

Slovenia – Austria

On the basis of Article 106.i of the Public Finance Act of the Republic of Slovenia, the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, Kotnikova 5, 1000 Ljubljana, represented by the Interreg and Financial Mechanisms Office, Cross-Border Programmes Management Division, issues the following

OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS (for standard projects)

in the framework of the Interreg Programme Slovenia–Austria 2021-2027
(Reference number: 4300-31/2022)

1. Managing Authority

The Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, Kotnikova 5, 1000 Ljubljana, represented by the Interreg and Financial Mechanisms Office, Cross-Border Programmes Management Division, is to act as Managing Authority.

The Managing Authority is the contracting authority for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

2. Legal basis

- Public Finance Act (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 11/11 – official consolidated text, 14/13 – revised, 101/13, 55/15 – ZFisP, 96/15 – ZIPRS1617, 13/18 and 195/20 – Const. Court Dec.);
- Rules on the procedures for implementing the budget of the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 50/07, 61/08, 99/09 – ZIPRS1011, 3/13, 81/16, 11/22, 96/22 and 105/22 – ZZNŠPP);
- 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 (Common Provisions Regulation) with all amendments;
- 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 (the ERDF Regulation) with all amendments;
- 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 (the Interreg Regulation) with all amendments;
- Implementing acts and delegated acts adopted in accordance with the aforementioned regulations;

- Other legal acts applicable to the implementation of projects co-funded by the ERDF;
- Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria No. CCI2021TC16RFCB046, approved by European Commission Decision No. C (2022) 3101, final as of 16 May 2022, with all amendments.

The pronouns used in the masculine gender form in this document shall be deemed to include the feminine gender form in line with the principles of gender-neutral language.

3. Open Call for Proposals

This Open Call for Proposals is issued by the Managing Authority.

The Application Pack, consisting of the Manual for Beneficiaries, the Project Statement and the Project Partner Statement templates, the Subsidy Contract sample, the Partnership Agreement sample and the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria (IP SI-AT), is available for download on the website www.si-at.eu. The offline template of the Application Form can be downloaded from the website www.si-at.eu (this document is not part of the official Application Pack).

The Interreg Programme Slovenia-Austria for the programme period 2021-2027 invites potential beneficiaries to submit project applications in the frame of this Open Call for Proposals.

4. Subject of the Open Call for Proposals

The IP SI-AT is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) under the European Territorial Cooperation objective. The subject of this Open Call for Proposals is the co-financing of projects that contribute efficiently to the **overall objective of the programme, which is:**

to reduce territorial disparities in the cross-border region, drive change and take opportunity of new development trends by pooling resources across national borders in order to be better prepared for the future and to alleviate border obstacles to better cooperate across national borders in specific areas.

The subject of this Open Call for Proposals is the co-financing of projects that correspond to the following priorities and related specific objectives:

Priority 1: A more resilient and sustainable region

- ✓ *Specific objective 1:* Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience
- ✓ *Specific objective 2:* Promoting the transition to a circular economy

Priority 2: A more competent and competitive region

- ✓ *Specific objective 1:* Developing skills and competencies for work and life
- ✓ *Specific objective 2:* Sustainable economic development based on culture and tourism potentials

Priority 3: A better cooperation governance

- ✓ *Specific objective 1:* Enhancing coordination and cooperation among institutions

The projects shall apply a result-oriented approach. **The coherence of the project intervention logic** (i.e. the project specific objectives, activities, outputs and expected results) **with the targeted specific objective and the indicators of the programme shall be clearly demonstrated.**

For a detailed description of the content of each priority and the programme specific objectives, including the actions and target groups, please refer to section 2 of the IP SI-AT. In order to make your project compliant with the programme, it is compulsory to read and take into account the description under each priority and the corresponding specific objective.

In line with the terms of this Open Call, a project proposal shall address only **one** of the mentioned **priorities** and **one programme specific objective**, even if certain activities of the project also fall under another priority.

5. Available funding, co-financing rate and project size

A total of **EUR 41,500,000** of ERDF funding shall be made available for co-financing projects in the frame of the current Open Call for Proposals.

The funds shall be broken down by priorities as follows:

Priority	ERDF funding in EUR
1 A more resilient and sustainable region	21,100,000
2 A more competent and competitive region	17,000,000
3 A better cooperation governance	3,400,000
Total	41,500,000

Only eligible expenditure (see point 10 of this document) shall be co-financed by the programme. Co-financing from the ERDF shall amount to a maximum of 80% of the total eligible costs, and at least 20% shall be provided by the Project Partners' own contribution and/or other sources¹.

The projects eligible for participation in the programme have to apply for **at least EUR 160,000 of ERDF funds** and **as a recommendation should not apply for more than EUR 1.5 million of ERDF funds.**

6. Programme area

The programme area comprises eight Slovenian (gorenjska, goriška, koroška, osrednjeslovenska, podravska, pomurska, savinjska, zasavska) and eight Austrian (Oststeiermark, West- and Südsteiermark, Graz, Östliche Obersteiermark, Unterkärnten, Klagenfurt-Villach, Oberkärnten and Südburgenland) NUTS-3 regions.

7. Partnership requirements

In line with the minimum requirement, the partnership shall have **at least one Project Partner from Slovenia and one from Austria** or an EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) registered in one of the participating countries consisting of members from both Member States.

¹ For detailed information, see the Manual for Beneficiaries.

Natural persons and political parties shall be excluded from participation. All other legal entities shall be able to participate provided they are not acting as external service providers and have the **financial, administrative and operational capacity** to participate in the programme.

The Lead Partners shall be **located within the programme area**. Institutions located outside the programme area but on the territory of a Member State involved in the programme can only act as Project Partners.

Project Partners located outside the programme area but in the European Union can be Project Partners only in duly justified cases. Please note that in the event of project approval the effective participation of partners from European Union regions outside the programme area is subject to the condition that the Member States in which they are located accept all implementing provisions regarding management, control and auditing.

8. Eligible period of co-financing

The earliest possible start of the project shall be the **date of the submission of the project application in the Joint Electronic Monitoring System (Jems)**.

The project end date shall be the date defined in the Subsidy Contract, but not later than 31 December 2028.

9. Project duration

The recommended project duration shall be **up to 36 months**.

10. Eligible costs

1. Staff costs
2. Office and administrative costs
3. Travel and accommodation costs
4. External expertise and services costs
5. Equipment costs
6. Costs for infrastructure and works

A detailed description of eligible costs is included in the Manual for Beneficiaries (Part 4).

Expenditure shall be considered eligible at the earliest from the date of the submission of the project proposal in the Jems.

11. Project development support

Before submitting project proposals, applicants should read the documents related to the respective Open Call for Proposals published on the website www.si-at.eu. Any inquiries and requests for additional information during the Call should be sent by e-mail to the Joint Secretariat (JS) at si-at.svrk@gov.si.

The following **information and support** related to project development and the preparation of applications shall be **provided by the JS**:

- information about the programme and the Open Call for Proposals;
- information about the preparation and submission of applications;
- the organisation of information workshops;
- the publication of frequently asked questions and answers;
- the publication of information about approved projects.

Support concerning specific project content-related topics, including information on State Aid, Project Partner search and information on national/regional co-financing (the latter applies to Project Partners from Austria) shall be **provided by the representatives of both Member States** (National and Regional Authorities). It is strongly recommended that all Project Partners contact their National/Regional Authorities prior to submitting their project application.

Contacts are listed in Part 2, Chapter 2.6 of the Manual for Beneficiaries and on the dedicated programme website.

The information about the planned information workshops, most frequently asked questions and approved projects are available on the programme website www.si-at.eu.

12. Submission of project applications

Project applications can be submitted at any time between the launch date and the closing date of the Open Call for Proposals or for as long as the funding is available. Applicants can submit project applications continuously after the Open Call is launched.

The first deadline for the submission of project applications is 28 February 2023 (at 12.00 p.m.). All subsequent deadlines for the submission of project applications will be published on the programme website www.si-at.eu at least two months before the set deadline. Applications received in due time before each Monitoring Committee meeting (MC) and fulfilling all requirements shall be subject to a MC decision.

The project application shall be submitted by the Lead Partner through Jems. The submitted application shall contain all the required data and be accompanied by signed and scanned documents annexed to the Application Form, as stated in the Manual for Beneficiaries.

The Application Pack is available on the dedicated programme website at www.si-at.eu.

13. Project selection

The projects shall have **cross-border impacts on the programme area**. At least three of the cross-border cooperation criteria have to be fulfilled. The Project Partners shall cooperate in project development, joint implementation and joint financing. In addition, they may cooperate in joint staffing.

The selection of projects shall be based on the assessment of the received applications following a standard procedure, which shall ensure respect for the principles of transparency and equal treatment. Only project applications submitted through Jems shall be considered valid.

The project selection procedure shall be conducted in two phases:

Administrative compliance and eligibility check

The set administrative and eligibility criteria shall have to be fulfilled by each project proposal. Project applications that fully comply with the administrative and eligibility criteria shall be further subject to quality assessment.

If according to the administrative check there are some discrepancies or certain documents are missing, the Lead Partner will be asked for supplements. The supplements may refer to compliance with criteria A3, B1 and B2. **The Lead Partner shall be able to supplement the project application within seven calendar days** after a request for supplementation is sent. In case the project application fully complies with the set administrative and eligibility criteria after the requested supplements have been provided and is approved by the MC, all supplements shall be entered in the Application Form (in the Jems) before the signing of the Subsidy Contract.

Quality Assessment

Projects that pass the administrative compliance and eligibility check shall be further assessed for quality against the following assessment criteria:

- Strategic assessment criteria;
- Operational assessment criteria.

The total number of points for a project application in the scope of quality assessment shall be 100 (100%). Each project application must achieve at least 70% or 70 points to be further considered. Projects not reaching 70 points shall be rejected. Projects reaching 70 points or more shall be discussed at the MC meeting with the possibility of being **approved for funding, approved under conditions, not approved for funding, or put on the reserve list.**

Project Partners of projects with specific project activities of increased environmental importance, such as studies of the carrying capacity of protected areas, projects that involve registered units of cultural heritage and/or heritage communities, media publications aimed at promoting cultural heritage, additional soil sealing created in total by projects and others (**programme specific objective 2.2**) shall foresee sustainable solutions for the management of visitors. These should include mitigation measures and the implementation of monitoring. Project Partners are asked to monitor those activities during the whole project implementation in order to be able to report thereon to Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat for the purposes of programme monitoring. This specific criterion needs to be fulfilled, otherwise the project will be rejected.

For the IP SI-AT, it is crucial that **horizontal principles** are integrated into the planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the project activities. During the whole life cycle of the projects, partners are requested to consider actions cross-cutting project activities, taking into account the

horizontal principles of the EU. More precisely, actions should be planned, implemented and reported considering the horizontal **principles of equal opportunity, non-discrimination, gender equality and environmental sustainability**. The Project Partners shall indicate the contribution of the project to horizontal principles as positive, neutral or negative and provide a short justification. A negative assessment in one of the horizontal principles will lead to the rejection of the project.

A detailed description of the scoring applied in the scope of the assessment is provided in Part 3, Chapter 2.1.2 of the Manual for Beneficiaries, which is part of the Application Pack published on www.si-at.eu.

14. Project Approval

The **final decision** on the project shall be made by the MC of the programme. The MC shall formally decide whether to approve or not approve the project application for funding and shall set the corresponding ERDF contribution by taking into consideration the quality of each project application and its contribution to the programme objectives.

15. Notification regarding project selection

The MAJS shall inform the Lead Partner whether its project proposal has been approved for funding/not approved for funding/put on the reserve list within 30 calendar days of the decision of the MC.

16. Amendments to the Open Call for Proposals

Any amendment to the text of the Open Call for Proposals or its Application Pack shall be published on the programme website www.si-at.eu.

Amendments to this Open Call for Proposals shall be published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia. Applicants are obliged to respect potential amendments to the Open Call for Proposals and its Application Pack published in the manner as described above.

17. Language

The Open Call for Proposals and the Application Pack shall be **published in the Slovene, German and English language**. In case of discrepancies between the Slovenian and German texts of the Open Call for Proposals and the Application Pack, the harmonised English version shall prevail and shall be used as a tool for common understanding.

The project application shall be bilingual, written in both the **Slovene and German language**, except for **the project summary, which shall be written in the Slovene, German and English language**. In case of discrepancies, the language of the Lead Partner shall prevail.

18. Other provisions

The results of the Open Call for Proposals are considered information of a public nature and shall be published on the website www.si-at.eu after the signing of ERDF Subsidy Contracts with the selected Lead Partners.