![Interreg Slovenia – Croatia logo and Co-funded by the European Union logo]

Interreg

Slovenia – Croatia

Co-funded by
the European Union

MANUAL FOR BENEFICIARIES FOR STANDARD PROJECTS

PART 1 – ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Version 2, May 2023

Manual for Beneficiaries for Standard Projects

PART 1:

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

Manual for Beneficiaries of the Interreg programme Slovenia-Croatia for the period 2021-2027, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

Prepared and published by the Programme's Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat in cooperation with the representatives of Slovenia and Croatia (National Authority). The Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat is hosted within the official structure of the Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development of the Republic of Slovenia.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Audit Authority
AB	Audit Body
AF	Application Form
BWG	Bilateral working group
CB	Cross-border
CF	Cohesion Fund
CBC Programme	Cross-border Cooperation Programme
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
CPR	Common Provision Regulation
EC	European Commission
ECP	European Cohesion Policy
EGTC	European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
ESI	European Structural and Investment Funds
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
NC	National Control
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
MCRD	Ministry of Cohesion and Regional Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IP	Interreg Programme
IP SI-HR	Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia
JS	Joint Secretariat
LP	Lead Partner
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
NA	National Authority
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
PP	Project Partner
RTD	Research, Technology and Development
RTDI	Research, Technology, Development and Innovation
R&D	Research and Development
R&I	Research and Innovation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SO	Specific Objective
SWOT	Strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats analysis
TA	Technical Assistance
TO	Thematic Objective

CONTENT OF PART 1:

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Manual for Beneficiaries for standard projects (hereinafter Manual for Beneficiaries) is to assist potential applicants in project development and preparation of the application for funding in the Interreg programme Slovenia-Croatia for the period 2021-2027 (hereinafter IP SI-HR). Furthermore, it provides information on application, selection, implementation and closure of the projects.

The Manual for Beneficiaries[1] is a part of the Application Pack and consists of different thematically parts:

- Part 1: About the Programme
- Part 2: The information on project development and partnership requirements
- Part 3: Submission of the application and assessment process
- Part 4: Provides information on eligibility of expenditure
- Part 5: The procedures and requirements for reporting
- Part 6: Communication and visibility
- Part 7: Archiving and closure

Overall, the Manual for Beneficiaries provides relevant and useful information on project implementation. **Applicants should therefore read the entire Manual for Beneficiaries carefully before submitting the application to the programme authorities.** The information in this Manual for Beneficiaries is essential for the preparation of a good project application, as well as for the implementation of already approved projects.

The information provided in this Manual for Beneficiaries will be, if necessary, further developed and updated during the programme implementation. The programme will also provide (potential) Project Partners with training and exchange opportunities in the form of workshops.

Additional information and documents related to the Open Call for proposals for standard projects for
Priority 1 and 3 (specific objective 6.2) and Open Call for proposals for standard projects for Priority 2
(hereinafter Open Call for Proposals) are available for download on the programme website www.si-hr.eu.

---

[1] *The IP SI-HR uses the term Lead Partner and Project Partner for all project phases (e.g. application, implementation).*

2 ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

This part of the Manual for Beneficiaries (Part 1: About the programme) includes the presentation of the whole programme, but **the content from Chapter 2.4 onwards is devoted only to standard projects**.

The Interreg Programme SI-HR 2021-2027 (hereinafter IP SI-HR) is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (hereinafter ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation (hereinafter ETC) goal of European Cohesion Policy 2021-2027 (hereinafter ECP).

The overall objective of European Territorial Cooperation is to promote a harmonious economic, social and territorial development of the Union as a whole. Cross-border cooperation programmes (hereinafter CBC programmes) aim to tackle common challenges identified.

For the participating regions of the present programme, deep analysis showed several challenges such as substantial disparities between regional urban centres and rural areas in terms of accessibility and an increasing demand for health and daily care services for the elderly.

Climate change has made the area vulnerable, leaving the municipalities of the area not resilient enough to the extreme natural events that are occurring more frequent and are already being felt by residents. The degradation of the conservation status of species and habitats is also recognised.

The fast-changing environment is calling for crossborder actions for resilience and increasing adaptation capabilities of people and organisations for emerging needs and new circumstances, which would foster the recovery of the economy and increase the quality of living in the programme area. The low level of entrepreneurial activities related to digital transformation and the insufficient knowledge of smart management concepts was recognised, and in fields connected with the tourism and culture sector as well.

IP SI-HR aims at achieving a preserved, resilient, and connected cross-border region where sustainable development is recognised and used as a main tool in reaching economic viability, safety, biodiversity protection, and social well-being of all inhabitants.

The Programme envisages mutual learning and joint actions leading to a change in all its priorities, primarily to re-connect across the border, to understand the current joint needs and threats of a rapidly changing reality, and to work together to improve resilience and adaptability of people, organisations, and communities, assisting the programme area in becoming more green and digital, and thus fit for the future.

2.1 PROGRAMME AREA

The programme area comprises 17 NUTS 3 regions - statistical regions in Slovenia and counties in Croatia:

🇸🇮	Pomurska region, Podravska region, Savinjska region, Zasavska region, Posavska region, Jugovzhodna Slovenija region, Osrednjeslovenska region, Primorsko-notranjska region, Obalno-kraška region.
🇭🇷	Primorsko-goranska County, Istarska County, City of Zagreb, Zagrebačka County, Krapinsko-zagorska County, Varaždinska County, Međimurska County and Karlovačka County.

IP SI-HR programme area covers 17 NUTS 3 regions, nine Slovenian NUTS 3 regions (Podravska, Pomurska, Savinjska, Zasavska, Posavska, Jugovzhodna Slovenija, Obalno-kraška, Osrednjeslovenska, and Primorsko-notranjska statistical regions), and eight Croatian NUTS 3 regions (Primorsko-goranska, Istarska, Zagrebačka, Krapinsko-zagorska, Varaždinska, Međimurska, and Karlovačka counties and the City of Zagreb). Not all regions are directly on the border (Osrednjeslovenska and Zasavska regions, the City of Zagreb), but all regions form part of the programme area. The Osrednjeslovenska region and the City of Zagreb make part of the programme area due to their proximity and concentration of economic, research, development, and educational capacities, which could significantly contribute to the development of the programme area. The Zasavska region in Slovenia is included in order to ensure the territorial cohesion of the cross-border area and to make better use of the potentials of cross-border cooperation. The programme area covers an area of 31,728 km² (SI: 46.6%, HR: 53.4%) with a population of about 3,8 million inhabitants. The area comprises a significant share of the Slovenian territory (73%), and almost one third of the territory of Croatia (30%). The approximate length of the land border between Slovenia and Croatia is 657 km.

Map of the programme area[2]

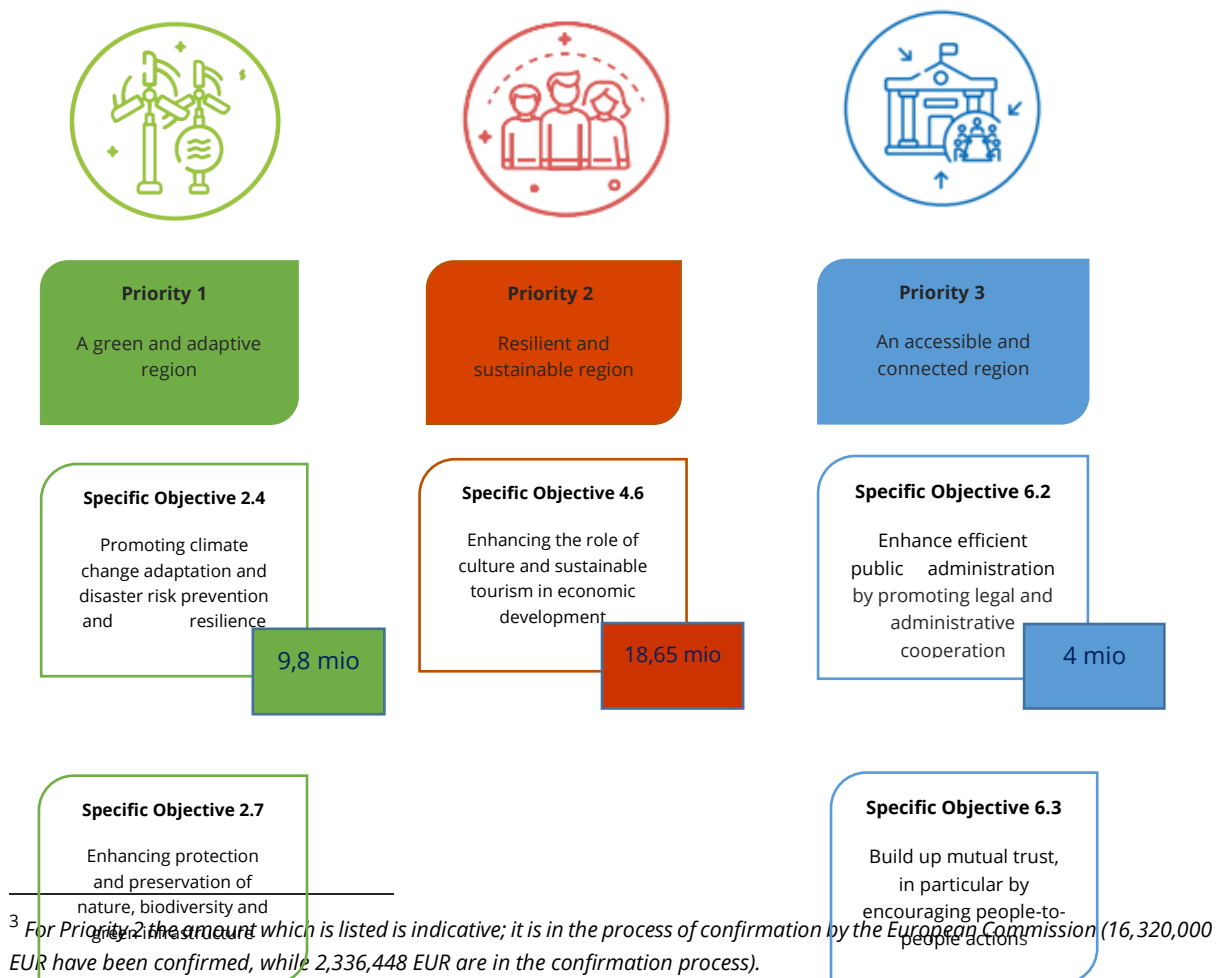## 2.2 PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

IP SI-HR aims at achieving a preserved, resilient, and connected cross-border region where sustainable development is recognised and used as a main tool in reaching economic viability, safety, biodiversity protection, and social well-being of all inhabitants.

Based on the regulatory framework, which foresees thematic concentration of expenditure on a limited number of objectives and funding priorities, the IP SI-HR selected two policy objectives: PO 2 - Greener Europe, PO 4 - More social Europe and Interreg specific objective 1 – A better cooperation governance (hereinafter ISO 1) within three funding priorities that are further broken down into five programme specific objectives (hereinafter SOs).

Priorities 1, 2[3] and 3 are described in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Priorities and specific objectives

Priority 1

A green and adaptive region

Priority 2

Resilient and sustainable region

Priority 3

An accessible and connected region

Specific Objective 2.4

Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention and resilience

9,8 mio

Specific Objective 4.6

Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development

18,65 mio

Specific Objective 6.2

Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation

4 mio

Specific Objective 2.7

Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure

Specific Objective 6.3

Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions

[3] *For Priority 2 the amount which is listed is indicative; it is in the process of confirmation by the European Commission (16,320,000 EUR have been confirmed, while 2,336,448 EUR are in the confirmation process).*

5,43 mio

0.72 mio

For detailed information on the description of the priorities, their specific objectives and main activities under each priority please see Chapter 2 of the IP SI-HR. In order to make your project compliant with the Programme it is compulsory to read and take into account the description under each priority provided in the IP SI-HR [4].

By every type of project also the **horizontal principles** of the programme such as equal opportunities, non-discrimination, gender equality and sustainable development have to be considered. They will be specifically observed in the selection of projects, regardless of the priority they are proposed for.

2.3 PROGRAMME INTERVENTION LOGIC INCLUDING THE RESULT AND OUTPUT INDICATORS

The intervention logic of the IP SI-HR consists of three priorities and related specific objectives. For each specific objective expected results are defined which reflect changes that the programme seeks to achieve for the entire programme area through the implementation of projects. Results and related changes are measured through result indicators linked to each programme specific objective. The principle behind the intervention logic is that projects should lead to change for the better in the regions involved.

It demonstrates how supported actions and developed outputs address the territorial challenges and needs tackled by the programme. Programme outputs and results build on outputs and results achieved by the funded projects. Therefore, there has to be a clear coherence between the programme and the project intervention logic. The IP SI-HR indicators will be monitored on the programme and project level. The intervention logic for each programme specific objective is described in detail in chapter 2 of the IP SI-HR.

Figure 2 – Programme intervention logic

---

[4] *The Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia is available on the programme website www.si-hr.eu.*

The **outputs** are the tangible deliverables of the project, which contribute to the results. They are directly deriving from the activities carried out in the project. They do not lead to a qualitative judgment on the project's results. In other words, it is not because the project organises e.g. a high number of workshops (output) that it will necessarily be successful. Outputs are typically measured in physical units such as the number of seminars, site visits, conferences, participants, publications, good practices identified, or policies addressed.

The **results** are direct and immediate effects resulting from the project and from the production of the outputs. They represent what is intended to be changed by the project. The production of outputs such as organisation of events, the identification and dissemination of good practices, the production of policy recommendations are only means to achieve the results of the project. Compared to the outputs, they imply a qualitative value, an improvement compared with an initial situation. They have to be measured in physical units such as the number of policy instruments influenced.

Figure 3 – Programme specific output and result indicators[5]

	INDICATOR	PRIORITY 1		PRIORITY 2	PRIORITY 3	
		SO 2.4 **Climate change**	**SO 2.7** **Protection of nature**	**SO 4.6** **Culture and tourism**	**SO 6.2** **Institutional cooperation**	**SO 6.3** **Cooperation among people**
Output	**RCO 83** Strategies and actions plans jointly developed	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	RCO 84 Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	RCO 87 Organisations cooperating across borders	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

---

[5] *The detailed description of indicators is available in the Methodological paper on indicators*

	RCO 115 Public events across borders jointly organised	✓	✓	✓		✓
	RCO 116 Jointly developed solutions	✓	✓	✓		
Result	**RCR 79** Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	RCR 84 Organizations cooperating across borders after project completion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	RCR 104 Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations	✓	✓	✓	✓	

SO: programme specific objective

Figure 4 – Output and result indicators per priority

	Priority	Specific Objective	Output indicator	Result indicator
1	**Green and adaptive region**	2.4 Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches	RCO 83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed	RCR 79 - Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations
			RCO 84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	RCR 104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations

			RCO 116 - Jointly developed solutions	
			RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders	RCR 84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion
			RCO 115 - Public events across borders jointly organised	
1		2.7 Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution	RCO 83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed	RCR 79 - Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations
			RCO 84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	RCR 104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations
			RCO 116 - Jointly developed solutions	
			RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders	RCR 84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion
			RCO 115 - Public events across borders jointly organised	
2	**Resilient and sustainable region**	4.6 Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	RCO 83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed	RCR 79 - Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations
			RCO 84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	RCR 104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations
			RCO 116 - Jointly developed solutions	
			RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders	RCR 84 - Organisations

			RCO 115 - Public events across borders jointly organised	cooperating across borders after project completion
3	**Accessible and connected region**	6.2 Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation, and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors, and institutions, in particular with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border region	RCO 83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed	RCR 79 - Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations
			RCO 84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	RCR 104 - Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations
			RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders	RCR 84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion
		6.3 Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions	RCO 87 - Organisations cooperating across borders	RCR 84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion
			RCO 115 - Public events across borders jointly organised	

2.4 TYPES OF ACTIONS, MAIN TARGET GROUPS, TYPE OF BENEFICIARIES SUPPORTED BY THE PROGRAMME AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

2.4.1 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2.4 – PROMOTING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK PREVENTION AND RESILIENCE, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ECOSYSTEM-BASED APPROACHES

Types of actions (non-exhaustive list)

Types of action 1: Strengthening of risk preparedness and response capacities in the cross-border area

- ✓ Cross-border exchange and harmonisation of data, risk mapping, establishment of joint protocols, and information flows on the cross-border level;
- ✓ Development and enhancement of cooperation of disaster response units and organisations, including rescue plans, protocols, and co-ordination mechanisms of civil protection to prepare and respond to climate change-related hazards and other risks in the cross-border area;
- ✓ Development and enhancement of early warning and response systems with efficient data and information exchange between the national, regional, and the local levels; awareness-raising and educational activities for inhabitants on climate risk adaptation and on how to act during different climate change-related and other disasters where shared in the cross-border territory;
- ✓ Joint cross-border upskilling and equipping of disaster response units and organisations for different types of hazard scenarios define for the expected area covered (e.g., fires, frost, floods, droughts, storms, earthquakes, and other extreme events); sharing knowledge and good practices on climate adaptation for resilience of society and infrastructure;
- ✓ Supporting cross-border capacity building, establishment of cross border tools for the target groups in the cross-border area (particularly youth and children) for protection against shared threats (promoting community assistance, reaction in case of disasters, digital tools for natural hazard observations in schools, etc.).

Types of action 2: Increasing the resilience to climate-change effects in the programme area

- ✓ Preparing and coordinating cross-sectoral, integrated, cross-border climate adaptation action plans for neighbouring municipalities/cities/regions/territorial units (aligned with the national climate plans) and their implementation on the regional level (e.g., SECAP - Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan) for anticipating the adverse effects of climate change on key sectors and taking appropriate activities to prevent/minimise damage they can cause, or taking advantage of opportunities that may arise;
- ✓ Pilot activities focused on strengthening the resilience of the cross-border area (e.g., digital solutions for selected sectors for different problem areas and users, accompanied by small scale investments etc);
- ✓ Supporting the process of elaboration of inclusive (interdisciplinary) cross-border spatial planning background documents (aligned with national strategies) and expert bases for local adaptation plans, responding to identified climate threats;

✓ Supporting capacity building for sustainable implementation of defined action plans on regional/local level. Pilot activities developed must benefit the target groups in the cross-border area;

✓ Introduction and development of nature-based solutions for integrated water management by considering ecosystem restoration, natural water retention measures and other green (or blue) infrastructure measures that reduce flood risk threats and have a direct benefit for climate change adaptation and risk prevention.

Main target groups

✓ National, regional, and local public authorities and bodies established and governed by national, regional or local public authorities (national, regional and local government, ministries, national agencies, etc.);

✓ Higher education and research institutions (universities, polytechnics, science centres and institutes etc.);

✓ Regional or local development agencies;

✓ NGOs, associations, and other interest groups (citizen's associations, associations of municipalities, associations of experts, local action groups, relief organizations, civil protection bodies, emergency and rescue services etc.);

✓ Schools and training centres (e.g. adult education institutions);

✓ Sectoral agencies and institutions (e.g. energy agencies);

✓ Infrastructure and service providers in public interest (institutions for spatial planning, communal institutions, hospitals etc.);

✓ Other public organisations (e.g. information centres, nature parks);

✓ Local population.

Types of beneficiaries

✓ National, regional, and local public authorities and bodies established and governed by national, regional or local public authorities (national, regional and local government, ministries, national and sectoral agencies, etc.);

✓ Non-profit organisations established by public or private law - legal persons (e.g. health centres, NGOs, associations, regional or local development agencies, emergency and rescue service, civil protection organisations, relief organizations, higher education and research institutions, institutions for spatial planning, etc.).

Guiding principles

✓ Creating sustainable joint risk management partnerships for the cross-border territory;

✓ Stimulating the application of nature-based solutions wherever possible, above hard or grey infrastructure;

- ✓ Enhancing the resilience of people, property, and natural environment to climate change and disasters (actions for enhanced resilience of society should not have indirect negative impacts on nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest);
- ✓ Supporting interdisciplinary approach and holistic planning in development of climate adaptation and disaster risk prevention action plans and solutions.

In line with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (hereinafter SEA) recommendations pay special attention to:

- increase the resilience to climate-change effects in the programme area and to nature and biodiversity protection goals in parallel to protection of society. This will be checked in the frame of **horizontal principles assessment (sustainable development and the "Do No Significant Harm" principle (hereinafter DNSH)).**[6]
- measures for protection of other segments of the environment, especially soil and agricultural land in order to make the direct positive effect on a larger scale.

2.4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2.7 – ENHANCING PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF NATURE, BIODIVERSITY, AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING IN URBAN AREA, AND REDUCING ALL FORMS OF POLLUTION

Types of actions (non-exhaustive list)

Types of action 1: Strategically planned green infrastructure for provision of environmental and socio-economic benefits

- ✓ Enhancing cross-border **cooperation and knowledge exchange for inclusive and holistic spatial planning** by fostering participative process, for integration of **green infrastructure on a regional scale**, relying on (but not limiting to) Natura 2000 network as its backbone, aiming to support habitat connectivity, prevent degradation and support delivery of ecosystem services;
- ✓ Supporting cross-border pilot activities for introducing and managing **green infrastructure, and enhancing and raising awareness on provision of multiple ecosystem services** in the cross-border area (e.g., establishment of pilot green

---

[6] *Negative assessment in one of the horizontal principles will lead to rejection of the project.*

infrastructure, promotion of environmental education, sustainable resource management etc).

Types of action 2: Improved protection and preservation of endangered habitats, species, and landscapes in the programme area

- ✓ Sustainable joint **cross-border actions for better management of natural areas for improving the conservation status** of species and habitat types in poor or declining condition (e.g., wetlands, grasslands, etc. also considering the underground karstic habitats). Actions under this activity should consider knowledge exchange and co-ordination of relevant stakeholders for advancement of nature protection efforts; cross-border pilot actions to demonstrate possible solutions (e.g., cross-border management plans of visiting regimes, cross-border nature interpretation, cross-border innovative models for results-based innovation in environment protection, etc.); engagement and education of citizens and local organisations from different sectors that impact behaviour and improve practices that cause negative effects on habitats and species in the cross-border area;

- ✓ Joint actions for planning and managing of natural landscapes across border (e.g. border river corridors, forests, other integrated biodiversity areas) aiming to provide a cross-border collaboration and exchange platform for preservation and development of the habitats quality and landscape identity and achieve high awareness on natural and semi-natural heritage value of the cross-border territory addressed, particularly involving (but not limiting to) Natura 2000 and other protected areas;

- ✓ Cross-border actions to improve protection, management, and implementation of joint measures **against invasive species** (e.g., cross-border relevant small-scale clean-up), including data gathering and exchange, on best preventive practices, and further awareness-raising actions for sustainability of cross-border cooperation. Activities to be focused on Natura 2000 and other areas of ecological importance;

- ✓ Coordinated cross-border actions for **protection of the threatened communities within ecosystems that support ecosystem services** in the programme area (e.g., pollinators, large carnivores and other, having special role in the community of species). Activities should address all integrated aspects (cross-border data gathering and processing, pilot implementation of identified solutions, awareness-raising, enhancing sustainability of cross-border actions). Activities to be focused on Natura 2000 and other areas of ecological importance.

Main target Groups

- ✓ National, regional, and local public authorities and bodies established and governed by national, regional or local public authorities (national, regional and local government,

ministries, national agencies, public institutions/agencies for nature and/or cultural heritage protection, etc.);

✓ Higher education and research institutions (universities, polytechnics, science centres and institutes etc.);

✓ Regional or local development agencies;

✓ NGOs, associations, and other interest groups (citizen's associations, associations of the municipalities, associations of experts, local action groups etc.);

✓ Schools and training centres (e.g. adult training institutions);

✓ Sectoral agencies and institutions (e.g. environmental agencies, forestry organisations);

✓ Infrastructure and service providers in public interest (institutions for spatial planning, communal institutions etc.);

✓ Other public organisations (e.g. nature parks);

✓ Visitors/tourists;

✓ Local population (e.g., local communities, farmers, owners of the land in Natura 2000, protected areas and other areas of nature values, owners of heritage units and other protected areas).

Types of beneficiaries

✓ National, regional, and local public authorities and bodies established and governed by national, regional or local public authorities (national, regional and local government, ministries, national agencies, public institutions/agencies for nature and/or cultural heritage protection, etc.);

✓ Non-profit organisations established by public or private law - legal persons in the field of nature protection and service providers in public interest (e.g. Natura 2000 and protected area management authorities, institutions for spatial planning, NGOs, associations, regional or local development agencies, environmental agencies, higher education and research institutions, etc.).

Guiding principles

✓ Enhancing participatory process for delivery of holistic and multi-beneficial solutions for habitats and species;

✓ Considering nature-based solutions underlying on multiple benefits.

2.4.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 4.6 - ENHANCING THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL INCLUSION, AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

Types of actions (non-exhaustive list)

Types of action 1: Supporting sustainable tourism and green transition of public and private organisations through pilot actions, collaborative learning, and awareness-raising of tourists and all stakeholders in tourism, and culture

- ✓ development of **joint pilot actions** to support a **green transition** of public and private stakeholders in tourism and culture (e.g., enhancing CB tourism products and services for entering green certification schemes, actions that promote and implement circular economy);
- ✓ **development of new or "greening" of existing CB products, services, or solutions** that contribute to the sustainability and accessibility of tourism and cultural products and service;
- ✓ **CB awareness-raising actions to increase environmental and social responsibility** of stakeholders in tourism and culture, tourists, and visitors;
- ✓ joint **CB collaboration platforms and joint learning actions** (e.g., CB study visits, CB mentoring, cross-border exchange programmes, CB job shadowing programmes for **supporting environmentally and socially responsible** tourism, culture, and creative industries);
- ✓ upskilling of public and private organisations for **integrated sustainable destinations management by enhancing knowledge and skills supporting transition to resilient tourism destinations** and **enhancing digital skills and supporting transition to circular business models** in tourism, culture, and creative industries (incl. heritage interpretation).

Types of action 2: Enhancing resilience and recovery of tourism and culture by development and upgrade of joint CB tourism products and services

- ✓ **increasing diversity and accessibility of CB tourism by development of** special types of tourism corresponding to the local or historical identity in rural communities, also respecting needs of vulnerable groups (e.g., cultural tourism, outdoor and active tourism that are in line with environmental and spatial requirements, developing **joint tourism products by using existing infrastructure**);
- ✓ modernising tourism and cultural organisations and institutions to meet the demands of modern visitor including vulnerable population by supporting CB demand driven **digitalisation** (e.g., digital solutions for identification, interpretation and presentation of cultural and natural heritage (e.g. cultural routes), joint smart technologies supporting information sharing in PA, CB reservation systems);
- ✓ increasing **quality** of tourism offer in **CB tourism regions/destinations** (e.g. by entering the certification schemes);

- ✓ **upgrading of joint CB tourism products** by supporting valorisation, preservation and inclusive and interactive interpretation of cultural and natural heritage;
- ✓ CB pilot actions to mobilize local communities and improve local economy by enhancing and promoting **health tourism, oenology, and gastronomy** as part of agrotourism and farm to fork initiatives;
- ✓ **joint CB** actions for supporting **social innovations and cultural and creative industries, and creativity in tourism and culture** (e.g., cross-border cultural networking, including clusters and cultural routes, increasing value of tourist cross-border products and services by development of participative creative experiences).

Main target groups

- ✓ National, regional, and local public authorities and bodies established and governed by national, regional or local public authorities (national, regional and local government, ministries, national agencies, public institutions/agencies for nature and/or cultural heritage protection, tourist boards, etc.);
- ✓ Higher education and research institutions (universities, polytechnics, science centres and institutes etc.);
- ✓ Regional or local development agencies;
- ✓ NGOs, associations and other interest groups (citizen's associations, associations of the municipalities, associations of experts, cultural organizations, local action groups, etc.);
- ✓ Schools and training centres (e.g. adult education centres);
- ✓ Sectoral agencies and institutions;
- ✓ Infrastructure and service providers in public interest;
- ✓ Other public organisations (e.g. tourist information centres, nature parks, museums, theatres and other cultural institutions);
- ✓ SME's, including micro-organisations (e.g. creative industries, trades, travel agencies, food producers etc.);
- ✓ Business support organisations/associations, including chambers of commerce/crafts, networks and clusters (business incubators, technological parks, tourism destination management organisations etc.);
- ✓ Local population (e.g. agrotourism, owners of heritage sites);
- ✓ Visitors and tourists;
- ✓ Vulnerable and marginalized population.

Types of beneficiaries

- ✓ National, regional, and local public authorities and bodies established and governed by national, regional or local public authorities (national, regional and local government, ministries, national agencies, public institutions/agencies for nature and/or cultural heritage protection, tourist boards, etc.);
- ✓ Non-profit organisations established by public or private law - legal persons acting in the field of cultural or natural heritage, sustainable tourism development or related services (e.g. museums, nature parks, regional or local development agencies, tourism destination management organisations, NGOs, associations, higher education and research institutions, sectoral agencies and institutions, business support organisations/associations, etc.);
- ✓ SME's, including micro-organisations (e.g. creative industries, etc.).

> **Please note that legal entities are eligible while natural persons, sole entrepreneurs and political parties are not.**

Guiding principles

- ✓ respecting and preserving culture, nature, biodiversity, and the health of inhabitants;
- ✓ fostering economic, environmental and social sustainablity of tourism;
- ✓ facilitating slow tourism by increasing the quality of fewer and more meaningful experiences by fostering sustainable mobility solutions, outdoor activities, organic food, and eco-oenological experiences, using local products, learning through interactive experience-based activities and implementing similar actions;
- ✓ facilitating cross-sectorial job creation and economic recovery of tourism, culture and creative industries.

The programme encourages the inclusion of revenue-generating measures to support the activities in the renovated cultural heritage or cultural sites, e.g. through diversification of use of the site or indirectly as an economic gain to the cross-border region.

In line with the SEA recommendations pay special attention to the increasing of sustainability of tourism:

- - through inclusion of sustainable mobility solutions;
- - through inclusion of solutions that promote circular economy to reduce waste, wastewater and GHG emissions.

In line with the SEA recommendations pay special attention that tourist products and services are provided in existing facilities or in degraded areas.

In line with the SEA recommendations pay special attention to the potentially increased number of visitors in protected areas and take into consideration the carrying capacity of specific

protected area(s) or site(s) and provide related sustainable solutions for visitor management. This will be checked in the frame of **horizontal principles assessment (sustainable development and DNSH principle).[7]**

In line with the SEA recommendations pay special attention in cases where the implementation of projects would require the installation of outdoor lighting: public lighting and other outdoor lighting should be planned restrainedly and according to actual needs. Environmentally friendly lighting that does not emit a large proportion of blue and ultraviolet light should be used.

2.4.4 ISO1: SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 6.2 - ENHANCE EFFICIENT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION BY PROMOTING LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN CITIZENS, CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS, AND INSTITUTIONS, IN PARTICULAR WITH VIEW TOWARD RESOLVING LEGAL AND OTHER OBSTACLES IN BORDER REGIONS

Types of actions (non-exhaustive list)

Types of action: Improvement of the quality and diversity of the services and development of innovative solutions in the areas of health care, social inclusion and welfare, accessibility, and energy efficiency in the border regions by overcoming legal and administrative obstacles

- ✓ Development and implementation of cross-border cooperation models; tools and learning networks for more efficient and accessible public administration in the areas of healthcare, social inclusion, accessibility and energy efficiency (e.g., knowledge sharing and capacity building, awareness-raising actions, cross-border data sharing and monitoring systems, introduction of digital tools for identifying cross-border legal and administrative obstacles, joint workshops, upskilling, meetings, and seminars for strengthening the cross-border cooperation between municipalities, cities and regions, study visits in order to transfer best practices, cross-border staff exchange programmes and cross-border mentoring);
- ✓ Establishment and co-ordination of joint multi-level and multisectoral knowledge exchange, governance models and development of territorial strategies of cross-border areas involving public administration at different levels (local, regional, national), civil society and other stakeholders;

---

[7] *Negative assessment in one of the horizontal principles will lead to rejection of the project.*

✓ Setting up new or/and upgrading existing cross-border organisational structures providing the services in the area of healthcare, social inclusion, accessibility and energy efficiency (e.g., **cross-border network for demand responsive transport**, joint development of models in the area of deinstitutionalisation of elderly care);

✓ Development of innovative cross-border **solutions and pilot actions** in the field of **energy efficiency** (jointly developed tools and solution for improving energy efficiency at different levels, models of self-sufficient energy communities, monitoring systems, proposals for reducing legal, administrative and other obstacles hampering implementation of such tools and solutions);

✓ Development of joint solutions and pilot actions for improving the **quality and diversity of health, social, and complementary services** (e.g., solutions to challenges connected to aging population, health, energy and mobility poverty to improve attractiveness of remote areas and to stop depopulation, pilot actions for integration of health, social and complementary services, diversification of health prevention activities etc.);

✓ Development of **solutions and pilot actions for improvement of accessibility** (e.g., action plan and pilot actions of joint cross-border sustainable mobility services, introducing digital solutions for easier access to health and social services, participatory decision-making actions to reduce the administrative barriers and harmonise timetables);

✓ Mainstreaming and uptake of developed solutions in the area of healthcare, social inclusion, accessibility and energy efficiency in the cross-border area towards civil society and public administration at different levels (e.g., promotion of suggestions on improving legislation, presentation of proposals for mainstreaming and adapting of developed solutions digital platforms, collaboration platforms, cross-border newsletter, cross-border newspaper).

Thematic areas to be co-financed under this SO are limited to the:

- **health care,**
- **social inclusion and welfare,**
- **accessibility,**
- **energy efficiency.**

Main target Groups

✓ National, regional, and local public authorities and bodies established and governed by national, regional or local public authorities (national, regional and local government, ministries, national agencies, public institutions);

✓ Higher education and research institutions (universities, polytechnics, science centres and institutes etc.);

✓ Regional or local development agencies;

- ✓ NGOs, associations and other interest groups (citizen's associations, associations of experts, local action groups, volunteers etc.);
- ✓ Schools and training centres;
- ✓ Sectoral agencies and institutions (e.g. energy agencies);
- ✓ Infrastructure and service providers in public interest (public transport service providers, health care and social care institutions, communal institutions etc.);
- ✓ Other public organisations;
- ✓ Local population.

Types of beneficiaries	

- ✓ National, regional, and local public authorities and bodies established and governed by national, regional or local public authorities (national, regional and local government, ministries, national agencies, public institutions, sectoral agencies);
- ✓ Non-profit organisations established by public or private law - legal persons (e.g. health centres, social care organisations, NGOs, elderly centres, regional development agencies, social enterprises, higher education and research institutions, etc.);
- ✓ organisations providing services in public interest (public transport service providers, health care and social care institutions, communal institutions, etc.).

Please note that legal entities are eligible while natural persons, sole entrepreneurs and political parties are not.

Guiding principles	

- ✓ Place-based approach,[8]
- ✓ Participatory approach,
- ✓ Sustainability,
- ✓ Digitalisation.

2.5 FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

The value of the IP SI-HR available for standard projects amounts to 37,886,448 EUR ERDF and is allocated to the three programme priorities:

---

[8] *In Slovenia the impact of the project is focused in regions (NUTS 3) that are directly bordering Croatia.*

Priority	ERDF (EUR)
1 Green and adaptive region	15,230,000
2 Resilient and sustainable region	18,656,448[9]
3 Accessible and connected region	4,000,000
SUM	37,886,448

The ERDF co-financing rate is max. 80%, while min. 20% shall be contributed by own contribution or other sources.

For standard projects Open Calls for standard projects will be published with several deadlines.

2.6 PROGRAMME LANGUAGE

The official languages of the IP SI-HR programme are Slovene, Croatian and English, whereby by discrepancies between different language versions, English version prevails. The official written communication with the Join Secretariat (hereinafter JS) or Managing Authority (hereinafter MA) is in principle to be carried out bilingually in Slovene and Croatian. All JS members have the understanding of Slovene and Croatian, therefore the communication with Project Partners in both languages is ensured.

2.7 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The IP SI-HR is a joint programme of the two Member States, Slovenia and Croatia.

The governance and management of the programme is shared between various bodies that are in charge of managing, coordinating, supervising and controlling the implementation of the programme.

---

[9] *Indicative amount is in the process of confirmation by the European Commission (16,320,000 EUR have been confirmed, while 2,336,448 EUR are in the confirmation process).*

➢ Monitoring Committee

The Monitoring Committee (hereinafter MC) steers the programme, supervises the quality and effectiveness of its implementation and decides on the approval or rejection of the projects for funding. It is composed of representatives of both Member States, Slovenia and Croatia. The list of the MC members is available on the programme website.

➢ Managing Authority

The Managing Authority is responsible for the management and the implementation of the programme in accordance with the principle of sound financial management and in line with EU regulations ruling the ERDF.

➢ Joint Secretariat

The Joint Secretariat assists the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in carrying out their respective functions and undertakes the day-to-day implementation of the programme. It also provides information and guidance to project applicants and partners.

➢ Audit Authority

The Audit Authority (hereinafter AA) is assisted by the Group of auditors comprising of representatives of both Member States participating in the Interreg programme. AA is responsible for carrying out system audits, audits on operations and audits of accounts in order to provide independent assurance to the European Commission (hereinafter EC) that the programme management and control system functions effectively and that expenditure submitted to EC is legal and regular.

➢ Body entrusted with the accounting function

The body entrusted with the accounting function submits the payment applications to the Commission and makes payments to the Lead Partners or in exceptional cases to Project Partners *(if applicable).*

➢ Representatives of the Member States

The representatives of the Member States (National Authorities) are providing information to applicants in order to obtain quality projects that will meet the programme objectives and indicators, as well as assisting the MA and JS in organising the support for potential applicants in finding CB Project Partners.
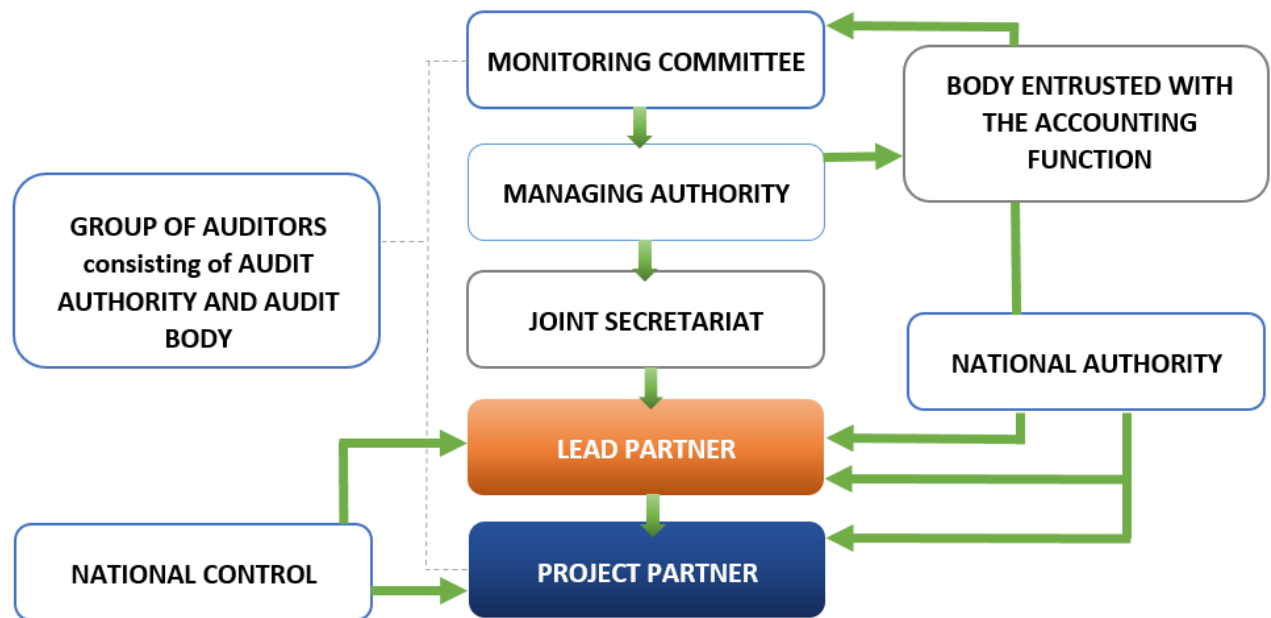
➢ National controllers

The National Controllers verify the delivery of the products and services co-financed, the soundness of the expenditure declared and the compliance of such expenditure with EU rules, programme rules and national rules. For this purpose, each Member State has designated controllers that are responsible for verifying the legality and regularity of the expenditure declared

by each Lead and Project Partner participating in a project located (as a general rule) on its territory.

Figure 5 – Programme management structure

2.8 ELECTRONIC MONITORING SYSTEM

The IP SI-HR Joint Electronic Monitoring System (hereinafter Jems) is a customised version of the common monitoring system developed by the Interact Programme, which is used by a large community of Interreg programmes.

Jems is an online system conceived to cover the full project and programme life cycle in one monitoring tool that allows to reduce the need for additional paper processes to a minimum. Furthermore, the concept of "one single entry point" of data is followed, avoiding multiple manual entry of the same data, through automatic transfer of data to different sections in the system. Users can fill in online forms (e.g. application, reporting) and upload/download files.

The IP SI-HR Jems is available at https://jems.si-hr.eu/. It can be accessed via standard web browsers like Google Chrome, Microsoft Edge or Mozilla Firefox (recent versions). For working in Jems, it is recommended to use a PC or notebook rather than mobile devices. When importing files into Jems, please note that their size must not exceed 15 MB. For more information on the Interact Jems initiative, please visit this page: www.interact-eu.net/#o=jems. Upon registration in Jems, the users have access to the system as applicant users. Once a project is approved and

contracted, the Lead Partner (hereinafter LP) user will be assigned to the project, who in turn assigns the partner users to the Project Partners. A helpdesk for technical support specifically dedicated to Jems can be reached via email (si-hr.mkrr@gov.si). In addition, also workshops/trainings on how to use the Jems will be organised by JS.

3 INTERREG SI-HR KEY PRINCIPLES

3.1 CROSS BORDER COOPERATION

The cross border cooperation is the key principle of the Programme. Projects should set up and foster cross border cooperation between Project Partners that should possibly continue beyond the project lifetime and provide benefits for wider group of stakeholders (e.g. cooperation networks in the border area).

3.2 RESULT ORIENTATION

The strong focus is given to the result orientation of a project with the demand for visible outputs and concrete results. The result-oriented approach is reflected in the programme, as well as project intervention logic.

Projects have to apply a result-oriented approach strictly, clearly defining the results the project is striving for and linking them with the territorial challenges and needs (see also chapter 2.1 in Part 2 of the Manual for beneficiaries for standard projects on developing the project intervention logic). **The coherence of the project intervention logic** (i.e. the project specific objectives, activities, deliverables outputs and expected results) **with the targeted specific objective of the programme is a pre-condition for a project to be funded.** Projects not showing a clear link to a programme specific objective and/or not contributing to the respective expected programme result will not be supported by the IP SI-HR programme.

> **A clear result-oriented approach contributing to a specific objective of the IP SI-HR is required by the projects.**
>
> ➢ Project objectives have to clearly target only one single programme specific objective within the chosen priority.
> ➢ The contribution of the project to the respective programme result (and the related indicator) has to be clearly demonstrated.
> ➢ Project activities and outputs have to be logically linked to the target specific objective

and competent for the development, implementation, communication as well as capitalization of the planned project outputs and results. In this respect, for designing a relevant partnership the

thematic competence and expertise, geographical and institutional relevance have to be considered.

The partnership should reflect the integrated territorial approach to regional development to be set in place by the project. All partners have to be involved in a way that demonstrates the joint implementation and the cross-border added value of the project.

3.5 SUSTAINABILITY

The durability of project outputs and results is crucial for **ensuring territorial impact and long-term benefits** which continue after the project end in order to reach the project`s overall objectives.

Therefore, projects have to ensure that outputs obtained and results achieved are durable and suitable to be continued after project closure.

In order to achieve durability, projects need to adopt from the beginning a long-term, strategic perspective that leads to desired results for the target groups over an extended time frame. In order to achieve such long-term benefits, it is essential to consider **needs of key stakeholders** as well as the **institutional context** already when planning the project. In particular, key stakeholders should be actively involved from the early stages of the project development. A distinction between the following dimensions of sustainability should be made: financial sustainability (financing of follow-up activities and investments, resources for covering future operating and maintenance costs, etc.) and institutional sustainability ("ownership" of project outputs - which structures will allow the results of the project to continue to be in place after the project end).

3.6 HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

In all phases of the programme cycle, the horizontal principles of **equal opportunities**, **non-discrimination**, **gender equality**, **accessibility for persons with disabilities** and **sustainable development** will be respected. The programme authorities have and will, through the entire life cycle of the programme (preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation), ensure that the horizontal principles are respected.

No project that could potentially harm the environment will be supported without relevant mitigation measures. The project applicants will have to meet the requirements related to protection of the environment and/or health. Moreover, they will be encouraged to promote climate neutrality and sustainable development.

In implementing the programme, the Managing Authority will promote the **strategic use of public procurement** to support strategic objectives. Project Partners should be encouraged to pay more attention to quality and life-cycle cost criteria. Where possible, environmental (e.g. **green public**

procurement criteria) and **social aspects** and **incentives for innovation** should be included in public procurement procedures.

In general, projects submitted under any priority are strongly encouraged to incorporate also activities for tackling environmental concerns and **reducing their environmental impact**, for example by:

- ✓ Contribution to **reduced transport and mobility related air pollution** (in particular for short travel distances).
- ✓ Contribution to the **development of green infrastructures** and technologies.
- ✓ Contribution to more **employment opportunities, training and education possibilities** as well as support services regarding environmental protection and sustainable development.
- ✓ Application of **green public procurement** in a methodological way.
- ✓ Considering **online meetings** instead of face-to-face meetings where possible.
- ✓ Organising conferences and events in a sustainable way (e.g. by combining different meetings in one place, reducing printing and using recyclable materials, using video conference facilities, etc.).

4 LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND PROGRAMME RELATED DOCUMENTS

Projects implemented under the programme must comply with EU rules governing the Structural Funds, the programme rules and national legislation, and must show coherence and complementarities with regional, national and sectoral development strategies/programmes. The documents or web links to the relevant documents listed below (not exhaustive list) are provided on the programme website www.si-hr.eu.

Relevant programme documents

- ✓ Interreg Programme VI-A Slovenia-Croatia, adopted by the European Commission Decision C (2023) 744 final as of 25 January 2023;
- ✓ Methodological Paper on Indicators IP SI-HR 2021-2027;
- ✓ SEA of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027, Environmental Report, May 2022.

Key regulations for the period 2021-2027

- ✓ Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021, laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European

Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (Common Provisions Regulation) with all amendments;

✓ Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on the European Regional Development Fund and on the Cohesion Fund (ERDF Regulation) with all amendments;

✓ Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 on specific provisions for the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) supported by the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments (Interreg Regulation) with all amendments;

✓ Implementing acts and delegated acts adopted in accordance with the aforementioned regulations;

✓ Other regulations and directives applicable to the implementation of projects co-funded by the ERDF.

Besides EU rules and rules of the Interreg Programme, also the national rules have to be respected.

We would like to highlight some examples:

✓ **Procurement of goods and services:** all Project Partners should comply with the principles of sound financial management and follow public procurement regulations.

✓ **State aid:** if the project or its activities are subject to State aid rules, the ceilings of public funding or aid intensity will have to be respected.

✓ Valid national legislation ruling **specific fields addressed by the project**, e.g. environmental interventions, natural and cultural heritage, construction, etc., has to be respected in preparing and implementing the projects.