



European territorial Cooperation
Summary of the cooperation programme

INTERREG VI-A Italia-Malta

Summary

| | |
|--|---|
| Introduction..... | 3 |
| INTERREG VI-A Italia Malta: strategy and priorities of the programme..... | 3 |
| Priority 1 - A smarter area of cooperation to promote research and innovation and the development of skills for smart specialisation..... | 4 |
| Priority 2 - A resilient cooperation area, which strengthens the protection and preservation of nature also through the efficient use of resources | 5 |
| Priority 3 - An area of efficient cooperation in social capital through the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development | 6 |
| Priority 4 - An area of cooperation with better governance between Italy and Malta | 7 |
| The financial allocation..... | 7 |
| Indicators..... | 8 |
| Management structures..... | 8 |
| Project selection notices | 9 |

Introduction

In June 2021, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union adopted regulations containing, among others, the common provisions applicable to cohesion policy funds 2021-2027 (Regulation (EU) 2021/1060), the European Regional Development Fund (Regulation (EU) 2021/1058) and the European territorial cooperation goal (Regulation (EU) 2021/1059).

Within the aforementioned regulatory framework is the European territorial cooperation programme INTERREG VI-A Italia Malta, listed in Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/74, for which the total amount of € 46,083,225 of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has been provided for the priorities of the programme, corresponding to the co-financing rate of 80%.

The remaining 20% share, corresponding to the amount of € 11,520,806, will constitute the national contribution to the program.

The new period 2021-2027 represents the fourth programming cycle that began in 2004, following Malta's entry into the European Union. From the first programming cycle to today, the cooperation between Sicily and Malta has reached a solid level of maturity that has seen: 1) the progressive enlargement of the area of cooperation that today affects the two territories in their entirety; 2) the constant increase in the resources available for the financing of interventions in the two territories; 3) the increasing participation of beneficiaries in the funded initiatives.

The main challenge of the 2021-2027 programming is to promote integrated and harmonious development between the two neighboring maritime territories.

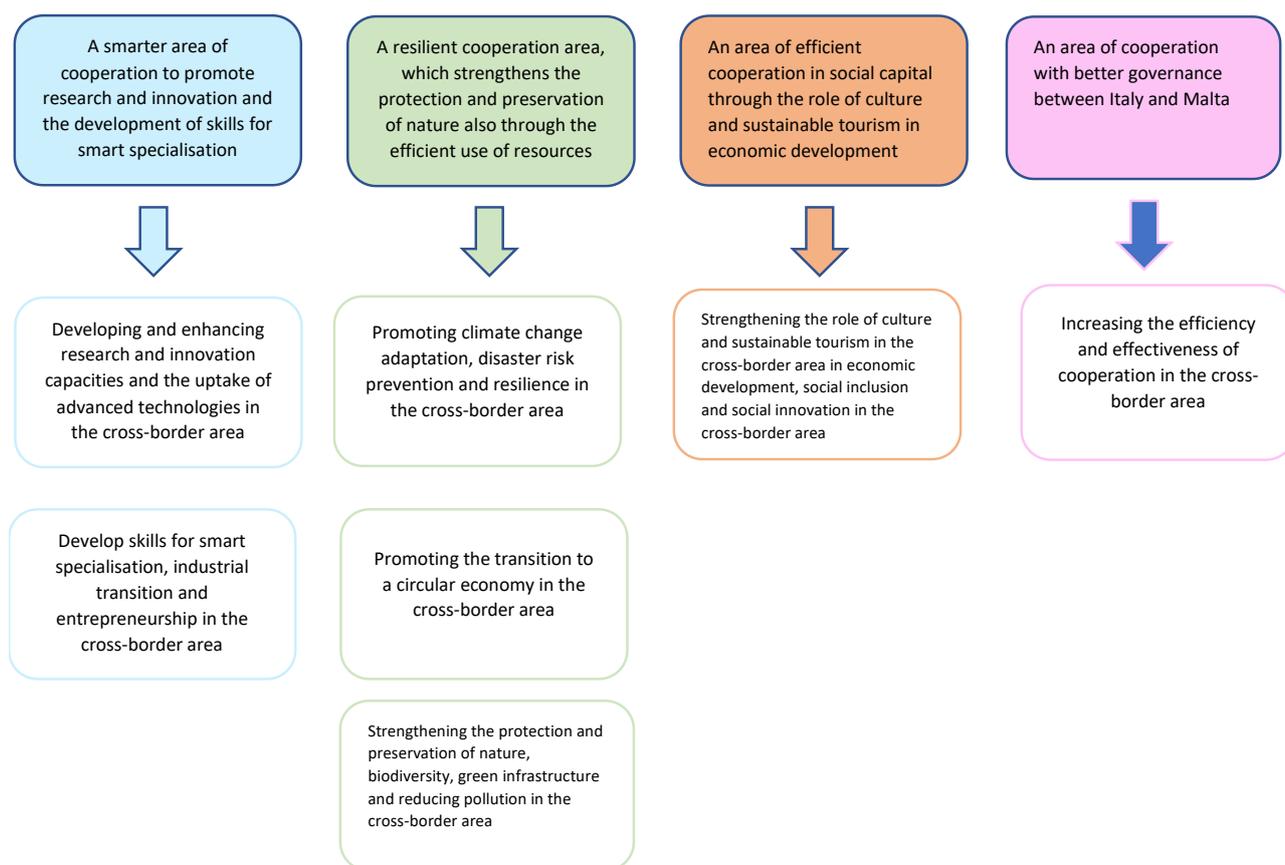
INTERREG VI-A Italia Malta: strategy and priorities of the programme

In continuity with the previous programming, the INTERREG VI-A Italia Malta programme will ensure thematic concentration by contributing to **3 strategic objectives (SO)** defined in the Common Provisions Regulation to which is added **1 Interreg specific objective (ISO)**:

- OS1: a more competitive and smarter Europe, by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation and regional ICT connectivity;
- OS2: a greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, the circular economy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, risk prevention and management, and sustainable urban mobility;
- OS4: a more social and inclusive Europe implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- ISO1: Better cooperation governance.

On these strategic objectives, **4 priorities** and **7 specific objectives** have been defined through which the INTERREG V-I A Italia Malta programme will address the common challenges of the cooperation area.

Table 1: INTERREG VI-A Italia-Malta strategic framework for specific priorities and objectives



Priority 1 - A smarter area of cooperation to promote research and innovation and the development of skills for smart specialisation

The maritime border, the island size of the two territories of the programme, the limited total R&D spending, in particular in its private component, make it more difficult for SMEs to take full advantage of joint cross-border opportunities.

The programme therefore aims to develop and strengthen research and innovation capacities in areas of mutual interest such as marine and maritime, digital technologies and climate change adaptation/mitigation.

The programme also supports *upskill* and *reskill* pathways by MSMEs, increasing the opportunity to exploit new advanced technologies (new KETs) and creating new opportunities for skilled work.

This will be pursued through two specific objectives:

- 1. Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies in the cross-border area**

Example of actions:

- **Promotion of collaborative research (partnerships between companies and research centers)** through interventions aimed at supporting networks between companies and specialized competence centers for the creation and testing of technological solutions in sectors or production chains in which a need for joint innovation emerges and / or for the experimentation of research

interventions aimed at reducing climate-changing emissions (eg production of more respectful fuels of the environment, pilot projects of energy self-sufficiency in conditions of insularity, etc.) ; evolution of the most promising research projects, on the basis of TRLs, into marketable products.

- **Provision of advisory and innovation support services for SMEs** through assistance interventions in the field of knowledge transfer in order to promote the dissemination of innovative solutions and services for a better satisfaction of the economic, social and environmental needs of the area

2. Develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and cross-border entrepreneurship in the cross-border area

Example of actions:

- **Qualification and mobility of human capital through** interventions aimed at creating skills for the new generations of entrepreneurs, managers, researchers, technicians and operators in areas of mutual interest such as the green and blue economy, the circular economy, health and quality of life, etc., but also the cultural and creative industry, social enterprises, etc., through cooperation with international and Mediterranean networks of knowledge, skills and abilities.

Priority 2 - A resilient cooperation area, which strengthens the protection and preservation of nature also through the efficient use of resources

The entire area of the programme is prone to natural and man-made disasters. Problems such as coastal erosion, floods, earthquakes, landslides and oil spills into the sea are just some of the most important threats. Water scarcity and drought are also a major problem in the center of the Mediterranean, whose impacts affect both the natural heritage and the economic activities of the area.

Added to this is the need for territories to arrive at a circular economic model that can contribute to the fight against climate change through the reduction of material consumption and the cutting of greenhouse gas emissions, thus contributing to the zero emissions goal by 2050.

This will be pursued through three specific objectives

1. Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and cross-border resilience in the cross-border area

Example of actions:

- **Integration, development and research of multi-risk prevention** processes aimed at the implementation of databases, the development of forecasting models in the climatic, meteorological, geomorphological, hydrological, seismic fields, the implementation of territorial analysis for risk studies and mitigation models.
- **Definition of local plans for adaptation to the consequences of climate change**, including water scarcity and drought, and emergency management (e.g. mapping of common climate profiles, joint plans based on similar climate and environmental issues, etc.).
- **Actions to raise awareness of anthropogenic risks and deriving from climate change** as well as *capacity building* actions for institutional and economic actors in the cross-border area.
- **Implementation of monitoring and alert systems** for the enhancement of the meteorological, geomorphological, hydrological, seismic, volcanic and environmental monitoring and observation system that guarantee the interoperability of the systems between the two islands in the fields of environmental monitoring and safety.

2. Promoting the transition to a circular economy in the cross-border area

Example of actions:

- **Interventions for the dissemination of the circular economy** through the promotion and multi-level awareness in the cross-border target sectors (urban and marine waste, textiles, agri-food, personal protection linked to COVID-19 equipment), aimed at the main actors along the value chain (companies, public bodies, consumers / citizens).
- **Development of new production/consumption models based on a circular approach** that can also give rise to new business opportunities as well as exchanges of experience and pilot actions for the adoption of measures aimed at implementing the circular economy also through forms of incentives.

3. Strengthen the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, green infrastructure and reducing pollution in the cross-border area

Example of actions:

- **Interventions for the monitoring and control of the marine and coastal environment** through the use of technologies aimed at minimizing the risks to which the ecosystems of the area are exposed and which make them vulnerable: solutions that allow the mapping of degraded ecosystems and habitats and target species threatened by the presence of alien species (IAS) ; tools to monitor the distribution of microplastics (marine litter); pilot solutions for the reduction of pollutants in port areas (CO2, pollutants, noise, etc.).
- **Constructions of green and blue infrastructure** for the protection of marine ecosystems to counteract the effects of climate change and extreme events and to improve the quality of life in the cross-border area.
- **Interventions to preserve biodiversity and marine and terrestrial areas of naturalistic value**, also in order to mitigate the fragmentation of ecosystems: actions to combat the introduction, naturalization and spread of invasive alien species that cause damage to biodiversity in Sicily and Malta; actions to conserve existing biological resources; actions to protect threatened or endangered species; pilot actions to restore existing ecosystems.
- **Support for the creation of ecological corridors** which prevent genetic isolation, enable species to migrate, preserve and strengthen the integrity of ecosystems.
- **Actions for the integrated management of parks and marine protected areas** for the environmental and economic enhancement of the existing natural heritage also through the implementation of small interventions that improve their use.
- **Definition of common systemic strategies and action plans** oriented towards blue growth in synergy with the other initiatives implemented (WESTMED Initiative, OP INTERREG NEXT Italy Tunisia and OP INTERREG NEXT MED).

Priority 3 - An area of efficient cooperation in social capital through the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development

Culture and tourism are a key factor for the economic development of the cross-border area and investments in these sectors generate clear added value along the entire value chain.

The new challenges faced by the sector, including "safe destinations", require a different approach than in the past, based on the transformation brought about by COVID-19 and oriented towards more sustainable post-pandemic tourism.

It is therefore necessary: 1) to invest in people's skills; 2) use/regenerate spaces and places making them accessible to all; 3) create new opportunities for a sustainable and digital development of tourism, creative industries and the cultural sector, while involving local communities and vulnerable social groups.

This will be pursued through a specific objective:

1. Strengthening the role of culture and sustainable tourism of the cross-border area in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

Example of actions:

- **Revitalization and promotion of places of culture and other spaces for cultural and social** purposes through the modernization of tangible and intangible infrastructures of the historical, cultural and environmental heritage, the improvement of the digital capacity of use and physical and cognitive accessibility, support for the green transition.
- **Steps to develop an inclusive cultural heritage and a sector of the creative industry**, with inclusive spaces, technologies, learning and job opportunities to increase the cultural participation of citizens.
- **Interventions aimed at jointly developing brands and digital tools** around territorial characteristics, natural characteristics, local products and crafts to strengthen, orient and make homogeneous the entire value chain of cross-border tourism with respect to sustainability objectives (Goals Agenda 2030); develop innovative solutions and new business models in culture and tourism also ensuring inclusion.
- **Actions aimed at diversification, requalification, development of new** sustainable and responsible tourism products oriented to new market niches (ecotourism, cultural tourism, food and wine, well-being), also through the involvement of the population (community based tourism-community tourism).

Priority 4 - An area of cooperation with better governance between Italy and Malta

The Programme aims to strengthen the efficiency of public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation and cooperation between citizens and institutions, in particular with a view to ensuring multi-level governance that allows for the harmonisation, integration and capitalisation of results between ETC and *mainstream* programmes of the respective countries and overcoming administrative and bureaucratic obstacles.

This will be pursued through a specific objective:

1. Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation in the cross-border area

Example of actions:

- **Capitalisation, mainstreaming and administrative capacity** through exchanges of experience and initiatives to increase the capacity of public authorities to prepare integrated cross-border initiatives/strategies, to identify and respond to crises and emergencies and to ensure synergy with mainstream initiatives.
- **Development of forms of inter-institutional cooperation** between ETC programmes and mainstream programmes in order to maximise the effectiveness of interventions with a view to complementarity.

The financial allocation

Based on the distribution of the budget, financial resources will be allocated as follows:

| SO | PRIORITY definition | % | ERDF | National co-financing | TOTAL |
|--------------------|--|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| SO1 | 1 - Research, innovation and skills for competitiveness | 30,00% | 13.824.968 | 3.456.242 | 17.281.209 |
| SO2 | 2 - Climate change, environmental protection, circular economy | 45,00% | 20.737.451 | 5.184.363 | 25.921.814 |
| SO4 | 3 - Culture and sustainable tourism for development and economy and social inclusion | 10,00% | 4.608.323 | 1.152.081 | 5.760.403 |
| ISO1 | 4 - Governance | 15,00% | 6.912.484 | 1.728.121 | 8.640.605 |
| GRAND TOTAL | | 100,00% | 46.083.225 | 11.520.806 | 57.604.031 |

Indicators

In order to measure its performance, the programme has been equipped with a set of indicators selected to ensure broad coverage in terms of actions and funds allocated. In addition, a pragmatic approach and a clear and streamlined framework of indicators make it possible to avoid imposing a disproportionate burden on beneficiaries.

| Indicator Code | Indicator Title |
|----------------|---|
| RCO01 | Enterprises supported |
| RCO04 | Enterprises with non-financial support |
| RCO 84 | Pilot actions jointly developed and implemented within projects |
| RCO 87 | Organisations cooperating across borders |
| RCO 116 | Jointly developed solutions |
| RCO 116 | Jointly developed solutions |
| RRCR 79 | Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations |
| RRCR 104 | Solutions taken up or scaled by organizations |

Management structures

The **Managing Authority** shall be responsible for the management of the programme in order to achieve its objectives. This function is carried out by the Regione Siciliana – Presidenza – Dipartimento regionale della Programmazione

The **Audit Authority** shall be responsible for carrying out system audits, operation audits and audits of accounts in order to provide the Commission with independent assurance of the effective functioning of the management and control systems and of the legality and regularity of the expenditure included in the accounts submitted to the Commission. This function is carried out by the Regione Siciliana – Presidenza – Ufficio speciale autorità di audit dei programmi cofinanziati dalla commissione europea.

The **Maltese National Coordination Authority performs** a coordinating function in the implementation of the cooperation programme for the part relating to the Maltese territory and provides support to the animation activities of the potential beneficiaries of the programme on Maltese territory. It also carries out the monitoring and control of expenditure incurred on Maltese territory.

The **Joint Secretariat** assists the Managing Authority and the Monitoring Committee in the exercise of their respective functions and contributes: 1) to the management, implementation and monitoring of the programme, as well as to the monitoring of projects; (2) the capitalisation of the results of the programme; (3) communication and information activities to potential beneficiaries on funding opportunities under the Programme; (4) the assistance of beneficiaries and partners in the implementation of operations.

The **Monitoring Committee** shall review, among others, the progress made in the implementation of the Programme and in the achievement of the milestones and targets; all issues affecting the performance of the Programme and the measures taken to address them; the implementation of communication and visibility actions; progress in implementing operations.

Project selection notices

Notices relating to the selection of operations of strategic importance will be open from 2023 and operations will be carried out from 2023 to 2029.