

First extensive Evaluation Report Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia

FINAL

(focused period from 15/12/2015 to 31/07/2017)

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ACRONYMS AND SHORT TERMS

CA	Certifying Authority
CP	Cooperation Programme
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
EGTC	European Group for Territorial Cooperation
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
FEG	Front-End Generalizzato (FVG on-line Platform for projects application)
JS	Joint Secretariat of the Programme INTERREG V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020
IB	Intermediate Body
IFM	International Financial Mechanism
IP	Investment Priority
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
I.T.I.	Integrated territorial investment
MA,	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MS	Member State
OIB	Office of the Intermediate Body
PA	Priority Axis
Programme	Programme INTERREG V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020
RoP	Rules of Procedure
SB	Sole Beneficiary
SFC	System for Fund Management in the European Union
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SO	Specific Objective
TA	Technical Assistance
TF	Task Force

TO	Thematic Objective
WG	Working Group
WP	Written Procedure

FOREWORD

This document is part of the evaluation process to be carried out during the period 21.12.2016 - 31.12.2023 by the External Evaluation according to the framework established by the public procurement documents and the technical offer as consolidated in the Contract signed by the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia and the contractors.

The first evaluation report offers an initial assessment of some relevant features linked to the first implementation period of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Italy - Slovenia:

- Programme management
- progress of Programme implementation
- results of the first calls for standard projects
- communication strategy
- integrated Territorial Investments.

In order to provide a reliable assessment on the mentioned features of the Programme, from the assessment of its management and implementation progress, to the project application and selection procedures, the project monitoring systems and mechanisms, and also the communication strategy and a description of the I.T.I. as for implementation of I.T.I. principles in the Programme itself, the First Extensive Evaluation Report on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme collects current and previous analysis and experiences.

The main objective is then to develop a targeted deepening on how have been proved effective the Programme management structure and procedures and the monitoring and indicators systems in supporting the implementation phase, and how inclusive and user friendly have been programme procedures and forms in the light of bringing simplification for the beneficiaries.

The evaluative activity covers the entire current programming period, in which the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020 operates: from December 2015 to July 2017.

SECTION 1 - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - RESUME OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1. Topics and evaluation questions

The First extensive evaluation Report has been developed around a set of evaluation questions, which seek coherence with the Evaluation Plan and the Integrated Evaluation Plan, in light of strengthening a common evaluative framework.

In the following table, the structure of the First extensive evaluation Report and its key evaluation questions are described.

SECTIONS/TOPICS OF THE EVALUATION REPORT	EVALUATION QUESTIONS
1. Executive summary containing conclusions and recommendations	EQ.P.1 How the programme is being implemented and managed?
2. Programme management	EQ.E.1 How effective are the programme management structures and procedures?
2.1. Management structures	- Have Programme Authorities (MA, JS, National/Regional Authorities, members of the Committees...) staff adequate capacities for fulfilling their tasks?
2.2. Decision making procedures	- Are decision making processes clear and transparent? Are decision making processes adequate and effective?
	- Are Programme management tools and procedures used in an effective and efficient way?
	- To which extent have measures undertaken to enhance stakeholders' involvement been effective, at project and Programme level?
3. Progress of Programme implementation	EQ.E.2 How effective are the monitoring and indicators systems in supporting the implementation phase?
3.1. Project cycle (Project application and selection procedures)	- Does the indicators system, used to measure outputs and results, help towards the efficient monitoring of the Programme?
3.2. Project monitoring systems and mechanisms	EQ.E.3 Were there delays or other problems in the granting of the resources?
3.3. Simplification and reduction of administrative burden	EQ.S.1 Did the innovative procedures introduced bring about simplification for the beneficiaries of the CP?
	- Has the Programme set adequate measures to reduce the administrative burden of applicants and beneficiaries?
	EQ.S.2 How user friendly are programme procedures and forms, manuals?
4. Communication strategy	To which extent the communication strategy of the Programme has contributed to a greater visibility and awareness-raising?
	- How effective are Programme communication actions

towards applicants and beneficiaries?

5. First calls for standard' projects	<p>How effective proved the calls for project procedures?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are decision making/selection criteria and procedures clear and transparent? - Are decision making/selection procedures effective? - Have those procedures facilitated stakeholders'/potential beneficiaries' involvement and participation? <p>To which extent the selected projects support the pursuing of Programme priorities?</p>
6. Description of the I.T.I. as for implementation of I.T.I. principles included in the Programme	<p>How effective are I.T.I. organisation and management?</p> <p>How I.T.I. organisation and management support the implementation of Programme and I.T.I. strategy?</p>

The evaluation report has taken into consideration the capacities of the Programme Authorities in relation to the tasks they are requested to fulfil. Another feature of the activity has been the assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the procedures, mainly devoted to transparency and clearness of the decision-making processes. In this context, also the effectiveness and the efficiency of the use of the Programme management tools and procedures has been included in the evaluation. Furthermore, the Report has considered the impact of the actions implemented by the Programme on the involvement of stakeholders.

Moreover, the First extensive evaluation Report has targeted the progress of Programme implementation, focusing on specific drivers, such as project selection procedure, monitoring and indicators systems, simplification. Regarding the implementation of the project cycle, mainly through project application and selection procedures, the Report analysed the first completed procedures, trying to maximize the evaluation items even in a prospective projection.

The assessment of the set of indicators, strictly connected with the effectiveness of the monitoring system, has been relevant to this first analysis. In particular, the Report focused on the efficiency and consistency of the indicators in measuring outputs and results (Section 3), in light of an efficient monitoring of the Programme. Consequently, also the effectiveness of the monitoring system in supporting Programme implementation has been included in the evaluation focus.

Measure towards simplification and reduction of administrative burden for the beneficiaries has been covered by the First Report. Firstly, investigating the improvement achieved by innovative procedures, manuals, guidelines, format and all the other online and offline tools for beneficiaries. Secondly, even if in a more general perspective, looking at the measures adopted by the Cooperation Programme to reduce the administrative burden of applicants.

Moreover, the Report tried to provide a first assessment of the expected outputs and results of the selected projects under the first calls for standard project proposals. Selected projects have been evaluated on the basis of several relevant elements, such as number of projects adopted, success and failure rates, initial financial allocation and resources granted, policy sectors involved and types of participants.

The Cooperation Programme Communication strategy has also been included in the Report, considering the strategic role played by communication in supporting the Programme implementation and the engagement of stakeholders. According to this consideration, the Report focused on how the Communication strategy contributed to a greater visibility of the Programme and to awareness raising in the Programme area, and whether or not Programme communication actions proved effective towards applicants and beneficiaries.

The First extensive evaluation Report also provides a description of the integrated territorial investments (I.T.I.) as for implementation of I.T.I. principles included in the Programme. The Report approached this part of the assessment fully understanding the strategic added value of the I.T.I. in the Programme, as a fundamental tool of territorial development strategy shaping, through an integrated logic, capable of responding to the different needs and challenges of the area.

It is worth pointing out that the municipalities of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba have set up, in February 2011, a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (GECT GO/EZTS GO) based in Gorizia, that is in charge for the implementation of common development strategies in different policy areas. Within the Italy-Slovenia Cooperation Programme 2014-2020, the I.T.I. for the implementation of two pilot actions presented by the GECT GO/EZTS GO - "Building a cross-border healthcare network" and "Isonzo-Soča cross-border nature park" - have been launched and financed.

Both regions in Italy and in Slovenia are part of more than one programme area at the same time.

Programme	regions of Slovenia/Italy in the Programme	Thematic Objectives ¹	Managing authorities
Italy-Slovenia	Venice, Udine, Pordenone, Gorizia and Trieste, Primorsko-notranjska, Osrednjeslovenska, Gorenjska, Obalno-kraška and Goriška	TA, TO1, TO11, TO4, TO6	IT
Italy-Austria	Udine, Gorizia, Trieste, Pordenone, Belluno, Treviso, Vicenza	TA, TO1, TO11, TO6, TO9	IT
Italy-Croatia	Trieste, Gorizia, Udine, Pordenone, Venice + 20 provinces	TA, TO1, TO5, TO6, TO7	IT

¹TA - Technical Assistance, TO1 - Research and innovation, , TO4 - Low-carbon economy, TO5 – Climate change and risk prevention, TO6 - Environment and resource efficiency, TO7 - Transport and energy networks, TO9 - Social inclusion, TO11 - Better public administration.

Slovenia-Croatia	Pomurska, Podravska, Savinjska, Spodnjeposavska, Jugovzhodna Slovenija, Notranjsko-Kraška, Osrednje Slovenska (20 %)	TA, TO11, TO6, TO5	SI
Slovenia-Austria	Gorenjska, Koroška, Savinjska, Podravska, Pomurska, Osrednjeslovenska, Goriška, Zasavska;	TA, TO1, TO11, TO6	SI
Slovenia-Hungary	Pomurska, Podravska;	TA, TO11, TO6	SI

As seen from the table all regions of Slovenia are included in one of the programmes. In Italy, Udine, Pordenone, Gorizia and Trieste (Region Friuli Venezia-Giulia) and Venice (Region Veneto) participate in several of the above-mentioned Programmes. Both countries (but different institutions) act as MA for three programmes. Major TP is TO6, which (besides technical assistance (TA)) appears in all programmes.

In general, the programmes have the same organisational structure with the same programme bodies (MA, JS, CA, CP ...), in a consolidated and widely accepted framework at EU level.

1.2. Conclusions and recommendations

How the programme is being implemented and managed?

The well-known delays of this programming period 2014-2020 - beginning from the delayed adoption of the National Partnership Agreements and consequent late adoption of the Programmes - generated an impact on the planned evaluation activities and even on the current Report, mainly due to slow average implementation of Programmes.

Regarding the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020, European Commission approval came by Decision C (2015) 9285 of 15th December 2015 and the official notification of approval through SFC2014 on 21st December 2015. However, some Programme modifications have been discussed and then adopted during the Monitoring Committees held in 2016 and 2017, which led to amendments and integrations to the Programme in different fields: from financial breakdowns to baseline and indicators, from the correction of clerical errors to rephrasing and renaming of several definitions. Just to quote an example, the Managing Authority could publish only in June 2016 on the Programme website the Annex IX, including the valorization of the baseline of the TO 11 ETC result indicator, so that information on the set of Programme indicators and its methodology could have been provided to the potential beneficiaries. Publication of Annex IX could not have done before due to the need of analysing the results of

a survey (an online survey targeting 200 stakeholders) influencing baseline and indicators related to TO 11, launched after the first Monitoring Committee. It is also worth pointing out that Programme approval came only after the partial amendment of the financial plan, requested by the Programme partner Slovenia.

The First extensive evaluation Report could focus only on a limited set of information, due to the initial stage of implementation of the Programme, even if the available data allow the consideration of some future perspectives. Naturally, the next evaluation reports will provide more information and recommendations.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

How effective are the programme management structures and procedures?

The definition of the management framework of the Programme seems to satisfy all the requirements according to the Common Provision Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013. At the current, initial, implementation stage of the programme is really premature to try to assess management capacities. Again, looking at the overall framework as far as the completion of the first procedures is concerned, the system proved effective.

Number of bodies have been selected to **manage, control and implement** the Programme. The management and implementation bodies in Interreg programmes consist of the Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Certifying Authority and Contact Points/regional supporting structures.

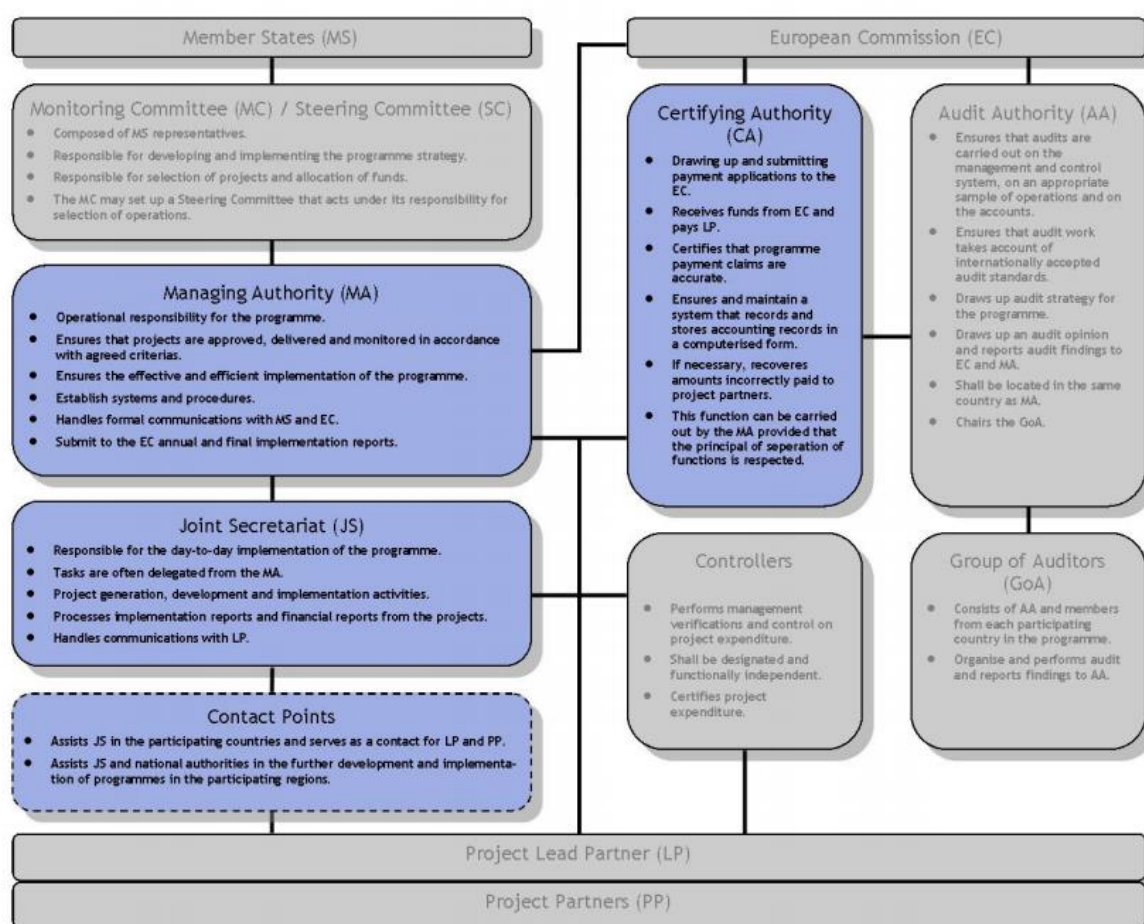
In accordance with the Article 21-25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the following authorities and structures have been designated for the management and control of the Programme for the period 2014-2020:

Table 1.1. Authorities and structures of the Programme

Managing Authority (MA)	MA is responsible for the management and implementation of the Programme towards the European Commission.
Certifying Authority (CA)	CA is responsible for certifying the declarations of expenditure and the applications for payment before their submission to the European Commission.
Audit Authority (AA)	AA is responsible for verifying the effective functioning of the management and control system.
Monitoring Committee (MC)	The Monitoring Committee is responsible for supervising and monitoring the Programme implementation and for selecting the operations.
Joint Secretariat (JS)	JS assists the MA and the MC in carrying out their

	respective functions.
The Representatives of Member States	The Representatives of Member States (MSs) are National/Regional Authorities.
Slovene Info Point and regional supporting structures in Italy	The Slovene Info Point and regional supporting structures in Italy provide information to potential beneficiaries in their own territories.
Intermediate Body GECT GO / EZTS GO (IB)	IB is responsible for the management and implementation of the Integrated Territorial Investment (I.T.I.).

Figure 1: Structure of the management, implementation and control bodies in the Programme



Also the Intermediate Body GECT GO / EZTS GO (IB) is part of the Management structure to which the MA delegated the management of the I.T.I.

It is worth underlining that the first steps of the management structure have been characterised by transparency, which is a fundamental principle of the co-financed EU actions. In fact, complying with art. 48 (2) of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, the list of the members of the MC shall be published on the official website of the Programme. The list of members of MC is published on the official web page, along with the Rules of Procedures and conclusions from the meetings, which makes their work very transparent.

Furthermore, although the MC is the ultimate - and only - decision making level of the Programme, it acts also through the Working Groups (set by the MC itself), in order to deal with technical issues and to fine tune relevant documents, bridging the different stakeholders involved.

Regarding the different languages of the Programme, understanding obstacles sometimes related to the quality of the translations, have been tackled - and hopefully overcome - through the externalisation of the translation and review services to experts. The JS holds strong linguistic competences thanks to a bilingual staff that support translation review and carries out on its own minor translations. The technical assistance also supports MA in this context.

*PROGRESS OF PROGRAMME
IMPLEMENTATION*

How effective are the monitoring and indicators systems in supporting the implementation phase?

Were there delays or other problems in the granting of the resources?

Did the innovative procedures introduced bring about simplification for the beneficiaries of the CP?

How user friendly are programme procedures and forms, manuals?

A progress have been surely experienced in 2016 and in the first semester of 2017, trying to overcome an initial delay whose reasons have been already described. In 2016 most of the activities were related to the process of the publication of the first calls for standard project proposals and to the elaboration of different supporting documents and manuals, all part of the Application package.

The Application package connected to this call includes the following documents:

- Selection Criteria;
- Assessment Manual;
- Guidelines for the on line Application Form;
- Manual on Eligibility of Expenditure;
- Template of Partnership Agreement;
- Template of LP Statement;
- Template of PP Statement;

- Template of Subsidy Contract.

A Methodological Note on Result and Output Indicators have also been implemented as an annex to the Application package. Selection Criteria have been also approved and adopted.

As usually in every starting phase, when new tools are developed and tested, even in the case of the Programme's web based platform for submitting applications some problems occurred. The web platform has been then optimized and it is currently an efficient tool supporting management and implementation.

Regarding more specifically the project cycle - as far as project application and selection procedures are concerned - implementation made some progresses. The first calls has been published in 2016, with a prompt good response from the Programme area. All the frequently asked questions - and answers - regarding the application of project proposals were published in Italian and Slovene language, after their careful collection.

Moreover, the process of the project assessment is described in detail in the Assessment manual-standard projects, which was published on the Programme web site, in the set of the call documentation. All the proposals which were submitted by the closing date of the call, were evaluated in accordance with standardized and transparent procedures based on the selection criteria approved by the MC, ensuring transparency, equality of treatment and objectivity. After submission, in fact, each application passed through a selection procedure, following the different steps defined by the Assessment manual.

First, project proposals underwent an administrative check (whether some mandatory documents were missing, the application was rejected without request for supplements) and an eligibility assessment, based on technical and administrative requirements. Only project proposals that satisfied the eligibility criteria advanced to the further step, the quality assessment. The quality assessment criteria cover a set of strategic assessment criteria and of operational assessment criteria, through a scoring system, resulting in a ranking list of all eligible applications. Criteria have been developed specifically for every Priority Axis. Ranking has been implemented for any single Specific Objective.

The process of assessment of project proposals proved to be effective. Moreover, the process was in detail and clearly documented in Assessment manual and Selection criteria, which gave a clear picture of the selection procedure, bodies involved, selection rules and selection criteria, so that beneficiaries were kept well informed about the assessment process and transparency was ensured.

Considering the project monitoring systems and mechanisms, it is important to remind that every Interreg Programme must to set up a computerised monitoring systems in order to collect all information on project and programme progress. For this purpose, the Programme developed the online Monitoring tool GGP2 and the front-end application FEG was completed in view of the launch for the first four

calls for proposals in June 2016. The system reveals to be modular and flexible in nature therefore should be used for project application at the first stage and for monitoring (reporting) at the second.

Furthermore, Guidelines for the online application were prepared for the applicants. Two versions of the Guidelines have been published: the first in June and, as the potential beneficiaries faced some technical challenges, a second one was published on 8 August 2016. The second, improved version was absolutely clear and easy to use as the instructions included also some screen shots of the on line application.

Looking at simplification and reduction of administrative burden, several tools have been implemented. One of those is the European programme Interact III, aimed at assisting European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes by providing advisory services on Interreg practices. The programme is meant to improve institutional capacity and public administration in several aspects.

New in this programming period is that staff costs of an operation may be calculated at a flat rate of up to 20 % of the direct costs other than the staff costs of that operation (Article 19 Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013). The beneficiary should indicate already at submission, whether flat rate or real cost option will be chosen.

Moreover, The MA implements the 4PM platform, where all the documentation and communication is shared and stored for their use by the Monitoring Committee and Working Groups. The application is user friendly and very transparent. The documents are uploaded regularly with clear file names, which makes any search very easy. The official web site <http://new.ita-slo.eu/> is in Italian, Slovene and English language and provides all the information with regular updates relevant for the beneficiaries.

*FIRST CALLS FOR STANDARD
PROJECTS*

How effective proved the calls for project procedures?

*To which extent the selected projects support the
pursuing of Programme priorities?*

Section 5 of the evaluation Report is devoted to the assessment of the expected outputs and results of the selected projects under the first calls for standard projects. It is worth highlighting that the Programme Monitoring Committee approved the ranking lists of the projects proposals related to the first four calls for proposals for standard projects in June 28, 2017: therefore, expected outputs and results may be evaluated mostly in perspective, whereas it would be possible.

The process for the drafting, approval and publication of the first calls has been articulated and complex, even if consistent with EU rules of procedures. Discussion on selection criteria began in December 2015 to come to an end in March 2016. The first set of documents of the Application Package was presented to the first

Monitoring Committee meeting in March 8, 2016 and the text of the four calls, the selection criteria and the whole Application Package were approved at the second Monitoring Committee meeting in May 20, 2016. Calls have then been published on the Programme website in June 15, 2016, and the management of the e-application procedure and assistance to beneficiaries took until September 2016. In September 30, 2016 the four calls have been closed, after the prolongation of terms of 12 days.

Regarding the entire process, some positive remarks should be done. First, the very positive response from the Programme area about the interest of a wide range of public and private actors towards the Programme, as proven by the 160 project proposals submitted through the online "FEG" (Front-End Generalizzato) System. The project proposals have been submitted with a different degree of interest to the different targeted Priority Axis:

- 62 under Priority axis 1 "Promoting innovation capacities for a more competitive area",
- 13 on the Priority axis 2 "Cooperating for implementation of low carbon strategies and action plans",
- 63 in Priority axis 3 "Protecting and promoting natural and cultural resources" - 43 for investment priority 6c, 10 for 6d and 10 for 6f -
- 22 on the Priority axis 4 "Enhancing capacity building and cross border governance"), even due to different financial allocations, but not affecting the general participation result.

Out of the 160 total applied proposals, 27 have been approved to be funded. Among the 27 selected proposals, 8 have been approved under Priority axis 1 Specific Objective 1b, 5 for Priority axis 2 Specific Objective 4e, 7 in Priority axis 3 (3 to Specific Objective 6c, 2 to Specific Objective 6d and 2 to Specific Objective 6f), and 7 under Priority axis 4 ETC 11.

The Assessment process of standard projects was divided into three phases: administrative check, eligibility check and quality assessment. The following table shows the fundamental features of the process, either related to project assessment and to external assessors selection.

Table 2.2. Assessment process phases

Phase	Date	Type
Administrative check and eligibility assessment	October-December 2016	Project assessment process
Call for the selection of independent evaluation experts (for the establishment of a long list)	October 7th, 2016	External assessors selection process
Publication of a long list of independent evaluation experts	December 12th, 2016	External assessors selection process

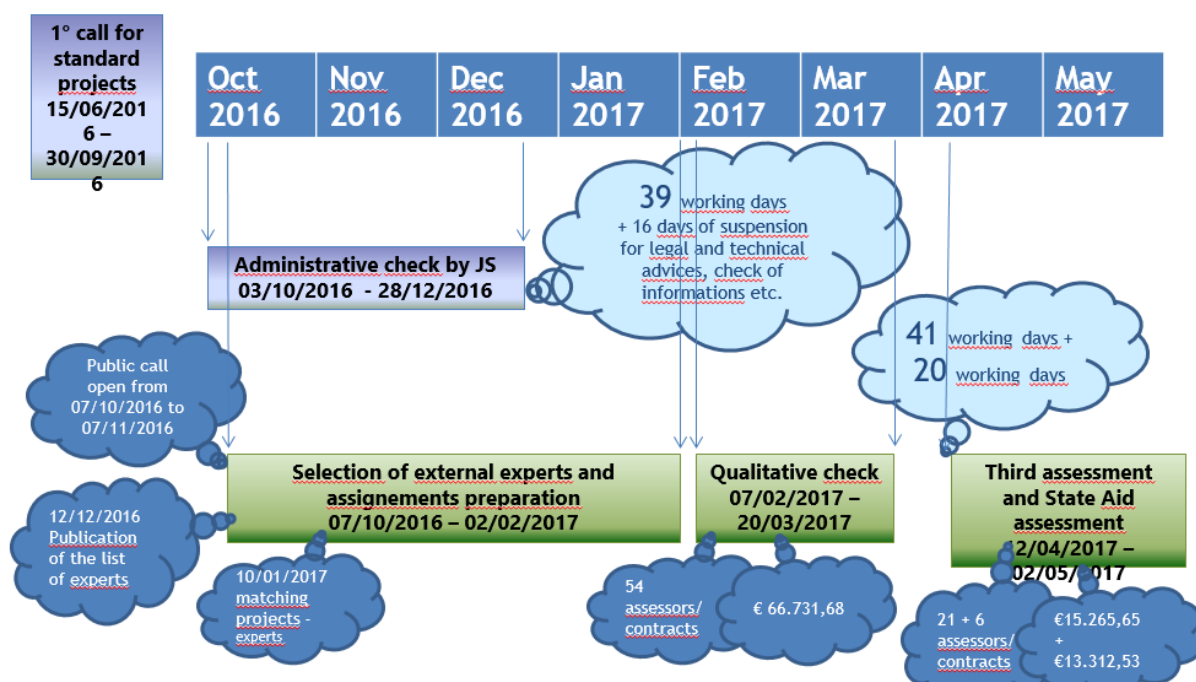
Quality assessment	January-February 2017	Project assessment process
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Experts have been selected on thematic and linguistic competences, in order to guarantee a high quality level of the assessment.

The assessment process requested the involvement of two different experts, one Slovenian and one Italian, in any project evaluation. Each expert, randomly paired with a project through an online system, carried out a separate assessment on the same project proposal. Each assessor independently scored and commented each specific criteria of the assigned project proposal, JS then drafted a joint assessment for each project application on the basis of the arithmetic average of the two assessments provided by Italian and Slovenian external assessors. Where the two assessment outcomes were relevantly different according to the Assessment manual, a further evaluation has been carried out: at this stage, two experts (again, one Slovenian and one Italian) have been involved in a joint project proposal assessment. This further assessment was then compared to the previous ones, in order to reach an average and to finalize the assessment process.

Each application got a final score as result of quality assessment to be proposed for approval to the Monitoring Committee. Projects not reaching 65% of total score (81/125) within quality assessment were rejected.

The process resulted to be complex and articulated, but it assured a high quality level of assessment and it was anyway completed within the deadlines set by the call.



The steps for the drafting, approval and publication of the first calls were as follows:

- Selection criteria were broadly discussed in seven Working Groups from December 2015 to March 2016 (two in 2015 and five in 2016);
- The first set of documents of the Application Package was presented to the first Monitoring Committee meeting (March 8th, 2016);
- The text of the four calls, the selection criteria and whole Application Package were approved at the second Monitoring Committee meeting (May 20th, 2016);
- Translation and publication procedures;
- Publication of calls on the Programme website (June 15th, 2016);
- Management of the e-application procedure and assistance to beneficiaries (June-September);
- Calls closure (on September 30th, 2016).

What is also important, in an evaluative perspective, is the relation among the calls for proposals financial allocation and the resources granted to selected projects, mainly for the positive - in this case - implications with the progress of the Programme financial implementation, in light of matching 2018 performance framework targets and reducing automatic decommitment risks. In fact, on a total of 28.134.757,80 euros allocated to the four calls for proposals, 26.316.581,16 euros have been granted to the selected standard projects, with a consequent absorption percentage rate of 93.54%.

Also positive can be considered the overlook on policy sectors targeted by the selected projects and types of participants, in term of coherence and consistency with the Programme priorities and with the common and Programme specific results and outputs indicators. Furthermore, the selected projects seem to match with the integration and multi-perspective approach to the local development overall approach of the Cooperation Programme.

With regard to the strategic projects procedure, in 2016 a huge exchange among Programme partners within bilateral and institutional meetings brought near to identification of strategic themes (approved by the MC in February 2017) and establishment of the dedicated WG, which met three times (22nd November 2016 30th January and 10th July 2017), in order to define the procedure of selection and finalise themes, as well as to reach a broad agreement on the general content of the call and of selection criteria.

**PROGRAMME COMMUNICATION
STRATEGY**

To which extent the communication strategy of the Programme has contributed to a greater visibility and awareness-raising?

The Strategy reveals a general coherence with EU rationale and guidelines, starting from the basic consideration that an effective communication is a prerequisite for any EU Programme to deliver good results, not only to project partners, but also to

broader audiences outside the project networks. In this perspective, the Programme Communication Strategy correctly focuses on increasing the awareness about the Programme, even in its breakdown of Priority Axes and connected financing opportunities.

The Communication strategy, correctly considered part of the Programme procedures, envisages adequate tools to support assistance to beneficiaries and applicants, as well as to promote results and achievements of the Programme.

The Strategy provides evidence of a careful consideration of the lessons learned from the previous programming period and of the possible weaknesses and threats. Consequently, it identifies several features that might be crucial in an improvement perspective.

Assessing communication activities implemented so far, it seems that a positive effort has been made in overcoming an initial delay in the Programme implementation, such in the implementation of the communication strategy itself.

The Communication Plan implemented in 2016 shows positive elements of consistency and coherence with EU general orientations on communication of co-funded programmes' activities, and with the broader Programme Communication Strategy. Furthermore, awareness raising and information activities on the field, as implemented in 2016, can pave the way to a higher level of consistency and coherence of actions backed by the following annual communication plans.

In 2017, communication strategy continued as planned, with a renewed effort in accelerating its implementation. Digital communication activities has been implemented coherently through the improvement of a multilingual (Italian, Slovene and English) website, the launching of social networking, the development of the web based 4pm platform for exchanging documents and the definition of the Programme visual identity. All activities that are particularly relevant for beneficiaries and potential ones. Publications and other informative materials and actions - including events on the field - have been budgeted for the current year and they are still under completion, mainly targeted to beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries. The evaluation activity supporting this First extensive Report took also into careful consideration the analysis of the set of indicators defined for the Programme Communication Strategy: at the current early stage of implementation, the Report could only focus on the consistency and the adequacy of the defined indicators, their assessment tools and the sources of data, which seem to prove effectively.

Moreover, the evaluation focused on the relation between an efficient organizational framework and an effective communication strategy. The next evaluation report could say more on the topic that at this stage reveals anyway adequate characteristics to reach good performances.

However, considering that communication competences and responsibilities are shared among different actors - Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat/OIB EGTC GO Implementing Body, the Monitoring Committee, the Info Point, and the projects, with the Monitoring Committee acting as steering and decision making body - an efficient coordination must be put in place.

A final recommendation regarding the Communication strategy deals with the events at local level in the Programme area. In this context, activities must satisfy the usually high expectations of stakeholders and beneficiaries about the quality and frequency of meetings/events.

*INTEGRATED TERRITORIAL
INVESTMENT*

How effective are I.T.I. organisation and management?

*How I.T.I. organisation and management support the
implementation of Programme and I.T.I. strategy?*

Within the Programme an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) has been established in the area comprised within the municipalities of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba with a total financial allocation of EUR 10.000.000 (ERDF contribution - 85% and national co-financing - 15%). The municipalities of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba have set up, in February 2011, a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (GECT GO/EZTS GO) based in Gorizia and that is in charge for the implementation of the I.T.I. strategy.

Two pilot projects were already foreseen in the Programme:

- the pilot action “Isonzo - Soča” will contribute to the achievement of SO 3.1 “Conserving, protecting, restoring, and developing natural and cultural heritage” seeking the change for valorization of a valuable cross border natural site through sustainable tourism, environmental protection and green growth;
- the pilot action “Health” will contribute to the achievement of SO 4.1 “Strengthen the institutional cooperation capacity through mobilizing public authorities and key actors of the Programme area for planning joint solutions to common challenge” seeking the change for a closer integration and understanding of the legislative framework and administrative practices implemented in the two countries while paving the way for a joint use of the health systems of the target area that could be furthered to the whole cooperation area and beyond.

A target call under Priority axes 3 and 4 and the application package and relevant documents/information were sent to EGTC GO via certified e-mail address - PEC. The two pilot actions were eligible for funding, both contracts were signed 3 May 2017.

Table 3.3. Resume of recommendations

Topic	Evaluation questions	Recommendations
Programme management	How effective are the programme management structures and procedures?	<p>Programme management structures must continue to satisfy all the requirements according to the Common Provision Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, particularly in terms of adequate capacities and staffing.</p> <p>Decision making processes must continue to be clear and transparent.</p> <p>Effectiveness of procedures, mostly those involving stakeholders and beneficiaries, must be fine-tuned with the timing of Programme implementation, in order to avoid delays.</p>
Progress of programme implementation	<p>How effective are the monitoring and indicators systems in supporting the implementation phase?</p> <p>Were there delays or other problems in the granting of the resources?</p> <p>Did the innovative procedures introduced bring about simplification for the beneficiaries of the CP?</p> <p>How user friendly are programme procedures and forms, manuals?</p> <p>How effective proved the calls for project procedures?</p> <p>To which extent the selected projects support the pursuing of Programme priorities?</p>	<p>Indicators system must be checked when requested/allowed to support the efficient monitoring of the Programme.</p> <p>A deeper reasoning should be done about milestones and target values for 2018 and 2023. As outcome of the first standard call, in some cases it seems to be a relevant disproportion among some of the targets and the capacity of the current projects to reach them, even in a future perspective.</p> <p>Tools and procedures must continue in the effort of reducing the administrative burden of applicants and beneficiaries, fine-tuning online procedures.</p> <p>Decision making/selection procedures must be optimised in order to avoid delays or time extensions in the granting of resources.</p> <p>Decision making/selection criteria and procedures must continue to be clear and transparent, with a regular update of the information channels. Articulation and complexity of selection procedures can be simplified, even with the objectives of avoiding delays, keeping the same quality level.</p> <p>Future calls must focus on those targets and indicators that need a stronger effort to be satisfied/reached.</p> <p>Projects successfully meeting the quality requirements of the first call, which could not be eligible for the allocated funding, must be valorised as a good source of support to reach the indicators in an economic and timely manner.</p>
Communication strategy	To which extent the communication strategy of the Programme has contributed to a greater visibility and awareness-raising?	<p>Programme communication must continue to ensure coherence with EU rationale and guidelines.</p> <p>Considering that communication competences and responsibilities are shared among different actors an efficient coordination must be put in place.</p> <p>Actions at local level in the Programme area must satisfy the high expectations of stakeholders, applicants and beneficiaries about the quality and frequency of meetings/events.</p>

Description of I.T.I. as for implementation of I.T.I. principles included in the Programme	<p>How effective are I.T.I. organisation and management?</p> <p>How I.T.I. organisation and management support implementation of Programme and I.T.I. strategy?</p>	<p>I.T.I. organisation and management must continue to ensure coherence with the EU regulations and guidelines, in the light of supporting the implementation of Programme.</p> <p>Result and output indicators appear not easy to be fully satisfied in a 2018 perspective, therefore need to be regularly monitored and eventually desirably revised.</p>
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SECTION 2. - PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

In the period between May 2013 and June 2015 a Task Force (TF) composed by the Institutional partners of the Programme (Representatives of the Republic of Slovenia, Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Region of Veneto and European Commission) was set up in order to prepare the contents of the Programme and supervise the programming procedures.

The Task Force concluded its activities when the Cooperation Programme (CP) was adopted by the EC on December 15th, 2015.

Due to Interreg Programme characteristics - such as two countries working together; mix of working cultures and languages; mix of project partner types and expertise; remote team work; programme rules and requirements (deriving from EU, programme, national rules) - the management of a Programme is very complex.

Number of bodies were nominated to manage, control and implement the Programme. The management and implementation bodies in Interreg programmes consist of the Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, Certifying Authority and Contact Points/regional supporting structures.

In accordance with the Article 21-25 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, as highlighted at page 8 of this Report, the following authorities and structures have been designated for the management and control of the Programme for the period 2014-2020:

According to the Regulation No. 1303/2013 there are no substantial changes in the functions of Programme authorities regarding the 2007-2013 period.

2.1 Management structures

For the management of the Programme the following bodies are responsible:

Table 2.1. Programme authorities.

AUTHORITY/MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES	NAME OF AUTHORITY/BODY AND DEPARTMENT OR UNIT	HEAD OF AUTHORITY/BODY (POSITION OR POST)
Managing authority	Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia; Central Directorate for Production Activities, tourism and cooperation - Area for manufacturing	Manager of the organizational Unit

Certifying authority	Central Directorate for Finance, Property, Coordination and Programming of Economic and EU Policies Tributes, Fiscal Fulfilments, Personnel and EU Programming Expenditure Documents Control Office; Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia	Office Director
Audit authority	Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia; Presidency of the Region; Directorate General; Audit Office	Office Director
Working groups	Different composition (Appointed by MC)	Facilitator (MA)
Info point	Slovenia	Director
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks (IT)	REPUBLIC OF ITALY: Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia/EU Structural Funds FLC Unit	Manager of the organizational Unit
Body or bodies designated to carry out control tasks (SI)	REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA: Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy - Control Division - ETC, IPA and IFM Programmes	Manager of the organizational Unit
Body or bodies designated to be responsible for carrying out audit tasks (IT)	Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia / Presidency of the Region / Directorate General/Audit Office	Office Director
Body or bodies	Republic of Slovenia - Ministry of	Office Director

designated to be Finance of the Republic of Slovenia,
responsible for carrying
out audit tasks (SI)

Intermediate Body (IB)

GECT GO / EZTS GO

Office Director

As for the management structures, the MA's Organisational Unit is made up of 5 units (the MA Head plus 4 staff units), the JS is composed by 5 units (the Head plus 4). Compared to the past, the reduction of TA funds for core activities brought a reduction of funds for Programme management. In addition to MA and JS, a bilingual group of Technical Assistance was contracted by the MA at the end of 2015 as the JS was not still in place. In consideration of the limited personnel working on Programme management, the external TA is still in place mainly has been engaged in the closure of Programme 2007-13, in the set-up of the online front-end and monitoring systems, for broad legal advisory role and support for translations.

The MC shall meet at least once a year. Each year one of the countries is the host for all the meetings.

Table 2.2. Monitoring Committee meetings in 2016-2017.

1	8 March 2016	Nova Gorica - Slovenia	Approval of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rules of Procedure of the MC amended Cooperation Programme total amount of TA budget for MA's core activity
2	20 May 2016	Postojna - Slovenia	Approval of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Implementation Report 2015 call for standard projects and application package selection criteria for standard projects Programme communication strategy Set up of I.T.I. WG and Strategic projects WG
3	22-23 February 2017	Trieste - Italy	Approval of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> two I.T.I. projects ten strategic themes approval of the selection procedure for strategic projects State Aid Guidelines Discussion on Evaluation Plan
4	24-25 May 2017	Trieste - Italy	Approval of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> amended Cooperation Programme and Annex IX Annual Implementation Report 2016

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated Communication Strategy No. 2/2017 and Communication Work Plans for 2016 and 2017 Integrated Evaluation Plan Establishment of the Working Group on Evaluation Information on the first Evaluation Report Presentation of the outcome of Calls for Standard Projects No. 1-2-3-4/2016 and proposal of ranking lists. The approval of all the ranking lists is postponed.
5	28 June 2017	Trieste - Italy	Approval of ranking lists of Calls for Standard Projects No. 1-2-3-4/2016. Mandate to the JS to perform face-to-face meetings with LPs before the signature of contracts to clarify assessors observations to be fulfilled and the understanding of indicators. Presentation on allocation of residual funds and figures

As further described in the following table, following RoP, MC may act in its plenary sessions of through written procedure.

Table 2.3. Written procedures (8 in the period concerned, December 2015 - July 2017).

WP n.	Object	Date
1	Approval of long minutes of the 1st meeting of the Monitoring Committee	10-24/05/2016
2	Approval of the revised version of Annex IX to the Cooperation Programme	13/06/2016
3	Approval of the extension of the terms of references of the first calls for standard project proposals n. 01/2016, 02/2016, 03/2016, 04/2016	7-14/09/2016
4	Approval of the Application Package for "I.T.I. EGTC" implementation Approval of setting up of a technical Working Group on the risk assessment of the Programme	2-12/12/2016
5	Approval of the State Aid Exemption Umbrella Block Scheme on the Programme pursuant to Regulation (EU) n. 651/2014 (GBER)	5-20/12/2016
6	Approval of the State Aid Assessment Guidelines	19-27/01/2017
7	Approval of the Programme Evaluation Plan	17-31/03/2017

8	Approval of: 1. the updated Cooperation Programme. 2. the updated Annex IX, amended because of one clerical error	20-27/03/2017
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Table 2.4. Working groups. Appointment and meetings in the period concerned (December 2015 - July 2017).

Working Group (WG)	Appointment	n. of meetings
WG on strategic projects	2° MC (20/05/2016)	3
WG on risk analysis	4° WP (2- 12/12/2016)	-
WG on ITI	2° MC (20/05/2016)	3
WG on evaluation	4° MC (24- 25/05/2017)	-

From 2016 five MC meetings were held, two in 2016 in Slovenia and three in 2017 in Italy. All the conclusions (Short minutes) from the meetings are published on the official website. Italian and Slovene are the official languages of the Programme and of the MC and simultaneous interpretation is provided for the MC meetings. Nevertheless the working documents are also all available in English (minutes from the meetings are usually in English e.g. http://new.ita-slo.eu/sites/default/files/MC_5th-meeting_Trieste-28-06-17_Short-Minutes_ENG.zip).

In compliance with Art. 48 (2) of the (EU) No 1303/2013, the list of the members of the MC shall be published on the official website of the Programme. The list of members of MC is published on the official web page, along with the RoP and conclusions from the meetings, which makes their work very transparent.

EGTC OIB

Accordingly to Paragraph 5.3.1.e Intermediate Body of the CP, in line with Article 11 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the Intermediate Body in charge of managing the I.T.I. shall be the Office of the Intermediate Body, a functionally independent unit of EGTC GO in line with the provisions of the Regulation on the Internal Organisational of EGTC GO.

Accordingly to Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 1299/2013 and Article 36(3) of Regulation (EU) 1303/2013 some of the tasks relating to the implementation of an

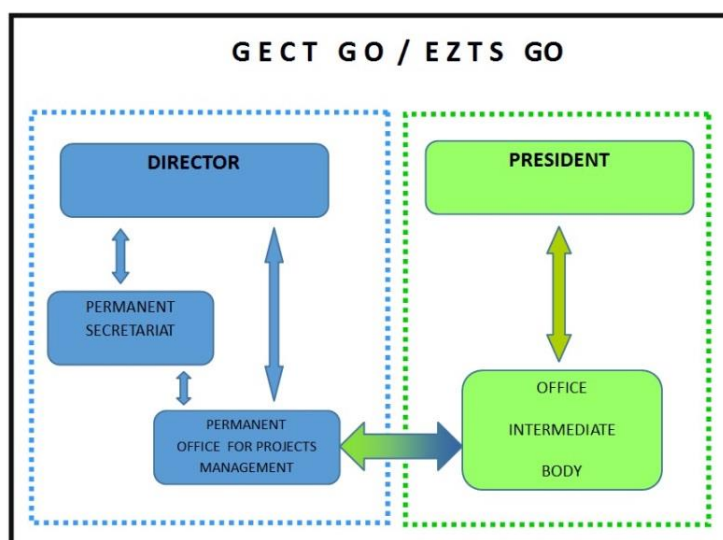
I.T.I. falling within the competence of the Managing Authority was delegated to the Office of the Intermediate Body.

The transfer of functions agreed between the Managing Authority and EGTC OIB (Agreement signed on 19/12/2016) serves as the basis for the OIB to carry out the following delegated tasks:

- applying adequate procedures and selection criteria, approved by the Monitoring Committee when implementing the I.T.I.;
- supporting the work of the Monitoring Committee as set out in Article 47 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and reporting to it about the general progress of the ITI;
- ensuring that the beneficiary is provided with a document setting out the conditions for support for each operation including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, and the time-limit for execution;
- ensuring that data are collected, entered and stored in the monitoring system;
- supporting the MA in drafting annual and final implementation reports in line with Article 50 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and in implementing activities regarding the general progress of ITI.

The EGTC OIB is a functionally independent office operating within EGTC GO.

Picture 2.1. Organisational structure of EGTC GO.



Representatives of Member States: National/Regional Authorities.

Slovenian info point:

In line with the 2007-2013 experience, the Slovenian Info Point located in Štanjel (Slovenia) and established by National Authority - Government office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODCP), also in this Programme period supports the MA in spreading the information on the implementation stages of the Programme across the Slovenian territory. There are two persons employed at the Info Point. They work in close coordination with the JS in the implementation of the following tasks:

- act as a first “contact point” for potential beneficiaries to provide information and advice to the Project Partners in the Slovenian territory;
- support the MA in the implementation of communication activities (including events, info- days, Communication Strategy);
- advise and assist beneficiaries participating in approved operations;
- inform stake holders on achievements of the Programme;
- support Programme management.

In Italy, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region and the Veneto Region supports the MA in spreading the information on the implementation stages of the Programme across their territories.

2.2. Decision making procedures

On the following pages the role of each body is described in relation to other bodies (or structures). Setting up properly functioning management and implementation bodies is the basis for a successful programme implementation. Clear procedures, division of roles and responsibilities, and defining ways of communication between the bodies are crucial for smooth co-operation towards Programme implementation.

The **Monitoring Committee** is strategic body for Programme implementation, and its decisions have a direct impact on the Programme’s success or failure. This committee plays a key role in developing and implementing the Programme strategy, the selection of projects, the allocation of funds and maintaining the cooperation spirit among the stakeholders.

The management and implementation bodies in the Programme consist of the Managing Authority, Joint Secretariat, EGTC GO IB, Certifying Authority and Contact Points.

As already said, within the Programme, the Monitoring Committee is composed of 14 voting members (seven from Italy and seven from Slovenia) and it is legally convened and its decisions are legally made when at least 4 full/voting members from each MS delegation are present at the meeting.

The working documents are published on the online management application (4pm) beforehand the meeting and after the meeting all the outputs are also published there.

As already mentioned, all short minutes are also published on the official web page, which makes the work of the MC very transparent.

For all the meetings the quorum requested by RoP was reached, three meetings were 1-day events and two were two day events, due to the number of topics to be discussed.

MC is a body with many obligations, and according to the documentation and materials reviewed it can be said that their work is very transparent. Due to RoP

the decision process is clear and well defined. MC uses the procedures in efficient way.

The MC may set up - and it has done it several times in the period concerned by this report - working groups to facilitate its decision-making process. Working Groups - set in their composition by the MC - deal with technical issues and fine tune relevant documents, bridging the different stakeholders involved.

The **Managing Authority (MA)** is the operationally-responsible body of the programme. It ensures the effective and efficient implementation of the programme, and delivers the programme strategy in accordance with preset quality standards. The MA therefore takes the lead in establishing systems and procedures, and ensures that these are maintained. MA ensures that the different Programme authorities and structures interact in a smooth way. MA role and functions are included in a specific organizational Unit functionally independent and separated from the other Authorities and FLC bodies in the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region. MA is the body in communication with EC and MSs.

The **Joint Secretariat** which purpose is to support and assist the MA and MC in carrying their functions was set up by MA in consultation with MSs.

Public selection notices for JS staff were prepared by MA and published on the Official Bulletin of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia No. 4, January 27, 2016. On 3rd May 2016, ranking lists were published on the Programme official web page and Friuli Venezia Giulia Region official website. Such process makes the selection process very transparent.

The **Certifying Authority (CA)** receives the payments made by the Commission (pre-financing, interim payments and the payment of the final balance as defined in art. 77(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013), and shall make payments to the lead beneficiary in accordance with Article 21 (2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

The **Contact Points** assist the JS and national authorities in the further development and implementation of Programme. With regards to standard calls, the Slovene info point and regional offices assisted the JS for the organisation of two info days held in mid-June 2016 (one in Italy and one in Slovenia).

As the projects have not started, some aspects cannot be evaluated yet, but they will be at a later stage.

SECTION 3 - PROGRESS OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

In the light of the 2007-2013 mid-term evaluation reports and ex-ante evaluation of the Programme 2014-2020, the CP approved by the European Commission focused on the thematic objectives (TO) as follows:

- TO1: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation.
- TO4: Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors.
- TO6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency.
- TO11: Enhancing institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and efficient public administration.

The CP consists of four priority axes (PA), which correspond to TO.

- PA 1 Promoting innovation capacities for a more competitive area
- PA 2 Cooperating for implementation of low carbon strategies and action plans
- PA 3 Protecting and promoting natural and cultural resources
- PA 4 Enhancing capacity building and cross-border governance
- PA 5 Technical assistance

In 2016 most of the activities were related to the process leading to the publication of the first calls for standard project proposals with the elaboration of different supporting documents and manuals, such as the Guidelines for on line Application Form and the Application Package:

- Selection Criteria;
- Assessment Manual;
- Manual on Eligibility of Expenditure;
- Template of Partnership Agreement;
- Template of LP Statement;
- Template of PP Statement;
- Template of Subsidy Contract.

On 15 June 2016, the first four calls (one call per PA) No 1/2016 1b, 2/2016 4e, 3/2016 6c, 6d, 6f and 4/2016 11 ETC) calls for the standard project application were published (in Italian language) in the Official Bulletin of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia No 24 on 15.6.2016. The documentation was published on <http://ita-slo.eu/> website in Slovenian (<http://ita-slo.eu/sl/razpisi/razpisi-2016>) and Italian (<http://ita-slo.eu/it/bandi/bandi-chiusi>) language.

The submission deadline was finally set to 30 September 2016.

The proposal of ranking lists is submitted for approval to the Monitoring Committee in May 2017 and on 28 June 2017 the Program Monitoring Committee approved the ranking lists of the projects proposals related to the four calls for proposals for standard projects published on June the 15th, 2016. Out of the 160 submitted proposals, 27 are eligible for funding.

Priority Axis – Specific Objective	Number of selected projects	approved but not co-financed	not reached threshold 65%	A-B check not met*
PA 1 - SO 1b	8	51	1	2
PA 2 - SO 4e	5	7		1
PA 3 - SO 6c	3	31	5	4
PA 3 - SO 6d	2	6		2
PA 3 - SO 6f	2	8		
PA 4 - ETC 11	7	11	2	2
Total	27	114	8	11

* There were different reasons for rejection: for instance, project proposals did not respect the maximum size of the project defined by the Call, missing documents at the time of submission, etc.

The ranking lists were published on the webpage (<http://new.ita-slo.eu/sites/default/files/INTERREG%20ITA-SLO%20RANKINGLIST.zip>).

As the contracts with the selected beneficiaries have not been signed yet the surveys and interviews with them for the evaluation purposes have not been conducted and will be done at the later stage.

Table 3.1. Implementation of the Priority axis

<p>1 Promoting innovation capacities for a more competitive area (PA 1)</p>	<p>The Programme was approved in December 2015.</p> <p>The first call for standard projects No 1/2016 1b (specific objective: Strengthen the cooperation among key actors to promote the knowledge transfer and innovative activities in key sectors of the area) was published on 15 June (in Italian language) in the Official Bulletin of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia No 24 on 15.6 2016. The documentation was published on http://ita-slo.eu/ website in Slovenian (http://ita-slo.eu/sl/razpisi/razpisi-2016) and Italian (http://ita-slo.eu/it/bandi/bandi-chiusi) language.</p> <p>The deadline for the application of the projects was prolonged (from 14.09.2016) and set to 30 September 2016, at 2.00 pm</p> <p>On 28 June 2017 The Program Monitoring Committee approved the ranking lists of the projects proposals.</p> <p>8 projects were selected for financing.</p> <p>51 projects were approved but not financed due to lack of financial assets</p> <p>3 projects were rejected</p> <p>The contracts with beneficiaries are not signed yet.</p>
<p>2 Cooperating for implementation of low carbon strategies and action plans (PA 2)</p>	<p>The Programme was approved in December 2015.</p> <p>The first call for standard projects 2/2016 4e (specific objective: Promotion of implementation of strategies and action plans to promote energy efficiency and to improve territorial capacities for joint low-carbon mobility planning) was published on 15th June (in Italian language) in the Official Bulletin of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia No 24 on 15 June 2016. The documentation was published on http://ita-slo.eu/ website in Slovenian (http://ita-slo.eu/sl/razpisi/razpisi-2016) and Italian (http://ita-slo.eu/it/bandi/bandi-chiusi) language.</p> <p>The deadline for the application of the projects was 14 September 2016 till 3.00 pm (CET).</p> <p>Due to technical problems which had occurred on the web based platform for submitting applications in the 48 hours before the deadline, the time-limit for submitting the applications was extended to 30 September 2016, at 2.00.pm</p> <p>On 28 June 2017 The Program Monitoring Committee approved the ranking lists of the projects proposals.</p> <p>5 projects were selected for financing.</p> <p>7 projects were approved but not financed due to lack of financial assets</p> <p>1 project was rejected</p> <p>The contracts with beneficiaries are not signed yet.</p>
<p>3 Protecting and promoting natural and cultural resources (PA 3)</p>	<p>The first call for standard projects 3/2016 6c, 6d, 6f (specific objective: 6c - Conserving, protecting, restoring and developing natural and cultural heritage; 6d - Enhance the integrated management of ecosystems for a sustainable development of the territory; 6f - Development and the testing of innovative environmental friendly technologies for the improvement of waste and water management) was published on 15th June (in Italian language) in the Official Bulletin of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia No 24 on 15 June 2016. The documentation was published on http://ita-slo.eu/ website in Slovenian (http://ita-slo.eu/sl/razpisi/razpisi-2016) and Italian (http://ita-slo.eu/it/bandi/bandi-chiusi) language.</p>

		<p>chiusi) language.</p> <p>The deadline for the application of the projects was 14 September 2016 till 3.00 pm (CET).</p> <p>Due to technical problems which had occurred on the web based platform for submitting applications in the 48 hours before the deadline, the time-limit for submitting the applications was extended to 30 September 2016, at 2.00.pm</p> <p>On 28 June 2017 The Program Monitoring Committee approved the ranking lists of the projects proposals.</p> <p>7 projects (6c - 3 projects; 6d - 2 projects; 6f - 2 projects) were selected for financing.</p> <p>45 projects (6c - 31 projects; 6d - 6 projects; 6f - 8 projects) were approved but not financed due to lack of financial assets.</p> <p>11 projects (6c - 9 projects; 6d - 2 projects) were rejected.</p> <p>The contracts with beneficiaries are not signed yet.</p> <p>The I.T.I. project Isonzo-Soca has been implemented under this PA. The contract was signed 3 May 2017.</p>
4	Enhancing capacity building and cross-border governance (PA 4)	<p>The Programme was approved in December 2015.</p> <p>The first call for standard projects 4/2016 11 ETC (specific objective: Strengthen the institutional cooperation capacity through mobilizing public authorities and key actors of the Programme area for planning joint solutions to common challenges) was published on 15th June (in Italian language) in the Official Bulletin of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia No 24 on 15 June 2016. The documentation was published on http://ita-slo.eu/ website in Slovenian (http://ita-slo.eu/sl/razpisi/razpisi-2016) and Italian (http://ita-slo.eu/it/bandi/bandi-chiusi) language.</p> <p>The deadline for the application of the projects was 14 September 2016 till 3.00.00 pm (CET).</p> <p>Due to technical problems which had occurred on the web based platform for submitting applications in the 48 hours before the deadline, the time-limit for submitting the applications was extended to 30 September 2016, at 2.00.pm</p> <p>On 28 June 2017 The Program Monitoring Committee approved the ranking lists of the projects proposals.</p> <p>7 projects were selected for financing.</p> <p>11 projects were approved but not financed due to lack of financial assets.</p> <p>4 projects were rejected.</p> <p>The contracts with beneficiaries are not signed yet.</p> <p>The I.T.I. project on Health has been implemented under this PA. The contract was signed 3 May 2017.</p>
5	Technical Assistance (PA 5)	<p>The preparation of the Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia programme was financed from the 2007-2013 CBC Italy-Slovenia 2007-2013.</p> <p>Activities focused on organisation of Task Force/Working Groups meetings in particular.</p> <p>The negotiation phase for the establishment of Joint Secretariat (JS) among Member States started in 2014. Afterwards, two selection notices for the JS staff were agreed and published on January 4, 2016 in the Official Bulletin of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia as well as and on the Slovene and Programme website. The deadline for application was on February 16, 2016 and the selection of the 5 candidates that compose the JS concluded on April 18th, 2016. The JS formal establishments were concluded by July 2016.</p> <p>The Managing Authority published an EU public tender for external technical assistance to the Programme in the EU notice, on the Official Bulletin of the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia and on the Programme website on December 12, 2014. The awarding procedure concluded with the signature of the contract in December 3, 2015. The</p>

group of experts officially started their support to the Programme in January 2016, in order to speed up the publication of the first call for proposal.

On 7th October 2016 first call for the establishment of a roster of independent experts for the assessment of project proposals in the Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia programme was published. On 2nd December a notice was given, that the deadline for publishing the names of eligible applicants was extended to December 12th, 2016, due to FVG administrative and legal requirements in accordance to Art. 10-bis of the Italian No 241 of 7 August 1990.

List of a roster of independent experts was published on the official web page on 12th December 2016.

10th January a list of external experts was published on the webpage.

The online Monitoring tool GGP2 (FEG-based) was used to draft and submit applications. All the work for elaboration of on-line application have started in December 2015 and the front end application has been completed by June 2016. As the system faced some technical challenges, the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat provided all the necessary support to the potential beneficiaries and informed them on the correct software solutions.

In order to improve efficiently the management of the Programme, the following actions have also been implemented:

- Preparing and implementing the first four calls for proposals, including the development of guidance documents and setting out the conditions for the projects' technical support;
- Setting-up and implementing procedures for the quality assessment of projects;
- Drafting and implementing the Programme communication strategy, including the setting up and implementation of information and communication measures and tools in line with Article 115 of the Regulation (EU) No. 1303/2013;
- Drafting the Programme evaluation plan;
- Setting up a network of national/regional authorities/Info point/ financial controllers, coordinated by the Joint Secretariat, with the purpose of exchanging information and best practices at cross-border level;
- Drafting of information documents for applicants and beneficiaries to guide them in the preparation of applications and the implementation, evaluation, control and communication of approved projects;
- Organizing, information and exchange events (e.g.: training workshop in Trieste, two local events in Venice and Postojna) to strengthen the capacity of applicants to develop applications directly contributing to the Programme specific objectives and expected results;
- Organizing trainings on specific implementation issues such as project and financial management, reporting, control, audit, communication and networking to strengthen the capacity of beneficiaries to implement approved operations, new EU legislation on public procurement;
- Developing information and exchange tools (e.g. analytical documents, bilateral meetings, targeted events, etc.) and organization of cross-border and national events to strengthen the involvement of relevant partners in the implementation of the Programme (also including authorities involved in the development or implementation of macro-regional strategies, joint legal bodies operating in the Programme area and umbrella organizations).

Furthermore, within PA 5 several other calls for tender have been published and selected, as described in the following table.

Table 3.2. Calls for tender Priority axis 5

Num.	CONTRAENTE	OGGETTO DELL'APPALTO	DATA DEL DECRETO DI AGGIUDICAZIONE DEFINITIVA	IMPORTO DI AGGIUDICAZIONE/ AFFIDAMENTO Euro al netto dell'IVA	stato appalto
1	RTI Lattanzio Advisory S.p.A./ SEENetwork Korilátolt Felelősségű Társaság	Servizio di assistenza tecnica specialistica per la predisposizione del Programma Italia-Slovenia 2014-2020 - SIGECO	26/05/2014	24.750,00	concluso nel 2016
2	VERTO GROUP Srl	Servizio di traduzione.	01/02/12	Euro 12,00= al netto dell'IVA (costo a cartella) ≥ VALORE MAX CONTRATTUALE: Euro 138.000,00= (al netto dell'IVA)	fino al 2018
3	Telecom Italia S.p.A.	Servizio Telefonía mobile e	25/05/15	Adesione a Convenzione per Euro 4918,03 (ottomila/00) IVA esclusa. Scadenza convenzione nel 2018.	fino al 2018
4	A.T.I. Greta Associati/MK Projezt Doo-Venezia	VAS - valutazione strategica ambientale PCT Interreg V-A ITA-SLO 2014-2020	19/06/14	23.166,00	concluso nel 2016
5	ECO LASER INFORMATICA SRL	Fornitura di materiale di cancelleria e di consumo per le esigenze del programma di cooperazione INTERREG V-A ITALIA-SLOVENIA 2014-2020	06/12/16	1.246,87	concluso
6	MOVIDA	Servizio catering (rinfresco) per l'evento di lancio (9/e/10)		3.626,00	concluso
7	COOPERATIVA SOCIALE LAVORATORI UNITI F. BASAGLIA SOCIETA' COOPERATIVA ONLUS	Servizio di catering per riunioni tecniche del Programma	19/08/16	Euro - 24,70 IVA ai sensi di legge esclusa (costo unitario a prestazione) ≥ Euro 17.550,00 = al netto dell'IVA: importo max contrattuale	fino al 2018
8	TECNOLIGHT SRL	Servizio impianti per la diffusione dell'interpretariato per riunioni interne/tecniche ristrette	16/05/2016	Euro - 699,00 IVA ai sensi di legge esclusa (costo unitario a prestazione) ≥ Euro 15.000,00 = al netto dell'IVA: importo max contrattuale	fino al 2018
9	TECNOLIGHT SRL	Servizio impianti per la diffusione dell'interpretariato per incontri esterni (beneficiari)	16/05/2016	Euro - 699,00 IVA ai sensi di legge esclusa (costo unitario a prestazione) ≥ Euro 15.000,00 = al netto dell'IVA: importo max contrattuale	fino al 2018
10	VERTOGROUP SRL	Servizio di interpretariato	16/05/2016	Euro - 699,00 IVA ai sensi di legge esclusa (costo unitario a prestazione) ≥ Euro 15.000,00 = al netto dell'IVA: importo max contrattuale	fino al 2018
11	MERIDIANA ITALIA srl	Servizi di supporto alla predisposizione del Programma di Cooperazione	24/10/13	28.900,00	concluso nel 2016
12	ARCTUR doo	Servizio relativo al software web-based denominato "4PM" per la conservazione e condivisione stabile e sicura di documenti programmatici tra operatori interni ed esterni all'Amministrazione Regionale e necessario al corretto funzionamento del Programma di Cooperazione Italia-Slovenia 2007-2013 e 2014-2020	14/12/2016	Euro 250,00 IVA ai sensi di legge esclusa (costo unitario a prestazione) ≥ Euro 4.000,00 = al netto dell'IVA: importo max contrattuale	fino al 31/03/2018
13	RTI Expert for Europe srl / Ecoter srl	Servizio di valutazione unitaria del Programma di cooperazione Interreg V-A Italia-Slovenia 2014-2020 (lotto 2)	24/08/2016	67.010,00	fino al 31/12/2023
14	RTI COSTITUENDO: MANDATARIA: Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini MANDANTI: PricewaterhouseCoopers Advisory Spa	Assistenza tecnica esterna per servizi strumentali all'esercizio delle funzioni dell'Autorità di Gestione del Programma	19/12/2016	718.901,00	fino al 2018, con possibile rinnovo fino al 31/12/2023
15	POMILIO BLUMM SRL	Servizio di ri-progettazione, elaborazione, realizzazione e manutenzione del sito web del Programma	01/12/2016	27.992,59	fino al 31/12/2023
16	IN CORSO	Servizio di comunicazione unitaria FVG dei programmi cofinanziati con fondi dell'unione europea nel periodo di programmazione 2014/2020	IN CORSO	65.500,00	fino al 31/12/2023

3.1 Project cycle (Project application and selection procedures)

After the publication of the call, all the documentation and the Application package was available in both languages on the <http://ita-slo.eu/>. Submission of the application was possible only via electronic submission tool - FEG (Front-End Generalizzato), which was also available on the web page of the Programme.

For Slovene applicants the registration in the application was available at: istanze-web.regione.fvg.it/FEGC/AreaRiservata/Home.aspx?LANG=SLO; for Italian applicants the registration was available at: istanze-web.regione.fvg.it/FEGC/AreaRiservata/Home.aspx?LANG=ITA.

All the documents submitted had to be signed with the digital signature. Standard projects evaluation follows the assessment criteria divided into:

1. Administrative criteria;
2. Eligibility criteria;
3. Quality Assessment criteria, divided into the following sub-groups:
 - i. Content related assessment - strategic criteria;
 - ii. Implementation related assessment - operational criteria;
 - iii. Specific criteria per PA and SO;
4. Assessment according to State Aid relevance

The MA is responsible for activating all procedures for appointing external experts as independent assessors through procedures assuring transparency and according to provisions in force. Therefore, for the quality assessment the MA with the support of the JS published a notice for the selection for the establishment of a roster of independent experts for the assessment of project proposals.

All questions and answers (FAQ) regarding the application of project proposals were published in Italian and Slovene language. All together there were 42 FAQs from potential applicants, which may indicate that the published documentation and manuals were clear enough and the process of application and electronic submission tool was averagely understandable and useable.

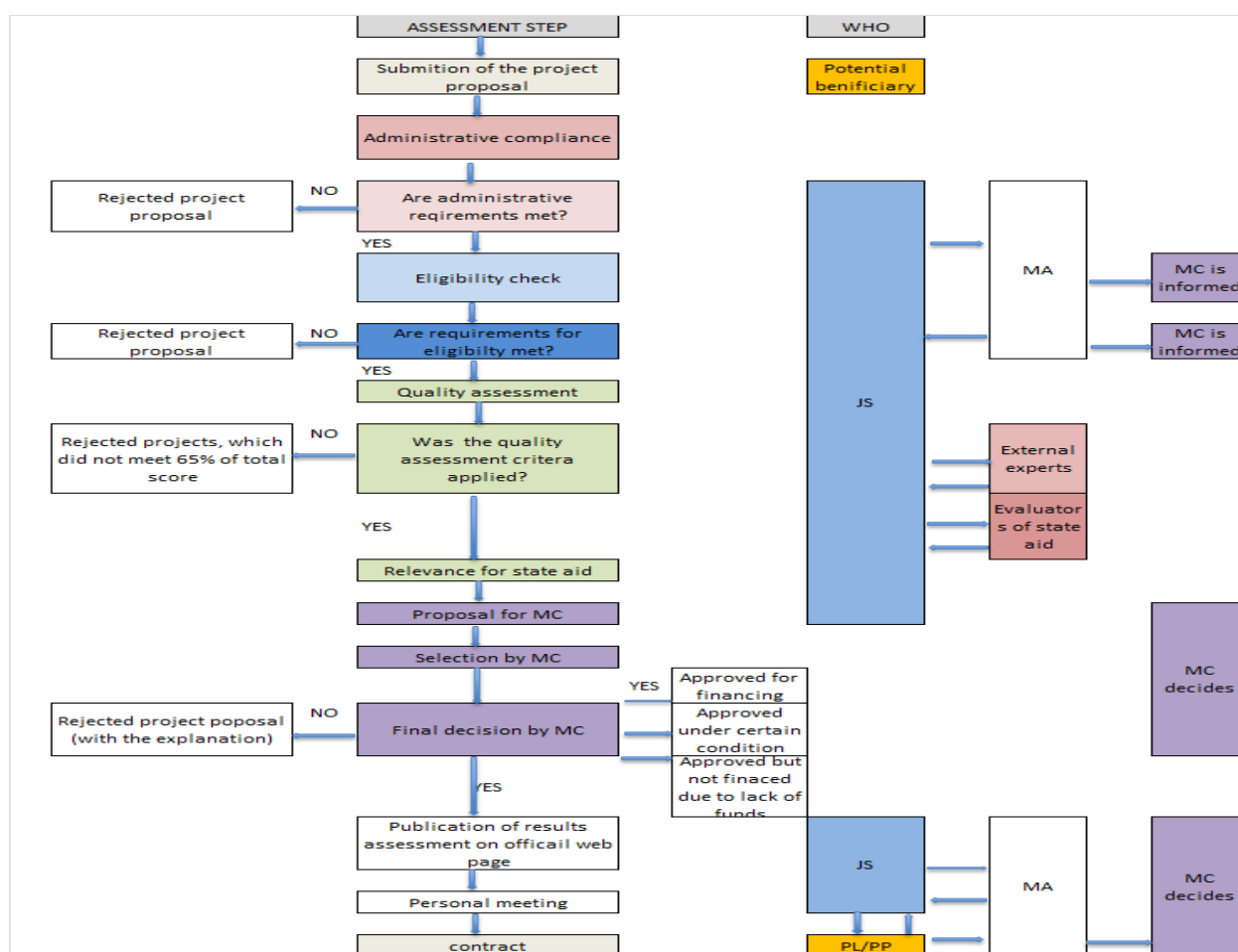
The process of the assessment is described in detail in the Assessment manual (in Slovenian and Italian language) - standard projects. All the proposals which were submitted by the closing date of the call, were assessed in accordance with standardized and transparent procedures based on the selection criteria approved by the MC.

The overall assessment and selection of the procedure is carried out in accordance with the following general principles:

- Transparency
- Equality of treatment
- Objectivity

Assessment process with the involvement of different Programme authorities / structures and external assessors is explained more in detail in the Picture 3.2.

Picture 3.2. Selection process of project proposals.



Source: Adapted from Assessment guide

Only project proposals that satisfied the eligibility criteria advanced to the second step, the quality assessment.

The quality assessment also applied an approach based on a scoring system, resulting in a ranking list of all eligible applications. The quality assessment was carried out by experts under coordination and supervision of JS.

The state aid assessment is carried out by external experts - State authorities. As already mentioned, the process was finalised by approving of ranking list of 27 awarded projects on 28 June 2017.

The MC members gave mandate to the JS to perform face-to-face meetings with lead partners before the signature of contracts. The purpose of the personal meetings is to clarify the assessors observations to be fulfilled and to clarify the understanding of indicators.

The process of assessment of project proposals was in detail and clearly documented in Assessment manual and Selection criteria which gave a clear picture of selection procedure, bodies involved, selection rules and selection criteria. The same documents

were used by evaluators, who were not to use any other criteria, not described in the manual.

3.2 Project monitoring systems and mechanisms

All Interreg Programmes are obliged to set up a computerised monitoring systems in order to collect all information on project and programme progress. At the same time, programmes should provide their beneficiaries with a system to allow them submission of information in electronic form. All exchanges of information between beneficiaries and managing authorities, certifying authorities, audit authorities and intermediate bodies should be carried out solely via an electronic data exchange system.

An electronic monitoring system with a data exchange module needs to be set up by each programme. All the information on submitted and approved projects (application form), their implementation and achievements (project reports and payment claims), modifications and closure need to be stored in the system. Additionally aggregated data on the progress of a programme should be collected as well. All programme bodies should communicate with beneficiaries via the system and re-use the data already collected.

For the Interreg Italia-Slovenia Programme the online system - made up of the “front-end application - FEG”, devoted to the presentation of projects from the beneficiaries within the call procedures, and of the GGP2 monitoring tool -was made available. All the work for the elaboration of the on-line project applications started in December 2015 and the front-end application was completed in view of the launch for the first four calls for proposals in June 2016.

The system is modular and flexible in nature and was used for project application at the first stage and will be used for monitoring (reporting) at the second stage.

A Guidelines for the on-line application was prepared for the applicants. There were two versions of the Guidelines - the first one was published in June (21.6. 2016 was published updated version) and as the potential beneficiaries faced some technical challenges, the second one was published on August 8th, 2016. The second version was clearer and easier to use as the instructions included the screen shots of the tool.

Although some ordinary problems have been experienced by the online system, it is fundamental to ensure the smooth management, monitoring and storage of projects and programme data, and to also ensure transparency of all the related procedures.

3.3 Simplification and reduction of administrative burden

According to the evaluations of CBC Programme Italy-Slovenia 2007-2013 the main administrative problems were:

- Long-time selection procedures;
- Many changes in the applicable rules during the implementation period;
- Need for a wider and more homogenous information and communication;
- Lack of web-based tools;

- Considerable percentage of ineligible projects proposal mainly due to eligible criteria not fulfilled;
- Monitoring system not always updated.

Several tools are used in a new programming period to reduce the administrative burden of beneficiaries as well as of programme bodies.

New in this programming period is that staff costs of an operation may be calculated at a flat rate of up to 20 % of the direct costs other than the staff costs of that operation (Article 19 Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013).

Staff costs may be reimbursed either:

- on a real cost basis (proven by the employment document and payslips);
- under simplified cost options as a flat rate in accordance with Article 19 of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

The beneficiary should indicate already at submission, whether flat rate or actual expenses for the reimbursement of staff will be claimed. A mix of methods can not be used.

There is the European programme Interact III created for assisting European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes. Interact provides advisory services on Interreg practices.

Interact provides practical support, training and advice to European Territorial Cooperation Programmes on management techniques, financial issues, European regulations, communication, strategic orientation and policy development. It offers as well a unique forum for European Territorial Cooperation stakeholders by supporting institutional and thematic networks on topics of common interest.

Interact supports Managing Authorities, Joint Technical Secretariats, Monitoring Committees, National Contact Persons, First Level Controllers, Certifying Authorities and Audit Authorities etc. across Europe.

The official Programme web page <http://new.ita-slo.eu/> is in Italian, Slovene and English language, it provides all the necessary information. The web page is well structured, it is regularly updated with the necessary documentation and information relevant for beneficiaries, the documentation is easy to find.

SECTION 4 - COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

As far as communication is concerned, the Evaluation Report is committed to assess the contribution provided by the communication strategy to a greater visibility of the Programme and the relative awareness raising on its objectives and, specifically, its communication activities (Evaluation question: "To which extent the communication strategy of the Programme has contributed to a greater visibility and awareness raising?"). In particular, the evaluation is aiming at focusing on the effectiveness of the communication strategy towards applicants - and potential applicants - and beneficiaries - and potential beneficiaries (Evaluation question: "How effective are Programme communication actions towards applicants and beneficiaries?").

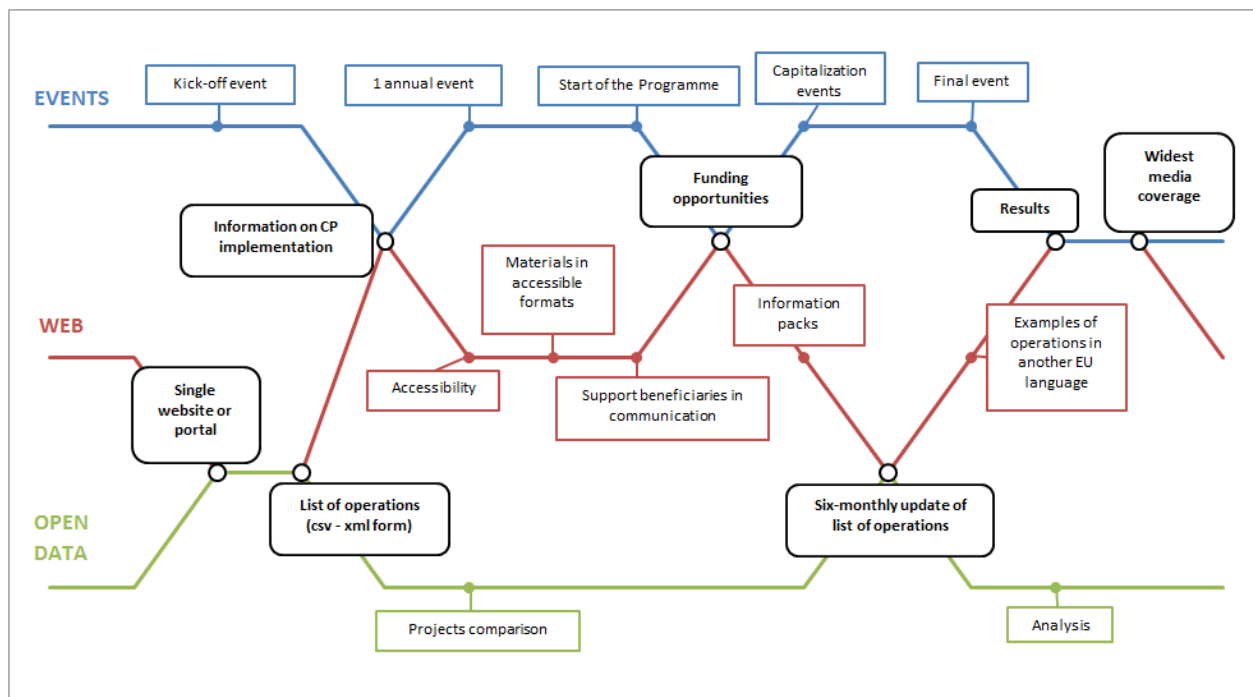
It is worth underlining how communication has gained a vital role in cross-border cooperation programmes throughout the recent past: effective and good communication is the basis of cooperation and it is crucial for programme implementation. This approach is clearly set out in the Programme Communication Strategy, as presented in its latest version, May 24, 2017, thus providing a first element of coherence and effectiveness.

The Programme Communication Strategy - along with the annual communication plans for 2016 and 2017 - seems to match coherently with EU rules and guidelines, starting from the basic consideration that an effective communication is a prerequisite for any EU Programme to deliver meaningful results, not only to project partners, but also to broader audiences outside the project communities. In this perspective, the Programme Communication Strategy correctly focuses on increasing the awareness about the Programme, even in its breakdown of Priority Axes and connected financing opportunities.

From a first - and basically preliminary - assessment, the strategy seems to be adequately planned in its overall process such as in its yearly planning to develop and implement communication tools targeted to assist the beneficiaries, as well as promoting Programme's results and achievements.

The framework of the Communication Strategy - correctly approached as an integral part of the working procedures at all levels throughout the project and Programme cycles - reveals a coherent and adequate procedural and operative set of activities and tools according to Common Provisions Regulation 1303/2013 and the implementing regulations, as described in the following graph.

Picture 5.1. Programme Communication map according to Common Provisions Regulation 1303/2013 and Implementing regulations.



Source: Programme Communication Strategy.

The Programme Communication Strategy provides evidence of a careful consideration of the lessons learnt from the past Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy - Slovenia 2007-2013. Looking at the Communication Strategy for the Cooperation Programme Italy - Slovenia 2014-2020, a survey has been conducted among the lead partners of the 87 projects financed (with a total value of 119.744.971 EUR) during the 2007-2013 programming period. The survey, focused on the support to beneficiaries in the events of information, communication and dissemination, has collected very positive responses that has been used as a guidance to develop a SWOT analysis in the light of supporting the shaping of the current Communication Strategy.

Paying mainly attention to the weaknesses and the threats, as relevant sources of improvement, the Programme Communication Strategy identified several features that might be crucial in this perspective.

From the weaknesses point of view, the communication strategy 2007-2013 lacked mostly in two relevant features of the strategy: on the one side, in coordination, as far as coordination among Programme authorities and structures, and coordination among Managing Authority and institutional bodies area concerned, probably as a result of an unclear identification of responsibilities and tasks; on the other side, in the effectiveness of information, resulting in a poor visibility and identifiability of projects, in a controversial image of the Programme and of its impact on the Programme area, in the development of specific information tools for the different target groups.

Regarding a closer analysis of the past threats to the communication strategy, it is worth pointing out that some of them must be targeted even in this current period, such as slow selection procedures and underestimated human and financial resources devoted to communication activities, which may affect the strategy.

The Programme Communication Strategy 2014-2020 seems to have carefully considered the past experiences and to have improved in the light of effectiveness and of partners information, awareness and engagement. According to the Communication Strategy, in fact, it is structured around some fundamental features:

Integrated, as it envisages integration in several aspects:

- Institutional partnership (Programme partners);
- Social and economic partnership, to increase the diagnosis capacity of the implicit or explicit informative needs of specific groups, to foster a more targeted dissemination of information in order to multiply its extent;
- Communication activities of other Interreg programmes to ensure an overview of the EU role within the ETC development strategy, but also a complementarity among communication activities;
- Institutional bodies and their communication activities on the Programme-area;

Accessible, as it will communicate with a clear language, friendly tones and always ensuring transparency regarding information;

Personalised, as its activities will be adapted to the different interests of the related target groups;

Engaging, as it is based on the active involvement of the beneficiaries and their associations and networks.

The Evaluation Report has also analysed the breakdown of general and specific objectives define by the communication strategy. The combination of those objectives contributes to the development of a communication strategy that could prove effective and inclusive, and reveals an overall approach consistent with the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy - Slovenia 2014-2020 and coherent with the Common Provisions Regulation 1303/2013 and its implementing regulations. However, at this stage the Evaluation Report can only provide on this an assessment in a future perspective, on which it is necessary to get back in the next evaluation reports.

The Communication Objectives, general (CO) and specific (SO), planned for the 2014-2020 programming period are the following:

CO 1. Raise the awareness about the Programme and its funding opportunities to attract high-quality projects

- SO a. Raise the knowledge among potential beneficiaries to attract applicants;
- SO b. Involve partners in communication activities to attract potential beneficiaries among their audiences;
- SO c. Properly inform potential beneficiaries and help them gain access to funding opportunities.

CO 2. Increase the public awareness and the reputation of the Programme

- SO a. Support projects in communication activities to sustain the Programme reputation and its attractiveness;
- SO b. Encourage a wide involvement of the relevant partners and contribute to upgrade their capacity building in projects presentation and implementation;
- SO c. Disseminate the results of the Programme and its projects;
- SO d. Ensure complete transparency and access to Programme information, above all about beneficiaries and projects achievements;
- SO e. Promote in the media the knowledge and positive reputation of the added value of the Programme for the Programme-area;
- SO f. Promote the best practices and sustainable solutions.

CO 3. Support the efficient Programme management and the implementation of the Programme

Looking at one of the basic elements of this current evaluation activity - the effectiveness of the communication strategy towards applicants and beneficiaries - specific attention must be paid to information and dissemination tools and activities planned. In this field, the Programme Communication Strategy reveals a careful consideration of the information needs of the potential applicants and beneficiaries: information needs regarding objectives, procedures, benefits and results of the Programme, the availability of funding, timing and frequency of calls, instructions for procedures, reference and guidance to success stories, tips, formats and models, and partners research.

Relying on this analysis, the communication strategy correctly identifies a set of actions devoted to the potential beneficiaries and to the beneficiaries. In the first cluster of actions are coherently included conferences, meetings, seminars, info days and other activities in order to raise awareness about the specific objectives of the Programme and the funding opportunities, and also an easily accessible, updated and complete website, where to find documentation about the implementation of the Programme providing clear and comprehensive information regarding the most useful and fundamental features (eligibility criteria, description of the assessment procedures of applications and deadlines, projects eligibility criteria, main contacts).

In the second cluster, information on administrative procedures required for the implementation of interventions are primarily concerned. In particular, the adoption and dissemination of manuals and guidelines for project management, and all the other relevant instructions for granting of funds.

Both clusters of actions are positively in line with beneficiaries' needs and with EU orientations.

The evaluation activity described in this First extensive Report has focused also on how the communication strategy is planned to develop during the years, deepening what has been done during this first Programme implementation period: it means from the

adoption of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy - Slovenia 2014-2020 (December 15, 2015) so far.

The Programme Communication Strategy seems to fairly plan its activities during the programming period, beginning with a first year (i.e. 2016) dedicated to launching the Programme, therefore focused on raising awareness about the Programme itself and engaging stakeholders. The following years, according to the strategy, will be devoted to the consolidation of communication, a further specialization towards the Programme priorities and an intensification of communication activities at national level. In this development flow of communication activities and in the overall communication strategy, the current year 2017 plays the role of a first reviewing step, in which the efficiency and adequacy of communication activities and tools will be assessed and implied to shift and improve the following steps. Improvement that must be addressed to a more effective communication in terms of information provided to the beneficiaries and potential ones, in terms of more thematically specialized communication and, finally, in a more target groups oriented communication. The last year of the communication strategy will be mainly devoted to dissemination of Programme achievements and results.

Annex 1 to the Programme Communication Strategy, here following, describes the evolution of the strategy itself.

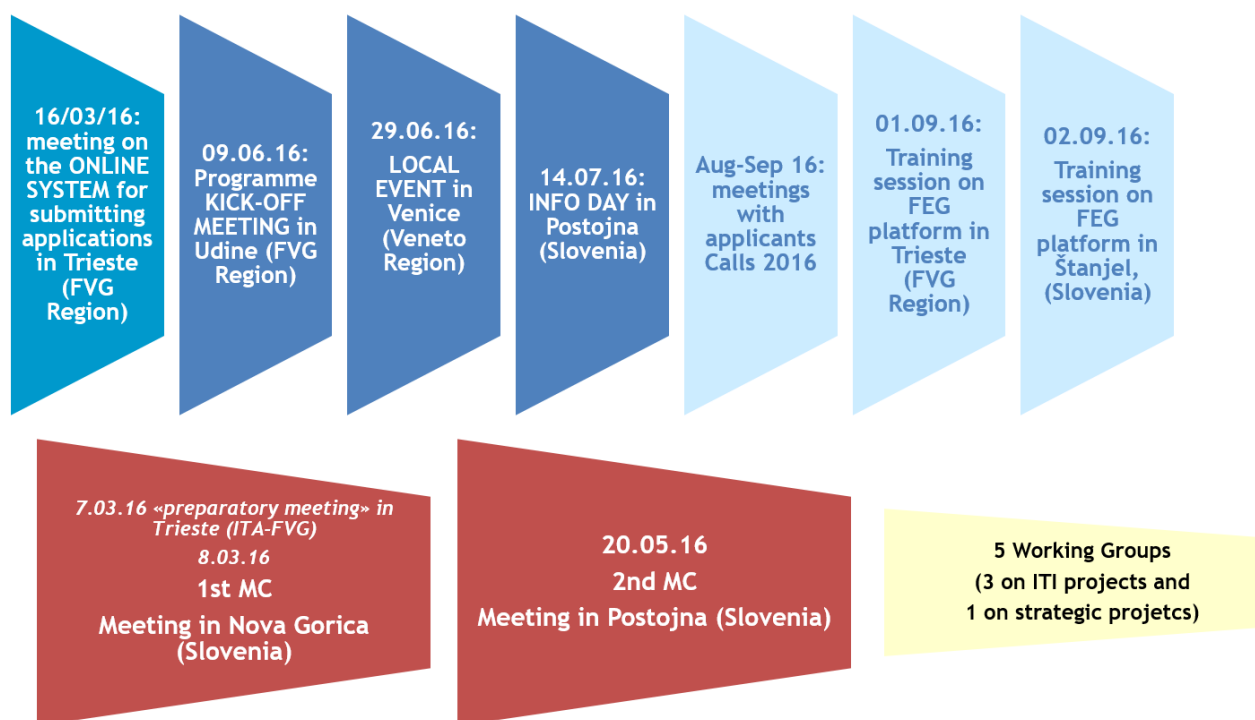
Annex 1 - Evolution of communication

YEAR	PHASE	FOCUS ON	GENERAL DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC TOOLS
2015	Preparation	Communication needs Development of information	Elaboration of Programme documents Set up of a communication structure Assessment of communication needs Development of the Communication Strategy Tender calls for the website	Programme documents
2016	Launching	Raising awareness Promoting Mobilising stakeholders Distribution and accessibility of information	Communication structure in place Communication activities begin Major information and promotional materials and communication tools developed Launch of the Programme Communication has a general, informative character	Website and social media development Development of information materials (flyer, communication toolkit, Programme and project brand manual)
2016	Consolidation	Project communication Presenting the priorities	Developing the communication network All communication tools are available and fully functional Increased interactivity between management and target groups Communication becomes more specialized	Events: seminars, meetings, workshops, project communication events Networking
2017	Review	Feedback Improving information Adequacy of information Fine tuning Adjustment Quality information	Assessing the efficiency and relevance of communication activities and tools Establishing best practices Improvement of communication tools, following received feedback Adjustment and specialisation of communication according to specific needs	Evaluation questionnaires Reports Best practices Project catalogues
2018	Improvement			
2019	Adjustment			
2020	Focus	Specialisation Tailored information	More targeted, specific communication	Thematic and capitalisation events
2021	Evaluation and Dissemination	Dissemination of results Evaluation of communication Lessons learnt	Define, disseminate and communicate the achievements of the Programme (projects, results) Evaluate the communication Prepare for the next programming period	Evaluation questionnaires Reports Best practices Project catalogue / Results brochure Thematic and capitalisation events
2022				
2023				

Source: Programme Communication Strategy.

Looking more specifically at the communication activities carried out in 2016, as described in the following table, it seems that a positive effort has been made in trying to overcome an initial delay in the Programme implementation, such in the implementation of the communication strategy.

Picture 5.2. Communication activities in 2016



Source: Programme Communication Strategy.

The table shows a good combination among fundamental horizontal tools, first of all the implementation of the new website and its updating, specific local events/info days and training sessions supporting awareness raising and information needs. In particular, delivering ground activities in different venues throughout the Programme area is a good evidence of a strategy that could prove very effective. Certainly, the feedback coming from the stakeholders has been positive: around 750 participants to the above-described activities in 2016, including potential beneficiaries and a wider audience.

In this perspective, the Communication Plan implemented in 2016 shows positive elements of consistency and coherence with EU general orientations on communication of co-funded programmes' activities, and with the broader Programme Communication Strategy. Furthermore, awareness raising and information activities on the field, as implemented in 2016, can pave the way to a higher level of consistency and coherence of actions backed by the following annual communication plans.

In 2017, communication strategy continued as planned, with a renewed effort in accelerating its implementation. Digital communication activities has been implemented coherently through the improvement of a multilingual (Italian, Slovene and English) website, the launching of social networking, the development of the web based 4pm platform for exchanging documents and the definition of the Programme visual identity. All activities that are particularly relevant for beneficiaries and potential ones.

Publications and other informative materials have been budgeted for the current year and they are still under completion, mainly targeted to beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries.

As far as events are concerned, different types have been budgeted for the year 2017, and some of them have been already implemented in the first two quarters, mainly Monitoring Committees meetings. In the field of events, it is worth underlining that usually and traditionally stakeholders and beneficiaries have high expectations on quality and frequency of meetings/activities.

The evaluation activity supporting this First extensive Report took into careful consideration the analysis of the set of indicators defined for the Programme Communication Strategy. Indicators became crucial in the overall system of policies supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds, as a means of assessment of the entire Cohesion Policy cycle. In this perspective, at the current early stage of implementation, the Evaluation Report could focus on the consistency and the adequacy of the indicators identified, their assessment tools and the sources of data.

The following table provide an overview of the system of indicators related to the Programme Communication Strategy for the year 2016, that all in all seem to prove effectively.

Table 5.1. Communication strategy indicators for 2016.

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES	ASSESSMENT TOOLS	ACHIEVEMENT INDICATORS	SOURCE OF DATA
CO 1 Raise awareness about the Programme and its funding opportunities to attract high-quality projects	Digital publications Public events Major publicity events for applicants Infodays and workshops for project applicants Feedback collection Promotional material	Surveys at events Attendance at events Analytics	N. of digital publications: 150 files published on the Programme website and 26 tweets N. of distributed printed publications:0 N. of major publicity events for applicants: 3 (1 FVG, 1 VEN, 1 SLO) N. of participants: around 750 N. of Infodays: 3 N. of workshops for project applicants: 2 (training sessions: 1 ITA, 1 SLO) + face-to-face meetings N. of received applications: around 750 participants>>160 standard project proposals N. of visits on the website www.ita-slo.eu : 80.198 Unique visitors N. of requests for information: 44 related to Calls 2016 N. of distributed gadgets: 0 Percentage of participants (to public events) stating that their knowledge of the Programme has increased: 77%	on line platform system Monitoring system Project reports JS and Annual reports

CO 2	Digital and printed publications Communication toolkit Major publicity events for beneficiaries Infodays and workshops Feedback collection	Questionnaires addressed to the final beneficiaries Feedbacks Attendance at events, surveys at events (e.g. online surveys in case of bigger events) Analytics	<p>N. of digital publications: 150 files published on the Programme website and 26 tweets</p> <p>N. of distributed printed publications: 0</p> <p>N. of major publicity events for applicants: 3 (1 FVG, 1 VEN, 1 SLO)</p> <p>N. of workshops for beneficiaries: : 2 (training sessions: 1 ITA, 1 SLO) + face-to-face meetings</p> <p>N. of participants: about 750</p> <p>N. of beneficiaries/partners participating: about 40% of tot (according to 2 biggest events questionnaires results)</p> <p>N. of events organized by beneficiaries: 0</p> <p>N. of projects committed and finished: 0</p> <p>Percentage of participants (to public events) stating that their knowledge of the Programme has increased: about 40% of tot</p>	<p>on line platform system</p> <p>Surveys</p> <p>Event registration forms</p>
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CO 3	Meetings	Questionnaires	N. of internal training activities: 1	MA/JS reports
Support the efficient Programme management and the implementation of the Programme	Intranet	Attendance at meetings		Surveys/questionnaires
	Mailing lists	Feedbacks	N. internal meetings: 2 MC and 4 WGs	
	Internal training activities (meetings among Programme authorities and structures)		N. of participations in EU and other Programme events: 4 people/ 2 events	
	Participation in European and other Programme events		Questionnaire results (see Annex 3)	
	Feedback collection		N. of employees (FTEs) whose salaries are co-funded by Technical Assistance budget: 5 JS + 1 Slovene Info Point + 2 MA (fixed-term contract workers)	

Source: Programme Communication Strategy.

Finally, the Evaluation Report focused on the relation between an efficient organizational framework and an effective communication strategy. Setting an efficient organisational framework must prove crucial for an effective communication strategy, as we already pointed out before. Communication, such as other Programme key activities, must be supported by favourable context and organisational conditions to be developed at high standards level in line with EU guidelines.

Programme communication is a shared responsibility of the Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat/OIB EGTC GO, the Monitoring Committee, the Info Point and the projects, with the Monitoring Committee acting as steering and decision making body. It is worth pointing out that, although shared and integrated competences are promoted within Cohesion policy programmes, such an integration implies a procedural burden on the Administration and requires an effective model of coordination among the relevant actors.

SECTION 5 - FIRST CALLS FOR STANDARD PROJECTS.

In this specific section, the Evaluation Report is called upon to assess the expected outputs and results of the selected projects under the first calls for standard projects. Although Programme implementation is still at an early stage, the Report can focus on the first wave of selected projects and try to develop a feasibly consistent assessment. However, it is fundamental to stress that the Programme Monitoring Committee approved the ranking lists of the projects proposals related to the first four calls for proposals for standard projects in June 28, 2017: therefore, expected outputs and results may be evaluated mostly in perspective, whereas it would be possible.

First, it is worth pointing out that the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020 aims at supporting three specific typologies of projects, as follows:

- 1) **Strategic projects**
- 2) **Standard projects** (focus of this current analysis)
- 3) **Projects for the I.T.I. implementation**

Focusing the current assessment on the standard projects, the management effort in year 2016 - as underlined in the Annual implementation report 2016 - mainly concerned the process for the publication of the first call for standard project proposals (in total 4 calls were launched, 1 call per Priority Axis), with the definition of the documents which make up the Application Package.

The four calls published have been supported with the following financial allocations:

Priority Axis 1: Promoting innovation capacities for a more competitive area - Specific Objective 1.1: Strengthen the cooperation among key actors to promote the knowledge transfer and innovative activities in key sectors of the area, with a financial allocation of 8.892.232,30 euro (70% of the total ERDF available for standard projects);

Priority Axis 2: Cooperating for low carbon strategies - Specific Objective 2.1 Promotion of implementation of strategies and action plans to promote energy efficiency and to improve territorial capacities for joint low-carbon mobility planning, with a financial allocation of 5.689.493,00 euro (100% of the total ERDF available for standard projects);

Priority Axis 3: Protecting and promoting natural and cultural resources - Specific Objective 3.1: Conserving, protecting, restoring, and developing natural and cultural heritage - Specific Objective 3.2: Enhance the integrated management of ecosystems for a sustainable development of the territory - Specific Objective 3.3: Development and the testing of innovative environmental friendly technologies for the

improvement of waste and water management, with a financial allocation of 7.367.838,80 euro (70% of the total ERDF available for standard projects);

Priority Axis 4: Enhancing building and cross border governance - Specific Objective 4.1: Strengthen the institutional cooperation capacity through mobilizing public authorities and key actors of the Programme area for planning joint solutions to common challenges, with a financial allocation of 6.185.193,70 euro (70% of the total ERDF available for standard projects).

The following table shows the details of the proposals submitted.

Table 4.1. Calls for standard project proposals, project proposals submitted.

Calls for standard project proposals n. 1/2016 1b, 2/2016 4e, 3/2016 6c, 6d, 6f e 4/2016 11 ETC: PROJECT PROPOSALS SUBMITTED			
Priority Axis	Specific Objective	Description	No. of project proposals submitted
PA 1	1b	Strengthen the cooperation among key actors to promote the knowledge transfer and innovative activities in key sectors of the area	62
PA 2	4e	Promotion of implementation of strategies and action plans to promote energy efficiency and to improve territorial capacities for joint low-carbon mobility planning	13
PA 3	6c	Conserving, protecting, restoring and developing natural and cultural heritage	43
	6d	Enhance the integrated management of ecosystems for a sustainable development of the territory	10
	6f	Development and the testing of innovative environmental friendly technologies for the improvement of waste and water management	10
PA 4	ETC	Strengthen the institutional cooperation capacity through mobilizing public authorities and key actors of the Programme area for planning joint solutions to common challenges	22
		Total	160

Source: Annual Implementation Report 2016.

The Programme Monitoring Committee approved the ranking lists of the projects proposals related to the four calls for proposals for standard projects in June 28, 2017.

It is here worth pointing out that out of the administrative and eligibility assessment, 149 project proposals passed to be quality assessed out of 160 submitted, highlighting good capacities from the stakeholders in the Programme area to participate to e-application procedures. Furthermore, the quality assessment, as previously described in its process, has been completed with a very positive output in terms of planning capacity of the stakeholders in the Programme area: only 8 proposals out of the total failed to reach the minimum score level requested for approval. Therefore, 141 project proposals have been admitted to the ranking list.

It is relevant to remind that the maximum total score of the quality assessment was 125 points (i.e. 100%), made up of the sub-criteria as described in the following table. The minimum threshold to be admitted in the ranking list of approved projects was 81 out of 125, i.e. the 65% of the total score.

In the event of equal points, the procedure gave priority to project proposals with a higher score in the sub-group “strategic criteria”. In case of a further tie, priority has been given to the higher score under the sub-group “operational criteria”. Moreover, whereas the projects were still scoring at the same level, priority has been given to the one embracing the largest number of specific criteria for Priority Axis. As a final criterion, the date of application through the online system is taken into consideration.

Finally, after the completion of the quality assessment, the project proposals matching checks and requirements of the call have been screened in their compliance with the State Aid regulation, according to article 107 of the Treaty (TFEU).

It must be considered that out of the 160 total submitted proposals, and out of the 141 proposals which successfully met the quality requirements, only 27 have been found eligible for funding, due to the resources allocated to the call. This means that approximately 110 good projects could not receive granting of funds for their implementation, resulting in a good basis for future investments that the Programme should not lose.

However, it is worth highlighting a set of collected and analysed data that may support a broader and deeper evaluation. First, it must be considered that out of the 160 total applied proposals, 27 have been found eligible for funding.

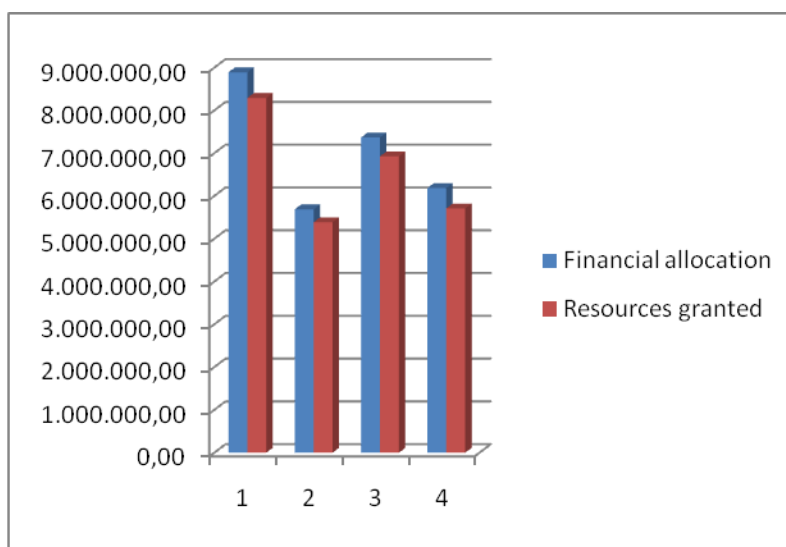
The following table shows the reported details of the selected projects.

Table 4.2. Number of selected standard projects and financial allocation.

PRIORITY SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	AXIS -	NUMBER SELECTED PROJECTS	OF CALL FOR PROPOSALS ALLOCATION (€)	FINANCIAL	RESOURCES GRANTED (€)
PA 1 - SO 1b		8	8.892.232,30		8.292.299,58
PA 2 - SO 4e		5	5.689.493,00		5.388.057,29
PA 3 - SO 6c		3	7.367.838,80		2.696.754,62

PA 3 - SO 6d	2	7.367.838,80	2.313.725,08
PA 3 - SO 6f	2	7.367.838,80	1.915.867,23
PA 4 - ETC 11	7	6.185.193,70	5.709.877,36
Total	27	28.134.757,80	26.316.581,16

Graph 4.1. Resources granted (€) to the selected projects within each Programme Priority Axis on the total amount of the financial allocation of the calls for proposals.



In terms of financial progress of the Programme, as far as resources granted to standard projects are concerned, it seems that the first calls are paving the way for a satisfactory outcome, as also the preceding graph and the following analysis on indicators highlight.

Looking at the policy sectors targeted by the selected standard projects, we can see that - coherently with the Priority Axis and the Specific Objectives concerned - for Priority Axis 1, Specific Objective 1b, biotech and biomedical fields have been involved, together with projects in the field of rural and fishery innovation and instruments supporting innovation and competition capacities of the SMEs. Those projects seem to match with the integration and multi-perspective approach to local development overall logic of the Programme: in particular, they seem consistent with the Specific Objective 1b “Strengthen the cooperation among key actors to promote the knowledge transfer and innovative activities in key sectors of the area” backing the results indicator “Level of cross/border cooperation among key actors of the Programme area”. In fact, the lead partners of the selected projects are basically universities, research and innovation centres, scientific and technologic consortia and parks, in line with the above-mentioned indicator and with the common and Programme specific results and outputs indicators, such as “Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions (Common Indicator)”, “Number of research institutions participating in cross-border, transnational or interregional research projects (Common Indicator)” and “Number of innovative services, products and tools transferred to enterprises”.

Concerning Priority Axis 1, Specific Objective 1b, looking at table 4 and table 5 of the CP, milestones for 2018 and final target are addressed by the approved projects as presented in the following tables. Data are taken from the application forms and will be verified/eventually adjusted by the JS in the framework of face-to-face meetings with the LPs prior signing Subsidy Contracts. Before the signature of Subsidy Contracts, JS will also collect the confirmation of projects financial plans with a detailed reporting timetable and spending forecast per each project partner. Therefore, within this Report, more detailed information regarding figures/funds allocated per each specific objective are not included and will be object of analysis in the next Programme Reports.

Comparison of data taken from projects application forms with the provisions of the CP regarding Programme Performance framework and foreseen Programme output indicators

PriorityAxis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target 2023	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)
1 B	Output	CO42	Number of research institutions participating in cross border, transnational or interregional research projects	Organizations	5	27	CO26	Number of enterprises cooperating with research institutions (Common Indicator)	Enterprises	38	1.1.1	Number of innovative services, products and tools transferred to enterprises	Number	10

PROJECT

TRANS-GLIOMA					4	4				1				1
FISH-AGRO TECH					3	4				70				23
SUSGRAPE					2	3				17				1
ARTE						3				2				5
NUVOLAK2						6				3				1
BioApp						20				4				25
CAB					3	3				2				1
TRAIN						3				1				2
Total					12	46				100				59

As far as granted standard projects under Priority Axis 2, Specific Objective 4e are concerned, sustainable mobility and energy efficiency are the policy sectors covered by the actions. Consistent with Specific Objective 2.1 “Promotion of implementation of strategies and action plans to promote energy efficiency and to improve territorial capacities for joint low-carbon mobility planning”, the selected projects seem to pursue consistency even with the common and Programme specific results and outputs indicators “Number of implemented actions towards the decrease of annual primary energy consumption in existing public buildings”, “Pilot implementation of innovative services for smart low carbon mobility” and “Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions (Common Indicator)”, and the results indicator “Level of capacities of municipalities in decreasing energy use”.

Concerning Priority Axis 2, Specific Objective 4e, looking at table 4 and table 5 of the CP, milestones for 2018 and final target are addressed by the approved projects as presented in the following tables. Data are taken from the application forms and will be verified/eventually adjusted by the JS in the framework of face-to-face meetings with the LPs prior signing Subsidy Contracts. Before the signature of Subsidy Contracts, JS will also collect the confirmation of projects financial plans with a detailed reporting timetable and spending forecast per each project partner. Therefore, within this Report, more detailed information regarding figures/funds allocated per each specific objective are not included and will be object of analysis in the next Programme Reports.

Comparison of data taken from projects application forms with the provisions of the CP regarding Programme Performance framework and foreseen Programme output indicators

PriorityAxis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target 2023		ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)
24e	Output	2.1.1	Number of implemented actions towards the decrease of annual primary energy consumption in existing public buildings	Number	4	25		2.1.2	Pilot implementation of innovative services for smart low carbon mobility	Number	5

PROJECT

MUSE						
INTERBIKE II						
LightingSolutions					8	17
MobiTour						
ENERGY CARE					7	22
Total					15	39

			5
			8
			26
			25
			64

Under Priority Axis 3, Specific Objectives 6c, 6d and 6f, the projects selected refer to the cultural and green tourism sector, the environmental protection and promotion field, and the rural sustainable development, complying with Specific Objective 3.1 “Conserving, protecting, restoring, and developing natural and cultural heritage”, Specific Objective 3.2 “Enhance the integrated management of ecosystems for a sustainable development of the territory” and Specific Objective 3.3 “Development and the testing of innovative environmental friendly technologies for the improvement of waste and water management”. The granted projects seem to adequately pursue consistency with results indicator “Level of Cross-border cooperation in the sustainable valorization of cultural and natural heritage” and reveal the fundamental features seeking coherence with the common and Programme specific results and outputs indicators identified, such as: “Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status (Common indicator)”, “Number of investments implemented or services/products created supporting preservation/restoration of natural and cultural heritage”, “Tools and services developed for assessing and promoting ecosystem services”, “Cross-border pilot actions to support biodiversity”, “Number of innovative green technologies tested and implemented” and “Number of enterprises applying new green innovation solutions”. Coherence that is backed also by the consideration of the lead partners of the projects involved: universities and research centers, natural parks and reserves authorities, public and private actors active in the policy fields targeted.

A deeper reasoning must be done about milestones and target values for 2018 and 2023. Looking at the outcomes of the call, in fact, we can see that there is a relevant disproportion among some of the targets and the capacity of the current projects to reach them on the basis of data available at this stage.

Concerning Priority Axis 3, Specific Objective 6c, 6d and 6f, looking at table 4 and table 5 of the CP, milestones for 2018 and final target are addressed by the approved projects as presented in the following tables. Data are taken from the application forms and will be verified/eventually adjusted by the JS in the framework of face-to-face meetings with the LPs prior signing Subsidy Contracts. Before the signature of Subsidy Contracts, JS will also collect the confirmation of projects financial plans with a detailed reporting timetable and spending forecast per each project partner. Therefore, within this Report, more detailed information regarding figures/funds allocated per each specific objective are not included and will be object of analysis in the next Programme Reports.

A remind has to be done to the indicator 3.1.2 which is not valorized by standard projects as it is referring only to the I.T.I. projects.

Comparison of data taken from projects application forms with the provisions of the CP regarding Programme Performance framework and foreseen Programme output indicators

PriorityAxis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target 2023	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)
3 6 C	Output	CO09	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Number	5.000	20.000	3.1.1	Number of investments implemented or services/products created supporting preservation/restoration of natural and cultural heritage	Number	30	3.1.2	Km bicycle path/lane completed	km	12

PROJECT

MEDS GARDEN						2000				5				
tARTini						3000				3				
AGROTOUR II					5	7				5				
Total					5	5007				13				

No progress of I.T.I. projects in the period impacting on indicators.

Comparison of data taken from projects application forms with the provisions of the CP regarding Programme Performance framework and foreseen Programme output indicators

Priority Axis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target 2023	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)
3 6 D	Output	CO09	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Number	5.000	20.000	CO23	Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status (Common indicator)	Hectares	6.000	3.2.1	Tools and services developed for assessing and promoting ecosystem services	Number	7	3.2.2	Cross-border pilot actions to support biodiversity	Number	48	3.2.3	Participants to educational and divulgative events	Number	8.500

PROJECT

CONA										2338				3				2				
NAT2CAR E										1330				2				7				2340
Total										3668				5				9				2340

Comparison of data taken from projects application forms with the provisions of the CP regarding Programme Performance framework and foreseen Programme output indicators

Priorit yAxis	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurem ent unit	Mileston e for 2018	Final target 2023	ID	Indicator or key implementatio n step	Measuremen t unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementatio n step	Measuremen t unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementatio n step	Measuremen t unit	Targe t value (2023)
3 6 F	Output	CO09	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural and natural heritage and attractions	Number	5.000	20.000	3.3.1	Number of innovative green technologies tested and implemented	Number	13	3.3.2	Number of enterprises applying new green innovation solutions	Number	7	CO20	Population benefiting from flood protection measures (Common indicator)	Number	1.111

PROJECT

BLUEGRASS										3				4				
Retracking										5				6				
Total										8				10				

Regarding Priority Axis 4, ETC 11, the standard projects approved support crossborder networks, cooperation tools and models towards different policies, ranging from health to education and learning, from navigation security to social inclusion, in line with Specific Objective 4.1 “Strengthen the institutional cooperation capacity through mobilizing public authorities and key actors of the Programme area for planning joint solutions to common challenges”. Moreover, this first overlook on selected projects shows a coherence with results indicator “Increased capacity of public authorities and stakeholders in cross border cooperation and governance”, and the basis to develop drivers of satisfaction of the common and Programme specific results and outputs indicators, such as “Cross-border agreement and protocols signed”, “Joint solutions increasing integration, coherence, harmonization of the Programme area governance (shared politics, legislative frameworks or regulations, joint strategic documents, e-government tools, etc.)”, “Number of beneficiaries participating in joint training schemes”, being universities and research centres, NGOs, public and private actors the lead partners.

Concerning Priority Axis 4, Specific Objective 4.1, looking at table 4 and table 5 of the CP, milestones for 2018 and final target are addressed by the approved projects as presented in the following tables. Data are taken from the application forms and will be verified/eventually adjusted by the JS in the framework of face-to-face meetings with the LPs prior signing Subsidy Contracts. Before the signature of Subsidy Contracts, JS will also collect the confirmation of projects financial plans with a detailed reporting timetable and spending forecast per each project partner. Therefore, within this Report, more detailed information regarding figures/funds allocated per each specific objective are not included and will be object of analysis in the next Programme Reports.

A remind has to be done to the indicator 4.1.4 which is not valorized by standard projects as it is referring only to the I.T.I. projects.

Comparison of data taken from projects application forms with the provisions of the CP regarding Programme Performance framework and foreseen Programme output indicators

Priority Axes	Indicator type	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Milestone for 2018	Final target 2023	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)	ID	Indicator or key implementation step	Measurement unit	Target value (2023)
4 CTE/ETS	Output	4.1.2	Joint solutions increasing integration, coherence, harmonization of the Programme area governance (shared politics, legislative frameworks or regulations, joint strategic documents, e-government tools, etc.)	Joint solutions	2	11	4.1.4	Number of cross-border medical teams full-formed and operational	Number	5	4.1.3	Number of beneficiaries participating in joint training schemes	Number	400	4.1.1	Cross-border agreement and protocols signed	Number	10

PROJECT

EDUKA2						2								182				
MEMORI-net					4	6												2
SECNET					5	5								30				1
CB_WBL					1	1								69				1
HARMO-DATA					1	1								60				1
CrossCare						1								290				1
INTEGRA					3	3								20				
Total					14	19								651				6

No progress of I.T.I. projects in the period impacting on indicators.

It is worth underlining that approximately 110 projects successfully met the quality requirements of the first call, even if they could not be eligible for the allocated funding. Valorising those projects might be a good source of support to reach all the indicators in an economic and timely manner.

As already pointed out previously in the document, a consistent assessment on target values may be premature at this stage of Programme implementation, and may therefore be integrated and completed in the next/future evaluations. Certainly, the achievement of the identified outputs and results must be supported with a timing of procedures completion and actions delivery fine-tuned with the planned progress of the Cooperation Programme within the framework of the programming period.

SECTION 6 - DESCRIPTION OF THE I.T.I. AS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF I.T.I. PRINCIPLES INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAMME

The entrance of Slovenia into the European Union and the adoption of Schengen Treaty have increased the opportunities but had also constituted an immediate challenge for an area strongly tied to a “border-based” economy. Therefore, three municipalities - Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba have decided to prepare jointly a territorial development strategy, based on an integrated approach, considered most appropriate to tackle the different needs and challenges of the area. At the same time, in order to fully exploit the opportunities offered by the shared EU context and framework, Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba have set up, in February 2011, a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (GECT GO/EZTS GO) based in Gorizia and that is in charge for the implementation of the joint strategy.

On 17th September 2014 the Task Force of the Italy-Slovenia Cooperation Programme decided to introduce in the Cooperation Programme the I.T.I. - Integrated Territorial Investment for the implementation of two pilot actions presented by the GECT GO/EZTS GO: the projects “Building a cross-border healthcare network” and “Isonzo-Soča” cross-border nature park”, with a financial allocation of EUR 10.000.000.

The Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020 Cooperation Programme (CP) was approved by the European Commission by Decision C(2015)9285 of 15/12/2015. Within the Programme, the Integrated Territorial Investment (I.T.I.) constitutes a significant implementation tool for the area comprised within the municipalities of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba with a total financial allocation of EUR 10.000.000 (ERDF contribution - 85% and national co-financing - 15%). The I.T.I. will be managed and implemented by the Office for Intermediate Body (OIB), a separated and functional independent Unit of the GECT GO/EZTS GO. At the European level this is the preceding case of “sole beneficiary” principle application by a European Group of Territorial Cooperation. This will enable the implementation of cross-border investments without taking into account the territorial division (national), but considering the area of the three municipalities (and the two states) as the only one, both from the point of view of the infrastructures and from the economic, tourist, cultural and social point of view.

In the context of the Programme, the following needs and challenges will be tackled:

- promote the natural and cultural sites of the area in a better integrated and coordinated manner;
- answer adequately to raising demand of citizens and enterprises for joint services while developing new tools and networks increasing coordination and cooperation in order to improve territorial cohesion of the area;
- define cross-border solutions improving natural and cultural resources management, promoting their potential as development factor while stimulating eco-friendly behaviors of citizens and tourists;
- encourage cross-border cooperation at different levels (institutional, political and administrative) to converge decision makers’ attention on common issues.

Two pilot projects were already foreseen in the Programme:

- The pilot action “Isonzo - Soča” will contribute to the achievement of SO 3.1 “Conserving, protecting, restoring, and developing natural and cultural heritage” seeking the change for

valorization of a valuable cross border natural site through sustainable tourism, environmental protection and green growth.

- The pilot action “Health” will contribute to the achievement of SO 4.1 “Strengthen the institutional cooperation capacity through mobilizing public authorities and key actors of the Programme area for planning joint solutions to common challenge” seeking the change for a closer integration and understanding of the legislative framework and administrative practices implemented in the two countries while paving the way for a joint use of the health systems of the target area that could be furthered to the whole cooperation area and beyond.

A target call under Priority axes 3 and 4 and the application package and relevant documents/information were sent to EGTC via certified e-mail address - PEC. The two pilot actions were eligible for funding, both contracts were signed 3 May 2017. In the Tables 6.1 and 6.2 the main objectives of the actions are listed.

Both projects are important for the region.

Isonzo-Soča

Table 6.1. Objectives and expected results of the pilot action “Isonzo - Soča”.

Main Objective	Conserving, protecting, restoring, and developing natural and cultural heritage of cross-border area “Isonzo - Soča” on the basis of the principle of sustainable growth
Specific Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improving accessibility and attractiveness of the area “Isonzo - Soča” through infrastructural works for strengthening of the cycle-pedestrian mobility; - increase the general knowledge of the area “Isonzo - Soča” in the EGTC GO territory through actions of marketing, promotion and general information aimed at attracting tourists even outside the area of the three municipalities; - application of experience of the previous programming period, by promoting the exchange of good practices and the synergies with complementary interventions supported by other policies / instruments.
Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated cross-border network of cycling and walking paths - Investments aimed at creation and promotion of the new tourist destination and new tourism products - Increased visibility of the cross-border area as an integrate tourist destination for the pleasant leisure time - Integrated marketing strategy - Increased number of visitors

The following types of actions will be implemented within the Isonzo - Soča project:

- construction of cycling and walking paths connecting the cross-border Soča-Isonzo area, construction of crossings over the Soča-Isonzo river,
- integrated revitalization and reconstruction of the area along the border, valorization of the area as a unique cultural tourist destination,
- creation and reconstruction of recreation tourist areas,
- communication and information of the general public about the project activities,
- creation of the common unified and integrated tourism development plan of the cross-border Soča-Isonzo area: marketing strategy, promotional material, marketing channels. Promotion and valorization of the area as a tourist destination,

- other activities deriving from studies and analysis of the area.

The project Insonzo-Soča will contribute to implementation of cross-border strategy, it will promote territorial dialogue, as bodies from both sides of the border (Slovene and Italian) will be involved, it will strengthen multi-level governance, promote partnership with Slovene and Italian stakeholders in territorial development, such as the corporate sector, local communities and public institutions.

The main objective of the "Isonzo-Soča" project is to address the common challenge of "restoring" the cultural and landscape heritage of the river to the city by encouraging the use of a significant part of the territory by the inhabitants of the EGTC GO. This challenge can be achieved by implementing a series of specific measures that would valorize the existing heritage by increasing accessibility while enhancing the tourist attractiveness of the area for recreational purposes and establishing a single market operation for more effective communication, which can also attract foreign tourists.

One of the important aspects is sustainable development which is in line with other strategies - As stated in Slovenia's Smart Specialization Strategy (2015), sustainable tourism is one of the priority areas. The project contributes to the implementation of strategies for the smart specialization of the Republic of Slovenia and the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, as it develops sustainable tourism and green infrastructure with the aim of increasing natural and cultural resources with a high quality tourist offer.

The project is in line with the following strategies: Danube Strategy (Slovenia is part of Danube region); Sustainable Urban Strategies of Two Urban Areas (Nova Gorica and Gorica) with planned complementary activities for achieving joint effects (Territorial Agenda 2020).

The project contributes to Alpine macro-regional strategy - EUSALP and to the Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) in sustainable development of the region and contribution to sustainable tourism.

Health

Table 6.2. Objectives and expected results of the pilot action "Health".

Main Objective	Strengthen the supply and improve the quality of health and social services for the population living in the EGTC GO area and in border areas of the public bodies involved.
Specific Objectives	Strengthen the institutional cooperation capacity through the mobilization of the public authorities and the operators in order to plan joint solutions to common needs in health and social service sectors.

Expected results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased competences and habilitation of cross-border health and social teams - Analysis of the state of the art, methodologies, clinical, administrative and legal aspects in the fields of health in Slovenia and Italy - Comparative analysis of the two health systems (Slovene and Italian) - Established cross-border multidisciplinary working groups and teams - Administrative and technical solutions for the cross-border health services - Cross-border booking system for health and social services - Premises for the rehabilitation center on the cross-border area
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The following types of actions will be implemented within the Health project:

- analysis of the state of the art, methodologies, clinical, administrative and legal aspects in the field of health and in social services in Slovenia and Italy,
- comparative analysis of the two health systems (Slovene and Italian),
- establishment of cross-border multidisciplinary working groups and teams,
- education and habilitation of cross-border health and social teams,
- definition of administrative and technical solutions for the cross-border health services,
- creation of the cross-border booking system for health and social services,
- valorization and realization of the premises for the rehabilitation center on the cross-border area,
- other activities deriving from studies and analysis.

The aim of the project is to create a network based on the existing excellence of services in two territories, based on the health needs of the population and the need for innovative planning of services, which is essential for a successful and efficient system of access to health services and the universal right to health.

In the project the following joint cross-border health groups will be set: in the field of mental health, autism and physiological pregnancy. A unified Slovenian-Italian center for the procurement of health services will be established. With the purpose to connect with social services, the activities of cross-border measures for social inclusion of vulnerable groups of population will also be conducted.

The project will establish a new IT network, which will allow the cross-border population to use a wider range of health services. A single information system in Slovene and Italian, which will connect and upgrade the existing two will be established. A single ordering system will be created to provide a more efficient health system for the residents.

The project mainly contributes to the implementation of the provisions of Directive 2011/24 / EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2011 on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, which provides for the establishment of conditions for facilitating access to safe and high-quality cross-border healthcare and encourages cooperation between Member States in the field of healthcare, and fully takes into account national competences in the organization and delivery of healthcare.

The project also contributes to the principles of the "Together for Health" Strategy,

which was established on the Italian side.

The project is in line with 3rd pillar of Strategy Europe 2020 - inclusive growth and contributes to the goal *Fighting poverty and social exclusion*.

The project is in line with the Strategy of development of health care and care in the health care system in the Republic of Slovenia (2011-2020) as well as it contributes to achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region 2014-2018, which in the field of health anticipates: a) Promoting health, prevention and primary care, b) the pursuit of increasing standards in the field of promotion of health and prevention, c) the effectiveness of the health system.

The project contributes to Alpine macro-regional strategy - EUSALP and to the Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) mainly in the field of cross-border management and with the strengthening institutional and administrative capacity.

Financial allocation

Table 6.3. I.T.I. Pilot actions financial allocation.

PA	TO	PILOT ACTIONS	ERDF ALLOCATION	NATIONAL COFINANCING	TOTAL ALLOCATION
PA 3	TO6 (6c)	Isonzo - Soča	4.250.000,00	750.000,00	5.000.000,00
PA4	TO 11	Health	4.250.000,00	750.000,00	5.000.000,00

Under the Programme, the eligible project activities are co-financed at a rate of 100% of total eligible costs (85% by the ERDF and 15% by the Italian National Rotation Fund), having regard to the State aid allocation rules (and Programme co-financing rate reduced accordingly).

The two projects must contribute to the programme-specific result indicators as described in CP.

Table 6.4. I.T.I. Pilot actions contribution to Programme specific result indicators.

ID	Result indicator	Measurement Unit	Baseline Year	Source of Data	Frequency of reporting
SO 3.1	Level of Cross-border cooperation in the sustainable valorization of cultural and natural heritage	Number of visitors	2014	National/Regional statistic	2018-2020-2023
SO 4.1	Increased capacity of public authorities and stakeholders in cross-border cooperation and governance	%	2016	Survey	2017-2019-2023

The expected outputs of the two projects have to contribute to common and programme-specific output indicators as described in CP.

Table 6.5. I.T.I. Pilot actions contribution to common and Programme specific output indicators.

	ID	Output Indicator
SO 3.1	3.1.1	Number of investments implemented or services/products created supporting preservation/restoration of natural and cultural heritage
	3.1.2	Km bicycle path/lane completed
SO 4.1	4.1.1	Number of Cross-border agreement and protocols signed
	4.1.2	Number of Joint solutions increasing integration, coherence, harmonization of the Programme area governance (shared politics, legislative frameworks or regulations, joint strategic documents, e-government tools, etc.)
	4.1.3	Number of beneficiaries participating in joint training schemes
	4.1.4	Number of cross-border medical teams full-formed and operational

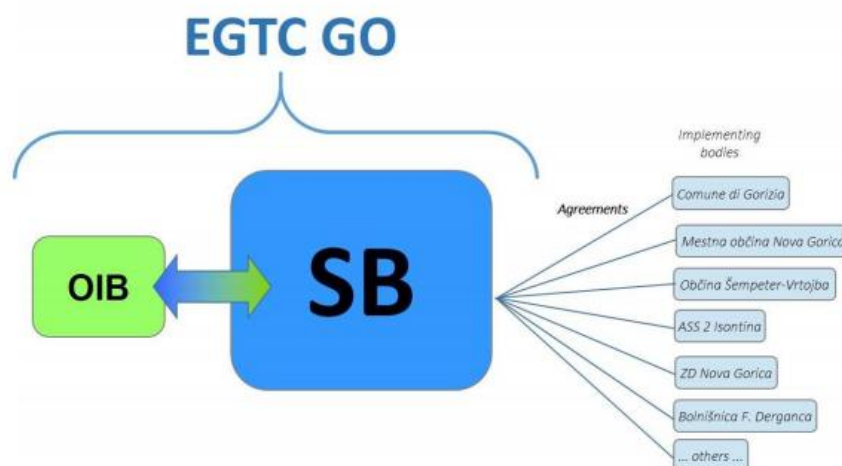
As both projects started in May 2017 indicators could not be achieved yet.

Organization and management

As already stated in section 2. of this document, the Intermediate Body in charge of managing the I.T.I. is the Office of the Intermediate Body (OIB), a functionally independent unit of EGTC GO in line with the provisions of the Regulation on the Internal Organization of EGTC GO.

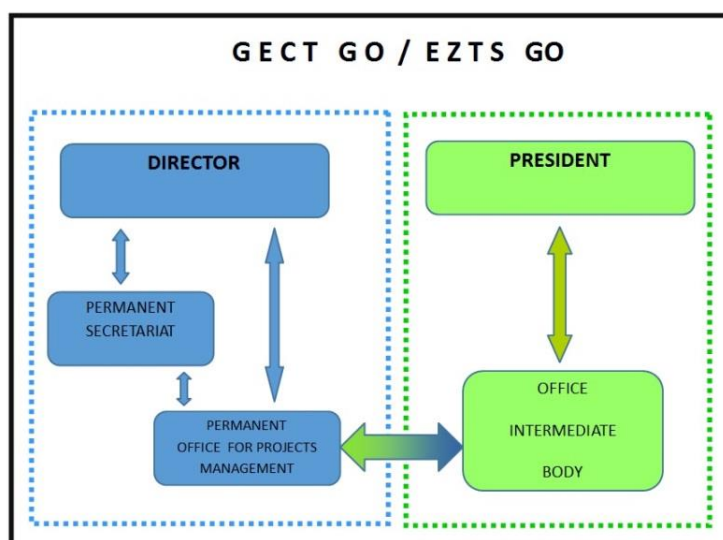
For both projects “sole beneficiary model” is used.

Figure 2: Sole Beneficiary model



The EGTC OIB is a functionally independent office operating within EGTC GO. The functional independence is enshrined in Article 8 of EGTC GO's Regulation on the Internal Organizational Structure, where the Office's employees are not considered subject to EGTC GO's Director. Article 10 of EGTC GO Regulation stipulates that the appointing, recall and replacement of the head of the OIB shall be an exclusive competence of the President of EGTC's Assembly. The OIB operates in line with the operating guidelines set out by the President.

Picture 6.1. Organisational structure of EGTC GO.



The choice to set up the EGTC as Intermediate Body aims at enhancing the I.T.I. territorial approach by delegating to a Body linked to the specific territory not only the implementation of the projects but also the management (and control) of this part of the Programme (Article 125 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013).

The “sole beneficiary” model allows a stronger focus on the joint urban dimension of the operations as well as the reduction of the administrative barriers represented by the existing border. The EGTC GO is the only partner of the projects and carries out

the implementation of the I.T.I. projects: it is responsible of public tenders for services and infrastructures on both sides of the border and carries out the expenditures.

Furthermore, in line with the provisions of Article 11 of the Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013, the EGTC GO acts as Office for Intermediate Body (OIB) and is in charge of the management of the I.T.I. as part of the Interreg Programme related to the territory of the EGTC.

According to the Art. 125 of the Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and to the Cooperation Programme VA Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020 the tasks of OIB of the EGTC GO are the following:

- apply appropriate procedures and criteria approved by MC for the selection of the operations;
- support the work of the MC referred to in Article 47 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and provide detailed data on the overall progress of the I.T.I.;
- ensure that the SB is provided with a document setting out the conditions for support for each operation including the specific requirements concerning the products or services to be delivered under the operation, the financing plan, and the time-limit for execution;
- ensure that the data is collected, entered and stored in the monitoring system;
- support the MA in drawing up the annual and final implementation reports referred to in Article 50 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013.
- support the Managing Authority with information needed to evaluate the Cooperation Programme V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020;
- prepare and update the audit trails for the operations within its competence;
- support the Managing Authority to ensure compliance with the information and communication obligations.

The delegated functions of OIB are described in detail in Agreement for performing the functions provided in the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Italy - Slovenia 2014 - 2020 as intermediate body responsible for implementing the integrated territorial investment (I.T.I. EGTC), Article 4.

Organization and management seem to be set in coherence with the EU regulations and guidelines, fostering the rationale of this cooperation instrument, i.e. its added value in strengthening a transnational approach and integrated cross-border solutions.

Entering in a further implementation stage will allow to focus a deeper evaluation on coherence and consistency of the implemented actions with EU and national legal framework, such as on their capacity to reach the levels set by indicators. Referring in particular to result and output indicators, at this stage they appear not easy to be satisfied in a 2018 perspective and perhaps subject to review.