

Interreg



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Co-funded by
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Italia - Malta

Public Notice 1/2023 for submission of cooperation projects falling within all specific objectives of INTERREG VI – A Italia Malta programme

Approved by the Monitoring Committee on 24/11/2023

SOMMARIO

Art. 1 – Legal basis.....	3
Art. 2 – Definition.....	4
Art. 3 – Objectives and topics	6
Art. 4 – Programme’s addressed areas.....	24
Art. 5 – Financial allocation	24
Art. 6 – Characteristics of cooperation projects.....	25
Art. 7 - Characteristics of the partnership.....	26
Art. 8 – Legal status of the eligible beneficiaries	27
Art. 9 – Eligibility of expenses	28
Art. 10 – State aid	31
Art. 11 – Selection criteria	32
Art. 12 – Selection procedure.....	33
Art. 13 – Documentation and submission of the project proposal.....	34
Art. 14 – Protection of personal data and information on their treatment.....	35
Art. 15 – Contacts	36
Art. 16 – Competent jurisdiction	37
Art. 17 – Applicable rules and reference	37
Art. 18 – Annexes	37

Art. 1 – Legal basis

- 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;
- 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;
- 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
- Commission Regulation (EU) 2021/1237 of 23 July 2021 amending Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty;
- Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 240/2014 of 7 January 2014 on the European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds;
- Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013 of 18 December 2013 on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid;
- Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC;
- Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/75 of 17 January 2022 setting out the list of Interreg programme areas to receive support from the European Regional Development Fund and external financing instruments of the Union, broken down by strand and Interreg programme under the European territorial cooperation goal;
- Commission Implementing Decision C(2022) 9624 of 13.12.2022 approving the cooperation programme “(Interreg VI-A) Italy-Malta” for support from the European Regional Development Fund under the European territorial cooperation goal (Interreg) in Italy and Malta with a financial allocation of €57.604.032 (ERDF + National contribution) of which €4.393.486,25 relating to the resources allocated to the technical assistance of the programme;
- Resolution n. 170 of 26 April 2023 of the Sicilian Regional Government adopting the INTERREG VI-A Italia-Malta, approved with Commission Implementing Decision C(2022) 9624 of 13.12.2022
- Letter dated 30/06/2023 (ref. n. 8980) of the Managing Authority submitting to the Audit Authority the first version of the “Description of the functions and procedures in place for the Managing Authority” pursuant to article 69(11) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021;
- Resolution n. 78 of 22/12/2021 which establishes for European territorial cooperation programmes of which the Italian Republic is part of that national co-financing is established at a maximum of 24 percent of total public expenditure (community share plus national public co-financing);
- Law n. 241/1990 laying down the general rules on administrative procedure, published in the Official Journal of 18 August 1990 n. 192, coordinated and last updated with Legislative Decree 16 June 2017, n. 104
- Legislative Decree 31 March 2023, n. 36 which establishes the public contracts code and implementing article 1 of law 21 June 2022, n. 78, containing delegation to the Government regarding public contracts

Art. 2 – Definition

AA	Audit Authority
AF	Application Form
Aid	Any measure that meets all the criteria set out in Article 107(1) of the Treaty;
Aid scheme	means any act on the basis of which, without further implementing measures being required, individual aid awards may be made to undertakings defined within the act in a general and abstract manner and any act on the basis of which aid which is not linked to a specific project may be granted to one or several undertakings for an indefinite period of time and/or for an indefinite amount;
CP	Contact Point
CP	Co-operation Programme
EC	European Commission
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European territorial co-operation
EU	European Union
EUSAIR	Strategy as defined in a Communication from the European Commission (COM(2014) 357 final), accompanied by an Action Plan (SWD(2014) 190 final) which presents the objectives and concrete pillars and topics of the Adriatic-Ionian Strategy. EUSAIR Strategy aims at creating synergies and fostering coordination among all territories in the Adriatic-Ionian Region. EUSAIR focuses on areas of mutual interest with high relevance for the Adriatic-Ionian countries and built on four thematic pillars: (1) Blue growth; (2) Connecting the region (transport and energy networks); (3) Environmental quality; (4) Sustainable tourism. https://maritime-spatial-planning.ec.europa.eu/practices/eu-strategy-adriatic-and-ionian-region-eusair#:~:text=EUSAIR%20focuses%20on%20areas%20of,%3B%20(4)%20Sustainable%20tourism.
IAID	Internal Audit and Investigations Department
ICEP	Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning
IGRUE	Ispettore Generale per I Rapporti con l'Unione Europea
JS	Joint Secretariat
LP	Lead Partner
MA	Managing Authority
MC	Monitoring Committee
MFIN	Ministry for Finance
MSMEs	Micro, small and medium enterprises
MNCA	Maltese National Coordination Authority
NC	National Contribution
New and innovative technologies	New and untested technologies compared to the state of the art in the relevant sector, which entail a risk of technological or industrial failure and do not consist of optimization or upgrading of an existing technology;
Organisation for Research and dissemination of knowledge	An entity (e.g. universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented real or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (established under private or public law) or source of financing, the main purpose of which is to carry out independent fundamental research activities, industrial research or experimental development or to ensure the broad dissemination of the results of these activities through the teaching,

	publication or transfer of knowledge. If this entity also carries out economic activities, the financing, costs and revenues of these economic activities must be accounted for separately. Enterprises that are able to exercise decisive influence on this entity, for example as shareholders or partners, cannot enjoy any preferential access to the results generated;
PA	Partnership Agreement
PP	Project Partner
R&D	Research and Development
RIS3	Malta's Research and Innovation Strategy
SI	System Information
Small and medium-sized enterprises or SMEs	Enterprises which meet the criteria set out in Annex I of Reg. 651/2014
TRL	Technology Readiness Level
SMEs	Small and medium sized enterprises: any entity engaged in an economic activity, regardless of its legal status (Reg. No. 651/2014, Annex I)
SO	Specific Objective
SRI3	Strategia Regionale dell'Innovazione per la specializzazione intelligente
VAT	Value Added Tax
WestMED	Initiative https://westmed-initiative.ec.europa.eu/

Art. 3 – Objectives and topics

The Public Notice 01/2023 is aimed at acquiring timely, concrete and feasible project proposals based on the specific objectives linked to the 4 Programme's priorities listed hereunder:

Programme's Priorities	Programme's Specific Objectives
1 – A smarter area of cooperation to promote research and innovation and the development of skills for smart specialisation	1.1 – Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies in the cross-border area (RSO1.1) 1.2 - Develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship in the cross-border area (RSO1.4)
2 - A resilient cooperation area, which strengthens the protection and preservation of nature also through the efficient use of resources	2.1 – Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and resilience in the cross-border area (RSO2.4) 2.2 - Promoting the transition to a circular economy in the cross-border area (RSO2.6) 2.3 - Enhancing the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, green infrastructure and reducing pollution in the cross-border area (RSO2.7)
3 - An area of efficient cooperation in social capital through the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development	3.1 - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in the cross-border area in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation (RSO4.6)
4 - An area of cooperation with better governance between Italy and Malta	4.1 - Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation in the cross-border area (ISO6.4)

Each project proposal will meet only one specific Objective of the INTERREG VI-A Italia Malta Programme referred to in the table above and contribute to the achievement of **at least one output indicator** relating to the specific Objective chosen.

The intervention logic of the initiatives that will be financed is described hereunder. Details of each output indicator meaning is further provided.

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

Specific Objective 1.1 - Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies in the cross-border area (RSO1.1)

With reference to research and innovation, the Programme aims to promote the growth and competitiveness of micro enterprises and SMEs in the area and to promote technology transfer in the thematic areas as described in the respective Smart Specialisation Strategy (SRI3/RIS3) documents such as green and blue economy, circular economy, health and quality of life etc. but also cultural and creative industry, social enterprises etc. that ensures forms of development and sustainable growth.

In order to face this challenge, the Programme has identified a non-exhaustive list of indicative types of projects that are expected to contribute to achieving the two different results indicators presented in the following table.

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
Enhanced competitiveness of the cross-border area through the adoption of joint solutions developed by organizations which cooperate more strongly	Promotion of collaborative research (partnerships between companies and research centres)	<p>Creation and testing of technological solutions in sectors or production chains in which a need for joint innovation emerges;</p> <p>Experimentation of research interventions aimed at reducing climate-changing emissions (e.g: production of more environmentally friendly fuels, pilot projects of energy self-sufficiency in conditions of insularity, etc);</p> <p>Support in the evolution of the most promising research projects, based on TRLs, into marketable products</p>	<p>RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</p> <p>RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions</p>	<p>RCR104 - Solutions taken up or up scaled by organisations</p> <p>RCR84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</p>	<p>Local, regional, national authorities and other public institutions and agencies</p> <p>Universities and research centres</p> <p>Enterprises, including micro and SMEs</p> <p>Business support organisations</p>
	Provision of advisory and innovation support	Knowledge transfer in order to promote the dissemination of innovative solutions and services for a better satisfaction of	RCO01 - Enterprises supported		

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
	services	<p>the economic, social and environmental needs of the area;</p> <p>Acquisition of specialized assistance and "quick impact" services (also in the form of vouchers) by MSMEs for the introduction of innovations and eco-innovations based on a technological approach (e.g. digital transition, technology transfer, etc.)¹;</p> <p>Promotion of non-tech business innovations (e.g. scouting to support innovative business ideas, (re)-organization of the company system, positioning on the markets and access to credit, etc.)</p>	<p>RCO04 - Enterprises with non-financial support</p> <p>RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</p> <p>RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions</p>		

Where applicable, these types of projects are integrated and contribute to the strategies for sea basins with particular reference to the WestMED initiative and to what the latter carries out through the Technical Group within the "green and sustainable shipping" area.

Where applicable, these types of projects contribute to Pillar 1 of the EUSAIR strategy, in particular for blue technologies in SMEs and R&D activities for SMEs, but also to Pillar 4, new services for tourism SMEs through the promotion of cultural heritage.

Specific Objective 1.2 - Develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship in the cross-border area (RSO1.4)

¹ The nominal value of specialized assistance and "quick impact" services (including in the form of vouchers) may not have a budget exceeding the amount of € 20,000 per each micro and SME and will be processed in accordance with Article 20bis of COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) 2021/1237 of July 23, 2021.

With reference to research and innovation, the Programme aims also to promote specific actions concentrated in the areas of smart specialization in Sicily and Malta as described in the respective Smart Specialisation Strategy (SRI3/RIS3) documents. This should contribute to the enlargement of the base of operators who are able to grasp and further develop the potential deriving from advanced technologies in the sectors of mutual interest, such as green and blue economy, circular economy, health and quality of life etc. but also cultural and creative industry, social enterprises etc and to improve skills and their circulation across borders.

In order to face this challenge, the Programme has identified a non-exhaustive list of indicative types of projects that are expected to contribute to achieving the two different results indicators presented in the following table.

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
Improved qualification of human capital of the cross-border area through the adoption of joint solutions developed by organizations which cooperate more strongly	Qualification and mobility of human capital	<p>Developing skills for the new generations of entrepreneurs, managers, researchers, technicians and operators in the sectors of mutual interest such as green and blue economy, circular economy, health and quality of life etc but also cultural and creative industry, social enterprises etc;</p> <p>Cooperation with international and Mediterranean networks of knowledge, skills and abilities</p>	<p>RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</p> <p>RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions</p>	<p>RCR104 - Solutions taken up or up scaled by organisations</p> <p>RCR84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</p>	<p>Local, regional, national authorities and other public institutions and agencies</p> <p>Universities and research centres</p> <p>Higher Technical Institutes</p> <p>Educational institutions of all levels</p> <p>Enterprises, including MSMEs</p> <p>Business support organisations</p>

Where applicable, these types of projects contribute to the development of the so-called "blue skills" in line with the WestMED initiative to respond to the common challenges of blue growth related mainly to climate change and sustainability, through cooperation with international and Mediterranean networks of knowledge, skills and abilities.

Where applicable, these types of projects contribute to Pillar 1 of the EUSAIR strategy with particular reference to the issue of upskilling and capacity in the blue economy sector and to Pillar 4 with regard to increasing skills in the tourism sector.

Furthermore, in the frame of this specific objective projects are expected to contribute to the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, with particular reference to the pursuit of equality of gender, age, ethnicity, health conditions equality and non-discrimination, as well as accessibility.

PRIORITY: 2 - A resilient cooperation area, which strengthens the protection and preservation of nature also through the efficient use of resource

Specific Objective 2.1 - Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and resilience in the cross-border area (RSO2.4)

With reference to climate change adaptation the Programme aims to promote actions aimed at strengthening risk prevention measures and responsiveness to adverse events with the aim of increasing the resilience of ecosystems and populations subject to natural and anthropogenic risks present in the cooperation area.

In order to face this challenge, the Programme has identified a non-exhaustive list of indicative types of projects that are expected to contribute to achieving the two different results indicators presented in the following table.

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
Increased resilience of ecosystems and cross-border populations subject to natural and anthropogenic risks	Integration, development, and research of multi-risk prevention processes	Development and implementation of databases, forecasting models in the climatic, meteorological, geomorphological, hydrological, seismic fields; Implementation of territorial analysis for risk studies and mitigation models; Local plans for adaptation to the consequences of climate change, including water scarcity and droughts, 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; Capacity building actions for institutional and economic actors in the cross-border	RCO83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions	RCR104 - Solutions taken up or up scaled by organisations RCR84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion	Local, regional, national authorities and other public institutions and agencies; Universities and research centres Civil protection corps and emergency services; Educational institutions of all levels Civil society organisations. Associations active in the environmental sectors

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
		area.			
	Implementation of monitoring and alert systems	<p>Strengthening the knowledge system and the meteorological, geomorphological, hydrological, seismic, volcanic and environmental monitoring system;</p> <p>Strengthening of coastal management capacity and the prevention of related risks also through the use of technological systems installed cross-border;</p> <p>Prototyping of efficient solutions for the management of water resources in a climate change scenario;</p> <p>Strengthening and interoperability of environmental and safety monitoring systems between the two islands;</p> <p>Development of joint models, tools and infrastructures for the monitoring, forecasting and management of risks (coastal erosion, fires, floods, navigation risks).</p>			

These types of projects are coherent with the priority areas of WestMED initiative regarding the achievement of a safer and more protected maritime space (Goal 1) by pursuing both the cooperation of coast guard functions (Priority 1) and maritime safety and response to marine pollution (Priority 2)

Where applicable, these types of projects contribute to Pillar 3 of the EUSAIR strategy especially in relation to increased readiness to deal with artificial risks.

Specific Objective 2.2 - Promoting the transition to a circular economy in the cross-border area (RSO2.6)

With reference to the transition to a circular economy, the Programme aims to encourage the participation of actors along the waste management, recovery and reuse chains that encourage the spread of virtuous practices and support the structural policies of the respective Member States, in line with the "Green Deal"² and with the second "EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy"³.

In order to face this challenge, the Programme has identified a non-exhaustive list of indicative type of projects that are expected to contribute to achieving the result indicator presented in the following table.

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
Increased awareness of the population towards more sustainable and environmentally friendly consumption models	Interventions for the diffusion of the circular economy	<p>Multi-level promotion and awareness-raising interventions in the cross-border target sectors (urban and marine litter, textiles, agri-food, personal protection linked to COVID-19 equipment) aimed at the main actors along the value chain (companies, public bodies, consumers / citizens);</p> <p>Development of new production/consumption models based on a circular approach that can also give rise to new business opportunities;</p> <p>Exchange of experiences and pilot actions for the adoption of local regulations and / or other regulatory measures aimed at implementing the circular economy also through forms of incentive;</p> <p>Pilot interventions for the promotion of innovative</p>	<p>RCO01 - Enterprises supported (of which: micro, small, medium, large)</p> <p>RCO04 - Enterprises with non-financial support</p> <p>RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</p>	RCR104 - Solutions taken up or up scaled by organisations	<p>Local, regional, national authorities and other public institutions and agencies;</p> <p>Universities and research centers;</p> <p>Enterprises, including MSMEs;</p> <p>Business support organisations;</p> <p>Chambers of commerce, clusters, incubators, living labs;</p> <p>Educational institutions of all levels</p>

²Further information at the following official link: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

³ Further information at the following official link: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0098>

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
		systems for the management, recovery and reuse of organic and non-organic solid waste and its subsequent reintegration into the production cycle in economic chains of common interest (ecodesign)	RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions		Civil society organisations; Associations active in the environmental sectors; Consumer associations.

Where applicable, these types of projects are coherent with stakeholders' experience and requirements of the WestMED initiative focusing on circular bioeconomy with a focus on islands and small island environments.

Specific Objective 2.3 - Enhancing the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, green infrastructure and reducing pollution in the cross-border area (RSO2.7)

With reference to the protection and preservation of nature, the Programme aims at mitigating the impact of climate change on biodiversity through non-structural actions that complement and integrate possible cooperation actions and the structural measures adopted by Sicily and Malta within their respective mainstream programmes, in line with the respective Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAFs).

The interventions will be concentrated in the Protected Areas, in the terrestrial and marine nature reserves, in the Parks, in the sites of the Natura 2000 network and in the ecological connection corridors. The nature of the interventions includes the so-called nature-based and marine-based solutions that provide a wide spectrum of ecosystem services, to integrate the needs of risk mitigation with the protection and recovery of ecosystems and biodiversity.

More specifically, alternative solutions will be promoted to conserve, sustainably manage and preserve the functionality of natural ecosystems or restore it in human-altered ecosystems.

This type of investment will take into due consideration the conservation objectives and measures to avoid any possible degradation of natural habitats and species as well as the disturbance of the species for which the areas have been designated as required by the respective national regulations emanating from EU directives applicable to protected areas, terrestrial and marine nature reserves, parks, sites of the Natura 2000 network.

In this regard, the investments planned for the improvement of access conditions respect the principles of strict protection and integrity of these natural habitats and species and plan mitigation actions to avoid any possible deterioration or disturbance (eg. protection of posidonia, nesting of turtles, etc.).

In order to face this challenge, the Programme has identified a non-exhaustive list of indicative type of projects that are expected to contribute to achieving the two different results indicators presented in the following table.

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
Mitigated impact of climate change on biodiversity and ecosystems	Interventions for the monitoring and control of the marine and coastal environment	<p>Development and implementation of technologies aimed at minimizing the risks to which the marine and coastal ecosystems of the cross-border area are exposed and which make them vulnerable;</p> <p>Solutions that allow the mapping of degraded ecosystems and target habitats as well as species threatened by the presence of IAS;</p> <p>Tools to monitor the distribution of plastic and microplastics (marine litter);</p> <p>Pilot solutions for the reduction of pollutants in port areas (CO₂, pollutants, noise, etc.);</p> <p>Small green and blue infrastructure for the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems to mitigate the effects of climate change and extreme events and to improve the quality of life in the cross-border area.</p>	<p>RCO83 - Strategies and action plans developed jointly</p> <p>RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</p> <p>RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions</p>	<p>RCR79 - Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations</p> <p>RCR104 - Solutions taken up or upscaled by organisations</p>	<p>Local, regional, national authorities and other public institutions and agencies;</p> <p>Universities and research centres;</p> <p>Managing bodies of sites, reserves, parks, protected areas;</p> <p>Enterprises, including MSMEs;</p> <p>Business support organisations;</p> <p>Civil society organisations;</p> <p>Associations active in the environmental sectors.</p>
	Interventions to preserve biodiversity and marine and terrestrial areas of naturalistic value	Interventions aimed at creating, restoring and maintaining natural areas and at mitigating the fragmentation of marine and coastal cross-border ecosystems;			

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
		<p>Actions to fight the introduction, naturalization and spread of invasive alien species that cause damage to biodiversity in Sicily and Malta;</p> <p>Actions for the conservation of existing living resources;</p> <p>Actions to protect threatened species or those at risk of extinction ;</p> <p>Pilot actions for the restoration of existing ecosystems;</p> <p>Actions to support the creation of ecological corridors that prevent genetic isolation, allow the migration of species, preserve and strengthen the integrity of ecosystems.</p>			
	Actions for the integrated management of parks and marine protected areas	<p>Interventions for the valorisation of the existing natural marine and coastal cross-border heritage also through the realization of small interventions that improve the conditions of access to preserve their integrity;</p> <p>Pilot actions for the construction of small infrastructures of a material and immaterial</p>			

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
		<p>nature for the improvement of the usability of the assets of the area, according to an integrated and sustainable approach;</p> <p>Interventions for the material accessibility of the cultural and natural offer such as underwater paths, sustainable coastal and underwater paths, online tools for the dissemination of knowledge, also for mobile applications;</p> <p>Small green and blue infrastructures to safeguard marine ecosystems to fight the effects of climate change and extreme events and to improve the quality of life in the cross-border area.</p>			
	Definition of common strategies and action plans	System actions oriented towards blue growth in synergy with the other initiatives implemented (WESTMED Initiative, INTERREG NEXT Italia Tunisia and INTERREG NEXT MED, LIFE etc.)			

These types of projects are coherent with stakeholders' experience and requirements of the WestMED initiative focusing on the conservation and awareness of environmental and cultural heritage.

Where applicable, these types of projects contribute to Pillar 3 of the EUSAIR strategy especially in relation to the protection of natural habitats, ecosystems and maritime protected areas and the management of coastal areas and maritime space.

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

Specific Objective 3.1 - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in the cross-border area in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation (RSO4.6)

With reference to culture and sustainable tourism, the Programme aims to enhance the theme of "usability for all" of cultural and natural heritage assets by experimenting with solutions that allow the regeneration of spaces and the revitalization of places of culture to promote initiatives in the cultural and creative field with the aim of inclusion and economic development.

In order to face this challenge, the Programme has identified a non-exhaustive list of indicative type of projects that are expected to contribute to achieving the two different results indicators presented in the following table.

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
Improved social and economic cohesion through tourism and culture	Revitalization and promotion of places of culture and other spaces for cultural and social purposes	<p>Actions aimed at increasing the level of attractiveness of the tourism and cultural system through the modernisation of tangible and intangible infrastructures of the historical, cultural and environmental heritage;</p> <p>Actions aimed at improving the digital capacity of use and physical and cognitive accessibility;</p> <p>Actions to develop an inclusive cultural heritage and a sector of the creative industry, with inclusive spaces, technologies, learning and job opportunities;</p> <p>Actions to increase the cultural participation of citizens by borrowing the principles of the</p>	<p>RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</p> <p>RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions</p>	<p>RCR104 - Solutions taken up or upscaled by organisations</p> <p>RCR84 - Organisations cooperating across borders after project completion</p>	<p>Local, regional, national authorities and other public institutions and agencies</p> <p>Universities and research centres</p> <p>Managing bodies of sites, reserves, parks, protected areas</p> <p>Enterprises, including MSMEs</p> <p>Business support organisations</p> <p>Civil society organisations</p> <p>Associations active in the environmental sectors, the</p>

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
		<p>new European Bauhaus⁴ through multidisciplinary and high-value actions that bring sustainability, aesthetics and inclusiveness to the local population;</p> <p>Interventions aimed at jointly developing digital brands and tools around territorial and natural characteristics, local products and crafts, etc;</p> <p>Interventions aimed at strengthening, orienting and making homogeneous the entire value chain of cross-border tourism with respect to the sustainability objectives (Goals Agenda 2030)⁵;</p> <p>Development of innovative solutions and new business models in culture and tourism ensuring social inclusion;</p> <p>Actions aimed at diversification, requalification, development of new sustainable and responsible tourism products oriented to new market niches also through</p>			<p>enhancement of natural and cultural heritage</p> <p>Bodies and/or associations promoting the active participation of disadvantaged subjects</p> <p>Educational institutions of all levels</p>

⁴ Further information at the following official link: https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/index_en

⁵ Further information at the following official link: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Beneficiaries
		the involvement of the population (community-based tourism).			

These types of projects are coherent with stakeholders' experience and requirements of the WestMED initiative also focusing on the conservation and awareness of environmental and cultural heritage as well as the integrated tourism initiatives towards common paths and experiences. In addition, thanks to the so-called "Accelerator on Sustainable Tourism"⁶ the goal is to increase networking between economic operators in a common tourism system, focused on marine ecotourism and nature, and accelerate the adoption of innovative business models and technologies.

Where applicable, these types of projects contribute to Pillar 4 of the EUSAIR strategy which focuses on the improvement of the capacity building in the tourism sector, in particular with flagship projects dedicated to skills and thematic pathways.

Furthermore, in the frame of this specific objective projects are expected to contribute to the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, with particular reference to the pursuit of equality of gender, age, ethnicity, health conditions equality and non-discrimination, as well as accessibility.

⁶ Further information at the following official link: https://eisma.ec.europa.eu/news/cosme-seven-years-supporting-growth-eu-tourism-2021-05-31_en

PRIORITY 4 – An area of cooperation with better governance between Italy and Malta

Specific Objective 4.1 - Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation in the cross-border area (ISO6.4)

With reference to the governance of the cross-border area, 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 the administrative and bureaucratic legal obstacles.

In order to face this challenge, the Programme has identified a non-exhaustive list of indicative type of projects that are expected to contribute to achieving the result presented in the following table.

Expected results	Types of actions	Types of projects	Output indicators	Results indicators	Eligible Beneficiaries
Improved cross-border governance	Capitalization, mainstreaming and administrative capacity	<p>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;</p> <p>Actions dedicated to the 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;</p> <p>Initiatives to capitalise on the results achieved and to develop joint monitoring systems for the detection of progress in the cross-border area with regard to the challenges of the ecological transition (e.g. in terms of circular economy), mitigation of the effects of climate change and prevention of disaster risks.</p>	<p>RCO81 - Participations in joint actions across borders</p> <p>RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects</p> <p>RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions</p>	RCR104 - Solutions taken up or upscaled by organisations	<p>Public institutions</p> <p>Organization for education and trainings</p> <p>Organizations and associations</p> <p>Enterprises, including MSMEs</p>

The following table refers to the programme strategy

Overall, the programme has identified 7 output indicators: RCO01, RCO04, RCO81, RCO83, RCO84, RCO87, RCO116. Each project will have to identify **at least one output indicator** among those envisaged and a brief description of the meaning is provided in order to address the partnership on the correct type of projects that it intends to implement.

Output indicators	Definition of the indicators
RCO01 – Supported enterprises (of which: micro, small, medium, large)	The indicator counts all enterprises that receive monetary or in-kind support. The enterprise is the smallest combination of legal units that constitute an organisational unit producing goods and services, and which benefits from a certain degree of autonomy in decision-making, especially for the allocation of its current resources. An enterprise carries out one or more activities at one or more locations. An enterprise may be a sole legal unit. Legal units include legal persons whose existence is recognised by law independently of the individuals or institutions which may own them or are members of them. For the purpose of this indicator, enterprises are profit-oriented organisations that produce goods and services to satisfy market needs. For Policy Objective 4 (Social Europe Europe closer to its citizens), the indicator includes also social enterprises defined as follows: “a social enterprise is an operator in the social economy whose main objective is to have a social impact rather than make a profit for their owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services for the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion and uses its profits primarily to achieve social objectives”.
RCO04 - Enterprises with non-financial support	<p>The indicator counts enterprises that receive non-financial support in a structured manner such as, for example, SMEs receiving incubator services. The support provided needs to be documented. One-off interactions (ex: phone calls for information requests) are not included.</p> <p>Examples of non-financial support include services such as (non-exclusive list): advisory services (consulting assistance and training for the exchange of knowledge and experience etc) or support services (provision of office space, websites, data banks, libraries, market research, handbooks, documents and working models etc).</p>
RCO81 - Participation in joint actions across borders	The indicator counts the number of participations in joint actions across borders implemented in the supported projects. Joint actions across borders could include, for instance, exchange activities or exchange visits organized with partners across borders. Participations (i.e. number of persons attending a joint action across borders - e.g. citizens, volunteers, students, pupils, public officials, etc.) are counted for each joint action organised on the basis of attendance lists or other relevant means of quantification. A joint action is considered as the action organised with the involvement of organizations from both participating countries.
RCO83 - Strategies and action plans jointly developed	The indicator counts the number of joint strategies or action plans developed by supported projects. A jointly developed strategy aims at establishing a targeted way to achieve a goal-oriented process in a specific domain. An action plan translates an existing jointly developed strategy into actions. Jointly developed strategy or action plan implies the involvement of organizations from both participating countries.

Output indicators	Definition of the indicators
RCO84 - Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects	The indicator counts the pilot actions developed jointly and implemented by supported projects. The scope of a jointly developed pilot action could be to test procedures, new instruments, tools, experimentation or the transfer of practices. In order to be counted by this indicator the pilot action needs not only to be developed, but also implemented within the project and finalised by the end of the project. Jointly developed pilot action implies the involvement of organizations from both participating countries.
RCO116 - Jointly developed solutions	The indicator counts the number of jointly developed solutions from joint pilot actions implemented by supported projects. In order to be counted in the indicator, an identified solution should include indications of the actions needed for it to be taken up or to be upscaled. A jointly developed solution implies the involvement of organizations from both participating countries in the drafting and design process of the solution.

Art. 4 – Programme’s addressed areas

Pursuant to Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/75, the eligible area of the INTERREG VI-A Italy Malta Programme includes the following NUTS 3 statistical regions:

For Italy

Sicilia: Palermo, Trapani, Caltanissetta, Agrigento, Ragusa, Siracusa, Enna, Catania and Messina;

For Malta

Malta, Gozo and Comino;

An operation can be also carried out in only one of the two countries participating in the Programme, provided that its impact and benefits for the entire area addressed by the Programme are identified.

In duly justified cases, the Programme may finance the implementation of operations or part of operations even outside the eligible areas of the Programme, provided that it contributes to the achievement of its objectives. The selection of that operation shall require the explicit approval by the managing authority in the monitoring committee.

In the event that the operations, or part of operations (activities), are not of benefit to the area, they will be considered ineligible.

Art. 5 – Financial allocation

The total ERDF contribution available for this Public Notice, divided by specific objective as reported below, is **27.669.483 Euros** and takes into account the decisions taken by the Monitoring Committee during the meeting of 30 May 2023. The financial resources of each SOs is indicative. Thus, in the event that the financial allocation of an objective exceeds the eligible projects, the Monitoring Committee may decide to shift the “not allocated” financial resources to an objective where there are eligible projects in the ranking list that are not covered by the funds allocated to it. Hereunder the indicative amount allocated for each SOs:

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

- ✓ Specific Objective 1.1 - Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies in the cross-border area (RSO1.1) - € 6.020.880 (ERDF)
- ✓ Specific Objective 1.2 - Develop skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship in the cross-border area (RSO1.4) - € 3.386.745 (ERDF)

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

- ✓ Specific Objective 2.1 – Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and resilience in the cross-border area (RSO2.4) - € 5.693.985 (ERDF)
- ✓ Specific Objective 2.2 - Promoting the transition to a circular economy in the cross-border area (RSO2.6) - € 2.515.947 (ERDF)
- ✓ Specific Objective 2.3 - Enhancing the protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, green infrastructure and reducing pollution in the cross-border area (RSO2.7) - € 5.031.893 (ERDF)

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

- ✓ Specific Objective 3.1 - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in the cross-border area in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation (RSO4.6) - € 1.976.392 (ERDF)

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

- ✓ Specific Objective 4.1 - Enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation in the cross-border area (ISO6.4) - € 3.043.643 (ERDF)

The amounts shown above constitute the contribution of the European Union from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), equal to 80% of the INTERREG VI-A Italy Malta programme.

For Italian beneficiaries (public and private bodies as well as bodies governed by public law) the national contribution, equal to 20%, is ensured by the national Fondo di Rotazione, without prejudice to the rules on state aid.

For Maltese beneficiaries the national contribution, equal to 20%, is to be ensured through funds from the partner itself, that is own resources, or by other public body/ies, should this be so endorsed.

The financial resources (ERDF and NC) made available by this Public notice for the selection of co-operation projects, are provided exclusively on a reimbursement basis for expenses actually incurred by the beneficiaries and considered eligible, in accordance with the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 June 2021, by the competent bodies of the programme.

An advance payment corresponding to 50% of the ERDF for each partner within the approved project is envisaged. Further advance payment, corresponding to 30% of the budget, may be transferred to partners demonstrating to have fully spent and certified the previous advance payment.

The beneficiaries will receive advanced payment within approximately 3 months from the presentation of the request to the Managing Authority made by the lead partner on behalf of the other partners.

Therefore, without prejudice to the possibility of requesting an advance of resources, each beneficiary (Lead Partner and Partner) will have to ensure – after the approval of the project proposal – the necessary financial resources for the launch of project activities.

In case of State Aid, the advance payment eventually paid is subject to a bank guarantee and in line with the provisions of Art. 91, par. 5, lett. b) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 which establishes that “those advances do not exceed 40% of the total amount of the aid to be granted to a beneficiary for a given operation”.

Possible delays in the transfer of the advance payment by the Managing Authority cannot be used by the project beneficiaries (Lead Partner and Partners) as a justification for the delay and the missed achievement of expenditure targets, the objectives and the outputs as stipulated by the subsidy contract and the partnership agreement.

Art. 6 – Characteristics of cooperation projects

Each cooperation project must provide a package of actions (timely, concrete and feasible), logically and coherently connected to one another, in order to allow full achievement of the programme output indicators identified for each specific objective as indicated in Art. 3 of this public notice.

For each specific objective (1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 3.1 and 4.1) the provisions contained in Art 3 of this Public Notice must be respected, under penalty of inadmissibility of the proposal itself to the evaluation phase.

Each cooperation project will be made up of partner beneficiaries and a lead partner beneficiary; the latter will represent the whole partnership vis-à-vis the MA and other programme authorities.

The general objective of the co-operation project will have to contribute directly to the achievement of the specific objective of the chosen Priority, therefore the results of the project will have to be linked to the result indicators of the Programme. This mechanism of correlating the internal coherence of the project with the programme shall imply that the outputs foreseen by the project must be directly linked to the programme outputs.

In general, each cooperation project must ensure:

- 1) The coherence of the project with the programme strategy, the priority and the specific objective chosen;

- 2) The coherence of the project with national and regional policies and the measures taken to create synergies and avoid overlapping;
- 3) The cross-border dimension and character of the project with partners who share common needs and objectives;
- 4) The innovative nature of the projects, their concrete specialization and their impact in the medium to long term;
- 5) The coherence of the partnership, the relevance and competences of the partners in relation to the objectives of the project;
- 6) The relevance of the financial plan and the coherence of the budget with the objectives;
- 7) Visible, concrete and lasting results;
- 8) A maximum duration of 24 months for specific objectives 1.2, 2.2, 3.1 and 4.1 and 30 months for specific objectives 1.1, 2.1 and 2.3⁷;
- 9) An overall budget allocation referring to WP 1 up to a maximum of 20% of the overall project allocations;
- 10) An overall budget allocation referring to the cost category "Travel and accommodation costs" up to a maximum of 4% of the total budget provided in WP 1;

The financial size of the projects submitted in the framework of the Public Notice 01/2023 shall be in line with the minimum and maximum amounts specified in the following table:

Specific Objective	Minimum Amount (ERDF)	Maximum amount (ERDF)
1.1	800.000	2.000.000
1.2	500.000	2.000.000
2.1	800.000	2.500.000
2.2	300.000	1.500.000
2.3	800.000	2.500.000
3.1	300.000	800.000
4.1	100.000	500.000

Art. 7 - Characteristics of the partnership

The quality of a project is closely linked to the quality of the established partnership. A good partnership shall gather competent institutional abilities on the subjects dealt within the project, in order to reach the set targets.

The partnership is made up of at least one (1) partner from each Member State participating in the programme.

When drafting a project proposal, project partners must identify themselves as lead partner or partners.

⁷ In duly justified cases and for delays that are not under the responsibility of the partnership, the MC may authorize possible project extensions beyond the deadlines set above without increasing the financial allocations.

The lead partner shall assume responsibility for ensuring implementation of the entire project, ensure that expenditure presented by all partners has been paid in implementing the operation and corresponds to the activities agreed between all the partners, in accordance with the project approved and the commitment made with the Managing Authority.

Associated partners are eligible and must be included in the project proposal, without the obligation to fulfil any declaration or sign the partnership agreement.

The associated partners are involved in the activities envisaged by the project proposal without any specific project budget. Typically, they are stakeholders/takers with respect to the objectives of the project. More specifically, they are subjects interested in the purposes of the project or in the acquisition of the results as long as this does not conflict with the legislation relating to public procurement.

Therefore, a project partner cannot delegate the performance of the project activities, or some of its parts, to an associated partner.

Associated partners are not counted among the eligible beneficiaries listed in the Art. 3 of this Public Notice.

Art. 8 – Legal status of the eligible beneficiaries

Only and exclusively the subjects listed under the heading "Eligible beneficiaries" in the schedules referred to in Article 3 for each specific objective can participate as beneficiaries of the projects.

For the purposes of eligibility for this public notice for submission of cooperation projects, these subjects must possess a **legal status** among those listed below:

- Public entities:
 - “Contracting authorities” within the meaning of Article 2(1), Number 1 of Directive 2014/24/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council
- Bodies governed by public law pursuant to Article 2(1), Number 4 of Directive 2014/24/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council
- Private bodies provided they have a legal personality
- Third sector entities if included in the Italian National Register for Third Sector (Runts) and if registered with the Maltese [Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations](#) or relevant body.

The beneficiaries/partners must have registered office or branches or local operational unit or administrative competence in the eligible area of the Programme.

If necessary, partners can also be based in areas outside the two Member States, i.e. in EU Member States, third countries, or overseas countries and territories (hereinafter “OCT”). In this case, their role in the project must be explained with particular attention. These partners must be essential to achieve the project results. They must bring added value to the project that the Programme Area does not currently own. It should be kept in mind that in all cases the impact of the projects must fall on the Programme Area. For partners from EU Member States outside the Programme Area, special agreements are needed between the Managing Authority and the cited EU Member State.

When the operation involves one or more partners located in the territory of a Member State, third country, partner country or OCT which is not represented in the Monitoring Committee, the Managing Authority shall condition its explicit approval to the submission of a written acceptance by the concerned Member State, third country, partner country or OCT to reimburse any amounts unduly paid to these partners.

When the written acceptance cannot be obtained, the body implementing all or part of an operation outside the programme area shall obtain a guarantee from a bank or another financial institution for the corresponding amount of the funds granted.

The entities whose institutional mission or main activities within the project are predominantly linked to project coordination, management, communication activities or support to other entities cannot be involved as project partners but should be contracted by means of procurement procedures.

If the requirements set out in this paragraphs are not satisfied/fulfilled, this would entail the exclusion of the individual beneficiary from the project partnership.

Art. 9 – Eligibility of expenses

The eligibility of expenses is governed by Chapter V of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059. The eligible cost categories are listed below and refer to what is regulated in the Articles 37-44 of the aforementioned regulation.

- ✓ Staff costs
- ✓ Office and administrative costs
- ✓ Travel and accommodation costs
- ✓ External expertise and services costs
- ✓ Equipment costs
- ✓ Costs for infrastructure and works

Beneficiaries' expenses can be claimed on the basis of real costs or on the basis of a fixed rate.

Expenses claimed on the basis of "real costs" are reported through the presentation of all supporting documents for expenditure and payment, up to the amount claimed.

Expenses claimed on the basis of a "fixed rate" are calculated according to the percentages established by the regulatory framework (refer to Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, 2021/1059 and 2021/1058) and, during the reporting phase, the submission of supporting documents for expenditure and payment is not required although the beneficiary should retain such documentation.

External expertise and services costs include first level control for which it is recommended to allocate 4% of each beneficiary's budget.

The summary table below highlights the different reporting methods for the cost categories envisaged by this notice:

Cost categories	Type of costs	Claiming methods		
Staff costs	direct cost	Flat rate of 20% of the direct costs other than the direct staff costs of that operation (Art. 39 par. 3 lett c) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059)	or	<p>Real cost, up to a maximum of 40% of direct costs according to the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Full-time ✓ part-time, with a fixed percentage of time worked per month <u>or</u> with a flexible number of hours worked per month ✓ on an hourly basis <p>Staff costs may be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. reimbursed on the basis of the eligible costs actually incurred by a beneficiary and paid in implementing operations (Art. 53(1) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060), proven by the employment document and payslips 2. reimbursed on an hourly rate (Art. 55, par 2-4 of the Reg. (EU) 2021/1060) calculated: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. by dividing the latest documented annual gross employment costs by 1720 hours for persons working full time, or by a corresponding pro-rata of 1720 hours, for persons working part-time; <u>or</u> b. by dividing the latest documented monthly gross employment costs by the average monthly working time of the person concerned in accordance with applicable national rules referred to in the employment or work contract or appointment decision (both referred to as the employment document). 3. reimbursed on the basis of staff costs calculated as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. a fixed percentage of the gross employment costs, in line with a fixed percentage of time worked on the operation per month, with no obligation to establish a separate working time registration system (Art. 55, par. 5 of the Reg (EU) 2021/1060) <u>or</u> b. a flexible share of the gross employment cost, in line with a number of hours varying from one month to the other worked on the operation, based on a time registration system covering 100 % of the working time of the employee (Art. 39, par. 4, lett. b) of the Reg. (EU) 2021/1059) <p>Methods referred in 3a and 3b will apply to staff costs related to individuals who work</p>

Cost categories	Type of costs	Claiming methods		
				on part-time assignment on the operation
Office and administrative costs	indirect cost	<p>Flat rate corresponding to 15 % of eligible staff costs, (Art. 54, par. 1, lett b) of Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.</p> <p>NOTA BENE: Expenses corresponding to the elements included in the list of Art. 40 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 will not be considered eligible under other cost categories. The purchase of consumables falls within the definition of office and administrative costs when laboratory consumables are purchased whose single cost is less than €500.00:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - chemical and biological materials - reagents - pipettes, test tubes, syringes - laboratory glassware - other materials and goods that are no longer useful after their first use. <p>As a consequence, the elements listed above will also not be considered eligible if reported under other cost categories other than office and administrative costs.</p>		
Travel and accommodation costs	direct cost	Real cost		
External expertise and services costs	direct cost	Real cost		
Equipment costs	direct cost	Real cost		
Costs for infrastructure and works	direct cost	Real cost		

Each beneficiary will have to choose one of the staff cost reimbursement options when drafting the application form. The chosen reimbursement option will apply to the whole staff working on the project for the entire duration of the project.

Art. 10 – State aid

Public contributions under the Programme must comply with State aid rules in force at the time the public contribution is granted.

In line with Art. 107 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union, State aid is a form of aid granted by the State, i.e. through state resources, under any form that, by favouring some companies or productions, distort or threaten to distort competition by favouring the production of some goods/services to the extent to which these hinder trade among Member States. The main elements defining State aid are:

1. the existence of a company performing an economic activity;
2. the responsibility of financing through state resources;
3. the granting of an advantage;
4. the specific nature of measures;
5. the possible distortion effect on competition as well as on the internal EU market.

It must be underlined that the five criteria are collective and, therefore, all the five elements must be adequately evaluated in order to establish whether the measure can be considered as State aid or not.

In line with Art. 1-Annex 1 of EU Regulation no. 651/2014 of the Commission of 17 June 2014, an enterprise is any entity that is engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form. Economic activities are all activities consisting in the offer of goods or services on the market. Activities performed within the framework of statutory tasks normally performed by public authorities do not belong to the notion of an enterprise, considering the non-commercial purposes of public entities. Nevertheless, while assessing the existence of state aid, the legal status of the beneficiary is irrelevant since, for example a non-profit organisation may also perform an economic activity. This being said, the aspect to be taken into consideration is the nature of the activities that the project beneficiary intends to carry out through the programme resources.

When such economic activities financed with public resources create a selective advantage for an entity that, under normal free market conditions and without public financing, would not have been obtained, then this is deemed as State aid. This is due to the fact that the carrying out of such activities affects the free competition principle and determines an effect that distorts the free market principle within the European Union. It must also be noted that state aid implications also apply in cases where the entity reports costs related to its routine operations that, should the entity not have participated in any project, it would have had to sustain anyway.

Within the INTERREG VI-A Italia Malta programme, activities considered for State aid purposes are assessed by the programme authorities.

All potential beneficiaries (lead partners and partners) are required to provide, during the project proposal presentation phase, a self-evaluation of the envisaged activities (Annex C) in order to determine their relevance for State aid.

Through the self-evaluation, the beneficiary will be able to choose the application of the provisions referred to in Art. 20 of EU Regulation no. 651/2014 of the Commission of 7 June 2014 as modified by Commission Regulation (EU) 2021/1237 of 23 July 2021 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty.

Art. 20 of EU Regulation no. 651/2014 of the Commission of 7 June 2014 as modified by Commission Regulation (EU) 2021/1237 of 23 July 2021 only applies to undertakings participating in cooperation projects provided that the conditions laid down in Chapter I of the Regulation itself are fulfilled (notification thresholds; transparency of aid; incentive effect; aid intensity and eligible costs; cumulation; publication and information).

To the extent that they are linked to the cooperation project, the following costs, which shall have the meaning ascribed to them in Articles 38 to 44 of Regulation (EU) 2021/1059 shall be eligible costs:

- a) staff costs;
- b) office and administrative costs;

- c) travel and accommodation costs;
- d) external expertise and services costs;
- e) equipment costs;
- f) costs for infrastructure and works.

The aid intensity shall not exceed the maximum co-financing rate of 80%.

Art. 20 bis of EU Regulation no. 651/2014 of the Commission of 7 June 2014 as modified by Commission Regulation (EU) 2021/1237 of 23 July 2021 only applies to undertakings participating in cooperation projects provided that the conditions laid down in Chapter I of the Regulation itself are fulfilled (notification thresholds; transparency of aid; incentive effect; aid intensity and eligible costs; cumulation; publication and information) in the case of limited amounts that do not exceed €20,000.00 granted to a company and attributable to indirect aid.

Art. 11 – Selection criteria

The selection of cooperation projects will be carried out in compliance with the selection criteria and sub-criteria set out in annex 1, attached to this Public Notice.

The selection of project proposals will take place in 2 sequential phases:

- A. Verification of formal admissibility and eligibility requirements
- B. Quality assessment of the project proposals

The admissibility verification activity ensures compliance with the administrative requirements for the submission of the application and the application dossier/Application Form, the existence of the minimum eligibility requirements of the proposals themselves, the application of non-discriminatory and transparent criteria and procedures, the contribution to the programme objectives and value for money, the respect of the so-called horizontal principles and non-infringement of operations with the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU.

Project proposals that do not satisfy the formal admissibility and eligibility requirements (even just one) will be considered ineligible and the project lead partner will be informed of the outcome.

Therefore, upon completion of the verification of the formal admissibility and eligibility requirements, each project proposal may be "**Eligible for evaluation**" or "**Not eligible for evaluation**".

Project proposals eligible for evaluation access the quality assessment of project proposals.

Quality assessment criteria are divided in two categories:

- the **strategic evaluation** which verifies: 1) the cross-border character, 2) the contribution of the project (relevance and strategy) to the cooperation area, 3) the relevance of the partnership, 4) the contribution of the project to the achievement of the objectives and results of the programme.
- the **operational evaluation** which verifies: 5) the adequacy of management skills, 6) the adequacy of communication, 7) the reliability of the work plan, 8) the adequacy of the requested financial budget

Within the strategic evaluation, it is possible to obtain an overall score of 100 points. However, in order to access the subsequent assessment, it is necessary to concurrently ensure the compliance with the following conditions:

- ✓ For criterion 1 "cross-border character" a minimum score of at least 21 points;
- ✓ An overall score of all criteria of at least 60 points.

Within the operational evaluation, the maximum score that can be obtained is equal to 100 points while the minimum score below which it is not possible to finance the project is 60 points.

The projects will be selected taking into account their score (in descending order) and will be financed on the basis of available resources. The final score achieved by a proposal is given by the sum of the scores obtained for each selection criterion in the strategic evaluation and operational evaluation.

Based on the score obtained, each project can be:

- ✓ eligible for financing
- ✓ eligible for financing under conditions
- ✓ eligible but not financed
- ✓ rejected

With reference to the project proposal “*eligible for financing under condition*”, it should be noted that such condition may concern the possible reshaping of budgets, of activities or parts thereof, of output and/or result indicators, etc. These will be specified in the evaluation grids for each project proposal. The eventual presentation of the revised project proposal, in line with the aforementioned conditions, will again be subject to evaluation.

With reference to the project proposal “*eligible but not financed*”, it is to be noted that this refers to the lack of sufficient financial resources at Programme level for carrying out the project. In this regard, it is specified that the final ranking lists will be valid for 24 months from the time of their publication and therefore the Monitoring Committee may allocate additional resources within those available in the programme, upon request by the Member States, for the possible financing of further project proposals occupying a favourable position in the ranking, according to the minimum admissibility score defined in the notice.

With reference to the project proposal “*rejected*”, it is to be noted that this refers to the minimum score below which no financing will be granted to the proposal, since the latter would be deemed not suitable.

Art. 12 – Selection procedure

The selection of co-operation projects will be carried out in compliance with the provisions of the “*Selection criteria of the operations - INTERREG VI A Italia - Malta programme*” approved by the Monitoring Committee on 25/07/2023.

The selection procedure for the identification and approval of co-operation projects is divided into the following phases.

PHASE 1 – Verification of the formal admissibility and eligibility requirements

The Joint Secretariat (JS), supported by experts independent of the Managing Authority (Nucleo di Valutazione e Verifica degli Investimenti Pubblici della Regione Siciliana), receives by the Managing Authority the project proposals submitted by the potential lead partners by the expiry date established by this Public Notice and starts the verification of the existence of the “*admissibility and eligibility requirements*” established by the selection criteria (refer to par. 2.2 of the attached document). The JS then presents to the Monitoring Committee (MC) a list with the details of the project proposals considered as:

- a) eligible for evaluation;
- b) eligible after completion of the documentation, according to the specific cases defined in the Notice
- c) not eligible for evaluation by providing the necessary reasons

The Monitoring Committee verifies and approves the list with the related eligibility details of the project proposals provided by the JS/experts and gives mandate to the Managing Authority to communicate to each lead partner the outcomes of the admissibility phase.

No later than 15 calendar days after receiving the results of the admissibility phase, the potential lead partners can submit to the Managing Authority, if necessary, counter-claims against the decisions of the Monitoring Committee. Such counter-claims must be made in a precise, concise manner and present arguments closely related to the reasons that led to the ineligibility of the project proposal to the evaluation phase.

Within 15 calendar days, the Monitoring Committee reviews the counter-claims received and gives a mandate to the Managing Authority to respond to each potential lead partner. It can change, if necessary, the list with the related eligibility details of the project proposals.

Duration of Phase 1: 80 calendar days

PHASE 2 – Quality assessment of the project proposals (strategic and operational evaluation)

The Joint Secretariat (JS), supported by experts independent of the Managing Authority (Nucleo di Valutazione e Verifica degli Investimenti Pubblici della Regione Siciliana), carries out the “qualitative assessment of the project proposals” considered eligible according to the selection criteria and then submits to the Monitoring Committee a proposed ranking list, with a list of the proposals divided by Priority and Specific Objective.

The Monitoring Committee verifies the JS/experts proposed ranking list, and prepares the final ranking list containing the list of project proposals divided by Priority and Specific Objectives, under one of the following financing eligibility conditions:

- a) eligible for financing
- b) eligible for financing under conditions
- c) eligible but not financed
- d) rejected

The Monitoring Committee gives a mandate to the Managing Authority to notify the outcomes of the evaluation to potential lead partners. No later than 15 calendar days after receiving the results of the quality assessment, the potential lead partners can submit to the Managing Authority, if necessary, counter-claims against the decisions of the Monitoring Committee. Such counter-claims must be made in a precise, concise manner and present arguments closely related to the reasons that determined a negative score for the project proposal, non-financing and/or rejection.

Within 15 calendar days, the Monitoring Committee examines any counterclaims and gives a mandate to the Managing Authority to answer each potential lead partner. It can change, if necessary, the list with the related financial eligibility details of the project proposals.

The Monitoring Committee adopts the final ranking lists of project proposals divided by Programme’s Priority and Specific, including per each project one of the above listed eligibility for financing conditions.

Duration of Phase 2: 150 calendar days

PHASE 3 - Eligibility for financing

Having received the results of the decision by the Monitoring Committee, the Managing Authority adopts the decree ratifying the final ranking lists and committing the resources which is further sent to each lead partners together with the request to communicate the project’s starting date. Subsequently, the Managing Authority establishes the modalities and the timing for signing the Subsidy Contract, duly accompanied by the Partnership Agreement.

Duration of Phase 3: 30 calendar days

The final ranking lists (Priority 1, 2, 3, 4) will be valid for 24 months from the time of publication.

The timeline indicated in this article is indicative and may be subject to change based on the number of project proposals that will be submitted.

The Monitoring Committee will be able to allocate additional resources, within those available in the programme, for the possible financing of further project proposals at the request of the Member States.

Art. 13 – Documentation and submission of the project proposal

The submission of project proposals must be made by the potential project leader, electronically (via e-mail to dipartimento.programmazione@certmail.regione.sicilia.it). The e-mail should include in the subject line the following wording: "Public Notice 1/2023 for the submission of cooperation projects under all specific objectives of the Programme - INTERREG VI-A Italy Malta".

The application pack for the participation under this call should consist of the following documents:

1. **Application Form:** form (**Annex 2.a**) and budget (**Annex 2.b**)

Please note that this is a template of the application form containing information to allow potential beneficiaries to draft their project proposals.

2. **Letter of intent and co-financing lead/partners (Annex A)** duly signed and stamped by the legal representative of the lead/project partners of the project proposal;
3. **Copy (front and back) of a valid identity document** belonging to the legal representative of the lead beneficiary and each project partner;
4. **Formal administrative act** (Decree, Decision, Resolution, formal letter, etc.) which approves the project proposal, highlighting the total budgetary amount for the implementation of the project activities of the whole partnership. This letter/administrative act should be endorsed by the legal representative of the lead partner.
5. **Any necessary clearances/permissions/authorizations** which verify readiness to develop the project proposal.

In the case of participation of a private entity and/or a "body governed by public law" (equivalent public entity), the following documentation will also need to be attached:

6. **Statute of the entity**

7. **Last two approved financial statements** of the entity with proof of filing;

Private entities only (profit or nonprofit) will also need to produce

8. **A document confirming financial capacity** (Annex D).

All beneficiaries will also need to complete and attach:

9. **State Aid declaration** (Annex C).

In the event that the National Contribution (NC) to cover 20% of the partner's share of the budget is secured by another entity and not by the partner itself, the partner in question must also submit the following document:

10. **Letter of Co-financing in favour of the partner (Annex B)** duly signed and stamped by the legal representative of the entity securing the private partner's NC.

The above listed documentation must be sent, no later than 90 days after the publication of this notice in abstract in the Official Gazette of the Sicilian Region GURS, to the e-mail address dipartimento.programmazione@certmail.regione.sicilia.it with all attached documentation duly dated and signed by the respective legal representatives of the potential beneficiaries.

Italian beneficiaries will provide for the signing of the documentation through digital signature.

Art. 14 – Protection of personal data and information on their treatment

The data acquired through this public notice, necessary for the preliminary investigation and evaluation of the project proposals, are processed by the Programme Management Authority (Presidency of the Sicilian Region - Regional Planning Department, P.zza Sturzo, 36 - 90139 Palermo) pursuant to Art. 13 of Regulation (EU) 2016/679. For this purpose it is brought to the attention of potential beneficiaries that the processing of personal data supplied by them, or otherwise acquired for this purpose, by the Managing Authority of the Programme (Presidency of the Sicilian Region – Regional Planning Department) is aimed solely at the completion of the de quo procedure of this notice and will take place at Area 7 of the

Department by authorized personnel, with the use of computerized procedures also, in ways and within the limits necessary to pursue the aforementioned purposes. The data will be stored in compliance with the conservation of administrative documentation. The Data Controller and person in charge of data processing is Vincenzo Falgares – General Manager of the Planning Department, with headquarters in P.zza Sturzo, 36 – 90139 Palermo (certmail: dipartimento.programmazione@certmail.regione.sicilia.it - email: dipartimento.programmazione@regione.sicilia.it; telephone 091/7070032).

The provision of data is mandatory and the refusal to provide the same will make it impossible to fulfil the conditions inherent in the procedure. Personal data, with the exception of those which reveal the state of health, may be disseminated. Pursuant to the current provisions, the data will be disseminated, through publication, in the forms provided for by the relevant regulations, in compliance with the principles of relevance and non-excess. Personal data may be disclosed to other public and private subjects when this is required by law or Regulation. In the context of the procedure, only sensitive and judicial data that are indispensable for carrying out institutional activities will be processed. In some cases, the interested parties have the right to obtain from the Data Controller, access to personal data and carry out corrections or cancellations of the same or limit or oppose the processing of data that concerns them (Articles 15 et seq. of the Regulation).

Pursuant to Art. 49, par. 3 of the Regulation (EU) no. 2021/1060, the list of operations selected to financing under the Programme, the reference to the approved projects and the amount of funds allocated are published on the Programme's website www.italiamalta.eu.

Art. 15 – Contacts

Responsible for the procedure of this public procedure is Daniela Bica – Head of Area 7 within the Sicilian Region - Regional Planning Department e-mail: d.bica@regione.sicilia.it - tel.: (+39) 091 7070033

The contact details of the authorities are as follows:

AUTORITÀ DI GESTIONE

Presidenza della Regione Siciliana
Dipartimento Regionale della Programmazione
P.za Sturzo, 36 – 90139 Palermo
Telefono: (+39) 091.7070013/032
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PEC: dipartimento.programmazione@certmail.regione.sicilia.it
Sito web: www.italiamalta.eu

MALTESE NATIONAL COORDINATING AUTHORITY

Ministry for the Economy, European Funds and Lands
Funds and Programmes Division
The Oaks Business Centre Block B,
Triq Farsons
Hamrun, HMR 1321
Malta
Telephone: 00356 2555 2555
Email: territorialcoop.fpd@gov.mt
Email: fpd.mefl@gov.mt
Sito web: <https://fondi.eu/>

Art. 16 – Competent jurisdiction

For any disputes arising from the application of this procedure as well as in relation to a decision of the Monitoring Committee refusing the award of a public grant on the grounds that the application was not selected or the project submitted was not approved, the potential beneficiary who considers himself aggrieved may within the terms of law:

- Submit appropriate counter-arguments, within the deadlines set by the public notice, to the Managing Authority, which will forward them to the Monitoring Committee for possible review;
- Jurisdictional appeal to the competent TAR in Palermo;
- Extraordinary appeal to the President of the Sicilian Region pursuant to art. 23 of the Sicilian Statute.

Art. 17 – Applicable rules and reference

All the provisions referred to in this public notice, in the Programme approved by the European Commission, in the Regulation (EU) 2021/1060, in the Regulation (EU) 2021/1059, in the Regulation (EU) 2021/1058 will apply to these proceedings and to the implementation phase of the project. For anything not expressly provided for in this public notice, reference should be made to current applicable Community, national and regional legislation.

The Italian version of the notice prevails over the English version in the event of discrepancies or misunderstandings.

Art. 18 – Annexes

This public notice for the submission of cooperation projects under Priorities 1, 2, 3, 4 of the INTERREG VI-A Italia-Malta Programme, on the basis of the decisions taken by the Monitoring Committee, is accompanied by the following documents which form an integral part of the public notice:

- ☐ Annex 1 – Selection criteria of the operations –INTERREG VI-A Italia Malta Programme
- ☐ Annex 2.a – Application Form for submission of project proposal
- ☐ Annex 2.b – Application Form “budget” for submission of project proposal
- ☐ Annex A – Letter of intent and co-financing lead/partners
- ☐ Annex B - Letter of co-financing in favour of private project partner
- ☐ Annex C – State aid declaration
- ☐ Annex D – Verification of financial capacity of private entities (profit or non-profit)