

**Interreg**  
**ITALIA-SLOVENIJA**

Fondo europeo di sviluppo regionale  
Evropski sklad za regionalni razvoj



# Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia 2014 - 2020: results in a nutshell



The cross-border Italy-Slovenia Programme was approved with Decision C (2015) 9285 in December 2015. It has a financial allocation of €94.848.220,00€, of which €79.744.212,00 ERDF. The organizational efforts and governance put in place by the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat - based in the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region - in collaboration with the Programme partners (Veneto Region, Republics of Slovenia and Italy) have produced effective and concrete results. The constant coordination between the Programme structures and the project beneficiaries has ensured the regular implementation and closure of all financed projects, achieving a remarkable operational and financial performance, even successfully overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic which has characterized Programme management from 2020 onwards.

The Programme has been developed along **four priority axis**:



- thanks to the qualified presence in the Programme area of universities, scientific and technological parks, the first axis, "*innovation and competitiveness*", mainly concerned the cooperation between research&innovation and economic operators in the healthcare field, innovation, nanotechnology and sustainable production in the primary and secondary sectors.



- In the context of the second axis, dedicated to "*mobility and carbon emission reduction*", the interest of the territory focused on sustainable, multimodal and cycling mobility, as well as on energy efficiency in the tourism and transportation sectors.



- For the third axis "*Environment and Culture*", the most represented themes were sustainable and cultural tourism, agri-food itineraries, risk prevention and management and environmental protection - particularly focused on water, wetlands and biodiversity.



- Finally, the "*cross-border governance*", whose projects have focused on the social-health sector, civil protection and cooperation between the seaports of Trieste, Koper and Venice.

Among the 63 projects, the Programme financed 10 strategic projects, 46 standard projects, 2 Integrated Territorial Interventions (I.T.I.) and 5 technical assistance projects (for supporting Programme implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation).

The results achieved by all projects derive from the consolidation of mature cross-border partnerships able to strengthen the cohesion of the Programme area and to contribute to the mitigation and removal of obstacles to cooperation in all sectors for the benefit of the

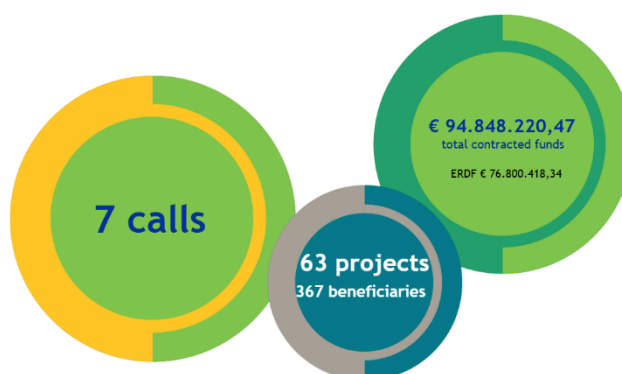


Image 1: The 2014-2020 Programme mission



entire community. Best practices were shared at EU level well beyond the Programme area.

In the context of the first priority axis, most projects worked in the health sector, proposing cross-border cooperation and knowledge transfer on regenerative therapies (ARTE), innovative diagnostics in pediatrics (CATTEDRA), immunology (IMMUNO-CLUSTER), prosthetic infections (IMBI), electronic and mobile health applications (ISE-EMH), big data applications in biotech (TRAIN) and new therapies for glioblastoma (TRANSGLIOMA). Two projects concerned green housing sector (CONSTRAIN, DuraSoft); other projects focused on creative industries (DIVA), agriculture and fishing (FUSHAGROTECH, SUSGRAPE), nanotechnologies (NANO-REGION), technologies in the field of mobility (TECHMOLOGY) and competitiveness of SMEs (BioApp, CAB, NUVOLAK 2).

In the second priority axis, projects aligned with the goals of the Green Deal and largely focused on sustainable mobility (CROSSMOBY) proposing joint design of multimodal urban mobility models in tourist areas (MOBITOUR), soft mobility along the Adriabike cycle path (INTERBIKE II) or models for energy efficiency (LIGHTINGSOLUTIONS, MUSE, SECAP), as well as awareness-raising and participatory management into energy sector (ENERGYCARE). Sustainable energy management, climate change adaptation and sustainable development remain fundamental issues for the future.

The majority of projects have been financed under the third axis and have worked in the areas of tourism and historical and cultural heritage (MERLINC, TARTINI, WALKofPEACE, Isonzo/Soča), the protection of minorities (PRIMIS which capitalized on the previous project JEZIK LINGUA financed under the Italy-Slovenia 2007-2013 Programme), but also the protection of biodiversity, blue and green technologies and circular economy (MEDS GARDEN; AGROTUR II, Acquavitis, BEE-DIVERSITY, GREENHULL, WASTE DESIGN, BlueGrass, CONA, ECO-SMART, ENGREN, NAT2CARE, RETRAKING, VISFRIM, GREVISLIN, TRETAMARA).

In the context of governance, axis 4, some projects have focused on health (C3B, MEMORI-net, NEX AID, SALUTE-ZDRAVSTVO), others on mobility (FORTIS) and training (CB-WBL, EDUKA2), but also on spatial planning (HARMODATA) and cross-border governance (GEOKARST), security (CLEAN BERTH, SECNET, CROSSIT SAFER) and social inclusion (CROSSCARE, INTEGRA).

It is worth to mention that Interreg Italy-Slovenia was the first Programme in Europe to fund **I.T.I. (Integrated**



*Image 2: Representative photos of some projects, from top to bottom: BioApp, CROSSMOBY, GreenHull, C3B.*





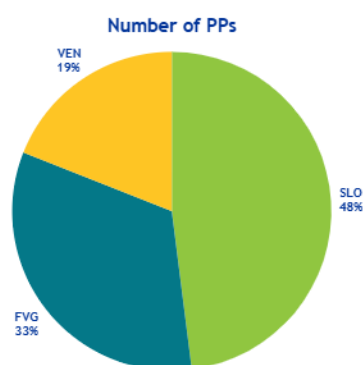
**Territorial Investment) projects** implemented by a “*Sole Beneficiary*” identified in a EGTC, i.e. the EGTC-GO (GECT-GO/EZTS GO) [www.euro-go.eu](http://www.euro-go.eu). In the area including the Municipalities of Gorizia, Nova Gorica, and Šempeter Vrtojba, two pilot projects, *Isonzo-Soča* and *Salute-Zdravstvo* were managed by EGTC-GO for a total amount of €10 million (€4,850,000.00 ERDF each). It acted as a Sole Beneficiary and with a mandate and territorial competence over the cross-border area object of the intervention which allowed an integrated territorial planning, overcoming the concept of the territoriality of interventions. Representing a new methodology for cross-border cooperation, the I.T.I. have been particularly noted by the European Commission: in fact, the EGTC-GO, acting as a single contracting authority for investments in Italy and Slovenia, allowed the three municipalities to share a strategy for integrated territorial and urban development, concretely implemented in the cross-border area. Thanks to the visionary decision by the three Municipalities Councils, an organization subject to Italian law is now authorized to manage public procurement in its cross-border area and can decide if applying Italian or Slovene legislation on public procurement.

Isonzo/Soča, the first I.T.I. project, has enhanced the natural, cultural, and recreational heritage along the Isonzo/Soča river for the benefit of citizens and tourists by creating and promoting a network of cycle-pedestrian paths and tourist infrastructures, including the pedestrian footbridge over the river in Solkan, kicked-off in 2022.

The second I.T.I. project Salute-Zdravstvo has contributed to networking the excellence of healthcare services in the two countries in the fields of autism, physiological pregnancy, mental health and social inclusion in order to increase healthcare offer and services both in Italy and Slovenia, with the establishment of a pilot project designed to allow to citizens of the three municipalities the access to health services through a unique cross-border booking center (CUP).

In addition to the I.T.I. projects and the standard ones mentioned above and implemented upon initiative of the territories according to the *bottom-up* approach - a comprehensive overview of the results achieved can be found at <https://2014-2020.ita-slo.eu/eng/projects>-, **10 strategic projects** selected through a *top-down* institutional approach have been activated, featured by greater financial relevance and also huger impact on European Union strategies. As an example, WALKofPEACE and CrossMoby were recognized as good practices at transnational level, respectively in the field of First World War cultural / tourist itineraries from the Alps to the Adriatic and in the field of joint planning of sustainable mobility and testing of cross-border rail services (along Udine-Trieste-Ljubljana axis as well as pilot services for buses, ships and bike-sharing). Strategic projects of the programming 2014-2020 are pioneer of the Operations of Strategic Importance (so-called OSIs) foreseen in European Regulations and implemented under the programming 2021-2027.

With regard to impacts across the entire Programme area, following the activation of 7 selection procedures, a total of 63 projects have been financed and **367 beneficiaries** have been involved. Regarding the 367 beneficiaries, a substantially equal distribution is observed between Italy (190) and Slovenia (177), while on the Italian side, 120 are based in Friuli Venezia Giulia and 70 in Veneto. The most active areas have been the former Provinces of Trieste and Venice and the Slovene Regions of Osrednjeslovenska, Obalno-kraška, and Goriška, which, overall, have absorbed about 73% of the Programme funds. The participation of



	Number of PPs	%
FVG	120	33%
VEN	70	19%
SLO	177	48%
TOTAL	367	100%

Image 3: Pie chart and table showing the number of PPs by region.

border areas in the former Province of Udine has instead appeared rather limited compared to their proximity to the border. The main cities and urban centers of the Programme area (Trieste, Udine, Pordenone, Gorizia, Nova Gorica, Ljubljana, Koper, Venice), included the I.T.I. managed by the EGTC-GO, have absorbed 76% of the Programme funding.

	PP typology	%
MINISTRIES AND REGIONS	32	9%
LOCAL AUTHORITIES	44	12%
HEALTH SECTOR	28	8%
EGTCS	3	1%
UNIVERSITIES	60	16%
RESEARCH AND INNOVATION ORGANIZATIONS	61	17%
DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES	11	3%
BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS	18	5%
NGOs	9	2%
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	3	1%
ENTERPRISES	55	15%
PORTS	6	2%
NATURAL PARKS	6	2%
OTHER-TYPE PARTNERS	31	8%
<b>TOT</b>	<b>367</b>	<b>100%</b>

Image 4: project partner typologies in 2014-2020.

	€ validated per PP	%
FVG	31.089.622,28	34%
VEN	14.156.736,56	16%
SLO	36.019.765,57	40%
GECT	9.910.207,21	11%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>91.176.331,62</b>	<b>100%</b>

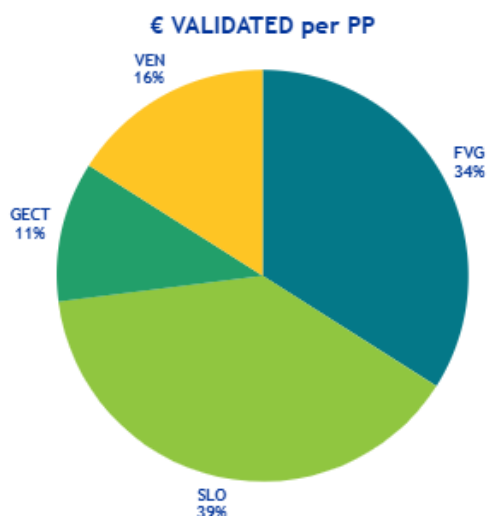


Image 5: Table and pie chart on the distribution of funds by area (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto and Slovenia).

Regarding the typology of partners, the public sector absorbed 84% of the funds and 78% of beneficiaries are public entities including municipalities, universities, public schools, research centers, EGTC, regions, ministries, hospitals, regional development agencies and natural parks.

Also in the private sector, actors have been diversified (companies, research centers, trade associations, organizations) and 55 SMEs were involved, representing 15% of the total beneficiaries and absorbing 10% of the resources (around 9 million euros), which is a great result for a Programme with complex management like those of European Territorial Cooperation.

Regarding **financial figures**, the final performance was over 91 million euros of certified expenditure to the European Commission, with a fund absorption rate of over 96%, with no irregularities reported to the relevant Authorities and minor adjustments which did not affect the excellent performance of the Programme. The expenditure was also evenly distributed between Italy and Slovenia.

It is worth to highlight that despite the relatively modest financial allocation of the Programme, Interreg Italy-Slovenia as an European Cross-border Cooperation Programme is expected to apply the same rules and procedures as other financially bigger and hugely structured Programmes within the SIE funds, plus it endorses an extra additional burden of managing relationships with neighboring Regions and States, which requires constant comparison and negotiation and also implies implementation of procedures ruled by different legislations.

The **Management Structures of the Programme** - based in the Unit (UOS) for Management of EU ERDF Fund and Regional Integrative Programmes of Central Directorate for Finance of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region - have ensured throughout the entire seven-years-period an effective and efficient management of funds, guarantying timely execution of all implementation phases in accordance with rules / procedures and with attention to reducing the administrative burden on beneficiaries as well as to effective evaluation, communication, dissemination and capitalization of results. The management effort at Programme level has also translated into an improved management capacity by projects. Projects

beneficiaries, in addition to benefiting from new simplification rules, has been constantly supported through many workshops, also online (whose recordings remain available on the website <https://2014-2020.ita-slo.eu/>), targeted assistance, and one-to-one meetings. All this has resulted in the fact that, as reported above, no irregularities were reported to the relevant Authorities, and the minimal adjustments did not affect the excellent performance of the projects and of the Programme. Programme structures succeeded over time with an increasingly effective partnership coordination with the Programme partners, the Region of Veneto and the Republic of Slovenia. The objectives described herein were achieved thanks to qualified personnel, made up of regional employees, temporary workers, and interns of various types over the years, in support of the Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat.

Multiple communication and publicity activities initiated by Programme Managing Structures have promoted the visibility of Programme and its project results at European level, strengthening public awareness of the added value of the contribution of European Territorial Cooperation and European funds for the benefit of border communities. Throughout the programming period, more than 116,000 people have been involved in over 2,000 public events promoted by the Programme and its projects.

Just to mention a few of the most relevant events, some workshops were organized within the framework of the annual European contest "EuRegionsWeek" organized by the European Commission and the Committee of

the Regions: for three consecutive years, the Programme was able to create an opportunity for visibility for its area in Europe on various topics, such as a greener Europe (2020), biodiversity and sustainable mobility (2021) and data sharing systems in the healthcare field (2022).

Furthermore, at the European level, the Programme has been awarded twice in 2020 and 2021 in the "Interreg Project Slam" contest, an initiative promoted by the INTERACT Programme aimed at making the results of cooperation more visible. In 2020, the video proposed by the WALKofPEACE project ranked as the best video in Europe; while in 2021 the CROSSMOBY project gained the second place out of over 100 competitors.

In 2021, the Programme promoted an initiative to disseminate results among the general public through a photographic contest titled "From the Alps to the Adriatic: a crossroads of biodiversity and culture" in which the winner, out of 188 non-professional photographers, was awarded during the celebration of the *European Cooperation Day* of that year. This Day is celebrated on September 21st of each year.



Image 6: 2014-2020 Programme events at a glance.





Special mention should also be given to the same Day in 2019 when a large-scale cross-border event was organized at the Škocjan Caves Park (Slovenia): thanks to a wide range of recreational and interactive activities addressing young people, families and children, the values and results of European cooperation were promoted to a wide audience. On that occasion, also the winner of a video contest "Why Europe is you?" was awarded.



*Image 7: Group photo of participants at the 2019 European Cooperation Day, organized by the Programme at the Škocjan Caves Park (Slovenia).*

The **closing event of the Programme** organized in Trieste on the occasion of the 2022 *European Cooperation Day*, titled '*Discovering European Projects and Future Opportunities*', involved nearly 400 participants and served as an important showcase for the products and services developed by funded projects, as a meeting point for local operators and, at the same time, as the kick-off event for the ongoing Interreg VI-A 2021-2027. During that event, some results worthy of capitalization were highlighted, for example: the HUBs between research centers and hospitals, the development of nanotechnologies; sustainable cross-border public mobility; the participatory approach in the fields of energy efficiency, cross-border models of social and health care for elderly; the cross-border geopark of the Karst.



*Image 8: Interreg cooperation fair at the closing event.*



Lastly, it is worth to mention the Programme excellent **capitalization strategy** which has also served as a bridge into the ongoing 2021-2027 programming and which has often been presented as a good practice for other Interreg programmes around Europe. Representatives of the European Commission, meeting some of the lead partners at the Managing Authority's office, have been able to appreciate the concreteness and durability of the results of cross-border cooperation between Italy and Slovenia; those results go beyond mere project duration becoming a true new asset for the territory.

Particularly, an event for capitalization in the healthcare sector took place in Isola (Slovenia) in 2019; while in 2020, the Programme promoted two pilot actions in the fields respectively of mobility and of the Green Deal, which provided an opportunity for the projects financed in these fields to work together for jointly planning ideas for the future cooperation. Some projects have represented capitalization over time since 2000-2006, such as those on cycling routes (Interbike), mobility (CROSS-5 and CrossMoby), or those involving national and linguistic minorities (Jezik-Lingua) and the Karst area (KRAS-CARSO). Other projects have been highlighted as good practices at transnational level (for example WALKofPEACE, CrossMoby, InterBike II, and Lighting Solutions). The first call published in the period 2021-2027 has been a capitalization call connecting the two programming periods which allowed for the capitalization of 24 2014-2020 projects in various fields and sectors, by involving new cooperation partners and consolidating projects outputs through their transferability and reuse.

2014-2020		2021-2027		
	CATTEDRA			CONCERTO
	IMMUNO-CLUSTER			IMMUNOCLUSTER-2
	CONSTRAIN			PRO-SIS
	INTER BIKE II			INTER BIKE III
	BLUEGRASS			BeBlue
	RETRACKING			RECREATE
	WASTE DESIGN			WASTE DESIGN 2.0
	NAT2CARE			E-NAT2CARE
	ENGREEN			ENGREEN 2
	GREVISLIN			GRENNAT
	BEE-DIVERSITY			BEE2GETHER
	AGROTUR II			AGROTUR+
	Acquavitis			IRRIGAVIT
	tARTini			TARTINI BIS
	WALKofPEACE			WALKofPEACE+
	MEDS GARDEN			MEDS GARDEN+
	PRIMIS			Primis Plus
	MerlinCV			RecapMCV
	ECO-SMART			ECO2SMART
	TRETAMARA			TRECap
	MEMORI-net			X-BRAIN.net
	CrossCare			CrossCare 2.0
	NEX AID			AidMIRE
	CROSSIT SAFER			IN4SAFETY KARST-SAFE

Image 9: 2014-2020 projects capitalized in the 2021-2027 Programme.

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Image 10: IVY volunteers hosted by the Programme.

Last but not least, it is worth to be highlighted that the Programme has always given space to the **youth**, as protagonists of European history and its future. In fact, throughout the seven-year programming period, 13 interns have been collaborating with the Managing Authority and Joint Secretariat thanks to agreements signed by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region and local Universities. Furthermore, by participating in the European Initiative managed by the *Association of European Border Regions* called "**Interreg Volunteer Youth - IVY**" (Interreg youth volunteers), the Programme hosted, from 2017 to 2022, 23 young volunteers aged between 18 and 30 on a rotational basis of six months each, offering them a job opportunity in the planning and organization of the

Programme communication and information activities. The volunteers meaningfully contributed to a significant increase in the use of social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn) by the Programme. This qualifying experience has also facilitated the access of many of them into the job market with good opportunities within the Programme area.

