjects do you consider a priority to involve more in the future activities of the Programme in order to improve the quality of the water of the sea by using innovative technologies in waste management and treatment? (High priority + Essential)**



The role of the SMEs emerges as more relevant for the future activities of the Program (73%) than it was considered in the previous question, in relation to the projects concluded up to now. The role of NGOs in future activities is also considered relevant to a greater extent (67%).

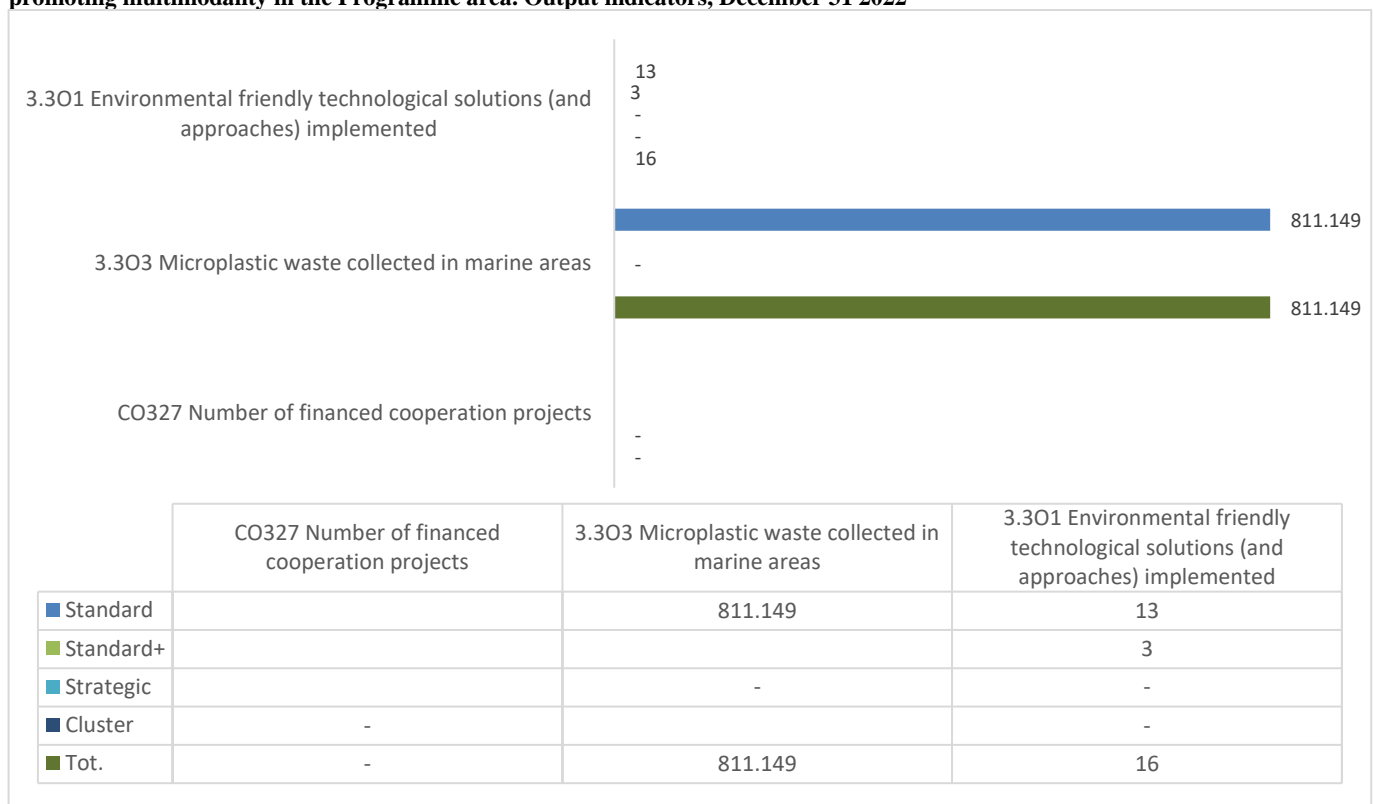
### 3.7. Marine and coastal transport services

The projects financed under the Specific Objective 4.1 "Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area" are 19 in total; of these 10 projects were selected with the Call of the Standard projects, 5 with the Call of Standard + projects, 3 with the Call of Strategic projects, and 1 with the Call for Cluster projects. As of December 31, 2022, the Standard and Standard + projects were concluded, while the activities of the Strategic and Cluster project were still in progress.

Only three projects have a Croatian lead partner. This is the Intermodal Transport Cluster, located in Primorsko-Goranska, which leads the Standard+ Transpogood project, of Pula Airport Ltd which led the Standard project Adrigreen, and the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Maritime Studies which led the Standard project DigLogs. All the other projects have an Italian lead partner, in particular the three strategic projects are led by Central European Initiative Executive Secretariat of Trieste (Mimosa), the Port Network Authority of the Eastern Adriatic Sea of Trieste (Susport) – which also lead the Cluster project “Digsea” and the Standard project “Promares” -, and the Consortium for the Coordination of Research Activities Concerning the Venice Lagoon System (Framesport).

The other projects involve the regional administrations of Friuli Venezia Giulia (Standard+ project Moses), and Marche region (Standard+ project Step-Up); the universities involved are Ca' Foscari University of Venice which led the Standard+ project Ecomobility, The University of Trieste which led the Standard project Metro. Two municipalities are also involved in the role of lead partner in two Standard projects: the city of Ancona (E-Chan) and the city of Caorle (Sutra).

**S.O. 4.1 Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area. Output indicators, December 31 2022**



The remaining projects are led by diverse kind of organizations, the Aries Limited Liability Consortium of Trieste (Standard project Deep-Sea), the North Adriatic Sea Port Authority based in Venice (Standard project Intesa), the Institute for Transport and Logistics Foundation based in Emilia Romagna (Standard project Icarus), the Euro-Mediterranean Center on Climate Change Foundation based in Lecce (Standard

project Gutta), the Rete Autostrade Mediterranee Spa with an operational unit in the region of Puglia (Standard+ project Charge).

- The result indicator related to the S.O. 4.1 is defined as “Goods transported by maritime mode”, the measurement unit is thousand tons. The baseline was set at 2,445 (2014) while the target value at 2,690 (2023). The level reached in 2022 records a value equal to 2,839 tons, above the final target<sup>6</sup>.

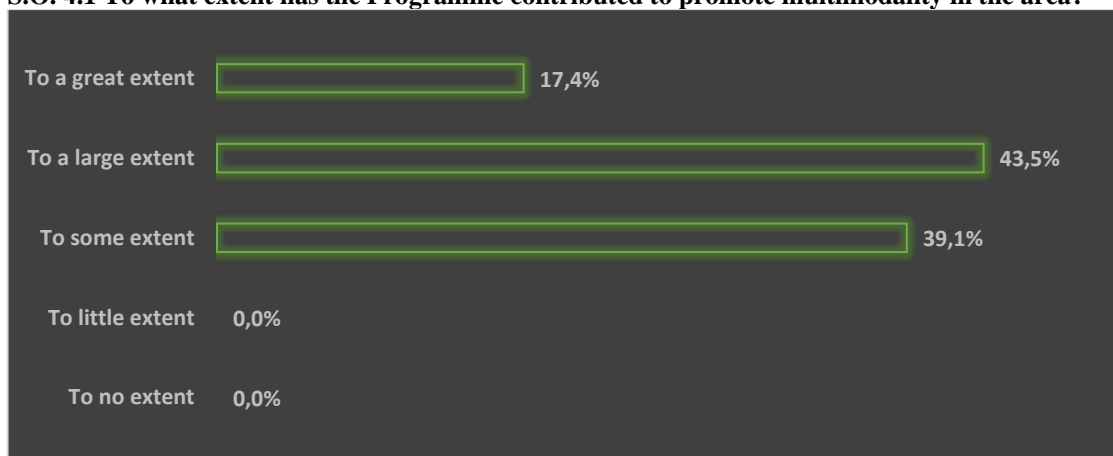
The Eurostat database is updated to 2021. In line with the methodology adopted so far, we have calculated the annual average of the data for the last three years available (2019-2021). The average annual figure for the three-year period considered is 2,839. The registered value for this three years period is higher than the last data collections and the final target.

### Analysis of the results of the survey

The questionnaire used to explore and analyze the opinion of the partners of the concluded projects under the specific objective 4.1 " Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area" was oriented to explore the opinions of the project partners towards the contribution of the implemented projects in order to promote the adoption of multimodality in the cooperation area, both as a general contribution and on a specific typology of actions. Moreover, it was also explored the role of the partners and stakeholders in promoting this e use of innovative technologies in this field and also the opinion of the partners on the importance of including them in the future activities of the Programme.

The first question addressed to the partners of the completed projects funded by O.S. 4.1 aimed to explore their opinion on the extent to which the Program has contributed to promote multimodality in the cooperation area. 61% of the respondents believe that the Program has contributed to a large extent or even to a great extent to achieving this goal. The remaining 39% believe that the Program's contribution in this policy has been of some extend.

#### S.O. 4.1 To what extent has the Programme contributed to promote multimodality in the area?



The second question explores which type of actions the contribution of the realized project has been most effective in order to promote the adoption of multimodality in the cooperation area. The graph shows the score received by summing up the answers “To a large extent” and “To a great extent”.

The action which has been judged as the most effective concerns the promotion of approaches based on the development of new kinds of passenger services, i.e., e-mobility, soft mobility, etc. (61%). Immediately

<sup>6</sup> The MA commented the methodology for the calculation of the indicator as follow: “The Eurostat database is updated to 2021. In line with the methodology adopted so far, we have calculated the annual average of the data for the last three years available (2019-2021). The average annual figure for the three-year period considered is 2,839. The registered value for this three years period is higher than the last data collections and the final target.”

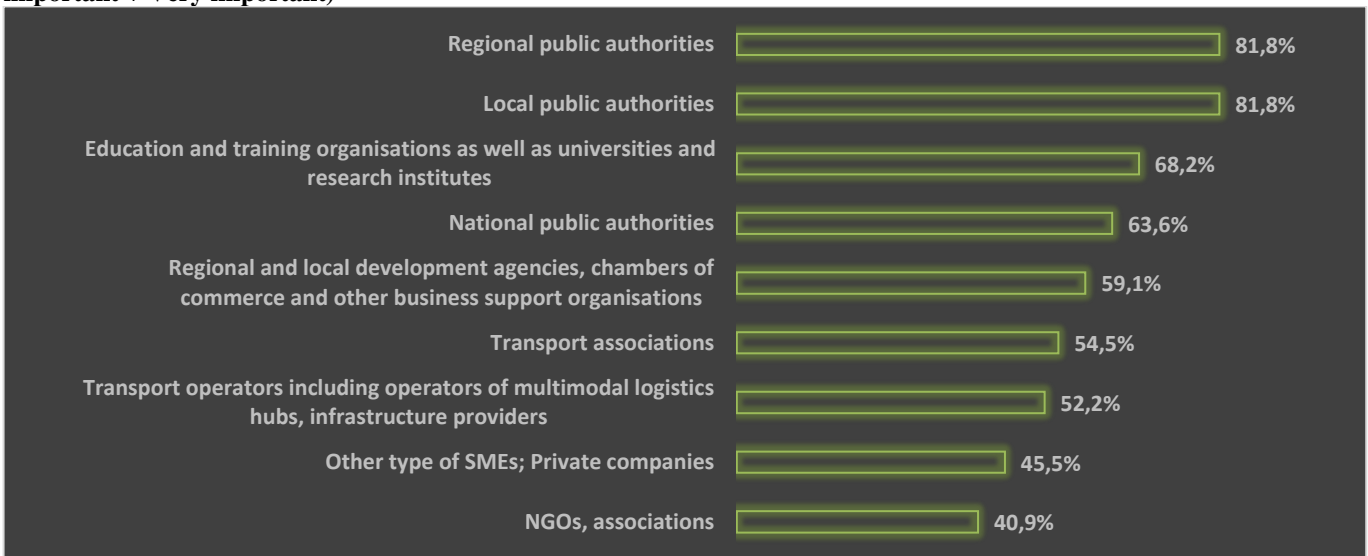
after, with a score of 59%, is the improvement of multimodal (rail, road, sea) transport systems through innovative solutions (ITS) including the promotion of pilot rail services in connection with ports. In an intermediate position we find the promotion of short sea shipping and maritime transport services through piloting CB routes (passengers, ferry connection between ports and their connections to hinterland), with a score of 45,5%, and the action oriented at harmonizing the administrative procedures and improvement of port quality management system (41%). Less important the contribution of actions aimed at “green” upgrading of the logistic system linked with maritime transport sector (38%); at the bottom of this ranking, we find the enhancing of a common vessel traffic monitoring centre (27%) and the support to the coordination between regional airports of the area for exploiting synergies and complementarities and promote multimodality (18%).

**S.O. 4.1 In which of the following fields has the Programme contributed to promoting multimodality in the area? (To a large extent + To a great extent)**



The following question concerns the role played by cross-border cooperation actors in supporting the use of multimodality. The actors that are recognized as key players in this field are the Local and Regional Public Authorities (82%) followed by universities and research institutions as well as education and training centers (both scoring 68%). Also high was the score obtained by the National Public Authorities (64%). Intermediate structures, such as regional and local development agencies, chambers of commerce and other business support organizations (59%).

**S.O. 4.1 Which of the following subjects had an important role in promoting multimodality in the area? (Moderately important + Very important)**



Specialized actors, like transport and operators (multimodal logistic hubs and other infrastructures), follow with scores between 54% and 52%. At the bottom of this rank, we find the contribution provided by SMEs and NGOs with scores between 45% and 41%.

**S.O. 4.1 Which of the following subjects do you consider a priority to involve more in the future activities of the Programme in order to promote multimodality in the area? (High priority + Essential)**



#### **4. Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives**

---

As part of the relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme's analyses, the Evaluator proceeded to reconstruct the logical framework of the Programme with particular attention to the needs and types of actions implemented per each SOs.

Furthermore, the following pages also cover a summary of the lessons learned within the Programme's strategy elaboration which are useful both for guiding the programming still in progress but also for the purpose of collecting hints for programming 21-27.

The Programme strategy is articulated in 4 Axes:

- blue innovation,
- safety and resilience,
- environment and cultural heritage,
- maritime transport.

These Axes are further divided into Specific Objectives (SOs):

- **AXE 1**
  - 1.1: Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area.
- **AXE 2**
  - 2.1: Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area.
  - 2.2: Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster.
- **AXE 3**
  - 3.1: Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development.
  - 3.2: Contribute to protect and restore biodiversity.
  - 3.3: Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches.
- **AXE 4**
  - 4.1: Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area.

To further explore the rationale behind the logical framework of the SOs the IE presents a **focus on the needs and the types of actions** programmed and implemented.

**SO 1.1** aims at improving the performance of the programme area in the field of innovation by establishing and developing mechanisms which contribute to a better exploitation of the existing potential. The needs emerged through the ex ante evaluation highlighted the urgency to improve competitiveness for both enterprises and workforce. Social capital is a crucial element of intervention considering that a cooperative and well functioning environment stimulates both coordination and functional information flow between all actors. This becomes a necessary precondition when it is applied in a context where companies and research institutions are supposed to cooperate in order to enhance the framework conditions to trigger innovation. The Programme intended to do so supporting two different types of action:

- joint projects and actions aimed at creating platforms, networks and at supporting exchange of good practices,
- actions aimed at cluster cooperation, joint pilot initiatives.

The objectives are to enhance the knowledge transfer and capitalization of achieved results and to boost the creation of marketable innovative processes and products in the field of blue economy.

**Figure 2 - SO1.1 logical framework**

Axe and specific objective	Needs (ex ante evaluation)	Types of action programmed
<p><b>1 “BLUE INNOVATION”</b></p> <p>1.1: Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area</p>	<p>Increase the level of competitiveness on international markets of SMEs</p> <p>Increase the specialization of the workforce</p> <p>Support “brain circulation” amongst research institutes/academies and companies</p> <p>Concentrate efforts for raising employment rate of the cooperation area</p> <p>Enhance cooperation between the innovation players</p> <p>Secure availability of high-skilled human resources to strengthen development patterns</p> <p>Facilitate involvement of SMEs in international networks for research</p>	<p>Joint projects and actions aimed at creating platforms and networks, supporting exchange of good practices</p> <p>Actions aimed at cluster cooperation, joint pilot initiatives in order to boost the creation of marketable innovative processes and products</p>

For what concerns Axe 2, **SO 2.1** which aims at improving the climate change monitoring and planning measures for strengthening the adaptation capacity of the region while increasing the resilience of the territory including its natural environment. The main topics of intervention for which this SO aims to develop the area’s adaptation capacity are:

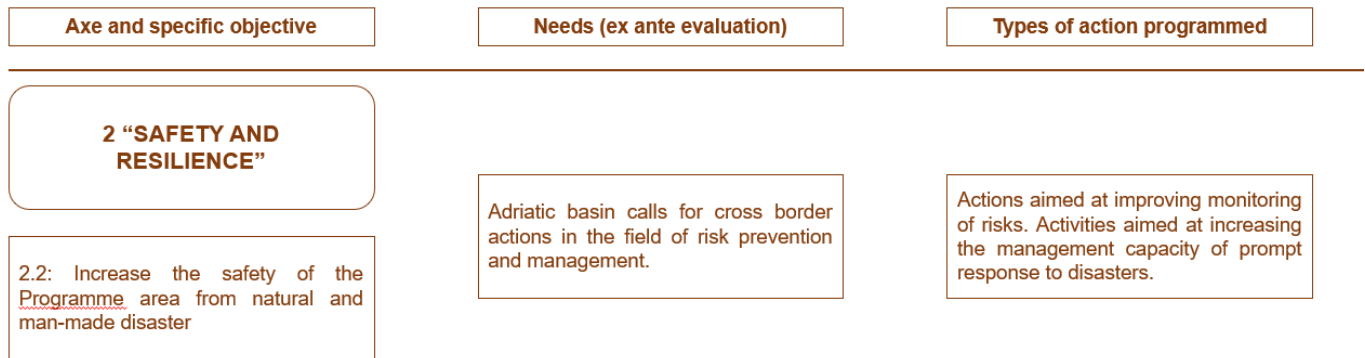
- sea level rise,
- flooding (in both coastal and hinterland areas),
- accelerated coastal erosion,
- subsidence,
- increasing water temperatures,
- acidification of the marine waters,
- saltwater intrusion into freshwater systems,
- increased occurrence of heavy rainfall and severe droughts and fires.

**Figure 3 - SO2.1 logical framework**

Axe and specific objective	Needs (ex ante evaluation)	Types of action programmed
<p><b>2 “SAFETY AND RESILIENCE”</b></p> <p>2.1: Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area</p>	<p>Improve adaptive capacity to have an higher impact on climate change, especially in vulnerable marine and coastal parts</p>	<p>Actions aimed at improving the knowledge base, data and monitoring systems supporting adaptation capacity</p>

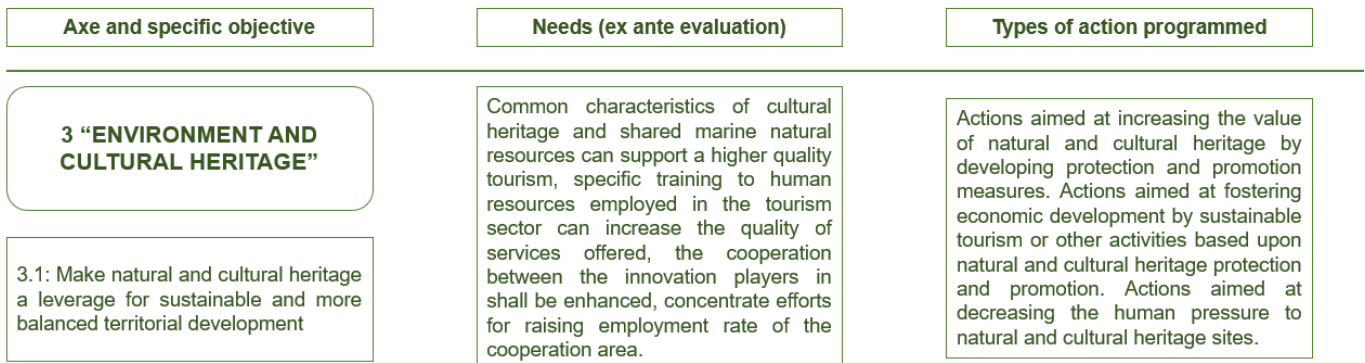
**SO 2.2** aims at increasing the safety of the area from natural and man made disaster. It aims to do so through a series of actions linked with improving monitoring activities, increasing management capacity and responses to crisis. The main natural and man-made disasters this SO aims to tackle are floods, fire, oil spill and other marine hazards.

**Figure 4 – SO2.2 logical framework**



For what concerns Axis 3 – Environmental and cultural heritage, **SO 3.1** works towards making this heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development. The SO aims at reaching a higher level of sustainable economic and territorial development by exploiting the potentials of the natural assets and cultural heritage while preserving them and increasing their value.

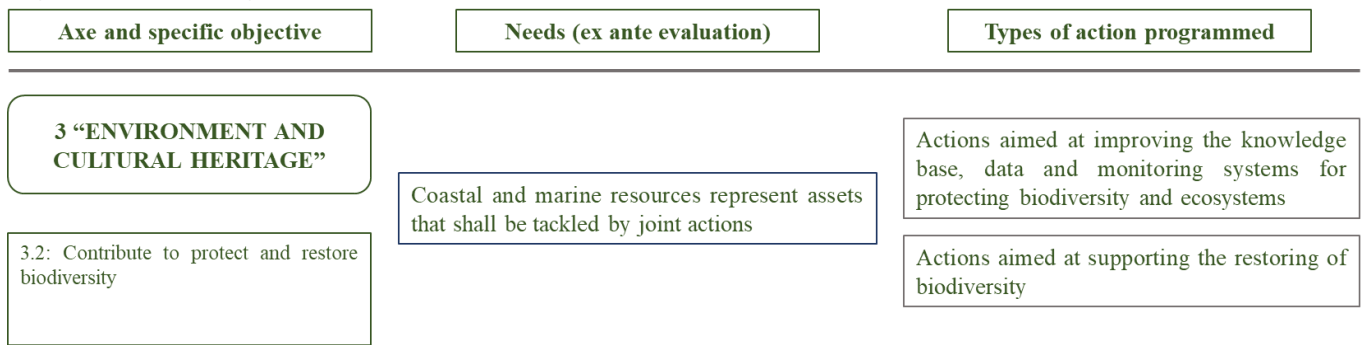
**Figure 5 – SO 3.1 logical framework**



For the **SO 3.2**, the main challenges are to strengthen the management and protection of ecosystems and to improve the cooperation between public actors/managers of the protected areas in order to increase environmental benefits. A secondary challenge is to provide economic and employment opportunities through the supported projects. Environmental and cultural heritage protection and restoration is both an end in itself but it is important to highlight the fact that it is understood to contribute to new economic opportunities and create occupation. Even though in the logical framework it is not explicitly emphasized, a collaborative/cooperative environment facilitates overcoming the identified challenges and achieving expected objectives. This offers the opportunity to highlight the fact that, more than any other programme, Interreg, given its nature, has an intertwined structure and SOs are strongly linked one another. Cooperation represents the key element that knots the different Axes, SOs and actions implemented.



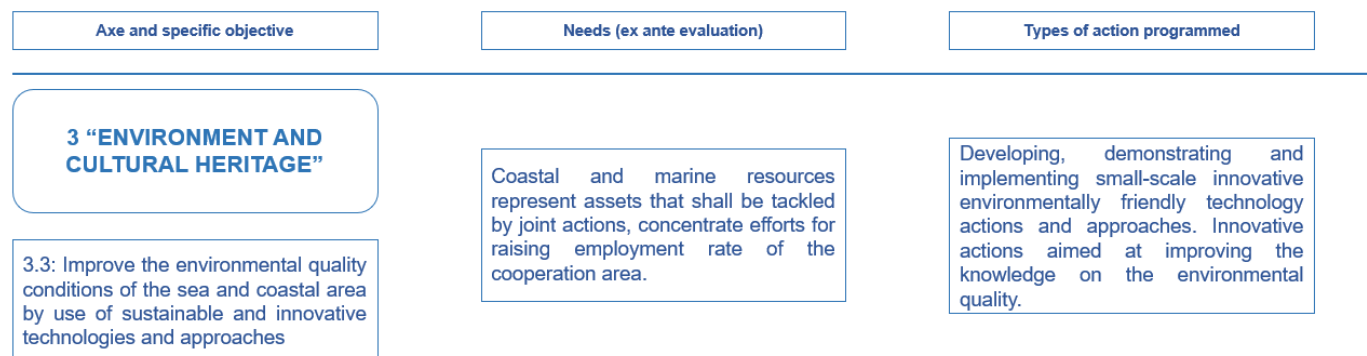
**Figure 6 - SO3.2 logical framework**



**SO 3.3** aims to improve the quality of the water of the sea by using innovative technologies in waste management and treatment, as well as new integrated approaches in facing several problems, including the emerging issue of marine litter. The main actions that the Programme is undertaking to further this SO are:

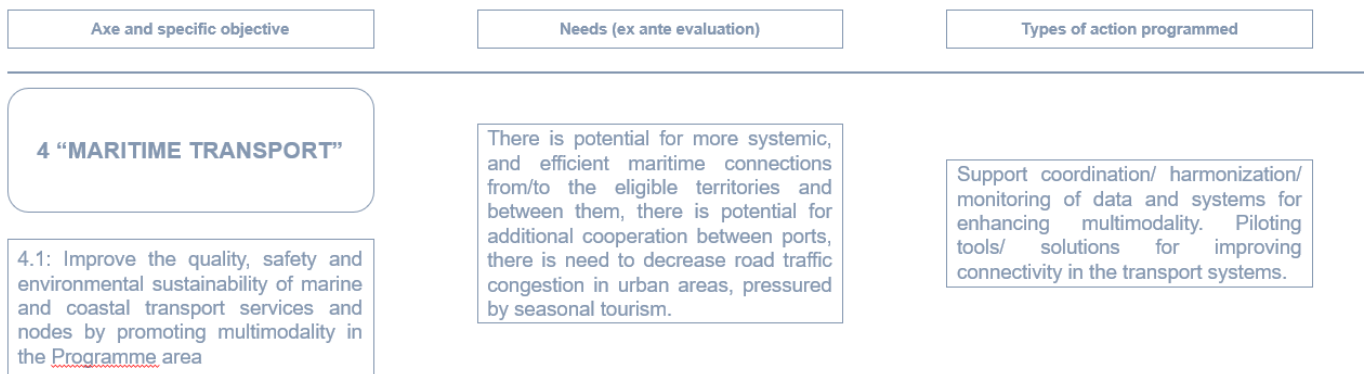
- developing, demonstrating and implementing small-scale innovative environmentally friendly technology actions and approaches;
- innovative actions aimed at improving the knowledge on the environmental quality.

**Figure 7 – SO3.3 logical framework**



Axis 4 – Maritime transport is composed of only **SO 4.1** which aims to improve the quality, safety, and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services. To achieve this change, the programme will support actions developing new traffic modalities directed towards the use of vessels using compatible energy sources (such as methane), the adoption of ICT systems to perform embarking and disembarking of passengers in vessel traffic management and implementation of e-ticket (electronic ticketing) systems and electronic traffic management to ensure a more efficient development of traffic in the area. Efforts for enhancing the quality and the environmental sustainability of services and node will contribute to a reduction of the CO2 emissions for transport purposes.

**Figure 8 – SO4.1 logical framework**



To check the progress of the Programme related to the SOs considered for this report, chapter 3 provides an overall and precise overview of implementation progress. The evaluation questions related to this chapter have been addressed thanks to the results emerged in the semi structured interviews directed to Lead Partners, Secretariat, MA and the Italian and Croatian National Authority conducted in 2022.

### **The main lessons learned relating to the elaboration of Programme strategy and the improvements to better address development needs in the future**

To tackle the theme **Relevance, consistency and complementarity** the main sources used by the IE are **semi-structured interviews undertaken during 2022 with Lead Partners, the MA and the JS.**

For the sake of clarity, the IE divides the results emerged from the interviews had with the Lead Partners and those with institutional characters.

Starting with the latter it is possible to highlight two main elements:

- indicators (ecolabel),
- ambitions on transports.

The program did not have troubles related to output indicators for the SOs selected for this impact evaluation report and the implementation phase did not encounter impediments. The program has been coherent with its objectives. This is not to be taken for granted considering that the program is at its first experience. **Projects’ coherence and relevance were pursued also thanks to the job of the Secretariat that offered the right support in the tendering and admission phase to those projects that presented critical situations.** The Secretariat followed the conditions clearing process and it helped some of the projects to match their initiatives and objectives with those of the program. **This certainly played a key role in the long term, and it is identified by the Italian National Authority as a good practice even though it meant that the time required for projects admission was longer than expected.** This tradeoff **between timing and coherence/relevance** is therefore considered positive. Furthermore, a crucial role was covered by Project Officers in supporting the Lead Partners reporting progresses and drafting reports. The job was similar to the one done by the Secretariat at the beginning, but it was adopted during the implementation phase. Project Officers made sure that reports were always in line with what was agreed on and they were aligned with the program’s objectives and rationale.

The secretariat highlights the fact that **only one of the indicators suffers from a slow pace, namely beneficiaries with ecolabel/green certification.** This was not a standard indicator, but it had strong value, and it might have been a bit **ambitious.** This indicator was **inserted in the program because it was seen as a pragmatic method to pursue environmental-friendly and sustainable results.** As it came up from the semi structured interview with the JS, there is a need for the next programming period **to make environmental sustainability more central in the next programming period and to adopt a more pragmatic and effective approach to achieve the expected results in this respect.**

The second point was discussed mainly during the interviews with the MA and the JS and it deals with **Axe 4 – maritime transport.** Both interviewees highlight the fact that **the program has not managed to make**

**an impact on the transport infrastructure in the cooperation area.** The reason for this lack of success is to be found in the fact that Interreg programs, because of their nature, can have only limited impact. There are some **structural impediments** such as **countless authorizations, huge investments, and time.** This Interreg cannot count on large funds and infrastructure investments are often very expensive and they need more time than one programming period to take place. What can the program do is to stimulate and **trigger the need to create new links.** Cooperation initiatives should therefore **activate the demand for new transport** through the new social capital and networks created. This first step can be considered a great starting point to initiate positive change and it might be a more accurate result for an Interreg program. The need for more efficient maritime infrastructure is perceived as important in the cooperation area. Transport during summer can be considered adequate even though it can be expensive because of the high demand, but during the off season this does not guarantee the same opportunities. The perceptions emerged from the interviews suggested that **commuters and professionals cannot rely on maritime transport for their work matters.** This should therefore be promoted to allow even more networks and links to blossom. Although this is felt as a need by the MA and the JS, they both acknowledge the fact that there is a clear difference between the needs of the area and the possible impact that this kind of program can have. This dualism represents a critical point that every program, despite its size and area of intervention, needs to face and tackle in order to be effective and efficient.

The **interviews with the Lead Partners provided operational insights** and these are strongly related with the impediments they faced in the implementation phase.

**Science based projects have a significant limit: they need a great quantity of data** that allows researchers to understand phenomena and look for pragmatic solutions. One of the Lead Partners that was interviewed specifically highlighted that they had **difficulties obtaining and using the data they needed to create a predictive model useful to show the impact of fishing.** They were smart **including the data provider in the partnership** and this helped to bypass some potential impediments. Data can be held by public and private entities, and they can be hard to get in both cases. This difficulty can be detrimental to the potential impact of the project, if data cannot be shared easily it means the project cannot be replicated which is a shame especially in the case it had success in its area of operation. **Making data open source is the quicker solution but also the hardest** to get to, solutions have to be found through networks and research institutions need to involve data providers in the partnerships.

**Another element that emerged during the interviews is linked with the ability/possibility for projects to establish fruitful networks that go beyond the partnerships.** One of the projects shared its experience regarding this topic and it showed how creating links with decision making institutions works as a multiplier effect. This is because each initiative works at two main levels: at the project level or at a broader one. Effects at the project level often include only the area of intervention and they affect the daily life of the local public, but local projects can also have a much bigger impact affecting institutions and contributing to changes at a wider scope. This project had the opportunity to build a relationship with two DGs (AGRI and CLIMA) and for a series of events the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture became one of the project partners. These two conditions allowed the project to present its activities to them and actively influence the institutions. This had a concrete positive result for Croatia considering that the topic of carbon credit was more or less never discussed (at an institutional level) and the opportunity to participate in a project with this topic opened up new frontiers and economic opportunities for Croatian farmers. The Lead Partner advocates that **such links should be promoted from the program through specific activities or conditions because it allows to achieve enhanced results.** It is also important to highlight that changes in the long term are backed up and are more likely to have an impact when institutions embody them. For this reason, the program should think to create a bridge between the financed projects and institutions at all levels, from municipalities to the EC.

**One of the Lead Partners that was interviewed brings up the fact that the main limit for such projects is the range of time available.** In this specific case, the objective of the project was to create a partnership between public and private entities contributing to the protection and restoration of the biodiversity in the cooperation area. Once the partnership took off and activities began, results were quite positive, and the network created was fruitful. They say that time can be a constraint in the sense that when support to this community ends, relations and results would progressively decrease. Creating a community takes time and

it needs encouragement and incentives before relations become standardized. This experience suggests that communities should not be left on their own once a project is concluded because the effects, they can bring about could be limited compared to the situation where support from the Lead Partner can still take place. The interviewee understands projects need to come to an end and that the program has a start and a finish date, but this insight is important for the MA to think about a mechanism for which follow up of the project is allowed. This would create the preconditions for enhanced results in the long term too, support prolonged during the years can be key to make relations and positive social dynamics the status quo.

## **5. Cross-border cooperation added value and networking**

---

### **5.1. Context**

Cross-border co-operation has the objective of reducing the effects of barriers, including administrative, legal and physical barriers, that are found at borders. Local and regional authorities and organizations cooperate across borders to promote regional development by improving for example local development and knowledge, by managing and monitoring common cultural and natural heritage and by reducing border obstacles such as differences in national regulation in order to facilitate mobility across borders. **Joint actions, face-to-face meetings and so on are the very core of INTERREG projects.**

The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes to social behaviours in Europe. One of its major consequences was the temporary closure of borders, which was introduced as a measure to prevent the uncontrolled pandemic spreading. This has had a major impact in the way in which cross-border cooperation has been conducted in Europe, including the Italy-Croatia Programme, as it dramatically restrained all flows across borders.

**The impact of the pandemic** can be particularly evident on role of cross-border cooperation as a multi-level governance form, regional development tool and Europe-building.

The border closure disabled the organisation of joint events, meetings, actions and so on alongside the border. Given the pandemic-related atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, the entire people-to-people part of the INTERREG programme was the first to be cancelled. Therefore, **the implementation of INTERREG-funded projects was substantially complicated.** The border closures have negatively influenced or disabled the implementation of joint cross-border initiatives, very often co-financed from the Italy-Croatia programme.

It has to be stressed the impossibility to implement projects, which should assist in removing the barrier function of the border, without the possibility to meet physically. This might also lead to a dramatic decrease of newly prepared projects.

The very negative influence of COVID-19 pandemic has been also stressed by the JTS during the focus discussion took place in October 2022 (see box below).

#### **Focus discussion with JTS – CBC added value, main elements**

- The Italy-Croatia Programme 2014-2020 is a completely new Programme. This is an added value for direct contacts between Italian and Croatian bodies establishing new relationships via Italy-Croatia projects
- It has to be stressed the impact of COVID-19 pandemic that has been one of the biggest setbacks for cross-border cooperation.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic face-to-face meetings, actions have been cancelled and this has had an high impact on the building of new partnerships/occasion for new projects.

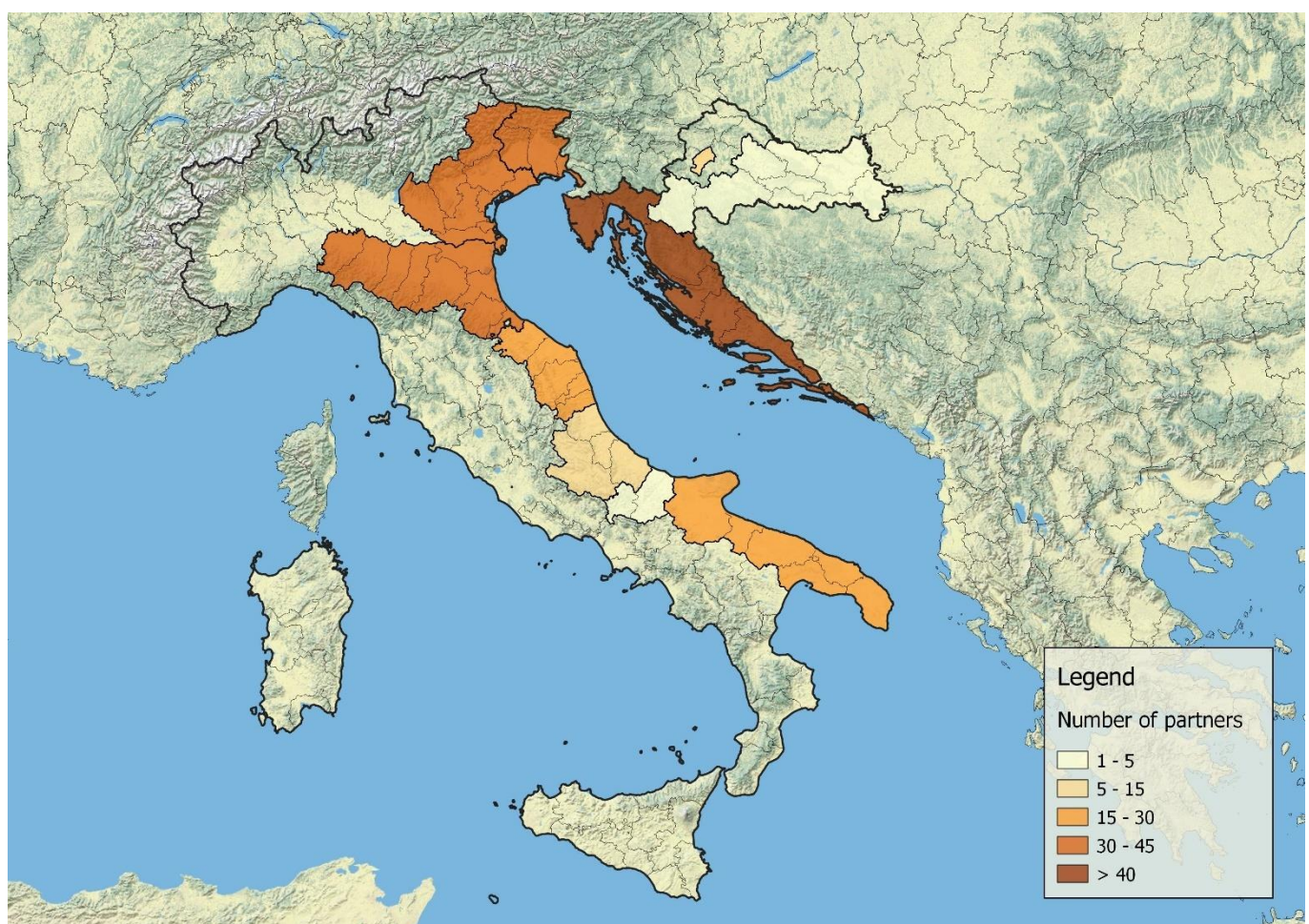
Despite the negative effects of the pandemic, further aggravated by the war in Ukraine, the **Italy-Croatia projects have achieved their objectives and have contributed to determining positive impacts** with particular reference to the CBC added value of the Program as demonstrated in the following pages.

## 5.2. Desk analysis

The following Evaluator’s desk analysis shows the extent of the partnerships activated by the closed projects funded by the Programme within the four SOs which are the focus of this Impact Evaluation Draft. The projects considered are those that were approved in implementation of the different calls for proposals for Standard and Standard+ projects and that are closed (none of the projects is reporting in closure). The research has been based on secondary data stemming from the MA’s informative system (SIU) and projects’ database that have represented the main sources of information.

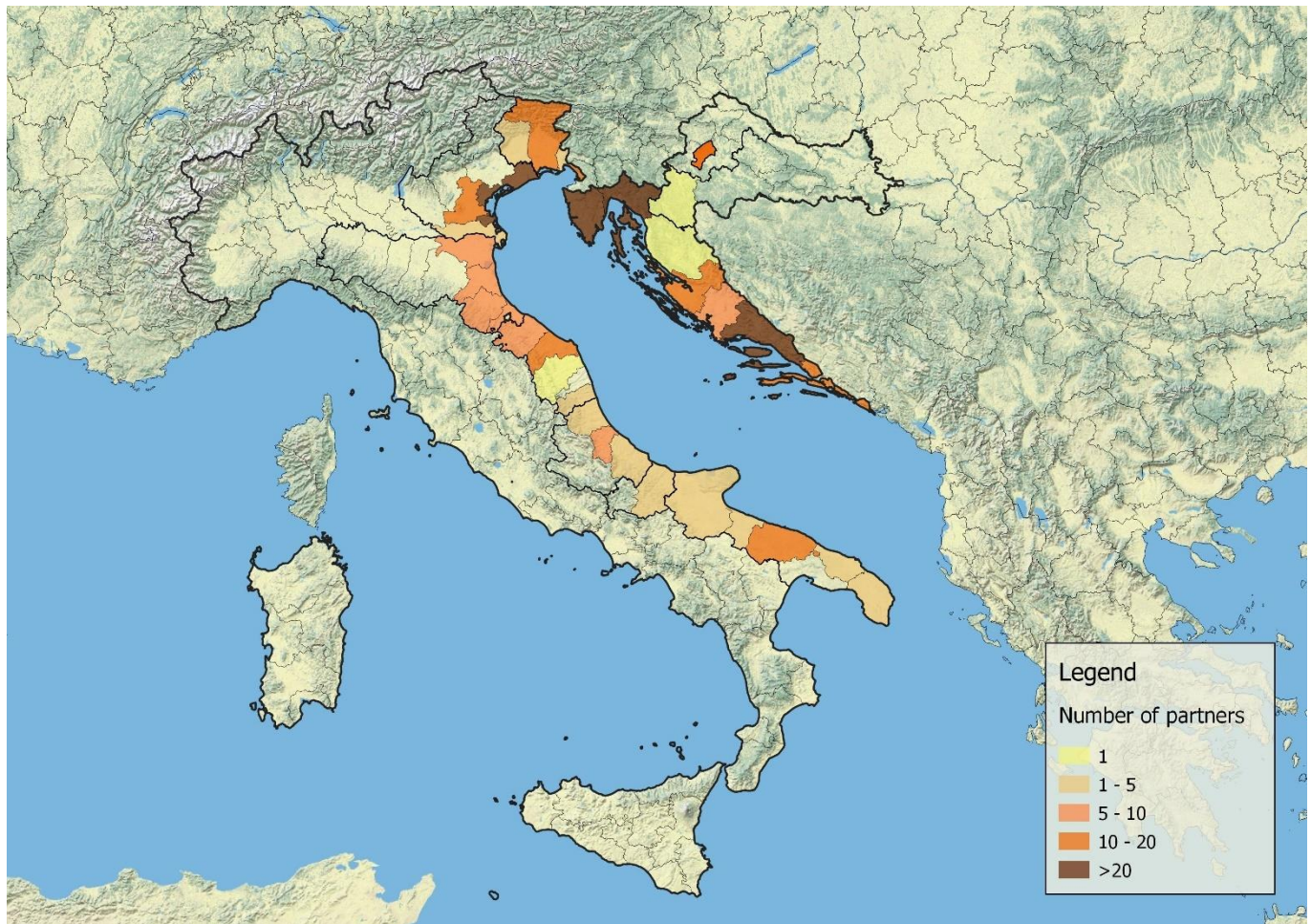
In the following maps the territorial distribution of partners NUTS 2 and NUTS3 is reported.

**Figure 9 – All SOs – Territorial distribution of partners (NUTS2)**



The actual **number of partners** involved in projects is **288** for all the four SOs concerned, with different typology of subjects such as Regions, University, Research Centers, Agencies of development, etc. It is interesting to notice that **Croatia has the highest concentration of partners in absolute terms**, both at NUTS2 and NUTS3 level, while **Southern Italy has the lowest number of subjects/partners**, especially at NUTS3 level. Looking at the partners’ typology, it is also significant to notice **that public bodies represent the majority of the participants**: only **61** out of 288 are private **bodies**, coming mainly from Italy.

**Figure 10 – All SOs – Territorial distribution of project partners (NUTS3)**



It is interesting to stress that **out of a total of 288 partners, 33% joined more than one project** (a total of 95 subjects/partners).

The following tables presents the **details of the partners** participating in more than one project **divided by SOs**.

**S.O 1.1. Partners joined more than one project**

Partners	Projects
UDRUGA ZA PRIRODU, OKOLIŠ I ODRŽIVI RAZVOJ SUNCE	FAIRSEA
	ADRIREEF
Ca' Foscari University of Venice	BLUTOURSYSTEM
	Adri.SmArtFish
EMILIA ROMAGNA REGION	PRIZEFISH
	Adri.SmArtFish
INSTITUT ZA OCEANOGRAFIJU I RIBARSTVO	FAIRSEA
	PRIZEFISH
	Adri.SmArtFish
	AdriAquaNet
	ITACA
MARCHE REGION	BLUE KEP
	Adri.SmArtFish
MINISTARSTVO POLJOPRIVREDE	PRIZEFISH
	Adri.SmArtFish
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEANOGRAPHY AND EXPERIMENTAL GEOPHYSICS - OGS	FAIRSEA
	ADRIREEF
	PRIZEFISH
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF ITALY	FAIRSEA

Partners	Projects
	ADRIREEF
	PRIZEFISH
	AdriAquaNet
	ITACA
PUBLIC INSTITUTION RERA SD FOR COORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT (SPLIT-DALMATIA COUNTY)	BLUE KEP
	FAIRSEA
	ADRIREEF
	PRIZEFISH
	ITACA
Region of ISTRIA	BLUE KEP
	BLTOURSYSTEM
	Adri.SmArtFish
University of Rijeka	BEAT
	ADRIREEF
	AdriAquaNet
University of Split	BLTOURSYSTEM
	FAIRSEA
University of Trieste	BEAT
	AdriAquaNet
University of Udine	COASTENERGY
	AdriAquaNet
Veneto Region	BLTOURSYSTEM
	Adri.SmArtFish
ZADAR COUNTY	Adri.SmArtFish
	PRIZEFISH

#### S.O 2.1. Partners joined more than one project

Partners OS 2.1.	Projects
CROATIAN WATERS	MoST
	ASTERIS
INSTITUT ZA OCEANOGRFIJU I RIBARSTVO	RESPONSe
	CHANGE WE CARE
IRENA – ISTARSKA REGIONALNA ENERGETSKA AGENCIJA D.O.O.	iDEAL
	Joint_SECAP
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL OF ITALY	MoST
	CHANGE WE CARE
	ASTERIS
Veneto Region	MoST
	CHANGE WE CARE

#### SO 2.2. Partners joined more than one project

Partners	Project
DUBROVACKO - NERETVANSKA ZUPANIJA	READINESS
	AdriaMORE
EURELATIONS GEIE	READINESS
	E-CITIJENS
REGIONE MOLISE	READINESS
	E-CITIJENS
SPLITSKO-DALMATINSKA ŽUPANIJA	READINESS
	E-CITIJENS
	PEPSEA
SVEUČILIŠTE U SPLITU - FAKULTET GRAĐEVINARSTVA, ARHITEKTURE I GEODEZIJE	E-CITIJENS
	PMO-GATE

**SO 3.1. Partners joined more than one project**

Partners	Project
AGENCIJA ZA RAZVOJ ZADARSKE ŽUPANIJE ZADRA NOVA	Zero Waste Blue
	MADE IN-LAND
ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - UNIVERSITA' DI BOLOGNA	RECOLOR
	EXCOVER
	S.LI.DES.
AZRRI - AGENCIJA ZA RURALNI RAZVOJ ISTRE D.O.O. PAZIN	MADE IN-LAND
	KeyQ+
COMUNE DI BARI	ATRIUM PLUS
	S.LI.DES.
COMUNE DI CAMPOBASSO	RECOLOR
	REVIVAL
	EXCOVER
COMUNE DI CESENATICO	REVIVAL
	ARCA ADRIATICA
COMUNE DI CIVIDALE DEL FRIULI	KeyQ+
	RECOLOR
COMUNE DI FORLI'	REVIVAL
	ATRIUM PLUS
DELTA 2000 - SOCIETA' CONSORTILE A R.L.	INNOCOLTOUR
	VALUE
	EXCOVER
	TOURISM4ALL
DUBROVACKO-NERETVANSKA ŽUPANIJA	HERCULTOUR
	Zero Waste Blue
GRAD KAŠTELA	VALUE
	UnderwaterMuse
GRAD LABIN	ATRIUM PLUS
	RECOLOR
GRAD ZADAR	RECOLOR
	REVIVAL
	TOURISM4ALL
JAVNA USTANOVA RERA SD ZA KOORDINACIJU I RAZVOJ SPLITSKO-DALMATINSKE ŽUPANIJE	INNOCULTOUR
	REMEMBER
	REVIVAL
	TOURISM4ALL
	UnderwaterMuse
MONTEFELTRO SVILUPPO SOCIETÀ CONSORTILE A R.L.	RECOLOR
	EXCOVER
PRIMORSKO-GORANSKA ŽUPANIJA	HERCULTOUR
	EXCOVER
	ARCA ADRIATICA
	ArTVision+
REGIONE DEL VENETO	INNOCULTOUR
	ArTVision+
	Zero Waste Blue
	VALUE



Partners	Project
	TOURISM4ALL
REGIONE EMILIA-ROMAGNA	Zero Waste Blue
	VALUE
	RECOLOR
REGIONE MOLISE	INNOCOLTOUR
	Zero Waste Blue
	TOURISM4ALL
REGIONE PUGLIA	TOURISM4ALL
	UnderwaterMuse
SIPRO AGENZIA PROVINCIALE PER LO SVILUPPO-FERRARA	ATLAS
	S.LI.DES.
SVEUCILIŠTE U ZADRU	ATRIUM PLUS
	REVIVAL
	EXCOVER
	MADE IN-LAND
TURISTIČKA ZAJEDNICA KVARNERA	ArTVision+
	ARCA ADRIATICA
TURISTIČKA ZAJEDNICA GRADA ŠIBENIKA	S.LI.DES.
	TOURISM4ALL
UNIVERSITA' CA FOSCARI VENEZIA	ArTVision+
	S.LI.DES.
	ARCA ADRIATICA
	UnderwaterMuse

### S.O 3.2. Partners joined more than one project

Partners	Projects
UDRUGA ZA PRIRODU, OKOLIŠ I ODRŽIVI RAZVOJ SUNCE	SASPAS
	SUSHI DROP
PLAVI SVIJET INSTITUT ZA ISTRAŽIVANJE I ZAŠTITU MORA	ECOSS
	SOUNDSCAPE
INSTITUT ZA OCEANOGRAFIJU I RIBARSTVO	ECOSS
	SOUNDSCAPE
MARCHE REGION	DORY
	SUSHI DROP
	SOUNDSCAPE
NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (CNR -ITALY)	DORY
	ECOSS
	SOUNDSCAPE
UBLIC INSTITUTION FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED NATURAL AREAS OF DUBROVNIK-NERETVA COUNTY	CREW
	ECOSS

### SO 3.3. Partners joined more than one project

Partner	Projects
CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE	WATERCARE
	AdSWIM
OGS (ISTITUTO NAZIONALE DI OCEANOGRAFIA E DI GEOFISICA SPERIMENTALE)	AdSWIM
	ECOMAP
JAVNA USTANOVA RERA S.D. ZA KOORDINACIJU I RAZVOJ SPLITSKO DALMATINSKE ŽUPANIJE	ML-REPAIR
	NET4mPLASTIC

Partner	Projects
INSTITUT ZA OCEANOGRFIJU I RIBARSTVO	ML-REPAIR
	ECOMAP
ISTARSKO VELEUČILIŠTE	WATERCARE
	AdSWIM
REGIONE MARCHE	WATERCARE
	NET4mPLASTIC
SVEUČILIŠTE U SPLITU - FAKULTET GRAĐEVINARSTVA, ARHITEKTURE I GEODEZIJE	AdSWIM
	NET4mPLASTIC
UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI FERRARA	NET4mPLASTIC
	ECOMAP

**SO 4.1. Partners joined more than one project**

Partner	Projects
AUTORITA' DI SISTEMA PORTUALE DEL MARE ADRIATICO CENTRALE	CHARGE
	ADRIGREEN
	INTESA
	PROMARES
AUTORITA' DI SISTEMA PORTUALE DEL MARE ADRIATICO CENTRO-SETTENTRIONALE	INTESA
	PROMARES
AUTORITÀ DI SISTEMA PORTUALE DEL MARE ADRIATICO MERIDIONALE (PORTI DI BARI, BRINDISI, MANFREDONIA, BARLETTA E MONOPOLI)	CHARGE
	GUTTA
	INTESA
	PROMARES
AUTORITÀ DI SISTEMA PORTUALE DEL MARE ADRIATICO ORIENTALE	METRO
	INTESA
	PROMARES
AUTORITÀ DI SISTEMA PORTUALE DEL MARE ADRIATICO SETTENTRIONALE – PORTI DI VENEZIA E CHIOGGIA	CHARGE
	PROMARES
	INTESA
CFLI - CONSORZIO FORMAZIONE LOGISTICA INTERMODALE	TRANSPGOOD
	DigLogs
ELEVANTE S.R.L.	TRANSPGOOD
	DigLogs
FONDAZIONE ISTITUTO SUI TRASPORTI E LA LOGISTICA - ITL	MOSES
	PROMARES
	ICARUS
ISTARSKA RAZVOJNA AGENCIJA - IDA D.O.O.	TRANSPGOOD
	ICARUS
	METRO
KLASTER INTERMODALNOG PRIJEVOZA	CHARGE
	ICARUS
	TRANSPGOOD
LUČKA UPRAVA PLOČE	CHARGE
	TRANSPGOOD
	INTESA
	PROMARES
LUČKA UPRAVA RIJEKA	INTESA

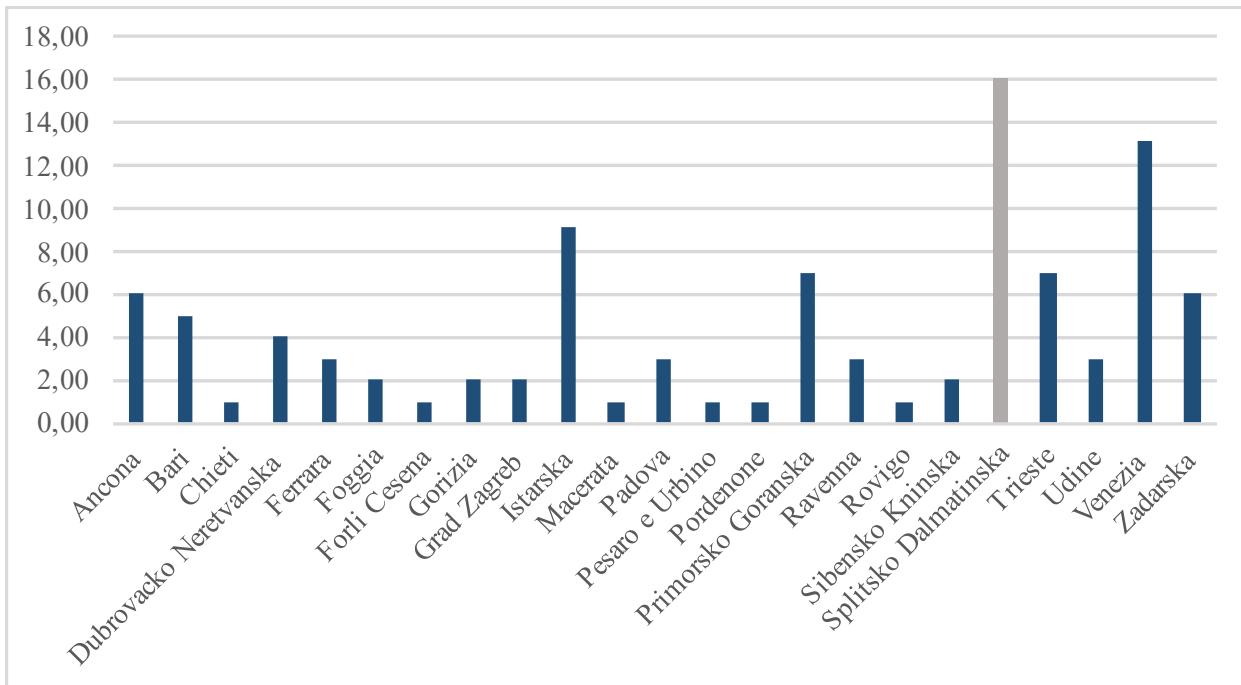
Partner	Projects
	PROMARES
	DigLogs
LUČKA UPRAVA SPLIT	CHARGE
	INTESA
MINISTARSTVO MORA, PROMETA I INFRASTRUKTURE	CHARGE
	GUTTA
	INTESA
RAM- RETE AUTOSTRADE MEDITERRANEE SPA	INTESA
	PROMARES
	CHARGE
REGIONE AUTONOMA FRIULI-VENEZIA GIULIA	MOSES
	ICARUS
REGIONE EMILIA-ROMAGNA	STEP-UP
	ICARUS
SVEUČILIŠTE U RIJECI, POMORSKI FAKULTET U RIJECI	METRO
	E-CHAIN
	DigLogs
	PROMARES
UNIONE REGIONALE DELLE CAMERE DI COMMERCIO I.A.A. DEL VENETO - UNIONCAMERE DEL VENETO	TRANSGOOD
	DigLogs
UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI TRIESTE	STEP-UP
	DigLogs
	E-CHAIN
	METRO
VENICE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY	ICARUS
	PROMARES

Thanks to the Evaluator's exercise on the secondary data provided by the MA and regarding the composition of the partnerships it is possible to draw up a **list of comments** concerning both the general context and each specific objective.

- The already known **high participation of public partners** such as universities and other public bodies is hereby confirmed by the analysis of partners taking part in more than one project. They are **almost all public or public equivalent bodies, except for 6 Italian and 4 Croatian private partners**.
- **Looking closely at the objectives, SO 3.1 registers the highest number of partners present in several projects (25 partners)**. A similar trend of **high participation** is also shown by **SO 4.1**, with **21 partners** taking part in more than one project. It is worth noting **the high participation of local public authorities** in the context of both SOs, 3.1 and 4.1. 24 out of 46 partners who joined more than one project are indeed local public authorities.
- For what concerns **SOs 2.2 and 3.3**, the number of partners present in more than one project is significantly lower if compared to SOs 3.1 and 4.1 (respectively **5 and 8 partners present in more than one co-financed operation**). It is interesting to stress the **relatively high number of Research Institutes** who joined more than one project in **S.O. 3.2** (6 out of 8 partners).
- Over 57% of partners participating in more than one project are Italian. However, none of them participates in more than 4 projects in the same SO with the sole exception of Regione del Veneto, who simultaneously joined 5 projects. It is possible to detect the same trend in relation to Croatian partners.

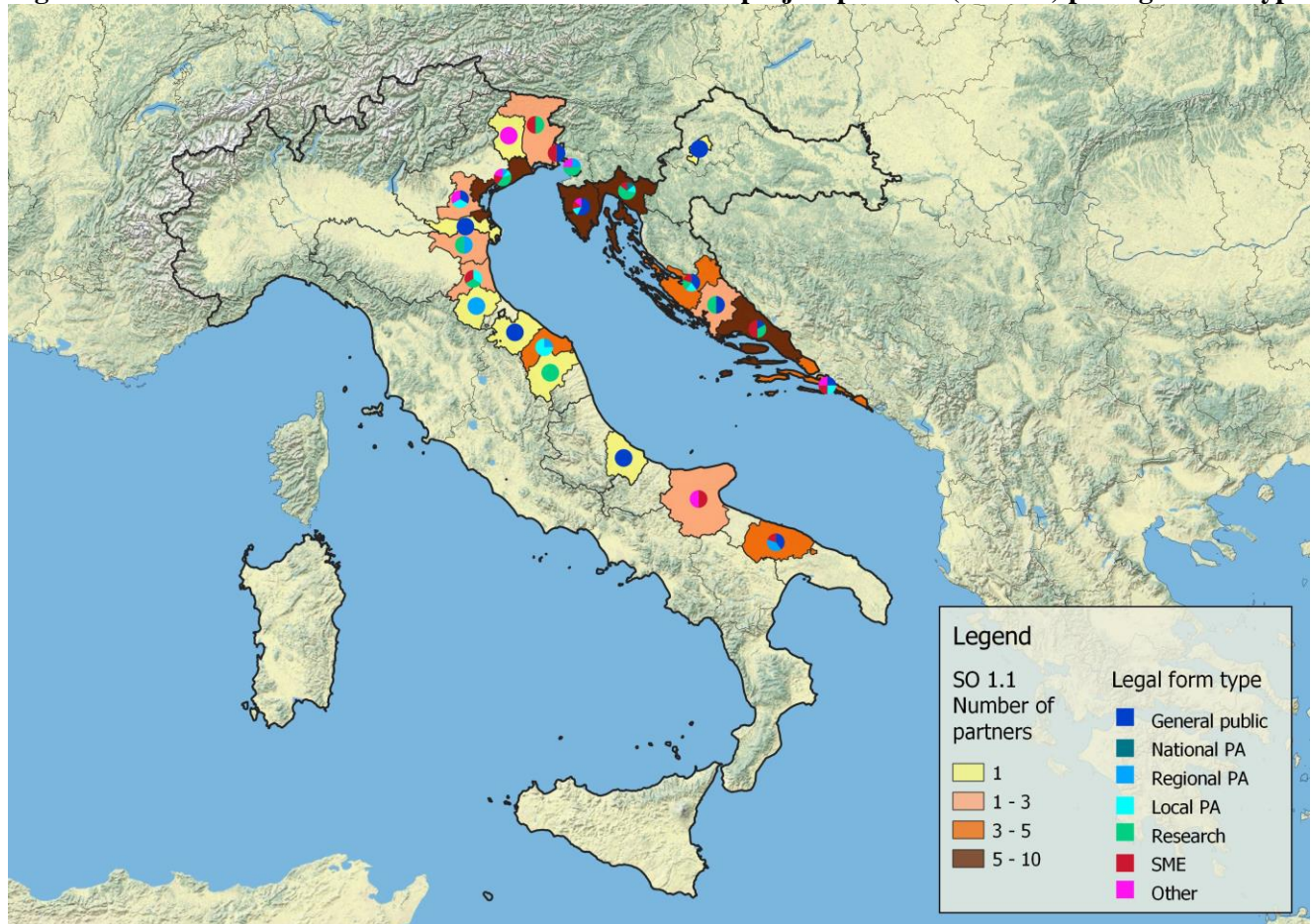
The following charts cover the overview of the % distribution of partners per implementing unit local (NUTS3) distinguished per each SOs.

**Graph 1 - S.O. 1.1 – %distribution of project partners per Implementing Unit Location NUTS3**



The chart shows the majority of project partners for the **SO 1.1**. comes from Splitsko Dalmatinska followed by Venezia, Istarska, Primorsko Goranska and Trieste. In this context it has to be underlined the high participation of Croatian projects partners. Except for Bari, the participation of Southern Italian NUTS 3 has to be improved within SO 1.1.

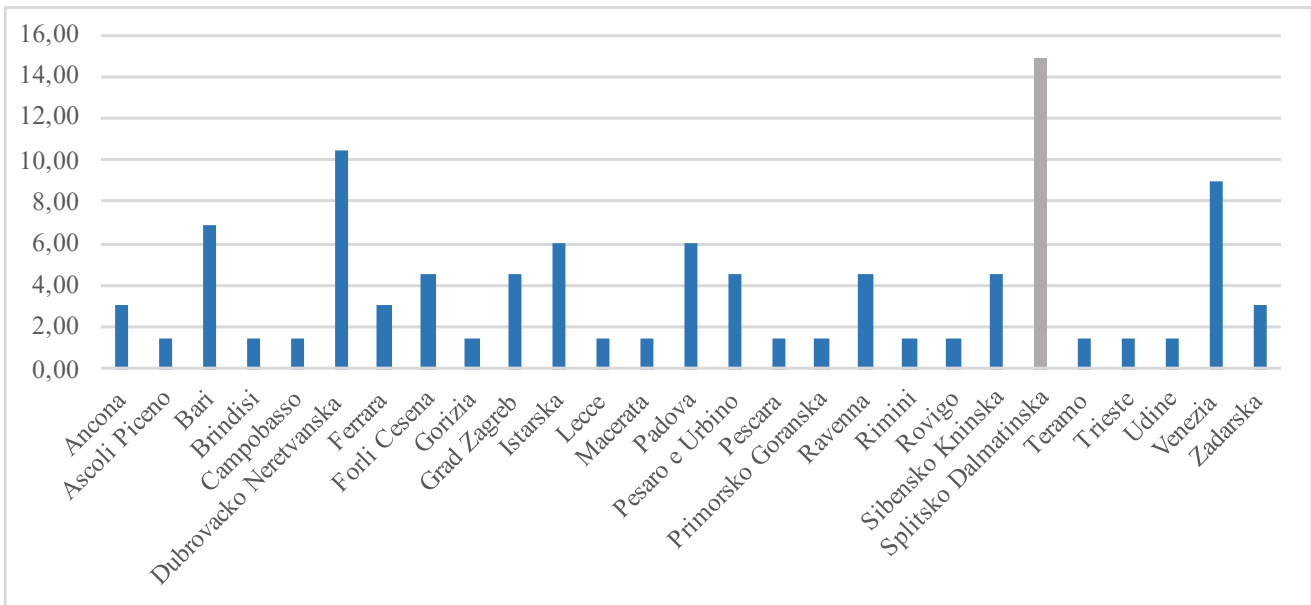
Figure 11 - S.O. 1.1 – Territorial distribution of number of project partners (NUTS3) per legal form type



The results stemming from the desk analysis are also confirmed by the geographical location of projects partners covered by the map above.

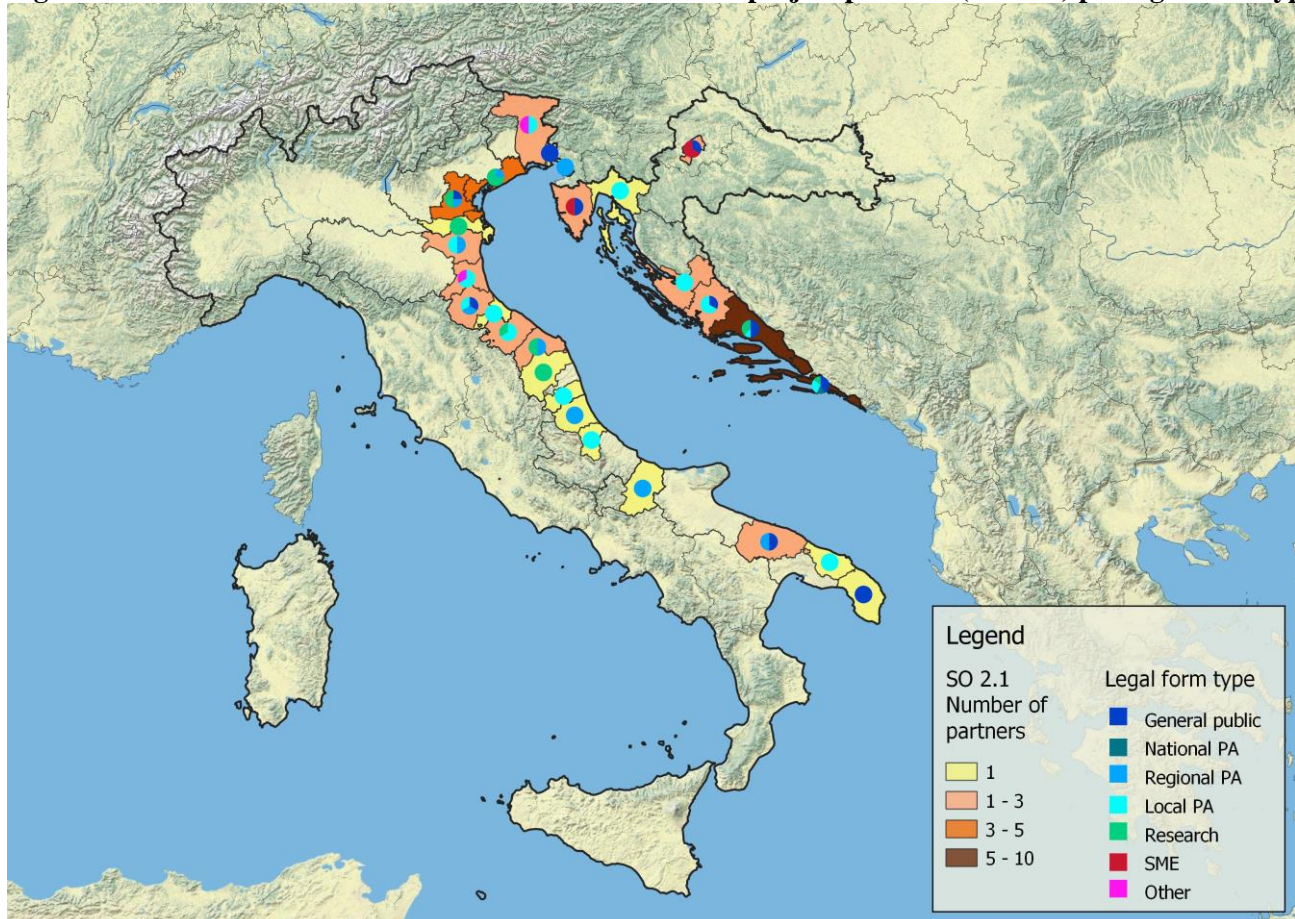
At the NUTS III level we can also see from the map that it is in fact the Croatian counties that are at the top of the list in terms of weight of administrative units by number of partners organisations active in projects financed by the SO 1.1. Regarding the legal form type the most represented group is constituted by general public. A significant concentration of SMEs is located in Croatia. The results stemming from the Evaluator's exercise are completely in line with the **intervention logic of Priority Axis 1 of Italy Croatia Programme** and in particular with the main aim of improving the performance in the field of innovation by establishing and developing mechanisms which contribute to a better exploitation of the existing potential. The achievement of these results would not be possible without the **active involvement of key target groups already identified in the Programme strategy** such as general public partners and SMEs.

**Figure 12 - S.O. 2.1 – % distribution of project partners per Implementing Unit Location NUTS3**



Even with reference to **SO 2.1** the chart shows that the majority of project partners comes from Splitsko Dalmatinska followed by Venezia, Dubrovačko Neretvanska, Bari and Padova. As the same of SO 1.1. it has to be underlined the high participation of Croatian projects partners.

**Figure 13 - S.O. 2.1 – Territorial distribution of number of project partners (NUTS3) per legal form type**

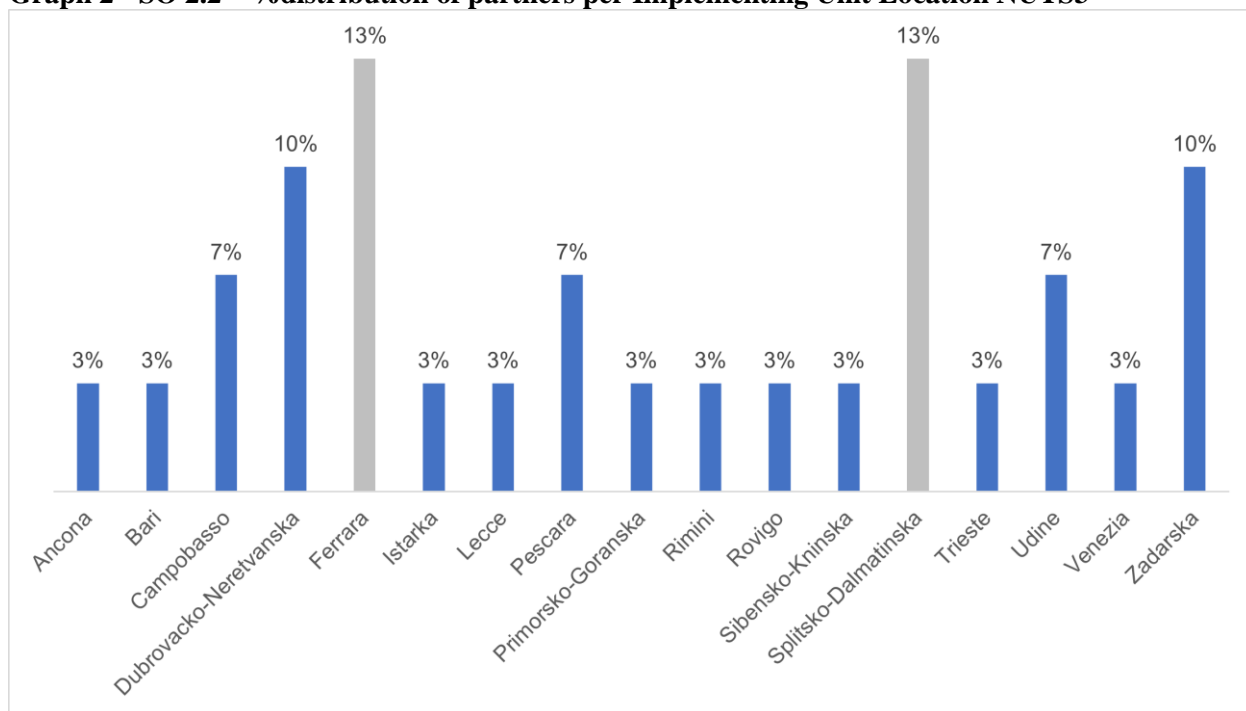


The results stemming from the desk analysis are also confirmed by the geographical location of projects partners covered by the map above.

At the NUTS III level we can also see from the map that it is in fact the Croatian counties that are at the top of the list in terms of weight of administrative units by number of partners organisations active in projects financed by the SO 2.1. Regarding the legal form type the most represented group is constituted by **local PA** both in Italy and Croatia followed by **General Public**. The map does not register SMEs in Italy joining partnership.

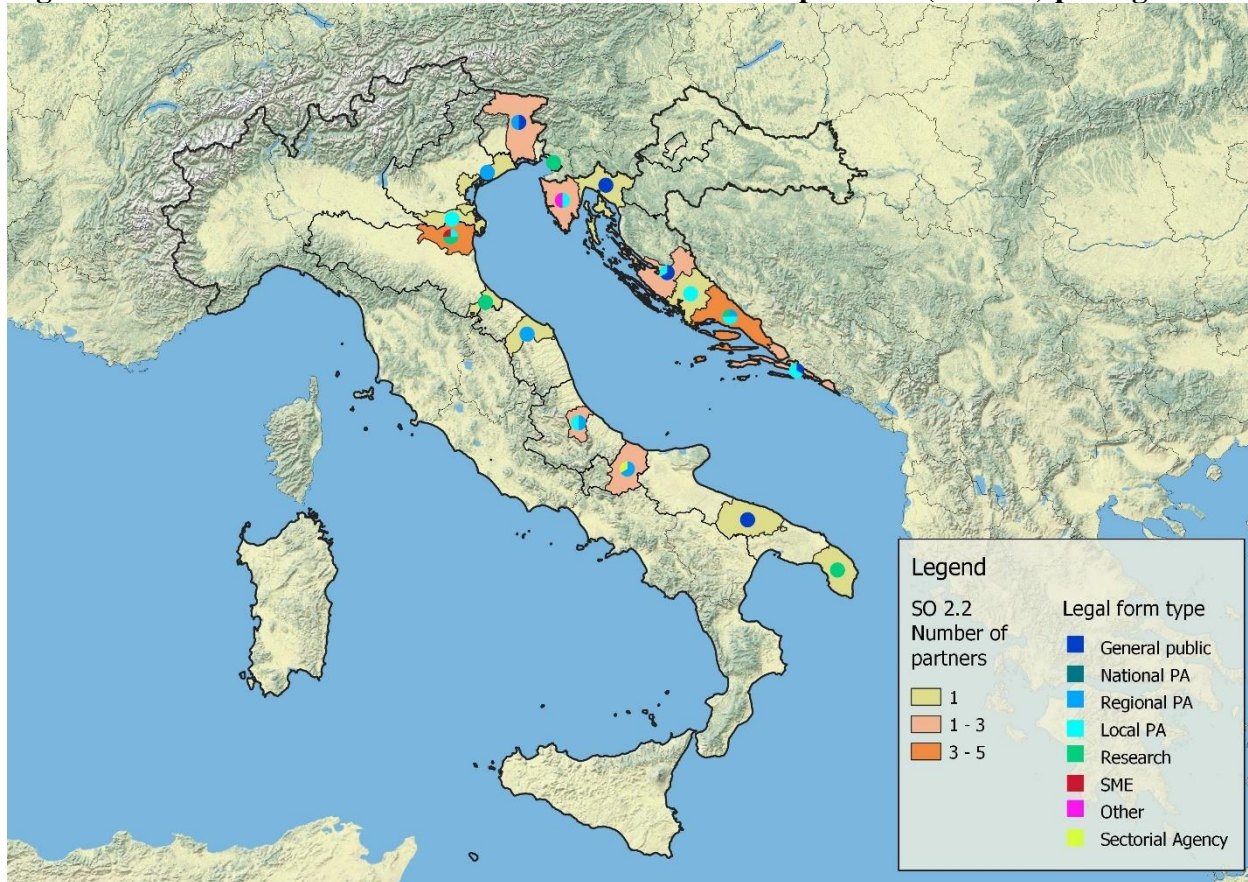
The results stemming from the Evaluator’s exercise are completely in line with the **intervention logic of Priority Axis 2 of Italy Croatia Programme** and in particular with the main aims of improving the knowledge base, data and monitoring systems supporting adaptation capacity and increasing the capacity for planning of adaptation measures. According to the Programme’s strategy **local PA and general public bodies are the main target groups of SO 2.1.** and, therefore, the result of the desk analysis is in full coherence with what is reported in the strategy of the Programme where, moreover, **SMEs are not listed as target subjects of this specific theme.**

**Graph 2 - SO 2.2 – %distribution of partners per Implementing Unit Location NUTS3**



The chart shows that the majority of partners for the **SO 2.2** comes from Splitsko-Dalmatinska and Ferrara, followed by Zadarska, Dubrovacko-Neretvanska, Campobasso, Pescara and Udine. While the participation of Croatian and Italian partners is rather balanced, there is still room for an improvement concerning the participation of some Italian NUTS3 within SO 2.2.

Figure 14 - SO 2.2 – Territorial distribution of number of partners (NUTS3) per legal form type

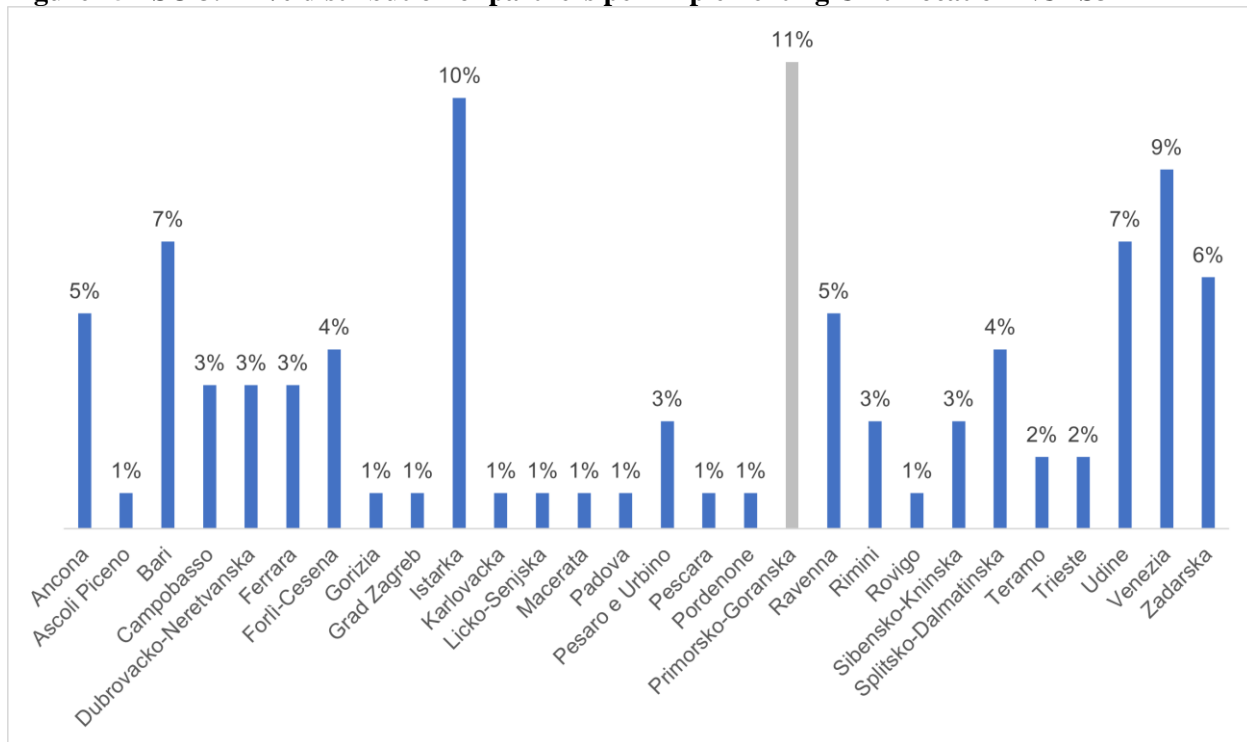


The results stemming from the desk analysis are also confirmed by the geographical location of partners covered by the map above.

At the NUTS3 level the map highlights a balance between the Croatian and the Italian counties in terms of weight of administrative units by number of partners organisations active in projects financed by the SO 2.2. For what concerns the legal form type, the most represented group is constituted by **local PA**, followed by **General public**, **Regional PA** and **Research bodies**. The results stemming from the Evaluator's exercise are completely in line with the **intervention logic of Priority Axis 2 of Italy Croatia Programme** and in particular with the main aim of improving monitoring of risks while increasing the management capacity of disasters and a prompt response to such events. The achievement of these results would not be possible without the **active involvement of key target groups already identified in the Programme strategy** such as local public authorities and general public partners.

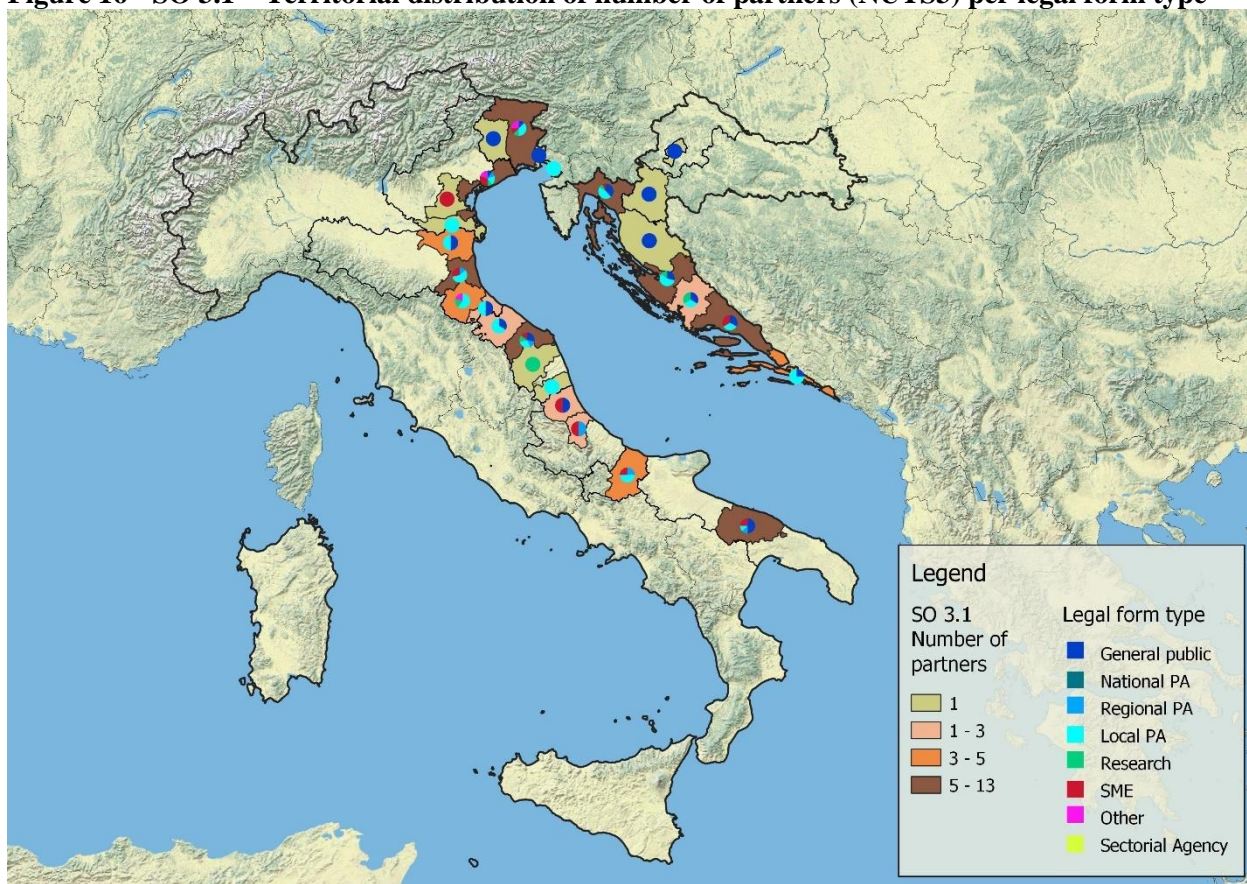


**Figure 15 - SO 3.1 – % distribution of partners per Implementing Unit Location NUTS3**



With reference to **SO 3.1** the chart shows that the majority of partners comes from Primorsko-Goranska, followed by Istarka, Venezia, Udine, Bari and Zadarska. It is interesting to note that this SO is characterized by a balanced participation from a quite high number of both Italian and Croatian NUTS3.

**Figure 16 - SO 3.1 – Territorial distribution of number of partners (NUTS3) per legal form type**

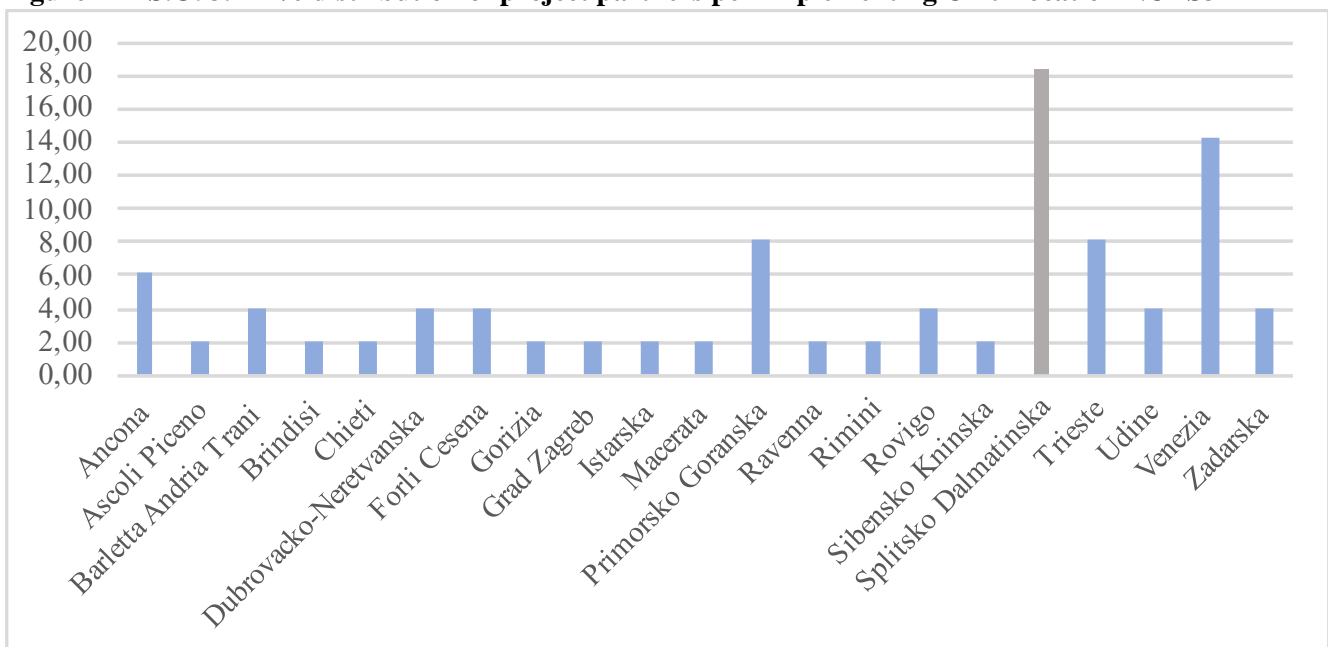


The results stemming from the desk analysis are also confirmed by the geographical location of partners covered by the map above.

At the NUTS III level we can also see from the map that there is a balance between the Croatian and the Italian counties in terms of weight of administrative units by number of partners organisations active in projects financed by the SO 3.1. Regarding the legal form type the most represented group is constituted by **local PA** both in Italy and Croatia followed by **General Public**.

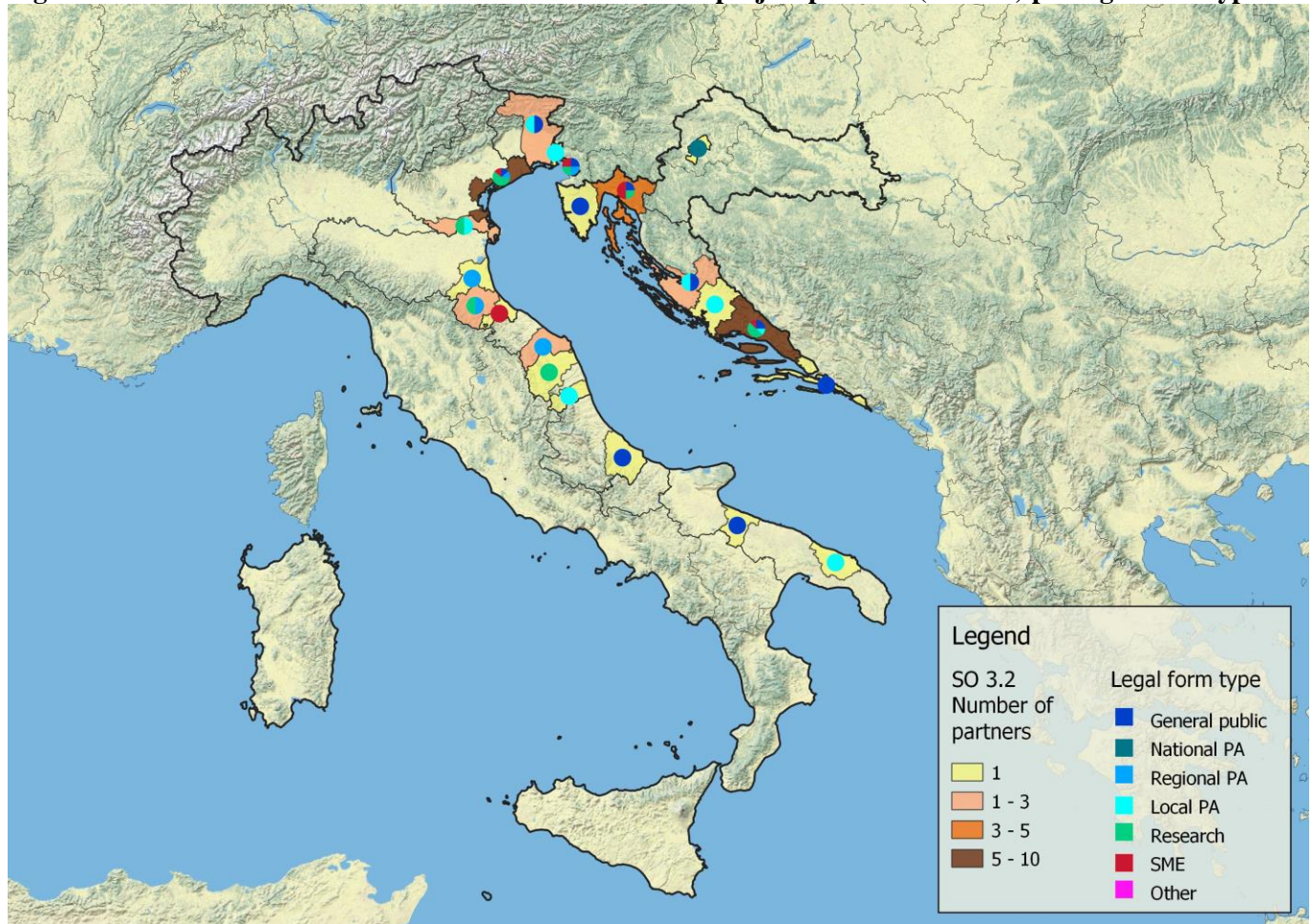
The results stemming from the Evaluator’s exercise are completely in line with the **intervention logic of Priority Axis 3 of Italy Croatia Programme** and in particular with the main aims of increasing the value of natural and cultural heritage by developing and implementing protection and promotion measures, fostering economic development by sustainable tourism or other activities based upon natural and cultural heritage protection and promotion while decreasing the human pressure to natural and cultural heritage sites. According to the Programme’s strategy **local PA and general public bodies are the main target groups of SO 3.1.** and, therefore, the result of the desk analysis is in full coherence with what is reported in the strategy of the Programme.

**Figure 17 - S.O. 3.2 – % distribution of project partners per Implementing Unit Location NUTS3**



Within **SO 3.2**, Splitsko Dalmatinska is the implementing unit location (NUTS3) with the high level of project partners followed by Venezia, Primorsko Goranska and Trieste. In this context it has to be underlined the more balanced participation among territories and the participation of more implementing unit local coming from the South of Italy (e.g. Barletta-Andria-Trani).

Figure 18 - S.O. 3.2 – Territorial distribution of number of project partners (NUTS3) per legal form type

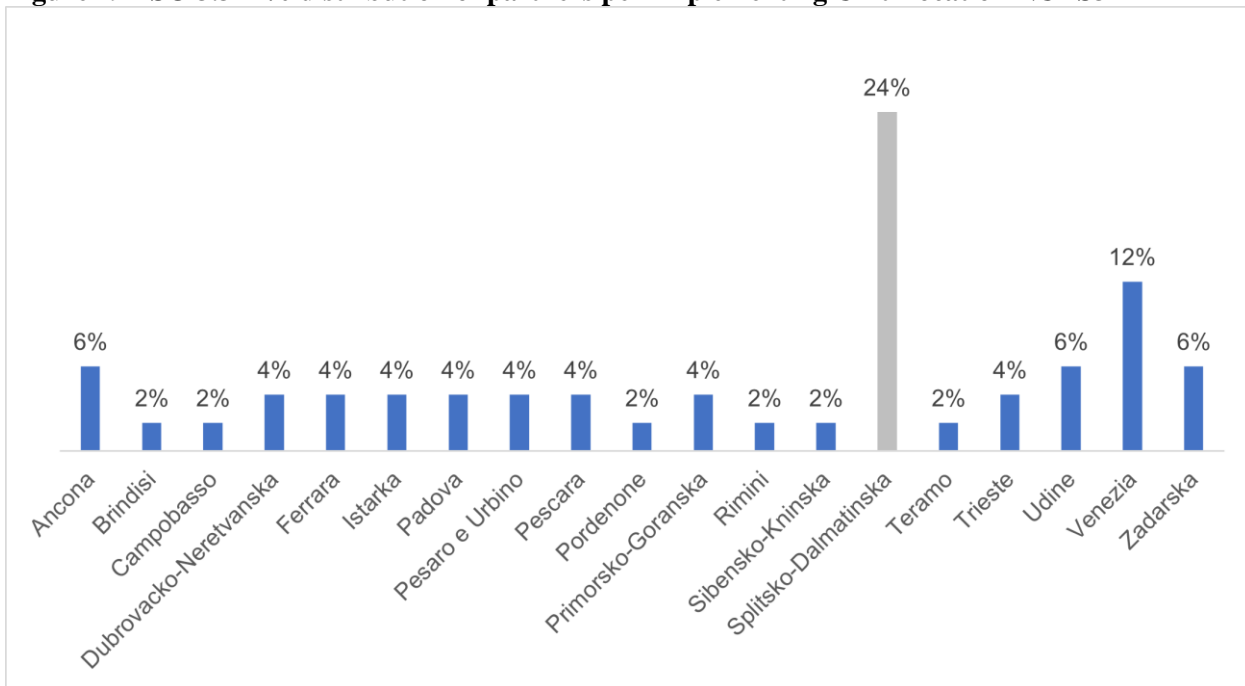


The results stemming from the desk analysis are also confirmed by the geographical location of projects partners covered by the map above.

At the NUTS III level we can also see from the map that it is in fact the Croatian counties are very active in projects financed by the SO 3.2. Regarding the legal form type the most represented group is constituted by **local PA both in Italy and Croatia followed by General Public**. A significant presence of **Research bodies** is registered in Italy. General public is also very represented in the partnerships.

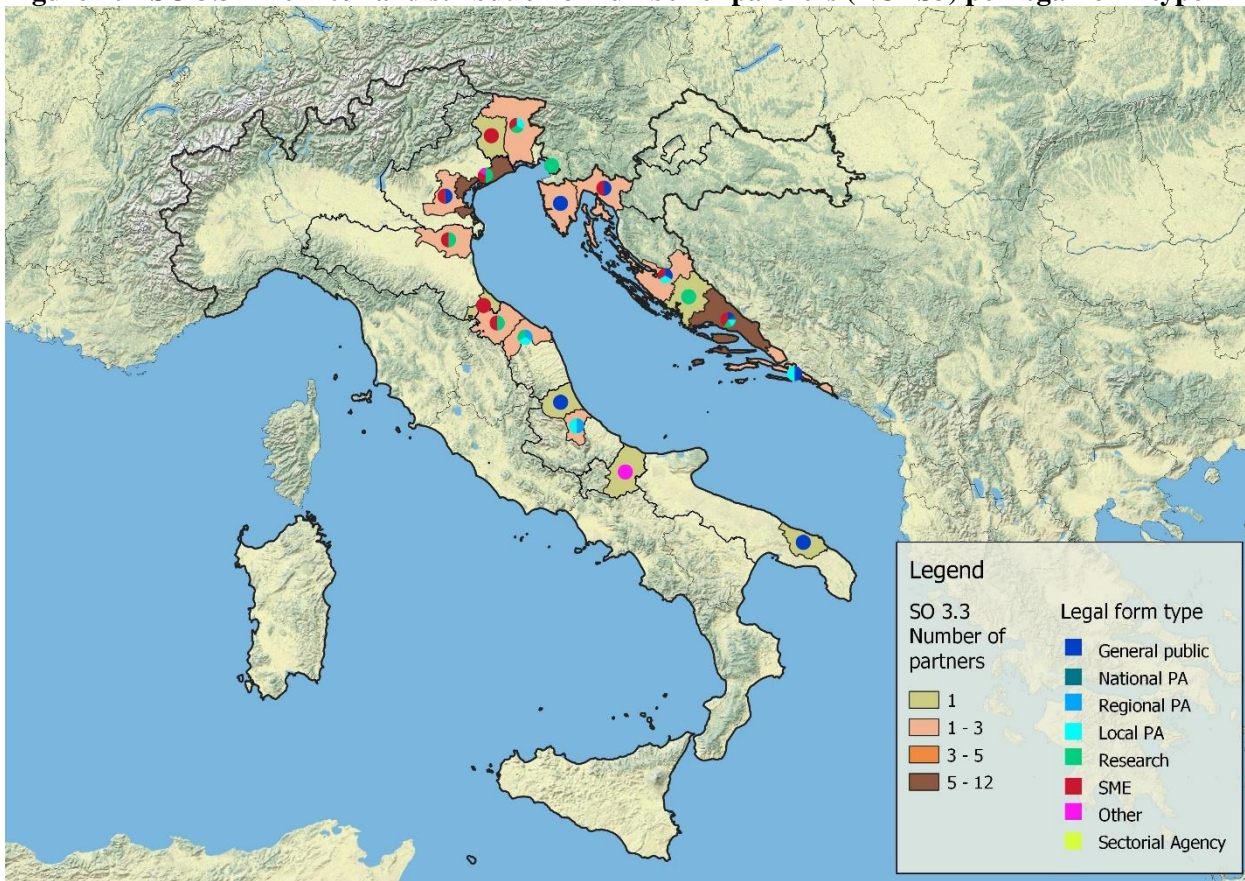
The results stemming from the Evaluator's exercise are completely in line with the **intervention logic of Priority Axis 3** of Italy Croatia Programme and in particular with the main aim of strengthening the management and protection of ecosystems and the cooperation between public actors/managers of the protected areas in order to increase environmental benefits and to provide economic and employment opportunities. It appears of particular interest to highlight the coherence of the results of the survey with regard to the **involvement of the target groups**. In line with the Program strategy, **local, regional and national public authorities together with research centers** are the most present partners that have already identified as **target groups** during the planning/formulation of the Programme's strategy

**Figure 19 - SO 3.3 – % distribution of partners per Implementing Unit Location NUTS3**



Within **SO 3.3** Splitsko Dalmatinska is the implementing unit location (NUTS3) with the highest number of partners followed by Venezia, Ancona, Udine, Zadaraska. The chart highlights a very balanced - though rather low - level of participation, with the sole exception of Splitsko-Dalmatinska.

**Figure 20 - SO 3.3 – Territorial distribution of number of partners (NUTS3) per legal form type**

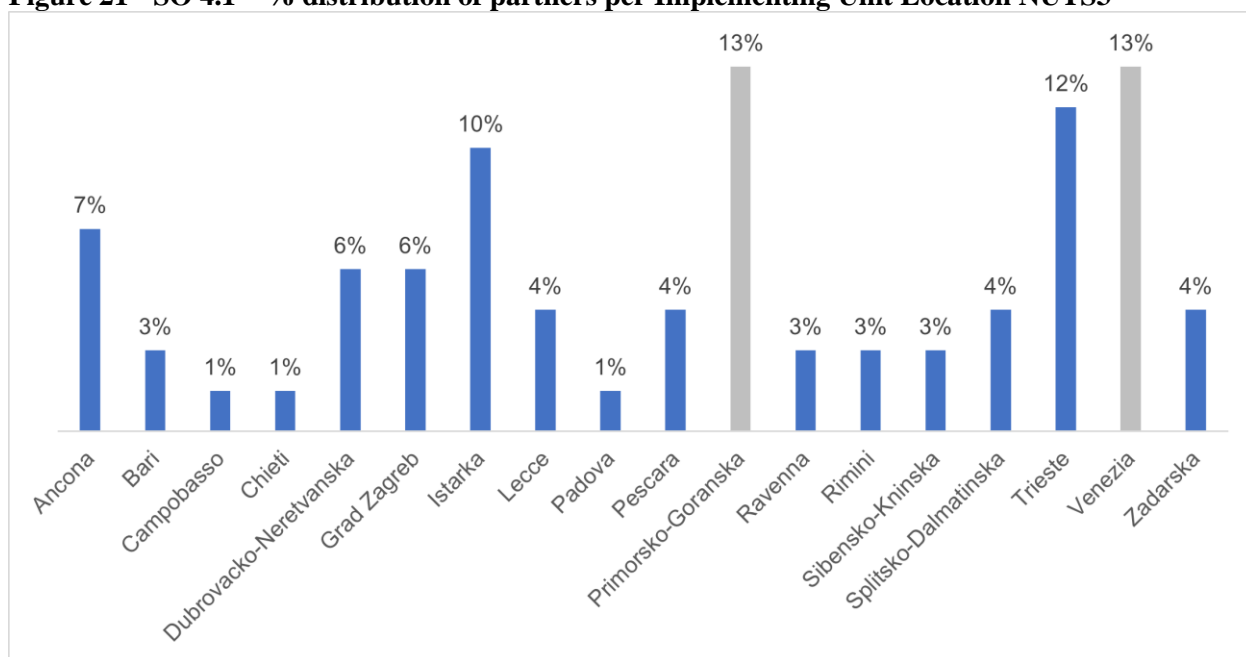


The results stemming from the desk analysis are also confirmed by the geographical location of partners covered by the map above.

At the NUTS III level we can also see from the map that there is a balance between the Croatian and the Italian counties in terms of weight of administrative units by number of partners organisations active in projects financed by the SO 3.3. Regarding the legal form type the most represented group is constituted by **SMEs followed by Research bodies**. General public is also very represented in the partnerships.

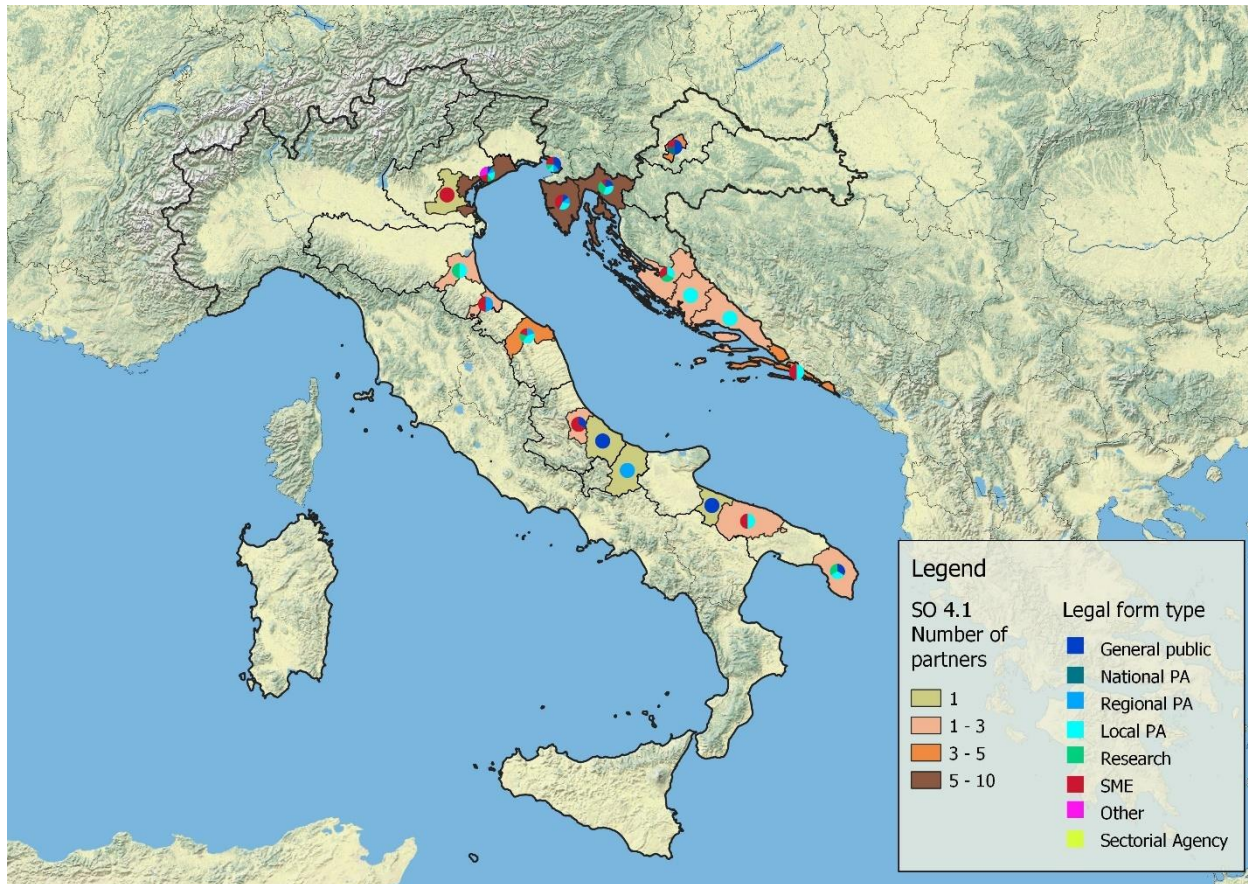
The results stemming from the Evaluator’s exercise are completely in line with the **intervention logic of Priority Axis 3** of Italy Croatia Programme and in particular with the main aim of developing, demonstrating and implementing small-scale innovative environmental friendly technology actions and innovative actions aimed at improving the knowledge on the environmental quality. It appears of particular interest to highlight the coherence of the results of the survey with regard to the **involvement of the target groups**. In line with the Programme’s strategy **SMEs together with research centers** are the most present partners that have been already identified as **target groups** during the formulation of the Programme’s strategy.

**Figure 21 - SO 4.1 – % distribution of partners per Implementing Unit Location NUTS3**



Within **SO 4.1** Primorsko-Goranska and Venezia have the highest level of partners followed by Trieste, Istarka and Ancona. In this context it has to be underlined the more balanced participation among territories and the participation of more implementing unit local coming from the South of Italy.

**Figure 22 - SO 4.1 - Territorial distribution of number of partners (NUTS3) per legal form type**

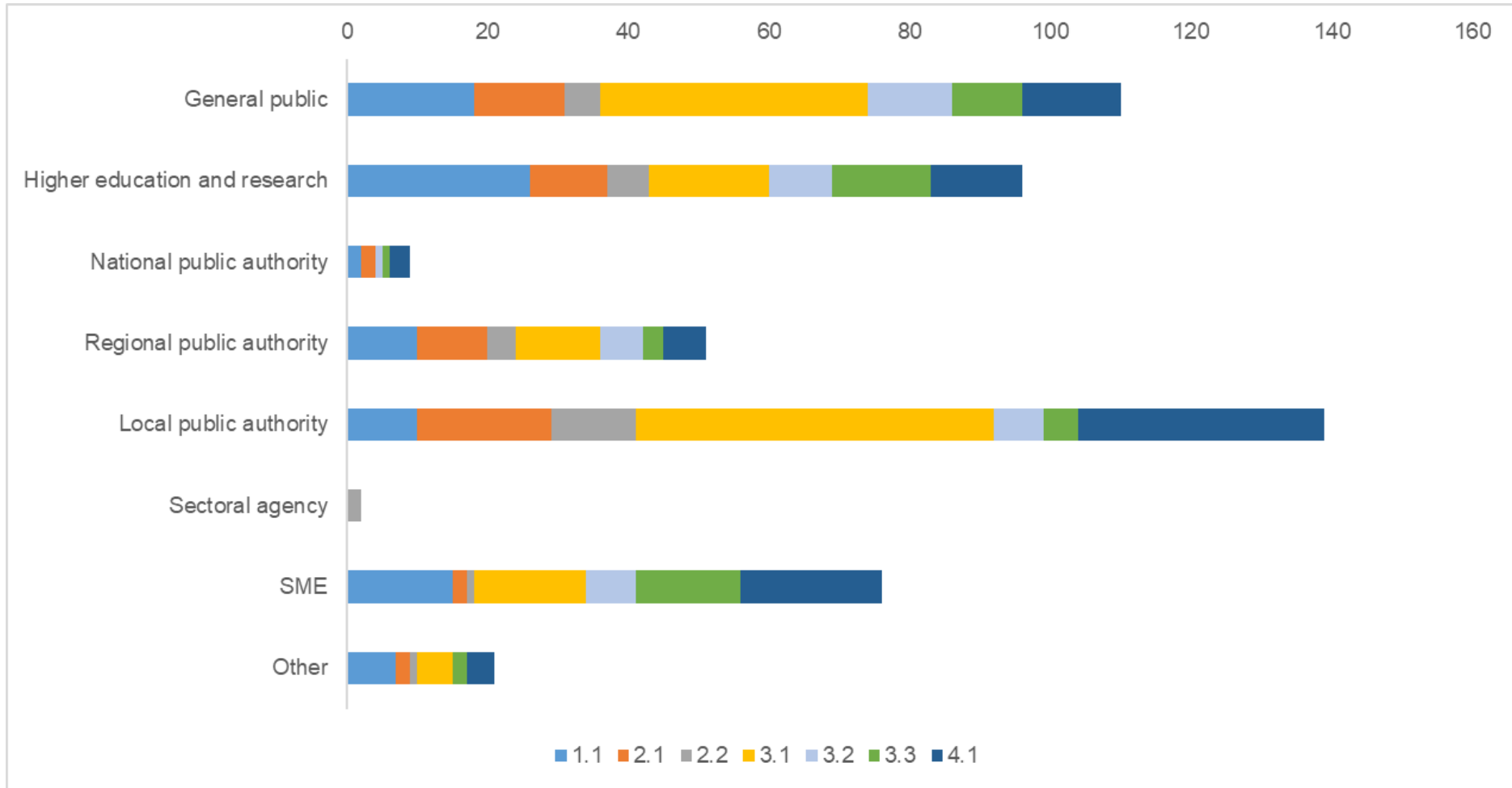


The results stemming from the desk analysis are also confirmed by the geographical location of partners covered by the map above.

At the NUTS III level we can also see from the map that the Croatian counties are on top of the list in terms of weight of administrative units by number of partners organisations active in projects financed by the SO 4.1. Regarding the legal form type the most represented group is constituted by both **local PA and SMEs in Croatia**, while in Italy it is constituted by **SMEs followed by General public**.

The results stemming from the Evaluator's exercise are completely in line with the **intervention logic of Priority Axis 4** of Italy Croatia Programme and in particular with the main aim of support coordination/harmonization/monitoring of data and systems for enhancing multimodality and piloting tools/solutions for improving connectivity in the transport systems. It appears of particular interest to highlight the coherence of the results of the survey with regard to the **involvement of the target groups**. In line with the Program strategy, **local and general public authorities together with SMEs operating in the transport services** are the most present partners that have been already identified as **target groups** during the planning/formulation of the Programme's strategy.

**Figure 23 - Distribution of partners per SOs and legal form type**



The chart reported above highlights the framework of partners' legal form type divided per SOs.

As a **premise**, it should be emphasized that the **data may be conditioned by some key elements** such as the greater number of partners in some objectives (e.g. SO 3.1) or the type of activity which by nature can, for example, attract more private partners (e.g. SO 3.3).

Notwithstanding the abovementioned issues, the elaboration of data has permitted to point out the following issues:

- The **high presence of private partners (SME) for the SO 1.1, 3.3 and 4.1** and, thus, the capacity of some major themes like environmental friendly technology and transport services to be an attractor of private partners and to develop multi-actors' partnerships.
- In six out of seven objectives (1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 4.1) there is a **high presence of regional public authorities** who have always been the key subject of partnerships considering the importance of involving the institutional level for the development of CBC joint actions.
- Within the **SOs 2.1 and 3.1. local public authority and general public** are very represented in the partnerships. This is very important with regard to territorial development measures.
- The results stemming from the Evaluator's exercise are completely in line with the **intervention logic of Italy Croatia Programme Priority Axis 1, 2, 3 and 4**. The achievement of these results would not be possible without the **active involvement of key target groups already identified in the Programme strategy** (see also 7.6 "Focus on target group") such as local public authorities and general public partners for SOs 1.1, 2.2 and 3.1, SMEs and research centers for SO 2.1., local authorities and general public together with SMEs for the SO 4.1, local, regional and national public authorities together with research centers for the SO 3.2.

The evaluation desk analysis highlights the general ability in promoting **vertical partnerships** through central and local bodies. This actually enhances the effectiveness of interventions and their sustainability. As a consequence of the above-mentioned issues, the Programme focus on fostering cross-border partnerships is quite clear, even if, as detected by the Programme itself (Paper 1 from JS – Final version), *"there are some examples of the projects were countries implemented activities "individually" (apart of the study visits) where it can be clearly seen the missing links representing an obvious obstacle and burden in cross-border cooperation and where the cross-border aspect is not satisfied"*. This surely has to be improved especially for the forthcoming programming period.

In addition, and as already highlighted during the evaluation path (e.g. the Operational Evaluation 2021), it has to be remembered that **indicators could be a suitable tool for improving cross-border dimension** (see Chapter 3 with Focus on indicators, Operational Evaluation 2021), with particular reference to indicators including cross-border issues. Looking at the indicators' qualitative analysis at standard project level that have the implementation closed, included in the Paper 1, some interesting concerns can be shared as examples of cross-border dimension: there are some indicators that are particular significant for capturing and measuring the cross-border dimension (such as the ones including joint actions etc.).

### **5.3. Cross-border cooperation added value**

There is an assumption that cross-border co-operation can bring added value to regional and local development and ultimately enhance European territorial integration. The added value of a policy or a programme involves a discussion of the need for such an intervention, i.e. its rationale and relevance, and its effectiveness in reaching its stated objectives. The concept of added value has been widely discussed in EU cross-border and transnational programmes.

**Four main types of added value of cross-border cooperation** can be identified:



1. solutions to common problems;
2. learning opportunities,
3. generating critical mass,
4. building structure for further co-operation and territorial cohesion.

In this framework the Evaluator carried out an in-depth desk analysis building a “**crossing table**” with the types of added value and a selection of the main outcomes of projects’ final report.

The evaluator’s selection is reported in the table below with the indication of project and types of CBC added value covered.

Project	Cross-border cooperation added value (Final Report)	Types of CBC added value			
		Solutions to common problems	Learning opportunities	Critical mass	Structure for further CBC
<b>Standard</b>					
ADAPT	share many problems and challenges, related for instance to the size of administrations	*	*		
Adrigreen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation in the project has been important not only in its transnational dimension, but also in terms of plural actors (ports, airports, public authorities, research institutions) bringing their own specific expertise for the development of efficient solutions in transportation and resource management.</li> <li>• testing innovative schemes</li> <li>• implement relevant actions for the local, regional, and transnational level</li> <li>• definition of Joint Action Plans and of the Manual on identified solutions and practices has also ensured the comparability of data and the complementarity of work.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
Adrireef	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing an innovative monitoring system with low environmental impact</li> <li>• methodology enriched by the cooperation between 7 technical partners that shared technics and evidences</li> </ul>		*	*	
Adrismartfish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• defining the state of the art of northern Adriatic SSF at a basin scale,</li> <li>• developing a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the sector, assessing its sustainability and devise guidelines to enhance it, and to developing a basin-scale SSF competitiveness “toolkit” to simplify and harmonize the regulatory framework.</li> <li>• without CB cooperation, the institution of the CB association of fishermen wouldn’t have been possible.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
AdSWiM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the quality of the environment is an issue that requires multidisciplinary skills</li> <li>• connect cross-border research centers, universities and municipalities together with managers of the plants committed in the purification of the wastewaters</li> </ul>	*		*	
Asteris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difficulty of gathering the data</li> <li>• network of cooperation provides an opportunity for collaboration with international institutions that could potentially allow to extend the data-modelling integrated methodology adopted to larger areas in the Mediterranean, under different international cooperation programs</li> </ul>	*	*		*
Change wecare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building a shared knowledge base for the Adriatic region</li> </ul>		*	*	

Project	Cross-border cooperation added value (Final Report)	Types of CBC added value			
		Solutions to common problems	Learning opportunities	Critical mass	Structure for further CBC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>exchange experiences about local management and decision making</li> </ul>				
Coast energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>define and share a common strategy to foster sustainable exploitation of marine renewable energy.</li> <li>multi-level approach that connects different stakeholders helped in overcoming existing regulatory, environmental and social barriers by fostering mutual discussion to find a common interest and strategy.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
Crew	sharing of experience at local and national level		*	*	
DigLogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sharing of knowledge and information concerning the implemented pilot actions</li> <li>pilots contribute to three major areas of innovation, which all contribute to fostering multimodal services</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
EcoSS	The attraction of local and regional actors was achieved mainly through the Partners' participation to the different phases of the stakeholders' involvement		*	*	*
Fairsea	CBC key aspect		*		
GECCO2	Each partner has given its original contribution, giving a significant added value to the whole project and expressing a good synthesis of its regional agriculture in the Adriatic region.	*	*	*	
GUTTA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sharing specific technical know-how,</li> <li>CB cooperation led to a better awareness of the geographical peculiarities and transport needs of either side of the Adriatic.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
ICARUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creation of a network of authorities</li> <li>possibility to exchange experiences</li> <li>problems that each partner encountered were resolved together and with active participation</li> <li>exchange of knowledge and different experiences, gain insights in Best practice solutions by other partners, mutual interests/communication/dialogue with different stakeholders, raising awareness in different transport sectors and among different institutions</li> <li>foster a dialogue among authorities and stakeholders of both territories, with the aim to establish joint best practices and benefit from a shared know-how</li> <li>exchange of knowledge and data on available transport options in each of the partner regions</li> </ul>	*	*	*	*
Joint secap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>some administrative delays occurred due to the post-pone signature of the partnership agreement</li> <li>joint plan for each target area was developed according to various stakeholders' shared methodology and capacity building/education.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
METRO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a cross-border approach has been more effective in finding wider solutions with benefits for the whole programme area</li> <li>The network established by METRO made possible for involved PPs to share their knowledge and exchange their expertise, especially in a field such maritime transport, that has an international scope (no single Country can provide such a complex know how)</li> </ul>	*	*	*	

Project	Cross-border cooperation added value (Final Report)	Types of CBC added value			
		Solutions to common problems	Learning opportunities	Critical mass	Structure for further CBC
MoST	CB cooperation allowed PPs to improve the research by adding different perspectives towards the saline intrusion problem and by comparing different study approaches.	*	*	*	
NETWAP	Experience and knowledge exchange between partners in both areas' transferability of the knowledge and experience in the field of waste management, environment protection and strategic planning has enhanced the capacities of all partners involved in this project. This is a great foundation for future cooperation that will surely happen.	*	*	*	*
Prizefish	shared marine resources of the Adriatic, thus only by cross border cooperation we can properly tackle any activity impacting on transboundary biological resources and environment	*	*	*	
Response	common climate smart governance approaches towards adaptation actions		*	*	
REVIVAL	The collaboration between PPs was essential in defining and adopting common methodologies to transform this common problem into a possible cultural, tourist and economic resource.	*		*	
Soundscape	-				
Sushidrop	the cooperation in this project allowed to evaluate how the progress of the drone technology may improve the information support to the National and Regional Administrations and to the fishermen and environmental protection associations.		*	*	
TOURISM4ALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clear and sustainable action plan that defines the roles of the PPs within the project.</li> <li>The project has been jointly elaborated through an exchange of information and technical meetings.</li> <li>The composition of the partnership has been established taking into consideration the expertise on the thematic objective of the project and the experience on the implementation of the Eu projects</li> </ul>	*	*		
WATERCARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cooperation between Adriatic cities/regions and scientific organizations, competent in a wide range of aspects relates to the water management (quality, analysis, monitoring, governance), ensured the adoption of the right approach to face identified common problems, to exploit opportunities and to jointly reach WATERCARE objectives.</li> <li>constant exchange of information, data, techniques and good practices among all entities and contributed to strengthen the already existing collaboration among people involved in the project and belonging to those entities.</li> <li>creation of a single model (WQIS &amp; FOM) valid for both Adriatic sides</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
<b>Standard +</b>					
AdriaMORE	The total collaboration among project partners and involving all possible institutions from the countries of Italy and Croatia, with total synergy, collaboration, loyalty and with the spirit of giving the maximum, each for their own skills and working together.	*	*	*	
ArTVision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creation of common tourism itineraries, which contribute to the sustainable development of tourism. It is important to point out that the promotional campaign used different tools for</li> </ul>	*	*	*	

Project	Cross-border cooperation added value (Final Report)	Types of CBC added value			
		Solutions to common problems	Learning opportunities	Critical mass	Structure for further CBC
	<p>promotion, thus possible to be applied outside of this cross-border area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ArTVision Advisory Board, as a neutral body, whose principal aim is to connect all that is connected with the cultural heritage and art in the cross-border area</li> </ul>				
ATLAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>involvement of local stakeholders (public bodies, tourism promotion agencies, companies)</li> </ul>		*		
ATRIUM PLUS	The exchange of knowledge and good practice between partners allowed the achievement of the expected results			*	
Beat	Involvement of different target groups				*
Blue Kep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>joint cooperation among partners</li> <li>sharing of the exchange of good practices among different education systems, to set the joint educational</li> <li>common international educational modules</li> <li>shared methodological evaluation standards.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	*
Blutourism system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cross-border steering committee and a management board</li> <li>engagement of a large numbers of other local/regional actors</li> </ul>		*	*	*
CHARGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>promotion of the project and its purposes among stakeholders</li> <li>Cooperation between Adriatic Port Authorities and between National Authorities competent on intermodality and transports ensured the adoption of the right approach to face identified common problems, to exploit opportunities and to jointly reach CHARGE objectives.</li> <li>constant exchange of information, data, innovative techniques and good practices among all entities strengthen the collaboration already existing among technical offices/units belonging to those entities.</li> <li>develop the transport network in the Adriatic Sea trying to bring it to a unique and single context/organism.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
Dory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>common knowledge</li> <li>exchange the best practices regarding sustainable methods, practices to reduce environmental impact of their activities.</li> </ul>		*	*	
ECOMOBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a universal tool, adaptable to different quality and type of data. Moreover, the potential transferability of the tool after the end of the project have been tested and verified.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	*
HERCULTOUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>joint cross-border platform (HERA Association and its developed products and procedures) for management and promotion of sustainable tourism based on common cultural heritage, in order to reduce seasonality of tourism</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
I-Archeo.S	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of the PPs' competences, their institutional power that was a guarantee so that the expected changes of the Project could be long lasting and could condition the policies at local/regional level</li> <li>capacity to attract others actors and to involve them in the Project activities</li> </ul>			*	
Ideal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attract other local/regional actors by involving them in communicational and technical activities</li> <li>share knowledge, exchange best practices and experiences (good ones that could be transferred and bad ones that should be avoided)</li> </ul>	*	*	*	*

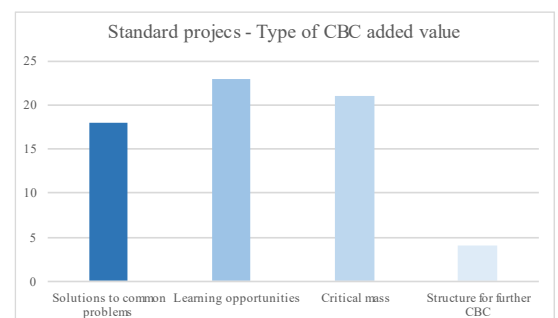
Project	Cross-border cooperation added value (Final Report)	Types of CBC added value			
		Solutions to common problems	Learning opportunities	Critical mass	Structure for further CBC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collaborate with multiple experts and collectively discuss about possible solutions. Through these activities, partners gathered knowledge and ideas that helped them in finding best measures/solutions for their Climate Adaption Plans.</li> </ul>				
INNOCULTOUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the opportunity to confront with other realities on several aspects relating to the management and enhancement of museums and places of culture</li> <li>sharing experience and competence and jointly defined the best interventions and promotional activities</li> <li>achievement of a higher visibility thanks to jointly promotional activities realized</li> <li>exchange and the share common challenge connected with similar situations in the cultural and natural sites involved</li> <li>know solutions adopted for the promotion of cultural heritage</li> <li>experience with new technologies, the work with project's target groups</li> </ul>	*	*	*	
KEYQ+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project has had an added value through cross-border cooperation because we learned a lot from each other, about diverse habits and culture, and from this we gained new knowledge that can be applied in different contexts.</li> <li>the study visits where networks were enlarged and strengthened by meeting other sectoral stakeholders and institutions</li> </ul>		*	*	
ML_REPAIR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>underline and respect differences between the two countries</li> <li>exchange methodologies and data on ML, creating a common reference point to create future activities addressing ML issue.</li> </ul>		*	*	
MOSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>direct and indirect connections between territories of Italy and Croatia, implementing initiatives and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>activities including maritime and multimodal pilot solutions and feasibility studies for strengthening further crossborder connections.</li> </ul> </li> <li>former cooperation experience of Croatian and Italian partners helped in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>tackling the lack of passengers' mobility and to improve the cross-border accessibility substantially</li> </ul> </li> <li>improve cooperation among relevant Stakeholders to concretely test and study better cross-border maritime and multimodal passengers transport services and solutions.</li> </ul>	*	*	*	*
READINESS	Exchange of know-how between Italy and Croatia which has helped to individuate tailored solutions for enhancing the resilience by fire and seismic hazard within the involved territories.	*	*	*	
STEP-UP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>concrete development and improvement of each of the local systems of the partners who realized and implemented the pilot actions and has led to local strategic actions also at governance level.</li> </ul>	*	*		*

Project	Cross-border cooperation added value (Final Report)	Types of CBC added value			
		Solutions to common problems	Learning opportunities	Critical mass	Structure for further CBC
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>training session designed, paved the way to capitalization and knowledge transfer bringing all the project partners, involved stakeholders and (future) professionals in the field of transport</li> </ul>				
TRANSGOOD	opportunity to connect with stakeholders from the cross-border area. Events were organized in a way where partners and stakeholders have opportunity to communicate and socialize with each other, leading to creation of new opportunities and sharing of knowledge.		*	*	
USEFALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capitalization of the management solution of the previous project and focus on the improvement of the inclusive approach – participatory approach to management of 6 UNESCO sites, providing pilot solutions for their accessibility</li> <li>best practices were transferred and the whole Programme area has been recognized with new heritage destinations accessible for all in order to reduce disparities between regions and reinforce cohesion with the transfer of best practices</li> <li>ensure a common model and joint promotion of the Programme cultural destinations accessible to all.</li> </ul>		*	*	
Zero Waste Blue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PPs cooperated since project's preparation in selecting jointly different kind of sport events located in natural and cultural contexts in the CB area</li> <li>Roles and responsibilities of each project partner have previously been shared and agreed.</li> <li>A Cross-Border Committee was established</li> <li>Each PP made big contribution in realization of all project activities</li> </ul>		*	*	

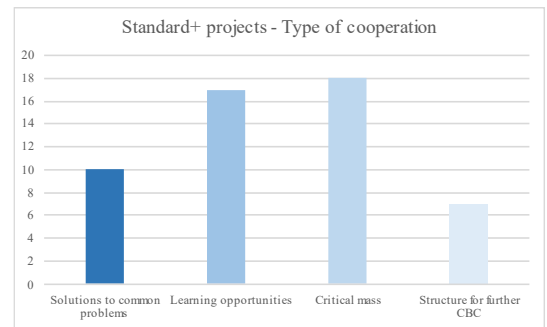
Source: Evaluator's elaboration on Standard and Standard+ projects' Final Report, closed by May 2023.

Thanks to the desk analysis and data elaboration, the Evaluator has detected the following **conclusions with reference to CBC added value**:

- **The majority of projects are very aware about the importance of CBC added value** and their final report show their awareness of the fact that without the cooperation component the project could not have been developed.
- **All types of CBC added value have been covered** by the Italy-Croatia projects with a certain balance among the types.



- **Learning opportunities and generating the critical mass** seem to be the most popular types of CBC added value among Italy-Croatia standard and standard+ projects (see Charts on the side).
- **Solution to common problems** is a type of CBC added value quite present in the standard and standard + project.
- More than one project has been implemented **CBC steering committee or management board** (e.g. Blutourism system, Zero Waste Blue). This is of outermost importance for CBC project and to manage the partnership in a valuable way.
- The **involvement of stakeholders and local actors** is a valid tool to ensure the CBC added value of projects with particular reference to capability of **influencing policies** (e.g. ATLAS, I-Archeo.S).
- The Partners' **participation to the different phases of the stakeholders' involvement** (e.g. Ecosystem) can be identified as a good practice to be transferred.
- The **PPs involvement in the project proposal' elaboration** through exchange of information and technical meetings has to be considered as a valuable example for the efficacy and efficiency of project and for the fulfillment of projects' results (e.g. TOURISM4ALL).
- The **composition of the partnership** has to be established taking into consideration the expertise on the thematic objective of the project and the experience on the implementation of the Eu projects (e.g. TOURISM4ALL, Fairsea).
- **Cooperation between Adriatic cities/regions and scientific organizations** has to be identified as a concrete added value of Interreg Italy-Croatia's projects (e.g. Watercare).
- **Best practices sharing, study visits and IT platforms** are detected as the "CBC added value tools".



Actually, the **in-depth interviews with the National Authorities** represented a further source of valuable information for the Evaluator. In particular, the **concreteness of the projects** was underlined, particularly on certain topics such as civil protection, biodiversity and climate change, and the **authority of the technical partners**. In general, it was also observed that the verification of the achievement of the CBC added value by the Programme as a whole could be maybe premature considering also that the strategic projects are still on-going. The achievement of the CBC added value are very much related to strategic projects' success. The positive support and the great work carried out by the Programme has been appreciated in terms of actions of support for the beneficiaries from projects' submission to management and expenses reporting.

In addition to the desk exercise on Final Reports above reported, it appears of interest to present an **overview of the case studies/in-depth interviews** covered by the evaluation's path. They show some **interesting issues with reference to the CBC added value** such as the importance of balanced and multi-level partnership, the involvement of partners with different competences as well as the importance of previous cooperation experiences.

The **Fairsea** standard project is an interesting example of how a **balanced partnership**, including representatives of organisations operating on different territorial levels in both countries involved in the cooperation, not only presents high levels of relevance, but is also effective in promoting the development of scientific knowledge applied to a specific environmental and economic problem.

S.O.	Project	Lead Partner	Budget	Partners
1.1	<b>FAIRSEA</b> (Standard Project)	National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics - OGS Trieste	2.060.000,00	<p><b>Italy:</b> National Research Council - Institute for Biological Resources and Marine Biotechnologies (CNR-IRBIM); Assam - Agency for Agrofood Sector Services of Marche Region; Coispa Research &amp; Technology - Bari; Italian Interuniversity Consortium for Marine Sciences - CoNISMA; Lag Eastern Venice – VEGAL.</p> <p><b>Croatia:</b> Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries - IOF Split; Ministry of Agriculture - Department for Professional Support to the Development of Agriculture and Fisheries - Croatia; Public Institution RERA S.D. for coordination and development of Split-Dalmatia County; Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development SUNCE - Croatia; University of Split - University Department of Marine Studies.</p>
<b>Objective</b>		The FAIRSEA project aims at enhancing transnational capacity and cooperation in the field of an ecosystem approach to fisheries in the Adriatic region by exchanging knowledge and sharing good practices among partners. The complementary expertise of the partners is shared, interlinked and integrated, considering also challenges and opportunities identified by stakeholders. The efforts are embedded in a spatially explicit management platform that will allow to share expertise, create a common pool of knowledge, boost the operational application of the ecosystem approach to fisheries, enhance the competence in complex system dynamics, and foster a consensus on the state of the environment and fisheries in the region. The process developed in FAIRSEA will provide an opportunity to describe best practices and define guidelines for a sustainable fishery management.		

The Fairsea project, as well as other projects, highlights how a cooperation Programme can enhance the collaboration networks that are active at various levels in the territory, starting with those formerly established between research organisations. The interview provided an insight into the dynamics that can facilitate effective cross-border cooperation. The importance of the **multi-level dimension of the partnership** emerged, but also that of the involvement of other actors in project activities and how they can bring benefits to the implementation of activities.

*“The partnership was a strong point of the project, very balanced between the two countries; there was an important presence of research organisations, perhaps it was unbalanced in this sense, but the interesting thing was the composition of the partnership that covered all territorial levels: from national or Adriatic basin partners, regional level partners down to local level partners, such as FLAGs. The project also involved an international organisation based in Rome (Medac - Mediterranean Advisory Council - c/o Ministero delle Politiche Agricole Alimentari e Forestali). [...] Fisheries management in the Adriatic requires great attention to the balance of participation - precisely because it is a closed basin, with two major entities, Italy and Croatia. The participation of economic actors has been possible by using several channels, from the involvement of the international partner, to technical meetings on a local scale.”. (Interview: March 9, 2022).*

Medac's involvement in the project activities was particularly useful in view of the fact that this organisation includes a large component of fishermen's co-operatives from several Mediterranean countries, including Italy and Croatia. This allowed the project to establish good relations with local economic actors and to involve them in monitoring and research activities. This characteristic of “scalarity” of the partnership has improved the project's ability to move from the general level of research to pilot actions at the local level and to involve an important category of stakeholders - the fisheries of the Adriatic basin - in the implementation of the project. The involvement of an international organisation has also helped to spread



the knowledge about the project's activities, creating the basis for further activities in other areas of territorial cooperation.

Another important achievement of the project - which shows the ability to realise the aims of cross-border cooperation - is that on the basis of mutual trust it has been possible to build up a **shared database available to partners in both countries** which enhances the information collected by the individual agencies.

*“The trust built up between the partners during the implementation of the project has made it possible to achieve important results. An interesting example is the possibility we had to overcome the difficulties related to the fact that each state (Italy and Croatia in our case) manages information on the movements of fishing vessels in their waters independently. For research purposes, this condition constitutes a problem. Fishing vessels, at least the larger ones, have a positioning system (VMS) that is managed by the national harbour masters' offices and each one does its own analysis. For the first time since this tool has existed, we have been able to make analyses of the movements of fishing vessels in an integrated way, overcoming difficulties that were related to lack of trust or other obstacles. In our case, the national authorities decided to share the information.” (Interview: March 9, 2022)*

Cooperation with stakeholders does not always proceed without obstacles. In cases where projects promote the development of scientific knowledge applied to common goods, such as cultural heritage or the natural environment of a region, the cooperation proceeds more easily. When, on the other hand, the content of the projects concerns certain areas in which market and competition dynamics are more relevant, cooperation with stakeholders may reveal obstacles that may affect the outcome of the projects. An interesting example in this context concerns the difficulties encountered in the development of a product realised as part of the **ITACA** standard project activities.

The main outcome of ITACA is to build a model to analyse historical series of data on the prices of anchovy and sardines and, on the basis of this model realizing a web app in order to provide the operators in the “bluefish” sector with information enabling them to make market choices on where and when to sell their catches. The project encountered some obstacles with regard to the reluctance of operators to share daily information on their catches. The conditions of competition between the operators from the two countries, the Italian and the Croatian, hindered the sharing of these data, so the model could only be applied on a small scale, while at the level of the Upper Adriatic basin the only information available to all was the monthly data on the fish catches - which did not allow the development of a particularly accurate model.

*“On the one hand, we have the scientific component to build the model, and on the other, we have the operational component that - through the involvement of development agencies and trade associations - allows us to involve economic operators. In principles the partnership appears to be well designed, but in practice, cooperation, especially with regard to information that has value in the economic field, has encountered difficulties”. (Interview: March 25, 2022)*

S.O.	Project	Lead Partner	Budget	Partners
1.1	<b>ITACA</b> (Standard Project)	Agenzia Veneta per l'innovazione nel Settore Primario - Veneto Agricoltura	1.744.467,00	<b>Italy:</b> Istituto Agronomico Mediterraneo di Bari; Istituto per le Risorse Biologiche e le Biotecnologie Marine (Cnr-Irbim) – Headquarter of Ancona; Confcooperative Regional Union of the Veneto. <b>Croatia:</b> Javna Ustanova Rera S.D. Za Koordinaciju i Razvoj Splitsko Dalmatinske Županije; Azri– Agency for Rural Development of Istria Ltd. Pazin; Institute Of Oceanography And Fisheries – Split.

S.O.	Project	Lead Partner	Budget	Partners
	<b>Objective</b>	ITACA tackles the competitiveness of Adriatic fisheries sector, fostering the introduction of blue innovation and improving the sustainability of catching activities. ITACA focuses on small pelagic (SP) fisheries [...]: anchovy and sardine that represent a significant share of income for the sector in the Adriatic. ITACA project contributes factually to the growth of the SP fisheries sector setting up, testing in 7 pilot regions and fostering the large-scale application of innovative SMEs oriented tools to increase the competitiveness of SP fisheries, together with establishing a cluster for a sustainable co-management of Adriatic ichthyic resources.		

In order to facilitate the construction of a climate favorable to the sharing of the information the lead partner involved the international organization Medac - which includes a large component of a fishing cooperative throughout the Mediterranean basin. The contents of the project were presented in the context of an event promoted by Medac raising the attention from the representatives of the Spanish fishing cooperatives who showed the interest of applying the model in their area, but no progress was obtained in the area of the cooperation.

The projects that manage to build **partnerships that combine in a balanced way the different competences of the various partners** succeed more effectively in achieving their objectives. This condition is highlighted in many of the project which have been interviewed. The Standard project **MoST** is particularly interesting. The main objective of MoST is the monitoring of the seawater intrusion in specific regions of the in northern Adriatic coasts of Italy and Croatia in order to assess its relevance, and suggest/test appropriate countermeasures. In addition, the project expects to improve the capacity in transnationally tackling saltwater contamination vulnerability and the preservation of strategic fresh water resources in coastal areas.

S.O.	Project	Lead Partner	Budget	Partners
2.1	<b>MoST</b> (Standard+ project)	UNIVERSITY OF PADUA - Department of Civil, Environmental and Architectural Engineering	2.598.608,61	<b>Italy:</b> National Research Council – Institute of Geosciences and Earth Resources (CNR-IGG); Land Reclamation Authority Adige Euganeo; Veneto Region - Soil Defence Regional Directorate; <b>Croatia:</b> Croatian Waters; University of Split - Faculty of Civil Engineering, Architecture and Geodes; Regional Development Agency of Dubrovnik Neretva Region - DUNEA.
	<b>Objective</b>	The main objective of MoST is the monitoring of the seawater intrusion in specific regions of the in northern Adriatic coasts of Italy and Croatia to assess its relevance, and suggest/test appropriate countermeasures. In addition, the project expects to improve the capacity in transnationally tackling saltwater contamination vulnerability and the preservation of fresh water resources in coastal areas.		

The project leader pointed out that the project has developed a solid cooperation between both Italian and Croatian partners with a specific mention for the University of Split which has acted as the coordinator of the Croatian partners. Each partner contributed to the project without particular problems, the coordination worked well and each partner was autonomous in its activities and administration.

*"There is a strong complementarity between the Italian and Croatian partners. The Italian partners have particularly deepened the scientific aspects, while the Croatian partners have been very good at communicating the project. There are no private partners in this partnership, also because the topics (water management) are typically of public interest. Small and medium-sized enterprises are used as subcontractors but not as research partners." (Interview: March 14, 2022)*

The added value of cross-border cooperation is defined as the improvement of the understanding of how problems differ in relation to the diverse contexts; an understanding that is increased by observing and

investigating the different techniques that are adopted and consequently by changing or improving the conventional perspective with which a problem is usually approached.

The **importance of previous cooperation experiences** between the partners is of particular importance for many of the projects that have been involved in the evaluation activities. Some of the projects interviewed, not only those that were financed with the call for Standard + projects - which concerned the capitalization of the results of projects financed in other cooperation programs, such as Adriatic IPA CBC, SEE and MED -, highlighted the importance to develop the contents that emerged during the previous cooperation.

An exemplary case is that of the Arca Adriatica standard project. In this case, the partnership was created from the previous cooperation experiences developed by the County of Primorje-Gorski Kotar on the one hand and the Municipality of Cervia on the other. These two partners have extended participation to other organisations in their countries. The previous cooperation experience developed by the Croatian partners was important for the definition of the project contents. The project that formed the basis for the construction of Arca Adriatica was called "Mala Barka" and was financed under the Slovenia-Croatia CBC Interreg Programme.

S.O.	Project	Lead Partner	Budget	Partners
3.1	<b>Arca Adriatica</b> (Standard project)	Primorje-Gorski Kotar County	3.168.790,00	<b>Croatia:</b> Municipality of Malinska-Dubasnica; Kvarner County Tourist Board; Association and Ecomuseum "House of Batana"; Municipality of Tkon <b>Italy:</b> Municipality of Cervia; Municipality of Cesenatico; International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies - Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari; Municipality of San Benedetto del Tronto; Ca' Foscari University of Venice.
<b>Objective</b>		The main aim of the project is the development of a common tourism product, based on the principles of social and ecological sustainability which, at the same time, valorises, preserves, protects and promotes the rich maritime heritage of the border area present in small-medium cities with local ports. In the coastal part of the border area, the project will protect the existing material and intangible maritime heritage (research and cataloguing of the maritime heritage and elaboration of the virtual museum) and exploit it through a series of measures (adaptation of interpretation centres, organisation of educational-demonstrative manifestations, promotional campaign, etc.), in order to develop and revive a common tourism product.		

In some cases, the previous experiences were also important in the case of some partners which, in the context of the CBC Italy Croatia Programme, moved on to take the role of lead partner, while in the previous cooperation experience they had participated as a partner. This is the case, for example of the projects FairSea and MLRepair. The case of the FairSea project is particularly interesting since the previous cooperation was developed outside of the Programmes of the European Territorial Cooperation. The lead partner, the National Institute of Oceanography and Experimental Geophysics (OGS) of Trieste had the opportunity to cooperate together with the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries (IOF) of Split in the frame of the FAO Adriamed "Scientific Cooperation to Support Responsible Fisheries in the Adriatic Sea" (<https://www.faoadriamed.org/>). This experience not only set the foundations for a further step in the transnational research work in the frame of the CBC Italy Croatia Programme, but the positive collaboration between the two partners has pushed OGS to take the responsibility of lead partners in the new project.

The standard project **Underwater Muse** operates in the framework of the specific objective 3.1 in the enhancement of underwater archaeological sites through the use of various technologies that allow to increase both the knowledge and the accessibility of the archaeological areas. The partnership includes the

lead partner Regional Institute for the Cultural Heritage of Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (ERPAC), and on the Italian side the Department of Tourism, Economy of Culture and Valorization of Territory of the Apulia Region as well as Ca' Foscari University of Venice; on the Croatian side RERA S.D. for coordination and development of Split-Dalmatia County; City of Kaštela.

S.O.	Project	Lead Partner	Budget	Partners
3.1	<b>Underwater Muse</b> (Standard Project)	Regional Institute for the Cultural Heritage of Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (ERPAC)	1.586.930,25	<b>Italia:</b> Apulia Region - Department of Tourism, Economy of Culture and Valorization of Territory; Ca' Foscari University of Venice; <b>Croatia:</b> RERA S.D. for coordination and development of Split-Dalmatia County; City of Kaštela;
	<b>Objective</b>	“The project aims at applying on sample areas (maritime landscapes of Torre Santa Sabina, Grado, Resnik/Siculi, Caorle) a methodological and technological protocol based on research/ knowledge and development/communication of an underwater archeological site that is complex and multi-stratified, characterized by strong diversity. The project’s objective is therefore to transform the site into an underwater archaeological park (or eco-museum) through innovative and/or experimental methodologies and techniques in order to try to reduce the loss of important cultural heritages as well as to guarantee an economic spin-off deriving directly from the creation of a sector linked to the tourist-cultural promotion of the context of reference.”		

Although the partnership shows a prevalence of Italian partners, the project made a careful choice of the archaeological sites on which to develop the activities, and the local authorities, managing to effectively contribute to the objectives of the Programme. The Underwater Muse project highlights another case in which the Programme succeeds in **exploiting the competences and relationships of some individual experts and institutions** based in the cooperation area in order to establish the foundations for a more balanced territorial development within the strategic framework of the specific objective 3.1. The interview made it possible to highlight how the cooperation between the partners was achieved. The added value of cooperation in this case goes beyond the deepening of specific knowledge or the exchange of good practices ("it was not a unilateral cooperation") but prefigures the **construction of a common platform** that in the future will be able to enhance the network of relations between the institutions involved which has been consolidated during the project.

*“The added value of cross-border collaboration was realized through the comparison of the techniques used to protect the underwater wrecks, which are different in every single excavation across the area of the cooperation. In addition, the fruitful exchange also concerned valorization, documentation and cataloguing using digitization, which on the Croatian side was more advanced, while on the Italian side it was the field-work on the specific sites which was more enhanced. Archaeological protection is also highly developed in Croatia. It was not a unilateral cooperation. In addition to that there was a strong institutional collaboration between all the entities involved, starting with an academic network that facilitated the process of cooperation because at that level the relationships between the partners were already established. We also established relationships with schools and educational institutions in both countries”. (Interview: March 21, 2022)*

### 5.4. Beneficiaries' viewpoint

The beneficiaries' survey also included a section dedicated to **cross-border cooperation**. In particular, the partners were involved in expressing their opinion on some key issues:

1. The contribution of Programme to improve partners' administrative competences/skills.
2. The contribution of PPs to achieving project's results.
3. Main actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement.
4. Facilitates/hinders for project partners in contributing to achieve project expected results.

**The framework of information resulting from the field analysis is vast and valuable**, also from a future point of view. The following pages show the data processing carried out by the Evaluator for each of the questions. It should be noted that in reading the data, the response rate to the questionnaire and the different types of subjects who clearly express their point of view, sometimes even personal, must be taken into consideration. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the fact that the cumulative respondents to the survey conducted both in 2022 and 2023 amounts to 131 but not all beneficiaries have replied to all questions. This is why some graphs have less than 131 respondents.

1. *To what extent has the Programme contributed to improve partners' administrative competences/ skills at Programme and project levels?*

A first strategic element taken into consideration by the survey is the contribution of Programme to partners administrative competences/skills' improvement. It is clear that the perception of the beneficiaries can be conditioned by various factors such as for example the different experience in terms of management of CBC projects or the greater or lesser dynamism of the project partners. The following charts shows the survey's outcomes per LPs and PPs.

Figure 24 – Lead partner

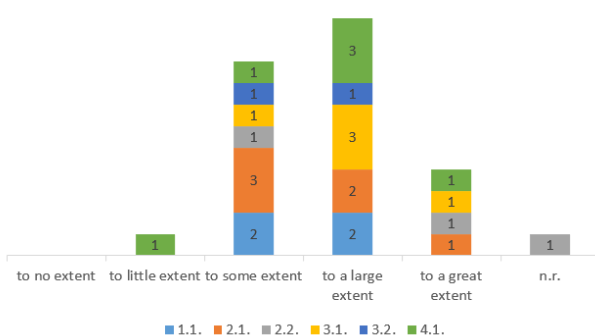
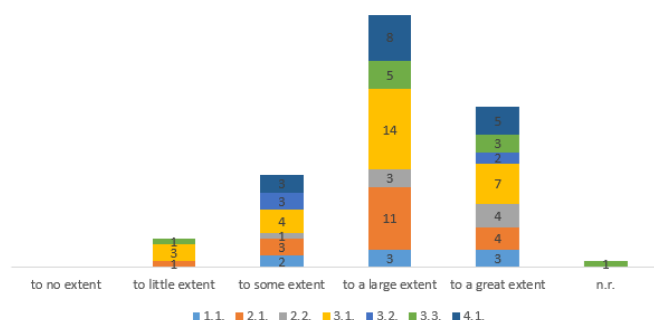


Figure 25 – Project's partners



The results of the survey highlight some useful elements:

- out of a total of 120 recorded responses, only 1 Lead Partner and 5 Partners consider there has been a **little support** from the Programme.
- Respectively 14 and 74 respondents out of 120 consider that the level of support from the Programme has been **high (large or great extent)**. This signals a certain success of the action of the Program management structures.

2. *To what extent involved partners efficiently contribute to achieving project expected results?*

Another key element of a successful CBC project is the effective and **concrete involvement of all partners** in order to achieve the planned results. Partnerships are the real cornerstone of CBC Programmes. They are a legal requirement and essential for activities to be of benefit on both sides of the border – joint problems require joint solutions. Within the impact evaluation desk analysis has been detected the awareness by Interreg Italy-Croatia partners of the partnerships importance and added value for achieving project results and a concrete cooperation among partners.

It is very well known after several years of CBC cooperation in Europe the most effective CBC partnerships are those where the issues and solutions are jointly identified, the actions are jointly implemented for the benefit of regions on both sides of the border, and each partner brings the competence, knowledge and skills to effect the change that is needed. The following charts shows the beneficiaries' view point per LPs and PPs.

Figure 26 – Lead partner

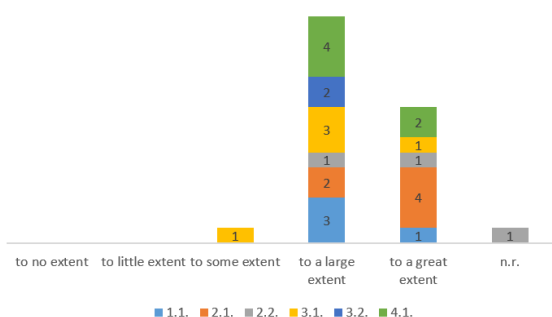
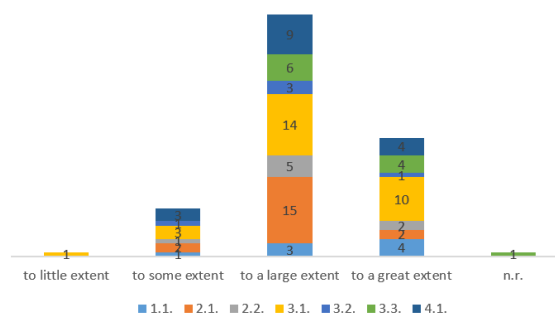


Figure 27 – Project's partners



The results of the survey highlight some useful elements:

- in this case none Lead Partner and just 1 Partner considers there has been **no or insufficient support** from the Programme out of a total of 120 recorded responses to this question.
- **for almost the majority of respondents** (106 out of a total of 120) **the level of partners contribution for reaching project's results has been high** (large or great extent). At the level of projects, it means that all lead and project partners demonstrated how their project complies with and contributed to achieving results and, thus, the project's overall success.

3. *In your opinion, what were the main actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement?*

The theme connected to the elements that have generated growth in the partnership achieved a high level of consensus among the respondents; consequently, it was possible to collect many key elements which, according to the LPs and PPs, favored the improvement. In particular **exchange of knowledge, cooperation between partners and training courses** are the main actions/tools that have enriched partners with **additional competences** both at Programme and project level and thus have more experience and knowledge that could be useful for future implementation of similar projects. The following table covers the detail of the main outcomes per LPs and PPs and per each SO.

S.O. 1.1	Actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• platform for the <b>reporting</b> activities</li> <li>• <b>Cross border coordination needs</b></li> <li>• <b>international stakeholder meeting and technical workshops</b> for discussing ecosystem approach to fisheries</li> </ul>

Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>exchange knowledge</b></li> <li>• <b>Study visits, demos and roadshows</b></li> <li>• Purchasing new equipment and increase of skills in application of <b>new laboratory methods</b></li> <li>• <b>Cooperation between partners</b> and managing organization, day-to-day management activities</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 2.1.</b>	<b>Actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the goal of approving <b>climate adaptation plans</b></li> <li>• Confrontation with the dynamics of <b>EU projects management</b></li> <li>• the <b>identification of adaptation measures</b> for temperature rise and floods</li> <li>• <b>Improvement and sharing of knowledge</b> on the energy potential of Italian &amp; Croatian coasts, development of "coastal energy networks" and assessment of feasibility of pilot coastal energy projects in target areas partners received <b>additional competences both at the Programme and project level</b> and thus have more experience and knowledge that is could be useful for future implementation of similar projects.</li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>better understanding on reporting to EU projects</b></li> <li>• Whole project experience was something new for our municipality.</li> <li>• Communication and <b>support from the lead partner and FLC</b></li> <li>• <b>Networking and spreading knowledge</b></li> <li>• <b>stakeholder involvement, communication and dissemination</b></li> <li>• <b>learning by doing</b></li> <li>• <b>Innovative approach</b> and development of volunteer carbon credit market</li> <li>• <b>Training courses</b> with project experts and municipal technicians on environmental vulnerability assessment and resilient climate territorial planning.</li> <li>• The main actions and instruments were opportunities to participate in the creation of plans on a municipal approach and the <b>use of new tools</b> to improve the work within the system</li> <li>• Coordinated <b>participatory processes for decision making</b></li> <li>• Communication with external experts and procurement procedure process for the production of project documentation</li> <li>• the <b>involvement of private stakeholders</b></li> <li>• Cooperation with other partners and institutions, <b>exchange of knowledge and experiences.</b></li> <li>• <b>Knowledge exchange</b> between partners new person skills</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 2.2.</b>	<b>Actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Managing the administrative and financial duties</b> required by the MA</li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Education, drills and workshops, equipping of the urgent services, geoinformation systems, online content</b></li> <li>• <b>Pilot project</b> for the local fire department and thematic workshops</li> <li>• <b>Knowledge exchange</b></li> <li>• The <b>sharing of the multidisciplinary data</b> available to the partners, both data already existing before the project and those acquired during the project</li> <li>• <b>Enhancement of MOs' &amp; PAs' competencies</b> to plan and implement energy-efficient mobility services.</li> <li>• A strict <b>monitoring of both administrative and technical activities</b></li> <li>• <b>Awareness and involvement of public</b> via innovative communication tools</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 3.1.</b>	<b>Actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exchanging information and meeting</b> in person, not just online, to resolve more easily every possible issues.</li> <li>• <b>Connection with private sector and fund raisers</b></li> <li>• To know the <b>organizational approaches</b> that the others were putting in place and the comparison was an added value.</li> <li>• <b>Respecting EU programme rules and regulations;</b> reporting and financial procedures</li> <li>• More ongoing <b>capacity building and training</b></li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the <b>training/explanation of the process</b> done by the Project Leader. Therefore, our improved skills are mainly linked to the support we received from our appointed consultant.</li> <li>• To create a <b>long-lasting relationship</b> with and within the pilot area actors</li> <li>• <b>Exchanges with controllers and Project officers;</b> management and leadership of WPs and monitoring tools</li> <li>• <b>Pilot Actions, Joint Strategies, Cooperation Agreements</b></li> <li>• The <b>dialogue with the local stakeholders</b></li> <li>• Holding <b>partner meetings</b></li> <li>• <b>Private organizations involvement</b></li> <li>• <b>Decreasing bureaucratic activities</b> and reducing response time to applications</li> <li>• The strict rules for application and conduction of the projects provided partners a valuable <b>set of skills on programme</b> and project level so there was no issues during the project implementation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Good communication</b> with LP and within the partners</li> <li>• <b>The bottom-up approach</b>, the creation of Local Communities of Practice to contribute to the development of the project activities</li> <li>• <b>Implementation and communication plans</b> unified all partners' efforts in implementing the project activities as a joint partnership</li> <li>• Better use of <b>digital tools</b></li> <li>• <b>Virtualisation of cultural tourism route</b></li> <li>• <b>Capacity building events</b> (training and workshops). Networking and cooperation with partners with extensive experience in projects.</li> <li>• The project has preserved <b>historically rooted cuisine</b> and less known heritage sites and gave boost to the cross-border economy</li> <li>• <b>the products of the WPs</b> are interesting studies for researchers and environmental protection bodies</li> <li>• <b>Trainings and workshops</b> for target groups. IT tools for exploring alternative tourist routes.</li> <li>• <b>Events</b> and WS on the international level, presentation for knowledge exchange and to be introduced to the new practices</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 3.2.</b>	<b>Actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Interaction</b> with international institutions</li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific <b>training courses</b> organized by the project</li> <li>• <b>Frequent moments of discussion</b> with the lead partner, who was in charge of the technical management of the project</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 3.3.</b>	<b>Actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement</b>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improvement of the analytical methods</b> applied for the analysis of the samples and improvement of the monitoring techniques of the micro and macroplastics</li> <li>• <b>Joint policies solutions</b> and suggestions as well as predefined indicators</li> <li>• <b>Citizenship training</b>, sharing of responsibility for waste management of local communities especially in periods of high tourist density, cooperation between business and research</li> <li>• <b>Communication</b> between the JS and project partners, active participation in internal meetings, and sharing pieces of information</li> <li>• <b>Pilot actions</b> on the local territories</li> <li>• <b>Educations on the SIU system</b>, help of the JS and if needed MA/MC but also the LP administration, workshops</li> <li>• the creation of <b>specific infrastructures</b>, the chemical-physical and microbiological analyzes of the aquatic environment, the hydrological evaluations of the site which may be potentially contaminated</li> <li>• Experience, examples of <b>good practice models</b> as benefits of partnership</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 4.1.</b>	<b>Actions and/or instruments that triggered an improvement</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>cooperation</b> among partners, sharing of information and tools, involvement of stakeholders</li> <li>• <b>shared knowledge</b> and joint actions for building common ICT instruments and shared procedures/pilot actions</li> <li>• <b>Financing.</b></li> <li>• <b>Computer applications</b></li> <li>• <b>Team work</b> between partners with different skills</li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sustainable mobility</b> in marinas and marinas has been improved (yachts) of the Adriatic, with particular attention to e-mobility services related to tourism and the energy supply (recharging) of yachts and boats</li> <li>• The Programme's impact on the <b>administrative competences</b> and skills</li> <li>• Creation of <b>apps</b> for sustainable mobility</li> <li>• <b>Involvement</b> of categories of <b>students</b></li> <li>• The continuous updating on the work carried out and the <b>exchange of good practices</b></li> <li>• The <b>Bike sharing system</b> opening and the sharing experiences and needs with the local tourism operators</li> <li>• <b>Communication</b> between LP and other partners. Planning in advance according to external finance officer templates for budget planning and funds allocation.</li> <li>• <b>Pilot actions</b></li> <li>• The needs to <b>cooperate</b> with different entity (municipality, university, private) both Italian and Croatian triggered the improvement of several skills</li> <li>• Knowledge about <b>EU programme rules and regulations</b>; reporting procedures, financial processes, etc.</li> </ul>

4. *What facilitates/hinders project partners in contributing to achieve project expected results?*



Within the evaluation survey with beneficiaries, it was of particular interest to involve the partnerships in the analysis of **facilities and hinders** to achieve project expected results in order to provide valuable useful information both in the closing phase of the current programming and for the start of the new programming period. The main result of the analysis shows how the main obstacle encountered by LPs and PPs is in **bureaucracy, public administrations rules and procedures** (e.g. public procurement timing) and the **restrictions due to the pandemic**. It is therefore noted that the **main hinders are of an exogenous nature** with respect to the Programme/projects. There is no doubt that **cooperation, sharing experiences, complementarity of expertise** is recognized as the **main facilities at the level of partnerships**. It is also useful to underline how the role of project's **Steering Committee as facilitator of achieving projects' results** is highlighted.

The following table covers the detail of the main outcomes per LPs and PPs and per each SO.

S.O. 1.1	Facilities	Hinders
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• common goals, need to share experiences in cooperation</li> <li>• strong cooperation, strong expertise and strong motivation</li> <li>• complementarity of expertise was facilitating; great common goal was facilitating;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For public bodies: <b>public procurement timing</b> and related issues. For private bodies: <b>average time for reimbursement</b></li> <li>• <b>language and distrust of the methods</b> was hindering some partners</li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting and work physically on target activities</li> <li>• Cooperation of scientific and industrial partners</li> <li>• Good organization, and a good project proposal. Also, the possibility for each partner to advance through research, development, and innovation are excellent motivators for partners to achieve project results.</li> <li>• Strict cooperation among partners and a very well-organised management from the LP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• difference in legislative between Italy and Croatia</li> <li>• very different types of reefs on Italian and Croatian side as well as developed economic activities that follows</li> <li>• Lack of specific regional/local laws</li> </ul>
S.O. 2.1.	Facilities	Hinders
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the Italian partners, another project was launched for the implementation of pilot projects for urban forestry</li> <li>• the advantage of the webinar form is that more participants are likely to join in since they do not need to move from their offices. Other problems encountered refers to the</li> <li>• The continuous updating and periodic meetings in order to check the status of the Actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid for sure had a negative impact, in single contexts lack of support within public administration has to some extent limited contributions by engaged members of the administration</li> <li>• restrictions to live meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic; virtual meetings did not allow for in-depth discussion and interaction among stakeholder</li> <li>• regulatory aspects. As for the legislation, on both sides of the Adriatic there are no chapters dedicated to blue energy.</li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better cooperation between Italian and Croatian partners is needed. It could be achieved by focusing visibility of project through common (IT-HR) activities and achievements</li> <li>• Exchange of experiences between partners</li> <li>• Covid-19 and earthquake slow down activities but good cooperation by lead partner has overcome obstacles</li> <li>• Partners' specific expertise</li> <li>• The possibility of meeting in person and exchanging good practices through study visits helps the overall project results.</li> <li>• Facilitating the exchange, reading and concrete use of technical data on climate projections can make it easier for cities to handle this type of more scientific data within planning tools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the differences in the project pilot areas specific management issues</li> <li>• Pandemic was an obstacle to some actions</li> <li>• Public administration (rules, procedures, protocol)</li> <li>• The main issue was the jurisdictional limitations for decision making</li> <li>• sometimes low cooperability with local government and rigid bureaucracy a lack of knowledge of the subject within the administrative structure of the public body</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The continuous exchange with the periodic meeting (also with Steering Committee supervision); the shared contribution in documents preparation and the supervision of the Scientific Committee</li> <li>partners contribute in such a way that they use the prepared plans in their daily business, as well as part of the plans presented to them as examples of good practice that are used in the further implementation of activities in their area</li> <li>Facilitates: good structure of Application form that enables flexibility</li> <li>The willingness of all stakeholders to actively cooperate is the key.</li> <li>Competence and clarity of ideas in initial stage of the project</li> <li>cooperation among partners</li> </ul>	
<b>S.O. 2.2.</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-border cooperation has a great impact in achieving project results just like team members involvement and competencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The waste of time in producing the reporting periods documentation</li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The possibility of sharing information and experience</li> <li>Good communication between partners, frequent partner meetings and an excellent leading partner facilitate the implementation of the project</li> <li>Competences gained through previous experiences in the technical area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bureaucracy at higher decision-making levels, lack of understanding</li> <li>Pandemic</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 3.1.</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the exchange of good practices and a strong communication channel</li> <li>A greater integration between them that provides a strong knowledge of the different territorial realities and a possibility in the future to be able to continue in collaboration</li> <li>Good project management and leadership of project</li> </ul>	-
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A clear task subdivision and shared objectives and goals</li> <li>Joint Cooperation, Clear division of tasks, Pro-active Lead Partner</li> <li>Communications with partner</li> <li>Lead Partner competencies and commitment</li> <li>The positive response of the territory facilitates</li> <li>The great understanding of the local community</li> <li>Exploitation of innovative technology facilitated the promotion of cultural heritage</li> <li>Previous experience and funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Covid pandemic</li> <li>The collaboration between IT and HR partners could be improved in order to strengthen the results not only at a local, but also at a more general, interregional Project-level.</li> <li>The biggest obstacle was the timing of the investment agreed with small mountain municipalities that needs help so much but which lacks the staff to carry out the activities</li> <li>Too much bureaucracy</li> <li>Conflicting priorities and interests, unclear expected results, or partner roles</li> <li>Differences in work organization, jurisdictions, and national law, regulations and obligations</li> <li>Limited resources, varying capacities, and external constraints</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 3.2.</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear communications of objective. Meeting in person is very important for sharing project expected results</li> <li>Proper planning</li> </ul>	-
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project results, may be hindered by problems related to</li> <li>Collaboration of partners in the implementation of strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>administrative management operating within individual partners (public administrations)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the project activities are facilitated if the partners face the same problems</li> <li>Mutual project result and later on project dissemination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>internal political change dynamics that reduce support for the project's intended actions</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 3.3.</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The support of local governance, the involvement of local communities' training</li> <li>Common interest to contribute to a better detection of sea pollution by waste with innovative methods</li> <li>Network business</li> <li>Good cooperation within the partnership, mutual division of work, good structure of the project implementation activities, budget flexibility, etc.</li> <li>The preparation of management actions for protection and rules and guidelines for public entities / the availability of financial resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Covid-19 pandemic</li> <li>Long public procurement procedures</li> <li>Different procedures in functioning and jurisdiction, different practices etc.</li> </ul>
<b>S.O. 4.1.</b>	<b>Facilities</b>	<b>Hinders</b>
Lead partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning and sharing of information and data</li> <li>Financing, support from the Programme bodies</li> <li>Budget</li> <li>Compliance with deadlines for each project in order not to slow down the work of the other partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reporting activities should be simplified and the focus should be on the impacts of pilots actions</li> <li>Lack of administrative support to implement some tasks</li> </ul>
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The competence of all partners to support actions in the sustainable energy for both the public and private sectors</li> <li>wanting the successful implementation of the project, but also contributing to the European Union standards, development and future</li> <li>Greater collaboration with public bodies</li> <li>Leader project's commitment</li> <li>General public awareness</li> <li>Pilot actions</li> <li>Constant email communication and coordination, joint meetings and events, joint goals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slowdowns in terms of time and dissemination events due to the health emergency</li> <li>Bureaucratic difficulties in the various countries involved and the different national law of the project partners</li> </ul>

### Lead partners semi-structured interviews main outcomes

The semi-structured interviews with the lead partners represented an **additional and key opportunity** to deepen the topic of CBC and networking and the following main elements came from:

- thanks to the **CBC creation of new partnerships** also with LPs that play this role for the first time, consolidation of existing partnerships and creation of stable networks between partners
- Sustainable partnership networks** with exchanges between partners that continue beyond the end of the project (e.g. contractual communities, networks between institutional and non-institutional local actors also as **effects not initially foreseen by the project**);
- use of the **flexibility of the Programme** in order to target the roles of the different partners also by remodulating what was foreseen during the presentation of the proposal to favor an **effective partnership**;
- involvement of stakeholders** unaware of the existence of a previous network on the topic of interest;
- sense of ownership and dynamism of the partners** as a **strength** of the project;
- CBC as a key element for on-the-job training** with reference to less experienced partners on participation in European projects;

- **private partners (SMEs) particularly proactive;**
- the **involvement of the institutional level in the partnership** (for example the Ministry) is essential for the success of the project;
- the presence of six-monthly monitoring as a valid tool for managing the partnership;
- development of joint management models that the partners continue to use even beyond the end of the project;
- knowledge sharing, common tools and strategic objectives as key elements of the CBC added value which has made it possible to implement "**sharing projects**" **also between public and private sectors;**
- implementation of **innovative CBC tools** such as integrated platforms (joint data elaboration in both Countries), schools of capacity building for researchers, joint management models.

## 6. Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy

---

### 6.1. Programme's strategy

The Joint Secretariat, supported by the MA and the MC, elaborated a **communication strategy** soon after the adoption of the Programme and it was published in the beginning of 2019. The aim of the communication strategy is dual:

- to inform potential applicants about founding opportunities under the cooperation Programme;
- to communicate progress and achievements of the Programme to the general public.

Communication has a vital role in cooperation programmes and it is a prerequisite for the Programme to deliver meaningful results not only to project partners but also to audiences outside the project communities.

**Two important elements** for an effective communication are uniformity and recognizability and this is why the Programme and all projects communication activities shall comply with a coordinated branding introduced on a voluntary basis by ETC programmes for the 2014-2020 period. The MSs shall support the MA in ensuring its effective application of the information and publicity requirements by taking appropriate steps to disseminate information and provide publicity within their territory. Similarly, also the approved operations can contribute to the Programme promotion through the spreading of their achievements and involvement of the target groups.

In the Communication Strategy, the Programme identifies **four main fields of operation**:

- facilitating and enhancing cooperation in public administration and strengthening internal communication capacity,
- involving stakeholders and attracting relevant beneficiaries for ensuring programme impacts,
- supporting projects during their implementation,
- raising awareness of the Programme goals and making the achievements visible.

In the Strategy the JS, together with the MA, provides a detailed plan of action identifying target groups, tactics and activities for each field.

The **first field** is directed to the public bodies involved in the implementation of the Programme. The programming bodies are those which are more in contact with potential applicants, beneficiaries and other target groups. In this context, capacity building has a primary role in ensuring consistent quality across all bodies involved. The objective is to create a certain uniformity between all public actors involved in the Programme and in communication activities. This is a key element to successful communication and the MA intends achieving this through training, networking, individual consultations and guidelines.

The **second field** of communication includes activities mainly directed towards potential beneficiaries (or the general public) and implemented by the MA/JS:

- raise awareness on the opportunities offered by the Programme,

- increase knowledge and engagement of potential beneficiaries regarding application processes, rules and requirements to participate in the Programme,
- exploit the results of cross border cooperation projects and make them available to further widen the potential beneficiaries' audience and to make the Programme known to the general public.

A **key element** to widen the spectre of communication activities is enabling Lead Partners and Project Partners to conduct their own communication initiatives. Indeed, it is key to support project partners during the implementation phase. This has a dual objective: on one hand, it ensures that projects follow their path and achieve expected results, on the other it provides support any time partners need expertise regarding any task they need to carry out, including communication activities.

The **last communication field** was thought to assure that the Programme's achievement will be efficiently spread within the cooperation area and beyond. This can be considered as the ultimate communication objective and it has to be carried out at all levels. Involving beneficiaries in such activity is important to provide first-hand experience and feedback on the opportunities offered by the Programme and in a certain way it further legitimates the Programme.

In the Communication strategy each field of operation was linked with relevant target groups to which activities were directed. As it is possible to see from the figure below, there are many different groups that the Strategy aims to address and while there is a clear demarcation between target groups and fields in the implementation phase, particularly at a late stage in the programming period, communication activities will be more horizontal.

Communication fields	Target groups
Facilitating and enhancing cooperation in public administration and strengthening internal communication capacity.	First level controllers, FLC designation body, AA, GoA EUSAIR stakeholders, Organisation Authorities hosting MA, MC and JS
Involving stakeholders and attracting relevant beneficiaries for ensuring programme impacts.	Potential applicants/beneficiaries, national officers, EU relevant bodies, key bodies of overlapping Interreg programmes and macroregional strategies, media and multipliers
Supporting projects during their implementation.	Lead and Project Partners
Raising awareness of the Programme goals and making the achievements visible.	National, regional and local authorities, thematic experts in the fields of projects' expertise at all levels, general public.

## 6.2. Communication tools

In the Communication Strategy, there is a list of activities that the JS, together with the Ma, planned to implement during the programming period. These included:

### ❖ Start-up activities

- initiatives regarding the organization of the launching event and corporate image setting up that will later lead to the definition of the brand book and project brand manual.

### ❖ ICT activities

- Programme website, multi-sites web-platform, social media management, multimedia, videos, newsletter.

### ❖ Publications

- leaflets, brochures, application packages, manuals, factsheets, guidelines for the use of SIU, implementation and communication manuals.

❖ **Public events**

- Programme annual conferences that will present the achievements of the operational programme, where relevant, major projects, joint action plans and other project examples.

❖ **Targeted events**

- thematic workshops for applicants, local seminars and networking sessions.

❖ **Media relations**

- Media releases and conferences.

❖ **Promotional materials**

- event materials such as gadgets, pens, folders, notes, USB pens containing the information on Programme.

### 6.3. The implementation of the communication strategy

The **original plan** was to select an external specialized company to carry out the planned activities, but this was not the case. For a series of administrative and procedural issues the MA and the JS did not manage to select a third party to implement the Communication Strategy before January 2021.

This means that for the time between the publication of the Strategy and the end of the selection process, communication activities were carried out internally. The effects of this delay were tackled during semi **structured interviews** and important elements emerged from these. As it is possible to understand, conducting communication activities internally grew a major burden for the staff. Even though there is a member of the JS who is specialised in communication, she had to carry out standard tasks to which this one was added. Resources and staff devoted to the implementation of the Strategy were therefore at a minimum level significantly downplaying the potential impact of communication activities. This was much more evident when the external company was selected and started working following the guidelines provided by the MA and the JS. The effects were immediately visible and the example of social media perfectly fits. Socials were already open before the selection processes ended but they were not updated often and interactions were limited, with the external company social media pages are much more active and contents are posted regularly making the pages more attractive to users. Social media represent an efficient way to get in contact with the general public, which is the target group that was most difficult to reach when communication activities were conducted internally. These insights all came out during the interview with the JS and from this it is clear that the most important recommendation for the next programming period is to start the selection process for a communication company right at the beginning. In this way, resources and activities can be carried out more efficiently and more effectively.

To check how the implementation of the Strategy is going, the MA provided the IE with the **monitoring report updated at the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2022**. Here it is possible to get a detailed overview of the activities conducted. What seems more interesting is the section focussed on **social media**. In the table that follows it is possible to have a look at the performance of the two Programme's social accounts, namely Facebook and Twitter. The IE went to look at the number of Facebook followers that other Interreg programs have and what emerges is that Ita-Cro was surely negatively impacted by the fact that externalized communication services quite late during the programming period. Social media performance was influenced by this, in the initial period posts and interactions were very sporadic. Just to give some numbers, here is a list of Interreg programs and their Facebook followers:

- Italy – Austria 205,
- Italy – Slovenia 559,

- Italy – Switzerland 3765,
- Italy – Malta 838,
- Italy – Albania – Montenegro 3511.

**Table 2 - Social media performance**

Social Media	Indicator	Results	
<b>Facebook</b>	People reached	1.271.879	
	Followers	497	
	Page reach (monthly)	7.600	
	Post engagements	732	
	Reactions	849	
	Comments	13	
	Shares	152	
	Posts	56	
	Top performer post	Impressions –	2.350
Post reach –		2.178	
Post engagement –		181	
<b>Twitter</b>	Interaction rate (average)	4,8%	
	Followers	363	
	Profile views	12.900	
	Click link	77	
	Retweet	57	
	Like	298	
	Tweets	115	
	Top performer tweet	Views –	737
		Interactions –	19
Interaction rate –		2,6%	

Source: program monitoring data

As it is possible to see from the see from the table below page visits stand a little lower 20.000 and unique visitors are just under 10.000 meaning that on average each user visits the website twice. Another interesting information is that the most visited page is the homepage and considering the number of the others, it is possible to assume that many visitors do not go further when visiting the website. The fact that the average time spent of the website is just a few seconds more than 3 minutes reinforce the assumption that the majority of the visitors do not expand their research much.

Furthermore, on 29<sup>th</sup> September and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022, respectively, the second and third newsletters were sent via Mail Up. In terms of efficiency, the newsletter in just two months has had positive results, registering:

- + **2.618** mailing list contacts;
- + **3.260** total newsletter openings;
- + **109** total newsletter clicks.

**Table 3 - Website performance**

Indicator		Results
Visits		19.449
Monthly visits (average)		3.000
Unique visitors		9.835
Visited pages		62.459
Visited pages per session (average)		3,1
Bounce rate		48,90%
Average time on website		3 mins and 3 secs
Desktop visits		85,46%
Mobile visits		14,17%
Tablet visits		0,37%
Visits from direct traffic		5.144
Visits via organic search		4.267
Visits through referral		701
Visits through socials		111
Users from Italy		3.941
Users from Croatia		1.975
Users from France		1.332
Most visited pages	Homepage	13.265
	Docs and tools	5.472
	News	3.955
	Discover	2.272

Source: program monitoring data

One of the most interesting activities conducted by the communication consultant consisted in the **support provided to beneficiaries related to communication**. Capacity building is key considering each project can implement its communication activities and have a great impact disseminating the opportunities and the results achieved through the Programme. In this scenario, the external consultant provided Word and Pdf files to share the visual identity of the Programme with the beneficiaries. This is meant to be used when they want to share results or information and undertake communication activities. It is important that all beneficiaries are coordinated and use the same visual identity. In this way the Programme becomes recognizable to the eyes of the general public or, less ambitiously, to the eyes of those that participate or come across events/presentations. This activity stimulated some of the projects to ask for a Communication Kit to guide their activities. This is still an ongoing process, and it is too early to assess its performance.

The communication company organized **4 training courses** tackling 4 different modules:

- effective communication;
- communication tools;
- public speaking;
- content production.

After each module the organizer gave the participants a **questionnaire** to measure the effectiveness and the coherence of the activity, and it came up with 3 main indicators:



- module rating is a compound indicator that summarizes the answers to different questions and expresses the perception of the participants,
- material rating is a simple indicator and it is deduced from the answers to the question regarding the quality of shared materials,
- perceived learning level aims to quantify the level of knowledge acquired thank to the participation to each module.

**Table 4 - Participant and topics per module**

Module	Participants	Topics	Participation Index	Module rating	Material rating	Perceived learning level
Effective communication	25/25	Principles of communication: theories and fundamentals	100%	7/10	8/10	6,5/10
		Effective communication: strategy, coherence and impact				
Communication tools	21/21	Communicating with social media	100%	7/10	7/10	6/10
		Offline communication				
Public speaking	11/15	ABC of public Speaking	73%	9/10	7/10	8/10
		Your speech				

Source: program monitoring data

On 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022, **Module 4 (“Content Production”)** was held by Pomilio Blumm, the course was divided into two macro themes: content and design. The approach was strategic, offering a complete overview of planning, content creation, social media communication and best practices.

The course was positively evaluated by all the participants. As reported in the graph below, the results of the survey show that the majority of the respondents (at least 6 out of 8) considered the course "very good", in terms of effectiveness (clarity, quality and relevance). In fact, after attending this course, the participants considered they had acquired a high level of skills, both in terms of content and design.

**Figure 28 - Results of the survey on Module 4**

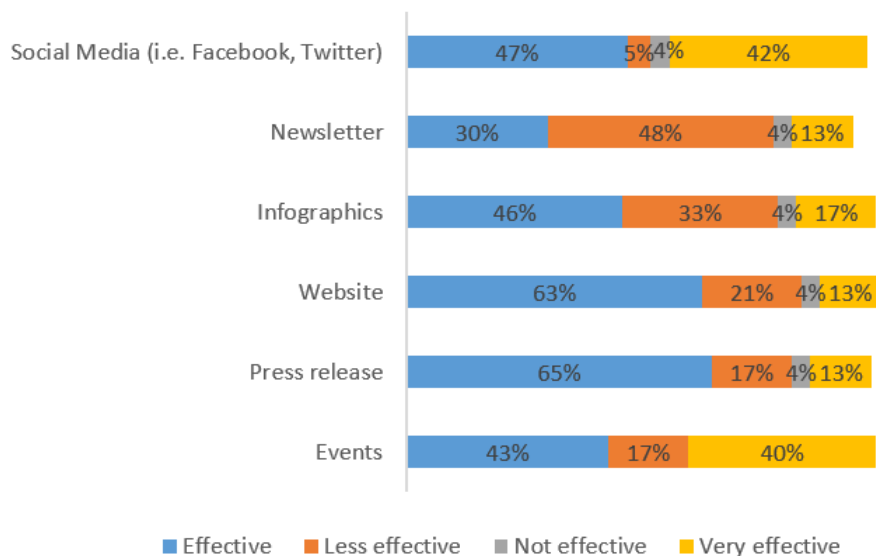


#### 6.4. Beneficiaries' viewpoint

The **results from the survey** presented below are presented dividing the answers from Lead Partners and from Project Partners. In this way the objective is to see whether there is a different opinion between the two types of stakeholders involved in the projects. Their characteristics are quite different, for example their involvement in the project and in the relations with the MA can differ between Lead and Project Partner but also within these categories. The objective of the survey was to understand what beneficiaries think of the communication strategy implemented by the programme and to realize whether some of the tools are better perceived than others.

The first question analyses which **tool** was **most effective** in increasing awareness on Programme objectives and potential opportunities. The **answers provided by the LPs are presented in the graphic below**. It is possible to see that events and social media get the higher percentages of positive answers (effective + very effective) between all tools. Social media and events get the highest % of very effective answers, 42% and 40% of the respondents choose this option. 43 respondents provided and answer also to a more specific question related to this matter - which tool you consider to be the MOST effective and why. The answers can be grouped in two main categories, the first conceives the use of social media and website the most effective because this programming period has been heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and this kind of tools were essential to maintain the information flow running. Furthermore, these tools are able to reach a large number of people with minimal effort. On the contrary, the other group identifies events as crucial and this is because this tool promote a more active participation and it better involves stakeholders increasing their awareness of projects and opportunities. Events represent a great opportunity to meet stakeholders, integrate perspective, share mutual limitations. It is clear that (in person) meetings and events are a substantial part of a CBC program because some of the stakeholders might not be able to communicate easily if not in such occasions.

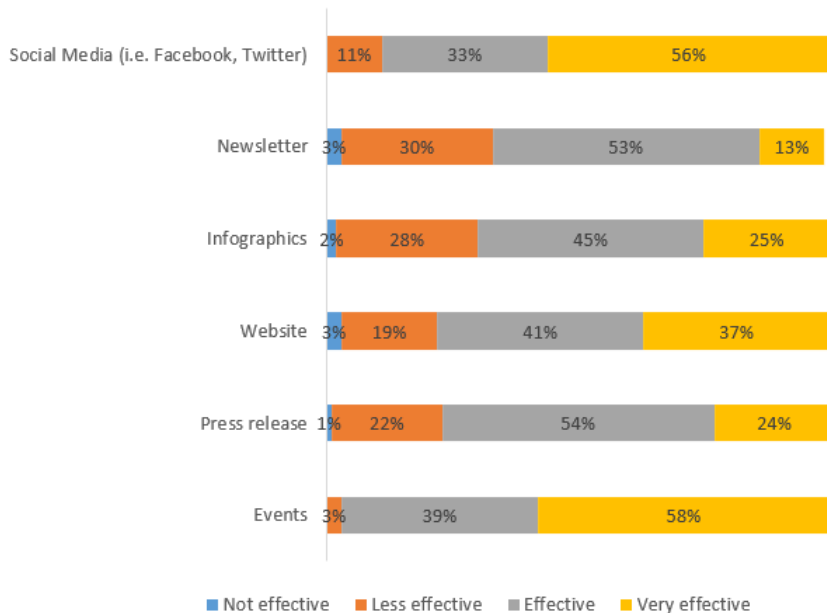
**Graph 3 - Which tools were most effective in increasing awareness on Programme objectives and offered opportunities? (LP results)**



Source: primary data collected by the IE

Overall, the **PPs provide higher % of positive answers** (effective + very effective) compared to LPs. Every tool achieves at least 65% of positive answers and the most effective tools are, just like for LPs, events, press releases, website and social media. When asked to choose which of the tool is the most effective tool and to provide a reason for it the behaviour reflects that of the LPs and the answers can be grouped in the same two categories: events and combination of social media/press releases. In this case, events have a dual advantage, on one hand, it is clear that some PPs benefitted from participating in events where they acquired precious insights and information on potential opportunities, on the other, they organized events themselves to involve local stakeholders from directly involved entities to project’s potential beneficiaries.

**Graph 4 - Which tools were most effective in increasing awareness on Programme objectives and offered opportunities? (PP results)**



Source: primary data collected by the IE

As it was introduced in the previous paragraph, **the communication strategy included support activities for all partners involved in projects.** The strategy used a range of tools to provide beneficiaries with the skills and expertise needed to carry out their own communication activities. The results presented below tackle this precise element, and it is clear that these tools are positively judged by partners. Only 15% of LPs and 3% of PPs did not find them useful while the large majority were happy with them.

**Graph 5 - Has the Programme provided any support to increase the capacity of projects to communicate their own achievements? (LPs results on the left and PPs' on the right)**

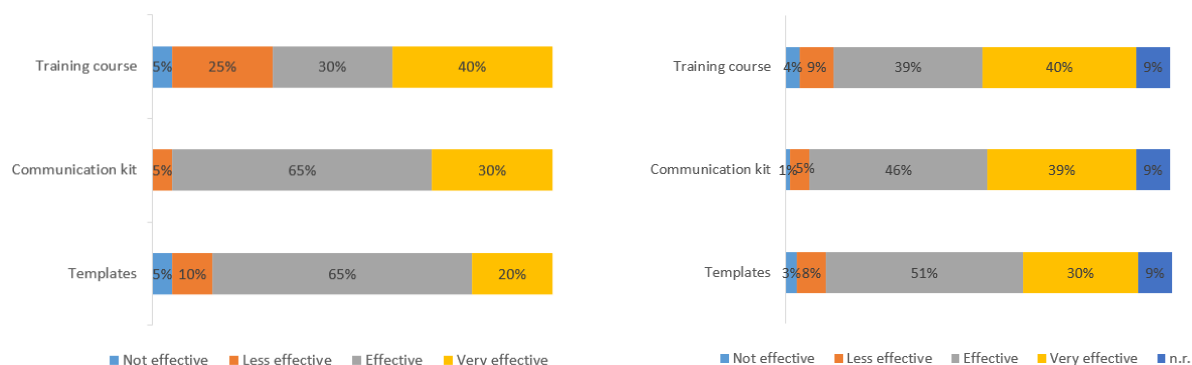


Source: primary data collected by the IE

The next question is linked with the previous and asks beneficiaries to **rate which of the tool used by the program is more effective in providing the right support.** As the graphs show, templates and communication kits were most useful for both LPs and PPs. Training courses were most productive for PPs rather than for LPs. Most of the LPs believe that communication kits/templates were most useful because they included standard guidelines that were easy to follow. Training courses can be very effective too because a direct contact can help to better understand some information and these are also key opportunities for beneficiaries to exchange experiences, mutual impediments and possible solutions. However, training courses help those who can attend and the pros of this tool can be exploited only by those who participate while communication kits are the same for everyone and they facilitate the harmonization of communication materials/activities for all projects.

PPs provide similar answers to LPs but there is a higher % of respondents who prefer training courses because first-hand experiences provide more insights and it is easy to learn new skills when there is a direct contact with professional experts. Some of the respondents specifically ask for more communication training in the future. Those who preferred communication kits believe that this tool can be quickly adapted to their needs.

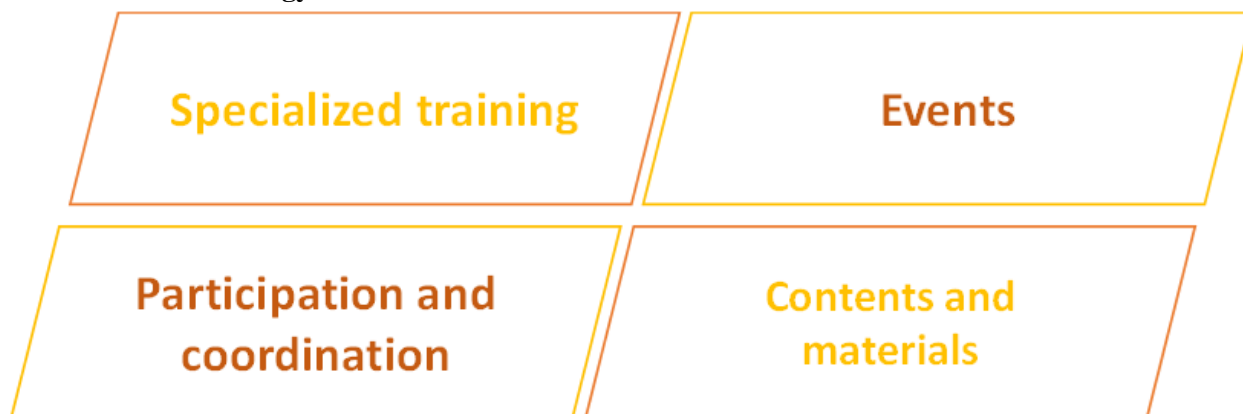
**Graph 6 - If yes, rate the effectiveness of each instrument? (LPs results on the left and PPs' on the right)**



Source: primary data collected by the IE

As a last question for this section of the questionnaire the IE asked the beneficiaries whether they believe there are any **improvements to make the communication strategy more effective**. Not all of them answered, some are satisfied with what has been carried out and other they do not have any idea of what else could be done in terms of communication because they are not expert in this field. Around 50% of the respondents provided an answer to this question and the IE decided to group these in order to present their needs more clearly. As it is possible to see from the figure below, the categories are 4 and beneficiaries ask for more specialized training to improve communication skills (mainly social media), events to involve stakeholders and general public, an higher level of participation and coordination between stakeholders (experience exchange), more contents and materials to disseminate results and initiatives.

**Figure 29 - Do you believe there are any other useful instruments/tools to improve the effectiveness of the communication strategy?**



Source: primary data collected by the IE

In the following table, it is possible to see the answers provided by each respondent categorized in sub-groups for each of the 4 categories.

**Table 5 - Do you believe there are any other useful instruments/tools to improve the effectiveness of the communication strategy?**

Specialized training	Participation and coordination	Events and meeting	Content and materials
specialized training for social media	more coordination between all actors	more frequent events (diverse in relation to target groups and contents) and promo materials directed to general public (i.e billboards)	more press releases
meetings with professionals	joint communication activities for similar projects	kick off meetings	infographics
specialized training for communication	Immediately adopting some of the good practices that emerge during the project within the partnership itself	online meetings	videos
be more concrete on support activities and guidelines	having a margin to do something different than expected, thanks to ideas that emerged later or born after partnership's exchanges.	study tours at the beginning of the project	infographics
workshop and demonstrations		giving precise indications on the type of stakeholder to bring to the study tours	gaming learning gadget, vouchers or other advantages

Source: primary data collected by the IE

## The results emerged from the semi structured interviews

The main element that came up from the interviews with the MA and the JS is also the most critical issue related to communication that the program had to face and that is the **delay assigning communication activities to an external company**. The externalization of this service took a lot of time and as the Italian National Authority highlighted this should have been strongly avoided considering **Interreg ITA-CRO is a new programme and communication was key to spread the opportunities available to potential beneficiaries**. There was nothing wrong with the communication strategy considering this was approved by all relevant bodies but the issue lies in the fact that the tender was published late and activities have fully started only when the external company was appointed. Both the MA and the JS say that **there has been a decisive spur since activities have been externalised** and results are more visible now both in terms of production (website update, social media, etc.) and results. This means that communication performance could have reached this peak way earlier and the recommendation comes up naturally for next programming period and that is to issue the tender as soon as possible. **Communication activities should proceed simultaneously to the implementation of the programme**. This is true also because, as the Croatian National Authority pointed out, partnerships are now established but **it is very important to always include new stakeholders** and communication activities at an early stage of the programme surely help doing so.

**The JS stated that in the beginning it was really difficult to reach all target groups**. It is hard to involve those that are far from you and are decentralized when you do not own the expertise and to tools to do so. Thanks to the externalization of this service reaching all target groups has become easier because specialized staff is now in charge of it and they have all the means to take care of this. Furthermore, communication activities are more consistent in time, this is a key precondition because it keeps attention high for all target groups.

Although this rough start, the program has achieved **great results in terms of awareness** about its activities and achievements in the cooperation area. One thing is very important to remember when dealing with this topic, this Interreg program is at its first experience and just its implementation shows an increase in the knowledge and awareness related to EU funds and program's opportunities. **The perception of all interviewees is clear and reflects the fact that initiating this new program had a benefit impact throughout all cooperation areas**.

When the interviews moved to analyze the **capacity of the projects to disseminate their own activities and results** the judgements slightly change. The **ability to communicate is very subjective** and it derives from a personal interest or a specific career path. Considering there is not a specific requirement to become project's communication manager it is possible that they are not qualified to do the task they are required and communication activities can feel the impact of this. This is a condition that the MA was well aware of and the **communication strategy included coaching activities but their implementation was delayed because the service was externalized at a later stage**.

Another **critical issue** that has been pointed out in all interviews concerns the **program website**. **Its structure was too complex and difficult to explore**, this made it unappealing for beneficiaries to use it and to contribute with contents and materials. The MA and the JS are aware of the problem and, in the next programming period, a different strategy will take place in order to make the website more engaging and easier to understand for the users. The attempt made by the program was praiseworthy because it wanted to concentrate all information regarding its activities and the funded projects in one website but this created some unexpected problems such as scarce visibility for the projects that decided to use a different website. This created quite a disorganized information flow that for the next programming period should be channeled through a shared and more coordinated strategy.

**One aspect on which all LPs interviewed agree is that they have to come up with original activities to make their projects more visible**. Some projects have a great impact at a local level and they can pave the path for positive change at different levels but if they do not share the results with both the general public and competent institutions it is not easy to achieve this further result. Targeting strategic stakeholders is a key component for successful communication activities. Not all projects followed the same road and we can identify two general practices:

- **addition activities to share results and raise awareness between general public and local stakeholders,**
- **involving institutions to improve collaboration with decision makers.**

These practices were followed by the 3 LPs interviewed, 1 focused on the first, the other on the second and the third project pursued a mixed approach. The project that focused on a **greater involvement of local stakeholders and the general public** was moved by the fact that it wanted to be different from the rest. The LP pointed out that this was triggered by the program because they understood that communication and participation were two key elements to develop. The project created a complex predictive model to measure the impact of fishing activities but they decided to make a simplified version available in order to allow non-professionals to use this too. This version was used in specific events where they invited fishermen to share the implication of fishing malpractices and give them concrete examples of future scenarios based on the techniques used. This event was very successful and their reaction was better than expected even if there was an initial suspicion/mistrust. The LP believes that this kind of event, where stakeholders and partners meet, is crucial to raise the awareness needed to trigger changes. The same objective was pursued with two other original activities, the creation of an online game to make fishing simulations interactive and playful and the publication of a card game. The latter was promoted following the suggestion of the program to develop gadget innovation and this experience was successful considering they managed to give away 900 decks and they keep receiving requests for new prints. Although this might seem superficial the fact that a project manages to spread its message and raise awareness on a specific topic thanks to alternative methods is crucial and can be definitely considered as a good practice to share with other LPs. Clearly this cannot be applied to all projects but it surely represents an insightful exercise.

**The project that followed the second path managed to share its results with institutional authorities.** The LP mentions that the fact that the Croatian Ministry of Agriculture incorporated a research center that was partner and became directly involved in the project was decisive. In this way, the proximity with decision making bodies became a daily reality and the positive results achieved through the process influenced the Ministry to discuss the carbon credit market at the national level. This was a fine opportunity for the Croatian government to become aware of such practice and of the benefits that derive from it. Additionally, the project participated in many events where they got in contact with DG Agri and DG Clima where the topic of the carbon credits is well known and it attracts a lot of interest. This experience suggests that links between projects and institutions can be very fruitful but they need to be cultivated and this cannot be left to the individuals. The program needs to think of a system where events that put together (local, national and European) institutions with LPs, or partners more in general, become the status quo. The recommendation is to conceive targeted events with institutions at all levels.

**The third project followed a mixed path and it involved local stakeholders, institutions (municipalities) and similar stakeholder from bordering territories.** The project aimed at building a community to preserve and restore biodiversity in a specific territory but this is not possible if the same approach is not followed in the near areas. When it comes to this type of projects it is necessary to involve as many stakeholders as possible to ensure that the effects of someone's actions are not overrode by someone else's. However, the project cannot include a huge number of partners and its area of interest cannot be too wide, therefore action is limited to a specific territory. The LP immediately realized that is important to share the initiatives carried out locally aiming at replicating the same in neighboring territories and this is why they carried out many events that put together similar stakeholder from other areas. Furthermore, considering that biodiversity is influenced by many factors the LP invited local municipalities to different events to pass on the message that every institution can make its fair bit. This mechanism where actions are replicated in a wider area and local authorities work at the normative level to regulate negative factors works as a multiplier effect that can truly enhance the results achieved until now. At the local level, the LP carried out many online events whose main objective was to raise awareness within the general population and some specific target groups that regularly visit the area. Events were all moved online because of the COVID-19 and, although this initially looked like a downgrade, it allowed the project to reach more people than expected with better results.

## 7. Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets

### 7.1. Context and methodology

In the 2014-2020 programming period the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) overall aim is to create synergies and fostering coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. The Interreg Italy-Croatia CBC Programme 2021-2027 will be focussing on the blue economy, capitalising previous cooperation experiences and creating stronger synergies with EUSAIR. Actually, the synergy and complementarities among territories/Programmes have been strengthened through the implementation of ongoing inter-programme coordination among Interreg programmes. At the same time, EUSAIR Facility Point launched an online public consultation at the EUSAIR Annual Forum (May 2022) for better involving EUSAIR stakeholders and the interested general public in the Action Plan revision. Based on a series of consolidated inputs by all EUSAIR actors, the European Commission will use the consolidated proposal to draft the future Action Plan.

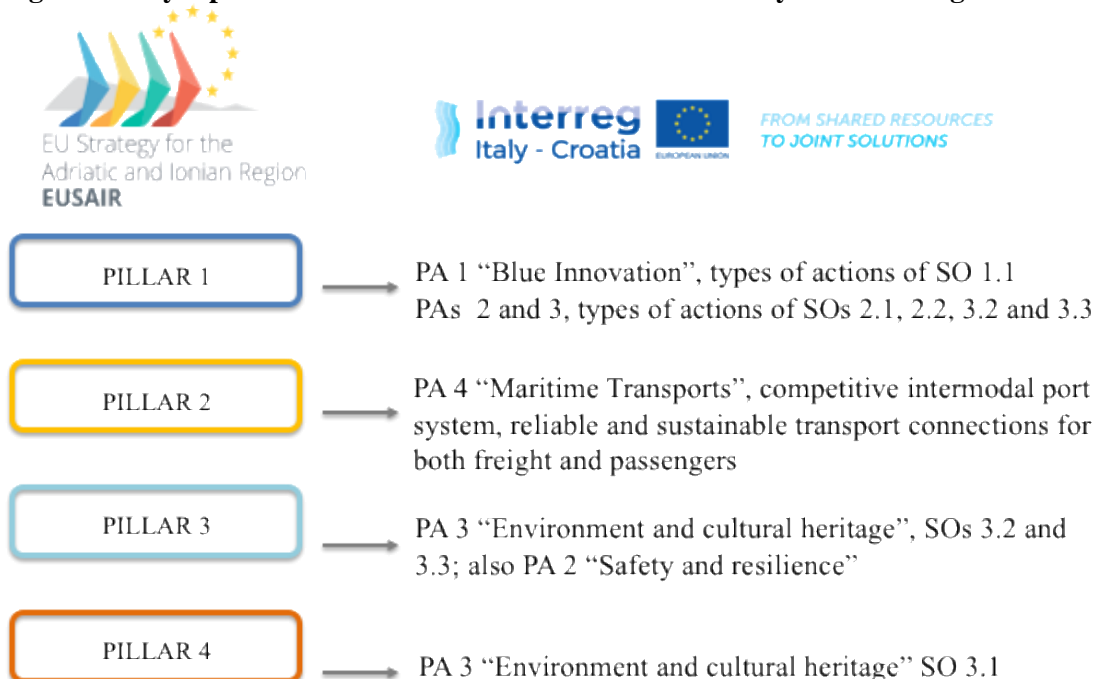
In this framework the evaluation questions related to **Italy-Croatia Programme contribution to both EUSAIR** macroregional strategy and to other macroregional strategy as well as the complementarity activated with other Programmes insisting on the same cooperation area seems to be a very interesting and strategic theme to be included in the analysis covered by the Impact evaluation both Draft (2022) and Final (2023).

The on-line survey has included also a section related to “Contribution to macro-regional strategies” to collect qualitative information and data useful for EQs’ answering. The feedback from the survey will be the main tool to answer to evaluation questions.

### 7.2. Contribution to EUSAIR macroregional strategy

In the Draft Impact Evaluation, the **synoptic framework of coherence** between the Italy-Croatia Programme and EUSAIR has been implemented per each Pillar with a specific analysis of the actions envisaged by the Programme for ensuring the coherence with EUSAIR as reported in the Figure below.

**Figure 30 - Synoptic framework of coherence between the Italy-Croatia Programme and EUSAIR**





The synoptic framework of coherence stemming from the Evaluator’s desk analysis shows the following elements already highlighted by the Programme itself:

- Pillar 1 “Blue Growth is directly addressed by Priority Axis n. 1 “Blue Innovation”. Actually, through the types of actions of SO 1.1 the Programme is contributing to the specific objectives of the Strategy’s first pillar by promoting research, innovation in blue economy sectors, by facilitating the brain circulation between research and business communities and increasing their networking and clustering capacity, by supporting innovation in fisheries and aquaculture or by promoting innovation in the maritime and marine related services. Also the Priority Axis n. 2 and n. 3 are contributing to the Pillar 1 “Blue Growth”, through the types of actions of SOs 2.1, 2.2, 3.2 and 3.3. by promoting data and knowledge sharing, by improving management and governance capacity and by increasing awareness and knowledge in maritime and marine sectors.
- Pillar 2 “Connecting the Region”, which is about connectivity within the Adriatic and Ionian Region and with the rest of Europe in terms of transport and energy networks is addressed by Priority Axis n. 4 “Maritime Transports”. The actions envisaged to be supported by the Programme, contribute to the development of a competitive intermodal port system, and to reliable and sustainable transport connections for both freight and passengers, which are targeted as strategic topics within the ADRIAN Region.
- Pillar 3 “Environmental Quality” which is about preservation of the marine, coastal and terrestrial ecosystems is mainly, but not exclusively, addressed by Priority Axis n. 3 “Environment and cultural heritage”. The protection and restoration of the biodiversity sought under SO 3.2 of the Programme, will have an important contribution to the objectives related to the marine and terrestrial biodiversity of the Strategy. Moreover, the actions of SO 3.3 directed towards the improvement of the quality of the sea water, will improve the status of the marine environment, the first pivotal topic of the third Pillar. Beside these, actions under Priority Axis n. 2 “Safety and resilience”, with their orientation towards supporting climate change adaptation or increasing the response capacity to environmental risks, can provide a significant contribution to the realization of several priority actions proposed and detailed in the EUSAIR Action Plan.
- Pillar 4 “Sustainable Tourism”, which is about developing sustainable and responsible tourism potential of the Adriatic-Ionian Region, through innovative and quality tourism products and services is supported by Priority Axis n. 3 “Environment and cultural heritage” SO 3.1 which fosters economic development by tourism or other activities based upon natural and cultural heritage.

### **7.3. Synergies with other INTERREG and mainstream Programmes**

In addition, in the framework of the 2014-2020 programming period, the integration of funds (and activities) is considered a priority action and Article 96.3 (D) of Regulation 1303/2013 requires the use of part of the allocation allocated to the ROPs to finance interregional actions and transnational with partners from other Member States.

In this context, the **synergies and complementarities implemented by Italy-Croatia CBC Programme projects with other Interreg and mainstream programmes** both at programme and project level is a challenging issue. Even in this case, the on-line survey will be the main primary source of information.

Actually, the forthcoming 2021-2027 programming period will be based on a strategic approach which shows a strong emphasis on synergies with other tools and policies development. Within this issue, the Focus discussion with JTS of October 2022 has been represented a valid evaluation tool to deal with a such interesting and ambitious theme. The main outcomes are reported in the box as follows.

**Focus discussion with MA, JTS and National Authorities – synergies and complementarities with other EU Programmes, main elements**

- In the 2014-2020 programming period the focus of synergies with other Interreg programmes is at project level (e.g. Call for Clusters).
- It has to be underlined that the forthcoming programming period is strongly oriented to implement synergies already from the programming phase.
- A networking among of Interreg Adriatic programmes' MA will allow to concretely activate synergies among them.
- Attempts to coordinate with other Programmes have already been tested in this programming period and they will be certainly strengthened in the forthcoming programming period considering the high awareness of the Programmes managers of the importance and strategic nature of the theme and the strong commitment from the European Commission.
- The INTERACT Programme played a strategic role on the synergies and connection among the various INTERREG Programmes.
- Within the INTERREG Annual Event of October 2022 three selected Italy-Croatia's projects will take part to the five on-site "Experience Rooms" showcasing some of Interreg's innovative projects in diverse fields.
- Coordination at Programme level but also on the tools to avoid overlapping between projects as much as possible (even of different Programmes such as Adrion and Italy-Croatia for example) which represented a critical issue in this programming period.
- The call for cluster of Italy-Croatia Programme is an example of good practice to be replicated in the future: when requests to partners are specific and well structured, the consequence is the success of the call; in the call for clusters, all the project proposals obtained funding as proof of the above mentioned.

**7.4. Focus on Synergies with other INTERREG Programmes: Italy-Croatia call for clusters**

As cooperation is the essence of the European Union, the regulatory provisions for the 2021-2027 programming period establish a **much stronger link between Interreg programmes and Macro Regional Strategies and Sea Basin Strategies**.

Coordination and **cooperation**, with projects from other Interreg programmes, **is central** for taking forward the outputs and results of IT-HR Programme current projects.

In this framework, during the 2021 the IT-HR Programme launched the call for clusters with general objective of maximizing the experiences and results achieved by Programme through the implementation of Standard+ and Standard Projects. Thanks to this Restricted Call for Proposals (IT-HR Clusters), the IT-HR Programme intends to fully exploit and consolidate the results achieved and increase the knowledge base on the following topics/clusters in preparation for the next programming period:

1. Connectivity from the sea: data driven solution in the sea economy.
2. Adaptation to climate changes: governance and capacity building.
3. Joint development of thematic cultural routes.
4. Marine monitoring as a tool in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP).
5. Improving quality, efficiency and environmental performance of Adriatic ports.

In particular, Applicants were requested to submit project proposals able to ensure the following goals for the outputs produced and the best practices tested during the implementation of Standard+ and Standard Projects:

- innovative schemes for the sustainability of results;
- transferability of results beyond the IT-HR Programme Area;
- **activation of coordination processes with other Interreg (e.g., ADRION Thematic Clusters) and EU initiatives (e.g., EUSAIR governance);**

- involvement in ongoing communication and dissemination activities of other Standard and Strategic IT-HR projects operating in the same thematic areas;
- development of project ideas in line with Interreg IT-HR Programme 2021-2027, identification of cross-border obstacles to be solved, **proposals to contribute to the implementation of EUSAIR flagships**;
- addressing as target groups "policy makers" relevant for the Programming Period 2021- 2027.

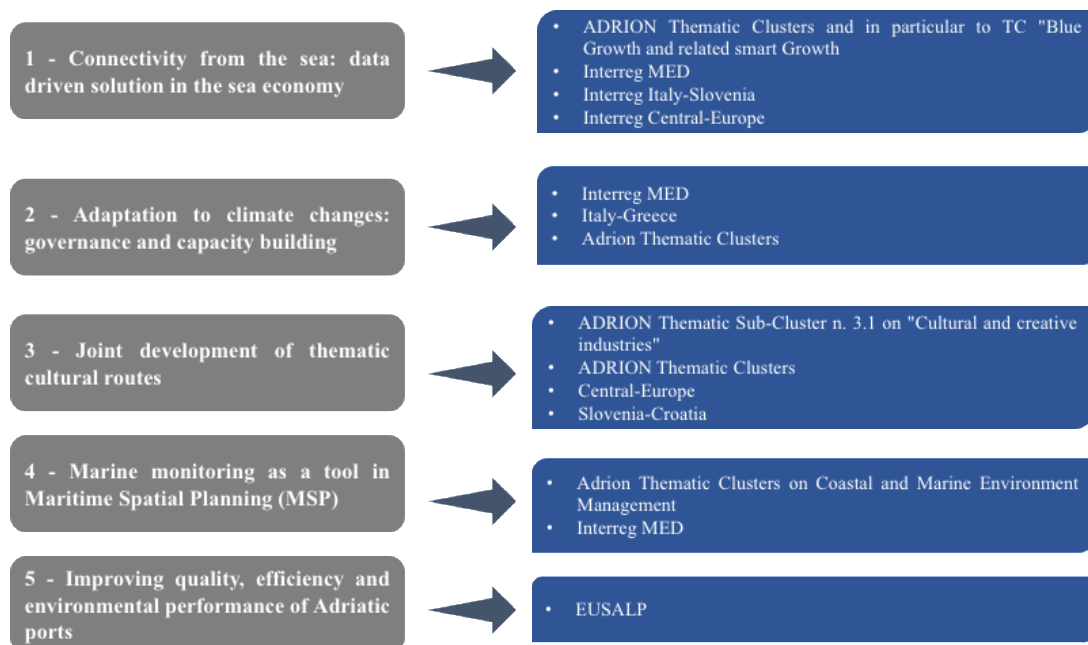
Precisely because of its nature the call for clusters has been selected as an "activator" of synergies between different Interreg projects and Programmes, as recommended by Managing Authority itself, in order to investigate the concrete synergy actions envisaged by funded projects.

It has to be highlighted that the Evaluator's exercise (2022) has been conducted on the projects' application forms as the progress reports were not yet available.

Implementing synergies among Interreg projects is a challenging building process. It has to be underlined that different circumstances can lead to different effects. Therefore, methodological support, but also the exchange of good practice and visibility are needed to help in the process.

This Evaluator's exercise wishes to contribute to that process, by presenting a **compilation of synergies** to be implemented by cluster projects.

The desk analysis shows the number of actions and steps towards synergies with other Interreg projects undertaken by clusters projects. First of all, it appeared of particular interest to build the **map of connections** between IT-HR Programme clusters and **other Interreg Programmes** as reported in the application form. The following figure summarizes the result of this Evaluator exercise.



Adriatic seems to be the other Interreg Programme with the highest synergy among projects. This is quite clear considering the connections between the two Programmes in terms of objectives and cooperation area including the common belonging to the Adriatic macro region.

In addition, Adriatic Thematic clusters have proved to be an important channel for promoting innovation and synergy for the solution of common problems.

Italy-Croatia projects will activate networks and synergies with Adriatic Thematic Clusters and this represents an added value for the common factor of the results gained by the projects in the broader Adriatic area beyond the cooperation area of own Programme.

Noteworthy are the **connections with Programmes that do not belong to the Adriatic area**, such as connections with **Interreg Central Europe**. This is the case of blue innovation with the **project CLASS 4.0** where the model of technology transfer in a transboundary environment is inspired by Interreg Central

Europe NUCLEI project (i.e. tech-foresight and tech-diagnosis delivered in a complex business environment).

In addition, the effort of some projects to highlight the **connections with other macro regional strategies** should be noted, such as the case of **project DIGISEA** with EUSALP; to give an example the plan of action foresees the “promotion of intermodality” with specific reference to “*optimising existing infrastructures between regional ports and terminals by new governance models and ICT tools*”.

Another element is the relation with **Interreg MED** highlighted by various projects with particular reference to **common capitalization for the maritime** sector by promoting sustainable growth in the Mediterranean area, fostering innovative concepts and practices and reasonable use of resources (e.g. projects **RESISTANCE, TECHERA, CREATE, HATCH**).

The following Table covers the Evaluator’s analysis with the specification of **coherence with EUSAIR pillars at project level, synergies with other Interreg Programmes and outputs with a distinct CBC added value.**

Priority Axis	Cluster	OS	Project	Coherence with EUSAIR	Synergies with other INTERREG Programmes	CBC added value main outputs
Safety and resilience	2 - Adaptation to climate changes: governance and capacity building	2.1 - Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area	Secure	Action Plan of EUSAIR: «the Adriatic and Ionian Region is vulnerable to disasters and to the impact of climate change and comprehensive actions to adapt to those circumstances are needed». It is also reported that «developing a regional strategy on adaptation to climate change, will make the Region more resilient to such changes» and the project will directly cope with these needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU projects that involved the Italian and Croatian partners always with the focus on the management of water resources in view of expected climate change are SALT (LIFE07), DRINKADRIA (IPA CBC 2007-2013), CC-WaterS (ERDF SEE); KATER-II (Interreg III B CADSES), REGIOCLIMA (Interreg IV C).</li> <li>Expected results from SeCure will contribute to policies, strategies and plans in the thematic domains of the European Green Deal (e.g., sustainable use of natural resources, economic growth, agricultural added values) addressed by other UE Programmes and Initiatives, specifically IPA CBC, PRIMA, Interreg EURO-MED, HORIZON-CL6-2022ZEROPOLLUTION-01-01.</li> </ul>	<p>A <b>guideline</b> for the management of saltwater intrusion and its effects on farmland productivity at the scale of the Northern Adriatic basin</p> <p>Participation in <b>public events</b> organized by EU institutions/EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups and/or other cluster events organized by other IT-HR projects</p> <p><b>Meeting and workshop</b> with farmers and other stakeholders located in the lowlying coastal areas facing the Northern and Southern Adriatic Sea</p> <p><b>Adaptation common strategies</b> to climate change induced salinization in lowlying natural and cropped coastal areas</p> <p><b>Study visits</b> on the lowlying farmlands and seawater mitigation measures</p> <p><b>Exchange of expertise</b> with other EU projects focused on management of lowlying coastlands</p>
Environment and cultural heritage	4 - Marine monitoring as a tool in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)	3.3 - Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches	Resistance	Project Resistance will contribute to EU Strategy for Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) pillars: Pillar1 Flagship2; Pillar 3 Flagship 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Resistance is coherent with Adriatic thematics clusters especially with Thematic Cluster on Coastal and Marine Environment Management which includes the necessary elements to handle the management of coastal and marine spaces in an integrated way</li> <li>Project is in synergy with the LIFE program 2021-2027, in particular sub-programme Nature and Biodiversity which is the priority of future programmes in aim to preserve coastal</li> </ul>	<p><b>Integrated methodologies and tools</b> for marine monitoring relevant for Maritime Spatial Planning</p> <p><b>Flagship Paper</b> based on the experiences gained in previous projects and in a expert analysis of current EU/national/local strategies</p> <p><b>Guidelines/best practices papers</b> on Maritime Spatial Planning principles to support sustainable development of marine and coastal resources in</p>

Priority Axis	Cluster	OS	Project	Coherence with EUSAIR	Synergies with other INTERREG Programmes	CBC added value main outputs
					<p>and marine pollution related to fisheries, inland and maritime activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project is in accordance with the main objective of the Interreg MED Programme regarding promoting sustainable growth in the Mediterranean area by fostering innovative concepts and practices and reasonable use of resources and by supporting social integration through an integrated and territorially based cooperation approach.</li> </ul>	<p>the Adriatic Sea, strengthen cross-border cooperation, and improve sea governance.</p> <p><b>Joint actions with other Programmes/EU (e.g. Initiatives EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups/conferences and those organized by other projects financed by Italy Croatia Programme or other ETC Programmes of the Adriatic area).</b></p>
Blue innovation	1 - Connectivity from the sea: data driven solution in the sea economy	1.1 - Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area	TECHERA	TECHERA will tackle the following specific challenges: "Development of skilled human capital on Blue Technologies" and "Creation of new jobs in the field of Blue Growth" - via Thematic seminars for students and the definitions of guidelines to promote blue careers and "Cooperation between research and public and private sectors, as well as users, to develop innovative products and services and technology transfer" through i) the definition of project ideas for the next programming period; ii) the implementation of activities to favor new intersectoral clusters based on data sharing and information circulation and the smart specialization of SMEs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong synergies with the ADRION Thematic Clusters and in particular to TC "Blue Growth and related smart Growth"</li> <li>all deliverables carried out also considering projects included in the ADRION TC Blue Growth, BlueMed programme (e.g., LABMAF), Interreg Med (e.g., SHAREMED), Interreg IT-SLO (e.g., TRECORALA), EASME/EMFF (e.g., MANTIS, RECFISH, DEEPBLUE) and related partnerships.</li> </ul> <p>TECHERA contributes to pave the way for the implementation of the sectoral initiatives such as those in the EMFAF, both at central and national/regional level, and those in the Digital Europe Programme, as well as to the ERDF regional operational in measures oriented to a smarter and greener Europe.</p>	<p><b>Information exchange</b> among research institutions and technological trends analysis for future joint activities</p> <p><b>Joint training initiatives</b></p>
Maritime transport	5 - Improving quality, efficiency and environmental performance of Adriatic ports	4.1 - Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting	DIGSEA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DIGSEA is fully consistent with EUSAIR, Pillar 2—"Connecting the Region"</li> <li>DIGSEA is wholly consistent with the EUSAIR flagship "Adriatic-Ionian</li> </ul>	<p>Coherence with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interreg IT-HR 2021-2027 specific objective no. 3.2 "National, Regional, local and cross border mobility"</li> <li>EUSALP: the plan of action foresees the "promotion of intermodality" with specific reference to "optimising existing infrastructures between regional ports</li> </ul>	<p><b>Physical/virtual study visits</b> to showcase the project inventory and best practices identified and raise awareness on ICT applied to multimodal Study visits transport in other ports of the IT-HR Programme</p> <p><b>Cross-border inventory of projects' results, transnational inventory of Thematic studies</b></p>

Priority Axis	Cluster	OS	Project	Coherence with EUSAIR	Synergies with other INTERREG Programmes	CBC added value main outputs
		multimodality in the Programme area		green/smart port hubs concept"	and terminals by new governance models and ICT tools" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EUSDR, Pillar 1b: the plan of action foresees the objective of "developing further nodal planning for multimodality"</li> </ul>	projects' results, best practice analysis, training curriculum <b>Thematic seminar</b> with other initiatives/EU Programmes (D.3.3.2), jointly with the final conference
Environment and cultural heritage	3 - Joint development of thematic cultural routes	3.1 - Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development	BOOST5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BOOST5 contributes to EUSAIR Pillar 4 Sustainable tourism by engaging key local public stakeholders in diversification and higher sustainability oftourism products/services while tackling seasonality</li> <li>Project also contributes to cross cutting issue "Capacity Building" by enhancing capacities of private and public actors in fostering cultural assets to increase tourism growth.</li> </ul>	LP and PP2 are currently engaged in ADRION Thematic Sub-Cluster n. 3.1 on "Cultural and creative industries" developing some crucial activities: creation of stakeholders' network acting for diversification of tourism offer thus increasing attractiveness of involved territories; policy paper with recommendations on the impact of digital technologies on cultural heritage This will smooth exchange knowledge and cross-fertilization with BOOST5.	<b>Guidelines</b> for design and exploitation of alternative Natural and Cultural Routes in the IT-HR area promoting accessibility, and sustainability and delocalization of touristic flows toward less known attractiveness <b>Financial dialogue perspective (booklet)</b> for project ideas (at least 4 project ideas, 2 for IT and 2 for HR) for 2021-27 programming period, including abstract, possible PPs, expected results and outputs. This output will be achieved by the contribution of each partners <b>Cross-border Observatory (CBO)</b> upgrading to achieve a more coordinated management of tourism in the area and to monitor and leverage natural and cultural heritage as drivers for sustainable territorial development
Environment and cultural heritage	3 - Joint development of thematic cultural routes	3.1 - Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development	AdriPromTour	The project is completely harmonized with EUSAIR strategy, Pillar 4: To encourage the development and strengthen the cooperation between main public and private participants – through educations and study visits for touristic stakeholders, who are mainly private bodies; To encourage competitiveness and innovation in tourism between the small and medium entrepreneurship – through development of sustainable thematic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The particular attention will be given to get in touch with ADRION Thematic Clusters' stakeholders and to lay a foundations for further cooperation. Partners will also have to prepare cross-border and transnational inventory of project results, soeach of them will have to capitalize the knowledge of other projects.</li> <li>synergy with: FOST INNO (Fostering tourism innovation system in Adriatic-Ionian Region) – project funded by</li> </ul>	<b>Virtual reality platform</b> is a digital platform of natural and cultural heritage on the partnership area. <b>Study visits involving also external stakeholders</b> related to tourism, hospitality and promotion.

Priority Axis	Cluster	OS	Project	Coherence with EUSAIR	Synergies with other INTERREG Programmes	CBC added value main outputs
				cultural routes will be ensured thematic tourism, distribution of tourism flows and prevention of massive tourism.	Interreg Adriatic programme, whose general objective is to improve and ensure long term competitiveness of the Adriatic-Ionian area by enhancing innovation capacity in sustainable tourism; CULTURECOVERY (Preservation and Recovery of Intangible Cultural Heritage) – project funded by Interreg Central Europe programme, whose general objective is to develop new approaches for innovative valorization and promotion of intangible cultural heritage; Mala barka 2 (Small boat 2) – project funded by Interreg Slovenia-Croatia programme, is a project on tourism valorization based on sustainable tourism principles which aim to protect, promote and develop maritime heritage of the Northern Adriatic.	
Safety and resilience	2 - Adaptation to climate changes: governance and capacity building	2.1 - Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area	CREATE	CREATE focussing a cross-cutting issue which coincides with more than one Pillar of the EUSAIR strategy, will interact with the EUSAIR Strategy's governance system by means of frequent interactions with different Thematic Steering Groups, the EUSAIR Facility Point and with the annual EUSAIR Forum. CREATE will contribute to 3 pillars of the EUSAIR (Pillar 1), (Pillar 3) and (Pillar 4).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synergies with at least three ADRION thematic clusters (Blue and Smart Growth, Sustainability in Cultural and Natural Tourism Destinations and Coastal and Marine Environment. Relying on existing contacts within the cluster and on screening of databases, the project will furthermore interact with key partners and stakeholders from suitable projects financed under other INTERREG and Life programmes, focusing on climate adaptation knowledge which is relevant for the programme area, as for instance, the INTERREG MED and the Italy Greece CBC programme, aiming at integrating the knowledge produced within the cluster and the projects financed under the ITHR CBC project.</li> <li>Exchange of results will be also secured with GEF Med Programme, the biggest GEF initiative in the Mediterranean currently under implementation.</li> </ul>	<p>4 online/offline <b>events with external stakeholders</b></p> <p><b>Report from the workshops</b> on governance for climate action will provide insights into barriers and opportunities for more efficient climate governance in the two countries</p> <p><b>Study visits</b></p>



Priority Axis	Cluster	OS	Project	Coherence with EUSAIR	Synergies with other INTERREG Programmes	CBC added value main outputs
Blue innovation	1 - Connectivity from the sea: data driven solution in the sea economy	1.1 - Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area	CLASS4.0	The project is in line with the proposed Flagship on topic 1.1 is "Blue technologies": In particular will support the reinforcement of the cooperation between the SMEs and researchers, increase their capacity to network and to better governance of the Adriatic in the 2021-2027 period: considering the strategic importance of an effective and shared governance model of the Adriatic region, in line with EU policies, macro-regional strategies and national priorities, an updated situation of the ongoing negotiations has been shared. and creating ecosystem favouring innovation and technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project has also synergies with the ERDF Regional program of Veneto Region with the actions 1.1.4, 3.3.1, 3.3.1. and 4.2.1. CLASS4.0 will build on the experience of past IT-HR projects</li> <li>The model of technology transfer in a transboundary environment is also inspired by INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE NUCLEI project (tech-foresight and tech-diagnosis delivered in a complex business environment).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Manifesto of collaboration</b> of the innovation ecosystem in the Blue Economy Sector</p> <p><b>Developed tools</b> and workshop materials for technology transfer</p> <p><b>Live engagement activity</b> simulating a real innovation process - best practices dissemination</p>
Environment and cultural heritage	4 - Marine monitoring as a tool in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)	3.3 - Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches	HATCH	The HATCH project is consistent with the Pillar 3 of the EUSAIR, because it aims to make available tools for the collection of data from environmental monitoring and the support to the transnational environmental policies. The project will contribute to ensure a good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment. Finally, it will contribute to preserve the biodiversity and ecosystem services, maintaining a good chemical and microbiological quality in the sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The HATCH proposal could capitalise the outputs of these ERDF projects:</li> <li>HarmoNIA – ADRION: the action could access to marine data harmonised among countries bordering the Adriatic – Ionian Seas and use protocols for monitoring and for assessment of contaminants in the marine environment shared in the ADRION area (<a href="https://harmonia.adrioninterreg.eu/">https://harmonia.adrioninterreg.eu/</a>);</li> <li>ACT4LITTER – MED: the action could benefit from joint measures to preserve natural ecosystems from marine litter (<a href="https://act4litter.interreg-med.eu/">https://act4litter.interreg-med.eu/</a>);</li> <li>PHAROS4MPAs – MED: the consortium could share approach and outputs of this project such as common capitalization for the maritime sector (<a href="https://pharos4mpas.interreg-med.eu/">https://pharos4mpas.interreg-med.eu/</a>); EFF project marGnet</li> </ul>	<p><b>Multistakeholder events</b> to stimulate dialogues among experts, the general public and policymakers' stakeholders to increase the participatory process, to collect firsthand feedback</p> <p><b>Study visits</b> as forum for discussion, exchangers, learning about pollutants monitoring and related governance practices.</p> <p>Development of <b>joint actions with MSP/ADRION/EUSAIR</b> Joint actions with others Programme/EU initiatives</p>

The IT-HR Programme clusters will help to build the critical mass of the Programme in each relevant thematic sector. Projects will exchange on data, information and knowledge in order to improve output's quality and more importantly, identify common goals.

The implementation of projects' cluster has a **clear added value** for the IT-HR projects and Programme and in general:

- create synergies among projects and Programmes within Interreg community;
- help the development of thematic analysis and the identification of new areas and fields of intervention to be funded in the future programming period;
- ensure the dissemination and transferability of project results

In this framework the Evaluator's goal was to identify a **series of outputs capable of producing added value of cooperation and valuable synergies between projects**. From the desk analysis some **"Multipliers of synergies"** can be detected:

- Cross-border inventory of projects results.
- Thematic seminar with other initiatives/EU Programmes.
- Cross-border Observatory (CBO) upgrading to achieve a more coordinated management of themes concerned.
- Virtual reality platform.
- Study visits involving also external stakeholders.
- Multi stakeholder events.
- Joint actions with others Programme/EU initiatives.

The box below covers a **specific analysis of projects' outputs multipliers of synergies** with other Interreg Programme **per each cluster** of Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme.

**Blue innovation: 1 - Connectivity from the sea: data driven solution in the sea economy**

- **Information exchange** among research institutions and technological trends analysis for future joint activities
- **Joint training initiatives**
- **Manifesto of collaboration** of the innovation ecosystem in the Blue Economy Sector
- Developed **tools** and workshop materials for technology transfer
- Live engagement activity simulating a real innovation process - **best practices dissemination**

**Safety and resilience: 2 - Adaptation to climate changes: governance and capacity building**

- online/offline **events** with external stakeholders
- **Report** from the workshops on governance for climate action will provide insights into barriers and opportunities for more efficient climate governance in the two countries
- **Study visits**
- A **guideline** for the management of saltwater intrusion and its effects on farmland productivity at the scale of the Northern Adriatic basin
- **Participation in public events organized by EU institutions/EUSAIR** Thematic Steering Groups and/or other cluster events organized by other IT-HR projects

- **Meeting and workshop** with farmers and other stakeholders located in the lowlying coastal areas facing the Northern and Southern Adriatic Sea
- Adaptation **common strategies** to climate change induced salinization in lowlying natural and cropped coastal areas

### **Environment and cultural heritage: 3 - Joint development of thematic cultural routes**

- **Virtual reality platform** is a digital platform of natural and cultural heritage on the partnership area.
- **Study visits** involving also external stakeholders related to tourism, hospitality and promotion.
- **Guidelines** for design and exploitation of alternative Natural and Cultural Routes in the IT-HR area promoting accessibility, and
- sustainability and delocalization of touristic flows toward less known attractiveness
- **Financial dialogue perspective (booklet)** for project ideas (at least 4 project ideas, 2 for IT and 2 for HR) for 2021-27 programming period, including abstract, possible PPs, expected results and outputs. This output will be achieved by the contribution of each partners
- **Cross-border Observatory (CBO)** upgrading to achieve a more coordinated management of tourism in the area and to monitor and leverage natural and cultural heritage as drivers for sustainable territorial development

### **Environment and cultural heritage4 - Marine monitoring as a tool in Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)**

- **Multi-stakeholder events** to stimulate dialogues among experts, the general public and policymakers' stakeholders to increase the participatory process, to collect firsthand feedback
- **Study visits** as forum for discussion, exchangers, learning about pollutants monitoring and related governance practices.
- **Development of joint actions** with MSP/ADRION/EUSAIR Joint actions with others Programme/EU initiatives
- Integrated methodologies and tools for marine monitoring relevant for Maritime Spatial Planning
- **Flagship Paper** based on the experiences gained in previous projects and in a expert analysis of current EU/national/local strategies
- **Guidelines/best practices** papers on Maritime Spatial Planning principles to support sustainable development of marine and coastal resources in the Adriatic Sea, strengthen cross-border cooperation, and improve sea governance.
- **Joint actions** with other Programmes/EU (e.g. Initiatives EUSAIR Thematic Steering Groups/conferences and those organized by other projects financed by Italy Croatia Programme or other ETC Programmes of the Adriatic area).

### **Maritime transport 5 - Improving quality, efficiency and environmental performance of Adriatic ports**

- **Physical/virtual study** visits to showcase the project inventory and best practices identified and raise awareness on ICT applied to multimodal Study visits transport in other ports of the IT-HR Programme
- **Cross-border inventory of projects' results**, transnational inventory of Thematic studies projects' results, best practice analysis, training curriculum
- **Thematic seminar** with other initiatives/EU Programmes (D.3.3.2), jointly with the final conference

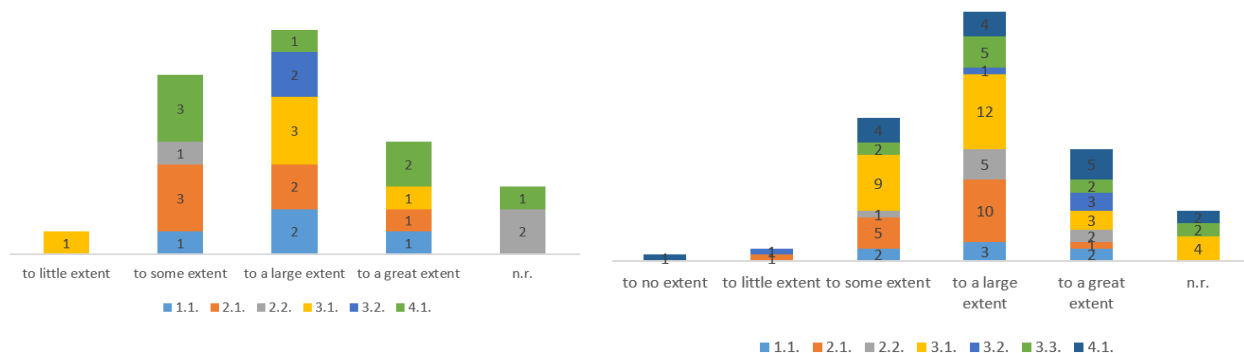
## 7.5. Beneficiaries' viewpoint

In order to determine the actual contribution of funded projects to EUSAIR and other strategies and European, national and territorial level, the evaluation processes could foresee specific tools and approaches for gathering relevant qualitative or quantitative information. For this reason, a specific section of the questionnaire of the beneficiaries has been focussed to these issues. The main results for each question are reported below

*To what extent has your project contributed to EUSAIR macroregional strategy?*

A first element envisaged by the evaluation survey is the contribution of the projects to EUSAIR which represents the specific macro-regional reference strategy of the cooperation area. Considering EUSAIR main goal of creating synergies and fostering coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region, the coherence and connection between Italy-Croatia projects and the macro-regional strategy is of outermost importance. The following charts show the survey's main outcome per LPs and PPs.

**Graph 7 - Lead Partner (left) and Project Partner (right)**



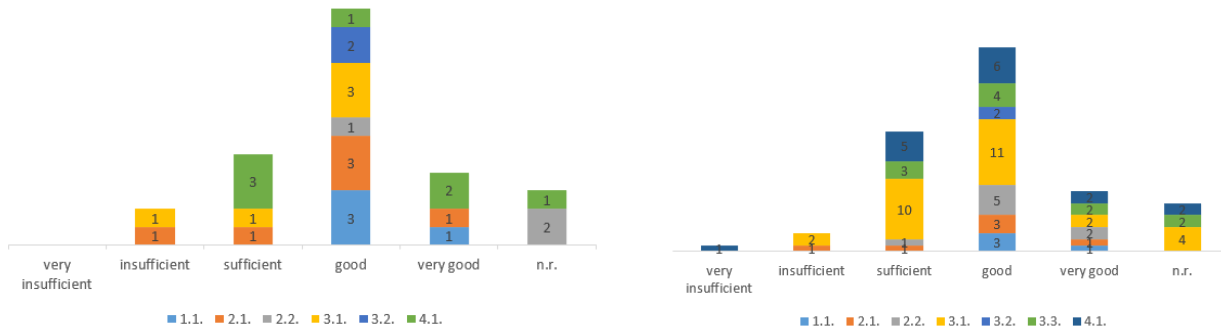
The results of the survey highlight that the majority of respondents (72 out of 120 replies to this question) consider that the **projects' contribution has been effective** (large or great extent).

In the context of the analysis focused on EUSAIR, a further interesting element was investigated, namely the opinion of the projects on their **concrete contribution provided in terms of solutions**.

*The solutions adopted by your project in order to support the implementation of the EUSAIR have been effective?*

The following charts show the survey’s main outcome per LPs and PPs.

**Graph 8 - Lead Partner (left) and Project Partner (right)**



The results of the survey highlight that the majority of respondents (61 out of 103 replies to this question) considered **"good"** and **"very good"** the effective contribution of their project in terms of **solutions adopted in order to support EUSAIR implementation.**

In the following boxes, **cases of interest** are reported for each individual SO stemming from open section of questionnaires.

S.O. 1.1	Project case
DigLogs project	Among its objectives, <b>PILLAR 2 “Connecting the Region” of EUSAIR strategy</b> aims at improving the connectivity within the Region and the rest of Europe in the transport sector through the development of maritime transport and internal connections to the hinterland which are the main topics of the DigLogs project. In a specific way, the strategy encourages actions leading to communication and information technology development in order to improve efficiency, reliability and safety/security of the cooperation among the actors of the sector, overlapping with the most relevant objectives of the DigLogs such as development of the IT tools integration process and support for data collection and analyses in order to establish smooth decision making process and to reduce the digital gap between different players of transport sector within the cooperative area to increase the usage of more efficient modes of transport linking for development of the cross-border cooperation of the area. DigLogs implemented the IT tools integration process and support for data collection and analyses in order to establish smooth decision-making process and to reduce the digital gap between different players of transport sector within the cooperative area to increase the usage of more efficient modes of transport linking for development of the cross-border cooperation of the area. An example of contribution to the <b>PILLAR 3: Environmental quality from the DigLogs project</b> : The route selection engine at the core of the 5.1.3. Deliveries Planning pilot achieved valuable outcomes towards multimodality approach, in favour of rail and SSS alternatives to the road transport, thus contributing to the reduction of EO2 emission and setting up the path towards changing attitudes and behaviours in favour of environmentally friendlier choices.
S.O. 2.1.	Project case

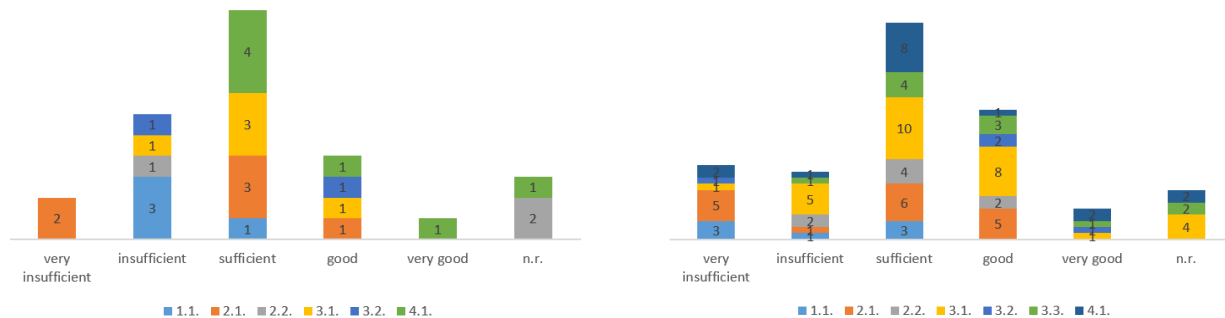
Coastenergy project	The project intended to contribute to the implementation of the <b>Blue Growth pillar of the EUSAIR</b> macro-regional strategy since Blue Energy is embedded in the Blue Growth concept, and it includes those Blue technologies that EUSAIR considers an untapped potential to exploit. Project intended to <b>reinforce networks among Blue Energy stakeholders</b> to foster better collaboration among them (both at cross-border and at local level) and boost macro-regional R&D, business initiatives and the innovation, internationalisation and clustering of Italian and Croatian SMEs working in the energy sector. Therefore, through local and international meetings, partners sought to involve as many SMEs as possible, especially those involved in Blue Energy technologies but also stakeholders such as local and regional authorities, given that, as decision makers and regulations, they are an important factor in implementation of Blue Energy technology in coastal areas. <b>Project outputs</b> such as web Portal are, among local and cross-border hubs, crucial in connecting different kind of stakeholders, either ones who wants to develop or invest in such technologies or ones such as local and regional authorities or development agencies who wants to develop Blue projects and transform the ports and seafronts of the Programme area into platforms for the sustainable exploitation of marine renewable energy but in visually unobtrusive way which is especially important for regions that economy is based on tourism. So, <b>the results of COASTENERGY</b> (8 Analysis of blue energy potential in selected pilot area, 8 Feasibility studies, online geodatabase and Portal) <b>are in line with the EUSAIR strategy and will contribute to the achievement of Pillar 1</b> ( <i>To promote research, innovation and business opportunities in blue economy sectors, by facilitating the brain circulation between research and business communities and increasing their networking and clustering capacity</i> ).
GECO 2	The <b>GECO2 project</b> objectives and activities fully comply with the <b>Pillar 3 (Environmental quality) of EUSAIR strategy</b> . Given that the main contents of GECO2 are the creation of a voluntary carbon market based on a participatory approach, on sustainability of production sectors and mitigation of climate change, the project, under the perspective of Europe 2020 Strategy concepts, has strongly addressed sustainable growth in terms of supporting efficient and sustainable use of natural resources in agriculture including preservation of biodiversity and agro-ecosystems. Moreover, these themes are crosscutting for the whole 4 pillars as GECO2 not only has fostered the support of low-carbon development and helped to limit the ecological footprint of economic process but it has directed attention to how environmental quality can ultimately enhance prospects for smart and inclusive growth under the three other pillars.
<b>S.O. 2.2.</b>	<b>Project case</b>
PMO-GATE	The project contributed to establish and develop <b>mutual relations</b> between inhabitants and institutions of Ferrara, Split and Kastela ; - create the conditions for the <b>economic development respecting the environment</b> ; - determine common interests of development, preparation, definition and harmonization of <b>a common development strategy</b> ; - ensure the conditions for an effective <b>exchange of experiences</b> and implementation of EU programmes.
<b>S.O. 3.1.</b>	<b>Project case</b>
S.LI.DES	The <b>S.LI.DES project</b> activities support both specific objectives of the <b>Pillar 4</b> : “Diversification of the macro-region’s tourism products and services along with tackling seasonality of inland, coastal and maritime tourism demand”; “Improving the quality and innovation of tourism offer and enhancing the sustainable and responsible tourism capacities of the tourism actors across the macro-region”.
<b>S.O. 3.2.</b>	<b>Project case</b>
CREW project	With <b>CREW</b> signed river contracts, project contributed to the goal of the <b>EU Biodiversity Strategy</b> to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restore them in so far as feasible.
<b>S.O. 3.3.</b>	<b>Project case</b>
HATCH	The <b>HATCH project</b> aimed to ensure good environmental and ecological status of the marine and coastal environment by 2020, in line with the relevant EU acquis and the ecosystem approach of the Barcelona Convention. It will also contribute to the goal of the EU biodiversity strategy of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them to the extent possible, by addressing threats to marine and terrestrial biodiversity. Lastly, the project will aim to improve waste management by reducing waste flows to the sea and to reduce nutrient flows and other pollutants to the rivers and the sea.
<b>S.O. 4.1.</b>	<b>Project case</b>

E-CHAIN	The main objective of the project is to enhance connectivity and harmonization of data for the Adriatic Intermodal Network, and this is definitely coherent with the EUSAIR scope to "builds bridges between people, cultures, and economies to foster stability, peace and unity in Europe". The project has greatly contributed to the EUSAIR macroregional strategy since the project was implemented on the Adriatic Area. The pillars of the strategy are Sustainable Tourism, Environmental quality, Connecting the Region and Blue Growth, which were basically also the goals of the E-CHAIN project.
INTESA	INTESA project is labelled as EUSAIR relevant for PILLAR 2 "CONNECTING THE REGION" and it was included in the "North Adriatic Sea Port Association - Joint Declaration on the promotion of trilateral cooperation between Italy, Croatia and Slovenia", signed by the three Ministers of Foreign Affairs and cooperation of Italy, Slovenia and Croatia in Ljubljana in April 2021. The project has also been included in an additional joint declaration, signed by the 5 Adriatic ports of Ravenna, Venezia, Trieste, Koper and Rijeka, at the presence of Mrs Adina Vălean, European Commissioner for Transport in December 2021. The main objective is strengthening trilateral cooperation between Italy, Croatia and Slovenia in the areas of environmental sustainability, digitalisation of logistics and transport procedures and connectivity, and promoting the creation of green and smart ports.

*Has your project contributed also to other macroregional strategies (EUSALP, EUSDR) involving the cooperation area?*

Another element of interest of the evaluation research which represented a specific section of the projects' application form, as for EUSAIR, is the coherence with other regional macro-strategies. It is clear that in this case the collection of information is more complex dealing with regional strategies than with only a partial or indirect impact on the cooperation area.

**Graph 9 - Lead Partner (left) and Project Partner (right)**



The survey results present a mixed overview: in fact, the 26% of respondents (31 out of 119 replies to this question) considered "good" and "very good" the effective contribution of their project to other macro-regional strategies; the other 26% of respondents, "very insufficient" and "insufficient"; while, the 39% of the respondents, "sufficient". Thus, the majority of respondents (77 out of 119 replies), believe that the project, even if just a little, has contributed to the development of other macroregional strategies.

Thus, it seems of particular interest to observe some **project cases** that have shared their experience on the topic in the open questions of the questionnaire. These results are reported in the following box.

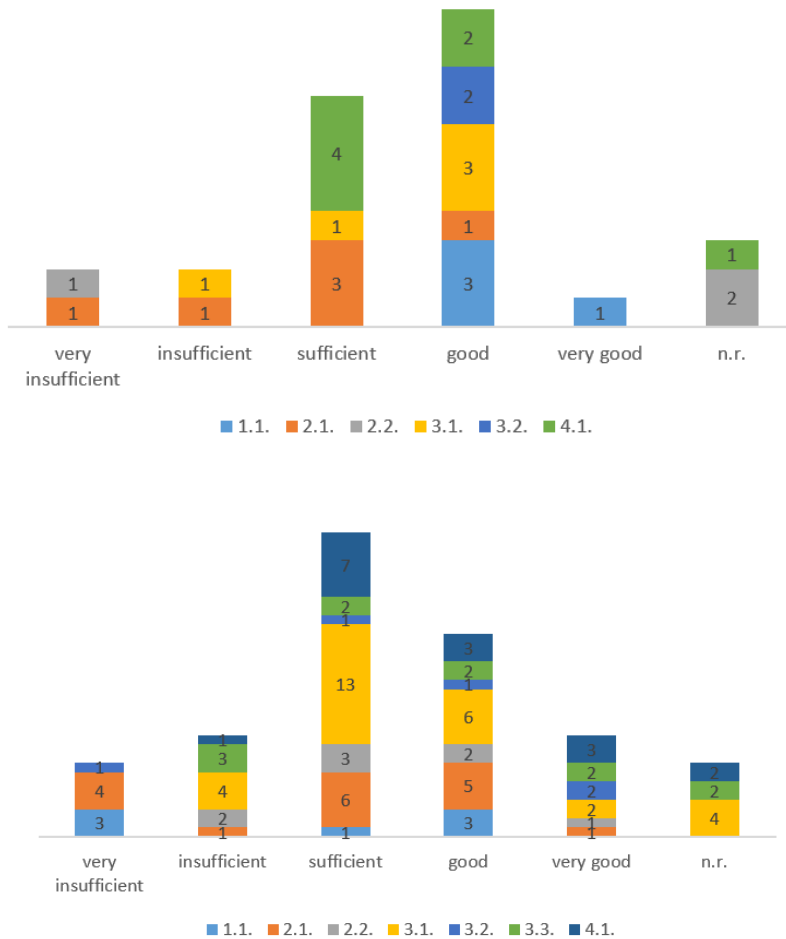
S.O. 1.1	Project case
Blue Kep project	<p><b>EUSALP macro-region strategy’s Action Plan</b> as the project aims at enabling clustering and cooperation among private companies and the education sector in order to promote innovation and competitiveness. In particular, the <b>project fully matches the Action Plan’s first thematic policy area’s (Economic growth and cooperation )</b> Action 3 which aims at improving the adequacy of labor market, education and training in strategic sectors in order to create an effective innovation ecosystem by securing the joint recognition of diplomas and professional skills and ensuring the access of skilled labor through the Region; Pillar C “Building prosperity in the Danube Region” of the EUSDR Strategy’s Action Plan. In particular, <b>BLUE KEP</b> is coherent with Pillar C’s second priority area “to support the competitiveness of enterprises, including clusters development”, where activities related to the development of joint programs for professional education together with enterprises and the reinforcement of cooperation between SMEs, educational and public sector are clarified. Also, the project is fully coherent with Pillar C’s third priority area “to invest in people and skills” which envisages activities aimed at strengthening networks of schools, at fostering cooperation between key stakeholders of labor market and educational sector, and at supporting the mobility of students, workers and researches through implementing the European Qualification Framework.</p>
S.O. 3.2.	Project case
CREW project	<p>CREW is coherent with <b>EUSALP</b> contributing to AG 6-7 and with EUSDR – PA6. It also contributes to the following relevant policies, plans and directives: - RBMP and WFD: fostering coordinated measures mitigating pressure on water and biodiversity - MSP and ICM: ensuring a holistic approach to coastal management through smart planning and cooperation between public and private stakeholders - MSFD: linking ecosystem components and anthropic pressures on the marine environment.</p>

*Has your project contributed also to relevant policies and plans (e.g. S3, RBMP, MSP, ICM, Urban and Regional Mobility plans)?*

The application form for project proposals submission also includes a specific section oriented to mapping the contribution of projects to relevant policies and plans.



**Graph 10 - Lead Partner (left) and Project Partner (right)**



The **picture** of the answers provided by the beneficiaries is **very varied**: 33 good, 41 sufficient, 10 very insufficient and 12 very good. For the majority of respondents, the contribution is sufficient but there is a discrete percentage of subjects who consider it very insufficient. This is maybe due to the fact that project objectives are indirectly in line with the objectives of other relevant policies and plans. Notwithstanding many projects of S.O. 1.1. have been highlighted the contribution to local and national strategy S3 as key drivers for example of:

- sustainable economic development,
- creating synergies between education-vocational system and companies,
- improve competences useful for the competitiveness of sustainable manufacturing sector comprising shipbuilding.
- encourage the mobility of knowledge to support innovation, technological transfer, and competitiveness in the shipbuilding sector

Some projects of S.O 2.1., 3.2. and 3.3. have also underlined their contribution to Common Fisheries policy (CFP), MSFD, MSP, ICM and IC. The box below covers some examples

presented by the projects in the open questions with reference to their contribution to relevant policies and plans.

- ensuring a holistic approach to coastal management through smart planning and cooperation between public and private stakeholders (MSP and ICM)
- MSFD: linking ecosystem components and anthropic pressures on the marine environment - Habitat and Birds Directives: involving Natura 2000 sites and stakeholders (MSFD);
- EU 2020 strategy: implementing a new territorial development tool based on stakeholders participation - EU biodiversity strategy: developing protection measures mitigating pressures on biodiversity and improving the resilience of wetlands
- EU agriculture policies (CAP): linking biodiversity, water management, climate change and agriculture
- EU fisheries policy (CFP): ensuring that fishing and aquaculture are environmentally sustainable;
- ICM: preserving the marine and coastal water ecosystems at transnational level, enhancing the effectiveness of the depuration of urban waste water thanks to the transfer of innovative technical solutions and best practice;
- MSP: due to innovative technologies and best practices between Italy and Croatia and improving the treatment effectiveness to reduce the potential environmental impacts on the marine and coastal water at transnational level.

### **Lead partners semi-structured interviews main outcomes**

The semi-structured interviews with the lead partners represented an **additional and key opportunity** to deepen the topic of CBC and networking and the following main elements came from:

- Implementation of **tools and methodologies in line with EUSAIR** obviously on a different scale;
- **Formal interactions with other INTERREG Programmes** such as Adrion and Italy-Slovenia for example participation in thematic events;
- **Participation in other European networks** (eg FARNET) as projects/case studies;
- **links with other European Funds on a local scale** (for example EMFF) through joint activities, transfer of information;
- back-to-back events, data exchange and **formal connections among Interreg Italy-Croatia projects.**
- **sustainable networks** that are born within Italy-Croatia and continue by exporting partnership and experience in other Interreg programs (e.g. Interreg MED).

## 7.6. Focus on target group

It is increasingly apparent that for projects aiming to develop long-term sustainable management solutions **target group participation is required at the design, implementation and evaluation phases**. To give an example that is the case of strategic and cluster projects of Italy-Croatia Programme. Actually, target groups' involvement is a key aspect of that projects' type; at the pilot level, their involvement is critical both to ensure that the pilots are delivered as planned and that the results have sufficient influence on the future management of the topics concerned.

Before presenting the elements emerged from the IE's elaboration, it is important to highlight a **few crucial aspects that can be useful for the MA for the next programming period to facilitate monitoring activities**.

The **database** provided regarding target groups cover **many differences between the definitions of target groups**. This has a direct consequence on the use of the data. To better illustrate the problem the table below shows the list of target groups as defined in the database. It is possible to see that there are **many repetitions and that many categories overlap**. The MA should provide beneficiaries with clear instructions on how to report their progress regarding all matters. For what concerns target groups, a first step could be providing a fixed set of categories.

**Table 6 – Definition of the target groups involved**

Target group involved	
Associations	NGOs, associations, innovation agencies, business incubators, cluster management bodies and networks
Associations, innovation and environmental agencies	Protected areas/ natural heritage management bodies
Associations, regional innovation agencies	Public service providers
Centers of R excellence	Regional and local development agencies
Cultural and natural heritage management bodies	Regional and local development agencies, chambers of commerce and other business support organisations
Education and training centers	Regional and local development agencies, enterprises (in particular SMEs within the cultural and creative industry as well as the environmental and tourism sector)
Education and training organisations as well as social partners and labor market institutions	Regional and local development agencies, environmental agencies and regional associations
Education and training organisations as well as universities and research institutes	Regional and local development agencies, environmental agencies, regional associations
Education and training organizations as well as universities and research institutes	Regional development agencies
Emergency services and coast guard centres	Regional innovation agencies
Enterprises, transport operators including operators of multimodal logistics hubs, infrastructure providers	SMEs
General public	SMEs and business supporting organizations
Local, regional and national public authorities	Transport associations
Local, regional and national public authorities and related entities	Universities and research institutes
NGOs	Universities, technology transfer institutions, research institutions

Source of information: IE elaborations on monitoring data

To better present the results, the IE tried to **group the categories that overlapped**. The rationale that was used is presented in the table below. This allowed the IE to analyze the monitoring data more coherently. This first step was also useful because it created the conditions to provide interesting insights on each target group.

**Table 7 – Re-classification by the IE**

Re-classification by the IE	Categories found in the monitoring database
Associations, innovation and environmental agencies	Associations
	Associations, innovation and environmental agencies
	Associations, regional innovation agencies
	NGOs
	NGOs, associations, innovation agencies, business incubators, cluster management bodies and networks
	Transport associations
Education (training and research centers, universities)	Centers of R excellence
	Education and training centers
	Education and training organizations as well as social partners and labor market institutions
	Education and training organizations as well as universities and research institutes
	Education and training organizations as well as universities and research institutes
	Universities and research institutes
	Universities, technology transfer institutions, research institutions
SMEs	Enterprises, transport operators including operators of multimodal logistics hubs, infrastructure providers
	Regional and local development agencies, enterprises (in particular SMEs within the cultural and creative industry as well as the environmental and tourism sector)
	SMEs
	SMEs and business supporting organizations
Regional and local development agencies	Local, regional and national public authorities
	Local, regional and national public authorities and related entities
	Regional and local development agencies
	Regional and local development agencies, chambers of commerce and other business support organizations
	Regional and local development agencies, environmental agencies and regional associations
	Regional and local development agencies, environmental agencies, regional associations
	Regional development agencies
	Regional innovation agencies
Public service providers	Cultural and natural heritage management bodies
	Emergency services and coast guard centers
	Protected areas/ natural heritage management bodies
	Public service providers

Source of information: IE elaborations on monitoring data

The **table below** shows, for each target group, the **expected target value and the amount reached**. The last column illustrates the difference between these two values. It is important to note that of all the target value (41.519.469 units) 99,94% is composed by **general public**. This is why in the table the IE decided to calculate the % of the other groups on the subtotal (23.878 - 0,6% of the total target value) and not the total. Going for the latter option would have not provided insightful results. Given the importance of the general public, the analysis highlights that the most significant actors, in terms of expected involvement, are: SMEs (60,4%), Regional and local development agencies (18,0%).

Overall, the total target value exceeded expectations by 60%. In absolute values, the most significant increase is given by the general public but in relative terms the subtotal (excluding the general public) is what exceeded expectations the most – target reached is 3,47 times the target value. This increase is given mainly by the great involvement of **SMEs**.

**Some of these results are way above the expected target value** and this can be seen as positive because each project was able to get a greater echo than what was originally planned. However, the other side of the coin is that the target value might have been underestimated and this needs to be corrected. This surely is something that needs to be considered for the next programming period. The MA should point out the problem to Lead Partners and make sure that there is a more accurate design of target indicators. It is also recommended that the MA provides all beneficiaries with **clear and shared instructions** on how to fill in the progress and final reports and with clear templates (e.g. progress and final reports) with specific sections useful for monitoring and evaluations tasks. In general, it is not easy to go through the reports and extrapolate coherent data that can be analyzed and compared.

**Table 8 – Target groups, expected and actual involvement**

Target Group	Target Value	%	Target reached	Δ
Associations, innovation and environmental agencies	2.535	10,6	2.999	464
Education (training and research centers, universities)	1.716	7,2	4.700	2.984
SMEs	14.411	60,4	87.270	72.859
Regional and local development agencies	4.308	18,0	10.367	6.059
Public service providers	908	3,8	1.537	629
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>23.878</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>106.873</b>	<b>82.995</b>
General public	41.495.591	99,9	66.482.242	24.986.651
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.519.469</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>66.589.115</b>	<b>25.069.646</b>

Source of information: IE elaborations on monitoring data

In the following table, the results are presented for **type of call**. What emerges is that cluster projects have not yet reached any target – or it has not been monitored yet in line with the level of physical and financial progress of such projects. All other types of call have achieved great results and exceeded expectations. The delta between target value and target reached is always positive:

- Standard projects have cumulatively reached 35% more than what expected,
- Standard+ 94% more,
- Strategic 431% more.

**Table 9 – Target value and target reached for type of call**

Call	Target value	Target reached	Δ
Standard	30.111.380	40.788.268	10.676.888
Standard+	8.383.642	16.265.750	7.882.108
Strategic	1.797.179	9.535.097	7.737.918
Cluster	1.227.268		-1.227.268
<b>Total</b>	<b>41.519.469</b>	<b>66.589.115</b>	<b>25.069.646</b>

Source of information: IE elaborations on monitoring data

In addition to the quantity-based analysis, the data also covers some information about the **target group involvement description** (quality-based analysis). Some interesting issues can be underlined as follows divided per subgroup.

**Local, regional and national public authorities** were mainly involved in:

- key dissemination and networking events like the testing site visit and the Cross-border Forum.
- Training sessions, training events, conferences.
- Project dissemination-oriented documents were the key tools that were used during the events; the documents produced during the project in the declination of outputs and deliverables were also made publicly available for consultation.
- Newsletter, technical presentation of activities, stakeholders' events have been organized in order to involve national, regional and local authorities, both Italian and Croatian. Project results were communicated also at EU level.
- Co-scenario workshops.
- Meetings, field trip, info days and workshops.
- Work café, info days and capacity building activities.
- This target group has been mainly involved through the following initiatives: 1. Local events organised by partners, 2. Mid-terms scientific conference and 3. Networking initiatives.

The partial underachievement for this target group, underlined by different projects, is most likely due to the need to **shift many communication and dissemination activities to an online mode**. In fact, while it is evident also from projects' experience that online events allow in principle a broader participation, this format needs an active initiative from the subjects deciding to participate in an event, no matter how simple is to actually participate, which in turn requires the awareness that the event actually exists. The participation to In-presence events, by contrast, permits a first contact with potentially interested subjects, otherwise unreachable by the Project staff, simply due to casual contiguity.

The complex mechanism for the **target group assessment**, completely oriented to the verifiability of the numbers, leads certainly to an underestimate in the counting, cutting off all the contacts for which all the information needed for the assessment has not been, or could not be, registered, or was simply not shared by the events' organizers.

In this context, the Italy-Croatia's Programme reached the following **subgroups** such as environmental agencies, development agencies, chambers of commerce, innovation agencies, NGOs, business incubators, cluster management bodies and networks:

- regional development agencies in the project partners' areas have been mobilized as **multiplier target groups**. They have participated in the local testing site visits with the aim to explore the project themes and consult the produced documents; besides, some have also been invited to participate as speakers in the stakeholder corner of the Cross-border Forum in Ancona.
- agencies, department and associations have been reached through in the training events, conferences organized by lead and project partners, meetings, field trip, info days and workshops.

**General public** was mostly reached through:

- communication and promotional activities, as well as events, working meetings, manifestation, and workshops organized.
- via social media activity, public releases and all the offline (printed media) and online (web news portals) publications that resulted from promotional activities, including radio and TV reportages.

In addition, this target group category attended different working meetings and events organized by Italy-Croatia's Programme, such as the meetings/workshops of promotional centres and study tours within promotional campaign. Also, members of general public participated in workshops. General public were also reached by the several communication channels (i.e newsletter and social media).

**Enterprises, SMEs** target was reached by the means of:

- regular communication & dissemination activities
- training sessions
- project newsletter,
- partners' and final event, meetings, local workshops, co-scenario workshops

Within this target group, it is to be mentioned the sub-group transport's operator including operators of multimodal logistics hubs, infrastructure providers that were reached by the means of regular communication and dissemination activities – especially when already cooperating with partner organizations in the framework of port/airport facilities – and during the testing site visits organized by partners.

**Universities, research institutions, technology transfer institutions, Centers of Excellence** have been involved in:

- the training events, conferences, meetings, field trip, info days and workshops.
- external events and conferences.
- Recipients of project newsletter.
- work café, info days and capacity building activities.
- stakeholder meeting, final conference.
- Local events
- Mid-terms scientific conference

- Networking initiatives
- training events, conferences, meetings, field trip, info days and workshops.

In this context subgroup of **students, teachers, pupils** were involved in the activities of increasing awareness put in place by the project AdSwim; students of higher level of education attended events; teachers of the primary and secondary school and students of the same level of education.

## 8. Evaluation questions, answers and recommendations

Theme	EQs' answers	Source of information
<b>D - Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives</b>		
<i>Are there any stringent uncovered needs that could be tackled under this or future cross-border Programme?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, the projects are satisfied with their scope of action and there is no evidence for needs that have been left out.</li> <li>• The Programme managed to achieve all the expected results and it fell short only in a few cases: the ecolabel/green certification indicator and the maritime transport. The first was not fully achieved but the managing bodies know that it was a very ambitious indicator. Even though is out of topic, the managing bodies and the national authorities all agreed on the fact that the development of the maritime infrastructure is the axe that falls behind. This is because Interreg Programmes might not be the most suitable tool to work on this topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>
<i>Which are the main lessons learned relating the elaboration of Programme strategy during this programming period? What can be improved to better address development needs in the next future?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some of the projects have highlighted that they faced some impediments. Availability of data is a problem that science-based projects have to deal with regularly and including data providers in the partnership was vital.</li> <li>• Time availability can also represent an issue for those projects that aim at building communities. They have to work on social relations and this kind of intervention might need more time to reveal its results in the long term. This impediment is difficult to overcome and the program should think of practical solutions to allow LPs to provide long term support in these cases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> </ul>
<b>E - Cross-border cooperation added value and networking</b>		
<i>To what extent has the Programme contributed to improve partners' administrative competences/skills at Programme and project levels?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Italy-Croatia Programme 2014-2020 is a completely new Programme. This is an added value for direct contacts between Italian and Croatian bodies establishing new relationships via Italy-Croatia projects.</li> <li>• It has to be stressed the impact of COVID-19 pandemic that has been one of the biggest setbacks for cross-border cooperation.</li> <li>• Due to the COVID-19 pandemic face-to-face meetings, actions have been cancelled and this has had a high impact on the building of new partnerships/occasion for new projects.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>



Theme	EQs' answers	Source of information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• out of a total of 120 recorded responses, only 1 Lead Partner and 5 Partners consider there has been a little support from the Programme.</li> <li>• Respectively 15 and 74 respondents out of 120 consider that the level of support from the Programme has been high (large or great extent).</li> <li>• exchange of knowledge, cooperation between partners and training courses are the main actions/tools that have enriched partners with additional competences both at the Programme and project level.</li> <li>• bureaucracy, public administrations rules and procedures (e.g. public procurement timing) and the restrictions due to the pandemic are the main hinders (exogenous nature).</li> <li>• The positive support and the great work carried out by the Programme has been appreciated in terms of actions of support for the beneficiaries from projects' submission to management and expenses reporting.</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Do involved partners efficiently contribute to achieving Programme/project expected results?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard and Standard+ have foreseen generally a wide variety of relevant tools and activities to effectively address cross-border dimension.</li> <li>• The ability in promoting vertical partnerships through central and local bodies cooperation enhances the effectiveness of cross-border interventions and their sustainability.</li> <li>• There is a high presence of regional public authorities who have always been the key subject of partnerships considering the importance of involving the institutional level for the development of CBC joint actions.</li> <li>• Within the SOs 2.1 and 3.1 local public authority is very represented in the partnerships. This is very important with regard to adaptation and territorial development measures.</li> <li>• With reference to SO 1.1, 2.1, 3.2 and 4.1 the Croatian counties are at the top of the list in terms of weight of administrative units by number of partners organizations; regarding the SO 2.2, 3.1 and 3.3 the localization of partners between the two eligible countries is more balanced. Regarding the legal form type, the most represented groups is constituted by general public and local public. A significant concentration of SMEs is located in Croatia for SO 1.1; it is also interesting to notice a rather high presence of SMEs from both countries in SO 3.3 and of Italian SMEs in SO 4.1. Local PA concentration is also high in both Italy and Croatia for SOs 2.1 and 3.1. Moreover, for SO 3.2. it has to be noted the high presence of research bodies in Italy.</li> <li>• The high presence of private partners (SME) for the SOs 1.1, 3.3 and 4.1 shows the capacity of some major themes like blue economy, environmental-friendly technology and improving connectivity in transport services to be an attractor of private partners and to develop multi-actors 'partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis (data and document analysis - primary and secondary sources)</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>

Theme	EQs' answers	Source of information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning opportunities and generating critical mass seem to be the most popular types of CBC added value among standard and standard + projects closed.</li> <li>• for almost the majority of the respondents (106 out of a total of 120) the level of partners contribution for reaching project's results has been high (large or great extent). At the level of projects, it means that all lead and project partners demonstrated how their project complies with and contributed to achieving results and, thus, the project's overall success.</li> <li>• The concreteness of the projects was underlined, particularly on certain topics such as civil protection, biodiversity and climate change, and the authority of the technical partners. In general, it was also observed that the verification of the achievement of the CBC added value by the Programme as a whole could be maybe premature considering also that the strategic projects are still on-going. The achievement of the CBC added value are very much related to strategic projects' success (National Authorities).</li> </ul>	
<b>F - Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy</b>		
<p>Has the Programme raised awareness about its activities and achievements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The results emerged from primary data collection show that all different stakeholders are satisfied with the capacity of the program to disseminate information related to its activities and achievements. One point that has been brought up in the semi structured interviews is the time that the program took to externalize the communication services. This had a negative impact in the beginning of the program considering that communication activities were carried out internally without much support.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
<p>To what extent the communication strategy has contributed to improve the knowledge on EU funds and the CBC Programme objectives and opportunities in the cooperation area? Were communication tools effective in increasing awareness on Programme objectives and offered opportunities? Which tools were most successful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering the fact that this program was at its first experience, its existence is already a great result in terms of spreading knowledge regarding EU funds and CBC programs. Furthermore, all interviewees mentioned the fact that sharing results is a key element to making people understand what the program does, and it gives them a concrete example on how EU funds work and are implemented. This type of activity is necessary to shorten the space between EU initiatives and the general public.</li> <li>• According to LPs and PPs the most effective tools to increase knowledge regarding program objectives and opportunities are two: in person events and social media/websites. These two are complementary considering that the latter has the ability to reach a much wider public with less effort while the first can provide more insightful information and notions, but it is often limited to a smaller number of people.</li> <li>• Although the website is assessed as an effective tool, all stakeholders involved in the program are quite annoyed by the fact that its structure (website with mini websites for each project) clouded the projects. The consequence was that many projects decided to create their own website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>

Theme	EQs' answers	Source of information
	<p>which created confusion and information were scattered and not always easy to reach.</p>	
<p>Has the Programme contributed to increase the capacity of projects to communicate their own achievements?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• According to LPs and PPs, the support given by the program to increase the capacity of the projects to communicate their achievements has been successful. The communication strategy included 3 different types of support: communication kits, templates and training courses. The first two were quite a handful for everyone and they provided standard guidelines. The latter went more in the specifics and tackled particular topics, such as public speaking and communication tools.</li> <li>• However, during the interviews with the LPs, it emerged that the program did not only support them through these activities, but they felt that innovative tools and creative communication were key aspects to develop. This was spurred by the program which insisted quite a lot on this, and the LPs received the message.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
<p><b>G - Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets</b></p>		
<p>What change can be observed in relation to the objectives of the Programme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
<p>How are they distributed at a territorial level?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
<p>To what extent can observed changes be directly attributed to the Programme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
<p>Are there unintended impacts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change</li> </ul>
<p>What mechanisms delivered the impact?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change (logical framework)</li> </ul>

Theme	EQs' answers	Source of information
<p>What are key contextual features for these mechanisms?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theory of change (logical framework)</li> </ul>
<p>Does the impact vary by subgroup within the main target group?</p>	<p>Within the main target groups the Evaluation's exercise has been detected some subgroups that have been actively participated to the projects' activities/events as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local, regional and national public authorities</li> </ul> <p>Subgroups: environmental agencies, development agencies, chambers of commerce, innovation agencies, NGOs, business incubators, cluster management bodies and networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enterprises, SMEs</li> </ul> <p>Subgroups: transport's operator including operators of multimodal logistics hubs, infrastructure providers that were reached by the means of regular communication and dissemination activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities, research institutions, technology transfer institutions, Centers of Excellence</li> </ul> <p>Subgroups: students, teachers, pupils were involved in events.</p> <p>It is important to note that of all the target value (41.519.469 units) 99,94% is composed by general public. Given the importance of the general public, the analysis highlights that the most significant actors, in terms of expected involvement, are SMEs (60,4%).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> </ul>
<p>Did the Programme succeed in achieving the expected impacts on the different target groups?</p>	<p>The Italy-Croatia Programme has mainly involved the following target group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General public</li> <li>• Local, regional and national public authorities</li> <li>• Enterprises, SMEs</li> <li>• Universities, research institutions, technology transfer institutions, Centers of Excellence.</li> </ul> <p>The most common ways of target group involvement have been the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and dissemination activities</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Workshops, events at local, regional, national and international level</li> <li>• Newsletters, publication at project level</li> <li>• Training session.</li> </ul> <p>Overall, the total target value exceeded expectations by 60%. In absolute values, the most significant increase is given by the general public but in relative terms the subtotal (excluding the general public) is what exceeded expectations the most – target reached 3,47 times the target value. This increase is given mainly by the great involvement of SMEs that exceeded the target value by 5 times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> </ul>

Theme	EQs' answers	Source of information
<p>Will short-run effects of the intervention differ from those in the long run?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> </ul>
<p>To what extent has Italy-Croatia CBC Programme contributed to EUSAIR macroregional strategy?</p> <p>The solutions adopted by the Programme in order to support the implementation of the EUSAIR through the projects have been effective?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pillar 1 and Pillar 3 are the two EUSAIR themes with the highest level of % within the projects' contribution. This is quite clear considering the SOs concerned. It is of outermost importance the contribution of Italy-Croatia projects to key theme of the EUSAIR macroregional strategy such as sustainable tourism, environmental quality, connecting the regions and Blue Growth.</li> <li>• It has to be underlined that the forthcoming programming period is strongly oriented to implement synergies already from the programming phase.</li> <li>• A networking among of Interreg Adriatic programmes' MA will allow to concretely activate synergies among them.</li> <li>• The results of the survey highlight that the majority of respondents (73 out of 119 replies to this question) consider that the projects' contribution has been effective (large or great extent).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk analysis</li> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>
<p>Has the Italy-Croatia CBC Programme contributed also to other macroregional strategies (EUSALP, EUSDR) involving the cooperation area?</p> <p>Which kind of synergies with other Interreg and mainstream programmes involving the cooperation area have been activated?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attempts to coordinate with other Programmes have already been tested in this programming period and they will be certainly strengthened in the forthcoming programming period considering the high awareness of the Programmes managers of the importance and strategic nature of the theme and the strong commitment from the European Commission.</li> <li>• The INTERACT Programme played a strategic role on the synergies and connection among the various INTERREG Programmes.</li> <li>• Within the INTERREG Annual Event of October 2022 three selected Italy-Croatia's projects will take part to the five on-site "Experience Rooms" showcasing some of Interreg's innovative projects in diverse fields.</li> <li>• In the 2014-2020 programming period the focus of synergies with other Interreg programmes is at project level (e.g. Call for Clusters).</li> <li>• From the Evaluator' desk analysis on the call for clusters' application forms "multipliers of synergies" can be detected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cross-border inventory of projects results.</li> <li>○ Thematic seminar with other initiatives/EU Programmes.</li> <li>○ Cross-border Observatory (CBO) upgrading to achieve a more coordinated management of themes concerned.</li> <li>○ Virtual reality platform.</li> <li>○ Study visits involving also external stakeholders.</li> <li>○ Multi stakeholder events.</li> <li>○ Joint actions with others Programme/EU initiatives.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews</li> <li>• Structured interviews/survey</li> </ul>

Theme	EQs' answers	Source of information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regarding other macro-regional strategies, the results of the survey demonstrate how in most cases the projects provide an insufficient contribution to other regional macro strategies. Although this is not the result of an inefficiency of the projects but a natural consequence of the indirect connection with the other macro regional strategies.</li> <li>In addition, and in line with the evaluation results, the events/seminars involving stakeholders at various levels, and which produce connections between actors are able to create synergy and added value of CBC cooperation.</li> <li>In particular, the study visit tool is appreciated by Focus Group's participants (Operational Evaluation 2023) as activator of exchange of experience, sharing of knowledge and competencies, precious opportunity to gather ideas and capitalise projects' results.</li> </ul>	

Theme	Recommendations
<b>C - Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme implementation</b>	
<b>D - Relevance, consistency and complementarity of the Programme objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be aware of the limitations of the Programme and of the cooperation area and do not overestimate the potential results. Make results proportional to the scope of action of the Programme to avoid disillusionment (expected and real impact of SO 4.1).</li> <li>Create an environment that facilitates and promotes the exchange of information between beneficiaries and with institutions at all levels to make projects even more effective. Networks that go beyond the project partnership have a crucial role to disseminate results and exchange best practices.</li> <li>Some projects might need to provide long term support to their communities to keep their initiative running, the program should think of a solution for this. The possibility to allow follow ups or something similar should be considered to concretize positive effects.</li> <li>It is also recommended that the MA provides all beneficiaries with clear and shared instructions on how to fill in the progress and final reports and with clear templates (e.g. progress and final reports) with specific sections useful for monitoring and evaluations tasks.</li> </ul>
<b>E - Cross-border cooperation added value and networking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the Final Report grid, the CBC added value is included as a single question within the Partnership cooperation section. In the future would be better to dedicate a specific section to this element considering its strategic importance. Collecting data, even qualitative at project level, on this issue would facilitate the management, monitoring, and evaluation of the Programme.</li> <li>The participation of Southern Italian NUTS 3 could be improved.</li> <li>The participation of private partners could be improved (only 61 out of 288 are private bodies, coming mainly from Italy). Furthermore, private partners do not often participate in more than one project, this aspect could be further explored and stimulated in the next programming period.</li> <li>Private partners, academic/research partners and policymakers bring clear and diverse benefits to projects. Therefore, a balanced mix of partners is expected to be of added value to a project. Currently, many projects include different types of stakeholders benefit from their contributions. The number of public partnerships is</li> </ul>

Theme	Recommendations
	<p>still very high. The involvement of different type of partners is an added value especially for cross-border cooperation Programmes; this element can be improved for the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicators could be a suitable tool for improving cross-border dimension, with particular reference to indicators including cross-border issues that are particular significant for capturing and measuring the cross-border dimension (such as the ones including joint actions etc.).</li> <li>• The Partners' participation to the different phases of the stakeholders' involvement (e.g. Ecos project) can be identified as a good practice to be transferred.</li> <li>• Some tools such as exchange of best practices, study visit, IT platforms emerged as "CBC added value tools". It is recommended to value and capitalize the use of these tools within CBC projects.</li> <li>• It is recommended to strengthen the stakeholders' involvement at project level from the very beginning of the project implementation. This could be considered as an asset.</li> <li>• More than one project has been implemented CBC steering committee or management board (e.g. Bloutourism system, Zero Waste Blue). This is of outermost importance for CBC project and to manage the partnership in a valuable way.</li> <li>• The development of unforeseen sustainable networks that survive even beyond the conclusion of the project is a result of the experience and a precious added value of the CBC that should be valorised at the Programme level too. Spreading evaluation results among stakeholders at different levels could be a valid tool.</li> </ul>
<p><b>F - Effectiveness and efficiency of the communication strategy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved website for next programming period</li> <li>• Issuing the tender for the externalization of the communication services as soon as the program starts</li> <li>• Introducing more specialized training for beneficiaries (mainly related to social media)</li> <li>• Programming more frequent events (diverse in relation to target groups and contents) and promo materials directed to general public (i.e billboards)</li> <li>• Promoting higher levels of participation and coordination between LPs, PPs and other actors involved</li> <li>• Introducing and planning events where projects can present their initiatives and results to institutions at all levels</li> </ul>
<p><b>G - Thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving synergies and complementarities among Interreg and mainstream Programmes both at programme and project level is a challenging issue. Actually, the forthcoming 2021-2027 programming period will be based on a strategic approach which shows a strong emphasis on synergies with other tools and policies development.</li> <li>• Coordination at Programme level but also on the tools to avoid overlapping between projects as much as possible (even of different Programmes such as Adrion and Italy-Croatia for example) which represented a critical issue in this programming period.</li> <li>• The call for cluster of Italy-Croatia Programme is an example of good practice to be replicated in the future: when requests to partners are specific and well structured, the consequence is the success of the call; in the call for clusters, all the project proposals obtained funding as proof of the above mentioned.</li> </ul>