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INTERREG ITALY-CROATIA PROGRAMME 2021 – 2027

Call announcement

3rd Call for Proposals

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Introduction

The INTERREG VI-A Italy–Croatia 2021-2027, a [Cross-Border Cooperation Programme](#)¹ in the framework of the European Territorial Cooperation, is launching the 3rd Call for Standard and Small-Scale project proposals, and it invites interested eligible applicants to submit their project proposals.

This document is part of the “[Application Package for the 3rd Call for proposals](#)” available for applicants.

The application package consists of:

- Call announcement (present document)
- Annex 1 to the Call announcement “Thematic focus”
- Project selection procedure
- Annex 1 to the Project selection procedure “Assessment criteria”
- Guidelines for Applicants
- Off-line Application Form templates (*for information purposes*)
- Lead partner (LP) Declaration template
- Project partner (PP) Declaration template
- Associated partner (AP) Declaration template
- Subsidy Contract template (*for information purposes*)

Further information and documents on the application process can be found in sections 10 and 12 of this document. The present Call is implemented through the Joint electronic monitoring system (Jems).

The Call for proposals is governed by EU Regulations², the Interreg Programme and the present document. Italian legal framework shall be applied wherever applicable. In terms of State aid, General Block Exemption Regulation³ and the de minimis Regulations⁴ apply to the present Call for proposals.

1. Programme overview

The Programme area’s greatest potential and core driver for development is represented by the Adriatic Sea: indeed, the strengths deriving from the maritime dimension are numerous, from the strategic position and good performance of ports in the area, to the impressive richness of biodiversity and the strong attractiveness of the region for coastal tourism flows. Thus, the Programme intends to exploit these

¹ EC Implementing Decision C(2022) 5935 and subsequent modifications.

² ERDF Regulation (EU) 1058/2021, Interreg Regulation (EU) 1059/2021, Common Provision Regulation (EU) 1060/2021

³ Regulation (EU) 651/2014 art. 20 and 20 A

⁴ Regulation (EU) 2831/2023, Regulation (EU) 717/2014 and Regulation (EU) 1408/2013, please note that it will not be allowed to cumulate de minimis aid.



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opportunities by focusing the cooperation efforts on **blue economy domains**, in consistency with the EU Blue Economy strategy. Moreover, synergies and complementarities with other funding instruments at EU, national, regional level including National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRP) will be encouraged. The Programme's vision expressed as follows: **"Focusing on innovation and sustainability in the blue economy, capitalising previous cooperation experiences, creating synergies with EUSAIR"** will be attained through the Programme's 5 Priorities and their 7 Specific Objectives (SOs).

Priority	Priority's title	SO	Specific objective's title
1	Sustainable growth in the blue economy	1.1	Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies
		1.2	Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship
2	Green and resilient shared environment	2.1	Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience taking into account eco-system based approaches
		2.2	Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution
3	Sustainable maritime and multimodal transport	3.1	Developing and enhancing sustainable, climate resilient, intelligent and intermodal national, regional and local mobility, including improved access to TEN-T and cross-border mobility
4	Culture and tourism for sustainable development	4.1	Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation
5	Integrated governance for stronger cooperation	5.1	Other actions to support better cooperation governance



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2. Addressed area

The Third Call for Standard and Small-Scale Projects is addressed to the whole Programme area, covering the following NUTS III regions:

Italy: Teramo, Pescara, Chieti (Abruzzo Region), Brindisi, Lecce, Foggia, Bari, Barletta-Andria-Trani (Apulia Region), Ferrara, Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena, Rimini (Emilia-Romagna Region), Pordenone, Udine, Gorizia, Trieste (Friuli Venezia Giulia Region), Pesaro e Urbino, Ancona, Macerata, Ascoli Piceno, Fermo (Marche Region), Campobasso (Molise Region), Venezia, Padova, Rovigo (Veneto Region);



Croatia: Primorsko-goranska, Ličko-senjska, Zadarska, Šibensko-kninska, Splitsko-dalmatinska, Istarska, Dubrovačko - neretvanska (Adriatic Croatia region), Karlovačka (Pannonian Croatia region).

3. Objectives of the Call

The INTERREG VI-A Italy–Croatia 2021-2027 Programme intends to select high-quality cross-border projects, in which organisations can cooperate to address common relevant thematic issues and very tangible needs in the area.

In addition, the **relevance of the partnerships** and the **cross-border approach** of each project is of utmost importance and it is therefore highly considered in the project assessment. Since the Programme is addressing common challenges of the cross-border area, all project proposals should be jointly developed and implemented by the partners.

In particular the 3rd Call for Standard and Small-Scale project proposals is understood as a targeted call, as applicants are encouraged **to focus on specific topics and actions**, which have only been insufficiently or partially tackled in the previous Calls. This selection of topics and actions is based on a Gap Analysis carried out on the Programme 1st and 2nd calls' projects, which were assessed on the basis of the Socio-economic and Territorial Analysis.

Even though the Gap Analysis does not cover outcomes of closed projects and in spite of its limitations, it provides a solid ground for encouraging a stronger focus in the selection of the topics and actions.



4. Call budget and co-financing

The Programme will allocate **34.759.000,00 EUR** from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to the third Call for Standard and Small-Scale Project Proposals like this:

	Standard ERDF (EUR)	Small-scale ERDF (EUR)	Total ERDF (EUR)
1.1	2.535.000,00 €	0,00 €	2.535.000,00 €
2.1	6.392.000,00 €	0,00 €	6.392.000,00 €
2.2	5.392.000,00 €	1.000.000,00 €	6.392.000,00 €
3.1	2.200.000,00 €	0,00 €	2.200.000,00 €
4.1	8.186.000,00 €	1.000.000,00 €	9.186.000,00 €
5.1	6.054.000,00 €	2.000.000,00 €	8.054.000,00 €
Total	30.759.000,00 €	4.000.000,00 €	34.759.000,00 €

The ERDF **co-financing rate** is equal to **80%** of total eligible costs of the project.

The share of expenditure not covered by ERDF funds (equal to 20% of total eligible costs of the project) shall be ensured by national co-financing sources. For Italian organisations, the national co-financing is ensured by the State (Fondo di Rotazione).⁵

State-aid assessment could entail the possible reduction of public contribution as described in the [Programme Implementation Manual](#).

5. Features of the 3rd Call for proposals

All project proposals submitted to the 3rd Call for proposals must fall within one of the following two types of projects:

Standard projects

These are cooperation projects typically originating from a need or a potential and consequently testing cross-border solutions. They involve actions such as the implementation of new solutions, the testing of new services, the development of strategies, joint action plans and pilots, the sharing of expertise, joint training actions, and the setting-up of new governance structures. They should be developed based on an

⁵ Ex Law n. 183/1987 and CIPESS Decree n. 78/2021.



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innovative project concept, although the capitalisation of previous projects and results is also strongly encouraged.

Small-scale projects

These are a form of cooperation in the Programme area resulting from the will of reaching new target groups and allowing newcomers to contribute to the improvement of the social, economic and territorial cohesion of the cross-border region. Compared to Standard projects, they have a shorter duration, supporting smaller partnerships with limited-scope interventions, mainly implemented by smaller organisations, addressing specific thematic issues and very tangible needs in the area. They promote direct cooperation between citizens and institutions, foster contacts between people locally, and bring border regions and their citizens closer together. These projects shall aim at improving legal and administrative cross-border collaboration, strengthen the communication channels, and increase the main stakeholders' capacities (including public authorities), for example through the implementation of awareness-raising campaigns, implementation of training and educational activities, specific actions aiming at improving and facilitating the cooperation of organisations on both sides of the maritime border.

Although applicants may submit proposals consistent with all the activities described in the Programme Intervention Logic, the beneficiary should keep in mind that the project assessment will give priority only to project proposals that focus specifically on **the actions identified in Annex 1 to the Call announcement "Thematic focus"**.

Duration

The duration of the projects must fall within the following ranges depending on the project type:

Type of project	Duration of project
Standard	From 24 to 30 months
Small-scale	From 12 to 18 months



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Budget size of the projects

The Programme expects to fund projects according to the following amounts (minimum – maximum):

	Standard projects ERDF (EUR)	Small-scale projects ERDF (EUR)
1.1	500.000 - 1.200.000	n.a.
2.1	500.000 - 2.200.000	n.a.
2.2	500.000 - 2.200.000	150.000 - 250.000
3.1	500.000 – 1.200.000	n.a.
4.1	500.000 - 2.200.000	150.000 - 250.000
5.1	500.000 - 1.200.000	150.000 - 250.000

/! Point of attention: in order to allocate sufficient funds per project partner, as to ensure a significant contribution to achieving the project objective, for Standard projects a **minimum amount of 150.000 € ERDF per partner** and for Small-Scale projects a **minimum amount of 50.000 € ERDF per partner** is compulsory.

Available financing options

Use of **Simplified Cost Options** (hereinafter: SCOs) is encouraged by the Programme.

For Standard Projects **three financing options**, which include different possibilities of using real and flat rate costs, are available.

For **Small-Scale Projects only two financing options** are available (Option n.1: Staff real + 40% flat or Option n.2: 20% Staff + External expertise real) and equipment and infrastructural works are not admissible.

In addition, to the budgeting options and SCOs, the 3rd Call also foresees the reimbursement, as Lump sums, of **preparation costs** and **closure costs**.

The information on financing options and the use of SCOs is described in the [Programme Implementation Manual](#) and summarised in the **Guidelines for Applicants**.



6. Eligibility of applicants

General provisions

Institutions/entities willing to participate in the 3rd Call for proposals must fulfil all the following criteria:

- Be **established under the national law of Italy or Croatia** (except for international organisations, see below);
- Have their **official seat or seat of operations in the Programme area**, as long as the official seat is active for at least twenty-four months (twelve for Small-scale projects) and the seat of operation is active for at least six months before the date of publication of this Call Announcement and its location in the area is demonstrated through official documentation (e.g. through a public register or equivalent), to be uploaded in Jems with the Application Form⁶;
- Be endowed with **legal personality**⁷.

Specific provisions

Standard projects		
Public bodies	Private entities	International organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National, regional and local public bodies and their associations⁸ • Bodies governed by public law, as defined in point (4) of article 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, and their associations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-profit organisations • Profit-making organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International organisations acting under the national law of an EU Member State • International organisations acting under the international law⁹

⁶ Private entities must be established for a duration that allows the Programme to check the financial capacity according to the criteria explained below.

⁷ Art. 200, 2. c) Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509: Entities without legal personality under the applicable national law, will be eligible provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on behalf of the entities and that the entities offer equivalent guarantees for the protection of the Union equivalent to those offered by legal persons. In particular entities shall have a financial and operational capacity equivalent to that of a legal person. The representative of the applicant shall prove that those conditions are satisfied.

⁸ Including European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

⁹ These organisations must explicitly accept all requirements deriving from the EU Treaty and the regulations applicable in the framework of the Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme by providing an ad-hoc declaration signed by these institutions that can be requested by the Managing Authority prior to granting the funds.



Small-scale projects	
Public bodies	Private entities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local authorities: <u>only</u> bodies representing a population fewer than 50.000 inhabitants including bodies representing local authorities¹⁰ Bodies governed by public law, as defined in point (4) of article 2(1) of Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, and their associations Schools and educational institutions with the exclusion of universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit organisations Profit-making organisations: <u>only</u> Micro or Small-sized enterprises¹¹ Schools and educational institutions with the exclusion of universities

/! Point of attention: the Programme strongly encourages the active involvement and **engagement of young people** in the projects: the assessment shall prioritise Standard and Small-Scale projects clearly addressing people aged 13 to 30 with suitable activities and as an explicit target group.

/! Point of attention: the Programme encourages the participation of new partners in Standard and Small-scale projects. The assessment shall prioritise projects which **involve newcomers** and include specific tutoring activities to support and build up Interreg management capacities.

Assimilated partners

Italian and Croatian public entities that are located outside the Programme area (both with its legal and operational seats) are eligible as Assimilated partners, only if they:

- are competent in their scope of action for certain parts of the Programme area;
- carry out activities that are beneficial for the Programme area.

Assessment of the competence is performed by the relevant National Authority of the country in which the assimilated partner is located.

¹⁰ Information will be assessed considering the latest census available for Italy and Croatia. For bodies representing local authorities, the sum of the inhabitants of all local authorities represented shall not exceed 50.000

¹¹ For their requirements, EC Recommendation (2003/361/EC) and the EC User guide to the SME Definition must be considered. See selection criteria



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Assimilated partners have **equal rights and obligations** as do applicants located within the Programme area and their budgets should be developed following the same principles and constraints applicable to Lead Applicants and Project partners.

Financial Capacity of private Applicants

The financial capacity of private Lead Applicants is going to be assessed during the eligibility assessment and in case the lead applicant is ineligible, the project proposal shall be rejected. Differently, the financial capacity of private project partners is going to be assessed only for those project proposals, which are recommended for financing and in case the project partner is ineligible, during the conditions clearing, the Lead Applicant is required to remove the ineligible partner from the project or to replace it with an eligible partner, with a suitable proposal to safeguard the project objectives and activities.

The financial capacity is going to be assessed through the information included in the Balance sheets and profit and loss accounts of the last two financial years¹² (only the last financial year for Small-scale) and a bank reference letter¹³, which should be based on financial accountability and generally applied principles to assess financial capacity of private entities¹⁴. Private partners not fulfilling the financial capacity requirement will have to be replaced during conditions clearing for selected projects, therefore Lead Applicants are recommended to check its respect, before submitting the project proposal. Additional information is available in the **Project selection procedure**.

7. Provisions applying to the Lead Applicant and 3rd Call specificities

Lead Applicant

Each project partnership shall appoint one organisation acting as the Lead Applicant that is in charge of coordinating the generation and submission of the proposal.

In compliance with the 'Lead Partner principle', if the proposal is approved, the Lead Applicant assumes the role of Lead Partner (LP) and takes full financial and legal responsibility for the implementation of the entire project.

¹² Eligible private organisations must have the approved and submitted to the competent authority financial documents related at least to the last two financial years (or one for SSPs) previous to the submission of the project proposal and make them available to the Programme.

¹³ A bank reference letter shall indicate the "Degree of trust" between the applicant and the banking system. This document declares the financial reliability of the organisation applying for the funds. The bank reference letter generally includes that the applicant has always met its bank commitments, has adequate solvency requirements, and can consequently be considered to have the financial capacity to carry on the project.

¹⁴ The Programme provides an [explanatory document](#) concerning the assessment of the financial capacity of private applicants, which is based on financial accountability generally applied principles. However, the result of the assessment performed by the Programme, in compliance with the rules set for this 3rd Call for Proposals, has to be considered the only valid for determining the financial capacity of private applicants.



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All eligible applicants listed in the previous paragraph ('Eligibility of Applicants') can act as Lead Applicant, with the exception of International organisations acting under international law. As explained above, private Lead Applicants must hold minimum financial capacity to implement the project.

For Standard and Small-scale Projects, each organization can take part in a **maximum of two proposals as Lead Applicant**. Therefore, only the first two proposals received, based on the chronological order of submission in Jems, will be considered. Should the organization infringe this rule, rejection of the additional proposal will occur. This constraint is applied separately for Standard and Small-scale projects' proposals.

In **Standard projects** only, the following public institutions can be considered as "per department":

- Ministries,
- Regions/Counties,
- Universities/Research institutions.

"Department" is understood as an organizational unit with financial and administrative autonomy and having technical and administrative staff to ensure its functioning. Thus, each single department within the above listed institution can be considered as a separate potential applicant.

In order to ensure sufficient capacity to manage the projects, **Small-Scale projects private Lead Applicants are only eligible if they have previously participated** as partners in the Interreg Italy-Croatia 2014-20 or 2021-27 projects.

8. Partnerships

The Programme encourages applicants to ensure geographic balance and establishes the following **minimum requirements** for the partnerships:

Standard projects	Small-scale projects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least three eligible partners, out of which at least one Italian, and one Croatian • Maximum number of partners is eight (including the Lead Applicant) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least two eligible partners, out of which at least one Italian, and one Croatian • Maximum number of partners is four (including the Lead Applicant)



Associated partners (Standard project only)

The participation of the **Associated partners** is envisaged, even if it is **not compulsory**. These are partners, may also be based outside the Programme area or in third countries, without a project budget. They should however contribute to the achievement of the project's objectives, i.e. demonstrate an added value for the partnership. In particular, the associated partner may be important for capitalising achieved results, as well as for synergies and complementarities among projects, programmes and EU macro-regional strategies.

The number of Associated partners shall not exceed the number of project partners.

Additional information about their participation can be found in the [Programme Implementation Manual](#).

9. Call timeline

Deadline for submission

The 3rd Call for proposals opens on **07/05/2025** and it is organised in a “single-step” procedure.

The lead applicants must submit the project proposals by **08/07/2025 at 2.00 PM**

After the above deadline, Jems will automatically disable any further submission of project proposals.

The Managing Authority (MA) reserves the right to postpone the Call for proposal's deadline in case of duly justified circumstances.

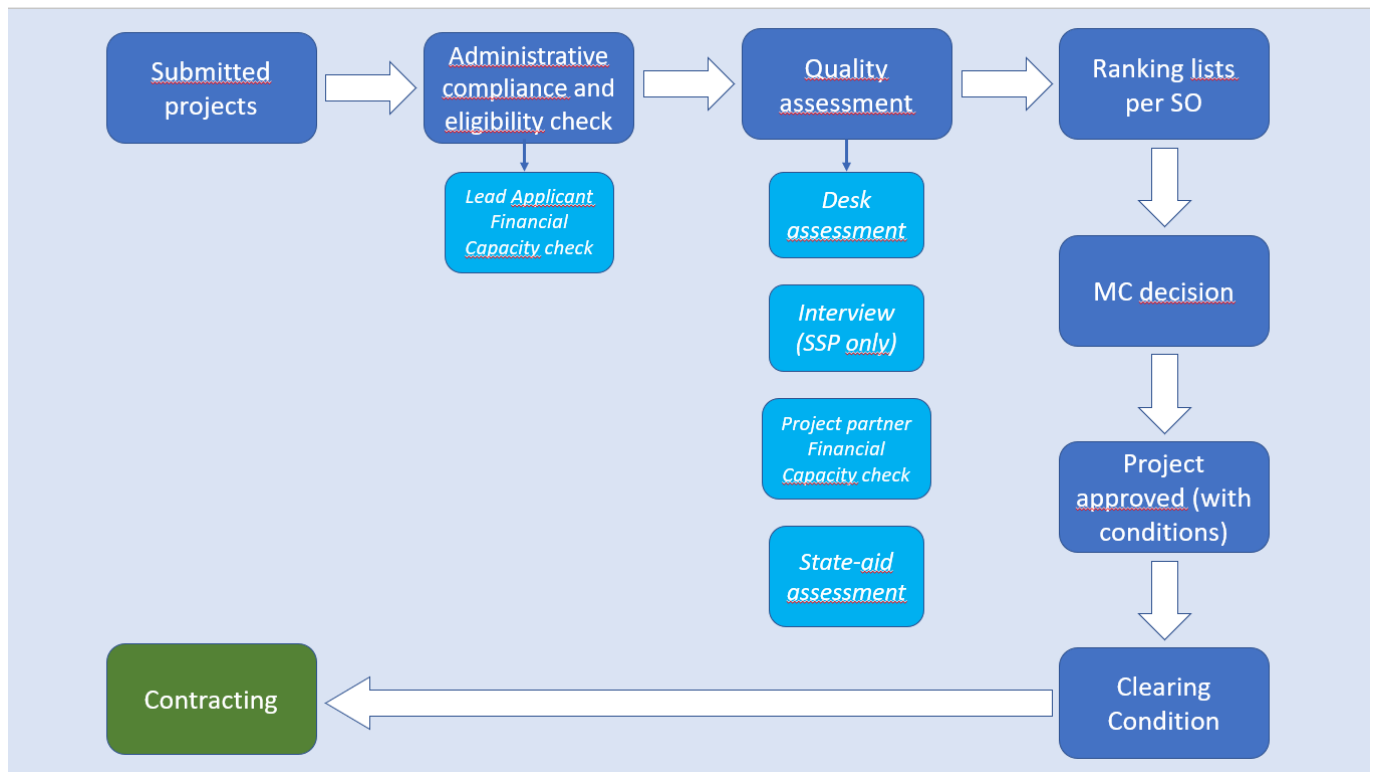
Assessment procedure

The selection of project proposals is carried out by the Monitoring Committee, on the basis of the assessment performed by the Joint Secretariat. More information is available in **Project selection procedure**.

The following chart illustrates the project selection steps:



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Upon completion of the assessment, the submitted applications, reaching the minimum thresholds, will be **ranked separately per Specific Objective**.

The Monitoring Committee of the Programme reserves the right not to commit all available resources depending on the quality of submitted applications. **Any savings from this Call for Proposals will be allocated for future calls for proposals.** Results of the assessment process will be published on the [Programme website](#).

Contracting procedure

Considering the time necessary for the assessment process, the expected number of application and the internal administrative procedures, contracting should take place approximately in Winter 2025/Spring 2026. Therefore, applicants should plan to **start the activities in the first quarter of 2026 (for Small-scale projects)** and in the **third quarter of 2026 (for Standard projects)**.

In any case, the actual starting date of projects will be the one included in the Application Form resulting from the Condition Clearing process.



10. How to apply

Project proposals must be submitted in English language and only through [Jems](#). Timely registration in the Jems system is highly recommended. No other method of submission will be accepted, and applications submitted in any other way will be automatically rejected.

In order to confirm the willingness of the Lead Applicant to submit the proposal, the legal representative, or a duly delegated person, **shall sign the Lead Partner's Declaration and the Application Form's print-out through a valid e-signature** (certificate compliant with the Regulation on the Electronic IDentification Authentication and Signature eIDAS¹⁵) or, in case of a handwritten signature, while attaching a valid ID-document of the signatory.

The LA is in charge of the submission of the project proposal on behalf of the whole partnership and it needs to be registered on Jems in order to be able to create and submit valid proposals.

For more information on how to fill-in the Application form see **Guidelines for Applicants**.

11. Complaints

According to Article 69 (7) of Regulation (EU) 1060/2021, the Programme set up a complaint procedure in order to find an amicable and mutually acceptable solution to avoid any form of litigation between the MA and the LA.

Information for applicants regarding the complaint procedure during the selection process is available in **Project selection procedure**.

12. Assistance and other resources

The Joint Secretariat (JS) is based in Venice, with an antenna in Zadar, and can be contacted, by Lead Applicants only, at any time for any queries related to project development and application at:

js.italy-croatia@regione.veneto.it

js.it-hr.antenna@mrrfeu.hr

Other useful information

The Programme offers the following support and tools for the applicants available at [Programme website](#):

- Videopills related to 3rd Call for Proposals
- FAQs

¹⁵ Regulation (EU) 910/2014.



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- Updates on the infodays (days and location)
- Glossary
- [Partner search tool](#)
- Optional consultations with the JS, especially for Small-scale projects (pay attention to the procedure for the request)

Useful documents for the development of the proposals

EU Policy Framework documents

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#) - Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1059](#) - Interreg Regulation
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1058](#) - ERDF Regulation
- [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 2024/2509](#) - Financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union

Interreg Italy-Croatia 2021-2027 documents available at the [Programme website](#)

Home > Implementation > Programme Documents > Programme

- Interreg Programme (IP)
- Programme Intervention logic
- Contribution to EUSAIR Flagships
- Programme Capitalisation plan

Home > Implementation > Programme Documents > Evaluation

- SEA Environmental Report

Home > Implementation > Project Implementation Documents > Project and Financial Management

- Programme Implementation Manual (PIM)
- Beneficiary financial capacity
- DNSH procedure

Home > Jems > Jems Implementation Manuals

- Manual for Submitting Project Application in Jems



13. Summary: Main Features and Requirements of the Call

Main Feature	Standard Projects	Small-Scale Projects
Max. n. of project proposals per LP	2 as LP* *Ministries, Regions/counties, Universities/Research centers counted per department	2 as LP
Min. no. of Partners	3 partners (at least 1 IT and 1 HR)	2 partners (at least 1 IT and 1 HR)
Max. no. of Partners	8 partners	4 partners
Min. budget per partner (ERDF)	150.000	50.000
Max duration	30 months	18 months
Min duration	24 months	12 months
Indicative start	3 rd quarter 2026	1 st quarter 2026
ERDF contribution	80%	80%
Min. financial size of each project (ERDF)	500.000	150.000
Max. financial size of each project (ERDF)	S.O. 2.1, 2.2, 4.1 = 2.200.000 S.O. 1.1, 3.1, 5.1 = 1.200.000	250.000

