

European Territorial Cooperation objective  
Cross-border Cooperation Programme  
Italy Slovenia 2014-2020

**EX ANTE EVALUATION**

*Synthesis*

**Draft**

**Venice, 29 September 2014**



The ex ante evaluation, entrusted to the Temporary Association of Companies Greta Associati - MK Projekt d.o.o., has supported the process of defining and building the strategy of the INTERREG V Italy Slovenia 2014-2020 Programme. The approach followed by the independent evaluator meets the indications referred to in Article 55 of the Common Provisions Regulation (CPR)<sup>1</sup> and the guidelines issued by the European Commission<sup>2</sup>. It also takes into account the indications given in the “Terms of Reference. Ex Ante Evaluation for the 2014-2020 period” document elaborated by INTERACT.

In accordance with the above-mentioned references, the ex-ante evaluation activities are summarized as the evaluation of the following key components: the programme strategy; indicators, monitoring and evaluation; consistency of financial allocations; contribution to Europe 2020 strategy and Strategic Environmental Assessment (in brackets and in italics, the reference to the paragraph of the Regulation(EU) no 1303/2013, art. 55, concerning the contents of the ex ante evaluation).

The analysis of the programme strategy was conducted in compliance with the requirements expressed by the European Commission evaluation guidelines in relation to the **first key component**. The following issues have been analysed: the consistency of programme objectives; the internal and external coherence of the strategy; the proposed logical framework; the integration of horizontal principles.

#### Consistency of programme objectives (*point a*)

The analysis of the consistency of programme objectives may be divided into two mutually related phases: the examination of the relevance of the programme challenges and needs and the monitoring of the relevance with which they have been translated into specific objectives. The challenges and needs identified by the programme for the cooperation area are extremely detailed and generally aligned with the relevant strategic documents considered (Europe 2020 Strategy; the Common Strategic Framework; Italian and Slovenian Partnership Agreements; Reform National Plans; Recommendations of the Council). A single element of mismatch is detected with reference to the issue of social inclusion and that of the competences which, though treated in the programme characterization, are not emphasized by the identified challenges and needs; considering the limited budget of the programme and the consequent reduced ability to take action on such far-reaching issues, it seems appropriate to consider them as cross-cutting issues within the programme objectives. With regard to the specific objectives, they interpret the programme area challenges and needs and, in turn, they show a good correspondence with the expected results of the Italian and Slovenian Partnership Agreements.

#### Internal and external coherence (*points b, c*)

The specific objectives of the programme are, in brief, the intervention logic of the strategy over the programme area. They arise directly from the analysis of the challenges and needs, which are in turn connected to the scenario drawn from the socio-economic analysis and the related SWOT analysis. Moreover, they take into account the previous experiences and the results of the participation process that has characterized the process of development of the programme.

In terms of internal coherence, the specific objectives seem to be clearly delineated and adequate with respect to the challenges and requirements to which they are connected; the types of actions associated to each specific

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<sup>1</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, the Cohesion Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006

<sup>2</sup> European Commission, Guidance document on ex ante evaluation, January 2013

objective are consistent and relevant to the purposes. The set of objectives is characterized by consequent logic, thematic coherence, synergy, absence of overlap or inconsistencies; and it is open to the development of potential synergies and complementarities cutting across the different axes.

The analysis of external coherence was assessed by correlating the programme strategy with EUSALP and EUSAIR regional macro-strategies (both expressly mentioned in the strategy of the programme), the Strategy for the Danube Region<sup>3</sup>, the programmes Horizon 2020, LIFE +, Erasmus +, Connecting Europe Facility, Creative Europe with regard to the communitarian level. With reference to national / regional level the evaluator has considered the strategy of development 2014-2020 for Slovenia, the Slovenian and Veneto Region smart specialization strategy (Friuli Venezia Giulia Region's is still being drafted), the Unitary Regional Strategy of the Veneto Region and the Strategic Plan of Friuli Venezia Giulia Region. The programme addresses the aspect of the relationship with other programmes in Section 6. In this regard, it is suggested to integrate the contents with the proposal of a methodology for the effective integration between different funds and programmes, which makes the application and implementation of these actions more explicit.

With regard to the macro-regional strategies it is proposed to verify the ways in which synergistic effects with the programme actions / projects can be generated.

#### Logical framework (point f)

The assessment of the intervention logic of the programme strategy was based on the analysis of the correlation between the investment priorities selected, the connected expected results and outputs programmed (ie, the types of action identified). The analysis shows that, in the aggregate, the programme logic appears well built and verifiable also from the point of view of the causal links between the fore-mentioned elements, related to each other. The set of proposed illustrative actions is broad, diverse and consistent with the results for the different investment priorities.

#### Horizontal principles (points l, m)

The issue of sustainable development has been addressed from the stage of socio-economic analysis, SWOT analysis and identification of challenges and needs that are traced back to the three segments of Europe 2020, including sustainable growth. Two axes (2 and 3) are directly connected to environmental and sustainability issues, but in an indirect way also the actions forecasted under the remaining two axes may provide a positive contribution. In this regard it should be noted that the strategic environmental assessment procedure of the programme, aimed at ensuring the proper integration of environmental issues into the strategy and their monitoring, is under way.

With reference to the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, the analysis of the characteristics of the programme area and its SWOT identify and report potentially more vulnerable groups in the cooperation area, such as the elderly, N.E.E.T.<sup>4</sup>, unemployed, women and minorities. Although these categories and, in general, the issue of social inclusion cannot find a direct correspondence in the challenges and needs, and thus in the specific objectives of the programme, they, along with the disabled, are included in Section 8, which pays particular attention, in the implementation phase, towards these aspects crosswise.

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<sup>3</sup> The strategy has been considered, though it includes only Slovenia.

<sup>4</sup> Not in education, employment or Training.

The **second key component** of the ex-ante evaluation has provided for the analysis of the set of proposed indicators, the provisions for the monitoring and management of the program (including facilities) and evaluation. *(points e, g, i, n, j)*

As for the set of indicators, the evaluator has directed the determination of output and result indicators, formulating precise methodological suggestions. In particular, a methodology for the baseline and target values determination and for the selection of indicators sources have been proposed. Overall, the ex-ante evaluation has verified the significance, relevance and clarity of the proposed indicators and their measurability. In general, the result and output indicators are consistent with the programme specific objectives and expected results; in some cases problems of definition have been reported and suggestions on the methodology for the baseline and target values determination have been given.

We have analyzed the suitability of the monitoring programme procedures, the characteristics of the monitoring system and the compliance of the monitoring system with the considered requirements and purposes.

The management and control structures of the programme have been properly identified, their tasks have been defined in accordance with the communitarian regulations. The adequacy of human resources and of administrative capacity to manage the programme have been verified, as well as the measures to reduce the administrative burden on beneficiaries.

The **third component** of the evaluation analyzed the consistency of financial allocations *(point c)*.

The evaluator has verified the consistency of financial allocations relative to the weight of the challenges and needs identified in the SWOT analysis and subsequently transposed into the system of the specific objectives and actions of the programme.

The **fourth component** of the ex ante evaluation refers to the estimation of the actual contribution that the strategy of the programme is capable of making to Europe 2020 Strategy.

The socio-economic analysis has been formulated starting from the priorities of Europe 2020; for strategic area (smart, sustainable and inclusive growth) a specific SWOT analysis has been prepared, with the identification challenges and needs for the cooperation area. The programme strategy develops themes aligned with Europe 2020 and, in particular, with smart growth (Priority 1 “Promoting innovation capacities for a more competitive area”), and sustainable growth (Axis 2 “Cooperation for low-carbon strategies” and Axis 3 “Protecting and promoting natural and cultural resources”). The programme capability to contribute to the achievement of targets set at Member State level is obviously limited. Both due to the limited financial resources of the programme, and to specific choices to delegate the more challenging objectives to the mainstreaming programmes. The program, therefore, will accompany the regional and national programmes (ERDF and ESF) in pursuit of Europe 2020 objectives, but to date the net effect cannot be estimated.

The last chapter of the ex ante evaluation presents the programme Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) state of art. The SEA process of has been initiated in accordance with national rules. Scoping has been initiated and consultation with experts in the environmental field is under way.