



## BEST 4.0 PROJECT

# “Blue Economy Sectors Digital Transformation towards Industry 4.0”

D.2.1.2

## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Version 1.0

## Memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the continuation of cooperation after the completion of BEST 4.0 project financed under Interreg Italy - Croatia Programme 2021 - 2027

### TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION:

- BEST 4.0 Project “Blue Economy Sectors Digital Transformation towards Industry 4.0 project financed by Interreg Italy – Croatia 2021-2027 Programme (Priority Axis 1 “Sustainable growth in the blue economy” – Specific Objective 1.1 “Research and innovation”);
- Project partners of BEST 4.0 are: CNA Ferrara Association (Lead Partner), CNA Territorial Association of Ancona (Partner n.2), CETMA - European Research Center for Technologies Design and Materials (Partner 3), Area Science Park (Partner 4), Croatian Chamber of Economy (Partner 5), Istrian development agency - IDA Ltd. (Partner 6), Association DIH AgriFood Croatia (Partner 7) and University of Rijeka, Faculty of Maritime Studies (Partner 8);
- BEST4.0 addresses the need for innovation and digitalization in the Blue Economy sectors along the Adriatic Sea. The project aims to connect businesses and research centers to apply advanced Industry 4.0 principles, enhancing production and processes. By establishing Digital Innovation Hubs (DiHs), the project seeks to close the gap between regions with varying performance levels, fostering innovation and competitiveness.
- The main objective of BEST 4.0 project include creating a catalogue of digital solutions for the Blue Economy, building a network of Digital Innovation Hubs to support SMEs in their digital transformation, and providing innovative solutions and support to 80 SMEs in the Blue Economy sectors.

Through collaboration among organizations, BEST4.0 aims to drive significant improvements in SME processes and outcomes within the Blue Economy.

- BEST 4.0 Project specific objectives are:
  - To assessing and involving SMEs operating in the Blue Economy sectors in the adoption of the I4.0 key principles, according to their emerging needs.

- To foster the action of the DIHs, and to create a cross-border network of DIHs for the adoption of I4.0 key principles by SMEs operating in the Blue Economy sectors.
- To enable DIHs to act as catalysts of new forms of businesses, innovative I4.0 solutions and capacity building path supporting the SMEs operating in the Blue Economy Sector.
- In the BEST 4.0 project, the MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) corresponds to **Deliverable 2.1.2** which " *will promote the action of the DIHs and create a cross-border network of DIHs to support the adoption of key I4.0 principles by SMEs operating in the Blue Economy sectors.*"

#### GIVEN THE ABOVE

The project partners of the BEST4.0 project (hereinafter referred to as *Partners*) voluntarily sign this:

#### MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE FUTURE COOPERATION AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE CROSS-BORDER DIGITAL INNOVATION HUB NETWORK IN THE BLUE ECONOMY SECTORS

##### Article 1: Purpose and scope

The objective of the MoU is to formalize the willing of partner to ensure the functioning of the Cross-Border Digital Innovation Hub Network after the project end, therefore, the continuation of exchange of good practices and the promotion of a shared cross-border vision to establish cooperation in the Blue Economy sectors and the adoption of I4.0 key principles by SMEs within the framework of future European funding opportunities. The Partners intend to undertake cooperation and collaboration based on equality, reciprocity, and mutual benefit.

##### Article 2: Content of the Memorandum of Understanding

The mutual goals to be achieved by signing this MoU are:

1. To continue developing events and meetings to raise awareness about the project's themes among regional networks, with a particular focus on Digital Innovation Hubs and the opportunities offered by the Blue Economy.

2. To continue producing the revision and update of the action plan for testing I4.0 Service Catalogue for SMEs in the Blue Economy sector.
3. To continue producing the revision and update of the S3 cross-border orientation plan.
4. To foster the continuous exchange of data and methodologies useful for applying governance principles related to sustainable environmental measures, promoting the adoption of key Industry 4.0 principles.
5. To continue promoting at the local and national levels the objectives and interests of the partnership cooperation with relevant associations and networks in the partner regions.
6. To continue identifying and encouraging potential users and stakeholders interested in the action plan principles and best practices identified during the BEST 4.0 project.
7. To promote the strengthening of communication systems among the Parties, facilitating the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and resources for shared digital innovation.
8. To collaborate in sharing ideas, expertise and skills to implement further projects in Interreg Italy- Croatia Programme and other Interreg and EU Programmes.
9. To encourage the signing of the MoU by other stakeholders interested in the themes of digital innovation within the Blue Economy sector.

### **Article 3: Framework for Cooperation and Joint Development**

The partners will cooperate using the technical and administrative capacities and good practices developed under the BEST 4.0 project. The partners will promote the joint development and implementation of EU Programmes and projects related to Blue Economy sector or any other sector of common interest, in the framework of the Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme and other Interreg and/or EU financing Programmes. Regarding the cooperation activities under this MoU, the partners may also encourage the participation of associated partners and/or may allow, as appropriate, the participation of other relevant government institutions, public undertakings, other organizations and the private sector. This document can therefore be subscribed by all potential public and private stakeholders who support the principles of the Memorandum.

**Article 4: Institutional Framework**

To coordinate cooperation activities, each partner may designate a representative to determine the directions of cooperation and to ensure the effectiveness of the exchange. Representatives of the partners or their designated coordinators should consult each other, by correspondence, and define cooperation activities and other related matters.

**Article 5: Financial aspects**

Cooperation activities are subject to the availability of funds and personnel. In any case, this protocol does not constitute or imply a financial commitment for any of the entities involved.

**Article 6: Dispute settlement**

Differences that may arise between the Partners due to the interpretation or implementation of the provisions of this MoU shall be resolved amicably through consultations between the Partners.

**Article 7: Termination of the Agreement**

Activities under this MoU may commence on the date of signature below and shall last for a minimum of 3 years after the end of project BEST 4.0 (expected for 30/06/2026). Partners may terminate their cooperation under this MoU at any time by giving sixty (60) days written notice to the other Partners.

**NOTE**

*This Memorandum of Understanding is made in 1 (one) original copy, stored at the LP (CNA FERRARA ASSOCIATION) as responsible for the Development of the MoU. Each partner has a scanned copy of the agreement. This Memorandum of Understanding is subject to any approvals and/or ratifications of competence, in order to proceed with the signing and at a later time to provide for the decisions of the individual entities involved.*

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## SIGNATURES PART



Ferrara



Ancona





**NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: CNA FERRARA ASSOCIATION**

**DAVIDE BELLOTTI**

**FERRARA, 18/03/2025**

*Name of the Signatory*

*Place and date*

**LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

*Position of the Signatory*

*Signature*

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**NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: CNA TERRITORIAL ASSOCIATION OF ANCONA**

*Massimiliano Santini*

*Ancona, 31.03.2025*

*Direttore*

*Signature*



**NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: CETMA – EUROPEAN RESEARCH CENTER FOR TECHNOLOGIES**  
**DESIGN AND MATERIALS**

**CETMA**  
IL PRESIDENTE  
(Dott. Roberto MORABITO)

Name of the Signatory

ROBERTO MORABITO

Place and 31.03.2025

Position of the Signatory

**CETMA**  
IL PRESIDENTE  
(Dott. Roberto MORABITO)

Signature

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**NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: AREA SCIENCE PARK**

*Anna Sirica*

*Trieste, 30.04.2025*

*Director General*

*Signature*  




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**NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: CROATIAN CHAMBER OF ECONOMY**

*Name of the Signatory*

Zagreb, 31.03.2025

**Luka Burilović, PhD**

*Position of the Signatory*

**President**

CLASS: 442-01/23-01/10

REF.NO: 311-33-00-00-25-7

Signature

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 **BEST4.0**

**NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: ISTRIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY – IDA Ltd.**

**Boris Sabatti, Ph.D.**

*Name of the Signatory*

**Director**

*Position of the Signatory*

*Pula, 31.03.2025*

  
*Signature*



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**NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: ASSOCIATION DIH AGRIFOOD CROATIA**

*Name of the Signatory*

*Place and 31.03.2025*

**Matija Bumbak**

*Position of the Signatory*

**Manager**

*Signature*



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**NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: UNIVERSITY OF RIJKA, FACULTY OF MARITIME STUDIES**

ANA PERIC' LAOŠIĆ

Name of the Signatory

Place and 31.03.2025

DEAN

Position of the Signatory



Signature



## BEST 4.0 PROJECT

# “Blue Economy Sectors Digital Transformation towards Industry 4.0”

## D.2.1.2

## Operational Rules

Version 1.0

## Operational Rules and Organizational Roles for the Cross-Border Digital Innovation Hub Network

### 1. Introduction

This document outlines the operational framework and organizational roles for the Cross-Border Digital Innovation Hub (DIH) Network established under the BEST 4.0 project. These guidelines are intended to ensure smooth collaboration among participating entities while maintaining flexibility for future adaptations.

### 2. Purpose

The network aims to foster innovation and digital transformation in the Blue Economy sectors across the Italy-Croatia Program area. It will facilitate knowledge exchange, promote Industry 4.0 principles, and enhance the competitiveness of SMEs by leveraging Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) as key enablers.

### 3. Organizational Structure

#### 3.1 Governance

The network shall operate on a **collaborative governance model**, ensuring inclusivity and mutual benefit for all partners. The key organizational bodies include:

- **Steering Committee (SC):** Composed of representatives from each partner organization, responsible for strategic decision-making and overseeing the network's activities.
- **Working Groups (WG):** Thematic groups formed to address specific aspects such as digital adoption, SME support, policy recommendations, and training initiatives.

## 4. Rules of Operation

### 4.1 Membership and Participation

- Membership is open to all project partners, associated partners, stakeholders, SMEs and other relevant entities interested in supporting the digital transformation of SMEs in the Blue Economy sector.
- Participants are encouraged to actively engage in network meetings, contribute to knowledge-sharing activities, and support joint initiatives.
- New stakeholders may join the network upon approval by the Steering Committee.

### 4.2 Meetings and Communication

- The Steering Committee shall convene at least **once a year** to review progress, set strategic priorities, and adjust action plans.
- The Coordination Unit shall facilitate **regular online meetings** (quarterly) and maintain a communication channel for ongoing exchanges (e.g., mailing lists, collaborative platforms).
- Working Groups shall meet as needed based on their thematic focus and ongoing initiatives.

### 4.3 Activities

The network will undertake the following key activities:

- **Knowledge Sharing:** Organizing cross-border workshops, conferences, and webinars on Industry 4.0 applications in the Blue Economy.
- **SME Support:** Providing tailored guidance, digital tools, and technical assistance through DIHs.
- **Joint Project Development:** Identifying funding opportunities and preparing collaborative proposals under relevant EU programs.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Engaging with regional and national authorities to promote policies that facilitate digital transformation in maritime industries.

## 5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Steering Committee Members:** Provide strategic guidance, approve new members, and ensure alignment with network objectives.
- **Working Group Leaders:** Drive specific initiatives, coordinate contributions from members, and ensure deliverables are achieved.
- **General Members:** Participate actively in discussions, share expertise, and support collaborative activities.

## 6. Financial Considerations

- Participation in the network is voluntary and does not entail any financial obligations.
- Joint initiatives requiring funding shall be pursued through external grants and financing programs.
- Any expenses incurred by individual members (e.g., travel, event participation) shall be covered by their respective organizations unless otherwise agreed.

## 7. Amendments and Review

- These operational rules may be reviewed and updated periodically to reflect the evolving needs of the network and its members.
- Amendments shall be proposed by the Steering Committee and adopted based on consensus among partners.

## 8. Termination of Participation

- Members may withdraw from the network at any time by providing a written notice to the Steering Committee.
- The network shall continue to operate as long as there is sufficient commitment from active members to sustain its initiatives.