

Students4Cooperation

Srednješolsko Interreg tekmovanje

2. izvedba

PRILOGA 2 – Obrazec za projektno idejo

Slovenščina in angleščina

September 2025



Obrazec uporabite pri pisanju vaše projektne ideje. Pri ocenjevanju se upošteva, ali so vsa polja izpolnjena.

Obrazec mora biti izpolnjen bodisi v slovenščini kot v angleščini. Besedilo naj bo dolgo vsaj 1000 besed (font: Times New Roman 11) v vsakem jeziku.

0. Osnovne informacije:

Šola: DRŽAVNI IZOBRAŽEVALNI ZAVOD JOŽEFA STEFANA

Šolska smer: KEMIJA, MATERIALI IN BIOTEHNOLOGIJE

Razred: 4. (MALALAN, PERIC, RENZI, SCUKA IN ŠKULJ TENZE)

Izbrana tema [Izbirate lahko med naslednjimi: 1. Okoljska vzgoja in zaščita območja; 2. Trajnostna mobilnost; 3. Aktivno državljanstvo; 4. Medkulturni dialog in socialna vključenost; 5. Vrednotenje skupne kulturne dediščine (glej Smernice, razdelek 2.1)]:

4. MEDKULTURNI DIALOG IN SOCIALNA VKLJUČENOST

Akronim projekta [Lahko izberete samo krajši akronim ali akronim + naslov]:

MERITO

1. Opis projektne ideje.

O čem govori projekt? Kateri je glavni cilj projekta? Kako projekt vključuje akterje iz obeh držav ob meji (Italija in Slovenija)? Zakaj je čezmejna značilnost projekta ključnega pomena? Ali je projekt dolgoročno vzdržen? Ali ga je mogoče ponoviti v drugih okoljih?

Projekt MERITO je čezmejna pobuda, ki mladim med 18. in 22. letom ponuja usmerjeno podporo pri izbiri študijske in poklicne poti. Mladi se bodo namreč s pomočjo projekta lahko še v času študija preizkusili v praktičnem opravljanju različnih poklicev v uspešnih in uveljavljenih slovenskih ter italijanskih podjetjih oz. ustanovah, ki so jim drugače težje dostopne.

Mladi imajo pogosto veliko teoretičnega znanja, vendar premalo možnosti, da bi v praksi preizkusili, kar jih res zanima in katera poklicna smer jim najbolj ustreza. Projekt si torej postavlja kot izziv vprašanje: kako bi lahko mladim omogočili, da bi pravočasno odkrili svoje talente, se preizkusili v različnih delovnih okoljih in sprejeli čim boljše odločitve o svoji prihodnosti?

MERITO ponuja rešitev s strukturiranimi čezmejnimi delovnimi praksami, ki potekajo v izbranih podjetjih, ustanovah in organizacijah na območju programa Interreg Italia-Slovenija. Mladi se tako že med študijem ali tik pred njim srečajo s konkretnimi delovnimi izzivi, dinamiko podjetij in različnimi poklicnimi profili, ki se jih klasični izobraževalni sistem pogosto le bežno dotakne.

V obmejni regiji se pogosto srečujemo tudi s trendom odhajanja mladih v tujino, ker doma ne najdejo dovolj kakovostnih priložnosti in marsikdaj imajo občutek, da sodobna družba pozablja na princip meritokracije. Prav iz slednjega naš projekt MERITO črpa tudi ime, ki izhaja iz latinske besede *meritus* in pomeni »zaslužiti si«. Obenem pa namiguje tudi na meritokracijo, in sicer na »družbeno ureditev, v kateri se položaji, funkcije dodeljujejo glede na znanje, izkušnje, uspehe« (SSKJ, fran.si). Slednja je ena izmed

pomembnih vrednot, ki jih podpira tudi Evropska unija, saj želi spodbuditi enake in pravične priložnosti za vse, ne glede na socialno ozadje.

Cilj projekta je pomagati mladim bolje razumeti, kateri poklic ali študijska smer jim najbolj ustreza glede na njihove talente, interese in izkušnje. Mladi pogosto opažajo pomanjkanje poklicnega usmerjanja. Zaradi tega velikokrat izberejo študijsko smer ali poklic, ki jim kasneje ne ustreza. Obmejna regija med Slovenijo in Italijo je že stoletja območje kulturnega prepleta, kljub temu pa mladi še danes premalokrat izkoristijo njen potencial. Prav zato želi projekt MERITO mladim ponuditi boljše izhodišče za zaposlitev v obliki sistema strukturiranih čezmejnih delovnih praks in z njimi povezano spletno platformo.

Projekt MERITO vključuje slovensko-italijansko območje, ki ga krije program Interreg, saj bodo vanj v čim bolj uravnoteženi meri vključena podjetja in ustanove obeh držav. Mladim naslovnikom projekta bodo ponujali delovne izkušnje in prakse. Ti bodo lažje in uspešneje začrtali svojo bodočo poklicno pot. Z zvišanjem zaposljivosti se bo v obeh državah zmanjšalo število brezposelnih. Čezmejno sodelovanje je ključno, ker predvideva realizacijo inovativne meddržavne ideje ter vzpostavljanje intenzivnejših odnosov med prebivalci obeh držav; mladi lahko izkusijo delo v sosednji državi, kjer istočasno spoznajo drugačen način dela, jezik in kulturo. Korist pa bosta imeli tudi vključeni državi, ki bosta s sprejemanjem delavcev iz bližnjih regij pridobili novo znanje, do katerega drugače ne bi imeli dostopa.

Projekt je dolgoročno vzdržen, saj ne zahteva pretirano visokega finančnega vložka, nikakor ne škoduje okolju in izboljšuje socialno stanje prebivalcev obeh držav. Ekonomsko stanje se bo na obmejnem območju izboljšalo, kar pomeni, da bo manj socialne ogroženosti in posledično manj stroškov za državi.

Model MERITO je prenosljiv v katerokoli obmejni prostor (npr. med Avstrijo in Slovenijo, med Italijo in Francijo itd.). Bližina dveh držav predstavlja zanimiv »laboratorij« vsestranskega medsebojnega oplajanja in tudi gospodarskega sodelovanja.

2. Kako učinkuje na skupnost? S katerimi problem, vprašanji in izzivi se sooča?

S katerimi problemi oz. izzivi čezmejne skupnosti se sooča projekt? Na kakšen način lahko pozitivno učinkuje na čezmejno skupnost? Predvidene dejavnosti spodbujajo integracijo v čezmejni skupnosti?

Projekt MERITO se v prvi vrsti sooča s težavami mladih pri izbiri poklica oziroma ustreznega univerzitetnega študija in nezadovoljstva pri delu ter s posledičnim problemom brezposelnosti. Mladim namerava ponuditi več priložnosti, da s pomočjo različnih delovnih praks razumejo, kaj bi radi delali v odraslosti, tako da se lahko potopijo v realno delovno okolje, doživijo, kako določena služba res izgleda in čim lažje izberejo nadaljnjo študijsko ali poklicno pot.

S sodelovanjem prestižnih in uveljavljenih ustanov projekt mladim dokazuje, da obstajajo zanimivi in spodbudni poklici tudi v bližini njihovega doma. Udeleženci lahko spoznajo, da obstaja potencial za uspešno kariero tudi v slovensko-italijanskem obmejnem prostoru.

Projekt spodbuja integracijo v čezmejni skupnosti, saj predvideva oblikovanje mešanih skupin Italijanov in Slovencev, ki se bodo vključili vanj. Prakse bodo potekale tako, da bosta v istem podjetju ali ustanovi sočasno vključena pripadnik slovenske in italijanske narodnosti. To pomeni, da bosta v primeru jezikovnih nejasnosti ali težav drug drugemu jezikovna tutorja oz. posrednika (npr. v Trstu bosta v italijanskem podjetju opravljala prakso Slovenec iz Ljubljane in Italijan iz Benetk; Ljubljčan bo najbrž pri komunikaciji uporabljal angleški jezik, vendar če se bodo preko rabe italijanščine pojavile težave v razumevanju določenih konceptov, mu bo pri razreševanju teh lahko preko angleščine pomagal Benečan). Posebno dodano vrednost pri jezikovnem posredovanju predstavljajo tudi pripadniki jezikovnih manjšin v Italiji in Sloveniji. Ti mladi naravno prehajajo med obema kulturnima in jezikovnima prostoroma, zato lahko v mešanih skupinah oz. parih prevzemajo vlogo posebej uspešnih povezovalcev, hkrati pa prispevajo k bolj avtentičnemu razumevanju lokalnih posebnosti in izkušenj čezmejne sobivanja. Mladi iz različnih obmejnih območjih se bodo tako

medsebojno spoznali, hkrati pa bodo brez prisile spoznavali jezik in kulturo sosedov. Za mlade bo to priložnost, da odkrijejo, kako se razlike iz ovir spremenijo v priložnost za širjenje obzorij.

Korist bodo imela tudi podjetja z obeh strani meje, ki bodo pridobila motivirane mlade delavce, dostop do znanja in veščin iz širšega prostora, možnost, da vključijo nove ideje in poglede v svoje delovno okolje.

Projekt MERITO torej povečuje zaposlitveni prostor mladih, zmanjšuje trend odseljevanja v bolj oddaljene države, krepi dvojezičnost in medkulturne kompetence, pomaga podjetjem pri iskanju mladega in motiviranega kadra, spodbuja razvijanje mednarodnih kompetenc na samem začetku karierni poti. Pozitivne učinke projekta bo občutila celotna obmejna skupnost tudi zaradi povečanja čezmejnih stikov, dvojezičnosti in medsebojnega zaupanja med prebivalci. To ustvarja večjo povezanost in stabilnost celotne regije.

3. Katere dejavnosti predvideva projekt?

Katere dejavnosti bodo izvedene v sklopu projekta? So le-te atraktivne za mlade? Na kakšen način vključujejo mlade?

Projekt je zasnovan v dveh fazah. Prva faza je pilotna, zato je njen obseg nekoliko omejen. Prav ta faza bo služila kot izhodišče za drugo, širitveno, v kateri bomo na podlagi izkušenj uvedli izboljšave ter nadgradili in razširili načrtovane dejavnosti.

Projekt ima v pilotni fazi omejeno število udeležencev in je namenjen starostni skupini med 18 in 22 letom. Prakse bodo v pilotni fazi potekale enkrat na leto v šestih izbranih mestih in njihovi okolici, in sicer v Trstu, Vidmu, Benetkah, Ljubljani, Kranju in Kopru. V pilotni fazi bodo v vsakem od mest prakso lahko opravljali 4 kandidati. V začetni fazi se bomo omejili na 10 sodelujočih ustanov v vsakem mestu, med katerimi bodo lahko udeleženci izbirali, in sicer 5 jih bo z znanstvenega in 5 s humanističnega področja. Vsaka ustanova oz. podjetje bo sprejelo enega udeleženca iz lastne in enega iz sosednje države (npr. v Narodni galeriji v Ljubljani ali v raziskovalnem centru Elettra Sincrotrone v Trstu bosta sočasno opravljala prakso državljani Italije in Slovenije, ki sta izrazila zanimanje za omenjeno ustanovo). Udeleženci bodo ob prijavi oddali motivacijsko pismo, opis svojih kompetenc, dokaze o znanju in seznam svojih preferenc glede ustanov (od prve do pete izbire), v katerih bi želeli opravljati prakso. Na podlagi teh seznamov bo izpeljan postopek razporeditve, ki bo najprej upošteval največja ujemanja v preferencah med slovenskim in italijanskim udeležencem. Če se njuni prvi izbiri ne bosta ujemale, bodo pri razporeditvi upoštevane naslednje preference na seznamu. Če kljub temu ne bo mogoče določiti skupne ustanove, bo izpeljan usklajevalni pogovor z obema kandidatom. Preko pogovora se bo poskusilo najti kompromis, ki bo okvirno lahko zadovoljil oba kandidata tudi na podlagi ostalih preferenc, ki sta jih izrazila.

Projekt MERITO bosta sočasno izvajali slovenska in italijanska ekipa. Vsako skupino bodo sestavljali koordinator, informatik in računovodja. Ekipi se bosta usklajevali in sodelovali, saj bo uspeh projekta odvisen od tesnega čezmejnega sodelovanja. Ob tem bo delovala tudi narodnostno mešana strokovna komisija, ki bo med kandidati izbrala udeležence delovnih praks.

Koordinator bo imel glavno organizacijsko vlogo. Skrbel bo za organizacijo s podjetji in ustanovami, sklepanje dogovorov o sodelovanju, organizacijo prijavnega postopka, razporeditev udeležencev glede na njihove kompetence ter razpoložljiva mesta in spremljanje poteka delovnih praks.

Računovodja bo odgovoren za upravljanje finančnih sredstev, prejetih iz programa Interreg, in morebitnih nacionalnih prispevkov. Skrbel bo za pregledno in enakomerno razporejanje sredstev med podjetja, ustanove in udeležence. Iz teh sredstev se bodo krili manjši prispevek sodelujočim podjetjem, vsi stroški bivanja udeležencev in denarni prispevek udeležencem za nakup osnovnih sredstev za preživetje. Na ta način bomo zagotovili, da se bo projekta lahko udeležil vsakdo, ki izpolnjuje pogoje, ne glede na svoje finančno ozadje.

Informatik bo urejal, razvijal in vzdrževal spletno platformo (merito.eu), ki bo ključna za uspešno izvedbo projekta MERITO. Spletna stran bo služila kot glavno orodje za informiranje mladih o projektu, bazo

podatkov o sodelujočih podjetjih in ustanovah, oddajo prijav, zbiranje podatkov o kompetencah in motivaciji kandidatov in tudi za zbiranje evalvacij.

Prijave mladih bo pregledala strokovna komisija, v kateri bodo sodelovali predstavniki obeh držav. Komisija bo presojala motivacijo kandidatov, njihove kompetence in primernost za posamezno delovno prakso. Prav tako bo izbirala sodelujoča podjetja in ustanove glede na njihovo kakovost, razvojne možnosti, ugled in pozornost do ranljivih skupin. Pri tem bo posebej pozorna na zagotavljanje načela meritokracije, kar je temelj našega projekta. Izbira bo torej temeljila na znanju, zavzetosti in potencialu posameznika, ne glede na njegov socialni položaj ali druge osebne okoliščine. Prednost bodo imeli mladi, ki bodo dokazali nadpovprečne učne dosežke in izjemno motivacijo. Komisija bo posebno pozornost posvetila tudi obravnavi kandidatov iz ranljivih skupin. Če se bo na primer na projekt MERITO prijavil mlad človek, ki uporablja invalidski voziček ali ima druge specifične potrebe, bo komisija presodila njegove kompetence in motivacijo enakovredno ostalim kandidatom, hkrati pa bo preverila, katera podjetja v programu omogočajo ustrezne delovne prostore in morebitne prilagoditve. V sodelovanju z delodajalci in koordinatorjem bo poskrbela, da kandidat zaradi specifičnih potreb ne bo prikrajšan, temveč bo imel možnost v celoti pokazati svoje sposobnosti v okolju, ki mu bo omogočilo varno in enakovredno vključitev. Kandidati, ki bodo izpolnjevali pogoje, bodo povabljeni na spoznavni razgovor z delodajalcem, nato pa bo koordinator poskrbel za njihovo razporeditev v ustrezno podjetje.

Ko bodo kandidati sprejeti, se bodo lahko za mesec dni preselili v izbrano mesto. V času prakse bodo imeli zagotovljeno brezplačno stanovanje v kraju, kjer bodo opravljali delo. V pilotni fazi bo stroške kril program Interreg v sodelovanju z gostujočo državo. V fazi nadgradnje projekta bomo povabili k sofinansiranju tega tudi posamezna podjetja, saj ta bodo s pomočjo projekta MERITO pridobila visoko motiviran in mlad kader. Z nudenjem podpore mladim pri strokovnem razvoju bodo v družbi dvignili tudi lasten ugled. Udeleženci bodo pod vodstvom specializiranega tutorja opravljali praktično delo, spoznavali izbrani poklic in razvijali strokovne ter osebne kompetence. Ob tem bodo sodelovali tudi z drugim mladim praktikantom iz sosednje države, kar bo prispevalo k razvijanju medkulturnih zmožnosti. Takšen model prakse bo mladim omogočil neposredno izkušnjo dela v tujini, spoznavanje novega okolja in ljudi, kar bo lahko pomembno vplivalo na njihovo nadaljnjo karierno pot.

Organizatorji bodo poskrbeli tudi za neformalna druženja, ki bodo potekala izven delovnega časa in bodo ustvarjala ter krepila vezi med udeleženci. Med predvidenimi družabnimi dogodki so na primer skupne večerje, spoznavne družabne igre, bowling, biljard, obisk muzejev ipd. Na srečanja bodo vabljeni vsi udeleženci, ki bodo v istem obdobju opravljali prakso v okviru projekta MERITO. Udeležba ne bo obvezna, a priporočena. Eden od ciljev projekta je namreč tudi ta, da mladi obišejo nova območja v okviru slovensko-italijanske obmejne regije in okusijo življenjski stil obiskanega kraja.

Ob koncu prakse bodo mladi s koordinatorjem opravili evalvacijski razgovor in izpolnili končni vprašalnik. Pridobljeni podatki bodo izredno pomembni za nadaljnji razvoj projekta MERITO, saj bodo pokazali, kateri elementi programa delujejo, kje so potrebne prilagoditve ter katere prakse je smiselno razširiti. Na podlagi tega bo slovensko-italijanska ekipa lahko utemeljila prehod projekta v naslednjo, širitveno fazo, v kateri bo projekt še dostopnejši mladim v celotni italijansko-slovenski obmejni regiji.

Udeleženci, ki bodo uspešno izpeljali prakso, bodo prejeli potrdilo, v katerem bodo predstavljene pridobljene kompetence in priporočila tutorja. To bo dodatno obogatilo njihov kurikulum in prispevalo k lažjemu usmerjanju pri izbiri univerzitetnega ali višješolskega študija ter iskanju dela.

Projekt MERITO je posebej osredotočen na mlade, saj ti predstavljajo bodočnost čezmejnega sodelovanja. Pomembno je, da se mladi učijo iz izkušenj strokovnjakov, hkrati pa tudi drug od drugega. S tutorstvom, čezmejno izmenjavo, delom v paru in bivanjem v novem okolju projekt spodbuja osebni razvoj, izboljšuje zaposljivost ter krepi povezave med slovensko in italijansko obmejno skupnostjo. Mladi bodo na tak način pridobili izkušnje, ki jih klasični izobraževalni programi pogosto ne ponujajo ali jih, a le v manjši meri. Projekt MERITO bo prispeval h gradnji mreže sodelovanja med podjetji in bodočimi strokovnjaki.

4. Kateri partnerji (združenja, društva, šole, univerze, ustanove, itd.) bi lahko bili soudeleženi pri projektu?

Kateri partnerji bi lahko bili soudeleženi v projektu? Je predvidena soudeležba organizacij ali društev iz obeh strani meje? Zakaj so bili izbrani ti partnerji? Katero dodano vrednost bi lahko prispevali pri projektu?

MERITO bo razvil bogato in razvejano mrežo partnerjev z obeh strani meje. Vodilni partner projekta bo Državni izobraževalni zavod Jožefa Stefana (DIZ Jožefa Stefana) v Trstu, ki ima dolgoletne izkušnje z organizacijo delovnih praks in svojim dijakom omogoča prvi stik z delovnim okoljem. Dobro pozna kompetence mladih in ima vzpostavljeno široko mrežo sodelovanj z lokalnimi podjetji ter ustanovami na Tržaškem. Prav zato je idealen nosilec projekta MERITO.

Med projektne partnerje bo DIZ Jožefa Stefana najprej vključil druge srednješolske, visokošolske in univerzitetne izobraževalne ustanove z območja Interrega. Te bo spodbudil, da s postopnim mreženjem širijo sodelovanje naprej in tako poskrbijo za učinkovito širjenje informacij o projektu.

Projekt bo obenem vključil tudi 10 vodilnih podjetij in ustanov v vsakem od 6 mest, Trsta, Vidma, Benetk, Ljubljane, Kranja in Kopra. V vsakem mestu bo sodelovalo 5 ustanov z znanstvenega in 5 s humanističnega področja. Na ta način bomo zagotovili raznolike, kakovostne in zanimive priložnosti za mlade.

Pri izboru sodelujočih ustanov bo slovensko-italijanska strokovna komisija upoštevala njihovo strokovnost, pripravljenost za tutorstvo, kakovostne delovne pogoje, interes za razvoj mladih ter za čezmejno povezovanje. Posebno prednost bodo imela podjetja, ki konkretno podpirajo mlade pri zaposlovanju v regiji Interrega Italia-Slovenija.

Projekt MERITO bo tako ustvaril močno vez med izobraževalnimi ustanovami, podjetji, lokalno skupnostjo in mladimi, ki bodo v bližnji prihodnosti prevzemali pomembne vloge v družbi.

Polja od 1 do 4: skupaj **VSAJ 1000 besed** (glej smernice razdelek 2.2).

1. Explain your project proposal.

What is your project about? What is the main goal of the project? How does it involve actors from both countries along the border between Italy and Slovenia? Why is the cross-border nature of the project essential? Is the project sustainable in the long term? Can it be replaced in other contexts, different from the original one?

MERITO project is a cross-border initiative that offers young people between the ages of 18 and 22 targeted support in choosing their educational and career paths. With the help of the project, young people will be able to try out various professions in successful and established Slovenian and Italian companies or institutions that are otherwise difficult for them to access.

Young people often have a lot of theoretical knowledge, but few opportunities to test in practice what truly captivates them, and which career path suits them best. The project therefore poses the challenge: how can we enable young people to discover their talents in a timely manner, try out different work environments, and make the best possible decision about their future?

MERITO offers a solution with structured cross-border work placements that take place in selected companies, institutions, and organizations in the Interreg Italia-Slovenija programme area. This will grant young people the opportunity to encounter substantial work challenges, company dynamics, and various professional profiles during or just before their university studies, which are often only briefly touched upon in the traditional education system.

In the border region, young people often leave and go abroad because they cannot find enough quality opportunities at home, and they often feel that modern society does not follow the principle of meritocracy. This is where our MERITO project gets its name, which comes from the Latin word "meritus", meaning "to deserve." At the same time, it also alludes to meritocracy, namely "a social system in which positions and functions are assigned on the basis of knowledge, experience, and achievements" (definition by the Slovene dictionary SSKJ). Meritocracy is in fact a value, strongly supported by the European Union, as it seeks to promote equal and fair opportunities for all, regardless of their social background.

The aim of the project is to help young people better understand which profession or field of study best suits them based on their talents, interests, and experiences. Young people often notice a lack of career guidance. As a result, they often choose a field of study or a profession that does not suit them later on. The border region between Slovenia and Italy has been an area of cultural intertwining for centuries, yet young people still do not take full advantage of its potential. This is why the project aims to offer young people a better starting point for employment in the form of a system of structured cross-border work placements and a related online platform.

MERITO project covers the Slovenian-Italian area covered by the Interreg program, as it will involve companies and institutions from both countries in a balanced way. The young people who are the target of the project will be offered work experience and internships. This will make it easier for them to map out their future career paths successfully. Increasing employability will reduce unemployment in both countries. Cross-border cooperation is crucial because it involves the implementation of innovative interstate ideas and the establishment of closer relations between the population of both countries; young people can experience working in a neighboring country, and at the same time learn about different working procedures, languages, and cultures. The participating countries will also benefit, as by accepting workers from neighboring regions they will gain knowledge that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

The project is sustainable in the long term, as it does not require excessive financial investments, does not harm the environment in any way, and improves the social situation of the inhabitants of both countries. The economic condition in the border area will improve, which should lead to lower social vulnerability and consequently lower costs for the state.

The MERITO model can be transferred to any border area (e.g., between Austria and Slovenia, between Italy and France, etc.). The proximity of two countries represents an interesting "laboratory" for versatile mutual enrichment and economic cooperation.

2. How does it affect the community? Which problems, issues and needs does it tackle?

What needs and challenges of the cross-border community does it address? How can it benefit the cross-border community? Do the activities encourage integration within the cross-border community?

MERITO project primarily addresses the difficulties young people face in choosing a career or suitable university studies, dissatisfaction at work, and the problem of unemployment. It aims to offer young people more opportunities to understand what they would like to do as adults through various work experiences, allowing them to immerse in a real working environment, experience what a particular job is really like, and make it easier for them to choose their future study or career path.

Through the cooperation of prestigious and established institutions, the project will show young people that there are interesting and stimulating careers close to home. The participants can learn that there is potential for a successful career in the Slovenian-Italian border area.

The project promotes integration in the cross-border community, as it implies the formation of mixed groups of Italians and Slovenians who will participate in it. The internships will include members of both the Slovenian and Italian nationalities simultaneously in the same company or institution. This means that in the event of linguistic ambiguities or difficulties, they will be language tutors or mediators for each other (e.g., in Trieste, a Slovenian from Ljubljana and an Italian from Venice will be doing an internship in an Italian company; the Ljubljana native will probably use English to communicate, but if problems arise in understanding certain concepts through the use of Italian, the Venetian will be able to help him resolve them through English). Members of linguistic minorities in Italy and Slovenia also represent a special added value in language mediation. These young people naturally move between the two cultural and linguistic areas, so they can take on the role of especially successful connectors in mixed groups or pairs, while also contributing to a more authentic understanding of local peculiarities and experiences of cross-border coexistence. Young people from different border areas will get to know each other and at the same time naturally learn about the language and culture of their neighbours. For young people, this will be an occasion to discover how differences can be transformed from obstacles into opportunities for broadening their horizons.

Companies on both sides of the border will also benefit, as they will gain motivated young workers, access to knowledge and skills from a wider area, and the opportunity to integrate new ideas and perspectives into their working environment.

The MERITO project therefore increases employment opportunities for young people, reduces the trend of emigration to foreign countries, strengthens bilingualism and intercultural competences, helps companies find young and motivated staff, and encourages the development of international competences at the very beginning of a career. The entire border community will feel the positive effects of the project, also due to the increase in cross-border contacts, bilingualism, and mutual trust among residents. This creates greater cohesion and stability throughout the region.

3. Which project activities are foreseen?

What activities will be carried out as part of the project? Are they attractive to young people? How are young people involved in the activities?

The project is divided in two phases. The first phase is a pilot phase, thus its scope is somewhat limited. This phase will serve as a starting point for the second, the expansion phase, in which we will introduce improvements based on our experience, and upgrade and expand the planned activities.

The project has a limited number of participants in the pilot phase and is intended for the age group between 18 and 22 years. In the pilot phase, the internships will take place once a year in six selected cities and their surroundings, namely in Trieste, Udine, Venice, Ljubljana, Kranj, and Koper. In the pilot phase, four candidates will complete an internship in each city. In the initial phase, there will be a limited number of 10 participating institutions in each city. The participants will be able to choose among those, i.e. five from the scientific field and five from the humanities. Each institution or company will accept one participant from its own country and one from a neighboring country (e.g., at the National Gallery in Ljubljana or the Elettra Sincrotrone research center in Trieste, an Italian and a Slovenian citizen who have expressed interest in the institution will simultaneously complete their internships). When applying, participants will submit a letter of motivation, a description of their skills, proof of knowledge, and a list of their preferences (from the first to the fifth choice) about the institutions where they would like to do their internship. Based on these lists, an allocation process will be carried out, which will firstly consider the best matches of preferences between the Slovenian and the Italian participants. If their first choices do not match, the next preferences on the list will be taken into account in the allocation. If a common institution will not be found among the first two preferences, a coordination meeting will be held with both candidates. A compromise that will satisfy both will be sought through a discussion, based on the other preferences expressed by them.

The MERITO project will be implemented simultaneously by the Slovenian and the Italian teams. Each group will consist of a coordinator, an IT specialist, and an accountant. The teams will coordinate and cooperate, as the success of the project will depend on close cross-border cooperation. In addition, there will be a committee of experts of mixed nationality that will select the participants for work placements among the candidates.

The coordinator will have the main organizational role. They will be in touch with companies and institutions, concluding cooperation agreements, organizing the application process, the allocation of participants according to their competences and available positions, and monitoring the progress of the work placements.

The accountant will be responsible for managing the funds received from the Interreg programme and any national contributions. They will ensure the transparent and equitable distribution of funds among companies, institutions, and participants. These funds will cover a small contribution to participating companies, all accommodation costs for the participants, and a contribution to the participants for the purchase of basic living expenses. In this way, we will ensure that anyone who meets the conditions can participate in the project, regardless of their financial background.

The IT specialist will manage, develop, and maintain the online platform (merito.eu), which will be crucial for the successful implementation of the MERITO project. The website will serve as the main tool for informing young people about the project, as a database of participating companies and institutions, for submitting applications, collecting data on the skills and motivation of the candidates, and for collecting evaluations.

The applications from young people will be reviewed by an expert committee of representatives from both countries. The committee will assess the motivation of candidates, their competences and suitability for individual work placements. It will also select participating companies and institutions based on their quality, development opportunities, reputation, and attention to vulnerable groups. In doing so, it will pay particular attention to ensuring the principle of meritocracy, which is the basis of our project. The selection will therefore be based on the knowledge, commitment, and potential of the individual, regardless of their social status or

other personal circumstances. Priority will be given to young people who demonstrate above-average academic achievements and exceptional motivation. The committee will also pay special attention to candidates from vulnerable groups. For example, if a young person in a wheelchair or with special needs applies to the MERITO project, the committee will assess their skills and motivation equitably with the other candidates, but at the same time will check which companies in the programme can provide a suitable workspace and any necessary adaptations. In cooperation with the employers and the coordinator, it will ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged due to specific needs, but will have the opportunity to fully prove their abilities in an environment that will enable their safe and equal inclusion. The candidates who meet the conditions will be invited to an introductory interview with the employer, after which the coordinator will arrange for their placement in a suitable company.

Once the candidates are accepted, they will be able to move to their chosen city for a month. During their internship, free accommodation near their working place will be provided. In the pilot phase, the costs will be covered by the Interreg programme in cooperation with the host country. In the upgrade phase of the project, we will invite individual companies to co-finance this, as they will gain highly motivated young staff through the MERITO project. By offering support to young people in their professional development, they will also raise their own profile in society. Under the guidance of a specialized tutor, the participants will perform practical work, learn about their chosen profession, and develop professional and personal competences. They will also collaborate with other young interns from neighboring countries, which will contribute to the development of intercultural skills. This model of internship will give young people direct experience of working abroad and getting to know a new environment and people, which could have a significant impact on their future career paths.

The coordinating group will also organize informal meetings outside working hours to create and strengthen bonds between the participants. The planned social events might include joint dinners, icebreaker games, bowling, billiards, museum visits, etc. All the participants doing an internship within the MERITO project during the same period will be invited to the meetings. Participation will not be mandatory, but will be recommended. One of the goals of the project is for young people to visit new areas within the Slovenian-Italian border region and experience the lifestyle of the places they visit.

At the end of the internship, the participants will have an evaluation interview with the coordinator and will complete a final questionnaire. The obtained data will be extremely important for the further development of the MERITO project, as it will show which elements of the programme are working, where adjustments are needed, and which practices should be expanded. Based on this, the Slovenian-Italian team will be able to justify the transition of the project to the expansion phase, in which the project will be even more accessible to young people throughout the Italian-Slovenian border region.

The participants who successfully complete the internship will receive a certificate presenting the acquired competences and the tutor's recommendations. This will further enrich their CV and facilitate the choice of a university or college study programme or finding a job.

The MERITO project focuses specifically on young people, as they represent the future of cross-border cooperation. It is important that young people learn from the experience of experts, but also from each other. Through mentoring, cross-border exchanges, working in pairs, and staying in a new environment, the project promotes personal development, improves employability, and strengthens ties between the Slovenian and the Italian border communities. In this way, young people will gain experience that traditional educational programmes often do not offer, or do it to a lesser extent. The MERITO project will also contribute to building a network of cooperation between companies and future experts.

4. Which partners (organization, club, school, university, institution etc.) could be involved in the project?

Which partners could be involved in the project? Will organizations and/or associations from both sides of the border be involved? Why were these partners chosen? What added values could they bring to the project?

MERITO will develop a rich and extensive network of partners on both sides of the border.

The lead partner of the project will be the Higher Education Institute Jožef Stefan in Trieste, which has many years of experience in organizing work placements and provides its students with their first contact with the working environment. It is familiar with the competences of young people and has established a wide network of cooperation with local companies and institutions in the Trieste area. This is why it is the ideal leader of the MERITO project.

The Higher Education Institute Jožef Stefan will first involve other secondary schools, higher education institutions, and universities from the Interreg area as project partners. It will encourage them to gradually expand their cooperation through networking, thus ensuring the effective dissemination of information about the project.

The project will also involve 10 leading companies and institutions in each of the six cities: Trieste, Udine, Venice, Ljubljana, Kranj, and Koper. In each city, five institutions from the scientific field and five from the humanities will participate. In this way, we will ensure diverse, high-quality, and interesting opportunities for young people.

When selecting participating institutions, the Slovenian-Italian experts committee will take into account their expertise, willingness to provide tutoring, quality working conditions, interest in the development of young people, and cross-border networking. Special preference will be given to companies that specifically support young people in finding employment in the Interreg Italia-Slovenia region.

The MERITO project will create a strong link between education institutions, companies, the local communities and young people, who will soon take on important roles in society.

*Total number of words for section 1 to section 4: **AT LEAST 1000 words.***