



# **Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014 – 2020**

7<sup>th</sup> draft, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2015

CCI	2014TC16RFCB029
Title	<b>The Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020</b>
Version	Draft 7, 25 <sup>h</sup> March 2015
First year	2014
Last year	2020
Eligible from	1 January 2014
Eligible until	31 December 2023
EC decision number	
EC decision date	
MS amending decision number	
MS amending decision date	
MS amending decision entry into force date	
NUTS regions covered by the operational programme	<p>EU Member States</p> <p>Croatia NUTS III regions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HR031 Primorsko-goranska County</li> <li>HR036 Istarska County</li> <li>HR041 City of Zagreb</li> <li>HR042 Zagrebačka County</li> <li>HR043 Krapinsko-zagorska County</li> <li>HR044 Varaždinska County</li> <li>HR046 Međimurska County</li> <li>HR04D Karlovačka County</li> </ul> <p>Slovenia NUTS III regions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slo11 Pomurska region</li> <li>Slo12 Podravska region</li> <li>Slo14 Savinjska region</li> <li>Slo15 Zasavska region</li> <li>Slo16 Posavska region</li> <li>Slo17 Jugovzhodna Slovenija region</li> <li>Slo18 Primorsko-notranjska region</li> <li>Slo21 Osrednjeslovenska region</li> <li>Slo24 Obalno-kraška region</li> </ul>

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## Abbreviations

AA	Audit Authority
ARD	Agency for Regional Development (Croatia)
ARSO	Slovenian Environment Agency
CA	Certifying Authority
CB	Cross-border
CBC	Cross-border co-operation
CI	Common Indicator
CP	Cooperation Programme Slovenia – Croatia 2014 – 2020
CPR	Common Provisions Regulation, according to the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013
e-MS	e-Monitoring System
e-MS	e-Monitoring System
EARDF	European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development
EC	European Commission
EE	Energy Efficiency
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
ESI Funds	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
ETC Regulation	The Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013
EUSAIR	EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
EUSALPS	EU Strategy for the Alpine Region
EUSDR	EU Strategy for the Danube Region
FASRB	Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin
FI	Financial Indicator
FLC	First Level Control
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GODC	Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy
GVA	Gross Value Added
HFS	Hydrologic forecasting systems
HIT	INTERACT Harmonized Programme Implementation Tools
HR	Croatia
ICT	Information and communication technologies
IP	Investment priority
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
JS	Joint Secretariat
KiS	Key Implementation Step
LLL	Lifelong learning
LP	Lead Partner
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee

MRDEUF	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds of Republic of Croatia
MS	Member State
NA	National Authority
NC	National Committee for Coordination of Croatian Participation in Transnational and Interregional Programmes as well as Macro regional Strategies of the EU (Croatia)
NCC	National Coordinating Committee (in Croatia)
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OI	Output Indicator
OP ECP	Operational Programme for European Cohesion Policy
PA	Programme Area
Pax	Priority Axis
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Service
PP	Project Partner
R&D	Research & Development
RTI	Research, Technology and Innovation
RES	Renewable energy sources
RI	Result Indicator
SA	Situation Analysis
SEIA	Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment
SF	Structural Funds
SI	Slovenia
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SO	Specific Objective
TF	Task Force
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TO	Thematic objective
TWG	Technical Working Group (in Croatia)
UAA	Utilised agricultural area

## SECTION 1

# STRATEGY FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNION STRATEGY FOR SMART, SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND TERRITORIAL COHESION

*(Reference: Article 27(1) CPR and point (a) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)*

## 1.1 Strategy for the Cooperation Programme's contribution to the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion

The cross-border cooperation aims to tackle common challenges identified jointly in the border region and to exploit the untapped growth potential in the border areas, while enhancing the cooperation process for the purpose of the overall harmonious development of the Union.

Cross-border cooperation between Slovenia and Croatia has been supported since 2003 under several EU instruments, starting with PHARE/CARDS (2003), trilateral Neighbourhood Programme (2004-2006), and IPA CBC (2007-2013). Administrative and implementing arrangements introduced in each of the programming period gradually improved conditions for cooperation, such as joint calls for proposals, joint projects, lead partner principle and contributed to eliminating some important obstacles. With the accession of Croatia to EU on 1 July 2013, the new cooperation period 2014-2020 opens new opportunities and challenges.

### 1.1.1 Description of the cooperation programme's strategy for contributing to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and for achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion

#### 1.1.1.1 Socio-economic profile of the Cooperation Programme area<sup>1</sup>

#### Programme area

##### ♦ 17 NUTS 3 regions

The Cooperation Programme Slovenia-Croatia 2014-2020 comprises 17 NUTS 3 regions - statistical regions in Slovenia and counties in Croatia:

- **Slovenia:** Pomurska region, Podravska region, Savinjska region, Zasavska region, Posavska region, Jugovzhodna Slovenija region, Osrednjeslovenska region, Primorsko-notranjska region, Obalno-kraška region;
- **Croatia:** Primorsko-goranska County, Istarska County, City of Zagreb, Zagrebačka County, Krapinsko-zagorska County, Varaždinska County, Međimurska County and Karlovačka County.

In line with Article 3 of the ETC Regulation to ensure coherence of the cross-border area, City of Zagreb, Osrednjeslovenska and Zasavska regions were included to the 14 NUTS 3 regions along

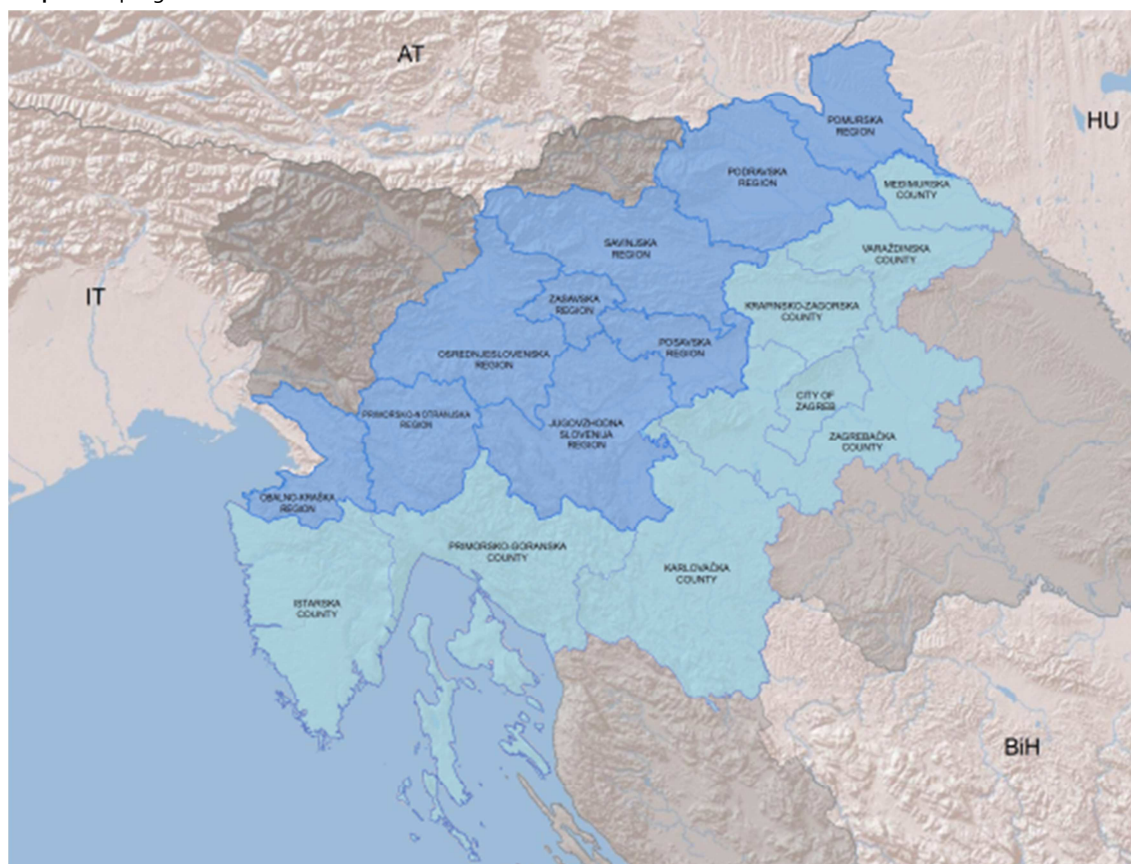
<sup>1</sup> The summary of socio-economic profile of the programme area including all reference data derive from a separate document presenting a detailed Situation Analysis of Slovenia-Croatia programme area.

Slovenia-Croatia internal border. Osrednjeslovenska and City of Zagreb were included as adjacent regions also in the cooperation period 2007-2013 for their close vicinity and concentration of the economic, research, development and educational capacities that could significantly contribute to the development of the entire cross-border area. Zasavska region in Slovenia was included in order to increase the territorial coherence of the cross-border area and to better seize CBC potentials.

♦ **Sparsely populated area - 3.285 million people lived across 31,728 km<sup>2</sup> in 2013**

The programme area covers **31,728 km<sup>2</sup>**, of which 46.6 % in Slovenia and 53.4% in Croatia. The area encompasses a significant share of the Slovenian territory (73%), and 30% of the territory of Croatia. Apart from City of Zagreb and Osrednjeslovenska region, the programme area is sparsely populated. The average population density is 120.7 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup>. The most thinly populated are hilly and mountainous Dinaric area of Jugovzhodna Slovenija and Primorsko-notranjska regions, Karlovačka and northern parts of the Primorsko-goranska counties.

**Map 1** The programme area



♦ **2 capital cities, 332 municipalities and 8457 settlements, 50% of population live in city municipalities**

There are 332 municipalities and 8457 settlements located in the programme area. Both capital cities (Zagreb with 790,017 and Ljubljana with 282,994 inhabitants)<sup>2</sup> are considered its most competitive and growing hubs. As a result of the past common polycentric spatial planning concept the whole area has a well-developed network of urban centres acting as regional or sub-regional service, employment and economic hubs such as Rijeka (128,624), Maribor (111,374), Velika Gorica (63,517), Pula-Pola (57,460), Karlovac (55,705), Koper-Capodistria (53,322), Celje (48,7675), Varaždin (46.946),

<sup>2</sup> For Croatia, Census 2011, for Slovenia SURS 2013 H1



Samobor (37,633), Novo mesto (36,285), Velenje (32,912), Čakovec (27,104), Zaprešić (25,223) Ptuj (23,404), Murska Sobota (19,188) and Sveta Nedelja (18,059)<sup>3</sup>.

Towns and cities are small however they represent an important functional support, service, labour and transport link to the surrounding suburban areas and rural hinterland. 50% of the population lives in city municipalities - urban centres representing the major driving force for the programme area; the remaining half resides in smaller and medium sized towns or in dispersed rural settlements.

**For the purpose of this CP all areas outside urban settlements of cities/city municipalities<sup>4</sup> are considered rural or/and peripheral areas.**

## Connectivity

### ◆ The programme area is relatively well accessible by international transport routes

The programme territory is located at the intersection of the international transport routes. Sections of the Pan-European Transport highway and railway Corridor X (Graz-Maribor-Zagreb, Salzburg-Ljubljana-Zagreb) and Corridor V (Rijeka-Zagreb-Budapest, Trieste/Koper-Ljubljana-Budapest) pass through the CB area. Corridor V is affected by heavy transit traffic, while both corridors face increased traffic flows in the summer tourist season.

The programme area has 57 border crossings. There are 6 international airports (Rijeka, Zagreb, Pula/Pola, Ljubljana, Maribor, Portorož) and 7 international border crossings for maritime transport. Two important Adriatic ports, Rijeka (HR) and Koper (SI), serve as entry point for goods designated for the EU, supplying in addition to Slovenia and Croatia, mostly Central European countries. The volume of transshipment at the ports is constantly increasing.

### ◆ Internal accessibility of regions varies, poor condition of the transport infrastructure

There are considerable differences in accessibility within the programme area. The 54,553 km road network represents the main transport infrastructure for the majority of the territory. Urban centres and regions along highway corridors X and V are in advantaged position comparing to areas distant from the highway. The existing regional **road infrastructure** is often in poor condition because of limited funds for modernisation and maintenance, which severely jeopardises transport safety. Local and regional **rail** connection is seriously underdeveloped. Lack of connectivity to neighbouring countries, interoperability and safety are common shortcomings. **Maritime transport** is essential for accessing the islands as only the island of Krk is connected to the mainland with a bridge. Poor ferry links among islands and with the mainland, seasonality of traffic and insufficient capacity of transport infrastructure on the islands result in unequal accessibility of islands and are one of the causes of outmigration.

### ◆ Underdeveloped public transport and limited cross-border connections

Public transport in the border regions is underdeveloped, inefficient, unevenly distributed and concentrated mainly in or near large urban centres. Urban public transport is heavily oriented to bus transportation (only Zagreb has tram networks). Some cities are introducing new concepts to promote the use of public city transport, such as e-mobility, price subsidies, etc. Transport connections and access to peripheral and/or tourist areas and protected areas are even worse; characterized by low frequencies and inappropriate timetables poorly matched to the needs of daily commuters and visitors.

Cross-border public coach/bus transport is left to open market and only profitable commercial lines connecting major cities operate, while local cross-border public transport is practically non-existent.

<sup>3</sup> City municipalities considered.

<sup>4</sup> City municipalities in slovenian part of the programme area are: Ljubljana, Maribor, Ptuj, Celje, Novo mesto, Koper, Murska Sobota and Velenje. Cities in croatian part of the PA are: Zagreb, Rijeka, Velika Gorica, Pula/Pola, Karlovac, Sisak, Varaždin, Samobor, Čakovec, Zaprešić and Sveta Nedelja.

Despite 7 rail cross-border lines, the actual public rail connections are poor. Some local CB lines were cancelled in the past leading to constant threat of additional termination of existing local lines as the number of passengers is relatively low.

#### ◆ Internet penetration improved, gaps in quality

Slovenia and Croatia made significant progress in Internet penetration during last years, however both MS are still lagging behind the EU average in share of access to broadband and level of Internet usage. The basic ADSL services on copper network are well spread across the CB area while only larger urban areas have optic fibre networks. This results in an obvious gap in quality of access (e.g. Internet speed) between urban and peripheral regions. While in Slovenia 75% of households are already connected to broadband, the share in Croatia is 68%. Low income, lack of computer skills or simply absence of the need, are the main reasons that households are not connected to internet. A digital gap is evident also in level of usage of Internet among individuals and enterprises.

### Environment

#### ◆ Forests, water, soils and air most valuable nature resources of the programme area

With 1,570 million hectares representing 49.5% of the land surface, the programme area is among the most afforested in the EU. **Forests** are an important natural and economic resource and provide numerous ecosystem services. Border forests are vulnerable to different risks, such as inappropriate management, herbivores, insects, forest tree diseases and nature disasters such as freezing rain, storms and fires that cause considerable damage. Dense surface and underground **water systems** cross the area. The available total quantity of water per capita exceeds the EU average by 4-times in Slovenia and 3-times in Croatia. Karst water systems supply with fresh water most of the population in the Dinaric platos and are particularly sensitive to pollution. In the more populated parts, the **soil** is threatened by the urbanization. The total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in both MS are decreasing, though still far from the set EU targets. Poor **air quality** is a challenge for larger urban centres, while the Mediterranean areas are threatened by elevated concentration of ozone in summer. Effective solutions for improvement of air quality, especially in the transport sector, and more attention to environment education, information and awareness of people are needed.

#### ◆ Renewable Energy Sources (RES)

Production of energy from renewable energy sources in Croatia and Slovenia is above the EU average. An overall share of RES in final energy consumption was 16.8% in Croatia and 21.5% in Slovenia compared to 14.1% EU-28 average in 2012. However, the percentage is primarily attributable to large hydro power plants, while other sources of RES (small hydro power plants, wind, solar, biomass etc.) are lagging behind the EU leading countries.

#### ◆ Diverse landscape and high concentration of protected areas, insufficient visitor data

Three major landscapes stretch from Pannonia lowlands and hills in the east, across Dinaric Mountain range featuring Karst phenomena to the Adriatic coast with Northern Kvarner islands in the south. Highly concentrated protected areas cover 3703.5 km<sup>2</sup> (11.7% of the CB territory) and include 8 regional and landscape parks in Slovenia and 3 nature and 2 national parks in Croatia, all with established management. Areas under protection include environmental, cultural, social and human values. Due to lack of permanent monitoring and absence of a common methodology for assessment of the visits no reliable data exist on unregistered visits to protected areas. This jeopardizes systematic planning and management of the protected areas.

#### ◆ High percentage of Natura 2000 (31.1% of the SCI and 22.5% SPA sites in the PA territory) reflects high quality of the environment

Natura 2000 areas cover 39.6% of the programme area with the highest shares in Primorsko-goranska (96.5%), Obalno-kraška (62.1%) and Primorsko-notranjska (58.3%). The main challenge is improving or at least maintaining a good conservation status of habitats and species. Unfortunately, Natura 2000 is still considered as development obstacle rather than an advantage for local population. Negative perception of conservation is present as in most cases these areas, their restrictions, regulations, protection regimes and preservation guidelines are not known and understood.

♦ **High biodiversity - numerous plant and animal species represent value of the programme area, but threatened by several pressures**

Partner countries have above average rate of biodiversity at EU level. Of estimated 45,000 – 120,000 animal and plant species in Slovenia, 66 plant and 800 animal species are endemic. 38,000 species are known in Croatia, though estimation ranges from 50,000 to over 100,000. Grassland ecosystems (in particular extensive meadows), karst caves and wetlands of Dinaric Mountains, floodplain forests, lowland wet meadows, freshwater as well as marine ecosystems are most common Natura 2000 sites in need for improved conservation status and management.

Only half of the Natura 2000 habitats and 60% of the region's species have attained favourable conservation status in Slovenia. In Croatia, the conservation status of habitats and species has not yet been assessed due to recent proclamation (September, 2013). However, almost 3,000 species assessed are on a Red List, out of which more than 45% taxa are threatened.

Many Natura 2000 areas are designated on the border, e.g. along the rivers, forest and karst areas, where numerous populations of species are common (bear, lynx, wolf, proteus, Natura 2000 fish species, Natura 2000 forest bird species) and migrate from one part to another. Some species have better preserved status on one side that enables 'supply' to the parts with less preserved population. Therefore joint monitoring and management is of high importance and presents an opportunity for improving the conservation status of Natura 2000 species and habitats in the CB area.

Uncontrolled pressures on land (i.e. agriculture, infrastructure, expansion of settlements), excessive use of natural resources, increased visits to areas under protection, climate change and introduction and spreading of invasive alien species pose a serious threat to the conservation status and functioning of habitats, species and ecosystems. Unsustainable agriculture, tourism, traffic, air pollution, infrastructure (i.e. power lines, windmill farms) pose a threat to biodiversity and nature conservation. The extinction trend among the endangered plants is highest in Istria, in the east of Slovenia, in flood areas of the Mura river, and in Eastern part of the Sava river basin.

♦ **Biodiversity and geo-diversity potential for sustainable tourism development**

Beside the rich biodiversity, numerous natural values, recognized as the geo-diversity of the surface and underground world (i.e. geological, geomorphological and hydrological phenomena – fossils and mineral sites, caves, gorges, waterfalls etc.) can be found in the area due to its karst character. Their conservation is of crucial importance due to vulnerable environment, whereas carefully planned, sustainable development of tourist visit to selected sites is a regional opportunity. The research and educational role of protected areas is also becoming increasingly important.

♦ **Rich cultural heritage challenged by preservation and valorisation**

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage is well represented both in towns and the countryside. More than 25,000 registered units of cultural heritage represent an important development potential, of which 262 units are of national importance - 10 in Croatian counties and 252 in Slovenian regions (discrepancy exist due to different registration systems). The area has 3 UNESCO protected sites - Škocjan caves and two World Cultural Heritage Sites (Ljubljansko barje, Basilica in Poreč), while UNESCO intangible cultural heritage is at present registered on the HR side only.

Built-up cultural heritage is particularly challenging; in many parts the deterioration is high due to lack of funds for maintenance and care, unresolved property ownership, low level of awareness on the importance of the heritage value. The situation is critical in rural areas and small historical towns especially where the buildings have no defined purpose. In Slovenia some investments in renovation of historical town centres, castles, and rural areas heritage were supported by SF in the 2007-2013 period. However, many cultural heritage sites still need to be preserved and mobilized. Many of the 374 museums and exhibition sites in the CB area are located in castles or similar cultural heritage sites. Their protection often poses challenges in tailoring the offer to the needs of modern visitors.

Although some of the most advanced tourist destinations (e.g. Istria, spa resorts, capital cities, karst caves) are located in the CB area, the opportunities offered by heritage, traditional knowledge, nature parks and landscapes of rural hinterlands and smaller historic towns are not sufficiently valorised. There is a visible lack of integration among museums, castles, nature sites, traditional events, etc., where the local economy could develop joint CB products or destinations competitive in international markets. The level of innovation and involvement of cultural and creative industries in the development of cultural heritage-based tourism products remains low.

#### ♦ Climate change and increased risk of natural and man-made disasters call for CB collaboration

Due to its geographical characteristic and topography, the PA is characterized by high vulnerability. Influenced by climate change and impacts of human activities the border area faces more frequent and more intense natural disasters; the most common are: floods, forest fires, earthquakes, heavy precipitation, thunderstorms and drought. Climate change does not affect only the human settlements, but also the business, tourism, heritage, the agriculture and forestry. Both countries have so far mostly dealt with the mitigation of climate change effects and far less with the adaptation to climate change.

In past 3 years the border area faced severe floods on the Drava river (2012) and South Slovenian river basins (2014) with an estimated damage exceeding 700 million €. In February 2014, sleet caused severe breakdown of public infrastructure and damaged approximately 6 million m<sup>3</sup> of timber in the Dinaric Mountain border area of both countries. Both countries also reported several major fires and droughts in 2012 and 2013.

The risk of floods and risk of forest fires is considered the greatest risk with highest CB effect and requires a joint prevention and risk management. Slovenia and Croatia prepared Danube and Adriatic River basin management plan further to EU water directive. Further to the EU Flood directive the countries prepared flood risk and flood hazard maps and by end of 2015 the water authorities are to prepare action plans for reducing the flood risks. While strategies and management plans are elaborated at the macro level there is evident lack of flood maps, strategic planning and co-ordination of implementation measures at lower level. The existing bilateral commission for water system management has insufficient financial resources, ad hoc solutions and lack of co-operation at the local level further limit its efforts. While flood risk at the Sava River<sup>5</sup> is already partly addressed by the international Sava Commission, other transboundary river basins require improvements in CB co-operation on flood risk prevention. The municipalities often claim that absence of detailed flood risk maps, coordinated plans and concrete mitigation measures hinder the economic development of the transboundary river basin areas.

With latest extreme weather events the general public and local population raised interest for flood risk prevention and climate change in general. However, the awareness and knowledge on proper urban planning, construction technologies and actions to be taken by individuals to avoid floods or diminish flood damage is rather low. It is crucial to seize the current moment of increased public

<sup>5</sup> Slovenia and Croatia are both signatories of the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin (FASRB) which is responsible for coordination of management plans for Sava river basin.

motivation and direct training and awareness measures to key local stakeholders (e.g. urban planners, environment NGOs, agriculture and forest authorities...) and population living and working in border flood areas.

## People and public services

### ◆ Unfavourable demographic trends on the Croatian side

Decline of the population is an alarming indicator for the programme area. In the period 2009-2013, marked with the economic crisis, the population in the programme area in total decreased by 19,000, with an increase on the Slovene side (24,166) and a decline on the Croatian side (43,154). Apart from Pomurska and Zasavska the population increased in all regions on the Slovene side, while on the Croatian side the population was growing only in the City of Zagreb whereas Primorsko-goranska, Zagrebačka and Istarska counties were most affected by the decrease of population. Lack of jobs, growing unemployment and overall worsening of economic situation intensified migration flows from rural to urban areas and also to other countries. Job creation and combating poverty is the main challenge to halt outmigration.

### ◆ Diversity of national and ethnic minorities

Italian and Hungarian national minorities are traditional in the PA. The Roma ethnic community is estimated to exceed the registered data. Constitution of Croatia further protects 22 ethnic minorities. A strong Slovenian community lives in the Croatian section of the PA and Croatian citizens live in Slovenia. CB programme represents an important opportunity for the cross-border cooperation of the representatives of minorities/autochthonous communities in neighboring country.

### ◆ Ageing of the population

Ageing of the population is characteristic for the entire programme area. The population aged 15 or less exceeded the population aged 65+ only in Zagrebačka and Međimurska counties. The lowest average age of population was in Međimurska (40), while Karlovačka and Pomurska have the oldest population with an average age of 44 years and the highest ageing index 157 and 142 respectively. Ageing of the population increases the need for social care services.

### ◆ Education network well developed in the main urban centres

Zagreb, Ljubljana, Koper, Maribor and Rijeka are the CB area's main educational centres. 147,000 students and 33,500 graduates represent an important human capital. One of the main concerns is that educational systems insufficiently reflect requirements of the labour market. Challenges in tertiary education also relate to efficiency of study and quality of the education, reflected in lower satisfaction of both the students and employers.

Lifelong learning centres are relatively well spread in the area, however the share of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training in 2013 was around 3% on the Croatian side and between 11 and 14 % on the Slovene side. Socially excluded were underrepresented in lifelong learning activities. Limited participation of the adult population in education and training in Croatia, as well as unsatisfactory level of quality and relevance of programmes, poses an obstacle to improving the employability and the qualification level of the labour force. The key problem is the lack of motivation due to limited supply side of LLL measures, flexibility and lack of successful learning experience.

### ◆ Differences in the access to health services and health inequalities

Primary health care services and general hospitals are relatively well distributed across the area. The greatest disparities exist in availability of medical doctors. With the exception of the City of Zagreb, Primorsko-goranska, Obalno-kraška and Osrednjeslovenska all other regions/counties are below national averages; with weakest availability in Zagrebačka and Primorsko-notranjska counties, Zasavska and Spodnjeposavska regions. Appropriateness of local health infrastructure and range of services vary.

Lack of health care workers is a structural problem restricting availability of health care, especially in rural areas and on islands, but also in small towns. For economic reasons the scope of health services in these areas could further reduce. There is a need for greater efficiency and effectiveness of the health network systems in the CB area, where common approaches to improved managements systems (e.g. sharing of the infrastructure and equipment, use of ICT solutions, mobile services and others) should be explored.

Health inequalities as a consequence of the socio-economic differences affecting the lifestyle of the population exist in the PA. Despite improvements, not only does health inequity persist but it is also increasing, especially in relation to differences in health status within the regions and population groups. Common concerns relate to risk behaviours of the population such as poor dietary habits, physical inactivity, smoking, misuse of alcohol and drugs. Ageing of the population and health care for the elderly as well as preserving the health of the workforce is another common challenge. The cooperation between health institutions across border is still low, even though some CBC projects were supported.

### ◆ Social services for the elderly and excluded groups present challenge for the CB area

30% of the population in Croatia and 20% in Slovenia were at the risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2013, while the EU-28 average was 24.5%. Various target groups are in need, the elderly, long-term and young unemployed, disabled persons, low-income families, single parent families and others. Overall, the quality, scope and delivery mechanism of social services provided to users most affected by poverty and social exclusion are not well adapted to their diversified needs and the changing environment, such as ageing of population, increased number of users, and different user profiles. There is a strong urge to develop integrative social activation programmes increasing inclusion and empowerment of target groups at the risk of poverty or social exclusion, including health risk and employment potential.

The CB area has close to 46,000 organisations active in different spheres (sport, culture, social, humanitarian and others) providing an important potential for creation of community partnerships with public sphere and other actors for development of new governance models and promotion of social innovation. At present the potential of social care institutions for CBC is not exploited.

### ◆ CB disaster rescue system requires modernisation

With increased risk of natural and man-made disasters and with regard to large nature protected areas, low population density in remote border areas and increased tourism flows, the importance of cross-border co-operation in prevention, preparedness and response to emergency events raises.

60,000 operational rescuers in Slovenia are involved in the system of protection against natural and man-made disasters of which 45,000 represented by volunteers (fire-fighters, followed by members of mountain rescue, cave rescue service, divers, red cross, rescue dog handler service, scouts, etc.), 2,800 by professional fire-fighters and emergency medical technicians and 12,000 by members of civil protection. Within the framework of the monitoring, notification and warning system, the central role is played by regional notification centres, of which 10 are in the CB area. In Croatia, the National civil protection intervention units involve 791 professional members in 4 regional departments in the PA. Of the 61,421 operative fire-fighters, 56,415 are volunteer fire-fighters of

municipalities, 1,621 are volunteers in industrial fire-fighting units, 2,371 are professionals in public fire fighting units, 236 are professionals in volunteer fire-fighting units and 778 are professional industrial fire fighters. There are 44,013 fire brigade operative volunteers being members of 1,956 fire brigade associations operating in the PA.

Slovenia and Croatia have well established collaboration in the field of civil protection following the bilateral agreement on co-operation in protection against natural and man-made disasters concluded in 1999 and managed by national civil protection administrations and implemented also through permanent bilateral commission for disaster management. New technologies, change of generations, climate change related appearance of extreme events and institutional arrangements require improvements and modernisation. Several barriers jeopardizing better CB disaster management were identified on-the-spot: a need for improvement of coordination and CB communication, standardisation and modernisation of technical equipment and access to detailed GIS maps covering CB area, familiarization with rescue plans of neighbouring country, improvement of self-help of local population in emergency situations, joint trainings and exercises of CB rescue services etc.

The cooperation between rescue services is already high and has potential to be further upgraded in particular in the areas of capacity building for the voluntary rescue services and their better functional integration with the professional services.

#### ◆ Public utility services with positive effect on environment

The water supply, wastewater treatment as well as waste management is under the responsibility of local governments. Significant progress has recently been achieved in Slovenia due to substantial SF investments. Similar investment cycle has started in Croatia.

83-84%<sup>6</sup> of population in Slovenia has access to public water supply systems while in Croatia the average is 80-82%, with lower shares in rural regions. The public water system in both countries still faces extremely high losses (around 45%).

In 2013 approximately 50% of households in Slovenia were connected to sewage system and 78% of all wastewater released was treated (in 2012 only 57,7%). Over 95% shares were achieved in most environmentally sensitive and densely populated areas (Obalno-kraška, Osrednjeslovenska) and the lowest in Zasavska (61%) region. However, Slovenia is still below the targets set by the EU water utility directive for the target year 2015 for agglomerations above 2,000 PE and 2017 for smaller agglomerations. In Croatia 43,65% of population is connected to sewage network while only 27% of population is covered by wastewater treatment.

Both countries witness a downward trend in waste generation, however considerable differences exist in the PA. The lowest waste generation was in Međimurska (181 kg/capita, 2012) and 360 kg/capita in Jugovzhodna Slovenija (2013). The highest quantities were generated in Istarska (495 kg/capita), Obalno-kraška (478 kg/capita) and Osrednjeslovenska region (460 kg/capita). The rate of recycling is growing while the depositing of solid waste is decreasing. Around 83% of the municipal waste in Croatia is still being land filled, in Slovenia 34% (2013), whereas the EU average is around 40%.

## Economy

#### ◆ Disparities in the regional GDP and GVA; Osrednjeslovenska region and City of Zagreb created around half the programme area GDP and GVA

GDP of the programme area in 2012/2011 was around 57.3 billion € and the Gross Value Added was 49.25 billion €. Almost 50% was created in the two most dynamic regions: Osrednjeslovenska and

<sup>6</sup> Own calculation (number of connection/number of households); 455.563 connections in 2013.



City of Zagreb. Looking at the GDP per capita, the highest in Osrednjeslovenska with 24,170 € (2012) exceeds the lowest of Krapinsko-zagorska (6,300 €) by four times. Besides Osrednjeslovenska and City of Zagreb, above national average GDP per capita were recorded only in Obalno-kraška, Primorsko-goranska and Istarska counties, which are all traditional tourism regions. Consequently the discrepancies are reflected also in average salary, which in Croatia is 26% lower compared to Slovenia. An average net salary in Croatia in 2013 reached 733 € and 992 € in Slovenia.

#### ◆ Services/tourism dominate in the cities and coastal parts, industry/manufacturing in continental regions

Regional GVA structure of economic activities shows that trade, accommodation and transport services are most developed in Obalno-kraška (36%), Zagrebačka (27%), Istarska (26%), Primorsko-goranska (23%), Osrednjeslovenska (22%) and City of Zagreb (22%). Some of the strongest tourism, trade, transport and communication corporations have seats within the programme area.

**Tourism** is an important economic activity of the PA with 9 million tourist arrivals and 41 million overnights generated in 2013. 80% of all accommodation capacities are provided on the Croatian side where 73% of all arrivals and 82% of overnights were generated.

'Sea and sun' is the dominant tourism product with high concentration of tourist arrivals to coastal parts compared to non-coastal regions and coastal areas hinterlands. Other important products include wellness and health, food and wine, karst caves, city tourism, cultural tourism, business tourism, winter tourism, yachting and cruising. Various forms of outdoor tourism have been developed recently, such as hiking, biking and water with accompanied visitor infrastructure. High seasonality and shortening of the length of stay is characteristic for most tourism products. Potential for the development of sustainable tourism activating natural and cultural heritage in the border area was not yet sufficiently tackled. Green tourism is a priority set in both national tourism development strategies.

There are many SMEs and other small tourism providers active in this sector. Product and territorial integration is needed of the variety of small fragmented tourism offers and local brands, which are not adequately visible and marketed, in order to increase effects on the local economy. One of the challenges is directing tourists from most visited attractions and tourist centres to the hinterlands or surrounding areas worth visiting. E-marketing systems have become a necessity, however still insufficiently developed and used.

Share of **industry** in the regional GVA structure is dominant in Jugovzhodna Slovenija (42%), Posavska (41%), Zasavska (40%) regions, Međimurska (40%), Krapinska (36%) and Varaždinska (35%) counties. Several large companies are operating as global players in automotive, pharmaceuticals, electric and similar appliance producers, food processing as well as metal processing and manufacturing industries. Some traditional industries such as textile are still present in Varaždinska and Međimurska counties and Pomurska region, while urban university areas generate higher number of start-ups and growing SMEs in ICT, multimedia and creative industries. Individual sectors are organised in clusters and supported by technology parks (e.g. Ljubljana, Varaždin) or technology-innovation centres (e.g. Celje, Čakovec, Rijeka). Although wood processing has a long tradition in various parts of the PA, it is characterized by low productivity, profitability and level of finalization and lag in technological development.

In spite of these facts and recovery of the EU economy, the performance of economic sectors in Slovenia and Croatia still lags behind.

#### ◆ Above average shares of agriculture and forestry in most parts of the PA

Apart from Osrednjeslovenska, Obalno-kraška and Zasavska region, City of Zagreb, Primorsko-goranska and Istarska counties the share of agriculture and forestry in all other regions is above national averages. The highest share of GVA in this sector was created in Međimurska (9%). Small



size of agricultural holdings results in low productivity and a weakened economic viability. Many agricultural holdings combine income by employment in other sectors or by operating supplementary activities on farms. Organic production has increased. Furthermore, food products with geographical origin and breeding of animals of indigenous origin have gained importance.

74% of forests in Slovenia are private property and thus very fragmented. On the contrary, 80% of Croatia's forests are state owned, whereby an average size of private forest holdings is only 0.43 ha due to fragmentation and continuous size degradation. Increasing productivity in the forestry sector and adding value in processing remains the challenge for both countries.

**♦ 77,635 SMEs (2013) create the largest share of all business entities in the programme area, potential for entrepreneurial development not exploited**

SMEs provide an important economic foundation and employment potential of the area, in particular outside the largest employment centres. Internationalisation of small businesses is still weak. Business support organisations in the PA are relatively well distributed, with higher range of services offered in main business centres and although improved, they mainly provide low value-added support services and advice to entrepreneurs. They need to develop and deliver products supporting enterprises along the entire growth cycle and specialised by sectors.

Entrepreneurial culture measured in number of enterprises/1.000 population for 2013 shows higher enterprise dynamics in most developed regions such as Osrednjeslovenska and Obalno-kraška, Istarska and City of Zagreb with index around or over 80, while the programme area average was 61. In less developed regions (e.g. Zasavska and Pomurska, Varaždinska, Međimurska and Karlovačka) the same index was below 44. The potential of the young people for entrepreneurship is not sufficiently activated.

**♦ 1.462 million employed in 2013, City of Zagreb and Osrednjeslovenska region provided 43% of the programme area jobs**

Besides the capital regions, Podravska region (8%) and Primorsko-goranska county (7%) contributed second largest share of the PA employment. The majority of people is employed in legal entities (1,229 million) and 197,378 in trade, crafts or freelance. The area has 35,000 employed farmers, of which 79% on the Slovene part. Maintaining the jobs and improving the skills of employed to cope with the quickly changing technological and market developments is the area's challenge in addition to adapting the work environment to cope with the workforce ageing.

**♦ Over 215,000 unemployed in 2014 - 92,500 jobs lost since 2007**

The economic and financial crisis contributed to the loss of 92,500 jobs and increased the number of unemployed by 150% compared to 2007. Since 2007, the number of unemployed in 2013 has more than doubled in some regions. The highest unemployment rates were recorded in Karlovačka County (24.5%) on Croatian and Pomurska region (18.9%) on Slovene side. Structural and long-term unemployment is the main challenge. This risk is high among unemployed with vocational education, older unemployed and unemployed persons with no prior employment experience.

According to the latest available data (10/2014 for SI and 11/2014 HR), the youth unemployment is alarming. The unemployed aged 15-29 represented approximately 25% of all unemployed on the Slovene and mainly exceeded 30% on the Croatian side. Youth unemployment is most problematic in Međimurska (35%), County of Zagreb (33.8%), and Krapinsko-zagorska (33.5%). Overall lack of jobs as well as difficult transition from education to employment is problematic.

Both countries face above average share of grey economy, which for Slovenia was estimated at 23.1% and 28.4% for Croatia, while the EU average was 18.4% of GDP (Eurostat 2013).

**♦ Fragmented R&D infrastructure**

The science and research network in the PA is quite strong, its core in the public sphere is represented by 86 university organizations and 39 public (research) institutes located mainly in

Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Maribor. Existing research and innovation potential differs between the countries. In Croatia, majority of RDI equipment and infrastructure (including e-infrastructure) is out-dated, scattered and fragmented and investments of businesses in R&D is low, while Slovenia sees advantages in a relatively good scientific quality of research capacities and infrastructure, international embedding, resound research system as well as high share of enterprise investment in research. Fragmentation and insufficient cooperation between all development and innovation actors and lack of focus of research activities on areas of comparative advantages are the main weaknesses in addition to effectiveness and efficiency of R&I.

### SWOT analysis

On the basis of the situation analysis the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the programme area were identified structured around EU 2020 Strategy objectives:

#### Smart growth

##### Strengths

- Tradition, knowledge and skills in manufacturing (mechanical and process engineering, wood processing, automotive, pharmaceuticals, food processing) with organised clusters
- Growing poles: Ljubljana, Zagreb, coastal areas
- Dynamic and strong service sector (commerce, tourism, logistics and transport, etc.)
- Diversity of tourist products and high number of individual tourist providers
- Some established tourist areas and relatively strong tourist flows across the PA
- Growing start-up initiatives in urban centres
- Growing renewable energy sector
- Quality agricultural land and favourable conditions for agriculture in eastern parts
- Established networks of business support institutions
- Educational, science and research centres in the capital cities and regional centres
- Relatively well accessible area (major EU corridors, ports)
- Polycentric network of regional urban centres

##### Weaknesses

- Disparities within and between regions with fragile rural and remote communities
- Loss of jobs
- Fragmentation and seasonality of tourism offers
- Weak integration between major tourist centres and the hinterland
- Tourist infrastructure incomplete
- Insufficient valorisation and visibility of cultural and natural heritage
- RDI not sufficiently present in business
- Small average size of agricultural holdings hinders productivity and economic viability
- Low level of entrepreneurial activity and unused growth potential (e.g. heritage resources)
- Weak capacities of business services supporting innovation and growth
- Below EU average of adult participation in LLL, especially on the part of Croatia

##### Opportunities

- Transfer of knowledge for innovative growth within CB area
- Global trends in green and creative industries
- Growth of foreign tourist arrivals
- Exploiting marketing potential of main tourism centres for tourism development of rural areas
- Use of modern technologies and innovation
- Increase in co-operation between private and public sector
- Synergies in joint promotion in the third markets

- Nature protected areas and cultural heritage as resource for sustainable development
- LLL sector expansion

#### Threats

- Continued disparities between the most and least developed regions
- Growing competitiveness in tourism markets at global and regional levels
- Further loss of jobs in industry and agriculture
- Inability of small businesses to compete in international markets
- Lack of trust between different interest groups (e.g. conservationists – businesses)

#### **Sustainable growth**

##### Strengths

- Variety of landscapes and geographical features
- High density of water networks and high forest coverage
- High concentration of natural and cultural values
- High share of areas under Natura 2000 and nature protection
- Relatively well preserved biodiversity
- Network of park management operators
- Growth of organic agricultural production and quality branding
- Increased awareness on climate change risks
- Awareness on potentials offered by local resources (wood, local food self-sufficiency, RES)
- Improving quality of environment (EE investments, wastewater and solid waste management)

##### Weaknesses

- Environment sensitive to extreme weather and nature hazards
- Loss of biodiversity and traditional landscapes due to plant succession, decline of agricultural production, pollution, change of management and other pressures
- High vulnerability of specific ecosystems
- Insufficient data on unregistered visits to protected areas
- Different stakeholder interests hinder sustainable development of heritage potentials
- Large share of population living in areas prone to flooding
- Absence of CB coordination, planning and implementation of measures related to flood risk management on the transboundary river basins
- Areas with higher level of air pollution on highway corridors, urban centres
- Poor supply of public transportation at local level and in remote CB areas and across the border
- Low penetration of renewables in transport

##### Opportunities

- Synergies with mainstream EU policies
- EU framework enabling joint approaches in planning, monitoring and management of natural resources
- Global trends in valorisation of heritage for sustainable tourism development
- Increased market demand for sustainable tourism
- R&D potential for management and valorisation of natural and cultural resources and adapting to climate change
- Diverting high level tourist/personal travel flows for tourism development in hinterlands
- Increased need for creating and strengthening cross-border commuting

##### Threats

- Ineffective management in areas that attract large numbers of visitors
- Increased risk of natural disasters as a consequence of climate change
- Restrictions and limitations of existing legal frameworks

- Loss of biodiversity and worse conservation status of habitats and species

### **Inclusive growth**

#### Strengths

- Tradition of cooperation between countries
- Stable population in most part of the programme area within Slovenia
- Relatively well established network of social, health, education, civil protection and rescue service institutions
- Common historical base in the development of health, social, civil protection systems
- Large number of NGOs active in social and civil protection and rescue sphere
- High level of voluntarism
- Growing social economy initiatives

#### Weaknesses

- Serious depopulation within Croatia, apart City of Zagreb, and in Pomurska and Zasavska in SI
- Population ageing and growing need for social care programmes for elderly
- High unemployment rates, especially in peripheral areas, with a high share of young
- Missing job opportunities
- Unequal access to and quality of services, low level of efficiency
- Health and social inequalities
- Growing number of groups at risk of poverty or exclusion, particularly in less developed areas
- Unexploited potential for CB institutional cooperation
- Low level of cooperation between public and civil society

#### Opportunities

- Sharing institutional capacities in the border area for provision of effective and efficient services
- Growing need for diverse range of health and social services as employment potential
- Social innovation and new governance models for improving access to health & social services
- Emerging public and civil society partnerships for tackling social & health care issues
- Free movement of goods, services and people with full EU membership of Croatia

#### Threats

- Further growth of health and social inequalities
- Decreasing public budgets for public services
- Prolonged economic crisis
- Reluctance to change

### **1.1.1.2 The Cooperation Programme's strategy for contribution to the delivery of the Union strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**

#### **Key needs and challenges of the Cooperation Programme area**

On the basis of the situation and SWOT analyses, the main needs and challenges of the programme area were identified:

#### **◆ Substantial regional disparities and the rural-urban divide**

Generally, rural regions lag behind cities in terms of infrastructure provision, access to public service, skills, income generation (higher risk of poverty) and job opportunities. This results in depopulation (especially of the young) and faster ageing in rural areas, abandonment of land and increasing economic disparities between regional urban centers and rural areas with the network of smaller

towns. Similar challenges related to connectivity and availability of services were observed also at the Kvarner islands. The rural-urban divide is further reflected through differences in the development of regions and counties of the PA, which are the greatest between the most developed – Osrednjeslovenska region, City of Zagreb, Obalno-kraška region, Primorsko-goranska County and Istarska County and the least developed - Pomurska, Zasavska, Primorsko-notranjska regions in Slovenia and Karlovačka, Međimurska and Krapinsko-zagorska counties in Croatia. **Using the economic strengths of the most developed regions to create synergies and activate the potential of less dynamic regions is the programme area challenge.**

#### ♦ Tackling unemployment and improving conditions for smart growth

Over the past six years the PA lost 95,000 jobs. Peripheral areas suffered the highest unemployment rates, especially Karlovačka, Krapinsko-zagorska and Zagrebačka counties, Pomurska and Zasavska regions. Lack of jobs presents one of the key challenges, as does the high level of youth who are unemployed and whose potentials are not being exploited, resulting in out-migration.

Tackling opportunities for increasing entrepreneurial activity and strengthening the economic base for the internationalisation of businesses is another challenge. **Potentials lay in the diversity of natural and cultural values whose mobilisation and valorisation can open up new opportunities for creation of sustainable jobs in tourism and related sectors. Unfavourable social situation and population ageing also provides opportunities for job creation in social services and expansion of social economy.**

Effective business support environment is needed, providing higher value added services accessible also outside major urban centres. Cross-sector and CB cooperation of institutions in tackling socio-economic development can bring value in particular to border and less developed areas.

#### ♦ Maintaining the programme area's environmental quality, diversity and identity and adapting to climate change

The programme area has an abundance of natural and cultural values and a high biodiversity. A large section of the PA is protected. **Protected areas represent valuable asset that must be maintained for future generations and at the same time provide potential for sustainable use and sustained economic development.**

Many of the Natura 2000 sites cross the border and there are common challenges related to preservation of species and habitats, which can be addressed by joint management.

The PA is also vulnerable to various natural and men-made hazard risks. Floods have in the recent years caused enormous damage for the populations and businesses located in these flood prone areas. **It is anticipated that climate change will only increase the risk of floods.**

The PA lacks strategic planning and co-ordination of implementation measures at micro level whereby border rivers require improvements in CB co-operation on flood risk management. The municipalities often claim that absence of coordinated plans, flood risk maps and concrete mitigation measures hinder the economic development of the border river areas.

#### ♦ Ensuring equal access to social, health, rescue services for populations in the programme area and making the area safe and attractive to live in

The quality of life of the people in the PA differs and is linked to the overall socio-economic situation. The main challenges are in ensuring equal access to health care and social care services as well as increasing public transport connectivity and safety to deprived rural areas, small towns and islands. **Population ageing, health inequalities, poverty and exclusion of certain social groups represent**

**major challenges that can be jointly addressed by institutional cooperation focusing on the increase of institutional capacities, development of new governance models to increase efficiency and effectiveness of services.**

In addition, remote cross-border areas and areas with a high number of tourist flows face an increased risk of emergency events that often **require efficient coordination and cooperation of rescue services from both sides of the border.**

#### Lessons from the previous cooperation period

The implementation of the CBC programmes between Slovenia and Croatia over years contributed to the **increase in cooperation levels and implementing capacity of the beneficiaries.** CBC culture has developed and matured in time. The visibility of the programme and interest of the beneficiaries seems to be quite high, which has reflected in significant receipt of applications to the calls for proposals.

Overview of the implementation in the period 2007-2013 shows **strong interest** for cooperation in all priorities and measures. In total 523 applications were received under 3 calls for proposals and 94 operations were supported. Under Priority 1 'Economic and social development' 58 projects were addressing tourism and rural development issues, entrepreneurial and social development. Under Priority 2 'Sustainable management' 36 projects were supported, of which 19 addressing environment protection and 17 addressing preservation of protected areas.

Although the potential for strengthening the economic cooperation and competitiveness of the area was identified and significant share of project proposals was received under the measure 1.2 Development of **entrepreneurship**, the on-going evaluation in 2011 showed that cooperation mainly concentrated on networking and capacity building, while practical economic cooperation of existing business entities was addressed to a lesser extent. **The potential remained unexploited**, partly because SMEs were not eligible as direct beneficiaries and the understanding of the state aid rules was relatively low.

Within 20 projects supported under 'Tourism and Rural development' measure various tourism partnerships across the CB territory emerged and different potentials deriving from traditions, culture or food production were recognised, assessed and locally promoted. Furthermore, several successful projects addressing valorisation and restoration of individual **natural and cultural heritage** were supported in the past. However, after project completion **the results are not visible** at the wider market due to absence of market led approach and integration into wider tourism products/destination. As tourism and preservation of protected areas were two separate measures, only few projects managed to demonstrate certain level of co-operation between heritage and tourism. Today, numerous individual initiatives scattered throughout the territory need to focus on concrete market product, collaborate and move up towards higher professionalism, quality and cross-border impact. Direct involvement of SMEs in tourism sector should be considered in future cooperation to better seize potentials for job creation in tourism and related services.

Projects addressing social integration and mobility were also effectively addressed. **The cooperation potential however was not yet seized.**

Initially this programme was recognised as one of the most successful IPA cross-border programmes as it was one of the first ones to have a Call for proposals published. However, it has faced several difficulties in the years 2012 and 2013 due to high staff turnover, institutional reorganisations and transition of the programme from IPA to ERDF programme which influenced the delay of the programme implementation. Organisational improvements and simplification of administration flows represents a challenge for the present **technical assistance** programme.

### Vision of the Cooperation Programme area

Having in mind the needs and challenges and lessons learned from previous cooperation, the programme vision was developed.

"The CP Slovenia-Croatia aims at promoting sustainable, safe and vibrant border area by fostering smart approaches to preservation, mobilization and management of natural and cultural resources for the benefit of the people living and working in or visiting the area."

## CP Slovenia – Croatia 2014 – 2020

### Connected in Green.

The vision highlights the overall direction to sustainable development. Primary focus shall be on seizing its natural and cultural values to deliver innovative, smart and effective solutions that help preserve and improve the quality of environment and its diverse identity on one hand, and activate its socio-economic potentials on the other. Ensuring safe and vibrant area is of outmost importance for the people and shall be addressed by increasing the capacities for institutional cooperation at all levels. The vision shall be achieved through four priority axes and five specific objectives.

- Priority Axis 1: **Integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins**  
Specific objective 1.1: Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins
- Priority Axis 2: **Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources**  
Specific objective 2.1: Mobilizing natural and cultural heritage for sustainable tourism development  
Specific objective 2.2: Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services
- Priority Axis 3: **Healthy, safe and accessible border areas**  
Specific objective 3.1: Building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas
- Priority Axis 4: **Technical Assistance**  
Specific objective 3.1: Provide the efficient and frictionless enforcement of the CP

### Rationale for the selection of thematic objectives

Strategic choices on selection of thematic objectives were made on the basis of the situation analysis and identification of the key needs and challenges of the PA. Examination of TOs and their potential contribution to solving the identified needs and challenges of the PA showed that all are relevant.

Focus of national priorities and programmes supported by ESI funds, value added of cross-border approaches and expected impact and feasibility of implementation were additionally observed. Considering limited financial means and the need for thematic concentration, **the Cooperation Programme shall primarily focus on areas where:**

- Issues with **direct cross-border effect** are addressed (e.g. joint management plans, flood risk prevention, biodiversity, valorisation of cultural and natural heritage);

- A history of **successful cross-border cooperation and interest** has been identified in previous cooperation periods or were identified through public consultation (mobilisation of cultural and natural heritage, environment protection, sustainable tourism);
- **Potentials and opportunities** within the PA can be strengthened and common weaknesses can be reduced for the benefit of the population (institutional cooperation, capacity building and innovation);
- **Tangible results** for the population of the CB area can be achieved.

TOs 1 and 3, which concentrate on R&D and SME competitiveness shall be strongly supported within the national ESI programmes. However, R&D shall be encouraged as crosscutting component of the selected TOs, while SMEs are to be involved in particular fields of cooperation. TOs 2, 4 and 7 require substantial funds and the CP could not make significant impact in the border area. TOs 8, 9 and 10 shall be strongly supported by the national mainstream programmes as well, while in the cross-border context these shall be encouraged through institutional cooperation within specific thematic fields. Thus, the following **thematic objectives** were selected:

- Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management (TO5);
- Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency (TO6);
- Enhancing the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration (TO11).

The **crosscutting issues** to be considered in the delivery of the programme results:

- **Research and development** shall support advancement of delivered solutions and results;
- **Capacity building**; improving competences of target groups and beneficiaries as well as increasing public awareness in general shall be supported under all TOs;
- **ICT**; use of modern communication tools and technologies supporting delivery of results under all TOs.

#### Priority axis 1: Integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins (TO 5)

Three main international rivers cross the programme area (Sava, Drava, Mura) while several smaller transboundary river basins spread along the border (Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Bregana). The transboundary river basins and rivers that require CB management cover approximately 354,868 ha or approximately 11% of the PA, of which approximately 22,960 ha area is at risk of flooding. In total, 8,328 population lives within border flood risk areas. Due to geomorphological features, water system is ecologically sensitive, particularly in the river floodplains and karst areas. In addition, most smaller river networks in the border area represent an important natural value.

The programme area recently faced severe flooding along the Drava, Sava and Kolpa/Kupa. The threat of flood on SI-HR transboundary river basins is increased by the lack of a reliable data for precise flood hazard modelling, absence of a system for common hydrological forecasting, timely information on water flows, data exchange and cooperation with respect to early warning systems.

Over the last several decades, local inhabitants have begun to invest in river tourism and campsites, the restoration of traditional water mills and the exploitation of water resources. However, the further development is often limited due to an absence of detailed flood maps, coordinated flood risk management plans and concrete measures necessary for modernization of flood defence at the transboundary rivers basins.

**Areas of cooperation to be addressed** by the programme:

- Increase of knowledge base and data exchange on the transboundary river basins;
- Increase of the level of integration and harmonisation of planning, management and forecasting/ monitoring in the transboundary river basin level;



- Improvement of flood protection in transboundary river basins that can only be achieved by cross-border cooperation;
- Activation of riverbanks for the sustainable development.

#### **Priority axis 2: Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources (TO6)**

Well-preserved natural environments as well as a high density of cultural values represent two main pillars and a strong potential for sustainable development of the PA:

- 8 regional and landscape parks in the Slovenian side of the PA as well as 3 national parks and 3 nature parks in the Croatia. 145.386 ha or 4.6% of the PA are designated as protected areas;
- A high share of Natura 2000 areas - 39.6% of the PA;
- UNESCO protected sites;
- Rich cultural heritage both in urban centres and rural areas: in total, there are 25,347 registered cultural heritage sites, including 22,069 in Slovenia (74% of all Slovenian heritage sites) and 3,278 in Croatia (37% of all Croatian heritage sites). Among these, 262 are of national importance.

Diverse and rich natural and cultural heritage represents the main identity element and untapped potential. As evident from the situation analysis, many sites are in poor condition, lacking attractive content and sustainable management. On the other hand, uncontrolled pressures on land, visitation of areas, climate change, abandoning of agriculture and the introduction and spreading of invasive alien species pose a serious threat to the ecosystems. This situation indicates a realistic threat of losing biodiversity and worse conservation of habitats and species as well as significant historical values and traditions of the programme area.

The Priority Axis 2 builds on the fact that mobilisation of heritage potential for sustainable development of the PA depends on people's ability to preserve biodiversity and a favourable conservation status of habitats and species as well as the natural and cultural heritage in a long-term perspective. Therefore, it addresses the expressed need for smart valorisation of heritage through its integration with local economies and CB products/destinations and penetration to the markets. At the same time, the need for restoration of biodiversity a favourable conservation status of habitats and species as well as involvement of local population in its preservation is extremely important.

#### **Areas of cooperation to be addressed by the programme:**

- Ensuring favourable status of the biodiversity, its species and habitats;
- Increasing the level of CB coordination and harmonisation of protection measures;
- Increasing local participation in biodiversity preservation;
- Increasing knowledge base on ecosystem services;
- Preserving cultural heritage that faces the threat of being lost;
- Ensuring the right balance between the conservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources;
- Seizing the potential of nature protected areas, natural and cultural heritage for sustainable economic development and economic diversification of the programme area, in particular with regards to sustainable tourism;
- Improving links between the most advanced tourist destinations and attractions and centres of local importance/hinterlands and increasing the presence of the area on third markets.

#### **Priority axis 3: Healthy, safe and accessible border areas (TO11)**

The situation analysis revealed serious regional disparities and an urban – rural divide regarding the accessibility of citizens to (public) services that are of greatest importance for the vitality of the border area. Several indicators reveal disparities ranging from socio-economic to health and poverty.

Public service institutions (health care, social care, civil protection, rescue services) have traditionally been well connected across the border due to historically common organisation systems. Public services are relatively well distributed at the regional level, while differences in the scope and quality of services differ locally also as a result of lack of human resources and adequate funds.

Certain parts of the CB area face challenges in adequate health care service capacities during tourism peaks, when the number of visitors/tourists increases. In connection with the increased number of visits to nature protected areas and due to relative difficulty to access areas, the risk of fires, accidents and the need for rescue and other interventions increases.

Poor availability or non-existence of public transport services in remote and immediate CB areas increases unsustainable transport modes, but also hinders the potential for their economic development (daily work commuting, access to formal education and LLL opportunities, attracting tourists and visitors flows to such areas).

The PA has the potential to activate relevant social capital in related sectors, increase access and quality of services and foster social innovation. NGOs in the area represent an essential actor, particularly in the field of civil protection but also in the provision of social care and in promotional activities related to health care.

#### **Areas of cooperation to be addressed in the programme:**

- **Rescue services:** equalising the skills between professional and volunteer members of civil protection and other rescue units, improving the skills and team work for a common preparedness and response to CB disaster events;
- **Health and social care:** Improving institutional capacities of public institutions and local partners to develop and test new models and approaches in addressing accessibility of social care and health services and programmes, particularly in rural and remote CB areas, and improving the range, quality and efficiency of services and programmes by fostering community services, decreasing health inequalities and health promotion;
- **Connectivity and mobility:** increasing institutional cooperation and capacity building for increasing sustainable mobility in the border areas and improving public transport connectivity of remote areas and areas of more concentrated cross-border tourism flows.

#### **1.1.1.3 Contribution to the strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth**

The CP is expected to contribute most to the sustainable growth objectives, followed by smart and inclusive growth.

##### **◆ Sustainable growth Promoting a more resource efficient, greener and more competitive economy**

The CP contribution to sustainable growth is focused on two issues – adapting to climate change and accelerating greener economy. Among several natural hazards, floods represent the highest threat and need urgent cross-border intervention. Increased risks of floods in the programme area will be addressed by strategically chosen activities aiming at increased coordination between the authorities, planning and observation of transboundary river basins and by introducing concrete structural and non-structural measures to increase the safety of the population, businesses and heritage in the CB area.

The PA potential for promoting the development of green economy will be supported in particular by mobilising the natural and cultural heritage for economic development and by preserving its natural values and biodiversity. In addition, the programme intends to focus activities to the areas where these potentials were exploited to a lesser extent.

◆ **Smart growth** - Developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation

Education, training and LLL, innovation and digital society are expected to better address all investment priorities. However, specific contribution of the programme to smart growth is expected in particular through development of new business models in the field of flood protection and mobilisation of cultural and natural resources. Research and ICT support as well as culture and creative industry sector is expected to raise the quality and range of tourist products, improved interpretation and the development of new audiences. Research and innovation will also support activities aiming at planning, monitoring and conserving the biodiversity in the area.

◆ **Inclusive growth** - Fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion

Specific territorial issues relate to accessibility of public service in different parts of the programme area as well as differences in the situation of particular groups. Contribution to inclusive growth is expected in particular through improved cooperation and exchange between public authorities and regional actors aiming at tackling common challenges related to social and health inequalities, accessibility, safety and vitality of the border area. Social innovation and developing partnerships between public and civil society, better utilisation of existing resources and capacity building are examples of contribution.

1.1.2 Justification for the choice of thematic objectives and corresponding investment priorities, having regard to the Common Strategic Framework, based on analysis of the needs within the programme area as a whole and the strategy chosen in response to such needs, addressing, where appropriate, missing links in cross-border infrastructure, taking into account the results of the ex-ante evaluation

**Table 1** Justification for the selection of thematic objectives and investment priorities

Selected Thematic Objective	Selected Investment Priority	Justification for selection
5	5b	<p>Flood risk prevention between Slovenia and Croatia is not at a satisfactory level, as indicated by 3<sup>rd</sup> country (SI) report to the EC for the Implementation of the Water Framework Directive as well as by recent flooding in both countries. The absence of practical solutions and coordination at the level of the transboundary river basins puts the areas along border rivers under further risk of flooding and jeopardises their socio-economic development.</p> <p>Integrated flood risk management including coordinated planning and improvements in flood risk mapping, data exchange, forecasting models and alert systems is needed and should be supported by concrete structural and non-structural risk prevention measures.</p> <p>Investment priority 5b targets only transboundary river basins where cross-border cooperation on flood risk management is necessary and most urgent. This issue has never before been subject of CBC and would contribute to strengthening capacities for flood disaster prevention.</p>

Selected Thematic Objective	Selected Investment Priority	Justification for selection
6	6c	<p>The area's main natural and cultural assets attract guests from urban centres and international tourists, though especially in rural areas they still represent an untapped potential for economic development.</p> <p>Many heritage sites require investments in preservation and innovative mobilisation. Lack of heritage integration into market driven products and destinations and low visibility in international markets holds back business development in this field.</p> <p>Investment priority 6c concentrates on promoting sustainable tourism based on a smart balance between conservation and mobilisation of natural and cultural heritage. Particular emphasis shall be given to activation and sustainable and attractive utilisation of heritage complemented by stimulation of entrepreneurship and job creation.</p> <p>Explicit proof of economic benefits from heritage utilization shall distinguish this investment priority from other investment priorities within this CP as well as from the past programme measures.</p>
6	6d	<p>Maintaining and restoring biodiversity and many of Natura 2000 species and habitats in the programme area significantly depends on a CB approach. The analysis indicates that not all habitats and species have attained favourable conservation status. This is understood as the result of human activities, climate change, absence of CB measures and a low involvement of local population in biodiversity preservation. Existing cooperation in the field of environmental protection represents a potential for further in-depth and more strategic approach.</p> <p>IP 6d focuses on preservation and restoration of biodiversity, primarily Natura 2000 species and habitats relevant for both sides of the programming area. It promotes awareness rising about the role of nature in the well-being of population and for long-term risk prevention. Preserved environment is a prerequisite for quality of life and potential for sustainable tourism development, supported in the IP 6c.</p>
11	11	<p>Substantial demographic and socio-economic disparities were identified between urban and rural areas. Population ageing, health inequalities, unequal access to services, the threat of social exclusion and, at the same time, increased aspirations for tourism, require more efficient and client tailored service provision.</p> <p>A sound network of institutions exist in the border area, however, the range and quality of public services decreases the further a region's distance from an urban centre. In some fields, there is an evident absence of CB cooperation.</p> <p>Investment priority 11 focuses on increasing institutional capacity in the fields of health and social care, safety (against man-made and natural disasters) and public transport services.</p> <p>Public structures and other stakeholders need to exploit the cooperation opportunities and synergies, align procedures, and diminish eventual barriers in CB service delivery to better meet the area's population and visitor needs.</p>

## 1.2 Justification for the financial allocation

The overall programme budget comprises of 54,556,289 € (with ERDF contribution of 46,114,193 €) as described in Section 3.

The financial allocation to the selected thematic objectives reflects:

- The estimated financial size of the projects foreseeing for each priority axis based on different types of actions and considering past experience of 2007-2013 period;
- The estimated institutional and financial capacity of potential beneficiaries in the border area;
- The coherence with the priority needs expressed in the border regions;
- The estimation of costs of strategic project under 5b investment priority;
- The opinion of stakeholders expressed during the consultation process;
- The strategic focus as set by this Co-operation Programme.

For the each priority axis a number of potential projects and potential average project size was estimated. In principle, a combination of few larger projects targeting whole or larger part of the border area and several smaller size projects with local border character are expected. The expected size varies between the investment priorities.

**Priority axis 1 (TO5):** the planned ERDF allocation to Priority Axis 1 is 10,026,557 €, corresponding to 21.7% of the total ERDF allocation. The financial allocation is justified by the evident absence of concrete joint efforts in flood risk prevention in the past and foreseen long term socio-economic benefits invested in prevention measures. This priority axis will be implemented preferably through a single strategic project, which shall be elaborated during the programme preparation and directly approved by Monitoring Committee. The financial allocation was made on preliminary cost estimation of key actions needed.

**Priority axis 2 (TO6):** the planned ERDF allocation to Priority Axis 2 is 28,074,358 €, corresponding to 60.9% of the total ERDF allocation. The financial allocation to this priority is in line with the programme emphasises to sustainable preservation and utilisation of heritage for growth. On the other hand it reflects the exceeded needs in previous programming period and high demand expressed by the border regions development programmes. Support to this priority axis was encouraged also during the consultation process. The higher allocation considers also the fact that enterprises will be for the first time eligible to participate in the programme Slovenia-Croatia programme (6c only).

**Priority axis 3 (TO11):** the planned ERDF allocation to Priority Axis 3 is 5,013,278 €, corresponding to 10.9% of the total ERDF allocation. While the topic of administrative capacity building is new to the cross-border programme area the smaller allocation of funds is foreseen for this priority axis.

**Table 2** Overview of the investment strategy of the cooperation programme

PAx	ERDF support in €	Proportion (%) of the total Union support to the Cooperation Programme (by Fund)			Thematic objective	Investment priority	Specific objective corresponding to the investment priority	Result indicators corresponding to specific objective
		ERDF	ENI	IPA				
1	10,026,557	21.7			5	5b	Flood risk	Share of targeted

PAx	ERDF support in €	Proportion (%) of the total Union support to the Cooperation Programme (by Fund)			Thematic objective	Investment priority	Specific objective corresponding to the investment priority	Result indicators corresponding to specific objective
		ERDF	ENI	IPA				
							reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins	transboundary river basins area under flood risk
2	28,074,358	60.9			6	6c	Mobilizing natural and cultural heritage for sustainable tourism development	Visitors to cultural and natural heritage sites in the programme area
						6d	Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services	Average degree of conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in the programme area
3	5,013,278	10.9			11	11	Building partnerships between public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border area	Level of cooperation quality (cooperation criteria) in the programme area (all criteria)
4 TA	3,000,000	6.5			-	-	Provide the efficient and frictionless enforcement of the cooperation programme	NA

## SECTION 2

### PRIORITY AXES

(Reference: points (b) and (c) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

#### 2.A. Description of the priority axes other than technical assistance

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

##### 2.A.1. Priority Axis 1: Integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins

###### 2.A.1.1. Priority Axis

ID of the priority axis:	1
Title of the priority axis:	Integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	

###### 2.A.1.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective

(Reference: Article 8(1) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

###### 2.A.1.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

###### 2.A.1.4. Investment priority

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	5b Promoting investment to address specific risks, ensuring disaster resilience and developing disaster management systems
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###### 2.A.1.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

ID	1.1.
Specific objective	Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla,

The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support

#### Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins

The programme area has an abundance of river networks and underground water systems. Floods are one of the major natural hazards, therefore, the development of the cross-border area is often limited due to an absence of implementation of structural and non-structural flood risk reduction measures in the transboundary river basins. Several natural hazard events and resulting damages were reported in the programme area last year.

This IP builds on existing efforts and cooperation of Slovenia-Croatia bilateral water management commission and civil protection cooperation. However, these efforts have always been limited by insufficient financial resources, ad hoc solutions and lack of cooperation at the implementation level.

The threats and opportunities that arise from the high density of the common hydrographic network require improvements in CB co-operation in the field of integrated flood risk management. Similar weaknesses were reported in the 3<sup>rd</sup> country (SI) report to the EC for the Implementation of the Water Framework Directive, River Basin Management Plans, 2012.

While the national ESI Fund programmes of Slovenia and Croatia target areas that are of highest flood risk (as identified in preliminary national flood risk assessments), CP Slovenia – Croatia focuses on flood risk reduction measures alongside the SI/HR border. Joint sustainable measures are to be implemented at six selected transboundary river basins (Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura, Bregana) that pass through remote, rural and declining border regions.

As a result, the programme is to **deliver a common strategic and implementation approach** for better coordinated, coherent and strategic flood risk management in the border area. A common approach is a pre-condition for integrated river basin management and more effective long-term flood prevention along SI/HR border areas.

**An improved knowledge base and understanding of flood risk and river basin management processes** coupled by the implementation of a set of structural and non-structural flood risk reduction measures are expected to result in **a reduced flood risk in the transboundary river basins.**

Non-structural measures will be implemented in the defined target areas of all six river basins, while structural flood reduction measures will be implemented in the Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava and Mura transboundary river basins. The foreseen tailor-made, sustainable and locally based actions are of particular importance for **the enhancement of the socio-economic development of the respective border area.**

In addition to the reduced risk of flooding of the human health, economy, cultural heritage and the environment situated in the target area, concrete flood risk reduction measures and coordinated planning will enable the **use of the river potential for the development of sustainable tourism and related economic activities that are situated along the rivers.**



Moreover, the results will contribute to the implementation of the **Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks (OJ L288, 6.11.2007, p.27) and national Flood Risk Management Plans** (in preparation under the Directive 2007/60/EU, prior to 22.12.2015) at the local level within the international transboundary river basins between Slovenia and Croatia. Furthermore, the results will contribute to the development of **better-coordinated updated national Flood Risk Management Plans due in 2021 in line with Directive 2007/60/EC.**

**Table 3** Programme specific result indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
5c-RI	Share of targeted transboundary river basins area under flood risk	%	6,47%	2014	5%	SI: MESP HR: CW	2018, 2020, 2023

## 2.A.1.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority

2.A.1.6.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	5b
<b>Indicative flood risk management activities in the transboundary river basins to be supported:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Non-structural flood risk reduction measures</b> in the target area (Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identification of the key natural water retention areas in the river basins of the target area;</li> <li>b. Implementation of the natural water retention measures;</li> <li>c. Development of the flood forecasting models and flood alert systems;</li> <li>d. Improvement of flood hazard and flood risk mapping;</li> <li>e. Awareness rising and capacity building activities for citizens, businesses, farmers, land owners and public institutions to understand flood risk prevention measures and water management processes and to learn how to react during flood events;</li> <li>f. Capacity building of institutions responsible for flood risk management and river basin management (e.g. water management authorities, bilateral commission for water management, hydro-meteorology services, civil protection, ...);</li> <li>g. Collection, management and exchange of the flood risk management related data;</li> <li>h. Identification of operational gaps and administration burdens for sound transboundary flood risk management, preparation of concrete solutions and if possible, their integration into national systems and daily practice;</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	

<p>i. Preparation of cross-border harmonized plans, studies and documentation for the implementation of the structural flood prevention measures (SEA, EIA, hydrological studies, feasibility studies, etc.);</p> <p><b>2. Structural flood risk reduction measures</b> in the target area (Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava and Mura river basins):</p> <p>a. Implementation of cross-border harmonized and bilaterally agreed pilot structural flood risk prevention measures.</p>	
Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Municipalities</li> <li>– Spatial planners</li> <li>– Local population</li> <li>– Businesses</li> <li>– Agriculture households</li> <li>– Public institutions</li> <li>– Land owners</li> <li>– Existing bilateral bodies (e.g. International Sava River basin Commission,..)</li> <li>– Institutions and NGOs active in the field of environment, spatial planning, risk prevention, civic protection, nature and cultural heritage protection, agriculture and other activities related to the water management and flood risk prevention</li> </ul>
Indicative types of beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– National, regional and local authorities responsible for water management, flood risk prevention, hydrometeorology and civic protection</li> <li>– Non-profit organisations established by public or private law - legal persons acting in the field of water management, flood risk prevention, hydrometeorology, civic protection and similar fields</li> </ul>
Specific territories targeted	<p>The following target areas of SI/HR transboundary river basin areas are eligible under this specific objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Dragonja (entire transboundary basin);</li> <li>– Kolpa/Kupa (entire transboundary basin);</li> <li>– Sotla/Sutla (entire transboundary basin);</li> <li>– Drava (from Markovci to Varaždin);</li> <li>– Mura (from Gibina to Podturen) and</li> <li>– Bregana river (entire transboundary basin).</li> </ul>

#### 2.A.1.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	5b
<p>Direct approval of project/s by Monitoring Committee in accordance to Article 12 of the ETC regulation is foreseen. Two or more indicative projects are anticipated: one addressing the non-structural and the other addressing the structural flood risk reduction measures.</p> <p>During the assessment, besides the criteria applied for project assessment, the following will be required under this specific objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Complementarity, co-ordination and synergies with mainstream programmes of Slovenia and Croatia under ESI Funds, particularly with the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development and Cohesion Fund.</li> </ul>	

- Only “ready to go” structural measures shall be approved (e.g. building permits obtained when necessary).
- Structural measures implemented in Natura 2000 areas have to be based on sustainable and ecologically sound methods and consistent with the objectives of concerned Natura 2000 site.
- Integration of at least one of three CP cross-cutting issues (R&D, Capacity Building or ICT) as an added value to the project within non-structural flood risk reduction measures.

#### 2.A.1.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

#### 2.A.1.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

#### 2.A.1.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

**Table 4** Programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target (2023)	value	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
CO2o	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	Persons	1,500		Monitoring System	Annually
5bOI	Transboundary river basins with joint tools, models and maps for flood risk management developed	Number	6		Monitoring System	Annually
5b-IO	Transboundary river basins with pilot structural flood risk reduction measures implemented	Number	4		Monitoring System	Annually

#### 2.A.1.7. Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation and Annex II of the CPR)

**Table 5** Performance framework of the priority axis

PAX	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Evaluation of the relevance of the indicator, where appropriate
1	Financial	11-FI	Payments: certified and declared to EC	EUR	1,179,595 EUR	10,026,557 EUR	Monitoring System	
1	Output	5bOI	Transboundary river basins with joint tools, models and maps for flood risk	Number	2	6	Monitoring System	

PAx	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Evaluation of the relevance of the indicator, where appropriate
			management developed					
1	Output	5b-IO	Transboundary river basins with pilot structural flood risk reduction measures implemented	Number	0	4	Monitoring System	
1	Key implementation step	5b-KI	Transboundary river basins where works have started	Number	1	4	Monitoring System	

### 2.A.1.8. Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

**Table 6** Dimension 1 Intervention field

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	87 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks e.g. erosion, fires, flooding, storms and drought, including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures	10,026,557

**Table 7** Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	01 (Non-repayable grant)	10,026,557

**Table 8** Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	03 (Rural areas (thinly populated))	10,026,557

**Table 9** Dimension 4 Territorial delivery mechanisms

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	07 (Not applicable)	10,026,557

### 2.A.1.9. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance -(where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

## 2.A.2. Priority Axis 2: Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources

### 2.A.2.1. Priority Axis

ID of the priority axis:	2
Title of the priority axis:	Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	

### 2.A.2.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective

(Reference: Article 8(1) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

### 2.A.2.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

### 2.A.2.4. Investment priority 6c and 6d

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	6c Conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage
	6d Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure

### 2.A.2.5. Specific objectives corresponding to investment priority 6c and 6d and expected results

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

ID	2.1.
Specific objective	<b>Mobilizing natural and cultural heritage for sustainable tourism development</b>
The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	Diverse and rich natural and cultural heritage represents the major identity element and the main untapped advantage of peripheral rural areas and small towns within the programme area. Many heritage sites are in poor condition, lacking attractive content and sustainable

management. This situation points to the realistic threat of degradation or losing some significant natural/ historical values and traditions.

Although the most advanced tourist destinations with high cultural and nature importance are located in the CB area, opportunities for connecting them with the hinterland areas have not been sufficiently seized.

Sustainable tourism<sup>7</sup> and related green economies that derive from the balance of preservation and the sustainable use of resources provide a driving force for the socio-economic development. However, the existing small business initiatives and the fragmented tourism offer need sharpened strategic approach and integration with heritage sites, museums, nature protected areas and others into market driven CB destinations or thematic tourism products.

Heritage and traditions shall be promoted as inspiration for innovation in visitor packages, local cuisine, local product design, crafts, arts and other similar activities. In addition, there is an obvious need for increasing awareness and a knowledge base among the local SMEs and populations regarding challenges offered by heritage.

The results that are to be delivered shall derive from the identity and natural /cultural heritage, ensuring that it is preserved, utilised, packaged, connected and at the same time competitive and **visible on the market as a sustainable tourism destination or product.**

As a result, the border area will not only **preserve some of its most important cultural and natural heritage sites, but will also increase their quality, sustainability and attractiveness.** Through different cooperative structures, heritage sites shall integrate tourism and tourism-related actors across the border area to establish a set of distinctive products/services and/or cross-border destinations that will be recognisable on international markets. This shall lead to increased visits of the heritage sites and a higher quality of visitor experience. In this way and by increasing the capacities of existing and potential small businesses and heritage management, the **economic potential of cultural and natural heritage shall be seized.**

ID

2.2.

Specific objective

**Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services**

<sup>7</sup> **Sustainable tourism** that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities ( Source: Making Tourism More Sustainable – A Guide for Policy Makers, UNEP and UNWTO, 2005, p.11-12, <http://sdt.unwto.org/content/about-us-5>.) **Sustainable tourism development** requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them. (Source: World Tourism Organization, 2004. <http://www.sustainabletourism.net/definitions.html>).

The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support

The CB area shows the highest concentration of nature values, protected areas and Natura 2000 sites in EU. 145,386 ha or 4.6% of the programme area are designated as protected areas. 39.6%<sup>8</sup> is represented by Natura 2000 sites, many of them are of CB character (e.g. border rivers and forests, karst). The diverse ecosystems of the Drava and Mura lowlands to the Karst areas of the Dinaric Mountains and the maritime ecosystems of the Adriatic sea are rich with species and habitat types, many of which are endemic. Because of the size and diversity, these areas serve as provider of ecosystem services<sup>9</sup> important for life quality, agriculture and economic activities. Unfortunately, the public awareness of ecosystem concepts is still low. Uncontrolled pressures on land, visitation of areas that are under protection, climate change, abandoning of agriculture and the introduction and/or spreading of invasive alien species pose a serious threat to the ecosystems.

Only half of the habitats and 60% of the species have attained favourable conservation status in Slovenia. In Croatia, the conservation status of habitats and species has not yet been assessed due to recent proclamation (September 2013). In the programming area, grassland ecosystems and wetlands, floodplain forests, lowland wet meadows, caves, freshwater and marine ecosystems are most common ecosystems in need of preservation. Within these ecosystems, populations of different species migrate regardless of the state border. In some cases the state of population significantly varies between the two countries. A joint monitoring, regimes and harmonised approaches towards the same population of species and Natura 2000 sites are necessary.

In order to preserve these high natural values, this SO is primarily focused on the **conservation and restoration of biodiversity** for future generations and **raising awareness of the role that nature plays in the wellbeing of people** and in long-term risk prevention.

While mainstream programmes target the nationally important Natura 2000 sites, CP will concentrate on issues that can be addressed more efficiently, through a co-ordinated cross-border approach.

At the CP level, actions should result in **improved conservation status of cross-border Natura 2000 species and habitats types which are of common interest for preservation**. This will be achieved through improved knowledge of species and habitats, joint management, channelling of visitors, intensive involvement of local population and improved interpretation of nature. A significant contribution to the preservation of biodiversity is expected from demonstration actions in the nature and actions promoting of awareness of the significance of nature conservation. This shall increase acceptance and understanding of biodiversity preservation and ecosystems among locals and visitors of the

<sup>8</sup> Land areas only. Source: SI Atlas Okolja RS <http://gis.arso.gov.si>, 2014; HR <http://natura2000.dzrp.hr/natura/>

<sup>9</sup> **Ecosystem services** are the benefits people obtain from nature. These include provisioning services such as food and water; regulating services such as flood and disease control; cultural services such as spiritual, recreational, and cultural benefits; and supporting services, such as nutrient cycling, that maintain the conditions for life on Earth. (Source: Ecosystems and Human Well-being: A Framework for Assessment, 2003. [http://www.unep.org/maweb/documents/document\\_300.aspx.pdf](http://www.unep.org/maweb/documents/document_300.aspx.pdf)).

programme area.

**Table 10** Programme specific result indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
6c-RI	Visitors to cultural and natural heritage sites in the programme area <sup>10</sup>	Number	4,911,583	2013	5,750,000	SI: SURS, Skupnost naravnih parkov Slovenije HR: Muzejski dokumentacijski centar Public institutions for management of protected areas	2018, 2020, 2023
6dRI1 and 6dRI2	Average degree of conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in programme area <sup>11</sup>	Number	Species CS: 2,050 Habitat CS: 2,070	2014	Species CS: 2,052 Habitat CS: 2,072	SI: Zavod RS za varstvo narave HR: Državni zavod za zaštitu prirode	2018, 2020, 2023

#### 2.A.2.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority

2.A.2.6.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	6c
Indicative actions to be supported are:	
<b>1. Development of cross-border products<sup>12</sup> and destinations<sup>13</sup>, on the basis of cultural and natural heritage following the concepts of sustainable tourism, bottom-up and integrated approach</b>	

<sup>10</sup> The indicator includes registered visits in museums and galleries for cultural heritage and registered visit in regional and national parks located in the programme area (Slovenia: Kozjanski regijski park, Logarska dolina, Regijski park Škocjanske jame, Naravni rezervat Škocjanski zatok, Krajinski park Sečoveljske soline, Krajinski park Strunjan, Krajinski park Kolpa, Notranjski park, Krajinski park Ljubljansko barje and Krajinski park Goričko; Croatia: NP Brijuni, NP Risnjak, PP Učka, PP Žumberak – Samoborsko gorje, PP Medvedica, Transboundary Biosphere Reserve Mura-Drava-Danube).

<sup>11</sup> See separate methodological document for definition of indicators; A Excellent -3 points, B Good – 2 points, C Average or reduced conservation - 1 point

<sup>12</sup> **Cross-border tourism product** means a set of tourism attractions/services/accommodations/transportations/ entertainments which take the form of a cross-border route, itinerary, trail, offer, package,..., either physical (based on physical infrastructure) or conceptual (linking places/destinations/attractions/experiences) and which all share a common link, feature, topic or theme.



- Small-scale conservation, restoration and preservation of registered<sup>14</sup> cultural and/or natural heritage including obligatory content development for smart utilization and sustainable management (e.g. restoration of ethnographic traditional buildings for the purpose of local museums, nature interpretation trails, archaeological parks, etc.);
- Small-scale investments in visitor infrastructure and equipment improving accessibility and visitor experience of registered cultural and/or natural heritage (e.g. visitor centres, crafts production centres and show rooms, bike trails and rentals, parking areas, adaptations to persons with special needs, connection paths to heritage sites, etc.);
- Development of new contents and interpretation concepts (e.g. storytelling) of natural and/or cultural heritage considering new audience development<sup>15</sup> and trends (e.g. innovative exhibitions, cross-border events, etc.);
- Development of new or improved joint sustainable tourism or related products and services in the form of thematic tours, packages, itineraries, routes or tourism offer by connecting natural and cultural resources with crafts and arts, local suppliers, SMEs, tourism operators, ... and exploiting RTI potential, ICT tools, e-services and/or market trends.

## **2. Cross-border destination or product co-operation structures, management and promotion**

- Setting up, positioning and promoting CB destinations by linking operators of cultural and natural heritage sites, businesses, destination managements organisations and/or other partners with common interest and products into common organisational structure (e.g. clusters, value-chain or similar structure that partners find most suitable for following commonly set objectives);
- Support to internationalisation and market access of cross-border tourism destinations and products (e.g. market entry support, joint development and piloting of marketing concepts and plans, participation at international events and fairs in the third markets, etc.);<sup>16</sup>
- Design and implementation of innovative promotion of the cross-border destinations and products, including use of ICT, smart technologies, social media, etc.

## **3. Improvement of knowledge base and capacities**

- Training, mentoring, awareness raising, exchange of good practices, practical guidelines and expertise and similar activities supporting
  - o All stages necessary for preservation, conservation and maintenance of heritage and traditional skills and strengthening the area's cultural identity (e.g. info points and guidelines for practical restoration of heritage, transfer of traditional knowledge, etc);
  - o All stages of mobilising the heritage for economic development and job creation in sustainable tourism and related businesses (e.g. start-up handy-craft centres, training programmes for new skills and competences development for actors

Each element of the tourism product is prepared to satisfy the need of the tourist/visitor and provide a quality of experience. The product shall cover or be developed in both countries and promote a concrete (not general) cross-border product having an international market potential. (Source: <http://lokatourconsultant.blogspot.com/2013/04/tourism-product-definition.html> and different documents of EC on sustainable tourism).

<sup>13</sup> **Cross-border tourism destination** is a single / unified cross-border territory in which is marketed or markets itself as a place for tourists to visit. (Source: <http://media.unwto.org/en/content/understanding-tourism-basic-glossary>).

<sup>14</sup> **Officially registered natural and cultural heritage or values** in the Republic of Croatia and Republic of Slovenia.

<sup>15</sup> **Audience development** describes activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential visitors and to help cultural/nature park management organisations to develop on-going relationships with visitors. In a broader term it can include activities, which stimulate interest and improves access for target groups who are not likely to visit the heritage site. Main aspects of audience development are related to programme adaptation (improving the quality of experience), marketing, communication and customer care (introducing new approaches to visitors). (Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audience\\_development](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Audience_development)).

<sup>16</sup> Third market is considered a country outside the programme area where promotion activities take place providing that conditions of Article 20 of ETC regulation are met.

involved in sustainable tourism and culture, interpretation skills, thematic tour guides, etc.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Developing and testing new business models for management of cultural and/or natural heritage (e.g. management and marketing of small historic towns, etc.);</li> <li>- Development and introduction of environmental or other quality standards;</li> <li>- Elaboration and implementation of visitor management plans (e.g. visitor counting, visitor survey, audience development concepts, etc.)</li> </ul>	
<p><i>Note:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Natural and cultural heritage under specific objective 6c is to be understood in a broader sense; besides registered tangible and intangible heritage one should consider other cultural values and habits, natural resources, traditional knowledge, etc. that create the programme area identity. However, small-scale conservation and infrastructural type of activities are only eligible for registered natural and cultural heritage.</i></li> </ul>	
Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourists/ visitors</li> <li>- Local population</li> <li>- Owners of heritage sites</li> <li>- Businesses, their employees and potential start-ups connected with the utilization of cultural or natural heritage or sustainable tourism</li> <li>- Also those groups listed under the caption "Indicative types of beneficiaries"</li> </ul>
Indicative types of beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Local, regional or national authorities</b> (e.g. municipalities, counties..)</li> <li>- <b>Non-profit organisations established by public or private law - legal persons</b> acting in the field of cultural or natural heritage, sustainable tourism development or related services (e.g. museums, Natura 2000 and protected areas management authorities, regional development agencies, tourism destination management organisations, NGOs, associations...)</li> <li>- Small and medium sized enterprises</li> </ul>
Specific territories targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme area</li> </ul>

Investment priority	6d
Indicative actions to be supported are:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Capacity building</b> actions for increasing the participation, awareness, knowledge and acceptance among target groups on <b>nature protection</b> and <b>ecosystem services</b>;</li> <li>- <b>Development of joint co-ordinated approaches, methods, tools and new solutions</b> in planning, monitoring and management of Natura 2000 and other species and habitat types relevant for CB area (e.g. data exchange, integration of planning and monitoring methods, introduction of new monitoring tools and technologies, co-ordination of management approaches, etc.);</li> <li>- <b>Implementation of monitoring surveys</b> of Natura 2000 habitat types or species as well as other habitats and species relevant for CB area.</li> </ul>	
Each project should among its activities implement at least one of the following actions:	

- **Practical demonstration actions in nature** aiming at improving conditions and protection of different habitat types and species:
  - o Establish the needed small-scale infrastructure to improve/guide accessibility so as to bring direct positive impact on Nature 2000 and other species and habitat types relevant for CB area;
  - o Guide tourism and recreation flows (traffic/visitors) in order to ensure nature protection (e.g. elaboration and implementation of visitor management plans, visitor monitoring and channeling) and establish quiet zones;
  - o Restore habitats, re-naturalisation of river beds/improve hydrologic conditions
  - o Ensure non-fragmentation of habitats;
  - o Establish green infrastructure <sup>17</sup> supporting the protection and conservation of habitat types and species and reducing the risks of biodiversity loss;
  - o Remove and prevent the spread of invasive alien species;
  - o Implement measures to prevent overgrowth (in abandoned areas not addressed by Rural Development Plan).
- Identification, mapping, evaluation and enhancement of **ecosystem services** with joint pilot studies of ecosystem values and development of methodologies for regional green accounting or other PES<sup>18</sup> systems.

Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local population</li> <li>- Visitors/ tourists</li> <li>- Local communities</li> <li>- Farmers</li> <li>- Owners of land in NATURA 2000, protected areas and other areas of nature values</li> <li>- Businesses</li> <li>- Teachers, students, pupils, children</li> <li>- Also those groups listed under the caption "Indicative types of beneficiaries"</li> </ul>
Indicative types of beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local, regional or national authorities (e.g. municipalities, counties,..)</li> <li>- Non-profit organisations established by public or private law - legal persons in the field of nature protection (e.g. Natura 2000 and protected area management authorities, conservation authorities, NGOs, R&amp;D institutions, regional development agencies, forest institutes, rural development centres, etc.)</li> </ul>
Specific territories targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme area</li> </ul>

#### 2.A.2.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	6c
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<sup>17</sup> **Green infrastructure** is to be understood as "a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas but also other environmental features designed and/or managed so as to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services. (Source: Draft thematic guidance fiche for desk officers Biodiversity, green infrastructure, ecosystem services and Natura 2000, version 2 - 20/02/2014)

<sup>18</sup> **PES** Payment for Ecosystem Service

During the selection procedure, besides the criteria applied for project assessment, the following will be required under this specific objective:

- Any heritage site or small-scale investment action receiving programme support should be **publicly accessible** after project is completed.
- The private profit lead partner shall be asked to provide, before the signature of the subsidy contract, proof that the financial guarantee is in force.

Higher relevance in regard to the achievement of specific objectives will be given to projects which demonstrate for example:

- **Contribution to the smart balance between preservation and sustainable use** of natural and cultural resources;
- **Integration of cultural and natural heritage with relevant tourism stakeholders** (businesses, tourism management organisations, etc.) **into market driven cross-border tourism products or destinations.**
- **Concepts of sustainable tourism, bottom-up and integrated approach.**
- **Positive increase on the number of visitors** of a cultural or natural heritage that is subject of support.
- **Enhancement, networking and upgrading of the existing initiatives** to achieve better market performance and visibility
- **Integration of at least one of three CP cross-cutting issues** (R&D, Capacity Building or ICT) as an added value to the project.
- **Elaboration and implementation of visitor management plans for natural heritage.**

Investment priority	6d
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During the selection procedure, higher relevance in regard to the achievement of specific objectives will be given to:

- **Projects focusing on preservation of biodiversity** that have a positive effect on:
  - o Degree of conservation status of Natura 2000 species and habitat types which can be found on both sides of the programme area or
  - o Natura 2000 sites which border to each other such as border rivers Mura, Drava, Sotla/Sutla, Kolpa/Kupa, Dragonja, etc.; CB forest areas of Gorjanci/Žumberak, Kočevsko/Snežnik/Snježnik/Gorski Kotar, etc. ; or cross-border karst areas (e.g. Kras/Čićarija).
- Projects, which **apply at least one of three CP cross-cutting issues** (R&D, Capacity Building or ICT) as an added value to the project.

#### 2.A.2.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

#### 2.A.2.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

## 2.A.2.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

**Table 11** Programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target (2023)	value	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
6c						
CO09	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural or natural heritage and attractions	visits/year	50,000		Monitoring System	Annually
OI2	Small scale investments in visitor infrastructure and preservation of natural and cultural heritage <sup>19</sup>	Number	15		Monitoring System	Annually
OI-3	New or improved cross-border sustainable tourism products and destinations developed <sup>20</sup>	Number	20		Monitoring System	Annually
OI-4	Persons participating in capacity building activities	Number	500		Monitoring System	Annually
CO01	Number of enterprises receiving support	Enterprises	7		Monitoring System	Annually
6d						
CO23	Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status <sup>21</sup>	Hectares (ha)	31,000 ha		Monitoring System	Annually
6dOI2	Implemented practical demonstrations of measures in nature in support of biodiversity	Number	10		Monitoring System	Annually

<sup>19</sup> **Small scale investments** include preservation of heritage such as restoration of ethnographic traditional buildings for the purpose of local museums, nature interpretation trails, archaeological parks, .. while small scale investments in visitor infrastructure includes visitor centres, crafts production centres and show rooms, bike trails and rentals, parking areas, adaptations to persons with special needs, connection paths to heritage sites,...).

<sup>20</sup> **Cross-border tourism product** means a set of tourism attractions/services/accommodations/transportations/entertainments which take the form of a cross-border route, itinerary, trail, offer, package,..., either physical (based on physical infrastructure) or conceptual (linking places/destinations/attractions/experiences) and which all share a common link, feature, topic or theme. Each element of the tourism product is prepared to satisfy the need of the tourist/visitor and provide a quality of experience. The product shall cover or be developed in both countries and promote a concrete (not general) cross-border product having an international market potential. (Source: <http://lokatourconsultant.blogspot.com/2013/04/tourism-product-definition.html> and different documents of EC on sustainable tourism). **Cross-border tourism destination** is a single / unified cross-border territory in which is marketed or markets itself as a place for tourists to visit. (Source: <http://media.unwto.org/en/content/understanding-tourism-basic-glossary>). Product or destination is considered **new** if it did not exist on the market before the project was proposed. In this case the development of a product or destination was one of project activities. On the contrary, when the existing product or destination is significantly changed and upgraded in terms of partners, quality, interpretation, scope, territory or marketing and its position on the market, it is considered to be **improved**.

<sup>21</sup> Surface of restored or created areas aimed to improve the conservation status of threatened species. **The operations can be carried out both in or outside of Natura 2000 areas, capable of improving the conservation status of targeted species, habitats or ecosystems for biodiversity and the provisioning of ecosystem-services** (Source: Guidance document of Monitoring and Evaluation, ERDF and Cohesion Fund, Concepts and Recommendations, European Commission, March 2014)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Target (2023)	value	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
6c						
6d-OI-3	Joint studies and tools for assessing and promoting ecosystem services developed	Number	3		Monitoring System	Annually
6d-OI-4	Persons with improved practical skills and competences for implementation of biodiversity protection measures and valorisation of ecosystem services	Number	250		Monitoring System	Annually

### 2.A.2.7. Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation and Annex II of the CPR)

**Table 12** Performance framework of the priority axis

P Ax	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Evaluation of the relevance
2	Financial	6cd FI	Payments: certified and declared to EC	EUR	3,302,866 EUR	28,074,358 EUR	Monitoring System	
6c								
2	Output	6cOI 2	Small scale investments in visitor infrastructure and preservation of natural and cultural heritage	Number	0	15	Monitoring System	
2	Key implementation step	6cKI O	Restoration or construction works at heritage sites or at supporting visitor infrastructure started	Number	5	15	Monitoring System	
2	Output	6c-O3	New or improved cross-border sustainable tourism products and destinations developed	Number	2	20	Monitoring System	
6d								
2	Output CI	CO2 3	Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status <sup>22</sup>	Hectares (ha)	0	31,000 ha	Monitoring System	
2	Key implementation step	6d-KI	Surface area of habitats in <b>process</b> of support in order to attain a better conservation status	Area covered (ha)	10,000 ha	31,000 ha	Monitoring System	

### 2.A.2.8. Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

**Table 13** Dimension 1 Intervention field

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	075 Development and promotion of commercial tourism services in or for SMEs	1,204,461
2	85 Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure	3,200,000
2	86 Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites	4,800,000
2	90 Cycle track and footpaths	1,605,949
2	91 Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas	3,011,154
2	92 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets	2,007,436
2	93 Development and promotion of public tourism services	2,007,436
2	94 Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets	8,230,486
2	95 Development and promotion of public cultural and heritage services	2,007,436

**Table 14** Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	01 (Non-repayable grant)	28,074,358

**Table 15** Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
2	01 Large urban areas (densely populated > 50 000 population)	2,850,559
2	02 Small Urban areas (intermediate density > 5 000 population)	10,677,179
2	03 Rural areas (thinly populated))	14,546,620

**Table 16** Dimension 4 Territorial delivery mechanisms

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
1	07 (Not applicable)	28,074,358

### 2.A.2.9. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

## 2.A.3. Priority Axis 3: Healthy, safe and accessible border areas

### 2.A.3.1. Priority Axis

ID of the priority axis:	3
Title of the priority axis:	Healthy, safe and accessible border areas

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	

### 2.A.3.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective

(Reference: Article 8(1) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

### 2.A.3.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

### 2.A.3.4. Investment priority 11

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	11 Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions.
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### 2.A.3.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

ID	3.1.
Specific objective	<b>Building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas</b>
The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	<p>The SI-HR border area has traditionally been well connected across the border. However, the situation analysis emphasises serious regional disparities and an urban–rural divide as regards to citizens’ accessibility to the services in public interest that are most important for the vitality of the border area.</p> <p>Conversely, with population ageing, outward migration, defined ambitions in tourism development and identified threats of natural and</p>



man-made disasters, the **challenges of vitality, health, safety and accessibility/connectivity** are primarily addressed within this specific objective.

Continuously shrinking public spending requires new approaches, effective solutions and co-operation models in service delivery between various stakeholders, being public or non-governmental, local, regional or national on both sides of the border. Wide range of volunteering organisations and NGOs active at the priority fields in the programme area provide a sound basis for extension of co-operation.

This investment priority builds on a historically common administration system, existing informal contacts and networks, low language barriers between the countries and new circumstances arising from Slovenia – Croatia border being an internal EU border, which are considered as an opportunity to strengthen the institutional co-operation in delivering services in public interest in the cross-border framework.

Therefore, interventions to be implemented under this investment priority shall **result in new or strengthened existing cross-border structures** that will enable cross-border delivery of services in public interest or improve access to such services in peripheral border areas with significant gap in service delivery.

The established and enhanced institutional cross-border partnerships and structures are expected to be able to demonstrate new, enhanced or improved existing public health care, social care services, safety (civil protection, rescue and emergency services) and cross-border sustainable mobility services.

Wider territorial based networks, vertical (local-regional-national) and horizontal integration of various authorities, NGOs and stakeholders, co-ordination of approaches and procedures, transfer of best practices, joint development of innovative solutions and the successful involvement of citizens (clients focus) shall allow **better utilization of existing human resources and improve the quality, diversity and accessibility of services** in programme area.

By focusing the efforts towards specific target groups (e.g. isolated elderly, women and youth at risk, the migrants, disabled people and other groups that are at risk of poverty or social exclusion), CP will contribute to reducing inequalities, fostering improved living conditions and/or a higher quality of life for citizens of the region (e.g. improved health care for specific population groups, etc.) as well as safer and more accessible tourist destinations for those visiting the area.

**Table 17** Programme specific result indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
11-RI-1	Level of cooperation	Number	17	2015	27	Monitoring system	2018, 2020,

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
	quality (cooperation criteria) in the programme area (all criteria)						2023

## 2.A.3.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority

2.A.3.6.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	11
<p><b>Indicative actions to be supported</b> in the field of i) public health and health-care, ii) social care services, iii) safety (civil protection, emergency and rescue services), iv) cross-border public transport and sustainable mobility services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Setting up new or strengthening existing cross-border cooperation structures<sup>23</sup></b> of public institutions, civil society and other stakeholders in order to provide integrated territory-based solutions for provision of services in the selected field (e.g. joint thematic events and workshops; know how, information and data base development and exchange, familiarization with partner legal framework and administrative systems, bilateral agreements in order to identify common development issues and structures for long term operation);</li> <li>- <b>Co-ordination, elaboration and improvement of joint plans, procedures and exchange of governance models</b> for provision of cross-border services and/or services in border areas with service gap (e.g. elaboration of joint cross-border plans, strategies and programmes, optimising processes of service delivery, reduction of administrative barriers, harmonisation of protocols and intervention procedures, transfer of best practices);</li> <li>- <b>Developing skills and competences</b> for provision of selected public services (e.g. joint training programmes, technical trainings and capacities for cross-border interventions, language and cross-cultural skills, mentoring, cross-border exchanges and placements of staff, etc.);</li> <li>- <b>Joint development and delivery (demonstration) of new or improved services within the cooperation structures</b> (e.g. innovative organisation models for service provision, organisational structures for provision of mobile services, diversification of the channels for service delivery, strengthening organisational and technical capacities for specific service delivery, adjustment of time tables and integration of public transports across the border, etc.);</li> <li>- <b>Promotion of active involvement of different groups of citizens</b> in cross-border cooperation and use of new services (e.g. specialised events, awareness and promotion campaigns, etc.);</li> <li>- <b>Promotion of co-operations structures, their joint services and programmes-</b></li> </ul>	

<sup>23</sup> **Cross-border cooperation structure** is a cross-border group of institutions and stakeholders established or enhanced during the project with the aim to develop and provide certain public service or programme. The group may go beyond project partnership, however it shall exist after the project completion.

Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Service providers</li> <li>– Staff members in organisations providing the public services</li> <li>– Volunteers</li> <li>– Local population in peripheral border areas</li> <li>– Tourists/visitors of peripheral border areas</li> <li>– Also those groups listed under the capitation "Indicative types of beneficiaries"</li> </ul>
Indicative types of beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– National, regional and local authorities</li> <li>– Non-profit organisations established by public or private law - legal persons (e.g. health centres, social care organisations, NGOs, elderly centres, regional development agencies, social enterprises, rescue services and civil protection organisations, etc.)</li> </ul>
Specific territories targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Programme area</li> </ul>

#### 2.A.3.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	11
<p>During the selection procedure, beside the criteria applied for project assessment, the following will be <b>required</b> under this specific objective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Projects shall clearly aim at developing a sustainable cross-border cooperation structure.</li> <li>– Each cross-border cooperation structure shall address at least one of the priority fields: i) public health and health-care, ii) social care services, iii) safety (civil protection, emergency and rescue services), iv) cross-border public transport and sustainable mobility services.</li> <li>– Each cross-border cooperation structures shall enhance either i) provision of cross-border service or ii) provision of service targeted to peripheral/rural areas. <b>Peripheral/ rural areas under this co-operation programme are considered all areas outside the urban centers of city municipalities.</b><sup>24</sup></li> <li>– Any service, structure or model developed shall be accompanied by a demonstration action, which allows-transfer of best practices and/or testing of new solutions in real life context.</li> </ul> <p><b>Higher relevance</b> in regard to the achievement of specific objectives will be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Projects that will be able to demonstrate <b>vertical integration of institutions and larger territorial coverage of cooperation structure</b>. Participation of relevant line ministries as associate partners in the project will reflect the strategic relevance of the project.</li> <li>– Projects that apply of at least <b>one of three CP cross-cutting issues</b> (R&amp;D, Capacity Building or ICT) as an added value to the project.</li> <li>– Projects focusing the provision of services towards <b>vulnerable target groups</b> such as isolated elderly, women and youth at risk, the migrants, disabled people and other groups that are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the programme area.</li> </ul>	

#### 2.A.3.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

<sup>24</sup> Urban centre is considered a settlement in which the seat of city municipality (in case of SI) or city (in case of HR) is located.

#### 2.A.3.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

#### 2.A.3.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

**Table 18** Programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
11OI1	Number of institutions participating in cross-border structures <sup>25</sup>	Number	45	Monitoring System	Annually
11OI2	Number of persons representing institutions and stakeholders from the programme area with improved skills and competences in CB service delivery	Number	300	Monitoring System	Annually

#### 2.A.3.7. Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation and Annex II of the CPR)

**Table 19** Performance framework of the priority axis

P. axis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Evaluation of the relevance
3	Financial	11-FI	Payments: certified and declared to EC	EUR	589,797 EUR	5,013,278 EUR	Monitoring System	NA
3	Output	11OI1	Number of institutions participating in cross-border structures	Number	3	45	Monitoring System	

#### 2.A.3.8. Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

**Table 20** Dimension 1 Intervention field

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	112 Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest	1,503,983
3	119 Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance	1,503,983
3	120 Capacity building for stakeholders delivering employment, education and social policies and sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at national,	2,005,312 <sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The indicator will measure the number of institutions and organizations engaged in the cross-border structure, which will lead to an increased capacity to develop and provide certain public service or programme.

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
	regional and local level	

**Table 21** Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	01 (Non-repayable grant)	5,013,278

**Table 22** Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	01 Large Urban areas (densely populated > 50 000 population)	1, 002,655
3	02 (Small Urban areas (intermediate density > 5 000 population)	3,007,967
3	03 (Rural areas (thinly populated))	1,002,656

**Table 23** Dimension 4 Territorial delivery mechanisms

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
3	07 (Not applicable)	5,013,278

#### 2.A.3.9. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

## 2.A.4. Priority Axis 4: Technical Assistance

### 2.A.4.1. Priority Axis

ID of the priority axis:	4
Title of the priority axis:	Technical Assistance

<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented solely through financial instruments set up at Union level	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The entire priority axis will be implemented through community-led local development	

### 2.A.4.2. Justification for the establishment of a priority axis covering more than one thematic objective

(Reference: Article 8(1) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

### 2.A.4.3. Fund and calculation basis for Union support

Fund	ERDF
Calculation basis (total eligible expenditure or eligible public expenditure)	Total eligible expenditure

### 2.A.4.4. Investment priority

(Reference: point (b)(i) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	
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### 2.A.4.5. Specific objectives corresponding to the investment priority and expected results

(Reference: points (b)(i) and (ii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

ID	4.1.
Specific objective	<b>Provide the efficient and frictionless enforcement of the cooperation programme</b>
The results that the Member States seek to achieve with Union support	An efficient implementation of cooperation programme demands technical management in order to ensure a realization of the programme objectives, and thus, the achievement of the desirable results. The allocation of Technical Assistance funds aims to ensure a proficient operation of all bodies which are needed for cooperation programme's frictionless enforcement (Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat, First Level Control, Certifying Authority, Audit Authority/Audit Body, National Authority in Slovenia and National Authority in Croatia) and this will contribute to

smooth transition to the period 2014 - 2020, institutional stability and necessary adjustments to the functions and tasks stated in the ESI funds regulations 2014 – 2020. Programme shall also address the target of reducing the administrative burden for beneficiaries.

Adequate staffing of the JS and joint management of the activities under the head of the JS regardless of the different locations the JS will contribute to efficient management of the JS and reduce employee Turnover.

In supporting the works of JS certain horizontal tasks (employment of JS members, setting up and operation of the programme's Monitoring and Information System, legal services) will be delegated to a separate unit of GODC.

The work portfolio of the enlisted bodies includes a variety of actions as preparation, management, monitoring, evaluation, information and communication, networking, certification of expenditures control and audit which have to be provided on one hand to the interested applicants (e.g. beneficiaries at a later stage) and the wider public as well as to the European Commission on the other hand.

The performances have to be undertaken professionally in order to provide support to the selected beneficiaries throughout all phases of the project management which includes initiation, planning/design, execution, monitoring and controlling, closing, reporting. Interested applicants and later beneficiaries have to be provided with the needed information in an easily accessible and simple way. Corresponding to the diversity of the applicants and/or beneficiaries as well as their variety in communication needs, a well-balanced blend between the usage of modern communication technology (e.g. online services) and a more traditional approach (e.g. face-to-face meetings) has to be established.

Moreover, informational and communicational actions should be undertaken to notify the wider public in the programme area and beyond about the funded and implemented projects, including general and specific project information. Further efforts include events for a wider public as competitions, get-togethers, publishing articles and other activities, etc. Such actions serve to raise awareness and promote operations to the inhabitants of the eligible area as well as good practice examples for potential emulators in other areas.

**Table 24** Programme specific result indicators

(Reference: point (b)(ii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

ID	Indicator	Measurement unit	Baseline value	Baseline year	Target value (2023)	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
Not applicable. Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council [...], Article 96, [...].Point (ii) shall not apply where the Union contribution to the priority axis or axes concerning technical assistance in an operational programme does not exceed EUR 15,000,000.							

## 2.A.4.6. Actions to be supported under the investment priority

2.A.4.6.1. A description of the type and examples of actions to be supported and their expected contribution to the specific objectives, including, where appropriate, identification of the main target groups, specific territories targeted and types of beneficiaries

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Investment priority	
<b>Indicative actions to be supported:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Simplification of the application, reporting procedures to reduce bureaucracy/administrative barriers by using the Harmonized Implementation Tools (HIT) and e-MS;</li> <li>- Trainings for the beneficiaries, programme Authorities and Bodies on the use of the e-MS and Harmonized Implementation Tools (HIT);</li> <li>- Setting-up of the Joint Secretariat with the appropriate categorisation of the staff taking into account demanding JS tasks to be performed and working in the international environment</li> <li>- Organization of the Monitoring Committee meetings;</li> <li>- Organisation of bilateral technical meetings to contribute to effective and qualitative programme implementation (e.g. to improve immediate response on the challenges in the programme...);</li> <li>- Exchange of information and good practices between the other relevant cross-border programmes in the regions (e.g. SI/AT, SI/HU, AT/HU, HU/CRO);</li> <li>- Reinforcement of capacities of project applicants and beneficiaries to submit project proposals that have high potential to contribute to the programme objectives;</li> <li>- Preparation of annual reports also with the aim of better visibility of the programme and its results;</li> <li>- Development, maintenance and the adaptation of the e-MS to the needs of programme;</li> <li>- Introduction and use of E-Cohesion;</li> <li>- Establishment and developing cooperation with the National Coordinators/National Contact Points for Macro-region strategies;</li> <li>- Specific activities of first level control;</li> <li>- Audit activities and activities of the Certifying Authority;</li> <li>- Programme level communication events and actions;</li> <li>- Elaboration of the Evaluation Plan of the programme – Article 114.1 CPR Regulation;</li> <li>- Preparation of the future Cooperation Programme, activities related to the closure of the previous programme (Article 59 of CPR).</li> </ul>	
Target groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential project beneficiaries</li> <li>- Line ministries</li> <li>- Management authorities of other cross-border programmes</li> </ul>
Indicative types of beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bodies designated in Section 5</li> </ul>
Specific territories targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Programme area</li> </ul>

## 2.A.4.6.2. Guiding principles for the selection of operations

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

## 2.A.4.6.3. Planned use of financial instruments (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable



#### 2.A.4.6.4. Planned use of major projects (where appropriate)

(Reference: point (b)(iii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

Not applicable

#### 2.A.4.6.5. Output indicators (by investment priority)

(Reference: point (b)(iv) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

**Table 25** Programme specific output indicators

ID	Indicator (name of indicator)	Measurement unit	Target (2023)	value	Source of data	Frequency of reporting
4-OI-1	Number of joint CB projects implemented and concluded	Number	57		Monitoring System	Annually
4-OI-2	Number of joint CB informational and publicity events	Number	10		Monitoring System	Annually
4-OI-3	Number of employees whose salaries are co-financed by the technical assistance	Number	12		Monitoring System	Annually

#### 2.A.4.7. Performance framework

(Reference: point (b)(v) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation and Annex II of the CPR)

**Table 26** Performance framework of the priority axis

P. axis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit, where appropriate	Milestone for 2018	Final target (2023)	Source of data	Evaluation of the relevance
Not applicable								

#### 2.A.4.8. Categories of intervention

(Reference: point (b)(vii) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)

**Table 27** Dimension 1 Intervention field

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
4	121 Preparation, implementation, monitoring and inspection	2,720,000
4	122 Evaluation and studies	140,000
4	123 Information and communication	140,000

**Table 28** Dimension 2 Form of finance

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
34	01 (Non-repayable grant)	3,000,000

**Table 29** Dimension 3 Territory type

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
34	01 Large Urban areas (densely populated > 50 000 population)	NA
34	02 (Small Urban areas (intermediate density > 5 000 population)	NA

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
34	03 (Rural areas (thinly populated))	NA

**Table 30** Dimension 4 Territorial delivery mechanisms

Priority axis	Code	Amount (EUR)
34	07 (Not applicable)	3,000,000

**2.A.4.9. A summary of the planned use of technical assistance (where appropriate)***(Reference: point (b)(vi) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)*

Not applicable

## SECTION 3

### FINANCING PLAN

#### 3.1. Financial appropriation from ERDF (in EUR)

**Table 31** Annual support from ERDF in EUR

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
ERDF	2,305,709	3,227,993	4,611,419	8,761,697	8,761,697	9,222,839	9,222,839	46,114,193
IPA								
ENI								
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,305,709</b>	<b>3,227,993</b>	<b>4,611,419</b>	<b>8,761,697</b>	<b>8,761,697</b>	<b>9,222,839</b>	<b>9,222,839</b>	<b>46,114,193</b>

### 3.2.A Total financial appropriation from the ERDF and national co-financing (in EUR)

**Table 32** Financing plan in EUR

Priority axis	Fund	Basis for calculation of Union support (Total eligible costs or public cost)	Union support (a)	National counterpart (b)= (c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total funding (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	For information	
					National public funding (c)	National private funding (d) (1)			Contribution from third countries	Contribution from EIB
Priority Axis 1	ERDF	Total eligible cost	10,026,557	1,769,393	1,769,393		11,795,950	85%	NA	NA
Priority Axis 2	ERDF	Total eligible cost	28,074,358	4,954,299	3,468,009	1,486,290	33,028,657	85%	NA	NA
Priority Axis 3	ERDF	Total eligible cost	5,013,278	884,697	796,227	88,470	5,897,975	85%	NA	NA
Priority Axis 4 TA	ERDF	Total eligible cost	3,000,000	1,968,331	1,968,331		4,968,331	60.4%	NA	NA
<b>Total</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>46,114,193</b>	<b>9,576,720</b>	<b>8,001,960</b>	<b>1,574,760</b>	<b>55,690,913</b>	<b>82.8%</b>		

(1) 30% of private co-funding is expected within Priority Axis 2 and 10% within Priority Axis 3.



### 3.2.B Breakdown by priority axis and thematic objective

**Table 33** Breakdown of the financial plan in EUR

Priority axis	Thematic objective	Union support	National counterpart	Total funding
Priority Axis 1	TO 5	10,026,557	1,769,393 <del>2</del>	11,795,949 <del>950</del>
Priority Axis 2	TO 6	28,074,358	4,954,299 <del>8</del>	33,028,657 <del>6</del>
Priority Axis 3	TO 11	5,013,278	884,697 <del>6</del>	5,897,975 <del>4</del>
Priority Axis 4	TA	3,000,000	1,968,331	4,968,331
<b>Total</b>		<b>46,114,193</b>	<b>9,576,717<del>720</del></b>	<b>55,690,910<del>913</del></b>

**Table 34** Indicative amount of support to be used for climate change objectives

Priority axis	Indicative amount to be used for climate change objectives	Proportion of the total allocation to the programme (%)
Priority Axis 1	10,026,557	21.7%
Priority Axis 2	4,805,949	10.4%
Priority Axis 3	0	0.0%
Priority Axis 4	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,832,506</b>	<b>32.2%</b>

## SECTION 4

### INTEGRATED APPROACH TO TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT

*(Reference: Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

The Situation Analysis has identified disparities between growing urban poles and declining peripheral areas as a major bottleneck for the sustainable development of the border area. Conversely, the preserved natural and cultural resources of the rural areas and the human/market potentials of the growing poles serve as the main development potential.

Thus, the SI-HR strategy focuses on activating indigenous resources of the rural border territories while utilizing the capacities of the growing poles. This multi-dimensional approach, the promotion of cross-sector cooperation and an emphasis on concrete solutions represent the backbone of the CP. Only in this way we can achieve an efficient response to the challenges of the programme area, while improving territorial cohesion in consideration of its resources. Through indicative actions, the CP stimulates various means that support an integrated approach to territorial development.

**Priority Axis 1: Integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins** concentrates on a pre-defined border river basin's territory, where only a cross-border and territorial- based approach can lead to effective results in flood risk prevention. Planning and implementation shall respect an integrated approach, taking into account economic development, climate change, spatial planning and sustainable solutions for flood risk mitigation.

**Priority Axis 2: Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources** strives to preserve biodiversity, improve the quality of natural and cultural heritage and enhance competitiveness and visibility of the SI-HR area as a sustainable tourism destination. To achieve a bottom-up and integrated approach that links different sectors, people and stakeholders a territorial or product based solution is preferred. Actions shall focus on mobilising the natural/cultural potential of hinterland and small/medium towns, thus strengthening their economic stability. Projects under SO 2.1. which better demonstrate product or territorial approach will be given higher relevance. During the implementation the programme management will facilitate co-operation between projects with similar thematic or operating within the same territory. Alike, projects under SO 2.2 addressing bordering territories of Natura 2000 sites, forests or karst areas shall be given higher relevance.

**Priority Axis 3: Healthy, safe and accessible border areas** aims at enhancing institutional capacities and CB networks to provide efficient service delivery in areas with significant delivery gaps. This PA again encourages institutions of urban centres to improve access and quality of health, social, safety and mobility services in rural areas. Proposed actions are aimed at reducing discrimination while promoting social inclusion and socio-economic stability of the peripheral communities' most sensitive groups. Rural areas to benefit service provision are defined within CP while the requirement is set as a guiding principle and shall be respected by beneficiaries.

Priority axes are in line with the PA of Slovenia<sup>26</sup> and Croatia<sup>27</sup>. The CP considers the specific context and challenges of the area while complementing TOs that are better addressed by mainstream programmes. The CP will contribute to reducing regional disparity, which both countries have set as a key strategic objective.

#### **4.1 Community led local development (where appropriate)**

*(Reference: point (a) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

Not applicable.

#### **4.2 Integrated actions for sustainable urban development (where appropriate)**

*(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

Not applicable.

#### **4.3 Integrated Territorial Investments (where appropriate)**

*(Reference: point (c) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

Not applicable.

#### **4.4 Contribution of planned interventions towards macro-regional and sea basin strategies, subject to the needs of the programme area as identified by the relevant Member States and taking into account, where applicable, strategically important projects identified in those strategies (where appropriate and where Member States and regions participate in macro-regional and sea basin strategies)**

*(Reference: point (d) of Article 8(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

The CP Slovenia – Croatia 2014 – 2020 is affected by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALPS). Thus, selected thematic objectives and investment priorities of the CP Slovenia – Croatia consider the priority objectives of all three macro-regional strategies, aiming to maximise thematic synergies and value added. Like CP Slovenia – Croatia 2014 – 2020, all macro-regional strategies support sustainable development, highlight the need for preserving natural and cultural resources and identify sustainable tourism as the main focus of socio-economic development. The CP has potential to create synergies with the following pillars and priority areas of macro-regional strategies:

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<sup>26</sup> Partnership Agreement Republic of Slovenia, 2014/Sl16M8PA001-1.3.

<sup>27</sup> Partnership Agreement Republic of Croatia, 2014/HR16M8PA001-1.3



**a) EU Strategy for the Danube Region (Slovenia, Croatia)**

Main pillars: Connect the region, Protecting the environment, Strengthening the region, Building prosperity

Potential priority axes and topics for creation of synergies:

- PA 03 – Culture and tourism
- PA 05 – Environmental risks
- PA 06 – Biodiversity, landscapes, quality of air and soils
- PA 10 – Institutional capacity and coordination

**b) EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (Slovenia, Croatia)**

Main pillars: 1. Blue growth, 2. Connecting the region, 3. Environmental quality, 4. Sustainable tourism

Potential priority axes and topics for creation of synergies:

- Topic 1.3 – Maritime and marine governance and services
- Topic 2.2 Intermodal connections to the hinterland
- Topic 3.1 The marine environment
- Topic 3.2 Transnational terrestrial habitats and biodiversity
- Topic 4.1 Diversified tourism offers
- Topic 4.2 Sustainable and responsible tourism management (innovation and quality)

**c) EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (Slovenia)**

Main pillars: Competitiveness, prosperity and cohesion; Accessibility and connectivity; Environmentally sustainable and attractive

Potential priority axes and topics for creation of synergies:

- PA 2.2 Improve sustainable accessibility for all Alpine areas;
- PA 2.3 Better connect society in the region
- PA 3.1 Reinforce Alpine natural and cultural resources as assets of a high quality living area
- PA 3.3 Alpine risk management including risk dialogue, tackling potential threats such as those related to climate change

During implementation, the MA and JS at the programme level and NAs at the national level will ensure appropriate coordination with all three macro-regional strategies, allowing for co-ordination of synergies during programme planning and implementing mechanisms such as:

- Mutual exchange of information within the Slovenian and the Croatian National Co-ordinators for the Macroregional strategies (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and at the level of Macroregional thematic working groups.
- Promotion and facilitation of links to each of three macro-regional strategies within the CP SI-HR programme communication activities.
- Mobilising stakeholders in the same territory and rising awareness among general public of the programme area of shared challenges and targets.
- Promoting on-going cooperation and more in-depth working relationships at the level of project partners and EUSALPS, EUAIR and EUSDR stakeholders and in areas of common interest.
- Participation at events and networking of National co-ordinators, stakeholders, partners and projects within the same thematic field by way of related programmes and macro-strategies.

Specifying in the programme evaluations and annual reports (2017, 2019), how the programme contributes to the challenges identified by the EUSALPS, EUAIR and EUSDR. It is noteworthy that a collaboration with EUAIR will be eased as one of programme co-ordination points will be set in Slovenia. So called, Facility Point will act as interlocutor or a bridge between the ADRION program and EUAIR. This will enable direct involvement (of GODC representatives) to the EUAIR Governing Board and its 4 thematic steering groups and smoother coordination with ADRION programme. There will be meetings, workshops and other events organized with the possibility of attendance of other ETC experts, too.

Furthermore, there is one EGTC covering part of the programming area on the trilateral border area Slovenia/Hungary/Croatia. Pannon EGTC, seated in the city of Pécs, Hungary was established in 2010 by majority of Hungarian municipalities. Until recently it has not been very active, however it shall be approached to facilitate the partnership between municipalities within EUSDR macro region as it joins members from NE part of Slovenia and Hungary, while Croatian members are having the status of observers.

## SECTION 5

### IMPLEMENTING PROVISIONS FOR THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

(Reference: Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

#### 5.1. Relevant authorities and bodies

(Reference: Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

**Table 35** Programme authorities

(Reference: point (a)(i) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Authority/body	Name of authority/body and department or unit	Head of the authority/body (position or post)
Managing Authority (MA)	- Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODC),  European Territorial Cooperation and Financial Mechanism Office, Cross-border Programmes Management Division	- Head of MA
Certifying Authority (CA)	- Public Fund for Regional Development of the Republic of Slovenia	- Head of CA
Audit Authority (AA)	- Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Slovenia, Budget Supervision Office of the RS	- Head of AA

The body to which payments will be made by the Commission is:

(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

☐ The Managing Authority

☒ **The Certifying Authority**

**Table 36** Body or bodies carrying out control and audit tasks

(Reference: points (a)(ii) and (iii) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Authority/body	Name of authority/body	Head of the authority/body
<b>Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks</b>	- Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy, Control office, Control division ETC, IPA and IFM programmes	- Head of the Control Office
	- Agency for Regional Development of the Republic of Croatia, Directorate for Financial	- Director

Authority/body	Name of authority/body	Head of the authority/body
	Management and Accounting, Service for FLC	
<b>Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks</b>	- Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Slovenia, Budget Supervision Office of the RS	- Director of the Budget Supervision Office of the RS
	- Agency for the Audit of EU Programmes Implementation System, Croatia	- Director

## 5.2. Procedure for setting up the Joint Secretariat

(Reference: point (a)(iv) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

After consultations with the Members States the Managing Authority will set up the Joint Secretariat (JS) in compliance with the Article 23 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 (ETC Regulation). The JS will assist the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee (MC) in carrying out their respective functions. The Joint Secretariat and the head of the JS will be in Ljubljana, within the official structures of the GODC. The JS will have two branch offices in Croatia. JS will be employed by GODC except for branch offices in Croatia, which will be employed by MRDEUF. The staff members shall be selected in agreement with both Member States. Regardless of the different locations the JS will have joint management under the responsibility of the head of the JS. The JS is set up within the same division as the MA. A clear separation of tasks will be ensured within the description of the posts.

**Table 37** Joint Secretariat and its info points

	Name	Location
<b>Joint Secretariat</b>	- Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODC),  European Territorial Cooperation and Financial Mechanism Office, Cross-border Programmes Management Division	Ljubljana
<b>Branch Offices</b>	- Branch Office in Croatia 1: Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds	Jastrebarsko
	- Branch Office in Croatia 2: Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds	Buzet

## 5.3. Summary description of the management and control arrangements

(Reference: point (a)(v) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

### 5.3.1 Programme Authorities and Bodies

#### 5.3.1.1. Programme Authorities

The joint implementation structure is built on the following programme authorities: **Managing Authority (MA), Certifying Authority (CA) and Audit Authority (AA)**.

According to the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 (Common Provisions Regulation, CPR) there are no substantial changes in functions of the programme authorities as well as the MC and the JS in regard to the period 2007 – 2013.

The following articles of the CPR and the ETC Regulation describe functions of the programme authorities:

- Article 125 of the CPR and Article 23 of the ETC Regulation: Managing Authority;
- Article 126 of the CPR and Article 24 of the ETC Regulation: Certifying Authority;
- Article 127 of the CPR and article 25 of the ETC Regulation: Audit Authority/Group of Auditors.

Although the MA bears overall responsibility for the Programme, certain horizontal tasks (employment of JS members, setting up and operation of the programme's Monitoring and Information System, legal services) will be delegated to a separate unit of GODC.

The Audit Authority will be assisted by a Group of Auditors comprising of representatives of both Member States participating in the cooperation programme.

Bilateral technical meetings will be organised by the MA in order to contribute to effective and qualitative programme implementation. Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, National Authorities (NA) and when applicable also Certifying Authority, Audit Authority and First level Control (FLC) will participate at the meetings. The meetings will be chaired by the MA.

More detailed provisions, relating to the internal control environment, risk management, management and control activities and monitoring will be included in the description of the functions and procedures for the Managing Authority and the Certifying Authority according to Article 124 of the CPR and the programme guidance documents.

#### 5.3.1.2. Programme Bodies

##### ◆ Monitoring Committee (MC)

Within three months of the date of notification to the Member State of the Commission decision adopting a programme, the Member States participating in the programme, in agreement with the Managing Authority, will set up a Monitoring Committee. The composition of the Monitoring Committee will be agreed by Member States in line with Article 5 of the CPR and taking into consideration Commission Delegated Regulation on the European Code of Conduct on Partnership. Details of the voting procedure will be set out in the MC's Rules of Procedure.

The main functions of the monitoring committee are described in the Article 49 of the CPR. Modalities of the Monitoring Committee work will be defined in the MC's Rules of Procedure while taking into account the general rule that each country has one vote and that decisions are taken in consensus. Monitoring Committee will be chaired by the Managing Authority. Meetings will be held alternatively in both MSs.

Member States will aim to promote gender balance and equal opportunity in the membership of the Monitoring Committee.

#### ◆ Joint Secretariat (JS)

The Joint Secretariat will assist the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions. The Joint Secretariat shall also provide information to potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under cooperation programme and shall assist beneficiaries in the implementation of operations. The JS is placed within the GODC and will have two branch offices in Croatia.

#### ◆ National Authorities (NA) – representatives of the Member States

NAs contribute to the programme by:

- Setting up the First level control system as set out in Article 74 of the CPR and 23 (4) of the ETC regulation;
- Representing the Member States and as such participating in the MC;
- Taking part in the implementation of the programme according to the guidance document.

**Table 38** National authorities

	Name of the body	Location
<b>National Authority in Slovenia</b>	- Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODC),  European Territorial Cooperation and Financial Mechanism Office, European Territorial Cooperation Division	Ljubljana
<b>National Authority in Croatia</b>	- Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds Directorate for Regional Development Sector for Regional Development Policy Service for International Territorial Cooperation	Zagreb

#### ◆ First Level Control Bodies (FLC)

As regards the verifications of expenditure in relation to beneficiaries, both Member States will designate the First Level Control Bodies as set out in Article 74 of the CPR and Article 23 (4) of the ETC regulation.

### 5.3.2 Project cycle/ Description of procedures

The administrative work involved in the procedures for granting assistance to the individual projects will be described in the programme guidance documents agreed between the programme authorities and bodies.

#### ◆ Project generation

Pro-active project generation is a basic principle of the Cooperation Programme, as it leads to projects with a clear added-value in the cross-border approach and achievement of the implementation steps, financial and output and result indicators, as set out in the performance framework.

The programme relevant authorities and bodies will provide information, support and assistance in partner-search to potential project applicants. For this purpose thematic workshops and/or seminars will be organised in the programme area.

The NAs will assist the JS in organising the support of potential project applicants in finding cross-border project partners.

#### ◆ Project application

The programme will operate on the basis of the **Open Call system**. This means that project holders can submit project applications continuously after opening the Call, which is open until all programme funds are disbursed. Applications received in set deadline before each MC and fulfilling all requirements will be subject to MC decision. In addition to an Open Call System as described the Call System with one deadline shall be allowed.

The application process will be carried out completely in an **online system** using the Harmonized Implementation Tools (HIT). Project applications will be submitted by the Lead Partner (LP) in electronic form to the JS.

In addition to call for proposals direct approval of strategic projects could be allowed.

#### ◆ Project assessment and selection

Within this paragraph general methods and principles of project assessment and selection are described while specific principles are given under description of each of investment priorities in Section 2.

Methodology for project assessment will be defined by the MA in cooperation with the NAs and approved by the MC. The MA will propose common standards for the eligibility and selection criteria which will be subject to the approval of the MC. The selection criteria will be made available in the application pack. The JS has the overall responsibility of organising the assessment of project applications. Details on the assessment process and the role of JS, NAs and external experts will be set out in the programme guidance documents.

The results of the assessment in a form of a report and a ranking list will be presented by the JS to the MC for its final decision. This report will cover all the project applications, which were received by the JS, and will provide recommendations for decision – consistently taking reference to the selection criteria given by the guidance documents.

The programme authorities and bodies ensure clear, transparent and traceable assessment and selection process. Selection will be based on **eligibility** and **selection** criteria.

A set of **administrative compliance and eligibility criteria** will be defined to ensure compliance of all project applications with formal requirements. This part of the assessment will especially focus on the following points:

- Submission in due time;
- Completeness of the submitted project application package;
- Financial capacity of the project partners;
- Sufficient co-funding sources;
- No evidence for funding by other resources (double financing) at this stage of assessment;
- Requirements for the partnership and geographical eligibility;
- Compliance with the CP specific objectives and indicators.

Those project applications that fully comply with the administrative compliance and eligibility criteria will be subject to quality assessment.

Quality assessment aims at assessing the relevance and feasibility of the project. This is reflected in two types of assessment criteria. **Strategic assessment criteria** are meant to determine the extent of the project's contribution to the achievement of the programme objectives. A strong focus is given to the result orientation of a project with the demand for visible outputs and concrete and sustainable results.

**Operational assessment criteria** review the viability and feasibility of the proposed project, as well as its value for money in terms of resources used versus outputs delivered.

All projects receiving funds have to meet the following quality requirements:

- Cross-border relevance;
- Compliance with relevant EU, national and regional strategies;
- Partnership relevance;
- Concrete outputs and sustainable measurable results;
- Coherent approach;
- Sound project communication strategy and tools;
- Effective management;
- Cost effective budget.

Since some of the potential beneficiaries (especially SMEs) and actions will be state aid relevant, the programme will respect state aid legal framework.

#### ◆ **Project decision for ERDF funding**

The MC decides on the approval of the projects and on the ERDF contribution. The MC meets at least once a year; in urgent cases programme authorities and bodies can ask for an additional MC or a written procedure for project decisions. After the formal decision is made, the applicant will be informed about the decision on the submitted project application by the MA.

#### ◆ **Contracting**

Following the decision of the MC, the JS will draft a Subsidy Contract by using a standard template approved by the MC. The Subsidy Contract lays down details concerning the responsibilities and liabilities of all contracting parties. It is addressed to the Lead Partner and signed by the legal representative of the Lead Partner and the MA. In line with the system put in place in each country the national funding bodies can issue the national co-financing contracts linked to the Subsidy Contract to the project partners.

Besides the general legal framework, the Subsidy Contract will lay down among other: the subject and duration of the contract, budgetary allocation (maximum ERDF funding), procedures and obligations regarding reporting and payments, obligations within the partnership, general conditions for the eligibility of costs, procedures for project changes, obligations regarding validation of expenditure and audit of operations, recovery obligations and procedures, information and publicity requirements, closure arrangements, rules for amendments to the contract and liability clauses in line with national legal requirements of the MA. The over-commitment of the ERDF funds should also be considered in order to optimise the disbursement process. Pre-financing of ERDF funds to Lead Partner up to 10% will be used as long as the funds are available.

#### ◆ **Resolution of complaints**

The complaints are differentiated according to the object of the complaint.

##### **Complaints related to assessment and selection:**

Project lead applicants will be informed in writing about the reasons why an application was not eligible or approved. Any complaint related to the assessment shall be submitted by the lead applicant to the MA that,



in collaboration with the MC, if necessary, will examine and provide its position regarding the merit of the complaint.

#### **Complaints related to decisions made by the MA or JS:**

Any complaints in relation to decisions made by the MA or JS on the basis of the Subsidy contract or MC decisions shall be submitted by the project applicant/beneficiary to the MA or JS, taking into the consideration their role in the decision-making process, that will examine and provide in due time an answer (in collaboration with the MC, if necessary). Where courts, public prosecution offices or other national institutions are competent in relation to the object of the complaint, the applicant/beneficiary has the right to turn also to these authorities in Slovenia.

#### **Complaints related to the First Level Control:**

Project Lead Partners or partners that have complaints related to the First level control system set up in accordance with Article 23(4) of the ETC Regulation, can file the complaint to the institution responsible for the financial control of the relevant Member State following national procedures set in place in accordance with Article 74(3) of the CPR.

Further information on the procedure for the submission of complaints will be laid down in the relevant programme documents communicated to applicants and beneficiaries.

#### **◆ Project reporting and reimbursement to beneficiaries**

In accordance with Article 13 of ETC Regulation, for each project, project partners will appoint a Lead Partner (LP). The LP will assume overall responsibility for the implementation of the project, including the handling of ERDF funds and taking any judicial and administrative procedures to recover amounts unduly paid to the project partners.

All project expenditure has to be pre-financed by the project partners. Expenditure of all partners have to be validated by First Level Control in line with Article 125 (4) of CPR. The LP collects certificates of all project partners that are issued by the FLC after verification of expenditure. These certificates will be included in activity and financial progress reports that the LP periodically presents to the JS. In these documents, the LP reports about progress achieved in project implementation and on related validated expenditure. This will be the basis for the project's claim for reimbursement. On the basis of the submitted reports, the JS monitors the progress of the projects both in financial terms and in terms of activities implemented. When assessing the reports, the JS considers the use of ERDF and the progress in implementation of the project in order to monitor the proper implementation of the project compliant with the Subsidy Contract.

Based on checks of the reports undertaken by the JS and in accordance with Article 21 (2) of ETC Regulation and Article 132 of CPR, the CA will make payments to the LP who is responsible for transferring the ERDF contribution to the partners participating in the project. On behalf of the LP direct transfers from the CA to the project partners could also be an option but the overall financial responsibility lies with the LP. The option selected, has to be mentioned in the partnership agreement and – if the project is approved – also in the Subsidy Contract.

In line with Article 132 of CPR, MA ensures that beneficiaries, subject to the availability of ERDF funds, receive payments in full and in due time, no later than 90 days from the date of submission of the LP Application for payment. No deduction, retention or further specific charges which would reduce the amount of the payment shall be made. The payment deadline may be interrupted by the MA in duly justified cases as described in Article 132 (2) of CPR.

### 5.3.3. First level control system

In accordance with Article 125 (4) of CPR and Article 23 (4) of ETC Regulation each Member State will designate the First Level Control Body for carrying out verifications in relation to beneficiaries on its territory. The control system is set up to verify the delivery of the products and services co-financed, the soundness of the expenditure declared for operations and the compliance with EU rules, programme rules and its national rules. Both countries in the Cooperation Programme set up centralised system of First Level Control.

In order to ensure coherence among all controllers responsible, standard templates such as control certificate and report will be used in the programme e-Monitoring System (e-MS). Furthermore, a network of controllers will be established to ensure harmonization, regular exchange of knowledge and good practices.

### 5.3.4. Programme monitoring

The monitoring of this programme will provide information on the implementation. It will cover financial issues and achieved results considering the targets fixed for the different milestones in the performance framework.

Programme data will be recorded and stored in the programme e-MS and will be used, together with additional information on the financial implementation of the programme, for drafting the annual and final implementation reports. The monitoring data will be available to the MA, CA, AA, JS, FLC and NAs as well as to the European Commission on a regular basis.

### 5.3.5. Implementation reports

In accordance with Article 14 of ETC Regulation, the MA will submit implementation reports (annual implementation reports and final implementation report) to the EC in accordance with the requirements stipulated in Article 50 of the CPR and respecting the deadlines set in Article 14 of ETC Regulation.

The annual implementation reports will be drafted by JS on the basis of programme monitoring data and data provided by the beneficiaries in their progress and final reports and other programme bodies. The annual implementation reports of the programme will be submitted to the MC for approval prior to sending to the EC.

### 5.3.6. Programme evaluations

The Cooperation Programme has been subject to an ex-ante evaluation of independent evaluators with the aim of improving the overall quality of the programme and to optimise the allocation of budgetary resources.

In accordance with Article 56 and 114 of the CPR, the MA will draw up an evaluation plan, which will be approved by the MC prior to sending to the EC. The evaluations will be carried out to assess effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the programme. All evaluations, recommendations and follow-up actions will be examined and approved by the MC.

By 31 December 2022, the MA will submit to the EC a report summarising the findings of evaluations carried out during the programming period, including an assessment of the main outputs and results of the

programme. In compliance with Article 57 and 114 of the CPR, the ex-post evaluation lies in the responsibility of the EC together with the Member States.

### 5.3.7. Monitoring System

On the side of the programme, the e-MS according to Article 72 of CPR shall provide data and information needed to fulfil management, monitoring and evaluation requirements. As stipulated in Articles 74 and 112 of CPR, data exchange with the EC will be carried out electronically (by means of SFC2014). In accordance with Article 122 of CPR, the programme will ensure that no later than 31 December 2015, all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and the MA/ CA and AA can be carried out by means of an electronic data exchange system. The e-MS will comply with the following aspects:

- Data integrity and confidentiality;
- Authentication of the sender within the meaning of Directive 1999/93/EC4;
- Storage in compliance with retention rules defined in Article 140 of CPR;
- Secure transfer of data;
- Availability during and outside standard office hours (except for technical maintenance activities)
- Accessibility by the MSs and the beneficiaries either directly or via an interface for automatic synchronisation and recording of data with national, regional and local computer management systems;
- Protection of privacy of personal data for individuals and commercial confidentiality for legal entities with respect to the information processed (according to Directive 2002/58/EC concerning the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy in the electronic communications sector and Directive 1995/46/EC on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data).

### 5.3.8. Information and communication

According to Articles 115 and 116 of CPR, a communication strategy will be drafted and submitted to the MC not later than 6 months after adoption of the programme. Any revision of the communication strategy will be discussed and approved by the MC.

In line with Article 116 (3) of CPR, the MA will inform the MC at least once a year on the progress in the implementation of the communication strategy and its assessment of the results, as well as on the planned information and communication activities to be carried out in the following year.

The aim of the communication strategy is two-fold, to inform potential applicants about funding opportunities under the cooperation programme and to communicate achievements of Cohesion Policy to the general public by focusing on the results and impacts of the programme and its operations. The cooperation programme will use harmonised branding introduced on a voluntary basis by ETC programmes for the period 2014-2020.

The communication strategy will be implemented within the JS that will be responsible for information and communication activities at the level of the programme area. A budget for the implementation of the communication strategy will be made available as part of the programme's budget for technical assistance.

The programme working language is English. All documents relevant for the beneficiaries will be provided in Slovene and Croatian language.

## 5.4. Apportionment of liabilities among participating Member States in case of financial corrections imposed by the managing authority or the Commission

*(Reference: point (a)(vi) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

Without prejudice to the Member States' responsibility for detecting and correcting irregularities and for recovering amounts unduly paid according to Article 122 (2) of CPR, the MA will ensure that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the LP. In accordance with Article 27 of ETC Regulation, the project partners will repay the Lead Partner (LP) any amounts unduly paid.

If the LP does not succeed in securing repayment from a Project Partner (PP) or if the MA does not succeed in securing repayment from the LP, the Member State on whose territory the PP concerned is located shall reimburse the MA any amounts unduly paid to that beneficiary. The MA shall be responsible for reimbursing the amounts concerned to the general budget of the Union.

Should the MA bear any legal expenses for recovery recourse proceedings – initiated after consultation and in mutual agreement with the respective MS – even if the proceedings are unsuccessful it will be reimbursed by the Member State hosting the LP or PP responsible for the said procedure.

Since Member States have the overall liability for the ERDF support granted to LPs or PPs located on their territories, they shall ensure that – prior to certifying expenditure – any financial corrections required will be secured and they will seek to recover any amounts lost as a result of an irregularity or negligence caused by a beneficiary located in their territory. Where appropriate a Member State may also charge interest on late payments.

In accordance with Article 122 (2) of CPR, irregularities shall be reported by the Member State in which the expenditure is paid by the LP or PP implementing the project. The Member State shall at the same time, inform the MA, CA and the AA.

The Member States will bear liability in connection with the use of the programme ERDF funding as follows:

- Each Member State bears liability for possible financial consequences of irregularities caused by the LPs and PPs located on its territory.
- For a systemic irregularity or financial correction on programme level that cannot be linked to a specific Member State, the liability shall be jointly borne by the Member States in equal proportions (50:50).
- For technical assistance expenditure incurred by the MA/JS, the liability related to administrative irregularities shall be borne by the MA/JS.
- For technical assistance expenditure incurred by the CA, the liability shall be borne by the CA.
- For technical assistance expenditure incurred by the AA, the liability shall be borne by the AA.
- For technical assistance expenditure incurred by the Member States, the liability shall be borne by the Member State concerned.

Member States may decide not to recover any amount unduly paid in special cases in accordance with Article 80 of the Financial Regulation.

## 5.5. Use of the Euro

*(Reference: Article 28 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)*

Expenditure incurred in a currency other than the euro will be converted into euro by the beneficiaries using the monthly accounting exchange rate of the Commission in the month during which that expenditure was submitted for verification to the controller.

## 5.6. Involvement of partners

(Reference: point (c) of Article 8(4) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013)

Developing programmes according to the “partnership principle” is a distinct requirement by EU legislation. Programming of CP Slovenia – Croatia 2014 – 2020 was implemented according to Article 5 of the CPR and the new European code of conduct on partnership<sup>28</sup> in the framework of the ESI funds.

### ♦ The programming process and role of partners

The programming process was managed and steered by the **Task Force (TF)**, which had the mandate to elaborate the programme document for submission to the European Commission. The TF was composed of representatives of National Authorities of both Member States, the MA, the JS and observers. The Task Force Members were selected based on their engagement in the past programme, knowledge of the border area and different sector policies. External experts supported the drafting of the Programme. Experts were also contracted for the Ex-ante evaluation and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA report).

The programming process was launched with the first meeting of the TF on 10.10.2012.

In early 2014, both National Authorities approached programme stakeholders, line ministries and regional actors from both member States to provide recommendations, proposals and policy frameworks for the respective programme area. The programming partners approached the persons responsible for EU programming in all relevant line ministries and the RDAs as the coordinators of regional/local stakeholders and Counties (in Croatia).

In Croatia, regional and policy specific needs were collected through an on-line questionnaire, while in Slovenia regions and line ministries proposed inputs following a Log-Frame matrix. These, together with results of on-going evaluation of the past programme (2007-2013), the situation analysis and revision of mainstream policies and macro-regional strategies, represented a solid baseline for the definition of the strategy and identification of key thematic objectives and investment priorities for the programme area.

External experts together with the representative of the NAs developed generic Log-Frame matrix of the programme and several draft documents as inputs for the discussion of the Task Force. In parallel, experts from different line ministries and agencies of both MS were consulted on specific topics. During the whole process, close co-operation and co-ordination between the drafting team and ex-ante evaluators was established in order to assure the optimal quality of the process and sound and coherent CP strategy.

In January 2015, four **workshops** with relevant stakeholders and potential beneficiaries were organised at four different locations along the Slovenia – Croatia border. More than 1000 institutions and NGOs which identified as potential beneficiaries for the new programme were invited. 244 participants from various local and regional governments, museums, schools, chambers, associations, NGOs and other organisations located in the programming area provided valuable inputs for the justification of the selected thematic objectives, fine tuning of indicative actions and setting realistic indicators.

Main benefits and value added of partnership dialog for the Cooperation Programme were:

- Better response of the CP to the real needs and opportunities of the border regions;
- Sharpening of the programme strategy while avoiding overlapping with ESI funds programmes;
- Adequate allocation of funding according to the capacities and initiatives recognised;

<sup>28</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds

- Valuable inputs from existing beneficiaries for the definition of implementation arrangements and reduction of administrative burdens;
- Enabling partner search and improving cross-border networks through joint workshops;
- Raising awareness and commitment among potential beneficiaries on the timely preparation of projects.

**Consultation process** on the final draft document was carried out between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2015 through public publication of the draft programme on the web site [www.si-hr.eu](http://www.si-hr.eu). 11 organisations, 9 from Slovenia and 2 from Croatia posed 17 different comments. Most of them were received from municipalities (5) while there were 1 RDA, 1 NGO, 2 national bodies and 2 companies submitting observations on the draft CP.

All recommendations and concerns were analysed. Most relevant comments were integrated in final CP while some proposals had to be rejected due to limited funding, overlapping with mainstream programme or incompliance with the set strategy. Several observations were generic or have already referred to concrete project proposals. All comments and answers were published on the programme website.

Over 12 meetings the Task Force reached the consensus on the strategy formulation and implementation arrangements for the programming period 2014-2020 and in March 2015 submitted the CP to EC for approval. **Ex-ante and SEA report** were conducted alongside the programming process, which enabled that their recommendations were fully considered in the final CP.

#### ◆ Role of partners in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the CP

The programme authorities and bodies commit themselves to the partnership principle as laid down in the Article 5 of the CPR and will therefore involve relevant stakeholder and key actors not only in programming phase, but also in the programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

JS and MA will pay particular attention to involve various actors and stakeholders in the programme implementation through different awareness raising and information activities.

## SECTION 6

### COORDINATION

*(Reference: point (a) of Article 8(5) of the ETC Regulation)*

The common objectives of the EU Strategy 2020 provide the potential for the CP SI-HR to create synergies with other EU supported programmes, in particular with nationally implemented ESI funds, ETC and centralised EU programmes.

#### ◆ Partnership Agreements

The specific objectives of CP SI-HR are complementary to and coherent with objectives set out under the same thematic objectives and investment priorities of the Slovenia and Croatia Partnership Agreements. In programme implementation, specific areas of intervention must be subject to on-going coordination so as to avoid overlap and boost possible synergies with thematic objectives relevant to the current CP:

#### TO 5B

- **PA Slovenia:** The same topic is addressed in OP ECP by SO 5.1. "Decrease flood risk in areas of significant flood risk". However, the 13 pre-defined priority target areas that will benefit from mainstream ESI funds do not overlap with the border river basins proposed by this CP.
- **PA Croatia:** Specific coordination needs may arise from objective 5b1 "Increasing capacities and equipping for risk management at the national and regional level". Some prevention and preparedness action as well as investment in flood protection are foreseen. Target flood risk territories for ESI funds investment in Croatia will be defined in the Risk Assessment study due in 2015.
- **Specific coordination needs:** While CP SI-HR targets only selected "border river basins" and addresses common flood risk management issues, mainstream ESI funds will be directed to "areas at highest flood risk" within a particular country. As these areas are not yet defined for Croatia, coordination mechanisms need to be established so as to avoid overlap of target areas and assure compliance of proposed CP measures with national policies and implementation systems. To ensure proper coordination, line ministries responsible for flood risk prevention in both countries shall be consulted.

#### TO 6c, 6d

- **PA Slovenia:** Coordination will be needed with objective 6.4. "Improvement of the conservation status of EU significant species and habitat types, in particular those with unfavourable conservation status and endemic species". This objective primarily addresses Natura 2000 sites, while it supports visitor access infrastructure and interpretation of biodiversity and cultural heritage on a rather limited scale. Synergies with the Rural Development Plan (direct support for landowners in Natura 2000 areas) and the OP for the Maritime and Fisheries Fund (SO3 restoring water biodiversity and ecosystems) shall also be considered.
- **PA Croatia:** As part of Priority Axis 6 Environmental protection and sustainability of resources, Croatia intends to use ESI funds for 6c1 "Enhancing protection and management of cultural heritage for development of tourism and other economic activities", 6c2 "Increasing attractiveness and sustainable usage of natural heritage". Proposed interventions under 6c1 and 6c2 shall result in job creation and increased visits to protected nature areas. A set of additional objectives is grouped around an investment priority addressing preservation and protection of the environment and promotion of resource efficiency,

with the aim of improving knowledge of the state of biodiversity, creating a framework for the sustainable management of biodiversity and preserving forest and forest land in Natura 2000 areas.

- **Specific coordination needs:** CP SI-HR builds on synergies deriving from the cross-border territorial potential that nature and heritage provide for sustainable development. Emphasise on common approaches to the preservation of species and habitats relevant for the programme area and the obligatory creation of joint sustainable tourism products/destinations thus distinguish the CP from national ESI funded programmes. To ensure proper level of coordination, line ministries responsible for biodiversity, heritage and tourism in both countries shall be consulted.

## TO 11

- **PA Slovenia:** Priority Axis 2.11 focuses on improving the rule of law, institutional capacities and efficient public administration in rather narrow fields of public administration and juridical systems. It also aims at NGO/social partner capacity building with an emphasis on improving advocacy capacity and capacity to implement public services. Direct overlap is also not envisaged with other mainstream thematic objectives: TO7 reduces bottlenecks in rail and road transport infrastructure and urban transport, while TO 9 addresses nationwide issues of social inclusion, poverty reduction and active/healthy ageing.
- **PA Croatia:** Relevant actions are funded under the OP for Efficient Human Resources for Croatia, Priority Axis 4 Clever Administration, which pertains to investment in institutional resources and actions set to improve efficiency of public administration management and ensure stronger and informative public services at the national, regional and local levels. Capacity building for stakeholders in education, employment and social policies will also be supported. Furthermore, specific objectives of the OP Competitiveness and Cohesion address large scale road, maritime and rail infrastructure. Potential coordination may be necessary within Priority axis 8 Social inclusion and health.
- **Specific coordination needs:** CP SI-HR provides a framework for cross-border collaboration of institutional and other partnerships so as to better align regulations and services to the needs of people living in border areas. As such, it builds on national objectives and creates value added by providing services in the public interest. There is no major risk of overlap. However, due to the specifics of targeted sectors, the vertical integration of partnerships at the local, regional and national levels is recommended in order to achieve efficiency of services and broader territorial impact. Thus, it is necessary to consult/involve line ministries responsible for transport, disaster recovery, social affairs and health. Regular data exchange between MAs and NAs is necessary for all TOs.

## ♦ European Territorial Cooperation

The entire programme territory overlaps with several transnational co-operation programmes (Danube Programme, Adriatic Ionian Programme, Central Europe, Alpine Space, etc.), while some NUTS-3 regions are eligible in other CBC programmes. CP SI-HR increases complementarity and coherence with the priority investments and activities of these programmes.

An overview of potential overlap of TOs and activities indicates main potential for creation of synergies under Priority axis 2 – Preserving and promoting natural and cultural resources and Priority Axis 1 – Cross-border flood risk prevention. A number of programmes address TO 11, which focuses on different aspects of institutional capacity building. In general, it is anticipated that CP SI-HR will address concrete challenges with practical field solutions and demonstrated actions, while further cooperation at the transnational or interregional level can be complemented in a wider territorial context or by improved policy development and management.



To achieve complementarity and synergies across programmes, efficient coordination at all stages of project generation, selection and implementation is necessary. As a general guide, applicants will need to demonstrate coherence and complementarity with national and regional ESI supported programmes.

#### ◆ Centralised programmes

Furthermore, LIFE, CREATIVE CULTURE and partly HORIZON 2000 are most relevant centralised programmes with potential synergies with the selected objectives of the CP SI-HR. Therefore, involving line ministries responsible for accompanying the programme implementation in Slovenia and Croatia shall pay an adequate attention to the connection.

#### ◆ Institutions and mechanisms of coordination

Mechanisms and bodies established in the MS to ensure effective coordination in Croatia and Slovenia are as follows:

#### Slovenian approach

In Slovenia<sup>29</sup> the **Government office for Development and European Cohesion Policy** (GODC) coordinates the development documents, monitors the implementation of development policies and its programmes and is responsible also for the coordination of documents pertaining to development planning and compliance of national development planning programmes and the European Union and other international organisations' development documents. European Territorial Cooperation and Financial Mechanism Office, Cross-border Programmes Management Division is also placed within GODC. Through ETC cross-border programmes, Slovenia will favour common development strategies.

The contents common to all cross-border programs (including CP SI-HR) and to transnational programmes in the vast majority have their place among the measures of the Danube, the Adriatic-Ionian and Alpine future macro-regions.

The coordination of the preparation of the Partnership Agreement, the Operational Programme for Cohesion Funds and cross-border cooperation programmes takes place within one institution, which both in the documentation preparation stage and during implementation provides for the complementarity and synergies of various funds at national and regional levels. At NUTS III level, Slovenia prepares regional development programmes in accordance with balanced regional development legislation to be used with investments from different sources of financing in key development areas based on territorial challenges and opportunities.

The coordination of the preparation of macro-regional strategies is the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while the coordination and implementation of individual elements of strategies and the preparation of projects are the responsibility of individual ministries.

According to Partnership Agreement between Slovenia and European Commission for the period 2014-2020 (30/10/2014) the **Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee** will provide for coordination between ESI funds that are being indirectly implemented with other EU instruments as well as other national instruments and

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<sup>29</sup>Information about coordination in Slovenia is based on the following documents: »Partnership Agreement between Slovenia and European Commission for the period 2014-2020« (30/10/2014) and "Responsibilities of Government office for development and European cohesion policy" available at: [http://www.svrk.gov.si/en/about\\_the\\_office/responsibilities/](http://www.svrk.gov.si/en/about_the_office/responsibilities/)

the EIB. Membership of the Inter-ministerial Coordination Committee will be represented by the MAs of all the Funds and participating ministries.

With the aim of ensuring Slovenia's contribution to the realisation of the individual thematic objectives the MA will establish relevant **Expert Groups** at the working level under the OP ECP 2014-2020 to provide for the coordinated preparation of expert bases. The latter will be composed of representatives of intermediate bodies, national authorities of ETC, experts on specific areas of macro-regional strategies, information points for direct EU programmes and, if necessary, external experts.

### Croatian approach <sup>30</sup>

The Government of the Republic of Croatia established the **Coordination Committee** for the preparation of programming documents for the financial period of the EU 2014-2020 and designated MRDEUF as the body responsible for the overall coordination in preparation of strategic documents and operational programmes for the use of ESI funds 2014-2020.

Following the completion of the programming exercise, the Coordination Committee (supported by the work of Technical Working Groups, TWG) will be used as a permanent coordination mechanism in the form of **National Coordinating Committee (hereinafter NCC)**, ensuring overall coordination and monitoring of implementation of ESI funds (mainstream operational programmes and cooperation programmes under the IPA and ERDF) and other Union and relevant national funding instruments. TWGs, established in line with European Code of Conduct for Partnership are intended to be used as support to the work of the NCC in increasing the impact and effectiveness of the funds.

NCC supported by the TWGs and technical secretariat provided by the MRDEUF will progressively substitute (where necessary by undertaking/merging part of the resources of) other currently existing coordination and monitoring platforms.

Single unit to perform the function of NA for 11 cooperation programmes and coordinate the participation of the Republic of Croatia in 13 territorial cooperation programmes is placed within the MRDEUF.

Close internal coordination mechanisms between the programmes are ensured through day-to-day work within MRDEUF and ARD as well as regular, weekly meetings, of heads of sectors. Coordination between other stakeholders involved in the implementation of different programmes is currently ensured through the work of **National Committee for Coordination of Croatian Participation in Transnational and Interregional Programmes** as well as Macro regional Strategies of the EU (NC), which has been established as one of the platforms for coordination and monitoring of implementation in the 2014 – 2020 period. For the purpose of further streamlining of coordination and monitoring activities, NC is intended to be progressively merged with the NCC. NCC shall have a crucial role with regards the macro-regional strategies Croatia participates in. As the overall coordinator of all instruments and funds NCC shall have advisory role for the financing of the projects, which contributes to the achievement of the macro-regional strategies goals. As for the cross-border cooperation programmes, all the relevant stakeholders are or will be involved in the monitoring committees directly.

On this basis, coordination of synergies between mainstream and CP SI-HR will be assured in Slovenia and Croatia.

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<sup>30</sup> Information about coordination in Croatia is based on the Partnership Agreement between Croatia and European Commission for the period 2014-2020

## SECTION 7

### REDUCTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR BENEFICIARIES

*(Reference: point (b) of Article 8(5) of the ETC Regulation<sup>29</sup>)*

The reduction of the administrative burden has been a key principle for the whole programming. During the period 2007-2013 the main challenge was management of the project selection phase including checking the administrative compliance and contracting. On the other hand, financial reporting and the time needed from the moment a cost occurred to when it was paid out presented a key burden to beneficiaries. Although all of the programme structures strived to make the assessment and the payment as fast as possible, the problems related to the delays occurred due to several facts; complexity of investment projects, different legal frameworks in Slovenia and Croatia, the reporting periods were frequent (for majority of the projects every 6 months), lack of staff within the JS and national control units. Both processes involve many checks and therefore take time. The specifics of the ETC programmes represented also some challenges for the complex monitoring system.

According to the experience the new programme should tackle the following challenges:

- to simplify the application and reporting procedures (simplification of documentation),
- to reduce bureaucracy/administrative barriers,
- to implement faster procedures (shortening of the decision-making procedures for the approval of projects, shortening of the reporting and reimbursement procedures, faster checking of reports by the first level control, etc.)
- to introduce a user-friendly (adapted to the needs of the programme) information system
- to put greater emphasis on the content and added value of projects etc.

Thereupon, programme partners and beneficiaries are in favour of as much simplification measures as possible that will help to reduce the administrative burden in order to ensure a smooth project application and implementation process. The following measures for the reduction of administrative burden will be implemented in the period 2014-2020:

#### ◆ Use of the Harmonized Implementation Tools (HIT)

Using the INTERACT Harmonized Implementation Tools (application form, reporting forms, administrative, eligibility and assessment criteria, etc.) is especially useful for applicants applying for funding from different funds as many funds will use the same approach, formats or rules, which are then familiar for the partnership. In addition, the use of the Harmonised Implementation Tools enables the exchange of good practices from different ETC programmes and ensures that the focus of the documentation lies on the essential components, which are needed for a good cooperation project. The HIT should be used when preparing the Call in 2015 and trainings on HIT of the authorities, bodies, applicants and beneficiaries will take place regularly.

#### ◆ Extended use of simplified cost options and rules on eligibility of expenditure at the EU level

The simplified cost options (e.g. unit cost, lump sums, flat rate, shared costs etc.) that have been made available by the ESI Regulations are planned to be used and will be defined in the Call. The aim of the simplified cost options is to reduce the amount of needed paperwork and to speed up the reporting, verification and control procedures. When deciding on the eligibility rules and simplified cost options on the

programme level, as defined in regulations and the delegated acts<sup>31</sup>, the experience of the MA, CA and JS of the current period as well as that of the FLC's will be taken into account.

In support of project partners, with the aim of harmonized approach at the level of programme area, the MA in cooperation with the FLCs and other involved parties will provide guidelines on eligibility of costs to the programme partners.

#### ◆ Simplification of the monitoring system (e-MS)

The new programme monitoring system is prepared based on the INTERACT Harmonized Implementation Tools and in cooperation with INTERACT and other ETC programmes. The templates and processes are based on the most essential elements and the structure has been based on an analysis of best practices from several ETC programmes. Also the fact that a lot of programmes use the same templates will simplify for beneficiaries applying from several funding instruments.

The online monitoring system will also enable multi-lingual tool. Furthermore, it eliminates the need to send documents in paper and with signatures. It also allows for streamlined and efficient handling of any changes required to the project application as both the project and JS/MA can access the same information in the database. It allows for interactive and/or pre-filled forms by the system on the basis of the data which is stored at consecutive steps of the procedures, for automatic calculations preventing mistakes and speeding up the work, where appropriate, automatic embedded controls which reduce as much as possible back and forth exchange of documents, system generated alerts to inform the beneficiary of the possibility to perform certain actions and on-line status tracking meaning that the beneficiary can follow up the current state of the project, which results in more transparency. Due to the principle of information inserted only once the beneficiaries avoid doing extra work. The e-Monitoring System also greatly reduces the amount of documents that need to be signed and sent in. The e-MS should be used when preparing the Call in 2015 and trainings on e-MS of the authorities, bodies, applicants and beneficiaries will take place regularly.

#### ◆ Simplification and acceleration of the application as well as reporting procedure

The mentioned simplifications will significantly simplify and accelerate application and reporting process. It includes a simplification of the administering and reporting documentation as well as of the corresponding procedures, like the shortening of the decision-making process of the approval of projects (decision on the submitted projects will be taken at least once a year, the decision of the MC will be taken as general rule within 6 months from the submission of the application). Also the tasks of the JS, national controllers and the functions of Certifying Authority will be reviewed and a simpler implementation process will be set up.

#### ◆ Introduction of E-Cohesion

Exchanges of information carried out by electronic data between beneficiaries and programme structures will be gradually introduced to ensure frictionless information and data flow. Moreover, such an approach would reduce the necessity for the submission of hard copy documents and alleviate the submission of electronic based documentations as well as to avoid excessive manual handling of the data. It shall ensure that no later than 31 December 2015, all exchanges of information between beneficiaries and programme authorities can be carried out by means of electronic data exchange systems.

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<sup>31</sup> Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 481/2014 of 4 March 2014 supplementing Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to specific rules on eligibility of expenditure for cooperation programmes

## SECTION 8

### HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

(Reference: Article 8(7) of the ETC Regulation No. 1299/2013)

#### 8.1 Sustainable development

In accordance with Annex I to CPR, point 5.2 Sustainable development, the programme authorities will undertake actions throughout the programme lifecycle, to avoid or reduce environmentally harmful effects of interventions and ensure results in net social, environmental and climate benefits. Actions to be undertaken may include the following:

- Directing investments towards the most resource-efficient and sustainable options;
- Avoiding investments that may have a significant negative environmental or climate impact, and supporting actions to mitigate any remaining impacts;
- Taking a long-term perspective when 'life-cycle' costs of alternative options for investment are compared;
- Increasing the use of green public procurement.

The SI-HR programme area is geographically diverse and rich in natural and cultural values. Large proportion of the area is under different forms of nature protection for its exceptional biodiversity. On the other hand the programme territory is ecologically sensitive and consequences of the climate change are becoming more evident. Preserving, protecting and improving the quality of the environment are put to the core of the programme strategy. Environmental sustainability is strongly reflected in the programme vision and slogan 'Connected in Green'.

Environmental aspects and objectives are directly reflected in all three priority axes. Actions proposed under **Priority Axis 1** aim at mitigating climate change effects and natural disasters due to increased risk of flooding and will address improvement of common knowledge base and capacities, joint planning and coordination. Concrete structural measures in flood prevention based on environmentally sustainable and ecosystem-based solutions are expected in the selected border river basins. The **Priority Axis 2** focuses on preserving natural and cultural resources of the programme area with particular emphasis on restoration and mobilisation of cultural heritage for sustainable tourism and protecting and restoring of biodiversity. Actions will again practice joined approaches and development and implement concrete actions in protection, restoration and promotion of cultural and natural values, especially in the nature protected areas, hinterlands and remote areas. The **Priority Axis 3** supports capacity building of public authorities and stakeholders aiming at improving health and social care, safety and accessibility of border areas. Actions include cooperation and capacity building of rescue services to increase preparedness and coordinated actions in the event of natural or man-made disasters (e.g. fires). Actions aiming at reducing gaps in accessibility of public services may include exploration of potential for energy efficient solutions related to provision of mobile services in remote areas, introduction of e-services or increase in the efficiency of infrastructure in the border area or similar.

All operations supported under the programme including technical assistance have potential to consider environmental elements, such as planning the cross-border events in environment friendly manner, increasing the level of recycling, use of local food and service chains, giving priority to purchase of long-lasting materials, reducing the need for travels by using online communication channels and applying sustainable mobility concepts, reducing the need for printing and similar.

The beneficiaries will be encouraged to include research and development and innovation related to environment protection, sustainable use of resources and resource efficiency in the development and implementation of operations supported under all three priority axes.

Selected result indicators will measure the progress in increase of the environmental sustainability as indicated in Section 2.

Environmental protection and sustainability will be specifically observed in the **selection of operations, regardless of the priority axis they are proposed to.**

Operations with any substantial negative effect on the environment shall not be supported. Particular attention will be placed on avoiding possible negative environmental effects as identified by the Strategic Environmental Assessment. Operations will have to be compliant with the respective environmental legislation.

Proposals with specific contribution to environmental, climate change adaptation and risk prevention and management shall be promoted. The contribution shall be clearly demonstrated in the application and will be monitored and reported during the implementation of the operation and on its completion.

## 8.2 Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

The programme authorities pursue the objective of equality between men and women and shall take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation during the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of operations.

The programme area identified significant regional disparities in the overall socio-economic development as well as between specific areas (remote areas and immediate border areas, islands). Urban-rural divide is evident in differences in the accessibility of public services, connectivity, poverty issues, out-migration and depopulation of certain areas, health inequalities and others. **Specific target groups** in need of particular attention include elderly, the young unemployed, and population living in remote and underdeveloped areas, disabled persons, low-income families and others. Inclusion and diversity is therefore an important objective to be pursued in the programme.

Inclusive development will be addressed in particular under Priority axes 3 and 2. Actions of the **Priority axis 3** focus on developing partnerships between public bodies and stakeholders for increasing the health, safety and accessibility of services in the areas with significant service delivery gaps. Health care and health promotion, social care services, civil protection, mobility and connectivity are areas to be specifically addressed targeting the groups at a disadvantage. Unemployment and lack of entrepreneurial initiatives are further challenges of the programme areas. Opportunities for the unemployed and population in particular in the rural areas will be addressed in **Priority Axis 2**. Actions aiming at restoration and mobilisation of cultural and natural heritage will promote development of new sustainable tourism products and services thus increasing employment opportunities and access to new knowledge and capacity building. On the other hand, investments in the natural and cultural heritage have to consider possibilities for ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities and elderly to the restored and new infrastructure and services. Developing products and services for new audiences may include target groups at the risk of exclusion. **Priority axis 1** is also addressing equal opportunities; flood risk prevention measures will create opportunities for the population areas threatened by flood risks for the development.

All priority axes will also support building of the social capital of the area by supporting knowledge and skills development of the target groups in priority axis related topics/themes. Moreover, products, services, and infrastructure delivered with the support of the programme shall be accessible to all citizens.

**Equal opportunities will be observed in the selection of operations regardless of the priority axis they are proposed.** Generally, all beneficiaries will be obliged to avoid discrimination of any kind and to ensure that their activities comply with the principles of equal opportunities. The contribution shall be clearly demonstrated in the application and will be monitored and reported during the implementation of the operation and on its completion. Equal opportunities and discrimination aspects may also be addressed in the programme evaluations.

### 8.3 Promotion of equality between men and women

The programme authorities pursue the objective of equality between men and women and will take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination during the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of operations in the programme.

Main differences between men and women in the programme area, similar to national levels, generally relate to the level of employment or unemployment, equal payment for equal job, participation of women in high management positions, involvement in politics and many others. The share of unemployed women in the programme area exceeds that of the men.

All priority axes have potential to include actions promoting gender equality, in particular 2 and 3. Under **Priority axis 3** actions may relate to issues connected to the equality of opportunity for men and women to take positions in specific services (e.g. civil protection or health care professions), examination of employment opportunities for women and men in provision of social care services for the elderly in remote areas. Issues related to health indicators and health promotion may be addressed to take into account differences and specific needs of men and women. Under **Priority axis 2**, employment opportunities for women in nature protected and rural areas related to sustainable tourism can be promoted. Protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage may also develop specific talents of both men and women.

**Beneficiaries will be required to examine gender-based differences where appropriate and consider activities in support of promotion of equal opportunities in the operations.** All beneficiaries will be obliged to avoid discrimination of any kind and to ensure their activities promote equal participation of women and men. It is important that supported operations would not unintentionally create new gender-based barriers.

Equality between men and women shall also be considered in the programme management arrangements. The programme authorities will ensure there is no gender-based discrimination in the appointment of personnel as well as in all other activities. Where appropriate, gender disaggregated data may be collected through monitoring (e.g. indicators related to capacity building and awareness raising activities, health care promotion, social care and health care services). Evaluation activities may specifically devote to gender issues where appropriate.

## SECTION 9

### SEPARATE ELEMENTS – PRESENTED AS ANNEXES IN PRINTED DOCUMENT VERSION

*(Reference: point (e) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)*

#### 9.1 A list of major projects to be implemented during the programming period

*(Reference: point (e) of Article 8(2) of the ETC Regulation)*

#### 9.2 The performance framework of the cooperation programme

*The summary table is generated automatically by the SFC2014 based on the tables outlined by priority axis.*

#### 9.3 List of relevant partners involved in the preparation of the cooperation programme

Ministries and other national bodies (Slovenia)	Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
	Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning
	Ministry of Infrastructure
	Ministry of Health
	Ministry of Culture
	Ministry of Economic Development and Technology
	Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
	Ministry of Education, Science and Sport
	Ministry of Defense, Administration for Civil Protection and Disaster Relief
	Office for Slovenians Abroad
	Slovenian Regional Development fund
	Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation
	Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia
Ministries and other national bodies (Croatia)	Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds
	Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection
	Ministry of Agriculture
	Ministry of Culture
	Ministry of Health
	Ministry of Social policy and youth
	Ministry of Maritime affairs, Transport and Infrastructure
	Agency for Regional Development of the Republic of Croatia
Development	Ministry of Tourism
	Croatia Waters
	Azra d.o.o.



Agencies, Business and Innovation Support organizations	AZRRI – Agencija za ruralni razvoj Istre
	INKUBATOR SEŽANA d.o.o.
	IRTA D.O.O. IRTA ISTARSKA RAZVOJNA TURISTIČKA AGENCIJA POREČ
	Istarska Razvojna Agencija (IDA) d.o.o.
	JAVNA RAZVOJNA AGENCIJA OBČINE ORMOŽ
	LUR
	Lokalni pospeševani center Pivka
	MRA
	Pomurski tehnološki park
	Prleška razvojna agencija, giz
	RA KOZJANSKO
	RA SAVINJA
	RA SAVINJSKA REGIJA
	RA SJEVER - DAN D.O.O.
	RA SOTLA
	Razvojni center Murska Sobota
	RCI CELJE
	RCR ZAGORJE
	Regionalna energetska agencija Sjeverozapadne Hrvatske
	Regionalni center za razvoj Zagorje
	Regionalni razvojni center Koper
	RGZC
	RIC SLOVENSKA BISTRICA
	RRA MEDZIMURJE REDEA D.O.O.
	RRA MURA
	RRA PORIN
	RRA Posavje
	RRA Zeleni kras
	RRA ZELENi KRAS
	SAŠA INKUBATOR d.o.o.
	VG Poduzetnički centar
	Zaklada za poticanje partnerstva ISTRA
	ZAVOD C-TCS, SLOVENSKI ORODJARSKI GROZD
Research institutes	Ekonomski inštitut za raziskovanje Maribor
	Gozdarski inštitut za raziskovanje Slovenije
	HRVATSKI ŠUMARSKI INSTITUT, PAZIN
	Inštitut za hmeljarstvo in pivovarstvo Slovenija
	INŠTITUT ZA KREATIVNI RAZVOJ MLADINE
	Institut za poljoprivredu i turizam POREČ
	Inštitut za raziskovanje krasa ZRC SAZU
Social & Health	ORZ-Okoljsko raziskovalni zavod
	CENTER ZNANJA PREKOMEJ

Services	CENTER ZA INKLUZIJU I PODRŠKU U ZAJEDNICI PULA
	Center za zdravje in razvoj –MS
	Upravni odjel za zdravstvo i socijalnu skrb, ISTARSKA ŽUPANIJA
	Zveza prijateljev mladine Maribor
	Zveza prijateljev mladine Slovenije
Chambers	Gospodarsko zbornico Dolenjske in Bele Krajine
	Območna obrtno-podjetniška zbornica Šmarje pri Jelšah
	Obrtnička komora Istarske županije
	OOZ CELJE
	OOZ sežana
	SŠGZ
	ŠTAJERSKA GOSPODARSKA ZBORNICA
Cities and municipalities	Grad Buje (HR)
	Grad Duga Resa
	GRAD KAROVAC
	GRAD LABIN
	GRAD OROSLAVJE
	GRAD ROVINJ
	Grad Velika Gorica
	Grad Velika Gorica
	MO Maribor
	MO VELENJE
	MO Celje
	MO Koper
	OBČINA BRASLOVČE
	Občina Cirkulane
	OBČINA ČRNOMELJ
	OBČINA HAJDINA
	Občina Krško
	Občina Lendava
	OBČINA LJUBNO
	OBČINA METLIKA
	OBČINA PIVKA
	Občina Radenci
	OBČINA ŠENTJUR
	Občina Sevnica
	Občina Slovenske Konjice
	OBČINA ŠMARJE PRI JELŠAH
	OBČINA ŠTORE
	OBČINA VOJNIK
	OBČINA ŽALEC
	Občina Zavrč

	OPČINA BRDOVEC
	OPČINA RADOBOJ
	Općina Viškovo
	Skupna služba ZIR, UE Šmarje pri Jelšah
Counties	Istarska županija
	Karlovačka županija
	Varaždinska županija
Nature Parks	Javna ustanova "Nacionalni park Brijuni"
	JAVNA USTANOVA PARK PRIRODE MEDVEDNICA
	JU Nacionalni park Risnjak
	JU NATURA HISTRICA
	Kozjanski park
	KP LJ. BARJE
	JU Park Medvednica
	Notranjski regijski park
	NU Brijuni
	Park Škocjanske jame
	ZAVOD ZA GOZDOVE SLOVENIJE
Agriculture and rural development services	KGZ CELJE
	KGZS - Zavod Lj
	KGZS NOVA GORICA
	KGZS-Zavod Maribor
	LAG FRANKOPAN
	Iag Istočna Istra
	LAG ZELENI BREGI
	ZRP POMELAJ, z.o.o., MALA POLANA
Public Utility Companies	Komunala Metlika d.o.o.
	Komunalno Ozalj d.o.o.
Culture & sport	KŠTM Sevnica
	KUD OŠTRC
	Kulturni dom Krško in enote Mestni muzej Krško, Galerija Krško in Grad Rajhenburg
	Posavski muzej Brežice
	Riječki sportski savezu
Transport	LUČKA UPRAVA UMAG-NOVIGRAD
Tourism Boards	TURISTČKA ZAJEDNICA MEDZIMURSKA ŽUP
	TURISTIČKA ZAJEDNICA OBČINE Marija Bistra
	TURISTIČKA ZAJEDNICA OPĆINE ŠTRIGOVA
	TZ Istarske županije
	ZAVOD CELEIA CELJE
Employment, Education, HRM	Andragoški zavod Ljudska univerza Velenje
	Izobraževalni center Prah d.o.o.
	LJUDSKA UNIVERZA ŠENTJUR

	LU ORMOŽ
	LU ROGAŠKA SLATINA
	UPI - ljudska univerza Žalec
	HRVATSKI ZAVOD ZA ZAPOSŁJIVANJE, KRAPINA
	RACIO D.O.O.
	MOZAIK
	ŠOLSKI CENTER VELENJE
	Univerza na Primorskem, Fakulteta za turistične študije – Turistica
	Univerza na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče
	UP ZRS
	UP FHŠ
	Visokošolsko središče Sežana,
Civil protection, emergency and rescue services	Društvo za reševalne pse Burja
	Zavod za hitnu gzedicine Krapinsko-zagorske županije;
	Jamarska reševalna služba/Jamarska zveza Slovenije
	Gasilska zveza Slovenije, PGD Postojna
	Gasilska zveza Črnomelj
	Gasilska zveza Črnomelj
	Gasilska zveza Kočevje
	Gasilska zveza Loška dolina
	Gasilska zveza Ormož
	Gasilska zveza Sevnica
	Gasilska zveza Slovenije
	Gasilska zveze Šentjernej
	PGD Gornja Radgona
	Vatrogasna zajedinica grada Čabar
	VATROGASNA ZAJEDNICA PRIMORSKO-GORANSKE ŽUPANIJE
Other	DTRDD
	ENVIRODUAL D.O.O.
	Eplan d.o.o.,
	FIMA Projekti d.o.o.
	FMTU
	HGK ŽK PULA
	Mednarodna ustanova Sirius
	OKP ROGAŠKA SLATINA, D.O.O.
	SAVAPROJEKT KRŠKO
	TELEVIZIJA AS MURSKA SOBOTA
	Zavod Roka, zavod za projektni management
	STIK LAŠKO