

Impact Evaluation for Strategic and Standard projects funded by the Interreg V-A CBC Programme Italy- Croatia 2014-2020

Final Report



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Executive summary

The ex-post evaluation assesses the programme's long-term impact, the effectiveness of funded projects (all except Standard+ projects), and its added value in fostering cross-border cooperation. These insights provide essential guidance for the ongoing 2021-2027 programming period and offer recommendations for the durability and scalability of future interventions.

The programme was structured around four priority axes. The first focused on fostering blue growth through innovation and economic development in the marine sector. The second aimed to enhance climate resilience and disaster risk preparedness by improving monitoring systems and planning adaptation measures. The third targeted environmental protection and the sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage, while the fourth sought to improve multimodal transport systems and environmental sustainability in maritime connectivity.

The impact evaluation applied a theory-based approach, assessing the programme's contribution to change while considering external influences such as political, economic, and environmental factors. The methodology combined desk research, surveys, case studies, and stakeholder interviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of project outcomes.

The programme achieved a **high financial absorption** rate of 99.95%, demonstrating effective financial management and strong implementation capacity. All priority axes exceeded their original financial targets, reflecting high demand and efficient use of funds. The evaluation highlights that despite challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, and administrative complexities, projects **successfully mobilised resources** and delivered **tangible cross-border benefits**.

In the field of blue innovation, projects focused on fostering innovation and technological advancement in the marine economy. Several initiatives promoted research collaboration, SME development, and **digitalisation in marine-related industries**. The InnovaMare project created a lasting asset in the form of a Digital Innovation Hub for marine technologies, supporting knowledge transfer and innovation partnerships.

Despite these advancements, the adoption of project results by businesses remained limited, with some innovations failing to reach full market maturity. Strengthening SME involvement and providing continued support to blue economy clusters could enhance the long-term impact of these efforts.

Climate adaptation and disaster risk prevention projects played a role in strengthening environmental resilience in the cross-border region. Initiatives such as AdriaClim and RESPONSE contributed to **improved climate monitoring and adaptation planning**, equipping local authorities with better data and decision-making tools to address sea-level rise and extreme weather events. **Emergency preparedness** also benefited from projects like FIRESPILL, which

established cross-border training centers and enhanced response capacity for oil spills, wildfires, and other hazards. Governance differences between Italy and Croatia occasionally slowed implementation, underscoring the need for stronger institutional coordination in future programming periods.

Sustainable **tourism initiatives**, including S.LI.DES and REMEMBER, introduced ICT tools to improve visitor management and accessibility, supporting seasonality reduction and the diversification of tourism offers. However, many tourism-focused projects lacked a strong cross-border dimension, as interventions often remained **locally-oriented** rather than promoting lasting cooperation across regions.

Efforts to **protect biodiversity and restore ecosystems** were also a component of the programme's impact. Projects such as CASCADE and SASPAS implemented wetland restoration measures and marine monitoring systems, reinforcing the cross-border management of shared environmental assets.

Environmental quality improvements in the **marine and coastal areas** were supported through **technological innovations and pollution control measures**. Projects WATERCARE and RESISTANCE developed water quality monitoring tools and organised microplastic collection campaigns, contributing to cleaner coastal waters. While these initiatives strengthened monitoring capacities, their **long-term effectiveness depends on sustained policy uptake** and enforcement at the national and regional levels. Ensuring that project results are integrated into long-term environmental policies will be crucial for maintaining the programme's impact.

The Programme contributed to improving the **quality, safety, and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport systems**, with a strong emphasis on **low-carbon and multimodal transport solutions**. Among its initiatives, projects like SUSPORT focused on enhancing the environmental performance and energy efficiency of ports, carrying out pilot actions that aligned closely with the broader macro-regional strategy. Meanwhile, MIMOSA and ICARUS worked to promote more sustainable connectivity by advancing multimodal transport options. **Ensuring the durability of these projects depends on fostering strong synergies with other funding sources and complementary investments**. A key challenge remains the effective implementation of policy tools developed under the SO, which requires aligning the interests of diverse and influential stakeholders - an often complex task.

The **programme demonstrated strong cross-border added value**, particularly in areas where cooperation was essential for tackling shared challenges. Climate and environmental monitoring efforts benefited from **harmonised data collection** and joint decision-making frameworks, while emergency preparedness improved through cross-border risk coordination. Innovation ecosystems in the blue economy were reinforced by **transnational research partnerships**, though the level of **private sector engagement** remained a **challenge**.

Differences in governance structures and regulatory frameworks between Italy and Croatia created administrative delays and asymmetries.

The evaluation identified several **key lessons for the future**. Many projects produced valuable strategic plans and action frameworks, but their **integration into policy** remained **uneven**. Involving policymakers earlier in the project lifecycle could improve the adoption of results and ensure long-term governance support. Enhancing the durability of project outcomes should be a priority, as some initiatives lacked clear durability mechanisms beyond the programme's funding cycle. Developing stronger financial sustainability plans and leveraging complementary funding sources can help maintain impact over time.

Strengthening partnerships remains a crucial factor in maximising programme effectiveness. The programme should consolidate these successful partnerships while actively engaging new stakeholders, including SMEs and the private sector, to diversify participation. Coordinating more closely with other Interreg programmes and with EUSAIR, would also help increase synergies and ensure that project results contribute to broader regional objectives.

Ensuring flexibility in implementation proved beneficial during the 2014-2020 period, particularly in adapting to challenges posed by the pandemic. While the **programme demonstrated resilience** in adjusting project timelines and budgets, administrative burdens remained a challenge for many beneficiaries. Further **simplification** of administrative procedures in 2021-2027, as well as increased guidance for project partners, helps to reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies and allow resources to be directed more effectively toward impact generation.

1 Contextual background

The Interreg Italy-Croatia programme 2014-2020 was a first-time programme created following Croatia's accession to the EU in 2013 to promote structured cooperation between the two Member States.

The geographical scope of the programme included a range of coastal regions on both sides of the Adriatic Sea. The map below illustrates the programme area.

Map 1 Interreg Italy-Croatia programme area



Source: programme website

Financially, the programme had a total budget of EUR 236.8 million, with EUR 201 million coming from the ERDF. This funding was directed towards achieving four main strategic objectives. The first priority axis aimed to promote blue growth, encouraging innovation and competitiveness within the maritime and marine-related economy (i.e. Blue innovation). The second priority focused on climate change adaptation and risk prevention, aiming to improve environmental management and address both natural and man-made disasters in the area (i.e. Safety and resilience). The third priority axis focused on environmental and cultural heritage, while the fourth aimed to improve maritime and coastal transport and accessibility, with a focus on enhancing connectivity between the Italian and Croatian territories.

Figure 1 Priority Axes of the Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 programme



As a first-time programme, Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 laid the foundation for continued cooperation in the Adriatic region. It created a robust basis upon which the successor 2021-2027 programme could build.

2 Introduction

The primary purpose of the ex-post impact evaluation is to ‘assess and analyse the outcomes, impacts, and effectiveness of the programme’. By broadening the scope of the evaluation, the exercise aims to provide a wider and more holistic understanding of the programme's impact, as well as the role and added value of cross-border cooperation in eligible regions.

The timing of this exercise provided the unique opportunity for a deeper understanding of the programme impact, as most projects have been analysed two years after their closure. The focus is therefore on the long-term impact. The previous evaluations of the 2014-2020 programme, i.e. the three operational and two impact evaluation reports delivered by the independent evaluators in 2021, 2022 and 2023 have been the starting point for the additional impact evaluation, allowing to enhance the answers to the evaluation questions, lessons learnt and conclusions and sharpen recommendations which will be useful for the current (2021-2027) programme implementation as well as post-2027 discussions.

The further purpose of this evaluation exercise is the improvement of transparency and accountability with programme stakeholders such as project beneficiaries, policymakers, funding bodies, and with the general public. An important point is represented by the learning opportunity among programme bodies, thanks not only to the evaluation findings but also to the continuous exchanges with the evaluation team.

3 Evaluation framework

As outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and the approved 2021-2027 evaluation plan of the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme, an additional impact evaluation for the programming period 2014-2020 was foreseen in order to expand the knowledge on the impact of selected projects two years after their closure, also increasing the information on projects and beneficiaries.

The regulatory basis for such exercise lies primarily in the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR) (EU Reg. 2021/1060) and Interreg Regulation (EU Reg. 2021/1059) which require programmes to carry out evaluations related to one or more of the following criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and Union added value, with the aim to improve the quality of the design and implementation of programmes (Article 44(1) of EU Reg. 2021/1060 and Article 35 of EU Reg. 2021/1059). For the purpose of this specific additional evaluation, which is included in the 2021-2027 evaluation plan but refers to the 2014-2020 programme, the previous CPR should also be taken into account (EU Reg. 1303/2013, Article 56) as well as the 2014-2020 programme evaluation plan.

4 Methodology

Among the 92 thematic projects funded by the Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 programme, the ex-post impact evaluation focuses on 50 standard projects funded at the end of 2018, and 11 strategic projects funded at the end of 2019, which closed their activity by June 2023. Moreover, it also considers nine cluster projects financed in 2021 which capitalise on the experience and results of Standard+ and Standard Projects.

In the framework of the Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 impact evaluation, both primary and secondary sources of data have been used and analysed by applying four different tools, i.e. desk analysis, web survey case studies and interviews.

4.1 THEORY-BASED APPROACH

The objective of impact evaluations is to assess the effects of programme implementation on regional socio-economic development and to analyse the mechanisms producing the impact, understood as the programme's contribution to change (theory of change). Theory-based impact evaluation builds on a more qualitative approach and on the question of why and how an intervention produced intended (and unintended) effects. For the ex-post impact evaluation of the 2014-2020 Italy-Croatia programme, a theory-based approach was applied, building on the existing intervention logic of the programme and its specific objectives, as defined in the Cooperation Programme (CP), considering the casual links between needs, inputs, outputs, expected

contribution to change, external factors and expected long-term results. The theory-based impact evaluation approach helps to better understand the reasons and mechanisms that led to an observed change and how the Interreg programme was involved in contributing to the change, as well as how change could be produced and any additional benefits of the programme that the funded projects brought to the territories.

4.2 INTEGRATION OF SOURCES



The triangulation of data stemming from all the applied methodological tools has allowed to evaluate the impact of the programme across the seven SOs.

Firstly, **Document analysis** was used for the collection of secondary data. The list of desk analysis sources is the following:

- Programme documents (such as Cooperation Programme and intervention logics per PA);
- Information related to applications, project implementation and monitoring of the progress (project application forms, project final reports, output and result indicator progress, financial progress data);
- Communication material (videos, brochures.);
- 2014-2020 impact evaluation reports (2022, 2023).

The project final reports were the main secondary source for the triangulation that led to the formulation of the evaluation judgements. Their excellent structure, combined with the generally satisfactory level of information provided by the projects, provided a good basis. To support the analysis, the evaluator proposed a categorisation of the outputs reported by the projects:

- Networks and capacities, including new networks, training and SMEs clusters;
- Data management tools, including monitoring systems and platforms;
- Sector specific solutions, including building renovation, accessibility infrastructures and transportation services;
- Policy, including plans and strategies.

This categorisation has been applied to the analysis of each SO and has been visualised in a series of figures.



The **Web survey** addressed Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 Lead Partners of all projects (excluding Standard+ projects) and collected information through questions with multiple answer possibility, response scales (e.g. Likert scales) and open answers.

The implementation of the web-survey followed this process:

- Questionnaire design: the structure of the questionnaire with individual questions consistent with the objective of the survey was developed;
- Uploading of survey questionnaire on the selected online platform (alchemer.com);

- Questionnaire pilot test sent to the programme, providing a detailed description of the questionnaire structure, content and functionalities;
- Questionnaire start and management: an e-mail containing the purpose of the survey, link and instructions (including a deadline) was sent out on 7 October 2024 and closed on 15 November 2024;
- Survey analysis.

Despite the reminders sent by the evaluation team and the programme JS, less than one third of respondents replied (29%). The table below presents the number of answers received for each SO.

Table 1 Answers received to the beneficiary web survey (per SO)

SO	N. of LP answers
SO 1.1	5
SO 2.1	4
SO 2.2	1
SO 3.1	4
SO 3.2	1
SO 3.3	0
SO 4.1	5
Total	20

Such distribution of answers does not allow to consider the survey as a fully reliable source of primary data to be triangulated for the purpose of the impact evaluation, in particular for three SOs (SO 2.2, SO 3.2, SO 3.3). However, the survey results were considered to highlight specific aspects.



Case studies represent a valid method to provide a view of complex issues related to programme impact. For the purpose of the impact evaluation of the Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 programme, the evaluation team conducted 12 case studies

selected with the programme based on the following criteria:

- 1) Specific Objective (one or two case studies per SO)
- 2) Type of project (balanced distribution between Standard, Strategic and Cluster projects)
- 3) Geographical distribution (balanced coverage of the programme area, balanced distribution of LP nationality)

The following projects were selected for the case studies:

- COASTENERGY (SO 1.1)
- InnovaMare (SO 1.1)
- AdriaClim (SO 2.1)
- FIRESPELL (SO 2.2)

- E-CITIJENS (SO 2.2)
- REMEMBER (SO 3.1)
- SL.I.DES (SO 3.1)
- CASCADE (SO 3.2)
- SASPAS (SO 3.2)
- HATCH (SO 3.3)
- RESISTANCE (SO 3.3)
- SUTRA (SO 4.1).



Interviews are one of the methods to be used to collect primary source data and served as a way of involving stakeholders in the analysis. The following table presents the conducted interviews.

Table 2 List of conducted interviews

Programme body	Who	Date
MA/JS	Flavia Zuccon (MA) Nicola Calenda (MA) Salvatore Lopreiato (MA) Silvia Comiati (JS) Angelo Mason (JS) Lada Vetrini (JS)	14 November 2024
MC members	Perica Gabrić (Ministry for Regional Development and EU Funds, Croatia)	26 November 2024
	Battistina Cugusi (Department for Cohesion Policy and the South, Italy)	12 December 2024
JS Antenna Office	Lovro Jurišić Hrvoje Grancarić Renata Marušić	18 February 2025

Lastly, a **counterfactual survey** was launched on 25 October 2024 addressing all Lead Applicants of the 2014-2020 programme which had been assessed positively but not financed



for lack of resources, i.e. whose proposal received an assessment score only slightly below the one received by the financed projects. This method was used so as to

create a control group as similar and homogeneous as possible to the treatment group (i.e. the lead partners of financed projects). Comparing the impacts for the not financed applicants' organisations and territories with those of the funded organisations was aimed to help to identify the specific impacts attributable to the funding from the Interreg programme, as opposed to other factors. Furthermore, the result of this analysis could have shown the possible added value of the Interreg funding on financed organisations in comparison to those who were not financed and revealed whether not financed applicants found alternative ways to achieve their goals or whether the absence of Interreg funding had a more significant negative impact. However, despite reminders and a long duration of the survey, **no complete survey answers were received.**

As a mitigation measure, ‘counterfactual case studies’ were proposed focusing on a limited number of non-financed projects to be compared to the case studies carried out on financed projects. Four non-financed projects were identified (one per Priority Axis), making sure that the Lead Applicant organisations were not involved in any other financed project under Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020. Only one out of the four contacted lead applicants replied and agreed to be interviewed in the framework of a project proposal under SO 2.1.

Methodological reflection on the counterfactual analysis

In view of future impact evaluations, the programme may consider requesting a counterfactual analysis earlier in the programme lifecycle so as to increase the likelihood of successfully involving non-financed project applicants in the evaluation process. Delaying this outreach until after the end of the programming period (in the case of this ex-post evaluation, up to seven years after proposals were submitted), significantly reduces the likelihood of obtaining responses. Organisations may no longer have the same staff involved, making it difficult to gather reliable insights on their perspective on why certain proposals were not funded and what alternative paths they pursued. Conducting the analysis earlier in the programme lifecycle (i.e. during the impact and not the ex-post evaluation) would ensure higher response rates, more accurate feedback, and a stronger evidence base for assessing impact.

5 Impact evaluation – data collection and analysis

5.1 ACHIEVEMENT OF FINANCIAL TARGETS

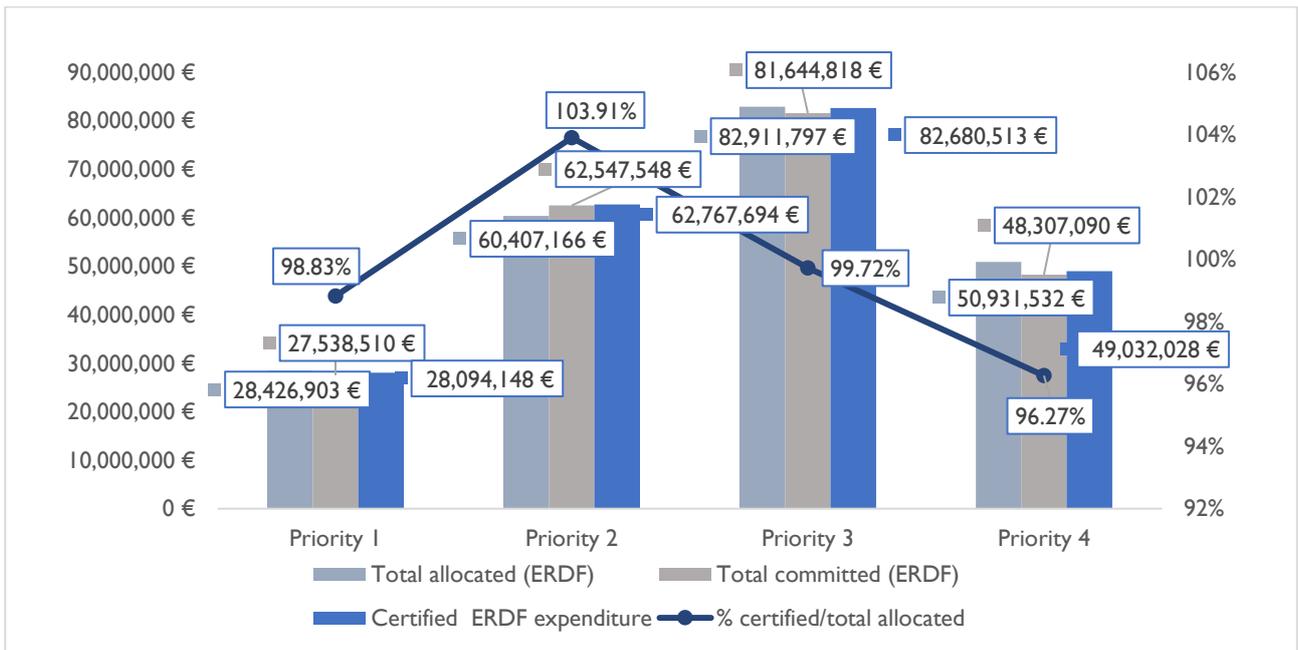
The programme reached significant achievements in financial performance, with an overall certification rate of 99.95% across all priority axes, reflecting strong fund absorption and effective project delivery. These results align with the steady progress made in particular from 2021, reflecting consistent improvements in financial absorption across the programme.

The financial data from 2024 shows a highly effective use of programme resources. Priority Axis 1 showed significant and steep improvement, with certified expenditure growing from EUR 7.5 million in 2021 to EUR 28.09 million in 2024, achieving a 99.83% certification rate (i.e. the certified amounts out of the total ERDF allocated budget for the Priority Axis). Priority 2 saw its expenditure surge, with certified amounts exceeding the committed budget, reaching EUR 62.76 million in 2024 and achieving a 103.91% certification rate. Priority 3, which had faced challenges earlier (as outlined in the 2020 and 2021 Annual Implementation Reports), gained momentum, with certified expenditure rising from EUR 45.5 million in 2021 to EUR 82.68 million in 2024, reflecting a 99.72% certification rate. Priority 4, despite slower progress in the earlier years, reached EUR 49.03 million in certified expenditure by 2024, achieving a 96.27% certification rate.

The steady increase in certified expenditure, from 46% in 2021 to 99.9% in 2024, highlights the programme's resilience and effective financial management. The improvements observed across all priority axes reflect a strong effort by the programme to ensure successful implementation and its adaptability to the challenges posed by external factors, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic. By 2024 and the end of the programme, the programme achieved near-total certification. These achievements can also be attributed to the measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which included increased flexibility to allow projects to stay on track and spend their resources (e.g. adjustments to project timelines, introduction of measures ensuring cashflow, budget shifts among budget lines and project partners, budget flexibility for additional expenses related to the projects but exceeding the initial budget as per subsidy contract).

The figure below shows allocated, committed and certified amounts (ERDF) per Priority Axis and certification rate.

Figure 2 Allocated, committed and certified amounts (ERDF) per Priority Axis and certification rate

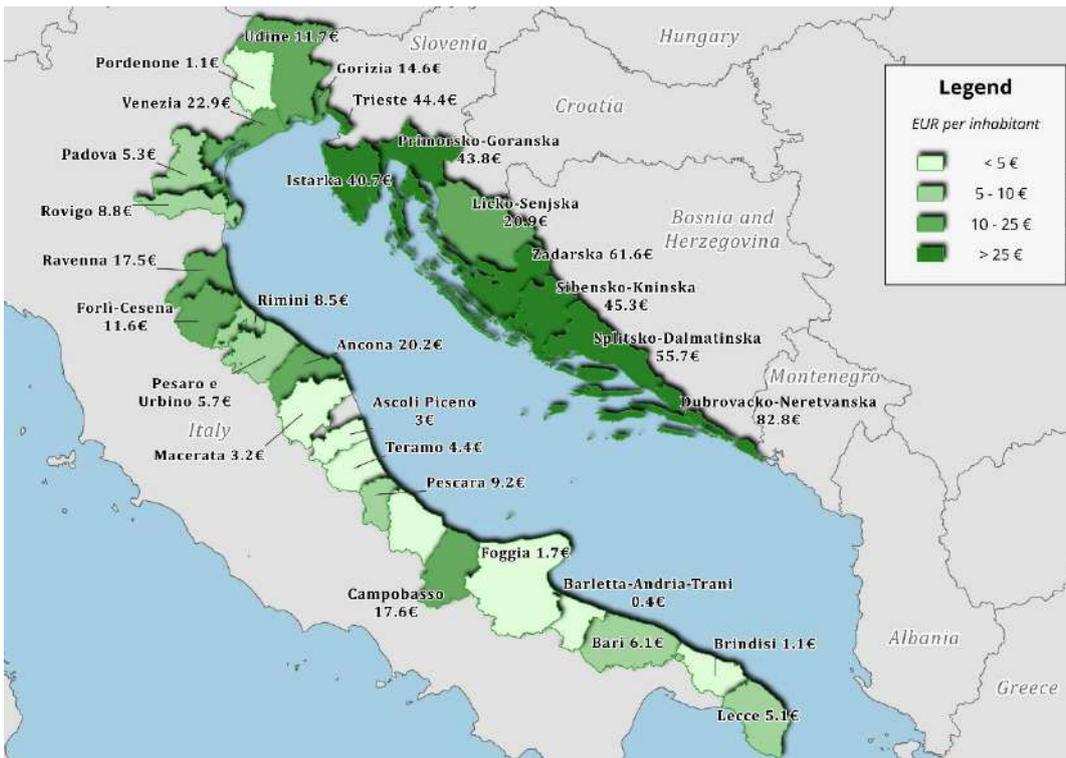


Source: data provided by the MA/JS

5.2 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING

The map below represents the distribution of allocated ERDF funding (EUR/inhabitant) in the Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 programme across the eligible NUTS 3 areas (i.e. Italian provinces and Croatian counties).

Map 2 Distribution of allocated ERDF funding (NUTS3) under Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020



Croatian counties received significantly higher per capita funding, with Dubrovnik-Neretva reaching EUR 82.8 euros per inhabitant, Zadar EUR 61.6, and Split-Dalmatia EUR 55.7. Other Croatian counties, such as Šibenik-Knin and Primorje-Gorski Kotar, also recorded values above EUR 40 per inhabitant.

Italian provinces with more significant participation were Trieste at EUR 44.4, Venice at EUR 22.9 and Ancona at EUR 20.2. These three cities stand out within the Italian context. A possible explanation is that their historical, economic, and cultural ties with the eastern Adriatic coast and Croatia may have contributed to their greater interest and involvement in the programme. The border city of Trieste, a port city with longstanding commercial and political connections across the Adriatic, Venice, with its historical ties and maritime tradition as well as the presence of the programme MA and JS headquarters, and Ancona, a strategic port connecting to Croatia, may have welcomed the programme as an opportunity to strengthen already existing cross-Adriatic relationships.

Many other Italian provinces, however, showed a very low participation in Interreg Italy-Croatia projects in 2014-2020, particularly Fermo (no funding received), Barletta-Andria-Trani, Brindisi, Foggia and Pordenone.

On the cross-border level, the imbalance between Italy and Croatia is primarily attributable to demographic differences and the relatively smaller populations in Croatian coastal counties, which amplified the programme funding per capita. Conversely, many Italian provinces involved in the

programme have larger populations, resulting in a dilution effect despite their active participation in funded projects.

This funding asymmetry has been a recurring observation in evaluations of the 2014-2020 programme. The relatively lower allocations in Italian provinces risks limiting the visibility and territorial impact of interventions. These insights suggest that current and future programming efforts should continue to prioritise areas with higher development needs but also work towards ensuring that the programme's added value, its promotion and visibility, is conveyed more uniformly across the entire cross-border cooperation area.

5.3 SO 1.1 ENHANCE THE FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS FOR INNOVATION IN THE RELEVANT SECTORS OF THE BLUE ECONOMY WITHIN THE COOPERATION AREA

Theory of change

Needs – SO 1.1 aimed to strengthen the conditions for innovation within the blue economy sectors of the Italy-Croatia cooperation area. It sought to enhance research, foster collaboration among stakeholders, and support the development of new technologies and products, ultimately boosting competitiveness and sustainable economic growth in the region.

Programme operations – For SO 1.1, the total funding was EUR 24,162,867. SO 1.1 invested in two types of actions: 'Joint projects and actions' and 'Cluster cooperation and joint pilot initiatives'. Potential beneficiaries included universities and research institutes, public authorities at local, regional, and national level, the private sector (SMEs), business intermediaries, social enterprises, innovation and technology transfer agencies. The SO was to be implemented mainly through standard projects.

Outputs - The types of actions listed above were expected to produce innovative solutions, foster SME growth, enhance business collaboration, improve market competitiveness, support technology transfer, and strengthen workforce skills, all contributing to the development of a sustainable and competitive blue economy. Outputs are measured by the following common output indicators defined by the 2014-2020 European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) regulation¹:

- Number of enterprises receiving support (CO01);
- Number of enterprises receiving grants (CO02);
- Number of enterprises receiving non-financial (CO04);
- Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects (CO42);
- Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training (CO44).

Expected programme contribution to change - The programme was expected to contribute to increasing innovation, economic competitiveness, and sustainable development in blue economy sectors of the Italy-Croatia cooperation area. By supporting cross-border collaboration and knowledge transfer, the programme aimed to enhance research, strengthen networks between

¹ [Regulation - 1299/2013 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)

SMEs, research institutions and public sector, and stimulates economic growth. This aimed to lead to increased employment opportunities, sustainable development, and resilience within the regional economy, aligning with long-term goals for environmental sustainability and regional prosperity.

External factors - The external factors which could have hindered the programme's achievement of results in this specific objective include economic downturns or shifts in market demand within blue economy sectors, which can reduce investment and innovation efforts. Environmental conditions, such as pollution or resource depletion in the Adriatic Sea, may also have limited the effectiveness of sustainable practices. Additionally, changes in policy and regulations, both at the EU and national levels, could alter the programme's framework and priorities, potentially disrupting progress. Finally, technological barriers, including limited access to advanced technologies and slow adoption by SMEs, might have prevented the full realisation of innovation objectives.

Expected results - The expected result of this SO was to increase the effectiveness of innovation activities in the relevant fields of the blue economy. The result indicator was measured by the increase in the number of European Patent Office (EPO) applications, with a target value of 680 EPO applications by 2023, starting from a baseline of 673.28.

Figure 3 Theory of change for SO 1.1



Programme contribution to change



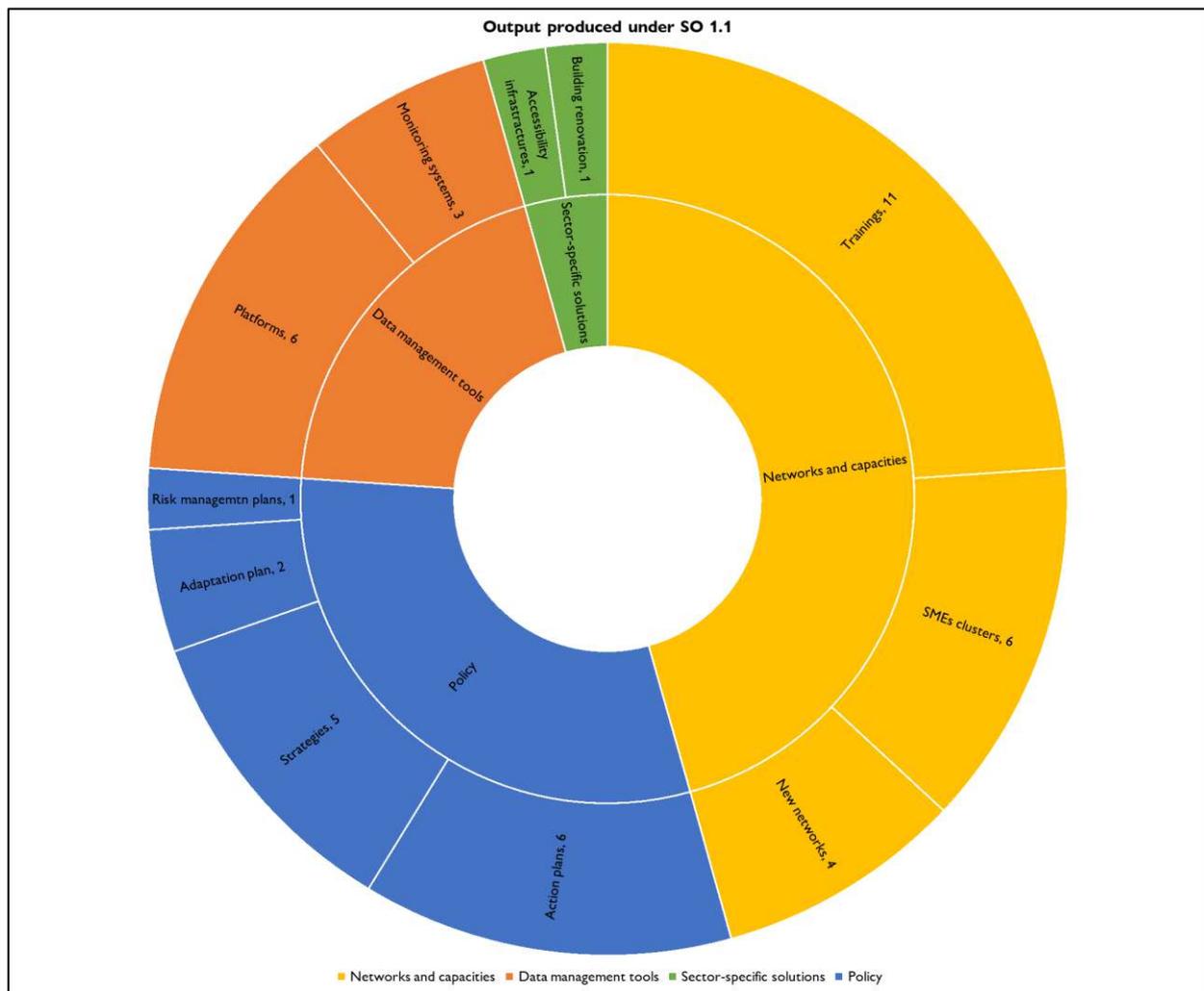
In addition to the three Standard+ projects initially funded, 11 projects of the Standard (8), Strategic (1) and Cluster (2) types were funded under this SO.

SO 1.1 focused on creating optimal framework conditions for innovation within the blue economy across the Italy-Croatia cooperation area.

The key types of outputs under this SO are: training (11), monitoring systems (3), SMEs clusters (6), new networks (4), action plans (6), strategies (5), platforms (6), adaptation plans (2), building renovations (1), accessibility infrastructure (1), risk management plans (1).

For the purpose of grouping these types of outputs into consistent categories across SOs, the following categories have been created by evaluators: policy, data management tools, networks and capacities, sector-specific solutions. The figure below shows the distribution of outputs categories and types for SO 1.1.

Figure 4 Categories and types of outputs produced under SO 1.1



The figure illustrates how 'soft' outputs (policy, networks and capacities) along with policy outputs (action plans, strategies, adaptation and risk management plans) represent the majority of outputs under SO 1.1. Sector-specific solutions were developed by the InnovaMare and COASTENERGY projects.



Looking into project final reports and from the information gathered through case studies (COASTENERGY, InnovaMare), projects under S.O. 1.1 have generated significant effects, particularly in **improving access to services** and promoting sustainable practices in the blue economy sector. For instance, Adri.SmArtFish and PRIZEFISH introduced advanced technologies, such as optimised fishing equipment and renewable energy applications, enabling SMEs and other actors to lower their operational costs and save time. The InnovaMare project created a Digital Innovation Hub which still provides access to knowledge and services to actors in the marine technology sector from both sides of the Adriatic. Innovations, including biogas production and wave energy systems, have reduced energy consumption and environmental footprints. The COASTENERGY and AdriAquaNet projects aimed to reduce marine pollution and improved resource management, benefiting not only businesses but also the marine ecosystem.

Furthermore, the projects under SO 1.1 strengthened the blue economy by enabling businesses to innovate and grow. Through the introduction of eco-certified products and sustainable practices, companies gained a competitive edge. Protocols, business development plans, and improved marketing strategies supported stakeholders in adopting efficient and profitable methods, **boosting economic development** and job creation.

Institutional capacity building emerged as a cornerstone of S.O. 1.1. Projects like InnovaMare focused on upskilling stakeholders, particularly through “Train the Trainers” programmes dedicated to marine technologies. These efforts enhanced the abilities of local institutions and project managers to implement and sustain innovative practices.

Some projects succeeded in **influencing policy frameworks** by producing actionable recommendations and strategies. For instance, AdriAquaNet and PRIZEFISH facilitated the adoption of sustainable fishery protocols and management practices at both local and regional levels. The development of white papers and strategic guidelines further solidified the alignment of innovation with broader policy goals.

Through extensive communication campaigns, the projects increased awareness about the critical role of innovation in the blue economy. Target groups, particularly fishermen and SMEs, showed tangible **shifts in attitudes**, such as **joining cross-border associations** or adopting sustainable production techniques. Public awareness initiatives fostered a culture of sustainability, making citizens active participants in preserving marine ecosystems.

The integration of innovative practices into existing frameworks laid the foundation for future growth. Synergies among stakeholders, such as through the Digital Innovation Hub (DIH) established by InnovaMare, ensured the durability and upscaling of project results. These platforms facilitated ongoing collaboration, ensuring that the effects extend beyond their initial scope.



According to the five survey respondents² for SO 1.1, the results of their projects demonstrate a strong commitment to innovation, sustainability, and cross-border collaboration within the blue economy. FAIRSEA and CLASS4.0 focused on enhancing ecological efficiency and environmental sustainability, with tools and methodologies tailored to SME needs.

INVESTINFISH emphasised entrepreneurial support by providing services which helped SMEs evaluate market potential and develop business models, while PRIZEFISH bridged innovation and market application with eco-certification frameworks, new fishing technologies, and added-value seafood products supported by e-commerce solutions.

Box 1 InnovaMare (strategic project)

InnovaMare stands out for its comprehensive approach, delivering digital platforms, prototypes, innovation hubs, and educational initiatives that foster collaboration and knowledge exchange. Created as a result of the cooperation of project partners, several robot-sensor solutions were developed as part of the InnovaMare project: two “Korkyra” robots (to monitor fish farms), SWAMP (a light mini-catamaran used to monitor environmental parameters in port areas and wetlands) and a system of smart buoys that monitor sea quality.

Furthermore, it should be noted that all respondents under SO 1.1 declared their project **generated additional investments or funding.**



SO 1.1 is the only SO for which the programme chose solely common output indicators, i.e. not developing programme-specific indicators. Output indicator targets under this SO have been reached and substantially overachieved in all cases except one. It should be noted that the overachievement of output indicator targets across all SOs indicates a likely underestimation of targets in the programming phase. The following table provides a thorough overview of output indicator achievements for SO 1.1.

² FAIRSEA, InnovaMare, INVESTINFISH, PRIZEFISH, CLASSE 4.0.

Table 3 Output indicator targets and achievements (SO 1.1)

Code	Definition	Target target	Achieved value	% of achievement
CO01	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support	36	1,076	2,989%
CO02	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving grants	6	6	100%
CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	30	1,070	3,567%
CO042	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	10	56	560%
CO044	Labour market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	120	2,432	2,027%

Source: data provided by the MAJS (January 2025)

The impact generated by projects reach a wide range of target groups, including local and regional authorities (LRAs), SMEs, the general public, universities and research institutions, NGOs, and others:

- University and research institutions played a dual role as both beneficiaries and target groups, by participating in projects but also in data-sharing networks and knowledge exchanges. These institutions leveraged project results to advance scientific research and support innovation within the blue economy.
- LRAs are pivotal stakeholders, playing a direct role in harmonising and promoting integrated strategies for the Adriatic region. These authorities benefited from enhanced institutional capacities through training, technical support, and the sharing of innovative policies.
- As primary target groups, SMEs were involved through targeted communication and training programmes and by accessing advanced technologies and cost-efficient solutions.
- Non-governmental organisations played a role in integrating environmental and sustainable development goals into project initiatives. Their expertise contributed to advocacy, ensuring a more comprehensive approach to addressing sectoral challenges.
- Engaging the general public, primarily through awareness campaigns, public events and social media, proved helpful in shaping perceptions regarding sustainability in the blue economy.

In conclusion, projects under S.O. 1.1 have contributed to enhancing the framework conditions in the blue economy within the Adriatic region by generating both tangible and intangible effects. By addressing economic efficiency, environmental sustainability, and institutional capacity, these projects have created a more robust framework for innovation. The engagement of diverse target groups ensured that the impacts were broad and inclusive. The ongoing collaboration among SO 1.1 beneficiaries in the 2021-2027 programming period will allow further progress, with the potential to further influence practices in the blue economy sector.

The **result indicator “Number of EPO applications”**, selected by the programme to assess changes in the SO 1.1 policy field, **overachieved its target** by the end of the programme's lifecycle in **2023**. **Its relevance as an accurate measure of the programme's actual contribution to policy change is questionable**. In this context, it is noteworthy that the in the current programming period direct result indicators are used rather than broader context indicators, such as “Number of EPO applications”.

Cross-border added value

One of the most critical aspects of cross-border projects is the alignment of policies, strategies, and operational frameworks across countries. Projects under S.O. 1.1 often developed joint guidelines, protocols, and action plans. InnovaMare facilitated the creation of a Digital Innovation Hub (DIH) for underwater robotics and sensors, providing a unified framework for innovation and collaboration across the involved regions in Italy and Croatia. Adri.SmArtFish promoted standardised sustainable fishing practices, so that cross-border fisheries could aim to operate under similar environmental and economic protocols.

Furthermore, the cross-border dimension of projects has allowed partners to share knowledge, technologies, and infrastructure, resulting in innovative solutions that neither of the two Member States could have achieved if acting alone. Initiatives like ‘Train the Trainers’ in InnovaMare increased the skills and expertise of professionals across borders, creating a more integrated workforce. **Shared technological progress** should also be mentioned: projects introduced advanced marine monitoring tools and sustainable technologies, such as renewable energy systems and robot/sensor prototypes, which were co-developed and tested in pilot locations across both countries.

Cross-border cooperation opened new funding opportunities and sources which may not have been accessible through isolated efforts. By working together, Italian and Croatian partners have secured further EU funding for projects and research initiatives, accelerating the adoption of innovative practices in the blue economy. Additionally, **SMEs gained access to broader markets** and networks, e.g. enabling the sale and promotion of eco-certified products developed under projects like *PRIZEFISH*.

A **key element of success** and meaningful cross-border added value is represented by the **focus of SO 1.1 on marine aspects of innovation** (i.e. the focus on the blue economy). The **Adriatic Sea is a common resource**, and its challenges transcend national borders. By working together, Italian and Croatian partners developed solutions that are more comprehensive and impactful. Joint efforts in the marine dimension reduced the environmental impact of economic activities, as seen in COASTENERGY and AdriAquaNet. The collaborative adoption of sustainable fishing techniques can make cross-border fisheries more viable and environmentally sound. This shared approach aims to **prevent fragmented or contradictory actions**.

Finally, the projects created innovation ecosystems which stimulate entrepreneurship and **knowledge exchange**. Platforms like the Digital Innovation Hub (InnovaMare) serve as hubs where academia, industry, and policymakers collaborate to develop and implement cutting-edge technologies. These ecosystems encourage the co-creation of products and services tailored to the needs of the involved regions and promote upscaling at cross-border level, with a greater potential to ‘multiply’ impacts.

Nonetheless, **disparities in institutional capacities** and regulatory frameworks between Italy and Croatia limited the full realisation of synergies. In several cases, joint outputs were not uniformly adopted, as some partners lacked the resources or political support to implement cross-border solutions. The focus on collaboration at the project level did not always translate into broader alignment across regional and national policies, reducing the strategic added value.

Durability

Many projects have incorporated mechanisms, strategies, and practices aimed at guaranteeing durability.

Projects often aimed to **embed outputs into institutional frameworks** and policy environments to enhance their longevity. Outputs such as strategic guidelines, protocols, and action plans (e.g., from *Adri.SmArtFish* and *PRIZEFISH*) were shared with policymakers to encourage adoption at regional or national levels. However, lack of political commitment or prioritisation meant that policy outputs could not always be taken up at regional or national policy level.

Durability was also ensured through strategies that reduced reliance on external funding and promoted **financial independence**. Eco-certified seafood products (e.g. *PRIZEFISH*) and the paid membership to access the Digital Innovation Hub services (InnovaMare) **generated revenue streams**, enabling stakeholders to sustain and upscale these practices independently.

Furthermore, projects like *InnovaMare* focused on **long-term, scalable technologies** such as robotics, sensors, and renewable energy systems. The emphasis on cutting-edge yet adaptable technologies ensured their continued utility in evolving contexts.

Ensuring that stakeholders and local communities took **ownership of project results** has proven critical for their sustainability. SMEs, LRAs, and NGOs were actively involved in the design and implementation of outputs, fostering a sense of ownership. For example, fishermen under *Adri.SmArtFish* formed cross-border associations to sustain the effects of sustainable fishing practices.

Durability was also supported through **robust knowledge-sharing mechanisms** and cross-border collaborations. Outputs like the Digital Innovation Hub (DIH) created under *InnovaMare* provided a platform for continuous learning, resource sharing, and innovation. Such hubs ensure that knowledge and expertise remain accessible beyond the project’s conclusion.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain. In many cases, beneficiaries rely on EU or other external funds to maintain and continue the activities related to the 2014-2020 Italy-Croatia project, which could be threatened if funding is discontinued. In addition, changes in political leadership or priorities could affect the integration and support to ensuring durability of project results.

External factors

Economic conditions in the cooperation area, such as the regional dependency on tourism, fisheries, and aquaculture, had both positive and negative effects:

- the **COVID-19 pandemic** reduced mobility, disrupted supply chains, and affected stakeholder participation in training, capacity-building, and pilot projects. However, it also accelerated digital adoption, as seen in the development of virtual tools and platforms;
- **market pressures:** inflation, price increases and obstacles in the supply chain, in particular after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, influenced project implementation and the achievement of project results.

As concerns political and policy factors, the alignment - or misalignment - of political priorities between Italy and Croatia and within the broader EU context played a significant role. The existence of EU directives on marine sustainability and the blue economy provided a favourable policy environment for many projects. However, differences in national regulatory frameworks sometimes delay project implementation or create challenges in harmonising actions across borders. Furthermore, the involvement and commitment of local and regional authorities varied, sometimes influencing the pace and scope of project activities.

5.4 SO 2.1 IMPROVE THE CLIMATE CHANGE MONITORING AND PLANNING OF ADAPTATION MEASURES TACKLING SPECIFIC EFFECTS, IN THE COOPERATION AREA

Theory of change

Needs – SO 2.1 was defined in order to tackle climate change challenges like flooding, coastal erosion, and extreme weather in the programme area by enhancing climate monitoring, adaptation capacity, and resilience through coordinated cross-border efforts and exchanges.

Programme operations – For the entire Priority Axis 2 (SO 2.1, 2.2) the total funding was EUR 51,346,091. SO 2.1 invested in two types of actions: ‘Improving the knowledge base, data and monitoring systems supporting adaptation capacity’ and ‘Increasing the capacity for planning of adaptation measures’. Potential beneficiaries included public authorities at local, regional, and national levels, universities and research institutes, NGOs, education and training centres, business intermediaries. The SO was to be implemented mainly through strategic projects.

Outputs - The types of actions listed above were expected to produce improved climate data and monitoring systems, enhanced capacity for climate change adaptation planning, stronger public sector resilience capabilities, and the development of strategic adaptation plans and tools. Outputs were measured by the following programme-specific output indicators:

- Climate change monitoring systems put in operation (2.101);
- Plans of adaptation measures put in place (2.102).

The programme did not include common output indicators from EU Reg. 1299/2013.

Expected programme contribution to change - The programme was expected to contribute to enhancing climate resilience in the region by addressing key climate change impacts such as sea level rise, flooding, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events. It aimed to improve the capacity for adaptation through better climate monitoring, planning, and coordination of measures, with the establishment of integrated, harmonised monitoring systems and more accurate climate data. Additionally, the programme had to foster stronger cross-border cooperation between Italy and Croatia, enabling the harmonisation of data and procedures to tackle shared challenges. By strengthening the capacity of public authorities to develop innovative services, policies, and financing schemes, the programme wanted to help build a comprehensive framework for climate change adaptation.

External factors - Several external factors could have potentially hindered the achievement of results under SO 2.1. Unpredictable natural events, such as extreme weather or environmental disasters, could have disrupted the implementation of adaptation measures and delay progress. Political or

institutional changes, both at the national and regional levels, could have shifted priorities or alter the alignment of the programme with current governance strategies, thereby affecting its execution. Additionally, the effectiveness of cross-border cooperation between Italy and Croatia could be influenced by factors such as administrative differences, lack of coordination, or differing national priorities, potentially undermining the integrated approach envisioned by the programme.

Expected results - The expected result of this SO is the increased number of inhabitants benefiting from planning of adaptation measures. The result indicator is measured through a targeted questionnaire elaborated by the programme, aiming to achieve a number of 8,000,000 inhabitants benefiting from planning of adaptation measures by 2023 starting from a baseline of 7,050,052 inhabitants in 2015.

Figure 5 Theory of change for SO 2.1



Programme contribution to change



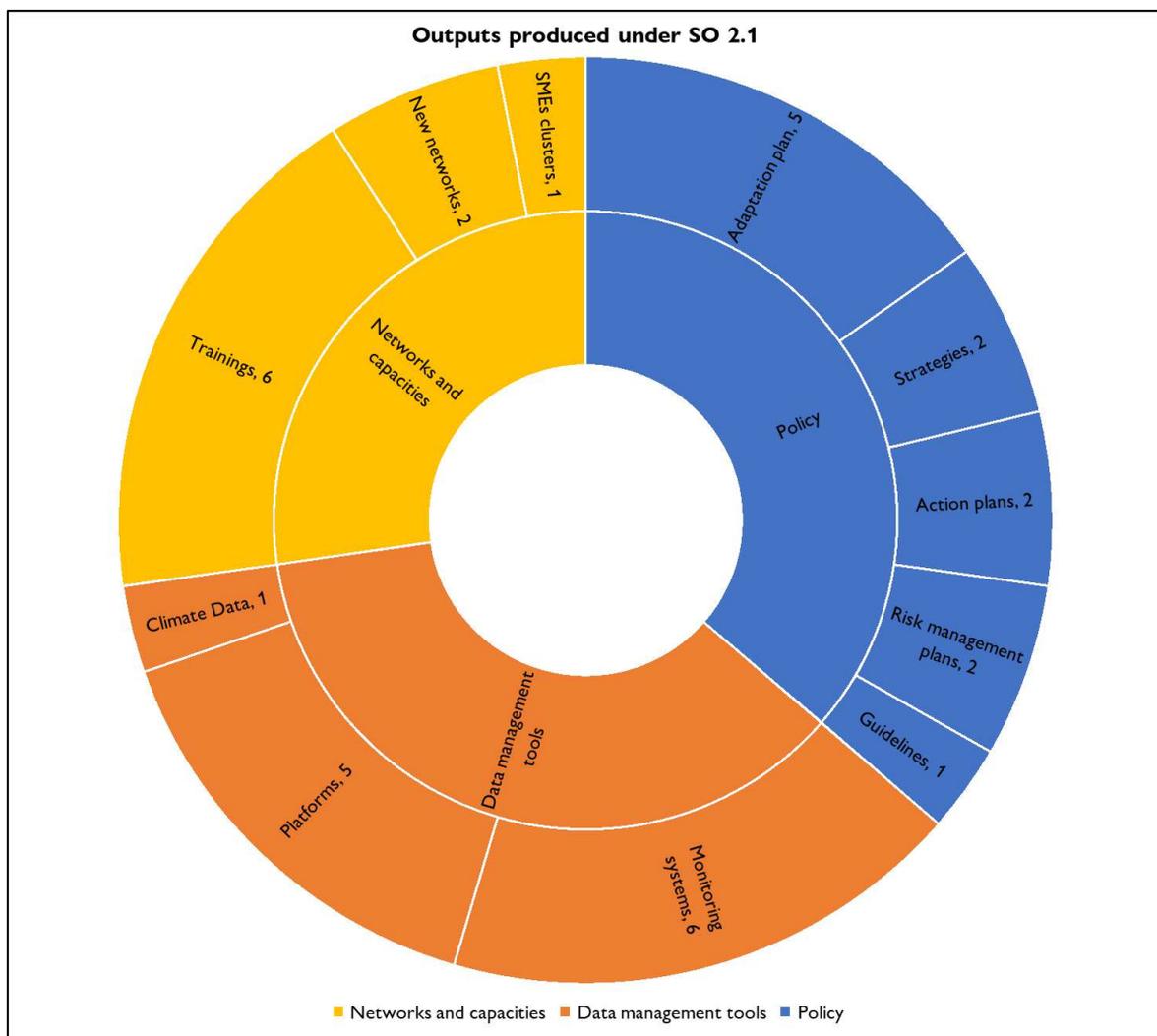
Apart from one Standard+ project initially funded, 10 projects of the standard (7), strategic (1) and cluster (2) types were funded under this SO, although the programme was intended to be implemented mainly through strategic projects.

SO 2.1 focused on enhancing climate change monitoring and planning adaptation measures within the Italy-Croatia cooperation area.

Key types of outputs under this objective include training (6), monitoring systems (6), SME cluster (1), new networks (2), action plans (2), guidelines (1), strategies (2), platforms (5), adaptation plans (5), risk management plans (2).

The figure below shows the distribution of outputs categories and types for SO 2.1.

Figure 6 Categories and types of outputs produced under SO 2.1



Source: Evaluator's elaboration based on the final reports of the projects

The figure illustrates an overall balance among data management tools, policy and networks and capacities under SO 2.1. Adaptation plans (policy) monitoring systems and platforms (data) represent the most important types of outputs, in line with the activities and expectations under this SO.



Looking into project final reports and from the information gathered through the case study (AdriaClim), projects under SO 2.1 have generated effects in **improving access to services** and reducing the risks associated with climate change. For instance, RESPONSE and AdriaClim introduced tools such as vulnerability maps and carbon footprint calculators, which support local authorities in better planning and responding to climate challenges. The CHANGE WE CARE project created advanced tools to assess sustainable usage profiles, improving access to relevant climate data. Technologies implemented by GECO2 allowed farmers to adopt low-carbon cultivation practices, benefiting both the environment and economic competitiveness.

Furthermore, projects under SO 2.1 aimed at strengthening regional resilience by **fostering collaboration among stakeholders**. Through training programmes and joint decision-making frameworks, local authorities and scientific institutions increased their capacity to address shared challenges. Adaptation plans developed under ASTERIS and ADRIADAPT aimed to ensure proactive responses to rising sea levels, droughts, and other climate change-related impacts.

Institutional capacity building emerged as a cornerstone of SO 2.1. Projects like ADRIADAPT and AdriaClim implemented ‘Train the Trainers’ models, equipping staff at local level (municipalities) with skills to adapt tools and strategies in their administrations. These efforts aimed to enhance the ability of local institutions to implement and sustain climate adaptation practices effectively.

Some projects attempted to influence policy frameworks by producing **strategic recommendations** and fostering **political engagement**. For instance, RESPONSE facilitated the **approval of action plans** for local climate adaptation.

Through extensive awareness campaigns, S.O. 2.1 projects have increased understanding of the critical role of climate adaptation measures. Public engagement activities, including workshops and dissemination of educational materials, aimed to foster behavioural changes (i.e. shifts in attitudes). Farmers under GECO2 adopted sustainable practices, and local stakeholders participated actively in the development of adaptation measures.

Platforms and tools, such as those developed under CHANGE WE CARE, ensured continuous access to valuable data and enhanced coordination among stakeholders. These efforts have cemented a strong framework for collaborative climate resilience.



The key impact highlighted by the four survey respondents³ for SO 2.1 is an increase in climate resilience in the medium to long term across the entire cooperation area.

This is due to the greater knowledge generated by the participation in the projects which supported the initial steps towards the implementation of concrete measures for climate change adaptation. ADRIADAPT, in particular, stressed the important achievement of the adoption of new adaptation plans in three out of the five local partners and the integration of existing plans and implementation of adaptation measures in two further local pilot areas.



Output indicator targets under this SO have been reached and substantially overachieved in all cases. The following table provides a thorough overview.

Table 4 Output indicator targets and achievements (SO 2.1)

Code	Definition	Target value	Achieved value	% of achievement
2.1O1	Climate change monitoring systems put in operation	5	22	440%
2.1O2	Plans of adaptation measures put in place	5	46	920%

Source: data provided by the MA/JS (January 2025)

The impact generated by projects reached different target groups:

- LRAs benefited directly from improved technical capacities, such as vulnerability mapping and risk management tools, enabling more informed decision-making.
- Universities and research centres played dual roles as both beneficiaries and target groups of financed projects. They used outputs like advanced monitoring systems for research while driving innovation in climate adaptation practices.
- NGOs played an active role in shaping and implementing adaptation strategies. Their involvement ensured that the projects addressed grassroots environmental and social initiatives.
- General Public: awareness campaigns targeting citizens, tourists, and farmers successfully communicated the importance of climate adaptation. Events and public education initiatives increased engagement in sustainable practices.

The result indicator ‘Inhabitants benefiting from planning of adaptation measures’, selected by the programme to assess changes in the SO 2.1 policy field, overachieved its target by the end of the programme's lifecycle in 2023.

³ ADRIADAPT, CHANGE WE CARE, CREATE, Joint_SECAP.

Cross-border added value

The cross-border added value under S.O. 2.1 lies in its ability to address shared climate risks and vulnerabilities in a coordinated way across the cooperation area. By sharing resources, expertise, and data, projects under this SO contributed to harmonised approaches to climate change monitoring and adaptation planning, in the framework of the broader goals of resilience and environmental sustainability.

Knowledge and resource sharing was a key cross-border added value of projects. Collaborative efforts in initiatives like RESPONSE, ASTERIS and GECO2 leveraged expertise and infrastructure from both countries, resulting in innovative tools such as carbon footprint calculators and climate vulnerability maps. This pooling of resources facilitated the development of solutions that neither country could achieve independently, highlighting the importance of collective action in addressing shared challenges.

Similarly, the AdriaClim project demonstrated the value of cross-border cooperation by creating a comprehensive system for climate and sea monitoring. This system combined data from Italian and Croatian research institutions, enabling more accurate and region-specific climate predictions. The **joint efforts in data collection and modelling** highlighted the benefits of collaboration, as neither country alone possessed the capacity to generate such detailed and wide-ranging datasets.

The CHANGE WE CARE project further underscored the importance of cross-border added value by addressing the interconnected nature of coastal ecosystems and water resources shared by Italy and Croatia. Through joint vulnerability assessments and sustainable usage profiles, the project enabled stakeholders to **manage** these **resources more effectively**, reducing risks such as saltwater intrusion and habitat degradation.

However, the cross-border implementation of SO. 2.1 projects was not without challenges. **Differences in institutional capacities, governance and regulatory frameworks**, and resource availability between Italy and Croatia sometimes hindered the full alignment of strategies.

For example, while the tools and plans developed under RESPONSE and AdriaClim were technically robust, their application in a coordinated cross-border context was occasionally unbalanced, as some local authorities lacked the resources or expertise to implement them effectively.

Parco Nazionale Foreste Casentinesi developed several project proposals within the Interreg framework, although none these were funded. The park has extensive experience as beneficiary of LIFE projects and has expressed interest in expanding its cooperation with Croatian partners through Interreg. This type of cross-border programme is perceived as offering added value compared to broader European programmes, as it allows for the creation of more solid and lasting partnerships. The geographical and cultural proximity between Italy and Croatia are further factors that would facilitate cooperation, making it easier to implement joint actions and sustain cooperation over time. Due to lack of human resources, the park organisation has not managed to participate in 2021-2027 calls yet.

Source: phone interview with Parco Nazionale Foreste Casentinesi (February 2025)

Durability

Many projects under SO 2.1 incorporated strategies to embed their outputs into **institutional frameworks**, aiming to ensure long-term relevance. For example, action plans and guidelines developed by projects like RESPONSE and ADRIADAPT were integrated into regional governance structures, providing a foundation for continued implementation and adaptation.

Economic sustainability was another critical aspect. Projects like GECO2 introduced **revenue-generating mechanisms**, such as carbon credit platforms, which provided financial incentives for stakeholders to maintain and expand sustainable practices.

Furthermore, tools like monitoring systems and vulnerability maps were designed for adaptability and possible scalability, enabling them to remain useful as climate dynamics evolved.

Stakeholder ownership was a key factor in encouraging the durability of project results. By involving local authorities, NGOs, and communities in the design and implementation processes, the projects fostered a sense of responsibility and commitment among partners and target groups. This approach aimed to ensure that the outputs were not only accepted but also actively maintained.

Despite these efforts, challenges to durability remain. Many projects still rely on external funding, particularly from the EU, to continue their activities. Shifts in political priorities or changes in leadership could also impact the long-term support for project results, underlining the need for continued advocacy and resource allocation.

External factors

The results of S.O. 2.1 projects were influenced by external factors. Environmental challenges, such as increasingly **unpredictable climate patterns and severe weather events**, accelerated the urgency of adaptation measures but also complicated project implementation. Economic pressures, including the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, impacted project timelines and the involvement of target groups. These economic conditions highlighted the need for flexible and adaptive project strategies and flexibility at programme level.

Policy dynamics also played a significant role. While EU directives provided a supportive framework for climate adaptation, **disparities in national regulations** between Italy and Croatia sometimes delayed project implementation. **Variability in the commitment** of local authorities further influenced the pace and scope of activities. Social and technological factors, such as initial **gaps in climate literacy** and uneven technological readiness, also required targeted interventions to overcome.

5.5 SO 2.2 INCREASE THE SAFETY OF THE PROGRAMME AREA FROM NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTER

Theory of change

Needs – SO 2.2 aimed to improve the safety of the programme area by enhancing disaster management systems, including the development of common tools for risk monitoring and emergency response coordination. It focused on strengthening recovery capacities, minimising damages from natural and man-made disasters like floods, fires, and oil spills, and ensuring immediate responses to sudden events.

Programme operations – For the entire Priority Axis 2 (SO 2.1, 2.2) the total funding was EUR 51,346,091. SO 2.2 invests in two types of actions: ‘Improving monitoring of risks’ and ‘Increasing the management capacity of / prompt response to disasters’. Beneficiaries included local, regional, and national public authorities, emergency services, coast guard centers, and development agencies involved in disaster management. NGOs, education and training centres, and universities contribute to awareness-raising, capacity-building, and developing solutions for disaster resilience and recovery. The SO was to be implemented mainly through strategic projects.

Outputs - The types of actions listed above were expected to improve disaster risk monitoring, enhance emergency response capacity, promote coordinated preparedness, and strengthen recovery efforts, ultimately increasing the resilience of the programme area to both natural and man-made disasters. The outputs are measured by the following programme-specific output indicators:

- People reached by initiatives for increasing awareness (2.202);
- Population benefiting from oil spills and other marine hazards protection measures (2.204).

The programme has also included two common output indicators from the annex of EU Reg. 1299/2013:

- Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from flood protection measures (CO20);
- Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from forest fire protection measures (CO21).

Expected programme contribution to change - The programme was expected to contribute to the development of integrated disaster management systems, improved cross-border coordination, and strengthened response capacities. This aimed to result in more efficient disaster preparedness, enhanced risk management, and quicker recovery, ultimately reducing the impact of natural and man-made disasters in the programme area.

External factors - Several external factors were identified which could hinder the programme's achievement for SO 2.2, including political instability, economic crises, and unpredictable impacts of climate change, which may have outpaced the programme's efforts. Legal and regulatory barriers could have complicated cross-border cooperation, while cultural and social resistance to new systems might have slowed their adoption. Additionally, technological limitations or inadequate infrastructure could have limited the effectiveness of disaster monitoring and response systems.

Expected results - The expected result of this SO was the increased number of inhabitants benefiting from risk management coordinated measures. The result indicator is measured through a targeted questionnaire elaborated by the programme, aiming to achieve a number of 9,000,000 inhabitants benefiting from risk management coordinated measures by 2023 starting from a baseline of 8,366,317 inhabitants in 2015.

Figure 7 Theory of change for SO 2.2



Programme contribution to change



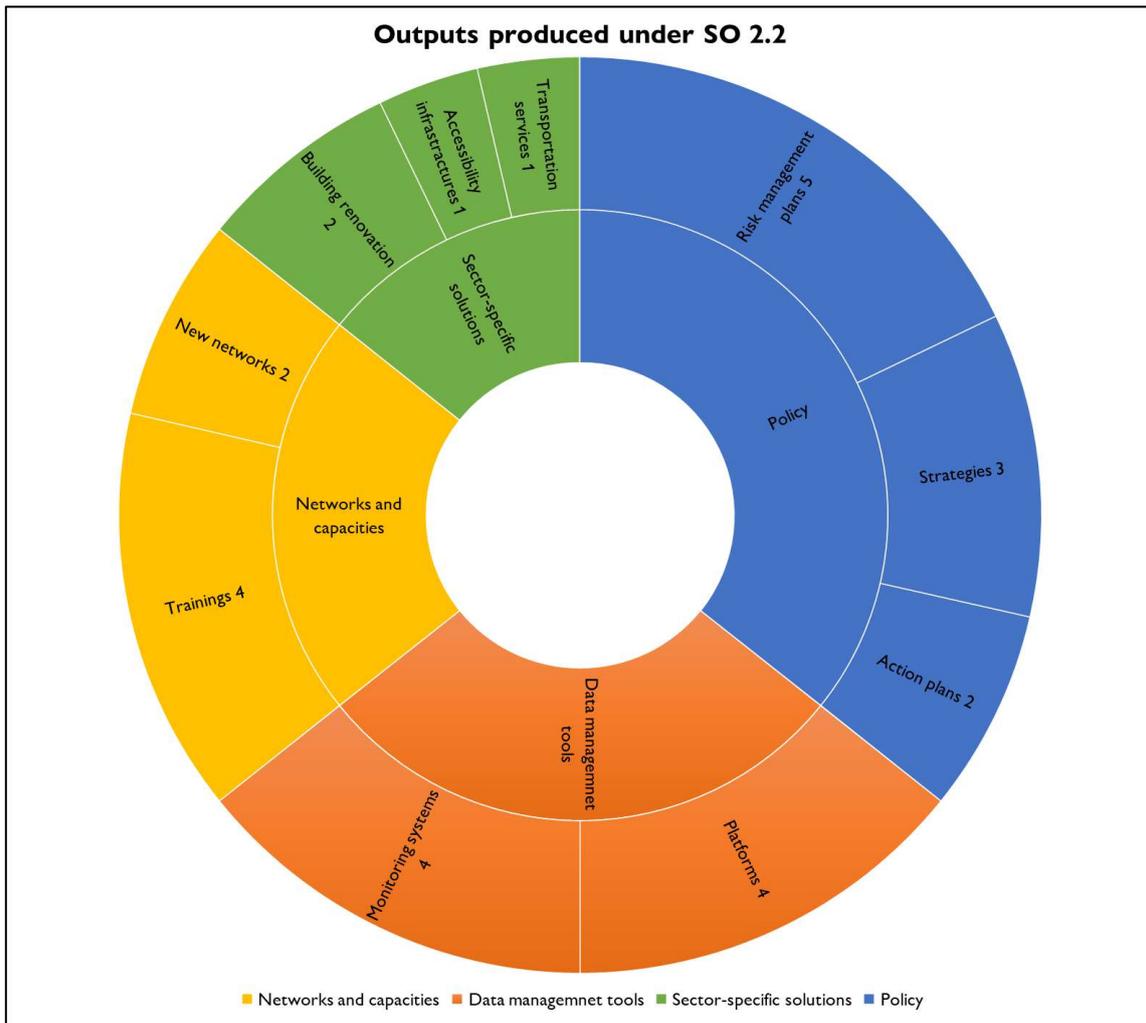
Apart from two Standard + project initially funded, five projects were funded under this SO, both of standard (3) and strategic (2) type, even if the programme was foreseen to be implemented mainly by strategic projects.

SO 2.2 aimed to enhance safety within the Italy-Croatia cooperation area by addressing risks associated with natural and man-made disasters. This objective focused on improving emergency response systems, risk assessment, planning, and the development of adaptive measures to mitigate vulnerabilities.

Key types of outputs under this objective include trainings (4), monitoring systems (4), new networks (2), action plans (2), guidelines (1), strategies (3), platforms (4), adaptation plans (5), risk management plans (2), transport services (1), accessibility infrastructures (1) and building renovations (2).

The figure below shows the distribution of outputs categories and types for SO 2.2.

Figure 8 Categories and types of outputs produced under SO 2.2



Source: Evaluator’s elaboration based on the final reports of the projects

Categories and types of outputs under SO 2.2 indicate a higher importance given to policy (risk management plans, action plans, strategies) and data management tools. The investments in sector-specific solutions through building renovation, accessibility infrastructure and transportation services are in line with the objectives of the SO.



Looking into project final reports and from the information gathered through the case study (E-CITIJENS, FIRESPIILL), projects under SO 2.2 have **improved emergency preparedness and response** capabilities.

For instance, the FIRESPIILL and STREAM projects introduced advanced equipment and methodologies to enhance emergency interventions, reducing response times and increasing efficiency. Additionally, the PEPSEA project developed equipment and plans to minimise pollution risks, particularly in marine and coastal areas, improving safety.

The FIRESPELL strategic project deserves a special mention, representing the programme's project with the highest budget (EUR 19.4 million) – and a budget which can be considered high in the realm of cross-border Interreg programmes.

Box 3 FIRESPELL (strategic project)

The project's main focus was to enhance the capacity of emergency services and civil protection organisations to respond to disasters (wildfires, oil spills, and earthquakes) effectively. Key outputs included advanced hazard mapping, the creation of a joint **cross-border emergency management system**, and the development of harmonised civil protection guidelines. Significant infrastructure was established, including **advanced training centers** in Vučevica, Kula Norinska, and Fabriano, which provided specialized training in firefighting and civil protection. These centres continue to play a role in improving regional emergency preparedness and response. FIRESPELL also deployed pilots addressing critical hazards. For example, **oil spill response capabilities were strengthened** with new equipment, such as skimmers and drones, while forest fire prevention was improved with upgraded firefighting tools and enhanced coordination among emergency units. Seismic monitoring systems were introduced to assess the vulnerability of public buildings in earthquake-prone areas, resulting in actionable prevention strategies.

The project had tangible impacts, including advanced early warning systems, upgraded communication tools, and **enhanced coordination mechanisms** between Croatian and Italian authorities. FIRESPELL also increased citizen engagement through its "Building Safe Community" campaign, with educational content and participatory risk prevention strategies.

The dissemination of **multi-risk maps** by PMOGATE allowed local authorities to identify vulnerable areas and **prioritise interventions**. Risk management plans developed by various projects incorporated strategies to mitigate the impact of large-scale disasters on infrastructure and communities. Furthermore, the adoption of innovative tools, such as emergency response systems under E-CITIJENS, aimed at facilitating cross-border coordination.

Institutional capacity building was another important component of SO 2.2. FIRESPELL focused on enhancing the **skills and knowledge of civil protection teams** through tailored training programmes and workshops. These efforts improved the technical capabilities of emergency responders.

Raising public awareness was another focus of SO 2.2. Campaigns conducted under PEPSEA and PMOGATE educated citizens about disaster preparedness, **encouraging proactive**

behaviours. Training sessions, workshops, and public events engaged communities directly, fostering a sense of responsibility and collaboration.

Efforts were also made towards the integration of innovative tools and systems into institutional frameworks. Projects such as E-CITIJENS and STREAM introduced cross-border emergency platforms which allowed real-time communication and coordination, with the aim of mobilising resources quickly and efficiently during crises.



Output indicator targets under this SO have been reached and slightly or substantially overachieved in all cases. The following table provides a thorough overview.

Table 5 Output indicator targets and achievements (SO 2.2)

Code	Definition	Target value	Achieved value	% of achievement
2.2O2	People reached by initiatives for increasing awareness	100,000	7,358,950	7,359%
2.2O4	Population benefiting from oil spills and other marine hazards protection measures	1,200,000	8,430,710	703%
CO20	Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from flood protection measures	1,500,000	11,605,421	774%
CO21	Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from forest fire protection	1,000,000	3,395,723	340%

Source: data provided by the MAJS (January 2025)

Projects under S.O. 2.2 impacted various target groups:

- **Emergency services**, including civil protection teams and coast guard personnel, were a primary target group. The provision of advanced equipment and decision-support systems improved their operational capabilities, reducing response times and increasing efficiency.
- **Local and regional authorities**, as key stakeholders, benefited directly from tools such as multi-risk maps and emergency plans, which were aimed at enhancing their ability to respond to disasters.
- **NGOs** were involved in the development and dissemination of risk management plans. Their participation in working groups and stakeholder meetings added a critical perspective to project activities.
- **Research institutions and universities** contributed to the development of innovative tools and strategies.
- The **general public** also benefited from S.O. 2.2 projects through awareness-raising campaigns and educational initiatives which aimed to empower citizens to take an active role in disaster preparedness.

The result indicator ‘Inhabitants benefiting from risk management coordination measures’, selected by the programme to assess changes in the SO 2.2 policy field, overachieved its target by the end of the programme's lifecycle in 2023.

Cross-border added value

The key cross-border added value under S.O. 2.2 lies in its ability to address the shared risks of natural and man-made disasters in the cooperation area in a coordinated and integrated manner. By facilitating collaboration across borders, the programme contributed to the development of harmonised strategies and tools for disaster prevention, preparedness, and response.

Cross-border cooperation was instrumental in creating standardised protocols and conducting joint training sessions for emergency responders from both countries (e.g. FIRESPELL). By jointly developing risk management plans and specialised equipment, the projects ensured a more cohesive approach to addressing natural and man-made hazards. The ability to coordinate actions and resources across borders significantly enhanced the region's capacity to protect its marine ecosystems from environmental disasters (e.g. PEPSEA). The participatory approach emphasised the shared responsibility of all stakeholders in reducing vulnerabilities and highlighted the importance of fostering cross-border efforts in disaster management (e.g. E-CITIJENS).

Despite these achievements, **the implementation of SO 2.2 projects revealed several challenges that limited cross-border added value: governance, regulatory and administrative discrepancies between Italy and Croatia created barriers.**

It should also be noted that **investments in infrastructure**, while representing an important aspect of emergency preparedness and disaster management, **lack a concretely cross-border dimension**. This is not only true for Interreg Italy-Croatia, but for most Interreg programmes with maritime borders.

Durability

While the projects under this objective successfully produced valuable outputs and results, their long-term impact depends on their integration into institutional frameworks, stakeholder ownership, and the availability of resources for maintenance and upscaling.

Projects like FIRESPELL and PEPSEA demonstrated a strong focus on embedding results within local and regional governance structures. For instance, FIRESPELL established advanced training centers which continue to function as hubs for emergency response coordination. These centres were designed to remain operational beyond the project's lifecycle. However, their sustainability relies heavily on consistent political commitment and funding from local authorities. Without dedicated budgets and long-term institutional support, there is a risk these centres may lose operational capacity or relevance.

The participatory elements of projects like E-CITIJENS also contributed to durability by fostering community involvement in disaster preparedness. The engagement of citizens through

collaborative platforms and training programmes created a sense of shared responsibility. However, such platforms often lack the financial and policy support to remain active and relevant.

A recurring limitation is represented by the reliance on EU funding. While some local and regional authorities have shown commitment to integrating results into their operations, others face budgetary constraints which hinder their ability to maintain or expand project deliverables. Additionally, the variability in institutional capacity across the region means that smaller or under-resourced municipalities may struggle to sustain the benefits of the programme without additional support.

External factors

Environmental challenges, such as the **increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters**, further underlined the urgency of implementing risk management strategies.

Economic pressures, including the disruptions caused by the **COVID-19** pandemic and inflation following the **Russian invasion of Ukraine**, impacted project implementation. These conditions affected supply chains, stakeholder engagement, and resource availability, requiring adaptive strategies to achieve project objectives.

5.6 SO 3.1 MAKE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE A LEVERAGE FOR SUSTAINABLE AND MORE BALANCED TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

Theory of change

Needs – SO 3.1 addressed the need to reconcile the conservation and protection of the natural and cultural heritage with territorial development. This objective highlighted the importance of safeguarding ecologically and culturally sensitive sites, mitigating anthropogenic pressures, and fostering tourism in underutilised areas. Additionally, it emphasized the role of economic diversification, employment generation, and innovative approaches in unlocking the potential of heritage resources while ensuring their long-term preservation.

Programme operations – For the entire Priority Axis 3 (including SOs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) the total funding was EUR 70,475,027, which were spent through non-repayable grants. SO 3.1 invested in three types of actions: ‘Actions to increase the value of natural and cultural heritage’, ‘Actions to foster economic development’ and ‘Actions to decrease the human pressure to natural and cultural heritage sites’. Expected beneficiaries were local, regional, and national public authorities, public service providers, cultural and natural heritage management bodies, SMEs in the cultural, creative,

environmental, and tourism sectors, regional and local development agencies, NGOs, education and training organizations, as well as universities and research institutes. The SO was to be implemented mainly through standard projects.

Outputs - The types of actions listed above were expected to enhance natural and cultural heritage, promote sustainable tourism, and support economic diversification while ensuring environmental and cultural preservation. The outputs are measured by the following programme-specific output indicators:

- Actors involved in actions aimed at promoting natural and cultural heritage (including typical products, joint branding and tourism);
- Natural and cultural heritage destinations with improved accessibilities (e.g.: to disabled tourists, virtual tourists etc.) in place;
- Beneficiaries with ecolabel/green certification;
- Cultural and natural heritage (tangible and intangible) promoted.

The programme has not included common output indicators from the annex of EU Reg. 1299/2013 for this specific objective.

Expected programme contribution to change - The programme was expected to contribute to sustainable territorial development by leveraging natural and cultural heritage to promote economic diversification, job creation, and sustainable tourism, while ensuring environmental preservation. It also aimed to reduce pressure on sensitive sites and encourage innovation, inclusivity, and long-term growth.

External factors - Several external factors, including environmental threats, economic instability, political or legal barriers, cultural resistance, lack of infrastructure, and tourism overload, could hinder the programme's achievement of results for this specific objective.

Expected results - The expected result of this SO was the reduction of seasonality in tourism in the programme area result from projects enhancing cultural and natural assets. The result indicator is measured as a number with a baseline value of 0.622 in 2014 and a target value of 0.621 by 2023. The sources of the data are the Regional Statistical Agencies, with reporting frequencies set for the years 2018, 2020, and 2023.

Figure 9 Theory of change for SO 3.1



Programme contribution to change

Apart from the 9 Standard+ projects initially funded, most of the projects funded (12) were of the standard type as foreseen in the programme. Only one strategic project was funded. Finally, the SO saw the development of 2 cluster projects.

The standard, strategic and cluster projects financed under SO 3.1 had various approaches. Several projects sought **to create shared tourism products** within the cross-border region, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the attractiveness of **ports**, which serve as **emblematic sites for tourism in the Adriatic area**. Additionally, considerable emphasis was placed on **improving accessibility to tourist sites**, thereby promoting greater inclusivity for specific groups of tourists with special needs. Some projects concentrated on **smaller, less-visited destinations** and even abandoned areas, aiming to **better distribute tourism flows**. This approach addressed the **twin challenges of undertourism and overtourism**, aligning with the overarching objective of leveraging natural and cultural heritage to promote sustainable and balanced territorial development. While the reduction of seasonality in tourism was a consideration in many projects, it was seldom articulated as a primary objective.

An analysis of the funded projects reveals a **stronger emphasis on cultural heritage** compared to natural heritage. Simultaneously, the **principle of sustainability** in tourism emerged as a **recurring** theme across the projects. Information and Communication Technology (**ICT**) **played a key role in several initiatives**, enabling innovative promotional strategies, enhancing accessibility, and facilitating a more even distribution of tourism flows.

The types of **outputs** associated with this SO are **predominantly related to networks and capacities**. Interestingly, in this cluster of outputs there is a **limited number of SME clusters**. Given that the main change to be promoted under this SO, i.e. the reduction in seasonality in tourism, can only be achieved by mobilising the energies of private actors who design, develop and market tourism products and services, such a gap should be noted.

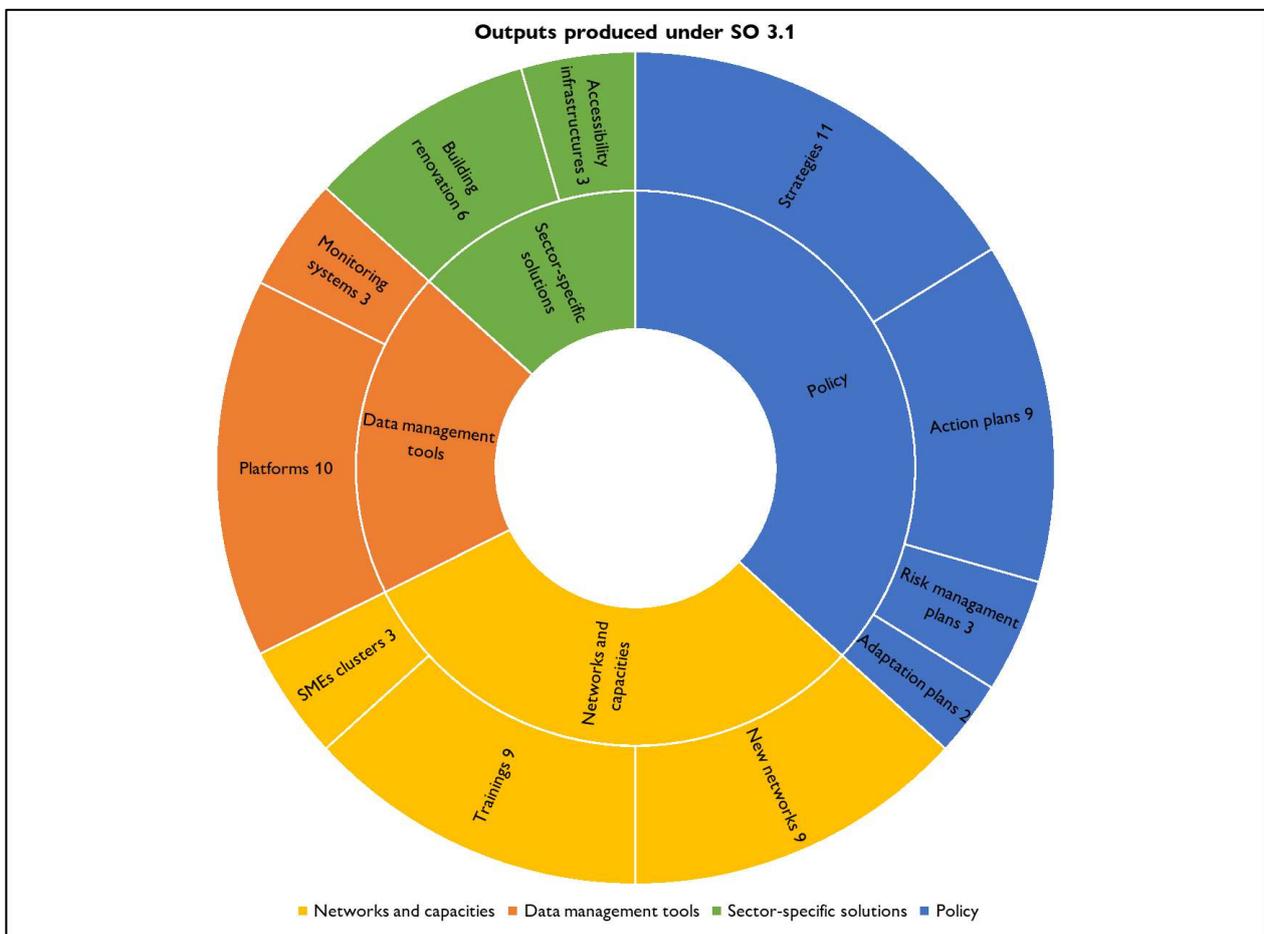
The SO appears also emphasizes the development of sectoral planning tools. Notably, the development of adaptation plans, risk management plans, action plans and especially strategies emerge as a primary focus. Sector-specific interventions are clearly present in the implementation of the SO, with the **renovation of buildings** underlining the preeminence of cultural heritage and the **accessibility infrastructures** showing the interest in increasing inclusivity in tourism.

Interestingly, **the production of outputs for data management seems to be much less important than for other policy areas** addressed by the programme. This suggests that the projects dedicated to better use of heritage for development purposes are less “data driven” than the initiatives in the environmental field. It seems that tourism in these projects was considered primarily as an area requiring innovative ideas, rather than as a scientific phenomenon to be analysed for patterns and regularities. This feature is a good reason for the evaluator to pay particular attention to projects focusing on data management in tourism, such as S.L.I.DES. The

evidence of a lower tendency to work with data also suggests that in this SO pilot samples were developed with less ambition to systematically accumulate knowledge to be used for further application.

Finally, it is worth noting that under SO 3.1, projects reported a further fragmented range of outputs (uncategorised by the evaluator to maintain comparability with other SOs), including a promotional event, a publication, a video, a project idea for 2021-2027, a joint action with other programmes/EU initiatives, and a transportation service. This diverse set of outputs indicates a bottom-up approach to the policy field, with various projects being developed. However, this diversity complicates the evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the projects as a cohesive package.

Figure 10 Types of outputs produced under SO 3.1



Source: Evaluator’s elaboration based on the final reports of the projects

Looking at the projects financed under S.O. 3.1, **the intangible benefits are more evident** than the tangible ones. All projects reported that they had contributed to **raising awareness** among stakeholders by involving professionals, associations, citizens and also tourists in various initiatives and events. Such a step is considered essential for the success of projects dealing with this issue, as changes in attitudes and behaviour seem to be at an early stage. Many projects have

contributed to institutional **capacity building** and have even begun to **influence policy**. However, as noted in the subsequent section on durability, **this aspect remains controversial**. Effects on social cohesion have been duly monitored, although it is clear that very localised interventions can have limited effects of this kind. **In order to have a significant impact on social cohesion, it would have been necessary to systematically influence policy.**

The most evident **tangible benefit** is the **improvement of access to tourism services**. The improvement in accessibility has been achieved mainly through **the development of ICT services for the touristic use of sites and heritage**. Accessibility has been conceived more as an empowerment of the fruition for all segments than as the removal of barriers that hinder the fruition by certain segments of tourists. Other recurrent benefits concern the improvement of competitiveness and the development of businesses in the tourism sector. However, **the mobilisation of SMEs in the projects does not emerge as a key feature of the projects**. Although some experiences went in this direction, for example by creating product clubs of tourism operators, most projects contributed more to improving services and increasing promotion than to improving commercialisation. In terms of job creation, some of the projects claimed to have made an indirect contribution, but overall they do not seem to have reached a sufficiently mature stage to have had a tangible impact on employment.

The box below highlights the benefits generated by the previously mentioned S.L.I.DES project - one of the few initiatives focused on data management in tourism, thereby establishing a robust foundation for potential policy influence at the local level.

The development of the data hub and dashboard by the S.LI.DES project, with the direct involvement of partner cities as "data collectors" at the urban level, has generated significant intangible effects. These effects include raising awareness among cities about critical data-related challenges and opportunities. Partner cities have come to recognize the widespread dispersal of data across public administrations and the associated difficulties in locating relevant information. They have also become more aware of the lack of open data, the limited timing and length of available data series, and the challenges of retrieving or purchasing data from private sources - particularly when considering a "big data" perspective.

By fostering a data-driven approach and testing it through pilot actions, the project has enabled city managers and local stakeholders to appreciate the value of data. This understanding represents an important step towards acquiring new institutional capacities. However, achieving these capacities requires a shift in organizational structures, particularly in terms of data collection and sharing, and a concerted effort to promote new internal skills.

The S.LI.DES action was not systematically continued at cross-border level, either through the original programme or the consortium. However, certain localised initiatives, inspired by the project's experience, have independently evolved carrying forward its legacy.

For SO 3.1, **programme-specific output indicators** were developed. These indicators assessed the number of actors involved, the tourism destinations where accessibility was enhanced, and the promotion of cultural and natural heritage. Additionally, a more targeted indicator tracked the number of beneficiaries obtaining ecolabels or green certifications. **All targets for these indicators were significantly or very significantly exceeded.**

This outcome highlights two key considerations. First, despite external challenges, as detailed in a subsequent section, the projects were implemented successfully. Second, the substantial overachievement of three out of four output indicators raises important questions. The first pertains to underestimation during the programming phase, which can be attributed to the programme's launch during the 2014–2020 period, when historical data were unavailable. The second question relates to beneficiaries' capacity to accurately interpret monitoring system categories for reporting their outputs. This issue is particularly pertinent for the 2021–2027 Interreg indicators, as they present potential risks of misinterpretation. The following table provides a thorough overview.

Table 6 Output indicator targets and achievements (SO 3.1)

Code	Definition	Target value	Achieved value	% of achievement
3.1O2	Actors involved in actions aimed at promoting natural and cultural heritage (including typical products, joint branding and tourism)	40	3,024	7,560%

Code	Definition	Target value	Achieved value	% of achievement
3.1O3	Natural and cultural heritage destinations with improved accessibilities (e.g.: to disabled tourists, virtual tourists etc.) in place	10	215	2,150%
3.1O4	Beneficiaries with ecolabel/green certification	10	18	180%
3.1O5	Cultural and natural heritage (tangible and intangible) promoted	20	332	1,660%

Source: data provided by the MAJS (January 2025)

The impact generated by projects reaches a wide array of target groups. According to the evaluator's survey, the most impacted are:

- Local, regional and national public authorities;
- Cultural and natural heritage management bodies;
- Associations, regional innovation agencies;

The general public was declared to be highly impacted. This is remarkable because most of the projects had to limit their public activities during the pandemic.

Regional Development Agencies along with enterprises, in particular SMEs within the cultural and creative industry as well as the environmental and tourism sector, appear to have also been significantly impacted. However, as discussed above, this resulted in a low number of actual clusters of SMEs created.

The **result indicator 'Seasonality in tourism in the programme area'**, selected by the programme to assess changes in the SO 3.1 policy field, **achieved its target** by the end of the programme's lifecycle **in 2023**. However, significant fluctuations in this indicator were observed during the programming period due to the external influence of the pandemic, as discussed below. **Its relevance as an accurate measure of the programme's actual contribution to policy change is questionable.** In this context, it is noteworthy that the in the current programming period direct result indicators are used rather than broader context indicators, such as 'Seasonality in tourism in the programme area'.

Cross-border added value

In the context of this SO, the **recognition of cross-border added value by project actors appears to be more limited compared to other policy areas.** This is particularly evident in the infrequent occurrence of joint activities outside the ETC framework. Such a trend raises critical questions regarding the perception of the cross-border dimension and its potential role in enhancing the attractiveness of cultural and natural heritage within each actor's territory. In the absence of ETC funding, it appears that tourism stakeholders do not perceive compelling incentives to engage in cross-border collaboration.

However, **cross-border projects were clearly viewed by the involved actors as a valuable opportunity for innovation**, especially in areas where international cooperation could foster the development of new solutions and knowledge-sharing. By pooling resources and expertise, several projects were able to address shared challenges with novel approaches. Although these innovations were not always fully acknowledged or scaled up, they nevertheless contributed to the overall impact of the programme.

The box below illustrates the limitation arising from the **lack of stakeholders dedicated to the permanent development of tourism within the Adriatic space**, guided by a cross-border logic.

Box 5 REMEMBER (standard project)

The significant challenges in ensuring the management of the Adrijo platform after the end of the REMEMBER project underscore that even a robust partnership was unable to identify a cross-border stakeholder with both the interest and capacity to promote Adriatic maritime cultural heritage. This suggests that, outside the framework of EU programmes, the promotion of tourism resources is predominantly regarded as a regional or local responsibility. This perspective highlights a limited recognition among stakeholders of the cross-border dimension in this domain.

Durability

As discussed above, in the absence of political and socio-economic actors with the authority and mandate to pursue sustained tourism development across borders, the long-term viability of such projects remains uncertain. In this context, the durability of these initiatives is heavily dependent on the continued funding from ETC. Without a stable source of financial backing, efforts to promote and integrate cross-border tourism are at risk of stagnation or failure. Therefore, it is essential that strategic funding mechanisms, coupled with a clear policy framework and strong leadership, continue to ensure cross-border tourism development.

On the other hand, the durability of cross-border tourism initiatives is closely linked to policy-level engagement, as this determines whether the pilot activities tested within the projects can be effectively mainstreamed by relevant authorities. In this context, it is important to note that the SO developed a series of tools intended to support policy implementation, including action plans and strategies. However, the case studies did not provide conclusive evidence that the policy tools produced by the projects are consistently and systematically utilised. Instead, the tools appear to have been applied in a more sporadic manner, with their usage largely influenced by local conditions that were either more or less conducive to their adoption.

Although the REMEMBER initiative achieved its anticipated objectives, it lacked a structured strategy to ensure the durability of its outcomes. By the conclusion of the project, no definitive plan had been established to maintain the ADRIJO platform, and insufficient resources were allocated for its promotion, including participation in key events such as MedCruise.

To address the gaps and ensure continued collaboration, the ADRIJOROUTES project was launched under the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme. This initiative focuses on strengthening cross-border cooperation and promoting sustainable management of passenger flows across 16 Italian and Croatian ports. The project aims to develop a resilient and sustainable tourism model in the Adriatic region, ensuring continuity of results until at least 2026. However, a long-term solution remains essential, given the

External factors

The implementation of SO 3.1, i.e. a specific objective dedicated to the development of a less seasonal and a territorially better balanced tourism, happened in a period marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a Policy Brief⁴ issued by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in August 2020, “Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting economies, livelihoods, public services and opportunities on all continents. While sustaining the livelihoods dependent on the sector must be a priority, rebuilding tourism is also an opportunity for transformation with a focus on leveraging its impact on destinations visited and building more resilient communities and businesses through innovation, digitalization, sustainability, and partnerships”.

The Interreg ADRION programme produced a policy paper⁵ through the involvement of several projects and based on a survey conducted in November-December 2021. The most significant negative impacts identified included the closure of businesses in cultural tourism and related sectors, such as hotels and restaurants, as well as the closure of cultural sites that were structurally inadequate to address new risks, including museums and cultural centers. Additionally, large international and local events, such as the European Capital of Culture and international fairs, were cancelled, and both international and domestic travel restrictions were imposed. The entire sector experienced a downturn, with a marked decline in visits to major cities and a halt in business travel for large conferences. However, a shift in lifestyle emerged, bringing relatively positive effects for

⁴ World Trade Organisation (WTO), Policy Brief: COVID-19 and Transforming Tourism - August 2020

⁵ ADRION Policy Paper: Sustainable development of the tourism sector in the ADRION macro region - A strategic proposal for the programming period 2021-2027 – January 2022

certain tourism sectors. The survey revealed a trend toward rural destinations and travel closer to home, resulting in an immediate impact on local, regional, and national tourism. Furthermore, activities like walking and cycling became more popular, and outdoor leisure time saw a significant increase.

In this context, it is evident that the projects were significantly influenced by the dramatic changes brought about by the pandemic. Specific effects at the project level were observed, reflecting broader trends within the programme, such as reduced mobility, decreased stakeholder participation in training and events, and limited opportunities for the implementation of pilot activities. However, the accelerated digital transformation driven by the pandemic had a positive impact on the funded projects, particularly in terms of developing ICT platforms to enhance virtual accessibility to cultural and natural heritage. Furthermore, the effects of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, particularly the inflationary pressures and disruptions to supply chains, are reasonably presumed to have impacted projects involved in physical interventions, such as building renovations and the development of accessibility infrastructure.

The respondents to the evaluator's survey identified additional external factors that influenced the projects. One project highlighted that national public works regulations contributed to delays in the tendering process. Another project was affected by extreme weather events, specifically floods in Italy, which resulted in the rescheduling and scaling back of certain activities. These examples underscore the increased likelihood that external factors can influence the successful execution of projects involving physical interventions and public works.

5.7 SO 3.2 CONTRIBUTE TO PROTECT AND RESTORE BIODIVERSITY

Theory of change

Needs – SO 3.2 tackled the need for systematic monitoring and improved knowledge-sharing to support biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. Additionally, it focused on reducing conflicts of use and strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to protect fragile areas, particularly in river basins, coastal, marine, and wetland environments.

Programme operations – For the entire Priority Axis 3 (including SOs 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) the total funding was EUR 70,475,027, which were spent through non-repayable grants. SO 3.2 invested in two types of actions: 'Actions to improve the knowledge base, data and monitoring systems' and 'Actions to support the restoring of biodiversity'. Expected beneficiaries were local, regional, and national public authorities; protected areas and natural heritage management bodies; regional and

local development agencies; associations; NGOs; education and training organizations; universities and research institutes. The SO was to be implemented by both strategic and standard projects.

Outputs - The types of actions listed above were expected to improve the knowledge base and monitoring systems for biodiversity and ecosystem protection, support the restoration of biodiversity, and promote sustainable management of natural resources. The outputs are measured by the following programme-specific output indicators:

- Natural ecosystems supported in order to attain better conservation status;
- Monitoring systems and data collections for protecting biodiversity and ecosystems put in place;
- Restoration actions supporting endangered species;
- Integrated management systems (sea, coastal and river environment) put in place.

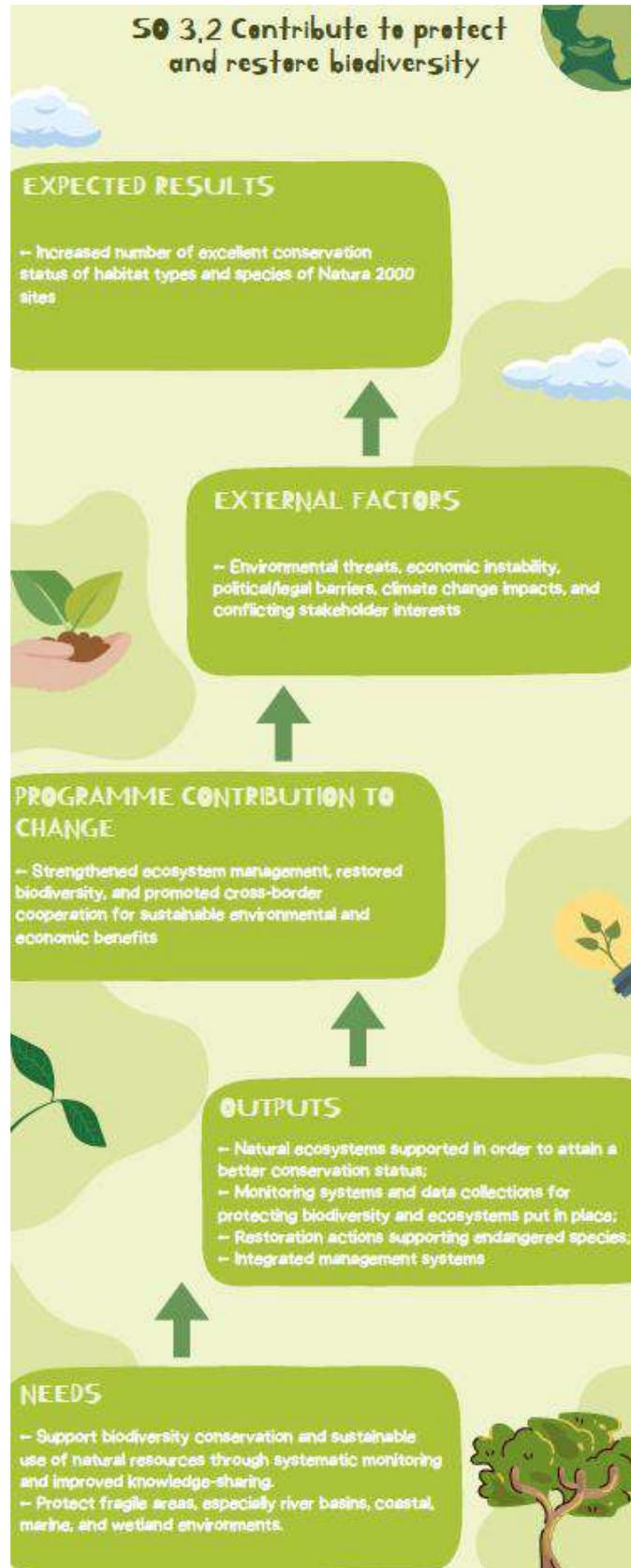
The programme has not included common output indicators from the annex of EU Reg. 1299/2013 for this specific objective.

Expected programme contribution to change - The programme was expected to strengthening ecosystem management and protection, restoring biodiversity, and fostering cross-border cooperation for sustainable environmental and economic benefits. It was also expected to enhance the cross-border cooperation in managing and protecting ecosystems through integrated approaches like Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) and Integrated Coastal Management (ICM).

External factors - Several external factors, including environmental threats, economic instability, political or legal barriers, climate change impacts and conflicting stakeholder interests, could hinder the programme's achievement of results for this specific objective.

Expected results - The expected result of this SO is the increased number of excellent conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in the programme area. The result indicator is measured as a number with a baseline value of 3,538 in 2014 and a target value of 3,550 by 2023. The source of the data is the Standard Data Form for Natura 2000 network, with reporting frequencies set for the years 2018, 2020, and 2023.

Figure 11 Theory of change for SO 3.2



Programme contribution to change

Apart from one Standard+ project initially funded, seven projects were funded under this SO, both of standard (5) and strategic (2) type, as foreseen in the programme.

The projects financed under SO 3.2 focus on **enhancing environmental sustainability, biodiversity preservation**, and the **sustainable management of marine and coastal ecosystems** in the Adriatic region. Key efforts are directed at improving biodiversity, preserving fragile coastal wetlands and monitoring marine habitats through **advanced technologies and integrated management approaches**.

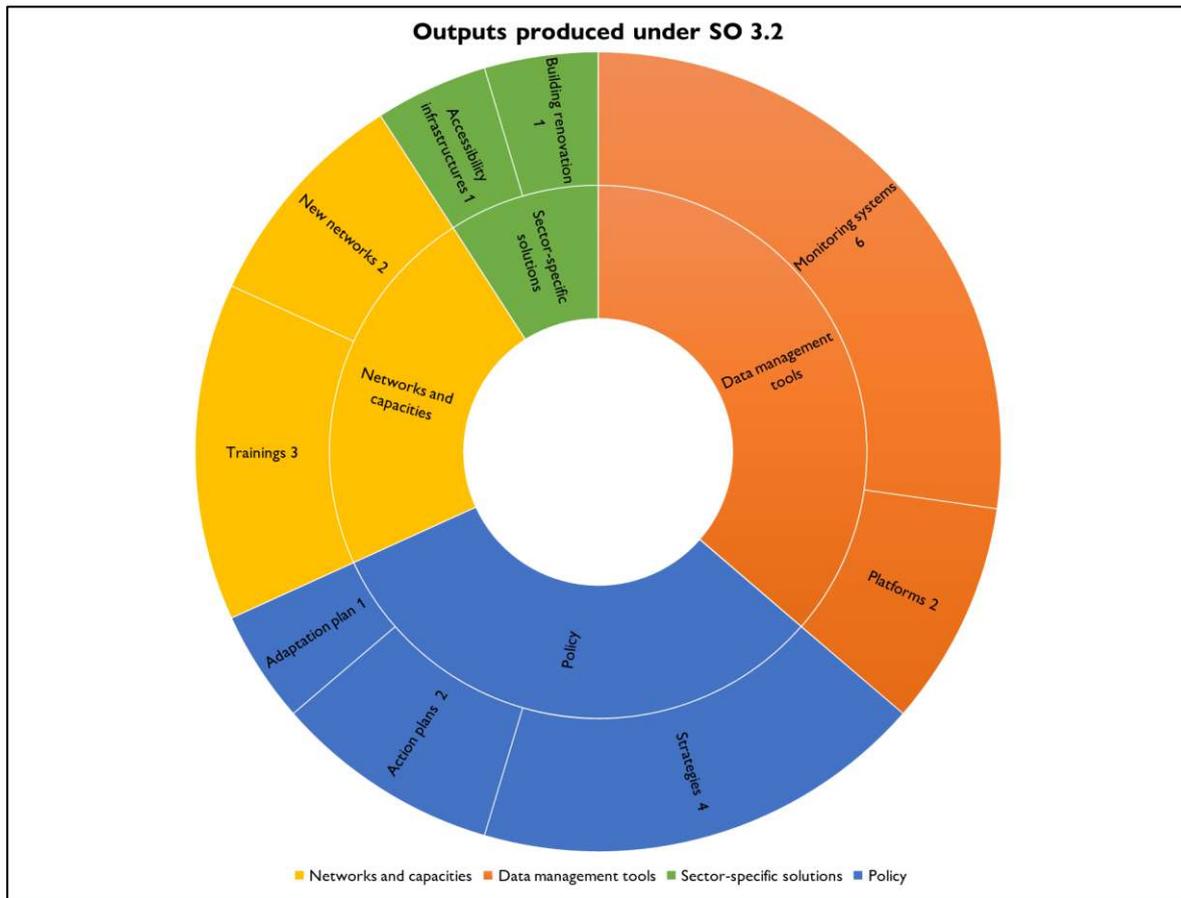
The projects aimed to strengthen governance structures, promoting coordinated actions among stakeholders and decision-makers to address common environmental challenges. They **emphasised the development of monitoring systems**, such as observing networks for underwater noise and biodiversity, alongside the application of new technologies, such as unmanned underwater vehicles, for non-invasive environmental assessments.

Another significant aspect of the projects was the **creation of frameworks for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture management**, ensuring that these activities are aligned with biodiversity protection. Efforts also include **evaluating the impact of maritime activities on marine fauna and ecosystems** and **supporting the restoration of endangered species** through integrated management approaches.

These projects collectively foster scientific collaboration, the sharing of best practices, and the adoption of sustainable strategies in the management of marine and coastal resources.

An analysis of the outputs associated with this SO reveals the **significant role of monitoring systems and platforms, which serve as solutions for storing and managing environmental data**. These outputs appear to function as **valuable tools for planning and decision-making within the environmental domain**. Additionally, adaptation plans, action plans, and strategies are explicitly focused on policy-related aspects. The SO also envisaged outputs related to networks and capacities. Although these outputs were less present compared to other SOs, they had the advantage of being thematically focused. Sector-specific interventions played a comparatively minor role in this context.

Figure 12 Types of outputs produced under SO 3.2



Source: Evaluator's elaboration based on the final reports of the projects

The SO has produced **tangible environmental benefits**, particularly **in pilot areas**. Key outcomes include the establishment of Wetland Contracts, fostering collaboration among public and private actors to prioritize sustainability. Innovations in monitoring, such as non-invasive drone systems, demonstrated minimal disturbance to marine life, enhancing research efficiency. Specific actions like creating no-take marine zones and Fish Aggregating Devices promoted biodiversity and protected fish stocks, complemented by the designation of three new Natura 2000 marine areas. Conservation measures, including dune ecosystem restoration, proved effective, reducing environmental degradation.

Additionally, the SO improved **data accessibility and service integration** through tools like web portals and dedicated platforms for environmental monitoring. The establishment of reference centres for training and stakeholder engagement further ensured the sustainability of these initiatives.

The reported effects on business development and competitiveness enhancement appear to be largely prospective rather than realised. The economic opportunities associated with the participatory processes and technical solutions implemented are described primarily as anticipated outcomes rather than concrete achievements attained during the project's execution.

On the intangible side, the **most significant impact generated by this SO lies in its influence on policy frameworks** for biodiversity protection. By promoting multilevel governance and fostering stakeholder cooperation, the SO enhanced coordination between preservation efforts and economic activities, effectively reducing conflicts and encouraging sustainable practices. Capacity building was advanced through observatories and platforms, which harmonized monitoring and management systems under EU directives, enhancing data-sharing and policy alignment. Recommendations for aquaculture best practices and conservation measures addressing environmental vulnerability were presented to local authorities, influencing governance. Position papers and stakeholder engagement further promoted awareness and policy coherence, establishing a foundation for integrated, evidence-based decision-making and sustainable management of natural resources.

A contribution to institutional **capacity building** was also observed, which supported policy-level impact. The SO fostered stronger cooperation among stakeholders and enhanced governance frameworks, facilitating more coordinated and effective decision-making processes. Stakeholder involvement raised awareness about the need for coordinated governance, particularly for Natura 2000 marine sites. Additionally, the programme promoted knowledge sharing through advisory committees and research collaborations, strengthening institutional capacity at regional and local levels. Communication activities also engaged coastal communities, raising awareness about biodiversity and encouraging active participation in conservation efforts.

Additional impact was observed in **raising awareness** and fostering **changes in attitudes and behaviors**. This was achieved through extensive stakeholder involvement, facilitated by organizing events and distributing project materials, which effectively engaged diverse audiences and promoted a deeper understanding of biodiversity conservation.

The box below highlights the impact on the policy level produced by the CASCADE project.

The monitoring systems developed by the CASCADE strategic project have been integrated into the operational procedures of regional environmental agencies, such as ARPA FVG, ARPA Puglia, and ARPAE Emilia-Romagna. This highlights the impact of the project at policy level.

Furthermore, the project emphasised citizen engagement through training sessions, workshops, and activities aimed at schools and tourists. A standout initiative was the Adriatic Sea Festival, which featured over 70 events across Italy and Croatia. While it is impossible to conclusively determine whether these efforts led to increased awareness among the target groups, the high number of communication and dissemination activities undoubtedly enhanced the chances of raising awareness and fostering a sense of responsibility among the involved population.

For SO 3.2, **programme-specific output indicators** were developed. These indicators assessed the number of natural ecosystems supported, the number of monitoring systems and data collection operations, the restoration actions and the integrated management systems put in place.

All targets for these indicators were significantly or very significantly exceeded.

Compared to other SOs, the initial estimation appears more accurate, though not overly ambitious. This indicates that the programme has had a better understanding of this policy field from the outset, particularly when compared to areas like the valorisation of cultural and natural heritage. The following table provides a thorough overview.

Table 7 Output indicator targets and achievements (SO 3.2)

Code	Definition	Target value	Achieved value	% of achievement
3.201	Natural ecosystems supported in order to attain a better conservation status	6	40	667%
3.202	Monitoring systems and data collections for protecting biodiversity and ecosystems put in place	4	21	525%
3.203	Restoration actions supporting endangered species	4	16	400%
3.204	Integrated management systems (sea, coastal and river environment) put in place	4	31	775%

Source: data provided by the MAJS (January 2025)

The projects primarily targeted the following groups:

- LRAs
- Associations and NGOs
- Education and training centres
- General public

In particular, the **SO successfully mobilised local and regional authorities**, which are key to ensure the **potential to influence policy**. Key stakeholders, including municipalities, provinces,

and national authorities, were actively involved through workshops, focus groups, and conferences. This engagement facilitated the integration of sustainable development practices, such as Wetland Contracts, into long-term policies. Additionally, public authorities participated in research and monitoring activities, fostering harmonized approaches to marine management and biodiversity monitoring. Through continuous dissemination efforts, including newsletters and events, the programme strengthened the capacity of authorities to incorporate scientific findings into policymaking and resource management.

The **SO effectively engaged associations and NGOs to ensure both a sound participatory approach and durability of its actions.** These organizations, including environmental groups, tourism associations, and fisheries representatives, were actively involved in key activities such as focus groups, round tables, and cross-border exchanges. Their participation helped raise awareness, disseminate best practices, and educate local communities, tourists, and sector stakeholders on biodiversity protection. By integrating these groups into decision-making processes and providing access to valuable data, the programme fostered local ownership and enhanced the durability of conservation efforts.

The **remarkable involvement of education and training centres** demonstrates a special effort in distributing knowledge on the themes of biodiversity protection and restoration. Regional and local development agencies were also involved, but to a lesser extent.

This effort to disseminate knowledge has been extended to the **general public**, with activities aimed at **raising awareness of the importance of protecting and restoring biodiversity.** Public outreach was achieved through local meetings, social media, educational trails, and the development of educational materials, including workbooks and videos. These resources covered topics like Adriatic biodiversity and marine conservation. Additionally, the programme targeted tourists and local stakeholders, including fishermen, with activities promoting sustainable practices. Information campaigns and high-visual-impact dissemination materials further strengthened public engagement, ensuring long-term awareness and active participation in conservation efforts.

The **result indicator “Excellent conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in the programme area”**, selected by the programme to assess changes in the SO 3.1 policy field, **overachieved its target** by the end of the programme's lifecycle in **2023.**

Cross-border added value

The SO has demonstrated significant cross-border added value through its focus on **marine environmental monitoring in Adriatic, an activity that cannot be effectively executed on a solely national scale.** By facilitating cooperation across borders, the SO enabled the sharing of scientific methodologies, enhancing the quality and comparability of monitoring efforts. The exchange of data across countries proved to be highly beneficial, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of marine environmental conditions. This collaborative approach has

allowed participating regions to align their monitoring efforts, addressing shared environmental challenges more efficiently. Overall, the SO has fostered a stronger, more integrated approach to marine conservation, highlighting the importance of cross-border cooperation in tackling complex environmental issues.

The box below highlights the need for a cross-border approach in the SASPAS project, which addressed scientific topics requiring collaboration across regions for a comprehensive investigation.

Box 8 SASPAS (standard project)

The SASPAS project addressed the issue of seagrass meadows, particularly *Posidonia oceanica*, which are widespread along the coasts within the programme area, spanning national borders and presenting similar conservation challenges in the two Member States involved. Significant results could be promoted through cross-border cooperation between key Italian and Croatian partners, fostering effective coordination for the protection, restoration, and development of the Integrated Management Programme for the Conservation of Seagrass Meadows.

This shared approach has made it possible to adapt to local specificities: in Croatia, overnight mooring is common in sheltered bays, whereas in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, mooring is more intensive but temporary, limited to daytime. Despite these differences, common elements for impact assessment and area management have been identified, strengthened by post-SASPAS project experience, which promotes a role as facilitator rather than authority.

Durability

The SO emphasizes the scientific necessity of sustaining marine environmental monitoring at the cross-border level. The continuity of such monitoring is key to maintain consistent data collection and ensure long-term environmental protection.

Key achievements include the establishment of an Observatory with a dedicated web platform, the successful installation of ecological buoys, and the development of an Integrated Management System, which will be incorporated into Natura 2000 management plans. Additionally, the programme's emphasis on cross-border collaboration has led to the creation of standardized data collection methodologies, enhancing monitoring capabilities across different regions. The acquisition of new monitoring systems, including unmanned surface vehicles and low-cost sensors, along with the integration of innovative technologies, strengthens long-term data collection. The establishment of a permanent advisory board, open access databases, and user-friendly GIS applications further promotes knowledge sharing and widespread adoption of best practices. These efforts have contributed to the enhancement of local policies and monitoring capacities, ensuring continued impact and replicability beyond the project's lifetime.

Therefore, **projects have demonstrated that ongoing collaboration between Italian and Croatian stakeholders is essential for tracking shared marine ecosystems and addressing environmental challenges.** Given the complexity of marine environments, which span across national boundaries, ensuring the continuation of monitoring efforts will provide the scientific community with reliable, comparable data that is crucial for future policy decisions.

The box below illustrates the duration of the effects of the SASPAS project after the end of the phase funded by the cross-border programme.

Box 9 SASPAS (standard project)

The SASPAS project ensured the sustainability of its actions through a continuous monitoring system of natural site quality, which remains useful even after the project's conclusion. Activities focused on mitigating the impact of recreational traffic, anchoring, and human activities on seagrass meadows, fostering the growth of transplanted species, and strengthening their ecological role. The Integrated Management System provides guidelines to protect biodiversity and support its recovery.

Among the key achievements in Croatia, the development of a national habitat map stands out, enabling precise identification of *Posidonia oceanica* distribution. However, a detailed analysis of areas under pressure and intervention priorities is still lacking. Such an understanding would be crucial to negotiating further actions with maritime sectors, including transport and tourism, which hold the power to control the number and distribution of vessels.

External factors

External factors transversal to the whole programme impacted the implementation of projects funded under SO 3.2. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted supply chains, mobility, and stakeholder participation, but accelerated digital tool adoption for alternative engagement. Market pressures, including inflation and supply chain disruptions, particularly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, further hindered project execution and results.

Beyond these general external factors, more specific points were observed. The SASPAS project analysis revealed that the success of biodiversity protection initiatives is influenced by the territorial management framework. In complex models like regional parks, slow permitting processes pose operational challenges, especially within tight project timelines. This highlights the risks of choosing such pilot sites. In contrast, marine protected areas with clear regulations provide advantages, offering a transparent framework for more efficient planning and action implementation, despite the constraints. In these situations, receiving robust support from the Joint Secretariat is deemed essential for effectively managing complex administrative challenges.

5.8 SO 3.3 IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY CONDITIONS OF THE SEA AND COASTAL AREA BY USE OF SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGIES AND APPROACHES

Theory of change

Needs – SO 3.3 addressed the need to improve environmental quality in the sea and coastal areas through the use of sustainable and innovative technologies. It tackled the need for reducing marine pollution, particularly from waste and marine litter, while promoting new approaches for efficient water and waste management. Furthermore, it focused on the need for cross-border cooperation in implementing innovative solutions and knowledge exchange to improve environmental protection and resource efficiency.

Programme operations – For the entire Priority Axis (SO 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) the total funding amounted to EUR 70.475.027. SO 3.3 invested in two types of actions: “Developing, demonstrating and implementing small-scale innovative environmentally friendly technology actions and approaches” and “Innovative actions aimed at improving the knowledge on the environmental quality”. Potential beneficiaries included local, regional, and national public authorities; regional and local development agencies; SMEs and business supporting organizations; associations, innovation and environmental agencies; NGOs; education and training organizations, as well as universities and research institutes. The SO was to be implemented mainly through strategic projects.

Outputs - The types of actions listed above were expected to implement innovative technologies to reduce pollution, improve water management, enhance recycling, and promote cross-border cooperation on environmental protection. The outputs were measured by the following programme-specific output indicators:

- Environment-friendly technological solutions (and approaches) implemented (3.301);
- Microplastic waste collected in marine areas (3.302).

The programme has not included common output indicators from the annex of EU Reg. 1299/2013 for this specific objective.

Expected programme contribution to change - The programme was expected to improve environmental quality in the sea and coastal areas by reducing pollution, promoting sustainable waste management, and fostering the use of innovative technologies. The programme was also expected to enhance cross-border cooperation and knowledge-sharing, leading to more effective protection of water, air, and soil resources.

External factors - Several external factors, including environmental threats, economic instability, political or legal barriers, climate change impacts and conflicting stakeholder interests, could have hindered the programme's achievement of results for this specific objective.

Expected results - The expected result of this SO was the stable quality level of coastal bathing waters (according to the dir. 2006/7/CE). The result indicator is measured as a number with a baseline value of 2,87 in 2014 and a target value of 2,87 by 2023. The source of the data is the European Environment Agency - Data on Bathing Water Directive, with reporting frequencies set for the years 2018, 2020, and 2023.

Figure 13 Theory of change for SO 3.3



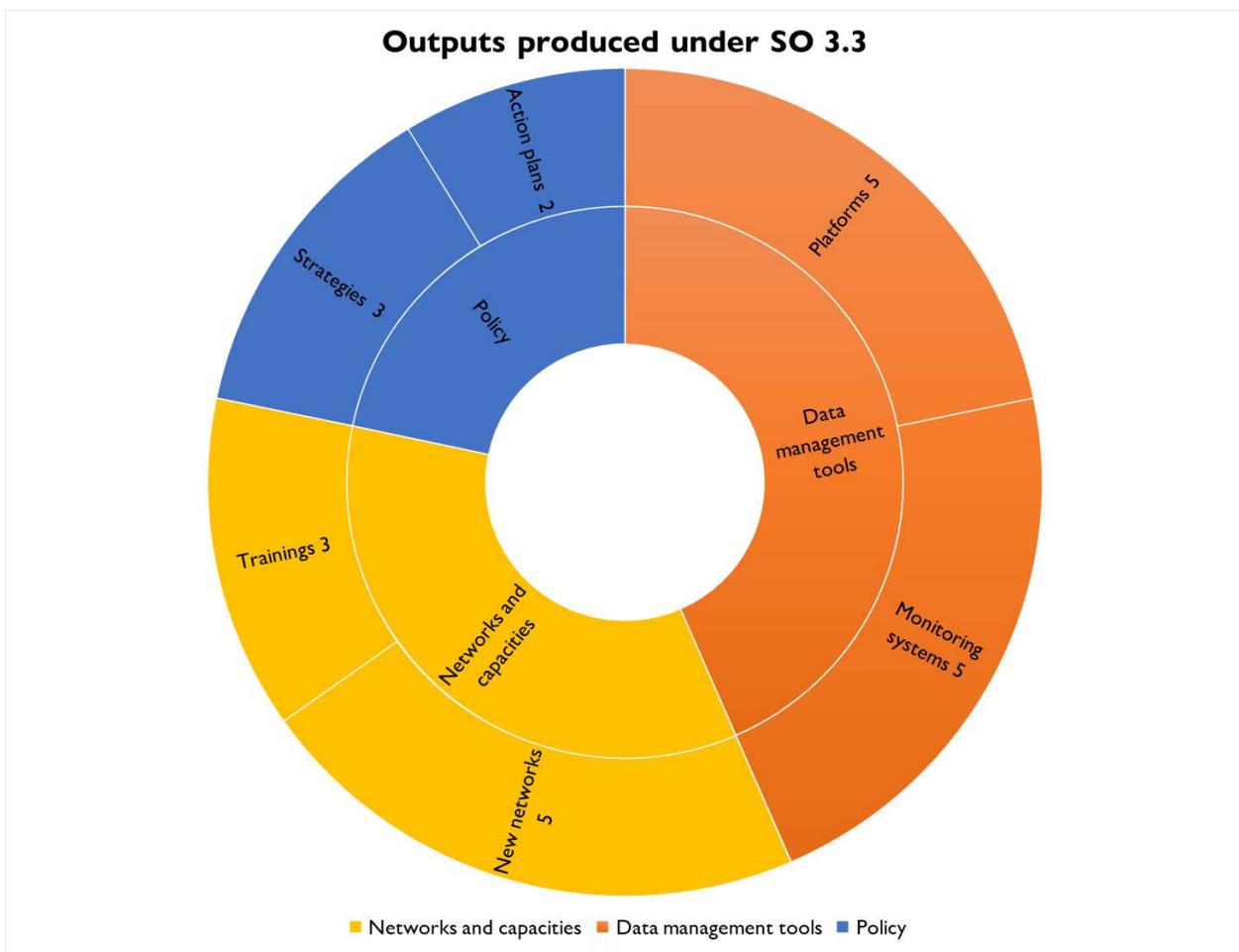
Programme contribution to change

Apart from 1 Standard+ project initially funded, eight projects were funded, of standard (5), strategic (1) and cluster (2) type, even if the programme was foreseen to be implemented mainly by strategic projects.

S.O. 3.3 focused on enhancing the water quality of the sea and coastal area of the Italy-Croatia cooperation area.

Key typologies of outputs under this objective include trainings (3) and new networks (5), monitoring systems (5) and platforms (5), action plans (2) and strategies (3). The relatively significant emphasis on data management tools within this little SO should be highlighted.

Figure 14 Types of outputs produced under SO 3.3



Source: Evaluator's elaboration based on the final reports of the projects

Under Specific Objective 3.3, the projects have contributed to reducing environmental impact, employing a combination of technological tools, data platforms, and community-driven initiatives to protect marine and coastal ecosystems.

Monitoring systems have proved to be a key tool in assessing and safeguarding water quality. Projects like WATERCARE deployed real-time water quality monitoring systems,

allowing for continuous tracking of water parameters and rapid detection of pollution events. Similarly, the NET4mPlastic project contributed by implementing technologies to track plastic waste levels in coastal and marine environments, further helping to manage pollution. Other projects, such as RESISTANCE, also developed monitoring systems to centralize and analyse environmental data, ensuring that decision-makers had access to the necessary tools for effective decisions. **These monitoring tools have laid the foundation for more accurate assessments of water quality and pollution sources, crucial for informed management.**

The development of **web platforms** further strengthened the capacity for sustainable marine and coastal management. RESISTANCE developed an integrated platform that centralizes environmental data, providing local authorities and decision-makers with real-time access to critical information, enhancing their ability to manage marine resources and monitor pollution. HATCH also contributed by creating a harmonized geodatabase that supports spatial planning and the sustainable use of marine resources. **These platforms facilitate better coordination across different stakeholders, enhancing the capacity for effective governance of marine and coastal ecosystems.**

The **creation of networks has been crucial for fostering cross-border collaboration.** The ECOMAP project, for example, established a network of Blue Technology Innovation Hubs, encouraging the exchange of best practices and technologies among public and private stakeholders. This network promotes innovation and supports sustainable practices in marine management. In parallel, the NET4mPlastic project helped to establish networks for waste management and marine litter monitoring, enhancing cooperation between local communities, environmental organizations, and public authorities. These networks have bolstered the efforts of the projects by providing platforms for the exchange of knowledge and resources, ensuring a more unified approach to water quality protection.

Action Plans and Strategies have played an important role in guiding long-term improvements. RESISTANCE developed action plans that laid out specific steps for preserving marine environments and combating pollution in the Italy-Croatia cooperation area. These action plans, alongside the strategies developed by ECOMAP and HATCH, have provided clear roadmaps for local and regional authorities to implement sustainable practices and effectively address environmental challenges. The integration of these plans into local governance frameworks has reinforced the sustainability of the project outcomes, ensuring that the efforts to protect water quality extend beyond the project lifespan.

Lastly, the projects have contributed to **training and capacity-building efforts.** ECOMAP and RESISTANCE organized several workshops and training sessions aimed at strengthening the skills of local authorities and stakeholders in marine and coastal management. These training activities enhanced the ability of public institutions to use the tools and methodologies developed throughout the projects, ensuring that they were equipped to continue managing marine resources effectively in the long term. The knowledge and skills gained through these training initiatives have

contributed to more informed decision-making and better implementation of environmental policies. Community-Driven Actions which are actions where communities actively participate have been instrumental in raising awareness and directly reducing environmental impact. RESISTANCE organized several beach cleanup days in Podstrana and Goro, engaging local volunteers, divers, and students. These initiatives collected over four tons of waste, primarily plastic, which were sent for recycling. By directly involving the community, RESISTANCE not only cleaned the beaches but also fostered a deeper understanding of environmental issues. According to the Lead Beneficiary, these cleanup activities, were set to continue after the project's conclusion under the management of local municipalities of Podstrana and Goro, exemplify the importance of local engagement in environmental protection.

In conclusion, under SO 3.3, the projects have made substantial contribution in enhancing the water quality of the sea and coastal areas through a combination of technological tools, data platforms, networks, action plans, strategies, and capacity-building initiatives. These efforts, which have included the development of monitoring systems and the establishment of collaborative platforms, have laid the **groundwork for sustainable management and protection of marine ecosystems in the Italy-Croatia cooperation area**. However, **it is essential to encourage greater use of the tools developed by the projects among policymakers**.

For SO 3.3, **programme-specific output indicators** were developed. These indicators assessed the number of technological solutions implemented and the microplastic waste collected in marine areas.

All targets for these indicators were significantly or very significantly exceeded.

The initial estimation of the technological solutions to be implemented was significantly lower than the actual capacity of the projects, indicating an overly cautious approach. In contrast, the initial estimate regarding the capacity to collect microplastics in marine areas proved to be highly accurate, aligning well with the actual programme outputs. The following table provides a thorough overview.

Table 8 Output indicator targets and achievements (SO 3.3)

Code	Definition	Target value	Achieved value	% of achievement
3.301	Environment friendly technological solutions (and approaches) implemented	2	30	1,500%
3.303	Microplastic waste collected in marine areas	1,000,000	1,061,149	106%

Source: data provided by the MAJS (January 2025)

The impact generated by projects reached different target groups, including:

- LRAs often gained enhanced technical capacities, including tools like Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and real-time water quality monitoring systems, enabling informed decision-making and better environmental policies. They were also provided with strategic documents, action plans, and guidelines to support the adoption of sustainable environmental practices.

- Universities and research centres played dual roles as both contributors and beneficiaries of projects. They used advanced monitoring systems and contributed to innovations in marine management, ensuring scientific support for the projects' outputs.
- NGOs played an active role in raising awareness and engaging local communities through beach cleanups and educational programs, fostering sustainable practices.
- General Public: awareness campaigns and participation in environmental activities, promoting sustainable behaviours and long-term commitment to marine protection.

The result indicator “**Quality of coastal bathing waters (according to the dir. 2006/7/CE)**”, selected by the programme to assess changes in the SO 3.3 policy field, overachieved its target by the end of the programme's lifecycle in 2023. Its relevance as an accurate measure of the programme's actual contribution to policy change is questionable. In this context, it is noteworthy that the in the current programming period direct result indicators are used rather than broader context indicators, such as "Quality of coastal bathing waters (according to the dir. 2006/7/CE)".

Cross-border added value

Cross-border cooperation enhanced the projects' effectiveness and scope. One of the most important contributions was the exchange of knowledge, data, and best practices, which has significantly strengthened environmental management capacities among partners in both countries. Projects like WATERCARE, HATCH, and RESISTANCE have developed unified approaches to water quality monitoring and marine protection, enabling both countries to **standardise** assessment methods and tackle shared pollution causes. WATERCARE, for example, created a joint water quality monitoring system, enhancing coordination and informing effective management strategies on both coasts.

The RESISTANCE project also exemplified cross-border value by facilitating knowledge exchange through study visits and collaborative workshops, leading to the development of strategic documents for sustainable marine management. Similarly, HATCH demonstrated how knowledge sharing can strengthen marine spatial planning efforts, fostering cooperation between stakeholders and creating a foundation for future environmental measures and policies.

NET4mPlastic showcased the benefits of shared methodologies and data exchange, particularly in the monitoring of microplastics, allowing both nations to compare pollution levels and adopt standardized practices.

These collaborations not only addressed shared environmental challenges but also laid the foundation for future policy development and long-term sustainability.

Durability

Across SO 3.3, projects demonstrated varying levels of success in ensuring the sustainability of their results. Some, like HATCH, have a clear focus on technical sustainability, with the Data Hub

designed to serve as a lasting tool for data use, expansion, and updating. While it was suggested by the Lead partner to integrate it into the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme in order to enhance durability, this ambition has not been fully realized, as challenges in political coordination and lack of sufficient support hinder its widespread adoption. Similarly, the RESISTANCE project faces challenges in maintaining the Joint Integration Platform's relevance, as the University of Ferrara can only guarantee its operation for five years without a clear strategy for future updates or integration into other projects.

On the other hand, the WATERCARE project has demonstrated a solid strategy for ensuring the continuity of its outputs. The sewage storage tank and the Water Quality Integrated System (WQIS) continue operating beyond the project lifetime, with several stakeholders committed to maintaining and expanding monitoring efforts. This includes the development of guidelines and tools to support local authorities, ensuring a lasting impact on water quality governance.

However, the overall sustainability of many projects still depends on the involvement of external funding or the adoption of outputs by local stakeholders. Projects like NETWAP and NET4MPLASTIC have set up networks or platforms to ensure the continued availability of project data, but these efforts rely on ongoing engagement and support from external actors, highlighting the challenges of securing long-term sustainability without clear institutional backing.

External factors

Projects under SO 3.3 faced diverse external challenges, many of which stemmed from administrative delays, time constraints, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Administrative issues were prominent in WATERCARE, where delays in public procurement procedures and unclear activity definitions caused some delays, particularly in Croatia. NET4mPlastic faced strict administrative procedures and communication delays between partners. HATCH struggled with the short project duration, limiting event organization and administrative preparation.

The pandemic severely disrupted activities in NET4mPlastic, NETWAP, and ECOMAP, delaying operations and forcing shifts to online formats that proved less effective in some cases. NETWAP also dealt with site-specific challenges, relocating its pilot project due to permit issues, while ECOMAP noted that territorial stakeholders are slightly fragmented and sometimes inactive. RESISTANCE experienced delays linked to unclear definition and comprehension of some deliverables and difficulties in dissemination efforts.

Policy divergence across countries created governance barriers, underscoring the importance of aligning regulatory frameworks to facilitate cross-border cooperation. Despite these challenges, projects demonstrated resilience and adaptability, achieving key objectives and addressing many of the obstacles encountered.

5.9 SO 4.1 IMPROVE THE QUALITY, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF MARINE AND COASTAL TRANSPORT SERVICES AND NODES BY PROMOTING MULTIMODALITY IN THE PROGRAMME AREA

Theory of change

Needs – SO 4.1 addressed the need to improve the quality, safety, and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport systems, promoting low-carbon and multimodal transport solutions. It responded to the need for reducing CO2 emissions and pollution through innovative technologies and coordinated approaches, while ensuring better connectivity and efficiency in transport services.

Programme operations – For the entire Priority Axis 4 (which includes only SO 4.1) the total funding amounts to EUR 43,291,802, which were spent through non-repayable grants. SO 4.1 invested in two types of actions: ‘Support coordination/ harmonization/ monitoring of data and systems for enhancing multimodality’ and ‘Piloting tools/ solutions for improving connectivity in the transport systems’. Expected beneficiaries included local, regional, and national public authorities; regional development agencies; enterprises and transport operators, transport associations, innovation agencies, NGOs, as well as educational institutions, universities, and research institutes.

Outputs - The types of actions listed above were expected to improve multimodal transport systems, enhance connectivity and coordination, promote environmentally sustainable and low-carbon transport solutions, and harmonise administrative and operational procedures for better quality management in transport services. The outputs are measured by the following programme-specific output indicators:

- Improved multimodal transport services;
- New links established;
- Harmonised services for passengers put in place.

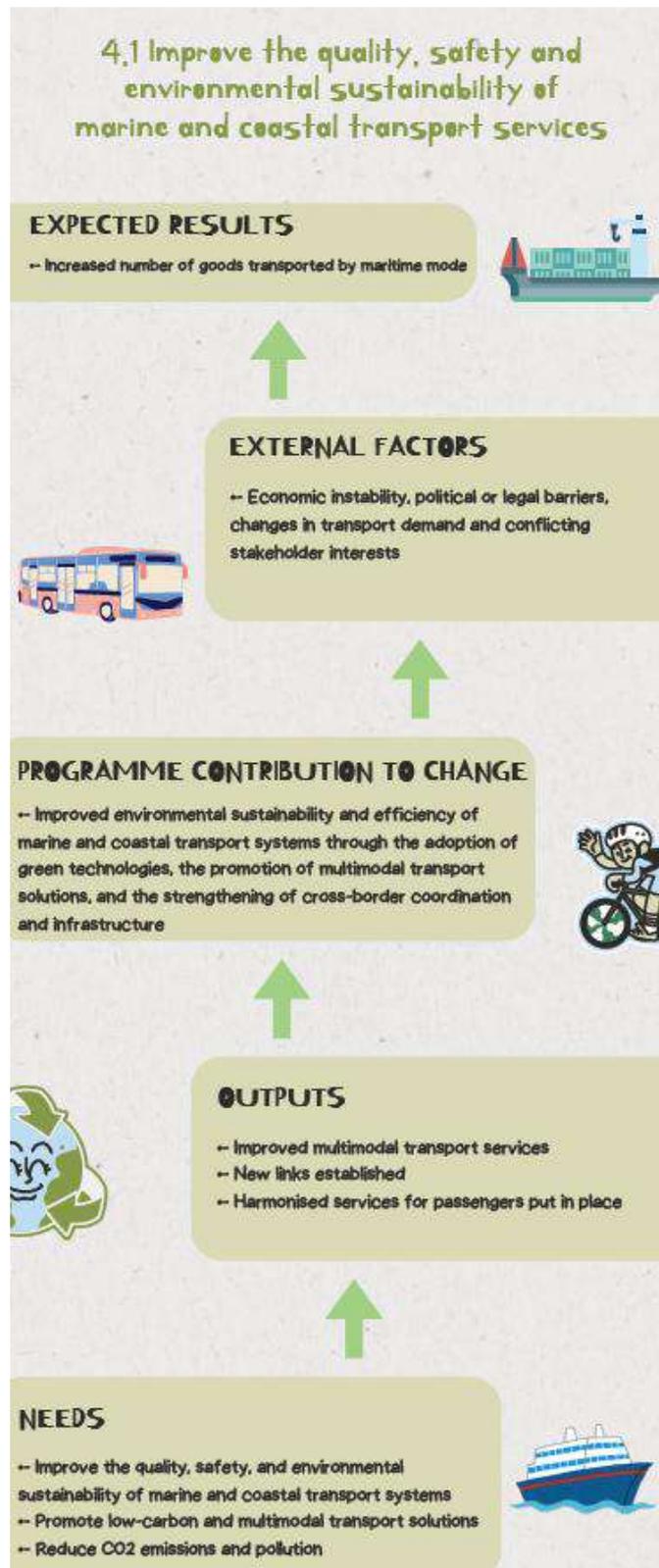
The programme has not included common output indicators from the annex of EU Reg. 1299/2013 for this specific objective.

Expected programme contribution to change - The programme was expected to improve the environmental sustainability and efficiency of marine and coastal transport systems through the adoption of green technologies, the promotion of multimodal transport solutions, and the strengthening of cross-border coordination and infrastructure.

External factors - Several external factors, including economic instability, political or legal barriers, changes in transport demand and conflicting stakeholder interests, could hinder the programme's achievement of results for this specific objective.

Expected results - The expected result of this SO was the increased number of goods transported by maritime mode. The result indicator is measured in thousand tonnes with a baseline value of 2,445 in 2014 and a target value of 2,690 by 2023. The source of the data is EUROSTAT – Maritime transport goods per country and main ports, with reporting frequencies set for the years 2018, 2020, and 2023.

Figure 15 Theory of change for SO 4.1



Programme contribution to change

Apart from the 5 Standard+ projects initially funded, SO 4.1 supported 14 projects. Most of them were of the standard type. Differently from what had been foreseen in the programme, which envisaged to implement this SO mainly by strategic projects, only three strategic projects were funded. Finally, the SO saw the development of one cluster project.

The Lead Beneficiaries of the standard, strategic, and cluster projects are predominantly concentrated in the northern Adriatic regions of Italy and Croatia.

This geographical concentration is particularly pronounced, with six out of 14 beneficiaries based in the province of Trieste, three in the province of Venice, one in the county of Istria, and another in the county of Primorsko-Goranska. In contrast, only three of the 14 projects are led by organisations situated in the central or southern Adriatic regions. This distribution suggests a regional variation, implying that stakeholders in the northern cooperation area exhibit a stronger recognition of both the challenges and opportunities in marine and coastal transport and multimodality.

Two main types of Lead Beneficiaries emerge as predominant. The first category comprises authorities and companies responsible for managing port and airport infrastructures, leading five projects. Notably, the Port Network Authority of the Eastern Adriatic Sea, based in Trieste, coordinated one strategic, one standard, and one cluster project. Similarly, the North Adriatic Sea Port Authority, based in Venice, led a standard project, while Pula Airport Ltd. was responsible for another standard project. The second prominent category includes research institutions, sectoral organisations, and universities, which collectively led five projects spanning both standard and strategic types. The strong representation of these two groups highlights the **central role of infrastructure management and research-driven innovation** in shaping the region's approach to marine and coastal transport and multimodality.

SO 4.1 is **the most complex area of intervention** of the programme. It raises the critical question of how a cross-border programme, with relatively limited financial resources, can effectively contribute to improving maritime transport. More broadly, it prompts an inquiry into how territorial cooperation policy programmes can support sectoral policies that require substantial investments and coordination at the transnational level.

Most of the projects addressed critical issues in maritime transport within the Adriatic region, focusing on shared challenges such as **optimising port procedures, enhancing safety measures, and advancing the adoption of ICT tools** for more efficient management of transport services. Additionally, the initiatives encompassed efforts to **support the development of small ports**, improve maritime connections related to tourism, and formulate strategies aimed at achieving long-term sustainable transport solutions.

The projects also focused on enhancing the **environmental sustainability** of maritime transport by exploring greener ferry routes, developing energy-efficient port operations, and

creating common environmental strategies. Several projects worked on promoting **sustainable mobility solutions**, such as e-mobility and shared mobility services, while others aimed to modernise and harmonise logistics processes for both freight and passenger transport.

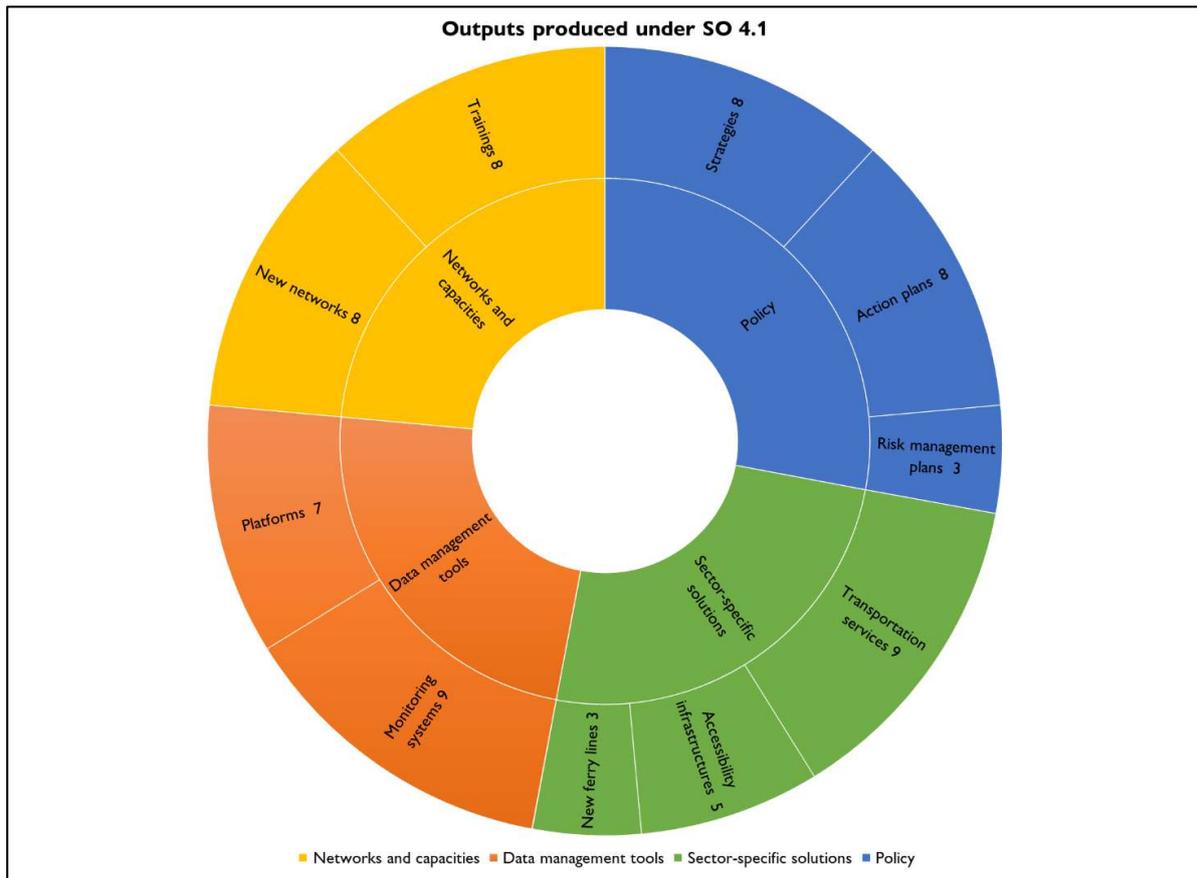
More specifically, some of the initiatives enhanced **intermodal transport** systems by integrating ports, airports, and other transport modes, with an emphasis on reducing environmental impacts, improving operational performance, and increasing digitalization. Efforts were therefore made to improve the **connectivity between coastal areas and hinterlands**, offering smarter and more integrated mobility options that reduce traffic congestion and CO2 emissions.

SO 4.1 is characterised by the development of sector-specific outputs, including **transportation services** (e.g., cold ironing and port lighting systems) and **accessibility infrastructure** (e.g., wheeling ramps for bicycles). The most ambitious expected output in this category is the establishment of **new ferry lines**. **These outputs constitute the core of the monitoring system**, providing key data to assess the success of this specific objective.

In comparison to other specific objectives, network creation, enhancement, and capacity-building interventions appear less prominent. While a data-driven approach is integrated into several projects, it has not emerged as a defining feature of SO 4.1, as seen in SOs 3.2 and 3.3. The development of policy tools within this objective primarily focuses on action plans and strategic frameworks.

The figure below indicates the various types of outputs and their relative weight under the SO.

Figure 16 Types of outputs produced under SO 4.1



Source: Evaluator’s elaboration based on the final reports of the projects

Projects focused on the maritime sector primarily produced preparatory studies and implemented pilot actions. A key concern addressed was the reduction of the environmental impact of transportation activities, which included initiatives such as cold ironing and port lighting systems. **Some projects reported tangible environmental impacts, assessed using well-structured metrics.** A valuable example is provided in the box below.

The 13 Pilot Actions carried out by the SUSPORT Project Partners make it possible to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) emissions by about 16.750 t CO₂ eq per year. Since the Italian and Croatian ports under consideration have an ecological footprint corresponding to approximately 628.000 t CO₂ eq, per year, then the 13 Pilot Actions allow to reduce emissions by almost 3% of the total emissions caused by terrestrial and maritime activities in port areas. The major contributions to the reduction of greenhouse gases (GHGs) emissions are guaranteed by the two cold ironing projects, one by the Port of Trieste and the other by the Port of Ancona. The other projects offer smaller contributions to reducing emissions, but still significant when compared to the ecological footprints of the individual Ports involved. They are positioned in this order: Port lighting systems (emissions saving: 412 tons CO₂ eq per year); e-cars & plug-in hybrid vehicles (83 t CO₂ eq/year); photovoltaic systems Energy (66 tons CO₂ eq per year); efficiency port's building (31 t CO₂ eq/year).

A key issue discussed in the section on durability pertains to the follow-up of pilot actions, which, in some cases, risk remaining one-off activities. Conversely, **projects aimed at enhancing connectivity between coastal areas and hinterlands, particularly those that developed intermodal solutions, have demonstrated tangible impacts**, also through the financing of small-scale infrastructure. A relevant example is provided in the box below.

Thanks to the ICARUS project, improvement of the access to services was produced both on Croatian and Italian territories. Two examples are provided.

Information panels about existing routes were installed in Pazin, while e-bike services were introduced in both Pazin and Lupoglav, facilitating the integration of bicycle and train transportation across the region. Additionally, the installation of new bike racks on e-buses in Poreč has enabled passengers to seamlessly combine two modes of mobility.

A significant example on the Italian side is the improvement of access to intermodal services in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region and the corresponding cross-border area with Croatia. This was achieved through the installation of 28 wheeling ramps in 10 railway stations, enhancing bike-train intermodality along the region's two main cycling corridors—north-south and east-west. These upgrades strengthen connections with neighboring areas in Croatia, Slovenia, and Austria, further integrating the Alpe Adria and Parenzana cycle paths with additional supporting services.

Simultaneously, the expansion of intermodal services, such as the Bike&Bus route connecting Trieste to Poreč, has facilitated access to existing cross-border and local train and maritime transport options, improving regional connectivity.

It appears that **the more projects focus on localised solutions within the respective partner territories, the more they generate lasting impacts beyond the project's conclusion.** However, questions regarding the **additionality** of cross-border financing tools arise, as discussed in the following section. This suggests that regional funding could be considered a more appropriate instrument in some cases.

As previously mentioned, the project portfolio includes initiatives that developed **platforms for managing transport-related data.** While this type of output is present across several projects, it does not define the specific objective due to the diverse range of outputs produced. This indicates that the first generation of cross-border projects financed in the maritime transport sector primarily served as an exploration of various potential approaches. As illustrated in the example provided in the box below, a project with a strong focus on a data-driven approach has significant potential; however, its actual utilization depends on the willingness of relevant stakeholders. The project openly acknowledges that, despite the ability to maintain the platform's operation for some years, the actual sustainability in terms of platform usage remains uncertain. This uncertainty raises **concerns about the potential of such initiatives to generate lasting impact in the sector.**

The GUTTA project developed a web tool designed to provide CO₂-optimal ferry routes, based on operational meteo-marine forecast products. If utilized by relevant stakeholders, this tool has the potential to reduce CO₂ emissions from ferries.

The GUTTA tool remains operational for three years after the project's conclusion, with its open access policy maintained. However, no further technical developments or updates to the service can be assured.

Since the effectiveness of the tool is closely tied to the operational and commercial decisions made by private operators (shipowners or ferry companies), the CO₂ emission reductions cannot be guaranteed by the project partners.

The projects produced a series of outputs to **influence sectoral policies**. Some of the projects developed action plans targeting non-partner authorities, harmonized mobility data to support evidence-based decision-making, and provided strategies for sustainable multimodal transport systems. Activities fostered local policy improvements through collaboration with authorities, while cross-border strategies and policy recommendations aligned with EU frameworks contributed to broader regional goals. Deliverables included methodologies, action plans, and guidelines on best practices, addressing challenges in transport accessibility, intermodality, and environmental sustainability. These outcomes are intended to equip policymakers and stakeholders with tools to drive innovation, improve efficiency, and support sustainable development in the programme area.

However, **the implementation and adoption of these tools present significant challenges in a cross-border context**, where diverse and influential stakeholders must align their orientations and modify established practices in complex and sensitive domains, such as port infrastructure management and ferry route design. As discussed in the section on durability, the establishment and reinforcement of permanent stakeholder networks in cross-border settings constitute a complementary measure to the development of policy instruments within these projects.

The analysis of the **output indicators** supports the findings discussed above, confirming the capacity to generate the envisaged outputs. The significant overachievement of the indicators 'Improved multimodal transport services' and 'Harmonized services for passengers put in place' can be attributed to the programme underestimation of the projects' capacity to deliver but also indicates that there is room to align the comprehension of the indicators at the programme and project level. The indicator 'New links established' is discussed in the following section dedicated to the cross-border added value.

The achievement of the output indicators for SO 4.1 is shown in the table below.

Table 9 Output indicator targets and achievements (SO 4.1)

Code	Definition	Target value	Achieved value	% of achievement
4.1O1	Improved multimodal transport services	5	78	1,560%
4.1O2	New links established	2	3	150%
4.1O3	Harmonized services for passengers put in place	4	30	750%

Source: Evaluator's elaboration based on the monitoring data

The impact generated by projects reaches a wide array of target groups. According to the evaluator's survey, the most impacted are:

- Local, regional and national public authorities
- Regional and local development agencies
- Enterprises, transport operators including operators of multimodal logistics hubs, infrastructure providers
- Transport associations

The involvement of Regional innovation agencies and Education and training organisations as well as universities and research institutes is also significant, albeit less intensive. NGOs, on the other hand, seem to have been involved to a lesser extent.

The **result indicator 'Goods transported via maritime mode'**, selected by the programme to assess changes in the SO 4.1 policy field, **exceeded its target** by the end of the programme's lifecycle in **2023**. However, significant fluctuations in this indicator were observed during the programming period due to external factors, as discussed below. **Its relevance as an accurate measure of the programme's actual contribution to policy change is questionable.** In this context, it is noteworthy that the in the current programming period direct result indicators are used rather than broader context indicators, such as "Goods transported via maritime mode."

Cross-border added value

Projects addressing maritime transport challenges in the Adriatic - such as developing environmentally sustainable practices, optimizing port procedures, enhancing safety measures, and promoting the integration of ICT tools for more efficient transport management - **exhibit clear cross-border relevance**, as they focus on the shared resource of the sea.

However, these initiatives in some cases reveal the **limitations of cross-border cooperation, particularly in overcoming administrative obstacles**. Effective resolution of such challenges would require the involvement of multiple governance levels, which is rarely achievable within the scope of an ETC project. Under SO 4.1, ministerial-level participation remains limited and is primarily observed on the Croatian side. Conversely, municipalities, which actively participate due to their vested interest in local development dynamics, show minimal influence when addressing cross-border governance barriers.

This situation is exemplified by an iconic output generated by the programme, i.e. ‘New ferry lines’, measured by the monitoring system as ‘New links established’. Significant efforts were made to achieve this output, but in some instances, the obstacles proved insurmountable. This was the case with the project outlined in the box below.

Box 13 – SUTRA (standard project)

The main goal of the SUTRA project was to promote sustainable mobility along the Adriatic coast and its hinterland, to reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and lower CO₂ emissions. Among the most significant results achieved by the project are:

- the creation of a Cross-Border Manual for implementing soft mobility solutions in coastal areas;
- the launch of nine new eco-friendly multimodal transport services in Italian and Croatian cities, including Caorle, Pescara, Chioggia, and Split.

It is important to note that the pilot initiatives implemented during the project diverged from the original plan. Specifically, the lead partner, the Municipality of Caorle, had initially proposed a maritime transport link between Caorle (Italy) and Poreč (Croatia). However, this initiative faced significant administrative and regulatory challenges, particularly related to Croatia's accession to the Schengen Area. The unanticipated requirement to establish a customs clearance system for passenger processing highlighted a critical oversight in the initial planning phase. This case underscores the importance of integrating comprehensive regulatory assessments into the design of cross-border mobility projects to ensure alignment with evolving policy frameworks.

The overall experience of Specific Objective (S.O.) 4.1 indicates that the implementation of the output ‘New ferry line’ was not sufficiently within the manageable factors of an ETC-funded project. The design of the monitoring system for the current 2021–2027 programme reflects an acknowledgment of this limitation. In addition to the ‘Interreg indicators’, only one ERDF output indicator was selected, specifically targeting intermodality (RCO54: New or modernized intermodal connections), demonstrating a more cautious approach.

More generally, it is important to note that in this policy domain, which necessitates robust multi-level governance, a bottom-up approach carries inherent risks. This challenge likely explains why the programme initially prioritized financing strategic projects, which did not fully translate into implementation. The portfolio included indeed five Standard + projects, 10 Standard projects, three Strategic projects, and one Cluster project. In this context, the strength of the partnership and its ability to control as many factors as possible during project implementation appears to be particularly crucial for success in this policy area.

Cross-border added value becomes more evident when projects are founded on cooperation between bodies with well-defined and robust sectoral competencies, such as port authorities. The example provided in the box below illustrates that cross-border cooperation is essential for enhancing the environmental performance of goods transport in the

Box 14 – SUSPORT (strategic project)

The SUSPORT project, led by the Port Network Authority of the Eastern Adriatic Sea, stated that the achievement of its outcomes would not have been possible without cross-border cooperation.

While maritime transport remains the most environmentally sustainable method for goods transportation, port operations still contribute to air quality degradation and greenhouse gas emissions. However, the ports within the cross-border area lacked a unified approach to environmental planning and energy efficiency, resulting in inefficient coordination and the absence of a common cross-border strategy. This gap was particularly problematic given that pollution and greenhouse gas emissions transcend national borders.

Therefore, strengthening institutional capacity and cross-border governance was essential for the collaborative planning of environmental impact reduction and greenhouse gas emissions mitigation across all ports in the Programme Area.

Adriatic Sea, fully aligning with the Adriatic-Ionian Green/Smart Port Hubs Concept promoted by EUSAIR.

Conversely, for projects targeting local development challenges - such as those focused on multimodal solutions, including connectivity between coastal and inland areas – the cross-border added value may be less immediately evident. Their contributions to sustainable transport and mobility are more localised, with activities being mirrored across respective territories rather than fostering a broader cross-border integration. While guidelines for preparing mobility plans or other common strategic orientations can be shared, the intensity of cooperation remains relatively low, functioning more as a framework for networking and exchange rather than the development of unified transport solutions. As previously mentioned, the question of using regional and national funding to support localised actions warrants consideration.

Durability

The main finding emerged is that **interventions in the field of maritime transport and multimodal mobility would need strong integration with other funds to continue producing effects**. However, the evaluators' survey indicated that the projects generated additional investments or funding as a result of their outcomes only in one case out of three. This

means that the so called ‘**cascade effect**’ appears limited, which is a threat for the durability of this kind of projects.

For projects that produced more localised effects, durability appears to depend significantly on the capacity of Local and Regional Authorities and other stakeholders operating at the local level. In certain territories, durability can emerge as a strength, particularly when local actors demonstrate the ability to attract additional funding. However, as previously noted, such projects raise concerns regarding their cross-border value and the extent to which they contribute to broader objectives. The example provided below highlights the significance of varying territorial administrative contexts in ensuring the durability of local transport solutions.

Box 15 SUTRA (standard project)

The durability of the SUTRA project’s outputs depends on the management capacity of each partner. In the case of the Municipality of Caorle, the management and maintenance of the service has been outsourced to an external operator for three years, enabling the planned expansion of the bike-sharing system and integration of other multimodal transport options. A service contract was awarded to an external company to handle the IT aspects of the bike-sharing system and the maintenance of the bicycles. Revenue, however, is managed directly by the Municipality through the Stripe system, which allows real-time issuance of invoices and receipts to bike users. Although both maintenance and bicycle management are outsourced, this process remains challenging and entails high costs.

In the case of the city of Poreč (PP7), unable to directly provide transport services, the public transport service launched as part of the project was granted in concession to an external company for a period of five years.

However, a more strategic approach to durability has also been observed. As mentioned previously, the ability to influence sectoral policies - the highest ambition of ETC projects, characterized by limited budgets and a strong capacity to mobilize resources for a future-oriented approach - cannot be achieved through individual projects alone. In some instances, this reflection led to the **establishment of permanent stakeholder networks, where key topics in the policy field are discussed and developed.** This is exemplified by the experience presented in the box below. Such an approach appears essential for consolidating the lessons learned during the projects and fostering an environment conducive to the application of the policy tools that have been developed.

The MIMOSA project acknowledges that ensuring long-term durability cannot rely solely on the repeated implementation of pilot actions. Instead, it necessitates a strategic approach aimed at institutionalizing project outcomes through formalized agreements, memoranda of understanding, and protocols. Furthermore, the development of dedicated cooperation structures is essential to sustaining continuous, long-term impacts at both the cross-border level and within the EUSAIR framework.

In this context, it is important to emphasize the project's network of stakeholders, who have been informed and consulted through meetings within the established Sustainable Mobility Quality Partnership Groups. Moreover, the creation of the **SUSMOB network** (<https://susmob.eu>) represents a significant step forward in facilitating the replication and further refinement of knowledge, as well as the consolidation of lessons learned. Currently, the network is promoting discussion on eight main topics: Amplifying Members' Mobility Insights, Driving EU Funding for Mobility, Advancing European Cooperation, Strategic Alliances for Mobility, Scaling Best Mobility Practices, Collaborating on EU Mobility Projects, Supporting EUSAIR and Cooperation, Promoting Regional Mobility Cooperation.

Another significant **factor influencing the durability of the projects is their alignment, or lack thereof, with the EUSAIR Strategy**, specifically within Pillar 2 'Connecting the Region.' The macro-regional area encompasses the territories of ten countries, including four EU Member States, five candidate countries, and the microstate of San Marino. Within this framework, the Italian and Croatian territories covered by the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme play a pivotal role in supporting maritime connections in the northern part of the macro-region. Notably, two strategic projects (MIMOSA and SUSPORT), three standard projects (ICARUS, INTESA, PROMARES), and the Cluster project (DIGSEA) have been labelled as "Soft Measures" under the EUSAIR Strategy⁶. This designation signifies their clear and direct contribution to the macro-regional objectives.

The projects financed by the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme constitute nearly 50% of the 'Soft Measures' classified as 'Studies and Pilots' (six out of 13) and account for two-thirds of the studies and pilots related to maritime ports (six out of nine) across the entire macro-regional area. This

⁶ EUSAIR Thematic Steering Group for Pillar 2 Connecting the Region – Transport Sub-Group – Book on EUSAIR labelled projects https://www.espcommunity.eu/images/Documenti/report/energy/Book%20of%20EUSAIR%20labelled%20projects_ver04.pdf

indicates that, **from the EUSAIR perspective, the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme serves as a pivotal instrument for researching and piloting solutions to enhance connectivity within the Adriatic region.** Moreover, EUSAIR's recognition of these projects as having effectively and directly contributed to the Strategy should underscore a broader commitment, beyond the projects' partnerships and the programme, to sustain and build upon the 'Studies and Pilots' launched by these projects.

Finally, the fact that all six Interreg Italy-Croatia projects labeled by EUSAIR involved interventions on maritime ports underscores the **programme's strong focus on the maritime domain.** Maritime ports, which serve as emblematic sites for tourism in the Adriatic area under SO 3.1, are positioned as fundamental hubs for SO 4.1. This emphasis represents a notable strength and serves as a **distinctive factor of recognition beyond the programme's framework.**

External factors

The implementation of SO 4.1, i.e. a specific objective dedicated to transport and multimodality, happened in a period marked by the **COVID-19 pandemic.** The "Thematic session: Connecting the Region: Transport (Pillar 2)" of EUSAIR reported in January 2021 that "since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020) passenger transport in the Adriatic-Ionian region has dropped down by 90%-95% (intercity transport), while freight transport has maintained levels close to the pre-crisis period, due to an increase of urban deliveries and food and pharmaceutical freight distribution".

In this context, the pandemic brought dramatic changes that significantly impacted the projects, mirroring broader programme trends. These included limitations on meetings, on-site visits, and stakeholder engagement, particularly in the initial phases, as well as disruptions in supply chains. Despite these challenges, the pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital tools, aligning with the objectives of several projects aimed at enhancing passenger services. However, ongoing market pressures, including inflation and further supply chain disruptions following the **Russian invasion of Ukraine,** compounded these difficulties, affecting project implementation and results. These factors also influenced the performance of the context result indicator, "Goods transported by maritime mode."

The SUTRA case illustrates how transport-related projects often rank high on local policymakers' agendas. This prioritisation can create favourable conditions for long-term sustainability but also carries risks. Political priorities may shift after local elections, or authorities may propose solutions that later prove impractical. Additionally, several projects faced challenges stemming from complex tendering procedures and administrative authorisation processes, further complicating their implementation.

6 Contribution to EUSAIR

The 2014-2020 Interreg Italy-Croatia programme has contributed to the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR), particularly by aligning with its four thematic pillars. The programme's projects aimed to foster blue growth, environmental quality, regional connectivity, and sustainable tourism, supporting EUSAIR's overarching objectives for macro-regional development.

Pillar 1: Blue Growth

EUSAIR's Blue Growth pillar aims to promote sustainable economic activities in the marine and maritime sectors. Under SO 1.1, the programme financed projects fostering marine innovation, sustainable fisheries, and digitalisation of blue economy sectors, e.g.:

- InnovaMare enhanced cross-border cooperation in marine robotics and smart underwater technology, contributing to the modernization of the blue economy sector.
- COASTENERGY promoted renewable energy solutions in coastal and marine environments, reinforcing sustainability in maritime economic activities.
- PRIZEFISH introduced innovative fishing practices and eco-certification systems, reducing environmental impact while maintaining industry competitiveness.

Pillar 2: Connecting the Region

This pillar focuses on improving transport and energy networks across the Adriatic-Ionian region, with an emphasis on multimodal transport, port efficiency, and sustainable mobility. Under SO 4.1, the programme financed projects fostering marine innovation, sustainable fisheries, and digitalisation of blue economy sectors, e.g.:

- MIMOSA addressed multimodal transport challenges, enhancing connectivity between ports and inland transport systems in the cooperation area.
- SUSPORT improved port sustainability, integrating low-emission technologies and digital tools to optimize port operations.
- DIGSEA advanced digitalisation in maritime logistics, improving efficiency and interoperability of shipping services.

Pillar 3: Environmental Quality

Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 contributed to Pillar 3 of EUSAIR by financing projects dedicated to marine conservation, pollution reduction, and disaster risk preparedness (SO 2.1, 2.2, 3.2, 3.3), e.g.:

- FIRESPELL strengthened cross-border emergency response capacities, improving risk assessment and crisis management for natural and man-made disasters.
- AdriaMORE developed innovative tools for climate change monitoring, improving flood risk forecasting and coastal resilience.
- MARLESS addressed marine litter pollution, introducing eco-friendly waste management solutions and public awareness campaigns.

Pillar 4: Sustainable Tourism

EUSAIR aims to promote tourism as a driver for economic development while preserving cultural and natural heritage. Under SO 3.1, the programme contributed to this goal by supporting projects developing digital tools, enhancing tourism accessibility, and fostering cultural exchanges, e.g.:

- S.LI.DES promoted smart strategies for sustainable tourism, integrating big data and digital platforms to enhance visitor experiences while managing tourism flows sustainably.
- EXCOVER aimed to boost lesser-known destinations, promoting sustainable tourism in inland and rural areas to achieve a more balanced territorial development.

In summation, while the 2014-2020 programme funded valuable projects aligned with EUSAIR's thematic pillars, there are opportunities to deepen involvement and increase long-term impact at the macro-regional level.

Currently, the programme's contributions are primarily, although not exclusively, seen through individual projects aligning with EUSAIR priorities, but there is room to strengthen structural coordination between the two frameworks, i.e. programme and strategy. More emphasis on integrating project results into EUSAIR and its governance structures could enhance the programme's long-term impact and sustainability.

To strengthen the programme's long-term impact and ensure a concrete contribution to EUSAIR, continued coordination among Interreg programmes overlapping in the EUSAIR area (e.g. through the multi-programme coordination mechanism and beyond) should be ensured, enabling better alignment of priorities and long-term sustainability of results. Thematic clustering of projects and cross-programme capitalisation calls could create synergies and increase broader macro-regional impact. Furthermore, the involvement of both regional and local policymakers and private sector stakeholders should be deepened, facilitating the transition of innovative solutions into practical applications.

7 Cross-cutting themes

The Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 programme incorporated **gender mainstreaming** principles in project design and implementation, though its impact varied across different thematic areas. While gender considerations were more evident in projects related to sustainable tourism and capacity-building initiatives, sectors such as infrastructure and environmental sustainability showed limited integration of gender-sensitive policies.

The S.LI.DES project effectively promoted gender equality by ensuring female participation in tourism-related digital innovation. It fostered entrepreneurial training for women and engaged them in leadership roles within the tourism sector.

However, disparities remained in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as maritime transport and blue economy innovation. Future programming should emphasise stronger gender-sensitive policy enforcement, incorporating gender impact assessments and specific targets for female participation in all funded initiatives.

Resilience was a central theme in the programme, particularly in areas related to climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and economic sustainability. Several projects contributed to enhancing regional resilience by developing climate monitoring systems, early warning mechanisms and emergency response frameworks.

The FIRESPELL project played a crucial role in strengthening emergency response systems and disaster preparedness by equipping regional authorities with advanced tools and training modules. Similarly, the AdriaMORE project focused on climate change resilience by developing forecasting models to mitigate flooding risks in coastal regions, demonstrating a proactive approach to environmental protection and risk management.

In economic terms, the programme supported SME growth and workforce capacity-building, enhancing resilience against economic shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of economic and social resilience, as several projects had to adapt their methodologies to maintain stakeholder involvement through digital tools and remote collaboration.

Innovation was a key driver of success in multiple programme areas, particularly in the blue economy, sustainable tourism, and environmental management. The programme facilitated the development of new digital platforms, data-sharing tools, and eco-friendly technologies, which contributed to both economic competitiveness and environmental sustainability.

Projects such as InnovaMare and COASTENERGY showcased how cross-border cooperation could foster technological advancements in marine robotics, renewable energy solutions, and eco-certification standards. Innovation was also evident in biodiversity conservation efforts, where new monitoring techniques and sustainable resource management strategies were implemented

to improve environmental stewardship. The PRIZEFISH project focused on promoting sustainable fishing techniques through technological advancements, reducing environmental impacts while maintaining industry competitiveness. Additionally, DEEP-SEA contributed to smart transport solutions, integrating digital technology into maritime transport logistics to optimize efficiency and sustainability.

Despite these achievements, barriers to innovation remained, including regulatory differences between Italy and Croatia, limited financial autonomy for SMEs, and uneven technological infrastructure. Strengthening innovation ecosystems, greater public-private collaboration, and streamlined regulatory processes will therefore be crucial in the current and future programming periods.

8 Evaluation questions and findings

Effectiveness and efficiency of programme implementation

Evaluation Question

What is the progress towards the overall Programme goal, specific objectives and expected results? How is the progress about the means and resources mobilised?

The Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 programme achieved its overall goal and specific objectives, with a financial absorption rate of 99.95%. The programme effectively mobilised resources across all priority axes. Output targets were exceeded, often due to an underestimation of targets. External factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and inflation, created delays but were mitigated through programme flexibility, which proved instrumental in securing the successful delivery of projects.

To what extent has the programme achieved its general and specific objectives? Were there any internal or external factors hindering the achievement of the Italy Croatia CBC programme goals?

The programme successfully achieved its general and specific objectives. However, the durability and scalability of results varied. Internal factors such as administrative burdens and governance asymmetries between Italy and Croatia at times hampered efficiency. External factors, including the pandemic and inflation, disrupted supply chains and delayed implementation. Despite these challenges, the programme's adaptability and flexibility enabled it to largely deliver expected outputs and ensure project completion.

SO 1.1: To what extent has the programme contributed to enhancing the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area? Have performances in the field of blue innovation improved?

The programme contributed to innovation in the blue economy by promoting knowledge transfer, supporting SMEs, and developing digital platforms and technological solutions. Projects like InnovaMare created lasting assets such as the Digital Innovation Hub for marine technologies. While outputs like eco-certified products and prototypes supported SMEs' competitiveness, their widespread market adoption remains limited. The durability of innovation platforms and clusters can often be at risk without continued support.

SO 2.1: To what extent has the programme contributed to improving the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects in the cooperation area?

Evaluation Question

The programme effectively strengthened climate change monitoring and adaptation capacities by developing advanced climate models, adaptation plans, and monitoring platforms. Projects like AdriaClim and RESPONSE improved data availability and decision-making tools for local authorities. Cross-border cooperation facilitated harmonised approaches, but the integration of outputs into long-term planning remains uneven. The durability of results relies heavily on local administrative capacity and continued funding for data systems and adaptation measures.

SO 2.2: To what extent has the programme contributed to increasing the safety of the cooperation area from natural and man-made disasters?

The programme improved emergency preparedness through investments in infrastructure, early warning systems, and joint risk management tools. The large project FIRESPELL established training centres and enhanced oil spill response capacity. However, regulatory and governance differences between Italy and Croatia sometimes hindered the adoption of joint solutions. While capacity building and equipment upgrades had a lasting impact, maintaining emergency coordination systems beyond the programme period depends on sustained political and financial support.

SO 3.1: To what extent has the programme contributed to making natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development in the cooperation area?

The programme supported sustainable tourism and the valorisation of cultural and natural heritage, promoting accessibility and seasonality reduction. Projects like REMEMBER improved visitor experiences through ICT tools, while S.LI.DES promoted data-driven tourism planning - an approach that, overall, saw limited application under the SO. The cross-border dimension often remained secondary, with many interventions confined to the local level. To effectively leverage natural and cultural heritage for development, greater involvement of the business sector appears essential.

SO 3.2: To what extent has the programme contributed to protecting and restoring the biodiversity in the cooperation area? Has the Programme succeeded in strengthening the shared management and protection of cross-border ecosystems and also in developing economic and employment opportunities?

The programme contributed to biodiversity protection through monitoring systems, restoration actions, and integrated management plans. Projects like CASCADE and SASPAS established observatories and wetland contracts, fostering cross-border ecosystem management. Although pilot actions were effective, their long-term sustainability depends on local authorities' commitment. Economic benefits remained largely potential, with limited direct employment

Evaluation Question

impacts, indicating a need for stronger linkages between conservation and economic development.

SO 3.3: To what extent has the programme contributed to improving the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by the use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches? Did the Programme succeed in improving the quality of the sea and bathing waters?

The programme improved environmental quality monitoring and reduced pollution through innovative technologies and community engagement. Projects like WATERCARE and RESISTANCE deployed water quality monitoring systems and organized cleanup campaigns. Strengthened capacities of monitoring tools and long-term improvements in water quality depend on consistent enforcement and policy uptake. The link between Programme outputs and improvements in bathing water quality is difficult to isolate.

To what extent has the programme contributed to improving the quality, safety, and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the cooperation area?

The programme improved the quality, safety, and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport systems, promoting low-carbon and multimodal transport solutions. Projects such as SUSPORT enhanced the environmental sustainability and energy efficiency of ports within the Programme Area by implementing a series of pilot actions, fully aligned with the relevant macro-regional strategy. Similarly, projects like MIMOSA and ICARUS contributed to more sustainable connectivity by promoting multimodal solutions. However, projects exhibited varying degrees of cross-border relevance. Overall, their long-term sustainability appears to require strong synergies with other funding sources and investments. The effective use of policy tools developed under the SO remains challenging due to the need for diverse and influential stakeholders to align with the proposed changes. The establishment of stable stakeholder networks has been identified as an appropriate mechanism to facilitate continuous dialogue and long-term cooperation.

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

Evaluation Question

What change can be observed about the objectives of the programme? How are they distributed at a territorial level?

Evaluation Question

The programme contributed to improved environmental monitoring, emergency response capacity, and maritime transport services, with impacts observable across both Italian and Croatian coastal regions. Larger urban areas and port cities like Ancona, Split, Trieste, Venice and Zadar benefited more due to their strategic relevance and institutional capacity. At NUTS3 level, Croatian counties indicate a significantly higher of participation in Interreg Italy-Croatia projects in 2014-2020 compared to Italian provinces (in terms of ERDF budget allocated per capita). On the cross-border level, this budget allocation imbalance is primarily attributable to demographic differences and the relatively smaller populations in Croatian coastal counties, which amplified the programme funding per capita.

To what extent can observed changes be directly attributed to the programme? Are there unintended impacts?

The 2014-2020 programme was the first cross-border cooperation experience between Italy and Croatia within the EU framework after Croatia's EU accession. This experience clearly contributed both to the establishment of new partnerships and to the strengthening of existing ones, i.e. for organisations which were already collaborating before in the framework of IPA programmes (e.g. IPA Adriatic) to work better and more concretely in the cross-border context.

Unintended impacts included the strengthening of pre-existing formal and informal cross-border networks and increased institutional capacity for EU project management, fostering future cooperation opportunities beyond the Programme's initial scope.

What mechanisms delivered the impact? What are the key contextual features of these mechanisms?

Knowledge exchange and pilot actions were the primary mechanisms for impact. Projects involving long-term partnerships and integrating local authorities into data systems and decision-making processes proved most effective. The presence of strong institutional actors, particularly in maritime transport and environmental monitoring, created the conditions to generate impact in the cross-border dimension. Weaker administrative contexts saw the generation of more localised impact with lower cross-border added value.

Does the impact vary by subgroup within the main target group?

Variations of the impact by subgroups within the main target group were not observed by the evaluator.

Did the programme succeed in achieving the expected impacts on the different target groups?

The programme succeeded in engaging local authorities, research institutions, and SMEs, improving their capacities in environmental management, transport, and blue economy

Evaluation Question

innovation. However, the business sector's involvement was more limited, particularly regarding long-term economic benefits, highlighting the need for stronger private sector engagement in future periods.

Will the short-run effects of the intervention differ from those in the long run?

Short-run effects include capacity building, data platforms, and pilot services, while long-run effects depend on the uptake of results into regional policies and continued cross-border cooperation. Infrastructure improvements and environmental monitoring systems could lead to lasting benefits, but their durability is contingent on sustained funding and political support.

What are the main lessons learned during the 2014-2020 period concerning both the programming and implementation phases? What can be replicated or improved in the 2021-27 CBC Programme?

Key lessons include the importance of fostering long-term partnerships, simplifying administrative procedures, and strengthening the programme's role as a facilitator of thematic communities. The need for realistic output targets, closer alignment with EUSAIR, and dedicated support for result capitalisation emerged as critical improvements for 2021-2027.

Focus on the indicator system

Evaluation Question

Has the selection of the overall set of common and programme-specific indicators turned out to be suitable and exhaustive for monitoring and evaluation purposes?

The indicator system was adequate for output measurement but less effective in capturing mid-term outcomes and cross-border value. Output targets were often underestimated, limiting their usefulness for performance assessment. In some cases, significant discrepancies between the target values set by the programme and the actual values reported by projects brought up questions about the shared understanding of the indicators. Consistent with the broader context of the 2014–2020 programming period, result indicators were not directly applicable for assessing the Programme's capacity to contribute to territorial change. The transition to Interreg-oriented indicators in the 2021–2027 period represents a positive development, enhancing the monitoring system's ability to generate information relevant at the project level.

9 Lessons learnt and recommendations

The ex-post evaluation of the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme 2014-2020 offers key insights which can guide and enhance the implementation and impact potential of the 2021-2027 programming period and beyond. Reflecting on the first programming cycle of the Italy-Croatia cross-border cooperation, it can be observed how this experience laid the foundation for durable partnerships and provided valuable lessons regarding both the strengths and limitations of the programme's capacity to produce long-term results. The points below summarise the key lessons learnt.

Impact

- Projects across all SOs provided **cross-border added value** by fostering knowledge exchange and collaboration, as well as developing common solutions for issues and sectors which impact both countries, such as climate change, natural hazards, and the blue economy.
- The programme's strong **focus on the Adriatic Sea** significantly enhances its capacity to generate meaningful impact, an approach that should be continued in the 2021-2027 period and beyond.
- The implementation of **environmental monitoring activities** in the Adriatic Sea demonstrates clear cross-border added value. However, there is a risk associated with the limited number of specialised actors participating in partnerships.
- The programme's capitalisation efforts, which began as a foundation of the 2014-2020 programme with the Standard+ projects, are now also being expanded to the Mediterranean level through the cross-border **coordination mechanism**. Placing greater emphasis on capitalisation at the macro-regional level could be a potential direction for the 2021-2027 period.
- One notable outcome from 2014-2020 is the **role of partnerships as drivers of continuity and impact** in all thematic areas, facilitating the transition into the 2021-2027 period. This confirms the strategic importance of consolidating and further supporting partnerships with proven capacity for cooperation.

Implementation

- As a newly established programme, the 2014-2020 **programme set-up** and early implementation faced considerable delays due to **administrative unfamiliarity with Interreg** within the MA hosting region and the necessary programme management requirements on a cross-border level. These initial limitations underlined the importance of institutional preparedness and streamlined administrative systems.
- **External factors** presented significant challenges to project implementation, with the COVID-19 pandemic being the most impactful. Nonetheless, the programme demonstrated

resilience, with adaptive measures such as deadline extensions and flexible financial rules helping to safeguard project progress.

- The pandemic also accelerated the **digitalisation** of programme procedures and ways of working (new and more user-friendly video conferencing and collaborative working tools, telework, etc.) and facilitated the interaction among programme bodies.
- The complexity of **administrative requirements** in 2014-2020 often diverted project resources away from impact generation. The transition to the 2021-2027 period has seen promising improvements, particularly with the introduction of the JEMS platform, enhanced monitoring tools, and more regular project reviews.
- Providing **adequate support** is crucial to the success of projects during the 2021-2027 period. The **tested flexible approach**, which involves mobilising programme officers and freelance staff, has proven to be a key step in ensuring the effective functioning of the programme.

In light of the ex-post evaluation exercise and the lessons learnt, the following recommendations have been formulated.

Impact

- **Strengthening focus on durability plans:** Projects should place greater emphasis on developing comprehensive sustainability and durability plans to ensure that their results and impacts extend beyond the project lifecycle. This can be achieved by requiring projects to outline clear strategies for maintaining outcomes post-implementation, fostering partnerships that support ongoing activities, and leveraging additional funding opportunities for long-term sustainability.
- **Defining a clearer role for policy makers in the uptake of plans and strategies to achieve long-lasting change:** a greater and more precise involvement of policymakers at local, regional and national level should be planned to avoid that action plans and strategies developed by projects have a higher chance of being adopted into long-term policies.
- **Encouraging the participation of newcomers in strategic thematic areas:** To diversify participation and broaden the impact, the programme should actively encourage the involvement of new beneficiaries, particularly in thematic areas that often see repeated participation by the same stakeholders, such as environmental monitoring and cross-border transport. Tailored outreach, targeted capacity-building initiatives, and simplified application processes can lower barriers to entry for newcomers, promoting inclusivity and innovation within the programme.
- **Consolidating effective partnerships** as drivers of effective change: a strategic approach to partnership consolidation should involve targeted support mechanisms to sustain and expand successful collaborations (e.g. knowledge exchange beyond the project cycle, cross-border 'communities of practice') ensuring that projects do not operate in isolation but rather contribute to a broader ecosystem of regional development and policy alignment. At

the same time, it is important to encourage partnerships with a balanced mix of experienced and new beneficiaries. This can ensure both continuity of expertise and the introduction of fresh perspectives and innovative solutions.

- **Ensuring continued coordination among Interreg programmes overlapping in the EUSAIR area** (e.g. through the multi-programme coordination mechanism and beyond) to strengthen the programme's long-term impact and contribution to EUSAIR, by enabling better alignment of priorities and long-term sustainability of results.

Implementation

- **Maintaining and enhancing flexibility during project implementation:** Continued flexibility in project implementation should remain a priority so as to adapt to evolving circumstances and challenges. Providing adaptive measures such as adjusted timelines, reallocation of resources, and tailored guidance for projects will help ensure their success.
- **Promoting flexibility of management and implementation at programme level:** at the MA and JS, continuing to foster an agile and collaborative working environment is essential. Furthermore, continuing to provide flexibility to projects during implementation will enable swift responses to emerging needs.

10 Conclusions

The Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 programme successfully strengthened cross-border cooperation between the two countries, achieving a high financial absorption rate and delivering significant benefits across key thematic areas. Despite external challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, and regulatory differences, the programme effectively mobilised resources, exceeded many of its output targets, and fostered institutional partnerships that are continuing in the 2021-2027 period.

The programme's impact was particularly strong in environmental monitoring, disaster risk preparedness, and blue economy innovation. Projects enhanced climate resilience, improved risk coordination, and introduced innovative solutions for sustainable fisheries, water quality management, and multimodal transport. However, in areas such as tourism and cultural heritage, many interventions remained localised, limiting the cross-border dimension of their impact. Strengthening long-term cooperation frameworks for tourism and environmental protection could enhance the sustainability of results.

While many projects produced valuable action plans, digital platforms, and policy recommendations, their integration into long-term strategies remained uneven. Increasing the involvement of policymakers at an earlier stage could improve the policy uptake of project results. Enhancing project sustainability beyond the programme cycle should also be a priority, particularly by ensuring that innovations, infrastructure, and monitoring systems continue to function and evolve through additional investments or integration into local governance frameworks.

Lessons learned from this programme provide valuable guidance for the ongoing programming period. A stronger focus on durability, policy alignment, and long-term financing strategies will be essential to increase the impact of future cooperation efforts. Improved coordination with macro-regional strategies (EUSAIR) could also enhance synergies between projects and broader regional development goals. By building on its successes and addressing these challenges, the Interreg Italy-Croatia programme can continue to play a key role in fostering sustainable and innovative cross-border cooperation in the Adriatic region.

Annex I – Beneficiary survey questionnaire

INTRODUCTION

Name:*

Email:*

Institution/organisation:*

Please specify if you are:*

- An Italian Entity
- A Croatian Entity

Have you benefited from EU funds other than Interreg Italy-Croatia programme 2014-2020? *

- Yes
- No

Could you specify which programme(s)?

In which programming period? *

- 2007-2013
- 2014-2020

Section 1 - PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

Do the programme indicators allow to capture the key projects outputs? *

- Yes
- No

Do the programme indicators allow to capture the key projects results? *

Yes

No

Which factors related to programme implementation have negatively affected the achievement of project objectives? (1=low negative influence, 5= high negative influence)

	1	2	3	4	5
Programme rules	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Instability of the project partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

SECTION II – PROJECT RESULTS

[ONLY TO LEAD BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECTS]

You are the lead partner of: (Please select your project)

[The full list of projects will be displayed and each project will be linked to its SO, so respondents can be redirected to the correct survey page]

Please note that if you are a lead beneficiary of more than one project, separate sets of questions will be displayed for each project you are involved in.

8) Please specify if your project is:

- Standard
- Strategic
- Cluster

Questions for PA 1 Blue Innovation - Specific objective 1.1: Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area

Project: Name of selected project

In which sector of the blue economy did your project contribute to enhancing the framework conditions for innovation?*

- Blue energy
- Aquaculture and sustainable fisheries
- Maritime and coastal tourism
- Sea shipping
- Marine biotechnology
- Digital and robotic applications
- Sustainable fishing and seafood
- Coastal protection, monitoring and surveillance
- Other (please specify):

How has your project contributed to improving the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area?*

- Creating platforms and networks to foster the exchange of good practices in the blue economy:
→ Specify which kind of platforms:
- Cooperation actions between clusters and pilot initiatives to develop marketable innovative processes and products in the blue economy:
→ Specify which action/pilot initiatives:
- Other (please specify):

What were the main types of outputs of your project?

- Agreements, Strategies and Plans

→ Specify the current status or key elements (e.g., where the agreement/plan stands today):

Cluster and Hubs

→ Specify the current status (e.g., are they operational, in development, or fully utilized?):

Digital tools

→ Specify the current status (e.g., is the tool still being used by local authorities or other stakeholders?):

Small infrastructure

→ Specify the current status (e.g., has the infrastructure been completed and is it still operational?):

Training, skills and awareness raising

→ Specify the current status (e.g., how many individuals have been trained and are there ongoing/planned activities?):

What are the results achieved by your project?*

Improved conditions for innovation in key sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area

Improved performance in the field of blue innovation, including

- developing new technologies
- developing new processes
- developing new products

Broadening the range of stakeholders

Other (please specify):

Please describe the results

What are the project's short, medium and long term impacts?

Please describe

Where can the project impacts be located?

- HR031** Primorsko-goranska županija **HR032** Ličko-senjska županija **HR033** Zadarska županija
 HR034 Šibensko-kninska županija **HR035** Splitsko-dalmatinska županija **HR036** Istarska županija **HR037** - Dubrovačko-neretvanska županija **HR04D** - Karlovačka županija
 ITF12 Teramo **ITF13** Pescara **ITF14** Chieti **ITF22** Campobasso **ITF44** Brindisi
 ITF45 Lecce **ITF46** Foggia **ITF47** Bari **ITF48** Barletta-Andria-Trani **ITH35** Venezia
 ITH36 Padova **ITH37** Rovigo **ITH41** Pordenone **ITH42** Udine **ITH43** Gorizia
 ITH44 Trieste **ITH56** Ferrara **ITH57** Ravenna **ITH58** Forlì-Cesena **ITH59** Rimini
 ITI31 Pesaro e Urbino **ITI32** Ancona **ITI33** Macerata **ITI34** Ascoli Piceno
 ITI35 Fermo

Did the project achieve the expected impacts on the involved target groups?

- Yes
 No

What intensity of project impact can be observed for the following target groups (specific to the project's objective)?

(1=low impact / 5=high impact)

	1	2	3	4	5
General public	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Local, regional and national public authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Regional and local development agencies, chambers of commerce and other business support organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
SMEs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Universities, technology transfer institutions, research institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Centers of R&D excellence	<input type="checkbox"/>				
NGOs, associations, innovation agencies, business incubators, cluster management bodies and networks	<input type="checkbox"/>				

	1	2	3	4	5
Education and training organisations as well as social partners and labour-market institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Which external factors have affected the achievement of the expected project results (e.g. COVID-19, inflation, etc.)?

→ Please describe

What is the added value of your project?*

- It allows to achieve economies of scale (technical, financial, infrastructural)
- It promotes and transfers good practices
- It promotes a better governance
- It allows to face common threats and obstacles
- It facilitates the movement of people and goods
- It promotes international networks
- Other (please specify):

For the sake of the mission pursued by your organisation, do you think that the funding opportunities of the programme have been:*

- Essential
- Important
- Not essential, the project would have been carried out anyway
- Complementary to other funding sources (other EU programmes, national/regional strategies)

Which ones?

- National/regional programmes
- Other EU programmes (COSME, Horizon etc.)

Other please specify:

When were the complementary funding sources obtained?

Before the project launch.

Please specify:

During project implementation.

Please specify:

No complementary funding

21) Has the project generated **additional investments or funding** as a result of its outcomes (cascade effect)?

Yes

Please specify (what, how, when):

No

22) Has the cooperation among partners lasted beyond the implementation of the Interreg IT-HR 2014-2020 project? (multiple answers possible)

Yes, we are applying for new Interreg IT-HR 2021-2027 projects together

Please specify:

Yes, we are applying for/implementing projects funded by other programmes together

Please specify:

Yes, and new partners have joined

Please specify:

No

What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of your project in the 2014-2020 period?

Please describe

What can be improved in the 2021-2027 Italy-Croatia programme?

Please describe

Questions for PA 2 Safety and Resilience – Specific objective 2.1: Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area

Project: Name of selected project

9) In which sector/area did your project contribute to improving the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects?*

- Coastal and marine ecosystems (if yes, please specify)
 - adaptation to sea level rise
 - mitigation of accelerated coastal erosion
 - addressing subsidence
 - managing increasing water temperatures
 - combating acidification of marine waters
- Water resources: preventing saltwater intrusion into freshwater systems
- Flooding
- Climate resilience: adapting to severe droughts and fires
- Other (please specify):

10) How did your project contribute to supporting investments for adapting to climate change? *

- Improving climate change monitoring
 - Specify the actions undertaken and the areas:
- Planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects
 - Specify the actions undertaken and the areas:
- Other (please specify):

11) What were the main types of outputs of your project?

- Agreements, Strategies and Plans

- Cluster and Hubs
- Digital tools
- Small infrastructure
- Training, skills and awareness raising

12) What are the results achieved by your project?*

- Improved monitoring of climate change
- Improved planning of measures to strengthen the region's adaptive capacity. Please specify the area:
- Other (please specify)

Please describe the results

13) What are the project's short, medium and long term impacts?

Please describe

14) Where can the project impacts be located?

- HR031** Primorsko-goranska županija **HR032** Ličko-senjska županija **HR033** Zadarska županija
- HR034** Šibensko-kninska županija **HR035** Splitsko-dalmatinska županija **HR036** Istarska županija **HR037** - Dubrovačko-neretvanska županija **HR04D** - Karlovačka županija
- ITF12** Teramo **ITF13** Pescara **ITF14** Chieti **ITF22** Campobasso **ITF44** Brindisi
- ITF45** Lecce **ITF46** Foggia **ITF47** Bari **ITF48** Barletta-Andria-Trani **ITH35** Venezia
- ITH36** Padova **ITH37** Rovigo **ITH41** Pordenone **ITH42** Udine **ITH43** Gorizia
- ITH44** Trieste **ITH56** Ferrara **ITH57** Ravenna **ITH58** Forlì-Cesena **ITH59** Rimini
- ITI31** Pesaro e Urbino **ITI32** Ancona **ITI33** Macerata **ITI34** Ascoli Piceno
- ITI35** Fermo

15) Did the project achieve the expected impacts on the involved target groups?

- Yes
- No

16) What intensity of project impact can be observed for the following target groups (specific to the project's objective)?

(1=low impact / 5=high impact)

	1	2	3	4	5
General public	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Local, regional and national public authorities and related entities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Regional and local development agencies, environmental agencies and regional associations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Education and training centers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Universities and research institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

17) Which external factors have affected the achievement of the expected project results (e.g. COVID-19, inflation, etc.)?

→ Please describe

18) What was the added value of your project?*

- It allows to achieve economic scale (technical, financial, infrastructural)
- It promotes and transfers good practices
- It promotes a better governance
- It allows to face common threats and obstacles
- It facilitates the movement of people and goods
- It promotes international networks
- Other (please specify):

19) For the sake of the mission pursued by your organisation, do you think that the funding opportunities of the programme have been:*

- Essential
- Important
- Complementary to other funding sources (other EU programmes, national/regional strategies)

Which ones?

- National/regional programmes (including NRRPs)
- Other EU programmes (e.g. LIFE, etc...)
- Not essential, the project would have been carried out anyway Other, please specify

20) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of your project in the 2014-2020 period?

Please describe

21) What can be improved in the 2021-2027 Italy-Croatia programme?

Please describe

Questions for PA 2 Safety and Resilience – Specific Objective 2.2 Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster

Project: Name of selected project

9) In what area of intervention did your project primarily act to increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster?

- Flooding (water management, flood risk techniques, etc.)
- Oil spill
- Other marine hazards
- Fire
- Other (please specify)

10) How has your project contributed to increasing the safety of the programme area from natural and man-made disasters?*

- Improving the monitoring of risks
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Increasing the management capacity of/prompt response to disaster
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Other (please specify)

11) What were the main types of outputs of your project?

- Agreements, Strategies and Plans
- Cluster and Hubs
- Digital tools
- Small infrastructure
- Training, skills and awareness raising

12) What are the results achieved by your project?*

- Supporting the development of disaster management systems

Recovery capacity enhancement

Damage minimisation

Other (please specify)

Please describe the results

13) What are the project's short, medium and long term impacts?

Please describe

14) Where can the project impacts be located?

- HR031** Primorsko-goranska županija **HR032** Ličko-senjska županija **HR033** Zadarska županija
 HR034 Šibensko-kninska županija **HR035** Splitsko-dalmatinska županija **HR036** Istarska županija
 HR037 - Dubrovačko-neretvanska županija **HR04D** - Karlovačka županija
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 ITI31 Pesaro e Urbino **ITI32** Ancona **ITI33** Macerata **ITI34** Ascoli Piceno
 ITI35 Fermo

15) Did the project achieve the expected impacts on the involved target groups?

Yes

No

16) What intensity of project impact can be observed for the following target groups (specific to the project's objective)?

(1=low impact / 5=high impact)

	1	2	3	4	5
General public	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Local, regional and national public authorities and related entities	<input type="checkbox"/>				

	1	2	3	4	5
Emergency services and coast guard centres	<input type="checkbox"/>				
NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Education and training centers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Universities and research institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

17) Which external factors have affected the achievement of the expected project results (e.g. COVID-19, inflation, etc.)?

→ Please describe

18) What was the added value of your project?*

- It allows to achieve economies of scale (technical, financial, infrastructural)
- It promotes and transfers good practices
- It promotes a better governance
- It allows to face common threats and obstacles
- It facilitates the movement of people and goods
- It promotes international networks
- Other (please specify):

19) For the sake of the mission pursued by your organisation, do you think that the funding opportunities of the programme have been:*

- Essential
- Important
- Not essential, the project would have been carried out anyway
- Complementary to other funding sources (other EU programmes, national/regional strategies)

Which ones?

- National/regional programmes
- Other EU programmes (e.g. LIFE, InvestEU etc.)
- Other please specify:

20) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of your project in the 2014-2020 period?

Please describe

21) What can be improved in the 2021-2027 Italy-Croatia programme?

Please describe

Questions for PA 3 Environment and Cultural Heritage – Specific Objective 3.1 Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development

Project: Name of selected project

9) In which sector did your project contribute to making natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development?

- Cultural heritage in coastal areas
- Cultural heritage outside urban areas
- Natural assets outside urban areas
- Cultural heritage in urban areas
- Natural assets in the coastal area
- Natura 2000 site
- UNESCO site
- Natural assets in urban areas
- Other (please specify):

10) How has your project contributed to conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage?*

- Activities based on the protection and promotion of natural and cultural heritage
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Actions aimed at fostering economic development through sustainable tourism
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Actions aimed at reducing human pressure on natural and cultural heritage sites.
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Other (please specify)

11) What were the main types of outputs of your project?

- Agreements, Strategies and Plans
- Cluster and Hubs
- Digital tools
- Small infrastructure
- Training, skills and awareness raising

12) What are the results achieved by your project?*

- A higher level of sustainable economic and spatial development by exploiting the potential of natural resources
- A higher level of sustainable economic and territorial development by exploiting the potential of cultural heritage
- A higher level of sustainable economic and land development by preserving and increasing the value of natural resources
- A higher level of sustainable economic and territorial development by preserving and increasing the value of cultural heritage
- Other (please specify)

Please describe the results

13) What are the project's short, medium and long term impacts?

Please describe

14) Where can the project impacts be located?

- HR031** Primorsko-goranska županija **HR032** Ličko-senjska županija **HR033** Zadarska županija
- HR034** Šibensko-kninska županija **HR035** Splitsko-dalmatinska županija **HR036** Istarska županija **HR037** - Dubrovačko-neretvanska županija **HR04D** - Karlovačka županija
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- ITI31** Pesaro e Urbino **ITI32** Ancona **ITI33** Macerata **ITI34** Ascoli Piceno

ITI35 Fermo

15) Did the project achieve the expected impacts on the involved target groups?

Yes

No

16) What intensity of project impact can be observed for the following target groups (specific to the project's objective)?

(1=low impact / 5=high impact)

	1	2	3	4	5
General public	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Local, regional and national public authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Public service providers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cultural and natural heritage management bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Regional and local development agencies, enterprises (in particular SMEs within the cultural and creative industry as well as the environmental and tourism sector)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Associations, regional innovation agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Education and training organisations as well as universities and research institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

17) Which external factors have affected the achievement of the expected project results (e.g. COVID-19, inflation, etc.)?

→ Please describe

18) What was the added value of your project?*

- It allows to achieve economies of scale (technical, financial, infrastructural)
- It promotes and transfers good practices
- It promotes a better governance
- It allows to face common threats and obstacles
- It facilitates the movement of people and goods
- It promotes international networks
- Other (please specify):

19) For the sake of the mission pursued by your organisation, do you think that the funding opportunities of the programme have been:*

- Essential
- Important
- Complementary to other funding sources (other EU programmes, national/regional strategies)

Which ones?

- National/regional programmes
- Other EU programmes
- Not essential, the project would have been carried out anyway
- Other please specify:

20) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of your project in the 2014-2020 period?

Please describe

21) What can be improved in the 2021-2027 Italy-Croatia programme?

Please describe

Questions for PA 3 Environment and Cultural Heritage – Specific Objective 3.2 Contribute to protect and restore biodiversity

Project: Name of selected project

9) In what area of intervention did your project primarily act to protect and restore biodiversity?

- River basins
- Coastal area
- Marine area
- Wetland area
- Other (please specify)

10) How has your project contributed to protect and restore biodiversity?*

- Actions aimed at improving the knowledge base
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Actions aimed at improving data
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Actions aimed at improving data monitoring systems
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Actions aimed at supporting the restoration of biodiversity
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Other (please specify)

11) What were the main types of outputs of your project?

- Agreements, Strategies and Plans
- Cluster and Hubs
- Digital tools
- Small infrastructure
- Training, skills and awareness raising

12) What are the results achieved by your project?*

- Improved conservation status of habitat types
- Improved conservation status of species
- Increased economic and employment opportunities
- Other (please specify)

Please describe the results

13) What are the project's short, medium and long term impacts?

Please describe

14) Where can the project impacts be located?

- HR031** Primorsko-goranska županija **HR032** Ličko-senjska županija **HR033** Zadarska županija
- HR034** Šibensko-kninska županija **HR035** Splitsko-dalmatinska županija **HR036** Istarska županija **HR037** - Dubrovačko-neretvanska županija **HR04D** - Karlovačka županija
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- ITH36** Padova **ITH37** Rovigo **ITH41** Pordenone **ITH42** Udine **ITH43** Gorizia
- ITH44** Trieste **ITH56** Ferrara **ITH57** Ravenna **ITH58** Forlì-Cesena **ITH59** Rimini
- ITI31** Pesaro e Urbino **ITI32** Ancona **ITI33** Macerata **ITI34** Ascoli Piceno
- ITI35** Fermo

15) Did the project achieve the expected impacts on the involved target groups?

- Yes

No

16) What intensity of project impact can be observed for the following target groups (specific to the project's objective)?

(1=low impact / 5=high impact)

	1	2	3	4	5
General public	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Local, regional and national public authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Protected areas/ natural heritage management bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Regional and local development agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Associations;	<input type="checkbox"/>				
NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Education and training organizations as well as universities and research institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

17) Which external factors have affected the achievement of the expected project results (e.g. COVID-19, inflation, etc.)?

→ Please describe

18) What was the added value of your project?*

- It allows to achieve economies of scale (technical, financial, infrastructural)
- It promotes and transfers good practices
- It promotes a better governance
- It allows to face common threats and obstacles

- It facilitates the movement of people and goods
- It promotes international networks
- Other (please specify):

19) For the sake of the mission pursued by your organisation, do you think that the funding opportunities of the programme have been:*

- Essential
- Important
- Complementary to other funding sources (other EU programmes, national/regional strategies)

Which ones?

- National/regional programmes
- Other EU programmes (e.g. LIFE, EMFAF etc.)
- Not essential, the project would have been carried out anyway
- Other please specify:

20) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of your project in the 2014-2020 period?

Please describe

21) What can be improved in the 2021-2027 Italy-Croatia programme?

Please describe

Questions for PA 3 Environment and Cultural Heritage – Specific Objective 3.3 Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches

Project: Name of selected project

9) How has your project contributed to improving the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area?*

- Demonstrate innovative small-scale environmentally friendly technological actions and approaches
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Implement small-scale environmentally friendly innovative technological actions and approaches
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Innovative actions aimed at improving knowledge about environmental quality
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Actions specifically addressing the collection of microplastic waste in marine areas
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Actions supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy (e.g., use of clean energy technologies, reduction of CO₂ emissions, etc.)
→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas
- Other (please specify)

10) What were the main types of outputs of your project?

- Agreements, Strategies and Plans
- Cluster and Hubs

- Digital tools
- Small infrastructure
- Training, skills and awareness raising

11) What are the results achieved by your project?*

- Improving seawater quality by using innovative technologies in waste management and treatment, particularly the collection of microplastic waste in marine areas
- Improving seawater quality by using new integrated approaches to address various problems and support the transition to a low-carbon economy through innovative solutions Other (please specify)

Please describe the results

12) What are the project's short, medium and long term impacts?

Please describe

13) Where can the project impacts be located?

- HR031** Primorsko-goranska županija **HR032** Ličko-senjska županija **HR033** Zadarska županija
- HR034** Šibensko-kninska županija **HR035** Splitsko-dalmatinska županija **HR036** Istarska županija **HR037** - Dubrovačko-neretvanska županija **HR04D** - Karlovačka županija
- ITF12** Teramo **ITF13** Pescara **ITF14** Chieti **ITF22** Campobasso **ITF44** Brindisi
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- ITH44** Trieste **ITH56** Ferrara **ITH57** Ravenna **ITH58** Forlì-Cesena **ITH59** Rimini
- ITI31** Pesaro e Urbino **ITI32** Ancona **ITI33** Macerata **ITI34** Ascoli Piceno
- ITI35** Fermo

14) Did the project achieve the expected impacts on the involved target groups?

- Yes
- No

15) What intensity of project impact can be observed for the following target groups (specific to the project's objective)?

(1=low impact / 5=high impact)

	1	2	3	4	5
General public	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Local, regional and national public authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Regional and local development agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
SMEs and business supporting organizations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Associations, innovation and environmental agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Education and training organizations as well as universities and research institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

16) Which external factors have affected the achievement of the expected project results (e.g. COVID-19, inflation, etc.)?

→ Please describe

17) What was the added value of your project?*

- It allows to achieve economies of scale (technical, financial, infrastructural)
- It promotes and transfers good practices
- It promotes a better governance
- It allows to face common threats and obstacles
- It facilitates the movement of people and goods

- It promotes international networks
- Other (please specify):

18) For the sake of the mission pursued by your organisation, do you think that the funding opportunities of the programme have been:*

- Essential
- Important
- Complementary to other funding sources (other EU programmes, national/regional strategies)

Which ones?

- National/regional programmes
- Other EU programmes (Horizon, LIFE etc.)
- Not essential, the project would have been carried out anyway
- Other please specify:

19) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of your project in the 2014-2020 period?

Please describe

20) What can be improved in the 2021-2027 Italy-Croatia programme?

Please describe

Questions for PA 4 Maritime Transport – 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

Project: Name of selected project

9) In which sector did your project help to improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area?*

- Air Transportation
- Ship Transportation
- Rail Transportation
- Road Transport

→ Please indicate the purpose of the transportation (select all that apply):

- Goods and passengers in commercial areas
- Passengers for civil purposes
- Other, please specify

10) How has your project contributed to improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes?*

- Support coordination of data and systems for enhancing multimodality

→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas

- Harmonization of data and systems for enhancing multimodality

→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas

- Monitoring of data and systems for enhancing multimodality

→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas

- Piloting tools/ solutions for improving connectivity in the transport systems and establishing new links

→ Specify the actions undertaken and the areas

- Other (please specify)

11) What were the main types of outputs of your project?

- Agreements, Strategies and Plans
- Cluster and Hubs
- Digital tools
- Small infrastructure
- Training, skills and awareness raising

12) What are the results achieved by your project?*

- Development of new traffic patterns
- Adoption of ICT systems to manage passenger embarkation and disembarkation in vessel traffic
- Implementation of electronic ticketing systems
- Implementation of electronic traffic management systems
- Harmonization of services for passengers put in place thanks to the establishment of new links
- Other (please specify)

Please describe the results

13) What are the project's short, medium and long term impacts?

Please describe

14) Where can the project impacts be located?

- HR031** Primorsko-goranska županija **HR032** Ličko-senjska županija **HR033** Zadarska županija
- HR034** Šibensko-kninska županija **HR035** Splitsko-dalmatinska županija **HR036** Istarska županija **HR037** - Dubrovačko-neretvanska županija **HR04D** - Karlovačka županija

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 ITI35 Fermo

15) Did the project achieve the expected impacts on the involved target groups?

- Yes
 No

16) What intensity of project impact can be observed for the following target groups (specific to the project's objective)?

(1=low impact / 5=high impact)

	1	2	3	4	5
General public	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Local, regional and national public authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Regional and local development agencies	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Enterprises, transport operators including operators of multimodal logistics hubs, infrastructure providers	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Transport associations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Regional innovation agencies;	<input type="checkbox"/>				
NGOs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Education and training organisations as well as universities and research institutes	<input type="checkbox"/>				

	1	2	3	4	5
Other: Please specify <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

17) Which external factors have affected the achievement of the expected project results (e.g. COVID-19, inflation, etc.)?

→ Please describe

18) What was the added value of your project?*

- It allows to achieve economies of scale (technical, financial, infrastructural)
- It promotes and transfers good practices
- It promotes a better governance
- It allows to face common threats and obstacles
- It facilitates the movement of people and goods
- It promotes international networks
- Other (please specify):

19) For the sake of the mission pursued by your organisation, do you think that the funding opportunities of the programme have been:*

- Essential
- Important
- Complementary to other funding sources (other EU programmes, national/regional strategies)

Which ones?

- National/regional programmes
- Other EU programmes (LIFE, CEF, etc.)
- Not essential, the project would have been carried out anyway
- Other please specify:

20) What are the main lessons learned from the implementation of your project in the 2014-2020 period?

Please describe

21) What can be improved in the 2021-2027 Italy-Croatia programme?

Please describe