

Italy – Croatia

Launch of Second Call for Proposals: it's time for "Operations of Strategic Importance"

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The Second Call for Proposals of the Interreg Italy-Croatia Programme is out. It is dedicated to Operations of Strategic Importance (OSIs), designed to **address key cross-border challenges through high-quality collaborative projects**. This Call represents a significant opportunity for specified organisations to contribute to the sustainable development of the cross-border region, addressing critical issues through strategic cooperation. The Call will remain open until November 19th".

The programme is seeking **innovative and impactful projects** that address **specific thematic issues** relevant to the cross-border region. These Operations of Strategic Importance (OSIs) are intended to foster cooperation between organisations, enabling them to develop solutions that meet concrete needs within the area. The projects will focus on "SMEs-Research Cooperation for Innovation" (1.1), "Developing Skills for Smart Specialisation, Industrial Transition, and Entrepreneurship" (1.2), "Mitigation of Climate Change Risks" (2.1), "Biodiversity Protection" (2.2), "Cross-Border Green & Smart Port Concept" (3.1), "Tourism Diversification and Delocalisation" (4.1). To support the first two objectives in priority 1, aid schemes for SMEs are also outlined in a Call's Annex.

The programme underscores the importance of **strong partnerships and a cross-border approach**. All project proposals must be developed and implemented jointly by participating organisations, reflecting the **collaborative spirit needed to tackle the region's shared challenges**. Given their complexity, OSIs require close supervision by the Monitoring Committee and must adhere to specific communication requirements outlined in the Interreg Regulation. These projects, which stem from a **top-down approach** led by Programme decision-makers, involve significant financial investment and necessitate the involvement of capable partners to ensure both regional impact and sound management. The scope of actions includes implementing new solutions, testing services, developing strategies, creating joint action plans, sharing expertise, conducting joint training, and establishing governance structures.

A total of €30.5 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has been allocated to this call, with the ERDF co-financing rate set at 80% of eligible project costs. Projects must be completed within **42 months**. Each organisation can participate in only two proposals, with only one as Lead Partner. While a range of entities can act as project partners, only some public bodies with specified statutory focuses are eligible to apply as Lead Applicants. The Programme also advises applicants to ensure **geographic balance** and thus specific minimum partnership requirements are set.

To assist potential applicants, **Infodays** will be held on 24th September 2024 in Zadar and 1st October 2024 in Udine, offering guidance on the application process and further details on the call. Participation is upon invitation only.

