



*FROM SHARED RESOURCES  
TO JOINT SOLUTIONS*

**INTERREG V A ITALY CROATIA CBC PROGRAMME 2014-2020  
EVALUATION SERVICE**

**CIG 8411073D01 CUP H79B17000030007**

**Operational Evaluation 2021**

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## ● Introduction

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This document represents the first Operational Evaluation for the year 2021 of the Evaluation Service of the INTERREG V A ITALY CROATIA CBC Programme 2014-2020. The Evaluation service includes three operational evaluation reports that are foreseen throughout the Evaluation service in order to assess the Programme's outputs and outcomes and the administrative capacities of its Programme bodies. Therefore, also considering the breadth of the subject to be assessed, each operational evaluation report will focus on specific elements.

In particular, following the participatory approach which characterizes the Evaluation Service, the focus areas and the related Evaluation Questions answered in the present first operational evaluation report have been set in advance, thanks to the interaction with the Managing Authority (MA), in order to provide a first snapshot of the implementation of the Programme and an analysis of some key elements including the management system, the result indicators system and the partnerships created.

To offer a more complete picture, it's useful to mention that the next Operational Evaluation, to be drafted in March 2022, will answer to the evaluation questions related to the cross-border cooperation added value and networking - in this framework additional analysis could be conducted on the type of partners and on the implementing unit locations, which was not carried out in the present report. Moreover, in agreement with the MA, the report could present an additional analysis of the indicators' system, including also an assessment of output indicators and its targets.

Finally, the third operational evaluation report, due at the beginning of year 2023, will include the assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme's communication strategy and of the thematic and territorial impacts of Programme implementation as well as its contribution to macro-regional strategies and EU 2020 targets. This timeframe is proposed because, in order to better appreciate these effects on the target areas of the Programme, it is necessary to have a larger number of completed projects.

Coming back at the present report, since structuring work of the new Programme is currently underway, the report aims to represent a tool capable of providing the decision-maker with useful suggestions in the definition and, subsequently, in the implementation of the new Programme.

The evaluation activity for drafting the present report, which has been carried out in close collaboration with the MA, has alternated desk analysis modalities, mainly through the study of documents and the analysis of progress data provided by the Monitoring System (SIU), with moments of meeting and contact with the Programme bodies (Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, National Authorities for both Croatia and Italy), while project partners will be involved in the framework of the following report.

The present Operational Evaluation Report is introduced by a first chapter dedicated to the description of the progress of the Programme as a whole and of the single Priority Axes, from the financial and procedural point of view. The second chapter aims at assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system. The third chapter concerns the indicators system with a specific focus on the result indicators with a forward-looking approach toward the next programming period.

The fourth chapter focuses on the effectiveness of the Programme, with regards to the relevance of the objectives and the cross-border dimension.

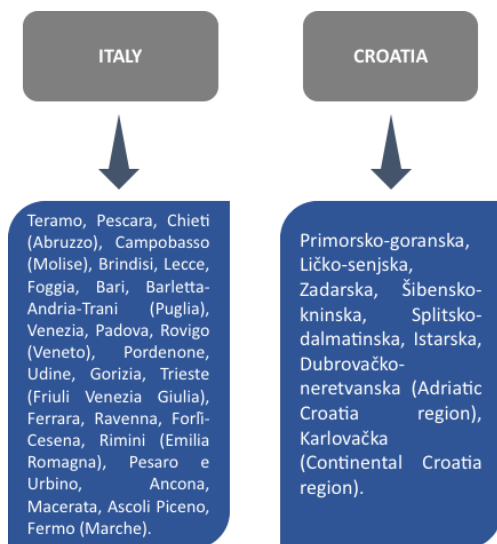
Finally, the fifth chapter provides conclusions of the analysis and recommendations that arise from them. In particular, when delays or implementation difficulties have been described by the Evaluator, the reasons for these delays, where possible in relation to the level of detail of the analyses, have been investigated in order to provide concrete suggestions for improvement.

## 1 Analysis of the implementation status of the Programme

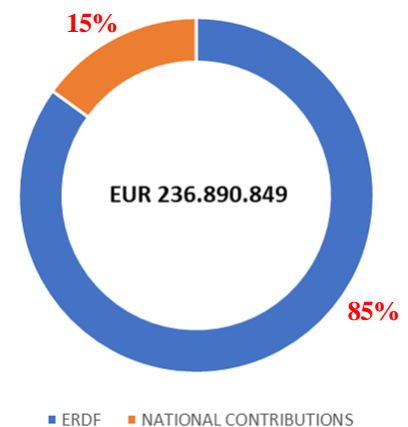
The INTERREG V A ITALY CROATIA CBC PROGRAMME 2014-2020, adopted by the European Commission with the Decision C (2015) 9342 of 15 December 2015, has an overall budget of EUR 236.890.849, including EUR 201.357.220 (85%) from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and EUR 35.533.629 (15%) from national co-financing.

With an area of more than 85.500 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of more than 12.4 million inhabitants, the eligible area of the Italy-Croatia Programme extends along the two shores of the Adriatic, including 33 statistical NUTS III territories (25 provinces in Italy and 8 counties in Croatia), as showed in figure 2.

**Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 2: Italy-Croatia cooperation area 14-20**



**Figure SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC**



In order to achieve the overall objective linked to the increase of the prosperity and of the blue growth potential of the area by stimulating cross-border partnerships able to achieve tangible changes, the Programme is structured in **four Priority Axes (PA)**, focussing on the blue economy in terms of innovation, maritime transportation, climate change, adaptation, environmental security and sustainability, and on the natural and cultural heritage as a driving force for sustainable and more balanced territorial development by integrating rural areas and ensuring a better spatial distribution of visitor flows; plus a fifth Priority Axes for

Technical Assistance. Under each PA, the Programme is articulated in 7 Specific Objectives (SOs): SO 1.1 aims at improving the performance of the programme area in the field of innovation by establishing and developing mechanisms which contribute to a better exploitation of the existing potential; SO 2.1 intends to improve the climate change monitoring and planning of measures for strengthening the adaptation capacity of the region while increasing the resilience of the territory including its natural environment; SO 2.2 aims at improving the safety the programme area supporting the development of disaster management systems, furthering the capacity of recovery while minimising damages: SO 3.1 seeks to reach a higher level of sustainable economic and territorial development by exploiting the potentials of the natural assets and cultural heritage while preserving them and increasing their value; SO 3.2 aims at strengthening of the management and protection of ecosystems and the cooperation between public actors/ managers of the protected areas in order to increase environmental benefits and to provide economic and employment opportunities, finally SO 4.1 is intended to improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services.

The table below shows the financial plan of the Programme.

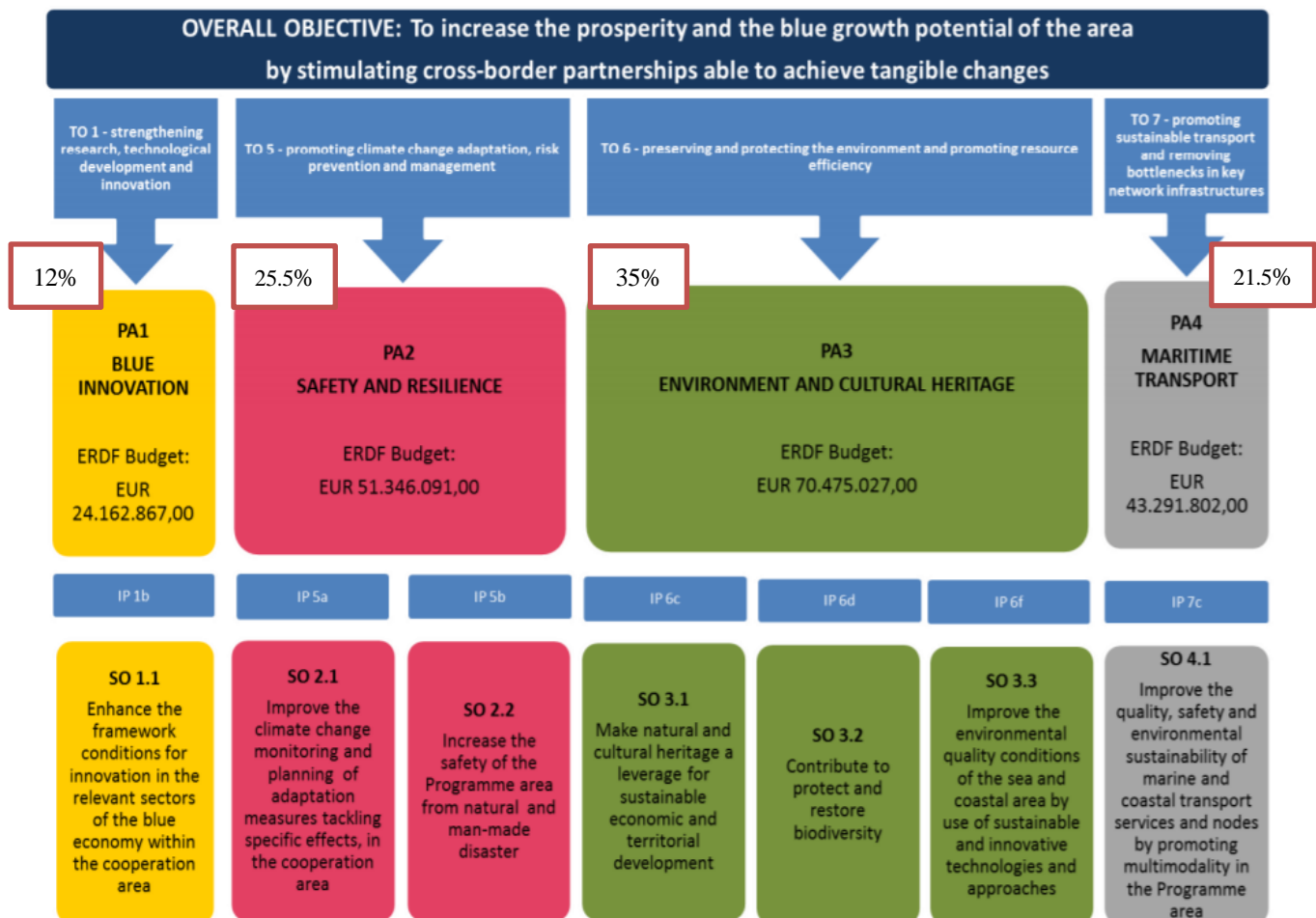
Table 1: Programme’s Financial Plan

	FINANCIAL PLAN	
	TOTAL	ERDF
Priority Axis 1	28.426.903,00	24.162.867,55
Priority Axis 2	60.407.166,00	51.346.091,10
Priority Axis 3	82.911.797,00	70.475.027,45
Priority Axis 4	50.931.532,00	43.291.802,20
Priority Axis 5	14.213.451,00	12.081.433,35
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>236.890.849,00</b>	<b>201.357.221,65</b>

Source: Data from SIU

It follows that the funds allocated to Priority Axes 1, 2, 3 and 4 (corresponding to the selected Thematic Objectives 1, 5, 6 and 7) amount to 94% of the Programme’s financial resources, as showed by the figure below; while the remaining 6% is allocated to Technical Assistance. The figure below shows also that most of the funds (35%) have been allocated to PA3 “**Environmental and Cultural Heritage**”.

Figure 3: Programme’s intervention logic



Source: INTERREG V A Italy – Croatia CBC Programme

## 1.1 Programme’s Calls for proposals

The Programme has launched until this moment **three calls for proposals, two of them in 2017 and one in 2019**. In particular, in 2017 a first set of calls including 1 call for “**Standard+**” projects and 1 call for “**Standard**” projects, targeting all Priority Axes; and 1 call for Technical Assistance (TA) in order to propose

to the Monitoring Committee the approval of 5 TA projects has been published. In 2019, a call for proposal for **Strategic Projects** was launched and closed.

The calls for proposals for Standard+, Standard and Strategic projects were addressed to:

- National, regional and local public bodies and associations formed by one or several of such public bodies;
- Bodies governed by public law, and associations constituted by one or several bodies governed by public law;
- Private bodies, including private companies, having legal personality and being operational from at least 2 fiscal years at the time of submission of the candidature, with some restrictions detailed in the different calls;
- International organisations acting under the Italian or Croatian national law and being operational from at least 2 fiscal years at the time of submission of the candidature.

Moreover, for Strategic projects in particular, a list of eligible categories of partners to be involved in the projects was defined for each strategic theme, on the basis of the institutional and technical competence and know how.

The above mentioned eligible categories had to be established under the national law of Italy or Croatia and had to have their official seat and their seat of operations in the part of the country included in the Programme area. The only exception to this rule concerns the **Assimilated partners**, which are institutions that are competent and relevant in their scope of action for all or part of the eligible area or are anyhow relevant due to specific and exclusive thematic competence for the eligible area but which are located outside of it. Assimilated partners have equal rights and obligations to applicants located within the Programme area.

In addition to the Assimilated partners, the Programme includes also the category of **Associated partners**, meaning those key stakeholders which are interested in the project results and which are relevant to be involved in the project for planning, developing and sustaining outputs and results but without financially contributing to it and without receiving ERDF funding. All requirements regarding project partners apply also to associated partners.

Applications for participating in the selection were submitted through the Electronic Management and Monitoring System (SIU) and the assessment of the applications was performed by the Joint Secretariat (JS) under the responsibility of the Managing Authority.

### **1.1.1 Standard+ call**

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The Standard+ call was open from the March to May 2017 for a limited period of 45 days. It aimed at funding projects stemming from existing cooperation potentials of the area – capitalising the achievements of the previous programming period - by means of piloting, testing or implementing in the programme area solutions developed in a larger scale context and in the framework of a 2007 – 2013 ETC Programmes in which Italian and Croatian partners already worked together (Adriatic IPA CBC, SEE and MED).

Each “Standard+” project had to involve **at least three partners**, out of which at least one Croatian partner that was member of the partnership of the previously financed project and at least one Italian partner that was member of the partnership of the previously financed project.

The ERDF budget allocated to fund the Standard+ projects, which represents 85% of the call’s total budget, amounted originally to EUR 15.000.000, which were increased by 19% after the submission of the project

applications to reach EUR 18.571.411,03, as showed in the table below, mostly due to the increase in the amount available for Priority Axis 3 (54%).

**Table 2: Budget for the Standard+ procedure**

Call	ERDF Budget at call opening	Total budget at call opening	Final ERDF budget after refinancing	Final total budget after refinancing
<b>2017 Standard+</b>	<b>15.000.000,00</b>	<b>17.647.058,82</b>	<b>18.571.411,03</b>	<b>21.848.718,86</b>
Priority Axis 1	4.200.000,00	4.941.176,47	2.445.990,09	2.877.635,40
Priority Axis 2	2.600.000,00	3.058.823,53	2.656.413,03	3.125.191,80
Priority Axis 3	4.200.000,00	4.941.176,47	9.139.515,06	10.752.370,66
Priority Axis 4	4.000.000,00	4.705.882,35	4.329.492,85	5.093.521,00

Source: Data from SIU

The above mentioned substantial increase of budget for Priority Axis 3 can be explained in terms of **interest showed by the beneficiaries for PA3**. Indeed, 24 proposals have been presented for the Standard+ call, 13 of them under PA3. Overall, all 24 proposals were admitted but only 22 proposals passed the quality assessment and have been eventually funded, according to the breakdown per priority axis showed below: under PA3, the Programme has funded 11 projects on the 13 applications received, while for the other axis all the projects presented have been funded.

**Table 3: Standard+ Projects funded**

Call	Proposals received	Requested budget	Admitted project proposals	Requested budget for approved project proposal	Approved budget	Average budget for approved projects	Average N° of partners for project
<b>Standard+</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>23.544.788,86</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21.848.718,86</b>	<b>21.848.718,86</b>	<b>993.123,59</b>	<b>6,7</b>
<b>PA1</b>	3	2.877.635,40	3	2.877.635,40	2.877.635,40	959.211,83	6,3
<b>PA2</b>	3	3.125.191,80	3	3.125.191,80	3.125.191,80	1.041.730,60	5,6
<b>PA3</b>	13	12.448.440,66	11	10.752.370,66	10.752.370,66	977.488,24	7
<b>PA4</b>	5	5.093.521,00	5	5.093.521,00	5.093.521,00	1.018.704,20	6,8

Source: Data from SIU

The table shows also the average budget of the funded projects which amounts to 993.123,59 EUR and the average number of partners which is equal to 6,7 for the Standard+ projects.



### 1.1.2 Standard call

The call for Standard projects was open from April to June 2017 for a longer period of 60 days with an original total allocation of EUR 63.200.000 from ERDF. This overall amount has increased by nearly 60% to EUR 100.914.492,19, as shown in the following table, with an increase in all PA, especially in PA3.

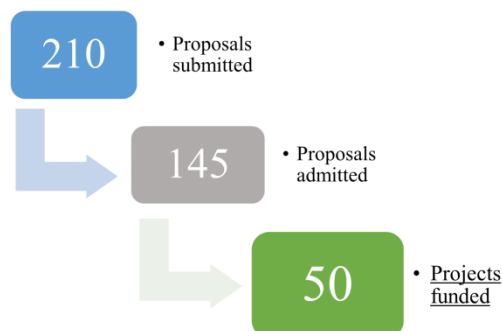
Table 4: Budget for the Standard procedure

PA	Budget at call opening	Budget at call opening	Final budget of the call	Final budget of the call
	ERDF	Total	ERDF	Total
<b>2017 Standard</b>	<b>63.200.000,00</b>	<b>74.352.941,18</b>	<b>100.914.492,19</b>	<b>118.722.931,99</b>
Priority Axis 1	11.470.000,00	13.494.117,65	16.599.928,02	19.529.327,09
Priority Axis 2	9.200.000,00	10.823.529,41	19.085.413,93	22.453.428,16
Priority Axis 3	29.700.000,00	34.941.176,47	44.480.016,42	52.329.431,09
Priority Axis 4	12.830.000,00	15.094.117,65	20.749.133,80	24.410.745,65

Source: Data from SIU

Indeed, the call for standard projects received great attention from the beneficiaries, so much that at the closure of the procedure, 210 project proposals were received, 145 of which were admitted and then 50 finally funded, namely 24% of the proposals received.

Figure 4: Standard Projects funded



Source: Data from SIU

The call has been conceived to fund projects that originated from the acknowledgement of a problem or a need and aiming at testing a potential solution.

Each “Standard” project had to involve **at least four partners**, located in each of the two countries of the Programme area (at least one per country).

The breakdown by priority axis shown below highlights, also in this case, the great interest from beneficiaries for Priority Axis 3, which has attracted 59% of the total proposals received. Under PA3, 123 project proposals were submitted, 75 were admitted and then 22 projects were funded.

**Table 5: Standard Projects funded**

Call	Proposals received	Requested budget	Admitted project proposals	Requested budget for admitted project proposal	Selected projects	Approved budget	% selected on presented projects
<b>Standard</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>431.916.843,84</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>308.887.237,14</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>118.722.931,99</b>	<b>25,3%</b>
<b>PA1</b>	42	83.871.103,10	34	70.097.169,35	8	19.529.327,09	19,0%
<b>PA2</b>	30	62.740.859,71	23	49.624.706,66	10	22.453.428,16	34,5%
<b>PA3</b>	123	247.852.434,98	75	156.388.935,08	22	52.329.431,09	19,5%
<b>PA4</b>	15	37.452.446,05	13	32.776.426,05	10	24.410.745,65	71,4%

Source: Data from SIU

To complement this analysis, the following table shows the average projects' budget and the average number of partners of Standard projects. It follows that Standard projects are larger than Standard+ projects in terms of budget (average budget 2.374.458,64 EUR compared to 993.123,59 EUR of Standard+ projects) and partnerships (9,3 average number of partners compared to 6,7).

**Table 6: Standard projects average budget and N° of partners**

Call	Selected projects	Approved budget	Average budget for approved projects	Average N° of partners for project
<b>Standard</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>118.722.931,99</b>	<b>2.374.458,64</b>	<b>9,3</b>
<b>PA1</b>	8	19.529.327,09	2.441.165,89	10
<b>PA2</b>	10	22.453.428,16	2.245.342,82	8,6
<b>PA3</b>	22	52.329.431,09	2.378.610,50	9
<b>PA4</b>	10	24.410.745,65	2.441.074,57	9,7

Source: Data from SIU

### 1.1.3 Strategic call

The last set of calls launched by the Programme aimed at funding **Strategic Projects**. It was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 for a period of 60 days until end of November 2019. With an initial financial allocation of EUR 82.015.294,11, it aimed at funding projects within 11 strategic themes covering the 4 Programme's Priority Axis, following an **institutional top-down approach**. Indeed, the call for Strategic Projects and the identification of the **11 strategic themes** was the result of a preparatory work conducted by the Monitoring Committee of the Programme, through the establishment of dedicated Working Group and involving national authorities and relevant institutions in both Italy and Croatia. This preparatory work has included the recognition of the needs of strategic cross-border relevance stemming from the Programme area, the strategic nature of the identified themes and the importance of giving a common and cross-border solution to the identified needs emerged. Therefore, 11 strategic themes were identified as follows:

1.1.1) Blue technology; 2.1.1) Climate change adaptation; 2.2.1) Flood risk; 2.2.2) Oil spills and other marine hazards, fire and earthquake; 3.1.1) Coastal and inland tourism; 3.2.1) Marine environment; 3.2.2) Fisheries

and aquaculture; 3.3.1) Marine Litter; 4.1.1) Maritime Transport; 4.1.2) Mobility of Passengers; 4.1.3) Nautical services.

Moreover, the strategic projects to be funded had to be characterised by:

- principle of wide-area partnerships, i.e.: the involvement of a higher number of beneficiaries than the minimum eligible partnership requirement as set in the Cooperation Programme;
- width of the involved territories to ensure that greater Programme area population benefits from the achieved results;
- higher financial allocations than those foreseen for standard projects;
- specific and targeted institutional and technical skills and know how to ensure deeper/long-lasting impacts and benefits for the whole cooperation area.

Each strategic project had to involve at least 3 Croatian and 3 Italian eligible partners. Furthermore, the call allowed the participation in the projects of **associated partners**, namely key stakeholders that could be involved in a project without financially contributing to it and without receiving ERDF funding.

As mentioned, for this call the **budget** was allocated **per strategic theme** as showed below, and it eventually reached the final ERDF amount of EUR 69.068.096,72.

**Table 7: Allocation of funds for Strategic projects**

	Call	ERDF budget at call opening	Total Budget at call opening	ERDF Final budget of the call	Total final budget of the call
<b>PA</b>	<b>2019 Strategic</b>	<b>69.713.000,00</b>	<b>82.015.294,11</b>	<b>69.068.096,72</b>	<b>81.256.584,49</b>
<b>PA1</b>	Theme 1.1.1	5.116.000,00	6.018.823,53	4.722.392,10	5.555.755,45
<b>PA2</b>	Theme 2.1.1	7.500.000,00	8.823.529,41	7.499.902,75	8.823.415,00
	Theme 2.2.1	8.000.000,00	9.411.764,71	7.999.909,13	9.411.657,83
<b>PA3</b>	Theme 2.2.2	14.029.000,00	16.504.705,88	14.018.879,65	16.492.799,60
	Theme 3.1.1	3.200.000,00	3.764.705,88	3.199.991,33	3.764.695,71
	Theme 3.2.1	4.945.000,00	5.817.647,06	4.944.914,95	5.817.547,00
	Theme 3.2.2	4.945.000,00	5.817.647,06	4.866.381,75	5.725.155,00
<b>PA4</b>	Theme 3.3.1	3.765.000,00	4.429.411,76	3.608.017,10	4.244.726,00
	Theme 4.1.1	6.071.000,00	7.142.352,94	6.070.700,00	7.142.000,00
	Theme 4.1.2	6.071.000,00	7.142.352,94	6.069.000,00	7.140.000,00
	Theme 4.1.3	6.071.000,00	7.142.352,94	6.068.007,96	7.138.832,90

Source: Data from SIU

The call announcement for strategic projects stated the expectation that 1 strategic project would have been funded for each theme, and this is what happened at the closure of the call. Indeed, 11 projects have been funded, one for each strategic theme, on 13 proposals presented. This is because, as shown in the table below, for thematic objective 3.2.1 and 3.3.1 two projects were presented, but just one was approved and then funded.

**Table 8: Strategic Projects funded**

	Call	Proposals received	Requested budget	Selected Projects	Requested budget for approved project proposal	Approved budget	Average budget for approved projects	Average N° of partners for project
<b>PA</b>	<b>Strategic Theme</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>86.617.186,07</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>81.256.584,49</b>	<b>81.256.584,49</b>	<b>7.386.962,23</b>	<b>17,8</b>
<b>PA1</b>	1.1.1	1	5.555.755,45	1	5.555.755,45	5.555.755,45	5.555.755,45	14
<b>PA2</b>	2.1.1	1	8.823.415,00	1	8.823.415,00	8.823.415,00	11.575.957,48	18,3
	2.2.1	1	9.411.657,83	1	9.411.657,83	9.411.657,83		
	2.2.2	1	16.492.799,60	1	16.492.799,60	16.492.799,60		
<b>PA3</b>	3.1.1	1	3.764.695,71	1	3.764.695,71	3.764.695,71	4.888.030,93	15,5
	3.2.1	2	9.223.673,20	1	5.817.547,00	5.817.547,00		
	3.2.2	1	5.725.155,00	1	5.725.155,00	5.725.155,00		
	3.3.1	2	6.199.201,38	1	4.244.726,00	4.244.726,00		
<b>PA4</b>	4.1.1	1	7.142.000,00	1	7.142.000,00	7.142.000,00	7.140.277,63	16,2
	4.1.2	1	7.140.000,00	1	7.140.000,00	7.140.000,00		
	4.1.3	1	7.138.832,90	1	7.138.832,90	7.138.832,90		

Source: Data from SIU

## 1.2 Overall funded projects

From the above it follows that the Programme has until this moment funded, in addition to 5 Technical Assistance projects, 83 projects (50 Standard, 22 Standard+ and 11 Strategic projects) for a total approved budget of **EUR 221.828.235,34**, following the allocation per priority axis shown below.

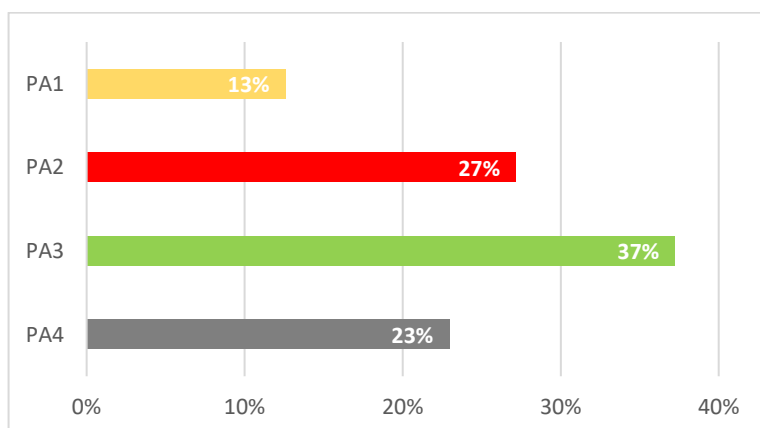
**Table 9: Overall Funded Projects per PA**

Priority Axis	Standard+	Standard	Strategic	Grand Total	Budget available	% per PA
<b>PA1</b>	2.877.635,40	19.529.327,09	5.555.755,45	<b>27.962.717,94</b>	28.426.903,00	<b>13%</b>
<b>N° of projects</b>	3	8	1	<b>12</b>		
<b>PA2</b>	3.125.191,80	22.453.428,16	34.727.872,43	<b>60.306.492,39</b>	60.407.166,00	<b>27%</b>
<b>N° of projects</b>	3	10	3	<b>16</b>		
<b>PA3</b>	10.752.370,66	52.329.431,09	19.552.123,71	<b>82.633.925,46</b>	82.911.797,00	<b>37%</b>
<b>N° of projects</b>	11	22	4	<b>37</b>		
<b>PA4</b>	5.093.521,00	24.410.745,65	21.420.832,90	<b>50.925.099,55</b>	50.931.532,00	<b>23%</b>
<b>N° of projects</b>	5	10	3	<b>18</b>		
<b>Total N° of projects</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>83</b>		
<b>Total amount per call</b>	<b>21.848.718,86</b>	<b>118.722.931,99</b>	<b>81.256.584,49</b>	<b>221.828.235,34</b>		
<b>% per call</b>	10%	54%	37%			

Source: Data from SIU

37 projects have been funded under Priority Axis 3, which has thus taken the main part of the overall Programme's budget, i.e. 37%, followed by PA2 to which has been allocated 27% of the total budget with 16 projects funded, and PA4 which counts for 23% of the overall budget with 18 funded projects. The table above indicates also the budget originally available for each PA in order to highlight that the amounts available at Programme level were consistently contracted.

**Figure 5: Budget allocation per Priority Axis**



### 1.3 Financial progress

The **22 Standard+ projects**, being also the first call to be launched, have followed the quickest path and all of the projects were **concluded** as of the end of the year 2019 with a final budget reported, validated and paid of **EUR 20.025.132,60**, as shown in the table below.

**Table 10: Financial Progress of Standard+ projects**

Call and Priority Axis	Selected projects	Approved budget	Closed Projects as of December 2020	Budget reported and certified	% certified on approved budget
<b>2017 Standard+</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21.848.718,86</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20.025.132,60</b>	<b>91,7%</b>
1	3	2.877.635,40	3	2.565.942,58	89,2%
2	3	3.125.191,80	3	2.980.520,87	95,4%
3	11	10.752.370,66	11	10.190.542,04	94,8%
4	5	5.093.521,00	5	4.288.127,11	84,2%

Source: Data from SIU

The table also highlights the overall very good performance of the Standard+ projects, considering that **91,7% of the approved budget has been eventually certified to the EC**. The best performance has been achieved by the projects funded under Priority Axis 3 with its 11 projects.

The **Standard projects** have started in late 2018 or beginning of 2019 and all of them are currently ongoing. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, requests for extension of project duration have been granted by the Programme to the beneficiaries: 28 Standard projects will be concluded at the end of this year 2021, while 22 of them will be concluded in year 2022.

The following table shows their financial progress as of December 2020, highlighting a percentage of 30,72% of certified budget to the EC on the overall approved budget.

**Table 11: Financial Progress of Standard projects**

Call and Priority Axis	Selected and ongoing Projects	Approved Budget	Total reported amount	Total FLC validated amount	Total EC certified amount	% certified on approved budget
<b>2017 Standard</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>118.722.931,99</b>	<b>37.953.292,68</b>	<b>37.060.404,98</b>	<b>36.466.895,28</b>	<b>30,72%</b>
1	8	19.529.327,09	7.448.499,01	7.295.743,99	7.235.153,09	37,05%
2	10	22.453.428,16	6.946.835,23	6.724.465,42	6.724.465,42	29,95%
3	22	52.329.431,09	16.536.456,28	16.171.437,81	16.169.365,07	30,90%
4	10	24.410.745,65	7.021.502,16	6.868.757,76	6.337.911,70	25,96%

Source: Data from SIU

The **Strategic projects** have been launched in mid-2020 and their conclusion is planned for December 2022, therefore their financial progress at the end of 2020 was limited.

**Table 12: Financial Progress of Strategic projects**

Call and Priority Axis	Selected ongoing Projects	Approved Budget	Total reported amount	Total FLC validated amount
<b>2019 Strategic Call</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>81.256.584,49</b>	<b>707.539,59</b>	<b>519.021,58</b>
1	1	5.555.755,45	-	-
2	3	34.727.872,43	265.510,11	176.800,73
3	4	19.552.123,71	204.158,13	151.251,75
4	3	21.420.832,90	237.871,35	190.969,10

Source: Data from SIU

Finally, in order to offer a complete picture, table 13 below shows the overall financial progress of the Programme by Priority Axis, including the technical assistance projects, as of December 2020. The overall amount certified to the EC is equal to EUR 61.885.308,02, of which 52.602.504,30 from ERDF budget. **The Programme has thus successfully met and exceeded its ERDF financial targets for year 2020**, which amounted to EUR 50.515.404,76.

**Table 13: Financial Targets**

TARGET N+3	
2017	-
2018	3.679.725,43
2019	18.716.243,36
2020	50.515.404,76
2021	85.084.937,36
2022	120.426.402,96
2023	201.357.220,00

Source: Data from MA

From the table below, it appears that the amounts certified on the budget available were still low because of the delays in implementation of the Standard Projects and the fact that the Strategic Projects were just at the beginning of their implementation, with overall **61 projects still ongoing** (9 under PA1, 13 under PA2, 26 under PA3 and 13 under PA4). Nevertheless, it clearly emerges the **very good performance of the Programme** that has reached **96% of ERDF certified amount on ERDF reported amount** by the beneficiaries.

**Table 14: Programme's financial performance as of 31 December 2020**

Priority Axis	Projects	Status	Total Budget	ERDF Budget	Total reported amount	ERDF reported amount	Total FLC validated amount	ERDF FLC validated amount	Total EC certified amount	ERDF EC certified amount	% ERDF certified budget	% ERDF certified reported amount
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>22 closed 61 ongoing</b>	<b>236.041.685,44</b>	<b>200.635.432,10</b>	<b>64.413.261,16</b>	<b>54.742.660,35</b>	<b>63.070.964,36</b>	<b>53.626.563,64</b>	<b>61.885.308,02</b>	<b>52.602.504,30</b>	<b>26 %</b>	<b>96%</b>
<b>PA 1</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3 closed 9 ongoing</b>	27.962.718,04	23.768.310,26	10.019.063,70	8.491.346,47	9.861.686,57	8.382.432,34	9.801.095,67	8.330.930,09	35%	98%
<b>PA 2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3 closed 13 ongoing</b>	60.306.492,39	51.260.518,41	10.320.379,77	8.772.321,51	9.881.787,02	8.399.517,61	9.704.986,29	8.249.237,06	16%	94%
<b>PA 3</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>11 closed 26 ongoing</b>	82.633.925,46	70.238.836,37	27.022.821,62	22.985.647,11	26.531.757,75	22.568.242,30	26.378.433,26	22.421.664,79	32%	97%
<b>PA 4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5 closed 13 ongoing</b>	50.925.099,55	43.286.334,56	11.601.168,35	9.860.991,75	11.347.853,97	9.645.674,27	10.564.475,59	8.979.802,82	21%	91%
<b>PA 5</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	14.213.450,00	12.081.432,50	5.449.827,72	4.632.353,51	5.447.879,05	4.630.697,12	5.436.317,21	4.620.869,54	38%	99%

Source: Data from SIU



## 2 Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system

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### 2.1 Methodology

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The Evaluator has reviewed the Cooperation Programme, its organization and the implementation documents. In particular, the documents produced by the JS in order to sustain the preparation of the new 2021/2027 programming period – “Paper 0” and “Paper 1” – have been particularly useful, as well as the Annual Implementation Report 2020, approved by the Monitoring Committee on May 27<sup>th</sup> 2021. The approach to self-assessment that characterized the JS activity which led to the creation of the Papers made it possible to promptly focus on some critical areas of programme management, as well as to enhance the ability to react to the obstacles without delay.

The evaluation of the efficiency of the management system has been carried out in accordance with the following methodological approaches:

- *Theory-based models* – and in particular the realistic evaluation, which guide the interpretation of causal mechanisms by referring to the theories of change underlying the Programme. These models are used in conjunction with quantitative techniques; they enhance the interpretative capacity of evaluative analysis, as they allow to focus on both contextual aspects and on the implementation process.
- *Participatory models*, which are particularly useful for the analysis of the process of implementation since they allow to enhance the different perspectives of the actors and the territories involved. They allow to interpret the cause-effect dynamics and the complex relationships which has been implemented in the frame of the Programme; at the same time, they trigger learning processes and develop visions and shared practices which may involve the management bodies, stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- *Performance oriented models* constitute a sub-group of participatory models, of particular relevance for the evaluation of the management system and the performance resulting from the actions taken (outputs and results). This approach focuses on the participation of the actors of the management in the monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme management system and in the quantification of the related indicators. This approach is particularly useful during the implementation of the tasks of the ongoing evaluations.

Monitoring data provided by the MA have been used as proxies to evaluate the state of the art of the Programme and the efficiency of the financial and procedural implementation. Monitoring data from EC “cohesion database” has been used in order to compare the financial performance of the Programme with the other ETC Programmes (internal borders) where Italy and Croatia are involved.

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

Semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the Managing Authority Director; the Head of Joint Secretariat; the Head of Service for Cross-Border Cooperation of Croatia and the Senior Expert Advisor of the Service for Cross-Border Cooperation of Croatia; the Officer of Unit 6 “ETC Programmes” of the Agency for Territorial Cohesion, Italy.

## 2.2 Evaluation questions

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The operational evaluation of the Programme management system has been designed according to the following evaluation questions:

- *Is the overall management and control system effective?*
- *How efficient and effective are the Programme management bodies (MA, CA, JS, MC, FLC) in the implementation of their functions?*
- *Are Programme bodies functions and responsibilities (division of tasks and workloads) clearly established and efficiently implemented?*
- *What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the Programme shared management tools and procedures?*
- *How efficient are Programme bodies internal procedures, tools and communication modalities adopted to guarantee the proper shared management, coordination and supervision of the Italy-Croatia CBC Programme implementation?*
- *How efficient and relevant are projects selection criteria for both standard and strategic projects?*
- *How effective is the Programme monitoring system?*

## 2.3 The process of implementation of the Programme management system

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The Italy-Croatia CBC Programme management system start-up phase had some initial implementation delays which have been recently analysed by the JS in the self-evaluation exercise was carried out through the mentioned “Paper 0 - new programming period 2021-2027” (draft version of 31 January 2021).

The “Paper 0” is the first of a series of papers through which the JS intends to contribute to the analysis of the Task Force for the new programming period (2021/2027). The "Paper 0" has been developed through a process of internal consultation of the JS staff involved in the Programme activities. It has analysed mainly the critical aspects of the implementation, in particular the operational and administrative issues, with the aim of providing information and potential solutions which may positively influence the next programming period management system and implementation process. Several observations and analysis which have been gathered and organized by the JS are also useful for the evaluation activity, especially in an early stage phase of the evaluation service.

The Programme design involved several actors. The DG Regio in December 2012 presented a first proposal of ETC 2014-2020 geographical areas, and included the proposal of a new cross border Programme between Italian and Croatian territories. In March 2013 it took place the first kick-off meeting for the establishment of a Task force in charge of the preparation of the Programme. The task force was including representatives from the national and regional institutional level, and one representative of the EC. After a long process (eight Task Force meetings) and several draft versions, the Cooperation Programme final draft has been approved in July 2015.

The complexity of the start-up phase of the Programme is only partly related to its late approval<sup>1</sup> - several other CBC Programs have been approved by the end of 2015. After the approval, in fact, the Programme had a long start-up phase which is clearly represented by *the time needed in order to get to the publication of the first Call for Proposals in spring 2017*, and then, later, the Call for strategic projects in autumn 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> The Interreg V A Italy-Croatia 2014-2020 CBC Programme was adopted by the European Commission with the Decision C (2015) 9342 of 15 December 2015.

- In the case of the two Italy-France CBC Cooperation Programmes the first Call for proposal has been published during the 2015: July and October 2015 Alcotra Programme for simple projects and September 2017 Alcotra Programme for Integrated projects; December 2015 and December 2016 Maritime Programme for simple and strategic projects. Several other CBC Cooperation Programmes began their operations in 2016: Hungary-Croatia in February 2016; Italy-Austria in March 2016 and later in April 2017; Italy-Slovenia in June 2016 and in February 2018 for strategic projects; Italy-Greece in July 2016. The Slovenia-Croatia CBC Programme operated through an open call approach which started in early 2016.

The most critical area in the implementation of the management system was the *establishment of the Programme bodies, in particular the MA and the JS* - in both cases the top positions has changed during the programming period, while the operational staff has been incomplete for long periods.

- The MA - in accordance with art. 23 of Regulation (EU) n. 1299/2013 which assign to the MA the role of setting up the JS of the Programme – launched the selection procedures for appointing the position of Head of the JS in February 2016, and few months later for the positions of Administrative Manager, Financial manager, Legal Expert and Communication Manager. The establishment of the staff (Project Managers) of the Branch Offices in Croatia proceeded by the end of 2016 and the 2017.
- The Head of JS resigned in the Spring 2018 and in July 2018 a new selection procedure was launched. The new Head of JS was contracted in October; in the same period the MA launched a selection procedure for one financial officer and one project manager to be included in the JS.
- Several interventions to strengthen the staff of the MA were carried out during the implementation of the Programme, continuing until the end of 2020, when the Head of MA was replaced.
- During the 2019 seven JS positions became vacant, including the Head of the JS who resigned in July. The new procedure for the Head of the JS was opened in November 2020 and finalized at the beginning of the following year. In parallel the MA has published a procedure to replace the missing JS staff (Financial Manager, Administrative Assistant and 2 Project Managers).

This concise reconstruction highlights how the process of setting up the new programme management structures was particularly complex. Despite the activity of the Task Force, the support of the National Authorities and the EC, the involvement of the Regions and the designated MA, the start-up phase took longer than expected and, consequently, the establishment of the new management structure was completed in delay.

Some interviewees highlighted some particular complexities concerning the Programme, in particular that this is the first programming period for this CBC Programme which has a remarkable dimension of the geographical eligible area, a large number of regional and local institutions involved, and a relevant budget. Other levels of complexity concern the fact that the Veneto Region, despite having a long experience in managing the regional Programs of the ESI funds, had never played the role of managing authority of an ETC Programme and several procedures had to be implemented *ex novo*.

All these elements had an impact especially in the first years of implementation, affecting above all the timing of the launch of the calls. The launch of the Call for standard projects was influenced by two issues: the criticality of the information system and the delay in setting up the managing bodies.

The strong participation in the first Call for proposals (Standard+ and Standard Projects) is also a reflection of the delay in the launch of the Programme activities - which contributed to increase the expectations from the territories. The success of the Call raised other issues related to the alignment of the documentation required in order to reach the formal approval of the financing agreement between the partners from the two countries with different rules and not yet fully integrated. The consequent *long process of contracting the selected projects* was actually mainly due to the difficulties in aligning the administrative procedures among the partners of the

two countries involved in order to comply with the requirements needed for the finalization of the financing agreement.

In the following phase, the full functioning of the management structure was limited by the *turnover that involved both the MA staff and the JS*, which had an impact on the capacity of managing the implementation of the Programme activities. Indeed, the high level of turnover of personnel - which goes along with the incomplete organizational structure of the Programme management system - was one of the most critical elements mentioned during the interviews.

In order to further explore this issue, it's useful to mention that the need to organize the Programme bodies by hiring staff with good experience and specialization has clashed with the stringent dynamics and regulations regarding public employees, but also with the dynamics of the labour market for this specific positions and skills. The contractual forms initially proposed to the selected candidates did not achieve the objective of ensuring the permanence of the selected subjects in their professional positions for the necessary period of time – consequently the contractual forms proposed will be modified in the subsequent "selection procedures".

The effects related to the high initial staff turnover led not only to delays in the Programme implementation but also to management problems, such as, for example, the *lack of comprehensive and consolidated procedures, manuals and other documentation*. This situation created uncertainty among the JS staff, in particular in the communication with the beneficiaries about the Programme requirements. This situation has become more significant as the number of the projects funded was increasing - creating further bottlenecks in the communication with project partners, and increasing the time needed to answer technical and administrative questions.

Once the Programme management system overcame the initial *impasse* the situation improved and its organization was able to gradually adapt to the new context of cooperation. A particularly important aspect in improving the effectiveness of the JS action was the completion of the staff, including in particular the Project Managers (PM), which enhanced the capacity of the territorial offices - or branches - to provide answers and support to the lead partners (LP) of the projects.

- ✓ The Project Managers' activity was progressively fully integrated in the JS improving the capacity of interaction with the funded projects also through *monitoring visits* on the spot.

After one year from the presentation of the projects, other problems emerged, related, e.g. to the change of some projects partner, or linked to the implementation of some of the components or activities which were initially planned by the projects.

With regard to the strategic projects, it emerged that the complexity of their nature would have required a more careful preparation work by the MA. The MC reacted by organizing a working group for the strategic projects generation which was aimed at analysing and defining the list of the strategic topics to be selected for the strategic projects. This was a very long and complex activity which could have been organized in advance.

The MC's working group went into detail in analysing the problems which emerged during the implementation and involving some beneficiaries on both sides –exploring the issues related to the management of the projects according to the different regional and national administrative levels.

- ✓ The activity of the working group could have a crucial impact on the next programming period by supporting the MA and the NAs in identifying the strategic areas towards which the strategic projects will have to direct their efforts.

Although the activity of the working group started without having defined a clear methodology, it undoubtedly introduced a practice of operational cooperation among the stakeholders of the programme. The activity of the

working groups can certainly be better developed in the future but this experience - alongside the completion of the organizational structure of the JS - has contributed to building a climate of trust and cooperation in the management system of the Programme that has already produced some results.

## 2.4 The financial implementation of the Programme in a comparative perspective

The table and graphs below show the main data and indicators on the financial progress of the ETC (Internal borders) Programmes in which Italy and Croatia participate. The source for monitoring the progress of these Programmes is the EC - "Cohesion Data" monitoring database (<https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>).

The efficiency levels of financial implementation of the Programme are evaluated using some synthetic indicators of financial progress whose values are listed in the columns D-F of the following table: D) *allocation capacity* (planned funds / allocated funds), E) *implementation efficiency* (expenses / planned funds); F) *utilization capacity* (expenses / allocated funds).

The table and the graphs allow to compare the performance of the Italy-Croatia Programme with respect to the other similar Programmes currently being implemented. The monitoring data are updated in June 2021.

**Table 15: European Territorial Cooperation (CBC - Internal borders) Programmes in which Italy and Croatia participate: financial progress (June 2021)**

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Program	Planned	Allocated	Expenses	B/A	C/A	C/B
Italy-Austria (approved: 30 Nov. 2015)	98.380.352	109.713.371	39.170.618	111,5%	39,8%	35,7%
<b>Italy-Croatia</b> (approved: 15 Dec. 2015)	<b>236.890.849</b>	<b>235.969.835</b>	<b>63.065.167</b>	<b>99,6%</b>	<b>26,6%</b>	<b>26,7%</b>
Italy-France (Marittimo) (approved: 11 Jun. 2015)	199.649.897	198.353.673	87.178.650	99,4%	43,7%	44,0%
Italy-France (Alcotra) (approved: 28 May 2015)	233.972.102	234.721.879	91.975.404	100,3%	39,3%	39,2%
Italy-Malta (approved: 12 Oct. 2015)	51.708.438	46.559.041	13.598.997	90,0%	26,3%	29,2%
Italy-Slovenia (approved: 15 Dec. 2015)	92.588.182	92.646.163	42.722.077	100,1%	46,1%	46,1%
Italy-Switzerland (approved: 9 Dec. 2015)	118.281.056	108.144.837	27.081.643	91,4%	22,9%	25,0%
Italy-Greece (approved: 15-Dec-2015)	123.176.901	135.268.018	35.735.930	109,8%	29,0%	26,4%
Croatia-Hungary (approved: 7 Sep. 2015)	73.900.028	74.058.776	35.905.783	100,2%	48,6%	48,5%
Croatia-Slovenia (approved: 1 Oct. 2015)	55.690.913	55.650.663	36.430.388	99,9%	65,4%	65,5%
	<b>1.284.238.718</b>	<b>1.291.086.256</b>	<b>472.864.657</b>	<b>100,5%</b>	<b>36,8%</b>	<b>36,6%</b>

Source: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>

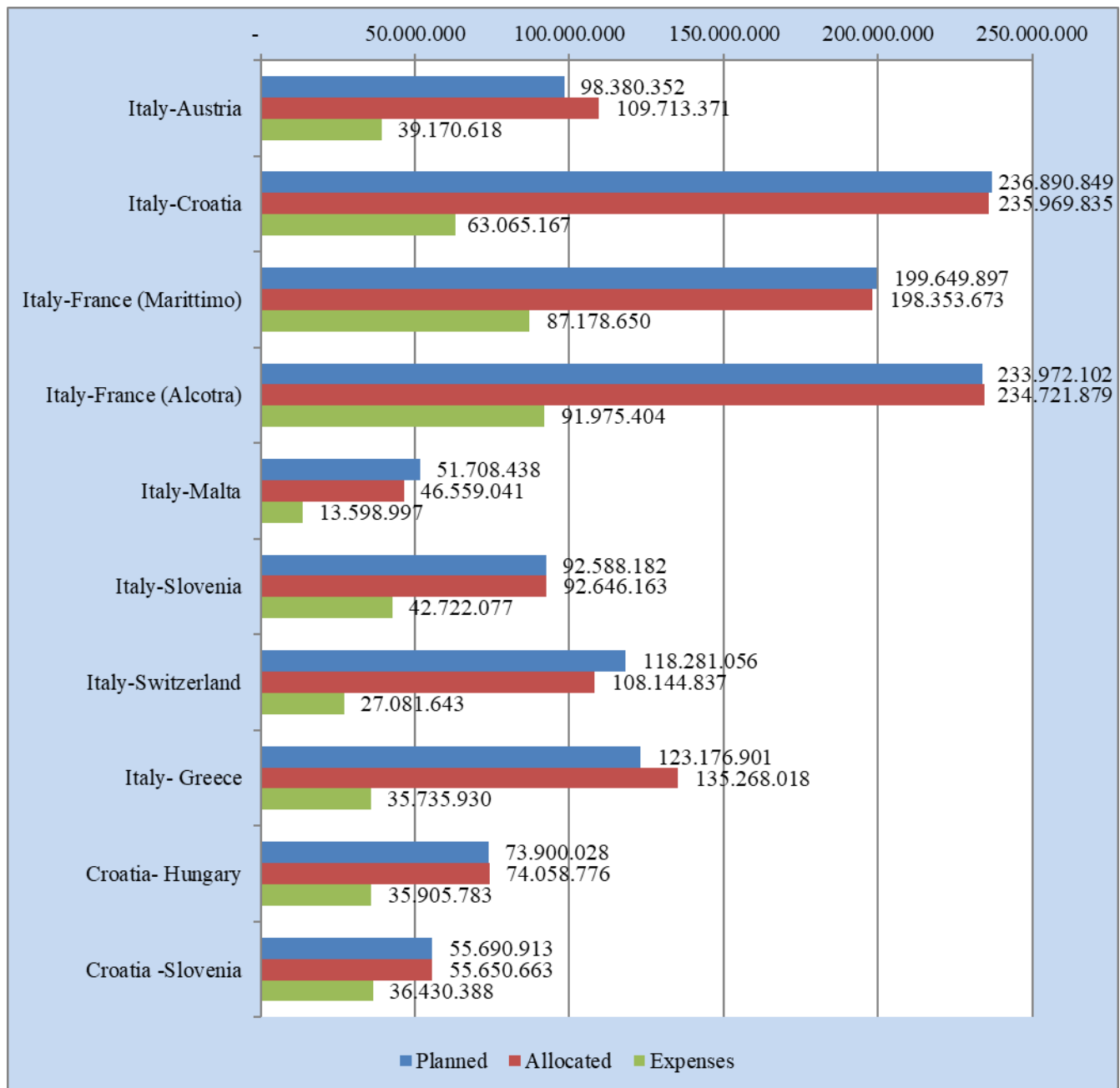
Italy-Croatia Interreg Programme has the highest budget within this list of ten Programmes, followed by the two ETC Programmes between Italy and France. Despite the delay in the setting up of the managing system and the start-up of the implementation of the projects, the Programme displays a satisfying degree of *allocation capacity* (99,6%).

As we highlighted in the first chapter, the level of progress of expenditure is not as advanced. The level of *implementation efficiency* (column E of table 1) stands at 26,6%, more than 10 points below the average. This is a reflection of the initial delays in the publication of the calls for proposal (see the previous paragraph §2.3), and consequently, of the limited capacity of the financed projects of producing valid expenditures in a short time frame.

The last indicator (column F *utilization capacity*) provides a measure of the ability of the Programme of using the allocated resources. The value of the indicator stands at 26.7%, about 10 points from the average of the programmes. In this case, the position of the programme depends mainly on the limited contribution of valid expenditures from the strategic projects. The strategic projects have been approved by the end of 2019 and started their activity by the mid-2020; their financial progress reported by the end of 2020 shows a validated amount of expenditures of €519.021,58 on an approved total budget of more than 81 million of euros (see inside: Tab 12 in Chapter 1). However, there are no delays compared to the previous indicator (column E *implementation efficiency*), on the contrary, the distance from the average value is slightly reduced.

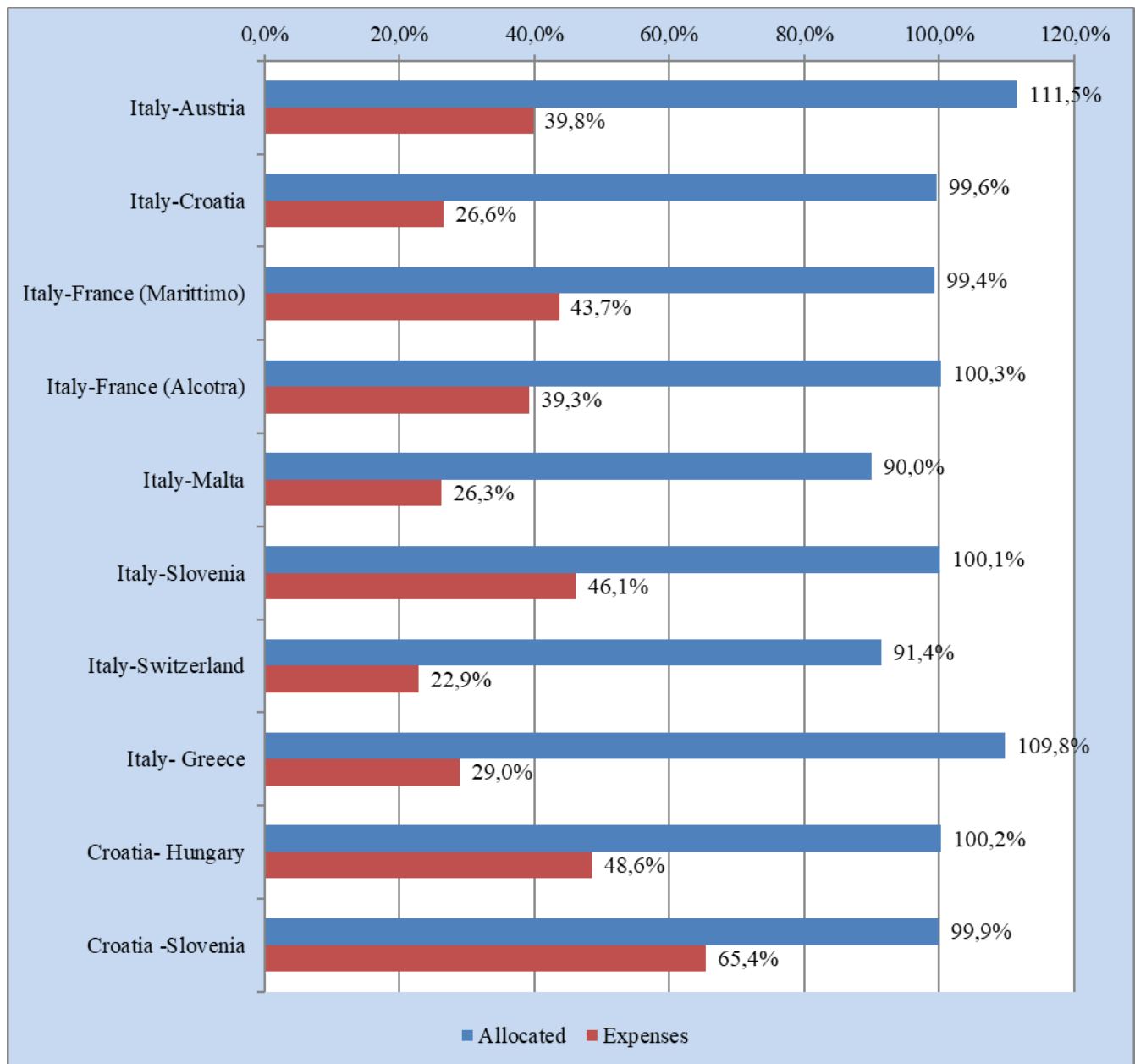
In conclusion, considering the good level of commitments, we can expect that the gap with the other programmes will **gradually narrow in the coming months**. The *utilization capacity* indicator (which considers the trend of expenditure with respect to the allocated funds) will increase its value as soon as standard projects and strategic projects produce eligible expenses. At that point, the financial performance of the Programme will be in line or closer compared to that of the other programmes.

Figure 6: Cross border Programmes of Italy and Croatia - financial progress, amount planned, allocated and expenses (June 2021)



Source: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>

**Figure 7: Cross border Programmes of Italy and Croatia: financial progress, amount allocated and expenses (%), June 2021**



Source: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>



## 2.5 First Level Control

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Within the framework of Interreg Italy-Croatia's management and control system, the First Level Control presents a different situation compared to the two cooperating countries: while the Croatian partner implemented a centralised control system, the Italian partners entrusted the selection of first level controllers to the beneficiaries themselves. The selection takes place on the market starting from simplified procedures that may include lists of consultants that guarantee specific experience and independence.

It's a **blended system**, which is adopted also in other territorial cooperation programs, for instance, the Interreg Programme "Italia-Francia Marittimo", where the French partners centralised the FLC within the Corse Regional Authority, while the Italian one selected its consultants relying on a long-list, prepared by the MA.

As a consequence, on the one side, centralising the FLC within a public authority involves a **"bottleneck" risk**, in particular when the deadline is close and the offices in charge for accounting activities are managing a large number of reports, from different Programmes, in a limited available time. In general terms this procedure is potentially more efficient, thanks to the concentration of competences and the uniformity of the procedures, which can guarantee a better timing for each single procedure. The risk relates to the ability to organize the workload in order to cope with the peaks of the projects' reports converging on the same deadline.

On the other side, the idea of leaving to the beneficiaries the choice of their controllers generates the problem of the first level controllers' specific competence with regard to the operational reporting procedures and the IT tools adopted. Hence, if there is a chance of avoiding bottlenecks in the initial phase of reporting validation, this have caused an increasing burden of work within the JS, which will have more requests of integration and control, because of the heterogeneity of the operational procedures and the technical solution adopted by single controllers. European programmes adopted specific solutions in order to tackle these difficulties, typically one of the followings:

- i) pre-selection of controllers, with public announcements and consequent lists and selection procedures by the beneficiaries;
- ii) actions of preliminary training of the controllers from the MA or JS, in order to guarantee the utmost uniformity of procedures and instruments.

Since Interreg IT-HR is a newly born program, the issue of the FLC is quite relevant, also in consideration of the problems (specifically the delays in the FLC certification of the Croatian partners) that have emerged close to the deadline set for the achievement of the N + 3 target. The efficiency of the FLCs will be tested again near the upcoming deadlines for reporting and validating requests for reimbursement.

This important experience, also characterized by critical moments, will have to lead to a further refinement and coordination of the control systems, which will have to balance procedural simplicity with the need for uniformity and reliability of the controls themselves.

## 2.6 The SIU monitoring system

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The most common IT system used by Interreg programmes is the eMS system<sup>2</sup>, which was at first designed in 2015 within the Interact Programme, the EU programme funded by ERDF which is focused on service delivery

<sup>2</sup> Interact, European Union, <https://www.interact-eu.net/#cooperation-tools>.

to support cooperation programmes (Interreg, Interreg IPA-CBC and ENI CBC). The info system eMS was intended to be a unique and integrated monitoring platform for all the Interreg programmes 2014-2020. While for the next programming period 2021-2027, a new version has been developed: JEMS<sup>3</sup>.

For what concerns Italy, a working group was activated in order to discuss the interfacing and the connections between eMS and the Italian unified database<sup>4</sup>. The eMS is a free of charge electronic monitoring system provided by Interact to all interested programmes who sign the license agreement. If needed, Programmes can adapt the system to their own specificities. The system was designed by Interact in close collaboration with a core group of 4 Interreg programmes and developed by an external IT provider. An extended group of some 25 observing Interreg programmes was also kept informed on the progress of the project.

As of October 2017, 37 territorial cooperation programmes signed the license agreement and were either testing or already using the system<sup>5</sup>. A Monitoring Systems Network was also set up and managed by Interact, which continues exchanging experiences between users of the different systems across Interreg programmes.

The Italy-Croatia Interreg Programme opted for the SIU system, which is a platform that Veneto Region uses for the management of the ESI funds Regional Programme. The Veneto Region chose to adopt the SIU system in a IT reuse logic and in order to respond to the legislation and the administrative request and to maintain the interoperability with the other regional tools (registration system, accounting system, EC certification and control system) and with the National Authorities. In this perspective, during the interviews has emerged a positive statement regarding the capacity of transmitting reliable financial progress data from the IT-HR Programme to the Italian national database managed by IGRUE.

This choice cannot be considered as a *unicum*: as a matter of fact, many cross-border and transnational programmes have chosen internal systems, generally those used for the ESI funds. An example can be the Interreg Italy-Austria, where the autonomous Region of Bolzano has opted for the same platform used for ESF and ERDF programmes, the so-called coheMON platform. This platform uses a unified IT system, which guarantees the simplification of processes, both for user and administration<sup>6</sup>. Another important example is the Italy-Greece Interreg, which has chosen the IT system ERGORAMA, the principal IT system of the Greek ministry, currently used for at least 9 different programmes<sup>7</sup>.

However, the decision of using the SIU as a leading platform for the IT-HR has generated several difficulties, in particular in the start-up phases of the Programme implementation, since this tool was not specifically created for this kind of programmes. The main difficulties that were highlighted during the interviews concern the fact that the system is not user-friendly, especially from the side of the beneficiaries - this feature is considered one of the causes of the delays accumulated by the Programme.

<sup>3</sup> The eMS system will be replaced in the next programming period 2021-2027 with the JEMS programme (Joint Electronic Monitoring System), which has been co-developed with a wide tester pool to create a harmonised, user-friendly software. Information on Jems are available at: <https://www.interact-eu.net/library>

<sup>4</sup> Relazione di Sintesi sulla partecipazione italiana ai programmi di cooperazione territoriale Europea, ENI ed IPA II 2014/2020, Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale, [https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Relazione\\_CTE\\_22.12.2020.pdf](https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Relazione_CTE_22.12.2020.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Interact, European Union, <https://www.interact-eu.net/#cooperation-tools>.

<sup>6</sup> CoheMON FESR, Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, <https://www.provincia.bz.it/politica-diritto-relazioni-estere/europa/finanziamenti-ue/cohemon-fesr.asp#accept-cookies>.

<sup>7</sup> ERGORAMA, Monitoring Information System, General Description, Completion & submission of AF & Progress Report, [https://greece-italy.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MIS\\_General-description.pdf](https://greece-italy.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MIS_General-description.pdf).

The positions of the partnership regarding the possibility of maintaining this system - which in the meantime has been progressively improved in its functionality - also in the next programming period are divergent. Nevertheless, as we have seen, there is no main road in choosing the information system that is valid for all Programmes. However, it is evident that the issue of the monitoring system has been identified and placed among the most important priorities of the Programme, and important efforts have been made for improving the SIU system, although the path is still ongoing and this issue need to be further analysed in the perspective of the new programming period.

The discussion between the partners on this issue was in-depth and the partnership's ability to tackle relevant issues for an effective program management constitutes a strong point of the Programme. The decision on the information system to be adopted by the Programme in the next programming period must emerge from this context and must take into consideration the positions of all the actors and authorities involved in the management of the Program.

In this context, the Audit Authority launched a System Audit in 2021 in compliance with article 127 of reg. European 1303/2013. Among the Key Requirements analyzed by the Audit was the Information System: "Key Requirements 6: Reliable system for collecting, recording and storing data for monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit purposes, including links with electronic data exchange system with beneficiaries." The audit results will be available by the end of 2021.

### 3 The indicators system

The Cooperation Programme has adopted a full set of **result indicators and related common and programme specific output indicators** for Priority Axis and Specific Objectives. While Annex 1 presents an update on the Programme’s Results Indicators, which are further discussed in the sections below, the following table provides a snapshot updated in December 2020 of the achievement of output indicators, broken down by type of projects. The table shows not only the targets set at Programme level, but also the targets set at project level and declared in the proposals funded by the Programme.

The 22 Standard+ projects that have been concluded at the end of the 2020 show a very good rate of physical performance with 17 on 19 indicators that have fully meet their projects targets in all the Priority Axis. Only in two cases under Priority Axis 4, the indicators related to “4.1O1. Improved multimodal transport services” and “4.1O3. Harmonized services for passengers put in place” have not reached their fixed projects targets.

Considering that Standard projects are still ongoing and Strategic projects have started only in 2020, the element that stands out is that **most of the Programme targets for output indicators were reached and exceeded already in 2020**. This situation require a new quantification of the Programme indicators which must take into consideration the experience of the implementation of the Standard+ projects as a proxy for the quantification of the new targets.

Moreover, table 16 below includes a focus on the output indicators related to the Standard+ projects, concluded as of December 2020, comparing the achieved values to the programme targets.

**Table 16: Achievement of output indicators**

		Programme	Standard+ (concluded)			Standard (ongoing)		Strategic (ongoing)		TOTAL	
		Target	Project target	Achieved value	%	Project target	Achieved value	Project target	Achieved value	Project target	Achieved value
<b>PA 1</b>	<b>Blue innovation</b>										
SO 1.1	Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area										
CO01	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support	36,00	113,00	113,00	100%	420,00	154,00	272,00	13,00	805,00	280,00
CO02	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving grants	6,00				8,00	8,00	2,00		10,00	8,00

CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	30,00	113,00	113,00	100%	416,00	155,00	222,00	13,00	751,00	281,00
CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	10,00	17,00	17,00	100%	61,00	32,00	6,00		84,00	49,00
CO44	Labour market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	120,00	293,00	293,00	100%	700,00	335,00			993,00	628,00
<b>PA 2</b>	<b>Safety and resilience</b>										
<b>SO 2.1</b>	<b>Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area</b>										
2.101	Climate change monitoring systems put in operation	5,00	1,00	1,00	100%	12,00	0,90	8,00		21,00	1,90
2.102	Plans of adaptation measures put in place	5,00	5,00	5,00	100%	31,00	0,50	5,00		41,00	5,50
<b>SO 2.2</b>	<b>Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster</b>										
2.204	Population benefiting from oil spills and other marine hazards protection measures	1.200.000,00				450.000,00	5.000,00	2.427.896,00		2.877.896,00	5.000,00
2.202	People reached by initiatives for increasing awareness	100.000,00	9.000,00	9.000,00	100%	75.820,00	69.848,00	203.500,00		288.320,00	78.848,00
CO20	Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from flood protection measures	1.500.000,00	201.000,00	201.000,00	100%	1.102.000,0	21.913,00	1.080.000,00		2.383.000,00	222.913,00
CO21	Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from forest fire protection	1.000.000,00	898.000,00	898.000,00	100%	500.000,00	-	150.000,00		1.548.000,00	898.000,00

PA 3	Environment and cultural heritage										
SO 3.1	<b>Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development</b>										
3.102	Actors involved in actions aimed at promoting natural and cultural heritage (including typical products, joint branding and tourism)	40,00	699,00	699,00	100%	1.353,00	600,00	120,00		2.172,00	1.299,00
3.103	Natural and cultural heritage destinations with improved accessibilities (e.g.: to disabled tourists, virtual tourists etc.) in place	10,00	97,00	97,00	100%	119,00	2,00	7,00		223,00	99,00
3.104	Beneficiaries with ecolabel/green certification	10,00						10,00		10,00	-
3.105	Cultural and natural heritage (tangible and intangible) promoted	20,00	111,00	111,00	100%	182,00	85,00	10,00		303,00	196,00
SO 3.2	<b>Contribute to protect and restore biodiversity</b>										
3.201	Natural ecosystems supported in order to attain a better conservation status	6,00	10,00	10,00	100%	24,00	11,00	6,00		40,00	21,00
3.202	Monitoring systems and data collections for protecting biodiversity and ecosystems put in place	4,00	2,00	2,00	100%	8,00	2,00	10,00		20,00	4,00
3.203	Restoration actions supporting endangered species	4,00				2,00	2,00	10,00		12,00	2,00
3.204	Restoration actions supporting endangered species	4,00	2,00	2,00	100%	10,00	-	19,00		31,00	2,00
SO 3.3	<b>Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches</b>										

3.301	Environmental friendly technological solutions (and approaches) implemented	2,00	3,00	3,00	100%	13,00	4,50	10,00	26,00	7,50
3.303	Microplastic waste collected in marine areas	1.000.000,00				816.000,00	600.602,0	250.000,00	1.066.000,00	600.602,00
<b>PA 4</b>	<b>Maritime transport</b>									
<b>SO 4.1</b>	<b>Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area</b>									
4.101	Improved multimodal transport services	5,00	6,00	4,00	67%	39,00	8,00	29,00	74,00	12,00
4.102	New links established	2,00	1,00	1,00	100%	1,00	-		2,00	1,00
4.103	Harmonized services for passengers put in place	4,00	3,00	2,00	67%	15,00	-	14,00	32,00	2,00
<b>PA 5</b>	<b>Technical assistance</b>									
TA1	Calls for proposals successfully launched and closed	3,00							3,00	3,00
TA2	Operations financed following calls for proposals	75,00							83,00	83,00
TA3	Programme communication strategy developed and implemented	1,00							1,00	1,00
TA4	Independent on-going programme evaluation implemented	1,00							1,00	-
TA5	Programme e-Monitoring System established	1,00							1,00	1,00
TA6	Workshop and events held	8,00							18,00	18,00
TA7	Number of employees (Full-time equivalents) whose salaries are co-financed by technical assistance	24,00							32,00	32,00

Table 17 below shows that for 10 indicators out of 19 the project targets have already met and exceeded the programme targets.

**Table 17: Achievement of programme indicators**

		Programme Target	Standard+ (concluded)		
			Project target	Achieved value	% Achieved on Programme target
<b>PA 1</b>	<b>Blue innovation</b>				
<b>SO 1.1</b>	<b>Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area</b>				
CO01	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving support	36,00	113,00	113,00	314%
CO04	Productive investment: Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support	30,00	113,00	113,00	377%
CO42	Productive investment: Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects	10,00	17,00	17,00	170%
CO44	Labour market and Training: Number of participants in joint local employment initiatives and joint training	120,00	293,00	293,00	314%
<b>PA 2</b>	<b>Safety and resilience</b>				
<b>SO 2.1</b>	<b>Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area</b>				
2.101	Climate change monitoring systems put in operation	5,00	1,00	1,00	20%
2.102	Plans of adaptation measures put in place	5,00	5,00	5,00	100%
<b>SO 2.2</b>	<b>Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster</b>				
2.202	People reached by initiatives for increasing awareness	100.000,00	9.000,00	9.000,00	9%
CO20	Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from flood protection measures	1.500.000,00	201.000,00	201.000,00	13%
CO21	Risk prevention and management: Population benefiting from forest fire protection	1.000.000,00	898.000,00	898.000,00	90%
<b>PA 3</b>	<b>Environment and cultural heritage</b>				
<b>SO 3.1</b>	<b>Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development</b>				
3.102	Actors involved in actions aimed at promoting natural and cultural heritage (including typical products, joint branding and tourism)	40,00	699,00	699,00	1748%
3.103	Natural and cultural heritage destinations with improved accessibilities (e.g.: to disabled tourists, virtual tourists etc.) in place	10,00	97,00	97,00	970%



3.105	Cultural and natural heritage (tangible and intangible) promoted	20,00	111,00	111,00	555%
<b>SO 3.2</b>	<b>Contribute to protect and restore biodiversity</b>				
3.201	Natural ecosystems supported in order to attain a better conservation status	6,00	10,00	10,00	167%
3.202	Monitoring systems and data collections for protecting biodiversity and ecosystems put in place	4,00	2,00	2,00	50%
3.204	Restoration actions supporting endangered species	4,00	2,00	2,00	50%
<b>SO 3.3</b>	<b>Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches</b>				
3.301	Environmental friendly technological solutions (and approaches) implemented	2,00	3,00	3,00	150%
<b>PA 4</b>	<b>Maritime transport</b>				
<b>SO 4.1</b>	<b>Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area</b>				
4.101	Improved multimodal transport services	5,00	6,00	4,00	80%
4.102	New links established	2,00	1,00	1,00	50%
4.103	Harmonized services for passengers put in place	4,00	3,00	2,00	50%

### 3.1 Focus on the result indicators

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#### 3.1.1 Methodology

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In this first operation evaluation report, it has been chosen by the Evaluator to concentrate its analysis on the result indicators.

The present overview on results indicators aims at providing bodies variably involved in the management of the Programme with useful hints to support the process of programme/projects' activities' monitoring and control. The main objective of this section of evaluation research is to verify the **system of indicators' reliability** with reference to Programme's strategy, its **suitability** regarding monitoring and evaluation tasks as well as the **clarity** of the set of indicators as a whole (indicators, baseline, target, measurement methodological approach).

From the methodological point of view, the Evaluator has focused his analysis on the observation of the degree of **coherence between objectives and indicators**, following the Project Cycle Management (PCM) approach which states that the role of indicators is *"to describe general and specific objectives and results in operational terms. By specifying indicators as quantifiable measures, they act as instruments aiming to control the objectives' achievement and represent the base for the monitoring system"*. According to the PCM's approach, a good indicator has to be **objectively verifiable**, allowing the examination of different levels of objectives in an operational, concise and reliable way<sup>8</sup>.

It is therefore essential for indicators to have an **explanatory power** representing a suitable benchmark for the formulation of an assessment about the grade of effectiveness of the intervention taken into consideration, that is to say, about the results achieved keeping in mind a given objective.

Given these premises and taking into account the objective of verifying the suitability of Italy-Croatia Programme's system of indicators, the Evaluator had recourse to methodological instructions known in scientific literature as the **S.M.A.R.T**<sup>9</sup> indicators:

- **Specific** for the objectives that the indicator aims to observe
- **Measurable** both in quantitative and qualitative terms
- **Available** at reasonable costs
- **Relevant** with regard to the informative needs expressed by Programme's joint management structures and significant stakeholders
- **Time-bound**

The Evaluator found it appropriate to specify the meaning of the above mentioned criteria by linking them to objective assessment parameters that were given a specific score. The aims are to increase S.M.A.R.T methodology's representativeness and adapt it to Italy-Croatia Programme's features.

#### 3.1.2 Evaluation questions

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The operational evaluation of the Result Indicator system has been designed according to the following evaluation questions:

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<sup>8</sup> European Commission, EuropeAid – Project Cycle Management Guidelines, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*

- *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?*
- *Are baseline, milestones and target values realistic and clearly defined?*
- *At this stage of the programming period, is the system of indicators still relevant according to the Programme strategy and in line with Programme bodies and stakeholders needs?  
How can it be improved in view of the next programming period?*

### 3.1.3 Assessment of Result Indicators according to S.M.A.R.T. Criteria

The following Table gives evidence to a brief description of S.M.A.R.T. criteria as well as to the identified assessment parameters and their connected scores.

**Table 18: S.M.A.R.T criteria**

S.M.A.R.T. Criterion	Assessment parameter	Maximum score
<b>Specific</b> Indicator related to the objectives that intends to measure and able to give useful and appropriate information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Does the indicator give appropriate information relating to the objectives that it intends to measure? (1 point)</li> <li>2) Is the indicator significant? (1 point)</li> <li>3) Is the indicator clear and easily understandable? (1 point)</li> </ol>	3
<b>Measurable</b> Indicator suitable to be quantified, observed and analysed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Can the indicator be observed through a clear measuring method/instrument? (1 point)</li> <li>2) Can the indicator be numerically quantified? (1 point)</li> <li>3) Can the indicator be measured through primary or secondary informative sources? (1 point)</li> </ol>	3
<b>Available</b> The information used to quantify the indicator are available at reasonable costs	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Can the indicator be measured through available information? (1 point)</li> <li>2) Is the necessary information available at reasonable costs according to the "saving principle"? (1 point)</li> <li>3) Is the necessary information easily achievable? (1 point)</li> </ol>	3
<b>Relevant</b> Indicator able to measure the phenomenon for which it has been proposed	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Does the indicator suitably measure the analysed objectives? (1 point)</li> <li>2) Does the indicator give information about the characteristics and the added value of Italy-Croatia Programme? (1 point)</li> <li>3) Is the indicator connected to the informative needs of the Programme's joint management structures and relevant stakeholders? (1 point)</li> </ol>	3
<b>Time-bound</b> Indicator duly put into temporal bounds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Can the indicator be referred to punctual span of time? (1 point)</li> <li>2) Is the indicator repeatable? (1 point)</li> <li>3) Can the indicator be processed, fastly and easily updated with reference to the objectives analysed? (1 point)</li> </ol>	3

**Explanatory score list: 1=LOW, 2=MEDIUM, 3=HIGH**

Source: elaboration by the Evaluator

Consequently, the following pages summarize the results of the desk analysis, developed by the Evaluator, aiming to verify the degree of **coherence of Italy-Croatia's result indicators according to S.M.A.R.T. criteria.**

It has to be underlined that, while analysing the system, it has been taken into particular consideration the **cause-effect relationship between specific objectives and indicators** as a preliminary exercise for the evaluation by connecting indicators to the relating objective.

Given these premises, the following Tables show the analysis' results by each indicator, enlightening the specific objectives to which indicators refer to, data sources for monitoring and the degree of indicators' compliance with S.M.A.R.T. criteria (High, Medium, Low) as described in the methodology below.

**Table 19: S.M.A.R.T analysis for indicators**

Specific Objectives	Result Indicators	Data Source	Compliance with S.M.A.R.T. criteria					Total score
			S.	M.	A.	R.	T.	
<i>S.O. 1.1 - Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area</i>	Number of EPO applications	EUROSTAT - Patent applications to the EPO by priority year by NUTS 3 regions ( <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/data/database">http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/data/database</a> )	3	2	1	3	2	11
<i>S.O. 2.1 - Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area</i>	Inhabitants benefiting from planning of adaptation measures	Targeted questionnaire elaborated by the programme / Desk analysis	3	2	1	3	2	11
<i>S.O. 2.2 - Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster</i>	Inhabitants benefiting from risk management coordinated measures	Targeted questionnaire elaborated by the programme / Desk analysis	3	2	1	3	2	11
<i>S.O. 3.1 - Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balance territorial development</i>	Seasonality in tourism in the programme area	Targeted questionnaire elaborated by the programme / Desk analysis	3	2	1	3	2	11
<i>S.O. 3.2 Contribute to restore and biodiversity</i>	Excellent conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in the programme area	Standard Data Form for Natura 2000 network ( <a href="https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/natura-9">https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/natura-9</a> )	3	2	2	3	3	13
<i>S.O. 3.3 Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches</i>	Quality level of coastal bathing waters (according to the Dir. 2006/7/CE)	Surveys/E European Environment Agency - Data on Bathing Water Directive ( <a href="https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/bathing-water-directive-status-of-bathing-water-9">https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/bathing-water-directive-status-of-bathing-water-9</a> )	3	3	3	3	3	15

<p><i>S.O. 4.1 - Improve quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Programme area</i></p>	<p>Goods transported by maritime mode</p>	<p>EUROSTAT – Maritime transport goods per country and main ports</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>1</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>11</p>
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Source: Elaboration by the Evaluator

Although some elements still need a further in-depth testing, the S.M.A.R.T. analysis on result indicators helped in acknowledging its general coherence with specific purposes of the Programme.

It is quite clear from the evaluation’s analysis that the **result indicators are relevant and specific**. Nevertheless, regarding availability, measurability and time-bound some **improvements** could be suggested.

Data reliability and data collection represent often bottlenecks for cooperation programmes considering the heterogeneity of the area and different situation and data collection methods from different countries. Regions/local levels play a strategic role for collecting data for a quite number of indicators.

It has to be underlined that the rules and regulations provide that the result indicators reflect the effects of the funding scheme in very different sectoral fields and frequently in very heterogeneous programme areas. Thus, in order to develop suitable indicators, it is also necessary to have adequate knowledge of the situation in the individual subregions of the programme area, apart from a profound technical understanding.

A methodology similar to the one commonly used to analyse the situation in the programme area might be used to show the developments in connection with the result indicators. This means that the situation in each sectoral field (here, according to the current programme logic, the level of the specific objectives would be most suitable) is regularly analysed by regional stakeholders on the basis of a scale. The rating on the scale can, if necessary, be supplemented by short explanatory notes and provides the required numerical value for the result indicator. It has to be taken into account that the assessment is to be made by stakeholders with the necessary technical experience in the respective sectoral field who can accurately appraise the situation in the programme area.

In addition to the update of the quantification of the Programme’s result indicators<sup>10</sup> presented in Annex 1, which has been carried out in agreement with the Managing Authority to feed into the Annual Implementation Report for the year 2020, the S.M.A.R.T. exercise allows the Evaluator to provide MA and the Monitoring Committee with a first preliminary reply to evaluation questions. As mentioned, this is included in the following sections and summarised in Chapter 5.

### 3.1.4 Overall set of result indicators

From the desk analysis the **result indicators’ system seems to be suitable** for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

It has to be highlighted that data sources are specified for each indicator, giving evidence to the methodology to be used and the degree of availability of the data themselves. This is particularly useful for monitoring and evaluation tasks.

<sup>10</sup> The review of the Evaluator excludes the Indicator O.S. 3.1 – “Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development”, which has been followed directly by the Managing Authority.

It is worth enlightening the importance of the contribution of each project not only for the monitoring at project level but also for Programme's monitoring and evaluation, since beneficiaries, while drawing up the application form, select projects' indicators, coherent with Programme's indicators, that help in evaluating the results reached by the Programme as a whole.

The beneficiaries' involvement could help also to fostering the monitoring of indicators and milestone methodology that has to be improved and agreed at a Programme level, as underlined by the Programme bodies (see Paper for the 2021-2027 programming period).

### **3.1.5 Relevance of the system of result indicators**

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The relationship between objectives and result indicators is clear, being evident the cause-effect relationship between levels of objectives and adopted indicators.

With a view to the further verification of the elaborated indicators it may, for instance, the Evaluator suggests that it might be appropriate to involve Programme bodies and stakeholders from the programme area also to verify if the set is yet compliant to their needs. It is possible that experienced project partners estimate to what extent the result indicators accurately represent the changes which Italy-Croatia Programme can actually bring about in the given regional and sectoral context.

### **3.1.6 Improvements in view of the next programming period (network indicators per cross border dimension)**

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As highlighted also by self-assessment exercise, the cross-border dimension has to be improved especially at project level.

There are two points of attention/recommendations that come from the Paper for the new programming period drafted by the MA/JS and that are worthy of consideration. First of all the fact that sometimes there is a lack of the CB aspect in relation to the project approach (also in communication of the projects' actions). While in some cases, projects are implementing the actions as if they were implementing the project financed with the ERDF National / Regional Operational Plans. Moreover, from time to time the actions implemented do not show any CB added value but instead are just the list of actions implemented separately on different territories.

This is one of the aspects that should be adjusted and considered very carefully for the next programming period

In this framework, indicators can be a very useful and suitable tools. In order to measure the achievement of cross-sectoral objectives and the effects achieved, it is necessary to develop suitable indicators in the course of programme planning.

Some cooperation programmes already developed in the current programming period result indicators to capture the specific effect of cooperation, i.e. the cross-border dimension. It would be conceivable that other cooperation programmes also use the current funding period as a pilot phase for the trialling of approaches to find out how their result indicators can take cross-sectoral results better into consideration than has been the case up to now.

Here, it might be particularly useful to collect the experiences from cooperation programmes which are already underway and take them as a basis.

It has to be noted that the specific effects of cooperation Programmes are in many cases of a qualitative nature. Statistical data are, as a rule, not suitable to represent these developments. The specific objectives of

programmes and the developed intervention logics for the cross-sectoral dimension can be used as a starting point for the elaboration of suitable result indicators. Besides the intervention logics, the precise analysis of the situation in the programme area can be very useful.

In the following pages a first exercise from the evaluation is presented with reference to network result indicators, also considering the focus on INTERREG specific indicators introduced by the forthcoming programming period 2021-2027.

In addition to that, and in the light of a whole redefinition of the indicators' set in the forthcoming programming period, it is suggested to **identify exact target values** which could reflect the implementation stage of the Programme and favour a more accurate monitoring of activities and results.

To conclude these first list of input for the future, a brief reflection on impact indicators may be interesting. The Programmer has not considered any **impact indicator**, choosing, correctly, to analyse the most immediate effects of Programme. It is worth remembering that, according to rules, the identification of impact indicators is not binding. Furthermore, Programmes' impacts can be verified, with certain soundness, only through an ex post Evaluation, namely after a lapse of time (i.e., 3-4 years) from their effective closure. In such a context, the Evaluator would share the assumption that a good set of result indicators represents the basis for the further and potential identification of impact indicators, if properly supported by precise methods and research tools aimed at both quantitative (monitoring data) and qualitative analysis (case studies, control groups, etc.). A very interesting examples of tentative methodology for capturing INTERREG impact and measuring them through impact indicators stems from INTERREG B framework in the 2014-2020 programming period (i.e. "*Measuring Interreg B Specific Impacts. Impacts of Transnational Cooperation in Interreg B*", Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure of Germany).

### **3.1.7 Elaboration of a preliminary hypothesis of network indicators for capturing the cross-border dimension**

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The analysis on result indicators developed in the previous pages has focused on both Programme's and proposed indicators' capacity to measure the most immediate effects of Italy-Croatia's Programme. Nevertheless, it emerged the need of improving the capacity of beneficiaries of understanding the real added value of cross-border cooperation and reflect it in the actions developed at project level. In addition, it has to be considered that in designing the performance framework of the next period, INTERREG specific indicators have been introduced, aside from the ERDF or "thematic" indicators.

Actually, the cross-border nature of the Programme itself requires an additional reflection on the necessity of catching the typical **immaterial results** of Cooperation Programmes and relating research modalities.

It deals with the need to understand and show the real **added value** of cross-border dimension, that is mainly represented by the Programme's ability of creating networks aiming to pursue common objectives and, in particular, of supporting **projects' partnerships' evolution into stable and sustainable institutional networks** able to raise the awareness of being part of the wider **European Union**, through the strengthening of relationships among Member States.

An example for such kind of indicators is contained in the cooperation programme Alpine Space 2014-2020: "*Level of maturity of framework conditions for innovation for generating innovation processes among business, academia and administration*".

Whether considered interesting by the Programme's MA and by the others joint managing authorities, in the following evaluation activities, it might be developed a first set of **network indicators**.

As a matter of fact, the **networking analysis** as a social capital measuring and research tool might be significantly used in the examination of cross-border cooperation as a collective action able to produce social capital. More specifically, in the continuation of the Service, Evaluator could resort to the network analysis to measure, through appropriate **mathematical indexes of centrality and density**, the networks/groups' inner balances, the trusty nature of each relationship in the network and that of the network/group as a whole. The results of such an analysis, duly integrated with interviews to local stakeholders, could contribute to the elaboration of interesting considerations about the development of the examined network.

Moreover, a set of **additional indicators** could be developed based on the social capital approach with the specific goal to “measure” and describe cross-dimension added value. For this purpose, it could be used a methodology aiming to measure the **social capital produced by the Programme** that might lead to the proposal of indicators able to measure outputs, results besides “formal and informal” impacts strictly connected to the networks and networking created (i.e., number of formal and informal networks created, promoted or supported).

### 3.2 Baseline, milestones and target values

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Notwithstanding the lack of updated data and the difficulty of sources' collection, the MA effort has to be stressed; actually, for each result indicator, it is identified a target value and a baseline. Moreover, a measurement methodology for result indicators has been developed and updated when necessary and the quantification of indicators has been provided (the last available data are covered by the AIR 2020).

It has to be noted that for the SO3 the target value has been already reached in 2021 (please see Annex 1). This surely shows that the quality of coastal bathing waters continues to perform at high level in the area of the Programme.

Thus, it is advisable to consider this experience for the future quantification of targets, with particular reference to consider the target as the preservation of the same situation, (i.e. no deterioration in the quality of bathing waters).

More in general, considering that, as observed above, most of the targets for outputs indicators have been already reached and significantly exceeded, it is recommended that careful attention is paid to the definition of targets in the next programming period, drawing lessons from current experience. Indeed, the target of the output indicators of the current Programme should be re-defined according to a reviewed methodology which must take into consideration the experience of the implementation of the Standard+ projects as a proxy for the quantification of the new targets.

The next operational evaluation report could investigate the method of target setting providing suggestions for increasing the rigour, avoiding the risk of keeping targets too low because of over caution.

As already mentioned, an important contribution to the gathering and organization of additional data might come from beneficiaries. Such data, that will be monitored along projects' lifecycle, could be collected at regional level, contributing to the enrichment of existing databases in the cooperation area. This is of outermost importance for the result indicators monitoring, quantification and future description.



## 4 Considerations on the effectiveness of the Programme, with regards to the relevance of the objectives and the cross-border dimension

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### 4.1 Methodology

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The Evaluator has analysed the data extracted from the SIU monitoring system (at 31 December 2020) by the Managing Authority in order to identify some of the trends which are emerging from the official information on the implementation of the projects. The data provided by the MA contain several useful information; among these there is also a classification of the partners according to the "type of institution" (this is the label of one of the "fields" that classify each of the partners included in the database), under this classification only two categories are included in the analysis: "private" and "public or public equivalent body". A more precise analysis on the coding of the activity of the partners available in the SIU – e.g. universities, research organization, development agencies, etc. – will be processed in the following Operational Evaluation Report and will be part of the analysis of the networks activated during the Programme implementation.

The documents produced by the JS in order to sustain the preparation of the new 2021/2027 programming period – “Paper 0” and “Paper 1” – have been particularly useful, as well as the Annual Implementation Report 2020, approved by the Monitoring Committee on May 27<sup>th</sup> 2021.

This first exercise in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Programme has been carried out with reference to the following methodological approaches:

- *Theory-based models* – and in particular the realistic evaluation -, which guide the interpretation of causal mechanisms by referring to the theories of change underlying the Programme. These models are used in conjunction with quantitative techniques; they enhance the interpretative capacity of evaluative analyses, as they allow to focus on both contextual aspects and on the implementation process.
- *Participatory models*, which are particularly useful for the analysis of the process of implementation since they allow to enhance the different perspectives of the actors and the territories involved. They allow to interpret the cause-effect dynamics and the complex relationships which has been implemented in the frame of the Programme; at the same time, they trigger learning processes and develop visions and shared practices which may involve the management bodies, stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- *Performance oriented models* constitute a sub-group of participatory models, of particular relevance for the evaluation of the management system and the performance resulting from the actions taken (outputs and results). This approach focuses on the participation of the actors of the management in the monitoring and evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme management system and in the quantification of the related indicators. This approach is particularly useful during the implementation of the tasks of the ongoing evaluations.

Monitoring data provided by the MA have been used as proxies to evaluate the state of the art of the Programme according to the Specific Objectives and the partnership activated.

The partnerships and stakeholder involvement determine largely the quality of projects and programme outputs. Therefore, the evaluation of the composition of partnerships is a key element of the operational evaluation. This chapter analyses the involvement of partners at project level in order to answer to the evaluation question regarding the partnerships’ relevance and coherence with reference to the cross-border nature of the Programme. The operational evaluation has benefited from the constant coordination with the MA staff which provided support to the Evaluator in order to identify the crucial information and contacts.

Interviews have been conducted with the Managing Authority Director; the Head of Joint Secretariat; the Head of Service for Cross-Border Cooperation of Croatia and the Senior Expert Advisor of the Service for Cross-Border Cooperation of Croatia; the Officer of Unit 6 “ETC Programmes” of the Agency for Territorial Cohesion, Italy.

## 4.2 Evaluation questions

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The operational evaluation of the Programme management system has been designed according to the following evaluation questions:

- *What is the progress towards the overall Programme goal, specific objectives and expected results?*
- *To what extent did the Programme achieve the expected results linked to the Performance Framework? How efficient were the corrective measures adopted?*
- *Are the relevant target groups of the Programme successfully involved? How is the participation in terms of beneficiaries’ type as well as in relation to the geographical coverage of the Programme area?*
- *Are the Programme objectives still relevant, consistent and complementary in the policy context?*
- *Is the Programme properly addressing the current development needs in the Programme area?*
- *Are created partnerships relevant and coherent with the Programme cross- border nature?*

## 4.3 Relevance of the objectives

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The relevance of the objectives of the CBC dimension was judged to be consistent by the interviewees; after three years of implementation, the analysis of the distribution of the projects with respect to the Programme objectives highlights some differences in the choices made by the beneficiaries.

The operationalization of the objectives of the Interreg Programmes which partly insist on the same geographical area – the Adriatic and Ionian Seas basin (EUSAIR strategy) – of other cooperation programmes is one of the critical issues which have emerged during the interviews. In particular, the operations promoted by the Interreg IT-HR Programme, in some cases, may have potential overlapping with the projects financed by the Interreg Adrion Programme. The Interreg IT-HR Programme has a larger budget compared to Adrion, while the latter intervenes in a much greater geographical area with a strong institutional complexity. Moreover, Adrion started its activity one year in advance compared to the Interreg IT-HR Programme. Once the IT-HR Programme started its activities the interest of the territories and the actors has been attracted by the new funding opportunities with the potential effect of draining the interest and the efforts of some of the partners from one Programme (Adrion) to the other (IT-HR). There is a space for a participated and strategic planning work to be further developed from the national level to the EUSAIR context, as well as cooperation between the MAs. In this context the experience carried out in the Working group (Adriatic- Ionian) has been so far productive and one of the goals of the Working group was exactly trying to define how the thematic objectives should be declined for each particular program.

If we continue analysing the distribution of **financial resources allocated by specific objective** - rather than by priority axis – the specific objective 4.1 *"Improve the quality, safety and environmental sustainability of marine and coastal transport services and nodes by promoting multimodality in the Program area"* turns out to be that which has collected the largest amount of resources from the projects financed so far, about 23% of the total, almost 51 million euros.

The other important specific objectives are the 3.1 *"Make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development"* with 19% of the total resources allocated, about 42

million euros, and the 2.2 "Increase the safety of the Program area from natural and man-made disaster", with 16% of total resources, over 35 million euros.

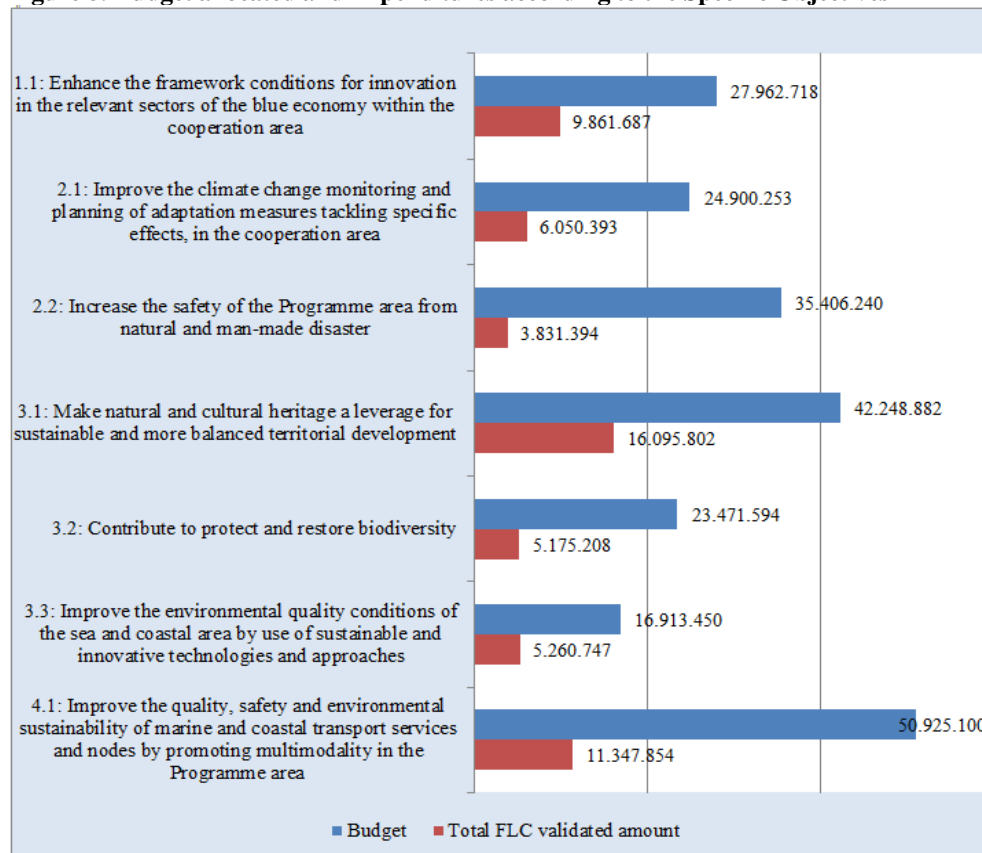
The specific objective that raised the lowest volume of financial resources is the 3.3 "Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches", with 8% of total resources, equal to almost 17 million euros.

From the point of view of **validated expenditure**, the situation changes considerably. The specific objective with the largest share is 3.1, with 28% of the total expenditure realized by the Program (about 16 million euros), objective 4.1 is following with 20% of the program expenditure, corresponding to over 11 million euros, and the specific objective 1.1 "Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area", with 17% of total expenditure, just under 10 million euros.

The lowest level of validated expenditure is placed at the specific objective 2.2 "Increase the safety of the Program area from natural and man-made disaster", only 7%, less than 4 million euros.

A possible reason for the change in the ranking of the specific objectives lies in the fact that those that have a greater weight in relation to the distribution of the financial resources allocated, are those with a greater concentration of strategic projects. However, since the strategic projects have not yet produced a relevant amount of validated expenses, the ranking referring to this last dimension favours the objectives where the weight of the strategic projects is lower.

**Figure 8: Budget allocated and Expenditures according to the Specific Objectives**



Source: Data from SIU

#### 4.4 Focus on partnerships

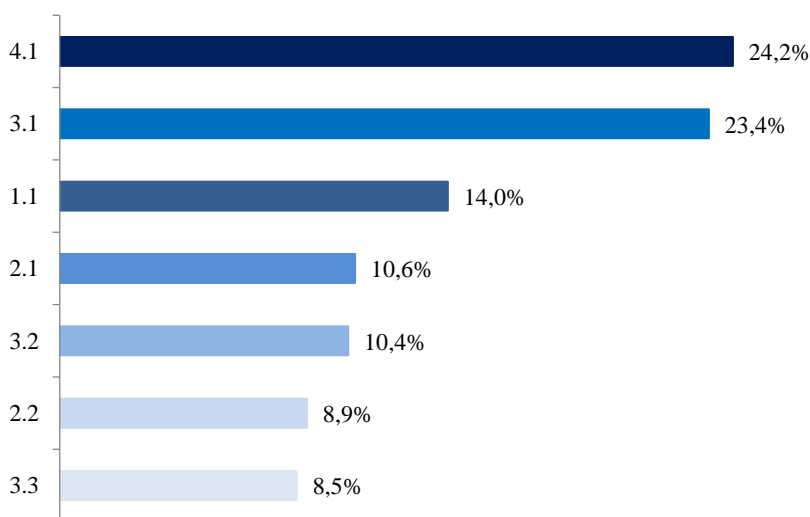
The following elaborations show the extent and the distribution of the partnerships activated by the projects funded by the Programme<sup>11</sup>. The analysis of the partnership has been conducted through a data selection of relevant information from the Programme database which has been provided by the MA. Nevertheless there are some limitations in the following analysis which are related to the fact that some information has not been yet processed, e. g., the distinction between the “Legal seat” of the project partner (PP) and the location of the “Implementing unit”<sup>12</sup> and the identification of “assimilated and associated partners”<sup>13</sup>.

It’s important to keep in mind this missing information when, in the following tables or figures, there are partners which have their Legal seat outside of the Programme area (e.g., Zagreb, Brussels, Rome). Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 1, the “assimilated and associated partners” are eligible when they operate with benefit for the Programme area. In the following elaborations these categories could not be analysed but this element will be further explored in the next Operational Evaluation Report.

The actual number of institutions involved in project implementation is 379 of which 319 participated as project partners (PP) and 60 as lead partners (LP). These organisations have generated a total of 809 participations in projects, of which 725 as project partners and the remaining 83 as lead partners. Out of 809 active project partners involved in project implementation (Standard+, Standard and Strategic projects) 56,7% are from Italian organisations and 43,3% from Croatian organisations showing a balanced involvement of the two Countries.

Specific objectives (SO) 4.1 and 3.1 show the highest concentrations of institutions (respectively equal to 24.2% and 23.4%). Another substantial share (14%) was addressed to SO 1.1., SO 2.1 and 3.2 follow, both with shares of around 10%. The remaining part is distributed in similar proportions between SO 2.2 (8.9%) and SO 3.3 (8.5%).

**Figure 9: Distribution of partnership organisations per Specific Objective**



Source: Data from SIU

<sup>11</sup> Technical assistance is not included in the analysis

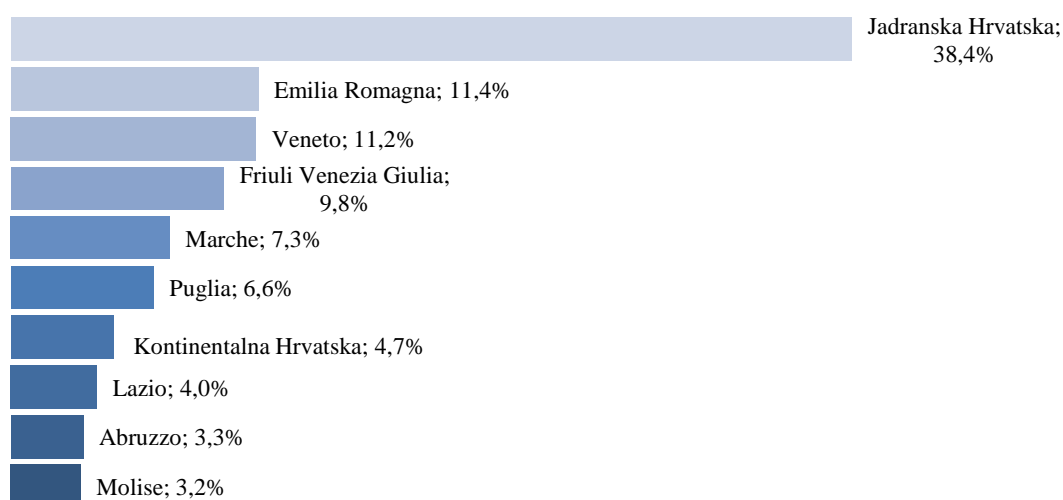
<sup>12</sup> A description of the “implementing unit” is available in the Programme Factsheet n. 4 “Strategic Calls for proposals, Project Application” (Version n. 1 of 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019) and in the Programme Factsheet n. 4 “Project Application (Version N° 1 of 27<sup>th</sup> March 2017).

<sup>13</sup> A description of the “assimilated and associated partners” is available in the same Programme Factsheet mentioned in the previous footnote and in § 1.1.

Considering the legal seat, it emerges the high incidence of the participants located in the region (NUTS II) of Jadranska Hrvatska or Adriatic Croatia<sup>14</sup> (38.4%) followed with much smaller quotas by the organisations of Emilia Romagna and Veneto - both groups with a percentage of about 11%.

Other substantial shares are recorded for the organisations of Friuli Venezia Giulia (9.8%), Marche (7.3%) and Puglia (6.6%). The bodies with legal seat in Lazio<sup>15</sup> account for 4%, and for about 3% those of Abruzzo and Molise.

**Figure 10: Distribution of partnership organisations per legal seat-NUTS II**



Source: Data from SIU

The Croatian NUTS II regions account for about 43% of the partner organizations of the approved projects. Croatian organizations are particularly concentrated in the coastal area. In both States, the specific objectives which have attracted the largest number of partners are the 3.1 and 4.1. This distribution regards almost all the NUTS II regions involved. Within the NUTS II Regions which include the capital cities (Kontinentalna Hrvatska and Lazio, where the most important research institutions of the countries are based, but the concerned implementing unit locations involved in the projects implementation are inside the Programme area) prevail the concentration of PP in the Specific objectives 1.1 and 2.1.

**Table 20: Distribution of partnership organisations per legal seat-NUTS II and Specific Objective**

	1.1	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	Total
<b>CROATIA</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>350</b>
Jadranska Hrvatska	44	26	30	77	32	27	75	311
Kontinentalna Hrvatska	9	9	3	2	3	4	8	38
(empty)							1	1

<sup>14</sup> The NUTS II Region of Jadranska Hrvatska includes most of the eligible Croatian territory, all of the national coastal surface; the other NUTS II Region, Kontinentalna Hrvatska or Continental Croatia, is eligible with only one County: Karlovačka. In the following statistical elaboration the data related to Kontinentalna Hrvatska include some project partners which have their legal seat in the capital city of Zagreb, which is not part of the eligible area of the Programme; the same apply for the cases which regard the Region of Lazio, which is not part of the eligible area of the Programme.

<sup>15</sup> Implementing Units of these partners are located inside the Programme area.

ITALY	60	51	39	110	49	38	112	459
Abruzzo	1	2	6	4	2	3	9	27
Emilia Romagna	8	12	8	32	8	7	17	92
Friuli Venezia Giulia	15	5	4	13	8	8	26	79
Lazio	8	6	3	1	6	4	4	32
Marche	6	8	4	14	7	6	14	59
Molise		2	4	9	3	1	7	26
Puglia	8	6	5	12	7	1	14	53
Veneto	14	10	5	25	8	8	21	91
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>809</b>

Source: Data from SIU

**Table 21: Distribution of partnership organisations per legal seat-NUTS II and Specific Objective %**

	1.1	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	Total
<b>CROATIA</b>	<b>46,9%</b>	<b>40,7%</b>	<b>45,8%</b>	<b>41,8%</b>	<b>41,7%</b>	<b>44,9%</b>	<b>42,9%</b>	<b>43,3%</b>
Jadranska Hrvatska	38,9%	30,2%	41,7%	40,7%	38,1%	39,1%	38,3%	38,4%
Kontinentalna Hrvatska	8,0%	10,5%	4,2%	1,1%	3,6%	5,8%	4,1%	4,7%
(empty)	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,5%	0,1%
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>53,1%</b>	<b>59,3%</b>	<b>54,2%</b>	<b>58,2%</b>	<b>58,3%</b>	<b>55,1%</b>	<b>57,1%</b>	<b>56,7%</b>
Abruzzo	0,9%	2,3%	8,3%	2,1%	2,4%	4,3%	4,6%	3,3%
Emilia Romagna	7,1%	14,0%	11,1%	16,9%	9,5%	10,1%	8,7%	11,4%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	13,3%	5,8%	5,6%	6,9%	9,5%	11,6%	13,3%	9,8%
Lazio	7,1%	7,0%	4,2%	0,5%	7,1%	5,8%	2,0%	4,0%
Marche	5,3%	9,3%	5,6%	7,4%	8,3%	8,7%	7,1%	7,3%
Molise	0,0%	2,3%	5,6%	4,8%	3,6%	1,4%	3,6%	3,2%
Puglia	7,1%	7,0%	6,9%	6,3%	8,3%	1,4%	7,1%	6,6%
Veneto	12,4%	11,6%	6,9%	13,2%	9,5%	11,6%	10,7%	11,2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: Data from SIU

The distribution of the **lead partners** is less balanced than the distribution of the partner organizations: 77.4% of the lead partners are based in one of the Italian regions. Only 19 lead partners (out of 84) are based in Croatia, 18 of which in the coastal region. The Croatian lead partners are particularly active in the S.O. 3.1.

On the Italian side, the lead partners are particularly concentrated in three regions: Veneto (especially in S.O. 1.1 and 4.1), Friuli Venezia, Giulia (in S.O. 4.1) and Emilia Romagna (where the S.O. 3.1 prevail). Despite the scarce presence of Croatian organisations among the project leaders, 21.4% of these have their registered office in the region of Jadranska Hrvatska region, the highest score, followed by the Region of Veneto (19%), Friuli Venezia Giulia (18%) and Emilia Romagna (17%). Among the less numerous aggregates, lead partners located in Marche (8.3%) and Lazio (6%) prevail. Abruzzo and Kontinentalna Hrvatska are the least represented areas, both with a figure of 1.2%.

**Table 22: Distribution of Lead Partner organisations per legal seat-NUTS II and Specific Objective**

	1.1	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	Total
<b>CROATIA</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>
Jadranska Hrvatska	1	1	3	7	1	2	3	18
Kontinentalna Hrvatska	1							1
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>65</b>
Abruzzo			1					1
Emilia Romagna	2	2	1	6	1	1	1	14
Friuli Venezia Giulia	3	1		2	2	1	6	15
Lazio		1		1	1	1	1	5
Marche		2		2	1		2	7
Molise			2	1				3
Puglia		1		1	1		1	4
Veneto	5	1		3	1	2	4	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>84</b>

Source: Data from SIU

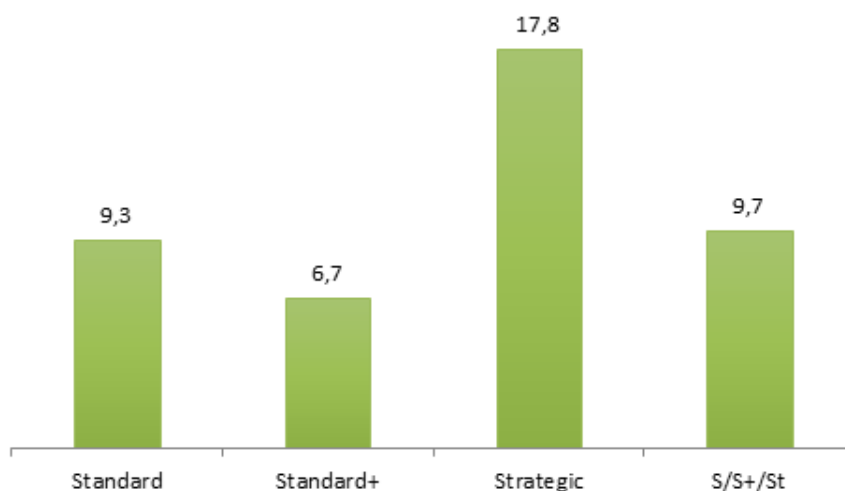
**Table 23: Distribution of Lead Partner organisations per legal seat-NUTS II and Specific Objective %**

	1.1	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	Total
<b>CROATIA</b>	<b>16,7%</b>	<b>11,1%</b>	<b>42,9%</b>	<b>30,4%</b>	<b>12,5%</b>	<b>28,6%</b>	<b>16,7%</b>	<b>22,6%</b>
Jadranska Hrvatska	8,3%	11,1%	42,9%	30,4%	12,5%	28,6%	16,7%	21,4%
Kontinentalna Hrvatska	8,3%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,2%
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>83,3%</b>	<b>88,9%</b>	<b>57,1%</b>	<b>69,6%</b>	<b>87,5%</b>	<b>71,4%</b>	<b>83,3%</b>	<b>77,4%</b>
Abruzzo	0,0%	0,0%	14,3%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	1,2%
Emilia Romagna	16,7%	22,2%	14,3%	26,1%	12,5%	14,3%	5,6%	16,7%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	25,0%	11,1%	0,0%	8,7%	25,0%	14,3%	33,3%	17,9%
Lazio	0,0%	11,1%	0,0%	4,3%	12,5%	14,3%	5,6%	6,0%
Marche	0,0%	22,2%	0,0%	8,7%	12,5%	0,0%	11,1%	8,3%
Molise	0,0%	0,0%	28,6%	4,3%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	3,6%
Puglia	0,0%	11,1%	0,0%	4,3%	12,5%	0,0%	5,6%	4,8%
Veneto	41,7%	11,1%	0,0%	13,0%	12,5%	28,6%	22,2%	19,0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Source: Data from SIU

The following figures show the dimension of the partnerships activated by the projects funded by the Programme. The actual number of institutions involved in project implementation is 379 of which 319 participated as project partners and 60 as lead partners. These organisations have generated a total of 809 participations in projects, of which 725 as project partners and the remaining 83 as lead partners.

Figure 11: Average number of partners per call type



Source: Data from SIU

The average number of participants in the partnerships activated by the Programme is **9.7**. Networks set up to participate in Standards + Calls are the smallest (on average 6.7 bodies per partnership), while those of Standard Calls are wider (9.7). Strategic Calls mobilised the largest networks, in which 17.8 organisations participated on average<sup>16</sup>.

At the level of **NUTS III**, the most represented group is constituted by organisations based in Splitsko-Dalmatinska (11%), in second place (with 8.7%) we find organisations with legal seat in Venice and, with a similar figure, those based in Primorsko-Goranska. Other significant concentrations are found at Istarska (6.4%), Bologna, Zadarska, Trieste and Ancona, all with a percentage around 5%.

Table 24: Distribution of partners per legal seat-NUTS III

Legal seat NUTS III	Bodies Number
Splitsko-Dalmatinska	11,0%
Venezia	8,7%
Primorsko-Goranska	8,2%
Istarka	6,4%
Bologna	5,4%
Zadarska	5,3%
Trieste	5,2%
Ancona	5,2%
Dubrovačko-Neretvanska	4,9%
Bari	4,6%
Grad Zagreb	4,4%
Roma	4,0%
Udine	3,2%
Campobasso	3,2%
Sibensko-Kninska	2,2%
Ferrara	2,1%

<sup>16</sup> This calculation excludes associated partners that don't have a budget share of the funded projects.



Padova	2,0%
Ravenna	1,9%
Pesaro e Urbino	1,2%
Pescara	1,1%
Lecce	1,0%
Gorizia	1,0%
Forlì Cesena	1,0%
Rimini	1,0%
L'Aquila	0,9%
Teramo	0,7%
Chieti	0,6%
Foggia	0,5%
Rovigo	0,5%
Macerata	0,5%
Ličko-Senjska	0,5%
Ascoli Piceno	0,4%
Pordenone	0,4%
Brindisi	0,4%
Karlovačka	0,2%
Barletta-Andria-Trani	0,1%
Treviso	0,1%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Distribution at NUTS III level highlights the prevalence of LPs based in Venezia, which represent 12% of total LPs. They are followed by Trieste, which concentrates 9.5% of the lead partners, and Bologna (7.1%). Other significant shares (all equal to 6%) are found for Ancona, Primorsko-Goranska, Padova and Rome.

**Table 25: Distribution of lead partners per NUTS III**

Legal seat NUTS III	LP Number
Venezia	11,9%
Trieste	9,5%
Bologna	7,1%
Ancona	6,0%
Primorsko-Goranska	6,0%
Padova	6,0%
Roma	6,0%
Gorizia	4,8%
Ferrara	4,8%
Istarka	4,8%
Zadarska	4,8%
Splitsko-Dalmatinska	3,6%
Udine	3,6%
Campobasso	3,6%
Ravenna	2,4%
Forlì Cesena	2,4%
Bari	2,4%

Lecce	2,4%
Pesaro e Urbino	1,2%
Dubrovačko-Neretvanska	1,2%
Grad Zagreb	1,2%
L'Aquila	1,2%
Macerata	1,2%
Treviso	1,2%
Ličko-Senjska	1,2%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

Analysing the distribution by specific objective and region of localization of the partnership organisations, the following figures emerges:

- the largest share of organisations located in Abruzzo participated in projects funded under S.O. 4.1 (33.3%); another significant share (22.2%) is found for S.O. 2.2;
- 34.8% of the Emilia Romagna organisations focused their activities on S.O. 3.1; followed by S.O. 2.1 with a figure of 13%;
- the organisations of Friuli Venezia Giulia have the highest shares of subjects in correspondence with S.O. 4.1 (33%) and S.O. 1.1 (19%);
- about half of Jadranska Hrvatska's organisations are distributed in almost equivalent shares between the two objectives 3.1 (24.7%) and 4.1 (24.4%);
- in Lazio and in Kontinentalna Hrvatska, SO 1.1 attracted the highest share of participant: respectively equal to and 25% and 23.7%. Furthermore, these two regions show substantial shares also for S.O. 2.1: equal to 23.7% of the organisations based in Kontinentalna Hrvatska and 18.8% of the organisations with legal seat in Lazio. In addition, an identical share of partner with legal seat in Lazio focused their activity on S.O. 3.2;
- about half of the organisations located in Marche are distributed in identical shares on objectives 3.1 and 4.1 (23.7%);
- 35% of Molise organisations addressed their activities to S.O. 3.1 and 27% to S.O. 4.1; these two objectives are also the most relevant among the bodies of Puglia (where 26.4% focused on SO 4.1 and 22.6% on SO 3.1) and for those located in Veneto (where S.O. 3.1 intercepted 27.5% of subjects and S.O. 4.1 23%).

**Table 26: Distribution of partnership organisations per legal seat-NUTS II and Specific Objective**

SO	Abruzzo	Emilia Romagna	Friuli Venezia Giulia	Jadranska Hrvatska	Kontinentalna Hrvatska	Lazio	Marche	Molise	Puglia	Veneto	Total
<b>1.1</b>	3,7%	8,7%	19,0%	14,1%	23,7%	25,0%	10,2%	0,0%	15,1%	15,4%	14,0%
<b>2.1</b>	7,4%	13,0%	6,3%	8,3%	23,7%	18,8%	13,6%	7,7%	11,3%	11,0%	10,6%
<b>2.2</b>	22,2%	8,7%	5,1%	9,6%	7,9%	9,4%	6,8%	15,4%	9,4%	5,5%	8,9%
<b>3.1</b>	14,8%	34,8%	16,5%	24,7%	5,3%	3,1%	23,7%	34,6%	22,6%	27,5%	23,4%
<b>3.2</b>	7,4%	8,7%	10,1%	10,3%	7,9%	18,8%	11,9%	11,5%	13,2%	8,8%	10,4%
<b>3.3</b>	11,1%	7,6%	10,1%	8,7%	10,5%	12,5%	10,2%	3,8%	1,9%	8,8%	8,5%
<b>4.1</b>	33,3%	18,5%	32,9%	24,4%	21,1%	12,5%	23,7%	26,9%	26,4%	23,1%	24,2%

Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
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It turns out that the highest proportion of the 379 partner organisations participated in only one project (61.5%), 18.5% in two projects, 7% in three projects and 4.2% in four projects. The remaining 9% (11 organisations) participated in a number of projects ranging from 5 to 23.

**Table 27: Distribution of organisation per no. of implemented projects**

Number of implemented projects	Number of PPs		Number of LPs		Total organisations	
1	191	59,9%	42	70,0%	233	61,5%
2	56	17,6%	14	23,3%	70	18,5%
3	24	7,5%	2	3,3%	26	6,9%
4	14	4,4%	2	3,3%	16	4,2%
5	8	2,5%	-	-	8	2,1%
6	7	2,2%	-	-	7	1,8%
7	4	1,3%	-	-	4	1,1%
8	3	0,9%	-	-	3	0,8%
9	3	0,9%	-	-	3	0,8%
10	1	0,3%	-	-	1	0,3%
11	1	0,3%	-	-	1	0,3%
13	1	0,3%	-	-	1	0,3%
14	1	0,3%	-	-	1	0,3%
15	2	0,6%	-	-	2	0,5%
16	2	0,6%	-	-	2	0,5%
23	1	0,3%	-	-	1	0,3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100,0%</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>100,0%</b>

In the latter group, the following institutions stand out for the high number of projects in which they have been involved as project partner:

- Javna Ustanova Rera S.D. - Za Koordinaciju i Razvoj Splitsko Dalmatinske županije<sup>17</sup> (23 projects)
- Consiglio Nazionale Delle Ricerche (16)
- Regione Emilia Romagna (16)
- Institut za Oceanografiju i Ribarstvo (15)
- Regione del Veneto (15)
- Regione Marche (14)
- Dubrovačko - Neretvanska županija (13)
- Regione Puglia (11)
- Istarska županija (10)

<sup>17</sup> RERA S.D. is a public institution for coordination and development of Split-Dalmatia County. It is a Croatian accredited regional coordinator and performs public interest activities, with the aim of effectively coordinating and stimulating regional development in the area of Split-Dalmatia County. It performs tasks of public authority.

**Table 28: Project partners participating in more than 4 projects (distribution by S.O)**

PROJECT PARTNER NAME	1.1	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	Tot.
Javna Ustanova Rera S.D. - Za Koordinaciju i Razvoj Splitsko Dalmatinske županije	5	3	2	8	2	2	1	23
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche	6	3	2		3	1	1	16
Regione Emilia Romagna	2	2	2	3	2	1	4	16
Institut za Oceanografiju i Ribarstvo	5	3			5	2		15
Regione del Veneto	1	2	1	6	2	1	2	15
Regione Marche	2	2	3		4	2	1	14
Dubrovačko - Neretvanska županija		2	4	2	2	1	2	13
Regione Puglia	1	2	2	3	1	1	1	11
Istarska županija	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	10
Università degli Studi Di Trieste	3					2	4	9
Regione Autonoma Friuli-Venezia Giulia	1	1	1		1	1	4	9
Splitsko-Dalmatinska županija		1	4		1	1	2	9
Regione Molise		2		3	2		1	8
Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna		1	1	4	1	1		8
Sveučilište u Zadru	1		1	5			1	8
Primorje-Gorski Kotar County	1	1		2	1		2	7
Istarska Razvojna Agencija	2			1			4	7
Sveučilište u Rijeci, Pomorski Fakultet u Rijeci	1						6	7
Istituto Nazionale di Oceanografia e Geofisica Sperimentale – OGS	3		1		1	2		7
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia	1			3	1		1	6
Autorità di Sistema Portuale del Mare Adriatico Centrale							6	6
Autorità di Sistema Portuale del Mare Adriatico Meridionale (Porti di Bari, Brindisi, Manfredonia, Barletta e Monopoli)							6	6
Institut Ruđer Bošković	2	1			1	2		6
Sveučilište u Splitu		1	2			2	1	6
Zadarka zupanija	2		2		2			6
Regione Abruzzo		1	1	2		1	1	6
Udruga za Prirodu, Okoliš i Održivi Razvoj Sunce	2				2	1		5
Unione Regionale Camere di Commercio del Veneto	1			1		1	2	5
Fondazione Istituto sui Trasporti e la Logistica							5	5
Autorità di Sistema Portuale del Mare Adriatico Settentrionale - Porti di Venezia e Chioggia	1			1			3	5
Agenzia Regionale per la Prevenzione l'ambiente e l'energia dell'Emilia-Romagna	1	1	1		2			5
Universita' Politecnica delle Marche		1	1	1		1	1	5
Agenzia Regionale per la Protezione dell'ambiente del Friuli Venezia Giulia		1	2		2			5
Lučka uprava Ploče							5	5

There are 18 organisations that have participated in more than one project as lead partners. The highest number of projects has been reached by the Università Ca' Foscari Venezia and the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (both are lead partners of 4 projects ), follow with 3 projects Regione Marche and Regione Molise.

**Table 29: Lead partners participating in more than 2 projects (distribution by S.O)**

LP NAME	1.1	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.3	4.1	Total
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia	1			1		1	1	4
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche		1		1	1	1		4
Regione Marche				1	1		1	3
Regione Molise			2	1				3

If we look at the types of project partners' organisation, it emerges that the public and public related bodies are very well represented (90% of the total partners), while, on the other side, the presence of private organizations, with only 10%, and private companies in particular, needs to be improved.

Nevertheless, the evaluation desk analysis highlights the general capacity of the Programme of promoting vertical partnerships through central and local bodies in order to enhance the effectiveness of interventions and their sustainability.

In addition, it has to be remembered that indicators (and the related coding activity in the monitoring system) could be a powerful tool for analysing the cross-border dimension (see also the Chapter 3). The performance of standard+ projects, which closed their implementation, shows some important issues that contribute to fostering cross-border cooperation and to giving priority to joint and common solutions shared by the two Member States. Thanks to the desk analysis and data elaboration, the Evaluator has detected the following remarks:

- **The overall involvement of relevant partners is deemed generally satisfactory.** A wide range of stakeholders is addressed by the current Italy-Croatia's projects. The selection of most relevant stakeholders is generally coherent and relevant with reference to the different Priorities. Standard+ projects that have closed their activities have foreseen generally a wide variety of relevant tools and activities to effectively address cross-border dimension. Implementation and management of Strategic and Standard projects could be the occasion for deepening themes related to strategic planning and for sharing competences and good practices exchange.
- **Private partners, academic/research partners and policy-makers bring clear and diverse benefits to projects.** Therefore, a balanced mix of partners is expected to be of added value to a project. Currently, many projects include different type of stakeholders. Actually, the number of public partnerships is still very high. The involvement of different types of partners is an added value especially for cross-border cooperation Programmes; this element should be further improved in the future.
- The ability in **promoting vertical partnerships** through central and local bodies cooperation – including the implementation unit - enhances the effectiveness of cross-border interventions and their sustainability.
- The development of **a set of common indicators able of capturing the cooperation added value and the cross-border dimension could be an asset.** At the same time, specific elaborations and analysis on indicators that provide specific information on cross-border dimension of the Programme have to be promoted and shared at Programme level.

## 5 Final considerations and recommendations

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### 1. Effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme management system

Despite the difficulties that characterized the start-up years of the Programme, the current organizational structure has reached a complete organization. Therefore, the Programme management structure can be considered as adequate in its definition and in setting the framework for an effective management.

The newly established Programme bodies have been severely challenged by various aspects: staff turnover, difficulties of the information system, high level of participation to the Calls for proposals, Covid-19 pandemic. These criticalities had serious impacts, primarily on the spending capacity.

The Programme management system is now based on a clear set of functions as well as on the availability of manuals, factsheets, established praxis, and a good cooperation between the different levels of the management system as well as within the partnership of the Programme.

- It is recommended to reach a more effective definition of the rules of engagement of the experts necessary for an effective management that includes the conditions and contractual forms proposed in the public notices for the recruitment of MA and JS personnel.
- It is recommended to try to avoid further changes in the MA and JS staff.

The **monitoring system** (SIU) adopted by the Managing Authority has been the focus of much controversy but also of incremental improvements. Although the SIU has created difficulties in managing the flow of information, particularly between the beneficiaries and the Managing Authority, its performance has been enhanced. The positions of the partnership regarding the possibility of maintaining this system also in the next programming period are divergent. Nevertheless, as we have seen (§ 2.5), there is no main road in choosing the information system that is valid for all CBC Programmes.

Indeed, the issue of the monitoring system has been identified and placed among the most relevant priorities of the Programme and important efforts have been made for improving the SIU system, although the process is still ongoing and this issue need to be further analysed in the perspective of the new programming period. In this context, the Audit Authority launched a System Audit which will be available by the end of 2021. The discussion between the partners on this issue are thorough and the partnership's ability to tackle relevant issues for an effective program management constitutes a strong point of the Programme.

- It is recommended that the decision on the information system to be adopted by the Programme in the next programming period emerges from this context of open discussion - taking into consideration the positions of all the actors and authorities involved in the management of the Programme – which must consider both the SIU functions which are related to administrative procedures as well as its accessibility (user-friendly) specially from the side of the beneficiaries.

Within the framework of Interreg Italy-Croatia's management and control system, **the First Level Control** presents a different situation compared to the two cooperating countries: while the Croatian partner implemented a centralised control system, the Italian partners entrusted the selection of first level controllers to the beneficiaries themselves (§ 2.4). Centralising the FLC within a public authority involves a “bottleneck” risk, in particular when the deadline is close and the offices in charge for accounting activities are managing a large number of reports, from different Programmes, in a limited available time. On the other side, the idea of leaving to the beneficiaries the choice of their controllers may generate the problem of the controllers' specific competence with regard to the operational reporting procedures and the IT tools adopted.

- Even if the centralised control system is potentially more efficient thanks to the concentration of competences and the uniformity of the procedures, it is recommended to plan the reporting periods in order to organize the workload in order to cope with the peaks of the projects' reports converging on the same deadline.
- On the other side, it is recommended to improve the de-centralised control system through a procedure of pre-selection of controllers, with public announcements and consequent lists and selection procedures by the beneficiaries, and/or through actions of preliminary training of the controllers from the MA or JS, in order to guarantee the utmost uniformity of procedures and instruments.

## **2. The indicators system**

From the desk analysis the indicators' system – particularly the result indicators - seems to be suitable for the monitoring and evaluation purposes. It has to be highlighted that data sources are specified for each indicator, giving evidence of the methodology to be used and the degree of availability of the data themselves. This is particularly useful for the monitoring and evaluation tasks.

- As highlighted also by the self-assessment exercise (§ 3.1), it is recommended to improve the cross-border dimension especially at project level. In this framework, indicators can be a very useful and suitable tools. In order to measure the achievement of cross-sectoral objectives and the effects achieved, it is necessary to develop suitable indicators in the course of Programme planning.
- Considering that most of the targets for outputs indicators have been already reached and significantly exceeded, it is recommended that careful attention is paid to the definition of targets in the next programming period, drawing lessons from current experience.
- In the framework of the current Programme, it is recommended that the targets of the output indicators are re-defined according to a reviewed methodology which must take into consideration the experience of the implementation of the Standard+ projects as a proxy for the quantification of the new targets.

The cross-border nature of the Programme itself requires an additional reflection on the necessity of catching the typical immaterial results of Cooperation Programmes: the Programme ability of creating networks aiming to pursue common objectives and, in particular, of supporting projects' partnerships' evolution into stable and sustainable institutional networks to raise the awareness of being part of the wider EU, through the strengthening of relationships among Member States.

- Whether considered interesting by the Programme MA, it is recommended to develop a first set of network indicators.
- Moreover, a set of additional indicators could be developed based on the social capital approach with the specific goal to “measure” and describe cross-dimension added value. For this purpose, it could be used a methodology aiming to measure the social capital produced by the Programme that might lead to the proposal of indicators able to measure outputs, results besides “formal and informal” impacts strictly connected to the networks and networking created (i.e., number of formal and informal networks created, promoted or supported).

### **3. Considerations on the effectiveness of the Programme, with regards to the relevance of the objectives and the cross-border dimension**

*The overall involvement of relevant partners is deemed generally satisfactory.* A wide range of stakeholders is addressed by the current Italy-Croatia's projects. The selection of most relevant stakeholders is generally coherent and relevant with reference to the different Priorities. Standard+ projects that have closed their activities have foreseen generally a wide variety of relevant tools and activities to effectively address cross-border dimension.

- In the framework of the implementation and management of Strategic and Standard projects, it is recommended to deepen themes related to strategic planning and to share competences and good practices exchange. Furthermore, it is recommended to focus on this aspect of the implementation of the Programme and to capitalize the results in the next programming period.

Private partners, academic/research partners and policy-makers bring clear and diverse benefits to projects. Therefore, a balanced mix of partners is expected to be of added value to a project. Nevertheless, the number of public partnerships is still very high.

- Considering that the involvement of different types of partners is an added value especially for cross-border cooperation Programmes, it is recommended to explore ways of enhancing the participation of the private partners and research institutions.



## 6 Annexes

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● **Annex 1: Update on the Programme’s Results Indicators**

**S.O. 1.1 - Enhance the framework conditions for innovation in the relevant sectors of the blue economy within the cooperation area**

Indicator:		Number of EPO applications						
Description	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Measurement Methodology	Quantification of the result indicators for the AIR 2020 (April 2021)
This indicator will point out the concrete capacity to promote the innovation in the cooperation area	Number	673,28	Data referred to the period 2008-2012 (annual average)	680,00	<p>EUROSTAT - Patent applications to the EPO by priority year by NUTS 3 regions (<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/data/data_base">http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/data/data_base</a>)</p> <p>Since 2020 the Eurostat stopped updating data on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Eurobase. Historic data for reporting years dating back to the early 1980s to around 2013 to 2017 (depending on the data set) remain available in Eurobase as ‘historic data’. Updated data on patents are available via the PATSTAT database of the European Patents Office (EPO) <a href="https://www.epo.org/searching-for-patents/business/patstat.html">https://www.epo.org/searching-for-patents/business/patstat.html</a> or the database of the OECD <a href="https://stats.oecd.org/">https://stats.oecd.org/</a> (“Science, Technology and Patents”).</p> <p>Consequently for drawing up the AIR 2019 the link <a href="https://data.epo.org/expert-services/">https://data.epo.org/expert-services/</a> has been used</p>	2018 2020 2023	<p>Since the relevant annual changeability of data, it is considered appropriate to extract data related to total number of EPO applications in the programme area between 2008 and 2012. On the basis of this number and effective number of statistical measurements, it has been possible to get the base line value like annual average number of EPO applications. Therefore the total number of EPO application can act as a proxy for specific level of EPO application in blue economy relevant sectors.</p> <p>The target value has been quantified taking into account that the programme will support limited number of projects.</p>	<p>Given the continuing failure to update the Eurostat website in relation to the registration of patents, and considering the lack of reliability of the European Patent Office database (see the site "Patent information services for experts": <a href="https://data.epo.org/expert-services/">https://data.epo.org/expert-services/</a>), in analogy with the calculation performed for the baseline, the average figure for the five-year period 2013-2017 is confirmed and is equal to <b>997</b> patent applications.</p>

**O.S. 2.1 - Improve the climate change monitoring and planning of adaptation measures tackling specific effects, in the cooperation area**

Indicator:		Inhabitants benefiting from planning of adaptation measures						
Description	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Measurement Methodology	Quantification of the result indicators for the AIR 2020 (April 2021)
This indicator will point out the capacity to plan adaptation measures in the cooperation area	Number	<b>7.050.052</b>	2015	<b>8.000.00</b>	Targeted questionnaire elaborated by the programme / <b>Desk analysis</b>	2018 2020 2023	Data of the baseline have been collected through ad hoc questionnaires prepared to interview competent authorities on existing adaptation measures plans. Target value: as reported by Italian and Croatian Environmental Ministries, the Adaptation National Strategy process is going on in both countries. It is expected that the number of inhabitants benefiting from planning of adaptation measures will increase.	As for the year 2019 some updates have emerged regarding the measures adopted at provincial/ municipal level but without any impact on the quantification. The population covered by the planning activities is the same as for the previous AIR (2019): <b>12,239,442.00</b> (thus exceeding the target value of 2023)

**O.S. 2.2 - Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster**

Indicator:		Inhabitants benefiting from risk management coordinated measures						
Description	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Measurement Methodology	Quantification of the result indicators for the AIR 2020 (April 2021)
This indicator will point out the capacity to tackle risk in a coordinated way	Number	<b>8.366.317</b>	2015	<b>9.000.000</b>	Targeted questionnaire elaborated by the programme / Desk analysis	2018 2020 2023	<p>Data have been collected through ad hoc questionnaires prepared to interview competent authorities on existing coordinated risk management measures.</p> <p>The target value has been quantified considering the main role played by the Italian Regional Governments with reference to the management of fire risk and their struggles relating to organization of its functions, it can be expected that the number of inhabitants benefiting from risk management coordinated measures will increase.</p>	There have been no significant changes since last year update, thus the population benefiting from these measures remain at: <b>11,721,642.00</b>

**O.S. 3.2 - Contribute to protect and restore biodiversity**

Indicator:	Excellent conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in the programme area							
Description	Measure ment Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Measurement Methodology	Quantification of the result indicators for the AIR 2020 (April 2021)
<p>This indicator will suggest the concrete contribution in biodiversity protection by the exam of Natura 2000 sites conservation status, where reliable data are available</p>	<p>Number</p>	<p><b>3538</b></p>	<p>2014</p>	<p><b>3550</b></p>	<p>Standard Data Form for Natura 2000 network (<a href="https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/natura-9">https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/natura-9</a>)</p>	<p>2018 2020 2023</p>	<p>According to the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), conservation status of a habitat and species is defined by several causes. Therefore conservation status is classified like A “excellent”, B “good” and C “Average or reduced conservation”. The indicator takes into account <i>only habitat and species where conservation status is excellent (A)</i>. The target value has been quantified taking into account that the programme will support limited number of projects.</p>	<p>To measure the number of habitats and species in Natura 2000 sites with conservation status “A” (excellent), we proceeded with the construction of a query that linked the list of all Natura 2000 sites in the project area with the Access database: <a href="https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/natura-11">https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/natura-11</a> Considering that the DB (available through the European Environment Agency website) has not been updated with respect to the measurement for the AIR 2019, the data remains unchanged. In Croatia, Natura 2000 sites have 780 habitat types or species preserved at an excellent level (of which 304 habitat types and 476 species). In Italy there are 2,796 types of habitat or species preserved at the level of excellence (of which 788 types of habitat and 2008 species). The value of the indicator is therefore equal to <b>3,576</b> habitats / species preserved at an excellent level.</p>

**O.S. 3.3 - Improve the environmental quality conditions of the sea and coastal area by use of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches**

Indicator:	Quality level of coastal bathing waters (according to the Dir. 2006/7/CE)							
Description	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Measurement Methodology	Quantification of the result indicators for the AIR 2020 (April 2021)
<p>This indicator will assess the quality of coastal bathing waters by measuring the concentrations of two bacteria, Escherichia Coli and Intestinal Enterococci. The presence of either of these bacteria in the samples may indicate pollution in the bathing water site, usually originating from sewage or livestock waste</p>	Number	<b>2,87</b>	2014	<b>2,87</b>	<p>European Environment Agency - Data on Bathing Water Directive (<a href="https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/bathing-water-directive-status-of-bathing-water-9">https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/data/bathing-water-directive-status-of-bathing-water-9</a>)</p>	<p>2018 2020 2023</p>	<p>The EU Bathing Waters Directive (2006/7/EC) requires Member States to identify popular bathing places in fresh and coastal waters and monitor them for indicators of microbiological pollution (and other substances) throughout the bathing season which runs from May to September.</p> <p>A synthetic qualitative evaluation is available for each site according to water quality standards (poor, sufficient, good, and excellent). The proposed indicator takes into consideration the 2114 sampled coastal sites on the Programme area (882 in Croatia and 1232 in Italy) and attribute a numeric value to each synthetic qualitative evaluation according to the following scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor = 0</li> <li>• Sufficient=1</li> <li>• Good=2</li> <li>• Excellent=3</li> </ul> <p>(arithmetic average is calculated).</p> <p>Given the existent high level of coastal bathing waters, the target for year 2023 is the preservation of the same situation, i.e. no deterioration in the quality of bathing waters. If further sites of the Programme area will be added to the set they will be taken into consideration.</p>	<p>Considering that the baseline and the 2023 target value are equal to 2.87, and that the last available value recorded in 2021 (on data which refer to the year 2019 which has been updated in June 2020) is <b>2.93</b>, the quality of coastal bathing waters continue to perform at high level in the area of Program.</p> <p>The value is higher for the Croatian coasts (2,99) compared to the Italian coasts, which also have a good performance (2,89).</p>

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

Indicator:		Goods transported by maritime mode						
Description	Measurement Unit	Baseline Value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting	Measurement Methodology	Quantification of the result indicators for the AIR 2020 (April 2021)
This indicator will measure the maritime freight transport in the area (only IT-HR traffic)	Thousand tonnes	2445	Data referred to the period 2012-2014 (annual average)	2690	EUROSTAT – Maritime transport goods per country and main ports <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/database">(<a href="http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/database">http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/transport/database</a>)</a>	2018 2020 2023	<p>White paper titled "Roadmap to a single European transport area — towards a competitive and resource efficient transport system" [(COM)2011 144], identifies the target of 50% shift in freight journeys of more than 300 km from road to other transport mode. The proposed result indicator measures the inward transport of goods (in tons) of reporting ports of the area from partner ports on the other MS (for definitions please check Eurostat: <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/mar_esms.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/mar_esms.htm</a>).</p> <p>While it does not directly measure that shift (no available Eurostat dataset allows to track exactly – for each possible type of carrier – loadings and unloadings from and to locations on the eligible area), the proposed indicator is a reliable proxy under the assumption that the rate of growth of maritime transport of goods between ports of the eligible area outdoes the one of road transport (which cannot be directly monitored).</p> <p>The target value has been quantified taking into account that the main risk is given by the existence of strong concurrent forces (e.g. other national/international programmes; economic cycles; evolution of prices; etc.) which may act pro or against the achievement of the target.</p>	<p>The Eurostat database is updated to 2019 for Italy and 2020 for Croatia.</p> <p>In line with the methodology adopted so far, we have calculated the annual average of the data for the last three years available (2017-2019).</p> <p>The average annual figure for the three-year period considered is <b>2,306.3</b>.</p> <p>A value that still falls compared to that recorded for the AIR 2019 and related to the three-year period 2016-2018 (2,412.00).</p>

● **Annex 2: Summary of the answers to the evaluation questions**

Evaluation question	Preliminary answer	Evaluation approach and techniques	Source of information
<p><i>Is the overall management and control system effective?</i></p>	<p>Despite the difficulties that characterized the start-up years of the programme, the current organizational structure has reached a complete organization. Therefore, the programme management structure can be considered as adequate in its definition and in setting the framework for an effective management.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> </ul>
<p><i>How efficient and effective are the Programme management bodies (MA, CA, JS, MC, FLC) in the implementation of their functions?</i></p>	<p>The newly established bodies have been severely tested by various aspects: staff turnover, criticality of the information system, high level of participation to the Calls for proposals, Covid-19 pandemic. These criticalities could have seriously impacted primarily on the spending capacity. Nevertheless, the different bodies have been able to deal with the problems with reactivity and coordination, and to reach a satisfying financial performance and the activation of a large and diverse partnership in the territories involved.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation approaches:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Theory-based models</li> <li>● Participatory models</li> <li>● Performance oriented models</li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluation techniques:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> </ul>
<p><i>Are Programme bodies functions and responsibilities (division of tasks and workloads) clearly established and efficiently implemented?</i></p>	<p>In the initial management phase, some dysfunctions were detected in the ability to plan and implement the Programme activities: from programming the Calls for proposals (e.g., timing of the Calls, preparation phase, selection) to the managing of the admitted projects (e.g., capacity of contracting).  The Programme management system is now based on a clear set of functions as well as on the availability of manuals, factsheets, established praxis, and a good cooperation between the different levels of the management system as well as within the partnership of the Programme.</p>	<p>d) Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework f) Analysis of financial implementation g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> </ul>
<p><i>What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the Programme shared management tools and procedures?</i></p>	<p>The stability achieved in the set-up of the Managing Authority has allowed an improvement in the coordination levels of the Programme. The improvements in the organizational structure of the JS have made it possible to develop a good capacity for analysing the progress of the Programme and the established CBC partnership. The activity of the Project Managers has been particularly useful in fostering efficient levels of</p>	<p>i) Analysis of the progress of the result indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> </ul>



	<p>communication with the project leaders and with the partnership in general. The main criticalities of the Programme are connected to the implementation of some management functions and tools, such as the monitoring system and the first level control system. In both cases, progress has been made but the coordination and efficiency of these two important functions of the program management system need to be improved.</p>		
<p><i>How efficient and relevant are projects selection criteria for both standard and strategic projects?</i></p>	<p>The project selection criteria - together with the information activities on the opportunities offered by the Programme - made it possible to start the Programme activities involving a significant number of organizations of various kinds and with a satisfactory distribution throughout the territories included in the area of cooperation. With respect to the relevance, it seems necessary to further reflect on the greater involvement of private subjects, and to establish criteria which define a maximum number of participation by an organization in the projects financed by the Programme.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> </ul>
<p><i>How effective is the Programme monitoring system?</i></p>	<p>The positions of the partnership regarding the possibility of maintaining this system also in the next programming period are divergent. Nevertheless, as we have seen, there is no main road in choosing the information system that is valid for all CBC Programmes. The issue of the monitoring system has been identified and placed among the most relevant priorities of the Programme and important efforts have been made for improving the SIU system, although the path is still ongoing and this issue need to be further analysed in the perspective of the new programming period.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Monitoring data analysis</li> </ul>
<p><i>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?</i></p>	<p>The result indicators' set seem to be suitable. Data sources are specified for each indicator, this is of great importance for monitoring and evaluation task. It is very important the role of beneficiaries for monitoring and evaluation and their role of collecting data for indicators (both output and result indicators). Most of the targets for outputs indicators have been already reached and significantly exceeded, it is recommended that careful attention is paid to the definition of targets in the</p>	<p>S.M.A.R.T. analysis, desk analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indicators system, programme documents/Papers</li> </ul>

	<p>next programming period, drawing lessons from current experience. The next operational evaluation report could investigate the method of target setting providing suggestions for increasing the rigour, avoiding the risk of keeping targets too low because of over caution.</p>		
<p><i>Are baseline, milestones and target values realistic and clearly defined?</i></p>	<p>As underlined also by the JS in the self-assessment exercise (Paper for the 2021-2027 programming period), the monitoring of indicators and milestone methodology has to be improved and agreed at a Programme level.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the lack of updated data and the difficulty of sources' collection, the MA effort has to be stressed.</p> <p>Actually, for each indicator it is identified a target value and a baseline. A measurement methodology for indicators has been developed and updated when necessary and the quantification of indicators has been provided (the last available data are covered by the AIR 2020).</p> <p>An important contribution to the gathering and organization of additional data might come from beneficiaries. As mentioned, this is important for the result indicators monitoring, quantification and future description. In the light of a whole redefinition of the indicators' set in the forthcoming programming period, it is suggested to identify exact target values which could reflect the implementation stage of the Programme and favour a more accurate monitoring of activities and results.</p>	<p>S.M.A.R.T. analysis, desk analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indicators system, programme documents/Papers</li> </ul>
<p><i>At this stage of the programming period, is the system of indicators still relevant according to the Programme strategy and in line with Programme bodies and stakeholders needs?</i></p>	<p>The relationship between objectives and result indicators is clear, being evident the cause-effect relationship between levels of objectives and adopted indicators.</p> <p>In view of the further verification of the elaborated indicators, it may be appropriate to involve Programme bodies and stakeholders from the programme area also to verify if the set is yet compliant to their needs.</p>	<p>S.M.A.R.T. analysis, desk analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indicators system, programme documents/Papers</li> </ul>
<p><i>How can it be improved in view of the next programming period?</i></p>	<p>The cross-border dimension has to be improved especially at project level.</p> <p>It might be particularly useful to collect the experiences from cooperation Programmes which are already underway with results indicators aimed at detecting the cross-border dimension.</p>	<p>S.M.A.R.T. analysis, desk analysis</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indicators system, programme documents/Papers</li> </ul>

	<p>A good set of result indicators represents the basis for the further and potential identification of impact indicators, if properly supported by precise methods and research tools aimed at both quantitative (monitoring data) and qualitative analysis (case studies, control groups, etc.).</p> <p>For the forthcoming programming period a hypothesis of “network indicators”, such as permanent or new networks, could be developed. An example for such kind of indicators is contained in the cooperation programme Alpine Space 2014-2020: “<i>Level of maturity of framework conditions for innovation for generating innovation processes among business, academia and administration</i>”.</p>		
<p><i>What is the progress towards the overall Programme goal, specific objectives and expected results?</i></p>	<p>The level of implementation reached does not yet allow an evaluation of the results achieved by the Programme. The targets of the specific objectives were often exceeded right from the start of the implementation of the Programme - highlighting the limits of programming activity in this area. In any case, a first analysis of the project partnership highlights the variety, the territorial distribution and the number of organizations involved. The picture that emerges from the analysis shows a good level of involvement of important and diverse organizations from both Countries.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation approaches:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Theory-based models</li> <li>● Participatory models</li> <li>● Performance oriented models</li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluation techniques:</b></p> <p>c) Analysis of the socio-economic context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Monitoring data analysis</li> <li>● Secondary data analysis</li> </ul>
<p><i>To what extent did the Programme achieve the expected results linked to the Performance Framework? How efficient were the corrective measures adopted?</i></p>	<p>The overall amount certified by the EC is equal to EUR 61.885.308,02, of which 52.602.504,30 from ERDF budget. The Programme has thus successfully met and exceeded its ERDF financial targets for year 2020, which amounted to EUR 50.515.404,76.</p>	<p>d) Analysis of the strategic and regulatory framework</p> <p>f) Analysis of financial implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Monitoring data analysis</li> </ul>
<p><i>Are the relevant target groups of the Programme successfully involved? How is the participation in terms of beneficiaries’ type as well as in relation to the geographical coverage of the Programme area?</i></p>	<p>The Programme covers 57% of Italian organizations and 43% of Croatian showing a balanced involvement of the two Countries.</p> <p>The overall involvement of relevant partners is deemed generally satisfactory. A wide range of stakeholders is addressed by the current Italy-Croatia’s projects.</p> <p>Many projects include different type of beneficiaries. Regarding types of entities, the SIU system has some limitation in the data regarding the specific type of partners. This element</p>	<p>g) Analysis of the physical implementation and procedural progress</p> <p>h) Analysis of governance and implementation processes</p> <p>i) Analysis of the progress of the result indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Monitoring data analysis</li> </ul>

	<p>will be further investigated during the next phase of evaluation's path following the completion of relevant data.</p> <p>The territorial distribution of the project partners is generally balanced. The distribution of the lead partners is less balanced than the distribution of the partner organizations: 77.4% of the lead partners are based in one of the Italian regions. Only 19 lead partners (out of 84) are based in Croatia, 18 of which in the coastal NUTS II region.</p> <p>As regards the specific objectives, those which have gathered the greatest number of partners are the 4.1 and the 3.1 - which together encompass half of the total participations in the projects financed by the Programme.</p>		
<p><i>Are the Programme objectives still relevant, consistent and complementary in the policy context?</i></p>	<p>Despite the strong changes in the context of the cooperation area caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the objectives of the program can still be considered broadly relevant, consistent and complementary. A judgment shared also during the interviews.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Monitoring data analysis</li> <li>● Secondary data analysis</li> </ul>
<p><i>Is the Programme properly addressing the current development needs in the Programme area?</i></p>	<p>Despite the delay in the start-up phase, the program strategy has been fully implemented, building a broad platform of cooperation and a practice of cooperation among the actors of the institutional, economic and social contexts of the two countries.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Secondary data analysis</li> </ul>
<p><i>Are created partnerships relevant and coherent with the Programme cross-border nature?</i></p>	<p>The overall involvement of relevant partners is deemed generally satisfactory. A wide range of relevant stakeholders is addressed by the current Italy Croatia's projects. The selection of stakeholders is coherent and relevant with reference to the different Priorities.</p> <p>The involvement of different type of partners and key stakeholders in the cross-border partnerships is an added value especially for fostering the cross-border cooperation dimension; this can be improved for the future, especially with reference to the private partners participation. However, the Programme has been able to promote vertical partnerships through the cooperation of central and local authorities; this feature improves the effectiveness of cross-border interventions and their sustainability.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Programme documents</li> <li>● Interviews</li> <li>● Monitoring data analysis</li> </ul>

Note: Evaluation techniques are listed in letters according to the methodology described in the "Integrated evaluation design"