

COMMUNITY INITIATIVE PROGRAMME
INTERREG IIIA ITALY–SLOVENIA
2000–2006

The present brochure aims at providing some information about the projects financed under the Community Initiative Programme INTERREG IIIA Italy–Slovenia, implemented in the framework of the Structural Funds during the programming period 2000–2006.

Thanks to the contribution of the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund), the Programme aims at strengthening the cooperation between the Regions Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto and the neighbouring Republic of Slovenia, by promoting the sustainable development and territorial integration, in order to overcome the isolation characterising the border areas.

The eligible area includes – on the Italian side – the Provinces of Trieste, Gorizia, Udine and Venice and – on the Slovenian one – the Statistical Regions Obalno Kraška and Goriška, as well as the Municipality of Kranjska Gora. Also included as territorial derogations are the Provinces of Pordenone and Rovigo, with reference to the Park of the Po Delta.

With a public funds allocation slightly exceeding 100 million euros, including also the Priority devoted to technical assistance the overall number of financed projects amounts to 480, distributed throughout the duration of the Programme.

Cross-border cooperation between Italy and Slovenia evolved significantly over time: in the first phase, corresponding to the period 2001–2003, the Programme's internal dichotomy due to the presence of two "twin" funding instruments subject to different regulations – the ERDF, to be used on the Italian territory and Phare–CBC (Cross–Border Cooperation) in Slovenia – hindered the cooperation between the parties.

The acquisition of Member State status by the Republic of Slovenia on 1st May 2004 marked the opening of a new phase of the Programme, where the ERDF is the exclusive source of community funding for the whole eligible area.

In this respect, the revised programming documents, the introduction of new project typologies and selection procedures, as well as the publication of simultaneous calls for proposals in Italy and Slovenia – aimed firstly at financing joint projects, then mirror projects, and residually cooperative projects – brought about positive effects on the Programme by improving project quality, strengthening cross-border cooperation and leading to the establishment of more solid, actual, factual, and long-lasting partnerships, if compared with the past.

An overall assessment of the results achieved indicates that the Programme's performance often proved positive in a general sense: in spite

of different methods and varying degrees of intensity, all financed projects (in most cases now closed) are consistent with the strategy of intervention. The number of the participating actors – directly as final beneficiaries and indirectly as project partners – exceeds 1,000.

Several projects are geared towards sustainable territorial development (Priority 1), including actions aimed at the safeguard, preservation and enhancement of the environment, the territory and the natural heritage (parks, protected areas, nature reserves, biotopes, Karst environment, caves and ravines, studies and analyses for the safeguarding of the marine ecosystem of the Upper Adriatic, integrated environmental monitoring systems); works for the upgrading/modernisation of urban wastewater treatment and purification in the catchment basin of the Isonzo–Soča river, through a number of actions mirroring those undertaken by the Slovenian partners under Programme Phare–CBC Eco–Adria 2001; studies aimed to indentify alternative and renewable energy sources and, particularly, forest biomasses; in the field of territorial planning, the drafting of development plans and the establishment of methodologies, models and tools for harmonization (cartography, maps, territorial information systems, shared territorial information maps, etc) aimed to provide a useful guide in decision–making processes and planning towards a joint management of the cross–border area, with a view to promoting sustainable development; lastly, the actions undertaken to prevent environmental

and natural risks threatening the resident population (preventing environmental disruption, improving territorial stability, adopting measures against hydro-geological risks and landslides in specific areas).

A substantial contribution to overcoming physical barriers and the marginal conditions that are typical of border areas comes from the projects implemented in the transport sector (Priorities 1 and 4) and, specifically: infrastructural actions aimed to enhance cross-border road connections, ensure transit safety and favour the mobility of workers and tourists across border passes (Ponte Vittorio, Uccia, Polava, Solarie, Molino Vecchio); actions for the functional conversion and modernisation of border traffic centres following the entry of the Republic of Slovenia into the European Union and according to the new customs regulations: in this sense, the conversion of the S.Andrea-Vrtojba customs inspection area and the Ferneti-Sežana logistic platform into modern traffic centres and highly technological hubs appears particularly significant, also in order to support the economic development of the eligible area, as well as the feasibility study of the Trieste-Divača railway line falling within the wider context of the development strategy for European Corridor 5.

Geared towards the economic development of the area (Priority 2) with a view to ensuring environmental sustainability are the projects pertaining to the tourism sector, aimed to enhance and qualify the offer of the cross-border area. In this regard,

among infrastructural actions aimed at renewing and enhancing existing facilities are cycle tracks, hiking tracks, mountain huts and camps, as well as visitor centres in parks and protected areas, targeting excursion tourism. As regards intangible initiatives, the Programme granted funds for actions aimed at territorial promotion and joint marketing efforts, the development of thematic tourism (cultural, environmental, historical, archaeological, religious, sports, eno-gastronomic, etc), the creation of integrated, across-the-border tourist packages, with particular reference to the enhancement of less known tourist destinations.

Economic development was also pursued by the primary sector projects, particularly initiatives for the joint promotion of typical local quality products (from agriculture, forests and fishing); structural actions aimed to modernise farms, in order to update and enhance infrastructures and

centres for product collection, storage, processing, transformation and sale to be used by the local operators in the border area; actions intended to improve the conditions of the primary sector, making it more competitive with the introduction of new business management techniques, production technology and agricultural methods; cross-border farm tourism.

The initiatives falling under Priority 2 also include economic enhancement initiatives – aimed to encourage internationalisation and to increase the competitiveness of local businesses on the market and the level of technological innovation among cross-border SME – promoted by the four Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Handicraft and Agriculture of Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia. In this respect, the said initiatives also contributed to consolidating the use of information and communication technology among local businesses and expanding existing networks, with the participation of more than 100 enterprises.

The projects aimed to overcome historical and socio-cultural barriers that characterised the life of past generations, to enhance a mutual understanding, to strengthen and consolidate integration among citizens residing in the eligible area, are especially numerous, thanks to the active participation of local authorities (Municipalities), associations, schools, organisations representing the Slovenian minority in Italy and the Italian minority in Slovenia – playing a fundamental role in bringing together the various ethnic groups present on the territory (Priorities 3 and 4). So-called “people-to-people” initiatives also fall within this category, that were funded in the first three years of implementation of the Phare-CBC Programme, through the Slovenian Fund for Small Projects. The actions aimed at achieving said objective include the study/cataloguing/promotion/enhancement of the shared cultural heritage (historical, artistic, archaeological and linguistic), with the aim of making it more widely known and accessible to a vast audience, cooperation among institutes and the setting up of cross-border networks (museums, libraries), the organisation of cultural, sports and recreational events – inspired to music, theatre, arts and the revival of local folk traditions – which provide an opportunity for meetings, sharing information, and fostering dialogue, to the mutual growth and enrichment of peoples, encouraging socialising and social cohesion.

As regards the enhancement and qualification of the human capital, Priority 3 funded school and professional guidance courses, training/refresher courses as well as internships/work experiences. 45 such projects were set up (with more than 560 participants, more than 50% women, in compliance with the principle of equal opportunities), in order to identify professional figures that are useful in the Programme Area, with some

actions directed at fostering the integration of the cross-border labour market and of cross-border workers mobility.

The Programme also encouraged cooperation in specific areas of intervention not included in its previous edition (INTERREG II), such as: healthcare, through the establishment of permanent cooperation networks among healthcare facilities, the harmonisation of hospital systems, cooperation aimed to improve the quality of the services provided to the population, the social sector, through initiatives aimed to counter phenomena such as social distress, deviance and youth marginalisation, scientific research, that saw the active participation of the various universities present on the territory in the production of studies and surveys on issues and problems that are particularly relevant in the Italian-Slovenian cross-border area.

In order to disseminate information on the initiatives realised during the programming period 2000-2006 and transfer ideas to subjects interested in drawing up new projects in the framework of the Cross-border Cooperation Programme Italy-Slovenia 2007-2013, additional information is available on the web site www.interreg-it-si.org, where a video on the Programme and a volume on the financed projects can be found.