



Interreg

NEXT MED



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Mediterranean
Multi-Programme
Mechanism

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Call for Proposals - Mediterranean Multi-Programme Mechanism (MMM)

PROGRAMME NAME: Interreg NEXT MED
CALL N° 3

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Type of call: coordinated MMM call

Project type: capitalisation projects

Project category: transferring of results

INTRODUCTION

These Terms of Reference (ToR) were drafted by all Interreg Programmes that have joined the MEDITERRANEAN MULTI-PROGRAMME MECHANISM (hereafter MMM), in collaboration with Interact and Interreg TESIM NEXT. Each Programme is, however, solely responsible for approving and implementing the ToR, and will propose them to its own potential beneficiaries in accordance with its management rules.

The **ToR** focus on the purpose and governance of the MMM, the objectives to be pursued and the topics identified for this call. The document defines what makes a project compliant with the MMM logic and clarifies the pilot and experimental nature of this coordinated call. The ToR must be read in conjunction with the Programme guidelines for applications, which contain the specific requirements of the call for proposals, including provisions on technical, financial, and eligibility criteria and other relevant information for the submission of project proposals.

A list of **joint outputs**¹ to be valorised is also provided.

Each ToR, together with the relevant technical information and annexes, will be **published by each Programme** when launching the respective Calls for Proposals.

¹ To be understood as a project product and not necessarily linked (or linked only) to indicators.



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MMM RATIONALE AND PURPOSE: HISTORY

The Mediterranean region remains one of the world's most visited destinations, attracting over 360 million international tourist arrivals in 2024, with projections reaching 500 million by 2030. While tourism is a vital economic driver, its rapid growth has intensified environmental pressures, particularly in coastal zones, and exacerbated challenges such as seasonality, resource depletion, and uneven territorial development.

In response to these shared challenges, the "Interreg Mediterranean Multi-Programme Mechanism" (MMM) was launched in 2022 as a strategic framework to enhance cooperation among Interreg Programmes operating across the Mediterranean basin.

Initially involving three Programmes - Interreg MED/Euro-MED, Italy-France Maritime, and ENI CBC Med/Interreg NEXT MED, in 2023 the Mechanism expanded to include Interreg Greece-Cyprus, Italy-Croatia, Italy-Malta, and Italy-Tunisia, and in 2025, Interreg Italy-Slovenia, Interreg IPA South Adriatic and finally Interreg IPA ADRION joined it as the eighth, ninth and tenth full members.

This mechanism fosters cross border and transnational Interreg-Programmes coordination, joint monitoring, and policy alignment to amplify the impact of sustainable development initiatives, particularly in tourism, in the Mediterranean area.

A pivotal milestone in the MMM's evolution was the "Paths That Last" conference held in Split, Croatia, on 25-26 June 2025, which convened over 350 stakeholders from across the Mediterranean. The event showcased successful Interreg projects and launched new initiatives such as "Peer Learning & Study Visits", while thematic workshops addressed different topics as explained below ([page 5](#)).

WHY A COORDINATED CALL FOR THE MMM?

These Terms of Reference set the strategic and operational framework for the first coordinated call promoting sustainable tourism under the MMM, ensuring that future actions are coherent, evidence-based, and aligned with European cohesion policy and global sustainability goals. It reflects a shared commitment among the participating Interreg Programmes to transforming tourism into a driver for inclusive growth, climate resilience, and territorial cohesion across the Mediterranean, mitigating environmental degradation and ensuring equitable benefits for local communities.

HOW THIS CALL WORKS

Potential beneficiaries must apply to a single Interreg MMM Programme participating in this coordinated call.

This choice will determine the administrative rules (specific objectives, eligibility and selection criteria, funding, geographical area, etc.) that will apply to your application and, if selected, to the implementation of your project.

It is important to underline that this is a **coordinated call**, not a joint one, as each Programme retains its own rules, budget and selection procedures. Despite the MMM coordination and common framework, each Programme will manage all formal steps of the call separately.

INTER-PROGRAMME COORDINATION

While each Programme operates independently, the participating Programmes have agreed on a common coordination framework to capitalise and improve the transferability and scalability of already achieved solutions beyond their own area of cooperation.

A) Common elements defined at MMM level:

- Common cross-cutting thematic focus (outputs from “Paths That Last” thematic workshops);
- Joint list of outputs, proposed by each participating Programme, to be capitalised and transferred into cooperation areas other than those in which they were originally developed;

- An indicative minimum overlap period of 10-month for all selected projects financed by the participating MMM Programmes to enable parallel implementation and knowledge exchange.

B) Elements defined and managed at Programme level:

- Project budget and duration;
- Partnership composition (including associated partners);
- Eligibility rules, submission and selection procedures, contracting processes.

The participating Programmes have also agreed to integrate harmonised features into the application form and the assessment processes. They will also run a coordinated communication campaign.

REMINDER!

All formal and administrative steps of the call remain under the responsibility of each single Programme.

WHICH GEOGRAPHICAL AREA AND WHAT KIND OF COOPERATION ARE TARGETED?

Projects submitted under the coordinated MMM call for proposals must **implement activities within territories that are eligible under the Interreg Programme selected for co-financing**. While all MMM Programmes share the Mediterranean as a common geographical and cooperation reference, the specific eligible areas vary according to the Interreg strand to which each Programme belongs.

It is therefore **the responsibility of the Lead Partner** to ensure that the proposal fully complies with the eligibility rules and geographical scope of the chosen Programme. However, since MMM Programmes will schedule an indicative **minimum overlap of ten months**, all projects selected under this call are encouraged to implement **complementary actions and mutual exchanges** (see examples of activities below, page 10) planned **from the beginning of their implementation**, in order to enabling and supporting inter-project cooperation, to address shared Mediterranean challenges and reinforce synergies. Projects implemented within the eligible territories of the selected MMM Programme shall clearly identify and engage specific

target groups, to maximise impact and ensure consistency with the Programme's mission and objectives.

The core **target groups** of a Programme consist of all relevant stakeholders from the public and private sectors involved in the territorial sustainable tourism development, including national, regional and local public authorities engaged and working together with other relevant bodies responsible for defining and implementing policies.

IMPORTANT!

For further information about targeted areas and groups, please refer to the specific information and annexes provided by each MMM Programme.

WHAT SHOULD THE PROJECTS BUILD ON?

The capitalisation² of experiences and results promoting new synergies is a common thread in the MMM Programmes and the core element to amplify results. For this reason, **project proposals submitted to this coordinated call must be based on at least one output developed under an MMM Programme other than the Programme to which the application is submitted.** Project proposals should focus on the valorisation and transfer of outputs achieved by previously implemented projects co-financed in the MMM area, rather than on the development of entirely new outputs.

The involvement of the partner(s) that originally developed the selected output is not mandatory but may be beneficial and could be carried out either through full partnership or through associated partners according to each Programme's eligibility rules.

REMINDER!

It is mandatory to conceive your project idea based on a specific output presented in the MMM joint database and use it in a Programme/cooperation area other than the one that co-financed it.

² To consolidate knowledge; to share, exploit and reuse knowledge; to have knowledge integrated by other actors and institutions.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN THEMATIC TOPICS AND KEY CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED?

The coordinated call focuses on sustainable tourism. This was identified as a particularly suitable focus, given that it is a cross-cutting field central to many Interreg operations in the Mediterranean. It encompasses environmental protection, economic development, social inclusion, cultural heritage, innovation, and governance, enabling each Programme to contribute according to its specific objectives and territorial scope.

From this perspective, sustainable tourism was considered to be sufficiently comprehensive and relevant for the Mediterranean area, supporting various approaches, strategies and methodologies that are already embedded within the participating Programmes. Therefore, the call connects results and experiences from multiple policy areas.

In the framework of the joint event **“Paths that Last”** (<https://www.interregnextmed.eu/paths-that-last-conference-gathered-8-interreg-programmes-to-shape-mediterranean-sustainable-tourism>), organised by the MMM Interreg Programmes in Split on 25 and 26 June 2025, five parallel workshops were held, each addressing a key dimension of sustainable tourism:

- **Workshop 1 & Workshop 2:** Shared and strategic governance of the tourism offer;
- **Workshop 3:** Tourism and green transition;
- **Workshop 4:** Social dimension of tourism (employment and upskilling) and inclusive and accessible tourism;
- **Workshop 5:** Innovative and smart tourism products.

These workshops followed a dual objective: on the one hand, to identify shared challenges and potential synergies among Programme beneficiaries; and on the other, to lay the groundwork for a future MMM coordinated call. Therefore, the conclusions and main challenges identified by participants during the collaborative sessions in Split are presented below. These should guide and structure the content of proposal submitted within the framework of this Interreg MMM project call. These challenges emerged from brainstorming sessions that brought together a wide range of stakeholders and project partners involved in numerous projects co-financed by eight Interreg Programmes across the Mediterranean.

WHAT KEY THEMATIC ISSUES DOES THE COORDINATED CALL FOCUS ON?

1. Shared and Strategic Governance of the Tourism Offer

Knowing that:

- Multi-level and cross-sectoral governance models are essential for sustainable tourism;
- Digital platforms and observatories foster coordination and integration;
- Barriers include fragmented governance, lack of shared vision, and short project timeframes;
- Durable governance structures, inclusive vision co-creation, and integration with public policy frameworks are needed;
- Capacity-building, peer learning, and youth/citizen engagement are critical.

Suitable technical solutions to develop in the framework of this call should be:

- **Permanent Multi-Level Governance Structures:** create and institutionalize cross-sectoral steering groups and digital platforms to ensure continuity and integration of tourism governance beyond project lifecycles;
- **Mainstream Project Results towards Policy:** develop and co-design policy briefs, toolkits, and position papers with local/regional authorities to embed project outputs into territorial development strategies;
- **Capacity-Building and Peer Learning:** implement training modules and peer-learning activities to empower stakeholders, including youth and intergenerational groups, in governance processes;
- **Inclusive and Data-Driven Decision-Making:** integrate data monitoring tools and participatory advisory groups to support transparent, evidence-based governance and citizen engagement;
- **Multi-Level Governance and Collaboration:** organize multi-level events, boot camps, and matchmaking platforms to foster exchange and strategic alignment across regions and Programmes.

2. Tourism and the Green Transition

Knowing that:

- Successful green tourism models rely on small-scale, fact-based solutions, citizen engagement, and multi-level governance;
- Barriers include short-term vision, lack of infrastructure, competitive mindsets, and technological divides;
- Projects should move from isolated interventions to systemic, long-term approaches;
- Capitalisation and sustainability require horizontal peer-to-peer exchanges and shared platforms;
- Civic engagement and intergenerational participation are vital.

Suitable technical solutions to develop in the framework of this call should be:

- **Integrated Green Tourism Models:** design and implement projects that link tourism with ecological balance, resource management, and territorial development, prioritizing long-term transformation;
- **Local Institutional Commitment:** develop enabling mechanisms and exit strategies from the outset to ensure project sustainability and integration into local governance;
- **Knowledge Management and Exchange:** create shared platforms and reinforce/valorise existing networks for collaborative learning, peer reviews, and dissemination of best practices across regions;
- **Civic and Youth Engagement:** support participatory governance models where citizens and youth co-create and shape green tourism initiatives.

3. Social Dimension of Tourism (Employment and Upskilling), Inclusive and Accessible Tourism

Knowing that:

- Empowerment of youth, infrastructure for people with disabilities, and digital platforms are key solutions;
- Strengthening skills and job quality in tourism is essential to support fair working conditions and long-term employability;
- Barriers include limited policy-maker engagement, bureaucracy, lack of incentives, and insufficient user involvement. These challenges also affect the availability of upskilling opportunities and the attractiveness of tourism careers;
- Accessibility should be universal, including children, elderly, and underrepresented groups.
- Projects should involve end users from the start and promote targeted calls and educational tools;
- Dedicated policy support and coordination mechanisms are needed to encourage uptake of social innovation in tourism and workforce development;
- Multi-level governance and harmonisation of procedures are needed.

Suitable technical solutions to develop in the framework of this call should be:

- **Universal Accessibility and Inclusion:** develop tourism solutions based on universal design principles, ensuring adaptability for all user groups (children, elderly, persons with disabilities).
- **Co-Participation in Project Design:** involve final users and target groups directly in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects and calls.



- **Skills and Quality Employment:** promote training, reskilling, and new career pathways to improve job quality and match evolving tourism labour market needs, with a focus on youth employment.

4. Innovative and Smart Tourism Products

Knowing that:

- Digital innovation (AI, VR, e-platforms, payment solutions) is advancing smart tourism;
- Barriers include lack of digital skills, limited authority support, data gaps, and complex certification systems;
- Future focus should include enhanced person-to-person experiences, capacity building, and scaling eco-tourism;
- Networking, data-driven scaling, and embedding results in regional plans are essential;
- Youth and citizens should be involved from the start through Living Labs, hackathons, and green start-ups;

Suitable technical solutions to develop in the framework of this call should be:

- **Digital Transformation in Tourism:** support the development and deployment of AI-powered services, VR tools, and digital platforms to enhance tourism experiences and operational efficiency;
- **Capacity for Innovation:** provide targeted training and support for SMEs, start-ups, and project teams to adapt to evolving business models, technologies and new opportunities (niche tourism);
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation between local authorities, SMEs, certification bodies, academia, and investors to foster innovation and scalability;
- **Capitalisation and Internationalisation:** use existing networks and joint distribution mechanisms to scale project outputs, monitor impact, and support replication across regions and markets;
- **Youth and Citizens in Co-Design:** implement participatory formats (Living Labs, hackathons) and simplified procedures to encourage youth-led innovation and inclusive project development.

WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES ARE OPEN UNDER THIS CALL?

Projects supported under this coordinated call shall fall within the category of **Capitalisation projects**, which aim at optimising and sharing validated common **instruments, policies, strategies**, and **action plans** so that stakeholders can adopt them. These projects focus on the re-use, replication and upscaling of existing outputs³ within the Programme cooperation areas — and, where possible, across the broader Mediterranean region.

Applicants should primarily build on **outputs** from projects funded within the MMM family of Programmes during **2021–2027** (outputs from 2014–2020 projects may also be considered where relevant to current priorities). Please refer to the provided list of joint outputs to be valorised. **Synergies** with other Interreg or EU-funded initiatives are encouraged.

IN SHORT

Applicants must:

- **Identify at least 1 output** originating from an MMM Programme other than the Programme to which the application is submitted (and participating in this coordinated call);
- **Define activities** to reuse, adapt, replicate and scale-up the identified output(s);
- **Indicate the original project and Programme;**
- **Explain the relevance** of the selected output(s) for the new context;
- **Describe how** the output(s) will be **transferred, adapted** and/or **scaled up**.

Priority will be given to outputs from the 2021–2027 programming period within MMM Programmes, whenever possible.

Cross-cutting elements to be taken into account when drafting a proposal and to guide project implementation:

1. **Capitalisation & transfer protocol:** proposals must include a clear plan showing which existing results will be transferred, who will adopt them (identify transferability partners)

³ For the purpose of capitalisation, the word “outputs” is understood in a wider sense than the indicators used by the programme and refers to any product of the project, which may be capitalised on. It may be a specific project output, the global project result, but also a key project activity or a deliverable of the same activity.

and dedicated budget allocations for scaling and sustaining project results, including follow-up funding and visibility mechanisms;

2. **Synergies & embedding:** demonstrate how the proposal aligns with national/regional tourism strategies, S3, climate adaptation plans, macro-regional strategies and Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development (MSSD), etc., where relevant;
3. **Governance & participation:** establish a permanent or long-lived steering committee (public, private, academia, civil society). Include mechanisms for intergenerational dialogue/advisory groups, and youth participation;
4. **Data, monitoring and open tools:** use/strengthen existing Sustainable Tourism Observatories, shared digital platforms for visitor and environmental monitoring, and open datasets to support transfer and policy uptake.

IMPORTANT! Projects are expected to address these processes in a proportionate way, depending on their scope and objectives. It is mandatory to conceive your project idea based on a specific output presented in the MMM.

INDICATIVE EXAMPLES OF **PROJECT ACTIVITIES**:

After the selection of relevant outputs in the common MMM database, applicants shall plan capitalisation actions such as:

- Implementation of thematic masterclasses and peer reviews;
- Demonstration and solution-testing activities, live exercises;
- Development of orientation, policy papers;
- Updating platforms data and functionalities produced within the project, implementation of study visits to showcase best practices identified and to raise awareness on the topics addressed;
- Implementation of dedicated actions to engage stakeholders and cluster demonstration activities, etc;
- Adaptation and contextualisation of transferred outputs to different territorial, institutional or policy contexts;
- Development of an initial stakeholder mapping to define target roles and objectives;
- Development and implementation of a targeted public relations strategy;
- Raising awareness among targeted stakeholders through outreach strategies, including training activities;
- Support to institutional uptake, including validation with competent authorities and integration into existing policy or planning frameworks;
- Design, customisation and deployment of modules for transfer of outputs in a step-by-step approach;

INDICATIVE EXAMPLES OF EXPECTED OUTPUTS:

- Policy implementing measures;
- Recommendations or regulatory proposals;
- Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) or cooperation agreements;
- Transfer plans and reports;
- Assessment tools and follow-up mechanisms or procedures;
- Adapted versions of transferred results (e.g. guidelines, toolkits or methodologies adapted to the target territories or institutions);
- Formal adoption or endorsement documents by competent authorities or relevant institutions, where applicable;
- Setting-up of governance structures to capitalise on strategies;

Other types of outputs may be produced, provided that they are consistent with the corresponding specific objective and the requirements of the ToR.

PARTNERSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

Applicants are encouraged to involve institutional partners and established networks, ensuring a balanced and efficient partnership.

IMPORTANT!

Applicants from other cooperation areas covered by the 'MMM' can be included, provided that the rules of the Programme for which you are submitting your application allow it. In this case, participation will be positively assessed if the benefit for the programme area is demonstrated in the proposal.

ALIGNMENT WITH EACH PROGRAMME'S OBJECTIVES

Depending on the specific objective chosen, projects should produce transferable and coordinated **solutions, strategies** or **action plans** which could also be applied to the territories covered by all the MMM Programmes (across the whole Mediterranean area, whenever possible):

- Solutions are methodologies, tools, technologies, services, or partnership agreements tested in real conditions and easily transferable;
- Strategies are courses of action designed to achieve long-term goals in a specific domain;

- Action plans are the translation of strategies into concrete actions.

RELEVANT POLICY FRAMEWORKS TO CONSIDER

Where relevant projects should, in the design of the proposal, consider complementarities with other European and Mediterranean initiatives, strategies and Programmes priorities focusing on similar challenges, among others:

- Union for the Mediterranean and more specifically the Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Climate Change, along with the “2030 Greener Med” Agenda supporting its implementation and the Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy;
- Communication on Sustainable Blue Economy (DG MARE);
- EUSAIR macro-regional strategy;
- EUSALP macro-regional strategy;
- WestMED Initiative (sea-basin strategy);
- BLUEMED Initiative;
- EU strategy for Sustainable Tourism (P9 TA(2021)0109);
- Other Interreg Programmes (not belonging to the MMM) and relevant thematic EU-Programmes (i.e. Horizon Europe, LIFE...);
- Joint Communication on the Pact for the Mediterranean (JOIN(2025) 26 final) and Action Plan;
- Communication on the European Ocean Pact (COM (2025) 281 final).

SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE MMM PROGRAMMES

In the **submission** phase, MMM programme authorities will support interested beneficiaries by:

- Providing access to a shared MMM coordination database to identify projects and partnerships working on similar topics;
- Organising seminars to provide information and facilitate the creation of partnerships;
- Providing all necessary information on dedicated pages on Programme webpages.

In the **implementation** phase, MMM Programme authorities will support funded projects by:

- Facilitating twinning activities and thematic exchanges to reinforce visibility and capitalisation of results;
- Encouraging beneficiaries to exchange information, compare approaches, contribute to milestones and outputs arising from other similar projects working with different territories and partners, within the broader Mediterranean framework.

IMPORTANT!

Applicants must ensure that their project proposal is **submitted under a Programme participating in the MMM coordinated call**. A project based on the same partnership, activities, objectives, and expected results shall be submitted to one MMM Programme only.

If the same or similar application has been submitted to several MMM Programmes, it cannot be granted under more than one Programme. In such cases, only the first Programme selecting it will award the grant.